

# India seeks UN Security Council membership with full veto rights

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 21 DECEMBER

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday was compelled to step in and clarify that the UPA government had not abandoned its claim to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) with full veto rights. Taken to task by the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha over discordant notes emanating on the foreign policy front, the Prime Minister sought to clear the air on nuclear policy as well as reassure the country on his talks with Pakistani president General Pervez Musharraf.

That the government was toying with the idea of gaining permanent membership of the exclusive UNSC club initially without veto rights and later lobby for full powers was indicated last week at an informal briefing by the national security advisor J.N. Dixit. Dissociating himself from such a notion, the Prime Minister

told the Upper House that India must have veto rights as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. "There is no ambiguity in our stand. There is no confusion regarding our position on our candidature for a permanent seat on the Security Council," he said.

"We do not believe there should be any discrimination in the Security Council and there should be no distinction between permanent members who have the veto and those who do not have veto because this position is based on the broadest possible political consensus," Dr Singh added. He, however, said it would be premature for the government to pre-judge the issue at this stage, maintaining that there was no clarity at the moment on what shape the UNSC reforms may take. "The UN is a complex organisation that reflects interplay of a variety of interests. Let us not pre-judge the outcome," he said, adding that India was in touch with "all those players who matter". On the nuclear issue that

followed Mr Natwar Singh's controversial remarks to a Korean daily, the Prime Minister sought to clear the doubts once again. "There is no ambiguity whatsoever about our nuclear policy. India is a nuclear weapon state and we are a responsible nuclear power. That sums up our idea," he said.

At the same time, he said India remained committed and consistent with its civilisational heritage to complete non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

The Prime Minister also sought to reassure the House that there was no dilution in the government's approach while seeking to better Indo-Pak ties. While referring to the joint statement that he signed with Pakistan president General Musharraf in New York that had given rise to such perceptions, Dr Singh said India would go by the situation on the ground as well as the January 6 commitment that was agreed between then Prime Minister Vajpayee and General Musharraf.

22 DEC 2004

The Economic Times

# BASU MEETS SONIA, DISCUSSES CMP CPM attacks UPA

SNS & PTI

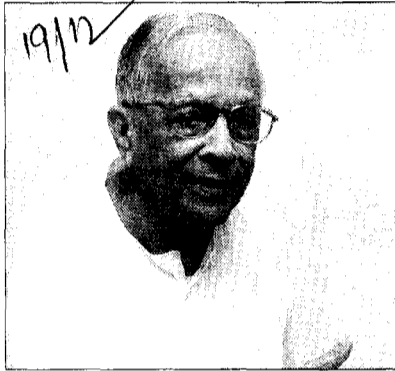
NEW DELHI, Dec. 18. — Veteran Marxist leader Mr Jyoti Basu today met the Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi to discuss the speedy implementation of the UPA government's national common minimum programme (CMP).

The former West Bengal chief minister, accompanied by party colleague Mr Sitaram Yechury, called on her at her residence, 10, Janpath, this morning. Mr Basu was in the Capital for the two-day CPI-M politburo meeting that ended today.

However, the UPA government came under attack from its principal Left ally for "diluting" the provisions of the CMP. The CPI-M is also seeking suitable "corrections" in the draft Bill on employment guarantee. The party is also demanding legislative measures to protect the workers' "inalienable" right to strike.

The party's politburo, during its two-day meet, reiterated its demand for restoration of 9.5 per cent interest rate on Employees Provident Fund, besides preparing a draft political resolution to chart out the broad contours of its political tactical line for the next few years. "It is unfortunate that the present Bill cleared recently (on employment guarantee for rural poor) represents a dilution of the provision made in the CMP", party politburo member Mr Yechury told reporters while listing out the promises made in the document and their absence in the draft Bill.

Instead of providing 100 days' minimum work to one adult in every rural household, the Bill seeks to target only "poor" families, implying those below poverty line, he said, adding that no provisions were made for payment of statutory minimum wages or to ensure that



Mr Jyoti Basu, Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Mr Sitaram Yechury. — AFP & PTI

40 per cent of these jobs should go to women. There was also no provision for the Centre to provide 100

## PM's quit offer reports rubbish

NEW DELHI, Dec. 18. — The CPI-M today rubbished reports that the Prime Minister, exasperated over frequent threats from Left parties, had offered to resign on four occasions. "I don't think there is any day-in and day-out threatening that is being done by the Left... As far as the Prime Minister is concerned, he seems to be absolutely hale and hearty," Mr Sitaram Yechury said in reply to reporters replying to questions. — PTI

per cent funding to this scheme and the states would also have to share the burden, he pointed out.

Observing that no parliamentary democracy had denied workers the right to strike, Mr Yechury said the CPI-M politburo expressed serious concern over various pronouncements made by the higher judiciary "seeking to suppress the right to strike and other forms of protest". "The import of these verdicts is to deny the right to strike which is the basic and inalienable right of the working class," he said.

Today's meeting between Mr Basu, Mr Yechury and Mrs Gandhi assumes significance in view of the Left pressures on the Centre to implement the CMP in "its true spirit". Describing the meeting as "essentially a courtesy call", Mr Yechury said Mr Basu called on the UPA chairperson since he could not attend her dinner hosted for allies on Thursday night. "We discussed the scene in the wake of six-months of the UPA government's tenure. There was an agreement on prioritising and expediting the implementation of the CMP," he said, and added that Mrs Gandhi assured that necessary steps would be taken.

19 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

# PM upset over Natwar's N-speak

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, Dec. 16. — Is Dr Manmohan Singh getting exasperated with the “onerous task” of handling his “difficult” ministerial colleagues and allies?

Both the Congress and the PMO were today, however, quick to dismiss as baseless speculation doing the rounds that the Prime Minister even “offered to quit”. Congress spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said: “Such reports are false”, while minister of state in the PMO Mr Prithviraj Chavan said: “It’s a fabricated story.”

Congress circles, nevertheless, say that the attitude of some senior ministers from the party, including Mr Arjun Singh and Mr Natwar Singh, the regular sniping from the Left, the issue of “tainted ministers”, and the posturing of leaders like Mr Lalu

Prasad and Mr Ram Vilas Paswan might be testing Dr Singh’s patience.

As a latest case in point, Dr Singh is said to be “upset” with the external affairs minister’s “loose comments” on the nuclear issue in Seoul, where he virtually sounded apologetic about India’s nuclear status.

Mr Natwar Singh even reportedly blamed the NDA government for the 1998 nuclear tests, urging the two Koreas “not to emulate India’s example”.

The Prime Minister is to seek Mr Singh’s explanation upon the minister’s return from Seoul tomorrow.

Asserting that India is a responsible nuclear power, Dr Singh told the Rajya Sabha there is no uncertainty in the country’s nuclear policy based on “continuity and national consensus”.

He was responding to Mr Jaswant Singh, who expressed concern over the minister’s remarks. The Prime

Minister said: “My assessment was that the reported remarks appear to be in context to questions from journalists and what he (Mr Natwar Singh) said was not a statement on foreign policy.”

Foreign ministry spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna told reporters here: “He (the external affairs minister) was merely stating a fact, not expressing agreement or disagreement.”

He said Mr Singh was also drawing attention to the fact that India was not a party to the NPT which it regards as discriminatory and countries which have international obligations under this treaty should abide by them.

“So, it is obvious from what I said that the report that you have seen this morning is based on misquotation and distortion... if you see the report in the *Korean Times*, you will see further explanation of the remarks,” Mr Sarna said.

# Speaker threatens to put in papers

Statesman News Service

## NDA mulls impeachment

NEW DELHI, Dec. 16. — Peeved at the forced adjournment of business in the Lok Sabha yesterday over the absence of railway minister Mr Lalu Prasad, Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee today threatened to resign.

He made a suo motu statement as soon as the Lok Sabha reassembled, saying that "...if the members are not happy, I shall have no regrets in leaving it. I was happy facing the Chair rather than occupying it".

The Speaker was hurt by someone from the Opposition benches saying: "*Tanashahi nahin chalegi* (We won't allow dictatorship)." Mr Chatterjee said: "I have been accused of *tanashahi*." The BJP clarified that the word *tanashahi* was not directed against the Speaker but against the government.

On two earlier occasions when the members continued to disturb proceedings despite warnings, Mr Chatterjee had noted that the Chair had lost its meaning and respect. Nonetheless today's statement from the Speaker was a strong one. He said that he had agreed, albeit reluctantly, yesterday to adjourn the House at the behest of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and leader of the Opposition Mr LK Advani.

But talking informally to reporters outside the House, Mr Vajpayee wondered why the Opposition was being targeted. "Whatever happened in the House yesterday was unfortunate, but the one person and the one factor responsible for the Opposition protest was the railway minister Mr Lalu Prasad, and his stubbornness. He undermined the dignity of the Lok Sabha," he said.

Mr Prasad was present in the House today but all questions relat-

NEW DELHI, Dec. 16.

— Many NDA leaders are debating whether to move an impeachment notice against Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee. An NDA meeting is slated soon to discuss the issue and to decide on the approach towards the Speaker and the government.

The NDA cannot change the equation in the Lok Sabha even if it decides to move an impeachment notice as the numbers are heavily tilted towards the UPA. However, some BJP leaders feel this may send the message that the NDA is opposed to the Speaker who they privately allege "is acting in a partisan manner".

A senior BJP leader said Mr Chatterjee was unable to rein in UPA partners such as the RJD but was too harsh on the

ed to the railway ministry were answered by MoS Mr R Velu. Mrs Sonia Gandhi was noticed keeping an eye on Mr Prasad.

Mr Prasad's remark that he did not know that Mr Vajpayee wanted "my presence even in his present condition" (*awastha mein*) sparked off a fresh row with BJP MPs protesting against the language. Unable to grasp the nuance of the expression "*is awastha mein*" (in a hopeless state), the Speaker said he couldn't comprehend why the BJP members were creating a ruckus. He promised to expunge the statement if it was objectionable.

The NDA finally walked out of the House saying Mr Prasad had under-



Mr Somnath Chatterjee speaks to reporters outside Parliament on Thursday. — PTI

NDA.

Mr Chatterjee has demonstrated his determination to conduct the business of the House even when MPs come to the Well, thereby frustrating the Opposition's attempt to make its point, the BJP leader said. The NDA is upset because of this and Mr Chatterjee's palpable animosity to the Opposition, he added. — SNS

mined the dignity of the House by flying to Patna from the site of the accident. Mr Prasad in his statement said "prima facie... the cause of the accident appeared to be due to human error." He said the block instruments of Bhangala and Mirthal stations were out of order a day before the accident. In such an eventuality, there are rules to allow trains to move but these were not followed.

An inquiry has been ordered and FIR lodged against the two station masters, Mr Prasad told the House.

The Congress officially refrained from making any comments on the Speaker's offer to resign.

Station master arrested, page 5

17 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

# 16/12 **Cabinet nod for job guarantee Bill** ✓

## ● Bill to amend Hindu Succession Act cleared

By Our Staff Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 15.** The Union Cabinet today approved the draft National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, ensuring at least 100 days of casual employment at a prescribed wage rate annually to one member of every poor rural household.

"The draft will be introduced in Parliament in the current session," the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister, S. Jaipal Reddy, told reporters after the meeting.

### Programme's focus

To be implemented by the Rural Development Ministry, the focus of the scheme will be on works relating to water conservation, creation of additional irrigation potential through micro and mini irrigation, drought proofing and wasteland development.

The scheme will be implemented in 150 districts initially and it will be extended to all rural areas of the country after evaluating its performance in the chosen districts. The wages

to labourers would be fixed by the Centre.

### Information Bill cleared

The Cabinet also cleared the draft Right to Information Bill, 2004, which will replace the Freedom of Information Act, 2000. Mr. Reddy said that while the right to information was a commitment made by the United Progressive Alliance in its national common minimum

programme, some suggestions made by the National Advisory Council had been incorporated in it. The Bill, when passed, will give people the right to seek information from government establishments.

Another important decision taken was to amend the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, giving equal rights to daughters in ancestral property. The Child Marriage restraint Act, 1929, will also be repealed and a new Prevention of Child Marriage Bill, 2004, introduced. "The enactment of the proposed legislation will implement the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women substantially and would help in bringing the social change in society," Mr. Reddy said.

It was also decided to confer the status of Central University to Allahabad University.

The Lokpal Bill too has been referred to a Group of Ministers, the constitution of which would be decided before it was introduced in Parliament, Mr. Reddy said.

### Airport near Hyderabad

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 15.** Paving the way for building a Greenfield airport at Shamshabad near Hyderabad, the Union Cabinet tonight cleared a Draft Concession Agreement to be executed between the Centre and the newly set up Hyderabad International Airports Ltd. — PTI

Details on Page 11

16 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

# No magic solution: Natwar

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 8. — Given the decades-old issues that are complicated and in dispute between India and Pakistan, one should realise that “there are no quick fixes and there are no magic solutions available” for the two countries. This was stated by Mr Natwar Singh today in the Lok Sabha, while replying to a discussion on India’s foreign policy under the UPA government.

The external affairs minister admitted to the House that differences would be there but at the same time he reiterated India’s firm commitment to improve relations with Pakistan. He recalled India’s

72-point confidence building measures (CBMs) sent to Pakistan by the present government. “I do not wish to give a picture saying that all is well. It is not. But we are emphasising the aspects which are positive and trying to solve the aspects which are negative,” he said.

Talking about China, the minister recalled the recent meeting between Dr Manmohan Singh and his Chinese counterpart Mr Wen Jiabao, at the Asean summit in Laos where the Chinese premier gave priority to his visit to India next year.

Mr Singh also made it clear that India shared a special relationship with the USA and pointed to the visit of the US defence secretary to New Delhi.

09 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

# UPA draws flak over employment promise

9/12  
7-11  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** A former PM, two UPA government allies and two members of the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council (NAC) went public on Tuesday with their unhappiness—and seeming helplessness—at the diluted draft of a Bill aimed at guaranteeing 100 days work in a year to needy rural families. The Bill is to be introduced in the ongoing Parliament session. They have also been assured that a new law on right to information will be brought this session.

Vowing to keep up the pressure on the employment guarantee law, CPM's Sitaram Yechury warned those elements in government which seem to feel they can just go back to the old economic policies, little realising the people have given a new mandate and the government has made some promises. However, he ducked a question on whether he was referring to the finance minister. It's certainly not the PM

who, he said, represents the view which favours the consensual mode.

"I am not in the habit of holding any individual responsible, it's the policies," he said. There are various lobbies at work, even those who say the people who drafted the CMP have nothing to do with economics. "I don't want issues to go into that dimension."

It wasn't even in our poll manifesto, said Yechury. It was in the Congress manifesto, it's their commitment—and it's in the Common Minimum Programme. "Our only condition for support was that they implement CMP." Some of this group met the PM on Sunday to convey its concerns. On Tuesday, they met Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, CPM gen-

eral secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet and rural development minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh.

CPI's D Raja said the PM told him the Bill would be introduced by December 15. They hope to press for changes before this, else the Bill may be referred to a committee and changes pursued there.

Former PM V P Singh, Yechury, Raja and NAC members Aruna Roy and Jean Dreze have half a dozen fundamental objections to the Bill. One, the dilution of provisions to scale up the programme country-wide in a time-bound, phased manner, allowing the government to switch off the programme anywhere, at any time.

Two, no minimum wage, diluting the commitment even to a "reasonable wage".

Three, unemployment dole only to "poor" households. In effect, threatening to convert the programme into a targeted scheme for below-poverty-line households only. The preamble specifies the programme is for poor households. Singh argued that "anybody ready to work with a spade or an axe should be considered needy".

The Left has been pushing for full Central funding of the scheme, given the "slender" state of state finances. They also want people's control over the scheme, with a social audit to ensure this programme doesn't head the way of all other government programmes steeped in corruption.

Dreze, author of the initial NAC draft of the Bill, said what is at stake are "fundamental, non-negotiable points". It has to be universal entitlement based on self-selection, he said, suggesting the government had a lot of experience to build on and needn't be afraid of the programme.

## Under Fire



# PM builds bridges with Naga rebels

812

## Both Sides To Work Towards Mutually Acceptable Solution

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 7 DECEMBER

**P**RIME Minister Manmohan Singh and leaders of rebel Naga outfit NSCN(I-M) agreed on Tuesday to work for a "mutually acceptable and honourable" but preferably "time-bound solution" to the long-standing Naga problem.

At their first meeting with Dr Singh, the Naga rebels led by NSCN(I-M) general secretary T. Muivah and chairman Isak Chisi Swu sought to renounce violence as a means to resolve the Naga issue and assured the government that "no stone will be left unturned in finding a peaceful solution to the Naga conflict". The Prime Minister in turn offered to make a "sincere effort to find an honourable way out that can ensure the Nagas a life of peace with dignity and self-respect".

Though no substantive discussions took place — actual delegation-level talks are slated to begin only three to four weeks from now — during the NSCN(I-M) leadership's "courtesy call" on the Prime Minister and later on Union home minister Shivraj Patil, the rebel outfit is believed to have presented to the Centre a memorandum detailing their demands.

This has been passed on to the Centre's interlocutor K. Padmanabhaiah for consideration during the upcoming round of talks in early January.

During their weeklong stay in New Delhi, the NSCN(I-M) will be meeting a host

of political leaders, including former Prime Ministers A.B. Vajpayee and V.P. Singh, besides chiefs of political parties such as Congress president Sonia Gandhi and BJP president L.K. Advani.

According to sources, the purpose is to build opinion in favour of their demands. They will leave for Nagaland by this weekend, spend Christmas and New Year's eve "among their own people" and then return for substantive talks here in early January.

Speaking to newsmen after meeting the Naga leaders at his office on Tuesday, home minister Mr Patil said it was just an opportunity to get acquainted with the NSCN(I-M) brass.

"We did not discuss anything substantive or controversial... We will work for peace and make all efforts to create a good atmosphere," Mr Patil said of the 45-minute meeting which also featured chanting of prayers by the Naga leaders seeking divine blessings for an early resolution of the Naga problem. Mr Padmanabhaiah and some senior officials were present at the meetings of NSCN(I-M) leaders with both Dr Singh and Mr Patil.

## PM open to talks with Ufa

New Delhi  
7 DECEMBER

**N**OTED Assamese litterateur Indra Goswami, negotiating between the Ufa and the Centre, on Tuesday said she had talked with the leadership of the North East militant outfit following communication from the Prime Minister's office expressing willingness to hold discussions with it. The Prime Minister's office had written to her expressing Manmohan Singh's "willingness for talks with the Ufa," she said.

The Jnanpith winner said she had discussed the letter with Ufa chief Paresh Barua and the insurgent outfit's formal response to it was likely to be formulated after he de-  
liberated about it with his top lieutenants. The letter, from the Prime Minister's special advisor M.K. Narayanan, came in response to her communication to Dr Singh last month. He shared with her the "agonies and sorrows" of Assam, according to Ms Goswami. However, she declined to divulge more details. Ms Goswami had met PM here on November 16 after which she had said that without the "sovereignty" issue on the table, the Ufa would not participate in the negotiations.

— PTI



**SPEARHEAD:** Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in traditional Naga gear presented by NSCN (I-M) leaders, at his residence in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI



# PTI Govt outlines 9-point strategy for Kashmir

*g.p.p. LIPK Bir-7 30/11*

**New Delhi:** Carrying forward its peace process, the Centre on Monday outlined a nine-point strategy that included initiation of dialogue with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir, especially those which shunned violence, to achieve the twin-objective of peace and development in the militancy-hit state.

The other salient features of this strategy include promotion of interaction with people of Pakistan and pursuing of opening of Jammu-Sialkot, Uri-Muzaffarbad and Kargil-Skardu roads, a home ministry spokesman said.

The strategy was finalised following home minister Shivraj Patil's visit to J&K earlier this month, the spokesman said. As part of the measures, communication equipment, gadgets, weaponry and ammunition and training in skills and technology for security forces and intelligence agencies will be upgraded.

Besides initiating a dialogue with all groups in J&K, especially those which eschewed the path of violence, the strategy talked about accelerating economic development, promoting culture, tackling unemployment and public grievance, avoiding human rights violation by security forces and intensifying involvement of media in the process of reconstruction in the state.

On accelerating economic development,

the spokesman said the Centre would ensure "balanced" development of the three regions of J&K—Jammu, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.

This will also include expediting completion of infrastructure projects—railways, roads and power, fuller implementation of schemes for development of agriculture, horticulture, tourism, trade, handicrafts and industries with emphasis on provision of basic necessities like drinking water, education, healthcare, woman empowerment and creation of employment opportunities.

The strategy will also focus on preserving and promoting the cultural uniqueness of J&K. Another key area will be creating employment by raising additional reserve battalions in the army and paramilitary forces from remote and border areas of J&K to prevent alienation of the youth.

On avoidance of human rights violations, the spokesman said prompt and transparent enquiries, strict action against offenders, reiteration of instruction and training on humane behaviour by security forces will be undertaken. There will be "intense involvement of media in the process of reconstruction", he said.

Patil had paid a three-day visit to J&K from November 6 along with parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and top officials. PTI

30 NOV 2004 THE TIMES OF INDIA  
THE TIMES OF INDIA

# India Inc gives poor rating to UPA govt on inflation

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Nov. 28. — India Inc expects the UPA government to perform “better” on major macroeconomic issues and external trade negotiations but was apprehensive on inflation and unemployment, according to an NCAER survey.

Nearly 50 per cent of the respondents in the survey felt that the present government would perform “better” on the economic reforms over the next six months, the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) said in its Business Confidence Index survey.

The survey, carried out on select 610 respondents, asked how the current political leadership would perform on issues such as managing economic growth, government finances, inflation, unemployment, exchange rate, political climate, external trade negotiation and economic reforms.

Stressing that pessimism to a large extent had given way to optimism, the NCAER survey said: “It is on the issue of managing unemployment and inflation that the current political leadership has got the lowest rating.” Only about 21 per cent of the surveyed firms felt that the present dispensation would perform “better” in managing the issue of inflation, it said.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation has been over seven per cent

since July and had even touched a four-year high of 8.33 per cent in August.

Only about 13 per cent of the respondents felt that the UPA government could manage the issue of unemployment.

On a region-wise analysis, North India gave the highest rating on the performance of the political leadership on the listed economic parameters.

Nearly 37 per cent of the firms from the North, East and West feel that the present political leadership was going to perform “better” over the next six months on various economic parameters, the NCAER survey said.

However, this percentage drops to just 21 per cent for firms belonging to the South, it said.

Overall, the survey said about 48 per cent of the firms surveyed reported that the government’s performance on various economic parameters would be the “same” and about 21 per cent of the firms said it would be “worse than now”.

NCAER said after the parliamentary elections in May when the new UPA government took charge, not only did the stock market react sharply leading to massive decline in the BSE Sensex, the overall industrial and investment climate also worsened due to lingering political uncertainty.

“In fact, it began appearing as if the fast unfolding political development will perhaps dislodge growth prospects of the financial year 2004-05,” the survey noted.

NOV 2004 THE STATESMAN

## Soren gets back coal; Ola shifted to mines

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 27. — Dr Manmohan Singh re-inducted Mr Siby Soren in the Union Cabinet today restoring the JMM leader as his coal minister four months after he asked Mr Soren to resign.

"The issue on which Soren had to resign no longer exists," the Prime Minister said after the lone member was administered the oath of office and secrecy at Rashtrapati Bhavan by President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam this afternoon.

Mr Soren was elated after having staged a comeback in the government retaining his coal portfolio without the department of mines. "I don't run after the chair but it is my right to be in the government. I asked for it and I am happy that I got it," Mr Soren said.

In a limited exercise undertaken by the Prime Minister making some changes in his Council of Ministers, Dr Singh shifted his labour minister, Mr Sisram Ola, to the department of mines which was held earlier by Mr Soren along with coal.

Mr K Chandra Shekhar Rao of the TRS has been finally allotted the department of labour and employment after a long wait of six months during which he was a minister without portfolio, according to a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique.

Mr Soren had to resign in July following an NBW issued by a Jharkhand court in a 1975 murder case. Mr Soren is on bail like other Union ministers, including Mr Lalu Prasad and Md Tasli-muddin of the RJD.

The BJP which had raised a storm in Parliament demanding the dismissal of Mr Soren, today said that the party would continue to oppose the presence of tainted ministers in the government. "BJP would raise the issue during the winter session", Prof. VK Malhotra, deputy leader of the party in the Lok Sabha said today.

■ More reports on pgs 10, 12

28 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

# Rollback debut with gas price

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Nov. 24: Manmohan Singh's government opened its rollback account today by scrapping the decision to raise cooking gas price by Rs 5 a cylinder every month.

By reviewing the price rise under pressure from the Left and Bihar ally Laloo Prasad Yadav, the United Progressive Alliance proved rollback-worthy of its predecessor, in which Yashwant Sinha as finance minister had to take one step forward and one step back several times.

He came to be known as Rollback Sinha, a label to which — however reluctantly — Mani Shankar Aiyar, as petroleum minister, has staked first claim in this government by announcing the gas price rewind.

"It has been decided by the cabinet committee on economic affairs that the previous decision to raise LPG price by Rs 5 every month stands rescinded," Aiyar said.

On November 4, along with a Rs 20 rise in the cooking gas price, it was announced that every month there will be a hike of Rs 5 to reduce the subsidy which had shot up to Rs 158 a cylinder in the wake of soaring international prices.

The Left had been demanding a review ever since the rise was announced but the government had stonewalled. Today, however, the response was prompt.

In the morning, Left leaders again pressed their case at a meeting of the ruling alliance's coordination committee and by evening the announcement was made.

Aiyar refused to disclose the reasons for the review. He simply said all other decisions of the cabinet committee, taken on November 4, would stand.

This means the diesel price, raised along with that of gas, remains untouched, leaving the Left unsatiated.

"The government has considered our demand. But it would have been better had they reduced diesel price also. The government would have to consider that," said CPI leader D. Raja.

It seems some other demands of the Left were not addressed either, one being the restoration of the provident fund interest rate to 9.5 per cent.

25 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

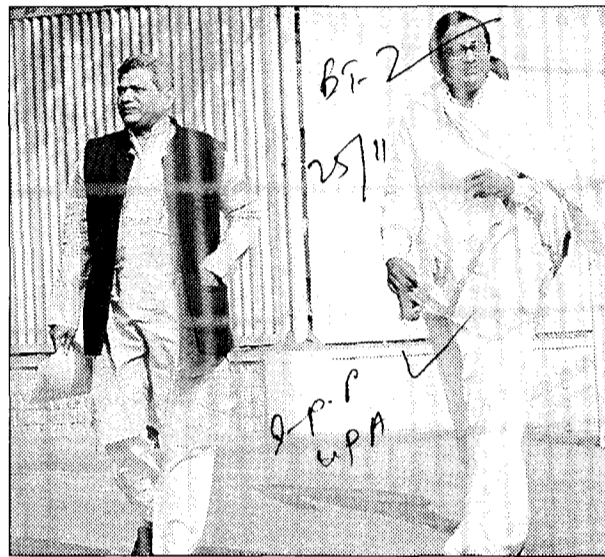
# Red Raj: Parties Now Want Rollback Of Diesel Prices LPG move fails to please Left

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 24 NOVEMBER

**N**OTWITHSTANDING the UPA government's decision to roll back its plan for a monthly hike in LPG prices, the Left sees little reason to smile.

While it termed Wednesday's announcement as "good", it declared that it would not give up its protests till diesel prices were also rolled back. Hours after the Left raised its demand for a reduction of petroleum product prices at the Left-UPA co-ordination committee meeting on Wednesday morning, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) announced its decision to withdraw the Rs 5 price hike on LPG cylinders. But this has come as a small consolation to the Left, which had termed the increase in diesel prices as inflationary and argued that the common man had certain expectations from the government.

CCEA rolled back the monthly Rs 5 increase in LPG, while the Rs 20 hike on LPG cylinders and the Rs 2.12 per litre hike in diesel remained untouched. All four Left parties have said that their oppo-



**DIFFERENT STROKES:** Sitaram Yechury and P. Chidambaram after the coordination committee meeting on Wednesday. — PTI

sition to the increase in prices of petroleum products would continue till the hikes in LPG and diesel were also withdrawn.

"We are not satisfied. They should reduce LPG and diesel prices as well," said CPI(M) politburo member S. Ramachandran

Pillai. "How can we be happy with this. Diesel prices should be brought down," CPI leader D. Raja remarked when asked to comment on the government's decision. RSP leader Abani Roy said: "It is good, but we will not be satisfied till diesel rates are cut."

Forward Bloc's Debabrata Biswas said: "Good sense has prevailed." But he added that LPG and diesel prices still needed to be addressed. At the two-and-a-half hour breakfast meeting at the Prime Minister's residence, the Left parties also asked the government to restore the 9.5% interest rate on the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), review the provisions of the Patents Amendment Bill and Electricity Act and discuss the roadmap for the implementation of a notification on FDI in Indian private banks. Although the Left got no concrete assurances regarding its demands, the government told its ally that the appropriate committees of the Union Cabinet would take the necessary decisions.

Sources said finance minister P. Chidambaram had spoken of revenue losses to justify the government's decisions as the Left argued its points. Mr Chidambaram and CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury told reporters after the meeting that various opinions had been discussed at the meeting and the government had taken note of the Left's concerns.

25 NOV 2004

*The Economic Times*

MEETING ON CRUCIAL ISSUES

# Left, UPA to break ice

598  
22/11  
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 21. — Petroleum, provident fund and foreign investment in telecom are the contentious issues that may come up for discussion at the next breakfast meeting between the UPA government and the Left parties on Wednesday.

Though the price of petroleum has come down by Rs 1.16 paise after a sharp hike, the Left parties - the CPI(M), the CPI, Forward Block and the RSP - are unhappy that the prices of diesel and LPG are still high and this is affecting common people. Diesel is a particularly difficult problem. High prices of diesel will mean higher transportation costs, making ordinary people pay more for vegetables and other essentials. Higher LPG prices are almost as troublesome as it would be affecting most families. Also, there are reports that LPG prices could gradually go up by Rs 20 per cylinder in every quarter.

The Left is only slightly less agitated about provident fund rates for workers. "There is no question of going below 9.5 per

cent. In the recent past, the government had said they would make a final decision after the Maharashtra assembly polls. Now that it is over, they have to look at it and tell us," a Left leader said. The Left's 'ideal' is about 12 per cent, but it accepts that it will remain a wish for a while.

The agenda for the breakfast meeting includes discussions about telecom. In the new draft cabinet note on telecom, the ministry has attempted to ensure there are some safeguards, but the Left parties believes that there could be national security problems and add, in the past the home ministry had opposed it. That had been the case during the Vajpayee government and even today, there is a feeling that the home ministry is still not happy with the proposals. A decision on the Patents Bill is also likely. The Bill is being ironed out by a GoM and may be placed in Parliament very shortly.

After breakfast, there may be a dinner invitation for the Left at a UPA meeting on Friday. It is still uncertain whether all the Left constituents will attend.

22 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

# 'Few steps' towards peace peak

ALOKE TIKKU

*q-p. up*

**Leh, Nov. 8:** Three days, nearly 40 delegations and hundreds of kilometres later, home minister Shivraj Patil believes he has walked "a few steps" forward on the long and winding road that could lead to peace in Kashmir.

Patil wrapped up his Jammu and Kashmir visit, which coincided with an escalation in militant violence, with a meeting with security officials of the region.

But before he left, he stressed what could be his single-most important political message for the state — when it comes to holding peace talks, the home ministry is capable of and willing to look through the Hurriyat Conference.

The idea is to strip the separatist conglomerate of the legitimacy as the representative of the people of Jammu and Kashmir that the National Democratic Alliance regime had bestowed on it.

Seen as part of this exercise was the release of a home ministry document in Jammu yesterday that linked the Hurriyat's reluctance to come for talks with pressure from Pakistan.

Minutes before he left for Delhi, Patil discarded his initial aloofness about the document after a few persistent questions on the Hurriyat's reluctance. "I spoke to nearly 40 delegations.... Is it not part of the peace process... or does one only need to talk to a few persons for that? We value other people (Hurriyat) also but not at the expense of the others," the home minister said.

At Leh's Officers Club, surrounded by snow-capped mountains, Patil spoke of his visit taking a few steps forward on the peace road but acknowledged there was a long way yet to go.

"One visit cannot resolve all problems... but could help

in improving the situation," he said, flanked by his two junior ministers, Sriprakash Jaiswal and S. Reghupathy, and parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

"Even when we have to scale a mountain, we have to take steps. These are steps which will take us to the peak."

Patil acknowledged the situation in the Valley was far from normal. Officials said nearly 13 militants and four security personnel were killed in an outburst of violence across the state in the last 48 hours.



Patil at a news conference in Leh on Monday. (PTI)

"We have never said that the situation in the state has become normal. That would be taking undeserved credit," the home minister said. But the situation, he contended, was "becoming normal".

On his tour's last leg, Patil met delegations of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, the district Congress committee, and social and Buddhist organisations.

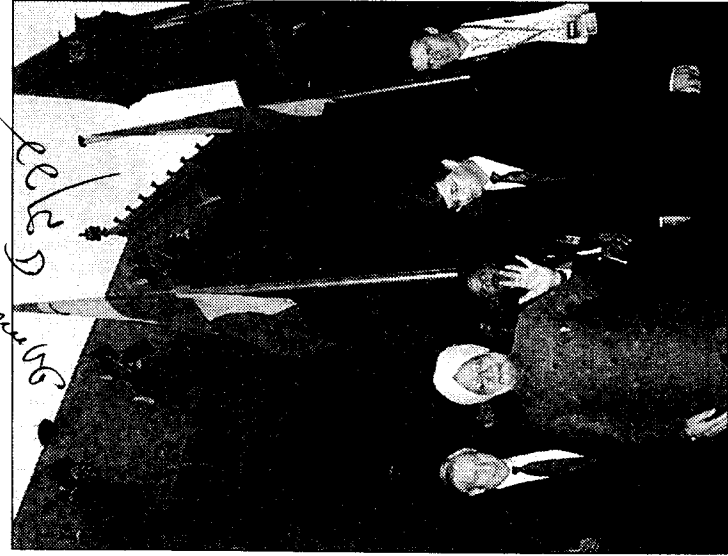
Patil indicated to some of them that he did not approve of their demand for Union territory status for Ladakh. But he agreed to consider development projects that would improve the region's connectivity with the rest of the country and boost its trade and tourism.

9 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

# সংস্কার নিয়ে বামেরা অবুঝ নয়, দাবি মনমোহনের

দ্য হেগ, ৮ নভেম্বর: তাঁর রাজনৈতিক দর্শন সংস্কার-কর্মসূচি ধিরেই। আরও স্পষ্ট ভাবে বলতে গেলে, আর্থিক সংস্কারই যে তাঁর রাজনৈতিক দর্শন, ভারত-ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়ন আর্থিক শীর্ষ বৈঠকে যোগ দিতে হল্যাণ্ডে গিয়ে এ কথা আবারও খোলাসা করে জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। গত দশকের গোড়ায় সংস্কারের ভগ্নীরূপ মনমোহন এই শীর্ষ বৈঠকে যা বলেছেন, তার একটাই অর্থ—তাঁর রাজনীতি 'অফ দ্য রিফর্মস, ফর দ্য রিফর্মস এবং বাই দ্য রিফর্মস'। তাই রাজনীতির কোলাহলের মাঝে সংস্কার-প্রক্রিয়ায় অবিচল থাকাই তাঁর প্রশাসনের প্রাথমিক কর্তব্য।



হল্যাণ্ডের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে মনমোহন। — পি টি আই

নয়।" ইস্তিত পরিকার। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বুঝিয়ে দিতে চান, রাজনৈতিক বাধ্যবাধকতার ফলে বামপন্থীরা যা-ই বলুন না কেন, আর্থিক বাধ্যবাধকতা তাঁরা বিলক্ষণ বোঝেন। আর এ প্রশ্নে তাঁরা অবুঝের মতো কাজ করবেন না।

মনমোহনের আশ্বাস, "আমি সর্বদাই বামপন্থী নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করছি। গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থায় বিতর্ক চলতেই পারে। তাকে স্থায়ী সম্ভট বলে ভেবে ফেললে তা বোধ হয় ভুল হবে।"

সংস্কার ঘিরে কেন্দ্রের বিভিন্ন সিদ্ধান্ত যে বিতর্ক সৃষ্টি করেছে, সে প্রসঙ্গে মনমোহন মনে করেন, এর একটি সুফলও আছে। তা হল, সমাজের যত ব্যাপক অংশ মন্থন করে সংস্কার এগিয়ে যাবে, তার ভিত্তও তত সুদৃঢ় হবে। এ কারণেই লক্ষ্যে যত দিন তাঁরা অবিচল আছেন, বিতর্কে তত দিন ভীত নন তিনি। আর্থিক যুক্তির উপরে অর্থনীতিবিদের পরিচিত আস্থা নিয়েই তিনি বলেছেন, "কয়েক দিন আগে হোক বা পরে, শক্তির বাড়তি খরচ জোগাতে হবে উপভোক্তাকেই।"

বস্তুত, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের সঙ্গে বৈঠকের প্রাক-মুহুর্তে মনমোহন বামপন্থীদের যা চিত্র এঁকেছেন, তাতে প্রতিবন্ধক নন, বরং সংস্কার-প্রক্রিয়ায় শরিক হিসাবেই তাঁরা উপস্থাপিত। এই সম্পর্কে বিতর্ক আছে, মতান্তর আছে। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়াই যে জয়ী হবে, তাঁর পরিলক্ষিত ভঙ্গিতে সে কথাটাই জানিয়েছেন মনমোহন। তবে প্রশ্ন হল, সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়া অনেকাংশে নির্ভর করে রাজ্য স্তরে সংস্কারের উপরে। অথচ, বেশ কয়েকটি রাজ্য সরকারের সমর্থনের উপরেই নির্ভরশীল তাঁর সরকারের জোটের স্থায়িত্ব। এই পরিস্থিতিতে অগ্রিয় সংস্কার কী করে রাজ্য স্তরে চালিয়ে দেবেন মনমোহন?

