

S.P.P. BAP Uma Bharti's suspension revoked

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, DEC. 24. The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti's suspension from the Bharatiya Janata Party has been revoked by the party president, L.K. Advani, but she may not immediately get the position of general secretary, a post to which she was appointed days before she was suspended.

A terse statement was made today by the former party president, Venkaiah Naidu: "L.K. Advani has revoked the suspension of Uma Bharti." He said she would not automatically get the post, but later added: "I do not know, I cannot know [when she will be given that position by Mr. Advani]."

However, party leaders are certain that sooner rather than later, perhaps after the Assembly elections due in February next year, Ms. Bharti will be taken back as general secretary. For the moment, the party plans to ask her to campaign extensively in Bihar.

Party sources indicated that Ms. Bharti wanted to bring the former general secretary, K.N. Govindacharya, back into the party, although this may not happen in the near future.

However, Mr. Govindacharya, told *The Hindu*, that he had no intention of staging a comeback. He indicated that the party was perhaps "irreparable" and that politics in general had become a profession in which money and power counted. "I have taken a different road ... my study is doing well ... there should be no reason for confusion."

Three days ago, Ms. Bharti lashed out at the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Babulal Gaur, (he replaced her after she



resigned following her arrest in the Hubli case relating to the hoisting of the Tricolour), and said that "he did not have the support of a single MLA" when she made him Chief Minister. When Mr. Naidu was asked whether that was not indiscipline, he said he was not aware of the statement.

Ms. Bharti was suspended on November 10 after she openly challenged Mr. Advani at a meeting of the party office-bearers. She alleged that senior leaders had planted stories against her in the media and that she was forced to counter them.

When Mr. Advani asked her to sit down and said that the "matter is closed," she refused to oblige and walked out challenging him to take action against her. Within minutes, she was suspended.

Even as she got the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to bring pressure on Mr. Advani to roll back the suspension order, Ms. Bharti's defiance continued in the form of letters she wrote to him. She openly criticised and made allegations against senior leaders such as Arun Jaitley, Pramod Mahajan, Sushma Swaraj and Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi even while saying that a "daughter had been thrown out" on the auspicious day of Dhanteras (just before Deepavali).

25 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

BJP revokes Uma Bharti's suspension

Sanyasin Will Be Party's Star Campaigner In Bihar Poll

New Delhi: Over a month after she openly challenged his authority, BJP president L K Advani on Friday revoked the suspension of firebrand leader Uma Bharti, capping days of drama of her regret and a reported attack on the party's second rung leaders.

"BJP president L K Advani has decided to lift the suspension on Uma Bharti," former party president M Venkaiah Naidu told reporters here. He, however, replied in the negative when asked if she would be back as general secretary. Bharti had been appointed to the post just days before she stormed out of the office bearers' meeting on November 10 demanding action against "leaders without base".

The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister, who had attacked leaders like Naidu, Pramod Mahajan, Arun Jaitley and Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, shocked the party brass, including Advani and former PM A B Vajpayee, by her show of defiance in full glare of TV cameras. The decision to suspend her was taken minutes after her walkout.

Flanked by general secretary Arun Jaitley and spokesman Manvendra Singh, Naidu said the suspension of her primary membership had been revoked. Asked the reason for the decision, he said, "You know the reasons." He refused to take further questions, saying "internal party matters are not discussed in the media".

Meanwhile, Bharti confined herself to puja at the residence of former party MP Vinay Katiyar and refused to meet the media.



Cometh Crisis, Cometh Uma

"Uma Bharti is in 'ekantvaas' (solitude) and cannot be disturbed. She will not be talking to anyone now," Katiyar said, adding that her 'ekantvaas' was likely to continue for another two days. She has, however, been informed about the decision taken by the party leadership.

Within minutes of the party revoking the suspension on Bharti, the BJP's Bihar unit announced that she would be its main campaigner in the coming assembly elections in the state. "She will be our main campaigner. The revocation of her suspension will prove beneficial for us. She is the only one competent enough to tackle RJD chief Lalu Prasad's tactics," BJP's Bihar unit chief Gopal Narayan Singh said, adding that the state unit would chalk out a campaign programme for her in the next few days and efforts would be made to ensure that she was in the state for at least 15-20 days. "Bharti will be our trump card. Nobody else can respond to Lalu Prasad like her. She is very popular among the backward class in the state," he added. PTI

Bahu's day of flip-flop

SMRITI THREATENS FAST SEEKING MODI'S
RESIGNATION, THEN SAYS SORRY

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, Dec. 12. — It was a day of the BJP's "ideal *bahu*", Smriti Irani, doing a Uma Bharati. Hours after an embarrassing attack on Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi, demanding his resignation over the 2002 riots, the actor and BJP newcomer today withdrew her statement after the party made it clear that she either retract or face action.

In an unexpected attack on Mr Modi, Ms Irani, who joined the party to contest the Lok Sabha elections unsuccessfully from Delhi's Chandni Chowk, told reporters during the inauguration of a jewellery showroom in Surat that she would start a fast-unto-death if he did not step down.

Significantly, taking Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's name repeatedly, she said Mr Modi's decision not to step down was "extremely shocking and appalling". She said her fast would start on 25 December — the birthday of Mr Vajpayee — to "redeem" his name.

Caught off guard, the party conveyed to her that it was extremely upset and made it clear that she retract. A senior BJP leader said she joined the party much after the Gujarat violence and has no right to criticise Mr Modi.

Once back in Mumbai, she spoke to party president Mr LK Advani over phone and had a meeting with Maharashtra BJP president Mr Gopinath Munde before issuing a statement late at night, withdrawing the remarks "unconditionally".

In her attack, Ms Irani said she was hurt when she heard Mr Vajpayee say, "If there is one blot on my name it is Narendra Modi. I was very surprised that he (Modi) did not give up his chair after

such a statement". "There is nothing wrong in correcting our mistakes," she said and went on to add "a leader like Mr Vajpayee should not fade away without his name ever being cleared of that blot".

BJP's plan to revoke the suspension of Ms Uma Bharati apparently prevented the party from taking action against Ms Irani, who withdrew her remarks under pressure from party leaders, including Mr Pramod Mahajan. Highly placed party sources said any severe disciplinary action against the actor would have conveyed to the cadre that the party had a dual approach towards its senior and junior leaders.

While senior party leaders had initially made up their mind to sack Ms Irani by tonight, they later felt that cadre could raise a finger on any party decision to bring back Ms Bharati who had openly dared Mr Advani to take action against her and later apologised.

The sources said the party had already made up its mind to revoke Ms Bharati's suspension before the Bihar Assembly elections. They

said it was thereafter decided to persuade Ms Irani to withdraw her statement and apologise, failing which she would be sacked or suspended from the party. According to the sources, Ms Irani was initially reluctant to withdraw her statement.

Earlier, asked if she took permission from Mr Advani or Mr Vajpayee to go on fast, she shot back: "Why seek permission for saying the truth? Why one needs permission to speak what one feels very honestly?" She said it was her personal decision. "At the end of the day, we should hold a mirror to our own family (party)".



Ms Smriti Irani

Stop Congressisation of BJP: Advani
page 3

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THE STATESMAN

উমার পরে এ বার স্মৃতি, জেরবার আডবানী

১২ ডিসেম্বর ১৯৮৫

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১২ ডিসেম্বর: উমা-কাণ্ডের পরে বিজেপি-তে আবার জোরদার নাটক হঠাৎ নরেন্দ্র মোদীর ইস্তফা চেয়ে দেশ জুড়ে শোরগোল ফেলে দেওয়ার কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীর ধমক পেয়ে তা নিঃশর্তে প্রত্যাহার করে নিতে বাধ্য হলেন স্মৃতি ইরানি।

আজই বিকেলে গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর অপসারণ দাবি করে আডবানীকে বেজায় অস্বস্তিতে ফেলে দিয়েছিলেন ছোট পর্দায় জনপ্রিয় নারিক্যা ও বিজেপি-র জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির সদস্য স্মৃতি ইরানি। উমা ভারতীকে নিয়ে দলের বিভ্রম্নার লেশ কাটতে না কাটতেই বিনা মেখে বজ্রপাতের মতো আবার বিতর্কের ঝড় তুলে দেন স্মৃতি। মাত্র মাস সাতক আগে বিজেপি-তে যোগ দেওয়া স্মৃতি দাবি করেছিলেন, ২৫ ডিসেম্বর অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর জন্মদিনের আগেই মোদীকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে সরিয়ে দিতে হবে। না হলে ২৫ ডিসেম্বর থেকে তিনি আমরণ জনশনে বসবেন। পরিস্থিতি সামলাতে বিজেপি নেতৃত্বও কড়া হন। দলীয় সূত্রের খবর, আডবানী স্বয়ং তাঁকে স্পষ্ট ভাষায় জানিয়ে দেন, বিনা শর্তে ওই দাবি ফিরিয়ে না-নিলে তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে শুধু শান্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থাই নয়, দল থেকে তাড়িয়েও দেওয়া হবে।

টেলিফোনে এই ধমক খেয়েই রাতে স্মৃতি মুম্বইয়ে মহারাষ্ট্রের বিজেপি সভাপতি গোপীনাথ মুণ্ডের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেন। তার পরেই বিবৃতি দিয়ে বলতে বাধ্য হন, “আজ দুপুরে আমি সুরাতে মোদীর ইস্তফা দাবি করেছিলাম। কিন্তু পরে আমি বুঝতে পেরেছি দলের একজন দায়িত্বশীল সদস্য হিসাবে আমার এ কথা বলা উচিত হয়নি। তাই আমি ওই দাবি প্রত্যাহার করছি।”

দাবি প্রত্যাহার করলেন বটে, তবে বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বও মানতে বাধ্য হচ্ছেন, এর ফলে দলের ভাবমূর্ত্তির ক্ষতি যা হওয়ার, তা হয়েই গেল। আজ সকালেই যুব মোর্চার ঠেঁকে আডবানী বলেছিলেন, “লোকে বলছে, বিজেপি এখন কংগ্রেসের মতো ঝগড়া, গোষ্ঠীস্বপ্নের দল হয়ে গিয়েছে। এ রকম আচরণ দলের যুব নেতারা যেন না করেন।” তার কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই যুব নেত্রী ও ইদানিং যৌক বেস গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছিল, সেই স্মৃতি ইরানি মলহোত্র সুরাতে বসে মোদীর বিরুদ্ধে কার্যত জেহাদ ঘোষণা করে দেন।

অনেক কষ্ট করে উমা-বিতর্ক কিছুটা সামলে উঠে সংসদে সরকারকে আক্রমণের রাস্তায় ফিরাছিলেন আডবানী। কিন্তু রাত্তি বিবৃতি ফিরিয়ে নিলেও স্মৃতির দুপুরের কথাবার্তা তাঁকে আবার একটা বড় ঝুঁকি দিল। উমার দলে ফেরা নিয়ে এখনও জলশোনা চলছে। এই অবস্থায় দলের আর এক বিতর্কিত চরিত্র নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে নিয়েও বিজেপি-তে বিরোধ প্রকাশ্যে চলে এল। দুপুরে স্মৃতি অভিযোগ করেছিলেন, “লোকে যখনই গুজরাতের ব্যাপারে বলেন, তখন তাঁরা শুধু দাস্তার কথাই বলেন। এ নিয়ে গুজরাতীদের কেণ্ঠাসা করার চেষ্টা হয়। তাই আমি বিজেপি ও অটলজির প্রতি শ্রদ্ধা বজায় রাখার জন্য মোদীর অপসারণ চাই। দলের সাম্প্রতিক হারের জন্য মোদীই দায়ী। এ জন্য আমি আমরণ অনশন করতেও দ্বিধা করব না।” মোদীর বিরুদ্ধে জেহাদে অটলকেও জড়িয়ে নিয়ে স্মৃতি বলেন, “গুজরাত ও বাজপেয়ীর মর্মান্দা ও গৌরব পুনরুদ্ধারের এটাই সময়। আরও একবার এবং এই শেষবারের মতো প্রমাণ

এর পর সাতের পাতায়



স্মৃতি ইরানি মলহোত্র



লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী

Smriti asks Modi to step down

Smriti Irani asks Narendra Modi to step down after a surprise attack on Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi for the post-Godhra riots, BJP leader and popular TV actress Smriti Irani on Sunday asked him to step down failing which she threatened to go on fast-unto-death from December 25, the birthday of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

That we are a secular party which thinks in the national interest, any step taken in that direction should be welcomed." She said she was hurt when she heard Vajpayee say "If there is one blot on my name, it is Narendra Modi. I was very surprised that he did not give up his chair after such a statement."

Irani, who is also BJP national executive member, said, "If Narendra Modi gives up the post of the chief minister of Gujarat, it would prove that BJP is a party with a dif-

ference. If he does not, then on December 25, I would like to go on fast till he gives up the post, a fast-unto-death." Asked if she took permission from party president L K Advani or Vajpayee in this regard, she shot back, "Why seek permission for saying the truth? Why one needs permission to speak what one feels very honestly?"

Irani contended "nobody in the country will deny the fact that Vajpayee and Advani have selflessly served the country for the last 50



Smriti Irani

Narendra Modi

years and for them to be blamed and pointed out just because Narendra Modi will not leave the seat was something extremely shocking, appalling, quite hurtful".

She said it was her personal decision to demand Modi's resignation. "There is nothing wrong in correcting our own mistakes."

Terming BJP as a movement of workers, she said the party was the result of the hard work of millions of workers who suffered humiliation and defeat but still kept on working. "Why do we forget that the party is made of all those members who make leaders. Leaders are expected to stand up to the truth. Leaders are expected to project that we are a party with a difference." PTI

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Sunil Shastri floats new party

11/12 ✓

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 10. The former general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Sunil Shastri, today floated a new political party.

He had resigned from the primary membership from the BJP two days ago after a long meeting with its president, L.K. Advani.

Mr. Shastri, who announced his decision here, said that he decided to take this "difficult decision" to take forward the dream of his father, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and Mahatma Gandhi. The new party, Jai Jawan Jai Kisan Mazdoor Congress, "would play a role in the coming Assembly elections in Haryana, Bihar and Jharkhand." It would take up the "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan" slogan

coined by his father in 1965.

He would also try and carve out a base among the "unorganised labour force" that constituted 90 per cent of the total labour force in the country.

Mr. Shastri said he had toured Haryana and come to the conclusion that the existing political forces in the State — the ruling Indian National Lok Dal, the BJP and the Congress — stood discredited. He would tour Bihar and Jharkhand extensively in the next few weeks. Although political circles were abuzz with reports that this was the first step towards Mr. Shastri joining the Congress, he told *The Hindu* that "the question does not arise" of his going back to his parent party, which he left in 1998.

J.P.P.
BJP

said census tics on the sex ratio in the who go 101

Charges against Bangaru & Jaya BJP cry rises with twin Tehelka cases

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 6: The CBI today registered criminal cases against former BJP chief Bangaru Laxman and former Samata Party president Jaya Jaitly in the Tehelka scam, provoking the main Opposition party to continue its boycott of railway minister Laloo Prasad Yadav and his "tainted" colleagues.

While the BJP slammed the CBI move as "politically motivated", a meeting of the NDA parliamentary party decided to protest the probe on the floor of the House tomorrow with a view to stalling proceedings.

The registration of the cases came more than three years after the news portal's spy camera caught Laxman accepting wads of currency notes from a Tehelka reporter who was posing as a representative of an arms dealer. Jaitly was shown assuring an undercover reporter at the official residence of then defence minister George Fernandes that she would "put in a word to 'sahib's office' if the proposal for hand-held thermal cameras for the army was not considered in the normal course.

The videotapes, made public on March 13, 2001, forced Laxman and Fernandes to put in their papers, though the latter was reinstated by the then NDA government even before the now wound-up Justice S.N. Phukan Commission cleared him of involvement in the scam.

In the FIRs lodged against Laxman and Jaitly, the CBI



Bangaru Laxman,
Jaya Jaitly

also named two members of Laxman's personal staff, Raju Venkatesh and Satyamurthy, former Major General S.P. Murgai, Kanpur-based industrialist Surendra Surekha and Rajasthan-based Samata leader Gopal Pajwal as accused.

Three cases have been registered separately against three suspended defence ministry officials — H.C. Pant

(deputy director), Nagendra Singh (assistant financial adviser) and P. Sasi (an assistant).

A CBI official suggested that the bureau could register more cases as and when more offences come to the notice of the sleuths studying the 105 videotapes of nearly 100 hours duration. The bureau — asked to investigate the scam after the Congress-led government wound up the Phukan commission in October on the ground that it was not getting anywhere — had initially declined to register cases based on a decision of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. It sought a detailed complaint from the government, listing the offences that it wanted the CBI to investigate.

The CBI brass is reported to have finally given in and register the cases on the basis of a letter from the department of personnel and training and a note from S.K. Dasgupta, secretary of the erstwhile Phukan commission.

"This is a continuation of a politically motivated act by the central government. They wound up a judicial commission headed by a retired Supreme Court judge which was on the verge of submitting its final report and instead preferred an executive police agency," BJP spokesperson Arun Jaitly said. "Such motivated acts are condemnable but one cannot expect better from this government."

Jaitly accused the Centre of taking recourse to filing cases against her to cover up its "own misdeeds".

Kalyan volte-face to defend Atal, Advani

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 3

FORMER UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh has claimed that the charges made by him against former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, party chief L.K. Advani and M.M. Joshi that they were part of a "conspiracy" to demolish the disputed structure at Ayodhya were made "out of anger". Singh made this statement in an affidavit filed before the Liberhan Commission.

Singh claimed he had made elaborate security arrangements as the chief minister to protect the disputed structure and was angered by the NDA government, which told the commission on June 20, 2003, that the state government failed in its duty to provide adequate protection to the structure.

"The statement of the counsel of the Centre was wrong and badly hurt the deponent. In that reaction, the deponent might have said before the media that there was a conspiracy by Vajpayee, Advani and Joshi," the affidavit stated. Singh said in the affidavit that the "deponent has no knowledge, information or evidence to support the above allegations. Actually the statement was made in furious reaction and was not correct".

Singh also rued that the judiciary had not so far "resolved" the vexed Ayodhya dispute and favoured dialogue for an early and amicable solution to the issue. "It remains a fact that courts have not been able to resolve this dispute over so many decades and the matter continues to be pending in various courts in one way or the other.



'Demolition act of god'

KALYAN SINGH on Friday sought to equate Lord Ram with *bharatiyata*, saying Ram was the symbol of Indian ethos and culture. Maintaining that he was for the construction of the temple at Ayodhya, Singh, in his affidavit, which detailed the security measures taken by his government to protect the disputed structure, however, said its demolition was an "act of god" and that he had "no repentance, no sorrow and no grief for that".

PTI, New Delhi

"I feel had the court verdict come in reasonable time, it might have helped in finding a solution to this problem," he said in his affidavit filed before the panel. He said his party never treated the temple agitation as a political or vote bank issue. "For us it was a cultural and national issue, one that was associated with the nation's identity, esteem and confidence."

Uma return hits new roadblock

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 3

AMID SPECULATION that the BJP might revoke the suspension of its firebrand leader, Uma Bharti, from the party, senior leaders today reportedly conveyed to party president L.K. Advani their reservations over withdrawing the disciplinary action.

Several second-rung leaders, attacked in a controversial letter purportedly written by Bharti, reportedly met or spoke over the phone and conveyed to him their displeasure over the content of the letter, excerpts of which appeared in a Hindi magazine yesterday.

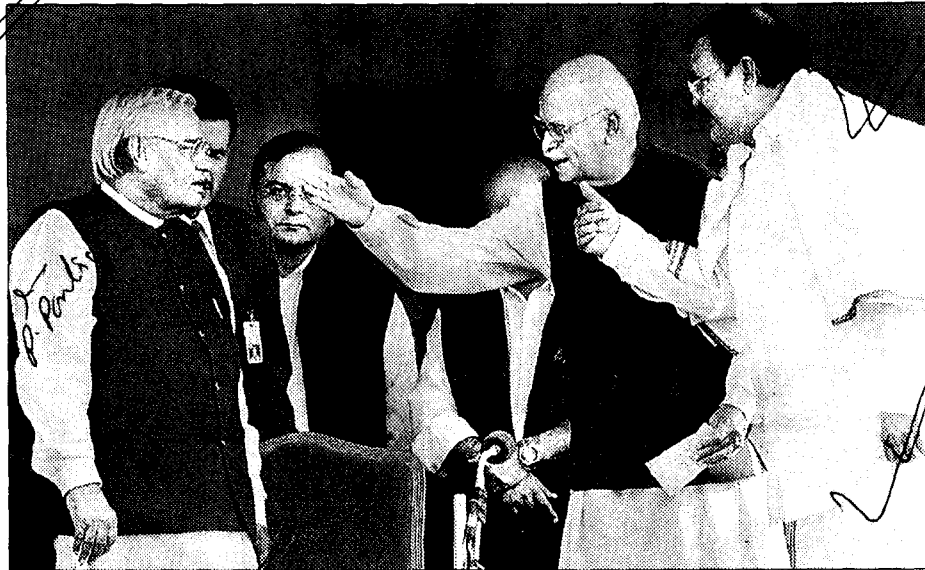
Party sources said the decks were almost cleared for revocation of the disciplinary action against her after she expressed regret for her conduct and hurting Advani at a key party meeting here on November 10, which led to her removal as party general secretary and suspension from the primary membership of the party.

A senior leader said, "This is an act of severe indiscipline. How can we work with a person in our team who has targeted almost the entire second line of leadership?"

The controversial letter had accused Mahajan of grooming such people in all state-units of the party who were working with the objective of getting into power and making money.

04 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



POINT OF VIEW: (From right) Venkaiah Naidu and L.K. Advani with A.B. Vajpayee during the BJP rally against rising prices in New Delhi on Wednesday. — AP

BJP rallies against price rise

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 1 DECEMBER

IN an attempt to ram in its political point that the "new deal" promised by the Manmohan Singh government is a "raw deal", the BJP on Wednesday took to the streets against the government's management of the economy and internal security situation. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and party president L.K. Advani, who led the BJP's charge, courted arrest after addressing a well-attended rally at the Ramlila Maidan in the capital. The two leaders said the track record of the Manmohan Singh government and its inability to control the rising prices

only showed that its promise to provide a new deal for the aam admi was just hollow.

The two leaders said the government's failure has a lot to do with political instability. "The government is not a cohesive one. Its ministers are feuding in public. The policies of the government can be stable only if the political situation is stable," said Mr Advani. In a no holds barred attack on the government, the BJP president said the handling of the internal security situation was worrying.

"The previous government had a well-deliberated plan to contain issues such as insurgency. These policies have been abandoned just because the Con-

gress has a tacit understanding with outfits like the Ulfa."

The issue found its echo inside Parliament when NDA members staged a walkout in the Lok Sabha on the price rise issue. Raising the issue during zero hour, BJP deputy leader Vijay Kumar Malhotra said his party workers were holding a massive rally in New Delhi to protest the government's "failure" to bring the prices down. Senior party leaders Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani would take part in the discussion, he said. "Let there be a discussion and voting on the issue in the House and I am sure two-thirds of the members will vote against the UPA government which is in a minority," Mr Malhotra said.

02 DEC 2004

The Economic Times

আডবাণীর সঙ্কেত, দল হিন্দুত্বে ফিরছে

১৪ নভেম্বর ২০০৪
শ্রীমত হোড় • রাঁচি

২৪ নভেম্বর: শঙ্করাচার্যের গ্রেফতারকে সামনে রেখে বিজেপি যে এ বার হিন্দুত্বে ফিরছে, সংসদের আসন্ন অধিবেশনও যে যথেষ্ট উত্তপ্ত হতে চলেছে, তার স্পষ্ট সঙ্কেত দিলেন লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী। শঙ্করাচার্যের গ্রেফতারকে রামমন্দিরের মতোই হিন্দু-আবেগের বিষয় বলে অভিহিত করে আডবাণী দ্ব্যর্থহীনভাবে বলেছেন, “যদি কেউ ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতার অঙ্কিত হিন্দু-বিরোধী কাজ করে, তা হলে বিজেপি তার পথে পাথরের মতো বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়াবে। আমরা এর জন্য যে কোনও ত্যাগ স্বীকারে রাজি।” আর শঙ্করাচার্য নিয়ে আন্দোলন প্রসঙ্গে তাঁর বক্তব্য, “এটা দিয়ে বিজেপি তার রাজনৈতিক ও আদর্শগত বিরোধীদের মোকাবিলা করবে।”

বিজেপি-র হিন্দুত্বে ফেরা বা না ফেরা নিয়ে দলের ভিতরে ও সঙ্ঘ পরিবারে অনেক বিতর্ক হয়েছে। হিন্দুত্বে যদি ফেরাও হয় তা হলে কতটা ফিরবে তা নিয়েও বিতর্ক হয়েছে। সম্প্রতি আর এস এস এবং ভি এইচ পি নেতৃত্ব হিন্দুত্বে ফেরার জন্য প্রবল চাপ দিয়েছিল বিজেপি নেতৃত্বকে। কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের প্রথম দিনেই এ বিষয়ে তাঁর মনোভাব পরিষ্কার করে দিলেন আডবাণী।

আজ রাঁচিতে বিজেপি-র জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে দলের কর্মসূচি ঘোষণা করতে গিয়ে আডবাণী জোর দিয়েছেন দুটি বিষয়ে। প্রথমত, শঙ্করাচার্যের গ্রেফতারের প্রতিবাদে আন্দোলন, রামমন্দির নির্মাণের জন্য আলোচনায় বসার জন্য কেন্দ্রকে চাপ ও কংগ্রেসের হিন্দু-বিরোধী ও সংখ্যালঘু তোষণের রাজনীতির প্রতিবাদ। দ্বিতীয়ত, মূল্যবৃদ্ধির মতো বিষয়, যা সরাসরি আমজনতাকে প্রভাবিত করছে তা নিয়ে আন্দোলনে নামা।

তিনি জানান, হিন্দুত্ব ও মূল্যবৃদ্ধি, দুটি বিষয়ে আন্দোলন ও জনমত সংহত করাই হবে বিজেপি-র কাজ। এই কাজ ঠিক ভাবে না করাতেই লোকসভায় দলের হার হয়েছে বলে তাঁর মত। জয়েন্ডর গ্রেফতারকে হিন্দুত্বের উপর আঘাত বলে বর্ণনাই শুধু নয়, আডবাণী আবার কংগ্রেসের বিরুদ্ধে সংখ্যালঘু তোষণের অভিযোগও এনেছেন। কংগ্রেসকে তাঁর প্রশ্ন— উত্তরপ্রদেশে '৯৪ সালে আই এস আই-র সঙ্গে যুক্ত এক সন্দেহভাজন জঙ্গিকে ধরতে গোয়েন্দারা একটি মুসলিম

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

দল হিন্দুত্বে ফিরছে

প্রথম পাতার পর

শিক্ষা-প্রতিষ্ঠানের হস্টেলে হানা দিয়েছিল। তারপর কেন্দ্রে তৎকালীন কংগ্রেস সরকার কেন্দ্র ক্ষমা চেয়েছিল? ক্ষমা চাওয়ার জন্য দু-জন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রীকে সেখানে কেন পাঠানো হয়েছিল? কোনও কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী যদি জনসভায় বলেন, তিনি হিন্দু বা মুসলিম হওয়ার জন্য লজ্জিত, তখন কী হবে? গরিব আদিবাসীদের ধর্মাস্তরের প্রতিবাদকে কেন সাম্প্রদায়িক আখ্যা দেওয়া হবে? হিন্দুত্ব, হিন্দু ঐতিহ্য, হিন্দু বিশ্বাসের সঙ্গে জড়িত কোনও কিছুর কেন সাম্প্রদায়িক বলা হবে? আডবাণী এটাও বলেছেন, “আমাদের দেশে এখন হিন্দুদের অপমান করা হিন্দুদের ন্যায্য স্বার্থে আঘাত করা, হিন্দু মনোভাবকে আক্রমণ করাকে ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতার প্রতি দায়বদ্ধতা বলে ধরা হচ্ছে। তামিলনাড়ুতে দুটি প্রধান দল, বামেরা এবং সব হিন্দুবিরোধী শক্তি একজেট হয়ে শঙ্করাচার্যের অপমান করে হিন্দু সমাজকে বড় আঘাত করেছে।” বিজেপি নেতৃত্বের দাবি, শঙ্করাচার্যের অপমানকে আর বাড়তে না দিয়ে অবিলম্বে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার বিষয়টিতে সক্রিয়ভাবে হস্তক্ষেপ করুক।

সভাপতির ভাষণে একবারের জন্যও উমা ভারতী বা দলীয় শৃঙ্খলার

প্রসঙ্গ তোলেননি আডবাণী। বরং স্পষ্টভাবে জানিয়েছেন দল এ বার কী করবে। তা বলতে গিয়ে সবথেকে বেশি জোর দিয়েছেন শঙ্করাচার্যের বিষয়ে। আডবাণী বলেছেন, “শঙ্করাচার্যের গ্রেফতার হল হিন্দুধর্মের উপর আঘাত। অনেক ডেবেটিভে, আলাপ আলোচনার পর বিজেপি শঙ্করাচার্যের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছে। ২০ নভেম্বর থেকে ধরনা ও উপবাসে বসে আমরা একটা প্রচার শুরু করেছি যা রামমন্দির প্রসঙ্গের সঙ্গে তুলনীয়।” রামমন্দির প্রসঙ্গকে একেবারে ছেড়ে না দিলেও আডবাণী রামমন্দির নিয়ে এ বার অন্য ভূমিকা নিয়েছেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, দুই সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে আলোচনা করে মতৈক্যের ভিত্তিতে বিরোধ মিটিয়ে রামমন্দির নির্মাণ করতে হবে। কংগ্রেসও তাঁদের ইস্তাহারে এই মতৈক্যের কথা বলেছিল। তা হলে কংগ্রেসের নেতৃত্বাধীন সরকার কেন এই মতৈক্যের জন্য চেষ্টা করবে না।

এত দিন দলীয় কোন্দল সামলাতে গিয়ে বিজেপি ব্যস্ত ছিল। এ বার সেই কোঁদল ঘুচিয়ে মূল্যবৃদ্ধির প্রতিবাদে তাঁরা যে পথে নামবেন তা আডবাণী ও বাজপেয়ী দু-জনেই পরিষ্কার করে দিয়েছেন। আডবাণী বলেছেন, ১ ডিসেম্বর সংসদের সামনে ধরনা দিয়ে এই আন্দোলনের সূচনা হবে।

25 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

BJP dharna continues, VHP calls bandh today

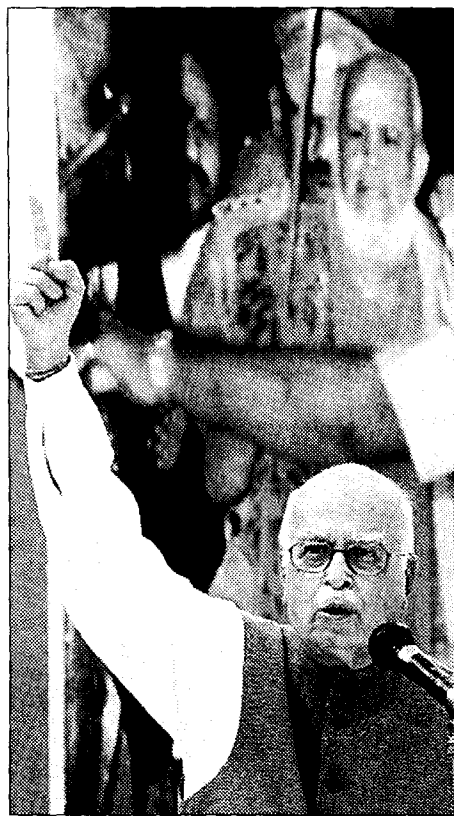
Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 21 NOVEMBER

THE BJP's dharna against the arrest of the Kanchi Shankaracharya, Swami Jayendra Saraswati entered the second day on Sunday, as the agitation to press for his release seemed set to intensify in the coming days. The VHP has called a nation-wide bandh on Monday. And if the Shankaracharya's police custody is extended on Monday, the BJP and the Sangh parivar will have no option but to redo their plans.

The issue is likely to figure at the BJP's national executive meeting, which commences in Ranchi from November 24. The party sees the issue as an opportunity to build bridges with its cadre, which has been sore with it for the ideological deviations that took place during the six-year-old NDA regime.

Former Union ministers Murli Manohar Joshi and Sushma Swaraj led Sunday's dharna against the Shankaracharya's arrest, while his party colleague Jaswant Singh is expected to hold fort on Monday on behalf of the party. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is likely to attend the concluding ceremony.

BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley, who was among the leaders who undertook the dharna, told reporters that they had taken strong exception to the manner in which the Kanchi seer was taken into custody by the Tamil Nadu government. Speaking on the occasion, Uttar Pradesh Urdu Committee chairman S. Khan said the country was religious but not communal and the treatment meted out to Shankaracharya was an insult to the religious sentiments of the people.



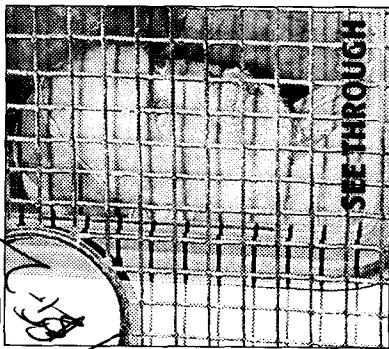
RHYTHM DIVINE: BJP president L.K. Advani delivers a speech during a rally in New Delhi on Sunday to protest against the arrest of the Shankaracharya. — AEP

BJP joins protest against seer arrest

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 19 NOVEMBER

In a development loaded with political connotations, the BJP on Friday decided to take the plunge in the ongoing agitation to press for the release of Kanchi Shankaracharya, Swami Jayendra Saraswati. The party charged the UPA government at the Centre of being a part of the conspiracy to jail the pontiff on trumped-up charges. Saraswati was remanded to police custody for three days on Friday.

The immediate impact of BJP's decision will be felt in Tamil Nadu, where the party faces the danger of being left absolutely friendless. Asserting that the Shankaracharya's arrest was not just an insult to an individual, but an assault on an entire religion, party spokesperson Sushma Swaraj blamed both the Centre and Tamil Nadu gov-



Seer in jail

being a colluding partner in the insult and assault.

The party, which had so far stayed away from commenting on the merits of the murder case in which the Shankaracharya was alleged to have been involved and was content with harping on peripheral issues such as the manner in which he had been arrested, on Friday decided to take up cudgels on behalf of the seer. A meeting of senior party leaders, chaired by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee this morning, decided to hold dharnas and dawn-to-dusk fast across the country for three days to build up pressure to secure the Shankaracharya's release.

A delegation led by Mr Vajpayee met President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam this evening and submitted a memorandum seeking his intervention in the matter. After leading the first day's

dharna-cum-fast in the capital on Saturday, BJP president L.K. Advani is expected to fly down to Chennai on Sunday to meet the Shankaracharya. Mr Vajpayee too is likely to follow suit.

The BJP's decision has been prompted by a number of factors. "We hadn't thought that the state government will seek the Shankaracharya's police remand. He is not a criminal, and the evidences that have been ferreted out by the prosecution do not have any substance," the BJP spokesperson said. A more important reason could be BJP's assessment that the move to put the Shankaracharya behind bars had sparked off a wave of public anger, just waiting to be channelised properly. "There have been spontaneous protests across the country," a senior leader said. The party's move, he said, was certain to send a positive signal to the cadre.

উমা ক্ষমাপ্রার্থী, তবে ক্ষমা চাইতে হবে দলকেও

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৮ নভেম্বর: ভাঙবেন, তবু মচকাকেন না উমা ভারতী।

তাকে দলে ফেরানোর উদ্যোগ যখন পুরোদমে চলছে, সেই সময় লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবীকে আরও একটি চিঠি লিখে উমা জানিয়ে দিলেন, বিজেপি সভাপতির কাছে তিনি ক্ষমা চাইতে প্রস্তুত। কিন্তু পাকটা বলেছেন যে, দলকেও তাঁর কাছে ক্ষমা চাইতে হবে। কারণ, তিনি যে নীতির প্রপ্ন তুলেছিলেন, তাকে বিকৃত করা হয়েছে। নাম না-করে এ ভাবে প্রমোদ মহাজনের বিরুদ্ধেই ক্ষের অভিযোগ তুলেছেন উমা।

আডবাবীও অজ মহারাষ্ট্রে প্রমোদ মহাজনের প্রভাব খর্ব করার ব্যবস্থা করেছেন। সেখানে প্রমোদের আত্মীয় গোপীনাথ মুভেডকে সরিয়ে আর এস এসের পছন্দের নেতা নীতিন গডগড়িকে রাজ্য সভাপতি করা হয়েছে। একে প্রমোদের জন্য ছাঁটা হয়েছে বলেই মনে করছেন অধিকাংশ বিজেপি নেতা। কারণ এতদিন ধরে মহারাষ্ট্রের বিজেপি-তে প্রমোদ-গোপীনাথের শাসন চলার পরে এ বার এমন এক জনকে বেছে নিয়েছেন আডবাবী, যিনি

এই দুজনের ঘনিষ্ঠ নন। কলটিকেও রাজ্য সভাপতির বদল হয়েছে। কিন্তু সেখানে অনন্তকুমারের ঘনিষ্ঠ নেতা জগদীশ শেট্টারকে রাজ্য সভাপতি করা হয়েছে। প্রমোদের ক্ষেত্রে তা করা হয়নি। উমার মূল জেহাদ ছিল প্রমোদেরই বিরুদ্ধে। ফলে আডবাবীর এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিঃসন্দেহে উমা এবং আর এস এস-কে খুশি করবে।

আডবাবীকে অজ দুটি চিঠি দিয়েছেন উমা। একটি চিঠি তিনি সংবাদমাধ্যমের কাছে প্রকাশ করে দিয়েছেন। অন্যটি গোপন। বিজেপি সুত্রের খবর, গোপন চিঠিতে আডবাবীর কাছে ক্ষমা চেয়েছেন আবেগময়িত উমা। আর প্রকাশ্য চিঠিতে আগের ব্যবহারের জন্য আডবাবীর কাছে দুঃখপ্রকাশ করেও মহাজনের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই জারি রেখেছেন। অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর কাছেও দুঃখপ্রকাশ করে চিঠি পাঠিয়েছেন উমা। তাঁর অভিযোগ যে কেননও ভাবেই আডবাবীর বিরুদ্ধে নয়, সেটাও প্রকাশিত চিঠিতে রাখতাক না-করেই বলেছেন উমা। তিনি লিখেছেন, “আপনি আমার রাজনৈতিক আদর্শ। আপনি আমার বাবার মতো।

আপনার একান্ত অনুগামীর মতো ওই কথারই পুনরাবৃত্তি করেছি। কিন্তু সুকৌশলে সেটা আমার নিজস্ব বিষয় বলে প্রচার করা হয়েছে।”

উমা আরও বলেছেন, “আমি কোনও ব্যক্তির বিরুদ্ধে বলিনি। এটা ঠিক যে, নীতির পালন ব্যক্তিই করে। একাধিক ব্যক্তি মিলে একটা গোষ্ঠী করে নেয়। তারা অন্যদের ঘিরে ফেলার চেষ্টা করে। এই চক্রবৃহৎ যারা ভেদ করার চেষ্টা করে, তারা অভিমুখ্য মতো শিকার হয়ে যায়।”

উমা বলেছেন, “আমি ‘দাগি’ মন্ত্রীদের মামলায় মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ হেডেছি। দলের কর্মীদের সমর্থন নেই বলে জয়ের সম্ভাবনা থাকা সত্ত্বেও আমার দাদাকে ভোটের প্রার্থী হতে দিইনি। আমার ভাইয়ের বিরুদ্ধে কিন্তু স্ট্রীচারের অভিযোগ ছিল না। তাই আমার আশা, আপনি আমাকে কমজোর হতে দেবেন না। কিছু দিন ধরে আমার বিরুদ্ধে ভয়ঙ্কর প্রচার চলছে। এই অবস্থায় আপনাকে কিছু সাহসী সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে হবে।”

কেননও নাম করেননি উমা। গোপনও করেননি যে, তাঁর লড়াই প্রমোদ মহাজনের বিরুদ্ধে।

তাই আপনার মনে আঘাত দেওয়ার জন্য আমি অত্যন্ত দুঃখিত।”

দলের তরফ থেকে অবশ্য উমার চিঠি নিয়ে কোনও মন্তব্য করা হয়নি। মুখপাত্র অরুণ জেটলি শুধু বলেছেন, বিজেপি সভাপতি চিঠি পেয়েছেন। তবে প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী ও বিজেপির আর এক শীর্ষ নেতা মুরলীমানোহর জোশী অজ এক সাক্ষাৎকারে জানিয়েছেন চিঠি ক্যামেরার সামনে উমার ওই বিব্রোহ দলের ভাবমূর্তি নষ্ট করেছে।

চিঠিতে উমা দলে তার বিরোধীদের আর এক বার তীব্র আক্রমণ করেছেন। বিজেপি নেতাদেরই ব্যাখ্যা, তাঁর কাছে দলকে ক্ষমা চাইতে হবে যে দাবি করেছেন, সেটা আসলে তাঁর বিরোধীদের লক্ষ্য করেছে। চিঠিতে আডবাবীকে উমা বলেছেন, “তালকটোরা স্টেডিয়ামে আপনি সাহসের সঙ্গে দলের ভিতরে দুর্নীতির কথা বলেছিলেন, রাজনৈতিক স্ফুটনের কথা বলেছিলেন। এই ধরনের কথা বলার সাহস আপনার মতো ব্যক্তিরই আছে। এখন আপনি ভিডিও কাসেট এনে দেখুন, আমি বিজেপি-র বৈঠকে ঠিক কী বলেছি। আমি

Uma ready to apologise

Six
NEW DELHI, Nov. 18. — Miss Uma Bharati is ready to apologise to the BJP president, Mr LK Advani. Residing in a Himalayan retreat after her recent suspension from the BJP, Miss Bharati wrote to Mr Advani expressing regret for hurting his feelings.

The BJP released the letter at its national headquarters today indicating that Miss Bharati's return to the party isn't yet ruled out. She has reportedly written a similar letter to Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. However, the firebrand *sanyasin* also urged Mr Advani to look into the issue of off-the-record briefings by some BJP leaders.



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Claiming that the issues raised at the party meeting on 10 November were very important, Miss Bharati wrote: "On introspection it will be clear that a matter of political importance has been turned into an issue of indiscipline... You will recall that I didn't refer to anybody's personal life but rather expressed my views."

On the possibility of revoking her suspension, Miss Bharati said both the party's will and her individual stand will matter in this regard.

The BJP leadership has decided to maintain silence on the letter at the present moment. — SNS

বন্দে মাতরম
আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা

৮৩ বর্ষ ২৫৪ সংখ্যা বৃহস্পতিবার ২ অগ্রহায়ণ ১৪১১ কলকাতা

আপাতত নিঃশব্দ

বিজেপির নেতৃত্বাধীন রাষ্ট্রীয় গণতান্ত্রিক মোর্চার সফট এ বারও তত ঘনীভূত হইতে পারিল না। রামমন্দির ও ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতার প্রসঙ্গে সুবর্ণ মধ্যপন্থা অবলম্বন করায় শরিকরা এ যাত্রায় বিজেপির সঙ্গেই রহিয়া গেল। কোনও-কোনও শরিক দলে বিজেপির সংস্রব ত্যাগের দাবি উঠিয়াছিল। লোকসভা ও বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে পরাজয়ের কারণ হিসাবে তেলুগু দেশমের এক বড় অংশই বিজেপির সঙ্গদোষকে দায়ী করিয়াছিল। লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী বিজেপির সভাপতি নিযুক্ত হওয়ায় হিন্দুত্বের পরীক্ষিত পথে বিজেপির প্রত্যাবর্তনের সম্ভাবনা সংযুক্ত জনতা দলকেও শঙ্কিত করিয়া তোলে। বিহারে বিধানসভার আসন্ন নির্বাচনে বিজেপির পরিবর্তে রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানের লোকজনশক্তি পার্টির সহিত গাঁটছড়া বাঁধার তাগিদও নীতীশ কুমার, শরদ যাদবদের অস্থির করিয়া থাকিবে। মহারাষ্ট্র বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে বিজেপি-শিব সেনা জোটের পরাজয়ও বিজেপিকে একটি নিমজ্জমান জাহাজ রূপে প্রতিভাত করিয়া থাকিবে, নাবিকরা যাহার সিঙ্ক-উত্তরণ সম্পর্কে সন্দেহান। সব মিলাইয়া ক্ষমতাচ্যুত বিজেপি ক্ষমতাসীন থাকাকালীন জোট টিকাইয়া রাখিতে পারিবে কি না, এই সংশয় প্রবল হইতে থাকে। আপাতত শঙ্কা দূর হইয়াছে। তবে আপাততই।

সে জন্য বিজেপিকে অযোধ্যা বিরোধের শান্তিপূর্ণ, আইনগত, পারস্পরিক আলোচনা-ভিত্তিক মীমাংসার প্রকল্পটি পুনরুচ্চারণ করিতে হইয়াছে। আডবাণীর প্রাথমিক আশ্বালন শুনিয়া শরিকদের মনে হইয়াছিল, সংঘ পরিবারের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণ করিয়া বিজেপি হিন্দুত্বেই ফিরিতে উদ্গ্রীব। তাঁহাদের নূতন করিয়া আশ্বস্ত করিতে হইয়াছে, যদিও তাহাতে পরিবারের শরিক বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ বিষম চটিয়াছে। জোট-শরিকদের এই চাপ বিজেপিতে উগ্র হিন্দুত্ববাদীদের নিয়ামক ভূমিকায় আসিতে দিবে না। আডবাণী সভাপতি হইলেও তাই সংঘ পরিবারের উল্লসিত হওয়ার তত কারণ নাই। হয়তো এই একই কারণে অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর মতাদর্শগত নিয়ন্ত্রণও দলের উপর থাকিয়া যাইবে। বিজেপি সভাপতি কে হইবেন, তাহা বিজেপির অভ্যন্তরীণ ব্যাপার হইলেও শরিকরা যে আডবাণীর তুলনায় বাজপেয়ীর নেতৃত্বেই স্বচ্ছন্দ বোধ করেন, সেটা তো অনস্বীকার্য। সংযুক্ত জনতা দলের মতো শরিক আপাতত বিজেপি জোট ত্যাগের পরিকল্পনা ত্যাগ করিয়াছে। তাহাতে বিহারে এই জোটের অসুবিধাই বাড়িয়া যাইবে। কেননা ইহার ফলে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের রাষ্ট্রীয় জনতা দলের মোকাবিলায় রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানের সহিত বোঝাপড়ার সম্ভাবনা নষ্ট হইল। পাসোয়ান তাঁহার নবাজিত মুসলিম ভোটব্যাংক হারাইবার ভয়ে বিজেপির জোট-শরিকদের সঙ্গ করিতে নারাজ। কিন্তু বিহারে ক্ষমতাদখল অপেক্ষাও জোট অক্ষত রাখা মোর্চার কাছে অধিক গুরুত্ব পাইয়া থাকিবে।

কারণটি অনুমান করা কঠিন নয়। সংযুক্ত জনতা হোক কিংবা তেলুগু দেশম, বিজেপির জোট শরিকরা অধিকাংশই আঞ্চলিক বা প্রাদেশিক দল, কংগ্রেস আধিপত্যের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ের মাধ্যমে যাহারা উঠিয়া আসিয়াছে। কংগ্রেস এখন জোট রাজনীতির রাস্তায় হাঁটিতে শুরু করিলেও তাহাকে বিশ্বাস করা এই সব দলের পক্ষে কঠিন। কংগ্রেস তাহাদের গিলিয়া খাইবে, এই শঙ্কা যেমন মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদবের, তেমনই চন্দ্রবাবু নায়ডুরও। আবার একক ভাবে অস্তিত্ব রক্ষাও কঠিন। বিজেপি অন্তত কোয়ালিশন রাজনীতির অনুশীলনের যে ঐতিহ্য স্থাপন করিয়াছে, তাহাতে তাহার উপর ভরসা করা যায়। পরাজিত, হতমান, গতশক্তি বিজেপিরও রাজ্য-রাজ্যে আঞ্চলিক দল ও গোষ্ঠীগুলিকে সমান দরকার। জাতীয় দল হিসাবে আপন বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা ধরিয়া রাখার কৌশলগত স্বার্থটি আদর্শগত বিশুদ্ধতা রক্ষার রণনৈতিক স্বার্থ অপেক্ষা বেশি জরুরি। তাই হিন্দু ভোটের কথা মাথায় রাখিয়া মাঝে-মাঝে রামমন্দির নির্মাণ কিংবা ধৃত শঙ্করাচার্যের মুক্তির মতো বিষয় গাইয়া বাজাপেয়ীর গরম করার বাহিরে বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব কোনও হঠকারী উগ্রতা অবলম্বন করিবে বলিয়া মনে হয় না। নির্বাচনী পরাজয়ের অব্যবহিত পরে তুচ্ছাতিতুচ্ছ বিষয়েও দ্বিতীয় সারির বিজেপি নেতারা এবং জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের মতো শরিক নেতা সরকারের প্রতি যে রণং দেহি মনোভাব লইয়াছিলেন, মহারাষ্ট্র নির্বাচনেও প্রত্যাখ্যাত হইবার পর ক্রমে তাহা মিয়াইয়া গিয়াছে। এখন বিজেপির নিজের মধ্যে যেমন উমা ভারতীর মতো কণ্টকিত বিতর্ক মাথা চাড়া দিতেছে, শরিকদের মধ্যেও তেমনই নেতৃত্ব লইয়া অনুরূপ বিসম্বাদ দেখা দিতে পারে। দল যখন ক্ষমতায় থাকে, তখন তাহার অনেক অভ্যন্তরীণ গোলযোগই চাপা পড়িয়া যায়, ক্ষমতা হারাইলেই যেগুলি মাথা চাড়া দিতে থাকে। বিজেপি জোটকেও এই সব সমস্যার মধ্য দিয়াই অগ্রসর হইতে হইবে। জনসাধারণের নজরদারি চলিতেছে।

18 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

উমার দাবি, আদপেই শৃঙ্খলা ভাঙেননি দুঃখপ্রকাশ না করে আডবাণীকে পত্রাঘাত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১১ নভেম্বর: ক্ষমা প্রার্থনা বা দুঃখপ্রকাশ তো দূরের কথা, কার্যত প্রত্যাঘাত করলেন উমা ভারতী।

বিজেপি থেকে সাসপেন্ড হওয়ার পরের দিনই অত্যন্ত কড়া ভাষায় লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীকে চিঠি লিখে উমা জানিয়ে দিলেন, তিনি কোনও শৃঙ্খলাভঙ্গই করেননি। বিজেপি-র নরম নীতিকে বিদ্রূপ হেনে উমা পরিষ্কার করে দিয়েছেন, তাঁর লড়াই বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণীর বিরুদ্ধে নয়, বরং সনিয়া গাঁধীর মতো বিদেশিনির বিরুদ্ধে। বামদেবের বিরুদ্ধে। রাম, রুটি ও গরিবের পাশে থেকে তিনি এই লড়াই করবেন। এবং কোনও রাখঢাক না-করে উমা বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন, বিজেপি এই লড়াই থেকে সরে এলেও তিনি সরবেন না। এই চিঠি পাঠানোর পর উমার ঘরে ফেরার পথও কার্যত বন্ধ হয়ে গেল। বরং উমা ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, অনেক বড় মঞ্চ থেকে তিনি তাঁর লড়াই জারি রাখবেন।

তাঁর চিঠিতে হিন্দুত্বের প্রতীক ব্যবহার করেই আডবাণীকে আক্রমণ এবং কার্যত তাচ্ছিল্য করেছেন উমা। সভাপতির কর্তৃত্বের পরোয়া না-করে আডবাণীর কাছে পাঠানোর আগে সংবাদমাধ্যমের কাছে পুরো চিঠি পড়ে শুনিয়েও দিয়েছেন তিনি। সেখানে বলেছেন, “আমাদের দেশের হৃদয়ে ধর্ম রয়েছে। নর্মদার তীরে অমরকন্টকে নিজের হাতে পিণ্ডান করে আমি সন্ন্যাসী হয়েছি। আপনার সিদ্ধান্তে আমার দিশা ও দশা কোনওটাই বদলাবে না। আমি তো গরিবের পাশে আছি, থাকব। অটলজি ও আপনার ছত্রচ্ছায় থেকে দল বড় হোক।” শুধু রাম আর গরিব নয়, তিনি গাঁধী ও দীনদয়ালকে নিয়েও চলবেন বলে উমা জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন। উমা বলেছেন, “ঈশ্বরের প্রেরণায় আমি মহাত্মা গাঁধীজি, দীনদয়ালের প্রদর্শিত রাস্তা খুঁজব।” তিনি যে বড় মঞ্চে থেকে জন-আন্দোলন করতে চান, সেটাও পরিষ্কার করে দিয়েছেন সন্ন্যাসিনী নেত্রী। সে জন্যই দীনদয়ালের পাশাপাশি টেনে এনেছেন গাঁধীকেও।

আজ সারাদিন কার্যত নিজেকে গৃহবন্দি রাখার পরে রাতে অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী ও লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর সঙ্গে দেখা করেন উমা। আডবাণীর বাড়িতে রাতে প্রায় ৫০ মিনিট

কথা হয়েছে উমার। সেখান থেকে বেরিয়ে সাংবাদিকদের তিনি জানান, চিঠিতে কী লিখেছেন, তা নিয়েই কথা হয়েছে আডবাণীর সঙ্গে। আডবাণী কী বললেন, জানতে চাওয়া হলে উমার জবাব, “সেই প্রশ্নটা ওঁকেই করা উচিত।”

কেদারনাথ থেকে ৩০ নভেম্বরের পরে দিল্লি ফিরে তাঁর ভবিষ্যৎ পরিকল্পনা খোলসা করার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছেন উমা। তার আগে আবেগকে হাতিয়ার করে আডবাণীকে চিঠিতে বলে গিয়েছেন, “কালকের ঘটনা ঘটাই ছিল। আমার বা আপনার নিয়ন্ত্রণে ছিল না। দেবতার বিধানেই ধনতেরাসের দিন বেটিকে ঘর থেকে বার করে দেওয়া হল।” তিনি কোনও ‘অন্যায়’ করেননি, তা ফের ঘোষণা করে লিখেছেন, “দু’দিন ধরে ভেবেও এর মধ্যে অনুশাসনহীনতার সূত্র পেলাম না।”

চিঠির ছত্রে ছত্রে এ ভাবেই আডবাণীকে বিদ্রূপের ছল ফুটিয়ে উমা বুঝিয়েছেন, তাঁর প্রতি অন্যায় হয়েছে এবং দল ‘ভুল পথে’ চলেছে। আডবাণীকে কাঠগড়ায় তুলে উমা বলেছেন, “আমি তো ৩০ নভেম্বর পর্যন্ত ছুটি নিয়েছিলাম। আপনার অত্যধিক আগ্রহেই কাল সাধনা ছেড়ে দিয়ে বৈঠকে যোগ দিয়েছিলাম।” আর সাংবাদিকদের বলেছেন, “আজ রাত পর্যন্ত অপেক্ষা করে দেখতে চেয়েছি, কার কী প্রতিক্রিয়া। এটা আমার মোক্ষ লাভে সহায়ক হবে।”

যদিও বিজেপি-র অন্যতম প্রধান অনগ্রসর এই নেত্রীকে বাঁচাতে সঞ্জয় নেতারা আজ তৎপর ছিলেন। কালই উমা আর এস এসএসের প্রবীণ নেতা নানাজি দেশমুখের সঙ্গে দেখা করেন। আজ মদনদাস দেবীর সঙ্গে উমার ফোনে কথাও হয়। উমা যাকে গুরুর মতো মানেন, ‘স্বদেশি জাগরণ মঞ্চ’-এর নেতা গুরুমূর্তিও আসরে নামেন। আর উমার সঙ্গে আজ সকাল থেকেই ছিলেন গোবিন্দাচার্য। বিজেপি-ও সুর নরম করে জানিয়ে দিয়েছিল, উমাকে কারণ দর্শানোর নোটিস দেওয়া হয়নি। কিন্তু প্রশ্নটা ছিল মিটমাট হবে কী ভাবে? বিজেপি নেতাদের শর্তই ছিল, উমাকে প্রকাশ্যে ক্ষমা চাইতে হবে। কারণ, তিনি আডবাণীর কর্তৃত্বকে চ্যালেঞ্জ করেছেন। টিভির পর্দায় গোটা দেশ তা দেখেওছে।

উল্টে পত্রবোমা পাঠিয়ে উমা পাড়ি দিলেন কেদারনাথে। একগুচ্ছ প্রশ্ন তুলে দিলেন বিজেপি ও তার ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে।

12 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA



Uma Bharti, suspended from the BJP on Wednesday for six years, leaves the residence of party president L.K. Advani after a meeting on Thursday night. Uma also met former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

PTI

Uma, BJP in peace bid

HTC & Agencies
New Delhi, November 11

A DAY after defying L.K. Advani in full glare of TV cameras and daring him to punish her for "indiscipline", Uma Bharti today was in a philosophical mood, and apparently ready for a patch-up, with "well-wishers" on both sides, including the RSS, working to find a rapprochement recipe.

The firebrand sanyasin said late in the evening that she was leaving for Kedarnath in the Himalayas on a "spiritual voyage". But before that she met A.B. Vajpayee and Advani to explain her conduct at yesterday's stormy meeting. She hadn't done anything to invite disciplinary action, she had only made some emotional remarks, Bharti

told both leaders.

She spent 45-minutes meeting Vajpayee and was with Advani for about 50 minutes. "I had soup with Advaniji and dinner at Atalji's residence," she told reporters afterwards.

Before meeting the two leaders, she released to the media a letter addressed to Advani, in which she said, "I tried to find out the element of indiscipline in my action yesterday, but found none...Your decision will influence neither the condition nor the direction of my life, because I am with the poor people of the country".

Asked what Advani's response was, she said: "You should ask this question to him." She refused to disclose the contents of her discussion with Vajpayee.

Earlier, she spent almost

the whole day at home when former BJP ideologue Govindacharya paid her a visit. Her other visitors included the all-India convener of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Murlidhar Rao. Sources said a senior BJP leader close to Advani had spoken to her over the phone during the day.

The BJP strained through the day to establish that Bharti had not been served any show-cause notice. General secretary Arun Jaitley went a step further, saying Bharti hadn't been suspended for six years — the suspension had no timeframe.

At the daily briefing at the BJP headquarters, he parried all questions on the chances of the suspension being revoked. "These are hypothetical questions," he said.

সন্ন্যাসিনী উমা এ বার বিদ্রোহিনী

১০ নভেম্বর ২০০৪

শাঁখের করাতে বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব, আর এস এস চুপ

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

আডবাণীর দিকে আঙুল তুলে ছ'বছর সাসপেন্ড

গৌতম হোড় • নয়াদিল্লি

১০ নভেম্বর: লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর কর্তৃত্বকে সরাসরি চ্যালেঞ্জ করে বিজেপি থেকে ছ'বছরের জন্য সাসপেন্ড হলেন উমা ভারতী।

বিজেপি-তে যা অভাবনীয়, আজ তা-ই করেছেন রামমন্দির আন্দোলনের 'আগুনে সন্ন্যাসিনী'। দলীয় বৈঠকে টিভি ক্যামেরার সামনে আডবাণীর মতো বিজেপি সভাপতির বিরুদ্ধে প্রকাশ্যে বিদ্রোহ এবং ওয়াকআউট। পঞ্চম বারের জন্য দলের সভাপতির দায়িত্ব নেওয়ার পরে বিক্ষোভ-বিদ্রোহে কোণঠাসা আডবাণীর কাছে এই ধাক্কাটা এসেছে তাঁরই অন্যতম ঘনিষ্ঠ অনুগামীর কাছ থেকে। আর এই ঘটনা বিজেপি-র দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতাদের লড়াইয়ের ভবিষ্যৎ, আডবাণীর কর্তৃত্ব এবং সম্ভব পরিবারের ভিতরের লড়াই নিয়েও প্রশ্ন তুলে দিয়েছে। আডবাণীকে চ্যালেঞ্জ জানিয়েই উমা সোজা আর এস এস-এর শরণাপন্ন হয়েছেন। উমার বিদ্রোহ ও বহিষ্কার নিয়ে আর এস এস মুখ খুলতে রাজি না-হলেও বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ বলেছে, রাজনীতি ত্যাগ করলে উমা তাঁদের সংগঠনে স্বাগত।

উমার আজকের বিদ্রোহ ছিল ১১ আশাক রোডে বিজেপি সদর দফতরে 'টিম আডবাণী'-র প্রথম বৈঠকে। মঞ্চ বসে অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী, লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী এবং যশোবন্ত সিংহ। সামনে বিজেপি-র কেন্দ্রীয় পদাধিকারীরা। সভাপতির বক্তৃতা দিচ্ছেন আডবাণী। রীতি বদল করে টিভি ক্যামেরার সামনেই চলছিল বিজেপি-র কেন্দ্রীয় পদাধিকারীদের বৈঠক।

কয়েক দিন ধরে দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতাদের ঝগড়ায় জেরবার আডবাণী তখন রীতিমতো কঠোর। ক্রুদ্ধ আডবাণী বলেছেন, "শৃঙ্খলাহীনতা সহ্য করার একটা সীমা রয়েছে। উমা কী বলছেন? শাহনওয়াজ কী বলছেন? নকভি কী বলছেন? আমার কোনও জবাব নেই। উত্তর দেওয়ার স্থিতি নেই। আমি এমনিতে কারও নাম করি না। কিন্তু দেখে মনে হচ্ছে গোটা দল কয়েক জন ব্যক্তির মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ হয়ে পড়েছে। কেন আপনারা আমার সঙ্গে কথা বলেন না? যখন ভুল করলে



বিদ্রোহের পরে আর এস এস দফতরের সামনে উমা ভারতী। পাশে সঙ্ঘের মুখপাত্র রাম মাধব।—পি টি আই

আমরা খবর হয়ে যাই, তখন তা দেখে আমার মাথা লজ্জায় নিচু হয়ে যায়। সবার জন্য আমি কাজ নির্দিষ্ট করে দেব। আর ঠিক করে দেব, কারা সংবাদমাধ্যমের সঙ্গে কথা বলবেন।"

একবারে সামনের সারিতে এক পাশে বেক্কাইয়া নায়ডু এবং অন্য পাশে রাজনাথ সিংহের মাঝখানে বসেছিলেন উমা। আডবাণীর কথা শেষ হতেই উমা বলেন, "আমার কিছু বলার আছে। চার-পাঁচ জন নেতা আছেন, এই ঘরেই কয়েক জন উপস্থিত আছেন, যাঁরা সংবাদমাধ্যমে নিজেদের নাম ব্যবহার না-করে (অফ দ্য রেকর্ড) আমার বিরুদ্ধে নানা ধরনের খবর দেন, যা খবরের কাগজে শিরোনাম হয়। তাই ইচ্ছাত বাঁচাতে প্রকাশ্যে মুখ খুলতে হয়। সেটাকেই শৃঙ্খলাহীনতা বলা হচ্ছে। এই সব নেতাদের আচরণও কি শৃঙ্খলাহীনতা নয়? এই ব্যাপারেও আলোচনা করতে হবে।"

আডবাণী জবাব দেন, "এটা ক্লোজড চ্যান্সার বা অধ্যায় সমাপ্ত।" কিন্তু উমা দৃঢ় ভাবে বলেন, "আমি আলোচনা চাই।" দাবি খারিজ করে দেন বিজেপি সভাপতি। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে নিজের জায়গা থেকে উমা উঠে দাঁড়ান। নাটকীয় ভাবে বলেন, "তা হলে আমি যাচ্ছি।" পাশে বসা রাজনাথ সিংহ সন্ন্যাসিনীর হাত ধরে বলে উঠেন, "কী করছেন কী?" বেক্কাইয়া "উমাজি" বলে কিছু বলার চেষ্টা করছিলেন। সে সব দিকে দৃকপাত না-করে উমা এগিয়ে যান বাইরের দিকে। একটু আগে মৃদু হাসছিলেন বাজপেয়ী। তিনি এ বার হতভম্ব। প্রমোদ মহাজন, অরুণ জেটলি, মুখতার আব্বাস নকভিদের দিকে তাকিয়ে উমা তখন বলে চলছেন, যাঁরা 'অফ দ্য রেকর্ড' কথা বলেন, তাঁরা সব রাজ্যসভা সদস্য। ঐদের আর কাজ নেই। তাঁরা চান না, কোনও বিষয়ে আলোচনা হোক।"

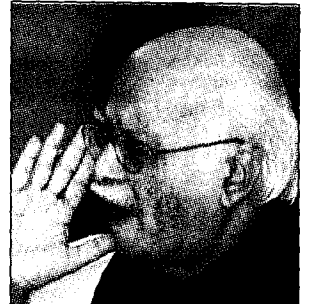
আডবাণী দৃঢ় ভাবে বলেন, "আমি বলছি, এই অধ্যায় শেষ হয়ে গিয়েছে। শেষ হয়ে যাওয়া মানে সকলের জন্য শেষ হওয়া।" বাইরে যেতে যেতে এ বার আডবাণীর দিকে ঘুরে দাঁড়ান উমা। আঙুল তুলে বিজেপি সভাপতিকে বলেন, "আমি বলছি, আপনি আমার বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নিন।"

বলেই সটান বাইরে উমা। পিছনে ধাবমান টিভি ক্যামেরা। রীতিমতো চড়া গলায় উমা বলেন, "আপনারা এখানে কেন? আমি গাড়ির জন্য অপেক্ষা করছি। আমার নিরাপত্তারক্ষীরা নেই। আপনারা এর সুযোগ নিচ্ছেন। এর পরেই দলের মিডিয়া সমন্বয়কারীকে ডেকে সকলকে সরিয়ে দিতে বলেন। বিজেপি অফিস থেকে তিনি সোজা চলে যান ঝাণ্ডেওয়ালয় আর এস এস-এর সদর দফতরে সহ-কার্যবাহ মদনদাস দেবীর সঙ্গে দেখা করতে।

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

১০ নভেম্বর: মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়কে নিয়ে ঠিক যে বিড়ম্বনায় পড়েছিলেন সীতারাম কেসরী, আজ সেই একই রকম শাঁখের করাতে সামনে পড়লেন বি জে পি-র শীষ নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী।

কেসরীও চাননি, মমতার মতো জনপ্রিয় নেত্রীকে দল থেকে বহিষ্কার করা হোক। কিন্তু মমতাই এমন পরিস্থিতি তৈরি করে নিজেকে এক চক্রবাহে ঠেলে দিয়েছিলেন, যেখান থেকে তাঁর বেরিয়ে আসার পথ ছিল না। দলের মধ্যে শীর্ষ নেতারা উমাকে বলতেন 'বি জে পি-র মমতা'। রাজনীতিটা মস্তিষ্ক দিয়ে নয়, আবেগভিত্তিক, প্রতিবর্তক্রিয়ার মতো করে থাকেন। আর চার দিক থেকে নানা কায়েমি স্বার্থ তাতে ঘূতাহুতি দেয়। কংগ্রেস থেকে মমতাকে বার করে দেওয়ার পরে মমতা রাজ্যস্তরে দল গঠন করেন নিজের অস্তিত্ব জাহির করতে। 'বি জে পি-র মমতা' উমার পরিণতিও সে দিকেই এগোচ্ছে বলে রাজনৈতিক মহলের একাংশ মনে করছেন। আপাতত তিনি ছ'বছরের জন্য দল থেকে সাসপেন্ড হয়েছে। সেই সঙ্গে কেন দল তাঁর প্রাথমিক সদস্য পদ খারিজ করবে না, নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের মধ্যে সেই কারণ দর্শাতে বলা হয়েছে। উমার জবাব পাওয়ার পরে দলের শৃঙ্খলারক্ষা কমিটি সেটি যাচাই করে দেখবে। তারাই উমার ভবিষ্যৎ সম্পর্কে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে। উমা বিদ্রোহ ছেড়ে নতিস্বীকার করলে বহিষ্কার এড়াতে পারেন। অরুণ জেটলি যাকে বলছেন, "উমার জন্য দলের দরজা বন্ধ হয়ে গেলেও জানালা একটা খোলা রয়েছে।"



দল থেকে সাসপেন্ড হয়ে উমা এখন আর এস এস-এর সাহায্যপ্রার্থী। ইতিমধ্যে উমার হয়ে এক বার আডবাণীর কাছে দরবার করে এসেছেন শাহনওয়াজ হুসেন। কিন্তু আর এস এস নেতারা এখনও মুখ খোলেননি। যদিও আর এস এস দফতরের বাইরে সাংবাদিকদের সামনে উমার পাশে এসে রামমাধব দাঁড়িয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু আর এস এস শীর্ষ নেতা সুদর্শন বা তাঁর হয়ে মদনদাস দেবীর মতো কেউ রাতে আডবাণীকে ফোন করেননি। আর এস এস সূত্রের ইঙ্গিত, চটজলদি উমাকে কেন্দ্র করে তারা বি জে পি-র অভ্যন্তরীণ বিষয়ে জড়িয়ে পড়তে না-ও পারে।

এই অবস্থায় উমার লড়াই আপাতত জাতীয় স্তরে হলেও শেষ পর্যন্ত তিনি মধ্যপ্রদেশে একটি আঞ্চলিক দল গড়তে চেষ্টা করতে পারেন। এখনই নয়। ধীরে ধীরে তিনি এক সমান্তরাল বি জে পি মঞ্চ গড়ে তোলার চেষ্টা করবেন। এ কাজে প্রত্যক্ষ ও পরোক্ষ ভাবে তাকে মদত দেন বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ নেতা অশোক সিঙ্ঘল ও প্রবীণ তোগাড়িয়া। আর এস এস নেতৃত্বের একটা বড় অংশও তাঁকে সমর্থন করতে পারেন। 'আডবাণীর কটর বিরোধী' বলে পরিচিত মুরলীমানোহর জোশীর মতো বি জে পি নেতা প্রকাশ্যে না-এলেও আড়াল থেকে বন্ধুত্বের হাত বাড়াতে পারেন শত্রুর শত্রুকে বন্ধু হিসাবে নিয়ে। সম্ভব পরিবারের একাংশ উমাকে সামনে রেখে মধ্যপ্রদেশে ক্ষমতাসীন বি জে পি-র বিষয়কদের ভাগানো যায় কি না, সেটাও ভাবতে শুরু করেছে। যদি সমঝোতা না হয়, তা হলে পুরনো ভারতীয় জনসঙ্ঘের মঞ্চকে কাজে লাগানোর কথাও ভাবা হচ্ছে।

বড় দুঃখের দিন আজ লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর। দলের সভাপতি হওয়ার পরে এক মাসও অতিবাহিত হয়নি। যে উমাকে তিনি মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদপ্রার্থী করে ভোপালে পাঠিয়েছিলেন অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর আপত্তি সত্ত্বেও, যে উমাকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর সিংহাসনে বসিয়ে তাঁর জনপ্রিয়তাকে কাজে লাগাতে চেয়েছিলেন দলের সাফল্যের স্বার্থে, সেই উমাই আজ যেন ফ্রাঙ্কেনস্টাইনের মতো রাজনৈতিক ভাবে 'হত্যা' করেছেন তাঁর স্রষ্টাকেই।

আডবাণীর কাছে উমার বিরুদ্ধে নালিশের অভিযান শুরু হয়েছিল আজ নয়, যে দিন তিনি মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হন সেদিন থেকেই। উমার ভাই স্বামী লোধ ও তাঁর ভাইপো সিদ্ধার্থের নামে দুর্নীতির অভিযোগ আসে। আবার তাঁর কাজ করার পদ্ধতি নিয়েও অসন্তুষ্ট ছিলেন আডবাণী নিজেই। উমা কখনও জিনস পরা নিষিদ্ধ করছিলেন,

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

11 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Uma demolishes BJP pride

Suspension follows revolt, RSS steps in

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Nov. 10: Uma's wrath today burned the BJP's vaunted body of discipline to a skeleton — in full glare of cameras.

