

Buddha raises ISI alarm

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Dec. 23. — "The neighbouring country has to be told that ISI activities against India cannot be allowed on its soil," Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee told the Assembly today. He clearly referred to Bangladesh but informed the Speaker that he will use the term "neighbouring country".

The chief minister, however, named Nepal and Bhutan without hesitation while presenting his report on terrorist activities.

"I have talked to Dr Manmohan Singh, Mr Shivraj Patil, Mr Pranab Mukherjee and even Mrs Sonia Gandhi. Delhi has to realise that its attention needs to move to the East and the North-east where ISI is very active," Mr Bhattacharjee said. "Religious fundamentalist and terrorist groups are operating across the international border between

India and its neighbour. Till now 137 people have been arrested in connection with 37 cases. Only three have so far been convicted in the Chandipur espionage case. Out of these three, one is a Bangladeshi and another is a Pakistani."

Fundamentalists and terrorist groups are operating across the border between India and its neighbour

The ISI was also helping the KLO and the United Liberation Front of Asom, said Mr Bhattacharjee. "After 166 KLO operatives were killed in the military operations in Bhutan, 30 KLO members went into hiding. Some of them, including Ulfa leader Paresh Barua and KLO leader Jiban Singh, have taken shelter in the

neighbouring country while others are trying to enter Nepal to join the Maoists. It has become difficult to destroy the Ulfa. If they continue to have a base in the neighbouring country they will regroup after every police or military operation", he added. The chief minister said it would pose a big danger for West Bengal.

Referring to the Naxalites operating in south Bengal districts, West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia, Mr Bhattacharjee said the MCC and PW cadres are getting a natural shelter in the jungles of bordering Jharkhand where the government has so far failed to crack down on these hideouts. "They are trying to form a base in our tribal villages by using the poverty of these people as a weapon against the administration. We have started several programmes ranging from health facilities to self-employment programmes", the chief minister said.

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THE STATESMAN

RAW incompetence

The quiescence of the intelligence agency on the Rabinder Singh issue shows its fear of exposure

THE country was shocked to learn in May that the joint secretary in the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), Rabinder Singh, had managed to quietly flee the country despite being under official surveillance for passing on sensitive information to the CIA. But what is more shocking, perhaps, is that despite the serious implications of Rabinder Singh's disappearance, there appears no discernible movement on the part of the government to trace him, declare him a proclaimed offender and bring him to justice or, at the very least, assess the damage the man has done to the country's interests and that of the organisation he was supposedly working for. It appears that the authorities are more keen on a damage control exercise than in setting their intelligence operations in order. RAW's quiescence indicates its own fear of exposure.

Nobody disputes the fact that intelligence agencies have necessarily to operate in the world of shadows, but when its incompetence becomes public knowledge — as in its ham-handed handling of the Kargil intrusions in the summer of 1999, or in the disappearance of one of its key operatives five years later — trotting out the old line about national security interests in order to justify its opaqueness just does not wash. The US Senate Intelligence Committee thought nothing of publicly putting the CIA through the wringer for its

shoddy handling of intelligence on the 9/11 attacks. Why then should the Indian government be pussyfooting its way through this mess?

The investigations of *The Sunday Express* have highlighted another dimension of the Rabinder Singh story. The fact that the man could have acquired or controlled no less than 15 properties over some 27 years in Delhi, UP and Punjab, should surely have rung an alarm bell somewhere in New Delhi's vast power apparatus? The fact that these properties continue to remain in his name; that there has been no attempt to impound them and turn the heat on their owner, where ever he may be, indicates a disturbing apathy on the part of the administration even by its own standards. In the early 1980s, the spy ring, comprising the Larkins brothers and two others, was busted precisely through effective counter-intelligence and quick response. The moment it was learnt that K.H. Larkins was planning to emigrate to Australia, the authorities moved in. Today, over six months after Rabinder Singh's exit, the issue remains in limbo. The signals are clear, both intelligence and counter-intelligence in India demand comprehensive reform in terms of personnel and their handling and in terms of restructuring of operations. Perhaps a tautology best sums that up: better intelligence demands better intelligence.

14 DEC 2004

INDIAN EXPRESS

Troop reduction has created goodwill, says Pranab

#10-9/12

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 8. The decision to reduce troops in Jammu and Kashmir was taken "consciously" and the move has created a lot of goodwill in the State, the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, told the Rajya Sabha today.

The decision has not adversely affected the situation in the border State even though infiltration attempts by militants went up last month, he said in reply to a question by Amar Singh (Samajwadi Party) and a host of supplementaries by other members during question hour.

"The question of redeployment is always there because it depends on the situation. So far, the decision has been well received all over the country, including the people of Jammu and Kashmir," Mr. Mukherjee

said. Terrorism cannot be "switched off and on" and there has been no dismantling of the terror infrastructure across the border. "Since November last, unilateral ceasefire declared by Pakistan is still continuing. This is a complex problem and there cannot be any simplistic solution to it. The process of composite dialogue is still going on since the former Prime Minister had visited Islamabad in January this year." There were 15 attempts at infiltration during September and October. Seven militants were killed, while 30 could have sneaked into the country, he said.

High technology

There has been no let-up in attempts to infiltrate into the State, but better surveillance, high technological aids such as unmanned sensors and radar and proper border fencing have

helped in keeping the level of infiltration down.

According to estimates, 67 terrorist training camps and 32 launch pads are still operating in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan.

"Though the number of incidents has reduced, one cannot say the situation is comfortable," Mr. Mukherjee said.

Changed tactics

The former State Chief Minister and National Conference member, Farooq Abdullah, said he had received reports that militants were now using a special powder and advanced cutters to cut border fences.

In reply to a query from the Congress MP, Karan Singh, the Minister said the militants had changed their tactics and were now resorting to *fidayeen* or suicide attacks.

Admitting that infiltration had increased in November compared to September and October this year, he said the Government had decided to raise six "home-and-hearth" battalions and induct surrendered militants. "It is an ongoing process and it will be expedited."

Also, massive economic activities and job opportunities for youth were needed to wean them away from militancy.

Mr. Mukherjee denied there were any differences among the Prime Minister's Office, the Home Ministry and the Defence Ministry on either troop reduction or handling the Jammu and Kashmir affairs.

To a query from S.S. Ahluwalia (BJP), the Minister said there was no question of "fake surrender" by militants in the State.

Terror shadow over 45% of India

Defence & N. Security

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Resurgent Insurgents

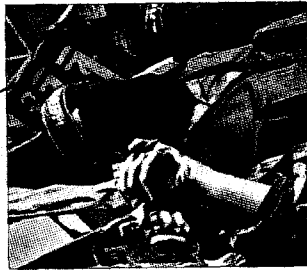
New Delhi: Don't look for enemies outside for there is a siege within. The task force report on internal security, formed after the Kargil war, says about 45% of India's geographical area, covering 220 districts, is in grip of insurgency of some kind.

The threat from the Naxals is the worst. From 55 districts and nine states in October 2003, Naxalite violence has spread to 156 districts in 13 states in just one year. The Opposition, led by BJP MP Arun Shourie, bombarded the Rajya Sabha with these alarming statistics.

Suggesting that the UPA government's olive branch to the Naxal groups in Andhra Pradesh hasn't converted foes into friends, the Opposition came out heavily on the government's handling of internal security.

"Please desist using phrases like sky is the limit and we are keeping all options open," Shourie warned the government.

The debate on internal security started with a very cordial resolve: "The issue is too grave to



- 45% of India's geographical area, covering 220 districts, is in the grip of insurgency.
- In last 20 years, 64,000 people killed in terrorist violence.
- In October 2003, 55 districts in nine states were affected by Naxalite violence. In October 2004 it spread to 156 districts in 13 states.
- Since 1989, 13,000 civilians and 5,500 security personnel killed in Naxalite violence.

civilians and 5,500 security personnel were killed in Left-wing violence.

He said the compact revolutionary zone (from Nepal to Andhra Pradesh) was very much a reality. "Nepal shows the danger in which we are," Shourie warned.

He said senior officials from the government confirmed to him that weapons to support this violence were not coming from China as it is made out to be. "The mass of these weapons are coming from India and India-an groups... Madarsas have come up in the border areas where there used to be no Muslims," Shourie said.

This evoked protest from Congress MP Rashid Alvi. "Give me addresses of five madarasas in this area. For last many years, I have been asking L K Advani but he has no answer," he said.

But the day ended on a rather cordial note, with BJP MP Jaswant Singh claiming that at most 95 recommendations of the task force were implemented by the NDA government and home minister Shivraj Patil promising to consider the pending recommendations.

boast each other's (the UPA government and the NDA's) doings." But both sides found it difficult not to pit NDA's six years against UPA's six months.

"Hurriyat has stopped talking to New Delhi but is making huge foray talking to anyone who comes to India. Foreign secretary of Pakistan was called on by the Hurriyat. Would India's foreign secretary go to Pakistan and talk to (secessionist) groups there?" he asked.

He said the UPA government's decision to talk with the Naxal groups in Andhra Pradesh was skewed. "Talks began even as the Naxals refused to put down arms. Naxal problem is spread in 156 districts in 13 states, so why was no other state consulted?"

Quoting the task force report, Arun Shourie said: "In the last 20 years, 64,000 people were killed in terrorist related violence. And all within Indian territory."

"Most lethal is the left-wing extremism," Shourie added.

Referring to an IB report he said since October 2003, there has been an additional sway in the Naxal violence "at two districts per day". Since 1989, 13,000

CBI registers FIRs in Tehelka case

Bangaru Laxman, Jaya Jaitly Among 10 Accused Named By Agency

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 6 DECEMBER

THE NDA, on Monday, got a big political jolt with the CBI registering cases against the BJP's former president Bangaru Laxman and JD(U) leader Jaya Jaitly on charges of accepting bribe to influence defence ministry officials in Tehelka scandal. The CBI cases are likely to snowball into a major controversy as it comes in the midst of Parliament session.

The two politicians figure among the list of 10 accused in the five first information reports (FIRs) the CBI registered on Monday, to probe the corruption in defence deals. The CBI has launched its investigation on the basis of documents forwarded by the Union personnel ministry on November 25. A note and nearly 100 hours of video tape on the sting operation were handed

over to the sleuths by the secretary of Justice Phukan Commission.

As was widely shown on television in March 2001, the CBI has accused Mr Laxman, who was also a Rajya Sabha MP, of allegedly accepting Rs 1 lakh in the name of new year party fund and demanding further instalments in dollars from the Tehelka journalists — posing as representatives of West End International, a fictitious firm. The former parliamentarian had accepted bribe for rendering assistance in supply of 'hand held thermal camefas' to Indian Army.

Mr Laxman has been charged under section 120 (B) of Indian Penal Code along with sections 7 (public servants taking gratification other than legal remunera-



TWO TO TANGO

tion) and 9 (taking gratification for exercise of personal influence with public servant) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The sleuths have also alleged

that Mr Laxman's personal assistant N. Uma Maheshwar alias Raju Venkatesh had taken Rs 10,000 from the undercover journalists for taking up their matter. Satyamurthy, another personal assistant of the former BJP chief, had also allegedly received a gold chain.

In the second case, Ms Jaitly has been charged with assuring Tehelka staffer, Mathew Samuel that she will put in a word to "sahib's office" (referring to the then defence minister George Fernandes' office), if the proposal of their firm was not taken up

by the ministry. It may be remembered that a meeting had taken place in Mr Fernandes' residence, attended by Ms Jaitly, retired Major General S.P. Murugai, Kanpur-based businessman Surender Kumar Surekha and Gopal Pacherwal, which was secretly video taped.

In that meeting, Rs 2 lakh was paid to Mr Pacherwal at the instance of Ms Jaitly, the CBI alleged. Later Mr Surekha was also paid Rs 1 lakh and Major Gen Murugai also accepted bribe for pushing their contract in the ministry. It is learnt that after several rounds of deliberations, the sleuths decided to include her name in the case. Otherwise the link in the criminal conspiracy hatched in the case would have weakened, sources said.

The reporters have not been brought under the ambit of the investigation since it was a "journalistic venture".

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The Economic Times

07 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Lok Sabha passes Bill to repeal POTA

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 6. The new law to tackle terrorism, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Bill, was today approved by the Lok Sabha. The House also gave its approval to the Bill to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).

The move to repeal POTA was opposed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies, who walked out in protest as the Bill was being taken up for consideration.

The Government also had to withstand intense pressure from its allies like the Left parties, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), who wanted the Bill to Amend the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to be referred to the Standing Committee. The SP and the BSP walked out in protest, while the Left parties abstained from voting on the passage of the Bill.

"We do not approve of the manner in which the Government has gone about the whole affair," said Gurudas Das Gupta of the Communist Party of In-

dia (CPI). While the Government had little trouble in getting the approval of the House to pass the Bill to repeal POTA, it faced some embarrassment on the Unlawful Activities Prevention Bill.

The Left, the SP, and the BSP were of the view that the Bill contained certain provisions that were similar in nature to POTA and were likely to be

misused. They urged the Government to refer the Bill to the House committee, so that it could be studied in detail and suitable amendments suggested.

The Government pleaded with its supporting parties to help pass the Bill, as the Ordinance to Amend the Prevention of Unlawful Activities Act would lapse if it was not passed

within this session of Parliament.

The Leader of the House, Pranab Mukherjee and the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, who piloted the Bill, promised to hold detailed consultations with the members after the passage of the Bill and to incorporate new amendments, if needed.

Their appeal only had a lim-

ited affect.

In his ruling, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee, said that though personally he was in favour of all Bills being sent to the respective Standing Committees, in the present case, given the fact that it had to be passed within the Winter session itself, he was in favour of it being passed today itself.

Refer Bill to committee: Sushma

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, DEC. 6. The Bharatiya Janata Party will certainly insist that the legislation to replace the repealed Prevention of Terrorism Act be sent to the standing committee attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs, party's deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha and chairman of the standing committee on Home Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, said today.

She said that after the Lok Sabha passes the Bill and

sends it to the Rajya Sabha for consideration, the BJP would insist and appeal to the chairman of the Upper House to send the legislation to a standing committee.

Ms. Swaraj said the Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, was not only a member of the Rajya Sabha, but for years when he was in the Opposition he had said that as a matter of principle any new legislation must first be whetted by the relevant standing committee. She hoped he would now stand by that principle.

She said it would be up to the chairman of the House, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, to accept or reject the BJP demand.

"He is competent to accept our demand ... he does not have to go by the majority opinion in the House,"

Ms. Swaraj said the standing committee on Home Affairs has several important MPs on it, including Rahul Gandhi, Sachin Pilot and R.K. Dhawan from the Congress and the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, from the BJP.

She told the press that "even if an amendment Bill is moved as a matter of principle it should first be sent to the standing committee concerned, and, in this case, the Unlawful Activities [Prevention] Amendment Bill, which seeks to replace POTA, is an extremely important piece of legislation, which has far-reaching implications ... if the Government does not want a vacuum as a result of repeal of POTA then it can re-promulgate the ordinance."

পাকিস্তানের উপরে নির্ভর করছে কাশ্মীরে সেনা-হ্রাস, বললেন প্রণব

সৌভদ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় • ওজার
(মহারাষ্ট্র)

২৮ নভেম্বর: কাশ্মীরে সেনা কমালো ও তা কতদিন বজায় থাকবে, সে ব্যাপারে কোনও নিশ্চয়তা দিতে রাজি নয় কেন্দ্র। বরং শান্তির লক্ষ্যে এই পদক্ষেপ বহাল রাখার ব্যক্তি দায়িত্ব এ বার পাকিস্তানের কাঁধেই রাখাচ্ছে দিল্লি। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের বক্তব্য, কাশ্মীরে সেনা কমানো শান্তির লক্ষ্যে একটি 'পরীক্ষা'। এর আয়ু নির্ভর করছে সীমান্তপারের সন্ত্রাস এবং জঙ্গি হানার পরিস্থিতি কী হয়, তার উপরে।

বিশ্বের অন্যতম সেনাবহুল অঞ্চল জম্মু-কাশ্মীর থেকে এ মাসে ফৌজের সংখ্যা কমানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিল মনমোহন সরকার। সেই অনুসারে ইতিমধ্যেই কিছু সেনা কমিয়ে নিয়েছে। প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রকের একটি সূত্র অনুসারে প্রায় নয় হাজার সেনা তুলে নেওয়া হয়েছে সন্ত্রাসদীর্ঘ রাজ্যটি থেকে। পাকিস্তান বরাবর কাশ্মীর থেকে ভারতীয় সেনা সরানোর দাবিতে চ্যাঁচামেচি করে আসলেও নয়াদিল্লির এই সিদ্ধান্তে ইসলামাবাদ খুশির কোনও লক্ষণ দেখায়নি। বরং একে 'প্রসাধনিক পরিবর্তন' আখ্যা দিয়ে পারভেজ মুশারফের বক্তব্য ছিল, এই ধরনের ব্যবস্থায় বিশেষ কাজ হবে না।

পাকিস্তানের এই তত্ত্ব স্পষ্ট ভাষায়

উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন প্রণব। তাঁর পাল্টা বক্তব্য, যদিও ফিদায়ি আক্রমণ এখনও চলছে, কিছু সন্ত্রাসবাদী লুকিয়ে রয়েছে জম্মু কাশ্মীরে। কিন্তু বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি যাচাই করে এই পরীক্ষা করেছি। প্রণবের কথায়, "কোনও গ্যারান্টি দেওয়া যায় না কতদিন এটা থাকবে। যদি পরিস্থিতি খারাপ হয়, তখন আমাদের অন্য ভাবে ভাবতে হবে।" প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী একটি ক্ষেত্রে পাক প্রশাসনের ভূমিকায় সন্তুষ্ট। তা হল, সীমান্তে সংঘর্ষবিহীন বজায় রাখা। কিন্তু একই সঙ্গে তিনি ফের মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন, সন্ত্রাসের পরিকাঠামো ধ্বংসের কাজে পাকিস্তান বিশেষ কিছুই কাজ করেনি।

শান্তির লক্ষ্যে বিভিন্ন সিদ্ধান্তের পাশাপাশি দিল্লি সুরক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে আজ এক ঐতিহাসিক কদমও রাখল। ভারতীয় বিমানবাহিনীর সেরা অস্ত্র, সুখোই ৩০ এম কে আই যুদ্ধবিমানের প্রথম দেশে তৈরি সংস্করণ আজ উড়ল আকাশে। পাকিস্তান যখন এক ১৬ জোগাড়ের পথে, তার মোকাবিলায় রাশিয়ার সঙ্গে সমন্বয়ে তৈরি এই যুদ্ধবিমানই দিল্লির সেরা ব্যক্তি। রাশিয়া থেকে ৫০টি বিমান তৈরি অবস্থায় পাবে ভারত। ৪০টি ইতিমধ্যেই এসেছে, শেষ ১০টি এই বছরের মধ্যেই আসবে। প্রণব বললেন, বাকি ১৪০টি সুখোই তৈরি হবে হিন্দুস্তান

অ্যারোনটিক্স লিমিটেডের কারখানায়। নাসিক থেকে ২৫ কিলোমিটার দূরে ওজারে এক রাশিয়ান ও ভারতীয় পাইলট পনেরো মিনিট দেশজ সুখোইতে যে কসরৎ দেখালেন, তা দেখে প্রণব-সহ দর্শককূল মুগ্ধ!

ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র, রকেট, বোমা— মোট আট কিলো গোলাবারুদ বহন করতে পারবে এই নতুন বিমান। একটানা ৩০০০ কিলোমিটার, মানে পাকিস্তানের পুরো আকাশ পাড়ি দিয়ে ফিরতে সক্ষম সু ৩০ এম কে আই। প্রতি সেকেন্ডে সর্বোচ্চ ২৭০ মিটার উঠতে পারে। বায়ুসেনা প্রধান এস কৃষ্ণস্বামী জানিয়েছেন, আপাতত অনেক ক্ষেত্রেই বিদেশি যন্ত্রাংশ ব্যবহার হচ্ছে। কিন্তু ভবিষ্যতে সেসবও দেশে বানানোর পরিকল্পনা রয়েছে।

দাঙ্গা দমনে আইন। সাম্প্রদায়িক দাঙ্গা দমনে কার্যকরী একটি আইনের খসড়া তৈরি করছে কেন্দ্রীয় আইনমন্ত্রক। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল জানিয়েছেন, এই আইনে সাম্প্রদায়িকতাকে সংজ্ঞাত করে আইনভঙ্গকারীদের কঠোর শাস্তি এবং দাঙ্গাদুর্গতদের ক্ষতিপূরণের ব্যবস্থাও থাকবে। এ বিষয়ে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের একটি প্রস্তাবপত্রের ভিত্তিতে এই খসড়া তৈরি করছে আইনমন্ত্রক। পাটিল জানান, মানুষের মত নিয়েই এই আইনকে চূড়ান্ত রূপ দেওয়া হবে। - পি টি আই

29 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

I'm first and last an Indian: JJ

9-9
 28/11
 J.J. Singh

Vishal Thapar
 New Delhi, November 27

LT-GEN. JOGINDER Jaswant Singh was today declared the next Chief of Army Staff. He will take over from General N.C. Vij.

Singh, presently the general officer commanding-in-chief of the Western Command, will take over as the 23rd chief of the Indian Army on February 1, 2005. He will have a two-year and 10-month tenure at the top slot. While the government has gone by the convention of seniority in naming Singh Chief-designate, he will, incidentally, also be the first Sikh to hold the post. Singh himself played down the circumstance. "I consider myself first and last an Indian," he told the *Hindustan Times*.

The General-designate is a third generation military officer. His grandfather and father are veterans of World War-I and II respectively. Widely perceived to be a thinking general, Singh is the architect of the Indian Army Doctrine, which has recently been made public.

An infantryman, Singh will also be the first Army Chief with hands-on experience on combating insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir. He was seriously wounded while leading troops from the front in a counter-terrorist operation in the Kashmir Valley, while com-

manding a brigade. The Chief-designate is supportive of the troop reduction initiative in Jammu and Kashmir. "The decision is based on sound fundamentals. The manpower reduction will not (adversely) affect the operational situation, both along the Line of Control and the interior areas," he said.

Describing the move as a "step in the right direction" and one "in consonance with the confidence-building measures", Singh said the troop reduction would be reviewed after monitoring the ground situation.

He strongly defended the human rights record of the Indian Army, describing the Manorama Devi incident in Manipur as an aberration. "We belong to the country and are with the people," he stressed, maintaining that the army's human rights record can compare favourably with other armies in similar situations.

Singh has an impressive command profile. He was the commander of 1 Corps, the Indian Army's main strike formation, during the 10-month long eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with Pakistan in 2001-2002. During the Kargil conflict, he was the public face of the Indian army as its ADG, Military Operations. He was commissioned in the Maratha Light Infantry regiment.



PTI
 Lt-Gen. J.J. Singh and his wife in New Delhi on Saturday after hearing of his appointment as the next Army Chief.

Sikh 'jinx' broken with appointment

Kanwar Sandhu
 Chandigarh, November 27

IN ANNOUNCING Lt-Gen. J.J. Singh appointment as the next Chief of Army Staff, the government has not only upheld the seniority principle but also broken the 'jinx' of the top military slot eluding Sikh officers.

With Singh's appointment, the government has set to rest reports of the elevation of current incumbent Gen. N.C. Vij as Chief of Defence Staff before his superannuation, which could have put Singh out of the reckoning for the army chief's post.

The seniority principle has generally been upheld, except on a few occasions. However, it is the breaking of the Sikh 'jinx' that is the talking point today. While two Sikh officers have made it to the top in the IAF, the Army hasn't had a Sikh chief despite a very large presence of the community. The last Sikh officer to come near enough was Lt-Gen. Surjit Singh, former GOC-in-C of the Western Command. But a two-year extension in service across the board put him out of the running.

However, many retired officers look at Singh's elevation in purely professional terms. Says Sangra: "It shouldn't be viewed in parochial terms. By upholding the seniority principle, the government has given Singh his due."

No troop cut in Siachen: Pranab

By Rajat Pandit/TNN

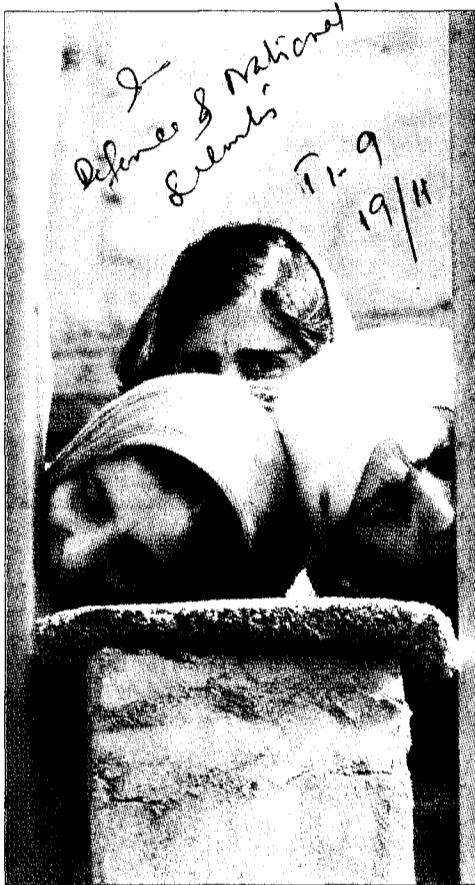
On Board INS Mysore (Arabian Sea): Even as the Army began the process to de-induct around 10,000 soldiers from Jammu and Kashmir within a fortnight, India made it clear that force levels will not be reduced in the Siachen Glacier-Saltoro Ridge region.

Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said there was no question of any pull-back from Siachen till Pakistan agreed to authenticate the positions held by Indian and Pakistani troops along the 150-km Actual Ground Position Line. "Some of the positions we hold are very advantageous...That's why we are asking them to delineate (the AGPL) first...so that if there is another Kargil, we will have proof," said Mukherjee, witnessing naval exercises 50 nautical miles south-west of Mumbai along with Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash.

The "unilateral" troop reduction, announced by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Diwali eve, will take place in all regions of the militancy-hit J&K, including Jammu, and not just the Valley.

"A limited de-induction has begun from the Anantnag, Srinagar and Pulwama districts to coincide with the PM's visit," sources said.

With around one-third of the 1.13-million strong Army deployed in J&K, reduction of only about 10,000 soldiers is clearly not going



From behind a fence, three Kashmiri women watch soldiers launch an operation against militants at Srinagar, just hours ahead of the Prime Minister's rally in the city, on Wednesday

to hit the operational efficiency on the ground. But, at the same time, sources insisted the exercise should not be viewed as "a mere symbolic gesture". "The troop reduction will be reviewed constant-

ly. If infiltration and violence levels come down, further troop reduction is possible," they said. The gaps created by the "few" battalions being moved out will be plugged by redeployment of those staying back. The Army's view is that it will not reverse the trend of containing militancy. If the ground situation deteriorates, troops may well be re-inducted.

Mukherjee, on his part, emphasised that troop reduction did not mean that the vigil along the Line of Control, as well as counter-insurgency operations in the hinterland, will be relaxed. "We will not be caught off-guard," he said.

"The (terrorist) infrastructure and camps on the other side of the border are intact...We have been able to reduce infiltration due to enhanced vigilance and other measures (like the anti-infiltration fence)...The

(troop reduction) decision was taken not because of Pakistan but despite Pakistan," said Mukherjee.

6-9-8
Nishant Khera

Army mulls further troop-cut

Srinjoy Chowdhury in New Delhi

Nov. 18. — The Army will consider another substantial reduction in the number of troops in J&K in the next two-three weeks if there is no "setback" in counter-terrorism operations.

While 2,000 troops began pulling out yesterday, there are plans to reduce a total of 10,000 to 11,000 soldiers from the state in four or five stages after a careful study. The initial exercise has been completed by Army headquarters and the Northern Command has also looked at the process. The decision was taken after directions from the highest levels of the government.

Of the 2,000 that have moved out,

US-Pak defence deal

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18. — The USA is selling Pakistan not only eight Orion surveillance aircraft and related equipment worth \$970 million, but also anti-tank missiles, and Pakistan has requested other equipment as well which can have no use against terrorists but only against the army and navy of a governmental enemy, says a media report. — PTI

Details on page 2

about 1,000 have cleared out of the Kupwara sector in north Kashmir, one of the more difficult areas where militants have been particularly active. It is also near the traditional infiltration routes.

The other pullout has been in central

Kashmir from Badgam, close to Srinagar. Here too, 1,000 troops have been reduced.

With the state having about 4 lakh troops, such a pullout is token but significant, politically at least. Not all the troops are in the state for fighting militancy.

Many are close to the borders in the Chinese sector where there is no militancy. The 14 Corps in the Ladakh region, comprising 65,000 officers and men, is unlikely to be touched. It looks after the Siachen area and also faces the Chinese border.

Two of the Army's biggest corps are 15, based in Srinagar and 16, in Nagrota, the latter being the size of two corps. The cuts will be from here, but the troops have other responsibilities, including guarding the LoC.

19 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Siachen troops to stay put

7-6
18/11 ✓
SUJAN DUTTA

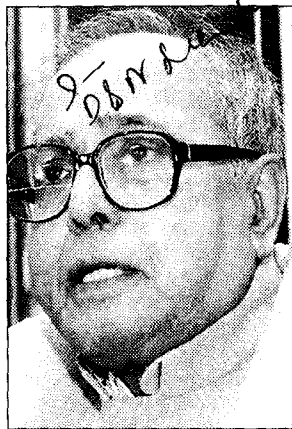
On board Indian Naval Ship Mysore, West Coast, Nov. 17: The cutback in troops in Jammu and Kashmir will be carried out mostly from the counter-insurgency grid and not from the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, highly placed defence sources have said even as a first column of olive-greens moved out of the Valley just before the Prime Minister landed in Srinagar this morning.

Pranab Mukherjee has confirmed that the position and level of troops on the Siachen Glacier will not be reviewed following the Prime Minister's announcement that troop levels in Kashmir will be reduced.

The defence minister, who was here yesterday for the first day of a four-day western fleet deployment exercise of the Indian Navy, made it clear that despite the Prime Minister's announcement, the Indian position on Siachen remain unchanged since the defence secretary talks between New Delhi and Islamabad in June this year.

"If we vacate and they take over those positions, then what is the proof that we were present there earlier?" Mukherjee said on board the INS Mysore, the second largest warship of the navy.

Mukherjee made it clear that India and Pakistan were still some distance away from freezing the war on the snowy wastes of Siachen despite the ceasefire along the Line of Control that has lasted a year now, having been extended to the Actual Ground Position Line in the glacier.

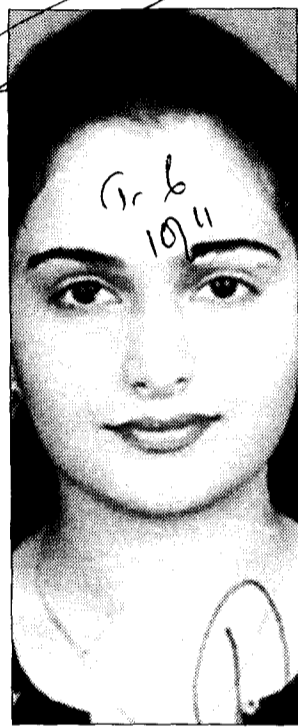


Pranab

Delhi views any suggestion to de-escalate in Siachen with suspicion and has deftly kept that "war on the roof of the world" distinct from its peace initiative in Kashmir. Sources in the security establishment say India is wiser after the 1999 Kargil war that sought to "Siachenise" glacial heights on the Line of Control and was an attempt by Pakistan to interdict the supply lines to Indian troop positions in Siachen.

Mukherjee said it was important for Pakistan to authenticate its military positions on a map before any pull-back in Siachen could be considered. This is an unchanged position since the defence secretary-level talks.

But, he said, the impasse in Siachen would not cast a shadow on the confidence sought to be built by reducing troops in the strife-torn state, Mukherjee said. He said that military commanders would decide on the numbers of troops required and "decide as per operational requirements".



Monica: Now to President

Monica taps Kalam

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Nov. 9: Underworld don Abu Salem's girlfriend Monica Bedi, facing an extradition trial in Portugal, has written to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam asking for pardon.

Monica has sought cancellation of all criminal proceedings initiated against her by the CBI and asked for a "second chance" in the handwritten letter received by the President's secretariat recently. She has apologised for forging her passport in Hyderabad.

The President's secretariat said the letter had been sent to the home secretary and the foreign secretary.

A similar letter was received by the Prime Minister's Office.

The CBI has said that despite her appeals, it would spare no effort to get her extradited. Monica, who completed her two-year sentence for using forged documents in Portugal on September 17, continues to be in judicial custody pending the extradition case.

The actor has contended that Abu Salem forced her to secure a forged passport and clarified that she had not used it while going out of India or during her stay in Dubai.

Monica said the CBI would question her in connection with the 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts, of which she had no knowledge. "When the blasts took place, I was merely 16 years and was staying in Norway. My association with Salem was very limited and it continued to be like that even when

we were caught in Portugal."

But CBI officials said investigators were more interested in getting Monica to throw light on Salem and his activities. As someone who has been staying with the don, she would be able to offer an insight into his functioning that could help enforcement agencies.

In her letters, Monica said she had made a mistake. "All I require is a second chance," adding that "me and my family is already paying a heavy price for my association with Salem."

The CBI had sought Monica's extradition for obtaining a fake travel document in the name of Sanha Kamal Mallick from Hyderabad. She was caught in Portugal with the passport and detained on 2002, along with Salem and two others.

10 NOV 2004 THE TELEGRAPH

'No Bhutan with Myanmar'

9-08-11 beemich

ARMY DENIES 'OPERATION ALL CLEAR' IN MANIPUR

Press Trust of India
Imphal, November 8

THE ARMY today said there was no joint operation with Myanmar forces to drive out rebels from Manipur, nor was it aware if Myanmar troops had closed their country's border to prevent insurgents from escaping.

Army PRO Maj. S.D. Goswami said security forces had been carrying out counter-insurgency operations in several areas of Manipur and at least 13 militants had been killed, 34 ultras apprehended and 20 weapons recovered since September.

But the Army was unaware whether Myanmar troops had been carrying out a similar operation on their side.

Maj Goswami denied a joint operation with Myanmar to eject insurgents from Manipur. A section of the media were "concocting stories that a Bhutan-like operation against the Ufa some months ago was being carried out in Manipur." He said there was no particular name for the ongoing counter-insurgency operation although some papers had termed it as 'Operation All Clear.'

The officials said reports in a section of the media that Myanmar troops had closed borders to cut off escape routes

"must have been based on assumption following the recent visit of Myanmar leader Than Shwe to New Delhi."

The Army PRO also denied he had ever said 6,000 troops had been deployed in the interior region or 100 rebel camps had been attacked by the Army since Monday last in Manipur. Two Army jawans had lost their lives in the present operation and one lieutenant was injured in a mine blast, he said.

Some senior civil and security officials said that four Army brigades, besides Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF

and other central forces — in addition to state forces like police, Manipur rifles and India Reserve Battalion forces — were engaged in the present counter-insurgency operation.

They said the 44th Mountain Brigade of the Army had been posted at Chakpikarong area near Sajik Tampak in Chandel, about two months ago and following the deployment of the security forces, some militants had escaped to some other interior areas, particularly neighbouring Bishenpur and Churachandpur districts.

There has been no new

development, they said adding that security forces had intensified counter-insurgency operations in Bishenpur and Churachandpur districts.

Following a statement of the separatist United National Liberation Front that the counter-insurgency operation had 'failed' in Manipur, a defence release had earlier said that the UNLF statement was a "propaganda stunt".

The release denied the UNLF claim that several army personnel had died in the ongoing operation and said it was a 'figment' of UNLF's imagination.

Manorama case: Panel to submit report by Nov 12

Press Trust of India
Imphal, November 8

THE COMMISSION of Inquiry enquiring into the circumstances that led to the killing of 30-year old Thangjam Manorama, allegedly by Assam Rifles personnel, would submit its report to the Manipur government within November 12.

Retired judge C. Upendra, who headed the Commission, said it had completed examining witnesses of Assam Rifles, family members of Manorama and others and would submit its report within November 12. The Commission had been set up by the Manipur government following widespread protests

against the killing and alleged rape of Manorama who was arrested by the 17th Assam Rifles personnel on July 10.

Her bullet-riddled body had been recovered the next day from Ngariyan area. A report of the Kolkata-based Central Forensic Laboratory Institute, confirming semen stains on her undergarments, had earlier been placed before the Commission.

An army court of inquiry had been constituted by the Assam Rifles, Assam Rifles sources said.

Sources said the DNA tests of 33 AR personnel had earlier been carried out at the instance of the Army court of inquiry and sent to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory Institute.

9 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pak threat via Dhaka: MoD

'KEEP WATCH ON CHINA, BUT BHUTAN'S A FRIEND'

Jaideep Mazumdar
Kolkata, November 7

BANGLADESH'S REFUSAL to take action against Indian insurgents based there and the growing presence of Pakistan's ISI in that country presents a serious security threat to India.

Large-scale illegal immigration from Bangladesh and crimes along the border are also areas of concern, the Ministry of Defence said in its annual report.

The report, released on Sunday, names Pakistan as the major threat and advises a close watch on China. "China's close defence relationship with, and regular military assistance to, Pakistan, including assistance for the latter's nuclear missile programmes at critical stages", coupled with modernisation of China's military, its build-up in the Tibet Autonomous Region, that country's nuclear and missile arsenals and "its continental and maritime aspirations" also require close observation, it said.

The report also mentions the Maoists' activities in the Terai areas (Nepal) bordering India and links with Left extremists in India as "cause for serious concern".

"The seas surrounding India have been a theatre of superpower rivalry in the past and continue to be a region of heightened activity from, and by, extra-regional navies", the report states, adding that blue water naval capability is urgently required to safeguard India's interests in the North Indian Ocean.

But the "primary and most immediate security concern" continues to be terrorism and fundamentalism nurtured in *madrastas* and training camps aided by Pakistan.

"Pakistan has been the source of infiltration, cross-border terrorism, military adventurism, nuclear and missile posturing and threats", the ministry observes, add-

ing that India's location at the "centre of the arc of extremist activism and terrorism between North Africa and Southeast Asia", Pakistan's propensity to harness terrorists to wage a low-intensity conflict and the prospect of terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction "require India to be particularly on guard".

It accuses "a section of the Pakistani military" of "ingrained adventurism motivated by its obsessive and compulsive hostility" towards India.

The threat faced by India is state-sponsored and cross-border, unlike the non-state nature of threat faced by most other countries. The MoD, while underlining the need

for diplomacy, states that "effective diplomacy" must be backed by "credible military power". India has to maintain a high level of defence preparedness due to all these factors. The report singles out Bhutan for praise. Bhutan's "display of courage and good-neighbourliness" in acting against Indian insurgents based there was "in the interests of mutual security", the Ministry said, observing that — despite periodic coordination efforts with Myanmar — rebels in North-east India continue to operate out of that country.

The ministry notifies four key elements to India's security planning: Indian armed forces must be prepared for the full spectrum of security challenges ranging from terrorism and low-intensity conflicts to conventional war and even the prospect of use of N-weapons. Second, since India is not a member of any military alliance, it has to maintain an independent deterrent capability. Since the country's armed forces have to be engaged in internal security functions, they require a "corresponding force structure and orientation". Fourth, building up India's naval capabilities.

People's help sought to curb infiltration

THE TRIPURA government has for the first time detailed measures to check illegal entry of Bangladeshis into the state. In a memorandum, the government has sought the people's cooperation.

Signed by a senior bureaucrat, the memorandum

sought information from the public to help in the identification and deportation of foreigners. Giving telephone numbers, the memorandum assured the people that information supplied by them would be kept confidential.

HTC, Agartala

8 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Maritime terror curbs

NEW DELHI, Nov. 2. — In what could be one of the toughest anti-terrorist measures, the Union Cabinet is likely to decide tomorrow on new Maritime Security Regulations that would ensure that all cargo sent from Indian ports is checked and cleared. This is part of the International Ship and Port Security or ISPS Code that says that a country — in this case, India — will have to clear as safe all cargo that is going to another country. Similarly, other countries signing the code will have to clear cargo coming into an Indian port. Considering millions of tonnes of cargo are dispatched all over the world every year, this has long been considered one of the biggest security loopholes in India and abroad. As the previous Navy chief, Admiral Madhvendra Singh, had said before retiring, the damage caused by an explosive-laden ship

blowing up just outside Mumbai Harbour is incalculable. Apart from the panic, it would stop trade for days, perhaps weeks. To enforce the regulations, the Cabinet is likely to agree to the amendment of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 and the Indian Ports Act, 1908. With most countries accepting the code and having to clear cargo, including bulk container traffic, a measure of safety is possible. The local agency associated with the shipping ministry, which is pushing through this proposal, will be the agency involved for clearing cargo. This involves having X-Ray machines that can examine bulk-containers and other specialised carriers. These are being imported. As a precautionary measure, the Navy and the Coast Guard want to check all freighters, tankers and container ships coming to India. — Srinjoy Chowdhury

3 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

J. Defence & ...

Plan to cut off terror lifeline

HF-3
27/10

PM for joint action with neighbours

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 26

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh told the country's top military leadership on Tuesday that India favours "joint or co-ordinated action" with neighbouring countries to deny space to anti-India insurgencies.

"We're for cooperation and dialogue with all our neighbours — including joint or coordinated action on the ground — to ensure that no Indian insurgent group finds willing sanctuaries and that the supply and transit routes are totally cut off", Singh said in his address at the Combined Commanders Conference here.

The remarks were made in the background of the crackdown by the Royal Bhutan Army against Ulfa militants operating from Bhutanese territory and New Delhi's persistent efforts to seek the cooperation of Myanmar and Bangladesh in the fight against insurgents from the North-Eastern region.

The PM expressed concern over the activities in the neighbouring countries with striking candour. "We have to remain alert about aberrations, strategic ambitions and geopolitical motivations in their (the neighbouring countries') poli-

cies, which can militate against our security and vital interests", Singh cautioned. "Our first and preferred resort is diplomacy, but our pursuit of peace doesn't imply we'll relax our vigil or compromise on our defence", he said.

Upholding India's decision to exercise the nuclear option, the Prime Minister said, "This has helped remove potentially dangerous ambiguities in the region". He endorsed the policy of minimum nuclear deterrence and no-first-use.

Singh called for the "qualitative upgradation of the manpower base of the armed forces" and reform in the organisational dimensions of the forces. He also reiterated his government's commitment to the modernisation of the defence forces. Finance Minister P. Chidambaram pledged adequate budgetary resources to ensure that the defence needs of the country were not compromised in any manner.

At the same time, he talked about the strain on resources and asked the military leadership to ensure greater efficiency in defence spending. Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh also addressed the commanders.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 OCT 2004

PM for joint action against ultras

Wants Neighbours' Help To Choke Terror Groups

New Delhi: India on Tuesday expressed its readiness to carry out "joint or coordinated action" with its neighbours to ensure that Indian insurgent groups don't find willing sanctuary or sustenance and that their supply and transit routes are totally cut off.

This significant step was mooted by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his first-ever interaction with top commanders of the armed forces where he cautioned that India, in addition to conventional threats, was now facing "newer and non-conventional challenges".

"We are for cooperation and dialogue with all our neighbours, including joint or coordinated action on the ground, to ensure that no Indian insurgent group finds willing sanctuaries and that the supply and transit routes are totally cut off," Singh told the day-long combined commanders conference, where the recent upsurge in militancy was in sharp focus.

The PM's remarks assume importance in the wake of the recent military operation carried out by the Royal Bhutanese Army against ULFA militants and New Delhi's efforts to seek the cooperation of Myanmar and Bangladesh to carry out similar coordinated anti-terrorist drives.

Upholding the country's decision to exercise the nuclear option, the PM said this had helped remove potentially dangerous ambiguities in the region. India, he said, would be guided by "restraint and responsibility" and 'no first use' of nuclear weapons.

Outlining that the multi-layered security scenario facing the country imposed the need to integrate resources and assets, Singh emphasised that the country "will have to enlarge instrumentalities and capacities to respond to these".

In this context, the PM asked the armed forces to rise to the challenges by carrying out broader reforms in all the three services through "qualitative upgradation" of its



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh greets senior air force officials at the combined commander's conference at the defence headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday

manpower base.

Singh called for faster integration of the three services, stressed the need for effective perspective planning so that gaps do not appear in the force structures and for improved career prospects and better career management in the armed forces.

"Reforms also involve cognition of the fact that our navy, air force and army can no longer function in compartments with exclusive chains of command and operational plans," he said.

For the first time, the Prime Minister suggested that as India's armament pur-

chases were large and substantial, the country must leverage this to serve its larger political and diplomatic ends.

Warning that failure to anticipate strategic trends and specific events vital to the country's security interests had forced a heavy price from India in the past, Singh said particular focus has to be made for anticipation of such events.

Besides the PM, the conference was addressed by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, external affairs minister K Natwar Singh, home minister Shivraj Patil and finance minister P Chidambaram. PTI

Rebel influx has declined: Army

By Aarti Tikoo/TNN

Negota (Jammu): The foreign component in Kashmir insurgency is declining sharply ever since ceasefire came into effect and fencing completed along the Line of Control (LoC).

General officer, Commanding 16 Corps, Lt. Gen. Ashok Kapoor, told this to reporters at the Corps Headquarters here on the eve of Infantry Day. Since 1947 October 27 is celebrated as Infantry Day as it was on this day that the first Army contingent of Independent India landed at Srinagar airport to fight back Pakistani tribal invaders. This was after Jammu and Kashmir Maharaja Hari Singh signed the instrument of accession with India on October 26, 1947.

Referring to the current security

situation in the state, Lt. Gen. Kapoor said there were 822 militants in the Jammu region of which 46 to 48% were foreigners. This foreign-local militant ratio in the past used to be 70:30 or 60:40.

The graph of the foreign mercenaries in Jammu region, he claimed, had gone down because of fencing and ceasefire that came into effect along LoC and International Border (IB) on November 26, 2003. Since there was no shelling and crossfire, which used to be cover provided by the Pakistani army for infiltrators, it has enabled the Indian Army to track effectively the movement of militants along LoC and IB and kill them during the course of their infiltration attempts.

Kapoor said the Army had killed 73 militants along LoC and IB and 268 in Counter Terrorist (CT) operations this year. For the corresponding period last year, the Army had killed 157 militants along LoC and IB and 428 in CT operations.

Though he claimed a decline in numbers was an indicator of decline in militancy, the Corps Commander refused to credit Pakistan's changing attitude towards cross-border terrorism. There was not much change in Pakistan's attitude, he said.

"We have reports that 3,000 militants are being trained in camps in Pakistan. The intercepts picked up by us show that they have militant training camps in Nikial, Samani, Barnala, Kahuta, Hot Spring, Sialkot and Zafarval," he argued.

A new internal security agenda

2-Defense & Security

By Harish Khare

HD-10 18/10

NOW THAT the Maharashtra Assembly elections are out of the way, it is up to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to decide whether or not the country needs to have a new Home Minister; but there can be no disagreement that the Government needs to redefine, and if possible, finesse, its internal security agenda. Mere coping with one "crisis" after another will not do.

The task of defining an internal security agenda has become all the more urgent because of neglect on the home front during the last six years, when presumably an Iron Man presided over the Union Home Ministry. These last six years, there was too much reliance on body counts, "operations," and busting of "modules," rather than on analysis and imagination required to bring about reconciliation.

The only exception to this uninspiring record was the "peace process" in Nagaland; this too was botched up by political clumsiness, resulting in the ungainly sight of the Governor of Manipur having to leave post-haste a burning Imphal. Unhelpful neighbours — Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan — remain unhelpful, despite the *deshbhakts* having elevated us to the status of a nuclear power. That status in no way seems to have enhanced our capacity to deal with our internal demons. Nor were the *deshbhakts* able to exorcise the baneful influence the assorted underworld *bhais* exercise long-distance on our police forces.

However the deficiencies of the National Democratic Alliance regime can be no source of comfort. The internal security scene remains marred on account of three fault lines: Kashmir, Northeast and naxalites. Hence the need for political and intellectual clarity.

At the core of the new internal security agenda has to be a recognition of the fundamental proposition that while the Indian state has the obligation to protect itself and its citizens against external challengers and internal disruptionists, this obligation has to be firmly and unambiguously anchored in the democratic sentiment. The state discharges its obligation in the interest of the citizens and there can be no basic conflict between the interests of the state and those of the citizens. The state and the citizens both have a common and convergent stake in the absence of violence, fear and insecurity.

The challenge, then, is twofold: how to enlist civil society against those who believe in deploying violence and terror as an acceptable —

The Indian state's obligation to protect itself and its citizens has to be anchored in the democratic sentiment. There can be no basic conflict between the interests of the state and those of the citizens.

and probably as the only workable — idiom of political protest. The other side of the coin is to develop the capacity, willingness and ingenuity to accommodate dissent and to address disenchantment and anger in this or that group. This means breaking out of the policy stranglehold of coercion. Violence whether by the state or its military, paramilitary or police forces or by the "freedom fighters," *mujahideen*, *jihadis*, secessionists, naxalites, insurgents, etc. generates its own justification, resentment, victims, heroes, medals, decorations, promotions, history, emotions, and sociological consequences.

It is easy to remain stuck in the quagmire of heroic pointlessness of violence; especially when weak political leadership does not have the elbow-room to break out of the familiar liturgy of sins and absolutions. A weak political leadership does not want to provide its opponents any opportunity to brand it as "weak" or "indecisive." And in a weak political set-up, the pronounced preference is for the mediocre but loyal officers to man the rusted bureaucratic tools. These "loyal" officers, in turn, deepen the politician's sense of hesitancy and cowardice.

A new internal security agenda can only begin with an obvious but often neglected proposition: no Central Government can possibly hope to address and cure the domestic sources of unrest and turmoil if it chooses to play favourites between groups of citizens. It has to spread its affection and exercise its sternness equally with all; any hint of exclusion or discrimination would open up a fault-line, which can only be exploited by those who do not wish us well.

The security-bureaucratic tools need to be recharged and revalidated. No government has the luxury of discarding the existing lot of security agencies, whatever the limitations; but the least it can do is to see to it that the key positions are manned by competent officers. The first task then is to begin the process of depoliticisation of appointments and promotions at the senior level — in armed services as well as Central police organisations. Unfortunately, the essence and intention of the Vireet Narain regime imposed by the apex court are already being suborned, if not downrightly abused.

Having put in place deserving officers in leadership slots, the Government should insist that they inculcate a new organisational culture of integrity and professionalism. In particular, the Manmohan Singh Government must set a timetable for itself to free the Army from all internal security duties. Overuse of armed forces for internal duties is already causing regrettable erosion. There is no reason why the Central forces' skills, weapons, doctrine and leadership cannot be upgraded to enable them to perform internal security duties.

Having selected competent leaders, the Government must demand that they put an end to smuggling of arms, weapons and narcotics across the borders. It would mean that the Government be prepared to break the nexus between the smuggler, the gun-runner, the narcotic facilitator and the politician.

If an "honest" Manmohan Singh is not able to accomplish this task, then no other Prime Minister would even want to undertake such a mission. There is a wider dimension. Only when the government and its leaders prove themselves capable to letting the law take its own course against the criminals — irrespective of their political patronage — will they be in a moral position to demand obedience to seemingly draconian laws.

This brings us to the Northeast. The Government has nothing to lose from thinking unconventionally. For instance, the Congress can take the initiative to form a group to review the working of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. It could be a Congress-Left working group or even an all-party panel, which could open up a dialogue with the activist groups. Political parties can help in breaking out of the familiar reliance on failed administrative formats.

As a gesture, even as a bargaining strategy, the AFSPA can be withdrawn and its useful aspects incorporated in a new law while discarding the provisions, which have been abused. The Act has not worked; we can live without it for six months. All our collective legal and political imagination cannot begin and end with one piece of law.

Similarly, can the new Government move away from the political economy of body counts in Jammu

and Kashmir? Without in any way diluting our vigilance and preparedness against vendors of terrorism, let us also find ways of having faith in our democratic pluralism. To begin with, why not involve and entrust the Indian Muslim leadership with the responsibility of bringing about a reconciliation in Kashmir? All these years we have relied on the Track II route, which has only provided gainful employment to retired generals and former diplomats. New interlocutors with new slates and new life experiences are needed. After all, Indian Muslims have the biggest stake in a democratic and secular India and they are ideally suited to address the Islam-centric secessionist sentiment in Kashmir.

The naxalite problem is deemed to be have acquired a pan-Indian dimension; there is evidence of "linking" up of various naxalite groups and the Maoists in Nepal. Here again we have to watch against the policeman's impulsive reaction. Reliance on coercion and the Indian Penal Code has not helped; it is time for a democratic code to come into play. Bent and corrupt police forces have merely helped enlarge the naxalite area of influence.

The Andhra Pradesh experiment in reconciliation with various naxalite groups needs to be genuinely encouraged and blessed as a precursor.

Lastly, we need to recognise the linkage between bad politics and bad security. The onus is on the ruling coalition and its outside supporters. We cannot pursue our electoral calculations at the expense of the abiding national interests. The Congress and the Left Parties in particular need to do a bit of honest introspection on whether they have provided patronage and sanctuaries to those who create vulnerabilities in the entire Northeast.

Since the Congress and the Left have competed with each other for a few parliamentary seats in the border districts, they have abetted unhealthy forces and trends. Now both owe it to themselves and to the country to move away from potential security hazards.

A new Home Minister, armed with a new internal security agenda, and hopefully a new thinking would start the process of blunting the disruptionists while making the Indian democratic project an attractive proposition to the periphery and to the disaffected. Tough decisions are needed. But it must be presumed that neither Manmohan Singh nor Sonia Gandhi, for that matter, would allow themselves to be blackmailed by a few Congressmen, or the allies or the "secularists."

160 weapons in scrap container from Yemen

Press Trust of India
Ludhiana, October 12

A TOTAL of 160 different items of arms and ammunition - including rocket-like objects - were recovered today by Punjab Police from one of the seven scrap containers imported by a steel unit from Yemen, official sources said here.

The sources said Punjab Armed Police experts, who were summoned from Jalandhar, recovered one hand-grenade, two stick-bombs, 24 bottle-bombs packed in four cartons, 21 85-mm medium machine-

guns, 91 mortar shells and 21 rockets after they opened the container. Some of the shells and ammunition appeared to be "misfired" during some war.

Besides them, rusted shells of AK-47 assault rifles were also recovered from the container, the sources said, adding the explosive being recovered in different forms could explode when heated.

It would take about a week's time to scrutinize the scrap in all the seven containers, imported by Bhushan Steel of Chandigarh, from Yemen and were

lying at the Inland Container Depot at the Ludhiana Dry Port. No official of the company was present when the container was opened.

Earlier haul

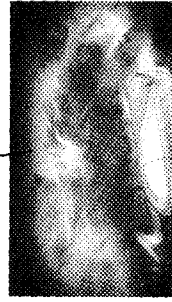
In Rajasthan, about 150 pieces of live ammunition and a large number of empty shells were found during a search at a foundry, in Bagru town of the district, a police official said today.

The ammunition was found at the dumping ground of R.N. Forging, where digging was done yesterday. However, heavy rain disrupted the

operation and they were taken out later, SP (Rural) Anil Palwal said.

Following the recovery of a large number of ammunition from various foundries, owners of two more industries in the Jhokwara industrial area, today

came forward to get their imported scrap searched for explosives, SP Anand Srivastava said. Digging at dumping grounds of three found-



SHELL SHOCK

were yet to be opened and checked, he added.

Mumbai joins in

Adding to the explosives in the scrap saga, a huge cache of explosives was re-

covered at Murbad, in Thane this evening. "Around 25 pieces of explosive were found abandoned on the banks of the Kahu river on the outskirts of Murbad", said District SP Ramrao Pawar. The police are doing a through search operation of this area - especially since it is polling day in Maharashtra tomorrow.

Rajasthan recovery

At least 120 shells of different size and shapes have been recovered from two villages in the Anjar taluka of Kutch district since this

morning. Though shells from war-torn Gulf region reportedly unloaded at Mundra and Kandla ports have played havoc in north India, this is the first time such shells have been recovered within Gujarat's geographical area.

The first discovery of nearly 50 shells was made early this morning from the fields of village Shinai on the Mundra Road. However, all of them except about five, were used empty shells, a police source in Anjar told Hindustan Times late this evening.

The shells were probably

thrown away by some scrap-dealers following the recent blasts and the recovery of live bombs in Ghaziabad and elsewhere, Kutch police sources indicated.

Later in the afternoon, too, 36 shells of different size and shapes were found abandoned in a gunny bag by the side of a road near a temple in village Mitiyana of Anjar taluka.

At another place nearby, 23 shells ranging in length from seven to 20 inches were found abandoned, the Anjar police sources said. Most of them appear to be used shells.

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Pranab's ISI charge may hit diplomacy

12/10
12/10 9-Defence & N. Security
By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

Mumbai: Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee's statement on Saturday that the "ISI is behind that ... They are supporting (militants in



North-East)" has ended the ambiguity in the government's position over the past week as Assam and Nagaland burned in terror attacks.

Mukherjee's was the first blunt statement. Earlier, Union home minister Shivraj Patil had taken a defensive posture on the subject. He refused to either confirm or deny the Pakistan hand.

Mukherjee's forthrightness will also have implications for the diplomacy calculus between India and Pakistan. The fact that the ISI has been active in Bangladesh and with ULFA is no secret and there is ample documentation of their growing influence and activity in that area. The best part of these clandestine operations is the blanket cover of "plausible deniability" that it gives to the Pakistan government.

With the India-Pakistan peace process on in full swing and people-to-people contacts at a peak, the government will find itself trapped in domestic political wrangling if it allows Pakistan to get away with opening another sphere of ter-

rorism. It was probably to address this growing concern within the government that foreign minister Natwar Singh, addressing a group of South Asian journalists, laid stress on Pakistan stopping cross-border terrorism for any meaningful peace process to take fruit. Considering that the UPA government has consciously toned down the rhetoric on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, the statement was imbued with special significance.

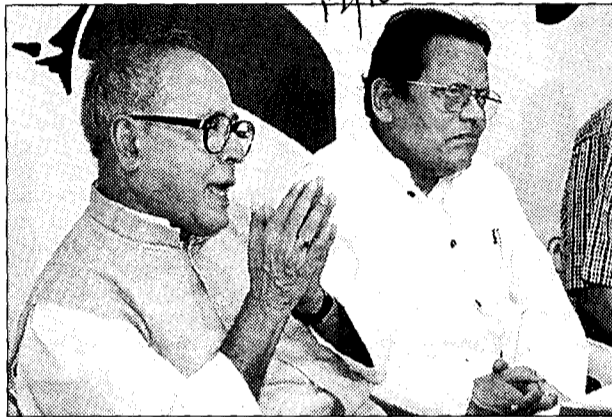
There are indications that Pakistan will be taking the softer line on terrorism in J&K to keep the peace process alive and international pressure at bay. But it has with equal felicity, opened up another terrorism theatre in the North-East to remain true to its promise of "a war with a thousand cuts". Besides, with the ISI tightening its grip on neighbouring Bangladesh, it is becoming a fertile ground for anti-India activities across a long land border, barely policed. It is this reality that the UPA government is currently confronting.

