

# India has 6th highest migrant population

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13/12

TIMES INSIGHT GROUP

**New Delhi:** Which is the country with the largest migrant population in the world? That's an easy one: the US, with a stock of 35 million migrants.

But which is the next? It is not, as you might expect, one of the west European countries. It's Russia, with 13.3 million migrants. Following Russia are Germany, Ukraine and France, and then India in the sixth place. Wind the clock back four decades and India was surprisingly a close second to the US in 1960. While the US then had 9.7 million migrants, India was only 300,000 short with 9.4 million. Pakistan was third with 6.3 million.

In the four decades that followed, the US went on to almost quadruple its migrant stock while India's dwindled to about two-thirds of the 1960 level and stood at 6.3 million in 2000. Pakistan finished 10th that year, according to the UN Economic and Social Survey.

Actually, the change isn't as surprising as it may seem. Remember that 1960 was just 13 years after Partition and both India and Pakistan, therefore, had large migrant populations. A somewhat similar (though not as violent and traumatic) shifting of populations might now be happening in the former Soviet republics, which might explain why Russia finished second in 2000, Ukraine ranked fourth and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were also among countries with a migrant stock of over a million in 2000.

Four decades ago, apart from India and Pakistan, Argentina, Poland and Indonesia too had high migrant populations. But these countries have now slipped down the scale. In the case of Argentina, this may well be be-

cause the country saw large scale European — particularly German — migration in the aftermath of the Second World War.

On the other hand, countries that weren't major destinations in 1960 but are now include Saudi Arabia (in eighth place in 2000), Ivory Coast and Japan.

International migration remains concentrated in a few countries. In 1960, 22 countries — about 10% of countries in 1960 — accounted for 75% of the world's migrants.

That trend continues, as 28 countries, or 12% of all countries in 2000, accounted for 75% of the world's migrants in 2000.

There has, however, been a change in the nature of destination countries, with developed nations predictably attracting a larger share of migrants. In 1960, the major destination countries included 8 developed nations and 11 developing nations.

That ratio remained similar in 2000, with 11 developed countries and 13 developing countries being among the major destination countries.

However, while the developed world accounted for 41% of the world's migrants in 2000, the corresponding figure for developing countries showed a drop from 40% to 20%.

The declining importance of migration in developing nations is on two fronts. Not only have the actual numbers dwindled, the high population in most developing nations also means that migrants form a much lower percentage of the population in the developing world.

The proportion of international migrants as a percentage of population in developing nations fell from 2.1% in 1960 to 1.3% in 2000, while that in the developed nations rose from 3.4% to 8.7% during the same period.

1960

Rank	Country	Migrant Stock (m)
1	United States	9.7
2	India	9.4
3	Pakistan	6.3
4	France	3.5
5	USSR (former)	2.9
6	Canada	2.8
7	Argentina	2.6
8	Poland	2.4
9	Indonesia	1.9
10	Germany	1.7

## Globally Mobile 2000

1	United States	35.0
2	Russian Federation	13.3
3	Germany	7.3
4	Ukraine	6.9
5	France	6.3
6	India	6.3
7	Canada	5.8
8	Saudi Arabia	5.3
9	Australia	4.7
10	Pakistan	4.2

Graphic: Appt

# রিলায়েন্সের দ্বন্দ্ব ফের কালো মেঘ বাজারে

অমিতাভ গুহ সরকার

বাজার যখন বেশ মজবুত, ৬০০০ ভেঙে সূচক যখন দুটু পায় উপরের দিকে এগোতে শুরু করেছে, পারিপার্শ্বিক পরিস্থিতির পরোচাই যখন বাজারের অনুকূলে, ঠিক তখনই অনিল-মুকেশ দ্বন্দ্ব খানিকটা কালো মেঘ ডেকে এনেছে ঝকঝকে পরিস্কার আকাশে।

তবে বাজার এখন এতটাই শক্তিশালী যে, দেশের বৃহত্তম বেসরকারি শিল্প গোষ্ঠীর মালিকানা নিয়ে দ্বন্দ্ব গত কয়েক দিন ধরে ভাল রকম জমে উঠলেও, তা এখনও মুষ্টি সূচককে ৬০০০ আঙ্কের নীচে নামিয়েও ধরে রাখতে পারেনি। তবে রিলায়েন্স গোষ্ঠীর এই সমস্যা আশু না-মিটলে তা গোটা বাজারের উপর খানিকটা প্রভাব বিস্তার করতে বাধ্য।

এই গোষ্ঠীর বৃহত্তম কোম্পানি রিলায়েন্স ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ মোট ইস্যুকৃত শেয়ারের বাজার দর ('মার্কেট ক্যাপিটালাইজেশন') অনুযায়ী দেশের দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম এবং বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে সব থেকে বড় কোম্পানি। গত বৃহস্পতিবার বাজার বন্ধ হওয়ার সময়ে রিলায়েন্সের মার্কেট ক্যাপ ছিল ৭০

পেশাদার পরিচালকদের হাতে। এই কারণে এই দ্বন্দ্ব ব্যবসার উপর হয়তো তেমন প্রভাব ফেলবে না বলে তাঁদের ধারণা। এই দ্বন্দ্বের জেরে বিভিন্ন রিলায়েন্স শেয়ারের দাম বেশ খানিকটা করে নেমে আসায় এঁরা এখন ওত পেতে বসে আছেন দাম আরও খানিকটা পড়ে কি না, তা দেখার জন্য।

তা হলে সেই জায়গা থেকে তাঁরা শেয়ার তোলা শুরু করবেন। রিলায়েন্সের এই ঘটনা ব্যাপ দিলে রাজারের স্বাস্থ্য এখন সুঠাম। গত সপ্তাহে মুদ্রাস্ফীতির হার নেমে এসেছে ৭.৩৪ শতাংশে। অন্য দিকে বেড়েই চলেছে ভারতীয় বাজারে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ সংস্থাগুলির লগ্নি। নভেম্বর

মাসে এখনও পর্যন্ত এরা লগ্নি করেছে ১০০ কোটি ডলারেরও বেশি অর্থাৎ ২০০৩ সালে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পরিমাণ যেখানে ছিল ৬৫৯ কোটি ডলার, সেখানে চলতি বছরে ১১ মাস শেষ হওয়ার আগেই বিদেশি লগ্নি পৌঁছেছে ৬৩৪ কোটি ডলারে। কয়লা, বিদ্যুৎ, সিমেন্ট, পোট্রোলিয়াম-সহ দেশের ছাঁচ মূল শিল্পে গত সাত মাসে উৎপাদন বেড়েছে ৫.৯ শতাংশ হারে। অক্টোবর মাসে পরিকাঠামো শিল্পে বৃদ্ধির হার ছিল ৪.৬ শতাংশ। মোটের উপর অবস্থা বেশ ভালই। রিলায়েন্স ছাড়া গত সপ্তাহে খারাপ খবরের মধ্যে ছিল আকরিক লোহা, কয়লা ইত্যাদি পণ্যের উপর রেল মাসুল বৃদ্ধি। এর প্রভাবে ইম্পোর্টের দাম আবার বাড়ার সম্ভাবনা দেখা দিয়েছে।

ধাপ নেমে যাবে বেসরকারি আই সি আই সি আই ব্যাঙ্ক। এই একত্রীকরণের প্রস্তাবের প্রভাবে গত সপ্তাহে দাম বেড়েছে এই দুই ব্যাঙ্ক শেয়ারেরই। পরোক্ষ ভাবে আইনগত জয় হল সর্দার সারোবর নর্মদা নিগমের ঊপা ডিসকাউন্ট বন্ডের লগ্নিকারীদের। এই বন্ড আগাম পরিশোধের ব্যাপারে নিগম যে-সব ব্যবস্থা নিচ্ছিল, তার বিরুদ্ধে দিল্লি হাইকোর্টে আবেদন করেছিলেন লগ্নিকারীরা। হাইকোর্ট এই মামলার পরবর্তী সুনামির দিন ধার্য করেছে ৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি। উক্ত সুসূক্ত এই বন্ড আগাম পরিশোধের সময় এ ব্যয়ের মতো ১১ জনুয়ারি শেষ হওয়ার নিগম আর এই পরিশোধের সুযোগ নিতে পারছে না, যা পরোক্ষ ভাবে বন্ডহোল্ডারদেরই জয় বলা যায়।

## নতুন ইস্যু

২৫ নভেম্বর বাজারে এসেছে ডেকান ক্রনিকল হোল্ডিংসের পাবলিক ইস্যু। কোনও সংবাদপত্র প্রকাশন সংস্থার তরফ থেকে এইটাই প্রথম পাবলিক ইস্যু। বুক বিক্টিং প্রথায় কোম্পানি বাজারে ছেড়েছে ৮০.১৩ লক্ষ শেয়ার। ১০ টাকা মূল্যের প্রতিটি শেয়ারের প্রাইস ব্যান্ড রাখা হয়েছে ১৬২ টাকা থেকে ১৯৪ টাকা। ইস্যুতে অতিরিক্ত আবেদন জমা পড়লে বাজারে মূল ইস্যুর সঙ্গে যোগ হতে পারে আরও ১২.০২ লক্ষ শেয়ার। ব্যবসা এবং লাভের দিক থেকে ডেকান ক্রনিকল এখন খুব ভাল অবস্থায়। ২০০৩-০৪ আর্থিক বছরে ১২২ কোটি টাকা আয়ের উপরে কোম্পানি মুনাফা করে ১৭.৫০ কোটি টাকা। চলতি আর্থিক বছরের প্রথম ছয় মাসে কোম্পানির নিট লাভ হয়েছে ১২.৭৮ কোটি টাকা। কোম্পানির ১০ টাকার শেয়ারের বর্তমান বুক ড্যান্ড ৩৭ টাকা। বর্তমান শেয়ার মূলধন অনুযায়ী গত ৩১ মার্চ এবং ৩০ সেপ্টেম্বর কোম্পানির শেয়ার শিল্প জায় ছিল যথাক্রমে ৫.৫ টাকা এবং ৮ টাকা। গোটা বছরের ই পি এস ৮ টাকা ধরলে ১৬২ টাকা এবং ১৯৪ টাকা মানে পি ই বেশিও দাঁড়ায় যথাক্রমে ২০.২৫ এবং ২৪.২৫। সংবাদপত্র শিল্পের শেয়ার এখনও শেয়ার বাজারে নথিভুক্ত না-থাকায় কোনও তুলনামূলক বিচার করা যাচ্ছে না। ইস্যু বন্ধ হচ্ছে ২ ডিসেম্বর। আবেদন করতে হবে কমপক্ষে ৩৫টি শেয়ারের জন্য।

এর পর আগাম পরিশোধের সুযোগ আসবে ২০০৯ সালে। এই বন্ডের মেয়াদ শেষ হবে ২০১৪ সালে। মেয়াদ শেষে ১৭ শতাংশ সুদযুক্ত প্রতীতি ৩৬০০ টাকার বন্ড পিছু নিগমকে দিতে হবে ১,১২,০০০ টাকা। হাইকোর্টের এই সিদ্ধান্তের ফলে সর্দার সারোবর বন্ডের দাম গত সপ্তাহে পৌঁছে গিয়েছে ৩৩,০০০ টাকায়। ১৯৯৩ সালে ইস্যু করা হয়েছিল এই বন্ড।

# Ambani Sr claims final word

24/11  
24/11  
New turn in Reliance saga: Mukesh sends email to employees



Sandeep Bamzai  
New Delhi, November 23

RELANCE EMPLOYEES got an email from their chairman, Mukesh Ambani, on Tuesday on the "ownership issue". It said that as chairman and managing director, his word is final on all matters relating to Reliance Industries.

Mukesh Ambani's younger brother and vice-chairman, Anil Ambani, is expected to address a media conference on Wednesday giving his side of the story. He hasn't said anything yet

on the matter publicly.

In another development, long-time Reliance director M.L. Bhakta put in his papers. No reasons were given for his resignation. It triggered speculation that Mukesh Ambani may recast the Reliance board.

Facts gradually emerging from within the heart of the Ambani empire reveal that Mukesh Ambani's statement that ownership issues had been decided within late chairman Dhirubhai Ambani's lifetime is based on the foundation that he has majority voting rights.

Of the 34 per cent owned by the promoters, 29 per cent through voting rights is controlled by whoever is the chairman of Reliance Industries. The remaining five per cent, apparently, is shared equally by the five legal heirs of Dhirubhai. This means

Mukesh Ambani effectively controls 30 per cent voting rights in the company.

Maybe that is why, in an email to all his colleagues, Mukesh Ambani has categorically asserted that, "founder chairman Shri Dhirubhai Ambani had taken all necessary steps to separate ownership from management and has settled all of them within his lifetime on all matters concerning RIL. There is no ambiguity in his legacy that the CMD is the final authority." This email dispels all notions on the subject and clears the air for all employees.

But the story is far from over. Anil Ambani goes public with his case tomorrow. It also appears that mother Kokilaben will be playing a role in this fight. She may have to ultimately play mediator.

■ Related report on Page 11

There is no ambiguity... that the CMD is the final authority

# Court vow to end bandhs

**OUR LEGAL REPORTER**

**Calcutta, Nov. 22:** A crusade was declared today against bandhs in Calcutta High Court.

"We are determined to end this bandh culture," the special bench set up to hear all bandh-related cases announced, calling political parties' practice of bringing life to a halt to register protest a "social evil".

"This anti-nation game cannot be allowed to continue. Our bench will not hesitate to take up matters relating to bandhs," Justices Pratap Roy and Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya said.

They were hearing a petition challenging the bandh the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) had called on November 17.

The judges' declaration came on a day a Naxalite group had called a bandh — like the SUCI — against the recent petroleum price increase, but received almost no response.

An opinion poll done for **The Telegraph** has shown that a majority of Calcuttans feel the oil and gas price rise is an important issue, but calling a bandh is not the solution.

The court asked SUCI's lawyers to file an affidavit, vowing that the party is ready to obey the order of the Supreme Court by not calling any more bandhs. "It is a simple question, please let us know whether your party leaders will be restrained from calling bandhs or not," the judges said.

By December 10, the party has to file the affidavit.

Another bandh is coming up before then, called by Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul, which enjoys far greater support than either the SUCI or the Naxalite group. Observers

believe December 3 will be the day the judiciary's, as well as the administration's, resolve to foil bandhs will be tested.

Some lawyers pointed out in court that Mamata had also called a bandh. The court asked them to file an application. "We are ready to hear your problems. The division bench will sit immediately after your petitions come to us as assigned matters," the judges said.

Idris Ali and Sreemoyee Mitra, lawyers for the All India Minority Forum, the organisation that had moved court against SUCI's bandh, told the court that they had filed a separate petition challenging Trinamul Congress' December 3 bandh.

"Please mention the matter. We will sit and hear your case," the judges said.

Once the petition comes up, Mamata might be required to file an affidavit similar to the one sought from the SUCI.

In the affidavit, the SUCI is expected to argue that it did not apply force to impose a bandh on the people and, therefore, did not violate the Supreme Court order. The Supreme Court had banned enforced bandhs. At the same time, it had said coercion is implied in the words "bandh" and "hartal".

There were train disruptions on November 17, which could be seen as coercion.

"Forty per cent of the total population of this country — slum and footpath dwellers who are mainly daily wage earners — suffer on days of bandhs. We cannot play the role of a mute spectator towards this social evil," the judges said.

The next hearing is scheduled for December 17.



Business as usual on Russel Street during the Naxalite bandh. Picture by Pradip Sanyal

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THE TELEGRAPH

# Mukesh calms market, not rift rumours

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai, Nov. 22: Five days after he ignited a firestorm of speculation about a split in the country's largest business house, Reliance chairman Mukesh Ambani tried to quell the concern that had welled up in the market.

Mukesh said today his remarks about "ownership issues in the private domain" in a TV interview had been wrenched out of context.

Returning from the US last night, he issued a statement in which he accused the media of trying to build up a sensational story based on "speculation and misrepresentation".

The statement shored up Reliance group shares which began the day with a hammering, but rumours about Mukesh's differences with younger brother Anil refused to die down.

Mukesh claimed that his father, Dhirubhai Ambani, who died in July 2002, had "settled all ownership issues per-

taining to Reliance during his lifetime".

This cryptic comment raised more questions than it sought to answer: it didn't categorically say whether Dhirubhai had left behind a will. If he hadn't (as the media had reported), it wasn't clear how the ownership issue had been settled within a Rs 99,000-crore group that uses a web of investment companies to control the family's holdings.

Mukesh also said his father had taken "necessary

wealth of Rs 27,000 crore with his brother — clarified that he was talking about future businesses when he said there were "ownership issues".

"Reliance is engaged in diversification, acquisition of running businesses and creation of new assets. In such a rapid growth phase, all big companies have to deal with several issues concerning corporate ownership of future initiatives. Reliance is no exception," the statement said.

Some reports said Mukesh had wanted to issue a joint

statement with Anil in a show of unity, but the move had been scuttled from within the family. There was also no confirmation if the much-awaited family conclave had been held today in the presence of mother Kokilaben to settle rumoured differences between the brothers.

Anil attended office at Ballard Estate as usual. Amid speculation that Mukesh's statement may not have settled nerves on the other side, there were reports that Anil could issue a state-

ment tomorrow.

