

Chaos in LS over George boycott issue

New Delhi
17 DECEMBER

AN attempt by a Samata Party member to rake up the issue of the Opposition boycott of defence minister George Fernandes in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday led to uproarious scenes resulting in adjournment of the House for over an hour before lunch.

As Samata member Prabhunath Singh sought to attack leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi and other leaders on the issue, on which he had given a breach of privilege notice, agitated Congress and RJD members trooped into the well.

He had also named CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee and RJD leader Raghuvansh Prasad in the notice. Speaker Manohar Joshi had a tough time controlling the proceedings in Zero Hour as Opposition members declined to leave the well of the House, protesting against Mr Singh's move. Mr Joshi's assurances failed to pacify the Opposition members. —PTI

The Economic Times

18 DEC 2003

Lok Sabha okays Bill on banning all defections

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 16 DECEMBER

THE Lok Sabha on Tuesday unanimously cleared a legislation seeking to impose a blanket ban on defection paving the way for a foolproof anti-defection law which will ensure continued majority support for single-party governments and consolidate the hold of party leadership over the legislators. In the current context, the enactment of the legislation after it gets the approval of the Rajya Sabha — a certainty in view of the across-the-board support — will throw a lifeline to the beleaguered Congress governments in Kerala and Punjab by leaving the dissidents there just 48 hours to make good their threat to walk out if their demand for leadership is not accepted.

Congress was lucky in Meghalaya where it managed to wean away six MLAs belonging to NCP only yesterday. The bill seeks to discourage defection by banning even bulk defections or those involving at least one-third or more of a legislature group, and by making ministerial offices out of

bounds for the legislator who switch their political allegiance mid-stream.

Taken together with the legislation which proposes to cap the size of a ministry to 15% of the strength of the legislature to which it is accountable, the legislation is seen as a major blow against the "aya rams and gaya rams". Three parties, all Janata offshoots, Samata, JD-U and Lok Janshakti, which expressed misgivings about the criminalizing of all defections did not follow through their protests by voting against the bill.

The unanimous backing for the Bill is explained by both the democratisation of power where every major player is confident of moving into the government as well as that virtually all of them have paid for the inadequacies of existing law. The existing Anti-Defection Act allowed for the one-third exception on the ground that a wholesale ban could lead to the tyranny of the whip, and muzzling of the dissent. The Patil model was soon adopted by Speakers of Assemblies to allow for across-the-aisle movements.

BY CHAIRPERSON SNUBS KAPIL SIBAL

Najma walks out amidst row over Sonia

SNS and Agencies

NEW DELHI, Dec. 12. — The Rajya Sabha witnessed noisy scenes today over I&B minister Mr Ravi Shankar Prasad's reference to Mrs Sonia Gandhi during the debate yesterday on the Ajit Jogi issue. The dispute ended with the House deputy chairperson Ms Najma Heptulla leaving the chamber, having taken exception to certain remarks by Mr Kapil Sibal (Congress).

The Upper House was adjourned for the day after that. There was some confusion because Ms Heptulla did not inform the members about the duration of the adjournment when she left.

BJP sources said the party, after having initially "not fully supported" Mr Prasad's reference to Mrs. Gandhi — "he

should have been more careful as a minister", is how a leader put it — is now "fully behind him" and intends to make the Congress's "over sensitivity" towards "naming Sonia Gandhi" an issue. A BJP leader said the Congress "often mentions the Prime Minister and his deputy in critical contexts, why can't we return the compliment?"

Congress MPs, however, are arguing that Mr Prasad must withdraw his remark and apologise. The minister had said that Mr Jogi was sacked because he (Mr Jogi) had mentioned Mrs Gandhi's

name.

"What the minister said yesterday is a matter of dispute", Ms Heptulla said. The minister and the Opposition, she said, had different opinions. "Let the government say what's to be done."

Minister of state for parliamentary affairs Mr O Rajagopal said: "We did not make any allegations, it is not correct." Mr Suresh Pachauri of the Congress, however, said the House had several precedents of ministers tendering apology. He cited the example of the late Ram Manohar Lohia. Mr Pachauri said the particular words about Mrs Sonia Gandhi must be expunged and the minister must apologise.

Dr Heptulla lost her temper when Mr Sibal said the Chair was not giving a chance to the Opposition and that he

should also be allowed to speak. It happened after the deputy chairperson called Dr LM Singhvi to speak.

To Mr Sibal's remark, Dr Heptulla said the Dr Singhvi's slip had come to her earlier. "Your comment was a clear insinuation. I take strong objection to it," she said. "Mr Sibal, you argue in the court, not here with me," was the deputy chairperson's her stern reply to the Congress member. "I am going to adjourn the House. I will not sit here," Dr Heptulla said before leaving the House around 3.35 p.m.



Ms Najma Heptulla

Opp for JPC probe on Judeo

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 10

THE OPPOSITION in the Lok Sabha on Monday demanded a JPC probe into the Judeo case even while Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee allayed their fears on the ongoing CBI investigation into the case.

"There should be no fear or misgiving on the independence of the investigation into the case," he said in his statement ahead of a discussion on the case. "Truth will soon be out and the law will take its own course," he added.

In the Rajya Sabha, members did not seek clarifications on being informed that a debate would follow in the Lok Sabha after Vajpayee's statement. The Upper House will debate the issue on Thursday.

During the debate in the Lok Sabha, the Opposition sought a JPC probe as they expressed serious doubts about the impartiality of the CBI. The Prime Minister is slated to reply to the



Judeo after the BJP's poll victory in Chhattisgarh.

debate on Thursday.

Briefly presenting the facts of the case, the PM said that the CBI had sent notices to then Union minister of state for environment and forests Dilip Singh Judeo and his former assistant private secretary Natwar Rateria, requiring them to appear before the agency. "It has been the policy of my government that all allegations

pertaining to corruption should be thoroughly inquired into. Accordingly, the CBI is inquiring into this whole matter and it would be premature to state anything till the inquiry is complete," Vajpayee said.

"The CBI has full functional autonomy and, under the recently enacted Central Vigilance Commission Act, the superintendence of the CBI in relation to offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act has been vested by the government in the CVC," he said.

Initiating the debate, Ramji Lal Suman (SP) charged the government with "eroding" the CBI's credibility. Describing the PM's statement as "without substance", he said "nothing was said on why Judeo resigned and on what grounds his resignation was accepted".

BJP MP Anadi Sahu raised the case involving Jogi, whom he described as a "megalomaniac". He alleged that Jogi had had "underhand dealings" when Balco was taken over by Sterlite.

H10
9/12

Jogi tape issue rocks Parliament

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 8. The Ajit Jogi audiotape controversy forced the adjournment of both Houses of Parliament this morning but normal functioning was restored in the afternoon. The pattern of the verbal duels in both the Houses was the same and the exchanges began soon after the end of Question Hour with Bharatiya Janata Party members raking up the Jogi issue. Congress members soon joined issue and referred to two sting operations that showed the ruling party leaders in a poor light. The presiding officers adjourned the Houses after the decibel levels remained high and members from both sides remained unyielding.

The Lok Sabha functioned for a slightly longer period. But the focus of attention was the Rajya Sabha where two former Ministers of the Narasimha Rao Government, now on opposite sides of the political fence, almost came to blows. After a wordy altercation from their respective benches, S.S. Ahluwalia (BJP) and H.R. Bhardwaj (Congress) traded charges after the House had been adjourned. The two had to be restrained by other members before things could get out of hand. The Congress chief whip, Pranab Mukherjee,

apologised for Mr. Bhardwaj's behaviour after the House reassembled and Mr. Ahluwalia, in turn, acknowledged Mr. Mukherjee's "magnanimity" and hoped that this gesture would "create a new atmosphere."

In the Lok Sabha, BJP MPs appeared to have come prepared to corner the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, and were on their feet as soon as zero hour began. Madan Lal Khurana, Vijay Kumar Malhotra and Kirit Sommaiya led the chorus and were supported by several backbenchers. Mr. Khurana pointed out that Mr. Jogi had tried to bribe his party MLAs and he even showed a copy of the letter allegedly written by Ajit Jogi to the Governor pledging his support to a rebel group of the BJP.

Mr. Khurana and Mr. Malhotra pointed out that Ms. Gandhi's name had been mentioned by Mr. Jogi himself and therefore she was also party to the "sordid developments" in Chhattisgarh. "Ms. Gandhi is also involved in it, no Congress leader can pledge this kind of support without the permission of its leadership," they said and demanded that she be asked to explain her "role".

Jaipal Reddy (Congress) defended his leader and said that whatever Mr. Jogi did was without the leader's knowledge.

Walkout in Lok Sabha over Babri Masjid issue

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 5. The Opposition parties staged a walkout in the Lok Sabha today, a day ahead of the 11th anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

The walkout came after the Speaker, Manohar Joshi, disallowed a spate of adjournment motions moved by the Opposition MPs.

Mr. Joshi allowed the Opposition leaders to present arguments on why the House should take up the matter immediately and then ruled that he was disallowing the motions since the matter was not of recent occurrence.

In his argument, the CPI (M)'s Somnath Chatterjee said the Opposition would be failing

in its duty if did not raise an issue that concerned the entire country. Describing December 6, 1992, as a day of "national shame", he said the demolition was an act of sacrilege and should not be allowed to go unpunished. "We will continue to raise the issue so long as those responsible for the crime are not suitably punished."

Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi of the Congress said the matter was of "recent occurrence and public importance" especially in view of the Central Bureau of Investigation's role. "The conspiracy charge has been dropped under pressure," he said.

The Samajwadi Party's Ramji Lal Suman said the demolition was an attempt to divide the nation while G.M. Banatwala (IUML) said that attempts were

being made to bypass the Supreme Court by getting the House to pass legislation authorising the construction of a temple at the site of the demolished structure. He wanted an assurance from the Government that it would wait for the Court's verdict and not attempt to change the *status quo*.

Earlier, the Speaker disallowed the Opposition adjournment notice on the alleged interference in the functioning of some public sector undertakings (PSUs) by some Central Ministers.

He told the House that he had received a factual note from the department concerned, which made it clear that at no point did the Chief Vigilance Commissioner mention the name of any Minister.

THE HINDU

6 DEC 2003

Judeo debate cloud on House

To 6
3/12
9. Parliament

**OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT**

New Delhi, Dec. 2: The Opposition is likely to train its guns on the Centre tomorrow and press for a debate on the cash-on-camera scandal and alleged ministerial interference in the functioning of public sector units.

In a meeting convened by CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee this morning, Opposition leaders decided to press for an adjournment motion on corruption, with special focus on the bribe allegedly taken by former minister Dilip Singh Judeo and the vigilance commission report that BJP ministers were using PSUs for personal profit.

The Opposition leaders do not expect the treasury benches to give in to their demand. But they are determined to vociferously press their case even if that means disruption of normal proceedings in the House.

The twin corruption issues are likely to dominate proceedings as there seems to be a consensus among the Opposition. Even the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party leaders, Ramji Lal Suman and Rashid Alvi, attended the meeting.

The proposed plan suits the Uttar Pradesh parties well enough for them to bury differences with the Congress, the Left and smaller Opposition parties. For the Samajwadi, it means the Ayodhya controversy would be pushed to the backburner. For the BSP, it is a great chance to turn the heat on the BJP.

Chatterjee hinted that tomorrow's floor strategy would maximise co-ordination among the Opposition parties. "We are very keen to continue with the co-ordination inside the House. We want to consolidate it further," he said.

But there seemed to be some uncertainty about the strategy after tomorrow. "Our strategy

will depend on the Assembly poll results from Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh," said a senior Opposition leader. Should the BJP do well, it is expected to become very aggressive. The Congress is, however, yet to reveal its cards. It even left Chatterjee to convene the meeting although he had met Sonia Gandhi yesterday.

Congress chief Sonia held a separate meeting of Congress parliamentary party leaders as the Opposition floor leaders were meeting in the CPM parliamentary party office.

Congress chief spokesman Jaipal Reddy did not throw light on what happened at Sonia's meeting. The party will wait until poll results are out on Thursday to finalise its floor strategy.

Reddy, however, spelt out the Congress agenda. Along with the rest of the Opposition, it will go on the offensive on the twin corruption issues. "We have decided to table an adjournment motion on corruption getting more and more rampant and naked in the NDA government," Reddy said. The party will demand an explanation from the Prime Minister.

The Congress also indicated its aggressive intentions on the stamp scam. Reddy said the Centre owed the House an explanation on the lapses at the Nashik government security press. He dismissed suggestions that Sushil Kumar Shinde's government was shying away from a CBI probe. "The matter is before Bombay High Court," he said.

Reddy said Ayodhya remained a priority issue for the Congress. He indicated the party was unhappy with the way the Mulyam Singh Yadav government was speaking in multiple voices on its demand to revive the criminal conspiracy case against deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and other BJP leaders. "We want a discussion on the issue. (But) the method is not clear," he said.

House attack case: HC acquits Gilani, Afsan

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 29. — In what can be described as a major setback for the Delhi Police, Delhi High Court today acquitted two accused in the Parliament attack case — SAR Gilani and Afsan Guru. It, however, confirmed the death sentences on two other accused, Mohammed Afzal and Shaukat Hussain Guru.

A special court here last year had convicted four persons — Mohammed Afzal, Shaukat Hussain Guru, his wife Afsan Guru alias Navjot and SAR Gilani — for conspiring to attack Parliament. It had awarded death sentences to Mohammed, Shaukat and Gilani. Afsan had been sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment.

In a packed court room, the Division Bench (coram Mehra, Nandrajog JJ) said: "We accordingly hold that the prosecution has brought to home its case of conspiracy against Mohammed Afzal and Shaukat but failed to prove the case against accused SAR Gilani and Afsan Guru. We accordingly acquit SAR Gilani and Afsan of all charges."

Upholding the verdict of the Special Court which had convicted Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists Mohammed Afzal and Shaukat Hussain Guru guilty of waging a war against the nation, Delhi High Court allowed the criminal appeals (murder reference) of Gilani and Guru against the Special Court order. The Division Bench, while rejecting the appeals of Mohammed Afzal and Shaukat Hussain, enhanced the punishment of the two

of Parliament
under Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code (waging war against the nation) from life sentence to death sentence.

The High Court observed that "under Pota, a confession of an accused is not admissible in evidence against the co-accused," thus rejecting the prosecution argument that both Mohammed and Shaukat had named Gilani as a co-conspirator. Prosecution had relied heavily on the mobile telephone transcripts to prove that Gilani was part of the conspiracy. "There is, however, no evidence on record to establish that he (Gilani) remained in touch with terrorists over the telephone," said the court. The Special Cell had claimed that when Shaukat's mobile phone was made operational, the first call was made to Gilani.

Shaukat's Hussain's landlord's state-

ment, that he had seen Gilani coming to his (Shaukat's) house, was also not found tenable. "The prosecution witness did not state that he had seen Gilani visiting the house of Shaukat in the company of five terrorists," the court noted.

Afsan Guru, who was charged with "remaining silent and not informing police while terrorists were planning attack on Parliament" was also acquitted on similar grounds. "She provided no logistics, procured no hide-outs, arms and ammunition, and was not even a motivator," said the court.

SAR Geelani was not released from jail till late tonight, adds PTI. While officials at the Tihar Jail said they have not received the court order for Geelani's release, his lawyers alleged "four play".



File photograph of Mohammed Afzal (left), Syed Abdul Rahman Gilani (centre), and Shaukat Hussain Guru (with cap).

THE STATESMAN

30 OCT 2003

Get parliament nod for oil PSUs sale: SC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

New Delhi/Mumbai: The supreme court on Tuesday restrained the Centre from going ahead with the disinvestment process for oil majors Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and asked the government to get approval from parliament before going ahead with the sell-off.

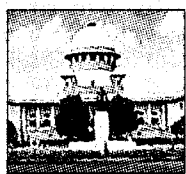
A bench of Justices S. Rajendra Babu and G.P. Mathur said the policy of disinvestment had not been challenged; what was objected to was the manner in which the two companies were sought to be privatised. It said the companies could be privatised only by repealing or amending the act of parliament through which the companies had been nationalised. The government could not order disinvestment through an executive order, it said.

Reacting from Germany, disinvestment minister Arun Shourie said the verdict "will have far-reaching consequences not only for disinvestment in these two PSUs but in other matters also". Petroleum minister Ram Naik, refusing to be drawn into a controversy regarding his disagreement with Mr Shourie over the issue, said it was decision of the cabinet as a whole. "I am a party to the decision. Therefore, my personal views do not matter," he said in Mumbai.

Within minutes of the judgment, the shares of Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum plummeted before starting a modest recovery. At the same time, HPCL's disinvestment advisor HSBC Securities was asked by the government to stop the due diligence process. Similarly, Little & Co of the US was directed to abort work on preparing BPCL's accounts.

The government had taken up the disinvestment process of the two com-

What it means..



• Govt can't go ahead with HPCL, BPCL sell-off without parliament amending the relevant laws

to permit divestment since the character of the oil PSUs as government companies as provided in the statute cannot be changed by an executive decision

• Balco judgment not applicable as that company was not created by an act of parliament

• Divestment in Maruti Udyog, also created by a statute, cannot serve as a precedent as its mode of privatisation was not tested by any court

panies without seeking parliament's prior approval. Two public interest petitions—filed by the Oil Sector Officers Association and the Centre for Public Interest Litigation—had challenged the Centre's decision, saying that the government should have approached parliament for enacting a suitable law for the privatisation of the two companies acquired in 1974 through parliamentary legislations.

Agreeing with the petitioners, the bench said the preamble to the Acquisition Act through which HPCL and BPCL were made government undertakings specifically stated: "In order to ensure that the ownership and control of petroleum products, distributed and marketed in India by the said company are vested in the state and thereby so distributed as best to subserve the common good."

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BJP begins pointing fingers at AG, Shourie

By Smita Gupta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The apex court's ruling that HPCL and BPCL cannot be disinvested until parliament approves it could not have come at a worse time for the BJP. The party's official line echoes disinvestment minister Arun Shourie's reported response from Berlin—that it is a "major setback" for economic reforms—but petroleum minister Ram Naik from Mumbai has described the court verdict as "historic".

With the PM away on a 13-day foreign tour, the blame game has already begun. Party sources said the government would first ask attorney-general Soli Sorabjee, whose advice was sought on the subject, where things went wrong. Mr Sorabjee's reply will determine the government's next step. But party sources say, he will probably say his advice emanated from the government brief he was given. While indications on Tuesday were that the BJP would not mind pinning the blame on Mr Sorabjee or even Mr Shourie, sources say the A-G's brief came from the law ministry. Indeed, this is why the opposition parties are asking for law minister Arun Jaitley's resignation.

But with Mr Jaitley being the flavour of the season after the historic defence he put up for India at Cancun, the BJP would not like to see him touched by any controversy. On Tuesday, party president M. Venkaiah Naidu said, "The BJP records its profound appreciation of the resolute defence of national interests by Mr Jaitley and the Indian delegation...in Cancun. Mr Jaitley's tough and skilful negotiating stance enabled India to emerge as the leader of the developing countries."

All beverages under JPC eye

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, Sept. 16: The joint parliamentary committee probing pesticide contamination in soft drinks has expanded the ambit of its investigations to cover all packed beverages, including iced tea and fruit juices.

Committee chairman Sharad Pawar said the panel will set a safety standard for all beverages that contain water. These include reconstituted milk products and even alcoholic drinks such as whisky and beer which use water as an ingredient.

"The JPC's terms of reference are to suggest criteria for evolving suitable safety standards for soft drinks, juices and other beverages like milk and liquor where water is the main ingredient," the Nationalist Congress Party leader said.

The 15-member panel — set

up to probe the report of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) which alleged high pesticide levels in 12 soft drink brands marketed by Coca-Cola and Pepsi — met for the first time today.

The committee watched presentations from the Central Food Laboratory and the Central Food Technological Research Institute — which had earlier tested the soft drink samples — besides the one from Council for Scientific and Industrial Research chief R.A. Mashelkar on the methodology used for detection of pesticides.

The meeting ended with the decision to ask the Lok Sabha Speaker to enlist the help of three scientists to thrash out technical issues. The panel has asked for G. Thiagrajan, N.P. Agnihotri and S.K. Khanna, experts in the field of pesticide monitoring, agriculture and toxicology.

Some committee members said Mashelkar failed to convince the panel why the CSE report, which claimed that the 12 brands contained pesticides at least 30 times higher than international levels, should not be taken seriously. Others, however, said it was a routine question-answer session and the question of "convincing or not convincing the JPC did not arise".

The committee, in certain respects, felt out of depth as crucial decisions hinge on technical and scientific knowledge. For instance, the method of testing and the quality of laboratories will be key to decisions the committee might take.

"We have, therefore, decided to seek professional help from scientists," sources said. The committee will meet again on October 9 and 10.

The meeting began on a con-

fusing note. To start with, there was confusion on the terms of reference before the committee and its scope — whether they included alcoholic beverages or not.

