Bourgeois UPA driving Left into corner

PRESS TRUSTOF INDIA OF counterpart Harkishen Singh CHANDIGARH, MARCH 30

UPA Government for "marginalising" them and pursu-THE Left parties tocal and economic alternative through greater unity among themselves, slamming the Congress-led day called for a politiing economic reforms.

Senior leaders of the CPI(M), RSP and Forward unity" among them and to doors open to regional parties work for expanding their spheres of influence in the Hindi heartland and western Bloc suggested keeping the and agreed on a "higher level of

Bardhan and his CPI(M) CPI general secretary A.B. parts of the country.

was a "political necessity" but such backing was not for ever as Surjeet and other Left leaders said their support to the UPA it can be reviewed if the alliance deviated from the common

Bardhan said although evitability of the coalition at the Centre, "many of its leaders remain in old mindset and were rying to expand their political space ignoring other allies of Congress has accepted the inhe UPA and the Left parties". minimum programme.

the Congress' design was to RSP's Abani Roy alleged weaken the Left in Bengal and charged the party with hobnoboing with the Trinamool

UPA regime, particularly in ed-Bardhan said despite some corrective steps taken by the



counterpart Harkishen Singh Surjeet at the CPI's 19th CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan with his CPI(M) party congress in Chandigarh on Wednesday. PTI

the party will discuss a proposal

to create more posts.

sion. The UPA government is a ucation, foreign policy and agrigovernment...It culture, "we are under no illung with economic reforms with seems to believe that continubourgeois

not share this approach." The draft resolution also charges Congress with "wanting to cor-

ner the Communist parties"

the country's problems. We do

a human face is the panacea for

ing a second rank leadership of sented by general secretary time... Young comrades should be prepared for this," says the fort must be made for preparand state levels, who will be ready and equipped to assure leadership at proper organisational report to be precomrades, mainly at the central A.B. Bardhan on Friday. induction of "working class" AHE CPI is planning to add new rungs to its orladder effect more radical changes in social composition of the "proletarian" party with members. At its 19th congress

ganisational

More rungs, 'working class' cadre

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 30

SHÀFI RAHMAN

society and all minorities," says The party is also worried a perusal of the last session's credential report shows that of 660 delegates, only 192 were from the working class. "Party members from SC, ST and backward class sections of the must make efforts to recruit about its social composition— To start with, it will roll out a secretary. Andhra Delhi politics. "Conscious efred carpet for a new deputy tional profile and experience in

Pradesh CPI leader Sudhakar Reddy is the most likely candidate for the new post as the party plans to give him a na-

general

INDIAN EXPRESS 31 MAR 2005

BJP accuses UPA of variant voices

Our Political Bureau NEW DELHI 29 MARCH

HE BJP on Tuesday accused the UPA government of speaking in different voices on the sale of F-16 fighter aircraft by the United States to Pakistan — a proposal which, the party alleged, would provoke arms race in the subcontinent.

"This gov-ernment is speaking in discordant voices. There is no unified, co-ordi-nated apnated approach," charged former external affairs minister Jaswant Singh, adding, "the government of

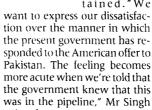
India, first of all, needs to clarify what the PMO meant when it let it be known that the prime minister had expressed great disappointment about this deal to President George Bush. Why this great disappointment when, just hours later, the ministry of external affairs officially conveyed a

different message on the issue?"

Mr Singh, while speaking to newspersons on the US offer, sought to highlight the differences between the PMO, on the one hand, and the Union defence and external affairs ministries on the other, and again, between the Congress and the Left parties, which are the ruling coalition's main prop.

"If the Prime

Minister says that we don't know what is being offered, it is a worrisome development. This amounts to saying 'I don't know what is happening," the senior BJP leader main-tained." We





JASWANT SINGH: BLAME GAME

pointed out.

Don't buy F-16s, LF tells govt

'It will fuel arms race'

HT Correspondent New Delhi, March 28

THE CPI(M) on Monday was critical of the government's positive reaction to the US offer to sell F-16s to India even as New Delhi kept up with its criticism of the US's deci-

sion to supply Pakistan with the fighter jets.

The CPI(M) cautioned the Centre that the deal would "fuel" an arms race between India and Pakistan.

The party politburo said, "The game of the Bush administration is clear. It intends to draw India into a strategic military

relationship just as Pakistan has been involved in one for decades."

Commenting on defence minister Pranab Mukherjee's statement calling the US offer to sell F-16s to India a "positive development," the party said the government should be wary of such offers. First, India was accessing defence equipment from a number of countries and experience showed the US could not be relied upon to be a dependable supplier.

Second, the US was trying

Second, the US was trying to draw India into its global strategic plans by asking the country to join the missile defence system. India should reject the proposal outright as joining the system would be tantamount to becoming a junior partner of the USA.

The party said India should not get involved in a strategic military alliance with the US at the cost of pursuing an independent foreign policy and forging closer ties with all major countries including China. An independent policy was also required

to ensure the success of the India, Pakistan and Iran gas pipeline project.

Meanwhile, keeping up the criticism of the US's decision to supply Pakistan with F-16s, the defence minister termed the decision as "ill-timed and inappropriate." "The US de-

ate." "The US decision to supply F-16s to Pakistan at this point is inappropriate and ill-timed since the two countries are engaged in a composite dialogue on improving bilateral relations," Mukherjee told reporters in Kolkata on the sidelines of the annual general meeting of the Indi-

eting of the inc an Chamber of Commerce.

Mukherjee said the F-16s were not for use for fighting terrorism but for waging a full-fledged war. Pakistan's track record proved that it has never fired a single shot towards any other country except India, he said.

Asked to comment on the US offer of selling military hardware to India, Mukherjee said that such an offer had never been made before.

He said that India would consider the offer to procure defence equipment keeping in view the requirements of the three services.

The Congress has called upon the US Congress to keep Pakistan's track record as a nuclear proliferator in mind before clearing the sale of the fighter jets.

"The US decision to sell F-16 is not only disappointing but also a matter of serious concern... It violates the long-stated policies of the US government as Pakistan is known for nuclear proliferation", party spokesman Anand Sharma told reporters.



PMO nips Modi claim

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 26: Narendra Modi's second attempt to embroil Manmohan Singh in the controversy over foreign trips has not gone down well with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Aware of the efforts of the

Aware of the efforts of the Gujarat chief minister and the BJP to use for political ends Singh's statement in Parliament against the US for denying Modi a visa, the PMO moved fast to nip a rerun in the bud.

Modi claimed on Thursday night that he had called off his UK trip on the "advice" of the Prime Minister following a phone call from Singh. The following morning, the PMO denied that Singh had called Modi.

The chief minister's office gave the impression that he was informed by the Prime Minister that there were intelligence reports from central



Modi

agencies of a "threat" to his life from radical Islamic groups which have a strong presence in the UK.

The official version from Gandhinagar was that if Modi still wished to go ahead, the Prime Minister advised the Gujarat police chief to set up a control room and coordinate with the British high commission and the Indian security establishment.

According to the Prime Minister's media adviser, Sanjaya Baru, Singh did not phone Modi. He also denied that the Centre had any information on any kind of terrorist threat to Modi.

Baru said it was home minister Shivraj Patil who called Modi to tell him that as the Gujarat chief minister was going on a private visit, the UK government was not in a position to provide him with any kind of security.

Patil informed Modi that there were apprehensions of a law and order problem and, therefore, it was advisable for him to reconsider his decision to visit London.

Making it clear that the decision to call off the trip was Modi's, Baru said that thereafter, the chief minister rang up the Prime Minister to inform him that the trip had been called off.

Modi stuck to his guns and insisted that Singh had advised him to postpone the trip. A spokesperson for the chief minister described as "highly unfortunate the denial of the facts" by the PMO.

Natwar to remind Yangon on oil dea

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA NEW DELHI, MARCH 23

ing his four-day visit to the ploration in Myanmar will be gon on its earlier high on External Affairs Minis-ROUNDby Yancommitment to allow Indian oil and gas companies to carry out on-shore exter Natwar Singh's agenda dur-

It's learnt that Myanmar has Oil India Ltd, Gas Authority of poration to place bids for exploration activity in blocks RSF5, tion to allow a consortium of India Ltd and Indian Oil Corretracted from its earlier posicountry starting Thursday.

RSF6 and RSF9. This was conwords, doors have been shut to mid-March. The fax from veyed as late as March 7 while the bids were to be placed by Myanmar's Ministry of Energy on March 7 said its government had decided to reserve onshore exploration for Myanmar owned company. In other foreign companies to pick up Oil and Gas Enterprise, a stateon-shore blocks.

which had finalised its bids after 🌞 an official delegation of Myanmet the Petroleum Secretary marese energy representatives headed by a deputy minister The denial came as a rude shock to the Indian consortium here on February 18-19.

Yangon shutting out explogation, which was accompaagreed to this and made an ofteam then visited Myanmar to turned on March 5. But two days later, sources said, they fer last month. A technical seek more clarifications and rewere stumped by this fax from nied by Myanmar's envoy here, ration to foreign companies.

activity in Myanmar. Sources. Yangon's attention to its earline India's interest in furthering oil and gas exploration said the reasons for Yangon's tumaround are still unclear Singh will look to draw lier commitment and underthough there are doubts over MOGE's financial links with

ONGC Videsh Ltd has other East Asian countries.

tionship as envisioned during for Yangon. Sources said New camps of N-E insurgents on its lems have cropped up in the A3 volved. In this context, India Myanmar Head of State Than picked up stakes in A1 and A3 blocks for off-shore exploblock where Daewoo too is inwill re-emphasise its willingness to iron out differences and strengthen the bilateral rela-Shwe's visit last October. Besides this, India is said to be working out a defence package Delhi will show its inclination to help Yangan in rooting out ration. But here again, probside of the border

Madagascar Foreign Affairs Minister with External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh in New Deihi on Wednesday. PTI

evinced interest to bid for exploration in the RSF6 block, Subsequently,

pany. The Myanmarese delewhich has apparently been vacated by Westburne oil com-

Left Gives In To Pranab Magic, LS Passes Patent Bill

Our Political Bureau NEW DELHI 22 MARCH

HE Patents (Amendment) Bill, which was seen as a test case of the Manmohan Singh government's ability to stay firmly on the reforms path, was passed by the Lok Sabha late on Tuesday evening. Some deft political management by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, who held detailed negotiations with the Left leaders on Monday night, saw the latter jettison their reservations on the Patents (Amendment) Bill and ensure its passage after a discussion lasting over five hours.

If the Opposition expected the ruling alliance to unravel itself under the weight of contradictions, it was disappointed. By managing to get the Left parties on board, the government's floor managers not only succeeded in removing the roadblocks in the Bill's passage, it also managed to turn the tables on the BJP and its allies, which had decided to oppose in an attempt to expose the differences on the Bill between the government and its main prop, the Left par-

ties. The Bill was passed by a voice vote, after the BJP and its allies staged a walkout from the House in protest against the government's refusal to accept standing committee.

In his reply to the discussion, anti-poor" move. commerce minister Kamal Nath



BJP, Allies Stage Walkout, Kamal Nath Says We Are Not Multinational Driven But National Driven

pointed out that the joint parlia- issue has been dubious," BJP mentary committee (had already spokesman Vijay Kumar Malhodeliberated the second amendment of the Bill for two years noon. "It's oft-repeated warning and, therefore, there should not to the UPA government not to be any differences on it now.

The third amendment, now become a joke," he added. sought to be passed, had been first moved by the NDA govern- mered out on Monday night bement in December, 2003. As the tween Mr Mukherjee and the Bill had been in the public domain for two years, the minister said he saw no reason why it should be referred to the standing committee again.

He also rejected the charge that the Bill, when passed, would benefit the MNCs. "We are not multinational-driven, but nationally-driven," Kamal Nath report within a month, and it requipped, adding that the UPA government would to everything to protect national interests. Having been rebuffed in its gameplan, the BJP and its allies would in the coming days be expected to train their guns on the their proposal to refer it to a Left parties for endorsing what it describes as an "anti-people.

"The CPM's role on the entire

tra alleged here on Tuesday aftertake its support for granted has

In keeping with the deal hamleaders of the Left parties, the government on Wednesday announced the setting up of an expert committee to deliberate on the two contentious clauses of patentability of micro-organisms and definition of a new entity as chemical/medical.

The committee will submit its mains to be seen whether the government will be in a position to incorporate its recommendations in a piece of legislation which had been passed only a month ago.

The remaining 10 amendments accepted by the government as part of the deal worked out on Monday night were only minor in nature, and in no way lessen the import of the Bill in its present form.

The Left parties, it is clear, were pushed into a corner. The promise to constitute an expert committee is only a face saver, nothing more.

Participating in the discussion, Rup Chand Pal (CPM) struggled to explain the Left's volte-face, describing it as "a paradox of history". The Left parties, he told the House, had been consistently attacking WTO and TRIPS, but the fact of the matter is that "we cannot wish them away".

"We have not changed our position," he argued, even as he sought to emphasise that the Left parties, in their discussions with the government, had convinced it that the amendments being pressed by them were in keeping with the UPA's Common Minimum Programme and were in national interest.

Expert panel to sort out communist dilemma

THE government has decided to get back to the Left parties on the outstanding contentious amendments in the Patents Bill within a month's time.

An experts committee, on which the two sides agreed last night as a mechanism to refer the contentious issue of microorganisms, will submit its report to the commerce ministry before the end of the Budget session in the second half of May. The government on Tuesday secured Left support to the Patents Bill, but not before segregating the amendments that the latter wanted to be part of the Bill.

The committee, to be set up by the commerce ministry, will comprise lawyers specialising in patent laws as well as experts in the area. Government circles on Tuesday maintained that the committee would look into whether the amendments suggested by the Left were TRIPs compatible or not.

Left reservations are primarily on the status of micro-organisms at a time when the WIO itself is reviewing its patentability. According to the Bill, microorganisms are patentable if they qualify the patentability criteria. Organisms as they are found in nature are not patentable. The industry has been saying that since the WTO itself is reviewing patentability of micro-organisms, India should not provide for it in haste—an argument that is being backed by the Left.

Political exigency led to support, say CPI, RSP

Our Political Bureau NEW DELHI 22 MARCH

ATTING itself on the back, big brother CPM on Tuesday managed to rein in its reluctant Left allies to support the Patents Bill. However, the smaller Left Parties did not share the CPM's air of bonhomie and candidly admitted they were supporting the Bill because of "political exigencies". The CPI and RSP, which had "serious reservations" about the new patent regime even

should have no reason to oppose the Bill.

In the House and outside, the CPI expressed apprehension about likelihood of increase in prices of pharma products. Participating in the debate, C.K. Chandrappan asked if the government could give an assurance that the medicinal requirements of people would be met at cheaper rates by domestic products. He said: "My party will support this Bill with all these fears in mind.

The RSP felt there were "grey areas" in the Bill even now. Party MPs said the RSP was in principle



after the agreement reached between the Marxist party and the government, had refused to support the Patents (amendment) Bill in the meeting of the Left Parties on Tuesday morning. While the CPI said it would abstain from voting on the Bill, the RSP wanted to oppose it.

CPM leaders holding separate meetings with the CPI and RSP and harping on Left unity to get their Left partners to vote in favour of the Bill. By Tuesday afternoon, the CPI agreed to support the Bill and later the RSP which felt it would be isolated if the CPI and the Forward Bloc was toeing the CPM's line. The CPM's plea was that since the government had agreed to most of the amendments sought jointly by all four Left Parties, they

opposed to the product patent regime which it felt will create a "catastrophic situation". It also want ed the government to make a suo moto statement on referring micro-organisms to an expert committee. The party which admitted that the Left had scored on several points, said it would sup-Things changed as the day went by with the port the Bill because of "political compulsions".

The CPM, which described its agreement with the government as a "big achievement for the Left", justified its support to the new patent regime by saying that the government had accepted its suggestions and was adhering to the Common Minimum Programme.

The CPM, which has been critical of the WTO and the TRIPs agreement, also said it cannot wish these away.

The Economic Times

Left springs surprise, supports patents bill 4

New Delhi: Left parties, known opponents of the WTO and Trips, sprang a surprise in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday by coming out in strong support of the Patents Bill, saying most of its amendments on the contentious measure have been accepted by the government. Amid thumping of desks from treasury benches. CPM's deputy leader Rupchand Pal said the Left parties have decided to support the bill as the Congress-led coalition has "accepted almost all our amendments.

Participating in a discussion on the bill, he charged the BJP

with not listening to the Left on issues like Patents Bill as that party was busy in its "communal agenda" while in power. Elaborating on its support which he himself described as "paradox of history," Pal noted that the Left parties had been consistently attacking WTO and Trips, but the fact of the matter was "we cannot wish them away. We have not changed our position," he said emphasising that the Left parties in their discussions with the government convinced it that the amendments being pressed by them were in keeping with the common minimum programme of the UPA coalition and were in national interest.

Taking a dig at the BJP-led NDA which had de-

LS passes bill pt



New Delhi: The crucial patents (amendment) bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday after commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath assured the house that adequate safeguards have been provided in the bill to protect the in-

terest of Indian pharma industry and the poor people. PTI

manded referring the matter to Parliamentary standing commit-tee, he said the saffron party should have some introspection as "people have already thrown you in the dustbin of history."

Earlier, commerce minister Kamal Nath rejected the demand of Bachi Singh Rawat and Uday Singh (both BJP) of referring the bill to parliamentary standing committee and "not rushing it through given the possibility of its major impact on the country." He said the Joint Parliamentary Committee has already deliberat-

ed on the bill for two years and, therefore, there should not be any differences now on it.

Pawan Kumar Bansal (Cong) said government had held extensive discussions with all political parties, including BJP which has failed to come out with a single amendment. He dismissed as "sweeping" BJP's charges against the government on the bill which, he said, was need of the hour. "No one should entertain any fear of any adverse impact on the country."

Ramjilal Suman (Samajwadi) said the bill would impact on the country's drug market. Alok Kumar Mehta (RJD), Lal Muni Prasad (BSP), C Kuppuswami (DMK) and C K Chandrappan (CPI) supported the bill. PTI

পেনশন বিলের বিরোধিতায় কক্ষত্যাগ করলেন বামের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ মার্চ: পেনশন বিলের গুরুদাস দাশগুপু জানিয়ে দেন, তাঁরা এই বিলের বিক্রজে। ক্ষেত্রে অনমনীয় অবস্থান নিচ্ছেন বামেরা। আজ লোকসভায় সংযুক্ত প্রগতিশীল মোর্চার সরকার তৈরি হওয়ার পরে এই করে তাঁরা কক্ষত্যাগ করেন। কেন্দ্রে বামেদের সমর্থনে পেনশন বিল পেশের সময়েই নিজেদের প্রতিবাদ নথিভুক্ত প্রথম বামেরা কক্ষত্যাগ করলেন।

প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েও তাঁদের আরও দুটি সংশোধনী মানেনি বলে করিয়ে নেওয়ার পরিকল্পনা করলেও সফল হয়নি। বিল নিয়ে এ দিকে সরকার আজ পেটেন্ট বিল আলোচনা করে পাশ আজ অভিযোগ করেন সিপিএম নেতারা। রাতে সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি হুমকি দেন, ভাদের সংশোধনী মানা না হলে তাঁরা করানোর চেষ্টা হবে বলে সরকারের তরফে জানানো হয়েছে। সমাজবাদী পাৰ্টিও ব্ৰোছে, কাল বিল পাশ ক্রানোর চেষ্টা আলোচনা কাল পৰ্যন্ত মূলতুবি হয়েছে। এ ক্ষেত্রে সরকার বিলের বিক্তন্ধে ভোট দেবেন। কাল ফের বিলটি পাশ

আজ সভায় পেনশন বিল পেশের সময়ে বামেরা বাধা দেন। সিপিএনের বাসুদেব আচারিয়া এবং সিপিআইয়ের

তাঁদের বক্তবা, বর্তমান সরকার ক্ষমতায় আসার আগেই এই করে। বিলটির বিরোধিতার প্রশ্নে তাঁদের মনোভাব চূড়ান্ত না; সরকার আগেই তা বিল হিসাবে পেশ করতে পারত। এ ভাবে সরকার সংসদকে এড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে বলে তাঁরা অভিযোগ 'পেনশন রেগুলেটরি অথরিটি' তৈরি হয়েছিল। কাজেই এত দিন পরে তা নিয়ে অর্ডিন্যান্স জারির কোনও প্রয়োজন ছিল করেন। বামেরা জানান, পেনশনের টাকা ফাটকা বাজারে করছেন। রাজনৈতিক সূত্রে খবর, সিপিএম নেতারা বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিল পেশের পর্যায়ে কক্ষত্যাগ করতে প্রথমে খুব একটা উৎসাহী ছিলেন না। কিন্তু সামগ্রিক অবস্থার প্রেক্ষিতে থাটানোর রাজা তৈরি হবে বলেও তাঁরা এর বিরোধিতা

জলে যাক এটা আমরা মানতে পার্ছি না।" পেনশন মলহোত্র বলেন, ''মানুষের কষ্টার্জিড টাকা শেয়ার বাজারে বিজেপিও ফাটকা বাজারে পেনশনের টাকা বিনিয়োগের বিরোধিতায় এগিয়ে এসেছে। দলের মুখপাত্র বিজয় কুমার রেগুক্লেটরি অথরিটি তাঁদের জমানাতেই তৈরি হওয়ায় তাঁরা বামপন্থীরা একযোগে সভা ছেড়ে বেরিয়ে যান। বিষয়টি নিয়ে অন্য আপত্তি তুলছেন না।

করতে কাল ফের এক দফা বিরোধী জোটের বৈঠক বসছে। বামপষ্টীদের কী সওদা হয়েছে আমরা জানি না। কিন্তু বানেরা প্রকান্ধ্যে অবস্থান নেন, তার সঙ্গে পেটেন্ট বিল সমর্থন কিন্তু তার আগেই মলহোত্র বলেন, ''সরকারের সঙ্গে করার সিদ্ধান্ত সঙ্গতিপূর্ণ নয়।"

গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পরামর্শ দিয়েছিলাম। কিন্তু জানি না সরকারের মনে াঁটিয়ে দেখতে সময় লাগবে।" সভার বাইরে বাসুদেব পেটেন্ট বিল সংসদীয় কমিটির কাছে পাঠানোর দাবি করেন। की जाएं ! (य मश्त्माथनी जाभारमत कार्ष्ट (मण्या राय़ष्ट, जा আচারিয়া ও মহমদ সেলিম জানান, সরকার এর আগে বারোটির মধ্যে সাতটি সংশোধনী মানলেও পরে আবার দু'টি ত্বে সিপিআই নেতা গুরুদাস দাশগুপু আজ লোকসভায় সিপিএনের নেতা রূপচাঁদ পাল বলেন, "আমরা সরকারকে

লোকসভায় বিল নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে না পেরে শাসক জোট তাদের ক্ষোভ উগরে দেয় বিরোধীদের উপরে।

বিজেপি আজ পেটেন্ট বিল নিয়ে বামপষ্টীদের আক্রমণ সোকসভার নেতা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় বিজেপিকে মনে করিয়ে বলেই তৎকালীন এন ডি এ সরকার আগের পেটেন্ট বিলটি টি ও-র সঙ্গে দর কযাক্ষি করে ১০ বছরের মেয়াদ আন্তর্জাতিক প্রতিশ্রুতির বিষয়।" উত্তরে বিরোধী দলনেতা কমিটির কাছে পাঠানো। বিজেপির তরফে সরকারকে প্রতিশ্রুতি দেওয়া হয়েছিল যে সংসদীয় কমিটির কাছে গেলে দেন যে ১৯৯৯ সালে রাজ্যসভায় কংগ্রেস সমর্থন করেছিল নিয়েছিলাম। সেটা শেষ হয়ে যাচ্ছে। এটা ভারতের পাশ করাতে পেরেছিল। প্রগববাবুর বক্তব্য, "আমরা ডবলিউ লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী জানান, সরকারের উচিত বিলটি সংসদীয় তার দ্ধত নিষ্পত্তি করা হবে।

ত্বরাঘিত করতে আজ বাম সাংসদদের একটি প্রতিনিধি দল ইঙ্কো বাঁচানোর জন্য সেলের সঙ্গে সংস্থাটির মিলনের প্রস্তাব প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করেন। এর আগে এক সময়ে রাজ্য করেছিল। কিন্তু ইম্পাতমন্ত্রী রামবিলাস পাসোয়ান তথন **ইঙ্কো নিয়ে**। সেলের সাথে ইঙ্কোর সংযুক্তিকরণ সরকারই এক বেসরকারি শিল্পপতিকে ইঙ্গো নিতে অনুরোধ দেন। বিষয়টি নিয়ে এখনও মন্ত্রিসভায় আলোচনা হয়নি।

Government introduces third set nendments to Patents Act

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 18. The Government today introduced the third set of amendment to the Patents Act, 1970 in Parliament to meet India's obligations under the agreement on Trade Re-Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and avoid any retaliatory action under the disputes mechanism of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The Bill replaces the patents amendment ordinance promulgated on December 26, 2004, to meet the deadline of January 1, 2005 to meet the commitment under the TRIPs agreement.

With this amending legislation, product patents will be introduced in drugs, food and chemicals sectors. All other fields of technology are already covered by product patent protection, in contrast to the earlier system of process patents.

In the statement of objects and reasons, the Commerce and Industry Minister, Kamal Nath, has described the time frame for this set of patent

nance as being "most crucial." Any slippage in meeting the deadline of January 1, 2005 had the potential of inviting a retaliatory action under the WTO disputes mechanism. Having availed itself of the entire tenyear period provided under TRIPs agreement, India had no legal basis to defend its default on the deadline, he said.

The past record of delayed implementation would also not have helped the Indian case, he said. This default would also have created a legal vacuum for "mailbox" applications for patents as there would not be any mechanism to deal with them after January 1, 2005. "Finally there would have been an erosion of India's credibility in the international field.'

Among the key features of the Patents Amendment Bill, 2005 are modifications of provisions relating to exclusive marketing rights, as they were part of transitional arrangements. It has also introduced a provision for enabling grant of compulsory licence for export of medicines to amendments through an ordi- the countries, which have insuf-

ficient or no manufacturing capacity to meet emergent public situations, a clause allowed under the Doha declaration on TRIPs and Public Health. In addition it has modified provisions relating to opposition procedure with a view to streamline the system by having both pre-grant and post-grant opposition in the Patent Office.

The Bill seeks to amend and strengthen the provisions relating to national security to guard against patenting abroad of dual use technologies. It also seeks to modify and clarify the provisions relating to patenting of software related inventions, when they have technical application to industry or in combination with hardware.

The other significant features of the Bill are amendments to provisions relating to the Intellectual Property Appellate Board to extend its jurisdiction to revocation of patents and also amend some provisions to harmonise them with the Patent Cooperation Treaty to which India is a signatory. The processing time for patent ap-

plications is also sought to be reduced as well as to simplify the procedure.

The Patents Act has already been amended in March 1999 and June 2002 to meet the country's obligations under the TRIPs agreement, which forms part of the agreement establishing the WTO. The statement of objects and reasons said, given the importance of this issue, the Government undertook broadbased and extensive consultations involving different interest groups on aspects critical to changes, which were necessary in the Patents Act.

Before carrying out the second amendment to the Patents Act in 2002, a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament examined all aspects and recommended various provisions to provide necessary and adequate safeguards for protection of public interest, national security, bio-diversity and traditional knowledge besides public health and nutrition. These recommendations were incorposecond rated amendment.

Government accepts many Left amendments to Patents Bill

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH. 18. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) today announced that the Government had so far agreed to incorporate seven of the 12 amendments suggested by the Left parties in the Patents (Amendment) Bill, introduced today to replace the Ordinance.

The discussions are on and as of now seven of the 12 amendments we had suggested have been agreed to by the Government. Of the rest, three more are likely to be accepted," the CPI (M) leaders, Rupchand Pal and Nilotpal Basu, said at a press conference. They said the opposition shown by some Left party MPs when the Bill ing. For instance, under compulso- was being introduced was due to a ry licensing, a country can have an application was filed during the TRIPs, Section 5 of the principal and application was filed during the ry licensing.

would continue the discussions over the weekend.

Mr. Pal said the introduction of the Bill to replace the ordinance was a legislative procedure. He, however, criticised the BJP's stand on the Bill. The party "had no moral right to oppose since it is their

On the suggestions agreed to, Mr. Pal said they included restricting the scope of patentability to modify definitions to describe "inventive step," "new invention" and "pharmaceutical substances;' hearing and extension of time for filing of pre-grant opposition, facilitation of pharmaceutical exports to the least developed countries; and compulsory licens-They access to patented products in transitional period of 1995 and Act would have to be deleted.

case of a natural calamity or, in case of an urgent need, can approach the patent-holder by payment of royalty, he said. There is, however, no agreement on royalty with the Left parties stating that it should be "nominal" and the Government saying that it should be 'reasonable." Another argument that in case of the least developed countries, which do not have production capacities, India, which has a strong pharmaceutical industry, could export to these nations under certain conditions.

Similarly, in order to take advantage of the flexibility available under the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), the Left parties suggest

2005, the patent regime should be applicable from the prospective date and should not have retrospective effect.

The CPI leader, S. Sudhakar Reddy, told The Hindu that just as Britain and France had taken steps to protect their national interest, India too should take steps. He said that since payment of royalties would become inevitable, the effort was to minimise its impact.

The All-India Forward Bloc general secretary, Debabrata Biswas, welcomed the amendments being brought in the Bill and urged the Centre to keep all options open to protect the country's biodiversity and public health. The party said that it would insist that in order to

Patent ordinance to lapse without support of Left

Our Political Bureau NEW DELHI 15 MARCH

HE fate of the patents ordinance appears uncertain with the Opposition and the UPA's allies, particularly the Left, refusing to support it in its present form. The ordinance will lapse on April 25 if the government fails to win over the Left's support for passage of the Patents (Third Amendment) Bill. The BJP ap-

Amendment) Bill. The BJP appeared determined to complicate matters for the government with its parliamentary wing seeking the Bill's scrutiny by a joint panel.

On his part, commerce minister Kamal Nath said he would table the Bill soon and seek the Parliament's direction. Taking a tough stand against the legislation, the Left on Tuesday demanded four major amend-

ments. The Left is not convinced by the government's claims that it had accommodated some of the suggestions made by the Left parties and said none of the major amendments sought by them have so far been accepted. CPM MP Nilotpal Basu has also written to the Rajya Sabha chairman saying his party would oppose the Rillifit is taken up in the House.

Bill if it is taken up in the House.

The Left has conveyed to defence minister

Pranab Mukherjee, who is also chairman of the group of ministers on patents, that it will oppose the proposed Bill unless the government accepted the four amendments, which include a provision to make patented pharma products available at cheaper prices.

The Left also wanted a royalty-based in-licensing system as well as reserving the term invention for a "new" product or process involving an inventive

step and capable of industrial application. This will help limit the number of applications and discourage frivolous claims. It has also asked the government to ensure that molecules discovered between 1995 and 2005 should not fall under the clause that every international application under the treaty designating India shall be considered if a corresponding application has been filed here.

Apprehensive that the government has not entirely explored the flexibility provided in the TRIPs agreement to protect domestic interests, the Left has been demanding that the Bill be referred to a parliamentary panel for wider debate. The Left had also pointed out that despite the TRIPs agreement allowing exports by manufacturers who produce through a compulsory license, the Indian Act did not explicitly provide for it.

Left parties will oppose proposed Bill unless govt accepts four major amendments, including provision to make patented pharma products available at cheaper prices

The Economic Times

18 MAC

Government is with you, Manmohan assures Somnath

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 16. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to-day called on the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, and conveyed to him that the Government was with him on the issues he had raised recently.

The meeting assumed importance in the wake of reports that the Government had distanced itself from the suggestion of the Speaker on the Presidential reference.

Dr. Singh, along with Pranab Mukherjee, Leader of the Lok Sabha, and Ghulam Nabi Azad, Parliamentary Affairs Minister, net the Opeaker at his residence this morning over breakfast.

The Prime Minister conveyed the Government's position to Mr. Chatterjee since there was some misinformation that it did not agree with the Speaker's stand, sources in the Speaker's office said.

The meeting, fixed at the request of Dr. Singh, lasted 40 minutes.

On Tuesday, responding to questions from television networks that the Government had apparently decided not to make a Presidential reference, Mr. Chatterjee was quoted as stat-

ing that he was not bothered about what the Government was to do.

Today's message was that the Government was in agreement with the issues raised by the Speaker. There was no reference to the upcoming meeting of Speakers of the State Legislatures called by Mr. Chatterjee on Sunday.

Speaker's prerogative

Later at the regular briefing, the Congress said there was no question of the party offering any suggestion to Mr. Chatterjee on whether or not to hold the meeting.

"The Speaker is the head of the legislature and it is his prerogative to convene a meeting of presiding officers," the party spokesperson, Anand Sharma, said. The Communist Party of India joined issued with the Bharatiya Janata Party/National Democratic Alliance (NDA) for attacking the office of the Speaker and suggested that it could move a no-confidence motion him.

It said that while the Speaker in his wisdom had called a meeting of leaders of different parties to discuss in camera the situation arising out of the Supreme Court judgment with regard to the Jharkhand Assembly, the BJP walked out.

