

Scribe 'bashed' in Mamata bash

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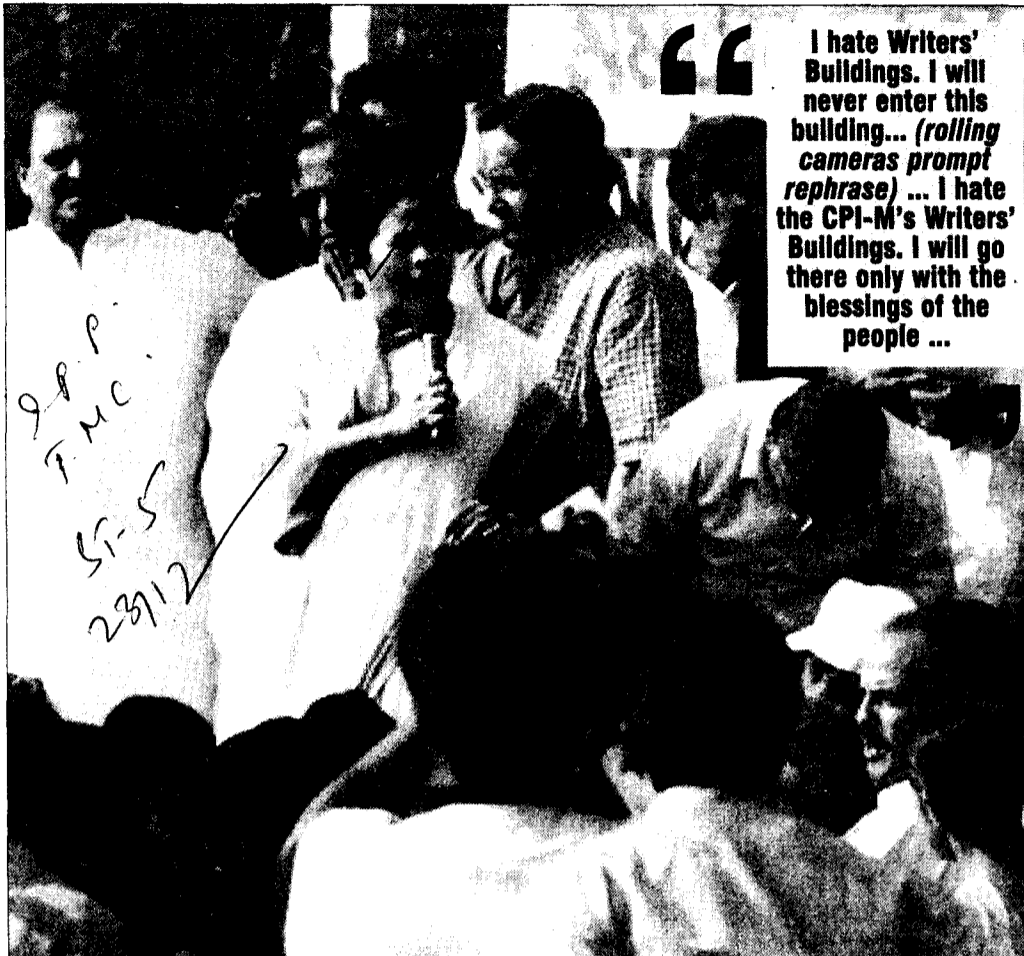
KOLKATA, Dec. 22. — Trinamul Congress chief Miss Mamata Banerjee had nothing new to offer in her protest against "Left Front misrule". It was the same theatrics. The same threats. Not to mention the same inconvenience meted out to commuters.

And, there will be more of this day after tomorrow when the Assembly takes up the West Bengal Block-Level Pre-Litigation Conciliation Board Bill for discussion, Miss Banerjee announced.

Hopping from Esplanade to Writers' Buildings to Raj Bhawan, she more or less succeeded in recreating the same "lawlessness" that marked her Writers' expedition on 21 July 1993. There was one difference though. While 12 dead youths had turned her into an icon after falling to police bullets in 1993, her supporters today roughed up a female journalist in full view of the police and hundreds of onlookers.

Miss Banerjee picked up the microphone in phases, letting other speakers fill in while she took time to plan her next move. But whenever she spoke, she spit venom on the CPI-M, the administration and her critics. She trashed "the malafide campaign" that her party had been losing strength. "There has been concerted propaganda that the Trinamul is finished. Today's gathering of 1,00,000 people says it all. It is the duty of the government to maintain law and order. Today, we did that," Miss Banerjee said.

Looking at the state secretariat from the pavement below Miss Banerjee said: "I hate Writers' Buildings. I will never enter this building". Realising that TV cameras



Miss Mamata Banerjee flanked by Mr Subrata Mukherjee, Mr Pankaj Banerjee and Mr Ajit Panja holds forth at the Trinamul Congress rally at Esplanade on Wednesday. — The Statesman

were rolling, she rephrased: "I hate the CPI-M's Writers' Buildings. I will go there only with the blessings of the people."

She accused the CPI(M)-led Left Front government of cheating the people of Bengal by making promises that they could not keep. The chief minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, was accused of leading the "anarchy" charge making time from his "beauty sleep".

Miss Banerjee, true to her style, demanded a white paper on the number of industries

set up and jobs created in the state since 1999. "The rate of unemployment is rising and

I hate Writers' Buildings. I will never enter this building... (rolling cameras prompt rephrase) ... I hate the CPI-M's Writers' Buildings. I will go there only with the blessings of the people ...



It's winter and people enjoy circus during this season...Once she had bitten a policeman. Then she slapped another

industries are closing down but our chief minister is only bluffing".

Having managed to avoid any untoward incident during the day, the CPI-M today took full advantage of the situation and described Miss Banerjee as a "joker in a circus". "It's winter and people enjoy circus during this season," CPI-M state secretary Mr Anil Biswas said.

"What's new about it. Once she had bitten a policeman. Then she slapped another," he added, reacting to the assault on the journalist.

'Target Lalbazar'

KOLKATA, Dec. 22. — It was a regular Trinamul Congress law violation programme but for Kolkata Police it was a strategic defeat. In view of the scheduled Trinamul law-violation programme, a large police force, including senior officers of the rank of joint CPs were deployed.

The Trinamul leaders had given in writing to the police that they would gather at Metro Channel and then proceed to Rani Rashmoni Avenue to stage a law violation and court arrest.

According to commissioner of Kolkata Police Mr Prasun Mukherjee: "Yesterday Trinamul leaders led by Mr Pankaj Banerjee met me. They said that they would muster a 50,000 crowd and that the police should go up to the dais and declare that they have arrested all and granted bail. I told them that it does not work that way in Kolkata Police and that I could not break the tradition."

Accordingly, a posse of policemen headed by DC (enforcement branch) Mr Ram Kalyan Adhikary was deployed at Dorina Crossing. Around 80 buses waited at RR. Avenue to ferry Trinamul law violators to jail and a large contingent was also deployed there. But the elaborate arrangement failed to prevent Trinamul supporters from running wildly towards Lalbazar.

Initially, the police were utterly confused and allowed the frenzied mob to proceed along Bentinck Street towards Lalbazar. Then they resorted to a random lathi-charge followed by brickbattening by the Trinamul. This continued for about 20 minutes until a large force led by joint CP (AP) Mr Zulfiqar Hasan arrived. Only then, the mob could be restrained and made to court arrest. At the Metro Channel meeting, party chief Ms Mamata Banerjee announced that 25 of them would court arrest and that the administration should let them know how they wanted to do that. A little later, she said: "Even after 20 minutes, we did not receive any response from the police. I am leaving and the youth wing will take over." Meanwhile, the crowd had started thinning out. Then the mayor Mr Subrata Mukherjee took over. He suddenly declared, "We will now move towards Lalbazar." Instantly, the mood of the crowd changed. With a sudden burst of energy, about 2,000-strong mob broke into a run towards Lalbazar. — SNS

তৃণমূলের সঙ্গে জোটের ইঙ্গিত এ বার প্রণবেরও

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: কলকাতা পুরসভা ও বিধানসভার নির্বাচনে তৃণমূলের সঙ্গে জোট গড়ার ইঙ্গিত দিলেন এ বার প্রদেশ কংগ্রেসের সভাপতি প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ও। তবে এই ব্যাপারে তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়কেই যে এগিয়ে আসতে হবে, প্রণববাবু তা-ও জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন।

রবিবার একটি ব্যাকের অনুষ্ঠানে মোগ দিতে প্রণববাবু কলকাতায় এলে তাঁর কাছে জানতে চাওয়া হয়, তৃণমূলের সঙ্গে আর্তাতের সম্ভাবনা আছে কি না। প্রণববাবু বলেন, রাজনীতিতে কোনও কিছুই অসম্ভব নয়। তবে এই ব্যাপারে সব কিছুই নির্ভর করছে তৃণমূলের উপরে।

দিল্লিতে তাঁর সঙ্গে মমতার কথাও হয়েছিল বলে জানান প্রণববাবু। কংগ্রেস যে মমতার সঙ্গে সমঝোতায় আগ্রহী, প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুন্সি তা জানানোর পরে প্রণববাবুও সবুজ-সঙ্কেত দিলেন। মমতা অবশ্য এখনই আলোচনায় রাজি নন। বিধানসভার গত নির্বাচনের সময়েই বি জে পি-র সঙ্গে ছেড়ে মমতা হাত মিলিয়ে ছিলেন কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে। তাতে মমতা ক্ষমতা দখল করতে না-পারলেও ৩০ জনের বেশি বিধায়ক পেয়েছিলেন। তৃণমূল পেয়েছিল বিরোধী দলের মর্যাদা। কিন্তু লোকসভার ভোটে বি জে পি-র সহযোগী হিসাবে মমতা কেবল তাঁর নিজের দক্ষিণ কলকাতা কেন্দ্রটি দখলে রাখতে পেরেছেন।

এই প্রেক্ষিতে তৃণমূলের বিধায়ক ও নেতারা আবার কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে গাটছড়া বাঁধতে আগ্রহী। জনা ছয়েক বিধায়ক এখনই তৃণমূল ছেড়ে কংগ্রেসে আসতে উৎসুক। কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে সমঝোতা করেই কলকাতার পুর ভোটে লড়তে আগ্রহী বেশ কয়েক জন মেয়র-প্যারিষদ ও কাউন্সিলর। আগামী বছর জেলায় বহু পুরসভার নির্বাচন। সে-দিকে তাকিয়ে জেলাতেও তৃণমূল নেতারা এই দাবির পক্ষে ক্রমশ সরব হচ্ছেন। বিশেষ করে মালদহ-সহ উত্তরবঙ্গে। ফলে মমতার উপরে চাপ ক্রমেই বাড়ছে। প্রণববাবুর মন্তব্য নিঃসন্দেহে এই চাপ বাড়িয়ে দিল।

এ দিকে, ছাঁটাই হওয়া ডাক্তারি-পড়ুয়াদের অভিজাবকেরা শনিবার রাতে প্রণববাবুর সঙ্গে দেখা করেন। তাঁদের সঙ্গে ছিলেন ছাত্র পরিষদের রাজ্য সভাপতি সৌরভ চক্রবর্তী। পরে সৌরভবাবু জানান, এই বিষয়ে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী এবং কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে তিনি কথা বলবেন বলে প্রণববাবু অভিজাবকদের আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন।

15 DEC 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

আঁতাইতই চায় কংগ্রেস-তৃণমূলের নিচু তলা

শক্ততা নয়। কংগ্রেস ও তৃণমূলের নিচু তলার, বিশেষ করে জেলায় জেলায় অধিকাংশ কর্মী-সমর্থকই চান দু'দলের সমঝোতা। সি পি এম-কে যায়েল করতে এ ছাড়া আর কোনও উপায় নেই বলে মনে করেন তাঁরা।

নিচু তলার কর্মী-সমর্থকদের এই মনোভাবের কথা দু'দলের নেতারাও জানেন। গত কয়েক বছরে পঞ্চায়েত, পুরসভার নির্বাচনেও দু'দলের প্রদেহ নেতৃত্বের নির্দেশের তোরাকী না-করে স্থানীয় স্তরে যে এমন সমঝোতা হয়েছে এবং লক্ষ্যও যে পূরণ হয়েছে, দু'পক্ষের নেতারা তা স্বীকার করছেন। এই ব্যাপারে দ্বিমত নেই হুগলির কংগ্রেস নেতা আব্দুল মান্নান থেকে শুরু করে মালদহের তৃণমূল নেতা কৃষ্ণেন্দু চৌধুরী। দু'দলের অন্যান্য জেলা নেতারও প্রশ্ন, মালদহে ইংলিশবাজার পুরসভা থেকে জেলা পরিষদ যদি তৃণমূল, বি জে পি এবং কংগ্রেস যৌথ ভাবে চালিতে পারে, তা হলে সারা বাংলায় সেই

সমীকরণ কাজ করবে না কেন? এই সূত্র অক্ষাই কাজ করবে বলে জানিয়েছেন কৃষ্ণেন্দুবাৰু। তাঁর কথায়, "সি পি এম যদি কংগ্রেসের শত্রু হয়েও দিল্লিতে একসঙ্গে চলতে পারে, তা হলে বাংলায় সি পি এমের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ে তৃণমূল ও কংগ্রেস একজোট হতে পারবে না কেন?" সি পি এমের ফর্মুলাতেই তাদের ক্ষমতাচ্যুত করার বিশ্বাসী তিনি। তিনি বলেন, "সংগঠনকে সারা দেশে ছড়িয়ে দিতে সি পি এম যেমন কংগ্রেসের মতো বৃহৎ শক্তিকে ব্যবহার করছে, তেমনই আমাদের এখনে কংগ্রেসকে সি পি এমের অত্যাচারের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবহার করা উচিত। কারণ, কংগ্রেসের নিচু তলার কর্মীরাও সি পি এমের হাতে অত্যাচারিত।"

পূর্ব মেদিনীপুরের এগরা পুরসভায় তাঁরা কী ভাবে সি পি এমের নেতৃত্বাধীন বামফ্রন্টকে ক্ষমতার বাইরে রেখেছেন, তা জানিয়ে তৃণমূল নেতা ও দলের যুব সংগঠনের রাজ্য সম্পাদক শান্তনু অধিকারীও বলেন, "তমলুক লোকসভা আসনে প্রতিকল্পিতা করার অভিজ্ঞতায় এবং

স্থানীয় স্তরে দলের পক্ষে বেশ কয়েকটি নির্বাচনে কাজ করতে গিয়ে দেখেছি, নিচু তলায় দু'দলের কর্মীদের মধ্যেই সি পি এমের বিরুদ্ধে এককাত্রী হওয়ার মনোভাব কাজ করছে।" লোকসভার গত নির্বাচনে নব্ব্বীপ কেন্দ্রে তৃণমূলের নীলিমা নাগের সমর্থনে কাজে নেমেছিলেন কংগ্রেসের সাধারণ কর্মীরা। সেই সময় কংগ্রেসের নেতা শঙ্কর সিং, অজয় দে বলেছিলেন, "পরিষ্টি মানুষকে সি পি এমের বিরুদ্ধে একত্র হওয়ার দিকে ঠেলেছে।" একই অভিজ্ঞতা দক্ষিণ দিনাজপুরের তৃণমূল নেতা বিষ্ণু মিত্রের।

তবে বর্তমান রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতিতে দু'দলের সমঝোতার প্রশ্ন ওঠে না বলে তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন। রাজ্য কংগ্রেসের সহ-সভাপতি প্রদীপ ভট্টাচার্যেরও বক্তব্য, পরিষ্টি এমন জায়গায় পৌঁছানি যে, দু'দলের এখনই মিলন হয়ে যাবে বা তারা হাত ধরাধরি করে সি পি এমের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই শুরু করে দেবে। দু'দলের নেতানেত্রীর মধ্যে আলোচনা রাজনৈতিক সুহতার লক্ষণ, তবে আলোচনা

মানেই দু'দলের যৌথ কর্মসূচি হয়ে যাওয়া নয়। এ ব্যাপারে অপেক্ষা ও ভবিষ্যৎ পরিস্থিতির উপরে নির্ভর করা প্রয়োজন বলে জানিয়েছেন প্রদীপবাৰু।

অব্যর্থ দার্জিলিঙের তৃণমূল নেতা গৌতম দেব বা দলের যুব সংগঠনের রাজ্য সভাপতি মদন মিত্র, তৃণমূল নেতা মুকুল রায়ের অভিমত, দিল্লিতে ক্ষমতা ধরে রাখতে সি পি এমের হাত ধরায় কংগ্রেসের কর্মী-সমর্থকদের কাছে দলীয় নেতৃত্বের বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা নষ্ট হয়েছে। সুতরাং সেই দলের সঙ্গে সমঝোতার কোনও প্রশ্নই নেই। তা ছাড়া তাঁরা মনে করেন, বি জে পি-র সঙ্গ ছেড়ে কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে সমঝোতা করলে ২০০১ সালের বিধানসভা নির্বাচনের ফলেই পুনরাবৃত্তি হবে।

তবে তৃণমূলের জেলা নেতাদের আনেকেই জানিয়েছেন, তপন সিকদার-তথাগত রায়েদের গোষ্ঠী-রুদ্ধে বি জে পি-র অস্তিত্বই বিশ্রী। সংখ্যালঘুরা এখনও মনে করেন, বি জে পি হিংসুদের দল। ওই নেতাদের মতে, সংখ্যালঘু ভোটা ধরে রাখতে বি জে পি-র সঙ্গে তৃণমূল নেতৃত্বের এখন বেশি ঘনিষ্ঠতা না-দেখানোই ভাল।

Court strikes down Mamata's bandh

Trinamool vows to go ahead with programme; CPM wants a close look at judiciary's powers

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, November 30

FOR THE first time, a court has ordered a political party to publicly call off a bandh.

The new Bandh Bench of the Calcutta High Court made history with its first ruling today, declaring the 12-hour Bengal bandh called on December 3 by the Trinamool Congress illegal and unconstitutional. And it directed the party to "withdraw their bandh call and to publish their decision in daily newspapers and in the electronic media on or before December 2".

The court came down with equal vehemence on the 30-minute *chakka* jam, called by Left trade union Citu tomorrow. Rejecting advocate-general Balai Roy's plea that a half-hour *chakka* jam cannot be equated with a 12-hour bandh, the Bench said, "Even a second's resistance to the citizen's fundamental rights and freedom is not permissible."

While Citu made vague noises about moving the Supreme Court, Mamata Banerjee simply declared her party would defy the High Court and go ahead with the bandh. "I have not seen the court judgment. I have always been with the people. On December 3, I shall seek justice from the people's court and request them to make the bandh a success," Mamata told *HT*.

Such defiance could bring on Mamata a jail sentence of up to six months for contempt of court and a direction to the Election Commission to deregister her party.

Citu state secretary Kali Ghosh, too, said he was yet to receive a copy of the court order. "So, how can we decide whether to withdraw the *chakka* jam?" Ghosh said. Citu insiders told *HT* that since it was unlikely that the court order would arrive by Wednesday morn-

ing, the transport workers would go ahead with the *chakka* jam.

The judges, however, left the state government in no doubt about how it was expected to act if the bandh or *chakka* jam were held. The government must try and ensure that all public and private vehicles are able to ply during the *chakka* jam so that commuters are not stranded, the judges said.

The same applies to the bandh. Besides, "all the offices of the state and

central government shall be kept open. In the event of any wilful absence, the absentee shall not be entitled to a day's salary because even a casual leave during a bandh is not permissible."

The court passed these orders on two public interest litigations filed by legal activist Deepak Prahladka and three social workers challenging the *chakka* jam and the bandh, called against the recent hike in fuel prices.

Mamata advised the judges to "read

the Constitution well". She told a public meeting that the Constitution guarantees the right to hold movements. "It is our fundamental right to be able to organise protest meetings," she declared.

The CPI(M) said it would meet all parties to seek a solution to the problem of "judicial activism". Party state secretary Anil Biswas said the CPI(M) wants to ascertain the "jurisdiction of the judiciary" under the Constitution.

■ See also Kolkata Live



MAMATA'S OPTIONS

- Withdraw bandh call
- Move Supreme Court against High Court order
- Defer bandh and justify bandh call before HC on December 7

IF SHE DEFIES ORDER

- Mamata can be jailed for a maximum of 6 months for contempt of court
- HC can direct EC to deregister Trinamool and debar Mamata from polls

"Can my leadership be questioned?"

By Meena Menon

MUMBAI, SEPT. 25. Faced with a rebellion for the first time in the party, the Shiv Sena executive president, Uddhav Thackeray said, "You can't question the leadership of the Sena. Does the rebellion in the Congress-NCP in Maharashtra mean that people are against the leadership of Sharad Pawar and Sonia Gandhi?"

In an interview with *The Hindu* today, the 43-year-old Uddhav, son of the Sena supremo Bal Thackeray, said the rebellion had raised issues about his leadership. "Because of two or three rebels, can my leadership be in question?" he asked. He had personally approved all the Shiv Sena candidates.