As reporters huddled outside SeaWind early this morning, skittish punters dumped Reliance group stocks — especially index heavyweight Reliance Industries. However, the mid-afternoon Mukesh statement talked up three stocks — Reliance Industries, Reliance Capital and Indian Petrochemicals Ltd.

The fourth counter — Reliance Energy a company managed by Anil — continued to lose ground.

■ See Business Telegraph

**All big companies have to deal with several issues concerning corporate ownership of future initiatives. Reliance is no exception**  
— MUKESH AMBANI



the goings-on behind the closed doors at SeaWind, the family fortress at Colaba.

The Reliance chairman — reputed to have a combined

steps to separate ownership from management" — another phrase that appeared to be laden with meaning for people who have been trying to divine

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THE TELEGRAPH

# Tryst with Destiny <sup>5-141</sup>

## Globalisation can be India's Hour of Glory

By James D Wolfensohn ✓

<sup>18/11</sup> When I think about India from the vantage point of someone who has now traversed the globe in the name of development for the past 10 years, I think about not just a nation of a billion people which has made good progress in recent years. I think about the embodiment of an idea whose time must inevitably come.

One-sixth of humanity, no less, hugely diverse and much of it poor, emerges from a history of colonisation and exploitation; a history of mesmerising design and complexity, riches and war and want. Recovering from the trauma of Partition and fuelled by a strong collective sense of destiny, it sets itself a clear agenda for development, aiming to improve the lot of every citizen and to become an influential voice in the world. Then, most remarkably, it opts to achieve this not through any oligarchy-dictated short cut, but through an elaborate and highly inclusive process of democracy in which every individual, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, has a say.

Participation and inclusion are hugely important. We at the World Bank did a study of 60,000 poor people in 60 countries and what they thought about poverty. The \$1 a day or \$2 a day that they live on was almost the last thing mentioned. What mattered was voice, an ability to contribute to their future, women not wanting to be beaten up, an opportunity for their kids. So, there is a yearning for participation in these countries. A yearning to be heard; a profound value in knowing what's happening around one, in transparency.

I recently read an interview in the Financial Times by my friend, prime minister Manmohan Singh, a man I hold in great personal esteem. Speaking in the context of reform, he said: "Few countries in the developing world have been able to implement such far-reaching reforms within the framework of a parliamentary democracy. Public debate and dissent is a source of strength for us, not of weakness... In the long run, a reform programme that has the widest possible social and political support is more enduring." He is so right.

When I think of India, I see a civilisational force that can and must be a voice of weight and reason on the global stage. The international community is already recognising India's potential to play this role. In earlier decades, it established its credentials through its leadership of the non-aligned movement. Today, its importance is underscored by such developments as its maturing relationship with the United States, the joint leadership that India, Brazil and South Africa are providing the developing nations in multilateral negotiations, and just this month, the

European Union's recognition of India as a strategic partner on par with Canada, China, Russia and the US.

But when I think of India, I also see a very critical role for this country in a very much more immediate fight — the global fight against poverty. The simple fact is that the world cannot win this fight if India does not win it. Despite the impressive gains made by India in the assault on poverty in the last two decades, more than a quarter of India's one billion people are still below the official poverty line; that amounts to more than 250 million people, about a quarter of all the world's poor, living here in India. Perhaps a few hundred million more remain vulnerable to slipping back into poverty by a single shock such as an illness or natural disaster.

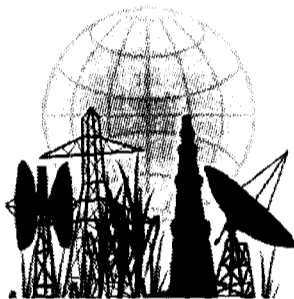
That is not all. India's huge numbers of illiterate people, children out of school, people suffering from communicable diseases, and infant, child and maternal deaths all amount to massive proportions of the respective world totals. In the year 2000, the international community set itself what have come to be known as the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs, a set of ambitious targets to improve human development indicators of the type I have just listed by the year 2015. It is obvious how very important India's role is in achieving these global targets.

India's recent rapid growth has created a vibrant, confident middle class, and lifted millions out of poverty. But the flow of benefits has been uneven. There are growing disparities between states, and between regions within states. There is a visible urban-rural divide. To resolve these, India must tackle some immediate problems: its antiquated infrastructure, the lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas, improving health and education outcomes, and ensuring that public services like electricity, water, sanitation and others are efficiently delivered, especially to poor people. And it must recognise that in some states, HIV infections are above 1% — the threshold of a general epidemic.

The key determinant to moving forward on these multiple fronts will be India's ability to mobilise, in a concerted and consistent manner, the right matrix of policies and programmes that will encourage investment, improve livelihoods and incomes, and promote better human development outcomes. The World Bank is ready to partner India in this effort with lending and analytical support.

I see a nation that has the capacity and confidence to address and resolve these challenges. The world believes that India, to quote the great Jawaharlal Nehru, has a tryst with destiny. The time has come to redeem that pledge.

(The author is World Bank president.)



# Left to pressure Delhi for 'legal' stamp on bandhs

*HP 1*  
**Aloke Banerjee**  
*Kolkata, November 11* *12/11*

THE LEFT is seeking to tighten its grip on the Centre, piling demand upon demand. Fed up with growing instances of "judicial activism, which is denying people their democratic right to strike", the Left parties have decided to take up the issue at the Left coordination-UPA meeting and demand parliamentary legislation accepting strikes as a legitimate tool of protest.

Though still unsure whether the Congress and the BJP would be sympathetic to their cause, the Left parties believe that only legislative intervention can "bridle" an "overzealous judiciary".

The Calcutta High Court has asked the state to cut the pay of government employees who would fail to report for duty on November 17, when the SUCI has called a Bangla bandh.

Though opposed otherwise to the SUCI bandh and willing to accept that strikes have lost their edge as a political weapon through overuse, the CPI, CPI(M), RSP and the Forward Bloc feel that by terming all strikes illegal, the judiciary has curbed people's constitutional right to protest.

"Even the International Labour Organisation has said that except for the army and certain groups of government employees, all sections of the people must have the right to strike. We will discuss the issue in our party," CPI(M) central committee member and CITU general secretary Chittabrata Majumdar said.

Forward Bloc national executive member Jayanta Ray said the Left parties would soon take up the matter with the UPA and discuss the feasibility of "corrective legislation". CPI state secretary Manju Majumdar said courts had no right to stop people from calling bandhs.

■ **Kolkata Live: The hurdles to bandh pay cut**

Legal and humanitarian pressure mounts on strike brigade to reconsider

# Court orders bandh salary slash

## OUR LEGAL REPORTER

**Calcutta, Nov. 10:** Calcutta High Court today asked Budhaddeb Bhattacharjee's administration to deduct the salaries of government employees found absent without intimation on November 17, November 22, December 3 or any other day of bandh.

Three different parties have called bandhs on those days in Bengal. The court said the ruling CPM also believed in the politics of bandhs, as evidenced by its behaviour in the past.

Justice Pratap Kumar Roy and Justice Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya, comprising a vacation

division bench, slammed the government for its failure to act against organisers of bandhs, though the Supreme Court has ruled that forcibly implemented bandhs are illegal.

It has also declared strikes by government employees unconstitutional and illegal.

"It is unfortunate that government employees enjoy a bandh day as a paid holiday and the government does not take any steps against such employees," the judges said.

The court asked the chief secretary to publish within 48 hours a notice in leading newspapers, citing the Supreme Court order and announcing that the salaries of

employees found absent on a bandh day without prior sanction would be deducted.

Its ruling, however, goes beyond just government employees. The judges said the government must maintain normality on a bandh day so that

"people feel encouraged to come out of their houses and to go to workplaces without fear. If the government failed to play the desired role in enforcing the law of the land on a bandh day, the judiciary will not remain a mute spectator."

All the three bandhs over the next three weeks have been called to protest against the recent increase in petroleum prices.

"Through the notification, the chief secretary should ensure safety and security of the people, opening of offices, educational institutions and hospitals and plying of vehicles on the roads. He will also have to file a compliance report before the court when the matter will come up for hearing again before a regular bench on November 17," the judges said.

A heated discussion erupted in the courtroom after the senior judge of the bench said the present ruling party introduced the practice of bringing life to halt in 1967-68 by calling a series of bandhs.

At this point, the government counsel became agitated

and raised his voice. Other lawyers present in the courtroom intervened and objected to the behaviour of their counterpart in government.

In their lengthy observation, the judges also spoke of the financial loss caused by a bandh. "It will be difficult for the judiciary to stop bandh politics until the general people become more conscious about the consequences of it."

The judges passed the order on a public interest litigation filed by the All India Minority Forum seeking a ruling declaring the November 17 bandh illegal and directing the state to pay compensation for losses suffered.



# বন্ধে অফিস গোপনীয় গেলো বেতন কাটতে বলল কোর্ট

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা: বন্ধের দিন সরকারি কর্মীদের বাড়িতে বসে নির্ভেজাল ছুটি কাটানোর রেওয়াজ বোধ হয় শেষ হল। তাঁদের এই অভ্যাসে বাধা সেধেছে কলকাতা হাইকোর্ট। বুধবার হাইকোর্ট জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, কোনও সরকারি কর্মী বন্ধের দিন কাজে না এলে তাঁর বেতন কাটতে হবে। বন্ধের দিন সরকারি জনজীবন সচল রাখতে কী ব্যবস্থা নিচ্ছেন এবং কাজে না এলে যে কর্মীদের বেতন কাটা যাবে, মুখ্যসচিব সংবাদপত্র ও বৈদ্যুতিন মাধ্যমের সাহায্যে তা রাজ্যবাসীকে জানাবেন। এই নির্দেশ যথাযথ পালন হয়েছে কী না, বন্ধের দিনই মুখ্যসচিবকে রিপোর্ট দিয়ে হাইকোর্টকে তা জানাতে হবে।

সুপ্রিম কোর্ট বন্ধ বেআইনি ঘোষণা করেই ছেড়ে দিয়েছিল। কলকাতা হাইকোর্ট আরও এক ধাপ এগিয়ে। রাজ্য সরকারকে নির্দেশিকা জারি করে 'বন্ধকে বেআইনি' ঘোষণা করতে বলল। মুখ্যসচিবকে তারা জানিয়ে দিল, বন্ধের দিন স্কুল, কলেজ, চিকিৎসালয় সব সরকারি অফিস খোলা রাখতে হবে। কোথাও কাজ বন্ধ রাখা চলবে না। রায়ের কাগজ এই দিন সন্ধ্যা পর্যন্ত মহাকরণে পৌঁছায়নি। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য এবং মুখ্যসচিব অশোক গুপ্ত দু'জন একই সুরে বলেছেন, তাঁরা মামলার কাগজপত্র পাননি। কাগজ পেলে যা বলার বলবেন। আগামী তিন সপ্তাহে রাজ্যে তিনটি বন্ধের ডাক দিয়েছে তিনটি পৃথক রাজনৈতিক দল। হাইকোর্টের নির্দেশ সত্ত্বেও ওই সব দল বন্ধের কর্মসূচি চালিয়ে যাবে বলে জানিয়ে দিয়েছে।

১৭ ডিসেম্বর এস ইউ সি-র ডাকা ১২ ঘণ্টার বাংলা বন্ধকে বেআইনি ঘোষণার দাবি জানিয়ে একটি জনস্বার্থের মামলা করা হয়। বুধবার সেই মামলার রায় দেয় বিচারপতি প্রতাপ রায় ও বিচারপতি জ্যোতির্ময় ভট্টাচার্যের ডিভিশন বেঞ্চ। রায় ঘোষণাকে কেন্দ্র করে নাটক হয়ে যায় এজলাসের ভিতরেই। সরকারি আইনজীবী সূত্রত মুখোপাধ্যায় চিৎকার করে বলে ওঠেন, "এটা রাজনৈতিক রায়।" সরকারি আইনজীবীর এ হেন আচরণে হতবাক অন্য আইনজীবীরা। তাঁরা সূত্রতবাবুকে আদালতের নিয়ম মেনে চলতে বলেন। তাতেও শান্ত হননি সরকারি আইনজীবী। তিনি গলা তুলে বলতে থাকেন, "কেন আমাকে ধামিয়ে দেওয়া হচ্ছে। আমি এই মামলার সরকারি আইনজীবী। আমি আমার বক্তব্য বলতেই পারি।" বিরক্ত অন্য আইনজীবীরা বলতে থাকেন, "রায় ঘোষণা হওয়ার পরে এভাবে তাঁর প্রতিবাদ করা যায় না। রায় নিয়ে কিছু বলার থাকলে উচ্চ আদালতে বলুন।"

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

# DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

## In-Built Imbalance Between Urban And Rural Areas

By PARTHASARATHI CHAKRABORTY

51-8  
20/11

The ruling parties both at the Centre and in the states are vocal on development and performance which is supported by reports and statistical data. On the other hand, the opposition describes all this as propaganda. It asks whether development in various sectors can be measured only by citing statistics. The real test is the fulfilment of basic needs with regard to food, housing, clothing, health care, education and employment opportunities. The qualitative indicators of development conceived by the United Nations Development Programme is unique. Monitoring development over time is important in order to improve the life-styles of the common people.

### Fudged statistics

Some typical qualitative indicators like literacy, mortality and morbidity rates, income, consumption, expenditure and retail price index are significant. The assessment of perceived satisfaction and dissatisfaction proved to be useful. Administrative records do not always give correct results. On the contrary, statistics supplied by nodal agencies are most likely to be inaccurate.

For example, in education, one of the most commonly used indicators derived from administrative statistics, namely school enrolment, doesn't mention dropouts. The claim of 100 per cent literacy in some districts of West Bengal, echoed by the leaders of the CPI-M, is not only inaccurate but ridiculous. It is unfortunate that this important indicator of development is inflated purposely so that figures give wrong ideas.

Another indicator is the proportion of households with at least one member literate. Most developed countries which have had compulsory education do not necessarily measure literacy. Similarly few hospital beds or li-

*The author was associated with a Unicef-assisted programme of the Government of West Bengal.*

limited availability of health care centres per 10,000 population is an indicator of lack of minimum infrastructure, because of geographical maldistribution of health care centres that are inaccessible to the lower income group.

However the UNDP ignores the essential needs of human

ms development and freedom are common. However, careful consideration would reveal the intricacy of the two words. Development for whom? What is freedom?

There certainly exists various types of freedom, like freedom of speech, freedom to write and express views and ideas, freedom



beings such as harmony and happiness while considering the human development index (HDI). Expansion of health, education and income, according to UNDP, would enable human beings to be more developed. Surely income and health may be attributed as a powerful instrument of development.

### Freedom and education

Good incomes can combat inequality of opportunities in many respects. Generation of income is good and perhaps a driving force to improve the quality of life to a certain extent. At the same time, effective and meaningful use of income seems to be more important, particularly in the field of education which would ultimately bring social harmony and happiness.

The classical idea of development as perceived by Aristotle, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill is significant even today. The ter-

of thought. Political and civil freedom are part of human freedom. But there appears to be lack of freedom, affecting millions in our country. Labour bondage is an example.

Development should be viewed as a journey to achieve freedom. It is a process of generation and realisation of new opportunities. Sustained development, however, is a continuous process. Needless to say, imparting proper education is a deliberate, spontaneous, process. It enlarges abilities. Social goals and social content of education appears to be equally important. Freedom of education only can ultimately bring human freedom and its total development. It is a glorious journey from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from ignorance to consciousness. Freedom through education is necessary in a country with 424 million illiterates. Around 35 million children,

aged between six and 10, do not even attend school, and about 40 per cent drop out before reaching class five. In tertiary education, the enrolment is six per cent only. If advancement of human freedom is our main object and means for total development, it is imperative that we should re-examine our education policy, particularly for rural and backward sections.

### Rural reconstruction

Rural reconstruction as perceived by Tagore has great relevance even today. According to Tagore, rural reconstruction was nothing but national development, and this area should be given the utmost priority in a nation building venture. His novel, *Gora*, published about a century ago, is worth recalling. *Gora*, an educated city-born young man and brought up in a cultured society, had horrifying experiences in the village.

Even today, the picture of rural India has not changed. Bullock-carts, mud roads, absence of safe drinking water facility, electricity and minimum health care system and other basic amenities of life are still witnessed. Although technology has brought about closer communication, there is still an in-built imbalance between urban and rural areas. Tagore wanted the welfare of the rural poor not by providing mere literacy but by nurturing and widening their minds to give strength and consciousness in all possible directions. According to Tagore, reading and writing is a secondary question, communication from heart to heart is what matters more.

He reiterated that without restoration of balance between city and village, no development is possible. Cities have their function of maintaining wealth and knowledge in concentrated forms, but they should not be centres of irrigation; they should gather in order to distribute. They should be like lamp posts; the light must transcend their own limits.

3 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

# Sorry, you're not part of the plan

By Siddharth Varadarajan

411-10 6/10

**R**IGHT IN the midst of the high-profile controversy over the inclusion of representatives of the World Bank and McKinsey in the formal deliberative process of the Planning Commission, an act of exclusion was being played out in distant Noamundi, a part of Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district that is rich in iron ore. Several hundred villagers who wished to take part in a public hearing on the proposed expansion of mining leases were not allowed inside to air their views.

