

LANGUAGE INDICATIVE OF THE GOVT'S DESIGNS: ATAL

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# PMO letter to CBI sparks House furore

**Statesman News Service**

NEW DELHI, Dec. 23. — The issue of the Prime Minister asking his aide to write to the CBI enquiring about the status of the Babari demolition case vis a vis Mr LK Advani, Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, Miss Uma Bharati and others who were chargesheeted by the investigating agency created a storm in both Houses of Parliament today.

The BJP was up in arms against the government and some members even demanded that the Prime Minister should resign. "It is the view of some members... not mine... but in a democracy it is majority opinion that counts," Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, who raised the matter in the Lok Sabha told reporters outside Parliament after the House was adjourned.

The former Prime Minister stood his ground on

the floor of the Lok Sabha that the tenor of the letter from the PMO clearly establishes the intention of the government to reopen the case against Mr Advani. "Such a letter ought not have come from the PMO in the first place," Mr Vajpayee said.

Mr Pranab Mukherjee, the leader of the House who was given the task of defending Dr Manmohan Singh and the government, dismissed the allegation. He said: "The reference from the Prime Minister's Office only requested clarification on the legal position about filing of revision petitions (by witnesses) and failure, if any, on part of the prosecuting agency in taking timely action to move a higher court," Mr Mukherjee said in a written statement.

"The sum total of this correspondence is nothing more than eliciting information from the investi-

## BJP recalls precedents

NEW DELHI, Dec. 23. — The disproportionate assets case against the JMM leader, Mr Siby Soren, was closed within seven months and no appeal was filed, a senior BJP leader pointed out to justify that the CBI's not filing an appeal against Mr LK Advani's discharge was not an isolated case. In the Satish Sharma case, the CBI was not given permission to prosecute him. In the case of the disproportionate assets case against Mr Lalu Prasad, two members of the IT Appellate Tribunal came from two different places and sat for a week exclusively to give a clean chit to him, the BJP leader said. The CBDT did not appeal, he pointed out. — SNS

gating agency. It is not not a directive of any kind to any investigating agency and cannot be construed to amount to any manner of interfering in the working of the agency," Mr Mukherjee told the House.

He also reminded Mr Vajpayee how he as Prime Minister had also written a letter to the CBI seeking the status of the Babari case after some Congress MPs sought clarification and a statement from the Prime Minister. Mr Vajpayee did not deny it but said

the tenor of his letter was different. The language of the letter in the present case is indicative of the government's designs, he said.

## Parliament adjourned

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned sine die today after receiving the news of PV Narsimha Rao's death. Members paid tributes to Rao and observed a minute's silence. Parliament will now meet in late February 2005 for the Budget session.

24 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

# Cong-BJP duel at Speaker's meeting

Agencies

New Delhi, December 21

LEADER OF Lok Sabha Pranab Mukherjee and Deputy Leader of BJP V.K. Malhotra today had a verbal duel at the all-party meeting convened by Speaker Somnath Chatterjee this evening over Opposition behaviour in the House.

The argument took place when Mukherjee said government was willing to extend session provided the Opposition played its role in a constructive manner and gave a "guarantee" that it would not disrupt the proceedings, sources said.

A visibly annoyed Malhotra took exception to these remarks

and wondered how Opposition could "guarantee" the functioning of the House. He said it was the responsibility of the government to ensure that the House functioned smoothly and recalled that during the NDA rule the ruling coalition had always allowed the Opposition to have its say.

Recalling the earlier disruption of the House during the Budget session, which was cut short, Mukherjee asked the Opposition to forget the past and allow the House to function smoothly. While no decision was taken on the issue of extending the session, all the parties felt that there should be a minimum of 100 sittings of the

House annually, sources said.

The meeting was attended by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, P.K. Vasudevan Nair and Gurudas Dasgupta (CPI), Ramjilal Suman (Samajwadi) and Basudeb Acharia (CPI-M).

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee blamed the UPA government for the "sorry state of affairs" in Parliament. Maintaining that the NDA was unnecessarily being accused of disrupting the House proceedings, he asserted that the responsibility for smooth functioning of Lok Sabha lay with the UPA, Left parties and the Speaker.

Speaking at the BJP Parlia-

mentary Party meeting here, Vajpayee said the Speaker should have reprimanded Railway Minister Lalu Yadav for "insulting" the House by not turning up to make a statement on the train accident in Punjab.

Reiterating the stand taken by the NDA parties at their meeting on Monday, Vajpayee told the BJP MPs that a "mischievous" campaign was being carried out against the Opposition alliance over disruptions in the House whereas the sole cause behind the trouble was Lalu Yadav himself.

Vajpayee deplored that the NDA was not able to raise people's issues in Parliament because of other matters.

22 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Opposition walkout over Lalu issue

By Our New Delhi Bureau

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 21.** The Opposition today sought to nail the Government in Parliament over its refusal to drop the Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, from the Union Cabinet after the Election Commission (EC) lodged a First Information Report (FIR) against him in a bribery case. Demanding a statement from the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the Opposition staged a walkout in both Houses to protest against the Government's attempt to wash its hands off the issue on the premise that the case was under the purview of the EC.

In the Lok Sabha, the BJP sought to raise the issue at the very start of the proceedings, with Sushil Modi demanding Mr. Prasad's immediate dismissal. Later, when the matter was allowed to be raised after Question Hour, the Opposition charge was led by the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who demanded to know from Dr. Singh when he would drop Mr. Prasad from his Cabinet and why he had not sought his resignation as yet.

Amid continuous heckling from across the floor with members of the ruling benches countering the Opposition with reminders of the "sari stampe" in Lucknow — Mr. Vajpayee's constituency — ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the Speaker allowed the issue to be discussed for nearly half-an-hour during which the Leader of the House and Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, inter-

"When they were in Government, they had so many chargesheeted Ministers, including the Home Minister, L.K. Advani, himself. How many of them stepped down," he asked, drawing an immediate response from Haren Pathak (BJP), who said he had resigned the day he was chargesheeted.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, said Mr. Prasad had been given time till 3 p.m. on December 24 by the EC to reply to the show-cause notice. He informed the House that he had spoken to the Minister over telephone this morning and had read out the text of the notice to him.

Mr. Azad said the show-cause notice was given to Mr. Prasad in his capacity as RJD president and not as Union Minister. "Let him reply to the show-cause notice, we will put the same reply before the House," he said.

The issue was raised by the Leader of the Opposition, Jaswant Singh, who wanted to know what action the Government proposed to take against the Minister who had an FIR lodged against him for reportedly distributing money.

Mr. Azad said the issue was in the jurisdiction of the Ethics Committee and did not want to link it to the action initiated by the Election Commission. But, as in the case in the Lok Sabha, the Government's stance did not cut any ice and the Opposition staged a walkout amid noisy scenes.



vened twice to say that with the Model Code of Conduct being in place, it was an issue to be decided by the EC.

Underscoring the fact that Mr. Prasad headed an important political party, he said: "It is not for the Prime Minister or anyone else to decide. The question of collective responsibility does not arise." Also, he maintained that the EC had not conclusively found anyone guilty as yet and advocated against Parliament interfering with the functioning of another constitutional body.

## Morality in public life

Unhappy with the Government's response, Mr. Vajpayee again intervened, articulating the need for morality in public life. Pointing a finger at Raghunath Jha of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) — who said his party president had only given money to poor people on request — the former Prime Minister said: "What good work was Mr. Pra-

sad doing?"

Holding forth for a while, he signed off by saying: "The Leader of the House has appointed us, but we have some hope still from the Prime Minister."

## Accusations

Earlier, during the course of the discussion, accusations flew thick and fast, with Devendra Prasad Yadav (BJD) questioning the double standards of the Opposition.

# Somnath offers to step down

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 16.** Unhappy with the way he was forced to adjourn the Lok Sabha on Wednesday and the aspersions that have been cast on him, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, today offered to step down. "If members are not happy with the present incumbent, I shall have no regrets in leaving it," Mr. Chatterjee said in a surprise statement soon after the House convened for the day.

Before taking up question hour, the Speaker recalled how "at the request of respected Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition but reluctantly and with great sorrow, I had to adjourn the House yesterday soon after the luncheon recess." Referring to the accusation that he was "indulging in *tanashahi* [dictatorship]" on Wednesday, he said:

"The Chair does not have any prestige any longer and has become totally irrelevant and it has become a matter of agony for me to occupy this Chair, which I never expected to do, far less solicited.

"So long as I am here I shall try my best to discharge my duties and functions according to the rules of procedure and my conscience. If members are not happy with the present incumbent, I shall have no regrets in leaving it. I was happy facing the Chair than occupying it."

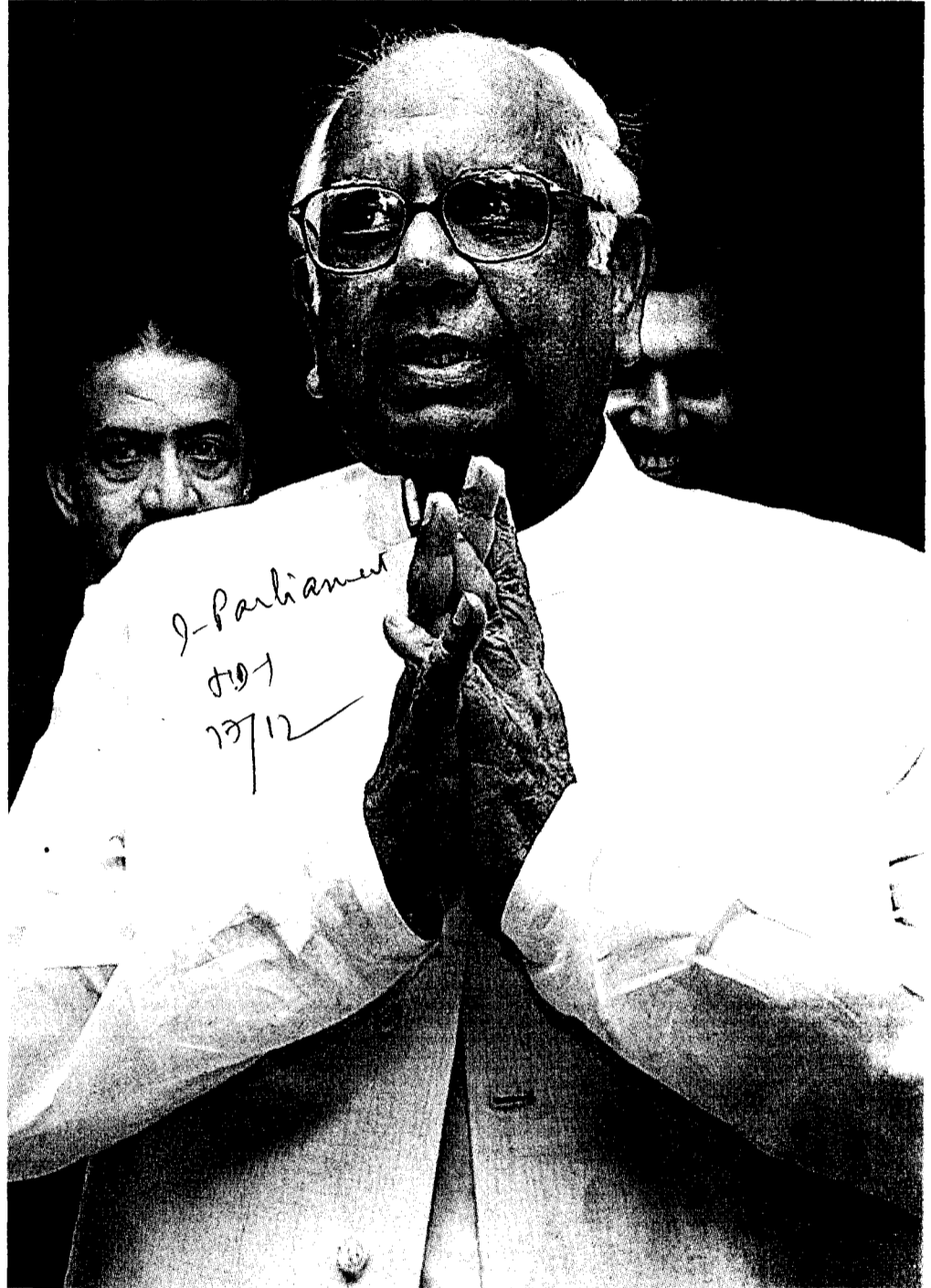
## 'I leave it to members'

Echoing a question posed by college students who met him yesterday after the furore in the House, Mr. Chatterjee said: "They asked me if Parliament did not function what was the future of Parliamentary democracy in this country. I leave that question before all the members to ponder and find out the answer, and let the country know."

Though the Speaker's "resignation" comments took members by surprise and left them speechless at first, it did not stop the Bharatiya Janata Party member, B. C. Khanduri, from entering into an argument with the Chair during question hour over not being allowed a question relating to the Army first despite being an ex-serviceman. Before the pre-lunch session was over, the Opposition staged a walkout to protest against the "callous attitude" of the Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, towards Parliament.

## Velu fields questions

The Speaker then took up the business of the day as the House absorbed the import of his



**A SPEAKER'S PLAINT:** Pushed to the limits by Opposition behaviour and charges, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, offers to give up his Chair. — AFP

words; so much so the Opposition made no comment when the Minister of State for Railways, R. Velu, who they called a "nobody" on Wednesday during the furore over Mr. Prasad's failure to make a statement on the train accident in Punjab, fielded questions on his Ministry instead of his senior colleague.

However, when Hannan Mollah (Communist Party of India-Marxist) asked the Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Santosh Mohan Dev, whether the Government had received a report from the Central Vigilance Commissioner about a Minister from the National

Democratic Alliance Government pressuring public sector undertaking managements for favours, Mr. Vajpayee got up protesting. "The member has made allegations about a former Government. Who will answer the question?"

## Thanks Minister

Even as members across the floor became restive, the Minister settled the issue saying that the question pertained to the Personnel Department. "I have not got anything. The question should be put to the Ministry concerned," he said immediately securing a word of gratitude from the Speaker who said: "I

thank you for solving the problem."

Though the Opposition did not interrupt Mr. Prasad during his statement, V. K. Malhotra (BJP) sought an explanation from him for going to Bihar instead of coming to report to Parliament about his visit to the accident site. "He has insulted Parliament and he has told the media that the accident was actually a murder. Who will take responsibility for this murder? In a democracy, the Minister is responsible," he said adding that the Opposition was going to walk out in protest.

**BJP wants all-party meet:**

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# লোকসভায় আক্রমণাত্মক অটল লালুপ্রসাদের ইস্তফা চাইলেন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ ডিসেম্বর: গরিবের 'মসিহা' দলিত-বস্তিতে টাকা বিলিয়ে এখন দ্বিমুখী আক্রমণ সামলাচ্ছেন। এক দিকে নির্বাচন কমিশন, অন্যদিকে সংসদে সরব অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী।

চাপে পড়ে 'মহারাণী' স্থগিত করেও লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবকে রেহাই দিচ্ছে না নির্বাচন কমিশন। লালুপ্রসাদ সরকারি প্রশাসনের অপব্যবহার করে কোনও রাজনৈতিক ফয়দা তুলছেন কি না, তা স্বাধীনভাবে খতিয়ে দেখার জন্য আজই এক উচ্চপদস্থ অফিসারকে পটনা পাঠিয়েছে কমিশন। পাশাপাশি পটনায় নির্বাচন কমিশনের পরামর্শদাতা কে জি রাও-কেও নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে, লালু সরকারি প্রশাসন-যন্ত্রকে ভোটের কাজে লাগাচ্ছেন কি না, তার উপরে কড়া নজর রাখার জন্য। এ ছাড়া আগামিকাল পটনা যাচ্ছেন বিশেষ পর্যবেক্ষক সায়ন চট্টোপাধ্যায়। কমিশন সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, বিহার নির্বাচনকে 'অবাধ ও নিরপেক্ষ' করার জন্য তাঁরা চেষ্টার কসুর করবেন না। এ জন্যই ভোটের দিনক্ষণ পরিবর্তন করতেও কমিশন উৎসাহী নয়। বিজেপি নেতাদের দাবি, কমিশন তাদের সাক্ষ্য জানিয়ে দিয়েছে বিহারে নিরাপত্তা বাহিনী নিয়ে যাওয়া ও সুষ্ঠুভাবে মোতায়েনের জন্য সময় দরকার। সেই জন্যই তিন পর্বে ভোট হচ্ছে।

নির্বাচন কমিশনের চাপে লালুপ্রসাদ খানিকটা রক্ষণাত্মক হওয়ার পর বিজেপি-ও এ বার নতুন

উদ্যমে আসরে নেমেছে। এর আগে দাগি মন্ত্রিদের প্রশ্নে বারবার সংসদ অচল করে দিয়েও লালুর গায়ে আঁচড় দিতে পারেনি বিজেপি। কিন্তু বিহারে বিধানসভা ভোটের আগে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রীর বিরুদ্ধে এফ আই আর হয়েছে, সেই যুক্তিতে ইস্তফার দাবি তুলে আজ সংসদে বিজেপি লালুকে কোণঠাসা করার চেষ্টা করছে। এই আক্রমণ শানানোর ক্ষেত্রে নেতৃত্ব দিয়েছেন বাজপেয়ী স্বয়ং। কয়েকদিন আগে পঞ্জাবের রেল দুর্ঘটনা নিয়েও লালুর বিরুদ্ধে সরব হয়েছিলেন বাজপেয়ী। কিন্তু লোকসভায় আজকের বাজপেয়ী ছিলেন আরও অনেক আক্রমণাত্মক।

আর এই আক্রমণাত্মক বাজপেয়ীর মোকাবিলায় লালুর দল সুকৌশলে এন ডি এ-কে দলিত ও গরিব-বিরোধী বলে চিহ্নিত করার চেষ্টা করেছে। আজ লোকসভায় রঘুনাথ বা বলেন, "এ কথা সত্যি যে লালু গরিব মানুষের দাবি মেটাতে গিয়ে তাঁদের টাকা দিয়েছেন। বঙ্গার লক্ষণের মতো নিজে পয়সা নেননি।" কিন্তু বাজপেয়ীর প্রশ্ন, "ভোটের ঠিক আগে আগেই ওখানে মিষ্টি খাওয়ার জন্য টাকা বণ্টন করা হল কেন? আইন তো নিজের পথেই চলবে কিন্তু আচরণের ক্ষেত্রে নৈতিকতার কি কোনও জায়গা নেই? না কি মন্ত্রীকে লুকিয়ে রাখা হবে?" লোকসভার নেতা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের উদ্দেশ্যে বাজপেয়ীর আরও প্রশ্ন, "লোকসভার নেতা কি পণ করে বলতে পারবেন যে ওখানে একশো টাকার নোট বণ্টন করা হয়নি? ওঁদের নেতারা তো স্বীকার করেছেন যে

নোট ছড়ানো হয়েছে। আমি জানতে চাই কোন শুভ কাজ করতে নোট ছড়িয়েছিলেন লালু?" এই প্রশ্নে উত্তরও নিজেই দিয়ে বাজপেয়ী বলেন, "আচরণবিধি বহাল রয়েছে। আর তারমধ্যেই নোট বণ্টন কর হয়েছে। দারিদ্র দূর করার জন্য তো ওই টাকা বাঁট হয়নি! আর যে মন্ত্রী এই কাণ্ডটি ঘটিয়েছেন, তিনি কিন্তু আদৌ লজ্জিত নন।" তিনি জানান, বিষয়টির ব্যাখ্যা দিতে গিয়ে লোকসভার নেতা 'নিরাশ' করেছেন, তবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে তাঁর প্রত্যাশা ও দাবি, 'প্রধানমন্ত্রী লোকসভায় বিষয়টি ব্যাখ্যা করুন।'

টাকা বিলি নিয়ে বি জে পি জাতীয় স্তরে লালুকে কোণঠাসা করার চেষ্টা করলেও লালু আবার ভোটের বাজারে এটাকেই অস্ত্র করছেন। বি জে পি-কে দলিত-বিরোধী ও গরিব-বিরোধী অ্যাখ্যা দিয়ে দলিত ভোট টানার কৌশল যে লালু ছাড়বেন না তা বাজপেয়ীর দলের নেতারাও মানছেন।

ভোটের ময়দানে কী হবে তা পরের প্রশ্ন। কিন্তু বিজেপি আজকে যে চাপা হয়েছে, তার মূল কারণ নির্বাচন কমিশনের প্যাঁচে পড়ে লালুর পিছু হটা। এবং ভোটের সময়েও কমিশন লালুকে কড়া হাতে সামলাতে পারবেন বলেই বিজেপি নেতারা মনে করছেন। তাঁদের মতে প্রশাসনকে ব্যবহার করে যে বাড়তি আট-দশ শতাংশ ভোট লালু জোগাড় করেন কমিশন সেটা থামাতে পারলে এন ডি এ সমানে সমানে টক্কর দেওয়ার অবস্থায় চলে আসবে।

● রাতভর বৈঠক করে 'র্যালী' বাতিল... পৃঃ ৫

17 DEC 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

# Opposition, Government trade charges over legislative business

11 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 10.** The Opposition today charged the Government with not doing its homework and said that it had not been able to bring enough legislative and official business before Parliament. But the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, countered it saying that after completely stalling the Houses for two whole sessions, the Opposition was now "pretending to be worried about legislation."

The Bharatiya Janata Party spokesman, V.K. Malhotra, started the debate saying that "apart from repeal of some legislation and a couple of Bills to replace ordinances, the Government has been unable to ready new legislation... Is this Government working, we wonder." Two days ago, the BJP deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha, Sushma Swaraj, made a similar charge saying that on some days the Rajya Sabha was adjourned early for want of adequate business.

Talking to reporters later, Mr. Azad said that any new legislation must first be introduced — which takes a couple of minutes — and then sent to the standing committee concerned before it was brought back for discussion and adoption.

"When the Opposition prevented Parliament from functioning for two whole sessions,

naturally no new Bills could be introduced and none could be ready for discussion in this session," he said.

### 'Plenty of time'

As for the list of 40 bills he had mentioned at the start of the current session, he said that 30 belonged to category 'b,' which would be introduced as

soon as the relevant Ministries were ready with the legislation after Cabinet approval. There was plenty of time as the current session would continue till December 23.

There were 11 Bills in category 'a,' to replace ordinances, which were the Government's priority. Some of them had already been approved or were in the process of being approved, including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Bill to replace the repealed Prevention of Terrorism Act. Next week, the Government would place before Parliament for discussion and approval the National Commission for Minorities' Institution Bill to replace an ordinance.

Mr. Azad said the Opposition did not cooperate for two sessions. The Government had to take the route of ordinances and those were now being replaced by legislation. In response to questions, he said he did not think that the Employment Guarantee Bill and the Right to Information Bill would be ready in this session.

## 'Table employment Bill'

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 10.** The Communist Party of India (Marxist) today demanded introduction of the employment guarantee Bill in the current session of Parliament itself.

A national employment guarantee was a promise made by the United Progressive Alliance Government in the Common Minimum Programme.

The Bill should be introduced in the session so that it could be referred to the Standing Committee for scrutiny, the CPI(M) said.

At a press conference, the party MPs, Nilotpal Bas and Mohammed Salim, said the argument against the guarantee on the grounds of inadequate funds could not be advanced.

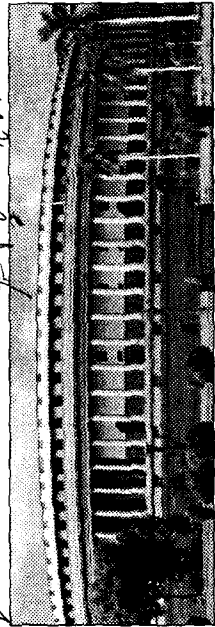
Whenever steps were proposed to help the vulnerable sections, such questions were raised.

# BJP blasts govt for bad House keeping

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 10 DECEMBER

**W**ITH day eight of the 17-day winter session of Parliament drawing to a close, there was, the BJP alleged on Friday, still no sign of any serious government or legislative business before the two Houses — a charge rejected outright by the UPA government and its main backer, the Left.

"We've almost crossed the halfway mark, but there is no government or legislative business," BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra said, adding, "this is not only bad for Parliament but also worrying for the entire country." It was clear, he said, that the government has not lined up any legislative business for the com-



ment was keen on ensuring their passage with an eye on the forthcoming Assembly polls. It'll have unfortunate consequences for the country," the BJP spokesman maintained.

The onus for ensuring that there was enough legislative business before the two Houses lay squarely on the government, Mr. Malhotra asserted. At the same time, he made it clear that the BJP would resist attempts to get the Patents (Amendment)

Bill passed in haste on the last day of the winter session or take the ordinance route to ensure that its provisions could come into force from January next.

"We still are in the dark about the contents of the Bill," he said. The government and the Left, however, joined hands in rejecting the Opposition charge that there was lack of legislative business during the first two weeks of the winter session. They also accused the Opposition of trying to scuttle the smooth conduct of the session by making up "irrelevant issues".

Parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad said all together, around 40 Bills were scheduled for this session, out of which 10 had been put in the priority A Class list. "It's impossible for any government to pass 40

Bills in one session, at best most of them could be introduced. But the government is confident of passing the 10 priority Bills," he told reporters.

Mr. Azad maintained: "There was enough legislative business during the last two weeks and there will be enough in the next half of the session too. Today, the Opposition said the business will not last even till 3 pm. I was present in the House to point out to them that the legislative business actually lasted till 3.45 pm. They should think before making such baseless allegations."

Rejecting the BJP charge, CPM deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Mohammed Salim said: "Several laws were passed in the House, and there is no ground for the BJP to complain on that ground."

# সংসদে কাজ নেই, বিরোধীদের অভিযোগ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ ডিসেম্বর: গত অধিবেশনে দু'পক্ষের সংঘাত চলেছিল সংসদ অচল করে দেওয়ার কেন্দ্র করে। এ বার এনডিএ আর ইউপিএ শিবিরের মধ্যে চাপানউতোর শুরু হয়েছে ঠিক উল্টো কারণে— সংসদ ঠিকমতো চলা নিয়ে!

এনডিএ-র অভিযোগ, সরকার পর্যাপ্ত বিল পেশ না-করায় সংসদ তাড়াতাড়ি শেষ হয়ে যাচ্ছে। সরকার পক্ষ এই দাবি নস্যাত্ন করে দিয়ে বলেছে, কাজ ঠিকই হচ্ছে। এই নিয়ে আজ লোকসভায় একপ্রস্ত বিতর্ক হলে স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় অবশ্য সরকারকে নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন যাতে পর্যাপ্ত কাজ হয়। কাজের সময়ে অনুপস্থিত থাকার কারণে কালই সোমনাথ কয়লামন্ত্রী শিবু সোরেনকে প্রশ্ন করেছিলেন। আজ স্পিকারের বক্তব্যে সরকারের বিড়ম্বনা বাড়তে বাধ্য।

আজ সকাল বারোটায় লোকসভায় প্রমোত্তর পর্ব শেষ হওয়া মাত্রই উঠে দাঁড়ান বিজেপির উপনেতা বিজয়কুমার মলহোত্র এবং ওড়িশার সাংসদ খারবেলা সোয়াইন। তাঁদের বক্তব্য, সভা চালানোর মতো পর্যাপ্ত কাজ সরকারের হাতে নেই। সোয়াইন প্রতিদিনের কাজের তালিকা হাতে তুলে প্রশ্ন করেন, “স্যার, দুপুর দুটো থেকে সাড়ে তিনটে পর্যন্ত এখানে কেবল দুটি বিল পেশ করার কথা লেখা আছে। এই বিল পেশ হতে সময় লাগবে বড়জোর দু'মিনিট। তারপর আমরা কী করব?”

জবাবে আক্রমণাত্মক হয়ে সংসদীয় বিষয়ক মন্ত্রী গুলাম নবি আজাদ বলেন, “ধন্যবাদ। এ বার অন্তত আপনারা সংসদের গুরুত্ব মানছেন।” গত অধিবেশনে বিরোধীদের লাগাতার বিক্ষোভের কথা তুলে তিনি বলেন, এতে এন ডি এ শিবিরের দৈন্যই প্রকাশ পাচ্ছে। আজাদের এই মন্তব্যে ক্ষুব্ধ বিরোধীরা প্রতিবাদ জানাতে আরম্ভ করেন। সরকারের সমর্থক হলেও সমাজবাদী পার্টির রামজিলাল সুমন বলেন, “সভায় পর্যাপ্ত কাজ থাকা উচিত।” সোমনাথ সবাইকে শান্ত করতে

জানান, বিষয়টি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। তিনি দেখবেন যাতে এ রকম কিছু না হয়।

পরে মলহোত্র অভিযোগ করেন, “লোকসভায় বিল নেই। রাজ্যসভাতেও এই হাল হয়েছে কয়েকবার। সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রী বলেছিলেন, এই অধিবেশনে ১৬টি বিল পাশ করানো হবে। কিন্তু পোটা রদ ও তার বিকল্প আইন বাদে বড় কোনও বিলই আসেনি।” পেটেন্ট বিল বা কর্মসংস্থান বিল কেন আসছে না, প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন বিরোধীরা। লোকসভায় সিপিএমের নেতা বাসুদেব আচারিয়ার অবশ্য পাল্টা যুক্তি, “বিল ছাড়াও তো সংসদের আরও অনেক কাজ আছে। কাল সংসদের অধিবেশন রাত পৌনে আটটা পর্যন্ত চলেছিল। আজও একঘণ্টা মধ্যাহ্নভোজের বিরতি বাদে পুরো সময়টাই কাজ হয়েছে।” গুলাম নবি আজাদও লোকসভায় দাবি করেছেন, সরকারের হাতে পর্যাপ্ত বিল রয়েছে। রাজ্যসভার সি পিএম দলনেতা নীলোৎপল বসুর যুক্তি, “সপ্তাহে দু'দিন সরকারি বিল এবং অন্য দু'দিন বিরোধীদের তোলা বিষয় নিয়ে সংসদে আলোচনা হবে। এটাই ঠিক হয়েছিল। সেইমতোই সংসদ চলছে। ওদের অভিযোগ পুরোপুরি অবাস্তব।”

কিন্তু খোদ কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রীও সংসদকে অবহেলা করার কারণে দলীয় সদস্যদের উপরে বিরক্ত। কয়েক দিন আগেই কংগ্রেস সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে তিনি দুশ্চিন্তা প্রকাশ করেছেন দলীয় সাংসদদের উপস্থিতির হার নিয়ে। বিশেষত, দুপুরবেলায়। আজ সকালে সনিয়া নিজে অনেকক্ষণ লোকসভায় হাজির থাকলেও দলীয় সাংসদদের উপস্থিতির হারে বিশেষ উন্নতি হয়নি। বিরোধীদের অভিযোগ, প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ এবং লোকসভার নেতা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় অনেক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আলোচনায় থাকেন না। এই শুনে সরকার পক্ষের সাংসদদের অনেকে বলেছেন, বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীও আলোচনার সময়ে বেশি করে এলে ভাল হয়।



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2004

## PARLIAMENT LIVE

WHEN HE TOOK charge as Speaker of the 14th Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee, India's senior-most parliamentarian, promised to bring order and discipline to a House that seemed without hope so far as the conduct of several of its members was concerned. Evidently, the 10-term Communist Party of India (Marxist) Member of Parliament underestimated the disruptive power of the flock that was now under his regulatory authority. His first experience as presiding officer was stressful, with the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party driving him to despair with rude interruptions and personal attacks followed by the boycott of the House committees and the Finance Bill. Although the BJP has behaved in more 'parliamentary' fashion this winter session, party MPs are clearly restive and there are indications that a new offensive could begin soon. Not that the treasury benches have set exemplary standards. A case in point is the war of words between Lalu Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan. While the duo has been careful not to quarrel within the precincts of the House, as Cabinet Ministers bound by the principle of collective responsibility they ought to have known better than to quarrel at all. In the event, the spat has become a point of contention in the Lok Sabha, leading to the now familiar story of pandemonium, walk-out, and the Speaker's last resort — adjournment.

Legislative disorderliness is not peculiar to Sansad Bhawan. Improbable as it may seem, the Mother of all Parliaments is quite relaxed about allowing its members freedom to interrupt and spar with each other. Indeed a House of Commons fact-sheet titled "Some traditions and customs" describes the Commons chamber as a "rather noisy place with robustly expressed opinions, many interventions, expressions of approval or disapproval and sometimes repartee and banter." To be sure, the British Lower House

frowns on "insulting, coarse or abusive" language and disallows anyone, however untruthful, from being called a "liar." (Winston Churchill famously substituted "terminological inexactitude" for the proscribed word.) And yes, there seems to be no Westminster equivalent of the Indian walkout, and the unique and patentable phenomenon known as "jumping into the well." Ironically, the latter practice is expressly prohibited by a "code of conduct" the Lok Sabha adopted for its members in November 2001. That Mr. Chatterjee came close last week to naming three MPs for this transgression shows such codes are easier adopted than enforced.

It is against this background that the Speaker's proposal to have parliamentary proceedings telecast live by Doordarshan gains importance. Will this have a salutary effect on all MPs? Will they be more decorous knowing they are being watched? Or will they be tempted to play to the gallery? Legislative proceedings are telecast live in the United States and in the United Kingdom. In 1979, the U.S. cable television industry created C-SPAN, a private, non-profit company dedicated to offering live television coverage of the proceedings of the House of Representatives. The House of Commons toyed with the idea in the early 1980s but faced resistance from members who felt concerned that MPs would address the public rather than the Chair. There was also some apprehension that the cameras would focus on drama rather than on substantive discussion. By 1989, the first experimental broadcasts started. Today BBC has a channel (BBC Parliament) committed to live, unedited coverage of Parliament. Has the live coverage done any public good? In a recent survey done for C-SPAN among select political scientists, 96 per cent were in agreement that televised coverage of the House debates "was the best decision for the public." Speaker Chatterjee should be pleased to hear that.

11 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

# Laloo-Paswan row rocks House

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, December 9

THE LALOO-PASWAN confrontation rocked Parliament today as a belligerent Opposition demanded an immediate explanation, on the issue, from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and forced adjournment in both the Houses.

Immediately after Question Hour, NDA members in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha got up demanding that the PM make a statement on the matter.

They were unwilling to accept a statement from anyone else.

In the Lok Sabha, as the NDA members and ruling benches shouted slogans and counter-slogans, Steel and Fertiliser Minister Ram Vilas Paswan gave a clarification that he had never made corruption charges against Railway Minister Laloo Yadav. As the chaotic situation continued, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee urged members from both sides to maintain decorum. "Please do not bring down the dignity and honour of Parliament ... The situation is intolerable," he told them.

Later, Janata Dal (U) member Prabhunath Singh, who had raised the issue, made certain remarks that angered Laloo Prasad Yadav and he reacted sharply. As agitated members from both sides advanced towards each other, the Speaker adjourned the House for

half-an-hour. When the House re-assembled, he was again forced to adjourn it till the lunch recess.

In Rajya Sabha, a similar situation was witnessed after Leader of the Opposition Jaswant Singh raised the issue demanding that the PM come to the House and respond to the "serious matter".

