

# Farmers want separate budget from next year

By N Vidyasagar/TNN

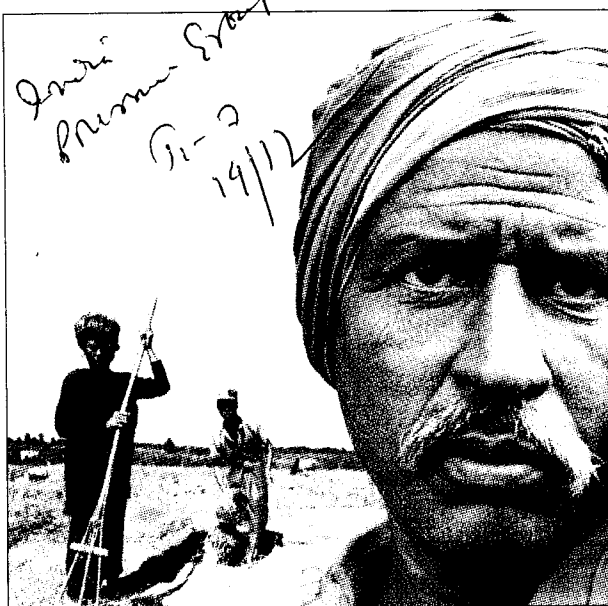
**New Delhi:** More than forty farmers' associations from across the country, in a joint declaration, have demanded a separate agriculture budget starting the financial year 2005-06.

They have asked the Centre to include agriculture in the concurrent list, which is now a state subject.

Hundreds of farm leaders, influencing over 50 million agriculturists, met in New Delhi to chart out a roadmap to liberate the farm sector from the clutches of the government. The farmers' conclave has participation from the federations of farmers' associations in AP, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat, UP, Tamil Nadu besides associations representing amla, apple, banana, grapes and guava growers.

They have also made a plea to integrate all agriculture-related issues dealt with by commerce and industry, food processing and water resources under the umbrella of agriculture ministry. They have also asked the government to disinvest in public sector (especially oil and telecom) and reinvest in irrigation.

The farm leaders have met finance minister P



Chidambaram and apprised concerns from farm community.

"We have demanded a separate agriculture budget since 65 per cent of the population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. We can make the sector self-sufficient. It should be given the same importance as railway or the Union Budget," said P Chengal Reddy, who heads the Indian Farmers & In-

dustry Alliance. "The state governments have no money to spend on agriculture. It's time for the Centre to intervene and bring agriculture under concurrent list."

Farm leaders representing associations from various states said they had no political affiliation and that their aim was to make the participation of "real farmers" in the decision-making process of policy-related agricultural issues.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 DEC 2004

# Kalam visits Kargil

PRESIDENT ADDRESSES SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Dec. 8. — It was an unforgettable day for the soldiers of the Indian Army posted at Kargil as their supreme commander — President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam — visited them today. The President also became the first head of the state to visit the forward areas of Kargil after the 1999 Kargil war.

Accompanied by Army Chief General NC Vij and GOC-in-C Northern Command Lt Gen. Hari Prasad, Dr Kalam addressed the troops. He also recited a poem penned by him in recognition of the service provided by the troops. Addressing the jawans, the President said: "You are our symbol of strength. Your courage, bravery and valour are the inspiration for the youth of this nation. The victory in Kargil will go down in the annals of history as an important milestone and I am here today to personally congratulate you for your success in the 1999 Kargil war."

He assured: "The government will arm you with modern equipment. We are aware of your needs and we will not only arm you with weaponry, but other personal kits which you require while guarding the borders in sub-zero temperatures," he said.

Dr Kalam also administered a five-point oath to the armed forces. He recited the five points and asked the troops to repeat in unison. Those points included: "I am proud to be the member of Indian Army which has the highest tradition of valour and bravery; I will always strive for victory and take the nation on the path of victory; I will be a responsible citizen of my country and at the time of need I will help



President Kalam walks past a barbed wire fence in Kargil on Wednesday. — AFP

my fellow countrymen; I will always feel pride in celebrating the victory of countrymen and the nation; and my flag is my life".

The GOC 14 Corps Lt Gen. ML Naidu presented a memento to the President. Dr Kalam also gave a memento to the GOC 14 Corps, GOC Mountain Division and Commander Infantry Brigade and distributed cashewnuts to the troops.

The President also interacted with the troops and had tea with them.

After his return from Kargil, Dr

Kalam inaugurated the Ibadat-e-Shahadat Museum, set up by the Army at Badamibagh Cantonment.

Later, interacting with school children at 15 Corps HQ in Srinagar, Dr Kalam hoped that India would get a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. He said the world cannot ignore one billion people of India.

On the situation in the state, he said there is an elected government at place in the state and dialogue with Pakistan was also continuing.

09 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

# Plan panel listens to farmers' woes

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Some unusual visitors to the Yojna Bhavan on Saturday gave an important insight into a few "real problems" that plagued India's economic and social growth.

The families of farmers, who committed suicide in the drought-prone Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh, met the commission members to tell their story. "And it was different one from what one usually hears," said plan panel member, Sayeed Hamid.

In their drought-hit villages, farmers' suicide is only one side of the tragedy. Falling water levels, failing crops and high indebtedness is taking its toll on village women.

On an average, 15-16 women of a village are landing up in brothels in Pune and Mumbai, the farmer families told the panel. The trend has been on for a decade now, but successive droughts in the last few years have made the situation acute.

So distressed is this society that entering prostitution is no longer seen as a violation of societal norms. With no source of livelihood around, this is becoming an accepted source of earning.

This meeting, organised by the Rayalseema Drought Movement, was "a flash of reality for us", said Hameed.

"Although farmers' suicides and trafficking of women are issues to be handled by the state governments, the Planning Commission can see that our new and old policies address these issues," she added. Besides Hameed, plan panel members Abhijit Sen and B N Yugandhar were also present at the meeting. The commission was presented with four case studies, one of a woman forced into prostitution because of family debts.

Putting her case before the panel, Parvati from Batalpalli sought a source of livelihood. Her husband Narayanswami had committed suicide two years ago after he failed to pay back Rs 80,000 he took from the local moneylender.

"Life has been difficult. There are no returns from our land. My husband took a loan for a borewell. We dug 300-400 metres into the ground but there was no water. He could do nothing so he committed suicide. The government is yet to provide irrigation facilities. We are totally dependent on rain," Parvati said.

The families demanded a social security and economic package to prevent trafficking of women, formation of self-help groups and counselling centres, and provision of micro-finance packages in their villages.



# Jute TUs call off strike after wage pact

**Mills Will Have To Pay Dearness Allowance Dues Immediately**

Our Correspondent  
KOLKATA 27 NOVEMBER

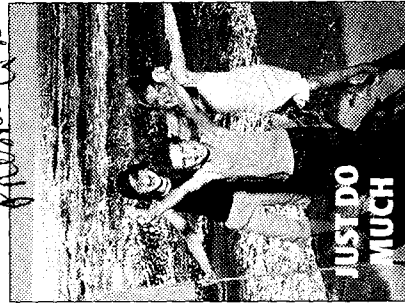
As expected, 14 central trade unions (TUs) operating in the domestic jute industry have called off the strike on Saturday following a tripartite wage agreement signed by TU leaders and industry representatives at Kolkata.

TUs called an indefinite strike from November 29 in support of a 13-point charter of demand on behalf of 2.5 lakh jute workers in 62 jute mills in West Bengal. The agreement was signed be-

fore the state labour minister Md Amin who initiated a series of negotiations both at bipartite and tripartite levels with representatives of TUs and industry during the last few weeks culminating in a settlement on Saturday.

In fact, on Friday, differences between the contending parties were considerably narrowed down for a meeting ground.

After the meeting, the labour minister told reporters that according to terms and conditions of the agreement, the mill management would have to pay immediately dearness allowance



wise tripartite agreements signed in January, 2002 and 2004. As for arrears DA, the office of the state labour commissioner would decide it with 15 days in consultation with representatives of industry and TUs.

The minister hoped that both sides would implement the terms and conditions agreed in the settlement so that industrial relations in the jute sector remains healthy and cordial in the interests of everyone concerned within the industry and trade. It was essential for revival of economic viability of this agro-based industry, which still played a vital role in the economy of the eastern region of the country, he said.

Among other terms of settlement, it was settled that the con-

troversial productivity-linked wage system, which could not be implemented so far in many mills should be implemented within four months from the date of settlement and for those mills where norms were fixed at bipartite levels, the system should be implemented immediately. It also agreed that workers in all jute mills would get an adhoc increment of Rs 10. As for implementation of the terms and conditions of the tripartite settlements of January 5, 2002 and January 8, 2004, the state government would set up a committee to oversee the implementation and make its recommendations.