Resentment

This has led to resentment in some sections of the party. But Mr. Thackeray says that this time the party has followed a strict procedure of selection. He had visited several constituencies over the years and has come to know the functioning of the cadres.

"I also recruited a professional agency to review and survey the performances of the MLAs. I requested our local-level leaders to take the opinion of the cadres and then we called

party office bearers from the district and local levels from every constituency. It was then that I prepared a list, which was approved by my father," said Mr. Thackeray.

'Blinded by greed'

He ruled out any injustice and said that compared to other parties, the Shiv Sena had less rebels. "The remaining rebels in our party are blinded by greed," he said. "It was all right for people to expect their names to be in the list of candidates but when they find that the party has other ideas, they should accept it. Only a very few rebels are left and most of them have withdrawn," he said.

Matoshree, the well-fortified residence of the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, was abuzz with activity today with the Sena leaders, Narayan Rane and Manohar Joshi, apart from the rebel candidates and party workers holding meetings. "I welcome those who have withdrawn and supported our wishes but for those who remain rebels, the party's doors will be closed to them forever," said Mr. Thackeray. This could include a senior leader like Ramesh Prabhu, who filed his nomination as an independent from Vile Parle and has not withdrawn his nomination.



Uddhav Thackeray

Like other Sena leaders, Uddhav too feels the issue of rebels cannot impact the votes. He says that this election is based on the non-performance of the ruling coalition. "We want to improve many areas in Mumbai like traffic management and infrastructure. The many flyovers were built during our rule. All this Government wants to do is sell real estate (including the race course). Even in the rural areas free power for farmers is still an issue. Farmers are still getting electricity bills. We

want to write off all the agricultural loans for farmers amounting to Rs. 6,500 crores. The drought for the last two to three years has weakened the farmers and they need support. We have also worked in malnutrition-affected areas by providing services like ambulances and food," he said.

Huge debt

He agreed that if the BJP-Sena alliance came to power the huge debt of Rs. 93,000 crores would be daunting. "We are not scared of taking this on — 'Darna mana hai' — we did leave the Government with a debt of Rs. 43,000 crores but we had taken loans to build so many infrastructure projects. This Government has taken loans and done nothing."

He feels the major issue is that because of this poor fiscal condition, investments have stopped coming to the State and industries have closed. "We need to renew confidence in Maharashtra as an investment destination. Now everyone is crying. Because the loans will increase, this Government has not taken up new projects or taken steps to reduce the deficit. This Government has no confidence and I say that anti-incumbency is the biggest factor on our side."

On the issues in this election,

Mr. Thackeray said that, "during the elections we cannot campaign on the basis of Hindutva because of the code of conduct, but Hindutva is still very much the party's identity. Savarkar is an issue raised by the Congress and the common man is angry because the removal of the plaque is an insult not only to the State but also the whole nation. Aiyar has refused to apologise and I feel he has Ms. Sonia Gandhi's support."

Tomb issue

Commenting on the Afzal Khan issue, he said the tomb should be there because Shivaji had built it and he wanted to show how the enemies of Swaraj were dealt with. "However, does it have to be celebrated? We oppose that. We were not clear about the VHP's stand on whether they wanted to break the tomb or the illegal structures. Afzal Khan was an enemy and there is no need to celebrate him," he explained.

And finally does the Sena need a new image? While the Congress-NCP have hired public relations agencies for the elections, Mr. Thackeray quipped, "We don't need image-building. Only those without any image need to build one."

Uma ends tiff with yatra

Vajpayee plays down Uma, Naidu clash

Amritsar: At the end of a tumultuous fortnight, which saw differences in the BJP coming out in the open, firebrand party leader Uma Bharti on Saturday ended her 'tiranga yatra' here. She thanked top party leaders, including BJP president M Venkaiah Naidu, for their "unstinted support" to her.

Bharti concluded her 16-day 'tiranga yatra', which began from Hubli by paying obeisance to freedom fighters at the historic Jallianwala Bagh here.

Former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former Union ministers Arun Jaitley, Ananth Kumar and Shahnawaz Hussain, Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) president Parkash Singh Badal and BJP MP Navjot Singh Sidhu were present at a public rally addressed by Bharti near Jallianwala Bagh, which over a thousand people attended.

Bharti handed over to Vajpayee the flag that had been given to her by L K Advani, at the start of her yatra, to mark its formal conclusion. She said "the tiranga yatra will go on till India becomes a developed country through the contribution of each of its citizens".

She had started the yatra after the Karnataka government dropped a 10-year-old case against her for alleged rioting while hoisting a national flag in the idgah grounds in Hubli.

The yatra had brought to the fore differences within the BJP, with Bharti reportedly lashing out at Naidu for allegedly trying to stop top leaders from sharing the dias with her.

But on Saturday, she sought to put an end to the controversy by lauding the BJP top leadership for supporting her.

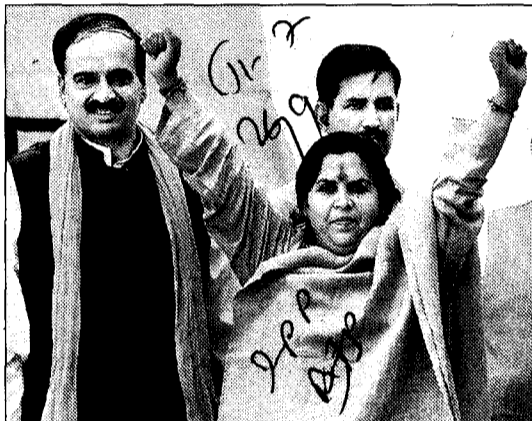
"I wanted to undertake the yatra to expose the corruption and mindset of the Congress. I would like to thank Vajpayee, Advani and Naidu for the unstinted support they gave me during the yatra.

"I am very happy for this as I am just an ex-chief minister but still they supported me," Bharti said. In an apparent reference to reports that she was eyeing Naidu's chair, she said, "I don't even consider myself worthy of any

praise on Bharti and even called her a *devi*.

Bharti's 'tiranga yatra' in Punjab was not without controversy. Shiromani Akali Dal (Mann) workers showed blag flags to her procession as it came here from Jalandhar and allegedly stoned it.

A few women activists entered the venue of her public meeting and raised slogans like "Uma Bharti wapas jao (Uma Bharti go back)" and showed black flags just as she started speaking. They were quickly removed from the spot even as Bharti appealed that the women be allowed to leave peacefully. Agencies



Uma Bharti at the public rally near Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on Saturday

New Delhi: Seeking to downplay reported differences within the BJP over the clash of schedules of the tiranga yatra and *satyagraha*, senior party leader A B Vajpayee on Saturday said no programme or those leading them were "small or big".

"Various kinds of talks are doing the rounds. New things are said everyday in the media," the former prime minister said, apparently referring to reports of a squabble between Uma Bharti and party president M Venkaiah Naidu and the former's grievance that her yatra was being "undermined" by the party. Agencies

'Savarkar was like fire'

New Delhi: BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Saturday showered praise on Savarkar but regretted he could not get the amount of popularity he deserved. "I had met him, talked to him, discussed issues with him. He had an impressive philosophy," he said about Savarkar.

"He was like a *jwala* (fire) whom (people) were scared to touch," Vajpayee commented. Agencies

Oommen Chandy is new Kerala Chief Minister

By Girish Menon

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 30. The ruling United Democratic Front convener and Congress leader, Oommen Chandy, will be the 19th Chief Minister of Kerala.

The Governor, R.L. Bhatia, will administer the oath of office to him at the Raj Bhavan at 12.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Mr. Chandy was unanimously elected the Congress Legislature Party leader tonight at the end of a five-hour exercise by the AICC observers, Pranab Mukherjee and Margaret Alva, in the presence of the AICC general secretary, Ahmed Patel, and the AICC secretary, Anil Shastri.

His election was announced after it was cleared by the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi. Later, Mr. Chandy, along with the CLP secretary, Thiruvanchur Radhakrishnan, met the Governor and staked his claim to form the government.

Consensus candidate

Mr. Chandy emerged as the consensus candidate after the AICC observers met the Congress MLAs, faction leaders, and the UDF constituents. Mr. Chandy told *The Hindu* that the IUML leader, P.K. Kunhalikutty, the Kerala Congress (M) leader, K.M. Mani, the JSS leader, K.R. Gauri, and the CMP leader, M.V. Raghavan, would be sworn in

Ministers.

The Kerala Congress (B) leader, R. Balakrishna Pillai, and the Kerala Congress (Jacob) leader, T.M. Jacob, would not gain an entry into the Cabinet mainly because of the Congress high command's reservations. Indications are there that they might find a berth when Mr. Chandy goes for Cabinet expansion. The two parties, however, submitted their letters of support to Mr. Chandy.

Fourteen MLAs belonging to the Karunakaran faction earlier backed the candidature of the Speaker, Vakkom Purushothaman. But Mr. Purushothaman withdrew from the fray pointing out that he did not want to raise a dispute. The former KPCC president and Mr. Karunakaran's son, K. Muralidharan, said the faction would decide its attitude to the new chief minister on the basis of his responses towards it.

The CLP meeting passed a resolution praising the outgoing Chief Minister, A.K. Antony. He had displayed high moral standards, it said.

Mr. Antony said Mr. Chandy's elevation was a correction of sorts for his inability to include him in his Cabinet on two previous occasions. He said he was happy to hand over the reins to a person who had stood by him steadfastly for 40 years.

Editorial on Page 10



The outgoing Kerala Chief Minister, A.K. Antony, embracing Oommen Chandy (right) who was elected the Leader of the Congress Legislature Party in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. — Photo: S. Mahinsha

31 AUG 2004

THE HINDU

Antony resigns, takes responsibility for election debacle

By Girish Menon

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 29. In a dramatic development, the Kerala Chief Minister, A.K. Antony, today submitted his resignation to the Governor, R.L. Bhatia, here. The Congress leader said he was doing this assuming moral responsibility for the defeat the United Democratic Front led by his party had suffered in the Lok Sabha elections in May 2004.

Mr. Antony's announcement came soon after a visit by the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to the State. She had come to Kollam today to launch the 150th birth centenary celebrations of the social reformer, Sree Narayana Guru.

Sonia informed

Addressing a press conference at the domestic terminal of the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport soon after her departure, Mr. Antony said that he had sought the Congress president's permission to resign from his post soon after the elections, but she had not given it at that time. "Today, I informed Ms. Gandhi that the uncertainty

could not continue indefinitely. I informed her of my resolve to resign. The UDF's electoral reverses might have been due to several reasons. But as the person who led the ruling front, I take the full moral responsibility for the electoral reverses," Mr. Antony said.

Soon afterwards, Mr. Antony called on the Governor to put in his papers.

Field open

The resignation has left the field open for the Congress high command to choose a new Chief Minister. The Union Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, and the All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary, Margaret Alva, are expected here on Monday. The Congress Legislature Party (CLP) will meet to choose the leader soon after the AICC observers, along with the AICC general secretary in-charge of Kerala, Ahmed Patel, and the AICC secretary, Anil Sasstry, go through the paces of arriving at a consensus candidate. The date for the CLP meet has not been announced.

There are indications that the choice of the successor would be

from among the sitting MLAs. The possible choices include the Speaker, Vakkom Purushothaman, the UDF convener, Oommen Chandy, and the Finance Minister, K Sankaranarayanan.

A surprise move

Mr. Antony had not given any indication of his plans till he walked up to mediapersons shortly after Ms. Gandhi's departure. Ms. Gandhi had earlier met several senior Congress leaders at the airport. She also met 15 selected leaders, including the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president, Thennala Balakrishna Pillai, the Speaker, the former KPCC presidents, K. Muralidharan, P.P. Thankachan, C.V. Padmarajan, Ministers, K. Sankaranarayanan and K.V. Thomas.

Mr. Antony hoped that the people of the State would in a fair manner assess his three-year tenure as Chief Minister. His Government had several success stories to its credit, though it could not implement all the programmes it had planned. He hoped the new Ministry would lead the State to progress.

Karunakaran's stand

The senior Congress leader, K. Karunakaran, said today that the Congress Legislature Party should elect the new Chief Minister. The practice of nominating someone should go and the MLAs should be asked to elect the new leader.

He said Mr. Antony's resignation was a "good thing" and a "service" to Kerala. "At least Antony has conceded. It is a good thing. It is a service he has done to the State. Antony has resigned taking the political situation in the State into account."

Mr. Muralidharan, while welcoming Mr. Antony's decision, said that the prospects of the UDF had brightened after Mr. Antony's resignation.

In the Lok Sabha elections held in May, the UDF won only one of the 20 seats. A lone seat — Ponnani — was won by E. Ahammed of the Muslim League.

This is the second time that Mr. Antony, who is 63, is resigning from the Chief Minister's post. In 1978, he resigned following differences with the central leadership.

Differences led to resignation: Page 11



CALLING IT A DAY: The Kerala Chief Minister, A.K. Antony, leaving the Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday after submitting his resignation to the Governor, R.L. Bhatia.

— Photo: S. Mahinsha

Hubli monopolises Tricolour, literally!

Tyasa Sharma in Hubli

Aug. 27. — Away from the political drama in the city over the Uma Bharti case and the National Flag, the Karnataka Khadi Gramodyog Samyukta Sangh, Bengaluru, a few km from the here, is quietly basking in the honour bestowed on it recently. It has become the only institution in the country with the right to manufacture the Tricolour.

A federation of 57 khadi units in the state, the

KKGSS produces 5000 National Flags of nine different sizes every month. While the smallest at 6 in. x 4 in. is used as table flag during meetings and is made of handspun silk, the largest, seen on large buildings with a high flag mast has an approximate dimension of 21 ft. x 14 ft. The rate per flag ranges between Rs 50 and Rs 7850, depending on the size.

According to Mr BS Patil, veteran Gandhian and chairman of KKGSS, the responsibility as the exclusive pro-



A file photograph of Uma Bharati with the Tricolour in Hubli before surrendering to the court.

ducer and supplier of the Tricolour was entrusted by the Khadi Village and Industries Commission last

December. "We are very happy with the responsibility and proud of the privilege given to us," he said.

The response too has been encouraging as the federation expects to boast an annual turnover exceeding Rs 5 crore thanks to the sale of the flags alone. "We are capable of raising our production from 5,000 pieces a month to 5,000 pieces daily with some additional staff and trained personnel," he said.

The recent Supreme Court order enabling citizens to fly the National Flag

without any hindrance, has come as a boon to the KKGSS as it means more demand for the Tricolour.

The production process is not an easy one, though, as it has to stick to the specifications set by the Bureau of Indian Standards.

As the demand for the Tricolour increases, the federation is hopeful that soon every nook and corner of the country would see the National Flag fluttering high. The branding of Hubli, therefore, would be complete.

" P C F A O f t d i p i n s t P i s e c c f o s r f l y b e o r i n p r a t

সপ্তাহব্যাপী বিক্ষোভ

ধরা দিলেন

উমা, আক্রমণ

সনিয়াকেই

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫ অগস্ট: ভোপাল থেকে ছবলি পর্যন্ত দীর্ঘ তিরিশ ঘণ্টার ট্রেন যাত্রা, স্টেশনে স্টেশনে জাতীয় পতাকা হাতে বিজেপি কর্মীদের বিপুল উদ্‌যাদনা, গাড়ির উপরে চড়ে আবেগঘন বক্তৃতার পর ছবলির আদালতে আত্মসমর্পণ করলেন উমা ভারতী।

আদালত তাঁকে চোদ্দো দিনের জন্য বিচারবিভাগীয় হেফাজতে রাখার নির্দেশ দিয়েছে। সর্বোচ্চ পর্যায়ের নিরাপত্তা পাওয়া উমা কোন জেলে থাকবেন তা নিয়েও একপ্রস্থ নাটকের পর তাঁকে ছবলি থেকে একশো কিলোমিটার দূরে বেলগাঁও জেলে রাখার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছিল। এত দূরে যেতে তিনি অস্বীকার করায় শেষ পর্যন্ত তাঁকে রাখা হয় ধারওয়াড়ের একটি অতিথিশালায়। উমার গ্রেফতারির প্রতিবাদে আগামিকাল কনটিক ও মধ্যপ্রদেশ বনধের ডাক দিয়েছে বিজেপি। দেশজুড়ে রাস্তায় নেমে বিজেপি-র প্রতিবাদও শুরু হচ্ছে কাল থেকে। সপ্তাহব্যাপী এই বিক্ষোভে দলের সব সাংসদ, বিধায়ক, জাতীয় নেতা সামিল হবেন। জাতীয় পতাকার অপমানের প্রতিবাদে কনটিকে সত্যাগ্রহ করবে বিজেপি। মহারাষ্ট্র ভোটার আগে জাতীয় পতাকা নিয়ে ভাবাবেগকে তুঙ্গে নিয়ে যেতে চায় বিজেপি।

উমা আজ কনটিকে ঢোকান পর তাঁকে গ্রেফতার করা হবে, না আদালতে আত্মসমর্পণ করতে দেওয়া হবে তা নিয়ে বিভ্রান্তি ছিল। বিজেপি সভাপতি বেক্কাইয়া নায়ডু জানিয়েছেন, ট্রেন ছবলি পৌঁছবার কিছুক্ষণ আগে কনটিকের পুলিশ গিয়ে উমা ভারতীকে বলে, ধারবার স্টেশনে তাঁকে নামিয়ে গাড়িতে করে ছবলি নিয়ে যাওয়া হবে। কিন্তু পুলিশকে উমা বলেন, ট্রেন যখন ছবলিতে যাচ্ছে তা হলে কেন তাঁকে গাড়িতে নিয়ে যাওয়া হবে? ট্রেন ছবলি পৌঁছবার পর পুলিশ অবশ্য উমাকে গ্রেফতার করতে আসেনি। সেখানে জাতীয় ও দলীয় পতাকা হাতে সমর্থকদের প্রবল অভিনন্দনের বন্যায় ডুবে যান উমা। একদিকে সমর্থকদের উচ্ছ্বাস, অন্যদিকে টিভি ক্যামেরা ও সাংবাদিকদের সামলাতে হিমশিম খায় পুলিশ। স্টেশন থেকে তাঁর গুরু সঙ্গ দেখা করে আদালতে যান উমা।

তার আগে উমা তাঁর প্রচারও শুরু করে দেন। আক্রমণের লক্ষ্য ছিল কংগ্রেস, বিশেষ করে সনিয়া গান্ধী। গাড়ির উপরে জাতীয় পতাকা ধরে উমা বলেন, “আমি জেলে যেতে ভয় পাই না। জাতীয় পতাকার জন্য মরতেও রাজি আছি। এক ইতালীয় মহিলার নির্দেশে কনটিক সরকার এই কাজ করল। আমি জামিন চাইব না। কারণ, জামিন চাইলে জাতীয় পতাকার অপমান হবে। জেল থেকে মুক্তি পেয়েই আবার জাতীয় পতাকার সম্মানের জন্য রাস্তায় নামব।”

উমা আদালতে গিয়ে তাই জামিনের আবেদন করেননি। আদালত তাঁকে চোদ্দো দিনের জন্য বিচারবিভাগীয় হেফাজতে রাখার নির্দেশ দেয়। দিল্লিতে বেক্কাইয়া জানান, এরপর উমাকে নিয়ে আসা হয় ছবলি সাব জেলে। কিন্তু জেলার জানিয়ে দেন, অত্যন্ত ছোট সাব জেলে উমার মতো নেত্রীকে রাখা সম্ভব নয়। সেটা ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটকেও জানানো হয়। তিনি তখন উমাকে বেলগাঁও জেলে রাখতে বলেন। এই নির্দেশ পাওয়ার পর গাছতলায় বসা উমা জানিয়ে দেন, গত দু-রাত তিনি ঘুমোননি। এখন স্পন্ডিলাইটিসের ব্যথা নিয়ে আরও একশো কিলোমিটার দূরে যাওয়া তাঁর পক্ষে সম্ভব নয়। শেষ পর্যন্ত তাঁকে ধারওয়াড় কৃষি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অতিথিশালায় রাখা হয়।

উমার সমর্থনে আজ খোদ বিজেপি সভাপতি বেক্কাইয়া নায়ডু মাঠে নেমে পড়েন। তাঁকে সভাপতির পদ থেকে হটাতে একটা প্রয়াস শুরু হয়েছে। জাতীয় পতাকা নিয়ে ব্যাপক আন্দোলনের পরিকল্পনা করে নিজের অবস্থানটাও দৃঢ় করতে চান বেক্কাইয়া। তবে শুধু উমা একা নয়, তাঁর সঙ্গ সাভারকর এবং দাগি মন্ত্রীদেব বিষয়টাও জুড়ে দিয়েছেন তিনি। এই অবস্থায় উমার বিরুদ্ধে আসল মামলাটা কী, কোন পরিপ্রেক্ষিতেই বা উমাকে আদালতে যেতে হল, তার বিস্তারিত ব্যাখ্যাও দেন বিজেপি সভাপতি। তাঁর দাবি, কোনও সাম্প্রদায়িক উত্তেজনা নয়, ছবলিতে ছ'জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছিল পুলিশের গুলিতে এবং সেটা হয় জাতীয় পতাকা তোলা ও উমাকে গ্রেফতারের পর। বেক্কাইয়ার প্রশ্ন, এস এম কৃষ্ণ সরকার কেন উমার বিরুদ্ধে মামলাটি প্রত্যাহার করে নিতে চেয়েছিল? কেনই বা এতদিন উমাকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়নি?

