

# Patnaik foot faults in Orissa House clash

## Pandemonium Breaks Loose Over Bauxite Deal

Nageshwar Patnaik

BHUBANESWAR 2 NOVEMBER

ORISSA chief minister Navin Patnaik on Tuesday sustained injury in the state legislature amid high drama of suspension of an opposition Congress MLA and unruly scene that dominated the first half of the day. Mr Patnaik has twisted his left foot when it came under the table during the

question hour. The chief minister, who was limping after the incident, was rushed to the government hospital here. The unpleasant incident took place when the members belonging to the opposition Congress, Orissa Gana Parishad (OGP), Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and ruling BJD-BJP coalition clashed just in front of Mr Patnaik's seat over the alleged irregularities over a deal with Vedanta Alumina Ltd (VAL) over bauxite mining largesse. VAL is a 100% subsidiary of the Sterlite Industries, which of late has sparked off a political row in the state over its Rs 4,500-crore project at Lanjigarh in the backward Kalahandi district.

The opposition members rushed to the well of the House when the steel and mines minister, Padmanabha Behera could not give satisfactory replies to most of their queries.

The Congress members queered the pitch by demanding a categorical reply from the minister that why did the government opted for the MoU route instead of the transparent global bidding process for mining of huge reserves of bauxite at Lanjigarh mines. They were also questioning the government for

the manner in which the state-owned Orissa Mining Corporation hurriedly signed an agreement with the Vedanta Alumina Ltd last month for mining rights to a joint venture company where VAL will have 76% equity stake. Besides, they also wanted a categorical reply whether the company had invested the required amount in the proposed Rs 4,500-crore alumina project to make it eligible for sourcing of bauxite mines from 75 million ton reserve Lanjigarh bauxite deposit. They also wanted to know how much the state government was going to benefit from the joint venture?

When the minister could not come out with satisfactory replies to pointed queries, the angry opposition members shouted anti-government slogans and created a ruckus.

As the House witnessed pandemonium over the issue, state sports minister, Debasis Nayak, signalled the security

personnel to remove the camera fitted on the audience gallery, prompting an immediate reaction from the Congress member Anup Sai.

In a fit of anger, Mr Sai threw his shoes at the security personnel who were driving out the cameramen. This was objected to by the BJD-BJP members who rushed to the well to pick up a quarrel with the Mr Sai.

In the ensuing stampede, the chief minister's table fell on his left foot. Mr Patnaik, with a swollen foot, was immediately rushed to the central hospital. He was released after preliminary treatment. The doctors have advised him two days's rest.



FOOT FOR THOUGHT

NOV 2 2004

The Economic Times

# Shiv Sainiks vandalise rebel leader's house

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** A group of about 20 suspected Shiv Sainiks attacked four vehicles belonging to dissident leader and former mayor Ramesh Prabhoo (65) on Monday morning, apparently to teach him a lesson for revolting against the party.

Prabhoo, a veteran Shiv Sainik and ex-MLA, had contested the recent assembly elections as a rebel candidate against the party's official nominee and then sitting MLA Vinayak Raut in Vile Parle. Raut lost the polls to Ashok Jadhav of the Congress and Prabhoo was blamed for the defeat of the Sena nominee. Before the elections, Sainiks had attacked the office of Chandrakant Paudwal, another Sena rebel in Girgaum. A few years ago, a Sena corporator Sridhar Khopkar was found murdered in mysterious circumstances.

A group of vandals walked up to the former Shiv Sainik's bungalow "Prabhoo Ghar" at Hanuman Cross Road No 2 in Vile Parle (East) around 11.45 am on Monday and told the watchman Pawan Tiwari that they wanted to meet Prabhoo.

Tiwari informed them that Prabhoo



**SC SETS ASIDE THACKERAY'S CONVICTION IN CONTEMPT CASE:** The supreme court on Monday set aside a Bombay high court order of 1997 convicting Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray of contempt of court for levelling bribery charges against a judge in his Dussehra rally speech at Shivaji Park in 1996.

was suffering from malaria and was resting in his room on the second floor of the bungalow. Without any provocation, they started fisting Tiwari and attacking the windshields of Prabhoo's four vehicles—a Mercedes van, a Daewoo, a Maruti Omni van and a Baleno—which were parked in the bungalow's compound.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Thackeray blasts Sonia, Pawar

By Meena Menon

**THANE, Oct. 9.** The Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray, said today that there was no need for the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, a "white-skinned woman," to teach Indians what was patriotism. "In Amravati, Sonia Gandhi had said that the tricolour should be in our hearts. Why do we need her to tell us this?"

Addressing his first election rally at Thane's Central Maidan, he called upon people not to tolerate this. "Can anyone rule over us," he asked and called on people to take pride in their country and vote out the present Government. Paraphrasing a dialogue from a Hindi film, Mr. Thackeray said: "One woman was making 'eunuchs' out of all the senior Congressmen in New Delhi. I see the whole thing from a cartoonist's point of view," he said.

Mr. Thackeray made his first public appearance in Thane this evening, after ill-health kept him out of campaigning for the October 13 Assembly elections. Over the 50,000 people who came to hear him today were not disappointed. He did not climb onto the stage but went up by a makeshift lift. Thousands of Shiv Sainiks had gathered to hear Mr. Thackeray, and the ground wore a festive look with saffron flags fluttering everywhere and fireworks lighting up the sky.

Wearing dark glasses and a shimmering saffron shawl, the Shiv Sena leader reserved his ire for Sharad Pawar and Sonia Gandhi. "I was determined to come to Thane and thank its residents for keeping the saf-

Minister, Manmohan Singh, as a "scare crow" and wondered how he could take orders from a "foreign" woman. "Is this the direction of the Government which Mr. Singh keeps talking about," he asked.

He referred to the "indiscriminations" of the Congress-NCP Government in Maharashtra and said that none of the projects started by the BJP-Sena alliance had been completed. "We have built so many flyovers, roads and expressways, but after us, the progress, specially in Mumbai, has been slow than a snail."

## 'Not against Muslims, North Indians'

Mr. Thackeray said there was no reason for the Sena to go against Muslims or North Indians. "I have no complaint against Muslims who think this is their country," he said. He referred to the joint celebration of festivals such as Ganpati and Moharram, but said that now, religious processions often ended in riots. "Who is killed in these riots — its poor people. What do we gain from this?"

He said North Indians had been living here for so many years and there was no problem. Lalu Prasad Yadav must take responsibility for the Biharis leaving his State, he said. "How much burden can Mumbai take," he asked. He was upset that the Congress manifesto had promised to regularise hutments till the year 2000. (Now it is up to 1995).

Tomorrow, Mr. Thackeray will address a joint rally with the former Prime Minister and BJP leader, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.



The Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray and Manohar Joshi with other Sena leaders at a campaign meeting at Thane, near Mumbai, on Saturday. — Photo: Vivek Bendre

ron flag flying," he said protesting himself on the stage, before a rather stunned audience. He also paid homage to a jawan, Vijay More, who was asked and referred to the Prime Minister last week in Kashmir.

Mr. Thackeray said he was the first to raise the "foreigner" issue and he had not gone back on it like Mr. Pawar. "How can you trust a person like Mr. Pawar who changes his stand every now and then," he asked.

# Deshmukh sworn in as CM

Statesman News Service

MUMBAI, Nov. 1. — Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh and Mr RR Patil were today sworn in as chief minister and deputy chief minister of Maharashtra.

Governor Mr Mohammad Fazal gave them the oath office and secrecy at a ceremony at Raj Bhavan in the presence of several Congress and NCP leaders. The rest of the ministry will assume shape in due course as the exercise of picking up colleagues from 141 MLAs is likely to be challenging, albeit, with the help of their respective Central leaderships. Mr Deshmukh and Mr Patil, however, betray no tension of Cabinet formation. Mr Deshmukh was confident that by Wednesday and Thursday he would be able



ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL! Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh and Mr Sushil Kumar Shinde after the swearing in ceremony. — AFP

to induct more ministers. Reporters welcomed the new chief minister and his deputy at Vidhaya Bhavan. Mr Deshmukh said he had consulted Mr Patil about

Cabinet expansion and added that today's Cabinet meeting was peaceful as only the chief minister and deputy chief minister were present.

The new chief minister conceded that the state was neck deep in debts. "We have to borrow to repay interests on earlier borrowings and this has adversely affected new development projects," he said. Mr Deshmukh said the government will have to explore new ways of raising money at lower interest rates and added that despite these problems, the Democratic Front government would implement the assurance of making farmers debt free.

The new Maharashtra Cabinet will have 43 ministers — 24 from NCP and 19 from the Congress in keeping with the new statutory provisions. Aspirants are many but berths are limited. NCP and Congress will have to ignore claims of several MLAs notwithstanding their seniority and experience.

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THE STATESMAN

## INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO AJIT PAWAR COST NCP CM'S POST

(SF)  
29/10

# PAWAR CRISIS

2-88  
maharashtra

**Vandur Kulkarni in Mumbai**

Oct. 28. — Too many aspirants in the Nationalist Congress Party finally cost it the chief minister's post. Most of the senior leaders in the 71-MLA party were believed to be against the front-runner, Mr Ajit Pawar, the nephew of NCP president Mr Sharad Pawar, as they find him too young. Others pointed to his "arrogance" and said it made him unacceptable as a leader. Discretion being the better part of valour, the NCP agreed to concede the chief minister's chair to the Congress and bought peace within its rank. As a seasoned politician, the NCP president would not have articulated his dilemma in so many words but his senior colleagues in the state have realised that Mr Pawar, after having insisted on NCP leading the new government, quietly surrendered the initiative as he anticipated the risk of favouring one name or other for the post.

Mr Ajit Pawar has rivals in Mr Vijay Sinh Mohite-Patil, Mr Chagan Bhujbal, Mr RR Patil and Mr Jayant Patil. They all were delighted as their party chief curtly told the Congress that he would settle for nothing less than the top post.

Within the NCP, Mr Ajit Pawar is often accused of haughty behaviour. Unlike his uncle, he is yet to set up better rapport with the seniors which only could have made him



Clockwise from top left: Bhujbal, Ajit Pawar, Sharad Pawar, Vijay Sinh, Jayant Patil

**Ajit Pawar's 'age and arrogance' were cited by NCP leaders who refused to back him as chief minister and Sharad Pawar had to back off**

acceptable to them as their leader. Sources said, even Mr Praful Patel, the national spokesman, did not favour Mr Ajit Pawar's name.

Nevertheless, the late evening decision yesterday giving away chief minister's post to the Congress came as a shock for the NCP workers in Mumbai.

Securing two more Cabinet posts is not considered a big deal. The Congress still retains the lucrative urban development ministry (which almost all chief ministers in Maharashtra kept with them), revenue, cooperation and general administration. For any political party, Maharashtra being the wealthiest state remains a big fund raiser. The NCP will have to be satisfied with two key ministries like home and finance. Its demand for revenue and cooperation was turned down by the Congress. The ministry formula has already been worked out under which the NCP will have 24 ministers and the Congress 19.

The aspirants in the Congress are Mr Sushilkumar Shinde, Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh and Mr Patangrao Kadam. The current incumbent, asked by Mrs Sonia Gandhi personally to take over from Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh about 18 months ago to thwart the anti-incumbency factor, leads the pack. The NCP and Congress are meeting separately at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. tomorrow before they attend the Democratic Front gathering at the Vidhan Bhavan later to choose the leader. The swearing-in is expected on Saturday.

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THE STATESMAN

29 OCT 2004

# Congress gets top job, NCP more berths

HR 28/10  
9.87 prabhat  
Vinod Sharma/Saroj Nagi  
New Delhi, October 27

AFTER 11 days of suspense and tough bargaining, the Congress and NCP worked out a settlement tonight on the Maharashtra government. As a price for retaining the chief minister's office, the Congress conceded three additional ministerial berths to Sharad Pawar's party, but not its demand for two deputy chief ministers' posts.

The agreed formula represents only a minor deviation from the 1999 agreement. As opposed to the 21 ministers it had in the outgoing Sushilkumar Shinde government, the NCP will now get 24 berths. And the Congress will be left with 18 as against the 21 berths it held apart from the CM's post.

The logjam was broken after a series of meetings between the two sides with Sonia Gandhi's political secretary Ahmed Patel and civil aviation minister Praful Patel playing emissaries. In the course of the talks, Pawar also spoke to Sonia Gandhi, besides discussing the issue with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee.

From the package, it is obvious that Pawar chose to be accommodative towards the Congress after first insisting on the CM's office and then on two deputy CMs. But it remains to be seen whether the Maharashtra pact also has a Central dimension.

In the course of the negotiations, Pawar was reportedly told that the Congress was not willing to concede anything more than two Cabinet slots, one MoS and two portfolios. Conceived by



**Sushilkumar Shinde**  
Tipped to be CM

Mukherjee, this offer saw the NCP seeking two deputy CMs, which the Congress rejected point-blank.

The legislature parties of the two partners will meet on Friday to elect their respective leaders. From available indications, Shinde, a Dalit, may continue as chief minister with the NCP's Maratha nominee, Vijaysinh Mohite Patil, as his deputy. The other name in circulation from the Congress side is that of Vilasrao Deshmukh. "But much would depend on who the MLAs elect as their leader," a senior AICC functionary said.

In its pursuit to retain the CM's slot, the Congress agreed to an expansion of the NCP's control of the state administration in terms of key ministerial berths. In addition to the prized portfolios of home, finance, irrigation, PWD, power, health, rural development and technical education, the NCP will also get labour, forest and environment. But urban development, cooperation, revenue and housing, which the NCP wanted, will remain with the Congress.

# Maharashtra see-saw

K. SUBRAHMANYA

New Delhi, Oct. 25: The Congress and the NCP today came tantalisingly close to ending the Maharashtra stalemate, but were forced to put on hold a give-and-take deal.

Under the agreement that was almost made public, the NCP leadership, which has been insisting on the chief minister's chair, is learnt to have agreed to concede the top post to the Congress, the junior partner in terms of the number of MLAs.

The understanding was that the Congress would then re-elect outgoing chief minister Sushil Kumar Shinde.

Anticipating a "package of concessions" from the Congress, the NCP leadership had made preparations to make an announcement in the evening. Ahmed Patel, the political secretary to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, was expected to convey his party's "offer" to NCP leader Praful Patel late in the afternoon.

However, Praful could not carry the final "offer" with him when he went to NCP chief Sharad Pawar's 6 Janpath official residence late in the evening. That there was no breakthrough became evident when Pawar left his residence to attend Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan's *iftar* without addressing a scheduled media conference.

Emerging from Pawar's residence, Praful said the NCP leadership had not yet taken a "final decision on the Congress party's proposal".

Yesterday, the Congress had offered the NCP three additional berths — two of cabinet rank and one of minister of state rank — in the 43-member ministry and two extra portfolios.

If the offer comes through, the NCP will have 15 cabinet ministers and nine ministers of state, while the Congress will have 12 and six, respectively.

The NCP leadership is understood to be pressing for two

deputy chief minister posts — one for incumbent Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil and the other presumably for facilitating the return of former deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal. The demand for two deputy chief minister slots is not seen as a big hindrance.

The NCP has apparently sought an additional berth in the Manmohan Singh ministry to accommodate Tariq Anwar, who had walked out of the Congress along with Pawar and P.A. Sangma.

Besides, the NCP is believed to be seeking an assurance from the Congress that it would fully back Pawar if the Supreme Court orders fresh elections to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

The hearing on the September elections, which Pawar lost by a casting vote, is scheduled to resume tomorrow.

However, the NCP leadership denied that it is bargaining for anything beyond Maharashtra.

THE TELEGRAPH

26 OCT 2004

# Cong makes CM pitch, NCP refuses to play

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 24. — In an apparently last-ditch attempt to hold on to its claim over the Maharashtra chief ministership, the Congress today offered the NCP added bonanza in the new state Cabinet, if it agrees to concede the top post to its nominee.

The NCP did not reject the proposal, but its leader Mr Praful Patel made it clear that "our initial response to this is not enthusiastic." The formula to break the nine-day long deadlock over the chief ministership involving the two alliance partners was proposed to Mr Patel by Mr Pranab Mukherjee, who is heading the Congress team to resolve the tangle, over the telephone this afternoon.

Mr Mukherjee said the Congress is ready to allot "three additional ministerial berths and two extra portfolios" to the NCP in lieu of the chief minister's office for a Congress candidate. This formula would help the NCP retain all its crucial portfolios — home, finance, power, irrigation — besides possibly securing plum portfolios like revenue and co-operatives from the Congress' existing quota. In terms of strength also, the NCP will have 24 ministers as against 18 ministers of the Congress, whereas both

## Surjeet peeved



NEW DELHI, Oct. 24. — CPI-M general secretary Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet today said race for power has led to the stalemate over chief

ministership in Maharashtra.

"They all want power and we are not like them. We work for the betterment of the people," he told the media when asked about the ongoing political tussle between the Congress and the NCP in Maharashtra. — PTI

parties had about 21 ministers each in the 42-member ministry in the outgoing Maharashtra government. Mr Praful Patel said: "This is the first Congress proposal in the last eight days beyond our stated positions." "We need at least a day to consult our colleagues to formulate our final response."

Mr Patel hinted that the NCP has stuck to its stand claiming the chief minister's post for being the "major partner" of the ruling alliance in its capacity as the single largest party.

Both the NCP and the Congress camps sent out signals that the con-

tentious issue would be resolved within a couple of days.

Although there was no meeting between the Congress and the NCP till the evening, their "internal consultation sessions" continued. The Congress brass, including Mr Mukherjee, Mr Arjun Singh, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mr Ahmed Patel, and Mrs Margaret Alva, went into a huddle at Mrs Sonia Gandhi's residence while Mr Praful Patel was said to have been closeted with NCP chief Mr Sharad Pawar. The legislature party meetings of both the sides are scheduled for tomorrow in Mumbai.

There are signs that the Congress is softening. It will barely have much options but to concede the chief ministership to the NCP, if the latter rejects this proposal. Both Mr Pawar and Mr Patel denied any proposal for two deputy chief minister's posts for the NCP in lieu of the top post for the Congress was mooted by either side.

Mr Pawar today politely rejected Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet's reported offer to broker a deal, saying the two partners are competent to find a solution between themselves.

Tomorrow, the Congress and NCP leaders are expected to get back to the negotiating table to carry forward their talks, which, albeit inconclusive, has now entered a decisive stage.