It said the NDA suggestion to Speakers of Assemblies, where it was in power, to stay away from the Sunday meeting was tantamount to "dilution of the status" of the office of the Speaker — asking them not to act according to their own conscience but submit to the party directives openly.

Photograph on Page 12

Govt mends fences: No differences with Speaker ewheeling interview to PTI

Press Trust of India

there were no differences NEW DELHI, March 16. After a meeting between Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Lok Sabha Speaker Mi Somnath Chatterjee, the government today said

"The UPA government of the BJP-led NDA annois totally in support of the Mr Chatterjee in the wake Speaker," parliamentary am Nabi Azad said in an apparent effort to mollify uncing plans to move a noconfidence motion, which affairs minister Mr Ghul with the Speaker.

has since been virtually gestion in that regard. dropped

breakfast meeting with Mr Chatterjee. The Speaker nied the Prime Minister and defence minister Mr presiding officers of state Mr Azad had accompa-Pranab Mukherjee to the has convened a meeting of Assemblies on 20 March.

Mr Azad said there were government and that it was the media which had given the impression that no differences between the legislature and the there were differences.

He said the Speaker had never made any demand ence but only made a sug-

Mr Azad said the Speaker, as the head of a conference of Speakers and the coming meeting cannot be construed to be within his right to convene showing any disrespect to presiding officers, was well the judiciary."

the *lakshman rekha*' SC has crossed

Asserting that he was not a Constitution about powers "dummy" Speaker, an unfazed Mr Somnath Chareme Court had crossed the lakshman rekha set by the tterjee today said the Supof judiciary and legislature.

DAMAGE-CONTROL: Dr Singh with the Speaker in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

lating procedures of the legislature or Parliament, he asked in a frank and fre-Maintaining that the Constitution has expressly debarred courts from regu-

confidence motion, which it had since dropped.

what courts could do.

The Speaker said: "It legislatures at the highest matter as 'legislature vs would be a very sad day for level that they can be directed in any manner on matters solely within their am supreme in my area and the courts are supreme in theirs. But to put this constitutional supremacy. I judiciary' is an artificially created controversy." why could he not decide to trigger a "judiciary vs legislature" confrontation Supreme "Can I ask what the business should be? This The 75-year-old Marxist charges that he was seeking and that he was doing this Supreme Court's list of veteran strongly denied will be palpably wrong,"

he said in the interview.

Stretching the Supreme Court's order in the Iharkhand case, he asked: "Why can't I decide what the court has to do because I am also an authority. Can I say what He also ruled out his of the BJP-led NDA's moves for tabling a no-

khand Assembly case went

against anti-BJP parties.

resignation in the context

Court order in the Jhar-

because the

will be palpably wrong." Mr Chatterjee said he the Supreme Court's list of business should be? This

preme Court, probably to a larger Bench, for a revi-ew and a fresh decision. had the highest respect for "Therefore, I felt it appropriate that the matter should go back to the Su-But it is entirely for the President to make the refthe Supreme Court

at destroying Parliament or judiciary", Mr Chat-Expressing anguish over aving in a manner aimed terjee said: "It is a baseless criticism that he was "beh accusation against me."

erence."

Bitter Patents bill stings UPA once again

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

HE hurriedly-issued Patents Ordinance has stung the UPA once again, as both the opposition BJP and Left allies revolted on the day the amended Patents Bill was to pass muster in Parliament.

BJP spokesperson VK Malhotra said yet again that the amended Patents Bill was "not in the national interest" and demanded another round of discussions. The Left, which held consultations on the proposed amendments as late as March 10, was unprepared for a debate on Tuesday.

The Bill now looks all set to hang fire until Budget session closes in two weeks. Both allies and opposition have asked for a Standing Committee or Joint Selection Committee of Parliament to discuss the proposed changes.

The government has indicated it is ready for additional debate.

"We have had discussions. They have given their response on some issues today as decided on March 10. We are going to meet again for further discussions," commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath told reporters on the Left's opposition on Tuesday. He said he hoped the Bill would be introduced before this session ends.

India installed a WTOcompatible product patent regime on December 30 last year by way of a 'Patents Ordinance,' pending approval for a bill to amend the 1970 Patents Act by Parliament.

Discussions on the proposed changes began after January 1, the WTO's deadline for India to install product patents for pharmaceuticals and certain agrochemicals.

However, in two months, the Left parties have stayed with their caveats on issues that stalled a consensus before December 30.

The Left and BJP have separately asserted that prices of essential drugs will escalate and patents on extracts of traditional or agricultural products such as neem and basmati will proliferate after the amendments.

The domestic and MNC pharma players, have also taken sides in the debate, in attempts to preempt provisions that could hurt their interests.

Fears are, modified versions of patented drugs will stay in the market even after patents on original drugs have expired. On the other hand, established players have asserted that drug patents will incentivise improvements on existing and known innovations. The government has maintained a studied silence on most provisions, but denied taking sides.

Several health sector NGOs have also stressed that the government's December Ordinance and the proposed amendments to the patents bill go far beyond changes needed to meet World Trade Organisation TRIPS requirements.

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2005

NOT MUCH DIGNITY IN DEFEAT

THE CHANGE OF course in Jharkhand with the de-induction of Shibu Soren and the induction of Arjun Munda as Chief Minister is the United Progressive Alliance's attempt at damage limitation. But this has come after the coalition ruling at the Centre suffered a considerable erosion of moral authority and was also facing certain political defeat. The pro tem Speaker could throw up his hands and plead that the conditions in the House did not allow him to conduct the floor test according to the Supreme Court's directive, but it was obvious to the whole country that with the numbers against them, the UPA legislators were not allowing the vote to go through. The Supreme Court's worst fears of a fraud being perpetrated on the Constitution had thus come to pass and the continuance of Mr. Soren would have been wholly untenable. In Jharkhand, as in Goa, making a play for power was not just indefensible in terms of political and constitutional morality. It was bad political strategy as well, since in the unstable conditions sitting in the opposition could have worked to the advantage of the Congress-led UPA. The National Democratic Alliance's action in herding the MLAs together and keeping them in virtual captivity was disquieting, but it paled before the more grievous impropriety wrought by the Governor. It is some consolation that constitutional propriety has at last prevailed over unscrupulous hankering after power.

The Centre's claim that it had nothing to do with the Jharkhand Governor's decision or the happenings in the Assembly will find few takers: even if one were to discount opposition charges that the botched attempt to keep Mr. Soren at the helm was a conspiracy hatched in Delhi, at the very least it shows up grossly incompetent political management. In Goa, the Central Government stepped in and imposed President's Rule to undo the mess created by the Congress party; and in Jharkhand a transparently reluctant Mr. Soren was persuaded to resign. After the two episodes, the impression has gained ground that the UPA Government headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh is more virtu-

ous than the UPA as a political grouping chaired by Ms. Sonia Gandhi, and that within the UPA the worst are the likes of Mr. Soren and Pratapsinh Rane in the States. The sequence of events in Jharkhand vindicates the Supreme Court's action in ordering the floor test, though the question remains if it could not have achieved the same object through an order that was less hands-on and less intrusive into the domain of the Assembly's practice and procedure. While the issue of the court's powers in relation to the Assembly remains, the sordid sequence of events in Jharkhand may not provide quite the right backdrop to press for its resolution.

The Governor should have got it right the first time when it was obvious that the NDA rather than the UPA had the numbers, and it can be argued with justification that it was no mere error of judgment but gross partisanship that coloured his action. Public confidence that he would do right by his constitutional office has been lost and he ought not to be allowed to continue. Chief Minister Arjun Munda has been asked to demonstrate his majority support before March 21, but even if he wins the trial of strength the going may not be easy for him. His publicly displayed group of 41 legislators (in a House of 81) includes five independents whose support has come at a considerable cost -- all of them have had to be made Ministers. With the strength of the Ministry fixed at 12, just six spots are left for the Bharativa Janata Party and the Janata Dal (United) MLAs who will probably be accommodated in other offices including chairmanships of government corporations. What type of governance he will be able to provide in these circumstances remains to be seen. He needs to put up one from the NDA ranks as Speaker (who cannot vote except to break a tie) but after winning the vote he will be able to nominate an Anglo-Indian legislator whose vote he can count on. Overall, however, with the independents holding the balance and the opposition in a position to play the poaching game, the situation holds within it the seeds of instability.

পাইপ লাইন নিয়ে কূটনৈতিক দায়িত্ব মণিকেই

(Shiring

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল ● নয়াদিল্লি

>২ মার্চ: দায়িত্ব পেলে তেল-কূটনীতিকেও যে অন্য মাত্রায় নিয়ে যাওয়া যায়, তা দেখিয়ে দিতে চান একদা বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের ডাকসাইটে ব্যক্তিত্ব মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ার। প্রথম প্রথম এক্তিয়ারের প্রশ্নে বিদেশমন্ত্রকের সঙ্গে বিতর্ক থাকলেও সম্প্রতি প্রধানমন্ত্রী ক্যাবিনেট বৈঠকেই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন যে গ্যাস ও পাইপলাইন সংক্রান্ত পুরো বিষয়টি দেখভাল করবেন পেট্রোলিয়াম মন্ত্রী মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ার স্বয়ং।

জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ প্রসঙ্গে পাকিস্তান ও বাংলাদেশের সঙ্গে দিল্লির যে মতবিরোধ, তার জন্য গ্যাস পাইপলাইন প্রকল্প বার বার ধারা খাচ্ছে। এ জন্য মণিশঙ্কর নিজে ভারত-বাংলাদেশ-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে ত্রিদেশীয় কূটনীতিক সম্পর্ককে স্বাভাবিক করে তুলতে তৎপর। মণির ভাষায়, "এখানে মূল প্রশ্নটা অর্থনৈতিক। উন্নয়নের প্রশ্ন। অর্থনৈতিক উন্নতির কথা ভাবাটাই বোধ হয় আজ সবচেয়ে জরুরি।"

তাঁর বক্তব্য, গ্যাস পাইপ লাইন নিয়ে ইরান ও পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে যেমন ভারতকে বোঝাপড়ার প্রক্রিয়া এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে হবে, তেমনই বাংলাদেশ-মায়ানমারের সঙ্গেও। মণিশঙ্করের স্বপ্ন, বঙ্গোপসাগরকে প্রাচ্যের 'উত্তর সাগর' বা 'নর্থ সি'তে পরিণত করা। অতীতে এই সাগর ও সংলগ্ন অঞ্চলে প্রভত

পরিমানে তেল ও গ্যাস মেলে, যা ওই এলাকার অর্থনীতির চিত্রটাই আমূল বদলে দিয়েছিল। মায়ানমার থেকে বাংলাদেশ হয়ে ভারতে তেল ও গ্যাস আনার পরিকল্পনার মধ্যেও মণিশঙ্কর পশ্চিমবঙ্গ তথা পূর্ব ভারতের সমৃদ্ধির স্বপ্প দেখছেন। বাংলাদেশ-মায়ানমার ও ভারতের প্রতিনিধিদের নিয়ে গঠিত হয়েছে এক যুগ্ম ওয়ার্কিং গ্রুপ। এই গোষ্ঠী পারস্পরিক মতপার্থক্যগুলি নিরসনের চেষ্টা করছে। খোঁজা হচ্ছে তেল ও গ্যাস আনার এক 'শর্টকাট রুট'।

মণিশঙ্কর বলেন, ''ভারত যদি তেল ও গ্যাস আনায়, তবে যে সব দেশের মধ্য দিয়ে এটি আসবে তারা ট্রানজিট ফি' পাবে।'' কাজেই কেন্দ্রীয় পেট্রোলিয়াম মন্ত্রীর এই 'শান্তির পাইপলাইন' রচনার পিছনে আছে অর্থনীতিরও শক্তপোক্ত যুক্তি। এই কাজে পশ্চিম করিডরে ইরান-পাকিস্তান-ভারত, এবং পূর্ব করিডরে মায়ানমার-বাংলাদেশ-ভারত উপকৃত হবে। অটল বিহারী বাজপেয়ী যথন প্রধানমন্ত্রী ছিলেন তখন থেকেই এই পাইপলাইন নিয়ে কথাবার্তা শুক্ত হয়।

কর্মসূত্রে পাকিস্তানে থাকায় মণিশংকরের সঙ্গে সে দেশের সম্পর্ক খুবই ভাল। তা ছাড়া, তিনি ও পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী কাসুরি লন্ডনে একসঙ্গে পড়াশোনাও করেছেন। মণি জানালেন, ''এখনও লাহোরে গেলে ওর বাড়িতেই উঠি।'' এখন দু'দেশের

মধ্যে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া ফের নতুন উদ্যমে শুরু হওয়ায় পাইপলাইন বসানোর কাজেও গতি আসবে বলে প্রত্যাশা।

মণিশঙ্কর দায়িত্ব গ্রহণের পর এ নিয়ে ইরানের সঙ্গে কথাবার্তা অনেক এগিয়ে গিয়েছে। ইরানের বিদেশমন্ত্রী ও তেলমন্ত্রী ভারত সফর করেছেন বলে মণিও ইরান ঘুরে এলেন। কিন্তু ভারত-ইরান সম্পর্ক উদ্বিগ্ন রেখেছে আমেরিকাকে। ভারতে মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রদূত ডেভিড মালফোর্ড মণিকে উদ্বেগ জানিয়ে বলেছেন, এ ঘটনায় ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্ক যেন ক্ষতিগ্রন্ত না হয়। কেন না, মার্কিন-ইরান সম্পর্কের জটিলতা ঐতিহাসিক। এ বিষয়ে মণির বক্তব্য, "আমেরিকার উদ্বেগ সম্পর্কে ভারত ওয়াকিবহাল। আবার ভারতের শক্তি সম্পর্কেও আমেরিকা অবহিত। ফলে, আমরা একজন অন্যের অবস্থা বৃঝি বলে এ নিয়ে সমস্যা হবে না।"

ইরান থেকে তেল পাকিস্তান হয়ে না এলে সমুদ্র পথে ভূগর্জস্ত পাইপলাইন করতে হবে যা অনেক বেশি খরচে। একই ভাবে বাংলাদেশ রাজি না হলেও সমুদ্র পথেই তেল আনার ব্যবস্থা করতে হবে। ভারত-বাংলাদেশ গ্যাস পাইপলাইন বসাতে সক্রিয় ছিল যে মার্কিন সংস্থা ইউনোক্যাল, এন ডি এ জমানায় দু দেশের মধ্যে এ নিয়ে কোনও অগ্রগতি হচ্ছে না দেখে তারা ভারত থেকে অগ্রিম তুলে নিয়ে চলে যায়। এখন এ কাজে গতি এনেছেন মণিশঙ্কর। গেইল-এর প্রধান প্রশান্ত বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় এবং ও এন জি সি-র প্রধান সুবীর রাহাও এই প্রকল্পে এখন খুবই সক্রিয়।



Over to the Court

And UPA Should Bow Out In Jharkhand

THE Centre has decided that there is no need for a presi-THE Centre has decided that there is no need to dential reference on the Supreme Court's ruling on Wednesday infringing on the rights of Jharkhand's legislature. But that does not mean that the court can choose not to reckon with the validity or otherwise of its directives on establishing whether the Jharkhand chief minister enjoys majority support. The court has been denied that luxury by the actions of the pro-tem Speaker of Jharkhand, who has refused to comply with the apex court's directive to conduct the confidence vote on Friday, leave alone videograph the proceedings. Pro-tem speaker Pradip Kumar Balmuchu has taken the stand that it is the job of the Speaker, not of the pro-tem Speaker, to conduct a confidence vote. Now, the confidence vote will take place presumably on Tuesday after the Speaker is elected. It is difficult to fault Mr Balmuchu. Now it is up to the Supreme Court to decide how it should react to the Jharkhand House's failure to comply with its directive. Should it initiate contempt proceedings or would it be more appropriate for the court to revise its own orders on what and how the Jharkhand MLAs should do. It is pertinent to recall that the court has, on an earlier occasion, shown the grace to correct itself in the case of a directive issued to the Election Commission, and challenged by the Commission.

Grace would sit well on the United Progressive Alliance as well. The decent course of action in Jharkhand would be for the UPA to accept that it does not have a majority and for Mr Shibu Soren to resign before the House convenes again. That alone would undo the misdeed done by the governor when he swore Mr Soren in as chief minister, using a piece of discretion that needs to be excised from the Constitution. Chief ministers should be chosen by the collective will of elected legislators, not the partisan benediction of governors. Instead of inviting anyone from the elected legislators to form the government and then prove his majority, the governor should simply call upon the House to elect a leader and then swear him in as chief minister.

The Economic Time:

CENTRE FORCES SOREN'S EXIT

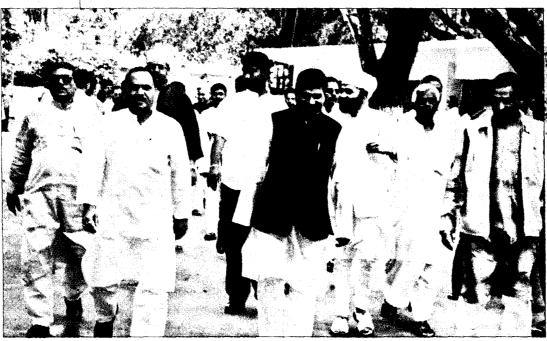
SNS & PTI

RANCHI/NEW DELHI, March 11. — Capping a day of dramatic developments, Jharkhand chief minister Mr Sibu Soren tonight resigned after his failure to prove his majority in the Assembly as directed by the Supreme Court. His resignation paved the way for the installation of a BJPled NDA government to be headed by Mr Arjun Munda, who will be sworn in tomorrow.

Putting up a last-minute resistance of sorts before Governor Syed Sibtey Razi, who asked him to quit, Mr Soren refused to tender his resignation during the hour-long meeting. He went home and only after some persuasion by some Congress leaders did he announce his resignation at a press conference close to midnight, the deadline set by the Supreme Court for completing the trial of strength.

The die was cast in Delhi shortly before Mr Soren's meeting with Mr Razi when Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patil said after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs that constitutional propriety demanded that Mr Soren resign. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh was reportedly upset at the constitutional "deadlock" created by the pro two: Speaker's failure to hold the trial of strength as he set himself on a collision course with the Supreme Court.

In what was one of the final acts of the sordid drama that began after the Jharkhand Assembly polls, the Governor was requested by the Centre to dismiss the government of Mr Soren and appoint former BJP chief minister Mr Arjun Munda to the post.



THORNY ROAD TO POWER: NDA MLAs on way to the Jharkhand Assembly for the trust vote which wasn't. -- PTI

At the late night CCPA meeting, the Centre decided that Mr Munda should be given a chance to prove his majority. the Union home minister said.

Earlier in the day, pro-tem Speaker Mr Pradeep Kumar Balmuchu played spoilsport in the Assembly. He had adjourned the House till 15 March without calling chief minister Mr Soren to prove his majority.

The NDA had 41 of the 81 legislators; the UPA 38 (excluding the pro-tem Speaker) and the lone NCP minister, Mr Kamlesh Singh, who abstained from the day's proceedings in the House citing ill health.

For a change, it was the members of the Treasury Benches who disrupted the proceedings no less than five times on the plea that the pro-tem Speaker has no right to conduct the vote

of confidence.

When the House met at 11 a.m., parliamentary affairs minister Mr Girinath Singh said the pro-tem Speaker is appointed to swear in the members and conduct the Speaker's election, but not the trust vote. Mr Upendra Das of JD-U said the Supreme Court ruling allowing the pro-tem Speaker to conduct the vote should be followed. JD-U's Mr Inder Singh Namdhari said since the matter was placed on the proceedings' list, the pro-tem Speaker had given his consent. "Then why the afterthought?" He wondered if a message had come from Delhi (read Mrs Sonia Gandhi) to stall the confidence motion. His remark led to protracted protests by UPA members.

More reports on page 4

10.50 a.m.: All 41 11.42 a.m.: Ruckus continues, Speaker adjourns House till 12 noon.

NDA MLAs enter House. 10.52 a.m.: UPA MLAs trickle in one by one. 11 a.m.: Pro-tem Speaker arrives. 11.02 a.m.: Assembly secretary announces

names of MLAs who skipped swearing in. They are Mrs Aparna Sengupta, Mr Bhanu Pratap Shahi and Mr Kamlesh Singh. However, none of them turns up.

11.03 a.m.: Girinath Singh tells the House that pro-tem Speaker cannot conduct a trial of strength.

11.15 a.m.: UPA members rush towards the Well following remarks made by Mr Inder Singh Namdhari. 11.20 a.m.: Pro-tem Speaker adjourns House till 11.40 a.m. 11.40 a.m.: House resumes. Enter Mr Shahi and Mrs Sengupta

(Forward Bloc), Both sit on the UPA

side and are administered oath.

2.20 p.m.: Fifth adjournment. 3.30 p.m.: House adjourned for the sixth time after resuming at 3 p.m. 10:15 p.m.: Centre asks Sibu Soren to resign. 11:45 p.m.: Soren resigns. Midnight: Arjun Munda appointed CM, to take oath on Saturday

Aparna Sengupta (right) with Forward Bloc MP Debabrata Biswas (left). - PTI

Noon: House resumes but Treasury Bench continues to disrupt House.

12.15 p.m.: House resumes. Ruckus

Adjourned till 12.15 p.m.

continues. Adjournment No. 4.



Centre not keen on presidential reference

NEW DELHI, March 11. — The Centre is "not keen" to immediately request the President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, to send a reference to the Supreme Court regarding the alleged "interference in legislative matters by the judiciary" as it could "precipitate matters" and lead to a bigger confrontation between the government and the judges.

While senior Congress leaders seemed to prefer caution at this morning's core committee meeting of the party, atteried by Mrs. Conia Gandhi, Dr Manmohan Singh, other Cabinet ministers and party leaders. the Left parties and some of the allies appeared to favour pushing the presidential reference issue. It could be made some time later when the Jharkhand issue is solved one way or the other and tempers cool down. Then, a reference could be a serious constitutional question as opposed to a burning political issue. Senior Congress leaders are talking of two possible ways of sorting out the crisis. First, it could be taken up unofficially, if for example, the Prime Minister met the Chief Justice of India, Mr RC Lahoti, over a cup of tea and thrashed out the issue. The second point

being made is the problem of escalation of conflict if the reference is sent. "The reference is regarding the Supreme Court's directive on the elections in Jharkhand. The order came from the Chief Justice himself and two other judges. Supposing the full Bench discusses the issue and makes the same point, it will be embarrassing for the government," a senior party leader said. If the Chief Justice had not been involved, there could have been some leeway.

Law minister Mr HR Bharadwai also appeared to indicate that the government does not want to raise the stakes and confront the judiciary. In any case, a Cabinet meeting needs to clear such a decision and one hasn't been planned as yet. It could be tomorrow but many Cabinet ministers are going to Ahmedabad for the re-enactment of the Dandi March.

There is also a realisation that the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, who pushed the issue, could be embarrassed if there is absolutely no effort by the Centre. During the meeting, Mr Pranab Mukherjee said that further discussions at the highest level were necessary at this stage. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

SC order defied, Centre makes Soren quit

MARKHAND | Late night CCPA sends marching orders, Speaker's idea of Presidential reference shot down

KOTA NEELIMA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

OURS after the Jharkhand protem Speaker defied Supreme Court's order on the confidence vote, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) met to seal the fate of the Shibu Soren Government. Soren was called by Governor Syed Sibtey Razi to the Ranchi Raj Bhavan and told to put in his papers. The development came after a day of drama and defiance in the Ranchi Assembly where the NDA which had 41 MLAs was not allowed to vote out the minority Soren government.

The Prime Minister, it's learnt, also met CPI(M) leaders Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Prakash Karat ahead of the CCPA and discussed the Jharkhand mess. He is believed to have told them that the government had to find a way out of the problem.

Earlier in the day, when the Jharkhand Assembly ignored court directions and adjourned until March 15, the Centre decided it would not go in for a Presidential reference and instead "obey the apex court's ruling."

the apex court's ruling."

Law Minister H R
Bharadwaj told *The Indian*

Express: "It is the duty of the government to abide by whatever order is given by the Supreme Court. The order should be obeyed in the Jharkhand case too." On the all-party meeting, he maintained: "It was called by the Speaker and is a completely different issue."

The suggestion to seek a Presidential reference had come from Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee who, after an all-party meeting last evening, suggested such a step to "restore constitutional balance." He said the SC ruling on Jharkhand had led to "a disturbing situation."

Upset over the government's decision to ignore his suggestion, the Speaker has now decided to convene a meeting of state presiding officers on March 20 to discuss separation of powers of the three organs of the state.

Meanwhile, UPA leaders met to discuss the matter during the day. Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh were present at the meeting in which legal and constitutional aspects of the Jharkhand case were discussed.

While the Congress maintained that the leaders took a "general review of the political situation" in the country, it's learnt that they

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



UPA MLAs enter the Jharkhand Assembly where they later disrupted proceedings throughout the day

Soren hides behind Somnath

Pro-tem speaker doesn't allow vote, puts off session to March 15

DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR & MANOJ PRASAD

RANCHI, MARCH 11

WOEFULLY short of numbers, the Shibu Soren government clung on to power today by citing Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee's criticism of the judiciary's "encroachment" on legislative matters. Defying the Supreme Court order to hold the confidence vote on March 11, pro-tem speaker Pradip Balmuchu convened the House again on March 15, the date earlier fixed by Governor Syed Sibtey Razi.

In five incredible hours inside the legislative Assembly in Ranchi, Soren's front made a travesty of democratic process as the NDA was not allowed to vote out the minority government though its 41 legislators were present in the 81-strong House.

According to the court's directives, 16 video cameras recorded the dramatic proceedings. Balmuchu played out the Speaker's role in the five-hour farce with remarkable histrionic skills. Every time the treasury benches provoked an adjournment, Balmuchu delayed his decision, raised his voice and fol-

lowed the rulebook with a great degree of precision. He ordered each adjournment with a shrug as though he had not authored the script. The House had to be adjourned five times, deferring the tabling of the confidence motion (which was listed Business of the House according to the printed agenda) till late afternoon.

Around 3.40 p.m., the protem Speaker, instead of ending the charade and asking the legislators to vote on the confidence motion, began reading out a carefully worded statement. The statement questioned the

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Infuriated NDA targets Speaker, plans to go back to SC & Kalam

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

INFURIATED by the "cheating" in Ranchi, a belligerent NDA plans to mount a three-pronged attack on the Centre to counter what it termed a "complete breach of the Constitution" and "subversion of democratic institutions" in the Jharkhand Assembly today.

The three steps under consideration,



NDA leaders said, were a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee for his criticism of the Supreme Court interim order on the Jharkhand trust vote issue; moving the Supreme Court again CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NDIAN EXPRESS

वर्षार्य मश्याट जिल ना किस भूषिय (क्रिटिंद अट्टिंग) भूष्या वानम् भूय (द्वार्ट्स,

এজিয়ারের বিষয়ে সংবিধানের ১৪৩ ৷ সংবিধানের কোনও শাখার সঙ্গে বলেছেন, তা খতিয়ে দেখা দরকার।" গুওয়া নিয়ে আপাতত কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত মাৰ্চ: বিচারব্যবস্থা ও আইনসভার ধারার আওতায় সুপ্রিম কোর্টের ব্যাখ্যা নল না ইউপিএ সরকাব।

সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকে কাল এই বিষয়ে প্রায় ঐকমত্য হয়ে গিয়েছিল। কিন্তু সিংহের সরকার এই ব্যাপারে দেশের भरवीक ष्यामांनरञ्ज भरत्र भश्यार কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার সূত্রে খবর, ঝাড়খণ্ডের প্ৰশ্নে সৃত্তিম কোৰ্টের কাছে রাষ্ট্ৰপতির তাড়াহুড়ো করতে চায় না। মনমোহন যাচ্ছে বলে বার্তা যেতে পারে, এমন মাধ্যমে ব্যাখ্যা চাওয়া নিয়ে তারা কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে না।

কোর্টকে সম্মান করি। তার সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রীয় আইনমন্ত্রী এইচ কে ভরষাজ বলেছেন, ''আমরা সুপ্রিম সংঘাতের কোনও ইচ্ছা আমাদের নেই।" তবে আজকের মতো ১৪**৩**

দিয়েছে। এখন রাষ্ট্রপতির মাধ্যমে ব্যাখ্যা চাইলে প্রধান বিচারপতির যদি একই মনোভাবের উপরে মোহর নেতৃত্বাধীন সুপ্ৰিম কোৰ্টের পূৰ্ণাঙ্গ বেঞ্চ লাগিয়ে ফেরত পাঠিয়ে দেয়, তা হলে সরকার আরও বিভ্ষনায় পড়বে। সংঘাতে যেতে। কিন্তু স্পিকার কাল যা অবশা নিজের মনোভাবই বজায় "কোনও পরিণত সরকার চাইবে না স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়

তা ছাড়া, ঝাড়খণ্ড নিয়ে সপ্ৰিম কোটের নির্দেশ পুনর্বিবেচনা বা উল্টে সংবিধান-বিশেষজ্ঞ ফলি নরিম্যানের কথায়, "রাষ্ট্রপতির মাধ্যমে ব্যাখ্যা আইনসভার এক্ডিয়ারের বৃহৎ পরিধির বিষয়ে। বিচারবাবস্থা কত দূর পর্যন্ত পারে, সেই বিষয়ে। এর সঙ্গে ঝাডখণ্ড আইনসভার কাজে হস্তক্ষেপ করতে দেওয়ার প্রশ্ন নেই। রাজ্যসভার সদস্য, বিচারপতি নিজের৷ বসেও আলোচনা হবে বিচারবিভাগ বিচারব্যবস্থা ও আইনসভার এক্ডিয়ার নিয়ে রাষ্ট্রপতির মাধ্যমে ব্যাখ্যা চাওয়া দরকার। আজ এই নিয়ে তাঁর মন্তব্য, "কে কী বলেছেন, আমি জানি না। আমি কালকের বক্তব্য থেকে একটা শকও বাদ দিচ্ছি না, কোনও শক যোগও করছি না।" সোমনাথের সিদ্ধান্তকে আজ সমর্থন করেছেন প্রবীণ সুপ্রিম কোর্টের কাছে ব্যাখ্যা চাওয়ার বিষয়ে কেন্দ্রের এই তাড়াছড়ো না-করতে চাওয়ার বেশ কয়েকটি কারণ সি লাহোটির নেতৃত্বাধীন বেক্ষ ঝাড়খণ্ড রেখেছেন। কাল তিনি বলেন, সুপ্রিম কোর্টের প্রধান বিচারপতি আর

সিপিএম নেতা জ্যোতি বসূত।

বিধানসভার ভোটাভুটি নিয়ে নির্দেশ 'করে নিতে পারেন। নরিম্যানের বক্তব্য, সাসংদ গুরুদাস দাশগুপুও বলেন, "যে সুপ্রিম কোর্টই। তাই রাষ্ট্রপতির মাধ্যমে তার কাছ থেকে ব্যাখ্যা চাওয়ায় তো "আইনের ব্যাখ্যার ক্ষেত্রে শীর্য মঞ্চ তো কোও অসমান নেই।"

বারবার শাসন জারি করার জন্যই এই ভাবে জে ডি ইউ-এর প্রভুনাথ সিংহ বা বিধানসভার অধিবেশন স্থগিত করে বিজেপি জোটের সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতা থাকলেও কেন্দ্র ঝাড়খনেও রাষ্ট্রপতির সভানেত্রীও কি এই কাজে জড়িয়ে ?'' দেওয়া হচ্ছে তথন লোকসভাও এই নিয়ে সরব হয়। এনডিএর বক্তব্য ছিল, র বিজয়কুমার মলহোত্র বলেন, "আমার মনে হচ্ছে, আস্থাভোট নেওয়া হবে না। প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং কংগ্রেস শিবসেনার অনন্ত গীতের বক্তব্য ছিল, বিধানসভায় হইচই পাকাচ্ছে। বিজেপি-কাড়খন্তে যথন

সরকারের শরিক সিপিআইয়ের

ঘটনাবলির সঙ্গে যুক্ত নয়। আমরাও দেওয়া উচিত হয়নি।" কংগ্রেস নেতা তা আমরা সমধন করি না। শিব সোরেনকে সরকার গড়ার সুযোগ সব কাজের সুযোগ করে দেওয়া হচ্ছে চাই, ঝাড়খণ্ডে সিদ্ধান্ত হোক প্ৰণৰ মুমোপাধ্যায় অবশ্য বলেন

বিধানসভায়। "

মনমোহন সিংহের বাড়িতে বসেছিল আজ সকালে এনডিএ-র বৈঠক লজ্যনের ঘটনা হয়েছে, তখন রীতি রাষ্ট্রপতির মাধ্যমে ব্যাখ্যা চাওয়া হবে ভাকা হয়েছিল। অন্য দিকে, প্রধানমন্ত্রী কংগ্ৰেসের 'কোর গ্রুপ'-এর বৈঠক

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

NDA no-trust threat to Somnath er for "repeatedly referring to ChatterTo belie the perception that there es majority rule. It accused the Company and demand that Driver and D

New Delhi, March 11: The NDA has threatened to move a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee for suggesting that a presidential reference be made to the Supreme Court following a ruling to advance the Jharkhand trust vote.

The motion will be the first of its kind if the NDA goes ahead with its

The BJP-led coalition is planning to keep the heat on the UPA by meeting President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to apprise him of the Speaker's "unconstitutional" behaviour.