উত্তরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, "কেন্দ্রের কাছে অনেক হাতিয়ার আছে। পিঠ চাপড়ে দেওয়া বা তিরস্কার, দু'ধরনের হাতিয়ারই। কেন্দ্র নিজের লক্ষ্যে স্থির হলে সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়া এগোনো যেতে পারে।" তবে মনমোহন পরিষ্কার করে দেন যে, সংস্কারের অন্যতম পূর্ণপর্ন প্রশাসনের বিবেচনাকরণ। পঞ্চায়েতিরাজ ছাড়া বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকারীও উঠতে পারেন বলে তাঁর মত। যদিও রাজ্য স্তরে নেতৃত্বের বিরাট অংশের কাছে রাজনৈতিক ও আর্থিক ক্ষমতার বিবেচনাকরণ নিয়ে অনীহা আছে, মেনে নিয়েছেন তিনি।

স ই হল ক য় র এ ন র ি- ঙ ন র , র ঙ ি



# Left warns Centre over fuel price hike

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, November 9

A DAY after the Trinamool Congress called a Bangla bandh against the rise in fuel prices, the Left Front too raised its pitch against the hikes, warning the Centre not to take its support for granted.

"The discussions the government pretends to hold with us on policy matters are a farce," CPI(M) politburo member Anil Biswas told a rally, distancing the Left from the price hikes. "The government has simply

been ignoring our opinion."

Then he issued a threat: "If they think we shall go on supporting them whatever they do, they are wrong."

"The time has come to issue the UPA a warning," agreed CPI leader D. Raja. "Let the government understand this clearly: the people will give them support only if they stick to the common minimum programme. They should remember that the BJP is getting ready to strike at them."

Raja said the Left would demand a complete rollback of the price hike during their meeting

with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi on November 11. "If they do not accept our proposal, they will have to face the consequences," he declared.

The Front leaders, speaking in the backdrop of three general strikes in the state against the fuel price hike — called by the Trinamool Congress, the SUCI and the CPI(ML) Liberation — were eager to prove that the Left's opposition to the price hike was genuine in spite of its under-standing with the Congress-led government at the Centre.

All the Front leaders who spoke at the rally tried to impress upon the audience that though the Left was sincere in its demand for a rollback of the price hike, the UPA government was ignoring its demands.

"If this government drifts away from the common minimum programme and follows in the footsteps of the BJP, it will be removed from power, as was the BJP-led NDA," Biswas declared.

Left Front chairman Biman Bose, too, said that if the UPA

government ignored the common minimum programme, which promises to protect the ordinary citizen's interests, it would lose the people's support.

The Left leaders, however, questioned the motive of the Trinamool, SUCI and Liberation who have challenged the price hike with calls for Bangla bandhs.

"The strike is the ultimate weapon," Bose said. "The bandhs have been called to humiliate the state government. Foil the bandhs and keep Bengal moving."



**Petrol dealers' strike**

Petrol dealers all over the country will keep their pumps closed for a day after Diwali in protest against the hike in the prices of petroleum products which, they claim, is eating into their profit margins

Left given a leaf out of its own book

# PM sticks to oil price rise

BHARAT BHUSHAN

The Hague, Nov. 7: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today ruled out any rollback of the petroleum price rise under pressure from the Left, but sought to play down differences with it, claiming that he did not see the group "as a problem".

Singh described the price increase as a "painful decision" while talking to the media on board his special flight to Amsterdam for the fifth India-European Union summit. However, he defended the decision as necessary to safeguard the profitability and competitiveness of the public sector oil companies.

In balancing the price hike with the need to strengthen the oil companies, Singh sought to hoist the Left with its own petard.

He claimed that by not allowing the companies to remain "strong profitable entities, we would be harming the cause of the public sector", which embodied the aspirations and desires of the Indian people.

"We cannot kill the hen that lays the golden egg," he said.

The interest of the poorest sections of society, the Prime Minister claimed, had been kept in mind while raising the prices of petroleum products.

"We have not touched



India will join an elite club of five when a strategic partnership with the European Union is formalised during visiting Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's talks with EU leaders on Monday. The US, Canada, Japan, China and Russia are the other countries with which the EU has such a partnership

kerosene prices and only marginally touched LPG prices."

The Prime Minister claimed that the only alternative to raising prices was to reduce taxes without affecting the profitability of the oil companies. Taxes had already been cut and a further lowering would lead to a widening of the fiscal deficit, putting an extra responsibility on the government.

Once again targeting the Left's pet concerns, Singh asked: "We want to spend a lot more money on education, healthcare, irrigation and agriculture. Where would that money come from if taxes are reduced?"

The Prime Minister argued: "Each time prices rise, we cannot tinker with the

budget. We cannot reduce the credibility of our public finances." At the same time, he pointed out that not increasing petroleum prices would imply "reducing the competitiveness of these Jewels of India (oil companies)".

Singh claimed that the choice of raising petroleum prices was not an easy one. "I hope that the people of India will realise that we were motivated by a desire to maintain the tempo of social and economic development."

He said he was "committed to a dialogue with our coalition partners" and was convinced that differences, if any, could be resolved through that process.

"I do not see our Left colleagues as a problem. I respect their point of view and we will evolve outcomes that are acceptable to our coalition partners."

The Prime Minister also dwelt on his government's attempts at re-starting a dialogue with political leaders in Kashmir — especially the Hurriyat Conference. He denied that his government had delayed the dialogue.

"We were not late (in restarting) the dialogue. A dialogue is not a linear process. There are many ups and downs and many ifs and buts in the process. But the process is on."

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# সরকারকে বিপন্ন না-করে আন্দোলনে বামেরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, কলকাতা ও নয়াদিল্লি: তেল ও রান্নার গ্যাসের দাম বাড়ায় বামপন্থীরা ক্ষুব্ধ। এই বৃদ্ধির প্রতিবাদে বামপন্থীরা দেশ জুড়ে আন্দোলনে নামবেন। তবে সরকার পড়ে যাওয়ার মতো কিছু যে করা হবে না, সিপিএম নেতারা তা-ও জানিয়েছেন।

দিল্লিতে পলিটবুরোর পক্ষ থেকে এক বিবৃতিতে এই মূল্যবৃদ্ধি কমানোর দাবি করা হয়েছে। অন্য দিকে, কলকাতায় জ্যোতি বসু বলেন, “আমরা এই মূল্যবৃদ্ধিতে আপত্তি করেছিলাম। শোনা হয়নি। এর বিরুদ্ধে দেশ জুড়ে আন্দোলন হবে।”

বামফ্রন্টের চেয়ারম্যান বিমান বসু আরও এক ধাপ এগিয়ে বলেছেন, “এই অযৌক্তিক মূল্যবৃদ্ধি প্রত্যাহার করতে হবে। কারণ, আন্তর্জাতিক বাজারে যখন তেলের দাম ব্যারেল প্রতি ৫ মার্কিন ডলার কমল, তখনই এখানে দাম বাড়ানো হল। আমরা এতে আপত্তি করেছিলাম।” ৯ নভেম্বর কলকাতা ও পাশ্চাত্য জেলা বামফ্রন্টের পক্ষ থেকে প্রতিবাদ সমাবেশ করা হবে ধর্মতলার রানি রাসমণি রোডে।

সি পি এমের এই আন্দোলনকে একহাত নিয়ে তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় বলেছেন, “সব লোক দেখানো। ৬ মাসে তিন বার জ্বালানি তেল আর রান্নার গ্যাসের দাম বাড়ল। কংগ্রেস আর সি পি এম

দুই দলই জিনিসের দাম কমানোর ভাওতা দিয়ে ক্ষমতায় এসেছে, তা প্রমাণ হয়ে গিয়েছে।”

জ্বালানি তেল, রান্নার গ্যাস আর নিত্য প্রয়োজনীয় দ্রব্যের মূল্যবৃদ্ধির প্রতিবাদে মমতা আজ রাস্তায় নামছেন। তিনি ধর্মতলায় জমায়েত করবেন। সেই সঙ্গে ঈদের পর থেকে লাগাতার আন্দোলনের ছমকি দিয়েছেন। রাজ্য বিজেপি প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কুশপুতুল পুড়িয়ে তেলের দাম বৃদ্ধির প্রতিবাদ করেছে। এস ইউ সি আই রাজ্য সম্পাদক প্রভাস ঘোষ বলেছেন, ইউপিএ সরকার যে সাধারণ ও গরিব মানুষের কথা ভাবে না বারবার তেলের মূল্যবৃদ্ধি থেকেই তা প্রমাণিত হয়ে গেল।

এদিন কলকাতায় প্রদেশ কংগ্রেসের ইফতার পাটিতে এসেছিলেন কংগ্রেস নেতা সলমন খুরশিদ। সমালোচনার জবাবে তিনি বলেন, “এনডিএর আমলে আন্তর্জাতিক বাজারে তেলের দাম বেশি বাড়েনি। তবু এখানে মূল্যবৃদ্ধি হয়েছিল। এ বার আন্তর্জাতিক বাজারে দাম যা বেড়েছে তার তুলনায় মূল্যবৃদ্ধি কমই হয়েছে।” বামপন্থীদের আন্দোলনের পাঁচটা জবাব দিতে সলমন রাজ্যের আইন-শৃঙ্খলার অবনতি ও সংখ্যালঘু, আদিবাসী ও তফশিলি গরিব মানুষদের উন্নয়নে সরকারের ব্যর্থতার বিরুদ্ধে আন্দোলন করতে

বলেন। তাঁর সঙ্গে ছিলেন প্রদেশ কংগ্রেসের নেতা প্রদীপ ভট্টাচার্য, সোমেন মিত্র, নার্গিস বেগম প্রমুখ। কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বের বক্তব্য, আন্দোলন করলেও বামেরা এই সরকারকে সমর্থন করে যাবে। কারণ, তাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলেই কেরোসিনের দাম বাড়ানো হয়নি।

সিপিএমের পলিটবুরোর বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, মূল্যনিয়ন্ত্রণ তুলে দেওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ভর্তুকিয়ুঞ্জ তেলপণ্যের ক্ষেত্রে শুল্কও তুলে দেওয়ার কথা ছিল। কিন্তু শুল্ক তোলা হচ্ছে না। ফলে প্রতিটি তেল-সংস্থার মুনাফা বাড়ছে।

“একটি বেসরকারি সংস্থাও ব্যাপক লাভ করছে।” এই মন্তব্য করে বিবৃতিতে লেখা হয়েছে, “সাধারণ মানুষের উপর ভার চাপানোর পরিবর্তে এই সংস্থাগুলিকে তেলের বাড়তি ব্যয়ভার বহন করতে দেওয়া উচিত ছিল।” সিপিআইয়ের ডি রাজাও মূল্যবৃদ্ধি পুনর্বিবেচনার জন্য ফোনে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে অনুরোধ করেছেন। আর এস পি ও ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকও মূল্যবৃদ্ধির বিরোধিতা করেছে চড়া সুরে। এই মূল্যবৃদ্ধিকে অযৌক্তিক আখ্যা দিয়ে বিমানবাবু বলেন, “নূন্যতম সাধারণ কর্মসূচি কথার কথাই থাকছে। কেন্দ্র তা মানছে না। আমরা আন্দোলন করে মানুষকে সে কথাই বোঝাব।”

# Left-UPA policy distance widens

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 1 NOVEMBER

**T**HE policy distance between the Left and the UPA establishment appears to be widening with the CPM on Monday charging the ruling regime with appeasing "foreign capital" at the expense of domestic industry and the public sector.

The Marxists, who said the economic policy matrix of the UPA government was similar to that of the previous NDA regime, said they will not allow any deviation from the CMP. The CPM also said the government cannot buy its silence by few decisions in

the social sector. Briefing reporters after a two-day meeting of the CPM's central committee, politburo member Prakash Karat said though the party was not "in the business of running the government," it cannot accept the approach that Left should confine itself to issues like employment generation, food supply, education and health, while core issues like liberalisation and privatisation are handled by the government.

Mr Karat said his party was not asking the government to completely reverse the liberalisation policy but the CMP required the government to act differently. "It cannot blindly pursue the course

taken by the NDA regime."

Refuting the argument that disinvestment up to 49% in profitable PSUs including navratnas will not have any impact on the character of the public sector, the CPM said the move is aimed at meeting the budgetary requirements. "It is not aimed at strengthening the public sector — a commitment made in the CMP." Mr Karat said the Left was informed that there was no Cabinet decision on divesting government stake in 35 public sector units.

The CPM also hit out at finance minister P. Chidambaram for his "eagerness to facilitate takeover" of Indian private banks

by foreign banks. "We are surprised that he has decided to give a special gift to them. This will be harmful as it will give them unfair advantage to swallow small private banks when they are already operating in the country," Mr Karat said.

On EPF interest rates, he said the trade unions would decide on protest actions adding "we had opposed reduction of the rate to 8.5%. How can we support 8.25?" The central committee decided that more emphasis needed to be given to mobilisation and struggles by different sections of the working people in defence of their interests and for change in the government's policies.

2 NOV 2004

*The Economic Times*

Govt pins hope on market softening

# Oil on hold till US poll

P.P.P.  
L.P.A.  
B-1  
1/4

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 31: If oil prices did not go up today, it was thanks to the election — the one in the US, or so it was claimed.

"Prices are not being raised today," petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar said.

The Vajpayee government did not raise oil prices for six months because of the Lok Sabha elections in April-May. Now, Bush versus Kerry has saved the consumer, even if temporarily, and possibly only to deal a heavier blow later, as had happened after the six-month freeze.

If there is an irony in oil prices in India being dictated by an election in the US, a bigger one lies in the Left arguing for a deferment until after Tuesday, when Americans head to polling booths.

"There is a general perception that crude prices will ease (after the elections)," Aiyar said.

It was strange, though, that the minister himself gave the impression that the decision to postpone an increase in petrol and diesel prices was taken at the last minute.

After a meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Aiyar last evening, a modest rise was expected to



Last raised: July 31

Global price then: \$37\*

Global price now: \$43-44

Petrol rise due: Rs 1.22 a litre

Diesel rise due: Rs 2.24 a litre

\*Indian basket crude price per barrel

be announced today. Even the Left was apparently reconciled to this.

"We lined up our officers for calculating prices at different locations... Now everybody is being sent back," Aiyar said.

He did not explain why this change of mind occurred, except to suggest that the process of consultation was not over.

"Today being a Sunday, we have not got full opportunity to talk to everybody (on raising prices). Consultations will continue," Aiyar said.

Global oil markets have been on edge because of uncertainty over the outcome of the US presidential election, apart from several other factors, one of which is a fear of terror attacks.

Crude oil prices flared on

speculative trading ahead of the US election, but have eased a bit since then.

Aiyar said the volatility could have been caused as measures the US might have taken to check its fiscal and trade deficits had been kept in abeyance because of the election.

He would not say if the Left had influenced the government's decision. But CPM leader Sitaram Yechury said: "We asked the government not to raise the prices till the US elections are over because global prices are fluctuating. After the elections, the prices could stabilise."

On paper, oil companies have the freedom to revise prices every fortnight, but have not been allowed to exercise the choice. They have been seeking an increase since July 31, when prices were last raised, but were not permitted to — perhaps, the Maharashtra election got in the way.

It is also possible that by postponing a decision, the government is simply buying time to arrive at an agreement on absorbing a part of the necessitated price rise through a reduction in the import duty on crude oil.

Finance minister P. Chidambaram is opposed to the move. Yechury said: "The government should consider all options (to avoid a hike)."

0 1 NOV 2004 THE TELEGRAPH

# PM defers decision on fuel prices

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

NEW DELHI, Oct. 30. —The government will announce its decision on a petrol price hike by tomorrow. The Union minister for petroleum, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, today met the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and finalised the controversial issue of price hike.

Mr Aiyar, however, refused to reveal the amount of hike on diesel and petrol prices. "The decision on revising petrol and diesel prices has been deferred till tomorrow," the minister said immediately after meeting the Prime Minister.

In view of surge in crude prices in the international market, the oil marketing companies have sought a hike of 65 paise per litre for petrol and Rs 1.15 per litre for diesel. Mr Aiyar is facing stiff resistance from left parties on price hike. Though he has persuaded left leaders to accept a marginal hike in prices, the fear still remains as the petroleum ministry has little option but to increase diesel price by more than Re 1 per litre.

Petrol prices were last revised on July 31. Since then the government has been turning down the request of oil marketing companies on price hike issue despite

steep increase in international rates.

The petroleum ministry had urged the finance ministry to reduce duties on petroleum products so as to minimise the impact of price hike, but the latter turned down the proposal.

The petroleum ministry had proposed zero duty on LPG and kerosene against the current level of eight per cent and 12 per cent respectively, and five per cent cut in the custom duty on petrol, diesel and crude oil. Excise duty had been earlier revised on June 15 and August 16 as the petroleum prices rose substantially in the international market. However, the finance ministry opposed both the proposal as it would have resulted in a loss of Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000 crores in the remaining part of the year. The petroleum ministry, on the other hand, argued that the government has already collected much higher revenues from the petroleum sector in the first six months and proposed cut in duties would yield much higher revenues from this sector against the target.

According to rough calculations, oil companies have lost around Rs 2,300 crore on the sale of petrol and diesel in the past six months due to government directives to maintain the price level.

THE STATESMAN

31 OCT 2004

# GoM meet to focus on patents

S. P. P.  
20/10/04

**Srinjoy Chowdhury**  
in New Delhi

Oct. 24. — It could be the most crucial issue for pharmaceuticals, the next big sunrise sector in India after information technology.

A high-level group of ministers meets tomorrow to discuss the issue of patents and ensure that the country's advantages in generic drugs remain and the laws do not hurt the industry while protect-

holding patents. Two issues are on the agenda for the GOM headed by the defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee: the right of hearing to the opponent, provided by the "Patent Act" and the attempt to "evergreen" some of the patents that are due to expire.

There is talk of removing the right of hearing before a patent is granted as it makes the procedures for the grant of patent much easier. There are

tory views on this.

If the Opposition (meaning legal issues) are moved to the post grant period, the aggrieved opponent will have fewer chances to get justice as the patent has been granted. Also, the patentee will have no incentive to get a decision either way and till there is a decision he will continue to enjoy the benefit of the patent.

What is worse is that finally, the procedures could establish that he is ...led to one.

Besides, there is strong opposition to the removal of the right of hearing to pre-grant opposition by the ministry of chemicals and fertilisers.

There is a realisation that a relaxed patent regime has benefited India in the past. The Indian industry has done well in generic drugs too. Keeping in mind compliance with Trips, the sector can be given opportunities, is the current belief.

This could help to ensure that the pharma-

ceutical sector becomes as internationally successful as the info-tech sector. Tomorrow's meeting is crucial as it will help to create the national policy on patents.

A preliminary meeting of the GoM, (including Union ministers like Mr Sharad Pawar, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, Mr Kamal Nath and Mr Kapil Sibal and deputy chairman of planning commission Dr MS Ahluwalia) has decided that the country's patent regime will be

made stronger and the draft legislation has been readied after country-wide consultations.

The GoM has noted that the existing law does not provide for "evergreening" of patents as it stops patents on the new use of an already known substance.

The GoM has already kept in mind measures to ensure the safety of the software industry, in the larger national interest. The "Patent Bill", to be placed in Parliament will

have to have special provisions to ensure that public health concerns are met.

The GoM has decided that the time-frame for possible dual-use patent applicants applying abroad will be three months instead of six weeks.

The introduction of an amendment stipulating approval of Bio-diversity authority as prerequisite for grant of patent using genetic material needn't be considered in view of the problems involved.

THE STATESMAN

25 OCT 2004

J.P.C.  
UPA

# Khadi panel dissolved in saffron clean-up

ST  
15/10

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 14.  
— As part of the UPA government's "detoxification" drive, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission was today dissolved and a new chief executive officer appointed.

Dr Mahesh Sharma, the former chairman, had been appointed by the NDA government. He and the entire board will have to leave immediately. A government release said the changes are being made to "revamp the institution as mandated under the national Common Minimum Programme of the UPA government to make it more professionally competent, effective and efficient body for the development and promotion of khadi and village industries and for the generation of more employment opportunities in the rural non-farm sector."

The Centre has appointed Ms Maya S Sinha as the financial adviser and chief executive officer in charge of the commission. It has issued a resolution for the appointment of the commissioner for khadi and village industries and also set up a committee to examine the functioning and performance of the commission and suggest its restructuring.

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act is also being readied for change and modifications are expected very soon.

THE STATESMAN



# Kher threatens legal action against Surjeet

*15/10 g.p.p. - upa 11-1*

**New Delhi:** A day after being sacked as censor board chief, actor Anupam Kher on Thursday dismissed allegations that he is an "RSS man" and attacked the left parties for his "humiliating" removal, saying he was "dumped by those in power for a mere 60 seats (in Lok Sabha)." He also sent a legal notice to CPM general secretary asking to withdraw his allegation or face a defamation suit.

"They are so dependant on Surjeet that if asked to bend, they crawl," he told newsmen here, squarely accusing the veteran CPM leader for his ouster. Surjeet had written against Kher in his party organ 'People's Democracy' as one of the various appointees of the previous NDA government who should be removed from their posts in the "desaffronisation" campaign.

Hitting out at the Congress-led UPA for the "humiliation", he alleged that he was made a "scapegoat" and wondered how could some ministers at the Centre run office "while in jail or while running away."

"How can I be dubbed as an RSS man when I had even cleared the movie 'Final Solution' on the Gujarat riots which to some extent is anti-BJP," asked Kher. He said he was fighting for his honour: "I do not give the government the permission to insult me."



Claiming that he was not associated with any political ideology or organisation, Kher said the Central Board of Film Certification was run without any kind of interference under him. "I am the only person in the history of the censor board who has passed

films without prejudice."

At the same time, he admitted that the post he held was at the mercy of the government of the day. "I think they have every right to remove everybody," he said, objecting to the "abrupt manner" of his removal. Also, he said the present government or the earlier one had not interfered in any way in the functioning of the CBFC. "I will give them a clean chit," he said. PTI

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 OCT 2004

# Kher censored out, Sharmila steps in

11/10  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK 017

9-10-04  
luctant to give him the marching orders.

**New Delhi:** Operation Detox – or weeding out cultural personalities with wrong ideology from positions of influence – reached a flashpoint on Wednesday with the government sacking film censor board chairman Anupam Kher and the actor refusing to heed the order right away.

Kher, appointed as censor boss by the NDA government, has been replaced by veteran actress Sharmila Tagore. She took charge in the Capital rather than Mumbai where the board is headquartered. Meantime, Kher has chosen to take his case to the people by addressing a press conference in Delhi on Thursday.

The decision to sack Kher, said sources, was taken at the highest level in the government. It was apparently prompted by CPM general secretary H S Surjeet's sharp attack on I&B minister S Jaipal Reddy, accusing him of not doing enough to cleanse his ministry of alleged saffronites. Recognising the need of the UPA leadership to placate the Left, Reddy seems to have decided ask Kher to go. It's learnt that I&B officials didn't find any evidence of transgression by Kher and were, therefore, re-



against policing culture. Responding to questions relating to Kher's defiance as well as DD's decision not to telecast a film on Jai Prakash Narayan, party spokesperson said: "Cultural policing is not something that Congress believes in, the BJP has done that all this while." She termed Kher's removal as a purely administrative decision.

What seemed to have gone against Kher was the delay in clearing a documentary film on the Gujarat riots. The I&B ministry, according to sources, felt that Kher being busy with acting and other commitments, could not give enough time to the censor board.

BJP expectedly described Kher's ouster as "nothing but an act of dictatorship and political vendetta". Party general secretary Arun Jaitley said that the UPA government had begun this process by first sacking some of the governors and then NDA appointed experts in the HRD ministry.

Reacting to Kher's sack, writer Khushwant Singh said: "They (the government) must not meddle in such areas, this is not a proper thing to do."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 OCT 2004

410-1  
13/10

# Manmohan to review oil prices

J-P-P  
UPA

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 12.** As the global crude oil prices crossed the \$54 a barrel mark today, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, will review the petrol and diesel prices later this week. According to the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, a decision on raising the prices or maintaining the *status quo* will be taken after he provides all the required inputs to Dr. Singh.

Hinting that a hike in petrol and diesel prices was unlikely, given the inflationary pressures on the economy, Mr. Aiyar said that the review done every fortnight would take into account the international prices as on October 15. It would also have to consider the rising inflation rate which had already crossed seven per cent.

On the impact on the public sector oil refining and marketing companies, he said their losses would be offset by the gains made by producers such as the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation which had been getting a higher price for the domestic crude output. The burden of the losses would be shared equitably.

On whether the petrol and

diesel prices would be raised on October 15, Mr. Aiyar said that "only God knows and the Prime Minister knows."

The major oil refining and marketing companies favoured a hike of over Rs. 2 a litre for diesel and a marginal increase of 50 paise a litre for petrol. But their pleas for a rise in the domestic prices had been turned down despite the hardening of prices in world markets since

the last price hike on August 1. These companies, including IOC, BPCL and the HPCL, will hold the fortnightly review meeting on Friday.

Mr. Aiyar said the formula evolved earlier for a price band mechanism to meet the needs of moderate revisions still existed. It was meant for "normal times" but the Government had to intervene if the required increase went beyond the band.

## It crosses \$54 a barrel

**LONDON, OCT. 12.** Oil prices surged to record highs above \$54 today as a fire at a Nigerian export pipeline became the latest threat to consumers' efforts to build winter heating fuel inventories.

U.S. crude set a record \$54.45 a barrel, marking a sixth successive day of all-time peaks, and by 7.15 p.m. (IST) was trading at \$54.00, up 36 cents on the day.

In London, Brent crude hit \$51.50 a barrel, before retracing to \$50.98, up 32 cents.

Oil prices have leapt 66 per cent this year as the strongest demand growth in 24 years

caught producers by surprise, leaving a tightly stretched global supply system little leeway to deal with outages.

In London, gas oil futures today broke the \$500 a tonne barrier for the first time.

Price gains were bolstered by news that saboteurs had set fire to a major oil pipeline feeding the Bonny export terminal in Nigeria, which exports 500,000 barrels (bpd) of crude a day.

High prices were beginning to slow the world economy and encourage energy saving measures in China, the International Energy Agency said on Tuesday.— Reuters

THE HINDU

13 OCT 2006

# Left happy with Centre's handling of North-East, Kashmir

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 12.** The Left parties today appeared satisfied over the approach of the Manmohan Singh Government in dealing with the situation in the north-east and Jammu and Kashmir, amid indications that the Government could consider the ceasefire offer of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB).

"We are satisfied with the discussions," said the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member, Sitaram Yechury, after the third meeting of the coordination committee of the United Progressive Alliance and the Left parties, attended among others by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the UPA Chairperson, Sonia Gandhi.

The Left parties, concerned over the sudden spurt in violence in the North-east, had decided to review the work of the Union Home Ministry as also the progress of the talks with different groups in Jammu and Kashmir. Briefing the Left leaders, the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, gave a detailed account of the security measures

taken in the two regions, the efforts taken by him and his Ministry to engage various sections of the people in the negotiations, and the measures taken to restore the confidence among the people.

## 'Situation better'

Mr. Patil said that the situation in the North-east had generally improved and that Manipur and Assam, in particular, were returning to normal.

The vacation of the Kangla Fort in the heart of Imphal, which had become an emotive issue, would be completed by December. About 1,600 of the 1,800 Assam Rifles personnel had been shifted and the remaining would do so in due course, Mr. Patil said.

Both in the North-east and Jammu and Kashmir, the Left parties suggested, socio-economic development and employment generation measures could be taken up in a big way.

On increasing the ceiling on foreign direct investment (FDI)

in telecom, the Government submitted detailed comments on the note circulated by the Left parties at the previous coordination committee meeting. Mr. Yechury said the Left parties would consider the Government's observations and come back with their reaction at the next meeting likely to be held towards month-end.

The Left parties presented a note on the review of the Electricity Act, 2003. They are opposed to new legislation, saying it encouraged the private sector in distribution and transmission of power, which they fear would lead to the neglect of the rural areas under the garb of reforming the power sector.

They also raised the issue of shifting of industrial units in Delhi and the Government said that it was seized of the matter.

## CMP implementation

The Government informed the committee of the measures being taken in the implementation of the Common Minimum

Programme and the legislative measures proposed to be introduced in the next session of Parliament.

Proposed legislation on guaranteeing rural employment and banking regulation would be among the bills that would be introduced in Parliament's winter session.

## Food-for-work

The food-for-work programme would soon be launched; it would cover 150 of the country's most backward districts.

Besides Dr. Singh and Ms. Gandhi, the UPA was represented by the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, the Union Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, and the political secretary to the Congress president, Ahmed Patel.

The Left parties were represented by Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Mr. Yechury (CPI-M), A.B. Bardhan and D. Raja (CPI), Abani Roy (RSP) and Debarata Biswas (Forward Bloc).

THE HINDU

13 OCT 2004

ALLOTTEES DISQUALIFIED FOR CONCEALMENT OF FACTS

# SC for cancellation of 297 pump allotments

NEW DELHI, Oct. 11. — The Supreme Court today said it has suggested cancellation of 297 petrol pumps on the basis of the findings of the high-level committee that scrutinised 409 “tainted” petrol pump allotments made during the NDA regime.

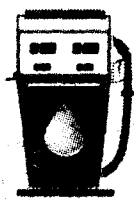
A two-member committee appointed in 2002 recommended to the Supreme Court (coram, Sabharwal, Dharmadhikari, JJ) the cancellation of almost 73 per cent of the allotments on the ground that they were “improper”.

“Of the 409 ‘tainted’ allotments examined, 297 were improper. Their selection could not be said to be made on merit... Either the allottees did not fulfil the eligibility requirements or they were disqualified for concealment/suppression of facts,” the Supreme Court said after perusing the report.

Immediately after the petrol pump allotment scandal came to light in 2002, with the Opposition raking up a huge

controversy, the Vajpayee government had cancelled all 3,158 allocations made between 2000 and 2002.

However, the Supreme Court had on 20 December set aside the government order cancelling the allotments and



**Of the 409 ‘tainted’ allotments examined, 297 were improper. Their selection could not be said to be made on merit...**

handed over scrutiny of the allotments to the committee comprising Supreme Court judge Mr Justice (retd) SC Agrawal, and High Court judge Mr Justice (retd) PK Bahri.

The Bench allowed inspection of the committee report by the counsel for those whose clients’ name figured in the list of tainted allotments.

The Court, however, made it clear

that it would not entertain any argument from the counsel of the affected parties on the question of facts which has been thoroughly examined by the committee.

The Bench said: “As far as the factual aspect of the matter is concerned, it stands closed. If we have to go into the factual aspect of the matter again, then there was no need for us to refer the matter to a high-level committee.”

It said the counsel for the affected parties could raise objections with regard to irregularity found by the committee based on the guidelines pertaining to allotments of petrol pumps.

The Bench adjourned hearing on the matter for eight weeks to give time to the counsel to inspect and take copies of the necessary portion of the report required to prepare the defence.

The committee went through the process adopted by Dealer Selection Boards in allotting petrol pumps after the Court noticed a newspaper report giving details of the irregularities.

THE STATESMAN

12 OCT 2004

# PM backs quota, but won't make it official

Our Mumbai Bureau  
6 OCTOBER

**P**RIME Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday did something of a flip-flop on the issue of job reservations in the private sector. Addressing a press conference at the Cricket Club of India, he spoke up in favour of a national policy on job reservations in the private sector for the weaker sections of the society. A policy will be announced soon, he said, describing reservations as "an idea whose time had come." He defended the Maharashtra government's move, subsequently spiked, to extend reservations to the private sector.

However, only a few hours later, the tone and tenor of the Prime Minister's remarks were different.

Addressing a packed house consisting of the who's who of Corporate India, he clarified that there will be no legislation imposing job reservations and a solution will be found through dialogue with industry.



## Doc to cure tax system ills

**T**HE Prime Minister has promised to introduce a new entrepreneur-friendly tax regime in the next Budget. "Our taxation system is riddled with too many uncertainties because of too many interpretations of the law giving rise to delays," he said in Mumbai on Wednesday, reports **Our Mumbai Bureau**.

► Full report on P 3

Clarifying his stand, he spoke of the deficiencies inherited by a section of the population as a result of centuries of discrimination. "Industry should do more than it has done in the past to see that these inequalities should not burden our social conscience," he said.

However, he said this would be achieved through dialogue and ways would have to be found to deal with the situation. He mentioned apprenticeship and training to ensure that men and women from the weaker sections of society can be gainfully employed.

Reacting to the Prime Minister's statement, Parle Bisleri chairman Ramesh Chauhan commented that most manufacturers having units in remote areas already employ a lot of people from weaker sections.

The idea of formally labelling a worker as a backward class worker can actually damage the social fabric further since not everyone would want to be identified thus, he said.

# Centre junks Tehelka panel, gives case to CBI

**New Delhi:** In a bid to put the NDA and its convener George Fernandes on the defensive, the Centre on Monday decided to scrap the S N Phukan commission, which is inquiring into the Tehelka expose on defence deals, and hand over the case to the CBI.

"The cabinet committee on political affairs (CCPA) has decided not to extend the term of the commission headed by Justice S N Phukan, which expired on October 3," law minister H R Bharadwaj said. He alleged that the NDA government had "misdirected" the inquiry as it wanted to "delay and shield" the

then defence minister. "The matter will now be probed by the CBI in an independent manner and the government will provide it the tapes used in the sting operation conducted by the web portal

Tehelka," he said, adding that the agency would be allowed to decide the course of the inquiry.

Hitting out at Fernandes and his Samata Party colleague Jaya Jaitly, Bharadwaj said, "How could a private person function from the ministerial bungalow of the then defence minister. Why did the NDA government not probe the minister?" PTI

## I have not been informed: Phukan

**New Delhi:** Remarking that it was the Centre's prerogative to scrap the panel headed by him which has been probing the Tehelka expose, Justice S N Phukan on Monday maintained that he had not been told about it. "I have nothing to say at this moment as I have not received any communication or even a telephone call from the government," he said. Agencies

Plan panel boomerang  
splits stand on govt

# Once bitten, Left twice cautious

MONOBINAGUPTA

**New Delhi, Oct. 2:** Learning a lesson from the Planning Commission row that boomeranged on them, the Left has decided to be more cautious in future on contentious issues.

The Left parties had not expected the decision that finally came their way when they escalated their confrontation with the government on the plan panel consulting "foreign" experts.

After an angry campaign by the Left against the inclusion of 14 experts from global agencies, including the World Bank, the commission dissolved all its consultative groups. While this met the demand for removal of the "foreign" experts, the purge also claimed economists ideologically aligned to the Left.

Forced to swallow the bitter pill, the Left leaders are now planning to adopt a more cautious strategy. A host of fractious issues are still on the agenda — the FDI cap in telecom, the provident fund interest rate and the exim policy. The government is preparing a note in response to the Left's queries on FDI in telecom and is considering a higher provident fund interest rate.

The next meeting of the UPA-Left coordination committee on Monday is likely to discuss these issues. The question before Left leaders is whether to adopt a belligerent stand if the government goes ahead with policies they are opposed to.

The bottomline, however, is that they will not destabilise the government. Left leaders say they will work out their strategies within this overall framework where they want

the United Progressive Alliance government to continue for five years, if only to keep the BJP out.

While a section of the Left leadership is against going into an aggressive mode, others advocate a confrontationist posture. For instance, CPM politburo member and CITU leader M.K. Pandhe does not want his party to pull its punches when it comes to economic reforms.

Senior CPI leader D. Raja lashed out at plan panel deputy chairperson Montek Singh Ahluwalia today. After a breakfast meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday, the CPM had described the Planning Commission's decision as "satisfactory". But Raja termed it "unilateral and autocratic" and also blamed the government for not taking into confidence the Left parties whose support is crucial to its survival.

A section within the Left Front believes the government should not take its support for granted, especially on policies it is opposed to. But others argue that the Left should also tactically retreat after voicing its objections on issues it cannot win.

Top CPM leaders said the Planning Commission row was blown out of proportion even before the decision to disband all consultative groups was taken and blamed Ahluwalia.

Finally, the Prime Minister resolved the issue with a formula that denied the Left academics as well as the foreign experts any say in policy matters. A section of the Left believes it should not in future pitch confrontations so high that they backfire in the end.



