

Mayawati leaves rivals to fight...

VRINDA GOPINATH
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 5

IT SEEMS that in the coming Assembly elections, BSP national president Mayawati is neither to help the Congress nor to go on a vengeful spree against her new hate, the BJP. Her strategy is both self-centred and straightforward — contest all seats where her party is strong and let the two parties fight over the rest.

Mayawati's party has to garner at least 4 per cent of votes in as many states to keep its national party status. The BSP recently released a list of candidates for Delhi, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, which reveals the focus on self-preservation.

The BSP is likely to hurt the

Congress more than the BJP, as most of the sitting MLAs here are from the Congress. Mayawati's oblique reference to an alliance with the Congress is perhaps exaggerated — in several states, where the margin between the Congress and BJP is vast, the BSP's presence will barely make a dent in that gap and is not likely to be of much help to the Congress.

Mayawati has helped the Congress by withdrawing from seats where the fight between the two parties is very close, but this seems almost incidental, as it is not her primary concern.

Take Delhi, where the BSP has decided to contest 40 seats of 70. In these constituencies, the Congress has 35 sitting MLAs, while the BJP has four



Mayawati in Bhopal before distribution of party tickets in Madhya Pradesh. PTI

MLAs and an Independent. The BSP thus does have the potential to damage Congress prospects.

In Rajasthan as well, the BSP will hurt the Congress

more than the BJP, but here, the contest is expected to be close. The BSP will challenge the two parties in 125 out of 200 seats; of these, the Congress has 110 sitting MLAs. If the margin between the Congress and the BJP narrow, as trends seem to show, the BSP poses more of a problem for the Congress. The BSP is determined to make inroads only in Chhattisgarh. Again, it will wreak havoc on the Congress.

The BSP will prove pivotal in deciding which party wins. It has tremendous damage potential for the Congress as it will eat into the latter's votes, but this leaves the BSP unconcerned as it charges ahead, attempting to cash in on the new votebank in the state.

Central Agency Recovers Assets Worth Rs 15 Cr From BSP Boss, While The Long Arm Of The Law Grabs At Chattisgarh CM

CBI launches raids against Mayawati

New Delhi
8 OCTOBER

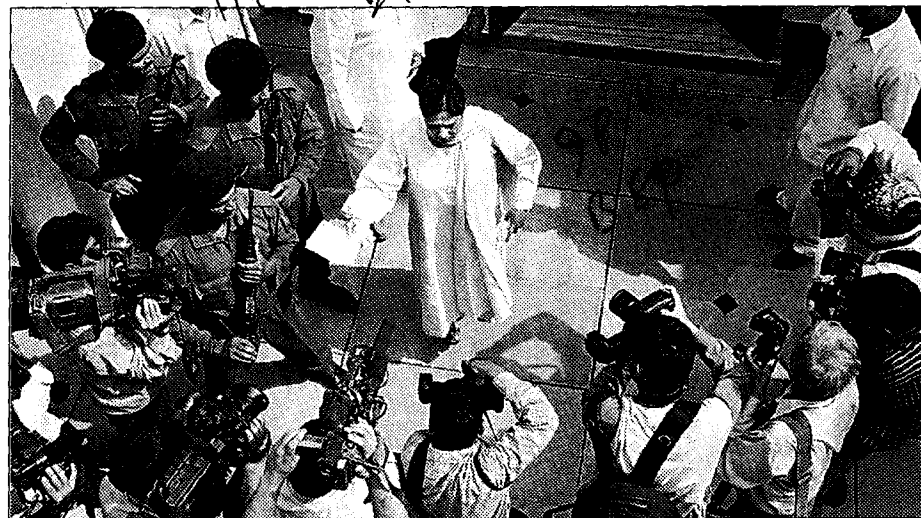
CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI), on Wednesday night, claimed that it had so far recovered assets worth Rs 15 crore that exist in the name of former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati or her close relatives.

CBI filed an FIR in a designated court at Lucknow under Section 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, on Sunday, and carried out searches at her premises on Wednesday morning. During the search, CBI claimed to have recovered documents related to the purchase of property in the national capital and other parts of Uttar Pradesh during the period April 1, 1995, to August 29, 2003.

In its FIR, CBI claimed that Ms Mayawati had disclosed her income as being just Rs 1.12 crore during the period but the agency had found that her bank balance in just two accounts — at Parliament Street and Moti Bagh — amounted to Rs 2.51 crore.

The FIR also claimed that she had purchased land at Lucknow during an auction in March, 2003, in the name of her party BSP, for Rs 45.75 lakh. This she transferred to her own name on August 8, 2003.

By then, the Taj Heritage controversy had picked up momentum, with the Supreme Court directing CBI to go after the "high and mighty" responsible for spoiling the environment around the 17th century monument. —PTI



Try To See It My Way: Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati is surrounded by security and media personnel as she briefs them at her residence in New Delhi on Wednesday — AP

Maya tears into Atal parivar

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 OCTOBER

BAHUJAN Samaj Party (BSP) leader Mayawati on Wednesday virtually slammed the door on the prospect a working relationship with the BJP when she, retaliating against CBI raids on her premises, on Wednesday accused the Prime Minister's household of corruption, and wondered whether Mr Vajpayee will order an inquiry into these allegations.

Launching a vitriolic attack against the Prime Minister after the completion of the CBI raids at

her official residence on Wednesday afternoon, Ms Mayawati singled out Mr Vajpayee's foster family, particularly his foster son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharya, demanding that his rise to riches from an obscure background should be investigated.

"What was he in the past, and what has he become today," said the BSP leader of the Prime Minister's foster son-in-law, alleging that he and his wife, Namita, had amassed properties at various places, including Nainital, and demanded an "independent inquiry" into their holdings. "Why doesn't the CBI take action

against them," she demanded.

This is the second time that the PM's foster family, which, for all practical purposes, has eclipsed his blood relations, has come under the public glare. Mr Bhattacharya had earlier attracted adverse attention when the Shiv Sena, in the immediate aftermath of the US-64 redemption crisis, had accused him of profiting from his connections with the PM.

While not much came of the Sena assault, with the PM's Office capping the controversy with the force of rebuttals, Ms Mayawati's charges have the potential of spiralling into a major controversy.

Cong backs Ajit Jogi, picks on CBI

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 OCTOBER

EVEN as a designated court here on Wednesday took cognisance of the CBI chargesheet filed against Chhattisgarh chief minister Ajit Jogi in a forgery case and summoned him on November 18, the Congress affirmed that the coming assembly elections in the state will be fought under his leadership.

"He is the chief minister of the state. Naturally, he will be leading the party in the assembly elections," party spokesperson Jaipal Reddy said. Rejecting the demand for his resignation in the wake of the CBI chargesheet against him, the party also accused the investigating agency of acting as a "political tool" of the BJP-led NDA government.

The role of the CBI in Babri Masjid demolition case, Tehelka expose and many other cases including Taj Corridor showed how "fairly and independently" they were acting, Mr Reddy pointed out sarcastically.

The party, however, sought to brush aside the court action of taking cognisance of the chargesheet, maintaining that it is a legal procedure. Following the preliminary scrutiny of the chargesheet, the court has issued summons to the Chhattisgarh CM for November 18.

Maya's claims are baseless, says Vajpayee

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 OCTOBER

EVEN as Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday termed Ms Mayawati's allegations against his household as "baseless," the prospects of a Congress-BSP tie up has begun to worry the BJP. Although Ms Mayawati has never allowed a second line leadership to take charge in the poll-bound states, she has the potential to mar the BJP's electoral prospects in varying degrees.

While the BSP has the wherewithal to tilt the electoral balance decisively in favour of the Congress in New Delhi, it can play the spoiler for the BJP in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Although the Congress may find it difficult to sew up an alliance with the BSP at this late hour, there are fears that a reconfiguration of alliances could prove to be fatal for the BJP.

Ms Mayawati's assault on the PM has virtually obliterated the scope for a rapprochement and BJP leaders, who are mindful of the sensitivities of the PM, would not like to reopen channels of communication with the BSP leader. Although the party on Wednesday used mild words to counter the BSP leader's attack, the PM's reaction will prompt his party to go on the offensive against Ms Mayawati. The PM, in his response to the allegations levelled by Ms Mayawati, told reporters at Bili that he was "saddened" by the charges.

Congress now eager to patch up with BSP

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 OCTOBER

WITH the BSP's ties with the BJP hitting a new low, the Congress clearly seems eager to step into the breach. The process of reconciliation has recently gained momentum. This started when Ms Sonia Gandhi, perhaps wanting to fuel the growing differences between the BSP and the BJP, called Ms Mayawati to inquire about the health of ailing BSP patriarch Kanshi Ram.

This was evident when the party on Wednesday reacted warmly to Ms Mayawati's hostile references to the BJP on Tuesday since it seemed to be good news for the Congress party. Party spokesperson Jaipal Reddy did not rule out the possibility of the two parties getting closer, though he rejected the possibility of an alliance in the coming Assembly elections. "We do not want to talk about alliances at this stage. But keeping in view that our ideological views are broadly similar, we can always align with each other in the future," he said.