The alliance might also get its leader Arjun Munda to move a contempt petition in the apex court against the Jharkhand Assembly's pro tem Speak-

jee's statement" and demand that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chatterjee make statements in the House.

With the Ranchi tug-of-war raging on, the NDA has met twice under the chairmanship of BJP president L.K. Advani. But the "strategy sessions" were also meant to be demonstrations of solidarity after the BJP found itself isolated at an all-party meeting convened yesterday by the Speaker.

The BJP's representatives walked out after presenting their case while partners, including its most steadfast ally, the Janata Dal (United), stayed on. They lent their voice to the dominant opinion that the jurisdictions of the judiciary and legislature, as spelt out by the Constitution, should be respected.

are cracks in the NDA, the meeting passed a resolution that went half-way to enshrine the allies' viewpoint while retaining the core thrust of the BJP's stand.

The NDA believes that both the legislature and the judiciary are supreme in their own fields," it said, echoing Chatterjee.

"However, the ultimate supremacy is of the Constitution. Both must subserve the purpose and goals enshrined in the Constitution. The role of the central government, the UPA, the governor and the pro tem Speaker of the Jharkhand Assembly is extremely disturbing," the resolution

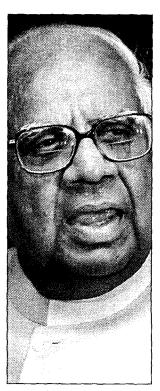
Endorsed by all NDA allies, the resolution said the Constitution envisages majority rule. It accused the Centre, the governor and the pro tem Speaker of "conspiring to ignore the principle" by keeping Shibu Soren in office.

BJP sources said the party is "divided" on moving the no-confidence motion although the "hardliners" and some NDA allies are "all for it"

A section of the party believes the motion would be tantamount to a no-trust vote against the UPA government and re-unite the ruling coalition as even Congress-baiters like the Samajwadi Party would support Chatterjee given their proximity to the Left. "The mood is 50-50," said a BJP

The flip view is that such a move would mobilise "public" opinion against the Speaker for "over-reaching"

Speaker sets up emergency debate



Chatterjee: Firm

KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, March 11: Speaker Somnath Chatterjee has called an emergency meeting of presiding officers of all states and Union territories in the wake of confusing signals sent out by the ruling Congress on initiating a presidential reference over the Supreme Court's Jharkhand order.

Chatteriee, as chairman of the Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India, decided on a March 20 meeting here even as the BJP threatened a noconfidence motion against him for "contempt of court".

After an all-party meeting yesterday that the BJP left midway, the Speaker had proposed the presidential reference on the apex court's order that advanced the Jharkhand floor test and directed its videographing.

"Irrespective of who thinks what, I am not for retracting my statement (of yesterday) nor am I adding a sentence to it," Chatterjee said today. He clarified that his job was to protect the dignity of Parliament and that his conscience was clear.

Chatterjee said he had the highest respect for the Supreme Court but felt the reference should be made as it was the view of all parties at yesterday's meeting.

The March 20 meeting would discuss the relationship between the three organs of the state - Parliament, judiciary and executive. Also on the table would be ways to ensure that they do not set themselves on a collision course in the backdrop of the apex court's order.

Sources said Chatterjee was "greatly disturbed" by the court order and was of the view that the presiding officers needed to discuss its ramifications.

He had convened the allparty meeting after political parties expressed concern over the order. At its conclusion, the overwhelming view was to make a presidential reference to the apex court.

According to the sources, Chatterjee had yesterday wanted to make a statement in the Lok Sabha on judicial in-

Irrespective of who thinks what, I am not for retracting my statement nor am I adding a sentence to it

tervention in the legislative arena.

The draft statement he had prepared did not mention presidential reference. But he did not go ahead with it after V.K. Malhotra, the BJP's deputy leader in the House, suggested that he wait.

The Speaker then suggest-

ed the all-party meeting, to which Malhotra agreed. The statement that was issued after the meeting incorporated the point about the presidential reference in view of the overwhelming opinion in its favour.

As for the Congress not taking a position on the judiciary-versus-legislature issue, a senior minister explained it with the help of a joke.

"A railway lineman," he said, "once boasted to his family that he had lots of power, enough to even stop a train. His wife challenged him and asked for a demonstration. When a superfast train was speeding down the track, he waved a red flag and stopped it. He was elated and so was his family

"A couple of days later, a railway superintendent came calling and slapped him for stopping the train. When the upset wife asked why, the lineman said: 'That was my power, this is his power'.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 2 MAR 2005

Cabinet nod for President's rule in Bihar 873

Lalu, Paswan stay away from meeting

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELH!, MARCH 7. The Union Cabinet tonight approved the imposition of President's rule in Bihar, where a fractured mandate has stalled the formation of the next Government. The House has been placed under suspended animation.

With last month's Assembly elections throwing up a hung Assembly, the Governor, Buta Singh, sent in his recommendation to the Centre on Sunday. The Lok Jan Shakti Party chief, Ram Vilas Paswan's firm stand of neither supporting the Rashtriya Janata Dal nor the Bharatiya Janata Party in Government-formation resulted in the deadlock.

The RJD chief and Union Min-told correspondents. ister, Lalu Prasad, and his colleague. Raghuvansh Singh, did not attend the Cabinet meeting.
Mr. Lalu Prasad said his party

could not attend a meeting where the decision was being taken to bring the State under Central rule. He squarely blamed Mr. Paswan for the imbroglio. Mr. Paswan too did not

attend the meeting.

However, Mr. Lalu Prasad made it clear that the RJD would do nothing to cause harm the ruling United Progressive Alliance Government at the Centre. "I am sure this development will not cause any embarrassment to the UPA Government which will remain strong and intact," he

Lalu meets Sonia

On a brief visit here, Mr. Lalu Prasad met the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) leaders, Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Sitaram Yechury.

He called on Ms. Gandhi two hours before the Cabinet meeting and explained the reason for his decision to stay away from it. He assured her that his party would continue to be with the Congress.

Asked whether the RJD would seek the ouster of the LJP from the UPA, Mr. Prasad said: "Why should I demand it. It is better if Paswan goes back to the NDA."

The Congress did not say whether the LJP should leave the UPA following serious differences with another constituent, RJD. "We do not decide the composition of the Council of Ministers...We treat the allies with respect and they decide who should be part of it. The Con-gress and its allies are committed to the Common Minimum Programme," the party spokes-person, Anand Sharma, said

'RJD, an important ally'

The Congress said that it was committed to the formation of a secular government in Bihar but the political situation arising out of a fractured mandate was the hurdle. The Governor's recommendation for the imposition of President's Rule was taken keeping in view the constitutional requirement. The RJD was an important ally and differences over Bihar politics could be discussed the in the UPA coordination committee.

The BJP president, L.K. Advani, earlier called on the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and urged him to appoint a "neutral" adviser to the Governor after it imposes President's rule. The Congress joined issue, with its spokesperson saying that when the party was in the Opposition it never made such suggestions.

More reports on Page 11



PROBING FOR BODIES: Army rescue teams, specially called in from Siachen, searching for bodies buried under snow in Waltengo-Naar village in south Kashmir. A snow storm hit the village on February 21 claiming more than 300 lives. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

Bihar situation will

By Our Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 7. The Union Rural Development Minister, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, today said the developments in Bihar would in no way affect the Rashtriya Janata Dal's equation with the United Progressive Alliance at the Centre. He said fresh elections were the only way out of this situation.

"We do not want to weaken the UPA at present," he told reporters after inaugurating a national conference "Launching of Skill Development Programme for Unemployed Rural Poor Through NGOs," organised by the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) and the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR) and the Confederation of NGOs of Rural India (CNRI).

Mr. Singh said the RJD was not putting any pressure on the UPA chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, to dissociate the Lok Jan Shakti Party from the alliance as Mr. Paswan himself ap-

peared to be on his way out. present crisis, the Rural Devel-The UPA is not dependent on Mr. Paswan's party.

Backing the Bihar Governor's decision to recommend President's rule, Mr. Singh said that while this appeared to be the only solution, he added that it was a temporary provision in the Constitution and had to be followed by elections to seek the people's mandate afresh. "Elections should be held within four months and the RJD will win two-thirds majority while the LJP will be completely wiped out." Mr. Singh said his party would learn from the mistakes it made in the ticket distribution.

Not in the race

Ruling out the possibility of him being a 'consensus' candidate for the post of Chief Minister, Mr. Singh said he was not in the race. "One, I don't want to be a consensus candidate and second, I will not be acceptable to all because of my principles.

Blaming the LJP chief, for the

opment Minister said Mr. Paswan only spoke for the Dalits but had no ideology while he himself, worked for the Dalits and their rights.

The training programme, which has been taken up under the aegis of non-governmental organisations capable of undertaking training for the benefit of target groups, is one of the major initiatives of the Ministry and CAPART to create productive and market-oriented employment opportunities for the rural unemployed.

Under the present scheme, CAPART has initially identified 50 NGOs — mostly drawn from the backward regions of the country to equip themselves with suitable trainers and other infrastructure for training 2,000 people by each NGO in productive skills, trades and ser-The training will vices. ultimately benefit 10-lakh unemployed rural youth in one year in skill upgradation and finding employment opportunities.

Rane on the run, Centre sacks Goa govt

Our Political Bureau NEW DELHI 4 MARCH

HE Centre on Friday wilted under the pressure of public outrage and sacked the Pratapsinh Rane government in Goa. The Union Cabinet's decision to throw out the Congressled regime came hours after it won the trial of strength under controversial circumstances.

Acting on expected lines, pro tem speaker Francisco Sardinha, who belongs to the Congress, had earlier in the day disqualified UGDP member and former min-

ister Matanhy Saldanha from taking part in the trust vote.

Under similar circumstances over a month ago, the Manohar Parrikar government was dismissed by governor S.C. Jamir minutes after it had won the trial of strength.

While recommending the imposition of President's rule in the state, the Union Cabinet, which held an emergency meeting on Friday evening, did not, however, dissolve the Assembly. It has been placed under suspended animation and the Congress would be hoping that it'd be revived after things stabilise. Given the strained relations between the UPA and the Opposition NDA, such a possibility appears rather dim. According to most political observers, holding fresh elections in the state could be the

only way out to help restore stability.

The BJP, not surprisingly, was guarded in its reaction. "In the present situation, the President's rule was the only alternative. I hope that the Assembly has been kept in suspended animation in the right spirit as the Supreme Court had asked the government in the S.R. Bommai case to take prior permission of Parliament before dissolving the House," Mr Pramod Mahajan, the general secretary in charge of Goa, observed.

"However, I have objections if

the House is not dissolved and suspended animation is a mere ploy for getting more and more MLAs to get to their side and ultimately form a government," he contended.

With the Supreme Court, whi-ch is hearing a petition

ing a petition filed by the deposed BJP chief minister Man-ohar keeping a close watch on the developme-nts in the state and with the NDA on the war path over the role of the governors, the Centre, it is clear, was constrained to take a more prudent route. With Parliament in session, it did want to ratchet up the faceoff with the Opposition. With its role in the states of Jharkhand and Goa coming under all-round flak, the UPA government sought to camouflage its decision to invoke President's rule in Goa behind a garb of morality.

Manmohan unveils Manmohan unveils Manmohan unveils

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 1. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to-day unveiled the "report card" of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) that seeks to inform the nation about the steps taken by the Government to implement the commitments made in the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) and the other initiatives promised in subsequent policy statements.

Christened 'Report to the People-I,' the document was released by Dr. Singh ahead of the UPA-Left coordination committee meeting here this evening.

Briefing mediapersons, the media adviser to the Prime Minister, Sanjay Baru, said Dr. Singh had undertaken this exercise to report to the people and the allies of the work done in the nine months since the UPA took charge.

On the timing of the report,

Mr. Baru said it was conceived as a document to complement the budget. Henceforth, the report will be released at the end of every calendar year so that it can be used as a ready reckoner for discussions. It was also testimony to the Government's commitment to ushering in transparency in public policy.

transparency in public policy.

In the report, the Government claims to have fulfilled more than half the specific promises made in the NCMP. Offering an update on its policies and programmes between May 2004 and February 2005, the report also claims that many of the other promises made were being implemented.

The report seeks to underline that "few governments have in the past ever maintained such a close watch on the pace and effectiveness of the implementation of the promises made in a manifesto as has the UPA Government." Acknowledging the role of the National Advisory

Council in conceptualising and formulating critical development initiatives, the report card sought to explain whatever delay there might have been in keeping all the promises.

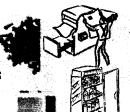
According to the report, "nine months is not a long time in the tenure of any govern-ment; moreover, the UPA Government was busy in the first two months with the presentation of the Union Budget 2004-05. With just seven full months of working time, it has been able to implement — or begin the implementation of - most of the important commitments made in the NCMP. In its second year in office, the UPA will be able to move beyond these commitments to lay the foundation for sustained long-term economic growth and develop-ment, based on a commitment to equity and efficiency and to the welfare of all sections of so-ciety, especially the weaker sections and minorities.



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- O NYLON POLYESTER
- **U** TEXTILE FIBRES



- CLOVES
- O REFRIGERATORS
- U TEA
- (Air-conditioners
- O COKING COAL



- () EDIBLE OIL
- O MOBILE PHONE
- **U** Tyres
- O FOOTWEAR



PRICES UP

- O CIGARETTES
- GUTKHA PAN MASALA
- O TOBACCO * **PRODUCTS**



- MOSAIC TILES
- **FLOWERS**
- () BRANDED JEWELLERY
- O PETROL AND DIESEI (likely from Apri



TAX BRACKETS BUILD BHARAT

tegnum News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 28. — If it was the turnover tax last year, this year two anti-tax evasion measures announced to check "black money generation" and a significant alteration of the income tax brackets were what passed for big ideas for finance minister Mr P Chidambaram as he presented his Budget proposals for 2005-06. His twohour Budget speech today had repeated references to the Bharat Nirman infrastructure programme. (Details, PC's mantra: citizen & country, see below)

A 0.1 per cent (Rs 10) is proposed to be levied on withdrawal of over Rs 10,000 in cash on a single day from banks. Banks would be required to report all deposits which are exempt from TDS (tax deducted at source) on interest. Mr Chidambaram said this is being done "since it is felt that large cash transactions become part of black money," observing that the measure had been taken to meet the commitment made in the CMP. ~ <u>2005</u>

He altered the income tax brackets, brought Customs duty closer to that of the Asean, brought several goods under the Central Value Added Tax (Cenvat) rate of 16 per cent and modified the corporate taxes.

"Tax proposals on direct taxes are expected to yield a gain of Rs 6,000 crore. On the indirect taxes side, they are broadly revenue neutral," the finance minister said.

He underlined the government's intention, to undertake major tax reforms to improve the tax to GDP ratio, expand the tax payer base, increase tax compliance and make tax administration more efficient.

Under the new tax brackets, income up to Rs 1 lakh will not attract any tax. Assessees with an income between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 1.5 lakh will have to pay 10 per cent, Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh will be charged 20 per cent and those with income above Rs 2.5 lakh will be taxed at 30 per cent.

Further, the taxable income level attracting a surcharge of 10 per cent has been raised to Rs 10 lakh. Women will enjoy a threshold exemption level of Rs 1.25 lakh while the exemption level for senior citizens has been fixed at Rs 1.5 lakh.

NAC allocations hiked

NEW DELHI, Feb. 28. - Allocations for the office of the National Advisory Council headed by Mrs Sonia Gandhi, listed together with the PMO, have been increased by Rs 1.73 crore from Rs 14.59 crore last year. "The provision is for salaries, travel expenses, office expenses and other establishment related expenditure of PM's office and National Advisory Council," the notes on the Demand for Grants said. - SNS

While the standard deductions are proposed to be removed, other exemptions would be "cleaned up". To encourage savings, Mr Chidambaram allowed a consolidated limit of Rs 1 lakh for savings which will be deducted from the income before tax is calculated. All prevailing sectoral caps will be removed as well as rebate under Section 88 and Section 80L omitted.

In addition to the sum of Rs 1 lakh, six deductions will continue to receive the same tax treatment — housing loan interest, medical insurance premiums, specified

expenditure on disabled dependant, expenses for medical treatment, deduction of interest on loans for higher studies and deduction to a person with disability.

As for perquisites, "benefits enjoyed collectively by the

employees and cannot be attributed to individual employee" will be taxed in the hands of the employer. Transport services for workers and staff and canteen services in an office or factory will be outside the tax net. The indirect taxes would be largely revenue neutral, but geared to attract higher investment, particularly in the infrastructure sector and trade. The peak rate for non-agricultural products would be reduced from 20 per cent to 15 per cent. Customs duty on textile machinery as well on refrigerated vans are proposed to be halved. Mr Chidambaram proposed a corporate tax structure under which the I-T rate for domestic companies would be 30 per cent plus a surcharge of 10 per cent. The Securities Transaction Tax has been hiked from 0.015 per cent to 0.02 per cent.

Full coverage: pages 5, 10, 11, 12, 13 Editorial: Politically Correct? nage 8 To purportedly check "black measy generation" a 0.1 per cent tax will be levied on withdrawel of cash of Rs 10,000 and above from banks on a single day. And there will be no amnesty scheme for black money.

SENSEX ZOOMS

Cut in corporate tax from 35% to 30% announced by the finance minister gave a major boost to the capital market as stocks zoomed at Dalal Street taking the 30-scrip Sensitive Index to the highest-ever mark of 6,713.86 points - crossing the 6.700-barrier - arnidst accelerStandard deduction removed "given the higher exemption limits and scaling up of tax brackets." As 1 lakh consolidated exemption limit will be allowed to all tax payers before computing taxable income. Sections 88 & 80L removed.

ated buying during the post-Budget period. The gain of 144.14 points or 2.19% was mostly on account of bank, tech and auto stocks. Nifty of National Stock Exchange also closed beyond 2,100 mark at 2.103.25 for the first time with an increase of 42.20 point or 2.02%

TAX BRACKETS ALTERED

NEW TAX BRACKETS

Income Re 1-1.5 lakh 10% Rs 2.5 lakh & above . .30%

Exemptions: As 1.25 lakh Threshold level for

As 1.5 lakh Senior citizens

- 10 per cent service charge will be applicable on income beyond Rs 10 lakh instead of present Rs 8.5 lakh
- Conveyance and canteen allowance to be outside the tax net but all other perks given by employers to employees as a collective benefit will be taxed at 30 per cent. This new tax will be called Fringe Benefit Tax and will be

levied on employers Six exemptions, including interest payments on

self-occupied and medical insurance premium, will be continued

housing loan on

- One by six schemes for filing of income tax returns amended by removing mobile telephone from the list but payment of electricity bill of Rs 50,000 per annum to be included
- Service tax rate has been retained

COMPANY MATTERS

- Corporate income tax for domestic companies reduced to 30%. The 10% surcharge continues
- Minimum Alternate Tax will continue
- 100% tax deduction for companies carrying out scientific



- Security transaction tax raised from 0.15 to 0.2%
- Service providers up to Rs 4 lakh gross turnover to be exempted from service tax
- Membership fee of clubs, associations and other services to be in the service tax-net.

BASICS

- To give a boost to the infrastructure sector, Mr Chidambaram has announced a Special **Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** for financing large road. port and airport projects and raised cess on petrol and diesel for highway development
- Bharat Nirman has been conceived as a business plan, to be implemented over a period of four years, for building infrastructure, especially in rural India
- Fiscal deficit pegged at Rs 1,51,144 crore or 4.3 per cent of GDP during 2005-06
- Revenue deficit proposed to be Rs 95,312 cr or 2.7 per cent of GDP for next fiscal
- Plan expenditure is estimated at Rs 1,72,500 crore for 2005-06
- Of plan expenditure. Rs 29,003 crore to be raised as loans by state governments directly.
- Mon-plan expenditure at Rs 370.85 crore for next fiscal.
- Defence allocation increased to Rs 83,000 crore next fiscal

Mr P Chidambaram arrives in Parliament on Monday.

ইন্দিরা ঘরানার বাজেট • উধাও বিলগ্নি, বিদায়নীতিও

জনতার স্বার্থে সামাজিক খাতে বরাদ্দ বিপুল টাকা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি: প্রায় এক দশকে এই প্রথম বিলম্পিকরণ শব্দটি অনুচ্চারিত থাকল বাজেট প্রস্তাবে। বাজার-প্রেমী, সংস্কারমনস্ক চিদম্বরমের হাত ধরে বাজেট ফিরল কংগ্রেসের 'গরিবি হটাও' জমানায়।

আয়ের ক্ষেত্রে অর্থনীতির যুক্তি মেনে চলেছেন চিদম্বরম। কিন্তু বরাদের হিসাবে কেন্দ্রীয় অর্থমন্ত্রী যে-ভাবে এগিয়েছেন, তা কংগ্রেসের 'গরিবি হটাও' জমানার প্রত্যক্ষ প্রতিফলন। সামাজিক উন্নয়নের নানা কর্মকাণ্ডের কথা ঘোষণা করে বাজেট-বক্তৃতায় চিদম্বরম স্পষ্টই বলেছেন, ''উন্নয়নের সাফল্য বহুলাংশে নির্ভর করছে অর্থের সংস্থানের উপরে। যা সরকারকে জোগাড় করতেই হবে।"

কিন্তু কী ভাবে? সে সম্পর্কে অবশ্য সরকারি নীতির হস্তক্ষেপের চিরন্তন দাওয়াই বাতলেই দাঁড়ি টেনেছেন চিদম্বরম। অর্থাৎ সরকারকে ঠিক নীতি নির্ধারণ করে, কর ব্যবস্থায় সামঞ্জস্য এনে সঞ্চয়ের প্রবণতা বাড়াতে হবে। যে টাকা বিনিয়োগের মাধ্যমেই সম্পদের সন্ধান দেবে। শেয়ার বাজার, ব্যাঙ্কের মতো পুরনো মাধ্যমগুলির পাশাপাশি তাঁর নয়া সংযোজন, ''বিমা, পেনশন তহবিল বা অবসরকালীন ভাতার তহবিল বিনিয়োগের উৎসের সন্ধান দেবে।"

বাজেট-বক্তৃতায় অর্থমন্ত্রী বলেছেন, 'আমজনতাকে চটজলদি স্বস্তি দিতে চাই।' যার তাগিদে বিভিন্ন সামাজিক খাতে বড় অঙ্কের টাকা বরাদ্দ করেছেন চিদম্বরম। যেমন, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ খাতে বরাদ্দ ৮,৪২০ কোটি টাকা থেকে বাড়িয়ে ১০,২৮০ কোটি করেছেন। আই সি ডি এস প্রকল্পে গত বাজেটের তুলনায় বরাদ্দ প্রায় দ্বিগুণ বাড়িয়ে ৩১৪২ কোটি টাকা করা হয়েছে। মিড-ডে মিল প্রকল্পে বরাদ্দ ১৬৭৫ কোটি টাকা থেকে বেড়ে হয়েছে ৩০১০ কোটি, সর্বশিক্ষা অভিযানে বরাদ্দ প্রায় ৪৭৫৪ কোটি টাকা থেকে বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে ৭১৫৬ কোটি টাকায়, পানীয় জল ও পয়ঃপ্রণালী খাতে প্রায় ১৫০০ কোটি টাকা বরান্দ বাড়ানো হয়েছে।

অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির উন্নয়নে, এক কথায়, ৬,২৫৩ কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করেছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। তাঁর মতে, ''সকলকে নিয়েই চলতে চাই।'' তফসিলি জাতি, উপজাতির ছাত্রছাত্রীদের জন্য কিছু নামী শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান বেছে নেবে সরকার। তফসিলি জাতি ও উপজাতিভুক্ত ছাত্রছাত্রীদের ওই সব প্রতিষ্ঠানে টিউশন ফি, থাকা-খাওয়ার খরচ, বইপত্র ও একটি কম্পিউটার বাবদ বড় অঙ্কের জলপানি দেওয়া হবে। বাজেটে চিদম্বরম 'রাজীব গাঁধী জাতীয় বৃত্তি' ঘোষণা করেছেন। তফসিলি জাতি-উপজাতির পড়ুয়ারা এম ফিল, পিএইচ ডি করলে ইউ জি সি-র ধাঁচে বৃত্তি পাবেন। বাজেটে লিঙ্গ-ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখার উপরে জোর দিয়ে মহিলাদের উন্নয়ন

খাতে ১৪ হাজার ৩৭৯ কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করেছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। বাজেটে সামাজিক ন্যায়ের মডেল প্রতিষ্ঠায় রীতিমতো ব্যস্ত, হার্ভার্ড বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক্তন ছাত্রের সংসদে বক্তৃতায় এক বারও উল্লিখিত হয়নি শ্রম আইন সংস্কারের মতো জরুরি বিষয়। স্রাসরি বিলগ্নিকরণ শব্দটি ব্যবহার না-

করেও রুগ্ণ, মৃতপ্রায় রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত প্রতিষ্ঠানের দায় কী ভাবে সরকার ঘাড় থেকে নামাবে, তা এড়িয়ে গিয়েছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। শুধু একটি অনুচ্ছেদ ব্যয় করা হয়েছে, "আমি এটা ঘোষণা করে খুশি যে, বাজেটে রেল-সহ কেন্দ্রীয় রাষ্ট্রায়ন্ত সংস্থার সহায়তায় ১৪ হাজার ৪০ কোটি টাকা দেওয়া হবে (ইকুইটি বাবদ)। তাদের ঋণ মিলবে প্রায় ৩,৫৫৪ কোটি টাকা।" বিলগ্নিকরণ, অতিরিক্ত মানবসম্পদের চাপ কুমানো ইত্যাদি সমস্যার মোকাবিলায় কোনও কৌশলের কথা বলেননি চিদম্বরম। বামেরা যে রীতিমতো তাড়া করে বেড়াচ্ছেন সংস্কারমুখী পি চিদম্বরমকে,

বাজেট-বক্তৃতায় সংস্কারের কয়েকটি পদক্ষেপ সম্পর্কে বলতে গিয়ে তা প্রকাশ করে ফেলছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। বামেদের বোঝাতে তিনি চিনের দোহাই দিয়েছেন। যেমন, সরাসরি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ। তাঁর কথায়, "সংসদের সব সদস্যকে বলব এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

এক হাতে কর কমিয়ে অন্য হাতে ছাড় বিলোপ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি: ১৯৯৭ সালে আয়কর সরলীকরণের যে-প্রতিশ্রুতি তিনি দিয়েছিলেন, আট বছর পরে তা পূরণ করলেন অর্থমন্ত্রী পালনিয়াপ্পন চিদম্বরম। তবে কর কাঠামো সংস্কার করলেও সোমবার মখমলের দস্তানার মধ্যে অর্থমন্ত্রী যে-ভাবে লৌহমুষ্টি আড়াল করে আয়কর প্রস্তাব পেশ করলেন, তার ফলে বেতনভোগী মধ্যবিত্তের পকেটে টান পড়তে পারে।

চিদম্বরম যে নতুন আয়কর কাঠামোর প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন, তা এ-রকম। বছরে এক লক্ষ টাকা পর্যন্ত আয় পুরোপুরি করমুক্ত। মহিলাদের ক্ষেত্রে এই অঙ্ক ১ লক্ষ ২৫ হাজার টাকা। প্রবীণ নাগরিকদের ক্ষেত্রে এই ছাড় ১ লক্ষ ৫০ টাকা পর্যস্ত। এর পরে রয়েছে তিনটি স্তরের জন্য তিনটি করের হার। যাঁরা এক লক্ষ থেকে দেড় লক্ষ টাকা পর্যস্ত আয় করেন, তাঁদের কর দিতে হবে ১০ শতাংশ হারে। বছরে দেড় লক্ষ থেকে আড়াই লক্ষ টাকা আয় পর্যন্ত করের হার ২০ শতাংশ। আড়াই লক্ষ টাকার উপরে যাঁদের বার্ষিক আয়, তাঁদের কর দিতে হবে ৩০ শতাংশ হারে।

পাশাপাশি অর্থমন্ত্রী স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ডিডাকশন বিলোপের কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন। বিলোপ করেছেন আয়কর আইনের ৮৮ ও ৮০-এল ধারার ফলে যে-ছাড় পাওয়া যেত, তা-ও। মাত্র ছ'টি ছাড় চালু রেখেছেন তিনি। সেগুলি হল, গৃহঋণের সুদের উপরে ছাড়, স্বাস্থ্য-বিমার প্রিমিয়ামে ছাড়, নির্ভরশীল প্রতিবন্ধীর নির্দিষ্ট ব্যয়ের উপরে, অবিভক্ত হিন্দু পরিবারে নিজের বা নির্ভরশীল ব্যক্তির চিকিৎসার ব্যয়ের উপরে, উচ্চশিক্ষা ঋণের সুদের উপরে ও প্রতিবন্ধীদের আয়ের উপরে। তবে গৃহঋণের আসলের উপরে যে-কর ছাড় মিলত, তা আর পাওয়া যাবে কি না, সেই ব্যাপারে মূল বাজেট-বক্তৃতায় অর্থমন্ত্রী নীরব। অনাত্র এই বিষয়ে কোনও ইঙ্গিত আছে কি না, বিশেষজ্ঞেরা সেই বিষয়ে নিশ্চিত নন।

ফলে প্রাইসওয়াটারহাউস কুপার্স প্রাইভেট লিমিটেডের এগজিকিউটিভ ডিরেক্টর রাহুলকৃষ্ণ মিত্র বা খেতান গোষ্ঠীর বিশেষজ্ঞ অমিতাভ গুহ সরকারের ধারণা, এক হাতে কর কমালেও অন্য হাতে নানা ছাড বিলোপ করে করের বোঝা প্রায় অপরিবর্তিতই রেখেছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। যেমন বর্তমান কাঠামোয় বছরে দেড লক্ষ টাকা বেতনের উপরে ১৯.০০০ টাকা কর ধার্য হতে পারে। নতুন হারে তা দাঁডাবে ৫,০০০ টাকা। কিন্তু স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ডিডাকশন বিলোপের ফলে ২০,০০০ টাকা খোয়াবেন তিনি। ৮০-এল ধারা বিলোপের ফলে বছরে ১২,০০০ টাকা সুদের আয় যা এত দিন করমুক্ত ছিল, তা করযোগ্য হল।

তবে সাধারণ ভাবে ছাড় তুলে নিলেও যাঁরা অপেক্ষাকৃত বেশি বেতন পান, তাঁদের জন্য ছাড়ের সুবিধা রেখেছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। বছরে এক লক্ষ টাকা পর্যন্ত বিনিয়োগ করলে ওই অঙ্ক সরাসরি বেতন থেকে বাদ দিয়ে করযোগ্য আয় হিসাব করা হবে বলে ঘোষণা করেছেন তিনি। অর্থাৎ মাসে যাঁরা আট হাজার টাকার বেশি সঞ্চয় করতে পারবেন, তাঁরাই এই কর ছাড়ের পুরো সুবিধা তুলতে পারবেন। কিন্তু বেতনভোগীদের কত জন এই সুবিধা পুরো নিতে পারবেন, সেই বিষয়ে সংশয় আছে।

যাঁরা অপেক্ষাকৃত কম বেতন পান অথচ করের আওতায় পড়বেন, তাঁরা এই কাঠামো থেকে বিশেষ সুবিধা পাবেন না বলে ধারণা বিশেষজ্ঞদের। তাঁদের যুক্তি, স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ডিডাকশন থাকার ফলে এত দিন কোনও সঞ্চয় না-করেও কর ছাড়ের সুবিধা পেতেন বিপল সংখ্যক মান্য। এই সবিধা রাতারাতি উধাও হয়ে যাবে। কিন্তু এঁদের হাতে সঞ্চয়যোগা তেমন অর্থ থাকবে না, যার সাহায্যে তাঁরা ছাড়ের সুবিধা পাবেন।

তবে যাঁদের করযোগ্য আয় ১০ লক্ষ টাকার বেশি, নতুন কাঠামোয় তাঁদের ১০ শতাংশ সারচার্জ দিতে হবে। অনাবাসী ভারতীয়েরা তাঁদের বিনিয়োগ থেকে যে-সূদ আয় করে থাকেন, তার উপরে তাঁদের কর দিতে হয় না। এই ব্যবস্থা চালিয়ে যাওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী।

অর্থমন্ত্রীর লক্ষ্য ছিল কর কাঠামো সরলীকরণ। পাশাপাশি বেশি সংখ্যক এর পর নয়ের পাতায়



সংসদের বাইরে সংস্কার

বেসরকারি ব্যাঙ্ক বিদেশিদের হাতে যাওয়ার পথ প্রশস্ত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: ভারতীয় বেসরকারি ব্যাক্ষে বিদেশি ব্যাক্ষের মালিকানা ও নিয়ন্ত্রণের পথ আরও প্রশস্ত করল কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। বিদেশি ব্যাক্ষগুলি শর্তসাপেক্ষে দেশি বেসরকারি ব্যাঙ্কে শুধু মালিকানার অংশ নেবে না, নিয়ন্ত্রণেও বড় ভূমিকা নিতে পারবে। চলতি বিধিতে মালিকানার অংশ পেলেও নিয়ন্ত্রণের অধিকার ছিল না বিদেশি ব্যাঙ্কের। সেই জন্য 'ব্যাঙ্কিং রেগুলেশন অ্যাক্ট' বা ব্যাঙ্ক নিয়ন্ত্রণ আইন সংশোধন করা হবে।