# সব কমিটিই ভাঙল যোজনা কমিশনের,

ধন্দে বামেরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩০  
সেপ্টেম্বর: বামেদের বিরোধিতার  
জেরে শেষ পর্যন্ত যোজনা কমিশনের  
সবক'টি পরামর্শদাতা কমিটিই তুলে  
দেওয়া হল। বিদেশি পরামর্শদাতা  
নিয়োগের বিরোধিতায় সরব  
হয়েছিলেন বামেরা। কিন্তু কমিশন যে  
ভাবে সমস্ত কমিটিই ভেঙে দিয়েছে,  
তাতে বামেরা প্রাণ খুলে আনন্দ প্রকাশ  
করতে তো পারছেই না, বরং  
কমিশনের ভবিষ্যৎ কৌশল সম্পর্কে  
তারা এখন রীতিমতো ধন্দে। কারণ,  
কমিটি তুলে দেওয়া হলেও বিদেশি  
পরামর্শদাতাদের সঙ্গে ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে  
আলোচনার দরজা খোলাই রেখে  
দিলেন কমিশনের ডেপুটি চেয়ারপার্সন  
মস্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়া।

এই ধন্দে ইঙ্গিত রয়েছে সি পি  
আই নেতা ডি রাজার কথায়। তাঁর  
দাবি, “কী কারণে সব কমিটি ভেঙে  
দেওয়া হল, সরকার তার যুক্তি দিক।”  
ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকের দেবরাজন এই  
সিদ্ধান্তকে ‘স্বাগত’ জানিয়েও বলেন,  
“কেন কমিটি ভাঙা হল, তা ব্যাখ্যা  
করুক সরকার।” সি পি এমের  
সাধারণ সম্পাদক হরকিষণ সিংহ  
সুরজিত আজ কোনও মন্তব্যই করতে  
চাননি। কলকাতায় সি পি এমের রাজ্য  
সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাসও বলেন,  
“কাল সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি প্রধানমন্ত্রীর  
সঙ্গে দেখা করে জানতে চাইবেন কেন,  
কোন ফর্মুলায় কমিটিগুলি ভাঙা হল।  
তার পরে দলের মত জানানো হবে।”  
অর্থাৎ, কমিশনের সিদ্ধান্ত বিস্তারিত  
খতিয়ে দেখে সম্ভবত কালই মুখ  
খুলবে সিপিএম। সব মিলিয়ে,  
কমিশনে বিদেশি প্রতিনিধিদের ঘিরে  
টানাপোড়েনে মস্টেক হারলেন বটে,  
কিন্তু বামেদের জোর থাকার দিয়ে  
গেলেন। অতর্কিতে ধাক্কা খাওয়া  
বামেদের উদ্বাহকে প্রশমিত করতে,  
বিষয়টি ব্যাখ্যা করতে আবার কাল  
চার বাম নেতাকে প্রাণরশ বৈঠকেও  
ডেকেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

দশম পঞ্চবার্ষিকী যোজনার  
অন্তর্বর্তী পর্যালোচনার জন্য কমিশন  
মোট ১৯টি পরামর্শদাতা কমিটি গঠন  
করেছিল। সেখানে ম্যাকিনসে,  
বিশ্বব্যাঙ্ক প্রভৃতি সংস্থার প্রতিনিধিদের  
অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা নিয়ে তীব্র বিরোধিতা  
শুরু করেন বামেরা। যোজনা কমিশন  
আজ জানিয়েছে, “বিষয়টি  
পর্যালোচনা করে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া  
হয়েছে যে, সব পরামর্শদাতা কমিটি  
তুলে দেওয়া হবে। এখন থেকে  
কমিশন আলাদা ভাবে বিশেষজ্ঞদের  
সঙ্গে আলোচনা করার পুরনো  
পদ্ধতিতেই ফিরে যাবে।”

এক জন বাদে বাকি বিদেশি  
পরামর্শদাতারা সকলেই পদত্যাগপত্র  
পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন মস্টেকের কাছে।  
এই অবস্থায় মস্টেকের সামনে  
এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

# সব কমিটিই ভাঙল কমিশনের

প্রথম পাতার পর

অনেকগুলি পথ খোলা ছিল। তিনি  
কমিটি রেখে দিয়ে নতুন মুখ আনতে  
পারতেন। যে বস্টন কনসাল্টেটিভ  
গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান অরুন ময়রা ইস্তফা  
দেননি, কেবল সেই কমিটিটিই তুলে  
দেওয়া যেত। এমন কী, সব কমিটি  
ভেঙে দিয়ে ফের নতুন করে  
পরামর্শদাতা কমিটি গঠন কতে  
পারতেন। কিন্তু বামপন্থীদের উদ্বাহ  
জবাবে মস্টেক সবক'টি কমিটিই তুলে  
দিলেন। সি পি আইয়ের নেতা গুরুদাস  
দাশগুপ্ত এই সিদ্ধান্তে প্রবল ক্ষোভ  
প্রকাশ করে বলেছেন, “কমিটি থাকলে  
বৃহত্তর পরিধিতে দেশের উন্নয়ন নিয়ে  
আলোচনা করা যেত। এটা মস্টেকের  
সুবিধাবাদী, ভ্রান্ত পথ।” গুরুদাসের  
অভিযোগ, কমিটির সদস্যদের আগে  
জানানোও হয়নি কমিটি ভেঙে দেওয়া  
হচ্ছে বলে। কংগ্রেসের প্রবীণ নেতা  
প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় অবশ্য পাল্টা দাবি  
করেন, “এই সিদ্ধান্তের মাধ্যমে সরকার  
বোঝাল তারা শরিকদের মতকে সম্মান  
করে। আমরা জোট সরকার চালাচ্ছি।  
তাই জোটধর্ম পালন করেছি।”  
অর্থনৈতিক বিশেষজ্ঞদের  
একাংশের ধারণা, কমিশনের এই

সিদ্ধান্তের ফলে নতুন সরকারের  
সার্বিক পরিকল্পনা তৈরির কাজও  
ব্যাহত হবে। দশম পঞ্চবার্ষিকী  
পরিকল্পনা তৈরি হয়েছিল বিগত এন  
ডি এ সরকারের আমলে। পরামর্শদাতা  
কমিটির মাধ্যমে যে অন্তর্বর্তী  
পর্যালোচনার কাজ শুরু হয়েছিল, তা  
আদতে নতুন সরকারের কর্মসূচি  
অনুযায়ী পরিকল্পনার দিশা ঠিক করার  
চেষ্টা। ক্ষমতায় আসার পরে নতুন  
সরকার অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি তৈরি  
করেছে। সেই অনুযায়ী পঞ্চবার্ষিকী  
পরিকল্পনাকে সাজানোর প্রক্রিয়ার অঙ্গ  
ছিল এই মূল্যায়ন। এই কাজ শেষ  
হওয়ার কথা ডিসেম্বর। এখন কমিটি  
তুলে দিয়ে আলাদা ভাবে বিশেষজ্ঞদের  
সঙ্গে নতুন করে আলোচনা শুরু হলে  
সেই কাজে বিলম্ব হবে বলেই আশঙ্কা  
প্রকাশ করেছেন রাজনৈতিক ও  
অর্থনৈতিক মহলের একাংশ।  
রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের অধিবেশনে যোগ দিতে  
যাওয়ার পথেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেছিলেন,  
বিদেশি পরামর্শদাতার বিষয়টি খতিয়ে  
দেখা হবে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী ফেরার  
তিনদিনের মধ্যেই এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিল  
কমিশন। তার আগে, কাল রাতে  
মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনীতি বিষয়ক কমিটির

বৈঠকে এই নিয়ে আলোচনা হয়।  
বৈঠকের পর মনমোহন সিংহ মস্টেকের  
সঙ্গে পৃথক ভাবে আলোচনা করেন।  
সেখানেও মন্ত্রিসভার সিদ্ধান্ত তিনি  
মস্টেককে জানিয়ে দেন। বিদেশিদের  
বাদ দেওয়া না হলে দেশের পাঁচজন  
বিশিষ্ট বামপন্থী অর্থনীতিবিদ ছমকি  
দিয়েছিলেন, তারা উপদেষ্টা গোষ্ঠী  
থেকে সরে যাবেন। এঁরা হলেন, প্রভাত  
পট্টনায়ক, উৎস পট্টনায়ক, সি পি  
চন্দ্রশেখর, জয়ন্তী ঘোষ ও টমাস  
আইজ্যাক। কমিশনের সিদ্ধান্তের  
প্রতিবাদে সি পি চন্দ্রশেখর ও জয়ন্তী  
ঘোষ পরামর্শদাতা কমিটির বৈঠক  
বয়কটও করেন। বিদেশিদের সঙ্গে  
সঙ্গে এই বামপন্থীরাও অবশ্য চলে  
গেলেন যোজনা কমিশন থেকে।  
শান্তি রেলো। সংবাদসংস্থার খবর,  
দুর্নীতির দায়ে ছুটিতে পাঠানো হল স্বয়ং  
রেল ভিজিল্যান্স কমিশনারকে। সেই  
সঙ্গেই আরও অনেক অফিসারকে  
বদলি করা হয়েছে, ছুটিতে পাঠানো  
হয়েছে। সাসপেন্ড করা হয়েছে  
ছ'জনকে। রেলমন্ত্রীর নির্দেশে আচমকা  
তল্লাশি চালিয়ে পণ্য পরিবহনের ক্ষেত্রে  
বেশ কিছু বেনিয়ম ধরে ফেলেছিলেন  
রেল-কর্তারা।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

২০০১

# Foreign experts on Plan panel out

**Happy but...**

The govt could not ignore the Left's concerns. It must now explain why all groups were dissolved

—CPI secretary D Raja

We are happy the foreign experts are gone. The govt should now keep health, employment and the rural sector in view

—RSP leader Abanti Roy

The govt has tried to set right one wrong by another

—Citu & Aituc

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, September 30

WILTING UNDER pressure from the Left over the involvement of "foreign" experts, the Planning Commission today disbanded all 19 of its consultative groups to defuse the controversy, which had threatened a rift in the UPA coalition on ideological lines.

For the Left, it was a qualified victory. Because the decision not only purges the Plan panel of "foreign experts" — all but one of whom are Indians — but also lays off the Left economists, who had threatened to quit unless the World Bank, ADB and MacKinsey experts were removed from any role in the mid-term appraisal of the 10th Plan.

The decision followed deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahlu-

walia's second meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in two days since they returned from their tour abroad.

Acknowledging that the decision to rope in individuals associated with multilateral organisations and foreign firms had been a "subject of some discussion", a Planning Commission press note said the panel "has reviewed the matter and has decided to dissolve the consultative groups".

The commission would revert to the earlier practice of consulting individuals separately "as part of the mid-term appraisal process", the note added.

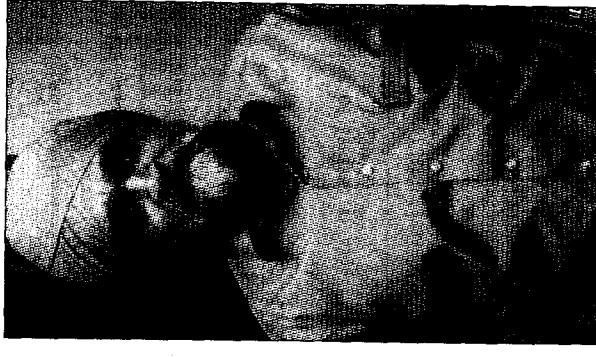
Broadly happy at the development, the Left parties felt only the government could explain the "logic" of dissolving the groups altogether. The Aituc and the Citu said the government had

tried to set right "one wrong by another wrong". The two unions were represented on the consultative group on employment, which was due to meet on Friday.

Aituc leader Gurudas Dasgupta said that by dissolving the groups altogether, the government had deprived itself of "wider consultations". Citu's M.K. Pandhe said, "We only wanted the World Bank and the ADB out."

CPI leader D.Raja sought to know the logic behind the decision and the government's future course of action. But he claimed the decision was a victory for the Left. Forward Bloc leader Debabrata Biswas said the (Centre's) "mindset should change". He said that though the government was a coalition, there had been no consultation.

## ALL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES DISSOLVED



**Montek Singh Ahluwalia**  
Beating a retreat

# Cabinet nod for minorities panel

**Statesman News Service**

NEW DELHI, Sept. 29. — This may well become the Mandal commission for minorities — religious and linguistic. The Cabinet today approved setting up of a National Commission to recommend measures for the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities, including reservation in education and government employment.

The Cabinet, at a one and a half hour long meeting chaired by Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, also approved the terms of reference for the commission, information and broadcasting minister, Mr S Jaipal Reddy, told reporters. The commission would suggest criteria for identification of socially and economically backward sections among religious

and linguistic minorities.

Another mandate of the commission was to recommend measures for the welfare of these sections, including reservation in education and government employment and suggest necessary legal, constitutional and administrative modalities for implementation of the recommendations.

The commission is expected to give its report by 31 March next year. This decision was taken to meet the commitments made in the National Common Minimum Programme of the UPA government, which spoke of setting up of such a commission to see how the welfare of these sections was enhanced.

Asked what constituted a "linguistic minority", Mr Reddy said the character of this definition would vary from state to state. Residents of one state speaking another state's language would be one example, he

elaborated. On whether the present ceiling of 50 per cent would be retained, Reddy said the ceiling was set through judicial pronouncements and the government did not want to pre-empt the proposed commission.

## GoM on print media

The Cabinet today decided to set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) to take a comprehensive look at the print media sector to examine the decisions taken on the matter by the NDA government in 2002.

## Hague Convention

The Cabinet today gave its approval for simplification of the procedure for authentication of public documents, which are to be produced abroad as under the Hague Convention abolishing the requirement of legalisation for foreign public documents, 1961.

# Government will not fall: Karat

By Our Staff Reporter

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 29. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, Prakash Karat, said here today that the Left was not against foreign consultants in the Planning Commission but against the representatives of the World Bank, and similar foreign organisations whatever the nationality of these representatives.

But those who thought that these differences would lead to the UPA Government's fall "are living in a fool's paradise."

He was addressing 150 activists of the Democratic Youth Federation of India at a three-day "political school" here. Mr. Karat made it clear that the CPI (M) would never allow these foreign institutions to become

part of India's sovereign planning process.

"Even the Congress Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, has gone on record to state that the World Bank inspired policies of [the former Chief Minister] Chandrababu Naidu had ruined the economy of the State. Despite this the Congress-led UPA Government invited representatives from the very same World Bank to participate in the planning process," he said.

"We do not share the BJP's chauvinism regarding foreigners. There may be foreigners who can contribute something positive to India's planning process. We are only against these international organisations as they are not answerable to the Indian people and their

economic policies are ruining our economy," he said.

Every Government, whether in the States or at the Centre, which had followed the World Bank's prescriptions on economic policy had been decisively rejected by the Indian voter, Mr. Karat said.

The popular mandate was clearly for alternative economic policies and the UPA's Common Minimum Programme, with its emphasis on agriculture, employment, health and education, reflected this basic political fact.

But the Government would not be able to generate the resources to meet these commitments if it continued with the economic policies of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation.

# Future of Plan panel experts in Doc's hands

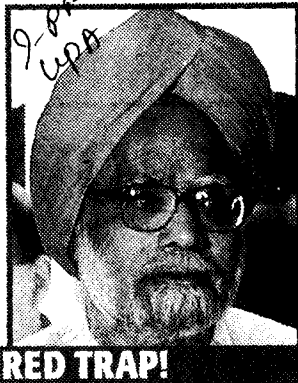
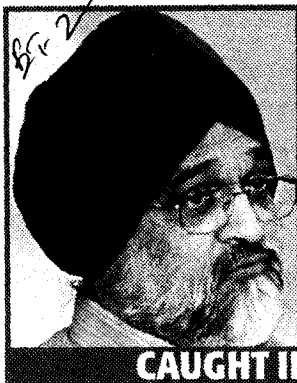
Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 28 SEPTEMBER

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh will now decide the fate of the "foreign" experts employed by the Planning Commission to provide inputs for the mid-term review of the Tenth Five Year Plan. The decision to lob the "foreigner" ball into Mr Singh's court was taken at a meeting of the Planning Commission, which backed Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia's stand in the skirmishes with the Left.

"We have discussed the issue with members of the Commission and I'll meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in a day or two to resolve it," Mr Ahluwalia told reporters after the meeting.

"The issue will be resolved in a few days... the Commission is unanimous," he said when asked about the views of the other members. Mr Ahluwalia, it is learnt, managed to secure the backing of his colleagues in the plan panel at the meeting held here on Tuesday. Among those attended it were minister of state for planning M.V. Rajashekharan, Dr Kirit Parikh, Dr (Ms) Syeeda Hameed and Prof Abhijit Sen, whose wife, Dr Jayati Ghosh, is among the five Leftist economists who've threatened to resign from the consultative groups if the foreign experts were not removed.

The members agreed that the row over the inclusion of these



CAUGHT IN RED TRAP!

experts had created an embarrassing situation, which had to be resolved at the earliest.

Dr Parikh, intervening in the deliberations, said he did not agree with the general clamour for the

ouster of these experts. However, if someone was unwilling to continue working with these bodies, let it rest at that, he's learnt to have said. Prof. Sen, who's from the JNU, argued that the mandate given to these consultative groups was not clear. It's also not clear, he maintained, whether these "foreign" experts were included in the consultative groups in their personal or official capacity.

Ms Hameed came out in full support of Mr Ahluwalia, observing that there was nothing wrong in employing foreign experts to provide inputs for the mid-term review of the Tenth Plan. An unseemly controversy has been sought to be created, she maintained. As the tug-of-war between Plan panel deputy chairman and Left parties over the continuance of the outsiders continues, the latter on Tuesday reiterated their demand for their removal.

## PM meets Sonia

CONGRESS president Sonia Gandhi had a 40-minute meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday evening, shortly after his return from the foreign trip. Sources said Dr Singh briefed the UPA chairperson about his meeting with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, US President George Bush and British Premier Tony Blair. The meeting was important since it came in the wake of the all-out Left demand for the ouster of foreign experts from the Plan panel.

# Manmohan promises to look into foreign experts issue

*J-P-P-  
N-PA*

**GENEVA, SEPT. 27.** Promising to look into the issue of foreign consultants in the Planning Commission, over which a row has been kicked up by the Left parties, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said today that he had no problem in dealing with the Communists and had "great faith in their inherent patriotism."

"I am very confident that despite different perspectives that we may have on how we look at various issues, that when the chips are down, we will be able to work out a programme of action which meets the challenges of our times," Dr. Singh said. He would look into "every" aspect of the issue when he got back to Delhi.

## 'Aim to help poor'

"When I go back, I will certainly look into every aspect of it." Dr. Singh told the media on board the special aircraft "Tanjore" on way from New York to Geneva for a stopover before returning home.

## Social equity

He said that in many ways he endorsed the concerns of the

Left that the path chosen by the Government should be one which at all times was aimed at helping the poorest people. It should be something which advanced the cause of social equity, he said, adding that "these are values which I cherish."

He said: "There will be differences about how we get to the final outcome, but I am confident we will work together. That is my hope, that is my faith. I have absolutely no doubt. I look forward to working with all colleagues in the Left."

## Montek's formula

The Deputy Chairman of the

*H.D. 1  
28/10*

Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who is accompanying the Prime Minister, said he had a "formula" to resolve the issue, but did not elaborate. He, however, stressed that "you have to listen to all points of view."

There were indications earlier this week that experts from the World Bank, Mckinsey and the Asian Development Bank had offered to quit amid a boycott of the consultative group on industry by the Left on the panel.

The World Bank and Mckinsey have declined to comment on the issue. — PTI

**Editorial on Page 10**

## Talks with Musharraf 'very good'

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 27.** Describing his talks with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, as "very good," the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said tonight that they agreed to carry forward the composite dialogue process which "augurs well" for bilateral ties.

"I met President Musharraf and I am glad to report that

talks with him were very good," Dr. Singh told reporters at the Indira Gandhi International Airport here on his return from a nine-day tour of Britain and the United States.

"We agreed to carry forward the composite dialogue process. It augurs well for India-Pakistan relations," he said. — PTI

## 11 commandments for governance

# Head-to-toe code on table

ALOKE TIKKU

New Delhi, Sept. 26: People in positions of power could soon have their own version of the Ten Commandments — plus one.

A draft thrown up for public debate by the Manmohan Singh government has listed 11 codes for good governance. The over-arching code covers not merely politicians — who are already bound by a model code of conduct that comes into force during elections — but anyone remotely involved with drafting and implementing policy decisions or enforcing the rule of law.

The draft is now on the website of the department of administrative reforms so that those it is aimed at can come up with suggestions. It will then have to be cleared by the cabinet.

The code — to promote good governance at the Centre and in states, right down to local bodies — covers ministers, legislatures, parties, government employees, the judiciary, auditors, anti-corruption agencies and even corporate firms and organisations that act as pressure groups influencing decision-making.

The code does not require them to do anything out of the ordinary but lays down simple rules. Like this clause that seeks this promise from ministers: "We shall not misuse

### THE CHARTER

- We shall act with honesty in public and private affairs
- We shall act with accountability and transparency
- We shall only take decisions in public interest and on merit
- We shall arrange our private affairs to prevent real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest
- We shall not exercise an official power to further private interest
- We shall not use our office to influence a decision
- We shall not solicit gifts or accept transfers of economic benefit
- We shall not use our official roles to assist private entities
- We shall not use information gained in office to further our private interest
- We shall not misuse our office for politically partisan purposes
- We shall not act after we leave public office to take improper advantage of our previous office

our office for politically partisan purposes."

The draft says the Prime Minister or chief minister of a state concerned should appoint a distinguished person to be the custodian of the code for ministers.

But the Hyderabad-based Centre for Good Governance (CGG), which prepared the draft, knew better than to stop at just drafting a model code and leave it to governments to ensure compliance. It has asked the Centre to link release

of funds to states to implementation of the code, which requires governments and their departments to improve delivery of services to citizens. States, in turn, would be free to arm-twist local bodies into following the code.

Originally expected to come up with a model code for governments rather than their specific arms, the CGG decided to cover them too as good governance required the state, market and civil society to work in unison.

This would be possible, says the 125-page report submitted to the government recently, only if various institutions and groups follow a "self-imposed" code of good governance based on the Constitution, principles of human rights and democracy.

The report emphasises that good governance rests on three key aspects: measuring performance of the government and its functionaries by their output rather than input, adherence to the rule of law and the concept of transparency, which includes getting feedback from the public, and delivery of service.

The first aspect could worry some in the bureaucracy. For example, the education ministry at the Centre could speak of the allocations made for literacy without worrying too much if the money spent changed the lives of people.

# আক্রমণ মন্টেককে, কিন্তু মূল লক্ষ্য প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন

দীপেন্দ্র রায়চৌধুরী • নয়াদিল্লি

২৫ সেপ্টেম্বর: প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ দেশে নেই। কিন্তু আজ সি পি আইয়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধনের জন্মদিনে তাঁর স্বাক্ষরিত শুভেচ্ছাবার্তা পৌঁছে গিয়েছে দলীয় অফিসে পুষ্পস্তবক-সহ। নিউ ইয়র্ক থেকে ফোনও করেছিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। কিন্তু তাতেও কী বিশ্বব্যাপক-বিতর্কে মনোভাব নরম হয়েছে কমিউনিস্টদের?

আদৌ না। জ্যোতি বসুর পরে আজ বর্ধনও বলেছেন, “দেশের বাস্তব অবস্থা বোঝার জন্য দেশে বিশেষজ্ঞের অভাব আছে নাকি? প্রধানমন্ত্রী দেশে ফিরলে এ সম্পর্কে আমাদের মনোভাব আমরা স্পষ্ট ভাবেই জানিয়ে দেব।” তাঁর এই মন্তব্যের লক্ষ্যও কিন্তু একই। বহুপাক্ষিক সংগঠনের উপর নির্ভর না-করে দেশের উন্নয়নের কথা এ দেশের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে অনুযায়ী ভাবা দরকার, এ কথাই বোঝাতে চেয়েছেন তিনিও।

তবে কমিউনিস্টদের এই সব কথা বলার আরও গভীর একটা লক্ষ্য আছে। বিষয়টা প্রকাশ্যে বলতে রাজি নন দুই কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির কর্তারা। কিন্তু ঘটনা হল, মন্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়াকে আক্রমণ করে বামেরা প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের কাছেই সংকেত পাঠাতে চাইছেন।

তবে সি পি এম জানিয়ে দিয়েছে বিদেশি বিশেষজ্ঞ বা কেন্দ্রের ইউ পি এ সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে নয়, তাঁদের আপত্তি কেবল বিশ্বব্যাপক বা আই এম এফের মতো বহুপাক্ষিক সংস্থার বিরুদ্ধেই। আজ কোচিতে সি পি এম পলিটব্যুরোর সদস্য প্রকাশ কারাত এ কথা জানিয়ে বলেন, সরকার যদি যোজনা কমিশনে বিদেশি বিশেষজ্ঞদের আনতে চান তাতে কোনও আপত্তি নেই। কিন্তু তাঁরা বিশ্বব্যাপক বা আই এম এফের লোক হলে চলবে না।

তিনি জানান পঞ্চাশের দশক থেকেই যোজনা কমিশনে বহু বিদেশি বিশেষজ্ঞেরা এসেছেন। তখন তো বামেরা কোনও আপত্তি করেননি। কিন্তু আজ মন্টেক যাঁদের আনতে চাইছেন তাঁরা প্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে ওই দু’টি সংগঠনের সঙ্গে যুক্ত। তাঁর বক্তব্য, ওই বিশেষজ্ঞেরা তো দেশের আর্থিক উন্নয়নের কথা ভাববেন না, তাঁরা যাবেন সংশ্লিষ্ট সংগঠন দু’টির স্বার্থ। তাই ভারতকে যদি সত্যিই আর্থিক উন্নতির পথে এগোতে হয় তবে এ ধরনের প্রয়াস ঠেকাতেই হবে। তাঁর অভিযোগ, ‘কিছু লোক এমন ভাবে ব্যাপারটির ব্যাখ্যা করছে যেন আমরা বিদেশি বিশেষজ্ঞদের বিরোধী।

মন্টেককে বিশ্বব্যাপকের লোক বলে মন্তব্য করে জ্যোতিবাবু এটাই বোঝাতে চেয়েছেন যে বিশ্বব্যাপক প্রভুত্বের দেখানো উন্নয়নের মডেল অনুসরণ

করলে আমরা তা মানব না’, ফোনে জানিয়েছেন সি পি এম পলিটব্যুরোর এক সদস্য। তিনি এ কথাও বলেন যে মন্টেককে যোজনা কমিশনের ডেপুটি চেয়ারম্যান করা ঠিক হবে না বলে তাঁরা সরকারকে আগেই জানিয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু প্রধানমন্ত্রী তাঁদের আপত্তিতে কর্ণপাত করেননি।

কাল শুধু জ্যোতি বসুই মন্টেককে বিশ্বব্যাপকের লোক বলে মন্তব্য করেননি, কর্নাটকের টুমকুরে পলিটব্যুরোর আর এক সদস্য এম কে পাঙ্কে বলেছেন, বিজেপি এবং কংগ্রেস উভয়েই একই ভাবে শিল্পপতিদের স্বার্থরক্ষা করে। এই সব বিস্ফোরক মন্তব্যের রাজনৈতিক প্রতিক্রিয়া কী দাঁড়াবে? সি পি এম সূত্রের বক্তব্য, মনমোহনকে এ কথা মাথায় রাখতে হবে যে তাঁর সরকার আমাদের সমর্থনের উপরে নির্ভরশীল এবং তিনি নিজের ইচ্ছা অনুযায়ী সব কিছু করতে পারেন না।

এ বি বর্ধন কিন্তু কারণও নাম না-করে প্রকাশ্যেই বলছেন, “কংগ্রেস এটা স্বীকার করে নিয়েছে যে জোট রাজনীতিই হল এখন দেশের বাস্তবতা। কিন্তু তারা এখনও জোটধর্ম মেনে চলাটা রপ্ত করতে পারছে না।” কোনও সংশয় নেই, জোটধর্ম মানার কাজটা প্রাথমিক ভাবে নির্ভর করবে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের উপরে। কারণ তিনিই মন্ত্রিপরিষদের কর্তা। দুই কমিউনিস্ট দলের নেতারা ইউপিএ সরকারের বিভিন্ন শরিকের সঙ্গে এ ব্যাপারে যোগাযোগ শুরু করেছেন। আরজেডি-র মতো কোনও কোনও শরিকের যথেষ্ট ক্ষোভ রয়েছে। ইতিমধ্যে সরকারের আর এক শরিক পিএমকে আজ এ ব্যাপারে বামদের সঙ্গে সুর মিলিয়েছে।

কিন্তু দুই কমিউনিস্ট দলের কর্তাদেরই বক্তব্য, এই সমস্ত কথা বলার অর্থ সরকারের স্থায়িত্বের উপর প্রশ্নচিহ্ন এঁকে দেওয়া নয়। কারণ এখন যা অবস্থা তাতে এই সরকারের পতন বলে বিজেপি-জোটকে ক্ষমতা থেকে দূরে রাখা সম্ভব হবে না। সেটা যেমন কমিউনিস্টদের কাম্য নয়, ঠিক তেমনই কাম্য নয় কংগ্রেসেরও। কাজেই উভয় পক্ষকে এ ক্ষেত্রে সমঝোতা করতে হবে। তাঁদের বক্তব্য, গত দু-দিন সপ্তাহে অবস্থার পরিবর্তনও হয়েছে কিছুটা। এখন বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রী তাঁদের সঙ্গে আলোচনাও করছেন।

এই সৌহার্দ্যের পরিবেশ তৈরিরই একটা দিক হল এ বি বর্ধনের জন্মদিনে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর পুষ্পস্তবক। কিন্তু ঘটনা হল, পুষ্পস্তবক এ দেশের অন্য রাজনৈতিক দলগুলির নেতাদের যতটা দুর্বল করতে পারে, কমিউনিস্টদের ততটা পারে না। তাই পুষ্পস্তবক পাওয়ার পরেও বর্ধনের বক্তব্য, “নীতির প্রশ্নে সরকারের উপর আমাদের চাপ বজায় রাখতেই হবে।”



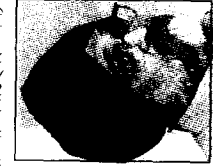
# ভুলভাল কাজ করছেন মর্টেক, কৌশল মেনেই নিন্দায় বসু

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: “মনমোহন সিংহ ও সনিয়া গান্ধীর সঙ্গে কথা বলে আমি সন্তুষ্ট। আমরা চাই, এই সরকার পুরো পাঁচ বছর চলুক।” — জ্যোতি বসু (১৮ সেপ্টেম্বর)।

“মর্টেক (যোজনা কমিশনের ডেপুটি চেয়ারম্যান মর্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়া) ভুলভাল কাজ করছেন। উনি এক সময় বিশ্বব্যাপ্তি কাজ করেছিলেন। এখন তাঁকে মানসিকতা ভালভাবে হবে।” — জ্যোতি বসু (২৪ সেপ্টেম্বর)।

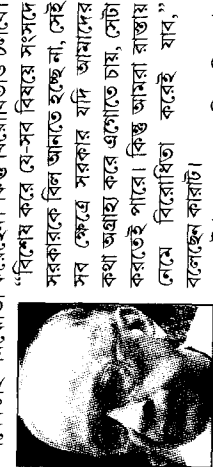
মাত্র পাঁচ দিনের ব্যবধানে সি পি এমের প্রবীণ নেতা বসুর মুখে এক বার কেন্দ্রের প্রশংসা এবং তার পরেই কড়া সমালোচনায় কি স্ববিরোধিতা আছে? যদি থাকে, সেটা কিন্তু বসুর কথায় নয়, তা আছে সি পি এম তথা বামপন্থীদের রাজনৈতিক বাধাবাহকতার মধ্যেই। বামপন্থীদের এই রাজনৈতিক বাধাবাহকতার সৃষ্টি হয়েছে দিল্লিতে কংগ্রেসের নেতৃত্বাধীন জোট সরকারকে বাইরে থেকে সমর্থনের সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার ফলে। এত দিন পশ্চিমবঙ্গ, কেবল ও ত্রিপুরায় কংগ্রেস-বিরোধিতাকেই বাম রাজনীতির মূল ভিত্তি হিসাবে গড়ে তোলার পরে এ বার দিল্লিতে কংগ্রেসকে সরকার চালাতে প্রয়োজনীয় সমর্থন জোগাচ্ছেন বামপন্থীরা। বি জে পি-কে ক্ষমতা থেকে দূরে সরিয়ে রাখার তাগিদ থেকেই যে তাঁরা এখন কংগ্রেসের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছেন, সি পি এম-সি পি আইয়ের নেতৃত্বাধীন স্বীকার করতে দ্বিধা করেন না।

কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে এই গলাগলির জেরে দলের নিচু উলায় কর্মী-সমর্থকদের মধ্যে যে বিভ্রান্তি ও সংশয় আসতে পারে, তা আন্দাজ করেই বাম নেতারা এখন দু’মুখো কৌশল নিচ্ছেন। এক দিকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন বা কংগ্রেসের সভানেত্রী সনিয়ার সঙ্গে সি পি এমের হুলকিফেন, সিংহ সুরজিৎ, বসু, সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি এবং সি পি আইয়ের এ বি বর্ধনেরা প্রায়শই এখন আলাপ-আলোচনা করছেন। অন্য দিকে সরকারের বিভিন্ন কাজকর্ম নিয়ে মাঝেমাঝেই প্রকাশ্যে সমালোচনা করে বাজার গরম করে তুলছেন তাঁরা। প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশি লাগি (এফ ডি আই) নিয়ে যেমন কয়েক দিন আগেই তাঁরা বিরোধিতায় সরব হয়েছিলেন। এখন যেমন যোজনা কমিশনের উপদেষ্টা কমিটিতে বিশ্বব্যাপ্তি ও মার্কিন উপদেষ্টা সংস্থা ম্যাকিনসের প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা বসুরা।



দেশের বিমানবন্দরগুলির বেসরকারীকরণের সরকারি উদ্যোগে গোল্ডস্ট্র-আপস্টি জা নিয়ে পুরো বাম দলগুলি সুর নরম করছে। আবার একই প্রক্ষেপে রাস্তায় নেমে আসে।

মুম্বই, দিল্লি-সহ দেশের প্রধান প্রধান বিমানবন্দর ধর্মঘট ডেকে বিমান চলাচল বন্ধ করে দেওয়ার হুমকি দিয়েছে। এই দু’মুখো কৌশল যে বামপন্থীরা সচেতন ভাবেই নিয়েছেন, তার ইঙ্গিত কয়েক দিন আগে দিল্লিতে সি পি এম নেতা প্রকাশ কারাটের কথায় পাওয়া গিয়েছে। তাঁর বক্তব্য, কেন্দ্রের কংগ্রেস সরকারকে সমর্থনের প্রসঙ্গে বামপন্থীরা অনেকটাই সমঝোতা করছেন। কিন্তু বিরোধিতাও চলবে।



এই রাস্তায় নেমে বিরোধিতা বৃহৎ প্রকাশ ঘটেছে যোজনা কমিশনের উপদেষ্টা কমিটিতে বিদেশিদের আমন্ত্রণ জানানোর ঘটনাকে কেন্দ্র করে। প্রথমে বামপন্থী অর্থনীতিবিদরা ওই কমিটি থেকে ইস্তফা দিলেন। তাপে পড়ে বিদেশি উপদেষ্টারাও সরে গেলেন। তার পরে বসুকে দিয়ে মর্টেকের সমালোচনা। শুক্রবার তিনি মর্টেকের সিদ্ধান্তের কড়া সমালোচনা করে আবার জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন,

যোজনা কমিশনে বিদেশি উপদেষ্টাদের নেওয়ার ব্যাপারটা বামপন্থীরা কিছুতেই মেনে নেন না। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বিদেশ থেকে ফিরলে এই নিয়ে কথা হবে। নিউ ইয়র্কে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে সফররত মর্টেক সাংবাদিকদের বলেছেন, দিল্লি ফেরার পরে ওই বিদেশি উপদেষ্টাদের প্রসঙ্গে আলোচনা হবে। মর্টেকের সমালোচনায় বামেরা কয়েক দিন ধরে সরব হলেও তাঁরা যে মর্টেকের ইস্তফার দাবি নিয়ে বেশি চাপাচাপি করবেন না, সেটা এ দিন বসুর কথাতেই পরিষ্কার। সাংবাদিকদের প্রশ্নের উত্তরে তিনি বলেছেন, তাঁকে ইস্তফা দিতে হবে কেন? তিনি বরং তাঁর মানসিকতা পাল্টান!

সমর্থন ও বিরোধিতার এই কৌশল নিয়ে চলতে হবে জেনেই পাছে কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে মতাদর্শগত সংঘাতে জড়িয়ে পড়তে হয়, সেই জন্য সনিয়া ও মনমোহনের পীড়াপীড়ি সত্বেও বামপন্থীরা সরকারে যোগ দেননি বা ইউ পি এ সরকারের অভিন্ন নুনতম কর্মসূচিতে স্বাক্ষর করেননি।

বি জে পি এবং সজ্ঞ পরিবারকে ঠেকাতে মরিয়া বামপন্থীরা এখন এ ভাবেই অনেক বেশি করে কংগ্রেসের কাছে চলে আসছেন। কাকতালীয় হলেও ভারতের মতো বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্রে কমিউনিস্টরা কী করে সফল হচ্ছেন, তা দেখতে চিনা কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির এক দল প্রতিনিধি এই সপ্তাহেই কলকাতা ঘুরে গিয়েছেন।

# Basu calls Montek 'World Bank man'

9-pp- up A

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, September 24

WITH NO hint yet of what the Congress-led UPA government will do about Left objections to the involvement of foreign experts in the Planning Commission, veteran CPI(M) leader Jyoti Basu today took a vicious swipe at the Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, calling him "a World Bank man."

"He's doing everything wrong. He's a World Bank man. He belongs to the

World Bank," the former Bengal CM said before attending his party's state secretariat meeting.

Asked if he would want Ahluwalia to quit, Basu lowered his pitch and said, "Why should he resign? He should change his mind. We don't need foreign experts in the Planning Commission. We have enough economists in the country. What will the foreign experts do?"

His party, Basu clarified, was not opposed to accepting funds from the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank. "We do have a number of World

Bank and ADB-funded projects in Bengal," he said, but stressed that he would talk to the Prime Minister after the latter was back from his tour abroad. "Their people (World Bank, ADB representatives) have resigned from the Planning Commission. Our people (five Left economists), too, have resigned. I do not know what is going on," he said.

Sources said the CPI(M) would also kick up a storm over the Centre's reported move to induct several World Bank, ADB and McKinsey representatives in several other central bodies

and consultative committees. "If the government inducts Bank representatives into its various bodies because they give us funds, it amounts to accepting the view that the lender is a dispassionate judge of the recipient's interests, a view whose untenability is obvious from the moneylender-kisan relationship in the Indian countryside," a central committee member of the CPI(M) said.

In New York, Ahluwalia said the issue would be discussed once he was back in Delhi early next week.



'Montek (right) is doing everything wrong. He should change his mind. We don't need foreign experts in the Planning Commission'

JYOTI BASU

# Tainted ministers: SC notice to govt

Agencies

New Delhi, September 24

THE SUPREME Court has issued notice to the Congress-led UPA government on a petition challenging the inclusion of "tainted" persons in the Council of Ministers headed by Manmohan Singh.

The notice was issued by a Bench - headed by Justice N. Santosh Hegde - while hearing a review petition filed by Manoj Narula seeking reconsideration of the court's earlier order dismissing his PIL on the issue.

The petitioner had challenged the inclusion of Laloo Prasad Yadav, Mohd Taslimuddin, MAA Fatmi and Jai Prakash Yadav in the Council of Ministers and made them respondents in the petition on which the Bench issued notice yesterday while hearing it in the chamber.

The petition will now be listed for hearing in the court. Taking note of the debate in Parliament on "tainted" ministers, the court, on July 16, had said no law was violated by inclusion of charge-sheeted persons in the Council of Ministers and dismissed the petition seeking a ban on inclusion of such persons.

"The matter is being debated in Parliament. We will see if Parliament comes out with legislation on this issue", the Bench had said while refusing to entertain the petition.