THE STATESMAN

25 OCT 2004



# শাঁসালো দফতর নিয়ে দরাদরি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ অক্টোবর: ফল প্রকাশের ন'দিন পরেও মহারাষ্ট্রের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ নিয়ে কংগ্রেস ও জাতীয়তাবাদী কংগ্রেস (এন সি পি)-র মধ্যে টানাপোড়েন অব্যাহত।

এখন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদের বিনিময়ে শাঁসালো দফতর পেতে দরকষাকষি শুরু করেছে এন সি পি। শরদ পওয়ারের দল মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদের দাবি ছাড়ার বদলে দু'টি উপমুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ, রাজস্ব-সহ একগুচ্ছ দফতর দাবি করেছে। দাবি মানতে নারাজ কংগ্রেস। মানলে দলের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে কার্যত ঠুটো জগন্নাথ হয়ে প্রশাসন চালাতে হবে বলে রাজনৈতিক মহলের ধারণা।

পাল্টা প্রস্তাব পেশ করে তাই সনিয়া গান্ধীর দল বলেছে, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদের বদলে এন সি পি-কে নিজেদের ভাগ থেকে আরও তিন জন অতিরিক্ত মন্ত্রী এবং দু'টি অতিরিক্ত দফতর দিতে তারা রাজি। কংগ্রেসের পক্ষ থেকে এর বেশি কিছু দেওয়া সম্ভব নয় বোঝাতে

দলের প্রবীণ নেতা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় রাতে বলে দেন, “আমরা এর পরে আর যেতে পারব না। এ বার ওদের জানাতে হবে।” কিন্তু আজ রাতেই কংগ্রেসের নতুন প্রস্তাবকে বিশেষ আমল না-দিয়ে এন সি পি-র গুরুত্বপূর্ণ নেতা প্রফুল্ল পটেল বলেছেন, “প্রাথমিক ভাবে এটা আমাদের কাছে খুব একটা উৎসাহজনক নয়। তবে

## মহারাষ্ট্রের কুর্সি

আমরা নিজেদের লোকের সঙ্গে কথা বলব।” ফলে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ ঘিরে দু'পক্ষই জায় লড়াই এখনও তুঙ্গে। এই পরিস্থিতিতেই কাল মুম্বইয়ে বসছে কংগ্রেস পরিষদীয় দলের বৈঠক।

আজ কংগ্রেস জানিয়েছে, তারা মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদের জন্য দু'টি দফতর ছেড়ে দিতে রাজি। এ ছাড়া, এন সি পি অতিরিক্ত আরও তিন জনকে মন্ত্রী করতে পারে। প্রণববাবু সাংবাদিকদের

বলেছেন, “আমরা ওদের কাছে এই প্রস্তাব রেখেছি। ওরা জানাক কী করবে।” এন সি পি-র উপরে চাপ বাড়াতে প্রণববাবু এটাও বলে দিয়েছেন যে, এর বেশি ছাড় তারা দিতে পারবেন না। তবে কংগ্রেস সূত্রের খবর, এই অতিরিক্ত দু'টি মন্ত্রক দিলেও এন সি পি-কে তারা রাজস্ব দফতর দিতে নারাজ। দলের একাংশের বক্তব্য, রাজস্ব দফতরটির মাধ্যমে জেলা আধিকারিকদের উপরে সরাসরি প্রভাব বজায় রাখা সম্ভব। এই দফতর এন সি পি-র হাতে গেলে বহু জেলায় কংগ্রেসের সাংগঠনিক ও রাজনৈতিক ভাবে কোণঠাসা হবার আশঙ্কা আছে। অর্থাৎ, স্বরাষ্ট্রের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দফতর ইতিমধ্যেই রয়েছে এন সি পি-র হাতে। আরও একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দফতর পওয়ারের হাতে তুলে দিতে তাই কংগ্রেস স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই রাজি নয়।

পওয়ারের দাবি ছিল, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

# শাঁসালো দফতর নিয়ে

প্রথম পাতার পর পেনেলে একটিতে পওয়ার তাঁর ভাইপো অজিত পওয়ারকে বসাতে পারবেন। তাতে দলের মধ্যে ক্ষমতা দখলের যে চোরাস্রোত রয়েছে, সেটা কিছুটা আটকানো যাবে। কংগ্রেস এই প্রস্তাব মানতে চায়না, কারণ দু'জন উপমুখ্যমন্ত্রী থাকলে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর কর্তৃত্ব অনেকটাই খর্ব হয়ে যাবে। কংগ্রেসের একাংশের আবার বক্তব্য, পওয়ারকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ ছেড়ে দিলে মহারাষ্ট্রে কংগ্রেসের সমূহ রাজনৈতিক ক্ষতি হতে পারে। প্রশাসনিক কর্তৃত্ব পেলে পওয়ারের দল ফুলে ফেঁপে উঠবে, এবং সেটাও কংগ্রেসের সংগঠন এবং ভোট ব্যাঙ্কের বিনিময়েই। এই ঝুঁকি নিতে নারাজ কংগ্রেস।

আসন সমঝোতার মাধ্যমে মহারাষ্ট্রে নির্বাচন জেতার পরে এখন কংগ্রেস এবং এন সি পি-র মধ্যে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ ঘিরে যে কিছুটা হলেও তিক্ততা সৃষ্টি হয়েছে, তা স্পষ্ট। এত

দিন ধরে সমঝোতা সূত্র নিয়ে গোপনীয়তা বজায় রাখার পরে আজ কংগ্রেস প্রকাশ্যে জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, তারা কী প্রস্তাব এন সি পি-কে দিয়েছে। বিষয়টি নিয়ে প্রথমে সনিয়া গান্ধী ও শরদ পওয়ার এক বার বৈঠক করেছিলেন। কিন্তু ন'দিনে মীমাংসা হয়নি দেখে দুই শীর্ষ নেতা দ্বিতীয় বার আর নিজেদের মধ্যে কথা বলেননি। এই ব্যাপারে সনিয়ার প্রধান দূত এখন প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। সেটা দেখে পওয়ারও নিজেকে পিছনে রেখে কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করতে এগিয়ে দিয়েছেন প্রফুল্ল পটেলকে। আজ দিনভর দুই শিবিরে একের পর এক বৈঠক হয়েছে। মহারাষ্ট্রের বিদায়ী মুখ্যমন্ত্রী সুশীল কুমার শিন্দে প্রণববাবুর সঙ্গে একান্তে কথাও বলেন। পটেল-সহ এন সি পি-র কিছু নেতা প্রণবের বাড়িতে এসে কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে আলোচনা চালান। আগামিকাল ফের আর এক প্রস্তাব বৈঠক হবে।

# Shinde hits out at <sup>HT</sup> 'betrayer' Marxists

22/10/89  
HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, October 21  
*pubharan*

A NEW government led by a Congress chief minister would have been in place in Maharashtra by now had the CPI(M) not "refused" to be recognised as the party's pre-poll ally, Sushil Kumar Shinde said today.

The outgoing chief minister blamed the CPI(M) for betraying the Congress in the deadlock over which party should lead the new government in the state. Shocked at the CPI(M)'s attitude, Shinde said the Congress had left three seats for the Left party after an understanding was reached at the highest level. "I was directed to give up the three seats on instructions from the high command," he said. An infuriated Shinde hoped the Congress leadership would take up the matter with the CPI(M) at the highest level.

The Congress won 69 seats in the Assembly polls, and would have enjoyed the support of 72 MLAs — one more than the NCP's 71 — had the CPI(M) not "denied" the pre-poll understanding, Shinde said. The death of Govindrao Wanjari, who had won the Nagpur (South) seat, has reduced the Congress's strength to 68, which means the Congress will have only 71 legislators even if the CPI(M) accepts the pre-poll alliance.

But there was some good news for the Congress, too. Another Independent legislator extended support to the party today. Madan Bhosale, son of former MPCC chief Prataprao Bhosale who won the Wai seat near Satara, met Congress president Sonia Gandhi a day after nine other Independents had declared their support to the party.

The next round of Congress-Nationalist Congress Party talks to decide on a chief minister will be held on October 23.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 OCT 2004

# Pawar hints at outside support

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, Oct. 18. — A crucial meeting between the leaders of the Congress and the NCP late tonight failed to break the deadlock over the next Maharashtra chief minister.

The NCP chief, Mr Sharad Pawar, upped the ante shrewdly proposing that his party is even ready to give "outside support" to the Congress, if the latter would not like to honour the 1999 formula.

The Maratha strongman has been firmly insisting on the implementation of this formula suggested then by the Congress itself, according to which the party with the larger number of MLAs was allotted the chief minister's post with the deputy CM's chair and several plum portfolios going to the junior partner.

## 'Udhav to stay, Bangla mafia led electorate stray'

MUMBAI, Oct. 18. — Shiv Sena supremo Mr Bal Thackeray today said his son Mr Udhav Thackeray would continue to be the party's executive president despite the defeat in the election. In an editorial in the party mouthpiece, *Saamna*, he said his fears of Bangladeshi migrants voting against the Shiv Sena-BJP combine had been reflected in the results. He blamed his party's defeat on the Bangladeshi Muslim vote-bank "groomed by the Congress" and added that the "threat of Muslim fundamentalism" will cost the country dearly. — SNS

After the meeting held at Mr Pawar's residence, the Congress leader, Mr Ahmed Patel and the NCP leader, Mr Praful Patel, conceded that the consultations did not clinch the issue. The matter will be taken up again tomorrow. Mr Pranab Mukherjee and Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad along with Maharashtra-related Congress leaders, Mrs Margaret Alva, Mr Sushil Shinde and Prabha

Rau, were present.

Mr Pawar has rejected the Congress proposal to become the chief minister himself. Mr Shinde had mooted the idea of a chief minister for two-and-a-half years on a rotational basis for each party, but it was shot down by the Congress, a party source said.

There are indications, however, that the contentious issue might be resolved tomorrow with

some "give-and-take" between the two parties.

Reeling under Mr Pawar's latest posturing, the Congress central leadership took a new line — that the alliance partners should be "duty-bound" to "honour the mandate of the Maharashtra people in favour of the Congress-led incumbent coalition government". The Congress hammered out this line after a high-level meeting of the party top brass at Mrs Sonia Gandhi's residence here tonight.

In Mumbai, the Maharashtra unit of the NCP expressed solidarity with Mr Pawar on the issue of the next chief minister. The party's newly-elected MLAs adopted a resolution empowering Mr Pawar "to take the decision in the interest of the NCP and the people of Maharashtra".

THE STATESMAN

19 OCT 2004

CONG, NCP FIGHT FIGURES WITH FIGURES

# Allies jockey for CM's post

Shahid Pervez  
in New Delhi

Oct. 17. — The government-formation exercise in Maharashtra is likely to hang fire for a few days since neither of the victorious allies — the NCP and Congress — is ready to concede the chief minister's post.

The two partners are now slugging it out among themselves over the top post. The NCP chief, Mr Sharad Pawar, today toughened his stand by staking his party's claim to the chief minister's post for emerging as the single largest party. Mr Pawar met Mrs Sonia Gandhi this morning, but the half-an-hour meeting failed to break the deadlock. It was, however, decided that Mrs Gandhi's political secretary Mr Ahmed Patel and Mr Pawar's close aide Mr Praful Patel would be the interlocutors in the bid to hammer out a compromise.

Mr Pawar reiterated that the "formula" proposed by the Congress in 1999 — the party with more MLAs was allotted the chief minister-ship with the deputy's post given to the junior partner — should be followed this time too.

But debunking the formula, senior Congress leaders, including Mrs Margaret Alva, Mr Digvijay Singh and Mr Prithviraj Chauhan, have now sought

## Few takers for PM's lunch

NEW DELHI, Oct. 17. — Mrs Ambika Soni and Mr Salman Khurshid were the only two AICC general secretaries of the total eight who showed up at a lunch hosted by Dr Manmohan Singh at his official residence today. Except Mrs Margaret Alva and Mr Digvijay Singh — who are in Mumbai — others were said to be present in Delhi. Some AICC leaders defended the absence by saying that they might be out of town. It caused a stir in the Congress as it indicated the Prime Minister's "clout" in the party. — SNS

to include three CPI-M legislators and two Independents — who were given the seats from its quota — in its tally, making the scoreboard 74 against 72 of the NCP plus RPI-A. Calling this argument "fallacious", the NCP has started floating the numbers of Independents supposedly backing its claim.

In this numerical game of one-upmanship and creation of "sub-alliances within the alliance", the CPI-M has made it clear that it is going to adopt a neutral stand. It is unwilling to give any credit to the Congress "quota" for the seats it won, holding that there had not been any "seat-sharing agreement".

An AICC leader said: "Both the partners are locked in an eyeball-to-eyeball encounter; it is difficult to say who blinks first." The NCP has now also rejected the Congress' claim of being the "real big brother, going by the pre-poll arrangement". NCP leader Mr DP Tripathi said: "The alliance should be now called NCP-Congress-RPI instead of the Congress-NCP-RPI combine."

The Congress is banking on "Mr Pawar's own restraints and compulsions". The Congress feels that the NCP chief would not be in a comfortable position to select the CM nominee from his own party. He might prefer his nephew Mr Ajit Pawar, but there is a big question mark over his "acceptability" among the NCP leaders, several of whom are themselves aspirants for the top job.

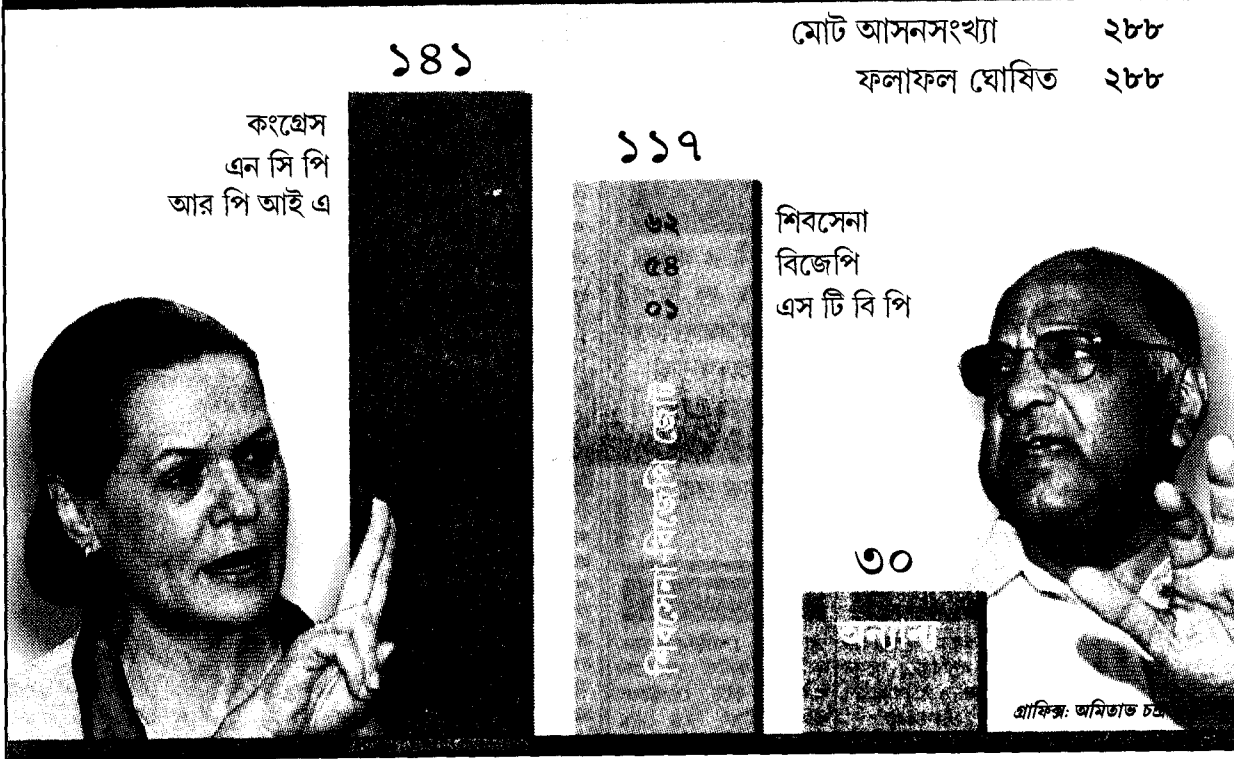
Exploiting this "chink in Mr Pawar's armour", the Congress believes it could play ball with him, giving him his pound of flesh at the state and Central levels in lieu of the chief ministership.

## BJP brass meet

Top BJP leaders will meet in New Delhi tomorrow to analyse the poll reverses and chalk out strategies for next year's Assembly elections in Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana.

# জয় মুম্বইয়ে, শক্তিবৃদ্ধি দিল্লিতে

## মহারাষ্ট্র বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে চূড়ান্ত ফলাফল



## সনিয়ারই জয়, কবুল করতে হল সুমমাকেও

**জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল ● নয়াদিল্লি**

১৬ অক্টোবর: প্রায়শ্চিত্ত করলেন সুমমা স্বরাজ। সনিয়া গান্ধীর প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়া ঠেকাতে তাঁকে 'বিদেশিনি' বলে ন্যাড়া হতে চেয়েছিলেন তিনি। মাত্র চার মাস পরে, মহারাষ্ট্রে দলীয় বিপর্যয় দেখে তাঁর স্বীকারোক্তি, এ জয়ের কৃতিত্ব নিশ্চয় সনিয়ার।

১০ জনপথের লন-এ উল্লসিত কংগ্রেস কর্মীদের সামনে এসে দলনেত্রী অবস্থা জানালেন, এ জয় কারও একার নয়। এটা মানুষের জয়। দলের কর্মকর্তা আর কর্মীদের জয়। হাতে কোনও কাগজ না-নিয়েই হিঁদিত্তে তিনি এ কথা বলার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই করতালি। হর্ষধ্বনি। সন্ধ্যায় মনমোহন সিংহ এলেন তাঁর কাছে। কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্ব মনে করছেন, এই জয় তাঁদের চার মাসের সরকারকে

প্রচুর বাড়তি মনোবল জোগাবে। আর সেই মনস্তাত্ত্বিক শক্তি আগামী দিনে আরও দৃঢ় ভাবে সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে সাহায্য করবে মনমোহনকে। গত চার মাসে নানা বিষয়ে সরকার নাজেহাল। মণিপুর, অসম, কাশ্মীর— সমস্যার অন্ত নেই। মুদ্রাস্ফীতি ও মূল্যবৃদ্ধির রোষ-কষায়িত লোচন।

এ অবস্থায় মহারাষ্ট্রে বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে এই জয় সরকারকে আর্থিক সংস্কার ও অন্যান্য কাজে সাহসী পদক্ষেপ করতে সাহায্য করবে। মহারাষ্ট্রের জয় তাঁর সরকারকে শক্তি জোগাবে, এটা বিলক্ষণ জানেন বলে আজ নিজেই ১০ জনপথে এসে দলনেত্রীকে কৃতজ্ঞতা জানিয়ে গেলেন মনমোহন সিংহ।

মহারাষ্ট্রের ভোটে সনিয়া কার্যত একাই ছিলেন কংগ্রেসের তুরূপের

তাস। মনমোহন নিজে ভোটপ্রচার করেছেন যৎসামান্য। সবটুকু দায়িত্ব কাঁখে তুলে নিয়েছিলেন সনিয়াই। এমনকী রাছল-প্রিয়ঙ্কাকেও সঙ্গে নেননি। যথেষ্ট সচেতন ভাবেই। সনিয়ার সঙ্গে পাল্লা দিয়ে জোটের হয়ে যিনি প্রচার করেছেন তিনি এন সি পি নেতা শরদ পওয়ার। অসুস্থতা উপেক্ষা করে সারা রাজ্য ঘুরেছেন তিনি।

সনিয়া গান্ধীর 'বিদেশিনি' পরিচয়ই মহারাষ্ট্রের ভোটে প্রচারের প্রধান হাতিয়ার করেছিল বিজেপি তথা সম্ভব পরিবার। লোকসভা ভোটেও তারা একই প্রচার চালিয়েছিল। সেই নির্বাচনে বিপর্যয় সত্ত্বেও পাল্টানো হয়নি রণকৌশল। একই সুরে এ বার সনিয়াকে আক্রমণ করেছিলেন শিবসেনা প্রধান বাল ঠাকরে।

এই প্রচার যে সাধারণ মানুষের

মনে দাগ কাটেনি, ভোটের ফল থেকেই সেটা পরিষ্কার। সনিয়া জাদু জয় করেছে মহারাষ্ট্র। ভোটের ব্যঙ্গ আমজনতা জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, 'বিদেশিনি' প্রসঙ্গ অবাস্তব।

এই জয় দলে সনিয়ার কর্তৃত্ব সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত করল। শুধু দল নয়, বিপত্তারিণীর ভাবমূর্তি নিয়ে সংযুক্ত গণতান্ত্রিক মোর্চার অবিসংবাদী নেত্রী হয়ে উঠলেন তিনি।

মহারাষ্ট্রে ক্ষমতায় টিকে থাকার ফলে শুধু যে মনমোহন সরকারের পায়ের তলার মাটি শক্ত হল তাই নয়, বিহার, ঝাড়খণ্ড, হরিয়ানার আসম বিধানসভা ভোটের আগে কংগ্রেসকে বাড়তি মনোবলও জোগাল। পরের বছর এই তিন রাজ্যে ভোট। তার পর ভোট উত্তরপ্রদেশে। এই জয়ই চার রাজ্যের ভোটে সনিয়ার দলের মূলধন।

## কুর্সির দৌড়ে এগিয়ে রইল শরদের দল

**দীপুঞ্জ রায়চৌধুরী ● নয়াদিল্লি**

১৬ অক্টোবর: কলকাতায় কয়েক দিন আগেই তিজ্ঞ অভিজ্ঞতা হয়েছিল। মুম্বইয়ে শেষ হাসিটা হাসলেন শরদরাও গোবিন্দরাও পওয়ার।