Giving his reaction to the settlement, deputy chairman of Indian Jute Mills Association

(IJMA) R.K. Poddar said the industry only hoped that TUs would keep their commitments, particularly in regard to the productivity-linked wage implementation in jute mills this time and thus help restoring the economic viability of a labour intensive high-cost industry like jute.

This was more so as jute was facing growing competition in commodity packaging industries in both international and domestic markets.

At Saturday's meet, the industry was represented by a seven-member team of Indian Jute Mills Association led by Mr Poddar and signed the tripartite agreement while all the TU leaders of 14 trade unions inked the deal on behalf of the workers.

Union loses 10 per cent of members in three years, not militancy

## Attack on 'outsider' aspirant workers

### OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Kharagpur, Aug 30:** As much as the chief minister wants the CPM's trade union arm to behave, the Citu reaffirms its militant credentials.

About 20 youths who turned up for an interview at the Tata Metaliks factory here yesterday were allegedly assaulted by Citu supporters opposed to the recruitment of "outsiders".

Around 157 youths from around West Midnapore had come for the interview for the post of trainee worker after receiving call letters from the employment exchange. All of them but the 20 who were attacked fled.

The youths lodged a complaint at the local police outpost saying Citu workers blocked a 4-km stretch leading to the factory gates and prevented them from entering. "Citu workers holding red flags made it clear that no outsiders will be allowed to

go for the interview. When we protested, they pushed us to the ground and assaulted us. When we informed the management, they expressed inability to provide protection outside the factory," said Bimal Mahato.

Citu had been demanding that only local boys be recruited to the Sahachak factory, about 125 km from Calcutta.

"We don't know what lies in store. We were denied the right to appear in the interview," said Samir Dutta, who came from a remote village.

Mihir Pahari, the secretary of the Citu-controlled coordination committee here, said: "I don't know anything about the assault, but we are against the decision to recruit outsiders."

Additional superintendent of police, Kharagpur, Manoj Verma, said a case was registered on the basis of complaints. "We are looking for those named in the FIR."

A spokesman for Tata Metaliks, which manufactures cast iron, denied knowledge of the assault. But he added: "Though we give priority to local youths, we will also have to give chance to those having quality and efficiency."

Chief works manager Debashish Mishra said the interview took place though many applicants did not turn up.

# City support for Citu on decline

cent in the next three years. However, even as the Citu's city membership went down, the number of members across the state went up.

A union leader in the city said: "We could not undertake a sustained movement against Delhi in the interest of an industry-friendly image. After Jyoti Basu, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is striving to create an industry-friendly atmosphere and aggressive unionism is frowned upon. Membership cannot be expected to rise."

However, strikes and shutdowns are possibly not going to be the way to rejuvenation. Shibani Sengupta, Citu's Calcutta vice-president, said: "We are working out a strategy to create jobs. Our activities are not confined to organising bands and strikes but exploring the possibility of employment generation. We are confident that the working class will be attracted to our organisation once we succeed in creating jobs for them."

**Up & down**

	Calcutta Citu	State unit
1997	1.78 lakh	10.70 lakh
2001	1.76 lakh	11.54 lakh
2004	1.60 lakh	12 lakh

*Figures approx*

ures to arrest the decline." According to the sources, the dip is also a reflection of the fact that some workers have lost confidence in the Citu as an effective minder of its interests. "For a section of workers, it came through as devoted to the cause of the government than the worker."

Out of 104 new Citu Calcutta district committee members, only 30 are new faces. But none of them has been inducted to the 22-member working committee, which continues to be crowded with veterans.

Goala said the district committee would work hard to increase membership by 20 per

### A STAFF REPORTER

**Calcutta, Aug. 30:** The number of Citu members in the city has dipped by nearly 10 per cent.

The Calcutta district committee of the union, which had 1.76 lakh members in 2001 has lost about 16,000 in the past three years, figures released by the union today revealed.

At the end of the 7th conference of the Citu's district unit, the membership stands at 1.6 lakh. At the end of the fifth conference, a marginal fall of 1,700 had been detected.

Sources said at the root of the shrink in membership is a combination of factors — lock-outs and closures, absence of younger leaders and the union's inability to confront the Left Front government.

"We are concerned at the fall," said new Citu president Rajdeo Goala. "The drop is because of closures and lockouts in industrial units. We will have to take effective meas-

# Trade unions observe protest day

2/8 HD-13 9. pressure groups  
By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 20.** Workers owing allegiance to major trade unions, along with some independent employees' federations, today observed a nationwide protest day to press their demands for higher interest on EPF and rollback of proposals to hike FDI in certain sectors, besides other issues. The Congress-backed INTUC and the Sangh-affiliated BMS, however, stayed away.

Demonstrations and dharnas in all State capitals and industrial centres in support of the seven-point demands, which included pension for the un-

organised sector, revival of sick PSUs and scrapping the decision on de-reservation of 85 items from the SSI sector, marked the protest day, the CPI-affiliated AITUC secretary, D.L. Sachdev, said.

At Jantar Mantar here, hundreds of workers shouted slogans demanding an immediate increase in the EPF interest rate and rollback of the proposed FDI hike in insurance, civil aviation and insurance sectors.

## 'No change in mindset'

The general Secretary of the CPI(M)-backed CITU, W.R. Wardarajan, said: "There has been only a change in the Gov-

ernment and not the mindset. We will build up pressure on the Government to look into all labour related issues."

Senior RSP MP and UPA Government's Coordination Committee member, Abani Roy, said the Left unions had decided to raise the issue both outside and inside Parliament and take up the issues at the Coordination Committee level.

"All the seven Left-supported trade unions, the CITU, AITUC, UTUC, HMS, UTUC-LS, TUCC and AICCTU participated in the demonstrations to pressure the Government on the demands," the UTUC (LS) leader, Achintya Sinha, said.

THE HINDU

19 AUG 2000

# Singh stronger after 100 days

g.p.m. 11-3 29/8

## The technocrat has settled down comfortably in the PM's chair

Vinod Sharma/Saroj Nagi  
New Delhi, August 28

FOR DR Manmohan Singh, whose government completes 100 days in office on Sunday, it has been baptism by fire spewed mostly by a belligerent Opposition and fanned by sceptics within the Congress.

But those dismissive of the technocrat, whom destiny catapulted to the highest office, didn't really have a good measure of the man, not until he showed the Opposition its place and his colleagues the mettle he is made of. Self-effacing to the core, Singh has settled down in the PM's chair without much ado. His style is his persona — quiet, efficient and accommodating until pushed to the wall.

The Opposition is using Singh's controversial meeting with NDA leaders to dispossess him of the image of a gentleman. But the signal has had a salutary effect on Thomases doubting his ability to lead from upfront.

"People forget Singh had navigated the Indian economy

solo performance fetched him appreciative e-mails. He has since been a changed man, determined to work the way he deems best in the country's interest," said a colleague.

In fact, Singh's refusal to accept the NDA's suggestions on the Finance Bill they refused to debate in Parliament prompted CPI-M leaders to compliment him for his principled stand. Moreover, Singh's persuasive skills have begun working to make give-and-take with the Left work on such key issues as Foreign Direct Investment.

The truckers' strike prompted the Communists to come to the government's defence. On his part, the PM addressed the Left's concerns by asking the finance ministry to mount vigilance against trends affecting the *aadmi*. Since the UPA's agenda can only be implemented with the help of states, Singh's focus lately has been on basic issues and governance-related reforms.

Besides managing the economy, Singh's stint has witnessed droughts, floods, problems in the



through its worst crisis in 1991. That challenge was as political as it was economic," said a PMO official. He felt those jumping to early conclusions about his abilities and temperament are in for a big surprise — "He's not the man to give up easily".

Much might be made of slip-ups such as the Congress' house journal not carrying the PM's first I-Day speech. But his "promises to keep" address to the nation, sources said, gave Singh the much-needed opportunity to connect with the people. "His first

North-East and Kashmir and the Opposition's onslaught on the tainted ministers' issue. Given his clean image, the PM wasn't comfortable delaying Shibu Soren's ouster. But, in permitting the JMM leader time to secure relief from court, he showed an understanding of the compulsions of a coalition.

"Soren isn't any longer in Singh's Cabinet. But the JMM is very much part of the UPA," said a PMO official, underlining Singh's political wisdom in seeing through the BJP's gameplan to create fissures in the coalition. Similarly, the PM refused to react to the BJP's insinuations that HRD minister Arjun Singh was targeting him while raising the demand of ridding the administration of RSS sympathisers.

In dispelling the notion of two power centres, Singh has been helped as much by Sonia Gandhi, who has refrained from interfering in the government's day-to-day functioning. But he'd be better off with timely political inputs from the party organisation.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 AUG 2004

20 AUG 2004

# Needed a code of conduct; Manmohan

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 26.** The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today gave vent to his anguish at the standoff between the Government and the Opposition that disrupted Parliament and culminated in the boycott of the passage of the Finance Bill by the National Democratic Alliance. Dr. Singh said that the events of the past few weeks "did not augur well for democracy or the Parliamentary system."