## Targeting 'tainted'

- The SC issued notice to the Centre on a petition challenging the inclusion of 'tainted' ministers in Cabinet
- The inclusion of Laloo Prasad, Md Taslimuddin, MAA Fatmi and Jai Prakash Yadav in Council of Ministers was challenged
- The petitioner cited PM's statement in Bangkok saying that 'tainted' persons should not be made ministers
- The Prime Minister said all parties must evolve a code of conduct and ethics
- Railway Minister Laloo Prasad said he would abide the SC order

The petitioner, while seeking a review, had pointed out that no such debate had taken place in Parliament on the issue of tainted persons being given ministerial posts.

Narula, in his review petition, cited the statement of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Bangkok saying that "tainted" persons should not be made ministers but, for that purpose, all parties should sit together and evolve a code of conduct and ethics.

The petitioner had said the ministers were required to carry out important constitutional func-

tions and should be of impeccable integrity.

Claiming that the inclusion of "tainted" persons breached the terms of oath given in Schedule III of the Constitution, counsel Anil Kumar Jha had contended that the charge-sheeted persons did not inspire the confidence of the people to discharge the obligation cast under the oath provision.

The Bench had, on July 16, asked the petitioner "who should decide which persons should be inducted in the ministry and at what stage?" When it did not get any satisfactory answer from petitioner's counsel, it dismissed the petition observing that there was no violation of any statute on the issue.

## Laloo to respect order

RJD president and Railway Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav today said he - along with his party ministers - would abide by any order of the Supreme Court on the issue relating to 'tainted' ministers in the Union Government.

"We have full faith in judiciary and we will respect the order of the Supreme Court on this issue", Prasad told reporters when his attention was drawn to the notice issued by the court to the Congress-led UPA government on a petition challenging the inclusion of ministers headed by Manmohan Singh.

# CMP: Chidambaram explains stance

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 22. The United Progressive Alliance Government told the Left parties today that a note would be sent soon explaining its position on the contentious issue of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the telecom sector. It said the Bill providing rural employment guarantee would be introduced in the winter session of Parliament.

At two separate meetings here, the Union Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, conveyed the Government's position on various issues raised by the Left parties and the progress on the implementation of various aspects of the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP).

Mr. Chidambaram hosted a lunch for the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau members, Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury, and a dinner for the CPI general secretary, V.B. Bardhan, and its national secretary, D. Raja. The Congress MP and National Advisory

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Committee member Jairam Ramesh, was also present.

## FDI caps

The Left parties had objected to the proposal to raise the FDI caps in the key sectors of insurance, telecom and aviation and sent papers to the Government detailing concerns in telecom and insurance.

They took exception to the UPA Government making policy announcements without consulting them. It was said that the discussions should be held in the early stages of policy-formation and not be presented with a *fait accompli*.

## Inflation

Mr. Chidambaram briefed the Left leaders about the state of the economy, the steps taken to check the inflation that climbed over 8 per cent, and the appointment of a Competition Commission and another for entrepreneurship in the unorganised and informal sector.

He elaborated the steps taken to control inflation, essentially

HD-11  
on account of the rise in international oil prices.

He said that during the last three months, there was a revival of the economy and the manufacturing sector and a steady FDI inflow.

## Austerity drive

The Left leaders were also informed that the Government planned to have a strict vigil on expenditure and that the austerity drive awaited Dr. Singh's return.

Mr. Ramesh, briefing them on the path drawn for the implementation of the NCMP, said the parts committing the Government to the setting up of various Councils and Commissions, reviews and legislation should be completed by mid-November.

The Government had already established a non-lapsable *Prathmik Shiksha Kosh* (elementary education fund) which would be utilised exclusively for elementary education, including the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and nutritional support to mid-day meal scheme.

# Left five line up against Montek

22/9  
OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 21: The bonhomie after the Prime Minister's Saturday luncheon came under strain today with five economists on the Planning Commission's advisory bodies threatening to quit unless foreign consultants were removed.

Making their stand clear, the five — all close to the CPM — sent a letter to deputy chairperson Montek Singh Ahluwalia who had yesterday ruled out removing World Bank and Asian Development Bank representatives from the commission's consultative bodies.

"We cannot sit together with representatives of these agencies in these committees. We would urge you to reconsider your decision to have these representatives, failing which we would have to withdraw from these bodies," the academics said.

Four of the protesters — Prabhat Patnaik, Utsa Patnaik, C.P. Chandrashekhkar and Jayati Ghosh — are economists at Jawaharlal Nehru University. The fifth, T.M. Thomas Issac, is associated with Kerala's Centre for Development Studies.

Before giving in the letter, the economists met CPM politburo member Sitaram Yechury at the party headquarters. They were roped into the committees after the UPA government took charge at the Centre.

Although the quit note points to a sudden rise in Left temperatures, core Planning Commission officials — even Left-leaning members like Abhijit Sen and Anwarul Hoda — seem to be firmly behind Ahluwalia on the controversy.

"There is no dissent within the Planning Commission. We have talked among ourselves, there is no dissent. The Planning Commission is unanimous," Hoda said, terming the letter "unfortunate".

However, the CPM lay the blame on Ahluwalia saying it was his "needless provocation" that had forced the economists' hand.

In a statement, the party said Ahluwalia's remarks came despite Prime Minister Manmohan Singh assuring the Left the matter would be taken up at the next UPA-Left coordination committee meeting later this month.

Only last Saturday, the CPM top brass — H.S. Surjeet, Jyoti Basu and Sitaram Yechury — had expressed satisfaction with the talks they had with Singh and Sonia Gandhi over lunch.

THE TELEGRAPH

# New partnership of trust



**Nilova Roy Chaudhury**  
in New York

Sept 21. — Over an hour-long breakfast of “quiche”, fresh fruit and coffee, a new phase in the Indo-US partnership (“never been as close as they were at present”) was given shape today in the first meeting between President Mr George W Bush and Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. It was Dr Singh’s first major engagement in this city and “the excellent atmospherics” during the “very relaxed” meeting were outlined in a joint statement issued after the meeting, which carried forward the Next Steps in the Strategic Partnership (NSSP) between the two countries.

Dr Singh is among a handful of leaders Mr Bush is meeting during his brief stay in the city and he was “appreciative” of Mr Bush’s gesture in taking time out from his “hectic re-election campaign schedule”, foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran said.

While in the joint statement, Mr Bush and Dr Singh “recognised the importance of working closely together in the war against terrorism and in combating proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems”, there was little reference to specifics. India “broadly outlined” its concerns on cross-border terrorism and stressed that for the composite dialogue process with Pakistan to go forward and succeed, terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir had to be contained, Mr Saran, who was present at the talks, said.

Mr Bush will also be meeting President Pervez Musharraf. And while he would “not be carrying messages”, the USA “was appreciative” of India’s concerns regarding the “integral link” between the talks process and elimination of terrorism in J&K. Mr Bush and Dr Singh spoke of “promoting democracy” in Iraq and Afghanistan as a goal beyond the control of terrorism in the region.

“Pakistan was not the focus of the talks,” the foreign secretary said. Neither was any mention made of seeking US support for India’s candidature for a permanent seat at the UN. Instead, the focus was on the India-USA partnership, that would “deepen and broaden” to include a significant rise in military to military exchanges.

Another report on page 4

TIME FOR FRESH FRUIT AND COFFEE: Mr George W Bush greets Dr Manmohan Singh at New York’s Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on Tuesday. — AFP

# Mammohan's CMP warrantee to Left

HTC and Agencies  
New Delhi, September 18

PRIME MINISTER Mammohan Singh today assured Left leaders that most of their concerns over the implementation of the common minimum programme would be taken care of in the next few weeks. He told CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet and former chief minister Jyoti Basu over lunch that the implementation of the CMP issues raised by them was "in the pipeline".

CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechuri said the lunch meeting, where UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi was also present, did not go into the Left's differences with the government on economic policy. "The Prime Minister told us that much of what we had raised would take

Bank experts on the Planning Commission's advisory panels would be discussed at the next UPA-Left Front meeting at the end of this month.

Asked about the differences, Yechuri said: "Our views are there. They will be taken up at the coordination committee meeting after the Prime Minister's return from abroad."

During the meeting, the CPI(M) leaders were told that the government's initiatives on the employment guarantee scheme, the food-for-work scheme and rural infrastructure projects would be "in place" in weeks.

Asked about Basu's statement on withdrawing support if the UPA government did not abide by the CMP, Yechuri said today's meeting was convened only because "Basu came to Delhi after a few

months and the Prime Minister and Sonia Gandhi wanted to meet him" and not because of any threat.

Yechuri said Basu had a "good and very sumptuous lunch" and "we wished the Prime Minister success for his visit to the United States". The groundwork for the meeting was done by Yechuri, who had separate meetings with Sonia and the Prime Minister.

Asked whether the CPI(M) would seek the ouster of Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who was with the Prime Minister just before the luncheon meeting, Yechuri said, "We are not seeking it."

In the past weeks, the CPI(M) has maintained that while it has criticised proposed policy changes, it was also worried about the implementation of the CMP.



Sonia Gandhi and Jyoti Basu at the Prime Minister's residence on Saturday.

tangible shape soon," he said. Yechuri told reporters that issues like the Left's opposition to increased FDI in the telecom sector and the presence of World

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# Differences with Congress have narrowed, says Jyoti Basu

By Our Special Correspondent

**KOLKATA, SEPT. 19.** Differences between the Left and the Congress on the Government's approach to key economic issues narrowed following last week's meeting between the leaders of the United Progressive Alliance and Communist Party of India (Marxist), the CPI(M) Polit Bureau member, Jyoti Basu, said today. "We have impressed upon the Congress that we need each other to keep the BJP in check. We requested the UPA

leadership, notably the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi, to ensure that the Government functioned for the benefit of the people," Mr. Basu said.

Mr. Basu, also the former West Bengal Chief Minister, told *The Hindu* today that he had assured both the Prime Minister and Ms. Gandhi that the Left would like the Government to complete its full term.

The topic came up for discussion on September 18 at a meeting in the Prime Minister's

residence in New Delhi. "We want the UPA to stay in office for five years. We have our differences but we will have to try to sort them out from time to time," he said. "Since the Government is run by a coalition, the UPA needs our support as much as we, in the Left parties, require them."

Saturday's meeting, which lasted for nearly two hours, was also attended by CPI (M) Polit Bureau members, Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Sitaram Yechury. The Congress president

and UPA chairperson, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, was present.

## Assurance

The Prime Minister assured the CPI(M) leadership that the UPA would adopt a policy initiative in consultation with the coalition partners and prioritise policies that the Left considered beneficial to the common man.

Issues such as the enactment of a law guaranteeing employment, initiating schemes such as food for work and midday meals and focussing on health in rural areas would be given precedence.

The outlines for such policies would be drawn up soon, Dr. Singh had told the Left leaders.

Saturday's meeting was convened at Ms. Gandhi's behest to reassure the Left that the UPA would not take any policy decision without consulting them. In the past few weeks, the Left has been openly critical of the Centre's decisions on foreign direct investment, provident fund interest rate and international funding agencies as consultants.

"The Government may be compelled to take certain decisions even in face of opposition from us. But, it should, nevertheless, take the Leftists into confidence," Mr. Basu said.

He also suggested that the UPA - Left Coordination Committee should meet regularly and sort out differences. "In fact, I told him (Mr. Singh) that the coordination committee should meet after he returns [from his] foreign trip. He has agreed."

## 'Stability depends on sincerity to CMP'

By Our Staff Reporter

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPT. 19.** The stability of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government depends on its sincerity in implementing the Common Minimum Programme (CMP), the CPI (M) Polit Bureau member, Sitaram Yechury, said, today.

Speaking at the All-India Professional Students' Convention, organised by the Students' Federation of India (SFI), he said the Government could not survive a single day without the Left's support.

He said that the SFI's demand for a Central legislation on admissions to professional colleges was welcome. It was

imperative that social control was effected over institutions which had adopted a "mercenary approach" towards education. The MPs of the Left parties would exert pressure on the Government for a legislation based on the Model Act for Government control over private educational institutions brought out by the SFI, he said.

He said that though the CMP was not a Left programme, the Left parties had endorsed its programmes which, if implemented, would put the economic reforms on a pro-people path. The Left's basic agenda was about the thrust of the reforms as it was the character of the reforms that was important and not the process.

"If reforms are pro-people, we are pro-reform. If the economic reforms are pro-capitalist, then we are anti-reform. A lot of people have been using canine phraseology these days, asking us if we will only bark or will also bite. It is not a question of a single Left leader barking or biting. If the Government sincerely implements the CMP, we will continue to support it. If it violates the CMP then we will mount pressure on the Government to reverse such actions," Mr. Yechury said.

The pressure would not be just about discussions with the Prime Minister but would also be about organising people's struggles against such decisions.



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MANMOHAN LEAVES ON 8-DAY FOREIGN TOUR ←

# ‘India to carry forward economic reforms’

By Harish Khare

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19.** The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today left on an eight-day foreign trip that will take him to London, New York and Geneva. He will address the United Nations General Assembly and is scheduled to meet the Presidents of the United States and Pakistan, George Bush and Pervez Musharraf.

He will hold talks with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in London.

According to a senior ministerial colleague, the visit can only enhance the Prime Minister's international stature.

“World leaders will see a basically decent person, an upright man, a competent administrator and a mature politician.”

Dr. Singh has packed in a number of activities in his five-day stay in New York, including a meeting with the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal*, another meeting with the Chief Executive Officers and a full-length interview with the Public Broadcasting Service.

“This time the Americans will see a less tongue-tied and more agile Indian Prime Minister,” added an aide.

Over the last few days, Dr. Singh and his aides have been

finetuning the talking points for the meetings with Mr. Bush and Gen. Musharraf.

It is learnt that the Indian side will be keen to impress upon the American leaders that the new Government in New Delhi is no less friendly towards the U.S. than the Vajpayee Government.

The Prime Minister is expected to point out that the 1998-2004 period was merely a continuation of the initiatives that began during the 1991-1996 tenure of the Congress Government led by P.V. Narasimha Rao. The second point that the Indian side will want to put across to the interlocutors in America is the continuity in economic reforms at home.

But it will also be added that the United Progressive Alliance Government had to be necessarily mindful of the need to make the reforms process relevant and acceptable to the vast sections of the population.

And, it is understood, that Mr. Bush would want to hear the Indian perceptions of the India-Pakistan relationship. Dr. Singh intends to tell him that the peace process was moving forward and that the new Government was for normal, peaceful relations with all the neighbours in South Asia.

There may be differences in

perceptions between the Indian and American sides on Iraq and Iran.

On Iraq, the UPA Government's position remains the same as that of the Vajpayee Government: no Indian troops, no dismemberment of Iraq, preference for the United Nations route and willingness to participate in reconstruction in Iraq.

## Meeting with Musharraf

As far as meeting with Gen. Musharraf, tentatively scheduled for September 24, is concerned, the Indian expectation is that it should be a “normal” meeting, without too much hype.

The Indian side will not be averse to speaking its mind, politely but firmly, about its concerns on cross-border terrorism.

There may not be any dramatic announcements. In any case, the two leaders will be meeting again in Dhaka. The accent will be on the talk process.

## Test of skills

Though this is his second foreign trip as Prime Minister, this will be the first test of his diplomatic skills. His hope will be that the trip would deepen the developing image of a competent Prime Minister at work.

# বামেদের খুশি করে তিন সিদ্ধান্ত

দীপ্তেন্দ্র রায়চৌধুরী • নয়াদিল্লি

১৮ সেপ্টেম্বর: প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ও শাসক জোটের চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গাঁধীর সঙ্গে কথা বলে জ্যোতি বসু সন্তুষ্ট। মাত্র ক’দিন আগেই ‘সরকারের কাজে আমরা সন্তুষ্ট নই’, এই মন্তব্য করে সরকারের সঙ্গে বামেদের মন-কষাকষির ধারণাটির সূত্রপাত কিন্তু জ্যোতি বসুই করেছিলেন। আজ বৃত্তটি সম্পূর্ণ করে সেই বসুই বুঝিয়ে দিলেন মন-কষাকষির অবসান হয়েছে।

সেটা স্বাভাবিক। কারণ বৈঠকেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী তাঁদের জানিয়েছেন এমন তিনটি বিষয়, যা তাঁদের মনের মতো। এক, শিক্ষা সেস কাল থেকে চালু হচ্ছে। দুই, আগামী মাস থেকে প্রথম পর্যায়ে ১৫০টি গ্রামে শুরু হচ্ছে কাজের বদলে খাদ্য কর্মসূচি এবং তিন, সংসদের শীতকালীন অধিবেশনে গ্রামীণ কর্মনিশ্চয়তা বিল আনার প্রস্তুতি চলছে। এ ছাড়া, তথ্য জানার অধিকার সংক্রান্ত আইনেরও সংশোধন করা হবে। পরে একটি অনুষ্ঠানেও এই বিষয়গুলি জানান প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তিনি বলেন, অর্থমন্ত্রী তাঁকে লিখিত ভাবে জানিয়েছেন, শিক্ষা সেস থেকে পাওয়া অর্থ দীর্ঘমেয়াদি প্রকল্পে ধারাবাহিক ভাবে খরচ করা যাবে। স্পষ্টতই, অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচির অন্তর্গত কয়েকটি পছন্দসই প্রকল্প রূপায়ণের সম্ভাবনায় বামেদেরা খুশি।

বৈঠকের পরে বসু বলেন, “আমি বলেছি, আমরা চাই এই সরকার পাঁচ বছর চলুক। আমাদের মধ্যে কিছু মতপার্থক্য আছে। সেগুলি মেটানো দরকার।” এর জন্য আরও ঘন ঘন সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠক হওয়া দরকার বলে মন্তব্য করেন তিনি। আর সেই সঙ্গেই জানিয়ে দেন, মতবিরোধ সত্ত্বেও সরকার যদি কোনও নীতিগত সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে চায়, তা হলেও তাঁদের জানিয়ে তা নিতে হবে।

আর প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সংক্ষিপ্ত মন্তব্য, “আমরা সমস্ত বিষয় নিয়ে সরকারের সব শরিক-সমর্থকের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করতে অস্বীকারবদ্ধ এবং সকলের প্রত্যাশা পূরণ করব।”

আজকের বৈঠকটিকে ‘ঘরোয়া’ বলে মন্তব্য করে তিনি বলেন, “জোট সরকার যা করেছে এবং যা করার পরিকল্পনা রয়েছে, তা নিয়ে কথা হয়েছে।” আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে আলোচনা হবে তিনি বিদেশ থেকে ফেরার পরে কংগ্রেস-সরকার-বাম সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকে। কালই ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি অনুযায়ী কয়েকটি ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভা, বাড়ানো হয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারি কর্মচারীদের মহার্ঘ ভাতা। ফলে আজকের বৈঠকের পরিবেশেও অনেক বেশি উষ্ণতা এসে যায়।

ইতিমধ্যে কংগ্রেসের তরফ থেকে বিশেষ করে বামেদের কাছে অনুরোধ করা হয়েছে যে, তাঁরা যেন প্রকাশ্যে বারবার এই ধরনের মন্তব্য করে সরকারকে বিভ্রত না-করেন। বিরোধের বিষয়টি নিয়ে যে কোনও শীর্ষ নেতা প্রধানমন্ত্রী বা শাসক জোটের চেয়ারপার্সনের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে পারেন বলে তাঁদের জানানো হয়েছে। আজও একই কথা ফের বলা হয়েছে কি না, তা অবশ্য নিশ্চিত ভাবে জানা যায়নি।

তবে বৈঠকের পর সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি আজ তাঁর সুর অত্যন্ত নরম করে বলেন, “কোনও নির্দিষ্ট বিরোধের অবসানের জন্য এই বৈঠক হয়নি। জ্যোতি বসু প্রায় তিন মাস পরে দিল্লি এসেছেন। মনমোহন সিংহ ও সনিয়া গাঁধী দু’জনেই তাঁর সঙ্গে কথা বলতে চেয়েছিলেন। তাই আজকের মধ্যাহ্নভোজের ব্যবস্থা।”

সেই সঙ্গে ইয়েচুরি জানান, “আমাদের দাবি সম্পর্কে খুব শীঘ্রই (সরকারের তরফে) ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।” কী সেই বিষয়গুলি? ইয়েচুরি জানান, কাজের নিশ্চয়তা, দুপুরের খাবারের ব্যবস্থা, গ্রামীণ পরিকাঠামো ও কল্যাণ ইত্যাদি। তিনি বলেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী আমাদের জানিয়েছেন, এই বিষয়গুলি বিভিন্ন পর্যায়ে খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে এবং কয়েক সপ্তাহের মধ্যেই ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।”

সি পি এম নেতারা জানিয়েছেন, আর যা কিছু বিতর্কিত বিষয় আছে, তা প্রধানমন্ত্রী বিদেশ সফর সেরে ফেরার পর সমন্বয় কমিটিতে আলোচিত হবে। বিদেশ সফরের জন্য প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে শুভেচ্ছাও জানিয়েছেন বসু, সীতারাম ও বৈঠকে উপস্থিত তৃতীয় নেতা হরকিষেন সিংহ সুরজিৎ।

আজকের বৈঠকের আগেই অবশ্য এটা স্পষ্ট ছিল, বৈঠকে বেশি হইচই বাধানোর ইচ্ছা বামেদের নেই। তাঁরা কিছুদিন ধরে ক্ষুব্ধ ছিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহনের একটি মন্তব্যে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেছিলেন, তিনি শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রে বাম ও

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

## বামেদের খুশি করে

প্রথম পাতার পর

দক্ষিণপন্থী দুই ধরনের মৌলবাদেরই বিরুদ্ধে। শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রে বাম মৌলবাদ বলার অর্থ কী, তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলেছিলেন সি পি আইয়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধন এবং শিক্ষাবিদ ইরফান হাবিব, প্রভাত পট্টনায়কেরা। এই মন-কষাকষিরই প্রতিফলন ঘটেছিল সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে প্রথমে এ বি বর্ধন ও পরে জ্যোতি বসুর অসন্তোষ জানানোর মধ্যে।

সি পি এম পলিটব্যুরোর বৈঠকের পর আজ এক বিবৃতিতেও কিন্তু ‘কোনও না কোনও অস্থিলায় রাজনীতিতে সাম্প্রদায়িক কর্মসূচি আনার জন্য বিজেপির প্রয়াসের’ বিরোধিতায় নামার জন্য সমস্ত ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ শক্তির কাছে আহ্বান জানানো হয়েছে।

সেইসঙ্গেই মনে করিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে এ বিষয়ে সর্বাধিক দায়িত্ব সরকার ও কংগ্রেস দলের এবং তাঁদের সেই ‘রাজনৈতিক ইচ্ছা ও আদর্শগত দৃঢ়তা দেখাতে হবে’।

এর পাশাপাশি সরকারকে জনদরদী কর্মসূচি নেওয়ার আহ্বানও জানানো হয়েছে।

অর্থাৎ, আপাতত মন-কষাকষি নেই ঠিকই; কিন্তু সব কিছু একেবারে মসৃণ-মধুর, এমনও নয়।

19 SEP 2004

# Cabinet clears ordinance to repeal Pota

New Delhi: Implementing a promise made in the UPA coalition agenda, the Union cabinet on Friday approved an ordinance for repealing the controversial anti-terror law, Pota, and cleared amendments to a "milder" existing law to check terror.

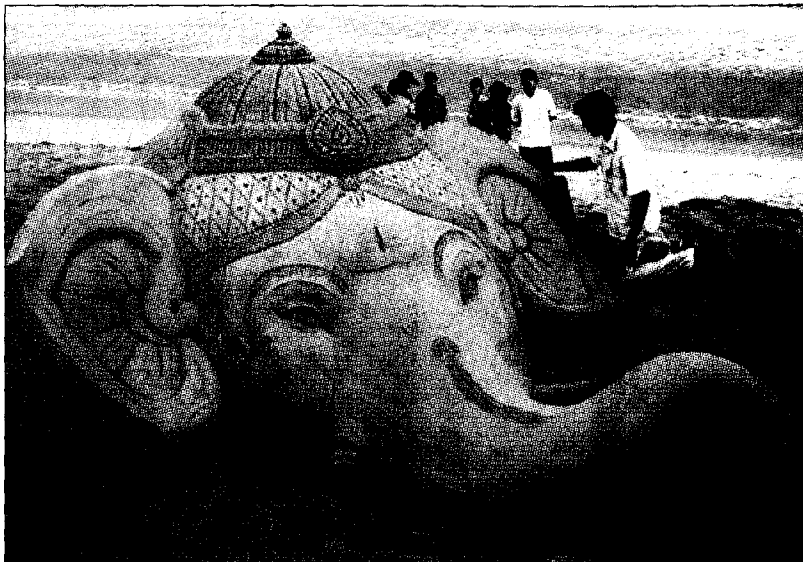
"The government will issue two ordinances for repealing Pota and amending the existing Unlawful Activities (prevention) Act simultaneously soon," Union home minister Shivraj Patil said here. The ordinances are to be sent for approval to President A P J Abdul Kalam who returns on Saturday from a trip abroad.

The cabinet decision is of special significance to Dravidian parties MDMK and

► **BJP PLANS STIR:** The BJP said the government's decision to repeal Pota amounted to compromising with the country's internal security just because of vote-bank politics and said BJP-ruled states would seriously consider enacting a similar anti-terror law. The party said it would protest the UPA government's action from "Parliament to streets". PTI

DMK which had conducted a spirited campaign against the "misuse" of the law in the wake of the arrest of MDMK leader Vaiko and some of his party leaders. MDMK and DMK had supported Pota as part of the NDA coalition. Their rival AIADMK is strongly opposed to the repeal.

Asserting that the repeal of Pota, as promised by the Congress-led UPA government in its common minimum programme (CMP), was necessary, Patil said "otherwise the provisions of the act would have continued in the cases even after its automatic lapse next month." PTI



An artisan works on a sand sculpture of the elephant god Ganesh in Puri

## Centre hikes DA by 3% Approves 2 Ordinances To Boost Market

New Delhi: Ahead of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's crucial US visit to woo investors, the government on Friday took a slew of measures to stem prices, strengthen financial markets and announced a 3% hike in dearness allowance for its employees.

Promising to maintain a strict vigil and ensure adequate availability of essential commodities, including sugar, in the coming months to rein in prices, finance minister P Chidambaram said more fiscal and monetary measures would be taken to contain inflation, which fell by a substantial 0.52 per cent to 7.81 per cent.

Stating that the recent rationalisation in the duty structure of edible oils would have a direct bearing on the prices of vanaspati, Chidambaram told reporters after meetings of the cabinet and its committees on economic affairs and prices that government would also allow import of raw sugar to keep the sweetener prices under check.

For its employees, the government gave a 3% DA hike ahead of festive season, a move that would entail a burden of Rs 1072 crore this year and Rs 1608 crore annually.

Simultaneously, the cabinet approved two ordinances to amend relevant acts for

strengthening and regulating stock exchanges by corporatising them and empowering the Reserve Bank of India with licensing powers for cooperatives (serious of engaging in banking activities).

Chidambaram said that an ordinance was approved to amend the Securities Contracts (regulation) Act, 1956 and Depositories Act, 1996 which would help

corporatisation a demutualisation stock exchanges.

Likewise, an ordinance was also approved for amending Banking Regulations (amendment and miscellaneous provisions) Act to enable the RBI issue banking licence to multi-state cooperative societies.

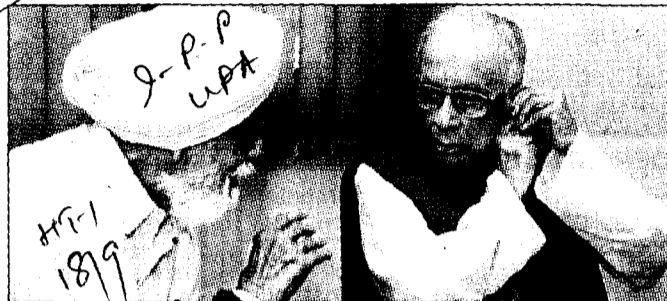
Following up on its earlier decision to rescue the troubled private sector Global Trust Bank by merging it with a stronger public sector bank, the cabinet gave post-facto approval to the amalgamation of the bank with Oriental Bank of

Commerce. As part of efforts to tone up the industry to face domestic and global competition, a decision was taken to set up National Manufacturing Competitive Council (NMCC) and constitute another commission for enterprises in the unorganised/informal sector to promote units under these sectors. Agencies

## Tamil to be classical language

New Delhi: The Centre on Friday decided to declare Tamil a "classical language", the first to be recognised so in the country. The Union cabinet, which met on Friday morning, decided to create a new category of "classical languages" and put Tamil in this category.

Information and broadcasting minister S Jaipal Reddy told reporters after the cabinet meeting that the government would consider putting Sanskrit and other languages in this category depending on their "heritage and legacy". An expert committee of Sahitya Akademi, which had been set up to look into it, has suggested strict criteria for declaration of languages as classical languages, he said. Agencies



Basu with Surjeet at the CPI(M) politburo meet in Delhi on Friday.

## No compromise on FDI, Basu to tell PM & Sonia

**HTC and Agencies**  
*New Delhi, September 17*

JYOTI BASU will meet Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi over lunch tomorrow to explain why the CPI(M) is opposed to an increase in FDI in the telecom sector and having World Bank and Asian Development Bank representatives in the Planning Commission.

"I'll meet the UPA chairman and the Prime Minister tomorrow," the former chief minister told reporters on the sidelines of his party's politburo meet today.

CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechuri said the UPA-Left Coordination Committee would meet sometime later this month after the Prime Minister returns from his foreign tour. A few days ago, he had met Singh and Sonia Gandhi to voice the Left parties' protest against the two issues.

Yechuri described today's politburo meeting as a routine affair where, he said, even

strategy for the Maharashtra polls was discussed.

Yechuri and CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet will accompany Basu to the Prime Minister's residence.

"We've stated our differences. The government has to tell us what it is doing about these issues," Yechuri said. "There is no bargaining point. If the government has not taken up some issues (like FDI) at today's Cabinet meeting, it shows it is considering our point of view."

What will Basu discuss with the PM and Sonia? Yechuri said, albeit in a lighter vein, that since it would be a luncheon meeting "food will have to be the main agenda".

Back to his serious self, Yechuri denied that the CPI(M) patriarch had ever been annoyed with the UPA. There was no major grievance, only some minor unhappiness with some pronouncements of the Centre, he said.

## কথার উষ্ণ আবহ চায় বাম-কংগ্রেস দু'পক্ষই

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৭ সেপ্টেম্বর: রাজনৈতিক উত্তেজনার পারদ চড়তে দেবেন না, এমন ইঙ্গিত বাম নেতারা দিয়েছিলেন গতকালই। আজ তা আরও স্পষ্ট করে দিলেন সি পি এম নেতৃত্ব। এ কে জি ভবনে পলিটব্যুরো বৈঠকের ফাঁকে সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি আজ জানিয়েও দিলেন, তাঁরা সরকারের কাজে অসন্তুষ্ট নন। বড় জোর বলা যেতে পারে, স্কেভ সীমিত শুধু কতগুলি প্রস্তাব ও মন্তব্যে। ইয়েচুরি যখন এ কথা বলছেন, তখন মনমোহন সিংহের মন্ত্রিসভা বাম অনুমোদিত ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি অনুযায়ী তিন তিনটি সিদ্ধান্ত নিল। সরকারের কাছে বামপন্থীদের মূল দাবিই ছিল, ন্যূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচির সৃষ্টি ও পূর্ণাঙ্গ রূপায়নে প্রয়াসী হতে হবে। সেই কর্মসূচি মোতাবেক আজকের ক্যাবিনেট বৈঠকে অসংগঠিত ক্ষেত্রে কাজের সুযোগ ও নতুন উদ্যোগ বাড়ানোর পথ খুঁজতে তৈরি হল জাতীয় কমিশন। উঠে গেল পোটা-ও। সামগ্রিক ভাবে, সি পি এম-কংগ্রেস শীর্ষ বৈঠকের আগের দিন দু'পক্ষই আজ আলোচনার পরিবেশে আরও উষ্ণতা নিয়ে আসতে সচেষ্ট হল।

এই উষ্ণতার মধ্যেই কাল দুপুরে

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের বাসভবনে মধ্যাহ্নভোজে যাবেন জ্যোতি বসু। মনমোহনের বাড়িতে থাকবেন সনিয়া গান্ধীও। আর বসুর সঙ্গী হবেন সুরজিৎ, সীতারাম। এই প্রসঙ্গে বসু আজ বলেন, “কাল দুপুরবেলা কথা হবে। কতগুলো পুরনো বিষয় আছে, যা নিয়ে আলোচনা চলছে। কতগুলো নতুন বিষয়ও আছে।” দলীয় সূত্রের বক্তব্য, পুরনো বিষয়ের মধ্যে রয়েছে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ, প্রভিডেন্ট ফান্ডের সাড়ে নয় শতাংশ সুদ ঘোষণার মমতো বিষয়গুলি। আর নতুন বিষয়গুলির ইঙ্গিত দিয়ে পরে ইয়েচুরি জানান, তাঁরা কাল কথা বলবেন কাজের বদলে খাদ্য, মিড ডে মিল প্রকল্প, একশো দিনের কাজের বিল, গ্রামীন পরিকাঠামো এবং স্বাস্থ্য ও শিক্ষার সেস নিয়ে।

কিন্তু পরিবেশ হৃদয়তাপূর্ণ রাখার জন্য দু'তরফেরই চেষ্টার খামতি ছিল না আজ। মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠক নিয়ে বলতে গিয়ে জয়পাল রেড্ডি বা পি চিদম্বরম বারবার জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, কোন কোন বিষয়ে তাঁরা ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি মেনে সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন। বামেরা এই ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি রূপায়নের জন্যই সরকারের কাছে বারবার আবেদন জানাচ্ছে। সেই অনুযায়ী আজ পোটা প্রত্যাহার করা

হয়েছে, তামিল ভাষাকে গ্রুপদী মর্যাদা দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে ও অসংগঠিত ক্ষেত্রের আরও অনেক বেশি বিকাশের জন্য বিভিন্ন সুযোগ সুবিধার ব্যবস্থা করতে গঠিত হচ্ছে কমিশন। এর মধ্যে প্রথম দু'টি সিদ্ধান্তই কিন্তু অনেক বেশি খুশি করবে সরকারের তামিলনাড়ুর শরিকদের। সনিয়া গান্ধী নিজেই পোটার সবচেয়ে বেশি বিরোধী ছিলেন। কিন্তু এই সিদ্ধান্তগুলি নিয়ে সরকার শুধু এই সংকেতই পাঠিয়েছেন যে তারা কর্মসূচি অনুযায়ীই এগিয়ে চলেছে। সেই কারণেই সিদ্ধান্তগুলিকে বাম নেতারাও বাহবা জানিয়েছেন।

এর পাশাপাশি মন্ত্রিসভা আজ আর এক দফা মহার্ঘভাতা ঘোষণা করেছে ও মূল্যবৃদ্ধি রোধের জন্য কিছু ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। এই সিদ্ধান্তগুলি অবশ্যই বামেদের খুশি করবে। তা ছাড়া মন্ত্রিসভার আলোচ্যসূচিতে থাকলেও টেলিকমে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানোর বিষয়টি শেষপর্যন্ত আজকের বৈঠক থেকে বাদ যায়। সরকার আজই টেলিকমে বিদেশি লাগি বাড়ানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিলে বামেরা কিছুটা কোনঠাসা অবস্থায় পড়তেন। কারণ দীর্ঘদিন ধরে বিষয়টির প্রকাশ্য বিরোধিতা করে আসছেন বামেরা।

মন্ত্রিসভা বৈঠকের বাইরে পোটা-প্রত্যাহার নিয়ে বলতে গিয়ে শিবরাজ পাটিলও আজ বলেন, “আমরা কথা দিয়েছিলাম, ন্যূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচিতেও ছিল যে পোটা প্রত্যাহার করা হবে। তাই এই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে।” মন্ত্রিসভা কিন্তু সিদ্ধান্ত না নিলেও পোটা-আইনের মেয়াদ অক্টোবরেই ফুরিয়ে যেত। পোটার ক্ষেত্রেও মন্ত্রিসভা বিতর্কিত আইনটি তুলে দিয়ে প্রয়োজনীয় কয়েকটি ধারা এখন বেআইনি কার্যকলাপ নিবারণ আইনের অন্তর্ভুক্ত করে নিচ্ছে। যেভাবে পরিবর্তন করা হচ্ছে তার ফলে সরকারের শরিক সমর্থক সব রাজনৈতিক দলই খুশি।

তবু কাল বাম-কংগ্রেস আলোচনায় অবশ্য দু'একটি অপ্রিয় বিষয় আসার সম্ভাবনা থাকছে। এই বিষয়গুলির মধ্যে রয়েছে যোজনা কমিশনে আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থার প্রতিনিধিদের রাখা ও মনমোহন সিংহের একটি মন্তব্যও। সম্প্রতি সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে মনমোহন বলেছিলেন, তিনি শিক্ষাজগতে দক্ষিণ বা বাম মৌলবাদ কোনওটাকেই প্রশ্রয় দেবেন না। এই ‘বাম মৌলবাদ’ প্রসঙ্গে উদ্গাও কাল জানাতে পারেন বসু।

● বিদেশি লাগি প্রসঙ্গ উঠল না... পৃঃ ৮

AMENDED ACT TO DEFINE TERRORISM

# Cabinet okays Pota repeal

Statesman News Service

## 3 per cent DA hike

NEW DELHI, Sept. 17. — The Union Cabinet today announced repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002, and amendment of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and said that two Ordinances would soon be promulgated.

The Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, told a press conference that the Pota review committee would, however, continue for one year to examine all cases pending in the courts or at various stages of investigation.

"Whenever in the opinion of the Review Committee, no prima facie case is made out either in respect of cases pending in courts, or under investigation, such cases shall be deemed to have been withdrawn and investigations closed, as the case may be," he said. No court shall take cognisance of an offence registered under Pota after one year of its repeal.

The Review Committee is being given the powers of a civil court in matters of production of a document or public record to strengthen its hands in expeditiously handling the cases under Pota.