The rebellion that challenged the authority of BJP president L.K. Advani forced the party to suspend Uma Bharti "till further action".

Uma, who has been locked in a war of nerves with several senior leaders, accused some colleagues of spreading stories to "lower my prestige" and demanded a discussion at a meeting of the party's central office-bearers. When Advani refused, she walked out, saying: "I want you to take disciplinary action against me."

As she headed straight to the RSS headquarters, the BJP announced that the firebrand sanyasin had been suspended.

Uma was closeted with general secretary Madan Das Devi for nearly two hours. Although the RSS refused to comment, it is reliably learnt that the Sangh counselled the BJP to reconsider. Uma had emerged as a front-ranking leader of potential, it argued.

Sources said if she apologises, the suspension may be revoked but a "longish cooling-off" period would be required. Uma was seen shopping near Connaught Place soon after she left the RSS office.

The suspension followed

days of dithering after Uma started a campaign for the ouster of general secretary Pramod Mahajan, indirectly referring to him as "power-broker", and earlier against M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Barring one office-bearer closely associated with Uma in the Madhya Pradesh elections and who, sources alleged, wanted to "put down" Mahajan through her, the rest of the BJP felt Advani should take action against her if he has to retain his authority.

Matters came to a head when Uma allegedly bad-mouthed even Advani before some mediapersons.

Last night, at a dinner hosted by Advani for party veteran J.P. Mathur, the dominant mood was that Uma should be "fixed" at the morning meeting. Her lone sympathiser sensed the mood and reportedly distanced himself from her.

To rub in the message that Advani would not brook "indiscipline", an unprecedented decision was taken to allow live telecast of his address. The

practice so far has been to bar the media from all meetings except the national council.

"We wanted to show the world that Advani will not tolerate nonsense from anyone," a source said.

The calculation backfired. "There is a limit to how much departure from discipline can be tolerated. Party leaders neither talk to me nor each other but only through the media. Why don't you talk to us? Our heads hang in shame that we are always in the news for the wrong reasons," the party chief said in his opening speech.

Advani referred to individuals — an extraordinary step in the BJP. "Workers ask us what are Uma Bharti, Shahnawaz Hussain and (Mukhtar Abbas) Naqvi saying? I have no answer. It appears as though the BJP only revolves around these three persons."

Uma took on Advani. "There are four-five people in this hall who do off-the-record briefings which appear as headlines and there are people who cannot do this. So we are forced to defend our honour by being compelled to speak on record and that is being branded as indiscipline."

Advani said: "I have said this matter is being closed. Closed means closed for all."

But Uma protested: "No, I am sorry, Advaniji. I want to discuss it here." Then she walked out.

BIG BRAWL

10.30 am

BJP central office-bearers' meeting starts amid a display of camaraderie

BEFORE



Advani, Vajpayee and Jaswant on the dais. Uma sits next to Venkaiah and Rajnath. Allowed in for the first time to cover Advani's opening address, here's what the media found inside

AFTER



A smiling Uma comes out of the RSS headquarters — her first port of call after the walkout

Tough times do not last, tough men do. There is a limit to how much departure from discipline can be tolerated

Party workers ask us about Uma Bharti, Shahnawaz Hussain and Naqvi, what are they saying? I have no answer to their query

There are four-five people in this hall who do off-the-record briefings (against me) and there are people who cannot do this. So we are forced to protect our honour by speaking on record

I have said this matter is being closed. Closed means closed for all

No, I am sorry, Advaniji. I want to discuss it here. I want you to take disciplinary action against me

Uma storms out

THE RIPPLES

Senior party activists and ordinary party workers should maintain discipline



A.B. Vajpayee
Quoted by Arun Jaitley

Umaji came for a meeting and has left. We have nothing to say right now



Ram Madhav
RSS spokesman

This reminds us of what had happened to Draupadi in Mahabharata



Girija Vyas
Congress media cell

Koi na raha rowan wala Lanka mein Ravan ke wadh ke bad (there is none to mourn in Lanka after the slaying of Ravan)



Laloo Prasad Yadav

✓ BJP vs BJP 11-12

u/u Tantrums should lead to two parties 9.1.18

The BJP seems to have accepted the suggestion, made in these columns on November 9, to split into two parties to capture moderate as well as Hindutva votes. What else explains the explosion of pique at the meeting of party honchos — a meeting that ended with a six-year suspension of Uma Bharti for speaking her mind to BJP president L K Advani? Bharti believes that politicians with little popular support, operating from comfortable Rajya Sabha perches, have too much influence within the party. She is correct. Recent results show that the BJP fares better on television debates than in real life elections. But Uma's diagnosis covers only part of what is wrong, now spectacularly so, with the party. Put simply, the BJP lacks a vision to rule a country of India's diversity. Driven by a sectarian ideology that dates back to 1925 and having grown under the impetus of a 15-year-old movement to topple mosques and build temples in their place, it is now groping for a political idiom that suits modern India's breakneck explosion of ambition and aspiration. Can yesterday's charioteer Advani and his prime time colleagues turn the BJP into a party that survives and grows in today's India?

Today's rift shows that hardliners like Bharti, organisations like the VHP and many in the RSS are prepared for a showdown with the kinder-gentler BJP that Vajpayee tried to build and Advani inherited. Clearly, many within the sangh parivar don't care much for this direction. So, without the glue of power to hold it together, the BJP is likely to crack up along ideological lines. That shouldn't surprise Indians who're used to the spectacle of party splits: the Communists in 1964 and 1967, the Congress in 1969 and 1977 and the Lohiaite socialists in a constant ferment of alignment and separation. The BJP was supposed to be immune to all this, but now the natural order of things is starting to take over. If Uma's revolt leads to the creation of another BJP, it will be interesting to watch which of the two will survive and grow. Typically, the more conservative, moderate factions tend to do worse than the radical splinter: The breakaway CPM is a far bigger party than the CPI; Indira's radical stuff trounced her rivals' conservative politics after the 1969 split. Will an Uma-VHP party drive the 'other' BJP into oblivion?

Gaur grins as Uma gets the boot

MP CM Emerges from a meeting with party top brass in New Delhi on Wednesday

By Suchandana Gupta/TNN

Bhopal: As news of party action against Uma Bharti spread like wildfire in the Madhya Pradesh capital, the sanyasin's most trusted aides queued up at sitting chief minister Babulal Gaur's residence for Diwali lunch. Gaur offered Uma's men besan ka ladoo. After serving three months in office, the chief minister was free from the Uma Bharti shackles.

By evening, the state government issued an official release claiming that chief minister Babulal Gaur and 15 state ministers, including names of Uma Bharti's most faithful followers and members of her cabinet, had supported the party's disciplinary action against her. Names of cabinet ministers supporting the high command's decision were Kailash Vijayavargiya, Gopal Bhargav, Dhal Singh Bisen, Vijay Shah, Harnam Singh Rathod, Kailash Chawla, Narendra Singh Tomar, Jayant Malaiya and half a dozen other ministers.

Gaur was extraordinarily chirpy and visibly relieved during the Diwali lunch in his official residence. He had invited the media and members of his cabinet. Forcing a smile on his face and helping himself to ladoo, a senior minister who also figured in the Uma Bharti cabinet quoted the scriptures: "Triya charitram, purushaya bhagyam. Devo na jana to kuto manusya? (Even God failed to know the fate of a man and the character of a woman. So who are we mortals?)"

Surprisingly, no one was shocked with either Uma Bharti's behaviour at the party meeting in New Delhi or the subsequent fallout of it. Chief minister Gaur said: "Ko kiya hai, uuska phal mila hai. Aur kendriya netritya ne thik kiya hai (This is the result of her deeds. The central leadership is right to have suspended her).

Speaking to TOI, a senior state cabinet minister known to have been close to Uma Bharti said: "The immense two-thirds victory of the BJP in Madhya Pradesh got into her head. She lost her balance after that. It is true, she worked very hard and the results were historical but she became too big for her boots. She listened to no one except for a handful of her selected advisors



Uma Bharti (left) shares a lighter moment with Venkaiah Naidu while Jaswant Singh looks on before the start of the meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. An image from a TV channel shows Uma making her point loud and clear. (Below) A relaxed Uma after meeting the RSS top brass



which proved fatal. They could not control her whimsical tantrums."

Another minister joined in: "She is utterly childish. Thinks politics is a game of village gilli-danda. You either play by her rules or she walks out. What happened today to LK Advani had happened way back in 1992 to former chief minister Sundarlal Patwa. There was a bomb explosion in Bharti's house in Tikamgarh after which a case was registered against her brother Swami Lodhi.

Uma will have her say

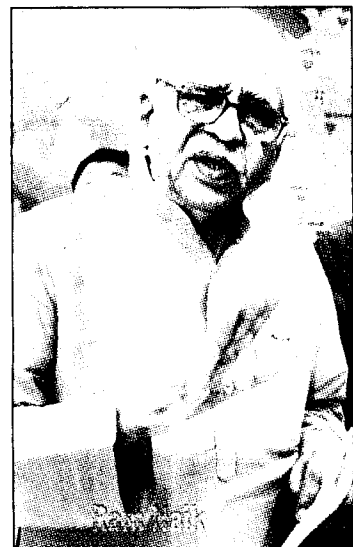
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: BJP rebel-leader Uma Bharti will be given an opportunity to submit her arguments before the disciplinary committee of the party formally expels her from the party for six years.

Disciplinary committee chairman and senior BJP leader Ram Naik, who spoke at length on Bharati's act of defiance, admitted that overall discipline in his party had plunged.

In the case of Bharti, the usual practice of issuing a showcause notice to her was unnecessary since her rude behaviour had been seen by the whole nation on news TV channels, Naik told a press conference here on Wednesday.

Lamenting the incident of Bharti storming out of the BJP meeting held in Delhi, Naik said it was not the first time the party had taken disciplinary action against senior leaders of the party. Bal Raj Madhok, then Jan Sangh president, had been expelled from the party four decades ago when he started criticising the party. The Jan Sangh did not suffer due



to his expulsion, he added.

"The silver lining is that every BJP worker accepts that discipline is essential for the well being of the party," he added. Naik, who heads the five-member disciplinary committee, did not indicate when it would be meeting to consider the case of Bharti and others.

Hussain-Naqvi fight rattles BJP

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 7 NOVEMBER

THE fighting within BJP just refuses to come to an end. Former Union minister Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, who owes his rise in the saffron outfit to former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Uma Bharti, hit out at the other prominent Muslim face in the party, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, for his anti-Uma remarks.

In a season marked by a virtual free-for-all among BJP's second generation leaders, this delivered a serious blow to BJP president L.K. Advani's attempts to inject some semblance of order and discipline into a badly-fragmented party.

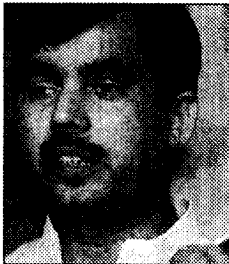
Mr Hussain questioned the party vice-president's locus-standi in criticising Ms Bharti. With the intra-party skirmishes showing no signs of ebbing, Mr Advani will have his hands full when he chairs the first meeting of his full team of office-bearers on Wednesday.

The fire that is raging within the party threatens to consume the entire Madhya Pradesh unit, where former Union minister Sumitra Mahajan and two MLAs have raised a banner of

revolt against the decision to allocate the ticket for the mayoral elections in Indore to Ms Bharti's candidate.

One of the senior-most leaders of the BJP, Ms Mahajan, a six-term MP from Indore, met Mr Advani here on Sunday night to apprise him of her grievances. The party's central leadership now seems to be working on a compromise formula.

While Ms Mahajan and her group may be won over, the unpredictable Ms Bharti is a



HUSSAIN: BATTLEGROUND

difficult nut to crack. Having single-handedly managed to puncture the euphoria gripping the party following the Advani takeover, she has now fielded Mr Hussain to cut Mr Naqvi down

to size. "Mr Naqvi is not the spokesperson of the party. Whatever he has said is his personal view," the former Union minister said, indicating that the party did not endorse Mr Naqvi's views. For Mr Hussain, it's pay-back time. A loyalist of the mercurial, short-tempered BJP leader, he was allotted the party ticket from Kishanganj for the first time in 1998, but was defeated by RJD's Mohd Taslimuddin, who's now a minister in the Manmohan Singh government.

8 NOV 2004

The Economic Times

Parivar at war tests Advani

RADHIKARAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Nov. 5: The Sangh parivar came under siege from within today with pressure mounting on L.K. Advani to act against a rebellious Uma Bharti and a restive VHP boycotting an RSS enclave for the first time.

Citing Advani's presence and his reluctance to get the Ayodhya agenda back on board, top VHP leaders stayed away from the RSS national executive in Hardwar.

The VHP's Ashok Singhal, Praveen Togadia and Giriraj Kishore did not show up though they were in Hardwar performing a ceremony for Hindutva's resurgence.

Advani said he was un-

aware why the VHP's representatives stayed away. RSS spokesperson Ram Madhav said: "These are all family matters. They will be sorted out."

Before the family feud spilled out in the open in Hardwar, another gauntlet aimed at Advani was thrown down in Delhi.

A few hours after the BJP sought to buy peace with Uma by making her a general secretary yesterday, the san-yasin stunned the party by calling a senior colleague names during television interviews.

She spoke of a "satta ka dala" (power broker) in the BJP without naming him. But when reporters asked if she referred to fellow general

secretary Pramod Mahajan, she just smiled.

A section of the party saw in her swipe a "bigger game plan" that envisaged a larger role for the RSS in the weakened BJP and decided to strike back.

BJP vice-president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, a confidant of former party president M. Venkaiah Naidu, suggested that disciplinary action must be taken against Uma. "Any public criticism of a colleague by any leader is not in the spirit of discipline that Advani has emphasised," he said.

Sources said Naqvi, who ceased to be a spokesperson, could not have made the comment without a go-ahead from the top leadership. In public,

however, Advani underplayed the episode, saying: "I will ask her what she actually said."

BJP sources said they are "convinced" that Uma had been egged on by "powerful" backers in the RSS, VHP and the Swadeshi Jagran Manch. They expressed the fear that if the "overarching influence" of the three was not curbed by Advani, there would be a "revolt".

The sources said Uma accepted the general secretary's post only after her demands relating to Madhya Pradesh were met. One of the terms — making her nominee the Indore mayor — prompted the resignation of Sumitra Mahajan as MP. But she sent the letter to Advani, not the Speaker.

হিন্দুত্ব আর শরিক নিয়ে জঁাতাকলে আডবাণীরা

গৌতম হোড় • নয়াদিল্লি

২ নভেম্বর: ক্ষমতা থেকে বিদায় নিয়েও শরিক এবং আর এস এস-এর জঁাতাকলে পড়ল বিজেপি।

বিজেপি-কে হিন্দুত্বে ফেরাতে মরিয়া আর এস এস নেতৃত্বের একটা বড় অংশ চাইছেন, আডবাণীরা দল পুরনো মতাদর্শে না ফিরলে তাঁরাই দূরে সরে যাবেন। আর শরিকদের পাঁচটা ছমকি, বিজেপি হিন্দুত্বে ফিরলে তাঁরা সম্পর্ক ছিন্ন করবেন। ক্ষমতায় থাকার সময় বারবার যে টানাপোড়েনে পড়তে হয়েছে বিজেপি-কে, সরকারের বাইরে এসেও তারা সেই একই চাপের মুখে। এই অবস্থায় আজ বিজেপি-র দুই শীর্ষ নেতা অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী এবং লাণকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী সোমবার আর এস এস নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে দু-ঘন্টা ধরে আলোচনা করেছেন। এন ডি এ-র বৈঠক ডেকে শরিকদের আশঙ্কাও দূর করতে পারেন বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব।

দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই বিজেপি-কে কট্টর হিন্দুত্বে ফেরাতে চাইছে আর এস এস। সংগঠনের নেতাদের মতে, হিন্দুত্ব ছেড়ে দেওয়ার জন্যই ভোটে বিজেপি-র পরাজয়। বাজপেয়ীর একটা যুক্তি ছিল, হিন্দুত্বের কর্মসূচি নিলে সরকার পড়ে যাবে। যে হেতু জোটের অভিন্ন কর্মসূচির ভিত্তিতে সরকার গঠন হয়েছে, তাই তার থেকে সরে আসা

সম্ভব নয়। কিন্তু এখন বিজেপি আর ক্ষমতায় নেই বলে আর এস এস নেতৃত্ব চেপে ধরেছেন। বিজেপি-কে হিন্দুত্বে ফেরানোর জন্য তাঁরা মরিয়া।

কিন্তু বিজেপি-র বিপদ হল, হিন্দুত্বে ফিরলে শরিকদের হারাতে হবে। যদি হিন্দুত্ব ক্ষমতায় ফেরা নিশ্চিত করত তা হলেও সেই ঝুঁকি নিতে পারত দল, কিন্তু রামমন্দির আন্দোলন যখন তুঙ্গে, সে সময়ও কিন্তু গরিষ্ঠতার ধারেকাছে পৌঁছতে পারেনি বিজেপি। তাই এখন আবার কট্টর হিন্দুত্বে ফিরে একা হওয়ার ঝুঁকি নিতে তাঁরা নারাজ। তাই সঙ্ঘের নেতাদের দাবি হল, যদি বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণীরা কথা না শোনে তা হলে আর এস এসই বিজেপি-র কাছ থেকে দূরে সরে যাক।

13 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

'Stand firm on Hindutva'

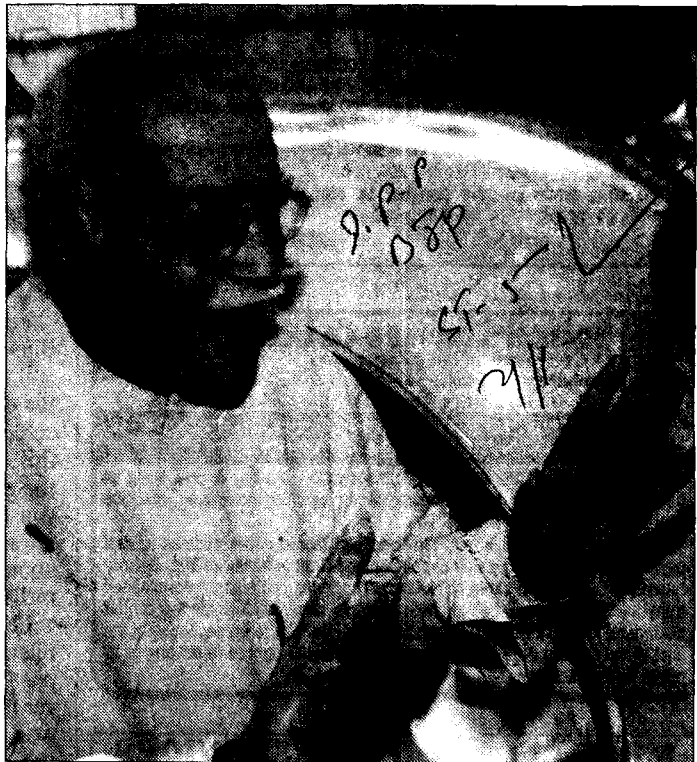
Sudesh K Verma
in New Delhi

Nov. 1. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani drove down to the RSS headquarters today to meet senior RSS leaders and discuss ways to recreate the past magic. The RSS told them point blank that the BJP must stand firm on Hindutva issues and try to create a new leader from among those who were committed to ideology and untouched by allurements of power.

While the meeting intended to smooth ruffled feathers between the BJP and other outfits of the Sangh Parivar, it also wished to send a clear signal to everyone outside the BJP that the party was not apologetic about its RSS roots.

That the JD-U was the only one of the allies which had problems with this was also discussed but they felt the party would not leave the NDA. Other allies such as the Shiv Sena, Shiromani Akali Dal and Biju Janata Dal had no problems with the BJP or its ideology, they felt. Therefore, the party could take the hard-line course, the RSS reportedly advised the two BJP leaders.

Today's meeting was a signal for a truce since it was after a long time that the top BJP leaders went to the RSS headquarters. Mr Mohan Bhagwat, Mr HV Seshadri, Mr Madan Das and Mr Ram Madhav represented the RSS.



Mr LK Advani enters the RSS office in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Ditch BJP, says CPM

NEW DELHI, Nov. 1. — The CPI-M today reached out to NDA partners, including Telugu Desam, Trinamul Congress and JD-U, asking them to ditch the "communal BJP" and return to secular ways. Speaking to reporters today, CPI-M general secretary Mr HS Surjeet, said: "These parties must realise that an alliance with BJP means an alliance with the Sangh Parivar and their communal agenda. They know the BJP is an electoral liability for them." Mr Prakash Karat said: "If they (BJP allies) don't (part ways), it will destroy their credibility". — SNS

A strong indication that the RSS may chide the BJP but not abandon it was clear when the organisation extended an invitation to Mr Advani to attend

its national executive in Hardwar from Friday. Both Mr Advani and BJP general secretary (organisation) Mr Sanjay Joshi will attend the meeting.

2 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

JD(U) wants BJP to clear stand on Ayodhya issue

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 31 OCTOBER

WITH elections to the Bihar and Jharkhand state Assemblies less than three months away, the Janata Dal (United) or JD(U) on Sunday sought to reclaim some 'secular' ground by calling for a meeting of the NDA to seek clarifications from the BJP for reviving its Ayodhya plank.

A resolution passed towards the end of its national executive meeting in Ranchi on Sunday made it clear that the JD(U) remained committed to the secular ideals, and that its alliance with the BJP was predicated on the condition that the latter would not rake up the three contentious issues — its demand for the abrogation of Article 370, implementation of a uniform civil code, besides the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya — that formed the core of its ideological plank.

The party's demand for an NDA coordination committee meeting to seek explanation from the BJP for raking up the Ayodhya issue at this juncture, political observers feel, was more in the nature of posturing than a real threat to re-think its ties with the saffron outfit. It was meant as much as a clear signal to the Muslims, who form some 13% of the total electorate in the poll-bound state of Bihar, that it remained wedded to the secular ideals as a means to assuage the hardliners within the JD(U) who've been clamouring for severing all ties with the BJP.

While it'd be too simplistic to assume that the members of the minority community, who remain steadfast in their loyalty towards Lalu Prasad Yadav's RJD, are going to be swayed by the latest overtures from the JD(U), George Fernandes and his camp-followers hope to soften them up by reiterating their "secular" credentials. "The recent statement of the BJP leadership on Ayodhya has created uncalled for controversies and feeling in the minds of the people and, particularly, in the minds of the political activists that the BJP is charting its own course with Hindutva as its driving force," the JD(U) resolution said. "In the circumstances, we'll seek an immediate meeting of the NDA for this purpose to clarify all the related issues," the statement added.

Observing that the NDA agenda was one for a change in governance and to pursue economic and social policies, the resolution added that the alliance was launched by putting aside contentious issues such as the Ayodhya dispute to preserve secular values.

01 NOV 2004

The Economic Times

Uma spurns post, jolts Advani

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, October 30

BJP CHIEF L.K. Advani suffered a setback of sorts today as he announced a new team of office-bearers and sought to present a friction-free organisation under his dispensation. Uma Bharti declined to accept the post of general secretary, seeking first a clear-cut role for herself in Madhya Pradesh.

Bharti's refusal came just before the list of office-bearers was to be released on Saturday, forcing a last-minute change. Advani decided to keep the post of one general secretary vacant.

Bharti has been upset by the high command's decision not to reinstate her as the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, a post she had to quit after the Karnataka government revived a riot case against her. She was subsequently acquitted in the case but her successor, Babulal



Advani (top) and Uma Bharti

Gaur, stayed in the post.

Bharti told Advani and interlocutors, including Arun Jaitley, that she needed to return to Madhya Pradesh, her home state. She could not be kept out of the state where she had worked so hard to fashion a

landslide victory for the BJP 10 months ago, she argued.

Bharti had recently had a bitter fight with Venkaiah Naidu, who resigned as the party president before Advani took charge. She also wants a say in the running of affairs in the Madhya Pradesh government through an organisational arrangement.

Her supporters, however, said Bharti declined the party post because her request that Pramod Mahajan be dropped as BJP general secretary was not accepted by Advani. Bharti will return to the Himalayas soon, they said, to resume her sabbatical, which was cut short after Advani became BJP president and summoned her to New Delhi.

Advani has retained all the previous general secretaries — Jaitley, Rajnath Singh, Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Sanjay Joshi and Mahajan. The only new face is former Union minister Ananth Kumar, who quit as the Karnataka BJP chief.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 OCT 2004

Sanyasin sore with Mahajan's inclusion in BJP brass

Uma opts out of Advani team

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 30. — Infighting within the second generation of BJP leadership came to the fore on Saturday when party president Mr LK Advani's attempt at a revamp suffered a jolt as Miss Uma Bharati opted out of the team protesting against the inclusion of Mr Pramod Mahajan in the list of general secretaries.

Sources said Miss Bharati told Mr Advani this morning that she would not be part of the general secretaries' team since her principal "baiter", Mr Mahajan, was inducted as a general secretary.

A party leader said: "What message does the party intend to send to the rank and file by including a person who had worked against her *Tiranga Yatra*." Party general secretary Mr Arun Jaitley, however, denied that Miss Bharati opposed

Mr Mahajan's continuation as a general secretary. "It was Mr Advani's prerogative to pick a team of his choice and he had done so after due consultations," he said. Miss Bharati could not be contacted for comment.

The party grapevine said Mr Advani had plans to make Mr Mahajan the vice-president. However, intervention by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, saved the day for Mr Mahajan.

Mr Advani's team does not reflect any serious thinking on a party revamp. Mr Ananth Kumar, a Brahmin, has been brought to Delhi as a general secretary. Five of the six general secretaries belong to the upper castes of which four — Mr Jaitley, Mr Mahajan, Mr Sanjay Joshi and Mr Ananth Kumar — are Brahmins. Mr Rajnath Singh is a Thakur. Mr Shivraj Singh Chauhan is the only

one from backward caste. The post of the seventh general secretary is left vacant.

All the seven vice-presidents under Mr Venkaiah Naidu have been left untouched. Mr Kishan Singh Sangwan, who was secretary earlier, has been made the eighth vice-president. Mr Bandaru Dattatreya, Mr Om Mathur and Mr Hari Babu have been made new secretaries. Mr Sudheendra Kulkarni, who has been functioning as secretary to the party president, has been formally brought into the party organisation as a secretary. Mr Ved Prakash Goyal made a comeback as treasurer.

Notable first timers in the national executive are Mrs Najma Heptullah, Mr Varun Gandhi and Mr Vijai Kapoor. Mr Arif Mohammad Khan has been made a special invitee.

Another report on page 11

THE STATESMAN

31 OCT 2004

Party Says Veto-Wielding Left Will Give Salaried People Taxing Times

BJP Courts Great Indian Middle Class

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 27 OCTOBER

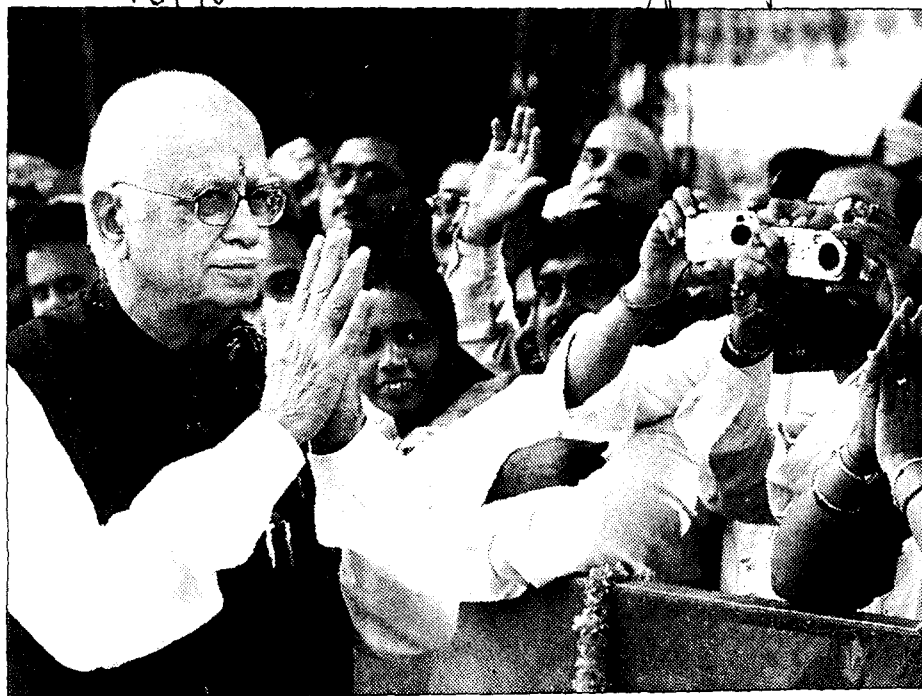
IN an attempt to regain its hold over the middle class, the biggest backers of its past electoral projects, the BJP on Wednesday said the "policy chaos and veto-holding Communists" will hurt the interests of the salaried and the middle class.

Launching a major offensive on the government, the political resolution adopted at the BJP's national council said the UPA government has disrupted growth momentum in the economy. "Interest rates, which had dipped to record lows during the NDA rule, have risen. If not corrected, these will push many sectors like housing, auto, construction and manufacturing into recession."

Attempting to exploit the growing anxieties of the middle class, it said the low deposit rates will hurt the interests of vast sections. "The abrupt withdrawal of tax-free saving schemes and reduction in tax benefits have further eroded their incomes. As a result, it has become a losing proposition for the middle classes to put their hard-earned savings in bank deposits."

The BJP, which saw the policy drift as a price that the Congress was paying for the support of the Left, said the ruling party has allowed the Left to backseat driving. "They are arrogantly using their veto card on practically every important economic policy or decision of the government. This has not only undermined the prestige of the government but also vitiated the investment climate."

In his address to the national executive, former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee also dwelt on the theme and said the stability



GREET EXPECTATIONS: BJP president L.K. Advani with party workers in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

in politics alone can ensure stability in policy. "When we were running a coalition government, there was more cohesion. But what is on display is quite dis-

treasing," Mr Vajpayee said, adding that cacophony over policies will harm the country in the short, medium and long run.

On the security front, too, the

BJP hit out at the UPA government for lowering its guard. It said the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has worsened in the past few months.

"The BJP is concerned that the momentum for peace and normalcy in J&K, which had picked up during the NDA, has run aground. The last five months have witnessed four assassination attempts on the chief minister ... Only three days ago, National Conference president Omar Abdullah and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah survived terrorist attack. 51 political activists have been assassinated by terrorists so far this year," the resolution pointed out. BJP asked the government not to overlook the terror campaign by the Maoists in Nepal.

New team on Oct 30

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 27 OCTOBER

BJP president L.K. Advani will announce his new team on October 30. The party president has convened another meeting on Thursday at Atal Behari Vajpayee's residence on Thursday, to discuss the composition of the team. The meeting will be attended by M. Venkaiah Naidu and Jaswant Singh.

An emissary of Mr Advani, who called on the RSS on Wednesday to know their preferences, was told about the Sangh's reservation over the inclusion of Pramod Mahajan as a general secretary. Though Mr Advani is keen on having Mr Mahajan in his team, he cannot be unmindful of the Sangh's views on the matter.

Boss wants party to give temple tussle wider berth

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 27 OCTOBER

EVEN as BJP president L.K. Advani on Wednesday once again put on record the contribution of the Ayodhya issue in catapulting the BJP from the fringe to the centre of the political stage, he conceded that the "environment that made Ayodhya the most potent mass movement has changed".

Mr Advani, whose political Hindutva propelled the BJP into a position of political dominance, also used the opportunity to drive home the point about the need to blend the BJP's ideological distinctiveness with pragmatic politics.

But at the same time he admitted that the BJP had to pay a price for its failings to match the expectations of the faithful. "In the course of the BJP's voyage, we aroused many expectations, some extremely emotive. We were unable to fulfil some of these. The construction of the Ram temple was one such issue," he said.

Mr Advani called upon the cadre to see the temple movement in a larger context as it extends beyond the Ram temple. "It has ensured that Hindus can no longer be either taken for granted or their sentiments blatantly disregarded....The nation eagerly looks forward to the day the makeshift temple is replaced by a structure benefiting the greatness of Lord Ram. At the same time, we must be candid enough to recognise that the Hindu anger that exploded on the streets in the early 90s has given way to a patient wait for the new temple whose construction is, I feel, inevitable," Mr Advani said.

The BJP president, who disagreed with the in-house criticism that the party has moved away from its core beliefs, said these fears are unfounded. According to him, political parties fashion their political priorities of the day by other considerations, all of which needed "a context" to be transformed into a larger issue. In the eighties, he said, the context for the birth of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was provided by the Congress in the form of its vote bank politics and pseudo-secular policies.

Advani takes BJP on moral road

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 27 OCTOBER

MIND your manners and morals, was BJP president L.K. Advani's message to the leadership and the cadre. Mr Advani, who laid out a roadmap for the party's revival — a mixture of ideological fidelity, organisational rigour and commitment to clean politics — at the BJP's National Council here on Wednesday, said political conduct of BJP leaders was crucial for regaining the party's numero uno status.

Addressing the meeting after his formal election as the BJP president, Mr Advani said the BJP's claim of being a party with a difference will be lacking in cred-

ibility if the party allowed the self-aggrandising Congress culture to eat into its vitality. Promising to join the efforts to cleanse politics, he added that the BJP would pull out all stops to change the image of the "ugly politician."

Mr Advani reminded party leaders that unlike other formations, the "heart and soul" of the BJP was its activist. "It is he who works tirelessly for the party through times good and bad. It is the party worker who connects to the ordinary voter." However, he said, the party leadership had not been responsive to the concerns of the party worker.

"Over the last few months, I received innumerable complaints from grassroots workers about the behaviour and style of

some party functionaries during the time the BJP was in power at the Centre. There have been charges of arrogance, aloofness, cronyism, overdependence on money power and even corruption," he said. He added that this sort of conduct would only bolster public cynicism and reinforce the prevailing view that the country was being dragged down by the self-seeking, greedy politician. The address of the party president also saw the BJP conceding a disconnect in the NDA's policies and the need for calibrated strategies. "Good governance in a country as large and diverse as India does not generate a uniform effect. In focusing on the big picture, we were guilty of overlooking some details."

Mr Advani, while reassessing the policy paradigm of the government led by the BJP, said the government would not afford to ignore the concerns of those who felt troubled by the changing times. "We weren't sufficiently attentive to the human costs of rapid change. In making India globally competitive, we fell short of providing an adequate cushion to communities that were overwhelmed by both technology and the market. In seeking to ride the crest of change we offended those who felt left out by it. They were unmoved by our assertion that India is shining. We have paid a heavy price for our failings," he added, while promising to undertake corrective measures.

'PERMANENT SOLUTION POSSIBLE' Temple back on BJP agenda

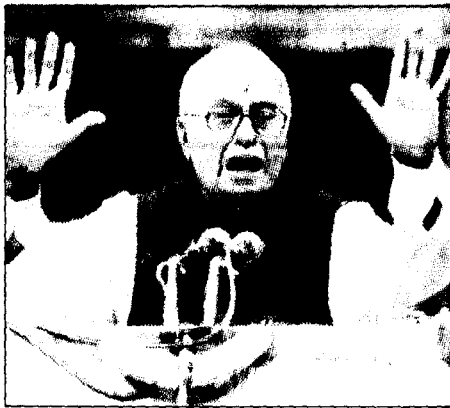
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. — In a clear signal to RSS hardliners and the rank and file of the Sangh Parivar that the BJP was not losing its ideological focus, party veteran Mr LK Advani today asserted the primacy of the Ram Mandir in the party's scheme of things and made a commitment to construct a grand temple at the site of the makeshift one in Ayodhya.

Thousands of members of the BJP's national council who had gathered to mark Mr Advani's formally assuming the office of party president for three years, raised slogans such as "Jai Shri Ram," "Ram Lalla, hum ayenge, mandir wahin banayenge," "Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega wohi Bharat pe raj karega" and "Garv se kaho hum Hindu hain."

The growth of the BJP was a clear indication of the national will that there should be a grand Ram Temple at the site of the makeshift one, Mr Advani said. Crores of people wanted a Ram Temple to be built there, he asserted. The construction would have begun if the Vajpayee government had returned to power, Mr Advani said. Those who were negotiating a solution were wary of coming out openly before the Lok Sabha polls, he said. "On the basis of talks then, I can say that a permanent solution through negotiation between the two communities is still possible. We have not lost hope." The only other option was through the courts, which has lingered on since 1949, he said.

Mr Advani described the Ram Janambhoomi movement as a defining landmark. "I've little hesitation in saying, it was our participation in this movement of Hindu resurgence that fired the people's imagination and catapulted the party to national prominence." He conceded it was politically awkward for the BJP that "much of the



Mr Advani at the BJP meet on Wednesday. — AFP

Hard times for nation: Atal

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today said the country was passing through difficult times and urged the BJP's rank and file to work unitedly for the nation's stability and progress. He attacked the UPA for bringing about instability through reports of differences on every other issue. The 24-party NDA coalition was based on trust and evoked confidence but the trust was missing in the UPA, he said at the BJP's national council meeting. — SNS

Details on page 4

impatience was articulated by organisations we regard as fraternal. The dissension fostered an impression of ideological disunity and confused our traditional supporters." Mr Advani clarified that the BJP should not be apologetic about that ideology which he tried to redefine as "nation first, cultural nationalism and integral humanism". Warning party leaders and MPs, he said they must not get themselves identified with the image of a "dirty politician". He said the UPA was "fragile and ideologically incoherent".

BJP expands list of posts: page 4

Don't hold talks with Naxals, says Advani

Hyderabad: Cautioning the Centre against the Andhra Pradesh government's talks with Naxals, BJP president L K Advani on Sunday said any attempt by individual states would be "dangerous" to national security.

"It is a matter of internal security of the country and any move by individual states will be dangerous," Advani said, reacting to the Andhra Pradesh government's talks with Naxal leaders.

"Talks should be held with those groups or revolutionary organisations who lay down their arms first," the BJP president said, addressing party workers here after inaugurating the new building of the state party unit.

Termining the talks with Naxal leaders as "a self-defeating and retrograde approach", Advani said the Naxalite problem could be solved only through coordination efforts by affected states.

"Naxalism is one of the internal problems the country is facing now and it is showing its ugly face in Andhra Pradesh," Advani said. The NDA government too held talks with militant groups in the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir when they had given up their arms, he said. Advani said the NDA government had decided to tackle the Naxal problem in a coordinated manner with the help of affected states.



"We had formed a coordination committee comprising police top brass of the affected states to evolve strategies for tackling the Naxal menace. But the UPA government reverted it and is giving a free hand to the states which will be dangerous," Advani said.

Expressing concern over the degeneration of politics in the country, Advani said, "During the days of freedom struggle, politics was a symbol of sacrifice but it's now lacking. The politicians are not being looked upon with respect due to various reasons."

He called upon party workers to take responsibility of creating a good image of politics with their sincere efforts to repose respect and confidence in the minds of people. PTI

THE TIMES OF INDIA

25 OCT 2004

Advani waves amity flag, Sangh red rag

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 22: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh matters to the BJP. If there were any doubts on this count, Lal Krishna Advani and Varun Gandhi set them at rest today.

The newly-anointed BJP chief and the party's GeNext "acquisition" from the Nehru-Gandhi family sat cheek by jowl at the RSS' Vijaydashami celebrations in Nagpur.

Varun's presence did not deter RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan from taking a potshot at Sonia Gandhi. He said: "I appeal to the Prime Minister to see that whenever foreign capital is invested in our country, the right to take the final decision always remains with Indians and not with any foreigner."

For the rest, Sudarshan trained his guns on "Marxputras" (offspring of Marx) and "Macaulayputras" (a reference to the English-speaking



Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh at Dussehra celebrations in Delhi on Friday. (PTI)

class). "By chance, they are in a position today to do back-seat driving in the government and, therefore, are engaged in conspiring to harm the Hindu forces. Because of their negative thinking, the Marxputras can only be destructive, never can they do anything constructive.

"Otherwise they should have transformed West Bengal, where they have enjoyed uninterrupted power for the last 27 years, (into) a Marxist

paradise. But what is the situation today?" Sudarshan asked.

In Calcutta, CPM's Bengal secretary and politburo member Anil Biswas reacted sharply. "Not a single person from Bengal will believe what Sudarshan has said against our government," he said.

By attending the annual Nagpur show, Varun passed the BJP's ultimate loyalty test and scotched speculation that he could cross over to the Congress. The only rite of passage

he did not observe was to raise his hand to his chest when the Sangh anthem was played. "We have to work with nationalist forces," Varun said, asked about his presence.

Advani did not wear the khaki shorts and black cap, sticking to his "dhoti-kurta". But he did everything else, including sounding the clap for the mahurat shot of a film on RSS founder K.B. Hedgewar. He spoke of how "blessed" he was to be at the "hallowed" spot on the RSS' founding day.

Sudarshan also used the opportunity to caution the BJP against "minority appeasement".

Advani's presence on the occasion — the first by a BJP leader in years — signalled that he was ready to make amends with the RSS and reassure the cadre that under him, the party would keep in mind the sentiments of its core Hindutva constituency. Such symbolic gestures could up to a point help the BJP resist pressure from Sangh hawks to revive their pet themes.

THE TELEGRAPH

23 OCT 2004

It'll be Bharatiyata now, not Hindutva: Advani

By Mohua Chatterjee
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: L K Advani, who formally replaced M Venkaiah Naidu as the BJP chief on Tuesday, said there was no going back to the Hindutva basics after his assuming charge. Speaking to TOI, he said the party would follow 'Bharatiyata' (Indianness) rather than Hindutva.



The remark takes on significance in view of the estimate in many quarters that Advani's return at the helm might cause the party to tilt towards Hindutva yet again.

Advani endorsed former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's view that Bharatiyata connoted Sangh Parivar's guiding philosophy of cultural nationalism better than Hindutva. Talking of Hindutva, which became synonymous with the BJP, the just-appointed BJP chief said: "The fact is that Hindutva was tagged to us by our adversaries in the '80s since they did not like our espousal of Shah Banu and Ram Mandir issues."

To substantiate his point, Advani recalled that Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the late RSS ideologue, had consistently preferred Bharatiyata to Hindutva in all his writings. "Several articles of his would bear out that

he (Upadhyaya) preferred Bharatiyata to Hindutva," said Advani.

The invoking of Upadhyaya's preference for Bharatiyata is sure to be seen in terms of BJP's anxiety to reassure its cadre that it was not engaging in any revisionism. The saffron cadre hold Upadhyaya, who crafted the party's doctrine of integral humanism, in high esteem.

Advani also touched upon the widely held impression that his taking back the organisational reins signified the failure of the party to groom its Generation Next. He said he stood by his statement, made in a recent TV interview, that he, Vajpayee and other party elders may not be around to lead the party when the next elections are called. "I don't think that this government is going to last five years. But if it does, I will have turned 82 and Atalji 84."

He shrugged off the impression that the younger crop has not lived up to its billing. "We have consciously groomed younger leaders like no other party. We have provided so many young chief ministers to the country only recently. So there is no dearth of young leadership in the party."

He also sought to rebut the view that Naidu had to go because he had been found wanting. "He was caught up with problems in his family. So the party considered to allow him to take a break because we felt that he would not be able to do justice to his role as party chief which needs more attention now."

New BJP Chief To Name Team On October 27, Likely To Bring Uma Bharti In Central Hierarchy

Advani to revamp organisational machinery

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 19 OCTOBER

LEADER of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha L.K. Advani, on Tuesday, took charge of BJP, which is groping for clues to overcome its biggest brand crisis ever. The party president began his new innings by acknowledging that the party would have to regain discipline for the battles ahead. He promised an overhaul of the organisational machinery.

Sources said Mr Advani would announce his new team on October 27, after a meeting of the party's national council. "I think it is time to call a spade a spade," Mr Advani said, while complimenting his predecessor Venkaiah Naidu's approach. Implicit in this was also the admission that the party could no longer be indulgent towards those involved in

factional feuds. The just-concluded Maharashtra elections saw second line leaders working at cross-purposes and state unit leaders relegating the central leadership to the status of observers. The promised overhaul may see Sanjay Joshi retaining his post as general secretary. Others tipped to enter the central hierarchy are Ananth Kumar and Uma Bharti.

There is a likelihood of Ms Sushma Swaraj returning to the organisational apparatus. But there are doubts about Mr Pramod Mahajan continuing as general secretary. Mr Shah Nawaz Hussain, who was a camp follower of Mr Advani's bete noire Brajesh Mishra during NDA's tenure at the Centre, has been lobbying for a promotion from his current position in the party hierarchy. The new party president may induct someone like Mr Arif Mo-

hammad Khan, who enjoys greater stature.

But Mr Advani's biggest task will be to build and consolidate alliances and in the poll-bound states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana. Although networking with other parties was, till some time ago, viewed as BJP's USP, the last Lok Sabha polls saw the party displaying the arrogance of a natural party of power. This not only led to DMK and its southern allies walking out of NDA, but also encouraged Assam and Haryana leaders to adopt an audacious go-it-alone policy.

The BJP leadership, which internalised the hype of Mission 2004, didn't realise the mistake committed by the party. In the end, Congress, which networked with the right forces, managed a back-breaking verdict for BJP.

But the defeat has not brought about any change in the outlook

of the state units of BJP. A striking example is that of Haryana, where the BJP state leadership is persisting with its "we-will-go-it-alone" vanity. With Congress putting its troops in place by merging Mr Bansi Lal's Haryana Vikas Party, a solo fight cannot but prove to be electoral suicide.

In other poll-bound states like Bihar and Jharkhand, there are still no signs of the party putting its winning foot forward. While the Bihar party is being controlled by political non-entity Gopal Narayan Singh, a feud is raging in the Jharkhand unit. In both cases, the central leaders have so far chosen to remain mute spectators.

Meanwhile, taking the reins of the party for the fifth time amidst a grand reception, Mr Advani said party workers should think about the future of the party and see how it could be improved.



POWER PLAY: Venkaiah Naidu hands over charge to L.K. Advani in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

আডবাণীর নেতৃত্বে আশ্বস্ত নবীনেরা

১৯ অক্টোবর: অনেক কাঠখড় পুড়িয়ে জ্যোতি বসুকে সরিয়ে বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের হাতে রাজ্যপাট তুলে দেওয়ার পরীক্ষা সি পি এমে সফল হলেও অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী-লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর জায়গায় দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতাদের হাতে দলের দায়িত্ব তুলে দেওয়ার কৌশল খটল না বিজেপি-তে। আবার সরাসরি আডবাণীর ছত্রছায়ায় আসতে পেরে তাঁরা যে কতটা আশ্বস্ত, আজ নতুন সভাপতির দায়িত্বগ্রহণের দিনেই, তা বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতারা। বিজেপি'র সদর দফতরে আজ চার দিকে বাজি-পটকা, ঢাক-ঢোলের মধ্যে অত্যন্ত উজ্জ্বল এবং হাসিমুখে ঘুরছিলেন সুসমা স্বরাজ, অরুণ জেটলি, রাজনাথ সিংহ, অনন্তকুমারেরা।

জড়ো হওয়া কয়েকশ বিজেপি কর্মীর মতো তাঁরাও তাঁদের প্রবল উচ্ছ্বাসটা গোপন করেননি। আডবাণী দায়িত্ব নিতেই রীতিমতো চাঙ্গা হয়েছেন দলের দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতারা। শুধু অত্যন্ত বিষন্ন ছিলেন বিদায়ী সভাপতি বেক্কাইয়া নায়ডু। আর নিজের ভবিষ্যতের কথা ভেবেই সম্ভবত কিছুটা উদ্বিগ্ন মুখে প্রমোদ মহাজন।

বাকি পুরো পরিবেশের মধ্যে ছিল আডবাণী-

নির্ভরতার ভরপুর ছবি। তবে আডবাণী আজ দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতাদের পাশে দাঁড়িয়ে বলেন, “ওঁদের উপর পুরো ভরসা আছে। আমি নিশ্চিত, অদূর ভবিষ্যতে ওঁদের হাতে ক্ষমতা তুলে দিতে পারব।”

তাঁরা যে চ্যালেঞ্জের মোকাবিলায় ব্যর্থ তা বিজেপি'র দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের প্রধান নেতারাও এখন স্বীকার করে নিচ্ছেন। দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের ব্যর্থতার ব্যাপারে আডবাণীর অত্যন্ত ঘনিষ্ঠ অরুণ জেটলির বিশ্লেষণ হল, “বর্তমান সময়টা বিজেপি-র পক্ষে সব থেকে চ্যালেঞ্জিং। তাই আমরা আমাদের সব থেকে বড় ভরসার উপরে দলের রাজ্যপাট সঁপে দিয়েছি।” তার মানেই তো বেক্কাইয়ার মতো দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতার পক্ষে এখন তা সামলানো সম্ভব নয়। প্রায় একই ধরনের কথা সুসমা স্বরাজের মুখে। “এমন পরিস্থিতি আসে যখন ভীষ্ম পিতামহকে নিজের হাতে দায়িত্ব তুলে নিতে হয়। সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই পুরো ক্যাডার চাঙ্গা হয়ে যায়।” কিন্তু ঘটনা হল যখন ‘ভীষ্ম পিতামহ’-কে দায়িত্ব নিতে হয়, তখন তো এটা স্পষ্ট যে এই লড়াই নবীনদের দিয়ে হওয়ার নয়। একই কথা স্বীকার করে নিচ্ছেন প্রমোদও। “এখন আডবাণীর হাতে দায়িত্ব দেওয়াই সব থেকে বিচক্ষণ সিদ্ধান্ত।”

এত দিন বেক্কাইয়া নামে সভাপতি থাকলেও আসল ক্ষমতা ছিল আডবাণীর হাতে। বেক্কাইয়া

সভাপতি অথচ, লোকসভার সময় নিজে প্রায় কোনও সিদ্ধান্তই নেননি। মহারাষ্ট্রের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিধানসভার নির্বাচনে প্রমোদ মহাজন তাঁকে ঢুকতেই দেননি। তাঁকে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছে না বলে উমা ভারতী দলের সভাপতিকে যা নয় তাই বলে পার পেয়ে গিয়েছেন। কাউকে আডবাণী কাউকে বাজপেয়ী প্রশ্রয় দিয়েছেন। বেক্কাইয়া ও তিনি সভাপতির ক্ষমতা প্রয়োগ করতে পারেননি।

বেক্কাইয়া ছিলেন মূলত আডবাণীর ঘনিষ্ঠ। তবে তিনি বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে ভাল সম্পর্ক রেখে চলেছিলেন। কিন্তু সঙ্ঘ পরিবার বিশেষ করে বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ ছিল তাঁর ঘোর বিরোধী। অরুণ জেটলির সঙ্গেও আডবাণীর সম্পর্ক অত্যন্ত ভাল। তিনি বেক্কাইয়ারও ডানহাত ছিলেন। সুসমা এবং উমা ভারতীর প্রতিও আস্থাশীল আডবাণী ও সঙ্ঘ পরিবার। কিন্তু বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে তাঁদের সম্পর্ক আদৌ ঘনিষ্ঠ নয়। অনন্তকুমারদের মতো নেতাদের ক্ষেত্রেও একই কথা খাটে। আবার বাজপেয়ীর আস্থা বেশি প্রমোদ মহাজনের উপরে। তবে সঙ্ঘ পরিবারের আস্থা কোনও দিনই প্রমোদের উপরে ছিল না। ফলে দ্বিতীয় প্রজন্মের নেতারা শুধু এক পক্ষের আস্থাভাজন হয়ে থেকেছেন, দলের মধ্যে সকলের কাছেই গ্রহণযোগ্য হতে পারেননি।

VENKAIHAH STEPS DOWN, CITES PERSONAL REASONS

Advani BJP president

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 18. — In an attempt to take the BJP out of a terminal depression, Opposition leader Mr LK Advani today became the party president as well. The outgoing president, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, resigned citing personal reasons. Mr Advani is slated to formally take charge of his new office at the national council meeting in the capital on 29 October.

The exigencies of the situation made Mr Advani accept both posts — party president and leader of the Opposition, something which will happen for the first time in the BJP.

Mr Advani is to form his team of office-bearers and also the national executive. The fact that the national council meeting has been scheduled in about 10 days' time indicates that the new team would be announced after a formal takeover. Mr Naidu is unlikely to be in the new team although he may join it in a different capacity later, sources said.

The absence of a credible face in the second generation forced Mr Advani to agree to the new assignment. The central office-bearers meeting which endorsed the change was also attended by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr Jaswant Singh.



TIME FOR CHANGE: Mr LK Advani in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Mr Naidu who met the press along with top party leaders after the meeting said in a choked voice that he wanted to be with his ailing wife and the party needed a senior person to wage the onslaught on the party.

The die was cast on the day the Shiv Sena-BJP combine lost the Maharashtra polls. Mr Vajpayee had spoken to Mr Advani asking him to become the party president. The RSS too wanted a change to recharge the cadre.

However, it remains to be seen whether Mr Advani is able to recreate

the old magic of the Ayodhya movement.

The task ahead is also difficult from the electoral viewpoint since the next round of polls in January-February in Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana may not bring good tidings for the saffron brigade.

Mr Advani would have preferred someone from the second generation to take over and reportedly toyed with the idea of Sushma Swaraj but it was rejected. Mr Naidu and Mr Arun Jaitley who had lunch with Mr Advani today proposed that only he was capable of sending the right message.

Mr Advani has broached the issue of the second generation taking over the party. Now he has three years to ensure that the transition is smooth.

Mr Advani was assisted by his five general secretaries in recreating a new image for the BJP. They were Kushabhau Thakre, Mr KN Govindacharya, Mr Pramod Mahajan, Ms Sushma Swaraj and Mr Venkaiah Naidu. Of these Thakre is no more, Mr Govindacharya is out and Mr Venkaiah Naidu is not available. Mr Arun Jaitley and Ms Uma Bharati could fill the void. Also, this is the right time to plan Mr Govindacharya's return, sources said.

The life and times of Venkaiah Naidu, page 4

নিরাপত্তা নিয়েও বামেরা নাক গলাচ্ছে, বক্রোক্তি আডবাণীর

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: বামপন্থীদের, বিশেষ করে সি পি এমকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ মাথায় তুলছেন বলে রবিবার নাগপুরে অভিযোগ করেছেন বিজেপি নেতা ও প্রাক্তন উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী।

চাঁছাছোলা ভাষায় তিনি বলেন, “মার্কসবাদীরা মূলত অর্থনৈতিক ব্যাপারেই আগ্রহী বলে এতদিন ধরা হত। এখন নিরাপত্তা ও বিদেশ নীতি নিয়েও তারা মাথা ঘামাচ্ছে।” এমনকী জ্যোতি বসুকেও তিনি ছেড়ে কথা বলেননি। উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলে জঙ্গি দমনে মার্কিন গোয়েন্দা সংস্থার প্রস্তাবে

জ্যোতিবাবুর বিরোধিতার প্রসঙ্গে এ দিন আডবাণী তাঁর কড়া সমালোচনা করেন।

সিপিএম নেতৃত্ব অবশ্য আডবাণীর এই সমালোচনাকে ধর্তব্যের মধ্যে আনছেন না। দলের পলিটব্যুরোর সদস্য, রাজ্য সিপিএমের সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস এ দিন বলেন, “আডবাণী সিপিএম তথা মার্কসবাদীদের বিরুদ্ধে যে বিবোধদগার করেছেন তাতে আমরা বিস্মিত নই। বিজেপি-র রাজনৈতিক-সাংগঠনিক ভিত্তিই হল আরএসএস।”

কেন্দ্রে এই ‘বিপজ্জনক’ শক্তি যাতে পুনরায় ক্ষমতায় ফিরে না আসে, সে জন্য বামেরাই রাজনৈতিক প্রচার চালিয়েছে বলে দাবি করে অনিলবাবু

বলেন, “তাঁরই ফলে, কেন্দ্রে যেমন বিজেপি হেরেছে, তেমনই কেন্দ্রের কংগ্রেস জেট সরকারকে বামপন্থীদের উপর নির্ভরশীল হতে হয়েছে।”

কেরলে ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গে কংগ্রেসের

আসলে ইউপিএ সরকার যাতে আগের সরকারের মতোই পরনির্ভরশীল দক্ষিণপন্থী অর্থনৈতিক নীতি অবলম্বন করে এবং আরও বেশি করে মার্কিনমুখী হয় সেই লক্ষ্যেই

আডবাণীর মতো নেতারা এই বিবোধদগার করেছেন।”

জ্যোতিবাবুর বিরুদ্ধেও আডবাণীর সমালোচনায় ক্ষুব্ধ হয়েছেন সিপিএম নেতৃত্ব। উত্তর পূর্বাঞ্চলে উগ্রপন্থীদের দমনের ব্যাপারে মার্কিন গোয়েন্দা সংস্থার নাক গলানোর চেষ্টার বিরুদ্ধে জ্যোতিবাবু সম্প্রতি সমালোচনা করেছেন।

সেই সমালোচনার

বিরুদ্ধে এ দিন আডবাণী বলেন, “জ্যোতিবাবু বোধহয় জানেন না যে দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই ভারত এবং আমেরিকার মধ্যে গোয়েন্দা সংস্থার সহায়তা বিনিময় ব্যবস্থা চালু রয়েছে। এটা আন্তর্জাতিক পর্যায়ে সন্ত্রাসবাদ দমনের প্রচেষ্টার অঙ্গ।” এই ব্যাপারে অনিলবাবু পাণ্ডা বলেন, “এটা বসুর কাছে আদৌ অজানা নয়। বিজেপি জেট সরকারের সময়েই এই সহযোগিতার চুক্তি হয়। তখনও আমরা এই চুক্তির বিরোধিতা করেছি। আডবাণীরা চান ভারত একটি দক্ষিণপন্থী-ফ্যাসিবাদী রাষ্ট্রে পরিণত হোক। আমরা মার্কসবাদীরা তথা বামপন্থীরা তা হতে দেব না।”



সঙ্গে তাদের যে বিরোধ রয়েছে, তার ফলে ওই দুই রাজ্যে নির্বাচনের সময়েই কেন্দ্রের কংগ্রেস জেট সরকারের উপর থেকে বামেরা সমর্থন তুলে অন্তর্বর্তী নির্বাচনের জন্য চাপ দেবে বলে আডবাণী বলেছেন। সংবাদসংস্থা জানিয়েছে, নাগপুরে এক সভায় এ দিন আডবাণী কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারকে সতর্ক করে বলেছেন, “কেরল ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গ বিধানসভার নির্বাচনের সময়েই বামপন্থীরা হয় ইউপিএ সরকারের উপর থেকে সমর্থন তুলে নেবে, অথবা এমন একটা পরিস্থিতির সৃষ্টি করবে যাতে সরকারের পতন হয় ও অন্তর্বর্তী নির্বাচন অবধারিত হয়ে ওঠে।”

এই প্রসঙ্গে অনিলবাবু বলেন,

Succession war in the BJP

By Venkitesh Ramakrishnan

Uma Bharti's Tiranga Yatra has exposed a power struggle in the second rung leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

10-10
2009

THE TIRANGA Yatra led by the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, should mark a new low in the history of political campaign yatras of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The party and its associates in the *Sangh Parivar* have used the yatras as an instrument of political and ideological propaganda for nearly two decades with varying degrees of success. The last big initiative of this genre before Ms. Bharti set off from Hubli to Jallianwala Bagh was the Bharat Uday (India Shining) Yatra undertaken by the former Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, during the campaign phase of the 14th general election. The central objective of the Bharat Uday Yatra was to boost the electoral chances of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance. But the campaign, as borne out by the results of the Lok Sabha election, failed to achieve this. Even in comparison to this dismal record of recent times, the Tiranga Yatra would rate as having set a new benchmark for failure.

The dimensions of this unprecedented political debacle are manifold. To start with, the Tiranga Yatra failed to achieve its basic objective of scoring political points over the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government at the Centre and the Congress, which leads the ruling alliance. It also did not succeed in generating the kind of mass appeal it sought to produce. Worse, the yatra, which was expected to enliven the BJP cadre, and lift them up from the state of dejection they were in after the shocking defeat in the Lok Sabha polls, did the exact opposite by becoming a tool to expose a discreditable power struggle in the second-rung leadership of the party.

So barefaced was the internal strife — involving a clutch of senior leaders including Ms. Bharti, the BJP national president, Venkaiah Naidu, Pramod Mahajan, and Sushma Swaraj — that it completely overshadowed all the grand political ideals and organisational plans that were sought to be advanced through the yatra. When the yatra was flagged off on September 11, the BJP had portrayed it as “a movement to champion the ideals of national pride and honour” led by “a leader who had fought valiantly, against great odds, to uphold the prestige of the national flag.”