সোমবার অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরমের বাজেট-বক্তৃতার কয়েক ঘণ্টা পরেই রিজার্ভ ব্যাস্ক-কর্তপক্ষ ব্যাঙ্কিং সংস্কার নিয়ে যে-রূপরেখা প্রকাশ করেছেন, তাতে বলা হয়েছে, পুনর্গঠনের জন্য তাঁরা দেশের যে-সব বেসরকারি ব্যাঙ্ককে চিহ্নিত করবেন. সেগুলিতে বিনিয়োগ করতে পারবে বিদেশি ব্যাঙ্ক। ওই বিনিয়োগ সংশ্লিষ্ট বেসরকারি ব্যাঙ্কের দীর্ঘমেয়াদি স্বার্থে প্রয়োজন বলে রিজার্ভ ব্যাক্ষ-কর্তৃপক্ষ যদি আশ্বস্ত হন, তা হলে তা অনুমোদন করা হবে।

ব্যাঙ্কিং সংস্কারের এই নবতম ঘোষণার ব্যাখ্যা দিয়ে রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কের মুখপাত্র বলেন, বর্তমান নিয়মে কোনও বিদেশি ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের হাতে কোনও দেশি ব্যাঙ্কের ১০ শতাংশের বেশি শেয়ার থাকতে পারে না। নতুন নীতিতে যদি সংশ্লিষ্ট বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীরা প্রমাণ করতে পারেন যে, তাঁদের লগ্নি (দেশি) ব্যাক্ষের দীর্ঘমেয়াদি স্বার্থের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, তা হলে রিজার্ড ব্যাঙ্ক-কর্তৃপক্ষ তা অনুমোদন করতে পারেন। সে-ক্ষেত্রে সংস্থার চিফ এগজিকিউটিভ অফিসার নিয়োগ থেকে শুরু করে পরিচালনার বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে নিয়ন্ত্রণের অধিকারও পেতে পারেন তিনি। এই ধরনের প্রতিটি বিনিয়োগের আবেদন আলাদা ভাবে বিচার করবেন রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কের কর্তারা। তবে আর্থিক স্বাস্থ্য, মালিকানার চরিত্র, বিশ্ব-বাজারে তাদের মান ইত্যাদির নিরিখে কিছু শর্ত পুরণ করতে হবে বিদেশি আবেদনকারীদের।

বাজেট-বক্তৃতায় অর্থমন্ত্রী ব্যাঙ্কিং সংস্কারের উল্লেখ করলেও এ ব্যাপারে কিছুই জানাননি। তিনি বলেন, এই ক্ষেত্রে সংস্কারের জন্য রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্ক-কর্তৃপক্ষ একটি পরিকল্পনা রচনা করেছেন। শীঘ্রই তাঁরা তা প্রকাশ করবেন। তিনি জানান, কিছু সংস্কারের জন্য রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কের নির্দেশই যথেষ্ট। কিন্তু অন্য কিছু সংস্কারের জন্য আইন সংশোধন করতে হবে। আগে দেওয়া প্রতিশ্রুতি অনুযায়ী ১৯৪৯ সালের ব্যাঙ্কিং রেগুলেশন অ্যাক্ট বা ব্যাঙ্কিং নিয়ন্ত্রণ আইন সংশোধনের কথাও বলেন চিদম্বরম। কিন্তু রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্ক যে দেশি ব্যাঙ্কে বিদেশি নিয়ন্ত্রণের মতো স্পর্শকাতর বিষয় নিয়ে রূপরেখা তৈরি করেছে, তার কোনও ইঙ্গিত দেননি অর্থমন্ত্রী।

রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্ক-কর্তৃপক্ষ এ দিন সংস্কারের যে-রূপরেখা পেশ করেছেন, তা প্রধানত দু'দফার। প্রথম দফার সময়সীমা বেঁধে দেওয়া হয়েছে ২০০৫ সালের মার্চ থেকে ২০০৯ সালের মার্চের মধ্যে। এই পর্যায়ে বিদেশি ব্যাক্ষগুলি ভারতে পূর্ণ মালিকানাধীন শাখা সংস্থা খুলতে পারবে। অথবা এ দেশে তাদের বর্তমান শাখাগুলিকেই পূর্ণ মালিকানার শাখায় পরিণত করতে পারবে। তবে আর্থিক স্বাস্থ্য, মালিকানার চরিত্র, বিশ্ব-বাজারে তাদের মান ইত্যাদি নিরিখে কিছু শর্ত পূরণ করতে হবে বিদেশি ব্যাঙ্কগুলিকে। যেমন কোনও বিদেশি ব্যাঙ্ক যদি পূর্ণ মালিকানাধীন শাখা এ দেশে খুলতে চায়, তা হলে তাদের ন্যূনতম ৩০০ কোটি টাকার মূলধন

আরও বাড়ক ধনীদের কর, চাইছিল বামেরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি ও কলকাতাঃ চিদম্বরমের সংস্কার-উত্তর সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রের দিকে অনেকখানি বাজেটে আড়াই দশক আগের ইন্দিরা- যুরে যাওয়ায় বামপন্থীরা খুশি। কিন্তু জমানার প্রতিফলনে বামেরা খুশি। অর্থের অপ্রতুল সংস্থান, বাণিজ্যিক নানা সামাজিক এবং গ্রামীণ প্রকল্পে আয়করে ছাড়, খনি, খুচরো ব্যবসা ও 'সমৃদ্ধ' এই বাজেটের অভিমুখ পেনশন প্রকল্পে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের বামপন্থীদের স্বীকৃতিতে আপাতত জন্য দরজা খুলে দেওয়ার ইঙ্গিত এবং 'জনমুখী' আখ্যা পেয়েছে।

উদ্ধারের। তেমন কোনও পদক্ষেপ সম্ভাবনাও কার্যত নেই। নেই বাজেটে। অর্থের অপ্রতুলতা খোলা রেখেছেন বামেরা।

নতুন করের দাবি ছিল বামেদের। দাবি ছিলেন, এ বার ততটা নন। তবে ছিল, ধনীদের কাছ থেকে কালো টাকা সংসদে বাজেটের বিরোধিতার

সাধারণ ভাবে বাজেটের অভিমখ বিদেশি লগ্নিকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের তবে গোলাপের কাঁটার মতোই কাজকর্মের উপরে কর না-বসানোর বামেদের বিধছে খনি ও ব্যবসা ক্ষেত্রে মতো বেশ কিছু বিষয়ে তাঁরা বিরক্ত। আমদানি শুৰু প্রত্যাহারের ঘোষণা। সব মিলিয়ে বর্তমান সরকারের প্রথম ধনী এবং বিদেশি সংস্থাগুলির উপরে বাজেটের পরে বামেরা যতটা উদ্বাহ

বাজেটে উল্লিখিত, কিন্তু বাজেট-রয়েছে। আর্থিক এই ফাঁক কী ভাবে বহির্ভূত একটি প্রশ্নে অবশ্য সংঘাতের ভরাট হবে, তা নিয়ে দ্বিধান্বিত বাম সম্ভাবনা পুরোদস্তর। আজ প্রথম রাজনীতিকেরা। সতর্ক বাম দিনেই ইঙ্গিত, ব্যাঙ্কিং ক্ষেত্রে সংস্কার অর্থনীতিবিদ, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থমন্ত্রী সংক্রান্ত বিলগুলি (ব্যাঙ্কিং রেগুলেশন অসীম দাশগুপ্ত কোনও ঝুঁকিই নেননি। আ্যাক্ট ও রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্ক অব ইন্ডিয়া বাজেট সম্পর্কে তাঁর প্রতিক্রিয়াকে আক্ট) সংসদে এলে বামপন্থীরা তার নিজেই 'মিগ্র' বলে চিহ্নিত করে বিরুদ্ধে ভোট দেবেন। অসীম দাশগুপ্ত দিয়েছেন। অভিনন্দনের সঙ্গে আপত্তির এ দিন ব্যাঙ্ক সংস্কার সংক্রান্ত পদক্ষেপ মিশেল দিয়ে পরে ক্ষোভ প্রকাশের পথ নিয়ে বিশদ কোনও মন্তব্য করতে রাজি এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

○ 2 लिक

343% 868

🌢 মহিলাদের ক্ষেত্রে ১ লক্ষ ২৫ হাজার

প্রবীণ নাগরিকদের ক্ষেত্রে ১.৫ লক্ষ

• ১.৫ লক্ষ— ২.৫ লক্ষ 50% **8**3

• ২.৫ লক্ষের উপরে

স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ডিডাকশন আর নয়

经有常力 চলতি হার

90%

 ৫০ হাজার- ৬০ হাজার >0%

•৬০ হাজার- ১.৫ লক্ষ ২০% ●১.৫ লক্ষের উপরে

 ৮. ৫ লক্ষের উপরে সারচার্জ ১০%

 আয়কর আইনের ৮৮ ধারায় ও ৮০-এল ধারায় ছাড উঠে যাচ্ছে। এক লাখ টাকা পর্যন্ত সঞ্চয় করযোগ্য আয় থেকে বাদ।

 ছাড় থাকছে গৃহ ঋণ, শিক্ষা ঋণের সূদে, স্বাস্থ্য বিমার প্রিমিয়ামে, अजित्रकीरपत क्रमा अतांत्री जातानीशरपत जााकाजरगढेत जरपा।

- খতিয়ে দেখার ইঙ্গিত... পৃঃ ৮
- માહ્યાર... ગુરુ છ বদল পেট্রোপণ্যের কর
- শুল্ক বিলোপ... পৃঃ ৮ সঞ্চয়কে বিনিয়োগের পথে
- দিনে ১০ হাজার টাকার বেশি তুললে কর... পৃঃ ৯

ফরাকা ব্যারাজ প্রকল্পে বরাদ্দ করা সহায়তা চা-শিল্পের সঙ্কট মেটাতে সন্তোষজনক নয়।" কিন্তু ওই পর্যন্তই। কতখানি কার্যকর হবে বা রাজ্যে গঙ্গার যাবে, তা নিয়ে সংশয় রয়েই গিয়েছে। প্রতিক্রিয়া জানিয়ে বাম দলগুলির

তাঁদেবই সক্রিয় সমর্থনে।

म्हाक तिर्शाहीत, नशामिल्लि ও প্রকল্পে সামান্য কিছু আর্থিক সহায়তা স্বা. পাট বা গঙ্গার ভাঙনের জন্য তেমন এবং গঙ্গা-ব্রহ্মপত্রের ভাঙন রোধে কিছু না-পাওয়া, বিশেষ করে উত্তর-১৮০ কোটি টাকার অংশবিশেষ ছাড়া পূর্বাঞ্চলকে দেওয়া সুবিধা উত্তরবঙ্গের আর কিছুই জুটল না রাজ্যের। চায়ের ক্ষেত্রে প্রসারিত না-হওয়ায় ক্ষোভ উপর থেকে সারচার্জ উঠে গিয়েছে। প্রকাশ করেছেন তাঁরা। কলকাতায় সি পি এমের রাজ্য কমিটির পক্ষে বিনয় হয়েছে ৫২ কোটি টাকা। কিন্তু এই কোঙার বলেন, "এই বাজেট আদৌ

ভয়াল ভাঙন কতটা প্রতিরোধ করা প্রায়ই বলতে শোনা যায় রাজ্যের মেধাবৃত্তির উৎকর্ষের কথা। কিন্তু তা তবে পলিটব্যরোর বিবতিতে সি যে শেষ পর্যন্ত কথারই কথা, তা প্রমাণ পি এম এই বিষয়ে নীরব। বাজেটের করে দিলেন চিদম্বরম। হার্ভার্ডের প্রাক্তন ছাত্র, আইভি লিগের সদস্য বিবৃতিতেও পালিত হয়েছে নীরবতা। চিদম্বরম দেশে হার্ভার্ড-স্ট্যানফোর্ড, কিন্তু ব্যক্তিগত প্রতিক্রিয়ায় পশ্চিমবঙ্গ অক্সফোর্ড-কেমব্রিজের সমকক্ষ উপেক্ষিত থাকায় হতাশ রাজ্যের বাম প্রতিষ্ঠান গড়তে বেছেছেন বাঙ্গালোরের সাংসদেরা। কারণ, এই সরকার চলছে ইন্ডিয়ান ইনস্টিটিউট অব সায়েন্সকেই। একটি মাত্র প্রতিষ্ঠানের কথাই তিনি মন্ত্রী কমলনাথের সঙ্গে তাঁরা এই বিষয়ে পৌঁছয়নি। এ বার দেখি কী হয়!"

কথা চিদম্বরমের মাথায় আসেনি।

তবে এই না-পাওয়ার ক্ষোভ যে সংসদের বাইরেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকবে, তা উৎপাদন-বায় কমবে। সে-ক্ষেত্রে কিছটা নিশ্চিত। সাংসদদের বক্তব্যে ইঙ্গিত হলেও চাপমুক্ত হয়েছেন মালিকেরা। মিলেছে, সংসদের ভিতরে এর প্রতিফলন ঘটবে না রাজনৈতিক

নেওয়ায় বাগান-মালিকেরা খুশি। তবে তাঁরা খানিকটা হতাশ নতুন গাছ লাগানো নিয়ে অর্থমন্ত্রীর উল্লেখযোগ্য রাজ্যগুলি। গঙ্গা-ব্রহ্মপুত্রের বন্যা নিয়ন্ত্রণ ঘোষণা না-থাকায়। ইন্ডিয়ান টি ও ভাঙন রোধে বাজেটে ১৮০ কোটি ফেডারেশন অব ইন্ডিয়ান চেম্বার অব মালদহ জেলা সম্পাদক জীবন মৈত্র কমার্স অ্যান্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রি (ফিকি)-র বলেন, "আগেও যোজনা কমিশন পূর্বাঞ্চলীয় সভাপতি সি কে ধানুকা ভাঙন রোধে ৬০ কোটি টাকা অনুমোদন জানিয়েছেন, কেন্দ্রীয় শিল্প ও বাণিজ্য করেছিল। এক টাকাও পশ্চিমবঙ্গে

তা নিয়ে অর্থবরান্দের কথা জাননিন। তবে সারচার্জ তুলে দেওয়ায় শিল্পের

বাজেটের খবর

গ্রাফিক্স: স্বরূপ দণ্ডপাট

খাদ্য ও সারে ভর্তুকি ● শিক্ষার বিস্তারে নতুন

- কাঠামোয়... পঃ ৮
- 'গরিবি হটাও' নয়া মোড়কে 'ভারত নির্মাণ'...পৃঃ ৮ ২১৭ তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি পণ্যে
- ঠেলতে পথনির্দেশ...পঃ ৮ • বিহার, উঃপূর্ব, কাশ্মীরের
- জন্য বিশেষ বরাদ্ধ...পৃঃ ৮ কোম্পানি করের হার কমিয়েও আয় বৃদ্ধি... পৃঃ ৯
- স্বস্তি প্রণবের... পৃঃ ৯

রাজ্যের প্রাপ্তি ছিটেফোঁটা, তবু চুপ সিপিএম সি পি আইয়ের গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত ভেবেছেন। দ্বিতীয় পছন্দ হিসাবেও বহু বার আলোচনা করেছেন। বাজেটে কলকাতা: শেষ পর্যন্ত পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বা ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকের দেবন্তত বিশ্বাসেরা যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় বা এস এন বোস চিদম্বরম চা শিল্পের উৎপাদন সমস্যা ভাগ্যে জুটল নামমাত্র। মাত্র দু'টি হতাশ পশ্চিমবঙ্গ কিছুই না-পাওয়ায়। ইনস্টিটিউট অব বেসিক সায়েন্সেসের এবং গাছ লাগানোর প্রসঙ্গটি তুললেও

> বাধাবাধকতার কারণেই। এ দিকে, চায়ের উপর থেকে প্রতি কেন্দ্র, রাজ্য, শিল্প-বাণিজ্য মহলকে কেজিতে এক টাকা সারচার্জ তুলে

বাজেটে ফরাকা ব্যারাজ প্রকল্পে বরাদ্দ হয়েছে ৫২ কোটি টাকা। প্রতি বছর গঞ্চার ভাঙনে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয় পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ও বিহার। গঙ্গার প্লাবনে ক্ষতি হয় ওড়িশা, পূর্ব উত্তরপ্রদেশের বেশ কিছু অঞ্চলের। ব্রহ্মপূত্রের বন্যার কবলে পড়ে অসম-সহ উত্তর-পর্বের অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের চেয়ারম্যান তথা টাকা বরাদ্দ করা হয়েছে। সি পি এমের

ধনীদের কর

প্রথম পাতার পর

হননি। তবে তাঁর বক্তব্য, এ নিয়ে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগে আরও সবিস্তার আলোচনার প্রয়োজন আছে।

বিজেপি অবশ্য প্রত্যাশিত ভাবেই এই বাজেটের মধ্যে তেমন ভাল কিছু খুঁজে পায়নি। প্রতিক্রিয়া জানানোর তাগিদেই যেন তাদের প্রতিক্রিয়া। কোনও নির্দিষ্ট পথের সন্ধান নেই সেখানে। প্রাক্তন অর্থমন্ত্রী যশোবস্ত সিংহ বলেছেন, "এই বাজেটে বাগাডম্বর আছে, কিন্তু সারবত্তা নেই। এটা কোনও জননায়কের বাজেট নয়, আইনজীবীর বাজেট।" বিজেপি-র জোট-শরিক, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের প্রধান বিরোধী দলের নেত্রী মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় বাজেটের সমালোচনা করে বলেন, "কালা-ধন প্রকল্পের কথা বলে চিদাম্বরমজি মানুষকে অপমান করেছেন। কালো টাকা উদ্ধার করতে তিনি যে কালা-ধনের উল্লেখ করেছেন তা কেন একজন সাধারণ ও সংপথে অর্থ উপার্জনকারী দেবেন। কেন ১০ হাজার টাকা ব্যাঙ্ক থেকে তুললে ১০ **টাকা সরকারকে দিতে হবে?**" অবিলম্বে এই 'কালা-ধন' বাতিলের দাবি তুলেছেন তৃণমূল নেত্রী।

এতখানি সরব না হলেও 'কালা-ধন' সম্পর্কে চিদম্বরমের চিন্তাভাবনা নিয়ে সংশয়ে রয়েছেন বামপন্থীরাও। অসীমবাবুর বক্তবা, কালো টাকা উদ্ধারে সংহত পরিকল্পনার প্রয়োজন রয়েছে। তাঁর ধারণা, কেন্দ্র-রাজ্য যৌথ ভাবে এই পরিকল্পনা হাতে নিলে তবেই তা সার্থক হবে। আপত্তির জায়গাগুলি বামপন্থীরা চিহ্নিত করছেন। চরম সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগে বামপন্থীরা যে সরকারের সঙ্গে व्यात्नाहमात्र भाषास्य भीभाश्मा हान. তার স্পষ্ট ইন্সিত আজ সি পি এমের লিখিত বিবতিতে দেওয়া হয়েছে। অসীমবাব আরও নির্দিষ্ট করে এই আলোচনার দাবি তুলেই রেখেছেন। তবে সার্বিক ভাবে এই বিবৃতি ও দলের বিভিন্ন নেতার বক্তব্য থেকে এটা স্পষ্ট যে বাজেটে সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রের দিকে নজর পড়ায় বামেরা খুশি। সি পি এমের বাসুদেব আচারিয়া বা নীলোৎপল বসু বা সি পি আইয়ের গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত বিষয়টিকে 'সদর্থক' वरलंडे वर्णना करवाछन।

খাদ্যের বদলে কাজ প্রকল্পে চাহিদা এবং বরাদের মধ্যে ২৯ হাজার কোটি টাকার ফাঁকটি নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন অসীম দাশগুপ্ত। এই ফাঁক ভরাট করার জন্য আর্থিক দায়ভার শেষ পর্যন্ত রাজ্যগুলির কাঁধে চাপবে কিনা তা নিয়ে চিন্তায় রয়েছেন পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থমন্ত্রী। নিশ্চিত কর্মসংস্থান প্রকল্পের রূপরেখা ও তার রূপায়ণ নিয়েও রাজ্যগুলির সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রের আলোচনার দাবি তুলেছেন তিনি। রাজ্যে সফল ভূমি সংস্কারের অভিজ্ঞতার নিরিখে অসীমবাব্র বক্তব্য, কর্মসংস্থান প্রকল্পের ফলকে দীর্ঘমেয়াদে ধরে রাখতে এর সঙ্গে ভূমি সংস্কারকেও যুক্ত করতে হবে।

গ্রামীণ স্বাস্থ্য প্রকল্পে সন্তোষ প্রকাশ করলেও এ বাবদ বরাদ যে অভিন্ন নূনতম কর্মসূচি ঘোষিত হারের থেকে অনেকটাই কম তা-ও মনে করিমে দিয়েছেন অসীমবাব। দেশের মেটি জাতীয় উৎপাদন ২৮ লক্ষ কোটি টাকা। কর্মসূচিতে তার ২ থেকে ও শতাংশ স্বাস্থ্য ক্ষেত্রে বরাদ্দের কথা বলা হয়েছিল। অর্থাৎ কমপক্ষে ৫৬ হাজার কোটি। কিন্তু চিদম্বরমের বরাদ্দ ১০ হাজার ২৮০ কোটি টাকা।

গ্রামীণ পরিকাঠামো ক্ষেত্রে চিদম্বরমের ঘোষণায় সন্তুষ্ট বামেরা। কিন্তু বরান্দের বড় অংশই রাজ্যকে ঋণ বাবদ দিচ্ছে কেন্দ্র। এ নিয়ে আপত্তি আছে অসীমবাবুর। আর আই ডি এফ এবং এ আই বি পি খাতে ১২ হাজার ৮০০ কোটি টাকাই ঋণ, রাজাকেই তা শোধ করতে হবে। অসীমবাবুর দাবি, এই প্রকল্পের বরাদ্দকে বাজেট অনুদান হিসাবেই চিহ্নিত করতে হবে।

পথ প্রশস্ত

প্রথম পাতার পর

প্রয়োজন হবে। ব্যাদ্ধিং সংস্কারের দ্বিতীয় পর্যায় শুরু হবে ২০০৯ সালের এপ্রিল থেকে।

২০০৪ সালের ৫ মার্চ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার ব্যাঙ্কিং শিল্পে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের রূপরেখা পেশ করেছিল। সেই নথিতে বলা হয়েছিল, বিদেশি প্রত্যক্ষ বিনিয়োগ, বিদেশি আর্থিক সংস্থার লগ্নি ও অনাবাসীদের বিনিয়োগ, তিন সূত্র থেকে বিনিয়োগ যোগ করে মোট বিদেশি অংশীদারি সর্বোচ্চ ৭৪ শতাংশ পর্যন্ত অনুমোদন করা হবে। বাকি ২৬ শতাংশ শেয়ার রাখতে হবে ভারতীয়দের হাতে। তবে পুনর্গঠনের প্রয়োজনে ব্যাক্ষে বিদেশি লগ্নির ভূমিকা ওই নীতিতে ছিল না। অর্থাৎ আগামী দিনে যা হতে চলেছে, তা হল, রুগ্ণ বেসরকারি ব্যাক্ষ বিদেশি ব্যাঙ্কের হাত ধরে ও বিদেশি মালিকানায় পুনর্গঠিত হতে পারে।

অর্থমন্ত্রী বাজেট-বক্ততায় ব্যাঙ্কিং সংস্কার নিয়ে যা বলেছেন, তা মূলত কাজের খুঁটিনাটি সংক্রান্ত ৷ 'স্ট্যাটিউটরি লিকুইডিটি রেশিও' বা এস এল আর এবং 'ক্যাশ রিজার্ভ রেশিও' বা সি আর আর-এর উর্ধ্ব ও নিম্নসীমা তুলে দেওয়ার প্রস্তাব দেওয়া হয়েছে বাজেটে। ব্যাঙ্ক মোট সংগৃহীত আমানতের যত শতাংশ অর্থ নগদ হিসাবে রাখতে পারে, সেটাই নির্ধারণ করে এস এল আর বা বিধিবদ্ধ নগদ অনুপাত। আর সংগৃহীত অর্থের যত অংশ ব্যাঙ্কগুলিকে জমা রাখতে হয় রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কে, তাকেই বলে সি আর আর বা নগদ জমার অনুপাত।

অর্থমন্ত্রীর প্রস্তাব, এস এল আরের সীমা তুলে দেওয়ার জন্য ব্যান্ধ নিয়ন্ত্রণ আইন সংশোধন করে এ ব্যাপারে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার ভার রিজার্ভ ব্যান্ধের হাতে অর্পণ করা হবে এবং সি আর আরের সীমা উঠে যাওয়ার পরে সংশোধিত হবে রিজার্ভ ব্যান্ধ অব ইন্ডিয়া আইন। উল্লিখিত দু'টি আইন সংশোধনের জন্য চলতি বাজেট অধিবেশনেই বিল আনা হবে বলে ঘোষণা করেছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী।

এক হাতে কর কমিয়ে অন্য হাতে ছাড় বিলোপ

প্রথম পাতার পর

প্রথম পাতার পা
মানুষকে করের আওতায় নিয়ে আসা।
প্রথম উদ্দেশ্যে চিদ্দরম যে সফল তা
পরিকার। দ্বিতীয় লক্ষাটি অর্জন করার
জন্য স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ডিডাকশন তৃলে
দিয়েছেন তিনি।

এর ফলে যে বহু মানুষ রাতারাতি করের আওতায় চলে আসবেন, অনেক বিশেষজ্ঞই সে বিষয়ে একমত।

করের আওতা বাড়ানোর জন।

তরান বাই সিক্স নামে যে প্রকল্প চালু
রয়েছে তাতেও সংশোধন করা হয়েছে।
মোবাইল ফোন রাখার কারণে

তথ্য থেকে কেউ করের আওতায়

মোবাইল ফোন রাখার কারণে আশা অথমান কর এখন থেকে কেউ করের আওতায় সংস্কারের ফলে তালিব আসবেন না। বরং যাঁরা বিদ্যুৎ বিল আতে বছরে ৫০,০০০ টাকা বা তার বড় ভরসা জুগিয়েছে।

বেশি দিয়ে থাকেন তাঁরা করের আওতায় আসবেন।

আগামী বছর আয়কর খাতে অর্থানন্ত্রী যে রাজস্ব আয়ের আশা করেন, তার থেকেও এর ইন্ধিত মেলে। চলতি আর্থিক বছরে যেখানে আয়কর থাতে সরকার ৫০,৯২৯ কোটি টাকা আয় করেছে, সেখানে আগামী বছর অর্থান্ত্রী ৬৬,২৩৯ কোটি টাকা আয়ের লক্ষামাত্রা রেখেছেন। বিশেষজ্ঞাদের যুক্তি, শুধু আর্থিক উন্নয়নের উপর ভরসা করে এতখানি রাজস্ব বৃদ্ধির আশা অর্থমন্ত্রী করতেন না। কর সংস্কারের ফলে তালিকায় অনেক নতুন করদাতা যোগ হবেন, এই আশা তাঁকে বড় ভরসা জৃগিয়েছে।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

D 1 MAR 2005

A TWO-IN-ONE BUDGET COMBO P. Chidambaram manages to combine

political sense with economic savvy

UDGET 2005 is an astute combination of good politics and good economics. By meeting expenditure requirements of the food for work scheme, larger education outlays and greater spending on irrigation and rural development, Union Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram has been able to meet the political demands of the National Common Minimum Programme. Unlike Budget 2004, which was alleged to have paid only lip service to some of the demands of the National Common Minimum Programme, in this Budget the finance minister genuinely meets some of the demands placed before him by the Leftists and Left-of-centre partners within the UPA. Fortunately, though, it is not just good political acumen that characterises this exercise. Chidambaram has managed to deliver good economics as well. The Budget keeps sight of the fact that the National Common Minimum Programme demands large resources. A short-term strategy, for instance, would have been to raise tax rates. This approach would have given him the resources to spend in the current budget but would not have generated resources for later. The finance minister, therefore, has chosen to place his bets on higher tax collections that will come with a simpler tax system and a lower tax rate.

AX reform then forms the heart of this Budget effort. Expectations about significant tax reforms in this exercise had already been raised by both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's and Finance Minister Chidambaram's references to Budget 2005 as a budget of tax reforms. A rationalisation of direct taxes, both on the front of personal taxes and corporate taxes, as well as the change in rates is welcome. The cut in custom duties is a move toward reducing tariffs to get to ASEAN rates and to increasing the competitiveness of Indian industry. The reduction of duties on crude oil and petroleum products to increase efficiency within industry and reduce the burden on the consumer is welcome. Chidambaram's Budget speech indicated the setting up of a Special Purpose Vehicle for infrastructure, more funds to the National Highway Project, the removal of 108 items from the Small Scale Industries' reservation list and money

for the National Common Minimum Programme's promises of food for work and education.

OST of the reforms in the MOST of the reforms in the Budget have, of course, not come as a surprise. While the official secrecy enshrouding the Budget-making proposals remains, there was little in these proposals that had not passed the scrutiny of the public. In fact, there was little on which there was no general consensus. On the direct tax proposals which are the most radical elements of this Budget — Chidambaran has accepted the recommendations of the Kelkar Task Force, either in full, as in the case of corporate tax or in part, as in the case of changes in the tax rates. The blueprint of the budgetary tax proposals can be seen clearly and concretely in the Kelkar Task Force report. The finance minister has also made good use of the fact that for once there was a clear road map laid out with rates, their expected impact on taxes and their effect on deficits all painstakingly and scrupulously worked out. In addition to the tax proposals, the proposal of the Planning Commission on using foreign exchange reserves for infrastructure has also been debated in public. This can be said for roughly 18 of the 20 proposals in this Budget. This transparency in the budgetary process is to be commended and taken further in the exercises of the future. The making of road maps for budgetary proposals, as well as revenue and deficit targets, is new and will take budget-making in India to new heights. An important reform in this Budget, then, is the reform of the process itself. Rarely have budget proposals been debated at such lengths any time before. The debate and discussion serve to strengthen the democratic aspect of the exercise and also place more responsibilities on the media, as the primary source of information in the public sphere. The next items on the agenda is more public discussion on subsidies and indirect taxes with a move towards evolving a Goods and Services Tax. The finance minister has already said that in the medium to long term he would like to see a national level Goods and Services Tax. At the end of the day, then, Chidambaram has managed a two-inone Budget combo: political sense and economic savvy.

D 1 MAR 2005

Reform vs CMP: FM to walk tightrope

Slab changes likely to benefit lower middle class Sops likely for tea sector

Arun Kumar New Delhi, February 27



THE UNION provide a ray of hope to Budget is expected

to increase the slab levels to Minister P. Chidambaram is the lower-income salaried class. Finance likely to wave his magic wand the benefit of lower-income he government may increase the tax slab of 20 per cent to incomes up to Rs 2.5 lakh group. According to sources, against the current level of Rs l.5 lakh.

However, it may also remove ed by the Vijay Kelkar-led FRBM task force. The sources which means that all the exsaid all exemptions will be grandfather for future years, emptions will be clubbed under one heading. Given the government's intention to inrease the tax base, it is uncertain exemptions as suggest ikely to move to a two-rate in come tax structure as suggest ed by Kelkar. The sources said it eq

Huge outlay seen for job creation

THE FINANCE minister is likely to create a huge corpus to meet the proposed expenditure on account of the Employment Guarantee Fund (EGF)

As per conservative estimates, the government needs to the poverty line is currently around 19 crore. The Planning providing a minimum of 100 days employment, it need to assume the cost per employee per day is Rs 100, it needs a total budget support of Rs 19,500 crore per annum which is ployment to every rural household. Rural population below create jobs for 195 crore mandays. And, even if one were to fork out nearly Rs 19,000 crore to guarantee 100 days of employed in rural areas. Therefore, to meet its commitment of Commission estimates that there are 1.95 crore unemaround one per cent of the GDP.

limit lower than the Kelkar recommendation and retain a make an endeavour to keep the income tax exemption low tax rate of 10 per cent.

structure (tax rates of 20 per cent and 30 per cent) from the current three-rate structure mum marginal tax rate to 30 also recommended the removal of standard deduction and reduction in the maxiper cent. The committee had The Kelkar committee had suggested a shift to a two-rate

Kelkar task force has also suggested for removal of exemptions under Section 10A, 10B, 80IA and 80IB of the Income for salaried taxpayers.

but would not be available to new units after the cut-off date applicable for old companies, means that these would remain It is learnt that the government may withdraw these exemptions and grandfather the same for future years, which to be set in the budget Fax Act.

Sandeep Bamzai & Deepak Joshi New Delhi, February 27

to have a comprehensive package for exporters as well with special emphasis on textiles in the post quota regime. With last year's foreign trade policy will take this forward. The cornertsone being en A BOOSTER shot is expected for the ailing tea and coffee sectors tomorrow. The budget is most likely looking at reducing transaction costs, the budge hancing competitiveness of Indian industry.