সামান্যের জন্য গরিষ্ঠতা হারালেও মহারাষ্ট্রে কংগ্রেস ও রাষ্ট্রবাদী জোটের সরকার এখন অবশ্যজ্ঞাবী। এই কৃতিত্বের অন্যতম কারিগর সনিয়া গান্ধী হলেও শরদ যে আজ এই ভোটেরঙ্গের নায়ক হয়ে উঠেছেন, তার কারণ মাত্র ১২৪টি আসনে লড়ে ৭১টি জিতে তিনি নিজের দলকে রাজ্যে প্রথম স্থানে নিয়ে চলে এসেছেন। তুলনায় ১৪২টি আসনে লড়ে কংগ্রেস পেয়েছে ৬৯টি। আর বেশি আসন পাওয়ার সুবাদেই এখন কংগ্রেসকে ছাপিয়ে শরদের রাষ্ট্রবাদী কংগ্রেস মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর কুর্সির দাবিদার হয়ে উঠেছে। মহারাষ্ট্রে এই জোটের তরফে এত দিন মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্ব ছিল কংগ্রেসের কাছে। কিন্তু কংগ্রেস তখন সংখ্যাতেও বেশি ছিল। এ বারে সনিয়া গান্ধীও মহারাষ্ট্রে ব্যাপক প্রচার চালিয়েছেন। ভোটের ফল-এ কিন্তু পওয়ার তাকেও টেকা দিয়েছেন। ফলে, ক্ষমতাসীন জোটের প্রধান দুই শরিকের মধ্যে এ নিয়ে টানাপোড়েনও শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে।

তবে এখন টানাপোড়েন চললেও দিনের শেষে কিন্তু জয় হল পাটিগণিতেরই। ক্ষমতাসীন সরকারের প্রতি ক্ষোভ তো ছিলই, গোদের উপরে বিষফোড়ার মতো ছিল বিপুল সংখ্যায় বিক্ষুব্ধদের চ্যালেঞ্জ। এই সমস্যা সত্ত্বেও দুই দলের নির্বাচনী মিলনের রসায়নটাই বিজেপি-শিবসেনার জয়ের যাবতীয় আশায় জল ঢেলে দিল।

কেন্দ্রে ক্ষমতায় আসার পাঁচ মাসের মাথায় প্রথম পরীক্ষায় উত্তরে গিয়ে জোটের নেতাদের মুখে এখন প্রশস্ত হাসি। "আমরা খুশি," উচ্ছ্বসিত মুখে এ কথা জানিয়ে সনিয়া গান্ধীও বললেন, "আমরা সকলের সঙ্গে কথা বলে সিদ্ধান্ত নেব।" আর প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহও পাক্কা রাজনীতিবিদের মতোই মন্তব্য করেছেন, "এটা সাংস্কারিক শক্তির পরাজয়।" পওয়ার এখন কথা বলার চেয়ে বেশি ব্যস্ত মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্বের সমস্যা সমাধানে। এই ব্যাপারে সনিয়া গান্ধীর সঙ্গে শীঘ্রই আলোচনায় বসতে চলেছেন তিনি। তবু তাঁর দল যে এ বার মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর গদির দাবিদার, তা গোপন না করে শরদ মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন, গত বারেই নীতিগতভাবে ঠিক করা হয়েছিল, জোটের মধ্যে যে দল বেশি আসন পাবে, তারাই মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদের দাবিদার হবে। কংগ্রেস যে শরদের এই যুক্তি সহজে উড়িয়ে দিতে পারছে না, সাংবাদিকদের সামনে বর্তমান মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কংগ্রেসের সূরীশ কুমার শিঙে যে ভাবে এই প্রশ্নটি এড়াতে চেষ্টা করছেন, তাতেই স্পষ্ট। কংগ্রেস রাজ্য নেতারা এখন নেত্রী সনিয়ার দোহাই দিয়ে এ প্রসঙ্গে মুখে কুলুপ আঁটছেন।

নূনতম গরিষ্ঠতার থেকে সনিয়া-শরদের জোট কম পেয়েছে ছটি আসন। কিন্তু তিনটি আসন আছে সি পি এমের কাছে। আর বিক্ষুব্ধ হিসাবে দাঁড়ানো পওয়ারের দলের বিক্ষুব্ধরা জিতেছেন জনা বারো-চোদ্দো। রাষ্ট্রবাদী কংগ্রেসের প্রাক্তন রাজ্য সভাপতি বাবনরাও পাচপুতের নেতৃত্বে এঁদের একটা বড় অংশ এখন 'মর্যাদা' পেয়ে কংগ্রেস-পরিবারে ফিরতে পারেন। ফলে সরকারের স্থায়িত্ব নিয়ে পরবর্তী মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে যে চিন্তা করতে হবে না, তাতে কোনও সংশয় নেই।

কিন্তু ঘটনা হল, এতটা সুবিধাজনক অবস্থায় শাসকজোট আসতে পারত না, যদি না পওয়ারের রাষ্ট্রবাদী কংগ্রেস আগের বারের চেয়ে তেরোটি আসন বাড়িয়ে নিতে পারত। আগের বার দুই কংগ্রেস আলাদা লড়েছিল এবং দুই দল মিলে মোট ১৩৩টি আসন পেয়েছিল। এ বার একত্রে লড়ে তাঁদের আসন বেড়েছে মাত্র সাতটি। জোটের আর এক শরিক রামদাস অটওয়ালের নেতৃত্বাধীন রিপাবলিকান পার্টি গত বারেও একটি আসন জিতেছিল, এ বারও তাই। কিন্তু পওয়ারের দল যখনই নিজেদের আসন বাড়িয়েছে ১৩টি, সেখানে কংগ্রেসের আসন গত বারের চেয়ে কমে গিয়েছে ৬টি। ফলে কংগ্রেসের চেয়ে অঠারোটি আসনে কম লড়েও পওয়ারের দল কংগ্রেসের সংখ্যাকে অতিক্রম করে গিয়েছে।

বিজেপির পক্ষে এই নির্বাচন কোনও সুসংবাদ নিয়ে এল না। বিরোধী শিবিরের হয়ে প্রচারে কার্যত একা দৌড়ে বেড়ানো শিবসেনার প্রধান বাল ঠাকরে মাত্র দুটি জনসভা করেছেন। প্রমোদ মহাজন তাই এখন দলের কাঠগড়ায়। কিন্তু মহারাষ্ট্রে

## ঘর সামলে, দিশা ফিরিয়ে আক্রমণ চান বাজপেয়ী

**জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল ● নয়াদিল্লি**

১৬ অক্টোবর: সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে সব সময় খড়গহস্ত হয়ে থাকা এবং সংঘত ভাবে বিরোধী দলের ভূমিকা পালন না-করা, এই দুইয়েরই মূল্য দিতে হল বিজেপি-কে। মহারাষ্ট্র-সহ সারা দেশ থেকেই নির্বাচনী দুঃসংবাদ আসার পরে দলীয় বিশ্লেষণে মূলত এই ব্যাখ্যাই উঠে আসছে। সন্ধ্যায় নিজের বাড়িতে আয়োজিত বৈঠকে প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীও দলীয় নেতাদের স্পষ্ট বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন, ঘর সামলে আক্রমণে যাওয়ার কৌশল নিতে হবে। দলকে দিশা দেওয়া জরুরি, সরকারকে বিপাকে ফেলার প্রথ তার পরে।

মহারাষ্ট্রে বিধানসভার নির্বাচনের মতোই গুজরাত, মধ্যপ্রদেশ, রাজস্থান ও উত্তরপ্রদেশে বিধানসভা উপনির্বাচনে বিজেপি-র ফল খারাপ হয়েছে। সেই সঙ্গে লোকসভা উপনির্বাচনে কনটিকের বিদর আসনটি খুঁইয়েছে তারা। মাস পাঁচেক আগে লোকসভার ভোটে বিপর্যয়ের পরে সে ভাবে আত্মবিশ্লেষণ যে করা হয়নি, সেটা এখন বিজেপি নেতারা নিজেরাই বলছেন। কেন এই সার্বিক বিপর্যয়, তা নিয়ে রকমারি মতও বেরিয়ে আসছে।

দলীয় নেতাদের অনেকেই মত, ইউ পি এ সরকারকে ফেলতে বিজেপি উঠেপড়ে লেগেছিল। জ্যোতিষীর বাতলে দেওয়া দিন ক্ষণ মেনে সরকার পড়বে কি না, তা নিয়েই হইটই করা হচ্ছিল। ক্ষমতায় ফেরার স্বপ্ন দেখা হচ্ছে অথচ দলকে ঠিক পথে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার সময় কারও নেই— এমন ক্ষোভ এখন তৈরি হয়েছে দলের ভিতরেই। সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডুই শুধু নন, মহারাষ্ট্রে ভোটের কাণ্ডারী প্রমোদ মহাজন থেকে সুমমা স্বরাজ, সকলেই কমবেশি প্রশ্নের সামনে।

নবীন প্রজন্মের নেতারা বিজেপি-র বৈঠকে অভিযোগের তর্জনী তুলেছেন দলের দিশাহীনতার দিকে। প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী শাহনওয়াজ হুসেন বা বিজয় গোয়েলের মতো নেতারা বলছেন, "লোকসভায় বিপর্যয় নিয়েই এখনও সৃষ্টি আলোচনা হল না। আমরা বেশি ব্যস্ত মনমোহন সরকারকে আক্রমণ করতে। নিজেদের ঘর গোছানোরই তো চেষ্টা করা দরকার।" দলের মধ্যে বেঙ্কাইয়া-বিরোধীরা

## কুর্সির দৌড়ে এগিয়ে

প্রথম পাতার পর

দলের আসন যা ছিল (৫৬) তার থেকে দু'টি কমেছে। কমে গিয়েছে শিবসেনার আসন সংখ্যাও। বিরোধী জোটের বড় শরিক গতবার ৬৯টি আসন জিতেছিল; এবার পেল ৬২।

অথচ, শরদের নিজের তালুক পশ্চিম মহারাষ্ট্রে কিন্তু জোট যথেষ্ট খারাপ ফল করেছে। গত বিধানসভায় আলাপা লাড়ও দুই কংগ্রেস পেয়েছিল ৪৬টা আসন।

একত্রে লড়ে গত লোকসভায় বিধানসভা-ওয়াড়ি ফলাফলে জোট পেয়েছিল ৫৭। কিন্তু এ বার জোট পেয়েছে ৪২টি (কিন্তু তার সুফল শিবসেনা-বিজেপি পায়নি)। তার সবচেয়ে বড় কারণ রাষ্ট্রবাদী পার্টির বিদ্রোহী প্রার্থীরা। এই অঞ্চল থেকেই তাঁদের বেশ কয়েকজন জিতেছেন। অদূর ভবিষ্যতে তাঁরা আবার রাষ্ট্রবাদী কংগ্রেসে ফিরেও যেতে পারেন।

পশ্চিম মহারাষ্ট্রের ৭২টি আসনে তুলনায় খারাপ ফল করেও যে কংগ্রেস জোট এগিয়ে গিয়েছে তার একটা বড় কারণ শিবসেনার মারাঠওয়াড়া ও কোঙ্কনের দুর্গ ধরে রাখতে ব্যর্থতা। কোঙ্কনে (মোট আসন ৩০) শিবসেনা জোট গতবার ১৯টি পেলেও এ বার

পেয়েছে ১৬টি আসন। চার মাসের আগের লোকসভার ফল অনুযায়ী মারাঠওয়াড়ায় ৪৮-এর মধ্যে ৩২টি আসন পাওয়ার কথা এই জোটের; কিন্তু তাঁরা পেয়েছেন ২৬। বিদর্ভ (৬৬টি আসন) অঞ্চল একসময় কংগ্রেসের দুর্গ থাকলেও খরা ও বহু চাষির আত্মহত্যার পরে গত লোকসভায় তা পুরোপুরি চলে গিয়েছিল শিবসেনা জোটের হাতে।

কিন্তু এ বার ফল দাঁড়িয়েছে প্রায় সমান সমান। আর মুম্বইয়ে লোকসভায় কংগ্রেস জোট যে ভাবে এগিয়ে গিয়েছিল, তাতে বিশেষ ফটল ধরাতে পারেনি শিবসেনা।

ফলে শিবসেনা পিছিয়ে পড়ায় আবারও মহারাষ্ট্রে ক্ষমতায় ফিরছে কংগ্রেস জোট। তবে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কোন দলের থেকে হবে, সেটা সবচেয়ে বড় প্রশ্ন। ক্ষমতায় টিকে যাওয়ার এই লগ্নেই জোটের প্রধান দুই শরিকের মধ্যে দরকষাকষি মুম্বই ও দিল্লির রাজনৈতিক উত্তাপ বাড়িয়ে দিতে সক্ষম হতে পারে।

শিঙে আজ শরদকে প্রকাশ্যে আহ্বান জানিয়েছিলেন, ঢের হয়েছে, কংগ্রেসে ফিরে আসুন। সবিনয়ে সেই প্রস্তাব প্রত্যাখ্যান করেছেন শরদরাও।

## ঘর সামলে দিশা ফিরিয়ে

প্রথম পাতার পর

বিপর্যয়ের ব্যাখ্যাকে শুধুমাত্র মহারাষ্ট্রে সীমাবদ্ধ না-রেখে সর্ব ভারতীয় পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে নিয়ে যেতে চাইছেন। উমা ভারতীয় অনুগামী নেতারা অভিযোগ তুলেছেন, সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া আজও চেম্বাইয়ে। মহারাষ্ট্রে নির্বাচনের সময় তিনি বসন্ত 'অদৃশ্য'ই ছিলেন। অতএব, তাঁকে এ বার সরিয়ে দেওয়া প্রয়োজন।

বেঙ্কাইয়াকে সরানোর দাবি উঠলেও আডবানী এখনও রাজি নন। উল্টে তাঁর বক্তব্য, মহারাষ্ট্রে বিপর্যয় হলেও দেশের সর্বত্র বিজেপি খারাপ করেছে, এ কথা মানা যাচ্ছে না। গুজরাতে পাঁচটি আসনই তো ছিল কংগ্রেসের। তা থেকে দু'টি এ বার বিজেপি ছিনিয়ে নিয়েছে।

এগুলির মধ্যে একটি আসন আবার ছিল প্রাক্তন কংগ্রেসি মুখ্যমন্ত্রী অমর সিংহ চৌধুরীর। হিমাচল, রাজস্থান, মধ্যপ্রদেশেও স্থিতিবস্থা ধরে রাখা গিয়েছে। ফলে সর্বভারতীয় ক্ষেত্র নয়, মহারাষ্ট্র নিয়েই আডবানী বেশি উদ্বিগ্ন।

আবার মহারাষ্ট্রে ভরাডুটির জন্য প্রমোদ মহাজনকেও কাঠগড়ায় দাঁড় করানোর চেষ্টা হচ্ছে।

আর মহাজন নিজে প্রকাশ্যে না-হলেও দলের ভিতরে এই বিপর্যয়ের জন্য-সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডুকে দায়ী করতে চাইছেন। এর পাশাপাশি বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব নিয়েও প্রশ্ন উঠছে। এ বারে মহারাষ্ট্রে প্রচার থেকে কার্যত দূরে সরে থেকেছেন অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী।

প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অসুস্থতার দোহাই দিলেও দলে অনেকের ধারণা, বিজেপি-র এই ছত্রভঙ্গ পরিস্থিতি দেখেই ক্ষুব্ধ বাজপেয়ী দূরে সরে থাকতে চেয়েছিলেন।

আজ ফল প্রকাশের পরে বৈঠকে বাজপেয়ী নিজেই সেই দিশাহারা অবস্থার কথা তুলেছেন। বলেছেন, সংসদ বয়কট থেকে শুরু করে সামান্য অজিলায় যুদ্ধং দেহি মনোভাব না-দেখিয়ে দলকে এখন অনেক বেশি সংযত হতে হবে।

নির্দিষ্ট লক্ষ্য সামনে রেখে এগোতে হবে। অনেক পোড় খাওয়া নেতাই মনে করেন, এই বিপর্যয়ের পরে দলে বাজপেয়ীর প্রাসঙ্গিকতা আবার বাড়বে। আজকের বিশ্লেষণী বৈঠক বাজপেয়ীর বাড়িতে হওয়া সেই সম্ভাবনারই ইঙ্গিত বলে তাঁরা এখন থেকেই দেখাতে চাইছেন।

# PAWAR BEGETS POWER

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, Oct. 16. — The Congress-NCP led Democratic Front is certain to retain power in Maharashtra. The alliance won 141 seats in the 288-member Legislative Assembly scoring a victory over their close rival, the Shiv Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party combine who won in 117 constituencies.

The DF is confident of winning over six Independents or rebels who won the elections. The exercise to welcome them back into the Congress or NCP was launched on Friday. NCP president Mr Sharad Pawar has been asked to open parleys with the rebels since majority of them are from his fief — the sugar belt of western Maharashtra. The poll results once again established the NCP chief's sway over Maharashtra voters. He had campaigned tirelessly, addressing about 10 meetings a day despite indifferent health and defying his physicians' advice. He had just one rally with Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi. Although Mrs Gandhi was looked upon as the star campaigner, Mr Pawar beat all expectations by winning the largest number of seats for NCP.

BJP's campaign chief Mr Pramod Mahajan and Shiv Sena leader Mr Narayan Rane conceded defeat and said they would sit in the Opposition. Mr Mahajan gave no excuses for the defeat. Shiv Sena chief Mr Bal Thackeray, son Udhav and nephew Raj did not meet the media.

The Shiv Sena-BJP combine was banking on the strong anti-incumbency factor and the presence of the BSP, neither of which played a significant role after all.

The Shiv Sena citadels, Mumbai and Konkan, are cracking. The party, with its ally BJP, managed to win in 15 constituencies of Mumbai, conceding seven seats to the Congress-NCP, which bagged

## Vote Cong, live in Shanghai

NEW DELHI, Oct. 16. — The Shiv Sena-BJP alliance having been, well, shanghaied, Dr Manmohan Singh, who had promised to turn Mumbai into a global metropolis like Shanghai during the election campaign, today sought practical ideas for implementing the proposal. Dr Singh chaired a two-hour meeting of senior officials of the PMO, Union ministry of urban development and the Planning Commission to discuss details of the proposed National Mission on Urban Renewal and asked the participants to come up with specific ideas. — SNS

18 seats. One has gone to an Independent. In 1999, the Shiv Sena-BJP had won 22 seats in Mumbai. In Konkan, the saffron combine's tally was 16 against the DF's 12. But it was Vidarbha with 66 crucial seats that dealt the biggest blow to the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance. The DF won 32 seats in Vidarbha when the Shiv Sena-BJP had to remain content with 29. The remaining five seats in Vidarbha have gone to others. Ironically, the proponent of a separate Vidarbha and former MPCC chief Mr Ranjeet Deshmukh lost from Nagpur West by over 13,000 votes.

What Vidarbha did to the saffron lot, western Maharashtra did to the Congress-NCP combine, particularly, to the latter. The NCP won 25 seats here, nine less than in 1999. The Congress managed 16 with a loss of two. The BJP has been the gainer. It won nine seats, adding four to its 1999 tally while Shiv Sena bagged eight, one less than in 1999. In north Maharashtra, the DF won 18 against Shiv Sena-BJP's 14.

## Making it in Maharashtra

Party	Seat
NCP	71
Cong	69
RPI	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>
Shiv Sena	62
BJP	54
STBP	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>
Independent	19
Others	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Total seat 288</i>	
<i>Result declared 288</i>	



Graphic: Arindam Mazumder

## NCP eyes CM's chair

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

MUMBAI, Oct. 16. — Dramatically changing his tune on a Congress chief minister in Maharashtra, NCP president Mr Sharad Pawar hinted this evening that his party could well be in contention for the coveted post since the NCP had won 71 seats, two more than its ally, the Congress (69).

Mr Pawar said: "The argument given to us by the Congress five years back was that the single largest party should get the chief ministerial post. The principle was also applied in Karnataka recently." He added that the matter would be discussed by NCP leaders and MLAs at a meeting here tomorrow.