It was also stated that the campaign would “expose the double standards adopted by the Congress on the national flag and nationalism

as well its [the Congress'] stratagems to divide the majority and minority communities.” This was to be done by highlighting the “divergent political positions of the Congress and the BJP” as well as by contrasting the individual images of the “nationalist (Bharatiyata) Ms. Bharti” and the “foreigner” Congress president, Sonia Gandhi.

But by the time the yatra completed its fortnight-long journey on September 25, the emphasis on these slogans was conspicuous by its absence. Almost all the actions related to the yatra underlined just one fact; that a no-holds-barred succession war was on in the second rung leadership of the BJP to occupy the third important position — after former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Mr. Advani — in the party. And all that these overt and covert operations in the succession war achieved was the aggravation of a sense of bitterness at various levels of the BJP and the *Sangh Parivar*.

The high drama with which the strife manifested also did no good for the morale of the party cadre. So negative was the impact of a number of these sensational developments — the volatile telephonic conversation between Ms. Bharti and Mr. Naidu, where she accused him of trying to sabotage her endeavour through efforts to prevent Mr. Vajpayee from attending the concluding rally of the yatra; Mr. Naidu's own refusal to participate in the Bhopal reception to the yatra following the explosive conversation; Ms. Bharti's flip-flop proclamations during the final stages of the yatra about quitting politics — that it gave rise to a kind of cynicism among the cadre and sections of the middle level leadership.

The level of cynicism could be gauged from an incident that happened on the penultimate day of the yatra. On this day, September 24, the yatra was briefly disrupted — through slogan shouting and stone throwing in some parts of Punjab by activists belonging to the Simranjit Singh Mann-led faction of the Shiromani Akali Dal. Under normal circumstances a happening like this would have evoked widespread — even nationwide — protests from the BJP and the *Sangh Parivar* activists

across the country. It would have at least been seen as an event that would help propagate the slogans of the yatra with an enhanced emotional fervour.

But there was virtually no response from the BJP rank and file in large parts of the country. A number of old time *Sangh Parivar* activists are of the view that this lack of response is essentially an expression of the party cadre's scepticism over the very political commitment of the incessantly warring leadership. By all indications, this scepticism has its roots in a perception that the second rung leadership of the BJP is more interested in personal aggrandisement and capturing positions of power, both within the party and outside, at any cost than with earnestly pursuing the larger goals of the party.

It is not as though the rank and file of the *Sangh Parivar* has never seen personality tussles within the BJP or other outfits of the Hindutva combine. Large sections of activists admit that one-upmanship games of leaders have time and again held sway over the Hindutva combine's political firmament. However, the debates on the second rung's succession war make a few fine distinctions between the personality tussles that have existed in the past and the present strife. One emphasis is on the brazen nature of the subterfuge adopted by the various second rung leaders. The absolute lack of ideological orientation is another striking feature of the present struggle.

The dimension of sabotage came to the fore not only in the explosive interaction between Ms. Bharti and Mr. Naidu or the inconsistent proclamations of Ms. Bharti on quitting politics. It manifested when Ms. Bharti's supporters protested that the Sushma Swaraj-led Andamans Satyagraha — with the professed objective of protesting against the “insult to the memory and honour” of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar — was aimed at “stealing the limelight” from the yatra and when the Maharashtra unit of the BJP, loaded with supporters of Pramod Mahajan, was accused of directing the yatra through “remote and politically insignificant regions of the State.”

The internal debates within the Hindutva combine point out that even though the personality tussle between Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani was a constant in the BJP from its early days in 1970s to the present date, neither of the leaders could ever be accused of adopting such tactics to undermine the political initiative of the other. True, Mr. Vajpayee did exploit his “moderate image” and “widespread popular appeal” to throw an emotional tantrum once in a while to score political points. Similarly, Mr. Advani used his extensive reach within the successive leaderships of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to advance an agenda close to his heart. But there is no record of either of them launching a fresh initiative while the other was immersed in a serious political campaign or of designing a route to lessen the impact of the “rival's” campaign.

Whether it was genuine or a carefully planned ploy of the *Sangh Parivar*, Mr. Advani and Mr. Vajpayee seemed to represent distinct ideological positions in their nearly four-decade-long tussle. While Mr. Vajpayee put forth a moderate, liberal voice, Mr. Advani's positions were closer to fundamentalist Hindutva positions. When the former Minister for Human Resource Development, Murli Manohar Joshi, sought to launch his own faction — albeit without much success — in the 1990s, he too had an ideological stance; that of an extremist variety of Hindutva.

But the personalities involved in the present succession war have no such distinct ideological positions. All of them are ready to adopt moderate or extremist, liberal or Hindutva stances as long as they can climb a few notches in popular appeal and organisational control. The Tiranga Yatra and the happenings during its journey bear testimony to this. Obviously, this approach is causing tremendous consternation in the Hindutva combine.

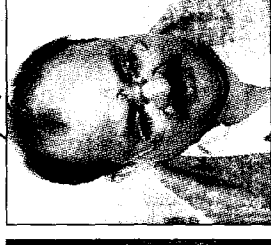
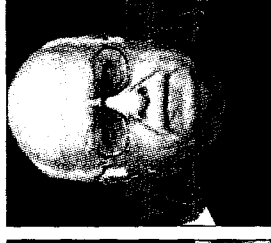
Already this has inflicted much damage on the combine's organisational structure, which was not long ago shown off as a model of political management. It also goes without saying that the combine can reclaim its political efficacy only if the current trends in the succession war are curbed. But the real question is how and when the larger *Sangh Parivar* can launch the damage control exercise. As of now, there are no concrete answers to this crucial question.

উমা-বেঙ্কাইয়ার ঝগড়া মোটাতে আসরে আডবানী

সৌতম হোড় • নয়াদিল্লি

২৩ সেপ্টেম্বর: বেঙ্কাইয়া নয়ডু এবং উমা ভারতীর ক্রমবর্ধমান বিরোধে মুসকিল আসনের ভূমিকায় আবার নেমে পড়লেন লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী। দলের দ্বিতীয় সারির দুই নেতা-নেত্রীর এই প্রকাশ্য লড়াই থামাতে আডবানীর দাওয়াই হল, উমা ও বেঙ্কাইয়া দু'পক্ষকেই বৃথিয়ে সুবিধে শাস্ত করে আলোচনার টেবিলে বসিয়ে দিয়ে বিরোধ মিটিয়ে দেওয়া। আডবানী চাইছেন, জলিয়ানওয়ালাবাগে উমার রথযাত্রার সমাপ্তি অনুষ্ঠানেই দলের ঐক্যের চেহারা সামনে আসুক। সে জন্য তিনি বেঙ্কাইয়াকেও জলিয়ানওয়ালাবাগে যেতে অনুরোধ করেছেন। সেই সঙ্গে তিনি এটাও স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন, ভবিষ্যতে বিজেপি-র নেতৃত্ব দখলের লড়াইয়ে যে ভাবে দ্বিতীয় সারির নেতা-নেত্রীদের প্রতিযোগিতা প্রবল বিরোধের চেহারা নিচ্ছে তাতে তিনি যথেষ্ট বিরক্ত ও হতাশ।

আজ সকালে উমার সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে সন্ধ্যাসিনী নেত্রীর যাবতীয় ক্ষোভ-বিক্ষোভ শোনে আডবানী। ফোনে তিনি কথা বলেন বেঙ্কাইয়া নয়ডুর সঙ্গে। দু-জনকেই আডবানী জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, যে ভাবে উমা ও বেঙ্কাইয়া প্রকাশ্যে ঝগড়া করছেন তা তিনি আদৌ পছন্দ করছেন না। ঘটনা হল, দুজনেই আডবানীর একনিষ্ঠ অনুগামী। এই পুরো ঘটনায় জলিয়ানওয়ালাবাগে উমার যাত্রার সমাপ্তিতে যাওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত ছাড়া অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী আর কোনও ভূমিকা নিচ্ছেন না। ফলে পুরোটাই ঝঙ্কিই এসে পড়েছে আডবানীর উপরে। উমার ক্ষোভ নিরসন করতে আডবানীর সিদ্ধান্ত, রথযাত্রা সফল



হওয়ায় আগামী রবিবার তিনি উমার সম্মানে নিজের বাসভবনে চা-চক্রে আয়োজন করবেন। দিল্লি বিজেপি-ও আগামী সোমবার উমাকে সন্মর্শনা দেবে। স্ত্রী অসুস্থ বলে পনেরো দিন দিল্লিতে আসতে পারবেন না বলে জানিয়ে দিয়ে চেম্বাই চলে গিয়েছিলেন বেঙ্কাইয়া। কিন্তু আডবানীর নির্দেশে বেঙ্কাইয়াও আগমিকাল চেম্বাই থেকে দিল্লি চলে আসছেন। বেঙ্কাইয়াকে জলিয়ানওয়ালাবাগেও যেতে বলছেন আডবানী। কারণ, দলীয় অনুষ্ঠানে বাজপেয়ী থাকবেন অথচ বিজেপি সভাপতি থাকবেন না সেটা ভাল দেখায় না। তা হলে বাজপেয়ীও অসম্মানিত বোধ করতে পারেন। সে ক্ষেত্রে পরিস্থিতি আরও জটিল হবে। বেঙ্কাইয়া বরং জলিয়ানওয়ালাবাগে গেলে বিরোধ মিটে যাবে। এর পরও দরকার হলে বেঙ্কাইয়া ও উমাকে নিয়ে আলোচনায় বসবেন বাজপেয়ী-আডবানীরা।

তবে দলের মধ্যে উমার সমর্শনে দুই শীর্ষ নেতা আডবানী-বাজপেয়ী এবং আর এস এস ছাড়া আর কেউ নেই। বিজেপি-তে

হওয়ার পরই উমার ঘনিষ্ঠ বৈঠক আফিসার ও অনুগামীকে সরিয়ে দিয়েছেন বাবুলাল। সরকার চালাবার ব্যাপারে উমার পরামর্শও তিনি বিশেষ নিচ্ছেন না। বেঙ্কাইয়ার বিরুদ্ধে উমার অভিযোগ, বিজেপি সভাপতি তাঁর যাত্রাকে অস্বর্গ্যত করছেন। সুফ্যা স্বরাজের আপামান সভ্যগ্রহে দিল্লি, কলকাতা, চেম্বাই মিলিয়ে মোট ৩৮ জন সাংবাদিককে উড়িয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়েছিল। কিন্তু উমার যাত্রায় একজনকেও নয়। উমার জেহাদের পর একেবারে শেষ পর্বে জলিয়ানওয়ালাবাগে প্রচারের ব্যবস্থা করছে বিজেপি। এই ক্ষোভ সামাল দিতেই আডবানী নিজেই উমার সম্মানে চা চক্রে ব্যবস্থা করারও সিদ্ধান্ত নেন।

এর মধ্যে পঞ্জাবে আরও একটি বিতর্ক উমার জন্য অপেক্ষা করে রয়েছে। অকালি দল(মান)-এর সভাপতি সিমরনজিৎ সিংহ মান ঘোষণা করে দিয়েছেন, তিনি উমার তিরঙ্গা যাত্রার বিরোধী। উমা পঞ্জাবে ঢুকলেই তাঁরা কালো পতাকা দেখাবেন।

অবশ্য দুই শীর্ষ নেতা ও সঙ্ঘ পরিবার সঙ্গে থাকলেই যথেষ্ট। তাই উমাও খুব একটা পরোয়া করছেন না। এই সন্ধ্যাসিনী নেত্রীর ক্ষোভের দীর্ঘ তালিকায় তাঁর যাত্রা নিয়ে ক্ষোভ তো রয়েইছে, তার সঙ্গে যুক্ত হয়েছে মধ্যপ্রদেশ নিষেধ ও একগুচ্ছ অভিযোগ। বিধানসভা উপ নির্বাচনে তাঁর ঘনিষ্ঠ গ্রহাদ পটলকে প্রার্থী করতে চেয়েছিলেন উমা। কিন্তু বেঙ্কাইয়ার বিরোধিতায় পারেননি। কিন্তু গ্রহাদের থেকেও বড় অভিযোগ বাবুলাল গৌড়ের বিরুদ্ধে, যাকে বেঙ্কাইয়ার সঙ্গে লড়াই করে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর গদিতে বাসিয়েছিলেন উমা। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী

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Uma snipes at Sonia intensifies in Bhopal



Miss Uma Bharati enters Ichhapur village during the BJP's Tiranga Yatra in Madhya Pradesh on Friday. — PTI

BHOPAL, Sept. 18. — "Don't sanction bank loans, allot land and jobs to Hindus or Muslims having more than two children," was Miss Uma Bharati's advice to her successor Mr Babulal Gaur while taking a break from Congress bashing in a rally in Bhopal after the BJP's *Tiranga Yatra* entered the Madhya Pradesh capital today.

Done with dispensing tips on population control to Mr Gaur, Miss Bharati was soon seen asserting how the Congress was playing a divisive role before going back to criticising her bete noire, Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

Addressing thousands of people at Dussehra Maidan, she said the "pride" of association with the Tricolour was far more important than the chief minis-

ter's post. She, however, iterated to fulfil her pre-election promises even though she was not at the helm. The BJP government, she said, was like an offspring, nurturing which she had spent one-and-a-half years.

The overwhelming response to *Tiranga Yatra*, she said, confirmed that people had seen through the "divisive" tendencies of the Congress. "Whether it is an attack on Savarkar or playing politics over recent census findings or framing charges against me, the Congress has exposed its designs of dividing people," said the fiery *sadhvi*. Mr George Fernandes, Mr Shah Nawaz Hussain, Mr Arun Jaitley, Mr Ananth Kumar and Mr Babulal Gaur echoed her. — SNS

'Gujarat' deletion from anthem^{HTI} sparks BJP fury^{17/9}

HTC & Agencies
New Delhi/Ahmedabad, Sept 16

AFTER THE Uma Bharti-Tri-colour and Savarkar issues, the BJP has stumbled upon another "anti-national conspiracy" by the Congress — the "deletion" of the word "Gujarat" from the national anthem printed in school textbooks in Kerala.

BJP president Venkaiah Naidu today sought an apology from the Congress, which heads the state's coalition government, and punishment for those guilty of the "deletion".

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi went one better, accusing Sonia Gandhi and the UPA government of hatching a "conspiracy" to defame Gujarat and threatening a mass agitation unless the Congress chief tendered a public apology. Modi also wrote to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today, urging him to take action.

In Delhi, Naidu told reporters: "For two consecutive years, the Kerala government has omitted mention of Gujarat from the national anthem printed in school textbooks." He circulated copies of a page of *Kerala Reader Mathematics*, a class IX textbook prepared by the State Council of Educational Research and Training.

Kerala education secretary P. Marapandian said it's only a printing error. "All books will be corrected by inserting 'Gujarat' in the right place between 'Sindh' and 'Maratha'," he assured reporters.

Savarkar, 'tiranga yatra' not poll issues: BJP

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 16. It is official. Neither the Savarkar controversy nor the "tiranga yatra" of the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, is anywhere near the "top" election issues the Bharatiya Janata Party will raise in the Maharashtra Assembly election campaign due to begin this month.

As for the potentially emotional issue of a separate Vidarbha to be carved out of Maharashtra, the BJP has calculated that even if the Congress-Nationalist Congress Party alliance ranged against it were to

go for this, it will not harm the BJP-Sena alliance as "it never has in the past" whenever the issue was raised.

"Savarkar will not be an issue in the Maharashtra elections. It is one of the national issues that will figure as other issues such as the 'tiranga yatra' during the campaign," the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, said today.

He confirmed what several party leaders had been pointing out — Savarkar was hardly known in the rural areas of the State. "His influence is limited to some sections of the urban middle class," the party general secretary, Pramod Mahajan,

told reporters.

Ms. Bharti's yatra, which will end its journey through Maharashtra tomorrow afternoon, is also not expected to make big waves. What the party wants is to "focus" on the "non-functioning State Government," the lack of regular supply of electricity, which is felt in every village since all villages are electrified, over 300 suicides by farmers burdened by debt, and malnutrition deaths in areas reeling under drought.

Mr. Mahajan said the Sena-BJP combine wants to take up issues that directly affect the people. Even the Telgi scandal

that had loomed large over the horizon for quite a while may be glossed over, except in passing references.

"Kante ki ladai hai" (it is a very close fight), but we have the edge," Mr. Mahajan said pointing out that anti-incumbency and the expected rebellion in the Congress-NCP ranks could work against the ruling combine. The BJP is expecting a large number of rebels to be given the ticket by Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party, which

registered a significant presence in some 40 to 45 Assembly segments during the Lok Sabha elections. The party feels that

overall, the loss will be that of the Congress-NCP alliance.

The effort this time has been to emphasise the good old method of campaigning from village-to-village and door-to-door rather than depend on "high-tech" methods such as SMS and telephone calls to reach the voters.

Admitting that he had learnt from the mistakes made during the Lok Sabha campaign, Mr. Mahajan has hit the roads in the State and has personally covered 70 of a total of 114 seats the BJP will contest.

While a separate Vidarbha will certainly not figure in the

Sena-BJP joint manifesto as the Sena is opposed to it, debt relief for all farmers and free electricity for rural pumps will be offered. "Load-shedding has almost become a Marathi word, it is understood throughout the State as people have to do without electricity for eight hours a day," Mr. Mahajan said.

Taking a leaf out of the Congress book, the BJP is planning to make unemployment one of its major issues. Corruption and the deteriorating law and order — witness the gang killings in Mumbai — are other issues that will be raked in the run-up to the campaign.

সরকারের কড়া মনোভাবে বিজেপি বিপাকে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৪ সেপ্টেম্বর—‘প্রকৃত’ জাতীয়তাবাদের কাছে বীতিমতো কোণঠাসা ‘সাংস্কৃতিক’ জাতীয়তাবাদ।

বাংলাদেশ ও পাকিস্তান সম্পর্কে কঠোর মনোভাব নিয়ে, ইসলামাবাদ ও ঢাকার দ্বিপক্ষ জঙ্ক-মদত্তের অভিযোগ প্রকাশ্যে ঘোষণা করে মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার প্রমাণ করে দিতে চায় যে বিদেশনীতির ক্ষেত্রে জাতীয় স্বার্থের সঙ্গে কংগ্রেস এক চুলও আপস করে না। বরং বিজেপি-ই বিদেশনীতিতে নরম মনোভাব নিয়ে জাতীয় স্বার্থের সঙ্গে আপস করে। মহারাষ্ট্রি ভোটের ঠিক আগে কংগ্রেসের এই অবস্থানে বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বও বেশ অস্বস্তিতে পড়েছেন। তাঁরা এই কঠোর বিদেশনীতির বিরোধিতা করে কংগ্রেসকে কাঠগড়ায় দাঁড় করাতে পারছেন না। আবার প্রকাশ্যে এই

নীতির সমর্থনে এগিয়ে আসতেও পারছেন না। তাই বিজেপি-র এই শীখের করাভের পরিস্থিতিতে মহারাষ্ট্র নির্বাচনের আগে কংগ্রেস আরও জোরদার প্রচারা নামাচ্ছে ‘জাতীয়তাবাদী আদর্শ’ নিয়ে। এর মোকাবিলায় জালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীদেব এখন বলতে হচ্ছে ‘সাংস্কৃতিক জাতীয়তাবাদ’ বিজেপি-রই বরং মূলমন্ত্র, কংগ্রেসের নয়।

নয়া সরকার ক্ষমতাসীন হওয়ার পর প্রথমে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটর সিংহ পাকিস্তান ও বাংলাদেশের মতো প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে প্রকাশ্যে কঠোর মনোভাব দেখান। এমনকী আমেরিকার সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক গড়ে তোলার ক্ষেত্রেও পূর্বতম সরকারের তুলনায় অনেক বেশি নৈর্ব্যক্তিক ভূমিকা গ্রহণের কথা বলেন। পরে দেখা যায়, শুধু

নটর নন, গোটা সরকারই এই একই রংকৌশল গ্রহণ করছে। বস্তুত, মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটিও বিদেশনীতির এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি অনুসরণ করার সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়।

বিজেপি-র নেতৃত্ব বুঝতে পারছেন, মহারাষ্ট্রি ভোটের আগে কংগ্রেস সচেতন ভাবেই বাংলাদেশ সম্পর্কে এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। মহারাষ্ট্রে শিবসেনা-বিজেপি-ও বাংলাদেশি অনুপ্রবেশ নিয়ে অনেক দিন ধরেই সোচ্চার। কিন্তু এখন দেখা যাচ্ছে, বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব গত ছবছরে যে সব হুমকি দিয়েছেন, তার চেয়ে অনেক বেশি কঠোর নীতি বাস্তবায়িত করছে কংগ্রেস। এই কারণে অস্বস্তিতে পড়ে বিজেপি আজই এ ব্যাপারে মুখ খোলেনি। বিজেপি-র দলের সাধারণ সম্পাদক মুখতার নাকভি বলেন, “বিষয়টি ভাল ভাবে খতিয়ে দেখে যা বলার বলব।”

বর্ষায়ান কংগ্রেস নেতা ও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেন, “কংগ্রেস কখনওই বিদেশনীতির ক্ষেত্রে জাতীয় স্বার্থের সঙ্গে আপস করেনি। ক্ষমতায় যখন আমরা ছিলাম না, তখনও পাকিস্তানে বা বাংলাদেশের বিষয় যে কথা আমরা বলেছি সরকারে এসে সেটিকেই বাস্তবে রূপ দিতে চাইছি। তবে রাত বাস্তবকে অস্বীকার না করে তা গোপন না করে সরাসরি আলোচনার মাধ্যমে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ককে অনেক বেশি মজবুত করা সম্ভব।” কংগ্রেসের বক্তব্য, তারা

প্রতিবেশীর সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক নষ্ট করতে চায় না। কিন্তু জাতীয় স্বার্থকে বিজেপি-র মতো জলাঞ্জলি দিতে চায় না। প্রণববাবুর আরও অভিযোগ, বিজেপি নিজেদের জাতীয়তাবাদী দল বলে দাবি করলেও জম্মলয় থেকে তাঁরা কোনওদিনই ভারতবর্ষের জাতীয়

মূলস্রোতের সঙ্গে যুক্ত ছিল না। তাঁর কথায়, “কোনও স্বাধিবাদী দল কখনই জাতীয়তাবাদী দল হতে পারে না। তাই, গত ছ'বছরে বিজেপি যেভাবে বিদেশনীতির ক্ষেত্রে জাতীয় স্বার্থকে জলাঞ্জলি দিয়েছে তা অন্য কোনও দল দেয়নি।” প্রণববাবু প্রয়াত প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইন্দিরা গান্ধীর দৃষ্টান্ত স্থাপন করে বলেছেন, “ভারতবর্ষের স্বাধীন সার্বভৌম বিদেশনীতির ভিত্তি তিনি প্রতিষ্ঠা করে গিয়েছেন। আজও সেটাই অনুসরণ করছি।”

বিজেপি-র জাতীয়তাবাদ নিয়ে কংগ্রেসের এই আক্রমণের জবাবে আডবানী বলেন, “বিজেপি সাংস্কৃতিক জাতীয়তাবাদকেই তাঁদের মূল আদর্শ বলে মনে করে। হিন্দু তথা ভারতীয়কে তার সঙ্গে যুক্ত করা হয়। তাই এই অভিযোগকে আমরা ভিত্তিহীন বলে মনে করি।”

PM undoing what Atal did: Uma

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BJAPUR, Sept. 11. — Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Ms Uma Bharati today charged Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh with being "directionless and indecisive" and blamed his government for undoing the "good deeds" of the Vajpayee government.

She had company in Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee who, reacting to Dr Singh's observation after the Planning Commission meeting yesterday that the NDA was responsible for increase in inflation, today said that Dr Singh seemed to be playing the role of an Opposition leader by blaming everything on the previous NDA regime.

Before Dr Singh became prime minister, none had "disrespect" towards him but now he "appears lost" and is not showing the "moral courage" to act on the "tainted ministers" issue, Ms Bharati told reporters before embarking on the second day of her *Tiranga Yatra* here. "Six years of development ushered in by the Vajpayee government has been undone in three months by his present counterpart," she charged. "The prime minister is not functioning independently and is ineffective." Ms Bharati also played the "so-called detoxication" of textbooks begun by Union human resource develop-

ment minister Mr Arjun Singh, saying it was influenced by the Leftists. Asked if her *Tiranga Yatra* would benefit the BJP in the Maharashtra polls, she said it might but "it is for you to analyse."

On the warning by Maharashtra chief minister Mr Sushil Kumar Shinde that his government would take action if there was a law and order problem owing to the *yatra*, Ms Bharati shot back, "why should there be a law and order problem because of the national flag?"

Accusing the Congress of suffering from the "mindset" of Mohammed Ali Jinnah on the tricolour issue, she said: "They should not follow Jinnah's party. They should follow Gandhi's party."

On an alleged threat by some Congress leaders in Madhya Pradesh to move the Election Commission to seek her disqualification from the Assembly for not disclosing the criminal case pending against her in Hubli, she said she had not been aware of the case.

"I was not served the non-bailable warrant. I don't see any problem." Ms Bharati said response to her *Tiranga Yatra* on the first day when she covered 296 km was "extraordinary and thrilling."

She would raise one new issue each day of her 16-day *yatra*, she said.



Miss Uma Bharati with a young sanyasin Pooja Kulkarni in Dharwad. — PTI

Centre not paying enough attention to security: Advani

J.P.P. HD-1 72/9
● 'Need for two-child norm'

By Neena Vyas and agencies

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 11. A two-day conference of the Bharatiya Janata Party Chief Ministers got under way here today with the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, L.K. Advani, telling them to "relate good governance to cultural nationalism which is our forte."

Mr. Advani told the Chief Ministers that they need not be apologetic about the "sanskritik rashtravad" (cultural nationalism) that was the party's ideology. The party's "tiranga [tricolour] yatra" led by the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, and its agitation on the Savarkar plaque issue were "nationalist" issues.

'Be proud'

"Our critics may be sarcastic about it but the fact is that our cultural nationalism is very old. We should not be apologetic for our stand on any issue of nationalism. We should be proud of it."

Mr. Advani said the Manmohan Singh Government was not paying adequate attention to national security and criticised its decision to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) while lifting the ban on the People's War.

The consolidation of Maoist elements in Nepal should be a cause for concern for at least six States in India up to Andhra Pradesh, but the Government was talking of removing the ban on the PW and revoking POTA.

He said the joint statement by Mr. Vajpayee and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, was the high point of the

India-Pakistan relationship and a major breakthrough.

The contents of the joint statement should be implemented in "letter and spirit," he said. The conference stressed the need for incentives and disincentives to make a two-child population policy effective, infrastructure development and, above all, the need for the BJP Chief Ministers to get the feedback from the party legislators on ongoing projects and to assess how effectively the benefits reached the people.

While the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, advised the Chief Ministers to focus on education, health, electricity, water, roads and "promote the two-child norm among all sections of society," Mr. Advani dwelt at length on terrorism, pointing out that "today was the anniversary of 9/11." He felt that in its 100 days the United Progressive Alliance Government had not given any indication of a well-thought-out policy on how to handle terrorism and other security issues. "The situation did not warrant the removing of all shackles," he said, questioning the wisdom of lifting the ban on the People's War.

Nine principles

Mr. Advani emphasised four points — *sangharsh* (struggle), *samraksha* (security), *sanghatan* (organisation), which were mentioned by the first president of the BJP, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, when it was founded in 1980, and added a fourth point, *sushasan* (good governance).

Mr. Naidu commended his own five S's — *sampark* (contact with the people), *samvaad* (dialogue or communication

with the people), *sahayog* (understanding people's grievances), *sahabhag* (making people partners in development, and *samanvay* (coordination between party and the government). If these points were kept in mind then the State Governments would create *santosh* or satisfaction among the people, Mr. Naidu said.

Today's was the first BJP Chief Ministers' conference which was attended by the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Goa, Babulal Gaur, Vasundhara Raje, Raman Singh, Arjun Munda, Narendra Modi and Manohar Parrikar. Mr. Naidu indicated that he would like such an event to take place every six months.

For the BJP the challenge is not only to win the next round of Assembly elections, especially in Maharashtra, but also to create conditions to enable the party to retain power after five years. The emphasis on good governance, the effort to make the Chief Ministers aware of the need to fulfil the poll promises, and the move to encourage them to exchange ideas and share "best practices" are a move in that direction. Centre-State relations were also discussed.

Party leaders claimed that under the Vajpayee Government, the States ruled by those in the Opposition at the Centre were not given a step-motherly treatment. At this conference, the central party leadership is keen on finding out whether its Chief Ministers are facing difficulties in getting their share of funds from the Centre.

See also Page 8

EC to watch Uma yatra in Maharashtra

SANTWANA
BHATTACHARYA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 10

THE Election Commission today said that it would keep a close watch on the Maharashtra leg of Uma Bharati's "Tiranga Yatra" and initiate swift, punitive action if the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister is found to be mixing politics with religion in the poll-bound state.

Mincing no words, Chief Election Commission T.S. Krishnamurthy today said that strict action would also be taken against any party that attempts to use the Ganesh festival in the state for political ends. His message was clear: "No mixing of religion and politics during elections".

"There are enough provi-

sions in the (Indian) Penal Code to proceed against (leaders and political parties) if religious celebrations are patently politicised. Religious sentiments should not be used for political purposes and it applies to all political parties," he said.

While he refused to speculate on whether Bharati's yatra — scheduled to enter Maharashtra this weekend — would make the political situation in the state volatile, Krishnamurthy was categorical that "adequate action would be taken, if there is a problem — either by the state government or else by the Election Commission".

In an attempt to distance himself from the ongoing war of words between the Congress-led coalition and the Opposition BJP, he said the Commission is not in a habit of

"anticipating problems".
"We take swift action, when required," he added.

Further, reiterating his view on small parties, Krishnamurthy said these should be allowed to contest only Assembly/state elections for the sake of good governance and clean elections. "It would be desirable and good that (small political parties) align with national parties in the general elections. It is time that we initiated a national debate. Not that it can be implemented immediately," he said.

Talking to poll observers to Anumachal Pradesh and Maharashtra and the four Lok Sabha and 40 Assembly bypolls, Krishnamurthy prescribed a "code of ethics" for them, somewhat similar to the "model code" they would be implementing during the polls.

■ Bharati sets 'historic' Tiranga Yatra in motion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HUBLI, SEPTEMBER 10

AMID slogan-raising party workers and spirited cries of *Vande Mataram*, BJP leader Uma Bharati started on her "Tiranga Yatra". Focussing on the triple planks of nationalism, probity and "true" secularism, she attacked Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, the UPA Government and Left leaders.

L.K. Advani, who handed over the national flag to Bharati at Rani Chennamma Circle here, described the yatra as an "historic event". He too lashed out at the UPA, alleging it has three power centres — "the Prime Minister, super Prime Minister and CPM".

Yatra focus on nationalism, probity and 'true' secularism

Apart from Advani, BJP's Karnataka unit president Ananth Kumar and former Union minister Shah Nawaz Hussain were present.

Hitting back at BJP detractors who accused it of showing a "sudden interest" in the national flag, Advani reminded them that it was Jan Sangh founder Shiyama Prasad Mookerjee who had led an agitation to hoist the Tricolour in the Kashmir Valley which at that time had a separate flag.

In a series of meetings at

Hubli, Dharwad, Kittur and Belgaum, Bharati slammed Sonia saying, "as long as people like me are alive, no foreigner can become prime minister".

She charged the Left parties with adopting "double standards". She noted that while, on the one hand, they were opposed to involvement of "foreign experts" by the Planning Commission, on the other, they were ready to support a "foreigner" as the PM.

Asserting that her yatra — a 3,000-km journey across seven states — was not for political gains, Bharati accused the Congress of "communalising" the issues of *Vande Mataram*, Ram temple and national flag. She asserted that the yatra was not "pre-planned".

BJP plans five-month long 'ideological war'

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9. For five months from September 25 to February 11 next year, the Bharatiya Janata Party will wage an "ideological war" at the grassroots guiding its cadre on taking forward the party's commitment to its ideology and principles.

The programme will run alongside the already declared programme of dharna and protest by MPs and MLAs at Port Blair on September 21, to be led

by Susmita Swaraj, and to focus on the Savarkar plaque issue and the 'tiranga (Tricolour) yatra' by the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister. Uma Bharti. The programme focusing on the "ideological orientation" of its cadre flows from the decisions taken at the "chintan baithak" (brainstorming session) in Goa. The party will give a "wider meaning to nationalism as an ideology," and reorient its cadre to recast Hindutva issues as "nationalist" issues. The emphasis on the Tricolour yatra

by Ms. Bharti seems to be part of that larger design.

Announcing the programme today, the vice-president and spokesperson of the BJP, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said the idea was to strengthen the party at the base with a "focus on orientation and renewed emphasis on work culture, individual conduct and organisation discipline." The attempt would be "to restore [the] primacy of ideology" at all levels.

The issues were an "alarming rise of jehadi terrorism in Jam-

mu and Kashmir"; the population explosion, especially the problem of "infiltration" (from Bangladesh); the threat of repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act held out by the Manmohan Singh Government; and "communal reservation" for Muslims. The so-called "result to the national flag" when Ms. Bharti was not allowed to raise it in Hubli 10 years ago and the Savarkar plaque issue are also to be moulded in the newly named "nationalist" ideology.

Census findings disturbing: BJP

Naidu Calls For Balanced Growth

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: BJP national president M Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday advocated a "proportionate population growth" a day after the 2001 census came out with religion-based statistics for the first time ever.

Speaking to reporters here, BJP national president M Venkaiah Naidu insisted: "There has to be balanced and more or less even growth of the population. Uniform measures of population control should be adopted by people belonging to different communities to ensure this."

Naidu stated: "All those who have concern for India's unity and integrity should seriously consider the situation. The trend reflected in the census is not healthy."

Expressing concern at the census report findings that the growth rate

of Hindus had declined, Naidu said it is "very disturbing." This, in addition to the "alarming demographic invasion" by Bangladeshi infiltrators, increased fears of long-term imbalance which should be prevented at all costs.

Naidu, however, contended that the country as a whole had not taken up population control. "All communities have to take it up as a challenge. It is the need of the hour for all people."



He appealed to all political parties to give up "vote-bank politics" and concentrate on controlling the population. "We must all work together across party lines to come to grips with the situation. Our party will discuss it thoroughly at its forums and come out with a detailed reaction to the census report," he added.

Imam smells conspiracy

New Delhi: The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board on Tuesday welcomed the first-ever religion-based census in the country but the imam of Fatehpuri Jama Masjid alleged it was a "conspiracy" to disrupt communal harmony. "The religion-based census is a good move. I welcome it," Kamal Farooqui, a member of the Muslim personal law board said.

Referring to the higher population growth among the Muslims, he said there were several reasons behind it which included greater response by members of the community to population enumeration and strict prohibition on abortion.

However, imam of Fatehpuri Jama Masjid, Delhi, Mufti Mukarram Ahmed said he "smells" a conspiracy behind the census and alleged it was targeted at Muslims and aimed to divide different communities living in peace and harmony. Agencies

Uma Bharti released

Rules out becoming Chief Minister again

By Our Special Correspondent

HUBLI, SEPT. 6. The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, today ruled out becoming Chief Minister again.

She told mediapersons here after her release from prison that when she proposed the name of Babulal Gaur as Chief Minister, he was to rule for the remaining term of the Assembly.

There was no change in her stand. She would like to remain a party worker and do whatever work the party entrusted to her. Ms. Bharti said she would

not like to become a "Super Chief Minister" like the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, who, she alleged, was acting as "Super Prime Minister."

On the increasing pressure put on her by her party workers in Madhya Pradesh to become Chief Minister again, Ms. Bharti said she would try to convince them.

About the changes made by Mr. Gaur, she said she would not bother herself with such issues. Mr. Gaur would function as a full-fledged Chief Minister without anyone breathing down his neck.

On the "tiranga (Tricolour) yatra," she said her party leaders would decide about that. She would visit Maharashtra to answer all charges being hurled against her.

A 'victory'

Ms. Bharti described the withdrawal of the case against her as a "victory for nationalism."

It was time Congressmen and Ms. Gandhi "learn a lesson" that politics in the name of the national tricolour would not cut ice with the people.

She said she had "nothing but pity" for the Karnataka Chief

Minister, Dharam Singh. She advised him to "act on his own wisdom rather than be led by Ms. Gandhi."

She alleged that the party had tried to divide society on communal lines on the issue of *vande mataram* and now it was doing the same in the matter of the national flag. She took exception to the advertisement released by the Congress about the case and her participation in the agitation for hoisting the national flag here 10 years ago.

Asked whether she would hoist the national flag at the Bharatiya Janata Party office in New Delhi Ms. Bharti said she

would arrange a function and invite Ms. Gandhi to do it. "We will not get her arrested."

Ms. Bharti came out of the guesthouse that had been turned into a prison shortly before 4 p.m. and waved to the waiting crowd after getting on top of a car. She went to the house of Datta Dorle, BJP Hubli-Dharwad district unit president, who had undertaken the responsibility of supplying food to her.

A victory procession was taken out by the BJP here soon after court verdict.

More reports on Page 11



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Uma free, party in a fix

779

OUR BUREAU

Hubli/New Delhi, Sept. 6: Uma Bharti stepped out of jail today with a new weapon in her fiery repertory of words but left her party wondering whether to press ahead with the *tiranga* yatra and how to engage her "purposefully".

Sources said the Tricolour rally she had set her heart on could be deferred on the plea that the BJP organisation is completely involved with next month's Maharashtra elections, but admitted there were no "easy" answers to what she is expected to do.

While former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has denied that Uma (in picture above) would take over the party, BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu has ruled out her return as Madhya Pradesh chief minister. Uma, too, has said she would not return to head the government in the state.

In Karnataka, soon after her release, Uma said a "new thinking on nationalism has arrived". She made it clear she would target Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on nationalism and communalism.

■ See Page 6

Jaitley, Swaraj court arrest

Press Trust of India

BANGALORE, Sept. 5. — BJP leaders Mr Arun Jaitley and Mrs Sushma Swaraj led around 1,500 party workers in courting arrest, along with 50 sadhus, on the fifth day of the party's high voltage agitation today, demanding withdrawal of cases against former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Ms Uma Bharati.

BJP Uttar Pradesh unit chief Mr Kesrinath Tripathi, his predecessor Mr Vinay Katiyar, former Union minister Mrs Maneka Gandhi, former Uttaranchal chief minister Mr Bhagatsingh Koshiar and former Himachal Pradesh chief minister Mr Premkumar Dhupal also courted arrest. Sadhus from UP led by Mr Katiyar also courted arrest as part of the BJP's stir involving the party's top leaders, including Mr LK Advani, to build pressure on the state government to withdraw cases against Ms Bharati.

Addressing BJP workers from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and some parts of Karnataka, Mrs Swaraj accused the Congress-led government in the state of giving the whole episode a communal colour and turning it into a Hindu-Muslim issue. "This is not at all a Hindu Muslim issue, it is about hoisting of the national flag," Mrs Swaraj added.

The BJP's ongoing struggle is about "foreign attitude versus Indian attitude", she said, in an apparent reference to Congress president Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

Earlier, she told reporters that the relationship between the UPA government in the first 100 days of rule and the Opposition had "come to the lowest ebb".



Mrs Sushma Swaraj and Mr Arun Jaitley in a police van after courting arrest in Bangalore on Sunday. — PTI

Swelling ranks: More than 1,000 BJP workers from all over Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry would converge at Bangalore tomorrow to participate in the satyagraha to press for the withdrawal of the case against former Ms Bharati, state party president, Mr CP Radhakrishnan said today, a report

adds from Coimbatore.

The workers, led by Mr P Radhakrishnan from Kanyakumari, Mr H Raja from Rameshwaram, Mr S Thirunavukkarasar from Chennai and himself from Coimbatore, would reach Hosur tonight, Mr Radhakrishnan said.

THE STATESMAN

6 SEP 2004

Much ado over Uma, Cong tells state

Karnataka unit fires party big guns in ad, high command fumes

PRADEEP KAUSHAL
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 3

A NEWSPAPER advertisement put out by the Karnataka Congress to highlight the Uma Bharati issue has got the party high command in Delhi fuming, sources said here yesterday.

The Congress high command, according to the sources, was upset over the use of photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, PM Manmohan Singh and former prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi to articulate a "purely Karnataka Congress view" on the matter.

The issue figured at a meeting of senior party functionaries at the Congress headquarters today, where most leaders took an exception to the advertisement.

A senior party leader told *The Indian Express*, "We have all been taken aback by this undue attention showered on Bharati by our Karnataka party leaders. She must be flattered. As if big newspaper advertisements were not bad enough, they pitted everybody, from the Father of the Nation to Rajyaji, to counter one Uma Bharati."

Saints take out yatra in protest

AYODHYA: Saints and religious leaders here on Friday took out a yatra to Karnataka in protest against the arrest of former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Uma Bharati.

The Rashtriya Dhwaj Samman Yatra of about five dozen saints of various temples and *akharas* led by former Uttar Pradesh BJP president Vinay Katiyar left for Lucknow from where they will proceed for Bangalore by train, VHP media in-charge Sharad Sharma said here. The sadhus will also take part in the BJP's agitation programme there demanding withdrawal of cases against Bharati. They will visit Hubli and hoist the tricolour at the very place where Bharati had hoisted it for which she was in jail now, Sharma said.

On reaching Lucknow, Katiyar said the saints have been forced to take out the march in protest against the humiliation to Bharati. He lashed out at the Congress and its president Sonia Gandhi for the action against Bharati. —PTI



BJP leader Murl Manohar Joshi waves to supporters after courtng arrest in Bangalore on Thursday

Another Congress leader said the party pantheon was invoked only on big occasions. Such a reckless invocation of dead illustrious leaders is unprecedented, he said, adding that "ideally, state Congress president B. Janardhan Pojary could have used only his own photograph if at all he felt called upon to insert advertisements in newspapers".

The BJP seized upon the opportunity to take on the Congress. BJP vice-president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi threatened the Congress with a defamation suit over the content of the advertisement titled "The Truth Behind the Allegations of Heinous Offences By Kum. Uma Bharati".

Naqvi told *The Indian Express* that the points made by the Congress were factually incorrect. "How can they sit and judge an issue which is pending before the court?" he said. He added that the Congress' stand on the issue was ambiguous. While on the one hand, the advertisement charged Bharati with "heinous offences", on the other, its state government had decided to withdraw the cases, Naqvi said.

Laloo alleges Cong-BJP pact over Uma issue

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 3

RAILWAY Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav yesterday alleged that BJP leader Uma Bharati had reached a secret agreement with some Congressmen to ensure she was not arrested in Karnataka.

Despite the fact that there was a non-bailable warrant against her, the Karnataka police chose not to arrest her, and instead welcomed her at Hubli station, said Laloo. "Karnataka Chief Minister Dharam Singh should explain it," he said.

"When I was in a similar situation, the Army was deployed to arrest me even though I had announced that I would surrender before a court. In Uma Bharati's case, there was a collusion between BJP and some Congressmen that she should be treated well," Laloo added.

He also took exception to Bharati being lodged at a guest-house, while he had been sent to Beur Jail and "treated like a common prisoner".

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Uma case withdrawal challenged

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Hubli, Sept. 3: Uma Bharti appears to be caught in a legal maze after a Hubli resident today challenged the state government's move to withdraw cases against the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister.

Chittaranjan Kallannavar, 33, told the court of the judicial magistrate first class (JMFC) that he "is of the view that it is only arbitrary use of power by the state government in abusing the processes of this honourable court".

"If such moves are allowed, a day is not too far when recourse is taken at even the fall of a hat," he added.

He urged the judicial magistrate, Mohammed Ismail, to reject the government's plea filed in July 2002 "in the interest of justice". The government had sought to withdraw the cases against Uma over a controversial flag-hoisting ceremony that left several dead in 1994.

Kallannavar's challenge came a couple of hours after the district sessions court here ordered the public prosecutor to submit his report and opinion in writing to the magistrate at 11 am tomorrow.

Rejecting the prosecutor's plea for a week's time to hand in the report, sessions judge John Michael D'Cunha said: "This court does not have the jurisdiction to interfere with the high court and the JMFC orders. You should comply with the directive."

On August 30, Karnataka High Court had directed the magistrate to reconsider the government's application for dropping all charges and withdrawing cases against the BJP

leader in line with a cabinet decision of January 2002.

Two days later, the magistrate refused a week's time to the public prosecutor to file a report to this effect. His order was challenged in the sessions court last evening.

Kallannavar's challenge further said the prosecution failed to secure the custody of the accused so far because of "sheer lethargy and negligent attitude".

"The above case was adjourned 48 times for the appearance of accused persons between September 1, 1994, and August 23, 2003. The state has failed in its duty towards the court."

Later, he said: "I am a farmer but I devote some time for matters that have an impact on the lives of people in Hubli. I have taken up this cause because it should not set a precedent."

Senior BJP leaders such as Rajnath Singh and Kalraj Mishra today joined the satyagraha launched by the party to seek withdrawal of the cases against Uma.

They were among 1,000 people who courted arrest here on the third day of the agitation.

Cong salvo

The Congress today said it would move the Election Commission against Uma's "failure" to mention the Hubli court case while filing nominations for the Assembly polls last year, reports PTI.

"We have now got copies of the nomination papers of Bharti. There is no mention of the cases related to the Hubli violence. We will initiate steps with the Election Commission," party spokesman Abhishek Singhvi said in Delhi.

Karnataka does U-turn on Uma

Statesman News Service

BANGALORE, Aug. 30. — The Karnataka government today told the High Court that it stood by the 2002 decision of the SM Krishna Cabinet to withdraw the case of rioting against Ms Uma Bharati.

The Karnataka advocate-general, Mr BT Parthasarthy, submitted that the government was not seeking to reopen the 10-year-old case in which the court had issued a non-bailable warrant against the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister.

Following the submission, the court directed the Judicial Magistrate First Court, Hubli, to consider the application of the additional public prosecutor seeking withdrawal of the case. The High Court also dismissed a public interest litigation filed by a farmer of Gadag district, seeking quashing of proceedings against the BJP leader.

On the government's change of stance, Mr Parthasarthy told reporters: "There is no political vendetta involved. The state stands by its earlier decision to withdraw the case against Ms Bharati. The impression that the present government differed with its predecessor is wrong."

The Karnataka government's volte face has surprised both the Congress and BJP workers, more so because till yesterday chief minister Mr Dharam Singh was

Notice to Hubli magistrate

BHOPAL, Aug. 30. — Madhya Pradesh Speaker Mr Ishwardas Rohani today issued breach of privilege notices to first class judicial magistrate (Hubli) Mr Ismail Mohd, Karnataka chief secretary Mr KK Mishra, Dharwad district collector Mr Gaurav Gupta and Dharwad SP Mr D Rupa for not informing the Assembly about former chief minister Ms Uma Bharati's recent arrest in Hubli. "The four have been asked to reply by 2 September to avoid ex-parte decision," Assembly principal secretary Mr AK Payasi said. — PTI

adamant on pursuing the case against Ms Bharati. Today, however, the chief minister said: "We have not reopened the old case. The government is not involved in the issue. If Ms Bharati had sought bail, which she refused to do, matters would have ended there."

He claimed that the government had sought to withdraw all the cases against Ms Bharati and the government had no plans to arrest the BJP leader. "If we wanted to arrest Ms Bharati, we would have done so in Belgaum itself."

The Karnataka government's U-turn comes just two days before the BJP is to launch a *satyagraha* to demand dropping of cases against Ms Bharati.

Speculation over Uma's future, page 5

THE STATESMAN

31 AUG 2004

নয়া কৌশল বিজেপি-র

দলের সব কর্মসূচিতেই এ বার অটল

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২৮ আগস্ট: প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে এনডিএ-র শীর্ষ নেতাদের বৈঠকে মনোমালিন্য হওয়ার ঠিক পরেই গত বুধবার দুপুরে অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীকে বলেছিলেন, “ঈশ্বরের অশেষ কৃপা, আমি ওই বৈঠকে ছিলাম না।” বাজপেয়ী তখন এই বিতর্কে জড়াতে না চাইলেও দেখা গেল বৃহস্পতিবার মাত্র ২৪ ঘণ্টা পরেই মহা সমারোহে সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করে তিনি খোদ মনমোহন সিংহকেই আক্রমণ করছেন অভব্য আচরণের অভিযোগে। যে মানুষটি প্রধানমন্ত্রী থাকার সময় ছ’বছরে একটিও সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করেননি, তিনি হঠাৎ এমন সক্রিয় ভূমিকায় অবতীর্ণ হলেন কেন?

বিজেপি সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, দলের সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডু বুধবার রাতেই বাজপেয়ীর কাছে গিয়ে বলেন, “প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুঙ্গি টিভিতে কী বলেছেন আপনি শুনেছেন? আপনাকে অন্ধ ধৃতরাষ্ট্র আখ্যা দিয়েছেন তিনি। আপনি নাকি ক্ষুব্ধ, কিন্তু মুখে কুলুপ এঁটে আছেন। কংগ্রেস নেতারা বলছেন, উমা ভারতী থেকে সংসদের কাজকর্ম সব ব্যাপারেই আপনি নাকি আমাদের কাজকর্ম সমর্থন করছেন না।” এই প্রচারের মোকাবিলা করার জন্যই বাজপেয়ীকে বাজেট অধিবেশনের শেষ দিনে সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করার প্রস্তাব দেন বেঙ্কাইয়া। বেঙ্কাইয়ার পাশাপাশি সভাপতির সচিব সুধীশ্র কুলকানিও বাজপেয়ীকে অনুরোধ-উপরোধ করেন।

এখানেই শেষ নয়, দলের আরও সিদ্ধান্ত, ১ সেপ্টেম্বর কর্নাটকে উমা ভারতীর বিষয়ে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী সত্যাগ্রহ শুরু করলেও ৮ সেপ্টেম্বর তা শেষ করবেন খোদ বাজপেয়ীই। উমা ভারতীকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী করতে চাননি প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। ব্যক্তিগত আলাপচারিতায় তিনি হিন্দুত্বের এই রাজনীতির বিরোধিতা করেন, আর তাই আডবাণী-বেঙ্কাইয়া এ বার মহারাষ্ট্র নির্বাচনের আগে তাকেও সামিল করাচ্ছেন এই প্রচারবিদ্যানে। একই ভাবে ২ সেপ্টেম্বর মুরলীমনোহর জোশীও যাচ্ছেন বাঙ্গালোর সত্যাগ্রহে সামিল হতে।

নরেন্দ্র মোদীর বদলে এ বার বিজেপি উমা ভারতীকে সামনে নিয়ে এসে যে রাজনীতি শুরু করছে, বাজপেয়ী তা সমর্থন করছেন না, এমনই ইঙ্গিত তিনি দিয়েছিলেন কিছু নেতার কাছে। আবার বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ ও আরএসএস নেতৃত্ব বিজেপি-র আরও কাছাকাছি আসছে। এ অবস্থায় বিজেপি-র এই রাজনৈতিক লাইন বাজপেয়ী মানছেন না, কিন্তু সংখ্যালঘু বলে চূপ করে আছেন, এমনটা বলছিলেন অনেক নেতা।

এই জল্পনা-কল্পনায় জল ঢালতেই বাজপেয়ীকে দলীয় কর্মসূচিতে সামিল করানোর কৌশল নেওয়া হয়েছে। এর আগে মোদীর প্রক্ষেপে তিনি সোচ্চার হয়ে মুম্বইয়ে দলের কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে পিছু হটেন। সংসদের অধিবেশনের সময় চূপচাপ এসে শেষ সারির আসনে বসেছিলেন। তখনও অনেক সাংসদের মনে হয়েছিল যে সংসদের অচলাবস্থাকেও সম্ভবত তিনি মেনে নিতে পারছেন না।

ক্ষমতা থেকে সরে যাওয়ার পরে নানা বিষয়ে দলে যে বিতর্ক চলছে, তাকে অবশ্য স্বাগত জানিয়েছেন আডবাণী। তাঁর বক্তব্য: ক্ষমতায় থাকার সময় মতাদর্শগত বিতর্কের যথেষ্ট অবকাশ থাকে না। সরকারের স্বায়িত্বের স্বার্থে অনেক প্রশ্ন নিয়ে খোলামেলা তর্ক করা সম্ভবও হয় না। এখন বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে দলের মধ্যে বিতর্ক করার এটাই তো উপযুক্ত সময়।

শিবু সোরেন থেকে উমা ভারতী, সংসদ অচল করা থেকে বিদেশি লগ্নি, নানা বিষয়ে দলের মধ্যে বিতর্ক রয়েছে। বিজেপি শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের একাংশ মনে করছেন, এত তাড়াহুড়া করা উচিত হচ্ছে না। সরকার এখনই ফেলা যাবে না। অন্য পক্ষের বক্তব্য: খুব শীঘ্রই মনমোহন সিংহ ইস্তফা দিতে বাধ্য হবেন। বিজেপি এমন এক পরিস্থিতি তৈরি করবে যে তিত্তিবিরক্ত হয়ে তিনি ইস্তফা দেবেন। আর তখনই কেন্দ্রে অস্থিরতা শুরু হবে পরবর্তী প্রধানমন্ত্রীর পদ নিয়ে। এই তত্ত্ব বিজেপি-র অন্য অংশ সম্পূর্ণ খারিজ করে দিচ্ছে। এই রণকৌশল নিয়ে বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণীর মতপার্থক্য প্রচারের সুযোগ যাতে শাসকগোষ্ঠী না পায় তার জন্যই বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডু বাজপেয়ীকেও সাংবাদিক বৈঠক থেকে সত্যাগ্রহ সবেতেই সামিল করাচ্ছেন। বিজেপি-নেতা অরুণ জেটলির মন্তব্য: প্রথম ব্যাটসম্যান প্রথম ওভার, তাই বলে ক্যাচ তুললেও আমি তা লুফব না। সরকার ফেলার প্রশ্ন নয়, কিন্তু ‘ক্যাচ’ তো লুফতেই হবে।

9 AUG 2011

Hubli court remands Uma Bharti

By M. Madan Mohan

HUBLI, AUG. 25. The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and BJP leader, Uma Bharti, surrendered today before the Judicial Magistrate First Class IInd Court. She was remanded to judicial custody for 14 days as she refused to move for bail.

Initially, Ms. Bharti was to stay in the Hubli sub-jail, but subsequently the plan was to take her to the Central Jail, Hindalaga, Belgaum, because of the high category of security enjoyed by her.

However, later she was lodged in the Dharwad agricultural university guest house.

Ms. Bharti's surrender brings the curtain down on a prolonged controversy over her continued non-appearance before the court in a case registered 10 years ago.

The case was in connection with the incidents which took place during an agitation for flag-hoisting at the Idgah Maidan here during the Independence Day celebrations of 1994.

The proceedings before Mohammed Ismael, Judicial Magistrate, was brief as Ms. Bharti, who arrived at 9 a.m. by train, went to a kalyana mantap and completed her puja, before entering the court complex at 12.15 p.m.

The entire area around the court had been put under curfew and no one was allowed inside. As she came out of the court, Ms. Bharti told the waiting newsmen that she was submitting to the judiciary with all humility. It was a case of "cheap politics." The Congress would have to pay a heavy price for whatever had been done.

Ananth Kumar, president of the Karnataka BJP, called for a statewide bandh tomorrow to protest against the Karnataka Government's efforts to "ferret out the case against Ms. Bharti."



WAVING THE FLAG: Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Uma Bharti on her arrival at the Hubli railway station before surrendering in court on Wednesday. — AP

Once Ms. Bharti appeared before the court and refused to seek bail, the proceedings practically came to an end with the rest of the time taken for the issue of the necessary court orders.

V.G. Patil, counsel for Ms. Bharti, told the court that an opportunity to solve the contentious issue had been lost. Dorairaju another counsel for the BJP, pleaded that one of the inspection bungalows be converted into a jail for housing Ms. Bharti. The court said that it had

no powers to issue such orders as it was an administrative matter. The magistrate accepted the plea on behalf of Ms. Bharti that some of her personnel be allowed to meet her as and when required.

'I will not seek bail'

By Our Special Correspondent

HUBLI, AUG. 25. The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, said here today that she would not seek bail and

would spend the time in jail till the case against her was withdrawn.

To seek a bail would mean an affront to the national flag, she said while speaking to pressmen after the long train journey from Bhopal from Monday night. To get arrested while being Chief Minister would have been an insult to the Constitution and, therefore, she resigned immediately on coming to know of the Karnataka police move to arrest her.

On the non-bailable arrest

warrant, Ms. Bharti said she had not known about it till recently. Had the Karnataka police told her during her recent visit to Bangalore, she would have gladly courted arrest.

However, she expressed unhappiness that the Karnataka Chief Minister, Dharam Singh, did not show the courtesy of talking to her on the arrest move.

Ms. Bharti said the revival of the case against her after the government had decided to withdraw it in 2002, was "political conspiracy."

"I don't want to blame Mr. Dharam Singh for the same. He is only acting at the dictates of a lady of foreign origin," Ms. Bharti claimed.

She wished that Mr. Singh would take action guided by his wisdom rather than being guided or goaded by "anybody."

Editorial on Hubli
histrionics: Page 10

TOUCH OF TAR

Most people are prone to believe that in India, politicians are above the law. This commonly-held notion is supported by certain recent developments. One of the most important precepts of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence, the bedrock of the Indian judicial system, is that a man is innocent till he is proven guilty. Yet it is assumed that a politician is guilty as soon as a charge is brought against him or her. Mr Shibu Soren of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha had to step down as coal minister in the Union cabinet because of a warrant which pertained to an incident that had taken place nearly three decades ago. The chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Ms Uma Bharti, resigned because of a warrant in Karnataka against something she had done ten years ago. Charges against both persons are yet to be proved and conviction, if there is one, is far away. Yet it is being presumed that they are guilty and therefore should not hold public office. The new buzzword is "tainted". Nobody is quite sure what makes a taint. The very ambiguity of the word is opening up a space in which jurisprudence can be mocked at and the judicial system ridiculed. The popular cynicism about politicians and their lack of integrity is only aiding and abetting the process.

It will surprise nobody that Ms Bharti is trying to capitalize on her arrest. Political dividends are not susceptible to taints. She and her party have proclaimed her action of raising the flag in the Idgah Maidan in Hubli as an act of liberation comparable to Jallianwala Bagh. Hence, the idea of a flag march from Hubli to Jallianwala Bagh. In this exhibition, what will be glossed over is the role that Ms Bharti's action played in provoking a riot that resulted in the loss of lives. It is that role which should be the focus of the trial. Instead, her arrest, without a proper trial, is providing an occasion for an elaborate piece of political theatre, and exactly the kind of theatre at which Ms Bharti herself and the Bharatiya Janata Party excel.

By making Ms Bharti resign from the chief ministership of Madhya Pradesh, the BJP is making a clear attempt to recover the moral high ground. It is from this ground that they will target Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, the most tainted minister of them all. The issue of tainted ministers threatens to stonewall issues of governance from being discussed in the Lok Sabha. The BJP's recovery of the moral ground is also something of a charade because it has made no efforts to cleanse itself and the National Democratic Alliance of tainted elements. The fact of the matter is that no political party believes that in public life even Caesar's wife should be above suspicion. Politics cannot be sanitized by stray resignations and by the public undermining of one of the basic tenets of jurisprudence. It is something politicians have to do by themselves.

ARREST UNLIKELY, SAYS KARNATAKA CM

Uma set to surrender



TIRANGE KI SHAAN: Ms Uma Bharati waves to her supporters at Bhopal station early on Tuesday before leaving for Hubli. — PTI

Tyagraj Sharma in Hubli

Aug. 24. — Ms Uma Bharati will court arrest tomorrow once the non-bailable warrant is served on her. She is reaching Hubli by train early tomorrow.

The Karnataka chief minister, Mr Dharam Singh, who cut short his Delhi visit in the wake of developments at Hubli, said the police were unlikely to arrest the former MP chief minister if she surrendered without much ado.

According to Mr Ananth Kumar, state BJP president, the party does not intend to contest the NBW. Instead, it will launch a statewide agitation which will continue till the Congress government drops the 1994 Idgah Maidan case against her. She is facing charges of rioting and attempt to murder.

The BJP will make Hubli the focal point of its agitation, Mr Kumar said. Hundreds of thousands of party workers have already assembled in the town. "The government will have to take the blame should anything go wrong. From the BJP side, efforts will be made to ensure a peaceful agitation," he said.

Mr Dharam Singh warned that the gov-

ernment was capable of tackling any eventuality.

The DGP, Mr SN Borkar, said over 4,000 policemen had been deployed at Hubli in addition to the Karnataka State Reserve Force and the Rapid Action Force. Prohibitory orders will be in force.

Mr Ananth Kumar claimed that Ms Bharati was getting a huge reception at every station with thousands of people waiting to garland her en route to Hubli.

The BJP plans to give her a warm reception when she crosses the Karnataka border tonight. She is expected to enter the state border from Maharashtra by 1.34 a.m. on Wednesday. Hubli station has been decorated by the party. "She has made the party proud," was the response of a worker when asked if he would be joining the agitation.

As her train to Hubli took her through parts of Maharashtra, Ms Bharati addressed the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance workers at Bhusawal, Manmad, Pune, Satara, Sangli and Miraj stations. The brief speeches had a common strand: whether it is a crime to unfurl the Tricolour in India. There was a big gathering at Pune station, where the train stops for 20 minutes. "Whatever took place at Idgah Maidan in 1994 was not communal but an assertion of national pride — *Tirange ki shaan*."

The date for Assembly polls in Maharashtra having been announced, top BJP leaders met in New Delhi today to chalk out the party's proposed movement to "safeguard the honour" of the National Flag and song '*Vande Mataram*' capitalising on Ms Bharati's resignation, adds PTI.

According to sources, the BJP is planning a series of public meetings in Maharashtra to be addressed by Ms Bharati. The party is planning to corner the ruling Congress-led coalition on issues ranging from Telgi scam to repeal of Pota, the attempts by parties, including NCP, to project slain terrorist Ishrat Jehan as a "victim of fake police encounter" and above all the removal of a plaque containing Veer Savarkar's quotes from the Cellular Jail memorial allegedly at the Centre's behest, the sources said.

**Photograph on page 4
Maharashtra goes to polls on
13 October, page 4**

Crown goes to rival, BJP readies yatra

Uma opts out, strife sets in

OUR BUREAU

Aug. 23: Uma Bharti today ended a short stint as Madhya Pradesh chief minister and headed to a Karnataka court, winching the curtains up on what looks like a season of bitter confrontation between the principal political players in the country.

Uma, whose chief minister's crown has gone to her arch-rival Babulal Gaur, is on her way to Hubli to surrender in court and face trial for rioting and attempt to murder in the decade-old Idgah maidan case.

She is scheduled to reach Hubli on Wednesday by train and unlikely to seek bail, BJP sources said.

The resignation, expected since last night and cleared by the BJP parliamentary board this morning, came after a court in Hubli quashed Uma's revision petition on the ground that it was filed "too late". The court also threw out the earlier S.M. Krishna government's appeal to withdraw the case against Uma.

But the sessions court said the government could approach afresh the judicial magistrate's court, which had originally issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against Uma, if it wants to do so. The current Dharam Singh government

CHAIN REACTION

●8 am: Karnataka police team with warrant reaches Mumbai, proceeds to Bhopal

●10 am: BJP parliamentary board accepts Uma's offer to resign as chief minister

●11 am: Uproar forces Lok Sabha adjournment

●2-2.20 pm: Furore in both houses. Parliament adjourned

●3.15 pm: Hubli court rejects Uma's appeal to withdraw the case as well as the Karnataka government's plea to reopen it

●5 pm: Home minister Babulal Gaur named Uma's successor

●5 pm: BJP formally decides to launch a *tiranga yatra* from Hubli to Jallianwala Bagh

●6.00 pm: Uma resigns as chief minister

has so far said it wants to press ahead with the case.

Today's order means the non-bailable arrest warrant against Uma is firmly in place. However, the Karnataka police team that left Bangalore to arrest her did not show up till late at night. There were reports that it had set out from Mumbai for Bhopal, but sources said it had turned back.

With Uma out of power, the BJP looked set to fall back on its time-tested roadshow politics and vowed to launch a *tiranga yatra* from Hubli to Jallianwala Bagh to protest

the arrest order. The party said the order reeked of the 1919 massacre in Amritsar by British police.

Leader of Opposition L.K. Advani hinted that Parliament would be held to ransom, demanding that the Centre take steps to get "all tainted ministers facing non-bailable warrants arrested".

A perturbed Congress, too, indicated that it is bracing for an abrupt end to the Parliament session as no business is possible in an atmosphere of rancour.

However, NDA chairperson A.B. Vajpayee said the Opposition would allow the passage of the Finance Bill without discussion to avert a crisis. That was the sole voice of conciliation on a day tempers ran high on both sides of the political divide.

The BJP Bhopal office crackled with tension when Uma arrived after stepping down as chief minister. Tears streamed down her face uncontrolled as hundreds of supporters pleaded that she take back her papers.

So charged was the atmosphere that riot police were sent for. Central observer Arun Jaitley did not take the risk of convening an open assembly for BJP legislators, preferring to go in for one-to-one interaction instead.

■ See Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

24 AUG 2004

No change in my stand: Uma Bharti

By Our Staff Correspondent

J.P.P. HD-1 23/8

BHOPAL, AUG. 22. The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, said today that she would not withdraw her resignation until she was acquitted or the Karnataka Government withdrew the case in which a non-bailable warrant had been issued against her by a court in Hubli, Karnataka.

About two dozen State Ministers have also sent in their resignation to the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, expressing full solidarity with Ms. Bharti. Anup Mishra, who is considered close to Ms. Bharti, told newsmen that he wanted to quit on "moral and emotional grounds." While the State BJP president, Kailash Joshi, confirmed that the resignation letters had been received, some prominent party functionaries were tight-lipped on the issue.

Ms. Bharti sent her resignation yesterday to Mr. Naidu. She has sought the permission of the party's parliamentary board to quit in the wake of the warrant issued against her in connection with a case linked with the hoisting of the national flag at Hubli's Idgah Maidan 10 years ago.

Poser to Sonia

Talking to mediapersons in Indore today, Ms. Bharti said the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, was not coming forward with any reply on the issue of hoisting of the national flag.

The issue was linked with national pride and the people wanted to know whether it was a crime to unfurl the Tricolour.