বিজেপি-র সিদ্ধান্ত, কাল থেকে জাতীয় পতাকা, সাভারকর, দাগি মন্ত্রী নিয়ে দেশ জুড়ে বিক্ষোভ শুরু হয়ে যাবে। শেষের দু-দিন আন্দোলন হবে কনটিক-ভিত্তিক। জাতীয় পতাকাকে সামনে রেখে সত্যাগ্রহ করবেন বিজেপি নেতারা।

● সঙ্ঘকে আক্রমণ কংগ্রেসের.... পৃঃ ৫

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

26 AUG 2008

কোর্টের রায়ে আজ শিবুর আত্মসমর্পণ জামতাদায়

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, রাঁচি, ২৯ জুলাই:
চিরুডিহি গণহত্যা মামলায় অন্যতম
অভিযুক্ত শিবু সোরেনকে ২ অগস্টের
মধ্যে জামতাদা আদালতে আত্মসমর্পণ
করতে নির্দেশ দিল ঝাড়খণ্ড হাইকোর্ট।
প্রধান বিচারপতি পি কে আই
বালসুব্রহ্মণ্যম ও বিচারপতি এস জে
মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ডিভিশন বেঞ্চ আজ ওই
নির্দেশ দেয়। ২৬ জুলাই সোরেনের রিট
পিটিশনের শুনানি হয় ওই বেঞ্চে। শুনানি
হলেও রায় স্থগিত রেখেছিল আদালত।
হাইকোর্টের নির্দেশ পাওয়ার পরে
রাঁচিতে এক জরুরি বৈঠকে বসেন
জেএমএম নেতারা। দলীয় সূত্রের খবর,
সেখানে পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ নিয়ে বিস্তারিত
আলোচনা হয়। পরে দলের কেন্দ্রীয়
কমিটির সদস্য শৈলেন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য বলেন,
“কাল সকালে ‘গুরুজি’ রাঁচি পৌঁছবেন।
তার পরে কর্মী ও সমর্থকদের মিছিলের
সঙ্গে সড়কপথে জামতাদায় যাবেন তিনি।”
শৈলেন্দ্রবাবু জানান, হাইকোর্টের নির্দেশকে
চ্যালেঞ্জ জানিয়ে সুপ্রিম কোর্টে যাওয়ার
এখনই কোনও পরিকল্পনা নেই। একই
সঙ্গে সোরেনের বদলে অন্য কোনও
নেতারও কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভায় যোগ দেওয়ার
এখনও কোনও সম্ভাবনা নেই। জেএমএম
সূত্রের খবর, চিরুডিহি-কাণ্ড দলীয়
নেতাদের এতটাই বেগ দিয়েছে যে,
ঝাড়খণ্ডের বিভিন্ন আদালতে শিবু
সোরেনের অন্য মামলাগুলির বর্তমান
পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া
হয়েছে আজকের বৈঠকে।

আদালতের রায়ের পরে গোপন ডেরা
থেকে শিবু সোরেন বৈদ্যুতিন মাধ্যমকে
জানান, তিনি ফেরার মন। আদালতে
আবেদনের পরে নিরাপত্তার কারণে তিনি
সমর্থকদের মধোই রয়েছেন। আদালতের
রায়ের খবর শুনে তিনি বলেন, “শীঘ্রই
আত্মসমর্পণ করব। জঙ্গলে সমর্থকদের
মধ্যে আছি। আমাদের সরকার ও নেত্রীকে
হেনস্থা করার জন্য বিজেপি যত্নবস্ত্র করেছে।
আগামী বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে এর জবাব
দেব। বিজেপি-কে ঝাড়খণ্ড ছাড়া করব।”

৭৫-এর ২৩ জমুয়ারি জামতাদায়
চিরুডিহি গ্রামে এক দল লোকের অক্রমণে
১০ জন গ্রামবাসীর মৃত্যু হয়। পুলিশ ওই
ঘটনায় জেএমএম নেতা সোরেন-সহ ৬৯
জনের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ দায়ের করে।
তারই ভিত্তিতে শিবুর বিরুদ্ধে গ্রেফতারি
পরোয়ানা জারি করেন জামতাদায়
এসডিজিএম। সেই পরোয়ানা-সহ গোটা
প্রক্রিয়াকে চ্যালেঞ্জ জানিয়ে ১৯ জুলাই
ঝাড়খণ্ড হাইকোর্টে ওই পিটিশন দাখিল
করেন সোরেন। আদালত সূত্রের খবর, ওই
একই মামলায় জামতাদায় ১৩তম অতিরিক্ত
সেশন জুজ ২০০৩ সালে শিবুর বিরুদ্ধে
গ্রেফতারি পরোয়ানা জারি করেছিল।
হাইকোর্টের ডিভিশন বেঞ্চ ওই নির্দেশের
সূত্র ধরেই জেএমএম নেতাকে ২ অগস্টের
মধ্যে আত্মসমর্পণ করার নির্দেশ দেয়।

আজ দুপুর সওয়া দুটো নাগাদ ভিড়ে
ঠাসা এজলাসে সোরেনের রিট পিটিশনের
শুনানির রায় দেয় ডিভিশন বেঞ্চ। গোটা
প্রক্রিয়া শেষ করতেতে পাঁচ মিনিটের বেশি
সময় নেননি বিচারপতিরা। রায়দানের
পাশাপাশি ‘গ্রেফতারি পরোয়ানা জারির
পিছনে কোনও রাজনীতি নেই’ বলে মন্তব্য
করে আদালত। সরকারি কৌশলি
রাজীবরঞ্জন মিশ্র বলেন, “২ অগস্টের
মধ্যে সোরেন আত্মসমর্পণ না করলে তাঁর
বিরুদ্ধে চাপ সৃষ্টি করার সমস্ত অধিকার
রয়েছে রাজ্য সরকারের।” জেএমএম সূত্রে
জানা গিয়েছে, বাংলা-ঝাড়খণ্ড সীমানা
লাগোয়া আসানসোল কিংবা ধনবাদের
কোথাও শিবু সোরেন রয়েছেন। দলের
বিশ্বস্ত কর্মীদের পাহারায় আজ গভীর
রাতে তাঁর সেখান থেকে রাঁচির উদ্দেশে
রওনা হওয়ার কথা।

এই খবর জানার পরেই ঝাড়খণ্ড
পুলিশের ব্যস্ততা তুল্পে পৌঁছেছে। শহরের
নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা জোরদার করার
পাশাপাশি যে পথে শিবু সোরেন রাঁচি
থেকে জামতাদায় যাবেন, সেখানকার
পুলিশি পাহারা তেলে সাজতে আজ
রাতেই বৈঠকে বসেন শহর পুলিশের
কর্তাব্যক্তির। স্পেশাল ব্রাঞ্চার পুলিশও
খোঁজখবর নেওয়া শুরু করে। এক
পুলিশকর্তা জানান, জামতাদায় পুলিশ
সুপারকেও সেখানকার নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা
জোরদার করার নির্দেশ পাঠানো হয়েছে।

ANANDABAZAR PATRIKA

29 JUL 2003

GIRIDIH MURDER CASE TO BE REOPENED

PM hits out at Opposition

Statesman News Service

PATNA/RANCHI, July 27. — While the Prime Minister today described the Opposition's behaviour in Parliament as "totally unconstitutional", the Jharkhand police seemed all set to further tighten the screws on Mr Sibu Soren by reopening a 1974 case in which a warrant is pending against him.

"We don't want any confrontation with the Opposition. We honour their rights but this does not mean that the House proceedings must be frequently disrupted over a trivial issue. There are many other important issues that merit national attention," was Dr Manmohan Singh's response to the NDA's stand on "tainted ministers" and its decision to boycott parliamentary standing committees.

He regretted that no solution was in sight even after meetings with Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani.

Adding more to Mr Soren's share of problems, police are searching for the papers related to the 1974 incident. As reported by The Statesman on 25 July, Mr Soren and four of his aides had allegedly murdered four persons over the killing of a goat in Giridih. Once the papers are retrieved — the police department was initially unaware of the case — formalities

Affidavit says it all



RANCHI, July 27. — Mr Sibu Soren, to be fair to him, had mentioned the Chirudih massacre case in the affidavit he filed along with the nomination paper for the Dumka Lok Sabha seat. Though Chirudih was not mentioned, the affidavit stated that Mr

Soren had been charged under the IPC Section 302 (murder) in an FIR filed lodged on 31 January, 1975. The case, GR No. 30/75, has been pending in the Jamtara SDJM court, the affidavit said. It, however, didn't mention the date — "not-available" — on which the charges were framed against Mr Soren. — PTI

such as execution of the arrest warrant will be implemented, sources said.

"All accused in the Giridih case, except Mr Soren, had faced trial and were acquitted, and police did not appeal to the higher court against the acquittal. So we had presumed that the case had been closed, not knowing that a warrant is pending against Mr Soren who did not face the trial," a senior officer said.

Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patil today said it was the Jharkhand government's responsibility to find Mr Sibu Soren and arrest him, adds PTI from Mumbai.

THE STATESMAN

JMM stays in govt but out of Cabinet

Press Trust of India
Ranchi/New Delhi, July 25

THE JHARKHAND Mukti Morcha today said it was not joining the Union Cabinet for the moment but would "remain solidly behind" the United Progressive Alliance government. This statement comes a day after Shibu Soren tendered his resignation from the Manmohan Singh Cabinet.

In Jharkhand, taking no chances despite the JMM's promise of peaceful protests against what it calls the "sinister campaign" to harass its chief Shibu Soren, the Jamtara administration today imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC following reports of the former coal minister's possible appearance there tomorrow.

The Soren stronghold remained tense throughout the day. Now that he has resigned as Union minister, there are fears that his supporters may unleash a wave of violent protests. Eight districts where the JMM leader wields considerable influence have been put on high alert.

Soren is likely to give himself up at Jamtara depending on the Jharkhand High Court's decision on a writ filed by him challenging the arrest warrant issued by a court here.

Jamtara DIG Ashok K. Singh said the prohibitory orders were enforced as a pre-



ventive measure and security was tightened not only in Jamtara but in all five districts of Santhal Parganas. One company each of the RAF and Special Task Force have been mobilised and the SDJM court barricaded.

A security ring has been thrown around judge A.K. Mishra who had served the non-bailable arrest warrant against the absconding leader that has culminated in his stepping down from the Manmohan Singh Cabinet.

With the Jharkhand High Court expected to hear Soren's writ tomorrow, JMM

leader and Rajya Sabha MP Stephen Marandi said in Ranchi today that the party would abide by its decision: "If guruji (Soren) has to surrender, he will do that."

Security has also been stepped-up for judge A.K. Mishra who had served the arrest warrant that finally led to the PM's plea to the Union minister to step down from the Cabinet.

Leaders of the JMM in Delhi remained conspicuously silent over the next course of action, possibly because they are waiting for a favourable verdict tomorrow

on Soren's criminal writ petition against quashing of the entire proceedings of the 1975 Chirudih massacre.

JMM leaders said they were neither happy nor sad over the PM asking Soren to resign. "Hum agar khushi bhi nehin hein, to itna dukhi bhi nehin hein (if we are not happy, we also are not that sad)," Marandi said.

Marandi also accused the BJP of digging up a decades-old case. "We are not thinking of any ministerial berth ... we are thinking of first taking the battle to the BJP camp for its conclusion."

Tundi's Robin Hood

CONTROVERSY HAS for long been the middle name of JMM chief Shibu Soren. All his life, the 62-year-old tribal leader has been in the glare of the spotlight, though hardly discomfited by the notoriety. Till now, he has managed to win through. This time, though, he might find the going tough.

Shibu, named so by his parents Sobren and Sona when he was born on Maha Shivaratri, was 15 when his father was killed leading an anti-money-lender agitation. His father was a schoolteacher, and a Gandhian — a combination too rich for the powerful landlords of Nemra village in Hazaribagh district of erstwhile south Bihar.

Sona inspired Shibu to continue his father's battle. The thirst for revenge did the rest. Soren began mobilising the masses of Barlenga panchayat, and launched an agitation against moneylenders in 1964, which subsequently spread to the nearby districts of Giridih and Dhanbad despite attacks on him.

By this time, Soren had become a virtual Robin Hood in the area, and the forests of Tundi became his Sherwood. Despite shoot-at-sight orders, he managed to organise the Adivasi Sudhar Samaj to propagate complete prohibition, collective farming, and united resistance against moneylenders.

This brought him in contact with veteran trade unionist-cum-MCC leader A.K. Roy and the late Binod Bihari Mahto, who became his mentors. This led to the formation of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha on February 4, 1973. The anti-moneylenders movement in Santhal Parganas turned bloody on several occasions, leading to violent incidents, including the Chirudih massacre in 1975. In 1977 Soren again went into hiding again, when the government issued a shoot-at-sight orders against him as the Jharkhand agitation led to large-scale violence.

HTC, Ranchi



ARYA PRAHARAJ

শিবুর ইস্তফা, তবে চাপ জারি রাখছে বিজেপি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ জুলাই: প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্দেশ মেনে শিবু সোহেন শেষশেষ আজ ইস্তফা দেওয়ার পরে এ বার অন্য 'দাগি' মন্ত্রীদের নিয়ে ফের আক্রমণ শানানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিল বিজেপি। বিজেপি-র দাবি, দাগি মন্ত্রী নিয়ে যুদ্ধের প্রথম পরে তাঁরাই জিতলেন। দ্বিতীয় পরে লালুপ্রসাদ, তসলিমুদ্দিনদের ইস্তফার জন্য চাপ সৃষ্টি করা হবে। কাল শিবুকে ফেরতের ও অন্য 'দাগি' মন্ত্রীদের পদত্যাগে বাধ্য করার দাবিতে রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে স্মারকলিপি দিচ্ছেন এন ডি এ নেতারা। শিবুকে পদত্যাগ করানোর প্রসঙ্গ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বিলম্বের সমালোচনা করে বিজেপি-র মুখপাত্র মুখতার আকাস নকজির প্রশ্ন, "যে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ভেবেচিন্তে সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে এত সময় লাগে, তাঁর উপরে মানুষ কী ভাবে বিশ্বাস রাখবেন?" বিজেপি-র দাবি, সোহেন কোথায়, তা-ও জানাক সরকার।

বিজেপি চাপ দিয়ে গেলেও, শিবুকে পদত্যাগ করিয়ে আপাতত সফট সামান

দিল মনমোহন-সরকার। কাল রাতের বৈঠকে ক্ষুদ্র প্রধানমন্ত্রী সিদ্ধান্ত নেন, আর পেরি নয়, ইস্তফাপত্র চেয়ে পাঠানো হবে শিবুর কাছ থেকে। এর আগেই বিষয়টি নিয়ে তিনি জাতীয় উপদেষ্টা পর্যদের চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গান্ধীর সঙ্গে কথা বলেন। পলাতক মন্ত্রীকে কোন ঠিকানায় চিঠি পাঠানো হবে, তা নিয়ে বিধায় ছিলেন মনমোহন। দিল্লিতে ঝাড়খণ্ড মুক্তি মোর্চার (জে এম এম) অফিসে চিঠি পাঠাতে পরামর্শ দেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। শিবুর ছেলে হেমন্তের সঙ্গেও যোগাযোগ করা হয়। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্দেশ মেনে আজ শিবু ইস্তফাপত্র পাঠান গোপন ডেরা থেকে। বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব শিবুর ইস্তফায় না-দমে ফের আক্রমণ শানানোর ছক কষলেও তাঁর পদত্যাগের ফলে জে এম এমের সঙ্গে জোট সরকারের সম্পর্কেও কেনও প্রভাব পড়ল না। তবে, শিবুর জায়গায় কে মন্ত্রী হবেন, তা নিয়ে জল্পনা চলছে। দলের খবর, শিবুর ছেলে

হেমন্তেরও মন্ত্রী হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। আজই সনিয়া গান্ধীর সঙ্গে দেখা করে হায় আশ ঘণ্টা কথা বলেন জে এম এম নেতারা। এর পাশাপাশি, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে হেমন্ত এবং জে এম এম সাংসদেরা অনুরোধ করেছেন, পুরো বিষয়টাই বিজেপি-র 'রাজনৈতিক যড়যন্ত্র'। হেমন্ত আমরায় গুঁর সঙ্গে রয়েছে। কোনও সমস্যা নেই।" বাবার পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ সম্পর্কে ছেলের বক্তব্য, "পুরো বিষয়টিই আদালতের এজিয়ারভুক্ত। আমরা আদালতের সিদ্ধান্তকে মান্য করব।" দলীয় সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে সোমবার রাতিতে কয়লামন্ত্রীর রিট পিটিশনের শ্রমাদানি না দেখে ডেরা ছাড়বেন না সোহেন। আজ তাঁর ঘনিষ্ঠ সাংসদ সুনীল মাহাতোকে প্রশ্ন করা হয়, কোথায় রয়েছেন শিবু? জবাবে তিনি বলেন, "আমাদের লোকের মাঝেই রয়েছেন।" এ দিকে, শিবুর ইস্তফার প্রেক্ষিতে ঝাড়খণ্ডের আটটি জেলায় নিরাপত্তা জোরদার করা হয়েছে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করেন হেমন্ত। তুলে দেন বাবার পদত্যাগপত্র। বেরিয়ে বলেন, "বাবার পদত্যাগপত্র প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে দিয়েছি। তবে, আমাদের সমর্থন এখনও সংযুক্ত প্রগতিশীল জোট সরকারের সঙ্গে রয়েছে। কোনও মতভেদ নেই। প্রধানমন্ত্রী আমায় বলেছেন তিনি আমাদের সঙ্গে আছেন। আমরাও গুঁর সঙ্গে রয়েছি। কোনও সমস্যা নেই।" বাবার পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ সম্পর্কে ছেলের বক্তব্য, "পুরো বিষয়টিই আদালতের এজিয়ারভুক্ত। আমরা আদালতের সিদ্ধান্তকে মান্য করব।" দলীয় সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে সোমবার রাতিতে কয়লামন্ত্রীর রিট পিটিশনের শ্রমাদানি না দেখে ডেরা ছাড়বেন না সোহেন। আজ তাঁর ঘনিষ্ঠ সাংসদ সুনীল মাহাতোকে প্রশ্ন করা হয়, কোথায় রয়েছেন শিবু? জবাবে তিনি বলেন, "আমাদের লোকের মাঝেই রয়েছেন।" এ দিকে, শিবুর ইস্তফার প্রেক্ষিতে ঝাড়খণ্ডের আটটি জেলায় নিরাপত্তা জোরদার করা হয়েছে।

ANANDABAZAR DAILY

25 JUL 2004

JMM files plea in Jharkhand HC

Soren seeks quashing of arrest warrant

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RANCHI, JULY 19

SOREN after an arrest warrant was issued against Lok Sabha MP Shibu Soren by Sub-Divisional Magistrate U.N. Mishra in Jamtara this morning, the JMM leader's lawyer filed a petition in the Jharkhand High Court here, seeking quashing of the warrant.

"The petition is likely to come up for hearing tomorrow. We are going to oppose

Soren had incited the mob to launch the attack: Victim

the plea," said State Advocate General Anil Kumar Sinha.

Twenty-nine years have passed since the FIR in the case was filed by Jamtara deputy collector I.C. Mishra at Narayanpur police station on January 23, 1975.

Soren has been named as accused in the case in which 11 people were killed and 18 houses were torched at Chirrudih village in Jamtara district. The district falls under Dumka constituency represented by Soren in the

Calls on Speaker



NEW DELHI: Union Coal Minister and JMM chief Shibu Soren, against whom an arrest warrant has been issued by Jamtara District Court, had a meeting on Monday with Lok Sabha Speaker

Somnath Chatterjee, sources said. Soren, who has already moved the Jharkhand High Court against the warrants relating to the 1975 Chirrudih massacre case, including the quashing of the arrest warrant against him, handed over some documents related to his case to the Speaker, the sources said. Soren was, however, not immediately available for comments. — PTI

Lok Sabha. Nine of the victims belonged to the Muslim community.

In a statement recorded by the police just before his death, Lakhendra Soren, one of the victims, had al-

legedly said: "He (Shibu Soren) had incited the mob to launch the attack".

After the police submitted the chargesheet on December 6, 1986, the court issued summons to all 69 accused. However, only 59 of the accused responded and faced trial in the court of the Additional District Sessions Judge. The trial of the other 10 accused, including Soren, didn't take off.