There was also confusion on whether the committee should probe the issue of contaminated groundwater, an issue the CSE has repeatedly raised. Some members insisted on including groundwater, which is the source of all contamination under probe. Others said it was too early to widen the scope of the investigation to such an extent.

Those in favour of including groundwater in the probe said the committee should ask state groundwater boards to give the current status report on the quality of water. Sources said Mashelkar was against bringing groundwater under the purview of the committee.

Debate brings out skeletons of dead promises

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, AUG. 19. The two-day debate on the no-confidence motion moved by the Opposition against the Vajpayee Government may have ended with a whimper, as expected, but the arguments on the two sides did help to bring to full view the skeletons of dead promises and the sins of omission and commission, past and present.

The Opposition tried to hoist the Government with its own petard, quoting extensively from the "promises" made to the people in the National Democratic Alliance manifesto of 1999. Four years later those promises remained on paper.

As for the treasury benches they often side-stepped the Opposition's "charges" to remind the Congress of all its misdeeds over the five decades that it ruled the country — the Emergency, corruption, toppling State Governments and all.

The NDA promise of a "seven to eight per cent" growth rate translated into a 4.7 per cent growth rate today when in 1995-96, the last year of the last Congress Government, it was 6.7 per cent, Congress MP, Satyavrat Chaturvedi, said. Domestic savings dropped and the promise of a "hunger-free India" led to starvation deaths in several States. Above all, the emphasis on "security" was exposed by the unspent defence budget of Rs. 24,000 crores and terrorist attacks on temples, Amarnath and Vaishno Devi pilgrims — even army camps were not safe any more.

He charged the NDA with denigrating Constitutional institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission, the Election Commission and now even the Public Accounts Committee.

Rebutting the nine charges made by Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, yesterday, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, stood for well over an hour through numerous interruptions to narrate the Government's achievements. First of all, the main "achievement" of the Government was that it had survived, disproving the Congress claim that a non-Congress government, especially a coalition government, could not survive a full term.

Zero queues for telephone and gas connections, six new hospitals like the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, success in warding off the dreaded SARS disease, new highways, and finally, she pointed to Pokhran as evidence of an independent foreign policy.

But a little later, the Nationalist Congress Party leader, P.A. Sangma, expanded on the Opposition charge-sheet: the promised "thrust on employment generation" and the NDA slogan of *berozgari hatao* had resulted in a shocking unemployment rate of 17 to 20 per cent among the educated youth, he said sarcastically.

'Desperate move'

The Government found unstinted support from its allies, the DMK, the TDP, the Shiv Sena

and qualified support from the BSP. Questioning the rationale for the no-confidence motion at this juncture when the past four years had provided several opportunities for the use of this "brahmashastra" (ultimate weapon), the TDP leader, K. Yerran Naidu, described the Congress-sponsored move as a "desperate" act which had no clarity of purpose.

Mr. Naidu blamed the Congress for usurping power of States, speaking in two voices on disinvestment, and asked the party to spell its policy on power reforms, but not before indirectly commenting on the BJP's 'mandir' politics when he quoted the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, to point out that what will be remembered is not how many temples and mosques are built but the level of economic growth achieved.

T.R. Balu (DMK) castigated the Opposition for bringing a no-confidence motion that lacked "vision and direction". And taking advantage of the AIADMK's decision to refrain from voting, Mr. Balu sought to portray his party as the more reliable ally of the BJP.

"You can depend on us," he said. He praised the Prime Minister and lauded the Government for lower inflation and increasing foreign exchange reserves and ushering in the telecom revolution.

Chandrakant Khaire (Shiv Sena) felt that there was no need to bring a no-confidence motion and warned the Opposition that it would not succeed in making Sonia Gandhi the Prime Minister.

Rashid Alvi (BSP) clarified that though his party had decided to oppose the no-confidence motion, when it came to the question of a uniform civil code, Babri Masjid or Gujarat, his party had its own view.

The Opposition attack got a big boost from Priyaranjan Dasmunshi (Congress) who charged the Government with "mal-performance and corruption".

In a hard-hitting speech, he asked the Prime Minister to probe defence deals and find out the name of the facilitator of the French defence technology manufacturer CSF Thomson, who was supplying equipment to both India and Pakistan.

The Congress chief whip also attacked the Prime Minister for shifting his stand on vital issues and of resorting to poetry to get out of tricky situations.

He referred to how the Prime Minister had spoken in favour of building the Ram Mandir at the funeral of Mahant Paramhans in Ayodhya and said something else at the Red Fort.

"It is all very well to be a poet, but one must choose in favour of following the raj dharma". And why did the Prime Minister maintain silence when the former U.S. President, Bill Clinton, said it was under American pressure that Pakistan withdrew from Kargil?

Crimes against Parliament

By Pran Chopra

10-10
1978

ABSURD THINGS have happened in Parliament before. Such as demands in the spring of the year 2000, among others by a leading barrister and a former Cabinet Minister, that the Government must resign before Parliament could be given the chance to discuss the reasons why it must. The scene on the floor of the House continued to deteriorate in the year that followed. When Parliament is stifled by disorder democracy is muzzled. Parliament is the highest forum the people have chosen for voicing their views, and if they are silenced there democracy is silenced as much as it may be by a dictator.

Fortunately the ultimate crime against democracy has not been committed as yet. A man in uniform has not marched into Parliament House. The worst so far been an attempt by some terrorists, whether inspired or not by other men in uniform in other countries, to sneak into Parliament House and blow it up. On the contrary, ordinary Indians, wiser than many who claim to represent them, have repeatedly proved they continue to believe in democracy even if many of those elected by them do not seem to any longer. Witness the stunning display of voter power in States as diverse and far apart as Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, and above all Jammu and Kashmir. Witness also the defeat of an increasing proportion of sitting candidates.

Perhaps in response to such warnings all MPs and their parties did three creditable things in recent years. First, they responded with near unanimity to the former Speaker, P.A. Sangma's example-setting move for a pledge by all that they would behave better; second, they restrained themselves sufficiently to allow Mr. Sangma's successor, G.M.C. Balayogi, a person of limited experience at that time, to re-establish the authority of the Chair; and, third, they agreed that any member who rushed to the "well" of the House in defiance of the Speaker would be automatically considered to have been "named" and therefore qualified for expulsion.

But recent events have shown that

What seems likely at the moment is that proper parliamentary procedures, evolved over decades, will go the way many other institutions have.

the season of shamelessness is in full swing. "Criminals in politics" may be a serious cry. But crimes against Parliament, and in Parliament, continue to be committed with impunity, and are even celebrated by an increasing number of members who do not deserve the seats they occupy when they are not shouting in the well. In fact, so alarmingly has their number grown that the Speaker's power to "name" the offender has been all but nullified by the numbers he would have to "name" when he begins with some. They are lucky that the people have not begun, yet, to turn their backs on democracy. But the time may not be far off when they do, and there may not be a lot of time left for those who let their lung power make up for their deficiencies.

Something worse is also happening, and it can grow into the ultimate crime against democracy, which of course will wipe out Parliament first. As a result of its high visibility and the power of its example, the virus of the discord which breaks out in that "well" so often is spreading throughout the polity. It is depriving Indian democracy of its life-saving quality, that it has hitherto been consensual by nature. For example, however bitter the electoral contest in any general or State election, the result goes in favour of parties or coalitions which follow or are getting into middle of the road politics, and are free of or are giving up extremist positions, whether they do so because of change of heart or because of the democratic compulsion that they can be in power only if they have or attain the support of the majority, in the legislature and in the country, or at least broader support than any other party or combination gets. But the spirit of discord is spreading into the practice of governance as well, and the result can be fatal for democracy.

In fact, the trend seems to be that the more important the issue at stake the less likely it is to receive the benefit of the kind of serious debate which alone can forge a durable consensus

behind it. It is because of the value attached to debates that may lead to such a consensus that so many deliberative institutions were written into the Constitution, including some attached to the parliamentary process. For the same reason, an added advantage was accorded to them by the practice that they would decide matters by consensus and not by counting heads even though the final decision would rest on a vote in the relevant higher body such as either of the two Houses of Parliament.

For example, two committees of Parliament, the Public Accounts Committee and the Business Advisory Committee. Both are most relevant to some current controversies which have assumed a most corrosive character. The Business Advisory Committee is for advising the House on whether a particular matter should be debated on the floor, and if so under what rule, when, and for how long. The Public Accounts Committee is for scrutinising for the House whether the monies voted by it for the Government have been properly spent by the latter. The final decision on both questions rests with the full House in debates steered by the Speaker. But over the years a convention has grown that their advice is accepted by the House; and that because of the companion convention that they reach their conclusions by consensus not by partisan voting in the committees.

But that appears not to have happened in a matter that has plunged Parliament into the current phase of acrimony. The disagreements that are being so vociferously voiced on the floor probably also blocked consensus in the Public Accounts Committee, and this has also dragged in the Business Advisory Committee though tangentially. It has been alleged that the Government refused to give a report of the Chief Vigilance Commissioner to the Public Accounts Committee and, therefore, the latter has not been able to make its report to Parliament. The Government explains it is only refusing to

place the CVC report before Parliament because the Commissioner himself has marked it top secret. The debate is also caught in the absurd tangle that while the House recognises the incumbent Government and its Prime Minister, the Opposition is not willing to hear the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, on a matter which directly relates to his portfolio. It insists that the Prime Minister must speak instead. While refusing to hear the Defence Minister, the Opposition is unable to vote him out because it can do that only through a vote against the Government, and it does not have the numbers needed for winning that vote.

It is possible that we are in a grey area and there are not enough precedents to show the way out on whether the CVC can mark his findings top secret and whether, if he does, the Government can withhold it from the Public Accounts Committee or from Parliament. Or on whether, on the principle of collective responsibility, the Minister most directly concerned with a matter can speak on it for the Government and the Prime Minister, without necessarily having to speak on it first, can later on add what he thinks he may need to. But when new situations arise they can be converted into useful precedents for the future by debating on them in a befitting parliamentary manner, not by walkouts.

What seems more likely at the moment is that proper parliamentary procedures, evolved over several decades of parliamentary democracy, will go the way many other institutions have gone although they were created, by people wiser than succeeding generations appear to be, precisely for the purpose of building useful precedents for dealing constructively with new situations. Institutions such as the Inter-State Council, the Zonal Councils, the regularity with which councils of Chief Ministers or Ministers concerned with specific departments used to be held to evolve remedies, standards, procedures. Instead we seem to have fallen into the habit of converting every understandable disagreement into an incendiary dispute. The current crimes against Parliament may be only the fuse.



The Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, participating in the debate on the no-confidence motion in Parliament on Monday. — PTI (TV image)



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, look on as the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, speaks during the debate on the no-confidence motion in Parliament on Monday. — PTI (TV image)

Fernandes seeks proof of charges

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 18. The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, today protested his innocence and challenged the Opposition to provide proof of the corruption charges levelled against him and his Ministry. Making an impassioned intervention in the debate on the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Fernandes said he had "nothing to hide." He said: "No one can buy me, I have fought against corruption all my life."

Making his first speech in the Lok Sabha after a gap of 22 months, during which period the Opposition parties had boycotted him, Mr. Fernandes demanded that all the reports of the Central Vigilance Commission be made public. "I am willing to go to any extent for the sake of transparency," he said.

Combative as ever, the Defence Minister repeatedly locked horns with the Congress, as the Left parties and the Rashtriya Janata Dal persisted with their policy of boycotting the Minister.

Details on Page 11

Sonia's day out in Parliament

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 18. It was a performance for which the entire Congress was waiting, with its collective breath delicately bated. Not surprising, the entire senior leadership was there to watch the leader open the debate on the no-confidence motion.

All the cheer-leaders were there in the Rajya Sabha gallery: Ghulam Nabi Azad, Ambika Soni, Ahmed Patel, Motilal Vora, Suresh Pachouri and others.

It was as if somehow the party wanted to see for itself whether Sonia Gandhi could hold centre stage, as if she was on some kind of personal test. And it was indeed a personal show.

The suspicion was confirmed by the presence of Priyanka Vadhra who sat in the visitors' gallery exactly across from her mother.

It was very much a personal and personalised show, out to prove to critics and admirers alike that her apprenticeship was over and she was ready to take charge of the party's parliamentary columns. The NDA benches, too, were cognisant of the occasion's importance for Ms. Gandhi.

In fact, the ruling coalition benches had a game plan. Disrupt her, trip her, throw her out of gear. Do not allow her message of indictment to sink in. Every time she would make a forceful point, the back-benches heckled.

The senior Ministers adorned the front benches, wearing that sniggering look of a veteran watching a novice

enter the arena. Jaswant Singh wore a bemused look; but the bemusement gave way to discomfort when Ms. Gandhi brought up the unsavoury episode of him as Foreign Minister escorting terrorists.

George Fernandes had sullen contempt in his eyes, Murli Manohar Joshi had his usual supercilious expression; L.K. Advani, who took copious notes, wore a superior look; of all the Ministers, the Prime Minister was most respectful, only occasionally knotting his brows disapprovingly.

Her speech was well-crafted. Combative, punchy and satisfying her speech writers that their labours were not wasted. But she was out to prove that she was not a prisoner of her speech writers.

It was her willingness to improvise, to depart from the text, that gave her performance a new, unexpected and pleasing flavour.

That was not all. What the parliamentarians witnessed was a Sonia Gandhi willing to play the parliamentarians' game of give and take.

Nor was she ruffled by the heckling. At one point she told the NDA benches to "go on, go on".

She even pre-empted the Prime Minister's proclivity to get annoyed with her: "I will not enter into a quarrel with the Prime Minister's promise of one crore jobs a year; I know he gets very irritated."

Mr. Vajpayee has been put on notice. He cannot play the "I-am-pained-how-

dare-she-question-me" card. Her best line was "Mungeri Lal ke sunhere sapne" (reference to a popular Hindi television show) when she dismissed the Government's projection of an eight per cent growth rate.

So spontaneous and all-round was the laughter that T.R. Baalu had to ask his neighbour, Yashwant Sinha, to translate.

The speech was 15 minutes too long; she ran out of steam and punch towards the end. But she made it up. The Congress benches and cheer-leaders watched with sheer delight as she got up thrice to interrupt Mr. Advani.

Her most personalised intervention came when she repeated that many who had gone to jail during the Emergency had written letters of apology to Indira Gandhi. This prompted many, including Arun Jaitley and Ananth Kumar, to join the heckling. For once, she got their goat.

The BJP unleashed the most petty weapon in its armoury when its chief whip, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, got up to point out — totally irrelevantly — that Ms. Gandhi was not an Indian citizen between 1975-76.

The expected protest and brouhaha followed, leaving both Mr. Advani and Mr. Vajpayee to savour the moment. Her most animated interruptions were personalised.

All had to do with the legacy of her husband and mother-in-law. She was underlining her own leadership as part of a family legacy.

PARTISANSHIP REIGNS SUPRFMF ON DAY ONE

Sonia indicts Govt., Advani rebuts charges

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, AUG. 18. The Vajpayee Government escaped unmauled, though not un-clawed on Monday, the first day of the no-confidence motion debate in the Lok Sabha. The Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi's nine-point indictment of the Government remained mostly unanswered, as the speakers of the National Democratic Alliance treated the debate as an occasion for political grandstanding.

The first no-confidence debate in the 13th Lok Sabha witnessed, expectedly, an intensely partisan and acrimonious debate, often resembling a dialogue of the deaf, with neither side willing to listen to the other. There was a time when members almost came to blows. The partisanship took its most cantankerous turn when the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, intervened to defend his stewardship of the Ministry. His strategy was to provoke the Congress benches — and, provoke he did, leading to interruption after interruption. At one stage, the Speaker ordered stoppage of the national telecast of the proceedings.

At the end of the day, the honours were even. The Opposition fielded Sonia Gandhi, the CPI(M) member, Somnath Chatterjee, and the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav; the Government was adequately defended by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and Mr. Fernandes.

Opening the debate, Ms.

Gandhi spelled out in an hour-long speech nine counts on which the Government deserved to be indicted. In a combative performance, she charged the Government with failure on the nation's defence, weakening national security, wrecking social harmony, subverting the secular character of the educational system, destroying probity in administration and public life, increasing unemployment and dismantling the public sector, adding to the misery of 'kisans' and agricultural labour, denigrating key institutions of parliamentary democracy and undermining the independence of foreign policy.

In particular, she challenged the Government on three of its most cherished accomplishments — the Kargil "victory" and defence preparedness, "victory" in the proxy war with Pakistan and the achievements on the foreign policy front.

As the Government's lead spokesman, Mr. Advani set the ball rolling by underlining the "feel good" sentiment, playing on the theme that the country stood tall in the eyes of the world and was at peace with itself under Mr. Vajpayee's leadership.

This was the NDA's theme song; by contrast, the NDA benches implied, the Opposition was not united behind Ms. Gandhi. Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress challenged the non-Congress Opposition parties to "declare here and now" whether Ms. Gandhi was acceptable as Prime Minister.

It was left to Mr. Mulayam Singh to tell the NDA benches not to worry about the alternative leadership.

Mr. Chatterjee also trained his guns on the Government for its various misdeeds. He sought to expose the opportunism of the "motley combination that is the NDA".

Though the Opposition, according to him, was conscious of the fact that the motion would be defeated in the numbers game, "it is our patriotic duty to try and remove this Government". This apart, he provided another rationale for supporting the Congress motion; stating it was the only tool left with the Opposition to bring the "elusive" Prime Minister to the House.

Wondering at the absence of the MDMK member, Vaiko — given reports of him being specially brought from prison to vote against the motion — Mr. Chatterjee said his "liberty has been traded for 11 votes of AIADMK".

Besides Mr. Chatterjee, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav and Jaipal Reddy gave the Government a hard time. For the NDA, the BJP chief whip, V.K. Malhotra, responded in kind returning partisanship with partisanship.

The only man who rose above the consuming partisanship was the former Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar. He faulted both the Government and the Opposition for devaluing parliamentary democracy and announced that he would abstain from voting.

See also Page 11

AIADMK to abstain from voting

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, AUG. 18. The AIADMK, which has 11 MPs in the Lok Sabha, will not take part in the debate and voting on the Congress-sponsored no-confidence motion against the Vajpayee Government.

After a meeting of the AIADMK executive here today, the general secretary and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, announced that the party would "abstain" from voting.

"They (BJP-led National Democratic Alliance) have not sought our support. There is no need for us to offer support on our own volition. And as far as we can see, the Government is not in danger," Ms. Jayalalithaa told the media at the party



headquarters here.

Asked if any NDA leader contacted her, Ms. Jayalalithaa said the Defence Minister and NDA convener, George Fernandes, had phoned her up on Saturday.

"However, I was not at home. I did not know why he called," she said. As of now, none from

the NDA had sought her support and there was no necessity to offer unsolicited support, she said.

"I do not want to speculate," she replied to a query if the NDA had not sought her support following protests from the DMK.

To a question on the reasons for the DMK deciding to vote against the motion after sending contrary signals, all she would say was: "This question should be posed to Mr. Karunanidhi."

Common civil code

Earlier, the meeting adopted a resolution in favour of "immediately" bringing in legislation on uniform civil code in Parliament.

Lauding Ms. Jayalalithaa for

declaring that only a uniform code would ensure true equality for everyone, the resolution said. The party would back such legislation. "If everyone is equal before law, the laws should also be equal to everyone," the party executive said insisting that a uniform law for all citizens was essential from the viewpoints of political, social and natural justice.

The AIADMK executive condoned the death of Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas leader, Mahant Paramahans Ramachandradas, who steered a movement for building a Ram temple at Ayodhya; the cosmonaut, Kalpana Chawla, and the Iranian twins, Laden and Laleh, who died following a surgery to separate them.

Debate turns into baiting game

19/8

HT Correspondent of *New Delhi*, August 18

Trading charges

SONIA'S CHARGESHEET

- ▶ Weakening national security
- ▶ Wrecking social harmony
- ▶ Increasing unemployment and dismantling public sector
- ▶ Denigrating parliamentary institutions

ADVANI'S RIPOSTE

- ▶ Govt's achievements include Pokhran
- ▶ Problems are a legacy of previous Congress regimes
- ▶ Country has not achieved its potential because of the Congress

CONGRESS DENIGRATED

- ▶ Institutions by imposing Emergency

GEORGE'S SALVO

- ▶ That man hasn't been born who can buy me off
- ▶ No govt has done as much for defence as this one
- ▶ CIA bribed Indira's Cong and Left in 1974

THE DEBATE on the no-confidence motion against the Vajpayee government turned into a televised poll campaign on Monday with Sonia Gandhi signalling readiness for a face-off with A.B. Vajpayee in the next round of elections and the NDA targeting her personally.

Initiating the debate, Sonia slammed the government as "incompetent, insensitive, irresponsible and brazenly corrupt" and as a threat to national security — an issue that is a major plank of the saffron party's political campaign. She also accused the government of lowering India's stature in the world, opening the way for Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani to fire a few salvos at her.