Even as the BJP Parliamentary Board is meeting tomorrow in New Delhi to decide on Ms. Bharti's resignation, the message being sent out by the Madhya Pradesh unit of the party is that it was backing Ms. Bharti to the hilt. The party's national general secretary, Shivraj Singh Chauhan, who was here yesterday, defending Ms. Bharti, said she had only tried to uphold the dignity of the national flag and equated her action 10 years ago with that of the freedom fighters.

Other BJP functionaries here have also severely criticised the Congress-led Government in Karnataka for reopening the case, which the former Krishna Government had tried to close in 2002.

'A political stunt'

Congress leaders in the State, including the State party president, Subhash Yadav, the former Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, and the leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly, Jamuna Devi, have described Ms. Bharti's decision to forward her resignation to the BJP president as a political stunt. They have said that if Ms. Bharti was really serious about her stand, she should have sent it directly to the Governor.

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উমার ইস্তফা আপাতত অগ্রাহ্য দলে

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২১ অগস্ট: উমা ভারতীর গ্রেফতারি পরোয়ানা নিয়ে সোমবার হুবলির আদালতের অবস্থান জানার আগে মধ্যপ্রদেশের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে তাকে পদত্যাগ করতে দেবে না বিজেপির কেন্দ্রীয় নেতৃত্ব। উমা ভারতী আজই দলীয় সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডুর কাছে তাঁর পদত্যাগপত্র পাঠিয়ে দিলেও দল তা গ্রহণ করতে রাজি নয়। যদিও উমার মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ থেকে সরে যাওয়া উচিত কি না, তা নিয়ে দলের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের মধ্যে ইতিমধ্যেই বিভাজন তৈরি হয়ে গিয়েছে।

অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী চাইলেও লোকসভার বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী উমাকে এখনই মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে সরাতে রাজি নন। বেঙ্কাইয়া আডবাণীর সঙ্গে আলোচনা করে আজ সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন, সোমবার আদালত যদি উমা ভারতীর পাল্টা আবেদনে ইতিবাচক মনোভাব দেখায় তবে দলের সংসদীয় বোর্ড প্রকাশ্যে তাকে সমর্থন করবে। কিন্তু জামিন অযোগ্য গ্রেফতারি পরোয়ানার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে আদালতে উমার আবেদন খারিজ হলে তাঁকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদে বহাল রাখা আডবাণী, বেঙ্কাইয়া বা অরুণ জেটলির পক্ষেও কঠিন হয়ে যাবে। সোমবার দলের সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে এ ব্যাপারে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে।

এ দিকে, মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ হারাতে পারেন আশঙ্কা করে উমা ভারতী বিকল্প হিসাবে দলের সর্বভারতীয় সভাপতির পদের দিকে তাকাতে চাইছেন। বর্তমান



সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডুর কাজকর্ম নিয়ে দলের মধ্যে যথেষ্ট প্রশ্ন থাকার সুযোগ নিয়ে তিনি চাইছেন বেঙ্কাইয়াকে সরিয়ে তাঁর জায়গায় বসতে। আজ বেঙ্কাইয়ার কাছে তাঁর মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে ইস্তফাপত্র জমা দেওয়ার পরে উমা টেলিফোনে কথা বলেন অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী, লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী, বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদের অশোক সিংহল ও আর এস এস নেতা সুদর্শনের সঙ্গে। তিনি তাঁদের কাছে দিল্লিতে বসে কাজ করার ইচ্ছাও প্রকাশ করেন। উমার প্রস্তাবে ভি এইচ পির সাথ আছে, তারা মনে করে উমাকে দলের সভাপতির পদে বসিয়ে বি জে পি হিন্দু নিয়ে এগোতে পারবে। কিন্তু বাজপেয়ীর তাতে আপত্তি রয়েছে। অন্যদিকে, উমা ও বেঙ্কাইয়া দু'জনেই আডবাণীর কাছে লোক হওয়ায় এ নিয়ে তিনি এখনও কোনও মত দেননি। উমা চাইছেন, তাঁকে সরতে হলে তাঁর জায়গায় মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হিসাবে তিনি রাজ্যের বর্তমান স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বাবুলাল

গৌড় বা নিতান্তই সেটা সম্ভব না হলে প্রদেশ সভাপতি কৈলাশ জোশী হোন। কিন্তু বেঙ্কাইয়া তাতে রাজি নন। তিনি চান, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদে উমার বিকল্প হিসাবে বিজেপি সাংসদ এবং কেন্দ্রীয় নেতা পৃথীরাজ সিংহ চহ্মণকে বসাতে।

১৯৯৫ সালে হুবলির ইদগা ময়দানে জাতীয় পতাকা উত্তোলন ও দাঙ্গায় প্ররোচনা দেওয়ার অভিযোগে উমা-সহ কয়েক জনের বিরুদ্ধে মামলা করে কনটিক সরকার। কিছু দিন আগে কনটিকের প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী এস এম কৃষ্ণ ওই

এর পর তিনের পাতায়

উমার ইস্তফা অগ্রাহ্য

প্রথম পাতার পর

মামলাগুলি তুলে নেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়। সোমবার কনটিকের বর্তমান সরকার ওই মামলাগুলি ফের শুরু করার যে আবেদন করেছে তার শুনানি হবে হুবলি আদালতে। এ ব্যাপারে আদালতের রায় না জানা পর্যন্ত আপাতত বিজেপির শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব শিবু সোরেনের গ্রেফতারি পরোয়ানার সঙ্গে উমা ভারতীর বিষয়টিকে ভিন্ন দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে দেখতে চাইছেন। সোরেনকে 'দাগি' বলে তাঁর ইস্তফার দাবিতে বিজেপি সোচ্চার হলেও উমা ভারতীকে সেই একই কারণে ইস্তফা দিতে বলছে না বিজেপি।

উমা ভারতীকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী করতে বাজপেয়ী অবশ্য প্রথম থেকেই রাজি ছিলেন না। কিন্তু আডবাণী তাকে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে সরিয়ে মধ্যপ্রদেশের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদের প্রার্থী করেন। কাল উমা আডবাণীর সঙ্গে দেখা করে ইস্তফা দেওয়ার ইচ্ছা প্রকাশ করলেও তিনি তা মানতে রাজি হননি। কেন্দ্রীয় নেতৃত্বের কোনও নির্দেশ না থাকায় উমা রাজ্যপালের কাছে পদত্যাগপত্র না পাঠিয়ে তাই আগে দলের কাছে পাঠিয়েছেন। শুধু তাই নয়, ভোপালে উমা নিজের ইস্তফাপত্র পেশ করে কেন্দ্রের 'দাগি' মন্ত্রীদেরও পদত্যাগ দাবি করেছেন। এখানেই অবশ্য শেষ নয়, ২৪ অগস্ট থেকে হুবলিতে জাতীয় পতাকা উত্তোলন নিয়ে উমা আমরণ অনশনের মতো আন্দোলনেরও ছমকি দিয়েছেন।

ইস্তফা দিয়ে উমা যেমন কংগ্রেসের আক্রমণাত্মক কৌশলের মোকাবিলা

করার চেষ্টা করছেন, তেমনই দলের ভিতরে নিজের অবস্থানকে মজবুত করার চেষ্টাও করছেন। মধ্যপ্রদেশ সরকারের মধ্যেও সম্প্রতি গোলমাল চলছিল বিস্তর। উমার নিজের ভাই এবং বেশ কয়েক জন মন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে উমার বিবাদ চরমে উঠেছিল। এই ইস্তফা দিয়ে উমা ফের হিন্দুত্বের তাসটি ব্যবহার করে সমর্থকদের মধ্যে নিজের জনপ্রিয়তা বাড়াতেও সচেষ্ট।

কিন্তু আডবাণী-বেঙ্কাইয়া-অরুণ কেন উমার ইস্তফা গ্রহণ করতে রাজি নন? দলীয় নেতাদের কাছে আডবাণী বলেছেন, প্রথমত উমার পরিবর্তে সর্বসম্মত কোনও বিকল্প নেতা বিজেপি পাচ্ছে না। দ্বিতীয়ত, অন্যদের তুলনায় উমা এখনও রাজ্যে বেশি জনপ্রিয়। তৃতীয়ত, সমর্থকদের কাছে হিন্দুত্বের প্রব্লেম মৌদীর মতো উমাও দলের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মুখপাত্র। চতুর্থত, সম্ভব পরিবারও উমাকে সরাতে রাজি নয়।

এই অবস্থায় সোমবার দলের বৈঠকে বাজপেয়ী কী বলবেন তার থেকেও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয় হল আদালত উমার ব্যাপারে কী রায় দেয়।

১৫ ২০০

A 10-year-old case and a volte face

By Our Special Correspondent

HUBLI (KARNATAKA), AUG. 21. If the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, and the Bharatiya Janata Party find themselves embroiled in a major political controversy over a pending criminal case in a Hubli court, they perhaps have only themselves to blame.

For, both Ms. Bharti and the BJP had been complacent over the implications of the pending criminal case, under which a non-bailable warrant (NBW) that had been repeatedly issued and remained unexecuted. A fresh NBW was issued in the first week of August by the Judicial Magistrate First Class II, Hubli, and this was in force when Ms. Bharti visited Bangalore the other day but apparently it was not served on her.

The Congress-led coalition State Government headed by Dharam Singh has tried to backtrack before the court on its earlier plea of withdrawing the case through a revision petition filed before the Additional District and Sessions Judge, Hubli. The action has opened a Pandora's box for Ms. Bharti and the BJP.

Flag-hoisting agitation

The case had its origin in the BJP-sponsored agitation in Hubli over the question of hoisting the national flag at Idgah Maidan, on Independence Day in 1994. Idgah maidan, an open place in the heart of Hubli, has been the subject matter of a prolonged dispute on the ownership, with the Karnataka High Court deciding that Muslims had been permitted to offer prayers on a few specified occasions. A Special Leave Petition filed by the Anjuman-e-Islam, Hubli is pending in the Supreme Court.

On August 15, 1994, the two-year-old BJP agitation for hoisting the flag reached a flashpoint, with the party announcing its intention to hoist the flag at the grounds. The then Congress Government under M. Veerappa Moily, determined to frustrate the BJP's attempts, clamped a curfew on the town. Police had closed the entry points to Hubli.

Ms. Bharti, however, entered the town outwitting the police. She led one of the contingents of volunteers marching towards the Idgah Maidan. She was intercepted at a place,



TO BE OR NOT TO BE CM: The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, coming out of her residence to announce her resignation in Bhopal on Saturday. — Photo: A.M. Faruqui

about a kilometre from the venue, and was arrested along with others. Later, she was let off.

Six persons lost their lives in the police firing to quell the violence that erupted on the occasion. Five persons were killed on the first day while another persons died two days later.

Ms. Bharti was the main accused in the case in which charges under Sections 307 (attempt to murder) and 436 (mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house, etc.) of the Indian Penal Code were filed.

Ms. Bharti never appeared before the court initially or even seven years later when the S.M. Krishna Government decided in January 2002 to withdraw all the cases, including one against Ms. Bharti, filed in connection with the Idgah agitation in the public interest.

All other cases were gradually withdrawn, except the one pertaining to Ms. Bharti, Rajendra Gokhale, the State BJP secretary, and 20 others.

Among those who got relief were Jagadish Shettar, the then Leader of the House in the State Legislature, and Pralhad Joshi. Later, Mr. Shettar scored his third successive win in the Assembly elections from Hubli rural while Mr. Joshi won the Dharwad North Lok Sabha seat.

Court's refusal

The prosecution tried in vain to get the Uma Bharti case withdrawn in July 2002 from the court of the Judicial Magistrate First Class II, Hubli. But in an order passed on July 11, 2002, the court declined to grant permission on the ground that it had no jurisdiction in the matter and that the offences mentioned therein could be tried only by a district sessions court. A reference was also made by the court to the continued failure of Ms. Bharti to appear before the court.

For the next two years, nothing happened. There was no sign of activity from the side of Ms. Bharti, who in the meantime had become Mad-

hya Pradesh Chief Minister. The BJP in Karnataka took comfort and did nothing as the Government itself had volunteered to withdraw all the cases. Neither the Karnataka Government nor Ms. Bharti took any step to seek relief in getting the cases withdrawn. This delay has proved costly for Ms. Bharati.

For the first time, lawyers on behalf of Ms. Bharti appeared in the 10-year-old case on May 24, 2004 and got the NBW recalled. A week later, they preferred a revision petition in the Court of the District and Sessions Judge for getting the earlier orders of the Magistrate dated July 11, 2002 quashed and for getting the case against Ms. Bharti withdrawn.

Three weeks later, the Karnataka Government moved another revision petition, making a similar plea. Both had pleaded for the condonation of the delay [in filing the revision petitions] and had taken the stand that the petitions were not affected by limitation.

Surprise

But new developments started taking place soon. The Judicial Magistrate First Class II, Hubli issued a fresh NBW on August 3, along with orders for the attachment of the property [of Ms. Bharti]. On August 18, the prosecution sprang a surprise by backtracking on its earlier plea for withdrawal of the case against Ms. Bharti. The implication was clear: the Government did not want to withdraw the case. The widely held view is that had Ms. Bharti put in a personal appearance in the court, she would not have been in the mess she finds herself now in.

The volte face by the Congress-led Karnataka Government vis-à-vis the cases has been a matter of intense political speculation in the State. The Public Prosecutor was acting on "oral instructions" in making the latest plea, while the original Government order of July 2 on withdrawal of the Idgah cases remains unchanged. The prosecution has changed its stand, despite admitting in the earlier petition that it was not possible to prove the charges because "the crime had been committed by 5,000 to 6,000 workers who had formed an unlawful assembly."

Uma sends resignation to BJP president

Bhopal, New Delhi

21 AUGUST



UNDER severe pressure after being declared proclaimed offender by a Karnataka court, Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Uma Bharti, on Saturday resorted to her favourite strategy of sending resignation to BJP president Venkaiah Naidu who gave enough hints that it was unlikely to be accepted.

Ahead of Monday's hearing of a 10-year-old rioting case against her in a Hubli court, the saffron-robed sanyasin stopped short of sending her resignation to the state governor Balram Jakhur, taking the plea that it was her party high command that had appointed her as chief minister. Only months ago, she had sent her resignation to Mr Naidu in protest against the possibility of Sonia Gandhi becoming the Prime Minister.

"The chief minister has committed no sin," Mr Naidu said in Vijaywada two days ahead of the BJP's parliamentary party board meeting to take a decision on her resignation. "Is it a big mistake she had done to hoist the national flag at the maidan?" he said and attacked the Congress-led Karnataka government for withdrawing the revision petition from the Hubli court.

Mr Naidu said it would be "unfair" to equate her case with that of JMM chief Shibu Soren who had to resign from the Union government after a Jharkhand court issued warrant against him. Ms Bharti's case relates to an agitation regarding hoisting of national flag at a ground in Hubli, while Mr Soren is charged with "murder of nine Muslims," Mr Naidu said.

He said the parliamentary board will assess the issue, by studying the background of the case against Ms Bharti and decide the future course of action. — PTI

The Economic Times 22 AUG 2004

Uma Bharti's story: What happened in Hubli

By Suchandana Gupta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bhopal: "I was arrested before I entered the Idgah maidan in Hubli," chief minister Uma Bharti said recalling that fateful day of August 15, 1994. "I didn't hoist the national flag and had not made any provocative speech," she said.

Bharti said the Congress government in Karnataka had banned the hoisting of national flag in Idgah maidan sometime between 1980 and 1985. "In the entire country, this was the only place where hoisting the national flag was banned," Bharti said. Therefore, "The people of Hubli formed a Dhvaj Samman (National Flag Honour) Committee. On Independence Day the committee members tried to hoist the flag but were forced to retreat by the police," she said.

Bharti claimed that hoisting the national flag in the maidan was an issue before she reached Hubli. "When I became president of the BJP Yuva Morcha in 1994, I was informed by the workers of my organisation that the Idgah maidan originally belonged to Queen Chennamma of the Kittur royal family. Chennamma was a freedom fighter and local residents wanted the

right to hoist the national flag at Idgah. I requested my party to allow me to hoist the flag and the party gave its nod. Artists, citizens, students and intellectuals also joined our movement," she said.

"The Karnataka govern-



ment had declared that Uma Bharti would not be permitted to enter Karnataka and would be arrested on the border. But somehow I reached Hubli. By August 14, I was in a house less than a kilometre from the Idgah maidan," Bharti recollected. "But the police lied that I was arrested," she added.

"Idgah maidan is situated in a very congested area. There are houses all around the place. On the morning of August 15, lakhs of people came out of their home and proceeded towards the spot. I was in a vehicle and moved to-

wards it. However, I was arrested before I could enter the Idgah grounds and taken away. The violence that the state government is talking about occurred 3 kms away where the police had opened fire and 4 persons, including a child were killed. I was not there."

"No case was registered then and there was apprehension of violence in the state," Bharti claimed. "I was instructed by senior leader L K Advani to leave Karnataka. The Veerappan Mooly government also allowed me to leave the state," she added.

"The state government gave me in writing that hoisting the national flag was not a crime and legal cases against me would be withdrawn." In 2001, she again contacted the state government and asked them if there was a case against her. "I was reassured by the Congress government that the case would be withdrawn," she said.

"In June this year, a lower court in Karnataka said that it was unable to decide on the case and asked the state to go to the district court. Even the Dharam Singh government told me that the case was being withdrawn. It is only recently that the Congress convened a meeting and decided not to withdraw the case," she said.

✓ NBW AGAINST UMA BHARATI, UPA DEMANDS SCALP

Taint boot switch

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 20. — The taint boot is on the other foot with the Congress demanding the Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Ms Uma Bharati's dismissal after a Karnataka court issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against her. The BJP has convened a meeting of its parliamentary board on Monday to discuss the political future of one of its "stars".

The NBW issued by a Hubli court follows the Karnataka government's decision to take back a government order withdrawing criminal cases against Ms Bharati and others in a August 1994 case.

Ms Bharati had reportedly participated in a movement to hoist the Tricolour at the Idgah Maidan in Hubli. A sessions court is expected to give its judgment on the state government's decision to reopen cases against Ms Bharati and others on Monday. Her lawyer has contended that the withdrawal



Ms Bharati: Denies resignation offer

of the revision petition was politically motivated. Ms Bharati said she had not offered to resign.

But the party is clearly caught in a bind after raising the issue of morality with regard to the tainted ministers in the UPA, particularly Mr Sibu Soren.

Top BJP leaders, including Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani, met to take stock of the situation as the Congress mounted pressure in Parliament for the "tainted" CM's dismissal.

Ms Bharati has to appear in the court on 19 September.

Even if she manages to get bail, the moral question of her continuation as a minister would remain.

There are, therefore, many who want Ms Bharati to resign and force the hands of the UPA government on the issue of tainted ministers.

Others say that this is the best opportunity to get rid of the temperamental *sadhvi* who has embarrassed the party on many occasions. But the RSS is likely to back her.

Former Union minister, Mr Arun Jaitley, who is the party's general secretary in-charge of Madhya Pradesh, said that the case against Ms Bharati did not involve moral turpitude unlike the cases against the tainted ministers in the UPA government. Mrs Sushma Swaraj of the BJP alleged that the Congress-led Karnataka government decided to withdraw the revision petition after the NDA raised the issue of tainted ministers in Parliament.

স্বাধীনতা দিবসে ঝান্ডা তুলে তুলে বিপাকে বেঙ্কাইয়া

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৯ অগস্ট: স্বাধীনতা দিবসের অনুষ্ঠানে জাতীয় পতাকা তুলতে গিয়ে মহা ফায়াসাদে পড়েছেন বিজেপি-র সর্বভারতীয় সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নয়ডু। চেম্বাইতে দলের সদর কার্যালয়ে যে ভাবে বেঙ্কাইয়া জাতীয় পতাকা তুলেছেন তাতে 'ন্যাশনাল এমব্রেম অ্যান্ড নেমস (প্রিভেনশন অফ ইমপ্রপার ইউজ)' আইন ভঙ্গ হয়েছে বলে অভিযোগ করেছেন স্থানীয় বিজেপি নেতা ও সমর্থকরাই।

চেম্বাই পুলিশের কাছে বিজেপির স্থানীয় এক নেতা, প্রবাসী বাঙালি সূভাষচন্দ্র বসু এই মর্মে একটি নালিশও জমা দিয়েছেন। পুলিশও ওই অভিযোগ পেয়ে উৎসাহিত হয়ে তদন্তও শুরু করে দিয়েছে। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী জয়লালিতার কানেও এই খবর

পৌছেছে। তিনিও পুলিশকে নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন পুরো বিষয়টি তদন্ত করে দেখার জন্য। 'একেই বলে গেরো', বললেন বিজেপিরই এক সর্বভারতীয় নেতা। লোকসভা নির্বাচনে সরকার

বদলের পর দলের ভিতরেই বেঙ্কাইয়াকে সভাপতি পদ থেকে সরানোর জন্য জোর চেষ্টা চলছে। এই অবস্থায় এই মামলা বেঙ্কাইয়াকে 'উটকো বাসলা'-য় ফেলল।

কিন্তু ১৫ অগস্ট চেম্বাইয়ে দলের সদর কার্যালয়ে বেঙ্কাইয়া কী এমন গর্হিত কাজ করেছেন?

অভিযোগপত্রে বলা হয়েছে, চেম্বাইতে দলের সদর কার্যালয়ে যে দণ্ডটি থেকে দলীয় পতাকা উত্তোলন করা হয়, সেই একই দণ্ড থেকে দলীয় পতাকা নামিয়ে জাতীয় পতাকা তোলা হয়েছে। এটা আইন বিরোধী। জাতীয় পতাকা এ ভাবে উত্তোলন করা যায় না।



জাতীয় পতাকার জন্য পৃথক দণ্ড ব্যবহার করা উচিত ছিল। কংগ্রেস নেতা আনন্দ শর্মা এবং টম ওরাক্কান বলেন, "বিজেপি আসলে জাতীয়

পতাকারই মর্যাদা দেয় না। আর এস এপার সদর দফতরে কোনও দিন জাতীয় পতাকা তোলা হত না।" তবে সম্প্রতি মামলা করে নিজের বাসভবনে জাতীয় পতাকা তোলার অভিকার অর্জন করেছেন শিবসেনার নতুন সাংসদ নবীন জিন্দাল। বিশেষ বিশেষ দিনে নিজের বাড়িতে জাতীয় পতাকা তোলার অভিকারের দাবিতে তিনি মামলা করেন। আদালত কিছু পূর্বশর্ত দিয়ে জিন্দালকে সেই অনুমতি দেয়।

তবে বেঙ্কাইয়া নয়ডুর পতাকা উত্তোলনের বিষয়টি নিয়ে ব্যাপক জনঘোলা হচ্ছে। দলের শীর্ষ নেতৃস্থ, প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী এবং বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবালীর কানেও এমসেছে এ ঘটনা। বেঙ্কাইয়া অবশ্য আত্মপক্ষ সমর্থন করে বলেছেন, জাতীয় পতাকার কানেও রকম অসম্মান তিনি করেননি।

প্রত্যেক বছরই দলীয় পতাকা সরিয়ে ওই পতাকাদণ্ডটিতে তেরঙা জাতীয় পতাকা তোলা হয়। এতে সমস্যাটা কোথায়, তিনি বুঝতে পারছেন না।

আসল সমস্যাটা কিন্তু বেঙ্কাইয়ার নেতৃত্ব নিয়েই। অন্ধপ্রদেশের এই নেতার সঙ্গে চেম্বাইয়ের দলীয় নেতৃত্বের নানা কারণে অশান্তি দেখা দিয়েছে। শুধু চেম্বাই নয়, বেঙ্কাইয়াকে সরিয়ে দলের পরবর্তী নেতা কে হবেন, তা নিয়েও রাজধানীতেও দলের মধ্যেই জোরদার জল্পনা-কল্পনা শুরু হয়ে

গিয়েছে। অরুণ জেটলি, সুধমা স্বরাজ, প্রমোদ মহাজন এবং রাজনাথ সিংহ— এই চার নেতার নামই আছে পরবর্তী প্রজন্মের নেতৃত্ব দখলের লড়াইয়ে। নেতৃত্ব টলমল করাতোই বেঙ্কাইয়াকে নিয়ে দলের কর্মী-সমর্থকরা জাতীয় পতাকা-বিবাদ তুলে দিয়েছেন বলে বিজেপির একাধিক শীর্ষনেতার ধারণা।

Vajpayee succeeds

5/8 7/8 Hindutva out, NDA in BJP

The BJP's chintan baithak in Goa concluded with a victory for Vajpayee. After the retreat, forced upon him over Narendra Modi stepping down as chief minister and the demands by RSS that there must be a return to its Hindutva ideology, the ex-prime minister needed the help of friends in the NDA. The RSS has even insisted that they may launch another 'Hindu' outfit if the BJP do not toe the line. The Goa meeting which had its share of RSS pracharaks, saw much wrangling on the issue. But it was Vajpayee, the pragmatist, who realised early, that a return to Hindutva would alienate allies and insisted on keeping out the 'H' word. The threat by allies like Janata Dal (U) and TDP to withdraw from NDA if it did not stay committed to the common minimum programme leaving out three Hindutva planks of Ram Mandir, uniform civil code, and Article 370, helped Vajpayee push his case.

Vajpayee, the shrewd politician, is keen to keep the NDA intact just in case the current UPA government meets an untimely end. If the NDA is present as an alternative, there will be greater pressure on the UPA. The former prime minister, who was against early Lok Sabha polls, sees the need to keep the Opposition united. The BJP on their own do not have the numbers or the base for a government. The RSS believe that they should be looking at the party's long term future and building up their base by luring more people to shakhas. Their task would be easier if Hindutva is imposed on the NDA. But the allies have their own compulsions to keep it out. The TDP saw its entire Muslim and liberal Hindu vote shifting away in the recent Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. If partners do a 'back to basics' than they can quit the NDA but not otherwise. The Janata Dal (U) has a similar problem but more acute as they have Assembly elections in Bihar and Jharkhand in early 2005. Hence it is in the interest of all the constituents of the NDA to keep Hindutva at bay. Vajpayee's success at holding the alliance together shows what a master of coalition politics he is.

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 2004

BJP IN TROUBLE

19-10
5/8

THERE IS TO be no end to the Bharatiya Janata Party's current troubles, judging by the warnings and threats hurled in its direction — first by its spiritual mentor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and now, its once-trusted allies, the Janata Dal (United) and the Telugu Desam Party. That the demands are diametrically opposite in nature only compounds the BJP's misery. On the one hand, there is the RSS with its fiat that the BJP, wholly and firmly, reassert its Hindutva identity. On the other, there are the JD(U) and the TDP, both of whom have registered their objections precisely to such a course. Barely did news filter out that, at its 'Chintan Baithak' (brainstorming session) in Goa, the BJP was contemplating a 'return' to its ideological moorings when the JD(U) struck. In a resolution passed at its national executive, the party hinted at a parting of ways: "We shall never compromise with religious bigotry." The TDP's threat was sharper and more direct. "If the BJP chooses to adopt the communal agenda, we will sever ties with it," said a party spokesperson. Certainly there is an element of grandstanding here. As long as the BJP was seen to be successfully running the government, its ideology posed few problems for its friends, be it the RSS or the non-Hindutva allies in the National Democratic Alliance.

Indeed, it would be hard not to remember the JD(U)'s willing complicity in the BJP's 'communal' agenda. Today George Fernandes may cite Hindutva as a reason for wanting to opt out of the NDA, but it was the same Mr. Fernandes who stood as the BJP's staunchest supporter during the genocidal anti-minorities pogrom in Gujarat. In the course of a parliamentary debate on Gujarat, he seemed to offer an apology for rape on the plea that it was a common enough offence. The TDP expressed

itself against the pogrom but did not translate its words into action, and consequently Chandrababu Naidu's oft-repeated commitment to secularism came across as weak and self-serving. Similarly, for all the time that Atal Bihari Vajpayee was eulogised as the ultimate leader, the RSS only too willingly went along with the 'governance first' thesis propounded by the BJP leadership. Today, if the knives are out for the BJP, it is in no small measure due to the drubbing it received in the 2004 elections.

The BJP's 10-point Goa charter is an attempt at once to please its allies and the RSS. Party president Venkaiah Naidu typically displayed some verbal acrobatics when he expounded on "further expanding the party with a focus on ideological orientation." The artful double-speak notwithstanding, there can be no doubting the winner in the event the BJP has to make a choice between its allies and the RSS. In a significant speech in Mumbai recently, Lal Krishna Advani approvingly quoted the Jan Sangh's decision to stay with the RSS following the dual membership controversy that brought down the Janata Party government. However, any unapologetic return to hardline Hindutva will only strengthen the bigots and push the BJP towards the brink. It is time the party accepted the real reasons for its defeat. What cost it a third term in office was not a dilution of Hindutva, but its self-created image as a highly divisive party that favoured the rich against vast sections of the poor and the marginalised. As further proof, one can point to Uttar Pradesh where the BJP lost the ideologically crucial constituencies of Varanasi, Mathura, and Faizabad (where Ayodhya falls). No less significant is the rout suffered by two champions of the Ram temple, Vinay Katiyar and Swami Chinmayanand.

THE HINDU

'10 conclusions' to strengthen BJP

By Anil Sastry

PANAJI, AUG. 2. The four-day 'chintan baithak' (brainstorming session) of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which concluded here on Monday, has come out with "10-point conclusions" outlining the future course of action, including the strengthening and expansion of the party. The theme of the session was "Looking Back, Looking Ahead."

At a press conference here, the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, said that the strengthening process would focus on ideological orientation and renewed emphasis on work culture, individual conduct and organisational discipline. Asked if the party would go back to its "Hindutva" ideology, he said the BJP had always followed the paths of "raashtravaad" (nationalism) and "pragati" (development). One could not achieve development without nationalism and vice-versa.

NDA to continue

Stating that the BJP was for the continuation of the National Democratic Alliance, he said ideological differences would not affect the combine. The NDA's constituents would fight

united the coming Assembly elections in five States. The NDA would also have co-ordination with all the non-United Progressive Alliance parties at the Centre.

While the senior leader, L.K. Advani, accused the Congress and the Left parties of working against the national interest, in its "conclusions" the party said it would expose the "nexus" between the communal, corrupt and criminal forces.

Mr. Naidu said "some par-

ties" in the country trusted the Inter-Services Intelligence more than the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. He quoted the former Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, as saying during the 'chintan baithak' that "the Congress and Communist combine has started on a confrontationist note. They look at the BJP as an enemy and plan to relegate the BJP to such a position that it occupies no effective place in the country. It is not a good omen for democracy, nor is it in

the national interest."

'Pseudo-secularism'

Blaming the Congress and the Left parties for "competitive pseudo-secularism," the meeting had decided to launch an extensive campaign against pseudo-secularism, including reservation on communal lines, Mr. Naidu said. Another "conclusion" was to create awareness on the worsening situation in Jammu and Kashmir and the alarming rise of militant outfits.

BJP to hold conclave of Chief Ministers

By Our Special Correspondent

PANAJI, AUG. 2. The Bharatiya Janata Party will hold a conclave of its Chief Ministers on September 11 and 12 in New Delhi to discuss ways and means of making their governments more popular.

Disclosing this to reporters here today, the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, said the conclave would facilitate an exchange of views on various developmental issues and strive to identify popular schemes. For proper coordination between

the party and the governments, guidelines would be drafted.

Panels constituted

On the agreement signed by India on the revised framework for discussions at the World Trade Organisation, Mr. Naidu said the 'chintan baithak' felt that the agreement was against the interests of farmers. The party had formed a committee, comprising former Ministers Arun Jaitley, Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie, to study the agreement and give a report within five days.

Another committee, headed by the former Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, had been formed to study and report the demographic invasion taking place in the border States.

When asked whether the term "strengthening the ideology" referred to the strengthening of Hindutva, Mr. Naidu said "Hindutva" was a way of life and that BJP had always used it when needed. "If you want to shun Hindutva, do you shun the country which is Hindustan or stop reading *The Hindu*," he asked.

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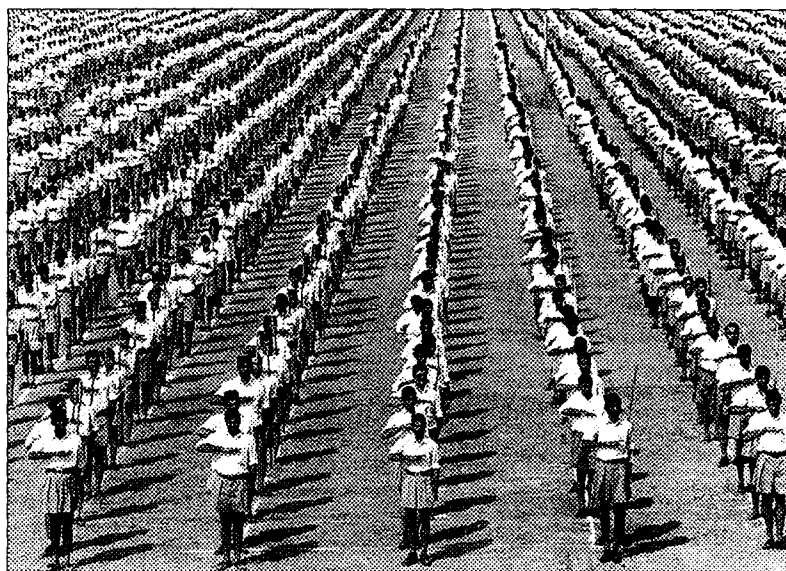
RSS in ideology dilemma

Pankaj Vohra
New Delhi, July 24

THE DECISION of the RSS to change the dress code of its volunteers from khaki half pants to full pants and to allow its *pracharaks* to get married seems to be a direct admission by the top brass that ideology is no longer the main attraction for its hardcore supporters.

The RSS ideology — underlining Hindu nationalism as enunciated by successive chiefs — appears to have taken a back seat with the organisation finding it difficult to attract dedicated workers. In fact, there's been a role reversal of sorts between the RSS and BJP. While earlier the Sangh had considerable influence over the BJP, it is the BJP's cosmetic dimensions that seem to have rubbed off on the RSS. An element of contradiction has also crept in. Because on the one hand the RSS wants to increase the number of its *shakhas* all over the country, but on the other it believes not too many people are attracted to the organisation at the moment. Hence the need to change the dress code and allow *pracharaks* to marry.

According to a *vibhag pracharak*, "It has become increasingly difficult to attract youngsters since TV and other sources of entertainment have influenced society in a big way. Earlier, youngsters could be persuaded to come out in the mornings to play kabbadi and kho kho, and slowly we'd introduce them to the RSS ideology." But a *zila pracharak* has a different view. He feels that yoga is be-



HT PHOTO

A file photograph of RSS volunteers in full uniform.

coming increasingly popular all over the world and the Sangh should use this to get to younger people.

There is also a debate that power has had a negative influence on many *pracharaks*. Functionaries now want air-conditioned cars when in the past they were content with bicycles. The top brass recognises the influence of money and power on volunteers and wants the course correction to be carried out at the earliest.

It is no wonder then that the RSS is once again pushing the Golwalkar school of thought, which holds ideology as supreme. It is in this light that

the BJP has been told to make a few changes. The brass is worried that many key functionaries are under the influence of certain BJP leaders and, therefore, have been overlooking the BJP's deviation from its ideology.

But as far as critics of the Sangh are concerned, the reported changes are merely to "hoodwink" people. "There is need to change mindsets. The Sangh should shed its communal, fascist and secretive character if it wants to become acceptable. Politics of hate must end. Knickers or pants don't matter. Those who wear them that do," a Congress leader said.

Hindutva not responsible for Mizoram resignations: BJP

GUWAHATI, July 5. — The BJP today denied to accept that its hardened stand on *hindutva* agenda had created apprehension amongst the party men in Christian-dominated Mizoram where the state unit resigned en masse recently.

The BJP unit in Mizoram deserted the party just after BJP's Mumbai convention stating that it doesn't want to be party to the BJP's latest staunch *hindutva* orientation. However, the BJP leader and former Union minister for information and broadcasting, Mr Ravi Shankar Prasad today claimed that the development in Mizoram unit had nothing to do with the *hin-*

dutva agenda of the BJP.

He said the party leadership was trying to assess what had gone wrong in the Mizoram unit, adding, "*Hindutva* doesn't mean complete abdication of secularism."

He asserted that Christians in the North-east weren't worried over the BJP's *hindutva* agenda and pointed out that there were as many as 12 BJP Christians MLAs from the region.

Mr Prasad, on a two-day tour to interact with party workers of Assam and Meghalaya, said that the BJP was already on the job to mobilise the party cadres in those states which are going to Assembly polls in the next two years. He ad-

mitted that the morale of the party workers in the region was down after "Mr Vajpayee failed to become the Prime Minister again."

Party President Mr Venkaiah Naidu is going to the North-east along with Swami Chinmoyananda to interact with party leaders to chalk out the party's election strategy for Arunachal Pradesh, which is going to polls in September.

The BJP usurped power in Arunachal Pradesh last year using the service of Arunachal Congress leader Mr Gegong Apang and by creating defection in the ruling Congress government led by Mr Mukut Mithi. — SNS

6 JUL 2004

6 JUL 2004

THE STATESMAN

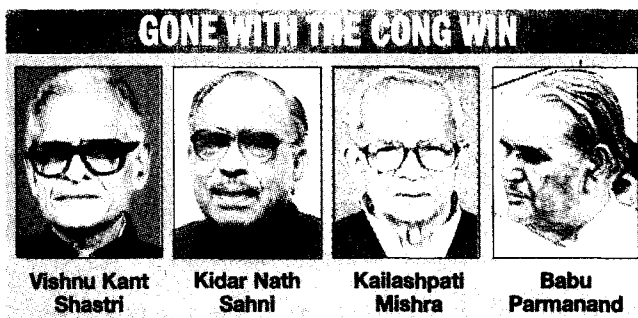
Saffron governors get the sack

UP, Haryana, Gujarat & Goa Raj Bhavan Occupants Evicted

New Delhi: Ignoring stiff resistance from the BJP, the Centre on Friday dismissed governors of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana and Goa with RSS-BJP background appointed by the NDA government, setting the stage for a fresh round of confrontation with the opposition.

Vishnu Kant Shastri (UP), Kailashpati Mishra (Gujarat), Babu Parmanand (Haryana) and Kidar Nath Sahni (Goa) were removed by President APJ Abdul Kalam. There was no official word from the government on the dismissals from which incumbents like Madan Lal Khurana in Rajasthan and Rama Jois in Bihar have escaped at least for the time being.

The decision, the like of which had been taken in the past and even during the NDA regime, was made public in a terse Rashtrapati Bhavan communique that disclosed that the President appointed Maharashtra governor Mohd. Fazal



BJP cries foul, plans protest

New Delhi: Stung by the sacking of four governors appointed during the NDA rule, the BJP on Friday termed it as "gross constitutional impropriety" and vowed to oppose the action at all available forums amid indications that the decision could be challenged in the court. BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley told reporters here that the motive behind the dismissal was "political" and accused the Congress of preparing the ground for toppling the governments in the states where the governors had been dismissed. Agencies

to discharge the functions of Goa governor. Similarly, Madhya Pradesh governor Balram Jakhar will hold additional

charge of Gujarat, his Punjab counterpart Om Prakash Verma that of Haryana and Uttaranchal governor Sudhar-

shan Aggarwal of UP.

Strongly defending the decision, the Congress said the four governors were sacked not because they belonged to a particular political party but were "for a long time associated with the Sangh Parivar", a byword for RSS.

The removal of the governors come at a time when the BJP-led opposition has already given enough notice of carrying ahead its campaign on the issue of "tainted" ministers in Parliament during the budget session beginning Monday.

The issue of continuance of these governors came to the fore after the change of guard at the Centre with the Left parties and other constituents of the UPA coalition pressing for their removal. The government first sounded out the targeted personalities through official channels, conveying to them that it would be better if they resign on their own rather than invite dismissal. Agencies

MONDAY, JUNE 28, 2004

A PLOT RETOLD, WITH TWISTS

98-P 558P

THE BHARATIYA JANATA Party's national executive, meeting in Mumbai between 22-24 June, did what political parties of the New Right do when they lose elections: tighten up, look for fresh scapegoats, and pursue hardness and certainty in ideology. The painful reappraisal that preceded the 'rededication to ideology and idealism' has been widely interpreted in the media as a return to 'Hindutva' and 'Hindu Rashtra'. In the perception of party strategists, this assessment is way off because the party was never allowed to move away from these goals — except in the wishful thinking of confused liberals who, among other things, committed the laughable blunder of taking the best face and voice of the BJP, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for someone who, Moses-like, would lead his followers to a new land. What the Mumbai exercise was all about was a re-setting of gun-sights to prepare the party for its role as the principal Opposition; and to look for a fast track to take it back to the corridors of power.

The real task before the BJP in Mumbai was to come to terms with Verdict 2004. It was a rather complex verdict containing its own contradictions but was a clear enough rejection by the national electorate of the party that claimed to have supplanted the Congress as the pre-eminent party in the political system. That voters rejected most of the BJP's allies even more emphatically was not a consolation but a double blow — because the strategy of extensive development and expansion into areas of weakness through striking deals with all and sundry had been checked effectively. The Political Resolution adopted by the BJP's national executive, aside from characterising the formation of the Congress-led Government with outside support from the Left and other parties as a "regressive development in the life of our Republic," goes to extraordinary lengths to contest the victors' claim that Verdict 2004 was a mandate for anti-communal, secular governance. It misses by a mile the basic truth that the 14th general election turned primarily on basic livelihood concerns and issues arising from mass deprivation, which the ham-handed slogan of 'India Shining' seemed to run against and mock. Was not the neglect of these concerns and issues the basic cause of the defeat of the Congress in States it ruled or was ruling until fairly recently?

Instead of probing the causes of the election debacle seriously, the BJP came up with superficial or diversionary explanations, such as 'overconfidence', 'complacency', a failure to detect negative trends in several major States and take timely corrective action, and unexpected 'anti-incumbency' against close to 50 per cent of sitting BJP MPs. Nor did the discussion go deeply into why several allies of the party (in the words of its president, M. Venkaiah Naidu) "left on their own [although] we did not leave any of our allies"; and why most of those who stayed with the BJP fared even worse than it did. The party, in fact, seemed to be in denial of its defeat. In place of a serious explanation came grand theory. This was articulated in terms of the alienation of leaders from the party cadres and the *sangh parivar* and "a weakening of the emotional bonds with our core constituency," the *ideological parivar* that had "laboured hard to put us in our present position." L.K. Advani went a step further. He remarked that while the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government was recognised as a "Hindutva government" by its opponents and the rest of the world, "the only two entities that did not so recognise this government were our ideological *parivar* and ourselves." Well might the party strongman have quoted Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "But when he once attains the upmost round, /

He then unto the ladder turns his back, / Looks into the clouds, scorning the base degrees / By which he did ascend." The Advani message was clear: the party could not afford, in future, to dilute its ideological moorings; and its growth could not be at the expense of "what we have," namely, hard-core Hindutva.

Aside from rededication to Hindutva, the BJP sought to distance itself from the mystique it had created around the *persona* of Mr. Vajpayee by coining the "nation first, party next, self last" slogan. Significantly, there was no economic resolution either, although there was a mention in the political resolution of the economic achievements of the Vajpayee Government and there was a reiteration of the party's commitment to development in Mr. Naidu's presidential speech. The 'India Shining' slogan was not just scrupulously avoided; unwept and unsung, it was given a dishonourable burial. Rhetorical flourishes apart, two trends were in evidence. One was the overwhelming role of the *sangh parivar* in determining the party's agenda. The second was the denial of the Vajpayee legacy and the emergence of Mr. Advani as the torch-bearer of the ideological constituency.

There was a twist to this plot foretold. Party conferences are a mix of rhetoric, pious intent, and sometimes interesting sidelights. It is rare, however, for the 'tallest' leader in a party to supply the anecdotal and gossipy bits. However, Mr. Vajpayee changed all this. During the run-up to the Mumbai conclave, he made waves by targeting Gujarat's infamous Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and seeming to suggest that the path ahead for the party involved getting rid of Mr. Modi and those like him. This line of thinking encountered, as one might have expected from the *sangh parivar*, fierce resistance led by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's top brass. So not for the first time Mr. Vajpayee withdrew his demand. Then speaking at a function to launch a book on himself on the penultimate day of the national executive, he reacted to a chorus of his supporters by declaiming in Marathi (which he speaks expertly) that he was no longer interested in leading the party and that he had had enough. He also spoke of the 'spray' of criticism being directed at him, an obvious reference to the flak he got from the *ideological parivar* for suggesting that Mr. Modi was a liability. Mr. Vajpayee's remarks were widely interpreted as a precursor to his exit from active politics. His speech on the concluding day, therefore, created great expectations. The final twist came with the former Prime Minister dismissing his remarks as a 'joke' and announcing his continuation in active politics and, more particularly, his determination to campaign actively in the coming Maharashtra Assembly elections. Is the Vajpayee era finally over? This question cannot be answered confidently before the outcome of the next round of battles — the Assembly elections that will be held in five States over the next year — is known. But the Mumbai conclave made one thing clear. Over the past two decades, starting with its two Lok Sabha seats in 1984, the BJP has made big gains in the electoral and political arena. Its shift to a strategy of extensive development seemed to pay off and it seemed to come close to becoming the leading party in the political system. Both the 13th and 14th general elections provided impressive evidence that the Vajpayee 'factor', whatever it was, enabled the party to perform far above its level in the national electoral arena. But this expansion and growth reached its limits in 2004 and the party was thrown back a long way, much further politically than its "just seven seats behind the Congress" suggests. The interesting question is: is it the beginning of a long-term decline for the BJP and its alliance-building strategy?

J.P.P.
28/6

It was all in humour, says Vajpayee

HD-1
25/6

By Neena Vyas

MUMBAI, JUNE 24. The former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, today explained away his "humorous" remarks in Marathi made yesterday at the party workers' meeting here. But the explanation was not without a bit of a sting.

Addressing the Bharatiya Janata Party's concluding session of its three-day national executive meeting for over 40 minutes, Mr. Vajpayee said: "I see that some people have lost the shine on their faces today. Perhaps, my remarks in Marathi yesterday are the reason." He then went on to "explain" that when party workers had raised the slogan *agli bari Atal Bihari* (next time it will be Atal Bihari), "I could hardly be expected to nod a 'yes' when the party has only recently been defeated." "After all, I had left the job of Prime Minister after six years only a few weeks ago." His response to the slogans was: "*ata bari nako* (no next time), *pushkal jhale* (enough is enough)."

Sometimes, he said, one did not want to do "*gadbad* (create chaos), *gadbad* just happens. When words leave the mouth they are like arrows that cannot be taken back." But senior leaders admitted that Mr. Vajpayee did not "explain" his other controversial sentence at the meeting: "For the first time I have been under attack (*pehli baar mere upar baucharen pad rahi hain*)."

Party leaders ignored this, and emphasised, as the party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, did emphasise: "Vajpayee is our tallest leader. There is no doubt about this."

After Mr. Vajpayee's outburst yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, Mr. Naidu, and the general secretary, Pramod Mahajan, who had been present at the workers' meeting, went to Mr. Vaj-

payee's suite at the hotel for dinner. But according to some, Mr. Vajpayee steered the conversation away from party politics to food.

Mr. Naidu later told the press that Mr. Vajpayee declared that he would campaign with redoubled vigour during the coming Assembly elections. "We will fight back and come back," he told the executive members.

He also made the point that power was not the goal in itself, but the party wanted power in order to fulfil its dream of making India a strong and prosperous nation, a dream that remained unfulfilled.

Other leaders said that Mr. Vajpayee expressed the view that the Manmohan Singh Government would not last. There were many "inner contradictions in it," he was reported to have said. It was born with problems.

Also, Mr. Vajpayee said that while the successes of his Government in the areas of national highways and telecommunications were there, perhaps these issues were "not directly related to the ground realities of poor India." He admitted that somewhere, somehow, the party was not able to carry its message to and influence the poor voters.

He told the executive that it was time to come out of the mood of sadness and disappointment, and take a decision to work for the party with dedication.

Mr. Vajpayee is reported to have again lapsed into humour, telling the party president: "Do not dig so deep to find the reasons for our defeat that nothing comes out." Was he warning, in his enigmatic style, that the party should not try to paper over the reasons for its defeat?

25 JUN 2004

BJP in damage control mode

Sudesh K Verma in Mumbai

MUMBAI, June, 24. — After having sent the message of 'back to the basics' core ideology and Hindutva, the BJP today sought to correct the impression of its being anti-minority by pledging to try and remove misconceptions on the minority front. It appended a section to its original resolution on the task ahead for undoing the damage.

However, it did not dilute the commitment to its core ideology and asked workers not to be apologetic about the party's relationship with the Sangh Parivar. It even spoke of taking the ideological battle to the Congress and the Communists, which pooh-poohed "Hindutva as the basic identity of the Indian nation." The party sought to redefine *swadeshi* and committed itself to India's integrated and accelerated development, based on a "*swadeshi* concept". The resolution adopted on the concluding day of the executive

Trinamul, CPM flak

KOLKATA, June 24. — The Trinamul refuses to buy BJP's Hindutva line. A senior Trinamul leader today said the party is unhappy over the BJP's reaffirmation of its Hindutva agenda that "will surely alienate the minorities further." The Trinamul welcomed Mr Vajpayee's "sober" arguments.

Reacting to Mr L K Advani's reported statement that the CPI-M is doing the back seat driving for the UPA government, CPI-M state secretary Mr Anil Biswas said: "We gave support to the UPA government only to keep the fundamentalists out of power." — SNS

laid great emphasis on discipline, lamented indiscipline and sought to apply correctives by rededicating itself to the core ideology. It even said that those not committed to the party ideology were free to leave the party. The party decided to set up subject level committees of MPs and experts to enable the party to keep tabs on the failures of the UPA.

Hindutva plank for Maharashtra polls

MUMBAI, June 24. — The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance hopes to dislodge the Congress-NCP alliance government in Maharashtra through a "Hindutva" campaign. This Assembly election will be an election on the Hindutva plank, a BJP leader privately said.

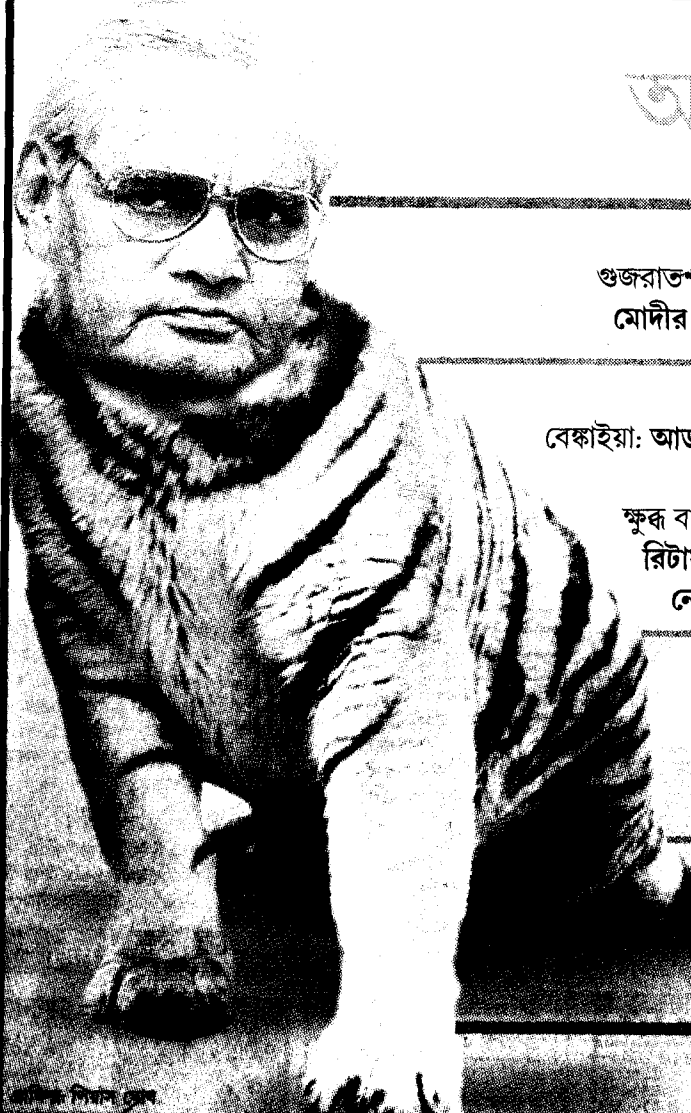
The Maharashtra versus outsider divide raked up by the Shiv Sena created problems in this strategy but Shiv Sena chief, Mr Bal Thackeray, is making amends by meeting leaders of various communities and assuring them that the Sena was not against them. This was the BJP's main worry as reflected in the national executive meeting. The Sena's opposition to outsiders (those who came after 1995) cost the party heavily in Mumbai in the Lok Sabha polls. To avoid a repetition in 34 assembly seats in the region the BJP is also trying to explain that the Sena was not opposed to outsiders per se. The pressure on Mumbai, which has geographical limitations, does not allow regularisation of the population that came after 1995.

One way to overcome the divide is to rake up the Hindutva issue. This has worked on earlier occasions. A BJP leader said that the alliance would launch a tirade against the Congress-NCP alliance if Ishrat Shaikh's links with terrorists is established.

In the 1999 elections the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance secured 38 per cent votes against the Congress-NCPs' 58 per cent. The BJP estimates at least 10 per cent anti-incumbency vote against the state government, giving the Opposition a decisive edge.

BJP leaders are scared of the Congress-NCP aligning with the Bahujan Samaj Party, which polled about 8 per cent votes in the recent Lok Sabha elections. — SNS

সুর পাণ্টে অটল বললেন, রসিকতা করোছ



অটলের উলটপূরণ

২০০২, মার্চ
গুজরাতশাস্ত্রের পর ত্রাণশিবিরে গিয়ে:
মোদীর উচিত রাজধর্ম পালন করা।

২০০৩, নভেম্বর
বেঙ্কাইয়া: আডবাণী লৌহপুরুষ, বাজপেয়ী
বিকাশপুরুষ।
ক্ষুদ্র বাজপেয়ী: আমি টায়ার্ডও নই,
রিটায়ার্ডও নই। কিন্তু আডবাণীর
নেতৃত্বেই দল ভোটে জিতবে।

২০০৪, ১৭ জুন, মানালি
বাজপেয়ী: ভোট বিপর্যয়ের
কারণ গুজরাত। মোদীকে
অবিলম্বে সরাতে হবে।

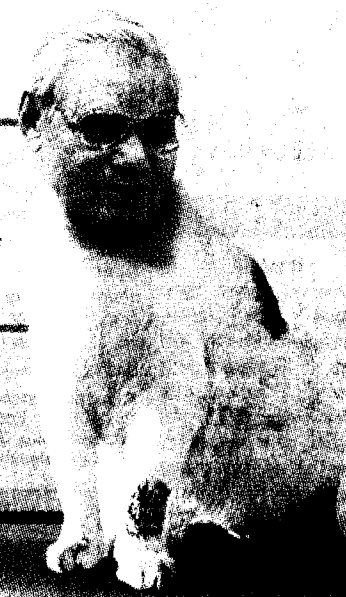
২০০৪, ২৩ জুন, মুম্বই
বাজপেয়ী:
অনেক হয়েছে,
আর নয়।

২০০২, মার্চ
গোয়ায় জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে:
গুজরাত কাণ্ড গোধরা-কাণ্ডের স্বাভাবিক প্রতিক্রিয়া।

২০০৩, নভেম্বর
বেঙ্কাইয়া-প্রমোদ-যশোবন্ত: আডবাণী নন, বাজপেয়ীর
নেতৃত্বেই দল ভোটে লড়বে।
ত্রয়ীর কথায় বাজপেয়ীর
পশ্চাদপসরণ এবং দলকে
ভোটে নেতৃত্ব দিতে রাজি

২০০৪, ১৯ জুন, নয়াদিল্লি
মোদীর বিষয়টা অতীতের।
আমাদের এখন ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে
ভাবতে হবে।

২০০৪, ২৩ জুন, মুম্বই
বাজপেয়ী: ওটা তো মজা
করছিলোম। মহারাষ্ট্র ভোটে
এটারও করব।



বেষম্য না-বাড়িয়ে আর্থিক উন্নয়ন চান মনমোহন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ জুন: আর্থিক সংস্কারের পথে চলার অঙ্গীকার করার সঙ্গেই সংস্কারপর্বে রাষ্ট্রের কী ভূমিকা হওয়া উচিত তার নতুন দিশা দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মতে, এত দিন যে ভাবে সরকার পরিচালিত হচ্ছিল, জাতীয় ক্ষেত্রে যে সব বিষয়ের উপর অগ্রাধিকার ভিত্তিতে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছিল, এ বারের ভোটে সাধারণ মানুষ তার বিরুদ্ধে রায় দিয়ে এই অগ্রাধিকারকেই পাল্টাতে বলেছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেছেন, ভোটের রায়ে দেশবাসী এটাও স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন, আর্থিক উন্নয়ন চাই, কিন্তু তা যেন সমাজে আর্থিক বৈষম্য বাড়িয়ে না তোলে, সামাজিক ন্যায়ের দিকটি উপেক্ষা না করে। অর্থৎ, উন্নয়ন ও সংস্কারের পুরনো অভিমুখ থেকে সরে এসে নতুন পথে হাঁটতে হবে। তিনি জানিয়েছেন, বর্তমান সরকারের প্রতিটি নীতির কেন্দ্রস্থলে থাকবে গরিব, সমাজের পিছিয়ে পড়া মানুষ, সংখ্যালঘু ও অনুরূপ অঞ্চলের জন্য ভাবনা। কিন্তু এই সব ভাবনাকে বাস্তবায়িত করার জন্য যে ধরনের সরকারি প্রশাসন দরকার, তা নেই। তাই সবার আগে সরকারি প্রশাসনযন্ত্র ও বিভিন্ন সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের সংস্কার করতে হবে।

দেশবাসীর উদ্দেশে নতুন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এটাই প্রথম বক্তৃতা। এর আগে সংসদে রাষ্ট্রপতির বক্তৃতার উপর বিতর্কে অংশ নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তৃতা দেওয়ার কথা ছিল। কিন্তু বিরোধীদের প্রবল হটগোলে সেই বিতর্ক দ্রুত শেষ করতে হয়, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তৃতা ছাড়াই। বিরোধীরা সংসদে যে বিষয়কে কেন্দ্র করে হটগোল করেছিলেন, মন্ত্রিসভার সেই 'দাগি মন্ত্রী'দের প্রসঙ্গে অবশ্য প্রধানমন্ত্রী তাঁর বক্তৃতায় নিরুত্তরই ছিলেন।

নতুন প্রধানমন্ত্রী দেশবাসীর সামনে তাঁর ভাবনাচিন্তার যে রূপরেখা তুলে ধরেছেন, তাতে স্পষ্টই ১২ বছর ধরে চলা সংস্কার কর্মসূচির অভিমুখ বদলানোর ইঙ্গিতই রয়েছে। সংযুক্ত প্রগতিশীল জোটের তরফে এর আগে অভিন্ন নতুন কর্মসূচি তৈরি হয়েছে, তাতেও এই ইঙ্গিত ছিল। কিন্তু তাতে রাষ্ট্রের পরিবর্তিত ভূমিকা কী হবে, সেটাই প্রধানমন্ত্রী স্পষ্ট করে দিলেন। তিনি তাঁর যুক্তির সমর্থনে মহাত্মা গান্ধীর বক্তব্য মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন: প্রতিটি মানুষের চোখের জল মুছতে পারাই ছিল তাঁর জীবনের যৌথিত ব্রত। গান্ধী বলতেন, 'তোমার দেখা সবচেয়ে গরিব মানুষের কথা মনে কর। ভেবে দেখ, এখন যে কাজটা তুমি করতে যাচ্ছ তাতে সেই গরিব মানুষটির কোনও লাভ হবে কি না!'

মনমোহন মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন, অভিন্ন কর্মসূচিতেই বলা হয়েছে, আর্থিক উন্নয়নের পথে এগোতে হবে, কিন্তু দারিদ্র, ক্ষুধা, গৃহসমস্যাও দূর করতে হবে, কাজের সুযোগ বাড়াতে হবে। সাধারণ মানুষের জীবনযাত্রার মান বাড়তে হবে। বাজার অর্থনীতি থাকবে, কিন্তু খোলা বাজারের নিয়মবিধি আরও স্বচ্ছ ও ন্যায়সঙ্গত করা দরকার। তাঁর মতে, এত দিন আর্থিক সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়ায় রাষ্ট্রের নিয়ন্ত্রণের ক্ষেত্র ছোট করে আনার উপর বিশেষ জোর দেওয়া হচ্ছিল, কারণ, বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রের উপর রাষ্ট্রের নিয়ন্ত্রণ এক দিকে যেমন বিনিয়োগকারীর উদ্যোগকে নষ্ট করে, তেমনিই প্রায়শ দুর্নীতির জন্ম দেয়। তাই এটা জরুরি ছিল। কিন্তু একই সঙ্গে সাধারণ মানুষের দৈনন্দিন জীবনের অনেক ক্ষেত্রেই রাষ্ট্রের ভূমিকা অপরিহার্য। প্রধানমন্ত্রী সেই ক্ষেত্রগুলি চিহ্নিতও করে দিয়েছেন— প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা ও

জন স্বাস্থ্য, পানীয় জল ও নিকাশি ব্যবস্থার মতো সামাজিক পরিকাঠামো। বলেছেন, জাতীয় স্বাস্থ্যনীতি ও জনসম্পদনীতি নিয়ে নতুন ভাবনাচিন্তা দরকার। সেচ, বিদ্যুৎ, সড়ক ও রেলপথের মতো আর্থিক পরিকাঠামো তৈরির দায়িত্ব রাষ্ট্রকেই নিতে হবে। মনমোহনের আশ্বাস, বর্তমান সরকার সংস্কারের পথ থেকে সরেছে না, বরং ব্যক্তিগত উদ্যোগের জন্য ক্ষেত্র আরও প্রশস্ত করবে। কিন্তু এটা করার সঙ্গেই এটা তুললে চলবে না সাধারণ মানুষের কাছে আসে এমন ভাবে সরকার চালানোর গুরু দায়িত্বও পালন করতে হবে। সে জন্যই সরকারি কাজে দক্ষতা আনতে প্রশাসনিক ব্যবস্থা ও সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের কাজে কর্মে আগে সংস্কার আনতে হবে।

আর্থিক সংস্কার, বিশ্বায়ন ও উন্নয়ন নিয়ে যে বিতর্ক চলছে, সেই প্রসঙ্গে দেশে প্রথম পর্বের সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়ার রূপকার, এখন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহনের বক্তব্য, বিশ্বায়নের ফলে এ দেশের অনেক মানুষ অবশ্যই লাভবান হচ্ছেন, কিন্তু এখনও দেশের কোটি কোটি মানুষ অশিক্ষা, অসুখ, অভাব, অনাহার ও অপুষ্টিতে ভুগছেন। লিঙ্গবৈষম্য প্রচণ্ড। পুরুষের চেয়ে মহিলারা শিক্ষা, পুষ্টি ও স্বাস্থ্যের মাপকাঠিতে অনেক পিছিয়ে। তফসিলি জাতি-উপজাতির মধ্যে রোজগারের সমস্যা ও তার ফলে খাদ্য-নিরাপত্তার অভাব সঙ্কটজনক মাত্রা নিয়েছে। আঞ্চলিক বৈষম্য বাড়ছে। সংখ্যালঘুদের অবস্থা আরও কৰুণ, তারা একদিকে আর্থিক নিরাপত্তার অভাবে, অন্যদিকে রাজনৈতিক ও প্রশাসনিক প্রক্রিয়াতেও কোণঠাসা হয়ে যাওয়ার মানসিকতায় ভুগছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দাবি, আর্থিক ও সামাজিক বৈষম্যের এই চিত্র বদলানোর লক্ষ্যে সরকার কাজ করবে।

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Atal 'fed up', Advani junks moderate line

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Mumbai, June 23: Atal Bihari Vajpayee ratcheted up tension over leadership and political direction in the BJP today with his enigmatic statement that he was "fed up".

Vajpayee's policies, leadership and the moderate direction in which he was trying to steer the party have come under severe criticism over the last two days at the BJP's national executive.

While releasing a book on his government's achievements at Mumbai's Shanmukhananda Hall, Vajpayee let slip how upset he was when his own colleagues were attacking him. "When our people are hitting out at me, this book will come in handy," he exclaimed.

The stunned silence that followed was broken by slogans in Vajpayee's favour: "Abki baari Atal Bihari (It's Vajpayee's turn)". There is an election due in Maharashtra in September and party workers were express-

ing their desire to have him at the helm of the campaign.

The former Prime Minister gave a wry smile and said in Marathi:

"Ataa baari nako, pushkal zhala (No more turns, I am fed up)."

There was immediate speculation whether this was Vajpayee's way of making way for another leader or whether he was only expressing his displeasure at being targeted.

Yesterday in his address to the national executive, party president M. Venkaiah Naidu had argued against the "virus of individualism" without, however, naming Vajpayee.

Today, it was close associate L.K. Advani's turn to attempt to bury his legacy.

Vajpayee has often used statements lending themselves to ambiguous interpretation in the past to consolidate control over the party. But this strategy



"No more turns, I am fed up"

worked when he was the Prime Minister and the threat of quitting would have led to turmoil.

Today, party stalwarts and Sangh organisations are ranged against him and it is doubtful if subtle hints like "fed up" will be as effective.

Vajpayee is scheduled to address the party leaders tomorrow when a firmer indication of his intentions or a clear expounding of his views may come.

There was no doubt today, however, that even Advani has had his turn at taking on the Vajpayee line and blaming it for the electoral debacle.

The failure of the BJP to blend good governance with the "prudent politics" of consolidating its Hindutva constituency was the primary cause of its "unexpected" defeat, Advani said. The BJP, he suggested, paid for ignoring its

Hindutva support base.

That this was essentially an argument against the Vajpayee line was evident when Advani lamented: "Our opponents in the country called us a 'Hindutva government'. The rest of the world recognised us as a 'Hindutva government'. However, the only two entities that did not do so were our ideological 'parivar' and ourselves."

Claiming that the party provided good governance while in power, Advani, however, suggested that it diluted its branding with the very people and organisations which catapulted it to power. The net result: the key supporters were alienated and the advantage of trying to expand the party's base remained dubious.

Although Advani began by praising Vajpayee ("We are blessed with the leadership of Shri Atalji"), he essentially sought to bury his legacy. He criticised attempts to expand the party's base at the expense of confusing its core "ideological constituency".

