

# HOUSE | Minorities' right to set up & run educational institutions to be protected' Govt introduces pvt quota bill in LS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20

**B**RAVING the NDA's opposition and in spite of the CPI(M)'s reservations, the government introduced the contentious Constitution amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha providing for reservation in unaided educational institutions.

HRD Minister Arjun Singh, who piloted the Bill, said the main objective of introducing the Bill was to provide reservation for backward classes, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in unaided educational institutions, which was currently not available. He said Article 30(1) gave minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions and this needed to be protected. The amendment has been moved for introduction of Clause 5 in Article 15 and excludes mi-

## Congress not for scrapping MPLAD scheme

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, DEC 20

THE Congress today rejected the suggestion for scrapping the MPLAD scheme, maintaining that it was not fair to make a sweeping indictment of all members on the basis of the conduct of less than even one per cent.

Party spokesman Anand Sharma told reporters in reply to a question that the issue of involvement of MPs taking money for securing contracts would have to be inquired into, but it would be premature to form an opinion on this count. "However, certainly, we are opposed to scrapping the scheme," he said

while responding to another question. He said, "We cannot take important decisions just like that—they are to be looked into and then accounted-ability fixed."

Reporters sought to know as to why the party was reluctant in seeking expulsion of the MPs involved in the MPLAD scheme when it had done so in the cash-for-question scam. Sharma said the scheme can not be "inkered with" on a selective basis. Re-

garding a letter reportedly written by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh suggesting the scrapping of the MPLAD scheme, Sharma said: "I am not aware of any such letter."

About the involvement of party MP Churchill Alemao in the MPLAD scam, he said the Goa leader had given a different version to the party. "Even then we want to have a thorough inquiry and then fix responsibility," he added.



nority institutions from its purview as mentioned in Article 30(1). The BJP had earlier decided to oppose the Bill and BJP member Santosh Gangwar said the Bill did not take care of reservation for OBCs and demanded that it be avail-

able in both aided and unaided educational institutions. However, the Bill received the support of the Samajwadi Party. Ram Gopal Yadav, the party's leader in the Lok Sabha, said there was no further confusion on reservations

in aided and unaided educational institutions, and OBCs would get reservation under the Bill.

Suggestions from MPs included one from RJD's D P Yadav, who said provision for reservation for the socially and educationally backward classes should be included in the Bill, while V Radhakrishnan of the CP(IM) and C K Chandrappan of the CPI suggested that it should be left to the states to identify minority institutions.

21 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Government to set up airport regulatory body

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 20

THE Government will constitute an airport economic regulatory authority (AERA) on the pattern of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). This was announced by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Praful Patel while replying to a discussion on a motion on developing Mumbai and Delhi airports in the Lok Sabha today.

Patel said the ministry would soon approach the Cabinet with a proposal and introduce a bill in Parliament later to put the authority in place. The minister said, "Infrastructure also needs to go hand-in-hand with regulatory issues." The directorate-general of civil aviation (DGCA), in his view, needed to be strengthened.

Regarding modernisation, he said public private partnership (PPP) was essential in civil aviation, telecom, roads and ports. Input requirements for the development of infrastructure can not be completely met by the Government.

His ministry, according to

**The ministry would approach the Cabinet with a proposal and introduce a bill in Parliament later**

Patel, was preparing a broad civil aviation policy. Both Indian Airlines and Air-India had been neglected so far. However, the Government had cleared a proposal for acquiring new planes to meet the growing demand.

He said 25 new destinations would be identified all over the country to expand air connectivity. Jaipur airport would be declared international by 2006, while several other airports like Bodh Gaya, Patna and Udaipur would also be developed. He said some "400 airports would have to be developed in the long run."

Patel said a new aviation academy would be established at Gondia in his erstwhile Lok Sabha constituency, Bhandara, in Maharashtra while the capacity of the Indira Gandhi Uran Academy at Fursatganj would be doubled to 100.

24 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

'FARMERS' INTERESTS NOT PROTECTED'

# Kamal Nath<sup>20/12</sup> confident,<sup>20/12</sup> CPM unhappy<sup>20/12</sup>

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Dec. 19. — Commerce minister Mr Kamal Nath today said the WTO Ministerial declaration fully secured India's concerns on agriculture and gave Indian farmers a chance to compete in the world market. But the UPA's key ally, the CPI-M feels otherwise.

The CPI-M today charged the Congress-led UPA government with playing into the hands of US and European Union at the WTO ministerial conference in Hong Kong without standing up "firmly for a more equitable agreement" for both India and developing countries in agriculture, intellectual property rights and services sectors.

"The claims made regarding the agreement on agriculture, the non-agriculture market access (NAMA), which pertains to industrial tariffs, the services sector and on intellectual property rights (TRIPS) do not stand the test of scrutiny. The role of government of India in these negotiations have not produced an outcome, which adequately protect the interests of the farmers and the country," the CPI-M Politburo said here.

The Politburo's statement underlined that the WTO agreement barely provided any protection to millions of farmers in the country. The commitment given by the developed countries, said the CPI-M, to ease out export subsidies by 2013 was no gain at all as its share was just 3.5 per cent of the total agriculture subsidy.

The party Politburo said the government should have rather taken up the plight of small and marginal farmers in the country and sought protection of their interests. "The special products and special safeguard mechanism proposed will not be sufficient in the light of the fact that we have already agreed to further cuts in agriculture tariffs. The government of India has to explain how agreement in Hong Kong will help protect our farmers and agriculture", the statement further stated.

The CPI-M was particularly critical of the declaration on the services sector. The party said in the coming days "progressive liberalisation under GATS" would ensure that regulation of foreign-service providers would be discussed. "India helped the US and the EU in facilitating this agreement on services. The terms of negotiations agreed to cannot be justified by the gains made in areas like grant of H1B visas and business process outsourcing (BPO), which are of interest to a small section of people, the CPI-M noted.

Meanwhile, the Union commerce and industry minister, Mr Kamal Nath, after his arrival here from Hong Kong today said the WTO ministerial declaration had created congenial opportunities for Indian farmers to take on their competitors in the world market.

"The agreement also adequately addresses the concerns of Indian industry as it requires developed countries to cut tariff's peaks and escalations" the minister said.

20 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

**Govt Thinks It Has Sealed A Good Deal, Allies Feel Let Down**

**Deal to work in favour of farmers**

New Delhi  
19 DECEMBER

(G-110) at the sixth WTO ministerial.

**C**OMMERCE minister Kamal Nath on Monday said the WTO agreement addresses the concerns of both agriculture & industrial sectors and would drive India's farm and manufacturing exports in the global markets.

"The agreement fully secures the concerns of our farmers. It ensures that no subsidy-ridden farm products are exported to India. The phaseout of export subsidies by developed countries would also give Indian farmers a chance to compete in the world market," Mr Kamal Nath said on his arrival from Hong Kong.

Developed countries will have to eliminate their export subsidies by 2013 while reducing them substantially by 2010.

Mr Kamal Nath said the talks succeeded because India had formed a grand coalition of developing countries

The agreement protects domestic farmers against surge in imports through the provisions of Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) that have been included in the ministerial declaration.

Under the special products provision, India and other developing countries would not have to cut tariffs on a specific number of products while SSM incorporates both price and volume triggers to check a rise in cheap imports.

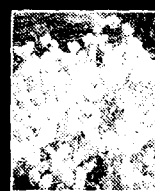
Mr Kamal Nath added that the agreement laid down the basic principles of trade negotiations. The full modalities would be worked out early next year, he added.

The agreement also takes on board the concerns of the Indian industry. The minister said developed countries would have to reduce tariff peaks and tariff escalations on products from developing nations like India. — PTI

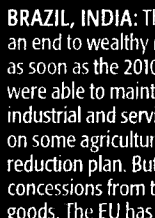
**GAIN SOME, LOSE SOME**

What key parties gained and gave up in the latest WTO trade pact

**EUROPEAN UNION:** European farmers will have to adjust after the EU agreed to stop paying them to export goods by 2013, but Brussels held out against pressure from Brazil and other developing nations to eliminate such export subsidies by 2010. The EU failed to get concessions it wanted from major developing countries on cutting tariffs on industrial goods and services.



**UNITED STATES:** The US made concessions to West African cotton producers by agreeing to eliminate export-oriented subsidies to American cotton-growers by 2006. But the US was able to avoid discussion of further cuts to its other farm subsidy programs. The US and other wealthy nations agreed to give duty-free and quota-free privileges to the world's least developed nations, but did manage to exclude 3% of imports from these countries after it raised concerns about textiles from Bangladesh. The US also failed to get the EU to further cut its import tariffs on agricultural goods.



**BRAZIL, INDIA:** These big developing nations secured an end to wealthy nations' farm export subsidies, but not as soon as the 2010 date that they would have liked. They were able to maintain protections for their still-young industrial and services sectors. They also got exemptions on some agricultural products from any WTO tariff-reduction plan. But they failed to wring further concessions from the EU on import tariffs on agricultural goods. The EU has offered to cut these tariffs by an average 46%, but developing nations want bigger reductions.



**POOREST COUNTRIES:** The world's so-called least developing nations, 32 of which are members of the WTO, secured duty free and quota-free access to rich countries' markets. But they gave rich countries the right to exempt 3% of poor nations product lines from that special treatment.



**Nath's no hero to the Red brigade**

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 19 DECEMBER

**C**OMMERCE minister Kamal Nath might be of the view that he has swung a good deal for India at the WTO ministerial in Hong Kong, but the Left parties are contesting his claims.

In a strong indictment of the UPA, the Left on Monday said the government had not only failed to negotiate an agreement that provided protection or gains to its farmers, but also helped the US and the EU in

facilitating an agreement on services that was "most retrograde". The Left also faulted the Centre for its failure to stand up for the developing countries. Even as Mr Nath claimed the ministerial declaration had secured the interest of Indian farmers and industry, the Communist parties issued statements that ran counter to his statements.

CPM general secretary, Prakash Karat said: "What has been claimed (by Kamal Nath) as an achievement for doing away of export subsidies by

2013 for developing countries is no achievement. Export subsidies are a very small part of the total subsidies agriculture receives in the EU. India will not be benefited as its exports are limited."

The CPI chose to take on the government's assertions through sarcasm. "It is wrong to think that laddoos will shower following the talks," CPI general secretary AB Bardhan said in Ranchi. The party said, "If the agreement will help our farmers and agriculture, Mr Karat told reporters.

another eight years before it yielded results. CPM warned the government that more pressure and trade distorting tactics could be expected from the developed world in the coming days.

On the proposed special products and special safeguard mechanism, the party said it would be insufficient as India had agreed to further cuts in agricultural tariffs. "The government has to answer how Karat told reporters.



# No stalemate in Indo-US N-deal

9-16/12  
UPA cut  
SI-3

**Statesman News Service**

NEW DELHI, Dec. 15. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today asserted that there was “no stalemate” in negotiations with the United States over the implementation of the 18 July agreement on civilian nuclear energy.

Addressing concerns raised by members in the Rajya Sabha during Question Hour, Dr Singh said the “binding constraint” was the 18 July “understanding”, which had laid out some of the responsibilities to be undertaken by both the countries. He added that the implementation was based on “strict reciprocity”.

“If the US does not carry out its obligations, we are also free not to carry out our obligations,” the Prime Minister said.

India wants the separation of civilian and military nuclear facilities, so that the former could be brought under the purview of IAEA safeguards. The USA wants to ensure that technology and materials transferred, as part of the co-operation, are not diverted for use in the nuclear weapons programme.

When some members mentioned that the US Congress seemed to be asking for more from India, the Prime Minister said that it was the job of the US administration to seek the approval of the US Congress.

On repeated demands for clarifications on the reciprocity clause, Dr Singh stressed, “I have explained at great length what is meant by reciprocity and I stand by that.”

When BJP members Mr Yashwant Sinha and Mrs

Sushma Swaraj wanted to know if the USA would have any role in the civilian-military installations’ separation process, Dr Singh categorically said that it would be a purely “Indian decision”. “There is no question of any other country forcing India to put this facility or that facility,” said Dr Singh.

The Prime Minister said the working group chaired by the foreign secretary and the US undersecretary of state for political affairs would be meeting on 21 and 22 December to continue negotiations.

## Denel deal scrapped

Defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee said today the government had decided to scrap all its deals with South Africa’s government-owned arms-manufacturing company, Denel Corporation.

## India, China on border row

NEW DELHI, Dec. 15. — Buoyed by the progress in their economic and political relations, India and China have agreed to speed up the resolution of long-standing border disputes and push up bilateral trade to over \$20 billion by 2008. “I had very good discussions with the Chinese Premier Mr Wen Jiabao. We feel negotiations (on resolving border dispute) should be expedited. I think it is possible to move forward at a faster pace,” he told accompanying journalists while returning home last night after a four-day visit to Malaysia to attend the Asean and East Asian summits. The first meeting of the special representatives for border talks were held earlier this year and the next would be held in January. — PTI

15 DEC 2005  
THE STATESMAN

# Government attacked on privatisation of airports

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** Mounting a scathing attack against the Government's move to restructure and privatise Delhi and Mumbai airports, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Thursday raised questions on the "transparency" of the process, dubbed it as "dubious" and cautioned that a scam was in the making.

Responding to the calling attention motion in Lok Sabha, the Civil Aviation Minister, Praful Patel, said the process of restructuring and modernisation of these two airports was "based on transparent procedure" and asserted there was no question of "selling these airports or transfer of assets." He said what was envisaged was a joint venture

without entrusting any sovereign functions such as security, air traffic control, communication, navigation and surveillance services, customs and immigration and the like.

Dissatisfied with the Minister's response, the CPI(M) and Samajwadi Party MPs staged a walkout. Expressing unhappiness over Mr. Patel's assurance on transparency, the Bharatiya Janata Party said it was walking out, just as the House stood adjourned. The CPI(M) member, Mohammed Salim, who raised the issue on the Government's decision to engage private companies to modernise and operate these two airports said there was "a conflict of interest" between general technical consultants, the financial advisers and legal

advisers who were associated with bidders.

## CPI(M) member's poser

Stating that the party was not opposed to modernisation and favoured Greenfield route, Mr. Salim wanted to know whether the Government would take into account report of the Airport Authority of India (AAI) on the issue. He said there were also reports suggesting that financial advisers ABN Amro had bidding companies Reliance and GMR, as did the legal advisers, Amirchand Mangaldas. He said the global technical consultant was taken over by another group.

Besides, Mr. Salim, Basudeb Acharia and Sunil Khan, (both CPI-M), Ajoy Chakraborty (CPI), and Sumitra Mahajan and

V.K. Malhotra (BJP) also sought to know the financial viability of AAI once control of these two airports that generate 60 per cent of revenue turns private.

On his part, Mr. Patel said AAI employees' alternate plan for development of these airports was examined by AAI and the consultants and the empowered Group of Ministers (eGoM) would consider the recommendations of the AAI.

The current modernisation and restructuring plan envisages upfront payment of Rs. 150 crores for each airport, a minimum of 5 per cent of gross revenue on year-to-year basis to AAI and that after the transaction the overhead cost of the Authority was expected to come down significantly.

16 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

# Cornered govt puts reservation Bill on hold

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — The UPA government's much-touted "political consensus" over the constitutional amendment Bill, to provide for reservation to SCs, STs and OBCs in private unaided educational institutions, has developed cracks and forced it to defer the scheduled introduction of the Bill in the Lok Sabha today.

The proposed Bill is aimed at overturning the 12 August Sup-

reme Court order declaring such reservation in private unaided educational institutions as "unconstitutional". The government was forced to postpone the Bill's introduction after the BJP opposed the provision of the draft Bill exempting minority institutions from its ambit.

Even the government's Left allies voiced reservations.

The proposed Bill cannot be passed unless two-thirds of the members support it in both the Houses. That explained why the government reverted to negotia-

tions afresh to hammer out a consensus across party lines.

Making the announcement about the government's move to defer the Bill, Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee said HRD minister Mr Arjun Singh had requested for it.

Mr Arjun Singh was expected to talk to the BJP and the Left parties to bring them on board.

The HRD ministry would also consult the law ministry over how could some changes, if required, be incorporated in the existing draft Bill for the sake of

the desired consensus, said the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi.

He said the government would introduce the Bill in the Lok Sabha next week after the amended draft Bill gets cleared by the Cabinet tomorrow.

Many OBC members also met Mr Das Munshi with the demand that the constitutional provision for reservation for socially and educationally backward communities should encompass the backward classes in the states too.

Mr Das Munshi pointed out that minority institutions were mandated by the Constitution to maintain their freedom.

The Congress said: "The Bill will definitely be introduced and passed in this session (that ends next week)." Party spokesman Mr

Anand Sharma said: "The government is committed to ensure reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs." Without spelling out the party's stand clearly on the minority issue, he added: "The Bill will reflect the constitutional provisions for all communities."

## 8.5 per cent EPF rate not final: Rao

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — The Union labour minister, Mr K Chandrashekhara Rao, appeared a different man today when he hinted that the rate of return (8.5 per cent) on EPF deposits, which he announced on 7 December, was not final. Sources close to him conceded that he might settle at 9 per cent.

The minister said he would meet Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh very soon on the issue. Talking on the sidelines of a conference of regional provident fund commissioners, Mr Rao said: "Let the Prime Minister come back from his foreign trip. May be, I will meet him tomorrow itself."

Though he categorically denied on 7 December that the announced 8.5 per cent rate was in any way interim, he said today: "I am yet to announce a final decision as the labour minister. As labour minister, I will try my best (to raise the rate)." He said he would also talk to the finance minister and do everything possible to ensure that more than four crore subscribers to the EPF got the best returns.

The Prime Minister had recently said that he would talk to the labour minister on the issue and do whatever was possible within the resources of the EPFO. But Dr Singh had ruled out budgetary support to EPF to retain the 9.5 per cent rate of the last fiscal. Asked if the investment pattern of the EPF money was likely to be changed, the labour minister said: "All possibilities will be explored to satisfy one and all". To a question as to what suggestions he would make before the Prime Minister, Mr Rao said: "I will try to the best of my capacity to impress upon the Prime Minister to meet the demands of the workers".

Earlier, he said 39,000 new establishments had been brought under the ambit of the EPF Act through a special drive for increased coverage.

The minister said the main task before the Union labour ministry at present was the implementation of labour reforms in the country to make India globally competitive and prepare it to face challenges from international markets. — SNS

## CPM warns PM on economic issues

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — Speaking on the sidelines of the Central Committee meeting of the CPI-M, party Politburo member and the general secretary of the party's trade union wing, CITU, Mr MK Pandhe, said today the CPI-M is totally opposed to FDI in retail sector and asked Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to take the CPI-M into confidence before issuing public statements on economic issues in the future.

"The Prime Minister is giving many statements with which we totally disagree... he must talk to us before making such statements," Mr Pandhe said. He was referring to a poser on Dr Singh's statement in Kuala Lumpur on Monday on a "positive" decision on the retail sector (FDI) in five or six months.

On EPF interest, he said the Centre should increase the rate on Special Deposit Scheme for Provident Fund Organisation. "If the government is going to continue such measures, we will have to review our suspension of staying away from the coordination committee meetings," he said. "These are totally unacceptable and there will be no compromise on these three basic issues," he said. He added that the CPI-M will take up the issue of FDI in retail with the Prime Minister. — SNS & PTI

'NO WIDENING OF PATHAK PANEL SCOPE'

# PM rules out support to raise EPF rate

Statesman News Service & PTI

ON BOARD SPECIAL AIRCRAFT, Dec. 11. — The Prime Minister today ruled out budgetary support to retain the EPF interest rate at 9.5 per cent in the current year and widening the scope of the Justice RS Pathak Inquiry Authority probing the Volcker committee report.

Dr Manmohan Singh arrived in Kuala Lumpur tonight on a four-day visit to participate in the India-Asean Summit and the first East Asia Summit.

Speaking to reporters on board the special plane en route the Malaysian capital, Dr Singh said: "In EPF rate, we had said last year that there is no scope for budgetary subsidising. This stand remains." The Prime Minister's assertion comes even as the Left parties and trade unions have called countrywide protests on 20 December against the EPF rate cut.

Dr Singh added: "Any rate that has to be paid has to come out of the EPF." Asked if he was satisfied with the 8.5 per cent EPF rate, he said: "It is not the question of whether I am satisfied or dissatisfied. It is a question of what the EPF can afford. We want the (EPF) organisation to be stable financially and make sure that it declares interest rates which it can sustain. If it can sustain a higher interest rate, I'll be happy."

To a question about widening the Pathak Inquiry Authority's scope, the Prime Minister said: "There is no proposal to tinker with the notification. What has been spelt out in the notification will not be tinkered with." Congress MPs had demanded widening the scope of the probe panel following allegations made by Mr Romesh Bhandari in an interview that a close aide of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was also involved in Iraqi payoffs.

The Prime Minister parried a question about naming a new foreign minister ahead of the upcoming visits by two key heads of States, including possibly President George W Bush. "The decision will be known when it comes," he said.

Regarding the BJP's demand for making public the documents procured by former UN Under Secretary General Mr Virendra Dayal in New York relating to the Volcker report, he said: "I think the papers are the properties of the Justice Pathak Inquiry Authority. Once it completes its work, the report, as well as the action taken report, will be tabled in Parliament. We do not intend to keep anything hidden."



The Prime Minister addresses the media prior to his departure for Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. — PTI

## Atal kin sues Bhandari

NEW DELHI, Dec. 11. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's foster son-in-law, Mr Ranjan Bhattacharya, today sent a legal notice to Mr Romesh Bhandari for alleging that a "very close" associate of the former Prime Minister was involved in the Iraqi payoff scam. Mr Bhattacharya's lawyer, Mr RN Karanjawala, said: "My client has never met or had any involvement with Saddam Hussein's son Uday. Since he has had no connection with Uday, the question of him being a partner in any of Uday's companies does not arise." — PTI

Details on page 4

Setting at rest the "misconception" that India and China were emerging as rivals in the economic and political area, Dr Singh said the bilateral relationship was progressing in the right direction.

Before his departure, Dr Singh told reporters in New Delhi that he hoped Asean leaders would outline a long-term vision for shaping the regional bonding and promoting community-building. "The first East Asia Summit is the beginning of a process that brings together countries with increasing inter-linkages and growing inter-dependence."

Praise for India, China potential, page 9

# Centre rules out JPC probe in Volcker

TNN & AGENCIES

*(11)*  
*2- LPA copy*  
*10/10*  
**New Delhi:** The government on Friday ruled out a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the Volcker findings on pay-offs in Iraqi oil scam, saying the Justice R S Pathak panel had started its investigations and that its scope was 'very wide'.

"I do not see that any purpose will be served by a JPC at this stage," said leader of the house and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee after BJP deputy leader V K Malhotra raised the issue in Lok Sabha.

Pointing out to the varying de-

mands the opposition had made on what kind of probe be carried out—a CBI probe, an FIR and 'now, suddenly a JPC', Mukherjee said that all 'new factors' relating to the Volcker issue would be sent to the inquiry authority. "To suggest a completely new mechanism is not acceptable at this point in time," he reiterated. But dissatisfied over his response, the opposition staged a walkout.

In Rajya Sabha, the issue was raised by leader of the opposition Jaswant Singh who said government should not fight shy of appointing a JPC to go into the issue and it should

not have any apprehension.

Responding to Jaswant Singh's demand, minister of state for parliamentary affairs Suresh Pachouri said besides Justice R S Pathak inquiry authority, Virendra Dayal had been entrusted with the task of collecting material from the UN and Volcker. The enforcement directorate was also looking into the violation under the foreign exchange management act, he said.

Moreover, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had already said earlier that government would go into the root of the matter, Pachouri added.