Such a row between two Central ministers only undermined the democratic system, he stated. As Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Suresh Pachauri refused to respond to the Opposition demand, BJP members, led by Sushma Swaraj and S.S. Ahluwalia, got up loudly demanding that the PM should respond to the issue.

Shouting slogans "Pradhan Mantri Jaiab De, Pradhan Mantri Haazir Ho," the BJP members stalled House proceedings for over 20 minutes. Earlier, RJD members sought to divert attention by referring to a letter, purportedly, written by Gauri Advani — estranged daughter-in-law of BJP president L.K. Advani — to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Amidst the continuing din, House Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat assured members that their sentiments would be conveyed to the Prime Minister and the matter should be treated as closed. But his pleas were not heeded to and he finally adjourned the House till the post-lunch sitting.



Shekhar Iyer  
New Delhi, December 9

## Advani cold to NDA's stall-session plans

LEADER OF the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and BJP president L.K. Advani on Thursday convinced NDA leaders, particularly those belonging to the JD(U), to drop plans for reverting to stalling tactics in Parliament.

Though the Opposition needed to corner the government on the issue of spat between Union Ministers Laloo Prasad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan, it could not afford to be seen headed on an obstructionist course, Advani said.

The BJP chief, who had written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urging him to come clean and invoke the principle of collective responsibility of the Union Cabinet, said the Opposition should use the floor of Parliament to press its case.

The BJP has been under pressure, particularly from its Bihar ally, to go ballistic against Laloo, who denied, outright, in Parliament making any allegation against Paswan when TV channels were re-running shots of his outbursts.

The NDA meeting agreed not to disrupt Question Hour or to rush to the Well of the House. The best option, it was felt, was to move a notice of a breach of privilege against Laloo.



Ram Vilas Paswan & Laloo Prasad Yadav

# লালু-পাসোয়ান নিয়ে বিবৃতি দিলেন না প্রধানমন্ত্রী, সংসদে হল্লা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৯ ডিসেম্বর: লালু-পাসোয়ান দ্বন্দ্বের প্রসঙ্গ তুলে বিজেপি আজ বেশ খানিকক্ষণ সংসদ অচল করল ঠিকই, কিন্তু লাগাতার অচল করার সাহস তারা জেটাতে পারল না।

লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়কে দেওয়া প্রতিশ্রুতি থেকে সরে এসে আজ দু'বার লোকসভা অচল করে দেন বিজেপি-সহ এন ডি এ সাংসদেরা। কিন্তু মধ্যাহ্নভোজের পর তাঁরা আর সভা অচল করার রাস্তায় হাঁটেননি। লাগাতার সংসদ অচল করার পথ যে তাঁরা নেবেন না, সে কথাও স্পষ্ট ভাবেই জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন বিজেপি নেতারা। বিজেপি-র দাবি ছিল, লালু-পাসোয়ান বিরোধ নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বিবৃতি দিতে হবে। কাল এ নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে চিঠিও দিয়েছিলেন বি জে পি সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী। কিন্তু আজ লোকসভা দু-বার অচল করে দেওয়া সত্ত্বেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী সেই দাবি মানেননি। সংসদীয়মন্ত্রী গুলাম নবী আজাদ পরিষ্কার জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, “মনমোহন সিংহ এ নিয়ে কোনও বিবৃতিই দেবেন না।” এই অবস্থায় লোকসভায় বি জে পি-র উপনেতা বিজয়কুমার মলহোত্রের বক্তব্য, “আমরা আমাদের প্রতিবাদ জানাতে চেয়েছিলাম, জানিয়েছি।”

প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী সংসদ অচল করার তীব্র বিরোধী। তিনি দলের নেতাদের এটাও জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন যে, প্রশ্নোত্তরের জন্য নির্ধারিত সময়ে গোলমাল করা তিনি

পছন্দ করেন না। সভার ওয়েলে নেমে এসে বিস্ফোভ দেখানোরও তীব্র বিরোধী তিনি। আডবানীও বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে একমত। বিহারের বিজেপি ও সংযুক্ত জনতা দলের সাংসদেরা এ দিন ওয়েলে গিয়ে সভা ভঙ্গুল করতে চাইলেও অনুমতি পাননি। ফলে প্রবল হল্লা করে লোকসভার অধিবেশন বার দুয়েক মূলতুবি করিয়েই রণে ভঙ্গ দিয়েছেন এন ডি এ সাংসদেরা। প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বিবৃতি দিতে বাধ্য করার মতো পরিস্থিতি তৈরি করতেও ব্যর্থ বিজেপি। তারা লালু ও রামবিলাসের বিরুদ্ধে অধিকারভঙ্গের প্রস্তাব আনছে। পি জি টমাস ইতিমধ্যেই তা স্পিকারের কাছে জমা দিয়েছেন।

লোকসভায় আজ চিৎকার-চোঁচামেচির ফাঁকেই গুলাম নবী আজাদ আবার জানিয়ে দেন, সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রী বিষয়টি পরিষ্কার করে দিয়েছেন। এটা নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আর বলার কিছুই থাকতে পারে না। কাল লালুপ্রসাদ জানিয়েছিলেন, তিনি রামবিলাসের বিরুদ্ধে কিছুই বলেননি। আর আজ রামবিলাস এন ডি এ সাংসদদের প্রবল হাইহল্লার মধ্যে সাফাই দিয়েছেন, তিনি মন্ত্রিসভায় তাঁর সহকর্মীর বিরুদ্ধে কিছুই বলেননি। তিনি বিহার সরকারের সমালোচনা করেছেন। ইউ পি এ-র চেয়ারপার্সন হলেন সনিয়া গান্ধী, যিনি চরম ত্যাগ স্বীকার করেছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী হলেন মনমোহনের মতো বড় ব্যক্তিত্ব। সেই সরকারের কোনও সহকর্মীর বিরুদ্ধে তিনি কিছু বলতেই পারেন না।

রামবিলাস যখন এই কথা বলছেন, তখন এন ডি এ-র সাংসদরা প্রবল

শ্লোগান দিচ্ছেন, ‘প্রধানমন্ত্রী জবাব দো’। সাংসদদের শাস্ত করতে না-পেরে বিরক্ত স্পিকার এক সময় বলেই ফেলেন, “এই পরিস্থিতি সহ্য কার যায় না।” হটগোলের জেরে প্রথমে দুপুর বারোটা থেকে পঁয়তাল্লিশ মিনিটের জন্য, পরে আবার বেলা দুটো পর্যন্ত লোকসভা মূলতুবি করে দেন তিনি। এর পরে অবশ্য স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই সভা চলে। মূল্যবৃদ্ধি নিয়ে বিজেপি-রই অন্য প্রস্তাবের উপরে আলোচনা হয়। মলহোত্রের সাফাই, “আমরা মূল্যবৃদ্ধি নিয়ে আলোচনার সুযোগ ছাড়তে চাইনি। তাই সভা আর মূলতুবি করিনি। কিন্তু লালু-পাসোয়ান প্রসঙ্গ ছাড়ছি না। ওঁরা দু-জনেই সম্পূর্ণ মিথ্যা কথা বলেছেন। টিভি ও সংবাদপত্রের কল্যাণে সারা দেশ জানে তাঁরা আসলে কী বলেছিলেন। তার পরও তাঁরা সংসদে অন্য কথা বলছেন।”

প্রণব-শিবরাজের বিরুদ্ধে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় এবং স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিলের বিরুদ্ধে অধিকারভঙ্গের প্রস্তাব আনার কথা ভাবছে বিজেপি। বেআইনি অনুপ্রবেশ ও জঙ্গি তৎপরতা নিয়ে নিয়ে এই দুই মন্ত্রী পরস্পরবিরোধী মন্তব্য করেছেন বলে বিজেপি-র অভিযোগ। মলহোত্র বলেছেন, “প্রণব কাল রাজ্যসভায় বলেছেন, অনুপ্রবেশ বেড়েছে। জঙ্গি তৎপরতাও বাড়েছে। আর পাটিল জানিয়েছিলেন, অনুপ্রবেশ এবং জঙ্গি হানা দুটোই কমে গিয়েছে।” এটা নিয়েই অধিকারভঙ্গের প্রস্তাব আনতে চায় বিজেপি। কংগ্রেস অবশ্য দাবি করেছে, দুই মন্ত্রী একই কথা বলেছেন।

## Parliament passes POTA Repeal Bill

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 9.** Parliament tonight passed the Prevention of Terrorism (Repeal) Bill and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod by a voice vote after a marathon debate and a walkout by the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party.

While the Samajwadi Party abstained from voting, the AIADMK opposed the new amendments in the Unlawful

*of Parliament*  
Activities (Prevention) Bill that replaces POTA. Both the Bills were passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday.

In his reply to the discussion on the POTA Repeal Bill, the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, defended the measure. He said the Centre had to strike a balance so that while innocents did not suffer, terrorist activities were contained. He rejected the Opposition charge that the Bill to repeal POTA was brought for political considerations.

*H0-1 10/12*  
"We do not want a draconian law like POTA. On the other hand, we are clear that terrorist activities also have to be curbed, controlled and contained. We have to strike a balance," Mr. Patil said.

Earlier, the debate witnessed another walkout by the BJP which objected to a remark by the Congress member, R.K. Anand. He apologised to the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Jaswant Singh, for his remarks during the discussion.

# BJP walks out of LS for alleged misuse of CBI

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 7 DECEMBER

the All India Defence Employees Federation in the Karnataka capital.

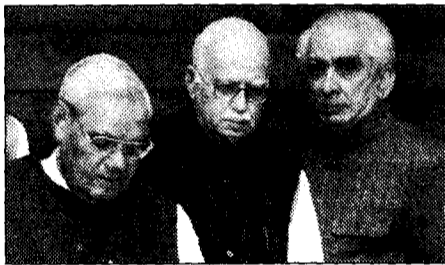
**T**HE BJP-led NDA on Tuesday staged a walk-out from the Lok Sabha during the zero hour, protesting against the alleged "misuse" of the CBI by the UPA government to nail its opponents.

And in Bangalore on Tuesday, NDA convenor George Fernandes tried to target Congress president Sonia Gandhi by accusing her of being the mastermind behind the Tehelka sting-

operation and demanded that the CBI register cases against the bribe-givers too.

"If anybody has accepted bribe and someone has offered it, then the bribe-giver is a bigger offender than the bribe-taker. What the government has done is to be very selective," he said while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the fourth federal council meeting of

"A lot of money from various sources that came into this operation has not been made public still," the former defence minister said, reacting angrily to the CBI's



**TRIBE:** A.B. Vajpayee, L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

decision to register cases against former BJP chief Bangaru Laxman and former Samata Party president Jaya Jaitly. Charging the UPA government with going in a direction where it was not really attacking those "who need to be attacked," Mr Fernandes demanded that the Tehelka team involved in the sting operation be "punished" on the ground that giving bribe is a crime.

Left joins cry on review by panel

# Lok Sabha repeals terror law

9-8  
7/12  
Parliament

## BJP vows to block bill in Upper House

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Dec. 6:** The Lok Sabha today repealed the Prevention of Terrorism Act amid a walkout by the National Democratic Alliance. The bill repealing the controversial anti-terror law will be sent to the Rajya Sabha in a few days for discussion and approval.

The Lower House also approved another bill amending the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 to strengthen the fight against terrorism.

Both measures were passed by voice vote after a nearly five-hour discussion during which the United Progressive Alliance argued for repealing the previous anti-terror act citing several instances of its misuse and the NDA opposed a repeal.

The Opposition alliance was isolated on the repeal, but the Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and the Left joined the BJP in asking for the amendment bill to be sent to a parliamentary standing committee.

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee rejected the demand for referring the amendment bill to a standing committee, saying this was not being done as the ordinance and the bill would lapse on January 12 after Parliament's winter session ends. Thus, the bill had to be passed during the session itself, said the Speaker who made it clear that he personally favours referring important bills to a standing committee.

The Samajwadi Party and the BSP separately walked out to protest the decision not to refer the new bill to the standing committee. The CPM and CPI wanted more consulta-

tions to ensure that certain provisions of the old anti-terror act which have been included in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2004 are not misused.

With CPI hinting it could abstain from voting if the government did not agree to consultations, the Leader of the House, Pranab Mukherjee, said amendments could be made in the second bill, if required, even after the House passes it.

Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, demanded that the repeal and the amendment should be referred to the home ministry's standing committee. He said in the past too a bill replacing an ordinance has been referred to the standing committee and cited examples.

Advani said India would be the first country to repeal an anti-terror law despite the UN Security Council having stated that terrorism is the biggest danger the world faces. He added that the Prevention of Terrorism Act should not be repealed just because it has been abused in some cases.

The Opposition leader led a walkout by the BJP and its allies after home minister Shivraj Patil said the government opposed referring the bills to the standing committee.

Gurudas Dasgupta of the CPI asked the government not to link the repeal of one bill with the passage of the other, saying: "This is not the way to pass a bill."

Patil assured the House that the Centre would consult the Left on the second bill after the CPI and CPM protested against the decision not to refer the amendment bill, 2004 to the standing committee.

**New Delhi, Dec. 6:** Unable to thwart the passage of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2004 in the Lok Sabha, the BJP seems determined to hold it up in the Upper House.

The bill, which is expected to become an act by tonight and will replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act, is to be sent to the Rajya Sabha for its assent this week.

The BJP will demand that the bill be referred to the home ministry's standing committee before it becomes law.

Sushma Swaraj, the party's deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha, said: "We are not totally opposed to any law which will fight terrorism but we are clear in our demand that it should be sent to the standing committee."

The BJP, which lacks the numbers to vote out a bill if there is a division of votes in the Upper House, reckons that it will make up for the shortfall on two counts: one, the UAPA bill will have to go to a parliamentary standing committee of the home ministry. This is one of the eight committees under the jurisdiction of the Upper House. The other 17 fall under the Lok Sabha's jurisdiction.

Sushma heads the home ministry's standing committee.

The BJP is also happy that it is Rajya Sabha chairperson Bhairon Singh Shekhawat's prerogative to send a bill to the committee; he is not bound to go by the will of the House.

He can thus overrule the Congress and the rest of the ruling United Progressive Alliance if they clamour for the bill's passage.

Sushma cited parliamentary precedents to buttress the BJP's case.

# Advani regrets stalling of Parliament

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9.** The Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, has expressed regret for the BJP's stalling of Parliament in the last session and promised to make every effort to ensure this is not repeated in the winter session. He also said that if the next Lok Sabha election were to be held on schedule after five years then it was "quite likely" that the BJP leadership would pass on to a person other than the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and himself.

Speaking rather candidly in an interview given to BBC's 'Hardtalk India' programme to be telecast tomorrow night, Mr. Advani virtually suggested that henceforth his party would prefer to use the term 'Bharatiyata' (Indianness) or nationalism instead of Hindutva to denote the BJP ideology.

"At our last meeting in Goa, the word 'Hindutva' was not stressed. 'Indianness' was stressed, 'Nationalism' was stressed. And it was emphasised that when we talk of Hindutva,

we do not mean anything other than Bharatiyata or Indianness," he said.

It was brought to Mr. Advani's notice that in five years both Mr. Vajpayee and he would be over 80 years in age. It was in that context he said that a change of leadership was "quite likely" although he did not indicate who would be the new leader.

Mr. Advani agreed that he would like to see Parliament debate important issues, and he hoped that the next session would be smooth — at least he would make the effort to see that it was, he told the BBC.

## Younger leadership

PTI, UNI report:

To the question of younger leadership in the BJP, Mr. Advani said: "Well, we've already done it in many ways. In the election of party office-bearers, in our selection of candidates. Perhaps no other party in the country has been trying to build a second-rung leadership in the systematic manner in which the BJP has been doing."

MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 2004

## OPPOSITION AND PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENTARY MISCONDUCT HAS become so routine that it might appear a waste of effort even to discuss the whys and wherefores of it. Forget the daily adjournments and walkouts; in recent times disrupters have spared no occasion, not even the once sacrosanct presidential address. However, when confrontation reaches a point where the very existence of Parliament is questioned, then it is distress time as much for democracy as for the institution itself. As if the scenes witnessed this budget session were not unedifying enough, a new controversy has erupted over Manmohan Singh's alleged "rude behaviour" towards an Opposition delegation that sought amendments to the Finance Bill. What exactly happened at the meeting is a matter of speculation, although the Prime Minister — a man of such genteel disposition that few would disbelieve him — has since clarified that he never meant any disrespect. Even assuming Dr. Singh lost his cool in dealing with the Opposition, there was no case for the latter, George Fernandes in particular, to resort to language that would embarrass a street bully. Much less considering the circumstances in which Dr. Singh turned down their plea for amendments. It is no small irony that an Opposition that now accuses Dr. Singh of discourtesy failed to accord him the courtesies he deserved as a newly sworn-in Prime Minister.

Mr. Fernandes and others not merely went against convention in stopping Dr. Singh from introducing his Council of Ministers; they deprived him of his right to reply to the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's Address. The National Democratic Alliance has since stonewalled the Government in the manner of irate protesters carrying out a blockade; it threatened a boycott of the parliamentary standing committees and insisted that the

budget be passed without a debate. The relentless tension was bound to tell somewhere. In seeking modifications in a budget it was determined not to debate, the Opposition clearly crossed a *Lakshman Rekha* as far as Dr. Singh was concerned. The upshot of this ugly sparring was the unopposed passage of a Finance Bill containing budgetary proposals amounting to Rs.500,000 crores. This is irresponsible Opposition conduct by any yardstick, and only reinforces the impression that the NDA constituents are bad losers. The Vajpayee-led coalition must do serious introspection about its record in Parliament, if for no other reason than its plummeting image among the urban middle class, once its core constituency.

Parliament-watchers are wont to recall the dignity and style of legislative conduct in the faraway days when such greats as Jawaharlal Nehru and Nath Pai gently sparred on the floor of the House. It is futile, and perhaps not even necessary, to expect the same levels of courtesy and grace from a Parliament that has long been transformed in character. Today's Lok Sabha is arguably more representative of society at large than at any time in the past. It is only fair then that rather than stick to the classical format, a Lalu Prasad and a Mayawati be allowed to bring their own distinctive styles to parliamentary debate. The same goes for disruptions. The Opposition cannot be expected to observe the niceties of parliamentary conduct in the face of grave misdemeanours by a Government. The Opposition was required to play the role of rigorous investigator in such cases as Bofors and Tehelka. However, that is a far cry from Mr. Fernandes virtually pronouncing the demise of Parliament. If all debates were to be settled on the street, as he has so casually advocated, we would soon have no use for elections.

30 AUG 2004



# Opposition's posture blamed for Parliament stand-off

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 27.** The Government today blamed the Opposition for the stand-off in Parliament and the truncated budget session.

"The problem is that they have not yet reconciled themselves to the fact that they have lost the elections. The Opposition has adopted a belligerent posture from day one in the hope of unsettling the Government. They must realise that the United Progressive Alliance is here to stay," the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, said.

Addressing the media a day after both Houses of Parliament were adjourned *sine die* a week ahead of schedule, he said the Opposition's strategy was to keep the pot boiling by raising one issue after the other. "They are not interested in debating things; they just want to raise issues and prevent Parliament from functioning smoothly."

## Ready for discussion

The UPA Government was ready for a discussion on any of the issues raised by the Opposition. "We were prepared to discuss the issue of 'tainted' Ministers, the Savarkar issue and the question of the war-

rants of arrest issued against Uma Bharti. But perhaps they feel that if they participate in the discussion then the issue will go away," he said.

Mr. Azad expressed the hope that the inter-session would provide time for the Opposition for introspection and bring about a change in their attitude. "We have requested the Presiding Officers of both Houses to call a meeting of all political parties with a view to finding a solution to the stand-off. This issue has to be dealt with. We cannot run Parliament on a day-to-day basis. If we continue in this manner we run the risk of people losing faith in Parliament," he said.

One of the reasons why the Savarkar issue and the arrest warrants against Uma Bharti were raised was the coming Assembly elections in Maharashtra.

## Savarkar issue

He sought to distance the Government from the remarks made by the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, on Savarkar. "They were his personal views and not that of the Government."

He clarified that the decision to remove the plaque was that of the Indian Oil Corporation

Trust and not the Government.

The Government was keen on repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) and replace it with new legislation — the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill 2004 — but could not do so on account of the pre-mature adjournment of Parliament.

He said the Government may now bring an ordinance to do away with POTA.

## The bills

The other bills scheduled to be introduced were the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill, The Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Repeal Bill, The State Emblem of India Bill, The Representation of People (Amendment) Bill, the Government Securities Bill, The Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Bill, The Seeds Bill, The Banking Regulations (Amendment) Bill and the Securities Contracts Regulation (Amendment) Bill.

According to Mr. Azad, the Lok Sabha had lost 55 hours and 35 minutes and the Rajya Sabha 55 hours and 21 minutes during the second session of the 14th Lok Sabha and the 202nd session of the Rajya Sabha due to adjournment on account of interruption by the Opposition.

# BJP, partners shirking responsibility: CPI(M)

By Our Staff Reporter

**BANGALORE, AUG. 27.** The Bharatiya Janata Party and its National Democratic Alliance partners had abdicated their responsibility as Opposition parties by choosing to boycott Parliament and demanding that the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, accept their memorandum of demands outside the House, S. Ramachandran Pillai, Polit Bureau member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), said here today.

At a press conference called to announce the progress of the week-long political campaign launched by the party on August 25, Mr. Pillai said the campaign was to focus on issues that were rocking the nation at present, and held dangerous portents to communal harmony, such as the BJP's attempts to revive the Hindutva agenda, and the display of its "disrup-

tionist agenda" in Parliament.

Issues such as the National Employment Guarantee Act, Central legislation for agricultural labour, reservation for women in the legislatures and Parliament, increased investment in agriculture, higher credit for farmers and expenditure in education and health and strengthening the public distribution system, were also being focussed on.

## FDI issue

Mr. Pillai said that "jathas" and other activities at the city, district and village levels were highlighting the consequences of indiscriminate opening up and handing over of key sectors to foreign capital through increases in foreign direct investment cap in telecom, insurance and civil aviation sectors. The party was against reduction in the interest paid on the Employees' Provident Fund. It was

also for Central legislation to empower State Governments to regulate admissions and fee structure in private institutions in higher education.

Mr. Pillai said the CPI (M) had decided to keep out of the United Progressive Alliance Government, as it was not a decisive force within Parliament. "We feel we can be more effective by supporting from outside and offering constructive criticism."

## Government's promises

The State Secretary of the CPI (M), G.N. Nagaraj, said in Karnataka, the party was focussing on the "big gulf" between the budget announced by the coalition Government led by the Congress, and the mandate of the people. Until the Government addressed issues related to fiscal responsibility, it would not be able to keep its commitments or fulfil the promises made to people.

# Opposition being denied 'adequate space,' says BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 27.** The Bharatiya Janata Party today charged the UPA Government with denying "adequate space" to the Opposition to enable it to raise key issues of governance in Parliament.

Objecting to the reported statement of the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, on the "confrontation" between the NDA leaders and the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the BJP general secretary and spokesman, Arun Jaitley, said that a senior leader such as Mr. Mukherjee had behaved "arrogantly" as if "the Government did not need an Opposition."

Defending the boycott by the NDA on the last day of the Budget session of Parliament on Thursday, Mr. Jaitley said: "Parliament is not only meant for conducting the Government

business but also for issues the Opposition wants to raise. There should be adequate space for the Opposition in Parliament. When that place is denied, it leads to a deadlock."

## 'Failure on many fronts'

At a party briefing, Mr. Jaitley referred to the Government's performance over the past three months and charged it with having failed on several fronts.

"We have an eminent economist as the Prime Minister but there is complete stagnation in the domain of economic policies."

The Government has failed to check price rise, spiralling inflation, prices of petroleum products, industrial unrest and strikes.

"Strikes are back in a big way. There is tension between the Left parties and the Government and they have differences

on several issues. This is certainly not a positive signal to the global community. The price rise has affected the common people badly," Mr. Jaitley said.

## 'Government exposed'

He said the two issues that led to the deadlock in Parliament — Uma Bharti's case of hoisting the Tricolour at Hubli in 1994 and the disrespect shown to Savarkar by removing the plaque from Cellular Jail at Port Blair — has only exposed the UPA Government.

"Discourtesy by the Government is being publicised as a virtue, arrogance has become determination by a Government whose mascot now is 'tainted' Ministers. In the past three months, the Government's image has taken a beating. The Government is going to be judged by its actions, not by words," Mr. Jaitley said.

# Parliament nod for Budget

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 26. Parliament today approved the 2004-05 Union Budget with the Lok Sabha passing the Finance Bill 2004 with 55 amendments and the Rajya Sabha later returning it. There was no discussion on the taxation proposals in either House; nor was the principal Opposition, National Democratic Alliance (NDA), present as it decided to boycott the proceedings.

## IT limit up

Through the 55 amendments he moved today, the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, extended the no-income-tax-liability limit from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 1,11,250 and retained the tax exemption on Non-Resident Indian deposits till the end of the current financial year. He also clarified the provisions relating to taxation of "gifts" from unrelated persons.

Since there was no discussion on the provisions of the Finance Bill, Mr. Chidambaram did not elaborate on the amendments. Later, the Government put out an official note listing some of the changes, but most members remained unaware of the bulk of the changes in the taxation proposals.

## No debate

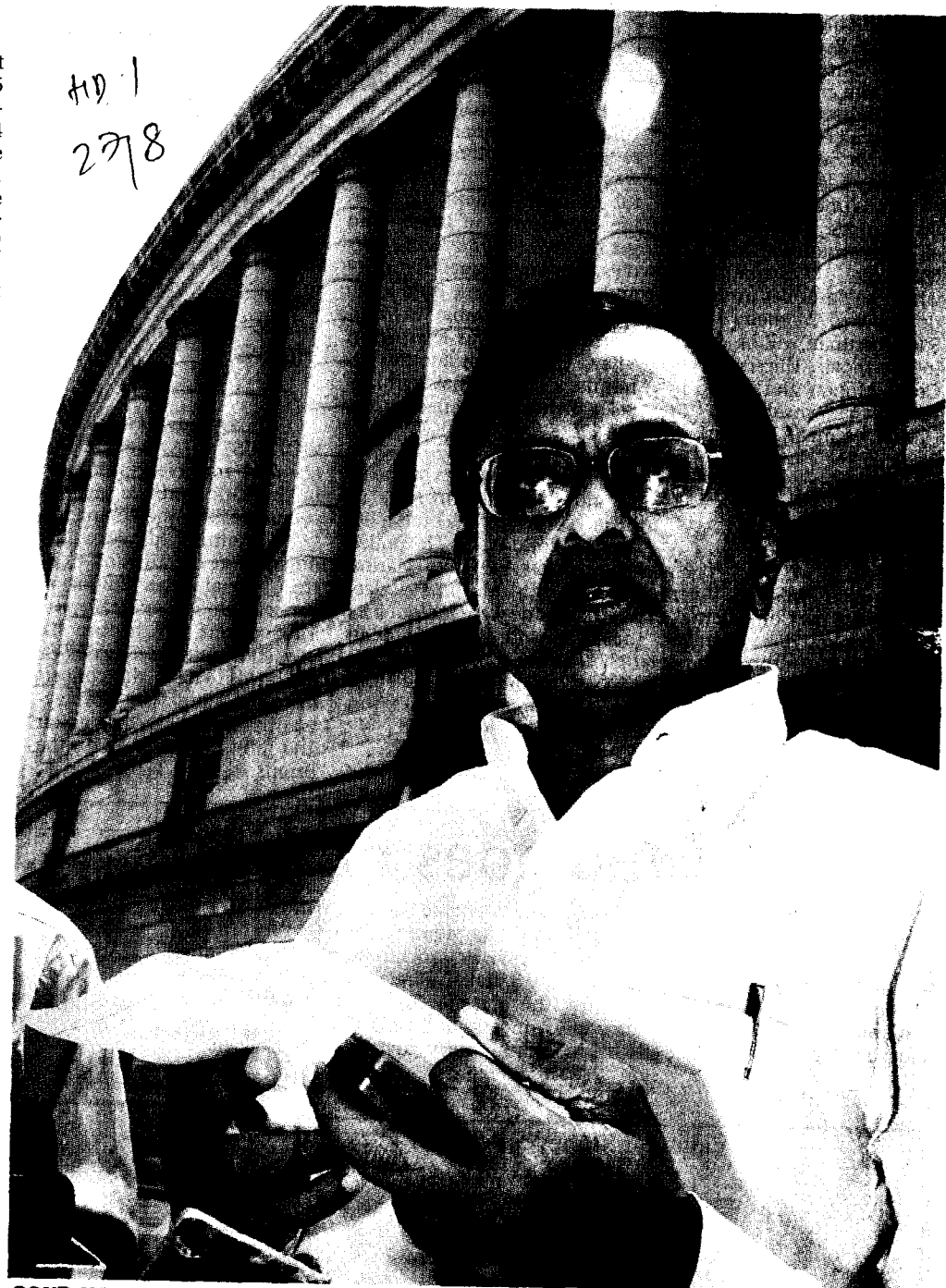
The continuing standoff between the ruling alliance and the opposition National Democratic Alliance ensured that there was no debate on the performance of various Ministries and their demands for the current year or on the taxation proposals of the budget.

By the evening, both Houses of Parliament were adjourned *sine die*, bringing to an end the monsoon session one week short of the original schedule.

In amending the Finance Bill, Mr. Chidambaram took note of the representations that the 100 per cent rebate provided to individuals with income not exceeding Rs. 1 lakh would result in a situation where they would have higher incomes than those with incomes marginally above Rs. 1 lakh. Therefore, relief has now been provided to ensure that those with incomes up to Rs. 1,11,250 would also have a post-tax income of Rs. 1 lakh.

## More time for NRIs

The Minister responded partially to the representations on withdrawal of tax exemption on interest incomes from Non-Resident External (NRE) and Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) accounts. This exemption was to have been



**SOUR NOTE:** Even as he offered marginal income tax reliefs while getting the Union Budget approved by Parliament on Thursday, the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, expressed unhappiness over the Finance Bill being passed without a debate. — Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

withdrawn from September 1, 2004 but will now cease from April 1, 2005. This has been done in order to give sufficient time to the NRIs to rearrange their funds and to enable a wider consultation on the issue.

Similarly, the tax exemption on leased aircraft was to be withdrawn from September 1 this year but has now been put off to April 1, 2005. This too has been done to give time to companies to reorganise their leasing plans as per the new tax regime.

## Provision on 'gifts'

Mr. Chidambaram clarified the provision relating to "gifts"

from unrelated persons.

The provision now states that any sum received by an individual or the Hindu Undivided Family from an unrelated person without consideration would be taxed if the amount exceeds Rs. 25,000, except in the case of sums received on the occasion of marriage or under a will or by way of inheritance or in contemplation of death.

Another clarification pertains to the provision for rigorous punishment for the falsification of books of accounts or documents by a person to induce or abet any other person to evade tax, penalty or interest chargeable under the Income-Tax Act.

It has now been clarified that for purposes of establishing the charge, it would not be necessary to prove the evasion of tax, penalty or interest by the other person.

## Provisions modified

The Minister clarified that provisions relating to Annual Information Return (AIR) had been modified to state that an AIR is to be filed by certain agencies and assesseees who are required to maintain books of account.

The information to be furnished would be specified in the Income-Tax Rules.

# Shamiana Politics

## 7/18 27/8 The NDA needs to respect the role of Parliament

Till Wednesday, the NDA referred to Manmohan Singh as a rubber stamp prime minister. Now they find him the "rudest prime minister ever". The crime that has earned Singh the sobriquet is his refusal to entertain the Opposition's "suggestions and comments" on the Finance Bill. Singh is absolutely right in doing so. He has pointed out that the proper forum to present the suggestions is Parliament. The Opposition has no moral authority to press for changes in the Bill through a memorandum after refusing to debate it in Parliament. If, Singh had entertained the demand, he would have been charged for conspiring with the Opposition to subvert the role of Parliament as the forum to debate public policy. Memorandum rustling is the job of lobbyists. Institutional propriety demands that MPs use the floor of the House to raise issues of public interest. Instead, in a fit of pique, the NDA refused to debate the Finance Bill despite appeals from the PM and the finance minister. By refusing to intervene constructively in a crucial part of policy-making, the Opposition has shirked its role in Parliament. It has failed the people. Ever since it lost power, the NDA has refused to adhere to established norms of parliamentary practice. In fact, violation of the norms of democratic discourse has become the norm. The first hundred days of the Manmohan Singh government have been characterised by the absence of serious debates on issues of public concern. Instead, Parliament has been reduced to a platform for sloganeering.

Lost in the controversy over Singh's "impolite and discourteous" behaviour towards the NDA delegation are the changes that it sought in the Finance Bill. Among the demands were exemption of transport booking agents, pandal and shamiana contractors from the service tax net; repeal of the proposed amendment in the income-tax Act that calls for imprisonment up to three years in case of falsification of books of accounts or documents; and a cut in steel taxes. It indicates that the BJP, despite claims of having broadbased its support base, remains very much a party of petty traders. The Uma Bharti episode reveals that the party has still not managed to find a platform other than sectarian nationalism to mobilise cadre. The BJP needs to realise that disruptive and sectarian agendas have no future in the long run. Parliament is as crucial to politics as the maidan. It is unfortunate that the NDA, despite the presence of seasoned lawmakers like Vajpayee, Advani and George Fernandes, continues to violate Parliament's institutional sanctity. People expect more than walkouts from them.

# House, arrested

Parliament has been emptied of both debate and parliamentarians. It's an ugly moment

A CONSTITUTIONAL crisis has been averted, they say. Government and Opposition have agreed to complete the bare formalities of passing the Union Budget. The Railway Budget is passed, ditto for the demands for grants for ministries and the Appropriation Bill. The Finance Bill will also be through if all goes well. Business canned, Parliament will be adjourned sine die and parliamentarians can return to the street. There, according to George Fernandes, is where they must rightly be. It is where the politics is. The NDA convenor was frankly dismissive about Parliament to newsmen on Tuesday. Those who still insist on the eminence of Parliament as the forum of debate and for enforcing legislative scrutiny and governmental accountability, must explain themselves.

But are there any people out there who will miss Parliament, if it adjourns a week early? Does anyone even notice any more when Parliament shuts down, doesn't do its job? Perhaps Fernandes is on to something, after all. It may be that the veteran of so many political circumstances has sensed the predicament of the parliamentary institution. All the really big political controversies in recent years — from Ayodhya to Tehelka to the tainted ministers row — have played themselves out outside its gates. They figured inside Parliament only as

cursory cues for overwhelming furore, walkouts, adjournments. When was the last time there was a debate in the House that resonated outside its portals? When, indeed, the last truly stirring speech, that moment of eloquence or erudition in which a pressing national problem seemed suddenly more permeable? Parliamentarians are quick to blame the media for trivialising the hard work of Parliament by focusing only on the spectaculars. There may be some truth in that. But as the fate of this Budget session shows, the crisis of Parliament does not lie primarily in the eyes of the beholder in the press gallery.