■ See Page 6

I have had enough, says Vajpayee

MUMBAI, JUNE 23. In a sudden outburst that overshadowed the Bharatiya Janata Party national executive's deliberations here, the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, tonight indicated that he would not lead the party any more as he has "had enough," an apparent reference to the Sangh Parivar's attack on him after the party's debacle in the Lok Sabha elections.

His remarks came on a day when the executive adopted a political resolution to go back to "ideology and idealism" in what is considered as a possible revision to aggressive Hindutva plank.

Mr. Vajpayee's supporters shouted "Abki bari Atal Bihari (it is Atal Bihari's turn)" after the release of a book on him at a BJP rally attended by the former Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani and the party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Mr. Vajpayee, who has been under attack from the Sangh Parivar, especially after his critical comments about the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, retorted in Marathi "Aata Nako Bari. Pushkal Jhal. (Now no more turn. I have had enough)."

Giving vent to his feelings, he said: "For the first time, I am under attack. This book will give me solace."

The book, a compilation on him, has been brought out by the pro-RSS publication 'Vivek'.

Addressing the rally to commemorate the death anniversary of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee coinciding with the national executive, Mr. Vajpayee said victory and defeat were part of democracy and the election process was linked to it. He said "consensus on issues

such as economic reforms should not be tampered with, which the new Government appears to be doing."

Expressing grave concern over the increasing influence of money power in elections, he said if this continued, it could pose a serious threat to democracy and "Janatantra" (democracy) could be converted to "Dhanatantra" (money).

Mr. Vajpayee said the previous National Democratic Alliance Government, particularly Mr. Advani, had taken several initiatives in poll reforms and the new Lok Sabha should "think of the future and about the type of democracy we want." Though the poll outcome was not to our "cent per cent satisfaction, the taste of victory is there which is the indication of hope for the future."

Earlier, addressing the workers meeting, Mr. Naidu said the BJP drew its culture and inspiration from the RSS though the party's political agenda may be different. He charged the Congress with having more faith in the Lashker-e-Taiba and the ISI rather than in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh "which always stood for nationalist and democratic causes."

"We have bonds with the RSS. It has taught us ideology and nationalism," he added.

Mr. Advani reminded the party workers that the BJP had suffered many a setback in the past and described the present defeat as a "challenging hour" for the party. He expressed confidence that the party would regain power in Maharashtra and it would herald the victory march of the BJP. — PTI

Tensions to the fore: Page 11



SPRINGS A SURPRISE: Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said on Wednesday that for the "first time he was under attack." He was addressing a rally in Mumbai to commemorate the death anniversary of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. The BJP leader, Pramod Mahajan, looks on. — AFP

ঢের হয়েছে, নেতৃত্বে আর নয়, পাল্টা চাপ অটলের

১৪/৬/৬৮

হিন্দুত্ব নিয়ে অপরাধবোধ নয়: আডবানী ● জয়ধ্বনি থামিয়ে দিলেন বিরক্ত বাজপেয়ী

২৩ জুন: বিজেপির জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের দ্বিতীয় দিনেই অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী বনাম লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীর মতবিবোধ একেবারে প্রকাশ্যে এসে গেল। আডবানীর নেতৃত্বে সারাদিন ধরে হিন্দুত্ব-র পথ থেকে সরে আসার জন্য সমালোচনা শোনার পরে বাজপেয়ী ঘুরে দাঁড়ালেন। গোটা ব্যাপারটায় নিজের বিরক্তি স্পষ্ট করে দিয়ে জানিয়ে দিলেন, যথেষ্ট হয়েছে, তিনি আর দলকে নেতৃত্ব দিতে আগ্রহী নন। বাজপেয়ীর সংক্ষিপ্ত এই কথা এখন দলের জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে আলোড়ন ফেলোছে। ক'দিন ধরে তাঁর সমালোচনায় মুখর নেতারাও এখন কিছুটা অপ্রস্তুত, অনেকেই আবার ছুটেছেন বাজপেয়ীকে বুঝিয়ে শান্ত করতে। এমন কী গত দু'দিন হোটেলের সাত তলায় পাশাপাশি ঘরে থেকেও দু'জনে একবারও একান্তে কথা না বলার পরে আজ রাতে দেখা গেল বাজপেয়ীর ঘরে গিয়ে তাঁর সঙ্গে একসঙ্গে রাতের খাওয়া সারছেন আডবানী।

এমনিতে কর্মসমিতির তৃতীয় ও শেষ দিনে তাঁর জন্য নির্ধারিত সময়ে বাজপেয়ী কী ভাবে সমস্ত সমালোচনার মোকাবিলা করেন, তা দেখতে অধীর আগ্রহে অপেক্ষা করছেন বিজেপি নেতারা।

গত কাল দলের সভাপতি বেঙ্কইয়া নায়ডু যে ভাবে হিন্দুত্বকে অবলম্বন করে এগেলার

কথা বলেছিলেন, আজ রাজনৈতিক প্রস্তুতের উপর দলীয় বৈঠকে আলোচনায় সেই হিন্দুত্বের প্রশ্নই আডবানী আরও এক ধাপ এগিয়ে মানে করিয়ে দেন, "দলীয় কর্মী, সঙ্গপরিবার ও হিন্দুত্বকে যারা সমর্থন করেন তাঁদের সঙ্গে নিয়েই আমাদের এগোতে হবে... হিন্দুত্ব নিয়ে কোনও অপরাধবোধ মনের মধ্যে রাখলে চলবে না।" দলকে সঙ্গপরিবারের হিন্দুত্বের বাইরে নিয়ে আসতে আগ্রহী বাজপেয়ী যে আডবানীর এই চিন্তা ভাবনার সঙ্গে একমত নন তা দলের প্রায় সকল নেতার কাছেই স্পষ্ট। বৈঠকে পর পর দু'দিন আক্রমণের মুখে পড়লেও বাজপেয়ী এখনও পর্যন্ত মুখ খোলেননি, তাঁর বলার কথা আগমিকাল। কিন্তু তার আগেই আজ সন্ধ্যায় স্থানীয় সম্মুগানন্দ হলে একটি বইয়ের প্রকাশ উপলক্ষে দলীয় অনুষ্ঠানে আডবানী ও বেঙ্কইয়ার সামনেই দলীয় কর্মীরা যখন বাজপেয়ীর নামে জয়ধ্বনি দিতে শুরু করেন, তখন বিরক্ত বাজপেয়ী তাঁদের থামিয়ে বলেন, যথেষ্ট হয়েছে, তাঁর আর এ সবে আগ্রহ নেই। 'বিবেক' নামে আর এস এস-এর একটি শাখা সংগঠন বাজপেয়ী সরকারের পাঁচ বছরের

মেয়াদে কী কী ভাল কাজ হয়েছে, তারই উপর লেখা ও ছবি দিয়ে একটি বই প্রকাশ করেছে। অনুষ্ঠানে ওই বইয়ের একটি কপি হাতে নিয়ে বাজপেয়ী মন্তব্য করেন, "যখন চারদিক থেকে আমায় উপর আক্রমণ আসছে, তখন এই বই আমার কাজে আসবে।" অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত দলীয় কর্মীরা যখন স্লোগান তোলেন, "অব কী বারি, অটলবিহারী" (এ বার কর্তৃত্ব অটলবিহারীর) তখন বাজপেয়ী এক কথায় তাঁদের থামিয়ে দিয়ে বলেন, "না, আর আমার কোনও সম্ভাবনা নেই। যথেষ্ট হয়েছে..." উল্লেখ্য, ক'দিন আগেই মানালিতে দলের হারের দায় নিয়ে তিনি প্রায়শ্চিত্ত করবেন জামিয়ে অটল বলেছিলেন, এবার তিনি আরও বেশি করে দলের কাজে মনোনিবেশ করবেন।

আজ দিনের বেলায় বৈঠকে আডবানী নাম না করেও যে ভাবে বাজপেয়ীর লাইনকে আক্রমণ করেছে, তাতে এটা স্পষ্ট যে ক্ষমতা থেকে ছিটকে পড়ার পরে দলের মধ্যে এখন পুরনো হিন্দুত্ব লাইনে ফেরার চাপ প্রবল। বাজপেয়ীর নেতৃত্বে ছ'বছর ক্ষমতায় থাকার সময় উন্নয়ন ও সরকার পরিচালনায় প্রশাসনিক সাফল্যকেই



বিজেপি ভোটের প্রচারে তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছিল। হারের পরে এ বার আডবানী সেটাকেই সমালোচনা করে বলেন, নিহক প্রশাসনিক সাফল্য ভোট জয় আনতে পারে না। তার সঙ্গে যুক্ত করা দরকার বাস্তবজীবনমূলক রাজনৈতিক চিন্তাকেও। "প্রশাসনকে গুরুত্ব দিতে গিয়ে আমরা এই রাজনীতিকেই অবজ্ঞা করেছি।" তাঁর বক্তব্য, সরকারের থাকার জন্য অনেক আপস করতে হয় ঠিকই, কিন্তু দলীয় আদর্শের প্রশ্নে আপস করা যায় না। এর ফলেই "দেশের ভিতর বিরোধীরা আমাদের সরকারকে হিন্দুত্বের সরকার বলেছে, গোট দু'নিয়াও আমাদের হিন্দুত্বের সরকার বলে চিহ্নিত করেছে, শুধু আমাদের সঙ্গপরিবারই তা মনে করেনি। এই দুর্বলতা থেকে আমাদের বেরোতে হবে। হিন্দুত্ব নিয়ে কোনও অপরাধবোধ মনের মধ্যে রাখলে চলবে না।" হিন্দুত্ব নিয়ে এত কথা বললেও লক্ষ্যবীণ, আডবানী কিন্তু তাঁর বক্তৃতায় রামমন্দির, কাশ্মীরে ৩৭০ ধারার অবলুপ্তি বা অভিন্ন সেওয়ানি বিধির মতো সুপরিচিত দাবিগুলির একটিও উচ্চারণ করেননি। দলের রাজনৈতিক প্রস্তুতাবেও এ নিয়ে বিশেষ উল্লেখ নেই। সেখানে শুধুই কংগ্রেস জোট সরকার, সনিয়া গারীর ভূমিকা ইত্যাদি নিয়ে সমালোচনা। তবে কি দল হিন্দুত্ব নিয়ে ইইচই করলেও ততটা সিরিয়াস নয়? আডবানী বলেন, কী ভাবে দল এগোবে তা নিয়ে পরে আলোচনা হবে। উল্লেখ্য, জগদেব বিজেপির নেতাদের নিয়ে যে চিন্তন বৈঠক বসবে, সেখানেই দলের পরবর্তী রাজনৈতিক লাইন চূড়ান্ত হওয়ার কথা।

After Temple, party tees off with terror

MANINI CHATTERJEE
MUMBAI, JUNE 22

IF EMPEROR Babar and his "aulad" were the hate figures that animated the BJP and RSS campaign against "pseudo secularism" in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Ishrat Jahan Sheikh and other "terrorists" of her ilk threaten to be the new icons of hate for the BJP as the party searches for a vehicle to take it back to hardline Hindutva.

With the Maharashtra Assembly elections looming in the horizon, the BJP and the Shiv Sena have decided to make the most of the recent "encounter" killings in Ahmedabad and "expose" the Congress and other parties for raising questions on the deaths and expressing initial sympathy for the teenaged girl from Mumbra.

But the Maharashtra elections apart, the BJP — following its decision to get back to its RSS roots and aggressively champion its "party with a difference" status — seems to be keen to make "terrorism" the number one issue in its national arsenal, at least pending the renewal of Ayodhya or some other religio-emotive issue in the coming years.

This was evident in party president M. Venkaiah Naidu's inaugural speech at the three-day BJP national executive meeting that began in the plush environs of the 7-star Renaissance Hotel overlooking the picturesque Powai lake this morning.

While railing against the UPA Government at the Centre (which he ridiculed as being disunited, regressive, and not an alliance but "an opportunistic arrangement for power-sharing"), Naidu spoke at length about the

National executive whitewash begins

MUMBAI: BJP chief Venkaiah Naidu's inaugural speech at the party's national executive meeting on Tuesday was largely an exercise in denial and defiance, blaming none and blaming all for the drubbing in the Lok Sabha elections.

He did grudgingly admit that "over-confidence might have led to complacency in certain places". Over-confidence, complacency "among our workers and traditional voters" and "anti-incumbency" against sitting MPs were listed as some of the reasons leading to the party's defeat.

These apart, the BJP chief blamed "local factors" for the defeat and said there was no clear or uniform national pattern. He said in a few states, the BJP had "suffered on account of alliance factor" but quickly added: "I am not saying this to put the blame on our allies, but only as a matter of fact. We have no regrets." Naidu claimed that some allies had left the NDA before the elections but the BJP had not deserted any ally, clearly forgetful of the clamour in BJP state units before polls to break off with alliance partners in Haryana, Assam, even Tamil Nadu.

There was no mention of the role of the top brass in the elections in spite of mounting criticism within the party, confirming the fears of the rank and file that the post-mortem session would largely be a whitewash as far as the leadership is concerned. —ENS

mindset of the new Government and those associated with it.

He described the mindset as "the phenomenon of competitive pseudo-secularism" and went on to outline its features. These included the fact that the CMP does not mention cross-border terrorism, the Government's promise to repeal POTA, and the criticism of "pseudo-secular parties and organisations" of the killing of four persons, who were part of a "Lashkar-e-Toiba conspiracy to

kill Shri Narendra Modi", by the Ahmedabad police.

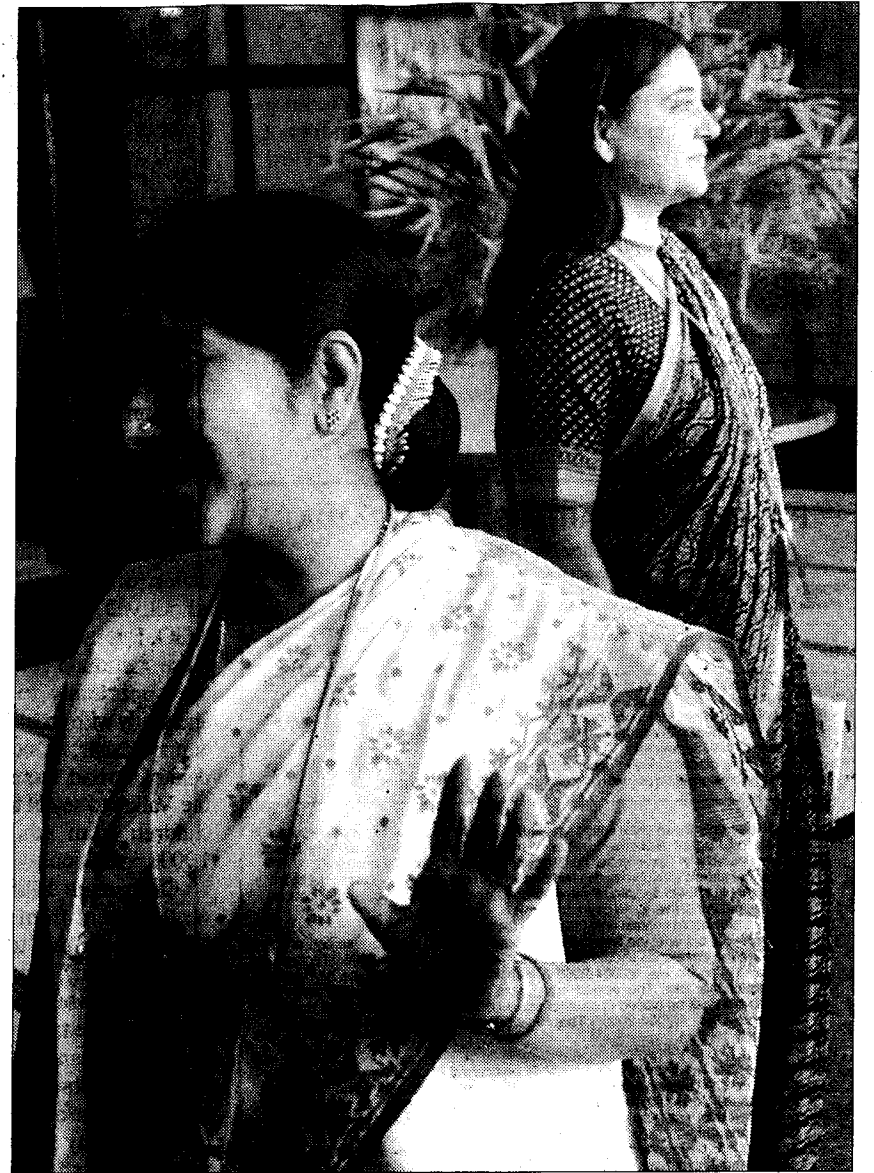
In fact, the Ishrat case has come to Modi's rescue, with even the Shiv Sena — which had earlier been critical of him — backing the Chief Minister on the "encounter" issue. Vajpayee's linking Modi's removal to the Gujarat riots was the first reason why the RSS and the majority in the BJP — keen to uphold the Hindutva line — backed Modi. The alleged terrorist conspiracy to kill him and the "pseudo-secular

criticism of the "encounter" deaths has added lustre to his image as a Hindutva hero. The fact that chief Modi-baiter Keshubhai Patel has not come to Mumbai only underlines Modi's new clout in the party.

For the BJP, though, the issue goes beyond Modi. As Naidu told his party colleagues today: "As a nationalist party, it is our duty to educate the people and arouse public opinion about the consequences of competitive pseudo-secularism. The BJP will em-

bark on a major nationwide campaign on this highly disturbing issue."

The BJP president also made it clear that the party would play the role of an aggressive Opposition, especially on Hindutva-oriented issues. Apart from the proposed campaign against "competitive pseudo-secularism", he said, "we shall soon launch a nationwide campaign against the Congress and Communist parties' vile attempts to re-falsify India's history in the name of de-saffronisation of textbooks".



Sushma Swaraj and Maneka Gandhi at the BJP national executive meeting at Hotel Renaissance in Powai on Tuesday. Manoj Patil

Ache aids Modi, leg-up for Hindutva

FINDING THEIR FEET



(Clockwise from top) Newcomers to the BJP Smriti Irani, Maneka Gandhi and Navjot Singh Sidhu at the venue. (AFP, PTI)

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Mumbai, June 22: Miffed over the party rallying behind his bete noir Narendra Modi, Gujarat's strongman and former chief minister Keshubhai Patel chose not to attend the BJP's national executive meet, citing ill health. However, that did not prevent the Modi issue from at least being mentioned.

What Keshubhai wanted to do, Tathagata Roy, the president of the Bengal unit of the BJP, accomplished. He cited the post-Godhra communal riots as having affected the party's electoral chances in the state as the entire Muslim community had been alienated. It was a bare mention, and nobody picked up the issue when the floor was thrown open for discussion.

"It was not picked up because everyone knows that traditionally the Muslims have never voted for us in Bengal. They are CPM voters. So what is the big issue about their polarisation?" a national executive member asked.

When the Gujarat elections results came up for discussion, the only oblique reference to Modi's role was when the farmers' agitation in parts of the state was mentioned. The agitation against the inability of the government to supply adequate power has been going on for nearly one-and-a-half years and is led by the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, a front organisation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

Although the Gujarat government's handling of the farmers' agitation came up for some criticism, Modi was not an issue in himself. The emphasis instead was on analysing the reasons for the shrinking and comparatively lower percentage of votes polled by the BJP, compared to the Congress.

Had Keshubhai been present,

WEAK KNEES



Keshubhai, whose 'aching knees' kept him away

the farmers' issue might have been taken up slightly more forcefully. He enjoys wide support among the state's farming community.

BJP spokesperson Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, however, seemed to be testing credulity when he insisted that the reason for Keshubhai's absence was nothing more than a bout of ill health. Keshubhai apparently cited his aching knees for not being able to reach Mumbai.

A senior BJP leader tried to lighten the atmosphere by saying, "it is only pain in his knees, not in his heart". But Keshubhai's absence was palpable.

His absence may have actually helped the party. Had he attended the meeting, he might have been prompted to intervene when the election results of Gujarat were being discussed or when the meeting took up discussion of the political resolution tomorrow.

Attending the national executive

meeting for Keshubhai might have been doubly insulting — with the party not only justifying Modi's retention but also endorsing his brand of Hindutva.

At the meeting of the party's national executive today, party president M. Venkaiah Naidu chose to put the entire party behind the Modi brand of Hindutva. He not only seemed to upbraid former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for his public analysis of the party's election defeat but also firmly reiterated the party's adherence to Hindutva.

Naidu said there was "no question of being apologetic about Hindutva". While admitting that the minorities were an integral part of the Indian nation, Naidu claimed that the party believed in "justice for all, appeasement for none".

The evidence of the party consolidating support for Modi was also evident in Naidu criticising how the recent killing of alleged Pakistan-inspired "terrorists" was being viewed. He blamed "the phenomenon of competitive pseudo-secularism".

He said: "What is shocking is that certain pseudo-secular parties and organisations are using this incident in their anti-BJP campaign and also trying to make it into a Hindu-Muslim issue. They are projecting it as a case of human rights violation, forgetting that human rights are for the protection of innocent citizens and cannot be misused for the protection of terrorists and anti-nationals."

Naidu criticised the "audacity" of the "pseudo-secularists" in claiming that the attack on Akshardham had been stage-managed. He claimed that the party would launch a major nationwide campaign against "competitive pseudo-secularism".

STILL STANDING



Modi at the meeting. (Reuters)

নেতৃত্বের লড়াই শুরু

দলই বড়,

বুঝিয়ে দেওয়া

হল অটলকে

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • মুম্বই

২২ জুন: নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে অপসারণের জন্য অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর প্রস্তাব অগ্রাহ্য করার পরে এ বার বি জে পির জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে তাঁকে আরও কোণঠাসা করার চেষ্টা শুরু হয়েছে।

কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের প্রথম দিনেই দলের সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডু বাজপেয়ীর নাম না উচ্চারণ করেও যে ভাবে তাঁকে আক্রমণ করেছেন, তা দলে তীব্র আলোড়ন তুলেছে। বেঙ্কাইয়া বলেছেন, “আমাদের প্রত্যেকের বোঝা উচিত, আমরা আজ যা হয়েছি তা দলের জন্য। দলীয় চেতনা, ব্যক্তিত্ব ও সত্বে আমাদের ব্যক্তি চেতনা, ব্যক্তিত্ব ও সন্তার সঙ্গে যুক্ত করতে হবে। দলের সভাপতির আজকের স্লোগান ছিল, দেশ সবার আগে, দল তার পরে, এবং ব্যক্তি সবার শেষে।” সম্প্রতি বাজপেয়ী গুজরাতের বিপর্যয় প্রসঙ্গে মোদীকে দায়ী করেন এবং তাঁকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে সরানোর কথাও বলেন। বেঙ্কাইয়া সেই সদ্যসমাগু বিতর্কের জের টেনেই যেন বললেন, “আমাদের দল দোষারোপের খেলায় বা কোনও ব্যক্তির বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগের তর্জনি তোলায় বিশ্বাস করে না। জয় ও পরাজয়, দুটো ক্ষেত্রেই আমরা যৌথ নেতৃত্বের নীতিতে বিশ্বাসী। বি জে পি ব্যক্তি নির্ভর দল নয়।”

ভোটের সময় বাজপেয়ীকে সামনে রেখে প্রচার করলেও নির্বাচনে বিপর্যয়ের প্রসঙ্গে এখন দলীয় সভাপতির বক্তৃতায় নাম না করে যৌথ নেতৃত্বের কথা বলার রাজনৈতিক তাৎপর্যটুকু দলীয় নেতাদের চোখ এড়ায়নি। আজ মাত্র একজন বক্তা বাজপেয়ীর সুরে সূত্র মিলিয়ে নাম করে গুজরাত দাঙ্গা ও তার জেরে নির্বাচনে সংখ্যালঘু ভোট হারানোর কথা বলার চেষ্টা করেছিলেন। তিনি তথাগত রায়, পশ্চিমবঙ্গে বি জে পির রাজ্য সভাপতি। কিং কর্মসমিতির অন্যদের কাছে তিনি কোনও সমর্থন পাননি। বৈঠকের প্রথম দিনে বাজপেয়ী ও লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী, কেউই মুখ খোলেননি। আগামিকাল দলের রাজনৈতিক প্রস্তাব পে করবেন আডবাণী। তার পরে বিতর্কে অংশ নিয়ে তিনি বক্তৃতা দেবেন। বাজপেয়ী মুখুলবেন ২৪ তারিখ, অর্থাৎ বৈঠকের সমাপ্তিদিবসে। দলের মধ্যে তাঁকে এ ভাবে কোণঠা করার চেষ্টার মধ্যে বাজপেয়ী নিজে কী বলেন, তা নিয়ে এখন অরুণ জেটলি, প্রমো মহাজন, অনন্ত কুমারের মতো নেতাদের তীব্র কৌতুহল রয়েছে। সব মিলিয়ে, জাতি কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের প্রথম দিন মহারাষ্ট্রের আসন্ন নির্বাচনের রণকৌশল ঠিক করার চেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠেছে, দলের রশি কার হাতে থাকবে, তার লড়াইটা। সকালে অধিবেশ শুরু হলে বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডু আডবাণীর ঘরে এসে এক দীর্ঘ বৈঠক করেন। তার প আডবাণীকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে হেঁটে নায়ডু হাজির হন বৈঠক প্রাঙ্গণে। অন্যদিকে, একই হোটেল: সেই আটতলাতেই থাকলেও বাজপেয়ীকে দেখা গেল, একাই গাড়িতে চেপে অধিবেশনে হাজির হতে। দলের মধ্যেই বিভিন্ন রাজ্যের প্রতিনিধিরা মনে করছেন, বেঙ্কাইয়ার আজকের এই আক্রমণের পিছনে হয়তো রয়েছেন খোদ আডবাণী।

দলকে ব্যক্তি (বাজপেয়ী)-র উর্ধ্ব তুলে ধরার চেষ্টায় বেঙ্কাইয়া আজ নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের অন্তর্ভুক্তির জন্য যে তিনটি কারণকে নির্দিষ্ট করেছেন, তাতে ব্যক্তিকেন্দ্রিকতাকেই সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে অভিহিত করেছেন। মনে রাখতে হবে, ক’দিন আগেই মানালিতে বসে মোদীর বিরুদ্ধে তোপ দাগার সময় বাজপেয়ী একবার এটাও বলেছেন যে, দল তাঁকে সামনে রেখেই ভোটের প্রচারে নেমেছিল। তাই ভোটে বিপর্যয়ের দায়িত্ব তাঁকেই নিতে হবে। ব্যক্তিকে বেশি গুরুত্ব দেওয়ার মাসুল দিতে হয়েছে বলে বেঙ্কাইয়া এক কথায় বাজপেয়ীর মানালি-কাণ্ডকে নস্যাত্ন করে দিয়েছেন।

তবে মোদী অপসারণের প্রশ্নে দলের বৈঠকে পরাস্ত হলেও বাজপেয়ী নিজের উদার ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ ভাবমূর্তিকে ভাল ভাবেই প্রতিষ্ঠিত করতে সফল বলে মনে করছেন দলেরই একাংশ। তাঁদের ধারণা, বাজপেয়ী এত সহজে হাল ছাড়বেন না। রাজনৈতিক সন্ম্যাসও নেবেন না। সি পি এমে জ্যোতি বসু যেমন দলের কাছে বার বার ঠোকর খেলেও ধীরে ধীরে দলকে অনেক ক্ষেত্রে উদারনীতি নিতে বাধ্য করেছেন, ঠিক সে ভাবেই বাজপেয়ীও তাঁর কটর দক্ষিণপন্থী দলকে উগ্র হিন্দুয়ানার পথ থেকে সরিয়ে আনার লড়াই চালাচ্ছেন। আগের তুলনায় দলকে এই প্রশ্নে কিছুটা নমনীয় করে আনতেও তিনি সক্ষম হয়েছেন।

যদিও নরেন্দ্র মোদীরা রয়েছেন। আজই জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডু বলেছেন, হিন্দুত্বকে আঁকড়ে থাকার জন্য বি জে পি মোটেই অনুতপ্ত নয়। মহারাষ্ট্রের নেতা গোপীনাথ মুণ্ডেও বলেছেন, আসন্ন নির্বাচনে মহারাষ্ট্রে বি জে পি-শিব সেনা জোট হিন্দুত্বকে তুলে ধরেই লড়াই। ক্ষমতায় থাকা বাজপেয়ীর উদারনীতি যে এখন ক্ষমতা থেকে ছিটকে আসার ফলে দলের হিন্দুত্বপন্থীদের চাপের সামনে কিছুটা কোণঠাসা হবেই, সে কথা এখানে সঙ্ঘপরিবারের প্রতিনিধিরা স্পষ্ট করেই মনে করিয়ে দিচ্ছেন। কিন্তু দলীয় সূত্রেই এটাও স্পষ্ট যে, এই হিন্দুয়ানার প্রশ্নে সঙ্ঘপরিবারের দাবি যা-ই হোক, তা নিয়ে বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণীর মধ্যে বিরোধ বেড়ে চলার সম্ভাবনাও কমে আসছে। লক্ষণীয়, বেঙ্কাইয়া হিন্দুত্ব না ছাড়ার কথা বললেও একবারও রাম জন্মভূমি মন্দির ইত্যাদি প্রসঙ্গ তোলেননি।

23 JUN 2001

ANAD...

BJP fails the test

Whenever Modi is shown the door, it must be
to account for Gujarat

THEY say it has blown away for now, the storm the Manali musings stirred up in Delhi. There is no proposal to remove Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, Venkaiah Naidu announced on Sunday, "at this juncture". That could mean: that the party's leadership has decided not to decide; that a decision has been taken and Modi is on his way out, only later, maybe after Maharashtra's assembly polls; that Modi will stay. Sunday's outcome is deeply disappointing. The BJP was not brave enough to meet its opportunity.

Modi must go and he must go because of his regime's proven abdication and culpability in Gujarat 2002. There must be no room for equivocation on that score. There may also be other reasons for removing him. His tenure has proved to be thoroughly alienating, thoroughly morbid on many counts and the near uprising against him in the ranks of the Gujarat BJP would seem to affirm that. But it would be a sad joke if Modi were to go in the name of one of his lesser crimes. It would be deeply unjust to those who perished and those who suffered during the rampaging violence two years ago in his state. And to those who continue to

suffer for lack of closure. The Best Bakery retrial has only just begun in a special court in Mumbai this week. It is a reminder that Modi's Gujarat is incapable of delivering justice.

Modi must go because of Gujarat for the BJP's sake as well. In the battle that has raged unofficially in and around the party these last few days, one section has argued that Modi is being made scapegoat for the party's dismal showing in the Lok Sabha elections. There is no clear evidence to link him to the party's poor performance, especially after the BJP won a round of assembly polls after and including Gujarat. The party must identify the real reasons for defeat, goes the argument, and move on. This is a bad argument and a self-defeating prescription. Gujarat is a ghost with a much larger footprint than can be truthfully gleaned from one electoral scorecard. The BJP's accountability for Gujarat is a larger one. It would be doing itself disservice by casting it in the narrow terms of electoral victory and defeat. BJP leaders needn't go to a chintan baithak to figure out that nearly all roads to the party's future lead back to Moditva. Rather, to its firm exile.

মোদীর অব্যাহতি সংঘের

নরেন্দ্র মোদী আবারও রেহাই পাইয়া গেলেন। তাঁহাকে এখনই গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্ব হইতে অপসারিত করা হইতেছে না। অন্তত দলের সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে তেমনই সিদ্ধান্ত হইয়াছে। অথচ গুজরাতের সংখ্যালঘু নিধনের জন্য তিনি দায়ী এবং এই নিধনকাণ্ডই লোকসভা নির্বাচনে দলের বিপর্যয়ের অন্যতম কারণ, এমন একটা বক্তব্য গত কয়েক দিন ধরিয়া দলের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বেও দানা বাধিতেছিল। এ ব্যাপারে স্বয়ং অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী তাঁহার মানালির অবকাশ-যাপনের ফাঁকে-ফাঁকে থাকিয়া-থাকিয়া কামান দাগিতেছিলেন, দল ও সংঘ পরিবারের মোদী-সমর্থক অংশটির উপর বিষয়টি লইয়া জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে আলোচনার জন্য চাপ সৃষ্টি করিতেছিলেন। প্রথম দিকে রাষ্ট্রীয় স্বয়ংসেবক সংঘ ও বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদের নেতারা মোদীর সমর্থনে দাঁড়াইলেও, মনে হইতেছিল, বাজপেয়ীর চাপের কাছে উত্তরোত্তর নতি-স্বীকার করিতেছেন। সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে বিষয়টি আলোচ্যসূচির অন্তর্ভুক্ত হওয়ায় অনেকেই ধরিয়া লইয়াছিলেন, এ বার আর মোদীর নিস্তার নাই। কিন্তু সেই অনুমান ভ্রান্ত প্রতিপন্ন হইয়াছে। মোদী দম ফেলিবার সুযোগ পাইলেন, এ বার দলের অভ্যন্তরে নিজের শক্তি আরও সংহত করিতে সচেষ্ট হইবেন। পক্ষান্তরে ইহা বাজপেয়ীর তরফে পরাজয় বা পশ্চাদপসরণ বলিয়াই গণ্য হইবে। তিনি যে মোদী-প্রশ্নে দলকে নিজ মতের অনুকূলে প্রভাবিত করিতে সম্পূর্ণ ব্যর্থ হইয়াছেন, তাহা নিশ্চিত।

এই ব্যর্থতা কেবল একটি সাময়িক ধাক্কা না-ও হইতে পারে। মনে রাখা দরকার, নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের কার্যকারণ লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী সহ দলের অপরাপর নেতারা ব্যাখ্যা করার পরেও বাজপেয়ী তাঁহার নিজের মতো করিয়া নিজস্ব ঢঙে মোদী-প্রসঙ্গের অবতারণা করিয়াছিলেন। অতীতে বহু বার মোদীর অপসারণে দলকে বাধ্য করিতে ব্যর্থ হইলেও এ বার যে তিনি মোদীর ব্যাপারে একটা হেস্টনেস্ত চান, সেই বার্তা সুকৌশলে রটাইয়া দিয়াছিলেন। কিন্তু হিন্দুত্ববাদীরা অন্তত আপাতত তাঁহাকে গুজরাত দলে মোদীর অব্যাহত কর্তৃত্ব শিরোধার্য করিতে বাধ্য করিয়াছে। এই পরাজয় বা ধাক্কা বাজপেয়ী কী ভাবে মোকাবিলা করেন, নূতন কী কৌশল অবলম্বন করেন, তাহা দেখিবার। তবে ইহার ফলে দলে হিন্দুত্ববাদীদের পরাক্রম আপাতত অক্ষুণ্ণ রহিল। মোদী যে হিন্দুত্বের 'পোস্টার-বয়' বলিয়া গণ্য হন, বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ ও রাষ্ট্রীয় স্বয়ংসেবক সংঘ যে তাঁহাকে আপন সম্পদ বলিয়া মনে করে, তাহা স্পষ্ট। শুধু তাহাই নহে,

সংখ্যালঘু-নিধন-কাণ্ডে পৌরোহিত্য করার দায়ে তাঁহার অপসারণ হিন্দুত্ব শিবিরে 'ভুল সংকেত' শ্রেণণ করিবে এবং বিজেপি তথা সংঘ পরিবারের মতাদর্শের মূলেই আঘাত করিবে, ইহাই হইয়া ওঠে মোদী-সমর্থকদের যুক্তি। এই যুক্তি দলের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের কাছে গ্রাহ্য হওয়ার অর্থ— উগ্র হিন্দুত্ব হইতে আপন বিচ্ছেদ রচনার গল্পকথাটির কল্পকথা প্রতিপন্ন হওয়া। বিজেপি যে আদৌ উন্নয়ন ও বিকাশের পার্টি নয়, শাসন-পরিচালনার স্বাভাবিক পার্টি নয়, এখনও আগের মতোই হিন্দুত্বের পার্টি এবং হিন্দুত্ব তাহার গোপন এজেন্ডাই রহিয়া গিয়াছে, যাহাকে প্রয়োজনমতো রণধ্বনিতে রূপান্তরিত করা যায়, এই আশঙ্কাই ইহার ফলে ঘনীভূত হইবে।

যাঁহাকে সুপ্রিম কোর্ট নির্ধূর রোমান সশ্রুটি 'নিরোর' সহিত তুলনা করিয়াছে, যাঁহার শাসনাধীনে ধর্মীয় সংখ্যালঘুদের সুবিচার পাওয়ার সম্ভাবনা বিষয়ে সংশয় সর্বোচ্চ আদালতকে সংশ্লিষ্ট মামলাগুলি রাজ্যান্তরে স্থানান্তরিত করিতে প্ররোচিত করিয়াছে, সেই নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে এ ভাবে আঁকড়াইয়া রাখিয়া বিজেপি নূতন করিয়া সংকেত দিতেছে, সুরাজ বা রাজধর্ম পালনে এ দলের কোনও আগ্রহ নাই। শঙ্কা হয়, রামজন্মভূমি আন্দোলনের সাম্প্রদায়িক হট্টগোলের মধ্য দিয়া জাতীয় রাজনীতিতে কঙ্কে পাওয়া এই দল কোনও পর্যায়েই হিন্দুত্ব পরিহার করিতে প্রস্তুত নয়, যে-হিন্দুত্ব ধর্মীয় সংখ্যালঘুর কাছে ত্রাসস্বরূপ। যাঁহারা মনে করিতেছিলেন, ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতা আর কোনও বিষয় নয়, সাম্প্রদায়িক রাজনীতি হইতে বিজেপি দূরে সরিয়া আসিয়াছে, তাঁহাদের নূতন করিয়া ভাবিতে হইবে। বিজেপির এই মোদী-ভজনার ফলে ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতাকে মূল শ্লোগান করিয়া জোটবদ্ধ কেন্দ্রের বর্তমান শাসক মোর্চা আরও সংহত হইবে। ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতা যে এখনও আগের মতোই প্রাসঙ্গিক, নরেন্দ্র মোদীরা রাজনীতির অঙ্গন আলো করিয়া বিরাজিত থাকিলে সাম্প্রদায়িক বিভেদপন্থা যে রাষ্ট্রনীতির অঙ্গ হইয়া উঠিবে, যাহার মোকাবিলা জরুরি, এই বিষয়টিই স্পষ্ট হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। মোদীর ব্যাপারে নিজের জিদে অবিচল থাকিয়া বিজেপি তাহার প্রধান প্রতিপক্ষ কংগ্রেস এবং বামপন্থীদের নূতন গোলাবারুদ সরবরাহ করিয়াছে। এখন তাহারা এমনকী কৃষ্ণজন্মভূমি কিংবা কাশী-বারাণসীর মসজিদ ধ্বংসের আন্দোলনও নব পর্যায়ে শুরু করিতে পারে। দেশবাসী ইহার অধিক কিছু বিজেপির কাছে প্রত্যাশা করে না। অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর নেতৃত্বাধীন ছয় বছরের অন্তর্বর্তী শাসনকালকে বরং ব্যতিক্রম বা বিচ্যুতি বলিয়াই ইতিহাস গণ্য করুক!

No proposal to replace Modi: BJP

● Panel to study reasons for defeat in elections

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JUNE 20. The Bharatiya Janata Party today decided that Narendra Modi will stay on as Gujarat Chief Minister. After a marathon four-hour meeting of the BJP parliamentary board here, the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, said there was "no proposal to change the Gujarat leadership at this juncture."

Asked whether Mr. Modi's leadership was discussed, Mr. Naidu said: "All issues were discussed."

Was the Modi chapter still open or had it been closed? To this, Mr. Naidu said: "Neither closed nor open." Repeated questions on the timing of Mr. Modi's exit elicited the same response: "No proposal to replace the Gujarat Chief Minister at this juncture."

Mr. Naidu said that after its national executive committee meeting starting in Mumbai on Tuesday, the BJP would organise a '*chintan baithak*' (brainstorming session) where the party would decide its "future direction" and all issues would be discussed there.

He announced that a committee would be set up to "study in-depth" the "reasons for the defeat in the Lok Sabha." He would announce the composition of the committee at the Mumbai meet.

Earlier, Mr. Naidu had a meeting with the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, ahead of the parliamentary board meeting.

Later the board met at Mr. Naidu's residence where the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh joint general secretary, Madan Das Devi, who is in charge of BJP affairs, was also present as he had been invited to lunch.

However, he did not attend the meeting. Mr. Devi was reportedly at hand to enable the party leaders to confer with him and get the RSS approval for the decisions taken.

The indication from some senior party leaders was that the Modi matter could be revived at the brainstorming session that was likely to be held in late July or early August during the Parliament recess.

Mr. Naidu said that the parliamentary board discussed the current political situation, the reasons for the defeat in the Lok Sabha elections and the agenda for the executive meeting.

State-wise reports on the election results would be placed before the executive and analysed.

Assembly poll strategy to be discussed

The executive would also give its views on the working of the new Government and the pre-

sent political situation through a resolution. Besides, the executive would discuss preparations for the Assembly elections to be held over the next 12 months in Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana and Arunachal Pradesh.

"Our battle plans for the Assembly elections will be discussed," Mr. Naidu said.

The party is also likely to present a paper — '*aagami disha*' (future direction) — at the executive.

Some party leaders said later that the emphasis at today's meeting was on preparing for the Assembly elections.

At the moment the BJP was not thinking about the life span of the Manmohan Singh Government. "We can sit in the Opposition. We want the Government to last the full five years," Mr. Naidu said while indicating that the BJP would strengthen and keep itself battle-ready if the need arose.

At the '*chintan baithak*,' the shortcomings in the preparations and strategy for the Lok Sabha elections would be discussed and the party was ready to "correct" lapses. "We have to learn lessons from the past and we have to move forward leaving the past behind."

Dissidents disheartened:
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মহারাষ্ট্রে ভোটের পর সরানোর পক্ষে আডবাণীও বাজপেয়ী ব্যর্থ, মোদী আপাতত রয়ে গেলেন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২০ জুন: গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে সরানোর চেষ্টা করে আজ ব্যর্থ হলেন প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী। বি জে পি-র সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকের পরে দলের সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডু জানিয়ে দিলেন, মোদীকে সরানোর প্রস্তাব এই মুহূর্তে নেই। তবে, তাঁর কার্যকলাপে দলের মধ্যে যে অসন্তোষ দেখা দিয়েছে, সে ব্যাপারে বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে আডবাণীও একমত। মহারাষ্ট্রে বিধানসভা নির্বাচনের পর প্রয়োজনে মোদীকে অপসারণের ক্ষেত্রে বাজপেয়ী আজ আডবাণীর সমর্থনও পেয়েছেন। আপাতত স্থির হয়েছে, মোদীকে তাঁর আচরণ সংযত করার জন্য সতর্কবার্তা পাঠানো হবে, অন্য দিকে ভোটে ভরাদুবিবির কারণ বিশ্লেষণ করা হবে।

আজকের বৈঠকে মোদীকে অপসারণ নিয়ে যথেষ্ট সরব ছিলেন বাজপেয়ী। কিন্তু তাঁর মত দল আপাতত মেনে না-নেওয়ার এটাই প্রমাণিত হল যে, দলীয় চাপের সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে বাজপেয়ীর ব্যক্তিগত ইচ্ছা-অনিচ্ছা আর মাথা তুলতে পারছে না। দলকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে পারছেন না প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। রাশ আর তাঁর হাতে নেই। রাজনৈতিক পর্যবেক্ষকদের মতে, আগামী দিনে মোদীকে সরাতে বাজপেয়ী ফের কীভাবে সক্রিয় হন সেটাই এখন দেখার। জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে অথবা তার পরে বিষয়টি অন্য কাউকে দিয়ে উত্থাপন করানো হয় কি না, দেখার বিষয় সেটিও।

মোদীকে অপসারণের ক্ষেত্রে অটল দলে সংখ্যালঘু হলেও নিজের ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ ভাবমূর্তি উজ্জ্বল করার প্রক্ষে তিনি যথেষ্ট সফল বলেই মনে করছে রাজনৈতিক মহল। গোয়াতে দলের জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে (গোখরা কাণ্ডের ঠিক পরেই) একই ভাবে মোদীর বিরোধিতা করে ব্যর্থ হলেও জনমানসে নিজের ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ ভাবমূর্তি তুলে ধরতে পেরেছিলেন বাজপেয়ী।

বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডুর বাসভবনে আজ সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে মোদীর অপসারণ নিয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হয়। বাজপেয়ী কোনও রাখঢাক না-রেখে জানিয়ে দেন, তিনি মোদীকে সরানোর পক্ষে। উপস্থিত সদস্যদের সামনে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীও এই উপায়ে বাজপেয়ীকে সমর্থন করে বলেন,



বিজেপি সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকের আগে দলের সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডুর সঙ্গে অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী। — এ এফ পি

গুজরাতে যে ভাবে সরকার চলছে, তাতে একটা সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া আশু প্রয়োজন। তবে, সেক্ষেত্রে মহারাষ্ট্র বিধানসভা নির্বাচনের আগে মোদীকে সরানো নেওয়া হলে দল ধাক্কা খেতে পারে, এই আশঙ্কায় অপসারণের সিদ্ধান্ত আপাতত ঝুলিয়ে রাখা হল। ইতিমধ্যে মোদীকে পাঠানো সতর্কবার্তায় বিক্ষুব্ধ গোষ্ঠীকে শাস্ত করার জন্য মন্ত্রিসভা সম্প্রসারণ করার, তাঁর আচরণে নম্রতা আনা, দলের কেন্দ্রীয় নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ বজায় রাখার কথা বলা হবে।

বৈঠকের পরে বেঙ্কাইয়াকে মোদীর অপসারণ প্রসঙ্গে বারবার প্রশ্ন করা হলে, একটি বাক্যই তিনি বলেন, “গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে সরানোর কোনও প্রস্তাব এই মুহূর্তে নেই।” তিনি ‘এই মুহূর্তে’ বলার ফলে রাজনৈতিক মহলে এই ধারণাই তৈরি হয়েছে যে, আগামী দিনে মোদী-অপসারণের সম্ভাবনা বেঙ্কাইয়া পুরোপুরি খারিজ করে দিচ্ছেন না। তবে তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ভাবে এক সপ্তাহ নীরব থাকার পর আজ হঠাৎই গুজরাতের সাম্প্রতিক পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে (সম্মানস্বাধী সন্দেহে ৪ জনকে গুলি করে মারা সংক্রান্ত বিতর্ক) মোদী

সরকারের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছে বি জে পি। বেঙ্কাইয়া বলেছেন, “কংগ্রেস-সহ শাসক জোটের শরিক দলগুলি জাতীয় নিরাপত্তার স্বার্থে গুজরাত সরকারের নেওয়া ব্যবস্থার সমালোচনা করছে। এর পর তো ওরা অক্ষরধামের ঘটনাকেও নাটক বলে প্রচার চালাবে। এই আচরণ অত্যন্ত নিন্দনীয়।”

মোদী প্রসঙ্গের পাশাপাশি বেঙ্কাইয়া এ দিন একাধিক সিদ্ধান্তের কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন। প্রথমত, লোকসভা নির্বাচনের পরাজয়ের কারণ বিশ্লেষণের জন্য একটি ছোট কমিটি তৈরি হবে। সেই কমিটির সদস্য করা হবেন তা ঘোষিত হবে জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে। শুধু গুজরাতই নয়, দেশের সমস্ত রাজ্যের পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখবে ওই কমিটি। দেশের বর্তমান রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি, নতুন সরকারের কাজকর্মও বিশ্লেষণ করবে তারা। এই কমিটির দেওয়া ‘ফিড ব্যাক’-এর ভিত্তিতে একটি রিপোর্ট তৈরি করা হবে।

দ্বিতীয়ত, জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে বিহার, মহারাষ্ট্র, ঝাড়খণ্ড, অরুণাচলপ্রদেশে বিধানসভা নির্বাচনের কৌশল তৈরি হবে।

তৃতীয়ত, জুলাই মাসে চিগুন বৈঠকে বসছে বি জে পি। সংসদের বাজেট

অধিবেশনের মাঝের বিরতি সময়ে এই বৈঠক হবে। বৈঠকে দলের ক্রটি-বিদ্যুতি নিয়ে আলোচনা, প্রয়োজনীয় সংশোধনীর কথা ভাবা, এগনোর নীতি তৈরি করা হবে।

চতুর্থত, কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে রাজনৈতিক এবং অর্থনৈতিক বিষয় নিয়ে বৈঠকের পাশাপাশি ‘ভবিষ্যতের কর্তব্য’ বিষয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা ও প্রস্তাব নেওয়া হবে। শুধু মাত্র পরাজয়ের ময়না তদন্ত না করে ভবিষ্যতের দিকে তাকানো হবে। পরাজয়ের কারণ খুঁজতে বসে কাদা ছোড়াছুড়ির যে সম্ভাবনা তৈরি হবে, তাতে মহারাষ্ট্রে ভোটের আগে দলের মনোবল আহত হবে বলে দলীয় নেতৃত্ব মনে করছে।

সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে ডাকা হয় আর এস এস নেতা মদনদাস দেবীকে। তাঁর সামনেই মোদী প্রসঙ্গে আলোচনা হয়। মদনদাস জানান, ‘মুখ্যমন্ত্রী’ মোদীকে সরানো হলে তাঁদের বিন্দুমাত্র আপত্তি নেই। কারণ মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বদলের বিষয়টি বি জে পি-র অভ্যন্তরীণ সিদ্ধান্ত বলেই তাঁরা মনে করেন। তবে মোদীকে সরানোয় যদি এই ধারণা তৈরি হয় যে, বি জে পি হিন্দুত্বকে লঘু করে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করছে, তবে তার বিরোধিতা করবে আর এস এস।

Vajpayee flip-flop on Modi issue

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 19. — The Modi issue, which has been dogging the BJP for the past few days, took a new turn today with Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee declaring that it's "a thing of the past". This view was endorsed by an RSS leader following a meeting with Mr Vajpayee. Mr Vajpayee, on his return to the Capital from Manali, said: "We should look to the future now and prepare for the next Assembly elections."

The Modi issue, however, will be taken up at the BJP parliamentary board meeting tomorrow. But it isn't clear whether the party will go by the RSS diktat on the Modi issue and distance itself from its NDA allies or take a pragmatic stand of keeping the allies together. Significantly, the Shiv Sena leader, Mr Udhav Thackeray has favoured Mr Modi's removal in view of the Maharashtra Assembly polls, due in a few months' time.

Soon after Mr Vajpayee's return to Delhi, Mr LK Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh met him and discussed how best to retrieve ground lost by the Vajpayee-Venkaiah Naidu sparring on the Gujarat issue. Mr Vajpayee is said to be peeved at the manner in which the RSS and the BJP president attacked him for his Manali statement on the BJP's defeat vis-a-vis the Gujarat riots and Mr Modi.

Mr Madan Das Devi, RSS

Singhal's barb

BHUBANESWAR, June 19 — "Mr Vajpayee should declare whether he belongs to the Sangh Parivar or not. If he belongs to it then he should follow the discipline of the Parivar," said VHP leader Mr Ashok Singhal here today. Talking to reporters, the VHP leader also asserted that the BJP will soon fall in line. But he refused to elaborate. Mr Singhal was responding to questions on the NDA's electoral debacle. — SNS

leader, called on Mr Vajpayee though he didn't fail to attack Modi-baiters again today. Mr Devi is understood to have conveyed the RSS views that the Gujarat violence should not be linked to the BJP's poll debacle.

Meanwhile, in an interview to a TV news channel, Mr Modi skirted a direct reply to the question whether he would resign. He said: "I am carrying the responsibility given by five crore people of Gujarat and working in the fields of education and energy".

The parliamentary board meeting has been called to narrow differences on the Modi issue and take a final stand.

The RSS felt linking Mr Modi with the Gujarat riots "will mean weakening the Hindutva movement." Mr Devi added that the BJP alone will decide Mr Modi's fate.

বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণী কথা

মহারাষ্ট্রে ভোট,

মোদী এখনই

সরছেন না

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৯ জুন: গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে এখনই সরানো হচ্ছে না। মহারাষ্ট্রের বিধানসভা ভোটের কথা মাথায় রেখেই আজ বিজেপি শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিল। সন্ধ্যায় অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী ও যশোবন্ত সিংহের বৈঠকে ঠিক হয়েছে সেপ্টেম্বরে মহারাষ্ট্র নির্বাচন হয়ে যাওয়ার পর মোদীকে সরানো হবে, তার আগে নয়।

আজ দিল্লি আসার আগেই মানালিতে বাজপেয়ী সাংবাদিকদের জানিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন, “মোদীর ইস্তফা আপাতত পুরনো বিষয়। তার চেয়েও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়গুলি নিয়ে এখন ভাবতে হবে। বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে আসন্ন বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে লড়াইয়ের নীতি স্থির করতে হবে।”

সম্প্রতি মোদীর ইস্তফা প্রসঙ্গে বাজপেয়ী ও বেঙ্কাইয়ার মতবৈধ প্রকাশ্যে চলে আসে। সে ব্যাপারে আজ বাজপেয়ী বলেন, “আমরা সব সময় এক কথাই বলি।” বেঙ্কাইয়া বলেছিলেন, গুজরাত সত্ত্বেও বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে দলের ফল ভাল হয়েছে। এই মন্তব্যের ব্যাখ্যা দিতে গিয়ে বাজপেয়ী বলেন, “আমরা যখন জয়ের কথা বলি তখন মধ্যপ্রদেশ, রাজস্থান প্রভৃতি রাজ্যের কথা বোঝাই যেখানে আমাদের প্রমোদীত সাফল্য এসেছে। গুজরাতেও আমরাই বেশি আসন পেয়েছি। কিন্তু সেখানে ফল আরও ভাল হতে পারত।”

মহারাষ্ট্রে সেপ্টেম্বরে বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে কংগ্রেস ও শরদ পওয়ার জোট মায়াবতীর বহুজন সমাজ পার্টিও সামিল হতে পারে এই আশঙ্কা করছে বিজেপি। এ দিকে গোটা দেশ জুড়ে এখন সনিয়া গাঁধীর ‘ত্যাগ’ নিয়েও সাধারণ মানুষের মনে এক উদ্দীপনা আছে। এই পরিস্থিতিতে মহারাষ্ট্রের বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব গুজরাত ও মোদী নিয়ে কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে আলোচনা করার ঘোরতর বিরোধী। প্রমোদ মহাজন শুধু নন, শিবসেনা প্রধান বাল ঠাকরেও বিজেপি’র শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বকে বলেছেন কর্মসমিতির বৈঠক চলার সময় মোদী প্রসঙ্গ উঠলে জোটের বিপদ অনিবার্য। গত কাল বাজপেয়ীকে ফোনে আডবাণী বোঝান। আর তখন সামনে প্রমোদ ও যশোবন্ত হাজির ছিলেন।

বাজপেয়ী মোদীকে সরানোর কথা প্রকাশ্যে বলেছিলেন ক’দিন আগেই এই মানালিতে। জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে আলোচনাও চেয়েছিলেন তিনি। কিন্তু বেঙ্কাইয়া পর দিনই কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে আলোচনার প্রস্তাব খারিজ করে দেন। কিন্তু বাজপেয়ী তার পর আবার গুজরাত নিয়ে আলোচনার কথা বলেন। তবে সে দিন তিনি মোদীর ইস্তফার কথা আর বলেননি। এখন ঠিক হয়েছে, আগামিকাল সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে মোদীর অপসারণ নিয়ে কোনও কথা হবে না। তবে নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয় খতিয়ে দেখার জন্য একটি কমিটি গঠন করে দেওয়া হবে আর এই কমিটি নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয় পর্যালোচনা করবে। আডবাণী বলেন, এ বার ভোটের ফল বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে বিভিন্ন। ফলাফলের বিভিন্নতার জন্য কমিটি শুধু গুজরাত নয়, উত্তরপ্রদেশ, অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মতো অন্য সব রাজ্যেও যাবে। এ ভাবে মোদীকে সরানোর বিষয়টিকে বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণী আজ দলের বৈঠকের থেকে আলাদা করে দিলেন। তবে বাজপেয়ী-আডবাণী সেপ্টেম্বরের পর মোদীকে সরানোর কথা ঠিক করলেও বিজেপি’র বহু নেতা মনে করেন এর ফলে মোদী অনেকটা সময় পেয়ে গেলেন। মহারাষ্ট্রের নির্বাচনের পরই এসে যাবে বিহারের বিধানসভার ভোটের প্রস্তুতি। মোদী নিজেও মন্ত্রিসভার সম্প্রসারণ করে বিক্ষুব্ধদের সামলে নেওয়ার চেষ্টা করবেন।

আর এস এস নেতৃত্ব যে মোদীকে সরানোর বিপক্ষে তা নন কিন্তু তাঁরা আডবাণীকে জানিয়েছেন মোদীকে সরানোর মাধ্যমে যদি এই বার্তা সর্বত্র পৌঁছায় যে বিজেপি ‘হিন্দুত্ব’-কে বিসর্জন দিতে চাইছে তবে তাঁরা এই সিদ্ধান্তের বিরোধিতা করবেন। একই কারণে এ বার মহারাষ্ট্র ভোটের আগে মোদীকে সরাতে প্রমোদ মহাজন-শিবসেনার আপত্তি রয়েছে।

আগামিকাল দলের সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে মোদী প্রসঙ্গ না উঠলেও মুম্বইয়ের কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে তোলার শেষ চেষ্টা করবেন প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কেশুভাই পটেল ও বিক্ষুব্ধ নেতারা। কিন্তু বাজপেয়ী নিজেই আজ সেই উদ্যোগে জল ঢেলে দিলেন।

মোদীর ইস্তফার চেয়েও এ ঘটনায় বাজপেয়ী ও আডবাণীর ক্ষমতার দ্বন্দ্ব অনেক বেশি স্পষ্ট হয়ে উঠেছে। দলের ভিতর তাঁর নেতৃত্বকেই প্রতিষ্ঠিত করলেন আডবাণী।

Gujarat issue will be discussed: Vajpayee

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JUNE 17. The countdown has begun for the exit of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, with the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, clearly signalling that the Gujarat issue will be discussed in Mumbai where the party is holding a three-day national executive committee meeting from Tuesday, June 22.

This is what Mr. Vajpayee said today at a public meeting near Manali, Himachal Pradesh, where he is holidaying: "We will discuss Gujarat when we meet in Mumbai; a discussion will take place ... we are not afraid to discuss issues; we discuss when we win elections and we also discuss when we lose ... we will discuss with an open mind ..."

Party sources said that Mr. Modi's fate might be sealed even before the national executive committee meeting. Mr. Vajpayee will be back from Manali on June 19; the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, will return from Chennai the same day; and both the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leader who is in charge of BJP affairs, Madan Das Devi, are in town. A meeting could take place any time between June 19 and 21 before the leaders leave for Mumbai. After a decision is taken here, a meeting on the sidelines of the executive to discuss the issue further will only be a formality. "With 80 per cent of the Gujarat State unit against Mr. Modi, the party has not much of a choice. The change of guard, if it takes place, will not be because of the riots or their effect on the Lok Sabha polls, but because of his style of functioning," a senior party leader said today.

In fact, a decision to change the Chief Minister was virtually taken some weeks ago but the party leadership wanted the dissident leaders to wait till the State Assembly session was over. Appar-

ently, the exit of Mr. Modi got postponed partly because there is no decision as yet on who should take his place. Then the June 13 statement of Mr. Vajpayee and the reaction of others that followed gave a few weeks' grace time to Mr. Modi, one party leader said.

On record, not a single BJP leader was willing to say anything. "No comments" was all that the party spokesperson, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, would say.

In political circles, today's statement by Mr. Vajpayee is being read as a rebuff to Mr. Naidu, who had virtually contradicted Mr. Vajpayee's June 13 statement from Manali that Gujarat and Mr. Modi would be discussed at the party's national executive and that the riots in the State two years ago were one of the reasons for the party's dismal performance in the elections.

Mr. Naidu said the next day: "There is no proposal" before the party on a leadership change in Gujarat and that "the matter will not be discussed at the national executive committee meeting in Mumbai." But even on that day Mr. Naidu had not denied that there was a crisis in Gujarat and said that the affairs of the State "would be discussed separately." The emphasis on "no discussion" at the executive led to speculation that the party would isolate Mr. Vajpayee. Today's robust rejoinder by Mr. Vajpayee is seen as a signal that he is ready to challenge those challenging his unquestioned leadership.

As for the RSS, it had made it clear that it is unhappy with Mr. Vajpayee linking the party's electoral rout to the Gujarat riots. It would not stand in the way of a leadership change for other reasons. "It is for the BJP to decide, we have no role to play," the RSS spokesperson, Ram Madhav, has said on the question of the party asking Mr. Modi to put in his papers.

পিছু হটতে হল অটলকে, মোদী এখনই সরছেন না

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৫ জুন: আপাতত গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর আসন থেকে নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে সরানো হচ্ছে না। প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী রবিবার মোদীকে সরানোর ইঙ্গিত দেওয়ার পরে সঙ্ঘ পরিবারের তীব্র প্রতিক্রিয়ার মুখে মোদীকে সরানোর বিষয়টি আপাতত শিকেয় তুলে রাখল বিজেপি। বাজপেয়ীর কথায় মোদীকে কেন্দ্র করে যে বিতর্ক তৈরি হয়েছে তাকে প্রশমিত করাই এএ মুহুর্তে বিজেপি-র লক্ষ্য। কিন্তু মোদীর পক্ষে যেমন সঙ্ঘ পরিবার এবং বিজেপি-র একাংশ সোচ্চার হয়েছে, তেমনই মোদীকে সরানোর পক্ষেও চাপ রয়েছে। এই অবস্থায় মুম্বইয়ে বিজেপি-র কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের পরে সম্ভবত মোদীর অপসারণের বিষয়টি আবার বিবেচনা করবেন শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব। অর্থাৎ মোদী-প্রশ্নে প্রথম রাউন্ডে বাজপেয়ীকেই পিছু হটতে হল।

দলের মুখপাত্র এম এ নকভি বলেন, বাজপেয়ী আমাদের সব চেয়ে বড় নেতা। বেক্সাইয়া নয়ডু কাল বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে কথা বলেই সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করেছিলেন। কিন্তু বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদের অশোক সিঙ্ঘল আজ প্রকাশ্যেই দাবি তুলেছেন, বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ স্তরে নেতা বদল করতে হবে। অর্থাৎ, বাজপেয়ীকে সরাতে হবে। তাঁর সবচেয়ে আপত্তি, বাজপেয়ী বলেছেন যে, গুজরাত-দাঙ্গার কারণেই লোকসভা নির্বাচনে বিজেপি-র হার হয়েছে। লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীকেও আক্রমণ করতে ছাড়েননি সিঙ্ঘল। আর এস এস নেতা সুদর্শন আগেই জানিয়ে রেখেছেন, মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বদলের বিষয়ে আর এস এস নাক গলাতে চায় না, কিন্তু গুজরাতের ঘটনাকে নির্বাচনে বিপর্যয়ের কারণ বলা চলবে না। এই পরিস্থিতিতে শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব এক কদম এগিয়ে দু'কদম পিছিয়ে এসেছে।

অটল এবং আডবাণী দু'জনেই মোদীকে অপসারণের প্রশ্নে দিন পনেরো আগে একমত হন। দলের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের পক্ষ থেকে বিষ্ণুর নেতা প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কেশুভাই পটেলকেও আশ্বাস দেওয়া হয়। কিন্তু বাজপেয়ীর প্রকাশ্য ঘোষণার পরে আর এস এস এবং পরিষদের আক্রমণ যে বিতর্ক সৃষ্টি করেছে তাতে মোদী কিছু দিনের জন্য অস্বস্তি পেয়ে গেলেন। আডবাণী আজ বেক্সাইয়ার

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

মোদী সরছেন না

প্রথম পাতার পর ৭:৪৪:৫৫
পাশাপাশি বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গেও কথা বলেছেন। ঠিক হয়েছে, প্রথমে মোদীকে ঘিরে প্রকাশ্যে কাদা ছোঁড়াছুড়ি বন্ধে উদ্যোগী হতে হবে। কিন্তু মোদীকে সরানো না হলে এন ডি এ-র শরিকদের মধ্যে বিদ্রোহ শুরু হবে এমন আশঙ্কাও রয়েছে। এর আগে গুজরাত দাঙ্গার পরে গোয়ায় বিজেপি-র কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের সময়েও তেলুগু দেশম নেতা চন্দ্রবাবু নায়ডু মোদীকে সরানোর দাবিতে সোচ্চার হন। কিন্তু তখন আডবাণী-সহ দলের একটা বড় অংশ মোদীর পক্ষে ছিলেন।

সব মিলিয়ে মোদী প্রশ্নে বিজেপি আপাতত একটা রাজনৈতিক সঙ্কটের মুখে। এক দিকে সংঘ পরিবারের চাপ, অন্য দিকে গুজরাতে দলের বিষ্ণুর নেতাদের বিদ্রোহ এবং এন ডি এ-র শরিক দলের নেতাদের চাপ। শরিকেরা এখনও প্রকাশ্যে বিবৃতি দিতে শুরু করেননি। বাজপেয়ী শরিক নেতাদের আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, মোদীকে সরানো হবেই। আডবাণী আজ রাতে দলীয় নেতাদের বুঝিয়েছেন, প্রথমে চলতি বিতর্কের অবসান চাই। দলের অভ্যন্তরীণ সঙ্কট মেটানোর পরেই রাজ্যে ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের চেষ্টায় যাওয়া বাঞ্ছনীয়।

মোদী এই সময়টুকু পেয়ে গিয়ে বিষ্ণুর নেতাদের মন জয় করতে মরিয়া হয়ে উঠেছেন। তিনি বিষ্ণুর নেতাদের মন্ত্রী করার টোপ দিতে শুরু করেছেন। দলের কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের পরেই মন্ত্রিসভার সম্প্রসারণ হবে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে।

AAJKAL

16 JUN 2004

RSS chief defends Modi, criticises Atal

By Ramu Bhagwat/TNN

Nagpur: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief K S Sudarshan on Sunday criticised former prime minister A B Vajpayee's remark that the Gujarat riots cost the BJP dear in the Lok Sabha elections. "A few months before the the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP performed very well in assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Does that mean that the BJP victory there was because of Gujarat riots," he said.