The opposition, which has been sharpening its knives, is likely to cut into the government for ignoring this aspect of Pakistan-sponsored terror. And it is likely that its concern not to leave holes in its armour may lead the government to introduce this particular element into India-Pakistan diplomacy as it nuances its demands to end terrorism to include not merely J&K but all of India.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

12 OCT 2004

Pranab dismisses security threat



SCRAP BOOK: Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee (left) at a press conference in Kolkata on Monday. — PTI

Kolkata
11 OCTOBER

DEFENCE minister Pranab Mukherjee on Monday ruled out any security threat in the wake of recovery of explosives from various parts of the country and urged metal scrap importers to be more vigilant about the contents.

Expressing concern over the discovery of rocket and mortar shells in imported metal scrap, Mr Mukherjee said "all concerned should be more vigilant. Metal scrap importers have to be much more cautious while importing." He was speaking on the sidelines of a book release func-

tion in Kolkata.

He, however, ruled out any possibility of the explosives being dumped on Indian soil and said: "No, I don't think so." Mr Mukherjee also replied in the negative when asked if the detection of huge number of munitions from different places posed a security threat for the country.

Earlier at a press conference, the minister, when asked whether there was a conspiracy behind it, said: "It is very difficult to say. These are being imported as scrap. Those who are supplying the scrap and those who are buying them should see what type of materials are being imported as scrap." — PTI

The Economic Times

12 OCT 2004

Shell-shocked



The shells seized in Siliguri on Monday. — SNS

SILIGURI, Oct. 11. — From Siliguri to Alwar in Rajasthan, mortar shells were seized from across the country today. Siliguri police seized six mortar shells from the banks of the Balason in

Matigara. Five of these were empty. Siliguri ADM in-charge Mr Tripurari said the shells are quite old, some dating back at least 20 years. "We believe criminals had disposed them off on the river banks. We are not under any threat from this incident. The Army has been informed," he said. More war ammunition surfaced across the country. Sixty used 'high-explosive' shells were found in Anjar of Kutch, Gujarat. In Raipur, two live rockets and 15 used shells were found from imported scrap. At Bilhaeri of Bhiwadi industrial area in Rajasthan, 14 pieces of ammunition were found. — SNS& PTI

Another report on page 4

THE STATESMAN

12 OCT 2004

600 more shells found in 4 states

Explosives' seals were inscribed in Russian

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, October 10

IN FRESH recoveries, nearly 600 live and rusted rocket shells and missiles, 1,000 cartridges and other munitions were found abandoned near steel yards and open fields in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat since last evening.

As many as 275 shells and missiles, most of them rusted, were found by a bomb disposal squad from a drain near two steel factories in Secunderabad in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahar district.

District Magistrate Abhishek Singh said that steel companies situated in the area are suspected to have dumped the ammunition into the drain. He said though most of the shells were rusted, they had explosive content.

Over 100 live munitions were recovered from a factory near Jaipur while two drums containing similar material were found abandoned on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway, police said.

Twenty shells were recovered during day-long raids near a factory in Jaipur where 90 mortars and rockets were found last night.

Close to 150 shells and around 1,000 cartridges, mainly empty, were found near a steel yard at Kalamboli in Mumbai.

The explosives appeared to be imported as



SHELL SHOCK

they had seals inscribed in Russian, police said. Fifty used shells were recovered from iron scrap containers at Kandla port in Kutch district but none of these were found to contain any explosive substance.

On Sunday seven rocket shells were found in a drain in the Uttam Nagar area in West Delhi.

The shells were dumped in a specially made pit, which has been covered appropriately to avert any harm, police sources said here.

The entire area has been cordoned off and explosive experts from NSG have been asked to examine.

Meanwhile in Tughlakabad, in inland container depot, a fuse used for detonation of bomb was seized from a truck carrying scrap, as screening of the trucks continued today.

After the Bhushan Steel Company episode in which ten people were killed in metal scraps explosions, the explosives in Bulandshahar were suspected to have been shifted from the two factories elsewhere and in

the night, they were thrown in the drain, Singh said adding the two companies had already been raided by police a week ago.

He said there appeared to be no danger from these ammunition as their explosives content was very little.

In Jaipur, at least 20 live pieces of ammunition and huge empty shells were unearthed during a search operation at the Balaji steel and foundry here today, hours after 90 mortars and rockets were found there last night, a senior police official said.

Tonnes of scrap buried underground probably along with live and empty shells of ammunition pieces were being dug out and searched by the police and the factory workers, SP (North) Anand Srivastava told.

I-G (Jaipur) O. P. Gehlotra, who is supervising the operation at the site, said all other foundries in the area were being asked to thoroughly check their scrap and immediately inform the administration about any recovery of ammunition live or used.

Asked whether Balaji industry was actively engaged in selling the live ammunition outside the foundry, Gehlotra ruled out the possibility saying that the owner "was unknowingly keeping the imported junk underground".

DEFENCE POLICY

Military Machine Needs Major Reorganisation

By VK MADHOK

57-8
11/10

Who is responsible for drafting and issuing India's defence policy? What should be its aims and objectives? What should be India's strategic doctrine? These are issues which have been avoided in the last half century. But the nation can ill-afford to sideline these issues any longer considering that the nation does not have a defence policy.

Any nation's defence policy would be designed to use the instruments of force to enforce national policy objectives which cannot be achieved by diplomacy or economic coercion. Accordingly, the defence policy outlines the aims and objectives which the armed forces would be required to achieve. It gives them direction and time to prepare. Without this directive, ad hoc employment of armed forces can end up in disaster.

Strategic objectives

India has to cope with threats both from Pakistan and China. Its armed forces have to be ready to blunt hostile designs in Kashmir and the northeast, so that Kashmir does not end up as another Vietnam and the northeast does not turn into another Bosnia. The sea lanes in the Arabian Sea have to be kept open and safe for transportation of oil and other trade. The country is heavily dependent on import of oil from the Gulf region and nearly 98 per cent of its trade is by sea. Besides, the country has to have a second strike nuclear capability to withstand the nuclear threat and to ensure that its citizens do not live under constant fear of missile threats. Further, in pursuance of its past resolutions, besides developing a capability to take back its territories from Pakistan and China, there has to be a capability to assist members of SAARC and also to prevent any hostile moves and actions by neighbours which pose threats to India. Finally, to ensure maintenance of law and order and continual governance of the Union when all other forces — civil and police — have failed. Such then are most of the objectives which the defence policy will have to spell out. Only then can the service chiefs be in a position to structure their forces and to train them.

India's defence philosophy needs to be debated in Parlia-

The author is a retired officer of the Indian Army

ment so that the entire nation is aware of it. As regards taking back territories from China, this can only be attempted after PoK is taken back unless of course, the country has compromised and does not wish to pursue this objective.

To achieve all this, a major change in attitude from a compromising and a reactive one to



a pro-active one is a pre-requisite. Besides restructuring of higher defence organisation as well as the Ministry of Defence, the military machine itself would need a major reorganisation. There is much greater need for integration in the services. Logistics, communications and intelligence branches are areas to focus upon.

Communication gap

Besides, why shouldn't the IAF have a space command, integrated with space scientists and the ISRO, to provide support from space to all three services from indigenous satellites in orbit while denying similar access to hostile ones? An integrated missile command would need to be created to destroy incoming hostile missiles as well as to launch those which are necessary to hit targets deep inside Pakistan and China with conventional and nuclear warheads. This would require an overall air defence system, initially under the IAF to ensure anti-missile defence, use of long range anti-aircraft artillery and combat aircraft. And as a long-term measure, India would need a separate Air Defence command for the future.

What about a surprise nuclear attack? No thought has been given to this. It requires construction of an underground opera-

tion and communication networks, coordination with the civil defence organisation and education of citizens. The Army needs to move from a conventional to a hi-tech warfare capability. Much greater attention needs to be paid to India's military leadership right from selection and training to promotion. India's Territorial Army

needs to be revived and the NCC made compulsory for students.

Further, India's defence apparatus has some major cracks. There is a big communication gap between the politician and the soldier. It must be bridged. The defence minister does not get direct advice of the Chiefs of Staff. What he gets is a watered down version through the MoD. There is no formal forum where the CoS can directly interact with the minister as they have been relegated to the position of the many who give such advice. The MoD's primary role which should have been coordination with other ministries has changed.

The defence secretary has become the chief coordinator of three services — in fact, the chief adviser to the defence minister while the MoD has taken on the mantle of a superior headquarters. The service headquarters accordingly acts as subordinate offices whereas they should be equal partners. As such, there is duplication of work and delay, mostly in the name of coordination. The MoD has become a vetting organisation without making any serious contribution.

In the present set-up, service headquarters functions outside the government while the ministry is staffed with generalists who may be from postal, telephone

and other departments without any defence background. Accordingly, there is a need for politicians and the services to interact, the absence of which is a serious lacuna. The question to be considered is whether the service headquarters should be merged with the MoD and a National Defence Council formed with the defence minister as its chairman.

As regards the defence budget, India has no option but to incur high spending on defence to maintain a superior force against Pakistan and a holding force against China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Besides, there is need for cordial and even quasi-alliance type relations with the US and Russia for facilitating technical, military, economic and diplomatic support during the transitional period till India is self-reliant primarily through indigenisation.

Indian dependence

India's security remains, to a large degree, dependent on a successful diplomatic posture towards the Russians and the US and a reasonable "cold war" with China. Pakistan remains a problem in all cases not because of its intrinsic strength but because of foreign powers acting through Pakistan which can have a telling effect on India's vulnerability. In addition, the military establishment must think of new concepts of threats like narcotics, international terrorism, collapse of governments and societies around us as well as within India.

An objective study of India's assets and liabilities vis-a-vis its adversaries will show that, in defence, India has the capacity to ensure the security of its territory. But this potential has not been fully developed. Indigenisation is the key requirement, considering that arms and equipment are the Indian armed force's Achilles' heel. India depends on Russia, Iran and the Middle East for oil. The sea lanes can be interfered with by Pakistan as it has a large number of military personnel serving in Saudi Arabia, Oman and other Arab states who can influence these countries to impede the oil flow. India has not explored the possibility of getting oil from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar. India's major foreign exchange expenditure is on oil, purchase of sophisticated foreign weapons and military hardware.

N-E blasts: Pranab points finger at ISI

Quoting
ISI *10/10*

New Delhi: Stating that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) could be behind the serial blasts in the north-east, India on Saturday said it had asked Bangladesh and Myanmar to take action against militants who had taken shelter in those countries.

"The ISI is behind the violence. It is supporting militants in north-east," defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said of the recent blasts in Assam and Nagaland which claimed over 60 lives.

Home minister Shivraj Patil had on Thursday stopped short of blaming the Pakistani intelligence agency. He had, however, said that it did not mean that India was giving the ISI a clean chit.

Addressing reporters at the Rai University convocation where he received a honorary doctorate, Mukherjee said the Centre had taken up the issue of anti-India militants hiding in Bangladesh and Myanmar with the governments there and sought their support.

"After the action against operational bases of militants in Bhutan, most of them were completely destroyed. But quite a few shifted to Bangladesh," he said, adding that Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had assured the Indian high commissioner of her country's help. "Terrorism has crossed all boundaries, but we can only request for help as we do not believe in hot pursuit," he said. PTI

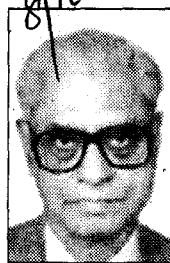


Northeast alert

96-8
INDO-PAKISTAN comprehensive dialogue appears to be set to make progress. There is general satisfaction on the talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and General Pervez Musharraf. There is also an increase in the people to people contact, the latest being the visit of Pakistani journalists to Jammu and Kashmir. The hostile rhetoric between New Delhi and Islamabad has been significantly toned down. It has been claimed that cross border infiltration across the Line of Control has come down. The Indian defence minister attributes this partly to border fencing and better technical methods of surveillance. There is, therefore, a sense of quiet optimism about the future of Indo-Pakistan relations. The traditional wisdom would advise our policy makers and agencies to do their best to build on this positive mood but at the same time to continue our vigil.

While adversaries often do become friends, it does not happen in the short term nor without a wide range of interaction between two societies. Even as we breathe a sigh of relief on the western front, the security situation in the Northeast has deteriorated sharply and the country has seen a large number of casualties to terrorist outrages since the Dhemaji school bomb explosion on Independence Day, when children were deliberately targeted. Simultaneous explosions in Dimapur and Assam and the continuing instability in Manipur have suddenly focussed the entire nation's attention on the Northeast.

A professional intelligence assessor will raise the question whether these two developments in the west and east of India are totally unrelated. For all we know they may be, but the question must be raised and fully explored. Observers of the global terrorism scene are of the view that there are linkages between Al-Qaida activities in Iraq, in Pakistan, in South-



810
Our security system needs serious reform as the recent blasts underline

9-10 National Security
K. SUBRAHMANYAM

east Asia and elsewhere. There is also a well-informed opinion that many jihadis have obtained safe haven in Bangladesh and they are in touch with a number of Indian insurgent organisations operating in the Northeast. At present, the US is on maximum alert and so also Europe against jihadi terrorism. The US is putting all the pressure it can on the Pakistan government to control the jihadis. In such circumstances, would it not be reasonable to expect that the jihadis are driven to encourage their terrorist associates to strike at northeast India?

This scenario may be dismissed as mere speculation by liberals who

ditional security. The old Joint Intelligence Committee has been saddled with other tasks. Further the political leadership is not sensitive to the recommendation that the National Security Council (NSC) should have a fortnightly briefing of overall intelligence assessment covering different areas of national security interest. There is a lackadaisical attitude that if some crisis was anticipated then the security agencies should bring it to the attention of the ministers. If the members of NSC are not willing to be in continuous touch with the security situation in various parts of the country, one cannot expect them to develop the degree of sensitivity needed to

Even as things have improved on the western front, the Northeast has deteriorated sharply. Are these two developments totally unrelated?

want to see no evil, hear no evil or speak no evil. But for professional assessors this has to be analysed and ruled out on the basis of available evidence. Recently, in the US, as a result of recommendations of the 9/11 commission, there is a proposal to decentralise assessments into six centres. The security situations in J&K and the Northeast would justify separate assessment centres with teams of specialists devoting themselves to whole time assessment of the situation. Unfortunately our political leadership, irrespective of the party in power, do not seem to realise the importance of assessment as the crucial management tool for ensuring na-

handle various security crises with the degree of political sophistication and sensitivity expected of them. This is what one saw during the recent Manipur crisis. Nor can they be expected to have a holistic picture of all factors that contribute to the crisis — such as ethnic tensions, illegal immigration, immigration, smuggling and organised crime, political corruption, drug trafficking and extra-territorial covert intervention.

There is, therefore, a need to staff the NSC adequately. I am told that one of the objections raised by those who came into office vowing to improve the NSC is that the present financial crunch does not per-

mit the adequate staffing of the Council. This line reminds one of similar argument put forward against liberalisation and reforms in the early '90s. At that time it was argued that conservation of foreign exchange necessitated strict import controls and the reformers who were in favour of liberalised trade were wrong. Now we know who were wrong. Similarly, if the country does not equip itself with appropriate assessment machinery, on the ground of financial stringency, the price it would pay for not anticipating possible crises and not acting in time will be several magnitudes of the order of expenditure involved in staffing and running a proper NSC. The reformers, if they are not just one dimensional economic reformers should be able to understand this basic principle.

Reform as a state of mind, cannot be restricted to economic and financial aspects only. Reform of security management is as essential as that of economic, political and social management. The country has paid a high price by not being able to take a holistic and coordinated approach to reform. Therefore it is surprising that a government dominated by economic reformers is not able to take a rational and progressive view about reforms in the security structure. If such an approach had been adopted in the earlier years, the Northeast would not be posing the problems it does today and ad hocism would not have ruled the roost.

Bangladesh is to have elections next year and there are parties in that country that are interested in projecting India as an enemy for their electoral advantage. Given the jihadi groups in that country, their linkages with our insurgents and the likely political compulsions arising out of anti-Indian attitudes of political parties, India can neglect equipping itself adequately on security management only at enormous future costs.

Neighbours add to disquiet on eastern front

India Gets Little Help From Bangladesh, Myanmar to Fight Off Separatists

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

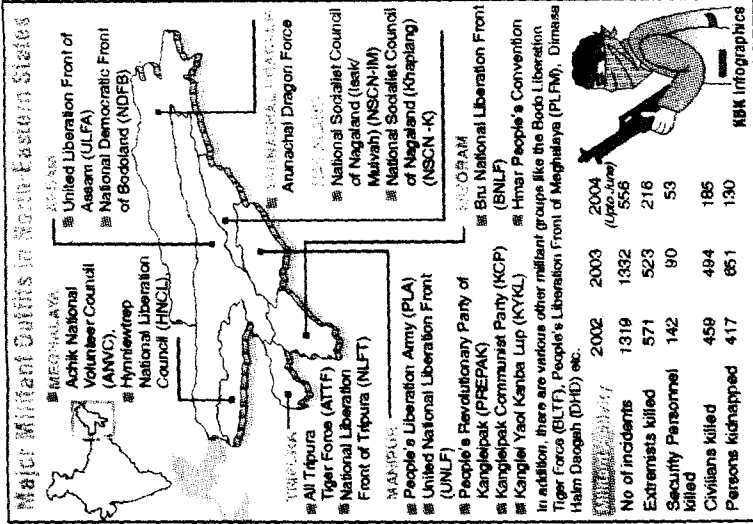
New Delhi: In the wake of the Assam and Nagaland blasts over the weekend India is counting its friends on its eastern borders—and not coming up trumps. It's not surprising that it will take more than mere persuasion to get Bangladesh and Myanmar to do Bhutan-type operations on their soil to flush out Indian militants.

Bangladesh prefers to be in denial about the presence of Indian terrorists despite repeated requests. But Myanmar is a different kettle of fish. After an unusually robust period of good relations between India and Myanmar, there has been a slight coating of frost on the ties.

During the recent BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok, the PM had bilateral meetings with all the other heads of government—except the Myanmar PM. It only added to the well of uneasiness that was created when, in his first press conference, foreign minister Natwar Singh announced that the UPA government would give priority to the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Hypersensitive at the best of times, Yangon did not let this comment pass unnoticed.

PM Manmohan Singh will have an opportunity to make good some of the uneasiness that has unwittingly crept into the Myanmar relationship in recent months when he hosts Prime Minister Gen Khin Nyunt on October 24. It was after extensive diplomacy that India and Myanmar launched joint operations, Operation Golden Bird in 1995 to flush out NSCN-Khaplang militants who had taken refuge there. In a move that smacked of callousness and killed the operations, India announced the Nehru award—to Aung San Suu Kyi.

Myanmar had no reason to smile either when former defence minister George Fernandes raised the bogey of Coco Islands and an "unfriendly" attitude.



Centre to deploy choppers to hunt down militants

New Delhi: Concerned over the sudden upsurge in militant violence in Assam and neighbouring Nagaland, the Centre on Wednesday decided to dispatch nearly 5,000 additional para-military personnel and deploy helicopters to search insurgents as part of its multi-pronged strategy to deal with the situation.



S Patil

Union home minister Shivraj Patil, who paid a two-day visit to Assam and Nagaland to assess the situation after a series of bomb blasts left over 60 people dead, discussed the issue at a high-level meeting attended by army chief N C Vij, Intelligence Bureau director A K Doyal, home secretary Dharendra Singh and senior officials of his ministry. Patil said investigations were on to identify those responsible for the blood-shed. Special secretary Anil Choudhary said as part of the strategy to tackle the situation, the government would strengthen and coordinate intelligence set-up, increase the presence of armed forces and activate the unified headquarters in Assam. He said 20 companies (nearly 2,540 personnel) of para-military forces—both BSF and CRPF—would be despatched to the state in the next few days and more forces would be sent as and when they were relieved from election duty in states like Maharashtra and Arunachal Pradesh. He also informed that the Railway Protection Force and the CISF had been asked to provide security around railway tracks and oil pipelines in the region. PTI

Subsequently, however, India embarked on several years of sustained diplomacy with Myanmar's ruling SPDC. There was never any dilution of India's commitment to democracy, merely a recognition that pragmatic politics wins the day. The vice-chairman of the SPDC, Gen Maung Aye's ground-breaking visit in 2000 was reciprocated by Jaswant Singh's successful forays into Myanmar to build the famous Tamu-Kalemyo-Kalewa road and start border trade with the northeastern states. Years 2002-2003 saw frequent visits by both sides, but it dried up with the advent of the UPA government.

marrese fears, Bangladesh, on the other hand, presents a unique and growing problem. As senior Indian officials grumble, "there's no country in the world that is in such complete denial about militant presence". Not only has Bangladesh refused to entertain any Indian evidence about the presence of Indian militant camps on its soil, there are credible reports that ULFA brass like Anup Chetia and Paresh Barua operate openly from Bangladeshi soil.

Recent comments by Bangla foreign minister Morshed Khan blaming India for the August 21 grenade attack on op-

PM prod to defence purchase

9-
Defence
N. Sec. Min.

5,8

SUJAN DUTTA 6/10

New Delhi, Oct. 5: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today asked the armed forces and the defence ministry to hone processes to fast-track military procurement.

Singh took note of delays and asked the services to prioritise purchases that can be made in the remaining two years of the Tenth Five Year Plan.

The Prime Minister was today briefed in the operations room of the defence ministry by service chiefs and defence ministry officials. The Defence Review Meeting discussed "the entire gamut of security-related issues," an official spokesman said.

Singh asked the ministry to prepare a "draft core plan" to make up for the delay in its Tenth Five Year Plan, a defence ministry spokesman said after the meeting.

The draft core plan was expected to list high-value equipment that were needed to be purchased urgently. A "non-core" section would focus on soft purchases that can be staggered.

The draft core plan would seek to meet five objectives:

- a conventional military ability to deter "misadventure" by an adversary
- a quick response capability in low intensity conflicts
- a capability for protection against weapons of mass destruction
- a security grid for island territories
- a capability to deter third party intervention.

The meeting was held in the ministry and attended by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, defence secretary Ajai Vikram Singh, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee and air force head Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy, army chief General N.C. Vij, vice-chief of the navy Vice-Admiral Yashwant Prasad

and national security adviser J.N. Dixit and special adviser to the Prime Minister M.K. Narayanan.

A standing committee of Parliament had noted that the Planning Commission and the Finance Commission had not yet finalised the five year plan for the armed forces.

The armed forces — chiefly the navy and the air force — have been pointing out repeatedly that force levels were declining and unless decisions on procurements were taken fast, the fighting arms of the services would be in a crisis.

The navy has asked for submarines and surface vessels on an urgent basis and the air force for multi-role fighters to replace ageing MiG-21 fighters that form a bulk of the air defence fleet. Typically, purchases of high-value items take about 10 years before they can be inducted. The services say this is too long a period and have been demanding that major acquisitions be fast-tracked.

Mukherjee told the Prime Minister that he has already issued orders to review the existing procurement policy at the secretary level. A ministerial-level review would be conducted after the secretary's report was submitted.

Mukherjee had earlier pointed out that despite the hike in defence allocations in this year's budget, the ministry was left with little to make new purchases.

Most of the allocation would be taken up in paying for high-value items contracted in previous years, such as the aircraft carrier *Admiral Gorshkov*, the Hawk advanced jet trainers and the Phalcon airborne early warning systems that were contracted last year.

The ministry has projected a shortfall of nearly Rs 7,000 crore and has said it will be hard put to take up new projects.

US help gives Delhi headache

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Oct. 5: US ambassador to India David Mulford has written directly to the Nagaland and Assam chief ministers offering them FBI help to smoke out the culprits behind the weekend blasts.

A similar offer has been made to the Centre in a separate letter to the foreign ministry, but Delhi has not taken the gesture well. There are rumblings that Mulford strayed beyond his brief, not in writing to the states but in offering FBI help as this could be seen as meddling in India's internal affairs.

A red-faced Delhi, slighted by the procedural aberration, issued a statement this evening but took care not to make any reference to the let-

ters written to Nagaland and Assam chief ministers, Neiphiu Rio and Tarun Gogoi.

"The US ambassador in India has made an offer of FBI assistance for investigation of the recent bomb blast that has taken place in Assam and Nagaland, in terms of the ongoing cooperation between our two countries on counter-terrorism.

"The offer will be considered in terms of the existing guidelines of the government of India," the statement said.

US embassy officials confirmed that Mulford had written to the states yesterday, condemning the blasts and expressing sympathy for victims' families. But the letter also said that "if requested", the US was ready to offer the FBI's services to hunt down

the "perpetrators".

South Block officials said it was not unusual for an ambassador to write directly to a chief minister and such letters had been written in the past. But those were to fix up a visit to the state and such like, not to offer FBI help, which could be done only through the foreign ministry.

What could have possibly ruffled the Centre's feathers is the reaction from its Left partners to the offer for FBI help. The dust they raised over the foreign consultants in the Planning Commission advisory bodies has barely settled.

Expectedly, the Left came clear with what they thought. "No external agency should be allowed to interfere in our internal affairs," CPM leader Sitaram Yechury said.

Howls of protest were heard from Assam Opposition parties, too, which suspected America's "nefarious plans" to meddle in India's affairs.

There could also be apprehension in government circles on how the NDA will react. Given that the Congress often jabbed the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime for its "pro-US tilt", Opposition parties could make a noise if Delhi does not talk really tough.

Assam massacre

Ten people were gunned down in Kokrajhar district of Assam, taking the toll in the state since Saturday to 42. Preliminary reports said masked NDFB rebels swooped on the village market in Jalabila around 7 pm and opened indiscriminate fire. (See Page 8)

THE TELEGRAPH
6 OCT 2004

Patil offers truce as Ulfa scoffs

'Unconditional talks with rebels who shun violence'

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, October 4

UNION HOME Minister Shivraj Patil said on Monday that the Centre was keeping its doors open for talks with the Ulfa and NDFB despite the violence unleashed by them.

Ironically, his talks offer coincided with the Ulfa's claim that it had carried out some of the strikes since Saturday in response to the Assam government's call for a ceasefire.

Talking to reporters at the LGBI Airport here after returning from Dimapur, Patil condemned the cowardly acts of violence.

"But we are open to unconditional talks with militants who are willing to shun violence," he said.

The Union Home Minister, however, added a new dimension to the renewed violence in the Northeast by saying that the involvement of external forces could not be ruled out.

'External' in the Northeast context invariably means ISI-backed Islamic extremism conducted out of Bangladesh soil.

Patil further said a "multi-pronged coordinated strategy" was being drawn up to check acts of terrorism in the region.

The Home Minister's talks offer was rebuffed by the Ulfa which claimed it had carried out at least five strikes since Saturday.

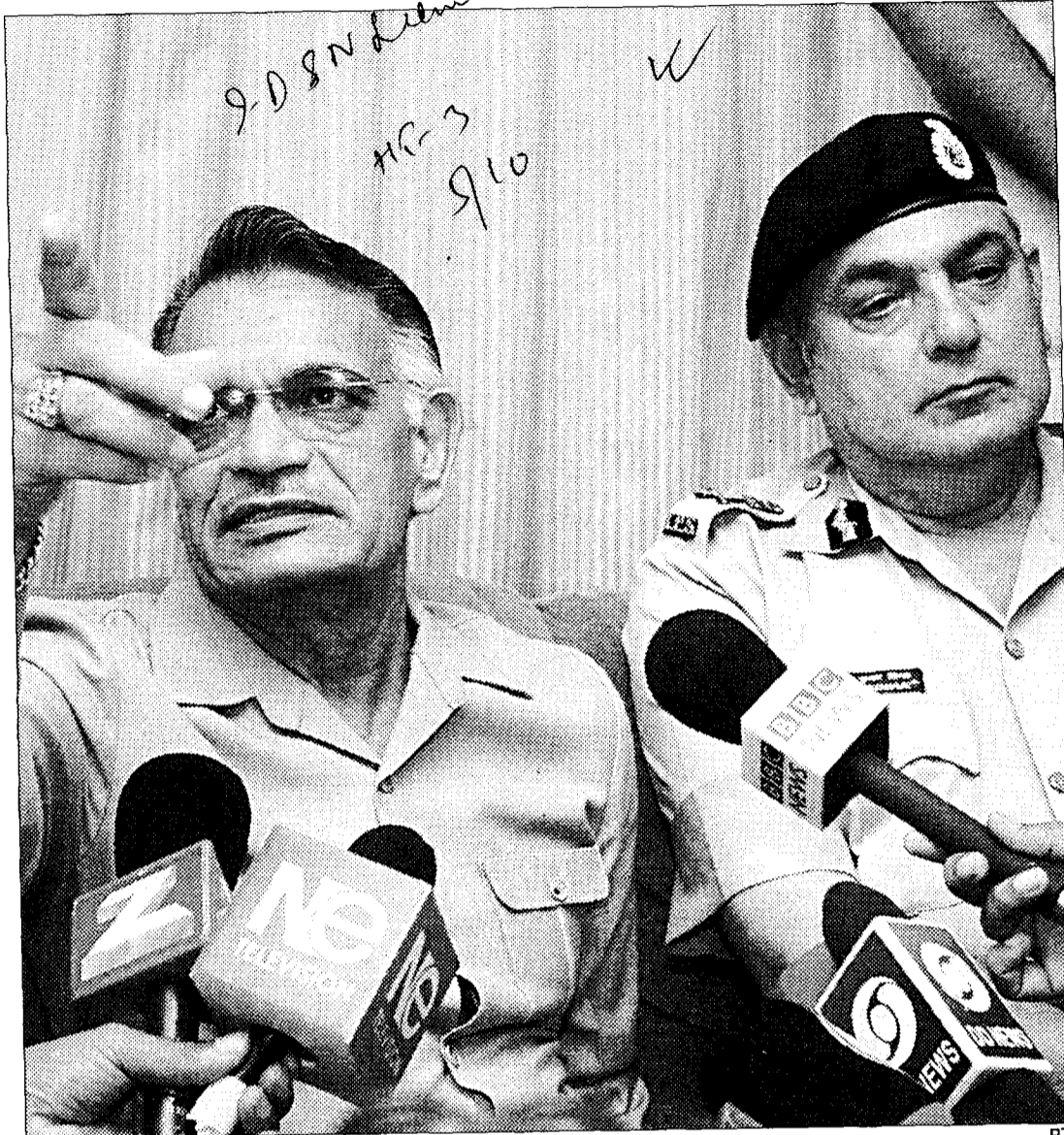
The NDFB has been blamed for the majority of strikes across Assam and Nagaland claiming over 70 lives and injuring nearly 200.

"The explosions are an answer to (Tarun Gogoi's) ceasefire call," said Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Barua, adding it would consider talks only if New Delhi was agreeable to discussing the issue of sovereignty.

Prior to the October 2 multiple strikes, Assam chief minister Gogoi had offered amnesty to Ulfa militants from October 16.

Meanwhile, Assam Governor Ajai Singh said much should not be read into the incidents of violence in the region.

"Normality prevails despite these dastardly attacks, which reveal that the militants are desperate to sustain their subversive designs," he said.



Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil and CRPF D-G J.K. Sinha at a Press meet in Guwahati on Monday.

BLOW by Blow

MILITANCY IN NORTH-EAST: THE ORIGIN

Most North-East outfits have been fighting for secession of states from India, with a few demanding statehood or self-ruled territories. A brief outline of the origin of insurgency in the N-E

- ▶ **A NAGA HOMELAND** was the basis for N-E insurgency, which began from the Naga Hills of undivided Assam in the early-'50s with Phizo forming the Naga National Council. Famine in the Lushai Hills of undivided Assam (now Mizoram) in '66 and New Delhi's nonchalance led to the Mizo National Front seeking secession from India but giving up arms in 1988; the MNF is in power in Mizoram today. Naga militancy returned after the Shillong Accord fiasco in '75; NSCN formed in '80, split in '88 into Isak-Muivah and Khaplang factions; NSCN(I-M) had a ceasefire pact in '97 and the Khaplang group follows suit; talks on for a settlement of Naga homeland issue
- ▶ **MANIPUR** has at least 17 militant outfits; the first was the UNLF formed in '64; most are against Manipur's '49 merger with the Indian union
- ▶ **TRIPURA** militancy has its roots in the political Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti party in '67; later, the issues of militancy became diluted with factionalism
- ▶ **MEGHALAYA'S** militancy began in '92 with the formation of HALC, which split along tribal lines in '96 into HNLC (Khasis) and ANVC (Garos) demanding self-rule; both outfits under ceasefire pact
- ▶ **ASSAM** militancy began in late-'80s with the Ulfa demanding a sovereign Assam; Bodo tribals floated a militant outfit in the early-'90s — a split saw one group (NDFB) demanding an independent Bodoland; the other (BLT, now disbanded) wanted a Bodo state carved out of Assam

PRASANTA DAS

NSCN-IM vows to get Dimapur bombers

Rahul Karmakar
Guwahati, October 4

» NEWS ANALYSIS

THERE HAS always been a pattern to militant violence in the North-east, but the twin blasts in Dimapur that killed 26 persons on Saturday beats logic.

Dimapur has always been an NSCN-IM stronghold. One of the most potent militant forces in the region, the outfit has been on a peace mode since July 1997 following a ceasefire agreement. But the blasts on Saturday took place just a few kilometres from the NSCN-IM ceasefire monitoring cell.

Dimapur has also been a convergence point for members of other outfits in the region, like the Ulfa, National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Dima Halom Daogah (DHD). Who could have the audacity to strike in NSCN-IM territory? Petty criminals were out since they would not dare antagonise a town that sustains them.

The NSCN-IM, given a clean chit by the Nagaland Governor and chief minister, earlier

blamed a non-Naga outfit and its Naga ally for the blasts and announced a reward of Rs 5 lakh for information leading to the capture of the culprits.

The Ulfa has had a strategic alliance with the NSCN (Khaplang) for a toehold in Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar, but there's no obvious reason why it would strike in Dimapur — and risk losing tacit Naga support — when it can opt for more vulnerable towns in Assam.

The region now appears poised for a never-before showdown between the NSCN(I-M) and the "culprit outfit". Said

The jihadi hand

EXPLODING BOMBS at public places had never been a trait with militants in the North-east. But with the jihadi influence on the Ulfa apparent for the past four years, the common man is now their target. Police said the Ulfa satisfied its

Bangladeshi mentors by killing 200 Bihari labourers in 2001. The idea was to "create space" for Bangladeshi immigrant labourers.

Reliance on explosives has increased. "Ulfa's strategy can be attributed to their closeness to Bangladesh-based Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami," said a senior police officer.

HT, Guwahati

NSCN(I-M) deputy *kilonser* (minister) of information Kraibo Chawang: "We're certain

who masterminded the blasts, and we'll get them before the Indian agencies do."

জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি ভাঙতে হবেই

দিল্লি সাহায্য চায় ঢাকা ও ইয়াঙ্গনের

অগ্নি রায় ও অশোক সেনগুপ্ত ● নয়াদিল্লি ও গুয়াহাটি

৪ অক্টোবর: উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের জঙ্গিসমস্যা মোকাবিলায় ভূটানের আদলে এ বার বাংলাদেশ ও মায়ানমারের জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি নির্মূল করার উপরে জোর দিচ্ছে মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার। অবশ্য দুই দেশের রাষ্ট্রপ্রধানদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করে তাঁদের সাহায্যেই ভারত এ কাজে সফল হতে চাইছে।

গোটা উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতে তীব্র আতঙ্ক সৃষ্টি করতেই জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলি যৌথ ভাবে বেপরোয়া আঘাত হানছে বলে অসমের কেন্দ্রীয় গোয়েন্দারা দিল্লিকে রিপোর্ট দিয়েছেন। সত্তর ও আশির দশকের অশান্ত অসমেও কিন্তু অল্প সময়ের মধ্যে এত ব্যাপক জঙ্গিহানার নজির ছিল না। এই পরিস্থিতিতে আজ গুয়াহাটিতে এসে অবিলম্বে অসম ও সংলগ্ন রাজ্যগুলিতে আরও বাহিনী পাঠানোর আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল। সেই সঙ্গে তিনি জানান, কেন্দ্র ও রাজ্যগুলির মধ্যে আরও ভাল সম্বন্ধের জন্য উত্তর-পূর্বের উপক্রম রাজ্যগুলিতে এক জন করে পর্যবেক্ষক মোতায়েন করা হতে পারে। অসমের রাজ্যপাল লেঃ জেনারেল (অবসরপ্রাপ্ত) অজয় সিংহ জঙ্গিদের হুঁশিয়ারি দিয়েছেন, হিংসা বন্ধ না করলে সরকার পুরোপুরি সেনা অভিযানে নামবে।

জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি ভাঙার ব্যাপারে মায়ানমারের স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিবের কাছে ভারতের স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব ধীরেন্দ্র সিংহ একটি প্রস্তাবও পেশ করেছেন। মায়ানমারের মাটিতে জঙ্গিশিবিরের তালিকাও ধীরেন্দ্র সে দেশের সরকারি প্রতিনিধিদের হাতে তুলে দিয়েছেন। ২৪ অক্টোবর মায়ানমারের প্রধানমন্ত্রী ভারতে আসছেন। দু'দেশের মধ্যে শীর্ষ পর্যায়ের বৈঠকে এই ব্যাপারে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত হবে বলে স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে। ইতিমধ্যে বাংলাদেশের উপরেও একই ভাবে চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছে ভারত। ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলন জানুয়ারি মাসের দ্বিতীয় সপ্তাহে হবে। এই সম্মেলনে যাওয়ার আগেই ভারত এ ব্যাপারে বাংলাদেশের কাছ থেকে সুনির্দিষ্ট প্রতিশ্রুতি চায়। বিদেশসচিব পর্যায়ের বাংলাদেশ ও ভারতের মধ্যে নভেম্বর মাসে কথা হবে। সেখানেও এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হবে।

শনিবার সকাল থেকে ৪৮ ঘণ্টায় নাগাল্যান্ডের দুই জায়গায় ও অসমের অন্তত ২০টি স্থানে জঙ্গিরা একের পর এক আঘাত হানায় রাজ্য ও কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার রীতিমতো বিভ্রান্ত হয়ে পড়েছে। এর পরেই কেন্দ্রীয় গোয়েন্দারা এই অঞ্চলের জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির মধ্যে সূক্ষ্ম সম্বন্ধের ব্যাপারে রিপোর্ট পাঠিয়েছেন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রককে। সেই রিপোর্ট অনুসারেই সরকার সুসংহত 'অ্যাকশন প্ল্যান' গ্রহণ করার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। এই সিদ্ধান্ত অনুসারে উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের ৮টি রাজ্যের মধ্যে সম্বন্ধ সাধনের জন্য একজন অফিসারকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হবে। উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চল বিষয়ের ভারপ্রাপ্ত যুগ্মসচিব রাজীব অধবালকে এই দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হতে পারে। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, উত্তরপূর্বাঞ্চলে জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলি এখন একত্রিত হয়ে একটা ছাতার তলায় আসতে সচেষ্ট। পাকিস্তানের আইএসআই এই সংগঠনগুলিকে এক্যবদ্ধ করার কাজে সক্রিয় বলে খবর এসেছে। এই প্রসঙ্গে অসমের আইজি (স্পেশাল ব্রাঞ্চ) খগেন শর্মা বলেন, "আগে জঙ্গিরা সাধারণ মানুষকে আক্রমণের লক্ষ্য করত না। এখন সাধারণ মানুষ, এমনকি স্কুলের নিরীহ ছেলেমেয়েদের 'সফট টার্গেট' করা হচ্ছে।" শিবরাজ পাটিল আজ অসম সফর সেরে ফিরেই দিল্লিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে একান্ত বৈঠকে বসেন। গতকাল তিনি অসমে যাওয়ার আগে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর সঙ্গেও ফোনে কথা বলেছিলেন।

মায়ানমারের স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের প্রতিনিধিদের সঙ্গে আজ শুরু হওয়া বৈঠক চলবে ৭ অক্টোবর পর্যন্ত। প্রথমদিনের বৈঠকের পরে একটি বিবৃতি দিয়ে ভারত জানিয়েছে, "বৈঠকে নিরাপত্তা, মাদক পাচার, আন্তঃসীমান্ত বেআইনি বাণিজ্য, সীমান্ত-প্রহরার মতো বিষয়গুলি নিয়ে আলোচনা হয়েছে। স্থির হয়েছে, জঙ্গি, অস্ত্র ও মাদক পাচারকারীদের মোকাবিলা করতে দু'দেশের মধ্যে সম্বন্ধ জোরদার করা হবে।" স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, আজ মায়ানমারের প্রতিনিধিদের কাছে সে দেশের মাটিতে জঙ্গিশিবিরের একটি অস্বাক্ষরিত তালিকা ধীরেন্দ্র সিংহ তুলে দিয়েছেন। বলা হয়েছে, উত্তর-পূর্বে জঙ্গিরা এক হয়ে কাজ করছে। এ বিষয়ে বিশদ তথ্য স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের কাছে আছে। এর আগেও অভিযোগটি মায়ানমার সরকারের কাছে করেছে ভারত সরকার। বিশেষ সাদা পাওয়া যায়নি। সম্প্রতি ব্যাককে বিমস্টেক সম্মেলনে ভারতের সঙ্গে দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকেও রাজি হয়নি মায়ানমার।

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

প্রথম পাতার পর

২০

স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে আজ ভূটানের মতোই জঙ্গি নির্মূল অভিযানের জন্য মায়ানমারের কাছে প্রস্তাব রাখা হয়েছে। ভূটানের তাড়া খাওয়া জঙ্গিরা আশ্রয় নিচ্ছে মায়ানমার এবং অরুণাচলপ্রদেশ সীমান্তের জেলাগুলিতে (তিরাপ, ছাংলাং-এর মত জেলায়)। আলফার সঙ্গে এন এস সি এন (খাপলাং) গোষ্ঠী একত্রিত হয়ে ভিত তৈরি করছে এই সব এলাকায়। এইসব জেলাগুলিকে ঘিরে রয়েছে গভীর জঙ্গল। এই পথটিকে তারা ব্যবহার করছে অসমে ঢোকার জন্যেও। ভারত মায়ানমারকে অনুরোধ করেছে তাইল্যান্ড সীমান্ত থেকে সেনা প্রত্যাহার করে এনে মণিপুর-অরুণাচল সীমান্তে জঙ্গিঘাঁটিগুলি উচ্ছেদের কাজে লাগাতে।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

5 OCT 2004

Tehelka panel wound up; CBI to probe charges

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, OCT. 4. The Central Government today decided to wind up the Tehelka Commission headed by Justice S.N. Phukan and, instead, ordered a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into all allegations of corruption. The allegations include those against the former Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and others mentioned in the tapes by the Tehelka portal.

The Union Law Minister, H.R. Bhardwaj, announcing the decision at a press conference, said the previous Government had not done anything to investigate the "personalities" shown on the tapes. "We have informed the Commission that we are not interested in its continuance as the matter required to be probed by an independent investigating agency. There is no need for the Commission to submit its report."

Set up soon after the Tehelka portal.

com's expose in March 2001, the erstwhile National Democratic Alliance Government set up the Commission headed by Justice K. Venkataswami, who resigned in November 2002. Thereafter, Mr. Justice Phukan was appointed to continue the probe and the last extension given to the panel ended on Sunday.

The Minister said the CBI would investigate the matter as the NDA Government had "tried to shield" the then Defence Minister, who resigned after the exposure. Asked about the fate of the interim report of the Phukan Commission, which had reportedly given a "clean chit" to Mr. Fernandes, he said the report never talked of any "clean chit" to the then Defence Minister. "The only thing the Commission has done so far is to send the tapes for forensic examination abroad and the report in this regard had said that the tapes were genuine. Once the tapes were found genuine, why would the Commission still inquire about the motive of the journalists who did a great service by bringing to public notice the widespread corruption in defence deals," he asked.

He said: "The then Government had to refer the matter to a Commission as it could not have afforded to move against some powerful people."

Asked whether the present United Progressive Alliance Government had lost confidence in the Commission, he said there was no question of losing confidence but as it was not mandated to interrogate the

"personalities" referred to in the tapes, a decision had been taken to refer the matter to an independent agency.

In an obvious reference to Jaya Jaitly, Mr. Bhardwaj asked: "How could a private person function from the house of the then Defence Minister and talk about defence deals? Why did the NDA Government not probe the misuse of the ministerial bungalow?"

He said it had been the consistent stand of the Congress that "when there is concrete evidence in the tapes about corruption and bribe in defence deals, where is the need for a Commission to probe into it?" The Tehelka expose was a big event in Indian politics and the then Government wanted to "delay" the probe by raising questions about the veracity of the tapes and the motive of journalists in carrying out the sting operation.

Asked whether the CBI would register a case against Mr. Fernandes, he said the Government would give the Tehelka tapes

during the sting operation and decide the course to be adopted. **More reactions: Page 11**

A humbug, says Fernandes

PUNE, OCT. 4. Describing the Centre's decision to scrap the Tehelka Commission as a "humbug," the former Defence Minister, George Fernandes, today said it showed "distrust" in Justice S.N. Phukan.

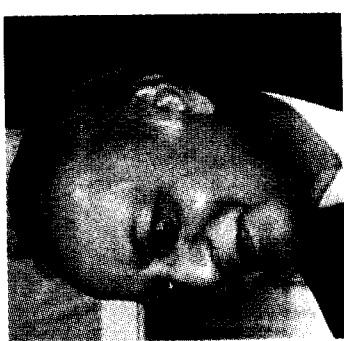
"How can the investigation of a case which was being enquired into by a commission headed by a retired judge be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation," Mr. Fernandes, who resigned in the wake of the Tehelka episode, told reporters here. "If Union Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj has taken the decision not to extend the term of the Tehelka Commission and instead refer the case to the CBI, it is 'bakwas' (humbug) for it tantamounts to showing distrust in Justice Phukan," he said. — PTI



No intimidation: Phukan

NEW DELHI, OCT. 4. Justice S.N. Phukan today said it was the prerogative of the Government to scrap the Commission but made it clear he had not been told about it.

"I have nothing to say at this moment as I have not received any communication nor even a telephone call from the Government about this," he told PTI when asked for his reaction to the Centre's decision to scrap the Commission. "It is a prerogative of the Government to scrap the Commission. They have done it." He said he had never applied for the post of Chairman. On the Government's decision to hand over the probe to the CBI, he said "the agency can register a case provided a cognisable offence is made out."



More explosions rock Assam, state sees 'roots' in Bangladesh and Myanmar

Glare on foreign 'camps'

OUR BUREAU

Oct. 3: Assam woke up to the sound of more explosions after the worst-ever bloodshed in the Northeast in recent times but the Centre refused to be thrown off its policy of talks with insurgent groups.

At least six more people were killed today in fresh strikes in Assam, prompting the state to put the glare back on Bangladesh.

Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi reasserted that the "roots" lie beyond the borders. "The roots are in Bangladesh and Myanmar. These roots have to be uprooted," he said in Guwahati, referring to allegations of camps being run by Indian fugitives across the border.

Over 50 people have been killed in Assam and Nagaland since yesterday in a series of militant strikes.

Keen to shrug off a perception of lethargy while dealing with crises, Union home minister Shivraj Patil today touched down in Assam and visited Nagaland, which was rocked by two explosions yesterday. The home minister, whose handling of the Manipur uprising had drawn criticism, will tour the violence-hit areas of Assam tomorrow.

Assam has been pressing for operations similar to that in Bhutan last December to dismantle the alleged camps in Bangladesh. Security officials pointed out today that the latest round of violence proved that the Bhutan military

operation had not "broken the back" of the militants.

They added that the senseless violence has also raised questions whether Assam outfits like United Liberation Front of Asom and the National Democratic Front of Boroland — prime suspects for the attacks though no evidence has been found yet — will ever reciprocate peace overtures. The onslaught had come barely 48 hours after Gogoi offered to declare a ceasefire if the militants ended hostilities by October 15.

But the Centre remained optimistic — at least in the case of Nagaland, where it is engaged in negotiations with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah). "Talks have paid dividends in Nagaland for the last seven years and this showed that talks are always useful," Patil said.

Patil stressed on increasing coordination between the Centre and the state, as well as among the affected states of the region, on intelligence sharing. He also offered the full support of the Centre to the two states.

The home minister said the authorities were still to establish a link or a pattern in the attack in the two states. "Only the date, place and the way the incidents took place are common. It is too early to jump to any conclusion," he said. The minister's cautious comments came as the NSCN (I-M) blamed a "non-Naga" outfit and its "Naga ally" for the blasts.

■ See Page 7

SUNDAY TREMORS

● 6 dead, over 70 injured in fresh attacks in Assam's Dhubri and Bijni

● Gas pipeline blown up in Upper Assam's Sivasagar

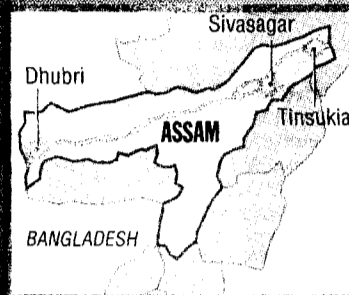
● Blast targets army vehicle in Tinsukia

● NSCN(I-M) blames a "non-Naga" outfit and its "Naga" ally for Dimapur blasts. Announces Rs 5 lakh reward for information on culprits

● Home minister Shivraj Patil touches down in Assam, visits Nagaland

● Assam again raises issue of insurgent camps in Bangladesh and Myanmar

● UN secretary-general Kofi Annan condemns the attacks



Shivraj Patil at Hongkong Market, the site of the second blast at Dimapur. Picture by Eastern Projectors

Bloodbath on Gandhi Jayanti

26 killed in Dimapur explosions

HT Correspondent
Dimapur, October 2

THREE EXPLOSIONS in the space of a minute killed 26 people and injured 87 in the commercial town of Dimapur in Nagaland on Gandhi Jayanti morning. Unofficial sources, however, said the blasts claimed 32 lives in this stronghold of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah).

The first explosion occurred at the railway station — Nagaland's only rail head — and was followed a minute later by two simultaneous blasts at the busy Hong Kong market. Most of the dead were Bengalis and Assamese.

The bomb at the station, planted between the refreshment room and the station manager's office, killed 15 people, strewn torn limbs, charred bits of flesh and smashed-up luggage all over the platform. Most of the dead and injured were passengers waiting for two trains, the New Delhi-bound Brahmaputra Mail and a Jorhat-bound passenger train.

The arms of the platform wall clock, a relatively unscathed witness, stood stuck at 9.29, indicating the probable time of the explosion. The remote-controlled improvised explosive device, which the police said was probably made with RDX, left a crater seven feet in diameter and two feet deep.

The scene at Hong Kong market, where 11 people were killed, was worse with a major portion of the market blown up and several bodies trapped under the rubble.

The security agencies, after a three-hour search with sniffer dogs, found and defused another bomb, which was concealed in a bag at the busy munic-



Rubble and bodies at the Dimapur railway station after a blast killed 15 people there. Militant attacks took 49 lives in Nagaland and Assam on Saturday.

ipal supermarket at around 2.45 pm. The army, Assam Rifles and the Nagaland Armed Police, who have taken over control of the town, have asked civilians to remain indoors to avert more casualties.

The carnage came as a surprise as the two NSCN factions — Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) and Khaplang (NSCN-K) — have been observing a "ceasefire" with New Delhi. No insurgent outfit

has yet claimed responsibility for the mayhem, which has been furiously condemned by the NSCN-IM.

Intelligence agencies suspect the blasts are an attempt to "derail" the NSCN-IM's seven-year-old peace process with the Centre, and could have been carried out by the rival Khaplang faction or the Ulfa, which recently rejected the Assam government's offer of unconditional talks.

NSCN-IM leaders, huddled in a series of meetings after the blasts, condemned the "cowardly act". A senior leader, Benjamin, said the outfit has announced an award of Rs 1 lakh to anyone who helps them nab the "culprits".

Train movements have been stopped in Upper (eastern) Assam till the security agencies give the all-clear.

■ ON PAGE 2
Ulfa turns down Gogoi truce offer

The suspects

NSCN-IM Unlikely to trigger blast at own hub in the midst of peace talks with Delhi, which have progressed a lot in 7 years

NSCN-K This jealous rival of the NSCN-IM may have carried out the blasts (a) to derail the latter's peace talks with Delhi; (b) to show the govt it can't ignore Khaplang and coddle Isak-Muivah; and (c) to undermine NSCN-IM at its stronghold

ULFA May be behind the blasts as it feels that if Delhi seals an accord with NSCN-IM, the Ulfa's position in the region would be weakened. Ulfa has repeatedly rejected govt's olive branches

BODOS NDFB is a master of the remote-controlled IED blast, which has become its hallmark

JEHADIS Nagaland has 250,000 illegal migrants from Bangladesh. The Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam & People's United Liberation Front are active in the region. Both are members of the 9-group Bangladesh Islamic Manch, which is sworn to destabilising the region

Bodo militants strike across Assam, kill 23

HT Correspondent & Agencies
Guwahati, October 2

ASSAM BLED repeatedly on Gandhi Jayanti with the National Democratic Front of Bodoland carrying out attacks across the state, mowing down 23 people and injuring at least 48, mostly Bengali Muslims.

The first of the strikes — which have come a day ahead of the Bodo outfit's 18th "Raising Day" — took place at the Santipur weekly market near Basugaon in the newly created Chirang district under Bodoland Territorial Council. The militants lobbed two hand grenades at 9 pm, killing two persons.

The next two attacks came within minutes of each other at around 5.30 pm. An NDFB team swooped down from the hills on the Makhrijora daily market in Dhubri district's Bilasipara subdivision and began shooting at the crowd. Eleven people died on the spot and 15 were seriously injured.

Almost at the same time, another group of militants were firing from their guns and hurling hand grenades in another market at the oil town of Bongaigaon, headquarters of the Bongaigaon district. When they left, three persons lay dead and 10 were blood-splattered with injuries.

The deadly strikes continued, with a grenade attack killing four at Angarkata in Dhubri and two motocyclists at Abhayapuri. At Diphu in Karbi Anglong district bordering Nagaland, suspected militants fired on a train, killing one CRPF man and injuring ten.

The NDFB carried out several other attacks, too, firing on a truck going from Guwahati to Bihar and injuring three occupants. The militants also exploded a bomb before the gate of the Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited. The security forces killed three Bodo militants, two of them in Udalguri and one near the Bhutan border.

Terrorism by ordinance

By Rajeev Dhavan

NDIA HAS launched another counter-terrorism law by ordinance. Legislation by stealth is not to be tolerated in a parliamentary democracy. Pre-emptive legislation stifles discussion. Indeed one of the Opposition's complaints about the Bharatiya Janata Party's POTO (Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance) of October 21, 2001, was that the ordinance should have awaited parliamentary enactment. The Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was to expire on October 24, 2004.

If repeal was called for, a simple repeal would have been enough. The heavens would not have fallen. After all there was no terrorism legislation from 1995 to 2001 after the demise of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. It was the BJP's strong-arm tactics that created POTO by ordinance and POTA by a forced joint session of Parliament. Typically, another anti-terrorism legislation has been created by cheating democracy.

Enacting anti-terrorism legislation has become a political fashion founded on false premises. Some of the compulsions arise from the United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 of 2001, which mandates all the member-countries of the U.N. to take anti-terrorist measures. But the terrorist threats India faces are not the same as those the U.S. has faced after September 11, 2001.

There is a difference between America's imperial policy and India's national terrorism policy. India's compulsions are not to terrorise its own people but to win them over — in Kashmir, the Northeast and elsewhere. Unlike Pakistan, India does not have to strike postures but has to reconcile its counter-terrorism with democratic ends and win the people's support. However, local politicians want POTA-style provisions to use against opponents and communities they do not like.

The Unlawful Activities Prevention (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 (UA-PO) promulgated on September 21, 2004 takes one important step in the right direction. It seeks to establish India's normal due process of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, in matters of arrest, bail, confessions and burden of proof. Those arrested are to be brought before a magistrate within 24 hours; confessions are no longer admissible before police officers and bail need not be denied for the first three months. The presump-

The Unlawful Activities Prevention (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 is an unsatisfactory half-hearted measure that leaves matters resolved halfway.

tion of innocence leaving the burden of proof on the prosecution has also been restored.

But there are inevitable problems with the definition of 'terrorism.' Definitions have been cast too wide — to convert public order threats into terrorist crimes in ways wholly disproportionate to the activity complained of. The use of explosives, disruption of community life and destruction of property are already punishable offences. To create a new category of terrorist offences which goes beyond this takes us to areas of sedition and waging war which are also offences under Sections 124-A and 121 of the Indian Penal Code. No doubt, there is a difference between 'terrorism against the state' and terrorism 'against the people'.

But a workable definition eludes us. Further, secondary offences of conspiracy and of 'supporting terrorism' are not eliminated in these special legislation. This allows for situations such as the one in which the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader, Vaiko, and others were imprisoned for exercising their civil liberties — even though such an abuse may not occur in the future. The extension of the law to terrorism in foreign territories creates extra-territoriality, plays to an American tune, tries to fulfil the objectives of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and will impact on the law of extradition and refugee protection. For the moment, any initiative should be confined to India alone. These are clearly matters for a Joint Committee of Parliament and not for arbitrary legislation by ordinance.

The ordinance continues the second major thrust of POTA — it targets the financing of terrorism. This draws inspiration from U.N. Resolutions 1373 of 2001 and 1390 of 2002 and traces its Indian origins to the Indian Law Commission's proposals in this regard — echoing British legislation. The procedure evolved is purely administrative. The attachment order of the Investigating Officer is to be confirmed by a Designated Authority (Joint Secretary at the Centre or Secretary-level of-

icers in the States) over a period of 60 days. This decision is subject to appeal within 30 days. Forfeiture can take place only by way of an order of the court after a pre-decisional hearing process. The preventive purpose of denying funds to terrorists can be achieved by attachment without forfeiture. Even attachment must be subjected to prior judicial scrutiny and not mere administrative confirmation. Innocents are attributed intangible connections to be deprived of property on incomplete and intuitive suspicion by unfair procedures, devoid of due process, through doubtful alliances between the police and administration.

Despite some redeeming features, the ordinance is an untidy reproduction of parts of POTA. The power to declare unlawful associations is now continued through the procedure followed in the Act of 1967 to which amendments are being made. In the V.G. Row decision (1952), the Supreme Court struck down earlier versions of this power as being violative of the fundamental right to association. After 1967, most bans have struck first and a tribunal-based due process has followed.