Advani kicked off by saying he would not "resort to the language and style of the leader of the Opposition". He then tried to paint Sonia's speech as anti-India — an oblique reminder to everybody of the Congress president's foreign origin. The Deputy PM said he was "astounded" by Sonia's charge that the country's stature had come down when it had actually risen. This brought an immediate rejoinder from the Congress president: "I have not criticised India but the government."

Shortly after Advani's hour-long speech came the day's most anticipated moment as — 18 months after his "boycott" by the Opposition — Defence Minister George Fernandes rose to speak. Wagging a finger at Sonia, his voice cracking with emotion, the defence minister brushed off the corruption charge against him with a theatrical statement: "No body has been born yet (with the power) to purchase me."

The Left and the RJD, as before, walked out before he had begun to speak, but Congress members kept to their seats, their uneasiness growing with every minute as he spoke.

Finally they leapt to their feet when Fernandes, reading from a book by former US Ambassador



A TV grab of Sonia Gandhi moving the no-confidence motion in Parliament on Monday.

by saying that several Sangh leaders had at that time written to Indira, pleading with her to release them from jail. After the uproar died down, former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar urged Sonia to refrain from making such sweeping statements and, instead, produce these letters if she could. However, for the most part, Sonia kept to the matter at hand, expressing her "genuine disquiet" over the Centre's "capricious way" of governance and the "inherent danger" such arrogance poses to the basic tenets of the Constitution. The government, she said, had jeopardised the country's defence and weakened national security; it had wrecked social harmony, subverted the secular character of the education system, destroyed probity in administration and public life, and weakened the independence of the country's foreign policy. She also mentioned the increasing unemployment, dismantling of the public sector and the suffering caused to farmers.

"Our indictment is comprehensive, just as their failures are complete. The government's days are numbered," Sonia said in her 80-minute speech.

The CPI(M)'s Somnath Chatterjee and Trinamool Congress's Mamata Banerjee also took part in the debate.

Related reports on Page 4

ADMK to abstain

THE AIADMK's 11 Lok Sabha members will abstain during voting on the no-confidence motion on Tuesday. Party general secretary J. Jayalalithaa explained there was no need for her to "extend unsolicited support" to the Centre "as there is no danger to it". The DMK had said it didn't want the NDA to seek Jayalalithaa's support.

HTC, Chennai

Parliament and military secrecy

By V.R. Raghavan

On the PAC issue, it is difficult to avoid the impression that the Opposition and the Government are engaged in seeking and denying political advantage.

THE ONGOING standoff between the Government and the Opposition on military matters is reflective of the value both sides place on national security. It brings into focus questions of parliamentary privileges, the MPs' right to information, the Government's need to protect secrecy, and the politicisation of issues that should remain above political considerations. Where does national security figure in this parliamentary jousting? What does the battle to score debating points do to the quality or level of the debate on national security?

On military matters, the record of India's Parliament has been a proud one. There were outstanding moments of unity and cooperation during wars. Parliament's unity in endorsing the Government's actions in the 1948 War in Jammu and Kashmir gave it and the defence forces the national backing needed at the time. Parliamentary pressures on Jawaharlal Nehru on his management of the conflict with China in 1962 had led to the resignations of Generals and the Defence Minister. In 1971, Parliament had backed the Government during momentous and dangerous times in the conduct of the war with Pakistan. During India's costly and painful involvement in Sri Lanka, the Government had been probed, put on the defensive and made accountable to the Indian people's concerns about the safety of our soldiers, sailors and airmen. The long campaign being waged against terrorism has received the support of all sections of Parliament. In arms procurement, purchase of equipment has always received the Opposition's close scrutiny.

Kargil witnessed a unique endorsement by Parliament of the Government's handling of the military campaign, even as there were serious reservations expressed on its management of the national security apparatus. The Opposition mustered both its ranks and its arguments competently to ensure that the BJP-led Government was forced to institute the Subrahmanyam Committee to enquire into the failings of the security apparatus and its operators. The Committee's recommendations were made public. The Government and the Opposition worked together in the larger interests of national security.

The current controversy places a

wholly negative and unflattering perspective on Parliament's role. It also shows the distance the Government and the Opposition have walked away from accountability to the people. Even as the Government is accountable to people through Parliament, the Opposition is right in demanding that accountability by effectively using parliamentary procedures at its disposal. The Opposition has let the Defence Minister off from being accountable by boycotting him in Parliament. Mr. Fernandes could have been questioned closely every time he appeared in the House. Procedures and rules of Parliament give enough scope to do so within the limits of decorum and propriety. Boycotting him has only made it more difficult for the Opposition to get at the truth. This by-product of the strategy of boycotts and walkouts has not only harmed the Opposition, it has also denied the people a parliamentary debate and a chance to hear both sides' points of view.

How does India's Parliament oversee the Government's management of governance? In Defence matters as in all other Ministries, Parliament exercises supervision through its estimates and public account committees. These committees have multi-party representation and have enough authority to summon information, officials, and documents. The reality, at least in Defence matters, is that committees have traditionally deferred to the Government's opinion. There has not been a tradition of seeking information, ideas, backgrounders and opinion from experts and organisations outside the Government. This approach would help the committees formulate the right thrusts, questions and supplementaries. There is no tradition of the committees seeking to meet the chiefs of the defence forces or other high officials. As a consequence, the Government through Opposition default becomes the sole source of information.

What then explains the heat and intransigent postures being generated on the Kargil issue by the stand the Public Accounts Committee

(PAC) has taken? From the information available from open sources, the PAC claims it has been denied essential information on defence purchases made during and after the Kargil campaign. The Government claims it offered to provide the information *in camera* and in the chambers of the Speaker, which the PAC did not accept. The Government has gone further to say that some of the information sought by the PAC is Top Secret and that has been so categorised by the Central Vigilance Commission. What is clear is that there is some information that the PAC wants and the Government finds inconvenient to part with. Is it because such information would cast doubts on the judgment or motives of high officials in making such purchases. Or, is it because such information would be politically embarrassing or even damaging? One has no way of knowing, but it is difficult to avoid the impression that the Opposition and the Government are engaged in seeking and denying political advantage. Parliamentarians know political advantage can be gained in two ways. One is to have incontrovertible evidence of malfeasance or misdemeanour in defence matters. Other than that only a military disaster forces the Government to concede failure. In seeking a specific set of information, the PAC and the Opposition are attempting to make the Government look less than credible. Is the Opposition wrong in doing so? It is, because it cannot boycott the Defence Minister and also seek information on which he would be best capable of providing answers. Is the Government wrong in denying the Opposition request for specific information? It is, because it cannot label some information as Top Secret and claim immunity for not sharing it with a committee of Parliament. This technicality is a poor defence, simply because the Government has the final authority in classification of documents. Just as it can mark a document Top Secret, it can also downgrade the classification. In any case, the chairman and members of a parliamentary

committee cannot be viewed as common citizens in matters of state secrets.

It would have been a different case if the Opposition had taken a similar stand on the Government's slow and halting implementation of the Kargil Committee recommendations. It would have been a credible insistence by the Opposition, if it had demanded explanation for the Government's lack of energetic action on the Group of Ministers' recommendations after the Kargil Report. The Opposition has done little to ask and insist on the Strategic Defence Review the Government had promised the country through an election manifesto. There are no Opposition sallies against the Government on either Defence modernisation or revamping the national security apparatus. It neither demands nor gets an annual state of national security report or address from the Prime Minister or the Defence Minister. The Government for its part is content to stonewall or deny the charges, instead of boldly acting to set the record straight. A selective approach to national security issues and the use of secrecy as a reason to deny information has done enough damage to everyone's security interests. Selective and ill chosen security issues lend themselves neither to substantive debate nor to giving the people of the country viable choices to make. National security then becomes no more than a subsidiary issue and in turn gets an equally shoddy treatment. Secrecy has been used by Governments in many countries to limit their political accountability. It, however, becomes a tragi-comedy when national security is reduced to issues which should really be on the margins of governance. Secrecy on the part of Governments should make the Opposition challenge the assumptions under which such authority is applied. One must ask if exemptions to secrecy on national security can be codified by Parliament. One must also ask if such rules were not too tightly drawn in an earlier era. Older assumptions on secrecy are now being impacted and splintered by information technology developments. India's Parliament would render a fine service by developing a new sense of national security and secrecy.

(Lt. Gen. Raghavan is a former Director-General of Military Operations.)

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

15 AUG 2003

Opposition protests to Shekhawat

By K.V. Prasad

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NEW DELHI, AUG. 14. Carrying forward their non-cooperation with the Government, the Opposition parties in the Rajya Sabha today decided not to participate in the proceedings of the House for the remaining period of the monsoon session.

The decision followed a meeting of the Opposition leaders after developments on Wednesday. In a joint letter to the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the leaders conveyed their sentiments with regard to his ruling while denying a discussion on the Public Accounts Committee report, a demand made by the Opposition.

Barring the Samajwadi Party, the letter was signed by the Leader of the Opposition, Manmohan Singh, the Congress chief whip, Pranab Mukherjee, Manoj Bhattacharya (RSP), H.K. Javare Gowda (JD-S), Robert Kharshing (NCP), Nilotpal Basu (CPI-M) and Ramdeo Bhandari (RJD).

They said the events of the last couple of days relating to the demand of the Opposition that the House debate certain issues in relation to the matters arising out of the report of the PAC had exercised the minds not only of the Opposition, but also all concerned with the orderly functioning of the House.

Expressing anguish at the turn of events during yesterday's afternoon session, the leaders said they always believed that the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha by virtue of his office was the custodian of the prestige, honour, and dignity of the House. The Chairman was the guardian of the interests of all sections of the House.

"The Chair, traditionally and as a matter of policy, cannot get involved in the thicket of politics since the Chair is above politics and never

takes a stand on issues which are essentially political. Any pro-active posture that has the tendency to involve the Chair in purely political matters has always been avoided and that has been the tradition of the House", the letter said.

Recalling the demand made by the Opposition and the 20-month boycott of George Fernandes, they told the Chairman that while he may personally disagree with their position, it was for the Government to make its stand clear. They said as the second highest dignitary of the Republic and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, they expected him to keep himself above the controversy and to objectively guide the proceedings of the House. By declaring that the Defence Minister would reply to the debate, he did what the Government was required to state in the House.

"A large section of the House considers that such observations do not fall within the ambit of the jurisdiction of the Chair. The piquant situation created by your observations has embarrassed a sizeable section of the House".

The also said that his ruling on their demand that some documents be placed in the House could have been stated by the Government and his observations on the functioning of the PAC was likely to be interpreted as an "interference" in the functioning of the Lok Sabha, since the PAC was essentially a Committee of the House of the People. However, the leaders said that while they had no intention to question the Chairman's ruling through the letter they wished to express their feelings. "We are writing this letter in this spirit not to show any disrespect to the Chair, or to disobey the ruling of the Chairman...our fight is against the insensitive attitude of the Government", the leaders said.

15 AUG 2003

9. Parliament

PAC deadlock: more questions than answers

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By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, AUG. 13. A meeting of political party leaders in the chamber of the Lok Sabha Speaker today failed to end the deadlock between the ruling and Opposition parties over the Public Accounts Committee refusing to take notice of defence purchases related to the Kargil conflict of 1999 as a result of the Central Vigilance Commissioner's report not being made available to it. Hopes are now pinned on a meeting of party leaders called by the Speaker tomorrow morning.

Even as the controversy rages — there is no sign of any thaw in the Lok Sabha — more questions are being raised by both the sides, but few answers are available.

Was there no CVC report on defence purchases related to the Kargil war as claimed by the Bharatiya Janata Party? If no, then why did the Defence Ministry deny the report to the PAC on grounds of "secrecy" rather than saying that the CVC report did not cover the period the PAC was interested in? And finally, if the CVC did not cover the period around the Kargil war why

did it not do this as the Defence Minister had ordered on February 14, 2000, a vigilance inquiry into "all defence deals" since 1989? Why is the Opposition making so much noise over a report which does not even exist?

As the two sides battle it out, with privilege notices issued against each other — the BJP today alleged that the PAC chairman, Buta Singh, had "hidden" a fact-sheet received from the CVC from other PAC members and had therefore violated the members' privilege — there seems to be little clarity about what really happened.

But what was certainly a shot in the arm for the Government was not only the ruling of the Rajya Sabha chairman rejecting the demand for a discussion in the House as "inappropriate", but also the surfacing of differences within the Opposition on the "boycott" of the Defence Minister, George Fernandes.

It seems that the Samajwadi Party and the Nationalist Congress Party, for example, do not share the view of the Congress and the Left on the "boycott" issue. It is reported that the SP and the NCP leaders, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Sharad Pawar,

today stated at the Speaker's meeting that the continued "boycott" of Mr. Fernandes was "a disservice to the country" as important issues related to Defence could not be raised.

Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI (M) pointed out that the Government had not yet stated officially that there was no CVC report related to the Kargil war purchases. Instead of saying that the report was "secret" the Defence Ministry could have communicated to the PAC chairman that there was no relevant CVC report. Other Opposition leaders pointed out that two letters, one from Admiral R.V. Purohit and the other from former MP, Jayant Malhotra, both relating to Kargil, were referred to the CVC for "action". What happened to that? Mr. Chatterjee also wanted to know whether the CVC report had been made available to the BJP spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra (who has been saying there was no such CVC report)? "If Mr. Malhotra had access to it then why should the PAC not have access? And if he has not seen it on whose authority does he say the Kargil war purchases do not figure in it?"

14 AUG 2003

THE HINDU

'MONUMENTAL CORRUPTION IN DEFENCE DEALS' (3)

PAC issue stalls Lok Sabha

By Our New Delhi Bureau 10-1

NEW DELHI, AUG. 7. The Government was put on the mat today with an aggressive Opposition charging it with trying to "cover up monumental corruption" in defence purchases related to 'Operation Vijay' (Kargil War) and riding rough shod over one of the basic duties of Parliament, "ensuring executive accountability".

The "inability" of the Public Accounts Committee to submit a report on 'Operation Vijay' in the face of "refusal" by the Defence Ministry to let it have a copy of the report of the Central Vigilance Commission related to purchases during and immediately after the Kargil war triggered the stand-off between the Opposition and ruling parties.

Charges and counter-charges were traded freely in the Lok Sabha — the issue of breach of parliamentary privilege was raised by both sides — and, after several short adjournments, the Speaker, Manohar Joshi, adjourned the House for the day with no business transacted.

Trouble began as soon as the House met with the Opposition demanding that its adjournment notices be taken up. Despite attempts by the Speaker to bring some order, the shouting and counter-shouting by the Opposition and Treasury benches and their members rushing to the well of the House finally forced the adjournment for the day.

'Breach of privilege'

The Opposition demanded the resigna-

tion of the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, who is already the subject of a "boycott" by it on the Tehelka issue. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi and Jaipal Reddy (Congress) said the PAC had "unanimously come to the conclusion that the Defence Minister was guilty of breach of privilege". The CVC report had been given to a retired journalist, who had attacked the MPs and the Comptroller and Auditor-General, but it was denied to the PAC, resulting in a "constitutional deadlock", they said.

Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) charged the Government with trying to "cover up monumental corruption" in defence purchases by "obstructing" the functioning of the PAC. He demanded that the Prime Minister come to the House and explain the situation. The Treasury benches made a determined counter-attack, charging that the PAC report was "leaked" to the media and thus a breach of privilege had been committed.

The chief whip of the Bharatiya Janata Party, V.K. Malhotra, said that the majority of the PAC members felt that the PAC report was "false and wrong".

Blackmail, says BJP

Later, outside the House, the BJP described the Opposition parties' behaviour as "irresponsible" and charged them with resorting to "blackmail" by suggesting that "either the Government should agree to their demands or the House will not be allowed to run".

The BJP emphasised that "there was no

CVC report on defence purchases related to the Kargil war", and, therefore, the question of the CVC report not being made available to the PAC did not arise.

Mr. Malhotra and Kirit Somaiya, BJP MP, who is a PAC member, said the CVC report related to purchases from 1989 till before the Kargil war. Mr. Malhotra said that a privilege motion had been moved against the PAC chairman, Buta Singh.

Three-point demand

The Opposition parties made a three-point demand: a full discussion on the situation arising out of the PAC report with a reply by the Prime Minister, the placing of all records of the PAC meetings before the House to expose the truth and making available the CVC report to the PAC.

Briefing correspondents after a meeting of the Opposition leaders called by Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, Mr. Jaipal Reddy said the demands had been communicated to the Government through the Speaker.

Mr. Reddy dismissed the BJP stand that there was no CVC report related to Kargil war purchases saying that the Defence Ministry officials appearing before the PAC had not denied its existence.

The final CVC report covering all defence contracts worth more than Rs. 75 crores since 1989 was submitted to the Defence Ministry on 31 March, 2001, but the BJP maintained that the Kargil war period was not covered.

'I offered to show CVC report': Page 11

8 AUG 2003

Rajya Sabha okays CVC Bill

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE Rajya Sabha today passed by voice vote the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) Bill, 2003, conferring statutory status on the CVC to inquire into offences committed under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1998, by certain categories of Central public servants, Central corporations, societies and local authorities owned or controlled by the Central Government.

While piloting the Bill, Minister of State for Home Affairs Harin Pathak assured the Upper House members that the CVC would certainly not have "unlimited power" and there is also no reason to fear that it would become a "super-government which could interfere with the Government's day-to-day functioning".

However, the CVC would "exercise superintendence" over the functioning of the CBI in so far as it relates to investigation of offences committed by officers of the rank of joint secretary or above in any government department or public sector undertaking.

"The CVC will not give orders contrary to the Government but would advise the Government on policy matter," he said.

The Bill, which has already been passed by the Lok Sabha, provides for the appointment of one Central Vigilance Commissioner and "not more than two Vigilance Commissioners".

The appointments would be made after obtaining the recommendation of a committee comprising the Prime Minister as chairperson, Minister of Home Affairs and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha as members.

"It will be the duty of the CVC to pre-



Commission gets statutory status to inquire into corruption complaints against certain categories of Central employees



sent annually to the President a report as to the work done by the commission within six months of the close of the year after which a copy of the report would be

laid before each House of Parliament," Pathak added.

The members, cutting across party lines, especially those from the legal profession like Fali S. Nariman, Ram Jethmalani, Kapil Sibal, Swaraj Kaushal, expressed apprehension and demanded that they should not be treated as public servants and corruption cases against them should be registered only after proper permission.

So much so that agitated Samata Party member Rajiv Rajan Singh Lalan remarked: "Yeh kaise niti hai, joint secretary bahar aur MP andar!" Similarly, Ram Jethmalani also argued against the "protection" this Bill provides to civil servants of the ranks of joint secretaries and above.

To which Pathak said necessary amendment in the Representation of Peoples' Act was under consideration and the MPs will not be brought under the CVC net unless they become representatives of any of the Central corporations.

Earlier, intervening in the debate to help Pathak out Law Minister Arun Jaitley suggested that an all-party meeting would be convened to decide on fixing accountability of members of parliament.

Defending the decision to keep officers from the rank of joint secretaries outside the ambit of the CVC, Jaitley said senior decision-makers and civil servants should be protected against frivolous complaints.

As the Bill came up for discussion, Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla proposed that the appointing body of the CVC (besides the proposed troika of Prime Minister, Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition) should include Leader of the House and Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha.

Lok Sabha to debate CBI 'misuse'

9 Parliament
7-6
1/8

2

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 31: The Ayodhya impasse continued to hound the BJP in Parliament today as the Opposition demanded a discussion on yesterday's screening of videotapes from December 1992.

The Opposition alleged the evidence the CBI handed to the Rae Bareilly court did not contain crucial speeches made by deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani on the Babri Masjid issue.

The three videotapes screened yesterday before Special Judge V.K. Singh did not show any of the eight accused Sangh parivar leaders, including Advani, make any inflammatory speech before, during or after the demolition.

At the end of an acrimonious day, the Centre agreed to a discussion in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The House will discuss "misuse of CBI as an investigating agency" under rule 193, which does not entail voting.

Parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj had initially opposed the discussion on the ground the matter was sub-judice.

Outside Parliament, BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu dared the Congress to come up with proof that the Centre tampered with any Ayodhya evidence. Forcing adjournments in both Houses, Congress members accused the CBI of presenting doctored tapes and insisted on a discussion.

In the Lok Sabha, the Congress led by Priya Ranjan Dasgupta raised a hue and cry and served an adjournment notice. As agitated party members gathered in the well of the House their BJP counterparts rushed forward. The Lok Sabha was adjourned amid the chaos that followed. When it met later, Dasgupta again raised the adjournment notice, which was rejected by the Speaker.

In the Rajya Sabha, the BJP wrestled with the Opposition for 45 minutes as it demanded suspension of question hour for a discussion on the CBI evidence.

Rajya Sabha chairperson Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, however, was as adamant in his resolve not to scrap question hour.

"The Prime Minister is in charge of the CBI. We want to hear what he has to say on this issue," CPM MP Nilotpal Basu said. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was present in the House throughout the day. He looked on in silence along with his ministers Arun Jaitley, Jaswant Singh and Yashwant Sinha as the Opposition shouted slogans.