As many as 217 cases are being investigated under Pota and 116 cases are under trial. These will be reviewed by the committee. It will also recommend their continuation or withdrawal within a period of one year from the date of repeal of the law, a home ministry official said.

As part of the government's resolve to fight terrorism at every level, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, will be amended to incorporate certain provisions considered necessary to deal with various facets of terrorism, Mr Patil said.

The provision of the proposed Ordinance to amend the 1967 Act defines a terrorist act, provides for banning a terrorist organisation and its support system including funding of terrorism, attachment and forfeiture of proceeds of terrorism.

NEW DELHI, Sept. 17. — In view of the rise in price index in recent months, the Cabinet today increased the Dearness Allowance for Central government employees by 3 per cent with retrospective effect from July 2004 from the existing rate of 11 per cent. Those drawing pension will also benefit.

The revision of DA is calculated on the basis of the increase by percentage in 12 months of the All-India Consumer Price Index for industrial workers with 1996 index of 306.33 as the base.

The additional burden on the public exchequer is estimated at Rs 1,608.39 crore in one year. For the current financial year the government will incur additional expenditure on the raised DA by Rs 1,072.38 crore since the hike will be effective from July 2004. — SNS

**More steps to curb inflation: page 9**

The law will be binding on all states, the minister said. It will apply to all cases in Jammu and Kashmir as well.

Mr Patil said that the 32 organisations, which were banned under Pota, would continue to remain unlawful under the new law. But no new organisations would be banned.

He said three aspects of Pota were Draconian in nature — police confession, stringent bail provisions and the fact that the onus of proving innocence was on the accused.

**Vaiko meets PM:** The MDMK general secretary, Mr Vaiko, who was in prison for 18 months under Pota, today welcomed the Cabinet's decision. "I am happy that the Draconian law has gone," he said after meeting the Prime Minister.

The BJP today lambasted the UPA government, describing the Cabinet's decision as "politically motivated". The party accused the Centre of compromising with the essentials of national security.

**Now what, wonder Pota detainee kin:**

9-P.P  
UPA  
8.9.17

# Left keen on Centre remaining within CMP 179

By Our Special Correspondent

**CHENNAI, SEPT. 16.** The struggle of the working class will have to intensify to put pressure on the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government at the Centre to remain within the Common Minimum Programme (CMP). During the previous rule, the struggle of employees was to change the policies of the Government, the leader of the CPI(M) Parliamentary Party, Basudeb Acharya, said today.

The Left had laid down one condition for the new Government and that was it should confine itself to the CMP. The Government was being repeatedly told not to follow the policies pursued by the earlier Government. Otherwise, it would also meet the fate of the earlier BJP-led Government.

"Our objective is that a Gov-

ernment that has been formed should implement the policies incorporated in the CMP. What we want is that the UPA Government should implement those policies pertaining to the people of the country."

In this context, he explained that the Left was against the reduction of the interest rate in Employees Provident Fund (EPF). The EPF was a social security for people and hence "we demand that social security of the people of the country should be considered as a fundamental right."

The mandate of the people in the Lok Sabha elections was not only for a change in the governance but it was for a change in the policies which were being pursued by the earlier Government. "The mandate was not in favour of any political party. But the people of the country re-

sponded to our call that representation of the Left parties in the Lok Sabha should be increased. The Government will have to rest on the support of the Left. The people responded," he said.

### 'Fascist manner'

Mr. Acharya lashed out at the AIADMK Government in Tamil Nadu for its action against Government employees in a "fascist manner" during their agitation. The entire working class in the State taught the AIADMK and its allies a lesson in the Parliamentary elections that "fascist action cannot be tolerated by people."

The CPI (M) leader was speaking at a meeting organised by the Joint Action Committee of Audit and Accounts Employees and Officers Organisations, Tamil Nadu.

# চিদম্বরমের সিদ্ধান্তের উপরেই আস্থা মারানোর টেলিকমে বিদেশি লগ্নি নিয়ে বৈঠক আজ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৬ অগস্ট: তীব্র বাম বিরোধিতার মধ্যেই আগামী কাল মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে পেশ হচ্ছে টেলিকম শিল্পে প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানোর বিষয়টি। টেলিকমে ৪৯ শতাংশ থেকে একলাফে ৭৪ শতাংশে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের সীমা বৃদ্ধি করা হবে, চলতি বছরের বাজেটে অর্থমন্ত্রী চিদম্বরম এই আশ্বাস দেওয়ার পরেই বামপন্থীরা সরকারের প্রকাশ্য বিরোধিতায় নেমে পড়েন। সেই চাপের কাছে সরকার আগামী কাল নতিস্বীকার করে কি না তারই পরীক্ষা হবে মন্ত্রিসভার এই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বৈঠকে। বৈঠকের আগের দিন অবশ্য কেন্দ্রীয় টেলিকম মন্ত্রী দয়ানিধি মারান পরিষ্কার জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, অর্থমন্ত্রীর ঘোষণাই চূড়ান্ত। তাঁর সিদ্ধান্তের উপরেই আস্থা রাখবেন মারান।

বামপন্থীদের বিরোধিতার মুখে সমঝোতাসূত্র হিসাবে ধাপে ধাপে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়াতে পারে, সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রক সূত্রে এমন ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে। ওই সমঝোতার সার বক্তব্য, বিনিয়োগের সীমা বর্তমানের মাত্র ৪৯ শতাংশ থেকে বাড়িয়ে ৫১ শতাংশ করা হোক। তারপর আগামী দেড় বছরে তা বাড়িয়ে ৭৪ শতাংশে নিয়ে যাওয়া হবে।

তবে এ দিন অবশ্য কেন্দ্রীয় টেলিকম মন্ত্রী দয়ানিধি মারান সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, তাঁর সমর্থন অর্থমন্ত্রীর প্রতি। তিনি বলেন, টেলিকমে অর্থমন্ত্রী বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ ৭৪ শতাংশে বেঁধে দেওয়ার ঘোষণা করেছেন, তা নিয়ে তিনি চিদম্বরমের সঙ্গে একমত। এ বিষয়ে অর্থমন্ত্রীর মতই চূড়ান্ত বলে মন্তব্য করেন মারান। টেলিকম মন্ত্রীর বক্তব্য, চিদম্বরম আর তিনি শুধু যে এক সরকারের মন্ত্রী তাই নন, তাঁরা এক রাজ্যেরও বটে। তিনি অর্থমন্ত্রীর সিদ্ধান্ত মানতে বাধ্য।

এ বিষয়ে বাম বিরোধিতা প্রসঙ্গে টেলিকম মন্ত্রী বলেন, প্রয়োজনে অর্থমন্ত্রী বামপন্থীদের লগ্নির মাত্রা বাড়ানোর প্রয়োজনীয়তা বুঝিয়ে বলতে পারেন।

তবে এক দফায় ৪৯ থেকে ৭৪ শতাংশে বিদেশি লগ্নির মাত্রা না-বাড়িয়ে দুই ধাপে তা বাড়ানো হবে কি না, এই প্রশ্নে মারান কোনও উত্তর দেননি। মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকের আগের দিন সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রকে অবশ্য জল্পনা জমে উঠেছে ঠিক তা নিয়েই।

সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, টেলিকম মন্ত্রকও বিদেশি লগ্নির সীমা বাড়ানোর বিরোধী ছিল। মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকের আগে মতানৈক্য দূর করতে বৃহস্পতি অর্থমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসেন টেলিকম

মন্ত্রী। পরে যোজনা কমিশনের ডেপুটি চেয়ারম্যান মনটেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়া ও ট্রাইয়ের চেয়ারম্যান প্রদীপ বাইজলকে নিয়ে দুই মন্ত্রী বৈঠক করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে। দুই মন্ত্রকের মতপার্থক্য দূর করতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজেও সচেষ্ট হন। তবে ধাপে ধাপে বিনিয়োগের মাত্রা বাড়ানোর সমঝোতাসূত্র মেলাবার জন্য বামপন্থীদের চাপও বেশ কিছুটা দায়ী বলে সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে।

দেশে বিমান পরিবহণে বিদেশি লগ্নিতে আপত্তি। পি টি আই জানাচ্ছে, অভ্যন্তরীণ বিমান পরিবহণ সংস্থায় বিদেশি অংশীদারির বিরোধিতা করেছে অসামরিক বিমান পরিবহণ মন্ত্রক। অর্থ মন্ত্রকের তরফ থেকে এ ব্যাপারে বিমান মন্ত্রকের সুপারিশ চেয়ে পাঠানো হয়েছে। তবে বিমান মন্ত্রকের মত হল, “বিদেশি সংস্থার হাতে দেশীয় বিমান সংস্থার মালিকানা গেলে ভারতের বাজারে তারা প্রবেশাধিকার পেয়ে যাবে। এটা কাম্য নয়।” জানানো হয়েছে, দেশের সরকারি ও বেসরকারি উভয় ক্ষেত্রেরই পেশাদারি দক্ষতার সঙ্গে সংস্থা পরিচালনার ক্ষমতা রয়েছে। বিমান মন্ত্রক বলেছে, অর্থ মন্ত্রককে তাঁরা এই অভিমত ‘যথাসময়ে’ জানিয়ে দেবেন।



# Soren's return on the cards

Shahid Pervez in New Delhi

Sept. 14. — The former Union minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) president, Mr Sibu Soren, is likely to be re-inducted in the UPA ministry once the Prime Minister effects his long-pending Cabinet reshuffle.

The expansion of the Union Council of Ministers seems to have been deferred till the completion of Maharashtra elections next month.

A senior Congress leader said Mr Soren has now got bail in the 1975 Churudih massacre case and that the

JMM slot in the Manmohan Singh ministry is vacant. The issuance of a non-bailable arrest warrant in this case by a Jharkhand court had forced Mr Soren to go underground, quit his post as the coal and mines minister and then surrender to the court. Mr Soren had been in judicial custody since 2 August until the Jharkhand High Court granted him bail on 3 September.

The AICC leader said the PM's prerogative in designing his Cabinet is "restrained" by "coalition compulsions". "The PM could not deny the JMM its quota of a Cabinet berth since the party, with 5 MPs, is a part

of the ruling UPA. The PM is also not supposed to ask the JMM who will be its nominee," he said. Moreover, the PM could not be expected to adopt "double standards" over Mr Soren vis-a-vis the RJD chief, Mr Lalu Prasad, and other "tainted ministers", who are now out on bail with regard to their separate criminal cases.

Congress circles said that legally there will be no bar on Mr Soren joining the government as he hasn't been convicted. "And even morally, the code of conduct on tainted ministers is yet to be worked out through a political consensus as suggested by Dr Manmohan Singh," said a leader.

# সোনিয়া, মনমোহনের সঙ্গে বৈঠক ইয়েচুরির খুশি হয়ে বললেন, এভাবেই সরকার চলে

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ১৩ সেপ্টেম্বর—  
বামপন্থীদের সঙ্গে সরকারের সমঝয় নিয়ে নিজে থেকেই  
উদ্যোগী হলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী ড. মনমোহন সিং। ইউ পি এ  
চেয়ারপার্সন সোনিয়া গান্ধীর পরামর্শ অনুযায়ী প্রধানমন্ত্রী  
নিজেই তদারকি করতে শুরু করেছেন। সিদ্ধান্ত  
নিয়েছেন, সমস্যা দেখা দিলেই তিনি নিজে হস্তক্ষেপ করে  
মেটাবেন। এরকম জটিল সমস্যা সমাধানের পথে আজ  
কিছুটা এগিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। এ জন্য তিনি প্রাক্তন  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপ সিংয়েরও সাহায্য নেন।  
বামপন্থীদের সঙ্গে ইউ পি এ সরকারের সমঝয়ের ক্ষেত্রে  
নেপথ্যে ভূমিকা আছে ডি পি-র। মৌলিক নীতির ক্ষেত্রে  
ও জটিলতা মেটানোর বিষয়ে ডি পি  
সব সময়ই কথা বলেন সোনিয়ার  
সঙ্গে। কালেভদ্রে সামনে আসেন।  
বামপন্থীদের সঙ্গে সমঝয় কমিটি  
গড়ার আগে এ ব্যাপারে মূল প্রস্তাবক  
ছিলেন ডি পি-ই। আজ রেসকোর্সে  
প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে বৈঠকে ছিলেন ডি

পি, সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি এবং সি পি আই নেত্রী অমরজিৎ  
কাউর। বিষয় ছিল, দিল্লিতে দূষণ রুখতে সওয়া লাখ  
কারখানা সরিয়ে দেওয়ার কর্মসূচি। অন্যদিকে আজ  
কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মা বলেন, বাম দলগুলি ও  
আমরা ইউ পি এ-র অভিন্ন নীতি ও কর্মসূচি রূপায়ণে  
দায়বদ্ধ। আমাদের জোট এন ডি এ-র মতো ক্ষমতায়  
থাকার জন্যই গড়ে ওঠেনি। গড়ে উঠেছে সুনির্দিষ্ট কিছু  
নীতির ভিত্তিতে। সমস্যা দেখা দিলে তার সমাধানের  
পথও আছে। বৈঠকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী ডি পি ও বাম নেতাদের  
কথা দেন। কাল মুখ্যমন্ত্রী শীলা দীক্ষিত ও নগরোন্নয়ন মন্ত্রী  
গুলাম নবি আজাদকে ডেকে আলোচনা করবেন। গুলাম  
নবি ও দীক্ষিত নিজেদের মধ্যে কথা বলে সিদ্ধান্ত নেবেন।  
ডি পি, সীতারাম ও অমরজিৎ প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বলেন,  
কারখানাগুলি উঠে গেলে শ্রমিক-কর্মচারী সমেত বিস্তীর্ণ

শিল্প এলাকার ৩৫ লাখের বেশি লোকের জীবিকা বিপন্ন  
হবে। সুপ্রিম কোর্টও সমস্ত কারখানা সরানোর বাধ্যতা  
আরোপ করেনি। মাস্টার প্ল্যান ঠিকমতো লাগু করলেই  
সমস্যা হবে না। এ জন্য রাজ্য ও কেন্দ্রের তরফ থেকে  
আদালতের কাছে তাদের মতামত জানাতে হবে। যতদিন  
না মীমাংসা হচ্ছে, ততদিন স্থিতাবস্থা বজায় রাখতে বলেন  
ডি পি। চীন সফর থেকে ফিরে সি পি এম নেতা ইয়েচুরি  
কাল সন্ধ্যায় সোনিয়ার সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসেন। ১ ঘণ্টার  
বৈঠকে সরকারের কিছু অনড় আচরণ নিয়ে কথা বলেন  
ইয়েচুরি। মনমোহনকে সোনিয়া যে বামদের ক্ষোভে কান  
দিতে বলেছেন, তাতে সন্তোষ জানিয়ে ইয়েচুরি বলেন,

## বসু-সোনিয়া বৈঠক

ইউ পি এ-র চেয়ারপার্সন সোনিয়া  
গান্ধীর সঙ্গে জ্যোতি বসুর বৈঠক  
১৭ সেপ্টেম্বর, বিকেল পাঁচটায়।  
সোনিয়ার বাড়িতে।

জোট এভাবেই চলে। বিরোধীরা  
আমাদের সঙ্গে সরকারের সম্পর্কে  
চিড় ধরেছে বলে যত প্রচারই করুক,  
আসলে মোটেই তা নয়। তিনি বলেন,  
বুদ্ধদেববাবু বা জ্যোতিবাবু যা  
বলেছেন, আমাদের প্রত্যেকের মুখেই  
সে কথা শুনবেন। বুদ্ধদেব বলেছেন,  
সরকার অভিন্ন কর্মসূচি রূপায়ণ না করলে আমরা সমর্থন  
করব না। খুব স্বাভাবিক কথা। যতক্ষণ সরকার কর্মসূচি  
রূপায়ণ করে যাবে ততক্ষণ আমরা সমর্থন করব।  
যেভাবেই বলুন, ঘটনাটা একই। মোর্চার সরকার  
এভাবেই চলে। গণতন্ত্রে ভিন্নমত প্রকাশ করা মোটেই  
ভুল নয়। বরং করাটাই গণতন্ত্র। সীতারাম জানান, ২৭  
তারিখ নাগাদ সমঝয় কমিটির পরের বৈঠক হতে পারে।  
ওই বৈঠকে তাঁরা মূল্যবৃদ্ধির ওপর নিয়ন্ত্রণ, যোজনা  
কমিশনে বিদেশি সদস্যদের ঢোকানো, ১০০ দিনের  
রোজগার, পি এফের সুদ ইত্যাদি বিষয়ে সরকারের  
অবস্থান জানতে চাইবেন। তিনি জানান। জ্যোতি বসু  
পলিটবুরো বৈঠকের সময় দিল্লিতে থাকবেন। ১৭ বা  
১৮ সেপ্টেম্বর তিনি বৈঠক করতে পারেন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর

এরপর ৬ পাতায়

# Keep Left sensibilities in mind, Manmohan tells economic advisers

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1/9/04  
S.S.K.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 13. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, is reported to have cautioned his economic advisers that they will have to be necessarily mindful of the Left parties' sensibilities.

This word of advice has come in the wake of the Left's opposition to the Planning Commission's move to seek

the advice of the World Bank consultants.

It is learnt that Dr. Singh is not exactly happy with the manner in which the Planning Commission Deputy Chairperson, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, handled the controversy.

Dr. Singh has told his advisers that "2004 is not 1991." All decision-makers will need to get adjusted to the demands of a coalition government, which

is critically dependent upon the support of the Left parties.

## Basu's protest

Alarm bells rang when the senior Marxist leader, Jyoti Basu, publicly voiced his unhappiness over the induction of foreign consultants. The suggestion now is that Dr. Singh will like to invite Mr. Basu for a discussion.

Prior to Mr. Basu's public

disapproval of the policies being pursued by the United Progressive Alliance Government, leaders of the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the All-India Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party demanded that the Government reconsider the step to bring in representatives of the World Bank and an American consultancy group in the plan

body. "To include representatives of international agencies and foreign private companies, who have their own agendas and who are in no way accountable to the Indian people in the planning process, is an unwarranted step," the leaders said last week in a joint statement.

Earlier this month, the CPI general secretary, A.B. Bardhan, said that the UPA Government was taking the Left parties "too much for granted." His remarks came after the Union Commerce Minister, Kamal Nath, had released the new foreign trade policy. Mr. Bardhan took objection on the grounds that neither were the Left parties consulted nor were they even informed about the impending move to release the new policy.

বাম চাপ আসে আসুক

৩০/৯/০৮ ১৩/৯/০৮ ১৩/৯/০৮

# কংগ্রেসের নীতি, উত্তরে থাকো মৌন

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১২ সেপ্টেম্বর: উত্তরে থাকো মৌন। সিপিএম প্রকাশ্যে যতই হুমকি দিক, কংগ্রেসের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের রণকৌশল আপাতত চূপ করে থাকাই।

তাই মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের সমর্থন প্রত্যাহারের হুমকি, একান্ত সাক্ষাৎকারে প্রকাশ কারাটের লোকসভায় বিরুদ্ধে ভোট দেওয়ার কথা শুনেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ, অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম, দলনেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধীও এই হুম্কারকে সেই রাজনৈতিক গুরুত্ব দিতে চাইছেন না। প্রধানমন্ত্রী সচিবালয় সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, বাম নেতারা আগাম জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, পৃথক দল হিসেবে তাঁদের মতপার্থক্য প্রকাশ্যে জানাতেই হবে। নিজস্ব ‘কনস্টিটিউয়েন্সি’কে ধরে রাখাটাই তাঁদের রাজনৈতিক দায়বদ্ধতা। অন্য দিকে, কংগ্রেসের কৌশল, বাম নেতাদের সমালোচনার জবাব না-দিয়েই নিজেদের আর্থিক নীতির রূপায়ণে অটল থাকা।

চিদম্বরম এক প্রশ্নে বলেন, “বামদের সমালোচনা যা-ই হোক, এখন কিছু বলব না। আমাদের সবচেয়ে বড় মূলধন রাজনৈতিক সহিষ্ণুতা। বিমা বেসরকারীকরণের মতো বিষয়ে যেখানে বাম নেতাদের ঘোরতর আপত্তি, সেটিও আমরা আলোচনার মাধ্যমে তাদের বোঝাতে পারব বলে মনে করি। অনেক কিছু ওরা মেনে নিয়েছেন। বিমা সংস্থার কর্তাদের সঙ্গে বাম নেতাদের সরাসরি আলোচনার ব্যবস্থা করছি আমরা।” গোটা বিশ্বে বিমার বেসরকারীকরণে মানুষের উপকারই তো হচ্ছে। চিদম্বরম জানান, “বাম নেতাদের সঙ্গে আজ হঠাৎ ঘর করছি এমন তো নয়। অতীতেও এমন সরকারের অর্থমন্ত্রী ছিলাম, যেখানে দু’জন কমিউনিস্ট নেতা মন্ত্রিসভায় ছিলেন। (ইন্দ্রজিৎ গুপ্ত ও চতুরানন মিশ্র) তাই বাম নেতারা সরকারের অচলাবস্থার কারণ হবে বলে যারা মনে করছেন, তারা মূর্খের স্বর্গে বাস করছেন।”

সিপিএম ধীরে ধীরে সমালোচনাকে যখন ধারালো করছে, তখন কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্ব নীরবে তাঁদের আর্থিক কর্মসূচিগুলি রূপায়ণে মন দিয়েছেন। যে টেলিকম বিভাগের শতকরা ৭৬ ভাগ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ নিয়ে বামেদের আপত্তি, সেই ক্ষেত্রে পূর্বতন সরকারের স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের গোয়েন্দা শাখার নিষেধাজ্ঞা প্রত্যাহার করা হয়েছে। পূর্বতন সরকারের অরণ শৌরি যখন টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ করতে চেয়েছিলেন, তখন লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্নে গোয়েন্দা রিপোর্টের আপত্তি দেখিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে বাধা দেন। অনেকের ধারণা, আর এস এস তথা স্বদেশি জাগরণ মঞ্চও এই প্রস্তাবের বিরোধিতা করে। শিবরাজ পাটিলের স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক কিন্তু গত সপ্তাহেই অর্থ মন্ত্রককে জানিয়েছে, টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রে প্রতিরোধমূলক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হয়েছে, এখন এই সিদ্ধান্ত রূপায়ণে বাধা নেই।

খনি বেসরকারীকরণ নিয়েও সরকার দ্রুত সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে চলেছে। অর্থ মন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকারও খনি বেসরকারীকরণের প্রস্তাবে সম্মতি দিয়েছে। ১৭ সেপ্টেম্বর প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দিল্লিতে বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের বৈঠক। এই বৈঠকেও মতপার্থক্য অবসানে প্রধানমন্ত্রী সচেষ্ট হবেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী রাজ্যস্তরে যে ভাবে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ করছেন ও আর্থিক সংস্কারের গতি বাড়াচ্ছেন, তাতে মনমোহন-চিদম্বরম-মটেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়া খুবই ‘সন্তুষ্ট’। সম্প্রতি মুম্বইয়ে দেশের প্রথম সারির শিল্পপতিদের সামনে বুদ্ধবাবু যে ভাবে সংস্কারের ডাক দিয়েছেন, এমনকী লন্ডন থেকে প্রকাশিত ‘ফাইন্যান্সিয়াল টাইমস’কে দেওয়া সাক্ষাৎকারেও যে ভাবে রাজ্যে বিনিয়োগের সম্ভাবনার কথা বলেছেন, তাতে কংগ্রেস শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব খুশি। আবার প্রকাশ কারাট শুধু অর্থনীতি নয়, মণিপুর থেকে কাশ্মীর নানা প্রশ্নে সরকারের সমালোচনা করার পাশাপাশি জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, সিপিএম সামগ্রিক ভাবে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের বিপক্ষে নয়। এ ব্যাপারে কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্রে সতর্কতা গ্রহণের পক্ষে। কাজেই প্রভিডেন্ট ফান্ডে সুদের হারের মতো বিষয় নিয়ে ট্রেড ইউনিয়নকে কিছুটা খুশি রাখার চেষ্টা যেমন আছে, তেমনি সিপিএম আর্থিক সংস্কারের প্রশ্নে পুরনো নীতিতেও আমূল পরিবর্তন এনেছে। মনমোহনও বলেছেন, ১৯৯১ থেকে ’৯৫ সালের সঙ্গে আজকের সময়ে অনেক বদল এসেছে। তাই সাবেকি মনমোহনের আর্থিক নীতিতেও অনেক বদল এসেছে। এখন মনমোহনও বারবার মানবিক দিকটির কথা বলছেন।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে তাই বলা হচ্ছে, “বুদ্ধদেব সমর্থন প্রত্যাহারের হুমকি দিলেও আমরা জানি এই দ্বৈধতার মধ্যে এক নিবিড় ঐক্য আছে। মতপার্থক্য মানেই সংঘাত নয়। আর তাই আমাদেরও কিছু বলার নেই।”

• অনিলের কণ্ঠে বুদ্ধেরই সুর.... পৃঃ ৬

# Singh changes tune

OUR BUREAU

**New Delhi, Sept. 11:** Manmohan Singh is distancing himself from the controversy over the inclusion of World Bank experts in the Planning Commission's consultative groups.

The Prime Minister, well-placed sources said, was not "particularly excited" by the idea and thought it was an "avoidable controversy". He also felt it had been "blown out of proportion".

Led by Jyoti Basu, the Left has condemned the induction of experts from international institutions, including the World Bank. Yesterday, Basu said: "We are not satisfied with the functioning of the government."

Singh's first response to Left criticism was to defend Planning Commission deputy chair, Man Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who had clarified that the experts were included only to provide inputs for mid-term

appraisal of the Tenth Plan.

But the Prime Minister reportedly "revised" his stand after getting inputs from the Congress that the Left should be mollified.

Singh, the sources added, could not be expected to go into the "nitty-gritty of what committees were constituted or start speaking to individual ministers and heads of commissions on how to run their departments".

The Left has urged the government to reconsider the move and sought an explanation why it wanted World Bank representation when the Congress in Andhra Pradesh had held the institution's structural adjustment policies responsible for the plight of farmers and other marginalised sections. Basu said the World Bank had always given wrong advice on crucial issues.

Initially, the government did not treat seriously what

sources called another Left "whine". But after Basu lent his voice to the protest, Singh had to revisit the proposal because the government depends on the "good offices" of the CPM leader and his party colleague Harkishen Singh Surjeet to rein in the "hardliners".

CPM sources, however, said Basu was only "echoing" his party's line to send the message to the rank and file that it had not deviated from its anti-Congressism.

In the government's perception, there are two areas of dealing with the Left: one, "ideology-centred" and economic policies and two, high-level appointments. On ideology, sources close to Singh said he was clear that there could be a clash.

"If Left and Congress agreed on everything, the former may well have joined the government," said a PMO official.

# Cong ignores Left snipes

SHAHID PERVEZ  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 11. — The Congress high command has chosen to "ignore" the Left parties' criticism of the UPA government's policies and performance, preferring not to take them seriously.

In the wake of recent attacks on the Manmohan Singh government by CPI-M leaders like Mr Prakash Karat, and more significantly by Mr Jyoti Basu, as well as the CPI leadership on issues ranging from the new foreign trade policy, FDI and "de-saffronisation of education", the Congress central leadership has barely displayed any signs of urgency, sticking to its "take-it-easy approach vis-a-vis the Left".

The Congress high command understands the Left's "political compulsions". "They have to make noises against the government's policy from time to time on a range of their pet issues in order to play to their constituencies," Congress sources said.

"The Congress leadership knows that the Left is not going to pull the plug from the government under normal circumstances as prevailing now, which it expects to continue for five years," sources said, referring to the statements made by Mr Sitaram Yechury and, more importantly, the CPI-M ideologue Mr Karat that "the Left would like to ensure the government's survival for five years".

There is also a view in party circles that there is a "tacit understanding" between the Congress and the Left on the matter. "Both the parties have agreed to disagree on contentious economic issues without allowing the dispute to rock the government's boat," sources said. To reinforce the point, sources referred to the government's move such as the fuel hike, which "it had not undertaken at all, if the Left would have put its foot down and vetoed the move".

## Party to contest all 60 seats in Arunachal

NEW DELHI, Sept. 11. — The Congress will contest all the 60 Assembly seats in Arunachal Pradesh even as the party's Central Election Committee is believed to have cleared the names of 52 candidates today. "The Congress has decided to contest all the 60 seats in the state. The committee had a discussion on all the seats," said CWC member in-charge of the North-east, Mr Ramesh Chennithala, after a CEC meeting chaired by the AICC chief Mrs Sonia Gandhi at her residence here this evening. Sources said the CEC has approved the candidates for 52 seats. A majority of them are understood to be sitting party MLAs, sources said. The CEC is likely to meet again shortly and finalise candidates for the 7 October Arunachal assembly polls, said Mr Chennithala. — SNS

The "arrangement" suits the Congress fine as the party would like to go ahead with its own way of governance while giving the Left "an outlet to vent their grievances. The Congress constituted a consultative panel with the Left precisely for this purpose. The Congress would like to assuage the Left's "bruised sentiments" at regular intervals.

For the record, the AICC's standard reply to the sniping from the Left leaders continues to be: "Everything is just fine, every coalition partner is entitled to have its own views, this is the democratic practice, there is no question of any confrontation, the differences with the Left will be bridged at the UPA government-Left coordination committee meeting."

12 SEP 2004

# Left hands wishlist to Centre

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, September 9

LEFT LEADERS today met to prepare for this month-end's UPA-Left Front coordination committee meeting, and expressed anger at the government for not taking their suggestions seriously.

Left parties today listed several issues they considered "priority items" for the government to take up and said they would discuss the situation in Manipur and J&K with the ruling UPA

coalition later this month. "We have listed several issues, including urgent political ones like the situation in Manipur and J&K. These two issues have to be seriously discussed at the Coordination Committee (between left parties and the UPA government)," CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan told reporters after a meeting of the four Left parties here.

Asked about the government's response on FDI in insurance and telecom sectors and other issues raised

at the previous meeting of the committee, RSP leader Abani Roy said, "The government has assured us active consideration (of these issues). We are still awaiting their response."

The next meeting of the Coordination Committee between UPA government and the Left parties is likely to be held in the last week of this month. The Left issues include enacting of a National Employment Guarantee Act to provide employment to the rural poor. Provision of

drinking water and a comprehensive legislation on agricultural workers should also be given priority, the CPI leader said.

Reiterating their demand that there should be "no privatisation" of airports, the Left parties would like to have a discussion on the modernisation and restructuring of Mumbai and Delhi airports, he said. Bardhan said "certain points" in the new Exim policy announced by the Commerce Ministry should be reconsidered.

## Priority issues

- ▶ Enactment of a National Employment Guarantee Act
- ▶ Provision of drinking water and an Act on agricultural workers
- ▶ A discussion on the modernisation of Mumbai and Delhi airports
- ▶ Reconsideration of some points in the new Exim policy

# Reds Unhappy With Centre's Lack Of Sensitivity In Addressing Concerns Of Poor Left uses common man to strike back

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 9 SEPTEMBER

**U**NDETERRED by the almost certain rejection of its plea against raising the DI cap in the telecom sector, the Left on Thursday lined out its next list of grouses against the JPA government. This time its nemesis is the common man and the lack of sensitivity on part of the ruling regime in addressing concerns of the poor.

The four Left parties, which had their coordination committee meeting on Thursday, decided to ask Manmohan Singh government to prioritise its agenda and focus attention on issues such as employment generation scheme, legislation for agricultural workers, provision for drinking water and food-for-work programme.

"We feel the priority items listed in the Common Minimum Programme, which affect 90% of the people especially those in the rural areas, must be addressed by the government immediately," CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan told reporters after the meeting. Apart from its pet concerns on economic front, the Left also included political issues like Jammu & Kashmir and Manipur.

The Left is not happy with the way the state and central governments are handling the situation in Manipur. The CPI had blamed the government for the Manipur situation and has been demanding action against the guilty in the Manorama Devi case and shifting of Assam Rifles out of Kangla fort.

The next Left-UPA meeting, which is likely to be held in the last week of this month after the Prime Minister returns from his foreign tour, will also discuss the restructuring of airports.

The Left, which has been opposing privatisation of airports, will also ask the government to explain its "overall approach" on the matter. The Left parties have also been critical of the government's new foreign trade policy. At the meeting, the Left leaders are expected to demand a review of proposals that will "go against the interest of domestic market and farmers".

The Left, however, refrained from saying as to what their future course would be if the government decides to ignore their demands.

Apart from Mr Bardhan, Thursday's meeting was attended by Prakash Karat, D. Raja, Debabrata Biswas and Manoj Bhattacharya.



**PANEL CODE:** Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with deputy chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee at the first meeting of the Planning Commission in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

## Doc backs Plan panel, brushes off Left protests

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 9 SEPTEMBER

**I**N A gentle snub for the Leftists, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday defended the Planning Commission's decision to involve "outside experts" in the process of mid-term appraisal.

A day after the Left unleashed an offensive against the Plan panel's deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia for including representatives of the World Bank, ADB and Ameri-

can consultancy groups in the Plan assessment exercise, the Prime Minister said the exercise was a useful one and complimented the Plan panel for starting the process of mid-term appraisal in right earnest.

"The commission has started the process in right earnest, including extensive consultations with central ministries, state governments and outside experts," Dr Singh said.

The four Left parties had, on Wednesday, questioned the merit of involving outside ex-

perts and asked the government to "reconsider" the move. Describing the step as "unwarranted", the Leftists had asked Dr Singh to "explain why it wants World Bank representation in the commission when the Congress in Andhra Pradesh has held the World Bank's structural adjustment policies responsible for the plight of farmers and ordinary people in the state."

Mr Ahluwalia clarified there was "no representation of outside bodies in the working of the Planning Commission.



## বিশ্বব্যাঙ্ক, এডিবি-র শলা নিত্তে নারাজ বামেদ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৮  
সেপ্টেম্বর: যোজনা কমিশনের সংশ্লিষ্ট  
উনিশটি পরামর্শদাতা কমিটির মধ্যে  
বিশ্বব্যাঙ্ক, এশিয়ান ডেভেলপমেন্ট  
ব্যাঙ্ক ও ম্যাকিনসের অন্তর্ভুক্তি নিয়ে  
বিতর্ক দানা বেঁধেছে। আজ চারটি বাম  
দল এক যৌথ বিবৃতিতে সরকারকে  
এই সিদ্ধান্ত পুনর্বিবেচনা করার দাবি  
জানিয়েছে। কিন্তু যোজনা কমিশনের  
ডেপুটি চেয়ারম্যান মস্টেক সিংহ  
অহলুওয়ালিয়া এই সিদ্ধান্তের স্বপক্ষে  
যুক্তি দিয়ে বলেছেন, “এর ফলে  
যোজনা প্রকল্পগুলির অগ্রগতি ও  
নীতির কার্যকারিতা নিয়ে অন্যদের  
মতামত পাওয়া যাবে।” কমিশনের  
নিজস্ব কাজের পরিধিতে এই  
সংস্থাগুলির কোনও প্রতিনিধি নেই  
বলেও তিনি জানিয়েছেন।

কাল পূর্ণ কমিশনের বৈঠক বসছে।  
সেই বৈঠকের উদ্বোধন করবেন  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। তার  
আগের দিনই আজ ব্রহ্ম নেতারা  
আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থাগুলির অন্তর্ভুক্তির

বিরোধিতা করেছেন। তাঁরা বলেছেন,  
“এই প্রথম এই ধরনের সংস্থার  
প্রতিনিধিদের এই কমিটিগুলিতে স্থান  
দেওয়া হয়েছে।” তাঁদের বক্তব্য এই  
সংস্থাগুলির নিজস্ব কর্মসূচি আছে এবং  
এরা ভারতের জনগণের কাছে দায়বদ্ধ  
নন। বিশ্বব্যাঙ্কের প্রভাবে অজ্ঞে কৃষক  
ও সাধারণ মানুষ দুর্দশায় পড়েছেন বলে  
ভোটের আগে কংগ্রেস যে মন্তব্য  
করেছিল, তাও তাঁরা মনে করিয়ে দেন।

পরে অহলুওয়ালিয়া এই  
সংস্থাগুলির অন্তর্ভুক্তির পক্ষে যুক্তি  
দেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, এই সংস্থার  
প্রতিনিধিরা শুধুই পরামর্শ দেওয়ার  
জন্য থাকবেন এবং এখনকার দিনে এই  
ধরনের পরামর্শের খুবই প্রয়োজন  
রয়েছে। কমিশনের এই ধরনের  
উনিশটি পরামর্শদাতা কমিটি  
কংগ্রেসের তরফে মুখপাত্র জয়ন্তী  
নটরাজন বলেছেন, বামেদের সঙ্গে এ  
বিষয়ে মতদ্বৈধ তৈরি হলে তা শাসক  
জোট ও বামেদের সমন্বয় কমিটির  
বৈঠকেই মিটিয়ে নেওয়া হবে।

## অশিষ্ট মন্তব্য নিয়ে অটল চুপ কেন, প্রশ্ন কংগ্রেসের

৭৭ স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৬  
সেপ্টেম্বর: প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন  
সিংহকে 'শিখণ্ডী' বলার পরেও ক্ষমা  
চাইতে নারাজ প্রাক্তন অর্থ ও  
বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিংহ। সম্প্রতি  
মনমোহনের বিরুদ্ধে বিরোধী  
নেতাদের প্রতি অশিষ্টতার অভিযোগ  
আনার পরে বিজেপি'রই প্রথম সারির  
নেতার এই 'অমর্যাদাকর মন্তব্য'কে  
কেন্দ্র করে রীতিমতো জলঘোলা  
হচ্ছে। শুধু যশবন্তই নয়,  
উত্তরপ্রদেশের প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী  
কল্যাণ সিংহও প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে 'পালতু'  
(হিন্দিতে যার অর্থ 'পোষা' এবং  
জীবজন্তুর ক্ষেত্রেই এই বিশেষণ  
ব্যবহার করা হয়) বলেছেন। কংগ্রেস  
আগেই দাবি জানিয়েছিল, যশবন্তকে  
ক্ষমা চাইতে হবে। আজ দলের  
মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মার প্রশ্ন, প্রাক্তন  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী চুপ  
কেন? তিনি কি এই ধরনের মন্তব্য  
সমর্থন করছেন? না করলে  
যশবন্তদের বিরুদ্ধে কী ব্যবস্থা নেবেন  
তা সাফ জানান বাজপেয়ী।

বিজেপি অবশ্য এখনও যশবন্তের  
পাশেই রয়েছে। দলের মুখপাত্র  
অরুণ জেটলির বক্তব্য, অশিষ্ট ভাষা  
ব্যবহার করা উচিত নয়। কিন্তু  
দু'পক্ষকেই তা মানতে হবে। কিছু  
দিন আগে প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুন্সি  
বিজেপি নেতাদের প্রতি অশিষ্ট ভাষা  
ব্যবহার করেছেন। কংগ্রেসের শরিক  
নেতা লালু কাল আডবাণী ও অমর  
সিংহের বিরুদ্ধে অত্যন্ত খারাপ ভাষা  
ব্যবহার করেছেন। কংগ্রেস সে  
ব্যাপারে চুপ কেন? লালুর মন্তব্যের  
কোনও দায় অবশ্য কংগ্রেস নিচ্ছে  
না। তাঁরা উল্টে মনমোহন ও সনিয়ার  
বিরুদ্ধে 'অমর্যাদাকর ব্যক্তিগত  
আক্রমণ' চালানোর জন্য বিজেপিকে  
অভিযুক্ত করেছে।

# Sinha defends remarks on PM

Statesman News Service

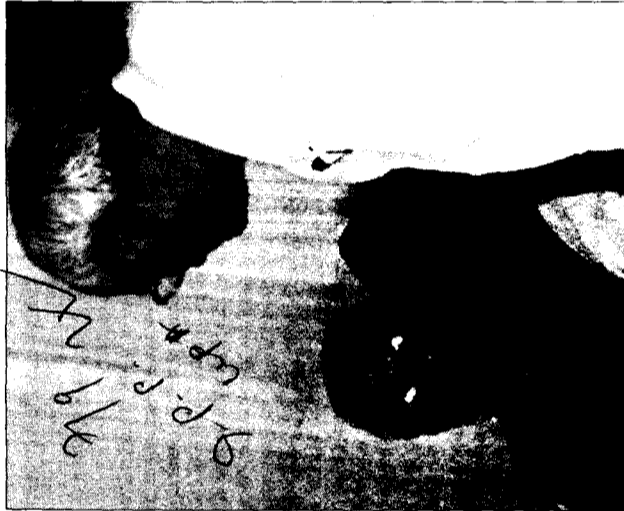
KOLKATA, Sept. 6. — Senior BJP leader Mr Yashwant Sinha today said he had every reason to stand by his remark that Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh is a puppet. Mr Sinha was in the city for the inauguration of the regional centre of a private educational institute.