In New Delhi, it is comforting to know that Montek Singh Ahluwalia believes in keeping the Government's "doors and windows open" to all influences. But at the grassroots, where the struggle for economic betterment is being waged, the gates are usually tightly bolted for all those who are poor or landless or tribal or likely to be displaced by some big project or the other. In Noamundi, the September 25 public hearing was held inside the premises of the Tata Iron and Steel Company — something which was a violation of the Environment Ministry's statutory norms. According to Chokro Khandait of the Chaibasa-based Jharkhand Organisation for Human Rights (JOHAR), the villagers fear TISCO's expanded mining operations will lead to the loss of their lands. They wanted to speak out in the public hearing, to air their views, he told me. "But the police stopped us before we could come near the premises." Asked who were the "300 people from nearby villages" who attended the hearing — as claimed in the official Tata press release — Mr. Khandait, whose organisation now plans to move the High Court, alleges they were mostly TISCO employees.

So there we have it: At the very moment when Dr. Ahluwalia was elegantly arguing that World Bank and McKinsey people had to be part of Yojana Bhavan's planning process because of the "perspective on global practice" these agencies would bring to the table, another more local argument over planning and perspective was being settled with the help of bamboo staves and Section 144. In India, multinational consulting companies and banks have a right to full representation in public bodies but the public has no right to attend public hearings, especially since they tend to be held inside private premises.

Though cast in the unfortunate form of a debate over sovereignty and the propriety of "foreign" experts serving on quasi-official panels, the question at hand was never really about their ethnicity or domicile but

*The debate over the composition of the Planning Commission panels was really a battle over the direction of the economy. And the outcome suggests the electorate's concerns do not count.*

the utility and quality of the advice they brought with them. During the early days of Planning, nobody objected to the Dutch economist Jan Tinbergen (who was actually on the Dutch Government's planning board at the time), the Norwegian Ragnar Frisch or the Polish-American Paul Rosenstein-Rodan being regularly consulted. Under P.C. Mahalanobis, the Indian Statistical Institute and its journal, *Sankhya* — which provided crucial intellectual inputs to planning in India — opened their doors to economists like Oskar Lange, Michal Kalecki, N. Georgescu-Roegen and Branko Horvat. The econometric model for India's fourth Five Year Plan drew heavily upon the 'consistency model' of Alan S. Manne of M.I.T. and Ashok Rudra. And the Ministry of Finance threw open its most confidential files for Nicholas Kaldor to produce his 1956 report on Indian Tax Reform.

Nobody objected to "foreigners" then and with good reason. For none of them allowed the advice they proffered to be weighed down by any institutional or corporate baggage. This does not mean their advice was always correct but it was delivered without the slightest trace of an ulterior motive. If Prof. Frisch influenced Indian planners with his export pessimism — something the young Manmohan Singh took on in his D.Phil — this was not because he had shares in a South Korean export house and wanted to leave the trading field open for his clients. In some cases, the advice was so good, Indian policymakers balked at implementation: The "philosophy of taxation" Prof. Kaldor developed to deal with India's resource imbalance was described by Sukhamoy Chakravarti in the *Cambridge Journal of Economics* more than 30 years later as "fully relevant today."

If Mahalanobis' "foreigners" had no ideological or vested interest to promote and no great institutional backing behind them, what of the expertise Dr. Ahluwalia wanted to foist on the Planning Commission? When multinational management consulting companies like McKinsey and the Boston Consulting Group push a certain policy or outlook, can we really be confident that this is disinterested advice? Or that when an ideologue like John Briscoe, the World Bank's senior water adviser, pushes one-

size-fits-all schemes of water privatisation, the fact that he is from a key donor agency like the World Bank will not give his views undue weightage and influence in any deliberative process?

Though the Left was right to object to the inclusion of such individuals in the Planning Commission's consultative groups, the retort that State Governments like West Bengal regularly employ McKinsey and others to produce vision documents and reports did catch them a little off balance. Objections to the World Bank or McKinsey cannot be confined to the formal or legalistic domain; what has to be challenged is our tendency to let institutions like these provide us with 'visions' of where we want to be as a nation 10 or 20 years from now. Whether he attends a Yojana Bhavan panel or not, do we really want Mr. Briscoe — who told the Third Water Forum in Kyoto last year that it was a "fantasy" to say water is a human right — influencing the direction of our economy? Or McKinsey, whose dystopic Vision 20-20 plan for a privatised Andhra Pradesh has put that State in the 'Bimaru' category as far as its peasant population is concerned?

On the issue of water, there is need for a broad reform of the entire system of water resource management in India. Most of our urban water authorities are inefficient and corrupt, leading to excessive ground water depletion and high costs for the poor, who must depend on private water tankers for their daily needs. There is need for greater public investment in water, as well as for decentralisation and democratic accountability of the *jal* boards at the local level. Instead of going down this route, however, there is a danger that politicians will look at privatisation as a quick fix, in part because of World Bank pressure. In Chhattisgarh, a 23.6-km stretch of the Sheonath river has been 'privatised', creating problems for the communities which live alongside its banks. "We lent Jordan money to improve the water sector," Mr. Briscoe said a few years ago, adding that the World Bank told Jordan "it must bring someone else" (i.e. a private company) to run the water rehabilitation programme of the Greater Amman municipality. Of course, once private companies come in, water prices tend to rise well beyond the

reach of the poor — as in Cochabamba in Bolivia, Ghana and South Africa.

The defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance at the polls earlier this year has been read by different political parties differently. But there can be no denying the fact that the verdict reflected, at least in part, the growing public uneasiness over the economic policies followed by the Vajpayee Government. The election saw the electorate in virtually every major urban centre voting in favour of parties that either openly criticised privatisation and fiscal cutbacks or promised reforms "with a human face." In rural areas, the fact that inequality has either not fallen as dramatically in the reform years as the BJP claimed or has even increased is now fairly well established (See Abhijit Sen and Himanshu, 'Poverty and Inequality in India, I and II', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 18 and 25, 2004, for the most comprehensive and thorough review of the statistical evidence so far).

Against this backdrop, it is unfair for the Left parties to be pilloried for demanding that the Manmohan Singh Government pay attention to the electorate's fears and concerns in drawing up its policies, even if their mode of argumentation has not been the most effective.

The debate over "foreign experts" has now been aborted by a clever if shabby compromise in which Dr. Ahluwalia has scrapped the consultative process altogether. It is almost as if the Government feels that if the World Bank does not get a say, neither should anyone else. Of course, this controversy was only a 'proxy war' in the larger battle over the direction of the economy. The electorate voted for the parties that today form the United Progressive Alliance because of the economic promises made during the campaign. Some of these promises — such as the right to employment — have already been watered down, but the fact that the Prime Minister has made a commitment to begin its phased implementation in the country's poorest districts suggests it is possible for social movements and Left parties to influence policy, if only partially. But that is not enough. What is needed is an acknowledgement of the fact that in a democracy, it is the aspirations of ordinary people — and their vision of what they want their lives to be — which should guide economic policy. India needs to stop listening to the McKinseys of the world. And start tuning in to what people in Noamundi are saying.

# Dateline Democracy

## An open society is the best defence against violence

Pakistani journalists, invited by the government, are visiting Jammu and Kashmir to see the situation there first hand, and hopefully report it the way they saw it. Meanwhile, terrorist violence grips Nagaland and Assam in India's north-east. The two events are apparently unrelated and seem to be moving in opposite directions. There seems to be signs of a thaw in Kashmir, the north-east looks like boiling over. Appearances are deceptive: There is greater convergence across the regions. Since August 15, when the recent spate of bombings began in the north-east, terrorist activity seems to have been stepped up. Actually, these are desperate acts by leaders of militant factions of ULFA, Naga and Bodo outfits who have been cornered into the wilderness of popular disaffection. The August 15 attacks were the militants' way of trying to sabotage New Delhi's attempts to open communication with ULFA's political wing. The recent spate of bombings is an attempt to scuttle negotiations between political parties, outfits like NSCN and Bodo students' federations and the government. This strategy has backfired. Ordinary people who're sick of violence and trying to put their lives back in order, have been repelled by senseless attacks on innocents. This is the time for the Indian state to reclaim its legitimacy. It should take people — and the political process in each state — into confidence. It must relax, and gradually withdraw, draconian measures like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act from the region.

The government's actions in J&K provide reasons for hope. Inviting Pakistani journalists to the northern state signals that India has nothing to hide, and we're confident that Pakistan's media will report fairly and without bias. This thaw follows several other measures: Easing travel restrictions, the flow of medical services across borders and stated intent to boost trade and investment among the two neighbours. The government should implement similar policies in the north-east. To begin with, New Delhi must ease travel curbs to the region: Even today, non-locals have to carry permits — whose origins date back to 19th century colonial practice — to visit many places in the north-east. Media from all over the world should be free to travel and report developments in the north-east, civil administration and law enforcement must be beefed up, if necessary by reining in the powers of governors and military brass. This is the only way a massive, mature democracy like India can deal with any troubled region — let the whole world witness the healing power of democracy in action.

# Truckers call off strike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Aug. 28. — Movement of commodities started limping back to normal within hours of truckers calling off their seven-day old strike following an agreement between them and the government.

Soon after the strike was called off in the wee hours today, a large contingent of trucks started plying towards the key "mandis" of Delhi and peripheral areas. Reports of normal truck movement were also received from other parts of the country.

The decision to withdraw the strike, which started on 21 August, was reached after a marathon meeting lasting over nine hours, at the end of which the finance and surface transport ministries signed two

separate agreements with All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC).

As per the agreement signed by revenue secretary Ms Vineeta Rai on behalf of the finance ministry and Mr BS Dhumal for AIMTC: "The government will make suitable rules/notifications as required and also define commercial concerns and consignment note to make it clear that truck owners and operators are not required to pay or collect service tax."

"Until 7:30 a.m., Azadpur Mandi received over 15,000 tonne of fruits and vegetables and loading and unloading came back to normal," Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee secretary, Mr Ajay Kumar Bisht said.

Prices of certain commodities like onions have

risen more due to a "drought-like situation" in Nasik, which supplies large quantities of the commodity to other parts of the country.

A joint committee comprising representatives of truckers and the government would look into the issues of service tax and tax deduction at source.

The nine-member committee would submit its report within two months, Ms Rai said, adding the government would take measures for the withdrawal of cases against the truckers arrested during the stir.

The ground for the intense negotiations was prepared by CPM general secretary Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet after talks between AIMTC and finance ministry officials failed yesterday.

# Truckers end strike

## ● Joint panel to look into service tax

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 28. The All-India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) today called off its seven-day-old strike after it worked out a mutually acceptable agreement with the Government covering the contentious issue of service tax as well as other demands.

Announcing the end of the agitation following the conclusion of marathon talks between the truckers and Finance Ministry officials at 3 a.m. today, the AIMTC president, B.S. Dhumal, told mediapersons that it had been agreed that a joint committee, comprising representatives of the truckers and the Government, would look into the issues of service tax and tax deduction at source.

The Union Revenue Secretary, Ms. Vineeta Rai, however said that truck owners and operators were out of the purview of service tax.

The Government has not yielded any ground insofar as the levy of service tax on cargo booking agents and truck companies are concerned. It is the modalities in relation to the enforcement of the service tax re-

gime that would be worked out on the basis of the recommendations of the joint committee.

In any case, the end to the strike, which began on August 21, has come as a major relief to the common man as the prices of essential goods were rising. As per the agreement, the Government will make suitable rules/notifications to make it clear that truck-owners and operators are not required to pay or collect the service tax.

### Report in two months

The joint committee would submit its report within two months, Ms. Rai said. The Government would take measures to withdraw the cases against the arrested truckers.

"Steps will be taken by the Income-Tax Department to simplify the problem of refund," she said. The Government recognised that procedural problems existed in refund of the tax deducted at source.

According to the second agreement signed by Mr. Dhumal and the Surface Transport Secretary, Dhanendra Kumar, the Government has agreed to examine the problems faced by

the transport sector relating to scrapping of old vehicles.

### Toll tax

On the issue of toll tax, Mr. Kumar said the committee set up on the issue would be asked to make its recommendations soon. Fresh directives would be issued to the State authorities for ensuring safety on the highways. While Mr. Dhumal said the committee on service tax would have nine members including six from the AIMTC, Ms. Rai clarified that the composition and other modalities would be firmed up in the next two to three days.

On the revenue implication of the agreement, Ms. Rai said as such the Government expected to collect about Rs. 2,000 crores in a financial year from the booking agents but the impact of implementing the new measures would be felt after five months. While appealing to the truckers to resume their operations, Mr. Dhumal thanked the CPI (M) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, whose mediation paved the way for fruitful talks.

Industry breathes easy:  
Page 13

# Truckers welcome panel, stir continues

*9.12.2004 (h) Sr 5 28/8*

**SNS and agencies**

NEW DELHI, Aug. 27. — The agitating truckers today welcomed a finance ministry decision to set up a committee to look into their problems but decided to continue with their indefinite strike despite withdrawing from the agitation. The Centre today told the states that the National Security Act is applicable against the striking truckers, but left it to them to use it if they feel it necessary.

In Andhra Pradesh, the lorry owners and the state motor transport groups have already called off the strike.

Amid ongoing discussions between top finance ministry officials and All India Motor Transport Congress which called the strike demanding withdrawal of service tax, the organisation's president Mr BN Dhumal told reporters that the "gov-

ernment will form a committee headed by revenue secretary Mr Vineeta Rai to look into problems of truckers and submit its report within two months.

"The nine-member committee will comprise six representatives from truckers associations and three from government."

In the first indication of a possible breakthrough, he also welcomed the formation of the committee after day-long discussions between the agitating truckers and revenue department officials, including Rai.

After the failure of talks this morning, the AIMTC representatives met CPI(M) general secretary Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet who had exuded confidence of finding a solution.

"We have drawn attention about the applicability of the National Security Act procedures. It is not a suggestion that they

invoke it, but if the states wish to use it, they can take appropriate action, if necessary, in consultation with the law departments," a senior government official said.

The official said there was hope that the truckers would back down — the NSA, in any case, being a last gasp measure.

"The applicability of the NSA is there," the official said, adding this is "in pursuance of a 1980 judgment."

The home ministry had issued a notification at that time as well. The truckers' strike had affected life, with prices rising and a shortage of essential commodities feared.

Mr Singh Surjeet, held discussions with agitating truckers. "I agree with their (truckers) demand and the government is working in the direction to end the strike," Mr Surjeet said after meeting members of the AIMTC.

# Swadeshi Saras soars on debut

**B.R. SRIKANTH**

Bangalore, Aug. 22: Like the crane it has been named after, India's first indigenous multi-role light-transport aircraft, *Saras*, smoothly took to the grey skies over Bangalore and flew flawlessly for 20 minutes.

The inaugural flight was cheered by scores of National Aerospace Laboratories (Nal) engineers who designed and developed the aircraft. The project was cleared by the Centre in 1999.

"It's a historic moment and a proud achievement for India. This is not the time to look back (at) how long it took and what it cost, but cherish its success. This is a flight into the future," said Union minister of st-

ate for science and technology Kapil Sibal, who was present.

He pointed out that Nal achieved the milestone overcoming a technology embargo slapped by the US after the second round of nuclear tests at Pokhran. Two experienced air force pilots, Squadron Leader K.K. Venugopal and Wing Commander R.S. Makker, flew the plane at an altitude of 800-900 feet at a speed of 130 knots (250 km) an hour.

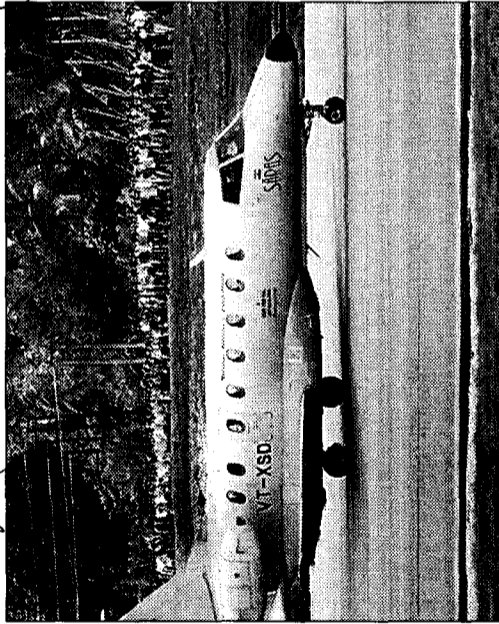
"Though we flew much higher in the earlier test flights, we have flown today in a very controlled manner for the inaugural function and went 10-15 km in distance as we had to keep flying over the airfield for most of the time to demonstrate its performance. We had

a smooth take-off and perfect landing," they said.

The prototype, with rear-mounted twin 800 HP Canadi Pratt and Whitney turbo-prop engines, weighs about 5.5 tons, at least 10-12 per cent more than envisaged on the design boards. It has 500 kg of instruments on board.

The 14-seater *Saras* can be used in multiple roles like feeder line aircraft, air taxi, air ambulance, executive aircraft, troop transport and for aerial survey and reconnaissance.

The air force has also given a letter of intent for manufacture of six LTAs. Nal director B.R. Pai said the second prototype of *Saras* would be ready in a year. Each aircraft would cost Rs 30-33 crore.