Two days ago, after the BJP-led Opposition launched attacks on the Government over reports that Soren was a "proclaimed offender", Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil gave a clean chit to Soren on the basis of a report submitted by the State

Two days back, Patil gave a clean chit to Soren

Secretary (Home), who said that the JMM leader was out on bail.

"The state government report clearly shows that Soren is not a proclaimed offender," Patil said on the floor of the Rajya Sabha on July 17.

However, in Ranchi, Advocate General Sinha, who had inquired into the case, told mediapersons that "the arrest warrant was issued against Soren in 1986. Since it was not executed, it remained in force till date".

29 years on, Chirrudih remembers massacre

MANOJ PRASAD
RANCHI, JULY 19

ALMOST 29 years ago, Chirrudih, a remote village in Jamtara district witnessed a massacre. The incident took place on January 23, 1975. Today, the village's 5,000-odd residents who live in three separate hamlets remain tight-lipped about the incident which took place in the Muslim-inhabited second and third hamlets of Chirrudih.

"The night had just set in when we heard the sound of drums. Immediately after that Adivasis barged into the village. All of them were armed with lathis, axes and bows and arrows," recalls Salim Akhtar, who was just seven-years-old then. His elder brother was killed in the ensuing melee.

"As I recollect it, they wreaked havoc...killed our relatives with bows and arrows," says Sultan.

Chirrudih is surrounded by a dozen villages inhabited by the Santhal tribe to which Jharkhand Mukti Morcha chief and the Union Coal Minister Shibu Soren belongs. Soren, the prime accused in the case, was then leading a movement under the banner of "Dikku Bhagao Abhivan" (Oust outsiders campaign) as

JMM secretary.

This was nearly two decades after his father Sobhran Soren — a school teacher — was allegedly lynched by money lenders. Two days before the Chirrudih massacre took place, Soren was reportedly beaten up by some unidentified residents of the village. In retaliation, Soren, along with his armed supporters, allegedly attacked the village.

Minutes before the attack, residents led by Trelokya Narayan Singh, the younger brother of the erstwhile landlord of the neighbouring Narayanpur estate, stood guard at the village, states the case chargesheet. "When Soren's men advanced, one of Singh's men opened fire. The bullet hit Lakhendra Soren of Soren's group.

This was followed by a pitched battle which left 11 people dead and 18 houses ablaze. Among the victims were nine Muslim residents of the village. While Trelokya Narayan Singh died in the ensuing melee, Lakhendra was rushed to the hospital where he died.

However, before dying, Lakhendra told the police, that "...he (Shibu Soren) incited us to attack the village," states the chargesheet.

Warrant sends Soren to high court

OUR BUREAU

Ranchi/Jamtara, July 19: A criminal writ petition was filed before the high court today on behalf of Union coal minister Sibu Soren soon after a warrant to arrest and produce him before a court was handed over to the superintendent of police at Jamtara.

The petition prayed for quashing the warrant and passing orders for the withdrawal of the case against him and 69 other accused, 25 of whom are said to have died along with 20 witnesses since January 1975 when the Chirudih massacre case was first instituted.

Attempts by Soren's lawyers to mention the petition today for an early hearing failed when the chief justice of Jharkhand High Court, P.K.I. Balasubramanyan, turned down their request.

The petition will again be mentioned tomorrow, the lawyers indicated.

The state's advocate-general, A.K. Sinha, told reporters that merely by filing the petition, the minister has not obtained any immunity from being arrested. "The warrant is still alive and police can execute the warrant till such time when the high court stays it. Therefore, Soren can be arrested," he said.

Challenging the criminal proceedings initiated against him, Soren's petition said it was wrong to issue a warrant of arrest against him without issuing any prior summons or notice to him in the case.

After securing a regular bail, Soren pleaded, he had no information or knowledge whatsoever about how or when his bail was cancelled by the sub-divisional judicial magistrate's court at Jamtara.

The lower court had not deemed it fit to serve him a summons after apparently cancelling his regular bail in June, he said.

The petition also prayed for orders to the state government to withdraw the case as it

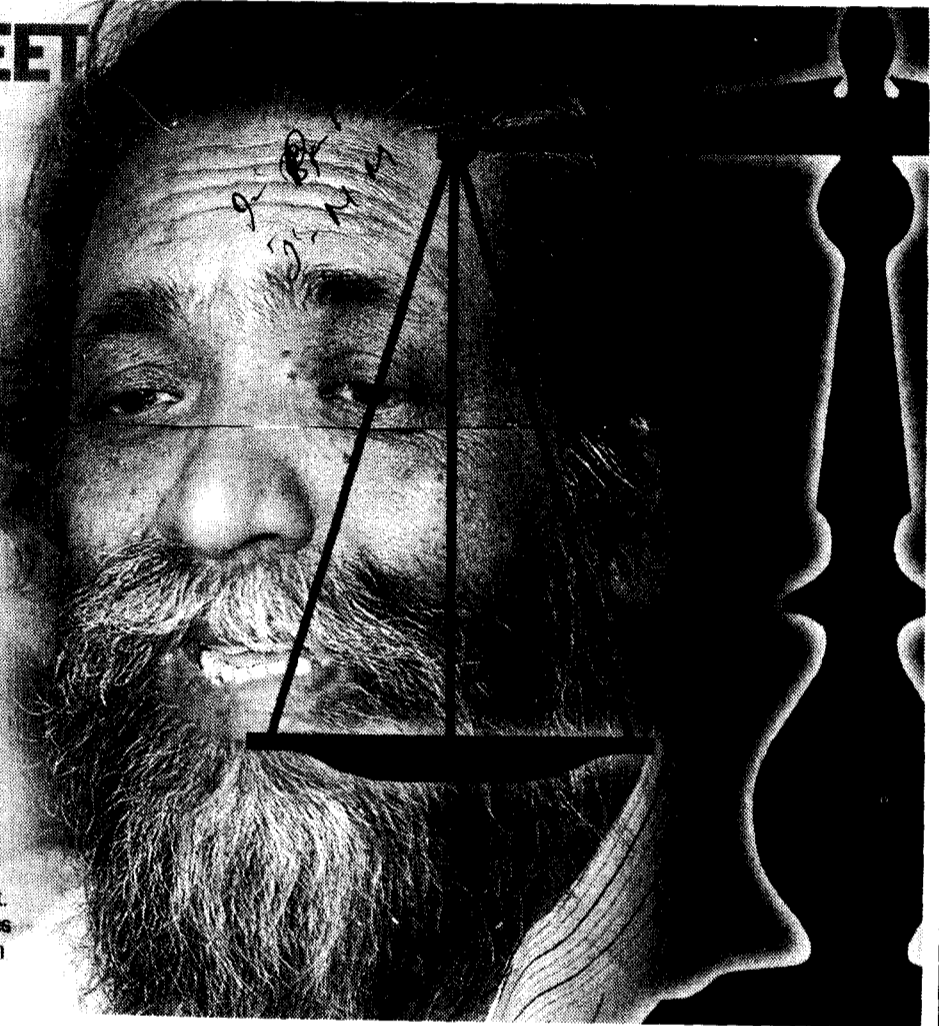
BALANCE SHEET

PROSECUTION'S CASE

- Soren did not appear before the court in 1986 along with 9 others despite being summoned
- Soren was named an accused in the FIR in 1975, indicted by a 'declaration' and named the prime accused in the chargesheet
- He was aware of the case because even in 2004 Soren had acknowledged that the case was pending in a declaration to the Election Commission
- He has, therefore, been an absconder for the last 18 years. Since 3 of the accused have been arrested recently, Soren cannot be treated differently
- Cases against Jharkhand activists, which did not involve loss of lives or property, have been withdrawn. But Chirudih, where 10 people died and many houses torched, is different

DEFENCE CASE

- The violence at Chirudih in 1975 was a mob violence and part of the political movement against moneylenders
- Soren was not personally involved in the violence
- Soren had attended the court for more than five years in the case
- Since 1986 he never received any summon from the court
- He was not aware that he was wanted by the court. Jharkhand government has withdrawn political cases instituted during the Jharkhand movement. Chirudih case is also one of them and should be withdrawn



was political in nature and related to the movement for a Jharkhand state.

Several such cases, the petition pointed out, had already been withdrawn by the state government.

Tension is building up in several parts of the state, where JMM workers hit the streets to protest against the alleged conspiracy to discredit Soren.

In both Ranchi and Jamshedpur, JMM workers, carrying swords and other traditional weapons, held demonstrations, complaining about their leader being "framed".

They raised slogans against the state government and the

BJP for falsely implicating Soren in the case.

R.S. Mazumdar, Soren's lawyer, refused to divulge information, pleading that "it is not proper to discuss the issue in the open since the matter is sub-judice now".

JMM leaders and workers thronged the court when Soren's lawyers filed the petition for quashing the case against him.

They were seen confabulating with lawyers and making enquiries about the fate of "Guruji".

Earlier in the day, the warrant for arrest of Soren and nine others accused along with him in the Chirudih massacre case of

1975 was formally sent to Jamtara superintendent of police Shashi Nath Jha for execution.

The warrant has been issued in continuation of the earlier orders of the sub-divisional judicial magistrate of Jamtara in 1986.

Sources at the district police headquarters confirmed that they had received the orders today from the court but refused to divulge their strategy.

The sources, however, said since Soren is a member of Parliament and a cabinet minister, permission would have to be sought from the Lok Sabha Speaker for arresting the tribal leader.

Necessary formalities in this

direction have already been initiated at the government level, the sources added.

Soren's counsel Sanjeev Kumar Mahata pleaded before the court for the certified copies of the case file along with the vakalatnama of a senior Supreme Court lawyer and Congress leader.

Chief minister Arjun Munda, asked to comment on the issue, said the law will take its own course.

"The state administration will seek the Lok Sabha Speaker's permission to arrest Soren if the court wished Soren to be presented before it," the chief min-

20 JUL 2004

Warrant against 'absconder' minister

Sandeep Sarkar in Ranchi

July 13. — Union coal and mines minister and JMM president Mr Sibu Soren, recently acquitted in the JMM bribery case, is in trouble again. This time in connection with a mass killing that took place nearly 30 years ago. The fourth additional district and sessions judge of the fast track court in Jamtara district, Mr UN Mishra, has issued an arrest warrant against him.

While confirming that the warrant has been issued against the minister, officers at Jamtara police station said Mr Soren had been an absconder for the past 18 years.

Police said that on 23 January

1975, 10 people belonging to a minority community were killed and 18 houses set on fire at Chirudih village as part of the "Diku (non-tribal) bhago" campaign.

Police said Mr Soren was the main accused in the case in which 69 people were chargesheeted on 26 December 1979. The accused were charged under sections 302 (murder), 148 (rioting, armed with deadly weapons), 149 (member of unlawful assembly, guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object), 434 (mischief by destroying or moving a landmark fixed by public authority) of the Indian Penal Code. The chargesheet was filed on the evidence of the then Jamtara deputy commissioner, Mr IC



The current status of the case: 25 of the 69 accused and more than 20 of the 40 witnesses have died. The witnesses who are alive are old and infirm

arrest warrant against 52 accused, including Mr Soren, and also sent a reminder to police in this connection. Police said 25 of the 69 accused and more than 20 of the 40 witnesses had died. The witnesses who are alive are now old and infirm.

The JMM has termed the development as a political stunt by the NDA and said that it would not affect the party's prospects.

Party spokesperson Mr Supriyo Bhattacharya said this was part of the NDA's campaign against "tainted ministers". He said the case was lodged at the height of the Jharkhand movement, during which cases ranging from dacoities to murders were registered.

Mr Bhattacharya said that all

these years the NDA was silent because Mr Soren had held important posts such as chairman of the Jharkhand Autonomous Area Committee. "The NDA chose to rake up this issue at a time when Mr Soren is a Union Cabinet minister. Why did they keep quiet all this time?" he asked.

The BJP, on the other hand, termed the development as a step towards removal of all "tainted ministers". Party spokesperson Mr Ravinath Kishore said Mr Soren was now left with no choice but to resign.

He said the case showed that the NDA's campaign against "tainted ministers" was headed in the right direction.

Mishra. The matter was raked up again after the arrest of three accused in the case — Chottu Soren, Hemlal Soren, and Mukhin Soren — on 8 July. All three were remanded in judicial custody.

The same day the judge issued the

had he taken bail.

EYE ON THE FARMER

Debt drives 95 to suicide in Kerala

Press Trust of India
Thiruvananthapuram, July 11

SPURT IN suicide of debt-burdened farmers has become a major cause of concern in Kerala with the UDF government coming under attack for its alleged failure to apprise the magnitude of the human tragedy.

Though the government is yet to come out with statewide figures, reports from across the state said about 95 cases of farmers' suicide have been reported since January.

In most instances, the victims were said to have driven to the extreme step by debt-trap they had fallen into over the years.

The Left parties had charged the A.K. Antony government with hiding facts from the Centre thereby coming in the way of the victims' families getting compensated.

The government's critics had pointed out that in a reply to Parliament recently Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar had revealed that the state government had not furnished details of the farmers' suicides.

The last two cases had come from the hilly Wayanad district in north Kerala where two farmers killed themselves at Mullankolli and Poothadi on Friday.

In both the cases, the family members of the victims had attributed the reason for suicide as inability to repay bank loans and the state's failure to deliver relief schemes.

Wayanad district administration sources said the figures appearing in the media were often inflated as any farmer committing suicide was

Another death in Andhra

UNABLE TO arrange money for his daughter's engineering college fees, a debt-burdened farmer committed suicide in Guntur district. A. Sadananda Rao (45), who cultivated cotton and chillies in his three acres of land, had incurred heavy debts due to cultivation expenses, the police said. PTI

attributed to have been driven to the extreme step by debt burden.

The administration sources put the number of cases triggered by debt or crop failure was 19 and in most other instances other causes had worked.

"We could only go by the FIR prepared by the police. In many cases investigations are on. There were also instances of suicide cases turning out to be murders when the investigation is completed," sources said.

The state was this year hit by a severe drought forcing the farmers to withhold repayment of loans allowing the interest to mount.

While the state government had declared moratorium on loans provided by state-run institutions and held up recovery procedures against defaulters, banks and other credit institutions are yet to come out with meaningful concession packages.

Farmers' forums in Wayanad had often alleged that the relief measures of the government were yet to reach the tillers.

Trinamool rebels moving towards Congress

By Malabika Bhattacharya

KOLKATA, JUNE 10. The Nationalist Trinamool Congress appears to have come unstuck following the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi's meeting with one of Trinamool's key rebels a few days ago in Delhi, sending signals to many rebels.

On June 1, Sudip Bandopadhyay, former Trinamool chief whip in Parliament, announced his return to the Congress after "a gap of several years."

He turned a rebel early this year and fought against the party candidate in Kolkata North-West on May 10 enabling the CPI (M) to win the seat. "She (Ms. Banerjee) has expelled me from the Trinamool. But I don't want to take political sanyas, so I have decided to return to the

not being able to highlight the reported starvation deaths in Amlasol village in Midnapore district.

He said he could not appreciate protests like banging heads over the fuel price hike. "I don't bang my head. I don't believe in such things."

Mr. Bandopadhyay, who has floated the Ganatantrik Unnayan Mancha, said the mancha should be treated as a sort of an umbrella to provide shelter to all dissatisfied Trinamool functionaries.

He and many like him would join the Congress shortly, he said. He had met Ms. Gandhi, the Union Ministers Pranab Mukherjee and P.R. Das Munshi and Mr. Mitra, former State party president, and discussed the issues with them.

Mr. Sarkar has come under severe attack from Ms. Banerjee's followers who described him as "opportunist and power-hungry."

Nine Trinamool MLAs, including Sonali Guha, Arunava Ghosh and Jyotipriya Mullick said in a statement that without Ms. Banerjee's efforts, Mr. Sarkar could not ever become MP.

"Now Sarkar has started criticising her [Ms. Banerjee]. He never loved the party. He came to Trinamool only to get benefits. Now that he has lost the election, Sarkar has begun to criticise her. He stands exposed."

Mr. Sarkar's move was not an isolated incident. The rebellion within the Trinamool came to the fore on June 28 when five Trinamool MLAs defied the party whip and abstained from voting in the Rajya Sabha election.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Congress," Mr. Bandopadhyay had said.

What also came as a blow was the movement of Bikram Sarkar, former Trinamool MP, in the direction of the Congress.

On June 1, Mr. Bandopadhyay, his wife Nayana, also suspended Trinamool MLA, and Mr. Sarkar shared the dais with one of West Bengal Congress heavyweight leaders, Somen Mitra.

They had all gathered at a function held in remembrance of B.C. Roy, one of the architects of post-independence Bengal.

Mr. Sarkar said that unless Ms. Banerjee changed her "autocratic" style of functioning, there was no future for the party.

He criticised Ms. Banerjee for

BJP breaks alliance with AIADMK

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 30 MAY

THE BJP today formally called off its pact with the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. "The alliance was forged for elections....The polls are over," BJP president M Venkaiah Naidu told reporters in Chennai. This was expected as Ms Jayalalitha last week indicated on a course correction by rolling back a series of poll-eve Cabinet decisions. In fact, it was these decision of the Jayalalitha regime — which included an ordinance to ban conversion — that brought the BJP

closer to the AIADMK. The BJP leadership, which went along with the assessment of Hindu Munnani leaders from the state as well as some leaders close to the RSS, created an atmosphere of mistrust in the NDA, leading to the DMK's exit from the alliance. It went to the extent of planning a clause in the Representation of People's Act for banning Vaiko, a Pota detenue at that juncture, from contesting election.

The debacle in Tamil Nadu has naturally strengthened those who had argued against an al-



liance with the AIADMK in the BJP. In fact, the leadership, which placed all its eggs in the Vajpayee basket, had spiked proposals for pacts with JMM, AGP and HVP. The loneliness in Tamil Nadu prompted the BJP president from making a categorical statement about the end of the alliance. "The alliance was formed for the elections.... The polls are over. You understand better," he told reporters here when asked if the tie-up would continue in the state.

"The question of alliance would be decided at the time of

elections. This is the stand of all political parties", Naidu said.

Asked if he had discussed the electoral performance with Ms Jayalalitha, he replied in the negative and said if required he would talk with her. However, Mr Naidu said there was no need for Ms Jayalalitha to step down as demanded by Opposition parties. "There is no rule that a party in the state should resign if it got a drubbing in the parliamentary elections. In that case, chief ministers of Kerala, Punjab, Uttaranchal and Maharashtra where the Congress performed miserably should go," he said.

The Economic Times

31 MAY 2004

Modi-fied Gujarat CM braces for storm

BJP High Command Asks Rebels To Hold Fire Until June 16, When House's Adjourned

THE TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: A day after dissidents put up an impressive show of strength at the birthday party of former Union minister A K Patel, chief minister Narendra Modi on Friday intensified his efforts to stem the brewing rebellion by throwing his doors open to MLAs. On the sidelines of the ongoing budget session of the state assembly, Modi met several MLAs who attended Thursday night's party on the outskirts of Gandhinagar.

State BJP president Rajendra Singh Rana, who himself was not present at the party, has reportedly apprised the central party leadership that 65 legislators and 10 MPs were present. He has faxed

the list of the party MLAs, MPs and other party leaders who attended the dinner.

BJP sources said the central leadership had reportedly conveyed through Rana that the dissidents should hold their fire till the end of the state assembly which is like to adjourn on June 13, instead of June 16 as scheduled earlier. It is believed that the leadership issue will be discussed in New Delhi with senior state leaders once the Lok Sabha commences from June 2.

MLAs coming out of meetings with Modi said they found a "changed Modi", someone who seemed keen to hear their grievances and solve them.

Modi met 20-odd MLAs, includ-

Gandhinagar: Leader of the opposition in the state assembly Amarsinh Chaudhary on Friday came out strongly against chief minister Narendra Modi and said he was glad that BJP members used words like Hitler to describe their leader at the birthday party hosted by former Union minister A K Patel on Thursday night.

He said the dramatic events that had taken place in and outside the House after Monday's BJP legislature party meet were indicative of the action to follow shortly. "Modi's removal is certain," he said. ^{TNN}

ing Gordhan Zadaphia, Maya Kodnani, Jitendra Patel, Mansukh Mandalia, Harjivan Upadhyay, Dhanraj Kella, Vajubhai Dobia, Pravin Mankadia, Tapu Limtam Bhojani and Mansukh Mandalia. The grievances aired ranged from a long-pending application to clear a school project to allotment of land at concessional rate for religious purposes. During the one-to-one meeting with MLAs, Modi did not discuss either the impending cabinet expansion or appointment of chairmen of boards and corporations. He did not even ask why they attended the birthday bash despite his reservations.

Later in the afternoon, Modi met ministers Ashok Bhatt, Narottam Patel, I K Jadeja, Amit Shah and Saurabh Patel, besides the state BJP treasurer Surendra Patel. It is believed he discussed the cabinet expansion and political appointments to the corporation as a measure to contain the dissidence.