In the Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind case (1995), the Supreme Court struck down the ban. But the tribunal procedure is wayward and unreliable. Bans are imposed for a year. The ban on the Students' Islamic Movement of India expired whilst matters were pending in the Supreme Court. Various High Courts refuse to interfere with the initial ban order. Meanwhile, the tribunal confirms the ban; and by this time, the period is over. The SIMI case followed a policy of ban-first-and-justify-later. Banned organisations are insufficiently organised to fight the ban. The initial ban needs to be subject to judicial review.

It is in the area of telephone tapping that the new Act retreats from severity to ambiguity. Telephone tapping has been carried on for decades by executive fiat. In the PUCL case (1997), the Supreme Court was surprised when I informed it that the list of those whose phones had been tapped allegedly included the Chief Justice of India. The Court felt that

the recourse to the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 was not sufficient and laid down interim guidelines until legislation was passed. POTA 2002 put in place a phone-tapping code that was dangerous. Phone tapping serves the illicit purpose of simply providing information to the government, which it uses as surreptitiously as it acquires it. POTA went further to permit the admissibility of tapped information.

In the Parliament attack case, the Supreme Court missed an opportunity to lay down strict requirements on the admissibility of evidence collected under doubtful circumstances. The UAPO takes us back without resolving important issues by connecting phone-tapping to the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and the new Information Technology Act, 2001. Under UAPO, information collected is now admissible as evidence though it is made available to the accused before trial. This is worse than POTA. The vexed question of making stray information from pre-authorised taps admissible in evidence is yet another area that needs public and parliamentary scrutiny.

UAPO is an unsatisfactory half-hearted measure that leaves matters resolved halfway. Anti-terrorism legislation is not to be passed to blindly implement U.N. resolutions or to respond to American pressure to fall in line with Washington-devised global strategies. The Indian Constitution permits preventive detention and tough criminal laws to deal with terrorism.

Beyond that, apart from vicious use and ruthless abuse, India's anti-terrorism legislation from 1985 have been a colossal failure — violative of democracy, due process, civil liberties and justice. Some States such as Tamil Nadu and those run by the BJP want POTA and threaten to enact State equivalents. But these demands are meant to project the Congress as 'soft' on terrorism, and to empower these States to attain their political ends or harass targeted persons and communities.

The new ordinance is right in seeking to tackle terrorism through ordinary rather than draconian extraordinary measures. But it remains imperfect and vacillating and will result in the targeting of the citizenry and not terrorists. Indian anti-terrorism legislation is notorious for being anti-people. UAPO cannot wholly escape that indictment.

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THE HINDU

1 OCT 2004

মাঝ আকাশে দুরন্ত গতিতে উড়তে উড়তে জ্বালানি ভরা

সৌভ্র চক্রোপাধ্যায় • আগরা

২৫ সেপ্টেম্বর: সতেরো হাজার ফুট উঁচুতে, মাঝআকাশে, প্রতি ঘণ্টায় ৫০০ কিলোমিটার গতিতে চলা বিমান কী কী করতে পারে?

সে জ্বালানিও ভরতে পারে! গল্পো মনে হলোও চোখের সামনে তেমনই দেখছি ভারতীয় বিমানবাহিনীর ইলিউশিন ৭৮ বিমানের ককপিট থেকে। সামনে, মেখের উপরে উড়ছে আর একটা প্রকাস্ত ইলিউশিন ৭৮। ডানার নীচ থেকে তিনটে লম্বা পাইপ বেরিয়ে আছে। সেই পাইপ থেকে জ্বালানি নিল প্রথমে একটি মিরাজ। এবং তার পর এক সঙ্গে দুটি সুখই যুদ্ধবিমান। এতটাই সহজ দেখাচ্ছে যেন কলকাতার কেননও মোড়ে দাঁড়িয়ে মারুতিতে তেল ভরা হল।

আলাপ করুন ভারতীয় বিমানবাহিনীর নবতম সংযোজন, ৭৮ স্কোয়াড্রনের সঙ্গে। বা বলা যাক, বায়ুসেনার 'মাঝ আকাশের পেট্রোপাম্প'। যাদের কাজ, উড়ন্ত যুদ্ধবিমানে জ্বালানি ভরে দেওয়া। যাতে নীচে নেমে, জ্বালানি ভরে, ফের 'টেক অফ'

ফালতু সময় নষ্ট না হয়। এই সুবিধা ভারতের প্রতিবেশীদের মধ্যে কেবল চিনের কাছে মজুত। পাকিস্তান? পরমাণু বোমায় ভারতকে পাল্লা দেওয়ার দাবি করলেও আকাশি পেট্রো-পাম্প এখনও আসেনি পারভজের দেশে।

দেশের ইতিহাসে প্রথম বাঙালি প্রতিবেক্ষামন্ত্রী এখন গ্রন্থ মুখোপাধ্যায়। কবিত্বলীল্য ভাবে, দেশের বিমানবাহিনীর এই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ স্কোয়াড্রনে বাঙালি যোদ্ধাদের উপস্থিতির হারও লক্ষ্যগীয়া। কমান্ডিং অফিসার শৌভিক রায় বললেন, "বিমানগুলি এসেছে উজবেকিস্তান থেকে। আর জ্বালানি ভরার ব্যবস্থা সরবরাহ করেছে ইজরায়েল।" ২০০২ সালের ১৬ ডিসেম্বরে গঠিত এই স্কোয়াড্রনের হাতে বর্তমানে এমন

চারটি বিমান রয়েছে। আরও দুটি বিমান আগামী মাসের মধ্যেই চলে আসবে। মিনিটে দেড় হাজার লিটার জ্বালানি সরবরাহ করা যায়। যুদ্ধবিমানগুলি ৫ থেকে ৮ মিনিট সময় নেয় ট্যাঙ্ক ভরতে। ২০০৩ সালের মে মাস থেকে ইতিমধ্যে ৪৮০০ বার এবং



এই সেই আই এল- ৭৮ বিমান। শনিবার আগরার মহড়ায় - পি টি আই

২৩০০ কিলোমিটার উড়েছে তিনটে ৭০-৮০ ফুট লম্বা পাইপ বিমানগুলি। ২৩৫০ টন জ্বালানি ভরে বেরিয়ে এল। সামনে প্যারাসুটের মতো মুখ। বাতাসের চাপে পাইপগুলি সোজা হয়ে প্রায় ৪৫ ডিগ্রি অ্যাক্সেলে ঝুলছে।

উড়ন্ত অবস্থায় তিন ভাবে জ্বালানি পিছন থেকে আসল ক্রভগামী সুখই, মিরাজগুলি। দেখছি, ট্যাঙ্কারবাহী আই এল ৭৮-এর ডানার নীচ থেকে দিকে জ্বালানি ভরার সুচৌলো মুখ।

এগিয়ে, গুঁজে দিল প্যারাসুটের মধ্যে। স্কোয়াড্রন লিডার অরিন্জিত রায় বললেন, "মুখের ভিতরে লকিং ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে। লক হলে ট্যাঙ্কারবাহী বিমান থেকে সুইচ টিপে জ্বালানি সরবরাহ শুরু হয়। ভরা শেষ হলে যুদ্ধবিমান গতি কমিয়ে দেয়, টানের ফলে লক খুলে যায়। এর পর যে বার মতো চলে যাবে।" কারিগরি বিভাগের দায়িত্বে থাকা অফিসার এ জে অধিকারী জানানেন, "আমাদের প্রশিক্ষণ নিতে হয়েছিল ইজরায়েল ও উজবেকিস্তানে। এখন আমরা রাতেও জ্বালানি ভরার কাজ করতে পারি।"

আপাতত সুখই, মিরাজ এবং জাগুয়ার জ্বালানি ভরতে পারছে। আগামী দিনে মিং ২৯ এবং নৌবাহিনীর সি হ্যারিয়ারকেও এই সুবিধা দেওয়ার চেষ্টা চলছে। সশস্ত্রিত আলস্কা অনুশীলনে যাওয়ার পথে এই সুবিধা ব্যবহার করে নজির গড়েছে কিলোমিটার জায়গার মধ্যে যে ভাবে উড়ল তাতে জুবিন মেটার অর্কেস্ট্রার বেহালা মনে হতে বাধ্য। যুদ্ধের বেলায় এই সংহতি, শক্তি, পেশাদারিত্ব কোথায় দাঁড়াবে সে পরীক্ষা আপাতত তোলা থাকছে। কিন্তু অনুশীলনে ইতিমধ্যেই বিশ্বের নজর কেড়েছে বিমানবাহিনী।

প্রায় এক ঘণ্টা উত্তরপ্রদেশের আকাশে চক্রর মেরে দেখা গেল জ্বালানি ভরার অনুশীলন। বিমানবাহিনীর লোকেরা বলছেন, এর ফলে তাদের শক্তি বহুগুণে বাড়ল। আবার এক সঙ্গে সাতটি বিমান দু'তিন কিলোমিটার জায়গার মধ্যে যে ভাবে উড়ল তাতে জুবিন মেটার অর্কেস্ট্রার বেহালা মনে হতে বাধ্য। যুদ্ধের বেলায় এই সংহতি, শক্তি, পেশাদারিত্ব কোথায় দাঁড়াবে সে পরীক্ষা আপাতত তোলা থাকছে। কিন্তু অনুশীলনে ইতিমধ্যেই বিশ্বের নজর কেড়েছে বিমানবাহিনী।

States may toe Andhra line on Naxal policy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 23

WEST Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand have plans to follow the Andhra Pradesh model on the issue of tackling Naxal menace but want the Centre to help push the development agenda in those states hit by Left-wing extremist violence.

The willingness to engage Left radicals in talks was expressed at the conference between CMs of Naxal-affected states and Home Minister Shivraj Patil in Hyderabad yesterday by Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Jharkhand Chief Minister Arjun Munda and the representative of the West Bengal government.

It is understood that these three governments have already sent feelers to the Naxalite leadership in their states.

With the focus of the conference on development rather than security measures, a number of decisions were taken to address the issue in tribal areas. Munda and Chhattisgarh Home Minister Brij Mohan Aggar-

Initiate talks, Centre is with you: Patil



NEW DELHI: The Centre advised Naxal-hit states to initiate talks and said that whether the extremists drop arms or not is not an issue. Home Minister Shivraj Patil on Thursday said: "If they drop arms, it is too good. But, if they carry arms and still want to talk... We don't have any difficulty. We are not afraid of that

also." "The most important thing is to see that peace is strengthened and dependence on violence is reduced," he added.

Naxals get Andhra govt invite for direct talks

HYDERABAD: The Andhra government on Thursday invited Naxal leaders for unconditional talks here on October 2. "I have sent a letter to the People's War emissary, Varavara Rao, inviting all revolutionary groups for direct talks with the government," state Home Minister K. Jana Reddy said. "We have accepted their (PWG) proposal that the arms issue can be discussed as part of the agenda during the direct talks," Reddy added. —PTI

wal, however, complained of acute Naxalite problem and advocated police action in conjunction with development of their backward areas.

Sources said priority was given to development of road network in Naxal-hit areas through allocation of additional funds from the PM's Gram Sadak Yojana. One specific proposal in this regard is development of the road from Bejwada in Andhra Pradesh to Ranchi

in Jharkhand via Sambalpur in Orissa.

It was also decided that the Centre would take steps to amend the Forest Conservation Act so that tribals would be allowed to build houses and export forest produce from the protected areas. In this connection, the state governments have been asked to send specific points that will be taken up with the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2004

POTA REPACKAGED

9-29-04
HD-12

ON THE FACE of it, the United Progressive Alliance Government has fulfilled its promise of repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). But what it has really done, in a sort of legal sleight of hand, is to smuggle in most of the provisions of the anti-terrorism law through the ruse of an omnibus amendment of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The ordinance amending the Act contains 53 sections; most of them are reproductions of POTA sections. Some of POTA's most controversial provisions, those that raised serious anxiety from a jurisprudential and human rights standpoint, are conspicuously absent in the amending ordinance. So in effect the new law is a less draconian version of POTA. It is worth recalling that the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the UPA Government proclaimed that POTA was "grossly misused" and promised to "repeal it, while [ensuring that] existing laws are enforced strictly." Rather than give the mischievous anti-terrorism law the unlamented burial it deserved, the Centre has repackaged most of its provisions under the guise of an amendment to another law. The explanation that these amendments were required to meet international obligations towards the eradication of terrorism sounds like a lame excuse for going back on a key democratic promise, namely that POTA, in its entirety, would be laid to rest.

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Ordinance, 2004 is a mixed bag. It has omitted some of POTA's contentious provisions, retained some others, and, oddly enough, dispensed with certain safeguards in the old law. The basis for claiming that it is not POTA rests principally on the omission of the provisions in the repealed law that dealt with confessions and bail (Sections 32 and 49). Section 32 made confessions to a senior police officer, under certain conditions, admissible in evidence. This outrageous provision, which does not exist in ordinary criminal law, belongs to a police state. It undermines the very notion of a free trial. It encourages the

24/9

practice of extracting confessions from persons in police custody, which as often as not under South Asian conditions means third degree methods. Under Section 49(7) of POTA, those accused could seek bail only after a year from the date of detention. Although this stringent condition was relaxed last year as a result of the Supreme Court holding that bail could be sought even before the expiry of the one year period, the amending ordinance brings the entire issue of bail for terrorist offences within the ambit of ordinary criminal law. Likewise, the new law does not contain the unduly restrictive provision under which an accused could be kept in detention for up to six months without filing charges.

While such changes are commendable, the amending ordinance does nothing to alter the overly broad definition of what constitutes terrorism, a notorious factor that contributed to the use of POTA against political rivals, grandfathers, children and highly vulnerable tribal folk who would not be cast in the role of terrorists even in a Bollywood pot-boiler. Ironically, a stricter definition of what constituted a terrorist act was contained in POTA's notorious predecessor, the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987. Section 3(1) of TADA made "intent to overawe the Government" an essential ingredient of a terrorist offence. Disturbingly, the amending ordinance retains the POTA provision that made intercepted communication ("wire, electronic or oral") admissible in evidence but omits the detailed procedures, in the nature of safeguards against privacy invasion, that were stipulated for tapping telephones or intercepting e-mails. It was the political realisation that the only use of POTA could be its misuse that led the major constituents of the UPA to make its repeal a major poll plank and, later, a commitment in the CMP. By incorporating so many of POTA's awful provisions into another law, the Congress-led Government has ensured that anxieties over the direction the 'war against terrorism' has taken in the legal realm will remain.

EDUSAT placed in orbit

By T.S. Subramanian

SRIHARIKOTA, SEPT. 20. India once again demonstrated that it is a world leader in space when its Geo-Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F01) raced into the sky from the spaceport at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, at 4.01 p.m. today and put EDUSAT in a perfect orbit 17 minutes later.

This is the third successful flight for the GSLV after the earlier successful flights from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota in April 2001 and May 2003. For the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), this is the 10th successful flight in a row.

The 1,950-kg EDUSAT is the heaviest satellite launched so far by ISRO. EDUSAT is India's first exclusive satellite for educational services.

'Excellent mission'

This is the first operational flight of the GSLV. The previous two GSLV flights were developmental missions. G. Madhavan Nair, Chairman, ISRO, called it an "excellent" mission. "We did not have any hold at all. The entire launch sequence went on as planned. The trajectory was unbelievably good."

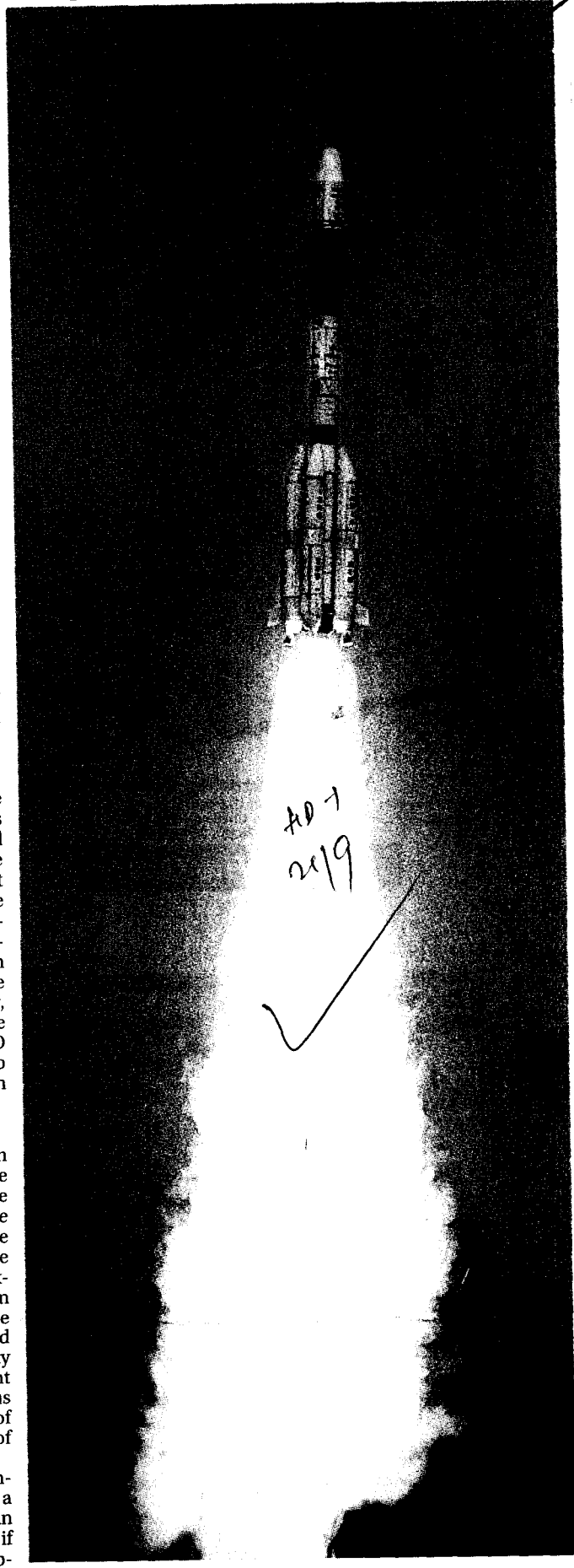
The success was all the more sweeter because heavy rains and thunder clouds threatened to disrupt the launch. There was lightning too. "We thought we should postpone the launch," Mr. Nair said. But using a radar that ISRO had developed and a balloon launch for measuring the height of the cloud and the wind velocity, and thereby redesigning the trajectory of the flight, ISRO decided at 8.30 a.m. today to go ahead. And the countdown proceeded without any hitch.

Spectacular

The GSLV-F01 lifted off on the dot at 4.01 p.m., and the giant vehicle soaring into the sky on top of balls of orange flames. The three stages of the vehicle ignited on schedule and they jettisoned with clockwork precision. Seventeen minutes after the lift-off, the third cryogenic stage injected EDUSAT into orbit at a velocity of 37,000 km an hour. It went into a perfect geo-synchronous transfer orbit with an apogee of 35,985 km and a perigee of 180.54 km.

EDUSAT would revolutionise distance education. From a television studio, a teacher can teach any subject, and if schools/colleges have reception facilities, they can simultaneously listen to him.

Editorial on Page 10;
A fantastic teamwork:
Page 12



SOARING SUCCESS: The GSLV on its flawless flight after liftoff from the SHAR range on Monday.
— Photo: Vino John

আডিন্যাঙ্গে বাতিল পোটা

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ১৭ সেপ্টেম্বর— কালা কানুন 'পোটা' প্রত্যাহার করতে দু-এক দিনের মধ্যে আডিন্যাঙ্গে জারি করা হচ্ছে। পোটা তুলে নেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত আজ কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভায় চূড়ান্ত করা হয়েছে। আসছে প্রিভেনশন অফ টেররিজম (রিপিল) আডিন্যাঙ্গে। এ ছাড়াও জঙ্গি তৎপরতা রুখতে আনলফুল অ্যান্টিভিটিজ (প্রিভেনশন) অ্যাক্ট ১৯৬৭ নামে আরও একটি আডিন্যাঙ্গে জারি হবে। এর পর পোটায় জারি-হওয়া সব মামলা সম্পর্কে পুনর্বিবেচনা কমিটির রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। তবে এ আইনে ইতিমধ্যেই শাস্তি হয়ে গেলে তা বদলাবে না। পোটা কার্যকর হয়েছিল ২০০২ সালের ২৮ মার্চ। আইনটির মেয়াদ চলতি বছরের ২৩ অক্টোবর পর্যন্ত। তথ্যমন্ত্রী জয়পাল রেড্ডি বলেন, ইউ পি এ-র সব দল প্রথম দিন থেকেই পোটার বিরোধী। তবে জঙ্গি দমনে বিন্দুমাত্র নরম হবে না সরকার। গত দু'বছরে পোটা অপব্যবহারের বহু অভিযোগ আছে। মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের অভিযোগও আছে। মহারাষ্ট্রের নির্বাচনের মুখে সরকারের এই সিদ্ধান্তে কি নির্বাচন কমিশনের সায় আছে? এ প্রশ্নের জবাবে সরকার জানিয়েছে, সিদ্ধান্তটি নেওয়া হয় দু'বছর আগেই। ইউ পি এ সরকারের ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচিতে এর উল্লেখ আছে। পোটায় ধৃত ব্যক্তির পুলিশের সামনে যে-বিবৃতি দেন, আদালতে তা প্রমাণ হিসেবে ব্যবহৃত হয়। পোটায় ধৃত ব্যক্তিদের প্রমাণ করতে হয় তাঁরা নিরপরাধ। এ-সব এবার উঠে যাচ্ছে।

AAJKAL

19 SEP 2004

Cabinet approval for repeal of POTA

● Three per cent rise in D.A. for Central staff

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17. More than six months after being in office, the Central Government today announced a flurry of policy decisions, all intended to firmly align the United Progressive Alliance Government with the letter and spirit of the Common Minimum Programme. The centre-piece of today's "policy blitzkrieg" is the end of the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) regime.

Relief for pensioners

A number of social initiatives and economic decisions were also finalised. These include a three per cent increase in Dearness Allowance for Central Government servants and a similar relief for pensioners. Also, the Cabinet gave its approval for setting up a national commission to suggest measures to promote enterprises in the unorganised sector.

Later in the day, the leader-

ship "core group" — consisting of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Human Resource Development Minister, Arjun Singh and the political secretary to the Congress president, Ahmed Patel — met at the Prime Minister's residence. The "core group" expressed satisfaction with the content — and more important — with the style of announcements.

According to a decision-maker, "if we can borrow the cricket terminology, today the Prime Minister was like a mature batsman who takes the guard a second time, after scoring a half-century, before settling down to move on to the century." Today's blitzkrieg is being attributed, by knowledgeable sources, to the Prime Minister's intense personal initiative.

Not only did the Government

act decisively, but it also saw to it that it appeared to be acting decisively. For the first time, three Cabinet Ministers were out there simultaneously briefing the media. While the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, detailed the reasons and the rationale for the changes in the POTA regime, the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, and the Information and Broadcasting Minister, S. Jaipal Reddy, held a full-fledged press conference to announce the other Cabinet decisions.

After today's decision-making exercise, the Prime Minister can be said to have found his rhythm.

Another round later

Today's decisions are being described as only a partial unveiling of the Government's policy initiatives. Another round of decisions is scheduled for the Cabinet meeting on September 29.

Other decisions: Page 11

Promise on POTA fulfilled, says Shivraj Patil

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17. "The promise made by the United Progressive Alliance is thus fulfilled," the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, said after announcing the Union Cabinet's approval to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The Congress and its allies, he said, were opposed to four provisions under POTA.

First, confession was made an admissible evidence in the court; second, bail provisions were very stringent; third, anyone sheltering a terrorist, including blood relatives and spouses, could be imprisoned for three years and "the most important of them" was that the onus was on the accused to prove himself innocent.

The last provision violated the basic tenet of criminal jurisprudence in which the onus of proof was on the prosecution.

"These provisions made POTA a draconian law. It was being opposed for these reasons," he said.

Mr. Patil declined to set any time frame for the promulgation of the two Ordinances —

repeal of POTA and amending the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act — because many formalities had to be completed.

A senior Union Home Ministry official said 217 cases registered under POTA were being investigated and the courts were trying 116 cases.

He did not think that the repeal of POTA would result in

meeting between the Centre and States on naxalism in Hyderabad, Mr. Patil said "we would like to hear what is happening in the States and get to know what they would like to do."

Termining the Andhra Pradesh Government's initiation of a dialogue with the People's War Group as a "good idea to talk to them with sympathy and con-

High expectations

Speaking on next week's

sideration," he cautioned against heightened expectations to resolve a complex problem.

'Not simple'

"They are our children. They are angry and we have to show them the right path with affection. We have the forces to deal with violence but that is not the

only approach. The way is not simple, there are many intricacies."

Setting the "record straight" on the Manipur problem, Mr. Patil said he could not spend much time with the representatives of the Apumba Lup, the umbrella body of 32 organisations agitating for the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Manipur, because many other delegations were waiting to discuss the situation with him during his first visit to Imphal.

"I have so far not contradicted news reports describing the talks with them as a failure. Now I want to tell you. There were no talks as such. They were bright boys and the discussion was very good. We may not have agreed but that is not objectionable."

"The only thing we are saying is that there is an elected government in Manipur. The correct course would be to first meet the Chief Minister and then they can meet us. After all they are our boys but we cannot take over the State Government's responsibility," he observed.

Vote bank politics at work: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 17. The decision to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was guided by "vote bank politics" and the United Progressive Alliance Government was "compromising" on internal security, the Bharatiya Janata Party said today.

"It is unfortunate that a law necessary for internal security has been repealed due to vote bank politics and the Government was compromising," the party general secretary, Arun Jaitley, said.

The law was required to tackle the menace of terrorism the country has been facing for over two decades and also a requirement after a United Nations resolution. Even now, several States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka had laws to tackle organised crime, with provisions as stringent as those in POTA.

Special features

Mr. Jaitley said there were special features, essential for every anti-terrorism law, in POTA. These include the definition of the word "terrorism";

making funding of terrorist activities an offence; provision for confiscating money and assets earned as profits of terrorism; provision to intercept communication between terrorists; ban on terrorist organisations; treating admission/confessions made by persons accused of terrorism as admissible evidence; stringent provisions for bail; protection of witnesses; and constitution of special courts to try terrorist offences.

Alternative law

Asked about the alternative the State.

legislation the Government was planning to bring in to replace POTA, Mr. Jaitley said it was not clear whether the features listed above would figure in the amended Unlawful Activities Act and so the party would comment only after perusing it.

To a question whether the BJP planned to take it up with the Election Commission since the Government's decision had been announced ahead of the Maharashtra elections, Mr. Jaitley said the BJP would bring this before the people of the State.

Cabinet panel discusses naxalite issue

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By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15. On a day when the Central Government received information on the expanding sphere of naxalite activity, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) discussed various aspects of the naxalite problem and the stand to be taken by the Centre at a conference of the Chief Ministers of naxalite-affected States on September 21.

Today, the Centre received information on posters cropping up at Jhulaghat, a town in the hill State of Uttaranchal bordering an area of Nepal that has a large number of Maoists. The posters warn India against militarily assisting Nepal.

First mass campaign

So far, the Maoists have been making sporadic contact with the population but this marks the first attempt at a mass campaign.

"Although India is our friend, if the Indian Government persists in assisting the Nepal Gov-

ernment in its fight against us, we will spread the armed struggle to India," warned the posters pasted in the town on Sunday night.

However, Uttaranchal is not among the States that have been invited to the Centre-State meeting next week.

A nascent problem

The problem is still considered nascent though several persons have been arrested by the State police for allegedly supplying logistics to naxalites who are said to be holed up in the jungles.

Police also claim to have conducted raids and seized caches of detonators and AK-47 rifles.

In the lower reaches of Uttaranchal, activists of the Maoist Communist Centre are said to be active. Nepal's Maoist cadre have been visiting the far-flung reaches of Pithoragarh district after avoiding intelligence personnel posted on the bridges linking Nepal with India by constructing makeshift bridges across the Kali River. The river

acts as the border between the two countries.

Parallel governments

The Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh will attend the September 21 meeting being convened by the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil. In many parts of these States, the naxalites have set up parallel governments and several areas are out of bounds for the police and the administration.

"We discussed the approach to be taken at the CMs' conference to deal with naxalite movement and left wing extremism," said the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, after emerging from the CCS meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh.

Mr. Mukherjee said there was unanimity over not viewing the problem mono-dimensionally. The enforcement of law and order must be accompanied by a comprehensive development of the areas affected, especially the tribal regions.

POTA politics

Keep the law, keep peace

The decision at the BJP chief ministers' conference that the party-ruled states — MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Goa, Jharkhand — should enact versions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, was arguably inevitable. The Congress-led UPA allowed score-settling politics to rule over common sense in deciding to repeal POTA instead of improving the Act. The BJP now feels its political honour is at stake and it must apply "correctives" to match its authority. So, we will have some states with POTA-like laws and the Centre won't. But also dangerously, POTA's strict penalties for funding terror, may therefore apply only in a handful of places in India. Those funding terrorism will need to make sure they're not in one of the states that have POTA-like laws — a situation gift-wrapped for terrorists.

UP's governor, along with those of a number of other states was changed, another hasty score-settling by the ruling coalition. The Congress's appointees in Raj Bhawans are certainly not going to be benignly indifferent to BJP state governments' efforts to create second generation POTAs. Any real or perceived non-cooperation from governors will increase political bitterness exponentially. Indeed, it would be an extraordinary travesty of the Indian state's commitment to combat terrorism were chief ministers, governors and, by extension, the Congress and BJP in Delhi engaged in a prolonged our law versus your law battle. Thankfully, we have in APJ Abdul Kalam a President who wouldn't allow party politics past the doors of Rashtrapati Bhawan. But that won't preclude a situation where the President is called upon to take a decision on a state government law. President Kalam can apply his mind in the best interests of the country but the problem will be that whatever decision he takes will be perceived as going against one of other of the two major political formations. None of these dangerous possibilities would have been relevant had the UPA decided to keep POTA and amend it. There's still time for the government to change tack — the repeal is slated for Parliament's winter session. A somersault is worth it if it stops convulsions.

THE STATESMAN

15 SEP 2004

BJP-ruled States asked to prepare law on terrorism

By Neena Vyas

Sinha 10-1-1999

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 12. The Chief Ministers of the Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled States have been asked to prepare legislation to deal with terrorism to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in the event of the repeal of the Central law.

Dealing firmly with terrorism was one of the planks of the party's new "nationalist" ideology, the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, told reporters at the end of the two-day conclave of the Chief Ministers.

The leadership told the Chief Ministers to continue to oppose the new school textbooks being planned by the United Progressive Alliance Government.

The "Left was pushing its ideology through red guards and the Chief Ministers should oppose the new textbooks being prepared by the UPA Government."

The Chief Ministers should push a population policy based on a two-child norm "for all sec-

tions of the population," the party said. It favoured a policy based on "incentives and disincentives," but details were not spelt out.

Mr. Naidu said the party wanted to send out the message that while the UPA Government and its supporting parties were "politicking," the BJP was serious about getting down to the business of "good governance."

Task force

Several decisions taken today flow from the party's wish to ensure "good governance" in States ruled by it. If the UPA had set up a committee to oversee implementation of its Common Minimum Programme, the BJP announced a five-member task force to be headed by the former External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, to ensure that its States had a plan to fulfil their election promises.

This task force would regularly meet the Chief Ministers, keep in mind the points made by business representatives on

possible investment opportunities in the States, identify issues that could be taken up by the Centre, and cull out the "best practices" in each State to be emulated by others. This task force would report directly to Mr. Naidu.

Besides Mr. Sinha, other members of the committee will be Arun Jaitley, Arun Shourie, Vijai Kapoor and Sudheendra Kulkarni.

It was decided that the Chief Ministers would submit a joint memorandum to the Finance Commission, which is to give its report by December this year, to raise the States' share of fund from the current 29.5 per cent to 40 per cent.

Self-help groups

The party wanted self-help groups to be set up in every village and it had asked the Chief Ministers to focus on literacy and health and strengthening of the panchayat system.

'Prepare for greater responsibility': Page 11

RDX haul in Punjab

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Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, Sept. 6. — The Punjab police has recovered a huge cache of arms, including 15 kg RDX, following the arrest of three terrorists and two suspected Pakistan nationals hiding in the Pathankot area.

According to police, the five terrorists had brought arms, ammunition and explosives to the Pathankot area through the Jammu and Kashmir border.

Backed by the ISI, they had been planning bomb blasts and shootings in Punjab to revive terrorism in the state, police said.

On a tip-off from Intelligence agencies on 3 September, the Gurdaspur SSP, Mr Narinder Bhargav, ordered special vigil on the Pathankot-Madhampur road. Last night, a team led by Pathankot SP Mr Manminder Singh, intercepted a Tata Sierra that did not bear any number plate on the T-point on the Defence Road on the Jammu-Pathankot highway.

The driver, on seeing the police, tried to drive through the *nakabandi*, but failed. However, after the vehicle was stopped, the occupants tried to flee in different directions, firing on the police party. But after a short exchange of fire they were arrested.

The arrested include Saroop Singh, a resident of Jalandhar district and a member of Khalistan Commando Force (Panjwar).

He was also closely associated with KCF terrorist Ranjit Singh, alias Neeta. Saroop Singh's brother Nirmal Singh, alias Nimma, and Rashpal Singh, a resident of the Adampur area in Jalandhar, were the other two terrorists arrested. Two more persons arrested were suspected to be residents of Pakistan. They, however, identified themselves as Rattan Singh and Avtar Singh and claimed to be residents of Uttar Pradesh.

The arms and ammunition seized were found buried along the Madhopur-Pathankot road on information provided by the arrested terrorists. During preliminary interrogation, the terrorists disclosed that they were trying to procure maps of Army and BSF locations in and around Pathankot. The suspected Pakistan nationals admitted that hardcore terrorist Ranjit Singh had sent them to Saroop Singh in Punjab to revive terrorism in the state, the IG said.

The interrogation of the arrested terrorists had also revealed certain startling facts regarding the involvement of certain non-resident Indians in the move to revive terrorism, police said.

THE STATESMAN

SEP 2004

Nuclear deterrence in place: Pranab

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 5. The Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, today asserted that the country had credible nuclear deterrence in place and said specialised forces were being raised to tackle the nuclear threat in all its dimensions.

"Whatever is needed to safeguard the country and to ensure effective deterrence, in line with our nuclear doctrine of 'no first use' has been done," Mr. Mukherjee said in an interview to PTI here.

Maintaining that the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) had a definite time-frame on test-firing of the intermediate range 3000-km surface-to-surface ballistic missile Agni-III, he said India was committed to 'no first use' of nuclear weapons and non-use of these weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.

'Specialised troops'

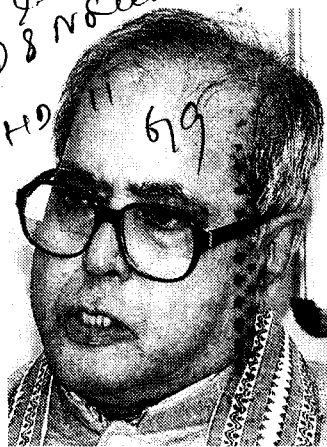
Asked if safeguards had been taken against selective nuclear strikes on forces and on civilians, Mr. Mukherjee said "we are raising specialised troops to tackle such threats".

He ruled out any scaling down of forces from the world's highest battlefield, Siachen Glacier, and from Jammu and Kashmir.

Infiltration

On infiltration from across the Line of Control (LoC), Mr. Mukherjee said figures available indicated that it had gone up in June-July.

"There has been substantial increase in attempts (by militants) to cross the LoC, but we have frustrated most of them.



The fencing along the LoC is proving quite effective," he said.

Ties with U.S.

Ruling out perceptions that there had been any de-escalation in the military-level ties with the United States after the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government assumed power, the Defence Minister said mutual interaction was continuing at the "same level" with Washington offering fast-track sale of some of the weapons platform, including anti-submarine P3C plus Orions for the Indian Navy.

Mr. Mukherjee said the U.S. Government had cleared the installation of missile deflector shields in the Boeing 737 aircraft to be acquired for the exclusive use of VVIPs, including the Prime Minister.

Regarding the situation in Manipur, Mr. Mukherjee said a bill to retain the regional character of the Assam Rifles would be revived soon. — PTI

6 SEP 2004

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POTA court dismisses withdrawal application

By K.T. Sangameswaran

CHENNAI, SEPT. 3. The POTA special court today dismissed a prosecution application seeking to withdraw the case against the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam general secretary, Vaiko, and eight other accused.

"The order of the POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act) review committee is destitute of any valid material except the speech delivered by the accused at the public meeting (at Tirumangalam near Madurai) on June 29, 2002. Hence this court does not accept the same", L. Rajendran, judge of the special court at Poonamallee, near here, said in his order on the application filed under Section 321 Cr.P.C.

The court found that the review committee order was "premature and arbitrary".

Soon after the court order was passed, G. Devadoss, defence counsel, said further course of action would be decided after discussions.

'Conclusions untenable'

The judge said the reasons assigned by the Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) to seek consent for withdrawing the case were based only on the April 8, 2004 committee order. The panel had "prematurely concluded the issue without having any opportunity to analyse the complete material relied upon by the prosecution as available before this court.

The trial was in progress and evidence had not been concluded. "That being the plight, the conclusions arrived at by the review committee about the absence of intention on the part of the accused are untenable".

The SPP had not submitted independent convincing rea-

sons warranting the trial court to grant consent to withdraw the prosecution. The reasons assigned by the prosecution in the application were "totally unsustainable in the light of the order passed by the review committee on POTA, while this

court considers the same with the material placed by the investigating agency before this court".

The grant of permission to withdraw the prosecution would not subserve the administration of justice and the public interest.

It was a well settled proposition of law that continuation of the proceedings to their logical end was the rule and withdrawal of a case was an exception, which could be resorted to only sparingly. Appreciation of evidence was a question of fact and the intention of the accused was a rule of evidence. Such appreciation was available only to the trial court to find out the intention of the accused, after the completion of evidence placed before the court, the judge said.

In the application, the SPP cited the ban imposed on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the prosecution case against the accused, including the "clandestine visits" to Sri Lanka by Mr. Vaiko, his reiteration of support to the LTTE at the Tirumangalam public meeting, the filing of the charge

sheet against the accused and the review committee's finding that there was no prima facie case against them.

The SPP submitted that the trial court, after appreciating the material placed before it, concluded that there existed a prima facie case against the accused and it proceeded further. He said nine witnesses turned hostile. The criminal intention on the part of Mr. Vaiko and three others to speak in support of the LTTE was doubtful as found by the review committee.

The SPP sought the court's consent to withdraw the prosecution in the light of the review committee's order.

Apex court may be moved

As the POTA-related case is already before the Supreme Court and as all proceedings before the special court were stayed, the rejection of the special prosecutor's petition is expected to be raised in the apex court.

It may be challenged either in the Supreme Court itself or, if it is so directs, in the Madras High Court.



The MDMK leader, Vaiko, who is on a renaissance walk.

We knew the outcome: Vaiko

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, SEPT. 3. "What we anticipated has happened. We knew the outcome even when the special prosecutor filed his petition. It was only to mislead the Supreme Court that the Tamil Nadu Government filed this petition," the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam general secretary, Vaiko, said today over telephone.

He was reacting to the special court's order rejecting the petition to withdraw the cases un-

der the Prevention of Terrorism Act against him and eight other party functionaries.

The MDMK leader, speaking in the course of his renaissance walk said: "The petition was so full of serious charges against me, with just one sentence seeking withdrawal of the case. It was only an eyewash. My experience in the 19 months (in jail) clearly indicated what is going to happen. But I will fight to the finish on the judicial fora and I am confident justice will prevail."

Bangla mobile service raises security concerns

Pramod Giri

Siliguri, September 1

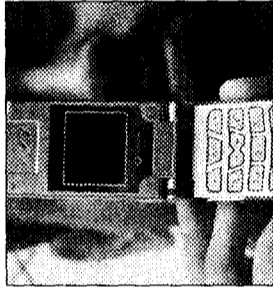
BANGLADESH MOBILE service providers have stepped in where Indian companies have failed to tread, posing a security threat in the Indian border areas.

Mobile telephone connections given by Bangladesh firms have already connected hundreds of people in north Bengal, the hub of Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation (KLO) activists and ISI agents in this part of the country. Intelligence

sources say many such users are using the Bangladesh facilities to pursue their anti-India agenda.

Pre-paid mobile sim cards of Bangladesh's Grameen Phone are easily available inside India around Chengrabanda, an international trading outpost under the Mekhliganj

sub-division in Cooch Behar district. BSNL sources say no Indian mobile service is available in places lying along the Indo-Bangla border despite a soaring demand for the facility since mobile phones are barred



from the sensitive areas. But that hasn't prevented Bangladesh sim cards from being easily available.

According to K. K. Sinha, telecom district manager of Cooch Behar, the

BSNL mobile center at Mekhliganj covered a radius of five kilometers only. This meant the BSNL mobile service was not available in border areas lying beyond that. The measure was taken in order to ensure that mobile phones were not misused. The India-Bangladesh border in North Bengal is known to be a hotbed of anti-India activities by militant outfits and ISI agents. The residents of Chengrabanda say the anti-India forces can communicate quite freely with their col-

leagues inside Bangladesh by using that country's mobile services. Ordinary people and businessmen living near the border, too, use the services, as they are readily available at affordable prices.

A senior intelligence officer lamented the Bangladesh government's failure to reign in the country's mobile service providers when the Indian government had consciously denied the facility to its own citizens living along the border because of security concerns.

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2 SEP 2004

Agni-II test-fired

By Our Staff Reporter

BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 29. The country's indigenously developed Agni-II intermediate range ballistic missile was successfully test-fired from the Wheeler Island in Bay of Bengal off the Orissa coast today.

The surface-to-surface missile was test-fired from a mobile launching pad at 12.55 p.m. The Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, was present.

The entire process of the test-firing was tracked down by telemetry and tracking stations and the naval ships stationed near the impact point at sea, according to sources.

Agni-II is a two-stage solid propellant missile with a range of 2000 to 2500 km. It can carry conventional or nuclear warheads.

Today's was the third test-firing of Agni-II. It was first test-fired on April 11, 1999, and then on January 17, 2001.

The Defence Research and Development Organi-

sation (DRDO) started the Agni missile project in 1983 and the first test-firing was done on May 22, 1989.

The Defence Secretary, Ajai Vikram Singh, the DRDO Secretary, V.K. Aatre, the Mission Director of Agni, R.N. Aggarwal, and a large number of defence scientists were present.

PTI reports from New Delhi:

The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, congratulated the scientists and engineers for the successful test-firing. He said: "I convey my congratulations on the successful launch of the Agni II missile, and felicitate the entire team of scientists and engineers who have worked most diligently for the success of the prestigious project.

"Today's launch marks a significant step forward in the country's efforts to achieve self-reliance in a high technology defence project of vital national importance. The nation is proud of this achievement."

THE HINDU

30 AUG 2001

যড়যন্ত্র বানচাল, হায়দরাবাদে লঙ্কর সন্দেহে ধৃত চ

হায়দরাবাদ, ২৯ অগস্ট: সেন্টেশ্বরের প্রথম সপ্তাহে ভারত-পাক সেন্টেশ্বরের আগে ভারতকে চাপে রাখতে দেশ জুড়ে নাশকতামূলক কাজকর্ম চালানোর যে পরিকল্পনা পাকিস্তান করেছে, তা ঘোষণার জন্য সজাগ রয়েছে পুলিশ-প্রশাসন। ইতিমধ্যেই ব্যাপক ধরপাকড় শুরু হয়েছে। লঙ্কর-ই-আজ এখান থেকে প্রেক্ষতার করা হয়েছে। পুলিশের দাবি, আগামী মাসে গণেশ উৎসবের সময় সেনেন্দরাবাদ রেলস্টেশনের কাছে বিখ্যাত গণেশ মন্দিরে বিস্ফোরণ এবং রাজ্যে মার্কিন ও ইহুদিদের আক্রমণ করে সাম্প্রদায়িক

দাঙ্গা বাধানোর যড়যন্ত্র করছিল এরা। ধৃতদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন ইসলামি সংগঠন 'তহরিক তহফুজ শরে ইসলাম'-এর সভাপতি নাসিরুদ্দিন। তিনি লঙ্কর-ই-আজের এক শীর্ষনেতা আবদুল হামজার হয়ে গোপনে কাজ করতেন বলে পুলিশ কমিশনার আর পি সিংহ জানিয়েছেন। ধৃতদের মধ্যে একটি গোষ্ঠী নলগোণ্ডার বাসিন্দা আহমেদ মহিউদ্দিন রশিদের নেতৃত্বে গণেশ মন্দিরে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানোর যড়যন্ত্র করা ছিল বলে সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে। বাকি তিন জনকে গুপ্ত জেলায় ইহুদিদের ও বেগমপেত বিমানবন্দরে মার্কিনদের

আক্রমণের কাজ দেওয়া হয়েছিল। ধৃতরা পুরনো হায়দরাবাদ ও পার্শ্ববর্তী এলাকার বাসিন্দা। তারা লঙ্কর-ই-আজের সদস্য আবু ভাইয়ের ঘনিষ্ঠবলে জানা দিয়েছে। আবু ভাই পাকিস্তানে প্রশিক্ষণ নিয়েছেন ও বর্তমানে তিনি ফেরার। ধৃতদের কাছ থেকে তিন কিলোগ্রাম অ্যানোনিয়াম নাইট্রেট, জিলেটিন স্টিক, তরল কার্বন টেট্রাক্লোরাইড-সহ কিছু বিস্ফোরক ও একটি রিভলবার উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে। পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, দিলসুন্নগরে সাইবাবার মন্দিরে দু'বছর আগের বিস্ফোরণে একই ধরনের বিস্ফোরক ব্যবহার করা হয়েছিল।

এই মুসলিম যুবকদের প্রেক্ষতারের প্রতিবাদে প্রায় ১০০ জন মুসলিম মহিলা আজ বশিরবাসে লোহার দরজা ভেঙে পুলিশ কমিশনারের দফতরে ঢুকে গড়ে। তাঁদের পুলিশি হেফাজতে রাখা হয়েছে। এই ঘটনা সম্পর্কে সিংহ ও খুরশিদ মহম্মদ কাসুরি ৫ ও ৬ সেন্টেশ্বরের দু'দিনের বৈঠকে বসছেন। তার আগে ভারতের উপরে কূটনৈতিক চাপ বাড়াতো এই দেশে নাশকতামূলক কাজকর্ম চালানোর পরিকল্পনা করা ছে পাকিস্তান।

সেনা গোয়েন্দাদের রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী পাক জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ শিঙগ হয়ে উঠেছে। তা রুখতে সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠেছে পুলিশ-প্রশাসন। — পি টি আই

ধৃত আলি বহু ফৌজি তথ্য পাচার করেছে পাকিস্তানে, বলল পুলিশ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: সেনাবাহিনী ও বিমানবাহিনীর গতিবিধি থেকে শুরু করে সেনাকর্মীদের নাড়িনক্ষত্র— একান্ত গোপন বহু তথ্যই আই এস আইয়ের চর সন্দেহে ধৃত আলি ভাই পাকিস্তানে পাচার করে দিয়েছে বলে তদন্তকারী অফিসারেরা জানিয়েছেন।

গোয়েন্দা পুলিশের কর্তাদের কথায়, সেনাবাহিনীর একেবারে ভিতরের লোক ছাড়া, সাধারণের পক্ষে এ-সব তথ্য জানার কথা নয়। স্বরূপনগরের ওই যুবককে দফায় দফায় জেরা করে তার কার্যকলাপের বিষয়ে চাঞ্চল্যকর তথ্য মিলেছে। অন্য দিকে, দমদম বিমানবন্দরে দূরপাল্লার রাইফেলে ব্যবহৃত যন্ত্রপাতি-সহ ধৃত তিন যুবকের জামিনের আবেদন নাকচ করে তাদের বিচার বিভাগীয় হেফাজতে রাখার নির্দেশ দেয় ব্যারাকপুরের এস ডি জে এম আদালত। ব্যাঙ্কের বিমান থেকে কলকাতায় নামা ওই তিন জনের সঙ্গে জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীর যোগাযোগ রয়েছে বলে সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে।

আলির কাছ থেকে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তথ্য সংবলিত কয়েকটি ফ্লপি উদ্ধার করেন গোয়েন্দারা। তাতেই সেনাবাহিনীর ভিতরের বহু খবর রয়েছে। আলির জিনিসপত্র ঘেঁটে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ও গোটা দেশে তার পরিচিত বেশ কয়েক জনের নাম-ঠিকানা পাওয়া গিয়েছে। পাকিস্তান ও বাংলাদেশেও আলির পরিচিতির বহর খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। বুধবার সন্ধ্যায় হাওয়ালার কারবারি মজফফরুল ইসলামের থেকে ১০,০০০ টাকা নেওয়ার সময়ে আলিকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়। আলি ও মজফফরুলের বিরুদ্ধে রাষ্ট্রদ্রোহ ও দেশের গোপন তথ্য পাচারের

অভিযোগ আনা হয়েছে।

সেনাবাহিনীর ভিতরের এত খবর আলি কী করে জোগাড় করল, তা জানার চেষ্টা চলছে। বি এস এফ, সেনা গোয়েন্দা, আই বি-র কর্তারা তাকে জেরা করছেন। গোয়েন্দা পুলিশ জানতে পেরেছে, গত জানুয়ারিতে বসিরহাটের কাছে স্বরূপনগর সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে এক সঙ্গীর সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশে গিয়েছিল আলি। তার পরে ঢাকা থেকে করাচি গিয়ে গুপ্তচরবৃত্তিতে তালিম নেয় সে। আলি যার সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশে যায়, তার নাম বা নাগরিকত্বের পরিচয় দিতে চায়নি পুলিশ। গোয়েন্দাদের ইঙ্গিত, ওই ব্যক্তি আই এস আইয়ের রাঘববোয়াল। এই রাজ্যে ঘুরে ঘুরে চরবৃত্তির জন্য বিশ্বস্ত কর্মী বাছাই করা তার কাজ। বাংলাদেশ হয়ে ওই সব লোককে তালিম নিতে পাকিস্তানে পাঠানো হয়। আলিকে জেরা করে আই এস আইয়ের ওই পাণ্ডাদের ধরার চেষ্টা চালাচ্ছেন গোয়েন্দারা।

এখনও পর্যন্ত আলিকে জেরা করে কী কী জানা গিয়েছে, তা নিয়ে মন্তব্য করতে চাননি গোয়েন্দ-প্রধান পীযুষ পাণ্ডে। তবে তিনি জানান, “ধৃত দুই যুবকের কাছ থেকে পাওয়া তথ্যের ভিত্তিতে ফের ধরপাকড়ের অভিযান চালানো হতে পারে।” গোয়েন্দা সূত্রের খবর: স্বরূপনগরের বাসিন্দা আলি সোনারপুরে ঘর ভাড়া নিয়ে থাকত। গরিবঘরের ৩২ বছরের ওই যুবক শিয়ালদহে টিকিটের এজেন্টের কাজ করত। গুপ্তচরবৃত্তিতে সে কত টাকা পেয়েছিল, তা এখনও জানতে পারেননি গোয়েন্দারা। আলি মাত্র ৩৫,০০০ টাকার কথা বললেও গোয়েন্দারা তা বিশ্বাস করছেন না। তবে তদন্তে প্রকাশ, গত ৩-৪ মাসে

ইন্টারনেটের মাধ্যমে আলি প্রচুর তথ্যই লেনদেন করেছে। মধ্য কলকাতার দু’তিনটি সাইবার ক্যাফেতে তার নিয়মিত যাতায়াত ছিল। আলি পাকিস্তানে কত দিন ছিল, তা-ও গোয়েন্দাদের কাছে পরিষ্কার নয়। তবে পাকিস্তানি সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে তার যোগাযোগ ছিল বলে গোয়েন্দারা জানতে পেরেছেন। আর এন মুখার্জি স্ট্রিটের বাসিন্দা মজফফরুল ইসলামের মাধ্যমে নিয়মিত আই এস আইয়ের টাকা পাঠানো হত বলে জানিয়েছে গোয়েন্দা পুলিশ।

বিমানবন্দরে নজরদারি: বুধবার সন্ধ্যার উড়ানে কলকাতায় নামা ধৃত তিন যুবকের কাছ থেকে জগদীশ সুখলাল সাহানি, সুখদেব সিংহ ও বৃদ্ধিচাঁদ নিশাদ অত্যাধুনিক আয়ুস্মায়ে ব্যবহৃত কলকজা মেলায় বিমানবন্দরে নজরদারি আরও জোরদার হয়েছে। কয়েক দিনের মধ্যে ওই তিন জন ছাড়াও আরও কয়েক জন যাত্রীর কাছে বিপজ্জনক জিনিসপত্রের হদিস পান শুদ্ধকর্তারা। অনিল কপুর নামে এক যুবককে গত সপ্তাহে বিচার বিভাগীয় হেফাজতে পাঠানো হয়।

ধৃত তিন জনের কাছে ৭১টি রাইফেলক্লোপ পাওয়া গিয়েছে। দূরপাল্লার রাইফেলে নিখুঁত নিশানার জন্য দূরবিন বসাতে যা ব্যবহার করা হয়। শুদ্ধ বিভাগের কমিশনার অমলকান্তি দাস বলেন, “বিদেশ থেকে ওই সব জিনিসপত্র নিয়ে আসায় বিধিনিষেধ আছে। ওদের লাইসেন্স খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। বেআইনি ভাবে ওই সব সামগ্রী বহনের অভিযোগ আনা হয়েছে তাদের বিরুদ্ধে।” ওই তিন জনের জঙ্গি-সংস্রবের বিষয়ে কিছু জানাননি অমলবাবু।

অটল আমলের প্রতিরক্ষা ব্যয় খতিয়ে দেখা

২৭/৯/৫৭
১০/৯/৫৭

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫
অগস্ট: বাজপেয়ী সরকারের আমলের
বিতর্কিত প্রতিরক্ষা ব্যয় খতিয়ে দেখার
কাজ শুরু করল মনমোহন সিংহের
সরকার। অস্ত্রশস্ত্র থেকে শুরু করে
কাগিল-শহিদদের জন্য কফিন
কেনা— সবই আসছে এই
পর্যালোচনার আওতায়। প্রতিরক্ষা
মন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, গত
সরকারের নীতি খতিয়ে দেখে সেটি
আরও 'সময়োপযোগী' এবং চাহিদার
প্রতি 'সংবেদনশীল' করা হবে। তবে
এর ফলে ইতিমধ্যেই স্বাক্ষরিত বিভিন্ন
চুক্তি বাতিল হবার সম্ভাবনা প্রায় নেই
বললেই চলে।

জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী
থাকাকালীন সামরিক কেনাকাটা নিয়ে
বারবার প্রশ্ন উঠেছিল। কাগিল যুদ্ধের
সময়ে বরাত দেওয়া অস্ত্রশস্ত্রের একটি
বড় অংশ যুদ্ধ শেষ হওয়ার অনেক
পরে দেশে এসে পৌঁছয়। ব্রিটেন
থেকে 'হক' এ জে টি কেনার চুক্তি
হয়েছে লোকসভা ভেঙে দেওয়ার
পরে। তদারকি সরকারের আমলে কী
করে এত বড় সামরিক চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত
হতে পারে, তা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন উঠেছে।
ইজরায়েলের সঙ্গে নজরদারি যান,
ট্যাঙ্কের জন্য 'নাইট ভিশন ডিভাইস'
পেতে যে চুক্তি, তা-ও সন্দেহের উর্ধ্ব
নয়। বস্তুত গত সরকারের আমলে
বেশ কয়েকটি চুক্তি হয়েছে যার পুরো
আর্থিক দায় নতুন সরকারকেই বহিতে
হবে। অবস্থা এমনই যে, প্রতিরক্ষা
খাতে বাজেট বরাদ্দ প্রায় ১৭ হাজার
কোটি টাকা বাড়লেও নতুন কোনও
চুক্তি করার টাকা কার্যত নেই
মনমোহনের সরকারের হাতে।

প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী হবার পরে প্রণব
মুখোপাধ্যায় অবশ্য জানিয়েছিলেন,
তিনি প্রতিটি চুক্তির তদন্ত করতে
আগ্রহী নন। তবে সামগ্রিক ভাবে
ফৌজের সাজসরঞ্জাম ক্রয়ের নীতি
খতিয়ে দেখা হতে পারে। সেই
অনুসারেই এই কাজ শুরু হয়েছে।
তবে মন্ত্রকের বড় অংশের ধারণা,
নীতির ফাঁক-ফোকর ভরাট করতে
গিয়েই গত সরকারের আমলে যদি
কোনও অনিয়ম হয়ে থাকে, তা ধরা
পড়বে। পাশাপাশি, বাহিনীর চাহিদা
পূরণ করার ক্ষেত্রে কোনও রকম
খামতি থাকবে না বলেও প্রতিশ্রুতি
দেওয়া হয়েছে। এ জন্য প্রয়োজনে
অর্থ মন্ত্রকের কাছ থেকে আরও টাকা
চাওয়া হবে।

শান্তি

Delay in making Arjun tank irks panel

2A
24
Defence by N. K. Srinivasan

NEW DELHI, Aug. 23. — "If the ordnance factories can't make 124 Arjun tanks on time, they should be closed down and tank-manufacture handed over to the private sector."

This is the put-down that came during recent meetings of the parliamentary Defence Standing Committee when defence officials first said they could produce the 124 tanks by 2008, and try to get them ready by 2007. They had earlier told the Army the tanks would be ready only by 2010. The production process at Avadi is slow. While five were handed over to the Army this year, 10 and 19 are likely to be ready in the next two years and the rest in the following three. If that schedule, is followed there is little chance of getting the entire contingent to the Army by 2007.

While the DRDO is pushing for an order of at least 300 tanks in the near

future, the Army's attitude is less enthusiastic. The Army still has some reservations about the tank, but the DRDO believes that the some objections relate to problems that have and can be sorted out.

The first issue relates to weight. The Army saying that at 60 tons, it is too heavy for the desert. The DRDO replies its ground pressure is evenly distributed, with the tank having an extra wheel. It is a Western-style tank, larger and more comfortable and the size relates to contemporary Western tanks.

The Army argues that the tank is too heavy for the bridges. The PMS Class floating bridge will take the tank as will the BLI which uses a T-72 chassis, but the AM-50, the intermediate assault bridge is too light for the Arjun.

The normal tank trailer will take the Arjun, but with difficulty. Carrying the Arjun is not recommended unless it is

strengthened. Perhaps, redesigning the trailer rather than the tank by increasing an axle could help. There are mixed reactions from the Railways — the tank wagons can take it on the broad-gauge tracks but not on the metre-gauge tracks. Of course, the broad-gauge is very prevalent now. Much of the mind-set the Army has is because of the collective memory of the failures of the tank in the past.