A *Saras* aircraft lands on the tarmac of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited in Bangalore on Sunday. (AFP)



## Core concerns dealt with at WTO: Nath

NEW DELHI, Aug. 16. — India's major objectives, particularly its "core concerns in agriculture" have been achieved in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Framework Agreement, which lays down guidelines for the Doha round of negotiations. In a statement laid in both Houses of Parliament today, the commerce and industry minister, Mr Kamal Nath, outlined the agreement finalised on 31 July.

"We attach due importance to the smooth functioning of the multilateral

trading system," Mr Kamal Nath asserted in the statement. "We are determined to ensure that as negotiations proceed based on the Framework Agreement, our core concerns are adequately addressed."

India's approach to WTO talks, he stressed, would be dictated by "national interests", especially concerns for the millions of farmers dependent for their livelihood on agriculture as also the objective of stimulating economic activity through export of goods and services. — SNS

# PREVENTABLE DEATHS

## Debt Burden At The Root Of Suicides By Farmers

By D BANDYOPADHYAY

There has been a disturbing phenomenon of a high rate of suicides among farmers since the mid-90s, particularly in southern India. Economic distress appears to be the main cause. The state crime bureau of Karnataka recorded 56,790 cases of suicide between 1996 and 2000 of which 10,959 (19 per cent) related to "farming and agricultural activity". Feeling uncomfortable about the whole issue the Karnataka government did not list "crop loss and indebtedness" as one of the 21 causes. The government tried to whitewash the whole affair with an expert committee presided over by Dr GK Veeresh.

The Veeresh committee concluded: "Economic problems are certainly in the background but these could have been tackled by a combination of timely interventions and institutional support which seem to have not occurred at the appropriate time, when required. In this process, it will not be correct to directly relate the spate of farmers' suicide to economic problems prevailing in the farming community in isolation and, therefore, a combination of issues need to be understood carefully". The ugly cadaver is quite visible behind this hastily crafted shroud.

### Crashing prices

A major study undertaken by the National Institute of Rural Development entitled, "Farmers' suicide in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka" (2006), highlighted the fact that macro-economic policy change since the early nineties was a major factor in this human tragedy. As a case in point it cited the problem of oil seed farmers. In the mid-80s, the government of India gave a major thrust to increasing oil seed production under Rajiv Gandhi's oil seed mission. The total production doubled from about 10 m tons in 1980 to 20.5 m tons in 2001-02. Import of edible oil fell from 1.04 m tons in 1985-86 to 0.35 m tons in 1993-94. The country achieved self-sufficiency in edible oil almost within a decade. With liberalisation India became the largest importer of edible oil which constitutes 63.5 per cent of total agricultural import (2002-03). There was a crash in domestic oilseeds prices resulting in the financial ruin of a large number of farmers. Under the thrust of the oil seed mission and lure of higher prices, a large number of farmers in Andhra and Karnataka resorted to mono-culture of oil seed giving up their traditional multi-crop pattern. When prices fell they got

*The author was secretary to government of India, ministries of finance (revenue) and rural development and executive director, Asian Development Bank, Manila*

into the debt trap from which only death provided an honourable escape route.

The same is the story with cotton. When the global prices of cotton went up, many farmers, particularly, small and even some marginal ones went over to the production of cotton abandoning their traditional staple crop (minor cereal) based agriculture. Traditional agriculture with multi-cropping provided a degree of

victims to the private sources was 70 per cent. The NIRD study came to the conclusion that the debt trap was the main cause of suicides. The report observes: "Debt trap is getting tightened because of agrarian crisis and inaccessibility to institutional credit". Most of the suicide victims were marginal, small and medium farmers with no staying power.

The response of both the



both economic and food security. Cotton is an intensive crop. In came the multinationals with their genetically modified "wonder" seeds which required a lot more of inputs. Small and marginal farmers having hardly any access to institutional finance had to depend heavily on private money lenders with very high rates of interest. When the crops failed and prices went down they had no means of paying back the loan and death provided an easy exit.

### Scaling down debt

Private money lenders are either local bigwigs or closely connected with them. Their affiliations cut across party lines. They always resort to strongarm methods to realise their advances. The NIRD report observed that in many cases farmers committed suicide after suffering humiliation and even physical violence.

It also gave a number of actual cases of utter insult and disgrace meted out to indebted farmers in public which led to suicide. Farmers do not have access to Debt Relief Acts that industrialists have. Being indebted to private money lenders they cannot go to any public authority to declare themselves insolvent or to get any kind of debt relief. In the Anantapur district of Andhra, only 23 per cent of total farm loan of the suicide victims was from institutional sources.

The debt burden was at the root of such large-scale suicide. In Karnataka the average outstanding loan among suicide

Andhra and Karnataka governments to this tragedy has been sluggish. The Karnataka government in the early stages provided some ex gratia compensation to victims' families which they promptly withdrew after the Veeresh Committee's findings that farmers commit suicide due to multiple causes and not because of crop loss and indebtedness. The Andhra government under the Telegu Desam Party hardly did anything.

The new UPA government at the Centre announced a major package for farmers on 19 June which in simple terms means enhancement of farm credit from institutional sources by 30 per cent and coverage of additional five million farmers in this fiscal year. But "there will be no debt write-off in violation of the prudent norms of RBI". It has rescheduled the debt repayment by five years with a two-year moratorium. But what about indebtedness to private sources?

After the Government of India Act 1935 came into effect and different political parties, including the Congress, came to power after elections in 1937, they promptly took legal and administrative measures to relieve the peasantry from debt burden to private sources. AK Fazlul Huq, Premier of Bengal, took the lead which other premiers in the United Provinces, Punjab and Madras followed.

The Land Revenue Commission of Bengal set up in 1938 under Sir Francis Floud toured various provinces to study the economic conditions of the pea-

santry. In their report in 1940 they gave considerable attention to the question of agricultural indebtedness in different provinces, including Bengal. A short summary of their observations on the Madras Presidency would be appropriate.

In Madras the Agriculturists' Relief Act was passed in 1938 with the object of scaling down the existing debts, reducing the rate of interest on future debts and writing off arrears of rent. Debts were classified into two categories. First, there were those incurred before or after 1 October 1932. In this case all interest outstanding on that date was wiped out and only the principal or such portion which might not have been paid was due from the farmer. If the repayment of principal and interest taken together amounted to double the principal, the entire debt was wiped out. If they amounted to less than twice the principal, only the difference was payable.

### Past offers solutions

In the case of debt incurred after 1 October 1932, the principal or such portion of it as might be outstanding was not affected and had to be repaid. Relief was given only in respect of interest which was calculated at five per cent simple interest. All payments made towards interest were deducted from the interest calculated at this rate and only balance, if any, remained due. For future loan interest had been limited to 6.25 per cent simple interest.

The Madras government also set up Debt Adjustment Board for scaling down debts and made arrangements by which the debtor could pay off the adjusted debt by fresh borrowing from government funds. Do they look revolutionary in the year 2004? What a Fazlul Huq, a Rajagopalachari or a Sikandar Hiyat Khan could do in the late 30s of the last century, why can't our chief ministers do now?

Both the Andhra and Karnataka governments were punished by the electorate in 2004 for their callousness verging on cruel response to this human tragedy. Will these governments now ask their officers to do a little research in the archives of Fort St George, Chennai, to devise similar schemes appropriate for the current situation? Giving some compensation money to the family of the victim is no substitute for a well thought out policy to scale down or wipe out the debt and keep the farmer alive with his productive potential. Will the UPA government at the centre issue appropriate guidelines to state governments for writing-off, scaling down or other adjustments of private debts?

# Montek to focus on social sector

Arun Anand  
In New Delhi

5/1-8  
2010



June 22. — There could be many red faces in the corridors of power if the new Planning Commission deputy chairman Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia's plans to expose the dark sheep in the social sector are implemented.

Dr Ahluwalia, who has been holding meetings with the who's who of the Planning Commission during the last three days along with his new team, has indicated that he would like to focus on reasons for the less than desired results in the social sector despite huge funding in the sector over the last five and a half decades.

The thinking behind this unorthodox move is that this would help to take the defaulting agencies to the task. According to a senior official, there are indications that the new team

might go public about the way funds in the social sector have not been utilised properly. At most of the meetings with advisors of Planning Commission on various issues, along with Dr Ahluwalia's team comprising Dr Kirit Parikh, Dr Balachandra Mungekar, Dr Syeda Hamid and Dr Anwarul Hoda has been asking pointed questions and looking into several aspects.

Performance of crucial sectors and important schemes is being given special attention. An official present at one of the meetings said Dr Ahluwalia's approach is markedly different.

MONDAY, JUNE 21, 2004

## NEW DEAL FOR AGRICULTURE

BY ANNOUNCING A package of measures aimed at alleviating the burden of drought-hit agricultural borrowers and extending the scope of institutional credit to farmers, the United Progressive Alliance Government has moved swiftly to deliver on some key promises made in the Common Minimum Programme (CMP). Among other things, the CMP promised to double the flow of rural credit in the next three years, and to extend substantial institutional lending to small and medium farmers. While emphasising the need to review the credit delivery system in rural areas, the programme envisaged immediate steps to ease the burden of high interest rates on farm loans. While the package announced by Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Friday appears to focus on reducing the debt burden of the farm community, it is comprehensive enough to address its all round concerns. Institutional credit to agriculture is to be stepped up from Rs.80,000 crores during 2003-04 to Rs.1,05,000 crores. All the three institutions engaged in rural credit — commercial banks, cooperatives, and regional rural banks — have been asked to enhance their exposures to the rural economy.

Those borrowers who are unable to repay and those who have defaulted on payments in the wake of successive droughts in different parts of the country can have their loans rescheduled. New guidelines on these will be issued in consultation with the State Governments and subject to certain conditions. Obviously the success of the package will depend on the detail and the way it is implemented. Conceptually, there is already plenty to commend it. Far from being populist, the package strives to impart flexibility to the lenders with a view to helping out the farmers, while simultaneously adhering to the broad canons of lending. There is a lot of significance attached to the assertion that the problem loans are merely to be rescheduled, not waived, and

that there is no direction to lower the lending rate. Even the goals that have been set for the lending banks and institutions — for instance, a target of 100 new farmers for each commercial bank in rural areas — appear realistic. In fact, according to banking sources, such quantitative targets already exist in their perspective plans. What should now make those targets achievable are, first, political will and, secondly, an action plan to enhance the quality of the credit infrastructure in the country. On the face of it, there are enough bank branches, especially of nationalised banks, and cooperatives in the Indian countryside. Unfortunately, many of them are saddled with legacy problems and hence unable to dispense credit readily. Previous loan write-offs and politically ordained arbitrary lending decisions have vitiated the rural credit structure in many places. Besides, Indian banking continues to be urban-centric and its personnel serving in rural branches need reorientation and a raising of morale.

Public sector commercial banks have pioneered lending to agriculture (and to the small scale sector) through crop loans (short-duration loans) and relying on innovative securities such as group guarantees. Over the past decade, banks have failed to capitalise on their early gains. Aside from attitudinal problems that go all the way to the top of the bank's hierarchy, banks have been lackadaisical in promoting improved technology, including better cropping practices and water management. In the past, technical counselling was part of a rural branch manager's job. There is exciting scope now for promoting information technology — using a rural bank branch as a nodal point for educating farmers. In sum, the first major deal announced by the UPA Government to provide relief to millions of rural families weighed down by debt is realistic and progressive.

# New govt lifeline for farmers

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, June 18

AHEAD OF the Union budget, the government has announced a major policy package to provide relief for distress-ridden farmers and increased the credit flow to agriculture by Rs 25,000 crore in the current fiscal.

The package includes rollover of existing loans, providing access to fresh credit at lower rates to farmers who have defaulted in the past and takeover of farmers' loans with moneylenders by banks.

Addressing a news conference today, Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said "this is the first step" towards meeting the commitments made in the Common Minimum Programme. Chidambaram, however, desisted from writing off of farmers' loans or interest, as demanded by Left parties. The package will not result in any additional funds outflow for the government. The biggest responsibility will be on commercial banks, Nabards, rural banks and cooperatives to implement the package.

The finance minister has targeted rural credit worth Rs 1,04,500 crore during this financial year as against Rs 80,000 crore lent by banks in 2003-04. While commercial banks would lend Rs 57,000 crore, regional rural banks would provide Rs 8,500 crore.

## FM GETS AGRO

- Debt relief to those who incurred losses due to drought and floods
- All outstanding loans up to March 31 to be restructured
- Restructured debt to be paid in five years with a moratorium of two years
- Farmers with payment arrears to be backed with fresh credit
- Fresh credit to defaulters after one-time settlement is reached with banks
- Banks encouraged to advance loans to farmers facing heavy debt burden
- Nine per cent interest rate on farmers' loans unchanged

The cooperatives have been given a target of Rs 39,000 crore for disbursement of farm credit.

The idea is to wean away the farmers from clutches of local moneylenders and other non-institutional sources to meet their monetary requirements. Chidambaram has also targeted bringing in 50 lakh farmers additionally under the fold of banks

during this year. Announcing the package, Chidambaram cited the plight of farmers due to successive drought, exploitation by moneylenders and non-availability of institutional support. He said farm credit would be doubled in three years, with 30 per cent increase in this year itself.

Loans for farmers will be made available through 33,039 branches of rural and urban banks branches of commercial banks and 14,051 branches of regional rural banks. In addition, cooperatives will pitch in with their own network.

Chidambaram met banks chiefs, the RBI top brass and Nabard bosses before announcing the package. "Farm credit is a profitable proposition. Any reluctance to provide loans to farmers must be removed as recoveries from self-help groups is as high as 96 per cent." Bank bosses and Nabard top executives will meet next Tuesday to work out norms under which the farmers will be supported by the banks. This will be followed up with a conclave of the chairmen of all regional rural banks on Wednesday and Thursday to ensure smooth flow of credit from Nabard to farmers.

On reducing the interest rates for farm credit, Chidambaram said 9 per cent on lending up to Rs 50,000 would stay. "Banks will be encouraged to provide cheap credit to farmers."

# 14 killed in Konkan Rail mishap

## Train Stumbles On Boulders Strewn By A Mudslide

Mumbai (Maharashtra)  
16 JUNE

IN the second major accident on the Konkan Railway route in less than a year, 14 people were killed and about 62 injured on a speeding Mumbai-bound Matsyagandha Express from Naglore derailed after hitting boulders on the tracks over a large here on Wednesday morning. The accident occurred at 6:08 between Karanjadi and Veer Roha in Raigad district of Maharashtra, about 200 km from Mumbai, after the engine hit two boulders that had fallen on the track due to mudslide caused by heavy rains in the area.

While the engine fell from the bridge across a stream, three coaches, including two general compartments, hung precariously from it. Eight coaches derailed, some lying on their side while seven other bogies remained unaffected.

Konkan Railway, in a statement, said 14 persons lost their lives and about 62 were injured. A large number of villagers rushed to the spot after hearing a loud bang and began rescuing people trapped in the affected coaches before the official machinery got into action. The railway also sought the services of local welders to cut open a bogie of the train. One bogie had to be cut open to rescue the passengers, railway sources said.

Together 98 people injured in the mishap were treated at various hospitals in Mahad, Chiplun and Mumbai, sources said, adding that 33 passengers were targeted after first aid. The 14 killed included a woman and a child. All passengers had been rescued by afternoon and restoration work was still on.



**KILLING FIELDS:** Derailed carriages of Matsyagandha Express lie scattered in Amboli, near Mumbai, after the tragedy on Wednesday. — Reuters

The accident occurred when the train was crossing a bridge. After hitting a boulder, the engine and two bogies derailed and fell down the bridge. Most of the passengers fell from the bogies, sources said. The bridge was not damaged in the mishap although it is generally considered to be "dangerous", sources said.

Meanwhile, calling the derailment an example of "nature humbling man", the managing director of Konkan Railway, Mr B. Rajaram said all "cuttings" up to 5 metres on hilly terrain of the Konkan Railway will be covered with high strength steel nets to prevent boulders from falling on

the tracks to avert accidents.

He said after last year's disaster when 53 people were killed in an accident on the same route after a boulder struck a train, Konkan Railway had covered all cuttings above 10 metres with high strength steel nets.

"After last year's accident we had taken special sanction from the ministry to do a complete engineering solution to cover cuttings. Everybody agreed it will be protective. So, all cuttings above 10 metres were covered with high strength steel nets. An area of three lakh square metre was covered", Mr Rajaram told reporters at the accident site. —PTI

## Laloo to crack whip on errant rail officials

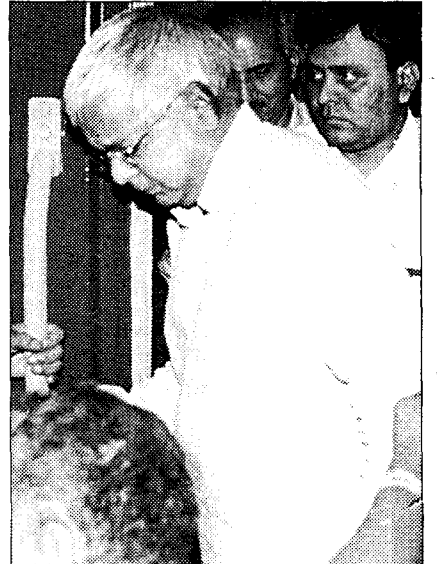
Our Kolkata Bureau  
16 JUNE

railway minister said nobody would be spared if it was found that human error had led to the accident. "We are personally going there to see what happened and let me tell

UNION railways minister Laloo Prasad Yadav said the Matsyagandha train tragedy was 'extremely unfortunate', adding his ministry will soon undertake a massive modernisation programme to avoid such accidents. The minister also announced a compensation of Rs 1 lakh to the immediate kin of those who died and Rs 15,000 to those who suffered injuries.