Delivering his valedictory address at the concluding session of the Budget session of Parliament, Dr. Singh regretted that important financial business such as the General Budget and the demands for grants were passed without a detailed discussion. "It is sad that Parliament cannot find the time to debate and discuss important issues like the President's address, and the Financial Bill.

This is not the way in which great democracies function," he said.

**'Duty of MPs'** Dr. Singh said that it was the duty of the Members of Parliament to debate and examine important measures such as the Finance Bill. "They must ensure that all the money that is sanctioned by Parliament is spent for the benefit of the people. Parliament must also ensure that the tax proposals are in accordance with people's wishes and preferences. But all this is possible only when Parliament is allowed to discharge its functions," he said.

Though Dr. Singh did not directly refer to the Opposition's boycott of the House, it clearly weighed on his mind as he appealed to all sides to reflect on the events of the past week. "We are living in abnormal times. Parliament has been unable to discharge its duties and

now we must ensure that such things are a thing of the past," he said.

Dr. Singh said that he recognised the Opposition's right to dissent but he also gently reminded them of their responsibility towards ensuring that Parliament functioned smoothly. "The Opposition too has a responsibility towards the House," he said.

In a similar address to the Rajya Sabha, Dr. Singh favoured a code of conduct for political parties inside and outside Parliament. He regretted that the MPs had been unable to examine and discuss the budgetary proposals in a detailed manner. "We are very poor; we tax even poor sections to meet the expenses. People expect MPs to apply their mind on vital issues," he said.

## Emotional note

Dr. Singh hoped that the Opposition would abide by the

prescribed rules of Parliamentary democracy.

Striking an emotional note, he said that he agreed with the observation made by the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, that there could be differences among political parties but no problem was so big that it could not be resolved through a "structured dialogue." Differences could be debated and discussed and a consensus evolved. "When we elected the Deputy Chairman unanimously, I thought this is the beginning of a new trend," he said.

"Power is the societal trust. You must spend power for public good. With a great deal of sadness, I am saying that we have not come up to your expectations. We have to look inside and it is high time when all political parties must evolve a code of conduct for inside and outside Parliament," Dr. Singh said.



# Change your attitude: Vajpayee

HP 1 By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, AUG. 26. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) today rejected Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's offer to "forget and forgive" any insult felt by their leaders at a meeting with him on Wednesday, and boycotted the entire Parliamentary proceedings in protest, including the passage of the Finance Bill, 2004-05.

After chairing a two-hour meeting of the NDA attended by MPs from both the Houses, the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, urged the Government to give up its "confrontationist attitude" with the Opposition parties and engage them in a constructive dialogue before the next session of Parliament to ensure that it was more productive.

Deploring Mr. Singh's behaviour with the Opposition delegation that went to meet him with amendments to the Finance Bill on Wednesday, he said: "I have regards for Dr. Manmohan Singh as a person, but he does not seem to be aware of the unwritten code of political conduct that should guide the interaction between the Prime Minister and senior leaders of the Opposition. Only the other day, he exhorted the political class about a 'code of

conduct.' He has certainly not set a good example by being impolite with the NDA delegation..."

## Not enough, says NDA

Although the Prime Minister had yesterday called up L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh in a conciliatory gesture, the NDA felt that "it was not enough." What seems to have precipitated the standoff is a note circulated by the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, today in which he gave the Congress version of yesterday's meeting which is contrary to what the NDA leaders have said. The NDA is also peeved at the Congress spokesman and other leaders justifying the incident.

It has now decided to take to the streets and announced a countrywide agitation from tomorrow, ending in a rally to be addressed by Mr. Vajpayee in Bangalore on September 8.

Addressing the media here, Mr. Vajpayee, who was flanked by the NDA convener, George Fernandes, and leaders of the Opposition L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh, said though the NDA had lost the elections, from the outset it had declared its cooperation with the Government. Despite differences, it had played a constructive role in national interest.

27/8 "But some such incidents have taken place that it seems the Government does not want our cooperation or wants it on its own terms. We are the Opposition. We have our point of view and want to play our role. But if the Government does not allow the Opposition to play its part then there would be difficulty and democracy would not work well."

## 'New low'

Mr. Advani said the Government's confrontationist attitude marks a "new low" in Opposition-Government relationship. "It is not acceptable." Asked about a reported comment from the Left parties on NDA blocking parliamentary proceedings as undemocratic, Mr. Advani said: "We need not learn about democracy from the Left parties and the Congress. The Marxists do not believe in democracy at all and the Congress almost destroyed democracy by imposing Emergency for 19 months. They have no right to say this to us." Pointing to the "disinformation" in Mr. Mukherjee's note, Mr. Jaswant Singh said: "Then why did the Prime Minister call me and Mr. Advani — to ask about our health?"

PM for code: Page 13  
Speaker, Shekhawat, appeal: Page 14

# Manmohan talks tough to Opposition

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 25. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today "politely but firmly" refused to accept a "representation" from the Opposition leaders, telling them it was "untenable" that while they would not allow a discussion on the Budget in Parliament they wanted to have their views taken note of.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, L.K. Advani, and leaders of the National Democratic Alliance were non-plussed as the Prime Minister told them, in an uncharacteristic stern tone, he would not accept any representation from them. The Congress political managers were, however, pleased with Mr. Singh's firmness. A senior leader of the party said: "First they [the Opposition leaders] have the gall to disrupt Parliament; then they have the nerve to present a memorandum. They should not mistake the Prime Minister's polite and humble demeanour for weakness."

## Brief interaction

The Prime Minister told the NDA delegation — consisting of George Fernandes, Jaswant Singh, Yashwant Sinha, Venkaiah Naidu, V.K. Malhotra and Sushma Swaraj — that there were only two alternatives. Either the Opposition should allow the House to debate the Budget and then it could propose all its ideas and amendments, or it should abide by the agreement to have the Budget passed without discussion. The interaction was over in 15 minutes. The Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, and the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, were present.

The Opposition leaders were taken aback by Dr. Singh's firmness. Only yesterday, he had given public expression to his frustrations on the stalemate in Parliament.

The NDA thought of the "memorandum" stratagem in the wake of widespread criticism that the Opposition was overdoing its confrontational politics and in the process was letting the Government get



away with the Budget proposals. Many business houses — strong supporters of the erstwhile Vajpayee Government — are believed to be unhappy with the BJP's unrelenting grounding of Parliament.

The NDA convener, George Fernandes, called a press conference to express shock and surprise at the "Prime Minister's rudeness." "In my 50 years of political life, I have seen many prime ministers and had opposed some but have never had such an experience. We did not expect this kind of behaviour from Manmohan Singh."

## 'Polite but firm'

Mr. Chidambaram, however, refuted Mr. Fernandes' contention and told the media that Dr. Singh was "polite but firm" in pointing to Mr. Advani and others the untenability of their suggestion.

## 'No offence meant'

The Prime Minister, also, later called up Mr. Advani and told him that there was no intention on his part to be rude or discourteous but he could not accept their memorandum. Dr. Singh again pointed out that Parliament was the only place for the Opposition to suggest any changes in the Budget.

The view in the Congress is that "enough is enough" and the Opposition cannot be allowed to paralyse the Government. It was explained that Dr. Singh's show of firmness indicated a commitment on his part to get on with the business of governance.

Fernandes' charge: Page 11

back. — AFP (Olympic reports on pages 13 and 14)

# End tyranny of inspector *raj*: PM

25/8  
Statesman News Service 5/1

NEW DELHI, Aug. 24.— An “end to the tyranny of inspector raj” is what the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, recommended today among a slew of measures for the country to sustain an economic growth rate of at least 7-8 per cent.

“It is of utmost importance that we create an enabling environment that rewards creativity, risk-taking and the spirit of enterprise and adventure,” Dr Singh said reiterating his government’s commitment to “ensure the economy grows at seven per cent to eight per cent per year in a sustained manner over a decade and more”.

Inaugurating the JRD Tata Centenary Celebrations organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham), the Prime Minister said he had asked the Planning Commission to prepare a paper on a regulatory framework for various sectors like power, roads and ports. “The paper will look at gaps in existing systems, comparing them with international best practice, and will recommend changes in the existing policy, if necessary,” he announced.