There is the import-substitution issue. Indian institutes have developed the tank tracks and the combustible cartridge case. There were problems with the fire control system because of the post-Pokhran embargo but the issue is the engine. DRDO believes the German manufacturer will transfer the technology for a newer engine if there is an order of 300. But will the Army buy 300 Arjuns? — SNS

বহু সেনার মৃত্যুর জন্য অটল সরকার ভৎসিত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৯

অগস্ট: পাকিস্তানের বিরুদ্ধে 'অপারেশন পরাক্রম' অভিযানে অযথা বহু সেনার মৃত্যু হয়েছে বলে বাজপেয়ী সরকারের কড়া সমালোচনা করল সংসদীয় কমিটি। কমিটির মতে, হেলমেট, বুলেট প্রুফ জ্যাকেট, নাইট-ভিশন যন্ত্র ইত্যাদি সাধারণ সরঞ্জাম থাকলেই অনেক জওয়ানের মৃত্যু আটকানো যেত। বিগত সরকারের কর্তাদের বিড়ম্বনা বাড়িয়ে সংসদীয় কমিটি বলেছে, ওই অপারেশনে পুরনো ও ক্রটিপূর্ণ মাইন ব্যবহার করার ফলেও বেশ কিছু সেনা মারা যান। বিষয়টি নিয়ে নতুন করে তদন্তেরও সুপারিশ করেছে সংসদীয় কমিটি।

কার্গিল যুদ্ধেও প্রথম দিকে পর্যাপ্ত সাজসরঞ্জাম ছাড়াই সেনাদের পাঠানোর অভিযোগ উঠেছিল বাজপেয়ী সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে। বলা হয়েছিল, পাহাড়ের চূড়ায় বসে থাকা পাকিস্তানিদের হঠাতে প্রথম দিকে যে সব সেনা গিয়েছিলেন, তাদের অনেকের কাছে সঠিক জুতোও ছিল না। এ বার অপারেশন পরাক্রমের প্রস্তুতি নিয়েও যে ভাবে কঠোর রিপোর্ট দিল সংসদীয় কমিটি, তাতে বিগত সরকারের বিড়ম্বনা আরও বাড়বে। এই অবস্থায় গত সরকারের আমলে ঘোষিত প্রতিরক্ষার আধুনিকীকরণের বিশেষ তহবিল গঠন করার কাজ অবশেষে শুরু হয়েছে। লোকসভায় প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় আজ জানান, এই হিসাব রক্ষার একটি প্রস্তাব সংশ্লিষ্ট দফতরগুলি এবং সি এ জি-র কাছে তিনি পাঠিয়েছেন। গত সরকারের অর্থমন্ত্রী যশোবন্ত সিংহ ২৫ হাজার

কোটি টাকার এই তহবিল তৈরির কথা ঘোষণা করেছিলেন। কিন্তু একটি টাকাও বরাদ্দ করা হয়নি। এই তহবিলের টাকা খরচ না হলেও ফেরত নেওয়া হবে না। পরের বছরের বরাদ্দের সঙ্গে তা যোগ হয়ে যাবে।

অপারেশন পরাক্রমের যৌক্তিকতা নিয়ে আগেই রাজনৈতিক মহলে ঝড় উঠেছিল। সংসদ ভবনে জঙ্গি আক্রমণের পরে ছয় দিন পরেই দেশের উত্তর-পশ্চিম সীমান্তে বিপুল সংখ্যক সেনা মোতায়েন করা হয় পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে 'আর পার কি লড়াই'-এর কথা ঘোষণা করে। টানা দশ মাস সেনারা সীমান্তে বসে থাকলেও শেষমেশ যুদ্ধ হয়নি। কিন্তু নিজেদেরই পৌঁতা মাইনে এবং জঙ্গিদের আক্রমণে প্রাণ হারান প্রায় পাঁচশো সেনা। সংসদের প্রতিরক্ষা বিষয়ক কমিটি আজ এই নিয়ে যে রিপোর্ট জমা দিয়েছে, তাতে বলেছে, "যে ভাবে পুরনো এবং ক্রটিপূর্ণ মাইন ব্যবহার করা হয়েছিল তা দেখে কমিটি স্তম্ভিত। সেগুলিতে ফিউজ কাজ করছিল না। ফলে, মাইন বসাতে এবং তুলতে গিয়ে বহু সেনার মৃত্যু হয়।" সংসদীয় কমিটিকে প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক অবশ্য জানিয়েছে, অভিযানের সময়ে হাত দিয়ে মাইন বসাতে গিয়ে প্রতিকূল আবহাওয়া ও পরিবেশের কারণে অনেকের মৃত্যু হয়েছে।

১৯ ডিসেম্বর ২০০১ থেকে ১৬ অক্টোবর ২০০২ সাল পর্যন্ত সেনা মোতায়েন ছিল পাকিস্তান সীমান্ত এবং জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখায়। ওই সময়ে মোট ৪৭৩ সেনা মারা যান এবং ১৪০১ জন জখম হন। এর মধ্যে মাইন বসাতে গিয়ে ৬০ জন সেনা মারা যান, ১৪২ জন আহত হন।

নেতাদের উপর গোয়েন্দাগিরি, সরতে পারেন 'র' প্রধান

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৬ অগস্ট: প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় থেকে রিসার্চ অ্যান্ড অ্যানালিটিক্যাল উইং (র)-কে স্পষ্ট নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে, বহির্বিশ্বে জাতীয় স্বার্থে কাজ করাকেই যেন তারা অগ্রাধিকার দেয়। কেন এমন নির্দেশ? কারণ, বর্তমান সরকারের কাছে অভিযোগ এসেছে, গত ছ'বছর, অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর জমানায় 'র'কে বারবার রাজনৈতিক গোয়েন্দাগিরির কাজে লাগানো হয়েছে। এই কারণে 'র'-এর প্রধান সি ডি সহায়কেও সরিয়ে দেওয়ার কথা ভাবছে কেন্দ্র।

বিহারের পুলিশ অফিসার সি ডি সহায় সম্পর্কে অন্যতম অভিযোগ হল, গত জমানায় 'র'-এর মতো সংগঠন অভ্যন্তরীণ রাজনীতির ক্ষেত্রেও গোয়েন্দাগিরি করত। প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর হাতে গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আই বি থাকায় 'র'কে দিয়ে আডবাণীর কার্যকলাপের উপরেও নজর রাখা হত। এ ছাড়া, কোনও রাজনৈতিক নেতা কোথায় যাচ্ছেন, কার সঙ্গে দেখা করছেন, এ সব তথ্য সংগ্রহ করত 'র'। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সমস্ত কার্যকলাপ অবিলম্বে বন্ধ করার নির্দেশ দিয়েছে। 'র'কে ক্ষুদ্র রাজনৈতিক কাজে আর ব্যবহার করতে চান না মনমোহন সিংহ।

তবে, সহায়কে এখনই সরানোর ক্ষেত্রে কিছু অসুবিধা আছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, পাকিস্তান ও আমেরিকার সঙ্গে বিভিন্ন দ্বিপাক্ষিক গোপন আলোচনা, এমনকী ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গেও যে কথাবার্তা, সবই প্রাক্তন প্রিন্সিপ্যাল সেক্রেটারি ব্রজেশ মিশ্র, প্রাক্তন আই বি প্রধান কে বি সিংহ এবং 'র' প্রধান সি ডি সহায় ছাড়া কেউ জানেনই না। তাই কৌশলগত কারণেই আরও কিছুদিনের জন্য সহায়কে ওই পদে রাখা প্রয়োজন। এই দরকার মিটে গেলেই

তাকে সরানো হবে।

মনমোহন সিংহ প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পরে আই বি বা কেন্দ্রীয় গোয়েন্দা ব্যুরোর প্রধান কে পি সিংহকে সরিয়ে দেওয়া হয়। তার পর এক মাস যেতে না যেতেই সহায়ের বিরুদ্ধেও বিস্তার অভিযোগ জমা পড়েছে গোয়েন্দা সূত্রেই। জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিত এখন সেই সব অভিযোগ খতিয়ে দেখছেন। 'র'-এর প্রধান পদ থেকে সহায়ের অবসর নেওয়ার কথা ৩১ জানুয়ারি। শীঘ্রই মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকে সহায়ের ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে। তবে 'র'-এর প্রধান পদ থেকে সরিয়ে রাজ্যপাল করার প্রস্তাব দেওয়া হলে সহায় তাতে রাজি হন কি না, সেটাও দেখার। কারণ আই বি প্রধানের পদ থেকে সরিয়ে কে পি সিংহকে নিরাপত্তা সচিব করার কথা হলে তিনি রাজি হননি।

আই বি এবং 'র' ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দাদের দু'টি পৃথক বিভাগ। স্বাধীনতার সময় ভারতে একটাই গোয়েন্দা শাখা ছিল। পরে ১৯৬৮ সালে তৎকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইন্দিরা গান্ধী তাকে ভেঙে আই বি ও 'র' তৈরি করেন। অভ্যন্তরীণ নিরাপত্তা দেখভালের দায়িত্ব পায় আই বি। বহির্বিশ্বে ভারতের স্বার্থ রক্ষার দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হয় 'র'কে।

গত বছর 'র'-এর প্রধান পদ থেকে বিক্রম সুদের অবসরগ্রহণের পরে সি ডি সহায়কে ওই পদে বসানো হয়। সংগঠনের বিশেষ সচিব আর এস বেদী সহায়ের চেয়ে প্রবীণ হলেও তাঁর দাবি উপেক্ষা করে বাজপেয়ী সরকার। তিন মাস পরেই অবশ্য অবসর নেন বেদী। এখন সহায়কে সরানো হলে তাঁর জায়গায় কাকে আনা হবে তা নিয়ে তদ্বির, পাল্টা তদ্বিরের পালা শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। কেবল পুলিশের প্রধান পি কে কারাকান্তকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হতে পারে বলে সরকারি সূত্রে খবর।

POTA repeal

The danger of limbo

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Demonstrating a national issue, the UPA government's repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) is hard to beat. No one ignores terrorism as a threat. Everyone accepts the prospect of a loophole, the size of barn doors in a POTA-less structure, which allows terrorists to walk away after apprehension. POTA should have been reviewed continuing the process of previous governments, admitting that the law is misused and some sections are unfair to civil liberties. The admission was enough of a political victory for the UPA, after Jayalalitha's misuse of POTA took the DMK and MDMK away from NDA and arguably changed the national verdict via the UPA's clean sweep in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil parties within UPA were keen that the Act be junked. But the Congress hasn't been any more responsible either. It has made POTA's repeal a carrot to attract minority votes. The result is that the big stick against terrorism will be replaced with several small ones, and some of them risk breaking contact with reality. Tough provisions against funding terrorism are a virtue here and life imprisonment or death, POTA's penalty for those who, typically, use the hawala route to finance jihadi networks in India. The Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), in contrast, allows money launderers to walk on payment of a financial penalty on the amount involved. Government are considering amending FEMA to make terror funding a separate provision. But why amend one Act when another law takes care of it. Plus, amending FEMA, essentially a civil law for what is a white-collar crime of anti-terrorism purposes, may prove complicated. It may only weaken laws against terrorists. anti-terror provisions. The same holds for a slew of other amendments in other laws — Evidence Act, Unlawful Activities Act, Criminal Law Amendment Act, etc — the government is planning to fill the gaps if POTA is repealed.

There will be heavy legislative work and entirely avoidable. There will also be a storm of new provisions in different Acts to replace an umbrella law, making the job of police and security agencies that much more difficult. Anti-terrorism cases will languish in courts. There will also be a huge political controversy once Parliament reopens. Indeed, there are doubts whether POTA can be repealed without creating legislative logjam as the Act's birth provoked. The BJP has demanded that the issue of repealing POTA be sent to a select committee. If the Opposition succeeds, anti-terror law may go into limbo. Terrorists, however, won't.

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কঠোর হোক, মানবিকও

সন্ত্রাস দমন আইন (পোটা) প্রত্যাহারের সিদ্ধান্ত পাক্কা। কংগ্রেসের নেতৃত্বাধীন সংযুক্ত প্রগতিশীল মোর্চার সরকার এই আইন রদ করার নির্বাচনী প্রতিশ্রুতি পালনের সিদ্ধান্ত অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচিতেই লইয়াছিল। বাজেট অধিবেশনের দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ে এই মর্মে নির্দিষ্ট বিল আনা হইবে। মোর্চার বক্তব্য, 'পোটা' নামে কুখ্যাত আইনটি রাজনৈতিক প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বীদের শায়েস্তা করিতে যথেষ্ট ব্যবহৃত হইতেছিল। ইহা বন্ধ হওয়া দরকার। বক্তব্যটি সারবান। সন্ত্রাস, অস্ত্রঘাত, রাষ্ট্রদ্রোহাত্মক ক্রিয়াকলাপ দমনের আশু উপযোগিতা অস্বীকার করা যায় না। কিন্তু তাহার নামে নিরীহ নাগরিকদের হেনস্থা এবং বিপক্ষীয় রাজনীতিকদের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিহিংসা চরিতার্থ করার নেতিবাচক প্রবণতার বিপদ অস্বীকার করা যায় না। এক দিকে ভাইকো-র মতো রাজনীতিককে 'শায়েস্তা' করার প্রয়াস, অন্য দিকে সংখ্যালঘুদের বিরুদ্ধে পাইকারি হারে এই আইনে গ্রেফতারি বিপদটিকে মূর্ত করিয়া তোলে। আইনটির প্রণেতা বিজেপি বর্তমান শাসক গোষ্ঠীর প্রস্তাবে 'গেল-গেল' রব তুলিয়াছে। কংগ্রেস জোটের সরকার সব সন্ত্রাসবাদী তথা জাতি-বিরোধী শক্তিকে কারামুক্ত করিতে উদাত, এমন কাল্পনিক এবং রোমহর্ষক জনরবও তুলিয়াছে। কিন্তু বিষয়টি অত একরৈখিক নয়। আন্তর্জাতিক সন্ত্রাস দমনে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রকে আশ্বাস দিয়াছে বলিয়া পোটা বলবৎ রাখিতে হইবে, বেঙ্কাইয়া নয়ডুর এই যুক্তি গ্রাহ্য নয়।

কঠোর আইন দরকার কোনও আন্তর্জাতিক দায়বদ্ধতার জন্য নয়, সন্ত্রাস ও নাশকতা দমনের অভ্যন্তরীণ বাধ্যবাধকতার কারণে। কঠোর শাস্তির বিধান না থাকিলে কিংবা রাষ্ট্রদ্রোহাত্মক কাজ করিয়াও পার পাইয়া যাওয়ার ব্যবস্থা থাকিলে গুরুতর ওই সব অপরাধ বাড়িয়া যাইবে। রাষ্ট্রকে তাই গণতান্ত্রিক সহনীয়তার একটা লক্ষণরেখা টানিতেই হয়। যদি সর্বত্র অনন্ত শান্তি, সুস্থিতি ও শুভবুদ্ধি বিরাজ করিত, তবে ভালই হইত। তেমন আদর্শ তপোবন আজ অনুপস্থিত। জীবন এখন হানাহানিমুখর, সাম্প্রদায়িকতা-জর্জরিত। হিংসা ও সন্ত্রাস যেমন পরস্পরের প্রতি, তেমনই রাষ্ট্র ও তাহার প্রশাসনযন্ত্রের প্রতি। এই হিংসাকে ছড়াইয়া পড়িতে দেওয়া যায় না। সে জনাই আইন। আগে ছিল মিসা, পি ডি অ্যাঙ্ক, টাডা। এখন পোটা, পোকা, ইত্যাদি। উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলের জন্য যেমন উপক্রম এলাকা আইন, সশস্ত্র বাহিনী বিশেষ ক্ষমতা আইন, ইত্যাদি। এই আইনগুলি আদৌ না বানাইতে হইলে ভাল হইত। কিন্তু বাস্তবতা রাষ্ট্রকে বাধ্য করিয়াছে।

মুশকিল, এই সব আইনের প্রয়োগের দায়িত্ব যে প্রশাসনের, তাহা নৈর্ব্যক্তিক বা নিরপেক্ষ নহে, বরং শাসক রাজনৈতিক গোষ্ঠীর অনুগত। আর এখানেই আইনের অপপ্রয়োগের সম্ভাবনা প্রবল। ইতিহাসের প্রতিটি নিবারণমূলক আটক আইনই অপব্যবহৃত হইয়াছে। মিসা-পি ডি অ্যাঙ্কে রাজনৈতিক কর্মী-সমর্থকদের গণ গ্রেফতারি হইত, বিনা বিচারে বছরের পর বছর আটকাইয়া রাখা হইত। টাডা-পোটার দখল গেল, শিব সেনা-বিজেপির সরকার বাছিয়া-বাছিয়া সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায়ের লোকদের ধরিতেছে। প্রথমে মহারাষ্ট্রে, পরে গুজরাতে সন্ত্রাস ও দাঙ্গার শিকার জনগোষ্ঠীকে রক্ষা করার পরিবর্তে দমন-আইনে তাহাদের পীড়নের আয়োজন পরিলক্ষিত হইয়াছে। রাজনৈতিক প্রতিপক্ষের হেনস্থা তো আছেই। বিরোধীদের চাপে টাডা প্রত্যাহৃত হইলেও পোটা প্রবর্তিত হইল। বর্তমান সরকার পোটা রদ করিতে চায়, আবার একই সঙ্গে চলতি আইনে বাড়তি দাঁত-নখও সংযোজন করিতে চায়। সত্য, যথাযথ প্রযুক্ত হইলে চলতি আইনেই অপরাধ-দমন সম্ভব। আবার প্রয়োগকর্তার ঠিক না থাকিলে বাড়তি কঠোরতা অনাবশ্যক পীড়ন সৃষ্টি করিতে পারে। আসল কথা, আইন অত্যন্ত সাবধানতার সহিত প্রণীত হওয়া চাই। এ দেশে প্রয়োগকর্তার সৌজন্য বা রুচির উপর কোনও আইনের প্রয়োগকে ছাড়িয়া রাখার বুকি লওয়া যায় না। প্রমাণ গুজরাত, যেখানে রাজ্যের পুলিশ খুন-ধর্ষণ-দাঙ্গার দায়ে এফ আই আর-এ নাম থাকা অভিযুক্তদের ছাড়িয়া দেয়, অথচ সংখ্যালঘুদের পোটার ধরিয়া জেলে পোরে। তাই কঠোর আইন হোক, তবে তাহা মানবিক ভাবে প্রযুক্ত হোক। অভিযোগ প্রমাণ না হওয়া অবধি অভিযুক্তকে নির্দোষ গণ্য করা হোক। নির্দোষতা প্রমাণের দায় অভিযুক্তের উপর ন্যস্ত না করিয়া দোষ প্রমাণের দায় গ্রেফতারকারীর উপর ন্যস্ত হোক।

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LAYING POTA TO REST

D. S. R. Srinivas

THE UNION CABINET'S decision to lay the Prevention of Terrorism Act to rest will be welcomed by all those who value democratic freedoms and respect for human life and dignity. The decision to repeal the draconian anti-terrorism legislation is in line with one of the key promises in the Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance, the vision document that was conceived as a template for governance with a human face. The Centre had the option of allowing POTA, which lapses in October, to die a natural death. But it obviously wanted to underline the point that it was eliminating it from the statute books and thereby fulfilling its promise. Significantly, the death of POTA, via a repealing Bill that will be moved in the current session of Parliament, will coincide with moves to amend the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Details of the proposed amendments have not been made public and the only available light on this matter has been cast by the brief remarks of the Information and Broadcasting Minister, S. Jaipal Reddy, who said the revised legislation would address concerns of internal security, specifically the funding of terrorist organisations.

The financing of terrorism is one of the major concerns of the United Nations' Committee on Counter-terrorism. The panel, which was formed post-September 11 and in which the United States displays a considerable interest, has been pressuring member-countries to put suitable legislative mechanisms in place to deal with terrorism and ensure that the U.N. Security Council's Resolution 1373 on anti-terrorism is effectively implemented. The hint that international obligations were behind some of the proposed amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act may indicate that the less controversial provisions relating to the financing of terrorism, which were in POTA, will be retained. The nature of the proposed amendments will be

keenly watched to ensure that none of the draconian aspects of the anti-terrorism law is dressed up in another form and brought in through the backdoor. POTA will not be repealed, as some civil rights activists had demanded, with retrospective effect. As a result, cases already registered under the law will be tried in accordance with its provisions. The safeguards for these cases will lie in the POTA Review Committees, which were given the legal teeth earlier this year to review ongoing cases and make recommendations that were binding on the respective State Governments.

It was the conclusion of exactly such a process, conducted by the Central POTA Review Committee, that has now resulted in the official prosecution withdrawing the unjust case foisted under the anti-terrorism law against MDMK leader, Vaiko, and eight of his party men. In April, this Committee had held there was no *prima facie* case under POTA against the nine accused (who were booked for merely expressing verbal sympathy for the proscribed Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and directed the Tamil Nadu Government to withdraw the cases. The Government, which was bound by this order, instructed the public prosecutor to do likewise; however, even a couple of months ago, the public prosecutor — armed with a Madras High Court ruling which said he could “apply his mind independently” — had maintained there was “no question of withdrawing the case.” Mercifully, such an imprudent posture has been abandoned and better sense has prevailed. It is impossible to ignore that the Cabinet's nod for POTA's repeal and the withdrawal of the case against Vaiko came on the same day. There is a tremendous symbolic significance in this. It was, perhaps above all, Mr. Vaiko's arrest and incarceration that had spread awareness about the danger of POTA's misuse and the necessity for dumping it into the dustbin of history.

THE HINDU

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প্রণবের সফরে স্পষ্টি বার্তা, সিয়াচেন ভারতেরই

সৌভদ্র চক্রোপাধ্যায় • নয়াদিল্লি

১০ অগস্ট: পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে যে-এলাকা নিয়ে বিবাদ রয়েছে, সেই সিয়াচেনে তিনি প্রথম বার সফরে যাচ্ছেন। সেই অবসরে ভারত-চীন প্রকৃত নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা অবস্থান কী, সেটাও সরেজমিনে বুঝে আসবেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। দু'দিনের সংক্ষিপ্ত সফরে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর যা সূচি, তাতে পাকিস্তান ও চীন— উভয় সীমান্ত-এলাকায় গুরুত্ব পাচ্ছে। চীন-ভারত প্রকৃত নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা সামলাচ্ছে ও নম্বর পাক সীমান্ত ডিভিশন। কার্গিল সেক্টর-সহ মাইটেন ডিভিশনের। এই দুই ডিভিশনের কর্তাদের সঙ্গেই আলোচনা

করতে ইতিমধ্যেই নতুন সরকারের সলিডার কথা একাধিক বার প্রকাশ্যে ঘোষণা করেছেন প্রণববাবু। সিয়াচেন গোল্ডেও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর বেশি আগ্রহ তাঁদের জন্য বিভিন্ন কল্যাণমূলক সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে। ঘনিষ্ঠ মহলে তাই প্রণববাবু ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, আগামী দিনেও তিনি সিয়াচেন যাবেন, তবে জর্জের সঙ্গে এই নিয়ে প্রতিযোগিতায় তিনি আদৌ উৎসাহী নন।

আগামী কাল তোরে লাডাখের কেম্ফবিন্দু লে শহরে যাচ্ছেন প্রণববাবু। সেখান থেকে বৃহস্পতিবার সিয়াচেন হিমবাহে পাড়ি দেবেন। তার আগে অবশ্য তিনি সেরে নিচ্ছেন ভারত-চীন প্রকৃত নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার পরিস্থিতির পর্যালোচনা। লে থেকে ষোল্লিখিত দুই

অংশ পাড়ে চিনে। হুদের এক পাড়ে ভারতীয় সেনা, অন্য পাড়ে 'পিপলস লিবরেশন আর্মি' পাহারা দেয়। এই সুযোগে চীন-ভারত সীমান্তের একটি অন্য রূপ দেখে নেন প্রণববাবু।

সিয়াচেন সফরের মধ্যে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের সর্বশেষ যুদ্ধের প্রধান পটভূমি কার্গিলে যাবেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী। সেখানেই তিনি বৈঠকে বসবেন ৮ মাইটেন ডিভিশনের প্রধানের সঙ্গে। কার্গিল যুদ্ধ, অর্থাৎ 'অপারেশন বিজয়' নিয়ে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীকে 'প্রজেক্টেশন' দেখানো হবে। প্রণববাবু হাসে যাবেন, যাবেন পর্তপূরেজ সেনা হাসপাতালেও।

সিয়াচেন এলাকায় অসুস্থ সৈনিকদের এখানেই ভর্তি করা হয়। প্রণববাবুর সফরে রয়েছে সিয়াচেন ব্যাটেল স্কুল দেখার কর্মসূচিও।

সিয়াচেন সফরের মধ্যেও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী যাতে প্রকৃতির শোভা উপভোগ করতে পারেন, তার জন্য বিখ্যাত প্যাঙ্ক হুদ অমেরও সময় রাখা হয়েছে। এই হুদ অমেরও অবশ্য অন্য তাৎপর্যও রয়েছে। কারণ, এর অর্ধেক ষোল্লিখিত সফরের মধ্যেও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী যাতে প্রকৃতির শোভা উপভোগ করতে পারেন, তার জন্য বিখ্যাত প্যাঙ্ক হুদ অমেরও সময় রাখা হয়েছে। এই হুদ অমেরও অবশ্য অন্য তাৎপর্যও রয়েছে। কারণ, এর অর্ধেক

TN to withdraw Pota case against Vaiko

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11/8
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: In a move which could have widespread political ramifications in the state, the Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday told a Pota (Prevention of Terrorism Act) court that it had decided to withdraw Pota cases against MDMK leader Vaiko and eight others.

A petition for the withdrawal of cases was filed at Pota court in Poonamalee, sources familiar with the development said. The decision comes after May 7, 2004 instructions of the state government to the public prosecutor to consider withdrawal of cases. It is now for the trial court to take a decision on the matter. The next hearing was slated for August 26, sources said.



Vaiko described the state government's decision to withdraw Pota cases against him and eight others as a "face saving device". Vaiko, who is on a 'renaissance' pa-

dayatra told a news agency over telephone from Kallakudi in Virdhunagar district that the TN government had taken the decision as the Centre was preparing to repeal Pota. Vaiko said he had been consistently maintaining that "justice will ultimately win". "I had filed a petition in the Supreme Court against my detention, which will be coming up for hearing soon," he said. "During the last 19 months, we (he and eight others) have undergone torture. There were tragedies in the families of four of the detainees. Are they going to come back. How is the government going to compensate?" he asked.

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CCS finalises anti-terror agenda for Indo-Pak talks

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 9. — The Cabinet Committee on Security met today to finalise a brief for the crucial two-day home secretary-level India-Pakistan talks on terrorism, cross-border infiltration and drug trafficking, to be held in Islamabad from tomorrow.

The 90-minute meeting of the CCS, chaired by the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, approved the brief that will be presented by the home secretary, Mr Dhirendra Singh, to the Pakistani delegation led by his counterpart, Mr Tariq Mahmood. India is expected to convey its concerns at the continued infiltration and the continued existence of the infrastructure for terrorism, including training camps and communications facilities, in Pakistan.

India will raise with Pakistan its concerns over the violence and terrorist

Ultra detained

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 9.— Pakistan has detained a top leader of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, officials said today. Maulana Fazl-ur Rahman Khalil was taken into custody recently, said security officials. The government banned Khalil's group after 9/11 attacks in the USA. Khalil is believed to be a friend of Taliban chief Mullah Mohammed Omar. — AP

attacks on security forces in Jammu and Kashmir at the two-day talks, the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, said. Mr Patil, along with the defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, and the finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram, attended today's CCS meeting. The August 10-11 talks on terrorism and narcotics control will be followed by discussions on Economic and Commercial Cooperation.

THE STATESMAN

10 AUG 2004

Monitoring Malacca

sr/b India should offer to help 9/8

The Indian Navy would be diligently monitoring the recently launched coordinated patrolling of the piracy-infested Malacca Straits by counterparts from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Since terrorism can follow piracy, and the region is prone to militancy the importance of policing those waters cannot be over-emphasised. For valid reasons those countries have initially declined to involve others — the United States was keen to play global super-cop but its presence could have fuelled Islamic extremism. There are, however, signs of a shift in that particular wind with a top Indonesian military official admitting that it would be difficult to muster and sustain adequate force levels. Which would indicate that including some regional navies in the exercise was an option. India could position itself as a logical choice: its relations with all three countries are generally smooth, there are historic and cultural ties, and it does have adequate naval capability. Though it would not publicly say so, establishing a “presence” in the Straits would bolster the security of the island territories which are really closer to troubled Aceh than the Indian mainland. Logistics is not be a problem, the Fortran (Fortress Commander, Andaman & Nicobar islands) has distinct muscle.

The need to maintain law and order in the Straits is all too obvious. The International Maritime Bureau recorded 445 pirate attacks last year, the second-highest since 1992. More than 50,000 commercial vessels sail the 800-km channel each year. While piracy is a long-standing problem, the post 9/11 spurt suggests that militants have infiltrated criminal gangs and are playing for higher stakes. It is a global concern, but for India a local threat. Policy makers in New Delhi would, however, be required to summon up a special blend of courage and finesse to secure participation in the patrolling (for the record, Indian warships escorted American vessels through the Straits not so long ago). Courage to assume the responsibilities that devolve upon an aspiring “regional player”, finesse to avoid creating a “big brother” impression. But the bottom line remains that the blue-water Indian navy cannot afford to remain docked while the adjacent seas are churning.

THE STATESMAN

9 AUG 2004

POTA panel demands more powers

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, JULY 23. The Central POTA Review Committee today urged the Centre to vest more powers with the panel by making suitable amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). It said that its review would be a futile and meaningless exercise otherwise.

In its second interim report submitted to the Union Home Ministry, the committee said that in spite of serious handicaps, it had been able to make substantial progress in reviewing the cases before it. But the lack of statutory powers to secure information and material from the quarters concerned had hampered its work.

The committee drew the Government's attention to its first interim report submitted on December 4, 2003 recommending that it be vested with powers similar to the National Human Rights Commission to seek information from the State Governments. Inaction on the recommendations had caused a major setback in the

functioning of the review committee.

Centre's inaction

The Government had merely replied in February that the recommendations would be considered at the time of extension of POTA beyond October 23, 2004. "Omission on the part of the Central Government in taking any meaningful action on the interim report only hampered the work of the review committee. It was only disabling the committee from effectively carrying out its statutory function."

The report said: "Efforts to expeditiously dispose of the remaining complaints may not fructify and, as a result, the remedy of review might become futile, unless suitable provision is made for production of information and material necessary for proper review of cases under POTA."

In its conclusions, the committee said: "The experience thus far has brought to the fore a number of issues concerning various provisions of the statute depicting prone-

ness to misuse. A number of these are subject matter of the suggestions received from various NGOs, Bar Associations, political parties and members of the public. These suggestions would also be taken up for consideration, after disposal of pending complaints, in respect of cases where accused persons are in jail." The report however failed to indicate how many complaints the committee had disposed of since its inception.

Ban on LTTE

The committee declined to take up for review the ban imposed on two terrorist organisations — the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Akhil Bharat Nepali Ekta Samaj — on the ground that a lot of time would be required to be devoted exclusively for these two matters at the cost of other work on complaints involving questions of personal liberty. It has, therefore, suggested that the Government set up another committee to review the ban.

জঙ্গিনদের জন্য পাঠানো অস্ববোধাই জাহাজ আটক চট্টগ্রামে

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৯ জুলাই: উত্তর-পূর্বের জঙ্গিনদের জন্য পাঠানো কয়েক কোটি টাকার অস্ত্রশস্ত্র আটক করল ভারত ও বাংলাদেশ। চট্টগ্রাম বন্দরে বেআইনি অস্ববোধাই এক জাহাজ এসে ভিড়ছিল কিছু দিন আগে। অস্ববোধাই জাহাজটি চট্টগ্রাম থেকে আসার কথা ছিল কলকাতার দিকেই। ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দা বাহিনী আগেভাগে জানতে পারে খবর দেয় বাংলাদেশ সরকারকে। তার পরে ওই জাহাজ থেকে অস্ত্রগুলি উদ্ধার করা হয়।

কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাতিল এই খবরের সত্যতা স্বীকার করে বলেন, "এই ঘটনার তদন্ত এখনও চলছে। তবে উত্তর-পূর্বপ্রদেশের জঙ্গিনদের কাছে পৌঁছে দেওয়ার জন্যই এই অস্ত্র জাহাজে করে আসছিল। অস্ত্রগুলির মধ্যে ছিল ১২৯০টি এ কে-৪৭ ও সাই-মেশিন গান, ১০০টি টমি গান, ৪০০টি ইউ জেড আই রাইফেলস ও সেমি-অটোমেটিক রাইফেল এবং ১৫০টি রকেট লঞ্চার।"

অস্ত্র আসার খবর ভারত সরকারের কাছ থেকে

পাওয়া মাত্রই বাংলাদেশ সরকার তৎপর হয়। চট্টগ্রামে ওই অস্ত্র উদ্ধারে ভারতকে সাহায্য করে। জাহাজটিতে অস্ত্র পাঠানোর পিছনে কারা জড়িত, তদন্ত করে দেখাচ্ছে মনমোহন সরকার। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাতিল এক প্রস্তাব জবাবে বলেন, "উত্তর-পূর্বপ্রদেশের বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদী গোষ্ঠীগুলির জন্যই এই অস্ত্র যে পাঠানো হচ্ছিল, তা বিভিন্ন রিপোর্ট থেকে আমরা জানতে পেরেছি।" কেন্দ্রীয় গোয়েন্দারা বলেছেন, বেশ কিছু দিন থেকেই এভাবে বেআইনি অস্ত্র মায়ানমার থেকে বাংলাদেশের চট্টগ্রাম হয়ে কলকাতা এবং তার পরে উত্তর-পূর্বপ্রদেশের বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে ছড়িয়ে পড়ছে। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক এই ঘটনা পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকারকেও জানিয়েছে।

বাংলাদেশ হাইকমিশনের মুখপাত্র আনোয়ারুল হক বলেছেন, "জাহাজ ধরার পিছনে আমাদের প্রচেষ্টাও রয়েছে। বিষয়টি নিয়ে আমরা উদ্বিগ্ন। কারণ, আমাদের দেশে অস্ত্র আমদানি বেধে। কিন্তু

তার সুযোগ নিয়ে অন্য দেশের জন্য এ ভাবে অবৈধ অস্ত্র আমদানির প্রচেষ্টা আমাদের দেশের স্বার্থের পক্ষেও ঠিক নয়।" আনোয়ারুল আরও জানান, বাংলাদেশের স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব ওমর ফারুক তদন্ত কমিটি গঠন করে বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখছেন।

এখন ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দারা তদন্ত করে দেখছেন যে চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর এলাকায় এই অস্ত্রগুলি এল কোথা থেকে? পাকিস্তান থেকেই কি এই অস্ত্রগুলি আগে বাংলাদেশে চলে আসে? পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা আই এস আই-ই কি বাংলাদেশে এই অস্ত্রগুলি আসতে সাহায্য করেছে?

আবার স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের গোয়েন্দা অফিসারদের একাংশের ধারণা, মায়ানমার থেকেই এই অস্ত্র পাঠানো হয়। তার পরে চট্টগ্রাম হয়ে এগুলি প্রথমে কলকাতার বন্দরে আসে। পরে ওই অস্ত্র উত্তর-পূর্বপ্রদেশের বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া হয়। এই অস্ত্রগুলি নেওয়ার জন্য কলকাতাভেতও এক জন এজেন্ট আছেন। তাকেও খোঁজা হচ্ছে।

তুটানে আলফা জঙ্গি ঘাঁড়িগুলিকে নির্মূল করে

দেওয়ার পরে এই সংগঠন অনেকটাই দুর্বল হয়ে পড়েছে। বিচ্ছিন্ন ভাবে কয়েকটি এলাকা ছাড়া অসমের আলফার কার্যকলাপ এখন স্তিমিত। মিজোরামের পার্বত্য এলাকায় এদের অনেকে আত্মগোপন করে আছে। আলফা সংগঠন দুর্বল হয়ে গেলেও এদের অনেক নেতাই এখন বাংলাদেশে। অরবিন্দ রাজশেখাওয়া এবং পরেশ বরফা এদের মধ্যে অন্যতম। জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলিতে "রি-এক্টিং"-এর চেষ্টা যেমন হচ্ছে তেমনই তাদের উৎসাহ দিয়ে আবার জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপে সক্রিয় করার উদ্যোগও শুরু হয়েছে।

স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের সন্দেহ, আলফা সংগঠন দুর্বল হয়ে যাওয়াতেই নতুন করে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপে উৎসাহ দেওয়ার উদ্দেশ্যেই এই অস্ত্র সরবরাহ করা হচ্ছিল। আলফার পাশাপাশি, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের সন্দেহের তালিকায় ন্যাশনাল ডেমোক্রেটিক ফ্রন্ট অফ বড়োলায়ড (এন ডি এফ বি), ইউনাইটেড পিপলস ডেমোক্রেটিক সলিডারিটি (ইউ পি ডি এস) এবং এন এস সি এন (মুইতা), এন এস সি এন (খাপলাং)

এবং বড়ো লিবারেশন টাইগারের মতো জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলিও রয়েছে। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক সূত্রে আরও জানানো হয়েছে, ২০০১ সালের জানুয়ারি থেকে ২০০৪ সালের মে মাসের মধ্যে গোটা দেশের নানা প্রান্ত থেকে বহু বিদেশি গুপ্তচরকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছে। এর মধ্যে ২৩ জন পাকিস্তানি ও চার জন নেপালি আছে। বাংলাদেশি গুপ্তচর রয়েছে তিন জন। এর মধ্যে এক জন ২০০৪ সালের ৩০ মে-র আগেই পশ্চিমবঙ্গ থেকেই গ্রেফতার হয়েছিল। ২০০২ সালেও পশ্চিমবঙ্গ থেকে এক জন পাকিস্তানি গুপ্তচরকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়।

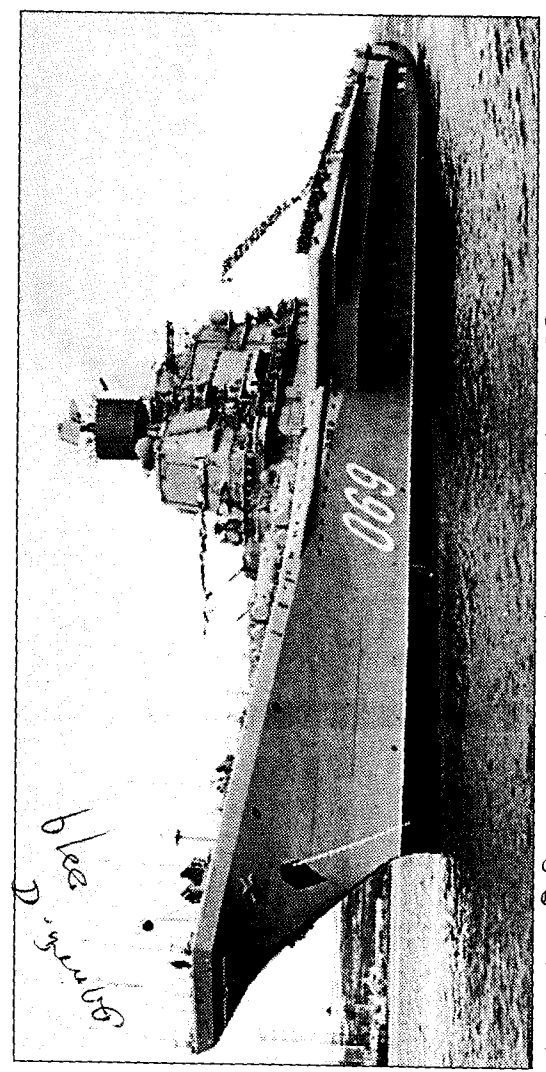
অন্য দুই বাংলাদেশি গুপ্তচরের মধ্যে এক জন রাজহীন থেকে এবং অন্য জনকে সিকিম থেকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়। এই ঘটনায় এটা প্রমাণ হয়ে যাচ্ছে যে, দিল্লিতে ক্ষমতার পরিবর্তন হয়ে গেলেও প্রতিক্রমী রাষ্ট্র বাংলাদেশের সঙ্গে ভারতের সম্পর্কের যে উত্তেজনা, তা এখনও প্রশমিত হয়নি।

বরাদ্দ বেড়েছে, এ বছর গর্শকভ কিনতে পারে ভারত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ জুলাই: বেশ কয়েক বছরের চিলেমির পরে, সামরিক বাহিনীকে অধুনিক বানানোর চেষ্টা এ বার গতি পেলে। রাশিয়ার বিমানবাহী জাহাজ গর্শকভ বা অ্যাডভান্সড জেট প্রশিক্ষক বিমান কেনার মতো বিষয়গুলি চলতি বছরে চূড়ান্ত হয়ে যাবে। কারণ, হাতে ৭৭ হাজার কোটি টাকার বাজেট-বরাদ্দ পেয়ে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের লক্ষ্য, ফৌজের আধুনিকীকরণের কাজে গতিবৃদ্ধি করা। গত দুই বছরে যেখানে প্রতিরক্ষা খাতে মূলধনী বরাদ্দ কমেছিল, সেখানে নতুন সরকার আসার পরে তা প্রায় বিগুণ করা হয়েছে।

প্রতি বছর প্রতিরক্ষা খাতে টাকা বরাদ্দ বাড়লেও খরচের বেলায় বিলম্ব হওয়াটা বেন নিয়ম হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছিল। এই কারণে এক সময়ে প্রায় ৯ হাজার কোটি টাকা ফেরতও চলে যায়। অথচ ফৌজের আধুনিকীকরণের চাহিদা দিন দিন বেড়েই চলেছে। এই সমস্যা মেটাতে দু'বছরে আসে একটি বিশেষ তহবিল গঠন করা হয় ২৫ হাজার কোটি টাকার। যার মেয়াদ বছর পেরিয়ে গেলেও ফুরিয়ে যাবে না। কিন্তু এই ভাবেও যে সমস্যা মেটেনি, তা স্পষ্ট প্রণববাবুর কথায়।

ফলে এই বছর বড় রকমের মূলধনী বরাদ্দ হাতে পেয়ে আসে প্রণববাবু বকেয়া চুক্তিগুলি সেরে ফেলতে চাইছেন। জর্জের



আমলের বেশ কয়েকটি চুক্তি সম্পন্ন হলেও আর্থিক লেনদেন হয়নি। তাই প্রতিরক্ষা-বরাদ্দ বাজেটে প্রায় ১৮ শতাংশ বৃদ্ধি হলেও কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বাধীন জেট সরকার কিন্তু চলতি বছরে নতুন চুক্তি করার ক্ষেত্রে সামান্যই স্বাধীনতা পাচ্ছে। কারণ, বাজেটের মূলধনী বরাদ্দের মধ্যে প্রায় ২৬ হাজার কোটি টাকাই খরচ হবে বকেয়া চুক্তির টাকা সেটাতে। প্রণববাবুও বলেছেন, "গত সরকারের আমলে যে সব চুক্তি পড়ে

রয়েছে, সেই খাতে প্রায় সব টাকাই চলে যাবে। নতুন চুক্তি করার জন্য বেশি টাকা এই বছর সরকারের হাতে থাকবে না।" বকেয়া চুক্তিগুলির মধ্যে উল্লেখযোগ্য হচ্ছে রাশিয়ার পুরনো বিমানবাহী জাহাজ আডামিরাবাল গর্শকভ কেনা। এ ছাড়া, মিগ ২১-এর বিকল্প হিসাবে অ্যাডভান্সড জেট ট্রেনার (এ জে টি) কেনার কাজও পড়ে রয়েছে। তা ছাড়া, আরও কয়েকটি সুশোই সু ৩০ বিমান নেওয়ার পাশাপাশি

জনা ১৫ হাজার ৪১৯ কোটি বরাদ্দ করা ছিল। সেই জায়গায় এই বাজেটে নৌবাহিনীকে ১৩ হাজার ১৫০ কোটি এবং বিমানবাহিনীর জন্য ২৩ হাজার ২৭০ কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করা হয়েছে।

প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, কোনও আনুপাতিক হিসাবে বিভিন্ন শাখার মধ্যে বরাদ্দ বন্টন করা হয়নি। বরং যার যে রকম দরকার, সেই মতোই টাকা দেওয়া হয়েছে। লোকবল ও সরঞ্জামের নিরিখে সেনাবাহিনীর পরেই আছে বিমানবাহিনী, শেষে নৌবাহিনী। কিন্তু এ বারের বাজেটে সবচেয়ে বেশি বৃদ্ধি হয়েছে বিমানবাহিনীর বরাদ্দে। গবেষণা খাতেও অর্থ বেড়েছে।

ফৌজের বরাদ্দের মধ্যে মূলধন বাদ গতবার ছিল বরাদ্দের ২৮.০৪ শতাংশ। এবার তা বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে ৫৬.৫২ শতাংশে। প্রণববাবুর বক্তব্য, "প্রতিরক্ষা-বাজেটের নীতি হচ্ছে চাহিদা। অনুসারে টাকার কথা বলা হবে। তাই দরকার পড়লে সালিসেমেন্টারি বাজেটের মাধ্যমে টাকা চাওয়া যেতেই পারে।"

দেশের প্রথম 'চিফ অফ ডিফেন্স স্টাফ' কে হকেন, তা নিয়ে এখনও কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত হয়নি। প্রণববাবুর কথায়, "আমাদের এখনও সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া বাকি রয়েছে।" তা ছাড়া, বিষয়টি নিয়ে এ যাবৎ সরকার বা দল কোনও প্রতিশ্রুতিও যে দেয়নি, সে কথাও জানাতে ভোলেননি প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী।

J. D. S. M. ...

More Defence funds may be needed: Pranab

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 10. — Despite a considerable increase of Rs 11,000 crore in the Budget provisions, the defence establishment appears dissatisfied. Today the defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, went public in asserting that additional resources may be required and would be sought through supplementary later in the year.

The increase in the Budget is largely to pay for the large number of defence deals signed for the Air Force last year. These, he explained, were committed liabilities. More deals are likely to be signed in the year for which extra money could become necessary he stressed.

Last year, the IAF signed deals worth over Rs 25,000 crore and considering payments for deals signed earlier are still being made, a fur-

ther increase of about Rs 8,000 in the defence Budget was necessary he declared.

Speaking to reporters, Mr Mukherjee said the increase for the IAF was substantial, and while there was something for the navy, there wasn't much for the Army. He said contracts for the Army were under discussion and sometimes, negotiations go on for long.

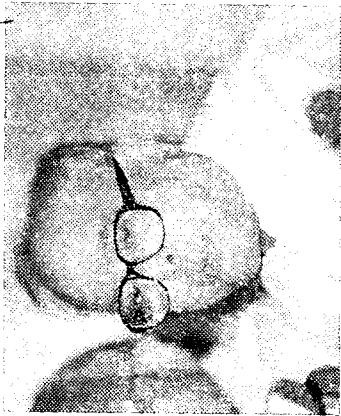
The increased allocations were because of the modernisation programmes and added if the money were not spent, it is not because of the bureaucracy's foot-dragging but because of the nature of the negotiations.

Mr Mukherjee explained why he had junked the previous government's plan to have a non-lapsable fund. He called it a misnomer and added he didn't subscribe to such things.

On the Kashmir situation, he sug-

gested the current troop-strength would be maintained, but it wasn't just the Army's job to establish and maintain normalcy. He said the dialogue process had not lead to a miraculous opening but it had showed that talks could go on. He hoped the fencing along the LoC would be completed soon. Later, asked about the series of complaints about corruption in the defence estates department, he said, the defence ministry, like the railways and the port trusts, was one of India's largest owners of real estate. He said people were trying to take away defence land and suggested that in some cases, problematic situations may have arisen and had to be sorted out. A senior defence ministry official unofficially said he would look into reports about dubious land deals.

Asked about a probe on defence deals by the Vajpayee government



Mr Pranab Mukherjee at a press meet in the defence ministry office on Saturday. — AFP

during the press conference, he said he had received some questions from the Comptroller and Auditor General. Speaking about the 'Coffin scam', he said the Public Accounts Committee was looking into it.

(To be continued)

No plans for a CDS now

NEW DELHI, July 10. — The Congress led UPA government does not have immediate plans to appoint a chief of defence staff.

While the previous Vajpayee government had been thinking about it, the defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee, today said, "We are yet to take a decision whether to have it or not." An appointment can be made only after a decision has been taken.

After a Group of Ministers report called for the creation of a post, the NDA government stepped back. The reason is still officially unclear. The only difference in the composition of the GOM and the Cabinet committee on security was the prime minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was in the CCS while his principal secretary and national security advisor, Mr Brajesh Mishra, was in the GOM. Yet, the government accepted all GOM recommendations except the one regarding the CDS.

The Indian Air Force was strongly opposed to the creation of the post—the chief at that time Air Chief Marshal AY Tipnis, had stated the Chiefs of Staff Committee, currently in service, was working well and didn't need to be changed. Despite that, the navy chief, then Admiral Sashil Kumar, the seniormost of the three service chiefs, was considered a front-runner and as part of the preparation, a house had already been allotted to him. — SNS

Eleven get life terms for '98 Mumbai blasts

Mumbai: A local court here on Friday sentenced 11 men, including a Pakistani, to life imprisonment for planning and executing a series of bomb blasts in suburban trains and railway stations in the city six years ago.

They were convicted last week on charges of trying to destabilise the country by triggering the 1998 explosions that killed four people and injured 30 others.

"This crime is uncommon," additional sessions judge V L Achalia said, pronouncing the sentence. He said the Pakistani national, Javed Ghulam Hasan Sheikh, was "provoked by the ISI to take revenge for the demolition of the Babri masjid".

Life imprisonment was also awarded to Mohammed Altaf Sayyad Ahmed Sheikh, Asgar Abdul Hanif Khan, Jafar Abdul Haq Sheikh, Shahid Khalil Ansari, Asgar Qadar Sheikh, Iqbal Mohammed Hanif Sheikh, Kadar Mohammed Shafi Sayyad, Sagir Bashir Chouhan, Farooq Younus Sheikh and Mohammed Yaqub Abdul Nadar.

The court directed that another Pakistani national, Shamshad Haider Qadar — who was acquitted earlier because of lack of evidence, be deported immediately. The judge asked the Mumbai police commissioner to keep Qadar in safe custody till then.

Delivering the judgement,

A Pakistani national among those convicted

He was provoked by ISI to avenge Babri masjid demolition, says the judge

Another Pakistani, acquitted earlier, ordered immediate deportation

Achalia said: "I had a choice between life term, capital sentence and the middle way in the form of new Supreme Court directives on the definition of life-term." The judge said that while he has punished the guilty in the strictest manner by awarding a jail term that will go till the end of their lives, he has avoided being too harsh by not giving a death sentence.

Besides awarding life term to the 11 men, the court ordered jail terms ranging from three years to 10 years for eight of the offenders, while the other three were given five years' rigorous imprisonment each with monetary penalty. All the terms should go "consecutively" and not concurrently, the court said.

Achalia said this was for the first time that life term was being ordered under Section 150 of Indian Railways Act (tampering railway property with the intention to cause severe loss of property or life of passengers). Agencies

10 JUL 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

জর্জের বিরুদ্ধে এ বার সেনা ক্যান্টিন কেলেঙ্কারির অভিযোগ, তদন্ত প্রণবের

১৭ জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২ জুলাই: তহলকা এবং কফিনের পরে আবার জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের বিরুদ্ধে নতুন কেলেঙ্কারির অভিযোগ। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের কাছে অভিযোগ এসেছে যে সেনাবাহিনীর ক্যান্টিনের আধুনিকীকরণ করতে গিয়ে তদানীন্তন সরকার প্রায় ২১০ কোটি টাকার এক কেলেঙ্কারিতে জড়িয়ে পড়েছে। কফিন কেলেঙ্কারিতে অভিযোগ ছিল ৬০ কোটি টাকার। এ ক্ষেত্রে অভিযোগ আরও অনেক বেশি।

প্রণববাবুর নির্দেশে 'ক্যান্টিন কেলেঙ্কারি' নিয়ে সেনা গোয়েন্দারা ইতিমধ্যেই তদন্ত শুরু করেছেন। ২৩ মে প্রণববাবুর কাছে এ ব্যাপারে এক বিস্তৃত রিপোর্ট জমা পড়েছে।

এই রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে যে সেনাবাহিনীর ক্যান্টিনগুলিকে আধুনিক করার জন্য কম্পিউটার প্রযুক্তি বসানোর কাজ শুরু হয়। এই কাজ শুরু হলে যে সংস্থা অনেক কম টাকায় এই কাজ করতে পারে তাই অবজ্ঞা করে অনেক বেশি টাকায় অন্য এক সংস্থাকে দিয়ে কাজটি করানো হয়।

বাস্কালোরের ক্যান্টিনকিট সফটওয়্যার নামক এক সংস্থা কোয়ার্টার মাস্টার জেনারেলের অফিসের সর্বস্তরে তাদের কাজের রিপোর্ট জমা দিলেও স্মার্টকার্ড লিমিটেড নামক অন্য এক সংস্থাকে কাজটি দিয়ে দেওয়া হয় ২০০৪ সালের ১৩ এপ্রিল। কমান্ড হেডকোয়ার্টারের প্রতিটি অফিসে এই নির্দেশ জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয় (চিঠি নং ৯৬৩০১/কিউ/ডিডি জি সি এস)।

ফার্নান্ডেজের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ ছিল কার্গিল যুদ্ধের সময় বিমানবাহিনী পাঠাতে দেরি হয়েছিল বলে যুদ্ধে হতাহতের সংখ্যা অনেক বেড়ে যায়। এ বিষয়ে প্রণববাবু জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজকে 'ক্লিন চিট' দিয়েছেন বলে অনেকে সংসদে অভিযোগ করেন। এই নিয়ে প্রণববাবু প্রকাশ্যে কিছু না বললেও অভ্যন্তরীণ বৈঠকে তিনি দফতরের অফিসারদের বলেছেন, "প্রতিটি বিষয়, প্রতিটি অভিযোগের তদন্ত হবে। কিন্তু তদন্ত হওয়ার আগেই কোনও কথা বলে রাজনৈতিক উত্তেজনা সৃষ্টি আমার লক্ষ্য নয়।"

সেনা ক্যান্টিনের পরিচালন ব্যবস্থার উন্নতির জন্য নানা ধরনের সফটওয়্যার বসানো হয়। কিন্তু এখন দেখা যাচ্ছে প্রতি

আর এক কেলেঙ্কারি

তাৎক্ষণিক	সরকারের ক্ষতি (কোটি টাকায়)
ক্যান্টিন পরিচালনায় সফটওয়্যারের খরচ	১০.৩০
সহজ বিনিময়ের সুবিধা নিতে প্রয়োজনীয় প্রযুক্তি	৯.২৪
তিন রকম ক্যান্টিনে হার্ডওয়্যার উন্নত করার খরচ	১১৫.০২
হিসাবের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় সফটওয়্যার	১০.৫৩
মোট ক্ষতি	১৪৫.০৯
দীর্ঘমেয়াদি	
বার্ষিক রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ	০.৭৩
বিনিময় প্রযুক্তিতে খরচ	০.৬৫
মোট ক্ষতি	১.৩৮

এই অভিযোগ ভিত্তিহীন বলে উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ। তিনি বলেন, বর্তমান সরকার নানা অবাস্তব কাণ্ড ঘটিয়েই চলেছে। এ সব অভিযোগের কোনও ভিত্তি নেই। "কদিন আগে সংসদে এখনকার প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী নিজে বলেছিলেন, এ সব ভিত্তিহীন। আমাকে যথেষ্ট নিশ্চিত করেছিলেন তিনি। আবার নতুন করে যে সব অভিযোগ উদ্ভাবন করা হচ্ছে, তা নেহাতই মনগড়া, আজগুবি গল্প।" জর্জ বলেন, "আমি এ নিয়ে একটুও চিন্তিত নই। এ ব্যাপারে কথা বলতেও আগ্রহী নই।"

ক্ষেত্রের অনেক বেশি অর্থ খরচ করেছে প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক। গত ১৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি বাস্কালোরের সংস্থাটি চিঠি দিয়ে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রককে জানায় যে এ ব্যাপারে তাদের ডাকা হোক। তারপরেও কেন তাদের সঙ্গে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রক কোনও যোগাযোগ করল না তা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন উঠেছে।

এ ব্যাপারে প্রণববাবুকে প্রশ্ন করা হলে তিনি বলেন, "অনেক ব্যাপারে অনেক অভিযোগই আসছে। এ ব্যাপারে একটাই কথা বলব, ল উইল টেক ইটস ওন কোর্স।"

NSAB to meet regularly

By Our Diplomatic
Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 2. The reconstituted National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) will meet more often to provide regular inputs to the National Security Council, official sources said today. The former High Commissioner to Pakistan and Ambassador to Moscow, S.K. Lambah, will be the convener of the 15-member body.

According to the sources, the Manmohan Singh Government has decided that the new members of the NSAB will have a two-year term, instead of the one-year tenure at present. A notification on the reconstituted Board is expected shortly.

Other members are: Vice-Admiral P.J. Jacob (retd), Air Mar-

shal P.S. Brar (retd), Lt. Gen. S.S. Mehta (retd), E.N. Rammohan, former Director-General, Border Security Force; B.K.R. Rao, former Special Secretary, Research & Analysis Wing; Hamid Ansari, former Ambassador to the United Nations; N.C. Saxena, former Secretary, Planning Commission; D.C. Pathak, former Director, Intelligence Bureau; Ashok Khosla, president, Development Alternatives; Meenakshi Gopinath, honorary director, Women in Security Conflict Management and Peace; S.K. Sharma, Professor of Chemical Engineering, Punjab University; Amitav Malik, former DRDO scientist, C. Rajamohan, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Manoj Joshi, journalist.

In a policy document on security, defence and foreign policy, released before the recent elections, the Congress had said it would ensure necessary connectivity between the Government's intelligence agencies, the National Security Adviser, the Strategic Policy Group and the NSAB.

"There has been no systematic interaction between the Strategic Policy Group and the NSAB. Nor has there been any regular interaction between [the] National Security Advisor and the NSAB," the document stated.

The promise of regular consultations and meetings within and with the NSAB is an obvious effort to address the gaps perceived by the Congress party.

MANAGING SECURITY

An Agenda For The New Government

By GURMEET KANWAL

Atal Behari Vajpayee's government may not have left India shining, but to its credit, it notched up several major achievements on the national security front. Foremost among these was declaring India a nuclear weapons state, a move that unquestionably enhanced India's quest for strategic autonomy. The new central government undoubtedly has numerous pressing domestic and international issues to deal with after a long holiday from governance due to the long drawn-out electoral process. However, it is in the realm of national security that it needs to move with courage, sagacity and speed to take some major decisions to make the country more secure both externally and internally.