With its exports set to ramp up to \$75 billion by \$150 billion exports by 2009. For this, a conducive the end of this financial year, India is targeting and supportive environment has to be created

tion of the budget. In the post-quota regime, Indian Jumpstarting this, the inverted duty structure relief will be given to the textile sector in this edimay be addressed to some extent and substantial textiles have to be nurtured so that it takes advantage of the opportunities available.

that total customs duty for an item is not above 25 counts for 4 per cent of India's GDP, total 20 per cent of exports and employs 35 million people di-The crying need for reduction in basic customs per cent may also be considered. Textiles now acduties across-the-board to 10 per cent and ensuring

There is every possibility of de-reservation of 26 items under the small scale industries sector, introduction of subsidy and incentive plans, establishment of apparel parks and clusters.

that the ailing tea sector will also be given the ben-Sources have indicated to the Hindustan Times efit of reduced import duty of 5 per cent on items of machinery which have been notified by the minstry of finance in the past for other sectors.

2 8 FEB 2005

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2005

WY YHV UPA SCORES OWN GOALS Selver

IF THE 14TH general election was all about winning through alliances, Assembly elections 2005 tell the same story in reverse. A broken alliance is the shortest and surest route to defeat. Last summer a Congress on the defensive and far from confident about its own vote-pulling capabilities built a winning coalition of national and regional parties. The United Progressive Alliance stood as a testimony to secular unity and surprised the pundits. Nine months on, the UPA has all but snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in two of the three States that went to the polls - and for reasons only too obvious. In both Bihar and Jharkhand, the Congress displayed mindless arrogance in wrecking the alliance that brought it handsome victories in the Lok Sabha election. In Bihar, the party leading the Central Government set out to prove it was a force to reckon with and bit the dust. Its limited alliance with the Lok Jana Shakti Party notwithstanding, it could not even hold the 12 seats it had in the outgoing Assembly. Worse, it inflicted crushing losses on its ally, the Rashtriva Janata Dal. In Jharkhand, the Congress went against alliance dharma and excluded the RJD from its seat-sharing pact with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. In the event, favourites IMM and the Congress finished well behind the Bharatiya Janata Party-Janata Dal(United) combine. When elections were announced to the State Assemblies of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Haryana, the arithmetic was so overwhelmingly in favour of the UPA that it looked set for a 3-0 sweep.

Today the UPA can claim only one unambiguous success — in Haryana. The Congress will no doubt take credit for its landslide victory in this State. Nonetheless, it would do well to temper its euphoria by considering two factors that contributed to this triumph. The mood on the ground was strongly for change. Secondly, the BJP, which fought the last Assembly election with the Indian National Lok Dal, was on its own this time. Haryana is poor consolation for the UPA considering its

losses in Bihar and Jharkhand. In Jharkhand, Chief Minister Arjun Munda of the BJP was hamstrung on many counts — a poor incumbency record, raging inner party dissidence, and incompatibility problems with the JD(U). Yet thanks to the overreaching ambitions of the Congress and the JMM, and the consequent splintering of the UPA's votes, Mr. Munda today looks headed for a return. That the RJD has done rather well for itself in this State is an irony that can only compound the misery of the Congress and the JMM.

The Bihar verdict may have been a blow to the UPA but it hardly redounds to the credit of the BJP-JD(U) alliance, which could not snatch an outright victory in a State thought to have been ruined by "15 years of [RJD] misrule." That Lalu Prasad put up a spirited fight not merely against his acknowledged adversaries but also against his purported allies speaks volumes for the RJD chief's resilience as well as his ability to fight on a number of fronts. Mr. Prasad braved brickbats from all sides, the BJP, the JD(U), the Congress, and the LIP, not to mention an Election Commission that scrutinised every move of the RJD with barely concealed adversariality. Bihar is faced with a hung Assembly that at least for the moment offers no ready solution. The key to the deadlock lies with Ram Vilas Paswan who might think he has been cast in the role of kingmaker. Yet Mr. Paswan is hardly in an enviable position. His bitter campaign against Mr. Prasad renders difficult any immediate patch-up between the two campaigntrail adversaries. On the other hand, Mr. Paswan's long-term ambition to build and nurture a Muslim-Dalit constituency dictates that he stay clear of the BJP-JD(U) combine. It is perhaps owing to this predicament that the LJP leader has suggested a spell of President's Rule for the beleaguered State. Those who favour such a course to clean what they believe to be the present-day equivalent of the Aegean stables clearly do not have much faith in the power of elective democracy.

28 77 2005

.Cruise @150 Kmph On Hi-Speed Routes

► Continued from previous page Barhaj Bazar – Faizabad via Dohrighat, Digha–Jaleswar, garh-Baddi Mailaduturai-Firukadevur-Taramgambadi-Tirunallar-Karaikal Madhubani-Sitamarhi-Bairenia via Shiyour, Pakri Deal, Dhaka Muzaffarpur-Janakpur, Kusheswarasthan-Darbhanga via Singhia, Akouna, Baheri, Kapchhahi, Nawadah-Giridih via Satgawan Sitamarhi-Nirmali Champada-

ga-Tarakeshwar, Amta - Bagnan, Kollangode – Trichur, Buniyadpur-Kaliaganj, Chanchal-Barsoi II. Surveys for following New

Lines are being updated 1 Extension of Naupada-Gunupur line up to Theruvali 2 Bhattu Kalan -Jakhal via Fatehabad and Ratia Puri–Konark 4 Katangi–Tirodi 5 Bargarh-Nawapara Road (via Padampur) 6 Chennai-Cuddalore via Mahabalipuram and Pondicherry 7 Amethi to Saĥaganj via Sultannur/Qadinur 8 Etah-Kasoan 9 Gaya – Daltonganj via Imamganj 10 Hissar-Sirsa via Agroha III. New Surveys for conversion of

following line to broad gauge are be-Extension of Rupsa-Bangriposi gauge conversion up to Gurumahishasini the following lines are being undated

IV. Surveys for gauge conversion of 1 Raipur-Dhamtari 2 Bhuj-Naliya with extension to Baranda/Koteswar 3 Minister for having approved Ku-Mavli-Marwar 4 Mehsana - Taranga Hill marghat - Agartala and Jiribam-Imphal



International Airport express train on a trial run, stops at a station, in December, 2001. The train was expected to carry between 5,000 to 10,000 passengers per day when it began operations in April 2002. Costing 2.4 billion ringgit (\$632 million), the train connects Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur and the airport, covering a distance of 56 .7 km

with extension upto Ambaii Pathankot-Jogindernagar 6 Madurai -

V. New surveys for doubling of the following lines are being taken up Laksar-Haridwar-Dehradun 2 Itarsi -Nagpur-Wardha-Ballarshah 3rd line 3 Valmikinagar-Narkatiaganj-Muzaffarpur 4 Ballarshah-Kazipet 3rd line 5 Kazipet-Vijaywada-Gudur 3rd line 6 Jharsuguhampa 3rd line 7 Durg-Nagpur 3rd line 8 Padampahar-Banspani 9 Ratlam-Vadodra 3rd line VI. Surveys for doubling of the fol-

lowing lines are being updated:

Annual Plan 2005-06

Sir, I would now like to present the Annual Plan 2005-06. The Plan outlay for 2005-06 has been kept at Rs.11,827 crore. Taking into account the outlay of Rs.3,522 crore on safety related works through the Special Railway Safety Fund (SRSF), the total outlay comes to Rs.15,349 crore. This is Rs.851 crore more than the outlay of last year. In addition to this, in order to improve the productivity and efficiency of the Indian Railways, the Hon'ble Prime Minister has directed the Planning Commission to allow the Ministry of Railways to access extra budgetary resources to the extent of Rs 3000 crore by identifying and posing financially viable throughput enhancement schemes on a projectised basis. For the year 2005-06, the total funds received from General Exchequer are Rs 7,230.81 crore, which include Rs. 2,699 crore for SRSF, Rs. 710.81 crore from the Central Road Fund leaving a net budgetary support of Rs. 3821 crore for distribution to different plan heads. The corresponding figure of last year's budget estimates was Rs. 7,020 crore, including Rs 2,075 crore for the SRSF and Rs. 401

crore from the Central Road Fund. In addition to the budgetary support, propose to provide Rs.4,718 crore for plan expenditure through internal resource generation which is higher than what was budgeted for previous year by Rs. 990 crore. As in previous years, extrabudgetary resources through market borrowing from Indian Railways Finance Corporation will provide the balance requirement of the Plan. The market borrowing targeted for 2005-06 is Rs. 3,400 crore. For the Special Railway Safety Fund, the contribution of the Central Government would be supplemented by Railways' own contribution which is expected to be Rs.823 crore taking the total outlay under SRSF to Rs.3,522 crore.

Sir, the thrust of the Annual Plan is to wards works for enhancement of throughput, safety and development The total outlay for the five major plan project heads this year has been kept at Rs.2, 185 crore with Rs.658 crore on New Lines, Rs.645 crore on Gauge Conversion, Rs.505 crore for Doubling and Rs.102 crore for Electrification. The out-

lay on metropolitan transport projects has been kept at Rs.275 crore. Apart from this, Rs.493 crore received as EAP element for projects to be executed by the Rail Vikas Nigam are being allotted to several works in the plan heads New Lines, Doubling, Gauge Conversion and Railway Electrification. The outlay on safety related plan heads, inclusive of given under the Special Railway Safety Fund, is Rs.2.623 crore for Track Renewals, Rs.755 crore for the Bridges and Rs.1,185 crore for Signalling & Telecommunications.

Additional funds to the tune of Rs 1365 crore have been sought for the national project of Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla new line and the newly declared national projects of the northeastern region. Release of funds to these would be made in the course of the year based on the pace of work. Similarly, the additional funds of Rs 358 crore sought for the works being executed by RVNL would also be released as necessary during the course of the year.

Ongoing Projects During the year 2004-05, about 1400 kms of broad gauge (BG) lines are likely to be added as against the progress of 1222 kms achieved during 2003-04. For the year 2005-06, a target of addition of 1692 km of BG lines has been set.

Sir, I had mentioned in my Budget Speech 2004-05 that time bound targets for completion of projects in the North-east region would be fixed. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime

Road (Tupul) new line and Lumding-Silchar-Jiribam gauge conversion projects s "National Projects". The argets for completion of these have been fixed as March 2007, March 2010 and March 2009 respectively. The completion of these projects is expected to meet the long-standing aspirations of the people of

Sir, the challenging National Project of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla is one of the flag ship projects of Indian Railways, and all out efforts are being made complete this expeditiously, despite the technical hurdles and certain other problems. The progress in Udhampur-Katra suffered a setback due to heavy ingress of underground water in one of the tunnels. The technical solution to this unforeseen problem is being worked out. The progress in the Quazigund-Baramulla and Katra-Quazigund sections

has also suffered due to various reasons. Government is taking all action to provide security on the project lignment and to expedite the progress of the project. ROUTE-WISE THROUGH-PUT ENHANCEMENT

Sir, this year a special effort has been made to sanction a greater number of route wise throughput enhancement works to remove congestions on the golden quadrilateral and its diagonals and to bring remarkable improvement in the operating efficiency of the Railways. These include terminal improvement works to bring down the turn round of wagons, deployment of modern signalling and telecommunication to enhance line capacity, doubling of railway lines, IT related initiatives to improve productivity and efficiency.

Sir, the financing of traffic facility works is done through the Development Fund also. With a view to making available adequate funds for throughput enhancement works, the proposed appropriation to this Fund in the current and ensuing year is Rs 3578 crore as against

2002-03 and 2003-04, which is three times more. Apart from this, extra budgetary resources of Rs 3000 crore on a projectised basis and Rs 851 crore through Rail Vikas Nigam would be available based on need. I have already covered the IT and signalling and telecommunication related initiatives earlier in my speech and would now like to elaborate on the remaining.

Terminal Improvement Works Besides the 200 odd sanctioned works another 42 terminals are proposed to

be covered for pro-viding facilities for full rake placement and round the clock working Doubling During 2004-2005 doubling of 307 kms is likely to be com pleted while for the

year 2005-06, a tar et of 538 kms has been fixed. In Kerala, the imnetus for progress ing with the doubling of Mangalore-Shoranur is being maintained and 30

kms from Pallinuram to Shoranur is targeted for completion during 2004-05. On the Jallandhar-Jammu Tawi section, progress of doubling is being expedited so as to complete the same by March 2007. The completion of doubling of Nergundi-Cuttack-Raghunathpur, Khurda Road-Delang and Sambalpur-Sason in Orissa, Korba-Gevra Road in Chhattisgarh. Diara-Singur, Champahati-Ghutiarisharif, Bandel-Bansberia, Eklakhi-Kumarganj-Harishchanderpur in West Bengal, Chapra-Hajipur in Biĥar, Tomagallu-Hospet, Hagari-Bellary, Bangalore-Bidadi in Karnataka, Panvel-JNPT in Maharashtra, Pallipuram-Shoranur in Kerala, Korrukupet-En-Tamil Nadu Cheonki-Lohagara, Zafarabad-Uttratia Chandrauli and Sultanpur-Bandhuakalam in Uttar Pradesh would add to the line capacity on certain congested routes.

Apart from this, doubling of the sections Jharsuguda-Rengali, Kursela-Seemapur, Maheshkunt-Thanabihpur, Bhimsen-Juhi, Sahjanwa-Munderwa, Babhnan-Mankapur, Ekma-Jiradei, Jaipur-Dausa, Salka Road -Khongsara ,Chinpain-Sainthia and third line between Panki-Bhaupur, Bhilai-Durg and Allahabad-Subedargani have been proposed for inclusion in the budget. The mpletion of these projects will improve traffic flows and add to line capacity on some of the saturated routes. **GAUGE CONVERSION**

Gauge conversions of Bharatpur-Agrafort of Agrafort-Bandikui, Adilabad-Kinvat of Mudkhed-Adilabad, Madurai-Manamadurai of Madurai-Rameswaram, Rupsa-Baripada of Rupsa-Bangriposi, Manoharabad-Nizamabad. Viramgam-Mehsana and Sihor-Palitana have been completed during the current year. Further, gauge conversions of Chhitaurgarh-Udaipur. Samukhtala Road-New Bongaigaon, Thanjavur-Tiruvarur of Trichy-Nagore-Karaikal, Biiapur-Basayanabagewadi of Sholapur-Gadag, Bankura-Sonamukhi of Bankura-Damodar river railway line, Mansi-Saharsa and Ranchi-Lohardaga are likely to be completed during the year. The progress of Gondia-Balaghat of Jabalpur-Gondia, Barsoi-Radhikapur of Jogbani-Katihar-Radhikapur and Sakshpur-Subramania road of Hassan-

Mangalore is also being expedited so as to open these sections early During the year 2005-06, a target of completion of 935 kms of gauge conversion has been proposed which include

the following sections: Kumbakonam-Mayiladuthurai Villupuram-Thaniavur

Manamadurai-Mandapam of Madurai-Trichy-Puddukotai of Trichy - Manamadurai

Samastipur-Khagaria-Mansi

Kanpur-Anwarganj-Farrukhabad of Tamluk-Digha and Mahenderlal-Kanpur-Kasgani-Mathura Secunderabad-Bolaram

Virddhachallam-Attur of Salem-Cuddalore Palanpur-Samkhiali of Gandhidham Palanpur

Delhi-Rewari

RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION I am glad to inform the House that the electrification of Renigunta-Nandalur, Balasore-Bhadrak and Kurda Road relating to improvement of terminals, Puri rail lines has been completed and

train services intro-

duced on these sections. Electrification on the Chennai-Kolkata route from he thrust of the Chennai to Barang and Kharagpur to **Annual Plan is on** Bhadrak has alprojects meant for ready been comoleted. Work is in enhancement of progress on the rethroughput, safety maining sections and is likely to be & development completed March 2005. The

electrification target of 375 kms for the current year is expected to be achieved. The work of electrification of Moradabad-Lucknow-Utretia has also been in-

cluded in this budget For 2005-06, electrification of 350 route kilometers has been targeted. This will cover the following sections: Najibabad-Moradabad Paravur-Trivandrum Krishnanagar-Behrampur Tirupati-Pakala-Katpadi

Talcher-Angul Villupuram-Electrification Pondicherry is also being taken up with 50% of the cost being borne by the Government of Pondicherry SUBURBAN TRANSPORT PROJECTS Phase-I of Thane-Turbhe-Vashi section

in Navi Mumbai has been completed and opened for passenger traffic in November, 2004. Work on the second phase viz., Turbhe-Nerul section, is in progress. Gauge Conversion works of full section between Chennai Beach and Chen-

zalpattu has been completed and opened for traffic in November 2004. The BG link between Chennai Egmore and Chennai Central has been approved as a part of the on-going suburban gauge conversion project.
The Tirumailai-Tiruvamniyur section of the Tirumailai-Velacheri phase-II has

already been commissioned. The remaining section from Tiruvamnivur-Velacheri is slated for opening during 2006-07. The proposal to extend MRTS phase II from Velacheri to St. Thomas Mount is under the consideration of Ministry of Railways. The Government of Tamil Nadu has already given its commitment for sharing two-third of the cost of this line. This scheme will be further

processed for necessary approvals.

The extensions of Circular Railway, Kolkata, from Princepghat to Majerhat and from Dum Dum to Netaii Subhash Chandra Bose Airport are expected to be mpleted by March 2005.

Extension of Metro Railway, Kolkata, from Tollygunge to Garia is expected to be completed by the year 2007. **NEW LINES**

I am happy to state that New Lines from Kakinada to Kotapalli, Kanthi-Digha of

nagar-Amta of Howrah-Amta have already been completed. It is hoped to complete Amravati-Chandur hazar Nokha-Sanjauli Rajgir-Nekpur of Rajgir-Tilaiya, Hassan-Sharavanabelagola and Bangalore-

Neelamangala

Bangalore-Hassan during the year. Further, works on Chandigarh-Morinda of Chandigarh-Ludhiana and Banka-Barhat of Deogarh-Sultanganj are in advanced stages of In 2005-06, Railways propose to

complete 219 kms of new lines including the following sections: Nekpur-Natesar of Rajgir - Tilaiya. Banka-Barhat of Deogarh-Sultan Chandigarh-Morinda of Chandi

garh-Ludhiana. Sanjauli-Piro of Ara-Sasaram. Kolavat-Phalodi. Gandhinagar-Kalol.

PART-II **Budget Estimates 2005-06**

Sir, I shall now deal with the Budget Estimates for 2005-2006. Enthused by the trend of buoy ancy in freight loading in 2004-05 the Railways are expecting to carry 635 million tonnes of revenue earning originating freight traffic during 2005-2006, which is 35 mil-

lion tonnes more than the traffic

likely to be lifted in the current year.

This increase is higher than the average incremental freight achieved in the last few years. The originating passenger traffic is estimated to go up by about 4 per cent, which along with certain measures will result in increasing the earnings by 7.4 per cent over the Revised Estimates of the current year. Considering the initiatives taken in parcel segment, the 'Other Coaching' earnings are expected to grow by 10 percent 'Sundry Other' earnings are expected to

grow by 5 per cent.
On the basis of these assumptions and considering the various rationalisation measures proposed in the budget, the Gross Traffic Receipts (GTR) are estimated at Rs 50,968 cr. These are Rs 4,183 cr higher than the Revised Estimates of the current financial year.

Ordinary working expenses are estimated to be Rs. 35,600 cr, 7% more than the revised estimates of the current year. Appropriation to pension fund from revenue will be Rs. 6,940 cr. Despite making an unprecedented appropriation of Rs.3,604 cr to Depreciation Reserve Fund, which is around 60% more than the appropriation of Rs. 2,267 cr made in the Budget Estimates of the current year, operating ratio is expected to improve to 90.8%. The working ratio of 87% of Budget Estimates for the current year is $expected \ to \ improve \ significantly \ to \ 83\%$ in the next year's Budget Estimates. Sir. after implementation of the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission the Operating Ratio is expected to reach this level for the first time in eight years. I express my commitments to bring down the operating ratio to less than 85% in the coming years through strict control on ordinary working expenses and after making adequate provision to DRF by enhancing revenue earning capabilities

of the Indian Railways. Sir, I know that

speeds along a new

Rochester, Kent, 40

miles east of London

on July 30, 2003. The

train reached at a top

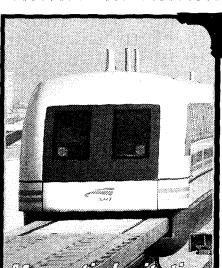
speed of 334.7 kmph, a

new speed record for a

Rail Link near

train in the UK

lingizurostartrain



train arriving at the Longyang Road station in Shanghai's Pudong New District. The Chinese state press reported on March 9, 2004, that China was mulling the construction of a second commercial magnetic levitation train (MAGLEV) from Shanghai to neighbouring Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.

this is a very difficult and challenging "Jeevan ke har path par mali pushp

nahi bikhrata hai Pragati ka path aksar pathrila hi hota

The total Working Expenses will, thus, amount to Rs 46,144 cr leading to the Net Traffic Receipts of Rs 4,824 cr. Taking together the effect of Net Miscellaneous Receipts, the Net Revenue works out to Rs 5,914cr.

A memorandum on the rate of dividend payable to General Revenues for 2005-06 is under the consideration of Railway Convention Committee. The committee has recommended a reduction in rate of dividend for 2004-05 from 7% to 6.5%. As resolution for this recommendation is yet to be adopted by the Parliament, the dividend for the current year and for the next year has been provided at the same rates as adooted for 2003-04. On this basis, dividend liability for 2005-2006 works out to Rs 3,638 cr Along with payment of Rs. 300 cr towards deferred dividend, an amount of Rs 3,938 cr becomes payable to the General Revenues. This liability will be discharged in full.

The above projections are expected to vield Rs 4718 cr towards the Plan outlay for the year, from the internal resources. FREIGHT SERVICES

I do not propose any across the board increase in freight rates for 2005-06. I propose to make historic changes in the goods tariff to make it simple, ration-

al and transparent "Pa hi lenge, aakhir manjil rahon ki mohtaz nahin,

Saath ho ummidon ka, kal hoga wahi o aaj nahin" Due to this simplification the Goods Tariff, which runs into a thick volume of more than five hundred pages containing over 4000 commodities, will now be

condensed into a few pages only. In the proposed rationalisation, the Goods Tariff will have only 80 groups of commodities instead of the existing over 4000 commodities. Each group, under a Main Commodity Head, shall have a single uniform class for the different commodities in the group, irrespective of their being in different physical forms or shapes and their different conditions. whether raw or manufactured. A copy of the rationalised Goods Tariff is given as an Annexure to the Memorandum Explaining the adjustments in Passenger

Fares and Freight Rates. Presently, minimum chargeable weight of the wagon is prescribed keeping in view the nature of the commodity to be loaded. For lightweight items this is considerably less than the carrying capacity of the wagon. This procedure for fixation of the minimum weight condition for different commodities is not only cumbersome but has also been causing dis-satisfaction to the rail users. Therefore, for all commodities, freight will be charged based upon the carrying capacity of wagons. As despite putting lighter commodities in the lowest Class-90 there may be an appreciable increase in their freight rates, it is proposed to introduce three new classes below Class-90 viz. 90-W1. 90-W2 and 90-W3. With the introduction of these three new classes, while the increase in freight will be contained to the barest minimum for most of the commodities, there will also be a marginal reduction in the freight in certain cases. Otherwise also the aim of these revolutionary reforms is not to earn revenue but to simplify the cumbersome procedure. The existing freight structure has 27

classes, in intervals of "Fives" from Class-90 to Class-190 and in intervals of "Tens" from Class-190 to Class-250. It is proposed to have a freight structure with uniform interval of "Tens" between the successive classes. It is also proposed to reduce the highest class from Class-250 to Class-240 to make the freight structure more compact. The total number of classes shall, accordingly, stand reduced from the existing total of 27 classes to 19 classes. To ensure that freight rates of commodities being used by common man are not increased, classes of kerosene and LPG have been reduced from 135 to 130 and 185 to 180 respectively. As a result the freight for Kerosene and LPG will get reduced by 3.7% and 2.7% re-

The existing classification of different types of Chemical Manures ranges from

Class-90 to Class-115. In the proposed rationalisation, the enire group of Chemical Manures vill have a single uniform Class-100. This will result in a reduction in the freight rates of many chemical manures and increase in some

Sir, our government is committed to the well-being of the economically under-privileged sections of society. Keeping this in view, the transportation of Food Grains and Pulses is done even below Base Class-100 at Class-90 and the resultant loss of earnings from short distances is being borne by the railways. To bear this loss of earnings in public interest is our government's commitment but there is no justification in incurring such losses in the transportation of non-PDS and non PAP food grains and pulses. Therefore, the classification for Food Grains and Pulses is proposed to be revised to Class-120. However, Food Grains for Public Distribution System and Poverty Alleviation Programmes and for other relief works shall be charged at Class-100 so as to avoid increase in their freight rates. Often open wagons return empty on Indian Railways. To reduce empty movement of such rakes, food grains for public distribution system, etc. will be carried at Class-90. A large portion of freight traffic

on Indian Railways comes from programmed traffic. We have long-term relationship with such customers and we transport their goods year after year in a planned manner. Therefore, apart from the transporters of programmed Iron-Ore, who also have private sidings in their steel plants, all other transporters of Iron-Ore will be charged at Class-160 instead of Class-140.

Freight customers, particularly exporters, often require rakes at short notice, but timely supply of the same is not possible due to long waiting lists. Keeping in view the convenience of such customers a new "Premium Registration Scheme" has been drawn up. Under this scheme, those who are willing to pay freight at two classes higher than the pre scribed class shall be accorded higher

> ake historic changes in goods tariff to make it simple, rational & transparent.

preference in allotment of rakes within the same class of priority. To avoid inconvenience to non-premium customers, at least two days in a week will be reserved for allotment of rakes strictly as per the

In order to encourage public-private partnership in procurement of wagons o meet the anticipated incremental freight traffic in the coming years, it has been decided to introduce an attractive new scheme called "Wagon Investment Scheme". The customers investing in railway wagons will be assured of the supply of a guaranteed number of rakes every month based on the number of rakes procured and the turn round of the type of wagons, which will be in addition to the normal supply of rakes to such customers. For such guaranteed rakes, there will be a rebate in freight of 10% for BOXN wagons for 10 years and BCN wagons upto 15 years. For such customers adopting the engine on load scheme also, additional two rakes per month will be made available on a guaranteed basis, but there will be no freight rebate on these additional rakes. Apart from this, provision has also been made to provide higher priority in the Preferential Traffic Order for such customers.

Passenger services As Hon'ble Members are aware while presenting the Budget for the current financial year I had decided not to increase passenger fares at all. Noted poet Nagarjuna from Bihar in his book 'Apne Khet Mein' has written:-

"Jaan lo bhaiya, gharibon ki ek hoti Usi ke hukum se, hilenge ek-ek paat

Sir, considering the advice given by Nagarjuna Baba, I do not propose to increase any fares in this budget. Conclusion

Sir, I consider it a privilege and also a unique opportunity to lead the Railways I would like to assure the August House that we will make every possible effort to improve its performance in every field. I acknowledge the enthusiasm and unstinted support of railwaymen without whose dedicated efforts the creditable achievements of the Railways would not have been possible. Our thanks are also due to passengers and users of the Railway whose co-operation we have always been getting and I expect that this co-operation will be forthcoming in fu-

ture too. Sir, over the last many years, the in vestment in railway's infrastructure has, in real terms, not been sufficient to keep pace with the growth of the economy and meet the aspirations of the people. Hon'ble Prime Minister has time and again stressed his commitment to ensure that this system becomes one of the best Railway systems in the world and has assured me that funds for this challenging task would be forthcoming without any hindrance. While placing on record my gratitude for his generous gesture, it will be my endeavour to fulfil the expectations of the nation.

Railway Budget 2005-06 to the House.

For full text log on to

DOUBLE-DECKER WAGONS TO BE INTRODUCED TO CARRY MORE FREIGHT

PRIVATE SECTOR TO BE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING SURPLUS LAND



FIGURE 1 PROUD TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE CAPITAL FORMATION AND ASSET GROWTH OF INDIAN RAILWAYS

te of registration.

Freight Movement Put On The Fast Track.

The following are excerpts from railway minister Lalu Prasad's speech:

r Speaker Sir, I rise to present L the Budget Estimates for 2005-06 for the Indian Railways. I am presenting this budget at a point in time when the Indian economy reflects a vibrant growth. The Tenth Plan envisages an economic growth of 8%. This requires significant investment in infrastructure, of which railways are important and integral part, through larger public and private investment. This also needs greater efficiency in these sectors and sound fiscal management for financial viability.

Indian Railways have a critical role in ensuring the continued economic development of the country. We have drawn up an ambitious plan for meeting the increasing and emerging demands of the economy through the provision of world-class infrastructure. We will work not only towards streamlining the passenger services further and ensuring a palpable improvement in the quality of passenger services but also initiate a gamut of commercial, operational and investment - oriented initiatives in the freight sector thereby doing everything possible to improve Railways' share in the transport sector. I shall outline these policy decisions in the course of my

REVIEW OF PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL Performance In 2004-05

Sir, when I presented the first railway budget of the United Progressive Alliance Government, the so-called intelligentsia had criticised it as a populist one since I had not increased railway fares and freight. I have immense pleasure in reporting to this August House that with the untiring efforts of lakhs of railway employees, the physical as well as financial performance of Railways in the first nine months of the current financial year has been excellent, thereby belying this criticism. On the freight front Indian Railways have transported 438.36 mt which is 31.21 mt more than the traffic lifted during the corresponding period of the last year. This implies a growth of 7.67% over last year. Keeping this trend in mind, the revised target for loading has been raised from 580 mt to 600 mt and the revised freight earnings have also been increased from Rs 28,745 cr to Rs 30,450 cr. For many decades the railways share of the freight market has been progressively reducing. Sir. it is a matter of pride for every railwayperson that this year, by registering a freight growth that surpasses the growth of economy, not only have the railways regained some market share, but will also be surpassing the Tenth Plan target of 396 billion tonne kilometres of the terminal year 2006-07 in this year itself, that is two years ahead of target. Sir. the current year's expected incremental freight loading of 43 mt is the highest achieved so far. Originating passenger traffic has also registered a growth of around 6% as compared to the budget target of 3%. The total earnings to end of December 04, which stand at Rs 33,900 cr, represent an 8.3% growth over the tered in the previous financial year. The Revised Estimates have been framed keeping this trend in mind. Total earnings of Revised Estimates at Rs 46.635 cr

Budget Estimates. Concerted efforts of the Ministry of Railways have also resulted in a two-fold increase in realisation of outstanding dues over the previous year. With the anticipated clearance of Rs 150 cr, the budgeted gross traffic receipts of Rs

are Rs 1,838 cr higher as compared to

44,902 cr will increase to Rs 46,785 cr. The Ordinary Working Expenses are likely to increase by Rs 400 cr, mainly due to the steep post budgetary increase for these are placed at Rs. 33,260 cr as against Rs. 32,860 cr in the Budget Esti-



previous years, the fund balances are expected to close with a healthy figure of Rs

In comparison with earlier years our physical and financial performance has peen praiseworthy. However, we will not remain content with this. 'Uthna hai aur bhi upar, hai uchaiana

Hai apar kshmtayein,aashaein tumhe

nihartin' Several policy initiatives which I shall spell out in the course of my speech, have been taken with a view to ensuring that the economy and populace are able to reap the full benefits of Railways' vast

FREIGHT BUSINESS INITIATIVES Sir, policy decisions on several commercial, operating and investment related aspects have been taken with a view to bringing about an increase in the average speed of freight trains and reduction of fetention to rolling stock at terminals which I would like to mention briefly. Strategy to improve wagon availability and wagon utilisation

Sir, despite no significant augmentation in the number of wagons last year, considerable increase in loading has been possible due to improvements in the wagon turn round. The latter is expected to improve from seven last year to about six in year 2004-05. By taking up measures for improvements in this area on a war footing it is expected to bring the wagon turn round down to five days in the near future.

The Preferential Tariff Schedule for supply of wagons has been rationalised and simplified. Highest priority "A" will be accorded to the Military tr fence movement. Priority "B" shall be accorded to the emergency relief material for natural calamities and traffic sponsored by the Central Government agencies. Approved programmed traffic shall be accorded "C" priority. All other commodities will be moved under priority "D". In every category a higher priority within the same class of priority shall be accorded to the traffic offered by the customers adopting Engine-on-Load scheme, Wagon Investment Scheme or

full rake sidings with mechanised roundthe-clock working. In order to ensure un-interrupted movement of goods trains and to have better turn round of wagons, it is proposed to electrify diesel sidings located on electrified sections at Railways' cost,

er month

Engine-on-Load

where heavy detentions occur and a prescribed number of rakes is handled

As the House is aware 'Engine-on-Load" (EOL) scheme, was announced in the last Budget, wherein the train engine waits during loading and unloading operations to ensure faster lease and better availability of wagons. After consultation with cusomers, the terms and conditions have been further liberalised. The permissible free time for loading is being increased from three hours to four hours for commodities and from five hours to six hours for bagged consignments. It has also been decided to give a cash incentive by way of encashment of the credit hours available at the end of every quarter to be adjusted as a rebate in the freight payable in the following nuarter. It has been decid ed that higher preference,

priority, will be accorded in

supply of rakes to the EOL

customers. The EOL

scheme is also being ex

tended to selected goods

sheds and for customers not having their

It is proposed to introduce a cash incen-

who help the railways in reducing the

terminal detention through investments

in infrastructure for mechanised loading

and unloading, round-the-clock work-

ing and improvements in yard lay out in

their sidings. The "Terminal Incentive

Scheme" shall be formulated in consul-

tation with industry and after getting all

related aspects examined by a profes-

To bring about a qualitative improve

ment in freight train examination and

wagons maintenance practices, infra-structural facilities will be upgraded at

cheme for such freight customers

Terminal Incentive Scheme

photo. Anglo-French tunnel operator Eurotunnel reported a €1.89 billion (\$2.36 billion) net loss in 2003 and said it had appealed to the French and British governments to allow for a rate cut to help boost traffic.

own private sidings

sional agency.