The crisis of the 14th Lok Sabha is made of an Opposition that is not reconciled to being one. The BJP-led NDA has conducted itself with the most embarrassing churlishness ever since the Congress-led UPA government assumed power. The party does not have a strategy save to hold up Parliament. The tainted ministers issue, Uma Bharti's resignation, controversy over Savarkar — they have all been rendered into displays of pique. The crisis of this Lok Sabha is also of the Congress-led UPA's inability to find the will or the sagacity to engage and persuade the Opposition. The apportioning of blame may be contentious. But the victim is certainly the tax-paying citizen. And that set of intangibles that we call political culture.

# Savarkar saves BJP blushes

Tables can be turned. This was realised by the BJP on Friday when ruling coalition members raised a ruckus over the reported case against Madhya Pradesh chief minister Ms Uma Bharati. The BJP's campaign against tainted ministers was nowhere to be heard as the party changed tack and thought it prudent to raise the Veer Savarkar issue keeping in mind the Assembly elections in Maharashtra.

The BJP also overlooked reports of callousness by the RJD government in Bihar towards those who died of starvation. The Lok Sabha was not allowed to function for the better part of three out of five working days when a determined Opposition forced adjournment after adjournment. Mr Pranab Mukherjee's belated clarification did not allow the Lok Sabha to function.

The House also had three structured debates under calling atten-

tion notices on the interest rate cut on EPF, the floods and the drought situation and the employees right to strike. The right to strike issue elicited a brief reply from the government which promised to re-examine the matter.

## week in PARLIAMENT

**Rajya Sabha:** It was pandemonium again when the Rajya Sabha resumed its second phase of the Budget session. It began with the same issue of tainted ministers but soon found a new cause - Veer Savarkar. Two calling attention motions were not taken up after being overtaken by the pandemonium. While the Left parties wanted to discuss the sale of Centaur Hotel and the role of

*J-Parliament*  
Mr Arun Shourie, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Nirupam was to raise the GTB merger with Oriental Bank of Commerce.

On Thursday, Mr Nirupam instead sought a discussion on the Savarkar issue. The House was adjourned till lunch and later for the day. Manipur aroused considerable interest among the members on Tuesday, who suggested initiation of dialogue with various groups.

Responding to the UPA demand on the Centaur deal, Mr P Chidambaram, told the members he would take action on some "discomforting aspects" of the deal after receiving a report from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Significantly, the Shiv Sena members joined the Congress and the Left in demanding a CBI and CVC inquiry into the sale.

— Mohan Sahay and Asha Ramchandran in New Delhi

# Uma Bharti issue rocks Parliament

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 20. Amid noisy scenes and uproar over a case against the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, in a Karnataka court, Parliament was adjourned today with Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal members demanding her resignation.

The issue was raised in the Lok Sabha as soon as the House met but the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, asked the members to raise it after question hour. The issue rocked the House once again after question hour when Congress and the RJD members started waving a "fact-sheet" on the case against Ms. Bharti, demanding her arrest and resignation.

The BJP and the Shiv Sena members countered the attack by raising the Savarkar issue once again. Soon, the House was drowned in slogans and counter-slogans and nothing was audible in the din.

Both the sides indulged in slogan shouting and Raghunath Jha (RJD) accused the BJP of adopting "double standards" as the party had stalled the proceedings of the House on the Shibu Soren issue. As bedlam prevailed for some time, the Speaker adjourned the House till lunch-break. In the post-lunch session, the unruly scenes were repeated, forcing the Deputy Speaker, Charanjit Singh Atwal, to adjourn the House.

## Echo in Rajya Sabha

In the Rajya Sabha, the issue found its echo soon after the question hour with the ruling party members demanding Ms. Bharti's resignation even as the Opposition demanded an apology from the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyer, on the Savarkar episode.

The Deputy Chairman, K. Rehman Khan, adjourned the House till 2.30 p.m. but uproarious scenes were witnessed again when the House re-assembled to take up private

members' business. With the decibel level remaining high, the House was adjourned for the day.

The Uma Bharti episode also kept the BJP leadership on tenterhooks today. The party's Central Parliamentary Board will meet on Monday to decide if Ms. Bharti should continue as Chief Minister in the wake of the non-bailable warrant issued against her by a Hubli court.

"The party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, has convened the meeting of the Parliamentary Board to discuss all aspects of the case dating back to 1994 relating to the hoisting of the national flag at the Idgah grounds in Hubli," the BJP Parliamentary Party spokesperson, Sushma Swaraj, said at a press conference.

Asked if the party could ask Ms. Bharti to step down, she said: "Uma Bharti has already conveyed to the party her willingness to accept any decision the party takes in this regard."

She said that Ms. Bharti today conveyed to Mr. Naidu her willingness to accept any decision of the party in this regard.

## 'No similarity in cases'

Responding to a query, Ms. Swaraj said there was "no similarity" between the cases against "tainted" Ministers and Ms. Bharti. "All the cases against her pertain to the hoisting of the tricolour. Despite that, keeping in view the moral grounds, the Parliamentary Board will meet and discuss all aspects of the issue," she said.

Ms. Swaraj said that it was a Congress Government in Karnataka and "not that of BJP or its allies" which had decided to withdraw the case after the peaceful resolution of the Idgah issue. However, the State Government had now decided to withdraw its earlier application. "Because we had taken up the issue of 'tainted' Ministers, the Congress Government in Karnataka appealed for withdrawal of its earlier petition," she said.

Case for Monday: Page 13

# Oppn stalls LS on Savarkar issue

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 19 AUGUST

**T**HE parliamentary row over Union petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar's "foot-in-the-mouth" remarks about RSS icon Savarkar is refusing to go away with agitated Opposition members forcing the suspension of business in both Houses.

Thursday's troubles began during the Question Hour itself, with Shiv Sena MPs seeking an explanation from Mr Aiyar, who was present in the House to answer questions related to his ministry. The first question on his turf was listed against the name of former Union minister and Sena member Anand Rao V. Adsul.

The Sena members pounced on this opportunity, urging the

Speaker to direct Mr Aiyar "to give his side of the story or else seek an apology." The RJD members protested, and in the melee that ensued, the Sena MPs, egged on by the BJP flock, rushed to the well. The Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee had no option but to adjourn the House for 15 minutes. The House could conduct its proceedings smoothly after the 15-minute break only after the Speaker assured the Shiv Sena-BJP members that the Leader of the House would give a statement after the lunch-break.

The Union defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, in his statement, repeated the point that he had made on Wednesday. "The Union cabinet is not directly involved in the matter. The decision was taken by the Indian Oil Foundation's board of trustees, just as the earlier deci-

sion to install the plaque containing the quotes was taken by the board. The government was not involved in it," he said, while comparing the process to the affairs of Vishwa Bharati University. "The President is its Chancellor, but it would be wrong to trace all the decisions taken in the University to the President," he argued.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr L.K. Advani, in his intervention, expressed surprise at the comparison drawn by the defence minister. "The Union Cabinet rarely comes into the picture. A minister's decision is the government's decision. While we have nothing against the inclusion of Mahatma Gandhi's sayings on the plaque, we take objection to the decision to order the removal of Savarkar's quotes," he said.

Moreover, he added, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was a Union Territory, directly administered by the Centre. "Nothing can be decided without the Union government's approval," Mr Advani pointed out, rubbishing Mr Mukherjee's contention.

The RJD member Raghunath Jha urged the Speaker to summon Mr Aiyar to give his personal explanation so that the matter could be sorted out once-and-for-all. BJP spokesperson Sushma Swaraj, while speaking to newsmen later in the day, rejected Mr Aiyar's offer to give a personal explanation. "We have raised a point of order. He can make such a statement in the Lok Sabha, of which he is a member, but cannot do so in the Rajya Sabha. He can make a personal statement only in the House of which he is a member," she said.

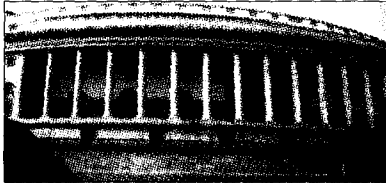
# Savarkar issue rocks LS, RS

*19/8*  
New Delhi: The Veer Savarkar issue rocked parliament for the second consecutive day on Wednesday with agitated members of the Shiv Sena and BJP demanding an apology from petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar for reportedly ordering the removal of a plaque from the cellular jail in Port Blair.

The government's attempt to douse the opposition ire, by saying that Aiyar's views on Savarkar were personal, failed as angry members of the two parties forced adjournments in both the Houses. Raising slogans, Sena-BJP members stalled the proceedings in the Lok Sabha, forcing two adjournments, and later they boycotted the House. Leader of the House and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said he had ascertained the facts from Aiyar. "As the Swatantra Jyoti is an eternal flame commemorating the freedom movement, it is only appropriate that Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, be remembered on the plinth on which the flame rests. This was done at my instance. Neither at the official function nor in the press conference that followed, did I refer to Veer Damodar Savarkar," Aiyar had said, according to Mukherjee.

In the Rajya Sabha, Sena member Sanjay Nirupam wanted the government to clarify on whose behest the freedom fighters' plaque containing Savarkar's inscriptions was removed. Making his submission, Nirupam said there were several plaques in-

*of parliament*  
scribed with quotations from several freedom fighters including Bahadurshah Zafar, Subhash Chandra Bose and Savarkar, who were imprisoned in the cellular jail. But one of the plaques containing the poems of Savarkar was missing, and he wanted to know from the government at whose instance it was removed. He also wanted Aiyer to apologise for having allegedly made some insulting remarks against Savarkar.



Parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad read out a statement from Aiyar saying Gandhi's inscription was put up at the Swatantra Jyoti complex marking the celebration of Quit India day on August 9. Azad said the Swatantra Jyoti was an Indian Oil Corporation project.

But, there was no mention in the statement of the removal of plaque of anybody, Azad said, triggering vociferous protest from the Shiv Sena-BJP combine. Quoting Aiyar, Azad said a plaque on Mahatma Gandhi was installed and during that function or at the press conference, Aiyar had not referred to Savarkar. But, on the sidelines, when a private television channel asked him about Savarkar, Aiyar said his personal views as a citizen were known but as a minister he was bound by the decision of the council of ministers. Agencies



# Saffron heartburn at Mani's Savarkar barb

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, August 17

**BOTH HOUSES** of Parliament today witnessed uproarious scenes when Shiv Sena and BJP members raised the issue of Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar's reported instruction for removal of the thoughts of freedom-fighter Veer Savarkar inscribed on the Independence memorial at Port Blair Cellular Jail.

The two Houses were ad-

journing amid pandemonium as the Opposition sought an immediate apology from the minister. Shouting anti-government slogans, the Shiv Sena members stormed the well of the House and had heated exchanges with RJD, CPI and CPI(M) members.

The entire Opposition staged a walk out condemning the government as well as the ruling Congress party after the Lok Sabha reassembled at noon and Leader of the House Pranab Mukhe-

rjee said he would ascertain facts and get back to the House.

Mukherjee said the government was not aware of the instruction issued by the Petroleum Minister and it would ascertain facts. He would, meanwhile, urge Opposition members to allow normal proceedings.

Angry Opposition members shouted "*Savarkar ka yeh apman nahin chalega*" (this insult to Savarkar will not be tolerated) and "*Veer*

*Savarkar amar rahe* (Long live Veer Savarkar)."

Shiv Sena leader Anant Geete said Savarkar was at forefront of the country's freedom struggle and wanted to know what prompted Aiyar to issue instructions for removal of Savarkar's thoughts from the memorial.

The Rajya Sabha witnessed pandemonium for half an hour when Shiv Sena member Sanjay Nirupam tried to raise the issue and sought an apology from Ai-

yar. The Shiv Sena member raised the issue just after the Question Hour despite Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat not allowing it. This sparked uproarious scenes after which Shekhawat adjourned the House for lunch.

Shekhawat said though the member had sought his permission earlier, he could not allow it as the government was yet to respond to a query that the Veer Savarkar airport at Port Blair was being renamed.

"When I have no information, how can I allow the matter to be raised now," he said. The Chairman said he hoped to get the information by tomorrow and then allow the member to raise the issue.

At one point, Home Minister Shivraj Patil rose to say something but members, particularly from Left parties, objected saying it would set a bad precedent as the government cannot respond when the matter itself was not allowed to be raised.

# Parliamentary impasse ends

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 16.** The parliamentary impasse witnessed during the first part of the budget session was formally resolved this morning with both the Government as well as the Opposition retracting their statements made on July 23, when the House adjourned for its three-week recess.

As part of a compromise formula, the leaders from both the sides made conciliatory statements and the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, declared the issue closed.

This enabled the House to carry on with the business of the day.

HN-11 1778  
Soon after the obituary references were over, Santosh Gangawar, Whip of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Lok Sabha, said his party did not harbour any misgivings about the Speaker and would continue to cooperate with him.

"We can never be disrespectful to the Chair or the House."

In the absence of V.K. Malhotra, Deputy Leader of the BJP, he sought the permission of the House to withdraw the statement made by him on July 23.

Mr. Malhotra, he said, had never meant to say anything derogatory against the Chair and urged the Speaker to treat the matter as closed.

Reciprocating the gesture,

the Leader of the House, Pranab Mukherjee, said that on the last day of the House objectionable remarks were made against the Chair, which he had condemned in a written statement.

Since the remarks had been withdrawn, he was also seeking the permission of the House to withdraw his statement.

Mr. Chatterjee said that as far as he was concerned he had forgotten about all that had transpired.

He urged the members to sincerely devote themselves to the business of discussing and debating issues before them.

"I seek the cooperation of members from all sections of the house," he said.

# Debates in Parliament

By Arvind P. Datar

FROM DAY one, the working of the new Parliament was paralysed on one ground or the other. Initially, the Opposition stalled the proceedings over the issue of chargesheeted Ministers. Later, it was Lalu Prasad's comment on Godhra, and then the case of the missing Shibu Soren. The entire session was hampered by repeated shouting and periodic walkouts. For those who watched the Parliamentary proceedings live, and from press reports, there was no meaningful debate on any issue. The hallmark of an effective parliamentarianism now seems to be the ability to shout and disrupt proceedings, preferably from the well of the House.

The practice is to completely paralyse any discussion in Parliament if the Opposition is agitated about any particular subject. In the last Lok Sabha, the Congress disrupted work for several days after the Tehelka controversy. Subsequently, proceedings were frequently disrupted on some pretext. The practice of repeatedly obstructing the proceedings in the House is most regrettable and defeats the very purpose for which the Legislature exists.

Under our Constitution, the three pillars of Government are the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary. The Legislature is perhaps the most important branch; it makes laws and guides the destiny of the country. The Executive implements the laws, while the Judiciary interprets them. Badly drafted laws lead to

administrative chaos and generate avoidable litigation. It is vitally necessary that important enactments are discussed in detail before they become the laws of the country. Similarly, Government policy, howsoever controversial, requires dispassionate debate and cold facts, and logic must prevail over emotional rhetoric.

The Constitution grants several privileges to Members of Parliament. Article 105 guarantees freedom of speech in Parliament and ensures that no Member of Parliament can be made liable for any proceedings in

that are proposed to be enacted or to discuss other important policy issues. Any debate requires extensive preparation and a recent article in a popular weekly made the shocking revelation that very few members use the huge Parliament library.

The behaviour of several members is in complete breach of the rules of Parliamentary etiquette. Rule 349 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha categorically states that a member should keep his place while addressing the House and should not interrupt any

would have entailed.

In the Constituent Assembly, the participation of Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyer, B.R. Ambedkar, Pandit Kunzru and other stalwarts ensured that important issues were debated in great detail. Unfortunately, there is now virtually no discussion or debate and, on a rare occasion, when a good speech is made, there are frequent interruptions.

The leaders of the respective political parties are squarely to blame for the pathetic state of affairs. If they want to make the coming session of Parliament, beginning on August 16, a meaningful one, they must completely prohibit walkouts, shouting or any disruption of the House proceedings. Paralyzing House proceedings does not solve any problem. In the long run, it will only affect the credibility of Parliament as an institution.

It is also high time that the Speaker exercises his power to suspend unruly members so that some dignity and decorum is restored. The running of Parliament casts a heavy burden on the taxpayer. The legislators must conduct themselves in a responsible manner and discharge their constitutional obligations. It is fervently hoped that the coming session will be a witness to a new era where skilful debates and meaningful discussions replace the shouting and walkouts that marred the earlier session this year.

(The author is a Senior Advocate of the Madras High Court.)

## *Paralysing House proceedings does not solve any problem. In the long run, it will only affect the credibility of Parliament as an institution.*

other member who is speaking; any disorderly expressions, or other interruptions or noises are prohibited. Indeed, the last session of the Lok Sabha was conducted in a manner contrary to the prescribed rules.

Some of the greatest speeches in history have been made in the British Parliament. William Pitt the Elder, Edmund Burke, Thomas Erskine, Gladstone and Churchill spoke on controversial topics and sometimes defended unpopular causes. But they were listened to with rapt attention. There were no walkouts, shouting or members rushing into the well of the House. One has to read the speeches of these parliamentarians to fathom the enormous preparation they

court in respect of anything said by him in Parliament or for any vote given by him. Such protection exists even to proceedings of any committee of Parliament. Article 88 confers the right on all Ministers to speak and take part in proceedings in either House of Parliament and to also attend any joint sitting or committee of Parliament. Similar powers and privileges are conferred on members of Legislative Assemblies under Article 194. Thus, the constitutional scheme enables all important issues to be fearlessly discussed in the House.

While we have borrowed parliamentary privileges from the United Kingdom, there is no desire or intention to properly debate various bills

# NDA ends boycott of House panels

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 3. — The NDA today finally agreed to join the standing committees of Parliament, thus ending its boycott that threatened to disrupt parliamentary business.

The standoff between the Opposition and the government came to an end after the day-long parleys the leader of the Opposition, Mr L K Advani, had with the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, and the Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee. Under the agreement, the Opposition will move a resolution in the Lok Sabha on 16 August when the House resumes sitting after the recess, withdrawing some disparaging observations made by Mr VK Malhotra of the BJP against the Chair on 23 July. This will be followed by Mr Pranab Mukherjee moving a second resolution withdrawing his statement of 23 July in the House in which he had condemned the Opposition for the disrespect shown to the Speaker by preventing Mr Chatterjee from completing his statement.

Both the resolutions will be carried unanimously and thus would not be part of the proceedings of the House.

The Statesman was the first to report that this was the *quid pro quo* arrangement that the NDA was demanding to end the boycott. Mr Advani later told some leaders of the NDA about the understanding reached with the government to end the impasse in Parliament. This was accepted by all.

In order to let the budgetary exercise begin, the Opposition will submit the names of its members drawn from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha for 36 Standing Committees of Parliament that are likely to be constituted by tomorrow. The Committees would scrutinise the budget proposals and grants for various ministries and heads and place on record its suggestions before Parliament resumes its sitting on 16 August.

The Opposition has been demanding withdrawal of Mr Pranab Mukherjee's statement in the House while the Congress was aghast at the manner in which the Opposition obstructed the Speaker in the House.

Mr Mukherjee being the leader of the House in the Lok Sabha conceded ground by agreeing to recall his statement that can be done only through a resolution in the

## BJP dumps Modi line

NEW DELHI, Aug. 3. — The BJP has rejected the Narendra Modi line on headline Hindutva and is preparing to "increase its coalition base" to take advantage of a "possible crisis" in the UPA government. This, senior party leaders said, was the basic outcome of the BJP's brainstorming session at Goa.

In fact, the three-day *chintan bairhath* decided not to use Hindutva in the BJP lexicon and to use a word more acceptable to allies — nationalism. Even the phrase "cultural nationalism" was dropped, though the party spoke about nationalism and development going hand in hand.

Even the RSS has attested the BJP line of thinking. Senior RSS leader, Mr Madan Das, who attended the meeting as observer told BJP

leaders that the Sangh was more concerned with action of the party than use of the word Hindutva. After all the sangh had preferred to call its affiliates *Bharatiya* such as the Bharatiya Jan Sangh or the Bharatiya Janata Party. The RSS has agreed to the Vajpayee line due to an impression in the BJP that the UPA government may not last long. Some leaders at the meeting said that Mr Vajpayee was serious and pensive.

Mr Modi reportedly proposed that the party stop bothering about 12 per cent of the minority community and try to appease 15 per cent of the Hindu population. He argued that the minority community was in any case not going to vote for the BJP. The BJP asserted that its motto was nationalism and development. spokesperson Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said those equating Hindutva with controversial issues were wrong. — Sudesh K Verma

Lok Sabha. The Prime Minister personally spoke to Mr Advani twice during the past fortnight; so did the Speaker.

Mr Advani first met Mr Chatterjee at the latter's official residence as a gesture that signaled the end of bitterness between the two sides. This was followed by an hour-long meeting with Dr Manmohan Singh that finally broke the ice.

The Public Accounts Committee which functions as a vigilance body is likely to be headed by Mr V K Malhotra of the BJP. The PAC Chairman's post is held by the Opposition. In the previous House, Mr Buta Singh of the Congress was the Chairman of the PAC and before him it was Mr ND Tiwari also of the Congress.

2 parts answer  
10-11

# All I want is Parliament to function normally: Somnath

2/17

By Marcus Dam

**KOLKATA, JULY 30.** When the two meet over tea in New Delhi on August 3, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee, will renew his request to the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, to "please reconsider" the decision of the National Democratic Alliance to boycott the parliamentary standing committees. "All I can do now is hope ... all I want is the normal functioning of the House," he told *The Hindu* in an interview here today.

Mr. Chatterjee said he "was going out of his way to make this appeal."

"I had written to Mr. Advani recently after learning of the shocking news [of the proposed NDA boycott] from newspapers. My letter carried the request to reconsider the decision because the role of the Opposition is very important and the standing committees cannot function properly without the Opposition's participation," he said.

"I am only concerned with the running of the House and on my part I will give the Opposition all the recognition and opportunities," Mr. Chatterjee said.

"Who am I to question their political decision?.. But it is also true that if the NDA sticks to its boycott decision Parliament's image will be seriously affected and it will not be able to function in full measure.

"I can only appeal. If not heeded the House will continue to function for it [the boycott] is not a Constitutional impediment. But that will be very undesirable," Mr. Chatterjee said.

Mr. Chatterjee was elected

Speaker on June 4 "but till now, I have found no job satisfaction." "But that does not mean I won't continue. I am not running away from my duties ... Yet I am sad and not happy about certain developments," he said, recalling certain events in the House that had occurred while he was in the Chair.

## 'Tension in Lok Sabha'

"It has been painful ... whatever the confrontation between the various parties the Chair should never be brought into it. The Opposition has accused me of sermonising even though I

had personally called on Atal Bihari Vajpayee after I was elected and committed to him my best as a Speaker," Mr. Chatterjee said.

"There is tension in the 14th Lok Sabha and it is not surprising," he noted. "It is only obvious that the political tension which led to a change in government, in rulers, in the composition of the Opposition will find an expression in the House ... But what ultimately matters for proper functioning is the good sense of members. There is no magic formula in running the House. One does so through

trial and error."

## Prime Minister's choice

On the question of "tainted" Ministers in the Government, Mr. Chatterjee said, "I am not there to judge the conduct of Ministers or any politician until it starts affecting the functioning of the House. If a Minister is disqualified it is the Prime Minister's choice. The law of the land will prevail [on the question of charges against anyone] ... Had all things depended on the Speaker's wishes then it would be the law of the jungle ... but I am not a dictator."

# Pranab urges BJP leaders to join parliamentary panels

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 30.** The Defence Minister and Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha, Pranab Mukherjee, today ruled out withdrawing his statement condemning a "section" of the Opposition for obstructing the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee. He hoped that "good sense will prevail" upon the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and that they would end the boycott of Parliamentary committees, including the ones scrutinising the budgetary proposals.

Asked for his reaction on the BJP-led Opposition's calls for a compromise on the issue, Mr. Mukherjee said: "I am suggesting and inviting them to join the committees. This is the com-

promise formula. Let them join." On the BJP leaders' charge that the Government was not talking to them, he told mediapersons at a Coast Guard function: "I am communicating to them through you."

## 'Custodians'

Pointing out that the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman were the custodians of Parliamentary Committees and that the Government was not involved, he said: "If someone says he is not joining committees like the Public Accounts Committee of which a person from the Opposition is the Chairperson, whom is he hurting? Not the Government. This amounts to not cooperating with the functioning of Parliament, not cooperating with

himself."

While "appealing" for an end to the Opposition boycott of Parliamentary panels, Mr. Mukherjee said his statement in Parliament was in order and could not be taken back. "How can you take it back? If paste comes out of the tube, you cannot put that same paste in the same tube."

His statement condemned a "section" and not the entire Opposition. This was because the Speaker was obstructed by a section of the Opposition.

"And, because the Leader of the House is responsible for ensuring the dignity of the House and the Speaker is the custodian of that dignity, I could not remain a silent spectator. Therefore I had to intervene," he explained.

# Rationale For Creating Parliamentary Panels Stands Defeated

## Boycott will continue till govt amends statement, says Advani

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 29 JULY

**T**HE collapse of a working relationship between the government and the Opposition was on display on Thursday when the former went back on the "truce formula" and leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani made it clear that the NDA will boycott the proceedings of the parliamentary panels till the government "amends" the condemnation statement. The NDA is yet to forward its list of nominees for the various parliamentary panels. The TDP, which is outside the NDA, had given its list to the presiding officers, but in the wake of the stalemate, Chandrababu Naidu may rethink on his party's approach.

For the conduct of business by the parliamentary panels, the Opposition's decision cannot be but a setback. Although the committees can meet and take decisions if it has the required quorum, the purpose of these committees will be defeated in the absence of the Opposition. The idea of the standing committees was to have a contemporaneous and constant scrutiny of government's actions on the policy front and this task will not be possible without the participation of the Opposition. The rationale for their creation of these panels was also to enable a detailed discussion on subjects that could not be dealt



with in the House for lack of time. There are 24 standing committees at present. In any case, there is unanimity that conducting business in a democracy without the Opposition is unacceptable.

There was expectations of a truce on Wednesday evening when government managers indicated to the Opposition that it had an "open mind" on the Opposition's demand. This saw Speaker Somnath Chatterjee stepping in with a letter of appeal to Mr Advani. But sources in the BJP said the leader of the Opposition politely told the Speaker that stalemate can be resolved only if the government takes "adequate steps." The Speaker is believed to be of the view that the government should not be adamant, but the Opposition too has to give him some elbow room to

protect the dignity of the House.

On his part, parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad rejected the demand for "amending" the condemnation statement. He also came out with a formulation that the Opposition decision amounted to 'boycotting the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the chairperson of the Rajya Sabha as these committees are constituted by the presiding officers'. The list of Congress members for various committees were given to the office of the Speaker on Wednesday evening, Mr Azad said. On the BJP demand for withdrawal of Pranab Mukherjee's statement, Mr Azad said: "Such a demand is unjust. I don't think there was any thing wrong in the statement made by the leader of the Lok Sabha (Mr Mukherjee). The presiding officers of the both the Houses have the right to speak whenever they want to do so. In this case when the Speaker was trying to speak, the Opposition members shouted at him and asked him to sit down," he said.

The Opposition too said it will not budge and at a meeting of the NDA, the alliance decide to stick with its boycott plans. "The statement of Mukherjee was insulting. In Parliament, Mr Mukherjee is leader of the House, not of his Congress party. He has to take everyone along," Sushma Swaraj said. "The ball is now in the court of the government."

# Haunted House

## The all-party spectre of immaturity

**T**he Opposition must oppose. But Parliament must function. Reconciling conflicting objectives is maturity from the Opposition, from treasury and from presiding officers. All three are failing; the biggest culprit in this case is the Opposition. The NDA's decision to boycott parliamentary all standing committees falls well beyond what divides legitimate pressure tactics from irresponsible stalling. Indeed, to the extent that standing committees are seen to be legislative watchdogs and in fact reflect the composition of both the Houses, the Opposition boycott is self-defeating.

It is not scrutiny of budget allocations that NDA will miss — these are hardly ever successfully challenged by stranding committees — but the chance to put major ministries like home, defence, finance and petroleum under the scanner. The NDA should remember the power the Opposition wielded in standing committees — high voltage criticism of the government and the strategic leaks to the media.

Why give up the opportunity? If tainted ministers is the issue, Opposition MPs manning standing committees become more important for the NDA. Isn't it better to attack, say, Mohammed Taslimuddin via the considerable powers accorded to standing committees than via yet another Venkaiah Naidu press conference? Plus, the NDA surely knows that the government will not sack Lalu Prasad and company because the Opposition wants it. It lends credence to reports that NDA's real grievance is the huge row in middle of the current session. If the Speaker withdraws Pranab Mukherjee's censorious remarks against LK Advani, the NDA will de facto say sorry to the Speaker and the episode will be expunged from the record.

It remains to be seen whether the government and the Speaker will accept it. Tactically both are on stronger wickets since the NDA needs the deal to get back to parliamentary business. It will also be politically immature for the government to look only for tactical victories. The Prime Minister (and, of course, Sonia Gandhi) should take a flexible approach, allowing the Speaker to take a lead in solving impasses.

The government has not been in acceptable conduct recently. Treasury bench MPs were heard jeering Opposition during a walk-out and the Prime Minister really couldn't keep quiet on the Sibu Soren affair and not raise questions about Parliament being informed of an extraordinary minister. As for the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee has years of House experience and inspires a lot of confidence.

But having to temper political instincts, all speakers need to behave. Chatterjee had been reported to have made adverse comments about the previous NDA government at a function. Even if he was dead right, he was not right to forget that the Speaker is neutral in the House and must appear to be so outside it. Hopefully, the recess before Parliament reopens will cool everyone down — wish the weather helped! — and allow MPs to do what they are elected for.

THE STATESMAN

29 JUL 2004

THURSDAY, JULY 29, 2004

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28/3

## DISRUPTIVE OPPOSITION

Parliament

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC Alliance's decision to boycott all parliamentary committees marks a new low, even measured by the rather lax standards of legislative decorum in India. Indeed, with walkouts and adjournments increasingly the norm in the Lok Sabha, the term 'parliamentary' — in the Indian context — has long been an ironic misrepresentation of the original. And yet, the daily battles inside the 'august' lower House can hardly be a justification for allowing parliamentary misbehaviour to plunge to the unseemly levels currently on view. There are two aspects to the present standoff, both unfortunate in the extreme. The first is the threatened boycott by the Opposition of important parliamentary committees, standing as well as consultative. And the second, the shocking disrespect shown to the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, who was rudely stopped from making a statement. That Mr. Chatterjee was forced to hold a press conference to defend himself against the charge of bias in allotting time is an eloquent enough comment on the unedifying drama that preceded the event. Standing committees are bi-partisan bodies, which meet in the recess to help Parliament scrutinise budgetary proposals and demands for grants from the various Ministries. The consequences of the boycott of these panels will be far more serious than those arising from such standard oppositional tactics as disruption of the zero hour, walkouts, and slogan-shouting. The boycott is both an insult to the institution of Parliament and an abdication of responsibility towards the people of the country.

The Opposition's grievances are long and debatable. The United Progressive Alliance Government has not covered itself with glory, whether on the question of the so-called tainted Ministers or the Prime Minister's response to the Shibu Soren episode or, more recently, Pranab Mukherjee's controversial statement in the Lok Sabha. However, the NDA can scarcely claim a

clean record when it comes to dealing with the law. Far from it: not a few among the NDA government's galaxy of star Ministers found themselves on the wrong side of the law. The defence then was that a distinction ought to be made between 'political' and 'criminal' cases and indeed that violence in a political context is unavoidable. The reference was of course to the Babri Masjid demolition case. In truth, the vile and barbaric act of demolishing a place of worship led to a horrific cycle of death and destruction, the consequences of which haunt us to this day. It is a different matter that innocence is presumed in law. As with L.K. Advani and Uma Bharti, so with the UPA Ministers who have criminal charges facing them. Unless guilt is established in a trial court and results in a conviction, their innocence must be presumed, although the political appropriateness and wisdom of making them Ministers is wholly another matter. Mr. Soren's case is a complex and peculiar one; although the Prime Minister did the right thing by asking for and wresting his resignation, he should have acted sooner and sent a stronger signal through the system.

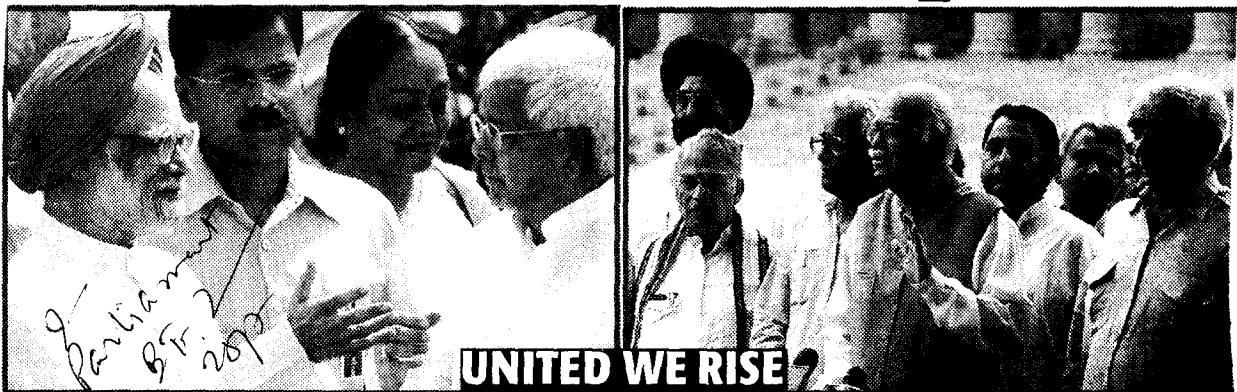
However, none of these lapses provides so much as an excuse for the extraordinary course the NDA has embarked on in Parliament. It can be nobody's case that the Opposition should ever be the picture of subdued cooperation. Quite the reverse, in fact, as democracy presupposes a vibrant and adversarial Opposition. The difficulty arises when the line between government and Parliament is sought to be blurred. It is one thing vigorously to oppose the Government in Parliament and quite another to destabilise the functioning of parliamentary sub-committees. What the NDA is doing sends out the political message that it is a very bad loser. It would do well to reverse course and give up its disruptive method of protest — not only because Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has made a dignified appeal and given it a face-saving way back in.

THE HINDU 29 JUL 2004



PM Wants Oppn Role In House Panels, BJP Defends Quit Decision

# No confrontation, please



Our Political Bureau  
PATNA/NEW DELHI 27 JULY

**E**VEN as the Congress on Tuesday persisted with his establishment's formulation that the Opposition's decision to boycott Parliament was "irresponsible" and "reckless," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has stepped in with a conciliatory message. Addressing reporters here, Dr Singh said the UPA government is not in favour of confrontation with the Opposition and that issues of national importance will have to be sorted out with the NDA's co-operation.

In what is seen as an acknowledgement of the view that conducting legislative business in a democracy without the Opposition was unacceptable, the Prime Minister recalled that he had talked to the leader of the Opposition L K Advani and former prime minister Atal Bihari Vaj-

payee on the issue of boycott of Parliament. "I understand the responsibilities and rights of the Opposition. But this does not mean that Parliament should not be allowed to function and that parliamentary Committees are boycotted. Confrontation is not our policy," he said.