# ফের ডেকে পাঠিয়ে চাপ সনিয়ার নিজের মুখে ইস্তফা ঘোষণা করলেন নটবর

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ৬ ডিসেম্বর: কাল রাতে যখন দশ জনপথ থেকে বেরিয়ে আসে নটবর সিংহের গাড়ি, তখনই ঘোষণার আশা করেছিলেন সকলে। কারণ, রাতের সেই বৈঠকেই ঠিক হয়ে গিয়েছিল যে, ইস্তফা দিচ্ছেন তিনি। কিন্তু সাংবাদিকদের অপেক্ষায় রেখে চলে যান প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী। ঘোষণাটি আসে কংগ্রেসের মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মার মুখ থেকে।

২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই অবশ্য নটবরকে আসতে হয় সাংবাদিকদের সামনে। বাড়ির সদর দরজা খুলে বেরিয়ে বিবৃতি দিয়ে জানাতে হয় নিজের ইস্তফার সিদ্ধান্তের কথা। তবে, পদত্যাগপত্র তিনি দেবেন কাল বিকালে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ দেশে ফিরলে। এর আগে আজ দিনভর চলে সংসদে বিরোধীদের হট্টগোল। অন্য দিনের মতো এ দিনও তাঁরা অচল করে রাখেন সংসদ।

অথচ কাল রাতে নটবর যখন সনিয়াকে নিজের সিদ্ধান্তের কথা জানিয়েছিলেন, তাঁকে প্রকাশ্যে সে কথা ঘোষণা করতে অনুরোধ জানান দলনেত্রী। তার পরও নটবরের এই সময় নেওয়াকে মোটেই ভাল চোখে দেখছে না তাঁর নিজের দলেরই একাংশ। কংগ্রেসের যে মহল তাঁকে সরাসরে সব থেকে বেশি চাপ তৈরি করেছে, তাঁরাই প্রশ্ন তোলেন, এই ভাবে কি সনিয়ার নেতৃত্বেও অনাস্থা জানাচ্ছেন না প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী? তিনি যদি কাল রাতেই ইস্তফার সিদ্ধান্ত ঘোষণা করে দিতেন, বিরোধীরা আজ আর সংসদ অচলের সুযোগ পেত না। রাজনৈতিক মহলও মনে করছে, বস্তুত, সনিয়ার অনুরোধ না শুনেই



নিজের উপরে চাপ অনেকাংশে বাড়িয়ে দেন নটবর। আজ সেই চাপের কাছেই মাথা নোয়াতে হল তাঁকে।

আজও সনিয়ার সঙ্গে কথা হয় নটবরের। সেই সংক্ষিপ্ত বৈঠকের পরে রাতে তাঁর ঘোষণা। ফলে স্পষ্ট হয়ে যাচ্ছে, কতটা চাপের মধ্যে ছিলেন প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী। কিন্তু নিজের অবস্থান থেকে একচুলও সরতে নারাজ তিনি জানিয়ে দিলেন বিবৃতির প্রথমেই। বললেন, “আমি আবার বলছি, আমি নির্দোষ। আমার বিরুদ্ধে কোনও চার্জই গঠন করা হয়নি।” কিন্তু বিরোধীরা তাঁকে সামনে রেখে সংসদ অচল করে রাখবেন, এটাও মানতে নারাজ নটবর। তাই সিদ্ধান্ত ইস্তফার। কাল বিকাল চারটেয় মস্কো থেকে দেশে ফিরছেন প্রথমমন্ত্রী। তার পরে আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে তাঁর হাতে পদত্যাগপত্র তুলে দেবেন।

নটবরের এই বিবৃতির পরে সংসদ আবার কাজে ফিরতে

পারবে বলেই আশা সরকারের। সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুন্সি বলেছেন, “আশা করছি কাল থেকে সংসদ আবার স্বাভাবিক হবে।”

বিরোধীরা কিন্তু অন্য কথা বলছেন। বিজেপির মুখপাত্র প্রকাশ জাভড়েকর বলেছেন, “কোনও ব্যক্তি বিশেষের বিরুদ্ধে নয়, আমাদের লড়াই উচ্চতম পর্যায়ের দুর্নীতির বিরুদ্ধে। কাল সকালে সংসদীয় দলের একজিকিউটিভ কমিটির বৈঠকেই কৌশল ঠিক হবে।”

বিরোধীরা যে কালও সংসদ অচল করতে পারেন, তার যথেষ্ট ইঙ্গিত দিয়ে অরুণ জেটলিও বলেছেন, “বর্ষ দুর্নীতির পরিমাণ ছিল ৬৪ কোটি টাকা। আমাদের কাছে যা খবর এসেছে, তেল দুর্নীতিতে সব মিলিয়ে ৫০০ কোটি টাকার মতো ফায়দা লোটা হয়েছে। বিষয়টি অত সহজে ছেড়ে দেওয়ার নয়।”

বস্তুত, নটবরের ইস্তফাকে এর মধ্যেই বিহারের পরে নিজেদের দ্বিতীয় রাজনৈতিক জয় বলে ভাবতে শুরু করেছেন বিরোধীরা। কাল রাতে নটবর-সনিয়া আলোচনার পরে আজ সকালেই এনডিএ-র কৌশল-বৈঠকের সময় সেটা পরিষ্কার হয়ে যায়। সেই বৈঠকে স্পষ্টই ছিল খুশির রেশ। সংসদে তাঁরা অনেক বেশি উজ্জীবিত ছিলেন এ দিন। এমনকী, আজ অবাধ্য বিতর্কিত সৌধ ধ্বংসের বার্ষিকী। সেই দিনেই বিষয়টি ভাল ভাবে ওঠানোই যায়নি সংসদে। বামপন্থীরা বিষয়টি তোলেন, কিন্তু হট্টগোলের মধ্যে সেটি শেষ পর্যন্ত চাপা পড়ে যায়।

ইতিমধ্যে এনফোর্সমেন্ট ডিরেক্টরেট আজ অনিল মাথেরানি, অ্যান্ডি সহগলের পাশাপাশি নটবর-পুত্র জগৎ সিংহকেও জিজ্ঞাসাবাদ করেছে। তাঁর কাছ থেকে প্রচুর তথ্য পাওয়া গিয়েছে বলে ইডি অফিসারদের দাবি। মাথেরানি এবং অ্যান্ডি তাদের খান মার্কেটের দফতরে হাজিরা দেন আজ সকালে, দেড় ঘণ্টার তফাতে। ক্রোয়েশিয়ান প্রাক্তন রাষ্ট্রদূতকে এ দিনও প্রায় সাড়ে পাঁচ ঘণ্টা জিজ্ঞাসাবাদ করেন ইডি-র অফিসারেরা। দীর্ঘ জেরার মুখে বসানো হয়েছিল অ্যান্ডিকেও। তাঁকে বিশেষ কিছু নথি জমা দিতে বলেছেন অফিসারেরা। এ ছাড়া ইডি প্রধান সুধীর নাথের নেতৃত্বে দু'জন অফিসার আজই ইরাক রওনা হয়ে গিয়েছেন। মাথেরানির অভিযোগে সাদ্দাম প্রশাসনের কাছ থেকে নটবরের তেল-কুপন পাওয়ার যে কথা বলা হয়েছিল, সেই সম্পর্কে কোনও প্রামাণ্য নথি রয়েছে কি না, তারই তদন্ত করবে ইডি-র দলটি।

07 DEC 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

# Manmohan yet to make up mind on External Affairs

Cabinet reshuffle only at the end of current session of Parliament

Siddharth Varadarajan

**ON BOARD PM'S AIRCRAFT:** Declaring that he did not "attach great importance to what the Bharatiya Janata Party is saying on [the Volcker Report]," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday was dismissive about the Opposition's attempts to target Congress president Sonia Gandhi in the oil-for-food affair.

"The BJP itself knows there is no substance in what it is saying in Parliament," he told reporters accompanying him for the sixth bilateral India-Russia summit to be held in Moscow on Tuesday.

Asked whether he would be willing to accept the resignation of Natwar Singh if the Minister without portfolio were voluntarily to tender it, the Prime Minister said, "If a person takes a decision voluntarily, when that situation arises, we will consider what to do."

Describing his discussions on Saturday night with the former External Affairs Minister, Dr.

• **'The BJP itself knows there is no substance in what it is saying in Parliament'**

• **No difference in approach between Ms. Gandhi and himself on Natwar's status**

Singh said: "He is a colleague of mine, he came to see me, we discussed various issues, particularly what has happened in the last couple of weeks. So there's nothing more significant than that." He added in response to a pointed question that there was no difference in approach between Ms. Gandhi and himself on the status of Mr. Natwar Singh.

The Prime Minister said a Cabinet reshuffle would be carried out at the end of the current session of Parliament but was non-committal about the fate of the External Affairs portfolio.

Asked whether he would wait for the Pathak Committee report before filling the crucial slot — which he currently holds — Dr. Singh replied: "Well, as of now, I have not made up my mind which way to go."

In a separate conversation with reporters, National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan refused to say when the Government first became aware of the oil-for-food allegations against Mr. Natwar Singh and the Congress party.

He bristled at the suggestion that there had been any "intelligence failure" manifest in the Government not reacting to these allegations when they were first made by the Central Intelligence Agency on its website on September 30, 2004. "Do you want us to be like the Gestapo," he asked, "questioning people, interrogating people? Is that what you want?" He also suggested that journalists who questioned why the Indian Government had not reacted to the

CIA's allegations at the time were perhaps unduly influenced by the American intelligence agency. A senior PMO official added that the issue only became serious when the CIA's charges were reiterated by the Volcker panel, a U.N.-appointed body.

Asked about his reported statements earlier this week blaming Pakistan for the killing of the Border Roads Organisation driver M.R. Kutty in Afghanistan, Mr. Narayanan said the statement attributed to him was incorrect. "I was speaking half in English, half in Malayalam," he explained, suggesting that local journalists in Kerala had, therefore, misunderstood him. He reiterated that there was no evidence linking Pakistan to the murder by the Taliban, but added, "What I think may be different, but what I think does not matter."

Photograph on Page 12



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# Natwar meets PM, holds back quit note

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**HT Political Bureau**  
New Delhi, December 3

FORMER EXTERNAL affairs minister K. Natwar Singh had a 40-minute meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday. But neither did he offer to resign nor did the PM ask him to demit office as a minister without portfolio.

PMO sources said Natwar gave the PM his side of the Aniel Matherani story. There was no question of the PM asking Natwar to step down as even in Parliament on Friday he took the position that the reported claims of the Indian envoy to Croatia did not alter the "unverified" nature of the references in the Volcker report on the UN oil-for-food scam.

But a growing perception in Congress and government circles is that Natwar should rise above his person and offer to resign to take the sting out of the Opposition's onslaught. But that does not seem to be happening with Natwar refusing to view the situation from the party's standpoint. In fact, at the release function of a book on Mangal Pandey, Natwar did not mind the parallel sought to be drawn between his situation and that of the martyr. "There is a struggle, we'll face it," he told reporters on the sidelines even as leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani again demanded his and Sonia Gandhi's resignation in the wake of Matherani's revelations.

Amid reports that Matherani would return home late on Saturday, the Opposition is sure to persist with making political capital out of his since-disclaimed interview to a leading news-magazine.

However, there was some positive news for Natwar from the NCP and the CPM, whose politburo persisted with its stand that the Volcker report should not be treated as "final and conclusive".

The CPI(M) also expressed surprise that the BJP was not seeking an inquiry against the "biggest non-contractual beneficiary" (other than Natwar and the Congress): "Is it because the then BJP-led government had something to do with this arrangement?"

As for Matherani, the CPM, like the NCP, said his statement should be placed along with other relevant papers before the Pathak Authority.

**More reports on Page 2**

04 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

## IRAQ OIL-FOR-FOOD SCANDAL

# Natwar on the mat over new disclosures

HT Political Bureau  
New Delhi, December 2

REMARKS ATTRIBUTED to Aniel Matherani by a TV channel have completed Natwar Singh's isolation in the government and the Congress, the predominant view being that the former external affairs minister should quit the Cabinet to save them further embarrassment.

Even while insisting that a three-pronged probe was already under way "to get at the truth", the UPA isn't unaware of the damage to its public image by Matherani's statement as reported by *India Today*.

Of all the claims that the Indian envoy to Croatia made, the most damaging was his assertion that Natwar used the 2001 visit to Baghdad "to give the green signal that oil vouchers could be handed over to Jagat Singh and Andaleeb Sehgal".

That the government was feeling the pressure was evident from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's prompt response to the Opposition's demand for a statement, his first on the issue in Parliament.

Reiterating the UPA's resolve to punish the guilty, if any, he said: "Statements have been made about Natwar Singh and other individuals. These are all a matter of concern. The Enforcement Directorate would take cognisance of the statements attributed to the Indian ambassador to Croatia and pursue its investigations."

But what's worrying the UPA and the Congress the most is that the allegations have emanated from a party insider, emboldening the Opposition to demand Sonia Gandhi's resignation as chairperson of the National Advisory Council.

Legally, the government has a case — that Matherani's allegations cannot be construed as verification of "unverified" references in the Volcker report. But party functionaries privately agreed that the technical explanation wasn't a strong enough defence for Natwar to continue at the expense of the government's image.

Continued on Page 3



### What Matherani said about deal

- Natwar Singh helped his son Jagat Singh and his associate Andaleeb Sehgal procure oil coupons in Iraq.
- Natwar and Jagat visited Iraq in January 2001; Andaleeb joined them in Baghdad as an official delegate of the Congress.
- Jagat and Andaleeb were introduced to Iraqi leaders as business representatives. Natwar gave the green light that oil vouchers could be handed over to Jagat and Andaleeb
- Talks on Iraqi oil vouchers may have taken place when vice-president Taha Ramadan and his oil minister visited India in 2000.

03 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Nod for communal violence bill

ENS BUREAU

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 25

THERE shouldn't be another Godhra, but the government will be better prepared in that eventuality. As per the National Common Minimum Programme, the UPA Cabinet has approved the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005.

Briefing mediapersons, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee yesterday said the Bill would be introduced in Parlia-



ment and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will put the draft provisions of the Bill on its website so that a wide-spread, informed debate can take place on the same.

Asked if the Bill included a provision that allowed the

Centre to prevail over states, Mukherjee replied in the affirmative. This is a significant provision as law and order is a state subject.

According to the preamble to the Bill, it is in exercise of the constitutional "duty of the Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance". Though the exact provisions of the Bill approved by the Cabinet today are not known yet, an earlier draft finalised by the MHA, envisioned giving the Centre unprecedented

powers over states.

Moreover, it equipped the armed forces with draconian powers of arrest, search and seizure and called for special courts to try cases, even arming them with the power to extort people "likely to commit a scheduled offence".

However, before the draft reached the Cabinet, the Home Ministry version of the Bill was studied by the Prime Minister's Office and the National Advisory Council headed by Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

25 NOV 2005

# IAEA report allows Left retreat on Iran

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

**New Delhi:** The IAEA report highlighting the connections between A Q Khan's illicit nuclear network and Iran's nuclear programme has given the Left parties an opportunity to beat a dignified retreat on their opposition to India's Iran vote.

"If the Centre decides to vote against Iran, it should be viewed seriously as the focus should be on Indian interests, without succumbing to outside pressure," CPM leader Prakash Karat said at a convention on independent foreign policy in Hyderabad on Sunday. "The Left parties are of the view that our foreign policy should be independent in nature, which takes care of national interests."

Karat almost sounds like Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

In many ways, the IAEA report served as a good cover for the Left parties, which had blinked when Manmohan Singh stared them down. Opting for a non-voting discussion in Parliament was seen as a sure sign the Left's high-voltage political drama was just that.

Incidentally, the issue will come up in a big way at the UPA-Left coordination committee meeting on Monday. The meeting will be attended by PM Manmohan Singh, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, finance minister P Chidambaram, defence minister Pranab Mukher-

jee and top Left leaders. Meanwhile, as national security adviser M K Narayanan spent Sunday conferring with the EU-3 (Britain, France and Germany), US and Russia on the language of the resolution against Iran, it was becoming clear there is little appetite for sending the Iran dossier to the Security Council just yet.

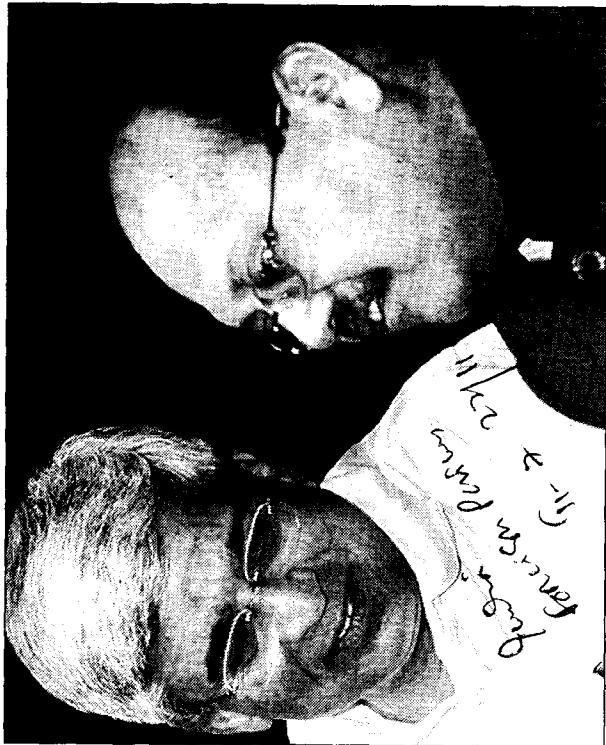
Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, has been pleading for resuming discussions with the EU.

time to comply before threatening them again. It would fulfil India's wish that the issue remains at the IAEA instead of going to the UN Security Council. The US too appears to be in no hurry to drag the case to the UN, unlike in September. This was clarified by secretary of state Condoleezza Rice.

Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, has been pleading for resuming discussions with the EU.

While acknowledging the IAEA report on Saturday, the MEA spokesperson said: "The additional information made available will shed greater light on clandestine activities of foreign intermeddies, in particular the Pakistan-based A Q Khan network, that is of utmost concern to India as they have seriously affected our national security. Greater clarity and transparency in this area is very much in India's interest."

The good news in Delhi is a political showdown between the government and its allies may yet be averted. Whether this means that India can prevent another nuclear weapons power coming up in the neighbourhood is not clear.



**CPM boss Prakash Karat with Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh at a convention on independent foreign policy in Hyderabad on Sunday**

# Left warms up to govt ahead of winter session

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, November 21

TWO DAYS before the start of Parliament's winter session, the government managed to get the Left on board on the contentious issues of Iran and disinvestment of non-Navratna companies for raising resources for social sector projects.

At the UPA-Left coordination committee meeting attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Union ministers Pranab Mukherjee, Shivraj Patil and P. Chidambaram, the Left parties were told that back-channel efforts were on to ensure that the Iran issue is not taken to the UN and remains within the IAEA's jurisdiction. Some "progress" has been made on this front, the government told Left leaders Prakash Karat, Sitaram Yechury, D. Raja and Abani Roy.

While it is still premature to say what could happen at the November 24 meeting of the IAEA — as Chidambaram told newsmen — Yechury read a "step forward" in the Centre's response.

The Left's demand for expanding Pathak panel's ambit to include oil deals during the NDA regime is expected to dilute the saffron party's onslaught on the Volcker report. In fact, sources said the probe would cover the NDA period as well.

At Monday's meeting, the government also sought the Left's support on the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Bill. It gave a note to Left leaders highlighting provisions to be added to the Bill, including limiting a foreign company's holding to 26 per cent, prohibiting overseas investment of subscribers' funds and allowing subscribers an option of 100 per cent investment of their money in government securities. "We can also discuss it with the trade unions," Chidambaram said.

The Left "agreed" to consider the Centre's proposals on the ticklish issue of disinvesting small portions of equity (subject to certain guiding principles) in selected profit-making non-Navratna public sector enterprises to raise resources for the National Investment Fund.

## GIVE & TAKE



- Left parties are satisfied with the Centre's response on Iran. India has now made it clear that it will not allow the issue to be raised at the UN
- The Centre managed the Left's support on the crucial issue of disinvestment of PSUs. The Left has agreed to let the govt sell off its stake in sick non-Navratnas. It has also allowed the Centre to dilute its stake in some PSUs
- The Left got the govt to enlarge the ambit of the Pathak panel inquiry into the Volcker report to include oil deals during the NDA regime

Development Comes As A Major Relief To Govt, Some Rich PSUs Identified

# Left open to non-navratna sell-off

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 21 NOVEMBER

THE Left parties, which have been stalling the divestment programme, on Monday opened a small window for the government by agreeing to consider its proposal to divest small percentage of equity in non-navratna profit-making PSUs on a case-to-case basis.

"We have identified some such PSUs and shared information with the Left parties. They have agreed to consider the proposals," finance minister P Chidambaram told reporters after a two-hour meeting of the Left-UPA Coordination Committee here. Asked whether the Left parties

would consider these proposals on a case-to-case basis, Mr Chidambaram and CPM's Sitaram Yechury replied in the affirmative. The development is sure to

come as a major relief for the UPA managers as the Left has been interfering with the government's governance calculus. It may be recalled that the Left's opposition

forced the government to abandon divestment of 10% equity in Bhel.

In this context, Monday's development indicates the Left's willingness to stay engaged in policy issues. Briefing reporters, the finance minister said the Left parties agreed to consider the government's proposals to divest "small portions of equity, subject to certain guiding principles, in selected profit-making non-navratna public sector enterprises in order to raise resources for the National Investment Fund". He said the Left parties would also give other proposals for resource mobilisation.

The government also gave a note to the Left parties on the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PPRDA) Bill, now before Parliament. Mr Chidambaram said the Left parties had agreed to give their response shortly after discussions with the trade unions. "Discussions are taking place at different levels, within political parties, with trade unions. At an appropriate time, we will also discuss with trade unions," he said. The government briefed the Left leaders on some Bills it intends to table in Parliament soon. These were the National Disaster Management Authority Bill, Communal Harmony Bill and the Scheduled Tribes (Regulation of Forest Rights) Bill.



# Left apprised of stand on Iran issue

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India will strive to ensure that the issue remains within IAEA

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Manmohan Singh Government on Monday told the Left parties of its intention to ensure that the Iran nuclear issue remained within the jurisdiction of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

At the eighth meeting of the United Progressive Alliance and the Left parties here, two days ahead of the crucial IAEA meeting in Vienna, the Government apprised the Left leaders of the progress made. The indication is that there is a possibility that there will be no voting and till now there has been no draft resolution suggesting that the matter be taken to the United Nations Security Council.

"The Government informed the Left parties of the progress made through diplomatic efforts. It was noted that the Government's intention was to ensure that the matter remains within the jurisdiction of the IAEA," Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram told correspondents after the meeting.

"We wanted to hear the Government state its stand [on the Iran issue]," Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Prakash Karat said. He said the CPI (M) had maintained the issue should be kept within the confines of the IAEA and should not go beyond it.

"We have been insisting that the Government should not be a party to any move that refers the

matter to the U.N. Security Council," he added. CPI (M) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury told correspondents that the Left stand had been that any dispute regarding Iran's nuclear capabilities should be kept within the IAEA and that the Government concurred with this view. Being an NPT signatory, Iran had both its rights and obligations.

## Pension Fund Regulation Bill

Besides Iran, the meeting took up the issue of Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Bill, the proposal to offload government equity in profit-making public sector undertakings, proposed legislation including the National Disaster Management Authority Bill, the Communal Harmony Bill and the Scheduled Tribes (Regulation of Forest Rights) Bill.

The Left parties sought to know the status of the Women's Reservation Bill and the move on Central legislation providing for reservation in private, unaided professional educational institutions.

The Government gave a note on the Pension Fund Bill, now before Parliament. The Left parties agreed to send in their response shortly. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha during March this year and the Standing Committee has already scrutinised it.

# Left, govt to discuss Iran vote

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 20 NOVEMBER

**T**HE Centre will engage Left parties in a discussion on the November 24 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting on Monday. The UPA, which has so far been dodging the demand to enlarge the policy table to involve the Left, however, is unlikely to spell out its position at the meeting.

The UPA government cannot afford to turn the Iran issue into a matter of public debate, as its managers are engaged in



important diplomatic initiatives to avert a vote. But the likelihood of success is slim, as Iran is taking a belligerent position, making the its own reli-

able energy partner Russia's task difficult. India's expected Russia to succeed in talking Iran out of its hardline position.

The Left, angered by the country's vote against Iran, however, has little opinion. It also knows that its pro-Iran line will have to be articulated within politically permissible limits. The government's stand that "New Delhi cannot afford a reckless proliferator in its neighbourhood," is something that the Left will find difficult to counter.

However, Prakash Karat on Sunday persist-

ed with his attack against the official stand. Mr Karat, who asked the UPA government to spell out its stance on the Iran nuclear issue before the Parliament session begins on November 23, cautioned that foreign policy should have an independent idiom, without giving in to outside pressures. "If the Centre decides to vote against Iran it should be viewed seriously, as the focus should be on Indian interests, without succumbing to outside pressure," agency report quoting Mr Karat said.



# Govt has slim chance to fend off IAEA vote

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 18 NOVEMBER

WITH Iran rejecting Russia's proposal to keep its uranium enrichment process on hold, the Manmohan Singh government's hopes of averting a vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting on November 24 appears to be fading away.

Tehran's nuclear belligerence is a major setback for New Delhi as it was banking on Russia's persuasive powers to bring down the temperature. The Russian proposal had the backing of three EU countries — Germany, France and Britain. In this new situation, New Delhi does not have much option, as the considerations that led India to vote against Iran have become stronger after Tehran's refusal to accept its reliable energy partner's proposal.

For the Left, which has been projecting its support for Iran's nuclear ambitions as a pet cause, the development does not augur well. The Left was hopeful of a resolution to the stalemate and had settled for a perfunctory discussion in Parliament. In the changed circumstances, the Left's inability to match its rhetoric with action is sure to anger its constituency.

It be recalled that CPM general secretary Prakash Karat went to the extent of communalising foreign policy by addressing a conclave at Lucknow which had sizeable presence of the Shia clergy. This new constituency of Mr Karat is sure to seek an explanation if his party settles for a

sober response. Government leadership is expected to discuss the Iran issue with Left leaders early next week.

The Left's compulsion to keep its opposition within the politically permissible limit could provide comfort for the Manmohan Singh government. But it could entail a huge political cost in the Hindi heartland if units like the Samajwadi Party continue to play footsie with community opinions over Iran. With reports of Tehran's belligerence reaching, there is the realisation in policy circles that India will not have the opinion to abstain from voting. The UN

nuclear watchdog has already made it clear Iran must provide more information about the nuclear programme to its inspectors.