Mr Yadav, who arrived here on Wednesday morning to address the Annual All India Railway Award function, cancelled all his engagements in the city

and rushed to the accident site in Maharashtra. Speaking to newsmen, Mr Yadav said action would be taken if any negligence was found to have caused the accident. "We want to see whether precautions had been taken in the area which is a remote hilly region," the minister said, adding heavy rains had apparently led to a landslide which caused the accident. Responding to a volley of questions, the



**TRAIN-ING GROUND:** Railways minister Laloo Prasad Yadav at Howrah Station on Wednesday. — Subhagit Pal

you that we know how to enquire," Mr Yadav said.

"An accident is an accident...honi ko kaun tal sakta hai? But safety of the passengers is the top priority of my ministry. And when you talk of safety measures after an accident, you must also remember that everyday several thousands of people are carried to their destinations safely by the railway services," the railway minister said.

# Gang war on train draws blood in AC coach

K.C. PHILIP

**Patna, June 9:** Two passengers who were fast asleep in an AC two-tier coach of the Howrah-Danapur Express were shot dead this morning in a daring strike said to be the first of its kind in the history of Indian Railways.

The assailants apparently used 9-mm pistols and pumped several bullets into the sleeping victims. The incident took place 48 km from the Bihar capital, somewhere between Bakhtiarapur and Khusrupur stations.

Police, however, remain clueless about the murderers because other passengers traveling in the coach panicked and disappeared before the train pulled into Patna junction.

Efforts were being made till

late in the evening to contact bona fide passengers and reconstruct what happened. Gang-rivalry emerged as the most likely motive for the sensational crime in the running train.

The victims were identified as Anil Kumar Yadav, 40, and Vijay Kumar Yadav, 30, who were returning from Calcutta after placing an order for paints. Small-time railway contractors, the two had recently bagged the contract for painting a railway bridge at Koilwar over the river Sone at Bihta (Bihar).

They had boarded a sleeper class compartment at Howrah on Tuesday evening along with a companion, Somnath Rai (27). While the two deceased managed to secure berths in the air-conditioned coach, the companion

stayed back in the sleeper class.

Rai lodged an FIR accusing one Ritlal Yadav and four of his accomplices of executing the crime.

The police, however, detained Rai for interrogation, wondering how he could have known the identity of the assailants since he was travelling in a different coach.

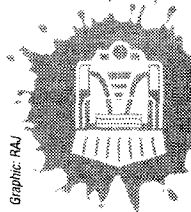
The police are also investigating how the assailants learnt the exact berths allotted to the deceased, unless someone in the train had tipped them off.

In a bid to pre-empt escalation of tension, it was promptly announced that both the deceased, Anil alias 'Soda' and Vijay, and the main accused belong to the same caste.

The police also confirmed

## TERROR TRACKS

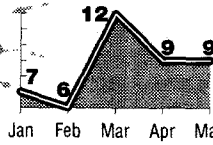
### Bihar's rail crime graph



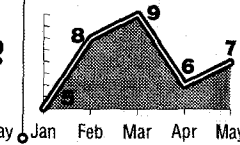
#### Murders

- **May 27:** Robbers kill BSF inspector on Farakka Express
- **May 31:** Dacoit lynched on Patna-Palaimu Express
- **June 3:** Passenger shot dead on Doon Express
- **June 9:** Two gunned down in AC coach of Howrah-Danapur Express

#### Dacoities



#### Robberies



that the duo was itself involved in crimes like extortion, abduction and murder and were killed as a result of rivalry over railway contracts.

The accused, Ritlal, is a crim-

inal with political links and 'officially' absconding. He is wanted by the police in several cases, including the killing of a BJP candidate for the Danapur Assembly constituency.

As his relatives moaned at Jamaluddin Chak in Khagaul, around 15 km from the state capital, Vijay's brother Santosh alleged that his brother had recently been beaten up by Ritlal's men for failure to pay up Rs 50,000.

Ritlal, the mukhia of Kothwan village, is the most dreaded gang leader in the state capital according to police records.

Ritlal, once a mentor of 'Chhota Santhosh' who was killed in a police encounter in Delhi about three months ago, is believed to be the main accused in the murder of Satyendra Singh Yadav, another notorious criminal, during Laloo Prasad Yadav's 'Lathi Rally' a year ago. The rivalry between the two gangs goes back to more than

five years.

According to some people of Jamaluddin Chak village, both Anil and Vijay had been sympathetic to the Satyendra Singh Yadav group, although of late they had been trying to establish themselves independently.

Situated near the Danapur divisional railway headquarters, Jamaluddin Chak, the native village of Laloo Prasad's son-in-law, has been the centre of many crimes in the past. Railway staff are constantly under the threat of the criminal gangs who control railway tenders and are engaged in kidnapping and extortion.

Sources say that the battle for supremacy is also played out in the Khagaul Nagar Parishad. Vijay, who is in the contract and

liquor business, was also the 'jamadar' (supervisor) for the various works of a ward council. A feud reportedly exists between the council chairman Shivnandan Paswan and the vice-chairman Sunil Kumar Yadav. Sunil is alleged to be close to Ritlal.

Anil was a relative of social activist Sarita, who was murdered along with her colleague Mahesh in Gaya some months ago. However, "our family had practically no relationship (with Anil)", Sarita's sister Sunita said.

Both the train murder victims were alleged to be behind the murder of a teacher, Ashok Master, of Khagaul. Vijay had apparently been jailed for eight months for an abduction case and came out of prison early this year.

Indira (9)

## IOC suffers Rs 2,100-cr loss

NEW DELHI, June 8. — After incurring a loss of Rs 2,100 crore in the last three months because of the rise in international crude oil prices, Indian Oil Corporation today said a hike in prices of petroleum products in the domestic market is necessary to make operations sustainable.

The IOC chairman, Mr MS Ramachandran, said because IOC, the country's largest oil firm, was not allowed to increase prices, it lost Rs 504 crore in petrol and diesel prices, and Rs 1,639 crore on LPG and kerosene in the first quarter.

In the international market, the price of crude oil started increasing early this year. It was reflected in the fourth quarterly profit of IOC. The company's net profit fell 16 per cent to Rs 1,849.94 crore.

Going by present international crude oil prices, IOC will end up posting losses, though refinery margins have gone up to \$5.6 a barrel, the chairman said. Giving

details of the company's financial performance for 2003-04, Mr Ramachandran said IOC's sales turnover has reached a new high at Rs 1,30,203 crore, up by nine per cent as compared to the previous year.

The profit before tax of Rs 9,691 crore is up by 15 per cent compared to the previous year. The profit after tax has reached an all-time high of Rs 7,005 crore, he said.

However, the company does not expect to maintain the profitability this year as it has already incurred over Rs 2,100 crore losses. Petrol and diesel prices have not been revised since January even though crude oil prices have jumped by more than \$7 a barrel in the international market. On the other hand, government subsidy on kerosene and LPG was cut to one-third.

Mr Ramachandran said IOC was open to government fixing a price-band for petrol and diesel, but slashing duty on petroleum products would be more viable. — SNS



# সূর্যমুখী বীজের ডি এন এ পরীক্ষা তদন্তে কেন্দ্রের সাহায্য চাইল রাজ্য

পার্থসারথি সেনগুপ্ত

সূর্যমুখী বীজে গুণগোল কোথায়, তার সরেজমিন তদন্তে কেন্দ্রের সাহায্য চেয়েছে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকার। প্রয়োজনে ওই বীজের ডি এন এ পরীক্ষাও করানো হবে কেন্দ্রীয় গবেষণাগারে। রাজ্য সরকার তাই ভারত সরকারের তৈলবীজ গবেষণা কেন্দ্রের কর্তাকে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে আনছে। 'ডিরেক্টরেট অব অয়েল-সিডস রিসার্চ'-এর প্রজেক্ট ডিরেক্টর ডি এম হেগড়ে সোমবার এই উদ্দেশ্যেই কলকাতায় আসছেন। তিনি বিভিন্ন জেলায় গিয়ে সূর্যমুখীর ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত ফলনও পরীক্ষা করে দেখবেন।

রাজ্যে সূর্যমুখী চাষের বিপর্যয় খতিয়ে দেখতে গঠিত উচ্চ ক্ষমতাসম্পন্ন বিশেষজ্ঞ কমিটি অবশ্য কেন্দ্রের বিশেষজ্ঞ পৌছনোর আগেই রায় দিয়েছে, কৃষি দফতরের বিতরিত বীজ 'বিশুদ্ধ' ও 'উচ্চ ফলনশীল'। বস্তুত, সূর্যমুখী চাষের ক্ষেত্রে কোনও বিপর্যয় নয়, সামান্য কয়েকটি জায়গায় 'বিচ্ছিন্ন' ও 'বিক্ষিপ্ত' ভাবে সমস্যা দেখা দিয়েছে বলে দাবি করেছে ওই কমিটি।

তবে রাজ্যের কৃষি অধিকর্তা ধবলেশ্বর কোনার চলতি পরিস্থিতিতে আর কোনও ঝুঁকি না-নিয়েই হায়দরাবাদে 'ডিরেক্টরেট অব অয়েল-সিডস রিসার্চ'-এর প্রজেক্ট ডিরেক্টর হেগড়েকে চিঠি লিখে আশ্বস্তি জানিয়েছেন। হেগড়ে চিঠির উত্তরে তাঁকে লিখেছেন, "সূর্যমুখী চাষের ক্ষেত্রে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে যে-পরিস্থিতির সৃষ্টি হয়েছে, তার কারণ খুঁজতে আমি সোমবারেই কলকাতায় আসছি। যে-সব জায়গায় সমস্যা দেখা দিয়েছে, সেখানেও যাব। সেই অনুসারে সমস্ত ব্যবস্থা করে রাখবো।"

কোনার জানান, তাঁর দফতরের অফিসারেরা হেগড়েকে নিয়ে জেলায় জেলায় ঘুরে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত ফলনের হালহকিকত খতিয়ে দেখবেন। কিছু বীজও সংগ্রহ করা হবে। হেগড়ে সেই বীজ কেন্দ্রীয় গবেষণাগারে নিয়ে যাবেন। সূর্য-৫১ নামের যে-বীজ নিয়ে এত বিতর্ক, তার ডি এন এ পরীক্ষাও হবে ওই গবেষণাগারে। তবে রাজ্যের বিশেষজ্ঞ কমিটি জানিয়েছে, বীজ নিয়ে সমস্যা নেই। সূর্যমুখী চাষের 'বিপর্যয়' নিয়ে কৃষি দফতরের মুখপত্র 'বসুন্ধরা'র বিশেষ সংখ্যায় সবিস্তার 'ব্যাখ্যা' দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন কৃষি অধিকর্তা। সেই ব্যাখ্যার খসড়ায় চোখ বোলালে দেখা যায়, অনেকটা জুড়েই রয়েছে ওই কমিটির অনুসন্ধান চালিয়েছে।

কৃষি দফতরের বক্তব্য, সূর্য-৫১ বীজ নিয়ে বিতর্কটা 'উদ্দেশ্যপ্রণোদিত'। কোনার লিখেছেন, "এ বছর রাজ্য জুড়ে পরীক্ষামূলক ভাবে চাষ করার জন্য বীজের চাহিদা বেশি হওয়ায় ওড়িশা কনজিউমার্স কো-অপারেটিভ ফেডারেশন লিমিটেড মারফত মহারাষ্ট্রের বেজো-শীতল হাইব্রিড সিড কোম্পানি বীজ সরবরাহের বরাত পায়। সূর্য-৫১ তাদের পেটেন্ট বীজ, যা নিয়ে ৯৭% জমিতে কোনও সমস্যাই হয়নি।" তিনি অবশ্য স্বীকার করেছেন, সঙ্কর সূর্যমুখী চাষের প্রচলন হয়েছে সবে গত বছর। এই পরিস্থিতিতে অপেক্ষাকৃত সহনশীল জাত বাছাই করে এই সমস্যা কতটা লাঘব করা যায়, তা পরীক্ষা করে দেখা দরকার। তাই ২০০৩-০৪ সালের রবিখন্ডে উত্তর ২৪ পরগনায় সূর্যমুখীর চারাটি প্যাক-৩৬, কে এস বি এইচ ওয়ান, এন ই এস এই-১৭ ও

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

## সূর্যমুখী বীজের ডিএনএ পরীক্ষা

প্রথম পাতার পর

সূর্য-৫১— এই চারটি সঙ্কর জাতের একটি সেট কৃষকের খামারে পরীক্ষা করে জাতভেদে সংবেদনশীলতা বোঝার চেষ্টা চলেছে।

কমিটির বক্তব্য, রাজ্যে প্রায় ১৮,০০০ হেক্টর জমিতে সূর্যমুখীর চাষ হয়েছে। কৃষি বিভাগের মাধ্যমে বিতরিত বীজের পরিমাণ ছিল ১৪.৩ মেট্রিক টন। সেই বীজে চাষ হয়েছে ২৯৩৩ হেক্টর জমিতে। ফলে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত জমির পরিমাণ তিন শতাংশেরও কম। ফলে যেটুকু সমস্যা দেখা দিয়েছে, তা 'বিক্ষিপ্ত' ও 'বিচ্ছিন্ন'। দ্বিতীয়ত, বীজের 'বিশুদ্ধতা' নিয়েও কোনও প্রশ্ন তোলেনি কমিটি। এই ক্ষেত্রে যুক্তি, "৯৫% এলাকায় দানাপূরণের কোনও সমস্যা হয়নি। বহরমপুরে ডালশস্য ও তৈলবীজ গবেষণা

কেন্দ্রের খামারে চাষ করা বীজের থেকে উৎপন্ন প্রতিটি 'হেডে' গড়পড়তা ৮০-৮৫% ফুলে পুষ্ট দানা হয়েছে এবং উচ্চ ফলন দিয়েছে।"

তৃতীয়ত, কমিটির ৩% ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত অঞ্চলে অনুসন্ধানের ফলে যে-তথ্য মিলেছে, তা হল, 'পরাগ মিলনের সমস্যার একাধিক কারণ আছে'। অনুসন্ধানে জানা গিয়েছে, যে-জমিতে বোরনের অস্বাভাবিক ঘাটতি রয়েছে, সেখানেই পরাগ মিলনের সমস্যা তীব্র ভাবে দেখা দিয়েছে। যেমন উত্তর দিনাজপুরের রায়গঞ্জ অঞ্চলের মাটিতে বোরনের অস্বাভাবিক ঘাটতি রয়েছে। সঙ্কর জাতের সূর্যমুখীতে বোরনের এই প্রচণ্ড প্রভাব সম্পর্কে কৃষি বিভাগের যে কোনও পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতা ছিল না, কমিটি তা স্বীকার করেছে।

চতুর্থত, চাষ দেরিতে শুরু করার বিষয়টিও সমস্যার অন্যতম কারণ বলে মন্তব্য করেছে কমিটি। যা ঘটেছে দক্ষিণ ২৪ পরগনার বাসন্তী এলাকায়। কমিটির মতে, "ওই সব অঞ্চলে দেরিতে বীজ বোনার ফলে পরাগ মিলনের সময় তাপমাত্রা বেড়ে ৩৬ থেকে ৩৮ ডিগ্রি সেলসিয়াসের মধ্যে ঘোরাফেরা করে। কিন্তু তাপমাত্রা ৩৫ ডিগ্রির উপরে চলে গেলে পরাগ মিলনের ক্ষতি হয়।" বর্ধমান ও দক্ষিণ ২৪ পরগনায় পচা রোগ, বর্ধমানের কালনায় কিছু এলাকায় গন্ধকের অভাব সমস্যা তীব্রতর করেছে। কমিটির রায়, "যে-সব অঞ্চলে ২-৪ বিঘা জমিতে চাষ হয়েছে, সেখানে মৌমাছির সংখ্যা নগণ্য হওয়ায় পরাগ মিলনে ক্ষতি হয়েছে।"

# Securing India's security

**L**AST month, I had written about the management of India's foreign relations over the last six years. We are going in for a general election, which is an exercise in choosing from alternative options about the management, not only of foreign policy, but of the purpose of foreign policy — which is to ensure national security in all its dimensions.

India, today, is recognised by the world as a significant centre of power. Its size, population, geo-strategic location, human and natural resources and technological capacities are being acknowledged as factors that could make it an important world power. Its credibility as a functioning democracy adds to this potential. One does not wish to expand on the inadequacies of the policies of the BJP-led government over the last six years. What is necessary to undertake a realistic projection of India's position in world affairs.

First, India should act more purposefully to ensure national consolidation and long-term internal cohesion. That cohesion is necessary if it is to emerge as the most important political, military and economic power straddling the region between Central Asia, South Asia and the western parts of Southeast Asia. India should also aim at emerging as a capable military power in the South Asian land mass and an influential power in the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the waters of the Indian Ocean. It should work towards consolidating its position as a responsible nuclear power and get recognised as such. Such a consolidation would, of course, help it to emerge as a major economic player. In fact, India's aim should be to structure and participate in a system of political, security and economic consultative arrangements which could form the basis for a stable world order.