Repeating their demand, senior Congress members refused Swaraj a chance to speak.

Failing to silence the members, Shekhawat said: "This House is not for sloganeering. The entire country is watching. You framed the rules not to disrupt question hour. It is in my powers to suspend this hour. But I have refused to do so."

1 AUG 2003

Govt no to *Tehelka* debate in Parliament

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 28. — The initiative taken by some Congress MPs in the Rajya Sabha and the Chairman, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, to end the impasse on the Opposition boycott of defence minister Mr George Fernandes in both Houses of Parliament was aborted today after the government decided not to have any discussion on *Tehelka* in Parliament.

"As far as the government is concerned, we are not going to accept any proposal of the Opposition for a discussion on *Tehelka*," Mrs Sushma Swaraj, minister for parliamentary affairs, said after the proposed discussion on the subject did not take place in the Rajya Sabha today.

Mrs Swaraj said there appeared to be a "communication gap" between Congress leaders and the party spokesman. Otherwise, how could it be that the Congress spokesman went on to demand that the party would also have discussion in the Lok Sabha when it was agreed that the discussion on the *Tehelka* issue would take place only in the Rajya Sabha, she said. On

Thursday some senior Congress MPs had met Mr Shekhawat in Parliament and it was agreed tentatively that the Upper House would have a discussion today on the *Tehelka* issue. This was to have ended the boycott of the defence minister by the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha.

Mr Fernandes, who was slated to make a statement in the Lok Sabha on the Akhnoor attack, was requested to defer the statement till 29 July so that the Rajya Sabha could complete the discussion facilitating the process of reconciliation between the Opposition and the government on the "boycott" issue.

Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Manohar Joshi was informed accordingly and Mr Fernandes was requested to defer his statement in the Lok Sabha till tomorrow. However, after the Congress insistence and the decision of the CPI-M and the RJD not to soften their stand on the boycott of the defence minister, the government finally said "enough is enough". Mr Fernandes is slated to make a statement on the Akhnoor attack tomorrow in both Houses. The Opposition will boycott his statement.

THE STATESMAN

29 JUL 2003

CONG. MOVE FOR FLOOR COORDINATION IN PARLIAMENT

Opposition will grill Govt. on rail safety, defence issues

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JULY 17. The Opposition parties are gearing to take on the Vajpayee Government in the monsoon session of Parliament beginning on Monday. The Railways and the Defence Ministries are likely to be specially targeted.

The session would provide clues to how effectively the Congress will be able to implement its "Shimla resolve" to work out coalition relationships with non-BJP parties; in particular, the Congress' success in evolving a coordinated floor strategy will be the first indication on whether the other Opposition parties have responded in kind to the "Shimla signals".

The Samajwadi Party has already struck a discordant note. "While we are fighting the BSP-BJP combine, the Congress is intent on fighting us," the party's general secretary, Amar Singh, said. The party is still cut up with the Congress decision to field a candidate in the recent by-election in Cherigaon in Uttar Pradesh. "They lost their deposit but ensured the victory of the BSP candidate," he said.

Other Opposition parties such as Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal, the Lok Janshakti Party of Ram Vilas Paswan and Laloo Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal, however, appear keen on joining hands with the Congress. "We must not only have floor coor-

dination inside Parliament, but all the secular parties must join hands outside as well," Mr. Paswan said.

Mr. Ajit Singh and the RJD's Raghuvansh Prasad Singh shared his views. "The Congress must take the lead in putting together an alliance against the BJP," Mr. Ajit Singh said. The RJD leadership is of the view that secular parties should put the past behind them and join hands both inside and outside Parliament. "For us defeating the BJP is top priority, we will extend total cooperation in this effort," said Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, who is also the leader of the RJD Parliamentary Party in the Lok Sabha.

Congress meets

Senior Congress leaders have for the past two days held in-house strategy sessions in order to identify issues to be taken up in Parliament. Besides the functioning of the Railway and Defence Ministries, the party would also seek an Action Taken Report on the Joint Parliamentary Committee report on the stock and UTI scams.

The Congress leaders are scheduled to meet again on Saturday to finalise the thrust areas and work on floor coordination with other Opposition parties.

The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, has convened a meeting of the Opposition parties on Sunday and extended invitations

to the Left parties, the RJD, the SP and the Nationalist Congress Party, among others. This will be preceded by a Left parties' coordination meeting.

The CPI(M) would also restart its weekly coordination meeting of the Opposition parties.

With railway accidents increasing, passenger safety is an area of serious concern. Both the Congress and the CPI(M) are planning to grill the Railway Minister, Nitish Kumar, on the subject.

The Congress has criticised the recent resignation of Mr. Kumar as political and not on moral grounds in the wake of the accidents. Defence preparedness and the rising number of fighter jet crashes is another area of focus for the Opposition.

The Congress' concern found reflection in Ms. Gandhi's closing speech at the Shimla shivir. It alleged that despite the Kargil tragedy, the Government "remained negligent" and pointed fingers at the Hill Kaka operation as a case in point. The party charged the NDA Government with "jeopardising" the nation's defences and said that in the last three years, almost Rs. 24,000 crores of the defence budget had not been spent.

It remains to be seen in what manner the Congress would press for discussion on defence preparedness given the strident stand to boycott George Fernandes in Parliament.

THE HINDU

18 JUL 2003

Outlandish idea

117 A 726-seater Lok Sabha? 51-8

The BJP has come up with an outlandish idea to resolve the impasse over reserving one-third of Lok Sabha seats for women. In order to resolve the fears of parties about giving up 181 out of the 545 Lok Sabha seats, the existing seats are to be kept intact, and 181 extra added to accommodate the new women MPs. Correspondingly, 181 out of 545 parliamentary constituencies will have two MPs — one a woman, and one in the general category. Since most MPs in the women's quota are expected to be the wives and daughters of present politicians, the proposal looks appetising as it offers them the prospect of doubling family income and perquisites at the expense of the exchequer. The cost to the nation is horrendous. It will involve rebuilding the Lok Sabha virtually from scratch, a job that will require crores of rupees and a year to complete.

Further treasure will have to be expended on the MPs themselves — each costs about Rs 12 lakh a year to maintain, which works out to an annual extra cost of Rs 22 crores to the exchequer, not counting the extra staff that will be needed. There is the question of disruption to House activities caused by remodelling, even if cynics say that not much useful business is transacted there at the best of times. Under the proposal select constituencies will be represented by two MPs instead of one. That is not quite an expansion of democracy, it presents its own problems. If MPs can pass the buck to someone else, why should they feel responsible at all? And who is the voter to blame if things go wrong? Or is the woman MP merely ornamental, responsibility for the constituency resting with the general category MP? If the last, that would strike at the root of the idea of having greater representation of women. One wonders whether the sheer madness of the proposal is intended to spike the whole idea.

The NDA has undone the wrong done to Savarkar by installing his portrait in Parliament because his sacrifices were not less than those of other leaders

IN DEFENCE OF SAVARKAR

VINAYAK Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) was one of the greatest revolutionaries of India. His motto was to free the motherland from the bondage. He was arrested in 1909 in London, his centre of revolutionary activities and suffered imprisonment for 28 years including 10 years in the Andamans and was released in 1937. He is probably the only Indian leader who suffered such long imprisonment for the country's cause.

It seems Professor RK Dasgupta, in his article "Spreading Hindutva" (8-9 April) has selected books where Savarkar's name has neither been mentioned nor referred to and at the same time has mentioned some facts which appear to be not tenable. Yes, Nehru did not refer to Savarkar in his autobiography but has mentioned him on page 326 in his *Discovery of India* (London 1956) and wrote: "A great deal of false and perverted history has been written about the Revolt and its suppression. What the Indians think about it seldom finds its way to the printed page. Savarkar wrote *The History of the War of Indian Independence* some 30 years ago, but his book was promptly banned and is banned still". Savarkar was the first Indian to describe the Sepoy Mutiny as the first war of independence.

Dasgupta's contention that "Subhas Chandra Bose too does not mention him in his two autobiographies" is not correct. He held Savarkar, the revolutionary, in high esteem. From the late thirties to the mid-forties of the last century he had a considerable following in the country and was a force in Indian politics. Before Subhas decided to leave the country to launch an armed struggle against the British from abroad, he met Jinnah and Savarkar apart from Mahatma Gandhi in Mumbai in June 1940. He had long discussions with Savarkar, then President of Hindu Mahasabha and wrote: "Mr Savarkar seemed to be oblivious of the international

The author is a retired joint secretary to the government of Assam

W 5/8 By BK BHATTACHARYYA 1/6

situation and was only thinking how Hindus could secure military training by entering Britain's army in India" (p 384, Netaji Collected Works volume 2, The Indian Struggle 1920-1942, Kolkata 1981)

An Advanced History of India authored by the three historians including Dr RC Majumdar did not contain any reference to Savarkar. But Dr Majumdar has devoted a number of pages on Savarkar in his three *History of the Freedom Move-*

freedom. He was the founder of Mitra Mandal and Abhinava Bharat, two revolutionary organisations, struggling for the country's freedom...".

Ved Pratap Vaidik in a published article "Why Frame Veer Savarkar?" on 21 March has said: "Savarkar was sentenced to two life imprisonments running into 50 years when he was 27 years old. When he escaped from a British ship in 1910, the world came to know for the first time — much before Gandhi

(London, 1936) has observed that "among the Muslims also there was propagated a wild but not negligible scheme for the creation of a Muslim state based on Afghanistan and embracing all those North-Western areas where the faith is strong..." (p 616, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's *History and Culture of the Indian People*).

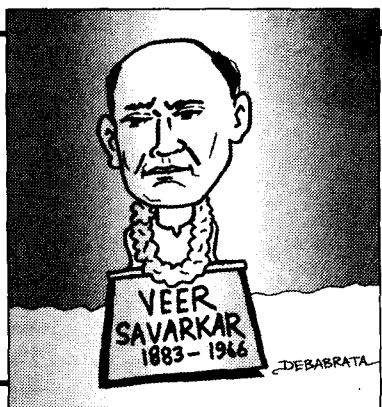
Prof Dasgupta has questioned "in what sense is Savarkar a national figure? And why should it take 56 years ... to realise that Savarkar was a national figure?" One of the reasons was that he did not toe the Gandhian line, rather he was strongly opposed to it.

The earlier regimes which ruled the country for 50 years or so did not give due honour not only to Savarkar but also to many other illustrious sons of the country. For example, portraits of Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak have been installed in Parliament long ago but not of Bipin Chandra Pal.

BJP or Savarkar's Hindutva did not extinguish "the glory of the Congress of Gandhi and Nehru". The "glory" of the Congress first started disappearing when its right-wing leaders led by the Mahatma did not allow Subhas Bose, the elected president at the Tripuri Congress (March 1939), to function. Had he been allowed, the history of India would have been different today. Its glory was "extinguished forever" when it accepted the country's partition in August 1947 although Gandhiji publicly declared on 31 March 1947 that "if Congress wishes to accept partition, it would be over my dead body". Savarkar was a firm believer in a united India. He did not oppose the Muslims but was dead against the Muslim League and its two-nation theory.

This valiant freedom fighter was marginalised for more than 50 years and the BJP-led NDA government has undone the wrong done to him by installing his portrait in the Parliament and not "tainted" it as contended by Dasgupta. His sufferings and sacrifices are not less than those political leaders whose portraits dazzle the Parliament's Central Hall.

Savarkar did not toe the Gandhian line, rather he was strongly opposed to it



ment in India and also in volume XI of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's *The History and Culture of the Indian People* (General Editor: Dr RC Majumdar). He has written: "Savarkar, an eminent Indian patriot, who played a very prominent part in India's struggle for freedom in the present century, and suffered much for his activities in the hands of the British authorities". His daring escape to French territory on way to India from a British ship while in its custody has been described by Dr RC Majumdar as "historic, almost romantic".

Again, Dasgupta has stated that "there is not even a passing reference to Savarkar in the 940-page *The Role of Honour: Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs* edited by KC Ghosh. Probably this book was first published during Savarkar's life time and that is why his name was not included as a martyr. But he has made a number of references to Savarkar in another equally important book and has written a short biographical sketch of Savarkar. I quote two lines: "He was always in favour of armed revolution to wrest

and Nehru joined the mainstream freedom movement — that India was trying to free itself from the clutches of the British. Savarkar internationalised the Indian freedom movement by being the first person whose case was fought at the International Court in the Hague."

On knowing the verdict of the Court of Arbitration at the Hague, *The Statesman* wrote an editorial "In Mutiny Mood" (25 February 1911) on Savarkar. Its first two lines: "The announcement from the Hague that the Savarkar case has been decided in favour of Great Britain will give general satisfaction.

The crimes of which this man has been found guilty after a full and fair trial were of a most heinous character, and it would have tended to bring the law of asylum into disrepute if such a miscreant had been allowed to go scot free..."

Long before Savarkar's alleged "117-page Hindutva (1923)" was published, the idea of having a separate Muslim state was there and it dates back to 1919. AB Keith in his *Constitutional History of India*

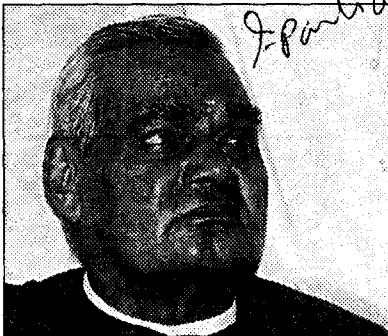
PM Will Be Held Solely Responsible If Mission Fails, Warns LS

House pushes Atal on the back foot over peace move

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 MAY

THE Lok Sabha on Thursday hoisted the "beware" sign for Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Prime Minister defended his peace gesture vis-a-vis Pakistan by pointing to the changed mood in J&K and post-Iraq global geopolitics. The short duration discussion in the Lok Sabha, the first since the Prime Minister's telephonic conversation with his Pakistan counterpart Mir Zafarullah Jamali, was insignificant in that it brought out Mr Vajpayee's desire for early resumption of negotiations as well as the constraints he faces in the form of deep-seated suspicions of Pakistan.

The message of major Opposition groups as well as NDA constituents to the Prime Minister was simple: While he can press ahead on the path of peace, he will be held exclusively responsible if the mission fails yet again. The absence of deputy prime minister L.K. Advani, sceptical about the whole en-



VAJPAYEE: LONELY AT THE TOP

terprise, from the House must also have alerted the PM to the political pitfalls.

Replying to the debate, Mr Vajpayee seemed fully aware of the limited space available to him as he repeated his government's preconditions — end of Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorism and dismantling of the terrorist support infrastruc-

ture across the border — and supported the BJP chief whip's demand for "a no proxy war pledge" on the part of Pakistan.

"I am mindful of the concerns expressed by the members," said the Prime Minister, adding that experience also demanded that he tread cautiously in what was a clear reference to the Kargil betrayal. Though the PM managed to defend his case, the tone of the discussion made it evident that there was little scope for ambitious diplomatic initiatives like another dramatic visit to Pakistan or an early invite to Mr Jamali.

Nonetheless, Mr Vajpayee's interest in early talks with the neighbour was evident when he qualified his insistence on Pakistan to meet the twin preconditions of cessation of support to cross-border terrorism and dismantling of the support infrastructure for jihadis by the remark that terrorists in J&K don't follow a single line of command. This may be interpreted as a dilution of the traditional stance where Pakistan and its ISI are held accountable for the outrages.

Advani prefers to stay away from debate

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 MAY

THE differences in the higher echelons of the government over the Prime Minister's new peace gesture towards Pakistan became publicly evident on Thursday when deputy prime minister L.K. Advani skipped the Parliament discussion on the issue.

Mr Advani was in his North Block office all through the evening when discussion on the subject was underway in the Lok Sabha. The deputy prime minister, a punctilious parliamentarian, rarely misses important discussions like this one. Mr Advani has been sceptical of the Prime Minister's efforts to resume negotiations with Pakistan. Though he expressed misgivings at important policy forum on this issue earlier, this was the first time that he distanced himself from the peace efforts.

Mr Advani's absence goes to show that Mr Vajpayee may not have much room to manoeuvre on the Pakistan question. The discussion in Parliament underlined the Opposition's readiness to tar-

get the BJP if the peace efforts go the way they did after the Prime Minister's Lahore bus trip.

Except for the Left, the National Conference, Mr Ramvilas Paswan and Mr Ramjeevan Singh of the JD(U), all speakers made it clear that they would not be able to shoulder the blame for another fiasco. As Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav joined the Shiv Sena in expressing his misgivings about Pakistan's intentions, it became clear that the avowed support for the peace mission was no carte blanche and that the margin of error was non-existent.

The reigning mood was one of scepticism and it was not lost on the Prime Minister. He defended his case and seemed ready not to hold Pakistan's regime responsible for every act of terror in the Valley. Mr Vajpayee, however, insisted that there was no dilution of the twin pre-conditions — end of Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorism and dismantling of the terror infrastructure across the border. BJP leader V.K. Malhotra's speech also made it clear that the party was not ready to switch to the peace track. His occasional lapses into Pakistan-bashing received applause from the Saffron benches.



ADVANI: HANDS OFF

N-policy not Pak-centric, says PM

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 MAY

PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Thursday, spurned Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's offer of denuclearisation of South Asia. He pointed out that India's concerns were not Pakistan-specific.

Referring to the offer made by President Musharraf in a television interview earlier this week, Mr Vajpayee said while Pakistan's nuclear programme was India-specific, "our nuclear programme is not Pakistan-specific." The Pakistani President had suggested a no-war pact between the two countries, followed by reduction in troops and denuclearisation. "We have to keep in mind developments in neighbouring countries as well," Mr Vajpayee added.

This remark came close to echoing Fernandes' "China is enemy No. 1" formulation.

The Economic Times

9 MAY 2003

OPPOSITION WARNS AGAINST DESIGNS OF USA AND PAKISTAN

Seeking peace not a crime: PM

9-Pakistani

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 8. — Searching for peace is not a crime, the Prime Minister said today, responding to members' questions during a discussion in the Lok Sabha.

"India can't remain static just because talks with Pakistan might fail. We are a big country and we must take steps to restore friendly ties with Pakistan. However, in the process, we will never compromise our position and our pride," Mr Vajpayee told the Lok Sabha today while winding up a four-and-a-half hour debate on Indo-Pak peace initiatives.

Mr Vajpayee said the Pakistani offer of making the sub-continent a "de-nuclearised zone" was not acceptable to India for two reasons.

First, Pakistan's nuclear programme is India-centric whereas India's nuclear programme is not focussed on Pakistan. "Our nuclear policy is keeping in view the overall world situation. The recent developments in the world, the manner in which the United Nation was rendered 'ineffective' by the USA in the context of the Iraq war have to be taken into consideration while determining our policy. Smaller and developing nations

have to come together." Mr Vajpayee said India's nuclear doctrine is based on the "no first strike" rule. There is no such provision in Pakistan's policy, he said. "Hence, India rejects the offer of a no-war pact with Pakistan."

Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mr Rasheed Akvi (BSP) and Mr Mani Shanker Aiyer (Congress) were among the other speakers. The Opposition expressed various degrees of skepticism about the peace initiatives. They warned the Prime Minister of the "designs of both the USA and Pakistan". Mrs Gandhi went to the extent of warning the government not to "think of giving up Kashmir or partitioning Jammu & Kashmir." To this, Mr Vajpayee said: "There is no question of giving up Kashmir. I am surprised that Mrs Gandhi raised this question. Nobody can survive in this country by giving up Kashmir".

Mr Aiyer quoted from the CIA web site in which the CIA Director is reported to have said that the attack on Parliament was carried out by Kashmiri terrorists. He also quoted Mr Richard Armitage saying at the US defence academy that India and Pakistan "shared a 50-year history of enmity, which is frightening". Some members urged Mr Vajpayee to "tread cautiously"



Pakistani Rangers watch as people cross into the Indian side of the border in Wagah, 30 km from Lahore on Thursday. — AFP

after his experience of Lahore and later when he visited Lahore and later when he invited General Musharraf to Agra. Reassuring the House, Mr Vajpayee said: "I have taken all precautions before taking a step forward towards Pakistan".

The Prime Minister denied this and said the government was fully prepared before he

bitten twice shy), he told members apprehensive of India's preparedness for this round of peacemaking.

Mr Vajpayee gave some details of his telephonic conversation with his Pakistani counterpart, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali. "Mr Jamali told me, 'let us play hockey'", Mr Vaj-

payee said. In response, Mr Vajpayee told the Pakistani Prime Minister that he knew Mr Jamali had been a good hockey player but how would it be if "during a India-Pakistan hockey match there's suddenly news that 50 innocent Indians have been massacred by terrorists."

Pak delegation in Delhi

NEW DELHI, May 8. — Amidst peace overtures by India and Pakistan, a 13-member Pakistani parliamentary delegation arrived in the Capital late tonight.

The delegation, which entered the country through the Wagah border this morning, is on a week-long visit during which they would be holding talks with their counterparts, writers and intellectuals.