It has reiterated that full transparency was overdue, although cooperation in some areas had improved. "Iran's full transparency is indispensable and overdue," IAEA chief Mohamed El Baradei has said in his report. The last meeting of the IAEA had passed a tough resolution that said the nuclear watchdog, "after two and a half years of intensive inspections, remains unclear on some important outstanding issues."

Although the resolution did not refer Iran to the UN Security Council, it did hint at this possibility by noting that some of the outstanding questions were "within the competence of the Security Council." The resolution was approved by a vote of 22 in favour, one against (Venezuela) and 12 abstentions.



# Priya gets I&B, PM keeps MEA

HT Political Bureau  
New Delhi, November 18

P. C. P. A. 9/11  
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19/11  
**NEW JOBS**

FRIDAY'S CABINET reshuffle, as widely anticipated, remained a low-key affair. But one man whose stocks looked really high was Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi. The veteran Congress MP from Bengal was regularised in the parliamentary affairs ministry and given additional charge of information & broadcasting.

Jaipal Reddy, a reluctant I&B minister throughout his stint, was shifted to the urban development ministry, vacant since Ghulam Nabi Azad was sent to Jammu & Kashmir to take charge as chief minister. Reddy will, however, continue to hold the culture portfolio.

Asked to comment, the outgoing I&B minister stuck to his trademark humour. "I have always held that it is easier to deal with business barons, who have affluence, than with media barons who are a confluence of affluence and influence."

He could afford to joke, because for all practical purposes, the shifts announced on Friday should be of an interim nature. The Prime Minister is expected to go for a full-fledged expansion-cum-reshuffle after the winter session of Parliament. By then, he should have more choices at his disposal through five nominations to the Rajya Sabha apart from several younger MPs waiting in the wings.

While Azad's two portfolios — parliamentary affairs and urban development — have been shared by Dasmunshi and Reddy, the vacancies left by the death of sports and youth affairs minister Sunil Dutt and Jagdish Tytler's resignation as the minister for overseas Indians have been filled by Oscar Fernandes. A Sonia loyalist, he would retain his original, low-profile ministry of statistics and programme implementation.

Meanwhile, Dasmunshi's water resources ministry will be run by heavy industries and public enterprises minister Santosh Mohan Deb. In the shuffle that largely lacked surprise, the PM retained external affairs and coal.

In a way, the stopgap arrangement might leave the Cabinet somewhat more unwieldy and less representative. These aberrations might be corrected in a month or so with induction of fresh faces and merit-based portfolio allocations for the sake of better governance and regional balance.

## CABINET MINISTERS



S. Jaipal Reddy  
Urban Development, Culture



Priya Ranjan Das Munshi  
Parliamentary Affairs,  
Information and Broadcasting

## MINISTERS OF STATE



Santosh Mohan Deb  
Water Resources, Heavy Industries  
and Public Enterprises



Oscar Fernandes  
Youth Affairs and Sports;  
Programme  
Implementation and Statistics

# “Centre will not disappoint UPA allies on IAEA vote”

Left parties eroding the credibility of the front: Munshi

Staff Reporter

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** The Central Government will not disappoint the UPA allies or its supporters on the vote on referring Iran's nuclear issue to the UN Security Council, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister for State Priyaranjan Das Munshi has said.

Mr. Munshi told reporters here on Tuesday that the UPA Government would amicably resolve among its partners the question of referring Iran's nuclear issue to the Security Council before the International Atomic Energy Agency meeting on November 24.

Accusing the CPI(M) of hijacking the issue, Mr. Munshi said the Government would settle the issue without disappointing any coalition partner or

those supporting the Government from outside. The Left parties could have discussed the issue within the forum of the coalition than taking it to the public, he said.

It would be taken up only after evolving a technical, environmental and political consensus between the Centre and State Governments. By taking a stand against the UPA Government, the Left parties were eroding the credibility of the front, he said.

Mr. Munshi accused the CPI(M) of adopting contradictory stances at the Centre, Kerala and West Bengal. The CPI(M) had allied with the Congress in its fight against communal forces at the Centre and had favoured foreign investment. It had also taken a firm stance against strikes and bandhs in West Bengal. But it had adopted a contradictory

stance in Kerala against foreign investment and development. He accused the CPI(M) of confusing the public. The Lok Sabha byelection is a chance for the voters to expose the contradictory positions of the CPI(M), he said.

The Minister said the Congress would not favour foreign investment that would deprive jobs to the natives. The Union Government had reiterated that it would not disinvest the Navarna companies. The CPI(M) had to enlist the support of the Congress to fight effectively against the communal forces in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and other States, he said. KPCC president Ramesh Chenithala demanded that the Government should arrest those involved in the case of harassing a nursing student at Kottayam.

## জহানাবাদের শিক্ষা

বিহারে ভোটপর্ব প্রায় নির্বিঘ্নেই শেষ হইবার পরে মনে হইয়াছিল, পরিস্থিতি শান্তিকল্যাণ। কয়েক ঘণ্টার ভিতরেই সেই স্বস্তি ছত্রখান। পটনা হইতে আশি কিলোমিটার দূরত্বে স্থিত জহানাবাদ শহরটি লইয়া ছিনিমিনি খেলিয়া মাওবাদী জঙ্গিরা বুঝাইয়া দিল, প্রশাসনের আত্মতুষ্টির কিছুমাত্র কারণ নাই। জহানাবাদ বরাবরই মাওবাদীদের বড় ঘাঁটি, ভোটের জন্য প্রচুর রক্ষীকে অন্যত্র মোতায়েন করিতে হইয়াছিল, এবম্বিধ অজুহাত, যথারীতি, উঠিবে। সেই অজুহাত সত্ত্বেও বিপুল মাওবাদী হামলার সম্মুখে প্রশাসন এমন অপদস্থ হইল কেন, অবিলম্বে তাহা খুঁজিয়া বাহির করা প্রয়োজন। প্রশাসনের অপদার্থতা আরও স্পষ্ট ভাবে প্রতিপন্ন হইতেছে এই কারণে যে সম্প্রতি অদূরে, ঝাড়খণ্ডের গিরিডিতে, ক্ষুদ্রাকারে হইলেও, অনুরূপ কাণ্ড ঘটয়া গিয়াছে। মাত্র কিছু কাল পূর্বে সেখানে হোমগার্ড লাইনে হানা দিয়া মাওবাদীগণ প্রচুর বন্দুক ও গুলি লুঠ করিয়াছিল। জঙ্গিদের সহিত সংঘর্ষে আট হোমগার্ড ক্যাডেট নিহতও হয়। সেই অশনি সঙ্কেত হইতে যে শিক্ষা গ্রহণের প্রয়োজন ছিল, প্রশাসন তাহা গ্রহণ করে নাই। তাই, মাওবাদীগণের চকিত এবং প্রভূত পরিমাণে সংগঠিত আক্রমণের সম্মুখে তাই কার্যত পরাজয় বরণ বিনা কোনও গতি ছিল না। পুলিশ লাইন হইতে মাওবাদীগণ অস্ত্র লুঠ করিতে পারে নাই, ইহা যদি প্রশাসনিক কর্মদক্ষতার নজির হয়, তাহা হইলে ইহাও ঘটনা যে বিদ্যুৎ-টেলিফোন সংযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন করিয়া, মাইকযোগে জনতাকে ঘরের ভিতরে থাকিবার নির্দেশ দিয়া জহানাবাদ জেল, জেলাশাসক এবং পুলিশ সুপারের বাসভবন-সংলগ্ন অঞ্চলে মাওবাদীগণ যে ভাবে হামলা চালাইয়াছে, তাহা নজিরবিহীন। হানাদারির এই সামূহিক রূপই বুঝাইয়া দেয়, প্রশাসন কী বিপুল অপ্রস্তুত ছিল।

শুধুমাত্র বলপ্রয়োগের মাধ্যমেই যে মাওবাদী সমস্যার সমাধান সম্ভব নহে, সেই কথা বহুপরিচিত। মাওবাদীদের জঙ্গি সন্ত্রাস রুখিতে হইলে বলপ্রয়োগ এক অর্থে অনিবার্য, কিন্তু তাহাই যে শেষ সত্য হইতে পারে না, বিশেষজ্ঞেরা সেই কথাটি একাধিক বার বলিয়াছেন। মাওবাদীপ্রবণ এলাকায় বলপ্রয়োগের সম্পূর্ণক হিসাবে উন্নয়ন, এবং সেই উন্নয়নের জন্য আর্থিক প্রকল্পগুচ্ছ ইত্যাদি প্রসঙ্গ বহু বারই আলোচিত। তৎসত্ত্বেও মাওবাদী সমস্যার সমাধান হিসাবে কোনও সংগঠিত জাতীয় নীতি এখনও পর্যন্ত উঠিয়া আসে নাই। মাওবাদী সমস্যার রাজনৈতিক সমাধান খুঁজিতে হইবে, ইহা বলা হইতেছে বটে, কিন্তু কার্যক্ষেত্রে সেই বলপ্রয়োগের নিতানুতন পথসন্ধানই যাবতীয় প্রশাসনিক উদ্যম নিঃশেষিত। কারণটি অনুমেয়। মাওবাদী সমস্যার সহিত একাধিক রাজ্য জড়িত। বলপ্রয়োগের ধাঁচধরন লইয়া সেই সকল রাজ্যের ভিতরে বিশেষ দ্বিমত নাই। দ্বিমতের অবকাশও কম। অন্য দিকে, অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়ন কী ভাবে হইবে, সেই বিষয়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট রাজ্যগুলির ভিতর ঐকমত্য গড়িয়া উঠে নাই। মতবিরোধের এই প্রেক্ষিতে মাওবাদী সমস্যার মোকাবিলার জন্য জাতীয় নীতি প্রণয়নের গুরুত্বটি বুঝা যায়। মাওবাদী জঙ্গিরা যে সব 'মুক্তাঞ্চল' গড়িয়াছে, সেই সব অঞ্চলে ন্যূনতম একটি জনসমর্থন বিনা তাহারা এমন অবাধে সমান্তরাল প্রশাসন চালাইতে পারিত না। সেই জনসমর্থন, বুঝিতে অসুবিধা হয় না, রাজনৈতিক ব্যর্থতা হইতেই উদ্ভূত। এই প্রসঙ্গেই সংশ্লিষ্ট অঞ্চলে উন্নয়ন জরুরি। আন্তঃরাজ্য তসমন্ময় ছাড়া সেই উন্নয়ন ঘটানো দুষ্কর। কথাটি বুঝিতেছেন সকলেই, কিন্তু কার্যক্ষেত্রে এমন বিলম্বিত লয় কেন?

# Cabinet approval for Pathak probe

## Terms of reference to be notified

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the appointment of a one-man Inquiry Authority, headed by the former Chief Justice of India, R.S. Pathak, to look into the Volcker Committee Report. The report had made references to the former External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, and the Congress as "non-contractual beneficiaries" in the U.N. oil-for-food programme in Iraq.

The notification relating to the setting up of the Authority and the terms of reference would be released on Friday.

After the Cabinet meeting, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram told presspersons that the Authority had been set up to establish the truth or otherwise of the unverified references in the Volcker Committee's report of allegations of payment of kick-backs to certain Indian entities and individuals.

Despite persistent queries, he declined to explain why an authority, and not a commission was being set up. "I do not want to go into legal technicalities now. Wait for a day. The notification will be issued on Friday." He maintained that it would not make any difference. "There will be no difference in terms of the objectives to be achieved. The Authority is also being set up under the provisions of the Commission of Inquiries Act. It would be clothed with all necessary statutory powers."

• Authority will be clothed with all necessary statutory powers

• Ministry of Company Affairs denies it is looking into the report

To another query, he said the Enforcement Directorate was questioning Andaleeb Sehgal and Vikas Dhar in connection with the case. He denied that Jagat Singh, son of Mr. Natwar Singh, was being questioned.

### Ministry's caution

The Ministry of Company Affairs said on Thursday that it had not undertaken any exercise to see whether there had been any violation of the Companies Act, 1956 by the Indian companies named in the Volcker Report.

Reacting to media reports that the Ministry was looking into the report, it said: "no such exercise has yet been initiated or contemplated by the Ministry with reference to the Volcker Committee Report. Minister Prem Chand Gupta had simply asked his officers to go through the Report and brief him about the contents and their implications."

He had also cautioned all concerned to be careful in their reactions on the subject and not distort the facts as it "may create unnecessary confusion in the minds of the Indian business community and others, which is wholly unwarranted," it said.

# Govt launches probe into Volcker panel report

New Delhi: Amid deepening crisis over the Paul Volcker report, the government on Sunday launched a probe into the references



made in it, with Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax (IT) officials questioning Andaleeb Sehgal, considered a close friend of the external affairs minister's son Jagat Singh.

Searches were also conducted by ED and IT sleuths at the residence and offices of Sehgal, partner in the Hamadaan Exports company which has been named in the UN independent committee as having been the non-contractual beneficiary in alleged payoffs in Iraq's oil-for-food programme.

Sehgal, who was summoned by the ED to its office on Sunday morning, was quizzed for over eight hours, sources said. He was believed to have been questioned about the company's business interests in Iraq during Saddam Hussein's regime and whether it had clearances under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) in view of the report's references, they said.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday held high-level consultations with Congress president Sonia Gandhi and senior Union ministers to discuss the fallout of the Volcker committee report, which has named the party and external affairs minister Natwar Singh as beneficiaries of Iraq's oil pay-offs.

The over hour-long meeting was attended by home minister Shivraj Patil, law minister Hans Raj Bhardwaj, finance minister P Chidambaram, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, HRD minister Arjun Singh and political secretary to the Congress president Ahmed Patel.

Natwar Singh on Sunday met PM after a meeting of the core group of Union ministers. Pawar-led NCP on Sunday became yet another UPA ally to come out in support of Congress. Agencies



# ভোলকার-বিতর্কে কী করণীয়, সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে নাজেহাল সরকার

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ৪ নভেম্বর: ভোলকার রিপোর্ট প্রসঙ্গে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের সঙ্গে কথা বলেই সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে চায় ইউ পি এ সরকার।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ও কংগ্রেসের সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধী চাইছেন, ভোলকার রিপোর্টের সত্যাসত্য যাচাইয়ের জন্য কী ধরনের ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে, তার মীমাংসা করা হোক নটবরের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করেই। এই কাজের জন্য কোনও আনুষ্ঠানিক তদন্তের পরিবর্তে একটি মন্ত্রীগোষ্ঠী গড়ে তাদের উপরে দায়িত্ব দেওয়ার ব্যাপারটিও আলোচিত হচ্ছে।

নটবর নিজে অবশ্য মনে করেন যে, তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে কোনও তদন্তই হওয়া উচিত নয়। কারণ, তাঁকে ফাঁসানোর জন্য তাঁর নাম রিপোর্টে তোলা হয়েছে। নিজের দলের নেতাদের তো বটেই, সিপিএমের প্রকাশ কারাট বা সিপিআইয়ের এ বি বর্ধনের কাছেও তিনি একই কথা বলেছেন। এই অবস্থায় তদন্তের ধরন ঠিক করতে নাজেহাল হচ্ছে সরকার। নটবরের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেছেন মনমোহন-সনিয়া। এখনও পর্যন্ত এটুকু স্থির হয়েছে যে, তাদের কাছে কী তথ্য রয়েছে, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের কাছেই তা জানতে চাইবে সরকার। আর কী করা যায়, তা নিয়ে সরকার আইনজ্ঞদের পরামর্শও নিচ্ছে। এই প্রসঙ্গে আলোচনার জন্য আজ মন্ত্রিসভার একটি বৈঠক ডেকেও পারে তা বাতিল করে দেওয়া হয়।

দেশের ভিতরে-বাইরে নিজেদের ভাবমূর্তি অমলিন রাখতে হলে

সরকারকে সত্যাসত্য যাচাইয়ের জন্য একটা বিশ্বাসযোগ্য পর্যায়ের 'তদন্ত' করতেই হবে। কারণ বিজেপি আজ আবার বলেছে, নটবরের পদত্যাগের দাবিতে তারা 'সডক থেকে সংসদ' উত্তাল করে তুলবে। লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীর নেতৃত্বে দলের বৈঠকে সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে যে, বিষয়টি নিয়ে তাঁরা রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছেও যাবেন।

তবে নটবর তথা সরকারের পক্ষে স্বস্তির কথা, ভোলকার বিতর্কের জেরে নটবরের পদত্যাগ করার কোনও অর্থই হয় না বলে মনে করেন সমর্থক বামেরা। সিপিআইয়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধন স্পষ্ট করেই সে কথা জানিয়েছেন। তবে কংগ্রেসের তরফে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ তথা ভোলকার কমিটিকে আইনি নোটিস পাঠানোর

বিষয়টিও নিতান্ত অর্থহীন বলেই আখ্যা দিয়েছেন তিনি। নটবরের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছেন প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী চন্দ্রশেখরও। তিনি বলেছেন, সবিস্তার না-জেনেই নটবর সিংহের মতো কারও বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ এবং আক্রমণ 'দৃশ্য' ঘটনা।

নিউ ইয়র্কে পল ভোলকার অবশ্য ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, কোথাকার জল কোথায় গড়াচ্ছে, সেটা আদৌ অজ্ঞাত ছিল না নটবর বা কংগ্রেসের। ভোলকারের বক্তব্য, "যাদের কথা রিপোর্টে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে, আমরা তাদের সঙ্গে আগেভাগেই যোগাযোগ করেছিলাম। তাঁদের প্রত্যেককে নিজের বক্তব্য জানানোর সুযোগও দেওয়া হয়েছিল। যারা প্রতিক্রিয়া ব্যক্ত করেছেন, রিপোর্টে তা উল্লেখও করা হয়েছে। যারা তাঁদের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ অস্বীকার করেছেন, তা-ও রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে।" তবে তিনি এ-ও জানিয়েছেন যে, তালিকায় নাম-থাকা অনেকের সম্পর্কে যেমন তাঁদের কাছে তথ্য আছে, তেমনই আবার অনেক ক্ষেত্রে ইরাকি নথি থেকে যা পাওয়া গিয়েছে, সেটাই উদ্ধৃত করা হয়েছে। নটবর সিংহ যে ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রী, সে কথা তাঁর আগে জানা ছিল না বলেও ভোলকার জানিয়েছেন।

ভোলকারের বক্তব্যের সূত্র ধরেই আজ বিজেপি মুখপাত্র মুখতার আকবাস নকভিও অভিযোগ করেছেন, "এত দিন কংগ্রেস এবং নটবর, দু'তরফেই বলা হচ্ছিল যে, কেউই কিছু জানতেন না। সেটা আর ধোঁপে টেকে না। কারণ,

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

## আপনার মতে

কংগ্রেসকে বাঁচানোর স্বার্থেই কি ভোলকার-কাণ্ডে সরকার নটবরকে আড়াল করছে?

এসএমএস করুন ৮২৪৩ নম্বরে

হ্যাঁ হলে লিখুন: Apoll a

না হলে লিখুন: Apoll b

উত্তর পাঠান হাচ, এয়ারটেল, টাটা ইন্ডিকম, রিলায়েন্স ইন্ডিয়া অথবা বিএসএনএল মোবাইল থেকে।

টিম চ্যাপেল কি এখন চ্যাপেলের দেশকেও হারাতে পারবে?

হ্যাঁ ৪৯% না ৫১%

## 'খাদ্যের জন্য তেল'-দুর্নীতি

- কুয়েত আক্রমণের পরে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের আর্থিক নিষেধাজ্ঞায় একঘরে হয়ে পড়ে সাদ্দাম প্রশাসন। বহির্বাণিজ্য প্রায় বন্ধ হওয়ায় খাদ্য, ওষুধ প্রভৃতির সঙ্কট দেখা দেয়। আর সন্তায় ইরাকের তেল পেতে মুখিয়ে ছিল রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের বহু দেশই। '৯৫ সালের ১৪ এপ্রিল অনুমোদন পায় তেলের বিনিময়ে খাদ্য প্রকল্প। ঠিক হয়, অত্যাবশ্যকীয় সামগ্রী কিনতে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ-নির্ধারিত দামে তেল বিক্রি করতে পারবে ইরাক।
- বিভিন্ন সংস্থা কতটা তেল তুলতে পারবে, তা বরাদ্দ করে সাদ্দাম প্রশাসন। এ ছাড়াও বিভিন্ন দেশের প্রভাবশালী আমলা, রাজনীতিক ও ব্যবসায়ীকেও তেল বরাদ্দ করা হয়। বরাদ্দ পায় রাজনৈতিক দলও। ভোলকার এদের 'নন কন্ট্রাকচুয়াল বেনিফিসিয়ারি' বলেছেন।
- এদের অনেকে বাজার সম্পর্কে ওয়াকিবহাল ছিলেন না। তাই বরাদ্দ বেচতে তাঁরা বিভিন্ন মধ্যবর্তী সংস্থার সাহায্য নেন।
- তেলের দখল নিতে বিভিন্ন তেল সংস্থা যা বাড়তি দিয়েছিল, তা ভাগ করে নেয় সংশ্লিষ্ট বেনিফিসিয়ারি ও মধ্যবর্তী সংস্থা।
- রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের দামের উপরে অবৈধ ভাবে সারচার্জ ও বসায় ইরাক সরকার। এই বাবদ প্রায় ২৩ কোটি ডলার লাভ হয় সাদ্দামদের।
- রিপোর্টে অভিযোগ, মেসফিন্ড এ জি নামে সুইস সংস্থাকে নিজস্ব বরাদ্দ বিক্রি করে নটবর সিংহ লাভবান হন। একই অভিযোগ কংগ্রেসের বিরুদ্ধেও। নটবর ও তাঁর দলকে 'নন কন্ট্রাকচুয়াল বেনিফিসিয়ারি'র তালিকায় রেখেছেন পল ভোলকার।

## ভোলকার-বিতর্কে

প্রথম পাতার পর  
ভোলকার কমিটি সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের কাছেই বক্তব্য জানতে চেয়েছিল। আসলে মনমোহন সরকার বিশ্বের কাছে ভারতকে হাসির পাত্র করে তুলছেন।" বিজেপি নেতার প্রশ্ন, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জকে কেন কংগ্রেস আইনি নোটিস পাঠাচ্ছে, তা বোঝা যাচ্ছে না। প্লেবের সুরে তিনি বলেন, "বরং, নটবরের বিরুদ্ধেই কংগ্রেসের নোটিস জারি করা উচিত। বিশেষ করে পরিস্থিতিটা যদি এমনই দাঁড়ায় যে, কংগ্রেসের যে টাকা পাওনা ছিল, নটবর সেটা দলকে দেননি।"

সিপিআইয়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধনও মনে করেন, আইনি নোটিস জারির কোনও অর্থ হয় না। তাঁর যুক্তি অবশ্য আলাদা। তিনি বলেন, "১৯২টি রাষ্ট্র যার সদস্য, সেই রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের বিরুদ্ধে কি মামলা করা যায়! আর ভোলকারের বিরুদ্ধে মার্কিন কোনও আদালতে মামলা দায়ের করা যাবে কি না, সেটাও সন্দেহ!" পটনায় বিজেপি-র সাধারণ সম্পাদক অরুণ জেটলির অভিযোগ, সংবাদমাধ্যমে খবর অনুযায়ী কংগ্রেসও এই কেলেঙ্কারিতে আর্থিক ভাবে 'লাভবান' হয়েছে। সেহগল, হামাদান ইনকর্পোরেটেড, জগৎ সিংহ (নটবরের ছেলে), মেসফিন্ড ও সর্বোপরি নটবর সিংহ এবং অনিল মাথরানি এই কেলেঙ্কারির মাথা।



VOLCKER LAUGHS OFF LEGAL NOTICE THREAT

# Centre looks for a way out

5/11 2-UPA 6/11 5/11  
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov 4. — Hectic consultations continued at the highest level in government to find a way out of the controversy triggered by the UN probe report on Iraqi oil pay-offs. The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, held a series of high-level meetings at his residence this morning, including one with the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi. The external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, who, along with the Congress, has been named as a beneficiary in the payoffs, was present.

An informal committee is said to have been constituted to look into the Volcker Committee report. The committee, comprising the ministers of defence, finance and law and justice, would suggest the future course of action. India's Ambassador to the USA, Mr Ronen Sen, is also learnt to have sent information on the deal. It was discussed at today's meeting, according to sources.

The BJP, which has been demanding Mr Natwar Singh's dismissal from the cabinet since the controversy broke, today announced a week-long countrywide mobilisation programme on 8 November against the UPA government over the Volcker findings. A delegation of NDA leaders is expected to call on the President, Dr APJ Kalam, on 7 November and urge him to "advise" the Prime Minister to "sack" Mr Singh from the Cabinet. "We have sought an appointment with the President for 7 November," senior BJP

leader Mrs Sushma Swaraj said after a meeting of party general secretaries here this evening. It was chaired by the BJP president, Mr LK Advani.

The CPI has said there is no reason to "disbelieve" the Volcker Committee report and called for a probe into the charges, even as the party general secretary, Mr AB Bardhan, said there was no need for Mr Singh to step down.