India has for long been internationally perceived and has behaved as a soft state. Otherwise, Pakistan's decade and a half old proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir, would not have gone unchallenged. Also, the ISI would not have been allowed to spread its tentacles to forge links with militant organisations in India's northeastern states and engineer bomb blasts and other acts of terrorism all over the country with impunity through its mercenary marauders.

Feelings of revenge

The recent peace overtures notwithstanding, Pakistan's military establishment is seething with feelings of revenge for its comprehensive military defeat in Kargil. Its various state-sponsored terrorist organisations have now become Frankenstein monsters and their writ runs unfettered across international boundaries. Osama bin-Laden, a degenerate terrorist warlord, has threatened a holy jihad against India. The internal security situation is also far from encouraging, with religious extremism once again rearing its ugly head even in progressive states like Gujarat. Fissiparous tendencies in disparate ethnic groups are again coming to the fore.

The first and foremost requirement for the better management of key national security concerns is to genuinely integrate the three services headquarters with the ministry of defence without any further delay. This long-pending reform in the country's defence and security threat perception, analysis, decision-making and policy implementation structure will lead to an exponential improvement in the management of national security. The services HQ are still attached offices of the ministry of defence for all practical purposes and merely renaming them has served no purpose. All vested interests still opposed to this inescapable reform need to be ruthlessly brushed aside. Besides such integration, other salient recommendations of the Arun Singh task force on higher defence management, such as the creation of a chief of defence staff to preside over the

recently instituted HQ integrated defence staff and the delegation of financial powers to the chiefs of staff of the army, the navy and the air force to manage their respective revenue budgets, also need to be expeditiously implemented.

A comprehensive strategic defence review is still to be conducted. The must be done post haste. The dangers posed by present and emerging threats to national

GDP is required to finance India's nuclear force structure for "credible, minimum deterrence", it will have to be provided. The Kargil intrusions of 1999 forcefully drove home the point that a strong conventional force continues to be necessary to ward off external threats from recalcitrant neighbours and that expenditure on developing a nuclear deterrent cannot compensate the neglect of conventional forces.



security, like the threat to India's integrity from the scourge of terrorism and the linked proliferation of small arms, threats from the weapons of mass destruction, information and cyberwarfare, the imperatives of food, energy and water security and the hazards of mass migrations from across India's borders, need to be evaluated and suitable policy options drawn up. A comprehensive national security strategy should then be formulated to deal with the threats on a long and short-term basis so that the responsibilities of the armed forces and concerned government departments are clearly enunciated. Based on the national security and foreign policy objectives and the responsibilities assigned, a comprehensive, inter-departmental, tri-service military strategy can then be drawn up.

All the departments concerned of the government must know their respective roles during war and peace as modern warfare is not the prerogative of the armed forces alone. The three services can then review their force structures and organisational underpinnings and make suitable recommendations to the government to institute the changes necessary for lean but lethal forces ready to fight the overt and covert wars of the 21st century.

Defence budget

The next important measure the incoming government must adopt is to raise the defence budget from the present abysmally low level of 2.2 per cent of the GDP to 3.5 per cent of the GDP, a figure that has been found by eminent Indian strategists and various think tanks to be sustainable for the Indian economy as well as the minimum necessary to enhance defence preparedness to acceptable levels. If an additional annual outlay over and above 3.5 per cent of the

Security Advisory Board of the National Security Council has drawn up a draft nuclear doctrine that is fairly comprehensive and a strategic forces command has been established, the remaining contours of the nuclear force structure, including its targeting, surveillance, early warning and damage assessment system and safety and risk reduction-cum-confidence building measures, are yet to clearly emerge. Transparency in matters of national security is a force multiplier as it enhances the public's awareness of major concerns and helps to build a national consensus.

Counter-insurgency

The management of internal security is another aspect that has suffered for want of due attention. It is well recognised that the army's prolonged involvement in counter-insurgency operations detracts from its ability to train and prepare for its primary role. However, when the central and state governments' internal security forces find it difficult to effectively defeat a foreign-sponsored proxy war type of insurgency fought with sophisticated weapons and the incidents begin to spiral out of control, the army has to be finally called out to restore a semblance of normality. This Catch-22 situation could have been overcome by raising a national level counter-insurgency force with the army's ethos, methods of training and, initially, the army's leadership.

However, the previous government reposed its faith in a "mix-n-match" policy of committing almost all types of central police forces like the Border Security Force, the Central Reserve Police Force of the forces has been raising new battalions in an ad hoc manner. The policy has not produced results commensurate with the force levels employed as counter-insurgency operations require a very high degree of specialisation and higher level coordination. Dealing with the various insurgencies threatening India's security requires a holistic inter-ministerial and inter-departmental approach. Above all, it requires political courage and vision to evolve and implement a comprehensive national policy.

Welfare measures too need immediate attention. Married accommodation continues to be abysmally short. Army units serving in high-stress operational areas are still bearing the cross of the shortage of 13,000 officers. The services have been justifiably demanding a separate pay commission.

These are issues the government can easily redress. Pakistan's misadventure in Kargil served as a timely reminder that the policy of drift in national security is dangerous and that the nation cannot bank on the armed forces to deliver the goods unless they are given the wherewithal necessary for them to accomplish the diverse missions that are being increasingly assigned to them. The new government at the centre must get to work in right earnest if national security is not to be compromised in future.

Commander ordered capture of Point 5353 during Kargil war

By Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29. Indian soldiers had attempted to capture Point 5353, a strategically-important peak in the Dras sector, in the first days of the Kargil war. New evidence that such an assault took place blows apart contradictory claims by the former Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and top military officials that the feature does not lie on the Indian side of the Line of Control.

An investigation by *The Hindu* has gained access to orders issued to Major Navneet Mehra of the 16 Grenadiers Regiment, ordering him to lead an assault on Point 5353, so named for its altitude in metres. It is the highest feature in the Dras sector, and allows the Pakistani troops to observe National Highway 1A, as well as an alternative Dras-Kargil route that is now under construction.

Major Mehra's men were asked to evict the Pakistani intruders on Point 5353 by 6 a.m. on May 18, 1999. The officer's plan was to set up three fire bases along the base of the peak to support the infantry assault by two groups.

Although backed by some artillery, both groups faced a difficult climb, under direct fire from both the Pakistani positions on Point 5353 and Point 5165.

However, Major Mehra's despatches note, his commanding officer, Col. Pushpinder Oberoi, gave specific orders "to go for it at any cost." Col. Oberoi's troops failed to execute his instructions. Ill-equipped for the extreme cold, and not properly acclimatised to the altitude, the troops withdrew after suffering 13 casualties. The attack was finally called off at 3 a.m. on May 19, 1999.

After news broke that the Pakistani troops occupied Point 5353, the Indian Army denied that the peak had ever been held by India, or, indeed, was on its side of the LoC. A press release issued on August 11, 2000, asserted that the "point was never under our control either before or after Operation Vijay in Kargil." Mr. Fernandes seemed to disagree. Asked about the status of Point 5353 at a subsequent press conference, he insisted that "every inch of the land is under our control."

Mr. Fernandes' subsequent

statements added to the confusion. Speaking to an audience in Mumbai, he said "Point 5353 is the point over which the LoC goes. Fact is, our troops had never occupied that."

However, on January 1, 2001, the Press Information Bureau issued a photograph of Mr. Fernandes standing on what it claimed was Point 5353. Later, the PIB was forced to sack a junior staffer for "an administrative error."

War-time media reports, based on Army briefings, suggest that further efforts to take the peak were made from July 21, 1999, well after the fighting had officially ended. While these efforts were unsuccessful, the available evidence suggests that then-56 Brigade Commander Amar Aul responded by occupying two heights on the Pakistani side of the LoC, 4875 and 4251.

Subsequently, the local commanders hammered out a deal, where both agreed to leave points 5353, 5240, 4251 and 4875 unoccupied.

Towards October-end, for reasons still not clear, the 16 Grenadiers were ordered to take Point 5240 and the 1-3 Gurkha

Rifles Point 5353. While the 16 Grenadiers' attack proceeded as planned, despite bad weather, the 1-3 Gurkha Rifles, for reasons still not clear, never made their way up to Point 5353. When the Pakistani troops detected the Indian presence on Point 5240, they promptly reoccupied Point 5353.

Interestingly, however, the 16 Grenadiers' records on the Point 5353 assault refer to Point 5353 as "a minor objective." So too, do entries in Col. Oberoi's confidential service records. This assessment was vindicated during the artillery clashes in 2001-2002, when the Pakistani observation posts on Point 5353 were unable to bring accurate fire to bear on either the highway or nearby Indian positions. The Indian troops were able to tie down the Pakistani position with accurate fire, rendering it near-impossible for its superior altitude to be used to good effect.

Correction

The height of Tiger Hill is 4,660 metres (i.e., Point 4660), not 4,165 metres as reported in these columns on Tuesday.

Ajai Vikram Singh, new Defence Secretary

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29. The key postings and transfers of top-level IAS officers announced today are part of a larger reshuffle being undertaken by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government. Sources said that key appointments of Secretaries were being made on the criteria of seniority, background and perception about top officials. Orders were issued today, sources said.

Both Anil Bajjal and Ajay Prasad, belonging to the 1969 batch of IAS, were handpicked by the previous National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government to head the Home and Defence Ministries respectively. Mr. Prasad also served as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to the former Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani.

Mr. Dharendra Singh, IAS officer of the 1968 batch of Karnataka cadre, was Secretary, Disinvestment in the NDA Government. He has also served in

Defence Production and has had a stint in the Cabinet Secretariat. He will have a rather short tenure of about nine months as the Home Secretary as he will attain the age of superannuation in March 2005.

Ajai Vikram Singh of the 1967 batch will be the new Defence Secretary. He briefly served as Revenue Secretary under the Jaswant Singh dispensation in the Union Finance Ministry and was moved to the Department of Non-Conventional Energy.

Sushil Chandra Tripathi will be the new Petroleum Secretary. He will fill up the vacancy caused by the promotion of his predecessor, B.K. Chaturvedi, as Cabinet Secretary. Mr. Tripathi, topper of the 1968 batch of IAS, belongs to U.P. cadre. He was recently moved from Elementary Education Department as Secretary, Education.

Anugrah Narayan Tiwari from the 1969 batch of the Andhra Pradesh cadre will be the new Secretary, Personnel. He will replace Arun Bhatnagar

who retires tomorrow but has been appointed as Secretary, Advisory committee on Common Minimum Programme.

B.S. Baswan of the 1967 batch of Madhya Pradesh cadre will take over as Secretary, Education. He is presently Secretary, Social Justice Ministry. R. Pournalingam, Additional Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, is being appointed Secretary, Disinvestment Department in the Ministry of Finance.

He belongs to the 1979 batch of the Tamil Nadu cadre.. PTI reports:

Deepak Chatterjee, Commerce Secretary, who has been given three months' extension in service, has now been given the additional charge of Textiles.

Reva Nayyar, Secretary, Ministry of Development, North Eastern Region, has been appointed Secretary, Department of Women and Child while Culture Secretary, Dhanendra Kumar, has been shifted to the Road Transport Ministry.

Neena Ranjan, Secretary, De-

partment of Official Language, has been posted as Culture Secretary, while Sarita Prasad, Special Secretary, Social Justice Ministry, has been elevated as Secretary in the same Ministry.

A K Rastogi, on "compulsory wait" with the Inter-State Council Secretariat, has been moved to the Home Ministry as Secretary, Border Management.

A K Rastogi, on "compulsory wait" with the Inter-State Council Secretariat, has been moved to the Home Ministry as Secretary, Border Management.

Minor reshuffle in MEA

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29. In a minor reshuffle, Navtej Sarna, currently Joint Secretary (External Publicity) and official spokesman in the Ministry of External Affairs, has been appointed Joint Secretary (Disarmament). Dilip Sinha, till recently India's Deputy High Commissioner to Bangladesh, will replace Mr. Sarna.

In other changes, Sujata Mehta, presently Joint Secretary (United States & Canada), will be moving shortly to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to replace P.S. Raghavan as Joint Secretary.

S. Jaishankar, till recently In-

dia's Ambassador to the Czech Republic, will replace Ms. Meh-ta as Joint Secretary (USC) while Mr. Raghavan takes over as India's new envoy to the Czech Republic.

Mr. Sarna has been Joint Secretary (External Publicity) for nearly two years and has dealt with sensitive negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in Geneva between 1994-1997 as Counsellor (Disarmament).

Dr. Jaishankar has previously worked as Deputy Chief of Mission in Tokyo and Press Secretary to the President while Mr. Dilip Sinha has been posted to Brazil, Geneva and Pakistan apart from a stint in the PMO.

ISI still trains ultras in PoK: MHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

INTERROGATION of some recently-arrested militants has revealed that ISI has re-opened militant training camps in large numbers in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) including Northern Areas (NA) and the government is fearing heavy infiltration in the coming months.

A 30-page Home Ministry document states that the largest militant camp was in Jungle-Mangal area where nearly 300 militants, mostly foreign mercenaries, were being trained followed by Elaquer where 200 others were

undergoing training, official sources said.

The report, based on interrogation of militants and intercepts of wireless messages, said camps in North West Frontier Province in Pakistan and Gilgit area in NA had been revived besides re-opening of full-fledged communication of Lashkar-e-Toiba in Lipa Valley.

Militant camps in Mansera and Haripur, which had been closed after the US-led operations against Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, have been revived with a constant flow of youths from Afghanistan, sources said.

The youths, who were mainly unemployed, were be-

ing targeted by ISI as it was facing a serious depletion in the ranks of insurgents as many of

Militant camps in NWFP, Gilgit have been revived, says the Ministry's 30-page report

the mercenaries belonging to foreign countries including Sudan, Kuwait and Lebanon had been thrown out of Pakistan under pressure from the US and allied forces.

Some mercenaries arrested recently were quoted in

the report as saying that they had ventured into Pakistan for a job, where they fell prey to ISI agents who lured them to training camps in Muzaffarabad in PoK, the sources said. Bugh district had recently been added to the list of areas where training is being imparted as the area has a link between PoK and Afghanistan, according to the arrested militants.

In order to maintain a distance from the Pakistan Army, ISI had created special detachments which were purely marked for launching the militants across the border without any help from troops at the border and the Line of Control.

With this move, Pakistan could escape international criticism that it was helping militants to cross over and instead project that it had no control over the terrorists, the report warned.

The report said that Irshad-ul-Dawa Hospital at Chialabani in PoK had been reopened where militant casualties are treated. This hospital was also closed after the US onslaught on Afghanistan. The report named Hunza and Mandakuli as the areas where militants owing allegiance to Al Badr were being trained, whereas cadres of Hizbul Mujahideen were being trained at Nawakote and Korpani areas in PoK.

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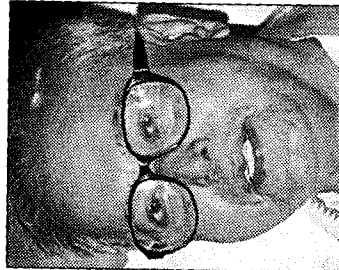
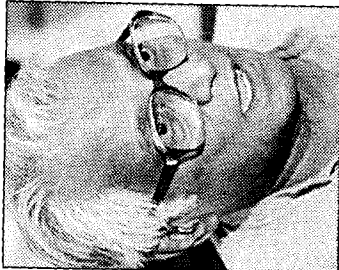
সৌভদ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় • নয়াদিল্লি

৯ জুন: কাঙ্গিল যুদ্ধে বিমানহানায় চিলেমির অভিযোগ থেকে বেহাই পেল এনডিএ। কিন্তু তার যটা তিলেকের মধ্যেই নতুন বিতর্কে জড়ালেন এনডিএ-র আঙ্কায়ক, প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ।

আজ সকালে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় সংসদে জানিয়ে দেন, বিমানহানায় দেরির কারণে কাঙ্গিল যুদ্ধে মোটেও অত্যধিক সেনা মারা যাননি। সেনাবাহিনী বিমান-আক্রমণ চাইলে বিমানবাহিনীর প্রধানই রাজনৈতিক অনুমতির কথা তুলেছিলেন। তার পর যুদ্ধের পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখেই যে বিলম্ব, তা-ও পরিষ্কার বলেন প্রণববাবু। বেকা তিনটে নাগাদ সাংবাদিক বৈঠক ডাকেন জর্জ। কিন্তু সেখানে বিতর্কিত সামরিক রিপোর্টটির কপি বের করলে প্রশ্ন ওঠে, কোন অধিকারে গোপন রিপোর্ট বাইরে দেখাচ্ছেন প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী। বিতর্কিত রিপোর্টটি তৎকালীন ডি জি এম ও (ডিভেস্টের জেনারেল অফ মিলিটারি অপারেশন্স) নির্মল চন্দ্র ভিঞ্জের 'আন অ্যাকাউন্ট অফ দি ওয়ার ইন কাঙ্গিল'। সংসদে এই নথিকে প্রণববাবু সেনাবাহিনীর 'অভ্যন্তরীণ তথ্য' বলে বর্ণনা করেছেন।

এই নথি প্রকাশ্যে দেখানোর ফার্নান্ডেজের সমালোচনা করেছেন প্রণববাবু। সংবাদমাধ্যমের একাংশকে তিনি বলেছেন, এটা সেনাবাহিনীর অভ্যন্তরীণ রিপোর্ট। এটা প্রকাশ করে জর্জ মন্ত্রী

হিসাবে নেওয়া গোপনীয়তার শপথ লঙ্ঘন করেছেন। এই কাজ করা তাঁর উচিত হয়নি। অন্যদিকে ফার্নান্ডেজের যুক্তি, এই রিপোর্ট তাঁকে ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে উপহার দিয়েছিলেন তৎকালীন সেনাপ্রধান বেদপ্রকাশ মালিক। ফলে এখন সেটা প্রকাশ করতে কোনও বাধা নেই। দু'দিন আগে, সংসদ ভবনের অ্যানেশনিরতেও একই রিপোর্ট দেখিয়ে এবং তার থেকে উদ্ধৃতি দিয়েই প্রকাশিত সংবাদদের বিরোধিতা করেছিলেন প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশোবন্ত সিংহ।



সংবাদমাধ্যমে খবর হয়েছিল, সেনাবাহিনী কাঙ্গিলে বিমানহানার দাবি জানিয়েছিল ১৯৯৯-এর ৮ মে। আর সেই অনুমতি দেওয়া হয়েছিল ২৫ মে। তৎকালীন সরকার বিমান অভিযানের সবুজ সঙ্কেত দিতে দেরি করায় আহেতুক অনেক ভারতীয় ফৌজি নিহত হন। প্রণববাবু আজ এই বক্তব্য নস্যৎ করে বলেছেন, "আমাকে বলা হয়েছে, ৮ থেকে ২৫ মে-র মধ্যে ৩৫ জন সেনা নিহত হন। ২৬ মে (বিমানহানার অনুমতি দেওয়ার দিন) থেকে ২৬ জুলাই, কাঙ্গিল যুদ্ধের শেষ পর্যন্ত

৬ জন অফিসার-সমতে ৪৩৯ জন বায়ুসেনা মারা যান।...এটা দেখা উচিত যে, বিমানবাহিনীকে কাজে নামার অনুমতি দিতে সময় লাগা অধিক সেনানুত্বুর কারণ নয়।" কী কারণ, সেটাও অবশ্য ব্যাখ্যা করে দিয়েছেন প্রণববাবু। তাঁর বক্তব্য, "এটা একটা কঠিন যুদ্ধ ছিল। অসুবিধাজনক অবস্থান থেকে লড়াই হয়েছে।"

সরকার জানিয়েছে, ১৯৯৯ সালের ৮ মে সেনাবাহিনী বিমান অভিযান আরম্ভ করার দাবি জানায়। কিন্তু তৎকালীন মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটি সেই অনুমতি দেয় ২৫ মে। এর ব্যাখ্যা দিয়ে জানানো হয়েছে, সেনাবাহিনী চেয়েছিল হেলিকপ্টারের মাধ্যমে

আক্রমণ ও সেনাদের যাতায়াত হোক। কিন্তু বিমানবাহিনীর প্রধান বলেন, আকাশ-হানা হলে যুদ্ধ ব্যাপক আকার ধারণ করতে পারে। আর অত উঁচুতে হেলিকপ্টার ঠিকমতো ব্যবহার করা যাবে না। করলে, কপ্টর আক্রান্ত হবার প্রভুত সম্ভাবনা।

তিনিই চেয়েছিলেন, আকাশ হানার আগে রাজনৈতিক নেতৃবৃন্দ ছাড়পত্র নেওয়া হোক। ১২ থেকে ১৭ মে-র মধ্যবর্তী সময়ে

মন্ত্রিসভা এই নিয়ে আলোচনা করে আকাশ থেকে আক্রমণের অনুমতি দেয়নি। তার পর পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখে ফের ২৫ তারিখ মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকে শেষপর্যন্ত বিমানহানার অনুমতি দেওয়া হয়।

প্রতিটি যুদ্ধের মতো কাঙ্গিলের ক্ষেত্রেও ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনী ২০০০-এর সেপ্টেম্বরে একটি গোপন রিপোর্ট তৈরি করে। ছয় খণ্ডের সেই রিপোর্টই এখন বিতর্কিত। প্রাক্তন মন্ত্রী এবং সরকার, দু'পক্ষই জানিয়েছে, কাঙ্গিল যুদ্ধের পরে একটি পর্যালোচনা কমিটি গঠন করা হয়েছিল। তার বিভিন্ন সুপারিশ খতিয়ে দেখতে একটি মন্ত্রিসভাগোষ্ঠীও গঠন করা হয়। তার বিভিন্ন সুপারিশ ইতিমধ্যেই রূপায়িত।

সেদিন লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী, যশোবন্ত সিংহেরা ওই রিপোর্টের ভিত্তিতে যে কথা বলেছিলেন, আজ প্রণববাবুর বক্তব্যে সেটিমুঠি তারই প্রতিধ্বনি ছিল। তবে সেনার অভ্যন্তরীণ রিপোর্টে তৎকালীন সরকারের ভূমিকার প্রশংসা করা হয়েছিল বলে এনডিএ-র শীর্ষ নেতারা যে দাবি করেছিলেন, সেইরকম কোনও কথাই উল্লেখ করেননি প্রণববাবু। সবমিলিয়ে, বিরোধী বেক্ষে থাকার সময়ে কাঙ্গিলের বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে তৎকালীন সরকারের কড়া সমালোচনা করলেও এখন সরকারে এসে অস্তুত এই বিতর্কে পূর্ববর্তী এনডিএ সরকারের পাশে দাঁড়াল মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার। পরে, জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ নিজে এবং বিজেপি নেতারা প্রণববাবুর বিবৃতির প্রশংসা করেছেন।

ANAND KUMAR... 11/11/2001

Media unpatriotic?

9-
D & M seems 578
Not because the army says so 11/6

Despite salvos fired in the name of "transparency", the defence establishment is uncomfortable under media focus — except when being praised. The media-military relationship has now been taken to a new low with a senior army officer stopping a couple of steps short of suggesting that what he deemed unfair reportage actually helped the nation's adversaries. Addressing a media workshop on defence in Gandhinagar, a news agency report says, a Brigadier declared that "Pakistan has achieved its aims by compiling Indian media reports, carried extensively in the Pakistani media, in cases such as the Siachen fake killings and the Tehelka episode".

After duly applauding some media aspects, he goes on to suggest that extensive reporting of alleged violations of human rights by soldiers also furthers interests of the adversary and lowers morale of the troops. What is the insinuation? That the Indian media is irresponsible? Or short of patriotism?

The matter cannot be downplayed as a simple soldier shooting his mouth off because the particular officer is part of the Army Liaison Cell of the Directorate-General of Military Intelligence at Army Headquarters, a counter-propaganda unit that supposedly has expertise in "media-management."

It is another story that the functioning of the ALC is frowned upon by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting which operates the Defence Wing of the Press Information Bureau. The officer ought to have known better than make statements that lend themselves to disturbing interpretations. The media would certainly be entitled to a clarification — are its credentials being questioned by the army? Maybe an officer of higher seniority should set the record straight. Or the Ministry spell out the position.

Yet the line taken by the Brigadier is not surprising. Several senior officers maintain that the "in-house" functioning of the forces are beyond the pale of accountability to the tax-paying public and hence the media would do well to lay-off. There is also a feeling that what was exposed in the Tehelka sting operation, or the fake encounters in Siachen and the North East should be kept under wraps in "national interest." Such exposes, it is contended, tarnish the image of the army in public perception. And the morale of the soldier suffers as a consequence.

Well, the truth may hurt, as it often does, but a cover-up hurts more because it facilitates repetition of the misdemeanour. Still, an "image" is only a reflection of reality. If the army wishes to appear squeaky clean then it will have to ensure that it remains just that. After all the media cannot expose what does not exist, but it must do its duty in highlighting shortcomings — across the board. Finally, the Army must learn to distinguish between patriotism and jingoism.

Chiefs ignored penetration warnings

By Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI, JUNE 15. One of the first things new intelligence agents are told is to forget what they might have seen in James Bond films: in real life, there ought to be no fancy cars, no diamond-wearing girlfriends, no evenings hanging out in expensive bars. In the Research and Analysis Wing, though, they also seem to be told that the rules don't have to be taken very seriously.

Successive chiefs of RAW ignored warnings from the organisation's in-house surveillance unit on its growing vulnerability to penetration. In the early 1990s, the Counter Intelligence and Security Division, the house security unit concerned, launched a major study of a dozen "stay-backs", officers who either never returned to India from their foreign assignments or left for jobs abroad shortly after retirement. CIS Division watchers also found that officers with known records of alcohol abuse, dubious financial dealings and sexual misconduct had been sent on sensitive assignments.

RAW began to haemorrhage personnel from around the time of the Emergency. A former Army officer transferred to RAW had applied for leave in the early 1970s, but was refused permission to travel abroad. RAW security staff were subsequently shocked to discover a notice in the Defence Services Officers Institution announcing that his household goods were up for sale. No action was taken, and the officer ended up taking asylum in a South American country after the Emergency was declared. A secretary to the former RAW chief, S. Sankaran Nair, took asylum in the United Kingdom at the same time.

As the years went by, several other RAW personnel went the same way. Two officers

who had served as personnel assistants to RAW Directors stayed on at the end of overseas postings. One of them first took premature retirement, claiming he intended to work in Mumbai at his brother's textile business.

The ranks of stay-backs, however, were not limited to low-level staff. One 1957-batch Indian Police Service officer serving in RAW, who was posted to Canada, took a job with the provincial government of Ontario. The CIS Division noted that most of these officers had been posted abroad towards the end of their careers, when fi-

RAW IN CRISIS — III

nancial temptations are at their highest.

A second string of scandals involved financial and personal misconduct. A woman officer recruited from the Income-Tax Department was sacked after allegations surfaced of bribe-taking from overseas businessmen, on the pretence of conducting an investigation into Bofors beneficiaries on the instructions of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

CIS watchers also found that the officer had made a massive contribution of Rs. 1,00,000 to a South Indian temple, for which she could not account, and had also made an unauthorised visit to Hong Kong. Finally, it turned out that the officer had a romantic relationship with a colleague, then posted in Dhaka, with whom she went on to set up a business.

The couple's efforts to use their service contacts to further their export business finally forced the CIS Division to order all Embassies overseas not to have any dealings with them. In this and several similar cases, careful vetting and surveillance

could have prevented embarrassment. One officer, for example, had to be removed from Oslo after problems related to alcohol abuse. CIS Division staff pointed out that the officer had been hired despite past knowledge of his alcohol problem, and the fact that he was facing criminal investigation for his alleged role in the genocidal anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984. The officer was also reported for misbehaviour at a RAW annual day function prior to his overseas posting.

In one case, the consequences of inadequate counter-intelligence almost proved calamitous. A RAW officer with a scientific background, posted to Vienna for liaison with the International Atomic Energy Agency, developed a relationship with a United States national there in the 1980s.

CIS Division files note that both enjoyed heavy drinking. As the relationship seemed innocuous, the officer saw no reason to report it — until his friend made an approach on behalf of the Central Intelligence Agency, asking for information on India's nuclear science and technology programme. The officer continues to serve in RAW but there has been no comprehensive assessment of what information he may have passed on casually to his American contact.

Serving and retired personnel from the CIS Division brought the attention of these and a welter of other cases to Surinder Singh, Cabinet Secretary in Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's Government, and to the former RAW boss, Amarjit Singh Dulat, suggesting a full-scale review of recruitment vetting and service-time surveillance. These timely warnings received no response. Now, with Rabinder Singh's defection, the price of inaction has become clear.

(Concluded)

How the mole-watchers were shackled

By Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI, JUNE 14. In 1987, the man now believed to have been the Central Intelligence Agency's top mole in the Research and Analysis Wing walked into his boss' office with a proposal. Rabinder Singh, then a junior officer, wanted to make a deal.

A year earlier, RAW had set up a new organisation called Counter-Intelligence Team 'J', a super-secret covert group intended to target Khalistan terrorist groups, much like the CIT 'X', which trains agents for covert operations in Pakistan. Mr. Singh had a volunteer who, in return for his cooperation, was demanding the release of two prisoners held on murder and trans-border trafficking charges. A little investigation led Mr. Singh's boss to two conclusions: the officer's deal involved not a little personal greed, and his recruit was just as likely to betray CIT 'J' as work for it.

The end result? Nothing. Repeated adverse comments by Mr. Singh's superiors neither halted his promotion through RAW's ranks nor denied him sought-after overseas postings. At the heart of the snowballing scandal around Mr. Singh's defection is the breakdown of RAW's in-house surveillance of its own staff, carried out by the Counter-Intelligence Security Division, popularly known as "mole-watchers." Each time the CIS Division has sought to raise security standards, RAW staff have revolted.

In 1980, RAW personnel actually went on strike against the CIS Division's surveillance, claiming it was unnecessary harassment. A Delhi police officer attached to the CIS Division was held hostage in his room while RAW staffers took out a protest procession. Mercifully for the organisation, the then RAW chief, N.S. Santook, held firm and ensured that the strikers were sacked under provisions allowing the President of

India to summarily terminate the services of Government employees. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi later introduced a law to prohibit strikes in sensitive organisations such as the Intelligence Bureau and RAW.

Matters again came to a head in 1985-1986. Intelligence Bureau counter-intelligence personnel monitoring a United States diplomat in Chennai discovered that a RAW field officer had been passing on sensitive information to the CIA. The officer was lured to New Delhi by CIS Division staff, who subsequently obtained a full confession. Although the officer spent a year at Tihar Jail in New Delhi, officials finally de-

RAW IN CRISIS — II

cidated against prosecution, believing secrets relating to India's operations in Sri Lanka could be exposed.

It did not escape notice that the Intelligence Bureau had detected the officer's contacts, not RAW, which simply did not have an adequate mechanism in place. More worrying, the handling officer, the U.S. diplomat, disappeared just a day before the Indian officer's seclusion by RAW. CIS Division personnel called for a full-scale mole-hunt, albeit to no avail. Random checks of officers of all ranks were also to have been carried out at RAW's headquarters in New Delhi and at major field stations. Special photocopiers, which would record the document as well as the user, were to have been brought in.

By 1999, however, most of these barebones procedures had become dysfunctional. In Mr. Singh's case, even basic counter-intelligence screening could have detected treachery at several stages. He was known to be in severe financial need after 1992-1993, following a serious automobile accident involving his daughter. Yet Mr.

Singh's wife spent up to six months a year abroad, entertained lavishly and lived in a house in an upmarket New Delhi neighbourhood with a market rent of over Rs.75,000 a month, supposedly gifted by a relative. Colleagues interacting socially with Mr. Singh were never questioned independently on what he wanted to know.

Mr. Singh's success was the consequence of resistance at senior levels of RAW to the post-1986 counter-intelligence regime, which was steadily diluted through the 1990s. The CIS Division's plans for broadening checks were shelved by officers who believed their rank and status automatically exempted them from reasonable suspicion. Worst of all, no effort was made to monitor Mr. Singh's interaction with a close relative, an employee of the United States Agency for International Development, who RAW bosses were told was passing on classified documents to the officer. Mr. Singh's dealings with his source were never independently monitored, standard operating procedure to prevent an agent from turning hostile.

A section of RAW officers, both serving and retired, believe resistance to independent oversight is a consequence of the fact that the organisation's special powers have not always been used judiciously at its highest levels. In the early 1990s, for example, RAW was tasked by the Government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to handle a goodwill donation to the African National Congress during the visit of President Nelson Mandela. RAW made the payment from its in-house funds, without asking for reimbursement from the Cabinet Secretariat. It later turned out that successive RAW chiefs had been holding cash from covert funds, while issuing certificates of utilisation to the Cabinet Secretariat. At the time, this covert fund-within-a-fund amounted to almost \$ 8,00,000.

Sleuths fail to nail nuke smuggler

Press Trust of India
Mumbai/Dubai, June 13

THE BHABHA Atomic Research Centre (Barc) in Mumbai today said it has so far not achieved any breakthrough on the suspected involvement of any nuclear scientist with Akhtar Hussain Qutubdin Ahmed, an Indian businessman deported from Dubai last night for allegedly trying to sell nuclear secrets.

Barc said it is examining all available information and scanning the employees' list in totality to ascertain if any nuclear scientist had links with Ahmed.

"We are scanning the list in totality and only tomorrow will we be in a position to provide information," a Barc spokesman said. There are around 16,000 employees working in Barc. The official said they were expecting some written information from Intelligence officials investigating the case.

Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission Dr Anil Kakodkar said the department is collecting all possible information regarding this case. The Central Intelligence Agencies, that were interrogating Ahmed, too have not been able to establish his proximity to any official concerned with Atom-

ic Energy, sources said. An important factor that has impeded the probe by central agencies has been lack of documentary evidence against Ahmed.

Although the Dubai Police have claimed that Ahmed, who was deported to Mumbai, was provided nuclear secrets by his brother, who is a nuclear scientist, the CIA have reportedly not succeeded in deriving the name of his brother during Ahmed's questioning.

Ahmed was grilled for over 18 hours at the Sahar International Airport. Mumbai police officials said they had held Ahmed on oral instruction from Dubai police and

there was no written communication from Dubai so far.

Mumbai police, who were involved in Ahmed's interrogation, withdrew themselves after the case was taken over by the Central agencies. Sources also denied that Ahmed was being taken to Delhi tonight, stating that he was still being held in Mumbai.

Meanwhile, the Dubai police Chief Lt-Gen. Dhahi Khalifa Tamim, while announcing the arrest of the 35-year-old Dubai-based Indian businessman at a Press conference in Dubai on Saturday, said that Ahmed had made his first attempt to sell Indian nuclear

secrets to some embassies in 1990s and had tried to contact UAE ambassador to India for the purpose.

Tamim said after Akhtar made his first attempt in early 90s, he was put under strict surveillance, which, however, was stepped up in recent years as he intensified his contacts from time-to-time with a number of embassies in UAE.

The police chief claimed that after his arrest, Akhtar confessed of his attempts to sell nuclear secrets and gave information that should have been dealt seriously particularly that his brother was working with an Indian Atomic energy concern.

Open doors for mole recruitment

#D-1
19/6

By Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI, JUNE 13. It sounds a little like the improbable factoids that appear on the back of breakfast cereal packets: in the summer of 2002, the Government of India actually *paid* the Central Intelligence Agency mole in its ranks to meet his handlers in the United States.

An investigation by *The Hindu*, published from today in three parts, has found that the scandal surrounding Research and Analysis Wing defector Rabinder Singh is merely a symptom of a far larger crisis in India's most important intelligence organisation: a crisis built around flawed liaison with external intelligence agencies, the shackling of counter-intelligence capabilities intended to detect traitors, and a long-running erosion of officer probity.

Rabinder Singh's 2002 visit to the U.S. points to the dangers of the increasingly mindless and indiscriminate liaison between Indian and Western intelligence services, conducted under the pretext of counter-terrorism cooperation. Perhaps the most curious aspect of Mr. Singh's 2002 Government-funded visit to the U.S. is that he had no reason to travel there. The counter-terrorism course he attended focussed on hijacking and hostage negotiation, skills the South-East Asia analyst had no need of.

With Prime Minister Manmohan Singh calling for files on a dozen disappearances and suspect personnel in RAW's ranks, attention has focussed on the growing depth of the U.S.' ongoing multi-billion dollar facilitation of counter-terrorism cooperation. Intelligence officers, most of whom do not drive their cars from their homes to work, have been abroad to learn about everything from offensive-defensive vehicle-handling techniques to VIP protection — lessons useless for their normal day jobs. Notably, few of the officers who have shown a desire for such learning have attended the many courses available *within* India.

Within India's intelligence establishment,

there is growing concern about the unspoken costs of the new liaison and cooperation procedures. Under the National Democratic Alliance, RAW, the Intelligence Bureau and the Defence Intelligence Agency were all authorised to make contact with their counterparts overseas, often with little monitoring. As a consequence, hundreds of Indian agents have been exposed, the term professionals use to describe individuals whose real jobs are known to foreign intelligence organisations. "As things stand," says a senior RAW officer, "we hardly have anyone left who can serve in a genuine covert role."

RAW IN CRISIS: The first of a three-part exclusive

Until recently, RAW alone was authorised to have such contacts — and the job was restricted to a select few within its ranks. From its inception in 1968, RAW's first boss, R.N. Kao, held meetings with his counterparts in the U.S., the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. Much of the liaison was essentially political in character — what is today known as 'back channel diplomacy' — but RAW's reconnaissance unit, the Aviation Research Centre, received technical assistance from the U.S. in return for information on China. Through the 1970s, the character of liaison shifted with political trends, as India leaned towards the Soviet Union for its security needs.

The last years of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's time in power, and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's subsequent regime, saw a shift. Israel was one new axis of liaison. Avionics equipment for the Aviation Research Centre, for example, began to be sourced through Israel after RAW established contact with Mossad, and some training programmes were also conducted for the National Security Guard and Special Protection Group. However, this contact was carefully monitored. RAW protests, for example,

led officials to shoot down plans for an Israeli delegation to meet with Union Minister Sharad Pawar.

At once, links with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence opened up in the wake of its support to terrorism in Punjab, and the near-war triggered by Operation Brasstacks. Brokered by Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan, whose wife was of Pakistani origin, a top Indian spymaster met ISI chief Lieutenant-General Hamid Gul in Amman and Geneva. General Gul, sources told *The Hindu*, admitted that Pakistan would continue to offer arms to anti-India elements who sought its help — but would not initiate such activity. In return, Pakistan quietly handed over some soldiers who had sought shelter there after the mutiny that followed Operation Blue Star.

Now, however, the situation has been transfigured. Ongoing investigations of Mr. Singh's case show just how easily liaison and training visits can be misused. Colleagues who went with him on the U.S. visit have told staff from RAW's Counter-Intelligence Security Division that the officer, whose family was in the United States, generally spent his evenings alone. When other Indian officers would gather together in the bar or for dinner, Mr. Singh would opt out, claiming he was visiting relatives.

Although he submitted reports to RAW on all foreigners he met during the course, the organisation had no means of verifying the accuracy of the officer's statements.

What is clear is that the U.S., which has trained over 31,000 personnel from 127 countries since it began offering anti-terrorism assistance in 1983, is finding the access it is getting very useful.

In 2002 alone, the last year for which figures are available, the U.S. hosted 80 courses for officers from India, along with 17 other countries in Asia and Africa. "Intelligence cooperation and liaison have always been chaotic," says former RAW officer and analyst B. Raman, "but we cannot afford complacency any more."

Pranab gives clean chit to NDA on Kargil

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 9 JUNE

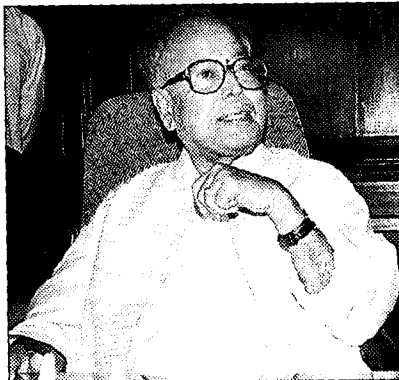
CONGRESS, which had created a ruckus in the two Houses of Parliament following the publication of a newspaper report which suggested that the high casualties suffered by the Indian army during the Kargil war could have been avoided had the political leadership of the day given an early clearance for the use of air-strikes, scored a self-goal on Wednesday when defence minister Pranab Mukherjee gave a clean chit to the Vajpayee government's actions. Congress had used the article to poke fun at BJP and the NDA's claim that the maintenance of national security had been one of the biggest achievements of the Vajpayee regime. Even during the war, Congress, which was occupying the Opposition benches at that point of time, had kicked off a shrill campaign by trying to highlight the government's alleged inadequacies in dealing with the situation.

But the new defence minister set the record right on Wednesday. In identical suo moto statements made in the two Houses of Parliament on Wednesday, Mr Mukherjee debunked the report carried by the national daily in its edition dated June 6.

The defence minister, in his

statement, sought to buttress his point by highlighting two factors — the first, as adumbrated by then Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal A.Y. Tipnis, was that "air power at those heights could not be properly utilised as helicopters would be extremely vulnerable and there would be a danger of escalation of conflict."

"Regarding the use of air power, the army, on May 8, 1999, had projected the requirement for at-



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tack helicopters for use against the enemy and also for transporting troops. This was considered between May 12-17, 1999, and it was decided not to use this option as it may lead to escalation," the minister said.

The defence minister also sought to blunt the argument put forward by the newspaper report that the delay in giving a political clearance to the use of air-strikes may have led to the high casualty figure of 474. "I wish there had been no casualties at all," Mr Mukherjee said.

NDA seeks CPM help to oust tainted ministers

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 9 JUNE

EVEN as the NDA hardened its position on its demand for the ouster of tainted ministers from the Union council of ministers, former defence minister George Fernandes sought to drive a wedge in the UPA by seeking support of the CPM on the issue. In an attempt to embarrass the CPM, the NDA convenor — in a letter written on Wednesday to Harkishan Singh Surjeet — quoted extensively from the Left party's manifesto for the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls to remind him of the commitment to rid the country's polity of corruption.

"I was happy to read about determination to fight against corruption through 'suitable institutional mechanism.' Your idea to target members of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, MPs and judiciary is most welcome," Mr Fernandes observed in the letter addressed to the CPM general secretary.

However, both inside and outside Parliament, Mr Fernandes said, there has been a strong demand for the removal of these ministers, but the UPA government has chosen to let the Parliament be paralysed.

Second Kargil-tainted soldier joins truth cry

GAJINDER SINGH

Chandigarh, June 8: Brigadier Surinder Singh, who was sacked for negligence, and another Kargil-tainted soldier today joined hands to seek a fresh probe against then army chief General V.P. Malik and other commanders for ignoring their warnings and allowing critical posts to fall into enemy hands.

Singh, who was dismissed for allegedly failing to detect intrusion by Pakistani troops in Kargil in 1999, and Major Manish Bhatnagar released a seven-page letter written by their lawyer to defence minister Pranab Mukherjee. Copies of the letter have been

sent to the Prime Minister, the President, who is the supreme commander of the armed forces, CPM leader Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Union ministers Kapil Sibal and Suresh Pachauri among others.

Singh and Bhatnagar questioned the terms of reference of the Subramanyam Committee, which went into the circumstances leading to the intrusion.

"We want to redeem our honour. We were made scapegoats. The fault lay with the senior officers who did not act on our warnings," the brigadier said.

"I have won gallantry awards. I have been wounded twice in war. A soldier goes to war to



Troops fire mortar shells during the Kargil conflict. (AP file picture)

die so that he can do his bit for the nation. The nation must know the truth. The guilty must be produced before the people," he added, with tears in his eyes.

clusive action had cost the lives of many Indian soldiers, said he had first intimated the higher authorities about the intrusions in January-February 1999. "It was not the shepherds but my daily station report that mentioned the intrusions," he said.

A general court martial had charged Bhatnagar with "disobeying command" and "improperly" stating that he and his troops were unfit for attack operations in the Yaldor-Batalik sector during the conflict. He was acquitted of the charge of disobeying command as his immediate commander Brigadier Devinder Singh denied giving him any such command. While other offi-

cers had been promoted, Bhatnagar said Brigadier Devinder "is still a brigadier". The second charge, he added, was frivolous.

"One is left with strong apprehension(s) that the terms of reference (of the Subramanyam Committee) were formulated with (the) purpose and design by the then government. It was to avoid scrutiny and responsibility of its (NDA government's) role and also to bail out the then senior commanders like the chief of army staff and others," the letter says.

"The said officer (Bhatnagar) had first initiated a situation report about the action of Pakistan inflicting casualties of five jawa-

ns of the Ladakh Scouts serving under him on 26th January, 1999 ... Even the situation report made by the officer having cited a bunker and enemy clearing snow on 9th February, 1999, was ignored.

"Though the officer did his job, action has been taken against him to silence him so that the government and senior commanders could be saved of their responsibility and their role in ignoring these early warnings. There cannot be (a) more urgent need for a probe than in regard to Kargil," the letter adds.

General Malik, who led the operations during the conflict, was not available for comment.

No 'neglect' during Kargil war: Jaswant

86 By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7. The former External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, who was a member of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) at the time of the Kargil war, today strongly denied "any kind of neglect" on the part of the Vajpayee Government "in dealing with the challenge thrown" at the country "in the form of Kargil."

Mr. Singh said that initially the then Air Force chief had opposed using air power while warning that it could escalate and enlarge the conflict, but a little later a decision was taken to use air power "on our side" of the Line of Control in the Kargil area.

Senior Ministers in the previous Government today broke their silence over allegations in the media that the CCS, at the time of the Kargil war, had delayed giving permission to the military to use air power leading to unnecessarily high casualties on the Indian side. L.K. Advani, who was Home Minister at the time, George Fernandes, the then Defence Minister, and Mr. Singh addressed the press today at the end of a meeting of the National Democratic Alliance MPs.

Although the meeting was called to discuss the NDA's parliamentary strategy on "tainted Ministers," the leaders came prepared to air their views on Kargil as they were armed with volumes of the "in-house" report on the Kargil operations by the Director-General of Military Operations (DGMO), from which Mr. Singh quoted profusely to make his point. The opportunity for this digression

9-06 N News HD-1
was apparently provided by some MPs who raised the recent media reports on the Kargil war and wanted to know the facts of the case.

Mr. Singh said that normally after every military conflict an assessment was made of the war. Various questions could always be asked. Why were the raiders in Kashmir not followed in 1948? Why was air power not deployed in the 1962 war with China? Why were a large number of prisoners-of-war returned to Pakistan after 1971? He said that the previous Government had implemented many of the recommendations made in the K. Subrahmanyam Committee report on the Kargil war.

Besides that report, there was the six-volume detailed "in-house" assessment of the operations made by the DGMO and Mr. Singh presumed that the recent media reports were based on this.

He said that in fact, when the issue of deployment of helicopters first came up it was "opposed" by the then Air Chief who pointed out that "it would enlarge the conflict." However, on May 24, 1999 the decision was taken to use air power "on our side" of the LoC. Mr. Fernandes sat silently throughout the presentation by Mr. Singh and even when asked whether he would like to add anything, he said "no."

Earlier, Mr. Advani said that some MPs wanted to "know the facts" from their leaders at today's meeting and "when Mr. Fernandes told them the facts, they felt that they should be brought to the notice of the people."

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'Indian peak was captured by Pakistan'

CHANDIGARH, JUNE 7. A day after the disclosure of an Army report regarding the National Democratic Alliance Government's delay in granting clearance to the air force to strike during the Kargil conflict in 1999, Brig (retd.) Surinder Singh today charged the previous Government with "another strategic lapse" with regard to the Kargil episode.

Talking to reporters here, Brig. Singh said that a strategically important peak — point 5353 — in the Drass sector was captured by the Pakistani Army during the conflict and the Government failed to take it back from the enemy.

The peak, which was on the Indian side of the Line of Control, was now a Pakistani post, he said.

Brig. Singh suggested that the new Government at the Centre demand the peak back from Pakistan, during bilateral talks.

He alleged that the Kargil Review Committee was a farce and it was forced to bail out the Government. He demanded a fresh inquiry into the Kargil episode by a sitting judge assisted by an "independent" retired General of the Army. — UNI

Cong, CPM for probe into Kargil 'lapses'

57-1
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 6. — Accusing the previous NDA government of delaying crucial decisions relating to the 1999 Kargil conflict, the Congress and the CPI-M today said the issue would be raised in Parliament and probed.

Hitting back, the BJP said the issue was being raised to "divert" attention from the presence of "tainted" ministers in the Manmohan Singh government.

Five years after the Kargil conflict, the Army has circulated a document about the operations claiming that delayed Air Force deployment led to more casualties. Army officers said the paper was a lesson for the future. The Army chief, General NC Vij, wants it to be an instructional manual. The Air Force hasn't made any comment.

In his reaction to recent media reports over Kargil, Congress spokesman Mr Ashwini Kumar said, "There have been lapses in national security. Nothing can be a more serious crime towards our citizens." He also said the issue would be raised in Parliament and probed.

J-D & N Seemab
Mr Kumar held former defence minister Mr George Fernandes responsible for the alleged Kargil lapses.

Describing Kargil as an "intelligence failure", CPI-M leader Mr Basudev Acharya said action should be taken against those responsible for the lapses. "The government and the defence ministry knew about it but took no action."

The BJP, however, pooh poohed the Congress' attempt to rake up the issue. The party said this was a diversionary tactic to shield the government from the Opposition's attack on the issue of tainted ministers.

"The Congress had raised Kargil earlier also. By doing so again they cannot divert attention from the issue of tainted ministers, which the BJP is determined to raise," BJP spokesman Mr Arun Jaitley said.

If the Congress wants it could raise the issue in Parliament, Mr Jaitley said, making it clear that the BJP is ready for a debate.

The matter being raised by the Congress is a sensitive one as it pertained to a decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security, he said. "We would therefore not like to comment on it."

কার্গিলে বায়ুসেনা দেহিতে তাই মৃত্যু বেশি, অভিযোগ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৬ জুন— পদকের লোভে সিয়াচেনে ভূয়ো সংঘর্ষের দাবি করার পরে ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীকে নিয়ে ফের বিতর্ক মাথাচাড়া দিল। তৎকালীন রাজনৈতিক নেতৃত্ব, অর্থাৎ এন ডি এ সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ উঠছে যে, কার্গিল যুদ্ধের সময় বিমানবাহিনীকে অনেক দেহি করে অভিযানের নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছিল। বিমানবাহিনী দেহী করে অভিযানে নামায় অনেক বেশি ভারতীয় সেনাকে শত্রুপক্ষের আক্রমণে প্রাণ হারাতে হয়েছে।

সেনাবাহিনীর পক্ষ থেকে আজ রাতে একটি বিবৃতি দেওয়া হয়েছে। তাতে বলা হয়েছে, বাহিনীর বিভিন্ন খামতির বিষয়ে একটি রিপোর্ট তৈরি করে হয়েছিল। ভবিষ্যতে যাতে এইসব ত্রুটিবিচ্যুতি এড়ানো যায়, তার জন্য এই অভ্যন্তরীণ রিপোর্ট তৈরি করে সেনাবাহিনী বিভিন্ন বিভাগে পাঠানো হয়েছিল। কিন্তু রাজনৈতিক নেতৃত্বের টিলেমির যে অভিযোগ উঠেছে, সে বিষয়ে সেনাবাহিনীর বিবৃতিতে একটি কথাও উল্লেখ করা নেই। বায়ুসেনার মুখপাত্রও এই নিয়ে আজ তড়িঘড়ি কোনও মন্তব্য করতে রাজি হননি।

কিন্তু রাজনৈতিক মহলে যথারীতি বিষয়টি নিয়ে তোলপাড় শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। শাসক কংগ্রেস ও শরিক সি পি এম আজ সংবাদপত্রে প্রকাশিত খবরের ভিত্তিতে পূর্বতন এন ডি এ সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে কামান দেগেছে। কংগ্রেসের মুখপাত্র অশ্বিনী কুমার বলেছেন, “জাতীয় নিরাপত্তায় গাফিলতি হয়েছে। এটা অসহ্য। আমরা জানি, অমী দিকে সি পি এমের সংসদীয় দলমতস্বয়ং বায়ুসেনার অভিযানের প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্দেজকে কাঠগড়ায় দাঁড় করাতে চেয়েছেন। বায়ুসেনার আবার বলেছেন যে কার্গিল যুদ্ধের সময়ে ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দা বিভাগ পূর্বসূচীতা করেছিল। এই নিয়ে সোমবার সংসদে শাসক পক্ষ সরব হবে। বিতর্কিত রিপোর্টটির ছয়টি ভাগ আছে বলে আজ একটি সংবাদপত্রে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। এই রিপোর্ট সেনাবাহিনীর শত্রু স্বরের সমস্ত অফিসারদের কাছে পাঠানো হয়েছে। বলা হয়েছে, সরকার শত্রু অভিযানের ছড়পত্র দিতে সেনাবাহিনীর সমরঙ্গ অহেতুক অনেক ভারতীয় ফৌজ নিহত হন। কার্গিল যুদ্ধে মোট ৪৭৪ জন ভারতীয় সেনা মারা গিয়েছিল।

আরও বলা হয়েছে, ১৯৯৯ সালের ১৩ মে বিমানবাহিনীর পাঁচটি মিগ-২৯ বিমানকে অসহীপুরের বায়ুঘাঁটিতে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়েছে। অর্থাৎ এই সময়েই বিমানবাহিনী প্রস্তুত হয়ে গিয়েছিল পাকিস্তানি অনুপ্রবেশকারীদের উপরে অভিযান হানতে। কিন্তু তৎকালীন মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটি সেই অনুমতি দেয় হতে পারে না।

কংগ্রেস মতন এই নতুন কার্গিল কেলেঙ্কারি নিয়ে বিমানবাহিনীর পক্ষে খরতে চাইছে, তখন পাঁচটা আক্রমণে বিজেপি নতুন সরকারের ‘দাগী’ মন্ত্রীদের বিষয়ে কের সরব হয়েছে। মুখপাত্র অরুণ জেটলির বক্তব্য, “কংগ্রেস আগেও কার্গিল নিয়ে ইচ্ছা করেছিল। এখনও করছে। কিন্তু তাতে অপরাধী রেকর্ড নিয়ে মন্ত্রী হওয়ার বিষয়টি লর্ড করতে পারবে না। আমরা এই নিয়ে লড়াই চালিয়ে যাব।” রিপোর্ট সম্পর্কে প্রশ্ন করা হলে অরুণ জেটলি বলেন, “এটা স্পর্শকাতর বিষয়। মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটি অভিযান আছে। তাই দলের পক্ষ থেকে আমরা মন্তব্য করতে চাইনি।”

Dixit takes security cake

ALOKE TIKKU

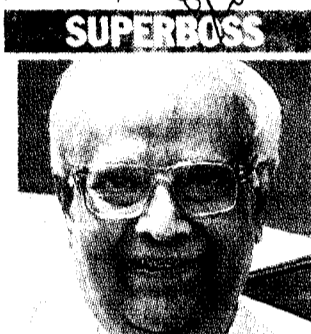
New Delhi, June 5: Designation wise, J.N. Dixit is the national security adviser to the government. But work wise, he is the security "superboss".

The former foreign secretary was on Thursday formally empowered to oversee the functioning of the three security agencies — the Research and Analysis Wing, Intelligence Bureau and the Defence Intelligence Agency — for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Cabinet secretary Kamal Pande issued the order.

The directive leaves Singh's principal secretary T.K.A. Nair free to concentrate on non-security issues. By implication, it makes Dixit the Prime Minister's principal secretary on security matters, if there could be such a post.

Dixit's new powers could change the profile of the National Security Council Secretariat — the secretariat of the national security adviser — which, for all practical purposes, had been reduced to a clearing house for reports forwarded by intelligence agencies, so far under the principal secretary.

"Dixit will practically become the superboss of all security



On Dixit's plate:

- Research and Analysis Wing
- Intelligence Bureau
- Defence Intelligence Agency
- Border talks with China

agencies by carrying out a supervisory role on behalf of the PM and dealing with the nuts and bolts of the security situation on a daily basis," a source said.

It means Dixit would from now on have to sift through real-time intelligence reports provided by the agencies on internal and external security matters.

There are suggestions that the move could also reduce the grip of the bureaucracy on the intelligence agencies.

Some say the agencies could become feeder outfits for the Na-

tional Security Council Secretariat that will play a more active role.

Officials said Brajesh Mishra had a similar job profile in the Vajpayee government. But then, he was wearing the hats of both national security adviser and principal secretary to the Prime Minister. Dixit will now have the same powers as Mishra had on security matters.

As national security adviser, Dixit will be the key person in the United Progressive Alliance government for security dialogue with nuclear nations. External affairs minister Natwar Singh has already named him Delhi's representative for border talks with China.

Although Dixit has been given the lion's share of the security pie, an expert in the Prime Minister's Office — special adviser M.K. Narayanan — has been given the job of bettering the performance of the intelligence agencies.

A former Intelligence Bureau director, Narayanan has been dubbed a "visionary", who has spent more years in the organisation analysing data rather than collecting them. He co-authored the G.C. Saxena report on reforming the Indian intelligence apparatus a few years ago.