Dr Manmohan Singh releases the Assocham’s commemorative issue in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

## ‘Abnormal times’

NEW DELHI, Aug 24.— The Prime Minister today blamed what he called the “abnormal situation” of daily turmoil in Parliament for his inability to interact with people and seek their views and opinions. “We are living through abnormal times. Never in the history of any government have the first 100 days been characterised by the daily turmoil witnessed in Parliament,” Dr Singh said in his opening remarks at the inauguration of the JRD Tata Centenary Celebrations in an obvious reference to the Opposition stalling of proceedings. “I had to deal with a number of these abnormal situations. This naturally cut me off from people from all walks of life whose views and opinions I greatly cherish,” Dr Singh said. The Prime Minister said he was keen to make a success of the experiment of building a process that involved more and more people in decision-making to give them a sense of belonging. — SNS

The framework will be transparent, independent of government to provide an impartial balance between public and private sector suppliers, and is based on international best practice, he added.

Lamenting that there was a “gross

neglect of the basic infrastructure of modern industrial development”, Dr Singh announced the setting up of a committee on infrastructure. The Planning Commission will function as the executive arm of this committee, which will be chaired by him.

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2004

# Manmohan promises end to tyranny of 'inspector raj'

## Steps to re-energise economy announced

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 24. Announcing a slew of measures ranging from revamping the regulatory framework to a committee for monitoring infrastructure projects besides reviving his Council of Trade and Industry, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today promised to end the tyranny of the 'inspector raj' and re-energise the economy for achieving a sustained 7-8 per cent growth.

By striving to create an enabling environment that rewarded creativity, risk-taking and the spirit of enterprise and adventure, the Government would work towards transforming India into the home of multinational corporations of the future and a "superpower of the Knowledge Economy" through its programme of modernisation and industrialisation.

He was inaugurating the Assocham-organised J.R.D. Tata Centenary Celebrations here.

India could not stay away from the irreversible trend of globalisation, he said. The country should first become domestically competitive and the private sector would need to invest in research and development, managerial skills and global economies of scale.

### Public finances

Reiterating the Government's commitment to fiscal discipline and improving the public finances, Dr. Singh said that

though he had written to his colleagues in this regard, both the Centre and the States would have to focus on improving the management of public finances and public enterprises to meet the objective of increased public investment in social and economic infrastructure.

Terming the decline in capital formation in recent years distressing, he said the Government was determined to reversing the trend by creating the policy and political environment required to boost investment. "[The] Government will

closely monitor the progress in all key infrastructure projects, including airports, power, telecom, roads and ports, on a quarterly basis to ensure that targets are met. To this end, I am setting up a committee on infrastructure that I will chair myself," he said.

### Role for Plan panel

The Planning Commission would function as the executive arm of this committee, identifying bottlenecks in the implementation of policy, guiding the Ministries to speed up the im-

plementation of projects and generating ideas for its consideration.

Promising to end the "tyranny of over-inspection," Dr. Singh said the Government would ensure a regulatory framework that was transparent, autonomous and world-class, and which provided an impartial balance between public and private sector suppliers. The Commission had been asked to prepare a paper on the regulatory structures for different areas such as power, roads and ports.

The country would need to push up the growth of agriculture by four per cent and that of industry by 10-12 per cent to achieve a seven-eight per cent overall growth even as it checked fiscal deficit and improved the public finances.

### Tax compliance

To accelerate private investment, the two most important requirements were infrastructure and incentives, Dr. Singh said. The incentive structure was more or less in place due to the tax reforms. The simplification of the procedures for tax compliance and related issues would be tackled in the next Union budget, he said adding that measures such as Value-Added Tax had addressed the fiscal policy agenda industry had been signalling for some time.

'Time to move ahead': Page 11

## 'We are living in abnormal times'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 24. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today lamented that the continuing deadlock in Parliament was preventing him from having frequent interactions with people from various walks of life, including trade and industry.

"I would have liked to interact more often with the captains of trade and industry. But we are living in abnormal times," Dr. Singh said during the inaugural of the JRD Centenary Celebrations here. "Never in the history of any government, the first 100 days have been characterised by the daily turmoil that we witness in Parliament," he said, add-

ing: "I had to deal with many of these abnormal situations."

"This naturally cut me off from meeting people of various walks of life whose views and opinions I greatly cherish," Dr. Singh said.

Expressing his desire to make a success of the experiment of building a process that was inclusive and involved more people in decision-making, the Prime Minister said that he would like to make up for the lost time.

"It is only befitting that I do so at an occasion that allows me to pay tribute to JRD who was truly one of the titans of modern India." "This is my first opportunity to meet representatives of business since the elections," he said.

# All steps to get hostages released: Manmohan

110-1  
20/8

## ● No question of paying ransom: Ahamed

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 19.** The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today assured the Rajya Sabha that the Government was making every effort to secure as early as possible the release of the three Indian nationals being held hostage in Iraq over the past one month.

In his brief intervention during question hour, he said: "We cannot say that the hostages will be released tomorrow. The Government is as serious as anybody else. I understand there is a considerable uncertainty. If members have any suggestion, we are willing to consider them also."

The Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed, told the House that it was not the Government's policy to talk to terrorists or kidnappers directly. "There is no question of any ransom but [the] honour of India will always be protected and

kept up. The Government will not involve itself directly in any dialogue with the terrorists or hostage-takers," the Minister said.

Considering the importance of the issue, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, clubbed four questions and took them first on a priority basis.

### 'Careful approach'

Mr. Ahamed, who heads the Crisis Management Group on the issue, said: "We are carefully dealing with the situation. The three hostages were employees of a Kuwaiti company and it is doing everything and trying to get all the seven hostages freed. The company is being encouraged to have a dialogue. Our policy is not to have any compromise with terrorist groups but safety and [the] well-being of our citizens will be taken care of." In his written reply to a question by Tariq Anwar (NCP),

Mr. Ahamed said the Government did not have any information that thousands of Indians in Iraq were suffering from human rights abuses.

To a question by T.S. Subbarami Reddy and Prem Cariappa, Mr. Ahamed said that it was estimated that about 5,000 Indians were now in Iraq and at least 13 Indians had lost their lives there in the last one year. The Government had not urged Indians working there to return. However, in view of the security situation, the Government had issued an advisory that Indians should defer their visit to that country for now.

Several members, including Vijay Raghavan (CPI-M), Arun Jaitley (BJP), Shankar Roy Choudhary (Independent), Datta Meghe (NCP), Sanjay Nirupam (Shiv Sena), and Jaya Bachchan (SP) expressed concern over the prolonged hostage crisis and wanted it to be resolved at the earliest.

# PM promises an accountable Government

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 15.** "Today I am not here to make any promises, but have promises to keep." This sentence summed up the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh's first Independence Day address to the nation from the Red Fort. His accent was on reforming the ways the Government functioned. Rather than announce the familiar package of schemes and initiatives, the new Prime Minister chose to spell out the idea that national progress was a collective enterprise, not just a Government project.

During his 40-minute speech, Dr. Singh acknowledged that "the real challenge for me and for the Government at all levels is the challenge of implementation of our stated policies and programmes." That means, the Governments have to deliver. "We have to make officials accountable — make Government more transparent. We have to make our people."

public enterprises more efficient. Citizens increasingly demand Governments that are accountable to them. They have a concern both for probity and efficiency in public affairs," he added.

Dressed in a white kurta-pajama, Dr. Singh stood out in sharp contrast to the dark-suited SPG personnel as he took the traditional salute from a contingent of three services and police contingent. His trade-mark blue turban was a gentle reminder that for the first time the country had a Prime Minister from a minority community. In fact, in the first part of his speech, Dr. Singh reaffirmed "the principles of secularism, social justice and equality of all before law" as the defining features of our nation.

## Ethics in public life

Dr. Singh referred to "the question of ethics in public life [that] has repeatedly agitated our people." He said: "The time

has come for us to consensually evolve a code of conduct for all political parties, a code of ethics for all individuals in public life, and a code of best practices for the Government at all levels." The Prime Minister suggested this was not a partisan matter and that "we must also look within our parties, and ourselves and ask ourselves what is the root cause of the decline in the values in public life?"

While spelling out the seven

**"Today, I have no promises to make, but I have promises to keep."**

**"The waters of our sacred rivers have for centuries nurtured our civilisation... We cannot allow these waters to divide us."**

**"The challenge for economic reform today is to breathe new life into Government."**

priorities of his Government, as mandated in the Common Minimum Programme, and dwelling at some length what it would take to enhance the Government's capacity to deliver, the Prime Minister made a passing reference to the threat of terrorism and noted: "Violence has never helped in the progress and prosperity of any society. We will fight this menace to civilized existence with determination."

However, he neither mentioned the violence in Manipur and the rest of the north-east nor took note of the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir. But he did observe that "we are willing to talk to any group provided they abjure the path of violence."

As for our neighbours, the Prime Minister said that "we are not only bound together by our common borders but also by our common destiny." On Pakistan, he declared his Government's "intention to carry forward with firm resolve and sincerity the

composite dialogue process with Pakistan." He emphasised "mutual trust and confidence" as key to progress in the peace process and entered the caveat that "trends of cross-border terrorism and violence make our task more difficult and complex."