Mocking at Congress' threat to sue him, the author of the controversial report on Iraqi oil payoffs, Mr Paul Volcker, has said his findings are based on Iraqi records. He maintained that he had given an opportunity to those named to give their comments. The Congress yesterday threatened to send a legal notice to the UN and the Volcker Committee demanding disclosure of the material on the basis of which the committee reached the "unverified conclusion" that the party was a beneficiary in the Iraqi oil deal scam. "They (Congress) are welcome to send a legal notice. The UN has certain privileges and immunities. And we also in some cases have the analysis but in some cases we certainly listed the information indicated from Iraqi records," said Mr Volcker. He was responding to queries at a function in New York.

On the statement by Mr Singh that he and the Congress were not asked for their comments, Mr Volcker said: "We have indicated that everybody was notified that they are going to be listed and we also indicated what their response, if any, was." He said he came to know that Mr Singh was India's foreign minister only yesterday.

STATESMAN

05 NOV 2005

# Congress to serve legal notice on UN

Wants Volcker Committee to disclose basis of its conclusion; Natwar Singh on edge

HT Political Bureau  
New Delhi, November 3

THE CONGRESS will issue "a comprehensive legal notice" to the United Nations and the Volcker Committee seeking "full disclosure" of the material constituting the basis of its "unverified conclusion" that the party was a non-contractual beneficiary in the Iraq oil-for-food scam. "Failing disclosure of the relevant material, the Congress party demands an unconditional apology for wrongly and maliciously making a reference to it (in the Volcker report)," an AICC statement issued on Thursday night said.

The decision to serve a legal notice was taken at a meeting of the Congress' core group attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, party chief Sonia Gandhi, Pranab Mukherjee, Arjun Singh, Shivraj Patil, P. Chidambaram and Ahmed Patel. Law minister H.R. Bhardwaj also participated in the discussions.

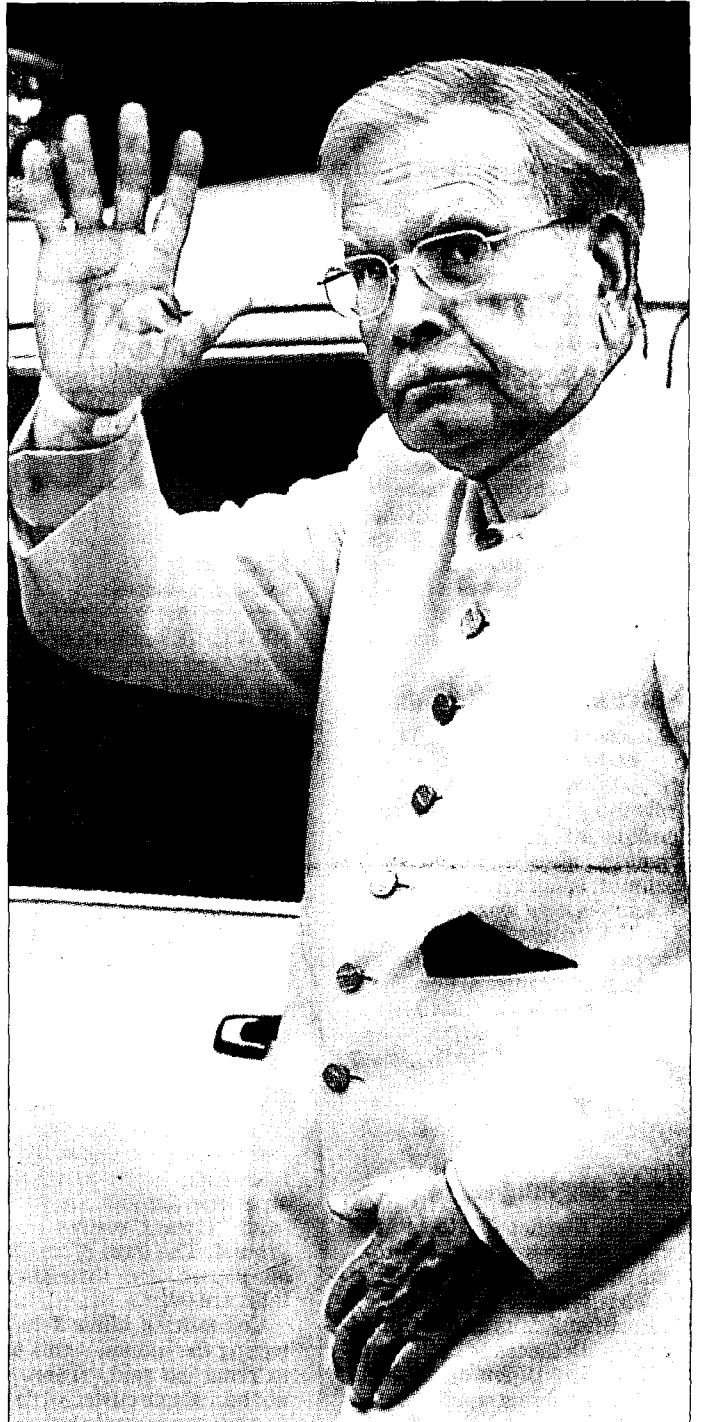
On behalf of the UPA, the PMO also expressed concern about "unverified references" to the Congress and external affairs minister Natwar Singh in the Volcker report. In a brief statement, the PMO said the government was determined to get to the root of the matter and establish the "truth or otherwise" of these references.

Amid reports of the PM's separate meetings with CPI(M) general-secretary Prakash Karat and Natwar Singh, the PMO reiterated that the Volcker report as it stands today "is insufficient to arrive at any adverse or definitive conclusion". It said the matter was under the government's serious consideration and a decision (on further action) will be announced shortly.

Even as the BJP sought Natwar Singh's resignation, the external affairs minister attended three meetings of the Cabinet, CCEA and CCS chaired by the PM. Sources close to the minister, who has said he will make a suo motu statement in Parliament's winter session this month, denied reports that he had put in his papers.

Meanwhile, in an interview to a yet-to-be launched news channel, India Broadcast News (IBN), a senior UN official said the Indian government was free to challenge the findings of the Volcker Committee. A statement from the channel quoted UN under-secretary general for communications and public information, Shashi Tharoor, saying that governments had every reason to challenge whatever details they find unacceptable. "Let the national authorities decide if they feel some things are forgeries and don't require further investigation," Tharoor said.

In a related development, Panthers Party chief Bhim Singh, who has also been named by Volcker, described the report as an attempt by the US to destabilise India and "facilitate" another trial of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussain. He also denied reports that he saw Natwar Singh's name in a document. "I had only said that while visiting a website in 2004 to look for my name, I came across his name," he clarified adding, "The mention of big names such as that of Natwar and the Congress party is a ploy."



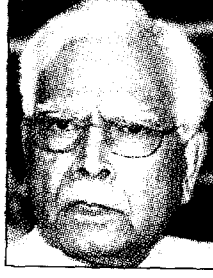
Natwar Singh leaves after attending a Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

**OIL-FOR-FOOD  
SCANDAL**

# রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জকে আইনি নোটিস দিচ্ছে কংগ্রেস, সরকার তদন্তের পথে

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩ নভেম্বর: ভোলকার কমিটির রিপোর্টের মোকাবিলায় দ্বিমুখী কৌশল নিচ্ছেন মনমোহন সিংহ-সনিয়া গাধী। মনমোহন প্রশাসন সত্যাসত্য খতিয়ে দেখতে তদন্তের ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছে। পাশাপাশি, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ এবং পল ভোলকারকে আইনি নোটিস পাঠানোর কথা ভাবছে কংগ্রেস। এই দুই কৌশলের কথাই আজ দুই তরফে পৃথক বিবৃতির মাধ্যমে জানানো হয়েছে। মনে করা হচ্ছে, এই ভাবে আন্তর্জাতিক স্তরে ভাবমূর্তি রক্ষায় সক্ষম হবে ভারত। সব থেকে বড় কথা, তদন্তের ইঙ্গিত দিয়ে বিজেপির মতো সর্ব বিরোধীদের চূপ করানোর পাশাপাশি সহযোগী বামপন্থীদেরও সন্তুষ্ট করতে পারবেন মনমোহন সিংহ।

কংগ্রেসের এখন একটাই লক্ষ্য, আরও এক বার যেন দল ও সরকারের উপরে কলঙ্কের দাগ না লাগে। সেই কারণেই সরাসরি ভোলকার এবং রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জকে আইনি নোটিস পাঠাতে চলেছে তারা। আজ দলীয় বিবৃতিতে এই কথা জানিয়ে বলা হয়েছে, যে তথ্যপ্রমাণের ভিত্তিতে ভোলকার কমিটি তাদের সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে, তা প্রকাশের দাবি জানানো হবে ওই নোটিসে। তথ্যপ্রমাণ প্রকাশ করতে না-পারলে ভুলের জন্য পল



ভোলকারকে শর্তহীন ক্ষমা চাওয়ার দাবিও জানাবে কংগ্রেস। কিন্তু রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সদস্য দেশ হয়ে তাদেরই নিযুক্ত কোনও তদন্ত কমিটির বিরুদ্ধে কি আইনি নোটিস পাঠাতে পারে ভারতের কোনও দল? কংগ্রেসের তরফে এই সম্ভাবনার কথা জানানোর সঙ্গে সঙ্গে প্রশ্নটি নিয়ে জল্পনা শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। এই নিয়ে ভোলকার কমিটির আইনি রক্ষাকবচ রয়েছে কিনা, তাই নিয়েও প্রশ্ন উঠেছে। কিন্তু সম্পূর্ণ ছবিটা এখনও পরিষ্কার নয়। এর মধ্যেই কিন্তু মহাসচিব কোফি আন্নান ও পল ভোলকারের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে সরকারি স্তরে নির্দেশ গিয়েছে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জে ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূত নিরুপম সেনের কাছে।

সরকার বা দলের আজ এতটা নড়েচড়ে বসার বড় কারণ, সামনেই শীতকালীন অধিবেশন। আর সেখানে এই প্রসঙ্গে হই চই বাধাতে তৈরি হচ্ছেন বিরোধীরা। বিশেষ করে বিজেপি এই সুযোগে তাদের আমলে জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের বিরুদ্ধে তহলকা কেলেক্কারি এবং তাই নিয়ে সংসদে তৎকালীন বিরোধীদের চাপের জবাব দিতে তৈরি হচ্ছে। দলের তরফে অরুণ জেটলি এই বিষয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে চিঠি পাঠিয়ে বলেছেন, এক মাত্র নটবরের ইস্তফাই তাদের সন্তুষ্ট করতে পারে।

এই অবস্থায় তদন্তের নির্দেশ দিয়ে এক টিলে তিন পাখি মারতে পারে সরকার। এক, বিজেপি-সহ বিরোধীরা বিষয়টি

নিয়ে এ মাসের শেষে সংসদের শীতকালীন অধিবেশনে হই চই করতে গেলে সরকার বলতে পারবে যে, বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। দুই, বামেরা বিষয়টি নিয়ে তদন্তের কথা বলেছিলেন। সুতরাং, এ ভাবে তাঁদেরও সন্তুষ্ট রাখা যাবে। তিন, আন্তর্জাতিক স্তরেও এতে ভারতের মর্যাদা রক্ষা হবে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মিডিয়া উপদেষ্টা সঞ্জয় বাডু সরকারের পক্ষে বিবৃতিটি প্রকাশ করেছেন। এই বিবৃতি প্রকাশের আগে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করেছিলেন নটবর। আজই আবার সিপিএম সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাট দেখা করেন নটবরের সঙ্গে। তদন্ত চাওয়ার পাশাপাশি মার্কিন চাপে নত না-হওয়ার কথা বলে কিছুটা হলেও নটবরের দিকেই পাল্লা ভারী রেখেছেন তাঁরা। বিদেশমন্ত্রী নিজে পদত্যাগ বা বদলিতে নারাজ। তাঁর বক্তব্য, পুরোটাই ভিত্তিহীন।

নটবরকে শেষ পর্যন্ত না সরিয়েই তদন্ত করা হতে পারে, সেই ইঙ্গিতও রয়েছে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতরের বিবৃতিতে। সেখানে প্রথমেই বলা হয়েছে, “ভোলকার কমিটি রিপোর্টে

এর পর আশির পাতায়

## নোটিস পাঠাচ্ছে কংগ্রেস

প্রথম পাতার পর আলোচনা করছেন

যে ভাবে সত্যতা যাচাই না-করেই কংগ্রেস ও বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের নাম উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে, তাতে সরকার গভীর ভাবে উদ্ভিন্ন।” আরও বলা হয়েছে, ভোলকার কমিটির বর্তমান রিপোর্ট বিরূপ বা নির্দিষ্ট সিদ্ধান্তে পৌঁছানোর পক্ষে যথেষ্ট নয়। সেই কারণেই সরকার বিষয়টির মূলে পৌঁছে উল্লেখ করা অভিযোগের সত্যতা যাচাই করতে বদ্ধপরিকর। তবে কী ধরনের তদন্ত হতে পারে অথবা তাকে আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে তদন্ত কমিটি বলা হবে কি না, তা এখনও নিশ্চিত নয়। প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গাধী বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিভিন্ন পর্যায়ে

ভোলকার রিপোর্টে নব্বইয়ের দশকে ইরাকে ‘তেলের বদলে খাদ্য’ প্রকল্পে দুর্নীতির অভিযোগ তোলা হয়েছে নটবর ও কংগ্রেসের বিরুদ্ধে। আর দলের নামও জড়িয়ে যাওয়ায় বাড়তি সুবিধা পেয়ে গিয়েছেন নটবরই। নব্বইয়ের দশকের ওই সময়টায় নটবর বা তাঁর দল ক্ষমতায় ছিল না। কাজেই তাঁকে দায় নিতে বলা হলে প্রশ্ন উঠবে, কংগ্রেস দলের তরফে তবে দায় কে নেবে? সে জন্যই কংগ্রেসের একাংশ চাইছে, সত্যতা যাচাইয়ের আগে এই নিয়ে নির্দিষ্ট কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত নয়। অন্য একটি অংশ অবশ্য নটবরকে পদত্যাগ করিয়ে ঝঞ্ঝাটমুক্ত হওয়ার পক্ষপাতী।

## OIL FOR FOOD

# PM backs Natwar, Left for probe

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, October 30

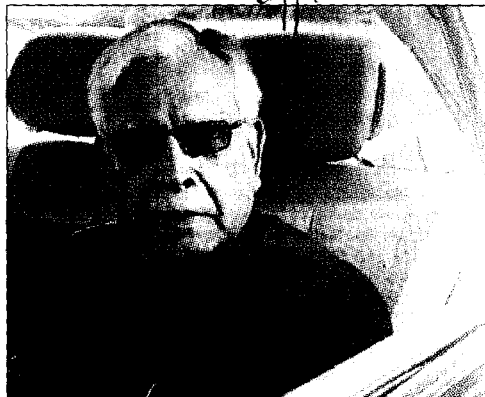
PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh on Sunday backed external affairs minister K Natwar Singh on the Volcker report issue, saying the facts mentioned in the UN inquiry into Iraq's oil-for-food programme were "insufficient" to arrive at any "adverse conclusion" against him.

Natwar Singh met the PM on his return from Moscow to deny he had received oil coupons from Saddam Hussein's regime.

The PM's media adviser, Sanjaya Baru, said in a statement that Natwar had categorically denied any involvement in the alleged illicit payments on oil transactions under the oil-for-food programme as stated by the UN Independent Inquiry Volcker Committee.

"The PM agreed that the facts mentioned in Table 3 of the report of the Independent Inquiry Committee are insufficient to arrive at any adverse conclusion against the external affairs minister and stands by him," Baru said.

The UN committee, headed by Paul Volcker, had, in its report, named Natwar Singh and the Congress among the non-contractual beneficiaries in the Iraqi oil sales in 2001. Natwar termed as "baseless and untrue" the allegations, saying they



### Rebuttal

**NATWAR** Allegations baseless and untrue

**PRIME MINISTER** Facts in report insufficient

**CPM** US and West biased against those who dealt with Iraqi government

**RSP** There should be independent probe

were part of a campaign to malign the Congress and its senior leaders.

Meanwhile, the Left allies have demanded a probe into the findings of the Volcker Committee, but cautioned that the "bias" of the US and other Western countries be kept in mind while examining the issue.

The CPI (M) poliburo said, "Iraq, which was under brutal sanctions for more than a decade, resorted to various methods to deal with the situation. It should be noted in this context that the US and other Western countries are biased against all those who had dealings with the then Iraqi government."

The party said it was necessary to get further evidence and details before reaching any conclusion. RSP leader Abani Roy also called for an independent inquiry into the matter and said the individuals and political parties also owed an explanation on this count.

The statement virtually rejects the demand by the BJP and JD(U) for the resignation of the minister, saying he could not stay even for a minute at his post after the UN reports had been made public.

Volcker's report says more than 2,000 firms linked to the UN oil-for-food programme in Iraq were involved in making illicit payments to the Iraqi government.

UPA SEEKS SUPPORT ON THREE BILLS ■ ALLIES AGREE TO HOLD TALKS ON IRAN

# Left objects to FDI in retail

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. — The Left parties' strong objections to allowing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the retail sector led to the deferment of a discussion on the subject today at the first UPA-Left Coordination Committee meeting since the boycott by the Left parties four months back on the issue of divesting Bhel.

The government assured the Left leaders that it would look into their grievances even as it sought their "support" in the passage of the PFRDA and two banking laws Amendment Bills in the winter session of Parliament.

In the morning, the Left parties presented a "note" on FDI in the retail sector to the UPA. They expressed their fears about "loss of jobs" if foreign players were allowed to enter the sector, which they said was only next to agriculture in terms of the number of people engaged in the sector. "It would adversely affect small traders and create havoc," the CPI national secretary, Mr D Raja, said after the three-hour long meeting. The Union finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram, acknowledging receipt of the Left note said: "The government has agreed to study the note and give its response."

The government said it had not taken a final decision on FDI in

the retail sector and would hold further discussions on it.

The UPA, meanwhile, requested the Left parties' "support" in the passage of three Bills — Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Bill and two Bills to amend banking laws — in the winter session of Parliament. "The government has taken on board the recommendations of the Standing Committee on the PFRDA Bill and will give due consideration to the Standing Committee's recommendations on the two Bills to amend banking laws. The government requested the Left parties to support these three Bills. The Left parties indi-

cated that they will consider the matter and put forward their suggestions for amendments, if any," Mr Chidambaram said.

Mr Raja said: "The matter needed to be discussed further." Understanding of each other's concerns on contentious issues marked the seventh meeting of the UPA-Left Coordination Committee. Both sides agreed to hold discussions on India's vote against Iran over the "nuclear issue" after the return of the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, from Moscow. Accordingly, the Left parties' countrywide "mass mobilisation campaign" on the Iran issue on 29 October would now be in the form of "seminars" and discus-

sions. "This will not be an embarrassment to the government," Mr Raja said. He termed the discussions as "fruitful".

At today's meeting besides the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and UPA chairperson, Mr Sonia Gandhi, the government was represented by the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, the finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram, the minister of State in the PMO, Mr Prithviraj Chavan and the Congress MP Mr Ahmed Patel. From the Left parties Mr Prakash Karat, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Mr Sitaram Yechuri (all CPI-M Politburo members), and Mr A B Bardhan, Mr D Raja (CPI) and RSP's Mr Abani Roy were present.

# CPM open for talks on divestment

## As long as Navratnas are left untouched

**PRESS Trust of India**  
New Delhi/Bangalore, October 22

HAVING SUCCESSFULLY forced the government to shelve sale of shares in Bhel, the CPI(M) on Saturday said it was open to discussing divestment in non-Navratna companies. "We are opposed to the divestment of Navratna companies but shares can be sold in other companies to raise resources for social sector. We can discuss sale of shares in other PSUs", CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat said in an interactive session with the Forum of Financial Writers.

He was also open to the sale of unviable PSUs. "We are asking the government to do what we are doing in West Bengal. There may be some unviable companies that can be closed. The National Common Minimum Programme says that all privatisations can be discussed on case-to-case basis. Some resources can be raised from that too", Karat said.

So far the West Bengal government has closed down two PSUs and privatised one. Of the

240-odd Central PSUs, only nine fall under the Navratna category. Among them 88 are loss-making while the rest are making profits. CPI(M) leader said his party was in favour of public sector reforms so that they can function professionally. "We don't want PSUs to be run as government departments", Karat said.

He termed as "bad idea" the move on the part of the government to foist politicians as independent directors on the boards of public sector companies. While the CPI(M) is in favour of professionalisation of PSUs, it still wants parliamentary control on them to continue.

### Pranab on PSUs

Ruling out divestment in profit-making public sector enterprises, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee on Saturday said debate on the topic was "unnecessary". "There is no question of divestment in profit-making PSUs on a sustainable basis in a competitive environment", Mukherjee said at the 28th plenary session of Intuc here.



**Hardliner Karat calls himself moderate**

SEEKING TO dump the hardliner image associated with him, Prakash Karat on Saturday chose to describe himself as a "moderate". At an interactive session with the forum of financial writers, Karat said, "I am a moderate". Karat usually comes across as a hardliner, especially when it comes to taking on the Left-propped UPA government on crucial economic issues. To a question on chinks appearing in the Left Front after the CPI chose to contest the Bihar polls separately, he said, "We are different parties. We have evolved differently over a period of time. We have different ideological positions on different issues".

# Left to oppose FDI in retail at Oct 27 meet

**PRESS Trust of India**  
New Delhi, October 22

THE LEFT parties have decided to oppose the opening of retail sector to FDI when they meet UPA leaders at a meeting of the coordination committee on October 27 — to be held after a gap of four months.

The Left will also raise the issue of mopping up additional resources for realising promises for social sector made in the National Common Minimum Programme and public sector reforms at the meeting. CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat said in an interactive session with the Forum of Financial Writers on Saturday. The Left parties will be attending the committee meeting for the first time after it boycotted the meetings following the government proposal to divest 10 per cent stake in Bhel, which was subsequently withdrawn to facilitate the Left parties to come back for the meeting.

"We don't have any negative approach on FDI. But on FDI in retail, our main concern is that it will displace employment. We don't have any preconceived notion but our opposition to FDI in

retail is based on realities on the ground", Karat said.

Trade associations joined the recent strike against the government's economic policies, saying they are downing shutters because they are opposed to the government proposal to open up retail sector for FDI, he said. Karat said the Left has not discussed the issue of opening up of retail sector to FDI with the government till recently.

When asked about the contradiction between the Left opposing FDI in retail sector at the Centre and inviting India-based Salim Group's executive Beni Santoso in Kolkata, Karat simply said Buddhadev Bhattacharjee as West Bengal chief minister has to meet many people.

"We are committed that we will not undo what we have achieved in West Bengal in terms of land reforms. We will not convert fertile agricultural land into industrial land", he said.

He did not subscribe to the view that the Left parties have adopted double standards with regard to reforms... adopting one policy in Bengal and another at the Centre.