The delegation, led by the former planning minister, Mr Khalid Ranga, was welcomed at the New Delhi railway station by activists of the Association of Peoples of Asia.

The delegation is scheduled to meet MPs Mr Somnath Chatterjee and Mr Mani Shanker Aiyer tomorrow. — SNS

LS on fire over telecom tariff hike

Long list of holidays worries RS

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 7 MAY

FOR disinvestment, communications and IT minister Arun Shourie, there is no respite from the criticisms of some of the BJP's own allies. Only this time, the issue at stake is not disinvestment but the modest hike in telecom tariff.

The divestment issue will, of course, resurface on Thursday, when the Lok Sabha takes up a discussion on the HPCL-BPCL selloff. The issue so agitated the "usual suspects" in the NDA pack — the Shiv Sena, the Samata Party and the Janata Dal(U) — that they joined the Opposition in staging a walkout from the Lok Sabha during Question Hour in protest against Mr Shourie's attempts to justify the hike in the rate of basic telephone services.

In doing so, the three NDA components delivered a serious snub to the Vajpayee government. This was probably the first time any of the BJP allies had publicly voiced their displeasure. Joining the growing chorus for a rollback were also Madan Lal Khurana and V.K. Malhotra.

The issue had the entire Opposition charged up and took up almost the entire Question Hour. Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi's attempts to restore order fell on deaf ears as the members kept up their demand for a rollback. Mr Shourie's efforts to defend the tariff hike only worsened matters.

The communications and Information Technology minister pointed out that the telephone rentals, in all the tariff plans, had remained unchanged. The reduction in the

number of free calls and the increase in the rates of land line to cellular phone rates had been necessitated by the reduction in the rates of long-distance calls like STD and ISD. These long-distance call rates used to cross-subsidise rural telephony, he said. Any move to alter this structure will only end up hitting MTNL and BSNL financially, Mr Shourie said.

His reply, made amid a din, failed to satisfy the Opposition members. They moved to the Well of the House, criticising, what they called, was an 'anti-poor step.' The Shiv Sena members too would have joined them, but were restrained from doing so by their House leader Chandrakant Khaire.

However, Mr Khaire and his party colleague Shivaji Mane laid their cellular phones on the table of the House as a mark of protest, saying they will be unable to face their voters. Amid all these uproarious scenes, Mr Raghunath Jha, the dissident Samata MP, alleged that the land line call charges had been increased to help the Reliance Group, which was operating a cellular service and had recently made its foray into the limited mobile service.

Mr Khurana was overheard saying that people were upset at the increase in the basic telephony tariff. As the noisy scenes continued, a visibly upset Speaker said: "You have other ways of expressing your views. This is not the way to behave in the House. I can understand your concerns and am ready for an half-an-hour discussion on the matter and the minister will reply to it." This ticking off, however, failed to pacify the members of the House.

Plan to cap ministry size half-hearted, says CPM

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 7 MAY

THE Vajpayee government's plans to limit the size of a ministry may have won all-round approval, but the CPI (M) on Wednesday criticised it as being half-hearted and in violation of the recommendation of the Constitutional Review Commission.

"The Union Cabinet has bypassed the recommendation made by the commission, which has recommended that the size of the ministry be limited to 10% of the popular House, i.e., the Lower House. Earlier recommendations have also favoured the curtailment of the size, based on 10% of the directly elected Lower House. By this principle, the Union ministry cannot exceed 54 members," a statement issued here by the party's politburo said here on Wednesday.

It found fault with the Bill that was introduced earlier this week in the Lok Sabha, which limits the size of the council of ministers at the national and state levels to 10% of the total strength of both the Upper and Lower Houses.

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 7 MAY

THE Rajya Sabha, on Wednesday, voiced concerns about the number of government holidays. Raising the matter by a special mention, Congress' Rajeev Shukla said a government employee works for only 164 days in a year.

Mr Shukla, who found support from Union shipping minister Shatrughan Sinha and several others, argued that the situation causes concern when one compares the working days in other countries with our own. So many holidays also hinder a country's development, he pointed out.

The leave portfolio of government employees, which was extraordinarily big, looks even more so after the government ignored the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission to slash the total number of holidays which are existent at present.

While the government implemented and, in some cases, even improved upon the recommendations of the pay commission, it overlooked the panel's suggestions to pare down the number of gazetted holidays to five from the 17 at present.

Electricity Bill passed in RS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 5

THE Electricity Bill that will bring about sweeping changes in the power sector was passed by the Rajya Sabha today. After being in a state of abeyance since it was first introduced in 2001, it was only possible to get it past both Houses as Congress decided to withdraw all its amendments.

The most significant change it will bring about is make the electricity sector into an industry as the private sector will not just be allowed to transmit and distribute but also generate power. Calling the Bill "revolutionary", Power Minister Anant Geete said it was an attempt to consolidate laws on generation, transmission and distribution of

power and to rational tariff.

The Left Front stuck to its amendments and even insisted on three division, which is unusual. Jibon Roy of the CPI(M) insisted on moving in the 108 amendments "to put it on record". These were predictably defeated on all three occasions though it did manage to create a flutter in the treasury benches as members rushed to fill in the near-empty benches.

The main objections were related to the fact that 112 recommendations of the Standing Committee on Electricity that had been working for the past 15 months had not been incorporated. "It was agreed that the Standing Committee will ease the legislative process, but if unanimous recommendations are not approved, then what is the guarantee that individuals will be heard once it is passed," said

Nilopat Basu from the Left Front.

He was responding to Geete's assurance that the Centre would bring a comprehensive bill in the next session to incorporate the remaining recommendations of the Standing committee. "It will not be a question of prestige for the Government. We will bring about the amendments ourselves," he said. He said the Bill providing access to private players in distribution and transmission of power in the country has already incorporated 80 per cent of the recommendations.

The fear that was expressed by the Left Front was that nearly 9 lakh jobs were endangered with privatisation. In earlier debates, fears were also expressed on the power and the term of the Chairman of the Appellate Tribunal. MPs like Kapil Sibal had demanded for better accountability of the State

Regulatory Commissions preferably to the Parliament. Another demand was open access of private players in distribution and transmission in a time-bound limit.

With the passage of the Bill, the Government would be able to realise the goal of adding 1 lakh megawatts of power generation capacity by 2012 besides providing electricity to all villages by 2007 and all dwelling units by 2012.

Geete tried to allay fears that the Bill would encourage large-scale privatisation and hence retrenchment of state electricity board employees. "The Bill would provide more opportunities as private players who would tap more sources and form new companies."

The amendments related to other issues would be brought in a comprehensive amendment in the next monsoon session.

of Parliament

House sanctity for talks offer

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, April 23: It's official now.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today elevated his last week's speech in Srinagar to the status of government policy when he told the Lok Sabha that India had indeed made a gesture of conciliation to Pakistan.

"We have extended our hand of friendship," Vajpayee said, expressing the hope that "a new beginning can take place between India and Pakistan".

The Prime Minister said Pakistan can open the door for talks by stopping cross-border infiltration and destroying terrorist infrastructure in its territory. "Talks", he added, can "take place on all issues, including that of Jammu and Kashmir".

In Islamabad, President Pervez Musharraf said he

was glad to see "positive indications" from India which could be pursued to "greater interacting process".

"Pakistan wishes to resolve all its issues with India peacefully," he said, speaking for the first time since Vajpayee's statement.

Pakistan foreign minister Khurshheed Mehmood Kasuri pitched in with his share of new-found bonhomie by making a fresh offer to Delhi to participate in a multi-billion-dollar pipeline project from Turkmenistan. Kasuri said the offer was made in the spirit of reconciliation displayed by Vajpayee. (See Page 6)

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani publicly threw his weight behind Vajpayee's peace effort by affirming the talks offer.

"Let them abandon the path of terrorism and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. I am sure not only the Government of

India but the people are willing to respond," he said in the Rajya Sabha.

In an interview with an Indian TV channel, Kasuri responded: "We are committed to combating terrorism."

In a statement on his two-day visit to the Valley, Vajpayee spelt out his government's changing policy on Pakistan. Since September 11, the National Democratic Alliance government has been ruling out talks unless Pakistan stopped sponsoring what it calls cross-border terrorism.

Today, recalling what he had said in Srinagar, the Prime Minister talked about a new beginning.

"Both countries should resolve that we need to live together in peace," Vajpayee said.

In Kashmir, he had also said that "we should take lessons from Iraq" in a throwaway re-

mark that figured indirectly in the House today.

Accused by the Opposition of acting under Washington's pressure, foreign minister Yashwant Sinha said: "Compulsive hostility to the US is a baggage we should leave behind... this is not suited to our national interest."

Embedded in the statement is a clear acknowledgement of the reality of unchallenged US supremacy and acceptance that Delhi cannot possibly go on stonewalling Washington's calls for talks with Pakistan.

There has been speculation in the media about a possible dip in Indo-US ties after Parliament passed a resolution deploring the war on Iraq. In the House today, a BJP member described the resolution as a "national irrelevance", which should gladden President George W. Bush's heart. (See Page 7)

29/4

9. Pakistan

MPs SEEK CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CMs

Mayawati's 'governance' draws flak in Parliament

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati's 'style of governance' was the subject of an animated discussion in both the Houses of Parliament today.

In the Lok Sabha, Opposition and Treasury benches alike called upon the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee to evolve a code of conduct for Chief Ministers. The issue was raised through an adjournment motion by the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who has been at the receiving end of Ms. Mayawati's policies.

He accused the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister of unleashing a 'political vendetta' against him and his colleagues.

He urged the House to exam-

ine the decisions made by him as Chief Minister. "If I am found guilty I am willing to accept whatever punishment the House decides".

The former Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar warned that the State was on the brink of a civil war, unless something drastic was done. "The language being used by the Chief Minister and the manner in which the Government is being run is reprehensible" he said.

The CPI(M) leader, Somnath Chatterjee, said the move to slap cases against the SP leader smacked of revenge, while Ramvilas Paswan(LJP) came down hard on Ms. Mayawati and challenged her claims to being the spokesperson of Dalits.

"She doesn't have a following

outside U.P." he said.

Dasmunsi (Cong.) said the politics of vendetta had started in 1999 itself when Rajiv Gandhi's name was put in the Bofors chargesheet.

"What is happening to Mulayam Singh can happen to anybody" he said.

V.K. Malhotra (BJP) agreed with the members' demand that the PM evolve a code of conduct. However Prabhunath Singh (Samata) demanded that the U.P. Chief Minister be booked under POTA.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition insisted that the Centre intervene and stop 'political victimisation' in Uttar Pradesh while the Samajwadi Party demanded dismissal of the Mayawati Government.

The SP demand was articulat-

ed by Ram Gopal Yadav, who charged that the Chief Minister's action had ~~resulted~~ in a sense of insecurity among those in the Opposition. While stating that in many cases, successive Chief Ministers had granted money from the discretionary quota as per rules, the SP chief was being 'singled out'. He charged that the CAG report had indicted Ms. Mayawati for having 'flouted rules' in 145 cases.

The Leader of the Opposition, Manmohan Singh, expressed concern over the "mass victimisation" and said the action was setting a bad precedent and affected successful functioning of parliamentary democracy.

He took exception that even a former Governor, Motilal Vora, was not 'spared' and demanded that the Centre should 'wake up' to the 'growing crisis of governance' hurting the pace of development in the State.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, assured the House that the Government would seek details from the U.P. Government and place it before the House.

The House witnessed heated exchanges, after the SP leader, Amar Singh expressed apprehension over threat to his life. Responding to the members' demand, Ms. Swaraj said she would take up the issue of security for the member with the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani.

Mayawati's poser: Page 12

Mulayam's arrest stayed

LUCKNOW, APRIL 21. The Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court, comprising Justice J.S. Mehta, Justice Anup Kumar Sahai and R.C. Pandey, today granted a stay on any arrest of the Samajwadi Party president, Mulayam Singh Yadav and other senior leaders till May 16 on the FIR registered against them by the Bahujan Samaj Party.

The hearing in the case will be held on May 16 next. Earlier on April 17, the SP national general secretary, Amar Singh also got a similar reprieve by the High Court.

The petitions filed by the SP leaders, sought interim orders to stay their arrests and quashing of the impugned FIRs against them registered on April 14 last.

The leaders who have been granted stay are:

the SP chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, party state general secretary, Shivpal Singh Yadav, SP leaders, Om Prakash Singh, Chandra Bhadra Singh, Balram Yadav, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Mohammed Azam Khan and deputy leader of the SP in the Assembly, Ambika Choudhary. Senior counsel, Virendra Bhatia argued the case on behalf of the petitioners while Advocate General, S.C. Mishra represented the state. Counsel, L.P. Mishra appeared on behalf of the Chief Minister, Mayawati and BSP state president, K.K. Sachan.

Incidentally, Mr. Sachan had lodged the FIRs against the eight SP leaders in Hazratganj police station on April 14 last for releasing "fake" video CDs against Ms. Mayawati. — UNI

Parliament's punch

Breaks the 'diplomatic' silence 57-8

It may have been watered down though it was not innocuous. It came too late to make a dent in the situation, and the pre-adoption wrangling certainly detracted from its import. Yet in forcing a resolution on Iraq the Lok Sabha re-established the potency of Parliament. Regardless of the obvious political motives of the opposition parties that mounted the pressure on a reluctant government, in the ultimate analysis what prevailed was the voice of the House. Even if the unanimity eventually exhibited was contrived, the signal that has been flashed is that the legislature is no rubber-stamp of the executive, that India's democratic traditions have not been totally eroded. To the dismay of many, the government had opted to place a premium on what it maintains is diplomatic pragmatism and avoided taking a position on the American-led military action in Iraq. Sure, there were the odd observations that it would have been better if Saddam Hussein was brought to his knees on the basis of a UN-approved war plan, but influenced by the mandarins of the external affairs ministry and the advice of the National Security Adviser, the government avoided doing anything that might risk the American backing it requires on a host of other issues, Kashmir in particular. A significant section of public opinion in this country deemed that both immoral and indicative of a lack of self-confidence. That section can claim some reassurance from what developed in Parliament.

It was, perhaps more than any of its forerunners, a compromise resolution. Significantly, and probably for the first time, a resolution dealing with an international issue was tendered in Hindi. That leaves the diplomats just a little room for manoeuvre, and that the opposition accepted that formulation indicates that its more responsible entities understood the government's difficulties. That group, to be sure, would not include the red brigade which is unlikely to ever be burdened with diplomatic duties since its chances of capturing the Red Fort, figuratively speaking, dissipated the moment its mentors opted for glasnost and perestroika. Not that the apprehensions of the government and its diplomats are unfounded. Given the manic mood in which Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice are functioning, and Tony Blair's currying favour with them, the US and the UK will not be pleased with being named in the resolution, its call for an immediate end to military action, and its stress on the UN playing a lead role in the re-building of Iraq. There is, however, a larger global community that matters, it should appreciate that the denizens of Sansad Sadan cherish their right to think independently, as surely do their counterparts in Westminster and Capitol Hill.

THE STATESMAN

SINHA ON PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKES

'Pak. in a much worse category'

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, APRIL 9. The External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said today that "if lack of democracy, possession of weapons of mass destruction and export of terrorism were reasons for a country to make pre-emptive strike in another country, then Pakistan deserved to be tackled more than any other country."

Responding in the Rajya Sabha to a discussion on an all-party resolution on the United States-led war on Iraq, Mr. Sinha denied that India's foreign policy was Pakistan-centric and gave certain "clarifications" on issues raised by the Opposition members.

Asserting that there was no third-party role on issues between India and Pakistan, Mr. Sinha said there was no question that anybody was being invited or would be permitted to play a role. While India had not hesitated to discuss the issue of cross-border terrorism under the international resolution against global terrorism, Indo-Pakistan bilateral issues would be discussed only under the Shimla accord.

"We know from experience, on the basis of evidence, that Pakistan does not fall in the same category as Iraq. It is in a much worse category, and therefore, it was in that context, that the reply given by me was that if these were the criteria, then Pakistan is a fitter case," Mr. Sinha said.

The House later unanimously adopted the resolution against the U.S.-led war on Iraq and said the coalition forces must immediately withdraw. It emphasised that Iraq's sovereignty should be kept intact and its reconstruction carried out under the supervision of the United Nations. The resolution, moved "under exceptional circumstances" by the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, was the same as passed by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday after much

wrangling between the treasury benches and the Opposition over whether the war should be "condemned" or "deplored". The Lower House finally settled for a Hindi word "ninda" which can be taken to mean either or neither. Although the Rajya Sabha was one in its harsh criticism of American "unilateralism" and "hegemony", the Government was taken to task for Mr. Sinha's reported remarks that India has a case for preemptive attack in Pakistan.

The Minister explained that his remarks were in response to questions asked in the media, to which the U.S. State Department reacted. "It should not be taken as a snub or humiliation. We must show confidence as a nation of one billion, which has the economic, military and democratic strength to tackle the problem with the same unity as shown in adopting the resolution on Iraq."

Initiating the discussion, the Congress leader, K. Natwar Singh, lambasted the Government for its "inconsistent" foreign policy and wanted to know whether the Minister's remarks on pre-emptive strike amounted to a justification of America's unilateral attack on Iraq. He questioned the legitimacy of the war which was contrary to the U.N. Charter. "The evangelical fervour of Bush to shape the world as he wants it to be is a matter of deep concern to India," he said. Mr. Singh said that India should be in touch with the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, the five permanent members of the Security Council and NAM leaders for a view on a post-war Iraq.

Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi (BJP) said that it was thought that after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. would show a better understanding of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan. Instead it had turned a "blind eye" to the activities of outfits such as Al-Qaeda and Jaish-e-Mohammed and, in fact, had waived off

10 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Parliament hammers out Iraq resolution

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 8. — Although the government, and particularly the external affairs minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, was unhappy at the need for a Parliamentary resolution against the military action in Iraq, the Lok Sabha today adopted a resolution, in Hindi, deploring the US-led coalition's hostilities against Iraq.

After two days of wrangling over words and frequent adjournments over the text, the Lok Sabha passed a resolution "deploring" the US-led war on Iraq, preferring a mild criticism to a stronger attack of the invasion as demanded by the Opposition.

The House also expressed unanimity in demanding an immediate end to the war and withdrawal of coalition forces while hoping that the post-war reconstruction would take place under the aegis of the UN without undermining the sovereignty of Iraq.

It also described as "unacceptable" the military action for changing the Iraqi government. The BJP spokesperson, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, asserted that the English translation of the word "ninda" (used in the Parliamentary resolution on Iraq) would be "deplored" and not "condemned" as claimed by the Opposition.

The BJP and the government did not accept the suggestion of the Opposition parties for using "ghor ninda" in the resolution, he added.

A give and take attitude between the Opposition and the government side on the contents and the text finally helped them to flag off the unanimous Parliamen-

India can't be subdued: Sinha

NEW DELHI, April 8. — The external affairs minister Mr Yashwant Sinha today assured the Lok Sabha that India cannot be 'subdued' or subjected to unilateralism by any country.

His comments follow apprehension by many MPs cutting across party lines that after the Iraq war, the USA could adopt a similar attitude to other countries and India can be a potential victim.

"India, a country of a billion people, cannot be treated so lightly... India cannot be subdued by any power on earth," he said as members cheered him by thumping desks.

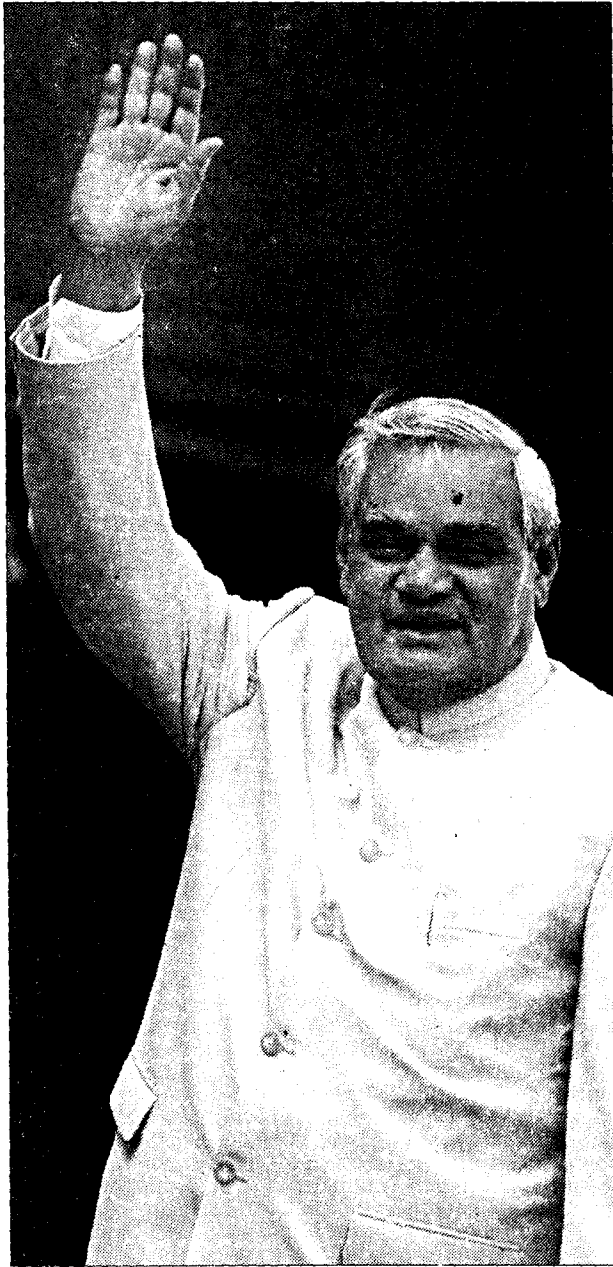
He asserted that no country should underestimate India's capacity to meet any challenge that may lie ahead. —SNS

tary resolution expressing 'ninda' of the war against Iraq.