Invoking the familiar national icons — the Mahatma, Jawaharlal Nehru, B.R. Ambedkar, Indira Gandhi — the Prime Minister used the occasion to send out a message of optimism and promised the country guarded its pluralistic ethos.

He expressed the hope for a bright future only if we could rekindle the idealism and perseverance demonstrated in the struggle against the British, because "we have the potential to change the fate and the face of India."

**Editorial on Page 10  
Text of Prime Minister's  
speech available on  
www.hinduonnet.com**

# PM anguish on tainted Cabinet

## 'THERE SHOULD BE A DEBATE ON CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS'

Vir Sanghvi  
Bangkok, July 31

IN THE clearest statement on the subject so far, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh gave some indication of the anguish and ambivalence he felt on the issue of tainted ministers.

Addressing a press conference in Bangkok, the Prime Minister said had he not agreed to include ministers who have been charge-sheeted, then the ruling coalition could not have taken office because the RJD-JMM component is an important constituent of the coalition.

"If that had happened," Dr Manmohan Singh said, "the BJP would have had to form the government and that was not the mandate."

Despite his clear ambivalence about having to include charge-sheeted ministers, Dr Singh bristled at the suggestion that charge-sheeted ministers in the NDA government were less morally culpable than those in his ministry.

"I don't accept this distinction of a 'political crime'," he said, arguing that a man charged with inciting a mob to demolish a mosque was as morally culpable as a man accused of any other crime, particularly if his actions had resulted in "the deaths of hundreds of people".

Despite seeming to equate Shibu

Soren with L.K. Advani, the Prime Minister said he was deeply concerned about the criminalisation of Indian politics and wanted a national debate on the subject.

"If I had been allowed to speak in Parliament," he said, "I would have asked all political parties to sit together and work out a consensus on who is a criminal and who is not."

This was not possible, he suggested, because the BJP did not want to resolve the issue but only wanted "to play partisan politics" on a subject of vital national interest.

Dr Singh said he had received a set of recommendation on the subject from the Chief Election Commissioner and had forwarded these to the law and home ministries.

On the Indian hostages in Iraq, he said the government was in touch with intermediaries but requested the media to play down the prospect of evacuating the 5,000 Indian nationals still in Iraq, arguing that it would lead to needless panic.

The press conference was meant to mark the end of the BIMST-EC Summit which, Dr Singh said, had gone well. BIMST-EC has now moved away from purely economic issues and will set up a Joint working Group on Counter-Terrorism.

Continued on Page 4



**RJD-JMM is an important ally. Had I not agreed to include ministers who have been charge-sheeted, the ruling coalition could not have taken office**

# Priority for solving farmers' problems: Manmohan

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 28. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today said the Government would soon bring a bill to address the needs of the aquaculture sector and also give priority to revitalising cooperative credit system.

Addressing representatives of farm organisations, animal husbandry, horticulture and aquaculture, who called on him today, Dr. Singh said the Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance was a five-year programme, but urgency would be given to dealing with the problems of farmers.

"Concrete steps were being taken to address the problem of agriculture credit, farm prices and technological and marketing support for farmers," he said.

Assuring the members of the delegation that he would seek their help from time to time, he said, "I attach great importance to interaction with farmers and people in our villages. There is no monopoly of wisdom in government. We will seek inputs on policy from the grassroots and there is need for a constant flow of information between the government and the farmers."

Sources said the farmers' representatives urged the Prime Minister to make agriculture the first strategy in resource allocation. They sought an increase in public investment with focus on farmers and rural poor, covering irrigation, electrification, construction of godowns, marketing, research and extension services.

They pleaded for an increase in investments in agriculture, credit flow in rural areas, revitalisation of the credit system and developing mechanisms for small and marginal farmers to get

easier access to credit.

Several organisations sought restructuring and rescheduling of debts along with interest payable, as also a one-time settlement of dues for vulnerable sections and farming communities. Some of them wanted food laws to be simplified and codified and the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee Act amended and a more genuine partnership with the private sector.

There was a demand for the introduction of a farmers' life security and accident insurance policy and a farmers welfare commission in each State. Some sought a new Agriculture Policy, which would be more in with times, while some others said rather than free power supply farmers needed quality and timely supply of inputs. The All-India Kisan Sabha sought land for landless families through land reforms and for a rapid increase in rural employment.

The farmers' organisations and representatives included K. Varadha Rajan and Atul Kumar Anjan of the All-India Kisan Sabha, Chengal Reddy, Chairman of the Federation of Farmers' Association of Andhra Pradesh, Sopan Kanchan from Pune, Balasaheb Vikhe Patil, MP, Vitalbhai Patel of the Mehsana Cooperative Milk Producers Union, S.C. Raghavendra of the Kisan and Khet Mazdoor Department, AICC, Bhupendra Singh Mann, and K.P. Murgesh, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Krishan Bir Choudhary of the Bharat Krishak Samaj, Bir Singh Mehto, MP, Abni Roy, MP Devendra Sharma and Sanat Kumar from Yeskay Corporation, Tomi George from Kerala, Chaudhary Ved Pal from Karnal and Narendra Bahadur Singh and Fahimujma Khan from Uttar Pradesh.



# TUs push for EPF rate hike

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 5. — Another reformist bastion risks falling after Left and Congress-affiliated trade unions today claimed that the finance ministry is agreeable to an increase in the interest rates paid on Employees' Provident Fund (EPF). This, union leaders said, is to be part of a "new direction" to be given to the Budget this year.

Finance ministers over the last decade or so have been looking at rationalising EPF rates since the burden of payout has increased with rates fixed at high levels but general interest rates falling. EPF rates should be aligned with general rates for sustainability of the PF system.

The Citu, Intuc and Aituc leaders, however, claimed that a reversal is in the offing because the finance minister, who met union leaders as part of his pre-budget exercise, "assured" them that he will "look into the matter".

While the Citu has demanded 12 per cent rate of interest on EPF, the Aituc maintained that it should be at least 9.5 per cent.

Union leaders also demanded a reduction in retail oil prices — this despite global oil



## On and off the rails

GORAKHPUR, June 5. — Railway minister Mr Lalu Prasad said today that he would resign if any attempt was made to privatise the Railway. "The day the issue of privatisation (of railways) comes up, I will step down from the ministry," the RJD chief told reporters here. The new railway minister was on an inspection tour of select railway stations in Uttar Pradesh today.

— PTI

prices rising over the last four months and the government considering ways to moderate

Year	Rate
2000	12 %
July 2000	11 %
Mar 2001	9.5%
Apr 2003	9%
	(plus 0.5% bonus to mark EPFD jubilee)
From Apr 2004	9%

a price rise — income taxes on rich farmers, extending the scope of service taxation and raising the exemption limit on income tax.

Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, the Aituc general secretary, said the finance minister has given an undertaking to the delegation that their demands will be seriously considered. Mr Dasgupta said the delegation had stressed to the finance minister that "it was time to tax rich landholders".

The Citu general secretary, Mr Chittabrata Majumdar, wanted the government to take new measures to expedite land reforms and bring rich farmers under the tax net.

Intuc leaders said they drew the attention of the finance minister towards "affluent people who were habitual tax evaders". They said "technocrats, professionals, traders and businessmen" must be brought under the tax net.

Another report on page 12

# Citu wants contributory pension to go

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 30 MAY

**A**FTER the Left parties, it is the turn of Left-affiliated trade unions to place their wish list before the new finance minister. Among other things, the Citu has asked the UPA to undo the NDA's contributory pension scheme.

At a meeting convened by P. Chidambaram on June 5, these trade unions will also suggest raising the income tax exemption limit from Rs 50,000 to one lakh rupees.

Citu president and CPM politburo member M. K. Pandhe said the NDA's pension scheme, under which government employees joining central service after January 2004 would not have GPF but contribute to pension, was "discriminatory" against the new employees.

"This is not a social security scheme. Pension should be non-contributory," he said. He also opposed privatisation of the pension sector and was of the view that payment for pension in case of government employees should come from Consolidated

Fund of India. Mr. Pandhe said there was no need for a regulator like the PFRDA, appointed by the previous government, if the sector was not being privatised.

This is not the only plan of the NDA that the Citu wants the new government to shelve. "The NDA gave heavy concessions to industry. The new budget should reduce the burden on the common man and increase taxes on the industry through more direct taxes," Mr. Pandhe said. It also wants the provident fund rate to be revised to 12% from the existing 9%. The trade unions, which

are discussing issues to be taken up at the meeting next week, want the new government to come out with schemes for revitalising sick industrial units and welfare of industrial workers in rural areas.