The RSS sarsanghachalak reacted to Vajpayee's remarks from his summer resort of Manali while addressing valedictory function of the Sangh Shiksha Varg (training programme for RSS volunteers). Defending Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, he said riots took place only in 60 places in that state, but the media focussed only on that and not the good work done in rest of the 18000 villages and cities in the state.

Soon after the riots the situation was brought under control and school examinations were conducted smoothly, Moharrum was observed peacefully, Sudarshan said. The RSS chief opined that that it was not fair to view communal ri-

Parivar's Problems



'The BJP won the assembly polls in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Does that mean the BJP victory was because of the Gujarat riots?'

ots with a perspective of electoral gains or losses. "It is a very sensitive matter, such remarks may even encourage riots. It seems those who call themselves liberal and secular are interested in perpetrating communal riots," he said, implying efforts were on to demoralise the Hindu community. Lambasting the media, especially the English newspapers and TV channels, he said the Gujarat issue was kept alive by them.

Sudarshan also dwelt in detail on the English education system inherited by the country and how it had affected the Indian culture.

EXECUTIVE WON'T DISCUSS ISSUE

BJP rules out Modi ouster

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 14. — A day after Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said Mr Narendra Modi's leadership should be put under scanner, his party ruled out the ouster of the Gujarat chief minister. The RSS and Bajrang Dal too defended Mr Modi today saying he is not to be blamed for the BJP's recent poll debacle.

Party sources said BJP president M Venkaiah Naidu had the support of Mr Advani before he came out with a statement in Mr Modi's favour. The draft of the statement is said to be prepared by a former Union minister, presently a party general secretary who is considered to be close to Mr Advani. Earlier during the day, the issue was discussed at a meeting of senior BJP leaders at Mr Naidu's residence.

BJP sources said the party's stand on the issue indicates that the post-1984 scenario is being repeated. Mr Vajpayee was sidelined after the BJP's rout in the 1984 elections in which it managed to bag only two Lok Sabha seats. The LK Advani-led Hindutva brigade had taken over the party in a bid to revive its fortunes.

Mr Naidu, however, parried a question on RSS chief Mr KS Sudarshan's sharp reaction to Mr Vajpayee's remarks. He disagreed with those VHP leaders who asked Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani to take "political sanyas". "We fought the elections under Mr Vajpayee. We accept the results and if there's any deficiency, we'll rectify and move forward," he said. Mr Naidu said after the meeting he had spoken to Mr Vajpayee over telephone. "There's no proposal to change the leadership of BJP government in Gujarat. Nor will this issue be on the agenda at the BJP National Executive meeting in Mumbai." He said the National Executive would be meeting in Mumbai only to discuss strategy for Assembly polls in Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana and Arunachal Pradesh.

Cracks in RSS

NEW DELHI, June 14. — The Sangh Parivar's official stand in support of Mr Narendra Modi



Was he wholly responsible?

notwithstanding; a significant section of its top brass is reportedly not in favour of defending Mr Modi as they are not happy with his style of functioning and fear that he is giving Hindutva a bad name by projecting it as a negative ideology. Cracks have been evident within the RSS ever since the Gujarat riots. Many functionaries had expressed apprehension about the way Hindutva was being given a militant face. Sources said, a veteran RSS functionary had even written to the RSS chief expressing anguish over the riots. "We've been trying to project Hindutva as a positive ideology highlighting the Sangh's social projects, but the Gujarat riots have tarnished this image," a *pracharak* said. — SN.

Details on page

Meanwhile, Mr Naidu, taking strong exception to the Congress' repeated threats to the UP government, warned it not to indulge in any undemocratic act or unconstitutional move. He said the Congress should first look at what was happening in Bihar, Maharashtra, Assam and West Bengal. "The home minister is getting enough information about UP. But in Bihar, there is jungle raj... but he's not aware of it. If the UPA is so concerned, it must look to Bihar and other states ruled by Congress-friendly parties," he said.

Cong reaction: Terming Mr Vajpayee's statement on Mr Modi as "confusing, welcome and surprising", the Congress today said the way Mr Naidu and other Sangh leaders have reacted, it seems they have launched an "open war" against Mr Vajpayee.

মোদীকে নিয়ে দলে দলে স্বন্দ, অপসারণ চান আডবাবাণীও

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৪ জুন: গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নরেন্দ্র মোদীর অপসারণ-বিতর্ক বি জে পি-র অভ্যন্তরীণ সঙ্কটকে প্রকাশ্যে আনাল। ২২ জুন দলের জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকেই মুখে এক দিকে দলের সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নায়ডু প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর বক্তব্যের প্রকাশ্য বিরোধিতা করে আজ জানিয়ে দিলেন, মোদীকে সরানোর কোনও প্রশ্ন নেই। অন্য দিকে, দলে অরুণ জেটলি ও বেঙ্কাইয়া ছাড়া অধিকাংশ নেতা মোদীর অপসারণের পক্ষে। বিরোধী দলের নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবী আজ রাতে ঘনিষ্ঠ মহলে জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, মোদীকে সরানোর বিপক্ষে তিনি নন। কিন্তু প্রকাশ্যে এ ব্যাপারে কোনও কথা বলার পক্ষেও তিনি নন।

শুধু বেঙ্কাইয়া নন, আর এস এস প্রধান

কুপ্তহালি সুদর্শন এবং বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ নেতা প্রদীপ তোপাডিয়া ও আচার্য গিরিরাজ কিশোর ও বাজপেয়ীর বক্তব্যের প্রকাশ্য বিরোধিতা করেছেন। বাজপেয়ী কালই নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের জন্য গুজরাতের ঘটনাকে দায়ী করেছিলেন। মোদীকে সরানোর ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছিলেন। দলের আসন্ন কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে মোদীর অপসারণ নিয়ে আলোচনা হবে বলে গুজরাতের তিনি। বেঙ্কাইয়া আজ সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করে বলে দিয়েছেন,

- নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের জন্য গুজরাতের ঘটনা দায়ী নয়।
- নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে সরানোর প্রশ্ন উঠেছে না।
- জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে এই ব্যাপারে কোনও আলোচনা হবে না।
- বাজপেয়ী মোদীকে সরানোর ব্যাপারে কোনও কথা বলেননি।

বেঙ্কাইয়া আডবাবী-ঘনিষ্ঠ বলে পরিচিত। তাই স্বভাবতই তার বক্তব্য শুনেই নরেন্দ্র মোদীর ও ধারণা হয়েছিল, তিনি আডবাবীর ছাড়পত্র নিয়েই এই সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করেছেন। কিন্তু এ বার ভোটের বিপর্যয়ের পর বাজপেয়ী এবং আডবাবী মোদীর ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা করেন। সেই আলোচনায় দিন পনেরো আগে দু'জনেই একমত হন, যে এবার মোদীকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে সরাতে হবে। মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে দাঙ্গা নিয়ে শুনানি চলছে। এর আগে আদালত মোদীকে বেশ কয়েকবার সতর্ক করেছে। এবার যদি মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে মোদীর বিরুদ্ধে কোনও কড়া ব্যবস্থা নেয়, সেক্ষেত্রে কেন্দ্র আদালতের নির্দেশকে হাতীয়ার করে গুজরাতের রাজ্য সরকারকে বরাস্ত করে দিতে পারে। এবং ৩৫৬ প্রয়োগের আগেই তাই মোদীর ইস্তফা দিয়ে



গুজরাতের ঘটনার পর গোয়া, মধ্যপ্রদেশ, ছত্তীসগড়, রাজস্থানের মতো রাজ্যে ভোট হয়েছিল। সেখানে বিজেপি-র অভূতপূর্ব সাফল্য ছিল। সে দিন সেই জয় নরেন্দ্র মোদীর ছিল না। আর আজ লোকসভায় নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের পর আমি দায়ী? তবে, প্রথমদিকের সরাণোর পক্ষে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী হবেন ধরে নিয়ে উমা ভারতীর সঙ্গে নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে ইস্তফা দেওয়ানোর কৌশল নিশ্চিন বি জে পি। কিন্তু সনিয়া গান্ধী

সরে দাঁড়ানায় বি জে পি-র সেই কৌশলও ভেঙে গেল। আডবাবী বিরোধী দলনেতা হওয়ার পর প্রশ্ন উঠেছিল, তবে কি অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী রাজনৈতিক সম্মান নেন? বি জে পি-র অনেকে নেতা মনে করছেন বাজপেয়ীর এই বিবৃতির পিছনেও প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর স্পষ্ট রাজনীতি রয়েছে। সম্মান দিয়েছেন, ঠিক তেমনভাবেই দলের কর্মসমিতির বিষয়সূচী ঠিক করে দিয়ে নিজের কতৃস্থকে দলের মধ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে চেয়েছেন। আবারমোদী বিরোধী বক্তব্য প্রকাশ্যে পেশ করে বাজপেয়ী তার ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ ভাবমূর্ত্তিকে তুলে ধরেছেন।

আডবাবী মোদীকে সরানোর পক্ষে। একসঙ্গেই আগে গুজরাতের বিরুদ্ধ বি জে পি নেতা প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কেশুভাই পটেল শুধু বাজপেয়ী নন, আডবাবীর সঙ্গেও এক

দীর্ঘ বৈঠক করেন। সেই বৈঠকেও মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বদল নিয়ে আলোচনা হয়েছিল। কিন্তু আচমকা বাজপেয়ীর প্রকাশ্য মোদী বিরোধিতায় আডবাবী খুশি নন। আর তাই, আজকের বেঙ্কাইয়ার বাজপেয়ী-বিরোধিতায় প্রাক্তন উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রীর প্রচ্ছন্ন মদত রয়েছে বলে অনেকে মনে করছেন।

মোদী আজ এই প্রতিবেদনকে বলেন, “গুজরাতের ঘটনার পর গোয়া, মধ্যপ্রদেশ, ছত্তীসগড়, রাজস্থানের মতো রাজ্যে ভোট হয়েছিল। সেখানে বিজেপি-র অভূতপূর্ব সাফল্য ছিল। সেদিন সেই জয় নরেন্দ্র মোদীর ছিল না। আর আজ লোকসভায় নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের পর আমি দায়ী? তবে, আমি দলের ব্যাপারে কোনও কথা প্রকাশ্যে বলি না। তবে শীর্ষ নেতারা নমস্যা। তারা বলতে পারেন।”

আর এস এস প্রধান সুদর্শন নরেন্দ্র মোদীর সুরে সুর মিলিয়ে বলেছেন

গুজরাতের ঘটনা নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের জন্য দায়ী নয়। গুজরাতের পর বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে বি জে পি সাফল্য অর্জন করেছিল। মুদর্শনের সঙ্গে বাজপেয়ীর বিরোধ অবশ্য সুপ্রাচীন ও সুবিদিত। তাই আর এস এস তথা সজ্জ পরিবারের বাজপেয়ী বিরোধিতা দলের কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে কতটা ছায়া ফেলবে সেটাও দেখার।

গুজরাতের ১২৭ জন বিধায়কের মধ্যে প্রায় ৬০ জন মোদীর বিরুদ্ধে সক্রিয় পুরুষোত্তম সোলাঙ্কি এবং এ কে পটেলের নেতৃত্বে এই কার্যকলাপ চলছে। কেশুভাই পটেল এই বিরুদ্ধ রাজনীতির পিছনে কলকটি নাড়ছেন বলে মনে করছেন অনেকেই। এই পরিস্থিতিতে মোদী দলের কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকের পরই মন্ত্রিসভার সম্মুখীন করবেন বলে অনেককে আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন। মোদী আজ বলেন, দিল্লি যাচ্ছি না। কোনও নেতাকে ফোনও করছি না।

Modi issue not on agenda of Mumbai meet

Will be dealt with separately: Venkaiah

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JUNE 14. The Bharatiya Janata Party president, Venkaiah Naidu, today "clarified" that the issue of the party asking the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, to quit office "would not be on the agenda" of the national executive committee meeting in Mumbai on June 23 and 24. However, he refused to set at rest the growing speculation that Mr. Modi might soon be out of a job.

"That matter [of Mr. Modi's ouster] will be taken up separately with the Gujarat unit [of the BJP]," Mr. Naidu told *The Hindu*. The executive committee would discuss the reasons for the party's defeat in the Lok Sabha elections, work out a strategy for the next round of Assembly elections and "set for itself the goal of reaching out to the future."

The occasion for the "clarification" was the statement of the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in Manali on Sunday that he had been and still was in favour of getting Mr. Modi to resign, that the Gujarat riots were among the factors that led to the party's debacle in the Lok Sabha elections and that Mr. Modi's resignation would be discussed at the national executive.

While Mr. Naidu contradicted Mr. Vajpayee on the issue — after talking to him and the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, over telephone, conferring with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leaders and holding a meeting here of senior leaders — he did not rule out the possibility of Mr. Modi being ejected out of office. "The affairs of the party in Gujarat will be discussed separately," he said in a written statement. "I had earlier told some BJP MLAs from Gujarat that the matter would be discussed after the State legislature session is over," he remarked.

Mr. Vajpayee's Manali statements, made in an interview to a television channel, and Mr. Naidu's "clarification" today have confused the party. Numerous telephone calls were made to Mr. Vajpayee by Mr. Naidu, Jaswant Singh and the RSS leader, Madan Das Devi, and to Mr. Advani [who is in Nainital] by Mr. Naidu and others before the

matter was "clarified." Mr. Naidu also conferred with Mr. Singh, Sushma Swaraj, V.K. Malhotra and M.A. Naqvi at his residence before he spoke to the press. Asked whether he was contradicting Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Naidu said: "There is no dichotomy."

While the dissidents in Gujarat had reason to feel encouraged by Mr. Vajpayee's remarks, some leaders felt the premature statement could give a new lease of life to Mr. Modi with the RSS unwilling to sacrifice him on the issue of the Gujarat riots.

"We do not support the view that Mr. Modi, his Government or the riots should be blamed for the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections," the RSS spokesperson, Ram Madhav, told *The Hindu*. He insisted that on the question of a change of leadership in Gujarat, the RSS had "no role to play" and that it was "for the BJP to decide what to do." He added that "the BJP should analyse the election results. There were several reasons for the defeat. We also got some feedback and it would be wrong to say that the riots resulted in the defeat. There were other reasons and the BJP should go into that."

Mr. Madhav said the BJP won the Gujarat elections — and the elections to the Goa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh Assemblies — after the riots. Even in the Lok Sabha elections, the party had done extremely well in some States.

Mr. Naidu said he agreed with Mr. Vajpayee that the videos of the Gujarat riots, used for propaganda by the Congress and other parties during the election campaign, had some effect. In contrast, Mr. Madhav was quite sarcastic: "It seems that Mr. Vajpayee has also been influenced by this propaganda."

Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders have blamed Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani for "betraying" the Hindutva ideology and said that "they should take rest."

BJP leaders feel that Mr. Vajpayee's statement has again focussed on the riots and that is not good for the party. "The riots were a shame, but we [the BJP] were not responsible," is the party line.

Dissidents baffled: Page 11

THE HINDU

13 JUN 2004

GUJARAT CM ISSUE TO FIGURE AT BJP MEET

Vajpayee salvo at Modi lobby

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 13. — Asserting that Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi's removal is still "an open issue", Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said today that the issue is likely to be discussed and decided at the BJP's national executive meeting in Mumbai on 23-24 June.

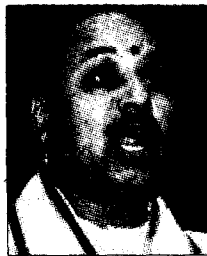
His observations that the party's electoral defeat and the leadership's failure to remove Mr Modi after riots broke out in the state were co-related have drawn instant reactions from across the political spectrum. Mr Vajpayee was speaking to a private news channel in Manali today.

Carrying his views on the Modi issue a step forward from what he had said yesterday, Mr Vajpayee sounded more caustic in his remarks today. "It was a mistake not to have removed Mr Modi after the Gujarat riots. We are thinking afresh the situation in Gujarat. The matter will be considered afresh at the Mumbai meeting of the national executive," the former Prime Minister said.

"Some people wanted his removal. I was of the same opinion. But the entire responsibility was put on me and I had to take a decision keeping in mind all shades of opinion. I felt that holding elections would be more beneficial", Mr Vajpayee told the TV news channel.

Mr Digvijay Singh of JD-U shared Mr Vajpayee's views and said the Gujarat riots were one of the main reasons of a major shift in the NDA vote base across the country in the Lok Sabha elections when the minorities who had earlier voted for the NDA turned totally hostile to the alliance. The TDP and even the Shiv Sena have expressed similar views on Mr Modi's removal after the NDA's defeat in the Lok Sabha elections.

Infighting cost BJP dearly: Togadia



NEW DELHI, June 13. — VHP leaders, Mr Praveen Togadia and Acharya Giriraj Kishore, criticised Mr Vajpayee for making Mr Modi a scapegoat for the BJP's electoral defeat. "It was more due to infighting in the BJP and

appeasement of the minorities that cost the party dearly in the Lok Sabha elections", the VHP leaders said, according to agency reports. Mr Vajpayee in his Manali interview also made it clear that he was very much active in politics and nothing much should be read in Mr Advani being elected the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. — SNS

The Congress today said the party had strongly demanded Mr Modi's dismissal. BJP insiders told The Statesman today that Mr Vajpayee's latest salvo has disturbed the lobby within the party who defended Mr Modi all through the riots and thereafter. Requesting anonymity, a BJP leader said that Mr Vajpayee's offensive was a major setback to Mr L K Advani, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu and Mr Arun Jaitley who are the prime architects of putting a strong wall against all odds to save Mr Modi. Even after the defeat, the pro-Modi lobby is working hard and has suppressed dissidence in Gujarat where a section of BJP legislators wanted Mr Modi out. Mr Vajpayee today said he was "neutral" when the proposal for holding early Lok Sabha polls was placed before him, but finally "it was felt that early polls may be beneficial".

Photograph on page 5

A month later, Vajpayee admits: Gujarat a reason

For the first time, former PM links party's rout to riots

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

MANALI | JUNE 12

A MONTH after the BJP-led NDA was voted out of power, former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today said Gujarat riots were one of the reasons for the BJP's defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. It is the first time that a senior BJP leader has linked the riots to the election disaster.

"It is very difficult to say what are all the reasons for the defeat in the elections... But one impact of the violence was we lost the elections," he told reporters on his arrival here.

"The BJP's handling of Gujarat was not wrong. Only that it was a sensitive and communal matter which the opposition took advantage of," he said. "I don't blame them. This is politics and such things

happen here." Vajpayee who reached his holiday home in Prini this afternoon added the Gujarat *khooni kand* (bloody episode) should never be repeated.

When asked why he chose not to be the Leader of Opposition, Vajpayee said: "I was the leader earlier, now it's Advaniji. We share and work together."

On this trip to Manali as a former PM, Vajpayee said he was very relaxed. "Earlier there were a lot of responsibilities. The important responsibility now I have is to meet people," he said. Vajpayee said that he was happy to be in Manali once again. "I will never forget the people of Manali," he said. His summer sojourn gives Vajpayee all he needs to return to his passion, his poetry. "If I get to write, I'll write," he said.

গুজরাত কাণ্ডও হারের কারণ, মানলেন অটল

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১২ জুন: গুজরাতের দাঙ্গা বিজেপি-র নির্বাচনী বিপর্যয়ের অন্যতম কারণ বলে স্বীকার করে নিলেন প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী। তিনি বলেছেন, ভোটে হারের সমস্ত কারণ খুঁজে বার করা কঠিন কিন্তু গুজরাতের হিংসার ছায়া যে লোকসভা নির্বাচনে পড়েছে, সেটা অনস্বীকার্য।

এই প্রথম বিজেপি-র কোনও শীর্ষ স্থানীয় নেতা মেনে নিলেন যে, গুজরাতের ঘটনা ভোটবাক্সে ভাঙন ধরিয়েছে। এর আগে প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী কবুল করেছিলেন, লোকসভা নির্বাচনে 'ভারত উদয়' ও 'ফিল গুড' স্লোগান কোনও কাজে আসেনি।

এক সপ্তাহের ছুটি কাটাতে কুলুতে পৌঁছে অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী আজ সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, "নির্বাচনে বিজেপি কেন হারল তার বিস্তারিত কারণ ব্যাখ্যা করা খুব কঠিন। তবে আমরা যে ভোটে হেরেছি, তার পিছনে ওই হিংসা একটা কারণ।"

গুজরাতের ঘটনার মোকাবিলা বিজেপি ঠিক মতো করতে পেরেছিল কি না, জানতে চাওয়া হয়েছিল বাজপেয়ীর কাছে। তিনি জবাব দেন, "পরিস্থিতি সামাল দেওয়ায় ভুল ছিল না। নইলে আবেগের আরও বাড়বাড়ি হতে পারত।" এর সঙ্গেই প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী যোগ করেছেন, গুজরাতে যা হয়ে গিয়েছে, সেটা দুর্ভাগ্যজনক এবং তার নিন্দাও করা হয়েছে।

বাজপেয়ীর এই মন্তব্য নিশ্চিত ভাবেই বিজেপি-র অন্তর্দন্দ আবার প্রকাশ্যে নিয়ে এল। দাঙ্গার কিছুদিন পরেই বাজপেয়ী গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে রাজধর্ম পালনের নির্দেশ দেন এবং তার পর তাঁকে সরানোর জন্য চেষ্টা শুরু করেন। গোয়ায় দলের জাতীয় পরিষদের বৈঠকে তাঁর সেই চেষ্টা ব্যর্থ বলেও বাজপেয়ী তাঁর মনোভাব স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীর নেতৃত্বে কট্টরপন্থী অংশ বাজপেয়ীকে আটকে দেন।

গুজরাতের ঘটনার পুনরাবৃত্তি যে আর হবে না, সেটাও অবশ্য আজ বলতে ভোলেননি প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। ওই ধরনের ঘটনা এড়াতে সব রকমের ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া জরুরি, জানিয়েছেন তিনি।

তাঁর কথায়, "ভবিষ্যতে আর কোথাও এ হেন রক্তক্ষয় যে দেশের মানুষ হতে

দেবেন না, সে ব্যাপারে আমি আত্মবিশ্বাসী।" দাঙ্গার পরে মানুষের ভাবাবেগকে রাজনৈতিক ফায়দা তুলতে ব্যবহার করার মধ্যেও খুব একটা অভিনব কিছু দেখেছেন না বাজপেয়ী।

তবে বাজপেয়ীর আজকের মন্তব্যের পরে গুজরাতে নরেন্দ্র মোদীর নেতৃত্ব নিয়ে বিতর্ক আবার মাথা চাড়া দেওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। লোকসভা ভোটের পরে নতুন করে কেশুভাই পটেলের নেতৃত্বে রাজ্য বিজেপি-র একটা বড় অংশ মোদীকে সরাতে উদ্যোগী হয়েছেন। লোকসভা নির্বাচনের ফলেও এ কথা স্পষ্ট যে, রাজ্যের মানুষের উপরে বিজেপি-র একচ্ছত্র প্রভাব এখন অনেকটাই কমে গিয়েছে।

পটেলের বিদ্রোহের পিছনেও দলের কেন্দ্রীয় নেতৃত্বের একাংশের প্রচ্ছন্ন মদত ছিল। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত পটেল সফল হননি।

গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্বে সীমাবদ্ধ থাকলেও আদতে মোদী এখন 'জঙ্গি হিন্দুত্বের' অন্যতম প্রধান প্রতীক হয়ে উঠেছেন। বেঞ্চাইয়া নায়ডু, অরুণ জেটলির মতো নেতারাও পুরোপুরি মোদীর সঙ্গে রয়েছেন। ফলে তাঁর ক্ষমতা খর্ব করা যথেষ্ট কঠিন হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। এই অবস্থায় নতুন করে মোদীকে আক্রমণ করেও বাজপেয়ী কত দূর সফল হবেন, তাতে যথেষ্ট সংশয় রয়েছে।

বাজপেয়ীর মন্তব্য নিয়ে আজ বিজেপি-র সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিনহা ও মুখপাত্র মুখতার আব্বাস নকভিকে প্রশ্ন করা হয়। কিন্তু তাঁরা প্রসঙ্গ এড়িয়ে গিয়ে বলেন, এই ধরনের কোনও মন্তব্য প্রধানমন্ত্রী করেছেন কি না, তা তাঁদের জানা নেই। না-জানা পর্যন্ত কোনও মতামত দেওয়া যাবে না বলে তাঁরা জানিয়ে দেন।

কুলুতে অবকাশ যাপনে আসা প্রবীণ নেতার কাছে জানতে চাওয়া হয়েছিল, কেন তিনি বিরোধী নেতা হতে চাইলেন না।

অটল বলেছেন, আডবানী ওই দায়িত্ব নেওয়ার ভালই হয়েছে। আর সুযোগ এলে ভবিষ্যতে ফের প্রধানমন্ত্রী হবেন কি না, সেই প্রশ্নের জবাবে সনিয়া গাঁধীর দৃষ্টান্ত দেখিয়েছেন বাজপেয়ী। বলেছেন, "সনিয়া গাঁধী তো প্রধানমন্ত্রী নন। তিনি কংগ্রেসের নেত্রী। তাতে কি তাঁর কাজ আটকে গিয়েছে?"

Najma Heptulla joins BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11. The Vice-Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Najma Heptulla, today resigned from the Congress and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party, which decided last night to field her as its candidate for the Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan. Her present and fourth consecutive term in the Upper House ends on July 4.

"Ms. Heptulla met the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, at his residence this morning and completed the formality of joining the party," the BJP vice-president, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said today.

"We have learnt that she resigned from the Congress just before the meeting of the central election committee yesterday evening where she was selected as the BJP candidate for the Rajya Sabha," Mr. Naqvi said when asked whether the BJP had named her as its candidate even while she remained a member of the Congress.

Mr. Naqvi said hotelier Lalit Suri, candidate for the Rajya Sabha from Orissa, was also a party member now.

He denied that the former Minister for Disinvestment, Arun Shourie, had been "dropped" from the list of candidates.

"There are still a few seats left which we hope to win," he said. "It is wrong to say that the BJP has denied a ticket to Mr. Shourie."

Not everyone can be accommodated in the Rajya Sabha or in the list of office-bearers. There are many considerations and criteria, which the central election committee has to consider when deciding the party candidates.

There was no rule that defeated Lok Sabha candidates should not be taken into the Rajya Sabha.

"The party has to consider the person's total work for the party, his or her seniority and usefulness to the party in Parliament ... party leaders are working in different areas, whether in Parliament, in the office-bearers' team, in the national executive or in other positions," he said.

'Political opportunism'

The Congress said that by agreeing to be a candidate of the BJP, Ms. Heptulla had "shown her commitment" to the ideology of a party that had provided her the opportunity to be a member of the Rajya Sabha for 24 years.

"If there is any award for political opportunism, it should go to her," the party spokesperson, Anand Sharma, said.

As far as the Congress was concerned Ms. Heptulla has ceased to be its member the day she accepted an award from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief, he said.

BJP retains core strategists

Caste factor & priority areas decided the party's first reshuffle

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, June 6

THE BJP has carried out the first revamp of its office-bearers and National Executive since its recent electoral debacle. It has more or less retained its core team of strategists while reshuffling others and bringing in fresh faces.

The party has kept in mind the caste factor, the minorities and priority areas like UP and Bihar while carrying out the changes.

The new BJP team includes:

■ Kalyan Singh, Bal Apte, Babulal Marandi, M.A. Naqvi, Jaskaur Meena, Sushil Modi will serve as vice-presidents.

■ Rajnath Singh and Arun Jaitley have returned as general secretaries.

■ Pramod Mahajan, Shivraj Chauhan, Sanjay Joshi have been retained as general secretaries.

■ Pramod Mahajan has been named general secretary in charge of Maharashtra, assigned the task of gearing up for assembly polls in three months.

■ Shahnawaz Hussain has been named secretary.

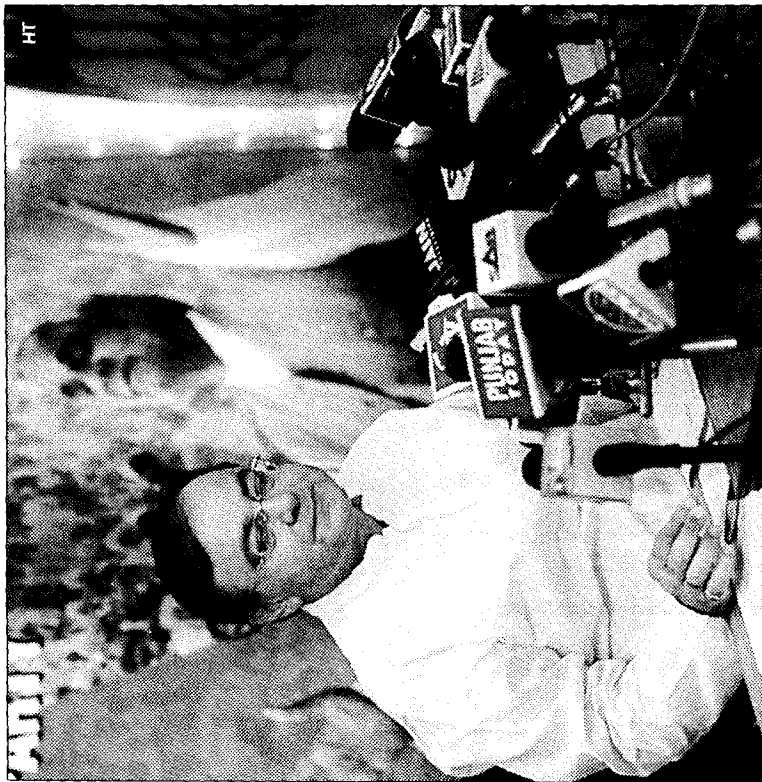
■ Sudheendra Kulkarni, who was in the PMO during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure, has been made secretary to BJP chief Venkaiah Naidu.

■ Yashwant Sinha has been made spokesperson, along with Jaitley and Naqvi.

■ Jaswant Singh's son, Manavendra, is additional spokesperson.

■ Vajpayee's niece, Karuna Shukla, is head of the BJP's women wing.

■ Orissa MLA Dharmendra Pradhan is BJP's youth wing chief.



NEW INNINGS Arun Jaitley after the BJP meet on Sunday.

■ Maneka Gandhi and actresses Hema Malini and Vijaya Shanti are members of the National Executive.

■ Arun Shourie, S. Bangarappa, Sahib Singh Verma, Arif Mohamad Khan, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Smriti Irani, Navjyot Singh Sidhu are special invitees to the National Executive.

■ Seven BJP chief ministers are permanent invitees to the National Executive. In a significant change,

THE NEW LOOK

Pramod Mahajan: Named general secretary in charge of Maharashtra, assigned the task of gearing up for assembly polls in three months

Sudheendra Kulkarni: Made secretary to BJP chief Venkaiah Naidu

Yashwant Sinha: Made spokesperson, along with Arun Jaitley and M.A. Naqvi

Manavendra Singh: Is additional spokesperson

Karuna Shukla: Vajpayee's niece, she has been made head of BJP's women wing

Shahnawaz Hussain: Named BJP secretary

Advani and former Union ministers Jaswant Singh, M.M. Joshi, Mahajan, Sushma Swaraj and Jaitley.

Naidu has also constituted a 16-member central election committee which will select candidates for various elections. Of the 78 members in the newly constituted National Executive, 20 are new (as required under a party rule). There are 13 women, 11 belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Mahajan has been relieved of any central responsibility and told to focus on bringing the BJP-Sena alliance back to power in Maharashtra.

Shivraj Singh Chauhan, who was BJP's secretary, has been made general secretary and also given the responsibility of secretary of the party's parliamentary board and central election committee, a post held by Mahajan. A 10-member BJP parliamentary board has been set up. It includes as its members Vajpayee, L.K.

'India Shining' hurt us: Advani

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 28

A FORTNIGHT after the poll results were declared, former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani has admitted that the BJP's twin slogans — "Feel good" and "India Shining" — had boomeranged on the party.

Advani said on Friday that these slogans were "valid in themselves", but had "given an opportunity to (BJP's) political opponents to highlight other aspects of India's contemporary reality — poverty and uneven development, unemployment among the youth and problems faced by farmers".

He said the BJP was not responsible for these problems, but the Congress and the Left "succeeded in creating a wedge between our party and a section of the population. It took the focus away from the inspiring vision we had placed before the country — that of making India a developed nation by 2020".

And that, Advani explained, was because of a communication failure: "We failed to effectively communicate to the poor and the deprived that five years was too short a time to fulfil their needs though India had progressed in several areas."

This and other factors created an anti-incumbency

sentiment against ministers and MPs at the local level, though there had been no such feeling against the NDA government in general, Advani claimed. There was also an anti-incumbency sentiment against state governments run by the NDA or parties supporting it.

His conclusion: "The poll results, instead of being the people's national verdict, became an aggregate of state verdicts." This means that no "party, group or any individual" had secured the people's mandate to rule. The fractured mandate meant, he said, the new government must work in co-operation with the Opposition.

Tough talk



BJP is unapologetic about its espousal of Hindutva... which is the basic identity of India

UPA should not misread the fractured verdict as a decisive mandate for an alliance, party or individual

Sonia's decision not to become PM came as a 'big relief' to country

Party & parivar rally behind Modi

OUR BUREAU

May 28: The Sangh parivar sprang to Narendra Modi's defence and the BJP ruled out replacing him a day after almost half of the party's MLAs in Gujarat demanded the chief minister's removal.

Party president M. Venkatesh Naidu said in Delhi that there was "no proposal or decision" to sack Modi and warned dissidents against going to the media.

Backing up words with action, the party issued a show-cause notice to Purushottam Solanki, the MLA heading the rebellion. He has been asked to explain within 24 hours his comments against Modi and hand in a written apology.

Yesterday, 62 of the party's 127 MLAs had come together at a birthday party and sought

Modi's ouster, according to dissenting leaders. Solanki announced that the MLAs were unhappy with the chief minister and wanted a change in leadership. He was not available for comment today.

"I have advised all of them that the Assembly session is on and they should help the government in countering the Opposition criticism. If there is any problem, we can sit and discuss it," Naidu said. "I have told them that statements given to the media are neither in the interest of the party nor in their interest."

Earlier, BJP leader L.K. Advani said the party president was holding talks with state leaders and the matter would be sorted out.

The RSS, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal rushed to the rescue of the Sangh parivar poster boy.

spokesperson Ram Madhav said. The dissidence was sparked after the Congress wrested seven seats from the BJP in the general elections, bringing down the ruling party's tally from 21 in 1999 to 14.

The VHP and the Bajrang Dal issued a joint statement calling for a halt to the dissident activities. "Such (political) developments that are causing instability will only strengthen the hands of politicians appeasing Muslims, jihadi fundamentalists, pseudo-secularists and those non-government organisations that are using foreign funds for religious conversions," it said.

Naidu said he was in touch with Modi and state party president Rajendrasinh Rana and that Solanki, who is the MLA from Bhavnagar, had called him and apologised.

The rebel leader sought a meeting with Modi today but was denied an appointment. The chief minister, however, did meet other MLAs to ask what he could do for them in an attempt to shake off the "autocratic" tag and show he is approachable.

Rana admitted that the "situation is very serious" but ruled out an immediate change of guard. A strong critic of Modi, the state BJP chief did not attend the birthday party hosted by Rajya Sabha MP A.K. Patel yesterday where the dissidents had gathered.

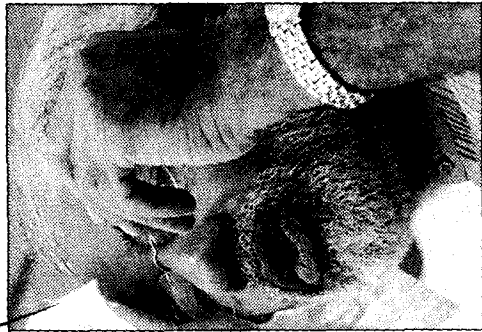
Asked if the rebel MLAs could be charged with anti-party activities before Naidu directed him to issue the notice to Solanki, Rana had said: "MPs and MLAs are not under the purview of (the) state president."

Rana, who is an MP, said Gu-

jarat MPs will be meeting the central leadership in Delhi next week when the Parliament session begins. He has been in constant touch with Delhi over the past week.

Although the dissidence is being blamed on supporters of Keshubhai Patel, who Modi had toppled as chief minister, several other leaders, including Kashiram Rana and Suresh Mehta, are reported to have joined hands against the Gujarat chief minister. Mehta met Naidu today.

But with the BJP leadership taking a tough line against dissidents, Mehta downplayed the revolt. "It is an internal matter of the party and will be settled in no time. Already it has started subsiding," he said. Solanki's comments have been "blown out of proportion", he added.



Modi: Feeling the heat

"Gujarat riots are in no way connected to BJP's recent defeat in the Lok Sabha polls," RSS

'We may have failed to assess ground realities'

Do you think that with the pro-Sonia vote being 145 seats (Congress seats), the anti-Sonia vote being 186 (NDA seats) and remaining being neutral, can it be said that she got a direct mandate from people to become the prime minister?

Sukanya Ghosh

The Congress party has got 145 seats and together with allies 217. So the people have not given a clear mandate to Sonia and her allies. It was a fractured mandate. Moreover the Congress party under the leadership of its President did not do well in most of the states. It has not got even a single seat in Kerala and was rejected in states like Karnataka, Punjab, Uttaranchal, Maharashtra, where it is in power, and lost miserably in BJP-ruled states like MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

Isn't it barbaric on the part of Sushma Swaraj to announce that she would resign her post (which is against the oath taken by an MP), wear a white sari and shave her head? How then do you justify that this is a "dignified" debate?

Gautham Kumar J

I don't agree that Sushma Swaraj's decision to resign was bar-

baric. She felt strongly and expressed her feelings in the way many Indians felt. But with regard to the other decision, it was purely personal. There was no mandate for the Congress president to become PM. After all they won only 145 seats out of 543. Neither the Congress nor its allies ever projected her as a prime ministerial candidate. The nation was concerned about a person of foreign origin occupying the highest post. Sushma gave expression to the feelings of the people, nothing unconstitutional.

Mr Naidu, why is it that the BJP is taking so much time to accept the mandate of the people? Will India stop shinning if the Congress party leads our country? An effective political opponent does not oppose on frivolous issues (on the foreign origin of Sonia Gandhi).

Varsha Pillai

The BJP took no time to humbly accept the verdict of the people. In fact, we accepted it on the 13th afternoon itself, even when final results were not announced. George Fernandes and I declared the same af-

Why are you afraid of Sonia? If Mahendra Chaudhary can be the Fiji President, why can't she be PM?

Mohammed Shoaib

Our opposition to Soniji becoming Prime Minister is not personal. It is to do with the national interest of the country. Though Mahendra Chaudhary was Fiji national by birth, you know what has happened to him. We are not afraid of any individual. It is our conviction that only Indian nationals should occupy high offices.

The BJP won elections in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on development agenda and on the same premise went for polls... Now, after the defeat, what will be the thrust area and how will the monitoring of administration/schemes be done in these states?

Prashant Arya

Yes the BJP won elections in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on development agenda and we projected the same in the Lok Sabha

elections but could not get the mandate of the people. Now, after analysis, we feel that we not only need development agenda, but also need to project the negatives of the other side. We will focus on development and good governance in states that are ruled by the BJP and its allies.

Will the BJP now change its strategy to work for the unity and integrity of the country?

Mohammed

We always work for the unity and integrity of the country. Our motto is "Sarvadiarna Saprabhavina"—appeasement of none and justice for all". We will continue to work in that direction and we will make further efforts to remove the misconceptions about our party in certain sections of the people.

Will the BJP now shunt people encouraging Godhra kind of actions, tarnishing the BJP's image, as you lost in Gujarat also?

Alok Verma

We are meeting shortly to work out the future strategy. We are not an ordinary political party, we are a mission. With regard to Godhra and subsequent incidents, we try to do

everything to prevent such incidents. Let me clarify that we did not lose in Gujarat, though the numbers have come down. We are ahead of the Congress, with 14 seats out of 26.

What happened to 'a party with difference'? You seem to be making wrong political moves. It also seems Vajpayeeji is not in command.

Sudhi

We are a party with difference, both ideologically and functionally. We don't think that we made a wrong move, we might have failed to assess ground realities. Vajpayeeji is very much in command and the leader of our party, but we took all the decisions collectively after thorough discussions. However, we will work hard and will try to regain the people's confidence.

Why did your party break your alliance with the DMK and MDMK, who are more reliable than the AIADMK? If you avoided the arrest of Vaiko or got him released earlier, you could have won hearts of many.

Mahendran

We did not break our ties with the DMK and MDMK, they walked out of the NDA, after serv-

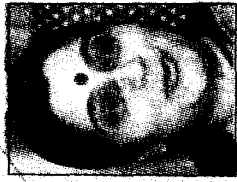
ing with us till the end of the government, on account of local compulsions. Vaiko's arrest or release was a state subject. POTAs implementation rests with the state government. In spite of our best efforts, we could not do anything.

FIRING LINE: NEXT WEEK D RAJA CPINATIONAL SECRETARY



CPI leader A B Bardhan's statement "Baadh mein jaye market" sent stocks into a tailspin,

forcing the Congress to step in for a mid-course correction. The Common Minimum Programme now worked out by the Congress shows the Left's influence, but what signal does it send out for the new government? Will the Left tone down its rhetoric now? Will the CPI later change its mind and join the government? Ask CPI leader D Raja at firingline@expressindia.com



বিদেশিনী: সুযমা, উমা, গোবিন্দাচার্যকে নামাল বি জে পি!

১৯৫১ কালো ব্যাজ, বয়কট সোনিয়ার শপথ?

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ১৬ মে—
বহুপাঠক আগে কণ্ঠিকের বেষ্টিতে
'বিদেশিনী' সোনিয়াকে চ্যালেঞ্জ জানিয়েছিলেন
'স্বদেশিনী বধু' সুযমা স্বরাজ। হেরেছিলেন সুযমা।
বেষ্টিার মানব 'বিদেশিনী'কেই বরণ
করেছিলেন, 'স্বদেশিনী বধু'কে নয়।
'বিদেশিনী'কে ভারতীয় বধু হিসেবে ভারতবাসী
মানে নিলেও মানতে নারাজ সুযমা। গতকাল
এক বিবৃতিতে তিনি জানানেন, 'সোনিয়া গান্ধীর
প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়া রাস্তায় অপমান। এই অপমান
মানে নিতে পারছি না। সাংসদ হিসেবে আমি
দেশের লজ্জার অঙ্গীদার হতে পারছি না।'
অতএব সুযমার সিদ্ধান্ত যে সংসদে প্রধানমন্ত্রী
সোনিয়া গান্ধী, সেই সংসদে তিনি নেই, তাঁর
স্বামীও নেই। বিদেশিনী ইস্যুতে স্বরাজ পরিবারের
(শ্রী সুযমা স্বরাজ ও স্বামী স্বরাজ কৌশল) এই
'আত্মত্যাগের' খবর গতকাল বি জে পি-র

তরফে ফলাও করে প্রচার করা হয়। গোটা দেশ
'বিদেশিনী'কে সম্মান জানানো সেটাকেই 'জাতীয়
লজ্জা' বলে তুলে ধরতে চায় বি জে পি। আসলে
এই 'আত্মত্যাগের' খবরের আড়ালে বি জে পি-র
দুটো কর্মসূচি আছে। এক, বেক্সাইয়া নাইডুকে
সরিয়ে আদবানির প্রিয়পাত্রী সুযমা স্বরাজকে
সভাপতি পদে বসানো। দুই, জনপ্রতিক্রিয়া

এক সঙ্ঘবর্মা

চিত্রদুর্গ (কর্ণাটক), ১৬ মে (পি টি আই)—সহ্য
হল না। 'হতাশায়' বিষপানে আত্মহতীতার এস
এস কর্মী। ৩০-এর মহেশ প্রভু। শ্রী. শিশুসন্তান
রয়েছে। 'একজন ইতালীয় দেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রী
হবেন, কিছুতেই সহ্য করতে পারব না।'
সুইসাইড নোট লিখে গেছেন মহেশ।

এড়িয়ে বিদেশিনী ইস্যুতে আন্দোলন জোরালো
করা। ভোট চুকে গেলেও ইস্যুটি জিইয়ে রাখতে
হবে। এই মুহুর্তে বিদেশিনী ইস্যু নিয়ে বি জে পি
বেশি ইচ্ছাই করলে জনপ্রতিক্রিয়া বিরূপ হতে
পারে। তাই নির্বাসনে পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া দলের
তাত্ত্বিক নেতা গোবিন্দাচার্যকে আবার সামনে
আনা হচ্ছে। অন্য কোনও মঞ্চের বকলমে
আন্দোলনের হওয়া তোলার চেষ্টা চলছে। যেহেতু
নির্বাসন থেকে আচমকা ফিরে গোবিন্দাচার্য
আজই 'রাস্তায়' যুক্তিমান আন্দোলন শুরু
করলেন। তাঁর মতে, একজন বিদেশিনীকে
প্রধানমন্ত্রী পদে বসানোর অর্থ 'সাংস্কৃতিক
আত্মহত্যা'। বেক্সাইয়া নাইডুর নেতৃত্ব নিয়ে প্রশ্ন
উঠেছিল অনেক আগেই। কিন্তু দল অকাল
ভোটের সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার প্রশ্নটি চাপা পড়ে। সে
সময় নেতৃত্বে বদল সাধারণের কাছে অনারকম
এরপর ৫ পাতায়



বাসালোরে। প্রতিবাদের পোস্টার। রবিবার।
ছবি: এএফ পি

Sonia does not have mandate to be PM, says Uma Bharti

By Our Staff Correspondent

BHOPAL, MAY 16. The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, said today that the people had not given a mandate to the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to rule the country.

Ms. Bharti told mediapersons that she was "personally filled with grief and anguish" at the prospect of Ms. Gandhi becoming the Prime Minister.

She said the rumour that she was going to tender her resignation was baseless and added that the Chief Minister's post would not come in her way while opposing Ms. Gandhi.

By stating that Ms. Gandhi had got the people's mandate, the Congress was trying to perpetuate a fraud; if they were serious on this count, they should have projected her as their prime ministerial candidate before the elections, she said.

UNI reports from New Delhi: The day Ms. Gandhi takes over as Prime Minister will be the "darkest day in the history of this country," she said.

Ms. Bharti, who spearheaded the BJP to one of its best Lok Sabha performances in Madhya Pradesh, said the Congress fighting the Left in West Bengal and Kerala would be a question mark on the stability of the alliance.

Wishing "full success" to the Congress in running the government, she said, "We all hope that this government lasts the full term because frequent elections are not good for the nation. But nobody can predict the future."

Asked if she apprehended any problem for Madhya Pradesh now that the BJP had lost power in the Centre, Ms. Bharti said she hoped that relations between the State Government and the Centre would be cordial.

विदेशिनी: सुषमा, उमा, गोविन्दाचार्यके नामाल वि जे पि

१ पातार पर
वार्ता दिते पारत। किन्तु निर्वाचनी प्रक्रिया यत एगिसेछे, बेङ्काइयार बार्थता तत स्थिति ह्येछे। बेङ्काइया जनसभाय लोक टानते चरम बार्थ। दिग्लिते तार सभाय लोक ह्येछे ना बले एस ओ एस पाठानो ह्य आर एस एस कर्तादेर काछे। लक्केइये वाजपेयीर निर्वाचनी परिचालकरा तार सफरसूचि हेँटे देन। अगत्या बेङ्काइया निजेर राज्या अङ्गप्रदेशे कर्मकाणु वाडिये देन। सेइ काणुेर फल तो एखन सवारइ जाना। तारइ राज्ये देशम-वि जे पि जेओट प्राय मुछे गेछे। सुतरां एखनइ बेङ्काइयाके हेँटे फेलार सुसमय। आदवानि पछन्द सुषमा स्वराज। सुषमार इन्तुफा वा आत्थ्यागेर प्रस्ताव आदवानिइ छक। गतकाल सुषमा यखन प्रस्तावति देन, हाजिर छिलेन वाजपेयी, आदवानि, मुरलीमनोहर, यशवन्त सिंग, प्रमोद महाजन, डैरोँ सिंग शेखाओयात— सवई चूप। शुधु यशवन्त बलेन, इतलिते उँसव ह्येछे आर भारतेरइ एक महिला अपमाने यन्त्रणाय संसद छाडते चाइछेन। घटना एइ, राज्यसभाय सुषमा स्वराजेर मेयाद आर २ बछर। उँतरप्रदेश थेके तिनि राज्यसभाय एसेछेन। भविष्यते आसते पारबेन कि ना निश्चयता नेइ। सेक्केरे वि जे पि-र सभापति पद अनेक बेशि आकर्षणीय ओ सम्मानजनक। सुषमार स्वामी स्वराज कौशल वंशीलालेर हरियाना विकास पार्टीर राज्यसभा सदस्य। तार मेयाद आर २ मास। तिनि ये राज्यसभाय फिरते पारबेन ना, ता निश्चित। कारण हरियाना विधानसभाय वंशीलालेर दल एखन अस्तित्वहीन। २ मासेर मेयाद बाकि থাকते आत्थ्याग-करे गौरव पेते दोष की? राजनैतिक दम्पति डेबेचिन्तेइ 'अपमाने लज्जय' इन्तुफार सिद्धान्त नियेछेन एवं खबर ह्ये उठेछेन। एइ 'गुरुतर सिद्धान्त' निये आगामीकाल बेङ्काइया नाइडुर वाडिते बैठके वसबेन आदवानि,

यशवन्त सिंग ओ सुषमा स्वराज। गोविन्दाचार्येर 'स्वभिमान आन्दोलन' नियेओ आलोचना हवे बले जाना गेछे। एदिके आज बाङ्गालोरे वि जे पि साधारण सम्पादक अरुण जेटलि बलेन, विदेशिनी सोनिया एखन थेके आमामेर प्रतिदिनेर इसु। एइ इसुते जातीय वितर्केर दावि तोला हवे। वि जे पि सूत्रे जाना गेछे, सोनियार शपथ ग्रहण अनुष्ठान वयकटेर कथा भावा ह्येछे। राजि करानोर चेष्टा चलछे वाजपेयीकेओ। जातीयतावादेर धुयो तुले वि जे पि-विरोधी जेओटे भाङ्गन धराते उद्योगी गोविन्दाचार्य। देशेर नागरिक एवं समस्त राजनैतिक दलेर काछे, एमनकि येसव दल नतुन जेओट सरकारेर सङ्गी, तादेर काछेओ गोविन्दाचार्येर आवेदन, भारतीय वंशेशुद्ध काउके प्रधानमन्त्री करन। नेहातइ यदि ता संभव ना ह्य, सोनिया गान्धीर शपथ नेओयार दिनटि काला दिवस हिसेबे पालनेर डाक दियेछेन तिनि। बलेछेन, कालो ब्याज परे देश जूडे धर्नाय वसते। वि जे पि-र अगिकन्या, मध्यप्रदेशेर मुखामन्त्री उमा भारतीओ एदिन बलेछेन, सोनियार शपथ नेओयार दिनटि हवे भारतेर इतिहासेर सब थेके अङ्ककार दिन। उमार अभियोग, डोटेर प्रचारेर समय दलेर प्रधानमन्त्री पदप्राथी हिसेबे सोनियाके तुले ना धरे, सुकौशले वितर्कित विषयटि वारवार एडिये गिये कङ्ग्रेस देशेर मानुषेर सङ्गे प्रतरणा करेछे। गोविन्दाचार्यओ एदिन एकइ युक्तिते, प्राय एकइ भाषाय कङ्ग्रेसके आक्रमण करेन। वस्तुत, सोनिया-विरोधिता दियेइ एखन पराजयेर हताशा काटिये उठते चाइछे वि जे पि, सञ्च परिवारि। वि जे पि नेता प्रमोद महाजन एवं आर एस एस मुखपात्र राम माधव आज बलेछेन, जनगणेर सम्मति छाडइ सोनियाके प्रधानमन्त्री करे डुल करछे कङ्ग्रेस। नागरिकसन्तरे विस्फोड अवश्य एदिनइ शुरु ह्ये गेछे कर्णटिके, सदा ये राज्ये

पतन घटेछे कङ्ग्रेस सरकारेर। 'स्वतन्त्रता रक्षा वेदिके' नामे स्थानीय एक श्वेच्छासेवी संगठनेर ब्यानारे अवस्थान विस्फोड ह्येछे बाङ्गालोरे। दावि तोला ह्येछे, संविधान संशोधन करे भारते भारतीयदेर अधिकार निश्चित करार। वि जे पि-र उपसभापति बाबुलाल माराडि एदिन नाटकीयभावे बलेछेन, एकजन विदेशिनीके देशेर प्रधानमन्त्री करार खबरे स्वधीनतार शहिदरा निश्चय आहत हतेन! किन्तु किछु मिरजाफर आर उमिर्चाद सोनियाके मदत दिछे देशेर माथाय वसते! बाङ्गालोरेइ उदुपि आमामर मठेर तीर्थस्वामी बलेछेन, सोनिया गान्धी प्रधानमन्त्री हले तिनि द्वितीय 'भारत छाडो' आन्दोलन शुरु करबेन। विश्वेर बृहन्तम गणतन्त्रे कोनओ विदेशि प्रधानमन्त्री हओया देशवासीर पङ्के अगौरवेर। एदिके प्राञ्जल प्रधानमन्त्री चन्द्रशेखर राष्ट्रपतिके चिठिते बलेछेन, सोनिया प्रधानमन्त्री हले सुषमा स्वराज इन्तुफा देबेन बले ये ह्मकि दियेछेन, ता संविधानेर परिपक्वी। संविधान अपमानेर दाये सुषमा स्वराजकेइ सासपेन्ड करा उचित। एइ प्रसङ्गे राष्ठीय जनता दल नेता लालुप्रसाद यादव स्वभावसिद्ध रसिकताय बलेन, एकजन महिला आरेकजन महिलाके सहा करते पारेन ना। एकथा रामायण-महाभारतेओ मुनि-स्वधिराइ बले गेछेन। सुषमा सोनियाके सहा करते पारछेन ना। सोनिया प्रधानमन्त्री हले आपत्ति नेइ शिरोमणि अकालि दलेर। बलेछेन दलेर प्रधान प्रकाश सिंग बादल। एदिके, गोविन्दाचार्येर आन्दोलने साय नेइ गुजराट वि जे पि-र। बलेछेन राज्या सभापति राजेन्द्र सिंग राना। बलेन, गोविन्दाचार्य एखन दलेर केउ नन। साधारण नागरिक हिसेबे तिनि कोनओ आन्दोलनेर डाक दितेइ पारेन। ये कोनओ नागरिक ताते अंश निते पारेन। तबे वि जे पि सेइ आन्दोलने नेइ।

এই বিপুল হার কেন, বিভ্রান্ত বিজেপি

গৌতম হোড় • নয়াদিল্লি

১৪ মে: চতুর্দশ লোকসভা ভোটের ফলাফল ঘোষণার চব্বিশ ঘণ্টা কেটে যাওয়ার পরেও হারের কারণটা কিছুতেই বুঝে উঠতে পারছেন না অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী। আজ বিজেপি-র সর্বোচ্চ নীতিনির্ধারক সংস্থা সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে দলীয় নেতাদের কাছে বাজপেয়ী খোলাখুলি জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, তিনি সত্যিই কিছু বুঝতে পারছেন না। তাঁর দীর্ঘ রাজনৈতিক জীবনে আর এক বারই মাত্র এরকম পরিস্থিতি এসেছিল। ১৯৫৭ সালে তিনি হারের কারণ আগাম বুঝতে পারেননি। যেমন পারেননি এই বার। তবে '৫৭ সালে ছিল তাঁর ব্যক্তিগত হার। আর এ বার তাঁর নেতৃত্বে দলের পরাজয়। কিছুতেই হিসাব মেলাতে পারছেন না প্রধানমন্ত্রী। যেমন পারছেন না বিজেপি সভাপতি বেক্সাইয়া নাইডু। তাঁরও খোলাখুলি স্বীকারোক্তি, "সাতাশ বছর ধরে রাজনীতিতে রয়েছি। কিন্তু এ বার এই ফল কেন হল তার যুক্তি আমার কাছে নেই।" যেমন প্রমোদ মহাজন বুঝতে পারছেন না উত্তরপ্রদেশে কোথায় ভুল হল।

তবে তার আগে বাজপেয়ী, আডবাণীরা আপাতত ঠিক করেছেন, হারের কারণ নিয়ে বিস্তারিত বিশ্লেষণ হবে। রাজ্য নেতৃত্বের কাছ থেকে রিপোর্টও চেয়ে পাঠিয়েছেন বেক্সাইয়া। কিন্তু তার আগে এই হারের ধাক্কা থেকে দলকে মানসিকভাবে চাপা করার কাজটা শুরু করে দিয়েছেন বাজপেয়ী, আডবাণীরা। দুই শীর্ষ নেতাই আজ বৈঠকে বলেছেন, অতীতেও পরাজয়ের পরে ঘুরে দাঁড়াতে পেরেছে বিজেপি। এ বারও তা না পারার কোনও কারণ নেই। ঠিক হয়েছে, বেক্সাইয়া দলীয় নেতৃত্বকে এ বার ঢেলে সাজবেন। সংগঠনের দায়িত্বে নিয়ে আসা হবে বাজপেয়ী মন্ত্রিসভায় গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দায়িত্বে থাকা বেশ কিছু মন্ত্রীকে। প্রমোদ মহাজন তো সাধারণ সম্পাদকের পদে আছেনই, এর পাশাপাশি অরুণ জেটলি, সুষমা স্বরাজ, শাহনওয়াজ হুসেনের মতো

নেতাদেরও নিয়ে আসার কথা ভাবা হচ্ছে।

আগামী বছরেই বিহার, ঝাড়খণ্ড, পঞ্জাব, মহারাষ্ট্রে বিধানসভা নির্বাচন। বিজেপি-র পরবর্তী লক্ষ্য হবে সেখানে ভাল ফল করা। দলের এক নেতার বক্তব্য, "আমরা ধরেই নিয়েছি, কংগ্রেসের নেতৃত্বাধীন সরকার পাঁচ বছর চলবে। এন ডি এ-কে যেমন ফেলা সম্ভব হয়নি, তেমনই ওঁদের ফেলাও সম্ভব হবে না। তাই ২০০৫-এর বিধানসভা এবং ২০০৯-এর লোকসভা হল আমাদের পরবর্তী লক্ষ্য।" আজ সংসদীয় বোর্ডের বৈঠকে সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে তড়িঘড়ি কোনও আন্দোলনে যাওয়া হবে না।

এই ধাক্কা এতটাই নড়িয়ে দিয়েছে বিজেপি নেতাদের যে বিরোধী নেতা কে হবেন সে বিষয়েও সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে পারেননি তাঁরা। এমনিতে বাজপেয়ীরই এই পদ নেওয়ার কথা। গত কাল সুষমা স্বরাজ জানিয়েও দিয়েছিলেন, বাজপেয়ীই বিরোধী নেতা থাকবেন। কিন্তু আজ বেক্সাইয়া নাইডু বলেছেন, এখনও কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত হয়নি। পরে অবশ্য তিনি যোগ করেছেন, বাজপেয়ীই এন ডি এ-র নেতা। বিরোধী নেতার প্রকৃষ্টি সাংসদেরা বৈঠকে বসে ঠিক করেন। দলে এই আনুষ্ঠানিকতাটা রয়েছে। বিজেপি সূত্রের খবর, বাজপেয়ী নিজে বিরোধী নেতা হতে আদৌ উৎসাহী নন। ভোটের আগেই তিনি বলেছিলেন এটাই তাঁর শেষ নির্বাচন। আর তিনি ভোটে দাঁড়াবেন না। প্রমোদ মহাজনের মতো বিজেপি নেতা প্রথম থেকেই বলে আসছেন, এটা বাজপেয়ীর উপরই ছেড়ে দেওয়া ভাল। তিনি না চাইলে তাঁকে এ নিয়ে জোরাজুরি করা উচিত হবে না। সে ক্ষেত্রে বিরোধী নেতার পদ স্বাভাবিকভাবেই যাবে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর কাছে।

কিন্তু তার আগেই বিজেপি-তে ক্রমশ হারের দায় এবং দায়িত্ব নিয়ে জলঘোলা শুরু হচ্ছে। আঙুল উঠতে শুরু করেছে প্রমোদ মহাজনের বিরুদ্ধে। প্রার্থী নির্বাচন থেকে শুরু করে উত্তরপ্রদেশের দায়িত্ব দেওয়া পর্যন্ত সব বিষয়েই

প্রমোদ ছিলেন কেন্দ্রীয় চরিত্র। তা হলে হারের দায়ই বা তিনি নেবেন না কেন? বেক্সাইয়া অবশ্য জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, যাবতীয় সিদ্ধান্ত তাঁরা সকলে মিলে নিয়েছেন। সূত্রাং প্রমোদ একা কেন বলির পাঁঠা হবেন? এক জনকে আলাদা করে তাঁর ঘাড়ে দায় চাপিয়ে দেওয়া ঠিক হবে না। আর ঘনিষ্ঠমহলে প্রমোদ বলেছেন, ১৯৮৪ সালে বিজেপি মাত্র দুটি আসনে জিতেছিল। তখন বিপর্যয়ের পরে কেউ তো দায়িত্ব নেননি বা এই প্রশ্নও ওঠেনি।

আঙুল উঠছে বিহারের দায়িত্বে থাকা রাজনাথ সিংহের বিরুদ্ধেও। গো-বলয়ের এই দুই রাজ্যের ১২০টি আসনের মধ্যে বিজেপি তার মধ্যে পেয়েছে মাত্র ১৫টি। কনটিকে ভাল ফল হওয়ায় বেঁচে যাচ্ছেন অরুণ জেটলি। কিন্তু প্রশ্ন উঠতে শুরু করেছে 'ভারত উদয়' এবং 'ফিল গুড' নিয়েও। সঞ্জয় পরিবার থেকে সমালোচনা শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে হিন্দুত্বকে লঘু করার জন্য। তাঁদের মতে, হারের অন্যতম কারণ এটাই। এটাও মানতে চাইছেন না বেক্সাইয়া। তাঁর পরিষ্কার বক্তব্য, দল যেমন চলছিল সে ভাবেই চলবে। প্রচারেও তিনি বলেছেন, হিন্দুত্ব জীবনপদ্ধতি। ভোটের বিষয় নয়। তার থেকে সরে আসার কারণ নেই। আর বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদের সঙ্গে তো এক বছর ধরেই বিজেপি-র দূরত্ব বেড়েছে। তবে একটা বিষয় তিনিও মেনে নিচ্ছেন, তামিলনাড়ুর মতো কিছু রাজ্যে কংগ্রেস জেট এন ডি এ-র থেকে শক্তিশালী ছিল। হরিয়ানায় চৌটালাকে কার্যত এন ডি এ থেকে তাড়িয়ে দেওয়া হল, অথচ তিনি সেখানে দুটি আসন পেয়েছেন, বিজেপি একটুও নয়। ডি এম কে এবং অন্যদের আটকাবার জন্যও তেমন চেষ্টা করা হয়নি। এমনকী ভোট এগিয়ে আনা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন উঠছে। নাম প্রকাশে অনিচ্ছুক এক বিজেপি নেতার বক্তব্য, প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইচ্ছুক ছিলেন না। কিন্তু ভোট এগিয়ে আনতে তাঁকে চাপ দেওয়া হয়েছিল। হারের ধাক্কার পাশাপাশি এই ধাক্কাও সামলাতে হবে বেক্সাইয়াকে।

ফের শাড়ি-কাণ্ড জড়িত বিজুপি-ই

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৯ মে—
ফের শাড়ি কেলেঙ্কারি! লখনউয়ের
লালজী টাউনের পর এবার সদর দিল্লির
বি জে পি প্রার্থী বিজয় গোয়েল।

কাল দিল্লিতে ভোট। তার চব্বিশ
ঘন্টা আগে বিজয় গোয়েলের অনুগামী বি
জে পি কর্মীরা সদর দিল্লির একটি বস্তি
এলাকায় শাড়ি বিতরণ করছিলেন।
প্রচার বন্ধ হয়ে যাওয়ার পর এই ধরনের
কাজ করার জন্য পুলিশ গোয়েলের
ব্যক্তিগত নিরাপত্তারক্ষীকে আটক
করেছে। তাছাড়া এক মহিলা-সহ দুজন
বস্তির বাসিন্দাকেও আটক করেছে।
স্থানীয় কংগ্রেস শিবিরের অভিযোগ,
গোয়েলের ব্যক্তিগত নিরাপত্তারক্ষী
দেবেন্দ্র যাদব গোয়েলের নামে এই শাড়ি
বিতরণের ঘটনায় জড়িত। পুলিশও
প্রাথমিকভাবে এই ধারণায় পৌঁছেছে। তাঁর
জিজ্ঞাসাবাদ চলছে।

গোয়েল অবশ্য গোটা বিষয়টি
অস্বীকার করে বলেছেন এই শাড়ি
বিতরণের ঘটনার সঙ্গে তাঁর নাম জুড়ে
দেওয়া হয়েছে। তাঁর বক্তব্য, “আমি যখন
যাচ্ছিলাম কংগ্রেসের কিছু কর্মী আমার
দিকে পাথর ছুঁড়তে শুরু করে। আমি
ব্যক্তিগত দেহরক্ষী দেবেন্দ্র সিংহকে
পাঠিয়েছিলাম দুষ্কৃতিদের ধরতে। কিন্তু
তারা তাঁর উপর বল প্রয়োগ করে।”

ANAD

10 MAY 2004

SC rejects Gujarat plea against Bakery trial shift

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 7

REFUSING TO review its order transferring the Best Bakery retrial from Gujarat to Maharashtra, the Supreme Court on Friday dismissed the state government's plea terming it "false and misleading". The bench of Justices Doraiswamy Raju and Arijit Pasayat said the application amounted to an "attempt through the backdoor" to seek a review of the court's April 12 judgment.

The appeal also wanted certain observations in the judgment deleted, such as the court's description of the state government's leaders as "modern-day Neros" who had looked the other way while children and women were being burnt alive at Best Bakery.

Rejecting the state's contention that the apex court did not have suo motu power to transfer a case without a specific prayer, the bench said the plea was "false and misleading as the Supreme Court had inherent power to transfer a case in the interest of justice".

Justice Pasayat said the official who has filed an affidavit in support of the application was expressing a falsehood by stating that Gujarat had not been giv-



Narendra Modi at an election rally in New Delhi on Friday.

en proper opportunity to present its case before the court ordered the trial shifted to Maharashtra.