The Congress chief whip, Mr PR Das Munshi, said when the warring sides, after failing to hammer out the English draft resolution, finally settled for negotiations on the "Hindi" draft.

However the Opposition leaders, trying to score brownie points outside, insist that the word "ninda" meant nothing but 'condemnation' even as the ruling party members emphasised with equal vehemence that 'ninda' was to 'deplore' and not 'condemn.'

Centre on backfoot over Iraq



Atal Bihari Vajpayee greets journalists in Parliament on Monday.

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 7

AS PARLIAMENT assembled after a three-week recess, the Opposition on Monday attacked the government in both Houses for not adopting an "unambiguous stand" on the Iraq war.

In the Lok Sabha, Opposition members demanded suspension of Question Hour and sought a categorical statement from the government on the issue. They submitted a notice to the Speaker for an adjournment motion. The latter adjourned the House, saying the government was considering a resolution.

Earlier, Congress chief whip P.R. Das Munshi said, "The Centre has failed to make clear its stand. During an all-party meeting before the war, the government had said it would condemn the US action in case of a war. But it has failed to make any categorical statement yet."

Left and Samajwadi Party members, too, attacked the Centre for its "failure" to condemn the US-led coalition's "naked aggression" on a country that has always been friendly towards India. LJP leader Ram Vilas Paswan said, "The Bush administration has dismissed Yashwant Sinha's statement that New Delhi had the right to take steps against Pakistan. Tomorrow, the US may take a pro-Pakistan stand and intervene in the Kashmir issue. What will our government do then?" he asked.

Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, too, warned: "India will be the next target of the US."

BJP's V.K. Malhotra said,

"My party has condemned the war. But would suspension of Question Hour put an end to the war?"

In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition demanded a government resolution to discuss the Iraq issue and condemn the US aggression. Opposition members wanted suspension of Question Hour to discuss the Iraq situation. Leader of the House Jaswant Singh said there was no need to suspend Question Hour as the government was ready for a discussion.

Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat announced the first adjournment at 11.30 am to let the government consider the Opposition demand. The House was adjourned again as the impasse was not resolved. The Opposition led by the Congress wanted a discussion under Rule 170 where the House could express its opinion on the issue.

Natwar Singh (Congress) said so far no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. The US wanted to kill the head of a State that was a member of the UN and NAM. The US had even indicated that it could do it again to settle the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan. The PM should make a statement and a resolution should be adopted by the House, he said. Nilotpal Basu (CPI-M) said a discussion without a government resolution would be meaningless. Jaswant Singh said the discussion could not begin without consultations with the external affairs minister. When the Chair asked him if there could be a unanimous resolution, he said, "It can follow a discussion".

BJP against Saddam's jihad call

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 7

BJP SPOKESMAN V.K. Malhotra said the Opposition was needlessly making a political issue out of the government's stand against the Iraq war when it had reflected the mood of the country, which was unanimously against the US action.

The BJP's national executive at Indore, too, had come out with a strong statement, deploring the US action, he said. Malhotra said the BJP was also against Saddam Hussein's call for *jihad* to resist the US-led forces.

"When many countries are rallying behind the Iraqi people, a call for *jihad* has a different connotation. Saddam should have raised other issues, including the plight of his people and human rights abuses."

Malhotra said no country other than India had come out so strongly against the war and the Opposition had unnecessarily stalled Parliament's proceedings on a flimsy pretext.

He said the Congress should remember that under its rule, too, Parliament had never condemned the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Czechoslovakia or Afghanistan. "As for the Left, it never raised its voice when the Russians took control of Afghanistan," he said.

Atal favours one-party govt

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 6

THE PRIME Minister has indicated his strong preference for a single-party government at the Centre after the next Lok Sabha elections. However, he said the BJP could also form a coalition in the best interests of the nation.

"One-party government is very good. But if need be, we can work with others for national interest and not just for the sake of power. We have shown that and we can do so again," he said at a function on Sunday to mark the party's 23rd anniversary.

Vajpayee's words were indicative of the mood of a strong section of the BJP that wants to go it alone next time. At the just-concluded national executive of the party at In-

doore, the leadership had set the target of 300 seats for the general elections due next year. Though BJP leaders have been publicly saying they will take the allies along if they get to form the government, many of them want the party to try and win enough seats on its own so that it doesn't have to be at the mercy of smaller parties again.

Addressing the gathering at the BJP national headquarters here, Vajpayee also cautioned party workers against the forces of disintegration and asked them to be united.

Speaking on the occasion, party president Venkaiah Naidu said the BJP was not just another party. "We have to work like missionaries on the path shown by our leaders like Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and Deen Dayal Upadhyay." Naidu also asked party cadres to strive towards

building a society free of fear and corruption, with the aim of making India a powerful nation.

Earlier, Vajpayee dwelt at length on inter-state water disputes, such as the ones over the Cauvery and the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal. He hoped the states concerned would resolve their disputes mutually, instead of waiting for court verdicts.

"All problems can be solved by taking people into confidence," Vajpayee said, citing the example of how the issue of Bilaspur zonal railway headquarters was resolved.

The Prime Minister told party-men that "winds of change" were blowing across Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. This, he said, was evident from the public rallies that he addressed at Indore and Bilaspur. Assembly elections are due in the two states later this year.

PARLIAMENT SESSION / JOGI'S CHARGE MAY COME UP FOR DISCUSSION

Cong. to seek resolution on Iraq

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 6. Parliament opens tomorrow for the second leg of the budget session and although the debate on, and the passing of, the Finance Bill is the most urgent business, several important issues are expected to be raised by the Opposition, and some of these could lead to a storm.

Several Opposition parties have reiterated their intention to ask for a unanimous and strong resolution by Parliament condemning the United States-led invasion of Iraq.

The Congress will table an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha tomorrow to press for a discussion on Iraq and also plead with the Government for a common resolution by Parliament, party spokesperson, S. Jaipal Reddy, said.

The CPI, the Lok Janshakti, the Samajwadi Party and others have indicated that they have not been taken in by the Bharatiya Janata Party's recent resolution on Iraq blaming the U.S. and deploring its aggression.

That was an example of the party's 'forked tongue' tactics, a senior CPI leader

said. The Opposition, especially the Congress, is not impressed by the Centre pointing accusing fingers at the Jammu and Kashmir Government in relation to the killing of 24 Kashmiri Pandits.

The National Democratic Alliance Government might be asked to give details of its own unimpressive record of the last five years when its "ally", the National Conference, ruled the State. And does the Centre have any coherent Jammu and Kashmir policy, some Opposition leaders have asked.

Several other issues — the misuse of POTA, the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister, Ajit Jogi's charge that the Intelligence Bureau has been put up to perform some "dirty tricks" on the Opposition leaders, and the threatening statements from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader, Pravin Togadia — could be raised during the session.

Dr. Togadia had admitted that the VHP was behind the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, and despite the Supreme Court verdict disallowing any change in the status of the Central Government acquired land in Ayodhya, he has threatened to "fake" the entire 67 acres

through a mass agitation.

A senior Congress leader has already asked the Centre to explain whether Dr. Togadia is "above the law". In short, the Government may have to explain why no action was being taken against him.

The DMK is upset with the Centre for being unable to do anything to get the MDMK leader, Vaiko, charged under POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act), released from jail. It could ask the Centre to repeal POTA, amend it, or ensure that it is not misused.

Besides the Finance bill, the Government has promised legislation on women's reservation and a ban on cow slaughter throughout the country.

Both these would require constitutional amendments and it remains to be seen how a consensus is worked out. The session could also see yet another attempt to resurrect the amendment of the Representation of the People Act, recently quashed by the Supreme Court.

For this there will have to be another all-party meeting to arrive at a consensus, but the Congress has already signalled that it is unwilling.

9/10/11 7/11

9/10/11

7 APR 2003

INDIAN HINDU

Rajya Sabha poll

9-Parliament
Changing rules a retrograde step.

The Union Cabinet's decision to amend the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to permit open ballot voting for elections to the Rajya Sabha and doing away with the provision that a person shall not be qualified to be chosen as a representative of any State or Union Territory unless that person is an elector for a Lok Sabha constituency in that State or Territory, is likely to impinge on the basic structure of our federal polity. Secrecy is the sine qua non of the ballot.

By introducing "open ballot", albeit for the Rajya Sabha polls only, a mockery is made of the principle of free and fair elections. It is true that secret ballots have led to a lot of malpractices in the elections to the Rajya Sabha in which moneybags have induced cross-voting. The answer to this problem lies in political parties exercising greater control over their legislators, rather than introducing a system of balloting that is fundamentally flawed. A Bill introduced in Parliament in December 2001 incorporating these changes failed to muster majority support and the issue was shelved.

57-8 114
The Rajya Sabha is the Council of States and the founding fathers in their wisdom had concluded that the problems of the State could be articulated best by persons who live there than by an outsider, however eminent. This requirement is observed more in the breach to accommodate party leaders rejected in elections to the House of the People or those who command no popular base at all. Indira Gandhi, after her defeat in Rae Bareilly and unseated from the Chikmagalur seat in the late '70s, wanted to enter the Rajya Sabha from Karnataka, the only State where the Congress had the numbers to get her elected.

An affidavit was filed by her claiming that she was a resident of Vishnu Ashram on the outskirts of Bangalore while her name prominently figured in the New Delhi voter's list. Such aberrations are not uncommon. The entire nation knows that Manmohan Singh, leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Rajya Sabha elected from Assam, is not a resident of that state, or Arun Jaitley, Union Minister for commerce and Industry and Law and Justice, does not belong to Gujarat from where he won his Rajya Sabha seat. The problem can be tackled by the Election Commission at the time of scrutinizing nomination papers and by making political parties accountable for sponsoring them. But to do away with the qualification for membership of the Council of States prescribed by the Representation of the People Act is on a par with the hypothesis that because murders continue to be committed despite Section 300 of the Indian Penal Code, the section should be repealed. The remedy is to enforce the law and the Constitution.

0 1 APR 2003

Dalit issue raises no concern

The brisk business conducted in both Houses last week left one wondering whether the members were indeed involved in the proceedings. In the Lok Sabha, there was no business left to transact in the last two working days — 12 and 13 March — after the discussion on the Budget ended with the finance minister's reply.

The slot was filled by including discussions on drought and atrocities on Dalits. And the discussion on drought was no better than what the House had witnessed in the previous winter session.

Participants such as Mr HD Deve Gowda, former Prime Minister and a farmer himself, questioned the

Centre's failure to tackle the situation.

It's a sad commentary on our Parliamentarians that only a few members from upper castes spoke on atrocities on Dalits; most of the speakers were Dalits themselves.

If upper caste members were shy of participating in the discussion, floor leaders of major parties such as the BJP, Congress and CPI-M should have fielded colleagues from upper castes to speak on the subject. But this did not happen.

Mayawati tapes reverberated in

the House on the all four working days. The Opposition, particularly the Samajvadi Party, raised the issue. But the House could not take it up because the Opposition and the government failed to agree on the mode of the discussion.

The Opposition wanted the debate under Rule 184 or 193, but the government was for a calling-attention motion that would lead to a short-duration discussion.

A private member resolution urging the Centre to pass legislation banning cow slaughter was shot

down by a determined Opposition. Led by Mr Shivraj Patil (Congress), Opposition members argued that banning cow slaughter was a state subject and the Centre had no right to pass legislation on it.

When parliamentary affairs minister Mrs Sushma Swaraj said it was a mere resolution and not a Bill, Mr Patil shot back saying the resolution spoke of passing a legislation. The resolution was finally withdrawn.

In the Rajya Sabha, the much-awaited discussion on the CVC Bill did not take place, though the Bill was listed for discussion and passage. The House may take up the Bill after the Budget session resumes on 7 April.

week in PARLIAMENT

17 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

Not a decoration

Rajya Sabha nominations

The controversy over Shabana Azmi criticising Lata Mangeshkar's sustained absence from the Rajya Sabha is not to be written off as a spat between two leading ladies of the entertainment industry but should bring into focus the role of the "eminent" persons nominated to what is, loosely, called the House of Elders. Contrary to what is being stated by those rallying around the melody queen, the purpose behind nominating persons "having special knowledge or practical experience" in "literature, science, art and social service" (to quote Article 80 of the Constitution) is not to recognise their contribution to their chosen field. For that there are awards aplenty: Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, Bharat Ratna. Nor is it intended to elevate the stature of the House. Bringing them to Parliament is aimed at bringing their rich experience and capabilities to bear on the proceedings of the legislature, to provide some guiding light to a forum that would otherwise remain just a poor relative of the more powerful Lok Sabha. Particularly in an era in which the Elders have forgotten that theirs is the chamber in which the interests of the states should be projected and protected. If they take a hard look at the philosophy behind their nominations, they will realize that they have a special responsibility to discharge. Lata is reported to have said: that from the very outset she had indicated that she would not be spending much time in the House. If so, she would have done better to decline the nomination.

A comprehensive review of the functioning of nominated members over the years indicates that the performance in the House of only a few of them has equated their other accomplishments. But they are not solely or entirely to blame. The system by which floor-time is allotted for participation in debates is a handicap, they get just a few minutes and that too at the fag end of the discussion. This must change. But Fali Nariman has no difficulty in catching the Deputy Chairman's eye. Perhaps the last word is that the nominated member, as the elected member, must have the reputation of having something worthwhile to say.

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17 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

Vajpayee briefs Kalam over buns and roses

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The developing situation on Iraq and the supreme court judgment striking down the Centre's electoral reforms law were among the key issues on which Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee briefed President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at a breakfast meeting on Sunday.

Normally, the PM briefs the President after every parliament session over tea. However, Mr Kalam made a departure this time and suggested to the PM that they meet over breakfast and at the Mughal Garden which is presently in full bloom.

Mr Vajpayee also apprised the President about the other issues that came up during the first half of the budget session. These included the two all-party meetings that the PM convened on the Iraq crisis and the women's reservation bill.

The talk of national importance apart, the breakfast fare laid out by the President was as varied as it was colourful—a combination of north and south Indian dishes, besides an array of breads and croissants. Also up for grabs were the hot favourites of both the VVIPs—mysore paak, jalebis, ladoos and gulab jamuns.

With the Mughal Garden in full bloom at this time of the year, the hour-long meeting naturally ended with a long stroll by the two amidst gladiolis, tulips and roses.

Meanwhile, like his predecessors, Mr Kalam has expressed a distaste for any place, institution or organisation being named after him. Ever since he took over as the country's President, requests have been coming in from across the country seeking his approval for utilising his name for a variety of causes.

The President obviously does not want his name being misused or the institution using his name getting into a controversy. Besides, from the first President and the first PM onwards, the convention has been to reject

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Flip-flop on Savarkar intriguing

CL Manoj in New Delhi

Feb. 25.—The Congress and Left are finding few takers for their plea that the silence of their representatives at a December meeting to take a decision on unveiling a portrait of V D Savarkar in Parliament was a "bad slip".

Both parties' contention that Savarkar was an accused in the Mahatma (Jain) assassination case and that he had "apologised" to the British and had supported the two-nation theory makes this silence intriguing. "All that we can say is that somehow the reflexes of the four leaders failed at that meeting," a Congress leader said. He felt it was "a political blunder and stupidity that will provide the BJP broom points against us."

It is learnt that many members of the Congress legislative affairs committee today criticised Mr Shivraj Patil and Mr Pranab Mukherjee's failure to voice their opposition to the government move. The Left camp is also in a

spot over the silence of CPI-M veteran Mr Somnath Chatterjee and his CPI colleague, Mr J Chittaranjan, at the meeting. Mr Chatterjee initially said they thought it was improper to vociferously differ with the Speaker, but later conceded that he "has now realised that it was a mistake not to have opposed the government move" and expressed regret.

At the meeting of Congress leaders, many MPs expressed their unhappiness over the failure of Mr Patil and Mr Mukherjee to voice their protest. Mrs Sonia Gandhi who was also present was reportedly "very uncomfortable" with the situation. Sources said given the seniority of Mr Mukherjee and Mr Patil, it was unlikely the high command would seek any formal explanation from them. The two leaders apparently said at the meeting it was a "slip" on their part. But many leaders wonder why these senior leaders, without even bothering to discuss the government proposal with the high command, "lent their silent support".

When the Statesman contacted Mr Patil, he said: "I don't wish to make any comment". The other leaders were not available for comment.

Though the Opposition today decided to boycott tomorrow's function and Mrs Gandhi and other Opposition leaders urged the President not to attend the function "the in-house blunder" took the wind out of their sails.

The CPI-M Politburo also came out with a strong denouncement of the government move but is reportedly upset about the slip of their parliamentary party leader. Recently, the CPI-M central leadership saw an internal debate with many leaders opposing the parliamentary party's failure to put up a candidate when the Shiv Sena leader, Mr Manohar Joshi, was fielded by the NDA for the post of Speaker. This, after the party opposed Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's candidature for the post of President (a decision that Left regretted privately later), many of them felt, was politically irrational.

13 MAR 2003

PM to make statement on Iraq in House

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

OPPOSING the Centre's "middle path" approach on Iraq, the Congress today extracted an assurance that Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee will make a statement in Parliament on the crisis.

The Congress and other Opposition parties raised a storm as soon as Question Hour ended in the Rajya Sabha today, demanding to know the Government's stance on the Iraq issue.

"We are opposed to the Government's middle path. We want its categorical stand opposing any unilateral action

against Iraq without the UN sanctions," party spokesperson Jaipal Reddy said.

Pranab Mukherjee said the PM and other leaders in the Government had been making statements on the Iraq issue outside the Parliament but regretted that the two Houses had not been taken into confidence in the matter. "An all-party meeting is no substitute to a statement in Parliament," he said, referring to Vajpayee's meeting with Opposition leaders yesterday.

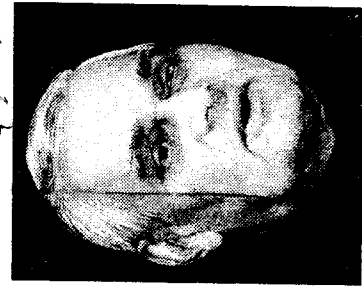
As several other Opposition members got up to speak, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had referred to the directions given by Deputy Chairman

Najma Heptulla to the Government on the Iraq issue yesterday that the PM or any of his Cabinet colleague could make a statement on Iraq.

As Swaraj began to read out yesterday's proceedings, several agitated Congress members shouted that they only wanted to know whether the Prime Minister would make a statement or not.

With the pandemonium continuing for almost 15 minutes, Swaraj was seen exchanging notes with External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha and officials seated in the gallery.

Thereafter, she told the House that the External Affairs Minister had come in to make a statement on the Iraq



9. P. K. Anant, 95.3

issue. However, since the Opposition wanted a statement only from the Prime Minister, she sent in a word for him. "The Prime Minister would come to the House as and when it was convenient for him and make a statement," she said.

Standing ovation for Vajpayee at party meeting

■ NEW DELHI: At the B.J.P. parliamentary party meeting here today, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee declared that India was opposed to a war on Iraq, but in the event of one, it would protect its interests.

On another note, the B.J.P. MPs gave a standing ovation to Vajpayee to mark his completion of five years in office. Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and B.J.P. president M. Venkaiah Naidu hailed his leadership. The meeting also decided to launch a fortnight-long, mass-contact programme covering all assembly constituencies of the country from March 19 to propagate the achievements of the Vajpayee Government.

The PM, however, said the "credit" for five years in office should also go to Advani and Naidu.

Advani told the meeting the NDA Government had demolished the myth that no non-Congress government could run the full course of five years. By the time the next Lok Sabha elections were held in 2004, the Vajpayee Government would have completed six-and-a-half-years in office.

—ENS

BSP, SP members clash in LS

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, MARCH 10. The simmering tension between the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) today boiled over in the Lok Sabha, with MPs from both sides almost coming to blows. The incident occurred during zero hour, and the Speaker, Manohar Joshi, adjourned the House for lunch ahead of schedule.