The NDA government did not do enough to achieve this

■ J. N. DIXIT

Having stated this vision for India, it would be pertinent to list the micro-level political and security challenges achieving it would entail. Most of all, India requires to structure new equations with the important power centres of the world after the end of the Cold War because of the disappearance of leverages it once had. An important dimension of this is the creation of a stable and calibrated relationship with the United States, without losing its own ability to make autonomous decisions on foreign and security issues. Managing the prospects of Pax Americana is a major foreign policy and security exercise.

**Its moves have been cosmetic. It did not ensure that national security was underpinned by structured arrangements**

Then there is South Asia, which constitutes nearly one-fifth of the world population and which also happens to be one of world's poorest regions. Meeting developmental requirements through appropriate domestic and external policies is another challenge.

Safeguarding India's territorial integrity and unity against overt or covert external aggression is the supreme responsibility of the government. This would require the fashioning of clear defence policies with precise consensus on the priorities to be kept in mind. Certainly, keeping the nation's armed forces fully prepared, backed by the necessary resources, is vital. The BJP-led NDA government has failed in discharging these responsibil-

ities. It has not undertaken the necessary reorganisation and reform in the armed forces or the defence organisations. It has not allocated sufficient funds for national defence. What is even more regrettable is that even the limited resources allocated have not been fully utilised to strengthen the armed forces. We need to remedy these shortcomings and in order to do so we would need to speedily implement the recommendations made for the restructuring of defence organisations and the armed forces, integrate the defence ministry with the headquarters of the three services, with uniformed officers being

given a participatory role in the formulation of defence policies and the higher management of national defence. It is necessary to integrate the higher command of the armed forces and appoint a chief of defence staff.

Clearly, necessary financial resources need to be allocated for defence, including special allocations for the research, development and modernisation of defence technology. Similarly, it is necessary to take steps to develop human resources for national defence. These would also entail finetuning the higher command for nuclear and missile capacities. These capacities must be safeguarded and maintained at the appropriate level in the context of the changing security environment, particu-

larly in the Asian region.

The institutional arrangements made by the BJP-led NDA government have been cosmetic. It did not ensure that national security was underpinned by systematic and structured institutional arrangements. The National Security Council, established in 1999, has not functioned with institutional cohesion. Important national security decisions have been taken by the prime minister and his principal secretary in consultation with the deputy prime minister, without utilising the Cabinet Committee on Security, the Strategic Policy Group and officials of the National Security Advisory Board. A separate national security advisor should be appointed. The present arrangements of the principal secretary to the prime minister functioning as the national security advisor should be discontinued. Regular meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Security should be institutionalised.

It is imperative to ensure necessary connectivities between the intelligence agencies and the National Security Advisory Board. Restructuring should be undertaken of these agencies to improve its human resource basis with multidimensional expertise. It should be ensured that there is modernisation of functional capacities of the intelligence agencies with appropriate modern technological equipment and facilities. The recommendations made by the Experts Group to reform the intelligence agencies after the Kargil war, which have been hanging fire for the last four years, should be speedily implemented. This will ensure not only the efficiency but accountability of the intelligence agencies.

*The writer is the chairman of the National Security Department of the AICC. The views expressed here are his own*

## PHOOLAN 'KILLER' BROTHER AND ACCOMPLICE HELD

# Jailbreak aides run out of luck

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 29: The man who posed as a policeman to help the suspected killer of Phoolan Devi escape from Tihar jail has been arrested.

Delhi police have identified the man as Sandeep Thakur, who had introduced himself in Tihar as constable Arvind Kumar of the Delhi Armed Police's third battalion while getting Sher Singh Rana out on the pretext of producing him in a Hardwar court.

Sher Singh's brother, Vikram Singh, too, has been arrested on the charge of helping in the escape, special cell additional commissioner Karnail Singh said.

The police, however, are yet to find Sher Singh.

Delhi police commissioner K.K. Paul had moved the probe from the crime branch to a special cell team led by assistant commissioner Shibesh Singh, who was helped by inspector Rama Lamba.

Investigations revealed Sher Singh had conspired with Vikram and Sandeep to get himself out of jail as he feared conviction in the murder case.

Karnail said after his team found a Roorkee resident was involved, discreet inquiries confirmed the identity of Sandeep, who had shifted to his village in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, after he escape.



Vikram Singh Rana (right) and Sandeep Thakur in Delhi after they were arrested. (PTI)

Sandeep was arrested there yesterday. He said during interrogation that he was Vikram's neighbour in Roorkee. Both men had been meeting Sher Singh during his court appearances in Roshanabad, Hardwar.

According to police, Sandeep was lured with Rs 6 lakh and a Maruti car. Working to a plan, Sandeep met Sher Singh in Tihar under the assumed names of Pradeep Kumar, a lawyer, and Ravi.

During one such meeting, Sher Singh informed Sandeep about his Roshanabad court appearance scheduled for February 17.

Vikram had allegedly paid him Rs 5,000 to buy a police uni-

form — which Sandeep got tailored in Roorkee — and handcuffs, which he bought in Aligarh.

According to Karnail, Sandeep visited Tihar on February 16 in the guise of Pradeep Kumar to finalise the details. Later, he returned to Ghaziabad for an overnight stay.

The next day, Sandeep, in the guise of Arvind Kumar, boarded a bus to the Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) in north Delhi and, from there, took a three-wheeler to Tihar.

He reached jail no. 1 and got Sher Singh out after handcuffing him and collecting Rs 40 as diet charges for the undertrial.

Karnail told PTI that the "impersonator" had shown no court production document or identity card at Tihar, raising questions over the conduct of the jail officials then present, if any.

Sandeep and Sher Singh then took a three-wheeler to ISBT from where they went to Ghaziabad, police said. The suspected killer was also handed Rs 10,000 that his brother had given to Sandeep. The duo parted ways in Ghaziabad.

According to the police, Sandeep had also collected Rs 1 lakh from Vikram Singh and passed it on to Sher Singh in a town in western Uttar Pradesh.

● NO I-T RELIEF ● FREE BAGGAGE LIMIT RAISED

# Interim budget benefits Central Government staff

By Alok Mukherjee

NEW DELHI, FEB. 3. Except for Central Government employees, who will have a major portion of their dearness allowance merged with the basic pay, the interim budget for 2004-05 presented in Parliament today by the Union Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, stopped short of handing out any major pre-election sops to voters. In fact, Mr. Singh did not announce any income tax relief and only promised to revise the exemption limits and standard deduction at a later date when the full budget for the year is presented.

The two other firm announcements concern baggage rules and stamp duty. Effective from today, the free baggage limit for Indians returning from abroad has been raised to Rs. 25,000 while the customs duty on the rest of the baggage has been reduced to 40 per cent. Another decision was to halve the duty on Central Government stamp papers and increase the threshold limit for stamp duty on receipts from Rs. 500 to Rs. 50,000.

For Central Government employees, Mr. Singh announced the merger of DA, to the extent of 50 per cent of the pay, with the basic pay. This will take effect from April 1, 2004, and cost the exchequer Rs. 3,500 crores approximately in a full year. But with

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a higher basic pay and allowance, the income tax burden of the employees is also expected to go up and fetch the Government an additional Rs. 500 crores, thereby bringing down the net outgo to Rs. 3,000 crores approximately. Mr. Singh said the Government was committed to revising the level of standard deduction and the current exemption limits but these would have to wait since an amendment to the Income-Tax Act was necessary and this was not being proposed now.

But he did hold out a number of promises which he felt should be fulfilled. Among these is continuation of the capital gains tax exemption on listed securities acquired on or after March 1, 2003; capital gains tax exemption on the compensation paid to farmers whose agricultural land is acquired by the Government; a review of the tax treatment of the family pension of war widows; a tonnage tax on shipping to provide a level-playing field for the shipping industry and extension of the fiscal benefits for new power projects beyond 2006 and till 2012.

For the rural population, the announcements cover expansion of the Antyodaya Anna Yojana scheme to two crore below-poverty-line families, credit to farmers at rates lower than the current threshold of nine per cent, a review of the collateral secu-

rity procedure for farm loans and extension of the farm income insurance scheme to cover 100 districts. All eligible farmers are to get the Kisan Credit Cards by March 31 with the Automatic Teller Machine access where such facilities exist. Special packages for the revival of the tea and sugar industries have also been promised.

For the small-scale sector, the limit under the small units credit card scheme has been increased to Rs. 10 lakhs from the present Rs. 2 lakhs for borrowers with a satisfactory track record. This modified scheme will be operational from March 1 this year.

## Drinking water supply scheme

An accelerated drinking water supply scheme for mega cities such as Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Hyderabad and the setting up of convention centres in Delhi, Mumbai and one each in Rajasthan and Goa have also been announced.

A long-pending demand of the defence forces for a non-lapsable modernisation fund has been conceded with an outer limit of Rs. 25,000 crores to be built up over the years. For industry, the Minister promised to consider some of the proposals seeking excise and customs relief.

Editorial: Page 10;  
More reports on Pages 11, 12, 16

THE HINDU

4 FEB 2004

# NITISH ALL STEAMED UP



## New Kranti trains

18 superfast trains connecting Delhi with state capitals. One of them will run from Sealdah. The trains, with only class II coaches, will run as fast as Rajdhani but at a cheaper fare



### e-Tickets

Passengers can book tickets via internet and board trains on the basis of computer generated slips



### Frequent traveller

Frequent travellers on Rajdhani, Shatabdi & Jan Shatabdi trains will get complimentary tickets



### Mobile booking

Passengers can reserve tickets via mobile phones. Operators can integrate services with Railways



### SMS Timetable

If the departure of a Rajdhani, Shatabdi or Jan Shatabdi is delayed, the passengers can get the info via SMS



### TATKAL

### Tatkal expansion

Tatkal reservation scheme — now available only for select trains — will be extended to all trains, more classes



### Security RPF will

have the additional responsibility of escorting trains and helping GRP maintain security in passenger areas

GRAPHICS: JAYANTO & ABHIMANYU

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 JAN 2004

# দুর্ভাগ্যের পরিণাম

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আপাতদৃষ্টিতে সম্পর্কহীন দুটি ঘটনা। মহিলা যাত্রীদের উত্তর প্রদেশের প্রতিনিধি জানানো ছাত্র মণীশ মিশ্রকে সহযাত্রীদের একাংশ চলন্ত ট্রেন হইতে ছুড়িয়া ফেলায় তাহার মৃত্যু হয়। এ ঘটনা উত্তরপ্রদেশের। অন্যটি বিহারের, যেখানে গয়া জেলায় গরিব নিম্নবর্ণের মানুষদের মঙ্গলে নিয়োজিত দুই তরুণ-তরুণী মহেশ ও সরিতাকে মাফিয়া ডনরা গুলি করিয়া হত্যা করে। উত্তরপ্রদেশ এবং বিহার, দুই রাজ্যই ভারতের মানচিত্রে 'দুর্ভাগ্য রাজ্য' বলিয়া গণ্য হইয়া থাকে। বিশেষত বিহার সম্পর্কে তির্যক ভাবে বলা হয়, এই রাজ্যটি রাষ্ট্রব্যবস্থার বিলোপ সাধনের মার্জবাদী তত্ত্বের রূপদী উদাহরণ রূপে শনাক্ত হইতে পারে। কেননা বহু কালই বিহার এমন একটি রাজ্য, যেখানে আইনের শাসন কিংবা সরকারি প্রশাসন বলিয়া কিছু নাই। কিন্তু সেখানে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব আছেন, সহাবুদ্দিন নামে এক সাংসদ আছেন, পাণ্ডু যাদব নামে এক রাজনীতিক আছেন, রণবীর সেনা-লোরিক সেনা-ব্রহ্মর্ষি সেনা-ভূমি সেনা ও লাল সেনা নামে রকমারি সংবিধান-বহির্ভূত লাঠিয়াল বাহিনী আছে, আছে সংগঠিত দুষ্কৃতী চক্র, ঠিকাদার-মাফিয়া। উত্তরপ্রদেশও যে ক্রমত বিহারের সঙ্গে একাসনে বসিবার দাবিদার হইতেছে, তাহা এ ঘটনায় স্পষ্ট। এখানে মাফিয়া চক্র মণীশের হত্যায় জড়িত নয় ঠিকই। তাহার অর্থ এই নয় যে উত্তরপ্রদেশে মাফিয়া নাই। বিহারের যদি সহাবুদ্দিন, পাণ্ডু যাদবরা থাকেন, উত্তরপ্রদেশের তবে অমরমণি ত্রিপাঠীরা রহিয়াছেন।

মণীশ মিশ্রের হত্যাকাণ্ডটি শোরগোল ফেলিয়াছে তিনি প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর সম্পর্কিত মন্ত্রী বলিয়া। এই সম্পর্কের কথা জনাজানি হওয়ার পর রাজ্য প্রশাসন ও পুলিশ নড়িয়া-চড়িয়া বসিয়াছে। অন্যথায় মৃতদেহ উদ্ধার করিয়া তাহা স্তন্যকরণের কাজটিও পুলিশ করিতে সক্ষম হইত কি না সন্দেহ বিহীন। মহেশ-সরিতার হত্যাকাণ্ডটিও খাম্বাচাপা পড়িয়া যাইত যদি গণমাধ্যমে এই দুই সমাজসেবীর স্বেচ্ছাসেবার বিবরণ আগেই প্রকাশিত না-হইত, স্থানীয় জনসাধারণ ক্ষোভে ফাটিয়া না পড়িত, রাজ্যের সব রাজনৈতিক দল ও বুদ্ধিজীবীরা প্রতিবাদে মুখর না হইতেন। সত্যে দুবের হত্যাকাণ্ডের সময়েও একই চিত্র দেখা গিয়াছে। জনমতের চাপ প্রশাসনকে তদন্ত শুরু করিতে বাধ্য করিয়াছে। দুই রাজ্যেই নির্বাচিত রাজনৈতিক কর্তৃপক্ষ সংগঠিত ভাবে আইনের শাসনকে খর্ব করিয়াছে,

সমাজবিरोधीদের পোষণ করিয়া, পুলিশকে নিধিরাম সর্দার বানাইয়া এবং নির্বাচনী কারচুপির কাজে দুষ্কৃতীদের নিয়মিত ব্যবহার করিয়া রাজনীতির দুর্ভাগ্য ঘটাইয়াছে। ইতিপূর্বে নির্বাচন কমিশন উত্তরপ্রদেশে এক ক্ষমতাসীন মন্ত্রীর ভোটের আগে তাহার নিজের নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্রে প্রবেশে নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করিয়াছিল, কেননা সংশ্লিষ্ট স্থানে তাহার উপস্থিতিই ছিল অবাধ নির্বাচনের পথে প্রধান অন্তরায়। পদস্থ প্রশাসনিক অফিসার, জেলাশাসক, পুলিশ সুপার প্রমুখের পাইকারি হারে বদলি করিয়া একের পর এক মুখ্যমন্ত্রী এই রাজ্যে শাসনযন্ত্রের শিরদাঁড়াটি বাঁকাইয়া দিয়াছেন। রাজনৈতিক কর্তৃপক্ষকে চটাইবার ভয়ে প্রশাসন তাহার নিয়মিত দৈনন্দিন কাজগুলিও করে না, হাত গুটাইয়া থাকে। তাহার পূর্ণ সুযোগ লয় দুষ্কৃতীরা।

তবে কেবল আইনশৃঙ্খলার অবনতি বোধ হয় এই দুঃখজনক পরিস্থিতির সন্তোষজনক ব্যাখ্যা নয়। আগেই বলা হইয়াছে, ট্রেনের ঘটনাটিতে জড়িত দুষ্কৃতীরা কোনও দাগি অপরাধী চক্রের সদস্য নয়। মণীশ মিশ্র সত্যে দুবে কিংবা মহেশ-সরিতার মতো আদর্শবাদীই ছিলেন। আদর্শবাদী না হইলে মহিলা সহযাত্রীদের উত্তর প্রদেশে, লালিত হইতে দেখিয়া উদাস হইয়া জলালা দিয়া চলন্ত ট্রেনের বাহিরে তাকাইয়া অপস্রিয়মাণ নিসর্গের চলচ্ছবি উপভোগ করিতে পারিতেন। কিন্তু তাহার বিবেক, সততা ও আত্মমর্যাদা তাঁহাকে প্রতিবাদী করিয়া তোলে। যদিও তিনি কোনও মাফিয়া চক্রের পাকা ধানে মই দেন নাই, তথাপি অন্যায়ের প্রতিবাদ করার সাহস তাঁহাকে অন্যায়কারীদের কাছে অব্যাহতি করিয়া তোলে এবং অব্যাহতি ব্যক্তির হাত হইতে অব্যাহতি লাভের সহজতম পন্থাটি তাহার খুঁজিয়া লয়। প্রতিবাদীর সংখ্যা বরাবরই কম। তবু একটা সময় ছিল যখন নিজেরা প্রতিবাদ করিতে না পারিলেও তেমন লিজার জোর দেখাইবার জন্য দুবে বাঁকাইয়া প্রতিবাদীর উদ্দেশে সজ্ঞা দিবার লোকের অভাব হইত না। মনে হয়, তেমন দিনকালও গিয়াছে। আসলে বিষ যদি মাথায় উঠিয়া যায়, তাহা হইলে তাগা বাঁধিবার জায়গা পাওয়া যায় না। সমাজদেহে দুর্নীতি, ক্ষমতালিপ্সা, স্বজনপোষণ, প্রতারণা এমন জায়গায় পৌঁছিয়াছে যে সত্যে দুবে, মণীশ মিশ্র কিংবা সরিতা-মিশ্রের ব্যতিক্রমী দৃষ্টান্তগুলি অনন্ত অন্ধকারের মধ্যে সাত্তনার বিরল জোনাকিবিন্দুর মতো ক্রমাগত মিটমিট করিতে থাকিবে।

## DOWN THE MIDDLE

It is tempting to find a symbolic dimension in the split in the Nationalist Congress Party. Both the warring sides have decided that they are the real NCP, that their chief is the real president, and that what the other faction has done is "illegal". The pull that tore the young party apart was the alliance game. Mr Sharad Pawar's side wants to align with the Congress for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, and Mr P.A. Sangma wants to go over to the National Democratic Alliance with his men. The right alliance has become crucial to vote-winning. Add to that the different demands of different regions and their varying equations with the Centre, and a split such as that in the NCP looks perfectly logical. Mr Sangma and Mr Pawar were thrown together because of their rejection of Ms Sonia Gandhi as the prime ministerial candidate from the Congress. Mr Pawar's subsequent decision to align with the Congress in order to form the government in Maharashtra took away something from the party's *raison d'être*. Mr Sangma has used this reason for his decision to side with the Bharatiya Janata Party this time, although by forming the North-East People's Forum, he also appears to be aspiring to the stature of regional leader, an advantage that Mr Pawar already enjoys.