The damage-control exercise was intensified even as the Keshubhai and Modi camps continued to make contrary claims over the number of MLAs who attended the birthday party. While the total strength of the BJP in the assembly is 127, close aides of Keshubhai said 68 attended the birthday party. The Modi camp countered the claim saying only 29 attended.

REGIME CHANGE

AIADMK Has Lost Its Mandate

By SAM RAJAPPA

The Constitution of India does not provide for the right of recall of elected legislators individually or collectively. If such a provision existed, the continuance of a Legislative Assembly might not be justified if the ruling party loses in the election to the Lok Sabha. When the Janata Party was voted to power in 1977, the Morarji Desai government dismissed the governments in 11 Congress-ruled states and dissolved the respective legislative assemblies as the party was totally routed in these states in the Lok Sabha election. The dismissal was challenged in the Supreme Court by the state of Rajasthan.

A seven-member Constitution Bench headed by the then Chief Justice Bhagwati ruled that dissolving the Assembly solely on the ground that the people had voted differently in the Lok Sabha election would be an indirect exercise of the right of recall of all members by the President without there being any such provision in the Constitution.

Total rout

However, the Bench noted, the situation before it for consideration was wholly different. This was not a case where just an ordinary defeat had been suffered by the ruling party in the state in the Lok Sabha election. There was a total rout of candidates belonging to the ruling party who were unable to secure a single seat. Never in the history of this country has such a clear unequivocal verdict been given by the people, never a more massive vote of no-confidence in the ruling party (AIR 1977/1361, para 147).

When there was such a crushing defeat suffered by the ruling party and the people had expressed themselves categorically against its policies, it clearly indicated complete alienation between government and people. It is axiomatic that no government can function efficiently and effectively in accordance with the Constitution in a democratic set-up unless it enjoys the goodwill and support of the people. Where there is a wall of estrangement which divides the government from the people and there is resentment and anti-

The author, a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai.

pathy in the hearts of the people against the government, it is not at all unlikely that it may lead to instability and administration may be paralysed, the Bench observed while upholding the dismissal of the state government.

The 10 May Lok Sabha election in Tamil Nadu has created a wall of estrangement between

compromised, Justice Bhagwati had ruled.

In the case of Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK rode to power in 2001 on the back of the Congress, Tamil Maanila Congress (which has since merged with the Congress), CPI, CPI-M, Muslim League and the Pattali Makkal Katchi, with the Marumalarchi



the state government and the people. Not only did the ruling AIADMK lose in 233 of the 234 Assembly segments in the 39 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state, the lone by-election to the Assembly from the Mangalore segment of Chidambaram Lok Sabha constituency held simultaneously also went in favour of the opposition DMK. Therefore, Jayalalitha cannot trot out the usual excuse that people vote differently in parliamentary and Assembly elections.

Consent

The Assembly has clearly ceased to reflect the will of the people. Merely because the ruling party in a state suffers defeat in the Lok Sabha election cannot by itself be a ground to say that the government of the state could not be carried out in accordance with the provisions of Article 356 of the Constitution. But the consent of the people is basic to democratic government. When that consent is withdrawn entirely and unequivocally so as to leave no room for doubt about the intensity of public feeling against the ruling party, the moral authority of the government would be seriously

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam lending a helping hand from outside. All these parties have either been sent out by Jayalalitha or left on their own the AIADMK alliance and have joined DMK-led Democratic Progressive Alliance which won all the 39 Lok Sabha seats in the state. It would be unrealistic to expect Jayalalitha to step down owning moral responsibility for the rout. But if allowed to continue, it would only be a lame duck government and people suffer unnecessarily.

Jayalalitha's decision to reverse the policies and programmes pursued by her government the last three years is a clear admission that they lacked the people's support. Announcing these measures in a press statement, she said: "My government has and will always be a people's government responding to their every need". If only she had heeded public opinion as and when she took these unpopular and anti-people measures, the AIADMK would not have been reduced to this sorry state. Claiming that she had always believed that truth should be faithfully reported and distortions should not creep in while

reporting, she ordered all the defamation cases numbering more than 100 filed by her government against the print and the electronic media should be withdrawn immediately. I have every confidence and hope that the media will respond positively to this gesture by ensuring unbiased reporting, upholding the best traditions of journalistic ethics, she said. That none of these cases could stand judicial scrutiny was glossed over. Jayalalitha also promised to move a resolution in the Tamil Nadu Assembly to drop all proceedings against *The Hindu* and other newspapers in connection with alleged breach of privileges that figured in November last year.

Weapon

The weapon Jayalalitha used to woo the BJP and drive out the DMK and its allies from the National Democratic Alliance was the enactment of the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Act. The BJP leaders hailed her as the new messiah and harbinger of Hindutva. Though she said the Act was enacted with the good intention of promoting harmony among all religions and that it was never intended to be used against the minorities, in practice it was used only against Christians and Muslims, both followers of religions that encourage proselytisation. The legislation earned her the wrath of all communities, including Hindus.

After the election debacle, she has ordered its immediate repeal. Much against Atal Behari Vajpayee's better judgment, Lal Kishan Advani and Venkaiah Naidu prevailed in the NDA to jettison the DMK and its allies and take the AIADMK on board. Vajpayee, who described the 13 months in 1998-99 when he had to co-exist with the AIADMK in his government as the worst period in his entire political career, reluctantly went along. If only the status quo was maintained, the DMK front would have contributed 40, including the Pondicherry seat, and the NDA would have emerged with 225 members in the new Lok Sabha instead of 185 and the Congress and allies would have been relegated to the number two position with 177 instead of 217 members and Vajpayee would have got another term to complete his unfinished tasks.

DMK gets Shipping, Revenue

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 25. The portfolio-centric crisis in the Manmohan Singh Government was sorted out today with the Congress agreeing to honour the commitments made to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Accordingly, T.R. Baalu gets charge of the Shipping Ministry while S.S. Palanimanickam will be the Minister of State (Revenue) in the Finance Ministry.

After a meeting with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the DMK leader and Union Minister, Davanidhi Maran, said that "all issues have been resolved. We are very much part of the Government." The DMK Ministers are expected to take charge of their Ministries tomorrow.

The breakthrough was made possible primarily by the Telangana Rashtra Samiti leader, K. Chandra Shekhar Rao, opting out of the Shipping Ministry. It was the DMK's contention that the shipping portfolio had been promised to it as per an agreement, whereas in the allocation of portfolios, the Ministry got earmarked for Mr. Rao.

Late last night, Mr. Rao met the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and offered to step down. This morning, he met the

Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and made the same offer, which was not refused. Dr. Singh complimented Mr. Rao and described him a "yogi" in politics. Mr. Rao will remain a Minister without portfolio.

To both Ms. Gandhi and the Prime Minister, Mr. Rao said that he did not want the Government to be rocked on the question of this or that Ministry allocated to us." He also thanked Ms. Gandhi for showing consideration to the DMK's least of his priorities and that he

A Rashtrapati Bhavan press communiqué later announced the allotment of the Shipping portfolio to Mr. Baalu (in addition to Road Transport and Highways).

Similarly, Mr. Palanimanickam becomes Minister of State (Revenue) in the Finance Ministry.

The Prime Minister also sorted out another anomaly. The Rashtriya Janata Dal nominee, Taslimuddin, who had been named Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise, has been made Minister of State for Agriculture, Food & Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution.

The change became necessary after Santosh Mohan Dev, who has been named Minister of State (independent charge) for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, objected to the presence of another Minister of State in the same Ministry.

Mr. Taslimuddin was advised this morning by the Cabinet Secretariat not to go to the Industry Ministry office till the anomaly was sorted out.

According to the *hashim* of Bhavan communiqué, E.V.K.S. Elangovan, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, now be the Minister of Commerce and Industries.

Ministers to take charge today

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, MAY 25. The seven DMK Ministers at the Centre will take charge on Wednesday following the resolution of the controversy over the allocation of portfolios.

The DMK was today given charge of Shipping and Revenue departments. However, another department that the party wanted, Personnel (under the Home Ministry), was not given. The DMK president, M. Karunanidhi, made light of this: "We can look at it personally later," he said.

Mr. Karunanidhi expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the talks with the Congress leadership. "This [the controversy] will not affect the image of the DMK," he added.

The United Progressive Alliance has now decided to set up a grievance redress mechanism. A "steering committee" would be set up in the "next two days", he said. "All constituents of the UPA will be represented in this." Asked if he would head the committee, Mr. Karunanidhi said he did not have the time to be the head of such a committee.

Ally's 'coterie' slur on Sonia & Singh

DMK THREAT TO SIT OUT OVER BERTHS

HT Correspondents

Chennai/New Delhi, May 24

COTERIE. IT was a word that had haunted the Rajiv Gandhi government. Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi saw it hurled at them today — on the second day of their government's tenure — by an ally that refused to join the government after getting seven ministers sworn in.

DMK chief M. Karunanidhi blamed a "coterie" around Sonia and the new Prime Minister for the Congress's alleged failure to honour an understanding on portfolios, and said his party would stay out of the government until this was "rectified".

A worried Manmohan called up the DMK chief and promised that the "mistakes" would be corrected in 10 days. Karunanidhi said he would be happy if the problem was solved before that. "It is better for both the leaders (Sonia and Manmohan) to identify the coterie and move away from it," he said. Asked if he could identify the "coterie", he said it could be a "*Chidambara rakasiyam* (secret) or *Mayiladuthurai*" — obvious references to Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar.

Karunanidhi's grouse centres on three portfolios that have been denied to his party: Shipping for T.R. Baalu (along with surface transport and highways), revenue department under the finance ministry for Palanimanikkam (MoS) and the personnel department under the home ministry for M. Raghupathy (MoS).

Karunanidhi displayed a letter signed by him and Congress leader



M. Karunanidhi

Janardhan Reddy which specified the ministries and departments to be allotted to the DMK's ministers of state. "This was finalised after I spent eight days in Delhi; but the moment I left, somebody seems to have played mischief," Karunanidhi told reporters. But could he withdraw support on the issue? He said: "We're not that narrow-minded, especially when the DMK has contributed 90 per cent to the front's sweep in Tamil Nadu."

To another question, he replied that the DMK's initial decision to stay out of the government appears in hindsight to have been a wise one. "But we were persuaded by Sonia, Surjeet, V.P. Singh and A.B. Bardhan."

Manmohan's telephone call to Karunanidhi came amid hectic parleys between senior Congress leaders and DMK minister Dayanidhi Maran to find a way out of the crisis. Maran and Union Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath, who is also AICC general secretary in charge of Tamil Nadu, held talks with Sonia and the Prime Minister.

Accord on portfolios not honoured: Karunanidhi

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, MAY 24. While promising continued support to the United Progressive Alliance Government, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president, M. Karunanidhi, said today that the party's seven Ministers would assume office on the basis of the decision of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on reallocation of portfolios.

Mr. Karunanidhi said he was hopeful that a solution would emerge soon and asserted that this would not ruin the relations between the alliance partners. "Let us have only positive thoughts," he added.

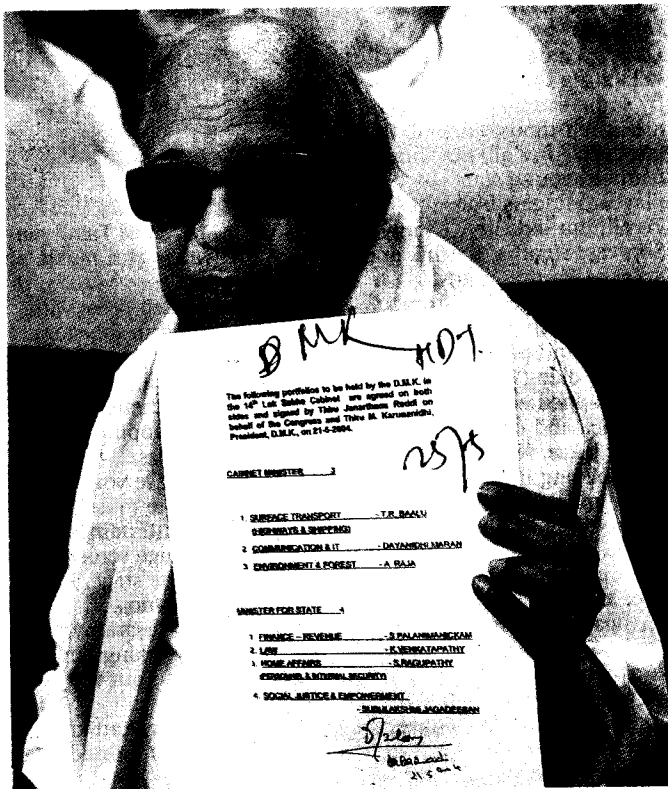
The Prime Minister had spoken to him in the morning and had asked for 10 days' time to find a solution. He had not suggested any alternative. But the DMK was open to a dialogue, Mr. Karunanidhi said.

Though the DMK leader absolved the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, of any role in the fiasco saying that she was the leader of the major alliance party, he held "a coterie" close to Ms. Gandhi and Dr. Singh responsible for the change of portfolios. "People like that being around Sonia and Manmohan is not correct." He, however, refused to name them and said that he was not sure who exactly was responsible.

To a question, Mr. Karunanidhi said he agreed that the crisis did not augur well for an alliance embarking on the mammoth task of ruling the country. Likening the problems to birth pangs, he said that in a way it was good that such problems were being raised since these could be attended to straightaway. But the DMK was not in any way threatening the Government since it "did not have a tradition of holding out threats."

At a crowded press conference today, Mr. Karunanidhi showed a copy of the agreement that he had signed with Congress leader Janardhana Reddy. According to the agreement, the Ministry of Surface Transport, including the Departments of Shipping and Highways, was to have been allocated to T.R. Baalu. Also, S.S. Palanimanickam was to take charge as the Minister of State for Finance (with the charge of the Revenue Department). S. Regupathy was to get charge of the Personnel Department and Internal Security as the Union Minister of State for Home.

The charge of Shipping, Fi-



DISCORD AMONG ALLIES: DMK president M. Karunanidhi displays at a press conference in Chennai on Monday the portfolio allocation agreement he signed with the Congress leader, N. Janardhana Reddy. — Photo: K. Pichumani

(See also Page 11)

nance and Personnel Departments were not given to the DMK despite the agreement, Mr. Karunanidhi said and added that he was pained over the development. The party had not been informed of the changes in portfolios beforehand, he said.

The DMK has called for a meeting of its 20-member high-level committee to discuss the issues. Reiterating that the stability of the Government was not at stake, Mr. Karunanidhi said that it was the DMK that

took the initiative to put together the alliance here. During the campaign, the DMK and its cadre had put in 90 per cent of the total effort of the alliance. He was personally against the DMK being part of the UPA Ministry. Only because of the insistence of Ms. Gandhi, the CPI (M) general secretary, Harkishen Singh Surjeet, and the CPI leader, A.B. Bardhan, did his party agree to join the Government, he said.

Editorial on Page 10

Congress hopeful of solution

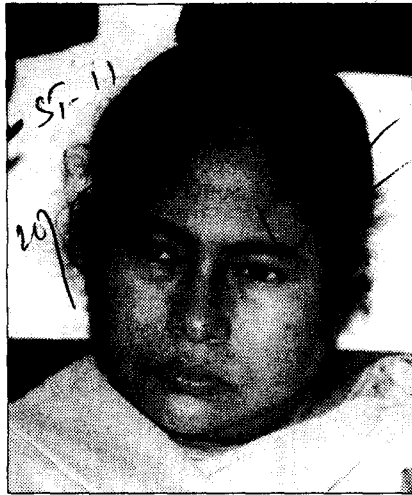
By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 24. The Congress hopes that the DMK-centric "problem" will be "sorted out." Its leaders say they do not intend to "ditch" a valued partner. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, had a meeting with the Minister for Communication and Information Technology, Dayanidhi Maran.

In the evening, Mr. Maran met the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and explained to her the "injustice" done to the DMK in the allocation of portfolios. He told *The Hindu*: "I told her that the agreement is not being honoured in allotting the portfolios. She was very much disturbed over the developments. She was displeased with the party and has promised to resolve the issue." He also told her that "we did not want to join the Ministry in the first place. We were forced to take part in the government because of your insistence. While so, we feel insulted when the agreement was not honoured."

TIE-UP WITH BJP COST DEARLY, FEEL SOME

Trinamul to remain in NDA, not to lament defeat, says Mamata



SNS & PTI

KOLKATA, May 19. — Despite an appeal by the Congress to discard the BJP and the feeling of a section of its leaders that the saffron party had become a liability, the Trinamul Congress supremo Ms Mamata Banerjee today said that her party would remain in the NDA despite the huge reversal in the Lok Sabha polls.

"Ms Mamata Banerjee told the party meeting here being attended by defeated Lok Sabha candidates, some NTC MLAs and councillors that the party will remain in the NDA," Mr Ranjit Panja, a member of the previous Lok Sabha from Barasat who was defeated this time said.

Those present at the meeting included Mr Ajit Panja, who was trounced from Calcutta North East and Mr Subrata Mukherjee, city Mayor who lost the election from

Calcutta North West seat.

A section of leaders including senior party legislator Mr Saugata Roy, who had lost the poll from Diamond Harbour constituency, felt that the party's association with the BJP was a liability in the state.

The Trinamul Congress also began a brain-storming session to analyse the causes for the party's debacle in the Lok Sabha poll.

The meeting was attended by party candidates for the just-concluded polls, MLAs and councillors.

The Trinamul decided not to waste time in lamenting over its defeat, fix responsibilities and draw a plan for checking erosion in the party support base, especially in view of the Pradesh Congress' threat to try and win over the demoralised and disenchanted Trinamul rank and file.

PCC strongman, Mr Somen Mitra, soon after the results had appealed to Trinamul activists to desert the party and return to the Congress fold "to fight the CPI-M in the state."

The Trinamul's candidates, remained tight-lipped about the causes of their rout with the only exception of Mr Panja, who was forthcoming enough to name three party MLAs in his Barasat constituency for "letting him down".

Mr Sultan Ahmed, another candidate who suffered defeat in the Katwa constituency, said it had been wrong for the party to quit the NDA-government when it was "performing well". The candidates also reportedly blamed the pogrom in Gujarat for the alienation of Muslim voters.

Voters uproot Trinamool

Ritwik Mukherjee, Ajoy K Das
& Writankar Mukherjee

KOLKATA 13 MAY

THE 2004 will be remembered as Mamata Banerjee's comeuppance! And as a fallout, the decimation of her Trinamool Congress, in just seven years. Far from storming the red bastion as Mamata has been dreaming all these years, her flip-flop politics have left her the sole winner, with all the rest sitting MPs of her party biting the dust.

Mamata became part of NDA and went on to become the railway minister. She quit the government in wake of the Tehelka scandal, demanding removal of defence minister George Fernandes who was one of her mentors in Delhi. She allied with the Congress and fought the Assembly election in West Bengal. Went back to NDA after not even making a dent in the red bastion. Waited for a berth in the Cabinet which she finally got, less than a month before elections were announced.

Her supporters call her emotional, her critics temperamental and lacking any political wisdom. Whatever it be, Mamata's wild swings across the political spectrum without any moorings left even her traditional vote bank sufficiently confused. If not totally disillusioned. They all voted against her with a vengeance.

Little else can explain the drubbing of her party even in supposed strongholds in the city. Trinamool's marginalisation in state politics is complete. Its sitting MPs — Krishna Bose (Jadavpur), Akbar Ali Khondakar (Serampore), Nitish Sengupta (Contai), Bikram Sarkar (although he changed seats from Panskura to Howrah), Ranjit Panja (Barasat), Ajit Panja (Kolkata North East) — all suf-

fered electoral reverses. And most by huge margins, all in hands of CPM.

The rebel Trinamool leader and sitting MP from Kolkata North West, Mr Sudip Bandyopadhyay, who this time contested as a Congress-backed Independent candidate, did get a pyrrhic victory for being denied ticket from his traditional constituency. Bandopadhyay ensured that he polled sufficient votes to let CPM candidate Sudhangsu Seal emerge the winner at the cost of Trinamool candidate and city mayor Subrata Mukherjee.

That's not all. The party's downslide rubbed off on its ally — the BJP, with both its candidates in the state and former ministers (Tapan Sikdar and Satya Brata Mookherjee) biting the dust. The saffron brigade has been wiped off completely in the red bastion.

Then there's little solace for Trinamool Congress from its party chief's victory either.

Mamata Banerjee's margin in Election 2004 slumped to 98,729 votes against Congress' Nafisa Ali and Rabin Deb of CPM. In her previous outing her margin of victory had been over 2 lakh.

West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said: "It was a shame in the first place that BJP had got a presence in this state. That shame has been cleansed by the people here."

Left Front chairman Biman Bose said: "It has been seen that since the last municipality and panchayat elections in the state that people on a micro-level are shifting from Trinamool to Congress. Trinamool is a party without any proper ideology, policy or manifesto. Such a party cannot survive for long and the party will now vaporise."