"I am not going to offer an apology for calling the Prime Minister a puppet. I made that statement in Bangalore and had every reason to do so," said Mr Sinha, holding up an advertisement "published in newspapers on behalf of the Congress-led Karnataka government that had shown Uma Bharati in a bad light". The former finance and foreign minister chided the Karnataka government for its "malicious attempt to tarnish the image of Miss Bharati and the BJP".

The former minister said that he believed: "There are four power centres at the Centre. One is Mrs Sonia Gandhi, the second one is run by Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav, and the third one is the Left. Whatever is left, is for the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to take care of."

Mr Sinha came down heavily upon the Prime Minister for keeping the tainted ministers in the Cabinet. "The selection of ministers is the prerogative of the Prime Minister and Dr Singh cannot get away from the responsibility of taking tainted ministers in his Cabinet," the BJP leader said. "Whenever Dr Singh is cornered on the issue, he calls for a national consensus on the criminalisation of politics, which is farcical," he added.

On being asked whether such tit for tat repartees are in bad taste, lowering the standards of behaviour of political leaders, Mr Sinha shot back: "Why should you expect us to be decent, nice and gentlemanly when, those in the Treas-



Mr Yashwant Sinha with former UP Governor Mr Romesh Bhandari at Kolkata on Monday.

— The Statesman

ury bench like Mr Lalu Prasad is making unsavoury remarks against Mr LK Advani."

While speaking at the inaugural function of the regional centre of the Indian Institute of Hardware Technology, Mr Sinha suggested that West Bengal strive to emerge as the major hardware and networking centre of the country. "There are enough centres focussing on software. Kolkata and West Bengal should better be concentrating on hardware and networking," he said. Former Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Mr Romesh Bhandari, and IT principal secretary Dr GD Gautama also spoke on the occasion.

## BJP defensive on Shikhandi slur

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 6. — The BJP today cited Mr Lalu Prasad's intemperate language to defend Mr Yashwant Sinha terming Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh "as shikhandi", a warrior in *The Mahabharat* whom Arjun used as a shield to kill Bhishma.

Taking umbrage at the description, the Congress charged Mr Sinha with lowering the dignity of PMO and asked Mr AB Vajpayee to clarify his position on Mr Sinha's language.

"The remark yet again betrayed the BJP's mindset and its perverse political character and culture," AICC spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said and described the language as "intemperate and vulgar".

The BJP, which was clearly on the back foot, was unable to decide whether Mr Yashwant Sinha made a political statement after being provoked by such expressions from UPA lead-

ers or allowed his personal equations with Dr Singh to get the better of him.

"You consider him great but he is not as innocent as he looks" he had told BJP leaders after Dr Singh's meeting with an Opposition delegation turned sour and described Dr Singh as a "puppet Prime Minister" who was trying to "finish off the BJP" in Bangalore.

There are many BJP leaders who say that there was no provocation for Mr Sinha to bring the political debate to a new low. Party general secretary Mr Arun Jaitley, tried to put up a brave face by saying that those demanding an apology had maintained a "selective silence" when railway minister Mr Lalu Prasad used objectionable remarks against Mr LK Advani and Mr Amar Singh.

"If the Congress wants the language of politics and political debate to be redefined it will have to be a two-way process," Mr Jaitley said.

# Aiyar's views his own: PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept 4. — Terming it "an unnecessary controversy," the Prime Minister today distanced himself from his Cabinet colleague, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar's comments on Veer Savarkar. Responding to a question at his first press conference, Dr Manmohan Singh said the views expressed were "personal" and "not those of the government".

Describing Savarkar as a "patriot" and a "freedom fighter", Dr Singh said there were some aspects of his life with which "we did not agree", but he did not think any good came out of criticising a dead person. He (Savarkar) was also a co-accused in the Gandhi murder case but was acquitted. "As far as the Savarkar controversy is concerned, these are Aiyar's personal views and not of the government... it is an unnecessary controversy," he said.

Answering a wide range of questions at his maiden press conference, the Prime Minister, describing it as "a great honour" (to be PM,



**'It is not in my nature to promise a false dawn, but I do believe in the ancient saying that a road is made by walking step by step'**

even though he was "not an aspirant") said his government would last its entire term of five years and suggested that he would be pressured into quitting were "misconceptions". There were no two power centres in the government, he said, and they would "very soon" bring an Ordinance to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Pota).

He called for all political parties to sit together to evolve a code of conduct to keep "tainted" persons away from Parlia-

ment and governance. "It is our intention to come with an Ordinance to repeal Pota very soon," he said, regretting that Pota could not be repealed through a Bill in Parliament during its last session as the two Houses could not function.

Denying that the government did not make any effort to break the deadlock over the "tainted" ministers issue, he said the impression that he was not amenable for talks with the Opposition leaders was incorrect, but called his alleged tiff "a closed chapter".

On the eve of the India-Pakistan foreign ministers' talks, Dr Singh said that infiltration from Pakistan must end for the success of the composite dialogue process. Progress has to be "measured step by step", he said, but his government has "gone through the exercise of completing the first round of composite dialogue with Pakistan"

within its first 100 days, an indication of the government's commitment to the process. "What we have achieved is not insignificant. Our approach to talks will be based on realism and the belief that the people of South Asia are bound together by a shared destiny," he said. "It is not in my nature to promise a false dawn, but I do believe in the ancient saying that a road is made by walking step by step," Dr Singh said.

His first meeting with President Musharraf, due on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session later this month, would be in the "nature of mutual comprehension", and his agenda would be to "expand and normalise our multifaceted relationship."

**UPA govt headed by a Shikhandi: Sinha, page 7**  
**Ritual tiff before neighbours talk. page 10**

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# ‘দাগি’ রাখতে আইন চান মনমোহন

সব ঝাঙ্কি  
সামলে নেব,  
আত্মবিশ্বাসী  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৪ সেপ্টেম্বর: আইন করে দাগি ব্যক্তিদের সংসদে প্রবেশাধিকার বন্ধ করা দরকার বলে মনে করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। ক্ষমতায় আসার পর থেকেই দাগি মন্ত্রীদের হটানোর দাবিতে বিরোধীদের প্রবল চাপের রাজনৈতিক মোকাবিলা করতে হয়েছে তাঁকে। কিন্তু তাঁর নিজের কথায়, দাগি ব্যক্তির সাংসদ হিসাবে সংসদে আইন প্রণয়নে অংশ নিতে পারলে তাঁদের মন্ত্রী হওয়ারই বা অসুবিধা কোথায়? তাই সমস্যার একেবারে মূলে গিয়ে সমাধান করতে হবে। দাগিরা যাতে সাংসদই হতে না পারেন সেই ব্যবস্থা করতে হবে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পর মনমোহন জানিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন, জোট রাজনীতির জন্য বাধ্য হয়েই দাগি মন্ত্রীদের সঙ্গে রাখতে হয়েছে। আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে প্রথম সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে তাঁর প্রস্তাব, সব রাজনৈতিক দল একসঙ্গে বসুক। নির্বাচনী আইন সংশোধনে রাজি হোক। তা হলে রাজনীতির অপরাধীদের অনুপ্রবেশ রোধ করা সম্ভব হবে।

দাগি মন্ত্রীদের বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিজেপি-সহ বিরোধী দলগুলি যত হইচই-ই করুক না কেন প্রত্যেক দলেই বেশ কিছু দাগি সাংসদ আছেন। সাংসদের যাবতীয় অধিকারও তাঁরা ভোগ করেন। বিজেপি-র মতে, একজন দাগি ব্যক্তি সাংসদ হতে পারে। সেটা আটকানো সম্ভব নয়। কিন্তু তাঁকে মন্ত্রী করা একান্তই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ব্যাপার। তিনি কেন এ ক্ষেত্রে বিবেক ও বিবেচনাবোধ প্রয়োগ করবেন না? এই যুক্তিতেই দাগি মন্ত্রীদের অপসারণের দাবিতে দিনের পর দিন সংসদ অচল রেখেছে বিজেপি। মনমোহন কিন্তু সমস্যাকে অন্য ভাবে দেখছেন। তিনি মনে করেন, কেউ সাংসদ হলে তাঁর এলাকার লোকেরও একটা প্রত্যাশা থাকে যে তিনি মন্ত্রী হবেন। তা ছাড়া কে দাগি, কে নয়, তা-ই বা কী করে ঠিক হবে? সব থেকে ভাল, আইন করে এই সমস্যা চিরতরে মেটানো।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পর একশো দিন অতিক্রান্ত। এই একশো দিন খুব অনায়াসে কাটাননি মনমোহন। দাগি মন্ত্রী, সাংসদ, তাঁর আচরণ নিয়ে সংসদের প্রায় পুরো সময়টাই অচল রেখেছে বিরোধীরা। মুদ্রাস্ফীতিকে লাগাম পরানো যায়নি। জল সমস্যা নিয়ে পঞ্জাব ও সেনাবাহিনীর বিশেষ ক্ষমতা আইন প্রত্যাহারের দাবিতে মণিপুর অন্য পথে হেঁটেছে। একই



প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পরে প্রথম সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে মনমোহন সিংহ। শনিবার দিল্লিতে। — এ এফ পি

সঙ্গে খরা ও বন্যার মোকাবিলা করতে হয়েছে। এই অবস্থায় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আত্মবিশ্বাসী বক্তব্য, একশো দিন খুব বেশি সময় নয়। তিনি সব সামলে নেবেন। সরকার খোলা মনে সব সমস্যার মোকাবিলা করছে। অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি রূপায়ণের কাজ শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। অদূর ভবিষ্যতে যে কাজ তিনি করবেন তারও একটা রূপরেখা দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। সেই কর্মসূচির প্রথমই রয়েছে পোটার বিলোপ। সরকার অর্ডিন্যান্স করে পোটাও বিলোপ করবে। সংসদ অচল থাকায় একটাও বিল পেশ করা যায়নি। তাই পোটার বিলোপে অর্ডিন্যান্সই হবে বলে জানিয়েছেন মনমোহন। আর ছাত্রছাত্রীদের জন্য মিড ডে মিল প্রকল্পটির সম্প্রসারণ হবে। কর্মসংস্থান বাড়ানোর কাজের বিনিময়ে খাদ্য প্রকল্পটি নতুন করে চালু করা হবে। সেই সঙ্গে শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রকে রাজনীতি ও আমলাতন্ত্রের আওতা থেকে মুক্ত করা হবে। আর জোর দেওয়া হবে কৃষির

উপর। মনমোহনের বক্তব্য, “কৃষিতে গত পাঁচ বছরে যে নজর দেওয়া উচিত ছিল তা দেওয়া হয়নি। কৃষকদের ঋণের বিষয়টির শীঘ্রই ফয়সালা হবে। ঋণের পরিমাণ আগামী তিন বছরে দ্বিগুণ করা হবে।”

পঞ্জাব ও মণিপুরে কংগ্রেসের সরকার যে ভাবে কেন্দ্রের তোয়াক্কা না করে এক দিকে জলবন্টন চুক্তি বাতিল করে আইন পাশ করেছে ও অন্য দিকে সশস্ত্র বাহিনীর বিশেষ ক্ষমতা আইন কিছু জায়গায় বাতিল করেছে সে প্রসঙ্গে এক প্রশ্নের উত্তরে মনমোহনের পরিষ্কার বক্তব্য, এ রকম সঙ্কট আগেও তৈরি হয়েছে। ১৯৯১ সালে কাবেরীর জল নিয়ে কণ্টক সরকারের একটি অর্ডিন্যান্স এই সঙ্কট তৈরি করেছিল। কিন্তু পরে আদালতে তা বাতিল হয়ে যায়। সম্ভবত এ কথা উল্লেখ করে এ বিষয়ে নিজের মত স্পষ্ট করে দিতে চাইলেন মনমোহন। জলবন্টন মামলার সমাধান করবে সুপ্রিম কোর্ট। তাঁর সরকার সেই সমাধানের জন্য অপেক্ষা

করছে। নদী সংযোগ কর্মসূচি নিয়েও চিন্তা ভাবনার পরে সিদ্ধান্ত নেবেন। এ বিষয়ে সব সম্ভাবনা খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। সশস্ত্র বাহিনী আইনে পরিবর্তন এনে মণিপুর সরকার ডুল কিছু করেনি বলেও জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানান, মণিপুরের সিদ্ধান্তে কেন্দ্র-রাজ্য সম্পর্কে কোনও প্রভাব পড়বে না।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দেন, সংস্কার চলবে। তবে ১৯৯১ সালে অর্থমন্ত্রী হিসাবে তিনি যা করেছিলেন, ২০০৪ সালে সেই একই কাজ করবেন না। বরং জোর দেবেন কৃষি ও কর্মসংস্থানের উপরে।

লোকসভা ও বিধানসভায় মহিলাদের জন্য সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি নিয়েও তাঁর সরকার লড়ে যাবে বলে ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন মনমোহন।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানান, লোকসভায় নির্বাচিত হয়ে আসার বিষয়ে এখনও তিনি কিছু চিন্তা করেননি। সব প্রধানমন্ত্রীই যে লোকসভায় জিতে এসেছিলেন, এমন তো নয়।

মুদ্রাস্ফীতি  
নিয়ে আশঙ্কা  
নেই, মিলল  
আশ্বাস

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৪ সেপ্টেম্বর: মুদ্রাস্ফীতি নিয়ে দেশজুড়ে ভীতির কোনও কারণ দেখছেন না অর্থনীতিবিদ প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। তাঁর বক্তব্য, এমন তথ্য নেই, যার ভিত্তিতে আর্থিক বৃদ্ধি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে বলে মনে করা যায়। সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়া কোনও ভাবে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে বলেও তিনি মনে করেন না। সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়া এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে শরিক দলগুলি যে বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়াবে, তাও তিনি মনে করেন না।

শনিবার বিজ্ঞান ভবনে তাঁর সরকারের ১০০ দিন পূর্তি উপলক্ষে প্রধানমন্ত্রী পরিষ্কার করে দেন আর্থিক সংস্কার এবং বর্তমান আর্থিক সমস্যা সম্পর্কে তাঁর এবং তাঁর সরকারের মনোভাব কী। তিনি বলেন, বিলম্বীকরণ নিয়ে তাঁদের কোনও নীতিগত আপত্তি নেই। এই সাংবাদিক বৈঠকের আগেই ওই বিজ্ঞান ভবনেই রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থাগুলির একটি যৌথ মঞ্চে দাঁড়িয়ে তিনি বলেছেন, যে বোর্ড তৈরির প্রতিশ্রুতি বাজেটে রাখা হয়েছিল, সেই প্রতিশ্রুতি রাখা হবে। একই সঙ্গে তিনি বলেন, ব্যাঙ্কগুলি নিজেদের প্রয়োজনে তাদের মূলধনের জন্য বাজারের কাছে যাওয়ায় তাঁদের কোনও আপত্তি নেই।

মনমোহন যে সংস্কারের মানচিত্র তৈরি করছেন, তাতে মালিকানা চেয়েও জোর থাকছে দক্ষতা এবং লাভের উপরে। এ দিন তিনি বিভিন্ন সময়ে পরিষ্কার করে দেন, গুং সরকারি নয়, দেশের উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচিতে বেসরকারি সংস্থাকে সমান ভাবে এগিয়ে আসতে হবে। এ দিনের সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে বারে বারে যে প্রশ্ন ঘুরে ফিরে এসেছে, তা সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়ার প্রতি বর্তমান সরকার ও শরিক দলগুলির সমর্থন ঘিরে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী এই সব প্রশ্নের জবাবে যা বলেন, তা হল দক্ষতা এবং লাভ এই দুই ধরে রাখতে রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার বেসরকারীকরণের কোনও প্রয়োজন নেই। তবে দুর্বল রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার জন্য গঠিত নতুন বোর্ড এই সংস্থাগুলিকে ঘুরে দাঁড় করানোর পথে বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়াবে না। এই আশ্বাস অবশ্যই এসেছে সেই ধারণা ভাঙতে। যে ধারণায় দুর্বল রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থাকে টিকিয়ে রাখতে ভর্তুকির ব্যবস্থা করত। অর্থাৎ, তাঁর জোর সরকারি মালিকানাযুক্ত দক্ষ এবং লাভজনক সংস্থা তৈরি করার উপরেই।

একই সঙ্গে তিনি পরিষ্কার করে  
এর পর চারের পাতায়

# UPA protecting Godhra accused, says Jaitley

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The BJP has attacked the government's decision to constitute an inquiry into the Godhra incident, saying that the terms of reference amounted to an attempt to protect those guilty of burning coach S-6 of Sabarmati Express on February 27, 2002.



BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley said that a clause in the terms stated that the new probe would ascertain whether overcrowding, ticketless travelling and the behaviour of passengers contributed to the fire. "This is a clear signal to those who are accused of the crime that the UPA stands by them," he said. He said that it was worrying that railway minister Lalu Prasad had even earlier suggested that passengers had been responsible for the violence. "The fact that PM Manmohan Singh has sanctified this amounts to a vengeful trivialisation of the Godhra incident," Jaitley said.

The BJP's decision to lock horns with the government over the Godhra probe indicates the party's resolve to play its "majority is unsafe" card to the fullest. It falls in with the decision to take up Uma Bharti's resignation and the planned "tiranga yatra". There is also another "saffron" issue agitating the BJP—the education "detox" campaign.

Jaitley said that the Nanavati-Shah commission's terms of reference fully covered the Godhra incident as it was to go into the "facts, circumstances and events" of the violence there. He said that if some facts had been uncovered, these should be presented to the commission rather than initiating another inquiry.

Jaitley asked the government to clarify whether the opinion of the Chief Justice of India had been sought before the probe was announced. Referring to forensic reports on the fire being started from within the burnt coach, he said that simulated tests had established the connections between two bogies had been cut open and petrol poured in. The BJP leader said that investigations had revealed that the burning was pre-planned at "Aman guest house" and the filling stations from where 160 litres of petrol had been procured were also known.

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# Ton of trouble

UPA's chaotic century

No government should be judged on the basis of its first 100 days. But the United Progressive Alliance has made it very, very difficult to avoid the temptation. It came to power on the back of one of the biggest electoral upsets. The first 100 days should have therefore been a grand Congress show in North and South Blocks. There has been a show all right, except it seems scripted by the BJP. The principal Opposition was shocked into lethargy by the verdict. The government has given it back life and rhetorical ammunition. It began with that great "sacrifice". It is now clear what Sonia Gandhi sacrificed is Manmohan Singh's ability to lead a government he constitutionally heads. Singh's ministers, especially the senior ones, are manifestly unimpressed with his authority and meticulously listen to Sonia. This is not only at odds with the aesthetics of a prime ministerial democracy — Singh said ministers shouldn't come to see him off at the airport, Sonia led the whole gang of them to say bye and make the cor. ary point — it can be dangerous insofar as the preeminence of the government over the party in executive matters goes. We have already had the law minister saying there's nothing wrong if Sonia is shown cabinet files. We have a National Advisory Council funded out of the PMO budget, headed by Sonia and given what should be the cabinet's job: overseeing the implementation of the government's manifesto Manmohan has been a marginal figure in all this and, sadly because he is a good man, the strain is showing.

What is showing on the BJP is a broad smile. The most extraordinary failure of this government's first 100 days has been its petulant and poorly planned politics of confrontation. Indeed, considering that the Congress has actually tamed what was billed to be the biggest enemy inside — the Left — it is incredible that it should commit so many blunders about the enemy outside. You don't try to replace school textbooks in the middle of an academic year. You don't make silly remarks — Arjun Singh's unprovoked attack on the RSS — about an adversary who flourishes when targeted thus. You don't summarily sack governors simply because they have been appointed by your political rival and especially when the latter hadn't done so during its stint in power. You don't crudely reassess a Maharashtra icon's historical contribution when Maharashtra elections are approaching. You don't ensure that an Opposition chief minister, a poor administrator whom her party couldn't sack for fear of political upheavals, resigns amidst grand political theatre and becomes free to do what she does best — work the crowds and build up a momentum. The BJP behaved like poor losers in the early post-defeat days. But the Congress seems determined to carry on as dreadful winners. Almost shockingly, this government hasn't had the so-called honeymoon period all new incumbents enjoy. Voters, of course, will give the government more time. The question is whether the Congress can use that.

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## INFRASTRUCTURE IS THE KEY

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WITHIN DAYS OF announcing his decision to focus on coordinated development of infrastructure, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has constituted a high-powered committee, which he himself will head. This body will monitor and facilitate the implementation of infrastructure projects in the country. It is in keeping with the United Progressive Alliance Government's declared intention to enlarge the role of the Planning Commission that its Deputy Chairman, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, has been named member-secretary of the panel. With Ministers holding charge of key economic portfolios — Finance, Railways, Surface Transport, Power, Petroleum, Commerce and Industry — as members, the committee will have a smooth interface with the Government. This will ensure that substantive decisions are taken and the hurdles to implementation of critical projects overcome expeditiously and without hassle. If achieving an eight per cent growth in GDP is to be taken up in a businesslike way, the key lies in the development and expansion of infrastructure. Unless the bottlenecks in highways, ports, telecommunications, Railways and power are removed, it will be impossible to sustain a higher trajectory of growth.

Finding the investments required for a massive expansion of infrastructure facilities across the country will be the real challenge. With the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and the Finance Minister on the panel, it should be possible to identify ways and means of raising adequate resources to fund these crucial projects. Despite opposition from some of its allies, the UPA Government is serious about privatisation of major airports in a bid to raise resources for their modernisation and expansion. So far as the Railways are concerned, the Centre has not been able even to identify areas in which the private sector can play a part. With the introduction of more

passenger trains every year, congestion on the lines is becoming a major problem; it needs to be solved if turnaround time and capacity utilisation are to improve. New highway projects provide for toll ways, at least in some stretches, to raise resources and to encourage private participation in 'Build Own Operate and Transfer' mode. The private sector has emerged as a key player in telecommunications and the public sector Bharat Sanchar Nigam is now trying to meet the challenge of competition. It is the power sector that lags far behind. Many major private projects have not taken off and power purchase agreements have turned out to be unrealistic and, in some cases, scandal-ridden.

The high-powered infrastructure committee must take a fresh look at power sector reforms. State Governments have not been able to gather the required political courage to push through critical reforms in this sector. It is clear that without sound and balanced reforms State Electricity Boards (SEBs) cannot be pulled out of the red. Unless SEBs are financially healthy, they cannot purchase power from private producers. The collapse of the much-hyped Enron power project in Maharashtra was a big setback to the strategy of fast-track privatisation. So much so, the Planning Commission and the Power Ministry appear convinced that the public sector will remain the key player in the electricity sector. Unless there is assured supply of quality power, industrial development cannot surge ahead to promote higher growth. For agriculture to post a four to five per cent growth, it is imperative that energy and water get priority attention. The hope is that unlike other panels and Ministerial Groups, Dr. Singh's committee will be able to take a hard look at the problems hindering growth and arrive at quick solutions. State Governments must also pull their weight in this national endeavour.



# Exit exim policy, welcome foreign trade

the Rs 7 lakh crore mark by the end of this decade.

Of course, the policy centres around export incentives. Free Trade and Warehousing Zones will be set. All exporters with a minimum turnover of Rs 5 crore will be exempted from bank guarantee requirements and EOUs will not be subject to service tax. More specifically, to promote gems and jewellery exports duty-free imports of samples up to Rs 1 lakh will be allowed.

The usual practice of setting up more “special areas” or “zones” continues — even though past promises have

still not materialised. Now it is the turn of biotech parks and a handicraft SEZ.

Incidentally, it won't be called EX-IM policy anymore. The new buzzword is a Foreign Trade policy that aims at a 20 per cent annual export growth target over the next five years.

Keen to project the “aam aadmi” motif after the flak that the previous government attracted for ignoring the farmer, the new policy focuses on agri exports.

Under the new scheme, there are incentives for export of agri produce like flowers, fruits, vegetables, minor

forest produce and their value-added products. There is also a new ‘target plus’ scheme for incremental substantially higher than export targets. Such exporters would be entitled to duty free credit.

For incremental growth of 20, 25 and 100 per cent, the duty-free credit would be five, 10 and 15 per cent respectively of FOB value.

Still, for now, services remain at the heart of the new policy. To give these a further boost, Kamal Nath said that common facility centres would be set up for home-based service providers.

2 1 SEP 2004

# Govt: Exit exim policy, welcome foreign trade

■ 'SERVED IN INDIA' | New policy meant to double India's share in global trade in 5 yrs, from the current measly 0.8%

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 31

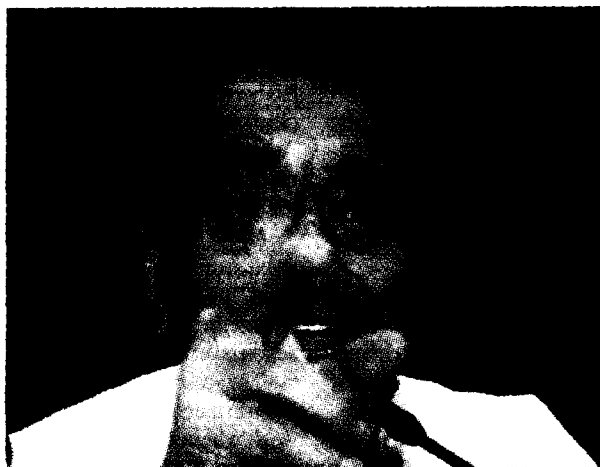
**T**O the rest of the world, a tiny ripple will grow just a little bigger. But to India, the new trade policy—if it works—will be a coming out party of sorts.

Commerce Minister Kamal Nath says that the new policy will double India's share in global trade by 2009 from the present level of 0.8 per cent.

He also hopes to use exports to create more jobs. And putting his money where his mouth is, the minister has promised duty-free credit to exporters who shoot past the export growth target.

But first, it is about creating a brand that goes beyond the tired "Made in India" theme. In fact, realising that even more than goods the world now looks to India for its service exports, Kamal Nath today launched a new initiative called "Served from India".

A little cheer must have



**Duty-free credit to exporters who shoot past the target: Kamal Nath**

gone up in the call centres and the BPO providers at this recognition.

While merchandise exports account for nearly Rs 3.15 lakh crore annually, the services exports, a newer phenomenon, have already touched Rs 2.25 lakh crore at present. Merchandise exports may double by 2009. Service exports will grow even quicker, nearly touching

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## What's new

- Export incentives to continue with DEPB under a new name
- Export oriented units exempted from service tax
- New scheme to categorise exporters into one star, two star upto five star export houses
- New scheme for agri exports: Vishesh Krishi Upaj Yojana
- Duty-free import of capital goods for agri exports

# UPA allies differ over Savarkar controversy

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 30. Different perceptions within the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and in it on the role of the RSS ideologue, V.D. Savarkar, put the Congress in a bind yet again today. Two of its allies — the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) — criticised the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar's tirade against Savarkar.

The Congress spokesman, Anand Sharma, maintained that the party always rejected Savarkar's ideology and political philosophy, and reiterated that Mr. Aiyar's views were his own.

As to whether the Congress subscribed to Mr. Aiyar's reported statement that Savarkar was responsible for Partition along with Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Mr. Sharma said divisive ideologies weakened the movement.

## 'Right to differ'

About the DMK president, M. Karunanidhi's criticism of

Mr. Aiyar for his statements against Savarkar and the Maharashtra unit of the NCP planning to petition the President on the matter, the spokesman said: "Everyone has the right to differ and hold their own views. This does not mean there is a rift between the Congress and the DMK."

Mr. Sharma sought to sidestep questions on the Maharashtra Congress leaders — including the Chief Minister, Sushil Kumar Shinde, and the party in-charge of the State, Prabha Rau — being upset with Mr. Aiyar for his remarks about Savarkar, and the party's own reluctance to endorse the Petroleum Minister's views. But, when questions on this count persisted, he shot back: "None of our leaders have endorsed the political philosophy of Savarkar."

## Stable administration

The Congress claimed that the UPA Government had laid the foundation for a stable and strong administration in the past 100 days it had been in office.

# Controversies mark UPA's 100 days

## Shahid Pervaz in New Delhi

Aug. 29. — Smarting under multiple controversies and a sustained Opposition onslaught, the Congress-led UPA government's first 100 days in power has proved to be a pretty tumultuous and tough affair.

The "honeymoon period" for the UPA government seemed to be over the moment it assumed office on 22 May. And as it lurched from one crisis to another, the government could barely be said to have settled down smoothly even now.

The period has been marked by a stunning low in the hostile government-Opposition relations with a belligerent BJP-led NDA

keeping the heat on the government ceaselessly right from day one over issues ranging from "tainted ministers", to the Veer Savarkar episode, to the Uma Bharati resignation affair.

There was, however, also the siege from within as the supporting Left parties did not spare the UPA, putting it in a dock repeatedly over a variety of matters, including the government's proposed hike in FDI caps in insurance, telecommunication, and civil aviation sectors, the increase in fuel prices, the slashing of EPF interest rate, and the plan to privatise airports.

Even the Congress chief ministers of Punjab and Manipur did their bit to embarrass their own govern-

ment at the Centre. While Mr Amarinder Singh masterminded a legislative move to scrap Punjab's all water-sharing agreements with the neighbouring states, Mr O Ibobi Singh sought to partially repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Manipur, the leaving Manmohan Singh government red in its face.

The seeds of problems for the government were sown right in its genesis. The government

was marred by intense scrambling and acrimony, with the DMK leaders as well as the RJD supreme, Mr Lalu Prasad, and the LJP chief, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, openly betraying their resentment on their claims over plum ministerial portfolios.

Reeling under the shock of its incredible defeat, the BJP was given the issue on a platter when "tainted ministers" were included in the government. The issue has afflicted the government till date, even as the BJP-NDA went on stalling the proceedings of

Parliament with unrelenting zeal. As Dr Manmohan Singh grappled with the Jamtara massacre case against Sibu Soren, finally asking him to resign, other criminal cases and warrants against the TRS minister, Chandrashekhar Rao and the RJD minister Mohd Taslimuddin came to light.

As the railway budget and the finance bill were passed in Parliament in the face of the opposition boycott in an unprecedented fashion, the Congress attacked the BJP for being "bad losers who are yet to gracefully concede their defeat". Citing the cases of charged BJP ministers in the Babari Masjid demolition case, the party blamed "coalition compulsions" for induction of accused ministers.

The litany of the UPA government's woes also involve inflation, drought, floods, insurgency, Iraq hostage crisis, and even the PM's alleged "rude and discourteous behaviour" with the opposition leaders.

Dr Singh's dramatic elevation to the country's top post was followed by another kind of drama distinguishing his innings so far, so much so that he was forced to admit that his initial 100 days had been "abnormal and tough unlike any other previous regime".

On the performance front, in addition to a "new deal for rural India", the UPA government has sought to focus on "the concerns of common people", agriculture and rural development, and "de-saffronisation of education".



Dr Singh: Uneasy lies the head...

# UPA completes 100 days; Mulayam shows off his 365

My govt is going through abnormal times, says PM

ENS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 29

An aggressive Opposition that was sure of coming to power, demanding allies and uneasy power equations with the ruling Congress marked the initial 100 days of the Congress-led coalition at the Centre.

The Cabinet formation itself led to considerable acrimony and marked the beginning of what is now known as the Paswan-Laloo divide, leave alone DMK's famous sulk.

The swearing in of RJID ministers, including Laloo Prasad Yadav, who got the prized Railways portfolio, gave the BJP-led Opposition, which was yet to recover from a shock defeat at the hustings, an issue on a platter with which began the deadlock in Parliament.

Singh was anguished over the logjam due to which he could not even introduce his council of ministers and there

We'll change Gujarat for the world



A woman ties garland to Modi in Rajgopal on Sunday. PTI

**BANGALORE:** Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the state was emerging as India's petro and medical tourism capital and his government proposed "to transform the state for the world in the 21st century".

"There was a time when the world was for Gujarat's. Now we want to transform Gujarat for the world," Modi said at the inaugural of the Sardar Patel Bhavan and unveiling of Patel's statue here. Modi said the state proposed to harness the 1,600 km of virgin coastline and pointed to the discovery of oil, valued at over Rs. 1,000 crore last week, after reopening 20-year-old wells. "While officials were hesitant to reopen the well, I took the risk of investing Rs 12 crore and later an additional Rs. 24 crore and last week we struck oil," he said.

—PTI

## Blames Governor for varsity crisis

ATIQ KHAN  
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 29

COMPLETING a year in office, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav

chanted the development mantra on Sunday, saying his government has fulfilled its promise of making UP a "model state". And riding on the success was his lieutenant Amar Singh and industrialist Anil Ambani.

The Chief Minister lauded the contribution of the Uttar Pradesh Development Council (UPDC) and said the blueprint for the state's development had been prepared with the help of Amar Singh, Anil Ambani and others.

Releasing a 49-page booklet, 'Hamara Uttar Pradesh *banega uttam pradeshi*', Yadav listed out his government's "achievements" in the past year, the

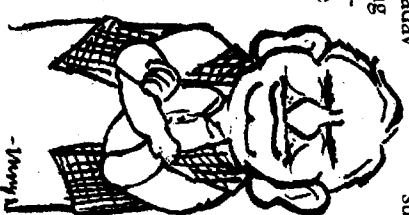
energy sector being accorded top priority. He said in the next four years, the state would become self-sufficient in power generation and the excess electricity would be exported to other states.

Among other achievements, Yadav counted "ending inequality in education". The Chief Minister said despite the English language still holding sway, the government had initiated several measures to make education affordable for poor students. It is the endeavour of Samajwadis, he said, to en-

sure that children of the poor study in the same schools as those from affluent sections of society. The government would soon launch a campaign to end illiteracy in the state, he added.

The government has, for the first time, ensured that sugarcane farmers got dues worth Rs 1,100 crore, he said. This came with the state initiating strict measures against private mill owners to clear the arrears at the earliest.

The Chief Minister slammed the "needless controversy" on the Maulana Mohd Ali Jauhar Urdu University, which claimed was one of the achievements of the



'In 4 years, urja pradesh to export power to states'

state government in the past year.

UPDC chairman Amar Singh, who was present at the press conference, showed off his latest success — Infosys, Singh said Infosys has convened a meeting with state officials on September 22 at Bangalore to discuss steps for adopting Lucknow as an information technology centre and making Noida and Greater Noida an IT hub. With the Tatas and AV Birla agreeing to set up power plants in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh will become "urja pradeshi", Singh said.

The Chief Minister commissioned five 132-KV power sub-stations to mark the a year in government. The sub-stations, at Gajokhar (Varanasi), Phulpur (Azamgarh), Lalaganj (Pratapgarh), Martin Purwa (Lucknow) and Kankarkhera (Meerut), have been built at Rs 35 crore.