While the gross traffic receipts are anticipated to increase by Rs 1,883 cr over the Budget Estimates, the working expenses are expected to grow by only Rs 400 cr, resulting in a significant increase in the internal generation during the current fiscal. With this the ratio of the ordinary working expenses and pension to the gross traffic receipts, i.e., "Working Ratio", is expected to be around 85% Despite the appropriation to Depreciation Reserve Fund being Rs 395 cr higher than budgeted, the Operating Ratio is expected to be 91.2% against the bud-

Eurostar train

enters the Channel Tunnel in Calais,

northern France, in this 1996 file

Hon'ble members have been expressing concern about depleting balances in the Railway funds. It is a matter of satisfaction that despite withdrawals in the current year being higher compared to

It is necessary that freight customers are encouraged to develop pvt sidings. The Railways shall share the cost if industry commits long-term traffic

ularly those for close circuit rakes. In the coming year 20 such examination centres will be upgraded. With this, detentions during examination of freight trains will be reduced, quality of train examinations will be improved and safety will be enhanced. Substantially longer intervals will be provided between two successive train examinations by providing extended run of freight trains after every examination and for most close circuit rakes there will be no need for reexamination up to 6,000 km. It is proposed to rationalise the rules

relating to demurrage and wharfage and the time given for loading and unloading. Accordingly, it has been decided that all goods sheds and sidings shall have uniform working hours and business hours. Customers are being encouraged to undertake loading and unloading operations through mechanised handling equipment and adopt round-the-clock working. As an incentive, only 50% of the actual time taken for loading or unloading operation from 22.00 hours to 06.00 hours will be reckoned for calcula tion of free time for the purpose of demurrage. Unloading from wagons is sometimes

held up due to delayed removal of consignments from an earlier rake lying on the ground. In order to encourage expeditious removal of the goods, it has been decided that a grace period of two hours beyond the prescribed free time for unding of wagons shall be permitted if the entire consignment from the rake is removed from the goods sheds within the extended free time

Electronic Payment Gateway I am happy to advise that the pilot project for setting up Electronic Payment Gateway for freight, which I had proposed during the last Railway Budget, has been implemented for Badarpur Thermal Power Station in January' 2005 and a clearance of Rs 110 crore has been effect ed from their outstanding dues. This facility will be extended to all major customers during the coming years, who

Public - Private Partnership Several public-private partnership initiatives are being taken to garner resources through non-traditional methods for the modernisation and development of the railways and to provide enhanced facilities for users. Prominent amongst these are private sidings, commercial utilisation of surplus railway land through construction of modern railway stations with provision of additional passenger amenities and logistics parks under the aegis of Rail Land Development Authoratives related to parcel, utilisation of optic fibre cable network of RailTel, computerised train enquiry system and wagon investment scheme, which will be covered in the course of my speech.

In order to enhance the rail share in transportation, it is necessary that freight customers are encouraged to develop their private sidings. It is proposed that the Railways shall share the cost of a new railway siding if the industry comes up with a long-term commitment of traffic; say for 10 years or more. Under this arrangement, the cost of the removable super structure including the track, sleepers, fastening etc. and the overhead electric equipment shall be borne by the railways. The capital cost of all traffic facilities such as 'Y' connection, additional lines at the serving station, crossing stations, patch doubling of the section etc. shall be fully borne by the railways. The siding owners will be required to bear the cost of the land, earthwork and the sub

structure of the track. It has further been decided that in all private sidings other than Engine on load only, barring the cost of one commercial staff per shift, the Railways would bear the cost of all other Railway staff. The cost of all staff at engine on load sidings will be borne by the Railways

Rail Land Development Authority To ensure the commercial utilisation o surplus railway land and air space I had. during the last Parliament session, pre2004 in the Rajya Sabha, for setting up of RLDA. This authority will, through pub--private participation, develop surplus land adjoining railway stations and goods sheds for constructing warehous-es and logistics parks. It would also generate additional resources for the development of railways. Sir, in the coming years we propose, with the help of this authority, to develop metro stations into world class modern stations and extend passenger amenities through construction of food plazas, shopping malls, etc. on vacant land. In 2005-06, all efforts will be made to complete the process relating to sanction of an action plan for converting New Delhi Railway Station into such a modern world class station. Integrated Warehouse Complexes Indian Railways have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Central Warehousing Corporation

(CWC) which will develop integrated warehouse complexes at 22 locations. A scheme for development of integrated warehouse complex by private sector has also been approved with a view to encourage public-private partnerships as per this model. It will provide a single window service to the customers for providing value added service of forwarding, handling, warehousing and road

Container Traffic With the globalization of the Indian economy and spurt in imports and exports, the container traffic is expected to grow exponentially. It has been assessed that the growth will be of the order of 15%. In order to meet the growing deother than Container Corporation of India will also be considered for movement of container traffic.

Capacity constraints on the existing routes necessitate introduction of double stack container freight trains. It is proposed to introduce double stack container trains during the next two years on one of the identified routes connecting North India with Gujarat ports, based on cost economics.

Passenger Business — Initiatives & AMENITIES

In the ensuing year I propose a number of steps for providing new, modern and improved facilities to the passengers. CONCESSIONS

> **e**xtend full concession in second class to unemployed youth appearing for interviews of state government iobs also

Sir, in my last budget speech I had announced that unemployed youth attending interviews for selection to Central Government jobs would be given full concession in second class on production of a certified copy of call letter and application. This year I propose to extend the same concession in second class to unemployed youth appearing for interviews of State Governments jobs also.

It is proposed to give 50% concession in Second Class fares to farmers and milk producers for travel to institutes of nationallevel in other parts of the country for the purpose of training/learning better agricultural practices and dairy farming. It is proposed to provide 75% conces-

sion in Second Class fares to Government rural school students, once in a in Second Class fares to girls from rural areas studying in Government schools for the purpose of attending national level entrance examination for medical, en-

ineering and other professional courses in colleges.

Railways have been carrying relief material for the people affected by the natural calamities/disasters. It is proposed that in notified cases of National alamities/Disasters, the transportation of the relief material will be carried on priority and free of cost. It is also prooosed that Railways will provide free Second Class transportation to persons stranded in such calamities for their

It is proposed that the dead bodies of patients who die while undergoing treatment in major Government hospitals will be carried on priority basis, to the nearest rail-head connecting their home town at 50% concession of the normal tariff rates.

Recruitment for Group D posts by

Sir, in my last budget speech I had announced that the recruitment for RPF posts by the Railway Recruitment Boards would be discontinued and the previous practice of filling up the vacancies directly by the field units would be restored. The results have been satisfacin the process of filling up of vacancies. Therefore, in order to tackle the problem of filling up of Group 'D' vacancies, the recruitment to Group 'D' posts will henceforth be made by the field units, as PASSENGER SERVICES

Indian Railways is at present running more than 9000 passenger trains. During the last few years, the railways have registered an annual average growth rate of nearly 3% in the number of passengers. Analysis shows that while on the one hand there are several routes or sections on which there is considerable demand, on the other there are several trains that suffer from lack of patronage due to inconvenient timings or the running of many trains at close intervals. It is, therefore, proposed to review all the trains low patronage and deploy re-

sources where there is greater need **New Trains** I propose the following services for the year 2005-06: Muzaffarpur-Howrah Jansadharan Ex-

press (weekly) Rhagalour-Malda Town Express (6 days a week) Bilaspur-Tirupati Express via Visakhapatnam (bi-weekly)
Jabalpur-Bhopal Express (daily)

Chennai Egmore-Secunderabad Express via Kurnool Town (daily) Madgaon-Mangalore Jan Shatabdi Express (6 days a week) Chennai-Bangalore Shatabdi Express (6 davs a week) Bilaspur-Itwari Express (daily)

Mangalore- Shravanbelagola Passenger (after completion of new line) Kumbakonam - Thanjavur Passenger Chennai Egmore-Pondicherry Link Pas-

Guwahati-New Bongaigaon Passenger (daily) Secunderabad - Nanded Express (daily) Secunderabad - Nizambad Passenger

senger (daily)

conversion)

Secunderabad- Bodhan Passenger (daily) Secunderabad - Basar Passenger (daily) Gondia - Balaghat Passenger - 4 Pairs (after gauge conversion) Udaipur - Jaipur Express (after gauge

Mysore) (after gauge conversion) Yesvantpur - Mangalore Express (via Arsikere) (after gauge conversion) Madurai- Manamadurai Passenger (af-

Yesvantpur- Mangalore Express (via

Thanjavur - Thiruvarur Passenger (after

Udaipur - Chittorgarh Passenger-2 Pairs (after gauge conversion) Kanpur - Farrukhabad Express (after gauge conversion) Kanpur - Farrukhabad Passenger

Pairs (after gauge conversion) Lucknow - Farrukhabad Passenger (after gauge conversion) Rupsa - Bangariposi DMU (after gauge

conversion) Ranchi - Lohardaga DMU (after gauge Bankura - Rainagar DMU (after gauge

conversion) Amritsar - Attari DMU (daily) Ajmer - Rewari Passenger

(MG) (daily) Hubli - Chikjajur Passenger (daily) Rajkot - Veraval Fast Passenger (daily) Ahmedabad

Passenger (MG) (daily) Agra Cantt - Bayan MEMU (daily) Parli - Parbhani Passenge

(daily) Jaipur- Rewari Passenger (MG) (daily)

Bina - Guna Passenger-2 Pairs (daily) Gondia - Chanda Fort Passenger (6 days a week) Mathura- Bandikui Passenger (via Alwar) (daily) Belgaum - Mirai Passen ger-2 Pairs (5 days a week)

(daily) Express (daily) Secunderabad - Gudur Express (daily)

Veraval-Ahmedahad Express (via Raikot) (daily) Udaipur-Nizamuddin Éxpress (after gauge conver-In addition to the above

services, I propose to run a train between Patna and Amritsar which will be added to 2317/2318 Aka Takht Express. Extension of trains

It gives me great pleasure to an-

nounce the extension of run of the following services: 5205/5206 New Delhi – Muzaffarour Lichchavi Express to Samastipur (after completion of terminal extension facili-

4059/4060 Jaisalmer/Barmer - Delhi Sarai Rohilla to Delhi Junction 4023/4024 Delhi - Farrukhabad Kalindi Express to Bhiwani on one side and to Kanpur on the other (after gauge con-

6831/6832 Mysore - Thanjavur Express to Kumbakonnam (after gauge conver-2083/2084 Coimbatore - Thanjayur Ex-

press to Kumbakonnam (after gauge 7405/7406 Tirupati – Hyderabad Krishna Express to Nizamabad

1003/1004 Mumbai CST-Nizamabad Devgiri Express to Kacheguda 6333/6334 Trivandrum - Hapa Express to Rajkot-Veraval instead of Rajkot-

874/877 Tiruchirrappalli - Thanjavur Passenger to Turuvarur (after gauge con-898/899 Tiruchirrappalli - Thanjavur Passenger to Tiruvarur (after gauge con-

133/134 Neemuch -- Chittaurgarh Passenger to Udaipur 1 KA/2 KA Allahabad - Kanpur Central Passenger to Farrukhabad (after gauge conversion) 6607/6608 Chennai Egmore - Erode Ex9149/9150 Ahmedabad-Dhanbad Parasnath Express to Asansol 9165/9166 Ahmedabad–Muzaffarpur Sabarmati Express to Darbhanga 2659/2660 Chennai - Visakhapatnam Express to Bhubaneswar 2625/2626 Trivandrum-New Delhi Ker-

sion of new pit line) 4083A/4084A Delhi-New Jalpaiguri Sikkim Mahananda Link Express to

ala Express to Chandigarh (after exten-

7603/7604 Kacheguda - Sri Sathvasai Prashanthi Nilayam Express to Yesvant-

9775/9776 Jaipur - Bangalore Express to Mysore (after doubling) 6327/6328 Trivandrum – Bilaspur Express to Korba (after provision of new pit

219/220 Howrah - Malda Town Passen ger to Balurghat 2707/2708 Nizamuddin-Secunderabad Andhra Pradesh Sampark Kranti Express to Tirupati via Kurnool Town. 8407/8408 Nizamuddin-Bhubaneswar Hirakud Express to Visakhapatnam

8477/8478 Puri-Nizamuddin Kalinga Utkal Express to Haridwar 2557/2558 Delhi-Muzaffarpur Sapta

2983/2984 Jaipur-Bilaspur Express to

Kranti Express to Darbhanga Apart from the above, it is also proposed that 6595/6596 Sanghamitra Express running between Rajendranagar, Patna and Yeshwantpur will now go to Bangalore City instead of Yeshwantour.

Increase in Frequency Hon'ble Members will be happy to know that weekly frequencies of some popular trains shall be increased. Details are given below.

1055/1056 Lokmanya Tilak (T) Gorakhpur Godan Express from triweekly to 4 days a week 1059/1060 Lokmanya Tilak (T) -Chhapra Godan Express from week ly to tri-weekly Puri - Tirupati Service

from weekly to 5 days a week 6123/6124 Chennai Egmore – Trivandrum Ananthapuri Express from 6 days a week to daily 2555/2556 Gorakhpur- New Delhi

Gorakhdham Express from tri-weekly to daily with extension to Rohtak 3403/3404 Bhagalpur-Ranchi Vananchal Express from 4 days a week to 5



auickly that the excited passengers

are pushed deep into their seats.

2423A/2424A/2435A/2436A New Delhi-Dibrugarh Town Rajdhani Link Express from tri-weekly to daily. 2661/2662 Chennai Egmore-Tenkasi Podhigai Express from weekly to bi-weekly. 8003/8004 Howrah-Yesvantpur Express from bi-weekly to daily with ersion via Tirupati.

8253/8254 Durg-Bhopal Amarkantak Express from 4 days a week to daily. Further, in order to strengthen the existing services on various routes, I propose to augment the well-patronised trains over Indian Railways wherever feasible by deploying about 400 addi-

tional coaches. During the coming year I also propose

speed up over 30 trains, and convert 1063/1064 Dadar-Chennai Express to a superfast train.

I had announced taking up of 72 surveys in my last Budget Speech. 20 more surveys have further been sanctioned since the presentation of the last budget. I am happy to state that 27 surveys have since been completed and based on results of the survey, further decision is being taken in the Ministry. I am happy to inform the House that execution of a new 85 km BG line from Deoriya Sadar to Hathua via Katia, Samoor, Bhagipatti, Pachdevri, Bathua Bazar, Phulwariya, Salar-Khurd and Lain Bazar has been included in this Budget. Gauge conversions of Chindwara-Nagpur and Pratapnagar-Chota Udaipur have also been included in the Budget. Some other projects have been processed for clearance of the Planning Commission, which include new line from Manoharabad to Kothapalli and Chola to Bulandshehr and gauge conversion of Kolar-Chickballapur and Virudunagar-Manamadurai. The surveys of gauge conversion of the Ankleshwar Rajpipla and Ahmedpur-Katwa are nearing completion. The remaining surveys are in various stages of progress and all the surveys have been targeted for completion during 2005-06. I. New Surveys for following new

lines are being taken up Jadcheria-Nandyal, Manuguru-Ramagendam, Mekhligani – Haldibari, Naginimora- Amguri, Ningala-Gadhad-Babra Khijadia Jn., Yamuna Nagar - Patiala, Kotturu - Chitradurg via Jagalur, Pandharpur-Lonad, Rail link to Kundalpur, Rewa-Mirzapur, Keonjhar-Badampa har, Qadian to Beas, Ajmer-Kota, Anup garh-Khajuwala - Ramgarh-Jaisalmer Erode-Palani via Dharapura, Satyaman alam-Mettur Anthur, Continued on next page

MLX01-901 MAGLEV train, a test model runs on the 18.4-km (11.4mile) test track in Tsuru, west of Tokyo, Thursday, November, 2003. Touching 500 km per hour in less than a minute and a half, Japan's MAGLEV train derives its name from the way it uses an electromagnetic cushion for levitation and propulsion. Officials point to the high-tech showpiece as the future of mass-transit. But after four decades

and 260 billion yen (\$2.4 bn) spent on research, the MAGLEV has just one station, no ticket booths, and no clear future.

TAMIL NADU GETS LION'S SHARE IN 46 NEW PASSENGER TRAINS, BIHAR JUST 2 LOW PATRONAGE TRAINS TO BE REDEPLOYED ON HIGH-USE ROUTES

বাজেট পড়া শেষ করেই তড়িঘড়ি পটনায়

অগ্নি রায় 👁 নয়াদিল্লি

২৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি: মুখের স্বাভাবিক উজ্জ্বলতা উধাও। টেনশনের ছাপ স্পষ্ট। তবে তিনি লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব। ভাঙবেন তবু মচকাবেন না। আর চবিবশ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে বিহারে ভোট-চিত্র সাফ হয়ে যাবে। তার ঠিক আগে. আজ, ৩৯ পাতার দীর্ঘ বাজেট বক্তৃতা শেষ করে সংসদের দোতলায় আসার সময়ে বললেন, "পুরো বক্তৃতাটা যে একটানা পড়ে যেতে পেরেছি এটাই অনেক। মাঝে এক গ্লাস জলও খাইনি। আর কী করবং হন্মানের মতো লাফাব না কি এখানে এসে!"

আজ রেল বাজেটের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দিন। কিন্তু গোটা দিনও দিল্লিতে থাকলেন না লালু। সন্ধ্যাতেই পটনার উড়ান। তবে ভিতরের টেনশন যাতে বাইরে না বের হয় সে জন্য সচেতন একটা প্রয়াসও রয়েছে সারাক্ষণ। একের পর এক প্রশ্ন তিনি সোজা ব্যাটে খেললেন।

গত বছর বাজেটের আগের দিন সক্রিয় লাল নয়াদিল্লি স্টেশনে টানা কয়েক ঘণ্টা কড়া নজরদারি করেছিলেন। কোন ট্রেন দেরিতে আসছে, কে প্ল্যাটফর্ম টিকিট কাটছেন না, কোথায় চুরি হচ্ছে।

কিন্তু এ বার? 'আপনাকে আজ কিন্তু বিধ্বস্ত লাগছে।'... 'গত বার বাজেট পড়ার সময় অনেক বেশি উৎসাহ দেখা গিয়েছিল আপনার।'

প্রথমে স্বভাবসিদ্ধ ঢঙে জবাব এল, "কী করব? হনুমানের মতো लाकाव नाकि সংসদে।" পরে বললেন, "সারা গায়ে বিষ বাথা। প্রচারের জন্য খুব পরিশ্রম হয়েছে তো।"

যেটা তিনি বিশদে বললেন না, তা হল দীর্ঘ পনেরো বছর পরে মসনদ টলোমলো হওয়ার আশঙ্কা তাঁকে দৃশ্যতই বেশ চাপে রেখেছে। রামবিলাস পাসোয়ান যে কার ভোট কতটা কেটেছেন সেই জটিল পাটিগণিতের হিসাব কষতে গিয়ে জ্ঞ সদাই কোঁচকানো। মুখে বলছেন, "কাল সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতা যে আসছে তা নিয়ে আমাদের চিম্ভা নেই। হয়তো তফাত সামান্য হবে।" আর তার পর পুনরাবৃত্তি করলেন কিছু আগেই বাজেট-বক্ততায় বলা হিন্দি কবিতার দু'লাইন, ''উঠনা হ্যায় ঔর ভি উপর, হ্যায় উঁচাইয়া পুকারতি/ হ্যায় অপার সমতায়ে, আশায়ে তুমহে নিহারতি'।

ভিতরের এই অবিরাম অস্থিরতা বন্ধ রাখার জন্যই বোধহয় আজ যতক্ষণ রাজধানীতে থেকেছেন কাজের মধ্যে বেঁধে রেখেছেন নিজেকে। শুধু দু'গ্লাস ছাতুর সরবত খেয়ে বেলা পৌনে এগারোটায় ধবধবে সাদা কুর্তা-পাজামা-জুতো এবং হলুদ সোয়েটার পরে সংসদে নিজের ঘরে এসেছেন। দু'ঘণ্টার একটানা বাজেট-ভাষণ। সেই ভাষণ শুরুর আগে এন ডি এ শরিকদের সঙ্গে

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

भारतीय रेत ■ যাত্রী-ভাড়া বাড়েনি পণ্য-মাসুলের পুনর্বিন্যাস 🔳 ৪৬টি নতুন ট্রেন ন'টি শাখায় গেজ বদল পাঁচটি শাখায় বৈদ্যুতিকীকরণ ছ'টি শাখায় নতুন লাইন যাত্রী-ভাড়ায় ছাড় — গ্রামের ছাত্রছাত্রী, কৃষক্ক, দুধ ব্যবসায়ী, বেকারদের ক্ষেত্রে সরকারি হাসপাতালে মৃত ব্যক্তির দেহ নিয়ে যাওয়ায় ছাড় ল্যান্ডলাইন ফোনে টিকিট কাটার ব্যবস্থা কম্পিউটারচালিত যাত্রী সংরক্ষণ ব্যবস্থার প্রসার वाक्तिः चतार्थ मधरार्ध

এ রাজ্যের প্রাপ্তির ভাঁড়ার প্রায় শূন্য, বন্ধু বামেরাও হতাশ

সৌভদ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় 🗨 নয়াদিল্লি

২৬ ক্ষেব্রুয়ারি: নতুন ট্রেন পেল বিহার, আর পশ্চিমবঙ্গের ঝোলায় শ্রেফ ভবিষ্যতের জন্য আশ্বাস!

এ বারের রেল বাজেটে রাজ্যের কপালে মাত্র তিনটি নতুন ট্রেন জটেছে। একটি মজফফরপুর-হাওড়া সাপ্তাহিক 'জনসাধারণ এক্সপ্রেস'। দ্বিতীয়টি ভাগলপর-মালদা টাউন এক্সপ্রেস (সপ্তাহে ছ'দিন)। বাঁকুড়া-রাইনগর ডিএমইউ চালু হবে গেজ পরিবর্তনের পরে। অতএব নয়া ট্রেনে রাজ্যবাসীর সফর পাশের রাজ্য বিহারে গিয়েই শেষ হয়ে যাচ্ছে।

ফলে মনঃক্ষুণ্ণ বিহার নির্বাচনে জানিয়েছিলাম। শিলিগুড়ির জন্য এটা নয়াদিল্লি-ডিব্রুগড় গিয়েছে। কিন্তু ট্রেন পেলাম না। সব রোজ চলবে তিরুপতি হয়ে। মিলিয়ে রাজ্য যা পেল, তাতে আমরা তো নেই রাজ্যের!"

দ্বিতীয় ব্যক্তি প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ইচ্ছার প্রকল্পও তেমন গুরুত্ব পায়নি তাঁর বাজেটে। নসিপুর-আজিমগঞ্জ রেলসেতুর জন্য লাগবে ২২ কোটি ৭৮ লক্ষ, দেওয়া হয়েছে মাত্র ১ কোটি। মশির্দাবাদের কংগ্রেস সভাপতি, সাংসদ অধীর চৌধুরী হতাশ হয়ে দুপুরেই ফোন করেন প্রণববাবুকে। অধীরের বক্তব্য, "রাজ্যের জন্য কিছুই নেই। এখন দেখি প্রণববাবুকে দিয়ে অতিরিক্ত বরান্দ কিছু আদায় করা যায় কি না !"

বেড়েছে। আমদাবাদ-ধানবাদ পরশনাথ এক্সপ্রেস আসবে আসানসোলে। দিল্লি-লালুর সঙ্গী বামপন্থীরা। লোকসভায় নিউ জলপাইগুড়ি মহানন্দা লিক্ষ রাজধানী খুবই দরকার ছিল। এই রেলপথের (জলপাইগুড়ি থামে) এখন রোজ

রাজ্যের তিনটি ট্রেনের যাত্রাপথ

কলকাতার চক্রবেল এবং মেট্রো মার্চ মাসের মধ্যে চক্ররেলের পশ্চিমবঙ্গের জন্য লালুর প্রিন্সেপঘাট থেকে মাঝেরহাট এবং

মনোযোগ এ বার এতই কম যে, এপ্রিলের মধ্যে দ্মদম থেকে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী এবং কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার এংয়ারপোর্ট পর্যন্ত সম্প্রসারণের কাজ শোষ হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা প্রবল। কিন্তু এই প্রক্রের প্রয়োজন আর বরান্দের মধ্যে ১১৪০ কোটি ৫ লক্ষ টাকার ফারাক। ্রাই অর্থ কী ভাবে আসবে তার কোনও স্পষ্ট উল্লেখ বাজেট প্রস্তাবে নেই।

পাঁচের পাতায়

হাল ফেরানোর দিশা নেই

🍅 প্রশংসায় শিল্পমহল

🌢 সমালোচনা প্রাক্তনদের

🍎 नेशी (भाष्ट्रिक नेशानिहि

● কোনে টিকিট বুকিং

২০০৭ সালের মধ্যে টালিগঞ্জ থেকে গড়িয়া পর্যন্ত সম্প্রসারিত হয়ে যাাবে মেট্রোরেল। চক্ররেলের জন্য ৪৫ কোটি এবং মেট্রো সম্প্রসারণের জন্য ৬৩ কোটি দেওয়া হয়েছে। কিন্তু চিংপুরে টার্মিনাল তৈরির জন্য এ বার মাাত্র ৯ কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ হয়েছে। দরকার আরও ৮১ কোটি ২১ লক্ষ।

লেক গার্ডেন্সে রেলসেত্র জন্য ৪।৫ লক্ষ টাকা বরাদ্দ করা হয়েছে। সিপিএম নেতা বাসুদেব আচারিয়া এক্সপ্রেস আলিপুরদুয়ার পর্যন্ত। আর চল্লতি বছরেই এই কাজ শেষ হয়ে বলেছেন, "কলকাতা থেকে উত্তরবঙ্গে হাওড়া-মালদা টাউন প্যাসেঞ্জার যাাবে। সোনারপুরে রেল সেতুর জন্য ১ একটি জনশতাব্দী ট্রেনের দাবি বালুরঘাট পর্যস্ত যাবে। এ ছাড়া, লক্ষ্ম টাকা ধরা হয়েছে। আরও প্রায় ৫ বেকাটি টাকা লাগবে।

চলতি আর্থিক বছরে লালু ৯৯টি প্রায় পুরোটাই ডবল লাইন হয়ে চলবে। হাওড়া-বাঙ্গালোর এক্সপ্রেসও নত্তুন লাইনের সুমীক্ষা করেছিলেন। এ বাার ৩১টির সমীক্ষা হবে। তার মধ্যে র্নাজ্যে ৬টি--- মেখলিগঞ্জ-হলদিবাড়ি, হতাশ।" সিপিআইয়ের সাংসদ রেলের জন্য অবশ্য ভালই টাকা নাগিনীমোড়া-আমগুড়ি, দিঘা-জলেশ্বর, গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্তের বক্তব্য, "কিছুই দিয়েছেন লালু। রেলমন্ত্রী জানিয়েছেন, রাানিগঞ্জ-বাঁকুড়া, চাঁপাডাঙ্গা-তারকেশ্বর, অমামতা-বাগনান। বাঁকুড়া সোনামুখি, এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

ড়ল না এ বারও,

পার্থসারথি সেনগুপ্ত 👁 নয়াদিল্লি

২৬ কেবুয়ারি: যাত্রী ভাড়া না বাড়িয়ে, মোট ছেচল্লিশটি নতুন ট্রেন চালু করার কথা ঘোষণা করে 'জনমোহিনী' রেল বাজেট পেশ করলেন লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব। বাজেটে সাধারণ ভাবে পণ্যমাসুল বৃদ্ধির কথা না-বললেও পণ্য পরিবহণের নতুন বিন্যাস ঘটিয়ে নিত্যপ্রয়োজনীয় সামগ্রীর মূল্যবৃদ্ধির পথ অবশ্য খোলা রেখেছেন লালুপ্রসাদ। সব মিলিয়ে, শনিবার লালপ্রসাদ সংসদে এমনই এক বাজেট পেশ করলেন যা ভারতীয় রেলের সংস্কারের আশায় জল ঢালার সমতুল্য।

সোমবার সংসদে সাধারণ বাজেট পেশ হওয়ার আগেই রেল বাজেট শিরঃপীড়ার কারণ হয়ে দাঁড়াল অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরমের। কারণ, রেলে ভর্তুকির ভার কমাতে লালুর উপর ক্রমাগত চাপ সৃষ্টি করছিলেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। এমনকী, শুক্রবার সংসদে পেশ করা আর্থিক সমীক্ষায় চিদম্বরম জানিয়েছিলেন ভারতীয় রেলের হাল ফেরাতে চাই আমূল সংস্কার। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহও চেয়েছিলেন আর্থিক শৃদ্ধলা ফেরাতে সচেষ্ট হন লালুপ্রসাদ। কিন্তু রেলমন্ত্রী সেই আশায় আজ কাৰ্যত ছাই ফেলে দিলেন।

লালুর কথায়, "বাজেটে আমি সাধারণ ভাবে পণ্য মাসুলে কোনও বৃদ্ধি করছি না। তবে কিছু ঐতিহাসিক পরিবর্তন করছি পণ্য পরিবহণের বিন্যাদের ক্ষেত্রে। যা পুরো ব্যবস্থাকে অনেক সহজ, স্বচ্ছ ও যুক্তিগ্রাহ্য করে তুলবে। চলতি তালিকায় প্রায় ৪ হাজার পণ্যকে ৮০টি শ্রেণিতে ভাগ করে আলাদা আলাদা ভাবে মাসুল বসানো হচ্ছে।" মাসুলের ক্ষেত্রে বেশিরভাগ পণ্য সুনির্দিষ্ট ভাবে চিহ্নিত না করলেও লালু আজ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, কেরোসিন ও রান্নার গ্যাসে মাসুল কমছে यथाक्रांस ७.१ ७ ২.१ শতाংশ। लालू এই আশ্বাস দিলেও অবশ্য ইতিমধ্যেই পণ্য পরিবহণের প্রস্তাবিত কাঠামো নিয়ে ঘোর সংশয় দেখা দিয়েছে। এমনকী, ইউ পি এ'র সমর্থক বামদলগুলিও এই সিদ্ধান্তে খুশি নয়।

বাজেট পেশ হওয়ার পরেই সি পি আইয়ের গুরুদাশ দাশগুপ্ত বলেন, "পণ্য পরিবহণের বিন্যাসের তথা শ্রেণি বদলের যে কথা বাজেটে বলা হয়েছে, তাতে খাদ্যদ্রব্য পরিবহণের খরচ বাড়বে। ফলে, মুদ্রাস্ফীতি বাড়ার আশক্ষা থেকেই যাচ্ছে।" অন্য দিকে, সি পি এমের বাসুদেব আচারিয়ার মতে, "উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলির মধ্যে ভারতে পণ্য পরিবহার মাসুল এমনিতেই অত্যন্ত চড়া। ফলে, রেলে পরিবহুপের কেঁট্রে পূণ্যের নতুন শ্রেণিবিভাগ করার কোনও অর্থ হয় না।" কলকাতায় সি পি এমের রাজ্য সম্পাদক অনিল

বিশ্বাস বলেন, "বাজেটে আমাদের সব দাবি মানা হয়নি। পরে এ নিয়ে আমরা রেলমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কথা বলব।"

তবে তিনিও বলেছেন, বাজেট 'মোটের উপরে ভাল'। এবং সামগ্রিক বিচারে সব বাম দলই এই বাজেটে খুশি।

রীতিমতো নাটকীয় ভঙ্গিমায় এ দিন সংসদে লালু জানান, তিনি রেলভাড়া বাড়াচ্ছেন না। বিহারের কবি নাগার্জুনের কবিতার দুটি ছত্র উদ্ধৃত করে লালু ব্যাখ্যা দেন আমজনতার স্বার্থেই তিনি গত বারের মতো এ বারেও কোনও ভাড়া বাড়াচ্ছেন না। বাজেট বক্তৃতায় তিনি বলেন, "জান লো ভাইয়া, গরিবও কি এক হোতি জাত / উসি কি হকুম সে. হিলেঙ্গে এক এক পাত। নার্গাজুনবাবার এই উপদেশ মেনে আমিও এ বারেও রেলের টিকিটের দাম বাড়াচ্ছি না।"

রেল বাজেটের প্রস্তুতি পর্বে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর, অর্থমন্ত্রক ও বিশেষত যোজনা কমিশনের চেয়ারপার্সন মন্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়ার তরফে বারবার লালুকে বোঝানোর চেষ্টা হয়েছিল রেল বাজেটে ছাড়ের হার কমিয়ে আয়ের রাস্তা বাড়াতে। যে যা-ই বলুক না-কেন, লালু তাঁর অবস্থান থেকে এক তিলও সরেননি। লালর সিদ্ধান্তে সম্ভোষ ব্যক্ত করা ছাড়া অবশ্য সরকারের গত্যন্তর ছিল না। বাজেটের পরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ তাঁর সংক্ষিপ্ত প্রতিক্রিয়ায় বলেছেন, "সাধারণ মানুষের উপরে বোঝা না-চাপিয়ে এই বাজেট আধুনিকীকরণে দিশা জোগাবে।"