► Perception factor: P 4

The Economic Times

14 MAY 2004

BENGAL ^{SIN} MASSACRE ¹⁹⁷⁵ FOR MAMATA

KOLKATA, May 13. — Miss Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress was completely routed in the elections in West Bengal's 42 Lok Sabha constituencies, the results of which were declared today. And no wonder, that made Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee "feel good".

Trinamul's sole representative in Parliament will be Miss Banerjee herself — minus the glory and with the victory margin reduced to less than a lakh of votes from her Kolkata South constituency. In 1999, she won by over two lakh votes; this time, the CPI-M's Mr Rabin Deb ate into her winning margin in a big way.

Worse for the party, its ally — the BJP — has been completely wiped out from the state's political map as far as representation in the Lok Sabha is concerned. The BJP lost both seats — Dum Dum and Krishnagar — to CPI-M candidates.

The Left Front, on the other hand, registered its best ever performance since 1977 as far as its Lok Sabha tally from West Bengal is concerned. With an increased tally of 35 seats — up six from last time's 29 — Bengal's Marxists seized the opportunity to re-establish



their presence in Kolkata by winning both Kolkata North-West and Kolkata North-East seats — considered Opposition strongholds thus far. The Left Front also wrested Jadavpur and Dum Dum from the Trinamul Congress and the BJP, respectively.

The Congress, however, doubled its tally to six in comparison to its performance in 1999.

Those who won their seats included Mr Pranab Mukherjee from Jangipur (his first ever Lok Sabha election win) and Mr Abdul Mannan Hossain from Murshidabad who emerged as a surprise winner. The major winners from the Left camp included Mohammed Selim and Mr Sudhangshu Sil from Kolkata constituencies, Mr Sujan Chakraborty from Jadavpur and Mr Amitava Nandy from Dum Dum. Miss Mamata Banerjee attributed the Trinamul Congress' rout to the "demolition" of democracy by the Marxists. Miss Banerjee said it was not only the "anti-incumbency" factor that took its toll on the NDA. "In Bengal, it's different." The CPI-M, she said, butchered democracy by manipulating voters' lists, intimidating Opposition activists and deploying its cadre to rig the the polls. — SNS

See Verdict 2004 Special: Kolkata Plus

Karunanidhi rules out joining Cong govt

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Chennai, May 12: As the count-down to the formation of the 14th Lok Sabha begins, M. Karunanidhi has said the DMK will not join a Congress-led government in case the results throw up a hung Parliament while allies MDMK and PMK have ruled out returning to the National Democratic Alliance.

However, the DMK chief said staying out of government was his "personal view". "I will put it across to my party executive and general council members and, if they have a better idea, I am open to it," he said, indicating he has not closed his options.

Asked if the NDA had got in touch with him, he said: "They know whom to send feelers to." The DMK has earlier ruled out returning to the Vajpayee-led alliance.

The DMK-led Democratic Progressive Alliance met today to discuss the missing names on the voters' list and what they described as the "attempt to kill" MDMK candidate S. Ravichandran at Sivakasi by Tamil Nadu sports minister Inbatazhan on polling day.

Karunanidhi told a news conference that other issues could be discussed "only after May 13 (when the results will be out)".

PMK leader S. Ramadoss, MDMK leader Vaiko, CPM state secretary N. Varadarajan, CPI state secretary R. Nallakannu, state Congress president G.K. Vasan and IUML chief Khader Mohideen also attended the meeting, which called for



Karunanidhi at the meeting on Wednesday. (AFP)

a statewide protest on May 17 on the two issues and demanded the "immediate arrest" of the sports minister.

Emerging from the meeting, Ramadoss was furious about media speculation that NDA convener George Fernandes was rushing to Tamil Nadu to woo him back. "Is Fernandes a socialist?" Ramadoss asked angrily. "Go ask him to wear saffron robes." The Vanniyar leader said there was no possibility of the PMK rejoining the NDA, and added that he had made his position known two months ago. The BJP had failed miserably on issues crucial to Tamil

Nadu, Ramadoss said.

Vaiko also dismissed speculation about the NDA sending him feelers. "Some friends of mine in Delhi only rang me up after the Sivakasi shootout incident as they were concerned about my safety," he said, adding that no NDA leader had spoken to him.

The MDMK chief, who had good words for his friends in the NDA, including Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was categorical about not returning to the alliance. "The MDMK is part of the DMK-led Democratic Progressive Alliance and with all sincerity we have worked for the victory of the alliance. There is no possibility of switching sides now and the DPA is intact in Tamil Nadu."

But he clarified that the MDMK will also not join any Congress-led coalition at the Centre. The party's general council had adopted a resolution recently that it would not join the government at the Centre, he pointed out. The MDMK is still a "fledgling party" and did not want to lose its identity in Tamil Nadu, he explained. The MDMK would extend outside support if a Congress-led coalition comes to power, he added.

Karunanidhi said yesterday's talks between Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Sonia Gandhi were held on the basis of discussions the CPM general secretary had with him at Madurai on May 1, but parried all other questions on government formation. The only thing he seemed certain about was there would be no third front at the Centre again.

DMK front sweeps polls

APD-1
18/5

By V. Jayanth

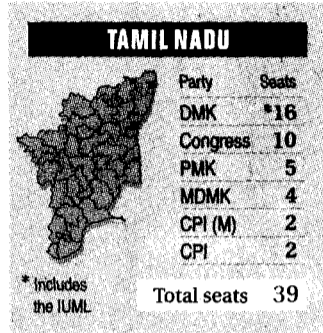
CHENNAI, MAY 13. The seven-party Democratic Progressive Alliance (DPA) swept the polls in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, winning all 40 Lok Sabha seats at stake.

In what the Opposition leaders called "a lesson" to the "autocratic, anti-people AIADMK regime", the electorate voted overwhelmingly in favour of the DPA, with some of the frontline leaders winning by a thumping margin of over two lakhs.

The verdict, described in cricketing parlance as a "white-wash", drew immediate demands for the resignation of the Jayalithaa Government, which the Opposition leaders claimed, lost its mandate to govern.

On an average, most of the DPA candidates won by over one lakh votes, the margins falling slightly in the Vanniyar belt of north Tamil Nadu, which meant the Rajnikant factor had little impact on the outcome, and the prestigious Periyakulam constituency, where the AIADMK's T.T.V. Dinakaran lost by just over 20,000 votes. Ms. Jayalithaa's Andipatti Assembly constituency falls under Periyakulam.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) president and DPA patriarch, M. Karunanidhi, who was very confident of this victory from the very beginning,



Graphic by Varghese Kallada

expressed "complete satisfaction" with the massive mandate for his alliance and against the AIADMK. He has called a meeting of the DPA leaders for Saturday morning and a DMK executive meeting for the evening.

From the initial stage of counting, it became obvious that an anti-incumbency wave was sweeping the State and the DPA candidates notched up early leads.

Except in Periyakulam, where it was low, they surged ahead to romp home.

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president, G.K. Vasan, thanking the people for the "overwhelming mandate", expressed the hope and confidence that he could persuade the DMK leadership to join a Congress-led secular government at the Centre.

While the first opinion poll for the State projected five seats for the AIADMK-BJP combine, the exit poll by NDTV raised the number to eight. But in the end, the vote surpassed all expectations to wipe out the ruling combine. The AIADMK had 11 members and the BJP four in the dissolved Lok Sabha. Prominent among the BJP's losers are the Union Minister, Pon Radhakrishnan (from Nagercoil), and the State president, C.P. Radhakrishnan (from Coimbatore).

Prominent among the critics of the AIADMK and its leadership is the Union Minister and BJP leader, Su. Thirunavukkarasar, who blamed the defeat on not just "anti-incumbency" but the "autocratic behaviour of the Chief Minister." He contrasted the cohesive Opposition alliance and the AIADMK-BJP combine, in which there was complete lack of coordination.

Late in the evening, the AIADMK general secretary, Jayalithaa, in a statement bowed to the people's verdict, even while underlining the fact that it was a parliamentary election.

The Tamil Nadu wave swept through Pondicherry too, taking the Pattali Makkal Katchi to its maiden victory in the Union Territory. Its candidate won by a margin of over 60,000 votes.

MDMK MANIFESTO RELEASED

'India must help in Sri Lanka peace'

By K.V. Prasad

COIMBATORE, MARCH 26. It is time India played a role in bringing about a lasting peace in the ethnic strife-torn Sri Lanka, says the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK).

The party's manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections, released here today by the general secretary, Vaiko, said the Centre should take note of the "vested interests" of various other nations, including superpowers, in brokering a peace in the island nation and their consequences. It should give up the "faulty" approach adopted so far and

contribute to the success of the peace talks.

While favouring a negotiated settlement, the party said a political atmosphere should prevail, conducive to hammering out a solution acceptable to Tamils and also help in retaining their ethnic identity. The manifesto accused the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumartunga, of stalling negotiations between the two warring sides.

Federation for brotherhood

To foster brotherhood among southern States in India, the MDMK mooted a federation.

Tamils lived in other States as much as diverse linguistic groups were in Tamil Nadu. Hence, to create a strong bondage, the Federation of Southern States could initially be formed with eminent thinkers as members.

The manifesto laid stress on decentralisation of powers to States and called for amendments to Acts to ensure that residuary powers were conferred on them. Besides, the Centre should allocate 50 per cent of its revenue to the States.

All languages in the Eighth Schedule should be made official languages, including Tamil,

which is the root of all Dravidian languages.

On competitive examinations of the Staff Selection Commission, the MDMK wanted the Government to allow candidates to write answers in the language of their States. This could be in addition to English or Hindi as the medium.

The MDMK would work for abrogation of Article 356 (which provides for dismissal of governments), ensure social justice and secularism, a permanent solution to the Cauvery crisis and implementation of the Sethu Samudram project. Given the widespread drought conditions, it was imperative to nationalise and link rivers.

Addressing partymen after releasing the manifesto, Mr. Vaiko said the Democratic Progressive Alliance would win "hands down" and the victory would be a "mortal blow" to the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-Bharatiya Janata Party combine.

'Not against Hindus'

He said the MDMK was not an enemy of Hindus. Allying that the Chief Minister, Jayalithaa, and Hindutva forces were trying to portray it as anti-Hindu, Mr. Vaiko said his party was not against any community. "Actually, there is need to prevent youth among both Hindus and Muslims from being misled by certain forces."

'A weapon for poll battle'

The presidium chairman, L. Ganesar, said the manifesto touched on issues which no other party dared to take up. "This is not a manifesto made out of mere paper. It is a weapon to fight the electoral battle."

The former Union Ministers, Gingee Ramachandran and M. Kannappan, were present.



The MDMK general secretary, Vaiko (second from right), releasing the party's election manifesto in Coimbatore on Friday. The general secretary of the Marumalarchi Labour Front, S. Duraisamy, receives the first copy. Looking on (from left) are the former Union Ministers, Gingee Ramachandran and M. Kannappan, and the party candidate for the Tiruchi Lok Sabha seat and MDMK presidium chairman, L. Ganesan. — Photo: K. Ananthan

Cong adopts Sudip

STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, March 25: Putting an end to speculation, Trinamul Congress rebel Sudip Bandopadhyay today announced he would contest from Calcutta Northwest as an Independent with support from the Congress.

State Congress president Pranab Mukherjee — addressing a news conference with Bandopadhyay by his side — said the party would support him only if he severed all ties with the National Democratic Alliance. This is a subtle shift from its earlier demand that the Trinamul rebel speak out against his former allies.

Bandopadhyay, known for his proximity to deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, said he would no longer maintain any relation



Mukherjee with the Trinamul rebel. Picture by Pradip Sanyal

with the NDA even if he won the elections.

"I will contest as a Congress-backed Independent as I was denied a ticket in Calcutta Northwest, my old constituency, by Trinamul. My party did not respond to my appeals and fielded

me from Raigunj in north Bengal," he said.

Bandopadhyay, the sitting MP from Calcutta Northwest, incurred Trinamul chief Mamata Banerjee's wrath by trying to land a Union ministry berth with BJP backing in July last year. Mamata settled scores by fielding mayor Subrata Mukherjee from Calcutta Northwest.

Teacher test cleared

The Election Commission has given the go-ahead for continuing with procedures related to the School Services Commission examination in the state. Earlier, the poll panel had asked the examinations to be put on hold after it was alleged that publishing related advertisements flouted the model code of conduct.

Now, Sudip at Cong door

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, March 8

AFTER WEEKS of speculation and intense parleys, rebel Trinamool leader Sudip Bandopadhyay said on Monday that he is seeking Congress support to fight the Kolkata North-West seat as an Independent candidate.



"It's impossible — especially if it's a Lok Sabha election — to fight without some party's support. I am appealing to various parties for support; but the Congress tops my list," Bandopadhyay told *Hindustan Times*.

State Congress working president Pradeep Bhattacharjee said talks with Bandopadhyay on supporting him against Subrata Mukherjee, the Trinamool's official candidate, and any Left nominee were in an "advanced stage."

Sources said Bandopadhyay had a one-on-one with Sonia Gandhi about two weeks ago after which the Congress decided to postpone nominating any candidate for the seat. The party had earlier thought about fielding Debi Pal.

Bandopadhyay said he would approach the Congress with a formal request for support in a day or two. "I am not joining the Congress or any other party. All I will do is seek support as an Independent candidate," he said.

The rebel Trinamool MP said he would meet the chief electoral officer on Tuesday to discuss any symbol he might get.

সিদ্ধান্ত পুনর্বিবেচনার আবেদন

প্রথম পাতার পর

সুদীপকে অন্য দু'টি কেন্দ্রে লড়ার প্রস্তাব দেন। এর মধ্যে একটি ছিল, অবিশ্বাস্য হলেও, দক্ষিণ কলকাতা। সম্প্রতি দিল্লিতে একান্ত বৈঠকে মমতা সুদীপকে তাঁর সঙ্গে কেন্দ্র পাল্টাপাল্টা করে নিতে বলেন। সুদীপ তাতে রাজি হননি। তিনি ভাবেন, নেত্রী তাঁর সঙ্গে রসিকতা করছেন। তাঁকে বলেনও সে কথা। সেই প্রসঙ্গের সেখানেই ইতি। তারপরেও সুদীপকে হাওড়া থেকে দাঁড়ানোর প্রস্তাব দেওয়া হয়। কিন্তু সুদীপ স্পষ্টই জানান, তিনি তৃণমূলের টিকিটেই তাঁর পুরোন কেন্দ্র থেকে লড়তে আগ্রহী। এই কেন্দ্রের জন্য তিনি গত পাঁচবছরে প্রচুর কাজ করছেন। শেষপর্যন্ত মমতা সুদীপের জন্য রায়গঞ্জ টিক করে ফেলেন।

রায়গঞ্জে সুদীপকে টিকিট দেওয়ার পিছনে তিনটি কারণ দেখেছেন মমতা। এক, উত্তর-পশ্চিম খালি করা। দুই, প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুঙ্গির সঙ্গে সুদীপ রফা করে কংগ্রেসে ফেরার চেষ্টা করছেন, এমন একটা সন্দেহ মমতার ছিল। এতদ্বারা সেই রাস্তা বন্ধ করা এবং তিন, 'শত্রুকে বাঘ মারতে পাঠানো। হয় শত্রু মরবে, নয় বাঘ।' রায়গঞ্জে লড়াই হলে প্রিয়-সুদীপের একজন হারবেন। যাই হোক, মমতার লাভ। তবে সুদীপ যে রায়গঞ্জে যাবেন না, সেটিও মমতা বিলক্ষণ জানতেন।

অবস্থা যা দাঁড়িয়েছে, তাতে সুদীপকে এখন হয় নির্দল হয়ে কংগ্রেসের সমর্থনে লড়তে হবে অথবা সরাসরি কংগ্রেসে যেতে হবে। সুদীপ-শিবিরের মতে, নির্দল হয়েই তাঁর লড়া উচিত। ওই

শিবিরের এক নেতার কথায়, "ত্রিমুখী বা চতুর্মুখী লড়াইয়ে উত্তর-পশ্চিমে ভোটের দিন ওয়ান ডে ম্যাচ হবে। সেদিন যারা ভাল খেলবে, তারাই জিতবে।"

শুক্রবার রাতের বৈঠকে সুদীপ-সুত্রত সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত ছাড়াও পাঁশকুড়ার সাংসদ বিক্রম সরকারকে হাওড়া থেকে টিকিট দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়। এ ছাড়া, বাকি সাংসদদের কেন্দ্র অপরিবর্তিতই রয়েছে। মমতা শনিবার বলেন, "বিক্রম'দা দলের অনুরোধে হাওড়া ছেড়ে পাঁশকুড়ায় গিয়েছিলেন। এবার তাই ওঁর অনুরোধ মেনে হাওড়াই দেওয়া হল। পাঁশকুড়টা সি পি এম কজা করে রেখেছে। তাই ওই কেন্দ্র নিয়ে আমাদের অন্য পরিকল্পনা আছে।"

তৃণমূল সুত্রের খবর, ওই কেন্দ্রের প্রাক্তন আই পি এস মানস চক্রবর্তীকে টিকিট দেওয়ার কথা ভাবছেন মমতা। লোকসভা ভোটে তিনি টিকিট দিতে চান বিধায়ক সৌগত রায়কেও। তাঁর জন্য আসানসোল ভেবেছেন নেত্রী। সৌগতের মতো হেভিওয়েট প্রার্থী হলে ওই আসনের দুই দাবিদার মলয় ঘটক বা কল্যাণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়—কাউকেই মমতার হতাশ করতে হয় না। দলীয় সুত্রের আরও খবর, কাটোয়ায় টিকিট দেওয়া হতে পারে সুলতান আহমেদকে। বসিরহাট পেতে পারেন সাধন পাণ্ডে। তবে দক্ষিণের ডায়মন্ডহারবারে মমতার চমক হতে চলেছেন শোভনদেব চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের স্ত্রী সুপ্রিয়া চট্টোপাধ্যায়। সবকিছু ঠিকঠাক চললে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী থাকাকালীন সিদ্ধার্থশঙ্কর রায়ের এই আণ্ডে সহায়ককেই মমতা ওই কেন্দ্রে লড়তে বলবেন।

AMAR...

16 FEB 2004

Independent Sudip to fight 'whimsical' bosses

BARUN GHOSH

Calcutta, Feb. 15: A defiant Trinamul Congress MP Sudip Bandopadhyay today said he would not shift from Calcutta Northwest to Raiganj to "oblige some people" and instead contest from the city seat as an Independent.

"Enough is enough. I don't find any justification for my shift to Raiganj, a place with which I am not even remotely connected. This is unjust and vindictive," Bandopadhyay said. His barbs were directed at party chief Mamata Banerjee and a section of the party opposed to his candidature.

Bandopadhyay said he would contest as an Independent "to lodge my protest against such (his party leadership's) autocratic style of functioning". He added: "I have decided to seek re-election from Calcutta Northwest as an Independent risking the displeasure of the party bosses. There should be a limit to whimsical politics."

Asked if this will amount to violation of party discipline, an

agitated Bandopadhyay said: "Nothing doing. I cannot go to Raiganj leaving my people here in the lurch. I cannot disown my voters, who want me to seek re-election from the seat."

Bandopadhyay, smarting under the humiliation of being denied a "patient hearing" by Mamata, said: "It was an insult. I wrote to her yesterday requesting her to sit with me to sort out the problem arising out of my candidature. But she suggested that I talk to those at the helm in the election committee. I don't expect such behaviour from my leader."

The Trinamul MP recalled the time he was expelled from the Congress in 1997 along with Mamata and the formation of Trinamul the next year. "Today Mamata has forgotten the past and is out to finish my political career," he said, but left room for rapprochement, adding: "I still regard her as my leader."

However, key Trinamul leaders are "angry" at Bandopadhyay's insistence on being allowed to contest from Calcutta Northwest. "We are watching

the developments. If he contests violating the party's decision, he will face disciplinary action," said Mukul Roy, a Trinamul general secretary. Roy said the party would step in as soon as Bandopadhyay enters the fray. "Didi wants him to contest from Raiganj and if he does not, he will face the music."

In a bid to cash in on the squabble within Trinamul, the Congress said it would back Bandopadhyay if he contests as an Independent and seeks support. "But he has to make his stand on the NDA clear. We shall extend support only if he parts with the NDA and contests as an Independent," said former party chief Somen Mitra.

The CPM today reiterated that a party veteran will fight from Calcutta Northwest to cash in on a split in Trinamul votes if Bandopadhyay contests mayor Subrata Mukherjee.

Veteran CPM leader Jyoti Basu said: "We are particularly interested in this seat. We have decided to field a formidable nominee to take on the duo and wrest Calcutta Northwest."