The spokesman's words were in contrast to the angry exchange between both parties about six months ago, when Ms Mayawati announced a change of name for Amethi. The move was criticised by the Congress. Now, the new conviviality is being powered by the Congress' calculations for the upcoming Assembly polls as well as the dividends to be gained from an alliance with the BSP in the Lok Sabha polls.

CBI raid on Maya's houses

BSP leader spews venom on Prime Minister

9.8.10
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HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 9

THE CBI on Wednesday raided the residence of former UP Chief Minister Mayawati in connection with the Taj Heritage Corridor project. The investigating agency believes the total value of the disproportionate assets in the name of Mayawati's relatives could be to the tune of Rs 15 crore — double the amount mentioned in the FIR registered against her on October 6. According to the FIR, a cash deposit of Rs 2 crores was found in one account in Mayawati's name.

Raids on 21 locations spread across Delhi, Lucknow, Ghaziabad and other parts of UP are still under way. Dismissing the BSP leader's charges that the probe was politically motivated, CBI director P.C. Sharma said the raids conducted were "absolutely legal".

CBI sources claimed some documents were seized from the residences of Mayawati's relatives in UP and Delhi. But no incriminating papers could be found at her C 1/11, Humayun Road residence in Delhi. Only cash amounting to Rs 5.5 lakh was seized from the Delhi residence.

In the course of its probe, the CBI has stumbled across 30 to 40 bank accounts in the name of various persons. It has roped in the Income Tax

department to probe these accounts and evaluate the total amount of cash and fixed deposits. The CBI has come across eight houses owned by Mayawati's brothers at Inderpuri in west Delhi. They have also obtained details of nine super-luxury buses the brothers operate in UP and Delhi. According to one document, there was transaction worth about Rs 1.5 crores over the last 15 days at the Arya Samaj Road branch of Canara Bank. One of Mayawati's

brothers "gifted" Rs 31 lakh to his mother earlier this year. Another document said there was a transaction of over Rs 2 crore over the last 25 days from a non-banking financial institution in Karol Bagh. "Our on-the-spot assessment suggests a huge amount of money has gone into acquiring fixed assets. We're yet to make any headway into her (or any benami) moveable assets", sources associated with the investigation said.

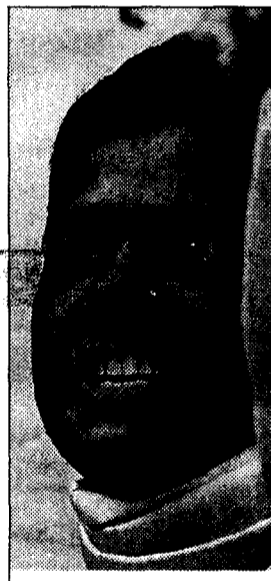
Meanwhile, Mayawati on Wednesday poured vitriol on the BJP and Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, saying that both were "hardcore Manuvadis" and "anti-Dalit". Minutes after CBI officials raided her Humayun Road residence — the raids began at 8 am and ended at 12:30 pm — Mayawati was full of scorn. In a bid to whip up sympathy among the Dalits, she fell back on BSP supremo Kanshi Ram's illness, claiming: "His condition might deteriorate and he may even die when he gets to hear of the raid".

She insisted that the Rs 5.5 lakh in cash seized from her residence was the amount that the "poor and downtrodden BSP supporters" had accumulated for payment towards Kanshi Ram's treatment. "The money was to be paid for his hospital bill. I requested the CBI not to take away the money and pleaded that it was to be paid for Kanshi Ram's medical treatment. If he doesn't get the medicines in time, he may die", Mayawati said.

Cong spokesperson Jaipal Reddy, however, said Mayawati's statement — that the CBI was being misused against her — could not be taken lightly. "It should be investigated", he said, recalling the use of the CBI as a "political tool" in the Babri demolition case, the Tehelka expose and other cases.

The yield so far, according to the CBI

30-40	bank accounts in the name of various persons
Rs 1.5 cr	worth half-built house in Noida
Eight	houses owned by Mayawati's brothers at Inderpuri, Delhi
Rs 1.5 cr	transaction over last 15 days at Canara Bank, Arya Samaj Rd.
Rs 31 lakh	'gift' by Mayawati's brother to their mother
Rs 2 cr	transaction in 25 days at non-banking institution in Delhi



Mulayam regrets dig at 'foreigner'

Cl. Manoj in New Delhi

Sept. 10. — The usually volatile relations between Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav took a new turn today with the Uttar Pradesh chief minister trying to bury their "bitter past" and requesting the Congress president to reconsider the decision to not join his government.

Before their meeting at 10 Janpath, Mr Yadav expressed regret for his 1999 remarks about Mrs Gandhi's foreign origin and his role in torpedoing her bid for premiership.

Ms Gandhi, significantly, has not rejected Mr Yadav's request outright. She may call another meeting of CWC members to consider Mr Yadav's request even as the Congress MLAs of Uttar Pradesh have

increased lobbying to join the government.

While praising her role in installing his government in Uttar Pradesh, he hoped for "a good and strong new beginning" between the SP and the Congress. Later, accompanied by Mr Amar Singh, he met Mrs Gandhi, who had Dr Manmohan Singh and Mr Ahmed Patel along. After the meeting, Mr Yadav sought her party's participation in his government.

When Mrs Gandhi informed him about the Congress decision to back his government from outside, he requested her to reconsider it. "Mrs Gandhi said she would consult with her senior colleagues."

Later, the Congress leaders said the issue of joining the government

'Judicious view'

NEW DELHI, Sept. 10. — The Uttar Pradesh government will take a "judicious view" on issuing fresh notifications or otherwise, to include charges of criminal conspiracy against Mr LK Advani, Mr MM Joshi, and others in the Babari case since the matter was sub judice, Mr Amar Singh announced today. Also the SP would go it alone in the Assembly polls in four of the five states as the Congress remained non-committal. — SNS

is still "open" for discussion. But seemingly the party will need "clarifications" on Ayodhya and a common minimum programme.

Mulayam all set to win trust vote

Statesman News Service

LUCKNOW, Sept. 7. — It should be smooth sailing for Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, thanks to the split in the BSP, when he seeks the vote of confidence in the Assembly tomorrow.

Along with the allies, he has much more than majority support in the 403-member UP Assembly which has one vacant seat. The breakaway BSF faction with 37 members broke away yesterday and later merged with the Samajwadi

Party increasing its strength from 144 to 181 in the 403-member Assembly.

There would be tight security in the Assembly when the confidence motion is debated. BSP leader Mr Swami Prasad Maurya has already expressed his fear of violence in the House.

In the new-look Assembly, following the split in the BSP (72), the BJP with 87 has become the second largest party in the House. The leader of the legislature party, Mr Lalji

Tandon, is now the Opposition leader.

Mr Tandon said the party would be adopting the role of a responsible Opposition in the House. There would be support for the government for development but if power was misused it would be forced to take a tough stand, he said. The BJP members had been issued Whip to vote against the confidence motion.

There was consternation in the BSP camp over the Speaker, Mr Kesari Nath Tripathi's

decision in recognising the split in the legislature party with alacrity. Mr Maurya said that the Speaker had not taken into account his petition against 13 of the party MLAs who had switched sides. He indicated that the party could go to court over this issue. He also alleged that the party MLAs were being threatened to switch sides.

The chief minister addressed the party MLAs this evening and plans were chalked out to face the mo-

tion. Party general secretary Mr Amar Singh also addressed them.

BJP stand: "We have nothing to do with the SP government in Uttar Pradesh," BJP president Mr M Venkatesh Naidu told reporters today, adds PTI.

Politics of "splits and mergers" was going on in the state and "we have asked our party-men to refrain from playing Dalit or Muslim cards," he said in apparent reference to the BSP and Samajwadi Party.

Another report on page 4

EX-CM COPES WITH ACTION TAKEN DURING HER TENURE AT TOP

CBI grills Mayawati over Taj Corridor scandal

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 1 SEPTEMBER

TROUBLES continue to pour for BSP leader Mayawati with a team of sleuths from the Central Bureau of Investigation on Monday questioning her in Lucknow in connection with the Taj Corridor scandal. CBI officers quizzed Ms Mayawati for close to two hours at her official Mall Road residence in Lucknow in what the agency sources described as an intensive session. CBI, who were put on the case by the Supreme Court and are working against a September 11 deadline, are believed to have focused on whether Ms Mayawati was in the loop of the goings-on.

The apprehension of a proactive CBI has been identified as one of the drivers for the BSP leader to up her ante against the BJP on Monday last, setting in train events as important as her ouster from chief ministership, collapse of BSP-BJP tie-up which may force the BJP to drop its plan to bring forward the Lok Sabha polls to February, as well as return of staunch opponent Mulayam Singh Yadav to power. Ms Mayawati decided to break off the ties after CBI put her environment minister and close political aide, Naseemuddin Siddiqui, through a five-hour wringer last month.