# টেলিকমে ৭৪% বিদেশি লগ্নির পথে বাধা কাটল

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২০  
অক্টোবর: অবশেষে টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রে  
৭৪ শতাংশ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পথে  
বাধা কাটল। রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব এবং বেসরকারি  
সংস্থার জন্য টেলিকমে বিদেশি লগ্নির  
সংজ্ঞা কী হবে, তা নিয়ে কেন্দ্রীয়  
মন্ত্রিসভা আজ তার নীতি স্পষ্ট করার  
সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই এ ব্যাপারে বিতর্কের  
অবসান হল। পাশাপাশি, সংবাদ  
চ্যানেলে বিদেশি আর্থিক সংস্থার  
লগ্নিতেও সায় দিয়েছে মন্ত্রিসভা।

আজ এক বৈঠকে মন্ত্রিসভা সিদ্ধান্ত  
দিয়েছে ব্যাঙ্ক-সহ রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব আর্থিক  
সংস্থাগুলিতে সাধারণ ভাবে বিদেশি  
লগ্নি থাকলেও, টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রে তাদের  
বিনিয়োগকে ভারতীয় লগ্নি হিসাবেই  
ধরা হবে। কিন্তু বেসরকারি ব্যাঙ্ক বা  
আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের ক্ষেত্রে তা ধরা হবে  
বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ হিসাবেই। কেন্দ্রীয়  
তথ্য ও সম্প্রচারমন্ত্রী এস জয়পাল  
রেড্ডি বৈঠকের পর এ কথা জানান।  
বিদেশি লগ্নির দরজা আরও বেশি করে  
খুলে দিতে আপলিঙ্কিং নীতি ঢেলে  
সাজিয়ে বিদেশি আর্থিক সংস্থাকে  
সংবাদপত্রের পাশাপাশি সংবাদ  
চ্যানেলগুলিতেও ২৬ শতাংশ পর্যন্ত  
লগ্নির অনুমতি দিয়েছে মন্ত্রিসভা।  
বর্তমানে সংবাদ চ্যানেলে সরাসরি  
বিদেশি লগ্নি এবং অনাবাসী  
ভারতীয়দের জন্য এই অনুমোদন  
মিলত, বিদেশি আর্থিক সংস্থার লগ্নির  
ক্ষেত্রে নয়। সাধারণ ভাবে টেলিভিশন  
চ্যানেলগে ভারতীয় উপগ্রহ মারফত  
আপলিঙ্কিংয়ের অনুমতি দিলেও তা  
কাজে লাগিয়ে ডি টি এইচ পরিষেবা  
দেওয়া যাবে না বলে স্পষ্ট করে  
দিয়েছে মন্ত্রিসভা।

চলতি বছরের ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে  
টেলিকম ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি লগ্নির সীমা  
৪৯ শতাংশ থেকে বাড়িয়ে ৭৪ শতাংশ  
করায় অনুমোদন দিয়েছিল কেন্দ্র। কিন্তু  
ব্যাঙ্ক এবং আর্থিক সংস্থাগুলি এ  
ব্যাপারে স্পষ্ট ব্যাখ্যা চাওয়ায় তা  
রূপায়ণ করা যায়নি। এ নিয়ে বিস্তর  
জলঘোলাও হয়েছে। ওই চূড়ান্ত  
উর্ধ্বসীমার মধ্যে রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থায়  
বিদেশি লগ্নির অংশকেও অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা  
হবে কি না, তা নিয়ে সরকারের  
দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি স্পষ্ট করার আবেদন জানায়  
সেলুলার অপারেটর্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশন  
অফ ইন্ডিয়া-সহ ভারতীয় ব্যাঙ্ক ও  
আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলি। তারা লিখিত  
ভাবে জানায়, ওই ৭৪ শতাংশ বিদেশি  
লগ্নির সীমা নিয়ে জটিলতা রয়ে  
গিয়েছে এবং সেগুলির বিস্তারিত  
ব্যাখ্যা চায় তারা। সে ক্ষেত্রে ওই  
সংস্থাগুলিতে বিদেশি শেয়ারের  
অবস্থান, তার রূপান্তর ও সংশোধন  
এবং পাশাপাশি ভারতীয়  
বংশোদ্ভূতদের লগ্নি বা তাঁদের  
শেয়ারের ভূমিকাই বা কী হবে, সেগুলি  
মাথায় রেখেই আজকের এই সিদ্ধান্ত  
নিয়েছে মন্ত্রিসভা।

ব্যাখ্যায় বলা হয়েছে রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব  
সংস্থার ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি আর্থিক সংস্থা,  
অনাবাসী ভারতীয়, এ ডি আর, জি ডি  
আর, রূপান্তরযোগ্য প্রেফারেন্স শেয়ার  
ইত্যাদি ওই ৭৪ শতাংশ বিদেশি  
বিনিয়োগের মধ্যে ধরা হবে না। বাকি  
২৬ শতাংশ থাকবে ভারতীয় নাগরিক  
ও ভারতীয় সংস্থার হাতে। যে সমস্ত  
ভারতীয় সংস্থায় বর্তমানে মাত্র ৪৯  
শতাংশ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ রয়েছে,  
তাদের ক্ষেত্রেই এই নিয়ম খাটবে।

# Cabinet nod for 74 % FDI in telecom sector

Sandeep Dikshit

140-1  
2/1/10

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Cabinet on Thursday cleared the decks for increasing the limit of foreign direct investment (FDI) in telecom from 49 to 74 per cent by addressing the clarifications sought by stakeholders, including cellular companies and equipment manufacturers. Though it cleared the proposal in February, the notification was held up to allow for clarifications on major issues such as ensuring security while repairing imported equipment and initial relaxation for complying with the new norms.

The Cabinet has banned for-

eign equipment manufacturers from repairing faults through remote access to preclude the possibility of spying or controlling the network.

But remote access would only be provided in case of 'catastrophic equipment failure' or the network becoming incapacitated for a long period. In this case, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) should be informed and the remote access password provided for a limited period. The Department of Telecom has been asked to define 'catastrophic failure'.

The Cabinet also incorporated more safeguards, including provision of providing full sup-

port to the IB for recording the transactions for online monitoring and refusing assistance to any equipment or software that forms part of overall monitoring.

Addressing the concerns expressed by cellular companies over the treatment to be given to public sector financial institutions and banks, the Cabinet clarified that in the remaining 26 per cent to be owned by resident Indian citizens or an Indian company, the foreign holding will be counted towards the ceiling of 74 per cent.

But the total holding of the public sector banks and financial institutions in this would be treated as Indian holding.

THE HINDU



# UK talks tough on Iran, UPA faces vote dilemma

## Left Wants Govt Not To Vote Against Iran Again

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 18 OCTOBER

**I**N a major setback to the Manmohan Singh government's diplomatic efforts for averting a vote against Iran in IAEA on November 24, UK has said it would do everything possible to deal with Tehran's nuclear ambitions and get the country to "meet its international obligations". The tough talk coincides with the UPA government's effort to get the EU-3 (UK, Germany and France), to engage Tehran on the nuclear issue.

UK's stand is a matter of serious concern for the government, as it indicates frontal confrontation with Iran. With the Left parties, the government's chief prop, making it clear that the government cannot vote against Iran for a second time, it has been undertaking some frantic diplomatic initiatives to dodge a vote.

Although UK did not suggest any change in position in during recent interactions, the positive response from Germany and France had given the impression of a mellowed response from EU-3. That the government has a tough task at hand became clear on Monday

from the hard-hitting statements emanating from London. US secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, who met with Tony Blair, backed UK's allegation that Iran was involved in the insurgent bomb attacks in Iraq. The US, which is mobilising support from Russia and EU, has said it will mount pressure on Iran to return to talks on its nuclear programme.

The development cannot but be distressing for the government as the Left is in the process of mobilising political opinion against UPA's stand on Iran. CPM general secretary Prakash Karat, who is spearheading the effort, had earlier charged the government with abandoning its diplomatic position to appease the US. Mr Karat has said that "by the next board meeting of the IAEA, the Indian government will have to undo the damage done".

In an article in CPM's mouth piece, Mr Karat held the Prime Minister directly responsible for the anti-Iran vote. "Just a few days of sustained American pressure has led the Manmohan Singh government to cave in. Condoleezza Rice's demand that India, China and Russia rally to the US position has been acceded to, at least by India.

NO DIVESTMENT OF PROFIT-MAKING NAVRATNA PSUs, ASSURES CENTRE

# Left ends panel boycott

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 13. — The Left parties today announced that they would end their boycott of the UPA-Left coordination committee meetings, following an assurance from the Congress-led UPA government that it would not go for disinvestment in profit-making public sector "navaratna" companies, including BHEL.

The Congress welcomed the Left's decision to resume participation in the coordination panel. The BJP, however, accused the Left of entering into a "gupt samjhauta (secret understanding)" with the government.

After an hour-long meeting of the Left parties at the CPI-M headquarters here today, the CPI-M general secretary, Mr Prakash Karat, reading from a written statement, said both the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the UPA chairperson, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, had assured the Left that no shares of profit-making state enterprises, including navratna PSUs like BHEL, would be sold. "In view of this development, the Left parties have decided to resume their participation in the UPA-Left Coordination Committee," he said.

The Manmohan Singh government's move to disinvest 10 per cent shares of BHEL in

May had triggered a Left furor. This subsequently led to the four Left parties — CPI-M, CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc — taking a collective decision to boycott the Congress-Left coordination committee meetings. They termed the government's decision as "the first major violation" of its common minimum programme (CMP).

The Left's decision today to resume their involvement in the coordination panel may signal a truce between the Congress and its supporting Left partners. The Left could project the government's decision to put BHEL divestment on hold as a victory of sorts, although there are still a number of the UPA government's economic and other policies and programmes over which the two sides do not see eye to eye. The countrywide strike on 29 September by the Left-affiliated trade unions pressing for their 16-point charter of demands was a clear pointer to their equation.

But, significantly, during the last three months of a stand-off between the Left and the Congress over BHEL, none of the Left parties ever gave any indication that even remotely suggested any threat to the survival or stability of the Manmohan Singh government. Interestingly, even as Mr Karat formally announced the decision to rejoin the UPA-Left

coordination meetings, other Left partners like the RSP still seemed averse to the idea.

Welcoming the Left's decision to rejoin the coordination panel deliberations, the AICC general secretary, Mrs Ambika Soni, said the Congress was confident after Mrs Gandhi wrote her letter to the Left that the matter would be soon resolved. Mrs Soni then lost no time in giving the big picture, saying "the UPA amalgam was constituted by various political parties committed to secular politics."

The BJP, however, sought to make light of the Left's rejoining the coordination committee meetings.

The party spokesman, Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said the Left had exposed itself by deciding to rejoin the coordination panel on the one hand and holding a separate election campaign in Bihar on the other. "The Left opposes the government. But it also enters into a secret understanding with the government. When they (Left parties) talk of labours' welfare before that they would have already spoken to the 'malik' (proprietors)" Mr Naqvi said adding the Left was only pretending to be playing the oppositional role.

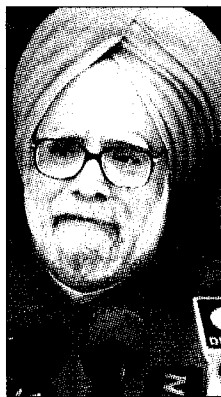
It is learnt that the next meeting of the UPA-Left coordination committee is likely to take place some time next week.

# Rs 500 cr more for a new life

## PM commits support in national calamity

ARUN Joshi  
Srinagar, October 11

AN EMOTIONAL Manmohan Singh on Tuesday spoke to the bereaved and quake-shattered survivors of Kashmir on behalf of each Indian, pledging full support and all help to rebuild their lives from scratch. After an on-the-spot survey of the ravaged areas in North Kashmir, the Prime Minister announced that the natural disaster would be treated as a "national calamity".



I am aware of your grief. I, along with 100 crore people of the country, share your grief. It is our duty to help reconstruct your lives and no effort will be spared in that direction

— Manmohan Singh

"We shall overcome," he assured the bruised and hungry and homeless of Uri and Tangdhar — the areas worst hit by Saturday's earthquake — announcing an additional relief package of Rs. 500 crore to speed up reconstruction and rehabilitation. The Centre had already sanctioned Rs.100 crore on Sunday.

He acknowledged that the death and devastation was much more extensive than it seemed in the immediate aftermath of the quake. No efforts would be spared to help the widows and orphans of the tragedy, he added.

It seemed the devastation on the PoK side hadn't escaped the Prime Minister's notice either. He had flown over the earthquake-hit areas along the Line of Control. Chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said that had Pakistan accepted India's offer of joint relief operations, "we could have offered the help also to those hit on the other side".

The Prime Minister looked deeply moved when he spoke to the locals, many of them stricken by hunger and cold, with Saturday morning's horror still etched on their faces. "I am aware of your grief. I, along with 100 crore people of the country, share your grief. It is our duty to reconstruct your lives and no effort will be spared in that direction," the Prime Minister said.

While showering praise on the army and the Jammu and Kashmir police for their dogged efforts to reach out to the victims, Prime Minister made it a point to stressed that even those far away from the disaster zone, the whole nation, was with the victims.

Officials accompanying him explained that the description "national calamity" was meant to assure the victims of the Centre's total commitment to fund all the relief and rescue operations followed by rehabilitation and reconstruction of houses, shops and infrastructure in general. The Rs 642-crore reconstruction package (Rs 100 crore plus Rs 42 crore plus Rs 500 crore) would also take care of the orphans, widows and senior citizens.

# Natwar one foot out, one in

## Ministry is gone, but not minister

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

**New Delhi, Nov. 7: Kunwar Natwar Singh lost his empire today but retained his crown.**

After days of will-he-won't-he speculation, it was announced by the Prime Minister's Office that Natwar would no longer hold the external affairs ministry but would continue as a member of the cabinet without a portfolio.

The arrangement was a signal that Natwar would neither take defeat for an answer nor allow the Prime Minister to reclaim the moral high ground after the oil-for-food scandal erupted.

M K Narayanan, the national security adviser, will be the de facto foreign minister following the Prime Minister's decision to keep the portfolio with himself.

Several Indian embassies and high commissions around the globe received oral instructions from South Block as soon as a decision was taken about Natwar Singh's fate that their point man in place of the external affairs minister would, henceforth, be Narayanan (in picture).

The national security adviser would be assisted in liaising between key Indian envoys and the Prime Minister by Narayanan's deputy and veteran diplomat, Vijay Nambiar.

Natwar and the Congress have been accused in the UN-appointed Volcker committee's report on the oil-for-food scheme that operated during Saddam Hussein's reign of paying kickbacks to Iraq. Both have denied the charge, saying they had no oil dealings with the Saddam government.

With Natwar's departure, external affairs become the responsibility of Manmohan Singh till the two probes instituted by the government to investigate the Volcker allegations against Natwar and the Congress are completed.

Earlier in the day, the government announced a judicial probe by a former chief justice, R.S. Pathak.

Last night, it had entrusted former UN diplomat Virendra Dayal with the task of liaising with the UN and its member-states to procure details about Indian entities and individuals mentioned in the Volcker report.

It is believed that Natwar, who till this morning made it plain he had no intention to quit, was assured that if absolved, he would get his job back.

Sources said Natwar himself might have dug his grave by "excessively politicising" the issue. First, he painted the report as a US-inspired conspiracy to malign those who were sympathetic to Saddam.

Second, he courted the Left and Congress allies like the DMK and the RJD for support on the ideological plank of anti-Americanism.

The last straw that broke the Prime Minister's and the Congress's patience was Natwar's declaration yesterday that India could revise its vote on making Iran fall in line with international norms on nuclear programmes.

"If a resolution is placed at the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), which is more severe than the last one... I can as foreign minister of India tell you that my recommendation to the government will be to revise our vote," he had said.

The government and the Congress read the statement as another sop to the Left and a "needless" provocation to the Prime Minister.

Sources close to Manmohan Singh said: "The Prime Minister was clear from the start that no motives should be attributed to a UN report."

Congress sources, however, admitted that if the Iran vote was "complex", forcing Natwar out was equally so because of his supposed damage potential. "His steadfast stand was: why was he singled out when the report mentions the Congress as well?" a source said.

There were "reasons to believe" that if dropped altogether, he might have damned the party in public.

■ See Pages 6 and 7

### THE GIANT SULK AND THE FAINT SMILE



Manmohan Singh and Natwar Singh watch the ceremonial reception for Czech Republic President Vaclav Klaus at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. (AFP)

## PM takes portfolio, Sonia gives post

### OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Nov. 7:** Natwar Singh owes his portfolio-less position in the cabinet to Sonia Gandhi. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had wanted the external affairs minister to stand down pending completion of the inquiry into the oil scandal, but could not get his way entirely.

With Natwar staying on in the cabinet, the signal comes out that Manmohan Singh and Sonia were not of the same opinion on what should be done with him.

But it is also true that the leadership thought Natwar would resign if made minister without portfolio. Not only did he not oblige, he also attended a meeting of the cabinet sub-committee on sports in his new avatar.

For the past three days, pressure had been mounting on the Congress president to take a decision on Natwar in the light of the strong opinion of the Prime Minister and senior colleagues that he should step down.

At the Sunday morning meeting of half-a-dozen senior ministers and party leaders at

the Prime Minister's house, some also expressed anger at Natwar's not-so-subtle allegation that some Congress colleagues were trying to oust him.

If Sonia had consented to the idea of persuading Natwar to quit voluntarily, he didn't oblige its proponents. Soon

after yesterday's meeting, the Prime Minister spent almost 90 minutes with Natwar.

He was told about the judicial inquiry and the George Fernandes precedent of quitting the government during such a probe. But an unmoved Natwar came out to announce he would continue in the government until he was asked by the Prime Minister and Sonia to step down.

He stood firm even as the government formally announced the judicial inquiry. Party leaders wondered how thereafter the Prime Minister succeeded in securing

Sonia's agreement to strip Natwar of his portfolio.

The Prime Minister, who called Natwar to his residence in the evening, conveyed the decision to remove him from external affairs.

Natwar had planned to meet Sonia before visiting Manmohan Singh. That plan, however, did not materialise.

Still, he has reaped benefits from his long association with the family. In the dark days after Rajiv Gandhi's death when P.V. Narasimha Rao was in power, Natwar was among the handful who had stayed by Sonia's side.

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### THE SLOG HOURS

#### SUNDAY

11:00 am

PM meets Sonia Gandhi, Pranab Mukherjee, Shivraj Patil, H.R. Bhardwaj, Arjun Singh and P Chidambaram at 7 Race Course Road

2:00 pm

Natwar meets PM

3:00 pm

Enforcement Directorate searches premises of Hamadan Exports, owned by Natwar son's friend Andaleeb Sehgal (in picture)

7:00 pm

Natwar says Delhi will revise its vote on Iran

10:30 pm

Government announces veteran diplomat Virendra Dayal will liaise with the UN to collect information on Volcker findings

11:00 pm

No question of resigning, says Natwar

#### MONDAY

11:00 am

Natwar to PTI: What should I resign for?

11:30 am

Government announces judicial probe

12:00

Congress releases letter to UN chief Kofi Annan, seeking relevant documents

1:00 pm

Led by Advani, NDA team meets President, seeks Natwar's ouster

2:00 pm

Sonia meets Ambika Soni, Ahmed Patel and Chidambaram, the last for legal inputs

4:00 pm

Natwar meets PM, Chidambaram present

5:00 pm

Govt flash: Natwar to exit foreign ministry but remain as minister without portfolio. PM to hold charge of foreign ministry

# Natwar one foot out, one in

## Ministry is gone, but not minister

RADHIKARAMASESHAN

**New Delhi, Nov. 7: Kunwar Natwar Singh lost his empire today but retained his crown.**

After days of will-he-won't-he speculation, it was announced by the Prime Minister's Office that Natwar would no longer hold the external affairs ministry but would continue as a member of the cabinet without a portfolio.

The arrangement was a signal that Natwar would neither take defeat for an answer nor allow the Prime Minister to reclaim the moral high ground after the oil-for-food scandal erupted.

M K Narayanan, the national security adviser, will be the de facto foreign minister following the Prime Minister's decision to keep the portfolio with himself.

Several Indian embassies and high commissions around the globe received oral instructions from South Block as soon as a decision was taken about Natwar Singh's fate that their point man in place of the external affairs minister would, henceforth, be Narayanan (in picture).

The national security adviser would be assisted in liaising between key Indian envoys and the Prime Minister by Narayanan's deputy and veteran diplomat, Vijay Nambiar.

Natwar and the Congress have been accused in the UN-appointed Volcker committee's report on the oil-for-food scheme that operated during Saddam Hussein's reign of paying kickbacks to Iraq. Both have denied the charge, saying they had no oil dealings with the Saddam government.

With Natwar's departure, external affairs become the responsibility of Manmohan Singh till the two probes instituted by the government to investigate the Volcker allegations against Natwar and the Congress are completed.

Earlier in the day, the government announced a judicial probe by a former chief justice, R.S. Pathak.

Last night, it had entrusted former UN diplomat Virendra Dayal with the task of liaising with the UN and its member-states to procure details about Indian entities and individuals mentioned in the Volcker report.

It is believed that Natwar, who till this morning made it plain he had no intention to quit, was assured that if absolved, he would get his job back.

Sources said Natwar himself might have dug his grave by "excessively politicising" the issue. First, he painted the report as a US-inspired conspiracy to malign those who were sympathetic to Saddam.

Second, he courted the Left and Congress allies like the DMK and the RJD for support on the ideological plank of anti-Americanism.

The last straw that broke the Prime Minister's and the Congress's patience was Natwar's declaration yesterday that India could revise its vote on making Iran fall in line with international norms on nuclear programmes.

"If a resolution is placed at the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), which is more severe than the last one... I can as foreign minister of India tell you that my recommendation to the government will be to revise our vote," he had said.

The government and the Congress read the statement as another sop to the Left and a "needless" provocation to the Prime Minister.

Sources close to Manmohan Singh said: "The Prime Minister was clear from the start that no motives should be attributed to a UN report."

Congress sources, however, admitted that if the Iran vote was "complex", forcing Natwar out was equally so because of his supposed damage potential. "His steadfast stand was: why was he singled out when the report mentions the Congress as well?" a source said.

There were "reasons to believe" that if dropped altogether, he might have damned the party in public.

See Pages 6 and 7

### THE GIANT SULK AND THE FAINT SMILE



Manmohan Singh and Natwar Singh watch the ceremonial reception for Czech Republic President Vaclav Klaus at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. (AFP)

## PM takes portfolio, Sonia gives post

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Nov. 7:** Natwar Singh owes his portfolio-less position in the cabinet to Sonia Gandhi. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had wanted the external affairs minister to stand down pending completion of the inquiry into the oil scandal, but could not get his way entirely.

With Natwar staying on in the cabinet, the signal comes out that Manmohan Singh and Sonia were not of the same opinion on what should be done with him.

But it is also true that the leadership thought Natwar would resign if made minister without portfolio. Not only did he not oblige, he also attended a meeting of the cabinet subcommittee on sports in his new avatar.

For the past three days, pressure had been mounting on the Congress president to take a decision on Natwar in the light of the strong opinion of the Prime Minister and senior colleagues that he should step down.

At the Sunday morning meeting of half-a-dozen senior ministers and party leaders at

the Prime Minister's house, some also expressed anger at Natwar's not-so-subtle allegation that some Congress colleagues were trying to oust him.

If Sonia had consented to the idea of persuading Natwar to quit voluntarily, he didn't oblige its proponents. Soon

#### QUOTE

What should I resign for?

NATWAR SINGH  
in the morning

after yesterday's meeting, the Prime Minister spent almost 90 minutes with Natwar.

He was told about the judicial inquiry and the George Fernandes precedent of quitting the government during such a probe. But an unmoved Natwar came out to announce he would continue in the government until he was asked by the Prime Minister and Sonia to step down.

He stood firm even as the government formally announced the judicial inquiry.

Party leaders wondered how thereafter the Prime Minister succeeded in securing

Sonia's agreement to strip Natwar of his portfolio.

The Prime Minister, who called Natwar to his residence in the evening, conveyed the decision to remove him from external affairs.

Natwar had planned to meet Sonia before visiting Manmohan Singh. That plan, however, did not materialise.

Still, he has reaped benefits from his long association with the family. In the dark days after Rajiv Gandhi's death when P.V. Narasimha Rao was in power, Natwar was among the handful who had stayed by Sonia's side.

### THE SLOG HOURS

#### SUNDAY

11:00 am

PM meets Sonia Gandhi, Pranab Mukherjee, Shivraj Patil, H.R. Bhardwaj, Arjun Singh and P Chidambaram at 7 Race Course Road

2:00 pm

Natwar meets PM

3:00 pm

Enforcement Directorate searches premises of Hamadan Exports, owned by Natwar son's friend Andaleeb Sehgal (in picture)

7:00 pm

Natwar says Delhi will revise its vote on Iran

8:30 pm

Government announces veteran diplomat Virendra Dayal will liaise with the UN to collect information on Volcker findings

11:00 pm

No question of resigning, says Natwar

#### MONDAY

11:00 am

Natwar to PTI: What should I resign for?

11:30 am

Government announces judicial probe

12:00 pm

Congress releases letter to UN chief Kofi Annan, seeking relevant documents

4:00 pm

Led by Advani, NDA team meets President, seeks Natwar's ouster

7:00 pm

Sonia meets Ambika Soni, Ahmed Patel and Chidambaram, the last for legal inputs

10:00 pm

Natwar meets PM.



# PM defends policies from Left attack

At CMs' conclave, says no one can question the patriotism of Congress; tells CMs to work hard and shun populism

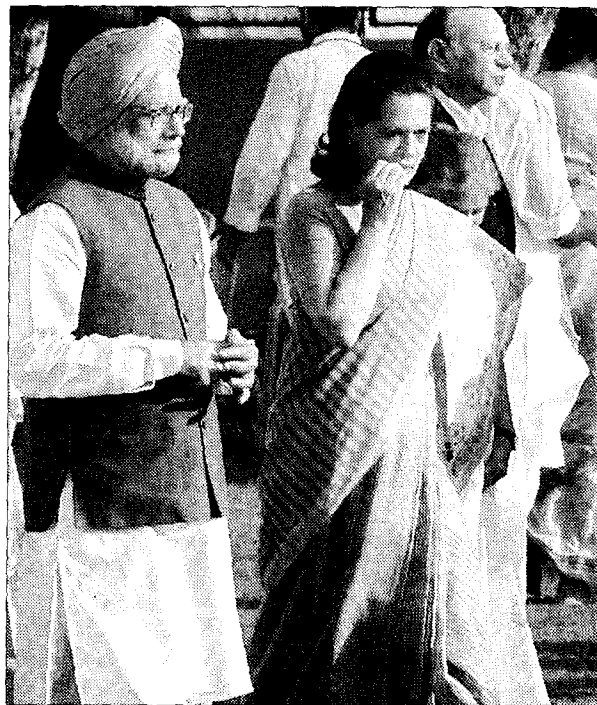
PRADEEP KAUSHAL  
CHANDIGARH | OCTOBER 8

**P**USHED by the Left on almost every front — disinvestment, foreign affairs and national security — Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today defended the government's policies saying that nobody could question the patriotism and motives of the Congress even though there could be differences of opinion.

Stating that "future of India is safe in caring hand of the Congress," he asked the party to educate people on "what is in the best interests of the country."