Riot witness safety

The Centre has informed the Supreme Court that it would by May 20 take appropriate measures for the protection of witnesses in the 10 major riot cases in Gujarat, PTI added.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 MAY 2001

Bengal in the red for Red TUs: Advani

Statesman News Service

DURGAPUR, April 28. — Once a prosperous state, West Bengal is now lagging behind in industrial resurgence and growth. And all because of militant trade unionism.

This was how Mr LK Advani criticised the Left Front government at a poll rally at Rajiv Gandhi Maidan here this afternoon. He was here to campaign for NDA candidates in Burdwan district.

Blaming the LF government's "misrule" and "unreasonable militant trade unionism", Mr Advani said: "According to a survey in 2003, West Bengal was 17th



Mr LK Advani at the Durgapur rally — The Statesman

among the 19 most important states in terms of industrial resurgence and growth. Interestingly, the same Bengal had provided a minister like Shyama

Prasad Mukherjee who had initiated the first railway engine manufacturing unit in Chittaranjan."

He said: "The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that no investor or entrepreneur is now willing to come here. I am sorry to say Bengal's status is now considered to be almost same as that of Bihar."

The rally's venue was comparatively a "hostile turf" for Mr Advani since the Asansol-Durgapur industrial belt had witnessed the closure of several Central PSUs — blamed on the NDA's disinvestment policy — in the past five years. And he was aware of the fact: "Many say that we (the

NDA government) indulge in closing PSUs. This is not true. We had always intended to streamline the enterprises that had turned into rubble of unused capital due to successive changes in the economy..." He, however, did not commit himself to the reopening of any of the closed Central PSUs.

'Congress sinking': Dismissing exit poll forecasts of a hung Parliament, the Deputy Prime Minister said he would be surprised if the Congress "crossed the two-digit mark in terms of seats". The Congress is "sinking" at an alarming speed and "now the BJP has become the principal party."

BJP hints at new post-poll alliances

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: One of the BJP's election planks has been that while it leads a harmonious NDA, the opposition is divided. On Saturday the party did not just seek to highlight "apparent" differences in the opposition camp, but also hinted at possible new post-poll alliances.



Sharad Pawar

First, it released a letter written by NCP leader Sharad Pawar congratulating law minister Arun Jaitley for his "brilliant" performance at the WTO ministerial meet at Cancun, the message being that the NCP could well back the NDA after the polls. However, the letter is dated September 15, 2003, before the Congress and NCP agreed to contest the current LS elections together.

The BJP then asked the opposition to announce the name of the leader of the Congress-led alliance, as the president of its ally RJD, Laloo Prasad Yadav, had reportedly staked his claim to the prime ministership.

Jaitley released the letter written to him, dated September 15, 2003: Saying he (Jaitley) had "effectively protected the legitimate interest of our farmers and that of other developing countries," Pawar wrote, "I feel, post-Cancun, the responsibility will be to consolidate the G-22 and G-15 groups because there may be attempts to break these forums by the developed countries."

In the letter, the NCP leader also suggested that the G-22 and G-15 countries should form a parliamentary trade forum "so that closer ties achieved on these issues can be consolidated and institutionalised for future negotiations."

Warning Jaitley that the OECD countries, especially the EU and the USA, may resort to a new wave of Non Tariff Barriers (NTB)

and use of Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) against the products of G-22 and G-15 countries, he ends by saying, "I am willing to extend all my cooperation and support of the Centre for International Trade in Agriculture and Agro-based industries in this regard."

Jaitley also raised the leadership question again: "While the NDA is clear that Atal Bihari Vajpayee is its leader, we would like to know who the Congress-led alliance is projecting as its leader. The Congress says its president Sonia Gandhi would head the alliance while Laloo Yadav has clearly stated he is also a claimant for the post of prime minister," Jaitley said here.

While maintaining that the Vajpayee factor—which stood for stability, national security and a strong economy—would be the most influential factor in the elections, Jaitley drew attention to previous governments which had been unstable because of the problem of leadership, highlighting the case of the United Front government.

BJP dares EC over stampede

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 22

THE BJP has washed its hands of the Lucknow stampede and questioned the Election Commission contention that the distribution of saris on Lalji Tandon's birthday prima facie breached the model code of conduct.

Though many BJP leaders viewed the EC's show-cause notice on the stampede as a major setback to their election campaign, the party seems ready to take on the EC.

At least 22 women died in the stampede on April 12 after BJP workers began throwing saris into a crowd of 5,000 as part of Tandon's birthday bash.

But the BJP on Thursday came to Tandon's defence, though he had to resign as the Prime Minister's election management com-

mittee convenor after Opposition parties demanded his arrest. The poll panel ordered the Uttar Pradesh government to register a case of bribery and illegal gratification against Tandon.

Though the Election Commission didn't respond immediately to the BJP's statement, it was expected to examine the party's contentions before deciding on the next course of action.

The poll panel, in its show-cause notice, exercised powers under Section 16A of the Election Symbol (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, which allows it to freeze a party's election symbol or even derecognise it as a national party for violating the model code of conduct or its orders.

In a seven-page reply submitted by a BJP delegation led by general secretary Mukhtar Ab-

bas Naqvi, the party has said: ● It didn't organise the event nor did it have any connection directly or indirectly. No BJP functionary was involved nor any information given to the party in advance to prevent the distribution of saris.

● Neither Tandon nor anyone on his behalf had asked those who received the saris to vote for the BJP to prove the element of bargain or a nexus involving inducement to voters and appeal to them to vote.

● There was no room for presumption on this aspect as upheld by the Supreme Court while approving the Karnataka High Court's decision to reject the contention that mass-feeding of the poor in Congress leader Jaffer Shareef's constituency on the occasion of immersion of Rajiv Gandhi's ashes during the

Lok Sabha election process in 1991 was held for the purpose of garnering votes.

● Such an event had not been organised for the first time to mark Tandon's birthday. In fact, it was held last year too. (The BJP submitted documentary evidence in support of this contention.)

● No code of conduct can stop birthdays, marriages and personal celebrations. The code is applicable to political parties and not to social organisations.

Also, the BJP said that since it was a national party it could not be held responsible for the actions of its workers and leaders in their individual capacity. Therefore, the BJP said, the EC had erred in holding it "prima facie" guilty of violating the model code of conduct that bars distribution of largesse to influence voters.

POLL POT



■ The Congress submitted before court the *nikahnama* of Dilawar Khan to press its case that Dharmendra had wrongly indicated his name in the nomination papers

■ Despite a boycott call, Tripura recorded 65% voting

■ BJP has complained to EC about an SP ad comparing Mulayam Yadav's sacrifices with those of Prophet Muhammad's grandson

DON'T FEEL LEFT OUT, VAJPAYEE TELLS MUSLIM LEADERS

Minorities and UP in BJP focus

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 21. — A day after the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls, a "confident" BJP today decided to focus on Uttar Pradesh and minority votes in the remaining phases.

Party leaders and workers who were active in the 140 seats that went to polls in the first phase have been deputed to work in those constituencies where elections are yet to be held. A significant number of them have been asked to work in UP.

The decision was taken as top party leaders, led by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, met to chalk out a strategy for the remaining phases of polls even as the assessment of the party's research and documentation wing showed the NDA winning 103 of the 140 seats that went to polls yesterday. The BJP is expected to get around 80 seats.

The leadership has reportedly decided to consolidate the party's position in around 120 seats where it's likely to win, and control the damage done by the sari stampede in Lucknow. The party also wants to reiterate its stand that the NDA is united as before. This has been necessitated by the controversy over Mr Vajpayee's statement in Nagpur that he's tired of managing a 22-party coalition. Launching a damage-control exercise, the party today said Mr Vajpayee was not averse to a coalition government at the Centre but "favours" a compact coalition of fewer parties.

NEW DELHI, April 21. — In the midst of talks about his successor, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today said that if re-elected, he would not quit midway through his tenure.

Asked how his party would fare in the elections, Mr Vajpayee said: "We're again going towards a coalition government". On the Ayodhya issue, he said talks were underway but that didn't mean that a solution would emerge immediately after the polls. — PTI

Another report on page 4

"Our assessment of the trends is encouraging. We're comfortably placed," party president M Venkaiah Naidu said after the meeting, which was attended by, among others, Mr LK Advani, Mr Arun Jaitley and Mr Pramod Mahajan.

Mr Naidu also appealed to the minorities, particularly Muslims, to give the party an "opportunity". In a clear indication that the BJP is eyeing Muslim votes, he flagged off the "Atal Behari Vajpayee Caravan". The *yatra* is being organised under the banner of Atal Behari Vajpayee Himayat Committee, a platform of Muslim intellectuals and clergy. It'll travel in UP for the next 17 days. The committee is also planning to hold a convention in Kolkata on 24 April. Mr Vajpayee today told a delegation of committee members that the community should not feel "left out".

PM team not keen on second seat: page 4



Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee with a Muslim leader in New Delhi on Wednesday. — AFP

BJP tailors strategy for later phases

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, April 21

THE BJP today decided to focus on Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, which it had so far left in the care of its allies, to improve the party's prospects in the later phases of the elections.

At a strategy meeting, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and other top BJP leaders also decided to go all out to woo Muslims following reports that the community was indeed changing its attitude towards the party.

The meeting also made a third point — that the party should not harp on Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin to the extent where its development agenda gets overshadowed. To this end, the BJP decided to lend the campaign a positive twist with a new slogan: "Give us a good mandate for good governance."

The leaders favoured a new campaign theme that emphasises a "compact" coalition consisting of a handful of parties rather than a ragtag grouping. Part of the motive is to end the confusion caused by Vajpayee's remark that he was tired of running a huge coalition.

The BJP top brass reviewed the impact of the Lucknow sari tragedy and decided that the Muslim votes in Vajpayee's constituency should be mobilised in a big way.

Vajpayee met a delegation of Himayat Committee, a new platform of Muslim intellectuals, academics and ulemas formed to garner support for him in Lucknow. Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister and Congress leader Amman Rizvi also called on him to pledge support.

SAFFRON SHIFT



- Concentrate on Bengal, UP & TN, till now left in allies' care
- Don't let Sonia origin issue overshadow the positive, feel-good development theme
- Woo Muslim votes in a big way, especially in Lucknow
- Stress a 'compact' coalition of a handful of parties rather than a ragtag grouping (PM recently said he was tired of running a huge coalition)

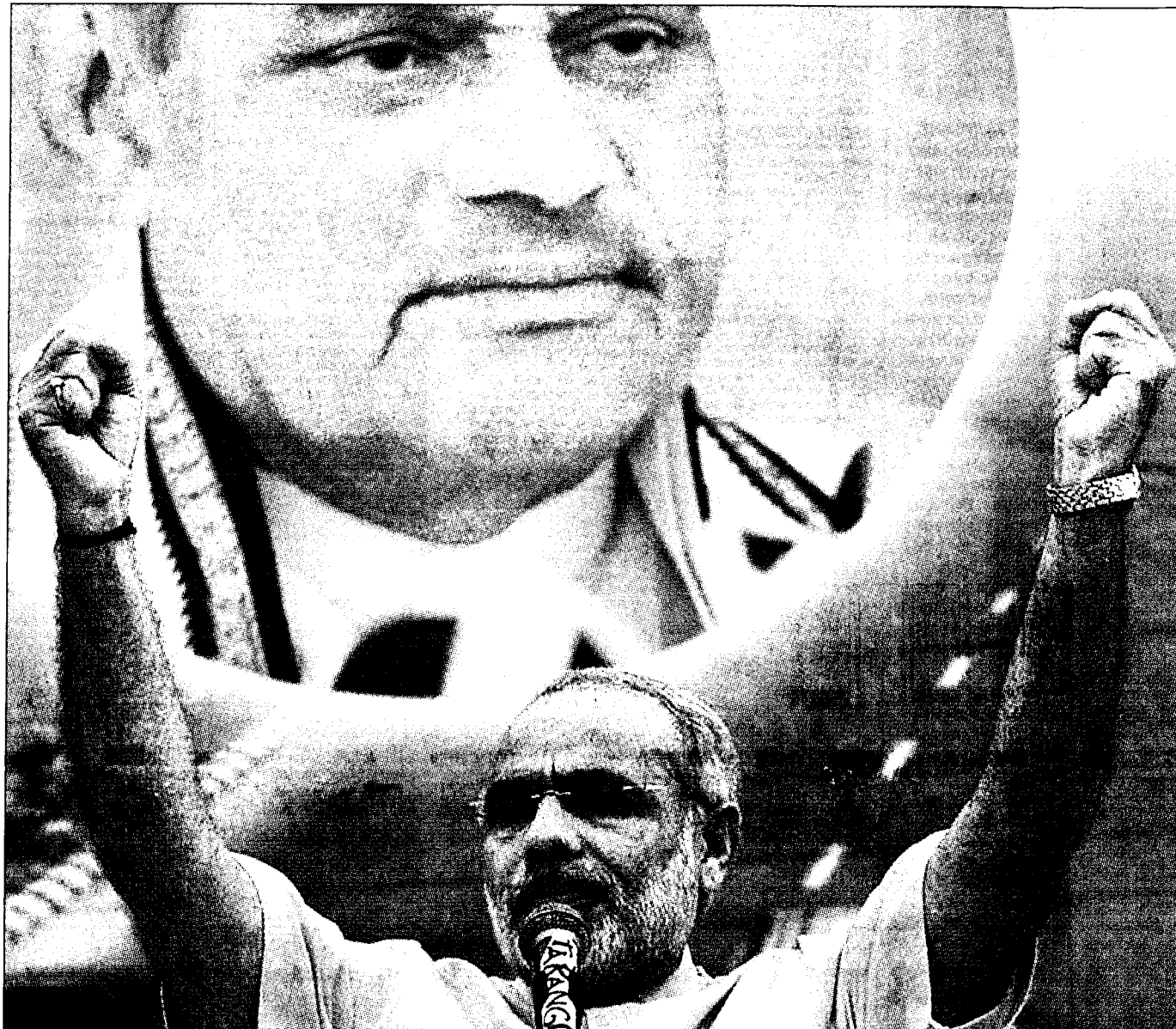
Vajpayee told the Muslim leaders that they should not feel left out and no attempt should be made to divide the minority community without whose support the country cannot progress.

The strategy meeting was attended by BJP president Venkiah Naidu, Advani, Law Minister Arun Jaitley and BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan. Earlier, Naidu had convened a meeting of leaders including Jaitley, M.A. Naqvi, Sanjay Joshi, Mahajan and Bal Apte.

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Big Two not enough, enter Modi

WHOSE HALO IS IT ANYWAY?



Modi at an election rally

SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, April 29: The BJP has pressed Narendra Modi into campaigning in Uttar Pradesh as the elections reach make-or-break stage, a move that is unlikely to make Atal Bihari Vajpayee happy.

Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, a general secretary of the party, announced today that the Gujarat chief minister would be going on the stump in the decisive state as it heads into its second and third phase of polling on May 5 and 10.

Naqvi said Modi would be one of the star campaigners — some central leaders like Pramod Mahajan and Arun Jaitley are already there. Vajpayee is also campaigning in Uttar Pradesh now.

It is not as if Modi is not going to other states. He did campaign in the earlier phases in Karnataka and Maharashtra, and he is hitting the trail in Rajasthan tomorrow and will tour Madhya Pradesh.

But Uttar Pradesh is Vajpayee country and the Prime Minister said at a public meeting only the other day that “we would not allow another Gujarat to happen” as he and other BJP leaders launched a sustained effort to persuade the minorities to shed their distrust of the party. A procession of minority leaders has made their way to the party’s Delhi headquarters to inspire confidence in the community.

“It is a foolish move,” said a BJP leader close to the Prime Minister about Modi’s campaigning.

“However, it’s a no-holds-barred fight to the finish, and Modi will probably be asked to campaign in constituencies

where there are fewer Muslims.”

The BJP leader also believed that the party need not panic because internal surveys have shown the BJP would clearly be the single largest party and be able to form a coalition government with Vajpayee at the head.

Party sources could not confirm if Vajpayee had been consulted before the decision to send Modi, but since the Gujarat chief minister has been campaigning, it may not be necessary that poll managers will seek the Prime Minister’s blessings at every step.

Those who know Vajpayee’s

THE TRIDENT

FIRST INDIA SHINING

SECOND ADVANI YATRA

NOW NARENDRA MODI

style of functioning say he will not make an issue out of it at this critical point in the party’s election campaign when some exit polls are predicting a hung Parliament and when the BJP is not expected to do particularly well in Uttar Pradesh.

Modi’s entry into the state may also be interpreted as a failure of the strategy the party has adopted for this election — Ram having been replaced by roads. Development and good governance were the centrepiece of the strategy.

While he campaigns in Uttar Pradesh, Modi is unlikely to

strike a strident Hindutva line, but his presence will be enough to send across that message loud and clear — the Gujarat riots having eclipsed the Ayodhya demolition in the minority psyche.

Vajpayee’s perturbation, though likely to stay unstated in public, is easier to fathom than L.K. Advani’s as Modi has often been referred to as being close to the deputy Prime Minister. It is not known, however, as to how Advani will view the fact that the BJP has to use the services of Modi after he himself has undertaken an arduous Bharat Uday Yatra that so symbolically touched Ayodhya.

What is known is that Modi did not have very much need for Vajpayee or Advani in his Gujarat campaign.

The Gujarat chief minister and other leaders will focus on 30-35 marginal constituencies which the BJP believes will come to its kitty if enough work is done there. Many in the BJP believe the party has made the right move.

“Considering that the minorities will not vote for us, what is wrong in consolidating our position among the Hindus by getting Modi to campaign?” asked a BJP leader.

He explained that, despite the Prime Minister’s appeals, the party was not depending on minority votes. What it was hoping to achieve was to ensure that the minorities do not close ranks and make a determined bid to defeat BJP candidates.

In Aligarh today, Vajpayee persisted in his efforts to position the BJP as a centrist party. “There should not be any doubt in the hearts of Muslims about us and we cannot in any way be dubbed anti-Muslim.”

Tandon quits Vajpayee campaign team

Statesman News Service

LUCKNOW, April 18. — In what appeared to be a strategic move, Mr Lalji Tandon today announced his "voluntary withdrawal" from Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's election campaign committee. Mr Shiv Kumar Singh has been named convener of the committee.

"There is no guilt while taking this decision," Mr Tandon told journalists after the withdrawal. He claimed that he was not given a chance to present his version before he was meted out the "punishment" by the Election Commission.

The model code of conduct, he said, is not applicable to him since he is neither contesting the election nor is he an agent of any candidate.

Claiming that he had nothing to do with the free distribution of saris in Lucknow, he said the programme was an annual affair, organised by a social welfare group that had no links with the BJP.

The administration and police were aware of the events sched-

uled to mark his birthday, he claimed. Advertisements were also published in newspapers about the programmes. "On 12 April, the day the incident took place, the election commissioners were here. They greeted me when I met them in the morning."

He also denied that the programme was organised by a former BJP corporator. Mr Brijendra Murari Yadav, Mr Tandon said, had never been a member of the BJP. "He was once a Janata Dal member of the municipal corporation."

Panel turns down UP plea

The EC has rejected the state government's request to reconsider the order for transfer of the Lucknow DM and SSP, adds PTI. The order was issued following the stampede. The panel, however, has allowed the UP government to provide ex-gratia assistance to the families of the stampede victims. The state government had earlier announced an ex gratia of Rs 1 lakh each to the victims' families.

Star-crossed on campaign trail

9.1. P. 188P.

B.R. SRIKANTH

Bangalore, April 17: Leading south Indian actor Soundarya and three others were killed this morning when their aircraft crashed minutes after taking off on a campaign journey for the BJP, which she had joined recently.

The 32-year-old, who has starred in about 70 films, was on her way to Karimnagar in Andhra Pradesh. Her brother Amarnath, BJP worker Ramesh Kadam and the pilot, Capt. Joy Philips, were the other victims.

Officials said the single-engine Cessna-180 crashed two minutes after taking off at 11.05 am on the fields of the University of Agricultural Sciences on Bangalore's outskirts.

Witnesses said they saw flames from the engine as the plane

hurtled down. Two labourers working on the fields were the first to reach the plane but, before they could wrench open the door, it burst into flames.

In Delhi, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said the "hand of destiny has snatched her away". Karnataka chief minister S.M. Krishna delayed an election tour and rushed to the spot.

Arvind Sharma, CEO of Agni Aerosports, which owned the Cessna, said it was bought in 1981 and was certified for airworthiness till July 2004. Since the plane did not have a black box, the cause of the tragedy will perhaps never be known.

Sharma believes it was either



Soundarya

due to a bird-hit or a technical snag.

Last month, a helicopter carrying three Congress leaders crash-landed in Gujarat, but there were no casualties.

Gloom descended on the BJP's Karnataka unit soon after news of Soundarya's death came in. "I am shattered..." said state unit chief Ananth Kumar.

Kumar and BJP state in-charge Arun Jatley visited the airstrip and consoled relatives of the victims. The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation has begun a probe into the crash.

Soundarya, whose real name was Soumya, joined the BJP earlier this year at the behest

of Amarnath, an RSS worker who has been active in the BJP since 1990.

She was a student of medicine when she decided to become an actor in 1992. The Bangalore-born star started her career with a Kannada film, but struck gold in the Telugu film industry.

Soundarya acted opposite the biggest male stars from the south like Rajnikanth, Chiranjeevi and Venkatesh. In 1999, she starred in the Hindi film *Sooryavansham* opposite Amitabh Bachchan. She won a national award in 2001 for her role in *Dweepa*, a Kannada film she also produced.

Soundarya was married to G.S. Raghu, who owns a small software firm. They would have celebrated their first marriage anniversary on April 27.

■ See Page 7

উদিত ভারতের কৃষকলক্ষ

গত সোমবারটি উদিত ভারতের পঞ্জিকায় একটি কালো দিন রূপে চিহ্নিত হইয়া রহিল? ভারত-উদয়ের যে চক্কানিনাদ কেন্দ্রীয় শাসক গোষ্ঠী বিশেষত তাহার প্রধান শরিক বিজেপি শুনাইতেছিল, তাহা যেন দুইটি ঘটনায় সুরতালচ্যুত হইয়া গেল। একটি নরেন্দ্র মোদী শাসিত গুজরাতে বেস্ট বেকারি মামলাকে অন্য রাজ্যে সরাইয়া লইতে সুপ্রিম কোর্টের নির্দেশ, অন্যটি লখনউয়ে বিজেপি নেতা লালজি ট্যান্ডনের জন্মদিনের উৎসবের শোকাবহ পরিণতি। নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে রাজধর্ম পালনের উপদেশ দিয়াছিলেন অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী। সেই মোদীর সরকার এমন ভাবে বেস্ট বেকারির কুখ্যাত সংখ্যালঘু নিধনের মামলা সঞ্চালন করিয়াছে যে সুপ্রিম কোর্ট তাহাকে প্রবাদোক্ত সত্রাট নিরোর সহিত তুলনা করিয়াছে, যে নিরো, গল্প অনুসারে, রোম নগরীকে আশুনে ভস্মীভূত করার সময় বাঁশি, মতান্তরে বেহালা বাজাইতেছিলেন! নিরঞ্জ মানুষের অসহায় হত্যাকাণ্ডের প্রতি এমন নিষ্ঠুর ঔদাসীন্য, ঘাতক বলিয়া অভিযুক্তদের বিরুদ্ধে সাক্ষ্যপ্রমাণ পেশে এমন গাফিলতি, তাহাদের বেকসুর খালাশ পাইবার নিশ্চয়তা বিধানে এমন বিশদ আয়োজন প্রজাপঞ্জের ন্যায়বিচার লাভের সম্ভাবনাকে নস্যৎ করিয়া দেয়। সুপ্রিম কোর্ট ইতিপূর্বেও খালাশ অভিযুক্তদের পুনর্বিচারের নির্দেশ দিয়াছিল। কিন্তু হাইকোর্ট এ বারও তাহাদের নির্দোষ সাব্যস্ত করিয়াছে, কারণ সুপ্রিম কোর্টেরই মতে 'সরকারি কৌশলি আসামি পক্ষের উকিলের মতো আচরণ করিয়াছেন'। তাই গুজরাতে নিগৃহীতদের ন্যায়বিচার প্রাপ্তির সম্ভাবনা নাই, যেমন নাই সাক্ষীদের নিরাপত্তার নিশ্চয়তা। তাই প্রতিবেশী মহারাষ্ট্রে মামলা স্থানান্তরিত। সুপ্রিম কোর্টের ভৎসনার একটাই সরল অর্থ: নরেন্দ্র মোদীর সরকারের উপর ভরসা করা যায় না, এই সরকার ধর্মীয় সংখ্যালঘুর ন্যায়বিচার লাভের গ্যারান্টি দিতে অক্ষম।

ইহার চেয়ে কঠোর ভাষায় এবং দৃঢ়ভাবে শীর্ষ আদালত কি কখনও কোনও নির্বাচিত সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে অনাস্থা ব্যক্ত করিয়াছে? ইহার পর বিজেপি নেতৃত্বের এবং প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এটাই কৃত্য থাকে: মোদীকে ইস্তফা দিতে বলা, অন্যথায় তাহাকে বরখাস্ত করা। রাজধর্ম কিন্তু তবেই রক্ষিত হয়। কংগ্রেস তথা বিরোধীরা এই দাবি করিয়াছে বলিয়াই তাহা অগ্রাহ্য করিতে হইবে এবং মোদীকে ভারত-উদয়ের অন্যতম সারথি রূপে রথারূঢ় করিয়া নির্বাচনী রণাঙ্গণে ছাড়িয়া দিতে হইবে, ইহা সংকীর্ণ সুবিধাবাদ। মোদীর হিন্দুত্ব এখনও সংঘ পরিবারের স্রিয়মাণ ঝটিকাবাহিনীকে উজ্জীবিত করিতে পারে। তাহার জনপ্রিয়তা এখনও

গুজরাতে অক্ষত থাকিতে পারে। কিন্তু কেবল নির্বাচিত হওয়ার বৈধতা সম্বল করিয়া সাংবিধানিক শাসন বানচাল করা গণতন্ত্রের পক্ষে সুসমাচার নয়। সংখ্যালঘুদের যদি ন্যায়বিচার পাইতে রাজ্যান্তরে যাইতে সুপ্রিম কোর্টই পরামর্শ দেয়, তবে সেই রাজ্য তো সংখ্যালঘুদের দমন করার সাংবিধানিক অনুমোদনই পাইয়া যায়। ইহা কি ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ রাষ্ট্রের রক্ষাকবচ জলাঞ্জলি দেওয়ার নামান্তর নয়? বাজপেয়ীর ভারত কি তবে কেবল সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠের জন্য উদিত হইতেছে?

এই উদয়েরই অন্য এক পরিহাসময় ও শোকাবহ চিত্র দেখা গেল বাজপেয়ীর নিজের নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্র লখনউয়ে। তাহার প্রচারকার্যের ভারপ্রাপ্ত রাজ্য বিজেপির পরিষদীয় নেতা লালজি ট্যান্ডন নিজের ৭০তম জন্মদিন উপলক্ষে শাড়ি বিতরণের প্রকল্প লইয়াছিলেন। চল্লিশ টাকার একটি শাড়ির জন্য প্রায় দশ হাজার সমবেত মহিলার মধ্যে যে কাড়াকাড়ি পড়িয়া যায়, তাহার চাপে এবং পদপিষ্ট হইয়া অন্তত ২২ জন মহিলা নিহত হইয়াছেন। নিহত হওয়ার পর অবশ্য রাজ্যের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী এবং প্রধানমন্ত্রী আলাদা-আলাদা করিয়া মৃতদের পরিবারবর্গের জন্য (নির্বাচন কমিশনের অনুমোদন সাপেক্ষে) এক লক্ষ টাকা করিয়া ক্ষতিপূরণ ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন। যাহারা চল্লিশ টাকার একটি শাড়ির জন্য মারা গিয়াছে, তাহাদের পরিবারের পক্ষে দুই লক্ষ টাকা (যদি অবশ্য মধ্যস্বত্বভোগীরা ওই টাকা মাঝপথে মারিয়া না দেয়) অবিশ্বাস্য এবং মর্মান্তিক সৌভাগ্যের মতো। কিন্তু প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কেন্দ্রেও ভোট জিতিতে এ ভাবে শাড়ি বিলাইতে হয়? অনুগ্রহ বিতরণের এমন নির্লজ্জ ঘটনা তে শোনা যায় উত্তর পূর্বাঞ্চলে: জনজাতীয় অঞ্চলে কিংবা বিহার ওড়িশার অনগ্রসর এলাকায় ঘটিত খোদ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বলমলে ভারতে শাড়িপ্রার্থী দরিদ্র মহিলাদের ভোট সংগ্রহে ডোল-কম্বল বিতরণের এমন লজ্জাকর আয়োজন? এই আয়োজনের ফলে নির্বাচনী আচরণবিধি ভঙ্গ করা হইয়াছে কি না তাহা লইয়া তর্ক উঠিয়াছে। বিধি ভঙ্গ হউক বা না হউক, শালীনতার ন্যূনতম শর্তও যে রক্ষিত হয় নাই, সেই বিষয়ে কিছুমাত্র তর্ক নাই। এই মৃত্যুর (নাকি 'গণহত্যার') দায় কে লইবে? পুলিশ বলিতেছে, তাহাদের সমাবেশের কথা জানানো হয় নাই, অনুমতিও লওয়া হয় নাই। লালজি ও তাহার সঙ্গীরা বলিতেছেন, তাহারা সভা ছাড়িয়া চলিয়া যাওয়ার পর ইহা ঘটিয়াছে। নির্বাচন আসিবে, যাইবে। কিন্তু নরেন্দ্র মোদী ও লালজি ট্যান্ডনদের হাত ধরিয়া যে ভারত উদিত হইতেছে, সেখানে ধর্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু কিংবা দরিদ্র মহিলাদের মতো প্রান্তিক মানুষেরা কি শুধু ভোটের খোরাক হিসাবেই থাকিয়া যাইবেন?

ট্যাণ্ডনের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৬ এপ্রিল—প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্রে শাড়ি বিলির অনুষ্ঠানে গণমতায় খটনার চার দিন পরে বিজেপি-র গলায় নির্বাচন কমিশনের ফর্স এঁটে বসল। অনুষ্ঠানের উদ্যোক্তা লালজি ট্যাণ্ডনের বিরুদ্ধে ভোট প্রত্যাখ্যাত করতে ঘূষের মামলা দায়ের করতে আজ নির্দেশ দিয়েছে কমিশন। পাশাপাশি, বিজেপি-র কেন্দ্রীয় নেতৃত্বকে নির্বাচনী বিধিভঙ্গের দায়ে শো-কজ করে কমিশন বলেছে, কেন এই বিধি ভাঙার দায়ে তাদের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে না, তা সাত দিনের মধ্যে জানাতে হবে। কমিশনের নির্দেশের পরিস্ফুটনিত বিজেপি আজ বলেছে, তারা এ ব্যাপারে সব রকম সহযোগিতা করবে। একই সঙ্গে লখনউয়ের ঘটনাটি নিয়ে 'রাজনীতি' না-করারও আবেদন জানিয়েছে তারা। উল্লেখ্য, গত সোমবার নিজের জমাদানে ট্যাণ্ডন গরিব মহিলাদের মধ্যে শাড়ি বিলি করছিলেন। সেই অনুষ্ঠানে হঠাৎ প্রচণ্ড ধাক্কাধাক্কি শুরু হলে ২২জন মহিলা ও দুই শিশুর মৃত্যু হয়। কমিশনের গৌহাট দস্তানার থেকে রেহাই পায়নি মূল্যায়ন সিংহ যাদবের সরকারও। ঘটনার পরেই উত্তরপ্রদেশের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী

বিরুদ্ধে ঘূষের মামলার নির্দেশ কমিশনের

মূল্যায়ন সিংহ যাদব 'মর্মান্তিক' ঘটনাটিকে 'দুর্ভাগ্যজনক' আখ্যা দিয়ে বলেছিলেন এতে কারো দোষ নেই। কিন্তু আজ কমিশন লখনউয়ের জেলাপাসক এবং সিনিয়র সুপারিন্টেন্ডেন্ট (এস এস পি)-কে বদলির আদেশ দিয়েছে। কারণ, কমিশনের নির্দেশ অনুযায়ী রাজ্যের মুখসচিব ও মুখ্য নির্বাচনী অফিসার ঘটনাটি সম্পর্কে দিল্লিতে যে রিপোর্ট পাঠিয়েছেন, তাতেই বলা রয়েছে, সে দিন ওই এলাকায় ১৪৪ ধারা জারি করা ছিল। এবং ওই অনুষ্ঠানের জন্য কোনও আগাম অনুমতি নেওয়া হয়নি। এই অবস্থায় কমিশন মনে করছে, অনুমতি ছাড়া অত বড় জমায়েত কী করে হয়েছিল, তার দায়িত্ব এড়িয়ে যেতে পারে না প্রশাসনও।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্রে লখনউকে ঘিরে এত বড় বিতর্ক নিশ্চিত ভাবেই বিজেপি-কে যথেষ্ট অস্বস্তিতে ফেলেছে। লালজি ট্যাণ্ডন গত বারেরও প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্বাচনী এজেন্ট ছিলেন। এ বারেরও তাঁরই বাজপেয়ীর নির্বাচনী এজেন্ট হওয়ার কথা ছিল। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কেন্দ্রের দেখভালও করেন ট্যাণ্ডন। তা সত্ত্বেও, কমিশন সরাসরি বাজপেয়ীর দিকে আঙুল তোলেনি। কারণ হিসাবে বলা হয়েছে, ঘটনার সময়ে লখনউয়ের প্রাক্তন হিসাবে বাজপেয়ীর মনোনয়ন জমাই পড়েিনি। সুতরাং, আইনগত দিক থেকে অভিযোগটা সরাসরি বাজপেয়ীর দিকে আসছে না। কমিশনের ঘোষণার পরে কংগ্রেস আজ দাবি করেছে, লখনউ কেন্দ্রের নির্বাচন পিছিয়ে দেওয়া হোক। কারণ, সেখানে কী পরিবেশে (প্রলোভন দেখিয়ে) ভোট হচ্ছিল, তা এখন স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে। মুখপাত্র কপিল সিংহ বিজেপি-কে আক্রমণ করে বলেছেন, "এটা কেবল এই কেন্দ্রের উপরে কালো দাগ নয়। গোটা নির্বাচন প্রক্রিয়ার উপরেই কালো দাগ। কারণ এটা ছিল প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্র।"

স্তম্ভিত লালজি অটলের পরামর্শের অপেক্ষায়

কমিশনের নির্দেশকে চ্যালেঞ্জ জানিয়ে আদালতে যাবেন? যাবতীয় প্রশ্নবাদের সামনে লালজি দাঁড়িয়ে থাকলে পাথরের স্তম্ভের মতো। ঠোট্ট একটাই জবাব, 'নো কমেটস'। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে একটি বার কথা বলার জন্য তিনি তখন মরিয়া। কিন্তু বাজপেয়ীর তখন ব্যস্ত গুজরাতে উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্রে জনসভায়। শুধু লালজি নন, লোখ নেতা কল্যাণ সিংহ, ব্রাজগ নেতা কলরাজ মিশ্র বা ঠাকুর নেতা রাজনাথ সিংহ, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে বারবার ফোন করে তাঁরা প্রত্যেকেই জরুরিতে চেয়েছেন, এখন তারা কী করবেন? অটলের ঘনিষ্ঠ মহল থেকে লখনউয়ে নির্দেশ এসেছে, এখন মুখে কুলুপ এঁটে বসে থাকুন। যা বলার তা প্রধানমন্ত্রীই জানানো।

ভোটের মুখে এই ঘটনায় উত্তরপ্রদেশের বিজেপি নেতারা যারপরনাই অস্বস্তিতে পড়েছেন। রাজ্য বিজেপি নেতাদের মধ্যে আলোড়নের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। অনেকেই ঠারঠারে দাবি তুলছেন, এরা পর পর্টার পাতায়

১৬ এপ্রিল: এমনটা যে হতে পারে স্বপ্নেও ভাবতে পারেনি লালজি ট্যাণ্ডন। শাড়ি-কাণ্ডের ধাক্কার পরেও কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর লখনউয়ে মনোনয়ন পত্র জমা দেওয়ার সময় তাঁর অন্যতম প্রস্তাবক ছিলেন তিনি। ভেবেছিলেন, সঙ্কটটা এ যাত্রায় বোধ হয় কাটিয়ে ওঠা গেল। ট্যাণ্ডন প্রাথমিক ভাবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বোঝাতে পেরেছিলেন, ভোট-রাজনীতিতে এ রাজ্যে শাড়ি-কাণ্ডের প্রভাব তেমন পড়বে না। সঙ্কট মোচন পারলেন, নির্বাচন কমিশন তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে এক আই আর দায়ের করার জন্য রাজ্য সরকারের কাছে নির্দেশ পাঠিয়েছে, তখন মাল অ্যান্ডিনিয়ে তাঁর বাড়িতে হত্যাশীল নেমে আসে।

খবর আসার পরেই সাংবাদিকেরা লালজিকে ছেঁকে ধরেন। কি বার বার একটাই প্রশ্ন। আপনার প্রতিক্রিয়া কী? আপনি কি

ট্যাণ্ডনের বিরুদ্ধে

প্রথম খাতার পর দুর্ঘটনার সময়ে মুখ্য নির্বাচন কমিশনার তরুণী সুবাইয়া কৃষ্ণমূর্তি এবং দুই কমিশনার বি বি ট্যাণ্ডন এবং এন গৌশালস্বামী জন্মতে ছিলেন। সেখান থেকেই তাঁরা উত্তরপ্রদেশের মুখ্যসচিবকে এই বিষয়ে দ্রুত বিস্তারিত রিপোর্ট পাঠাতে নির্দেশ দেন। ইতিমধ্যে বিজেপি-র তরফে সাফাই দেওয়া হয় যে, ওই অনুষ্ঠানের সঙ্গে জলের কোনও সম্পর্ক ছিল না। ওটা ছিল লালজির জন্মদিন উপলক্ষে একটি সামাজিক সম্মেলনের অনুষ্ঠান।

অন্য দিকে, কংগ্রেস ও সি পি এমের মতো বিরোধী দলগুলি নির্বাচন সদনে গিয়ে অভিযোগ করে আসে, শাড়ি বিলির অনুষ্ঠানে বিজেপি-র পতাকা ছিল; স্পষ্টতই এর লক্ষ্য ছিল ভোটের আগে মানুষকে প্রভাবিত করা। মুখ্যসচিবের রিপোর্ট হাতে পেয়ে আজ পূর্ণ কমিশনের বৈঠক বসে।

দুর্ঘটনার ফৌজদারি দিকটি, অর্থাৎ, গণমতায় বিষয়টি কমিশনের এজিয়ারে পড়ে না। তারা দেখছে আচরণবিধি লঙ্ঘনের দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে।

কমিশনের মুখপাত্র এ এন ঝা বলেছেন, "ভোটের সময়ে ওই অনুষ্ঠানে দাঙ্গা-ধরারটি করা হচ্ছিল।" যে রিপোর্ট দৃষ্টি এসেছে, তার তথ্যপ্রমাণ নিয়ে কমিশন সন্তুষ্ট বলেও জানিয়েছেন ঝা।

আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাজপেয়ী, উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী, সভাপতি বেকাইয়া নাইডু-সহ বিজেপি-র সমস্ত শীর্ষ নেতাই দিল্লির বাইরে। দলের তরফে মুখ্য মুখপাত্র প্রকাশ জাভাদেকার জানান, শীর্ষ স্তরে আলোচনার পরেই বিজেপি এই বিষয়ে বিস্তারিত প্রতিক্রিয়া জানাবে।

অন্যদিকে, দুর্ঘটনার পরেই ট্যাণ্ডনকে ভোটের কাজ থেকে সরিয়ে দিতে চেয়েছিলেন।

দুর্ঘটনার খবর পেয়েই বাজপেয়ী যখন লখনউ যান, তখন ট্যাণ্ডনকে তাঁর আশেপাশে দেখা যায়নি। কিন্তু মনোনয়ন পত্র জমা দেওয়ার সময়ে ফের ট্যাণ্ডনকে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আশেপাশে সক্রিয় দেখা যায়। কিন্তু আজকের পরে ট্যাণ্ডন যে আর এই নির্বাচনে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কেন্দ্রে জন্মলা দায়ের করতে নির্দেশ দিয়েছে। ভারতীয় দণ্ডবিধির ১৭১ (বি) ধারায় ট্যাণ্ডনের বিরুদ্ধে ভোটের সময়ে ঘূষ দেওয়ার জন্য অভিযুক্ত করতে নির্দেশ দিয়েছে কমিশন।

Court and crush spoil feel-good



Bodies of some of the stampede victims in an ambulance in Lucknow on Monday.

TRILOCHAN SINGH

21 die in Lucknow stampede

HT Correspondent
Lucknow, April 12

IN NDA'S 'shining' India, 21 women died today in a stampede in the Prime Minister's constituency after BJP workers started throwing saris into a crowd of 5,000 as part of a party leader's birthday bash.

Lalji Tandon, on his 70th birthday, was meant to hand out the saris to lined-up women from Lucknow's slums. But his patience wore out after giving away merely 15 and he left the venue, Chandra Shekhar Park, around 2 pm. BJP workers, impatient to get the ritual over with, began tossing the saris in heaps into the equally impatient crowd.

"There were no policemen to control the mob, for the organisers hadn't taken permission," District Magistrate Aradhana Shukla said.

"It was a private function, so we didn't think permission was necessary," Tandon later told *Hindustan Times*.

The organisers — Nagrik Sewa Samiti, run by Tandon aide and history-sheeter Brijendra Murari Yadav — were guilty of another thoughtless act: that of closing the park's only gate before the distribution had begun. They opened it later to slip out after the mayhem. The police arrived some 15 minutes after the tragedy.

Other than the 21 dead, the stampede left scores injured, including

many children who had come along with their mothers.

The Election Commission has sought a report from the chief secretary to be able to decide if the sari distribution flouted the model code, as alleged by the Congress and the CPI(M). These two Opposition parties asked the Prime Minister to resign as the tragedy had happened in his constituency.

Vajpayee cut short a poll meeting in Dhanbad to fly to Lucknow. He met relatives of the victims in hospital and promised a compensation of Rs 1 lakh for the families of each of the dead. The state government has ordered a probe.

■ **Page 13: BJP worries about political fallout**

Bakery trial shifted to Maharashtra

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 12

THE SUPREME Court today described Gujarat government leaders as modern-day "Neros" and quashed all the 21 acquittals in the Best Bakery case, ordering a retrial in Maharashtra.

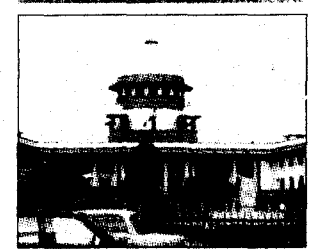
Virtually accusing the Modi government of being hand-in-glove with the killers — who burnt 14 people alive in Vador's Best Bakery locality on March 1, 2002 — the court said: "The modern-day Neros were looking elsewhere when innocent children and helpless women were burning, and were probably deliberating how the perpetrators of the crime can be protected."

The Bench of Justices Doraiswamy Raju and Arijit Pasayat ordered the state to appoint a new public prosecutor — it accused the current one of having behaved like a "defence counsel" — asked the DGP to oversee further investigation and said the retrial must be conducted on a day-to-day basis. Never before had an order for retrial and reinvestigation passed after the trial court and High Court had both acquitted the accused.

The apex court — which passed the order on appeals by key witness Zahira Sheikh and the Modi government — set another precedent by asking Gujarat to consult the victims and witnesses before choosing an advocate. It also told Gujarat and Maharashtra to provide protection to witnesses and victims "so that they can depose freely without apprehension of threat or coercion from any person".

The Bench said a free and fair trial was not possible in Gujarat. Therefore, "keeping in view the... glaringly demonstrating subversion of justice delivery system with no congenial and conducive atmosphere still prevailing, we

Apex court blast



On riots The fanatics who spread violence in the name of religion are worse than terrorists

On probe The probe appears to be anything but impartial without any object of finding out the truth and bringing to book those who were responsible for the crime

On Modi govt Modern-day Neros were looking elsewhere when innocent children and helpless women were burning (in Best Bakery)

direct that retrial shall be done by a court under the jurisdiction of Bombay High Court".

The court lambasted the Gujarat High Court for its "irresponsible" remarks against the National Human Rights Commission and social activists, including Teesta Shetalvad. Expunging these remarks, Justice Pasayat said: "The High Court appears to have miserably failed to maintain required judicial balance and sobriety in making unwarranted references to personalities and their legitimate move before competent courts — the highest court of the nation — despite knowing it could not deal with such matters."

Related reports on Page 3

BJP defends Modi as Cong demands his scalp

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/ GANDHINAGAR, April 12. — Soon after the Supreme Court issued the verdict on Best Bakery retrial, the BJP jumped to Mr Narendra Modi's defence even as the Congress demanded the Gujarat chief minister's resignation.

Congress spokesman Mr Kapil Sibal said the verdict was a "clear indictment of the ideology that caused Gujarat massacres. It's also an indictment of the administration of justice by the current government". If Mr Modi doesn't resign on his own, Mr Sibal said, the Prime Minister "should fulfil his *Rajdharma* by sacking him."

Union law minister Mr Arun Jaitley refused to accept that the SC order was an indictment of his party's government in Gujarat. The court had commented on the trial and not indicted the government, he said.

On the Congress' demand for Mr Modi's resignation, Mr Jaitley said his name could not be dragged if a witness turned hostile, and alleged that the witness was pressurised to give a different kind of statement. He discounted the possibility of the Supreme Court order having any electoral

impact in Gujarat or elsewhere. He asserted that the court order would be complied with, the issue at stake was justice and none would want the guilty to be saved.

Mr Jaswant Singh, Union finance minister, when asked to comment on the order said: "*Gujarat sarkar pe tippani hai, BJP pe nahin*, (the observation is on the Gujarat government, not on the BJP). The state government will take corrective steps." Asked whether the "SC order was a blow to the credibility of the Gujarat government," Mr Singh reacted sharply, saying: "It is a great error to treat it in this manner. How can it be a blow?"

However, Ms Teesta Setalvad of Citizens for Justice and Peace described the Supreme Court order as "a very very severe indictment of the Gujarat government." Ms Setalvad, instrumental in taking the case to the Supreme Court, said she was "very happy and satisfied" with the development. She also said that she had spoken to Ms Zahira Sheikh, one of the main witnesses who is under her care in Mumbai, and she too had welcomed the SC order.

Stating that "we want the CBI to reinvestigate the Best Bakery case", Ms Setal-

vad said in Ahmedabad today that the trial of other cases like Godhra, Gulberg, Sardarpur and Ode should also be transferred out of Gujarat. "The Supreme Court is to hear the prayer in these cases on 21 April," she said.

"The Supreme Court order is not just a moral victory, not just a judgment on the state of affairs in Gujarat." She observed that the next logical steps should be reinvestigation (of the case), change of public prosecutor and appointment of a watching advocate."

There was commotion at the premises of Prashant, the NGO building, where Father Cedric Prakash has his office and where Ms Setalvad met the press.

Father Prakash filed an FIR after he was threatened by two accused in the Gulberg Society case. The two, identified as Atul Vaidya and Bharat Teli, were loitering around the building and had asked to meet Teesta.

Teesta who had arrived in the city in the morning was without police escort at the time. When Father Prakash tried to question the two they told him "*tujhe dekh lenge*" and vanished. After this incident, police were immediately called in and an FIR registered against the two accused.



File photograph of Zahira Sheikh, key witness in Best Bakery case.

Irrked CM heckles scribe
GANDHINAGAR, April 12. — Mr Narendra Modi today not only refused to answer a journalist from Godhra who asked for his reaction on the Supreme Court order in the Best Bakery case, but also pushed him for having the audacity to ask him for his reaction on the matter.

Dignesh Parikh, the scribe, posed the question to the Gujarat chief minister as soon as he alighted from his car and started walking towards the podium at a rally venue in Labag Tekra Maidan. No sooner than the 30-year-old Parikh asked Mr Modi his reaction on the matter, than he was pushed by the irritated firebrand Hindutva leader and fell on the ground.

The chief minister's security team, according to another journalist Anil Soni, soon cleared the route for the leader and shooed away the remaining journalists. Journalists from Godhra later expressed their "unhappiness" over the incident. Another sore point for Mr Modi's show today was that the entire Muslim population of the town boycotted the BJP's election meeting. The few Muslims seen attending the rally were BJP workers.

— SNS

21 women killed in Lucknow stampede

Statesman News Service

LUCKNOW, April 12. — As many as 21 women were killed and several others injured in a stampede this afternoon during the distribution of saris to celebrate the 70th birthday of the BJP leader, Mr Lajji Tandon. The tragedy occurred in the Prime Minister's Lok Sabha constituency.

Nearly 7,000 women had gathered at Chandrashekhar Azad Park in the Mahanagar area to collect saris. Trouble began after 2 p. m. when Mr Tandon left the venue. The mayor of Lucknow, Dr SC Rai, presided over the function which was organised by Mr Brijendra Murari Yadav, a former city corporator. It was touted by the BJP as a welfare programme.

Mr Tandon denied that mismanagement had caused the stampede. He claimed it was an

annual private function organised by his well-wishers to celebrate his birthday.

The Prime Minister and the chief minister, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, have announced an ex gratia of Rs 1 lakh to every bereaved family, and Rs 50,000 to each of the seriously injured. The BJP has allotted Rs 50,000 to each family.

Lucknow's divisional commissioner, Mr DC Lakha, will hold an administrative inquiry.

The Congress has demanded action against Mr Tandon. Mr Ram Jethmalani, likely candidate against Mr Vajpayee, called the function an "attempt to corrupt the voter".

The chief minister, who met Mr Tandon, said the BJP leader was not at fault. "It is an accident and the matter should not be politicised. If somebody wants to distribute clothes on his birthday, I don't see how that is a violation of the model code," Mr Yadav said.

He also visited the hospital.

Police said the organisers did not seek permission for the rally. The park isn't spacious enough to accommodate 7,000 people. "Normally we insist that the organisers seek permission for such programmes," said the District Magistrate, Mrs Aradhana Shukla.

Asha Devi, who had come to collect a sari, said some women tried to jump the queue in order to snatch more than one sari. The situation went out of control when the organisers announced that the function was over, and that saris could be collected from the exit gate. The passage was too narrow. This led to the stampede. And those who didn't get saris were furious.

"I wasn't present when the stampede occurred. I left the venue after distributing a few saris. I came to know of the stampede much later," was Mr Tandon's comment.



The bodies in a police van. — AFP

PM cancels engagements, BJP worried

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 12. — Following the tragedy in Lucknow, a "disturbed" Prime Minister cancelled his engagements and rushed to Lucknow from Jharkhand, where he was campaigning, and BJP leaders were worried whether the incident would be a "blot on the campaign".

Mr Shiv Kumar Sharma, a key political aide of the PM said moments after he landed with Mr Vajpayee in Lucknow, that "the incident is a great tr-

agedy". Sources close to the PM's entourage said that the team was "shaken" by the event and "assessing the impact".

Senior party leaders in Delhi questioned whether UP BJP leaders had exercised due caution in holding the event. The BJP's concerns are especially sharp because Mr Lajji Tandon is a key Vajpayee aide in the state. The PM is supposed to file his nomination on 15 April and BJP leaders are apprehensive about the impact the tragedy may have on what was to be a showcase

ceremony.

BJP state unit leaders are "angry" with Mr Tandon, sources said, but given the "sensitivity" of the case, "no one is saying anything". Mr Tandon has been Mr Vajpayee's pointsman in Lucknow for a long time. The PM has, in fact, not asked senior party colleagues to pitch in for his constituency and conducted most of the work of constituency nursing through Mr Tandon.

However, BJP leaders said that Mr Tandon's proximity to the PM may not "save him

from tough questions" this time. Of particular worry for BJP leaders is how the issue will play in general in a state where the party has pulled out all stops to improve its performance.

There are concerns, in this connection, about the Opposition "blowing up" the issue, as a senior BJP leader put it. The Congress has already accused Mr Tandon of violating the model code of conduct and asked why the PM was "allowing" his aides to "break rules".

CEC seeks report from UP govt

LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI, April 12. — The Chief Election Commissioner, Mr TS Krishnamurthy, has asked the UP government to submit a report immediately. The EC will intervene on the basis of the report.

Is the sari distribution a violation of the code of conduct? Under Section 123 (A) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, bribery for votes is classified as actions taken by the candidate, by his certified election agent or by any other person(s) who acts with the consent of the candidate or the agent. In this case,

since the PM hasn't filed his nomination as yet, he is not officially a candidate. So, he does not have an election agent.

In last year's Assembly elections in Delhi, BJP candidate from the Gole Market constituency, Ms Poonam Azad, wife of Mr Kirti Azad, faced questions about some materials being distributed. She had told the commission that she was not aware of any attempts to influence voters and that such attempts didn't have her sanction. The issue rested there.

— SNS

Allies share BJP temple vision

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RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, April 8: The National Democratic Alliance manifesto released today made a marked departure from the 1999 edition, reflecting a clear imprint of the BJP's Vision Document 2004.

Moving away from the earlier "moratorium on contentious issues", the manifesto for "development, good governance and peace" dwelt at length on the Ram temple, cow-slaughter ban, protection of the demographic identities of Jammu and Kashmir's three regions and reservation for the upper-caste poor.

The manifesto, however, was quiet on the BJP's other obsessions — abrogation of Article 370, a common civil code and proscri-

bing religious conversion — all of which figured directly or tangentially in the Vision Document.

But like the big brother's document, the manifesto formulated its position on what are considered "contentious" issues in neutral language.

"We mentioned it (Ram temple) because we do not want to take the issue further and make it a subject of dispute and a poll issue," said Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who released the manifesto.

"No one can have a problem" with the articulation, NDA convenor George Fernandes said.

While the "judiciary's verdict in this matter should be accepted by all", efforts should be "intensified for dialogue and a negotiated settlement in an atmosphere of mutual trust and goodwill", the manifesto said.

BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan, at whose residence the release function was held, said Fernandes was persuaded on the "wisdom" of the Ayodhya inclusion. Fernandes reportedly read out the draft portion on Ayodhya to each of the allies, including Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee who was believed to have accepted it.

On the "foreign origin" issue, the manifesto said: "(A) Legislation will be introduced to ensure that important offices of the Indian state can be occupied only

by those who are India's natural citizens by the Indian origin."

"Efforts will be made to evolve consensus for passing a central legislation for protection of cow and her progeny," read the manifesto promise articulated under the "animal husbandry and fisheries" sub-head.

Also on offer was the ambitious promise to make India an economic superpower, with a 10 per cent annual growth rate, in five years and wipe out poverty by 2015.

The manifesto contained its share of sops for the minorities lumped under "minorities development agenda", whose emphasis was the three Es of education, economic uplift and empowerment.

■ See Page 7

Advani defends Modi govt...

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAIPUR, April 3. — Giving a clean chit to the Narendra Modi led BJP government in Gujarat over post-Godhra communal riots, Mr Advani said: "If Godhra incident had not taken place the following riots would not have occurred. Allegations in this regard against the state government are baseless and unfounded." He said the attack on Akshardham temple was even more serious, had the state government not been very careful in handling the situation, the worse would have occurred.

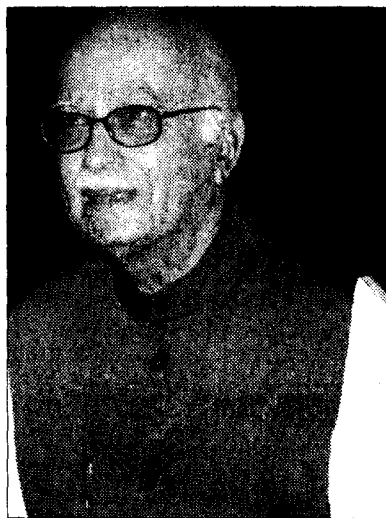
Mr Advani said: "The Modi government is functioning very well. The kind of challenges it faced from drought to earthquake, very few governments would have been able to overcome. As far as issues of administration and governance are concerned, the government is very good and foreign investments to the state are at a record high."

Reacting to apprehensions raised about his *yatra* triggering off communal tension, Mr Advani said: "Till today, the 22nd day of the *yatra*, there has not been a single untoward inci-

... slams soft-on-nuke charge on Vajpayee

JAIPUR, April 3. — Reacting to the Congress charge that Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee had opposed nuclear testing as the then external affairs minister in Janata Party government, Mr Advani said today: "I find it ridiculous, it was not a BJP government, but a government headed by Morarji Desai and his views on nuclear deterrence are well known".

"Even we could conduct nuclear test only after NDA partners agreed. Had there been any opposition we would not have, as the issue was only in BJP agenda and not part of the common programme of governance", he said. — PTI



Mr LK Advani

dent. Those who were looking for tension must have been very disappointed. Even the courts rejected all petitions seeking stopping of the *yatra*." "Hum *yatra karein to apradh. Aap roadshow karein to theek hai* (its a crime if we embark on *yatra* but if they do roadshows it is fine)," he said referring to Mrs Sonia Gandhi's road shows.

Asked about the temple issue, Mr Advani said: "I am confident the issue will be resolved after a new government assumes office".

To a question about not being considered as Prime Ministerial candidate, he said: "For me BJP emerging as a major party was the biggest pleasure. We want votes for the party".

India Shining dark spots force BJP to roll back blitz

A. B. M.
RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, April 1: The BJP has decided to go slow on its advertising blitzkrieg after getting feedback that its India Shining campaign has proved to be "counterproductive", sources involved in the campaign have said. The Centre had unleashed the campaign to publicise its achievements and create a "feel-good" ambience before the Election Commission enforced the model code of conduct. "Our feedback was there

was an overkill of ads and even the middle-class, at whom it was targeted, was beginning to think it was overdone. If we spend more money on ads, our assessment is it is not going to make a great impression," sources said. The plan is to go in now only for "response" ads, which will be created and released only if there is "provocation" from the Opposition; the resources will be spent directly on individual constituencies. The only new element in the

BJP's campaign is a modified version of an earlier message delivered by Atal Bihari Vajpayee asking people for a renewed mandate. The new version will name the candidate and his constituency. However, the Prime Minister recorded the message all over again yesterday at a four-hour sitting and covered 146 constituencies going to polls in the first phase on April 20. His message will only be for BJP candidates and not those of the National Democratic Alliance.

This message too will be played on the phone like the earlier one. The party has made a video recording as well and plans to put it on a CD as well. On law minister Arun Jaytley's request, Vajpayee recorded a separate message in Karnataka. Jaitley is in charge of Karnataka. There was disquiet over the blitz among sections of the BJP, especially in the Uttar Pradesh and Bihar units which felt the India Shining theme was "out of sync" with ground realities.

Leaders from these states told the party high command from time to time that even their constituents questioned the credibility of the claims made on behalf of the rural populace. Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Vinay Katiyar was among those who voiced his unhappiness over the timing of the campaign, which followed the record cold wave deaths in the state. But these objections were overruled. "However, the reality hit us when in TV talk shows our representatives were asked

uncomfortable questions about the ads by middle-class viewers," sources said. They agreed that "somewhere down the line", Opposition allegations that taxpayers' money had been wasted on the campaign had struck a chord among the middle-class. Sources say if the "response" ads need to be aired, they will put out only on television and not in print to save on money and increase the impact. The BJP feels that an advertisement aired two or three days on

television is more "effective" than a print ad. Vajpayee himself is believed to be "unhappy" at the way pictures were splashed across the BJP's Vision Document 2004 — there were 54 pictures across 48 pages. The Prime Minister, who met BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu and party general secretary Pramod Mahajan yesterday, reportedly told the latter in Marathi: "Three or four pictures would have been enough. Why was I not shown the document earlier?"

BJP sets sights on mainstream

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The BJP's 'Vision document', released here by party president Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday, begins with the premise that the Congress era is over and spells out its intention to make India a 'great power' by 2020. The party's spin doctors are trying to give the party's image a "mainstream" look, even appropriating Gandhi and Ambedkar.

In what is being seen as an attempt to lurch to the centre, the party has put its long-standing demand for repeal of Article 370 in cold storage, pitched the demand for enactment of the uniform civil code as a gender justice issue rather than an instance of "appeasement" of minorities and jettisoned the traditional concept of swadeshi verging on autarky for a forward-looking pragmatic version.

The departure is stark over Article 370 with the document not even mentioning the numerals—which formed the party's campaign fodder for years. Party sources affirmed its stand on Article 370 was reflective of the need for pragmatism in the current context of

improving relations with Pakistan and the ongoing peace talks with the Hurriyat Conference.

The section on the subject reads: "While recognising that the Constitution provides for certain transient and transitory provisions for Jammu and Kashmir, we believe that the immediate chal-

code as "an instrument to promote gender justice", with stress on its endorsement both by the Constitution as well as by the supreme court.

Sources engaged in the drafting sought to downplay the change. "This is in line with a resolution that we passed a decade ago, and we want to make

READJUSTING ITS VISION

- ▶ **Article 370:** No direct reference to Article 370, earlier a core issue for the party. Greater stress on Kashmir peace process and involving all sections in it. Clear sign of mellowing.
- ▶ **Uniform Civil Code:** Pitched in terms of gender justice rather than appeasement. Even so, stress on consensus.
- ▶ **Ram Temple:** Repeats construction pledge, but calls for negotiations and judicial settlement as only way for achieving objective.
- ▶ **Swadeshi:** Redefines the concept by embracing a pragmatic approach that calls for economic efficiency which will enable India to compete in the world. Sure to make SJM-types squirm.
- ▶ **On Muslims:** Cuts out the barbs, instead gives a three-point pledge — education, economic upliftment and empowerment.
- ▶ **Sops for hardliners:** Promises to ban conversions, ban people of foreign origin from taking up high constitutional office.

challenge before the Centre and the State is to involve all sections of society in eliminating terrorism, accelerating economic development and strengthening popular governance that can provide a people-friendly administration."

The deviation from tradition on the Uniform Civil Code is subtle, yet significant. The issue—a key plank of the party's appeasement campaign—has been repackaged with the party conceding the need to forge "social and political consensus" for the enactment. The document justifies the

the distinction between rights and rituals. While we want everyone to have the same rights, no one will interfere with religious rituals." But others in the party felt that the changed party line—the "mainstream" viewpoint over the issue—and said that by acknowledging the need for consensus, the party had acquiesced in the "veto" that it campaigned against in the wake of the Shah Bano case.

On Ayodhya, the document leans in favour of negotiations to settle the issue, rather than a court settlement.

Varun adds voice to Sonia-bashing

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai, Feb. 21: Blood may be thicker than politics, but Varun Gandhi shows no signs of this.

Just a few days after joining the BJP, Varun today beat even the likes of Pramod Mahajan at Sonia-bashing.

In his soft, almost childish voice, Varun made it clear he would take his mother Maneka Gandhi's fight with Indira Gandhi's other *bahu* yet further, adding more fire and a great deal of sarcasm to it.

Here to attend a felicitation for senior BJP leader Gopinath Munde, Varun hijacked the show with a string of barbs at his aunt, who only recently wished him well on his new political career.

"I guess I will make a speech instead of reading it," the BJP's

Gandhi said, alluding to Sonia's habit of reading from prepared texts.

"Otherwise the public would have said I am a reader and not a leader," Varun said, as party workers broke into laughter.

He went to say that India is for Indians and should be ruled only by them.

Sensing the mood at the gathering, Varun overcame his initial reservations about attacking his aunt — he had recently said Sonia's foreign origin was not an issue for him. Today, the BJP's Gandhi said voters should usher in a government "which is of Indians, for Indians and (run) through Indians".

Varun's presence sparked a mad rush to see him and hear what he had to say, stretching the administration and BJP workers to the limit.

One middle-level BJP leader said: "Yeh Gandhi hamare paas hain, toh woh Gandhi kya karege."

But Varun was not done yet. Speaking about Atal Bihari Vajpayee's achievements, the star of today's meeting said only the BJP under the Prime Minister's leadership could provide a stable government and ensure India is respected the world over.

Speaking like a seasoned politician, Varun even questioned minority politics and quipped: "What have those who bank on minority votes given to the minorities apart from hunger and unemployment. The minority community should join the BJP as its leaders have the biggest hearts."

Munde, for whom the felicitation was organised, said he expected a lot from Varun and was

sure he would fulfil his expectations.

As Varun's convoy crisscrossed Mumbai's busy streets a happy party worker showed just how much the Gandhis have a hold over the public when he said: "Ab toh bahut mazaa ayega."

Cousins' contest

Sonia today negated rumours of her children Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's entry into electoral politics.

Speaking in Allahabad, where she was in the midst of an Uttar Pradesh roadshow, the Congress president said: "There is nothing like that."

She had been asked if her children would contest the coming Lok Sabha elections.

Sonia refused to take further questions on the issue.



Varun at the BJP meet in Mumbai on Saturday. (AFP)

BJP announces second list

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 15. — The BJP today finalised a second list of 46 more candidates in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Jharkhand for the April-May General Elections.

The party also reached an understanding with Mamata Banerjee's Nationalist Trinamul Congress on 40 of the 42 seats in West Bengal, senior BJP sources said after a two-hour long meeting at the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's residence here.

BJP, which had yesterday renominated five sitting MPs including Deputy Prime Minister Mr LK Advani from Gujarat, finalised 18 more candidates from the state at the meeting which was also attended by Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi. Decision on the remaining three seats is likely soon. In Madhya Pradesh, the

Bengal deal

NEW DELHI, March 15. — In West Bengal, BJP will contest 12 seats and the Trinamul the remaining 28, while decision on Bankura and Purulia has been kept pending. BJP has staked a claim on the two seats as it was runners-up in Purulia and its supported independent candidate was just behind CPI-M's Mr Basudeb Acharya in Bankura. — SNS

party finalised names of 20 more candidates, taking the total number of seats decided in the state to 23. Among the six seats where the party is yet to finalise its candidates include Guna, Bhopal and Rajgarh.

The party finalised eight more candidates in Jharkhand, leaving only three out of the total 14 seats in the state to be decided. Sources said the party will finalise candidates from the North-

Hazarika from Guwahati

NEW DELHI, March 15. — In its second list for the coming Lok Sabha polls, the BJP today dropped Union minister of state for water resources Ms Bijoya Chakravarty and fielded leader of Opposition in Bihar Mr Sushil Kumar Modi from Bhagalpur and singer Bhupen Hazarika from Guwahati.