The ugly scenes erupted when the BSP MP, Ashok Chandel, raised slogans, calling the SP chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, a "chor" (thief), which was objected to by Mr. Yadav's son, Akhilesh Yadav. No sooner had Mr. Chandel completed his remarks than Akhilesh Yadav

rolled up his sleeves and rushed towards him pushing him in the process. Mr. Yadav was not present at the time. Soon, MPs from both the sides moved menacingly towards one another. Akhilesh Singh and Ramjilal Suman of the SP, too, joined the fray and the situation appeared to be taking an ugly turn. The former Prime Minister, Chandrashekhar, the CPI (M) leader, Somnath Chatterjee, and Priyaranjan Dasmunshi (Cong.) moved swiftly to separate the members.

Heated exchanges continued for a while and the Speaker's appeal for calm fell on deaf ears. Minutes later, he adjourned the House. The members continued to argue even after the

House had adjourned and it was only after a prolonged meeting at the Speaker's chamber that the two sides relented.

At his press conference, called to announce the joining of the Indian Ekta Party led by the former Minister, Rashid Masood, Mr. Yadav said the Mayawati tape was filmed during a BSP meeting and could have been shot only by BSP members. His party had not indulged in such practices and neither intended to do so, he added.

On the Women's Reservation Bill, Mr. Yadav said the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had spoken to him and efforts were on the arrive at a consensus. "Something will emerge on the Bill," he said.

1 1 MAR 2003

SEE HINDU

Mayawati must go: Opposition

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, MARCH 6. The incidents in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly today cast a shadow on the proceedings in Parliament, with irate Opposition members demanding the resignation of the Chief Minister, Mayawati, on the ground that there was a complete breakdown of the Constitutional machinery in the State.

The Opposition stalled proceedings in the Rajya Sabha for two hours starting from question hour, upsetting the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, to the extent that he threatened to resign than allow a discussion that infringed on the autonomy of State legislatures.

Disallowing the Congress plea for suspension of question hour, Mr. Shekhawat sat through it and preferred not to adjourn the House in the face of a determined Opposition onslaught. After lunch, the Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla, adjourned the House till 4 p.m. and an informal agreement led to restoration of order.

In the Lok Sabha, a Samajwadi Party MP threatened to quit his membership and relented after throwing his jacket on the table of the House.

The issue was brought up by the party chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, and the Congress leader, Shivraj Patil, demanded the resignation of Ms. Mayawati, claiming that there was a breakdown of the constitutional machinery in the State.

"The State budget, Governor's address and the confidence motion were passed without a discussion. This is absolutely unheard of," they said adding that the Centre should advise the Governor to sack Ms. Mayawati if she did not resign

on her own. Mr. Yadav sought to know from the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister why they were supporting a Government that had "lost the support of a majority of the MLAs".

Raashid Alvi of the BSP took up the cudgels on behalf of Ms. Mayawati, while Vijay Kumar Malhotra of the BJP sought to defend her saying that though there were corruption charges against Opposition Chief Ministers, the Centre had not sacked them. The Speaker, Manohar Joshi, rejected the adjournment motions moved by Ramjilal Su-

man and Akhilesh Singh of the SP and Sriprakash Jaiswal of the Congress to discuss the developments in the State. He upheld the Government's decision not to table the contents of the letter sent to it by Ms. Mayawati on the tape episode.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition had its say through a 90-minute deliberation on the State with Motilal Vora (Congress) maintaining that while he did not want to intervene in State matters, the "brazen" violation of the Constitution in the State was a matter of grave concern.

Janeshwar Mishra (SP) said an income tax enquiry should be ordered against Ms. Mayawati and the Rs. 5 crore worth of diamonds she received as birthday gift deposited in the State coffers. He demanded dismissal of the State Government.

Gandhi Azad (BSP) alleged that there was a "deep rooted" conspiracy to harass a Dalit Chief Minister. Peace, order and tranquillity, he said, prevailed in the State.

Kalraj Mishra of the BJP said both the SP and the Congress were frustrated as their political fortunes in Uttar Pradesh had nose-dived. They should do "self-introspection" before raising the question of constitutional propriety. The allegation of breakdown of constitutional machinery in Uttar Pradesh was "wrong and baseless". A hype of violence inside the Assembly had been whipped up by the Leader of the Opposition. Even the Speaker was targeted inside the House, he added.

Sarla Maheswari, CPI (M), said the issue concerned the nation and upholding of democratic values and fundamental principles. Referring to the videotape issue, she said it only showed how deep corruption was in political life.

In a related development, the Allahabad High Court today directed the U.P. Government and the Comptroller and Auditor-General to file separate counter-affidavits within four weeks on a public interest litigation petition alleging misappropriation of public money during the birthday celebrations of Ms. Mayawati. Meanwhile, in Uttar Pradesh, the State Legislative Council was adjourned *sine die* today, a day ahead of schedule, amidst pandemonium.

See also Page 11

'Reconvene House'

By Our Special Correspondent

LUCKNOW, MARCH 6. The Opposition today urged the Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, to reconvene the State Assembly to debate and vote on the Opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion against the Mayawati Government. "The Governor should not accept any recommendations for adjournment of the House sine die as all the proceedings conducted in the Assembly yesterday were totally irregular," the Opposition leaders said.

The Opposition had staged a "sit in" strike in the well of the Assembly after the House had been adjourned last evening. They called off the strike past midnight after the Speaker, Kesri Nath Tripathi, personally went across to appeal to them to end the agitation. Today, the entire Opposition marched to the Raj Bhavan to submit a memorandum to the Governor to inform him of "the constitutional mockery that had taken place inside the House on Wednesday".

The memorandum alleged that while the Opposition had maintained complete order inside the Assembly, "unscrupulous elements in the treasury benches indulged in strong-arm tactics to force adjournments throughout the day... And those indulging in unruly behaviour included Ministers also".

"For the first time in the constitutional history of India, a motion of thanks to the Governor for his address was passed without any debate," it said. The memorandum said that no Opposition member had heard the presiding officer calling them for a debate on the no-confidence motion. But they were subsequently informed that the motion had been defeated.

In a near repeat of the drama in the Assembly, the Legislative Council was adjourned *sine die* today, a day ahead of schedule, amid unruly scenes.

Mayawati tape issue rocks Lok Sabha

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4. The Mayawati episode — the allegation that the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister had asked her party MPs and other elected representatives to give to the party fund a "percentage of the commission they get" on works done by spending the constituency fund — sparked a storm of protest in Parliament and outside. Opposition MPs in the Lok Sabha demanded her resignation and others wanted the scandal to be probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). After loud protests and a lot of din in the Lok Sabha for about half-an-hour, it was decided that the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, will make a statement on the matter in the House tomorrow.

The issue exercised everyone across party lines as last eve-

ning and throughout the day some television channels had telecast a videotape allegedly of Ms. Mayawati, addressing her party MLAs and MPs and asking them to contribute a sum to the party fund from the "commission" they got from spending their constituency funds. (Every MP gets a fund of Rs. 2 crores a year to be spent on works in his constituency and in different States MLAs get different annual constituency funds.

One view was that the allegation was grave and it had cast a shadow on the honour of all MPs and this must be cleared after a proper inquiry. Some MPs even demand that the scheme be scrapped altogether although it is known that many, including some BJP MPs, have been in favour of increasing the fund to Rs. 3 crores a year.

But it seemed from comments made later by the Parlia-

mentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, that the Government may at most allow the matter to be raised as a privilege issue. When pressed what procedure could be followed, she told reporters that it could become a privilege issue. However, some other MPs stated outside the House that the Speaker had the authority to ask for a full inquiry.

The issue was raised in the Lok Sabha by the Samajwadi Party MPs, Ramjilal Suman and Akhilesh Singh, who said that it was a clear case of corruption which must be probed by the CBI. They were supported by Congress, Left and Rashtriya Janata Dal MPs even as some SP members moved to the well of the House. The SP also tried to raise the issue in the Rajya Sabha but it was disallowed.

Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi (Cong.) said that this was a grave issue and insisted that the Government make its position clear, while Raghuvansh Prasad (RJD) and Mamata Banerjee (Trinamool Congress) said that if this was the way the MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) was being misused it should be scrapped. Outside the House the Congress renewed its demand for Ms. Mayawati's resignation and a CBI probe. "If she doesn't resign on her own, the Uttar Pradesh Governor should sack her" said Satyav-rath Chaturvedi. But the BJP spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, preferred not to comment considering that the matter was delicate as it involved a coalition partner in Uttar Pradesh.

Mayawati's charge: Page 11

No trust move against Mayawati Govt.

LUCKNOW, MARCH 4. In a day of swift political developments in the wake of the cassette and CD controversy, the entire Opposition in Uttar Pradesh, led by the Samajwadi Party, today served a notice of no-confidence against the Mayawati Government.

An Opposition delegation met the Assembly Secretary, R.P. Pandey, and served the notice of no-confidence against the BSP-BJP Government.

The delegation comprised the SP Legislature party leader, Azam Khan, the Congress Legislature group leader, Pramod Tewari, the Rashtriya Kranti Party leader, Kalyan Singh, and some independent legislators.

The leaders also sought a two-day discussion on the motion, which is likely to be put before the Assembly tomorrow. — PTI

Lok Sabha rocks to Maya tapes

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha was rocked on Tuesday by angry opposition protests about Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati's apparent remarks on videotape that since legislators got a hefty cut from their constituency development funds, they should contribute some of it to the BSP's coffers.

As soon as the house met in the morning, the question hour was disrupted by Samajwadi Party members who trooped into the well demanding that the CM be dismissed. They also called for a CBI probe into the episode. Flashing newspaper reports, they shouted slogans against her comments and insisted that it was an issue concerning a legislator's dignity.

The Samajwadi Party had on Monday handed over a compact disc and video footage to governor Vishnukant Shastri in Lucknow. The cassette allegedly shows Mayawati telling her Bahujan Samajwadi Party MLAs that since they siphon off funds from the Vidhayak Nidhi and Sansad Nidhi (MLAs' and MPs' funds), they should pass on some portion of them to her. She is reported to have told the MLAs that of the amounts varying from Rs. to 25 lakhs which each of them pocket, a minimum of Rs 2 lakhs should be given to her.

SP chief whip Akhilesh Singh and his party colleague Ramjilal Suman had given notice for the suspension of question hour to take up the issue on Tuesday. They were strongly backed by Congress and RJD members. "An attempt is being made to tarnish the image of every legislator," P.R. Dasmunshi (Congress) said, urging speaker Manohar Joshi to give a direction to the government to make a statement. "What is at stake is the dignity of an MP," he said.

Interestingly, there was no attempt from the ruling NDA benches to defend the Uttar Pradesh CM.

Responding to the members' pleas, Mr

Joshi agreed that it was indeed a matter of "serious nature" and told parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj to convey the concerns in the house to the government. Ms Swaraj later informed the house that deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani would make a statement in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. "We need a day's time to collect information about the incident," she said.

Comment: It's difficult to say whether this is a case of the pot calling the kettle black or vice versa. Either way, there appears to be only darkness at the end of the tunnel for the people of UP.

No trust in CM, says opposition

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

Lucknow: The opposition parties in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday night decided to move a no-confidence motion against the Mayawati government. The decision was taken at a closed-door meeting of leaders of all opposition parties at the residence of Samajwadi Party president Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Leaders of the Congress, the SP, the Rashtriya Kranti Party, the CPI and the CPM as well as some Independents who attended the meeting, claimed they had the requisite numbers to defeat the government on the floor of the house and provide an alternative government.

Meanwhile, seeking to minimise the damage done by the Samajwadi Party's expose, Mayawati on Tuesday hit back with allegations against Mulayam Singh. She accused him of accepting crores of rupees from the MLAs' fund for a school named after his father in Etawah.

5 MAR 2003

PM does not take kindly to criticism

Sonia job jibe gets Atal goat

KAY BENE^{4/3}DICT ^{9-Parliament T-1}

New Delhi, March 3: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi traded barbs in the Lok Sabha today after the Congress chief taunted him for falling short on his election promise of providing one crore jobs a year.

The rare verbal duel occurred while the Prime Minister was replying to the motion of thanks on the President's address to Parliament.

Sonia stopped Vajpayee midway through his speech. "By now you should have created 3.5 crore jobs? What happened to the promise made by the NDA government and the Prime Minister?" Sonia asked, intervening perhaps for the first time as leader of Opposition.

Vajpayee, who had come prepared with a sheaf of papers for the reply, countered, saying "jobs do not mean government jobs alone". "When we said we will provide one crore jobs, it did not mean that (the) government will call one crore people and give them jobs."

The Prime Minister then read out figures supplied by officials to say that 84 lakh jobs were created in 2002-03, 79 lakh in 2001-02 and 73 lakh the year before.

He then proceeded to chide the Opposition. "What sort of politics is this? If (the) government says people are getting jobs, you say they are not. You can't challenge official figures. If



HOUSE ROW: Sonia, Atal

you say one crore jobs are not enough and more should be provided, I can understand that," he said, adding that he was ready for a debate on the issue.

Vajpayee, who wrapped up his speech and left the House soon after Sonia's interruption, also found fault with her remarks on secularism, drought, terrorism and the reference to his government as "BJP-led" instead of a "coalition government".

There is no need to beat the drum about secularism as it was already in the Constitution, he said, asserting that his government would not deviate from the secular path.

Sonia's speech last week where she had assailed the government for discriminating against Congress-ruled Rajasthan in providing drought relief came in for criticism, too. Rejecting the charge, Vajpayee said: "We cannot allow political differences to come in the way of giving foodgrains to drought-hit areas."

Citing figures to show that the Centre had gone the extra mile to help Rajasthan, the Prime Minister said he had an-

nounced an initial grant of Rs 50 crore to the state when drought had not even hit it.

The government will raise the limit of issue of foodgrain to 1.5 crore families below the poverty line from 25 kg to 35 kg a month under the Antodaya scheme, Vajpayee added. The Prime Minister rejected Sonia's charge that his government was using terrorism as a pretext to polarise society and termed the allegation "unfortunate". "There are hundred ways of doing politics but to bring the issue of terrorism in this manner is wrong," he said. "Ultimately, the people will decide the way they did in Himachal Pradesh and before that in Gujarat."

Vajpayee also countered Sonia's description of the central coalition as a BJP-led government. "It is a coalition government and not a BJP-led government as was stated by the leader of the Opposition," he said. It is a coalition government comprising several parties and "it is functioning smoothly and will serve its full term".

Earlier, Vajpayee made a faux pas by referring to the chairman of the Rajya Sabha as "adhyakshji" (President) but was immediately corrected. The error occurred when he made an apparent reference to Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat getting a cramp in his leg while reading out the Hindi version of the 24-page, 70-minute-long President's address.

4 MAR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

OPPOSITION STAGES WALKOUT IN LOK SABHA

9-
Parliament
1101

Action on Ayodhya not politically motivated: Jaitley

7812 ✓

NEW DELHI, FEB. 27. Amid an Opposition walkout, the Government tonight asserted that it had moved the Supreme Court for the expeditious disposal of cases relating to the undisputed area in Ayodhya and refuted the charges that its action was "politically motivated".

"Whatever we have done is a genuine, bona fide act of the Government to expedite the matter," the Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, told the Lok Sabha, asserting that the Centre was committed to the ruling National Democratic Alliance agenda and was endeavouring to get the title suit in the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court expedited.

Mr. Jaitley insisted that whatever the Government had done in the Supreme Court was the "most honourable thing under the circumstances" as a writ petition was filed against it for seeking relief in the matter of the over 71 acres of acquired land in Ayodhya, excluding the disputed site.

"The Government is the rightful owner of the acquired land," Mr. Jaitley said, even as Jaipal Reddy (Cong.) asked how the Government had become an aggrieved party and had moved the Supreme Court.

Mr. Jaitley's reply came at the end of an eight-hour marathon discussion on the Ayodhya issue, which saw the Opposition making a scathing attack on the Government and the allies of the BJP asking it to stick to the NDA agenda.

"Is moving the court deplorable, treacherous or a moral corruption? If no one

moves the court, which is the other way to expedite the matter, which had the potential to create social tensions," Mr. Jaitley asked. — PTI

Divisive agenda, says Opposition

Our New Delhi Special Correspondent reported:

Earlier in the day, the ruling and Opposition benches traded charges during the discussion, turning the debate under Rule 193 into a political blame game.

While the ruling benches questioned the rationale of discussing the vexed issue in every session, the Opposition said the matter would not have been raised this time had the Government not moved the Supreme Court for vacating the status quo ordered by it last year.

The blame game started with the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav — who initiated the discussion — accusing the BJP of raking up the issue every time an election was round the corner. "You have nothing to show by way of achievement, and that is why you keep raising such divisive issues to divert attention."

Taking exception to the Prime Minister's statement in Himachal Pradesh that he anticipated a verdict in favour of those pitching for a temple on the disputed site, Mr. Yadav said "his statement was nothing but an attempt to influence the courts".

Swami Chinmayanand (BJP) said the

place was already a de facto temple as Muslims had not offered prayers there since 1934, he urged Parliament to exert its moral authority and find a solution to the problem.

The Opposition guns were equally trained on the allies for surrendering their conscience to the lure of power. Besides criticising the Government for abandoning the NAG and foisting its own "divisive" agenda on the country, Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI (M) and S. Jaipal Reddy (Cong.) made out a case for awaiting the court verdict.

Describing himself as a reluctant speaker, the former Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar — while holding the view that such discussions were of little use — accused the Government of fuelling the controversy by raking it up periodically.

With Mr. Chatterjee and Mr. Reddy ridiculing the allies' submissive attitude, Yerran Naidu (TDP) was at pains to explain his party's position, insisting that there was no deviation from the NAG.

Asked by Priyaranjan Dasmunshi (Cong.) whether his party supported the Prime Minister's statement in Himachal Pradesh, an agitated Mr. Naidu said there was no need to react to everything.

The former Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda, urged the Government to withdraw its application in the Supreme Court, while Rashid Alvi (BSP) said his party government in U.P. would implement the court verdict.

हिन्दु

28 FEB 2003

Savarkar portrait in LS amid uproar

PRADEEP KAUSHAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 26

PRESIDENT A.P.J. Abdul Kalam unveiled the portrait of Hindu Mahasabha leader Veer Savarkar in the Central Hall of Parliament today amid slogan shouting by BJP-Shiv Sena members and a walk-out by the Opposition, with the exception of former PM Chandra Shekhar.

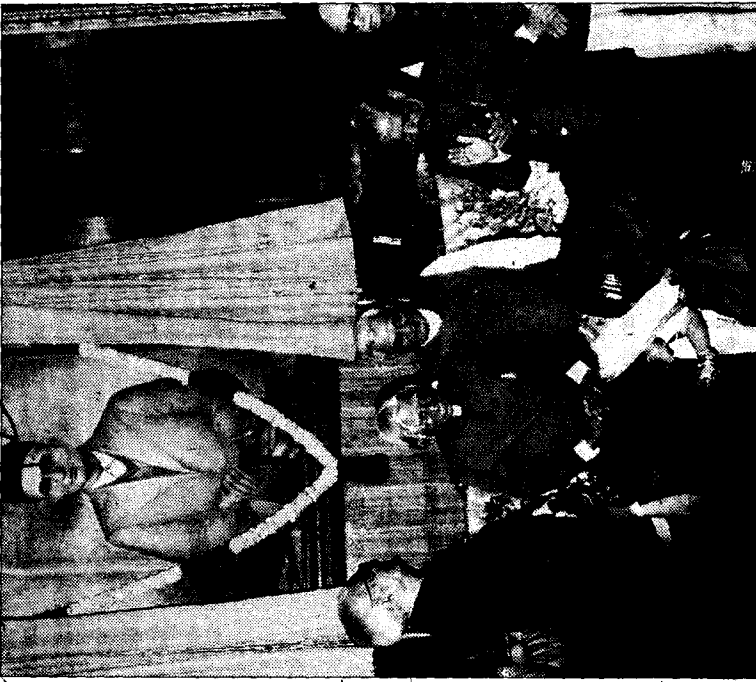
Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi and Savarkar's son were present at the function.

The NDA allies present included members from Samata Party, Telugu Desam, DMK and Trinamool Congress. The Telugu Desam was represented by K. Yerran Naidu and M. Jaganathan and the DMK by Union Minister T.R. Baalu, D. Venugopal,

Viduthalai Virumbi and Shanmugasundaram. Rajiya Sabha Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptullah, who belongs to the Congress, participated in the function, though her party colleague and Deputy Speaker P.M. Sayeed stayed away.

BJP-Shiv Sena combine MPs shouted in chorus *Swatantrya veer Savarkar amar rahe* (may you become immortal) and *Jab tak saraj chand rahega, Savarkar tera naam rahega* (till the sun and moon exist Savarkar you will be remembered) as the President unveiled the portrait.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and leaders of other parties had earlier written to the President requesting him to reconsider his decision to unveil Veer Savarkar's portrait since he was allegedly associated with the assassins of Mahatma Gandhi apart from being a supporter of the two-nation theory.



They flayed him for a mercy petition to the British authorities during the freedom movement.