The Congress, however, was non-committal on the matter. Speaking to reporters in Delhi, Congress chief Mrs Sonia Gandhi said she would have to consult her party colleagues and Mr Pawar before she could join the issue. The Congress, analysts say, can still lay claim on the chief



Mr Sushilkumar Shinde being greeted by grandson Veer. In Mumbai on Saturday. — PTI

minister's post citing support of the CPI-M (three seats) and rebels (of the 19 Independents elected). The Congress, sensing a certain chance to form the new government, declared that two AICC observers, Mr Pranab Mukherjee and Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, would facilitate the

choice of new Congress Legislative Party leader at the MLAs' meeting here tomorrow.

Mr Pawar has also ruled out going back to Maharashtra as the chief minister. "Once I made a blunder as it was very difficult to say no to Mr Narasimha Rao. Besides I had an emotional involvement following the riots (in 1993)," the NCP chief said recalling the last time he went to state politics.

Mr Pawar had earlier maintained that he would give the chief minister's post to the Congress "even if they get one seat more than us". As results started pouring in the early afternoon, Mr Pawar praised Mr Shinde's leadership. He said elections were normally won on the basis of a chief minister's performance adding that the new chief minister would be decided by the Congress. In the evening, however, he suggested the top post should go to the NCP.

**Editorial: Back in Pawar, pg 8**  
**More reports on pg 10**

# Exit Pole Position For Cong-NCP

## It's A Close Call, But Ruling Alliance May Just Make It

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** In a race run hard and long, the Congress-NCP combine may just have gathered enough steam in the home stretch to get ahead of the saffron Shiv Sena-BJP combine. If leads provided by exit polls are to be believed, the ruling DF government may just buck incumbency and retain its control over Mantralaya.

Given that the May 2004 general elections showed exit polls in a poor light, there remains an element of caution in taking them at face value.

Polls conducted by Star and

Aaj Tak put the Congress-NCP close to the half-way mark of 145 seats in the 288-seat Assembly. Star gives 149 seats to the ruling alliance, 119 to Sena-BJP and 20 to other parties.

The Aaj Tak exit poll puts the Congress-NCP tally at 140-150, Sena-BJP at 100-110 and the figure for other parties between 30 and 40. Only the Zee exit poll showed a closer contest: 125 for Congress-NCP, 115 for Sena-BJP and a staggering 48 for independents and smaller political parties. While the channels did not rule out a hung House, the saffron allies seemed at a disadvantage.

Congress managers were quick to claim victory, Sena and BJP leaders hoped that the inaccuracy displayed by exit polls during the Lok Sabha election would now work in their favour. Exit polls have indicated that the BSP may well debut on the Maharashtra scene—with just how

many seats only October 16 will tell.

Regional variations that exit polls point to are interesting. Take Mumbai (34 seats) first. The Sena-BJP seem to have staged a recovery. Not quite a repeat of the 1999 performance (19 seats) but a marked improvement over this year's Lok Sabha (one of out six). Aaj Tak gave Congress-NCP 19-23, Sena-BJP 10-14 and 1-4 for others.

The run-off, in the same order, according to Star was 21, 12 and 3. Zee showed an almost even split at 16 for Congress-NCP, 17 for Sena-BJP.

The big picture that exit polls outline

shows that the Congress-NCP may have actually ceded some ground in western Maharashtra. But while Sena-BJP may have had some joy in the sugar belt, the allies have lost support in Konkan, failed to score over Congress-NCP in northern Maharashtra and Marathwada while failing to sweep Vidarbha. This could mean an edge to the Congress-NCP.

While it is necessary to stress that projections and sampling can go awry, the exit polls and the average voting percentage could mean that the opposition has not been able to whip up the anti-incumbency mood required to decisively unseat the Sushil Shinde government. Experts may debate whether a late monsoon helped, but the Sena-BJP effort may have lacked a hard, negative edge. It is also possible that post-general election bickering slowed down the BJP.



FOR WHOM THE POLLS TOLL	Pollster	Cong-NCP		Sena-BJP		Others	
		State	City	State	City	State	City
	ZEE	125	16	115	17	48	3
	STAR	149	21	119	12	20	3
	AAJ TAK	140-150	19-23	100-110	10-14	30-40	1-4
	Current Seats	133	15	125	19	30	0

## Sena serves biryani

**A**n army marches on its stomach, said Napoleon, and the Shiv Sena seemed to have taken the maxim to heart. For years the Sena's election day staple for its foot soldiers has been puri-bhaji and vada pav while Congress tiffins opened to the appetising aroma of biryani. But this time around, the Sena decided to upgrade its menu. Biryani was the fare for most of the Sena's boys in Andheri, Amboli, Vile Parle and elsewhere in the western suburbs. Ravindra Waikar, the Sena candidate from Andheri, had given contracts to as many as four caterers to ensure that the supplies of vegetarian, chicken and mutton biryani didn't fall short. Now if only the Sena would extend its culinary liberal-



A city girl marked for the first time

ism to its politics. **A New Common Man** Much to everyone's surprise, underworld don Arun Gawli, who was too scared to vote in the Lok Sabha elections in case he had a close and fatal encounter with the police, stepped out of his Dagdi Chawl fortress to cast his vote. In trademark white shirt, pyjamas and Gandhi topi, Gawli, who is standing from Chinchpokli, was at his modest best. When a TV journalist addressed him as 'don', Gawli tapped him on the back and corrected him with, "Why do you want to mislead the public by calling me a don? The court has acquitted me of all charges. I am neither don nor politician, I am just another common man."

R K Laxman's finally got competition.

## South Mumbai shows the finger with vengeance

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Whether it was due to 'pitrukash' or the general listlessness that has pervaded these polls, the city woke up slowly to voting day, with the trickle of morning voters turning into a steady stream only by the afternoon. Still, overall voter turnout only added up to 38% by 3.30 pm, and was surprisingly high in

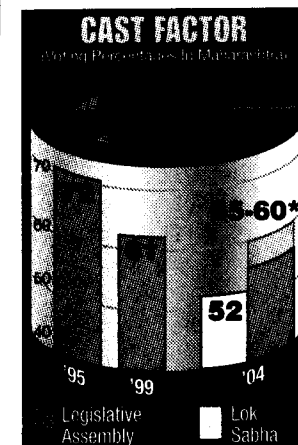
## 55% turnout in lacklustre state poll

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** The fate of 2,678 candidates was encoded in 82,000 EVMs across Maharashtra on Wednesday as an estimated 55 per cent of the state's 6.59 crore voters took part in choosing their representatives to the 10th legislative assembly. The EVMs will be stored in secure places and activated on October 16 for the counting. The final results should be available by noon on Saturday.

If the campaign, which was effectively restricted to two weeks because of the Ganesh festival, was lacklustre, the polling was even more so. According to the EC, only 45 per cent voting was reported until 3.30 pm.

► Pitru Paksha led to slow start, Page 5



\*Estimated affluent areas like Dadar, Cuffe Parade and Malabar Hill.

Peace marked the polls, even in don-dominated areas like Chinchpokli, Arun 'Daddy' Gawli's den, where gangster rivals could have created a lot of trouble. Only the incident of the 'poisonous' pedas marred an otherwise eventless day which only recorded four minor poll-related offences.

Full marks to the election commission for adding six lakh names to the list so there were almost no grumbles about not being able to vote. This time, the middle-class showed their finger with some vengeance in South Mumbai,

the white-collar western suburbs were sluggish except in pockets like Malvani, Aarey and Juhu while the slums in Chembur, Mankhurd and Trombay in the eastern suburbs were buzzing even in the morning. Navi Mumbai surprised with people queuing up for half-an-hour before breakfast, and so did Thane, where 200 women from middle-class housing societies protested by refusing to push any of the buttons.



BSP-SP FACTOR CRUCIAL IN MAHARASHTRA

# Cong shaky, BJP fingers crossed



MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, Oct. 13. — Notwithstanding the plethora of exit polls with their varying projections, the mood in the Shiv Sena-BJP camp was upbeat tonight compared to the cautious optimism in the rival Congress-NCP alliance as voting for the Maharashtra Assembly polls ended this evening.

It could even be anybody's guess but undoubtedly the elections, which are likely to have nationwide ramifications, were fought neck-and-neck. The campaigning witnessed over the fortnight was quite hectic and relentless conducted in healthy political ambience the one like which was not seen in the past.

The Congress appeared to be shaky as the AICC's "internal feedback and assessment" on Maharashtra turned out to be "disappointing". "Our internal reports today are projecting poor prospects for the ruling alliance, we might not hit the magic number, 145," said an AICC leader. Indeed, the "rebel" candidates and the BSP factor came back to haunt the Congress-NCP circles. The BJP kept its fingers crossed tonight. The party isn't ready to assert that the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance will win the polls although it formally said it hoped to get a clear majority. "We will form the government," said the BJP vice-president and spokesperson, Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi.

The Congress-NCP combine has already started zeroing in on their "worst-case scenarios", conceding that "the battle is neck-and-neck". This view is in sharp contrast to the perception that the Congress-NCP has a slight edge over the Shiv Sena-

SFI 14/10

	Cong NCP	BJP Sena	OTHERS
3 NEWS	140-150	100-110	30-40
STAR NEWS	149	119	20
ZEE NEWS	125	115	48
NDTV	120-130	125-135	30-35

## Exit polls

NEW DELHI, Oct. 13. — Independents may hold the key to government formation in Maharashtra if exit poll results by private news channels are to be believed. With the exception of the NDTV survey that places both the major contenders for power, the Congress-NCP and BJP-Shiv Sena combines, at par, Aaj Tak, Star News and Zee News give the ruling Congress-NCP alliance an edge in their exit polls. — SNS

Details on page 4

BJP alliance.

Aiming at a figure of 130-135 seats, the Congress-NCP's hopes are, ironically, pinned on Independents, most of whom are their own "rebel candidates". Both the Congress and the NCP have sent overtures to several rebel candidates considered "potential winners".

Independent observers point to the strong presence of Miss Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party in Vidarbha and Mr Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party in some pockets that had implicitly assisted the saffron alliance in beating the ruling Democratic Front to the post. They say BSP and SP have potential to make severe dent in the Dalit-minority vote bank of the Congress-NCP. On the contrary, Shiv Sena-BJP have nothing to lose. The pattern of voting too was encouraging in today's Assembly election that was found in the April-May Lok Sabha hustings. Mr UPS Madon, state's chief electoral officer, said that the preliminary figures indicated 55 to 60 per cent voters cast their ballots. In Mumbai, the turnout was above 50 per cent. The state has 6.59 crore voters.

Mr Madon said barring five

minor incidents of violence in Naxalite-infested Gadchiroli district, the election has been orderly and peaceful. The vote counting will take place on 16 October. About 2,678 candidates are in the race for election to the 288-seat Assembly.

Internal assessments of Shiv Sena-BJP is said to be more positive than in the Lok Sabha polls when the alliance won 25 of 48 seats against 23 by the Congress-NCP combine. Mr Pramod Mahajan and Mr Bal Thackeray of BJP and Shiv Sena, confidently brushed aside fears of a split verdict. "Shiv Sena-BJP will form the next government on their own strength of majority," declared Mr Mahajan. Mr Thackeray rejected the suggestion of seeking help from Independents. Shiv Sena today received support from unexpected quarters with Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh leader and Dr BR Ambedkar's grandson, Mr Prakash Ambedkar, hinting at "issue-based association" with the BJP.

NCP chief Mr Sharad Pawar and chief minister Mr Sushilkumar Shinde seemed satisfied with the predictions but did not say in so many words.

More poll reports on page 4

# A close contest on the cards

By Kalpana Sharma  
HID-11  
16/10  
9-8-04  
M. S. Narayan

**MUMBAI, Oct. 12.** The rallies, road shows and door-to-door campaigns have come to an end. As Maharashtra pauses after the campaigning for one of the most closely-fought elections for its 288-member Assembly comes to an end, no one can make a definite prediction about the outcome of the election to be held tomorrow.

While the Bharatiya Janata Party-Shiv Sena combine asserted today that it was confident of getting a simple majority, the Congress-National Congress Party combine has been more circumspect merely saying that it thinks it has the edge.

Neither politician nor pollster really knows which way the vote will go after a large number of the 6.59-crore registered voters exercise their franchise in 64,390 polling booths across the State.

With 2,678 contestants, including 1,083 independents, the choice for the voter will be neither simple nor easy. There are 695 national parties with the Bahujan Samaj Party fielding 272, more than any other party. To add to the choice, there are 163 State parties in the fray as well as 161 State parties from other States and 576 regional parties.

## The 'rebel' factor

The special feature is the presence of "rebel" candidates in a large number of seats. The exact number is not known because many are known only at the constituency level. While

some are contesting as Independents others have got ticket from the BSP, the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal (United).

The Congress has expelled 47 such "rebels" and the NCP 13. Even the BJP and the Shiv Sena have not been spared the problem. The BJP has sent out five persons from the party for opposing official candidates and the Sena is said to have around 13 in the fray.

The impact of the rebels will be felt mainly in Vidarbha and Western Maharashtra — the two regions with the largest number of seats. It is expected that these two regions will essentially determine which of the two main alliances eventually rules the State.

## Vote split

An additional factor in Vidarbha is the presence of the BSP, which has campaigned for a separate Vidarbha State. It has also capitalised on the disarray among the traditional Dalit parties, the four factions of the Republican Party of India (RPI). The split in the vote caused by the presence of the BSP could go either way but the saffron parties are counting on it benefiting them.

In Western Maharashtra, however, the Congress and the NCP are battling their own party members contesting as rebels. Not all of them have been expelled.

Asked by mediapersons how the party would respond to the rebels who win, the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, said today, "politics is the art of

the possible, so anything can happen."

The relatively short run-up to the elections, as well as the strict rules set by the Election Commission, forced all political parties to do a far more low-key and intensive campaigning

than in the past. As a result, in a city such as Mumbai, until the last two days, few would have felt that an election was due. Hardly any banner or poster was visible.

The future of three former Chief Ministers — Vilasrao

Deshmukh and Shivajirao Nalangekar-Patil of the Congress and Narayan Rane of the Shiv Sena — and the current incumbent, Mr. Sushilkumar Shinde, will be determined on October 16, when the election results will be known.

## THE GLADIATORS- Maharashtra Polls 2004

### Prominent contestants and main opponents in Maharashtra Assembly elections

<b>MUMBAI</b> — 1 <b>MALABAR HILL</b> Raj Hemant Shroff (INC) Mangal Lodha (BJP)	<b>YEVLA</b> — 2 Chhagan Bhujbal (NCP) Kalyanrao J Patil (SHS)	<b>NAGPUR WEST</b> — 3 Ranjeet Deshmukh (INC) Devendra Fadnis (BJP)
<b>CHINCHPOKLI</b> Madhu Chavan (INC) Arun Gawali (ABHS) Ramanath Tripathi (BJP)	<b>BHIWANDI</b> — 4 Ansari S Nizam (INC) Yogesh R Patil (SHS) Abu Azmi (SP)	<b>LATUR</b> — 5 Vilasrao Deshmukh (INC) Shivajirao B Patil (BJP)
<b>MAZGAON</b> — 6 Pankaj Bhujbal (NCP) Bala Nandgaonkar (SHS)	<b>NILANGA</b> — 6 Shivajirao N Patil (INC) Sambhaji N Patil (BJP)	<b>TASGAON</b> — 7 Raosaheb R Patil (NCP) Prataprao Patil (SHS)
<b>BANDRA</b> Shaina N C (BJP) Baba Jiyuddin Siddiki (INC)	<b>SOUTH SOLAPUR</b> — 10 Sushil Kumar Shinde (INC) Shivajirao Dattatraya (SHS)	<b>MALSHIRAS</b> — 11 Ajitkumar Mote (BJP) Vijaysingh S Mohitepatil (NCP)
<b>BORIVALI</b> Gopal Shetty (BJP) Shashee Prabhu (INC)	<b>RENAPUR</b> — 8 Gopinath Munde (BJP) Fuichand Karad (NCP)	<b>MALVAN</b> — 12 Vijay Sawant (INC) Narayan Rane (SHS)
<b>TROMBAY</b> Abrahani Y M Hussain (INC) Afroz R Mohammed (Ind) Rahul Shewale (SHS)	<b>CHOPDA</b> — 9 Arunlal G Gujrathi (NCP) Kailas G Patil (SHS)	<b>VASAI</b> — 13 Hitendra V Thakur (Ind) Pt. Vivek Raghunath (SHS)
<b>CHEMBUR</b> Pramod Shirwalkar (BJP) Chandrakant Handore (INC) Deepak Nikalje (RPI-A)	<b>ULHASNAGAR</b> — 14 Uttamchand K Ailani (BJP) Pappu Kalani (RPI-A)	<b>KBK Pollgraphics</b>

# Sonia, Pawar rally cadre for Maha yudh

gdm. Sr. Maharashtra

## Lambast NDA Govt For Neglecting Farmers At Joint Cong-NCP Meet

By Prakash Joshi/TNN  
11.1.04

**Nashik:** Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and NCP boss Sharad Pawar on Tuesday shared a platform to launch an attack on the Shiv-Sena alliance and ask voters to return the Congress-NCP back to power.

Addressing the first-ever Congress-NCP joint election rally at this pilgrim centre, Sonia appealed to voters in Maharashtra to give a fresh mandate to the Congress-NCP government to "safeguard the interests of dalits, minorities and farmers". In a show of bonhomie, NCP president Sharad Pawar arrived here from Satara by a helicopter to join Sonia.

Pawar alleged that the Vajpayee government had neglected farmers in the state and cautioned voters against "tall claims" made by the Shiv-Sena-BJP alliance. "If farmers in the state want to protect their interests and wipe out debt burden, they should vote the Congress-NCP to power. We have not only given promise of free power, but the DF government has already delivered the goods by providing zero

crowds, which had gathered at this industrial district, awaited anxiously for Sonia and Pawar. When the two leaders climbed up the specially-erected dais at Golf Club ground, the crowd lustily cheered.

Both Gandhi and Pawar emphasised the need to elect the Congress-NCP government in the state so that the Congress-led government at the Centre can solve the problems faced by farmers and other sectors of society.

Sonia said though both parties had fought against each other in 1999 elections and later joined hands to provide "good governance", they had faced several problems during the last five years as the Vajpayee-led NDA government did offer full cooperation. "Now we have shown that there is perfect coordination between the two parties. We have reached a pre-poll alliance and we will give you a good secular government?" she added. CM Sushilkumar Shinde showed a copy of an electricity bill and claimed that it showed zero rupees for July. He claimed that his government had fulfilled promise of providing free power supply to farmers.



**Congress president Sonia Gandhi with NCP president Sharad Pawar and CM Sushilkumar Shinde at a rally in Nashik on Tuesday**

electricity bills to farmers for July 2004."

The joint address by the two leaders was aimed at sending a message of 'full coordination' between the NCP and the Congress. Large

Srinam Venkai

# Sena-BJP manifesto skips Vidarbha issue

*Pr* *29/9*  
**Mumbai:** Free power and waiver of loans for farmers, reservation in jobs and education for women are among the various issues that feature in the joint manifesto released on Tuesday by the BJP-Shiv Sena combine for the October 13 Maharashtra assembly elections.

The manifesto, released by BJP leader Pramod Mahajan and Sena executive president Uddhav Thackeray here, however, does not refer to the issue of separate Vidarbha.

Sena supremo Bal Thackeray's promise of free power to farmers figured prominently in the manifesto along with the assurance to waive loans of peasants if elected to power.

A promise to install "Savarkar Jyot" (Savarkar flame) at some places is included in the manifesto. The combine has plans to set up a memorial of Chhatrapati Shivaji at

Rajgad fort too. Mumbai Vision 2010, a plan for developing the city of Mumbai, is another promise doled out by the saffron combine if it romped home victorious at the hustings.

The manifesto also focusses on issues related to women, including 25% reservation in jobs and education.

On Hindutva, Mahajan said, "Hindutva is an issue of commitment for both the Shiv Sena and BJP and is not an election issue. Since it is an issue of commitment, it need not be mentioned in the common manifesto of

the saffron alliance."