কেন এত মিগ দুর্ঘটনা, দেখছে প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: কেন মাঝে মাঝেই মিগ বিমান ভেঙে পড়ছে, প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক তা খতিয়ে দেখছে বলে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় জানিয়েছেন। শনিবার তিনি বলেন, “মিগ বিমান পুরনো হয়েছে। হয়তো কিছু কারিগরি ত্রুটিও হচ্ছে। যাই হোক, প্রতিটি ক্ষেত্রেই মিগ বিমান ভেঙে পড়ার কারণ অনুসন্ধান হয়। কেন তা ভেঙে পড়ল। দুর্ঘটনা না কি কারিগরি ত্রুটি, তা খতিয়ে দেখা হয়। ক’দিন আগে উত্তরবঙ্গের হাসিমারাতোও দুর্ঘটনা ঘটেছে। কেন এমন হচ্ছে প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক, তা খতিয়ে দেখছে।” প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জানান, সব কিছু খতিয়ে দেখার পরে দুর্ঘটনা এড়ানোর ব্যাপারে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।

এ দিনই প্রণববাবু দিল্লি থেকে কলকাতায় আসেন। প্রদেশ কংগ্রেস অফিসে বসে তিনি রাজ্যের যে সব জায়গায় সি পি এমের হাতে কংগ্রেসকর্মীরা আক্রান্ত, সেই ব্যাপারে বিস্তারিত খবর নেন। প্রদীপ ভট্টাচার্য, মানস ভূঁইঞা প্রমুখ তাঁকে এ ব্যাপারে বিস্তারিত জানান। কী ভাবে আগামী দিনে দক্ষিণবঙ্গ কংগ্রেস সি পি এমের মোকাবিলা করে সংগঠন গড়ে তুলবে, সেই ব্যাপারে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা হয়।

সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে প্রণববাবু জানান, সোভিয়েতের বিলুপ্তির পরে এক মেরু বিশ্বে সীমান্তপারের সন্ত্রাসবাদই শান্তির পথে সব চেয়ে বড় বাধা। সেই সঙ্গে রয়েছে আন্তর্জাতিক সন্ত্রাসবাদ। সে ক্ষেত্রে মার্কিন প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রকের সঙ্গেও যেমন কথা হবে, তেমনি পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গেও ভারত কথা বলবে। তিনি বলেন, “বামেরা আমাদের সরকার সমর্থন করলেও মার্কিনদের সঙ্গে কোনও কথা হবে না বা ইজরায়িলের সঙ্গে পুরনো অস্ত্রচুক্তি বাতিল হবে, এমন কোনও কথা নেই। দেশের স্বার্থে যে সব কাজ করা

দরকার, তা সবই হবে।”
প্রণববাবু কথায়, “সন্ত্রাসবাদ এমন বিষয় তা ‘সুইচ অন’ হলেই হবে বা ‘সুইচ অফ’ হলেই বন্ধ হবে, এমন বিষয় নয়। স্থায়ী ভাবে দুই দেশের মধ্যে কথা চালিয়ে যেতে হবে।” প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের মত তিনিও কি সেনাদের উৎসাহিত করতে সিয়াচেন যাবেন? জবাবে প্রণববাবু বলেন, “যেখানে সেনা প্রকৃতির সঙ্গে লড়াই করে সীমান্ত পাহারা, দিচ্ছে সেখানে তাদের উৎসাহ দিতে যাওয়া নিশ্চয়ই দরকার। সুবিধা মতো আমিও যাওয়ার চেষ্টা করব।” বামেরা সব সময় প্রতিরক্ষা বাজেটের খরচা নিয়ে সমালোচনা করে। এ বার তাদের সমালোচনার মুখে না-পড়ার জন্য কি প্রতিরক্ষা বাজেটে অতিরিক্ত বরাদ্দ বা আধুনিকীকরণ বন্ধ থাকবে? জবাবে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী বলেন, “বামেরা কখনও প্রতিরক্ষা ক্ষেত্রে আধুনিকীকরণের বিরোধিতা করেছে বলে আমার জানা নেই। তবে তারা সব সময়ই বলে, যে-টাকা খরচ হচ্ছে, তা যেন ঠিক মতো খরচ হয়। তাদের যুক্তি ঠিক।”

এ দিকে, অভিযুক্তদের কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী করার ব্যাপারে বিজেপি-র অপত্তি বা বামেরদের বিরক্তিকে যে কংগ্রেস আমল দিতে পারাজ, প্রণববাবুর কথায় তা পরিষ্কার হয়ে গিয়েছে। দলের ওয়ার্কিং কমিটি সদস্য তথা লোকসভার এই নেতার হাতে, “অভিযোগ থাকলেই হবে না। তা প্রমাণিত কিনা, সেটা দেখতে হবে। যাঁরা কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী হয়েছেন, তাঁদের কয়েক জনের বিরুদ্ধে চার্জশিট থাকলেও কারও ক্ষেত্রেই অভিযোগ প্রমাণিত হয় না। প্রমাণ না-হলে সকলেই আইনের চোখে নির্দোষ।”

এই বিষয়ে প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর

প্রসঙ্গ তুলে তিনি বলেন, “ভারতীয় দণ্ডবিধিতে লোককে প্ররোচিত করে মসজিদ ভাঙা অপরাধ। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর বিরুদ্ধে এই অভিযোগ ছিল। কিন্তু তিনি বহাল তবিয়তে মন্ত্রী ছিলেন। এখনও এক মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর বিরুদ্ধে এই অভিযোগ রয়েছে।”

বিমানবন্দরের ৪৯ শতাংশ বেসরকারীকরণে বামেরা আপত্তি করেছে। অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচির ভিত্তিতে সরকার চলার ক্ষেত্রে প্রথম থেকেই এই বিরোধিতা কি সরকারের ক্ষতি করবে না? জবাবে প্রণববাবু বলেন, “অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম সাধারণ কর্মসূচি তৈরির সময় প্রথম থেকেই বামেরা বিমানবন্দরের বেসরকারীকরণের বিরোধিতা করেছিল। আসলে অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচিতে সব বিষয়ে বামপন্থীদের সঙ্গে আমাদের ১০০ শতাংশ মতের মিল নেই। অনেক ব্যাপারেই মতানৈক্য আছে। তবুও সামগ্রিক ভাবে ওরা আমাদের সমর্থন করেছেন।”

যুব তৃণমূলের আন্দোলন: দলের সাংগঠনিক পদে রদবদলের পরে শনিবার যুব তৃণমূলের রাজ্য নেতৃত্ব বৈঠকে বসে। যুব তৃণমূলের সভাপতি মদন মিত্র জানিয়েছেন, সি পি এমের অত্যাচারে দুই মেদিনীপুর, হুগলি এবং বাঁকুড়া জেলার ঘরছাড়াাদের ঘরে ফেরানোই তাঁদের প্রথম কাজ হবে। এর জন্য সরকারি স্তরে কথা বলা ছাড়াও প্রয়োজনে সব রকমের আন্দোলনের পথে যাওয়া হবে। তা ছাড়া, তৃণমূলের শহিদ দিবস ২১ জুলাইয়ের আগে জেলায় জেলায় সক্রিয় সদস্য নিয়োগ করা হবে। সব মিলিয়ে রাজ্যে ১ লক্ষ সক্রিয় সদস্য নিয়োগের সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে, যাঁরা নির্বাচন থেকে আরম্ভ করে প্রতিটি ক্ষেত্রে দলকে সব রকমের সহযোগিতা করবেন।

Gujarat keeps a terror law spare

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, June 2: The Congress-led central government's proposed move to scrap the Prevention of Terrorism Act has prompted the Gujarat government to enact an alternative to the anti-terror law.

In a swift move, the government today tabled the Gujarat Control of Organised Crime (Amendment) Bill in the Assembly. The bill was passed with a few amendments even as the Opposition Congress walked out questioning the "timing" and intention of the state government.

Congress chief whip Arjun Modvadia alleged that the law is being framed for "political victimisation" of weaker sections of society, especially the minority community. "For the past two years, we have been witnessing the misuse of (the) simple IPC. We fear that if the law is misused, it would be nothing but another draconian law to terrorise, suppress and harass the minority community," he said.

Sensing that the Centre might repeal the anti-terror law, the state government had begun considering an alternative to

deal with "terrorism". The Gujarat government believes that if the anti-terror act is scrapped, it would lead to a spurt in terrorist activities.

The bill that was tabled today with certain amendments, as suggested by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, had already been passed on March 26, 2003, the day former state home minister Haren Pandya was assassinated. It had been awaiting presidential clearance since then.

One of the changes was deletion of the sections that allowed district collectors and superintendents of police to intercept communication.

Minister of state for home Amit Shah told reporters that "the deletion of the clauses and other sub-clauses pertaining to interception of communication will in no way decrease the effectiveness of the law".

The legislation has all other provisions of the anti-terror law, such as jail without trial. This means even if the anti-terror law is scrapped, all the 279 people booked under the law in the state may not get a reprieve. They could be booked under the state law, which is equally stringent.

Gujarat has substitute if Pota is repealed

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TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: Gujarat's minister of state for home Amit Shah, on Tuesday announced that if the new government at the Centre repealed the deterrent anti-terrorist act Pota, the state government had decided to amend the provisions of the Gujarat Control of Organised Crime Act (GUJCOC) and implement it to check terrorism.

While replying to the debate on budgetary demands pertaining to his department, Shah said that GUJCOC would be amended in the current session of the state assembly.

Referring to the accusation made by senior Congress member Farookh Shaikh that the BJP government had invoked TADA against a particular community, Shah said that the government had used it only against those involved in the terrorist attack on Akshardham and assassination of ex-home minister Haren Pandya. In all Pota has been invoked in nine cases. The state government has constituted a Pota review board, but so far only three applications have been received by the board.

Shah assured members from the Saurashtra region that the government would leave no stone unturned to smash the increasing menace of mafia gangs in Porbandar and Junagadh districts.

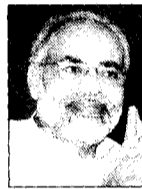
Under no circumstances, gangsters would be protected by the government as has been feared by some members in the house. "They would be dealt firmly as government has political will to curb such elements". The minister said that the state government has evolved an action plan to improve policing.

The state government he said had prepared a special core group to monitor activities of subversive elements along the Indo-Pak border. The group is headed by former DGP A K Tandon.

For stepping up patrolling in coastal areas, the government has prepared a Rs 371 crore plan, which has been sent to the Central government. He sought the help of Amarsinh Chaudhary to get it cleared from the United Progressive Alliance gov-

Modi said let rioters run amok: Amarsinh

Gandhinagar: An allegation by opposition leader Amarsinh Chaudhary that chief minister Narendra Modi had told government officials at a meeting not to take action against rioters during the 2002 communal riots sparked off a furore in the state assembly.



An acrimonious debate over the issue ensued for about two hours. Chaudhary, while participating in the budgetary demands of the home department, made a direct attack on Modi, alleging that the riots had broken out after he had addressed a meeting of officials on the eve of the VHP's call for a Gujarat 'bandh' on February 28, 2002, to protest against the Godhra train carnage. Choudhary claimed that according to the information he had received, Modi had told officials at the meeting to "let people give vent to their feelings".

This, he alleged, had resulted in the administration looking the other way when violence broke out. TNN

ernment.

The government has decided to spend Rs 100 crore on the modernisation of the police force. Besides Chetak commando force, the state government has decided to raise five new battalions of the state reserve police. At the same time, the department has initiated the process of recruiting 5,947 police personnel. Of these 3,000 posts will be filled shortly.

POTA politics

Congress is wrong and foolish

Don't cut your head off if you have a headache, especially if someone is waiting to receive that severed item and display it. This simple political lesson seems to have been lost on the Congress which, in promising to repeal POTA, has given in to its eagerness to attack the BJP and surrender to pressure from the Left and Tamil parties. The BJP has been handed a gift because there are very good arguments against scrapping the law. The Congress will be on the defensive in formal debates to come. It would be easy for the BJP, now that the DMK is not an ally and the AIADMK is not much of an ally, to agree that POTA was abused grossly, and needed amending. Changes include sharpening the distinction, as the former Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee had rightly observed, between speaking in favour of terrorist groups and acting to help them. The first is a matter covered by interpretations of the right to free speech; the terrorism law does not come in here. Vaiko should never have been arrested. The second major improvement in POTA would have been to strengthen review panels so that abuses like those by the Jharkhand government, which made a habit of picking up teenagers, could be checked. POTA isn't the first law on which proper application is found wanting. The mature response is to correct flaws, not score political brownie points. The Congress and allies will be hard put to answer why POTA should be repealed when terrorism is a major problem and when the Act helps secure quicker convictions.

In fact, had cheap politics not been the real agenda behind the POTA repeal promise, the Congress could have scored substantive political points by saying the Act will stay but will be expanded to include perpetrators of communal violence. POTA was applied by the Narendra Modi government against those accused of setting the Godhra train on fire but not against those who rioted in Gujarat. That's the kind of lacuna a smartly amended law could have addressed. When TADA, a law as controversial as POTA, was repealed, the Narasimha Rao government prepared the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 1995, as a replacement and expanded terrorism law to include communal violence. That Bill couldn't pass during the Rao government's time. That's all the more reason the Congress could have resurrected it. There's also the issue of blatant convenience politics — the Congress government in Maharashtra passed the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) and used it extensively. Now, suddenly, the state government is talking of repealing MCOCA. This is an effort to be "consistent". But has organised crime in Mumbai vanished? This is bad politics, bad law and bad policy — a considerable achievement for a government that's just about a week old.

Bofors howitzer faces new tests — and old ghost

By Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI, MAY 28. In the first week of June, the Army is scheduled to begin a new round of tests on three 155-millimetre, 52-calibre towed howitzer systems competing for a contract estimated to be worth Rs. 12,000 crores. The changed political circumstances, however, could have an impact on the fortunes of the contenders, notably SWS Defence AB, the successor organisation to Bofors.

SWS Defence has fielded the FH77 B05 L52, an upgraded version of the weapon some experts believe was key to India's successes in the 1999 Kargil war. Rivals Soltam of Israel has put up the TIG 2002 howitzer, while South Africa's Denel is hoping its G5/2000 system will win the contest. India's artillery modernisation plans call for an inventory of around 1,400-1,800 155-millimetre howitzers. At present, the artillery uses a va-

riety of guns that are not only inefficient but require large, costly inventories.

Military sources say the latest tests, to be carried out at the Mahajan firing range in the Pokhran desert, are necessitated by the fact that none has met the General Staff Qualitative Requirements in tests carried out last year. The Ministry of Defence subsequently asked the three companies to modify their systems. A set of tests in 2002 had produced a non-committal evaluation by the Director-General of Artillery, who did not rank the guns by order of merit.

In a level playing field, whoever performs best at Pokhran could walk away with a lucrative contract for 400 155-millimetre towed howitzers, 180 of which will be purchased outright and the remainder assembled under licence. The Army also needs wheeled and tracked 155-millimetre self-propelled howitzers. Notably, all three contenders for

the towed howitzer deal also have interests in other spheres of Indian artillery and armour modernisation.

Price negotiations are under way with Denel for LW T6 turret to be mated with the indigenous Arjun Main Battle Tank to produce the Bhim, a tracked self-propelled howitzer successfully tested in 1999. Denel had asked for some Rs. 2 crores to Rs. 3 crores more for each turret system than India was willing to pay, but may have been hoping that a compromise price could be reached in a deal that also includes the purchase of its towed howitzers. Orders are to be initially placed for 124 tracked howitzers.

Soltam, for its part, has almost completed work on upgrading 180 of the Army's 130-mm M-46 field guns to 155-mm, a contract sealed in 2000. Soltam faced some problems with the project, executed by the Ordnance Factory Board at Kan-

pur. Faced with objections raised by the artillery, the Defence Ministry had halted all work on the upgrades two years ago, citing quality problems. However, these problems now seem to have been resolved, a fact Army sources attribute to political pressure.

Until the 2004 Lok Sabha election results were out, Soltam had hoped to capitalise on the fact that under the National Democratic Alliance, Israel had become the second largest supplier of military hardware to India after Russia. Israel is not only selling India three Phalcon airborne early warning systems, mounted on Ukrainian IL 76 heavy transport aircraft, but is also awaiting Washington's clearance to make available its Arrow 2 anti-ballistic missile defence system.

SWS Defence, in turn, has already concluded contracts for spares worth \$ 6-8 million and for the existing towed Bofors ho-

witzers in the Army's arsenal. The Swedish manufacturer has also said negotiations for an upgrade kit for these guns may begin once the tests for the new weapons are concluded. Like Israel, however, Sweden is apprehensive that political considerations may lead them to lose out on the towed howitzer deal.

For the same reason, Denel is optimistic. The ruling African National Congress' relationship with the Congress in India has always been warm, and the former South African President, Nelson Mandela, had thrown his weight behind his country's efforts to sell 155-millimetre rounds to India at depreciated costs. The howitzer contract is crucial for Denel's financial survival.

THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2004 ✓

REVIVING BOFORS

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AMONG THE SLEW of decisions the new Government at the Centre will have to take is one that will reflect directly on its sense of fair play and commitment to justice. It is a decision that relates to the fate of the Bofors case — a case about a scandal that shocked the collective conscience of the nation in the late 1980s and one that became synonymous with corruption in high places. Following the contentious Delhi High Court ruling in February 2004 — which held, among other things, that there was no evidence of any illegal payoffs in connection with the Rs. 1,437 crore contract for the purchase of 155 mm howitzers — everything depends on the Central Bureau of Investigation filing a special leave petition against this verdict in the Supreme Court. It is imperative that the Congress-led Government does not fall prey to the temptation of interfering with the due process of law. It should give the CBI a free hand to pursue the case to its legal conclusion, whatever that may be. With the former Congress Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi finding a place in the list of accused, it is perhaps understandable that *l'affaire Bofors* evokes strong emotions within the party. But this cannot be a basis for attempting to scuttle the case, something that earlier Congress Governments attempted to do — and in a clumsy and ham-handed manner at that.

As things stand, what remains of the Bofors case is a pale shadow of what it originally comprised. A single Judge of the Delhi High Court quashed the charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act against the Hinduja brothers on the ground that there was no evidence of illegal gratification on the part of any public servant. However, Justice J.D. Kapoor's order directed that charges be framed against three Hinduja brothers — Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash-

chand — for entering into a criminal conspiracy to cheat the Government by dishonestly representing that there were no middlemen involved in the negotiations to clinch the howitzer deal. Justice Kapoor's knotty and convoluted ruling, on the one hand, dismissed all charges of corruption and absolved Rajiv Gandhi and former Defence Secretary S.K. Bhatnagar and, on the other, suggested that middlemen for the Swedish arms manufacturer had attempted to "cheat" the Government and cause it "wrongful loss."

The CBI has maintained it would appeal against this perplexing order ever since it was issued. Last month, high-ranking CBI sources told this newspaper that the grounds of appeal were almost finalised; and that once it was internally vetted, the draft appeal would be sent to the Law Ministry for approval. The Delhi High Court had given the CBI three months to appeal against its ruling, but the earliest a special leave petition can be filed is July, that is, when the Supreme Court reopens after the vacation. With the CBI committing itself to challenging the Delhi High Court's order, the ball is really in the court of the Law Ministry and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Apart from making it possible for the CBI to file an appeal in time, the Centre should ensure it is as persuasive and legally watertight as possible. With the new Government in place, other corruption cases handled by the CBI also deserve to be on the watchlist. Among them are the cases against born-again Congressman Sukh Ram, former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi, and key Congress allies such as Laloo Prasad Yadav and Shibu Soren. But Bofors, given the political sensitivities of the Congress, will be the acid test of the new Government's commitment to uprightness and the rule of law.

THE HINDU

27 MAY 2004

Terror attack on BSF convoy kills 28

Masood Hussain

LOWER MÜNDA (ANANTNAG) 23 MAY

IN an apparent bid to send a terror welcome message to the new government on its very first day in office, militants in Kashmir blew up a bus carrying BSF personnel and their families, killing 28 and critically injuring six. The wounded were battling for their lives in hospital.

The security-men, who had proceeded on leave, were on their way home when an IED hidden under a culvert was remotely detonated at around 10:10 am. The dead included 15 BSF men, six females, four children and three male relatives of the BSF jawans. Three commuters in a civil bus that followed the BSF vehicle were also wounded.

An anonymous caller, claiming to be the spokesman of the Hizb-ul Mujahideen, staked the claim for the attack. He said it was carried out to avenge the killing of outfit's three top commanders in the last two months.

This major post-poll militant strike is unprecedented, as far as



KILLING FIELDS: Soldiers stand near the remains of the bus destroyed by the blast on the Jammu-Srinagar highway on Sunday. — PTI

the casualties are concerned, in the over 15-years-old separatist insurgency in Kashmir. Even in October 2003, at a nearby spot, militants using the same tactic had made BSF suffer some casualties. But this time, it was not merely the blast that led to the massacre but the fire that caught the bus after its oil-tank exploded. Cops and soldiers from the

neighbouring RR camp said almost all the bodies were charred beyond recognition. The ill-fated bus, HR55b-3410, carrying a total of 33 persons including paramilitary men and their families, had crossed the Panthachowk at around 8:30 am as part of the routine convoy.

"The fire was instant and by the time the rescue operations

started, there was literally nothing to be saved. All those who could jump out on their own may somehow survive," said one CRPF man, who was on routine duty in Gulab Bagh, the spot where the explosion took place — 90 kms south of Srinagar, on the Srinagar-Jammu highway. The fire-fighters who reached the spot could only help douse the bus skeleton that paved way for recovering the charred bodies.

Since the road was closed for traffic for over six hours, people stood watching cops and soldiers clearing the debris. Far from the smashed skeleton of the bus, a scribe traced the half-burnt pages of a soldier's annual confidential report (ACR).

From shoes, chappals, half-burnt clothes and blood stains, somebody fished out a greeting card, apparently the part of a soldier's luggage. Personnel from the Border Road Organisation (BRO), which maintains the road, swiftly started restoring the culvert, a part of which was completely destroyed.

Hundreds of buses were stranded for over six hours on the

strategic 300-kilometre highway. Since the highway and all the major roads used by security forces for their movement are scanned for landmines in the wee hours of morning by road opening parties (ROP) using mine-sweepers, sniffer dogs and hand-held mine-detectors, the explosion came as a shock to many in the security grid.

IG-Kashmir K Rajinderan admitted: "A huge quantity of explosives seems to have been used. We are investigating whether or not it was a security lapse." He confirmed that the CRPF personnel had already cleared the road for routine movement before the explosion took place.

K Srinivasan, a DIG-rank BSF officer in Srinagar said: "We are not aware of who cleared the road, but yes, our boys and families were targeted. We have no hope of the wounded surviving."

The wounded, he informed, were airlifted to 92-base hospital in Srinagar and were in critical condition. Top security officials termed the attack as "frustration" on the part of militants who targeted the civilians.

Cabinet condemns killing of jawans

Bharti Jain

NEW DELHI 23 MAY

THE Union Cabinet on Sunday condemned the killing of 28 BSF personnel and their kin in a powerful landmine blast triggered by militants in Jammu and Kashmir. The Cabinet meeting, the first after the Manmohan Singh ministry was sworn in on Saturday, passed a resolution condemning the attack, Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan informed reporters here. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is said to have shared with his colleagues details of the landmine explosion, besides the assessment of the intelligence agencies that it was carried out by the Hizbul Mujahideen as a backlash to the killing of its top commanders, including two chief commanders, in intelligence-driven security operations since January this year.

According to intelligence sources, the near decimation of Hizbul's top leadership here has not only greatly disturbed the outfit's Pakistan-based supreme commander Syed Salahuddin but has also dipped the morale of its cadres. With this attack, the sources said, the Hizbul Mujahideen was only trying to prove that it is still very much around and that its capacity to inflict violence remains intact.

Ever since the security forces stepped up intelligence-driven operations to eliminate the top leadership of militant outfits active in Jammu and Kashmir, nearly 40-50 senior leaders, mainly of the rank of divisional commander, have been killed.

The damage has been maximum to the Hizbul, which has lost two of its chief commanders one after the other, within a gap of four months. While one chief commander, next in line to Salahuddin, was killed in January, his successor was killed as recently as May 5.

Intelligence agencies have been issuing warnings, said sources, that the Hizbul may soon want to prove its worth by carrying out an attack that ensures maximum collateral damage. Their strategy of targeting the security forces remains intact the purpose being to prove that militancy in J&K is being carried out by Kashmiris.

The Economic Times 24 MAY 2004

Trial against Vaiko, 8 others stayed

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 7. The Supreme Court today stayed all further proceedings pending against the MDMK general secretary, Vaiko, and eight other partymen before a special POTA Court in Poonamalee, near Chennai, under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

A Bench, consisting of Justice Y.K. Sabharwal and Justice S.B. Sinha, stayed the proceedings on a special leave petition from Mr. Vaiko and others challenging a common order passed by the Madras High Court declining their prayer for a direction to the State Government to withdraw the POTA cases against them as per the decision of the Central POTA Review Committee which held that there was no prima facie case for proceeding against them.

The High Court by an order dated April 29 had also reiterated that its earlier direction to the POTA Court to complete the trial by June 30 would continue.

Assailing the order, senior counsel Fali Nariman, appearing for Mr. Vaiko and others, told the Bench during "mention" time that if the trial were to be completed by June 30, the POTA Committee's decision would become meaningless and infructuous. Hence, he sought the stay.

However, Subramonium Prasad, counsel for the

Tamil Nadu Government, opposed the stay and said the State Government had passed an order instructing the Public Prosecutor to act on the POTA Committee's decision.

The Bench, in its brief order, said: "List after vacation. Meanwhile, proceedings in the trial court stayed." In his SLP, Mr. Vaiko and others said that substantial questions of law had arisen in the petition — whether the High Court was right in interpreting Section 60 (7) of POTA that even despite the clear language of the said section the directions issued by the Review Committee would not automatically withdraw the proceedings against the accused under POTA.

The SLP said the main task of the Review Committee was to oversee that the provisions of POTA were not misused. Also, it was a safeguard provided to find out whether there was any prima facie case to proceed against the accused under POTA. While so, the interpretation given by the High Court would bind only the State Government and not the Public Prosecutor and that he would have to independently apply his mind. If the interpretation of the High Court was accepted, the same would defeat the very purpose for which the committee was constituted, they said, and prayed for quashing the impugned judgment and an interim stay of its operation and stay of the trial.

Ministry admits Army faked kills

But targets man who spilled beans

Kanwar Sandhu
Chandigarh, May 7

THE MINISTRY of Defence on Friday admitted that a court of inquiry had established the Army had indeed claimed fake kills in Siachen.

Reacting to Friday morning's report in *Hindustan Times*, the ministry charged Major Surinder Singh, a Company Commander with 5/5 Gorkha Rifles, with having faked kills and destroyed stage-managed 'enemy' bunkers. It stated that on the basis of the inquiry, the authorities had ordered disciplinary action against him and administrative action against the unit's Commanding Officer, Col K.D. Singh, and unit adjutant, Major Mohit Lama.

However, from the ministry's response, it is clear that despite incontrovertible evidence of complicity of more than one officer — and perhaps higher-ups — the ministry and the Army HQ have chosen to blame principally Major Singh who, while owning up to his crime, has spilled the beans on others in the unit. According to the Major, he had done it at the instance of Col K.D. Singh. The CO has denied the charge.

Incidentally, the first enemy "kills" were reported not by Major Singh's company but by two other companies — on July 10, July 18 and July 19 last year. The first "kill" by Major Singh's company came on July 29, and was followed by another "strike" on July 31 — both with sniper rifles.

Other companies deployed at Army posts Darshak ("D"), Jawala ("C") and Kaman ("B"), reported 18, 13 and two enemy killings in July-November. Since Northern Command has stated



AFP
YES MINISTER: George Fernandes in Siachen on December 25, 2001. The defence ministry admitted on Friday that the Army faked kills in Siachen.

that its procedures for verifying enemy casualties include intercepts of enemy transmissions, an obvious question is: how many of these "kills" reported by the battalion were confirmed by such intercepts or other evidence?

Col K.D. Singh has been strongly censured by Brigade Commander H.P.S. Bedi, who in his letter of December 11, 2003, charged him with propagating "gross untruths", "misquoting facts" and "concealing grave irregularities in operational matters". Bedi signed off: "I hereby caution

you not to indulge in misquoting of facts and refrain from misleading, misinforming senior commanders."

Despite the officer having reported fake "kills" in his complaint to the Army chief, the matter was dealt with routinely. The inquiry ordered by Major Gen R.P.S. Malhan, GOC of the Division, was presided over by his deputy, Brig H.S. Nagra. No effort was made to ensure the inquiry was free of regimental influence — like Brig Nagra, Lt-Gen Sharma, the GOC of 14 Corps, is from the Gorkha Regiment.

GOLD TRUTH in SIACHEN

HT'S QUESTIONS

Could bunkers have been constructed without the army high command's knowledge?

Video of a kill was shown by 14 Corps (Ladakh) commander Lt-Gen

Arvind Sharma during a presentation at Defence Staff College. Does it mean none of Major Surinder Singh's superiors found anything amiss with the video?

Why did it take the army's internal reporting system five months to realise the encounter was stage-managed?

Was permission for photos taken? After Nepalese porters were seen making videos in the area, the Corps HQ in June 2003 said no photography — even by officers — will be allowed without permission

It's been happening routinely, all over

Vishal Thapar
New Delhi, May 7

WHAT HAPPENED in Siachen is apparently happening elsewhere too. Top Army officers have told *Hindustan Times* that inflating the number of kills is fairly common practice in the force, even though the blatant "acting out" of hits (like in Siachen) is probably rare.

Officers have good reason for exaggerating their successes. The Army measures the performance of its units against insurgencies only in terms of kills and captures made. Unit citations and gallantry medals, too, are awarded on the basis of the number of kills and recovery of major weapons.

Officers are, therefore, under constant pressure to show larger and larger numbers. "Everyone is gunning for glory through this route. There's the pressure to achieve recognition and promotions, especially on generals who have very short tenures. This pressure is forced all the way down the line," a senior officer said.

While a corps commander — a lieutenant-general — usually has a tenure of 12-14 months, his division commander — a major-general — has only 16 months to prove his worth. "This leads to excessive pressure to demonstrate high performance during a short tenure," the officer explained.

The Army is now beginning to accept that the claims of kills of intruding militants along the LoC could be inflated up to 40-50 per cent. This is so especially in high-altitude areas, where bodies are buried on the spot. "In the Valley, it is difficult to exaggerate figures: the bodies have to be produced since the people are politically very aware," the officer said.

Nor is "false reporting" new. A battalion commander in the Drass sector did not report Pakistani intrusions in Kargil in 1999 because his tenure was to end in two months and he wanted to proceed for the Higher Command Course.

SC stays Vaiko's POTA trial

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE Supreme Court today stayed POTA proceedings against MDMK leader Vaiko and eight others.

A bench of Justice Y.K. Sabharwal and Justice S.B. Sinha, after hearing the arguments of senior counsel Fali Nariman briefly, stayed the judgment of the Madras High Court directing the Special POTA court at Poonamallee to complete the trial by June 30.

The bench ordered issuance of notice to the Tamil Nadu government and posted the matter after vacation. Vaiko and eight others had filed a petition in the Madras HC contending that the Central POTA Review Committee had ruled on April 4, 2004,

The MDMK leader's SLP challenged the Madras High Court's order dismissing his petition. The apex court has issued notice to the TN govt



that POTA charges did not apply against Vaiko and eight others. The committee had also directed the state government to issue suitable directions to withdraw charges against him and eight others.

The TN government also filed a writ petition in this regard in the high court seeking a writ of certiorari calling for the records of the Central POTA Review Committee and praying for quashing its order.

Vaiko's Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court submitted that both the writ petitions were taken up by a HC division bench together and orders were issued. This was done without issuing notice to Vaiko and others, the MDMK chief contended.

The Madras High Court dismissed the state government's petition but went on to hold that the directions of the Central POTA panel do not bind the public prosecutor and

he has to independently decide whether to file a petition for withdrawal of prosecution.

The SLP challenged the Madras High Court order holding Vaiko's writ petition premature and dismissing it. If proceedings at Special POTA court are allowed to continue, the decision of the POTA Review Committee would become infructuous, the petitioners contended and prayed for quashing the HC order and sought a stay on further proceedings before the special court.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court also issued notices to the Bihar Home Secretary and IG (Prisons) taking suo motu notice of Pappu Yadav alias Rajesh Ranjan — who is in judicial custody in connection with the Ajit Sarkar murder case — roaming freely in Madhepura constituency.

08/29/04
D. N. Lakshmi

POTA panel order binding on government: High Court

By A. Subramani

CHENNAI, APRIL 29. The Madras High Court today ruled that the Central POTA Review Committee's order was binding on the State government and declined to quash the April 8 directive of the panel asking it to withdraw criminal proceedings against Vaiko, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader, and eight other partymen.

The First Bench, comprising Chief Justice B. Subhashan Reddy and Justice V.S. Sirpurkar, was passing orders on two writ petitions, one filed by Mr. Vaiko and the other by the Chief Secretary.

Mr. Vaiko sought a direction to the government to implement the committee's order that the public prosecutor be instructed to file a petition under Section 321 of the Criminal Procedure Code in the light of the finding that there was no prima facie case to proceed against him under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. But the government contended that the committee was only an executive body and it could not be permitted to inter-

fer with the administration of justice by a competent judicial forum. It sought to quash the panel order.

The judges said: "The Review Committee has formed its opinion, which is purely administrative in nature. It is binding on the government up to the point of addressing a letter to the prosecutor to consider whether it is a fit case to file an application under Section 321 of Cr.P.C."

(According to Section 321, the public prosecutor in charge of a case may, with the consent of the court anytime before the judgment is pronounced, withdraw the prosecution.)

The judges said, "The public prosecutor is not bound by any consideration other than the one revolving round Section 321 and in accordance with well-settled legal principles enunciated by the Supreme Court. As such, we hold that the plea in the writ petition filed by the government is not justiciable." They also observed, "The writ petitions are premature as they have been filed even before the exercise under Section 321 is made."

Recalling its earlier order on the jurisdiction of the committee, which was upheld 'in dictum' by the apex court, the Bench said, "in a judgment on February 4, 2004 a Division Bench upheld the constitutional validity of sub-sections 4, 5 and 6, and explained sub-section 7 that even if the committee comes to the conclusion that there is no prima facie case against the accused, the prosecution cannot be deemed withdrawn automatically.

"We explained that if the committee concludes that there is no prima facie case, then the administrative decision is binding on the government, which has to issue a letter to the prosecutor. With that the role of the committee and the government comes to an end.

"It is for the prosecutor to apply his mind independently, taking into consideration the interpretation given for Section 321 by the Supreme Court. Even if he files a petition, the court is not bound to automatically accept the plea. It has to assess the factual situation by applying legal principles and then formulate its opinion."

HPD-12
20/4

Navy enhances quick reaction capabilities

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, APRIL 19. A 30-crore 'extra fast attack' craft was inducted into the eastern fleet here today, enhancing the quick reaction capabilities of the Navy in the region.

The T-84, produced with Israeli collaboration at the Goa Shipyard in record time, is the fastest surface ship in the Indian Navy's inventory.

"The T-84 with its fast attack capabilities would play a vital role in taking quick reaction patrol along the coast. It is also an ideal platform for the conduct of special operations," said the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, O.P. Bansal, who commissioned the vessel. Another ship of the same class, T-83, arrived here last month.

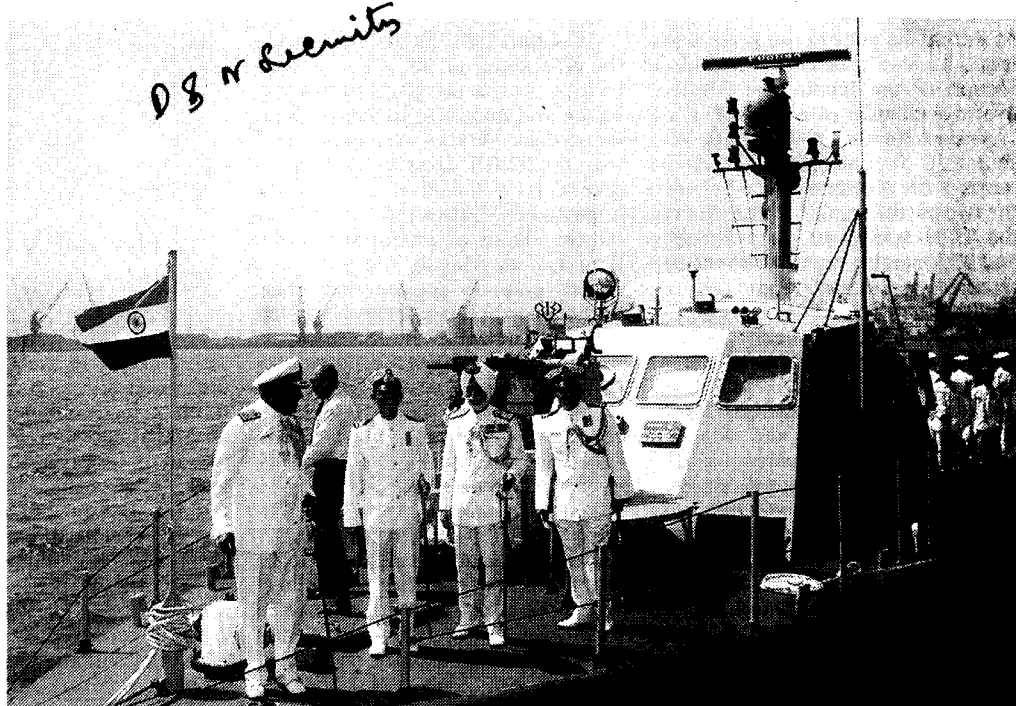
Though this was the first time a ship was being commissioned here, there was no message intended to be sent across to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or Sri Lanka, he said in response to a question.

"There is no message of that sort. Many ships have been rebased from Visakhapatnam (the Eastern Command headquarters) to Chennai. We got some ships from Kochi too. It is the first time a ship is being commissioned here," he said.

Asked if there was any increased activity in the Palk Straits because of the stand-off within the LTTE, he said there was none. "I think it is quiet."

The Goa Shipyard chairman and managing director, Sampath Pillai, said that a long-term maintenance contract with the Navy was in the final stages and would be signed shortly.

The two remaining orders for



Vice-Admiral, O.P. Bansal, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, launches the latest addition to the eastern fleet in Chennai on Monday. — Photo: R. Ragu

the 'extra fast attack' craft would be delivered in 10 months.

The contract period for the T-84 was 18 months and the vessel was delivered nearly six months ahead of schedule.

Addressing presspersons, Admiral Bansal, said the exercises now being conducted with two British ships off the Chennai coast were "more advanced than the earlier ones" and had "gone off very well."

The exercises had grown in complexity with all the counties that India was carrying out joint exercises. "Now we are doing actual operations with them."

The Navy was not patrolling

the Malacca Straits "for the time being." "We were till last year. There has been no requirement since then."

Asked if the exercises had served as a deterrent to poachers, smugglers and terrorists, he said that more number of Naval ships at sea meant better and more effective maritime security.

The Navy was evaluating a "number of options" on the acquisition of maritime patrol aircraft.

"Long range maritime patrol aircraft is the requirement of the navies. We are evaluating all those [in use with the navies of the world.] The requirement is

not for flying fast but keeping them in the air for a longer time and having a very good sensor package," he said.

On Coco Islands, he said the Navy was "keeping a close eye all the time." "We have to keep an eye on what is happening in Coco Islands. It is too close to our island territories which are very far from our mainland."

Warships under Project 17, the Navy's new series of stealthy multi-role surface combatants, launched about a year ago, "are under construction."

The next Delhi class warship under Project 15 will be launched on June 4.

11-2 drop case 19/4

Bail petition of accused rejected in Purulia case

Kolkata: The acting chief metropolitan magistrate, C H Karim, on Sunday rejected the bail prayer of Acharya Tadbhavanand Avadhoot alias Lal Chand Parihara, an Ananda Margi, and remanded him to jail custody for a day in connection with the Purulia armsdrop case.

The magistrate also ordered that he be produced before the ninth metropolitan magistrate on Monday for further order. *D J N Records*

The accused was produced in the Metropolitan Magistrate's court pursuant to a Delhi court's granting a CBI transit remand to the accused on April 16.

The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate in Delhi, Ravinder Dudgeja, had directed that the accused be produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate in Kolkata on April 18.

The accused, who is a resident of Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, was arrested from the posh Chanakyapuri area here on April 15.

Praying for the bail, the lawyer of the accused, Shankar Thakur, submitted before the court that the trial of the case had already been completed and that in the chargesheet, the name of the accused person had been shown as absconding.

So, the question of further inquiry is not at all necessary as prayed for by the CBI.

The CBI on the other hand requested the court to allow police custody for the accused as the inquiry had not been completed. Agencies

বফর্স প্রক্ষে রাহুলকে 'তাল' করছেন সনিয়া: বিজেপি

১১ ৪ M. S. S. ১১ ৪

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১১ এপ্রিল— বফর্সের পুরনো কাসুদিকে এবার বিদেশিনির সঙ্গে যুক্ত করে কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গাধীর বিরুদ্ধে আক্রমণ বাঁখালো করতে চাইছে বিজেপি। বফর্স নিয়ে বিতর্ক ফের মাথাচাড়া দেওয়ার গত কাল সনিয়ার পাশাপাশি তাঁর পুত্র রাহুলও বিজেপির বিরুদ্ধে মুখ খুলেছিলেন। রাহুলের জবাবের প্রেক্ষিতে বিজেপি আজ সনিয়াকেই আক্রমণ করে বলেছে, তিনি ভারতের ঐতিহ্যের বিরুদ্ধে গিয়ে পুত্রকে তাল হিসাবে ব্যবহার করছেন। দলের সাধারণ সম্পাদক মুখতার আব্বাস নাকভির বক্তব্য, “এইরকম একটি গুরুতর অভিযোগ চাকতে কংগ্রেস অধ্যক্ষ সন্তানদের রক্ষা কবচের মতো ব্যবহার করছে। এটা ঐতিহ্যের বিরুদ্ধে। এতে কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রীর মনোভাব সম্পর্কে সন্দেহ জাগে।”

সনিয়া গাধী বিজেপির প্রক্ৰবায়ের সামনে গত কাল বলেছিলেন, অন্য কোনও বিষয় নেই বলেই গত ১৮ বছর ধরে বিজেপি বফর্স নিয়ে বিতর্ক খুঁচিয়ে তোলার চেষ্টা করছে। তিনি কটাক্ষ করে বলেছিলেন, হয়তো

তাঁর প্রসৌত্রদেরও এই অভিযোগ স্নতে হবে। সনিয়ার এই জবাবের পাঁচটা আক্রমণে বিজেপি দেশের প্রতিরক্ষার ব্যাপারে বিদেশিনির যুক্ত হওয়ার আশঙ্কা নিয়ে সরব হয়েছে। বফর্স মামলায় অভিযুক্ত ওস্তাডিও কুত্রোচ্চির সঙ্গে কতটা ঘনিষ্ঠতা ছিল, সনিয়াকে তা স্পষ্ট জানাতে দাবি করে নাকভির বক্তব্য, “যে ব্যক্তি প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিবাসে ঢোকা মাত্রই এত বড় কেলেঙ্কারি হয়, তিনি প্রধানমন্ত্রী হলে যে কী হবে, তা বোঝাই যাচ্ছে।”

উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী ভারত উদয় যাত্রা শেষ করে ১৪ এপ্রিল দিল্লি ফিরছেন। ১৫ তারিখ দিল্লিতে সংবাদিক বৈঠকে তিনি বফর্স বিষয়ে সরব হবেন। পরের দিন, ১৬ এপ্রিল আডবানীর নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্র গাধীনগরে বাজপেয়ী যাবেন জনসভা করতে। সেখানেও দুই নেতার বক্তৃতায় বফর্সের বিষয়টি বড় অংশ জুড়ে থাকবে বলে বিজেপি সূত্রে খবর।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী ও তাঁর অনেক সহযোগী স্বাধীনতার আন্দোলনে যোগ দেননি বলে অভিযোগ করেছেন সনিয়া। জনসভায় সনিয়া বলেছেন,

কেন বাজপেয়ী স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনে নিজের ছিলেন, তার জবাব দিন। এর জবাবে নাকভি প্রথমে বলেন, পাঁচটা প্রশ্ন করে প্রশ্নের উত্তর এড়ানো যায় না। তিনি বলেন, “কোনও বিদেশির কাছ থেকে দেশভক্তির প্রমাণপত্র নেওয়ার দরকার নেই ভারতীয়দের।” প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বিরুদ্ধে লখনউতে কংগ্রেস-সর্মথিত প্রার্থী রাম জেঠওয়ালি আবার বিজেপিকে চালেঞ্জ ছুঁড়ে বলেছেন, যদি সনিয়ার বিরুদ্ধে বাস্তবিক আক্রমণ বন্ধ না হয়, তাহলে তিনি এমন তথ্য ফাস করবেন, যাতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী-সহ বিজেপি-র নেতৃত্বকে বিভ্রাণ পড়তে হবে। অন্য দিকে, কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র কপিল সিবাল আজ ফের বলেছেন, কোনও নতুন অভিযোগ নেই। এখন সংবাদপত্রে যা প্রকাশিত হচ্ছে ও বিজেপি যা বলছে, তা অনেক আগেই বিভিন্ন পত্রপত্রিকায় বেরিয়েছিল। কিন্তু কোথাওই সনিয়ার নাম অভিযুক্ত হিসাবে ছিল না।

নাকভির চাচাছোলা আক্রমণের পরেই বিজেপির দলীয় হফতরে হারমোনিয়ম, ঢোল নিয়ে গান শুরু করেন ‘রাম তেরি গঙ্গা মৈলি’ ব্যাত সুরকার রবীন্দ্র

শঙ্কর জৈন! তার গানও সনিয়ার বিদেশিনি বিষয়ে— “মুহুঁ দিখাই মে মাস্কে হিন্দুস্তান/ রাজীব কি দুলহনিয়া/ বড়া উচা রখা রে আরমান / রাজীব কি দুলহনিয়া।” অর্থাৎ, নতুন বউ হিসাবে রাজীবের স্ত্রী শঙ্করবাড়িতে মুখ দেখানোর উপহার হিসাবে দেশটা চাইছে।

এই রবীন্দ্র জৈনই সপ্তাহ খানেক আগে কংগ্রেস দফতরে বসে গান গেয়েছিলেন। কেন তিনি আজ আকবর রোড ছেড়ে অশোক রোডে? তার কোনও সন্দেহ নাই। দিতে পেরে একটা শায়েরি আউড়ে বিজেপি নেতাদের বিভ্রাণ কাটাতে চেষ্টা করেছেন সুরকার। নাকভি জানিয়েছেন, বিজেপিতে যোগ দেওয়া হয়েছে গায়কগায়িকাদের নিয়ে। ত্রোটের প্রচারে সুরকার সারা দেশ জুড়ে। রূপকথা অনুসারে বিভিন্ন বড় শহরে দু'ঘণ্টাব্যাপী গানের অনুষ্ঠানে সুরকার শান, রবীন্দ্র জৈন, অনুপ জলোটা, প্রভৃতি গায়কেরা গান গেয়ে ভোট চাইবেন। সেখানে কোনও রাজনৈতিক বক্তৃতা থাকবে না। শেষ সঙ্গীতেই ভোট চানবেন এই সব রাজনৈতিক-শিল্পীরা।

India jittery over Bangla arms haul

Nilova Roy Chaudhury in New Delhi and Agencies

April 11. — The discovery of 10 truck loads of arms of worth between Rs 200 and Rs 300 crore at Chittagong port on 2 April is "something which directly impacts our security and the security of the region" and is "a matter of serious concern," an official said today.

And while no 'démarche' (formal diplomatic protest) has been issued to the Bangladesh government yet, the Indian high commission in Dhaka is "very closely watching and monitoring" the course of official investigations into

what is being termed the 'largest ever haul of illegal weapons' in that country.

Officials believe the weapons (which, according to local media reports, included thousands of automatic weapons, and around one million rounds of ammunition, 150 rocket grenade launchers, and 25,000 hand grenades) were headed for India for use by insurgents, especially those active in the North-east, during the elections.

Yesterday, agency reports from Chittagong had quoted city mayor Mr ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury as having said that the cache of arms and ammunition were "shipped from the

USA and Pakistan to arm Indian rebels camped in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)."

Bangladesh has repeatedly denied New Delhi's charge that Indian insurgents were sheltered in its territory. After Bhutan acted to flush out insurgents from camps on its soil, Delhi had again urged Dhaka to cooperate in closing down rebel training centres. Officials acknowledged that they've been increasingly frustrated at Dhaka's official response.

In a statement a week after the arms haul, the Bangladesh mission in Delhi had said: "When asked to comment, a spokesman of the ministry of foreign affairs said that all details relating to

the recent haul of a large amount of arms in Chittagong are being dealt with in an effective manner" by the Bangladeshi home ministry.

An example of the "effective manner" was to appoint the O-C of the local 'thana', who initially supervised the off-loading of the weapons, as the investigating officer!

According to agency reports, Mr Chowdhury claimed that the Indian secessionists were running 50-60 training camps in the CHT and the weapons were brought in to arm them under "a sinister conspiracy to create unrest in the sub-continent," according to the independent English-language newspaper *Daily Star*.

12 APR 2004

THE STATESMAN

Congress, BJP trade charges on Bofors

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
& PTI

NEW DELHI, April 10.
— Reeling under the BJP's Bofors assault on Mrs Sonia Gandhi and the questions posed by Mr M Venkaiah Naidu and Mr Arun Jaitley, the Congress today hit back, posing three questions to the Prime Minister on the issue.

The Congress has asked Atal Behari Vajpayee to come clean over why, in his capacity as the position leader, he had written to the then PM Mr Narasimha Rao pleading on behalf of the Iyengar brothers". The party has sought Mr Vajpayee's explanation on why he failed to extradite Flavio Quattrocchi from Malaysia during his six-year tenure. "New Delhi should have used its economic leverage over Malaysia to realise this objective", said Mr Prakash Amesh.

The Congress has also asked Mr Vajpayee why as the Opposition leader he had "bombarded the then United Front Government in 1996-97



Mrs Sonia Gandhi:
All guns blazing.

with letters against Snamprogetti's involvement in the Indo-Oman urea joint venture project, but then reversed his position completely after becoming the PM".

Mrs Sonia Gandhi also broke her silence over Bofors while addressing an election rally in Chhattisgarh. She attacked the BJP for habitually raking up the Bofors issue on the eve of polls.

In Amethi, Mr Rahul Gandhi dismissed the BJP's bid to raise Bofors and foreign-origin issues as "signs of its frustration". "After finding that its feel-good claims are not cutting much ice with the people, the BJP is trying to grab power by

diverting the attention of the people by raking up these issues".

In Ahmedabad, Congress leader Dr Manmohan Singh accused Mr Vajpayee of allegedly influencing the CBI action against Mrs Gandhi for extracting political mileage on the eve of elections.

In Bangalore, the BJP intensified its attack on Mrs Gandhi today and demanded that she break her silence and "come clean" on the issue.

"BJP shall continue to raise this issue before people because elections are an ideal time to debate", BJP spokesman Mr Arun Jaitley said. Mr Jaitley said the party was raising the issue as it concerned probity in public life. "The people expect Mrs Gandhi to come clean on the issue. Politicians who aspire to high constitutional posts must be accountable and answerable".

In Chattisgarh, Mr LK Advani today asked the Congress to answer the questions his party has raised following the "sensational" statement by Swedish police officer probing the Bofors scam.

CBI to appeal against court order in Bofors case

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10. Two months after the Delhi High Court quashed bribery charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act against three Hinduja brothers in the Bofors case, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has decided to go ahead with filing an appeal against the order.

Highly placed sources in the CBI said the 115-page judgment of Justice J.D. Kapoor had been scrutinised and grounds for the appeal had almost been finalised but it would still take some more time as the file would need to pass through a few more stages. As such, sources said, the agency had time till May to appeal against the order.

Sources said the Directorate of Prosecution in the CBI was 'vetting' the appeal before the Director, U.S. Mishra, finally put his seal of approval on it and forwarded it to the Union Law Ministry, which would complete the procedural formalities. Sources said the agency would seek to restore the charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act and also draw the attention of the Supreme Court to certain observations made by the High Court, which were 'not required.'

Mr. Justice Kapoor of the High Court had upheld the decision of the special court framing charges of cheating and conspiracy against the Hinduja brothers — S.P. Hinduja, G.P. Hinduja and P.P. Hinduja. The Judge had ordered that A.B. Bofors would face trial for the offence punishable under Section 465 of Indian Penal Code (forgery) for having made false documents saying that there were no middlemen in the deal. He ordered that the charges against the Hinduja brothers, Martin Ardbo, then chief of A.B. Bofors, and the Italian businessman, Ottavio Quattrocchi, would be framed by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate as the offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act against the accused had been quashed.

However, Mr. Justice Kapoor gave credit to the CBI for tracing the money received as 'commission' by middlemen/agents — Win Chadha, since dead, Mr. Quattrocchi and the Hinduja brothers. Some of the key high-ranking former CBI officials and investigators who had been associated with the Bofors case probe told *The Hindu* that the latest revelations in the case as published in a section of the media were just 'recycled facts.' They were of the view that Mr. Quattrocchi and the then Bofors



Answer our questions, says Advani

JASHPUR (CHHATTISGARH), APRIL 10. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today asked the Congress to answer the questions the BJP had raised following the "sensational" statement by the Swedish police officer, Sten Lindstrom, probing the Bofors scam.

"The issue has not been raised by anyone from India but by a Swedish police officer who has investigated the case from the beginning. It raises many questions and our party leader Arun Jaitley has asked some direct questions and I hope the Congress will answer them," he told reporters here.

He said that in view of the "revelation" by the officer, the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had asked the CBI to take appropriate action on it. — PTI



'Bogey of Bofors'

RAIPUR, APRIL 10. Hitting back at the BJP on the Bofors issue, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, today accused it of raking up the controversy deliberately for the last 18 years. "The timing of this [Bofors issue] being brought up again speaks for itself," she told reporters here.

"This bogey of Bofors has been raised for the last 18 years and it was thrust on my husband, now on me very conveniently and God knows one day on my great grandchildren," Ms. Gandhi said. The BJP was "deliberately" raking up the issue to cover up the Vajpayee Government's inability to solve problems facing the country. "So what else to do? Attack the Nehru-Gandhi family and me in particular," she said adding "let them go ahead" with this. — PTI

chief, Martin Ardbo, could turn out to be 'goldmines of information' as the two had never been questioned by the CBI. Even the trail of payments made to Mr. Quattrocchi appears to be lost in a maze of numerous bank transfers as no end-beneficiary of any consequence has been pinned down so far.

The three Hinduja brothers, questioned by the agency nearly a year ago, had admitted having received commissions from Bofors but denied that these pertained to the howitzer deal with India. For maintaining 'commercial confidentiality,' they did not disclose the nature of their relations with Bofors.

Some of the officials recalled that at one point of time before filing the first chargesheet in the Bofors case in 1999 there had even been an 'internal discussion' if the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, needed to be questioned but the possibility was ruled out as there was no reference to her.

Interestingly, legal experts and former officials felt that the CBI had indeed 'squandered away' the opportunity to question Mr. Quattrocchi who had slipped away quietly on the night of July 29, 1993 when his objections before the Swiss Courts against transmitting documents to India had been dismissed. Sources said that the 'turning point' in the Bofors case probe came when the Swiss authorities made public the names of the Hinduja brothers, Mr. Quattrocchi and Win Chad-

ha as the ones who had blocked the transfer of documents to the CBI. Since only Mr. Quattrocchi was available in New Delhi, the CBI should have questioned him but he was allowed to go.

Sources said that a proposal by the then CBI Director, S.K. Dutta, to question Mr. Quattrocchi was shot down by the Narasimha Rao Government and the agency sent a Deputy Superintendent of Police to Mr. Quattrocchi's residence who was told that the Italian businessman was going abroad for 20 days. Since then, Mr. Quattrocchi has lived in Malaysia. After India's extradition request failed in Kuala Lumpur, he has shifted base to Italy. Sources said that even diplomatic pressure on Italy had failed to yield any results.

Sources recalled that even during the visit of the then Additional Solicitor-General, Arun Jaitley, and a team of CBI officials in January 1990, armed with the Letter Rogatory (LR), the Swiss Magisterial Court had expressed its displeasure over the fact that the LR was not accompanied by a list of suspects. Sources said that a list of 15 suspects was handed over to the Swiss Court and later the Magisterial Court had expressed unhappiness to the CBI for failing to observe formal legal procedures.

On Mr. Quattrocchi's links with the Gandhi family, the November 14, 2002, order of the Special Judge, Prem Kumar, had made detailed observations. It said: "Around 1974, Quattrocchi

was introduced to Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi by an Italian named Mr. Molinari. Then Mrs. and Mr. Quattrocchi started visiting Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi. Children of both sides were frequent visitors to each other. At that time Rajiv Gandhi was a pilot in Indian Airlines. Italian food and other gifts were also being exchanged between them. Quattrocchi thus became very close to Rajiv Gandhi and his wife."

Further, the judgment, against which the Delhi High Court was moved later by the Hinduja and A.B. Bofors, noted: "V.P. Singh, Finance Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi Cabinet, has stated that Quattrocchi had sought appointment with him on a number of occasions but he did not give him any appointment. Rajiv Gandhi then asked him to meet Mr. Quattrocchi... the modus operandi of Quattrocchi was clear. He kept himself close to Rajiv Gandhi and took advantage of his closeness to the Prime Minister... Arun Nehru stated that Quattrocchi was having close links with public servants. This can be seen by scrutinising the concerned records of the Ministry of Fertilizer and Chemicals as to how Quattrocchi got the fertilizer deals during 1980-86. The link between the public servants, politicians and Quattrocchi looms large in these deals. The award of Jagdishpur Fertilizer Plant to Quattrocchi, changing earlier decision for SPIC, is a clear case."

Sonia must break silence on Bofors: BJP

State News Service 5/10/94

NEW DELHI, April 9. — The BJP today said Mrs Sonia Gandhi's silence on the latest revelations on the Bofors pay-off case "indicated her desire for concealment". Hiding behind even legalese was not accepted in the political domain, more so if the person under a cloud was aspiring to become the Prime Minister, Union law minister and BJP spokesperson, Mr Arun Jaitley, said.

"The strange silence is not evidence of ignorance as it is becoming more eloquent, which indicates a desire for concealment and seeks to avoid embarrassment of disclosure," he added. The BJP had raised the question in the public domain, he pointed out.

She only has to say whether or not she was close to the Italian businessman, Ottavio Quattrocchi, and whether the Bofors deal was influenced by this connection, Mr Jaitley said. He pointed out that a response had come from two lawyers, Mr Ram Jethmalani and Mr Kapil Sibal, who were attorneys to the alleged recipi-

Cong seeks apology

NEW DELHI, April 9. — Five Congress Working Committee members today demanded a public "apology" from the Prime Minister over his comment on the Bofors issue yesterday. The Congress leaders said Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has displayed "the height of indiscretion" by saying, in the context of yesterday's media reports targeting Mrs Sonia Gandhi, that "fresh evidence" has surfaced in the Bofors scam and that the CBI will do the needful in the matter. — SNS

ents (Hindujias). Was it Bofors that had brought together Mr Jethmalani and the Congress, he sought to know.

BJP president Mr M Venkaiah Naidu carried the battle further by asking the Congress three questions, one of which related to Mr Ram Jethmalani. What were the reasons for supporting Mr Jethmalani who raked up the Bofors issue and who had legally defended the killer of Indira Gandhi, he asked. He had to quit the BJP on the issue, Mr Naidu pointed out and sought to know if the Congress was aware of the public mood on the issue.

Mr Naidu's second question concerned the Congress alliance with the DMK in Tamil Nadu. He circulated the letter which the the Congress president, Sitaram Kesri, wrote to President Mr KR Narayanan in 1997 charging the DMK with supporting the LTTE which was involved in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress had withdrawn support to the United Front government on this issue, he pointed out.