MAYAWATI: ON A TOUGH WICKET

While Ms Mayawati has disclaimed any knowledge about the way senior officials of her government sought to execute a project with a potential to damage the Taj, the defence is not borne out by the evidence in the CBI's possession. CBI sources point to the damning "chief minister has seen it" note made by her trusted bureaucrat, the all-powerful principal secretary, P.L. Punia. Otherwise also, not many are ready to believe that Ms Mayawati, with her ardent belief in micro-manag-

ing matters, could have allowed a project worth Rs 175 crore to be decided at the bureaucratic level.

Aside from Ms Mayawati, other bigwigs interrogated in the Taj Corridor case include Union environment and forests secretary K.C. Mishra as well as state bureaucrats such as principal secretary (irrigation) S.K. Agarwal and environment secretary R.K. Sharma.

The questioning of Ms Mayawati caused the BSP-BJP ties to deteriorate further with the former demanding that the ambit of the probe should be extended to cover Union environment minister Jagmohan. Leader of the BSP group in the Lok Sabha, Rasheed Alvi, said the Union environment minister was very much in the know of the state governments plan to construct a corridor consisting of restaurants, shopping malls and other recreational spots, in close proximity to the Taj.

It needs to be mentioned that the first evidence of strain in the ties had come when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee refused to entertain the BSP's demand for the removal of Mr Jagmohan from the environment ministry.

An agency report from Lucknow, claimed that Ms Mayawati had "spilled the beans" to her CBI questioners who also asked her about the sources of her assets.

Kickoff with Mayavati
probe; suspense on Cong

Mulayam gets crown, BJP relief

YOGESH VAJPEYI

Lucknow, Aug. 28: Lucknow's walls are being scrubbed clean of the BSP's cobalt blue and repainted in the Samajwadi Party's red and green, mirroring a regime change that will be complete with the coronation of Mulayam Singh Yadav on a river bank tomorrow.

Mulayam Singh, who has to prove his majority in 14 days, did not waste time in articulating his priorities and declared that his government's first job would be to order a probe into charges of corruption against his predecessor Mayavati, 13 of whose legislators have offered support to the new coalition.

"Charges of corruption against Mayavati would be probed as per the law and no action would be taken to settle political scores," Mulayam Singh said.

That should be music to the ears of the BJP, despite the disclaimer on settling scores, especially after Mayavati struck a jarring note today on the Babri Masjid demolition case in which L.K. Advani is an accused.

She claimed that BJP leaders had sought her help to withdraw the case but did not name anyone, sparing it for the "right time". (See Page 8)

The BJP has already sent positive signals to Mulayam Singh. By allowing two MLAs of its ally Loktantrik Congress to join the Samajwadi bandwagon, the BJP has indicated that it is not interested in bringing down the coalition in the near future.

"We welcome the governor's

decision (to invite Mulayam Singh) as he followed democratic norms. But we intend playing the role of the Opposition seriously," BJP state chief Vinay Katiyar said.

Mulayam Singh also hinted at revoking the anti-terror law invoked against Independent MLA Raja Bhaiyya, who has been brought to a Lucknow hospital today from prison, and others.

After a thanksgiving visit to Raj Bhavan in response to the invitation to form the government, Mulayam Singh said a small group of ministers would be sworn in on the banks of the Gomti, close to the city centre.

Asked whether the Congress will join the government, he said: "We would like them to join the government, but it is for their party to decide."

The Congress Working Committee met for several hours in Delhi and asked Sonia Gandhi to take a decision. Most MLAs are keen on sharing power after a long period of deprivation.

But the Congress is in a dilemma as too much of hobnobbing with Mulayam Singh will antagonise Mayavati, whose help it is banking on in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Besides, the Congress is weighing the implications of power-sharing on the general polls — which are more important for the party than Uttar Pradesh.

Kalyan Singh's party has agreed to join the government, making it all the more difficult for the Congress to justify sharing power with someone linked to the Babri demolition.

GOVERNOR GIVES 14 DAYS TO PROVE STRENGTH

Mulayam all set for fresh stint

Statesman News Service

J.P. Samajwadi

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Mayawati alleges BJP pressure over Babari

LUCKNOW, Aug. 28. — Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav will be sworn in as Uttar Pradesh chief minister tomorrow. He has been given 14 days to prove his majority in the Assembly, which will meet from 2 September.



Having the last laugh

After a night of conflicting reports on whether Mr Yadav was invited to form government (Samajwadi Party chief's Man Friday, Mr Amar Singh, cleared the air late last

night when he told The Statesman that there was no call from Raj Bhavan), Governor Mr Vishnu Kant Shastri finally issued the invitation this morning.

Mr Yadav and leaders supporting him met the Governor and decided that the swearing in would take place at the Lakshman Mela ground on the banks of the Gomti so that the people could watch the ceremony.

Mr Yadav later told journalists that he would decide on the size of his ministry in consultation with leaders of the parties supporting him. Initially, the ministry is likely to be small, but Mr Yadav may not be able to avoid for long a jumbo-sized one, given the mixed bag of support he has garnered for himself in the House of 403.

Though Congress leaders such as Mr Jagdampika Pal and Mr Promod Tewari were pro-active in helping Mr Yadav rustle up a majority, the party is yet to make up its mind whether it would join the ministry. Faced with internal differences, the Congress Working Committee tonight "deferred" a decision, but iterated that it would back the Yadav government. The CWC left it to Mrs Mrs Gandhi to decide on the issue.

Before visiting Raj Bhavan, a cool and confident Mr Yadav went to Rae Bareilly, where he addressed a rally and spelt out his plan of action as chief minister. He talked of withdrawal of Pota and action against some officials who had aligned with the outgoing chief minister.

After calling on the Governor, Mr Yadav denied Ms Mayawati's allegation that he was coming to power because of an understanding between the Samajwadi Party and the BJP.

LUCKNOW, Aug. 28. — Miss Mayawati today resigned from the Assembly and alleged that the BJP had destabilised her coalition government because she refused to meet the party's demand of withdrawal of cases against leaders chargesheeted in the Babari Masjid demolition case. Her refusal prompted the BJP to prop up the "so called dissidents" in her party, the outgoing chief minister said in her last press conference at the official residence.

In her resignation letter to the Speaker, however, Miss Mayawati didn't mention the BJP. She wrote that the political situation had forced her to quit.

She also alleged that the BJP leadership "wanted me not to issue the notification of setting up of special court in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babari Masjid case. But I declined." She vowed to finish communal forces by launching a nation-wide movement against them. The BJP dismissed the charges as "bogus". — SNS

Mulayam begins bid to split BSP, BJP

HT Correspondent
Lucknow, August 26

MULAYAM SINGH Yadav (SP) and Kalyan Singh (RKP) launched an incisive "break parties operation" on Tuesday with the latter's heavily guarded official bungalow becoming the main hub of political activity.

The two leaders met at Kalyan's residence, where some BSP and BJP MLAs were brought in six vehicles. None of the vehicles bore registration numbers. According to information, the BSP and BJP MLAs fear the wrath of their party leadership and may be moved to a safe place.

SP leader Amar Singh is said to be carrying out a similar operation at an undisclosed destination.

The focus shifted to the BJP's disgruntled members after Governor Vish-

nu Kant Shastri asked Mulayam to submit a list of MLAs supporting him.

According to the Anti-Defection Law, Mulayam needs to win over 29 legislators. This may prove to be a herculean task. Mulayam may not wish to annoy the BJP at a time when it is giving positive signals. Also, the BJP's stance that it is not in favour of President's rule has left the field open for Mulayam.

The BJP, meanwhile, has launched a large-scale exercise through Union minister Rajnath Singh to keep its flock together. Most of the disgruntled MLAs are Thakurs and considered close to Rajnath.

State BJP president Vinay Katiyar denied the possibility of legislators deserting the party. "The party stands like a rock despite differences on certain issues," he told HT.



MAN OF THE MOMENT: Mulayam Singh Yadav leaving Raj Bhawan after staking his claim to form the government on Tuesday.

TRILOCHAN SINGH/HT

Shot in the arm for Congress

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 26

THE COLLAPSE of the BJP-BSP alliance is, perhaps, the biggest gain the Congress could have hoped for in the run-up to the Assembly polls later this year. There were apprehensions that the strength of Mayawati's Dalit vote bank would help the Sangh Parivar mount a real challenge in the Assembly and LS polls.

The Congress' relief at the coalition's disintegration seems to outweigh its fears that the party may, if it becomes part of an SP-led coalition, enter into another Bihar-like situation, where Laloo Yadav had decapitated the party.

The Congress also has to contend with the political implications of joining a coalition that includes Kalyan Singh. It also fears that not joining the government may split the 16-member legislature party.

While the Congress has no option but to back Mulayam Singh Yadav's efforts to form a government, the break-up has opened new vistas for the party outside UP. The Congress is silent on if it will reach out to the BSP in Congress-ruled MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Delhi. The Dalit party can cut into Congress vote in these states and tilt the balance in closely contested constituencies.

CBI questions UP principal secy

THE CBI on Tuesday quizzed UP Principal Secretary, P.L. Punia, in connection with the Taj Corridor project.

Punia was questioned for about two hours. This is for the first time the CBI has questioned any officer of the Chief Minister's secretariat. The CBI may now decide to quiz Mayawati herself on the basis of information collected from Punia.