সিদ্ধান্ত পুনর্বিবেচনার আবেদন জানিয়ে চিঠি সুদীপের, মমতা অনড়

অনিন্দ্য জানা

উত্তর-পশ্চিম লোকসভা কেন্দ্র নিয়ে দলের সিদ্ধান্ত পুনর্বিবেচনা করতে তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের কাছে সরাসরি আর্জি জানালেন সুদীপ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। শনিবার মমতাকে লেখা এক চিঠিতে সুদীপ স্পষ্ট বলেছেন, কলকাতা থেকে সাড়ে ৩০০ কিলোমিটার দূরের কেন্দ্র রায়গঞ্জে দাঁড়াতে তিনি আগ্রহী নন। তাঁর কেন্দ্র বদলালে তার ফল দলের পক্ষে ভাল হবে না। কেন্দ্রের মানুশও তা ভালভাবে নেবেন না। সুদীপ লিখেছেন, “আমার দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস, আপনার কাছে সুবিচার পাবা।”

‘শনিবারের চিঠি’ প্রসঙ্গে মমতার ‘সুবিচার’ যা দাঁড়িয়েছে—“আমি তো এর মধ্যে নেই! কাকে কোথায় টিকিট দেওয়া হবে, তা ঠিক করেছে দলের নির্বাচনী কমিটি। কমিটির সুপারিশ আমায় মানতেই হবে। চিঠি উনি লিখতেই পারেন। তবে আমাকে লিখে কোনও লাভ নেই। লিখলে ওই কমিটিকে লিখুন।” বস্তুত, মমতা এদিন সুদীপের নামোচ্চারণও করেননি। শুধু বলেছেন, “যাঁর কথা বলছেন, আমি তো শুনেছি, তিনি আর জে ডি-র টিকিটে ওই

কেন্দ্রে দাঁড়াচ্ছেন!”

দলীয় সূত্রের খবর, সুদীপকে টিকিট দেওয়ার জন্য মমতাকে অনুরোধ জানিয়েছিলেন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী ছাড়াও প্রমোদ মহাজন, অরুণ জেটলি এবং বেঙ্কাইয়া নাইডু। কিন্তু মমতা কারও অনুরোধই রাখেননি। বস্তুত, প্রমোদ কিছুদিন আগে সরাসরিই সুদীপকে বলে দেন যে, মমতা তাঁকে টিকিট দিচ্ছেন না। মমতার ঘনিষ্ঠমহলের অবশ্য দাবি, আডবানীর সঙ্গে শুক্রবার মমতার একাধিকবার কথা হলেও সেখানে সুদীপ-প্রসঙ্গ ওঠেইনি। একটি সরকারি অনুষ্ঠানে আডবানী ১৯ তারিখ কলকাতায় আসতে পারেন। মমতার সঙ্গে সেই নিয়েই তিনি কথা বলেছেন।

শুক্রবার গভীর রাতে তৃণমূলের নির্বাচনী কমিটি বৈঠকে বসে দলের জয়ী সাংসদদের কেন্দ্র সম্পর্কে সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়। তখনই ঠিক হয়, সুদীপবাবুকে দেওয়া হবে রায়গঞ্জ। কলকাতা উত্তর-পশ্চিমে টিকিট দেওয়া হবে কলকাতার মেয়র সুরত মুখোপাধ্যায়কে। সুরত এদিন বলেন, “দল আমাকে টিকিট দিয়েছে। আমি লড়ব।” সেক্ষেত্রে কি তাঁকে মেয়র পদে ইস্তফা

দিতে হবে? মেয়র বলেন, “মেয়র থেকেও লোকসভায় লড়াই যায়। এটা আমি দিল্লিতে নির্বাচন কমিশনের কাছ থেকে জেনে এসেছি। রাজ্য সরকারও এটা জানতে চেয়েছিল। কমিশন একই জবাব দিয়েছে।” এ দিনও সুরতকে নিয়ে জোড়াবাগানে সভা করেন মমতা। সেখানে ছিলেন ডেপুটি মেয়র বি জে পি-র মীনা পুরোহিত। সুদীপ প্রসঙ্গে তাঁর বক্তব্য, “টিকিট কাকে কোথায় দেবে, তা তৃণমূলের ব্যাপার। তবে উনি সাংসদ না-থাকলে এলাকায় কাজের ক্ষতি হতে পারে।” প্রসঙ্গত, রায়গঞ্জে আব্দুল করিম চৌধুরীকে টিকিট দেওয়ার দাবি ছিল স্থানীয় তৃণমূলের। সুদীপের নাম ঠিক হওয়ায় তারা ক্ষুব্ধ।

এর পরেও কোনও অবস্থাতেই যে সুদীপকে তাঁর পুরনো কেন্দ্রে টিকিট দেবেন না, তা মমতা এ দিন ফের দলীয় মহলে স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন। বস্তুত, তিনি প্রথমে প্রার্থী তালিকা থেকে একেবারেই ছেঁটে ফেলতে চেয়েছিলেন সুদীপকে। তারপর মমতাকে দলের একাধিক শীর্ষনেতা বোঝান, একেবারে টিকিট না-দিলে সুদীপ ‘শহিদ’ হয়ে যাবেন। এর পরেই মমতা

এর পর তিনের পাতায়

15 FEB 2004

Cong embraces 'clean' DMK

Press Trust of India

CHENNAI, Feb. 13. — More than six years after her party pulled down the United Front government over the issue of the DMK's alleged links with the LTTE which had assassinated Rajiv Gandhi, Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi met Mr M Karunanidhi today for the first time and gave a clean chit to his party in the matter. In reciprocation, the DMK chief announced that the meeting was "a politically good and honest one" that was "necessary for the country". He added that the partners of the Democratic Progressive Alliance in Tamil Nadu had accepted Mrs Gandhi as the prime ministerial candidate of the front.

After the first-ever visit by a Congress chief to the DMK headquarters, she said the final report of the Jain Commission, which went into Rajiv's assassination, had made no "negative comments" about DMK

leaders in the plot. "The interim report made some adverse comments on some (DMK) leaders, but the final report didn't have any negative comment on the leaders. Which is more important, interim or final," Mrs Gandhi asked reporters in return today. It was on the basis of the interim report of the commission dwelling on the alleged links between the LTTE and the DMK in the assassination of the former Prime Minister, that the Congress had demanded the ouster of DMK ministers from the IK Gujral government. The Congress withdrew support to the UF government resulting in its fall when its demand for the ouster was not heeded to.

On a five-hour visit to Chennai to consolidate the alliance between the two parties today, Mrs Gandhi was hosted over tea at the DMK headquarters with top leaders from both parties in attendance. Congress has bagged 10 out of the 39 seats in Tamil Nadu for the next Lok Sabha polls

under a seat-sharing deal with the DMK.

Describing her 30-minute meeting with Mr Karunanidhi at the DMK office as "good", Mrs Gandhi said that by visiting Chennai to meet him, she fulfilled one of her promises made to the two DMK leaders Mr MK Stalin and Mr TR Baalu, who had met her at New Delhi recently. She said that the DMK-led DPA was "a formidable and winning alliance" to take on the BJP-AIADMK combine in the next polls in Tamil Nadu.

Lashing out at those who had raked her foreign origin issue, including the AIADMK supremo and state chief minister Miss Jayalalitha, Mrs Gandhi asserted that she was an Indian. "I'm Indian by heart. Regardless of what others say, including the AIADMK chief, it can't be removed from my heart". On the dispute over the allocation of the Pondicherry Lok Sabha seat to the PMK as per the seat-deal with DMK, she said a solution to the issue would emerge soon.

Sonia forgives DMK on Rajiv

HT 9/14/2
I am as Indian as anybody else, says Cong chief

HT Correspondent
Chennai, February 13

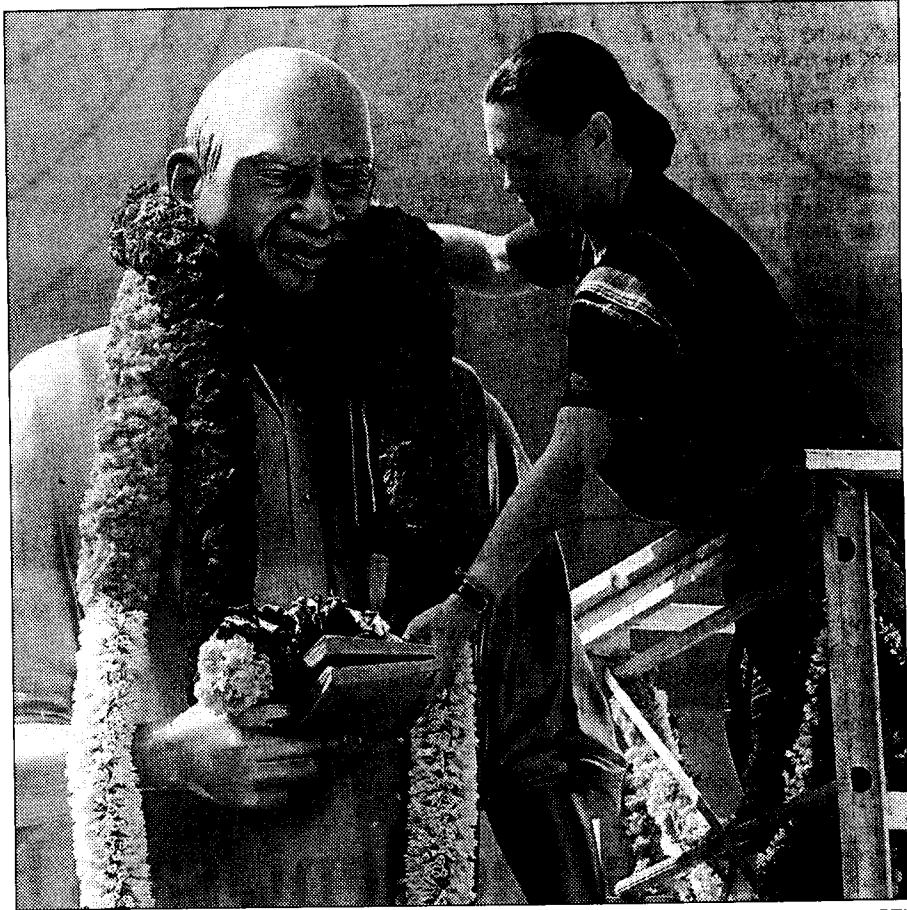
CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi absolved the DMK of any involvement in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, saying the Jain Commission's final report had not made any critical observations about her southern allies.

Speaking to reporters after a tea hosted by DMK chief M. Karunanidhi, Sonia Gandhi also made it clear that she was as Indian as anyone else. "I've been an Indian in my heart forever and no one can take that away from me," she said.

Karunanidhi reciprocated Sonia Gandhi's gesture, saying his party had never questioned the Congress president's eligibility for the post of prime minister. "Not only the DMK, but our entire front in Tamil Nadu will support her," the DMK leader said.

There were indications that the southern front was working out well. Asked to compare the Congress's alliance with the DMK in its earlier alliances with the AIADMK, Sonia Gandhi said: "This is a formidable and winning alliance." She added that the issue of giving the Pondicherry constituency to the PMK would be settled soon, a point seconded by Karunanidhi.

The DMK laid out the red carpet for the Congress president, reserving a marriage hall complex behind its party office for a high tea that lasted 45 min-



PTI

Sonia Gandhi garlands the statue of K. Kamaraj in Chennai on Friday.

utes. "The daughter-in-law has followed the footsteps of the mother-in-law (Indira Gandhi)," Karunanidhi said, referring to the fact that this was the first time in 20 years that a Congress leader had attended such a function.

Sonia's visit has boosted the morale of the local Congressmen who had been dispirited after a raw

deal handed out by the DMK in seat allocations. "After Soniaji's visit, the Congress will recapture its magic that existed during the days of Indira and Rajiv," declared TNCC president G.K. Vasan. Only the election results would vouch for that.

Meanwhile, despite Congress's efforts to get the lone Pondicherry Lok Sab-

ha seat reallocated to it, PMK said it would definitely contest the seat.

"PMK contesting from Pondicherry is final and firm," party founder S. Ramadoss told reporters at Ranipet near Vellore.

"The seat has been allotted to PMK and an agreement has been signed to this effect by "Karunanidhi and me," he said.

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রায়গঞ্জে প্রার্থী করে দিলেন মমতা, তবে সুদীপ নারাজ

অনিন্দ্য জানা
দলের বিদ্রোহী সাংসদ সুদীপ

বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়কে উত্তরবঙ্গের রায়গঞ্জ লোকসভা কেন্দ্রের টিকিট দিলেন তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। কলকাতা উত্তর-পশ্চিম কেন্দ্রে টিকিট দেওয়া হয়েছে কলকাতা পুরসভার মেয়র সূত্রত মুখোপাধ্যায়কে।

শুক্রবার গভীর রাতে দলের বৈঠকে এই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়। সুদীপবাবু বলেন, “আমার অবস্থান খুব স্পষ্ট। শেষ রক্তবিন্দু দিয়ে আমি কলকাতা উত্তর-পশ্চিম কেন্দ্রের মানুষের সেবা করে যাব। কলকাতা উত্তর-পশ্চিম কেন্দ্রের প্রার্থী হিসাবে আমার নামের দেওয়াল-লিখন তো শুরুই হয়ে গিয়েছে!” তার কথায় স্পষ্ট, তিনি তার পুরনো কেন্দ্র থেকেই দাঁড়াবেন। তা সে যে-দলের টিকিটেই হোক। বা নির্দল হয়ে। রায়গঞ্জের প্রসঙ্গে তার প্রতিক্রিয়া, “কংগ্রেস তো লড়াই করে সি পি এমের কাছে থেকে রায়গঞ্জ ছিনিয়ে নিয়েছে। আর আমার মূল রাজনৈতিক প্রতিপক্ষ তো সি পি এম। দলের এমন কী হল যে, সি পি এম ছেড়ে কংগ্রেসের বিরুদ্ধে লড়ার জন্য আমাকে পাঠাতে হচ্ছে? তৃণমূলের লড়াই কার সঙ্গে, সি পি এমের না কংগ্রেসের?”

উত্তর-পশ্চিম কলকাতা কেন্দ্রে টিকিট পাওয়ার পরে সূত্রতবাবু ঘনিষ্ঠ মহলে জানান, দলের ইচ্ছায় তিনি লড়তে নামছেন। জিতলে কেন্দ্রে যাবেন, হারলে মেয়র থাকবেন। তার হারানোর কিছু নেই। যে-বৈঠকে এই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হল, মমতা সেখানে ছিলেন না। ছিলেন সূত্রতবাবু, সৌগত রায়, সাধন পাণ্ডে, পঙ্কজ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, শোভনদেব চট্টোপাধ্যায় প্রমুখ। মমতা না-থাকলেও কংগ্রেসের প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুন্সির বিরুদ্ধে সুদীপবাবুকে ঠেলে দেওয়ার সূত্রটি তিনিই দিয়ে যান। কারণ, মমতার কাছে খবর আসছিল, কলকাতা উত্তর-পশ্চিমে তৃণমূল সুদীপবাবুকে প্রার্থী না-করলে তিনি কংগ্রেসের হয়ে দাঁড়ানোর জন্য প্রিয়বাবুর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগের রাস্তা খুলছেন। মমতার মতে, এই পরিস্থিতিতে সুদীপ-প্রিয়কে রায়গঞ্জে মুখোমুখি লড়িয়ে দেওয়াই ভাল। তবে সুদীপবাবু যে উত্তরবঙ্গ পাড়ি দেবেন না, সেটা তিনি এ দিনই স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন।

ওই বৈঠকেই তৃণমূলের বাকি পুরনো সাংসদদের তাঁদের নিজের নিজের কেন্দ্রেই টিকিট দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে। অর্থাৎ মমতা নিজে দক্ষিণ কলকাতায়, উত্তর-পূর্বে অজিত পাঁজা, যাদবপুরে কৃষ্ণা বসু, বারাসতে রঞ্জিত পাঁজা, শ্রীরামপুরে আকবর আলি খোন্দকার, কাঁথিতে নীতীশ সেনগুপ্ত এবং পাঁশকুড়ায় বিক্রম সরকার। বিক্রমবাবু হাওড়া আসনটি চাইলেও মমতা সেই আবেদনকে আমল দেননি।

জল প্রকল্প ঘিরে সুব্রত আর সুদীপের অঘোষিত লড়াই দিয়েই প্রচার শুরু

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: জোড়াবাগানে জল প্রকল্পের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানকে সামনে রেখে মেয়র সুব্রত মুখোপাধ্যায়ের সঙ্গে সুদীপ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের 'অঘোষিত' লড়াই শুরু হয়ে গেল। এই লড়াইয়ে মেয়রের বল-ভরসা অবশ্যই তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। আর দলনেত্রীর উপস্থিতিতে কার্যত এই অনুষ্ঠান থেকেই তৃণমূলের ভোটের প্রচারও শুরু হয়ে গেল।

পাশাপাশি ভেঙে দেওয়া লোকসভায় তাঁরই দলের সদস্য সুদীপবাবুকে টেকা দিতে শুক্রবার সকাল থেকেই শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে তৃণমূল নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের স্বাস্থ্যমেলা। বিজ্ঞাপনে পুরসভার ১০৮ নম্বর ওয়ার্ডের চৌবাগায় মেলার উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে নেত্রীর হাজির থাকার কথা বলা হলেও মমতা অবশ্য সকালের সেই অনুষ্ঠানে হাজির ছিলেন না। যদিও ওই স্বাস্থ্যমেলার শর্ত অনুযায়ী স্থানীয় সাংসদই (এ ক্ষেত্রে মমতা) হবেন মেলা কমিটির চেয়ারপার্সন।

কলকাতা পুরসভার অনুষ্ঠান হলেও সুদীপবাবুর নির্বাচনী এলাকা কলকাতা উত্তর-পশ্চিম লোকসভা কেন্দ্রের জোড়াবাগানে গোটা অনুষ্ঠান এলাকা জুড়ে দেওয়া হয়েছিল প্রচুর ব্যানার ও ফেস্টুন। সেই সব ব্যানারে লেখা ছিল, "সি পি এম নয়, কংগ্রেস নয়, নির্দল নয়, উত্তর-পশ্চিম কেন্দ্রে তৃণমূল প্রার্থীকে জোড়াফুলে ভোট দিন।"

সুদীপবাবুকে আমন্ত্রণও জানানো হয়নি। কিন্তু আশপাশ এলাকার তৃণমূলের বিধায়ক, কাউন্সিলররা তো বটেই, গাইঘাটার বিদায়ক জ্যোতিপ্রিয় মল্লিক, নাকাশিপাড়ার কল্লোল খাঁ, বড়তলার সাধন পাণ্ডে এবং বি জে পি-র রাজ্য সভাপতি তথাগত রায়ও হাজির ছিলেন। জোড়াবাগানের সি পি এম বিধায়ক সুধাংশু শীলকেও আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হয়েছিল। বড়বাজার, জোড়াবাগান এলাকার বিধায়কদের আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হলেও সুদীপবাবুর স্ত্রী এবং বৌবাজারের তৃণমূল বিধায়ক নয়না দাসকে আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হয়নি। এই ব্যাপারে মেয়রের সাফ জবাব, "সুদীপবাবু তো এখন সাংসদ নন। আর যে-সব এলাকা দিয়ে জোড়াবাগান জল প্রকল্পের জল যাবে, সেই সমস্ত এলাকার জনপ্রতিনিধিদেরই আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হয়েছে। বৌবাজার তো অনেক দূরে। তাই ডাকা হয়নি সেখানকার বিধায়ককে।"

অথচ, এ দিন রাতেই কলকাতা উত্তর-পূর্ব লোকসভা কেন্দ্রের মধ্যে কাসিয়াবাগানে আবাসিক নার্সিং স্কুল নির্মাণের অনুষ্ঠানে

সেখানকার প্রাক্তন সাংসদ অজিত পাঁজাকে অমন্ত্রণ জানিয়েছে পুরসভা। আমন্ত্রণে কেন এই বৈসম্য? মেয়রের জবাব, "এটা আমাদের ব্যাপার। আমরা যাকে ইচ্ছা ডাকতে পারি।" সুদীপবাবু অবশ্য তাঁকে আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হয়নি বলে আদৌ বিচলিত নন। তাঁর কথায়, "এই নিয়ে আমার কোনও মাথাব্যথা নেই। শিলান্যাসের পরে অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রেই দেখা যায়, শিলান্যাসের ফলক কাক-কুকুরে নোংরা করে। আমি আশা করব, এ ক্ষেত্রে তা হবে না। এই জল প্রকল্পের কাজ সময়সীমার মধ্যে শেষ হবে, এটাই কাম্য। এখানকার মানুষের জল নিয়ে যে-সমস্যা রয়েছে, সেটা মিটুক, এটাই আমি চাই।" মমতা ও সুব্রত দাবি করেন জোড়াবাগান পার্কে যে-জল প্রকল্পের শিলান্যাস হয়েছে, তা এক বছরের মধ্যেই শেষ হবে। অনুষ্ঠানে পুরসভার চেয়ারম্যান অনিল মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেন, "যে-শিলান্যাস হল, এ দিন থেকেই তার কাজ শুরু হয়ে যাবে। কারণ, মেয়র ব্যাল্কে টাকা রেখে কাজ শুরু করেছেন।"

এই প্রসঙ্গে সুদীপবাবু জানান, দু'মাস আগেই এখানকার ২১ নম্বর ওয়ার্ডে কয়েকটি এলাকায় জলসঙ্কট মেটাতে তিনি পুরসভাকে ১৫ লক্ষ টাকা দিয়েছেন। সাংসদ থাকাকালীন কলকাতার উত্তর-পশ্চিম লোকসভা কেন্দ্রে এলাকায় সুদীপবাবু যে-উন্নয়নমূলক কাজ করেছেন, তার ভূয়সী প্রশংসা হয়েছে সর্বস্তরে। কিন্তু এ দিন জোড়াবাগান পার্কের অনুষ্ঠানে তৃণমূল নেত্রী বলেন, "উন্নয়নের জন্য যাঁরা কৃতিত্ব দাবি করছেন, সেই কৃতিত্ব আমাদের কারও নয়। কৃতিত্ব যদি কারও থাকে, তা জনগণের। কারণ জনগণই আমাদের নির্বাচিত করেন। সব চেয়ে বড় কথা, উন্নয়নের কাজ নিয়ে রাজনীতি করা উচিত নয়।" এমনকী যে-রেলমন্ত্রী সুদীপের প্রশংসায় পঞ্চমুখ, নাম না-করে মমতা তাঁকেও এক হাত নেন। তিনি বলেন, "অনেকে এসে ফিতে কেটে বলে এটা আমি করেছি। আমি বলছি, রেলের কম্পিউটারচালিত আসন সংরক্ষণ কেন্দ্র আমি মন্ত্রী থাকাকালীনই করে দিয়েছিলাম।"

এ দিনই সকালে চৌবাগার স্বাস্থ্যমেলায় নেত্রীর অনুপস্থিতিতে তাঁর হয়ে প্রচারের বাকি কাজটুকু কাঁখে তুলে নিয়েছিলেন মেয়র সুব্রত মুখোপাধ্যায় স্বয়ং। মমতার নির্বাচনী এলাকায় স্বাস্থ্যমেলার উদ্বোধন করে এ দিন মেয়রের আরও একটি প্রতিশ্রুতি: ওই এলাকায় পুরসভার উদ্যোগে একটি প্রাথমিক স্বাস্থ্যকেন্দ্র গড়া হবে। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে স্থানীয় এক ব্যক্তির ঘোষণা: এ-জন্য তিনি তিন কাঠা জমি দান করবেন।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

19 FEB 2004

Advani and Jaya digest deal over dinner

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Chennai, Feb. 1: L.K. Advani today sealed his party's poll alliance with the ADMK when, after dinner with Jayalalithaa, he said there was "no problem" in seat-sharing between the two parties.