Speaking at the Congress Chief Ministers' Conclave at the Punjab Bhawan here, the Prime Minister said, "Be it our economic policy, or foreign policy, or our national security policy, the party must explain the thinking in the government to the people ... who would never question the patriotism of the Congress".

The government's sole motivation, he said, was "to build an India that is strong, that is prosperous, that is liberal and caring, that is inclusive and secular." The party, he added, "must educate people about the limitations under which a government functions so that false expectations are not generated."



UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the Congress CMs' Conclave in Chandigarh. PTI

Whether it is disinvestment or the Indo-US nuclear agreement or India's vote for an IAEA resolution on Iran, the Prime Minister signalled the party to put forth its own viewpoint more effectively as the Left goes to town with its own.

The Prime Minister also came down heavily on populism, a veiled but clear censure of chief ministers Y.S.R. Reddy (Andhra Pradesh) and Amarinder Singh (Punjab), who use promises of free

power to win electoral support. He said: "Populism and populist gimmicks no longer impress people. Hard work does. Promises like free electricity and other promises that cannot be sustained will not fetch results. Performance does a make a difference."

At a press conference later, when the reporters asked Singh about the response of the two chief ministers, the Prime Minister said, "They were listening to me when I

was speaking", evoking loud laughter. The two chief ministers were present at the press conference.

Pointing out that the UPA government had "implemented three-fourths of the commitments undertaken in the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP)," the Prime Minister told the chief ministers that the "cutting edge of governance is in the states" because the Centre could only offer funds and make policies.

It was incumbent upon the states to improve delivery of services. "The citizens' confidence in our governance systems is shaped by how you, at the state level, at the village level, manage the affairs of the state." He asked the chief ministers to "commit their best civil service talent" for the implementation of the Employment Act. Singh said even though "the economy is on the move," there were areas of concern — "need for massive investment in infrastructure, unacceptably high levels of fiscal deficit of states and an alarming decline in agricultural growth."

Expressing concern over the "manner in which we are dealing with internal security challenges," he said, "all our plans for development will amount to nothing if we cannot ensure the rule of law."

## On Bihar, says wait for detailed judgment

PRADEEP KAUSHAL  
CHANDIGARH | OCTOBER 8

A DAY after the Supreme Court held the dissolution of the Bihar Assembly "unconstitutional," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sought to buy time to formulate a response. His argument: The government will wait for the detailed judgment.

Speaking to the media after the Congress Chief Ministers' conclave, the Prime Minister told reporters: "We don't know the reasons for which the court has declared the dissolution unconstitutional. We will wait for the verdict before we say anything further."

"The Governor had made a recommendation. The Union Government acted on that recommendation. You all know the history of the case."

The Prime Minister, who conferred with senior party leaders, including Congress president Sonia Gandhi on arrival late last night, has obviously fallen in line with the dominant view of the core committee that the party should examine all aspects before taking a position.

Sources said more than Buta Singh, "who in any case is likely to either lose his job or get transferred to another state", the party

leadership is more concerned with the implication of the Cabinet recommendation to the President.

When a reporter pointed at this, the Prime Minister said he "did not disown" responsibility. "Certain circumstances," according to him, "were brought to our notice and in our assessment dissolution was the only practical course open."

Sources, however, said that besides the view of the party, the Prime Minister has to contend with other factors, like the concern reportedly expressed by the President to him soon after the SC judgment as well as different views of the UPA partners on the role of the governors, as well.

When a reporter sought his view on politicians being made governors, the Prime Minister said, "having been a politician was not a bad qualification."

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who had been spared of questions on the Assembly dissolution, was suddenly confronted with one. A reporter asked whether after having a technocrat as the President and a bureaucrat as the Prime Minister, time had come for the appointment of apolitical governors. Sonia promptly said: "I don't think politics has started from Raj Bhawans."

## Remove Buta and apologise, BJP tells PM

EXPRESS NEWS  
SERVICE  
NEW DELHI | OCTOBER 8

REACTING to the Supreme Court order declaring dissolution of the Bihar assembly as unconstitutional, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today demanded immediate removal of Bihar Governor Buta Singh for "recommending the dissolution" and "at least an apology" from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for "misleading the people, Parliament and the President".

BJP leader Pramod Mahajan told media-persons after a meeting of BJP general secretaries and office-bearers that if the PM stepped in to protect the Governor, it would demand his resignation too. An NDA delegation led by BJP president L.K. Advani will meet the President on Monday.

He also questioned Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj's remark that the Supreme Court Bench, which passed the judgment, was split 3-2 on the issue. "How did the minister know the details of a decision taken by five judges? I hope the Supreme Court takes a suo moto notice. This is a matter to be investigated," he said.

CPM says dissolution was only way out

NEW DELHI: THE CPM justified the dissolution saying it was the only way a new government could have been formed in Bihar but stressed the need for changes in the Constitution "to check the arbitrariness in the discretionary powers of the Governor". The party politburo, which met today, said that after three months, no party or combination of parties was in a position to form the government.

# We want UPA Government to work within the CMP: Karat

Special Correspondent

**MUMBAI:** The CPI(M) general secretary, Prakash Karat, has said that he had received a letter from the United Progressive Alliance chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, formally informing him of the Prime Minister's decision to put on hold the move to divest 10 per cent Government equity in the profit-making BHEL.

"We received a letter on this issue from Sonia Gandhi requesting us to rejoin the UPA

Co-Ordination Committee and we will take a decision soon," Mr. Karat said. He was addressing a seminar on "Disinvestment and FDI" organised by

Citizens for National Consensus here on Thursday. He said he got an assurance in this regard from the Prime Minister earlier. "We want the UPA Government to work within the Common Minimum Programme," Mr. Karat said.

The Left parties stopped attending the UPA Coordination Committee meetings, as they were not able to reach a consensus with the Government on sale of 10 per cent equity of BHEL. "We maintain that our position on BHEL is correct," Mr. Karat said. He said that dividend income from profit-making Public Sector Enterprises were growing several times. "Now the Govern-

ment will say 51:49 (Government 51 per cent and private 49 per cent). Later, crossing the line of two per cent is very easy," he added.

He said "we come to know only from the media" several policies of the Government. Consultation with the Left was held only when Parliament had to pass some legislation, Mr. Karat said. He came to know about the Government move to allow FDI in the retail sector from the media. "We are not against FDI. It is necessary. If a particular FDI will augment our productivity, bring in technology and generate employment, we welcome it," said Mr. Karat

# Return to coordination meetings: Sonia

UPA chairperson tells Left: decision to offload equity in BHEL put on hold

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi has written to the four Left parties to consider returning to the UPA-Left Coordination Committee, as the Cabinet decision to offload equity in Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited has been "put in abeyance."

The Left parties have been insisting on a formal communication from the UPA — that it would not proceed with the disinvestment of BHEL or any other Navratna public sector undertaking — to reconsider their decision to withdraw from the Coordination Committee.

The All-India Forward Bloc general secretary, Debabrata Biswas, confirmed receipt of the letter despatched early on Thursday. He said the Left parties would meet soon to formulate a response.

Identical letters have been sent to Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Prakash Karat, CPI general sec-

• **Left parties saw BHEL disinvestment as the first serious violation of CMP**

• **Left will meet soon to formulate response, says Debabrata Biswas**

• **Sonia writes after receiving communication from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh**

retary A. B. Bardhan and Abani Roy of the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

Ms. Gandhi said she had received a note from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh conveying the Government's decision to put in abeyance disinvestment of shares in BHEL. "In this context, you may like to consider resuming participation in the UPA-Left Coordination Committee," he said. Ms. Gandhi's letter makes a reference to the letter written by the Left parties on June 26 — the day they decided to suspend par-

ticipation in the Coordination Committee over the Government's decision to offload equity in the Navratna PSUs, beginning with BHEL.

They saw the BHEL disinvestment as the "first serious violation" of the National Common Minimum Programme.

Upset by the manner in which the Government went ahead with its decisions, the Left parties had said in a letter to Ms. Gandhi: "We find no useful purpose will be served in attending meetings of the Coordination Committee." While the Government subsequently gave several indications of putting BHEL disinvestment on hold, the Left parties decided to await a written assurance before taking any decision on returning to Coordination Committee meetings.

"They [UPA] have indicated that they do not plan to proceed with divesting in BHEL or other Navratna companies ... we will take a decision after we receive a formal communication," Mr. Karat said on September 13.

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7/10  
UPA GCA



# সনিয়ার চিঠি কারাটকে

## বাতিল নয়, স্থগিত থাকছে ভেল-বিলগ্নি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৬ অক্টোবর: অবশেষে চিঠি এল। সঙ্গে আনল গত চার মাস ধরে চলা অচলাবস্থা কাটানোর ইঙ্গিত।

কেন্দ্রের ইউপিএ জোটের সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গাঁধী সিপিএমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাটকে চিঠি লিখে জানিয়েছেন, ভেল-এর বিলগ্নিকরণ 'স্থগিত' করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। বামেরা যাতে সরকারের সঙ্গে সমন্বয় কমিটিতে আবার ফিরে আসেন, তার জন্য অনুরোধও জানিয়েছেন তিনি। সনিয়ার চিঠি পেয়ে তড়িঘড়ি বামেরা সমন্বয় কমিটিতে ফেরার কথা না-জানাতেও প্রায় তাদের দাবিই সরকার মেনে নেওয়ায় বরফ গলার সম্ভাবনা থাকছে। শুধু ভেল বা বিলগ্নিকরণ প্রসঙ্গই নয়, সামগ্রিক ভাবে ইউপিএ-বাম সম্পর্কে নতুন করে গতি আনার পথে সনিয়ার এই চিঠিকে বড় উদ্যোগ হিসাবেই ধরা হচ্ছে।

দেশে আর্থিক সংস্কারের কাণ্ডারী হিসাবে যাকে গণ্য করা হয়, সেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহই ভেল-এর বিলগ্নিকরণ 'স্থগিত' রাখার সরকারি সিদ্ধান্ত জানিয়ে সনিয়া গাঁধীকে চিঠি লিখেছেন। মনমোহনের চিঠি পাওয়ার পরে বামেরদের চিঠি লিখেছেন সনিয়া।

চিঠির কথা জেনে প্রকাশ কারাট বলেছেন, "আমি এখনও দেখিনি ওই চিঠিতে কী লেখা আছে। তবে আমরা চার বাম দল বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা করে সিদ্ধান্ত নেব।"

ভেল-এর বিলগ্নিকরণের প্রতিবাদে সরকারের সঙ্গে সমন্বয় কমিটি থেকে সরে দাঁড়ানোর সিদ্ধান্ত বামেরা নিয়েছিলেন জুন মাসে। তার পর থেকে তাঁরা এই বিষয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে এড়িয়ে কথা বলতেন শুধু শাসক জোটের নেত্রী সনিয়ার সঙ্গে। অচলাবস্থা কাটানোর জন্য সনিয়া চিঠি লিখলেন অক্টোবরে। বাস্তবে কিন্তু জুন থেকেই সরকার বিষয়টি নিয়ে আর এগোয়নি। অর্থাৎ বলতে গেলে সেই সময় থেকে বিলগ্নিকরণ স্থগিত হয়েই আছে।

ভেল-এর বিলগ্নিকরণ স্থগিত হওয়ার অর্থ অবশ্য বিলগ্নিকরণ প্রক্রিয়াটিরই আপাতত সমাপ্তি। কারণ বামেরদের আপত্তি শুধু ভেল নিয়ে নয়, সমস্ত নবরত্ন সংস্থা নিয়েই। চিঠিতে

অবশ্য শুধু 'ভেল'-এর কথাই বলা হয়েছে (কারণ, ওই একটি নবরত্ন সংস্থার বিলগ্নিকরণ ঘিরেই বিরোধ বেধেছিল)। বামেরদের দাবিমতো চিঠিতে বিলগ্নিকরণ 'বাতিল' করার কথা বলা হয়নি, শুধু 'স্থগিত' করার কথা বলা হয়েছে।

তবে এত দিন পরে লিখিত ভাবে স্থগিত করার কথা জানানোর মানে দাঁড়াচ্ছে বিষয়টি প্রায় বাতিল করা। স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই এর পরে সরকার যে আর বামেরদের সম্মতি ছাড়া এই ধরনের সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে না, তাতে বিশেষ সংশয় নেই। বিলগ্নিকরণ থেকে প্রতিরক্ষা ক্ষেত্রে মার্কিন সহযোগিতা— বিভিন্ন প্রশ্নে সরকার-বাম সম্পর্ক যে ভাবে অবনতির পথে চলছিল, তার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে এই চিঠিটি যথেষ্টই তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। অতি সম্প্রতি ইরান-প্রশ্নে সরকারের 'মার্কিনঘেঁষা' নীতির বিরুদ্ধেও বামেরা সরব। এই অবস্থায় সনিয়ার চিঠি অন্তত আংশিক ভাবে সম্পর্ক জোড়া লাগাবে।

একই সঙ্গে আবার আলোচনায় আসছে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভায় সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার পরেও বামেরদের চাপের মুখে সরকারের পিছিয়ে যাওয়ার দিকটা। ইউপিএ জোট সরকারের জমানায় এটাই প্রথম বড় ধরনের হৌচট। এর ফলে ভারতের অর্থনৈতিক সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়ার দিকে যাঁদের নজর রয়েছে, তাঁদের কাছে ভুল সঙ্কেত যাবে বলে সরকারেরই একাংশ মনে করছে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ অবশ্য তেমন মনে করেন না। তিনি মনে করেন না যে, ভেল-এর বিলগ্নিকরণের সঙ্গে সামগ্রিক সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়ার কোনও নিবিড় যোগসূত্র আছে। বামেরদের সঙ্গে সমঝোতার এই পথ তিনিই খুলে দিয়েছেন সনিয়া গাঁধীকে চিঠি লিখে। সেই চিঠিতেই তিনি ভেল-এর বিলগ্নিকরণ 'স্থগিত' রাখার কথা জানিয়েছেন। বামেরদের দাবি ছিল, বিলগ্নিকরণ বাতিল করার কথা ঘোষণা করতে হবে। মনমোহন অবশ্য সেটা করেননি। তবে চিঠিতে ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন, কেন ভেল-সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছিল। সেখানে তিনি সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়ার কোনও উল্লেখই

এর পর তেরোর পাতায়



## স্থগিত থাকছে ভেল-বিলগ্নি

প্রথম পাতার পর

করেননি। তাঁর বক্তব্য, সামাজিক ক্ষেত্র-সহ বিভিন্ন জলকল্যাণ প্রকল্পে অর্থ জোগানোর জন্যই ওই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছিল। চিঠি থেকে এই ইঙ্গিত পাওয়া যাচ্ছে যে, এর পরে নানা সামাজিক প্রকল্পে অর্থের জোগানে টান পড়লে কারণ হিসাবে বিলগ্নিকরণ স্থগিত করার বিষয়টিকেই সামনে নিয়ে আসবেন মনমোহন।

বামেদের আপত্তির পরিপ্রেক্ষিতেই যে তাঁকে এমন সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে হল, তা-ও সনিয়ার কাছে স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন মনমোহন। তবে কংগ্রেসনেত্রী অম্বিকা সোনি দাবি করেছেন, এটা চাপের সামনে ভেঙে পড়া নয়। “আমরা বাইশটা দল নিয়ে সরকার চালাই,” এ কথা জানিয়ে তিনি বলেন, “সেখানে বিভিন্ন জনের বিভিন্ন মতামত আছে।

বিভিন্ন প্রশ্ন আছে, যা নিয়ে

আলোচনা দরকার। এটাকে সংকীর্ণ দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে দেখা ঠিক নয়। সকলকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে চলাটাই বেশি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।” সমন্বয় কমিটিতে বামেরা ফিরলে সেখানে যে নবরত্ন বিলগ্নিকরণের গোটা বিষয়টি নিয়ে আবার আলোচনা হতে পারে, সেই ইঙ্গিতও দিয়েছেন অম্বিকা।

এই চিঠি যে দেওয়া হবে, সে কথা অবশ্য আমেরিকা সফরের আগেই সিপিএমের সাধারণ সম্পাদককে জানিয়ে গিয়েছিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। সেই আশ্বাসের পরেও চিঠি আসতে অনেকটা দেরি হয়েছে। ইতিমধ্যে ইরান এবং অন্য কয়েকটি প্রদেশে সরকারের কাজকর্মে অসন্তোষ জানিয়েছেন বামেরা। এখন এই চিঠি না-এলে অদূর ভবিষ্যতে বামপন্থীদের তুষ্টি রাখা সনিয়া-মনমোহনের পক্ষে সম্ভবত আরও কঠিন হয়ে দাঁড়াত।

# কেন্দ্রের আক্রমণের সামনে বামি অস্ত্র ইরান

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩ অক্টোবর: সরকারের সঙ্গে লড়াইতে গিয়ে বামেরাই এখন বেশ অসুবিধায় পড়েছেন। প্রত্যাঘাত করতে কেন্দ্রের 'আমেরিকা-ঘনিষ্ঠতার' বিরুদ্ধে 'সমমনোভাবাপন্ন দল ও ব্যক্তিদের' নিয়ে প্রচার-অভিযানে নামার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন তাঁরা। সমমনোভাবাপন্নদের মধ্যে মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদব এবং এইচডি দেবগৌড়া থাকছেনই। আর কারা আসেন সেটাই দেখতে আগ্রহী রাজনৈতিক মহল।

এই কর্মসূচির প্রাথমিক উদ্দেশ্য, নভেম্বরে আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু শক্তি সংস্থায় ভারত যাতে ইরান প্রসঙ্গ নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে পাঠানোর বিরোধিতা করে। কারণ, সরকার নভেম্বরেও ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে গেলে কী ভাবে মনমোহন সরকারকে সরাসরি সমর্থন করে যাওয়া সম্ভব, তা নিয়ে বামদের মধ্যে ইতিমধ্যেই বিতর্ক দানা বাঁধতে শুরু করেছে। দ্বিতীয় উদ্দেশ্য, ভবিষ্যতের জন্য তৃতীয় ফ্রন্টের স্বপ্ন নিয়েও খানিকটা নাড়াচাড়া করা।

এর কারণ, বামেরা এখন সমন্বয় কমিটি, শ্রম সংস্কার এবং ইরান, এই ত্রিফলা আক্রমণের মুখোমুখি। আগে ভরসা দিলেও সরকারের তরফে 'নবরত্নের বিলম্বীকরণ না-করার প্রতিশ্রুতি' দিয়ে আজ পর্যন্ত কোনও চিঠি বামদের পাঠানো হয়নি। চিঠি এলে সমন্বয় কমিটিতে ফেরা হবে কিন্তু চিঠি কবে আসবে বা আদৌ আসবে কি না, তা নিশ্চিত নয়। ধর্মঘট করে সরকারকে ধাক্কা দেওয়া যাবে বলে ট্রেড ইউনিয়ন নেতারা আশা করলেও, বাস্তবে তার কোনও প্রতিফলন ঘটেনি। বরং কেন্দ্র শ্রম সংস্কারের পথে এগনোর যাবতীয় প্রস্তুতি শুরু করেছে।

এই অবস্থায় বামদের সিদ্ধান্ত, ইরান নিয়েই পাল্টা আক্রমণ শুরু করা প্রয়োজন। সিপিএমের প্রকাশ কারাট ও বৃন্দা কারাট, সি পিআইয়ের এ বি বর্ধন, ডি রাজা এবং পল্লব সেনগুপ্ত, ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকের দেবব্রত বিশ্বাস, জি দেবরাজন এবং আর এস পির অবনী

রায় আজ আলোচনায় বসেন। পরে কারাট 'সমমনোভাবাপন্ন দল' হিসাবে মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদব ও এইচ ডি দেবগৌড়ার দলের নাম করেন। সরকারের শরিক দলগুলিকে তাঁরা টানার চেষ্টা করবেন কি না জানতে চাইলে তিনি বলেন, "দেখা যাক, ওরা কেউ আসে কি না।"

ভেল নিয়ে সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ে শুধু বামেরাই ছিলেন। এখন ভবিষ্যতের কথা চিন্তা করেই তাঁরা অন্য দলকে সঙ্গে টানার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন। কারণ, দুই কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির একটা বড় অংশ এখন মনে করছে, ভবিষ্যতে কোনও তৃতীয় ফ্রন্ট গড়তে হলে তার সূত্রপাত যৌথ আন্দোলনের মধ্যে দিয়েই হওয়া উচিত। সরকারের সঙ্গে দূরত্ব আরও বাড়লে বিষয়ভিত্তিক সমর্থনের পথে সরে যাওয়া উচিত বলেও তাঁদের অভিমত। প্রয়োজনে বিষয়ভিত্তিক সমর্থনের পথে সরে যাওয়ার আগে কমিউনিস্টরা এমন একটা জায়গায় পৌঁছতে চান যাতে ভোট হলে নিজেদের এবং তৃতীয় শক্তির সদস্যসংখ্যা আরও বাড়ানো যায়। অঙ্কে চম্বাবাবু নায়ডুর সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠতা ফের হাঙ্কিল। কিন্তু এখন রাজ্যের পুরভোটে দশ শতাংশ বোর্ড পাওয়া নেতার সঙ্গে যাওয়ার আগে তাঁদের ভাবতে হবে।

কর্নাটকে দেবগৌড়ার দলে ছোটখাটো ভাঙন লেগেই রয়েছে। আর সঙ্কট দেখা দিলে এম করুণানিধি তাঁদের দিকে আসবেন কি না (আর জয়ললিতা তখন কংগ্রেসের পাশে যাবেন কি না) তারও কোনও নিশ্চয়তা নেই। উত্তর ভারতেও উল্লেখযোগ্য অগ্রগতি নেই।

এই অবস্থায় ইরানের প্রসঙ্গকে কেন্দ্র করেই তৃতীয় বিকল্পের স্বপ্ন উদ্ভেদিতে চাইছেন প্রকাশ কারাটেরা। কারণ, এই একটি বিষয়ে এক টিলে দুই পাখি মারা সম্ভব। এটি যেমন মার্কিন বিরোধিতার প্রশ্ন, তেমনই সংখ্যালঘু ঘনিষ্ঠতারও সহজ পথ।

# Iran: party stands by Manmohan

Core group noted that circumstances did not permit wider consultation

Harish Khare

**NEW DELHI:** On Saturday the Prime Minister was asked about CPI(M) leader Prakash Karat's sharp criticism on India's Iran vote. If Dr. Manmohan Singh seemed to shrug off the personal attack by citing the Gita, it was because a day earlier the Congress leadership had totally endorsed the United Progressive Alliance Government decision to vote against Iran in Geneva.

On Friday evening the "core group" met at Dr. Singh's residence.

The group comprises Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Dr. Singh and senior ministers Pranab Mukherjee, Arjun Singh, Shivraj Patil, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and political secretary to Ms. Gandhi, Ahmed Patel.

It discussed the post-vote

controversy.

## Standing convention

The group was told that a decision (which way to vote) had to be taken in a hurry, as the Americans had violated a standing convention of member-states getting 48 hours before any resolution was discussed or put to vote.

Only 12 hours were available and a detailed discussion was not possible even within the Government. Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee was in Kolkata, Foreign Minister Natwar Singh in New York, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in Washington and the Prime Minister in New Delhi.

The Government can be indicted for not initiating as wide a consultation process as was desirable, but under the circum-

stances a decision had to be made without the benefit of wider consultation.

## Party had to be realistic

When a member suggested that the vote would annoy the minorities and hurt the Congress electoral prospects, it was left to Mr. Mukherjee to point out that the party had to be realistic. It was noted that the minorities did not vote for the Congress in 1977 nor did they vote for it after the Babri Masjid demolition. The minorities do not vote on the basis of a vote in some distant forum. The member was told that national security decision-making could not be dictated by such considerations. The "core group" noted that Iran had not been a helpful neighbour and was prone to take a pro-Pakistan stance in international fo-

ras, especially at the Organisation of Islamic Countries.

Secularism could not be equated with endorsement of Iran's nuclear policy. The group felt that the immediate positive outcome was a change in Canada's stance on matters nuclear. It was noted that Mr. Natwar Singh had secured a breakthrough understanding with the Canadians, overturning a position Ottawa has had since 1974, reinforced in 1998 (after India's nuclear tests).

Senior Congress sources suggest that the party leadership stands fully behind Dr. Singh on the Iran vote issue. A senior Cabinet minister has been identified as a source of a number of inspired stories, suggesting a rift at the top. The Minister has been politely told to desist from making any remarks.