Mr Naidu's third question was on the BJP's pet theme — the foreign origin issue. He released the letter which Mr Sharad Pawar, Mr PA Sangma and Mr Tariq Anwar had written to Mrs Gandhi as party president, asking for an amendment to the manifesto to debar a person of foreign origin from holding high constitutional offices.

Mr Naidu said at NSC Bose Airport this evening that the Congress should come clear on the Bofors issue SNS adds from Kolkata. "As a political party, we are not making any allegation but the Congress should itself come clear and the Left parties should also react on it because it is the national issue."

THE STATESMAN 10 APR 2004

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2004

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WITHDRAW THE CASES

POTA - (D.B. elements)

THERE WAS ALWAYS only one rational conclusion with respect to the flagrantly unjust and politically motivated cases slapped on Vaiko, the general secretary of the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and eight other partymen under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Thankfully, the Central POTA Review Committee, which was recently given the legal teeth to check the misuse of the draconian anti-terrorism legislation, has arrived at just this. At one level, the Review Committee's finding that there is no *prima facie* case against Mr. Vaiko and eight others emerges from the obvious — the lack of even an iota of evidence to show that they were engaged in terrorist activity or for that matter any form of illegality. At another level, the Committee's conclusion flows naturally from the Supreme Court's ruling in December 2003. In that judgment, the Court, while upholding the constitutional validity of POTA, sanitised what was possibly the most controversial and dangerous provision in the law, by making a vital distinction between merely expressing verbal sympathy for a banned terrorist organisation and acting in a manner that invites support for its activities. Once the Court held that Section 21 of POTA will be attracted only when there is a criminal intention of furthering terrorist activity, the cases against Mr. Vaiko and eight of his partymen, who were booked for making allegedly pro-LITTE speeches, had no legal leg to stand on.

The Central Review Committee's finding that there is no *prima facie* case against the nine is binding on the Tamil Nadu Government. The anti-terrorism law was amended last year with the main purpose of giving the Central and State Review Committees, which enjoyed hardly any powers under the unamended Act, the authority to determine whether POTA has been misused in

a particular case and, where warranted, direct a State Government to withdraw it. The new powers granted to the Review Committees were upheld by the Madras High Court, which ruled that if such a Committee came to the conclusion that a case "is fit to be withdrawn from prosecution, it can address the State Government which, in turn, has to instruct the public prosecutor" to withdraw the case. The Court added the caveat that it was then up to the public prosecutor to "apply his mind independently" and for the special court trying the case to decide whether the plea for withdrawal "is acceptable or not."

Having pursued the cases against Mr. Vaiko and his partymen in the face of grave misgivings and serious legal doubt, the Jayalalithaa Government must show the good sense to have them withdrawn quickly. The outrageous injustice done to Mr. Vaiko, who spent 19 months in detention before being released on bail, is incalculable and impossible to redress. The MDMK leader would be fully justified in seeking exemplary compensation for the manner in which his liberty was curtailed, for reasons that smack of political vendetta and through the (mis)use of a draconian provision in a bad law. The Central Review Committee's findings on the MDMK cases must be welcomed. At the same time, the very fact that such Committees are needed to review specific POTA cases constitutes a damning indictment of the anti-terrorism law, a shocking admission of the wanton misuse it has been and can be put to. It is only a matter of time before the cases against Mr. Vaiko and his partymen are formally brought to a close. But POTA — the legal basis for the agony they were made to undergo — remains on the statute book. For the sake of liberty and democracy, the campaign for scrapping the indefensible law must continue unabated.

THE HINDU

10 APR 2004

BJP, Congress wage Bofors battle

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, April 8: Atal Bihari Vajpayee is confident the CBI will take "necessary action" after new "revelations" about the Bofors gun deal appeared in the media today.

His remarks came after a multi-edition English-language daily carried reports of a Swedish investigator in the Bofors case raising questions about links between Sonia Gandhi and Italian businessman Ottavio Quattrone.

Speaking after releasing the Bofors case to the CBI, Vajpayee said: "I am confident that the CBI will take necessary action."

Minister said: "... new facts have come to light today. I am confident the CBI will look into it and take the necessary action". He hinted that the bureau could question the Congress chief.

The BJP moved to make political capital, demanding that Sonia make public what she knew about the case as she is aspiring for prime ministership.

Law minister Arun Jaitley said: "If Mrs Sonia Gandhi is aspiring for high political office in India, is she willing to break her silence and share with the country the facts that she knows about the case?"

For a change, the Congress went on the frontfoot and returned the BJP fire aggressively. Party spokesperson Kapil Sibal asked at a news conference: "Why have they not interrogated Sonia Gandhi for 13 years? Arun Jaitley was the law minister for a good part of those 13 years."

Sibal sought to put the BJP on the defensive, accusing it of turning a blind eye to the scams that have occurred during its five-year rule. He dared the government to come clean on the Teheika expose and the petrol pump and land allotment scams and arrest BJP leaders Bangaru Manjan and Dhir Singh Judeo.

"Instead of taking action in these cases, the BJP is now raking up a case that has already ended after prolonged hearings," said Sibal. He made special references to bungsals allegedly made by the home ministry in procuring AK-47 rifles.

Delhi High Court exonerated Rajiv Gandhi in the Bofors case in February because there was no evidence against him, Sibal pointed out. "Why is the BJP not accepting the verdict gracefully instead of raking up a case which has already been closed on the eve of the general elections?"

Sonia was never an accused

in the case, he pointed out, and asked what the BJP's motive was in naming her now.

The BJP, including the Prime Minister, has put Sonia and her foreign origin in the direct line of fire in their election campaign. The Congress says the latest attempt to malign Sonia in the Bofors case even after it has been buried is one more indication of the BJP launching personal attacks on the Congress president. Sibal said: "Even Ram Jethmalani, who has been on both sides of the fence, says the case has been closed and the CBI had ample time to question Sonia if it so wanted."

Jethmalani, who had been in the forefront of the onslaught against Rajiv Gandhi when news of the scandal broke in the eighties, dismissed the media report as "just trash" and raised questions over its timing. He said he had information that the author of the report was defence minister George Fernandes "friend" and had "met him several times in Sweden".

Jethmalani said Rajiv Gandhi and his family had been absolved and the statement by the investigator was "unwaranted". The lawyer said there was no basis for the CBI to question Sonia.

9 (D.S.W. delhi)

Arms haul in Bangladesh

Poses serious threat to Indian security

We should be concerned about last Friday's biggest-ever arms haul in Bangladesh's port city Chittagong. Ten truck-loads of sophisticated Chinese arms, packed in 1463 crates worth several hundred crores of Takas, were seized from a high security government jetty before being shipped to Bogra from where they were to go to Assam via north Bengal. The clandestine shipment was to replenish ULFA's stock of arms and ammunition bulk of which were seized during "Operation flush out" in Bhutan last winter. Friday's haul had 2000 pieces of AK 47 rifles, "hundreds" of sub-machine and Tommy guns, 21000 pieces of hand grenades, 150 rocket launchers, a "large quantity" of anti-tank missile and "hundreds" of pistols besides 10 lakh rounds of ammunition.

The consignment was smuggled in by the brother of an influential MP of the ruling BNP with the connivance of government security agencies. Last June over 100,000 rounds of AK 47 ammunition and a big consignment of RDX were seized from Bogra which too were bound for the north-east. In March 1996 while Begum Khaleda Zia was still in power, three truck loads of arms and ammunition including SMGs, LMGs, mortar shells were seized not far from Chittagong. The smuggled arms were meant for Naga insurgents.

What is of serious concern is that the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar sea route has become an important entry point for international arms smugglers. The latest seizure was a day after Begum Zia rejected Delhi's plea to extradite Anup Chetia, general secretary of ULFA, and dropped hints he might be granted political asylum. It is no ordinary coincidence that these seizures take place whenever her government is in power.

Last Friday arms were unloaded from trawlers in full view of Coast Guard and police. Consignments would have remained undetected if some conscientious officers were not to make an issue of it. The ship involved in smuggling belongs to Begum Zia's parliamentary adviser whom she wants to make secretary general of OIC. Supporting Indian insurgents is part of her not too hidden agenda as she publicly eulogises them as "freedom fighters liberating the north east from Indian yoke". Providing sanctuaries to them, including the ULFA commander Paresh Barua, is part of her strategy.

Unfortunately the Indian Cabinet Secretariat and the MEA have been soft pedaling the issue. What is of greater concern is the open proximity of two key CS officials to a powerful section of the ruling BNP. This has adversely affected the functioning of our intelligence and security establishment including monitoring of arms inflow from Bangladesh to north east. Its high time Delhi took note of this.

Second pilot's body found

IAF Denies Use Of Sub-Standard Spares

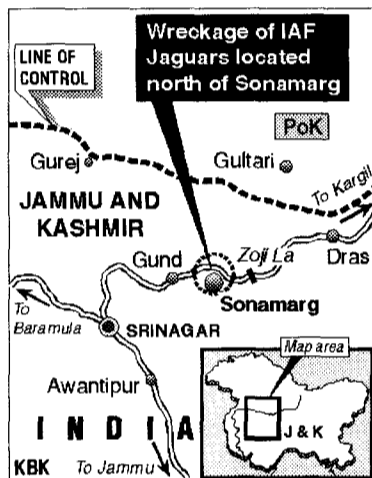
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi Even as special rescue teams found the second pilot's body at the wreckage site of the two Jaguars which crashed near Sonamarg on Friday, the IAF on Sunday strongly denied any use of sub-standard or second-hand spares in the fighter jets.

Flight Lieutenant Mayank Mayur's body was found near the wreckage of the second Jaguar four km north of Sonamarg, around 60 km from Srinagar, on Sunday afternoon. Incidentally, his wife is also an IAF officer, Flight Lieutenant M Agarwal, handling ground duties at the Ambala airbase.

Army rescuers had retrieved the body of other pilot, Flight Lieutenant Gagan Oberoi, from the inhospitable mountainous terrain on Saturday. His parents have already reached the Jaguar homebase at Ambala for the last rites.

Both the bodies were apparently found in the cockpits of the ill-fated jets, indicating that they did not have time to eject. The two flight data recorders have been sent to Ambala for further investigations to aid the ongoing court of inquiry.



Preliminary reports indicate that "sudden deterioration in weather" could have led to a mid-air collision between the two jets, say IAF officers. The two Jaguars were apparently trying to pull-out of the turbulence, after another two jets on the low-level valley flying mission with them had managed to do so, when the mishap took place.

IAF officers claimed the accident had nothing to do with sub-standard spares. India first inducted the

Jaguars, capable of delivering tactical nuclear weapons, in 1979. The fighters are now manufactured at Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) under licence.

Some doubts have been raised in the past about the lack of proper quality control at HAL facilities. But an IAF officer said, "Most of the Jaguar spares are manufactured by HAL. And they are made as per standards laid down by the Directorate-General of Aviation Quality Assurance."

Some Jaguar spares are also imported from "original equipment manufacturers". Engine spares, for instance, come from Rolls Royce, while other aircraft systems come from British Aerospace, Avionics and Thales, among others. "These spares conform to US Federal Aviation Authority standards and British authority standards," he said.

Moreover, all repair and maintenance supply orders of the IAF are checked by the chief resident inspector before being dispatched by HAL. A programme to modernise the around 100 Jaguars in the IAF's inventory, which constitute four strike and one maritime squadrons, is currently under way.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 APR 2004
5 APR 2004

End of the road for Quattrocchi extradition attempts

9-26 10:42:45
(Bofors)

SNS and Agencies

NEW DELHI/ KUALA LUMPUR, April 1.— Malaysia's highest court has rejected India's attempt to secure the extradition of Italian businessman, Ottavio Quattrocchi, wanted in connection with the Bofors payoff investigations and trial, effectively sealing the government's efforts to bring back Quattrocchi to stand trial in the Bofors arms case.

There was no official comment from the Indian government today, but senior officials have said that the Malaysian government was never serious about attempts to bring Quattrocchi back to India to stand trial.

There have also been allegations that the Italian Prime Minister, Mr Silvio Berlusconi, directly intervened with the Malaysian government, then headed by Dr Mahathir Mohammed, to ensure that Quattrocchi was allowed to return to Italy in December 2002.

The Federal Court's three-judge Bench ruled yesterday that it had no jurisdiction to hear the appeal, after a final attempt by the Indian government to reverse the previous

Malaysia's Federal Court's three-judge Bench ruled yesterday that it had no jurisdiction to hear the appeal, after a final attempt by the Indian government to reverse the previous ruling, that allowed Quattrocchi to leave Malaysia.

ruling, that allowed Quattrocchi to leave Malaysia.

"The Federal Court has unanimously dismissed the appeal," Quattrocchi's lawyer, Muhammad Shafee Abdullah said. Shafee said Quattrocchi had been informed about the court decision.

Shafee said Quattrocchi was considering suing the Indian government for damaging his reputation and destroying his business in Malaysia.

Quattrocchi was arrested on 20 December, 2000 by Malaysian police but was released on bail. Malaysia's lower courts had consistently rejected India's extradition request. The Italian left for Italy in December 2002, after the High Court upheld a lower court decision to deny his extradition to



India.

"Quattrocchi is free to return to Malaysia. He wants to resume doing business in Malaysia," Shafee said today.

Quattrocchi, a friend of assassinated former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, has been accused in India of receiving 7 million dollars in illegal payments as a middleman in the 1.2 billion dollar purchase of artillery from Swedish arms maker Bofors AB in 1986.

The scandal helped bring down Gandhi's government in 1989. After his assassination two years later, his widow, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, now heads the Congress party.

Quattrocchi, an Italian national, moved to Malaysia after his hurried departure from India in the early 1990s.

THE STATESMAN

1 APR 2004

A QUEST FOR SCIENCE

THE INDIAN SPACE Research Organisation (ISRO) had not forgotten its origins in science, remarked its chairman, G. Madhavan Nair, recently. Mr. Nair was himself part of the team assembled by Vikram Sarabhai, the visionary who started India's space programme, initially to launch imported sounding rockets and then to build those rockets within the country. The Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station was established four decades ago by the seaside on the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram in order to study the equatorial electrojet, a band of current flowing high in the atmosphere along the magnetic equator, as well as other atmospheric phenomena. The sounding rockets would carry scientific instruments to great heights, radioing back the data collected. It was from such beginnings that Sarabhai went on to enunciate his vision of a space programme that would build satellites and put them into orbit on its own launch vehicles. Many early Indian satellites, including Aryabhata, the country's first indigenous satellite launched from the Soviet Union in 1975, and the Stretched Rohini Satellite Series carried aloft by the augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle, were equipped for scientific data-gathering. But once ISRO began launching satellites for operational use, the Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) satellites for imaging the ground from space and the Insat satellites for communications, broadcasting and meteorology, science missions seemed to take a backseat. When scientific instruments were carried, they went piggyback on a satellite intended primarily for other purposes, such as the x-ray astronomy payload on the IRS-P3 launched in 1996 and the solar x-ray instrument on GSAT-2 launched last year.

Now, ISRO has three dedicated science missions in hand. The best known of these is Chandrayan-1, a scientific probe that India will send

to the Moon in 2008. Launched aboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the satellite will, with its cameras and instruments, map the Moon's surface, study its chemical composition, and look for minerals. In 2005, the Space Capsule Recovery Experiment is to travel on the PSLV as a co-passenger along with another satellite. The 500 kg recoverable capsule will provide a platform for experiments in material sciences and biology that need to be performed in very low gravity. After several orbits in space, the capsule is to be brought safely back to earth. ISRO has also been working on Astrosat, the country's first dedicated astronomy satellite that could be launched by 2008. One of Astrosat's unique features will be the sensitivity of its sensors to a remarkably broad band of frequencies, from visible light, ultra-violet and all the way to soft and hard x-rays.

International science missions, notably the Hubble telescope and the recent Mars probes, have shown that the general public, as much as the community of scientists, is deeply interested in the new discoveries that such science missions make possible. But it is not enough to build and launch scientific satellites. Scientists are needed to analyse the data and convert them into scientific findings. Mr. Nair alluded to this problem when he recently observed that it was not easy to find scientific groups in the country who could participate in the science missions. To prepare for Astrosat, scientists have already begun training students with a Master's or doctoral degree. The larger issue is the well-observed phenomenon of the best and brightest minds coming out of school and college in recent years opting not to pursue a career in the basic sciences. Finding ways of bucking this trend and attracting bright young people back to science is a challenge that ISRO and the rest of the scientific establishment need to address swiftly.

IAF flexes muscles after three yrs

167

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
POKHRAN, MARCH 15

THE Indian Air Force today tested all its key fighter aircraft as they bombarded dummy targets before an audience comprising military attaches, foreign officers attending courses in India as well as a delegation of the Thai Air Force.

But Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy made it clear that the audience had nothing to do with the IAF's annual firepower demonstration Vayushakti, which essentially is a training exercise. "It is good and also helps us draw lessons. For instance, one of the positives that emerged today was the performance of the upgraded MiG-21s."

The fighter aircraft, which included the Sukhoi-30 MKI, Mirage 2000, Jaguar and the entire



The Surya Kiran Aerobatics team of the Indian Air Force display their skills at Vayu Shakti 2004 in Pokhran on Sunday. PTI

MiG series, pounded targets with different types of ammunition. From precision-guided to conventional, all kinds of ammunition were on trial at the Chandan Air Force Firing

'Hawk deal will be sealed'

POKHRAN: The Hawk deal with British Aerospace will be sealed soon, with a crucial meeting slated to take place on Monday, senior Defence Ministry officials said on Sunday. Both Defence Secretary Ajay Prasad and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy were confident that the deal will come through soon, and that there was no threat of it falling through due to ongoing negotiations on who would do the designing and tooling. "The question is not of if, but of when it happens," said Krishnaswamy. "We have a meeting tomorrow, so let us see. They have agreed to some extent with our proposals," Prasad said at Vayushakti 2004 here. —ENS

Range here.

While there were more hits than misses, Krishnaswamy saw

a lesson in the few that missed the target. "It was the conventional ammunition which missed the targets. Here is where one needs to understand the importance of precision-guided ammunition. The chances of missing the target are far less."

But it was the SU-30 MKI which emerged as the clear favourite exhibiting both its manoeuvrability and fire potential. The viewers, in particular, were in complete awe when aircraft shot straight upwards, then seemed to completely stop before falling down to execute a double backflip.

The Vayushakti exercise, which was last held three years ago, had to be postponed due to Operation Parakram thereafter.

One of IAF's recent acquisitions, the IL-78 mid-air refueller aircraft was also in action, refuelling two Mirage-2000s in the air.

J.D.N. Beulah

The NDA government has failed to build a viable national security system

Frayed security blanket

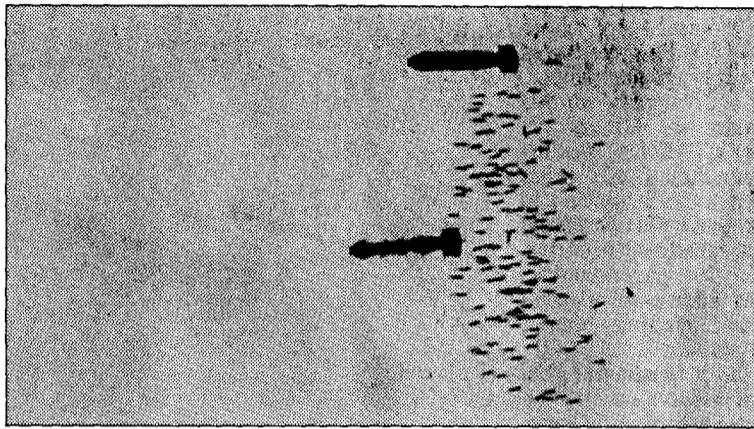
By J.N. DIXIT

✓ 15-9-167 ✓

THE BJP-LED government has been in power for nearly six years. It has dealt with India's defence and national security management during a period of profound global transitions. The NDA claims credit for the nuclear weaponisation of India, furthering missile defence arrangements, for dealing with the Kargil war, countering terrorism and for having established defence cooperation arrangements with the US.

Nurturing national security and defence of the territorial integrity are the highest responsibilities of any government. As India prepares to elect a new government by May 2004, it's necessary to review how the BJP-led coalition has fulfilled this vital responsibility. National security is not a unidimensional phenomenon dealing only with military and defence matters. It has multi-dimensional facets related to international governments, food security, social cohesion and energy security. The focus, however, will be on the defence, military and political dimensions of security. Significant ingredients in the transitions affecting the international situation have been the following:

- The US consolidation as the most powerful Nation-State.
- The US's declared intention to retain this position of influence in all dimensions of global relations.
- The US's post-9/11 campaign against international terrorism.
- The campaign, though global, has been selective, focused on specific concerns of the US and not fully responsive to India's concerns.
- The new world economic order sought to be established under the WTO regime hasn't been successful because the broad commitments on the basis of which India and other developing countries adhered to the WTO have been modified to the disadvantage of developing countries.
- New concepts in inter-State equations — 'regime change', 'punitive and pre-emptive peace-making', 'containment of rogue States' — have eroded the sanctity of national sovereignties and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of individual countries.
- The insistence of legally-recognised nuclear weapons states on retaining their WMDs and not agreeing to structure a time-bound programme for non-discriminatory elimination of WMDs have resulted in the horizontal proliferation of such weapons.
- Instead of structuring interna-



SO TELL US REALLY, WHAT'S THE TARGET?: Cluster bombs in Pokhran

tional arrangements for equitable utilisation of the world's energy and natural resources, the major powers seem to be attempting to gain privileged utilisation of resources.

■ The security environment in India's immediate neighbourhood remains tense because of terrorism, political uncertainties in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the threat of religious extremism.

■ Transfers of technologies and developmental inputs like investment are being subjected to political and security conditionalities stipulated by major world powers.

■ The role and effectiveness of the UN and its agencies stand marginalised.

In this period, India's defence and national security policies have been characterised by a supine and reactive attitude. Relations with the US have been characterised by submissiveness, without ensuring requisite levels of reciprocity. Its response to the challenge of terrorism directed against the country has been ineffective due to the advice given by the US, particularly manifested in India not responding to the attack on its Parliament and the families of defence personnel.

India's Pakistan policies have been full of contradictions, ambiguities and impulsiveness. Vajpayee's 1999 visit to Lahore was followed by the anti-climax of Kargil which, in turn, led to a break in communications with Pakistan. This culminated in the Pakistan-sponsored terrorist attack on Parliament. India's response to this attack was cosmetic and theatrical. Instead of taking effective punitive action against terrorists across the LoC, India withdrew its high commissioner from Islamabad and suspended all air and transport linkages with Pakistan.

To compound this, India deployed more than 500,000 troops on the LoC and the border with Pakistan as an exercise in coercive diplomatic pressure. This did not make an impact although it cost India nearly billion. India exhausted all its national security and diplomatic options at one go without adhering to the requirements of a measured response to a critical development.

After giving unconditional support to the US without stipulating reciprocity, India complained to the US about it utilising Pakistan as a major partner in the exercise. This complaint was immature, given Pakistan's capabilities of being useful to the US. Instead of taking advantage of the logic of the US's anti-terrorist campaign by structuring our own national anti-terrorist campaign in an effective manner, we subjected our campaign to the inhibitions stated by the US. In sum, the NDA government has failed in ensuring national security. It has not combated terrorism effectively. It succumbed to the terrorists during the Kandahar hijacking. Despite the most recent peace initiative with Pakistan, terrorism continues in J&K.

Institutional arrangements on national security set up by the government have not been functional, except for the role played by the national security advisor (NSA). The four-tier system of the Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS), the Strategic Policy Group (SPG), the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and the NSA's office failed in three collective institutions mentioned above. The recommendations made by various experts groups after the Kargil conflict have still not been implemented despite the passage of four years.

Given this, it is necessary that

national security is not viewed through the narrow prism of a purely military context. It has political, economic, social and developmental dimensions. It is necessary to formulate and implement a comprehensive multi-dimensional national security policy which will cover vital aspects of energy security, food security, good governance and countering the centrifugal trends affecting the country. The institutional arrangements made by the government have been cosmetic. In substance, national security isn't underpinned by systematic institutional arrangements. The national security council, established in 1999, has not functioned with institutional cohesion.

Important national security decisions have been taken by the PM and his principal secretary in consultation with the deputy PM without utilising the CCNS, the SPG and officials of the NSAB. There has been no systematic interaction between the SPG and the NSAB, nor any regular interaction between the NSA and the NSAB.

It is necessary to appoint a separate NSA. The present arrangements of the principal secretary to the PM functioning as the NSA should be discontinued. Regular meetings of the CCNS should be institutionalised. It should be ensured that there is institutional interaction between the NSA, the SPG and the NSAB. Necessary connectivities between the intelligence agencies of the government and the NSAB should be ensured.

Restructuring of the intelligence agencies should be undertaken to improve its human resource basis without multi-dimensional expertise. Modernisation of the functional capacities of the intelligence agencies with appropriate modern technology should be ensured. The recommendations made by the experts group to reform the intelligence agencies post-Kargil — which have been hanging fire for the last four years — should be speedily implemented. It will ensure not only efficiency but also accountability by the intelligence agencies.

It's imperative that problems of national security are dealt with on the basis of coherent perceptions by political parties and through consultations and consensus. It shouldn't be an exercise in claiming partisan credits. The need is for continuity and acknowledging foundations laid in the past on which the future should be built.



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Jaya govt is misusing POTA, says SC

■ **VAIKO, GOPAL** | Tamil Nadu appeals against Pota review panel thrown out

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

IN a setback to the Jayalalithaa Government, the Supreme Court today dismissed its three appeals challenging the Central POTA Review Committee's powers to probe the detention of MDMK leader Vaiko, *Nakkeeran* editor R Gopal and eight others under the anti-terrorism law.

"It appears that the pow-

ers under POTA are being misused in your state," said a Bench comprising Justice S N Variava and Justice H K Serna, observing that it was the duty of the review committee — set up pursuant to the amendments

to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 — to look into the reasons behind invoking the stringent law against an individual.

"In our view, the High Court has done correctly. The

challenge cannot be sustained. We do not feel the need to interfere with the orders of the High Court," remarked the Bench.

The TN Government's appeals were directed against a February 4 order of the Madras High Court, which had dismissed its writ petition challenging the order of the committee to submit relevant papers regarding the POTA cases against

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



from the front page

SC: Jaya Govt misusing POTA

Vaiko, Gopal and others.

The State Government had contended that as the proceedings pertaining to POTA against these persons were already pending before regular courts, the review committee did not have the jurisdiction to test the legality of invocation of POTA against them.

Appearing for the Jaya Government, senior counsel C S Vaidyanathan argued that the committee's work amounted to parallel proceedings.

In the case of Vaiko and eight others, charges were framed after the Special POTA court decided that there was a prima facie case to proceed against them under POTA. As many as 26 witnesses have already been examined in the ongoing trial.

Pointing out that the discharge application filed by eight others that there was no prima facie case against them was dismissed by the Special POTA court and confirmed by the Madras High Court, Vaidyanathan argued that the Committee could not say there was no prima facie case now as it would amount to interference in the course of justice.

Vaidyanathan further contended that sub-sections 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Section 60 of POTA added after amendment to the Act, giving pow-

ers to the committee to review and reverse the court's proceedings, are unconstitutional.

Appearing for Vaiko and eight others, senior counsel Fali Nariman pointed out that the scope of the proceedings before the Special Court or any court of law was different from the scope of review under the POTA Review Committee.

Referring to the Kartar Singh case, Nariman pointed out that the apex court itself had directed the constitution of review committees, both at the Central and State-levels, to review all TADA cases, oversee if the provisions of TADA were being misused, and suggest remedial measures. It is based on these directions of the Supreme Court that the present Act contains the provisions for creation of a Central Review Committee, Nariman argued.

Hence, the Committee has the powers to review all POTA cases and find out whether there was a prima facie case to invoke the Act, he said.

During the mentioning of the petitions before a Bench on February 17, the Supreme Court had allowed the Committee to go ahead with the hearing of the cases before it but had asked it not to pass any final orders on the issue.

No eyeball to eyeball any more in new war doctrine

three Strike Corps — Mathura-based I Corps, Ambala-based II Corps and Bhopal-based XXI Corps — will be there only for training purposes. The war will be fought through eight battle groups with integrated elements from the IAF and Navy.

Backed by tank regiments, heavy artillery, missile regiments and the air force, the battle groups will go for limited but lethal destruction on enemy territory. The Navy with its carrier-based fighters will have the key role of supporting the battle groups. Ships will also launch missiles like the Russian Klub.

The idea is to destroy, not to hold or capture territory. This concept was first war-gamed during Exercise Vijay Chakra in the Thar desert by Gen Oberoi in 2001 and synergised between the three forces during Exercise Brahmastra later that year. Still being war-gamed, a part of it was on view at Exercise Divya Astra in Pokharan this week.

This strategy was fine-tuned once the threat of nuclear war dawned on the security establishment. It was done by Gen Choudhary, then commander of the Jalandhar-based XI Corps, and his counterparts in IAF and Navy.

Measuring the force application during war time, they took into account the nuclear threshold of the adversary. In short, don't hit the adversary's strategic points so hard as to invite a nuclear response or international intervention.

POTA review panel is there to check misuse of powers: Supreme Court

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8. Declining to interfere with a judgment of the Madras High Court, holding that the Central Review Committee under the Prevention of Terrorism Act was empowered to hear the cases against the MDMK general secretary, Vaiko, and Nakeeran Gopal, a Supreme Court Bench today said: "POTA gives unbridled powers on the government. The review committee is there to check misuse. The committee can go behind the materials on their own to come to the conclusion whether or not a case under POTA exists and the decisions had been made binding on the Central and State Governments and the investigating officer."

When senior counsel for Tamil Nadu, C.S. Vaidyanathan, argued that the committee was also looking into the same materials before the trial court, the Judges said, "May be, but the committee can see whether the materials submitted were correct or not." "Why are you afraid of the committee if you had correctly invoked POTA," the Bench asked.

The Bench comprising Justice S.N. Variva and Justice H.K. Sema said it did not agree with the submissions of counsel that the committee, headed by Justice A.B. Sahaya, could not interfere in the proceed-

ings of the criminal court after the chargesheet had been filed. Counsel said the High Court had dismissed the revision petitions filed by Mr. Vaiko and eight others against the trial court's order framing charges against them. He said that once the court had taken cognisance, the committee could not interfere in its proceedings.

Mr. Vaidyanathan brought to the notice of the Bench that the High Court had directed completion of the trial by June 30 and hence interference by the committee at this stage would hamper the progress of the trial.

The State Government initially raised preliminary objections before the panel, questioning its jurisdiction to review the cases pending in courts. The committee, by its order dated January 23, rejected the objections. The State Government's petitions for quashing the panel's order was dismissed by the High Court, which held that the panel could review the cases of Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Gopal.

Appearing for Mr. Vaiko, senior counsel F.S. Nariman submitted that the amendment to POTA conferring more powers on the Review Committee was passed by Parliament after the Members expressed serious concern that the Act was being misused in many States and that the com-

mittee required more teeth to check its misuse.

He said the apex court in the TADA case had upheld the powers of the Review Committee and this decision had been subsequently reiterated in two other decisions. The High Court had dismissed the petitions applying these apex court decisions. He said the committee under POTA was intended as a safeguard to Article 21 of the Constitution (dealing with personal liberty of an accused).

Pakistan to testfire Shaheen-II missile

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 8. Pakistan today said that it would testfire its Shaheen-II — a 2,000-km range missile capable of carrying nuclear or conventional warhead — "anytime from now."

The Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, told correspondents that neighbouring countries, including India, have been notified on the test as per the convention. It would be the first missile test by Pakistan after the scandal involving the father of the nuclear bomb, Abdul Qadeer Khan.



Airmen watch as two MIG-27 fighter aircraft take off from the Gwalior air force station and (below) a US Air Force engineer checks an F-15C fighter after a joint exercise on Wednesday. PTI & Reuters

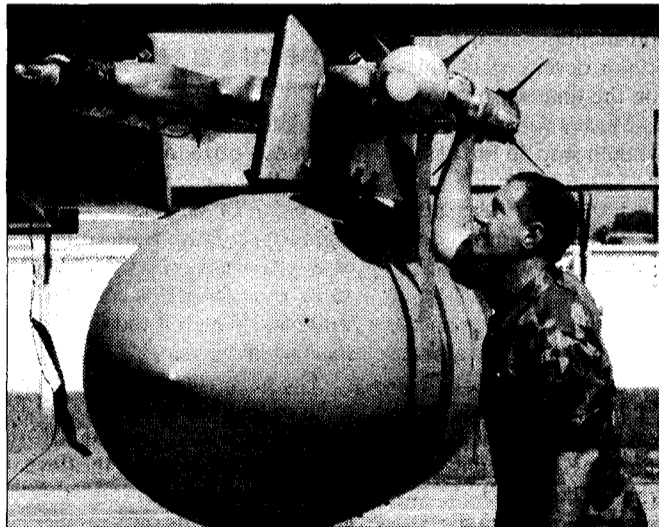
Indian, US pilots share Gwalior skies, some tips

SAIKAT DATTA
Gwalior, February 25

LT COL Mark Henkel of the USAF talks fondly about that day long ago when he took on his first MiG-29. Those were heady days — the Berlin Wall had fallen and the Unified German Air Force was

Joint Exercise

growing ecstatic over the fresh batch of MiG-29s it had inherited. A USAF team rushed to the former German Democratic Republic to take a long look at the MiG-29. Henkel was there too, and he liked what he saw.



After years, he was trying to relive that day when his squadron, the Alaska-based F-15C aircraft, flew in to take on the IAF's best at the ongoing 10-day joint Indo-US air exercise in Gwalior. Ask him

about the SU-30K and Henkel says: "It's a big aircraft." He would know; the F-15 was known to be one of the biggest aircraft for a long time till the SU-30 arrived.

Over the weekend, USAF pilots convened an urgent meeting for a brainstorming session to work out the tactics to deal with the SU-30K. "It surprised them," says an IAF pilot, adding: "I don't think they were expecting that kind of performance".

Dave Skalicky would agree with him. He has flown over the Taj Mahal, seen the Himalayas and come back to Gwalior, several joint exercises later, with a newfound respect for his Indian counterparts. His colleagues have had a "few rides on the SU-30K and the MiG-21 Bison". About the much-talked about MiG-21, he says: "It's very good and we were surprised with its new avionics".

On Wednesday morning, as four USAF F-15Cs took to the skies to "defend" the Gwalior air base against "invading" IAF strike aircraft, both had a "mission" in hand. Forty minutes later, Gwalior was "bombed" by an IAF MiG-27 escorted by a fleet of SU-30Ks and Mirage-2000s.

The joint exercise, which ends on February 27, have given the IAF, starved of exposure for nearly three decades, an opportunity to pit its skills against the US Air Force's. And while they size each other up in the skies, on the ground the USAF pilots are trying to get used to the spicy curry and take some time off to make a few quick trips to the bazaar and the historical monuments.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2004

AD-10
352

TRAGEDY AT SRIHARIKOTA

THE INDIAN SPACE Research Organisation is in shock and mourning, after a devastating fire at the solid propellant plant in the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota claimed six lives and left three others badly burnt on Monday afternoon. There are operations in preparing a launch vehicle or spacecraft that are inherently dangerous and accidents do happen. ISRO can be proud of its safety record. In the four decades of its existence it has suffered only one other operational mishap, which happened in the 1980s, when one person died. In solid propulsion, which involves some of the most risky operations, ISRO today has one of the most competent teams in the world. After importing solid propellant technology from France in the 1960s to build sounding rockets that could carry scientific instruments high into the atmosphere, ISRO's specialists swiftly improved on the technology. Soon they were building bigger and more powerful rocket motors. They saw to it that chemicals needed for making solid propellants were produced within the country. With future launch vehicle requirements in mind, modern facilities were established at Sriharikota in the 1970s to make and test solid motors. The successful launches of the all-solid SLV-3 in the early 1980s showcased the capability ISRO had developed. But this scientific achievement was to be surpassed by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). Its first stage, carrying 129 tonnes of solid propellant (which was subsequently augmented by a further 10 tonnes), is one of the largest solid motors in the world. PSLV's third stage is one of the world's biggest and most efficient upper stage solid motors. Eight PSLVs have been launched so far, each of them equipped with eight solid motors. The next generation Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mark-III, which ISRO

hopes to have ready by the end of this decade, will have two giant solid motors, each loaded with 200 tonnes of solid propellant.

The tremendous amount of energy solid propellants possess and release when ignited also means that solid motors and their chemical constituents need to be handled with the greatest care. The smallest spark can cause them to catch fire and even explode. ISRO has been able successfully to build and fly world class solid motors only by strictly adhering to safety systems and procedures. To make a solid motor, propellant is poured as a thick slurry into a casing. The propellant is then allowed to solidify, a process known as curing. According to ISRO, the accident at Sriharikota happened when, after curing, a team of nine persons was in the final stages of removing metal fixtures from the casing and the propellant inside inadvertently caught fire. As these post-curing operations are particularly hazardous, they are governed by detailed procedures, check-lists, and tight supervision.

ISRO's chairman, G. Madhavan Nair, has responded to the tragedy with commendable promptness by announcing the formation of a high-power committee to investigate the accident. The mandate of this committee will be to discover how and why the accident happened and, more importantly, make recommendations for improving safety systems and procedures. The investigation of last year's accident of the Space Shuttle Columbia has shown how a long series of successful launches can create complacency and allow safety standards to be relaxed. At a time when ISRO uses contract labour and is contemplating contracting out routine tasks, it could consider instituting periodic external safety audits. If the tragedy at Sriharikota leads to a safer work culture in ISRO, those men will not have died in vain.

THE HINDU 25 FEB 2004

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29/2

5 killed in explosion at Sriharikota space centre

By T.S. Subramanian

SRIHARIKOTA (ANDHRA PRADESH), FEB. 23. Five persons were reported killed and three were seriously injured today in a blast at a plant making solid propellants at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, the Indian Space Research Organisation's space port.

The blast occurred at 3.50 p.m. at a huge facility called the Solid Propellant Booster Plant (SPROB) when the solid propellant, after curing, was being moved from one building to another for further tests. The propellant caught fire, resulting in the blast. The propellant, hydroxyl-terminated poly butadiene (HTPB), powers ISRO's launch vehicles, including the SLV-3, the ASLV, the PSLV and the GSLV.

Employees of the centre, who did not want to be named, said five persons — three engineers (technicians) and two labourers — were killed in the fire and the resultant blast. An employee said: "After the solid propellant was cast and cured, and the rocket motor filled with it was being moved from one building to another, the accident happened." The blast completely damaged Building 117, an official of the centre said. According to him, the three who were injured were standing at the entrance to the building when the explosion took place. "They ran out but received severe burns," he added.

The ISRO Chairman, G. Madhavan Nair, told presspersons at the Chennai airport, on his way to Sriharikota, that between four and six persons had been killed. "I cannot give you any confirmation more than that. That is why I am rushing to SHAR to see for myself the exact situation."

S.K. Das, Additional Secretary, Department of Space, said: "We are taking action to approach the building, clear the debris and reach those inside. We do not know how many



One of those injured in an explosion that ripped through a building at Sriharikota being brought to the Apollo Hospital in Chennai on Monday. — Photo: R. Ragu

have been killed." The fire had "more or less been contained," he added.

Processing and handling the solid propellant are hazardous tasks carried out using remote-controlled mechanical arms. It is at the SPROB that the solid propellant grains, which also contain the oxidiser ammonium perchlorate, are made.

The chemicals are mixed into a uniform paste and filled into the rocket motor chambers under vacuum conditions. The curing process entails heat treatment of 60 degrees Celsius to 150 degrees Celsius.

The SPROB, one of the biggest plants of its kind in the world, was commissioned in March 1977. The complex is spread over 25 sq. km. on the spindle-shaped Sriharikota island, about 100 km. from Chennai. The island has a maximum width of eight km. The

SPROB has several buildings, spaced wide apart as a safety precaution, for casting, curing and other processes involved in the manufacture of HTPB.

This solid propellant fuelled ISRO's sounding rockets, the Satellite Launch Vehicle -3 (SLV-3) and the ASLV. The PSLV and the GSLV also had stages fuelled by HTPB.

The SPROB is undergoing a massive expansion programme to cater to the needs of the under-development GSLV-Mark III that will have two boosters each powered by 200 tonnes of HTPB.

Our Chennai Bureau reports: The ISRO Chairman said he had "set up a very high power committee to probe the entire episode."

Asked if any of ISRO's immediate projects would be affected, Mr. Madhavan Nair said

since only one of the test motors had been damaged, "I don't see any of our immediate projects getting affected."

"It is a very sad incident. One of the buildings in which rocket propellant was being prepared, caught fire inadvertently... the building has been damaged. Three of our senior scientists have sustained serious injuries... I can only say that some more are still trapped in the debris."

The injured were brought to the special burns unit of the Apollo Hospital, Chennai, at 7.30 p.m.

While Krishnaprasad and Sachin were in a serious condition, Narayanan had suffered only 20 per cent burns, said Dr. M. Baskaran of the emergency unit.

All their vital signs were stable and they were conscious, he added.

Arjun now can fire missiles

New Delhi, Feb. 11. — The *Arjun* tank, now going into production for two regiments of the Army, has picked up a new trick: it can fire missiles.

At recent trials held at the Mahajan test range, the *Arjun* fired laser homing anti-tank missiles, which struck home repeatedly. "This is one for advantage of using the tank. It can fire anti-tank missiles. Being unable to do so would have been a disadvantage," an official of the Defence Research and Development Organisation said.

How effective is the missile? DRDO officials said that it was good enough to smash through a tank armour. It has a range of about 5 km. A version of the missile to strike helicopters, particularly the tank-busting gunships are being readied. Then, the *Arjun* would be able to counter the other threats it faces.

The Army has ordered 124 tanks, but the production is slow and the DRDO officials said the manufacturing will have to be speeded up. The armoured corps' 43 regiment will be getting the tanks first. — SNS

Nuke shields on border, at PMO

Vishal Thapar
New Delhi, February 9

ALMOST SIX years after South Asia went overtly nuclear, the army is finally getting some cover against a tactical nuclear strike on its forward or advancing formations.

Underground field shelters will be provided right at the frontlines, and nuclear-biological-chemical warfare gear made available to troops in bulk soon, defence ministry sources said.

"The shelters will be installed at various places along our western and northern boundaries, including the LoC and the Punjab and Rajasthan borders," an official said.

Similar shelters are expected to be installed for VVIPs in New Delhi, including one in the Prime Minister's Office.

"The shelter is a self-contained unit with sleeping bunks for 30 personnel, captive power

and water supply, toilets, a decontamination module, waste disposal and fire-fighting systems," explains Pradeep Dass of Dass Hitachi, a Delhi engineering company, which will manufacture the shelters.

At the heart of the pre-fabricated shelter is an NBC ventilation system to purify contaminated air in nuclear battlefield conditions. "The shelter can also be used as a decontamination centre for troops," says Brigadier G.R.C. Rajan, an NBC expert. "In the event of an attack, soldiers (who escape a N-strike) can pass through the shelter for decontamination and rest," he points out.

Developed by the DRDO, 12 prototypes of the shelter, costing Rs 70 lakh each, have been handed over to the army.

Former vice-chief of army staff Lt-General (retd) Vijay Oberoi says the shelters are not designed to protect everybody.

"In a million-man army, we can't protect everybody. The shelters will protect key commanders and command centres."

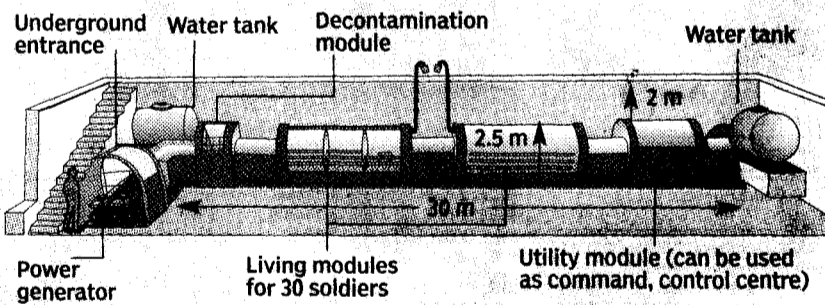
Dass agrees. "It is designed for ensuring the survival of key personnel in a near-miss situation," he says. In a direct nuclear hit, it's going to be instant vaporisation.

Experts say it's the perfect opportunity to construct the shelters as N-hell has broken loose in Pakistan. With Pakistan accused of proliferation on a massive scale, India's move can only be construed as defensive. Besides, building permanent defensive structures along the LoC gives it even more legitimacy.

The go-ahead for the construction of the shelters presupposes that Pakistan is likely to use tactical nukes against an Indian armoured thrust early in a war. However, experts doubt if Pakistan has the expertise to make tactical nukes.

India's new N-shelter

Designer:
DRDO
Cost: Rs 70 lakh
Numbers: 100s will be built
Users: Army, PMO



Graphic:VINEY

PURULIA ARMSDROP: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Hours after he locked his door from the inside for the first time in over eight years, and hours before he boarded a plane for the first time since being grounded and arrested in the winter of '95, Peter Bleach spoke to **The Telegraph** on some aspects of the Purulia armsdrop case: ✓



Bleach with Jo Fletcher at Heathrow airport. (Reuters)

■Is this the end of the matter?

This isn't over yet, not by a long way. I do want to stress that I am not guilty. I've never ever conspired against India and sooner or later, either before Calcutta High Court or the Supreme Court in Delhi, this will be proved. I will be coming back to pursue this matter, though the time frame vastly depends on the speed of the Indian legal system (winks while lighting another bidi).

■Wouldn't remaining silent be safer?

I really don't know. But if you live your life scared of shadows like that, what do you do, where do you go? Tr 6 8/2 ✓

■Was the armsdrop an enormous conspiracy?

Douglas Hurd (the veteran British parliamentarian) had once said that in all his years of politics he had actually never come across a conspiracy. I think he's right to an extent, but I would qualify that conspiracies do exist to cover up cock-ups. I am totally convinced that Purulia was a conspiracy in that it was covering up for something that had gone horribly wrong somewhere, something that turned out to be very serious business indeed. Some people didn't do what they were paid to do and that set off an extraordinary chain of events.

■What is the one unanswered question that bothers you the most?

The one question that really burns is that it's a matter of record that I had alerted the British authorities about the armsdrop. It is a matter of record the British authorities had relayed the message to the Indian authorities, so why didn't anyone stop it? Who made that decision? Somebody in Delhi made that decision. What happened? That's the burning question. If I was a tax-paying Indian citizen, I'd say to hell with this Briton, to hell with the Latvians, to hell with Kim Davy. The one question I would want an answer to is why the hell didn't my government act? J-D & M deems ✓

If that question is answered, the Purulia armsdrop case will be resolved.

■What happens next?

I have done a huge amount of research in prison on military history and am ready to write a thesis, then two books on the subject. I have also learnt a lot about how a prison should work far more than I had learnt as a prison warden in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and I would also like to use that knowledge academically. And then there's such a great deal of the unknown after losing eight years. I am looking forward to learning a lot.

THE TELEGRAPH

8 FEB 2004
8 FEB 2004

Booming questions

CBI must appeal Bofors order

Sonia Gandhi is entitled to express joy and other more intense emotions on the Delhi High Court (coram, Kapoor, J) holding that there's no evidence to link Rajiv Gandhi with Bofors bribery. It stretches even pre-electoral political credulity, however, to suggest that the entire episode, starting from the Swedish radio report in April 1987, was a vilification campaign. As Sonia should be the first to remember, her husband at that time was a Prime Minister with a massive parliamentary majority and still enjoying public goodwill on account of his claims and attempts to be different from decrepit and decadent Congressmen. It's tough contemplating a witch-hunt under these circumstances and tougher pulling it off. Bofors boomed in Indian politics because everyone knew something fishy had happened, and since Rajiv never ever came up with a factually and logically consistent rebuttal, and since Octavio Quattrocchi, a friend of the Family, consistently behaved suspiciously, and since one of Rajiv's own cabinet ministers started asking questions, it would have been insane not to ask the then Prime Minister to explain himself. Sonia should ask her current best friends, the Left, why it thought Rajiv had to answer how the deal was brokered. She should ask Madavsinh Solanki why he took that infamous note while on official trip abroad. She could query Arun Singh why he suddenly quit Rajiv's cabinet despite being one of the brightest members. And possibly she could ask herself, too.

This political memory loss is courtesy a judgment that with all due respect begs a whole lot of questions. Mr Justice JD Kapoor, hearing the Hinduja's appeal against the special court order, has given four reasons why he finds there's not a "scintilla" of evidence against Rajiv. First, there are secret accounts traced to the Hinduja's (Lotus, Tulip and Mont Blanc) but not to Rajiv Gandhi. We must politely ask whether international finance is so unimaginative that lack of a successful trace so far means the lack of an account. Second, the judge argues, vis a vis the famous 48-hour clearance of the Bofors gun over its French rival, Sofma, that once the government had agreed to buy the Swedish howitzer, how quickly the necessary signatures were obtained doesn't matter. With due respect again, we must point out that the alacrity with which the deal was cleared suggest something more than normal government procedure. No big ticket government purchase before and since has been okayed so fast. Mr Justice Kapoor arguably could have given this more thought. Third, the judge finds CBI has no evidence to show Rajiv influenced the Technical Committee or the Negotiation Committee.

Assuming for the moment that CBI's evidence indeed lacks such details, it is still necessary, indeed crucial, to ask whether VVIPs ever leave trails in the manner the judge has demanded. Influence peddling and deal fixing are not done via catalogued phone calls and carbon-copied sarkari letters at the upper reaches of power. Nor are members of committees who sit over such matters liable to sing to the investigative agency, as the judgment also demands. The court's fourth objection, that Rajiv being dead, no useful purpose will be served by examining his culpability, is worth considering. Except that prime ministerial lapses of conduct deserve to be scrutinised even in such situations because institutional sanctity is at stake. This is not the first time a rather curious judicial interpretation has been brought to bear on the Bofors case. Another Delhi High Court order in 2002 had quashed the charge sheet against Hinduja's, saying the CVC should have been consulted by the CBI. The Supreme Court had rejected that interpretation. The CBI has said it will appeal this High Court verdict, too. It should do so with the maximum possible dispatch.

THE STATESMAN 7 FEB 2001

7 FEB 2001

সালেমকে ফেরত দিচ্ছে পর্তুগাল, ভোটের মুখে দিল্লিও পেতে উন্মুখ

৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১১

আইনমন্ত্রকের সঙ্গে পরামর্শ করেন। আইনমন্ত্রক সেই অনুযায়ী সি বি আই-কে নির্দেশ দেয়, সালেমকে মৃত্যুদণ্ড দেওয়া হবে না, এই নিশ্চয়তা পর্তুগিজ প্রশাসনকে দেওয়া হোক। সি বি আই-এর দল লিসবনে গিয়ে সে দেশের সরকারকে জানিয়ে দেয়, সালেম-মনিকা দোষী সাব্যস্ত হলেও তাদের মৃত্যুদণ্ড দেওয়া হবে না।

৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি: ভারতের দীর্ঘদিনের দাবি মেনে মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণে অন্যতম প্রধান অভিযুক্ত আবু সালেম ও তাঁর বান্ধবী মনিকা বেদিকে প্রত্যর্পণে রাজি হয়েছে পর্তুগাল। সেখানকার হাইকোর্ট আজ সালেমকে ভারতে ফেরত পাঠানোর জন্য পর্তুগিজ প্রশাসনকে নির্দেশ দিয়েছে। আসন্ন লোকসভা নির্বাচনের মুখে তাই কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার যত তাড়াতাড়ি সম্ভব সালেম-মনিকাকে এ দেশে বিচারের জন্য নিয়ে আসতে চাইছে। তা করা সম্ভব হলে, সেটাকে প্রচারের বিষয়ও করা যাবে। পাশাপাশি, ভারত ২১ জন অপরাধীর যে তালিকা পাকিস্তানকে দিয়েছিল, তা নিয়েও সোচ্চার হওয়ার রণকৌশল নিচ্ছে বাজপেয়ী সরকার। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, দিন পনেরোর মধ্যেই সালেমকে ফেরত পাঠাবে পর্তুগিজ প্রশাসন। কিন্তু, এখানে একটা আইনি প্রশ্নও থেকে যাচ্ছে। কারণ, হাইকোর্টের এই রায়ের বিরুদ্ধে পর্তুগিজ সুপ্রিম কোর্টে আবেদন করার সুযোগ সালেমের রয়েছে। এবং সালেম তা করলে প্রত্যর্পণের বিষয়টা ফেরত ঝুলে থাকবে।

মনিকাকে ফেরত পাঠাতে ইতিমধ্যেই পর্তুগাল রাজি হয়েছে। কিন্তু, মনিকা এর বিরুদ্ধে সে দেশের সুপ্রিম কোর্টে গিয়েছেন। বিষয়টি এখন বিচার্যধীন।

উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী আজ সকালে

গুজরাতে মহাত্মা গান্ধীর জন্মস্থান পোড়বন্দরে গিয়েছিলেন। সেখান থেকে ফিরেই তিনি সি বি আই প্রধানের ফোন পান। পর্তুগিজ হাইকোর্টের নির্দেশ নিয়ে দু'জনের মধ্যে আলোচনা হয়। পরে সাংবাদিক সম্মেলন ডেকে সি বি আই জানায়, সালেমকে খুব শীঘ্রই ভারতে নিয়ে আসার ব্যপারে তারা অত্যন্ত আশাবাদী।

বস্তুত, পর্তুগালের কাছে বিচারের জন্য সালেমকে প্রত্যর্পণের দাবি ভারত অনেক দিন ধরেই জানিয়ে আসছিল। কিন্তু সালেমের ক্ষেত্রে প্রতিবারই পর্তুগিজ আইনের অজুহাতে ব্যাপারটি পিছিয়ে গিয়েছে। অবশেষে সে দেশেরই খোদ হাইকোর্ট সালেমকে ফেরত পাঠানোর নির্দেশ দেওয়ায় নয়াদিল্লি নিঃসন্দেহে স্বস্তির নিঃশ্বাস ফেলবে। পর্তুগিজ আইন অনুযায়ী, মৃত্যুদণ্ডের বিধি আছে, এমন কোনও দেশেই কোনও অপরাধীকে প্রত্যর্পণ করা যাবে না। তাই সালেমের ক্ষেত্রেও পর্তুগালের প্রধান পূর্বশর্ত ছিল, ভারত তাকে কোনও ভাবেই মৃত্যুদণ্ড দেবে না, এর নিশ্চয়তা দিতে হবে।

পর্তুগালের মনোভাব জানার পরেই আডবানী এ বিষয়ে কেন্দ্রীয়

প্রসঙ্গত, জালিয়াতি ও বেআইনি ভাবে পর্তুগালে থাকার জন্য সালেম ও মনিকাকে পর্তুগিজ আদালত দোষী সাব্যস্ত করে যথাক্রমে সাড়ে চার বছর ও দু'বছরের কারাদণ্ড দিয়েছে। সালেমের বিরুদ্ধে তিনটি অভিযোগ এনেছিল লিসবন পুলিশ। ভূয়ো পাসপোর্ট নিয়ে দেশে ঢোকা, পুলিশ অফিসারের গায়ে হাত তোলা ও সরকারি অফিসারদের তদন্তের কাজে বাধা দেওয়া এবং অবৈধ ভাবে সে দেশে থাকার অনুমতি আদায় করার জন্য স্থানীয় একটি মেয়েকে বিয়ে করা। পর্তুগিজ প্রশাসন অবশ্য সালেমের বিরুদ্ধে এই শেষ অভিযোগ নিয়ে চার্জ গঠন করেনি।

তবে, সালেমকে গ্রেফতারের পিছনেও ইতিহাস আছে। মুম্বই

বিস্ফোরণের তদন্তকারী সংস্থা সি বি আই ২০০২ সালে ইন্টারপোলের মাধ্যমে সালেমের নামে 'রেড কর্নার' নোটিস জারি করেছিল। ইন্টারপোলের তরফে তার পরে পর্তুগিজ প্রশাসনের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করা হয়। এর পরেই ২০০২-এর ২১ সেপ্টেম্বর সালেমকে গ্রেফতার করে লিসবন পুলিশ।

মাফিয়া ডন দাউদ ইব্রাহিমের এক সময়কার

ঘনিষ্ঠ সঙ্গী আবু সালেম ১৯৯৩ সালের মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণ মামলার অন্যতম অভিযুক্ত। মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণের চক্রান্ত রূপায়ণে দাউদ ইব্রাহিম ও টাইগার মেমনকে আবু সালেম সাহায্য করেছিল বলে অভিযোগ। মুম্বইয়ের একটি বিশেষ আদালত তার বিরুদ্ধে সর্বাঙ্গিক সতর্কতা জারি করে।

পরের দিকে দাউদের সঙ্গে বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে তার বিরোধ দেখা দিলে সে দাউদ-বিরোধী একটি নয়া গোষ্ঠী তৈরি করে। অনেকে মনে করেন, সালেমের ধরা পড়ার পিছনে দাউদের হাত রয়েছে। এক সময় সে ও মনিকা মধ্যপ্রদেশে থাকতো। বিস্ফোরণের পরেই ভোপাল থেকে জাল পাসপোর্ট তৈরি করে সে পালিয়ে যায়।

কিছু দিন দু'জনে সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরশাহিতেও ছিল। সেখানেও ভারত সরকারের তরফে সালেমকে ধরার জন্য আমিরশাহির উপরে চাপ দেওয়া হয়েছিল। আমিরশাহির সঙ্গে ভারতের বন্দি প্রত্যর্পণ চুক্তিও রয়েছে। বিপদের আশঙ্কা করে সালেম-মনিকা সেখান থেকেও পালায়।



আবু সালেম ও মনিকা বেদি। — এ এফ পি-র ফাইল চিত্র

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2004

D.S. Nene V.C.

119-10

BOFORS WITHOUT RAJIV GANDHI

THE LANGUAGE OF the Delhi High Court's latest judgment quashing the bribery and related charges but ordering the trial to go ahead on the counts of cheating, entering into a criminal conspiracy to cheat, causing wrongful loss to the Government, and committing forgery has given rise to the impression that Rajiv Gandhi, his Defence Secretary S.K. Bhatnagar, and his Government have been cleared of all wrongdoing in the 14-year-old Bofors criminal case. Starting with its president, Sonia Gandhi, the Congress party has been quick to respond with a repetition of the absurdly false claim that *l'affaire* Bofors has been, from start to present, an exercise in "abuse, vilification and ... character assassination," indeed an evil conspiracy. Forsaking judicial statesmanship, the single Judge made uncalled for and self-defeating observations in his judgment on "trial by media", bringing in irrelevancies such as the recent Daler Mehndi episode. He needs to be reminded that had the news media, especially *The Hindu*, left Bofors to the official investigative process, nothing would have come of it — since between April 1987, when the scandal surfaced, and January 1990, when a criminal case was first registered, the Government's response was deliberate and studied non-investigation of the alleged criminal wrongdoing. The Judge has also unjustly characterised as a "fiasco" the Central Bureau of Investigation's efforts to discover direct payoffs to Rajiv Gandhi, Bhatnagar or any other public servant — ignoring the elementary fact that the agency never assumed or asserted that the illegal payments were made into secret accounts owned by any of them.