However, the PM steered clear of any reference on the genesis of the controversy — the continuation of tainted ministers in the government. Probably, the locale which he chose to issue the appeal to the Opposition, was the inhibiting factor. For, the tainted crowd in his ministerial team represent Bihar in Parliament.

The Prime Minister's intervention coincided with BJP's assertion in Delhi that a rethink on its decision will depend on the response of the prime minister to their demand. There is expectation that the Prime Minister will convene a meeting to debate the

issue which has raised questions about his regime's "moral integrity". A section in the Congress conceded that the government's acceptability got depleted when it allowed the Shibu Soren issue to linger. Although some Congressmen have been making attempts to blame Dr Singh for the unwholesome Soren episode, this theory has few takers. For, Ms Sonia Gandhi is the key player on the political turf and a decision of this nature was not possible without her consent.

Opposition taking its decision to boycott of parliamentary panels, it could harm the credibility of the legislative business that have to be handled by these committees. Technically, the government can carry on with its legislative business despite the boycott, but questions could be raised in the political impact and propriety.

On its part, the BJP defended the decision to boycott parliamen-

tary panels and asked the Congress and Communist leaders to "introspect" on what has forced the Opposition to take the extreme step. "Before criticising the NDA for its decision to stay away from the standing and consultative committees, let the Congress and Communist leaders introspect on what has forced the Opposition to take this step most reluctantly and as a matter of last resort," BJP president M Venkaiah Naidu said. "Let them give up their confrontationalist approach and stop inflicting further damage to our system of parliamentary democracy," he said.

Asserting that the Lok Sabha poll verdict favoured a consensual approach between the government and Opposition, he said: "We would like to remind the PM in parliamentary democracy, it is primarily the responsibility of the government to seek the cooperation of the Opposition parties".

# Somnath rues NDA boycott

ENS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, JULY 26

96-3  
27/7

**S**TEPPING up its offensive against the UPA Government, the Opposition NDA today decided to boycott the standing committees of Parliament protesting the "confrontationist" attitude of the ruling coalition, an action said to be the first of its kind since these committees were formed 10 years ago.

Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee called the decision "unfortunate" and appealed to them to reconsider it

and participate in the functioning of the committees in the interest of proper budget scrutiny and strengthening of democracy.

"It was unanimously decided that unless the Government changes its attitude towards the Opposition and makes amends for the uncalled for attacks on the Opposition, the NDA shall not join any parliamentary committee," NDA convenor George Fernandes said.

Later, BJP general secretary and spokesman Arun Jaitley told reporters that the al-

liance was "pushed into taking this decision" as the "space for a vigilant Opposition in a democracy is being denied".

He said the coalition was not willing to even allow any question on an absconding Central minister and leave alone, the PM making a statement on the issue. "What we get in response is a statement of denunciation of the Opposition by the Leader of the House. We did not invent the tainted ministers. When there is wholesale criminalisation of ministers, the country does not expect a mute Opposi-

tion," Jaitley said. The meeting of NDA leaders at former P.M.A.B. Vajpayee's residence was attended by Leader of Opposition L.K. Advani, BJP leaders Sushma Swaraj and V.K. Malhotra.

The Congress dubbed the decision as "reckless and highly irresponsible" and asked it to reconsider it. "Standing committees are entrusted with very serious work. By boycotting it, the Opposition is not only behaving in a reckless manner but there is nothing to warrant such action," its spokesman Anand Sharma said.

# A day of great sorrow: Speaker

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 23.** The Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, said today that he had made up his mind to request the Government to respond on the issue of arrest warrants issued against the Minister for Coal and Mines, Shibu Soren, but was prevented from doing so by the Opposition.

"As the Speaker of the House, I was not even allowed to read my statement or make my observations. It is a day of great sorrow," said a visibly pained Mr. Chatterjee.

Addressing the media after he was forced to adjourn the House amid scenes of pandemonium, Mr. Chatterjee said that it was indeed unprecedented that the Opposition refused to allow even the Speaker to make his observations.

"This is the first time in the 34 years that I have spent in Parliament that such a thing has happened," he said.

Mr. Chatterjee appeared particularly upset over the charges

of "partisanship" levelled against him and challenged the Opposition to point out even one rule or convention which he had violated. "Let them point out even one example and I am willing face the consequences. It is painful that motives are being attributed to me." On several occasions, he had cut short CPI(M) MPs and those of the supporting parties to ensure that everybody got his chance. "In fact, they have been complaining that I am too harsh on them," he said.

## Statistics

Quoting statistics, the Lok Sabha Speaker said the 185-member Opposition was given more time than the rest of the members put together. On several occasions, he had used his discretionary powers to allow the Leader of the Opposition to raise issues even though no prior notice was given. He had allowed Mr. Advani to make his observations when the Prime Minister was introducing his Ministers, and then again be-

fore the Finance Minister was to present the budget and again during the course of Mr. Chidambaram's reply to the budget.

## Poser to Vajpayee

Mr. Chatterjee also quoted profusely from the speeches made by Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister decrying the Opposition attempts to force the suspension of question hour or the adjournment of the House. "I had specially called on him to request him to help me in running the House smoothly. I wonder what he has to say to all this now," said Mr. Chatterjee.

The Speaker said on Thursday that Mr. Advani came to see him and asked him to intervene in the matter. He told Mr. Advani that he was not allowed to speak so how could he make his observations. Mr. Chatterjee said he had sent a video recording of the proceedings to Mr. Advani in order to enable him to see things for himself.

The Speaker expressed sur-

prise that V.K. Malhotra, Deputy Leader of the BJP Parliamentary party came to his chamber on Thursday and told him that the NDA had decided that the House would not function. "How can people adopt such an attitude?" he asked. Under the rules he did not have the power to direct the Government to follow a particular course of action on the question relating to Mr. Soren, nor could he find out the whereabouts of the Minister. "How can a Speaker find about absconders?" he asked.

## I'm not resigning

Pained though he maybe, Mr. Chatterjee has no intention of throwing in the towel. "I am not resigning, I am not a shirker. But I do want everybody to ponder over whether we have strengthened the cause of democracy." He also appealed to the Opposition not go ahead with its proposed boycott of the Standing Committees of Parliament. "It will be a sad day if they do it," he said.

## NDA threatens to quit parliamentary panels

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, JULY 23.** The Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, has threatened that the National Democratic Alliance would withdraw from all parliamentary committees to protest against the "confrontationist attitude" of the Manmohan Singh Government.

He also alleged that the Prime Minister was "not in control" of his Government and "unable to exercise his authority," citing Dr. Singh's inability or unwillingness to make a statement on his "missing" Cabinet colleague, Shibu Soren, against whom a court in Jharkhand has issued non-bailable arrest warrants.

### To meet President

On July 25 an NDA delegation

would meet the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, to request him to "advise" the Prime Minister to sack Mr. Soren, Mr. Advani said, adding that the Opposition had no option but to go to the people and seek their support to compel the Government to govern in accordance with the law of the land.

Mr. Advani was addressing the press today after the Parliament was adjourned till August 16 when it will meet for the second part of the Budget session.

The immediate provocation was the confrontation between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Speaker in the Lok Sabha today when BJP members wanted the Speaker to allow Mr. Advani to speak first even as the Speaker was addressing the House. However, Mr. Advani pre-

ferred not to respond to questions on why his MPs refused to listen to the Chair and insisted that he be allowed to speak first. Instead, he said that the Opposition was well within its rights to demand an explanation or a statement from the Prime Minister on the Soren issue.

"What do we get instead? A condemnation of our stand is read out in the Lok Sabha by the Leader of the House. This is unprecedented," he said.

### 'Will not resign'

Asked whether NDA MPs were thinking of resigning from the House since they did not want to attend it or participate in its deliberations or committees, his answer was a "no."

He also rejected the charge that the NDA was not interested

in raising issues such as farmers' suicides, the floods and drought affecting different parts of the country or the issue of Indians taken hostage by a group in Iraq.

He said the Government was not interested in these issues although debates on some of these topics were agreed upon, listed on the agenda papers but could not be held as the Opposition forced adjournments or walked out. Mr. Advani insisted that "all we demanded" was a statement from the Prime Minister.

He was asked by reporters why the Jharkhand Government (ruled by the BJP) had given a clean chit to Mr. Soren just a few days ago on the basis of which the Home Minister had answered a question in the Rajya Sabha.

Soren-dipity: NDA Plays Blame Game, Govt Breathes Sigh Of Relief As Session Draws To A Close

## Oppn slams PM for failure to oust Soren

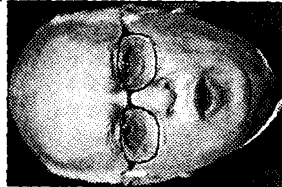
Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 23 JULY

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday came in the Opposition's line of fire for his failure to ensure a "morally defensible order" and for his inability to get rid of his "fugitive colleague" Shibu Soren. The Opposition said this proved that Dr Singh was just not in charge of matters.

Addressing a press meet in New Delhi to announce the NDA's future course of action, which could include boycott of consultative committees and standing committees of the Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani said even the prime ministerial pre-

Minister is not in control of his own government. That he is unable to exercise his authority or function as an effective chief executive. The reason for this is the existence of multiple power centres at every level. The Prime Minister is yet to receive necessary directions from the 'super prime minister' and the CPI(M) on the whereabouts of his absconding colleague," Mr Advani added.

Mr Advani said the Soren episode has clearly exposed the government's moral deficiency, which is draining the credibility of democracy. "It was perfectly justified on our part to have demanded a statement from the Prime Minister on the absconding minister. If only the Prime Minister had made a statement, this situation would not have arisen. His not doing so has led to the present stalemate," he pointed out. The leader of the Opposition said the people of the country had been let down.



ADVANI: BIG SHOUT

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 23 JULY

THE pre-recess Budget session of the Parliament came to an end on Friday on a bitter note. The confrontation between the ruling UPA and the NDA over the ouster of the fugitive cabinet minister Shibu Soren from the Union council of ministers, showed distinct signs of escalating further.

The UPA government, under relentless attack from the Opposition on the issue, could, however, be heaving a sigh of relief with the Houses of Parliament taking a break. It will now be looking forward to the outcome of the petition moved by Mr Soren in the Ranchi High Court, which challenged the arrest warrant. The petition is likely to be taken up for hearing on Monday.

A beleaguered JMM, in the mean-

while, suffered a setback on Friday as its general secretary and spokesman Muk-ti Nath Upadhyaya, who was instrumental in brokering a deal between his party and the Congress on the eve of Lok Sabha polls, quit the outfit. Besides the passage of the vote-on-account, little business could be transacted in the first three weeks of the Budget session of the Parliament, which got off to an uproarious start. The NDA paralysed the proceedings of the two Houses in the first few days in support of its demand for the sacking of the "tainted" ministers.

The Opposition campaign got a fresh lease of life after a Jharkhand sub-judicial magistrate's court issued non-bailable arrest warrants against the JMM chief and nine others in a case relating to the murder of 11 persons, including nine Muslims, 29 years ago.

The JMM kept up its protest on the



SOREN: RUNAWAY

last day of the session before the two Houses broke off for the recess. Wisser from the unruly scenes that had been witnessed in the last three days, the presiding officers of both the Houses thought it prudent to adjourn the proceedings without much ado during the zero hour. The question hour had been disrupted earlier in the day.

The resumption of proceedings saw slogan-shouting NDA members storming the well in both Houses, asking the Prime Minister to make a statement on the whereabouts of his Cabinet colleague who, they alleged, was "absconding" as the Jharkhand police was chasing him to execute an arrest warrant in connection with the massacre case. However, papers were laid on the tables of both Houses by the ministers in the midst of this din. Amidst the uproar in the Lok Sabha, the Leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee made a statement condemning the behaviour of a member of the Opposition which, he alleged, had obstructed even the Speaker from making an observation.

# Pandemonium in Parliament over Shibu Soren issue

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JULY 22. Acrimony reigned supreme in both the Houses of Parliament today with the Opposition determined to stall proceedings till the Government made a statement on the whereabouts of the Coal Minister, Shibu Soren, against whom an arrest warrant has been issued, and took Parliament into confidence on how it proposed to address the "unprecedented" development.

The trouble started during question hour itself, immediately after the Houses convened. In the Lok Sabha, the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, first refused to give in and took up question hour for about 30 minutes amid unrelenting slogan-shouting by the BJP and Shiv Sena members. However, after the Bihar MPs from the ruling benches got into an altercation with the Opposition, which had laid siege of the well for the entire sitting, Mr. Chatterjee adjourned the House for 15 minutes at 11.45 a.m. The House met again at noon, only to be adjourned within seconds as members from both sides almost came face-to-face in the

well. The exchange of words, particularly between the Shiv Sena and the Rashtriya Janata Dal members, became so heated that senior members had to rush in and pull them apart.

## Rehman elected

In the Rajya Sabha, the situation was no different. The uproar was triggered when Opposition members wanted to know why the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, whose question day it was, had not come to the House, and the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, adjourned the House till noon, when there was a brief truce to allow the election of the Deputy Chairman, K. Rehman Khan. But as Dr. Singh, who was present for the election, left the House immediately afterwards, the Opposition once again rush to the well shouting slogans.

Amid the pandemonium, the Chairman asked members, who had "special mentions" listed against their names, to table them and the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Suresh Pachouri, laid the papers on being told to do so by the Chair. Mr. Shekhawat then adjourned the house till lunch. It met again

briefly only to be adjourned for the day as the commotion continued.

## Disgraceful, says Advani

In the Lok Sabha, too, the Opposition kept its guns trained on the Government over the Shibu Soren issue. In the post-lunch session, the Speaker allowed the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, to make a statement. Stating that it was "disgraceful" that the Government had not dropped a Minister who was "absconding," Mr. Advani urged the Chair to ask the Prime Minister to make a statement and requested Mr. Chatterjee to adjourn the House till then.

In response, Mr. Chatterjee said the Chair could not compel any Minister or the Prime Minister to make a statement. However, he added: "In deference to the personal request made by the Leader of the Opposition, I am adjourning the House till tomorrow."

As members trooped out, some persisted with their slogan-shouting though it was a faint echo of the chorus of protest heard earlier against the Government, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and

the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

That the Opposition would force an adjournment in both the Houses was known in the morning itself before Parliament convened for the day.

At a meeting of all the National Democratic Alliance MPs, it was decided that the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies would stall proceedings on the issue of the "missing" Minister (Mr. Soren).

## 'Sack Soren'

The former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, told the NDA MPs that the Government was "not fulfilling its responsibilities," while Mr. Advani said he had "never seen such a situation," the Deputy Leader of the BJP, V.K. Malhotra, later told reporters. Mr. Malhotra virtually charged the Prime Minister with "protecting" a man wanted by the police and demanded that the "tainted" Mr. Soren be sacked immediately.

Tomorrow morning, the NDA MPs will meet again and the indication is that they will continue to raise the Soren issue in both the Houses, and possibly force an adjournment.

# Rahman Khan elected RS deputy chairman

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 22. — Congress leader Mr K Rahman Khan was today unanimously elected the deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha. The Shiv Sena did not move the motion for Mr Eknath Thakur's candidature.

Parliamentary affairs minister Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad moved the motion for Mr Khan's election followed by 12 sets of proposals, including one by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. Leader of Opposition Mr Jaswant Singh conveyed the decision to support a unanimously elected deputy chairperson.

Shiv Sena leader Mr Sanjay Nirupam said his party had nominated Mr Thakur for a symbolic contest to register its protest at not being consulted or taken into confidence. It was only after Mr Azad and Mr Singh had met Shiv Sena leaders that party supremo Mr Bal Thackeray consented to a unanimous election.

Chartered accountant-turned-educationist Mr Rahman Khan (65) was minister of state for chemicals and fertilisers in the Manmohan Singh government. He replaces Ms Najma Heptulla, who was deputy chairperson for two terms. Ms Heptulla had quit the Congress to join the BJP recently and was critical of Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi during the Lok Sabha elections.

After being elected, Mr Khan was



Mr Khan being felicitated by his supporters in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

escorted by leader of the House, Dr Manmohan Singh and Mr Jaswant Singh to his chair, next to the leader of the Opposition.

17 JUL 2002

# Somnath focuses candid camera on unruly MPs

PTI



Not only disruptive MPs, those who doze off during important discussions too will be exposed. Just as HRD Minister Arjun Singh was at this national workshop on women in Mumbai on Friday.

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 16

THE CITIZEN'S right to know is clearly high on Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee's agenda. Especially, his right to have a first-hand view of how the leaders he elects disrupt Parliament proceedings, thus wasting crores in public money.

So, after opening up Zero Hour to television cameras, Chatterjee has used his discretion and reworked the guidelines which stipulate that the cameras should focus on the presiding officer when members become unruly and storm into the well of the House. He has now decided that the

cameras are at liberty to show the misbehaviour of the members so that the public's pressure acts as a brake.

The telecast of the indiscipline of the members will also ensure that the presiding officer is not faulted for not being able to control them.

The idea behind telecasting Zero Hour was because members often used the occasion to raise matters of public importance for which they didn't have time to give notice earlier. Now, in addition to that, Chatterjee is considering allowing the media to cover the proceedings of the House committees so that the voters get to know about the issues that are

## SC dismisses plea on tainted ministers

THE SUPREME Court on Friday said no law was violated by the inclusion of charge-sheeted persons in the Manmohan Singh ministry and dismissed a petition seeking a ban on inclusion of such persons. "The matter is being debated in Parliament. We will see if Parliament comes out with a legislation on this issue," the court said. The petition, filed by Manoj Narula, had contended that as the ministers had to carry out important constitutional functions, their integrity should be above board.

HTC, New Delhi

raised and discussed.

Parliamentary party leaders reportedly aren't quite enthusiastic about this proposal, which was mooted at an all-party meeting earlier this month. Though

they unanimously endorsed his proposal to telecast Zero Hour live on the national hook-up, they seemed a trifle hesitant to bring the committee's discussions into the viewers' drawing rooms.

The argument given was that the presence of the media would prevent the members from speaking freely and prompt them to take a partisan stand on issues.

Though the Speaker has the authority to decide on the matter, he is keen to carry everyone along with him. He is therefore likely to broach the subject again with the leaders and seek their concurrence by convincing them of the people's right to know.

"I have proposed that at least the evidence part of the committee should be open," Chatterjee said in an interactive session with editors on Friday and expressed the hope that the proposal would be cleared.

# Godhra probe issue rocks Parliament

By Our New Delhi Bureau

**NEW DELHI, JULY 15.** The Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad's announcement that a departmental probe has been ordered into the Godhra carnage stalled the proceedings in Parliament today, leading to successive adjournments before the presiding officers of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha called it a day in the afternoon.

Practically no business — which included a discussion on the budget — could be transacted in either House, with the Bharatiya Janata Party members raising the issue as soon as Parliament met for the day. Questioning the rationale behind a fresh probe, the members objected to the manner in which Mr. Prasad made the announcement on Wednesday during his reply to the discussion on the Railway Budget. With the ruling coalition MPs — particularly from Bihar — countering the Opposition charge with slogans, the Lok Sabha was adjourned thrice for an hour each before the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, decided to adjourn the House for the day. The Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day immediately it met for the post-lunch session after two adjournments in the pre-lunch sitting.

The issue was raised in the

Lok Sabha by Vijay Kumar Malhotra (BJP) and it evoked an immediate retort from the ruling benches. As both sides traded charges, the BJP and Shiv Sena members trooped into the well of the House while Rashtriya Janata Dal members stood along its edges and raised slogans.

With neither side willing to relent, the Speaker adjourned the House for an hour. Though the papers were allowed to be tabled when the House met again, the BJP members were on their feet the moment the Speaker called the Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, to make statement on Amarnath yatra even as the former Railway Minister, Nitish Kumar, insisted that he be allowed to respond to Mr. Prasad's statements.

With the Speaker maintaining that he should come with a written statement and Mr. Kumar demanding that he be allowed to speak, the House was adjourned twice again before the Speaker called it a day.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition was on its feet from the moment it assembled in the morning. The former Union Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, wanted the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to clarify whether he concurred with Mr. Prasad's decision to re-open the Godhra incident for inquiry.

**BJP's warning: Page 12**



# Houses on fire after Punjab turns off tap

HT Correspondents  
New Delhi, July 13

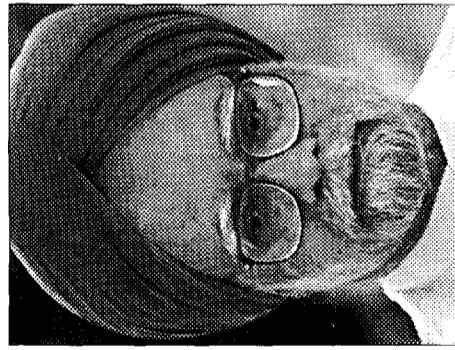
THERE WAS an uproar in both Houses of Parliament today over Punjab's unilateral scrapping of the water-sharing agreements with Haryana and Rajasthan.

Lok Sabha proceedings were marred with repeated disruptions leading to two successive adjournments before finally resuming in the afternoon at the intervention of the Prime Minister. BJP and Shiv Sena members protested throughout the day right from the start of Question Hour over the Centre's neglect of drought conditions and SYL canal issues.

In the Rajya Sabha, an agitated Opposition raised a ruckus over the issue of the Punjab Assembly Bill. The House had to be adjourned twice as the BJP and its allies repeatedly stalled proceedings demanding the Prime Minister's intervention.

During the day, Leader of Opposition L.K. Advani met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to discuss the crisis. "The Prime Minister shared our concerns and has assured that he will call the Chief Ministers of the states concerned to Delhi to discuss the issue," Advani told reporters later. The former Deputy PM was accompanied by the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Jaswant Singh, at his meeting with Manmohan Singh.

Haryana was also up in arms,



**Manmohan Singh**  
*Tightrope walk*

with the state Congress terming the Punjab Assembly decision to deny Yamuna waters to neighbouring states as "unacceptable".

The party has also threatened to agitate both in Parliament and outside, while welcoming the Prime Minister's decision to convene a meeting of Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. "It is a matter concerning the welfare of Haryana ... the Bill is against the interests of other states," PCC leader Avtar Singh Badana said.

Following the stormy sessions in the two Houses, the Prime Minister himself made a statement on the floor of the Rajya Sabha prom-

ising a lasting solution to the water dispute between Punjab and its neighbours. Such a solution should protect the unity and integrity of the country and the interests of the states affected, he said. Later, the PM made a similar statement in the Lok Sabha.

Jaswant Singh demanded suspension of the Question Hour to take up the issue of the Punjab Bill. As the turmoil continued, the House was adjourned till noon by Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.

Soon after resumption, the BJP and allies TDP and AIADMK rushed to the Well and squatted on the floor. Shekhawat's pleas fell on deaf ears. After pandemonium continued for nearly 20 minutes, the Chairman adjourned the House again till the post-lunch session.

Commotion broke out again after Singh's statement with BJP MP Sushma Swaraj demanding to know what the PM did while the Bill was being contemplated and passed. This drew loud protests from UPA members. After things settled down, Jaswant Singh said the water dispute between the states was a "highly sensitive" issue while pledging his party's full cooperation. The current tussle was a major challenge whose solution would determine the future course of action in all such disputes, he said.

In the Lok Sabha, two successive adjournments came around

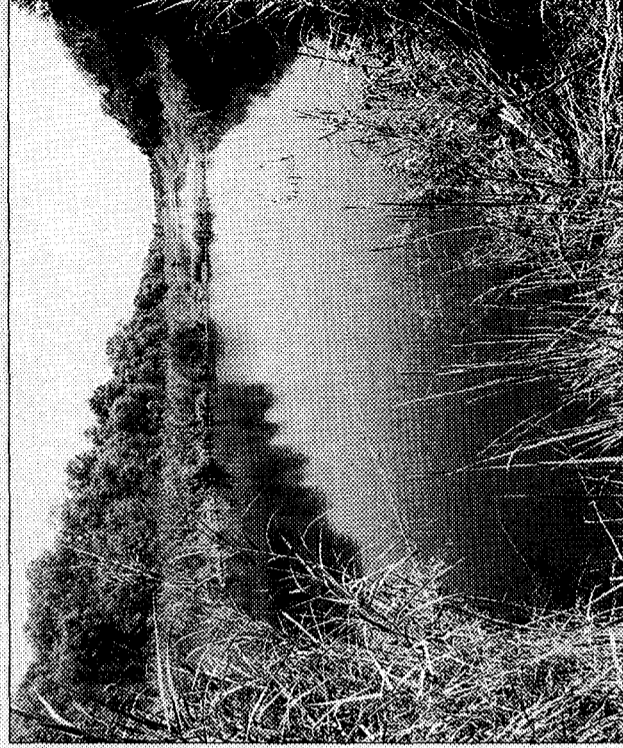
## WATER WAR LEAVES NEIGHBOURS HIGH AND DRY

### FRAYED TEMPERERS

**Rajasthan to fight back**  
The state decided at a Cabinet meeting headed by Vasundhara Raje Scindia to take tough constitutional and legal measures to protect its interests

**CPM says order ominous**  
Punjab's decision is very ominous for the federal structure, says Left. The Assembly of one state cannot legislate on issues which impinge on the rights of other states. The party's Punjab unit has also disassociated itself from the move

**BKU hails decision**  
Says the share of water for Haryana and Rajasthan is disproportionate and these states should not be given even a single drop



The fate of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link canal now hangs in the balance.

ly treatment to Maharashtra over its drought conditions". BJP MPs from Rajasthan took the cue, demanding immediate implementation of the Supreme Court's verdict on the SYL canal that mandates water supply to the desert state.

**Amarinder consults Sorabjee**  
Ahead of the meeting with the PM, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh today sought the legal opinion of former Attorney-General Soli J. Sorabjee on the issue. Sorabjee confirmed this but refused to divulge details.

9-8-2004 HC-2 14/7

# Removal of Governors a right decision: Patil

By Javed M. Ansari

**NEW DELHI, JULY 12.** The United Progressive Alliance Government today defended its decision to remove the Governors in four States, saying it was "constitutionally right and legally correct."

Replying to a short duration discussion in the Lok Sabha on the subject, the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, said the Government had "scrupulously followed both the law and the procedure," while dismissing the Governors in Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat and Haryana.

Earlier, initiating the discussion on the removal of the Governors, the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, called upon the Manmohan Singh Government to reconsider the dismissals, which he called an "outrageous assault on the multi-party democracy."

In his reply, Mr. Patil denied that the Government's actions were "politically motivated" and that it had not consulted the State Governments while appointing the new Governors. The four Governors who were removed, he said, were taking orders from a political party and

had "loudly proclaimed their affiliation to the RSS." "If some Governors are not prepared to follow the ideals of secularism and socialism as enshrined in the Constitution and choose to take their orders from the political parties or organisations that they belong to rather than from the Government, what are we expected to do," he asked.

Citing the example of Gujarat, he said the Government did not want to face a situation "where the Governor, shackled by his ideological considerations, was not prepared to give a factual report of what was happening on the ground." The UPA had won a mandate to provide a secular government and to take everybody together. "However, if some Governors do not want to cooperate with us on the subject, how can we then fulfil the mandate," Mr. Patil asked.

Dwelling on the constitutional validity of the Government's decision, Mr. Patil said that Article 156 of the Constitution stipulated that the Governor should hold office at the pleasure of the President. In 1998, the Vajpayee Government had removed the Governors of Gujarat, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh and Goa soon af-

ter coming to power. The Janata Party Government, of which Mr. Advani was a member, had sacked several State Governments. "The National Front Government supported by you [BJP] had sacked all the State Governors appointed by the previous Government," Mr. Patil said.

Responding to Mr. Advani's charge that the Government's decision to remove the Governors had struck a blow to federalism, he assured the House that the Government was committed to upholding the federal character of the Constitution. The Governor was only a nominated person whereas the BJP had tried to remove the elected Government of Bihar by invoking Article 356. "It is more dangerous to remove elected governments than to remove nominated Governors," he added.

He refused to say what the Government was contemplating with regard to Arunachal Pradesh. The Government was not in a position to give any assurance. "We have contradictory reports. We will carefully consider the whole situation before taking any action," he said.

**Advani's criticism: Page 11**

# NDA to boycott 'tainted' ministers...

## ...Sonia calls it a desperate move

Statesman News Service

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 7. — The NDA has decided to do to the five "tainted" ministers what the Congress did to Mr George Fernandes when he was defence minister. The five-member committee that was to decide the NDA strategy concluded that the Opposition should not put either questions to these ministers or listen to them when they speak.

The ministers are Mr Lalu Prasad, Mr Taslimuddin, Mr Jai Prakash Yadav, Mr Shibu Soren and Mr Prem Chand Gupta. The Shiromani Akali Dal wanted inclusion of Mr Jagdish Tytler too in the list. They will now carry on an independent boycott of Mr Tytler.

"We do not recognise them as ministers at all," parliamentary party spokesperson Mrs Sushma Swaraj said. "We have decided to boycott all

### Cong seeks Vajpayee's apology

NEW DELHI, July 7. — The Congress today sought an apology from Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee for his "highly misleading and unwarranted" allegation that Jan Sangh founder Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was killed as part of a "conspiracy" between the Nehru and J&K governments. The former Prime Minister had made this comment at a function last night to commemorate Mukherjee's 103rd birth anniversary. — PTI

the tainted ministers in all parliamentary proceedings, including Question Hour. We will neither ask them any questions nor listen to their replies," she clarified.

The deputy Opposition leader in the Lok Sabha, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said a decision was not taken on boycotting Mr MAA Fatmi as a chargesheet was not filed

against him. The Opposition leader, Mr LK Advani, later conveyed the decision to other NDA members at a meeting. However, the BJP could not pass the boycott test on the very first day since the Bihar Lok Sabha member. Mr Sushil Kumar Modi, demanded further concessions from Mr Lalu Prasad while participating in a discussion on the railway budget thereby creating a conflict between boycott and making demands.

Mrs Swaraj justified it saying that the demand was made of the government and not Mr Lalu Prasad. The party denied any difference of opinion within the NDA more particularly with Mr George Fernandes on the issue of the boycott. He was reportedly not in favour of such a step.

She said NDA leaders would meet the PM and submit a memorandum justifying the NDA stand. This would be in line with the memorandum the NDA submitted to Dr Kalam.

NEW DELHI, July 7. — In a scathing attack on the BJP-led NDA for their "conduct in Parliament in recent days", the Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, today said they have been making attempts to "subvert the overwhelming mandate of the people".

Addressing the first general body meeting of the CPP in Parliament's Central Hall this morning after the Congress-led UPA government assumed office, Mrs Gandhi said the "desperation" and "frustration" of the BJP/NDA were expected. "Blinded by arrogance of power, isolated from people, they did not expect to lose. They lost decisively".

Mrs Gandhi claimed that equipped with no "substantive" issue to attack the ruling alliance, the Opposition is "behaving in a most irresponsible way" while the country, she said, would like "Parliament to function smoothly".

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and senior Cabinet ministers.

Taking note of the UPA government's "beginning in right earnest", Mrs Gandhi, who is also the chairperson of the UPA Coordination Committee, praised Dr Singh, saying "his special plea for making government a more effective instrument of economic change and social transformation has been well-received across the country".

Significantly, the Prime Minister did not speak on the occasion. Asked for the party's comment, AICC spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said: "The first customary CPP general body meeting just stuck to its standard practice whereby only the chairperson delivers the speech". In the same breath he said: "There are no thumb rules and the PM could address the body later".

# NDA changes tack, decides to end boycott

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 6

THE NDA has dropped its strategy to stall proceedings in Parliament, after boycotting the railway budget presentation in protest against inclusion of "tainted" ministers in the Manmohan Singh government.

The move was seen as a truce following Singh's appeal yesterday to A.B. Vajpayee and L.K. Advani for cooperation. Moreover, NDA MPs were not comfortable with continuing the policy of disruption of Parliament.

At their meeting, the Opposition MPs adopted a resolution saying the NDA did not believe in disrupting Parliament, unlike the Congress, the Left and the RJD which did so when the NDA was in power.

The NDA resolution said: "What is specially reprehensible is the PM's callous rationalisation, bordering on justification, of his government's untenable stand on the matter."

The NDA has worked out a new strategy, under which it would continue to highlight the issue of tainted ministers by focusing its protest mainly against "one representative tainted minister, the Minister of Railways, in an appropriate manner".

Former PM and NDA chairman Atal Bihari Vajpayee presided over the NDA MPs' meeting, which was attended by convener George Fernandes, BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu as well as senior BJP leaders Sushma Swaraj, Jaswant Singh and V.K. Malhotra. Vajpayee asked the NDA MPs to be united and determined in their approach for

success of their strategy.

"It was felt the proceedings of Parliament should be allowed and important issues should be discussed," Advani said. "There will be different forms of protest from Wednesday, which will be suggested by a sub-committee."

Today's developments were seen as a truce following Manmohan Singh's appeal to the two BJP leaders for cooperation, and also because of misgivings among NDA MPs on continuing the policy of disruption of Parliament.

Though the boycott was triggered by the non-removal of "tainted ministers" and the dismissal of four Governors, the NDA said it had decided to perform its "duty conscientiously".

Later, L.K. Advani said the Babri Masjid demolition case against him and two others (who were made ministers in

the Vajpayee government) could not be compared with the criminal cases against the "tainted" ministers in the Manmohan Singh government.

"The offences for which I was charged with do not make me a criminal," he said, in reply to a question that the BJP did not have the right to raise the issue when it had included chargesheeted ministers in the government.

Advani said the Opposition had expected the government to acknowledge the issue by at least dropping one of the "tainted" ministers, "say the one who was dropped from the UF government under the Left's pressure".

Asked whether the NDA would boycott Thursday's general budget, he said, "It will go on as usual," making it clear that the boycott of the railway budget was targeted against "tainted" ministers.

*J. Manmohan Singh*

# Opposition unrelenting

## Manmohan talks to Vajpayee, Advani

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JULY 5. In an effort to end the deadlock in Parliament, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today talked to the chairman of the National Democratic Alliance, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the Leader of Opposition, L.K. Advani, this morning while NDA leaders postponed till tomorrow a final decision on their strategy. But they indicated that a "boycott" of the Railway Budget presentation is likely.

Talking to reporters at an investiture ceremony, Dr. Singh said he had repeated his earlier request to Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani that "regardless of the differences (between the Government and the Opposition), the House should function normally and all issues should be discussed in a cordial atmosphere."

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, indicated the Government's readiness for a discussion "on any subject in any form under the rules." Referring to the disruption of Parliament by the Opposition on the issue of "tainted" Ministers, Mr. Azad said stalling of Parliament was not helping the Government or the Opposition.

Earlier in the day, after a

meeting of the NDA leaders this morning, there was no sign of change in their determination to "boycott" the presentation of the Railway Budget tomorrow.

The BJP is of the view that the Government is not helping to create the right atmosphere for cooperation. Even as the controversy over the induction of "tainted" Ministers was yet to be addressed, the Government sacked four Governors appointed by the Vajpayee regime, and, as if that was not enough, the Human Resource Development Minister, Arjun Singh, failed to invite the BJP to a convention to discuss the problems faced by the minorities in education and other fields, the BJP deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, V. K. Malhotra, said today.