# প্রধানমন্ত্রিস্থের ১০০ দিনে জেরবার মনমোহন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮ আগস্ট: আর যাই হোক একে মধুচন্দ্রিমা বলে না।

ক্ষমতার আলিঙ্গনে প্রথম একশো দিন এমন ঝঞ্জাঝুঝু হবে, ভাবেননি প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। ঘরে বাইরে নানা সমস্যা যে তাঁকে বিরত করেছে তা নিজেই কবুল করেছেন তিনি। দীর্ঘদিনের প্রশাসনিক অভিজ্ঞতা নিয়ে সমস্যা সমাধানের চেষ্টা করলেও সবটা তাঁর হাতেও নেই।

একশো দিনের যে রিপোর্ট কার্ড তৈরি হয়েছে তাতে দেখা যাচ্ছে একের পর এক সমস্যা। অর্ধনীতি এবং নিরাপত্তা— রেহাই নেই কোনও দিকেই। গোটা দুনিয়া জুড়ে যে মুদ্রাস্ফীতি আর মূল্যবৃদ্ধির ঝড় উঠেছে তা নিজের ঘরের জানলা বন্ধ করে রোখা যাবে না। আন্তর্জাতিক ক্ষেত্রে তেলের দাম হু হু করে বেড়েছে। গত তিন চার বছর ধরে একই ভাবে পণ্যের দামও বেড়েছে। ইম্পাত ও অন্যান্য ধাতুর দাম উর্ধ্বমুখী। ফলে সিংহাসনে বসতে না বসতেই মুদ্রাস্ফীতির বিশ্বাসনের ধাক্কা সামলাতে হয়েছে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে।

অর্ধনীতির পাশাপাশি নিরাপত্তা নিয়েও সমস্যা জটিল। নিজের দলের সরকার হওয়া সত্ত্বেও কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে রাজনৈতিক সংঘাত মাথাচাড়া দিয়েছে পঞ্জাব, মণিপুরে। মণিপুরে মনোরমা-ধর্মসের ঘটনাকে কেন্দ্র করে জঙ্গি নাশকতামূলক কার্যকলাপ আরও বেড়েছে। মনমোহন সেখানে রাষ্ট্রপতি শাসন জারি করতে

রাজি হননি ঠিকই, কিন্তু কোর্শের নির্দেশের তোয়াক্কা না করে আংশিক ভাবে সশস্ত্র বাহিনীর বিশেষ ক্ষমতা আইন প্রত্যাহার করে নিয়েছে মণিপুর সরকার। অন্য দিকে, শতক্র-যমুনা খাল তৈরির প্রক্ষে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কথা না বলে পঞ্জাবের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী অমরিন্দর সিংহ সুর্তিম কোর্শের নির্দেশকেই চ্যালেঞ্জ করেছেন।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী হতে না-হতেই মনমোহনের টেবিলে এসেছে বিভিন্ন দেশের রাষ্ট্রনায়কদের আমন্ত্রণপত্র। অধিকাংশ দেশকেই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় জানিয়ে দিয়েছে এখন বিদেশযাত্রা সম্ভব হচ্ছে না। মনমোহন তাঁর সচিবদের বলেছেন, খুব জরুরি না-হলে এখন তিনি বিদেশে যাবেন না। দেশের ভিতর তাঁর অনেক কাজ।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী গদে মনমোহন সিংহের শুরুটা একেবারেই অন্য রকম। কোনও টিভি চ্যানেলকে একান্ত সাক্ষাৎকার দিয়ে এই একশো দিনে কী কী কাজ করেছে তার স্মরণশক্তি দেননি তিনি। উল্টে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিবকে নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন, কোনও সরকারি বিজ্ঞাপনে যেন তাঁর ছবি ছাপা না হয়। প্রচার সর্বস্বতার ঢক্কা নিষাদ যে তাঁর পছন্দ নয় সেটা তিনি মন্ত্রীদেরও যারবার বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন। স্বাধীনতা দিবসে জাতীয় পতাকা উত্তোলন করতে গিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেছেন, তাঁর কোনও প্রতিশ্রুতি নেই। তাঁর কাজ পুরনো প্রতিশ্রুতির রূপায়ণ। রাষ্ট্রীয়ত্ব সংস্থার সম্পদের অপব্যবহার, আর্থিক

অপচয়, অযথা বিশেষত্বমণ্ডল এবং সর্বই বন্ধ করার নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন তিনি। সং ও স্বচ্ছ প্রশাসনই শুধু নয়, রাজ্যে রাজ্যে সরকারি প্রকল্পের সঠি রূপায়ণ ব্যবস্থা গড়ে তোলার ডাক দিয়েছেন তিনি।

এইসব শুভ প্রচেষ্টা যতই থাকুক বাস্তব পরিস্থিতি সবটা তাঁর নিয়ন্ত্রণে নেই। মনমোহন-চিদম্বরম-মর্দেক সিংহ, অর্ধনৈতিক সংস্কারে এত ভাল গ্রহী বিরল বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। কিন্তু নানা চাপে ও জ্যেষ্ঠ রাজনীতির বাধ্যবাধকতার কারণে তাঁদের আপোসও করতে হচ্ছে। জালুপ্রসাদ

যাদবকে দিতে হয়েছে রেলমন্ত্রক। সেখানে সস্তা জনপ্রিয়তার রাজনীতি করছেন লাভু। সংস্কার শুরু। বিদ্যুৎ-ক্ষেত্রে সংস্কার করতে দায়বদ্ধ ছিল কংগ্রেস। গত জমায় বি জে পি যখন বিদ্যুৎ বিল এনেছিল তখন কংগ্রেস তা সমর্থন করেছিল। কিন্তু বাম নেতৃত্ব প্রকাশ্যে এই বিলের বিরোধিতা করেছে এবং আবার এই বিলের পর্যালোচনা দাবি করেছে। প্রতিভেট ফাউন্ডেশনের সুদের হার কমানোর বিরোধিতা করেছে বাম জামিক ইউনিয়নগুলি। চিদম্বরম তাতে দাবি মানতে নারাজ। বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ নিয়েও একই ভাবে বিতর্ক চলছে।

বাম নেতারা অবশ্য বারবার সমিয়া গণ্ডি এবং প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে এসে বলে যাচ্ছেন যে, তাঁরা বাইরে যতটা গর্জন করছেন বাস্তবে ততটা বর্ষণ করবেন না। সরকারের কোনও সফট নেই। তর্কবিতর্ক চলুক। তাই বামেরা যতই সমালোচনায়

মুখর হোন প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং অর্ধমন্ত্রী নীরবে সুকৌশলে সংস্কারের কাজ এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে চাইছেন। শুরু হয়েছে এক অভিনব রাজনৈতিক প্রক্রিয়া। বাম নেতৃত্ব পুরনো কটরপন্থী অবস্থান পরিত্যাগ করছেন। অন্য দিকে, 'মনমোহনীয় অর্ধনীতিতেও' বদলাচ্ছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। কিন্তু মাত্র একশো দিনে এর সফল পাওয়া সম্ভব নয়।

আপাতত যাতপ্রতিযাতই যেন বড় হয়ে উঠেছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ভূমিকায় অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী আর মনমোহন সিংহের মধ্যে ব্যবধান সহস্র যোজন। মনমোহনকে রাজনৈতিক ও সাংগঠনিক

সমস্যা নিয়ে মাথা ঘামাতে হয় না। এ ব্যাপারে তিনি অনেকটাই নির্ভর করেন দলনেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধীর উপর। আবার প্রশাসন পরিচালনার প্রধান কাণ্ডারী তিনি। এই অভিনব কার্যপন্থার সফল যা-ই থাক আপাতত কোনও সমস্যারই চটজলদি সমাধানসূত্রে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে নেই। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ের মুখপাত্র বলেন, একশো দিনে সমস্যা অনেক এসেছে এ কথা যেমন সত্য, তেমনই সত্য সেগুলো সমাধানের চেষ্টা। মুদ্রাস্ফীতি গোটা পৃথিবীর সমস্যা হলেও তাকে যথেষ্ট শক্ত হাতে মোকাবিলা করা সম্ভব হয়েছে। ট্রাক ধর্মঘট প্রত্যাহার হয়েছে।

এই কঠিন পরিস্থিতিতেও হতাশ নন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। নূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচির প্রতিটি বিষয় রূপায়ণের জন্য আরও সময় চান তিনি।

29 AUG 2001

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28/8

# Manmohan renews call for code of conduct

By Vinay Kumar

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 27.** The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today stressed the need to evolve a code of conduct by consensus 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. Inaugurating a two-day biennial conference of State anti-corruption bureaus and the Central Bureau of Investigation here, Dr. Singh said the administrative systems and procedures should be more rational and transparent. He warned top police officials against adopting investigative procedures that killed managerial initiative and stunted individual enterprise and risk-taking.

"Management is an art, not a science. It requires individual initiative, creativity and willingness to take risks in the larger

interests of the enterprise. I am all for rules and regulations and procedures that punish the wrongdoers, but in doing so we should not hold back the truly enterprising people with initiative and dynamism and enthusiasm," he said.

In his half-an-hour address, Dr. Singh referred to his Independence Day speech and his brief intervention in Parliament on Thursday last, indicating that key issues of good governance, dynamic economy and a compassionate polity were a source of great concern to him.

The Government could not depend purely on individual ethics and morality or public opinion to deal with the malaise of corruption.

"It must design institutional checks, create incentive and disincentive structures and put in place reward and punishment systems," he said.

Following the liberalisation of economy, Dr. Singh said, there had been a spurt in economic offences such as financial frauds, bank and stockmarket scams, money-laundering and cyber crimes. "A strong link has developed between economic offences and the anti-social and terrorist organisations. The criminal today can hide from law anywhere in the world," he said.

The aim of economic reforms was to make the government less intrusive and discretionary and more transparent. "Many of these reforms had an added beneficial effect of ending the hypocrisy that had come to characterise some of our industrial policies, where we said one thing on paper and allowed another in reality. Rational policies, transparent procedures, simple rules do have the positive externality of reducing the

scope for corruption," he said.

Dr. Singh's prescription for the anti-corruption agencies such as the CBI was that in judging individual cases, one must not forget that in public life "one is dealing with a world of great uncertainty." "Honest mistakes" could be made, he said adding that every effort should be made to distinguish between "honest mistakes" and "wilful defiance" of the rule of law.

## Pending cases

In his welcome address, the CBI Director, U.S. Mishra, expressed concern over the drawbacks in the criminal justice system and the piling up of cases in courts. "We can think of increasing the number of special courts trying Prevention of Corruption Act cases," he said.

**Another report and photograph on Page 13**

THE HINDU

28 AUG 2004

# মূল্যায়ন হচ্ছে মন্ত্রীদের

## কেন্দ্রে দফতর

## তেলে সাজার

## তোড়জোড়

২৭/৮ জয়ন্ত শোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি ৭/৮/৮৭\*

২৭ অগস্ট: ক্ষমতায় আসার ১০০ দিনের মধ্যেই কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভা তেলে সাজার প্রস্তাব নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করেছেন সনিয়া গান্ধী ও মনমোহন সিংহ। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ের প্রতিমন্ত্রী পৃথীরাজ চহ্লাণ বলেন, “এর লক্ষ্য দু’টি। এক, মন্ত্রীদের কাজকর্মের মূল্যায়নের ভিত্তিতে রদবদল। দুই, কাজকর্মের জন্য বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রকের কাঠামোগত পরিবর্তন।” বিষয়টি নিয়ে ইতিমধ্যেই সনিয়ার সঙ্গে দু’দফা বৈঠক করেছেন মনমোহন। কোনও চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত না-হলেও বেশ কিছু প্রস্তাব দুই শীর্ষ নেতার সামনে আছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী আমেরিকা সফরে যাবেন ১৯ সেপ্টেম্বর। তিনি লন্ডন হয়ে মার্কিন মুলুকে যাবেন এবং ফিরবেন ২৬ সেপ্টেম্বর। এ দিকে, রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আব্দুল কালাম দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা যাচ্ছেন ১০ সেপ্টেম্বর। কাজেই তার আগেই এই রদবদল করার ব্যাপারে চাপ আছে দলের ভিতরেই।

বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রীর কাজের খতিয়ান নেওয়া শুরু করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তাঁর সচিবালয়ের পক্ষ থেকে আমলাতান্ত্রিক ও রাজনৈতিক দুই ধরনের ‘ফিডব্যাক’ দেওয়া হচ্ছে তাঁকে। আপাতত যে রিপোর্ট কার্ড তৈরি হয়েছে তা থেকে জানা যাচ্ছে, যে সব মন্ত্রী খুব ভাল কাজ করেছেন তাঁদের মধ্যে আছেন পেট্রোলিয়ামমন্ত্রী মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ার, প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়, বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী কমল নাথ।

যে দুই মন্ত্রীর কাজকর্মে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় খুশি নয় তাঁরা হলেন, লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব ও অর্জুন সিংহ। লালুর বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ, রেল সংস্কারের কাজ কার্যত স্তব্ধ হয়ে গিয়েছে। রেলমন্ত্রী রাজনৈতিক জনপ্রিয়তা অর্জনে অনেক বেশি ব্যস্ত। অন্য দিকে, অর্জুন সিংহ সম্পর্কে অভিযোগ, শিক্ষার প্রসার ঘটানোর চেয়ে আর এস এস বিরোধী প্রচার অভিযানেই বেশি মনোযোগী তিনি।

প্রণববাবু সম্পর্কে রিপোর্ট কার্ডে বলা হয়েছে, মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে আসার আগে তিনি প্রতিটি বিষয়ে গভীর ভাবে পড়াশুনো করে আসেন। শুধু প্রতিরক্ষা নয়, স্বরাষ্ট্র থেকে অর্থ প্রতিটি বিষয়েই প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে নানা পরামর্শ দেন। মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ারও খুব অল্প সময়ের মধ্যে মন্ত্রকের কাজ সামলে নিয়েছেন বলে রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে। তাঁর কাজে আমলারা খুশি। কমল নাথের কাজকর্ম সম্পর্কেও প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ের মূল্যায়ন ভাল। এই রিপোর্ট তৈরির ব্যাপারে গোয়েন্দা বিভাগও সাহায্য করেছে বলে খবর।

তবে রদবদল নিয়ে যে সব প্রস্তাব এসেছে তাতে বলা হচ্ছে, ● পঞ্চায়েতকে গ্রামীণ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রকের সঙ্গে যুক্ত করে সে দায়িত্ব মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ারকে দেওয়া। রঘুবংশপ্রসাদ সিংহকে অন্য মন্ত্রক দেওয়া। ● ইউনেস্কোর নির্দেশিকা মেনে পর্যটন ও সংস্কৃতি দফতরের সংযুক্তি। তথ্যমন্ত্রী জয়পাল রেড্ডির হাতে রয়েছে সংস্কৃতি দফতর। পর্যটনমন্ত্রী রেণুকা চৌধুরি নিজে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে জানিয়েছেন, সংস্কৃতি দফতর ছাড়া তাঁর কাজ করতে অসুবিধা হচ্ছে। আগের সরকারের জগমোহনের হাতে দু’টি দফতরই একত্রে ছিল। ● বাণিজ্য ও শিল্প মন্ত্রককে ভেঙে দেওয়া। শিল্প মন্ত্রককে আলাদা করে দিলে নতুন একজনকে মন্ত্রিসভায় আনা সম্ভব হবে। তেলেশানা রাষ্ট্র সমিতির চন্দ্রশেখর রাও এখন দফতরবিহীনমন্ত্রী। তাঁকে কোনও দফতর দিতে হবে। তা ছাড়া অন্ধপ্রদেশের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী রাজশেখর রেড্ডি আরও এক-দু’জনকে মন্ত্রী করতে চাইছেন। শিবু সোরেন ইস্তফা দেওয়ায় কয়লা ও খনি মন্ত্রক খালি। এই দুই বিভাগকে ভেঙে একটি জে এম এমকে দেওয়ার কথা হচ্ছে।

নতুন কাকে কাকে মন্ত্রিসভায় আনা হবে তা নিয়ে অবশ্য আলোচনা হয়নি। সতীশ শর্মা, আর কে ধবন, মহসিনা কিদোয়াই প্রমুখ মন্ত্রী হতে ইচ্ছুক। কিন্তু সনিয়া শেষ পর্যন্ত এ ব্যাপারে কী সিদ্ধান্ত নেবেন, তা এখনও অজানা।

কাশ্মীর যাচ্ছেন মনমোহন: আমেরিকা সফরের আগে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ কাশ্মীর ঘুরে আসতে পারেন। এ মাসের শেষে তাঁর চেন্নাই ও অমৃতসর যাওয়ার কথা। তার পরই তিনি কাশ্মীর যেতে পারেন। আজ মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটিতে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা হয়েছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর হঠাৎ কাশ্মীরে যাওয়ার লক্ষ্য দু’টি। পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে বিদেশমন্ত্রী ও বিদেশসচিব পর্যায়ের বৈঠক শীঘ্রই শুরু হবে। তা ছাড়া আমেরিকায় পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গে তাঁর আলোচনা হওয়ার কথা। তার আগে তিনি কাশ্মীরে গেলে হরিয়তের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় যে জট দেখা দিয়েছে তা ছাড়ানোর সম্ভাবনা উজ্জ্বল হবে। দ্বিতীয়ত, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে ভারত কতটা অনড়, তা আবার বুঝিয়ে দেওয়া যাবে।

28 AUG 2004



# Never seen a PM losing temper: Atal

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 26. — The PM-  
Opposition spat intensified today with  
the former Prime Minister coming down  
heavily on the conduct of his successor.  
Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, who is also the  
NDA chairman, said his successor had  
not set a "good example for the country  
by being impolite" with the NDA delega-  
tion and refusing to accept an Opposition  
memorandum. And in a suo motu state-  
ment in the Lok Sabha, Dr Manmohan  
Singh perceived a "looming threat" to  
the democratic system if the latest turn  
of events in Parliament was a precursor  
of things to come.

After a meeting of NDA MPs, Mr  
Vajpayee said that during his five-decade-  
long political career, he had never wit-  
nessed a PM losing his temper with the  
Opposition leaders or refusing to accept  
a memorandum. He said it was with

## Memo shown its place

NEW DELHI, Aug. 26. — In his response to  
Opposition criticism of the Prime Minister's  
attitude, the leader of the Lok Sabha and  
defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, said:  
"What else could Dr Manmohan Singh have  
said when the BJP has been disrupting the  
House since day one? Should he have kept  
the memorandum on his head or in the wast-  
epaper basket? The table is the only place  
where he can keep the memorandum." — PTI

"much reluctance" that NDA MPs stayed  
away from Parliament today in protest  
against the PM's "unbecoming conduct".

Reacting to Mr Pranab Mukherjee's  
statement on the issue, Mr Vajpayee said,  
"It is regrettable that the reaction of the  
spokesman for the government and rul-  
ing coalition did not reflect the 'forgive  
and forget' message of the PM to the  
Leader of Opposition."

Mr Vajpayee discerned an "undemoc-  
ratic and intolerant" attitude of the gov-  
ernment in the "brazen insult" to Veer  
Savarkar and its "double standard" in the  
Uma Bharati case. It appeared, Mr  
Vajpayee said, that the government had  
decided not to care for what the  
Opposition has to say on various issues.

Dr Singh described the forced adjourn-  
ment of Parliament and its failure to dis-  
cuss the Budget as something that "does  
not augur well for the future of our  
democracy. I don't want to apportion  
blame on anyone but a poor country like  
ours, which is trying to modernise, needs  
patience", the Prime Minister told a  
House devoid of the Opposition.

"We recognise the Opposition's right  
to dissent but I feel sad at the end of the  
day. The people have sent us to  
Parliament to see to it that all money  
should be spent properly and yet the  
Budget proposals were not debated".

Another report on page 4

# অটল ও আক্রমণাত্মক আচরণবিধি চালু হোক, চান মনমোহন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৬ অগস্ট: বিরোধী নেতারা গতকাল তাঁকে 'অনা মূর্তি'তে দেখেছিলেন। আজ রাজ্যসভা দেখল আক্রমণাত্মক মনমোহনকে। তাঁর 'অশিষ্ট' ব্যবহারের জন্য এন ডি এ-র সংসদ বয়কটের পর প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মন্তব্য। "রাজনৈতিক দলগুলির উচিত সংসদের ভিতর ও বাইরের জন্য আচরণবিধি তৈরি করা। সংসদীয় গণতন্ত্রের নিয়মকানুন মেনেই বিরোধীদের চলতে হবে।"

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আচরণের জন্য এন ডি এ আজ সংসদ বয়কট করার পর এটা প্রমাণিত, সরকার ও বিরোধীদের সম্পর্ক তলানিতে পৌঁছেছে। এই অবস্থায় এন ডি এ অল্প হিসাবে ব্যবহার করেছে প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীকে। শরীর পুরো সুস্থ নয়। হটিতে অসুবিধা হচ্ছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রিত্ব যাওয়ার পর তাঁর প্রথম সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে অটলের পাল্টা আক্রমণ, "বিরোধী নেতাদের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী কী রকম ব্যবহার করবেন, সেই অলিখিত আচরণবিধি বোধহয় মনমোহন ভুলে গিয়েছিলেন। এন ডি এ প্রতিনিধিদলের সঙ্গে অভব্য ব্যবহার করে, স্মারকলিপি না নিয়ে, ন্যূনতম সৌজন্য না দেখিয়ে মনমোহন আদর্শ উদাহরণ তৈরি করেননি।"

এই চাপান-উতোরের মধ্যে বিরোধী-শূন্য সংসদে আজ অর্ধবিয় পাশ হয়ে যাওয়ার পর বাজেট অধিবেশনও শেষ হল। কিন্তু সরকার-এন ডি এ বিরোধ নিয়ে সমস্যা তীব্র হয়েই থেকে গেল। চব্বিশ দিনে হইহট্টসোলে লোকসভার ৪৭ ঘণ্টা নষ্ট হওয়ায় ক্রুদ্ধ স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় বলে দিয়েছেন, "নেতারা ভাবুন, কী ভাবে এই সমস্যার সমাধান হতে পারে। না হলে আমাকে কিন্তু কড়া ব্যবস্থা নিতে হবে।" কী ভাবে অচলাবস্থা কাটতে পারে তা নিয়ে মনমোহনের প্রস্তাব হল, "এমন কোনও সমস্যা নেই যা আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সমাধান হয় না। সরকার বিরোধ মেটাবার জন্য আপ্রাণ চেষ্টা করেছে। মতৈক্যে পৌঁছবার চেষ্টা করেছে। কিন্তু যদি সংসদই না চলে, তা হলে দেশ কোথায় গিয়ে পৌঁছবে?" আর লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর বক্তব্য, সরকার সংঘাতের রাস্তা থেকে সরে এলেই সমস্যা মিটবে। তবে আগামী অধিবেশন বয়কট করা হবে না বলে আগাম জানিয়েছেন আডবাণী।

মাস আড়াই পরে শীত-অধিবেশন। কিন্তু তার আগে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আচরণকে কেন্দ্র করে সরকার-বিরোধীদের সম্পর্ক এতই তিক্ত, যে আজ তারা একে অন্যকে কার্যত মিথ্যাবাদী আখ্যা দিয়েছে। কাল ঠিক কী ঘটনা ঘটেছিল, তা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন তোলা শুরু হয়েছে। এই বিতর্ককে আজ আরও উস্কে দিয়েছে লোকসভার নেতা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের তিন পাতার বিবৃতি। প্রণববাবু বলেছেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রীর অফিসের এক অফিসার এসে জানান, ছয়-সাত জনের প্রতিনিধিদল দেখা করতে এসেছেন। যদিও প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে আসলে লোকসভা ও রাজ্যসভার বিরোধী নেতার দেখা করার কথা ছিল।" এ নিয়ে আডবাণীর বক্তব্য, "কী আর বলব? আমার সচিবকে জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিলাম। আমরা কে কে যাব, সকলের নাম আগে থেকে দেওয়া হয়েছিল। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর অফিসে এটাও বলা হয়েছিল আরও জন দুই নেতা যেতে পারেন। প্রণববাবুর বিবৃতি বিশ্বয়কর।" জর্জের কাছ থেকে স্মারকলিপি নিয়ে টেবিলে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ছুড়ে ফেলার প্রসঙ্গ প্রণববাবুর বিবৃতিতে নেই। বরং প্রণববাবু বলেছেন, "মনমোহন দরজা পর্যন্ত তাঁদের পৌঁছে দিয়ে আসেন। এন ডি এ নেতারা তিলকে তাল করছেন।" এর জবাবে রাজ্যসভার বিরোধী নেতা যশোবন্ত সিংহের তির্যক মন্তব্য, "যদি কিছুই না হয়ে থাকে তা হলে, কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী আমাকে ও আডবাণীজিকে কেন ফোন করেছিলেন? স্নাতকের খৌজখবর নিতে?" সি পি এম পলিটব্যুরো বিরোধীদের আচরণকে দায়িত্বজনহীন বলে মন্তব্য করে বলেছে যে, প্রধানমন্ত্রী থাকার সময় বাজপেয়ী যা বলতেন এখন তার উল্টো কাজ করছেন। কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মার ব্যাখ্যা, "জর্জের সময় আমরা শুধু প্রশ্নোত্তর বয়কট করে আবার চলে আসতাম। কিন্তু বিরোধীরা সংসদ পণ্ড করতেই চেয়েছে।"

এ সব কিছু পরে বাজপেয়ী বলেছেন, "আডবাণীজির কাছে শুনলাম, গতকাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী ফোন করে দুঃখপ্রকাশ করেছিলেন। কিন্তু তারপর সরকার ও ক্ষমতাসীন জোটের মুখপাত্র যে ভাবে ও ভাষায় কথা বলেছেন, তাতে তো না রকমই মনে হয়। আর প্রধানমন্ত্রী এন ডি এ-র নেতাদের কাছ থেকে অর্ধবিয় সম্পর্কে স্মারকলিপি নিচ্ছেন না, অথচ রাতে বাম নেতাদের সঙ্গে বিষয়টি নিয়ে দীর্ঘ আলোচনা করছেন। এই ঘটনাই তাঁদের ব্যথিত করেছে।"

এই অবস্থায় আগামী ১ সেপ্টেম্বর থেকে বাঙ্গালোরে সত্যপ্রহ করতে যাচ্ছেন বিজেপি নেতারা। সেখানে উমা, সাভারকর প্রসঙ্গের সঙ্গে জুড়ে যাচ্ছে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আচরণ প্রসঙ্গও।

# PM throws Opp into a rage

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, August 25

g.p.s. 26/8  
x.c. 26/8

RELATIONS BETWEEN the Centre and the Opposition sank to a new low today with the Prime Minister allegedly "throwing away" a memorandum handed by top NDA leaders and indicating he wanted them to leave his chamber.

So hostile was the meeting that the Opposition team — NDA convenor George Fernandes, leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha L.K. Advani, leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Jaswant Singh, BJP chief Venkaiah Naidu, deputy Opposition leaders V.K. Malhotra and Sushma Swaraj, and former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha — left the Prime Minister's office in Parliament House after "barely two-and-a-half minutes".

"Not only did the PM not accept the note (on the changes the NDA wanted in the Finance Bill), his behaviour and language was regrettably impolite and discourteous," Fernandes said. He alleged that when he handed the note over, Manmohan Singh "threw the note" on the table in the presence of Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

"The PM said, 'we won't take this. We have nothing to do with it,'" Fernandes told reporters. "Advani tried to reason with him, but he remained adamant. In my 50 years of political life, I have seen many PMs and fought with them, but I have never undergone such an experience. The meeting lasted two and a half minutes. The PM's behaviour indicated

to allow smooth passage of the Finance Bill, but without a discussion because of the stalemate in Parliament. NDA leaders said they would meet tomorrow morning, before the Lok Sabha meets to pass the Bill, to rethink their promise to allow smooth House proceedings.

Azad maintained the PM had merely refused to accept the memorandum and not "thrown" it. "He said Parliament, and not the PM's office, is the proper forum for discussing amendments to the Finance Bill. Therefore, there would be no point in his accepting the memorandum," Azad said.

In the night, Singh called up Advani to make the same point, and said he had not "thrown" the memorandum away but only refused to accept it.

**Related report on Page 2**



**Manmohan Singh** *Fresh trouble*

he wanted us to leave the room."  
"We have no words to express our anger. The uncivilised behaviour was shocking for all of us," Malhotra said.

As recently as Tuesday, the Centre and the Opposition had agreed

# Left parties upset about move to hike FDI cap, EPF issue

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 25 AUGUST

A day before the Finance Bill is slated to get parliamentary approval, the Left, on Wednesday night, persisted with its demand for raising EPF interest rate to 9.5% and dropping plans to increase FDI caps in telecom. However, the good news for the government was the silence of the Left on allowing FDI in airport modernisation. Responding to the Left's demands, the government leadership said the issues raised by them were "under their active consideration."

The UPA-Left coordination committee, which had its second meeting since it was formed, also discussed inflation and issues related to the Budget concerning the small sector and "dereser-

vation" of 85 items. The Left parties had sent four notes to the UPA on August 21, setting the agenda for Wednesday's meeting. They had argued against government's proposals to raise FDI caps in telecom from 49% to 74%, slashing EPF interest rate to 8.5% and sought an assurance that the Public Enterprises Reconstruction Board would only advise the government on reconstruction of public enterprises and not their disinvestment. It sought to prevent the appointment of a bureaucrat as the head of the new body by saying that the Prime Minister should head the panel.

UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi could not attend the meeting as she was unwell. The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, finance minister P. Chidambaram and

defence minister Pranab Mukherjee. In its note on EPF rates, the Left pointed out that the Vajpayee regime had slashed the rate from 12% to 9.5% and by further reducing it, the UPA was carrying forward the legacy of the previous government. It had also said that it was the only social security available for four crore people. The Left has been accusing government of being soft on stockbrokers and hard towards workers.

On telecom, the Left has cited the example of China where the state holds more than 70% of the shares in all three listed operators. The Left parties want the majority stake to remain in Indian hands and have expressed apprehensions that raising the cap to 74% would mean some of the existing Indian companies become foreign-owned and controlled.

# Judge puts Uma in jail

Tyagraj Sharma in Hubli

Aug. 25. — Ms Uma Bharati today surrendered in the lower court in connection with the non-bailable warrant that was issued against her 10 years ago.

Mohammed Ismail, Judicial Magistrate First Class, termed the offences alleged against her as serious and remanded her in judicial custody for two weeks in Hubli sub-jail till 7 September. Three others were also directed to be treated similarly by the court. Miss Bharati was later shifted to Dharwad University Hostel as the Hubli sub-jail was not equipped to handle a 'Z' category security person.

Earlier, the city authorities had taken all precautions to prevent any untoward incident. All schools and colleges were closed with prohibitory orders having been imposed in a major part of the city. Over 4,000 security personnel manned the streets.

Police barricaded the court premises even preventing newsmen from entering. Repeated attempts to persuade the police to allow the newsmen into the court fell on deaf ears. That is until, some scribes urged the chief minister himself to intervene.

The court decision sparked off major protests from the BJP which felt that Ms Bharati was being penalised for hoisting the National Flag in the Idgah Maidan case dating back to 15 August 1994. The party has now called for a statewide bandh tomorrow to protest against the verdict.

This would be followed with an agitation to force the Dharwad Singh government to drop the case against the BJP leader. Ms Bharati not only did not seek any bail in this connection for what she termed was the proud act of "flag hoisting", but even challenged the state government to prevent her from hoisting the National Flag again as it was her constitutional right as a citizen.

**Lalu blasts Cong:** Mr Lalu Prasad today hit out at the Congress for letting Ms Bharati stage her political drama in Karnataka and not arresting her, SNS adds from Delhi.

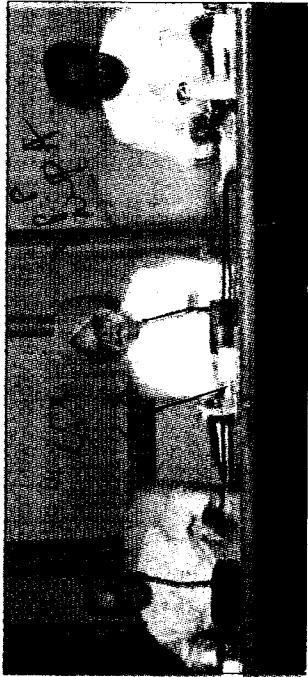
NEW DELHI, Aug. 25. —

The government-Opposition parliamentary fracas turned ugly today, with the NDA accusing Dr Manmohan Singh of being "rude" and "insulting". The PMO and the Congress denied the charges. But the PMO also said the Opposition must understand Dr Singh can "show his teeth".

The controversy centres around a meeting NDA leaders sought with Dr Singh to hand over a list of proposed amendments to the Finance Bill.

NDA leaders said Dr Singh "not only refused to take the memorandum" but "used regrettably impolite and discourteous language". The Opposition said the PM threw the memorandum back. They also alleged the delegation was not even invited to sit.

The Congress said the PM was right in not accepting the memorandum. The Opposition should have used Parliament to propose changes in the budget, the party said. Giving a memorandum was unacceptable when the House has been boycotted, it said. The NDA said its boycott was "under extreme provocation".



(From left to right) Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Dr Manmohan Singh and Mr P Chidambaram at the UPA coordination committee meeting. — PTI

## Centre's assurance to LF

NEW DELHI, Aug. 25. — The government today made several promises to the Left Front on accommodating its opinions on economic reforms, including FDI in the telecommunication sector. It also promised to reconsider the cut in employees provident fund interest rate- it may be raised from 8.5 per cent to 9 per cent. In a climb-down, the UPA government appeared "considerate" towards the Left. The Left Front spokesman, Mr Sitaram Yechury, said finance minister Mr P Chidambaram "appreciated the Left's concern over FDI and promised to take its views into consideration. The government also promised to consider raising the EPF interest rate."

Today's meeting was chaired by Dr Manmohan Singh, and attended, among others, by Mr Pranab Mukherjee and Mr Chidambaram.

The Left Front was represented by Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet (CPM), Mr AB Bardhan and Mr D Raja (CPI), Mr Abani Roy (RSP) and Mr D Biswas (FB). The Left Front extracted two major assurances from the government, one being a special package for the jute industry. The government also promised to constitute a board for revitalisation of sick PSUs and review the duty structure on certain items.

**Rahul attends Mulayam dinner:** While Mrs Sonia Gandhi stayed away from the dinner hosted by Mr Muleyram Singh Yadav, Mr AB Vajpayee and Mr Rahul Gandhi were among the state MPs who attended it. The dinner was thrown for discussing UP developments, turned out to be a political affair. — SNS

# PSUs not your fief, PM tells ministers

9.8.04  
OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 22: Days after he told ministers to keep off top-rung appointments in public sector undertakings, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has written another letter to them. The message: PSUs are not the fief of ministries.

Singh wants his cabinet colleagues to change the perception that administrative ministries (and ministers) treat PSUs as their fief. There have been reports of ministers misusing resources of PSUs, including one of a Union minister operating out of suites of a government-owned five-star hotel while her office was being renovated.

The Prime Minister also acknowledged having received "disquieting reports" about some PSUs ignoring the "ground rules of good corporate governance and conduct". Allegations of extravagance by some senior officials have been brought to the notice of the government, he said.

Singh has said PSUs have a pride of place in the country and perform very valuable functions in several core sectors of the economy. Their efficient management contributes to the generation of wealth, overall development and the social well-being of the people, he said.

"We are committed to improving their standards of efficiency and competitiveness and expect them to be model employers."

The common minimum programme of the United Progressive Alliance government had emphasised the need for a "strong and effective public sector whose social objectives are met by its commercial functioning". Its PSU policy was to "devolve full managerial and commercial autonomy to successful, profit-making companies operating in a competitive environment".

Singh reminded the ministers that, while the government was committed to granting full operational autonomy to PSUs to help them succeed in the global market, administrative ministries "had the responsibility for ensuring accountability of PSU executives for their performance in conformity with established norms of conduct".

"The ministries in charge of PSUs are custodians of the resources of our country and it is their bounden duty to lead them by their example of efficiency, rectitude and austerity." The Prime Minister urged his cabinet colleagues to "take note of his concerns" and have the PSUs take appropriate follow-up action.