Double-billing has become extremely important. Mr V.C. Shukla has abandoned Mr Pawar too, but will not be in Mr Sangma's party either when he throws in his lot with the NDA. Instead he will form his own outfit based in Chhattisgarh. Perhaps he will now be able to get his own back a little, since he had found it very difficult to digest the Congress high command's decision to make Mr Ajit Jogi the chief minister of the newborn Chhattisgarh. The importance of regions has been growing over the last few years: the clout of Mr N. Chandrababu Naidu and Ms J. Jayalalithaa at the Centre, for example, cannot be understood without this. The BJP has used this shrewdly — it was a notable feature of its carefully calibrated campaigns for the recent assembly elections where it won in three states. On the face of it, the split in the NCP looks advantageous for the BJP. But there is still some time to see whether the BJP or the Congress picks up the biggest prizes. And then the electorate can change it all.

THE TELEGRAPH

26 JAN 2004

# Soumitra, Sourav get national awards

SNS and PTI

NEW DELHI, Jan. 25 — Noted writer Amrita Pritam, astronomer Jayant Vishnu Narlikar and former Chief Justice of India Mr MN Venkatchalliah have been awarded Padma Visbhushan, the second highest civilian awards, this year. There is no recipient of Bharat Ratna this time.

The President has honoured the Indian cricket team captain, Sourav Ganguly, and the vice-captain, Rahul Dravid, with Padma Shree on the eve of Republic Day today.

The Padma Bhushan awards which are higher than Padma Shree have been given to 19



Clockwise from top left: Amrita Pritam, JV Narlikar, MN Venkatchalliah, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and Soumitra Chatterjee

mer Planning Commission member Ch. Hanumantha Rao, Carnatic violinist N Rajam, social worker Ms Poornima Arvind Pakvasa from Gujarat, scientists Govindarajan Padmanabhan and Sardara Singh Johl. Civil servants Mr TL Sankar and Mr TV Antony have also been awarded Padma Bhushan.

Bollywood actor Anupam Kher, athlete Anju Bobby George, hockey player Dilip Kumar Tirkey, mountaineer Gurmayum Anita Devi, singer Hariharan, bhajan singer Purshottam Das Jalota and cartoonist Sudhir Talang are also among the 74 who have been awarded the Padma Shree.

persons which include veteran Bengali actor and director Soumitra Chatterjee, veteran journalist MV Kamath, noted Bollywood lyricist Sampuran Singh Gulzar, former Japanese Prime Minister Mr Yoshio Mori, well-known dancer Alarmel Valli, noted doctor Lt. Gen. Bijoy Nandan Shahi, for-



# জাতীয় সম্মান নিয়ে অটল-কালাম মতান্তর

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৩ জানুয়ারি— পদ্মশ্রী, পদ্মভূষণ সম্মান প্রাপকের নামের তালিকা নিয়ে আপত্তি তুলে প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর কাছে ফাইল ফেরত পাঠালেন রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আব্দুল কালাম। ঘটনাটি নিয়ে দীর্ঘদিন পর রাষ্ট্রপতির সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মতান্তর সামনে চলে এসেছে। পরে বাজপেয়ী অবশ্য ফোনে কালামের সঙ্গে কথা বলে বিষয়টির নিষ্পত্তির চেষ্টা করেছেন। কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রীর অফিসের প্রতিনিধি গিয়ে রাষ্ট্রপতির সচিবালয়ের এক কর্তার সঙ্গে বিষয়টি নিয়ে বৈঠকে বসবেন।

রাষ্ট্রপতির আপত্তি অবশ্য তিন থেকে চার জনের সম্পর্কে। আপত্তির কারণ মূলত দু'টি। একটি কারণ হল, দু-তিন জনের বিরুদ্ধে নানা কারণে তদন্ত চলছে এবং গোয়েন্দা রিপোর্টও রয়েছে। এদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন তামিল অভিনেত্রী ও বি জে পি নেত্রী বিজয়শান্তি। এ ছাড়া রাষ্ট্রপতির আপত্তির আর একটি কারণ হল পদ্ধতিগত। 'সংস্কৃতি' নামক শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানের অধ্যক্ষা গৌরী ঈশ্বরনের নাম সম্মান সংক্রান্ত কমিটির সুপারিশের মধ্যে ছিল না। পরে এই নামটিকে সরকার যোগ করায় রাষ্ট্রপতি আপত্তি তুলেছেন।

রাষ্ট্রপতি ফেরত পাঠানো ফাইলে সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, কমিটির সুপারিশ ছাড়া কোনও নাম সরকার যোগ করতে পারে না। প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী কমিটির সুপারিশ করা নামের তালিকা থেকে কোনও নাম বাদ দিতে পারেন। কিন্তু যোগ করতে পারেন না। রাষ্ট্রপতির এই ফাইল ফেরত পাঠানোর ঘটনাকে কেন্দ্র করে আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ে আলোড়ন তৈরি হয়েছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ের মুখপাত্র অবশ্য বলেছেন, এই ধরনের কোনও ঘটনা তাঁর জানা নেই।

বিজয়শান্তির বিরুদ্ধে আবগারি বিভাগের তদন্ত চলছে। এই তদন্ত না-মেটা পর্যন্ত সরকার তাঁকে এই ধরনের সম্মান দিতে পারে না বলে রাষ্ট্রপতির অভিমত। বিজয়শান্তি বি জে পি'র সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নাইডুর খুবই ঘনিষ্ঠ। প্রসঙ্গত, কিছুদিন আগে সিরি ফোর্ট অডিটরিয়মে তাঁর অভিনীত ছবি 'ক্যাপ্টেন ভবানী' দেখতে গিয়েছিলেন লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী-সহ অনেকেই। বিজয়শান্তি ছাড়া আরও দু-এক জনের বিরুদ্ধে একই ভাবে অভিযোগ আছে স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের গোয়েন্দাদের।

গৌরী ঈশ্বরন হলেন প্রয়াত নেতা রঙ্গরাজন কুমারমঙ্গলমের বোন। শিক্ষাবিদ হিসাবেও তিনি পরিচিত ব্যক্তিত্ব। 'সংস্কৃতি' প্রতিষ্ঠানটি কার্যত তাঁর নিজের হাতে তৈরি। এর আগে তিনি দিল্লি পাবলিক স্কুলের অধ্যক্ষা ছিলেন। তাই তাঁর যোগ্যতা নিয়ে রাষ্ট্রপতিও প্রশ্ন তোলেননি। কিন্তু কমিটির মাধ্যমে নামটি কেন আসেনি, এই বিষয়ে তিনি জানতে চেয়েছেন।

ANADABAZAR PAPER

24 JAN 2004

# Nitish Establishes Sampark With Passengers

THUS SPAKE NITISH KUMAR:

Mr Speaker,

**S**ir, I rise to place before the House the Revised Estimates for 2003-2004 and the estimated receipts and expenditure for 2004-2005. The estimates for the next financial year are for the whole year, but at present I seek from the August House a "Vote on Account", sufficient to provide for the estimated expenditure for the first four months. The requirements for the remaining part of the year are to be voted separately, later on.

2. I would like to make special mention of some of the areas in which concrete measures have been initiated under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister. Thanks to his farsighted decision, the Railways have been able to embark upon the much needed programme of replacement and renewals of over-aged assets with an assured funding through the Special Railway Safety Fund, having substantial contribution from the general exchequer. The launching of the National Rail Vikas Yojana, for removal of bottlenecks in the saturated sections of the railway network, is yet another initiative. The Technology Mission on Railway Safety, announced on Independence Day last year, aims at developing and adopting state-of-the-art safety, control and design technologies. The capital component of Railways' plan outlay registered a considerable boost under his guidance, which facilitated completion of a number of projects. Further, Railways have also embarked on several non-budgetary initiatives including cost sharing arrangements to raise funds for various projects.



**Railway Protection Force being geared up to take over additional responsibility of train escorting & security in passenger areas**

## SECURITY

3. With a view to provide better security to passengers and passenger areas, certain amendments have been carried out in The Railways Act and The Railway Protection Force Act in the current session of Parliament. With these amendments Railway Protection Force have been entrusted with the additional responsibilities to inquire and launch prosecution in respect of certain minor offenses under The Railways Act and thus Government Railway Police (GRP) would be able to concentrate more on offenses of serious nature. In this context a high-level coordination meeting of Home Secretaries, DG(P)s and GRP Chiefs of various states was organised by the Ministry of Railways on 15th January, 2004. In this meeting detailed discussions were held regarding a coordinated approach in implementation of the aforesaid amendments. Thereafter, Railway Protection Force is getting geared up to take over the additional responsibility of train escorting and security in passenger areas with effect from 1st July, 2004. It has also been decided to institutionalize such security related coordination meetings with the states, to be held on 15th January every year.

## SAFETY

4. A "Workshop on Safety" on Indian Railways was organized on the 12th and 13th July 2003 at New Delhi, followed by similar workshops at zonal levels focusing on various aspects of safety, including safety consciousness, measures to enhance safety and positive steps to be taken by the rank and file of Railways. Christened as "Safety Samvad", this was a notable initiative to involve the grass-root level worker including the federations of staff and officers' associations. These "Safety Samvads" were mutually beneficial in that the awareness levels and commitment to safety among the staff increased while the administration was able to win the confidence and trust of the workforce through prompt follow up action on identified areas.

5. For the first time a "Corporate Safety Plan (2003-2013)" of Indian Railways has been formulated and presented to both Houses of Parliament on 19.8.2003. The safety targets for Indian Railways as a whole have been laid down in this safety plan. The zonal railways and divisions have geared up to implement the safety plan through their detailed action programme. Indian Railways are well set to achieve substantial reduction in consequential train accidents per million train kilometers from 0.44 in 2002-2003 to 0.30 in next four years, which will be one of the best safety standards obtaining in the world's leading railways.

## TECHNOLOGY MISSION ON RAILWAY SAFETY

6. As a follow up of the Independence Day pronouncement of the Hon'ble Prime Minister made last year regarding setting up of a Technology Mission on Railway Safety, action has been initiated and four Mission Programmes in the field of Traction and Rolling Stock, Track and Bridges, Signal and Communications and Fog Vision Instrumentation have been jointly identified by RDSO and IIT, Kanpur. Ministry of Railways has approved 14 projects under the four Mission Programmes. The Mission will be a joint effort between Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Human Resource Development and industry.

7. Successful trials of the Anti Collision Device (ACD), named as "Raksha Kavach", have been completed on the Railways. Surveys have been completed on 3465 Kms on Northern Railway, Northeast Frontier Railway, Southern Railway, South Central Railway & South Western Railway and are in progress on additional 10,000 Kms. Provision of ACD has been launched on 20th January, 2004 on Northeast Frontier Railway,

covering 1736 Kms of BG network and is targeted for completion by December 2004. ACD will be provided on the remaining Broad Gauge sections of Indian Railways, progressively in the next five years.

## SPECIAL RAILWAY SAFETY FUND - FINANCIAL & PHYSICAL PROGRESS

8. Special Railway Safety Fund (SRSF) was set up in October 2001 for execution of safety related works in a time frame of six financial years. I would like to inform the House that mid period review shows satisfactory progress. In the year of its inception i.e., 2001-2002 works to the tune of Rs. 1434 cr were executed under this fund. During the year 2002-2003, works totaling Rs 2486 cr have been carried out. Of this, Rs 1350 cr was contributed by the General Exchequer and the remaining amount by the Railways through levy of safety surcharge, supplemented by its normal revenues. In the current year, the total net allocation for SRSF was Rs 2311 cr as per the Budget Estimates, which included Rs 1600 cr as contribution from General Exchequer and Rs 711 cr from the safety surcharge. This has been further increased by Rs 40 cr in the Revised Estimates.

9. As regards physical progress, out of the targeted track renewal of around 16500 km to be carried out through SRSF track renewal of around 8500 km is expected to be completed by the end of the current year.

Rehabilitation of approximately 1350 bridges, out of the target of 2700 bridges to be rehabilitated, is likely to be completed by the end of the current financial year. Similarly, out of targeted placement of signalling installations at 1500 stations, replacement works at 444 stations are likely to be completed by the end of the current year. Further, about 1675 track circuits, out of 5300 track circuits to be provided, are also likely to be provided by the end of the current year.

## NATIONAL RAIL VIKAS YOJANA

10. As the Hon'ble Members are aware, the National Rail Vikas Yojana envisages removal of capacity bottlenecks in the critical sections of the Railway network, with an investment of Rs. 15,000 cr over the next five years. The projects under the initiative include strengthening of the golden quadrilateral, rail connectivity to ports and construction of four mega bridges. Works for all the sanctioned projects under the Yojana have been taken on hand, and most of the projects of the first two segments have been handed over to Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) set up for fast track execution of these works.

11. I am grateful to the Hon'ble Finance Minister, who has not only simplified the process of sanctioning of projects relating to the National Rail Vikas Yojana to be executed by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited, but has also provided the necessary financial support from the infrastructure development fund.

12. The Revised Estimates 2003-2004 provide a Rs. 500 cr outlay for RVNL, to be expended by the Nigam on these projects. During 2004-2005, the RVNL has planned an expenditure of Rs 1000 cr on these projects out of which Rs 300 cr are expected to be raised from the market.

13. The work on all the projects is going on in full swing and all efforts are being made to achieve the targets. I am also happy to announce that the Jammu-Udhampur New Line Project is nearing completion and will be completed before the target date and be opened to traffic on 25th March 2004.

## ADDITIONAL TRAINS/SERVICES

14. Most of the new trains, extension of services, increases in frequency and MEMU and DEMU services announced in the budget speech of 2003-2004 have since been introduced and the balance will be introduced shortly. Apart from these, 35 additional services including Jan Sadharan Express have been introduced during this year.

## TICKETING INITIATIVES

15. The frontiers of the much-acclaimed customer friendly computerized Passenger Reservation System (PRS) have been expanded further with the introduction of internet booking. Now, reserved tickets are also being delivered at the doorstep of the customer. On the unreserved side, where difficulties continued to persist, a major break-through was achieved last year with the introduction of computerized Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS), which has won the appreciation of the traveling public. It is proposed to extend the system further. With these steps, the entire ticketing system on Indian Railways has become state-of-the-art.

16. A new horizon is proposed to be covered with the introduction of e-ticketing in the reserved segment. A pilot project is being started on select Shatabdi Express trains, which will enable the passengers to get their reservations booked through internet and occupy their reserved seats on the basis of a computer generated slip.

17. The expansion of communication aids and the extra-ordinary penetration of mobile phones in the common man's life style



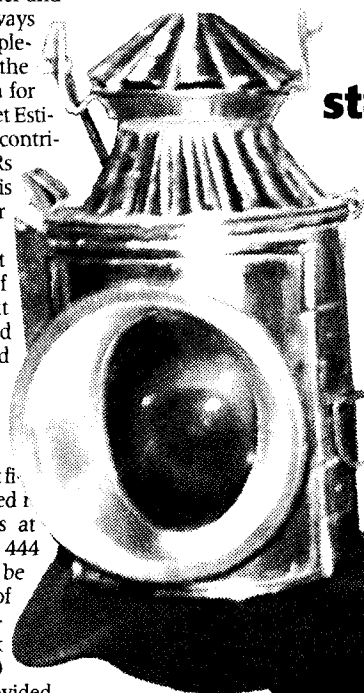
**To help passengers who travel at short notice, Tatkal services would be extended to all trains and all classes**

cannot be ignored by the railways. Passengers who so desire will henceforth be able to get their train reservations done through their mobile phones. The Indian Railway

Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has developed technical ability to enable cell phone operators to integrate their system with the Railways. This facility will be offered to all cell phone operators.