Mr. Malhotra indicated that "boycott" of the Railway Budget would be the "minimum" protest action that the NDA would approve tomorrow. But there was also an indication from some party MPs that the NDA might take part in the debate on the Railway Budget, whenever that takes place, as many MPs were keen on focussing the attention on the problems faced by the people in relation to this largest public utility.

There was a hint from sources in the BJP that the NDA may

decide to do what the Congress and the Left parties had done to the former Defence Minister, George Fernandes. He was not asked any questions and they refused to listen to him whenever he got up to speak in Parliament but allowed Parliament to function at other times.

Immediately after the adjournment of both Houses of Parliament today, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, called a meeting of the party leaders once again in an attempt to resolve the issue but to no avail. When Mr. Malhotra was asked whether the BJP would respond to the Congress offer of a debate on the subject of "tainted" Ministers, Mr. Malhotra said: "They did not allow even the Leader of the Opposition to speak." He was referring to the first brief session of Parliament when the trouble erupted as the Prime Minister began introducing his Ministers.

Mr. Malhotra told the press that the BJP could not accept Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav as Minister. He had resigned as the Bihar Chief Minister after he was named an accused in the fodder scandal.

Another Minister in the present Government had been dropped by the Bihar Chief Minister, Rabri Devi, he said.

6 JUL 2004

THE HINDU

# আজ বাজেট অধিবেশন

## সব আবেদন ব্যর্থ, অনাড় বিরোধী পক্ষ

দীপেন্দ্র রায়চৌধুরী • নয়াদিল্লি

J. Parthasarathy  
D. J. S.

৪ জুলাই: রাজ্যপাল-বিতর্কের উত্তাপ অগ্নিগর্ভ করে তুলতে চলেছে সংসদের বাজেট অধিবেশন। আগামিকাল এই অধিবেশন শুরু হচ্ছে। তার আগে আজ স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের ডাকা সর্বদলীয় বৈঠক বা সুষ্ঠু ভাবে সংসদ চালানোর জন্য প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের আবেদন, কোনও কিছুতেই কাজ হয়নি। সংসদের কাজ যে তাঁরা ভাল ভাবে চালাতে দেবেন না তা স্পষ্ট করে দিয়ে বিজেপি'র উপনেতা বিজয়কুমার মলহোত্র বলেন, রাজ্যপালদের বরখাস্ত করে সরকারই পরিস্থিতি জটিল করে তুলেছে।

গত অধিবেশনে দাগি মন্ত্রীদের বিরুদ্ধে শোরগোল তুলে রাষ্ট্রপতির বক্তৃতার উপরে কোনও আলোচনাই বিজেপি করতে দেয়নি। একই কারণে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের রেল বাজেট পেশের সময়ও তাঁরা লোকসভা বয়কট করবেন বলে স্থির করেছেন। কাল রাতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ফোন করেন বিরোধী নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীকে। কিন্তু তাতে যে অবস্থার কোনও পরিবর্তন হয়নি তা সোমনাথের ডাকা সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকেও স্পষ্ট ছিল।

স্পিকারের আয়োজিত মধ্যাহ্নভোজের পর প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, “আমরা সকলের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে রাজি আছি। সংসদ কথা বলা ও আলোচনার একটি মঞ্চ। আমাদের নিজেদের মধ্যে যতই মতভেদ থাকুক না কেন, সব রাজনৈতিক দলেরই উচিত এই ঐতিহ্যকে স্বাগত জানানো এবং সংসদ ঠিক ভাবে চলতে দেওয়া।” দাগি মন্ত্রীদের বিষয়টি থেকে শুরু করে রাজ্যপাল প্রশ্ন, যে কোনও বিষয় নিয়ে তিনি বিতর্কে রাজি আছেন বলে মনমোহন জানান। তবে রাজ্যপাল বরখাস্তের প্রশ্নটি নিয়ে তিনি আজ কোনও কথা বলতে চাননি।

সোমনাথবাবুও বলেন, “আমি সকলের কাছে সহযোগিতার আবেদন জানিয়েছি এবং সভা যাতে সুষ্ঠু ভাবে চলে তা-ও দেখতে বলেছি।” সোমনাথ এই উদ্দেশ্যে দফায় দফায় বৈঠকও করেছেন। বিজেপি জানিয়েছে, দাগি মন্ত্রী, রাজ্যপালদের বরখাস্ত করা, রেল ডাকাতি, অনুপ্রবেশ প্রভৃতি প্রশ্নে সরকারকে জেরবার করে দেওয়াই তাঁদের উদ্দেশ্য।

বিজেপির সহযোগী দলগুলি এই ব্যাপারে বিজেপির পাশে কতটা দাঁড়াবে তা নিয়ে অবশ্য প্রশ্ন চিহ্ন আছে। কারণ, রাজ্যপাল বা অনুপ্রবেশ সেই অর্থে তাঁদের বিষয় নয়। কিন্তু নীতীশ কুমারেরা যে দাগি মন্ত্রীদের বিষয়টি বা রেল ডাকাতি নিয়ে হইচই বাধাবেন তাতে সংশয় নেই। কারণ, এর লক্ষ্য লালুপ্রসাদ ও তাঁর দল। আবার বামপন্থীরা দাগি মন্ত্রীদের বিষয়টি নিয়ে যেমন অস্বস্তিতে থাকবেন, তেমনই বিমানবন্দর বেসরকারিকরণের মতো বিষয় সভায় তুলতে চাইবেন। তবে দলীয় সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, বিজেপির লাভ হয় এমন কোনও কাজ তাঁরা করবেন না।

● কাল বিক্ষোভে নামছে বিজেপি.... পৃঃ ৫

PM'S CALL FALLS ON DEAF EARS

# BJP gets into battle mode

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97  
Shahid Pervez in New Delhi

July 4. — The Budget session of Parliament, beginning tomorrow, is likely to be as stormy as the earlier one. Apart from the induction of "tainted ministers", the BJP has got another issue to bring the proceedings to a halt: dismissal of four Governors with BJP-RSS background.

An all-party meeting called by the Lok Sabha Speaker here this afternoon did not seem to make any headway in resolving the impasse, even as the Prime Minister and Mr Somnath Chatterjee appealed to the parties to ensure smooth functioning of Parliament. Emerging from the meeting, BJP representative Mr VK Malhotra accused the government of not taking any initiative to end the deadlock that had paralysed the first session of the 14th Lok Sabha last month.

"We are willing to talk to anybody... Parliament is a forum for dialogue and discussion. All political parties regardless of our differences... should respect the great institution of Parliament and it should be allowed to function smoothly," Dr Manmohan Singh said after the meeting.

Dr Singh had a telephonic talk with Mr LK Advani last night. He said he was keen to meet the Opposition leader today, but could not do so since the latter had gone to Ahmedabad.

Referring to the Opposition's demand that the government should allow admission of a censure motion against the "tainted" ministers, Dr Singh said: "We are ready to discuss whatever bothers the Opposition." On Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's statement that Governors had been reduced to daily wagers, he said: "I don't want to comment. But what the BJP is saying is not correct."

Despite the Prime Minister's call, the BJP sent out clear signals about the hard-

## No smoking in Parliament

NEW DELHI, July 4. — The Central Hall and lobbies in Parliament House will be no-smoking zones from tomorrow. This was announced by the Lok Sabha Speaker today after an all-party meeting. The meeting also decided that the Zero Hour proceedings of the session would be telecast live. — SNS



ening of the Opposition stand on the two issues. The party will even boycott the presentation of the railway budget on 6 July since rail minister Mr Lalu Prasad tops the Opposition's list of "tainted ministers".

Mr Malhotra accused the Congress-led coalition of working in a "fascist" manner. The government, he said, has not come forward with any proposal to settle the row over "tainted" ministers issue and has aggravated the situation by sacking the Governors.

Stepping up the heat on the UPA, Mr Advani said in Gandhinagar: "This government has started its tenure by criminalising not just politics but criminalising the government. None of the governments in the past has done so."

Mr Vajpayee, on his part, asked the government to change its attitude if it wanted the budget session to pass off peacefully. "The situation has come to such a pass that we're forced to voice our opposition. The government is attacking democracy by removing Governors on the ground of their ideology."

Among other issues the NDA will raise are farmers' suicide and starvation deaths in West Bengal.

More reports on page 4

# New Rajya Sabha members take oath

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 5.** The Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, the Bharatiya Janata Party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Mayawati, the Leader of the Opposition, Jaswant Singh, the former Deputy Chairperson of the House, Najma Heptulla, actress Jaya Bachchan

and industrialist Anil Ambani were among the 52 persons who took oath as members of the Rajya Sabha here today. Ms. Heptulla is now a BJP member.

The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, was present in the House for 10 minutes. Earlier, he introduced Jaipal Reddy as the Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

Watched by Amitabh Bachchan and Tina Ambani from the visitor's gallery, Ms. Bachchan and Mr. Ambani took oath in Hindi and English respectively. Ms. Bachchan touched the feet of the Human Resource Development Minister, Arjun Singh, after taking oath.

Among others who took oath were BJP leaders Murli

Manohar Joshi, Pramod Mahajan and Arun Shourie, Congress leaders Mohsina Kidwai, Ambika Soni, Jairam Ramesh and Oscar Fernandes and noted Sarvodaya leader Nirmala Deshpande, who is a nominated member.

There were five absentees — V. Hanumantha Rao (Congress), Pyarelal Khandelwal (BJP), Dilip Singh Judeo (BJP),

Sharad Joshi (Swatantra Bharat Paksh) and Nand Kishore (SP).

Seven members have been elected to the Upper House from Andhra Pradesh, two each from Bihar and Chhattisgarh, four each from Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, five from Rajasthan, six from Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, three from Punjab, 11 from Uttar Pradesh and one each from Uttaranchal and West Bengal, while one has been nominated.

While Mr. Naidu, Mr. Joshi and Congress member Santosh Bagrodia took oath in Sanskrit, all the three members from Punjab took oath in Gurmukhi and all the members from Tamil Nadu in Tamil. Ms. Kidwai and Kamaal Akhtar (SP) took oath in Urdu. Several members took oath in their mother tongue including Kannada, Telugu, Marathi and Oriya.

Mr. Jaswant Singh and Mr. Mahajan bowed before the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, after taking oath. Ms. Heptulla was cheered by the BJP benches when her name was announced but only a few from the Congress benches cheered their former colleague.

Amid laughter, Mr. Joshi, who shook hands with Mr. Arjun Singh after taking oath, was asked to repeat it by the Congress member, Suresh Pachauri. Mr. Gyan Singh Pilia took oath sitting on a wheel chair. A secretariat official went to him and took his signature.

Ms. Mayawati did not acknowledge any side as she went to take oath. But when she returned to her seat, the Samajwadi Party leader, Amar Singh, greeted her with a 'namaste.' She returned the greeting without a smile.

Welcoming the new members, Mr. Shekhawat said he hoped they would maintain high standards of debate and enhance the dignity and prestige of the House. "We would welcome infusion of new ideas and fresh thinking on the critical issues facing the country," he said.

## Amitabh mobbed for autograph

By Gargi Parsai

**NEW DELHI, JULY 5.** "Well done," superstar Amitabh Bachchan told his wife, Jaya Bachchan, as he hugged her in the corridors of Parliament after she took oath as the new Samajwadi Party member of the Rajya Sabha today. Earlier, Mr. Bachchan gave a thumbs-up sign when she looked up at the visitor's gallery after taking the oath in the House.

"I am happy. Let me absorb this. You've to give me time to think," Ms. Bachchan told *The Hindu* while reacting to her first day in Parliament as a member.

Asked why she touched the Human Resource Development Minister, Arjun Singh's feet, she said: "Because he is my father's friend." Ms. Bachchan, who belongs to Bhopal, is the daughter of well-known journalist Taroon Coomar Bhaduri.

The Bachchan family was present in full strength in the visitor's gallery to watch the beginning of yet another stint of a member of their family in politics. About 15 years ago, Mr. Bachchan himself was elected to the Lok Sabha on the Congress ticket from Allahabad. Not only the Bachchans, but their 'samdhis' Ritu and Rajan Nanda, and close friend Tina Ambani were also present to watch the proceedings. Ms. Ambani was there to watch her husband, Anil Ambani, take oath as an independent member backed by the Samajwadi

Party.

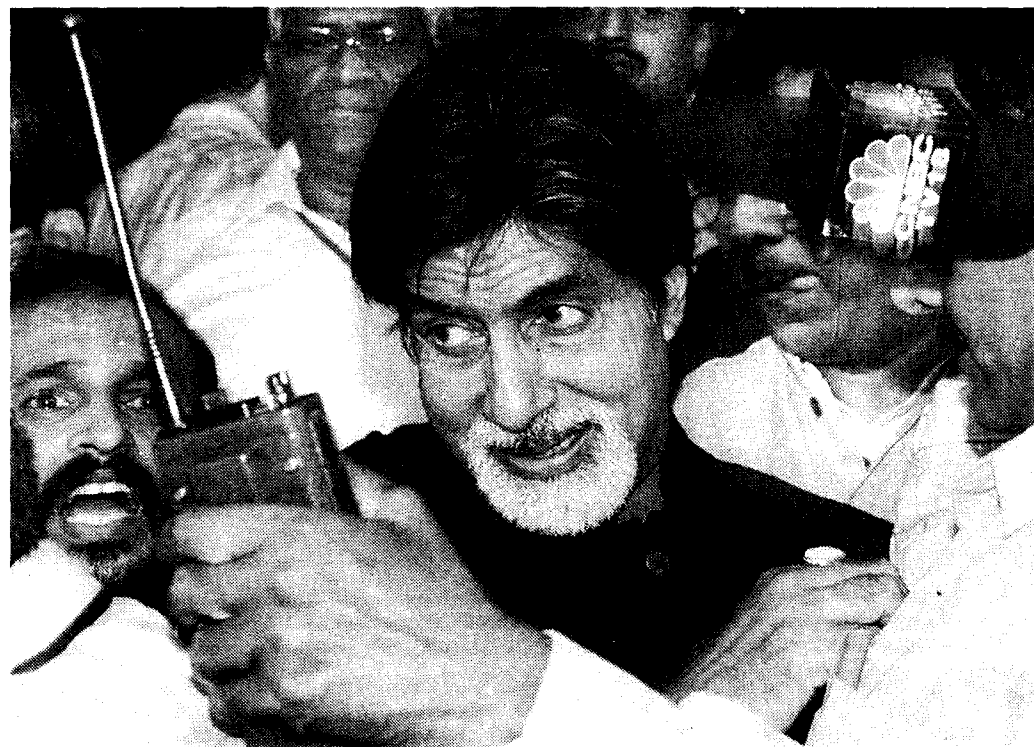
"No I am not joining politics," Mr. Bachchan said when asked whether his backing of his wife's entry into the Rajya Sabha was any indication. On Jaya Bachchan's election, he said, "I am happy and proud. She is an individual and she is free to choose and pursue her interest." The Bachchan chil-

dren said they had never before come to Parliament House. Not even when their father was a member. "We are very proud of her and very happy," Abhishek and Sweta said.

There was a virtual stampede in the hallowed corridors of Parliament as the watch and ward staff, security staff and

visitors mobbed Mr. Bachchan. For a while, there was total chaos with hundreds of people seeking his autograph.

Ms. Bachchan, who was also mobbed, was rescued by actress Jayaprada, now a Samajwadi Party member of the Lok Sabha. She guided her out from a side exit into a waiting car.



Bollywood star Amitabh Bachchan coming out of Parliament House after attending the oath-taking ceremony of Rajya Sabha members on Monday. His wife, Jaya Bachchan, was among those who took oath. — PTI



## Congress wants Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson post

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 3. The Congress today made it clear that it would like to have someone from within its ranks as the next Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, today appealed to the Opposition to help facilitate a consensus on the issue. He, however, said that, if necessary, the election for a new Deputy Chairperson would be held during the budget session of Parliament starting on July 5.

At a press conference, Mr. Azad also indicated that there was little possibility of his party agreeing to yet another term for Najma Heptulla as Deputy Chairperson. He has requested Jaswant Singh, the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, to help evolve a consensus on the issue.

The Minister felt that it was quite natural for the ruling party to have a presiding officer of its choice. The previous Government also had adopted this practice. "In the Rajya Sabha, we must have at least one presiding officer from our party," he said.

The Minister held out an olive branch to the Opposition on the question of "tainted" Ministers by expressing the Government's readiness to have the issue debated on the floor of the House.

Mr. Azad said the Opposition had made its point on the issue and now it was time for Parliament to get down to work. "It will hurt them more if there is no debate in the House. They will lose an opportunity to corner the Government."

Never in the past had the Opposition boycotted the railway and the general budget, he said and urged the National Democratic Alliance to draw from its experience in the Government to appreciate the compulsions of running a coalition.

Mr. Azad said the budget session starting on July 5 was scheduled to conclude on September 3. The general budget for 2004-05 would be presented at 11.00 a.m. on July 8 and there would be no question hour that day. The railway budget was slated for noon after question hour on July 6. The economic survey would also be presented at noon the next day.

The budget session will have a total of 30 sittings — 15 sittings in the first part of the session from July 5 to 23 and 15 in the second part. Both Houses of Parliament will adjourn for a three-week recess from July 23 and reassemble on August 16.

The session will be devoted to discussing the two budgets and related demands for grants and Appropriation Bills. As many as 38 Bills are likely to be introduced during the session. Among the non-legislative issues that would come up for discussion are the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) and the National Plan of Action for Children 2003.

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# Speaker tries to end impasse

By Javed M. Ansari

**NEW DELHI, JULY 1.** Ahead of the leaders' meeting on Sunday, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, will meet leaders of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Friday to explore the possibility of ending the impasse in Parliament over the "tainted" Ministers issue. This will be followed by a meeting with the leaders of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) on Saturday. Mr. Chatterjee was hopeful of finding a solution that will allow the House to function in an orderly manner during the Budget session.

Ultimately, it is for the members to decide on how the House should function, it is their House. There are leaders with loads of experience on both the sides and I am sure that all of us will together be able to find a way out," said Mr. Chatterjee. He said that he had spoken to the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, who had agreed to attend tomorrow's meeting.

The NDA leaders are meeting on July 5 to finalise their floor

strategy. Today, Mr. Advani, the NDA convener, George Fernandes, and the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Venkaiah Naidu, met informally. The view that has emerged is that the NDA should 'boycott' the Railway Budget to be presented on July 6 by the Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, but a final decision has yet to be taken, the deputy leader of the BJP in the Lok Sabha, V.K. Malhotra, said.

In his days as a front-ranking leader in the Opposition benches, Mr. Chatterjee had been in the thick of action and is, therefore, not unduly pessimistic about the resolution of the impasse. "It is not something unique ... such things have happened before. We have always been able to find a way out," he said.

The Speaker, however, ap-

peared to be disappointed by the increasing tendency among the MPs to resort to high-decibel protests leading to the disruption of the proceedings.

"Unfortunately all of us have come to believe that the most potent form of protest is to stall the proceedings of Parliament," said Mr. Chatterjee.

To introduce greater transparency in the functioning of the Lok Sabha, the Speaker has instructed his office to explore the possibility of telecasting live the proceedings of the zero hour in Parliament. Mr. Chatterjee said the move was not aimed at disciplining the members, nor did he think that it would expose Parliament and its members to contempt. "I don't believe that it can be a method for disciplining the members. All that I am doing is

conceding to the people their right to know what is happening in Parliament. If people can be present in the visitors' gallery during zero hour, if the press is allowed to remain there to report, there is no reason why the public should be deprived of viewing the proceedings on television." According to Mr. Chatterjee, the practice is in vogue in several parliamentary democracies and it is time to implement the idea here.

"Several members raise very important issues concerning their constituencies. Why should the people be deprived of viewing their MPs and see for themselves how they perform," he asked. Mr. Chatterjee has constituted the Business Advisory Committee for the Lok Sabha, which is expected to meet on July 6.

## Polit Bureau of CPI(M) to meet on July 11

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JULY 1.** The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) will meet here on July 11 to analyse the Lok Sabha elections and also to assess the latest political developments.

Although the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee met the week after the May 13 results, the focus was on the invitation extended by the Congress to the CPI(M) to join the United Progressive Alliance Government.

Polit Bureau member, Prakash Karat told *The Hindu* here that the daylong meeting will be the first exercise by the party to analyse the verdict of the Lok Sabha polls and subsequent developments.

The party is also likely to discuss the preparations for the Assembly elections in Maharashtra due to be held during September-October.

# Ambani, Suri elected to RS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, June 26. — Reliance vice-chairman Mr Anil Ambani and hotelier Mr Lalit Suri have become Rajya Sabha members from Uttar Pradesh. The two were among the 11 to be declared elected to the Upper House today.

Mr Ambani was backed by the ruling Samajwadi Party and Mr Suri had the support of the BJP. Mr Ambani had filed his nomination papers hours after his company signed a 'state support agreement' with Uttar Pradesh for the world's largest gas-based power project at Dadri with an investment of Rs 11,000 crore. The 11 candidates were declared elected after the rejection of the nomination papers of two Congress candidates.

Among those elected were former Union ministers Mr Murli Manohar Joshi

and Mr Arun Shourie (both BJP), Miss Mayawati (BSP) and Mrs Jaya Bachchan (SP).

The rejection of the Congress candidates' nominations has soured the relationship between the SP and the Congress. The Election Commission ordered a "re-scrutiny" of the papers after Congress contested the rejection. "The nominations were rejected under pressure from the government," the party had alleged.

The Congress sought to "expose" the Samajwadi Party, which is why its poll managers asked the SP to support their candidate. Had polling taken place, it would have revealed whether the surplus votes with the SP and it allies had gone in favour of the secular Congress candidate or Mr Lalit Suri.

Mr Suri benefitted from the rejection

of nominations of the Congress candidates.

The Congress had also raised objections about the nomination of Mrs Jaya Bachchan. The party said that she held an office of profit as chairperson of the State Film Development Council and had a Cabinet rank. Mrs Bachchan, however, presented documents which showed she had resigned from the post on 29 May and it was accepted by the government on 31 May. Mrs Bachchan claimed that she did not use any of the perks while holding office.

Mrs Bachchan had taken over as chairperson on 24 October with much fanfare, but there was no official declaration of her resignation. State Congress chief Mr Jagdampika Pal said the resignation had "not been announced so far".

# Najma, Jaya file RS nominations

New Delhi  
16 JUNE

UNION home minister Shivraj Patil, Rajya Sabha deputy chairperson Najma Heptullah, Reliance group vice-chairman Anil Ambani, former Union ministers M.M. Joshi and Yashwant Sinha, BJP chief Venkaiah Naidu and film star Jaya Bachchan were among the 35 candidates to have filed their nominations on Wednesday — the penultimate day for filing of Rajya Sabha papers.

Other prominent ones to file their papers in Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bihar, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh were Union ministers Oscar Fernandes and Anbumani, Congress leaders Ambika Soni and Captain Satish Sharma, former Union minister Chhatrapal Singh, BJP leader Pyarelal Khandelwal and industrialist Lalit Suri. Mr Patil, who lost the Lok Sabha polls from Latur in Maharashtra, filed his papers for the Upper House at the Vidhan Bhavan in Mumbai for the elections slated for June 28. He was accompanied by chief



PAPER CAPER: Najma and Jaya file their nominations. — AP

minister Sushilkumar Shinde and MPCC chief Ranjit Deshmukh. Senior Congress leader Vijay Darda also filed his nomination papers in Mumbai for his second term in the Rajya Sabha. Mr Anil Ambani, Mr Joshi and Ms Jaya Bachchan were among the nine candidates to file their papers in Uttar Pradesh.

Mr Ambani, contesting as an Independent, is being supported by Samajwadi Party

and the RLD, while Mr Suri is being supported by BJP. Ms Jaya Bachchan, along with Bhagwati Singh, Ram Narain Sahu, Nand Kishore and Kamal Akhtar filed their papers as SP candidates. Mr Shourie filed his papers as the BJP nominee. Mr Naidu, who is seeking re-election to the Upper House, filed his papers from Karnataka, where Oscar Fernandes also filed his papers. — PTI

## No RS seat for Yechury

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 16 JUNE

AFTER the CPM's central leadership turned down politburo member Sitaram Yechury's name for Rajya Sabha, the party nominated state secretariat member P. Madhu as its candidate from Andhra Pradesh.

The CPM's Andhra Pradesh unit had recommended Mr Yechury's name, but the central leadership was not keen on sparing him from organisational party work, sources said.

The politburo members felt that there was already a skeleton party staff working on party affairs at the national level and devoting more may disturb the organisational work.

Though Mr Yechury has said he was not in the race, it is understood that the state committee's proposal was rejected because the party does not see Mr Yechury's presence in Parliament broadening its party base in the state since he has been away from his home state for the past several years.

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**OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

# House session ends without debate

**New Delhi, June 10:** In a rare occurrence in parliamentary history, both Houses of Parliament today adopted without debate the customary motion of thanks to the President's address as the six-day sitting of the new Parliament ended this afternoon.

The Manmohan Singh government has decided to recommend to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to prorogue Parliament, signalling that the budget will not be presented this month.

The President will have to summon a fresh budget session with at least 21 days' notice. Indications are that the budget session would start from July 5, and not June 28 as earlier indicated.

Unrelenting in its protests against the inclusion of "tainted" ministers in the Manmohan ministry, the NDA agreed to put on hold its offensive for just a few min-

utes this morning to adopt the motion of thanks without any discussion.

"I learn that there is an understanding on both sides (the treasury benches and the Opposition) to put the motion of thanks to the President's address to vote," the Prime Minister said in both Houses before the presiding officers took a voice vote adopting the motion.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee adjourned the House *size die* after the vote. In the Upper House, the proceedings went on for a couple of hours to bid farewell to 47 members, including deputy chairperson Najma Heptullah, who are completing their terms.

Soon after the conclusion of the first session of the 14th Lok Sabha, parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad indicated that the budget session might start from July 5. Apparently finance minister P. Chidambaram has sought more time to prepare the budget.

Azad said there would be a second vote-on-account along with the budget as its passage would take about six weeks after its presentation in early July. The previous NDA government had taken a vote-on-account to cover running expenses of the government till July 31.

The minister said the budget proposals and demands for grants of various ministries would be vetted by standing committees of Parliament. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha were in the process of constituting the committees.

Responding to questions, Azad said the government did not intend to promulgate an ordinance to repeal the anti-terror law during the inter-session period.

Azad blamed the Opposition for the failure of the two Houses to discuss the notion of thanks. Through its disruptive tactics, the Opposition had also failed to present its case on the inclusion of "tainted"

ed" ministers in the Manmohan ministry, he contended.

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today asserted that the inclusion of "tainted" ministers was an important issue for the Opposition. He disagreed with the United Progressive Alliance that his ministry, too, had chargesheeted ministers.

The cases against chargesheeted ministers like L.K. Advani and Murlidhar Joshi in his government and those against ministers like Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mohammad Taslimuddin were different, Vajpayee asserted. "These (cases) are of different nature. You cannot assess them by one yardstick," he said outside the Lok Sabha.

Vajpayee asserted that a person booked for violating Section 144 of the IPC (prohibitory orders), which is a "political crime" cannot be classified with "other criminals".

# Houses thank Prez, adjourn on bitter note

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The pre-budget short Parliament session ended on Thursday on an unsavoury note with an aggressive opposition sticking to its demand for removal of "tainted ministers" but allowing adoption of a motion thanking President A P Abdul Kalam for his address to the joint sitting of both Houses.

The motion was adopted without any debate by a voice vote in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha after all the amendments were negated or withdrawn.

Stepping up their offensive in both Houses, the agitated opposition members shouted slogans like "Daagi mantri isteefa do" (tainted ministers resign) and "Daagi mantri ki sarkar nahin chalegi" (government

with tainted ministers cannot function).

This was vociferously countered by members from ruling benches, some of whom came menacingly near the front rows and said that members on the other side had no moral right to raise such an issue as many of them were chargesheeted and were in the NDA government.

Making brief remarks in both the Houses, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, "I learn there is an understanding on both sides that the motion be put to vote

straightaway and passed unamously."

The Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die by Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, bringing to an end the first nine-day session of the new House ahead of the budget session likely to begin this month-end or in the first week of July.

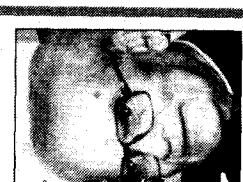
Before adjourning the Rajya Sabha Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat asked members to introspect how to resolve conflicts and overcome "situations of obstructions and interruptions".

"Let us through dialogue and

building up mutual trust and understanding find ways for smooth functioning of the House without having the need for interruptions or adjournments," Shekhawat said.

Lamenting that the normal business of discussion on the President's address could not take place despite the best attempts and efforts, the Chairman reminded the members that they had an obligation to strengthen democracy and uphold dignity of the House.

Choosing the occasion to bid farewell to 61 members who will retire by July 4, Shekhawat said, "I do hope that the heat of summer will be over soon and that by the time we meet again in the monsoon session, the environment will have turned pleasant and will be full of harmony and understanding." Agencies



**B S Shekhawat**



**Abdul Kalam**

# Parliament adopts motion of thanks

*House adjourned sine die*

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, June 10

THE GOVERNMENT and the Opposition on Thursday reached a deal to let Parliament adopt a motion thanking President Abdul Kalam for his address to the joint sitting of both Houses, but without speeches or debate.

Both Houses were later adjourned sine die, bringing to an end the new Parliament's first nine-day session.

The Budget session, which is likely to begin this month-end or the first week of July, comes next. The ruling benches proposed that Leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee and Leader of Opposition L.K. Advani should give their speeches before the motion was adopted.

The Opposition stuck to its demand for the removal of "tainted Ministers", saying it would not let Prime Minister Manmohan Singh or any other leader speak.

Both sides agreed to allow Parliament complete the formality of adopting the motion of thanks, but without any speeches or debate.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh then said: "I learn there is understanding on both sides that the motion be put to vote straightaway and passed unanimously."

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee appealed for calm. The Opposition kept shouting slogans against "tainted ministers" till the motion was taken up.



Manmohan Singh

RJD members led by Ram Kripal Yadav said the Opposition members had no moral right to raise the issue as many of them were also chargesheeted.

In the Rajya Sabha, Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat asked members to introspect how to resolve conflicts and overcome "situations of obstructions and interruptions". He said, "Let us through dialogue, mutual trust and understanding find ways for (the) smooth functioning of the House without having the need for interruptions or adjournments." Shekhawat reminded members that they had an obligation to strengthen democracy and uphold dignity of the House.

Bidding farewell to 61 members, he lamented that the normal business of discussion on the President's address could not take place.

"I do hope the heat of summer will be over soon and by the time we meet again in the monsoon session, the environment will be pleasant and full of harmony," he said.

# Court vacates stay on Rajya Sabha polls

● Election of candidates from outside their States will be subject to final orders

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, JUNE 9. The Supreme Court today cleared the decks for the Election Commission to hold elections to the Rajya Sabha for filling 65 vacancies from 14 States by vacating the interim order passed on June 4. The order had restrained the Commission from proceeding further with the conduct of the elections.

The Court, however, made it clear that the election of candidates who contest from the State to which they do not belong would be subject to its final orders on the petitions filed by former MPs Kuldip Nayar and Inderjit, challenging amendments made to the Representation of the People Act, dispensing with the domicile requirement and introducing the open ballot system.

A vacation Bench, comprising Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justice P. Venkatarama Reddi, said that in view of the stay granted earlier, the Commission could not take any further action pursuant to the notification issued on June 4. "It is open to the Commission to revise the election schedule, if necessary, and proceed with the election," it added.

The Bench said: "We have considered the broad aspect of the matter and having regard to the contentions advanced in these cases, the petitions filed by Mr. Kuldip Nayar and Mr. Inderjit require detailed consideration and [the] writ petitions are accordingly admitted. However, we do not think that it is just and proper that the interim stay should continue. We hereby vacate the interim stay."

## 'No compelling reason to stop process'

The judges said: "As the Presidential notification has already been issued and the election process has started, we do not think that there are compelling reasons to stop the election process at this stage; especially in view of the presumption of constitutionality of the impugned provisions."

The judges said that "in the event these petitions are allowed and the amended provisions are found to be unconstitutional, we consider it

expedient to give the following directions to meet such contingency: each candidate seeking election for the Rajya Sabha in the ensuing elections shall indicate clearly in the nomination form the State in which he is a resident and [the] serial number and part number of the electoral roll of the Assembly or Parliamentary constituency. We are told that the nomination paper for election to the Council of States in Form 2 C

toral roll of the constituency in which their name figured, and the elections held would be subject to the result of the final orders to be passed by the Court.

Mr. Nariman submitted that in case the Court accepted the plea of the petitioners that doing away with the domicile status under the 2003 Amendment Act was unconstitutional, then those who got elected from a State without being an ordinary resident of that State would lose their membership in the House.

The Attorney General said the Court must consider what was in the public interest in a democracy and the injury that would be caused by the non-filling of 65 seats to the House. He said what could be given in a statute could be taken away by the statute and the amended Act did not in any way violate the basic structure of the Constitution.

Mr. Gopal Subramaniam contended that the interim order of June 4 was a clear infringement of Article 329 (b) of the Constitution, which barred interference by courts in any election process after its commencement.

He submitted that the qualifications prescribed for a candidate did not impinge upon federalism because the representation of the State or territory was still undertaken on a vote being cast by the electoral college consisting of the elected representatives of the people. There was no endangerment to the basic structure of the Constitution as was contended by the petitioners.

Mr. Murlidhar questioned the *bona fide* of Mr. Nayar saying the petitioner was a member of the Rajya Sabha when the amendment was passed in August last and yet he took eight months to challenge the same. He said that two elections to the Upper House had taken place under the amended law, one in September last and another in March this year. However, the Court said that it would not take into account the *bona fide* of the petitioners when questions of constitutional validity were raised in their petitions.

18 outsiders: Page 12

## New schedule

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 9. Following the Supreme Court order lifting the stay on the Rajya Sabha elections, the Election Commission tonight announced a new schedule for the polls, which will be held on June 28, if necessary.

The last date for filing nominations is June 17. Scrutiny will be on June 18 and the last date for withdrawal is June 21. The entire process is to be completed by June 30.

under Rule 4 (Conduct of Election Rules) requires to state these details."

The election of the Members of the Council of States is subject to the result of writ petitions or orders that may be passed at the time of the final disposal of these petitions.

The Election Commission shall bring the contents of this order to the notice of the candidates seeking election, the Bench said.

The Court issued the orders after hearing the submissions of the Attorney General, Milon K. Banerjee, senior counsel Gopal Subramaniam for the Centre, S. Murlidhar for the Election Commission, Rajinder Sachar for Mr. Nayar and Fali S. Nariman for Mr. Inderjit.

The Bench virtually accepted the suggestions of Mr. Nariman, who is also a Rajya Sabha member, that all candidates indicate, in their nomination forms the State in which they ordinarily resided and the elec-



# POTA will be repealed: President

● 'Model law to deal with communal violence'

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7. In his Address to the two Houses of Parliament, the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, today outlined the Manmohan Singh Government's agenda for the next five years. While a sharp departure from the Vajpayee Government's political and social policies defines the Address, it promises to carry forward the process of economic reforms but with a human face, "making a billion people smile."