The common minimum programme of the UPA has pledged to have tripartite consultation with trade unions and industry on all proposals concerning them. It also said the rights and benefits earned by workers, including the right to strike according to law, will not be taken away or curtailed.



FACING LEFT BLOCKS

# Citu strikes, city loses jobs

ANIEK PAUL

Calcutta, Feb. 24: Barry Mermelstein and his Indian partner Subir Chatterjee sat in their nearly deserted Purna Das Road office this afternoon, counting the losses.

They had travelled from New Jersey to Calcutta to sew up an outsourcing deal with one of the US' largest banks for their fledgling company, Fi-Tek. As of now, the deal stands cancelled as the four-member team of the Chicago-based bank cooled its heels in Mumbai, unable to travel to Calcutta because of the strike.

According to Mermelstein, the chief operating officer, the deal would have meant jobs for "several hundred people".

"We received an e-mail from our client this morning, saying they were advised against travelling to Calcutta because it could be dangerous. We understand that the proposed outsourcing agreement has been called off, at least, for the near future," he said.

Fi-Tek, which is half-owned by the Purnendu Chatterjee group, was to develop and manage an accounting package for the bank, a task that would have created both IT and finance jobs.

The four senior managers of

## Brokers forced to stop trading

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Feb. 24: An army of 30-40 Citu activists forced closure of the Calcutta Stock Exchange building this morning, driving brokers out.

Guards at 7 Lyons Range, right behind Writers' Buildings, stopped the group of strikers but, realising they were going to be overpowered quickly, alerted the brokers inside.

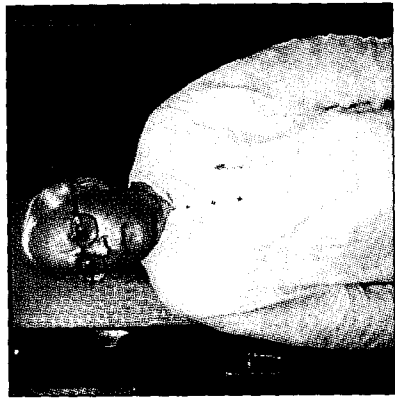
Hundreds of brokers operate out of 6 and 7 Lyons Range. They trade on the National Stock Exchange and are estimated to clock a transaction volume of nearly Rs 3,000 crore a day.

Initially, they tried to resist the Citu supporters, who were in no mood to budge. Sensing the futility of trying to reason, senior brokers restrained the fuming youngsters who had nearly picked a fight with the Citu activists.

By then, the strikers had deflated the tyres of the vehicles parked around the stock exchange, while policemen guarding the back of the state's seat of power looked the other way. "This is the first time that brokers were flushed out of their offices," said Ajit Day, a former president of the stock exchange. The Calcutta Stock Exchange is dead anyway, having lost its relevance some years ago.

the bank were to arrive in Calcutta to check out the infrastructure in Bengal Intelligent Park and seal the deal. As part of its expansion plan, Fi-Tek had booked around 16,000 sq ft in Saltlec.

As the two narrated the loss the company had suffered — and the sole member of the team from the bank who has been here



Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee at Writers' Buildings on Tuesday. Apart from him, minority affairs minister Mohammad Salim was the only cabinet member to attend work. Picture by Pradip Sanyal

See Metro

CPM's labour arm.

He was right as the majority of IT companies in Saltlec decided to play safe and remain shut. IBM and Cognizant were open, but only just, with a handful of employees around. Business process outsourcing outfits like BNK e-Solutions, Manjushree Infotech and Acclarics, which have to operate 24/7, saw atten-

dance of 50 to 60 per cent. "We had arranged for vehicles to pick up our employees, but the strike supporters didn't let the drivers join work. Despite making food and lodging arrangements, the attendance is around 55 per cent," said an official of BNK e-Solutions, a call centre company.

IT minister Manab Mukherjee said he didn't receive any complaints. "Some IT companies decided to keep their offices shut, but the IT-enabled services companies operated. And, as promised, we extended all our support to them," he said.

"All our support" meant providing some car-stickers saying "public utility service". In spite of this passport, transport movement in Saltlec was next to nothing.

Citu state secretary Kali Ghosh, of course, believes "one day's stop-work will not harm anyone. Let the IT people work for the rest of the 364 days and develop the technology".

Fi-Tek fears that its experience will have repercussions beyond Calcutta. "Back in Chicago, they will generalise and argue that if such disruptions can happen in Calcutta, it can happen anywhere in India," said Subir Chatterjee, the CEO.

Bandh hostage, Page 9

# Farmers must also feel good, says Advani

g.p. news group  
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 19. — Mr LK Advani said today that despite the “feel good wave”, the farming community was not feeling so and assured the community that its problems would be addressed soon. Various sections of society are talking about the “feel good” factor, he said, but it would be really so if farmers too feel the same.

“Our government believes there is a good feeling in the country,” the Deputy Prime Minister told a group of farmers from



Mr LK Advani after meeting the farmers' delegation. — PTI

Haryana who called on him to offer their thanks for the Cabinet decision to waive

## Sonia tirade

VARANASI, Feb. 19. — Keeping up the tirade against the NDA, Mrs Sonia Gandhi today blamed the BJP-led coalition for all the “ills in the country”. On the third leg of her road campaign this month, she addressed a series of rallies in eastern UP. “Congress ko jitayen aur desh ko bachchaye,” was the refrain of her speeches. — PTI

capital gains tax and TDS for agriculturists on their acquired land. “But we feel, the feel-good will really be so when the farming community says so.”

# CM steps in to break Citu power strike

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, February 17

CITU HAS decided to call off its indefinite work-to-rule strike at the West Bengal State Electricity Board offices after chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee promised to look into its grievances relating to the functioning of power and finance departments.

The strike was scheduled to begin on Wednesday

The chief minister gave his assurance during a meeting with Citu president Shyamal Chakraborty on Tuesday.

On Monday, Citu had accused the state finance and power departments of deliberately plunging the rural areas into darkness in order to sell power to other states. The officials of the two departments, Citu alleged, were also delaying the implementation of various power projects besides depriving the employees of their dues to sabotage the Left Front's electoral prospects.

The Citu affiliated SEB Workers' Union had also accused the power and finance ministers, both of whom are senior CPI(M) leaders, of not being able to control the officers who had been misleading them.

Shyamal Chakraborty said on Tuesday that his organisation would postpone the proposed agitation since the chief minister had given his word that he would look into the matter.

State transport minister Subhas Chakraborty, himself a Citu leader, had also supported the organisation's charges.

Shyamal Chakraborty raised the charges and he must be aware of its implications, said Subhas. He added that all other

## Darjeeling Cong leader suspended

THE DARJEELING District Congress Hills secretary has lost his job for objecting to possible nomination of Priyanka Gandhi or Buta Singh for contesting the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat.

District Congress President Dawa Norbula said the Lawrence Pt Lama was suspended for six months for "anti-party activities".

Lama had made a press statement that he would oppose the nomination by the party of either Priyanka or Buta Singh from Darjeeling constituency in the ensuing Lok Sabha polls, said Norbula.

Accepting the decision of his suspension, Lama said that he had no intention of questioning the authority of the party high command over nominations. "Priority should be given to local candidates. That is all what I said," Lama said adding that he was ready to apologise for his statement.

HTC, Siliguri

government departments had a sweet and sour relationship with the finance department since it was the department which agreed or refused to grant funds, he said.

The chief minister and the finance minister Ashim Dasgupta said that they would talk to Shyamal Chakraborty to sort out the problems.

Work-to-rule protest  
against bureaucrats

**Citu threat  
to power  
supply**

STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Feb. 16: Power supply across the state is likely to be hit as the Citu today announced an agitation in which about 30,000 employees of the State Electricity Board will resort to a work-to-rule from Wednesday.

Shyamal Chakraborty, the president of the CPM's labour arm, said more than 33,000 board employees have been asked to join the agitation to press for implementation of an "11-point charter of demands".

"I am afraid the power situation would take a few knocks because of the action we have lined up," said Chakraborty. The man, who moved up to the helm of the union last year, is known to be close to the government for being a moderate and his ability to work within limits drawn up by the CPM brass and Writers' Buildings.

"I have been active in the power sector for over 24 years as a trade unionist, but was never before compelled to take a stand like this. There is no other way we can highlight grievances," Chakraborty told a news conference.

A CPM central committee member, Chakraborty said the union gave the work-to-rule call to draw the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee government's attention to "sabotage" by officers in the electricity board and the power and finance departments.

Though the Citu cited the "sabotage" and several other justifications for the agitation, the government's failure to pay heed to its demand to appointment 1,500 technical assistants in substations in place of contractors

is believed to be the real provocation. The union, it is believed, wants to pressure the government into an agreement in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

Power minister Mrinal Banerjee said he could only comment after speaking to the union leaders. "I tried to reach Shyamal Chakraborty over phone but could not. Tomorrow, I will find out what the Citu leadership has decided," he said.