The saffron alliance would continue with its special programme of providing for rehabilitation of 40 lakh slum dwellers who have settled before January 1, 1995, in various parts of the state capital. *PTI*



# Maharashtra: closer than it looks

By P. Sainath

*The elections to the Maharashtra Assembly will be a close run race between the ruling Congress-NCP combine and the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance.*

THE CONGRESS-NCP alliance in Maharashtra has worked hard this year at re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. No matter how bad things have been in the countryside both before and after the Lok Sabha polls, it has been business as usual for the Government. One whose leaders promise free power to farmers. And speak, in the same breath, of reviving Enron's project in the State.

Resurrecting a rip-off that has blown a highway-sized hole in its finances is just part of the logic. This State had already seen hunger deaths, farmers' suicides, the crushing of former mill workers, drought and countless scams. Yet the one great issue peddled by the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) during the Lok Sabha polls was that over the James Laine 'controversy.'

The party feared, rightly, that large chunks of the Marathas were drifting away from it. And the idea was that the outrage over Laine's book would somehow bind that community once again to the NCP. The move flopped. The Marathas kept drifting. More, the attack on the Bhandarkar Institute in Pune, driven by the hysteria, outraged most people and even drove a wedge between sections of Brahmins and Marathas.

The appeasing of the State's sugar barons in the countryside and its urban builders' lobby only accelerates. As does the pouring of money down the bottomless pit of fraud-ridden cooperative banks. All the while, the distress of the mill workers in Mumbai city only deepens. That sends a chilling signal to working people across the State.

The new phase of the Enron game is unique. The Congress first struck the deal in the early 1990s. In the 1995 polls, the Shiv Sena-BJP combine trounced the Congress (then led by Sharad Pawar) on the issue. It promised "to throw Enron into the Arabian Sea." On being elected, it cancelled the project, only to reinstate it soon after. With even more gains for the MNC. In 1999, the Enron disaster helped defeat the Sena-BJP Government. Today, all four parties, Congress, NCP, Shiv Sena and BJP, are talking of reviving Enron.

The fight in the Assembly polls in October seems very tight. Just a few months ago, it was simpler: numbers favoured the Congress-NCP. Politics favoured the Sena-BJP. The Lok Sabha results brought some changes to the numbers. While the Sena-BJP led in 141 Assembly segments, the Congress-NCP-Republican Party of India (Athavle) led in 139. In the remaining

eight, the CPI (M) led in two, the Peasants and Workers Party of India (PWPI) in two, Kadu (a Congress rebel) in three, and Arun Gawli in one. That makes up the 288 seats to be contested in the Assembly polls in October.

However, the overall Congress-NCP lead of around 1.8 per cent exists because of western Maharashtra. In which region they are so dominant, it is hard to add any more seats. And there is this question: has anything happened since May to endanger the ruling alliance to voters?

The Sena-BJP's strategy is basic and coherent. Western Maharashtra, where the rival alliance outscored it by over 12 per cent in May, is not a priority. Nor is it banking on gaining Dalit votes. Just on the Bahujan Samaj Party damaging the Congress even worse than in the Lok Sabha polls. In Marathwada and Vidharbha, the BJP-Sena alliance believes — quite reasonably — that the crisis and bad governance favours it.

Take Marathwada. In the Lok Sabha polls, the Sena-BJP led in twice the number of Assembly segments that the Congress-NCP did. That is 32 to 16. In Vidharbha, the Sena-BJP blasted the ruling alliance 46 to 17, greatly aided by the bright showing of the BSP. The BSP grabbed close to seven per cent of the vote in that region. The difference between the Congress and BJP-led fronts was 5.24 per cent.

In Khandesh, the BJP-Sena led in 19 segments to the rivals' 16. But the latter got the higher vote percentage. So it is a very tight race there. In the Mumbai-Konkan region, the Congress-NCP combine surprised many by taking a lead of close to five per cent in the vote.

What the BJP-Sena now concentrate on is three cities: Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur. The setback in Mumbai shocked the combine. In Vidharbha, the only Lok Sabha seat it lost was Nagpur (headquarters of the RSS). And in Pune, it senses a pool of voters exists that is more receptive. The October contests in nearly 48 seats in these three cities will be, in Sena-BJP eyes, the turning point.

Hence, all its major actions have been directed at those sections it believes it lost here. The Savarkar issue does not speak to the State's devastated farmers. But it does touch passions in Mumbai and Pune. Likewise, the Sena's 'struggle' for the 'right' to

have bhajan mandalis belting out their devotion on all suburban trains is solely a Mumbai issue. The physical attack on *Mahanagar* editor Nikhil Wagle was also aimed at the Sena-BJP's urban constituency.

Then there is the great anger with the Congress-NCP Government. The damage done to the Public Distribution System (PDS) in this State will surely hurt it. As will the discontent of the middle classes over the commercialisation of education. This State is further down that road than many others. And it hurts. The top education barons are from the Congress and NCP. And people can see that.

Even Congressmen are not keen to defend their record in the countryside. Growing indebtedness, repeated crop failure and malnourishment have ravaged Maharashtra. As have the hunger deaths (mainly amongst Adivasis). The response of the ruling alliance to these has been a disgrace.

Is there hope then for the Congress-NCP alliance at all? Well, yes. But that depends on several complex factors.

One, the choice and announcement of candidates will, as always in this State, have a profound fallout. The Congress comes out with its list at the last moment to give its many potential rebels less time to do their damage. The BSP, which put up a strong show in Vidharbha in the Lok Sabha polls, did give the ticket to Congress rebels there. Win them back and the Congress is in business. But if the BSP cuts even more votes this time, it is different. And if those who voted for the BSP in April included large chunks of the RPI's Mahar voters, then the Congress is in deep trouble. So managing the BSP factor will be crucial.

Also, the Congress unwisely ceded to the NCP seats that party had no chance of winning in Vidharbha and Marathwada. Repeating that error could be fatal. Correcting it could vastly improve things. For the Assembly polls, this has become vital.

Two, the old solid lead of the Congress-NCP is gone. The gap between the two fronts is narrow. But managing the rebels might help. And with good rainfall and sowing in the zones of electoral loss, some mending is possible, even if quite hard to do. The Congress and its allies believe the good monsoon might reduce the in-

tensity of anti-incumbent feeling. Also, the unattractive nature of the alternative could help.

Three, a deft handling of alliances might help them scrape through. The winning margins of the Sena-BJP were very small in many places. The Samajwadi Party is now irrelevant in this election. And the PWPI and the Janata Dal (Secular) will not go with the Congress. If the Congress-NCP can draw and hold together the diverse RPI factions, some retrieval of the Dalit vote could happen. That means getting the Athavle, Ambedkar, Gavai and Kawade groups together. And pulling back rebels from the BSP. Difficult but not impossible.

Striking a deal with the CPI (M) could also help the Congress-NCP consolidate in up to eight seats now out of its grasp.

Four, after turning down the Prime Minister's post, Sonia Gandhi's prestige shot up. Importantly this touched even crucial Vidharbha, where she has always been a crowd puller. It would be wrong to underestimate the anger of the poor in that region and Marathwada. But her campaigning there can make a big difference to her party.

Five, some Central Government promises should, in theory, favour the Congress. The problem is just that — it is still theory and promises. The pledge of greater rural credit, for instance, might cut some ice because Sharad Pawar is now Agriculture Minister. So too, the State Government's talk of free power and loan waiver could aid it. The question is whether it really means it and if people believe it. If they do, it could help the ruling alliance.

Lastly, with much in their favour, the BJP-Sena have not been able to fully ride the huge rural discontent. The *tiranga* yatra has bombed and State-level BJP leaders view it as a harmful distraction. And the party's inner struggles for power, between Pramod Mahajan and Uma Bharati and others, helps deepen this divide. Meanwhile, the BJP-Sena's urban focus could also prove a drawback. Even while they are yet to prove they have pulled back the alienated north Indian vote in Mumbai.

For those factors to click for the Congress-NCP, they would need to work in ways they have not known in a long time. The task is much tougher than it looks and the candidate lists will launch the next phase. Once those are out, the dice roll with the campaign. Only, they are loaded against the people of Maharashtra, faced with such a poor, uninspiring choice.

# Rane, Kadam figure in Sena's list

## 44 sitting MLAs selected again

1719  
mebore

## BJP picks 26 new faces

**Mumbai:** Forty-four sitting MLAs on Thursday figured in the first list of 84 candidates announced by the Shiv Sena for the October 13 assembly polls.

The prominent MLAs to be renominated are Narayan Rane, Ramdas Kadam, Prabhakar More, Baban Gholap, Jayprakash Munda, according to the list published in the party's mouth-piece Saamna here on Thursday.

Former minister Ravindra Mane, MLA from Sangameshwar has been denied ticket and instead Subhash Bane has been fielded from the seat.

Kashinath Mengal was issued a ticket instead of Pandurang Gangad in Igatpuri while in Parbhani Tukaram Renge Patil was sidelined by the party with Sanjay Jadhav being issued a ticket by the party this year. In Badnapur, Narayan Chavan found his name missing from the list with the ticket being given to Bhanudas Ghuge.

In Thane, the party has fielded Eknath Shinde following the death of M D Joshi. The widow of Sena leader Prakash Khedkar, Anusuya Khedkar has been selected to represent the party at the hustings from nanded constituency.

NCP MLA Shirish Khotwal, who was disqualified during the 2001 political crisis found his name included in the list from Chandwad. The Sena has also decided to sponsor the candidature of the disqualified NCP MLA from Khed-Alandi, Narayan Pawar. Ganesh Dudhgoakar, for-

mer MPCC vice-president, who switched loyalties to the Sena, has been offered ticket to contest from the Jintur assembly constituency.

Narendra Boragaokar, former NCP vice-president, who also crossed over to the Sena camp has



Narayan Rane

been issued a ticket from Tuljapur. The three other women to be issued tickets besides Anusuya were sitting MLAs, Manisha Nimkar from Palghar, Mandakini Kadam from Niphad and Leelatai Tupe, a fresh candidate from Pune cantonment and wife of late NCP leader Vithal Tupe. Vivek

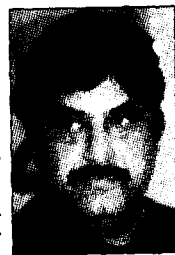
Pandit, former Congress spokesperson, who joined the Sena camp, has been offered ticket from Vasai. The party, which would be contesting 171 seats, has this time introduced 26 fresh faces. Agencies

**New Delhi:** The BJP on Thursday denied tickets to six of its sitting MLAs but brought 26 new faces as it announced the first list of 83 candidates which include state party chief Gopinath Munde and senior leader Eknath Khadse.

It has also fielded Prasad Hire, son of Congress leader and former minister Baliram Hire. The next list of 31 candidates will be announced in the next two-three days.

While Munde and Khadse have been nominated from their home constituencies of Renapur in Beed district and Edlabad in Jalgaon district, Prasad has been made the nominee from Dabhadi in Nashik district. The MLAs who faced the axe included Chandrakanta Goyal, wife of former

Union minister and party treasurer Ved Prakash Goyal (Matunga), Hemendra Mehta (Borivali), as also those who represented Silod, Baglan and Pathardi constituencies. In Devgad Ajit Gogte, nephew of sitting MLA Appa Gogte has got the nomination.



Gopinath Munde

The list includes the name of several former ministers, including Shobhatai Phadanvis (Saoli), Daulatrao Aher (Nashik), Raj Purohit (Mumbadevi) and Sudhir Mungantivar (Chandrapur). Shivaji Patil-Kavhekar, who as Janata Dal nominee had trounced former chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh from Latur a decade back is the party nominee from the same seat represented by the Congress leader.

Former Janata Dal state president Sambhaji Pawar, who joined the BJP last year, is the party nominee from Sangli, while another new entrant Babubhai Bhawanji has been fielded from Matunga.

In the seat-sharing arrangement arrived at with the Shiv Sena, the BJP will contest 114 seats while the Sena will contest 167. Seven seats have been allotted to the Shetkari Sanghatana, with the Sena leaving four seats and the BJP three. The party has allotted seats to seven candidates from the scheduled castes and seven from the schedule tribes. Agencies

## CPM to contest 18 seats

**Nashik:** The CPM will contest 18 seats in the October 13 assembly elections in Maharashtra, state unit party chief Prabhakar Sanzgiri has said.

The party decided to go it alone, after its talks with the Congress and the NCP failed and chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde decided to stand from the Solapur-south, for which the CPM had staked a claim, Sanzgiri said on Wednesday.

Pointing out that the party had extended support to the UPA government at the Centre to keep

casteist forces away from power, he said similar attempt was made in Maharashtra to keep away the BJP-Shiv Sena, but the Congress demanded the Solapur-south seat. CPM leader Narsayya Adam had earlier represented the seat, Sanzgiri said.

However, the CPM leader in reply to question, said doors were not closed for talks with the Congress and the NCP.

Of the 18 seats, three are in Nashik, Dindori and Surgana seats in Nashik district, Sanzgiri added. Agencies

THACKERAY LAUNCHES MAHARASHTRA POLL CAMPAIGN IN THE NAME OF SAVARKAR

# Blasts target mosques

9-87  
Meharade

SNS & PTI

MUMBAI, Aug. 27. — Eighteen people were injured in bomb explosions at two mosques in Jalna and Poorna towns of central Maharashtra today in the first major incident of violence during the run-up to the Assembly polls on 13 October. The attacks, coming within 15 minutes of each other, prompted the authorities to clamp curfew in Jalna and put the Mumbai Police on a high alert.

Also today, Shiv Sena chief Mr Bal Thackeray virtually launched the Shiv Sena-BJP combine's poll campaign by symbolically hitting an effigy of Union petroleum minister Mr Mani Shankar Aiyer with a wornout *chappal*, marking the beginning of the saffron agitation in Maharashtra against the Union minister for his derogatory remarks about Veer Savarkar.

Unidentified persons on a motorcycle lobbed crude bombs at Kadriya masjid in Jalna, injuring five people. In a similar incident, 13 people were injured when bombs were thrown at a mosque on the outskirts of Poorna town in Parbhani district. Senior police officers monitoring the situation at the two places said the first blast occurred at Jalna at 1:45 p.m. while the second one occurred barely 15 minutes later. Violent incidents were reported from both places after the blasts as angry mobs damaged vehicles and set some afire.

Police were deployed at several places of worship and sensitive points in Mumbai soon after the blasts. Steps were taken to avoid any backlash, police said. Anti-riot police were also asked to remain prepared as a precautionary measure. "Curfew has been imposed in Jalna and the situation is under control", DSP Jalna, Mr Prakash Wani, said and added that the police sus-



The Shiv Sena supremo hits an effigy of Union minister Mani Shankar Aiyer with a slipper in Mumbai on Friday. — PTI

pect that the blasts were a planned affair. In Mumbai, Mr Thackeray took to the streets after a long time to lead his "Sainiks from the front". To make the occasion a success, Shiv Sena activists had been collecting wornout footwear, preferably slippers, from various parts of the city. After Mr Thackeray "inaugurated" the *chappal*

maro campaign against Mr Aiyer, 1,000-odd Sainiks performed their role with extraordinary zeal. In a brief speech on the occasion, the Sena chief repeated the allegations against the Union minister that he had collected money for the Chinese during the 1962 India-China war. Calling Mr Aiyer a "traitor", Mr Thackeray said he could understand the ignorance of Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Mr Aiyer but not the silence of the eight ministers in the Union Cabinet who are from Maharashtra. "They should speak out on Veer Savarkar's valiant fight against British rule."

Deshmukh-Mayawati tango raises Congress alarm: page 4

KARNATAKA COPS ON CM-ARREST MISSION

# Uma likely to resign today

9.8 M.P. sir 23/8

Statesman News Service

BHOPAL/NEW DELHI, Aug. 22. — The Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Miss Uma Bharati, is likely to put in her papers to the Governor, Mr Balram Jakhar, and surrender to a Karnataka police team arriving here tomorrow.

After she learnt that a police team from Karnataka has been sent to Bhopal to arrest her, she would now take permission from the BJP high command to resign before she could be arrested.

Miss Bharati said as it would not suit decorum of the CM's post, she would first resign and then get arrested. Yesterday, she sent her resignation to the party president, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, which otherwise had no legal tenability.

Now that the situation has changed adversely for her with the Karnataka government despatching a police team to arrest Miss Bharati following a Hubli court warrant against her, she has decided to call it quits.

Speaking to the press at Indore, she said the changing circumstances had forced her to take fresh orders from the party high command to put in her papers because the BJP parliamentary board could take up the matter tomorrow. The Hubli court decision on her petition to withdraw the case is also expected tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Mr Arun Jaitley, the state BJP president, Mr Kailash Joshi, and Miss Bharati will attend a meeting of the BJP legislature party to "decide her successor". The front-runners for the coveted post are Mr Babulal Gaur, Mr Gaurishankar Shejwar, Mr RK Kusumaria, Mr Kailash Chawla, Ms Sumitra Mahajan, Mr Kailash Joshi, Mr Vikram Verma, Mr Prahlad Singh Patel and Mr Shivraj Singh Chauhan.

Sources, however, said the BJP may decide the CM among 173 legislators. If it happens, Mr Gaur, Mr Shejwar and Mr Chawla are front-runners. Among "outsiders", Mr Chauhan may well be the unanimous choice. The Damoh member of Parliament, Mr Kusumaria, a confi-

## Congress, CPM vent ire



NEW DELHI, Aug. 22. — The Congress today demanded the immediate resignation of the Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Miss Uma Bharati, and charged her with

linking the criminal case against her with the hoisting of the National Flag. The party said the case against Miss Bharati was "far more serious" than the one against the JMM chief, Mr Siby Soren. The CPI-M today said persons with criminal records should not be given tickets for contesting elections. "The party's stand is whoever has criminal records should not be given nominations. This should happen. But is not happening. That's why the situation worsens like this", the CPI-M leader, Mr Basudev Acharya, told reporters when asked about the issue of "tainted" ministers.

BJP chief Mr Venkaiah Naidu's statement that it is unfair to compare Miss Bharati's being declared a "proclaimed offender" by a Karnataka court with Mr Soren's case drew sharp reactions from the JMM today. While Miss Bharati's case amounted to provocation of communal riots with disastrous consequences, Mr Soren's was related to the struggle for statehood that led to the creation of Jharkhand, a senior JMM leader and MP, Mr Sunil Mahato, said in Ranchi. — SNS

dante of Miss Bharati, too stands a chance.

The BJP is likely to attack the government and demand removal of "tainted" ministers more vigorously in view of the developments in Madhya Pradesh. "If she is arrested before the Hubli court hearing, we will certainly raise it vigorously in Parliament tomorrow," the BJP deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, Mr VK Malhotra, said tonight, adds PTI.



# Uma Bharti submits resignation

By Our Staff Correspondent

**BHOPAL, AUG. 21.** The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, today sent in her resignation to the Bharatiya Janata Party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, in the wake of a non-bailable warrant issued against her by a court in Hubli, Karnataka.

Announcing this at a press conference here, Ms. Bharti said that she had requested Mr. Naidu and the former Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, that it be approved by the party's parliamentary board before being forwarded to the Governor.

## Charge against Sonia

She blamed the Congress, particularly its president, Sonia Gandhi, saying they were indulging in "petty politics" by raking up the issue of a court warrant against her in an old case in which she had "wrongly" been made an accused under Section 307 of the Indian Penal Code. It was unfortunate

that a criminal case had been slapped against her for trying to hoist the national flag at Hubli's Idgah ground on Independence Day in 1994.

Ms. Bharti said she had defied the prohibitory orders and reached Hubli on August 15, 1994, to hoist the Tricolour at the Idgah Maidan, famous for the battle between Chenamma, the erstwhile Queen of Kittur, and the British. She was arrested even before she had reached the ground, and it was at another spot that a few persons were killed when police opened fire. Also, the former Congress-led Karnataka Government had moved an application in the court to withdraw the prosecution and even as late as June 10 this year, the State Government had maintained the same stand. However, subsequently it had decided to withdraw the revision petition filed by the predecessor Government (again led by the Congress).

## 'Firm in my resolve'

She said that the issue of

"tainted" Ministers was important when it came to national pride and asserted that she could not be equated to the same level as she was wrongly being tried in a rioting case. Many times in the past she had offered to resign but this time she was firm in her resolve. In fact, she said, her resignation was for upholding the dignity of the Tricolour.