# ফের নিন্দা কারাটের, গীতা আউড়ে অনড় মনমোহন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, কলকাতা ও নয়াদিল্লি: শনিবার সন্ধ্যায় বৃষ্টির মধ্যে ধর্মতলার সভায় দাঁড়িয়ে সিপিএমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাট যখন আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু শক্তি সংস্থায় (আইএইএ) ইরানের বিপক্ষে ভোট দেওয়ার জন্য প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহকে কড়া সমালোচনায় বিধছিলেন, তখনই দিল্লিতে রাষ্ট্রপতি ভবনে এক অনুষ্ঠানে গীতাকে উদ্ধৃত করে বাম সমালোচনা কার্যত উড়িয়ে দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। ইরান প্রসঙ্গে দলীয় মুখপত্রে কারাটের সমালোচনার কথা বলা হলে, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর জবাব, “আমি এতে বিস্মিত নই। গীতায় বলেছে, কর্তব্য করে যাও। ফলের আশা কোরো না। আমরা যা করেছি, তা আদৌ ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে নয়। বরং সমস্যার সমাধানের জন্য কূটনৈতিক-সময় পাওয়া গিয়েছে। যা দুই দেশের পক্ষেই গ্রহণযোগ্য।”

কলকাতার সঙ্গে দিল্লির দূরত্ব দেড় হাজার কিলোমিটার। কিন্তু ইরান নিয়ে বামদের সঙ্গে সরকারে যে দূরত্ব সৃষ্টি হচ্ছে, তা এর থেকে অনেক বেশি বলেই মনে হচ্ছে। ভারত ইরানের বিপক্ষে ভোট দেওয়ায় আমেরিকা যে খুশি, তা শুক্রবার মনমোহনকে মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বুশের ফোন করা থেকেই পরিষ্কার। ওয়াশিংটন-রিব্রটিকে ‘অত্যন্ত তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ’ বলে বর্ণনা করেছে। কারণ, রাশিয়া, চীন, মালয়েশিয়া, দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার মতো ১২টি দেশ ভোট না দিলেও ব্রিটেন, জার্মানি, ফ্রান্সের পথ অনুসরণ করে ইরানের বিপক্ষে ভোট দিয়েছে ভারত।

দলের পলিটব্যুরোর দুই সদস্য বিমান বসু এবং অনিল বিশ্বাসকে পাশে বসিয়ে রানি রাসমণি রোডের সভায় কারাট এই বিষয়টাই উল্লেখ করেন। তিনি স্পষ্ট জানান, আইএইএ-তে ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে ভোট দিয়ে কেন্দ্র কেবল ন্যূনতম সাধারণ কর্মসূচিই (সিএমপি) লঙ্ঘন করেনি, নেহরুর সময় থেকে ভারত যে জোট নিরপেক্ষ বিদেশনীতি নিয়ে চলছিল, তা থেকেও সরে এসেছে। তাঁর কথায়, “কেন্দ্র একবার ভুল করেছে। নভেম্বরে ফের আইএইএ-র ভোটে এই ভুল শোধরানোর সুযোগ আসবে। আমরা চাই, আমেরিকার চাপে নতিস্বীকার না-করে কেন্দ্র যেন ইরানের পক্ষেই ভোট দেয়।”

বাজপেয়ী সরকারের বিদেশনীতির উল্লেখ করে কারাট বলেন, “ওরা বলেছিল, ভারত আমেরিকার স্বাভাবিক মিত্র। আর এরা (কংগ্রেস) মুখে অন্য কথা বলে ভারতকে

আমেরিকার জুনিয়র পার্টনার করতে চায়। আমরা কিছুতেই তা মেনে নেব না। বিদেশনীতি নিয়ে স্পষ্ট সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে হবে। মানুষকে সব খুলে জানাতে হবে। কারণ, সরকার গঠনের সময়েই সিএমপি-তে বলা হয়েছিল, স্বাধীন বিদেশনীতি নিয়ে চলতে হবে।”

এ ব্যাপারে সই সংগ্রহ-সহ তাঁরা যে দেশ জুড়ে প্রচার অভিযানে নামবেন, তা জানিয়ে কারাট বলেন, “আমরা চাপ দিয়ে কেন্দ্রকে আমাদের কথা শুনতে বাধ্য করব।” সংসদেও বামেরা সরব হবেন কি না জানতে চাওয়া হলে কারাট বলেন, “এখনই সংসদের কথা আসছে কেন? আগে নভেম্বরে সরকার কী করছে, তা দেখতে চাই।”

## প্রসঙ্গ ইরান



আইএইএ-তে ভারত ইরানের বিপক্ষে ভোট দেওয়ায় আমেরিকা থেকে তারাপুর পরমাণু কেন্দ্রের জন্য জ্বালানি পাওয়ার বিষয়টি নিয়ে আর কোনও বাধাই রইল না। এটা ভারতের পক্ষে বড় লাভ। কিন্তু ইরান থেকে পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে দিয়ে যে গ্যাস পাইপ লাইন আসার কথা, তা কিছুটা হলেও অনিশ্চিত হয়ে পড়ল। টেলিফোনে বুশ-মনমোহন কথার প্রসঙ্গ তুলে কারাট বলেন, “আমি জানি দুই রাষ্ট্রপ্রধানের মধ্যে কাল কথা হয়েছে। কিন্তু প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে আমি জিজ্ঞাসা করতে চাই, আমেরিকা থেকে পরমাণু-জ্বালানি পেলেই কি আমাদের শক্তির সমস্যা মিটে যাবে? দেশের মানুষের স্বার্থে ইরানের থেকে গ্যাস বা জ্বালানি তেল পাওয়া কি বেশি জরুরি নয়? কারণ, তাতে আরও বেশি মানুষ উপকৃত হবেন।”

কিছুটা আক্ষেপের সুরেই কারাট বলেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজে মনে করেন, শান্তিপূর্ণ ভাবে পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি ব্যবহারের অধিকার ইরানের আছে। বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ নিজে ইরানে গিয়ে ওদের সঙ্গে গ্যাসের ব্যাপারে সমঝোতা করেন। তার পরেও আমেরিকার চাপে যে ভাবে কেন্দ্র ইরানের বিপক্ষে গেল, তা ভারতের গণতন্ত্রের পক্ষেও ক্ষতিকর।” তবে, কেন্দ্রকে চাপ যা-ই দেওয়া হোক, সিপিএম যে এখনই চরম কোনও পদক্ষেপ করবে না, তা দলীয় নেতৃত্ব কলকাতায় জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন। আর সেই ভরসাতেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী গীতার শ্লোক আউড়ে যাচ্ছেন। সেই সঙ্গে সমন্বয় কমিটিতে ফেরার অনুরোধ জানিয়ে বামদের চিঠিও দিচ্ছে না কংগ্রেস জোট। কারাট বলেন, “ওঁরা যত ক্ষণ চিঠি না দিচ্ছেন, বা কিছু বলছেন, তত ক্ষণ কমিটিতে ফেরার প্রসঙ্গই নেই।”

# Left rejects Centre's claims on Iran vote

## Govt Could Have Scored On Both Sides & Maintained A Non-Aligned Stance

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 28 SEPTEMBER

**T**HE Left on Wednesday attempted to climb policy making heights by demanding a review of the anti-Iran vote before the November meeting of the IAEA. The government, which is under domestic pressure to explain the paradigm shift in diplomacy, however, was non-committal on India's stand at the November meeting.

The Left parties argued that the vote against Iran will hamper economic ties with Iran, including the gas pipeline and LNG projects. The government told the Left leaders that the Indian ambassador in Tehran was talking to the Iranian foreign secretary on the LNG project, which

has run into trouble following India's stand at the IAEA. The Iran issue will be taken up tomorrow at the all India strike by Left-affiliated trade unions.

When asked by the Left what India had gained by the move, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh claimed that India had gained two months for diplomacy to resolve the issue through talks with Iran and the US. In a note circulated to the Left parties, the government said, "Our support for the resolution, despite our reservations, based on the premise that the intervening period will be used by all concerned to expand the diplomatic space to satisfactorily address all outstanding issues. India supports keeping the door open for dialogue and consensus and avoid-

ance of confrontation." The Left rejected the government's argument that its intervention had prevented the matter being re-

### Peaceful nuke programme okay

The foreign office on Wednesday briefed Iran on the reasons for supporting the IAEA resolution on Tehran's controversial nuclear programme and made it clear that it has no reservation on peaceful uses of nuclear energy. During a meeting, foreign secretary Shyam Saran had with Iranian ambassador S Z Yaghoubi, it was explained that New Delhi's vote was aimed at averting a major confrontation.

ferrered immediately to the UNSC, saying even if it had reached UNSC, Russia and China would have vetoed the move.

The Left parties, which had accused India of succumbing to US pressure, disagreed that the government stand went in favour of Iran saying that was not the message that went across the world or how that country had viewed it.

The Left countered the PM's contention that even if India abstained, the numbers would have gone against Iran, by saying that India would have scored the point that it was by Iran's side and not "aligning" with the US. The



meeting began with the director general, atomic energy, briefing the Left leaders on the resolution on implementation of safeguards in Iran. A senior Left leader interrupted the briefing saying there was no point in reading out the transcript. The Left's contention was that India had given the go by to its non-aligned policy by voting against Iran.

# Left rejects PM's stand on IAEA vote

'Ensure That Iran N-issue Does

29/9 Not Go Before UNSC' 9/11

New Delhi: Rejecting the government's explanation for voting in favour of a resolution against Iran's nuclear programme at the IAEA, Left parties on Wednesday asked the Centre to ensure that the issue was not referred to the United Nations Security Council.

"We are not convinced by the explanation given by the government and our differences remain. India should have abstained from voting," CPM leader Sitaram Yechury told reporters after a 75-minute meeting with the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. "We demanded that India should assure the world

that we will not allow the issue to be raised at the Security Council," he said. The Prime Minister explained to the Left leaders the circumstances in which India voted for a European Union resolution against Iran on its nuclear capabilities, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters.

Mukherjee and foreign secretary Shyam Saran were also present at the meeting with the Left delegation comprising Yechury, CPI leaders A B Bardhan and D Raja, and RSP's Abani Roy. Forward Bloc leaders were not pres-

ent as they were out of station.

Yechury said "The vote (at the IAEA meet in Vienna) was not of any consequence to the final outcome. It was a positioning vote which unfortunately gives the impression that India is aligning with the US on the matter."

Mukherjee, who also briefed mediapersons, acknowledged the government's differences with the Left parties on the issue. "Different parties have different perceptions. The Left leaders also shared their perceptions," he said.

Yechury said the vote also went against UPA's Common Minimum Programme

which says that the government should follow an independent foreign policy and oppose "hegemonistic approach" by any country. The CPM leader said such a stand could affect India's energy security interests at a time when New Delhi and Teheran have agreed to construct a gas pipeline through Pakistan.

He said even if the IAEA resolution was taken up at the UN Security Council, it would not be adopted as both Russia and China had not agreed with it at the Vienna meeting. Agencies



Leaders of the Left parties talking to the media outside the PM's residence in New Delhi on Wednesday

# Iran vote was to 'avoid global confrontation'

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 26 SEPTEMBER

**R**ATTLED by the combined onslaught of the Opposition BJP and sections of its own alliance for its alleged attempt to effect a paradigm shift in India's foreign policy, the Manmohan Singh government on Monday rushed in to clarify its stand. It said it had backed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution on Iran's nuclear programme to avert what could have turned into a major confrontation between the Islamic republic and the international community.

Two days after the Manmohan Singh government signalled a major foreign policy rejig by going along with the West on the IAEA resolution on "the agreement with Iran on the implementation of NPT safeguards," foreign secretary Shyam Saran sought to allay the fears expressed by the BJP and the Left parties about a quid-pro-quo deal with the US in return for the resumption of ties between the two countries on civilian nuclear programme.

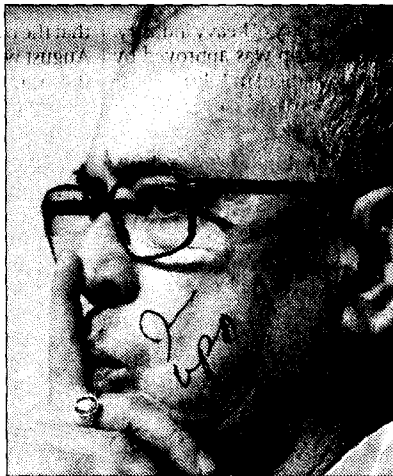
It was this pact which, the BJP and the Left allege, forced India to abandon its traditional policy on Iran in Vienna on Saturday.

Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, while talking to newsmen separately, denied that India had acted under US pressure. Mr Mukherjee said the government's stand gave more time for diplomacy and a peaceful resolution of the issue.

The BJP, however, remained unimpressed with the explanation on an issue which, it said, was essentially political. "My first complaint is that there is a complete absence of information from the side of the government," sen-

ior BJP leader and former external affairs minister Jaswant Singh told newsmen here on Monday afternoon.

Mr Singh commented: "These are important policy issues. The government first fielded a middle-level foreign ministry official to outline the factors that prompted India to vote with the resolution. Then you had the Indian ambassador to the US doing the expla-



PRANAB: CENTRAL DEFENDER

nation and on Monday, it was the foreign secretary. Why this slow upgradation in explanation?"

The BJP veteran asked the Prime Minister or, alternately, the external affairs minister to come forward and share with the people the reasons behind the somersault. "In consequence, a country-wide impression has spread that the UPA government has surreptitiously engaged in a major recast of policy on this important issue, which directly affects our national security too," he said.

"There is a belief that this has been done under international pressure, particularly of the US, that India, as a permanent member of the IAEA board, has merely followed the initiative of the others, such as that of the EU-3 (UK, Germany and France)," he added.



# বাস্তববাদই পন্থা

বাম-চক্ষু দিয়া বিশ্ব-দর্শনের বিপদ হইয়াছে যে মাদ্রাতা আমলের রীতিবিধিকেই একমাত্র সত্য বলিয়া মনে হয়, কালচক্র যে অবিরাম ঘুরিতেছে, সেই সত্যটি স্মরণে থাকে না। ইরানের পরমাণু কার্যক্রম লইয়া ভারতের সাম্প্রতিক পদক্ষেপ প্রসঙ্গে ইউপি এ জোটের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ শরিক বাম-শিবির-এর প্রতিক্রিয়া দেখিয়া কাল-চেতনার সেই অভাবের কথাই স্মরণে আসে। ভিয়েনায় আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু সংস্থার ভোটভুক্তিতে ভারত আমেরিকার পক্ষে ভোট দিয়াছে, অতএব, নয়াদিল্লি মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের 'চাপ'-এর নিকট নত হইয়াছে, যাহা বাম-শিবিরের অভ্যন্তর বুলি অনুযায়ী, গর্হিত অপরাধ। খটকা হইল, এই জাতীয় কথাবার্তা পথিপার্শ্বে খুচরা জনসভায় কিংবা ব্রিগেডের লাল-দুর্গে চলিলেও চলিতে পারে, বাস্তববাদী বিদেশনীতির অঙ্গনে ইহা প্রলাপ ভিন্ন কিছু নহে। প্রথমত, ইরানের পরমাণু কর্মসূচির ক্ষেত্রে ভারত যে ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের সঙ্গেই আছে, প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ তাহা বেশ কিছুকাল পূর্বেই স্পষ্ট করিয়া দিয়াছিলেন। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ সভায় যাইবার পথে ফরাসি প্রেসিডেন্ট জাক শিরাকের সঙ্গে সাক্ষাতের সময়ই প্রধানমন্ত্রী এই সিদ্ধান্তের কথা জানাইয়া দিয়াছিলেন। অতঃপর আমেরিকায় বসিয়াও তিনি ইরানের পরমাণু কার্যক্রম প্রসঙ্গে এই নীতির কথা বহুবারই বলিয়াছেন।

কেন বলিয়াছেন, তাহা অনুধাবন করা প্রয়োজন। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সহিত সাম্প্রতিক কালে পরমাণু কার্যক্রম লইয়া ভারতের যে চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরিত হইয়াছে, তাহা অভূতপূর্ব। কার্যত, অভাবনীয়ও বটে। পরমাণু অস্ত্রপ্রসাররোধ চুক্তিতে স্বাক্ষরকারী দেশ না-হওয়া সত্ত্বেও আমেরিকা ভারতকে পরমাণু শক্তিদ্র দেশ বলিয়াই মানিয়া লইয়াছে, এমনকী পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি হস্তান্তরের লক্ষ্যে চুক্তিও স্বাক্ষরিত হইয়াছে। পরমাণু প্রযুক্তির ক্ষেত্রে দ্বিপাক্ষিক স্তরে এমন সাফল্য আক্ষরিকই পূর্বে কখনও ঘটে নাই। সাধ করিয়া সেই বাড়া ভাতে ছাই নিক্ষেপের যে কোনও অর্থ হয় না, তেমন কর্ম যে স্বীয় পদযুগলে কুড়াল মারিবার সামিল, সেই কথাটুকু বুঝিতে অভিজ্ঞ কূটনীতিক হইবার প্রয়োজন নাই, কাণ্ডজ্ঞান থাকিলেই চলে। ইরান-প্রশ্নে গোঁয়ারতুমি করিয়া আমেরিকা-সহ ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের শক্তিদ্র দেশগুলির সহিত বিরোধিতা করিলে তেহরান সম্ভ্রষ্ট হইলেও মার্কিন পরমাণু প্রযুক্তি পাইবার সম্ভাবনা নিশ্চিত ভাবেই অন্তর্ধান করিত। কূটনৈতিক বাস্তববাদ বলিবে, এমন কর্ম আদর্শেই উচিত নহে। তৎসহ, প্রত্যাশিত ভাবেই, পরমাণু শক্তিদ্র দেশ হিসাবে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের স্বীকৃতি পাইবার পরে নয়াদিল্লি এক্ষণে দায়িত্বশীল পরমাণু শক্তি হিসাবে নিজেকে তুলিয়া ধরিতে তৎপর। ইরানের স্বাধীন পরমাণু কার্যক্রমের পক্ষে সওয়াল করিলে নিঃসন্দেহে সেই ভাবমূর্তিতে আঘাত আসিত। ভারত যে সেই পথে না-হাঁটিয়া বাস্তববাদী কূটনীতির রাস্তাই ধরিয়াছে, তাহা স্বস্তির বইকী!

বাম শিবিরের আর একটি আপত্তি হইল, আমেরিকার পক্ষে কথা বলিয়া ভারত জোট-নিরপেক্ষ আন্দোলনের শরিক ইরানের বিরুদ্ধে বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা করিয়াছে। অভিযোগটি হাস্যকর। শীতল যুদ্ধ, রুশ-মার্কিন দুই শিবিরে বিভক্ত বিশ্ব প্রভৃতি লজ্জ যে কালের ধারায় হারাইয়া গিয়াছে, সে সম্বন্ধে কি বাম নেতৃবৃন্দ অবহিত নহেন? বর্তমান একমেরু বিশ্বে কার্যত একমাত্র বৃহৎ শক্তি আমেরিকা। পরিবর্তিত প্রেক্ষাপটে তাই জোট-নিরপেক্ষ অভিধাটির তাৎপর্য সম্বন্ধে পুনর্বিবেচনা জরুরি। বস্তুত, কথাটিই আদর্শে আর প্রাসঙ্গিক কি না, তাহাই দেখিবার বিষয়। বাম নেতাগণ যদি বাস্তবকে না মানিয়া বিষম স্মৃতিমেদুরতায় আক্রান্ত হন, তাহা হইলে সেই ভার দেশের বিদেশনীতির উপরে না-চাপানোই বাঞ্ছনীয়। সম্প্রতি রাশিয়া, চীন এবং আমেরিকা একযোগে উত্তর কোরিয়াকে পরমাণু কর্মসূচি হইতে নিবৃত্ত করিবার পরে ইহা স্পষ্ট হইয়া গিয়াছিল যে একাকী ইরানের পক্ষে পরমাণু কর্মসূচি লইয়া অগ্রসর হওয়া অসম্ভব হইয়া উঠিবে। মনমোহন সিংহের প্রশাসন দেওয়ালের সেই লিখনটি পড়িতে পারিয়াছে। ইরান-প্রশ্নে তাই বাম-মহলের বেসুর কোনও মতেই যুক্তিসিদ্ধ নহে।

# UPA allies hold seat-sharing talks

## Doors open for other secular parties

**Agencies**  
New Delhi, September 19

FEARING THE damage that can be caused by the Third Front comprising the LJP, CPI and some others, four UPA allies — the RJD, Congress, CPI(M) and NCP — on Monday held the first round of seat-sharing talks for the Bihar Assembly polls.

"We held preliminary talks today and, by tomorrow, we'll finalise the seat-sharing adjustment so that we can jointly take a plunge. But, if any other party wants to join the secular coalition, we have no objections", RJD supremo and rail minister Lalu Prasad told reporters.

The meeting, lasting nearly two hours at Prasad's residence, was attended by AICC general secretary Digvijay Singh, CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechuri and NCP leader Tariq Anwar. Bihar PCC chief Sadanand Singh was also present.

Without naming the LJP headed by Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan, the RJD chief said the

doors were still open for other secular parties to join the RJD-led alliance in the state. "But the four of us are united like a rock", he said. He declined to divulge how many seats each of them was claiming.

### Show-cause notice

RESPONDING TO the EC's show-cause notice served on him, Lalu has pleaded that he did not violate the model code of conduct. The EC had served the notice on a complaint by the NDA about his misusing his official position. In a related development, the EC has convened a meeting of poll observers from Bihar here on Tuesday.

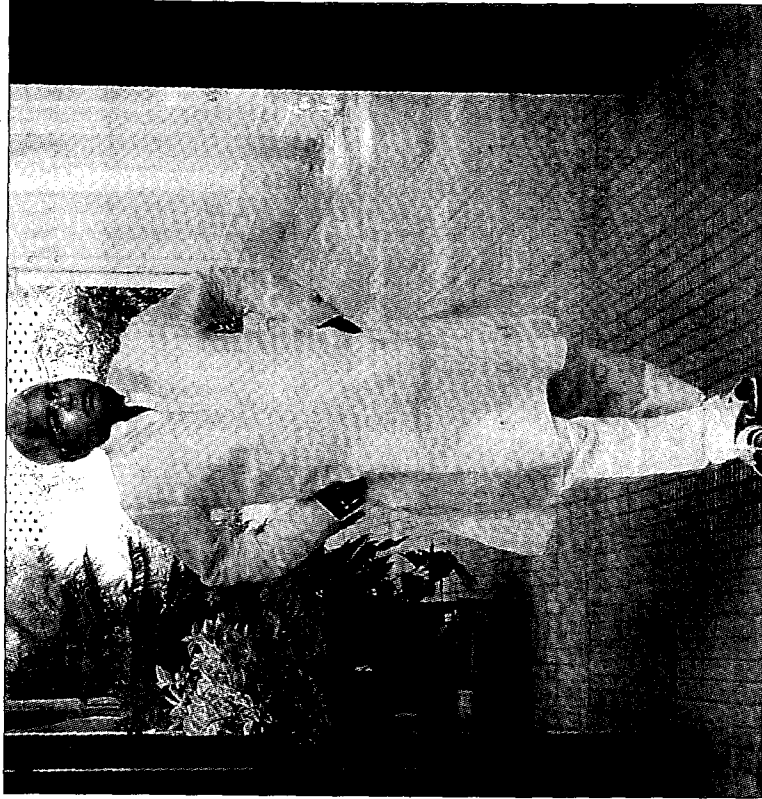
**PTI, New Delhi**

Monday's meeting — the first such joint exercise by the UPA allies and outside supporter CPI(M) — comes a day after the CPI offered its support to Paswan to end 15 years of RJD "misrule" in the

state. Asked to comment on the Third Front, Lalu dismissed it as a group of parites without any base. "I've seen many fronts. The voters will teach them a lesson", he said, adding that a common minimum programme (CMP) would be drafted soon. Lalu parried a question on who the UPAs chief ministerial candidate would be, saying, "Everyone knows. In Bihar, it's always been Lalu versus all".

After the meeting, Yechuri said his party would give its opinion on the CMP, although it would not be a part of the coalition if it came to power. "We'll be an outside supporter", he said. To repeated questions on seat-sharing, the CPI(M) leader said the nitty gritty of seat adjustments would be discussed on Tuesday" on the basis of the relative strength of each party".

To a specific question on whether Paswan's party was still acceptable, Yechuri said, "Lalji has said we're open to all secular parties".



RJD chief and railway minister Lalu Prasad after a meeting with Congress, NCP and CPI(M) leaders at his New Delhi residence on the coming Bihar polls.

PTI

# Congress silent on Paswan for now

Statesman News Service & PTI

NEW DELHI, Sept. 19. — The Congress today remained non-committal about whether LJP leader Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, who has launched a Third Front for the upcoming Bihar Assembly polls, should remain in the UPA or not.

"It is an issue for the national leadership of the UPA to decide," AICC general secretary Mr Digvijay Singh said when asked to comment on Mr Paswan finally throwing his lot in favour of a Third Front along with the CPI. Mr Singh added: "When there are two secular fronts, the votes are

bound to get divided." The CPI-M had earlier demanded Mr Paswan's ouster.

In Jalandhar, CPI general secretary Mr AB Bardhan today criticised the CPI-M's suggestion that the UPA should take action against Mr Paswan and said the alliance couldn't dictate its constituent's political department at state level. "Who has given anyone the right to speak on behalf of the UPA which is only bound by a common minimum programme at national level," the CPI leader added.

He, however, ruled out formation of a Third Front at national level and said his party would continue to support the UPA at the Centre although it was hav-

ing some difference on the issue of following the CMP. Disagreeing that the alliance between LJP-CPI-Forward Block would split "secular" vote bank in Bihar, Mr Bardhan said: "People wanted a change from Mr Lalu Prasad's misrule. Rather, the new alliance has provided an alternative."