দিশা জোগাক আর না জোগাক, নানা ছাড়ের আকর্ষণীয় এক প্যাকেজ রয়েছে লালুর দ্বিতীয় এই বাজেটেও।

যেমন, গত বাজেটে লালু বেকার যুবক-যুবতীদের জন্য যে ছাড় ঘোষণা করেছিলেন, তার পরিধি বাড়িয়েছেন। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের কোনও চাকরিতে 'ইন্টারভিউ' দেওয়ার জন্য ট্রেনে যেতে হলে দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির টিকিটে ১০০ শতাংশ ছাড়ের কথা গত বারই ঘোষণা করেছিলেন লালু। এ বার রাজ্য সরকারের চাকরির জন্য 'ইন্টারভিউ' দেওয়ার ক্ষেত্রেও এই ছাড দেওয়া হবে।

দ্বিতীয় শ্রেশির যাত্রীভাড়ায় আরও ছাড় রয়েছে। কৃষক ও দৃশ্ধ উৎপাদকেরা দেশের কোনও প্রান্তে জাতীয় স্তরে কোনও প্রতিষ্ঠানে প্রশিক্ষণ নিতে গেলে ৫০ শতাংশ ছাড় মিলবে। গ্রামের বিদ্যালয়ের ছাত্রছাত্রীরা শিক্ষামূলক ভ্রমণের জন্য ৭৫ শতাংশ ছাড় পাবেন। গ্রামের সরকারি স্কুলের ছাত্রীরা জাতীয় স্তরে ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং-ডাক্তারি বা পেশাগত কোনও শিক্ষাক্রমে প্রবেশিকা পরীকা দিতে গেলে ৭৫ গতাংশ ছাড় পাবেন। বিশেষ বিশৈষ কোনও প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয়ের ক্ষেত্রে ত্রাণ এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

হতাশ বন্ধু বামেরাও

প্রথম পাতার পর

এবং বাঁকুড়া-দামোদর নদী রেলপথের গেজ পরিবর্তনের কাজ এই বছরে শেষ হবে বলে জানিয়েছেন লালু। কৃষ্ণনগর বহরমপুর লাইন বৈদ্যুতিকীকরণের কাজ ২০০৫-০৬ সালে শেষ হবে।

নতুন লাইন তৈরির যে কাজ চলছে, তাতে তারকেশ্বর-বিষ্ণুপুরের জন্য বরাদ্দ ১০ কোটি টাকা (বাকি থাকছে ২৪৩ কোটি)। রামপুরহাট মন্দারহিল পেল ১০ কোটি (বাকি থাকছে ৯৪ কোটি)। তবে এ বার ভাল টাকা পেয়েছে সময়সীমা পেরিয়ে যাওয়া বৈদ্যুতিকীকরণের প্রকল্প— রানাঘাট-বনগাঁ (২৪.৭১ কোটি), বারাসত-হাসনাবাদ (৩৩.৩১ কোটি)।

বারাসত-হাসনাবাদের মধ্যে ডবল লাইনের জন্য দেওয়া হয়েছে ৫০ লক্ষ টাকা। বারুইপুর-মগরাহাটে ডবল লাইন প্রকল্পকে জিইয়ে রাখা হয়েছে ১ লক্ষ টাকা বরাদ্দ করে। রেল বাজেটে লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের নির্বাচনী এলাকা বোলপুর-আহমেদপুরে ডবল লাইন পাতার জন্য ১ কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করা হয়েছে।

রাজ্যে ডবল লাইনের ১৭টি প্রকল্প এ বছর শেষ হবে না। নতুন কংক্রিটের ব্লিপার তৈরির জন্য ১২টি কারখানার কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন। তার মধ্যে দু'টি বিহারে হলেও পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বিষয়ে কিছু বলা নেই।

যাত্রী পরিষেবাতেও কম টাকা দেওয়া হয়েছে পশ্চিমবঙ্গকে। পূর্ব রেলে যাত্রী পরিষেবার জন্য ২৪ কোটি ২৫ লক্ষ ৪২ হাজার টাকা খরচ করা হবে। অথচ পশ্চিম রেলে ৩০ কোটি ৫৪ লক্ষ এবং পূর্ব-মধ্য রেলে (হাজিপুরে সদর) ৩৪ কোটি ২০ লক্ষ টাকা ঢালা হচ্ছে। উত্তর রেল এই খাতে পাচ্ছে ৩৫ কোটি ৬৭ নক্ষ টাকা।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

পেশাদারি সংস্থাকে কাজে লাগানো কথাও বলেছেন লালুপ্রসাদ। এ বিষয়ে থবে।ভারতীয় রেলকে রেলমন্ত্রক। विषम्रिष्टे खेनीम खत्नेहे ठिक हत्त्व। यमन লালু। যেমন, ভারতীয় রেলের বছরে थात्र ১२ नम्म जनमत्रशास क्यीत পেনশনের খাতে খরচ হয় প্রায় সাত शकात काहि होका। बात बाह्नह লালুপ্রসাদ পেশ করলেন তা প্রায় ১৫, १९२ कार्डि छोकात। ফলে আर्थिक शन হচ্ছে আর পি এফের ক্ষেত্রে। প্রাকৃতিক হাসপাতালে মৃত্যু হলে মৃতদেহ বাড়ির শিকটবর্তী স্টেশলে নিয়ে যাওয়ার সময় **बनत्याहिनी** वात्कटं कर्यमश्यानत রাজ্ঞা খোলা রাখতেও কসুর করেননি जनम्<mark>यो।</mark> जन**७**तम् त्रिकृत्यम् तार्ड 6

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Hidden lash in Laloo largesse OURSPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MILKMAN BUDGET: Tapping mammaries of welfare state

METRO WATCH

New Delhi, Feb. 26: Laloo Prasad Yadav rolled out a second "populist" railway budget in less than a year that came without fare and freight increases and yet managed to promise a surplus of Rs 1,975 crore for 2005-06.

However, just as Laloo Prasad seemed to have lost some of his magic touch in home state Bihar where results of a tense election will be known on Sunday, it appeared that in his eagerness to craft a pro poor budget he had glossed over certain elements that would be seen as unpopular.

The cornerpiece of the budgetary exercise has been a rejig of the commodity classification categories, bringing them down from 27 to 19.

While the recast has lowered transportation costs for a range of goods from petrol and diesel to cars, textiles and tea. it raised the freight costs for rice and wheat (including foodgrain sold through ration shops), pulses, paddy and sugar — all commodities of common consumption.

Most of the foodgrain pecially that meant for ration shops — uses the railways and the re-categorisation means that customers must brace for higher prices. Only if the grain is moved by open wagons will the railways charge the old freight rate.

Laloo Prasad, who was marshalling his cadre to fight what has been widely seen as a tough election in Bihar, might have had little time to go over the fine print of his budget. Result: his so-called populist budget may not be as popular as he might have expected.

One reason for this is that the freight tariff cuts have ●50% off for milkmen and farmers going for training at national institutes

- Govt rural school students to get 75% concession for annual study tour
- ●75% off for girls from rural govt schools taking professional entrance exams
- •Free travel extended to unemployed going for state govt job interviews
- ●50% concession for carrying bodies of patients who die during treatment at big govt hospitals
- ●46 new trains, eight in the east (List on Page 6)

All concessions are for second class fares

RESERVATION

- Ticket booking from land phones
- ●Computerised train enquiry across the country. Dial 139
- Ticket booking on Net extended from 4 am to 11.30 pm
- Vacancy position charts on coaches and platforms

been the sharpest for indus-

tries that barely use the rail-

ways to move their commodi-

ties: the rates for cars and mo-

torbikes have been cut by as

much as 61 per cent for dis-

substantial portion of their

production by road — and

the railways are offering the

cuts as an inducement to

Most carmakers move a

tances of 1.500 km.

switch over.

●Continuous update of waiting lists

Carmaker Hyundai Motor India president B.V.R. Subbu said: "We only send our products by train to Delhi and this is a region where a drop in freight will be passed on." Rival Maruti Udyog was more circumspect, saying it was as-

sessing the impact. Although LPG and kerosene freight rates have been lowered by 2.7 and 3.7 per cent, respectively, there is little likelihood of a cut in prices as they are already heavily subsidised.

Graphic: MANOJ

The railways are finally getting ready to stem the loss of earnings in the upper classes with passengers shifting to airlines, taking advantage of cheap Apex fares. Railway Board chairman R.K. Singh said the railways would introduce a frequent traveller scheme sometime in August.

railway minister seems to have paid no heed to the suggestion of the Planning Commission and the finance ministry to not introduce new trains. He grandly announced 46 new trains

The truth is that this is a bit of a chimera: the railways are still struggling to fulfil the promises of new trains made by Laloo Prasad's predecessors.

Waitlisted passengers will now get a virtual update on the ticket position and no longer have to wait for the list to be finalised four hours before the departure of trains. The upgrades stop now on the eve of

TRICKLE-DOWN

Laloo Prasad also promised a peace express: a special train daily between Amritsar and border outpost Attari.

■ See Pages 6, 11 and 12

EFFECT ●Trains on New Delhi-Howrah and New Delhi-Chennai routes at 150 kmph ●2007 deadline for Calcutta's Metro Railway extension to Garia Freight ●World-class stations, starting with New Delhi changes may make these goods costlier... Rice Wheat **Pulses** Paddy Sugar ...and these cheaper' Cars Tea LPG Petrol Diesel Detailed list on Page 11

THE TELEGRAPH

27 FEB 2005

Sonia crows on coalition dharma our special correspondent

New Delhi, Feb. 25: Congress president Sonia Gandhi has asserted that the party, the leading partner in the ruling United Progressive Alliance, has followed coalition dharma to ensure cohesive functioning of the Manmohan Singh government.

"We in the Congress have been very sensitive to the challenges of running a coalition government, accommodating diverse points of view to ensure its cohesive functioning," Sonia said while addressing the Congress parliamentary party here this evening.

The Congress president's assertion came in the wake of railway minister Laloo Prasad Yadav's complaint that the party lacked experience in running a coalition government — a criticism also voiced by CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan.

The coalition has worked well during the past nine months, contrary to the expectations of "our detractors", Sonia said and assured that the party would remain sensitive to accommodating different points of view to ensure that the government runs smoothly.

Sonia said the President's address earlier in the day had laid out the agenda for governance by the Congress-led alliance for the next year and hoped Monday's budget would reflect the commitments of the party's election manifesto.

She said she had detailed discussions with the Prime Minister on giving effect to the party's pledges in areas such as elementary education, employment, health and farmers' welfare.

Sonia drew the attention of ministers to the complaints made against them by party workers. "They are simply unable to get access to our ministers," she said, asking them to be mindful of their responsibilities towards party workers and organisational leaders.

UPA yet to decide on women's quota

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 24. The Government and the Congress appear to have distanced themselves from the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil's proposal to raise the number of seats in the Lok Sabha for women as a measure to take forward the stalled Women's Reservation Bill, providing one-third reservation in Parliament and Legislatures.

Mr. Patil had in his letter to political parties suggested that the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha could be increased

by one-third by adding 181 seats to the present strength of 545. However, it appears that the proposal does not have any formal sanction within the Government and the party.

ernment and the party.

The BJP remained lukewarm to the suggestion and said even after adding 181 seats, the total percentage of reservation would remain at 25 per cent.

On his part, The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, told correspondents today that the United Progressive Alliance Government was yet to take a view. He parried

questions whether the suggestion of Mr. Patil was his own view. Mr. Azad said that Mr. Patil had been asked to talk to various political parties and find out their views and asserted that as far as the Congress was concerned, it stood for one-third reservation for women both in Parliament and State Legislatures.

"The Home Minister has initiated a discussion with political parties and the exercise has not yet been completed. Once it is completed, we will see how to go about it," he said.

BIG BUCKS FOR BUILDING BOOM

Statesman News Service

the government barred the sale of undeveloped land by foreign investors demands, the UPA trod on Marxist toes direct investment (FDI) in the constructer, Mr P Chidambaram, did his best to suggest that he would listen to their today by allowing 100 per cent foreign a breakfast meeting with leading Left party leaders where the finance ministion and development sector. However NEW DELHI, Feb. 24. — Shortly after to prevent speculation in real estate.

tion during the Budget session of Parliament, came the FDI decision by the way for entry of foreign investors, After the UPA and the Left formed a the Cabinet Committee on Economic ister Mr Kamal Nath said it would pave spur development and generate emp-loyment, particularly in the rural sector. "FDI up to 100 per cent will be allowed under automatic route in townships, housing, built-up infrastructure and construction-development projects," Mr Nath said. Constructiondevelopment projects will also include resorts, hospitals, educational institutions, recreational facilities, and city committee for better floor coordina-Affairs. Commerce and industries minhousing, commercial premises, hotels, and regional level infrastructure.

ment on the automatic route in the construction and development sector economy by boosting construction The move would also lead to spin-off "It is expected that allowing investwould have a multiplier effect on the activities of all types," the minister said it would create employment not only or skilled and unskilled labourers, tech nicians and artisans, but also for engineers, architects and designers, he said.

benefits for the manufacturing sector. idustries like cement, steel and brick king. Allowing 100 per cent FDI also ensure rapid increase in built particularly construction



up infrastructure as well as improvement of existing infrastructure.

even bothering to inform the Left about such decisions. CPI leader Mr Gurudas Left parties were prompt in their reaction. RSP seader Mr Abani Roy said it was a sign that the UPA was either taking the Left for granted or was ignoring Bloc regretted that the UPA was not Mr Debabrata Biswas of Forward Dasgupta also opposed the move.

the dozen demands of the Left would During the meeting in the morning, be looked into seriously. Mrs Sonia Gathe finance minister tried to explain that

ndhi, the UPA chairperson, and Dr Maa pre-Budget meeting. We have to see ly done," a senior Left leader said. But during the meeting, Left leaders did point out that public sector banks nmohan Singh were present. "This was ard way. There was a need to speak to trade unions and the banking associafrom the Budget what they have actualshould not be given powers in a haphaztions for decision-making, they said.

made in this direction.

Over breakfast - with the usual menu of dosas, idlis, upma and sandwiches supplemented by chicken cutlets — there were questions regarding

FDI under automatic route

Shopping

project has been reduced to serviced housing plots or a minimum built up area of and 2,000 dwelling units for 25 acres from 100 acres developed under each Winimum area to be 50,000 sq m.

Educational Institutions

> Minimum \$10 million capital for wholly-owned arm

Housing & Townships

> Original investment cannot be repatriated before three for joint ventures

\$5 million minimum capital

Recreational

Facilities

accorded national treatment FDI projects would be

at par with local developers Sale of undeveloped land speculation in real estate barred to prevent

Hospitals

implementation of the Employmen Hotels & Resorts (LEFT) Mr P Chidambaram and Thursday's meeting with the Prime Minister. — AFP

Mr Sitaram Yechury after

ture. Strengthening the public sector, mobilising tax revenue, re-introducing ing and cutting down defence expendithe capital gains tax and improving rural Guarantee Act, increased deficit spend credit are some of the suggestions. more funds for irrigation. This was how much agriculture depended on the monsoons. However, Dr Singh intervened to say that efforts would be Among the Left leaders present were after the finance minister spoke about intervened to say that efforts would

and changes in the banking sector after an increase in the FDI limit. They also called for more commitment towards leaders also opposed the Patents Bill At a meeting this afternoon, the Left rural connectivity in the telecom sector

CPI-M general secretary Mr HS Surject and CPI chief Mr AB Bardhan. Both

left for a visit to Pakistan later today. During the meeting, Left leaders reiter-

ated their proposals regarding the

more funds for the Common Minimum Programme which would mean the

Budget. They had earlier

demanded

Another report on page 11

MIXED RESPONSE FROM PARTIES

Free hand for 2812 PSU banks and supplemental supplementa

SNS & Agencies

NEW DELHI, Feb. 22. — With exactly a week to go before Budget 2005-06 is presented, the government today unveiled its blueprint on banking sector reforms to enable public sector banks to compete with the fast-growing private sector banking.

The PSU banks have been accorded greater autonomy, allowing them to make

domestic and overseas acquisitions on their own without seeking any approval from the government. State-run banks could also freely exit non-profitable ventures, start overseas branches or set up subsidiaries, a finance ministry official said.

While the CPI-M is likely to react tomorrow, the smaller Left parties have spoken out strongly against certain parts of

the plan including the closure or merger of unviable branches, BJP's economic cell member Mr Jagdish Shettigar said it was a good decision that would help PSU banks compete better with private banks and safeguard the depositor's interests.

The government's blueprint would enable the PSU banks to be equipped with greater operational flexibility, thus providing a level playing field to effectively compete with private sector banks, the official said. The PSU banks can now hire the best talents, while having managerial autonomy to appoint professionals at higher salaries and as many GMs as they wish. The PSU banks will have the freedom to carry out their functions without any impediment, subject to statutory requirements.

The Boards of Directors of the stronger banks will enjoy additional autonomy for framing their own HR policies and procedures for recruitment, for creating additional posts of general managers, for sanctioning differential pay tanked to performance with the pay scales decided after negotiations and for deciding the amount of contribution to be made to the staff welfare fund. The government has put four presconditions and track reported of these

pre-conditions— a track record of three years' consecutive profit, capital adequacy ratio of over nine per cent, not non-performing assets of less than nine per cent and minimum owned funds of Rs 300 crore— for banks to get the managerial—and functional autonomy. The other areas where banks will be allowed treadons are

■ Pursuing new lines of business.

Making suitable acquisitions of companies a businesses, closure or merger of unviable branches, opening overseas offices, acting up subsidiaries and freedom to exit toom a business.

- Deciding statting pattern, recruitment, placement, transfer, training, promotions and pensions.
- Prescribing standards for categorisation of branches.
- Prescribing essential academic qualifications, minimum qualification standards, and modalities for promotion and recruitment.
- Undertaking visits abroad.

■ Laying down policy of accountability and responsibility of bank officials.

The government will continue to exercise certain functions as the owner.

THE STATESMAN

23 FEB 2005

uity, Left livio Govt to invest EPF money i 9. Upp grot

Deepak Razdan New Delhi, February 21

returns"

ON A day the Left threatened to "bite very hard" if the UPA govtees' board overrode objections ed to invest in equities, opening the fund to market risk. ernment ignored its stand on economic issues, the EPF trusfrom the Left unions and decid-

Having earlier bowed to Left terest rate to 9.5 per cent, the board today appointed a private pressure and raised the EPF in-

tion with the finance ministry, will draw up a roadmap for the

The firm's recommendations, if implemented, will require amconsultant for advice on invest- next 10 to 15 years for investment of social security funds in accordance with the "best national and international practices' endment to the EPF Act. ments which can yield the "best Currently, EPF deposits are invested in government securities in keeping with finance ministry guidelines. The consultant has now been asked to

The report of the consultant, Mercer Human Resource Consulting, Mumbai, will cost Rs 33 lakh. The firm has been asked to ship of the fund's key finance of the fund, including memberevaluate "governance structure' and investment committee.

suggest ways for investments in Indian stocks as well as multi-

laterally guaranteed interna-The private firm, in consulta-

tional instruments.

The landmark decision was not a smooth affair. Left-backed unions Citu and Aituc, along with the Bharatiya Mazdoor meeting while the Congress-Sangh and Hind Mazdoor Sabha, opposed the move at the board

taken in violation of the board's backed Intuc supported it.
Left unions later criticised
the board's "majority decision", past practice of adopting all decisions by consensus.

According to Citu leader W.R. Vardarajan, there was lack of

The board could not take up the issue of 9.5 per cent interest payment because of poll-eve

formula," he said.

drasekhar Rao, who presided over the meeting, said there should be no worry on that count, for "the government will pay curbs. Labour minister K. Chan whatever has been announced transparency in the award of the consultancy tender, whose conditions were allegedly re-

ment recently, in spite of the fact that it could result in a deficit of Rs 927 crore.

The board's finance and in-The payment of 9.5 per cent was announced by the govern-

were decided by the finance tile", he said, because EPF investments, in the final analysis,

laxed at the last stage. The consultancy exercise could be "fu-

ministry. "We favour handing

over the funds to the RBI, which can work out an inflation-linked

vestment committee will meet on March 3 to take up the interest rate to be paid next year.

'UPA Government's stability depends on its sincerity to CMP'

By Our Staff Reporter

MALAPPURAM, FEB. 20. The stability of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government at the Centre did not depend on the Left parties, but on the sincerity with which the Government implemented the common minimum programme (CMP), said the CPI (M) Polit Bureau member, Sitaram Yechury.

Inaugurating a seminar on the "Left perspective in today's political scenario and future" on the second day of the CPI (M)'s State conference here this evening, Mr. Yechury indirectly warned the Congress-led UPA Government that the Left would not hesitate to withdraw support to it if the Congress did not change its policies.

Mr. Yechury reminded the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, that no Prime Minister who followed the liberalised economic policy after Narasimha Rao had been re-elected. "So your economic measures have to shift for people's welfare, not for capitalist welfare," he said. Mr. Yechury asked the Congress to recognise the content and the message of the people's mandate. The mandate is that there cannot be any Government at the Centre without the support of the 61 Left mem-

bers. The mandate, he said, was that the Government must take on the communalist forces and strive to

achieve economic independence and social justice.

Repeatedly warning the Government against violating the CMP, Mr. Yechury said "the moment you deviate from it, the Left will be the first to go to the people to mobilise public opinion against you." He said the Left would strengthen its agitation against the Government if the latter did not include in the forthcoming Budget the demands put forth by the Left.

get the demands put forth by the Left.

"The Congress should follow a different set of policies from what it used to follow earlier. The Left will continue to pressurise them," he said. The Left had a major role to play in implementing the people's mandate for a secular democracy. Therefore, it has to strengthen itself. The future of modern India depended on how fast and successful the Left Front would be in the days to some heavily.

how fast and successful the Left Front would be in the days to come, he said.

Mr. Yechury said the years till 2007 would see a political drought for the BJP, with the elections next year in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Bengal authoring a verdict against communal forces. He called upon the party members in the State to make use of the opportunity.

Nath backs 100% FDI in shopping malls, hotel by Priya Ranjan Dash/TNN properties could attract (100% FDI is being considered. (6))

proposed opening up of the fect by commerce minister New Delhi: The commerce and industry ministry has allowing 100% FDI in conproperties such as shopping foreign investment policy by struction of commercial net is expected to decide soon, on a proposal to this efmalls and hotels. The Cabi Kamal Nath last week.

The note is a follow-up to at the recent World Economthe feedback Nath received ic Forum meeting in Davos, where he led India's participation. Officials said concommercial

large amount of FDI

Also, in a post-Davos report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Nath has not ed the strong investor interest in India and suggested that the government should provide fresh avenues to investors to cash in on the remendous global interest

seven activities where FDI is eign investment policy, is also looking at partly opening up retail trade, another prohibited activity, for FDI. prohibited. The commerce ministry. At present, housing and real estate is on the list of which administers the forindustry

In the broad sector of real ship". The automatic route is, however, not available to quire to go through FIPB Foreign Investment Promoallowed only in the "development of integrated townsuch proposals which reestate, FDI of up to 100% tion Board) clearance.

posal, however, FDI can go for FDI. Under the new prointo construction of commercial properties and this Officials said land, real estate and housing would still remain largely prohibited ting in FDI into certain segcould be a precursor for let ments of retail trade

> ments of the retail sector, such as in retailing of spebranded products, which would neither affect the domestic trade and shop

keepers nor hit employment

Allowing FDI in certain seg

Govt mulls FDI in constructior

New Delhi: The government is examining allowing foreign direct investment in construction sector, commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath said.

cement industry. He said the aim was to look at FDI in said FDI in construction would also stimulate steel and construction and not in real estate as FDI in real estate "We are reviewing FDI provision relating to invest ment in construction, housing sector... We are examining it with the aim of spurring development and gener ating employment in rural sector," he said here. Nath would only lead to buying and selling of land.

He, however, declined to give a time-frame saying that government was currently holding consultations with the various stakeholders.

Currently, FDI is permitted only in township development, that too with various conditions like \$10 million investment. ™

Package for Jharkhand in next session: Manmohan

By A Correspondent

RANCHI, FEB.13. The policy envisaging a special package for Iharkhand would be unveiled in the next session of Parliament, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, disclosed here today. Dr. Singh was speaking at his first press conference in Jharkhand since becoming Prime Minister.

Asked what the package would be, the Prime Minister said it was in the process of being formulated. To ensure the State's all-round development, the proposed package would include measures to provide large-scale employment, boost industrial growth, increase educational opportunities, and assist improvement in the health sector.

'Expectations not met'

He said that Jharkhand was formed with great expectations that were not met.

Criticising the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance Government in the State, he said it had failed on all fronts. There was no law and order, no irrigation, no industrial growth and no educational and no proper health facilities.

Expressing concern over the naxalite problem, Dr. Singh said it was a serious one and the Centre was in favour of resolving it with the cooperation of the affected States.

solving it with the cooperation of the affected States.

Pointing out that he was ready to discuss the issue with the Opposition, Dr. Singh rejected the contention that the

scrapping of a tough anti-terror law such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was responsible for the spurt in extremism.

"I don't have any hesitation if the Opposition wants to give any suggestion ... We have to have a comprehensive strategy for the problem."

To a question on the political crisis in Nepal, the Prime Minister said India was concerned and that the Indian Ambassador to that country had already met the King and the Nepal Foreign Minister. "We have already clearly stated that the monarchy and multi-party constitution are the two pillars of the Nepal politics," he said.

He said the Congress was

He said the Congress was committed to providing a stable Government in Jharkhand by extending all possible support to farmers, the Scheduled Tribes, the Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections. In

the past four years, the ruling BJP had entirely ignored the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes, he alleged. It had done nothing for the other minorities either, he added. There was rampant corruption in the State, he alleged.

BJP attacked

Earlier, addressing a public rally in the steel city of Jamshedpur, Dr. Singh charged that the BJP Government was trying to divide the people on communal lines. All sections were unhappy with the Government's performance.

Pointing out that the UPA was committed to improving child education, he promised that in the next three to five years, tremendous improvement would take place in the health and irrigation sectors. Campaigning for the second phase of the Assembly elections in Jharkhand ended today.

CPI(M) willing to give UPA Government more time

By Our Special Correspondent

KOLKATA, FEB. 12. The
Communist Party of India
(Marxist) is still willing, even
nine months after the United
Progressive Alliance (UPA)
Government assumed power,
"to give it [the Centre] some
more time" to fulfil the
Common Minimum
Programme (CMP) aimed at
benefiting the working class,
the peasantry and the
common man.

The CPI (M) would take stock of the "record" of the UPA Government's performance at its party Congress to be held in Delhi in April "and then decide on moves [that might need to be taken] in the future," the Politburo member, Prakash Karat, said at a rally here today, a day after the

conclusion of the three-day 21st State Conference of the party. The Union Budget to be placed at the end of the month would indicate the Government's policy priorities.

The party Congress would also enable the CPI (M) leadership "to find out why we have not been able to extend [our influence] to other parts of the country [beyond West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala]," the Politburo member and former West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, said.

They would also discuss how best to "replicate it [the party's performance in West Bengal] in other States...where the party is not strong enough despite having mass organisations," he said.

Mr. Basu said the present political situation was

"complex." "We have told them [the UPA Government] be there [in power] for five years. But why are you [the Congress] still opposing us in the States?

"We could never imagine supporting the Congress on the basis of the CMP after having opposed the party over the past 45 years...but the party still opposes us in the States ...we need to understand this better."

"We are supporting the UPA Government only on the basis of certain conditions," the West Bengal Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, said. There could never be total agreement on all issues "and I have told the Prime Minister on occasions to think more seriously before deciding to shut down our factories and

textile mills."

"We cannot support them if they go the same way [as the previous Government]... Where have the promises of improving the lot of people in the rural areas gone? What have they done about them?" he wondered. "We have told Delhi that we are supporting you but don't ignore us," Mr. Bhattacharjee added.

The CPI (M) general secretary, Harkishen Singh Surjeet, underlined the need for regularly assessing political developments.

The State Secretary, Anil Biswas, said that the party organisation should be strengthened for consolidating democratic forces against communal and imperial forces. The Left Front chairman, Biman Bose, presided.

1 3 FEB 2005

DIFFERENCES WITH LEFT / CONGRESS STARTS FIRE-FIGHTING

By K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, FEB. 10. Concerned over reports of consistent disagreement by the Left parties, especially on issues concerning economic affairs, with the Unit-ed Progressive Alliance Government, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and Congress leaders have reached out to the Left in an apparent damage control exercise.

Taking note of the discontent by the Left parties — the Communist Party of India predicting bad days ahead for the United

Progressive Alliance and the All-India Forward Bloc mincing no words — the Congress got into the act, top political sources said.

The Prime Minister made a telephone call to the CPI general secretary, A.B. Bardhan, who was attending a party conference in Andhra Pradesh, and understood to have sought to know the CPI's provocation in making such a statement.

Apparently, the CPI leaders understood that while Dr. Singh and his team heard them in private, the policy decisions being announced by his Government on regular basis went contrary to the spirit of discussion.

The Left parties have been ex-

pressing dissent over decisions of the Government to raise the limit of the foreign direct investment in telecom and banking sectors despite protest.

Emissary to AIFB

A senior emissary of the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, got in touch with the AIFB general secretary, Debabrata Biswas. The AIFB, at its last central 'fire-fighting exercise.

committee meeting, concluded that the Congress was pursuing a path of economic reforms not agreeable to the Left. The party has maintained that the Congress was pushing "its agenda" while making it appear that the Left parties were consulted whereas all that the Congress did was to "merely inform" of the decisions arrived at.

Informed sources said that after the Left parties' views came out afresh, the Congress president's political secretary, Ahmed Patel, has begun the

squabbling, says PA is

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 10. The unity displayed by the National Demo-cratic Alliance in its protest against the dismissal of the Parrikar Government in Goa offers a contrast to the "squabbles" visible in the United Progressive Alliance, according to the Bharativa Janata Party vice-president, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi.

In Maharashtra, he said, the Congress played a tough game of nerves with its alliance partner, the Nationalist Congress Party, and insisted on its own Chief Minister; in Bihar, the UPA had virtually unravelled and no one knew whether the Congress was for or against the ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal; in Jammu and Kashmir, the Congress fought the local body elections on its own, not with its partner, the People's Democratic Party; in Karnataka, the relations between the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) were not quite right; and in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress was supporting the Samajwadi Party Government and the SP said it was supporting the UPA at the Centre, but the two parties were daily engaged in a verbal duel, Mr. Naqvi said today.

On the other hand, the NDA had displayed unity and the ability to rally together "in defence of democracy in Goa."

Commenting on the submission of the Nanavati Commission report to the Union Home Minister, Mr. Nagvi said that if the Government was doing the proper constitutional thing by not disclosing its contents before it was placed in Parliament, then why did it allow the Banerji committee report to be publicised? The BJP was not convinced that it was the differing status of the two - one was a judicial commission appointed under the Enquiries Act and the other was a committee appointed by the Railways Ministry that allowed the Government to deal with them differently.

Cabinet nod for talks on gas pipelines

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 9. The Union Cabinet today authorised the Petroleum Ministry to hold negotiations with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran and Myanmar on the gas pipeline project.

the gas pipeline project.

The Petroleum Minister, Mani
Shankar Aiyar, disclosing this
here today, said that the "broad
approach" to the talks had been

approved.

India is seeking natural gas from Iran, Myanmar and Turkmenistan. The pipelines are envisaged from Iran via Pakistan and from Myanmar via Bangladesh and the proposed supplies from Turkmenistan would come through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Mr. Aiyar said talks have begun with Iran and detailed discussions would begin on Monday when the Iranian delegation arrives. The dates for further talks with the Pakistan Oil Minister are yet to be decided. The techno-commercial group of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh would meet on February 17 and 18.

ADB report

On the proposal of a pipeline from Turkmenistan, Mr. Aiyar said that no steps had been taken till now. The Government would study the report of the Asian Development Bank on the project.

But the initial estimates suggesting that 60 million standard cubic metres a day gas would be available from Iran may be increased. Pakistan would require 50 million standard cubic metre of gas a day from the Iranian pipeling.

Mr. Aiyar said India would need 400 billion standard cubic metres a day by 2025, of which

half would have to come from international sources. The indigenous availability was only about billion standard metres a day now and it may only double in the next 20 years. Besides, the country's reliance on imported crude oil was in-creasing with 85 per cent of consumption coming from abroad by 2025. As energy security was a key component of the national common minimum programme, these steps would go a long way in enhancing it, Mr. Aiyar said. The Cabinet also decided to set up a post of Additional Secretary (International Operations) in the Petroleum Ministry. Talmiz Ahmed, an IFS officer, will occupy the post.

It is good news, says Pakistan

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 9. Pakistan has welcomed India's decision to hold talks with Islamabad on the a gas pipeline from Iran through Pakistan and said it was ready to address all concerns and apprehensions of New Delhi.

"This is a good news and ... is welcomed. We are ready to remove all concerns and reservations of India," the Pakistan Petroleum Minister Amanullah Khan Jadoon, told a news conference here.

The proposed pipeline has been hanging fire for nearly a decade in view of India's reservations on the safety and security of the pipeline.