The Address turns out to be the first coherent statement of purpose of the new Government that came into power after the elections to the 14th Lok Sabha. It, predictably, borrows copiously from the United Progressive Alliance's Common Minimum Programme but it takes care to pace the expectations, promising to find resources for many of the commitments only over the next five years.

"It will be the sincere effort of the Government to implement the programme during the next five years. However, the precise content and phasing of the programmes will depend on both the availability of resources and the pace of improvement of the absorptive capacity of various sectors," cautions the President.

The Address also stresses that quest for "efficiency and equity" will be undertaken "while maintaining a high degree of fiscal discipline."

President Kalam, however, asserts unambiguously that the electorate have voted for a change from the ways things were being done the last six years. According to him, it "is indicative of people's yearning for inclusiveness — economic, social and cultural — and their rejection of the forces of divisiveness and intolerance. The verdict is for establishing the rule of law and repairing our secular fabric."

The President reiterates the Manmohan Singh Government's commitment to do away with the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). It asserts that "while there can be no compromise on the fight against terrorism," the Government believes that the existing laws should be adequate." Consequently, it "proposes to repeal POTA." The Address does not indicate any time frame for the repeal.

The most inspired part of the Address is the expression of sensitivity on the "issue of af-



The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, arrives to deliver his address to the joint session of Parliament on Monday. He is accompanied by the Vice-President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee, and the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

firmative action, including reservation in the private sector." It proposes that the Government "will initiate a dialogue with political parties, industry and other bodies on how best the private sector can fulfil the aspirations of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."

The President commits his Government to fighting "the forces of communalism," which manifested themselves in Gujarat. The Manmohan Singh Government will undertake to adopt a "model law to deal with communal violence and encourage States to adopt it" as part of its resolve "to promote

and maintain communal peace and harmony so that minorities feel completely secure." It also promises to examine the question of giving constitutional status to the Minorities Commission.

## Saffronisation to be rolled back

On Ayodhya, the Address reiterates the UPA's known position: "Await the verdict of the courts while encouraging negotiations between parties to the dispute for an amicable settlement, which, in turn, must receive legal sanction." In the same vein, the President prom-

ises to roll back saffronisation of the textbooks by taking steps "to remove the communalisation of the school syllabus that has taken place in recent years."

The President also undertakes to deepen the process of cooperative federalism. The Address promises a second Sarkaria Commission that will look at Centre-State relations "in view of the sea-changes that have taken place in the polity and economy of India" in the last 20 years. It says the Government "will consider the demand for the formation of a Telangana state at an appropriate time after due consultations."

The Government undertakes to "respect the letter and spirit of Article 370 of the Constitution that accords a special status to Jammu and Kashmir," besides promising to continue the dialogue process "with all groups and with different shades of opinion in Jammu and Kashmir." Similarly, the Government puts on record its determination to "tackle terrorism, militancy and insurgency in the northeast as a matter of urgent national priority."

On foreign policy, the Address promises "an independent foreign policy" as well as continuation of the "dialogue with Pakistan on all outstanding issues" on a "sustained basis within the framework of the Shimla Agreement and all subsequent agreements between the two Governments, including the Joint Statement of January 6, 2004."

The foreign policy section reflects a subtle shift away from the hitherto overdependence on the United States.

The Address seems a collective effort of the alliance partners in and out of the coalition Government. It offers something to all, though not every partner is likely to be satisfied with it completely.

Focus on agriculture, reforms: Page 11  
Editorial on Page 10

## A poem, a prayer

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7. The President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam today departed from the prepared text to recite a Tamil poem, a prayer to the Lord to bless India with vision and make it an island of peace.

Mr. Kalam added a prologue to the address to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament by reciting a few lines from his poem, an idea, which he said had struck him while on his morning walk today.

Titled "The Vision", it read:

"I climbed and climbed, where is the peak my Lord?

I ploughed and ploughed, where is the knowledge treasure, my Lord?

I sailed and sailed, where is the island of peace, my Lord?

Almighty, bless my nation with vision, sweat resulting in happiness!" — PTI

MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2004

## UNDOING THE FRAUD

THE SUPREME COURT'S interim stay of the notification relating to the Rajya Sabha elections is a reflection of its transparent concern over a retrograde enactment — one that detracts from the federal character of the Constitution and the purpose for which the Constituent Assembly fashioned a second chamber of Parliament. If the elections were to go ahead as scheduled, this would be the first time biennial Rajya Sabha vacancies would be filled without the so-called domicile clause — the original stipulation in Section 3 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 that “a person shall not be qualified to be chosen as a representative of any State or Union territory in the Council of States unless he is an elector for a Parliamentary constituency in that State or territory.” A condition laid down by the electoral law for registration as a voter is that the person should be “ordinarily resident in a constituency.” In due course, practice made a mockery of the domicile requirement through subterfuge and faked compliance. Finding Rajya Sabha seats for persons who did not belong to the States or Union Territories they were supposed to represent became increasingly common. Post-1989, the chief political reason for accommodating such ‘outsiders’ has been the need to compensate party persons who cannot win, or have lost, Lok Sabha elections. Media exposure of faked compliance and some legal challenges rendered the domicile requirement into something of a nuisance. Finally, in August 2003, it was done away with through an amendment of Section 3 that replaced the words “...in that State or territory” with “...in India.” Interestingly, this fraud on the Constitution had the support of the entire political class barring the Left.

The petition challenging the amendment of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 — on the ground that it undermines the federal scheme that is part of the “basic structure” of the Constitution — has offered an opportunity to look at the concept of the Rajya Sabha, the circumstances of its creation, and what it represents. Going through the Constituent Assembly debate on the question makes it clear that a second chamber of the “Union of States” was explicitly conceived to represent not the Union but the “units”, that is, the States and Union Territories. The whole Council of States scheme was based on the election of representatives of each State by the elected members of the Legislative Assembly of that State “in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.” The allocation of seats broadly reflected the population of the units. A small exception was made to this rule through a provision for the nomination by the President of 12 members having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.

The framers of the Constitution had before them several models of second chambers in major Parliaments and also the highly unrepresentative Council of State established under the Government of India Act of 1919. The overriding desire was to forge the social and political unity of the country through a genuine system of direct representation based on universal franchise, one that would get rid of the colonial baggage of separate, communal electorates and undemocratic representation for propertied and other special interests. Most of the founding fathers wanted a second chamber that would act as a check on hasty or ill-conceived legislation but had little patience with anything that might act as a “clog in the wheel of progress.” Various ideas and schemes for election and representation in the second chamber came up before the Constituent Assembly, notably proposals for functional representation, doing away with nominations, reducing the member-

ship strength, and, most interestingly, equal representation for every federal unit on the model of the American Senate.

Eventually the dominant desire for national unity and the federal realities of India struck a balance that resulted in a bottom-line constitutional federalism. This was expressed in the crafting of a Council of States (renamed the Rajya Sabha in August 1954) elected by a system of proportional representation and mirroring the political diversities and federal character of India and the complexion of the State Legislative Assemblies. A membership ceiling of 250 is laid down by the Constitution, which limits the number of representatives of the States and Union Territories to 238; the actual allocation of 233 seats to be filled in by representatives of the units is made in the Fourth Schedule. The Constitution itself prescribes some qualifications for Rajya Sabha membership, including Indian citizenship and a minimum age of 30 years; and authorises Parliament to prescribe other qualifications by law. It was in keeping with the basic constitutional scheme and the purpose of creating the Council of States that Parliament in 1951 prescribed, in the electoral law, the domiciliary qualification. Permitting politicians unconnected with a State or Union Territory to masquerade as representatives of that unit and offer themselves for election to the Rajya Sabha is a violation of the basic structure of the Constitution. Acknowledging this implicitly, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution recommended in 2002: “In order to maintain the basic federal character of the Rajya Sabha, the domiciliary requirement for eligibility to contest elections... from the concerned State is essential.”

The domiciliary issue grabbed national attention in 1991 when T.N. Seshan, the Chief Election Commissioner, sought to disqualify Manmohan Singh, Finance Minister in P.V. Narasimha Rao's Government, on the ground that he did not “ordinarily reside” in Assam and therefore did not fulfil the legal qualification for Rajya Sabha membership. Among Rajya Sabha notables who have been elected from States they emphatically did not reside in: the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu (elected from Karnataka); the former Union Minister, O. Rajagopal (elected as a BJP representative from Madhya Pradesh); and the Congress' Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Science and Technology (elected from Bihar). It is likely that this list of curiosities will grow, especially considering that Ministers who are not members of either House have recently been sworn in. In accordance with Article 329 of the Constitution, the higher judiciary has traditionally refrained from intervening in the election process once it has formally begun. The extraordinary step of staying the election would seem to suggest that the Supreme Court recognises that the issue is well joined between the proponents of the view that the “basic structure” lens must be applied to the domiciliary issue and those who, for self-serving reasons, have changed the electoral law and want it enforced regardless of what the Constituent Assembly intended. However, an extended stay would leave more than 65 Rajya Sabha seats vacant, an unprecedented situation with serious constitutional implications. If the arguments are heard in detail and the deletion of the domiciliary requirement is found to be against the basic structure of the Constitution, the 2003 amendment will no doubt be struck down. But that would be time-consuming and probably involve a hearing before a Constitution Bench. The immediate challenge before the apex court is to enable the Election Commission to fulfil its constitutional obligation of holding the Rajya Sabha elections in time — and find a way to ensure that the residency requirement intended by the Constitution-makers is honoured in substance and in spirit.

# EC moves SC for vacation of poll order

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 5. — The Election Commission today filed an application before the Supreme Court seeking vacation of its yesterday's interim order halting the process of holding the next phase of biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha.

"We have filed an application seeking vacation of the stay," EC sources here said. The Centre has also filed a similar petition seeking vacation of the interim order.

Pending the application, the EC has asked state electoral officers not to accept nomination forms for the 21 June elections to 65 Rajya Sabha seats that are likely to fall vacant.

The application, filed by the EC, has sought vacation of the stay on three grounds, one that it had yesterday morning published the notification for holding elections to the 65 seats and that under Article 329 (b) of the Constitution, once this process is set in motion, courts cannot interfere with it.

Secondly, the EC has already held two phases of polls in March-April for the Rajya Sabha after the impugned amendment was passed.

Thirdly, the application contended that since the term of these members is expiring on 30 June, the EC was constitutionally-bound to hold these elections on or before that date.

The Supreme Court (coram, Pal, Agrawal, JJ) had yesterday stayed the process to fill up the RS seats initiated by the EC through a letter written by it to the President on 24 May.

The court in its short interim order had said: "If the notification has not been published, it shall not be published. If it is published it shall not be given effect to."

The court had wondered how the EC had begun the process when the Supreme Court had issued notice on 28 April on the matter on a petition filed by veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar.

Nayar had contested The Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2003, which did away with the

secret ballot system and replaced it with the open ballot system for elections to the Rajya Sabha as also the domiciliary requirement for contesting a Rajya Sabha seat.

The law as it earlier stood permitted only those ordinarily resident in a state to contest a RS seat from there. But the 2003 amendment permitted a candidate from anywhere in the country to contest any RS seat. "This is against the federal structure envisaged by the Constitution-makers," Nayar had contended.

*9-Parliament (RS)*

# Court stays Rajya Sabha polls over domicile law

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, June 4

HTF1  
9  
W. K. ...  
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THE SUPREME Court on Friday stayed the by-elections to the 65 vacant Rajya Sabha seats in response to a petition questioning the amendments made to the Representation of the People Act in 2003.

The amendments had dropped the requirement that candidates contesting for Rajya Sabha seats from a state be domiciled there, and introduced an open ballot system for the elections to the Upper House.

The petition, filed by columnist Kuldip Nayar in April, argued that the amendments went against the basic structure of the Constitution. The Bench of Justices Ruma Pal and B.N. Agrawal, in their interim order blocking the elections, made the Chief Election Commissioner party to the case and gave the Election Commission the right to move the apex court seeking a vacation of the order. It adjourned the hearing of the petition till June 14.

The Supreme Court rejected the Centre's plea that the Bench, instead of staying the election process, should wait for the poll panel's response. The court said the EC's notification of the elections should not be published in the

## House tangle

9 Parliament  
5/6

**New law** Before 2003, you could contest RS polls from a particular state only if you could prove domicile. Now you don't have to do that

**Legal point** Govt or EC can argue that the judiciary shouldn't interfere with poll process once it is in place

gazette if it hasn't already been made official. It barred the EC from acting on the notification if it has been published.

Nayar contends that the domicile clause was one of the basic features of the federal character of the Constitution. His petition also challenged the amendment providing for an open ballot system, brought in by the NDA government to curb cross-voting by MLAs.

### Chittabrata for RS

The CPI(M) state secretariat today decided to nominate CITU's all-India general secretary, Chittabrata Majumdar, for the Rajya Sabha seat left vacant by Pranab Mukherjee's resignation. Mukherjee won the Jangipur seat in the Lok Sabha elections.

NOTICES ISSUED TO EC

# SC stays Rajya Sabha polls

Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, June 4. — The Supreme Court (coram, Pal, Agrawal, JJ) today stayed the process set in motion by the Election Commission to hold the next phase of biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha.

The court order came on a petition filed by veteran journalist Kul-dip Nayar, challenging a recent amendment of the Representation of the People Act 1951, deleting the domicile requirement for candidates contesting elections to the Upper House from Article 84 of the Constitution.

Prior to this amendment, a candidate contesting from a Rajya Sabha seat in Punjab had to be a domicile of Punjab. After this amendment, the candidate could be from anywhere within the territory of India. Even the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, is a Rajya Sabha member from Assam though he is a resident of Punjab. At least 56 Rajya Sabha seats fall vacant between April to July. Some 19 more seats become vacant in the remaining months of the year. At least three Cabinet ministers were expected to contest this phase of the elections to fulfil the constitutional requirement of being a member of either house within six months of becoming a minister.

"If the notification has not been published, it shall not be published and if it is published, it shall not be given effect to," the Court said. It also issued notices in this regard to the Election Commission. The order will stand till 14 June when the Vacation Bench next hears the matter. It will, however, be open to the EC to seek vacation or modification of this or-

## What it means for the Big Two

NEW DELHI, June 4. — While the Congress may have problems accommodating its ministers in Rajya Sabha if the residential clause for Rajya Sabha election is made mandatory, the BJP would have its own share of problems as its president Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, a resident of Andhra Pradesh, may find it difficult to get elected from Karnataka this time. The Congress would have problems with Mr PM Sayeed as there is no Rajya Sabha representation from Lakshadweep. The government can either get him nominated or give him a safe Lok Sabha seat. There won't be problems in accommodating Mr Shivraj Patil from Maharashtra and Mr Oscar Fernandes from Karnataka as the Congress will have at least one seat each in both the states. If the residential clause is made mandatory local leaders would be happy since they would get a chance of getting elected to the Rajya Sabha instead of accommodating other leaders from different states. The Bill passed by the earlier government had the support of the Congress as well, a BJP leader said while pointing out the consensus. — SNS

der. The court wondered how the EC could have written to the President on 24 May seeking a notification when the court had issued a notice on the matter on 28 April.

Justifying the order, the court said: "If you go by the basic structure doctrine, this follows."

Mr Nayar had also challenged the amendment making the process of balloting for the RS polls open. Secret ballot is basic to our constitutional structure, he had argued.

5 JUN 2004

# Speaker Somnath has the taste of the chair

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 4. — The newly-elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, had the taste of the chair on the very first day when he presided over the proceeding of the House.

Immediately after the leaders including the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, and the leader of the Opposition, Mr L K Advani, had finished eulogizing Mr Chatterjee, it was the turn of Dr Manmohan Singh to introduce his Council of Ministers to the House.

Hardly had Dr Singh begun the exercise, the leader of the Opposition Mr Advani was on his feet to protest against the presence of the tainted ministers in the government. Members on the Opposition benches joined Mr Advani and began raising slogans "dag mantri nahi chalega nahi chalega....."

There was silence on the treasury benches occupied by the Congress and the Left Members. The task to defend the likes of the Railway Minister Mr Laloo Yadav, Md Taslimuddin, Mr Fatmi, Mr Prem Chand Gupta and Mr Jaiprakash Yadav was left to the RJD members who countered the charges. As the din continued, the Speaker found himself in a helpless situation even though the Prime Minister Dr Singh continued reading out the names of the ministers. Mr Chatterjee adjourned the House till Monday next.

The Prime Minister recalled the day when he received his graduate degree at the convocation some 50 years ago by the father of Mr Chat-



Mr Somnath Chatterjee being presented a bouquet by secretary-general of the Lok Sabha Mr GC Malhotra after he was elected Speaker. In New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

terjee who was the chief guest at the convocation that year.

Mr Vajpayee did not miss the touch of humour while praising Mr Chatterjee.

"As a member of the House on the Opposition benches, you have been speaking much, but now that you are in the Chair, you should change your past habit and speak less", Mr Vajpayee said. "Aap Bolpur se chunav jit kar aye hain, par ab bolana kam padega", Mr Vajpayee remarked.

## Role reversal

NEW DELHI, June 4 — It was a changed scenario in the Rajya Sabha today with flamboyant BJP leaders sitting silent in Opposition benches and a spirit of joy and enthusiasm evident among members of the ruling combine. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh will be the Leader of the House and former Union Minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, Leader of the Opposition, according to an announcement by the Chairman. — PTI

# Advani trains guns on tainted ministers

## Somnath Faces Bouncer Barrage On Debut

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 4 JUNE

FOR Mr Somnath Chatterjee, it was literally a baptism by fire. Anointed as the Lok Sabha Speaker, in a rare display of unity and camaraderie among the political class, he got a taste of the bitterness that has come to mark relations between the Treasury and the Opposition Benches.

The House was thrown into turmoil as soon as leader of Opposition L. K. Advani got up to make his point about the inclusion of "tainted" politicians in the Union council of ministers. The BJP veteran had timed his intervention well in advance, having secured the Speaker's permission to speak just before Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's mandatory introduction of his ministers before the House.

Going by the storm of protests that Mr Advani's remarks drew from the Treasury Benches, the CPM veteran is in for difficult days ahead. With the two sides bracing up for a showdown on the issue, Mr Chatterjee will have to use all his skills and experience to ensure that the proceedings of the House are not derailed.

Mr Advani, in his remarks, said while the Prime Minister had the prerogative to select his ministers, never before in the past had persons with criminal background been inducted in the Union government. His comment triggered a wave of protest from the Benches earmarked for the ruling side. The newly-elected Speaker's attempts to have a semblance of order in the House fell on deaf ears as Mr Advani was not allowed to speak. The Opposition MPs countered by raising slogans *Daaji Mantri Hatao, Desh bachao* (remove the tainted ministers and save the nation).

Amidst noisy interruption, Mr Advani continued, observing that he was happy that a person of clean image had occupied the Prime Minister's chair, but many were disappointed over the constitution of the Cabinet. Not only were the Opposition parties unhappy, even the parties supporting the UPA government had not exactly welcomed the induction of "tainted persons" in the Cabinet.

He cited Wednesday's protest march over the issue, in which over 200 NDA MPs had walked up to the Rashtrapati Bhavan to submit a memorandum to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam against the inclusion of tainted persons in the Union council of ministers. "It was an established convention that persons with criminal background should not be included in the Cabinet," the leader of Opposition pointed out.



## RJD Goes On Front Foot

New Delhi  
4 JUNE

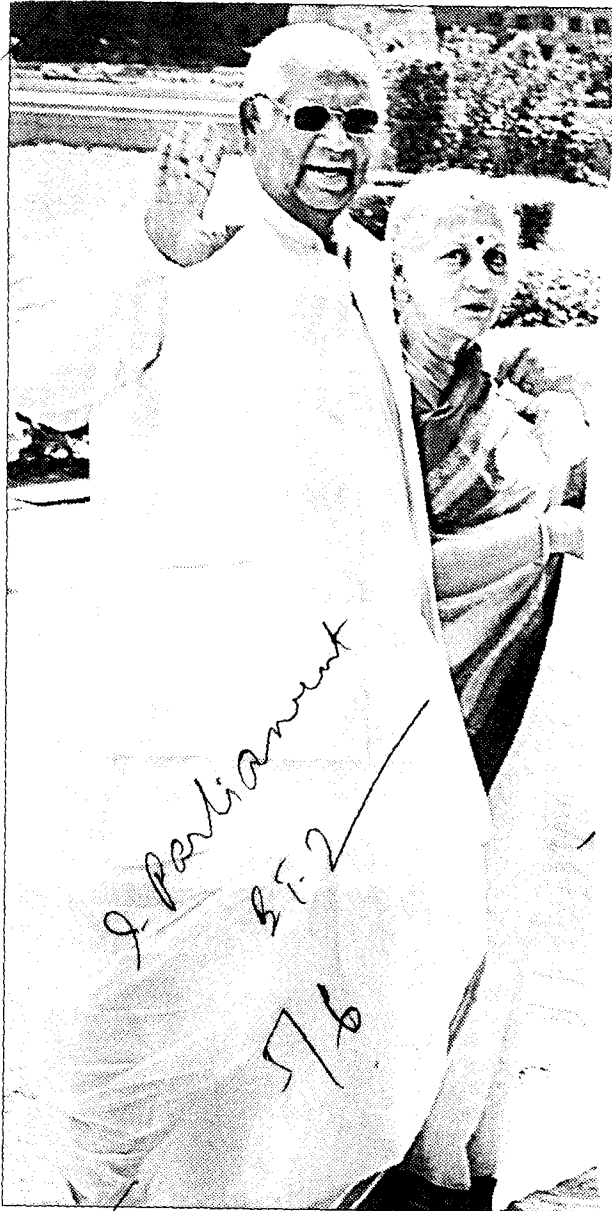
AS NDA mounted onslaught against the UPA government over inclusion of tainted persons in the ministry, RJD, a key ally in the ruling coalition, launched a counter-attack on Friday releasing a list of 78 leaders of the BJP-led coalition, including L.K. Advani and M.M. Joshi, facing various court cases.

RJD's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Devendra Prasad Yadav asserted here that his party had "concrete evidence" against the NDA leaders on their charges and was ready to defend the accusations. The list incidentally includes some Samajwadi Party leaders, but Mr Yadav evaded a direct reply when asked about it.

Emphasising that no accused is guilty till a court establishes so, Mr Yadav, who was elected as deputy leader of the party on Friday, said: "The issue raised by NDA over so-called tainted ministers is baseless, concocted and politically-motivated."

He attacked his former "socialist" colleagues George Fernandes and Sharad Yadav for joining BJP in the campaign, alleging the Lohiawadis (followers of Ram Manohar Lohia's principles) had turned saffron and become feel-good and Shining India people." Particularly targeting Mr Sharad Yadav over Gujarat riots issue, Mr Devendra Yadav alleged "he remained silent even as humanity was being killed in Gujarat."

—PTI



**HOUSE CAPTAIN:** Somnath Chatterjee and wife Renu arrive at the Parliament House in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

## LS Well-comes Red Speaker

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 4 JUNE

**C**PM leader Somnath Chatterjee was on Friday unanimously elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha. He is the first Communist leader to become Speaker. The candidature of Mr Chatterjee, a 10-time member of Parliament, was proposed both by the ruling side as well as the Opposition. Soon after his election, Mr Chatterjee was escorted from the front benches to the Speaker's chair by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, to a standing ovation.

Felicitating Mr Chatterjee, Dr Singh emphasised the need "to recapture the high noon of idealism, which inspired our freedom struggle."

Extending "fullest cooperation" of UPA and the Congress, Dr Singh said his government was committed to taking the nation forward as "modern, progressive, open, secular and liberal democracy and a just society."

Mr Advani used the occasion

to drive home the point that ideological differences should not be allowed to come in the way of constructive parliamentary activities. "The Opposition and the government can have different ideologies, but on some issues, we can speak in one voice," he said. He said it was the Speaker's duty to ensure that the "Opposition has its way since the government will always have its say."

Extending his best wishes, Mr Vajpayee said

**RED LETTER DAY** Mr Chatterjee had now risen from being an honourable member to occupy the coveted Speaker's chair. He said in a multi-party House, there was increasing need for the Speaker to guide the House properly without taking partisan attitude. The former Prime Minister regretted that for some time now, the House was witnessing some undesirable tendencies which need to be nipped in the bud.

He hoped Mr Chatterjee would conduct the proceedings in such a manner that members don't feel the need to troop into the Well of the House to express their grievances.



# সোমনাথই সর্বসম্মত স্পিকার আজ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩ জুন—  
কাল বিনা প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতায় স্পিকার  
নির্বাচিত হতে চলেছেন সোমনাথ  
চট্টোপাধ্যায়। দেশের প্রথম কমিউনিস্ট  
স্পিকারের জন্য আজ ১৮টি  
মনোনয়নপত্র জমা পড়ে। প্রস্তাবকদের  
মধ্যে ছিলেন অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী,  
সনিয়া গান্ধী, প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়,  
লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী, শরদ পওয়ার,  
নীতীশ কুমার, লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব,  
মায়াবতী, সমাজবাদী পার্টির নেতা  
রামগোপাল যাদব এবং তেলঙ্গানা রাষ্ট্রীয়  
সমিতির চন্দ্রশেখর রাও প্রমুখ।

এ ছাড়া অন্য কারও নামে  
মনোনয়নপত্র পড়েনি। মনোনয়নপত্র  
জমা দেওয়ার সময়সীমা আজ দুপুরেই  
পার হয়। কাজেই স্পিকার-পদে  
ভোটভুক্তির প্রয়োজন হবে না। বিরোধী  
পক্ষ প্রথমে তাঁদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা না-  
করে সোমনাথের নাম স্পিকার হিসাবে  
নিয়ে আসায় ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করেছিলেন।  
কিন্তু পরে সংসদীয় মন্ত্রী গুলাম নবি  
আজাদ কথা বলেন বাজপেয়ী, আডবানী  
ও জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের সঙ্গে।

সরকারের তরফে তাঁদের ডেপুটি  
স্পিকারের পদটি নিতে অনুরোধ করা  
হয়। এন ডি এ সেই প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ  
করেছে। সেই অনুযায়ী এন ডি এ-র  
সদস্য দলগুলিও সোমনাথের নাম প্রস্তাব  
করেছে। অকালি দল ডেপুটি স্পিকারের  
পদে আগ্রহী। বিজেপি-র সত্যনারায়ণ  
জাতিয়ার নামও বিবেচিত হচ্ছে। ডেপুটি  
স্পিকার নির্বাচন হবে পরে।

আজ আজাদ জানান, সব পক্ষের  
তরফেই সোমনাথের নাম প্রস্তাব করা  
হয়েছে। “এই ঘটনা কার্যত তাঁর যোগ্য  
নেতৃত্ব, রাষ্ট্রনায়কত্ব এবং অভিজ্ঞতার প্রতি  
সকলের শ্রদ্ধার্ঘ্য,” মন্তব্য করেছেন  
আজাদ। সমর্থন দেওয়ার জন্য সমস্ত  
দলের নেতাদের ধন্যবাদ জানিয়ে আজাদ  
বলেন, “তাঁর (সোমনাথের) থেকে  
বিচক্ষণ ব্যক্তি আমরা পেতামই না।”  
সোমনাথকে স্পিকার করার প্রস্তাবটি  
এসেছিল আদতে সনিয়ার কাছ থেকে।  
সি পি এম তা নিয়ে আলোচনা করে  
সম্মতি দেয়। কাল লোকসভার  
কর্মসূচিতে সোমনাথের স্পিকার-পদে  
নির্বাচনটাই বলতে গেলে একমাত্র বিষয়।

SOMNATH PRO-TEM SPEAKER

# Quiet start for 14th LS

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 2. — The 14th Lok Sabha got off to a quiet start today with few shouts of joy or sparring matches between rival parties as MPs began taking oath.

Among those who took oath first were defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Opposition leader Mr LK Advani, former Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi. Mr Somnath Chatterjee was sworn in as the pro-tem Speaker.

Mr Chatterjee asked the MPs to come up to the expectations of the voters and work to strengthen democracy. A panel of chairpersons — Mr Manabendra Shah, Mr Giridhar Gamang and Mr Babasaheb Vikhe Patil — to administer the oath was announced.

Compared with the exuberance of the previous House, this Lok Sabha, which saw a change of role for the two leading political alliances, began quietly. Dr Manmohan Singh shook hands with his predecessor Mr Vajpayee.

Cabinet ministers such as Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, Mr Sharad Pawar, Mr TR Balu, Mr Gulam Nabi Azad and Mr Pranab Mukherjee sat in front as did Mrs

Sonia Gandhi. As seats were not allotted to individual members, several senior ministers sat at the back. They included Mr Arjun Singh, Mr Sunil Dutt and Mr Ram Vilas Paswan. The Opposition front benches were occupied by Mr Advani and former Union ministers Mr Ananth Kumar and Maj-Gen (retd) BC Khanduri.

As members of the Lok Sabha took oath (Mr P Chidambaram took his oath in Tamil and Mr PR Das Munshi in Bengali), quite a few senior leaders began trickling out. By just after noon, a lot of people had left, including Dr Singh, Mr Vajpayee and Mrs Gandhi. Mr Chatterjee had to request the members to be present in the House when their colleagues took oath.

Mr Sachin Pilot and Mr Manvendra Singh were among the handful of members who donned colourful turbans. What caught the eye most was a pink cap (with two ribbons) worn by the RJD's Mr MAA Fatmi. The young MPs of the UPA — including Mr Jitin Prasad, Mr Milind Deora, Mr Navin Jindal and Mr Pilot — sat together as did many of the film stars — Dharmendra, Vinod Khanna and Jaya Prada. Mr Rahul Gandhi, sitting just behind his mother, drew curious looks.

# 14th Lok Sabha meets

Budget, Monsoon sessions may be combined

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 2.** The 14th Lok Sabha met for the first time today and as many as 376 members took the oath under the supervision of the pro tem Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, who had been sworn in by the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, at Rashtrapati Bhavan before the House met.

Beginning with the National Anthem, a minute's silence to mark the solemnity of the occasion and a call by Mr. Chatterjee to strengthen parliamentary democracy, the House got down to business without much ado.

After the panel of pro tem Speakers — Balasaheb Vikhe-Patil, Giridhar Gamang and Manvendra Shah — took the oath, Mr. Chatterjee announced the roll call by which members would make the affirmation.

The first to take the oath was the Leader of the House, Pranab Mukherjee, followed by the Leader of the Opposition, L. K. Advani, the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Sonia Gandhi. Thereafter, it was the turn of the Council of Ministers who had been elected to the House, after which members were called to the well of the House as per the alphabetical order of the States.

The exercise will continue on Thursday.

As soon as he arrived, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, went up to Mr. Vajpayee and greeted him and Mr. Advani before moving towards Ms. Gandhi who rose to greet him.

The Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, caused a bit of a stir in the Congress benches when he touched the feet of Mr. Vajpayee after taking the oath.

The linguistic diversity of the House was in full flow with many a member — including several from the Council of Ministers — opting to take the oath in their respective languages.

Prominent among the Ministers who took the oath in Tamil were P. Chidambaram, Mr. Aiyar, Dayanidhi Maran and T.R. Baalu.

While Priya Ranjan Dasmuni took the oath in Bengali, K. Chandrasekhar Rao made his affirmation in Telugu, Shibu

Soren in Santhali and E. Ahmad in Malayalam.

The Budget and the Monsoon sessions of Parliament are likely to be clubbed, though no dates have been fixed. According to the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, the exact schedule for the presentation of the Union Budget, recess to enable the Standing Committees to examine the budget proposals and discussion and voting on the Finance Bill will be decided in consultation with the yet-to-be-elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Interacting with newsmen after the inaugural session of the 14th Lok Sabha, Mr. Azad said that the process of setting up the Standing Committees for the various Ministries would commence after the new Speaker assumed office.

The Minister appeared confident over the unanimous election of Mr. Chatterjee as the Lok Sabha Speaker. Mr. Chatterjee's candidature was likely to be proposed by the Prime Minister and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. The situation would become clear before noon tomorrow, the deadline for filing of nomination papers. Plans are under way to file several sets of nomination papers

with all major parties proposing and seconding his name; significantly, the first set of papers for Mr. Chatterjee were from the Samajwadi Party.

## Deputy Speaker's post

Mr. Azad said that the election of the Deputy Speaker would take place separately. He dismissed reports that the Congress was ready to offer the post of Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha to the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Mayawati. "There is no vacancy there; when the vacancy arises we will see what is to be done." He had recently called on Ms. Mayawati to support Mr. Chatterjee for the Speaker's post. Nothing else was discussed, he stated emphatically.

Apparently, the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies have not yet finalised their candidate for the Deputy Speaker's post, a position already offered by the Congress and its allies to the National Democratic Alliance. A senior BJP leader told *The Hindu* that Satya Narayan Jatiya, MP from Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh, and Charanjit Singh Atwal, Akali Dal MP from Phillaur in Punjab, were being considered for the post.

Photographs on Page 11

## Sonia sits in front row next to Ministers

By Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 2.** The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, remained the focus of attention for the hour-and-a-quarter she spent in the Lok Sabha today.

Ms. Gandhi took a seat in the front row adjacent to the block reserved for Ministers. Within seconds of her arrival to a round of applause, members from the Congress and its allies gathered to greet her. Even the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Mayawati, who is not part of the ruling United Progressive Alliance, went up to Ms. Gandhi.

In view of the numerous theories about which seat would be allotted to Ms. Gandhi, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, clarified later that it was a decision left to the parties. "Specific seats are allocated only for the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. All we do is allot blocks to parties. It is up to the political parties to decide where to seat their leaders and members."

It was still too early for parties to allot seats for members, he said. "This session will have only a loose arrangement wherein the ruling party and its allies will be seated to the right of the Speaker's podium, and the Opposition parties to its left. The final seating arrangement will be ready in time for the next session." As chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance and Leader of the Opposition in the 13th Lok Sabha, Ms. Gandhi is a natural choice for a front row seat.

Complacency Bane Of NDA, Feels Vajpayee

# Advani takes over as leader of Opposition

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 1 JUNE

FORMER deputy prime minister L.K. Advani was elected the BJP parliamentary party leader in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, a post he had held earlier during P.V. Narasimha Rao's tenure as Prime Minister. His first stint as the parliamentary party leader saw the BJP acquiring an aggressive face, which never failed to let go off an opportunity to put the government of the day on the mat on issues of national importance.

After having been unceremoniously dumped by the electorate, the BJP will be looking to the 77-year-old leader once again to guide it out of the fatigue generated by the electoral verdict.

In his new role, Mr Advani will have the full backing of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who has been made the chairman of the parliamentary party — a new post, which has been created specifically for the BJP veteran by amending the party constitution.

Even though he'll hold a largely ceremonial job, Mr Vajpayee will be called upon to articulate the party's viewpoint on special occasions. The newly-elected members of the Lok Sabha can look forward to his forceful, statesmanlike interventions, in his inimitable oratorical style, during those occasions.