Officials of the environment department and the UP Pollution Control Board were also questioned.

HTC, Lucknow

Eating humble pie to strike later

Vinod Sharma and
Rajnish Sharma
New Delhi, August 26

LEFT TO herself, Mayawati would have walked out on the BJP on the Jagmohan issue late last month. She reportedly postponed this to be able to clear pending business in Lucknow in the nearly month-long interregnum. She had planned the 'no-truck with the BJP' rally she addressed on August 25 within hours of her July 28 patch-up meeting with the PM.

"The roadmap was clear to her," said a BSP leader. The reason why she ate

BEHIND THE NEWS

humble pie to be able to buy time is unclear. But her 35-page letter to Vajpayee after severing ties with the BJP on Monday explains her decision to part ways. While cohabiting with the saffron party, she was often at the receiving end of the diatribes and machinations of Vinay Katiyar, Rajnath Singh and Kalraj Mishra. The troublesome BJP trio had their own political reasons to keep distance from the BSP. Mayawati's vote bank of Dalits and Muslims



had no social accord with their party's fast eroding Brahmin-Rajput base.

In this backdrop, Mayawati became circumspect about the tenuous numerical majority she had in the 402-member UP House. Her

timing can be explained by this factor that would have come into full play at the Assembly session on August 28. The defeat of any of the money bills the House was to discuss would have toppled her government.

One can also make sense of her decision on Tuesday to quit as CM. Had she persisted with her original stand — that her offer to quit was predicated on the dissolution of the Assembly — the Governor would have asked her to take a trust vote. In such a case, her party could have split on the floor as no legislator is prepared for an early poll.

Chief minister recommends dissolution, opportunity opens for Mulayam to stir UP's cauldron

Mayavati delivers the spice, governor to do the cooking

26/8 98 P.S.P
OUR BUREAU

cabinet this morning that she had decided to recommend dissolution of the Assembly and fresh elections.

But BJP ministers Laji Tandon and others in the cabinet claimed that their party had already withdrawn support before Mayavati could reach Shastri with her recommendation.

Tandon and senior BJP leaders had rushed to Raj Bhavan to ensure that Shastri did not accept any recommendation from Mayavati without hearing them out. The state unit has demanded her dismissal.

Shastri seemed to be playing the BJP game when he told reporters tonight "he was seeking legal opinion" as Mayavati's recommendations had come after the BJP had communicated the withdrawal of support.

Mayavati described this as "politics of deceit". "If the BJP had withdrawn support before, why were its ministers attending the cabinet?" the infuriated BSP leader asked before despatching a 30-page chargesheet to the Prime Minister.

The Mumbai blasts and absence of several leaders from Delhi have forced the BJP central leadership to decide to take up the Uttar Pradesh tangle tomorrow morning, when the party's apex decision-making body, its parliamentary board, will meet at Atal Bihari Vajpayee's residence.

Sources said while the BJP leadership views central rule as an "ideal" option, an alternative government led by the Samajwadi may not be a "bad" second choice.

Aug. 24: Mayavati today spooned out the "political spice" she had promised overnight, abandoning the uneasy partnership with the BJP and triggering a chain of events that could toss up a new salad of alliances in the country.

As the Bahujan Samaj Party-BJP coalition collapsed after ruling Uttar Pradesh for 15 months, Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party sent signals that it is ready to step in.

"The Samajwadi Party is the single largest party in the Assembly. Other Opposition parties are supporting us. Therefore, the governor should invite us to form the government," state general secretary Shivpal Singh Yadav said.

Asked if the Samajwadi would stake claim, Yadav said it would be decided at the party's parliamentary board meeting to be held in the next two or three days.

Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri now holds the key as his recommendation will decide whether the state will go to polls soon or whether it will witness another round of political upheaval that will throw up new equations. No combination is being ruled out and almost every one is being considered somebody's prospective ally (See chart).

The heartland upheaval is also expected to provide a new impetus to the Opposition's efforts to cobble together an anti-NDA alliance in the run-up to the Assembly

THE OPTIONS

- Since BJP has pulled out, the governor can treat Mayavati as having lost majority and recommend dissolution of the House with polls under President's rule
- Governor accepts Mayavati recommendation and dissolves House. Polls are held under Mayavati as caretaker chief minister which BJP will not want
- Governor can call largest party, Samajwadi Party, to form a government. Mulayam Singh can give it a shot. Mayavati has suggested she is not averse to aligning with him and Congress
- It is not impossible for Mulayam to form a government with BJP support

THE TALLY

● Samajwadi Party	142
● Bahujan Samaj Party	111
● BJP	87
● Congress	16
● Bahujya Lok Dal	14
● Bahujya Kranti Party	4
● CPM	2
● Loktantrik Congress Party	2
● Bahujya Mahasabha	1
● Sameta Party	1
● Janata Dal (U)	1
● Samajwadi Janata Party	1
● Janata Party	1
● National Loktantrik Party	1
● Unattached member	17
● Independents	1
● Vacant	1
Total	403

Mayavati term to forgive favourite foe

▶ FROM PAGE 1

The only problem was that the Samajwadi could poach on BJP legislators for the numbers required to reach a simple majority.

If the BJP kept the cards close to its chest, others sent more forthright signals, though couched in political jargon. The Congress said a "secular alternative" should be allowed to take over. The party was loath to name its choice but said the "leader of the largest party" (Mulayam Singh) usually stakes claim in such circumstances.

Former chief minister Kalyan Singh, who left the BJP and has four legislators in the Assembly, met the governor

tonight. Even his name is being talked about as a dark horse but sources claimed that he requested the governor to invite Mulayam Singh.

Mayavati, too, sent feelers to both Mulayam Singh — with whom she shares one of the most rancorous relationships in Indian politics — and the Congress. The chief minister said she is willing to "forgive" the Samajwadi leader if he offers a public apology for the infamous state government house case of 1996. Mayavati had claimed that she was attacked by Mulayam Singh's supporters and the case is still in court.

"I can also forgive" the Congress if it apologises for the mistakes committed by its leaders against the Bahujan Samaj in the

past and have a rethink on adjusting with the BJP if it expels (Union agriculture minister) Rajinath Singh who had been spewing venom against me," she said.

The controversy over the Taj corridor project is being seen as the immediate provocation for Mayavati to dump the BJP but the odds were stacked against both parties pursuing clashing constituencies and agendas.

Mayavati had given a hint of her intention yesterday when she told reporters to expect "spicy news" during the BSP workers' national convention in Lucknow today.

Today the chief minister, while presiding over the cabinet meeting, began to read from the

text of the letter which she later submitted to the governor.

Tandon and friends tried to object, but Mayavati kept reading. The BJP ministers had already signed on blank papers at the beginning of the meeting and Mayavati reminded them that they must bear collective responsibility for all decisions.

"The cabinet has decided that the present House should be dissolved with immediate effect. The cabinet recommends (to) the governor for the dissolution under Section 174 (2b) of the Constitution and arrangement should be made for election of the new House," she said.

The recommendation thus became part of the cabinet's decisions, duly signed by the BJP

ministers. Mayavati underlined this while talking to reporters at Raj Bhavan after meeting Shastri. Tandon later claimed he had handed over the letter withdrawing support to the governor just before Mayavati met him.

Shastri told reporters he had received two letters — one from the leader of the BJP legislature party withdrawing support and the other from the chief minister recommending dissolution of the Assembly. "I will examine both the letters and take an appropriate decision in due course of time," he said.

On its part, the Election Commission denied earlier reports that said it was not prepared to conduct polls in Uttar Pradesh in November-December.



Mulayam Singh Yadav

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

RLD MLAs WITHDRAW SUPPORT

UP Opp. moves, CM unmoved

SFI 8/13

9- P.P. BSP

Statesman News Service

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Though observers feel the ruling coalition has come pressure, Miss Mayawati ruled out any threat to her government. In a statement issued from abroad, the chief minister said her government enjoyed "absolute and clear majority". She said the Samajwadi Party and others had constantly made "efforts to destabilise her government".

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Mr Amar Singh of the Samajwadi Party and Mr Naval Kishore Sharma, AICC general secretary in charge UP, said the coalition should be asked seek a vote of confidence as it had been reduced to a minority. But they did not mention any numbers.

Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, Mr Sharma, Mr Singh and Mr Kalyan Singh of the Rashtriya Kranti Dal met at the VIP guesthouse before the RLD chief handed

over the letter of withdrawal to the Governor. Mr Yadav said Mr Kalyan Singh was in touch with BJP MLAs.

Mr Kalyan Singh could not be present at Raj Bhavan in the afternoon because of prior engagements. Mr Amar Singh claimed he had been authorised by Mr Kalyan Singh to represent him.

Reports from Delhi said that Mrs Sonia Gandhi and her aides have conveyed to Mr Yadav, Mr Amar Singh and Mr Ajit Singh that the Congress would like the RLD chief, who had quit

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Shift in base

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THE STATESMAN

21 APR 2002

VHP's trishul drive is thoughtless but ban foolish: Advani

MANINI CHATTERJEE

NEW DELHI, APRIL 25

DEPUTY Prime Minister L K Advani today described the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's *trishul diksha* programme as "*nasamjhi*" (thoughtless) but said Rajasthan's decision to ban its distribution was "much more foolish."