Electricity board officials said though the generating stations at Bakreswar, Kolaghat, Bandel and Santaldih are under the jurisdiction of the Power Development Corporation, the board distributes the power.

The officials expressed fear that as the unions in the generating stations also belong to the Citu, employees there may resort to an unofficial work-to-rule affecting generation.

Chakraborty alleged that the board was selling power to other states while villages in Bengal were without electricity during the evening peak hours. "This is nothing but sabotage by a section of officers before the elections. I will furnish a list of names to the chief minister," said the Citu leader.

Chakraborty alleged that "bureaucrats" in the power and finance departments have declared "war" against the government. "These officials are keeping the power and finance ministers in the dark about decisions and selling electricity to other states creating an artificial crisis."

But Chakraborty's method of protest may plunge large parts of the city into darkness as the board feeds CESC areas as well.

# CII meet to boost Gulf ties

*Pranay Sharma*  
*Pranay*

**PRANAY SHARMA**

**New Delhi, Feb. 1:** India and the Gulf Cooperation Council will hold their first ever industries ministers' meeting in Mumbai this month in a move that is likely to deepen economic cooperation and strengthen political ties between the two sides.

Industries ministers from the six member countries of the council — Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman — will participate in the India-GCC Industrial Conference in India's financial capital on February 17 and 18. Council secretary-general Abdu-rrahaman bin Hamad al-Attiyah will also attend the conference.

The first industrial conference between the two, being organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, gathers significance because of its potential to deepen economic and trade ties between the two sides and improve the political climate between India and nations of the Gulf.

There is a possibility that al-Attiyah will also come to Delhi after the Mumbai conference ends, to hold talks with Indian leaders, though the dates are still to be worked out. The conference will also give India the opportunity to balance its growing ties with Israel and assure the Arab world that Delhi is not abandoning its traditional friends because of its ties with Tel Aviv.

The Gulf is of immense stra-

tegic importance to India. More than three million Indians work there and send back nearly \$6 billion every year as remittance. The two-way trade between India and countries of the council is over \$12 billion and the region is also the main source of India's energy supplies.

After the September 11 terror strikes in the US, there is a growing perception that Gulf countries — who have mainly invested in the West — are looking for new investment destinations as the image of the Arabs in Europe and the US had turned negative.

Members of the council have been looking at Africa and the East Asia as new investment destinations. India wants to take the opportunity provided by the February conference to project itself as an attractive investment destination and also highlight areas where it can enter into joint ventures with Gulf countries.

India has traditionally had cordial relations with members of the council, which are important countries in the Arab and Islamic world. But high-level visits to and between Delhi and Gulf capitals have been very few.

An attempt is now being made to strengthen political ties — though there is a strong economic content in the relationship — by putting in place a structure that will allow an annual summit between the two sides.

# 'The problem is... we've an image problem'

Statesman News Service

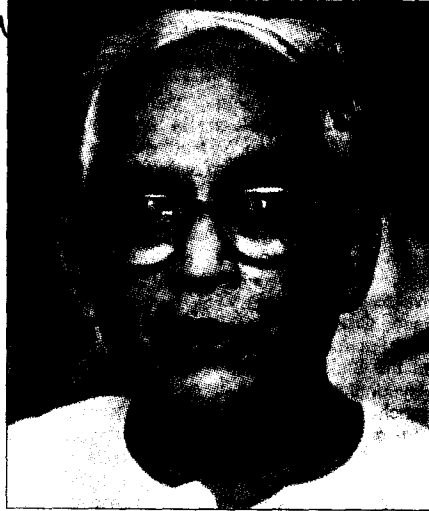
HYDERABAD, Jan. 30. — Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said today that militant trade unions have caused an image problem for West Bengal and admitted to earlier mistakes for the situation. "The (West Bengal Left Front) government is against irresponsible trade unionism and workers must behave... there is militancy in trade unions," the chief minister said and admitted: "We're attracting foreign investments but the problem is we are having an image problem."

Mr Bhattacharjee was addressing a CII road show — Resurgent Bengal — to attract investment for his state here. The first road show was held in June 2003 in Mumbai. "Earlier we committed mistakes. In the 1960's we encouraged irresponsible trade unions. There used to be gheraos. Today, gherao is there in the Oxford English Dictionary because of us. We're telling workers that things have changed around the world... we're against irresponsible trade unions," he said.

The chief minister also said that the problem (of irresponsible trade unions) was the most persistent in seven or eight jute mills. "We're trying to persuade workers that we have to understand the present set up. Productivity is not just the owner's responsibility. We have to share in that and without that we cannot advance. We are telling workers that there is stiff competition in the world. Workers must behave," he said.

The following 20-minute interactive session stretched to 45 minutes as the CPI-M chief minister took questions sharp-focussed on strikes and trade unions. "We did commit mistakes in the past. We've to persuade workers. A majority of them are good and behave responsibly," he said.

Ms Poornima Kamble of the CII



Mr Bhattacharjee: Plainspeaking

asked him to explain the concrete steps his government had taken on bandhs and militant trade unionism. Mr Bhattacharjee said Bengal had drafted the industrial policy in 1994, ITeS policy, Biotech policy in 2001. "All these documents have 'dos and don'ts'. In ITeS there's work day and night. There was a controversy if women would be allowed to work late. They're working 24 hours for 365 days. This is because the policy is clear on rights and duties of workers".

He referred to strikes and said: "There must be restrictions. But we will not allow irresponsible movements that would harm industry". For the Special Economic Zones, including Gems and Jewellery Park, the government has clarified management-worker positions and what's acceptable and what's not, he said. To an observation that industry was insecure about Bengal due to statements from Communist leaders from outside the state, he said: "It's a political issue and I will handle it in my own way". He also claimed that it was a myth that he has a fight with his party and claimed full support of the CPI-M.

THE STATESMAN

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# Chittabrata shows his hand!

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**I**N response to the publication in these columns of a report "One year on, the CPM hand is now exposed" by Ravindra Kumar (The Statesman, 3-4 January), we have received on 16 January a communication from Mr. Chittabrata Majumdar, General Secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, Kolkata.

We are publishing it in full and without editing it for style, grammar, syntax or punctuation as we ordinarily would because we do not want to be charged with distorting the content or diluting the robust flavour of the missive.

We wish, though, to comment on certain aspects of the communication. First, readers will note that for the leader of an organisation that has no affiliation with the trade union of The Statesman, Mr. Majumdar is remarkably well acquainted with the identities of those of our executive staff he chooses to name.

Second, while even the Labour Commissioner, whose activities had been highlighted in the report in question, had accepted that the services of those involved in the murderous assaults on officers of The Statesman last year had been terminated, although he characterised the termination as "illegal", Mr. Majumdar goes a step further. He says the employees are under "suspension". Thus, within the course of a single Marxist fortnight, the status of these persons has moved along from having been "terminated" to having been "illegally terminated" and now to being under suspension. To be fair to him though, Mr. Majumdar is unable to sustain this version for in the penultimate paragraph he admits the employees were dismissed. Thank heavens for small mercies!

Third, readers will note how an attack on officers of The Statesman

becomes in the hands of Mr. Majumdar first a scuffle and then an attack by officers of The Statesman.

Fourth, Mr. Majumdar claims there was no outside presence in the events at The Statesman even as he admits (a) that posters had been put up announcing his presence as well as that of other central trade union leaders at a meeting outside Statesman House and that (b) "CITU is committed to stand for legitimate demand and struggle of the working people." He fails to mention though that the Statesman Employees' Union, under whose aegis he and other trade union leaders claimed to act, wrote to him to say pointedly that it opposed his public meeting on the ground that this effort was one by "outsiders with some mala fide intention to create disharmony".

Fifth, readers will note Mr. Majumdar's spirited defence of the Police Commissioner and the Labour Commissioner.

The Police Commissioner, it seems, earns Mr. Majumdar's admiration in spite of having arrested eight employees who were the "victims" for having suffered "an unprovoked physical assault and attack" by executives of The Statesman and in spite of the officer not having acted on a purported complaint by these "victims" to the police alleging that it was they who were attacked.

The Labour Commissioner gets a pat on the back for "simply seeking" a discussion to resolve "industrial unrest". Readers will recall that the officer, who claimed to act under instructions of the Labour Minister, was supposed to ring on 6 January to seek an appointment. He did not do so, as we had suspected would happen.

Finally, Mr. Majumdar comments on two matters that are before appropriate courts, and about which we must withhold comment.

He also accuses us of masterminding deceit of people and having exerted unethical influence on the Industrial Tribunal, which prima facie, constitutes contempt of a judicial authority.

This, perhaps, would be the appropriate juncture to rest our case. But that would not be fair to Mr. Majumdar who, after all, has taken the trouble to write. His letter follows, and once you have read it, you will understand why we need say nothing else. — Ed. S.