These *obiter dicta* have added to the impression that the Bofors scandal has now been judicially determined to be sound and fury, signifying little. This little, of course, translates into triable charges of the undeclared commission agents of Bofors — the three Hinduja brothers, Win Chadha, and Ottavio Quattrocchi — "cheating," and causing "wrongful loss" to the

Government of India, and Bofors resorting to "forgery". The cheating charge against the agents that has been upheld as triable is: "entering into a criminal conspiracy to cheat the Government of India by fraudulently and dishonestly representing that there were no agents involved in the negotiation for the contract, and further that the price quoted was the reduced price proportionate to the amount of commission that would have otherwise been paid to the agents." The triable charge of forgery against Bofors is concocting false documents to show that no middlemen were involved in the deal.

So where does this leave us on Bofors? This is actually the third time over the past 14 years that the investigation and prosecution of India's best-known corruption case has suffered setbacks in the Delhi High Court, only to have the quashing decisions reversed on appeal. The CBI will no doubt appeal against the quashing of the charges under the Prevention of Corruption Act. But the issues involved in this scandal must be understood at a deeper level than is evidenced in the Delhi High Court's latest judgment. Analytically, *l'affaire* Bofors needs to be understood in terms of five modes of action. The first is the Rajiv Gandhi-led decision-making on the choice of howitzer, which involved conspiratorial "cheating" and "forgery" to "induce" the Government into going in for a contract that resulted in "wrongful loss." The arrangements for the illegal and secret payments amounting to Rs. 64 crores, and the prolonged cover-up and crisis management, are the second and third modes. The fourth is the journalistic investigation and exposé. The fifth mode of action is the CBI's criminal investigation, assisted by the authorities and courts of countries like Switzerland, and the ongoing prosecution. To suggest that Rajiv Gandhi, some of his key officials, and his regime had no role in the scandal other than their bit parts as naïvely innocent dupes of alleged cheats and forgers is, well, to read *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

THE HINDU

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Security and censorship

By Garimella Subramaniam

THE SUPREME Court ruling on the question of the right to information vis-à-vis public safety from radiological and industrial risks is unlikely to end the debate on the issue. This is especially so given the current global and domestic anxieties over the hazards involved in the use of atomic energy. The Court has refused to disclose the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board's findings on violation of safety norms in nuclear plants. The ruling comes within a year of India's worst radiation-related accident at the Kalpakkam atomic power facilities in January 2003.

In the Court's view, such information falls outside the public's entitlement to know as there are national security interests. It justifies the veil of secrecy saying it is a reasonable restriction on the freedom of expression and the right to information guaranteed in Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.

The impugned 1995 report of the AERB had documented 130 instances of equipment failure and human error in atomic power stations and nuclear research establishments. When attempts to get the report made public failed, the People's Union for Civil Liberties and the Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal challenged Section 18 of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, in the Bombay High Court. The High Court dismissed the petition in 1997. In the subsequent appeal, the apex court upheld the impugned Section, main-

taining that the contents of the report constituted privileged information and that "the state must have the prerogative of preventing evidence being given on matters that would be contrary to public interest."

The intervening seven years between the judgments of the High Court and the Supreme Court were witness to Japan's worst-ever radioactive fire at the Tokaimura uranium enrichment plant in 1997. Two instances of radioactive heavy water leak at the Kalpakkam atom power

No. 6, pp. 52-57) in which a technician was inadvertently locked up in a shielded room at Dhruva in the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. A fellow technician who wanted to know why the reactor was continuously shutting down discovered him by chance. He then learnt that the man had caused the reactor to trip in order to save himself from radiation risk.

The performance record of many power stations is hardly enviable. The reactors in Tarapore, Rajasthan and Chennai have, in fact, been de-rated

The denial of any information that is basic to the protection of human rights in the name of national security is antithetical to fundamental democratic values. Indeed, considering the inherent hazards of nuclear installations, even non-disclosure can be seen as undermining the provisions of Articles 21 (right to life and liberty), 47 (fundamental duty of the state to improve public health) and 48 A (duty of the state to improve and protect the environment) of the Constitution. Therefore, restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to information must pass the test of reasonableness, understood in terms of their compatibility with basic democratic norms.

Relevant in the context of the recent apex court judgment is the qualification by the European Court of Human Rights that restrictions should serve a pressing social need and must be kept to the minimum. It also points out that measures that prevent the public from learning of illegalities and wrongdoings from whistleblowers fail this test.

Another important contribution in this area is the Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. They hold up the right to information on national security as part of the basic right to know. Legitimate restrictions are only those that demonstrably protect a country's existence or territorial integrity. But states cannot categorically deny information on all aspects of national security.

The denial of any information basic to the protection of human rights in the name of national security is antithetical to democracy.

from their original capacity of over 200 MWe. But the standard refrain of the officials of the Department of Atomic Energy to both near mishaps or their mere moderate output is one of outright denial or playing down the magnitude of issues. In fact, the 2003 incident at Kalpakkam was so serious that the reprocessing facility was shut down for six months. All these fall into a familiar pattern of the Indian nuclear establishment's attempts to shore up its safety record with claims of national security as well as the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, 1923. Moreover, a distinction between civilian and military nuclear installations is a prerequisite to bring the former under continuous public scrutiny.

facilities also came to light. In the first incident in 1999, at least 50 people were exposed to radiation risk. But it still needed considerable pressure from the media for the authorities to admit that six tonnes of heavy water had leaked, even as a plant emergency was declared and the reactor shut down. In the leakage in January 2003 at the reprocessing facility, six employees were exposed to levels of radiation well in excess of the threshold annual limit. The employees had not been wearing radioactivity readers and the gamma monitors had failed to emit cautionary signals.

There was also the shocking instance in 1989 (reported in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* November/December 1999 Vol. 55,

Tehelka panel clears Fernandes

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 FEBRUARY

TWO days before the dissolution of the 13th Lok Sabha, defence minister George Fernandes got a clean chit from the Justice Phukan commission, set up to look into a website's allegations regarding irregularities in defence purchases. A retired judge of the Supreme Court, he was appointed head of the commission after the abrupt resignation of Justice K. Venkataswami towards the end of 2002, S.N. Phukan submitted the first part of his report to the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Wednesday morning.

The commission, in its 641-page report, found "no impropriety" on the part of Mr Fernandes in any of the 15 defence deals finalised during the period 1981-2000.

The exoneration of Mr Fernandes, seen as the red rag before the Congress-Left parties-RJD combine, is expected to liven up the political scene in the run-up to the general election. Armed with the reprieve provided by the commission, the Janata Dal (United) president immediately went on the offensive, terming the entire sting operation carried out by Tehelka as "rubbish."

It was clear that Mr Fernandes would use the findings of the



Top Notch: Defence minister George Fernandes atop a Bofors gun in New Delhi on Wednesday. - PTI

Tehelka commission during the campaign to turn the tables on the Opposition. "Ever since that rubbish came out, I've been saying that those who wanted to malign me would go on doing so and those who'll continue maligning me will do it with the coffins," a combative Mr Fernandes told newsmen here on Wednesday afternoon.

The timing of the report predictably had the entire Opposition crying foul. Congress spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy questioned the basis on which Justice Phukan had come to the conclusion that the Tehelka tapes were doctored.

Justice Venkataswami, who had ini-

tially been given the task of looking into the allegations, had considered them to be genuine. His successor differed from his predecessor and referred the tapes to a foreign firm for examination. "There was absolutely no scope for Justice Phukan..... Justice Phukan referred the tapes to a foreign firm whose identity is not known to anybody except Mr Fernandes and the Government of India," Mr Reddy said, while accusing the defence minister of using his influence to get the "examination of the tapes doctored."

The Congress, he pointed out, remained "unrepentant" about its stand on the controversy. "Mr Fernandes is a great sinner. Mr Vajpayee is a bigger sinner because he has brought the sinner back to the Cabinet," the Congress spokesman said.

He asserted that the Opposition suspected foul play from the moment Justice Phukan was named head of the commission. "While Justice Venkataswami was chosen by the Supreme Court, Justice Phukan was chosen by the government. There was manipulation in the selection of the judge itself and nothing much was expected from him." The Venkataswami Commission was set up in March 2001 after the surfacing of the Tehelka tapes. The revelations triggered the first major crisis faced by the Vajpayee government, leading to the resignation of Mr Fernandes from the Union Cabinet.

Freedom, finally

Parting gift for Bleach: Rs 2,200 for jail work

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, February 4

THE CIGAR was worth the wait. After 8 years and 44 days in Alipore Central Jail, the first thing Purulia armsdrop convict Peter Bleach did after stepping out of the prison premises was to light up a Edward King cigar. And blow a ring to the sky that eluded him for 8 years and 44 days.

Donning a red shirt and a navy blue suit, Bleach finally stepped out of the jail on Wednesday at 3.15 pm. Accompanied by British Deputy High Commissioner Andrew Hall and Vice-Consul John Hamilton, Bleach greeted the media army with a brief "hallo" and quickly boarded the bullet-proof Landrover of the British Mission.

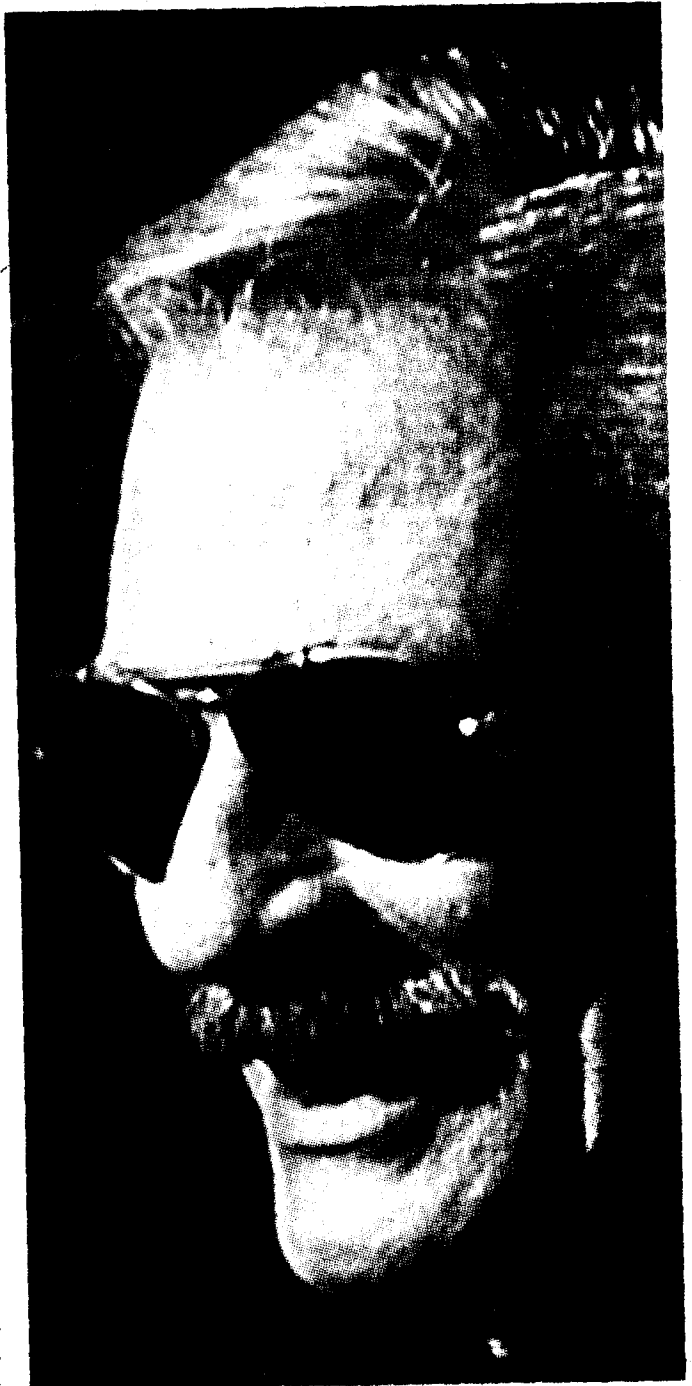
As has been the routine over the last week, Bleach began the day too with uncertainty over his release. He was summoned several times to the jail office, but wasn't once told that he would be set free within hours. The last hurdle was cleared early in the morning when the Union finance secretary sent a fax message to state home secretary Amit Kiran Deb, intimating him that "the Mumbai Customs adjudication case has been disposed of by imposing a penalty of Rs 5,000 on Bleach and the Customs criminal case at the Esplanade Court shall be withdrawn. We have no objection to releasing Bleach from jail."

After receiving the message, Deb promptly cleared the

decks for Bleach's release. IG (Prisons) Joydeb Chakraborty reached the jail soon after, at 1.30 pm, to hand him over to the High Commission officials. Bleach was called to the jail office for the last time at 2 pm and asked to pack his bag. The hour had finally arrived.

Rushing back to his cell, he packed his clothes and hundreds of files running into more than 10,000 pages of his case papers in 15 cartons. A parting gift awaited Bleach at the jail: Rs 2,200 — from the prison authorities towards the remuneration for his labour during his years there. As he readied to leave the jail, hundreds of prisoners lined up inside the prison gates to see off the *sahab* inmate. "I apologise to you for losing my temper on occasions," Bleach told jail superintendent R.P. Bhattacharya before leaving.

Immediately after reaching the High Commission office, he called up his 83-year-old mother, Oceana Bleach, in Yorkshire and girlfriend Jo Fletcher in London. Jo later told HT: "When I heard Peter was once again on British soil, at the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata, I was thrilled. Until the moment of his actual release, it was hard to believe that it would really happen, especially given all the twists and turns that led up to this event. There have been so many false alarms over the years that I wasn't prepared to celebrate it until it actually happened. The biggest relief was that he sounded exactly the same."



SUBHANKAR CHAKRABARTY/HT
Peter Bleach comes out of Alipore Jail on Wednesday.

Said Oceana: "We couldn't recognise each other's voice when he called. I was too emotional to say much. I told him I will go down to Heathrow to receive him, but he asked me not to do that because it's too cold out there. I will go anyway."

In his press statement after the release, Bleach said: "I wish to express my gratitude to His Excellency, the President of India, for exercising his authority to remit my sentence. Nothing can replace the

years that I have lost. But I am delighted to be a free man at last. This is a very emotional moment for me. The years have not been easy and I am eagerly looking forward to returning to the UK and seeing my family again."

Prodded by reporters on his future plans, he said: "I have no plans to write my memoirs. All I want is to be with my mother and Jo, who have waited all this while for me."

See also Kolkata Live

Rajiv cleared of Bofors payoff stigma

9
D.S.N. Fernandes
HTC 1
3/2

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 4

IN A landmark order, the Delhi High Court has ruled that there is no evidence to show that any public servant, including former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, received any bribes in the Bofors pay-off case.

In his 115-page order, Justice J.D. Kapoor observed that the CBI, despite investigating the case for 16 years, could not unearth any evidence against Rajiv Gandhi and former defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar. "All efforts of the CBI ended in a fiasco...", Justice Kapoor noted.

The judge quashed charges of criminal conspiracy between public servants (Rajiv Gandhi and Bhatnagar) and the petitioners (Hinduja brothers and Bofors) that had been framed in a Special Court order in November 2002.

However, the court gave the go-ahead for framing of charges against the Hinduja brothers — Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash — for allegedly having entered into a criminal conspiracy to cheat the Union government in 1985-86 by representing that there were no agents or middlemen involved in the negotiation of the contract.

The court also ordered framing of charges against Bofors.

The court observed that the CBI had traced the money received as commission by the Hinduja brothers and the other middlemen in the case, Ottavio Quattrocchi and Win Chadha. But the CBI had failed to establish any link to Rajiv Gandhi. Justice Kapoor also noted that the army had had the decisive voice in selecting the Bofors gun.

The High Court has now directed the chief metropolitan magistrate to hear the case on a day-to-day basis "as far as possible".

Justice Kapoor did not spare



PTI

Fernandes inspecting the Bofors gun at the Defexpo India 2004 in New Delhi

George gets clean chit in tehelka

ROUGHLY TWO months ahead of the general elections, the Justice S.N. Phukan Commission of Inquiry on the Tehelka expose on Wednesday said it had found "no impropriety" on the part of Defence Minister George Fernandes in the 15 specific cases of defence deals that it probed. Sharply reacting to the one-man panel's report, Congress spokesman Abhishek Singhvi said it was ironical that an enquiry itself had become a scam.

HTC, New Delhi

the CBI and media in his order. He said the case was an example of how "trial and justice by the media" could cause irreparable, irreversible and incalculable harm to the reputation of a person.

See also Page 5

Interim relief for George

R. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, Feb. 4: George Fernandes is probably breathing a bit easier.

Justice S.N. Phukan, who is probing the Tehelka exposé, today said there was "no impropriety" on the part of the defence minister in various arms deals but added he would deal with the tapes in his second report.

The judge made it clear that his report was an "interim report with interim recommendations" dealing with only 15 defence procurements between 1981 and 2000 which had "no link" with the Tehelka tapes, which were sent abroad for forensic examination. "The Tehelka tapes will be dealt with only in the next report as foreign expert opinion is likely to reach by end-March," he told reporters.

The major deals among the 15 looked into by the one-man commission involved purchase of

Sukhoi fighter jets, Barak Missiles, T-90 tanks and tank navigation systems.

Justice Phukan said he had convened the news conference "only to inform" that he had submitted a 641-page report to Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and refused to divulge details, except that the "(defence) procurement system needs improvement".

The judge said he submitted the report after examining 507 "secret defence files" and the evidence of 26 witnesses. There will be "three or four reports", he added. The commission is understood to have recommended action against certain officials for their alleged role in the "deals".

The commission, earlier headed by Justice Venkataswami, was set up in March 2001 soon after the news portal played video tapes recorded in the sting operation that purportedly showed bribes being paid to various people, including then BJP chief Bangaru Laxman, who had to resign. Fernandes also resigned as defence minister but was later reinducted.

Justice Phukan said he would examine the role of "four to five" alleged middlemen in various defence deals and also send notices to Sharad Pawar and Mulayam Singh Yadav — who were defence ministers between 1981 and 2000 — to "assess" their role.

The judge said his recommendations were "corrective" in nature so that in future defence purchases could be carried out without corruption and that it was "within the purview of the government to make it (the report) public". The BJP seized on the report, with spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi saying it had vindicated the party's stand that Fernandes was "not involved in any of the deals alleged by the Tehelka portal".

The Opposition slammed the report. "There was absolutely no scope for Justice Phukan.... He referred the tapes to a foreign firm whose identity is not known to anybody except Fernandes and the Government of India," Congress spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy said.

Fernandes said political forces that backed the "malicious campaign" would be exposed. "Did I have to clarify anything? Ever since the motivated Tehelka rubbish came out, those who wanted to malign me used this and the coffins issue to tarnish my image," he said. "Three rogue journalists were out to commit mischief and some politicians, who have all along been against me, supported them. I feel pity for them."

State removes a legal hurdle for Bleach

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, February 1

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THE STATE government has decided to withdraw a minor assault case against Peter Bleach, one of the three pending cases that blocked his release yesterday. The armsdrop convict has been on hunger strike since Saturday after he came to know that he wouldn't be released immediately despite a presidential remission.

"We won't wait for the court to reopen on Tuesday. We can withdraw the case even after releasing him," said IG (Prisons) Joydeb Chakraborty on the minor case of assault by Bleach on fellow convict Kamal Routh in Presidency Jail about a year ago.

One of the cases the state government had cited, while stalling Bleach's release, was his writ petition with the High Court to change his status to that of a political prisoner. Chakraborty said the writ petition wouldn't be a problem either. "We can release him if he submits a letter withdrawing the petition."

However, it is still not clear how long the process of Bleach's release could take, with another case pending against him in Mumbai. The Customs on August 20, 2003, had sent a notice to Bleach to appear in Mumbai either in person or through his representative on September 11. Bleach had replied that since he had already been convicted in the armsdrop case, the Customs should drop the notice. He never received a response.

"We have already intimated the Union home ministry about the case. Though it appears to be pending, we don't have any warrant from any court for keeping Bleach in jail custody in this case. What we want is a clarification from the Centre that we can release him if he has not been ordered to be detained in jail in any other case. The clarification can come anytime. If we receive it on Sunday, we will release Bleach on Monday," said Chakraborty.

Bleach's legal adviser Deepak Prahladka has decided to move the High Court against the CBI, seeking action-taken report on the complaint he filed last year against Mumbai Customs officials for fabricating evidence and filing false case against Bleach and the five Latvians.

Protesting against what he calls his illegal detention, Bleach went on a hunger strike on Saturday evening. "I am not eating in protest. Despite the President's remission and the fact that there is no warrant for my detention in any other case, I have still been kept here. I have no other way to lodge my protest against this illegal detention," said Bleach.

Bleach's passport to freedom touches base

OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, Jan. 30: Peter Bleach is hours away from freedom.

At 6.30 pm, a note reached home secretary Amit Kiran Deb's desk at Writers' Buildings. It contained what the Briton, serving a life term in connection with the Purulia armsdrop, was waiting for.

"The President's order, committing the rest of Peter Bleach's sentence under Section 72 (1B) in response to his prayer for clemency, reached me this evening," Deb told **The Telegraph**.

"If there is no other case under any other law pending against Bleach in this country, he is to be released immediately and handed over to the British deputy high commissioner," said Deb. "We are in the process of checking out the legal clause and working out the modalities."

Pressed for a time frame for the release, the home secretary said: "Any time tomorrow".

So, after spending eight years and 30 days behind bars in Calcutta, the 51-year-old is on the



HEARMS TRAIL

• **Dec. 17, 1995:** A huge cache of arms and ammunition dropped on four villages in Bengal's Purulia district from a Russian AN-26 aircraft. The arms dropped included 241 AK-47/56 assault rifles. The plane then flies to Thailand

• **Dec. 24, 1995:** The aircraft returns and lands in Mumbai, where it is seized. Peter Bleach (left) and crew are arrested, but alleged mastermind Kim Davy escapes

• **Mar. 11, 1998:** Trial begins at Calcutta civil and sessions court

• **Feb. 2, 2000:** Bleach and five Latvians sentenced to life imprisonment

• **July 22, 2000:** The five Latvians released and handed over to Russia

verge of returning to his North Yorkshire home.

Bleach spent an anxious day at Alipore Central Jail after a British deputy high commissioner official informed him of the 30-minute meeting between deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and British home secretary David Blunkett in Delhi. "The request for the release of Bleach is being actively considered by the government and this would be possible soon," Advani later said.

"I am cautiously optimistic. This is the least ambiguous statement on the chances of my

what it regarded as a clear case of discrimination against Bleach after the five Latvian crew members served identical sentences were released in July 2000 after Russian President Vladimir Putin personally requested their acquittal. Despite Prime Minister Tony Blair and former home secretary Jack Straw pushing Bleach's case during every meeting with senior Indian leaders, Bleach continued to languish in jail.

"It's finally over," Teddy Taylor, the Tory MP pleading Bleach's case for years, said from London. "The home office informed me this morning that Peter would be back home next week."

"It's fantastic," laughed Bleach's girlfriend Jo Fletcher. "He sounded so depressed in his last few letters that I was beginning to fear I would never see him again. But everything has changed in a few hours."

Back at 1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, the British office which has been Bleach's "only link with the outside world" was gearing up for "a very long night and day ahead".

Modernization of defence requires a new mode of thinking

Ship of contention

BRIJESH D. JAYAL

Perhaps no defence procurement has drawn as much public attention as the recent announcement of the purchase of the Russian aircraft carrier, *Admiral Gorshkov*, along with its refurbishing costs and associated complement of fighter aircraft and helicopters. The reasons are varied. Some have questioned its very need while others have commented on cost-effective alternatives having been ignored. Some have argued that the Indian air force, with its long range SU 30 fighter and flight refuelling capability, could have provided the fleet with much more, while others are unhappy at the prospect of a ship headed for the scrapyard being given free, but with a huge attendant bill for retro fitment and equipment added.

There have been others who have endorsed this move, giving operational and other grounds to support their views. It is also not without significance that this project has been under active consideration for nearly ten years and such procrastination in itself has generated speculation and debate. An interesting aspect of the debate has been that many retired senior officers from all the three services have expressed views, apart from editors and security commentators.

Undoubtedly, of all the major defence procurements of recent years, this deal has clearly elicited strong views on both its desirability or otherwise. Such divergent views, especially from senior retired military professionals, some themselves sailors, have left many observers of national security issues somewhat puzzled.

The chief of naval staff, while announcing the finalization of negotiations, was quoted as saying that *Gorshkov's* acquisition would make India capable of power projection and give the navy, for the first time, capability to take on even shore-based air force fighters. Admiral Nadkarni, a retired CNS member and a commentator on security affairs, wrote a column in rediff.com in 2001, which, while confirming the navy's need for an aircraft carrier to defend its fleet on the high seas and against air strikes, said that anti submarine patrols and strikes against surface targets were added bonuses, not necessities. He felt there were reasonable alternatives and concluded that getting the *Gorshkov* to do the job was like using Schumacher's F1 Ferrari to do your weekly shopping. So within the maritime fraternity itself, there are divergent views on this subject.

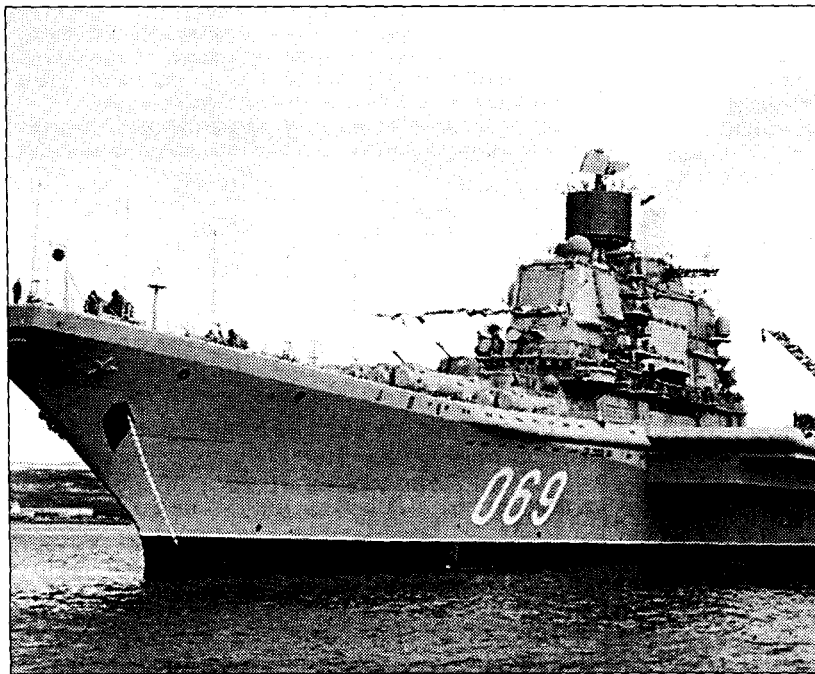
It is not this writer's case to add to this debate. What is intriguing however is that some of the projects of the three services that are coming to fruition now (including the *Gorshkov*) have been on the wish list of the services for over a decade or two. The IAF flight refueller aircraft and AWACS requirements were projected in the mid-

Eighties. While FRA deliveries have just begun, the latter will materialize five to six years hence.

The indigenous main battle tank should have been operational with the army by the mid-Eighties. Instead, deliveries of T90 tanks procured from Russia have only just begun. This reflects poorly on the defence management and decision-making process, which adversely affects modernization and consequently the operational capability of the armed forces. But more, when projects drag on indefinitely, does the security management system have a self-regulatory mechanism to

agency and asymmetric warfare at one end and nuclear war at the other. While the spectrum of threat has widened, the middle space, namely conventional war, for which the Indian defence management and the armed forces have traditionally been organized, has shrunk considerably.

In response, no fundamental changes in the management of defence and the doctrines of the armed forces have so far been visible. Even the few changes that were proposed at the higher management level after Kargil have been slow in coming and some buried for lack of consensus or integrated



“ The purchase of Admiral Gorshkov has drawn the most public attention in recent times ”

thinking. The absence of a chief of defence staff is one. To meet emerging challenges, the Indian military and civil bureaucracies need to break out of traditionalism and aim for transformation through innovativeness.

The world over, some important factors are now forcing another look at whether past patterns of the way armed forces are structured, organized and equipped are relevant to a rapidly changing future. One is the horror of nuclear war and the danger of conflicts rapidly approaching the nuclear threshold, another the growing potency of asymmetric warfare and finally, a revolution in military affairs brought about by the march of technology (including that of space). This blurs the roles between the three services.

Many in the West are attempting to understand the deeper ramifications of these changes with a view to adapting accordingly. Indeed, scientific tools

of operational analysis and quantitative analysis are being used extensively to arrive at optimum solutions with regard to systems and operational capabilities, respectively.

In India, a dynamic approach would be to rationalize roles and missions and then for each service to carry out a one time “zero based” approach to service organization and modernization plans. This needs a bold and dynamic defence management system, which continues to elude us.

Viewing modernization merely in terms of advanced weapon systems is already an outmoded concept. Modernization must strive towards achieving integrated operational capabilities efficiently and effectively. Synergizing of optimum operational capabilities across the spectrum including agencies and institutions outside the military must be the management goal of security planners and managers, as security threats now need an integrated response. Operational capabilities to achieve defined military objectives must flow from perceived threats and national military strategy to meet them.

How best these operational capabilities can be achieved by either two or more of the services must emerge through scientific analysis techniques and not by resorting to subjectivity or institutional parochialism. Force structures and defining of roles and missions amongst the services must also flow from such scientific analyses.

Since the Indian security management system lacks integration of operational planning and conduct of operations, servicewise budget distribution continues to follow historic percentage shares except for minor variations. The services view their respective shares as sacrosanct and the defence ministry has learnt not to tread on this emotive inter-service turf. Between and within the services, institutions specializing in OA and QA applications are non-existent. Service headquarters are largely guided by subjective and operational arguments and limited by their command oriented rather than collegiate decision-making cultures.

In the absence of a CDS, no professional audit is possible beyond the service headquarters. In such an environment it is hardly surprising that procurement decisions become the subject of major controversies. This results in doubts and anxiety in the lower formations of the services and is detrimental to the nation's security.

New security challenges require priority spending on capabilities like nuclear, space and counter-terrorism on land, sea and in the air that in the past made virtually no demands on the defence budget. If indeed the nation's security is to be managed within resources that the nation can afford, then there is no option but to resort to scientific methods of determining how desired integrated military capabilities could best be achieved with maximum security returns on investments made.

The author is a retired air marshal of the Indian air force

India is one of the few countries faced with security threats from insur-

Parliament attack: Deaths stayed

2011 HT-1
HT Correspondent
New Delhi January 19

THE SUPREME Court on Monday stayed the execution of Shaukat Hussain Guru — convicted in the Parliament attack case — and summoned court records to hear his plea on February 20.

A Bench comprising justices S.N. Variava and H.K. Sema also issued notices to Delhi University lecturer S.A.R. Geelani and Shaukat's wife Afsan Guru on a petition filed by the Delhi Police which challenged the Delhi High Court's order acquitting the two in the case.

Shaukat had challenged the death sentence awarded to him by the trial court and confirmed by the high court. Shaukat and another prisoner



Shaukat Hussain Guru
Reprieve

— both Jaish-e-Mohammed militants — were accused of plotting the attack with those who tried to storm the Parliament building.

Afzal is yet to file a petition

2 Dg N Geelani
against the high court order.

The Supreme Court asked Geelani and Afsan not to leave the country without its permission. The order followed submissions by senior counsel Gopal Subramanian who represented the Delhi police. The police in its appeal said the high court should not have acquitted Geelani, who was sentenced to death by the trial court.

On October 29, the high court acquitted Geelani and Afsan but confirmed the death sentences awarded to Shaukat and Afzal.

In December 2001, five Pakistani gunmen in a car managed to break through the Parliament's outer security cordon and shot dead nine people, including some policemen, before being killed themselves.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 JAN 2004

58 militant camps in Bangladesh: Tripura CM



Mr Manik Sarkar

Kaushik Ghosh in Agartala

Jan. 19. — In an impromptu press conference at Agartala airport, the Tripura chief minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, today said there are 47 to 58 militant camps, including camps of Al-Qaida, in

Bangladesh and he can "point out the camps on the map".

He expressed disappointment that even after the Bhutan government's operation against ultras on its soil, there has been "no perceptible change in the attitude of the Bangladesh government with regard to militants". "Bangladesh should learn from Bhutan," he said.

Mr Sarkar claimed there is considerable ISI presence in Bangladesh but the country was doing nothing about it. He said: "India traditionally has friendly relations with Bangladesh, but if the neighbour continues to harbour anti-India elements, relations are bound to sour. After all, how long can we bleed in silence?"

Expressing concern over the "ISI presence in Bangladesh" the chief minister said: "Pakistan could never reconcile with the creation of Bangladesh and has, therefore, been pushing militants into the country."

At the moment, the militants are busy in

anti-India activities, but they would soon start to pose a threat to the internal security of Bangladesh. The government there should immediately conduct operations against the ultras and hand them over to India."

On being asked about his letter to the Centre asking it to pressure Bangladesh into carrying out "Bhutan-like operations", Mr Sarkar said: "I have not received a reply so far."

The Prime Minister might have discussed the issue with his Bangladeshi counterpart, but there has been no concrete development."

The chief minister was headed towards Delhi to attend the North-east Region Business Summit, which would be inaugurated by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee at Vigyan Bhavan tomorrow.

Mr Sarkar said he would raise the issue of the terrorist presence in Bangladesh with the Deputy prime Minister Mr LK Advani, who is also likely to attend the summit.

Arrest of Bangla infiltrators reveals ISI plan

STATESMEN NEWS SERVICE

JALPAIGURI, Jan. 17. — In a major revelation, intelligence agencies claimed that the Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan had come up with an elaborate plan to destroy some of the key installations of North Bengal, especially those in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar prior to the Republic Day celebrations on 26 January.

This came to light following the arrest of nine Bangladeshi nationals

from Dhupguri on 9 January. Police initially booked the infiltrators under the Foreigners Act but later discovered that they had entered the country with ulterior motives.

Police have now appealed to the court that the nine Bangladeshis be sent to police custody for interrogation.

It bears recall that on 9 January, Dhupguri police had arrested these foreign nationals from Shalbari. While initial investigations revealed nothing, it was later learnt that the

Bangladeshis congregated in Dhupguri after a trip to New Delhi where they met an ISI top-ranking leader, Fulzar Ali.

Fulzar had reportedly brought these persons from Bangladesh. They did not infiltrate the border but came with valid passports and visas through Benapole from Dhaka in Bangladesh.

According to the police, the nine went to Delhi and stayed there at a hotel. Delhi police who had information about their whereabouts raided

the hotel. But Fulzar managed to escape before the police raid.

These nine Bangladeshis were held and later were released after their passports and visas were seized.

They were ordered by the Delhi police not to leave the state but they fled from Delhi and came to Kolkata where they took shelter in the Park Circus, Garden Reach-Metia Bruz, Kidderpore and Rajabazar areas.

Intelligence officials said Fulzar had brought them to New Delhi after

introducing himself tourist guide and said that he would take them on a tour of the tourist destinations there.

But according to the intelligence department, large amounts of fake Indian currency were recovered from them.

Intelligence agencies are also trying to find out if these people had any relation with Faruque, the head of ISI's cell in Bangladesh.

Jalpaiguri SP Mr. SN Gupta said they have appealed to the court for more time to interrogate them.

9.03 New Delhi

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10 JAN 2001

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শ্রীমত-৪

দীর্ঘ টানা পোড়েনের পরে গত সপ্তাহে বিমানবাহী রুশ যুদ্ধজাহাজ গর্শকভ ক্রয়ের চুক্তি পাকা করিয়াছে ভারত। এই বিশাল রণতরীটি নৌবাহিনীর প্রধান হাতিয়ার হইবার পথে। এই যুদ্ধজাহাজে ব্যবহৃত ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র কিংবা ইহা হইতে উড়ানক্ষম যুদ্ধবিমানের পাল্লা এতই দূরবিস্তৃত যে তাহা চিনা ভূখণ্ডকেও নাগালের মধ্যে আনিতে পারে। সেই হিসাবে এই প্রাপ্তি মূল্যবান। কেননা, দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় কেবল পাকিস্তান নয়, চিনের মহড়া লইবার মতো সমরসজ্জাও আবশ্যিক। উল্লেখ্য, গর্শকভ গোত্রের কোনও বিমানবাহী যুদ্ধজাহাজ পাকিস্তান দূরস্থান, মহাশক্তিধর চিনেরও নাই। গর্শকভ খুব বেশি পুরানোও নয়, মাত্র ১৯৮৭ সনে ইহা তদানীন্তন সোভিয়েত নৌবহরে যোগ দিয়াছিল। ইহার সহিত যে সকল সাজসরঞ্জাম সংযোজন করিতে রাশিয়া চুক্তিবদ্ধ, তাহাতে ইহার প্রায় ৭০ শতাংশই নবীকৃত হইয়া যাইবে। অর্থাৎ পূর্বের মতো অকেজো পুরাতন অস্ত্রশস্ত্র তৃতীয় বিশ্বের দেশগুলিতে উচ্চ মূল্যে বিক্রয় করিয়া কার্যত সেগুলির হাত হইতে নিস্তার সাধওয়ার যে প্রবণতা, তাহার সঙ্গে গর্শকভ চুক্তির তুলনা চলে না।

ইহার সঙ্গত কারণ আছে। ঠাণ্ডা লুডাই শেষ হওয়ায় অস্ত্রের বাজারও আগের তুলনায় মুক্ত। ক্রেতার পছন্দের স্বাধীনতাও বাড়িয়াছে। কোনও দেশকে বাতিল বা অকেজো অস্ত্র বা সামরিক যন্ত্রাংশ ক্রয় করিতে বাধ্য করিবার দিন আর নাই। রাশিয়াও তাহা জানে। আর সে জনাই গর্শকভ লইয়া দরকষাকষি এত তীব্র ও দীর্ঘস্থায়ী হইয়াছে। সাত হাজার কোটি টাকার এই লেনদেনে বেশ কয়েকটি মিগ-২৯ যুদ্ধবিমান এবং অন্তত ছয়টি সাবমেরিন-ধ্বংসী জঙ্গি হেলিকপ্টারও অন্তর্ভুক্ত হইয়াছে। একই সঙ্গে নৌবাহিনীর ব্যবহার্য আরও ৬০টি মিগ-২৯ কিনিবার ব্যাপারেও কথাবার্তা চলিতেছে, যাহার দামও আরও ৭ হাজার কোটি টাকা। দুই দেশের কেহই পরমাণু মারণাস্ত্র বহন বা ক্ষেপণকারী বিমান বা ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র কেনাবেচার কথা স্বীকার করে নাই। তবে ভারত যে গর্শকভকে পরমাণু ক্ষেপণাস্ত্রবাহী করিয়া তুলিতে চাহিবে কিংবা তাহার মিগ-২৯ বিমানগুলিকে দিয়া সে কাজ করাইতে চাহিবে, তাহাতে সন্দেহ নাই। পরমাণু শক্তিধর হইয়াও ভারত এখনও সেই মারণাস্ত্র বহন বা উৎক্ষেপণের উপযুক্ত বাহন নির্মাণ করিয়া উঠিতে পারে নাই। 'অগ্নি' জাতীয় ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র এখনও এ ব্যাপারে পরীক্ষামূলক স্তরেই বন্দি। তা ছাড়া রুশ পরমাণু-সমৃদ্ধ

সাবমেরিন কিনিবার সাধ ভারতীয় প্রতিরক্ষা দফতরের দীর্ঘ দিনের। আন্তর্জাতিক নজরদারি সংস্থা এবং পরমাণু প্রসার রোধ চুক্তির কড়াকড়ি এড়াইয়া দুই দেশের পক্ষে প্রকাশ্যে এ ব্যাপারে ঘোষণায় অসুবিধা আছে। তবে ভারতের স্বার্থে যে এ ধরনের পরমাণু অস্ত্রবাহী বিমান, ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র ও সেগুলি উৎক্ষেপণযোগ্য রণতরীর প্রয়োজন আছে, তাহা অনস্বীকার্য।

রাশিয়া ভারতের পরীক্ষিত মিত্র। আন্তর্জাতিক মঞ্চে তাহার সমর্থন ভারতকে বহু বার একঘরে দশা হইতে বাঁচাইয়াছে। ভারতের সামরিক সজ্জা রুশ ট্যাংক, সাঁজোয়া গাড়ি, যুদ্ধবিমান দ্বারাই একদা সম্পন্ন হইত। একদা ভারতের ভারী শিল্প, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং শিল্প, লোহা ও ইস্পাত শিল্পও রুশ সহায়তায় গড়িয়া উঠিয়াছিল। সেই সোভিয়েত জমানার পরে এখন বিশ্বের একমাত্র বৃহৎশক্তি আমেরিকার সঙ্গেও ভারতের সুসম্পর্ক বর্ধমান। প্রতিরক্ষা ক্ষেত্রে যৌথ সহযোগিতা, মহড়া, প্রশিক্ষণ চলিতেছে। ইসলামাবাদের সহিত ঘনিষ্ঠতা সত্ত্বেও দিল্লিকে দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় আমেরিকা তাহার রণনৈতিক অংশীদার করিতে আগ্রহী। তবু রুশ-ভারত মৈত্রীর মূল কাঠামো এখনও অটুট। চিন এশিয়ায় উত্তরোত্তর বৃহৎ অর্থনৈতিক ও সামরিক শক্তি হইয়া উঠিবার লগ্নে প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বে ভারতের ভূমিকাও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। ভারতের সমরসজ্জা, বিশেষত পরমাণু অস্ত্রসজ্জা আমেরিকার অপছন্দ হইলেও তাহার গণতান্ত্রিক ঐতিহ্য ও কাঠামো যে পরমাণু প্রসারের বিরুদ্ধে স্বতঃপ্রণোদিত রক্ষাকবচ হিসাবে কাজ করে (পাকিস্তানের ক্ষেত্রে যাহা পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি পাচার এবং 'ইসলামি বোমা'র শঙ্কাকে মূর্ত করে), তাহাও সকলে বৃক্ষিতেছে। এই প্রেক্ষিতেই রাশিয়ার কাছ হইতে ভারতের অস্ত্র সওদাটি বিচার্য। আজ মিগ-২১-এর সীমাবদ্ধতা লইয়া যাহাই বলা হউক, এই বিমানগুলিই কিন্তু পাকিস্তানের সহিত যুদ্ধে আকাশপথে ভারতের 'প্রাধান্য' প্রতিষ্ঠা করিয়াছিল। ঠিক যেমন বফর্স কামান ক্রয় লইয়া বিপুল জল-খোলা হইলেও কার্গিল কাণ্ডে এই কামানের গোলাবর্ষণই ভারতীয় ফৌজকে ফিরাইয়া দিয়াছিল বেদখল সীমান্ত-চৌকিগুলির অধিকার। সামরিক যন্ত্রপাতির কোনও মতাদর্শ নাই, তাহার ক্রেতা-বিক্রেতাদেরও থাকার কথা নয়। লক্ষ্যভেদে যে অস্ত্র নিপুণ, যাহা সুলভ ও সহজে মেরামতযোগ্য, ক্রেতার তাহাই চাহিবেন। গর্শকভ ভারতীয় নৌবাহিনীর রাজটাকা হইয়া উঠুক।

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'Bhishma' handed over to Army

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By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JAN. 7. The Minister of State for Defence Production, O. Rajagopal, today handed over the first indigenously assembled T-90 S main battle tank, Bhishma, to the Chief of Army Staff, N.C. Vij.

"Today is a great day in the history of the Ordnance Factory Board as well as the Army," Mr. Rajagopal said after handing over the 'L' shaped key to Gen. Vij. "It not only marks the transfer of technology of the T-series of tanks from our Russian partners but also signifies the bond of trust and confidence that both countries share for decades," he said. "We are looking forward to the totally indigenised version of the T-90 S," he added.

Just past 11.30 a.m., amid the chanting of Vedic hymns, claps, cheers and back-slapping by Heavy Vehicles Factory officers and workers, 'Bhishma' came to life as an Armoured Corps driver turned on the upgraded 1000 horse power engine. The ash gray smoke generated mixed with the dust kicked up, as the tank made its first jerky movements and then, lowered its turret to salute the top defence officials.

The T-90 S, named 'Bhishma' by the authorities, is a highly versatile and state-of-

the-art tank and assembled from imported semi-knocked down units at the Heavy Vehicles Factory, Avadi. The superior features of the new battle tank are its mobility, lethal firepower, surprise hit-at-first sight and self-protection. Its enhanced mobility, ballistic computers for sight and accuracy and capability to fire all types of ammunition in addition to firing guided missiles make the 'Bhishma' among the best in the world, said the Additional Director-General (Armoured Vehicles), A.K. Lamba. The main gun is upgraded and has commendable field maintainability. Similarly, the night vision device and thermal imaging system fitted on the 'Bhishma' tank are the latest.

The tank has superior armour protection with its explosive reactor armour panel and also has protection against nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. It also has state-of-the-art communication system.

The Army wanted 30 per cent of its equipment to be state-of-the-art, another 40 per cent contemporary, said Gen. Vij. The T-90 S would form the large chunk of the state-of-the-art machines, along with the indigenous 'Arjun'. The Army would depend on both 'Bhishma' and 'Arjun'.

Gen. Vij said the problems with the ther-

mal imagers had been sorted out. "We are buying some more for the different versions for which we have floated a request for proposal. That is an on-going process." On the failure of the imagers in the 50 plus C temperatures of the Rajasthan desert, he said, "that was a minor issue."

At present, there are about 80 T-90 S tanks in the assembly line in semi-knocked down condition that will be put together with technical guidance from the Russian collaborators. This will be ready for induction by April this year. Later on, in about a year, about 100 T-90 S imported tank-kits in completely knocked down condition will be assembled at Avadi. Then, the indigenous production of the tank will start by 2006-07. As many as 100 tanks will be produced each year, Mr. Lamba said.

"Our next step is to indigenise within a few years. There is already vast infrastructure and technological support available with the doors open for the private sector," Mr. Rajagopal said. He ruled out reconsidering the decision to allow private sector participation in defence projects and dismissed suggestions that national security will be compromised. "We will look into all aspects before we grant licence to any firm."

Should we buy the Gorshkov

Yes, shore-based fighters can't match the reaction speed of aircraft carrier

VINOD PASRICHA

THE "guns versus butter" debate treads a very thin line. The price that a nation has to pay for its defence is invariably high and security concerns dictate the ability to "project power" to deter potential adversaries. Hence, the acquisition of an aircraft carrier is integral to India's defence structure.

From the apprehensions expressed by some defence analysts, it appears that the purchase of Gorshkov is a debate on "guns versus a piece of the cake". The view that land-based aircraft can equal its performance and that better jointmanship concepts would enable us to achieve our aims more economically are gaining ascendancy.

There is little doubt that air power, with its essence of swiftness and mobility, is essential in any combat situation. But matters need to be placed in their proper perspective. It was the speed of the ships of the Western Fleet and more so of the Eastern Fleet, which sailed from Visakhapatnam to Mumbai in less than 24 hours' notice, which was instrumental in providing the required deterrence during the Kargil conflict. However,

lots ready for a launch in under two minutes. For offensive missions close to enemy shores, these aircraft need to be airborne. To expect shore-based fighters to be able to provide such urgent support from airfields more than 600 kms away would indeed be naive.

A few analysts have argued that shore-based aircraft can defend our coastline. Today, 95 per cent of our trade is through sea routes. In addition to the mercantile marine, there is need to provide protection for our island territories. We are a peninsular country and sit astride some of the important Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) in the Indian Ocean. Planning round-the-clock air cover in all weather conditions to the fleet and our offshore assets is indeed a mammoth task.

In 1982, during an exercise conducted by Naval Headquarters, the number of aircraft required to provide immediate air support to a moving fleet operating only up to 600 kms from the coast was analysed to be nearly 260. Besides the aircraft, crew, maintenance personnel and equipment, this meant 75 per cent of the flying hours would be spent in transit. Another disadvantage was the continuous communication with shore authorities, compromising the fleet's position and occasionally also the disposition of ships. An integral squadron of 18 aircraft operating from the carrier not only nullified most of these shortfalls, but did so without needing to be actually airborne, just by remaining in

becoming a major economic power by 2020 there is a concurrent requirement to not only have adequate capability to defend herself, but also have the capacity to project power. A carrier on each coast would thus be important. One more as a replacement to cater for refits becomes essential. Thus, a plan to have at least three carriers by 2020 would be appropriate.

The founding admirals of our Navy have displayed tremendous wisdom in our indigenous ship-building capabilities. Today, our ships can compete with the best. We thus have to urgently start building our own carrier.

The ADS has finally been sanctioned but is still waiting for its keel to be laid. It is a pity that our decision-making processes take longer than the actual time taken to construct and commission a ship. Opti-

at Kochi. Similarly, other carriers have had accidents and fires, but have continued in operational service after repairs.

In the Gorshkov, we have an Ambassador that would be refitted to fulfil our operational requirements. We neither need nor can afford an Opel Astra. However, I have no doubt that we will eventually build our own Astra equivalent as Gorshkov's replacement.

When INS Viraat came to India in 1987 she was to be in service for only 15 years. Fortunately, she still has a life of at least another 5 to 7 years. Since we will not have our own ADS by then, we need to look for a replacement for INS Vikrant and then manage with only one carrier or keep the Viraat going till the ADS becomes available. For the last

No, there are cheaper options for providing air defence cover to surface fleets

SATISH KUMAR SAREEN

THE Indian Navy currently operates the refurbished Hermes class aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, which is due for decommissioning by 2005. Whether the Admiral Gorshkov, or any other aircraft carrier, should replace the INS Viraat is a question that demands thorough examination and public debate. This is particularly so as the costs involved are very substantial, the

with air-to-air refuellers have a range of well over 2,000 km i.e. covering the entire Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.

INDIA'S vital maritime interests can broadly be placed under three categories. First, it is deterring a sea-borne invasion of the mainland or the outlying islands. Second, it is ensuring the safety and security of our sea-borne trade. Finally, it is defending the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), extending 200 km from our coastline.

Clearly, even without an aircraft carrier, our existing military capabilities would make a sea-borne invasion of India, or an enemy attempt to interfere with our EEZ, a futile venture. Neither Pakistan, nor China would rationally contemplate invading India by sea.

trade-dependent nations are critically dependent on each other and on sea-borne trade. By maintaining friendly relations with the Indian Ocean states (primarily Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia and South Africa), the naval forces of these countries, and the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR)-based US forces, far from posing a threat to India, become virtual guardians of our sea-borne trade. As we share common strategic goals with the IOR countries and the US, the rationale for acquiring the Admiral Gorshkov cannot be the need to project air power in this region.

PAKISTAN and China are the two countries we need primarily to concern ourselves with. Although we had differences with the US during the Cold War era, surely no Indian naval planner seriously con-

MiG-29K fighters. Let us further assume that our Navy and the carrier are deployed during hostilities against our key adversary i.e. Pakistan, and are committed to blockade Karachi port.

The Pakistani Navy's surface ships, sailing close to the Pakistani coast and under PAF air defence cover, will not pose a major threat to the Indian Navy. Joint naval and air force operations against the Pakistani Navy's Agosta submarines (of which there are less than half-a-dozen), would neutralise that threat as well. The IAF can detect and attack the Orions at their land base, and while airborne, more effectively than two squadrons of carrier-based fighters. The Pakistani Navy's Agosta submarines will likely seek out Indian Navy warships blockading the Pakistani ports, with the Indian Navy's existing anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capability equal to the threat.

The carrier based MiG-29Ks will have a lower operational radius than the PAF F-16s, and to attack enemy warships and coastal installations, the carrier would have to be deployed well within the operating range of the PAF fighters. A deployment within the PAF's range would encourage it to go all out to sink the vessel. Rather than attacking the enemy, the aircraft carrier group would be preoccupied with defending itself. If the aircraft carrier were struck and sunk, it would be a huge blow to India, and a great morale boost for Pakistan.

In the aftermath, difficult questions would be raised about why a difficult-to-defend aircraft carrier was placed within the PAF's range when the IAF, with a multi-layered air defence capability, has 35-plus squadrons for attacking the same Pakistani targets. To ensure its safety from aerial attack, the carrier would have to be based well outside the radii-of-action of the PAF's F-16 and Mirage aircraft. The Indian Navy's submarines are its only platform that can get close to the Pakistani coast, blockade its ports, and remain largely invulnerable to aerial attack. Based at a safe distance from the PAF, the role of the aircraft carrier becomes to provide air defence for the surface warships taking part in the blockade.

As highlighted by former Navy Chief Admiral J.G. Nadkarni, there are cheaper options for providing effective air defence cover to the surface fleet. These include the indigenously built air defence ship, at a fraction (around one-third) of the US\$ 1.5-2 billion price tag for the Admiral Gorshkov, and its aircraft and systems.

The difference between the cost of an air defence ship and an aircraft carrier translates into a significant number of modern submarines (perhaps nuclear-powered ones) and other warships, utilising proven technologies, that would greatly enhance the offensive and defensive potential of the Indian Navy. The acquisition of the Admiral Gorshkov is justified neither by India's strategic situation nor by the operational requirements of the Indian Navy.

The author is former Air Chief Marshal, Indian Air Force

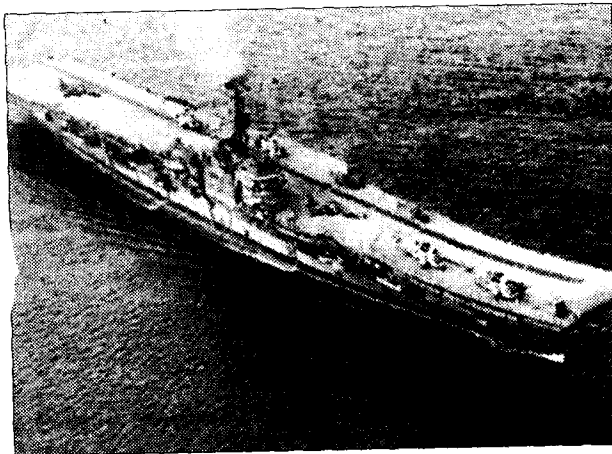
POINT

COUNTER POINT



The Admiral Gorshkov. Pix courtesy: India Today

The INS Vikrant. Express file photo



these fleets would not have been able to remain at sea without the presence of INS Viraat and her aircraft.

AIR cover has become an integral component of all major sea battles. Our continental theorists think that an aircraft carrier requires a screen of fleet ships for protection at sea. This is contrary to current maritime thought. It is, in fact, the fleet that requires to be protected against air attacks. With air to surface missiles fired from LRMP aircraft and submarine-launched TLMs becoming vital to any maritime engagement, speed is of great essence. And as missiles get more intelligent, it is important to attack the platforms carrying the weapons before they are released.

Integral aircraft — both fixed wing and helicopters — are necessary to detect, identify and engage such enemy maritime targets. Mathematical modelling and computer simulation studies done by CASSA, Bangalore indicate that this is made possible by carrier-based aircraft provided they are in "Condition One", with the pi-

Gorshkov is old, but Viraat too was 30 years old when we purchased her. Vikrant was even older. Over the last five decades, we have acquired expertise in repairing ships... In Gorshkov, we have an Ambassador that would be refitted to fulfil our operational needs. We neither need nor can afford an Opel Astra

"Condition One". The capability of the carrier to move by as much as 1000 kms in a day proved to be an added bonus.

ANOTHER question that invariably emerges is the optimum number of aircraft carriers required by our Navy. For India to meet her goals of

mists believe that the ADS will be ready by 2012, but we would be lucky if she is commissioned and all trials completed by 2017. What happens till then?

Of course Gorshkov is old, but Viraat too was 30 years old when we purchased her. Vikrant was even older. Over the last five decades, we have acquired expertise and capability in maintaining and repairing ships, occasionally with limited spares support from the foreign OEMs. We are perhaps the only Navy that has been able to concurrently operate and maintain Soviet origin ships, Western Navy ships and have successfully merged these two different concepts to evolve our own indigenous systems and sensors. Thus, there is little doubt that Gorshkov would be fully serviced to meet all the commitments demanded of her.

SCN Jatar had raised the issue of her dry-docking at Kochi and a major fire on board. I wonder if he is aware that in the initial years Vikrant went as far as Singapore for her docking needs and that Viraat still continues to dock only

six years, Gorshkov has been staring us in the face with a ready answer.

Having been the commissioning Commanding Officer of INS Viraat in 1987 and seen her getting ready in UK and also had the opportunity to have led a delegation to Russia for a look at Gorshkov in 1998, I am aware that there are a lot of similarities between the two carriers. In fact, the visits by naval officers and the discussions that followed confirm that Gorshkov would definitely meet our requirements.

One of the major deficiencies in India's planning continues to be the lack of accountability of our bureaucrats and political decision makers. There is no penalty for letting major acquisitions drag on ad infinitum. The AJT, Gorshkov and the Ganga-Cauvery canal are but a few examples of delayed decisions. This myopic view and the ingrained indecisiveness perpetuated by our system will surely cost India dearly, both financially and in operational capability.

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government's budget deficit is at an unsustainable level, there are pressing development needs and there remain many serious gaps in the modernisation of the armed forces.

The acquisition of any significant military capability must be preceded by a clear and unambiguous demonstration of the strategic and tactical necessity of such a capability. In the case of the Admiral Gorshkov, no convincing case has ever been made.

An aircraft carrier is primarily a means of projecting air power beyond the reach of land-based air forces. The acquisition of an aircraft carrier must be preceded by identifying the vital interests to be defended at that range, the enemy likely to be engaged, and by demonstrating that an aircraft carrier is the most economical and militarily effective means of defending that interest.

In this context, it is worthwhile remembering that in the 1980s the IAF's shore-based aircraft had an operational range of 300 km, whereas at present, Su-30MKI operating

The only power capable of mounting a sea-borne invasion, or sustained interference in our EEZ, is the US. Fortunately for India, the US is a friendly power. If the US were to turn hostile, the utility of one, or even half-a-dozen, Gorshkov class aircraft carriers would be close to nil. With their sensor and missile technologies, the US military would make short work of sinking a large slow moving target like an aircraft carrier.

There are two vital interests that could be served by an aircraft carrier. First, to ensure the security of Indian shipping in our traditional area of influence, i.e. from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca. Second, to blockade Pakistan's ports to disrupt her trade, economy and war-making capabilities. Operating effectively beyond this area, or attempting to disrupt the commercial shipping of a larger adversary, is not within India's economic or technological resources.

In an increasingly integrated global economy, the economies of democratic