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Advani said this was exactly what he had told Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot two months ago.

The Government had so far refrained from making any official comment on the *trishul* distribution programme. Nor had it taken up with Rajasthan the issue of Togadia's arrest or the state notification regulating the possession and distribu-

tion of *trishuls*.

Denying that he had ever described the *trishul* as a dangerous weapon, Advani conceded that Gehlot had raised the issue at the chief ministers' conference on internal security in February.

At the conference most chief ministers spoke of the ISI factor and proliferation of dangerous weapons within the country. But Gehlot, Advani recalled, referred to the VHP's *trishul* and demanded that it be banned.

Neither the Prime Minister nor he responded to the demand, but at an informal tea held after the conference, Advani said he did speak to Gehlot about it. "I said that their (VHP's) programme is thoughtless (*nasamjhi*) but to take

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

26 APR 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

Tables turned on Togadia

SUDHANSHU MISHRA

Jaipur, April 16: Taking off the velvet gloves, the Congress has turned the tables on Praveen Togadia.

The Congress government in Rajasthan has slapped a sedition charge on Togadia — the most vocal voice of militant nationalism — for defying a ban on distributing *trishuls*.

The Section invoked against the VHP leader carries charges ranging from waging war against the state to attempting anti-national activity, prompting an Ajmer court to keep him in judicial custody till April 30.

Additional chief judicial magistrate Indu Pareek, before whom Togadia was produced today, said she was rejecting his bail application as he had been booked under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code.

Pareek also made it clear the case was beyond her jurisdiction and that the district and sessions court was empowered to hear it, as the punishment under the Act was life imprisonment.

The sedition charge marks a turnaround in the Ashok Gehlot-

led Congress government which summoned courage to arrest Togadia only after he had completed the *trishul* initiation programme and left Ajmer for Jaipur. The VHP general secretary was also treated as a VIP in jail.

Togadia was produced before Pareek at 7 this morning.

The prosecution urged the court not to accept Togadia's bail application as he had defied the ban. But Togadia's counsel Onkar Singh Lakhawat pleaded that Section 121-A was not mentioned in the original FIR of the police and included later along with three other Sections of the IPC.

Pareek, however, ruled that the defence could move an appropriate court for appeal.

After the proceedings, Lakhawat told reporters their next course of legal action would be finalised later, maybe tomorrow. But Togadia asked his advocate not to

file a fresh bail application in view of the new sedition charges.

The BJP and the VHP slammed the Gehlot government. BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan said the government's action had revealed its "bankruptcy".

"There is a tradition of distributing symbolic weapons. *Trishul* is not a weapon of mass destruction but a symbol of devotion," he told reporters in Delhi.

"I do not know the reasons for which he has been charged with sedition but Praveenbhai is not a *rajdrohi*, nor is distribution of *trishul* sedition," RSS general secretary Mohan Bhagwat said.

VHP leader Acharya Giriraj Kishore, who addressed a news conference in Ajmer, said the sedition charge was levelled as an afterthought and was mala fide. Togadia, he added, had only urged the people to uproot the state government, which was well within his democratic rights.

VHP president Ashok Singhal will reach Ajmer on Friday to take stock of the latest developments. The state unit of the VHP is planning to move the high court against the inclusion of sedition charges under Section 121-A.

QUOTE

Praveenbhai is not a *rajdrohi*

THE RSS

THE TELEGRAPH

17 APR 2003

Mayawati hits back at Mulayam

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

Lucknow: A new chapter was added to the political rivalry between Mayawati and Mulayam Singh Yadav on Monday when the Uttar Pradesh CM directed the administration in 40 districts to lodge first information reports against the Samajwadi Party president and other functionaries in 136 cases for 'embezzling' crores of rupees from the state's discretionary fund.

At a huge 'pardaphaas' (exposure) rally here, Mayawati warned that Mr Yadav could face up to three years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine for the offence, and may even invite a life-term if he was also found guilty in other cases that were being investigated.

Mr Yadav struck a defiant note, daring the state administration to arrest him and dismissing as baseless the allegation that he had misused government funds when he was chief minister.

"It is political vendetta. The cases registered against me are baseless. The comptroller and auditor general, the high court and the state assembly have already given a clean chit to my decisions," he told reporters in Jalandhar.

"When the assembly cleared me of the allegations of misuse of discretionary funds, Mayawati was also present in the house," he said, and added, "By registering cases against me, Mayawati is taking revenge for the SP releasing videotapes showing her asking her party MPs and MLAs to donate a part of their local area

Political vendetta

Case hysteria

UP CM orders FIRs in 136 cases to be filed against SP chief Mulayam Yadav, party workers. Mr Yadav says charges are baseless

Shots at Congress

Probe ordered into Motilal Vora's largesse during President's rule

development funds to the Bahujan Samaj Party coffers."

While Mr Yadav had to bear the brunt of Mayawati's ire, she fired warning shots at the Congress as well. "A probe is also under way into the Rs 18 crore distributed by then governor Motilal Vora during the eight months of President's rule," she said. This money was also withdrawn from the discretionary fund.

Although the Congress is bound to defend him, her statement is likely to add to Mr Vora's troubles since he stands accused of ruining the party in UP in collusion with its legislature party leader, Pramod Tiwari.

Before telling the gathering about how Mr Yadav had dipped into the state till to help his relatives, Mayawati made it clear that her relatives and family members were not the beneficiaries of any government largesse. "Whatever I have belongs to the BSP," she said. She also said that she would publicly disown her relatives if she ever found them misusing her official position.

Her aggressive posture shows that Mayawati is out to make a Laloo Prasad Yadav of Mulayam. Will she be willing to see him incarcerated for 'all wrongs'? It is not difficult to answer that question as the country's largest state is witness to a new round in the politics of vindictiveness. After all, nobody had expected Raghuraj Pratap Singh and his father to have been put behind bars and their property seized—until he decided to cross swords with Mayawati.

● Mayawati threatens mass dalit conversions to Buddhism, Page 5

11 5 APR 2003

Maya blinks, BJP wins

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 29

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Mayawati was forced to retract her demand for Union Tourism and Culture Minister Jagmohan's resignation in a political drama lasting less than 24 hours.

The climbdown came after the BJP signalled its readiness to pull down her government.

Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee refused to entertain her demand and called a meeting of UP leaders and the party's parliamentary board on Wednesday to review ties with the BSP.

Mayawati said at a news conference that she was withdrawing the demand following an assurance from Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani that they would look into her complaints.

She also said her party would

continue to extend "full support" to the NDA government at the Centre. The BSP would also stick to its commitment of fighting the 2004 Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh with the BJP, Mayawati added.

Mayawati met Vajpayee late on Tuesday night to "clarify" matters. Advani, Finance Minister Jaswant Singh, BJP chief Venkaiah Naidu and HRD Minister M.M. Joshi also attended the two-hour meeting. After the meeting, she reiterated what she had said at the news conference.

The drama began with Mayawati calling Vajpayee on Monday night after she sent her letter demanding Jagmohan's removal. Vajpayee responded by telling her no chief minister could demand a Union minister's resignation.

On Tuesday, BSP legislators raised an uproar in the Lok

Sabha over the Taj issue, forcing two adjournments and a premature end to proceedings.

When the Lok Sabha assembled in the morning, the leader of the BSP in the House, Rashid Alvi, rose to demand Jagmohan's dismissal. Other BSP members rushed to the well of the House.

Later Mayawati called Advani, saying she did not want ties between the two parties to snap.

Mayawati also regretted the disruption of proceedings by her party members in the Lok Sabha.

"What happened in the Lok Sabha was not right. I had told my MPs to raise the issue (of Jagmohan's resignation) in the Lok Sabha. I did not want the House to be adjourned. They misunderstood me," the chief minister said.

Another report on Page 5

Akali foes mend bridges

GAJINDER SINGH

Chandigarh, June 13: Sarb Hind Shiromani Akali Dal leader Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who met Akali chief Parkash Singh Badal for the first time in five years, declared today that they had decided to bury their differences.

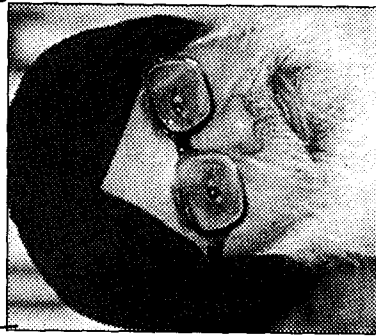
"I have merged the Sarb Hind Shiromani Akali Dal with the Shiromani Akali Dal, keeping in view the sentiments of the rank and file of the party. My party stands dissolved," Tohra said.

Five years ago, Tohra had walked out of the Badal-led Akali Dal, demanding decentralisation of power, and formed the Sarb Hind Shiromani Akali Dal. The divide led to the defeat of Badal's faction in last year's poll and paved the way for the Congress, led by Amarinder Singh, to grab power.