Dear Sir,

The story under the heading "One year on, the CPM hand is now exposed" by Sri Ravindra Kumar, Editor and Managing Director, Statesman Ltd in the front page of 3rd January 2004 Statesman has provoked to contest the very substance of the same.

It is noteworthy that you have picked up the anniversary of unearthing occurrence in your Company and tailored the story not only to belch your despise against the working class but also to malign the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the administration and the Left Front Government. Your attempt also reveals your desperation to hush up your series of unlawful practices and misdeeds as an employer; you have been sought for a long time. We know that you are horribly scared and averse to see it public that Statesman Ltd has been a willful defaulter to discharge the statutory liabilities towards the Provident Fund and ESI including the deduction from the employees towards the same. Your arrogant denial to implement in the Company the recommendation of the Manisana Singh Wage Board for years together with the adamant stand for mindless retrenchment of a sizeable portion of workmen are the expression of your primitive

master like attitude in modern era.

The culpable act of tearing and trampling of posters by convent officials including Sri Ravindra Kumar the Managing Director himself on 03.01.03 (the same day the story have dealt with) were the enough manifestation of disrespect and intolerance to the legitimate democratic movements of the workers on your part. Obviously Sri Ravindra Kumar did not dare to put a little mention of the complaint lodged by Statesman Employee Union on the very day i.e. 01.03.2003 with Bowbazar Police Station against Sri Anand Sinha G.M. (M&A), Sri Isahan Joshi, Sri Kausik Kundu and Sri Parth Banerjee, all the prime witness as per your claim accusing for the above stated misdeed and unprovoked physical attack and assault on the office bearers of the Unions on the said date. On the contrary you have seek to use you paper for malicious propaganda to corner public sympathy in favour of management of the Statesman Ltd portraying aslant picture. Sri Kumar also desperately tried to draw some sort of far-fetched nexus between the complaint of sexual harassment against his college and aide with the ongoing industrial unrest in the Statesman, may be to defend his case further.

The Editor is annoyed that union has put up posters for a meeting to be addressed by me as General Secretary, CITU, West Bengal Committee, along with the leaders of other central trade unions. And thus he tirelessly tried to prove the "hand of outsiders" in the scuffle between a handful management personnel and the members of the unions, who eventually are all employees of the company and not the outsiders. I may be permitted to reiterate here that Centre of Indian Trade Unions is committed to stand for legitimate demand and struggle

of the working people all the time.

We once again diagnose your political allergy against the Communists, which have been erupted from the story when Sri Kumar has deliriously attacked the Labour Commissioner, West Bengal Government for simply seeking for discussion on the serious issues like retrenchment and suspension of sixteen employees and other issues, which in consideration of all except you leads to industrial unrest, purely on the basis of the appeal made by the unions to the State Government for intervention. The hysteria further heightened and manifested when Sri Kumar has lambasted the Police Commissioner, Kolkata for not gratifying the Statesman management framing the concocted charges against the victims of the management.

The line to line of the story, clearly once more speak of the vindictive attitude of the Statesman management and the mindset of the paper as a whole.

The signal is clear, as every body understood, that you are totally opposed to any sort of reconciliation process relating to the industrial relation issues, for which the Labour Department of the State Government has attempted to initiate dialogue. In response you have shown the obstinacy. But ridiculous enough that simultaneously you have signed on the minutes of the meeting with your employees on 2/3 July 2002 pledging to work in a spirit of co-operation.

You become frustrated when the police administration refused to step into your shoes by booking your victims under murder charge as per your sweet will and highhanded directives. It is interesting to note that the Managing Director and Editor is not contended despite of the fact the Police administration

has arrested eight employees who have been kept under custody for a period each, purely on the basis of a complaint lodged by Sri Kumar. And the Police Commissioner, West Bengal, so, despite of the charges against him, similar charges against the management of the Company Ltd by the Unions on the mentioned already. In fact, enough, the management is happy with nothing on section 307 of IPC (attempt to murder), be the merit of the demand?

Any way, the event has perhaps has last to make Sri Kumar with the management paper understand that Front Government employees has been committed in an impartial manner not in bias manner to rich and the lords. As you have decided to again your camp, CITU, the Left Front and the Communists

Also by harping piteously narrating murderous threat against Sri Kumar and other so called helplessness masterminded not of the people but to exert influence on the Tribunal, where they have challenged their Sri Kumar himself since

I hereby therefore demand protest shall be published paper with equal for your contested story much tom-tom police journalism of your paper I would have no other take up the issue with

Chittabrata  
Kolkata, Jaipur

# Strike for right to strike deferred

1371  
9. Prasad Ghosh  
ASTAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Jan. 12: The Citu has rescheduled its proposed all-India industrial strike from February 11 to 24 to protest the apex court's decision to ban strikes.

"The strike had to be deferred as we were not getting the support of Intuc, who had agreed in principle to join the agitation," said Kali Ghosh, the state secretary of the CPM's labour arm. The strike was rescheduled after the Congress-controlled labour organisation agreed to support it, he said.

The Citu leader said representatives of all central trade unions, barring the BJP-supported Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, met in Delhi on January 5 and agreed to call the strike to protest against the Supreme Court's verdict banning shutdowns.

At the meeting, Intuc chief G. Sanjeeva Reddy assured that he would ask his union's working committee to join the strike with the Left trade unions.

"The strike will be a success as the Congress-controlled Intuc has joined us," Ghosh said today.

Intuc president and Trinamul Congress mayor of Calcutta Subrata Mukherjee said: "I am opposed to the Citu at the state-level but there is no harm in joining hands with it at the national level."

The mayor said the decision to be part of the Citu strike was taken "to protect the fundamental rights of trade unions".

However, Trinamul sources said the Intuc's participation in the strike will invite criticism from Mukherjee's detractors. "It is unfair on Mukherjee's part to speak in favour of the strike, as he is key party functionary and the city mayor as well," said a Trinamul leader.

Citu leaders said here the proposed strike would also oppose the BJP-led coalition government's move to close down several central public sector undertakings, as well as anti-people policies.

Gurudas Dasgupta of the CPI-controlled Aituc said the trade unions would launch their protest against the Supreme Court's verdict with a nationwide strike. "Bandhs and strikes are the last weapons left with us to protest against the Centre's anti-people policies. So, should we sit idle when such fundamental rights are being curbed?" asked the former CPI MP.

# Jute strike called off, TU demands accepted

Arup Pal  
KOLKATA 8 JANUARY

**T**HE 11-day-old strike in the jute industry was called off on Thursday following three rounds of tripartite talks convened by the West Bengal labour minister Md Amin. The strike had been called by 15 central trade union to press for a revision of the January 5, 2002 agreement which could not be implemented.

In the revised agreement clinched on Thursday, the mill managements largely conceded to trade union (TU) demand. However, BJP-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Union, SUCI and four minority unions did not join this strike call and were not party to this agreement and denounced it as "kala chukti."

It was agreed that all the strike-bound 62 jute mills employing around two lakh workers in the state would resume operation from Saturday (January 10) and outstation workers would be allowed 10 days' time to join.

Addressing TU leaders and mill representatives at the end of the meeting the labour minister ap-

pealed to parties to implement the agreement so that jute mills in the state could be run peacefully with normal production in the interests of all concerned.

According to the terms and conditions of the revised settlement, the management will pay dearness allowance (DA) to the workmen on increased cost price index (CPI) of 134 points with effect from February 1, 2004 at the DA neutralisation point of Rs 1.90 per point totalling Rs 252 or so per worker.

If fringe benefits are added, the total pay packet will be about Rs 350 for each worker.

It was also agreed that future increase of CPI points due with effect from February, would be paid on August 1, 2004, but would take effect from February 1 this year, payable for May and August quarters.

Subsequent quarters as per CPI points would be paid with effect from first day of May and August 2004, respectively as per industry-wise agreements signed on December 2, 1995 and January 5, 2002.

The management would pay all workers, irrespective of grade

and scale including new entrants, an adhoc increment of Rs 10 per month with effect from February 2004. The parties would finalise the achievable norms of production of individual mills for the purpose of productivity-linked wages within a period of four months from the date of this settlement. Workers will have to implement it from day one and achieve it within the agreed of period of four months.

The mill management would have to pay the gratuity as per provisions of the payment of gratuity Act, 1972. Based on Janu-

ary 5, 2002, the workers getting a total wage of more than Rs 1,000 per day would continue to do so and any deductions in wages, if any, would be restored from the date of this agreement.

It was agreed that in determining such wage employer's share of contributions towards ESI, costs will not be deducted from the wage of the workmen.

All other points, including arrears of PF and ESI dues, will be referred to the negotiating committee for jute industry revived recently for settlement within six months.

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