Dwelling on the reasons for the party's unexpected defeat in the Lok Sabha elections, Mr Vajpayee, in his first comments after the declaration of the verdict, felt 'complacency' and 'overconfidence' could be the contributory factors. In the process, the role of



TOGETHER THEY FELL: A.B. Vajpayee and L.K. Advani at a meeting of the BJP Parliamentary Party in New Delhi on Tuesday. — AFP

another important slogan raised by the BJP during the campaign — Vajpayee-versus-question mark — was called into question by the former Prime Minister. "Lehar banane wale lehren me bah gaye, (those responsible for making waves were themselves swept away by the waves)," he said on a lighter note.

"While in the battlefield the enemy is always identified, it was not so in this case," he said.

## BJP kicks off process to strengthen organisation

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 1 JUNE

THE BJP on Tuesday kicked off the process to strengthen its organisational apparatus.

The party on Tuesday appointed office-bearers of the parliamentary party.

While former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was made chairman, L.K. Advani was elected as leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, with former finance minister Jaswant Singh occupying the slot in the Rajya Sabha. V.K. Malhotra will be the party's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha and Sushma Swaraj his counterpart in the Rajya Sabha.

Former roads and national highways minister, Maj Gen. (Retd) B.C. Khanduri has been appointed as the party's chief whip in the Lok Sabha. Santosh Gangwar and Rambaksh Varma are the new parliamentary party secretaries while G.M. Siddheshwar will be its treasurer.

The BJP is set to go in for an organisational shake-up too, with former Jharkhand chief minister Babulal Marandi, the lone BJP winner from the state, former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh and former Union minister Satyanarain Jatiya likely to be appointed as vice-presidents.

# NDA bids for LS Speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

98-5 81/5

**T**HE NDA today indicated that it may field a candidate for the post of Lok Sabha Speaker to take on CPI (M) Veteran Somnath Chatterjee with some alliance constituents favouring Nationalist Trihamool Congress leader P.A. Sangma.

NDA convenor George Fernandes told a press conference here that the Opposition parties have not so far been consulted on the issue of speakership and that the choice for the post was unlikely to be unanimous.

"Appointing anybody as the Lok Sabha Speaker without consulting the Opposition has never happened till now. We were not consulted on the issue and some of our constituents are favouring P.A. Sangma for the post. Therefore election is



Former defence minister George Fernandes at a press meet at the JD(U) head office in Delhi on Sunday. Ravi Batra

likely," he said.

Last week, BJP president Venkaiah Naidu had also hinted that NDA might oppose Chatterjee for the post of the Speaker.

Meanwhile, NDA convenor and JD(U) leader

George Fernandes today demanded a speedy and time-bound inquiry into the coffin scam in which there were allegations of corruption against him and the previous NDA government. "I would like to be the first one to demand an

Parliament

immediate and speedy enquiry into the 'specific' matter of the purchase of reuseable caskets by the Army headquarters. The enquiry should not take too much time, say two weeks, since the material is easily available with the Army headquarters, and it will not be a cumbersome task to establish whether I or anyone else has made illegal money out of this stalled procurement," Fernandes said in a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Referring to a media report that senior government and Army officials were queueing up before Congress President Sonia Gandhi and advising her on matters of national security "to get promotions and plum posts", Fernandes said the new government should take immediate action against such officers, who were allegedly leaking official secrets to the MP (Sonia Gandhi).

BJP/5  
9 Parliament  
+10-1

# We were not consulted on Speaker's choice, says Fernandes

By Gargi Parsai

**NEW DELHI, MAY 30.** The National Democratic Alliance will meet here on Tuesday on the eve of the Parliament session to discuss its floor strategy.

It is possible that the NDA may challenge the ruling United Progressive Alliance's candidature of the veteran Communist Party of India (Marxist) parliamentarian, Somnath Chatterjee, as the Lok Sabha Speaker, on the ground that the Opposition was not consulted "as is the norm."

Asked about this here today, the NDA Convener and Janata Dal (United) president, George Fernandes, said, "The Speaker is always decided after mutual discussions. The convention is to consult the opposition but for first time we've seen that this was not done."

On speculation that the Opposition might field the Nationalist Trinamool Congress leader and former Speaker, P.A. Sangma, Mr. Fernandes said it had not been discussed in the NDA so far.

On the possible candidate for the post of

Deputy Speaker, he said it was normally held by the Opposition but on this too there had been no talks.

Asked about this, the BJP spokesman, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, told *The Hindu* that the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting on Tuesday would decide whether there should be a contest for the Speaker's post.

He too said that the UPA had not consulted the Opposition on the issue.

**Fernandes for speedy probe;  
Tape genuine, says Sibal: Page 11**

THE HINDU

31 MAY 2004

# DMK, LEFT, SP NOT TO JOIN GOVERNMENT

# Friendly fire hits

# Congress plans

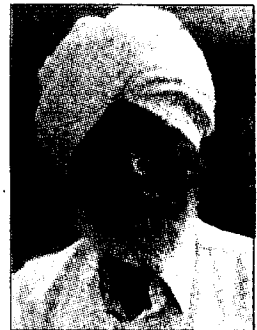
Mohan Sahay in New Delhi

May 12. — The Congress' government-formation ambitions received major jolts a day before election results are declared. The party was told by Samajwadi Party supremo, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, the DMK and the Left that they wouldn't like to join a non-NDA government, but would support it from outside.

For the Left and the DMK, the issue of Mrs Sonia Gandhi's leadership is an irritant, sources said. For the SP, the reservations run deeper, a senior non-Congress, non-NDA leader said. He said the SP is still "assessing" the pluses and minuses of supporting the NDA in case the coalition falls short.

These views were conveyed in the course of parleys held by non-NDA leaders in Delhi today. Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet was the most active of these leaders. The Congress leader, Mr Jaipal Reddy, and Mr Yadav met Mr Surjeet.

Congress sources said that the party leadership has been "taken aback" by the statements from the DMK and by what Mr Yadav told Mr Surjeet. Mr Surjeet was asked by the Congress leadership to persuade Mr Yadav to change his mind, but SP sources said the party chief stuck to his guns. Mr Surjeet was also requested by Mr Jaipal Reddy to persuade Mr Karunanidhi to change his mind about not joining a Congress-led government.



KEY PLAYERS: Mr Mulayam Yadav, Mr M Karunanidhi and Mr HS Surjeet

Sources said the CPI-M leader wasn't very sure that he could change the DMK chief's stance. With the Left too taking that line, Congress leaders say they can depend only on Mr Laloo Yadav and Mr Ram Vilas Paswan for full support.

Congress strategists said later in the day that they are "not sure" about Mr Sharad Pawar at the moment either. The Congress will also have to consider the Left parties' demand for a "common minimum programme" before the latter extends their support. Some Congress leaders are "apprehensive" about what this may entail.

Mr Chandra Shekhar met Mrs Sonia Gandhi this evening and extended support to her. The former Prime Minister also met Mr VP Singh and CPI leaders Mr AB Bardhan and Mr D Raja.

## Laloo for Sonia

PATNA, May 12. — A day before the declaration of the Lok Sabha results, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav today upped the stakes for the formation of a non-NDA "secular" government, reiterating his preference for Mrs Sonia Gandhi as putative Prime Minister in colourful language and going soft on Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav. "This is an era of women's empowerment... if the queen (Sonia) says no, only then secular forces should sit together and decide (on an alternative)," Mr Yadav told The Statesman. — SNS

More reports on page 4

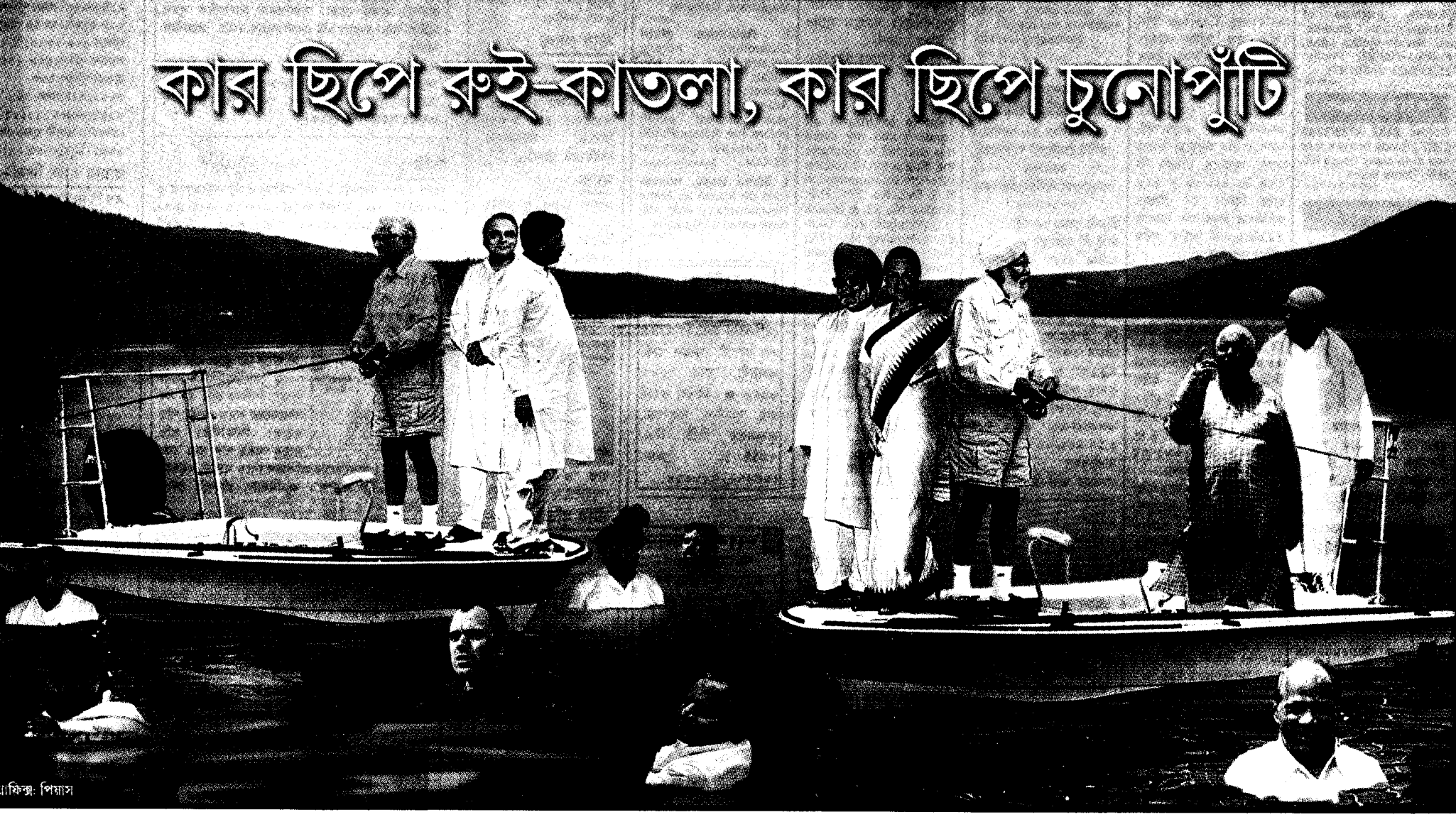
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THE STATESMAN

13 MAY 2004

# দিল্লি দখলে শরিক সন্ধান তুঙ্গে

কার ছিপে রুই-কাতলা, কার ছিপে চুনোপুঁটি



## মনমোহনকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী করার উদ্যোগ

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১২ মে: রাত পোহালেই চতুর্দশ লোকসভার চেহারাটা জানা যাবে। তার আগের দিন, আজ দিনভর রাজধানীর হাওয়া ছিল দুই শিবিরের শরিক শিকারের তৎপরতায় উত্তপ্ত। লোকসভা ত্রিশঙ্কু হবে ধরে নিয়েই বিজেপি ও কংগ্রেস, দুই পক্ষই উঠে পড়ে লেগেছে সরকার গড়তে প্রয়োজনীয় সমর্থন জোগাড়ের চেষ্টায়।

এনডিএ যাতে কোনও ভাবেই সরকার গড়তে না পারে, সেই দিকে লক্ষ্য রেখে কংগ্রেস নেত্রী সনিয়া গাঁধী আজ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন যে, তিনি আদৌ প্রধানমন্ত্রী পদপ্রার্থী নন। বরং প্রাক্তন অর্থমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের নেতৃত্বে যদি অবিভক্ত ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ জোটের সরকার গঠনের প্রস্তাবে একমত হয়, তবে তিনি তা সমর্থন করবেন।

মনমোহন সিংহকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী পদের প্রার্থী করার পাশাপাশি মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদবকে উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী করার প্রস্তাবও ভাবা হচ্ছে। এ ব্যাপারে কংগ্রেসের পক্ষ থেকেও ইতিবাচক সাড়া মিলেছে। সনিয়াও বুঝতে পারছেন, বাজপেয়ী সরকারের বিকল্প গঠন মুলায়মকে বাদ দিয়ে সম্ভব নয়।

এ দিকে, বিজেপি সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রমোদ মহাজন আজ স্বীকার করেছেন, সরকার গঠনে প্রয়োজনীয় সংখ্যা এনডিএ না-ও পেতে পারে। তিনি বলেন, “সরকার তৈরি করতে সামান্য অসুবিধা হতে পারে।” এই অবস্থায় বিজেপি তথা এনডিএ নেতারা আজ সারা দিন ব্যস্ত ছিলেন নতুন শরিক খোঁজার কাজে।

কেন্দ্রে অ-বিজেপি সরকার গঠনের চেষ্টায় কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা নিচ্ছেন সিপিএমের হরকিয়েন সিংহ সুরজিৎ। কাল রাতে সুরজিৎ এবং মনমোহন সিংহের বৈঠক হয়। আজ সকালে সুরজিৎের সঙ্গে দেখা করেন মুলায়ম। সাক্ষাতের পর সমাজবাদী নেতা সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, এনডিএ-কে সমর্থন করার প্রস্তুতি নেই। তিনি আরও বলেছেন, “আমি প্রধানমন্ত্রী বা উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার দৌড়ে নেই।”

মুলায়ম ছাড়া সুরজিৎ আজ কংগ্রেসের জয়পাল রেড্ডি এবং প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী দেবগৌড়ার সঙ্গেও বৈঠক করেন। বৈঠক শেষে সুরজিৎ বলেন, কেন্দ্রে সব অসাম্প্রদায়িক দল মিলে একটি স্থায়ী সরকার গড়বে। এর নেতৃত্ব কে দেবেন, তা ভোটের সব ফল জানার পরে আলোচনার মাধ্যমে ঠিক করা হবে।

এ দিকে, আজ প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী চন্ড্রশেখর এবং শিল্পপতি অনিল আস্থানি সনিয়ার সঙ্গে এক ‘সৌজন্যমূলক’ সাক্ষাৎকারে মিলিত হন। চন্ড্রশেখর স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, সনিয়া গাঁধী প্রধানমন্ত্রী হলে তাঁর কোনও আপত্তি নেই।

ত্রিশঙ্কু লোকসভা যে হবে, তা এনডিএ জোট যেমন ধরেই নিয়েছে, ঠিক সে ভাবে কংগ্রেস ও তার সহযোগী দলগুলিও পাল্টা সরকার গঠনে এখন মরিয়া। ফলে রাজধানীর রঙ্গমঞ্চে নাটক ক্লাইম্যাক্সে পৌঁছেছে। আগামী কাল ভোটের ফলাফল প্রকাশ হতে না হতেই সরকার গড়ার কৌশল ও পাল্টা কৌশলের বাস্তব প্রয়োগ শুরু হয়ে যাবে।

বিজেপি শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব আজ স্বীকার করে নিচ্ছেন যে, প্রয়োজনীয় সংখ্যা সংগ্রহ করা কঠিন হবে বলেই মনে হচ্ছে। বিশেষত, এন ডি এ-র বর্তমান শরিকদের ফলাফল খারাপ হচ্ছে দেখে নতুন শরিক খোঁজার কাজে তাঁরা এখন ব্যস্ত। যদিও সে কাজেও এখনও তাঁরা খুব একটা সাফল্য অর্জন করতে পারেননি। মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদব এবং শরদ পওয়ার দু’জনেই জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন যে, এন ডি এ-কে সমর্থন করার কোনও প্রস্তুতি নেই। ডিএমকে-এমডিএমকে-পিএমকে-র মতো পুরনো শরিকরাও ফের জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, কংগ্রেসকে পরিত্যাগ করার কোনও পরিকল্পনা তাঁদের নেই। আজ চেম্বাইয়ে গণতান্ত্রিক প্রগতিশীল মোর্চার বৈঠকের পরে ডিএমকে-র সভাপতি করুণানিধি জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, তাঁর দলের এনডিএ-তে ফেরার কোনও প্রস্তুতি নেই।

এ অবস্থায় বিজেপি শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব অনেকটা ভরসা করছেন বহুজন সমাজ পার্টির নেত্রী মায়াবতীর উপর। মায়াবতী আজ দিল্লিতে আছেন। কিন্তু সাংবাদিকদের কাছে মুখ খোলেননি মুলায়মের মতো। বিজেপি নেতা অরুণ জেটলি তাঁর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ রাখছেন। এ বার ভোটের সময় মায়াবতীর সঙ্গে সনিয়ার জোট যাতে গঠন না হয়, সে ব্যাপারে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী আগেই সক্রিয় হয়েছিলেন। সে সময় দিল্লির বাটরা হাসপাতালে

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

13 MAY 2004



# The making of coalitions

By K.K. Katyal

*The temptation to install minority governments with the help of "outside support" from major parties should be resisted.*

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29/5

**T**O SAY that coalitions have come to stay is to stress the obvious. Since 1996, no single party has secured a majority in the Lok Sabha, with the largest single group a long way from the halfway mark. This trend is certain to continue in the present elections, even though the predictions by pollsters about the relative strength of rival political formations may not come true. The Lok Sabha, after all, reflects the state of politics outside, which has tended to move towards fragmentation rather than consolidation.

There is nothing wrong or opportunistic or unethical about coalitions, accommodating as they do the aspirations of various sections of this land of vast diversities in a single power sharing mechanism. More important, coalitions are in tune with the spirit of the federal polity.

What about our experience with the working of coalitions in the last eight years and, earlier during the 18-month spell from 1989 onward? Far from satisfactory, at times, messy. We accepted the inevitability of power-sharing but miserably failed when it came to imbibing the coalition dharma or the coalition culture.

Whether it was the V.P. Singh Government in 1989-90 or the Chandra Shekhar-headed set-up in the following months, or the fall of the two United Front Governments in quick succession in 1996-97 or the sudden end of the first Vajpayee Government two years later, this failure stood out. True, the second Vajpayee coalition could have completed its tenure had the elections not been advanced but the equations between the BJP and the smaller allies were not always smooth. Towards the end there was the exodus of eight groups from the NDA, with some of them leaving well before the elections were announced. Then there was that oft-quoted lament by the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on the unwieldy nature of the coalition — "My worry now is, if we are again saddled with a 22-party coalition, such a situation is better avoided."

Some of the problems faced by the coalition governments arose out of systemic deficiencies, others out of the clash of personalities and of ambitions. From the way the forecasts of

a hung Lok Sabha have set off a flurry of statements on the likely scenarios after the end of polling later this month, it is clear that no lessons have been learnt from the past.

Attention needs to be drawn to an interesting feature, which does not look like changing. There is no scope for the politics of extremes in the making of coalitions, which have to be either centre-left or centre-right. The United Front Governments fall in the first category, the BJP-led combine in the second. The BJP had to tone down its extreme positions and agree to shelve some of its pet projects — Hindutva, demand for a uniform civil code and for the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution (on the special status for Jammu and Kashmir) — so as to be acceptable to its partners. That individual Ministers, belonging to the BJP, continued to push its agenda — like saffronisation of education by the Human Resource Development Minister, Murlu Manohar Joshi — is another story.

Similarly, inclusion of the Communist Party of India in the United Front Government or the support of the CPI(Marxist) from outside did not give a pronouncedly Left orientation to their policies, though it did check a tilt towards the Right. In the next round too, there will be no escape from moderation of extreme positions, whether the present ruling combine, with the inclusion of new allies, assumes office again or its place is taken either by a Congress-led alliance or a third front.

It will be useful for the political elite to learn lessons from the past and make conscious efforts to avoid the pitfalls that wrecked earlier coalitions. This, in particular, will mean resisting the temptation of installing minority governments with the help of "outside support" of major parties. There were at least five such minority governments that came to grief. One, the V.P. Singh Government backed from outside by the BJP, on the one side, and Left parties, on the other. The President of the day, R. Venkataraman, however, was not influenced by the announcements of

"outside support." Mr. Singh was invited to form the government in his capacity as the leader of the second largest party, after the Congress, the largest party, chose not to stake its claim for forming the government. However, the BJP-Left backing was a material factor, and when the BJP changed its mind, the collapse of the Government could not be prevented. Worse was the fate of the Government by Mr. Chandra Shekhar, the head of a breakaway group of the Janata Dal, with the support of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress. This was a highly lop-sided arrangement and the President was keen to ensure a measure of stability. He asked Mr. Gandhi whether his support would continue at least for one year and was told: "Why one year, it may extend to the life of Parliament". As a matter of fact it lasted some four months. The third minority government — by Mr. Vajpayee, as leader of the BJP — was in office for just 13 days. The BJP, at that point of time did not get the support of others, thus failing to cash in on its advantage as the largest single party.

None of the next two governments by the United Front, propped up by the Congress, could complete one year. The first headed by H.D. Deve Gowda collapsed when the then leader of the outside supporter, Sitaram Kesri, developed personal ambitions and pulled the rug from under the feet of the Prime Minister. The second, led by I.K. Gujral, had to quit when the Congress withdrew its support on the plea that he had not accepted its demand for dropping the Ministers, belonging to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, supposed to have been indicted by the Jain Commission after its inquiry into the Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

A coalition dominated by one constituent has a better chance of survival than one without such an anchor. It was because of this factor that the present Vajpayee regime secured the distinction of being the first non-Congress Government to have completed its term.

The tightening of the anti-defec-

tion law will help remove one cause for instability of coalitions. It is no longer possible now for any faction to break away from the parent party and claim legitimacy on the strength of support by one-third of the total membership, as was the case till recently.

The splits in the constituents will no longer wreak havoc with the coalition concerned. However, there is no check on the entire constituent withdrawing from the coalition and, thus, administering a fatal blow. In other words, there is no safeguard against the type of situation that arose in early 1999, when the withdrawal by the AIADMK led to the fall of the first NDA Government.

At times, strains were introduced in the coalitions by some of the constituents exerting disproportionately heavy pressures and extracting maximum price for their support. This distorts the decision-taking process — to the detriment of the country's interests.

Coalition-makers have now to reckon with pressures unknown in the past — the ambition of the regional parties for a share of power at the Centre. That was not the case earlier when the regional bigwigs would tell the major party "you run the Centre and let us run the State". Witness the current speculation over the possible role of the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, after the elections now.

At the moment, all manner of wild stories are doing the round. How will the NDA conduct itself if it is slightly short of majority? Seek Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav's help as a *quid pro quo* for the good turn done by the BJP in helping him become the Chief Minister in Uttar Pradesh? Will the Congress make strenuous efforts to mobilise additional support if its tally improves to, say, 145 and stake claim to form the government? Or will the Congress like to sit back and let the NDA form a shaky government in the hope that a mid-term poll may be unavoidable after two years when it would be in a better position to wield power under the stewardship of either Ms. Gandhi or her son Rahu will it back a third front?

In all these scenarios, there danger of the coalition culture a casualty. Not a happy thou

THE HINDU

3 MAY 2001

# Exit polls point to hung Parliament

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 26. — Exit polls on television channels after the second phase of general election today have projected a hung 14th Lok Sabha with the ruling NDA struggling to reach the half-way mark.

The Prime Minister readily brushed aside the projections, casting doubts over the NDA's return to power. There is no reason why the people should not vote this government to power again, he said. However, the party appeared concerned; senior leaders are meeting at Mr M Venkaiah Naidu's residence tomorrow to examine the political mood and take action wherever necessary.

And encouraged by reports indicating a narrowing gap between the expected tallies of the NDA and the Congress, the AICC today claimed the party could reach a "clear majority" with the help of its "existing" allies.

NDTV figures projected the NDA falling way short of simple majority with its estimated tally to remain between 233 and 255 seats, while the Congress and its allies are expected to get 190 to 210 seats with 100 to 120 seats going to smaller parties and Independent candidates.

The Congress is expected to make gains in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, while the NDA will hold its ground in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh.

Star News predicted that the NDA would get between 267 and 279 seats. It said the Congress and its allies would get 160-172 and gave 97-109 to others, including the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Aaj Tak gave 262 seats to the ruling



coalition, short of the 273 required for majority in the House. It placed 177 seats in the Congress tally and gave 104 seats to others.

The exit poll of Sahara News, Sahara DRS, which covered the 282 seats that have gone to polls so far, projected 155 seats for the NDA, 99 for the Congress and the rest for others.

In the 136 seats that went to the polls today, the BJP will get 68-80 seats, Congress 38-50 and others 12-

24, Star News said.

The projections by Headlines Today, the English channel of the India Today group, showed that the anti-incumbency factor was at work in Andhra Pradesh, ruled by Telugu Desam, with the Congress likely to bag 31 along with its ally the Telangana Rashtra Samiti.

The TDP and BJP together would get some 10 seats, reflecting a huge reduction in their tally.

	Cong+	BJP+	OTHERS
AAJ TAK	177	262	104
NDTV	190-210	233-255	100-120
SAHARA SAMAY	99	155	28
STAR NEWS	160-172	267-279	97-109
ZEE NEWS	89	125	64

However, the surveys on Sahara-DRS and Zee-Taleem for the first two phases, involving 276 constituencies which went to polls today and on 20 April, gave 155 and 125 seats respectively to the NDA. While Sahara-DRS gave 99 seats to the Congress and its allies till the second phase and 24 to others, the Zee poll predicted 89 for the Congress and 64 for others.

NDTV's exit polls showed that the TDP-BJP combine is facing a rout in Andhra Pradesh as it is expected to lose 18 out of 21 seats where the Congress is winning.

However, in Karnataka nine out of 13 seats, which went to polls today, are expected to go to the NDA. The Congress is likely to get three seats while one is likely to go to JD-S. Out of 136 seats that went to polls today, the NDTV exit poll projected the

Congress and its allies winning around 61 seats with the NDA lagging behind at 49 and the rest going to others.

Addressing a rally in Churu, Rajasthan's Jat-dominated constituency, the Prime Minister said: "Some doubts (over the BJP's success) were expressed before the Assembly elections last year. But when the results were declared, the Opposition was stunned. The same will be repeated in the Lok Sabha elections this year."

"Hum bhi chunkar aayenge, jarror aayenge, kyon nahint aayenge. Sarkar hum hi banayenge (We will be elected to the government for sure. Why should we not be voted to power again? We will form the government," Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee told the meeting.

He said the Congress is very unhappy with the projections. "So for their sake we too are not banking on exit polls." Countered AICC spokesman Mr S Jaipal Reddy: "Mr Vajpayee began his career as an Opposition leader, he is going to end his career as the same."

While calling the Left parties its "potential post-poll allies", the Congress said it could form the government at the Centre without the support of the SP or the BSP. On the NCP leader, Mr Sharad Pawar's statement that mere numbers would not determine the leader of the non-NDA alliance, Mr Jaipal Reddy said: "We consider Mr Pawar our stable and credible ally".

**Candidate killed:** Former UP minister and BJP candidate from the Gonda Lok Sabha seat Mr Ghanshyam Shukla was killed in a road accident late tonight, police said, PTI adds from Lucknow.

More election reports on pages 3 & 4

## 55 per cent polling amid fresh violence

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 26. — An estimated 55 to 60 per cent of 175 million voters exercised their franchise in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections for 136 parliamentary constituencies spread over 11 states.

Large-scale violence, rigging and damage to electronic voting machines were reported from Andhra Pradesh, parts of Bihar, UP and Jharkhand. Seven persons, including an assistant sub-inspector and a school teacher, were killed and nearly 100 people injured in poll-related vio-

lence, the EC stated. However, the death toll is likely to go up, as the commission has not received reports from all places.

A sector magistrate was arrested at Gazipur in UP on charges of influencing voters. Polling was also delayed in a large number of polling stations because EVMs were not deployed on time. However, after that it went on smoothly and there were no major complaints against polling staff members.

In Mumbai, the EC received complaints of deletion of names from the voters' list that resulted in a heated exchange

### SC refuses to ban exit polls

NEW DELHI, April 26. — The Supreme Court (coram, Babu, Mathur, Balakrishna, JJ) today rejected a plea to ban all exit polls till the last phase of polling is complete on 10 May, but issued notices to the Centre, the Election Commission and the Press Council of India so that the legal point could be settled. The court order came after it had heard out the petitioners' counsel, Mr PP Rao. At the outset the court was not inclined to hear the petition, filed by the Supreme Court lawyer, Mr DK Thakur. "Please don't waste our time," Mr Justice Rajendra Babu, who's also the Chief Justice-designate, observed. But Mr Rao insisted that the issue was crucial to democracy. He pointed out that the EC and the Press Council of India have not been able to do anything on the issue. — SNS

Details on page 4

of words between polling officers and political workers.

As per the provisional polling

figures given by the EC, Andhra Pradesh reported highest polling of 68 to 70 per cent, followed by

Assam at 65 to 70 per cent. The lowest polling was recorded in Jammu and Kashmir where it could reach only 21 per cent, said the Deputy Chief Election Commissioner, Mr A N Jha. Among other states, Orissa had 65 per cent, Karnataka 55 to 60 per cent, UP 45 to 50 per cent and Maharashtra 50 per cent. Bihar, Goa, Manipur and Jharkhand had 55 per cent.

In view of the incidents of EVM damage and snatching, the commission has not yet received all the reports and it will decide on repolling only after reviewing the reports

from returning officers and election observers. The EC has already received reports of poll-related violence, rigging and EVM damage in 65 polling stations in Andhra Pradesh, 15 in UP, seven in Karnataka, four each in Manipur and Orissa.

Most of the violence was reported in Andhra Pradesh where over 24 incidents of clashes were reported killing two people and leaving several injured. In Jharkhand (Details on page 3), an assistant sub-inspector and a teacher died in extremist related violence. Two died in Bihar and one in UP.

SNAP THEIR PHONE AND POWER CONNECTIONS: HC

# Axe on defaulter MPs

Statesman News Service & PTI

NEW DELHI, March 1. — Stressing on equal treatment for all citizens, Delhi High Court today asked the MTNL and NDMC to take all appropriate steps, including disconnection of telephone and electricity lines, to recover crores of rupees due from over 650 sitting and former members of Parliament.

The court took exception to MTNL counsel Mr Dinesh Agnani's suggestion that political parties should be asked to exert pressure on their candidates to clear the dues. "You don't disconnect their telephones. How do you expect the parties to do your job?" the Division Bench of Chief Justice Mr BC Patel and Mr Justice BD Ahmed said.

The court also asked the Election Commission to seek affidavits from candidates for the coming Lok Sabha elections on the amount, if any, they owe to government departments on account of telephone services, power supply and the like. "The EC shall take effective steps to publicise the information in local dailies," the Bench said.

The court, however, clarified that the candidates would not have to obtain "no dues" certificates from the departments concerned before filing their papers.

The publicity to be given by the EC in the form of advertisements would be in addition to that given by the media. Quoting last year's SC judgement in the PUCL case, the Bench observed that "an informed voter is the founda-

## Transfer ban

NEW DELHI, March 1. — The EC has banned transfer of officials connected with the conduct of elections. The ban covers CEOs, additional, joint and deputy CEOs, divisional commissioners, district election officers and revenue officers, as well as police officers — from IGs to SDPOs. "This ban shall be effective till the completion of the polls," the panel said. The EC also banned all fresh grants from local area development funds of MPs and MLAs/MLCs. — SNS

tion of democracy", adding that it was the EC's duty to inform him about the antecedents of a candidate.

As many as 656 sitting and former Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha members owe Rs 11.18 crore to MTNL, while 669 members of both Houses owe Rs 6.32 crore to NDMC in water and electricity bills. According to MTNL and NDMC, Mr ABA Ghani Khan Chowdhury (Congress) tops the list of the defaulters. He owes over Rs 41.31 lakh on telephone dues and more than Rs 30 lakh in power bills. He has challenged the bills in the court, saying he had overpaid.

Among others on the list of defaulters are BJP's Mr Jai Narain Prasad Nishad (Rs 12.18 lakh), Mr Chandra Shekhar (Rs 7.1 lakh) and Mr HD Deve Gowda (Rs 76,772). The Youth Congress (Rs 26.21 lakh) tops the list of political organisations that owe telephone dues.

## Bengal leaders run for cover

KOLKATA, March 1. — The state government might have to shelve its decision to cut down on security cover for politicians as more and more CPI-M leaders in West Bengal are asking for bodyguards.

In December, the home department had decided to review the threat perception of the 200-odd people who are now getting security cover. It felt that apart from the four VIPs who enjoy 'Z plus' security — Mr Jyoti Basu, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Miss Mamata Banerjee and Mr Subash Ghising — there are many who don't need personal security anymore. This decision was taken mainly to cut down on expenditure.

But recent KLO and Naxalite attacks have changed the situation. Quite a few district CPI-M leaders fear they may be targeted by these organisations before the polls. Many of them have refused to campaign in remote areas without security cover. "The government may have to pay heed to their anxiety. Going by the number of people asking for security, the expenditure may go up by as much as 40 per cent. Even if they're provided with security, the administration will probably have to withdraw the cover once poll results are declared," an official said. — SNS

Another report on page 9

# Panja beats Vajpayee on use of MP funds

SF-1  
177  
**Srinjoy Chowdhury**  
in New Delhi

Feb. 16. — Where does Mr Ajit Panja, the MP from Kolkata N-E and former Union minister, score higher than the Prime Minister? Simple, he has spent more funds (due to all MPs for development work) on his constituency than Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has in Lucknow, his Lok Sabha constituency.

On the eve of the Lok Sabha polls, government records show virtually all top leaders, including Mr Vajpayee, Mr LK Advani, most senior Cabinet members, top Opposition leaders and eminent parliamentarians have spent over 70 per cent of their allotment. But some MPs, for a variety of reasons, lagged behind.

And among those who haven't spent the allotted Rs 2 crore per year plus entitlements from previous years is Mr Rupchand Murmu, the CPI-M MP from Jhargram. While the Centre released Rs 16.05 crore to Mr Murmu for development work, he could spend only Rs 1.34 crore, or 8.32 per cent. Next noteworthy in this respect from West Bengal is Sk Khabiruddin Ahmed, MP from Nadia district. He spent 25 per cent of what was released to him.

Among those who received an entitlement of over Rs 16 crore — most full-term MPs who won the previous term as well — Mr Panja is virtually unsurpassed. He has got officials in his constituency to sanction Rs 17.43 crore (108 %)

worth of projects and has spent the entire amount.