Badal met Tohra — who recently suffered a heart attack — at his brother-in-law Harmel Singh's residence in Patiala. The two were closeted for over 90 minutes before making the an-



Tohra (left) and Badal



Changes will be made at all levels in the party to select able candidates for the gram panchayat poll," Badal said.

With the gram panchayat election due on June 29, the Akalis, who have been alleging police harassment against party supporters, have also decided to take on the administration if faced with police excesses.

"There is talk of Badal's arrest on cooked-up graft charges. His nephew Narottam has already been arrested and more relatives might be arrested as the gram panchayat poll nears," an Akali leader said.

Tohra and Badal admitted that unity between the two factions had been forged following "serious challenges to the Panth and people" of Punjab posed by the Amarinder government. Tohra threatened to launch an agitation in the state if Badal or his family members were arrested by the government.

They have asked Badal to mediate but the government does not want the problem solved," the leader said.

Tohra said the united Shiromani Akali Dal would continue its alliance with the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. The united Dal would be reconstituted, Tohra and Badal said.

nouncement.

A senior party leader said unity efforts were on for the last few weeks, and the caste riots in Talhan forced Badal and Tohra to take a quick decision.

"We are taking the riots very seriously. The Congress is meddling in the religious affairs of the Sikhs by appointing a receiver at the gurdwara there. Dalit anger against the Jats has to be solved amicably, not by force as Amarinder is trying to. It will spell doom for Punjab and Pun-

of P. Singh (1-2)

PM joins celebrations on 'white night'

Press Trust of India

ST PETERSBURG, May 30. — On a "white" night washed by unseasonal rains, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee tonight joined other world's powerful leaders on the deck of a ship in celebrating the tercentenary of this former Russian imperial city, seizing the opportunity to discuss global issues in the aftermath of Iraq crisis.

The showers, however, did not dampen the festivities as over 43 leaders, including US President Mr George W Bush, French President Mr Jacques Chirac, German Chancellor Mr Gerhard Schroeder, Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Mr Junichiro Koizumi met in an informal ambience on the fourth deck of the ship on the banks of the River Neva.

St Petersburg is the world's only metropolis where the phenomenon of "white night" takes place in summer when bright sunshine floods the city even at midnight, drawing thousands of people to the downtown part of it. The ten-decked ship also provided the venue for Mr Vajpayee's meeting with Mr Putin and Mr Chirac. The dinner was followed by a high tea on the fifth deck of the ship that was commissioned two years ago.

Shortly after his arrival, Mr Vajpayee visited the Monument of Peter I, the Czar who founded the city in 1703, where there was a "handshake" with President Putin who gave a formal welcome to him.

Tomorrow, in the midst of a hectic schedule of bilateral meetings with leaders including Chinese President Hu Jintao, the Prime Minister will participate in the inaugural ceremony of the festivities amid tight security.

RLD MLAs WITHDRAW SUPPORT UP Opp. moves, CM unmoved

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Though observers feel the ruling coalition has come under pressure, Miss Mayawati ruled out any threat to her government. "In a statement issued from abroad, the chief minister said her government enjoyed "absolute and clear majority". She said the Samajwadi Party and others had constantly made "efforts to stabilise her government".

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3 1 MAY 2009

THE STATESMAN

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Amar Singh alleges death plot

OUR SPECIAL REPORTER
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 14: Samajwadi Party general secretary Amar Singh today alleged a political conspiracy between the NDA government at the Centre and Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati to "finish off his party".

Singh said the Samajwadi will intensify its agitation against the state government and expose the "Centre-state connivance". Singh said Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani were behind the "conspiracy".

"This is happening at the instance of the Prime Minister and the deputy Prime Minister and Mayawati is being used as a *mohra* (pawn)," the Samajwadi leader alleged. "The conspiracy has been hatched during the recent meetings Mayawati has had with Vajpayee and Advani here," he alleged.

(Going hammer and tongs at

Mayavati. Singh said the Bahujan Samaj Party's *parade* rally in Lucknow today did not expose anything. Singh said neither he nor Samajwadi leader Mulayam Singh Yadav was scared of Mayavati's threats and they would face her politically, adding that he was waiting for the "Ghaziabad police to knock at his doors and read any time".

The Samajwadi leader alleged that Mayavati has asked some criminals released from an Aligarh jail to kill him. Mulayam Singh Yadav's son Akhilesh Singh and Shivpal Singh, the party's Uttar Pradesh general secretary, "I have given the list of those criminals to the government. I have written to deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani," he said.

Singh said the party will



Amar Singh

launch a cycle rally on April 19 at the block and district levels in the state to politically counter her. "The cycle yatra will conclude with a huge rally at Lucknow on May 12," he said.

The Samajwadi general secretary regretted the Congress' refusal to co-operate in dislodging the BSP-BJP government, but said he would again talk to it to broaden the agitation against the Mayavati government.

Singh also came down on the BJP top brass and the Centre for propping up the Mayavati government. He alleged that she was acting at the behest of Vajpayee and Advani. "Without the Centre's blessings it (filing cases against Samajwadi leaders) is not possible," he said.

Singh lambasted the BSP chief for "unleashing a reign of ter-

ror" on Samajwadi members and thanked her for the publicity she gave the party. "The entire rally was devoted to abusing me and Mulayam Singh Yadav. She has become our propaganda secretary. I am grateful to her."

The Samajwadi leader challenged her to disprove the veracity of the videotapes, in which she allegedly told party legislators to contribute a portion of their constituency development fund to the party. He said he would quit politics if it was proved that the tape was "doctored", as alleged by the BSP leader. "Let her show evidence that I doctored the tapes," he said and sought a CBI probe into the matter.

Singh said Tarun Tejpal's Teelka exposed former BJP president Bangaru Laxman and defence scams, following which Laxman was forced to quit the post and George Fernandes also had to quit as defence minister. "What is good for Peter (Bangaru and Fernandes) is good for Paul (Mayavati)," he said.

Mayawati hits back at Mulayam

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

Lucknow: A new chapter was added to the political rivalry between Mayawati and Mulayam Singh Yadav on Monday when the Uttar Pradesh CM directed the administration in 40 districts to lodge first information reports against the Samajwadi Party president and other functionaries in 136 cases for 'embezzling' crores of rupees from the state's discretionary fund.

At a huge 'pardaphaas' (exposure) rally here, Mayawati warned that Mr Yadav could face up to three years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine for the offence, and may even invite a life-term if he was also found guilty in other cases that were being investigated.

Mr Yadav struck a defiant note, daring the state administration to arrest him and dismissing as baseless the allegation that he had misused government funds when he was chief minister.

"It is political vendetta. The cases registered against me are baseless. The comptroller and auditor general, the high court and the state assembly have already given a clean chit to my decisions," he told re-

g. p. p. - 13 & p. (11-1)
"When the assembly cleared me of the allegations of misuse of discretionary funds, Mayawati was also present in the house," he said, and added, "By registering cases against me, Mayawati is taking revenge for the SP releasing videotapes showing her asking her party MPs and MLAs to donate a part of their local area

Political vendetta

Case hysteria

UP CM orders FIRs in 136 cases to be filed against SP chief Mulayam Yadav, party workers. Mr Yadav says charges are baseless

Shots at Congress

Probe ordered into Motilal Vora's largesse during President's rule

development funds to the Bahujan Samaj Party coffers."

While Mr Yadav had to bear the brunt of Mayawati's ire, she fired warning shots at the Congress as well. "A probe is also under way into the Rs 18 crore distributed by then governor Motilal Vora during the eight months of President's rule," she said. This money was also with-

Although the Congress is bound to defend him, her statement is likely to add to Mr Vora's troubles since he stands accused of ruining the party in UP in collusion with its legislative party leader, Pramod Tiwari.

Before telling the gathering about how Mr Yadav had dipped into the state till to help his relatives, Mayawati made it clear that her relatives and family members were not the beneficiaries of any government largesse. "Whatever I have belongs to the BSP," she said. She also said that she would publicly disown her relatives if she ever found them misusing her official position.

Her aggressive posture shows that Mayawati is out to make a Laloo Prasad Yadav of Mulayam. Will she be willing to see him incarcerated for 'all wrongs'? It is not difficult to answer that question as the country's largest state is witness to a new round in the politics of vindictiveness. After all, nobody had expected Raghuraj Pratap Singh and his father to have been put behind bars and their property seized—until he decided to cross swords with Mayawati.

● Mayawati threatens mass dalit conversions to Buddhism **Byna S**

N. Korea shifts stand to resolve nuclear stand-off

Seoul: North Korea shifted significantly toward US calls for multilateral talks on its suspected nuclear arms plans and Washington voiced interest, saying it would follow up through diplomatic channels.

The North Korean comments on Saturday could mark a breakthrough in the nuclear standoff just days after US-led forces removed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from power in a war the South Korean president said had "petrified" the North.

"If the US is ready to make a bold switchover in its Korea policy for a settlement of the nuclear issue, the DPRK will not stick to any particular dialogue format," the North's KCNA news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying.

Until now, North Korea has insisted on bilateral talks.