Ms. Bharti challenged Ms. Gandhi to an open debate on the national flag. She said the Congress had no qualms about entering into an alliance with the Muslim League to form government in a State knowing that this party "was responsible for dividing the country." Now they were trying to target her only because she had tried to uphold the dignity of the national flag. Quitting as Chief Minister was hardly a sacrifice and the Tricolour was more important.

Ms. Bharti said that she would request the Parliamentary Board to accept her move to resign and permit her "to

come out on the street" and throw an open challenge to Ms. Gandhi.

Regarding the case in the Hubli court, Ms. Bharti said she would give full respect to the court and fight the case both in the court of law as well as in the people's court.

She had also sought Mr. Advani's permission to launch a journey from Hubli to Jallianwala Bagh in Punjab to uphold the dignity of the Tricolour.

## Brother calls off stir

After Ms. Bharti left for Ujjain this evening, her elder brother, Swami Prasad Lodhi, who on Friday sat on strike at a busy road junction here demanding the ouster of some State Ministers accusing them of indulging in corruption, called off his protest saying that he had never expected such a rapid turn of events.

In the meanwhile, speculation has arisen on Ms. Bharti's possible successor.

**A 10-year old case: Page 10**

# Mumbai fine dulls bandh shine

Statesman News Service

MUMBAI, July 23. — Bombay High Court today directed the Shiv Sena and the BJP to pay Rs 20 lakh each as compensation for disrupting Mumbai's normal life and business activity on 30 July 2003 by organising a bandh and coercing the citizens to make it successful.

The path-breaking ruling was handed down this morning by the Bench on a PIL filed by noted citizens like Mr BG Deshmukh, former Cabinet secretary, Mr JF Reibero and others, seeking a compensation of Rs 50 crore from two political parties who had called the bandh in protest against the killing of innocent people in a terrorist attack on a BEST bus at Ghatkopar. The penal amount will be used for public utility services. The two judges cited a Supreme Court order banning intimidating bandhs.

The petition was filed in the names of four ordinary citizens. An auto mechanic, Mr Vinod Kumar, resident of Jogeshwari sought Rs 260 as com-



Dog day afternoon

penation for the bandh day, while an autorickshaw driver, Mr Ayub Khan, demanded Rs 150 which he said was equivalent to his daily earnings.

The petition said bandh infringes upon a person's right to work, earn and move about freely. The petitioners' organisation, Action for Good Governance and Networking, pointed

## Guarded reaction

KOLKATA, July 23. — Reacting to Bombay High Court's directions, the state Congress leadership conceded today that parties need to be cautious after such a ruling. Trinamul Congress, which has called a bandh on 2 August, was not willing to give up the right to call bandhs. The party leadership feels that parties and TUs always have a constitutional right to call bandhs. Mr Tathagata Roy, state BJP chief, said it would not be proper to comment on judicial pronouncements. Left Front chairman Mr Biman Bose said he would react only after getting details of the court order. — SNS

out that bandhs have always been accompanied by violence. The then advocate-general, Mr Goolam Vahnavati, accepted that on many occasions police are helpless. The Shiv Sena-BJP said the bandh was a spontaneous reaction to the killings of innocent citizens and they would challenge the HC order in the Supreme Court.

# HC makes Sena, BJP pay for Ghatkopar bandh

Justice Verma in July 2008 asked each party to be used for city's development

(11/2/11) X TIMES NEWS NETWORK 9.8.11

Mumbai: In an unprecedented judgment, the Bombay high court on Friday slapped damages of Rs 20 lakh each on the Shiv Sena and the BJP for enforcing a Mumbai bandh on July 30, 2008, to protest the Ghatkopar bomb blast.

The path-breaking verdict is a clear warning to all political parties and organisations that they will have to pay a heavy price if they disrupt public activity. Laying down a strong principle of accountability and retribution, acting Chief Justice A P Shah and Justice S U Kamdar said the money would be placed in a separate account to be opened by the state government and used to improve public facilities and services in Mumbai. They held that the bandh had caused a violation of fundamental rights of Mumbaikars.

The verdict has been stayed for eight weeks to enable both the parties to appeal before the apex court.

Coming down strongly on the Sena-BJP, the judges rejected the combine's stand that the bandh was a spontaneous reaction which was supported by other political



parties and groups. "It is not open for the Sena-BJP to contend that the situation demanded such a bandh," the judges observed, while disposing of a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by four prominent Mumbaikars and four daily wage earners. The petitioners had sought Rs 50 crore as compensation from the parties for holding the city to ransom on that day.

The petitioners were theatre personality Gerson da

Cunha, former cabinet secretary B G Deshmukh, ex-police chief Julio Riberio, ad man Alyque Padamsee, motor mechanic Vinod Kumar, rickshaw driver Ayub Khan, shop worker Sabit Ali and security supervisor Sanser Singh. Upholding the submissions of senior counsel Aspi Chinoy, who represented the petitioners, that the bandh call was an attempt to terrorise the public, the judges held that the two parties were liable to pay compensation to the citizens of Mumbai. Censuring the conduct of the two parties, the judges said, "Although they were aware of the supreme court order and the Kerala high court judgment holding bandhs illegal, as well as a decision of this court on the issue, the parties still went ahead with a bandh." They added that the parties could have protested without calling for a bandh.

While the parties put up an unsuccessful argument that their protest call did not fall within the definition of a bandh as held by the apex court, the judges held that it was a "fit case" to levy exemplary damages on the Sena and the BJP since lakhs of daily wage earners had lost a day's pay in the bandh.

# Mumbai blasts: life term for 11

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, JULY 9. A Sessions Court here sentenced today 11 persons, including a Pakistani national, to various terms of rigorous imprisonment for engineering the serial bomb blasts on the railway lines of Mumbai in 1998, killing four and injuring about 30 others.

The punishment, under Section 150 of the Indian Railways Act, includes two life terms — one for murder under IPC 302 and another for causing damage to or tempering with the tracks with a view to causing deaths. Legal sources said that this was the first such conviction under the Railways Act.

The Additional Sessions

Judge, V.L. Acharya, sentenced them to different terms of prison, ranging from three to 10 years, and decreed that the sentences would run consecutively and not concurrently. Thus the convicts would serve for over 50 years.

He, however, rejected the prosecutor, Ujjwal Nikam's demand for capital punishment for the convicts but directed the Maharashtra Government not to invoke its discretionary powers to condone the sentence and release them after 14 years or reduce the sentence.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Nikam said: "I am happy about the judgment. The court has ensured that the terrorists would spend the rest of their

lives in jail by directing the State not to use its power to dilute the sentence later." He said Javed Gulam Hussein, a Pakistani ISI agent, had mas-termined the blasts.

Apart from Hussein, others sentenced are Aftab Sayeed Ahmed, Asgar Kadar Shaikh, Afzal Abdul Hameed, Iqbal Mohammed Haneef, Jaffer Abdul Shaikh, Kadeer Mohammed Shafi, Shaikh Shahid Khalid Ansari, Shaabeer Basheer Chavan, Farooq Yusuf Shaikh, and Mohammed Yakub Abdul Majeed.

Mr. Justice Acharya acquitted another Pakistani national, Shamshed Gulam Kadeer Hyder alias Raj, for want of sufficient evidence, and directed

the Mumbai police to arrange for his safe deportation.

Ashfaq Sayed Ahmed, an approver in the case, had turned hostile during his deposition. He is now going to be prosecuted separately. Another accused, Akram Asgar Ali, had died during the prosecution.

The group had blasted the rail line between suburban Vikhroli and Kanjurmarg stations, between Malad and Goregaon, near Santa Cruz and had triggered bombs on platform No. 3 of Kandivalli station and also near Virar during January and February 1998.

The court had examined 45 witnesses in the case and did not admit the evidence about the Kandivalli blast.

# Claims clash over Bhopal gas tragedy cash

OUR BUREAU

July 19: The Supreme Court today directed the government to disburse Rs 1,503 crore to victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy, bringing hope to thousands but at the same time opening the floodgates of confusion over control of the compensation money.

While non-government organisations and activists working with the victims want the money to be distributed only among the survivors, the BJP-ruled government in Madhya Pradesh feels part of the amount should be used for developing the city.

The apex court order, by a bench of Justices Shivraj Patil and B.N. Srikrishna, came nearly 20 years after deadly methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the factory

of the multinational Union Carbide five minutes past midnight on December 3, 1984. While several thousand died in the immediate aftermath, thousands survived with permanent disabilities.

The world's worst industrial disaster did not spare even the unborn — after the tragedy many children were born with genetic disorders.

The compensation amount has been calculated on the \$470 million Union Carbide deposited with RBI under a settlement with the government in February 1989. The court directed that the money be distributed in proportion to the damage and also ordered the welfare commissioner of the Bhopal Gas Relief Fund to file before it an account of how

the amount will be distributed.

A compensation of Rs 86 crore has already been given to relatives of the dead and another amount of Rs 1,100 crore had been distributed. The amount announced today is the last portion of the compensation money. But if some of the survivors grieved the news with silent prayers, a fight has begun over control of the fund. Babulal Gaur, the state minister in charge of gas relief and local MLA, feels the entire city should get "its due" and that part of the compensation be spent on relief, rehabilitation and development projects like parks, schools and memorials.

Another court battle loomed as Abdul Jabbar, who runs the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udh-

yog Sangathan, moved a petition in the apex court seeking that the compensation be restricted to 36 wards of the city that were affected. The petition has been listed for hearing tomorrow.

Jabbar and other NGOs want more compensation. They say the amount was arrived on the basis of "old figures" of about 105,000 survivors and 3,000-odd deaths whereas, in the last 20 years, the number of survivors has increased to over 500,000 and the total number of deaths crossed 22,000. "We require Rs 6,000 crore more as the compensation money cannot and should not be used for rehabilitation purpose," Jabbar said, speaking from Delhi.

In the narrow lanes of J.P. Nagar, Ayub Nagar and Arif

Nagar, the reality of the court verdict was yet to sink in. For Ameena Bi, 72, and her daughter-in-law Razia, the figure is too big to grasp.

"Beta, ek crore mein kitna paisa hota hai? (How many paise are there in Rs 1 crore)," she asked. She smiled when a neighbourhood boy told her it was enough to fill her tiny, dingy room.

Ameena had lost her husband, several close relatives and two children that night. She survived, as she was away in a city hospital attending to her eldest son. "Don't know if I will receive the compensation in my lifetime," she whispered.

A group of more enthusiastic survivors, however, brought out a "victory procession" from the Carbide factory gate.



Gas tragedy survivors celebrate in Bhopal after the Supreme Court ruling. (PTI)

# 87 children die in school fire

● Many battling for life ● Nation shocked over Kumbakonam tragedy

By G. Srinivasan

**KUMBAKONAM, JULY 16.** In a horrifying tragedy that shocked the nation, 87 schoolchildren were burnt to death and 23 seriously injured today as fire raged through a primary school in Kumbakonam town of Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu.

While 75 children in the nursery section of the Saraswathi English Medium School were burnt to death in their classroom as the thatched roof caught fire and fell on them, 12 others who were seriously injured died after being admitted to the Kumbakonam General Hospital. Twentythree children are being treated in the hospital, and a few of them are in a critical condition, officials say. Ranjith Kumar, a mason, who tried to rescue the trapped children and suffered serious burns, died in hospital.

The fire, which started around 10.40 a.m., raged for an hour. Fire-fighting and rescue operations were hampered by a lack of access to the three-storey school building — located between two residential buildings — and with only one entrance and a single flight of stairs. It is said that the thatch over the

kitchen — where the noon meal was being prepared — caught fire when a spark from the burning firewood fell on it. The blaze then spread to the thatched roof of the classroom on the first floor. However, the high school

Surya, a seventh standard student who escaped, said that a teacher told them of the fire and asked them to run. She could get out as her classroom was on the ground floor; however many children who went back to take their books and water bottles fell victim to the fire.

While the total strength of the school is 870 (in both the primary and high school sections), 193 children were believed to have been in the classrooms that caught fire. Of them, 87 have died.

As news of the fire spread, hundreds of parents rushed to the school, desperate to rescue their wards. Most of the children, both girls and boys, are from the Palakarai area of Kumbakonam. The school presented a pathetic picture — burnt books and blackboards and schoolbags and tiffin boxes scattered all over the classrooms. In the hospital, shocked and dazed parents thronged the mortuary to identify their children and their cries filled the air. Pulavar Palanisamy, Correspondent of Sri Krishna Aided School, has been arrested.

Leaders' condolences: Page 11

## On the Photographs

Some of the photographs of the fire tragedy in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, published in today's issue may cause distress to readers. Television channels have already shown many close-ups. However, the enormity and nature of the calamity makes such visual news presentation unavoidable.

— Editor-in-Chief

students of the Sri Krishna Aided School (located in the same building) escaped as they were on the ground floor and in a section of the first floor that had a 'pucca' roof.

Firefighters, who were alerted at 11 a.m., had to break the concrete structure to reach the children. By the time they contained the fire, the bodies were burnt beyond recognition.



**SCENE OF INFERNO:** The poignant remains of a class at the Saraswathi English Medium Nursery School in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu. On Friday morning, its thatched roof caught fire and collapsed, engulfing the children. By Special Arrangement with Ananda Vikatan / Photo: Kudandhai Ravi (More on the tragedy on Page 20)

## Four officials suspended

By Our Staff Reporter

**KUMBAKONAM, JULY 16.** The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, today ordered criminal charges filed against the management of the Sri Krishna High School, Kumbakonam, holding it responsible for the fire accident in which 87 children were killed. She said she had ordered the school closed and cancelled its licence.

Ms. Jayalalithaa, who visited the school and the Government hospital in the evening where the injured children are being treated, told presspersons that there had been "criminal negligence" both on the part of the school management and the Education Department.

Holding the Education Department guilty of dereliction of duty, she ordered the suspension of the Chief Educational Officer, the District Education Officer, the District Elementary Education Officer and the Assistant Education Officer.

The Chief Minister said that it was three years since the Education Department had inspected the school. This was criminal negligence. The school had a thatched roof, which was not permissible under the rules. Besides, it had a thatched kitchen

close to the thatched classrooms, again a violation.

Ms. Jayalalithaa announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs. 1 lakh to the families of each of the dead, Rs. 25,000 to the seriously injured and Rs. 10,000 to the others injured.

## 'Teachers fled the scene'

By Our Staff Reporter

**KUMBAKONAM, JULY 16.** Teachers were the first to run out as the fire engulfed the first floor of the school in Kumbakonam, eyewitnesses and local residents said. Members of the public fought the flames and tried to rescue the children before the firefighters arrived, according to agency reports. "As soon as the fire started, the teachers had escaped, leaving the children behind," a senior fire department official was quoted as saying. "It was the

local people who saved at least 80 children from the third floor before the roof came down."

The victims were mostly aged six to 13, eyewitnesses said. J. Radhakrishnan, District Collector, said that no teachers were killed.

Some reports suggested that the primary school teachers had asked the students to remain seated, assuring them the fire was being put out. But with the blaze intensifying and spreading quickly, they fled leaving the children behind.

# Sena pitches poll net wide

**Aurangabad, July 11 (PTI):** The Shiv Sena today shifted into poll gear by unveiling a plan to blend aggressive Hindutva with the concerns of farmers and workers to sew up a broader constituency for the Maharashtra Assembly elections.

After the Sena reiterated its commitment to staunch Hindutva to win back "non-Marathis" into its fold, party patriarch Bal Thackeray gave a slogan of "jai jawan, jai kisan aur jai kamgar".

Thackeray, who addressed the concluding session of a two-day party conclave, announced at a news conference here that if the Sena-BJP combine returns to power it would waive electricity bills and loans of the farmers in the state.

Thackeray had made a similar announcement before the 1995 elections, which his party won. He had promised a free housing scheme for nearly 40 lakh slum dwellers in the metropolis.

The Sena leader today emphasised the need to look after the sufferings of the working class.

Thackeray's focus on farmers and labourers is clearly an attempt to harp on the "failure" of the Congress-led Democratic Front government in Mumbai to help them and invoke the anti-incumbency mood.

Asked about the feasibility of waiving farmers' power bills in view of the state's fragile financial position, he said "we have considered all aspects before this. It (exempting farmers from electricity bills) is possible".

The Sena, which is facing a nascent rebellion, warned of strict action against dissent. Executive president Uddhav Thac-



**Thackeray: Changing track**

keray said rebels will face strict action and announced a probe into the "role" of MLAs and office-bearers during the Lok Sabha polls, in which the party lost a few seats.

Asked how the party would raise its Hindutva agenda during the polls, Thackeray said: "I can speak on Hindutva now but not at the time of elections as then the code of conduct will come into force."

Opposing the Manmohan Singh government's proposal to reserve jobs for minorities, Uddhav said "providing reservations to Muslims will isolate them from the society and it (the announcement) is an unnecessary step".

Turning to the Maharashtra government's announcement of job reservations for SC/ST and OBCs in the private sector, he said: "Why create a divide between people on caste and religion basis... Efforts should be made to help the poor irrespective of his caste."

# Punjab plunge throws up market poser

SUJAN DUTTA

**New Delhi, July 25:** For all the turbulence over water that Punjab has caused in the capital, the state's face here has a blunt, matter-of-fact justification. "It is simply ours; we are not grabbing anybody else's."

Jivtesh Singh Maini is Punjab's principal resident commissioner, chief minister Amarninder Singh's man in New Delhi.

Since Amarninder's government piloted the act that abrogated its inter-state water sharing treaties, water politics has developed two poles — Punjab versus the rest.

Punjab's unilateral action has created several layers of conflict — between states, between political parties, within political parties and between states and courts.

■ Haryana and Rajasthan are saying they are being denied

their rightful shares

■ Vasundhara Raje's BJP government in Rajasthan and Om Prakash Chautala's INLD government in Haryana are flogging the issue with loud protestations that make the Congress-led ministry at the Centre uncomfortable with a Congress government in Punjab

■ A tribunal headed by Justice Eradi is due to come out with its final report in two months, but Punjab threatens to render that superfluous

■ The Centre, caught between a belligerent Opposition and "rebellious" state units, is turning to the Supreme Court to bail it out.

The water-sharing dispute between Punjab on one side and Rajasthan and Haryana on the other is in a sense comparable with the freight equalisation policy that Bengal so vehemently protested against through the seventies and the eighties.

Broadly, the policy meant that resource-rich states like Bengal and Bihar had to pay the same prices for coal, iron or steel as states as far away as Karnataka or Kerala. Not only were they made to part with their resources but were made to pay for that.

By abrogating its water-sharing treaties, Punjab has refused to accept such a policy. "Amarninder Singh has done today what Punjab should have done 20 years ago. We are simply asserting our right," says Maini.

The doctrine of riparian rights says the landowner adjacent to a stream has the right to its water. The Ravi, Beas and Sutlej flow through Punjab, not Haryana, not Rajasthan.

In full-page advertisements

in mainline English dailies that the Punjab government brought out last week, it justified its stand, said the abrogation of the treaties will not mean that it is stopping the flow of water and that despite its need it has allowed Rajasthan and Haryana to use its waters "under sufferance".

Water-sharing disputes invariably arise between riparian states and states that are not riparian or are downstream. In the US, the states of Alabama, Florida and Georgia had a formula for allocation of the waters of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river basin.

Two years ago, the states failed to arrive at a solution on allocations acceptable to each of them. Their agreement broke

down and the matter was referred to the US Supreme Court.

In the US, water-sharing disputes inevitably land up in the Supreme Court, which then appoints a tribunal. The tribunal's word is final.

The international experience with water-sharing disputes has led experts to suggest that the economics of market forces should be brought into play in dealing with them with restrictions. Allowing the market to completely determine the mechanics of water sharing will inevitably lead to a commodification of a natural resource.

In India, that is far from being accepted even if water has already become a commodity (bottled water, for instance, is a fast-moving consumer good).

A study titled *Inter-state Water Disputes in India: Institutions and Policies* says: "It is widely recognised that water

has a number of features that create potential market failure... though increased reliance on market forces (e.g. one state selling water to another) can contribute significantly to resolving water issues, there is no escaping from the need for parties to agree upon a set of rules, an enforcement mechanism and a prior distribution of property rights."