Minister of state for parliamentary affairs Mr O Rajagopal, a Rajya Sabha member from Madhya Pradesh, will contest from Thiruvananthapuram, while Mr S Krishna Kumar, a former Union minister in Rajiv Gandhi Cabinet who joined the BJP last year, has been fielded from Mavelikkara in Kerala. — SNS

Eastern states, West Bengal and seat sharing with allies in Bihar in the evening.

Sources said the seat from where Mr Lakshman Singh, former Congress MP and brother of minister Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mr Digvijay Singh was elected in the last elections, is yet to be finalised. "He may be pitted against Jyotiraditya Scindia in Guna instead of Rajgarh, which

he represented in the dissolved Lok Sabha," they said.

The BJP is also yet to decide on a replacement of Miss Uma Bharti, who after becoming the chief minister of the state relinquished her Bhopal seat. Former Union minister and former state chief minister Mr Sundar Lal Patwa has been denied ticket from Hoshangabad, where Mr Sartaj Singh has been fielded.

KALYAN & SHUKLA IN, JUDEO OUT

SFA
SFB

BJP walks tight rope in first list

2-Pan Panti
BSP 2

Statesman News Service

Join secular alliance, Cong to to SP & BSP

NEW DELHI, March 14. — The BJP today walked a tightrope while announcing the names of 142 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls. Prominent among them are, expectedly, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee (Lucknow), Mr LK Advani (Gandhinagar), Mr Yashwant Sinha (Hazaribagh), Mr MM Joshi (Allahabad) and Mrs Maneka Gandhi (Pilibhit).

Former UP chief minister Mr Kalyan Singh, who returned to the BJP recently after making peace with the Prime Minister, will contest from Bulandshahar (UP). Mr Khetrpal Singh, who represented Bulandshahar in the last Lok Sabha, is the only Union minister left out in the first list.

Former Congress stalwart Mr VC Shukla, who has merged his Rashtriya Jantantrik Dal with the BJP, has been named for Mahsamund (Chhattisgarh). Scam-tainted Mr Dilip Singh Judeo, who was to be given Mahsamund, opted to campaign for the party instead of contesting from any other seat.

Most candidates (around 80) in the first list are sitting MPs. Which means the party will have to fight the incumbency factor.

In UP, the party fielded candidates in 54 of the 80 seats. Twenty-seven of them are sitting MPs. Mr Vinay Katiyar, who shot into limelight during the Ram Temple movement, got his constituency changed from Faizabad (that has Ayodhya within it) to Kheri. Party general secretary Mr Pramod Mahajan denied that the incumbency factor was responsible for the change. Mr Katiyar, by moving to a seat that the party

NEW DELHI, March 14. — The Congress today called upon the SP and the BSP to join anti-BJP forces to avoid losing their "secular credentials". This comes a day after both parties closed doors on the Congress for poll tie-ups. The Congress was fighting elections on secular plank and the role of these parties in an electoral battle that would essentially be bipolar would establish their character, Congress spokesperson Mr Kapil Sibal said. "All parties must join hands in UP to defeat the BJP." — SNS

had lost in the last polls, will ensure that both Faizabad and Kheri come to the party's kitty, Mr Mahajan said.

He also announced that Mr Rajnath Singh and Mr Kalraj Mishra — both Rajya Sabha members — would not contest the polls and would assist the party in the campaign.

By fielding Mr Kalyan Singh the BJP seems to be sending out a message to Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav that it would not disturb its government if the NDA returns to power at the Centre, in which case the former CM will be made a Union minister. This also paves the way for the BJP seeking Mr Yadav's support in the event of the NDA falling short of the majority.

Four Muslims figure in the first list of candidates. Among them is Syed Shahnawaz Hussain who will contest from Kishanganj. The rest have been fielded for the three seats in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Vinod Khanna has been re-nominated from Gurdaspur.

Cong second list likely tomorrow, page 4

THE STATESMAN

15 MAR 2004

YATRA TO HARDELL 'NEW BJP', DRIVE HOME GOOD GOVERNANCE

Advani opens odyssey file, rath starts journey

PR Ramesh
KANYAKUMARI TO MARCH

DEPUTY prime minister L.K. Advani on Wednesday embarked on his rath from the mainland's southernmost tip — Kanyakumari — for his 31-day-long political odyssey after renewing his party's commitment to use the newly-forged development plank to power the BJP's re-election bid. Unlike the previous yatras, which were rooted in his party's core Hindutva concerns, Mr Advani's address, before BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu flagged off the latest motorised rath, clearly hinted that the objective of the campaign was two-pronged — to market the "new BJP" and confer the elections the status of a presidential poll.

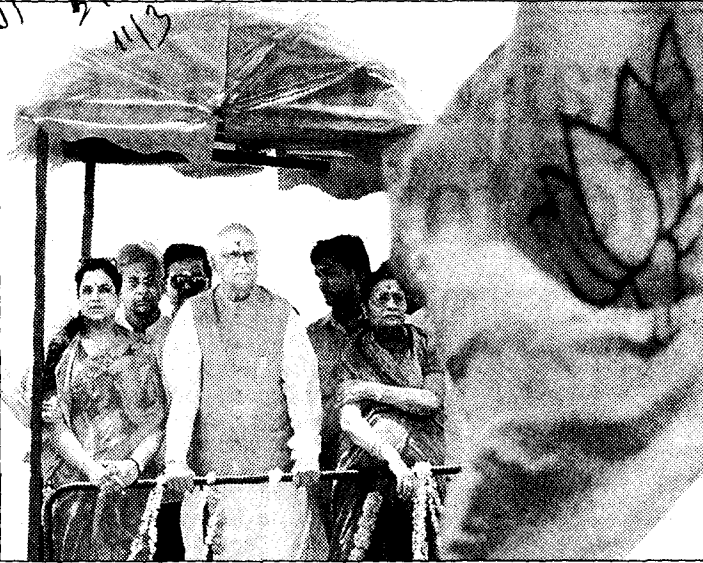
That the idea of a "new BJP", which has become the centre of an intra-safron parivar debate, will be taken forward was evident when Mr Advani's address concentrated on developmental politics and attempted to project his party as one best suited for providing stable and good governance. "Good governance will be one of our principal planks," declared Mr Advani.

Mr Advani's latest yatra was kicked off at 11 am, with a large crowd converging at the confluence of the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal to watch the spectacle set against the backdrop of the Vivekanand Memorial and the giant statue of Thiruvalluvar.

In his subsequent meetings en route to Thiruvananthapuram, the deputy prime minister presented the elections as a Vajpayee versus Sonia Gandhi affair, where the former has secured the backing of a pan-Indian alliance while the latter's candidature is yet to be proposed or seconded by any party of consequence. Driving home the BJP's stability theme, he said Mr Vajpayee has been successful in taking the country away from instability and uncertainty.

"You have seen Mr Vajpayee and experienced his governance. On the other side is a person alien to this country, ethos and governance," he said. That the BJP is keen to broaden its sphere of influence and neutralise, at least partially, the hostility of the minorities was evident earlier when the party leadership ensured the participation of its entire galaxy of Muslim leadership, ranging from BJP general secretary Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi to neo-convert Arif Mohammad Khan, as well as the Dewan of Ajmer, Syed Zainul Abedin Ali Khan, the great-grandson of the Khwaja Sahab of Ajmer Sharif.

In his speech, the Dewan said he saw no reason why the Muslims should not respond to the BJP's overtures if it was showing signs of changes in its views towards the community. In an attempt to ram in the point that the BJP's concept of nationalism was not an exclusivist one but an "India First" approach, Mr Advani said development formed the core of the BJP's nationalism.



Man With A Mission: Deputy prime minister L.K. Advani, his wife, Kamala (right) and daughter Prabha (left) stand atop the Bharat Uday Rath in Kanyakumari on Wednesday. — Reuters

Atal gets Lucknow for fifth time

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI TO MARCH

PRIME Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee heads the BJP's first list of candidates for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls. A veteran of many electoral battles, Mr Vajpayee will be re-nominated for the fifth consecutive time from Lucknow.

The BJP's central election committee, which is meeting here on March 14, is likely to come out with a list of 40 candidates all from Uttar Pradesh. Among those likely to be fielded are former state BJP chief Kalraj Mishra and Union agriculture minister Rajnath Singh.

While Mr Mishra is tipped to be nominated from Varanasi, replacing third-term member, Mr Shankar Prasad Jaisawal, Mr Singh is among the leaders whose name is in the reckoning from Ghaziabad, though a section wants the western Uttar Pradesh seat to be allocated to the Janata Dal (United), which wants to field its general secretary K.C. Tyagi. Ghaziabad has been a saffron citadel for over a decade, returning Mr Ramesh Chand Tomar to the Lok Sabha four times straight. The party, however, feels that the time is ripe for a change.

Another high-profile BJP leader, Mr Vinay Katiyar, may also jettison his seat, Faizabad, in view of the BSP's decision to back the candidature of former state minister Mitrasen Yadav from the temple town.

Delhi HC, EC stay away from rath

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI TO MARCH

FACILITATING a smooth takeoff for deputy prime minister L.K. Advani's Bharat Uday yatra, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday disposed of a petition challenging the journey saying that it was for the EC to take a view on the matter. The EC, on its part, clarified that only the state governments could take action in the case of violation of any law by its organisers. "If the rath yatra is election campaigning it does not violate the law and so long the legal provisions are complied we will have no problems," Chief Election Commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy told newsmen during a visit to Bhubaneswar.

The EC's no-objection certificate to the yatra, against which the Opposition parties have been campaigning, is significant as it clears the way for Mr Advani to crisscross the country over 33 days on his motorised rath without attracting provisions of the model code of conduct. Mr Krishnamurthy, however, said that if the yatra led fanning of religious and communal passions, "the state governments in charge of maintenance of law and order would keep watch as would the observers to be deployed by the EC."

In yet another relief to the government, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to prioritise the hearing on a petition challenging the India Shining ad campaign.

A vote for BJP will make India a superpower: Advani

● 'Bharat Uday Yatra' launched

By Radha Venkatesan

KANYAKUMARI (TAMIL NADU), MARCH 10. The Deputy Prime Minister and senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader, L.K. Advani, today launched his election road show 'Bharat Uday Yatra' from the shores of Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu appealing to the people to vote back the Vajpayee Government "to make India a superpower" and a "developed country by 2020."

Setting off on his yatra along with his wife, Kamla, and daughter Pratibha, from atop a special coach fitted with a chariot-like canopy, Mr. Advani said that if Mr. Vajpayee continued in power for five more years India would surely become a "superpower."

Without naming the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, he told the voters that the choice before the people was a "great Prime Minister" and a "prospective Prime Minister who does not understand India and who is not willing to project

herself as the Prime Minister."

As his campaign vehicle rolled down the Nagercoil town, Padmanabhapuram and Marthandam, Mr. Advani's attack on the Opposition, especially the CPI(M), which is pitted against the BJP in the Nagercoil Lok Sabha constituency, turned sharper.

Invoking the memories of the former Congress Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Kamaraj, who represented the Nagercoil constituency, Mr. Advani said the local people who were known for their nationalistic spirit would never vote for a party which "contributed to the divisiveness of the country." When patriots such as Kamaraj fought for the country's Independence, the role of the Communists "is known to the whole country," he said, addressing a roadside meeting in Marthandam in support of the party's Nagercoil candidate, Pon Radhakrishnan. The philosophy of Marxism and Communism had been "wiped off the face of the earth" and the

Left parties were confined to just "two corners of the country."

Mr. Advani enthused the people lining the road through the 62-km campaign route, concluding his speech with *Bharat mata ke* and the crowd responded with *jai*. When he said *Vande*, people responded with *mataram*.

At a few places, he got off the vehicle and interacted with the people. At Marthandam, he walked to the house of a Christian family and exchanged pleasantries. His campaigning in Tamil Nadu culminated at Kaliyakavalai, close to Kerala.

Mr. Advani said he had just a four-word message for the voters — "India's time has come." Comparing the 45-year Congress rule and the past five-year Vajpayee regime, he said: "Now everyone says India is shining," while prior to 1998 "dark clouds of uncertainty" had gathered over the country.

The Vajpayee regime had brought about connectivity in every field — highways, railways, telecom and rivers. However, the most important part was the "emotional and social connectivity."

With Kanyakumari town falling within the Tiruchendur constituency, where the BJP ally, the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is in the fray, Mr. Advani started his yatra, campaigning for the AIADMK candidate, ● Damodaran.

While introducing him, Mr. Advani said: "Tamil Nadu has seen great men such as Annadurai and M.G. Ramachandran. And, Jayalalitha who follows in their tradition has made AIADMK a close ally [of the BJP]. I am grateful to her for this alliance."

Before he began his yatra, the first phase of which culminates in Amritsar on March 27, two Christian priests from Kerala and a Muslim cleric from Rajasthan, along with a host of celebrities, including film star Vijayashanti and former cricketer Krishnamachari Srikkanth, and Tamil Nadu's Health Minister Thalavai Sundaram, greeted Mr. Advani.

Sidelights, photograph on Page 11

CPI(M) alleges misuse of IAF plane

By Our Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 10. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, has used Indian Air Force aircraft to airlift material for the 'Bharat Uday Yatra' and the Election Commission should intervene immediately to stop the 'yatra' as it involved 'misuse' of official machinery, the Kerala CPI (M) secretary, Pinarayi Vijayan, alleged here today.

In a statement, he sought a comprehensive inquiry into the 'use' of the IAF aircraft to transport 'yatra' material to Thiruvananthapuram and action against those responsible. This was a clear violation of the Election Commission ban on use of official aircraft by the Deputy Prime Minister for electioneering, he said.

Mr. Vijayan alleged that the aircraft that brought the 'yatra' material to the Kerala capital had used the runway normally used by civilian flights and that the material was later transported from Thiruvananthapuram to Kanyakumari in private trucks. If the material transported to Kanyakumari was part of the security brief of Mr. Advani, the authorities concerned could have used the trucks of the Central Reserve Police Force, the Army or the IAF. The use of private trucks showed the "gross misuse of official machinery."

Nobody was opposed to the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister campaigning for the BJP, but any attempt to misuse official machinery or use such campaign to create a communal divide would amount to a violation of the model code of conduct requiring intervention by the Election Commission, he said.

Advani yatra shows BJP has two mascots

Pankaj Vohra

THE DECISION of deputy prime minister L.K. Advani to begin yet another yatra has clearly demonstrated that the BJP is not a "one-man party". While Atal Bihari Vajpayee is being projected by the NDA as its sole leader, the BJP apparently wants to ensure that Advani's status as the undisputed second-in-command doesn't go unnoticed even if it amounts to having two mascots for the party, something which may not be to the liking of the numero uno.

BJP chief Venkaiah Naidu had to correct himself when he talked about the BJP's twin mascots last year. Vajpayee conveyed his displeasure by stating that the next polls would be contested under Advani's leadership. Both Naidu and Advani then clarified that it was Vajpayee alone who was the supreme leader and the party would have one and not two mascots.

However, the yatra, which begins from Kanyakumari, has raised several questions. Kanyakumari was the venue from where Murli Manohar Joshi as the BJP president had started his Ekta Yatra in December 1992 for Srinagar. By accident or by design, a section in the BJP has again selected Kanyakumari as the starting point. This was perhaps to score a political point over Joshi, who is considered close to Vajpayee. The end point (Srinagar) could also have been the same had talks with the Hurriyat resulted in positive results.



Secondly, the yatra is to project the achievements of the NDA government and highlight the India Shining slogan. One would have normally thought that since Vajpayee is the undisputed number one in the NDA, he would lead the campaign. The BJP campaign being spearheaded by someone else could give rise to speculation about the Prime Minister's fitness. We all know that Vajpayee is in the best of health. And when

the country is on the threshold of getting into the big league, questions about the Prime Minister's well being should not be raised.

Like all political exercises, there also seems to be a hidden agenda in the yatra. Advani's first yatra, which was from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990, had helped the BJP consolidate its vote bank. In fact, Advani's rath yatra became synonymous with the Ram Janmabhoomi move-

ment. Therefore, when the new yatra begins, it will bring back memories of the earlier yatra and even if Ayodhya is not part of the NDA's common minimum programme or the BJP's manifesto or vision statement, it will get highlighted all the same. This yatra will become a re-mix of the last yatra and instead of India Shining, the focus in public mind will once again be on the unstated agenda — Ayodhya.

নূতন বোতলে জাতীয় গৌরব

লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী প্রবলভাবে শিরোনামে উল্লিখিত নির্বাচনের প্রস্তুতিপর্বে এ যাবৎ প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাজপেয়ী মধ্যমঞ্চ জুড়িয়া ছিলেন, উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী ছিলেন অনেকটাই নিশ্চয়, এমনকী ভারতীয় ক্রিকেট দলের পাকিস্তান সফরকে কেন্দ্র করিয়া, হয়তো অকারণেই, তাঁহার ভাবমূর্তিতে যেন ঈষৎ কলঙ্করেখাও লাগিয়াছিল। কিন্তু ভোটের প্রচারকে কেন্দ্র করিয়াই আডবাণীজি দাপটের সঙ্গে প্রত্যাবর্তন করিয়াছেন। প্রথমত, 'কৃষকদের ভাল না লাগিলে সব 'ফিল গুড'ই নিরর্থক' এমনত মন্তব্য করিয়া তিনি দুকূলপ্রাবী বিজেপানে উজ্জ্বলিত প্রধানমন্ত্রীর উজ্জ্বল প্রতিমায় ছায়া ফেলিয়া দিয়াছেন। দ্বিতীয়ত, তাঁহার মাসাধিককালব্যাপী 'ভারত উদয় যাত্রা'র ঘোষণাটি তৎক্ষণাৎ অনুরাগী ও বিরোধী দুই তরফের দৃষ্টি বিলকূল আকর্ষণ করিয়াছে, আপাতত নির্বাচনী আলোচনার একটি বড় অংশ এই যাত্রার চরিত্র উন্মোচনে আবর্তিত হইতেছে। পাদপ্রদীপের আলোয় বিতর্কিত ঋকা যদি রাজনৈতিক গুরুত্বের প্রধান সূচক হয় তবে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর রাজনৈতিক গুরুত্ব এই মুহূর্তে অতুলনীয়।

ভারত উদয় যাত্রার নাম উচ্চারিত হইবার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে চৌদ্দো বছর আগের আর এক যাত্রার স্মৃতি জাগ্রত হইয়াছে। ১৯৯০ সালে বিরোধী দলনেতা আডবাণী রামরথ যাত্রা করিয়াছিলেন, পরবর্তী ইতিহাস সর্বজনবিদিত। বিরোধীরা, বিশেষত বামপন্থীরা উচ্চকণ্ঠে বলিতে শুরু করিয়াছেন যে, রামরথ যেমন সাম্প্রদায়িকতার আশুনে ইন্ধন দিয়াছিল, এ বারের রথযাত্রারও তেমন প্রতিক্রিয়া ঘটতে পারে, সেই অভিসন্ধিতেই আডবাণীর এই পরিকল্পনা, তাঁহারা সাম্প্রদায়িকতার বিষদরিয়্য মস্থন করিয়াই ভোটের অমৃত সংগ্রহ করিতে চাহেন। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ও তাঁহার সহকর্মীরা অবশ্যই বলিয়াছেন, ইহা অপপ্রচার। পরিচিত সওয়াল-জবাব। কিন্তু লক্ষণীয়, আডবাণী নিজেও ইঙ্গিত দিয়াছেন যে ১৯৯০ সালের যাত্রার সঙ্গে এ বারের যাত্রার একটি মৌলিক সংযোগ রহিয়াছে। এই সংযোগটিকে সাম্প্রদায়িকতার ষড়যন্ত্র হিসাবে দেখিলে অতিসরলীকরণ হইবে। ইহা এক গভীরতর সংযোগ। তাহার মূলে রহিয়াছে 'জাতীয় গৌরববোধ'-এর প্রশ্ন। ভারতীয় জনতা পার্টির প্রচারে এই জাতীয় গৌরববোধ বরাবরই একটি অতি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করিয়াছে। বস্তুত, ইহাই এই দলের এবং তাহার পূর্বসূরি জনসঙ্ঘের আদর্শগত অবস্থানের ঘোষিত ভিত্তি। কিন্তু জাতীয় গৌরবের অর্থ কী? তাহা কীসের গৌরব? কী লইয়া গৌরব?

ইহাই মূল প্রশ্ন। আশির দশকের দ্বিতীয়ার্ধে বিজেপি যখন ভারতীয়

রাজনীতির প্রান্ত হইতে মাঝমাঠে উঠিয়া আসিতে শুরু করে তখন তাহার প্রচারিত জাতীয় গৌরবের প্রধান অবলম্বনের নাম ছিল: হিন্দুত্ব। 'গর্ব করিয়া বলো আমি হিন্দু'— এই প্রচারমন্ত্রটি দলনায়করা দক্ষতার সঙ্গে ব্যবহার করিয়াছিলেন, তাহার ফসলও তুলিয়াছিলেন। তাহাদের হিন্দুত্ববাদ রাজনীতি ও সমাজে উৎকট বিভাজন ঘটাইয়াছে, ঘৃণার বিষবৃক্ষে সেচ ও সার জোগাইয়াছে, এই রাজনীতির অশুভ পরিণাম লইয়া নূতন করিয়া বলিবার কিছু নাই। কিন্তু সেই পরিণামের হিসাব কষিতে গিয়া সমালোচকরা অনেক সময়েই একটি সত্য বিস্মৃত হন। হিন্দুত্বকে জাতীয় গৌরবের প্রকরণ রূপে ব্যবহার করিবার কৌশলটি বিজেপি দক্ষতার সঙ্গে ব্যবহার করিয়াছে; সমাজের একটি বড় অংশের নিকট হিন্দুত্ব ও জাতীয় গৌরবের সমীকরণটিকে তাহারা সফল ভাবে বিক্রয় করিতে পারিয়াছে। উহাই এই দলের সাফল্যের একটি প্রধান কারণ।

কিন্তু সেই সাফল্যের সীমানাও ক্রমশ স্পষ্ট হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। প্রথমত, হিন্দুত্বের গৌরববোধ ভারতের মানচিত্রে সর্বত্র সমান ভাবে জাগ্রত হইবার নয়— বিজেপি আজও মূলত হিন্দি বলয়ের দল। দলের আদর্শ-সাম্রাজ্য বিস্তার করিতে চাহিলে জাতীয় গৌরবকে হিন্দুত্বের ছকে বাঁধিয়া রাখা চলে না। দ্বিতীয়ত, বিজেপির হৃদয়পুরেও হিন্দুত্বের মহিমা আজ আর আগের মতো নাই। সিঙ্ঘল, তোগাড়িয়া প্রমুখ সহনায়করা চেষ্টি চালাইতেছেন, হয়তো ক্ষেত্রবিশেষে সেই চেষ্টি ফলবতীও হইবে, হয়তো ইতস্তত নূতন বোতলে (বা পুরানো বোতলে) নরেন্দ্র মোদী মডেলও রূপায়িত হইবে, কিন্তু সামগ্রিক বিচারে হিন্দুত্বের উৎপাদনশীলতা এখন অধোগামী। সুতরাং জাতীয় গৌরবের নূতন অবলম্বন চাই। এখানেই ভারত উদয়। বিজেপি এখন অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নকেই গৌরববোধের প্রকরণ করিতে চাহিতেছে। লক্ষণীয়, এই পরিবর্তন ঘটতেছে বিশ্বায়নের প্রবল অভিযানের সম্মুখে, বস্তুত বিশ্বায়নের মধ্যে দাঁড়াইয়া। যে বিজেপি এক দিন স্বদেশিয়ানার পূজক ছিল, আজ সে বিশ্বায়নের বাস্তবকে কেবল স্বীকার করিতেছে না, তাহাকে বরণ করিতেছে এবং সেই দলের নেতা ও দেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলিতেছেন যে ভারত আন্তর্জাতিক মহাশক্তির গৌরব অর্জন করিবে। এই প্রেক্ষিতেই আডবাণীর ভারত উদয় যাত্রা অবশ্যই ইহা তাহাদের রাজনৈতিক কৌশল। কিন্তু বাস্তবের চাপেই সেই কৌশল তাহাদের লইতে হইতেছে। বাস্তবের চাপেই উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রীকে রামরথ ছাড়িয়া ভারত উদয় রথে চড়িতে হইতেছে। এখনও ইহা লক্ষণ মাত্র। কিন্তু সুলক্ষণ।

BJP vision set on NDA manifesto

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 5. — The NDA manifesto may precede the BJP's vision document. This is to enable the NDA to come out with non-controversial points on which the alliance is seeking a renewed mandate. The BJP's document, which will essentially be the party's manifesto, could then incorporate the points of the NDA and also talk about the issues the party would like to focus on.

This is to send a message that the BJP was playing second fiddle to the NDA and not vice versa, sources said. This was important in order to send the right message to NDA partners and the common man who is not swayed by 'divisive politics'.

A member of the BJP's 'vision committee' said NDA convener Mr George Fernandes had been told to prepare the manifesto at the earliest. The BJP vision document may not contain contentious issues barring Ayodhya despite demands by the RSS to do so. Ayodhya is likely to figure when the document talks about evolving a mechanism to resolve all contentious issues through talks.

Senior RSS and BJP leaders today met at the residence of the Prime Minister to discuss the issue. The BJP leadership reportedly assured a positive response in the vision document. The RSS demand has come amidst cadre expectation that the BJP would not abandon its

"core issues".

The meeting also assumed importance in view of the RSS working committee meeting in Jaipur, where the organisation is likely to package a softer image for itself and come with a new gesture towards the minority community. Although the vision document is ready, finer points would be worked out after the RSS meeting, sources said.

RSS joint general secretary Mr Madan Das said the organisation would have a separate discussion with Union law minister Mr Arun Jaitley, chairman of the committee preparing the vision document.

BJP president Mr M Venkaiah Naidu said there was no question of giving up issues such as Ram Temple. It's very much part of the party's agenda, he said, adding a solution would have to be found through negotiations between the leaders of the two communities.

The RSS leaders told the BJP that they welcomed the latter's initiative to resolve the Ayodhya tangle, but added a note of caution: the party should not be allowed to be taken for a ride. A commitment would be given by them only after the basics were properly worked out, they reportedly told the BJP leaders. Mr Madan Das said *swayamsevaks* would participate in Mr LK Advani's *Bharat Uday Yatra* in their capacity as individual citizens.

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Yatra mantra

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Advani's proposed roadshow indicates how much the BJP has changed and how much it hasn't

COMPARISONS are odious but inevitable. When L.K. Advani is flagged off from Kanyakumari on his electoral cross-country rally next Wednesday, it will resurrect images of the earlier rath yatras he has undertaken. This is all the more so given the fact that the second leg of this programme — from Porbander to Samastipur — will overlap at several points the route taken during his first controversial rath yatra of 1990. Points like Somnath, Ajmer, Dhanbad and Samastipur — each of which had a loaded sub-text in the earlier moment.

A leader as politically astute as Advani would not have considered such an involved journey — which some may consider inadvisable for a man in his 77th year — if he did not perceive valuable political dividends accruing from it. What could these be? There is of course the explanation put out by the party office that the rath will help it garner valuable media attention at a time when all political parties are desperately vying for the voter's attention. This, of course, is very likely because high profile yatras make for primetime spectacle. But Advani, by opting for the familiar yatra mantra, by resorting to a political tool that has come to be identified with his own brand of politics, also seems moved by a desire to project a kinder, gentler image of the party and himself. As he has underlined, the focus this time

will be on "development", not on a shining temple but a "Shining India" — a shift certified by the best known hardliner in the BJP fold. The electoral compulsions of such a shift are easy to understand. The party is anxious to expand its vote base. Certainly, the first phase of Advani's yatra will traverse largely through regions that have remained immune to the seductions of saffron and the hope perhaps is that voters would respond more positively to a Congress-ised BJP, or at least an Atal-ised BJP. Clearly, the political success of Vajpayee's moderation has proved to be an object lesson for the hawks within the party fold and the rath yatra — once the metaphor for Hindutva mobilisation — is now being dusted down to showcase a more liberal party and leader.

But the contradictions in this project do not easily go away. Nothing underlines this more than the Gujarat leg of Advani's journey where the Narendra Modis and Mayaben Kodnani will dominate the tableau. If Modi's electoral yatras of late 2002 are any indication, the discourse that will travel the most in these parts will be potent Hindutyaspeak. Advani's proposed roadshow indicates, then, just how much the party that came to power riding on the rath yatra of 1990 has changed — been forced by the pursuit and exercise of power to change — and how much it has not.

Congress, CPI(M) object to Advani's yatra

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 2. The Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) today objected to the Bharatiya Janata Party's announcement that the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, would launch a *Bharat uday bus yatra*, and urged the Election Commission to take "strong and immediate action."

The Congress said Mr. Advani's proposed yatra was a "direct panic reaction" to the "success" of the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi's *Jan Sam-park Abhiyan*.

"Afraid of being marginalised

in the wake of Ms. Gandhi's highly successful programme, Mr. Advani is trying to grab the political centre stage. We can only hope that Mr. Advani's latest yatra will not be accompanied with widespread and mindless violence that accompanied his rath yatra in 1990," the party media secretary, Tom Vadakkan said.

The CPI (M) described the bus yatra as a "deplorable step" and said that it could result in vitiating the atmosphere.

In a statement, the politburo said though the BJP leader projected it as one to spread the party's message and NDA's

agenda, he had declared that there was "an intrinsic link" with his previous yatras.

"Thus under the cover of an election campaign the BJP leadership is once again seeking to arouse communal passions in the garb of a resurgent nationalism. One has only to recall the havoc created by Advani's rath yatra on the temple issue in 1990."

"The Election Commission should examine whether such a campaign will help the conduct of elections in a peaceful and democratic atmosphere," the party said.

BJP banking on India Shining

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 29 FEBRUARY

WITH the countdown for the general election starting today, the BJP has renewed its attempts to secure a fourth innings at the Centre under the leadership of Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The party has not only finalised an elaborate plan to project Mr Vajpayee as its poll mascot, it has already unleashed a major publicity drive, at the centre of which is the 'India Shining' theme encapsulating the numerous accomplishments of the Vajpayee regime.

Having been successful in running a coalition government for a near full-term, the BJP finds itself better-placed in consolidating its gains. While the other side struggles to put together a coherent and credible alternative, the BJP's pre-poll al-

liances are more or less in place.

The damage that has been caused by the exit of DMK-PMK-MDMK combine in Tamil Nadu is being sought to be compensated by renewing the partnership with Ms Jayalalithaa's AIADMK after a gap of five years, while in Assam, a deal with the AGP is again being finalised with the hope of preventing a split in the anti-Congress votes. Former Lok Sabha speaker P A Sangma, who is trying to project himself as the spokesman of the north-eastern states, has also promised support to the NDA.

Far from being on the defensive after serving a full term as the ruling party, there is an expectation that incumbency can be converted into an asset. The Prime Minister's and BJP's decision to play the coming battle on a development turf shows the confidence that it has a record to

run on. In all public meetings by Mr Vajpayee, he has been taking care to drive home this point.

The party also has the advantage of a well-oiled campaign machinery. Unlike the Congress, the party has a galaxy of second generation leaders, who are vying to claim credit for masterminding the campaign in various states. This may be a healthy trend now, but could harm the party in the long run.

While top leaders of the party have already embarked on their electoral journey, BJP strategists have drawn an impressive campaign calendar for its star campaigners. It has hired the services of 20 aircraft and 36 choppers, and is set to bombard the unsuspecting people with leaders of all hues. Even though the polls are 50 days away, the BJP has acquired the air of a winner, which gives the party the advantages of the "pull-factor".

The last few days has seen a host of political leaders, filmstars, sportspersons and leading cultural personalities embracing the saffron brigade. These include former Union minister Arif Mohammad Khan, former MP CM Digvijay Singh's younger brother Laxman Singh, Assamese cultural czar Bhupen Hazarika, former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu and filmstars Hema Malini, Jee-tendra and Suresh Oberoi.

The process is likely to gain momentum in the days to come. Rajya Sabha deputy chairperson Najma Heptulla, former Karnataka chief minister S Bangarappa and former Assam chief minister Praful Mahanta are likely to join the saffron bandwagon. The party's renewed bid to recapture power at the Centre will, however, be severely tested in the Hindi heartland.

Vajpayee opens door for admirer Najma

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 28: Najma Heptullah — one of the Congress' most visible women leaders and a relative of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad — appeared set to join the BJP after a clear hint from Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Speaking to reporters after releasing the Devnagari translation of one of Maulana Azad's works, Vajpayee said it was now up to Heptullah to do what she wants. "She has to decide what to do," he said.

The Rajya Sabha deputy chairperson reciprocated by lavishing praise on Vajpayee, slamming the Congress — which she said had a problem of "not being able to digest if good work was praised" — and declaring how the Quran did not support cow slaughter.

Applauding Vajpayee's efforts to "unite hearts both within the country as well as with Pakistan", she said: "You are doing what was not done so far. Your effort has created a good atmosphere and kindled hopes."

Heptullah recalled how Mau-

HEADHUNTERS

PRAMOD MAJAHAN
Maneka and Varun Gandhi
D.P. Yadav
Arif Mohammad Khan
Jeetendra

M. VENKAIAH NAIDU
Hema Malini

SUSHMA SWARAJ & ARUN JAITLEY
Bhupen Hazarika

lana Azad had dreamt of good-neighbourly ties with Pakistan, "which could not be fulfilled in his time", but was fructifying during Vajpayee's tenure.

"You are making efforts to clear the debris of Partition gradually," she told Vajpayee at the mainly Muslim gathering at the book-release function, organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations which she heads. "I saw for myself in Pakistan how much love and affection people there have for you."

Heptullah praised the Prime Minister's rural road connectivity programme and said it has not only linked cities and villages

but also "joined hearts".

BJP sources said Heptullah was likely to join their ranks early next week. Although they admitted she was not a vote catcher, they hoped her entry would make the party more "acceptable" to Muslims.

The sources said Vajpayee is keen on Heptullah because of the larger ramification of getting a Muslim and a woman who is recognised internationally. After the Congress refused to nominate her for the Vice-President's post and indicated it would not give her another term in the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister made her the chairperson of the ICCR. The post normally goes to the Vice-President.

Among the other likely inductees are former Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sangma, Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala's younger brother Ranjit Chautala and former diplomat G. Parthasarathy. Two former chief ministers — S. Bangarappa, of Karnataka, and Prafulla Mahanta, of Assam — have also reportedly approached the party.

BJP leaders have been on a headhunting spree over the past few weeks (See chart).

BJP withdraws DP Yadav membership

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 24. — Bowing to pressure from within the party and criticism from outside, the BJP today withdrew the membership of the controversial Rajya Sabha member, Mr DP Yadav. BJP spokespersons were hard put to explain their earlier defence of Mr Yadav when he joined the party.

BJP president Mr M Venkaiah Naidu said "we have withdrawn his membership. I have spoken to him (Yadav) and also to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. Mr Yadav said that if the BJP's image was getting

dented because of him the party should take appropriate steps to correct the impression."

Senior party leaders were rattled by the criticism over Mr Yadav's induction into the BJP. The RSS too sounded out its serious reservations and sought remedial action. A senior RSS leader told Mr Naidu that this had damaged the party's prospects in many Lok Sabha seats, including the seven in Delhi.

The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani, are also learnt to have put their foot down, saying that issues such as "feel good" and "development" were getting diluted with this unintended focus on crimi-



Feeling not-so-good

Venkaiah & Pramod: Did they plan it PM and Deputy PM: Did they know it BJP cadre: 'Shocked' at leadership RSS brass: Angry at BJP But the buck won't stop anywhere. Everyone "too big to be showcaused" is how one BJP leader put it.

nalisation of politics.

Both Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani had failed to either defend Mr Yadav's induction or reject it outright, but BJP leaders said they

were not consulted. It was only when well-known persons join the party that these two leaders are taken into confidence, a leader said. Senior party leaders had not anticipated such an outcry and had expected the criticism to die down. Even the Tehelka expose on Mr Bangaru Laxman and the former minister, Mr Dilip Singh Judeo, being caught on camera taking bribes did not lead to such a furor, a BJP leader pointed out.

There was jubilation in the BJP camp after Mr Naidu's announcement. The party has done the right thing and people will appreciate its readiness to take corrective action, one leader said. When asked why Mr

Yadav's antecedents were not verified, he said, "nobody is infallible." Mr Yadav later told reporters that he was 'sacrificed' by the BJP under 'orchestrated pressure' from some quarters. He demanded a public debate on the issue. Mr Yadav said the charges levelled against him were baseless. He said the BJP should have thought about it before taking him in.

Mr Yadav's induction generated a lot of heat particularly in the national Capital as his son Vikas Yadav is an accused in the Nitish Katara murder case.

Editorial: "Vikas" vs Vikash Yadav, page 8

25 FEB 2004

THE STATESMAN

Arif skips date, Hema packs BJP poll punch

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

FORMER Union Minister Arif Mohammad Khan skipped his date with the BJP today while Rajya Sabha member Hema Malini kept hers. Khan had a simple explanation — he was not told he would be “admitted” today.

Khan’s absence at the specially convened media conference, however, sparked speculation that he had developed second thoughts on joining the BJP. “Not at all,” Khan said, he did not come “because I was not told by the leadership that I will be admitted today”. He said he planned to meet BJP general secretary

Pramod Mahajan tonight and it was for the latter to tell him when and where he would join the party.

“I have already made my mind clear. You are talking of the BJP but I am going a step further. I want to work for the Sangh Parishad,” he said. “The Congress has only exploited people. I am turning to the people who alone have the capacity to bridge the Hindu-Muslim gap.”

He said the Gujarat riots had to be seen in perspective. “I backed the Congress over Gujarat. They called me to Gujarat but did not bother to call their

Hema Malini with BJP chief Venkatesh Naidu in New Delhi on Thursday. Anil Sharma

own Muslim leaders. It is all very easy to keep harping on Gujarat but very difficult to live through it. Those who talk of Gujarat fail to realise that the houses of Hindus and Muslims are contiguous, with common walls. You have to get the two communities together.”

On his meetings with Congress general secretary Ahmed Patel and Lok Janshakti Party leader Ram Vilas Paswan, he said: “I have a long association with Paswan. However, Patel spent two hours with me yesterday persuading me to change my mind...he told me, you can pick up a seat of your choice and contest on a Congress ticket, but I told him that your problem is the ticket. I am not interested in it.”

Back at the BJP headquarters,

Hema Malini was enrolled as a party member by president Venkatesh Naidu. “Madam, you have to pay us the signing amount,” BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan quipped, pointing to the membership fee.

“I feel honoured to be here to become a part of the BJP. I am a great admirer of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and I feel very close to the BJP’s ideology.”

Asked if she was ready to fight the elections, Hema said: “No, I have not decided. If the BJP asks me, then I will think it over.” Husband Dharmendra was not spared either. “He too has a great liking for the BJP. He would definitely campaign for the polls but I don’t think he would contest...He is not not used to it.”



Dara Singh's Entry Into Poll Arena May Spell Trouble For R.L. Bhatia

Dharam, Hema BJP Jat-setters

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 18 FEBRUARY

DHARMENDRA, Hema Malini and Dara Singh will not just lend star power to saffronites' re-election bid, but will enter the fray as BJP candidates from the Jat-dominated seats of Punjab and Rajasthan. The BJP, which has decided to "recall" Hema Malini and Dara Singh from the Rajya Sabha — the two were nominated as members of the Upper House recently — is expected to field them from Ludhiana and Amritsar, respectively. Dharmendra hails from Lalton village in Ludhiana and the party estimates the election of his wife to be a one-sided affair.

Dharmendra, who is likely to join the BJP shortly, may contest

Congress. Dara Singh's entry into the electoral arena could spell trouble for senior Congress leader R.L. Bhatia. He has been winning the seat for the past several terms, except in 1998 when he lost to the BJP.

Ludhiana, the seat where Hema Malini is expected to test the electoral waters, was earmarked for the Akali Dal. The Akalis are learnt to have agreed to accommodate BJP's candidate in return for the Hoshiarpur constituency. The entry of Dharmendra may help the BJP consolidate its support among Jats who have of late been veering towards the BJP.

Although they have traditionally voted for the Congress, the just-held Assembly elections in the state saw them deserting the party and pitching for the

BJP. While the community holds the sway in 40 Assembly segments of Rajasthan, it is a deciding factor in another 25 seats.

The entry of the three film stars will help the BJP counter the Opposition's charge that the party has converted the election campaign into a glamour circus. Moreover, there has also been criticism against using nominated members of the Rajya Sabha in BJP's electioneering.

The dream girl and the two "musclemen" have been active campaigners of the BJP for the past several elections. With their entry into active electoral politics, the BJP can now claim to have an impressive star line up.

Minister for external affairs Vinod Khanna has been winning the Gurdaspur seat in Punjab for the last two terms.



HEMA: THEME FOR A DREAM

from Nagaur or Bikaner, two seats dominated by Jat voters. Both seats in the just-dissolved Lok Sabha were held by the

Shining, still hungry for sparkle

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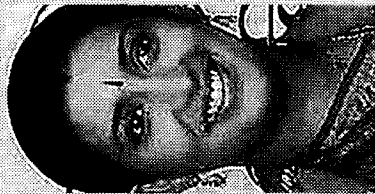
NOW SHOWING ON THE SAFFRON SCREEN



Hema Malini



Dara Singh



Smriti Malhotra Irani



Sudha Chandran



Suresh Oberoi



Jeetendra



Gajendra Chauhan



Navjot Singh Sidhu



Dharmendra



Padmimi Kohlapuri

ON THE FLOOR

Maneka, Varun join BJP

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 16. — Mrs Maneka Gandhi and her son Mr Varun Feroze Gandhi joined the BJP today in the presence of party president Mr Venkaiah Naidu and general secretary Mr Pramod Mahajan.

Mr Varun Gandhi, however, made it clear that he would neither campaign against his cousins, Priyanka and Rahul, nor contest against them in the coming Lok Sabha polls, as "we are of the same blood". But he did say that he considered the foreign origin of Mrs Sonia Gandhi an issue. "Yes, foreign origin is an issue but not an election issue."

Mrs Maneka Gandhi said in her statement: "In its mature stewardship of the NDA, the BJP has displayed a generosity and the spirit that allows people of strength and vision to blossom and grow."

Welcoming the mother-son duo into the BJP, Mr Naidu said: "Their services would be utilised in the best manner." Earlier in the morning, Mrs

Maneka Gandhi and her son met the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, at his residence.

In separate statements, Mrs Maneka Gandhi and Mr Varun Gandhi said they joined the BJP as strengthening the party was in the nation's best interests.

The twenty four-year-old son of Sanjay Gandhi said: "My family has been part of the Congress and has led it through its most glorious era. I do believe, however, that what my family was true to was not a party but a value system, a tradition of self-sacrifice, national pride and independence of spirit."

Mrs Sonia Gandhi welcomed Mr Varun Gandhi's entry into politics today.

Speaking to the media at Berhampur in Orissa after the first leg of her Jansampark Yatra, the Congress chief said Mr Varun Gandhi was her nephew and she wished him success in his political career.

Sonia-Mayawati talks, page 4

BJP still firm on temple

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

FAIZABAD, Feb. 7. — Kicking off the BJP's poll campaign in Uttar Pradesh, the Prime Minister today said his party remained committed to construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya and urged those involved in the dispute to reach an understanding so that the dream could see the light of the day without leaving any rancour in its trail.

Describing the temple construction as his government's "unfinished task", he said: "We want the construction is completed and all hurdles in the way are removed." Addressing a rally here, near Ayodhya, after a gap of 13 years, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said the issue could either be resolved by a court verdict or through an understanding between the parties concerned. "The path of judiciary could be a long one. The parties concerned should reach an understanding in a harmonious way to resolve it (the dispute)," he said while urging the people to give another five-year tenure to his government.

Resolution of the Ayodhya issue through mutual agreement would give a boost to the country's communal harmony, Mr Vajpayee said. Attacking Mrs Sonia Gandhi for having described him as a "day-dreamer like Mungeri Lal", the Prime Minister said: "I'm a dreamer, but I know how to turn my dreams into reality. The Congress is in a bad shape. I pity it. Mrs Gandhi has been saying that our government has not done anything. Our party had never opposed a government while in Opposition for the sake of opposing it."

He recalled that he had congratulated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for India's victory in the 1971 Bangladesh war. At the same time, he said he had criticised her

The path of judiciary could be a long one. The parties concerned should reach an understanding in a harmonious way to resolve the Ayodhya dispute

for having reached "an agreement without attempting to resolve the Kashmir issue".

Referring to the Kargil conflict in 1999, Mr Vajpayee said: "We're prepared to fight a war when it's necessary and also ready for a dialogue when a hand of friendship is extended."

Giving a rundown of his government's achievements, he said the relations with Pakistan had shown improvement after his recent talks with Gen. Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad. Cross-border infiltration has "ended" and of late there has been no firing on the Indo-Pak borders. Relations with Islamabad will further improve, he said, if there is "a determination to take on challenges that lie ahead".

History on wheels: Mr Vajpayee created a record of sorts today when he undertook an 8-km train journey from Katra to Faizabad. This was the first time in over two decades that the highest political executive of the land travelled by train. The Prime Minister made the journey after inaugurating a bridge on the Sarayu.

■ Another report on page 10



FLAGGING OFF HINDUTVA? The Prime Minister in Faizabad on Saturday. — PTI

Vajpayee is a failed PM: Sonia

CL MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. — Mrs Sonia Gandhi today charged Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee with being a "failure on many fronts" as Prime Minister. She also alleged that the BJP and the NDA were bereft of ideas, forcing them to "focus so much on Mr Vajpayee's personality". Mrs Gandhi was speaking at a lunch she hosted for New Delhi-based journalists, her first such effort.

Clearly attempting to be different from her earlier uncommunicative style, the Congress president, with

her advisers and party leaders in tow, circulated among her news-hungry guests. On the Prime Minister, she said: "The NDA and the BJP keep talking about his personality. May be because there is nothing in the NDA except that ... I think as a Prime Minister he has failed on many fronts. About his personality, you ask the people."

She also said the NDA government's "huge media campaign on performance" couldn't be matched by the Congress.

Reacting to Mr Vajpayee's remarks yesterday at the BJP's national council meet — the Prime Minister had

said, in an obvious reference to the Congress, that there are no "born leaders" in the BJP — Mrs Gandhi described criticism of dynastic politics as a "joke". "It's ridiculous to say so. Look at their (NDA's) side... What about the Chautalas, the Abdullahs and many BJP leaders' families in politics? What about Lalooji and Karunanidhi. You should say all of them are political dynasties... India is full of (political) dynasties". Asked about the political plans of her children, Mrs Gandhi said only Rahul and Priyanka could answer the question.

■ Another report on page 10

**Opportunities
in Education**
see Page 7

MiG 23 crashes

JAIPUR, Feb. 7. — An IAF MiG 23 fighter aircraft crashed and the pilot died this morning during preparations for the Vayu Sakti programme to be held next month. An IAF spokesperson said the incident took place at 9.20 a.m. near Chandan Range in Pokhran, Jaisalmer district. — SNS

IIMs on fee

AHMEDABAD, Feb. 7. — IIM-Ahmedabad director Mr Bakul Dholakia today ruled out taking legal action "for now" against the HRD ministry's directive on reduction in tuition fees. But he said the institute's board of governors would soon meet to discuss the directive. — PTI

(Details on page 10)

Poll-driven BJP spins Atal story

Bram Vajpayee Gets the Thumbs-Up At Party's National Council Meet in Delhi

By Smita Gupta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: From the banners to the speeches, it was Atal all the way. The BJP used its national council meeting at Ambedkar Stadium, where M. Venkaiah Naidu was appointed party president, to kick off the party's election campaign. And it was evident that the Prime Minister—more than ever before—was going to be the party's USP, the reigning deity in the BJP's pantheon of gods.

If the banners read, 'Jan Jan ki pukar, Atalji ki phir sarkar (The public wants another Atal term)', and 'Atal aur vikas, Bharat ka vishwas (India trusts in Atal and development)', the party's leaders outdid each other in selling the Atal brand. For the party's latest star entrant, Kalyan Singh, it was 'Atal Bihari ka kaam aur naam, aur upar Bhagwan Ram'; for Madhya Pradesh CM Uma Bharti, he was Vishnu—whose avatars include Ram and Krishna—whom she invited to contest from Bhopal, saying, "The people of

UP have Ayodhya's Ram, give us Brindavan's Atal Bihari"; for textiles minister Shahnawaz Husain, Mr Vajpayee—notwithstanding Gujarat—was greater than Nehru as there was less communal violence in the last five years; and parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj repeatedly punctuated her speech with

"Atalji ke netratva mein.."

Simultaneously, it was underscored that Congress president Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin would be the chief target. "BJP is a party of Indians, by Indians and for Indians. We stand in sharp contrast to the Congress," stressed Mr Naidu while Gujarat CM Narendra Modi said he believed Ms Gandhi when

she said she was "not feeling good"—it is a sentiment, he said, which only an Indian could feel. And Ms Swaraj, taking a dig at Sonia's recent speech in the Lok Sabha, assured the National Council that the next PM would be an asli Indian, not a naqli Indian.

The PM, on his part left the flourishes to his colleagues: He

instead focused on demolishing the Congress—all the ills in the country, from the Kashmir imbroglio to the drinking water crisis, he said, were a legacy of the Congress; in an age of coalitions, the Congress which had a record of pulling down coalition governments, could hardly be expected to head one successfully unlike the BJP which had done so for the last five years. If it was difficult to

initiate a family planning programme, it was because the Congress had given it a bad name, and finally, if the people wanted a government that would solve all the pending problems, it should vote for the BJP, with its track record of achievements on the development front. To emphasise that the BJP represented all sections, speakers were chosen for whom they represented: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Gegong Apang for the north east, Jharkhand CM Arjun Munda for the tribals, Hussain for the Muslims; central minister Sanghviya Gautam for the dalits and so on. In the process, some leaders did not get their chance for want of time.



Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan CMs Uma Bharati and Vasundhara Raje confer with party president M. Venkaiah Naidu at the BJP rally on Friday. Vajpayee and his deputy L.K. Advani set the party ball rolling



Sanjay Sekhri

BJP General Secretary Calls For Central Intervention In State

Mahajan pulls up Rabri govt

Ashok K. Mishra
PATNA 28 JANUARY 2004

EVEN as the Bihar BJP leaders are pressing for the imposition of the President's rule in Bihar, the general secretary of the party Pramod Mahajan feels Bihar needs central intervention. At the same time, he ruled out the possibility of imposing President's rule at the moment as the NDA government at the Centre lacked the majority in the Rajya Sabha to ratify such a decision.

Talking to newsmen in Patna on Wednesday, the BJP general secretary said the question of promulgating President's rule largely depended on the strength of the NDA in the upper House. "It is not feasible right now as we do not have the requisite majority in the upper House. At least no such action could be initiated till the election," he remarked. He, however, conceded the central

in Bihar. Replying to a query, Mr Mahajan said the Prime Minister's leadership, the performance of the NDA government and the stability it had provided would help us see through the election.

He said Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin remained an issue which cannot be overlooked. Brushing aside the criticisms of the opposition that the dissolution of the Lok Sabha would rob them the opportunity of listening to the Presidential address during the Budget session, Mr Mahajan said they will have this privilege when the NDA government will again come to power in May.

Referring to Ramvilas Paswan, Mr Mahajan said he had quit the NDA government on his own. The NDA, he said was not happy when he decided to break away from it. "The NDA will be too pleased to welcome him back. But for that to happen, he himself will have to take a decision," he said.



CENTRE SPREAD: Pramod Mahajan (R) with Union ministers Ravi Shankar Prasad (L), Rajeesh Pratap Singh (C) in Patna on Wednesday. — PTI

leadership of the NDA was in agreement with the Bihar unit which felt conditions in the state were conducive for invoking article 356

Unease over Kalyan re-entry

Statesman News Service

LUCKNOW, Jan. 25. — There was a clear sense of unease among forward caste BJP leaders in Uttar Pradesh as the decks were cleared for the re-entry of the influential backward leader Mr Kalyan Singh to the centre stage of politics in the Hindi heartland. The state leaders had little say in the decision to woo Mr Singh. Significantly, the entire operation was managed by the central leadership.

One of them was the Union minister Mr Rajnath Singh. "The party is always bigger than an individual. His return will not have any impact on Uttar Pradesh politics", Mr Singh, a Thakur said. He does not speak against the move to bring back the Lodh leader into the party fold. But his recent statements had an obvious tinge of scorn.

"Since the party high command has taken a decision, every one should abide by the decision and welcome it", Mr Rajnath Singh said. It was well known that the two did not pull on well and have somewhat cold relationship.

Another upper caste leader, Mr Kalraj Mishra, was also cool to the idea. The high command was instead relying on Mr Vinay Katiyar, the state party chief, who was a backward and a co-accused with Mr Kalyan Singh in the Babari Masjid demolition case.

After the national general secretary Mr Pramod Mahajan nearly clinched the issue, it was Mr Katiyar who was asked by the high command to follow up the matter with Mr Singh. The language which Mr Katiyar uses over the prospect of the party after the former chief minister joined was different than Mr Rajnath Singh. "With Kalyan Singh's re-entry into the party, the BJP was sure to get a majority in the state once again", an upbeat Mr Katiyar said.

Those not approving Mr Singh's re-entry were not willing to give weight to the BJP think tank's calculation that the party could be in an advantage in as many as 22 Lok Sabha seats across the state.

কল্যাণের বিজেপি'তে ফেরা নিশ্চিত, আসছেন মেনকা-বরুণ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৩ জানুয়ারি— উত্তরপ্রদেশের প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কল্যাণ সিংহের ঘরে ফেরা প্রায় নিশ্চিত। কল্যাণ ছাড়াও বিজেপি-তে যোগ দিতে চলেছেন প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী এবং নেহরু-গান্ধী পরিবারের বধু মেনকা গান্ধীও। তাঁর ছেলে বরুণ গান্ধীও একই সঙ্গে বিজেপি-তে আসতে পারেন। বৈঠকে ঠিক হয়েছে, জয়ললিতা যাতে এন.ডি.এ-তে যোগ দেন, সেই চেষ্টাও করা হবে। এ আই.এ ডি এম কে নেত্রী মতবদল না করলে তাঁর সঙ্গে আসন সমঝোতাই হবে।

আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে বিজেপি নেতাদের বৈঠকে কল্যাণের বিজেপি-তে ফিরে আসা নিয়ে আলোচনা হয়েছে। তাঁকে উত্তরপ্রদেশের দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হবে, এমনকী ভবিষ্যতে রাজ্যে বিধানসভা নির্বাচনের সময় তাঁকে ছায়া-মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হিসাবে ঘোষণা করতেও বিজেপি নেতৃবৃন্দের কোনও আপত্তি নেই। আর লখনউয়ে কল্যাণও ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, তাঁর বিজেপি-তে ফেরা সময়ের অপেক্ষা মাত্র। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কাল কল্যাণ সিংহের বৈঠক হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। তার পরেই কল্যাণকে দলে ফেরানোর কথা আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে ঘোষণা করা হবে। বিজেপি'র সহ-সভাপতি করার প্রস্তাব রয়েছে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দলীয় নেতাদের বৈঠকে আরও ঠিক হয়েছে, অরুণ জেটলি, প্রমোদ মহাজন, সুসমা স্বরাজের মতো

সনিয়া-অমর কথা, নতুন করে জন্মনা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৩ জানুয়ারি— কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধীর সঙ্গে আজ উত্তরপ্রদেশের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ও সমাজবাদী পার্টির নেতা মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদবের ঘনিষ্ঠ সহযোগী অমর সিংহের হঠাৎ সাক্ষাৎকে কেন্দ্র করে দিল্লিতে আবার রাজনৈতিক জন্মনা-কল্পনা শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। মাম্বাবতীর সঙ্গে কংগ্রেসের জোট গঠন যখন প্রায় পাকা, ঠিক সেই সময় অমর সিংহ কেন সনিয়ার সঙ্গে দেখা করলেন তা নিয়ে পর্যবেক্ষক মহলে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে। কংগ্রেস-মাম্বাবতীর জোট গঠন দেখে উদ্বিগ্ন বি জে পি শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব চেয়েছিলেন মুলায়মের দলের সঙ্গে জোট গড়তে। কিন্তু মুলায়ম বি জে পি-কে জানিয়ে দেন, ভোটের আগে জোট গঠন তাঁর পক্ষে সম্ভব নয়। কেন না, সে ক্ষেত্রে উত্তরপ্রদেশে তাঁকে

রাজ্যসভার নেতারা ভোটে লড়বেন না। এক-দু'টি ক্ষেত্রে ব্যতিক্রম হতে পারে। কিন্তু গুরুত্বপূর্ণ নেতারা ভোটে না লড়ে নির্বাচনী ব্যবস্থাপনার দায়িত্বে থাকবেন।

কল্যাণ সিংহের বিজেপি-তে ফেরা নিয়ে সমাজবাদী পার্টির সঙ্গে বিজেপি নেতৃবৃন্দের মন কষাকষি চলছে। মুলায়ম চান না, কল্যাণ আবার বিজেপি-তে ফিরুক। কারণ, তা হলে মুলায়মের সরকারে থাকা কল্যাণের ক্রান্তি পার্টি বিজেপি-র সঙ্গে মিশে যাবে। বহুজন সমাজবাদী পার্টির সঙ্গে কংগ্রেসের সমঝোতা হয়ে গেলে তাঁরাও সরকারের উপর থেকে সমর্থন তুলে নেবে। তাতে মুলায়মের সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতা বজায় থাকলেও সরকার নড়বড়ে হয়ে যাবে।

সমাজবাদী পার্টির নেতারা এটাও বলছেন, বিজেপি-র সঙ্গে তাঁদের এখন সুসম্পর্ক আছে। কল্যাণকে দলে নিলে তা নষ্ট হতে পারে। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও বিজেপি-র নিজের প্রয়োজনেই কল্যাণকে দলে নিতে হচ্ছে। কেন্দ্রে সরকার গঠন করতে গেলে উত্তরপ্রদেশে অন্তত গতবারের ফল বিজেপি-কে করতেই হবে। সে জন্য কল্যাণের লোখ ভোট দরকার বিজেপি-র। জ্যোতি মশেক কেন্দ্রে যথেষ্ট পরিমাণ লোখ ভোট রয়েছে। আজ দলের সাধারণ

এর পর এগারোর পাতায়

এর পর এগারোর পাতায়

24 JAN 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

P. T. O

কল্যাণের ফেরা

প্রথম পাতার পর সম্পাদক প্রমোদ মহাজন বলেছেন, “দলের মধ্যে কেউই কল্যাণের ফিরে আসার ব্যাপারে আপত্তি তোলেননি।” মেনকা গাধীকে বিজেপি-তে নেওয়ার ব্যাপারে বেশ কিছুদিন ধরেই আলোচনা চলছিল। আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী এই প্রস্তাবে রাজি হয়েছেন। ঠিক হয়েছে, মেনকা উত্তরপ্রদেশের পিলিভিত থেকে বিজেপি-র প্রার্থী হিসাবে লোকসভা নির্বাচনে লড়বেন।

জয়ললিতার সঙ্গে জোট নিয়েও আজ বৈঠকে কথা হয়েছে। জয়াকে তাঁর রাজ্যের জন্য সবরকম সাহায্যের প্রতিশ্রুতি দেওয়া হবে। আগামী ২৮ জানুয়ারি বেঙ্গাইয়া নাইডু চেম্বাই গিয়ে জয়র সঙ্গে কথা বলবেন। তাঁকে দিল্লি এসে বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে কথা বলার অনুরোধও জানানো হবে। বিজেপি সূত্রের খবর, জয়া আসন সমঝোতায় রাজি হলেও এন ডি এ-তে যোগ দিতে চান না। তিনি চন্দ্রাবাবুর মতো জোটের সহযোগী দল হিসাবে থাকতে চান।

Labour reforms, job-related devt to be BJP planks

Diwakar & P.R. Ramesh
HYDERABAD 11 JANUARY

BJP on Sunday rededicated itself to the development plank, promising to continue with reforms, including the politically sensitive changes in the labour law regime. Changes in labour laws, strengthening of SEZs, improvement of infrastructure and measures to broaden the base of retail investors and widen the reach of the insurance sector are part of the policy road map laid down by the BJP national executive in what is seen as the precursor to the party's poll manifesto.

That the party, as it tries to carry its December form into the Lok Sabha battlefield, will use the newly-forged development plank to power its re-election bid was obvious from the economic resolution's stress on labour reforms. Though safely worded, the mention of the policy marks the first time that a party has gathered courage to put the sensitive item high on the agenda.

The six-page document of the BJP stressed on job-oriented growth. Rebutting the Congress charge that the NDA government had failed to fulfil its promise to create one crore jobs a year, the resolution said the economic initiatives of the government have resulted in massive job creation. It, however, also acknowledged the need for an Indian model which combined growth with jobs. The BJP's new development mien also reflected through its jeering of the Congress for the 3.5% Hindu rate of growth under its dispensation. The resolution flaunted the new growth

buoyancy, calling it the Hindutva rate of growth. The upbeat tone of the resolution showed the confidence of the party, long taunted for its reliance on emotive plank, to take on its adversaries on mainstream issues.

"Good governance will be one of our principal planks," said commerce minister Arun Jaitley. "A new grammar and vocabulary of politics is evolving," Mr Jaitley added. The BJP's just-acquired faith in the winning potential of development politics was evident even at the inaugural session where party chief M. Venkaiah Naidu shrugged aside the feeble in-house doubt that the new pre-occupation might push Hindutva to the backburner. "Concepts of Hindutva and development are not mutually exclusive. In fact, Hindutva as a construct subsumes development," he said.

Mr Jaitley pointed out that his party's ambition was to transform India into a global manufacturing hub and the world's biggest granary. He also spoke of the BJP's plans to modernise airports, roads and railways; boost ports capacities; provide power at competitive rates and reduce fuel costs; lift the manufacturing sector's share in the GDP well beyond the current 25%.

Mr Jaitley added that there will be efforts to leverage the food surplus for making country the biggest foodgrain exporter, to "empower" the agriculture sector. "The challenge for the future is to improve agricultural productivity, concentrate on agro-processing activity and connect product of the Indian farmer to the global market."



WIN-SOME: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee smiles on being asked by BJP president Venkaiah Naidu to flash a victory sign at a political rally in Hyderabad on Sunday. — AFP

Vajpayee invites TDP once again to join future govt

M Enosh Jeremiah
HYDERABAD 11 JANUARY

PREPARING the ground for early elections, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee renewed his invitation to the TDP to join the NDA government at the Centre and criticised the Congress for "attempting to cobble together a motley Opposition grouping based on unprincipled alliances."

"The TDP extended strong support to the NDA government but chose to stay away from joining the government. I hope it will reconsider its decision and join us, once we come back to power in the ensuing elections," he said. He was speaking at a large public rally on "Sounding of Development Bugle" here on Sunday evening. He, however, did not specify as to when the elections would be held

—whether they would be advanced or held as per schedule. Stating that coalition governments are inevitable in a vast country with diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, he said the BJP had realised this fact long before and forged alliances with parties that have the nation and its welfare at heart.

"But the Congress seems to be opening its eyes to this reality only after losing in the recent Assembly polls. It's now trying to form an alliance with a party in Tamil Nadu, which it accused of having a hand in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi," he said, without mentioning the DMK by name. He described this alliance as "unprincipled."

Referring frequently to the development that has taken place under his leadership over the last five years, he declared that India

could become a developed nation by 2020, if it maintains current growth rates. "We have all it takes to be a developed nation, but we have to maintain peace, brotherhood and harmony," he said.

The Prime Minister reiterated that the alliance with the TDP would continue in Andhra Pradesh. He complimented the chief minister and his government for the development taking place in the state. "The Andhra Pradesh government is changing the face of Hyderabad and of the state, just as we are doing for the country," he said.

Mr Vajpayee also talked about maintaining close relations with all neighbours, including Pakistan. He expressed his desire to forge regional trade alliances with neighbours for the overall development of the entire south-east Asian region.

BJP uses thaw in Pakistan ties as trump card

Diwakar & P. R. Ramesh
HYDERABAD 11 JANUARY

THE BJP leadership on Sunday showcased Pakistan's recent commitment not to let its territory be used for anti-terror activities as a major achievement of the Vajpayee government. Party president M. Venkaiah Naidu complimented the Vajpayee government for achieving the recent breakthrough in ties with Pakistan without compromising on the fight against cross-border terrorism.

"Indeed, it is Pakistan which had to give a commitment that it will not allow anybody to use its territory for terrorist activities against India," said the BJP chief, chipping away at the bilateral vow to refrain from pointscore over the outcome of the Vajpayee-Musharraf pow-wow.

Both India and Pakistan agreed at Islamabad not to look for winners and losers, calling the breakthrough as one leading towards a win-win situation for all.

Mr Naidu's decision to breach the discipline by striking a triumphant note was being explained in the light of BJP's compulsion to ward off any perception that the Vajpayee government relaxed its much-repeated "no talks till terrorism stops" condition for engaging Pakistan in dialogue.

Though the Vajpayee government's performance at Islamabad has come in for praise from neutral galleries, an impression that it might have resigned from its tough anti-terror stance can be lethal for the party which prides itself on muscular nationalism.

The precaution may seem to

be even more necessary in the light of assertions that Pakistan has been forced to make to fight off the sell-out insinuation. The compulsion has forced General Pervez Musharraf to rule out the recognition of LoC as the border while Pakistan has petitioned the United Nations to protest against India's attempt to fence the border.

The inaugural remarks also brought out BJP's calculation to show off Pakistan's anti-terror guarantee to strengthen the leadership halo around Mr Vajpayee. The party will also adopt a resolution at the meeting of its apex decision making body on the Prime Minister's successful visit to Pakistan.

The BJP chief was gushing in his praise of the PM for his conduct of foreign policy. "India's achievements on the foreign policy front have truly been unprecedented. The entire world has come to recognise Shri Atalji as a statesman par excellence."

Under his leadership, India's stature in the world has risen enormously. His latest foreign policy success has been his historic visit to Islamabad where he provided visionary leadership both in the 12th Saarc summit as well as to the breaking of ice in the frozen relations between India and Pakistan," said the BJP chief.

The lavish praise for Mr Vajpayee and the assertion that it was General Musharraf who backed down at Islamabad are only reflective of BJP's calculation to use the thaw in ties with Pakistan as the peace icing on the feel-good cake but without softening its anti-terror armour.