Washington, which lumps communist North Korea in an "axis of evil" with Iraq and Iran for seeking weapons of mass destruction, wants talks that also include regional play-

- We note N. Korea's statement with interest, reacts US
- Iraq war 'petrified' North, says South Korea
- S. Korea hopeful of resolving crisis in a peaceful manner

ers South Korea, Japan, Russia and China.

"We noted the statement with interest," US state department spokesman Philip Reeker said on Saturday, adding: "We expect to follow up through appropriate diplomatic channels."

The United States and North Korea do not have formal diplomatic relations, but exchange messages through diplomatic channels in New York. The United States can also work through intermediaries such as Russia and China.

The North's spokesman did not specify what would constitute a "bold switchover" but the impoverished, energy-starved North has demanded security guarantees and aid in

the past.

South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun reiterated on Sunday that he would make every effort to solve North Korea's nuclear crisis in a peaceful manner.

"I am confident we can resolve the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue and diplomatic channels," he told an anniversary ceremony for establishing Korea's interim government in China during Japanese colonial rule in the early 1900s.

Kim Jung Roh, deputy spokesman at the South Korean unification ministry, said by telephone that Seoul had expected North Korea to shift its position gradually. "Also, as the Iraq war is coming to an end faster than expected, North Korea has less options to take," he said.

Mr Roh told 'The Washington Post' in an interview published on Friday the US-led Iraq war had had a profound impact on North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and other North Korean officials. Reuters

14 APR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

North Korea tells South to stay off nuke dispute

SEOUL, April 28. — North Korea told South Korea today that it should not meddle in a stand-off over the Communist North's suspected nuclear weapons, calling it a dispute between Pyongyang and Washington.

In a second day of Cabinet-level talks in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, South Korean delegates led by unification minister Mr Jeong Se-hyun

again demanded that the North abandon any nuclear weapons development, citing a 1992 inter-Korean agreement to keep the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free.

North negotiators headed by the North's unification minister, Mr Kim Ryong-sung, stonewalled the nuclear discussion. "The Northern side reiterated that the nuclear issue is a matter between the North and the USA," a statement from the South Korean government said. "But they said they wanted to resolve the matter peacefully."

The talks, which began yesterday, are scheduled to end tomorrow.

Seoul officials said North Korean delegates have not confirmed a US claim that during talks in Beijing last week they told an American envoy that they may test, sell or use atomic weapons, depending on Washington's actions.

Instead, they reiterated that the North made a "new, bold" proposal to the USA during the Beijing talks, but did not elaborate, South Korean spokesman Mr Shin Eun-sang said.

US officials did not reveal the North's proposal, but South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper, quoting unidentified sources, reported today that North Korea proposed to give up its nuclear programmes in return for a non-aggression treaty and normalisation of "political and economic relations" with the USA.

The US Administration has ruled out such a treaty, but US officials have said some form of written security guarantee could be possible. North Korea says it fears being invaded by the USA following

ing the Iraq War.

South Korean President Mr Roh Moo-hyun said today that when he meets Mr Bush in Washington on 15 May, they will discuss cooperating "to find a complete and peaceful solution to the nuclear issue."

During yesterday's talks, North Korea called for "united efforts of all the Koreans" to "reject the unilateral strong-arm action of foreign forces ... and prevent the danger of war," said the North's official news agency, KCNA.

THE STATESMAN

N. Korean confusion jangles Asian nerves

Seoul, April 1 (Reuters): Conflicting reports about a North Korean short-range missile test today jangled north Asian nerves already on edge over suspicions Pyongyang might seek to grab attention now the US-led war in Iraq is under way.

Initially, Japanese and US officials said North Korea had fired a surface-to-ship missile without warning into the Yellow Sea between the Korean peninsula and China. A South Korean intelligence source also confirmed the test.

But officials in Seoul then contradicted the reports about South Korea's Communist neighbour, which says it believes it will be the next target after the US war in Iraq is over.

"Following our initial investigation, we could not find evidence that North Korea fired a missile," a South Korean defence ministry official said.

The director-general of Japan's defence agency, Shoei Yamanaka, later retracted an earlier Japanese announcement, saying Tokyo was still trying to confirm the information.

No one was letting on why the story changed. But a military source in Japan said in February after one of two confirmed launches there had been 10 unannounced tests since September. It was not clear why the US, South Korean or Japanese authorities would want to avoid announcing such tests.

Today's initial reports moved the financial markets in Japan and South Korea slightly. Traders are sensitive to North



A US soldier during a military exercise near the demilitarised zone in Paju, 50 km north of Seoul. (Reuters)

Korea, given its standoff with the US over its suspected nuclear weapons ambitions and its rich rhetoric against Japan, the US and the South Korean military.

Yamanaka did not deny or confirm the North fired the missile today — less than a week after Japan sent two spy satellites into orbit to give Tokyo its first independent opportunity to scrutinise North Korea from space.

Pyongyang denounced that launch as a "hostile act" that could set off a regional arms race. It kept up its outspoken rhetoric against Japan today, saying Tokyo would pay dearly if it kept helping the US with spy flights near North Korea.

North Korea accused the US military today of flying more than 220 spy flights over the peninsula last month and of conducting military exercises to prepare for an attack.

"The aerial espionage and war exercises go to clearly prove that the US is going to invade the DPRK at the end of the Iraqi war," the North's KCNA news agency said. DPRK is the acronym for the state's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Washington says it seeks a diplomatic solution to the nuclear crisis but has not ruled out a military option. There have been media reports North Korea might be preparing for a ballistic missile test that would break deals it reached with Washington and Tokyo. Ballistic missiles could reach Japan.

The US military, which has 37,000 troops in South Korea, said it would keep some F-117 "Stealth" fighters in South Korea for more training and to enhance deterrence.

The radar-eluding aircraft were deployed on the peninsula this year for annual military exercises for the first time in a decade, prompting Pyongyang to say it was all part of a prelude to a pre-emptive strike on its Yongbyon nuclear complex.

The north recently announced reactivation of the plant, saying this was to produce electricity for its stricken economy. Washington says the plant is too small for that and is more likely to be used to produce material for atomic weapons.

THE TELEGRAM

2 APR 2004

Travel trade down with flu

Nina Mehta,
New Delhi, April 1

IT'S DOUBLE trouble for the travel industry. First it was the war; now there's also the pneumonia scare. Indians, reputedly the most uncomplaining of travellers, are cancelling their trips, forcing a sharp downturn in outbound traffic.

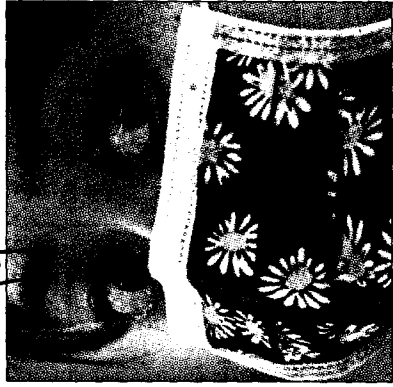
One distinct fallout of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) has been a fall in the aircraft load factors between India and East Asia. Air-India has already cut down its flight frequency to Hong Kong (from five per week to four on the Mumbai-Delhi-Hong Kong sector and from four to three on the Mumbai-Delhi-Bangkok-Tokyo sector).

Cathay Pacific and Singapore Airlines have denied plans to cut down their flights to India, but industry sources say they are thinking about it.

dropped by 15 to 20 per cent since the SARS outbreak, is expected to decline further — by 40 per cent over April-May unless a cure is found fast enough.

"There already was a drop in bookings after the World Cup. The double impact of war and pneumonia has hit the trade just when things were expected to look up. People were not travelling west, now they have stopped going to the east as well," Arjun Sharma, CEO Select Holidays, said.

Even inbound flight bookings are drying up. "It's a lean season for the leisure segment. But even business travel to India has fallen by seven to eight per cent as India was usually part of a larger itinerary for executives visiting Singapore," Ankur Bhatia, CEO, Amadeus India, said. This could work out to a 50 per cent decline in traffic, if the disease spreads further, a tour operator said.



A girl takes protection in Hong Kong.

Business travel, too, has been hit. Indian companies that had begun looking east to make up for the war-induced loss of business in Europe and the US have put off travel plans. Overall outbound travel, which

Singapore breathes a little easy

Agence France Presse

SINGAPORE, April 14. — More than 200,000 secondary school students in Singapore returned to their classes today after an 18-day shutdown to contain the spread of the SARS virus, but only after facing stringent screening measures.

Some schools had teachers stationed outside the premises to spot students with a fever — an initial symptom of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) — to be sent home immediately. Others set up temperature monitoring stations, manned by teachers wearing surgical masks and gloves.

Pei Cai Secondary School was just one ex-

ample, with teachers garbed in medical masks, gloves and gowns scrutinising returning students, a spokesman said.

“It was very smooth today. We had teachers stationed outside taking temperatures of students coming to school. All the teachers were involved, and they were equipped with the masks, gloves and the gowns,” he said. “We can’t really tell how many students were sent back, but it wasn’t that many,” he said.

13 more dead in China

Six more people succumbed to the deadly pneumonia today in China, which accepted that the situation was “grave” as the virus killed seven more patients in Hong Kong where deaths of “younger and fitter” persons sparked concerns that the virus had mutated.