Alan Richards and Nirvikar Singh of the department of environment studies of the University of California write in the study: "Property rights have been claimed on the basis of historical use, as well as on the basis of the Harmon Doctrine that what falls on our roof is ours to use, without regard to any potential harm to downstream parties."

Can Punjab actually offer to sell water to Haryana and make good its losses?

## WATER WARS



# PM Summons CMs Of Four Northern States To Find Amicable Solution Punjab annuls water-sharing accord

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 13 JULY

THE Punjab government pushed the central government and the Congress into a first rate political crisis by nullifying the water sharing agreement with Haryana, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, forcing the Prime Minister to intervene to sort out the mess. But a solution remained elusive till late evening as Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh stuck to his gun and ruled out any softening on his government's part.

The prime ministerial intervention followed a ruckus in Parliament over the issue with the Opposition and even Congress members from the aggrieved states attacking the Punjab government's decision. The Punjab Assembly resolution nullifying the water treaty has already raised constitutional questions and many say it could be struck down by the Supreme Court.

The Prime Minister, aware of the immense political damage that Punjab's move could cause on the inter-state relations had summoned the chief ministers of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh to Delhi.

The move of the Punjab Assembly came days ahead of the Supreme Court deadline for the Centre to take over the site for the construction of the canal that was to carry



AMARINDER SINGH: AQUA-STICS

waters to Haryana. However, the decision of the state Assembly to scuttle the Supreme Court direction to this effect by unanimously nullifying the water accord has put

the Union government and the Congress leadership in a political corner. It's learnt that Mr Singh who mooted the resolution, did it without taking either Prime Minister Manmohan Singh or Congress president Sonia Gandhi into confidence. When summoned by the Prime Minister and the Congress leadership, the chief minister told the AICC that he was under pressure and had to act in that direction following an all-party decision to that effect.

But for the UPA government and the Congress leadership, the move of Punjab could cause major political damage as it could result in giving upper hand to the INLD government of the election-bound Haryana and BJP government of Rajasthan. In Himachal Pradesh, it will give the BJP enough ammunition to attack the government.

Even though the BJP and Akali Dal MLAs were part of the Punjab move, in Delhi the issue became a political football. Soon after Dr Singh held a meeting with Union water resources minister P.R. Das Munshi, law minister, H.R. Bharadwaj and Kapil Sibal on the issue the Opposition leaders in Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh and called on the Prime Minister, urging him to find an early solution to this development. Even though these two leaders extended their cooperation to the government, the NDA members were quick to needle the government in Parliament.

# To the Neighbouring States Punjab Reaffirms its Commitment

Indian Express 17 July 2004

## Water flowing into Haryana, Rajasthan

SANJEEV CHOPRA  
LOHGARH/KANDUKHERA, JULY 16

FINDING itself in troubled waters after having annulled all earlier agreements with neighbouring states over sharing of river waters, Punjab today carried out a major "face-saving exercise," along the Rajasthan and Haryana borders to make a point that it had not stopped the supply of existing waters to the two neighbouring states. Punjab Minister for Irrigation and Public Health Avtar Henry today visited the Lohgarh headworks in Haryana and travelled to Kandukhera and along the Rajasthan border, to make it clear that the two neighbouring states were receiving their existing share of the river waters.

Henry told mediapersons that even though Punjab had annulled its existing agreements over sharing of river waters, it would continue to honour clause 5 of the agreement, which ensures the protection of existing utilisation of river waters, which would remain unaffected.

"Punjab will continue to give Rajasthan, Haryana and other states their share of river waters as being given now and it does not intend to stop the same in the future too," Henry said.



Irrigation minister Henry at the Lohgarh headworks in Haryana.

He added that as per the agreement a total of 8,225 cusecs was being released to Rajasthan as per the Technical Committee Meeting (TCM), while Punjab was getting only 2,300 cusecs from the Harikere headworks. The arrangement, which started on July 11, would continue till July 20, subject to adequate availability of water, he added.

The minister said the chief engineers of the three states had met earlier during the day to clear things on the matter of neighbouring states getting their share of waters. Fearing that the water-sharing issue may evoke law and order problems too, he explained that there should be no misconception or ill-will among the people of the neighbouring states

over this issue. He made it clear that Punjab would continue to honour the existing river water sharing terms, but had no more water to be given to the neighbouring states through the SYL canal.

He also promised to honour the Apex court, but refused to honour its directions on the SYL canal.

Henry instead said "agreements for the sake of interests. We hope the government would listen to our side." Punjab does not have any other option, he said. Giving figures, he said that Punjab was receiving 0.20 MAF (million acre feet) of water from the Sirhind Canal. Punjab is releasing 7325 cusec water in Rajasthan Feeder and 900 cusec water in Sirhind Canal for the desert state," said Henry, adding that Section 5 of Punjab Termination of Agreement Act, 2004 protects the existing and actual utilisation of water through the existing systems by different states and Rajasthan and Haryana will continue to get the quantum of water they have been receiving from Punjab so far.

## Neighbours getting water

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bathinda / Patiala: Punjab's ministers have launched a field campaign to discredit reports of Punjab stopping water supply to Rajasthan and Haryana after terminating its water sharing pacts.

On Friday, state irrigation minister Avtar Henry reached the Lohgarh head of Rajasthan Feeder, 16 km from Dabawali, to convey the message that the Rajasthan government was misleading the public and trying to sour relations between the two states.

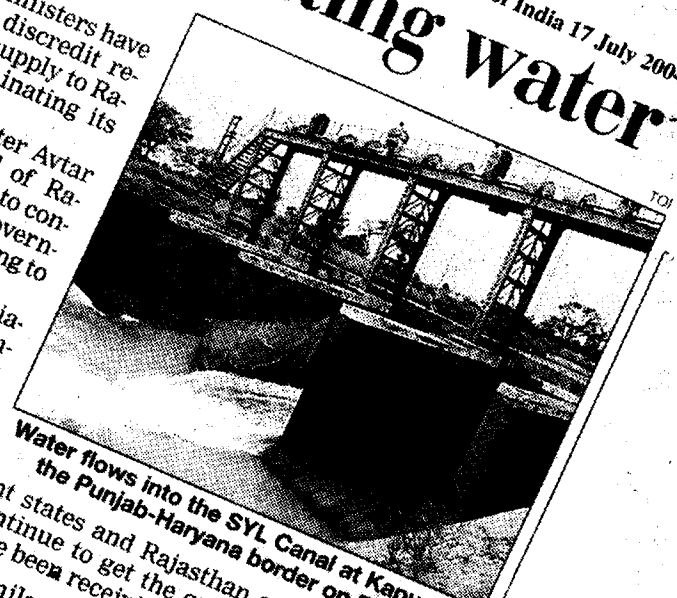
The irrigation minister along with media-persons started his journey from Burji Number 496 in Muktsar district and reached Lohgarh head of the canal, covering about 55 km. Along the route, he pointed out that Rajasthan was being released its due share of 8225 cusec water.

"The state government is releasing 7325 cusec water in Rajasthan Feeder and 900 cusec water in Sirhind Canal for the desert state," said Henry, adding that Section 5 of Punjab Termination of Agreement Act, 2004 protects the existing and actual utilisation of water through the existing systems by different

ent states and Rajasthan and Haryana will continue to get the quantum of water they have been receiving from Punjab so far. Similarly, Cabinet minister Jasjit Singh Randhawa, who visited Kapuri in Patiala district on Friday, said, "Punjab has not stopped water to Haryana and is releasing more than its already allocated share of 3200 cusecs."



Capt. Amarinder Singh  
Chief Minister, Punjab



Water flows into the SYL Canal at Kapuri on the Punjab-Haryana border on Friday.

**The Punjab Termination of Agreements Act, 2004 fully protects current utilization of Ravi, Beas and Sutlej waters by the neighbouring States. Section-5 of the Act clearly stipulates that all existing and actual utilizations through the existing systems shall remain protected and unaffected.**

WEDNESDAY, JULY 14, 2004

## DISTURBING UNILATERALISM

THE PUNJAB ASSEMBLY'S Bill terminating all previous agreements and accords on river waters and the assent given to it at lightning speed by the State Governor raise many serious issues. In the 1950s, while negotiations with Pakistan were going on over the sharing of the Indus system, planning began towards the full utilisation of the eastern rivers Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. In 1953 began the processes that eventually led to the Rajasthan Canal Project. In 1955 the Union Minister of Works and Power helped in securing an agreement on the allocations to Jammu and Kashmir, Pepsu, Punjab and Rajasthan of the surplus waters (after excluding the pre-Partition use) of Ravi and Beas. The share of Punjab (with Pepsu merged) had to be divided between Punjab and Haryana after the reorganisation of States. This ran into difficulty but in 1976 the Government of India settled the dispute by a notification under the Punjab Reorganisation Act. Punjab was not happy and filed a suit in the Supreme Court; so did Haryana. In 1981, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi brought about an agreement among the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. Punjab and Haryana withdrew their petitions from the Supreme Court. However, the dispute continued and the Accord between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sant Longowal of July 24, 1985 included a paragraph regarding the sharing of Ravi-Beas waters. It was in pursuance of that Accord that the Eradi Tribunal was set up. The Tribunal gave its award in 1987 but there was a reference back to it (as provided for under the Inter-State Water Disputes Act 1956); the outcome in the form of a clarificatory or supplementary report is still awaited.

The first question is whether one party can unilaterally repudiate an agreement to which there are two or more parties. Reference has been made to the sovereign rights of States but do those rights extend to the repudiation of covenants en-

tered into with other equally sovereign States? Such action strikes at the heart of federalism. Secondly, the Central Government has been deeply involved in these matters at every stage; it cannot be silent when one State seeks to annul the agreements. Thirdly, it seems wholly improper to change at this stage the entire history that has been presented to the Tribunal. Fourthly, the construction of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal was an element in the 1976 and 1981 Agreements as also in the 1985 Accord. The termination of all those agreements and accords will destroy the very basis of the SYL Canal, and therefore of the recent directions of the Supreme Court to the Central Government to ensure its expeditious completion. Indeed, that seems to be the objective of Punjab's action. It is certain that Haryana and Rajasthan will now seek the intervention of the Supreme Court. The Centre must support them.

Punjab has a strong sense of grievance over the sharing of river waters. So has Haryana over the non-completion of the SYL canal. Rajasthan has apprehensions about the large allocation of eight million acre feet (MAF) given to it being at risk. These are matters to be resolved by agreement, conciliation, mediation or adjudication — not by unilateral, disintegrative action. It will be contended that there were strong political compulsions but can the country accept the position that politics can override the sanctity of covenants, the rule of law, the spirit of federalism, and respect for the Supreme Court? Ultimately, the answer lies in better water management. Over the years, irrigation in Punjab has resulted in a significant incidence of waterlogging and salinity. Are the farmers of Punjab aware that the availability of abundant waters to Pakistan under the Indus Treaty has led to a massive problem of waterlogging and salinity in the Indus Basin in that country? Let that unfortunate experience not be repeated in India.

# Punjab cancels all pacts on water sharing

**HT Correspondent**  
*Chandigarh, July 12*

IN AN unprecedented decision having far reaching politico-legal implications, the Punjab Assembly on Monday terminated all agreements relating to Ravi-Beas river water and discharged itself from its obligations under the 1981 agreement with Haryana and Rajasthan on water sharing.

The move comes three days ahead of the Supreme Court deadline to the Centre

to take up construction of the canal in the state. The Assembly unanimously passed "The Punjab Termination of Agreements Bill, 2004", annulling all its agreements over Ravi-Beas waters with Haryana and Rajasthan. The Bill, moved by chief minister Amarinder Singh, was passed by the House at a specially convened one-day session.

The apex court had directed the Centre to ensure timely completion of the SYL canal portion in Punjab

to enable flow of Haryana's share in the Ravi-Beas waters to the neighbouring state.

Talking to mediapersons soon after the Bill was passed, chief minister Amarinder Singh said the Supreme Court judgment regarding the SYL canal was primarily based on the 1981 agreement between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. "By terminating the agreement, we have created a new ground to fight Punjab's cause in the Supreme

Court," he asserted. The CM said the feeling that Punjab wants to deprive other states of river waters is wrong. "We are here to follow the Constitution. But we will not allow Punjab to be in the grip of violence again on the matter," he said.

After the Bill was passed, an all-party delegation comprising the CM, leader of Opposition and SAD chief Parkash Singh Badal, irrigation minister Avtar Hen-

Governor Justice O.P. Verma (retd.) to apprise him about the decision.

According to the Bill, no territory of Haryana and Rajasthan falls within the basin areas of Ravi and Beas. The two states have continued to utilise waters of the two rivers though they are neither riparian nor basin states.

Such a huge trans-basin diversion of water is likely to have permanent adverse impact on irrigation and other requirements within

the basin areas of Punjab, rendering about nine lakh acres of Punjab area dry and barren. "In the present circumstances, the terms of the agreement dated December 31, 1981, have become onerous, unfair, unreasonable and contrary to the interests of the inhabitants of the Ravi-Beas basin," it said.

Legal experts said the CM's move was aimed at saving the state government from contempt of court, in case of the state violating its directives.

**Haryana is angry**



O.P. Chautala

What Punjab does is not our concern. If the highest court's verdict is not implemented, there may be a constitutional crisis... If Punjab or the Union government delays it, we will again knock on the SC's doors

# ইসরাতে সংকার ঘিরে মুস্বরায় বন্ধ, উত্তেজনা

প্রশান্ত কুণ্ড • মুস্বই

১৯ জুন: মঙ্গলবার লঙ্কর জঙ্গি সন্দেহে গুজরাত পুলিশের এনকাউন্টারে নিহত কলেজ ছাত্রী ইসরাত জাহান শেখের মৃতদেহ সংকারের জন্য আজ তাঁর মুস্বরার বাড়িতে নিয়ে আসা হলে সেখানে উত্তেজনা দেখা দেয়। সমাজবাদী পার্টির মুস্বই প্রধান ও রাজ্যসভার সদস্য আবু আসিম আজমি ইসরাতে মা শামিমা জাহান শেখের সঙ্গে ইসরাতে মৃতদেহ নিয়ে আজই মুস্বই ফেরেন। মৌনমিছিল করে মুস্বরার স্থানীয় মানুষজন চোখের জলে ইসরাতকে শেষবিদায় জানান। এ দিকে, পনের জাভেদের সঙ্গে ইসরাতে সম্পর্ক নিয়ে বিস্তারিত ভাবে খোঁজখবর নিচ্ছে পুলিশ। ইসরাতে মা শামিমা জানান যে তাকে আমদাবাদের পুলিশ কোনও সাংবাদিকের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে দেয়নি। সংবাদপত্রে কোনরকম বিবৃতি দিতেও পুলিশ তাকে নিষেধ করেছে বলেও তিনি

জানান। গুজরাত পুলিশের অপরাধ শাখার এ সি পি জানিয়েছেন শামিমাকে এমন কোনও নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়নি।

ইসরাতে শববাহী মৌনমিছিলকে ঘিরে যাতে কোনওরকম অপ্রীতিকর ঘটনা না ঘটে তার জন্য থানে পুলিশ আজ কড়া পাহারার বন্দোবস্ত করে। বেলা এগারোটা নাগাদ কড়া পুলিশি নিরাপত্তায় ইসরাতে মৃতদেহ সমাধিস্থ করা হয়। মুস্বরার সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায়ের অসংখ্য মানুষ ভিড় করেছিলেন ইসরাতে শেষ যাত্রায়। আবু আসিম আজমি বলেন, মহারাষ্ট্রের সংখ্যালঘু মুসলিম সম্প্রদায়কে হেয় করতে ইচ্ছাকৃত ভাবেই এই ঘটনা ঘটানো হয়েছে। মুস্বইয়ের শহরতলি অঞ্চল মুস্বরায় আজ সারা দিন বন্ধ পালিত হয়েছে। গোটা এলাকার পরিস্থিতি ছিল থমথমে, রাস্তায় টহল দিচ্ছে বিরাট পুলিশ বাহিনী। ইসরাতে হত্যার প্রতিবাদে মুস্বরার সমস্ত দোকানপাট বন্ধ ছিল, পথচারীরাও কালো ব্যাজ পরে নীরব প্রতিবাদ জানিয়েছেন। পুলিশের অবশ্য বক্তব্য, পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণেই রয়েছে।

গত পনের জুন আমদাবাদ বিমানবন্দরের সামনে জঙ্গি সন্দেহে গুজরাত পুলিশ চারজনকে গুলি করে হত্যা করে। তার মধ্যে দু-জন পাকিস্তানের নাগরিক ছিল বলে গুজরাত পুলিশের অভিযোগ। সে দিন ওই ঘটনায় নিহতদের মধ্যে একজন পূনবাসী কেরলের জাভেদ। ইসরাতে সঙ্গে জাভেদের সম্পর্ক নিয়েও পুলিশ তদন্ত করে দেখছে। বাড়ি থেকে বেরনোর সময় ইসরাত তার মাকে জানিয়েছিল ইন্টারভিউ দিতে সে আমদাবাদ যাচ্ছে। এর পর সে জাভেদের সঙ্গে গিয়েছিল কিনা তা খতিয়ে দেখছে পুলিশ। সেই সঙ্গে ঠানে পুলিশের অপরাধ দমন শাখা সোমবার মহারাষ্ট্রের স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রী আর আর পাটিলকে একটি প্রাথমিক রিপোর্ট পেশ করবে বলেও জানা গিয়েছে।

# Dharam Singh to be Karnataka CM

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 27. — The Congress Legislature Party leader in Karnataka, Mr Dharam Singh, will be the new chief minister while the Janata Dal (Secular) Legislature Party leader, Mr Siddaramaiah, will become the deputy chief minister. The swearing-in of both the leaders will take place tomorrow in Bangalore.

The breakthrough took place late tonight after a meeting which was attended among others by JD(S) chief Mr HD Deve Gowda and Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi, at 10 Janpath.

Mr Dharam Singh and Mr Siddaramaiah said the deadlock over government formation in Karnataka has been amicably resolved, with both parties agreeing to form a Congress-JD(S) coalition government on the Maharashtra model. They said the decision was taken to in the state's interest to "checkmate" the growth of the BJP.

The issue had been hanging fire since the election results were out. Mr Deve Gowda had met Mrs Gandhi several times earlier to reach an agreement.

Mr Dharam Singh said that a coordination committee and the common programme will be worked out jointly by the two parties to run the government. Mrs Gandhi's political secretary, Mr Ahmed Patel, was also present at tonight's decisive meeting.

## SILENT REVOLUTION IN KERALA

1995  
THE RESULTS OF the Lok Sabha elections in Kerala stand out for two reasons. First, in a State known for close contests, the sweep by the Left Democratic Front led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) marks a dramatic departure from the past. Secondly, for an electorate with a proven bias towards the Congress in parliamentary elections, the complete rejection of that party, which was out for a duck for the first time since Independence, could mean a radical shift in voter preference. Had the results been less spectacular, they could have been explained with reference to the infighting between the two factions led by Chief Minister A.K. Antony and former Chief Minister K. Karunakaran. Although the cloak-and-dagger manoeuvres of the faction leaders and the permanent public exhibition of inner-party differences have created revulsion among the people, this does not explain the character and magnitude of the LDF mandate. It is significant that the allies of the Congress fared as badly as it did. The Kerala Congress (Mani) did not merely lose in Muvattupuzha, it finished third behind the Indian Federal Democratic Party and the CPI(M). The Muslim League had Manjeri, its bastion, snatched from it. The mandate was clearly as much in favour of the LDF as it was against the Congress-led combine.

By sending 18 of its MPs to the Lok Sabha, the people of Kerala have signalled that they recognise the Left bloc as a constructive and forward-looking force at the national level. They decisively rejected the Congress campaign in the State that it did not make sense to vote the Left parties to the Lok Sabha as they would be obliged to support the Congress against the Bharatiya Janata Party at the Centre. While several parts of the country preferred the Congress

1995  
Kerala  
to the BJP, in States where the former was pitted against the Communist parties the popular verdict has gone the way of the Left. Evidently, the people of Kerala wanted it not just to help the Congress form a government at the Centre, but also to act as a check on its policies. This trend reflects a growing concern over basic livelihood interests that have been trodden upon in the era of liberalisation and globalisation. Stagnation of employment opportunities in the public sector, the growing informalisation of work, talk of labour law changes, and the crisis of rural livelihoods have brought about major changes in the attitude and perception of ordinary people that may cause many electoral upsets in the future. Since Kerala voted in the last phase on May 10, it is also possible that the exit polls of the previous phases projecting a fractured verdict prompted the people to vote a greater role for the Left at the Centre.