THE TELEGRAPH

23 AUG 2004

# বামেদের মন জুগিয়েই আর্থিক প্রস্তাব কংগ্রেসের

সাঁফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ আগস্ট: জোট সরকার টিকিয়ে রাখার স্বার্থে বামেদের সঙ্গে কোনও রকম সংঘাতে যেতে চায় না কংগ্রেস। আজ এ আই সি সি বৈঠকে নেওয়া অর্থনৈতিক প্রস্তাবে এই মনোভাবের প্রতিফলন স্পষ্ট। বাম-অনুমোদিত নূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচিরই প্রতিধ্বনি করে কংগ্রেস তার অর্থনৈতিক দলিলে বামদের সঙ্গে মতান্তরের ক্ষেত্রগুলি এড়িয়ে গিয়েছে।

শ্রম-সংস্কার থেকে রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থা—আজকের প্রস্তাবে এই সব বিষয়ে যা বলা হয়েছে, তা নিয়ে কমিউনিস্টদের আপত্তির কোনও প্রশ্ন তো নেইই, উল্টে তাদের মনের কথাই লেখা হয়েছে কংগ্রেস দলিলে। পাশাপাশি, টেলিকম, বিমা, বিমান পরিষেবার প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের প্রশঙ্গ অথবা স্বল্পপক্ষে সুদের হারের মতো কোনও বিতর্কিত বিষয়ের কোনও উল্লেখই নেই সেখানে। এমন কী, প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন

সিংহও তাঁর দীর্ঘ ভাষণে একবারের জন্যও বিষয়গুলির উল্লেখ করেননি। তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ভাবে শুধু অর্থনীতিই নয়, বিদেশনীতির ক্ষেত্রেও একই কৌশল নেওয়া হয়েছে। সরকারের অভ্যন্তরীণ মতপার্থক্যের কারণে বি জে পি যাতে কোনও ভাবে বাড়তি রাজনৈতিক সুবিধা না পায়, সে বিষয়ে সতর্ক থাকতে চাইছেন সিনিয়র মুদ্রাস্ফীতি নিয়ে বামেদের অসন্তোষও এ দিন খানিকটা চাপা দিতে চেয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। তিনি বলেছেন, দানের স্থিতাবস্থা আনাকেই অগ্রাধিকার দিচ্ছে তাঁর সরকার। মুদ্রাস্ফীতি কমানো হবে, এই আশ্বাসও দিয়েছেন মনমোহন।

সরকার গড়ার পরে যে নূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচি তৈরি করা হয়, তাতে বলা হয়েছিল, বেসরকারীকরণ করা হবে স্বচ্ছতার সঙ্গে এবং প্রত্যেকটি ইউনিট ধরে ধরে আলোচনার মাধ্যমে। আজকের অর্থনৈতিক প্রস্তাবে ছবছ একই কথা

বলা হয়েছে, “বিলম্বীকরণ এবং বেসরকারীকরণ এমন কিছু নয়, যা অপরিবর্তনীয়। স্বচ্ছতার সঙ্গে, আলোচনার মাধ্যমে প্রত্যেকটি ইউনিট ধরে ধরে এর বিবেচনা হওয়া উচিত।” বামেদের দাবির সঙ্গে সঙ্গতি রেখে বলা হয়েছে, “সমস্ত কর্মীদের প্রাপ্য বকেয়া এবং ক্ষতিপূরণ পেয়ে যাওয়ার পরেই ক্ষতিতে চলা সংস্থা বন্ধ বা বেচে দেওয়ার প্রশ্ন উঠবে। অবশ্য তার আগে রুগণ রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার আধুনিকীকরণ করা বা পুনর্বিন্যাস ঘটানোর সমস্ত রকম চেষ্টা করা হবে।”

অর্থনীতিকে চাপা করতে প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের কথা বলা হয়েছে ঠিকই কিন্তু বিমা বা টেলিকমের মতো বিতর্কিত বিষয়গুলি এড়িয়ে বলা হয়েছে, “শিল্পের বৃদ্ধি ঘটানোর জন্য সমস্ত রকম দৃঢ় পদক্ষেপ করা উচিত। সে জন্য বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগ বাড়তে উৎসাহদান, প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বাড়ানো প্রয়োজন। বিশেষত

পরিকাঠামো, উচ্চপ্রযুক্তি এবং রফতানির ক্ষেত্রে। তা হলে স্থানীয় সম্পদ এবং চাকরির দুটোই বাড়বে।” বামেদের দাবি মাথায় রেখে শ্রমসংস্কারের প্রশ্নে বলা হয়েছে, “শ্রম আইনে পরিবর্তন আনা সরকার ঠিকই। কিন্তু তা যেন শ্রমিক ও তাঁর পরিবারের স্বার্থকে সম্পূর্ণ ভাবে সুরক্ষিত রাখে।”

বিদেশনীতি নিয়ে প্রস্তাবে ইজরায়েল-প্যালেষ্টাইন ও পাকিস্তান নিয়ে যে কথা রয়েছে তা বামেদের অস্থি করবে না। বলা হয়েছে, “ইজরায়েলের সঙ্গে ভারতের সম্পর্কের উন্নতি প্যালেষ্টাইনের মানুষের ন্যায্য দাবির প্রতি ভারতের সমর্থনের বিনিময়ে ঘটবে না।” পাকিস্তানের নাম না করে বলা হয়েছে, “আমাদের মুখোমুখি হতে হচ্ছে প্রতিবেশী দেশের, যে প্রতিজ্ঞা পালনে বাধ্য।...আন্তঃসীমান্ত সন্ত্রাস পরিষ্কৃতি যোরালো করে রাখছে।”

J. P. P.  
UPA

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2004

## THE FORGOTTEN AGENDA

110-12  
21/8

THE UNITED PROGRESSIVE Alliance Government has unfortunately not shown that it is serious about redeeming the important pledge made in the Common Minimum Programme to enact a national employment guarantee law. Fortunately, the National Advisory Council has done a considerable amount of preparatory work on the benefits of such a programme for rural India, on the conditions under which it can be made to work, and even on draft legislation. All these are important inputs for the Government to seriously consider. It is difficult to argue against an employment guarantee programme for rural labour. Official surveys have shown that unemployment, in the broadest sense of the term, is as high as 7 per cent for men and women in the rural areas. They have also shown that there was an increase during the 1990s in the degree of unemployment among rural labourers. It is apparent that the 1990s' momentum in growth has bypassed this class, which is also the largest single group among the poor. A concern for redistribution makes it imperative that the Government enact legislation that will guarantee at least 100 days of work a year to one member of every rural household that comes forward to participate in a public works programme. Such a guarantee, as promised in the CMP, will have multi-dimensional benefits. It will make a frontal attack on rural poverty, enhance productivity in agriculture, and ease the pressure to migrate to cities. Since it will offer manual work at the minimum wage, it will also be a self-selecting programme. In other words, only the poor will wish to be employed.

If the case for an employment guarantee is so strong, why is a Government that claims to believe in 'reforms with a human face' so hesitant to offer one? Three sets of counter-arguments are usually on offer; none of them can withstand close scrutiny. The first one is that it will be a waste of resources because useful assets will not be created. True, the experience with existing ru-

ral employment programmes has not always been positive. The problem has been the tendency to see these schemes as basically unemployment doles, with no agency interested in asset-formation. If a work guarantee is made an integral component of the New Deal promised for agriculture, it should result in large-scale capital formation in land development, irrigation, and environmental renewal. The second argument is that an employment guarantee programme will result in massive leakages. This may be partly true under existing conditions, but as the NAC has argued, leakages (especially in the form of non-payment of wages) can be controlled if the Central and State Governments show greater resolve in ensuring the right to information. When local bodies in cooperation with the district administration are in charge of execution and the intended beneficiaries are fully aware of fund allocation and utilisation, there is no reason to expect maladministration of the programme to be the norm.

The third and most commonly voiced criticism is that the cost of guaranteeing employment will be prohibitive. A number of independent estimates have placed the annual financial burden at no more than two per cent of GDP. Economists in the NAC have proposed that, starting with the 150 poorest districts, the programme could be gradually extended to the whole of India within four years. From as little as 0.5 per cent of GDP in the initial year the cost will gradually rise to one per cent of GDP (Rs.40,000 crores at 2004-05 prices) in the fourth year. The advisory body has also pointed out that if the programme is implemented effectively, it will provide Rs.6,000 a year to each participating household. This will result in as many as 75 per cent of the rural poor (1999-2000 estimates) rising above the poverty line. It would be an act of social irresponsibility for the Centre not to fund such a reasonable and just scheme that promises immense and immediate tangible benefits.



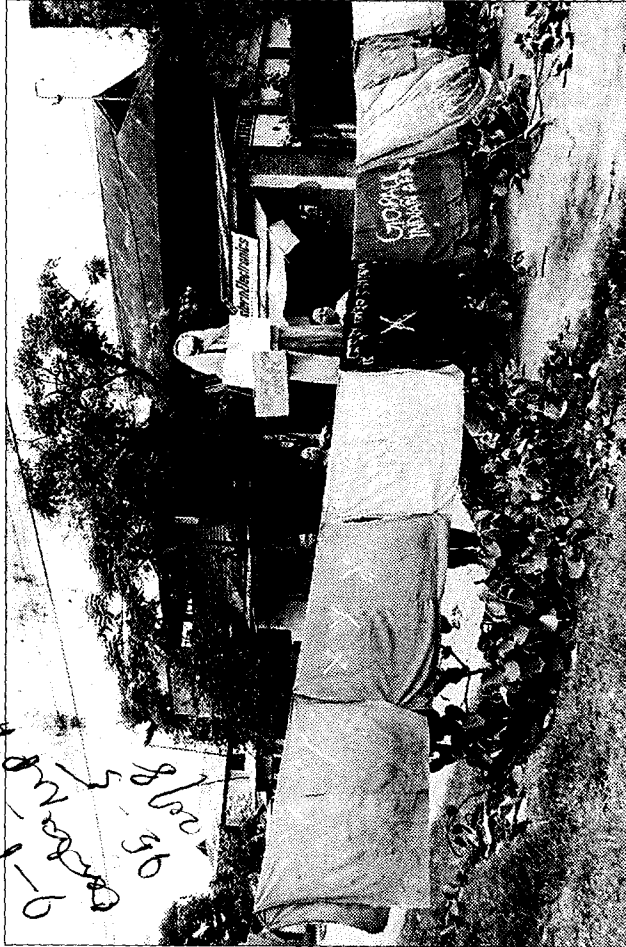
# We'll give Ibobi space, says Patil

**I Art 356 not the only option before Centre'**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 19

**H**OME Minister Shivraj Patil today indicated that the Centre is disinclined to impose President's Rule in Manipur and would rather give the state government a chance to set things right. Meanwhile, a few insurgent groups have shown willingness to talk to the government, he added.

The Minister said the Centre did not want to act in "anger" or in a manner which would "embarrass more than improve the situation" in Manipur. Though he admitted Chief Minister Ibobi Singh had acted against the Centre's advice in withdrawing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from Imphal city, Patil said they are giving him "space" to work, and try to improve the situation.



**Demonstrators, angry over the cremation of student leader Chittaranjan by the Manipur government, block the state highway by hanging clothes in Imphal on Thursday. PTI**

"President's Rule is not the only option before the Centre. There are other options too in the Constitution. We will adopt a suitable option when the time comes," Patil said. For the time being, they had left it to the state to handle the situation. "The situation continues to be difficult in the state. Though it has not deteriorated, there is not much change also. In Delhi, we are watching what the elected government is doing. If the situation continues to be difficult or becomes worse, then appropriate action will be taken by the Government of India," the Home Minister said. For now, Ibobi Singh is be-

The Minister ruled out the possibility of a leadership change in Manipur, saying it was bad for the morale of the state government. "Why unnecessarily change things? He (Singh) is trying his best."

Instead, the Home Minister said "fruitful dialogue" would be the first step to a solution in the state. The Centre could sort out their grievances, help them with an economic package and create employment opportunities. He even hinted at a possible review of the AFSPA though he defended the Act, saying excesses could happen under any law. "Such laws are there to deal with exceptional circumstances," he said.

On dialogue with the insurgent groups, the Home Minister said the feelers had come through former chief ministers of the state, who were advising the government. Even the present CM is in favour of entering into a dialogue with the insurgents, he said, adding any of them could act as facilitator.

"Our government has made it clear we are willing to talk to everybody who wants to talk," the Home Minister said.

# UPA continuing NDA policy on missile defence

By Amit Baruah

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 19.** The National Democratic Alliance Government may be history, but the United Progressive Alliance administration is not averse to continuing with some of the controversial policies adopted by its predecessor.

This includes support for the Bush Administration's missile defence programme — a policy the Congress itself had once opposed.

In a one paragraph response to a question "whether the Government has formed an opinion on the U.S. offer to include India in the missile defence programme," the Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed, said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday: "Presentations and briefings by the U.S. side on missile defence have been on the agenda of the India-U.S. Defence Policy Group since 2001. The U.S. side made a presenta-

tion on missile defence in Delhi on June 1, 2004."

"There is no change in the policy of the Government under which it has held preliminary discussions and dialogue with the U.S. on the subject of missile defence," Mr. Ahamed said. Though the policy itself is not spelt out in the response, it is clear that the UPA is pressing on with the NDA agenda on missile defence.

## CPI (M) unhappy

The CPI (M) reacted sharply to the Government's position on missile defence. "We want the UPA Government to take a clear stand that we should not participate in or be associated with U.S. missile defence plans," senior party leader Prakash Karat told this correspondent.

When asked to comment on the Government's position, he said that such cooperation did not serve the country's inter-

ests. "We should not participate in U.S. missile defence initiatives nor should we be part of any regional arrangement," Mr. Karat said.

And, what precisely did the NDA Government commit the country to on missile defence?

On August 8, 2003, a joint statement issued after the India-U.S. Defence Policy Group meeting said: "The two sides reaffirmed the shared view that missile defence enhances cooperative security and stability. They decided to hold a missile defence workshop in India in the next six months as a follow-on to an international workshop attended by U.S. and Indian delegations at the June 2003 Multinational Ballistic Missile Defence Conference held in Kyoto, Japan."

On May 7, 2001, the Congress party was critical of the support announced by the Vajpayee Government to the U.S. President, George Bush's proposals

on missile defence. In a statement, the party said the NDA had been in an "unseemly rush" to welcome U.S. plans. The Congress asked the then Government to "convince us that the U.S. President's new nuclear and missile doctrine is in the interest of the country."

Mr. Bush, in an address on May 1, 2001, said that his country would deploy missile defences to strengthen global "security and stability."

"I've made it clear from the very beginning that I would consult closely on the important subject with our friends and allies who are also threatened by missiles and weapons of mass destruction," he said, adding that high-level representatives would be sent to "allied" capitals in Europe, Asia, Australia and Canada. The Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, was sent to India as part of these consultations.

Quick off the block, India said

on May 2, 2001, that Mr. Bush's address sought to transform the strategic parameters on which the Cold War security architecture was built.

"India believes that there is a strategic and technological inevitability in stepping away from a world that is held hostage by the doctrine of MAD [mutually assured destruction] to a cooperative, defensive transition that is underpinned by further cuts and a de-alert of nuclear forces. We note with appreciation the U.S. resolve to seek dialogue, consultation and cooperation with the countries concerned towards a fulfilment of this vision."

Along with high-technology trade, civilian nuclear and space cooperation, India and the U.S. have also been discussing the issue of missile defence. It appears that the Manmohan Singh Government does not want to disturb this dialogue architecture in any way.

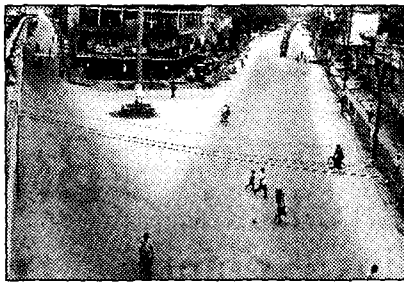
# UPA reviews SC strike ban order

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 18 AUGUST

THE government on Wednesday told Parliament that it was reviewing the Supreme Court's order on banning strikes. The apex court judgment had sparked off a controversy, with the then attorney-general Soli Sorabjee saying the decision was bad in law. The country's top law officer said there "may not be a constitutional right to strike but certainly there is a legal right." He added that all labour laws like the Industrial Disputes Act and Trade Union Act allow employees the right to strike, which he termed a Parliament-guaranteed right.

Responding to calls for review of the Supreme Court order from the political class, minister for personnel Suresh Pachauri said: "The Supreme Court judgment is under review. It is not proper for me to mention what is the view point of the government."

On August 6 last year, the Supreme Court



Ghost Town: Guwahati during the Aasu bandh on Wednesday. — PTI

had ordered that no right to strike — whether fundamental, statutory, equitable or moral — was available to government employees. The judgment had raised hue and cry with political parties vociferously arguing that judiciary cannot be allowed to take away the right to dissent, which was fundamental in a democratic set-up.

## Bandh cripples life in Assam

Our Guwahati Bureau  
18 AUGUST

THE normal life in Assam was paralysed on Wednesday following the 12-hour bandh called by All Assam Students Union (Aasu). The bandh was in protest against the killing of innocent school children in Dhemaji by banned Ulfa on August 15.

The student's body has strongly criticised Ulfa for the killing. It has warned the outfit along with NDFB to put an end to such killings. On Tuesday, schoolchildren in several places took out peace procession, seen as a hard-hitting condemnation of the killings by the militants. Aasu claimed that the bandh has been spontaneous and successful throughout the state.

# Three Left parties skip UPA meet

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 18. — A three-hour meeting of the UPA coordination committee, involving Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi and leaders of Congress' allies in the government, tonight deliberated on the Manipur situation, inflation, and recent fuel hike, among other issues. Although the four Left parties, which are not in the UPA, were also specially invited to attend tonight's deliberations, only the leaders of the CPI, Mr AB Bardhan and Mr D Raja, showed up at the dinner meet-

ing organised at the PM's residence. The decision of the three Left parties — CPI-M, Forward Bloc and RSP — to stay away from the meet triggered speculations about the "intra-Left differences over their relationship with the UPA government" despite the fact that a meeting of the separate UPA government-Left panel is slated at the PM's residence for 25 August.

Speaking to The Statesman, RSP leader Mr Abani Roy sought to make light of the absence of the three Left parties from the UPA's deliberations. "We are not part of the UPA; it was their internal exercise; and the meeting of our own consultative mechanism is scheduled for 25 August,

where we will go", he said. He denied that the Left had "collectively" taken the decision to "boycott" tonight's meeting.

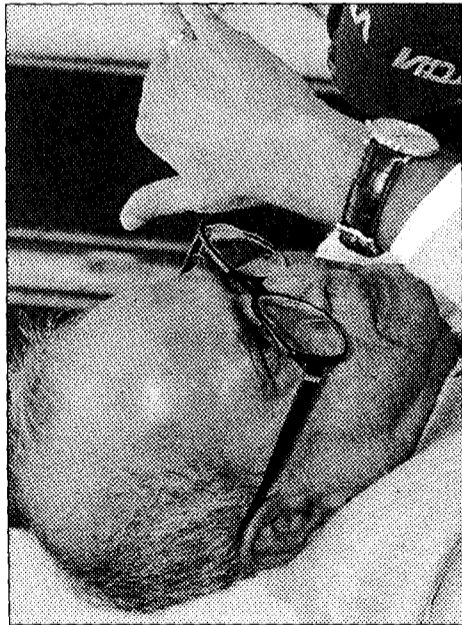
Holding that the UPA meeting had no "set agenda", he also refuted that the Left parties, at the meeting of their own coordination committee a couple of days back, had decided to participate in the UPA meet. "That meeting had actually cleared our participation in the 25 August meeting when we will put our views and papers before the government." On the question why the CPI responded to the UPA's invitation, Mr Roy said: "If's their own decision, it is not a big deal."

CPI-M general secretary Mr Harkishen

Singh Surjeet echoed similar views. Sources, however, said that the CPI-M had wanted other Left parties to stay away from the UPA meeting, which was clearly rejected by the CPI. "The CPI-M would like to throw its weight around, asserting its significance, in a bid to send out a signal to the Congress that it could not be taken for granted," sources said.

The UPA government, however, also played down the Left's virtual absence. "There is no question of their boycott", said Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad. "Mr Surjeet is unwell, Mr Sitaram Yechury is out of town, and whoever was present in the Capital turned up", he said.

# Kargil slippery peak on Pranab's radar



Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee talks to women journalists during an interactive session with them at the Women Press Corp in New Delhi on Tuesday.

**Vishal Thapar**  
New Delhi, August 11

DEFENCE MINISTER Pranab Mukherjee has asked the Army for a detailed briefing on Point 5353, the Pakistani-held peak in the Dras sector, which has been referred to as the unfinished business of the 1999 Kargil war.

The briefing on Point 5353, sources said, will be part of a presentation on Operation (Kargil) Vijay which will be made to the Defence Minister at Dras on Thursday.

Mukherjee on Wednesday began his maiden visit to Ladakh as Defence Minister. During the course of this two-day tour, he is scheduled to visit forward po-

sits along the Line of Actual Control with China in Eastern Ladakh, the Siachen Glacier and, finally, the area which was theatre of the Kargil skirmish.

The controversy over Point 5353 is over the alleged failure of the Army to recover this peak, which is one of the highest in the Dras sector. Its occupation gives the Pakistanis the ability to observe National Highway 1A and thus direct artillery fire on troop and goods convoys moving along the crucial Srinagar-Leh route.

Responding to the controversy, the Indian Army has denied on record that the peak was ever held by India or even that it existed on the

Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC).

"The point was never under our control either before or after Operation Vijay in Kargil," it insisted in a press statement released through the Ministry of Defence in August 2000. It was also suggested that the LoC passes through Point 5353.

The political leadership of the time had echoed the Army claim, asserting then that Point 5353 sits plumb on the LoC. "It is the point over which the LoC goes. Fact is, our troops had never occupied that," it was stated.

However, the controversy has refused to die down. The Defence Minister has now sought to know the fac-

tual position. At Kargil, Mukherjee will be given another briefing by the general officer commanding of 8 Mountain Division, Major General PC Katoch.

On Wednesday, he was briefed on the situation in the 3 Division area by its general officer commanding, Major General Rajagopal. The Army's 3 Division is deployed at Siachen and the Line of Actual Control with China.

This is also the first visit by a Defence Minister to Siachen after the fabrication of enemy killings by an Indian Army battalion deployed on the Glacier came to light.

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# PF hit at political high risk

## Rate cut with signal of backlash flashing

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, Aug. 9: The government today cut the interest rate on employees' provident fund from 9.5 to 8.5 per cent, signalling that it would not balk at taking tough decisions even at the risk of incurring the wrath of allies and dropping some notches on the popularity chart.

Over 3 crore subscribers of the employees' provident fund (EPF) scheme will be affected by the cut, which was decided after six weeks of haggling between representatives of trade unions and the government on the board that oversees its operation.

Union labour minister Sis Ram Ola, also the chairperson of the board, said: "This is an interim decision. A final decision on the interest rate will be notified at the end of the year."

Even after slashing the rate, the board will be left with a deficit of Rs 206 crore, he added. The gap will arise because the interest the fund earns on its money parked in the government's special deposit scheme has been cut even lower by finance minister P. Chidambaram to 8 per cent. Some 80 per cent of the EPF corpus is invested in this scheme.

Ola was clearly on the defensive. "At the time of the final review at the end of the fiscal year 2004-05, the interest rate

would be fixed depending on the available funds," he said.

He assured subscribers that "it will not be lower than 8.5 per cent. If we earn more, the interest can go up".

Outnumbered on the EPF board — trade unions have 10 members as opposed to the strength of 32 of government and employers' representatives — labour leaders said they would hold protests on August 20.

"We have already decided to observe a national day of protest and one of the issues we will be highlighting is the decision on the provident fund interest rate," said CITU leader W.R. Vardharajan after the board meeting.

CPM leader Nilotpal Basu described the decision as "unmindful of the concerns of the common people".

The tussle between the trade unions, Left parties and the government started during the Vajpayee regime. The board had favoured a consensus but decided to go by majority opinion, realising unanimity was impossible.

Arguments in favour of the cut centred on the fact that since the fund itself was earning 8 per cent, anything above that paid to subscribers would bleed it white, ultimately debilitating its ability to pay anything at all. But the only union that accepted this logic was the Congress-affiliated Intuc.

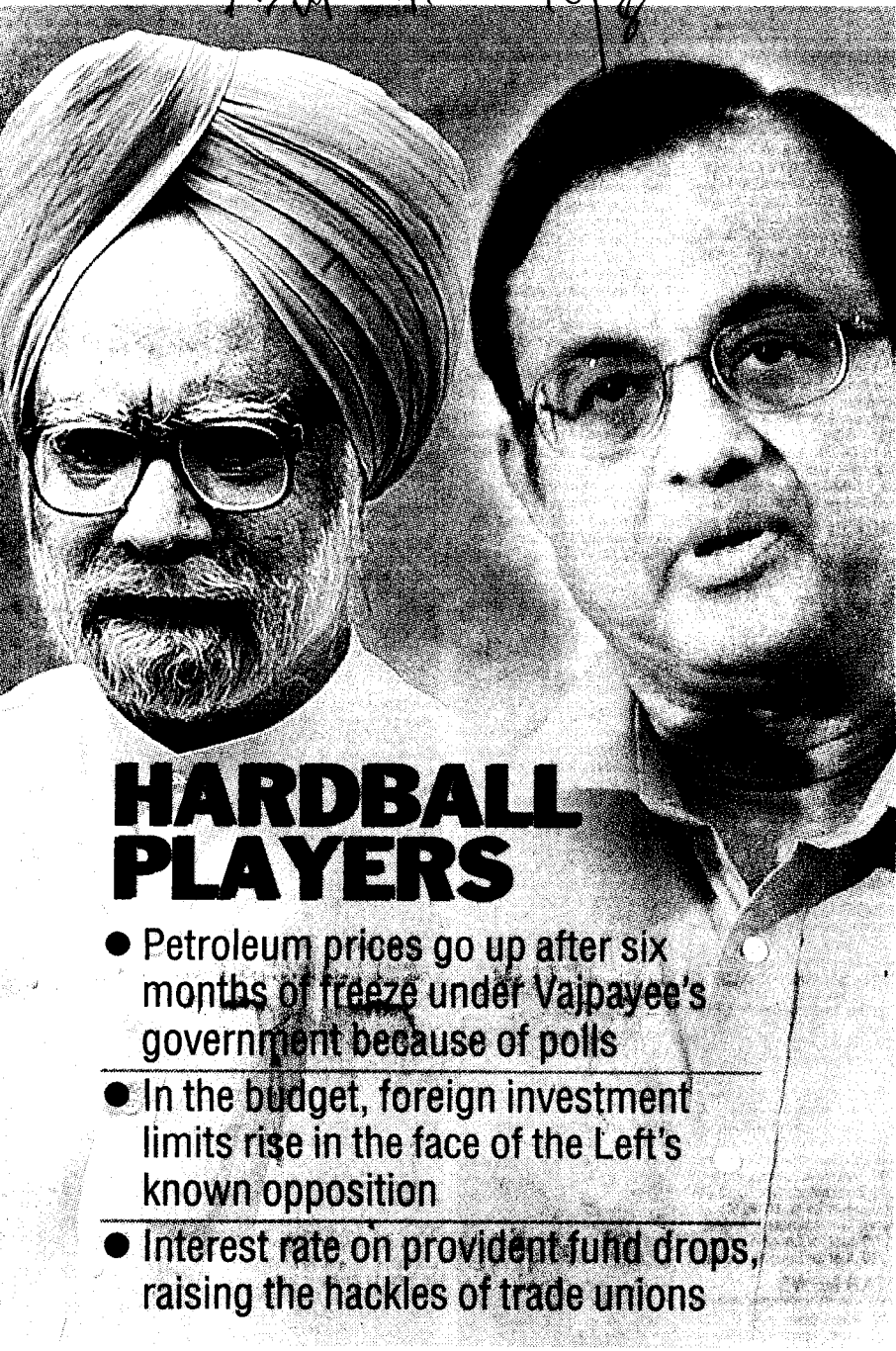
The decision also comes in the backdrop of pressure on interest rates to go up because of rising inflation, which stands at 7.51 per cent and is expected to touch 8 per cent at the end of the week.

Still, the EPF cut has been sanctioned by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chidambaram in order not to blot the government's balance sheet any further. Finance ministry officials said the government has been forced to stall increases in interest rates on the EPF and small savings schemes as such a move will stretch its limited resources.

The gap between the government's expenditure and income is Rs 137,407 crore while it pays an annual interest of Rs 129,500 crore on its borrowings. This burden will swell if it subsidises the interest paid to subscribers or investors on schemes it runs itself.

Market rates of interest — paid by banks — are ruling at a maximum of 5.5 per cent while the government is paying at least 8 per cent, which is the level now for small savings schemes.

What is surprising, however, is the political gamble it has taken while making a decision that is bound to be seen as unpopular, offering not only a hungry Opposition looking for issues a stick to beat it with but also angering its ally, the Left. (See Page 6)



### HARDBALL PLAYERS

- Petroleum prices go up after six months of freeze under Vajpayee's government because of polls
- In the budget, foreign investment limits rise in the face of the Left's known opposition
- Interest rate on provident fund drops, raising the hackles of trade unions

ANOTHER MINISTER, ANOTHER WARRANT

# Fresh trouble for UPA govt

Statesman News Service

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**Shifty character**

HYDERABAD/NEW DELHI, Aug. 4. — The dust over the Sibu Soren issue has hardly settled when fresh trouble has hit the Congress-led UPA government following a non-bailable warrant against Mr K Chandrashekhar Rao, a Cabinet minister without portfolio belonging to the Telangana Rashtriya Samiti. The Fifth Metropolitan Magistrate today issued a non-bailable warrant against Mr Rao for cheating.

The magistrate directed the Banjara Hills police station to register a case and begin investigations after Mr Rao ignored the court's summons to appear before it today. He also ignored an earlier order to appear before it on 16 May.

Mr Rao had surrendered his shipping portfolio to accommodate the DMK's demand to join the UPA government.

The complaint was filed in court by Mr N Prahalad under Section 420 for cheating, among others. He alleged that Mr Rao had collected Rs 10,000 as application fee from him to contest as a TRS candidate from Mahboobabad Assembly segment in Warangal district in the April elections.

Mr Rao collected Rs 10,000 from every aspirant and Rs 5,000 from each SC/ST applicant who wanted to contest on a TRS ticket. He issued applications for all



RANCHI, Aug. 4.— The tug-of-war between the Jharkhand government and the former Union coal minister, Sibu Soren, continues with the state administration today making a request to the court to shift him from Jamtara to Ranchi. — SNS

Details on page 4

the 107 Assembly constituencies in the Telangana region.

Mr Prahalad alleged that the money was not refunded to those aspirants who were denied tickets, despite Mr Rao's assurance to do so. Mr Rao had moved the High Court to quash the case against him, but without success.

The BJP has demanded Mr Rao's resignation from the government, saying the UPA Cabinet has "already a long list of tainted ministers and Mr Rao is the latest addition to the list".

The Congress leadership was taken off guard by the Hyderabad report saying a lower court has issued the NBW. The AICC, however, tried to defend Mr Rao, dismissing the case against him as "politically motivated".

# Left, UPA kick off first round

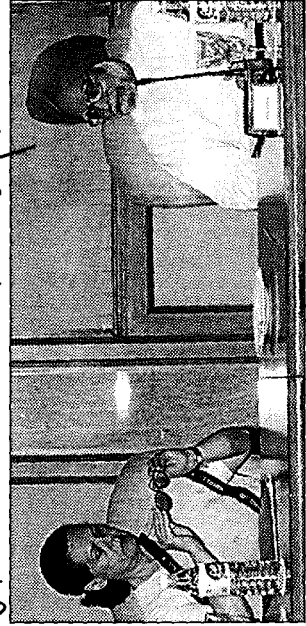
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OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Aug 4:** The first coordination committee meeting of the ruling alliance and the Left today began with a general discussion on the common minimum programme and ended with the decision to meet once a month and more if necessary.

"The matters to be taken up at the next meetings will be identified and depending on the issues, the ministers concerned will be invited to the meeting," finance minister P. Chidambaram and CPM politburo member Sitaram Yechury told the media after the two-hour meeting.

Yechury, who had been harsh on the United Progressive Alliance government for its decision on foreign direct investment, took a concil-



Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh at the coordination committee meeting. (PTI)

atory position.

"Our main compulsion is to see that this government runs for five years. We will try to minimise the differences between us and will put in a mechanism that will make it easier for the government to function," he said.

This is the first time that the Left has had a direct dis-

ter Manmohan Singh, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, legislator Ahmed Patel, CPM general secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet and his CPI counterpart A.B. Bardhan, RSP's Abani Roy and Forward Bloc general secretary Debabrata Biswas.

A joint statement issued by the committee said: "It was agreed that each meeting will be so structured that a few issues are taken (up) for discussion."

Both Chidambaram and Yechury maintained that today's meeting did not go into the nitty-gritty of the difference the Left has with the UPA over certain policies.

The Left believes it should now widen the ambit of its focus and touch upon other areas of public interest like the move to slash PF interest instead of zeroing in on FDI.

cussion with a high-level Congress group since its row with the Centre over several decisions — increasing the FDI cap, petrol and diesel price hike, and move to slash provident fund interest rate and privatise airports.

Other than Chidambaram and Yechury, the meeting was attended by Prime Minis-



# BJP shifts focus to UPA govt's economic issues

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 3 AUGUST

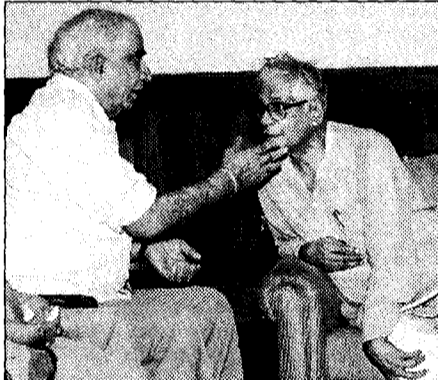
**A**FTER shifting Hindutva's strategic role, the BJP has decided to target the government over the management of the economy — an issue that has brought the ruling UPA government into an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with its chief backers in the Left.

The BJP's decision to shift the role of Hindutva — it has made it clear through the pro-Hindu assertions by its leaders that the party has not abandoned Hindutva — and to concentrate on economic issues is clearly aimed at ensuring a flare-up in the ruling alliance. An emphasis on Hindutva issues at this juncture will only ensure consolidation of anti-BJP forces.

This assessment is not misplaced as the leaders of the ruling front have been using "secularism is in peril" slogan to keep the UPA going.

The BJP has, towards this end, already decided to

attack the all-round increase in prices — stimulated by the rise in fuel prices — to drive home the point that aam aadmi has no place in the government's economic calculus. The party had earlier undertaken a somersault on Union finance minister P. Chidambaram's proposals to raise the FDI cap in the sectors of insurance, telecom and civil aviation.



By GEORGE: NDA convenor George Fernandes with Jaswant Singh in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

During its stint in power, the BJP had invited the wrath of Sangh parivar affiliates such as the BMS and the SJM by facilitating the entry of foreign investment in the insurance sector, while raising the bar in the other two sectors. Compulsions of realpolitik have however, forced the BJP to re-consider its stance on the issue.

Now that BJP is in the Opposition, it is keen to portray the Manmohar Singh government, and its props such as the Left

parties, as being inimical to the interests of the "common man." The party also hopes that these moves would enable it to bridge the differences with the members of the Sangh family.

# UPA treating BJP as enemy: Vajpayee

SNS and Agencies

## Moderates gain upper hand

NEW DELHI/PANAJI, Aug. 2. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, today charged the UPA with treating the BJP as its "enemy". Describing this as "a bad omen", he asserted that the BJP would bounce back to power "in spite of setbacks."

BJP president Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, who briefed reporters on deliberations at the *chintan baithak* in Goa, said Mr Vajpayee during his valedictory said the UPA was trying to ensure that the BJP had no effective place and voice in the political space.

The hallmark of the meeting was an attempt to keep a low profile on issues such as Hindutva and a commitment to work towards keeping the NDA intact. Mr Naidu spoke about continuing the NDA experiment and avoided words such as Hindutva or "cultural nationalism". However, he

PANAJI, Aug. 2. — Moderates led by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee appeared to have the upper hand over Hindutva votaries at the BJP's *chintan baithak*, with the party deciding to continue to work with its NDA allies. The BJP came out with a 10-point "document of conclusions" to strengthen the organisation with focus on ideological orientation and to continue with the NDA experiment. — SNS&PTI

spoke about nationalism and development as the party's guiding principles.

Mr Naidu asserted that he party's better relations with the RSS would not influence the working of the NDA. The Sangh would not interfere in politics, he said. Even RSS leader Mr Madan Das Devi who was at the meeting said that idealism, and not terminology was important, Mr Naidu claimed.

Mr Vajpayee told the meeting: "The party has gone through many trials and each time we have come out successful. We shall succeed once again." He stressed that the BJP still enjoyed wide support

and goodwill. Mr Naidu said Mr Vajpayee urged all to counter the defeat with unity and determination.

Mr LK Advani charged the Congress and the Communists with taking steps against national unity, security, democracy and peoples' interests. He said new political equations provided the party with challenges and opportunity.

Mr Naidu recalled the 1984 Lok Sabha poll results when the BJP's strength in the Lok Sabha was reduced to two seats. It subsequently bounced back to 182. "We have learnt lessons from the past. We have to leave the past behind and move forward."

# CPM gets caught in a conflict of coordination

C.L. Manoj  
NEW DELHI 1 AUGUST

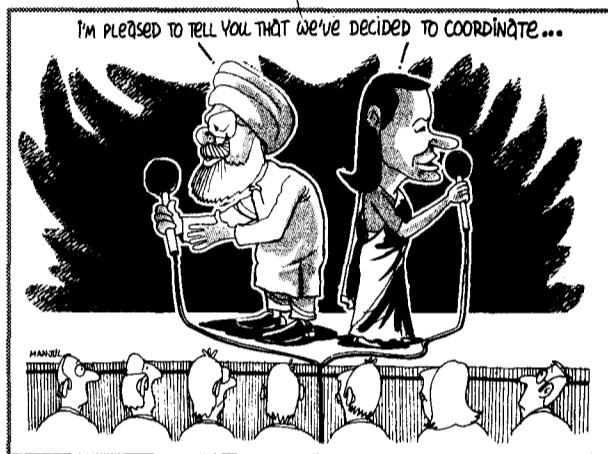
POLITICKLE

MANJUL

**A** COORDINATION mechanism for the Congress and the Left parties are expected to be announced in a day or two but, the CPM's "original designs" on this move appears to have got jammed between the resistance from the Congress on one side and its Left partners on the other.

If the Congress has refused to play ball with the Marxists who have subtly pushed the idea of 'formal induction' of a couple of UPA partners along with the Congress in this panel, the smaller Left parties have told their Big Brother that they do not share its new-found liking for a formal panel-sharing deal with the Congress. As the Left leaders are hoping to meet the Prime Minister tomorrow, the CPM is making efforts to get a face-saver in the form of having some non-Congress ministers in the panel on a rotation basis.

While the Left has already



made public the names of their six representatives for this CPM-mooted panel, the Congress responded by saying it would have six members — Mr Manmohan Singh, Ms Sonia Gandhi, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mr P Chidambaram and Mr Ahmed Patel.

The Congress side, politely re-

jecting the CPM demand for UPA partners like DMK, NCP and the RJD in the proposed panel, said it would be difficult for them to "pick and choose" some parties out of the UPA. It seems the Congress was quick to see through the CPM plan to prop up a "pressure group within the United Progressive Alliance".

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# Sonia, Basu discuss coordination panel

By Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI, JULY 31.** The proposed coordination committee — envisaged as a mechanism for consultation between the United Progressive Alliance Government and the Left parties — will be a 12-member body and will, in all likelihood, include constituents of the ruling coalition. Six members will be from the four supporting Left parties, the UPA will be represented by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, and four members of the Government who will participate in the meetings depending on the issue before the committee.

However, a final decision on the contours of the committee — mooted by the Left parties —

will be taken on Sunday after the Prime Minister returns from his overseas tour.

### Differences resolved

Differences between the Left parties and the Congress over the membership issue seem to have been ironed out at a meeting between the former West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, and Ms. Gandhi here this morning. Mr. Basu was accompanied by the Polit Bureau member, Sitaram Yechury, and Ms. Gandhi by her political secretary, Ahmed Patel.

The Congress said the remaining four members of the UPA would be selected by Dr. Singh and Ms. Gandhi. The idea gaining ground is that the membership would be issue-based; thereby addressing the Left

concern that the committee is not primarily a Congress-Left coordination mechanism.

The Left feels that at least three other constituents of the UPA — the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Nationalist Congress Party — should be represented.

However, the Congress — which has reservations over confining the representation to just three allies — favours it being primarily an interface between it and the Left parties.

Mr. Yechury refused to disclose the proposals discussed. However, late in the evening, Mr. Yechury said the Congress had suggested that the announcement be deferred till after the Prime Minister's return.