The remark came after a 90-minute dinner meeting with the chief minister at her Poes Garden home, which the deputy Prime Minister emphasised he was visiting "after many years".

Though Advani put no number on his party's expectations, political circles claimed the BJP was pitching for 10 of the state's 40 Lok Sabha seats, including Pondicherry but would be happy even with eight. The BJP's state unit, Advani said, was discus-

ssing the "matter (seat sharing)" with the ADMK.

More important, Advani sought to convey the message of the seal of authority he had put on the understanding reached a few days ago when BJP chief M. Venkataiah Naidu met his ADMK counterpart.

This was evident when he said: "We reaffirmed that the government should receive a renewed mandate in Delhi. We are confident that this is going to happen." This, for all practical purposes, laid the framework for renewed BJP-ADMK poll ties.

Adding a personal touch to the proceedings, Advani — who was here to launch the "campus community radio" at Anna University — thanked the chief minister's "very warm and generous hospitality".

Information and broadcasting minister Ravi Shankar Prasad — who was present at the dinner — has "given me an opportunity to come to Chennai" to inaugurate the community radio, Advani said, thus giving him the chance to "come to Poes Garden after many years".

At the university, Advani, while underscoring the Centre's "feel-good" performance, reserved praise for Jayalalithaa by describing her as a true follower of Annadurai's tradition and a charismatic leader determined to take Tamil Nadu to greater heights.

The deputy Prime Minister also drove home the point that the return of Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister was crucial for the stability of India's polity. "The country had seen seven

Prime Ministers from 1988 to 1998 and Vajpayee is the only one to occupy the post for over five years from 1998."

"God willing, he will continue to be the Prime Minister for the next five years," said Advani as Jayalalithaa stood by his side waiting to see him off.

The deputy Prime Minister made the remarks to some camera crew who were allowed inside Poes Garden. He skipped the reporters waiting outside and drove straight to the airport.

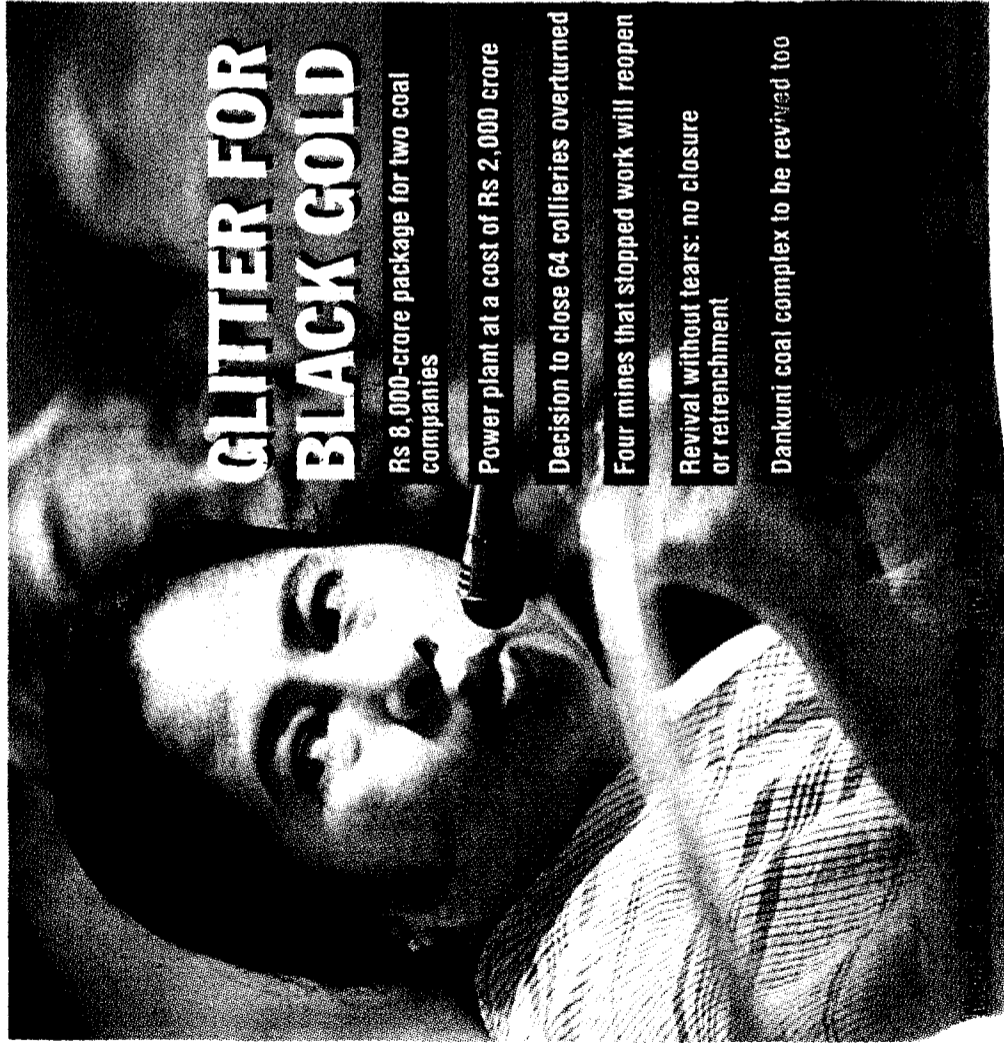
DMK, Cong meet

The meeting scheduled in Chennai between M. Karunanidhi and Sonia Gandhi to release their parties' constituency lists has been put off because of her inability to come owing to the ongoing Parliament session.



Advani and Jayalalithaa in Chennai on Sunday. (AFP)

Mamata showers crores on coal



GLITTER FOR BLACK GOLD

Rs 8,000-crore package for two coal companies

Power plant at a cost of Rs 2,000 crore

Decision to close 64 collieries overturned

Four mines that stopped work will reopen

Revival without tears: no closure or retrenchment

Dankuni coal complex to be revived too

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Jan. 29: Only a fortnight in office and Mamata Banerjee has unleashed a Rs 10,000-crore thunder, joining her cabinet colleagues in the pre-poll splurge.

After denying herself the privilege of announcing "packages" by quitting the railway ministry, Mamata — now the coal and mines minister — made up for lost opportunities with a Rs 10,000-crore plan for the coal industry in eastern India.

Bengal-based Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL) and Bharat Coal Ltd (BCL), of Jharkhand, will be the beneficiaries of the scheme that has several components. Both companies are sick and have been referred to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction.

According to unaudited results for 2002-03, ECL's loss was around Rs 310 crore and BCL's Rs 357 crore.

At a news conference today, Mamata made her Calcutta debut as coal minister by announcing that revival plans would be sent to the Board, proposing investments of Rs 2,000 crore in ECL and Rs 4,000 crore in BCL.

ECL will also receive Rs 2,000

crore by way of expenditure on upgradation and expansion of the Rajmahal mines, which are in Jharkhand.

The other big chunk of the package is a 500 mw power plant that she said Neyveli Lignite Corporation would set up in Bengal as a joint venture with ECL at an investment of Rs 2,000 crore.

Mamata said under the revival package, none of the 1.14 lakh employees of ECL and 92,000 of BCL would be retrenched, a move that turns on its head an earlier decision to close down some 64 collieries under ECL. Work has been suspended in four mines already, but will resume, according to Mamata.

With the Prime Minister recommending dissolution of Parliament on February 6, Mamata has to move fast to get the package approved by the cabinet. The coal ministry will formalise the package quickly but doubts remain whether permissions, at several tiers can be obtained for such huge investments before polls are announced.

Officials in the finance ministry said that while approval in principle could be given, the actual spending would have to be spread over a long period of time. Any such investment is of

long-term nature in any case.

Therein lies the catch, too. After the elections, assuming that the NDA returns to power, there is no certainty Mamata will get coal again. It is well known that she prefers the railway ministry. If she does not, it is a matter of conjecture whether her successor will pursue these projects, especially given the condition of the two companies, with the same vigour.

A coal industry source said the two Coal India subsidiaries were referred to the Board in 1994, but no acceptable revival package could be worked out until Mamata's immediate predecessor, Karia Munda's tenure.

Thanks to the cabinet reshuffle earlier this month when she was allotted coal after spending months in Delhi without a portfolio, Mamata got to announce the package.

She appealed to trade unions to accept the revival package, promising to protect workers' interests.

In the 12-13 working days she has had since taking over, the coal ministry also decided to build a hospital for Coal India employees in Calcutta that will match the standards of Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

5-1 3/1/04

Mamata eyes faction-ridden seats

Arindam Sarkar
Kolkata, January 19

TRINAMOOL CONGRESS is gearing up to contest 28 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats. Mamata Banerjee plans to make a fight of it in 18 to 20 seats where she wants to take advantage of the factionalism in the CPI(M) district units.

Party insiders said the candidates' list is likely to be announced by mid-February. The seats to be watched this time round are Kolkata North-West, presently occupied by MP Sudip Bandopadhyay, and Asansol, where Mamata could spring a surprise.

"Subrata Mukherjee is likely to contest in one of these two seats. This is the first time he will contest the Lok Sabha polls, but Mamata has not made up her mind on which seat to offer to him," a Trinamool Congress leader said.



Ajit Panja

To be retained

As for Kolkata North-east and Jadavpur constituencies, Mamata is eager to retain sitting MPs Ajit Panja and Krishna Bose respectively. But Mamata wants MP Bikram Sarkar to shift from Panskura to contest from Howrah parliamentary seat this time. As for Akbar Ali Khondekar, Nitish Sen-gupta and Dr Ranjit Panja, Mamata has decided not to disturb them. They are likely to contest from Serram-



Krishna Bose

Safe bet

pore, Contai and Barasat parliamentary seats, from where they won last time.

But this time Mamata is keen to flex power in Barrackpore, Diamond Harbour, Tamluk and Hooghly constituencies, where Trinamool leaders believe there is a one-to-one contest with the CPI(M) MPs, the internal rivalry within the CPI(M) units in the local areas could lead to major upsets for the Left and give ad-



Sudip Bandopadhyay

On a sticky wicket

vantage to the Mamata brigade. CPI(M) district secretary leaders want to field former MP Nepaldeb Bhattacharya in Barrackpore constituency.

With sitting MP Tarit Topdar likely to be fielded in Dum Dum this time, out of the seven Assembly segments in Barrackpore, Trinamool is strong in Halishahar, Noapara, Jagaddal and Bhatpara segments. If they can neutralise the Aamdand-

ga, Titagarh and Kanchrapara Assembly segments that give the CPI(M) the winning every time, Trinamool stands a good chance this time," said a Trinamool MLA from North 24-Parganas.

Mamata is also eyeing Tamluk constituency as the sitting MP Lakshman Sett is losing his base there and accept in Haldia (Sutahati) and Norgbat Assembly segments, where the CPI(M) has a comfortable majority, the Trinamool has an edge over the CPI(M) in Tamluk, East Panskura, Moyna, Nandigram and Mahisadal Assembly segments. "And the man who can turn the tide in favour of the Trinamool and give the CPI(M) a real run for the money is the Tamluk MLA Nirbed Roy. If the Congress does not field a candidate and there is a one to one fight, then anything can happen here," said a Mamata aide.

No budging from bandh call, says Trinamul chief; coal relief rolls out on office Day IV

Tax on top in Mamata plot

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta, Jan. 12: In her first public appearance since bagging the Union coal and mines ministry, Mamata Banerjee kick-started a campaign for the Lok Sabha elections.

Her stick to beat the government with was apparent. The "burden" of taxes Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's government has put on "common people" will be fought tooth and nail, the Trinamul Congress chief said even as she rejected a climbdown from the February 3 bandh call.

The 12-hour shutdown is on unless the government withdraws its circular proposing taxes on pets and livestock in rural areas, Mamata said. She was also not in favour of the lifetime tax on two-wheelers.

"Now the government will impose tax on people walking the streets of Calcutta. But we will fight tooth and nail against all kinds of taxes that burden common people," she said at a programme of the Trinamul-controlled union of Calcutta Municipal Corporation employees.

Recounting her tenure as railway minister, Mamata said she

always thought of "ways to minimise the burden on people". "When I was the rail minister, I never increased passenger fares. But, at the same time, I worked out ways to increase the revenue of my ministry," she said.

With the minority vote base in mind, Mamata tried to clarify her alliance with the BJP. "The Trinamul and the BJP will contest the polls on a joint platform, but it is not religious. It is a political platform," she said.

Describing the state government as "bankrupt", Mamata said it is caught in a Rs 1,00,000-crore debt trap and moving aimlessly. Trinamul, she said, is opposed to the government's ways of increasing revenue by bringing bicycles, livestock, pets and rural roads in the tax net. "If the government does not drop the proposals to tax the rural people, Trinamul will launch a bigger movement against it after the February 3 bandh," Mamata added.

She charged the CPM-led government with double standards and said it is now shelving the rural taxes because the elections are round the corner. "The government has not withdrawn the notification served to the panchayats proposing the taxes.



Union coal and mines minister Mamata Banerjee at the meeting on Monday. Picture by Amit Datta

But, at the same time, it is saying that the taxes will not be imposed. It is resorting to this doublespeak because of the Lok Sabha polls."

Trinamul sources said on returning from Delhi last night,

Mamata instructed Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Pankaj Banerjee and aide Mukul Roy to launch a campaign in the rural belt in support of the bandh and against the rural taxes.

She also asked mayor Subra-

ta Mukherjee, who was present at the meeting, to review and restructure the procedure of taxation by the civic bodies.

Mukherjee said the corporation is drawing up a scheme to reduce property tax in the city.

A sop and promise of more

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Jan. 12: Mamata Banerjee, the new coal and mines minister, today announced a 15 per cent interim relief for seven million coal industry employees with effect from January 1.

The minister, who met the Coal India Limited brass and leaders of the Joint Bipartite Coal Committee of India, said no colliery would be shut down and there would be no retrenchment.

The statement comes three days after Mamata took charge of the ministry and in the face of Coal India's attempts to shut down loss-making collieries.

Mamata's remarks were welcomed by the trade unions. The minister said she would request the Union labour department to discuss the relief with the steel ministry so that miners at Tata Steel and the Indian Iron and Steel Company also get the benefit.

She would discuss customs duty on coal with the finance minister. The unions have urged Mamata to restore customs duty on imported coal at the pre-1991 level of 85 per cent. It is 25 per cent now. The bill to pave the way for private participation in coal mining will not be pushed through without the unions' consensus, Mamata said.

Trinamul divide over bandh date

9.8.04 TMC

**BARUN GHOSH AND
DEEPANKAR GANGULY**

Calcutta, Jan. 4: Caught on the wrong foot after choosing a wrong date, the Trinamul Congress appears to be planning to defer the dawn-to-dusk bandh on February 3.

Minority community leaders in Trinamul have apparently pointed out to their leader that the party's Muslim support base will shrink further if a bandh is observed during Id-uz-Zoha.

"We have requested Didi (Mamata) to postpone the bandh as it coincides with the three-day Id-uz-Zoha festival beginning February 2. Didi has promised that

she will soon announce a fresh date for the bandh," said Trinamul leader Javed Khan.

However, party spokesman Pankaj Banerjee, the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, asserted that Trinamul is going ahead with the bandh at this point. "I've had a talk with Mamata in this regard. We are sticking to the February 3 bandh call," he said. Banerjee declined comment on the argument against the bandh put forward by leaders like Khan and Mamtaz Alam.

The Trinamul chief was not available for comment but two senior party functionaries, mayor of Calcutta Subrata Mukherjee and MLA from Dhakuria

Sougata Roy, are believed to have urged her to consider a postponement. President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is scheduled to be in the city on February 3 and 4.

"We shall decide on a new date for the bandh after further discussions," Mukherjee said tonight. Roy said the party should get support from "all sections of people" to fight a people's cause. "The bandh is part of our month-long agitation against the government's decision to impose enhanced taxes on domestic animals and rural transport and to open liquor off-shops across the state. We want the people with us," he added.

Idris Ali, the chairman of

the All-India Minority Forum who deserted Mamata after she stopped short of condemning Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi after the riots in 2002, today sent feelers urging her to defer the bandh.

A request to put it off also came from state BJP chief Tathagata Roy. "We have extended our support to the bandh as the issues are genuine but at the same time, I have written to Mamata urging her to defer it in view of the President's visit," he said.

Observers spotted "political immaturity" in the sudden Trinamul turnaround on the bandh. "Mamata is in the habit of taking sudden decisions on im-

portant issues and then roll it back under pressure," said a senior Congress leader.

Some of her Trinamul colleagues complained that Mamata announced the bandh without consulting it within the party. "We should have taken into account the views of the Muslim members in the party before announcing the date," said a Trinamul leader.

The CPM's trade union arm, CITU, was today said to be "undecided" on the industrial strike by 19 trade unions on February 11 as the Congress' and the BJP's trade union wings, the Intuc and the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, are unwilling to collaborate.

Mamata tells mayor to review taxes

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Jan. 12. — Soon after she scuttled the mayor's plans to impose water tax, Trinamul Congress supremo and Union minister Miss Mamata Banerjee today urged Mr Subrata Mukherjee to review and restructure corporation taxes in Kolkata.

Speaking at the annual function of the Trinamul-backed Kolkata Municipal Corporation Employees' and Workers' Union outside the civic body's main building today, she said the aim should be to enable common people pay civic taxes which "should be within their means".

Miss Banerjee said if the process of collecting the existing taxes be made fool-proof with each and every tax-payer in Kolkata making regular payments, there would be no need to increase taxes or impose the same. Also, revenue will keep pouring in automatically for the development projects. Mounting her

regulation attack on the Left Front government, Miss Banerjee said: "The government is extorting money by imposing taxes on livestock, among other things. The bankrupt government has nothing better to do than raising money employing these means."

The minister also declared that the 3 February bandh was inevitable unless the government withdrew the notification. Praising the mayor, who was sharing the podium, he expressed her appreciation for the development works taken up by him as well as the pension scheme for KMC workers. Mayor Mr Subrata Mukherjee, in his address, said that the pension scheme for KMC workers has been started. He also spoke about his plans to introduce five-days-a-week scheme for KMC employees.

Opposition Leader in the Assembly Mr Pankaj Banerjee blamed the ruling government's faulty economic policy for the stop on development work.

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