18. Enthused by the response to the experimental measure of reduced fares on select trains during the off-peak season, a regular incentive scheme for frequent Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Jan Shatabdi travelers in the first AC, second AC and chair car categories is

**A number of initiatives have been taken to improve the quality of service, strengthen safety and meet the expectations of the people**



being announced. The scheme would reward such rail travelers on the basis of journeys performed by them in one year time period. The traveler willing to avail of this scheme would be registered and be eligible for an additional complimentary trip after he has performed requisite number of journeys.

## TRAIN RESCHEDULING INFORMATION THROUGH SMS

19. In the event of delayed departure of Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Jan Shatabdi trains by more than 30 minutes, passengers who so desire can get information regarding this on their mobile phones through SMS. Initially this facility will be made available as a pilot project for such trains departing from Delhi area.

## EXTENDED TATKAL SCHEME

20. Presently Tatkal reservation scheme is available only in selected trains and primarily in Sleeper class only. With a view to fulfill the needs of passengers who have to travel at short notice, it is proposed to extend Tatkal services to all the trains and in Sleeper, Chair Car, AC-3 tier & AC-2 tier classes.

## REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE IN 2002-2003

21. I am happy to inform this August House that the optimism of improved loading in revising the target from 510 million tonnes to 515 million tonnes was justified as the Railways surpassed this target and achieved 518.74 million tonnes, i.e., a growth of 5.3% over previous year. Passenger kilometres recorded a growth of 4.4%. The "excess" of receipts over expenditure improved by Rs. 95 cr over Budget. This improved performance resulted in a better operating ratio of 92.34%. Actual Plan expenditure was Rs. 11,408 cr as compared to Revised Estimates of Rs. 12,315 cr.

## REVISED ESTIMATES 2003-2004

22. For the year 2003-2004, a target of 540 million tonnes of revenue earning freight traffic was laid down. Having loaded 407.15 million tonnes till December 2003, which is higher than the proportionate target. Railways are hopeful of not only meeting the full year's target but exceeding it as well. Accordingly the target is being revised to 550 million tonnes. Passenger traffic has recorded a growth of over 2.8%.

## GROSS TRAFFIC RECEIPTS

23. The trend of earnings has not matched our expectations in the Budget. Hence the Revised Estimates are lower by Rs. 890 cr and the Gross Traffic Receipts are revised downwards by an equal amount. The target for clearance from traffic suspension has been retained at the budgeted level.

## WORKING EXPENSES

24. Taking into account the trend of savings achieved to end of December, a net reduction of Rs. 1490 cr is expected in the Ordinary Working Expenses. The appropriation to Pension Fund has been reduced by Rs. 295 cr, consistent with the actuals so far. Taking note of the requirements, the appropriation to Depreciation Reserve Fund has been increased by Rs. 262 cr. With this, the Total Working Expenses stand revised from Rs. 40,850 cr to Rs. 39,327 cr, a reduction of Rs. 1523 cr.

25. As a result of these variations and a marginal reduction in the Net Miscellaneous Receipts, the Net Revenue is higher at Rs. 4,148 cr as compared to the Budget Estimate of Rs. 3,533 cr.

26. A provision of Rs. 2,933 cr was made towards payment of dividend in the Budget Estimates, which now stands revised at Rs. 2968 cr. With the improved availability of resources, discharge of deferred dividend liability, a beginning towards which was made during the last year, is being continued through a provision of Rs. 300 cr towards the same. Thus, the provision for dividend payment in the Revised Estimates has been increased to Rs. 3,268 cr.

27. With these changes, the "Excess" of receipts over expenditure works out to Rs. 880 cr as against Rs. 600 cr anticipated in the Budget. This is being appropriated to the Development Fund and the Special Railway Safety Fund.

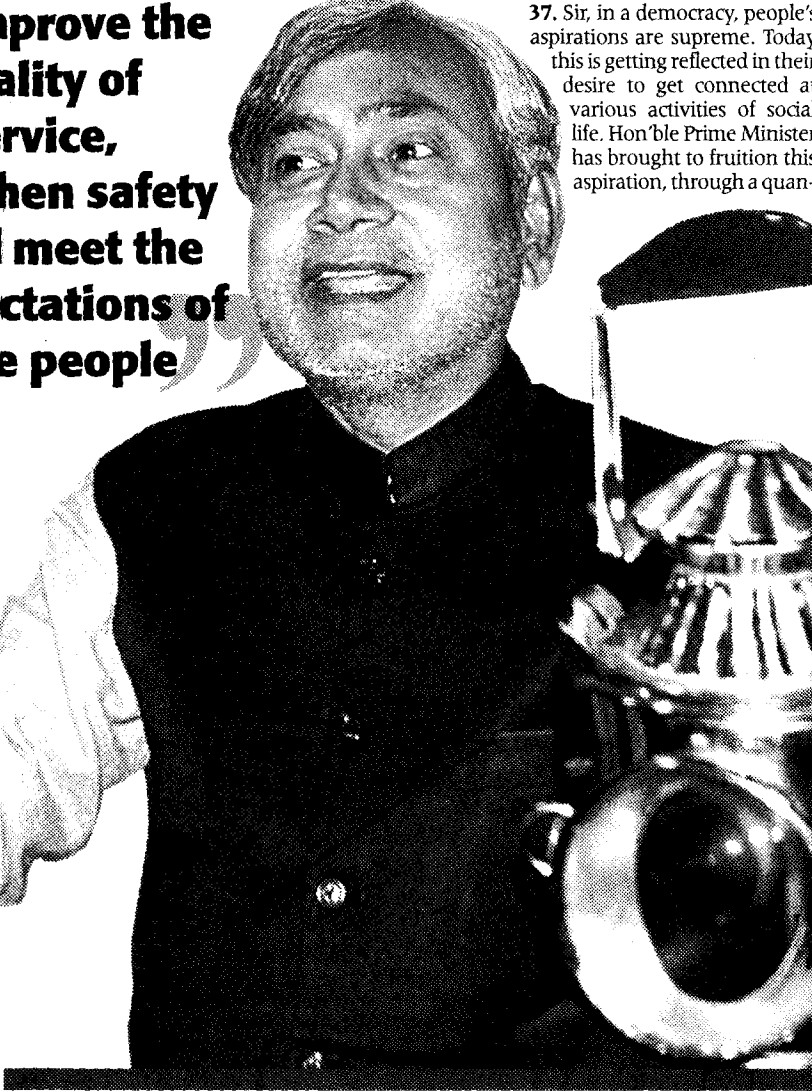
## ANNUAL PLAN FOR 2003-2004

28. The Railways' annual plan for 2003-2004 envisaged a total outlay of Rs. 12,918 cr. In the Revised Estimates this stands increased to Rs. 13,918 cr. The increase of Rs. 1,000 cr is contributed by the separate allotment of Rs. 500 cr for the National Project of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla New Line, additional budgetary support of Rs. 300 cr for increasing the pace of completion of certain projects and increased outlay of Rs. 200 cr in

normal maintenance and operations, on incremental basis. Apart from this, it is expected that there will be scope for indirect employment of nearly 55000 persons per year. The "Remote Area Rail Sampark Yojana" will go a long way in changing the economic and social scenario of the remote and backward regions of the country and bringing the people of these areas into the mainstream. Further, the demand for steel, cement, rolling stock, fittings, components, plant and machinery will also be generated, boosting the economic growth of the entire country.

## NEW SERVICES

37. Sir, in a democracy, people's aspirations are supreme. Today this is getting reflected in their desire to get connected at various activities of social life. Hon'ble Prime Minister has brought to fruition this aspiration, through a quan-



the internally financed segment.

## BUDGET ESTIMATES 2004-05 GROSS TRAFFIC RECEIPTS

29. I shall now deal with the Budget Estimates for 2004-2005. Gross Traffic Receipts for the year at the existing level of fares and freight are estimated at Rs. 44,482 cr. This is Rs. 1,877 cr more than the Revised Estimates for the current year, and is based on an estimated 3.2% growth in passengers and revenue earning freight traffic of 570 million tonnes, 20 million tonnes more than the revised target for 2003-2004.

## ORDINARY WORKING EXPENSES

30. Ordinary Working Expenses are estimated at Rs. 32,960 cr, representing an increase of Rs. 1,990 cr over the Revised Estimates for the current year.

31. To meet the higher pensionary payments due to increase in the number of pensioners and higher dearness relief, appropriation to the Pension Fund has been enhanced by Rs. 300 cr over the Revised 8 Estimates of the current financial year to Rs. 6,390 cr. The contribution to Depreciation Reserve Fund is proposed at Rs. 1,900 cr.

32. The Total Working Expenses are estimated at Rs. 41,250 cr, leaving Net Traffic Receipts of Rs. 3,232 cr. A sum of Rs. 993 cr estimated by way of Net Miscellaneous Receipts, and thus Net Revenue would amount to Rs. 4,225 cr.

## FINANCIAL RESULTS 2004-2005

33. Dividend to General Revenues for the year 2004-2005 has been computed provisionally on the basis adopted for 2003-2004 and works out to Rs. 3305 cr, which is proposed to be paid fully. In addition, payment of Rs. 300 cr is also proposed towards deferred dividend liability. With this, the "Excess" of receipts over expenditure works out to Rs. 620 cr.

## ANNUAL PLAN 2004-2005

34. The Annual Plan for 2004-2005 has been kept tentatively at Rs. 13,425 cr. This includes budgetary support of Rs. 4544 cr, internal resources of Rs. 2635 cr, an outlay of Rs. 2795 cr under the Special Railway Safety Fund and Rs. 401 cr under Railway Safety Fund. The extra budgetary resources have been budgeted at Rs. 3050 cr.

## REMOTE AREA RAIL SAMPARK YOJANA

35. Railways have a large shelf of over 230 projects worth about Rs. 43,000 cr, for construction of New Lines, Gauge Conversion, Doubling, Electrification and Metropolitan Transport Projects. Even with the enhanced budgetary support, non-budgetary initiatives under National Rail Vikas Yojana and other cost sharing mechanisms apart from Defence funding of some projects of strategic importance, there will still be projects valuing Rs. 20,000 cr which would remain unfinished even after the next five years.

A large number of these have been sanctioned on socio economic considerations with the intention of connecting remote and backward areas with the rail network. However their progress is very slow on account of inadequate funding, which causes dissatisfaction. Connecting these areas with the rail network will facilitate the economic and social development of these areas and will provide major employment opportunities during construction and thereafter.

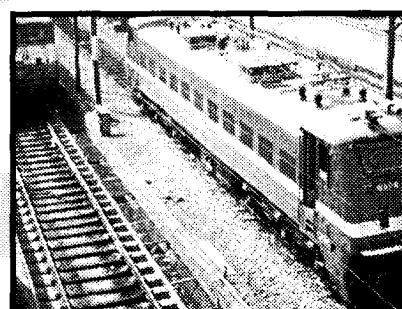
Keeping these factors in mind, it has been decided to speed up the execution and completion of these projects also in the next five years. I am happy to inform the House that this would be done through an ambitious 'Remote Area Rail Sampark Yojana', with an additional outlay of Rs. 20,000 crore.

36. This decision to accelerate the completion of all projects in five years is expected, on a broad estimate, to provide yearly employment to about 3 lakh persons during the construction period.

Once opened for traffic, these lines would also require about 18000 persons per year for

turn leap in all modes of connectivity, be it road, rail or communications. In fact, he has initiated "Sampark Kranti", that is to say, connectivity revolution.

Railways have always been a vehicle of connectivity. Therefore, a new series of trains to be named as "Sampark Kranti Express" will be introduced to provide quicker connectivity from a particular state to the national capital, with value added features such as non-stop run beyond the state, dedicated staff throughout the run and public address system. This service is going to be the first of its kind and the first train of this series, viz., Karnataka Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Bangalore (Yashwanthpur) is being introduced on 8th February this year. While it will initially run as a tri-weekly train, it will be made daily from 2nd October 2004. The other trains in this series would be (i) Poorvottar Sampark Kranti Express from New Delhi to Guwahati (ii) Andhra Pradesh Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Secunderabad (iii) Bihar Sampark Kranti Express from New Delhi to Samastipur (iv) Chattisgarh Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Durg (v) Gujarat Sampark Kranti Express from New Delhi to Ahmedabad



**A new series of 17 Sampark Kranti Express trains to provide quicker connectivity from states to national capital**

(vi) Jharkhand Sampark Kranti Express from New Delhi to Ranchi (vii) Kerala Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Trivandrum (Kochuveli) (viii) Maharashtra Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Mumbai (Bandra) (ix) Madhya Pradesh Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Jabalpur (x) Orissa Sampark Kranti Express from New Delhi to Bhubaneswar (xi) Rajasthan Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi to Jodhpur (xii) Tamil Nadu Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Madurai (xiii) Uttar Pradesh Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Chitrakoot (xiv) Uttaranchal Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi to Kathgodam (xv) West Bengal Sampark Kranti Express from New Delhi to Kolkata (Sealdah) (xvi) Goa Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi (Nizamuddin) to Madgaon (xvii) Uttar Sampark Kranti Express from Delhi to Udhampur, to cater for Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.

## CONCLUSION

38. Sir, a large number of initiatives have been taken to improve the quality of service, strengthen safety and meet the aspirations and expectations of the people from this lifeline of the nation. The House has always been appreciative of the total dedication to duty and commitment displayed by railway employees at all levels. The House has always extended kind support to the Railways in fulfilling its role of a vehicle for economic growth and social upliftment with financial vibrancy. I am confident that the Railways will always be able to successfully meet the various challenges ahead.

39. Sir, with this I commend the Interim Budget to the House.

## Chugging On Economic Well-Being Track

**E**IGHTEEN new trains between Delhi and the major states, promise of Rs 20,000-crore projects generating lakhs of jobs, e-ticketing and mobile booking for the tech-savvy middle classes, no hikes in fare or freight rates—rail minister Nitish Kumar has contributed more than a mile to the sense of economic well-being that figures so prominently in the ruling alliance's poll strategy. At the same time, his interim budget has managed to avoid the fiscal pitfalls of rank populism, with a creditable financial performance in the current year. He has chosen to focus on equipping the Indian Railways to take on the challenges ahead - including achieving a growth rate which is higher than the projected growth in the economy. Excerpts from an interview where the minister talked of a consolidation in the railways over the next five years, which he reckons would be reflected in a better balance sheet and spread a "feel-cheerful" factor

**Do you think there has been a real turnaround in the financial performance of the Indian Railways? If so, why?**

There has been a remarkable turnaround in the financial health of the Indian Railways. Growth based on most performance parameters has been higher than the overall economic growth. Better financial management, improved fund flows, buoyancy in freight traffic coupled with massive expenditure compression have helped put railway finances on a sound footing. We have not only discharged our dividend liability, but are also in the process of paying deferred dividends as well. The operating ratio, which is the barometer of efficiency, has also shown a distinct improvement.

**Are you planning to reconstitute your accounting system to make it more transparent?**

Yes, we are on course to reform our accounting system and have apprised the Asian Development Bank of the development. The process of appointing a consultant will be completed by April this year.

**Despite the buoyancy in freight traffic, why are revenue receipts from freight projected to fall short of the budget estimates this fiscal?**

The railways expect to haul 550 million tonne of freight by the end of the fiscal, which is 10 million tonne higher than the budget estimate. But revenues would be around Rs 800 crore lower than the budget estimate, mainly due to a decline in freight revenues. Earnings from petro-products are lower due to lowering of freight rates and volume discounts. Besides, average leads for all commodities have also come down. But the shortfall will be off set by the nearly Rs 1,500 crore savings in expenditure.

**The appropriation to the railway pension fund has been cut by around Rs 295 crore this fiscal. Have you made any provisions for meeting the pensionary liability for new entrants to the railways?**

Fresh recruits to railways will come under the new pension scheme announced by the government. The balances in the railway pension fund will be used to mainly meet the liabilities of pensioners or existing employees who will be entitled to pensionary benefits after retirement. Provisions will be made later to meet the future pension obligations of fresh entrants. We still have time since the new pension scheme has just been kicked off.

**Are the projects that you propose to undertake through the remote area rail sampark yojana commercially viable? How do you propose to fund this initiative?**

Expanding the rail network to remote areas cannot obviously be a profitable proposition. The railways have a shelf of over 230 projects covering new lines, gauge conversion and doubling valued at over Rs 40,000 crore. Since a large chunk of funds are earmarked for commercially viable projects, our objective is to accelerate the pace of funding for projects sanctioned on socio-economic considerations, valued at over Rs 20,000 crore. There will be no projects pending after five years.

**Where will the finances come from this initiative and what are the spin-offs?**

We will consider all possible measures including enhanced budget support for funding the remote rail sampark yojana. The initiative is expected to result in massive employment generation. Once the lines are opened up, at least 18,000 persons would be required every year for normal maintenance. It would also push up demand for steel, rolling stock and help bolster economic growth.

**What incentives do you plan to offer rail commuters?**

Beginning next fiscal, we will be introducing a scheme for frequent rail commuters on trains like Shatabdi and Rajdhani, similar to the frequent flier scheme on airlines. The details are being worked out. The other major customer friendly measure is the e-ticketing facility.

**You have announced the introduction of 18 Sampark Kranti Express. How different are these from the Shatabdis or Rajdhani's?**

The new series of 18 trains will have all classes and fares would be 15% lower than Rajdhani fares.

— OUR BUREAU