The Minister said the project had been "delayed due to India and we will welcome if India joins the project."

Left protests against raising FDI in telecom sector

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, FEB. 7. A large number of activists from the Communist Party of India (Marxist), CPI, Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party today staged a demonstration here to protest against the decision of the United Progressive Alliance Government to increase the foreign direct investment limit to 74 per cent in the telecom sector.

Addressing the gathering, the national CPI secretary, D. Raja, warned the Government of resistance both within and outside Parliament if the decision

was not withdrawn. The Left, he said, would not compromise on steps which affected the national interest.

The decision of the Government would impair national security.

The president of the Delhi Science Forum and expert on the telecom sector, Prabir Purkayastha, pointed out that cellular operators Hutch and Airtel already possessed foreign holding above the stipulated total limit of 49 per cent.

He alleged that the "move by the Government is directed more at legalising the illegality that already prevails and has no connection with further investments in the telecom sector."

Mr. Purkayastha also accused the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, of unduly favouring the foreign telecom companies and said his actions were suspect since he had legally represented foreign companies in the Supreme Court.

Stating that the telecom industry had become the "most scam-ridden sector of the country," he cifed the recent fine imposed on Reliance by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India for violating its licence agreement.

The CPI (M) MP, Dipankar

Mukherjee, said the decision was taken by the Cabinet despite the Left parties submitting a detailed note containing their objections to the proposal.

objections to the proposal.

He said the Left parties had raised the issues of security concerns, citing the points mentioned by the Intelligence Bureau, and had also noted that the huge capital resources already available with the existing telecom companies did not make more FDI a necessity.

Further, the Left had called for prioritising rural telephony in the backdrop of the increasing tele-density gap between urban and rural areas.

Plans protest By Our Special All V (C)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 3. Left parties today decided to organise an all-India protest on Monday against the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government's decision to hike the foreign direct investment limit in telecom sector to 74 per cent and also seek the intervention of the UPA Chairperson, Sonia Gandhi.

The four Left parties also decided to write a letter to Ms. Gandhi, conveying the stand on telecom and that the announcement came even before consultations were continuing.

After a joint meeting here, these parties and that they have been engaging the Government on various policy matters which the Left considered detrimental to India's economic sovereignty such as amending the Patents Act, allowing forming heads to purpose a charge of private eign banks to purchase shares of private Indian banks and other banking reforms and disinvestment of profit-making pub-

lic sector undertakings.
"These are matters which, the Left par ties strongly feel, need to be thoroughly discussed before any decision is taken with the prime objective of defending India's economic sovereignty," the parties said in a statement. The Monday protest would be observed all over the country specifically opposing the FDI hike in telecom and generally in defence of Indian economic sovereignty" the Left parties leaders said at a press conference. The Left parties said the objections were not limited to consider a leader limited to security consideration alone but also to tele-density and foreign cap-ital investment among others.

Electricity Bill

Referring to the new Electricity Bill announced on the basis of the Electricity Act, 2003 which the Common Minimum Programme has promised to review, the Left parties said that till such a review was completed, no new policy measures should be undertaken. It is understood that the Bill does not contain suggestions against privatisation or on continuation

against privatisation of on continuation of power subsidies.

Today's meeting was attended by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member, Sitaram Yechury, the CPI general secretary, A.B. Bardhan, the CPI national secretary, D. Raja and Pallab Sengupta, the All India Forward Bloc secretary, C. Deversion, The Revolutionary retary, G. Deverajan. The Revolutionary Socialist Party could not attend it but had agreed with the decision following con-

sultation over telephone.

UPA Govt's Zeal For Reforms Upsets Communists

Left plans to seek Sonia's help to shun Manmohan

Our Political Bureau

HE Left parties on Thursday decided to seek UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi's intervention in the Manmohan Singh government's policy matrix for addressing their reservations against the changes in the FDI rules.

Leaders of the Left parties, who met here on Thursday to discuss the Manmohan Singh government's resolve to carry out the reform promises made in the last budget, was of the view that there was a marked reluctance on the part of the government to leadership to accept the Left's view-point. Left leaders said the government leadership was taking the allies for granted and this would have to be addressed by the coalition leadership.

A section of the government is of the view that Ms Gandhi will have to take the role of an arbiter as she alone has the necessary political clout for settling differences. Although the Congress president is part of the consultation process, she has so far not intervened in economic policy decisions of the government.

Meanwhile, refuting the claims of the government that the Left had agreed to the FDI decision, Left party leaders said the announcements were made in



LAUGH LINES: Sitaram Yechuri (right) with A.B. Bardhan

the midst of consultations. "This goes against the spirit of the coalition. The Congress will have to observe the rules of the coalition," Left leaders said after the meeting.

In its letter to the Congress president, the Left is also likely to register its protest against raising FDI in Indian private banks and merger of public sector banks.

The Left dubbed as "thoroughly mischievous" reports that the increase in the EPF interest rate was linked to the decision to raise FDI in telecom. "There has been no such deal," CPM polit bureau member Sitaram Yechury told reporters. The Left also decided to organise an all-India protest day

on February 7 against the increase in the FDI cap in telecom.

On the new electricity policy, too, the Left has serious reservations. Left leaders said power minister P M Sayeed did not hold consultations with them. The Left parties are opposed privatisation, unbundling of state electricity boards and elimination of cross-subsidies.

"There are matters, which the Left parties strongly feel, need to be thoroughly discussed before any decision is taken with the prime objective of defending India's economic sovereignty," said a statement issued by the Left after the meeting.

स्ट को कि कि कि कि कारम और जो वा कि विवाह के कारम वा कारक वालाह। EX BU ফলৈ অতিরিক্ট খরচ হবৈ নশো কোটি

টাকার মতো। কোথা থেকে আসবে সেই টাকাং শ্ৰমমন্ত্ৰী চন্দ্ৰশেখন নাও বলেছেন, "আম্বা নিজেদের হিসাব ফের পরীক্ষা করে বোঝার চেষ্টা করব কতটা ফান্ডের থেকেই দেওয়া যায়। म्होक दिल्मार्हीत, नग्नामिक्षि, ७ **ফেবুয়ারি**: টেলিকম ও প্রভিডেন্ট ফান্ডের সিদ্ধান্ত একই দিনে ঘোষণা করে বামপষ্টীদের যথেষ্টই অসুবিধায় ফেলে দিয়েছেন অৰ্থমন্ত্ৰী পি চিদম্বর্ম।

পরিণতিতে আজ সরকার সম্পর্কে সহযোগী ট্রেড ইউনিয়নগুলির মধ্যেই পরিস্থিতি মোকাবিলায় বাম মনোভাব নিয়ে বাম দলগুলি ও তাদের মতভেদ দেখা দিয়েছে।

তারপর যে টাকা কম পড়বে, তা আমরা অর্থমন্ত্রকের কাছে ভর্কি হিসাবে চাইব।" কিন্তু অর্থমন্ত্রকের ব্যয়সচিব ডি

> ও 'আলোচনা না-করেই বামেদের সঙ্গে তা জানিয়ে জোটের চেয়ারপার্সন নেতারা সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন, কী ভাবে আলোচনা হয়েছে' বলে দাবি করছে, সরকার 'নাুনতম কর্মসূচি লাজ্যন করছে সনিয়া গাঁধীকে তাঁরা চিঠি লিখবেন।

সরকারি হিসাব অনুযায়ী ৮.৫ থেকে बनामिक अधिएउने कार्टित বাড়ডি সুদের টাকা কে দেবে, তা নিয়ে भत्रकोरत्रत भर्षा ७५ र्राह घन्छ। বাড়িয়ে সুদের হার ৯.৫ শতাংশ করার

আজ চার বাম দলের বৈঠকে অবশ্য দুই বড় দলকে সমস্যায় ফেলে দেন ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকের ডি দেবরাজন। তিনি জানতে চান, অর্থমন্ত্রী, বিদ্যুৎমন্ত্রী এবং অন্য কিছু মন্ত্ৰীও বলছেন, বামেদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করে তাঁরা সিদ্ধান্ত নিচ্ছেন। সেই সব আলোচনা ডাকও দিতে পারেন। সংবাদমাধ্যমে এ কথাই প্রচারিত বিনিয়োগের সীমা বাড়ানোর পাশাপাশি পি একের সুদ বাড়িয়ে বামপন্থীদের হয়েছে যে চিদম্বরম টেলিকমে বিদেশি

অবস্থায় সি পি এমের সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি বলেছেন, "যে ভাবে এই কে, সংবাদমাধ্যম না সরকার, তা তিনি তবে তাঁর পালে বসে সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে সি পি আই-এর সাধারণ সরকারের কথাই বলছি।" তাঁরা দু'জনে সঙ্গে বোঝাপড়া করে নিলেন। এই अञ्माष्ट व वि वर्षन वर्तन, "बाधता বোঝাপড়ার কথা প্রচার করা হয়েছে, তা অনৈতিক।" তাঁর বক্তব্যের লক্ষ্ স্পষ্ট করেনান।

অর্থমন্ত্রে বক্তব্য, পি এফের

কক্ৰুক জ্যমন্ত্ৰক।

ষরূপ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, তাঁরা ভর্কি

দিতে পারবেন না।

অবশ্য তাঁরা খোলসা করেননি। তবে वर्धन क्रानित्याष्ट्रम, भवकात এ ভाবে চললে ভবিষ্যতে তাঁদের গভীরভাবে চিন্তা করতে হবে। কী চিন্তা করবেন, তা একইসঙ্গে বলেছেন, সরকার এ ভাবে ध अन्यशार्क শামমন্ত্রকের জবাব, তার সুযোগ খ্ব বেশি নেই, কারণ বকেয়া নিয়ে মামলা-টাকা কোথা থেকে আসবে, তা নিয়ে অবশ্য বামপন্থীরা এই মুহুর্তে মাথা ঘামাতে রাজি নন। তাঁরা বরং অনেক বেশি ব্যক্ত এখন নিজেদের ভাবমূর্তি বকেয়া আদায় করে টাকা জোগাড়

মোকদ্দমার পাহাড় জন্ম আছে।

ইতিমধ্যে দেশের 'অর্থনৈতিক ষাধীনতা অক্ষুন্ন রাখার জন্য ও বিরোধিতায় বামেরা দেশজুড়ে বিক্ষোভ ইউনিয়নগুলি ফেবুয়ারির ২৬ তারিখে পেটেন্ট অর্ডিন্যাঙ্গের বিরুদ্ধে এবং ৬ থেকে ১২ মার্চ সরকারের অর্থনৈতিক নীতির বিরুদ্ধে বিক্ষোভের ডাক টেলিকমে বিদেশি লগ্নি বাড়ানোর পাশাপাশি বাম ও মধ্যপন্থী ট্রেড দিবসের ডাক দিয়েছেন ^ন ফেবুয়ারি। তা তিনি জানতে চান। সি পি আইয়ের কোথায় হচ্ছে এবং কাদের সঙ্গে হচ্ছে

এই বৈঠকে সিট বাম দলগুলির যোগ দিতে বললেও এইটাক ভাতে ধৰ্মঘটের ডাক দিতে রাজি হয়নি হিন্দ মজদুর সজ্য। শেষ পর্যন্ত গুরুদাস রাজি হয়নি। অদুর ভবিষ্যতে দেশজুড়ে দাশগুণ্ডের মধ্যস্থতায় সমঝোতাসূত্র হিসাবে বলা হয়েছে, 'প্ৰয়োজনে' তাঁরা তারিখের কর্মসূচিতে ইউনিয়নগুলিকে ধর্মঘটে যেতে বাধ্য হবেন।

দিয়েছে। সমালোচনা কেন করা হবে না। এর সরকারের এই ধরণের বজবোর লেখার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়। এই মুহুর্তে সনিয়ার উপর অনেকটাই নির্ভর করছেন পঙ্গব সেনগুপুও প্রশ্ন তোলেন, জানিয়েছেন, সনিয়ার জাতীয় উপদেষ্টা পরিষদও ঠিক সেই সব খাতেই বরাদ্দ পরেই বিষয়টি নিয়ে সনিয়ার কাছে চিঠি বামের। কারণ, বাজেটে যে সব খাতে তাঁরা বরাদ বাড়ানোর দাবি

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দেওয়া-নেওয়া

টেলিকমে বিদেশি লগ্নির সীমা বেড়ে ৭৪ শতাংশ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২ ফেব্রুয়ারি: অবশেষে টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের সীমা ৪৯ থেকে ৭৪ শতাংশ হল। আজ কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার এই সিদ্ধান্ত অনুমোদনের কথা ঘোষণা করেন অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম।

এই দীর্ঘ টালবাহানা যে বামেদের আপত্তি এবং বিশেষ করে নিরাপত্তাজনিত উদ্বেগের কারণেই ঘটেছে, সে কথা খোলাখুলি জানিয়েছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। নিরাপত্তার ব্যবস্থা নিশ্ছিদ্র করার জন্য তাঁরা বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীর উপর সাত দফা শর্তও আরোপ করেছেন।

বামেরা অবশ্যই প্রকাশ্যে এই সিদ্ধান্তের বিরোধিতা করেছেন। সি পি এম পলিটবাুরোর সদস্য সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি এবং সি পি আইয়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধন জানিয়েছেন, তাঁরা 'নীতিগত ভাবে টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রের দরজা খুলে দেওয়ার' বিরোধী। এ দিকে, কলকাতাতেও দলের পলিটবাুরোর সদস্য ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গের রাজ্য কমিটির সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস বলেন, "কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের সিদ্ধান্তের আমরা ঘারতর বিরোধী। একাধিক বার আমরা কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার ও অর্থমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে এই ব্যাপারে আলোচনা করেছি। অন্তর্বতাঁ বাজেট তৈরির সময়ে বামপন্থীরা বিষয়টি নিয়ে লিখিত ভাবে জানিয়েছিলেন, এই ধরনের সিদ্ধান্ত দেশের নিরাপতার পক্ষেক্ষতিকারক হবে। এর আমরা বিরোধিতা করব। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের একতরকা ভাবে এই ধরনের সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ আমরা মেনে নিতে পারিনা।" সংসদের ভিতরে ও বাইরে তাঁরা এই সিদ্ধান্তর বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ জানাবেন।

কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভা আজ এক ধাকায় টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রের দরজা খোলার পাশাপাশি নতুন বিদ্যুৎ নীতি ঘোষণারও সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। এই নীতিতে যাতে রাজ্য বিদ্যুৎ পর্যদগুলিকে ভেঙে দেওয়া না-হয় এবং বেসরকারীকরণ বাধ্যতামূলক না-করা হয় তার জন্য বামেরা চাপ দিয়ে চলেছেন। সরকারের ঘোষিত নীতির রূপরেখায় 'ক্রেতাদের স্বার্থরক্ষা' এবং 'বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্রকে আর্থিক ও বাণিজ্যিক ভাবে লাভজনক করে তোলা'র কথা বলা হয়েছে।

টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রে সাধারণ ও সেলুলার-সহ বেশ কিছু পরিষেবায় সরকার 'সামগ্রিক বিদেশি মালিকানা' ৭৪ শতাংশ করার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে কেন্দ্র। সরকার আগেই বাম নেতাদের জানিয়েছিলেন, আগের সরকারের নীতি অনুযায়ী বিদেশি সংস্থা সরাসরি ৪৯ শতাংশ মালিকানা নিতে পারলেও ঘুরপথে আরও ১৪ শতাংশ নিতে পারে। কাজেই কার্যক্ষেত্রে তাঁরা যা করছেন তা হল ৬৩ থেকে বিদেশি মালিকানা ৭৪ শতাংশে নিয়ে যাচ্ছেন। এরপরেই বামেরা বিবৃতি দিয়ে নিরাপত্তাজনিত উদ্বেগের কথা জানান। গত বাজেটেই চিদম্বরম টেলিকম, বিমা ও বিমান ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি লিগ্ন বাড়ানোর কথা বলেছিলেন। তারপর বামেরা বৃঝিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন, বিমা বিল সংসদে এসে তাঁরা বিরুদ্ধে ভোট দেবেন, কিন্তু বাকি দৃটি যেহেতু সংসদে আসবে না, তাই তাঁরা বাইরে প্রতিবাদ-আন্দোলন করবেন।

চিদম্বরম আজ বলেন, "আমরা (টেলিকম নিয়ে) সংশ্লিষ্ট মন্ত্রক ও বাম-সহ সব মিত্রের সঙ্গে একত্রে কাজ করেছি। বামেদের আমরা বলেছিলাম যে, সমস্ত নিরাপত্তাজনিত এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

প্রভিডেন্ট ফান্ডে সুদের হার বেড়ে ৯.৫ শতাংশই

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: টেলিযোগাযোগের ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের উর্ধ্বসীমা ৪৯ শতাংশ থেকে বাড়িয়ে ৭৪ শতাংশ করার কমবেশি আট ঘণ্টা পরেই বামপন্থীদের তুষ্ট করতে লোকসান স্বীকার করেই কেন্দ্রীয় অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম বুধবার প্রভিডেন্ট ফাল্ডের সুদের হার ৯.৫ শতাংশ রাখার কথা ঘোষণা করলেন।

বামেদের বিরোধিতার মোকাবিলা করতেই এক হাতে পি এফের সুদের হার বাড়িয়ে অন্য হাতে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধির দরজাও খুলে দিলেন কেন্দ্রীয় অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম। অর্থমন্ত্রীর ওই চালের ফলে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ নিয়ে বামেদের বিরোধিতা অনেকটাই ধার হারাবে বলে মনে করছেন সংশ্লিষ্ট মহল। অন্য ভাবে দেখলে, একই দিনে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের সীমা এবং পি এফের সুদের হার বাড়ানোর সিদ্ধান্ত আসলে বামদের সঙ্গে অর্থমন্ত্রীর এক সমঝোতা সূত্র।

তবে বামদের সঙ্গে ওই সমঝোতার মূল্য অবশ্য মেটাতে হবে পি এফ তহবিলকেই। সুদের হার ৯.৫ শতাংশ করার ফলে পি এফ তহবিলের লোকসানের পরিমাণ ৯২৭ কোটি ছাড়িয়ে যাবে। ওই লোকসান কী ভাবে মেটানো হবে সেব্যাপারে এখনও কিছু জানানি অর্থমন্ত্রী। এখন এই 'সমঝোতা সূত্র' বামপন্থীরা কতটা মেনে চলেন, তা দেখার। লক্ষণীয়, সিপি এম ইতিমধ্যেই টেলিকমে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বার্ডানোর সিদ্ধান্তে কড়া প্রতিক্রিয়া জানিয়েছে। আজ, বৃহস্পতিবার চার বামদল দিল্লিতে এ নিয়ে নিজেদের মধ্যে বৈঠকে বসছে।

সিটু এবং এ আই টি ইউ সি-ও আলাদা আলাদা বিবৃতিতে টেলিকম শিল্পে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধির সিদ্ধান্তের বিরোধিতা চালিয়ে যাওয়ার কথা বলেছে।

প্রত্যাশিত সুরেই পি এফের সুদের হার বৃদ্ধিকে স্বাগত জানালেও বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ বৃদ্ধির সিদ্ধান্তের বিরোধিতা তাঁরা চালিয়ে যাবেন বলে জানিয়েছেন সিটুর সাধারণ সম্পাদক চিন্তরত মজুমদার। তাঁর বক্তব্য, "এন ডি এ সরকারের আর্থিক নীতির সঙ্গে ইউ পি এ সরকারের আর্থিক নীতির কেন্দ্র ইউ পি এ সরকারের আর্থিক কেন্দ্র করে বড় মাপের কোনও আন্দোলনে যাওয়ার কথা অবশ্য এই দিন তিনি জানাননি।

এ আই টি ইউ সির সাধারণ সম্পাদক গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত এ প্রসঙ্গে শুধু 'বিদেশি লগ্নির বিরুদ্ধে আমাদের আন্দোলন চলবে' বলেই ছেড়ে দিয়েছেন। গুরুদাসবাবু এই দিন বলেন, "প্রভিডেট ফাভের সুদের হার বাড়ানোর পাশাপাশি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পরিমাণ বাড়ানোর সিদ্ধান্ত একই সঙ্গে নিয়ে ইউ পি এ সরকার বামপন্থীদের সঙ্গে গাজর এবং লাঠির নীর্কি নিয়ে চলছে।"

প্রভিডেন্ট ফান্ডের অছি পরিষদ ২০০৩-০৪ সালের জন্য পি এফের সুদের হার সাড়ে ৯ শতাংশ অনুমোদন করলেও কেন্দ্রীয় অর্থমন্ত্রক এত দিন তা অনুমোদন করছিল না। উল্টে চিদম্বরম জানিয়েছিলেন, সুদের হার ৮ শতাংশের বেশি করা হলেই তহবিলের লোকসান শুরু হবে। সেই মতো তিনি ঘোষণাও করেছিলেন '০৩-০৪ সালের জন্য সাড়ে ৮ শতাংশ সুদ দেওয়া হবে। কিন্তু বামদের আপত্তি ও বিরোধিতার জন্মই সেই নির্দেশ ঝুলিয়ে রাখা হয়। এত দিন দর কষাক্ষ্যির সুর্বে তা বাড়িয়ে ৯.৫ শতাংশ করা হল।

্রিটেলিকমে বিদ্ধেশি লুগ্নি

প্রথম পাতার পর
সংশয় নিরসনের ব্যবস্থা করব। সেই
অনুযায়ী আমরা বিভিন্ন শর্ত আরোপ
করেছি।" এই শর্তগুলি হল:

এক, সংস্থার পরিচালকদের অধিকাংশ এবং ম্যানেজিং ডিরেক্টর ও চিফ এগজিকিউটিভকে ভারতের আবাসিক নাগরিক হতে হবে।

দুই, একজন আবাসিক ভারতীয়ের হাতে অস্তত দশ শতাংশ মালিকানা থাকবে।

তিন, চিফ টেকনিক্যাল অফিসার ও চিফ ফিনান্স অফিসার হবেন আবাসিক ভারতীয়েরা। এ ছাড়াও অন্য যে কোনও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদে আবাসিক ভারতীয়কে বসানোর জন্য লাইসেন্সদাতা (অর্থাৎ টেলিকম দক্ষতর) নোটিস জারি করতে পারে।

চার, দেশের কোনও কল ঘুরপথে
বিদেশ হয়ে আসবে না (যাতে আড়ি
পাতা না-যায়)। পাঁচ, যোগাযোগ
সংক্রান্ত কিছু তথ্য (যেমন 'নেটওয়ার্ক
ডায়াগ্রাম') বিদেশে যাবে না। ছয়,
সমস্ত গ্রাহক সম্পর্কে স্বচ্ছ তথ্য রাখতে
হবে, এবং সাত, মেরামতির জন্য
'রিমোট অ্যাকসেস ব্যবস্থা' কোনও
বিদেশি সংস্থাকে দেওয়া যাবে না।

এই সাত শর্তের কোনওটি ভাঙা হলে শান্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে বলেও অর্থমন্ত্রী জানান।

বামপন্থীরা কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের এই
সিদ্ধান্তের বিরুদ্ধে আন্দোলন গড়ে
তোলার সিদ্ধান্ত নিলে সেটা তাঁদের
পক্ষে বেশ অস্বস্তিকর হবে। ইতিমধ্যে
অবশ্য ট্রেড ইউনিয়নগুলি তাদের সুর
চড়া করতে শুরু করেছে এবং ব্যাঙ্ককর্মচারীরা আগামী ৩ মার্চ ধর্মঘটের
হুমকিও দিয়ে দিয়েছেন। তবে
তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি সংস্থাগুলির শীর্ষ সংগঠন
ন্যাসকম আজ কেন্দ্রের সিদ্ধান্তকে
স্বাগত জানিয়েছে।

FDI in telecom allowed up to receipt (FCBs), American depository receipts (ADRs) and global mobile personal look forward to cheaper call depository receipts (GDRs).

increased foreign holding limit at 74 per cent would hold good for services such as fixed line basic services, cellular or mobile services, proposal to hike the ceiling of composite foreign direct investment (FDI) in the telecom sector to 74 per cent from the existing 49 per cent. This is subject to certain nation's interest by way of Ministry to safeguard the conditions and clauses inserted by the Home

Chidambaram, said the

function as service providers and the people at large who With today's decision, the telecom companies which are the actual users, have reason to cheer.

companies will have easier access to larger chunks of For while the telecom foreign investment for

> long distance telephony, V-Sat, public mobile radio national and international

unified access services,

foreign institutional investors (FIIs), non-resident Indians (NRIs) or overseas corporate bodies (OCBs), foreign

currency convertible bonds

investment comes in through proportionate investment in In no case is the ceiling be exceeded irrespective of whether the foreign Indian promoter/investment the issuance of convertible companies, including their preference shares or holding companies. the increased foreign holding limit, Mr. Chidambaram said that the 74 per cent cap would include but will not be limited to investments by

Another report on Page 18

EPF sop follows FDI uproar Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 2. — The Centre walked a difficult tightrope today, first incensing the Left parties and then trying to throw them a sop. First the FDI rate in the telecom sector was hiked to 74 per cent from 49 per cent and then, the Employees Provident Fund interest rate was restored to 9.5 per cent.

Halfway through the day, things looked gloomy for the government with the CPI-M Politburo strongly opposing the FDI decision and vow-

ing to fight the issue in Parliament. The smaller RSP went even further, speaking about reconsidering support to the UPA government. As a result, the EPF announcement is being seen as a knee-jerk reaction of the govern-

ment after the Red uproar. The Left has appreciated the hike in EPF interest rate - something they said the Prime Minister had promised he would announce at the "right time". But if it had been classic stick and carrot, the announcements could well have been made at the same time.

The Cabinet cleared the hike in FDI cap in the telecom sector and said all security aspects raised by the Left parties, the defence ministry and other security agencies were addressed. Now, the FDI cap in basic, cellular, unified access services, National Long Distance and International Long Distance, V-Sat, Public Mobile Radio Trunk Services Global Mobile and Personal Communication Services has been increased. The Union finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram, said the total composite foreign holding should not exceed the 74 per cent cap. The remaining 26 per cent will be owned by resident Indian citizens, or an Indian company, the finance minister said.

Late this evening, the Centre hiked the interest rate on the EPF back to 9.5 per cent from the current 8.5 per cent announced for 2004-05.

"The Prime Minister has decided that the EPF interest rate for 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 will be 9.5 per cent," Mr Chidambaram said. "The order to this effect will be issued tomorrow." The government's earlier interim order bringing down the interest rate to 8.5 per cent had been opposed by the Left Front and trade unions.

Tax the rich, Left parties tell FM

New Delhi: Left parties on Tuesday asked the government to hike taxes on the rich and phase out exemptions to corporates in the hudget for to about Pe 66 000 areas. and phase out exemptions to corporates in the budget for ensuring additional Rs 50,000 crore for employment, agri-culture, education and health

In their pre-budget meeting with finance minister P Chidambaram, Left parties opposed disinvestment of PSUs and wanted more discussion with UPA for finalising the roadmap for banking sector reforms. Asking the finance minister to revamp indirect taxes and raise corporate tax rates to hike the tax:GDP ratio by 1.5 per cent to over 10 per

to about Rs 66,000 crore.

"The budget must provide for four key areas—national employment guarantee employment guarantee scheme, investment in agriculture, health and education," CPI leader A B Bardhan said after the meeting.

Prakash Karat of CPM, D
Raja of CPI and other leaders

reiterated the need to raise government revenue to fund the social sector schemes. "The last budget provided Rs 10,000 crore more for these four areas. Much more is needed in next fiscal." Bardhan said. PTI

মনমোহনী বাজেট দাবি বামপন্তীদের

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ৩১ জানুয়ারি— কেন্দ্রীয় অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম আসম্ন বাজেট নিয়ে কাল আলোচনায় বসছেন বাম নেতাদের সঙ্গে। বিকেল তিনটেয় নর্থ ব্লকে অর্থমন্ত্রীর দপ্তরে হবে এই বৈঠক। সি পি এম, সি পি আই, আর এস পি এবং ফ ব-র শীর্ষ নেতাদের ডাকা হয়েছিল আলাদা ভাবে। কিন্তু আজ চার বাম দলের বৈঠকে

সিদ্ধান্তের পর সি পি এম নেতা প্রকাশ কারাত অর্থমন্ত্রীকে জানিয়ে দেন,

তাঁরা চার বাম দল একই সঙ্গে তাঁর সঙ্গে কথা বলবেন।
আলাদা আলাদা নয়। আজ সি পি এম সদর দপ্তরে চার বাম
দলের নেতারা বৈঠকে বসে তাঁদের সন্মিলিত বক্তব্য চূড়ান্ত
করেন। ছিলেন সুরজিৎ, প্রকাশ কারাত, সীতারাম
ইয়েচুরি, অবনী রায়, দেবব্রত বিশ্বাস, ডি রাজা এবং এ বি
বর্ধন। বাম নেতারা বৈঠকে জানতে পারেন অর্থমন্ত্রী তাঁদের
সঙ্গে পৃথকভাবে কথা বলতে চান। এতে চার দলই
আপত্তি জানায়। এবং ফোন করে জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয়,
বৈঠক আলাদা আলাদা ভাবে নয়, একসঙ্গেই হবে। যার
ফলে কোনও তরফেই আর কোনও সংশয় সৃষ্টির অবকাশ
থাকবে না। উল্লেখ্য, ইউ পি এ-বাম সমন্বয় কমিটির বিগত
বৈঠকের সময়ই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নির্দেশে অর্থমন্ত্রী বাজেট নিয়ে
বাম দলগুলির সঙ্গে আলোচনার কথা জানান। এর পর
জয়রাম রমেশ পৃথকভাবে বৈঠকের সময়সুচি তৈরি করে

জানিয়ে দেন। বৈঠকের পর প্রকাশ কারাত, দেবব্রত বিশ্বাস, অবনী রায় এবং এ বি বর্ধন বলেন, বাম দলগুলির ঐক্য ও পারস্পরিক সমন্বয় যে কতটা সুদৃঢ়, আজকের ঘটনায় তা আরও একবার প্রমাণিত হল। বাম নেতারা জানান, কাল তাঁরা অর্থমন্ত্রীকে বলবেন শ্রমিক, কৃষক ও সাধারণ মানুষের জন্য উন্নয়ন ও আগাগোড়া

কর্মসংস্থানমুখী বাজেট করতে হবে তাঁকে। এজন্য টাকা আসবে

কোথা থেকে তাও তাঁরা বলে দেবেন। বলবেন, অন্তত ৩০ হাজার কোটি টাকার সংস্থান হতে পারে করভিত্তি ঠিক রাখলে। এজন্য কোনও বিপ্লবাত্মক রাস্তায় তাঁকে হাঁটতে হবে না। শুধু ছাড়তে হবে বি জে পি-র পথ। এর আগে কেন্দ্রের শেষ কংগ্রেস সরকার নরসিংহ রাওয়ের প্রধানমন্ত্রিত্বের ও মনমোহন সিংয়ের অর্থমন্ত্রিত্বের সূচনায় যে করভিত্তি বজায় রেখেছিল সেই পথে ফিরে গেলেও চলবে। এতেই ১.৫ শতাংশ রাজস্ব-ঘাটতি পূরণ করা যাবে। সূতরাং, প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংকে তাঁর প্রথম বাজেটের কথা স্মরণ করানোটা, খুব একটা অন্যায় প্রস্তাব নয় বলেই মস্তব্য করেন বাম নেতারা। তাঁরা হিসেব ক্ষে অর্থমন্ত্রীকে দেখাবেন এর ফলেই ৩০ হাজার কোটির সাশ্রয় হবে। যে ৩০ হাজার কোটি অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর

এরপর ২ পাতায়

মনমোহনী বাজেট

> পাতার পর
নেতৃত্বাধীন সরকারের অর্থমন্ত্রীরা ভূল খাতে ব্যয় করেছেন। অবশ্য এন ডি এ
সরকারের অবস্থান ও দায়বদ্ধতা ছিল উচ্চবিত্তদের প্রতি। সূতরাং, ওই জমানায়
মোবাইল সস্তা আর রুটি দামি হয়েছে। কিন্তু বাম সমর্থনপুষ্ট ইউ পি এ
সরকারেক সে-পথে হাঁটলে চলবে না। এই সরকারের দায় প্রমিক-কৃষকমধ্যবিত্তকে যতটা সম্ভব সুখ ও স্বস্তিতে রাখা। এজন্যই এই প্রথম এই সরকারের
পূর্ণাঙ্গ বাজেটে প্রকৃত পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হতে হবে অর্থমন্ত্রীকে। কৃষিক্ষেত্রে, কৃষি
সংলগ্ন ক্ষেত্রে এবং শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য ও কর্মসংস্থানে বাজেট বরান্দের ক্ষেত্রে অভিম
ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি রূপায়ণ করতে হবে। এবং কোনও অবস্থাতেই বোঝা চাপানো
চলবে না সাধারণ মেহনতি মানুষের ওপর। ব্যাক্ষের অনাদায়ী ঋণ পুরো উসুল
করতে হবে। এবং ৯১-এর করভিত্তি অনুযায়ী কর ও শুল্কনীতি রূপায়ণ করতে
হবে। এর ফলে জি ডি পি-র ফাঁকও পূর্ণ হবে অনায়াসে।