The BJP failed to open its account in Kerala despite the concentrated efforts of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to establish a base for the *sangh parivar* in the State. The National Democratic Alliance, however, has its first directly elected member from Kerala, P. C. Thomas, a defector from the Kerala Congress (Mani) who formed his own party and joined the Government at the Centre. His victory was a deviation from established patterns in politically polarised Kerala, but not even an NDA partisan would see this as creating space for a third front. The overall voter turnout of 71.37 per cent was normal for Kerala: in the past, voting percentages of over 75 have tended to favour the Congress. It appears that the Left surge was waiting to happen, but interestingly no opinion or exit poll was able to catch the trend.

NAVIN HEADS 22-MEMBER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

# New Orissa ministry sworn in

## Statesman News Service

**BHUBANESWAR, May 16** — A 22-member BJD-BJP ministry, headed by Mr Navin Patnaik, with very few surprises was sworn in at Raj Bhavan here today amidst thundering cheers and bursting of crackers by jubilant party supporters.

The Governor, Mr MM Rajendran, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the Chief Minister, Mr Navin Patnaik, and his 22 ministerial colleagues. Portfolios will be allotted tomorrow.

The police had a harrowing time in controlling the crowd of BJD-BJP supporters who tried to force their way into the swearing-in venue.

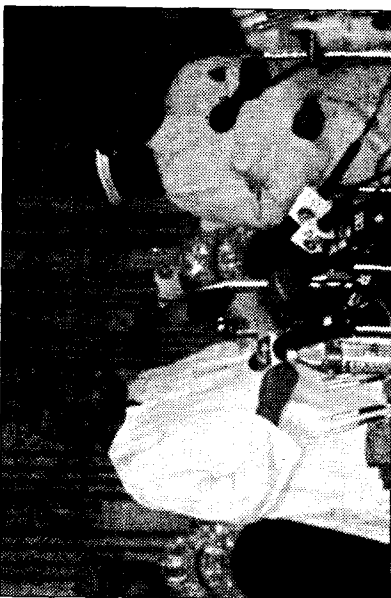
The new two-tier ministry comprised 14 Cabinet ministers and seven ministers of state. For the first time, all the ministers of state were given independent charge. Of the total 21 ministers, 14 belonged to the BJD and seven to its ally the BJP. Five members of the erstwhile ministry were dropped while eight new faces were inducted into the Cabinet. Those who got the axe are Mr Anand Acharya, Mr Ranendra Pratap Swain (both BJD), Mr Bimbadhar Kuanr, Mr Himanshu Sekhar Meher and Mrs Drapadi Murmu (all BJP).

Pradhan and Mr Pradipta Nayak (all ministers of state).

Of them, only Mr Samal and Mrs Padhi were first-timers in the state assembly. Similarly, Mrs Pramila Mallick who was given a Cabinet berth had never been a minister earlier.

Mr Bijoyshree Routray and Mr Golak Naik, who were ministers of state in the previous government, were elevated to Cabinet rank. Speculation that several senior members will be dropped and Mr Patnaik may prefer youngsters fell through as veterans like Mr Damodar Rout, Mr Prafulla Ghadei, Mr Surendranath Nayak and Mr Kalindi Behera were all retained.

**The structure of the new ministry is as follows:**  
Chief Minister — Mr Navin Patnaik. Cabinet Ministers — Mr Kalindi Charan Behera, Mr Padmanav Behera, Mr Prafulla Chandra Ghadei, Mr Samir Dey, Mr Biswa Bhushan Harichandan, Mrs Pramila Mallick, Mr Surya Narayan Patra, Mr Golak Naik, Mr Surendra Nath Nayak, Mr Bijoyshree Routray, Mr Damodar Rout, Mr Manmohan Samal, Mr A U Singhdeo and Mr K V Singhdeo. Ministers of State — Mr Balabhadra Majhi, Mr Jaynarayan Mishra, Mr Rabi Narayan Nanda, Mr Pradipta Naik, Mr Nagen-dra Pradhan and Mrs Surama Padhi.



Of the eight new faces, three were appointed Cabinet ministers while the rest were made ministers of state. The new entrants were the BJP state unit president and deputy leader of the BJP Legislature Party, Mr Manmohan Samal, the former BJD MP, Mr Padmanav Behera, the Biju Mahila Janata Dal president, Mrs Pramila Mallick, (all Cabinet), the former BJD-BJP deputy chief whip, Mr Jay Narayan Mishra, the former BJP Mahila Morcha national president, Mrs Surama Padhi, Mr Debasis Nayak, Mr Nagendra



# How Naveen won hearts and votes in rural Orissa

Soumyajit Pattnaik  
Bhubaneswar, May 14

NAVEEN PATNAIK'S successful political journey is also the story of a Page 3 celebrity connecting with the rural masses through hard work and perseverance, notwithstanding the language barriers.

A photograph of Patnaik with the late Jacqueline Kennedy kept in the CM's drawing room speaks about the company he kept before he took the plunge into politics. The Chief Minister was initially taking it easy till Kashipur starvation deaths came as a wake-up call for him to interact with the tribals and the rural masses.

In fact, Patnaik learnt a hard lesson after reacting late to the Kashipur starvation deaths. He visited Kashipur after nearly twenty days and people threw mango kernels at his car. The photographs of mango kernels strewn on his car and the bad publicity he got for the delayed visit brought a welcome change in him and he never repeated the same mistake again. Since then, the CM has never faltered to stand by the people in their hours of crisis in this calamity-prone state.

In his four years in office, Orissa faced floods in 2001, which ravaged coastal areas, a severe drought in 2002 and again floods in 2003. Apart from mobilising relief and rescue operations, Patnaik made it a point to personally



visit all flood-affected places to monitor the administrative measures. And in relief camps, Patnaik always tried to feed the people with his own hands. Governments in Orissa often become unpopular because netas get jittery to face the people's wrath for relief mismanagement during natural calamities.

Naveen reversed the trend and led from the front so far as relief operations were concerned. More than his oratory skills in Oriya, his gestures won him many hearts in rural Orissa.

While explaining the reasons behind the renewed mandate from the people, Patnaik said the people appreciated the good intentions of his government. Patnaik may not have won the battle

against corruption, but people appreciated the CM's intentions to combat corruption. And that paid him huge dividends in the polls. Patnaik saw to it that in schemes such as Indira Awas Yojana or BPL cards, the real beneficiaries did not have to pay bribes, which was quite endemic in Orissa. And the vigilance department has instituted many cases against officials not doing justice to the schemes for the rural poor.

Patnaik, in his first year in office, was often criticised for delay in project execution.

He stuck to the maxim that in the name of prompt execution, quality of village roads should not be compromised. There was delay, but the roads have not disappeared overnight by an unholy nexus between the officials and contractors. Patnaik also initiated prompt police action against local goons who dictated awarding of contracts at the block and village level. The number of such goons had swelled under political patronage before. And when he hit the campaign trail, Patnaik told the electorate in every meeting that he has ended the "goonda raj and contractor raj" in the state. And it drew huge applause from the audience.

During his first-term in office, Patnaik got good support from the Centre. But now with the NDA government voted out of power, he might face a different ball game in his second term in office.

# Orissa swims against the tide

By Rajaram Satapathy  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

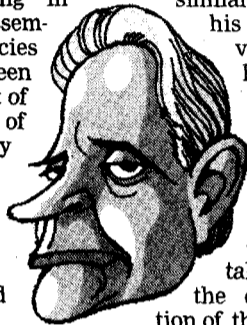
**Bhubaneswar:** Going against the national trend, Orissa on Thursday stood by Naveen Patnaik, giving another chance to his BJD-BJP combine to rule the state.

Trends trickling in from all the 147 assembly constituencies projected the Naveen team falling short of the 2000 figure of 106. But the tally would not be so low as to be threatened by its rival, the Congress-led five-party alliance headed by J.B.Patnaik.

The BJD-BJP combine is likely to get about 90 seats, while the Congress-led alliance may end up with around 50 seats. Latest results showed the BJD-BJP combine bagging 61 seats as

against 27 by the Congress.

The high point of the result was the slender winning margin of most victors from either side. J B Patnaik scraped through with a slender margin of 2000 votes. Energy minister Surya Narayan Patra (BJD) was similarly lucky to retain his seat with just 164 votes more than his rival.



"It was the outcome of good governance by my government. The steps the BJD-BJP government had taken to improve the economic condition of the state by stamping out corruption in administration and implementing welfare programmes sincerely had received tremendous support from the people", BJD chief Naveen Patnaik remarked.

## 13 proves unlucky for BJP

**New Delhi:** The number 13 finally proved to be unlucky for Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee as also the BJP which once boasted that it always favoured it.

Number 13, condemned as inauspicious in the West, was considered "feel good" for the ruling party as also Vajpayee.

The first time the BJP came to power in 1996 at the Centre, it lasted for 13 days.

The next time it assumed reins in New Delhi in 1998, the BJP-led coalition's tenure ran for 13 months. It again came to power in 1999 emerging triumphant in the 13th Lok Sabha, with Vajpayee assuming office on October 13.

With Vajpayee becoming

Prime Minister for the third time, BJP leaders were apparently carried away by the 'magic' of 13. They started boasting that now their rule would be for a minimum period of 13 years.

When the Election Commission, while announcing the poll schedule, said that counting would be on May 13, there was a perceptible glee in the saffron camp.

Pokharan tests, the nuclear explosions which were a matter of pride for the BJP, were conducted on May 11 and May 13, 1998.

As if there was a sting in the '13' tale, this May the explosion was of a different kind. Agencies

# Naveen to take guard once more in Orissa

Nageshwar Patnaik  
BHUBANESWAR 13 MAY

**V**OTERS in Orissa sprang a surprise by going against the national trend of anti-incumbency swing, reposing their faith in the Biju Janata Dal (BJD)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) combine. The ruling combine has won 18 seats, Congress two and JMM one in the Lok Sabha polls. The ruling alliance is also set to retain power at the state by winning 93 Assembly seats. Congress has won 38 seats and its allies eight, while Independents bagged eight seats down by over 20 seats. Both Assembly and Lok Sabha polls were held simultaneously in Orissa after a gap of 33 years.

The Vajpayee factor, Advani's Bharat Uday Yatra, the clean image of chief minister Naveen Patnaik and a lacklustre campaign by the Congress seem to have worked in favour of the ruling alliance. With this win, Naveen Patnaik also appears to have avenged the defeat of his father, the late Biju Patnaik, at the hands of the Congress in 1995 Assembly polls. The Congress was the unexpected winner with 80 seats then.

A triumphant Naveen Patnaik on Thursday de-

scribed Orissa's poll outcome as an "island in the storm (that swept the NDA off its feet)" and attributed the ruling alliance's success in the simultaneous elections to "good and transparent governance during the last four years, good law and order situation, pro-poor and pro-progress policies and efficient handling of recurring natural calamities." The BJD supremo, who will once again head the BJD-BJP alliance government, expressed dismay at the NDA's debacle at the Centre, but ruled out the possibility of quitting the BJP-led alliance.



ALL SMILES

"The BJD is part of the NDA and will continue in it," he remarked, adding that the new government at the state would continue to work for the rural poor. On the contrary, a pall of gloom descended on the Congress headquarters here.

The party high-command had pinned its hopes on a good showing.

"We could not take our message to the people due to time constraint. The BJD-BJP's misrule, ineptitude, corruption could not be properly highlighted before the people," said Orissa Congress president J.B. Patnaik.

Many Congress workers, however, blame J.B. Patnaik for BJD-BJP's victory.

# Beant trial trio in tunnel getaway

**GAJINDER SINGH**

**Chandigarh, Jan. 22:** Three prisoners being tried for the assassination of Punjab chief minister Beant Singh have pulled off an audacious jailbreak, burrowing their way up to the boundary wall and scaling it to reach a getaway vehicle lying in wait.

The escape from the high-security Burail jail was carried out last night amid rain and extreme cold. Another prisoner who is involved in a separate case also slipped out with the trio.

Beant Singh was killed by a human bomb as he was stepping into his car outside the Punjab secretariat here on August 31, 1995. The bomb, allegedly carried by Babbar Khalsa member Dilawar Singh, killed 14 others on the spot. Three more succumbed to injuries later.

Three of the accused in the assassination case — Jagtar Singh Tara, Jagtar Singh Hawara and Paramjit Singh Bheora — escaped by digging a tunnel 14 feet deep and 94-feet long and scaling the 15-foot-high boundary wall.

Tara, Hawara and Bheora were provided the fourth fugitive, Dev Singh, as a "helper" since they were not allowed to mix with other jail inmates due to security reasons.

The trio, with a record of

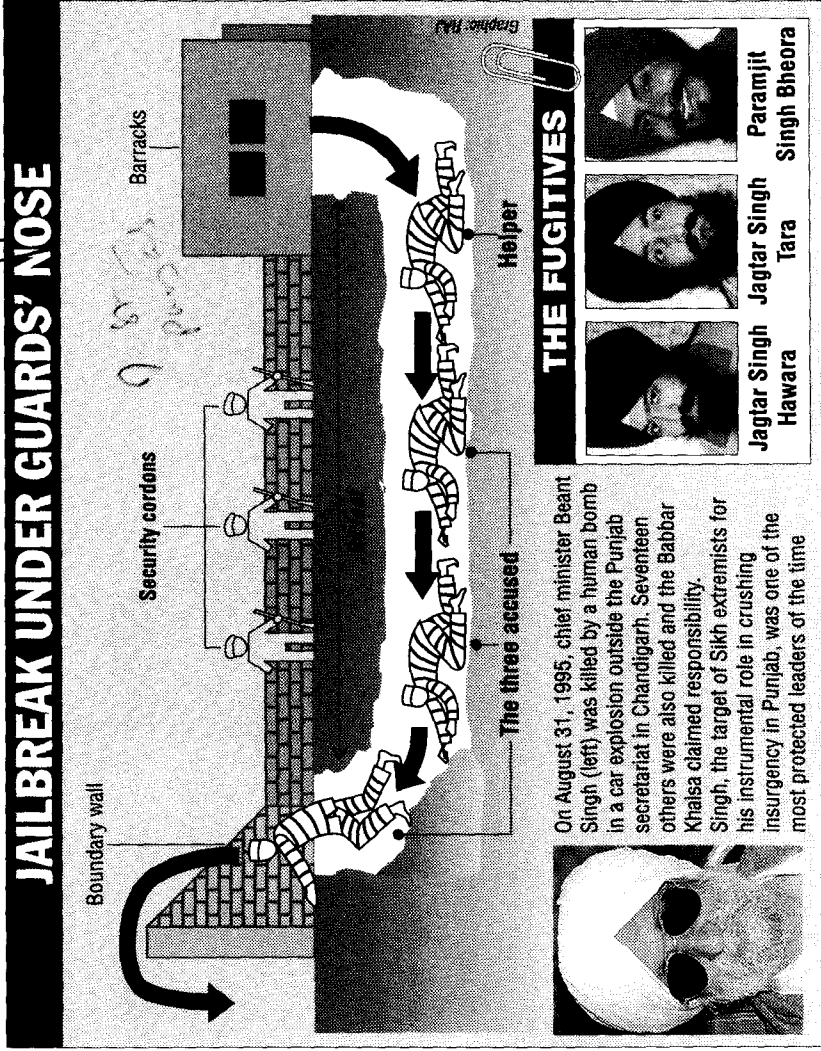
botched escape attempts, had spread terror among jail staff and fellow prisoners and had been provided VIP facilities in their cells, police said.

"We are looking at all angles to the escape, including connivance of jail personnel," Lalit Sharma, adviser to Chandigarh administrator Justice (retd) O.P. Verma, said.

The Union territory administration has arrested five persons, including deputy jail superintendent D.S. Sandhu, havaladar Nishan Singh and havaladar Kashmir Singh, who was in charge of barracks no. 7 where the trio was lodged. CRPF constables Inder Singh and Jagir Singh were also arrested.

The police have mounted one of the biggest manhunts in recent times, spread over several states. Barricades have been set up at all major entry and exit points in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and areas bordering Rajasthan and Delhi.

The police said the prisoners could not have dug the tunnel in a day. "It is a long tunnel and must have taken days of planning. Moreover, we are looking at where the huge amount of earth had been deposited while the tunnel was being made. We are also screening records of people who may have met the



headcount at 7 am today. A search in the barracks showed up the tunnel with its mouth 20 metres from the boundary wall. The stretch from the barracks to the inner wall is patrolled throughout the day. The area between the outer wall and the boundary wall is not heavily patrolled, making it easy to escape.

The prisoners escaped from the tunnel whose mouth is just 10 metres from a watch tower, which was not manned last night. The prisoners also had to crawl in the open for over 70 metres before escaping in a vehicle — tyre marks have been detected on the wasteland near the right side of the jail. The police were informed only at 8.15 am.

This was the third jailbreak attempt by the prisoners — in 1998 they made two abortive bids to flee the jail, first by trying to smuggle in RDX in sweets, and later by trying to seize the then jail superintendent and make a dash for freedom.

Amar Singh Chahal, counsel for the accused, said the escape was stage-managed so that they could be "eliminated". "Why should they try to escape? They will get caught sooner or later and that would ensure a stricter sentence for them," he said.

The Beant Singh trial involving 13 accused was being held on the jail premises.

## THE FUGITIVES



**Jagtar Singh Hawara**  
**Jagtar Singh Tara**  
**Paramjit Singh Bheora**

prisoners during the last six months," a senior Punjab police officer said.

Burail jail has been barricaded and no one is being allowed inside. Located on the outskirts of Chandigarh and near the satellite town of Mohali, the jail is home to many extremists. Officials are tight-lipped on the presence of Kashmiri militants in the jail, but some arrested during the daily

# Attack in Orissa

Patnaik must not spare the guilty SFS

That violence and crime are not confined to seedy bylanes, and can occur in the hallowed precincts of a state secretariat became clear last week when four photographers were assaulted and robbed at the Bhubaneswar secretariat. They were witness to an altercation between government employees and Sarat Paikray, a ruling party MLA and chairman of the State Housing Board. Paikray, agitated by the transfer of an auditor, was remonstrating with an Additional Secretary when a rumour spread that he and his supporters had manhandled the bureaucrat. Furious employees rushed to the spot and accosted Paikray's supporters. In the clash that ensued, a section officer was injured. And this led the agitated employees to attack everyone in sight, but principally the photographers who had recorded the incident. The attack went on for nearly two hours while police stood by helplessly. This newspaper's photographer had his camera robbed, and until today there is nothing to suggest that the equipment will be recovered. This is not the first time cameramen have faced the ire of government employees; not so long ago, similar scenes were witnessed at the Kolkata secretariat and just two months ago even in Bhubaneswar. And just as the West Bengal Chief Minister had then promised action, so too did Naveen Patnaik, two months ago and last week. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee did not deliver on his promise, and there is no reason to believe Patnaik will.

It is easy to understand why cameramen face such treatment at the hands of mobs. They are witnesses to criminal acts, and they possess evidence. Having said that, there can be no excuses offered for the manner in which police officers failed to perform their duties, and yet evaded official censure. Patnaik would like his constituents to believe that he is an effective administrator. It is necessary that he act, and act fast, to ensure that the guilty do not get away. Paikray has been stripped of his post, but he was never arrested, only taken into protective custody. There is nothing to suggest that action is contemplated against the secretariat employees or the deficient policemen. One detail that may have eluded Patnaik and which ought to force him to act is that the secretariat is supposed to be a high-security zone. The airport and the assembly are two others. And in the past three years, violent clashes have taken place at all three venues. Those who attacked photographers the other day may well turn around and attack Patnaik or some of his legislators some day. Even a less than adequate politician realizes the need for self-preservation. Patnaik has every reason to crack down, and hard; the victims were journalists but the slap was administered on the face of his administration.