Some eminent MPs who hadn't spent even half their allotment include Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, Ms Mamata Banerjee, Ms Lata Mangeshkar, Dr PC Alexander and Dr Farooq Abdullah. The former J&K chief minister was entitled to Rs 3 crore. While the government released Rs 1 crore, he hadn't spent a paisa till the end of 2003. Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, senior BJP leader, was on the same boat with him. Entitled to Rs 4 crore, half of which was released, he spent nothing. The Trinamul chief and the RJD supremo spent about 45 and 8 per cent of their funds received till the end of 2003. Significantly, both received more funds this year.

THE STATESMAN

17 FEB 2004

# Curtain falls on 13th House of the People

Mohan Sahay in New Delhi

The week just gone by marked the final departure of members of the 13th Lok Sabha from the chamber in which they had been active for over four years. Yet, when Vande Mataram was being played for the last time, less than 170 MPs in a House of 545 were present. They included Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, leader of the House, and Mrs Sonia Gandhi, leader of the Opposition.

Many big names that dominated the scene during the past 54 months were not around when the curtains fell. Mr Somnath Chatterjee, Mr Sharad Pawar and his bete-noire Mr PA Sangma were notable absentees, in addition to more than 20 ministers of the Vajpayee government who were members of the Lok Sabha.

When members left the House, a sense of satisfaction was evident despite the uncertainty of elections and whether they would return to the apex legislature.

"No regrets," said Mr GM Banatwala, the lone member of the Muslim League who was a permanent fixture in the House even when the bell used to ring for lack of

reason why many MPs wore a smile on their faces was the near completion of the 13th Lok Sabha's term. "There was a lurking fear that the coalition government would not last and the House would be dissolved within two to three years, forcing us to face the voters again. This did not happen," said Mr Kirit Somaya (BJP).

Mr Rashid Alvi, however, had one regret as he left the precincts on 5 February. "It is unfortunate that hardly 30-40 members participated actively in the proceedings.

Most of them just came, signed the register to mark their presence, and never showed their face in the House," he observed. If an average is worked out, it would appear for every hour of the 1,943 which the House sat, less than 25 per cent of the members (545) marked their presence.

The Upper House could not escape the atmosphere of despondency when the Lok Sabha ended its term on 5 February. It, too, bade farewell to some of its members.

## week in PARLIAMENT

quorum. So was the case with Mr Raghuvans Prasad, who never missed an opportunity to speak his mind on subjects known and unknown. One

# Cabinet panel to discuss JPC's cola report

5-10  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. — The Cabinet Committee on Food Safety is meeting on 13 February to discuss the Joint Parliamentary Committee's report on soft drinks and the Union health ministry's draft notification on stringent norms for cold drinks.

"We have asked for an urgent meeting of the CCFS on 13th of this month to discuss the draft notification," health minister Mrs Sushma Swaraj said. "The CCFS will come out with stringent norms for cold drinks as suggested by the JPC report," she added. Mrs Swaraj said that though the draft notification issued by the health ministry on safety standards also dealt with fruit juices, the meeting would discuss only soft drinks as suggested by the JPC. "As the draft had been issued much earlier, we are saving 90 days' time which is needed to elicit reactions on a draft," the minister said.

Mrs Swaraj said that her government had also initiated a process to bring out an integrated food law to deal with the issue of food safety. Ministers of food processing, commerce and law, besides the Union health minister, were part of a group which was working on the Food Safety Act.

The Union health ministry would be the nodal agency for the Act which would be introduced whenever Parliament meets next, Mrs Swaraj declared. The Central government had also issued a note on including water in the food definition which would be discussed by the Cabinet.



**Mrs Sushma Swaraj**

7 FEB 2004

# President dissolves 13th Lok Sabha

New Delhi  
6 FEBRUARY

**C**LEARING the decks for early elections, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, on Friday, dissolved the 13th Lok Sabha nine months ahead of its tenure. "In the exercise of the powers conferred upon me by sub-clause (b) of clause (2) of Article 85 of the Constitution, I hereby dissolve the 13th Lok Sabha," the President said in the order, a day after Parliament was adjourned sine die following the passage of votes-on-account (railways and general) and the Finance Bill for 2004.

Before leaving for Chennai at around noon, the President signed a proclamation dissolving the House with immediate effect, accepting the January 27 recom-

mendation of the Union Cabinet. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had conveyed the Cabinet's decision to Dr Kalam on the same evening and followed it up with a brief on the completion of the financial business of Parliament on Thursday night.

The die was cast for the premature dissolution of the Lok Sabha at the National Executive meeting of BJP, held in Hyderabad last month. This was followed by the Union Cabinet's decision to recommend to the President a dissolution of the House on February 6.

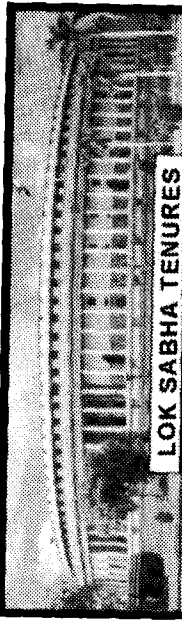
This is the fourth time this has happened in over 50 years. The first such instance was in 1971 when the late Indira Gandhi called early elections, riding high on the Indian army's victory in the war for liberation of

Bangladesh. Subsequently, her son late Rajiv Gandhi decided on early elections in 1984 shortly after her assassination and later again in 1989 when his government lost the Constitution amendment bill on Panchayat Raj.

**Dissolution PIL:** Meanwhile, the Supreme Court will hear a public interest litigation (PIL) next week, challenging the Union Cabinet's decision to recommend a dissolution of the Lok Sabha before its term was finished. The petition, filed by advocate Viplay Sharma, has been listed for a hearing on February 13.

The petitioner said the recommendation was not in the interests of the people as early elections would result in a colossal waste of public funds for the benefit of a handful.

—PTI



**LOK SABHA TENURES**

Lok Sabha	Constituted on	Dissolved on	Duration in Year, Months & Days
Thirteenth	13.10.1999	06.02.2004	4y 3m 25d
Twelfth	10.03.1998	26.04.1999	1y 1m 17d
Eleventh	15.05.1996	04.12.1997	1y 5m 20d
Tenth	20.05.1991	10.05.1996	Full Term
Ninth	22.12.1989	13.03.1991	1y 3m 12d
Eighth	31.12.1984	27.11.1989	Full Term
Seventh	10.01.1983	31.12.1984	Full Term
Sixth	23.03.1977	22.09.1979	2y 5m
Fifth	15.03.1971	28.01.1977	5y 10m 4c*
Fourth	04.03.1967	27.12.1970	3y 9m 24d
Third	02.04.1962	03.03.1967	Full Term
Second	05.04.1957	31.03.1962	Full Term
First	17.04.1952	04.04.1957	Full Term

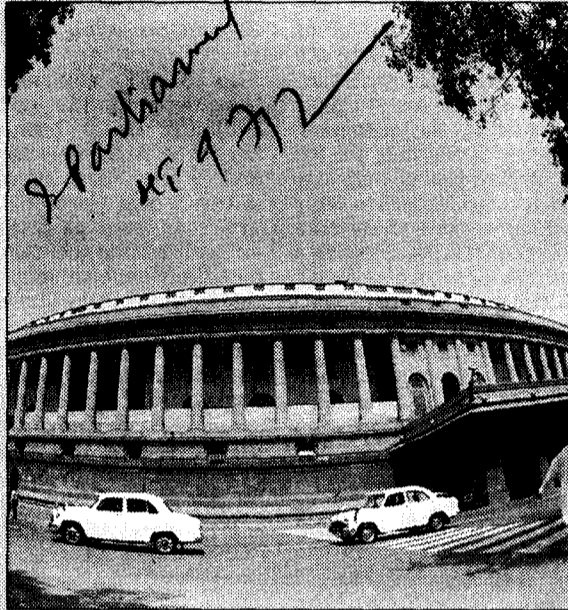
\* tenure 6 years under 2nd Amendment, but dissolved 2 months earlier

Under the Constitution, a Lok Sabha has a tenure of five years. The tenure of the 13th Lok Sabha, which was dissolved by the President on February 6, 2004, lasted 4 years, 3 months and 25 days. If untruncated business on 355 sessions.

With its dissolution, the 13th Lok Sabha became the sixth House not to complete its full tenure. Earlier, 4th, 6th, 9th, 11th and 12th Lok Sabhas had not completed their full tenure.

PTI Graphics

# 13th Lok Sabha: House stats



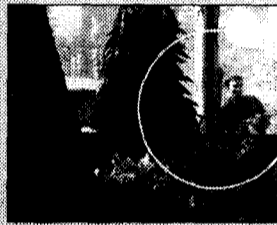
## Member profile

<b>543</b>	MPs
<b>193</b>	First-timers
<b>46</b>	Women
<b>55.5</b>	Average age
<b>428</b>	Graduates

## Report card

<b>305</b>	Bills passed
<b>43</b>	Bills pending
<b>5</b>	Adjournment motions
<b>1</b>	No-confidence motion
<b>14</b>	Sessions
<b>356</b>	Sittings
<b>1,944</b>	Hours of actual sitting

## Major events



**Dec. 12, 01** Terrorist attack on Parliament House

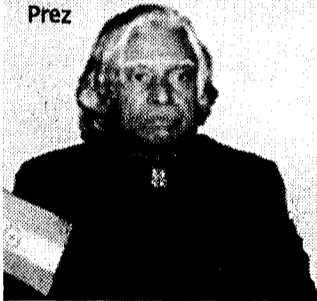


**March 26, 02** Joint sitting to pass POTA



**Boycott of George Fernandes stretches 2 years**

**July 18, 2002**  
A.P.J. Abdul Kalam elected Prez



**March 22, 2000**  
Bill Clinton addresses joint session

**August 2003** Sonia Gandhi moves no confidence motion



Graphic: SANJAY KAPOOR



## STAGE SET FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS

# 13th Lok Sabha dissolved

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, FEB. 6

The President, A.P.J. Kalam, today dissolved the 13th Lok Sabha on the advice of the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, setting the stage for the next parliamentary elections.

However, there is considerable confusion whether the Prime Minister needs to resign and render himself a "caretaker prime minister" subsequent to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. But the legal advice available to the Prime Minister is that there is no "constitutional requirement" for him to resign.

A Rashtrapati Bhavan communiqué, issued this morning, said that Mr. Vajpayee had called on the President on January 27, 2004 and conveyed to him the advice of the Union Cabinet that the Lok Sabha be dissolved on February 6.

Mr. Vajpayee met the President again on Thursday (February 5) and informed him that the votes-on-account (railways and general) 2004-2005 and the Finance Bill, 2004, had been passed.

The communiqué went on: "As necessary financial and other business have since

been transacted by Parliament, the President has now accepted the recommendation and, in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by sub-clause (b) of clause (2) of Article 85 of the Constitution of India, has signed an Order today dissolving the 13th Lok Sabha with immediate effect."

It is believed that when Mr. Vajpayee met the President on February 5 it was gently put to the Prime Minister whether there should be a resignation.

Mr. Vajpayee is understood to have told the President that there was no need but he would get the constitutional requirement examined.

Today, the Attorney-General, Soli Sorabjee, is said to have given a half-page opinion, arguing that there was no need for a prime minister to resign (and become a caretaker prime minister) after recommending dissolution of the Lok Sabha while still enjoying a majority in the House. (Incidentally, Mr. Sorabjee had met the President on February 4).

The records, according to officials, show that neither in 1971 nor 1977, Indira Gandhi had resigned while recommending the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. On both occasions, she was enjoying a majority in the Lok Sabha.

In support of the "there-is-no-need-to-resign" argument, a 1971 Supreme Court judgment is cited wherein the court dealt with a similar contention and ruled in favour of the then Prime Minister. Prime Ministerial aides are of the view that the matter is closed.

Today's dissolution of the Lok Sabha is the sixth time the President has invoked Article 85. There were early dissolutions in the past on December 27, 1970 (Fourth Lok Sabha), August 22, 1979 (Sixth Lok Sabha), March 13, 1991 (Ninth Lok Sabha), December 4, 1997 (Eleventh Lok Sabha), and April 26, 1999 (Twelfth Lok Sabha).

Then, there is the special case of "early dissolution" of the Fifth Lok Sabha whose life was extended during the Emergency for one year but the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, sought dissolution before the year was over.

The dissolutions in 1979, 1991, 1997 and 1999 became necessary because the Government of the day had lost its majority and no alternative government could take its place.

# Premature dissolutions

By Rajeev Dhavan

110-10  
672

SHOULD THE Lok Sabha be dissolved prematurely? Can an incumbent Prime Minister steal a march over other political parties by dictating the timing of the general election? Is this a public interest issue? Or simply a political perk of the incumbent party handed down by the British practice? The text of the Indian Constitution flexibly caters to future uncertainties. The term of India's legislatures is five years "unless sooner dissolved" (Articles 83 and 172). Since the President or the Governor has the power to dissolve the respective legislatures, the ultimate power to do so remains with them (Articles 85 and 174). But as the President and the Governor are bound by the advice of their Cabinets (Articles 74 and 163), it is readily assumed that this advice will prevail when a premature dissolution is requested by a Prime Minister or Chief Minister.

It is now well established that the advice of the Cabinet is binding on the President or the Governor — subject to the latter's power to refer a matter back for reconsideration. But there is also ample authority that the President and the Governor do have discretion in selecting who should form a government and when a dissolution should take place. This discretion has to be exercised on the basis of sound constitutional principles, and not on whim or caprice or without application of mind.

The Lok Sabha did its full term in 1957, 1962, 1967 and 1989. The first premature dissolution was readily granted to Indira Gandhi in 1970 and the second, during the Emergency in 1977. In the second instance, the collapse of alternatives led to a dissolution after just two years in 1979. But in 1991 and again in 1997, the Lok Sabha was dissolved after about one year of its term. In 2004, the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has decided to prematurely dissolve Parliament even though his coalition has a secure majority. This dissolution has nothing to do with national interest. Elections to the Lok Sabha are likely to be called because the BJP is riding a victory wave after its performance in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. The move appears based on political opportunism as opposed to a situation where political paralysis did not yield a stable government in 1991 and 1997.

Should such dissolution be re-

*The correct principle is that a House must do its full term unless constitutional governance is simply not possible because the government is in a minority and no other alternative is conceivable.*

fused? Refusal of dissolution has taken place. The Sarkaria Commission reports on refusals in Punjab (1967), Uttar Pradesh (1968), Madhya Pradesh (1969) and Orissa (1971). To them perhaps can be added a refusal to Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh (2003). A dissolution was granted to Narendra Modi in Gujarat in the aftermath of the riots. In England, premature dissolution has usually been granted. Over the past 200 years, there have been many convenient mid-term dissolutions — especially in 1859 and 1868. In 1910 and 1911, there were two successive dissolutions, virtually one after the other, as

indeed in 1923 and 1924. Edward Heath dissolved Parliament prematurely in 1974 and Harold Wilson in the same year after a few months.

What is the basis for premature dissolution? According to both the Bhagwan Sahay Committee (1971) and the Sarkaria Commission (1986), the principle appears to be that dissolution must always be granted to a Ministry that enjoys a majority. But the logic of this is greatly skewed. The converse proposition may be acceptable. Thus dissolution may be refused to a minority Ministry to explore alternatives for government formation. On that logic, a premature dissolution must be refused to a majority government as the need for an alternative does not arise.

A powerful statement of the principles underlying premature dissolution is contained in a famous letter to *The Times* of London, which is now regarded as a classic. Dissolution may be refused if: "(1) there is the belief that the existing Parliament was still vital, viable and capable of doing its job; (2) there is belief that a general election would be detrimental to the national economy; and (3) an alternative Prime Minister is found who would be capable of commanding a working majority ... and thus able to form a government for a reasonable period."

The first two principles are exceptional and represent good reasons for refusing a premature dissolution. In India, it must be assumed that the sheer cost of an elec-

tion is sufficient financial reason for not plunging the nation into premature polls. The third requirement is troublesome and responsible for an unthinking approval for the principle that a majority government can always ask for dissolution. The principle places a Prime Minister in a position to blackmail the President by asserting that he will not rule and since his party or coalition refuses to produce an alternative Prime Minister, dissolution must be granted.

Although democracy is more pivotal than the finances of an election, the enormity of an all-India election cannot be ignored. It is estimated that the number of voters in the tentative voter list is 653,726,115. The electoral exercise will cost Rs.1100 crores. The outcome is uncertain, the future unpredictable. So why a premature election to help the party in power?

The main reason for granting a premature election is that in the absence of an alternative government, parliamentary governance is no longer possible. Thus minority governments are denied dissolution until an alternative is found. Equally, unstable coalitions are put on hold until alternative governments and, if need be, elections resolve the crisis. But no such situation exists when a majority single party or stable coalition asks for dissolution. Such a request from a majority government can only imply two circumstances: (i) refusal to govern further, knowing that no one else can (the blackmail argument); and (ii) timing the election to suit the party or parties in power (the political opportunism argument). Neither blackmail nor political opportunism is consistent with Indian democracy, which speaks for a free and fair election. An election, the timing of which is biased and partisan is neither fair nor free.

Unfortunately, the problem has arisen because India has followed its own undemocratic instinct to slavishly accept an unsound British tradition. This is where the Bhagwan Sahay and the Sarkaria recommendations as well as the Indian practice have gone wrong. When the Consti-

9-Parliament

tution clearly stipulates five-year terms "unless sooner dissolved," there must be a reason for 'sooner' dissolution. The British practice was evolved to discipline the monarch whilst overlooking the original principles of constitutional governance. In 1846, Robert Peel wanted to 'blunt' the Queen's power to dissolve, but took the fundamental view that dissolution for strengthening a party was not justified. This was affirmed by Lord Russell in 1852. In 1858, Lord Aberdeen emphasised that dissolution could only be for the "good of the country." Gladstone, in 1868, echoed that dissolutions should not be sought to "determine (the party's continued) existence."

All this made good democratic sense — even if these principles were breached in practice. But the principles were themselves torn apart when Neville Chamberlain opportunistically called the 'Khaki' election in 1900 at the time of the Boer War in Africa. After that, British monarchs stepped back to allow Prime Ministers heading majority governments premature elections whenever they wanted. The window of opportunism was opened and never shut.

India needs to give its own interpretation to the constitutional words "unless sooner dissolved." The Sahay Committee and the Sarkaria Commission are clearly wrong in empowering a majority leader to pick and choose the propitious party-political moment for elections. The correct principle is that a House must do its full term unless constitutional governance is simply not possible because the government or coalition is in a minority and no other alternative is conceivable. If there is doubt, a floor test will determine the issue. For a majority government refusing to govern when it is fully capable of completing its term amounts to blackmail and opportunism, and placing the party's interests over those of the nation. To this can be added sins of constitutionality and unfair advantage.

No political dividends from early dissolutions are permissible. But Mr. Vajpayee's Government in 2004 seeks to cash in on an interim vote-catching budget whilst bypassing the constitutional requirement of a President's address to Parliament required under Article 87. The Constitution is above party interests. The President must refuse dissolution meant for purely party interest.

# House blow to cola giants

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Feb. 4:** The joint parliamentary committee set up to probe pesticide levels in soft drinks has upheld the findings of the Centre for Science and Environment and asked the government to lay down stringent norms for carbonated drinks.

The panel's report, tabled in Parliament today, said the CSE "stands corroborated" on its findings on pesticide residues "in 12 brand products of Pepsi and Coca-Cola", prompting the two companies to assert that their beverages produced in India were "safe" and matched international standards.

The JPC report stressed that the committee, which heard out the various parties in the dispute — the two cola giants and the CSE — had sent the samples of the same 12 brands analysed by the CSE to laboratories in Calcutta and Mysore.

"Both the laboratories detected the presence of organochlorine and organophosphorous pesticide residues. The presence of pesticide residues is therefore a common scientific finding of all the three laboratories," the report said.

The CSE, a non-government organisation which collected samples of the so-called dirty dozen from Delhi and its neighbourhood, had said last August that all the brands contained pesticides at least 30 times higher than international standards.

"Each sample (of soft drink) had enough poison to cause in the long term cancer, damage to the nervous and reproductive systems, birth defects and severe disruption of the immune system," the CSE had alleged.

The JPC report took note of the fact that different procedures were employed in the laboratories for analysis. "The commit-

tee has no hesitation in admitting to the variations in analytical research. Different experts who appeared before the JPC explained it," the report said.

It dismissed as "unsatisfactory" the claims of Pepsi and Coke that more than half their operations were through franchisee-owned bottling plants and, therefore, the multinational companies were not the real culprits for compromising on quality.

"The committee feels the existence of a bottlers' agreement cannot absolve the producers of their responsibility to ensure that contaminated beverages are not sold to consumers," the report said. It was clear that responsibility rests with the brand owner who "selects the bottlers, provides the processing technology and finally markets the end product".

With the blame squarely on them, both Coca-Cola and Pepsi scrambled to assure that their drinks were safe. "Our products manufactured in India are world class and safe. We follow one equality system across the world," said a written statement from Coca-Cola India.

"Our products already meet the science-based norms recommended by the JPC and all our consumers can have full confidence in the safety of our products," the statement added.

Sunil Gupta, vice-president, public affairs and communications, said: "We look forward to the government finalising the science-based India norms."

Pepsi India, Coke's rival, said that it was reviewing the JPC report. "We share the government's interest in protecting the health of the Indian consumers, which is why we have always produced beverages in India that are absolutely safe and made according to the same high quality standards we use around the world," the company said.

# Vote-on-account: use and misuse

By Madhu Dandavate

THE CONCEPT of vote-on-account was introduced in the parliamentary process with a definite perspective. The financial year ends on March 31. It is therefore essential that all the stages of the debate on the budget presented to Parliament, including the general discussion, discussion on demands of grants of various Ministries, appropriation bill and finance bill are completed before March 31.

If discussion covering all the stages is not completed by March 31, no financial resources will be available for the expenditure of various Ministries in the next financial year. To prevent such an exigency, by way of abundant caution, a vote-on-account is introduced in Parliament sanctioning roughly one-third of the expenditure projected in the budget. Then, even if the discussion during all the stages of the debate is not completed and it spills over beyond March 31, on the basis of the amounts sanctioned by Parliament through the vote-on-account financial crisis is avoided. The convention is that such a vote-on-account is accepted in Parliament without division.

There is another situation under which vote-on-account becomes inevitable and inescapable; when the Lok Sabha is elected quite close to March 31, with hardly a few days left for the presentation and discussion of a full-fledged budget. Vote-on-account, popularly known as "interim

budget," then becomes unavoidable. However, there are occasions when the device of vote-on-account is misused. Our parliamentary record shows that on one occasion, the Finance Minister had already prepared a full-fledged budget. It was construed that in the compelling situation, the budget would be a "hard" one with heavy burdens thrown on consumers, taxpayers and different sections of the population. But prior

notifications for a week prior to the presentation of the budget. I had then raised a privilege issue in the Lok Sabha against the Finance Minister on the ground that it was not proper to lay on the table of the House notifications about change of custom duties, when hardly a week was left for the presentation of the budget. The then Speaker of the Lok Sabha took a technical view and ruled that the Customs Act allowed

and tax reliefs on the eve of the vote-on-account. Since a vote-on-account does not allow duty and tax structures, the best course of action on the part of the Government would have been not to make announcements about various financial sops but to wait for a full-fledged budget before recommending the dissolution of the Lok Sabha. The obvious intention of the NDA Government was to gain some mileage on the eve of the next general election.

However, if one carefully analyses the financial proposals before the present vote-on-account, regarding rich families and upper middle classes, disinvestments, corporate educational facilities, foreign investments and NRIs (non-resident Indians) etc., one can easily see that almost none of these sops will touch even a fringe of 80 per cent of India's population.

The so called 'feel good' sops offered prior to the vote-on-account will not satisfy the needs of vast sections of India's population. The inability of the Finance Minister to cater to the aspirations of vast sections of the population is hidden behind the veil of the limited scope of the vote-on-account. People are told, vote-on-account is only a constitutional ritual. To the poor and the neglected, the message transmitted is: "wait for the next full-fledged budget and for that return us to power again to enhance the 'feel good effect.'"

## *There was a grave impropriety on the part of the National Democratic Alliance Government in granting a series of concessions and tax reliefs on the eve of the vote-on-account.*

such custom duty changes to be introduced through notifications laid on the table of both the Houses of Parliament. However, when a similar privilege issue was raised in the Rajya Sabha, the Chairman of the Upper House ruled that despite the fact that the Customs Act allowed changes in customs duties through notifications laid on the table of the House, propriety demanded that this should not be done on the eve of presentation of the budget.

The present National Democratic Alliance Government, after recommending the dissolution of the Lok Sabha to the President of India, has gone in for a vote-on-account. There was a grave impropriety on its part in granting a series of concessions

KALAM APPRISED OF DECISION

# LS to be dissolved<sup>of Parliament</sup> on 6 Feb

51-1 28/1  
**Statesman News Service**

NEW DELHI, Jan. 27. — On the advice of the Union Cabinet, the President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, today agreed to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha on 6 February before the next general elections.

The Union Cabinet, during a special meeting this evening, decided to advise the President to dissolve the 13th Lok Sabha on 6 February after the finance minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, and the railway minister, Mr Nitish Kumar, present their votes-on-account.

With the Cabinet clearance, the stage has been set for the next Lok Sabha elections, to be completed by April.

Speaking to reporters today, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, the parliamentary affairs minister, said she along with the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani, and the NDA convener, Mr George Fernandes, met the President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam this evening.

She said the Prime Minister handed over the letter, asking for the dissolution of the House. She said the President had agreed to the request and wished them the best.

Mrs Swaraj said the government had decided not to call for the dissolution before Republic Day when the President of a foreign country (in this case, Brazil) would be the chief guest. It was decided to call for the dissolution immediately after.

The government would have to explain to the Houses of Parliament why the vote-on-account had been called for instead of having the budget which is

## **Congress ready**

NEW DELHI, Jan 27. — Welcoming the government's decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha and go in for early polls, the Congress tonight said it was ready for the electoral bout. "Congress is ready to get into election mode," the party spokesman, Mr S Jaipal Reddy, said here. Earlier in the day, Mrs Sonia Gandhi petitioned the President, requesting him to take measures with regard to "the constitutional impropriety committed" by the NDA government by not proroguing both the Houses even a month after they were adjourned sine die. — PTI

why a Cabinet clearance was necessary now.

She said it was a very short meeting with a single item on the agenda: the decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha.

Earlier, she pointed out, the NDA's allies had asked the Prime Minister to fix a date for the polls and the BJP national executive had also requested the Prime Minister to ask for early polls.

But however early the polls are held, there would have to be a vote-on-account as the new government would not be in a position to have a budget before 31 March. So, Parliament, not prorogued, has merely to be summoned, she pointed out.

But this was not the last Cabinet meeting before the polls, Mrs Swaraj said.

A number of important decisions are yet to be cleared by this government and one or two Cabinet meetings are likely to be held in the coming week.

A new exim policy, for instance, is likely to be announced very shortly.

# Kalam returned Padma files for breach of norms

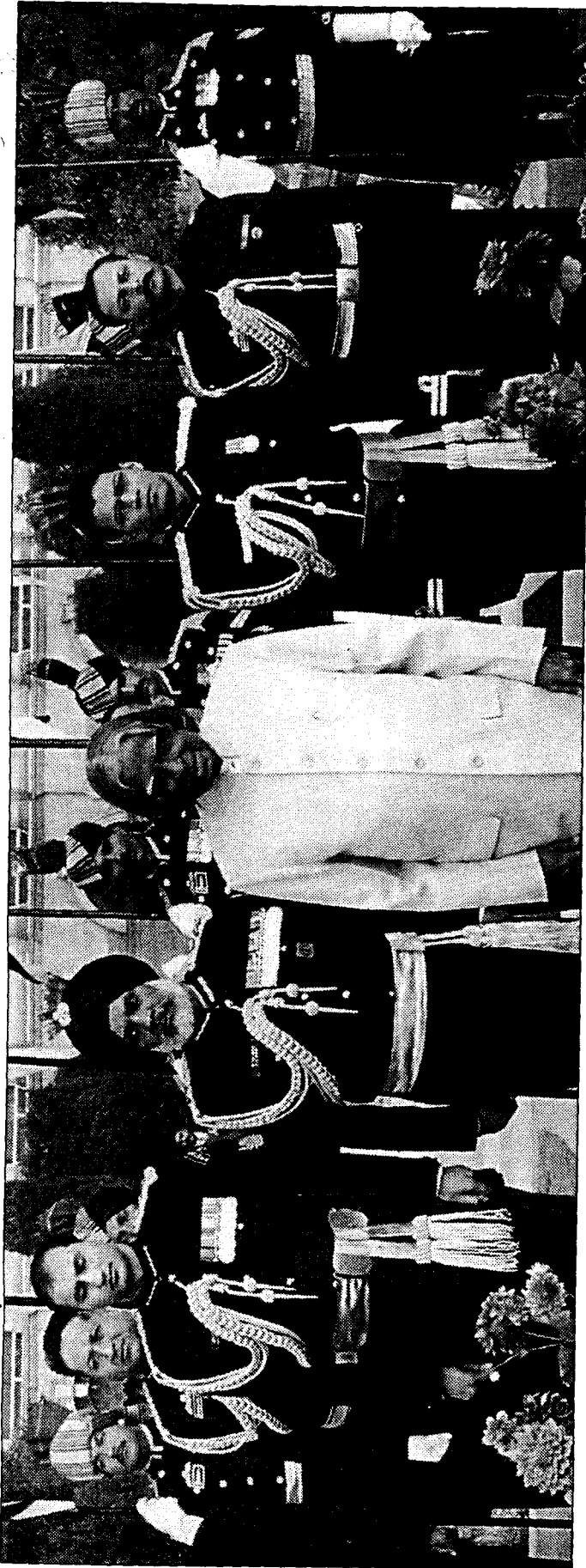
Chandan Nandy  
New Delhi, January 27

**FINDING IRREGULARITIES** in the manner in which certain eminent personalities were selected for the Padma awards, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam had sent back the file containing all the names to the Prime Minister's Office, citing violation of norms and procedures.

Kalam's secretariat sent back the file containing the names of the awardees to the PMO as late as January 22 after it was found that three critical rules were violated or overlooked.

Even the inter-ministerial Padma Awards Committee, which has the final say in the selection even if the President, the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister make recommendations, was by-passed. Government sources disclosed to *Hindustan Times* that Rashtrapati Bhavan referred to violation of three norms. In his note to the PMO, Kalam advised the PMO to "ensure" that the norms were followed.

These are: a) Even if the President, PM or the Deputy PM add names to the list finalised by the Padma Awards Committee, they should "back refer" their recommended names to the panel. It was found that three names had been included in the list without the approval of the committee.



**WINGS OF FIRE:** President APJ Abdul Kalam listens to the National Anthem during the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on Monday.

REUTERS

b) No person about whom the Intelligence Bureau has reservations should be on the final list of awardees. *Hindustan Times* has learnt that there were at least 12 such persons about whom the IB had made adverse comments and were, therefore, not deemed fit to be conferred with any of the three Padma awards. c) There should be a gap of at least

10 years before one person, who had earlier been honoured with a Padma award, to get the next higher award. Two such names, about whom the Committee had not made any recommendation, were detected. There was consternation in the PMO after the Rashtrapati Bhavan sent back the file, sources said. On January 22 it-

self, the PMO directed the Union Home Secretary, N. Gopalaswami, who heads the Awards Committee, to either reconvene a meeting of the committee or consult individual members over telephone to "include" the names of a few other personalities. This after the PMO removed the names against whom there were adverse IB reports

and those whose names were "pushed" in violation of the rules referred to by the President's secretariat. What the HT found in its investigation is that though the "objectionable" names were removed, a few more were added, although they did not figure in the two meetings the Committee held to finalise the list on Decem-

ber 26 and January 19. Several Committee members are peeved at the manner in which some of the names were included.

One such person was Sanskruti school principal Gauri Eshwaran. After the committee members were consulted and the inclusions made, the file was sent back to the President's secretariat on January 24.

PG 1A 28/1

# President tells parties to end corruption

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, January 25

WITH ELECTIONS round the corner, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam told political parties in his Republic Day-eve speech to make a commitment in their manifestos for eradication of corruption.

In his address to the nation, the President also took note of the current thaw in Indo-Pakistani relations, saying the country will be grateful to "successful peacemakers".

On the coming general elections, Kalam said he often wonders what the manifestos of the competing political parties would be. In course of his interactions with youths, Kalam said, he has found they have a dream of living in a developed and a corruption-free India.

"I am also convinced we should build developed India in a time-bound way to prevent instability in the society. Hence the manifestos of the political parties have to take into account their aspirations with identified missions and action plan. Every party must clearly state their vision, action plan, and approaches for the Developed India Vision 2020 and how fast they can realise these missions," he said.

He recalled the embarrassment suffered by parents of a young child in Nagaland who had asked him how India could hope to become a developed country when there was corruption everywhere.

On the peace initiatives, he said: "For national development and economic growth in the sub-continent, peace is a paramount ingredient. Most nations have realised that low-intensity proxy wars, deterrence-based build-ups and real wars are expensive detractors from the visions of development."

Vote-on-account to be tabled on 3 Feb.

# LS session signals early polls

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 17. — Clearing the decks for early Lok Sabha polls, the Centre today sought a brief session of Parliament during which vote-on-account for railway and general budgets will be tabled. Parliamentary affairs minister Mrs Sushma Swaraj said the government had requested the Speaker to convene the Lok Sabha session from 29 January, and the Rajya Sabha chairman for convening the House from 30 January. Both sessions end on 5 February.

The interim budget and the vote-on-account for general budget will be presented in the Lok Sabha on 3 February, and the railway budget and the vote-on-account on 30 January. Copies of both will be tabled in the Rajya Sabha on the same day as in the Lower House.

Mrs Swaraj said the Prime Minister met the President this evening to apprise him of the proposals. A statement released by Rashtrapati Bhavan said: "The two leaders discussed matters of national importance, including the forthcoming session."

Mrs Swaraj said the railway

budget would be discussed and passed in the Lok Sabha on 3 February. Discussion on the interim budget will be taken up on 4 February; it'll be passed the same day.

She said it could neither be called a new session nor the first session of 2004 since the Houses were not prorogued after the winter session that ended on 23 December. Since it would not be a new session of the year, there would be no joint sitting and the President's address.

The minister said the government would formally write to the presiding officers of both Houses on Monday. The schedule for the session was finalised in consultation with finance minister Mr Jaswant Singh and railway minister Mr Nitish Kumar, following discussions with the Prime Minister and his deputy, Mr LK Advani.

Replying to a query, she said three Bills passed by the Rajya Sabha earlier might be placed in the Lok Sabha. Any decision regarding dissolution of the Lok Sabha, she said, had to be taken by the Cabinet. The decision will be announced by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee himself.

## Pervez for *jihad* against terror

NEW DELHI, Jan. 17. — Gen. Pervez Musharraf today went a step further on his assurance not to let terrorists operate from Pakistan-controlled territory. In his first-ever address to the joint session of parliament, the Pakistani President called for a *jihad* against extremism, pledged to root out terror from Pakistani soil and emphasised that the composite dialogue beginning next month should be pursued with sincerity to find a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue. — SNS

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