Ironically, several leading lights of the Opposition, including CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee and senior Congress leaders Pranab Mukherjee and Shivaraj Patil were present when a Parliamentary committee cleared a proposal to put up Savarkar's portrait two months ago. President Kalam also inaugurated an exhibition featuring rare photographs and writings of Veer Savarkar.

After he unveiled the portrait, Shekhawat, Vajpayee, Advani and Sushma Swaraj offered floral tributes to it.

President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam blesses Chandrakala Kumar Kadam, the painter who made the Savarkar portrait. Also seen are Vice-President Shekhawat, PM Vajpayee and Dy PM L.K. Advani. PTI

Opposition to boycott unveiling of Savarkar portrait

By Jayed Ansari

NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. The unveiling of a portrait of V.D. Savarkar in the Central Hall of Parliament has become a subject of raging controversy. The entire Opposition has decided to boycott tomorrow's ceremony where the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, is due to unveil the portrait. The Opposition has written to Dr. Kalam, urging him to reconsider his decision of unveiling the portrait.

The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, in a letter to Dr. Kalam, registered her party's protest against the move to instal the portrait. She pointed out that the boycott decision was not out of any disrespect for him.

In addition to Ms. Gandhi's letter, the Congress also released a statement voicing its protest. It said that "Savarkar's petition seeking mercy from the British, his advocacy of the two-nation theory and his alleged association with the assassins of Mahatma Gandhi, make it extremely inappropriate that his portrait be put up in the same hallowed precincts as those of other freedom fighters".

Other Opposition leaders, including Rashid Alvi (BSP), have, in a letter, objected to

the decision on the grounds that "Savarkar was an accused in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and had submitted a mercy petition to the British authorities, besides being a supporter of Mohammed Ali Jinnah's two-nation theory."

Providing the rationale for the boycott decision, the leaders pointed out that their association "will give credibility to the activities and the divisive policies of V.D. Savarkar".

The signatories to the letter include the former Prime Minister, Deve Gowda (JDS), Somnath Chatterjee, CPI(M), Mulayam Singh Yadav (SP), Rashid Alvi (BSP), E. Ahamad (IUML), Francis George, S. Ramachandran Pillay, CPI (M), Amar Roy Pradhan (AIFB), Manoj Bhattacharya and Birsingh Mahato (RSP).

The deputy leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Shivraj Patil, chief whip of the party in the Rajya Sabha, Pranab Mukherjee and Somnath Chatterjee are members of the joint committee on installation of portraits and statues of national leaders.

All three and J. Chittaranjan of the CPI were present at the meeting of the committee in December

in which the decision to instal the portrait was taken.

'A case of afterthought'

The BJP spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, said the Opposition reaction was a clear case of afterthought. He said the minutes of the meeting clearly showed that none of those present at the meeting raised any objection.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, said the set procedure was duly followed. "Nobody protested or dissented when the committee met and the minutes were circulated. To protest and create a controversy now is not right." Mr. Chatterjee today conceded that he had erred in not being vocal in his protest at the committee meeting. "It was a big mistake. I should have been more strident in my protest," he said. Both Mr. Mukherjee and Shivraj Patil were not available for comments.

The Congress spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy, had a tough time defending the stand taken by two senior leaders of the party. "As the deliberations of the parliamentary committees are confidential, I cannot comment on what transpires at the meeting."

Criticism in Cong.: Page 11
Historians flay move: Page 13

26 FEB 2003

HINDU

Kalam dragged into Savarkar portrait wrangle

Vinod Sharma & Saroj Nagi
New Delhi, February 25

THE SPEAKER'S decision to put up Veer Savarkar's portrait in the Central Hall of Parliament has landed the President's Office in an unseemly controversy.

Even the BSP, the BJP's alliance partner in UP, has joined the Opposition's appeal to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to "reconsider" presiding over the unveiling ceremony and "protect the country's secular traditions".

The Opposition parties' objection to the portrait is based on their perception of Savarkar's role in the freedom movement, his ideal of a Hindu rashtra and his alleged role in the plot to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi. But the clamour is belated.

The General Purposes Committee of Parliament, which endorsed Speaker Manohar Joshi's decision to put up the portrait, was composed of the same leaders who are now opposing the move.

The meeting at which Joshi took the members into confidence was attended by Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI(M), J. Chittaranjan of the CPI and Shivraj Patil and Pranab Mukherjee of the Congress. "I admit I made a mistake by going along with the decision. I should have been stringent in my objection at the GPC," Chatterjee said on Tuesday.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi too is reported to have chided her party colleagues at the Congress' Parliamentary Affairs Committee meeting for not bringing the matter to her notice before. She has written a letter to President Kalam, urging him to reconsider presiding over the function.

Others who have made similar appeals include Somnath Chatterjee, former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda of the JD(S), Mulayam Singh Yadav of the



Veer Savarkar

Samajwadi Party, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh of the RJD, E. Ahmed of the Muslim League, Rashid Alvi of the BSP, Ajoy Chakraborty of the CPI, Amar Roy Pradhan of the Forward Block and Bir Singh Mahato of the RSP. Sharad Pawar of the NCP would be sending a similar letter, Chatterjee said.

The Opposition's decision not to attend the function would amount to a boycott. But in deference to the President's Office, the parties have said their disassociation with the function was not meant to be a "personal disrespect" to Kalam.

Intellectuals, too, rejected the idea. "If installation (of the portrait) is not stopped, it will make a mockery of the supreme sacrifice made by patriots," Gandhian Nirmala Deshpande said. "What kind of role models are we giving our youths by honouring the legacy of Savarkar who, in a mercy petition, had promised to be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the British government?" Bipin Chandra asked.

Disinvestment issue rocks Parliament

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 20. The disinvestment of profit-making oil companies, HPCL and BPCL, caused further embarrassment for the Government in the Lok Sabha for the second consecutive day today with its own allies leading the charge against the decision to sell the two public sector oil companies.

While the issue was raised by Prabhunath Singh of the Samata Party, the discussion saw many in the ruling benches echo the sentiments aired by the Opposition which was particularly peeved at the manner in which Parliament was being by-passed by the Government.

Also, members demanded that the Attorney-General be summoned to the House to explain his opinion that Parliamentary approval was not required to disinvest the two companies which were taken over by the Government by an Act of Parliament.

The members were of the view that the disinvestment of

the two companies should be kept in abeyance till Parliament had been consulted. According to Mr. Prabhunath Singh, the Government was playing to the tune of Reliance and there was division within the Cabinet on the disinvestment of the two companies.

Echoing the sentiment aired by Mr. Prabhunath Singh, the JD(U) member, Devendra Prasad Yadav, said the Disinvestment Ministry ought to be rechristened 'Rashtriya Sampatti Bachao Mantralaya' (National Asset Selling Ministry) so that the people are not misled into believing that what was being done was in the interest of the country.

With two allies of the BJP speaking out against the disinvestment, Shivraj Patil of the Congress voiced the hope that they would stick to their guns should the matter be put to vote even as Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI(M) quipped on how the NDA was not united on the issue while the Opposition was speaking in one voice.

THE HINDU

21 FEB 2003

GOVT. 'NO' TO RESOLUTION ON IRAQ

Ayodhya debate on Feb. 26

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, FEB. 18. Parliament began on a contentious note today with the Government and the Opposition parties failing to agree on adopting a unanimous resolution on the impending war in Iraq and an adjournment motion on Ayodhya.

The Government turned down a Congress-led Opposition demand in the Rajya Sabha that a resolution be adopted on India's position on Iraq, saying that it needed "flexibility" and "leverage" at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Kuala Lumpur.

And after some wrangling behind the scenes and the rejection of 20 adjournment motions on Ayodhya in the Lok Sabha, submitted by the MPs of the CPI (M), the Samajwadi Party and the Congress, it was "agreed" that a discussion on the subject would be taken up on February 26, immediately after the Railway Budget was presented, while Iraq would be discussed by the Lok Sabha tomorrow.

But even before Parliament met, at the Bharatiya Janata Party's parliamentary party meeting this morning, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, expressed his view on Iraq.

He is reported to have told his party MPs that "in case the United States goes for unilateral action against Iraq, it will be unfortunate for the international community and the United Nations. And, if, subsequently,

the U.N. endorses the American action, it would amount to an erosion in the U.N.'s authority."

Clearly signalling his Government's disapproval of a unilateral military action against Iraq, Mr. Vajpayee said that such a course would certainly render the U.N. "ineffective," even as "it would lose its influence and prestige."

Afterwards, in the Rajya Sabha, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, made clear the Government position on an Iraq resolution.

While she shared the concern of the members and said the Government was willing to have a full-fledged discussion on the issue, she did not want the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister to be "tied down" to a parliamentary resolution when they participated in an international forum. "They will place the feeling of the nation before NAM."

It was the Congress leader, Pranab Mukherjee, who raised the Iraq issue during zero hour in the Rajya Sabha. The Government, he said, should *suo motu* come up with an Iraq resolution reflecting the opinion of the nation. "We are worried not only about the developments but (the fact) that it will affect our vital economic interests," he said adding that the issue must be resolved peacefully. The people of Iraq had suffered enough and India was committed to the Iraq resolution of the U.N. Security Council.

In response to a question by Natwar Singh (Congress), Ms. Swaraj said "the Government's Iraq policy will be in accordance with the people's feelings."

Most members, including Ram Gopal Yadav (Samajwadi Party), Nilotpal Basu (CPI-M) and Suresh Pachauri (Congress) said the unilateral action being planned by the superpower should be "deplored."

In the Lok Sabha, most of question hour was taken up by wrangles over the adjournment motions on Ayodhya.

The Opposition view was that the Government had been partisan in moving the Supreme Court. The CPI (M) leader, Somnath Chatterjee, described it as a "diabolical move," and the Congress leader, Shivraj Patil, supported the Samajwadi Party president, Mulayam Singh Yadav, in his view that the Government had dropped its neutrality and was "tilting towards divisive forces."

The BJP, of course, rejected this, with its chief whip, V. K. Malhotra, saying that the Government was only trying to expedite the matter.

During zero hour, the POTA issue figured. The SP chief warned that the situation in Uttar Pradesh had become "explosive" and that "it had all the ingredients of a civil war."

"POTA had been politically misused in the State, he alleged. It was also the case "in Tamil Nadu against the MDMK leader, Vaidyanathan," Mr. Chatterjee added.

THE HINDI

1 0 FEB 2003

AYODHYA ISSUE LOOMS LARGE OVER PROCEEDINGS

BJP, Cong. rally support ahead of budget session

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, FEB. 16. There was hectic political activity here today ahead of the budget session of Parliament opening tomorrow. And with a number of States going to the polls — four later this month and five at the end of the year — both the major political groups, one led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the other by the Congress, are trying hard to shore up support. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, began his day early meeting the Telugu Desam Party chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, and ended it late with a dinner meeting with his partners in the National Democratic Alliance.

The Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, tried to warm up her frosty relations with the leaders of some secular parties by bringing them around her dinner table at 10, Janpath, while the four Left parties held a coordination committee meeting and their leaders later attended the dinner hosted by Ms. Gandhi.

The Opposition parties were attempting to get their act together and show that they

were willing and able to coordinate their activities in relation to the parliamentary session ahead — some of them have publicly stated that after the BJP's Hindutva show in Gujarat, it has become all the more urgent for the secular parties to come together and confront the communal threat.

A heavy dose of Government business will form a major portion of the pre-recess budget session — the President's address to the joint session on Monday, the Railway Budget, the Economic Survey, the Union Budget and the debate on the motion of thanks to the President. And the new Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, has promised to make one more serious attempt to get a consensus on the women's reservation bill by asking the Prime Minister to call an all-party meeting of leaders and by individually contacting the leaders of the major parties.

However, the Ayodhya issue has begun to loom large over the session. The Supreme Court is hearing the Government petition on February 21, and a 3-day 'dharam sanad' organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad will begin its deliberations the

following day amid publicly issued threats that if the Government-acquired land is not handed over to the VHP-controlled Ram Janmabhoomi trust, the organisation will start an agitation.

It is also known that the top leadership of the BJP and the Government have been promising their mentors in the RSS that if the court were to give the Government some breathing space, it would do the needful — that is, transfer the acquired Ayodhya land to the trust. Thus, the issue is worrying not only the Opposition parties but also the NDA partners who would prefer not to have to tax their secular conscience too much. The Left parties are, in fact, thinking of an adjournment motion on the issue, but some other Opposition parties may prefer to wait and see what the apex court has to say before making their move. With nine Assembly elections due this year and the Lok Sabha next year, the political atmosphere is edgy. Much could happen between now and the next joint session at the start of the next budget session.

**Await court verdict: TDP;
Left decries Centre's move: Page 11**

Help fight terrorism, says Vajpayee

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 22. The Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee today urged parliamentarians to strengthen mutual cooperation in the fight against terrorism, which had "become a big threat to peace, democracy and the civilised world order".

Addressing the three-day international parliamentary conference, being held at the Central Hall to mark the golden jubilee of the Indian Parliament, he wanted the delegates from 85 countries to exercise their diverse experiences to find solutions to several complex issues facing parliamentary democracies. "Together we have a wealth of experience from which to devise solutions to the challenges before us". He asked them to consider whether there were ways to ensure stability of governance and policies, while retaining the vibrancy of multi-party democracy.

In an apparent reference to the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharaff, he remarked that coups, bloody power struggles and military takeovers have become anathema to the world. "Even rulers in khaki have felt the need to seek some kind of democratic legitimacy" he said.

The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, inaugurating the meet, called for visionary policies for global prosperity and a global



The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, flanked by the Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, and the Vice-President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, followed by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, arriving to attend the inaugural session of the International Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

outlook for universal harmony. He said poverty, illiteracy and unemployment were driving the forces of anger, frustration and violence. "These forces link themselves to historical enmity, tyranny, and injustice, ethnic issues and religious fundamentalism, and transform themselves into outbursts of terrorism worldwide". He called for "policies with vision at the global level and a sharing of resources under a consortium approach for peaceful

co-existence and co-development".

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi asked parliamentarians to help bring about effective legislation to combat terrorism, and to safeguard democracy from those trying to destroy its foundations. Citing the September 11 strikes in the U.S., the December 13 terrorist attack on Indian Parliament, and the attacks in Moscow and Bali, he said they demonstrated that democracies and plural

and open societies were vulnerable. The Vice President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat said the conference should be used as an opportunity for serious introspection about the challenges being faced by the free world and democracies. The former Presidents, R. Venkataraman and K.R. Narayanan, former Prime Ministers, P.V. Narasimha Rao and I.K. Gujral, and the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, also attended it.

More reports on Page 11

23 JAN 2003

Threats now more complex:

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 22. — As Parliamentarians from across the world began to deliberate on the threat perceptions mankind has been facing since World War II, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam saw threats as more complex and wondered how to combat the integrated phenomenon of what he called "conventional warfare, cross-border terrorism, insurgency and threat of nuclear attacks."

Inaugurating a three-day International Parliamentary Conference, the President said: "In 2003, the world is facing yet another new kind of warfare owing to a combination of religious conflicts, ecological differences and market warfare."

"It is an era of control regimes separating the nations as developed, developing and underdeveloped by using the tool of supremacy of technology and technology denials", the President said while sounding a note of warning that ecological differences, water crisis being at the top, and market warfare posed a serious threat to the world peace.

Dr Kalam divided the war period into three parts — up to 1920, 1920-1990 and beyond 1990. The first part was "human warfare" during which wars were fought either for territorial greed, or wealth or over religious domination. The cumulative fallout was World War I.

He said 1920-1990 was a "mechanised warfare period", during which battle tanks, fighter aircraft, ships and submarines were used in addition to nuclear bombing of the two cities of Japan in World War II. "Man lived on wars and we have seen that war adds to wars. The mission for Parliamentarians should be the evolution of a vision for their nation to bring peace on earth."

Vice-President Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat reminded the delegates that one-fourth of the world population was living in



Not for them the long-winding speeches. Foreign delegates doze off at the International Parliamentary Conference to mark Parliament's golden jubilee in Parliament House on Wednesday. — PTI

abject poverty and one-fifth didn't have access to drinking water.

Speaker Mr Manohar Joshi, who plays host to the conference, delivered the welcome address, in which he said India was not only the world's largest democracy, but also the most vibrant one since "governments have come and gone as per the time-tested democratic norms".

The key-note address on terrorism was delivered by Mr KC Pant, planning commission deputy chairman, who said differences on what constituted terror among the nations at war against terrorism hampered the joint approach to fight the global menace. "It will be impossible for the world to combat terrorism without first arriving at an international and a universally-accepted definition of what constitute terrorism. Till such a consensus is arrived at, one man's terrorist will remain another man's hero or freedom fighter."

More than 170 delegates are participating in the conference.

Kalam PM for 'full' term of Parliament

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 22. — The Prime Minister today used the International Parliamentary Conference to advocate a full term for Parliament. The spectre of elections which is there at all times as some polls or the others keep on taking place prevents the government from taking "firm decisions", he said.

Speaking at the packed Central Hall of Parliament, and in the presence of foreign as well as Indian delegates, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee asked: "Should our Parliaments be allowed to run their full term?"

He stressed the importance of a free and democratic society in the modern world that alone could fulfil people's aspirations. "Coups, power struggles and military take-overs have come to be seen as anathema to the ethos of modern times. Even rulers in *khaki* have felt the need to seek some kind of democratic legitimacy".

Acknowledging that in any democracy there are bound to be differences among parties, he said vitality of democracy also demanded discipline, a constructive approach and readiness to contribute to consensus-building process.

History, he said, has proved time and again that a free and democratic society is self-creative and self-regenerative. "The holding of regular elections, victories and defeats of individuals and parties and the periodic change of governments have many benefits."

He stressed the need to protect democratic institutions which is the 'guru mantra' for democracy: "*Dharma Rakshati, Rakshati Dharma*".

'Science and spirituality share the same goal'

NEW DELHI, Jan. 22. — Dr APJ Abdul Kalam shared some of his memorable experiences with an exclusive audience of Parliamentarians from across the world today.

Deviating from his prepared text, he spoke of his recent visit to the 400-year-old Tawang monastery, where he had asked the chief monk what his message was for India and the world.

The reply was: "When you remove 'I' and 'Me' from your mind, you eliminate ego. If you eliminate ego, hatred towards fellow human beings will vanish..." The President lamented: "What we see today is man has veered away from God's message..."

He shared another experience blending science and spiritualism. In 1962, Dr Vikram Sarabhai, whom he referred to as his 'Guru',

needed land at Thumba (Kerala) for upper atmosphere research.

The land housed a church and the Bishop's house. The administration and the politicians expressed helplessness. Dr Sarabhai approached the Bishop, Rev. Peter B Pereira, to spare the land.

The Bishop asked him join the church service on Sunday. There he told the congregation: "I've a famous scientist with me who wants our church and the place I live in for work of space science and to bring material prosperity... both science and spirituality seek the Almighty's blessings for human prosperity and peace." The Bishop then asked: "My children, can we give the God's abode for a scientific mission?" There was a chorus of 'Amen' from the congregation. — SNS

Double standard for Delhi

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Jan. 21: India does not consider Pakistan to be a democracy. But it thinks China is one. And so are Myanmar, Bhutan and the Maldives.

The three-day international parliamentary conference being organised from tomorrow by India to commemorate the 50th anniversary of its Parliament will have 170 delegates from 85 countries. But none from Pakistan.

"Pakistan has not been invited," said host and Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi. "Member countries of the Commonwealth and the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) have been invited to the conference. Pakistan is not a

member," he said.

Moreover, memories of December 13, 2001, when the venue of the international conference was attacked by terrorists, are fresh in every Indian's mind. Delhi had accused Pakistan of masterminding the strike on Parliament.

Joshi, who recently visited China on an official tour, announced that one of the biggest delegations to the conference would be from there. All the other South Asian nations have been invited, Myanmar, too.

"We have invited Myanmar, but I don't know whether they will send anyone," Joshi said.

But faced with a barrage of questions on the justification of inviting Myanmar, which is rul-

ed by a military junta, the Speaker changed his stand. "I am not sure whether it has been invited. I have to check," he said.

"The stress of the three-day conference will be on strengthening democracy all over the world to combat the threat of terrorism," the Speaker added.

Distinguished parliamentarians from across the world will attend the conference.

"Such interaction will help further consolidate democracy all over the world so that forces that are trying to destroy the foundations of open society are isolated and eliminated," the Speaker added.

"The greatest threat to democracy and civilisation today is terrorism. As opinion-makers, parliamentarians have an im-

portant role to play in building a consensus against terrorists and their collaborators and in lending the much needed support in rooting out the evil of terrorism."

Irrespective of the countries that figure on the list of invitees, one thing is certain: it's a party to which Pakistan is not welcome. In fact, much of what India is trying to achieve or the signal it wants to send out is directed against Islamabad.

"The Parliament has become one of the main targets of terrorists. It is necessary that parliamentarians from different parts of the world raise their voice unitedly against the menace,"

Joshi said, leaving little doubt about which direction he was pointing at.