Holiday toll!

BANGKOK, April 14. — While all of South East Asia is gripped by the panic over SARS, the death toll from the Songkran holiday in Thailand over the weekend rose to 359 yesterday while more than 23,000 people have been reportedly hurt in road accidents during the festivities, the Thai ministry of health said. The Narethorn emergency centre said since Friday 359 people were killed and 23,327 injured in road accidents throughout the country. On Sunday alone, the death toll was 160 and 10,648 people were hurt. — The Nation/ANN

Pyongyang ready for talks: Seoul

Agence France Presse

SEOUL, April 14. — South Korea today said North Korea had signalled it was ready for multilateral talks to resolve the six-month-old nuclear crisis.

Seoul's statement follows Pyongyang's declaration on Saturday that it was ready for talks with the USA under any format. South Korean President Mr Roh Moo-Hyun's office said the move proved North Korea was complying with efforts to resolve the crisis and was ready to accept dialogue.

"The government considers this as an indication that Pyongyang will accept multilateral talks on resolving its nuclear issue," the statement read.

It said: "North Korea appears to be creating a favourable atmosphere for dialogue while complying with efforts by our government and the international community to solve the nuclear issue through dialogue."

Russia sceptical

Russia is sceptical about the usefulness of holding multilateral talks to resolve North Korea's nuclear stand-off with the USA and may not participate, a foreign ministry official said today. In Moscow's first public response to Pyongyang's announcement on Saturday that it would accept any form of dialogue with Washington, Russian deputy foreign minister Mr Alexander Losyukov accused the USA of fanning the crisis by refusing to enter into direct talks with North Korea, adds AFP from Moscow.

"The USA will prefer to stay on the sidelines while a group of countries conduct the talks with their (US) participation. Such an approach has no prospects and we will not take part in this," he said. "If we see that there is a real willingness on the part of the USA to reach an agreement then there would be a role for our diplomats."

Mulayam primes for tape thrust

YOGESH VALPEYI

Lucknow, April 5: Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party is ready to come out with part two of the Mayavati tapes next week, just before the Uttar Pradesh chief minister holds her "parade/fast" rally on April 14 to "expose" him.

The videotapes allegedly show Mayavati berating Hindu deities, including Ram, while exhorting BSP activists to mobilise more funds for the party. The Samajwadi Party has made several copies of the videotape of Mayavati's address to party workers of eastern Uttar Pradesh in February 2001 for mass circulation.

"The first part of the tapes, released earlier, showed Mayavati exhorting MPs and MLAs to divert funds from their constituency development funds. The second part will expose how she treats Ram and other Hindu

deities worshipped by followers of her ally, (the) BJP," a Samajwadi Party leader said.

Preview comments made available to some journalists show Mayavati asking BSP supporters to shun Hindu religious practices and donate to the party instead of "squandering money" on rituals and worship of Hindu deities.

The first part of the Mayavati tapes released last month had triggered a furor in Parliament and the Assembly. The target audience of the second part is the BJP's Hindu vote bank.

In the second CD — a copy of which was made available to **The Telegraph** — Mayavati emphasises the importance of



Mayavati: Trouble ahead

money in running the party and the movement and reminds supporters of B.R. Ambedkar's dictum — "Political power is the only key which can open doors for the progress of Dalits".

"Party ko har saal 3.5 crore rupaye ki zaroorat hai movement chalne ke liye. Yeh paisa apko ikattha karra hai (The party needs Rs 3.5 crore every year to run the movement. You have to raise this money)," the tapes show her saying.

What could embarrass the BJP is Mayavati's formula for collecting funds by BSP functionaries not holding an elected office — abjure Ram and other Hindu deities. "Panthar ki devi ko charrauaa data hain jise bada

me kutta kha jata hain. Jo devta kute se apni raksha nahin kar sakti, woh tumhara bhagya kya badlega (Stray dogs lap up the offerings made by the devout to stone idols. How can the deity that is so defenceless against even stray dogs change your fortune?) she asks.

Ram, the BJP's icon, also comes in for a bit of tongue-lashing. If the CDs are to be believed. "Ek nishad ne Ram ki nau par lageyi thi. Par kya Ram ne kisi nishad ki nalya par lagayi (A nishad (fisherman) had ferried Ram across the river. But has Ram every ever helped a fisherman cross the river of life?) she is heard taunting.

Asking the Dalits to stop worshipping Hindu deities and observing Hindu rituals, Mayavati tells the party workers that even the poorest Dalit squanders Rs 1,000 every year on such useless rituals. "If you can convince them to donate this money to the party and the movement, we can take on all the manuwadi parties," she says.

While accusing earlier Ambedkarite outfits, like the Republican Party of India, for "jacking the boots of the Congress and other manuwadi parties," the BSP leader had not spared the BJP's Dalit leaders either.

"There was one Buddha Priya Mautya and one Sangh Priya Gautam. I am talking of UP. They were in the Congress and are now in the BJP. They used to give lengthy speeches against manuwadi forces to the delight of Dalits, but are now licking the feet of manuwadi parties," she reminds.

While the BJP leaders refused to comment on the alleged tapes, the BSP's reaction was expectedly derisive. "Since it is from the same concocted videotape from which the first part had come, who is going to believe it?" said a BSP leader.

Uproar in House over Maya tapes

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 4

PANDEMONIUM PREVAILED in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday as irate Samajwadi Party (SP) members sought suspension of Question Hour to discuss the alleged corruption charges against Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati.

The SP and some other members made a similar demand in the Rajya Sabha. Backed by the RJD and the Lok Jan Shakti Party, the SP MPs trooped into the well of the Lok Sabha, waving newspapers. They demanded an immediate discussion on the issue on the plea that Mayawati had lowered the dignity of the House.

SP's Akhilesh Singh said Mayawati had levelled allegations of corruption against the MPs. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh (RJD), Praveen Rashtrapal (Congress) and some others suggested the MPLAD Scheme should be done away with as Mayawati alleged the MPs were usurping funds meant for developmental works, while demanding a cut from the BSP MPs and MLAs for party funds. The House was pushed to turmoil as soon as it assembled for the day.

Congress chief whip P.R. Das Munshi supported the SP. "It is not an issue of any

Swift retaliation

AN ANGRY Mayawati struck back at the SP on Tuesday, ordering Chief Secretary D.S. Bagga to conduct an inquiry into the misuse of discretionary funds in Mulayam Yadav's regime. She also ordered FIRs against those guilty of fraudulently receiving money or misusing it.

She alleged the video-cassette and CD of a February 2001 meeting given to the Governor was tampered with and her statement mischievously edited. The BSP workers had said SP



leaders were giving hefty sums from their respective funds to various institutions and colleges managed by the kin of Mulayam Singh Yadav.

HTC, New Delhi

party. It is an attempt to tarnish the image of Parliament, including the Speaker," he said. Order was restored for some time during Zero Hour after Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said Deputy PM L.K. Advani will make a statement on Wednesday after gathering facts about the issue raised by the members.

The SP had on Monday "exposed" Mayawati by submitting a video recording of a BSP meeting to Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri. On the tape, Mayawati is seen directing party legislators to give 50

per cent of their 'cut' from the MLAs fund to the party. However, the meeting recorded on the videotape was held on February 11, 2001.

Speaker Manohar Joshi described the issue as serious. "I am going to take up the matter personally," he said, trying to pacify the agitated members.

The order was short-lived as the Congress benches raised the issue of increase in urea and diesel prices. The slogan-shouting Opposition, led by the Congress, stormed into the well and demanded immediate rollback of the hike.

5 MAR 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Mayawati rewards 4 from split Cong

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 FEBRUARY

MAYAWATI on Tuesday flashed her readiness to deal with a possible toppling bid by rewarding four members of the breakaway Congress faction with ministerial berths and by dangling more ministerial carrots for other potential defectors by getting more slots vacated. The entry of four from the Congress splinter group — Kazim Ali Khan, Shyam Narain Tiwari, Kamleshwar Upadhyaya and Virendra Singh Bundela — came at the expense of loyalists drawn from BSP's own stable, who were occupying



MAYAWATI: DANGLING BAIT

ministerial perches. The caste make-up of the "rewardees" —

two Brahmans, one Thakur and one Muslim — as well as the social break-up of those who were asked to vacate their positions, pointed to the shuffle space Ms Mayawati has as she braces up for a new round of poaching game.

By drawing loyalists from among fellow dalits, MBCs and Muslims dependent on BSP's core constituents for their electoral survival, the chief minister has sent out the signal about both her readiness and capacity to oblige others who may like to switch to the ruling combination.

Her remarks after the swearing-in ceremony at Lucknow Raj Bhavan also showed a new confidence about her numbers —

something that seemed to be in scarce supply before she found the defensive reinforcements in the form of the support of eight MLAs from the Congress. The chief minister was quoted by a news agency as declaring her readiness to face the budget session of the Assembly.

Not long ago, she steered clear of taking issue with the Opposition when it accused it of running scared of facing the assembly because of a serious numerical deficiency.

The "reward" for the rebels come when Congress and SP appear to be making an attempt of sorts to join hands at least for floor coordination.