Also today, four UPA allies — the RJD, Congress, CPI-M and NCP — held the first round of seat-sharing talks for the Bihar polls. "We held preliminary talks today and, by tomorrow, we will finalise the seat-sharing adjustment so that we could take the plunge jointly. But if any other party wants to join the secular compartment, we have no objec-

tion," Mr Lalu Prasad told reporters.

## Lalu pleads not guilty

Pleading that he had not violated the model code of conduct, RJD chief Mr Lalu Prasad today replied to the show-cause notice from the Election Commission following a complaint that he had misused his official position. Mr Prasad maintained that he respects the commission and that he had used his official vehicle only for security reasons as he was placed in the 'Z' category, senior party leader Mr Ramdeo Bhandari, who had handed over Mr Prasad's response to the EC, said.

# Oil's not well but gas let off

*Left demands rollback of  
'anti-people' measure*

**HT Corporate Bureau**  
New Delhi/Kolkata, September 6

BRUSHING ASIDE all objections from the Left parties, the Cabinet on Tuesday okayed another round of hikes in prices of petroleum products. Petrol will cost Rs 3 a litre more from midnight and diesel will be dearer by Rs 2 per litre. LPG and kerosene, however, have been spared.

Left parties led by the CPI(M) reacted immediately, calling the move "anti-people". They vowed to take the issue to the streets in the coming days.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet decision, petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar said the government would issue bonds to the oil companies to enable them to meet their capital expenditure targets since the PSUs would, even after the hike the PSUs, be selling much below the market price.

The Centre also turned down the Left proposal for cutting excise duties on petrol and diesel to offset the losses of the oil companies. Aiyar said this was because indirect tax revenues were lower than the target. Justifying the hike in oil prices, the minister said it was in the national interest to have profit-making public sector oil companies.

Aiyar said as per the equitable burden-sharing arrangement of the government, the oil companies would bear nearly half of the burden arising out of spiralling crude oil prices. One-third of the burden will be borne by the ministry of finance, while the con-

sumers will have to shoulder nearly 13 per cent of the burden. The petroleum minister added that the upstream oil companies — Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Oil India Ltd (OIL) and GAIL (India) Ltd — would continue to subsidise losses suffered by the oil



	<b>Petrol</b>
Earlier	43.79
Now	46.90
	<b>Diesel</b>
Earlier	30.80
Now	32.87
	(Rs/litre)

marketing companies. The minister argued that the hike was inevitable since profitable oil PSUs were turning sick.

But the Left parties are in no mood to let the hike pass. CPI(M) leader Dipankar Mukherjee said the increase in diesel prices would hit the farmers hard. The CPI central secretariat issued a statement saying: "The hike in petrol and diesel prices will have a cascading effect on prices of all essential commodities."

In Kolkata, Jyoti Basu said that Left would do all it could to ensure that the "government withdraws the anti-people measure".

Transport minister Subhas Chakrabarty has called a meeting of transport operators on Wednesday to discuss the situation arising out of the Centre's decision. This was after Bimal Guha, general secretary of the Bengal Taxi Association, demanded an immediate revision of taxi fares. Swarna Kamal Saha, president of the Bengal Bus Syndicate, too, hinted that an increase in fares was inevitable. "We give the government 24 hours to decide on the hike. After that, we will decide what to do."

# Left strike greets PM oil price rise news

T-1  
6/9

## OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 5: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today told the Left leadership that the government was left with no option but to increase petrol, diesel, cooking gas and kerosene prices as crude oil had touched \$70 a barrel in the world market.

As a result, public sector oil companies are suffering losses at prices at which these products are being sold now.

Singh ruled out the cut in excise duties on petroleum products the Left had been asking for to cushion the impact of rising global prices.

CPI secretary A.B. Bardhan said the Prime Minister had turned down their suggestions to lower central excise and ask states, too, to scale down sales tax. His CPM counterpart, Prakash Karat, was also present at the meeting.

The Left decided to observe September 29, when they have called an all-India strike, as a day of protest against the price increase that would

now be coming.

The question of revising petroleum prices is expected to be discussed at a cabinet meeting tomorrow when petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar will be back from his foreign tour.

At the meeting, the Centre will have to find a way of arriving at a balance between the pressing need to raise prices and the danger of stoking inflation. Assembly polls in Bihar are also round the corner.

Petrol and diesel prices are expected to go up by Rs 2-3 a litre, cooking gas by Rs 20 a cylinder and kerosene by Re 1 a litre.

Bardhan told reporters that Singh did not indicate the extent of the possible price increase, but said it would be the "minimum possible".

With the rate of inflation at just over 3 per cent, this is believed to be the propitious time to raise prices.

Singh told the Left leaders that oil companies were unable to pay dividends to the government. Their ability to pay income tax has been crippled

as profits have plunged in the absence of a revision in prices in keeping with international rates. Excise duty, therefore, was the only source of earning for the government from oil and could not be reduced.

States, he told them, could not cut sales tax because their own revenues were in a shambles.

If the Left leaders were convinced by the argument, their public announcements did not signal acceptance.

Left parties and trade unions observe a strike on September 29 to highlight issues of food security, employment, women's reservation in Parliament and state Assemblies and the forest rights bill. A protest against oil price increase has been tagged on to this.

At the meeting today, the Prime Minister asked the Left leaders about the strike.

"Without undertaking such measures (as excise duty cut), it will be unjustifiable to burden the consumers and make public sector companies suffer more losses," the CPM said.

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THE HINDU

# Centre tests Left with another sale

## Govt to offload 8 per cent Maruti equity

**HT Correspondent**  
New Delhi, September 2

UNFAZED BY the Left's opposition to equity sale in Bhel, the government has decided to offload 8 per cent equity in automobile major Maruti Udyog Ltd.

CPI(M) politburo member M.K. Pandey said Citu would launch an agitation over the Maruti equity sale. Sitaram Yechury, however, played down the issue, saying Maruti was virtually a private company now and it hardly mattered if it sold its residual stake.

The Maruti equity sale will not be done through the IPO route to retail investors. Instead, the equity will be offered to public-sector banks and financial institutions (FIs) through competitive bidding to realise the maximum value for the government's shares.

While the Centre expects to net about Rs 1,000 crore through the equity sale in MUL, the Left parties'

opposition has been blunted by limiting the participation to public-sector banks and FIs.

The decision of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Maruti is bound to set a precedent for selling the government's equity in blue-chip PSUs and joint ventures. A minister said the same route could be taken for other profitable PSUs in which equity sale to retail investors and strategic partners was being opposed by the Left.

Following the CCEA decision, the finance ministry will now appoint advisers to assist in the proposed equity offloading. The sale of equity to banks and FIs will also be benchmarked to the market price.

After the equity sale, the Centre's direct holding in MUL will be diluted to 10.28 per cent from 18.28 per cent. Suzuki Corporation holds 54.2 per cent, government-owned agencies like the LIC hold 3.30 per cent and FIs 5.60 per cent.

**ALOKE Banerjee**  
New Delhi, September 2

THE CPI(M) politburo on Friday gave a firm nod to Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's reforms, but sought to buy peace with grumbling party-men and allies.

The politburo assured that no agricultural land, even of the mono-crop variety, would be touched by the Salim Group's controversial project. Bhattacharjee and the West Bengal CPI(M) had earlier said that the government would provide only mono-crop land. Now, CPI(M) state secretary Anil Biswas said the government would not touch even that, unless it was unavoidable.

Sitaram Yechury explained that such plots, though small in number, would fall in areas adjoining the construction site. Those evicted would be adequately compensated, he said.

The slight shift in stance comes to appease the CPI, the RSP and the Forward Bloc. CPI(M) leaders in-

cluding Bhattacharjee will meet Forward Bloc leaders on Monday and those of other partners later. Before that, the partners will work out a strategy to counter the CPI(M)'s arguments. They will stress that there should be no loss of agricultural land.

Land is not the only issue. The CPI(M)'s allies are also sore about the association with Salim, a group close to "Communist killer" Suharto. Though the politburo chose to ignore the link while clearing Bhattacharjee's policies, the allies will insist that the party acknowledge it.

The politburo yielded to pressure on another issue. For the moment, it agreed not to allow FDI in airports, even at the green-field stage. Citu has vociferously opposed FDI in airports, and the CPI(M) too has taken a stand against the Centre's plans for airports in Mumbai and Delhi.

This follows the controversy over Bhattacharjee's reported invitation for 100 per cent FDI for a second air-

port in Kolkata — a statement he has defied making. Yechury said it had been an "off the cuff" remark.

"Nothing has been decided on the second airport in Kolkata. No survey has been done yet," he said.

Yechury said whatever Bhattacharjee was doing in West Bengal was well within the approved policies of the party. Bhattacharjee, who submitted a report on his tour of Singapore and Indonesia, said there was no reason why he should backtrack on his policies. He also met representatives of a German engineering firm and said they, too, have agreed to invest in Bengal.

The politburo meeting will be followed by a central committee meet. Party sources said that once the central committee put its seal of approval on Bhattacharjee's liberal policies, the party would showcase West Bengal as a model for the country and continue to oppose the UPA's anti-people policies.

See also Kolkata Live

**ALOKE Banerjee**  
New Delhi, September 2

THE CPI(M) politburo on Friday gave a firm nod to Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's reforms, but sought to buy peace with grumbling party-men and allies.

The politburo assured that no agricultural land, even of the mono-crop variety, would be touched by the Salim Group's controversial project. Bhattacharjee and the West Bengal CPI(M) had earlier said that the government would provide only mono-crop land. Now, CPI(M) state secretary Anil Biswas said the government would not touch even that, unless it was unavoidable.

Sitaram Yechury explained that such plots, though small in number, would fall in areas adjoining the construction site. Those evicted would be adequately compensated, he said.

The slight shift in stance comes to appease the CPI, the RSP and the Forward Bloc. CPI(M) leaders in-

cluding Bhattacharjee will meet Forward Bloc leaders on Monday and those of other partners later. Before that, the partners will work out a strategy to counter the CPI(M)'s arguments. They will stress that there should be no loss of agricultural land.

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See also Kolkata Live

# Centre files Buta reports before SC

## Guv saw a trend to win over elected reps

Agencies

New Delhi, September 2

THE ATTEMPTS to break away MLAs from Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP and the 'restive' feeling among Lalu Prasad's RJD MLAs were the focal points of Governor Buta Singh's report on May 21 that led to dissolution of the Bihar Assembly on May 23.

Filing the 158-page reply to petitions challenging the presidential proclamation on the issue, the Union government in its affidavit on Friday annexed two reports of the Governor dated April 27 and May 21, which were almost identical in nature.

In his two-page letter of May 21 to the President, the Governor said, "The reports received by me in the recent past through the media and also through meetings with various political functionaries — as also intelligence reports — indicate a trend to win over elected representatives of the people."

Referring to his April 27 letter, Singh had said: "I was informed that around 16-17 MLAs belonging to LJP were being wooed by various means so that a split could be effected in the LJP. Attention was also drawn to the fact that the RJD MLAs had also become restive in the light of the above moves made by JD(U)." The Governor cited reports to state that the LJP general secretary had resigned today (May 21) and "also 17-18 more perhaps are moving towards JD(U) clearly indicating that various allurements have been offered which is a very disturbing and alarming feature".

Any move by the breakaway faction to align with any other party to cobble a majority and stake claim to form a government would positively affect the Constitutional provisions and safeguards built therein, he said. It would also "distort the

verdict of the people as shown by the results of the recent elections", Singh said and added "if these attempts are allowed it would be amounting to tempering with constitutional provisions."

However, the Governor did not elaborate which of the constitutional provisions would be affected and tempered with and the purport of the provisions.

In conclusion of the May 21 report, the Governor said: "I am of the considered view that if the trend is not arrested immediately, it may not be possible to contain the situation. A situation has arisen wherein it would be desirable in the interest of the state that the Assembly presently kept in suspended animation is dissolved" so that

the people/electorate can be provided with one more opportunity to give their mandate at an appropriate time, the Governor said in the last paragraph of his letter to President APJ Abdul Kalam, who was in Moscow then.

Interestingly, the May 21 letter, which sent alarm bells in the Union Cabinet leading it to recommend dissolution of the Assembly in an emergency meeting on May 22, did not mention the word "horse-trading" at all.

Singh in his April 27 letter, said, "The present situation is fast approaching a scenario wherein if the trend is not arrested immediately, consequent political instability will further give rise to horse trading being practiced by various political parties trying to allu-

ected MLAs.

"Consequently, it may not be possible to contain the situation without giving the people another opportunity to give their mandate through a fresh poll," he said.

The two reports were filed in the Court after the Centre waived privilege over it and decided to make them public.

**The Election Commission is likely to announce the Bihar election schedule on Saturday. A group of MLAs of the dissolved House had approached the apex court challenging the dissolution. Earlier, the EC had said polls would be held only in October-November. The process will be completed by November 22 when the six-month period after dissolution of the Assembly expires**

# Left talks reform, PM waits for walk

RADHIKARAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Aug. 31: Despite the recent pro-reform statements by Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and Prakash Karat, the Prime Minister prefers to wait and watch.

After his successful trip to Southeast Asia, the Bengal chief minister has coined a slogan: "Reform, perform or perish." Now, party general secretary and hardliner Karat has endorsed this, saying: "We (the CPM) are not dogmatic. With time, our party has changed its stand on various issues. We are open to change and have changed."

But Manmohan Singh isn't ready to see this as the green light to pursue his largely stalled liberalisation agenda. He will watch how these sentiments expressed by the Left leaders "play out" in the weeks to come, sources said.

At his one-to-one with Bhattacharjee this evening, the Prime Minister tried to get a clear understanding of the CPM's "mind". Depending on this, a meeting of the United Progressive Alliance-Left coordination committee — which the CPM and CPI have stopped attending in protest against the proposed Bhel divestment — may be called.

A senior CPM leader confirmed the party will come on board once the government publicly announces that it has put the Bhel issue on the backburner and will not touch the other navratna PSUs.

Among the sticking points between the government and the Left are FDI in the retail sector, liberalisation in the financial/banking sector and FDI in insurance (see chart). Labour law reform is another contentious

## ON PM'S PLATE

### Problems with Left

- FDI in retail sector
- Liberalisation of financial/banking sector
- FDI in insurance
- Liberalisation of labour laws
- Amendments to Electricity Act 2003

### Challenges (Implementation of)

- Urban Renewal Mission Fund
- National Rural Health Care Mission
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
- Bharat Nirman Project
- Airport modernisation
- Power sector reforms

issue, with government sources saying this is a must to attract greater investment in special export zones.

"Also, the textile industry has not kept pace with the global scene because of India's inflexible labour laws. Pakistan and Bangladesh are competing better because theirs are flexible," a source said.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly stressed in his

On FDI in retail, the government's argument, articulated by a source, has been: "It is one of the high-investment areas, and the US is keen on it. Investments in retail have had a huge impact on China."

"This is what the Prime Minister explained to Bhattacharjee. Retail investments do not mean the neighbourhood grocer will become extinct. It means more and more Indian goods can be outsourced; (that) Wall-Mart will take Indian goods to other countries. Bhattacharjee understood the argument but was non-committal. Let us see how his party ideologues receive it."

Realising how "nuanced" the equation with the Left is, Singh is keen to avoid being seen as "intervening" in its "internal debate" on economic reforms.

public addresses that to reach the eight per cent growth rate, investments have to go up by 32 per cent compared with the current rate of 28 per cent.

Singh is also worried that infrastructure—whether it's power, roads, railways, ports or coal—has hit a roadblock because FDI was not coming at the expected pace. "Airport construction is behind schedule," a source said.



# Karat cavils at Centre's US 'tilt'

SNS & PTI

CHENNAI/NEW DELHI, Aug. 30. — Asserting that any relationship between India and the USA should be "balanced and equitable", the CPI-M has said the recent agreements between the two countries went against the UPA's Common Minimum Programme which stated that New Delhi would follow an independent foreign policy.

Taking exception to the Indo-US defence co-operation pact and the joint statement by the Prime Minister and the US President during Dr Manmohan Singh's recent visit to America, CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat said at a public meeting last night:

"America's strategic goals in Asia are sought to be met through this agreement."

The CMP had committed to India playing a leading role in promoting multi-polarity in world relations, he said, adding that his party was disappointed to note that the defence pact contravened the CMP.

In fact, the agreement provided the USA with an opportunity to involve India in its military strategy, which would help them contain China, Mr Karat said, observing that America had tried to make India an ally to carry out its 'designs' in Asia.

The CPI-M leader added that India should not accept any strategic

alliance which would restrict its independent role in international affairs, and New Delhi should not make any unilateral concessions to Washington just because it was offered military hardware or support for the country's civilian nuclear programme.

The CPI-M leader accused the UPA government of continuing with the policies of the NDA government, which had wanted India to be recognised as a nuclear country "at any cost" and had been prepared to do anything for this.

## Bill of discord

In a move at preempting attempts by the UPA to implement the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Bill, 2005, the CPI today "ad-

vised" the Centre against treading "the dangerous path" of bringing the Bill which it said sought to kill the "labour movement" and had the potential of becoming the cause of a "serious confrontation" between the Left and the UPA government.

The CPI Lok Sabha member and AITUC general secretary, Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, said he had been compelled to make public the contents of the Bill which was "a secret document" and yet to be tabled in Parliament out of his concern about 80 per cent of the country's work force as it sought to do away with their basic rights.

**Opp, Left seek assurance on FDI in retail, page 5**



# সরকারের সঙ্গে ফের সংঘাতের পথে বামেরা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩০  
অগস্ট: সংসদ অধিবেশন শেষ হতে  
না-হতেই ফের সরকারকে আক্রমণের  
রাস্তায় হাটা শুরু করল বামদের দুই  
বড় শরিক সিপিএম ও সিপিআইয়ের  
কট্টরপন্থী অংশ।

আজ এক দিকে সিপিএমের  
সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাট  
ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্ক নিয়ে কেন্দ্রকে  
আবার আক্রমণ করেছেন। অন্য দিকে,  
সিপিআই নেতা গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত  
প্রস্তাবিত ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্প আইন  
সংশোধনের প্রয়াসকে কেন্দ্র করে  
সরকারকে সতর্ক করে দিয়েছেন।

পেনশন বিল না আনায় এই  
অধিবেশনে বামদের সঙ্গে সরকারের  
কোনও বড় ধরনের সংঘাত বাধেনি।  
তবে অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম সম্প্রতি  
জানিয়েছেন, শীতকালীন অধিবেশনে  
পেনশন বিল আনা হবে। অন্য দিকে,  
বিদেশি পত্রিকার সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎকারে  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, আগামী  
দিনগুলিতে তিনি শ্রম সংস্কার ও খুচরো  
ব্যবসায় বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পথ  
প্রশস্ত করার চেষ্টা করবেন। এই সমস্ত  
বিষয় নিয়ে বামেরা নতুন করে  
সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে আক্রমণ শানাতে  
শুরু করেছেন।

ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্ক এবং প্রণব  
মুখোপাধ্যায় ও মনমোহন সিংহের  
আমেরিকা সফরের সময়ে দু'দেশের

মধ্যে যে সমস্ত সমঝোতা হয়েছিল, তার  
বিরুদ্ধে প্রচার চালানোর সিদ্ধান্ত  
সিপিএম আগেই নিয়েছিল। সেই  
সিদ্ধান্ত মেনেই দলের সাধারণ সম্পাদক  
ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্ক নিয়ে বিভিন্ন  
জায়গায় প্রচার চালাচ্ছেন। কাল রাতে  
চেন্নাইয়ের এক জনসভাতেও তিনি  
সিপিএমের আপত্তির বিষয়গুলি ফের  
জানিয়েছেন। কারাটের বক্তব্য, ওই  
ধরনের সমঝোতার মধ্য দিয়ে 'এশিয়ায়  
মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সমরকৌশলগত  
লক্ষ্যগুলিই পূরণ করার' চেষ্টা চলছে  
এবং এনডিএ সরকারের মতোই  
মনমোহন সিংহের সরকারও 'যে  
কোনও মূল্যে' পরমাণু শক্তিদ্র দেশ  
হিসাবে স্বীকৃতি পেতে চাইছে।

অন্য দিকে, ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্প  
সংক্রান্ত বিল প্রসঙ্গে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভায়  
প্রাথমিক আলোচনার ভিত্তিতে তৈরি  
নোটটি আজ ফাঁস করে দেন শ্রমিক  
নেতা ও সিপিআই সাংসদ গুরুদাস  
দাশগুপ্ত। প্রস্তাবিত ওই বিলে বলা  
হয়েছে, ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি শিল্পে শ্রম  
আইন মানা হচ্ছে কি না, তা নিয়ে  
কর্তৃপক্ষের বয়ানই যথেষ্ট বলে  
বিবেচিত হবে। গুরুদাস বলেন, এই  
বিল সরকার সংসদে আনলে বামেরা  
অবশ্যই বিরুদ্ধে ভোট দেবেন।  
পশ্চিমবঙ্গ-সহ দেশের কোথাও শ্রমিক  
স্বার্থবিরোধী সংস্কার বরদাস্ত করা হবে  
না বলেও তিনি জানিয়ে দেন।

## Chidambaram issue rocks Rajya Sabha

New Delhi: Finance minister P Chidambaram's wife Nalini's appearance in a court in a case on behalf of the income-tax department on Monday rocked the Rajya Sabha which adjourned for the day without transacting any business following an uproar, notwithstanding his statement that he had "no knowledge" of her appointment. After repeated interruptions and adjournment of the house twice following procedural wrangles and opposition disruption, Chidambaram came to the house to make a statement of personal explanation.

"I had no knowledge on the matter and at any point of time had the matter been brought to my notice, I would have ensured that the proposal of (engaging) Nalini Chidambaram was nipped in the bud and not proceeded any further", he said in his first public statement on the controversy. The FM's brief statement failed to bring peace to the House and satisfy the opposition which challenged his assertion and demanded the right to seek clarifications on it.

This sparked acrimonious scenes with the opposition NDA and AIADMK members clashing with ruling party members and rushing to the well of the house followed by slogan shouting. Barely had the minister completed his brief personal explanation under rule 241 of the code of procedures of the house, opposition members S S Ahluwalia (BJP) and N Jothi (AIADMK) challenged this saying Chidambaram, not being a member of the RS could not under the rule give a personal explanation. Agencies

THE HINDU

# Chidambaram should quit, says BJP

Uproarious scenes in the Rajya Sabha over Nalini Chidambaram's appearance in I.T. case

*J. - dep A. V. M. L.  
HD-1  
20/8*

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Rajya Sabha was adjourned for Monday as uproarious scenes were witnessed over the issue of appearance of Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's wife, Nalini Chidambaram, in a court on behalf of the Income Tax Department.

Repeated disruptions and adjournments rocked the House. Even Mr. Chidambaram's statement that his wife had made the court appearance without his knowledge failed to bring order in the House as an agitated Opposition, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, marched into the well, raised slogans and demanded his resignation.

Frequent interruptions, noisy scenes and adjournment of the House twice marked the proceedings in the morning session. Mr. Chidambaram came to the House as soon as it reassembled at 2 p.m. and made a statement, offering a personal explanation.

"I had no knowledge of the matter and it came to my notice when it was attempted to be raised in the House. Had it come to my notice any time earlier, I



would have ensured that the proposal of engaging Nalini Chidambaram was nipped in the bud and not processed further," he said.

The Opposition members demanded the right to seek clarifications but it was turned down by the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who cited previous rulings that did not allow any discussion after personal explanations by the Ministers.

The Finance Minister said the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had admitted its lapse for not informing him and ex-

pressed regret. A statement had also been issued by his wife explaining the circumstances that led to her appointment as special counsel in the case, at the instance of senior counsel Pushya Sitaraman. Mr. Chidambaram said he came to know of it when the Rajya Sabha Secretariat informed him about a letter by the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam member, N. Jothi. This related to the appearance of Ms. Chidambaram in the Madras High Court on behalf of the Commissioner of Income Tax in the Jayaram Mills Limited case.

The Minister said his wife had not accepted any case involving the Income Tax Department since 1996 and it was the "sole case." He noted that Pushya Sitaraman, in a statement on August 26, affirmed that it was she who persuaded Ms. Chidambaram to accept this assignment. These three statements — by Ms. Chidambaram, the CBDT and Ms. Sitaraman — had already appeared in the media.

More reports on Page 12

# Give and take in fight against terror

## Wanted from Pak: Don now, 'spy' later

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, August 28

ONE OF them is wanted in India for a string of blasts in 1993. The other has been convicted by Pakistan for serial blasts on the other side of the border. India now wants both men, but will press for only one on Monday.

Dawood Ibrahim, and not Sarabjit Singh, will be high on India's agenda when the home secretaries of the two countries meet in New Delhi. India is set to seek Dawood's deportation, but will wait as far as Sarabjit is concerned. Though India insists that Sarabjit is innocent, it is still waiting for its high commission to report their conversations with the prisoner, who is awaiting execution on charges of spying.

Dawood is likely to top a list of wanted men that India will hand Pakistan. "We will seek the deportation of all those who are involved in terrorist activities against India and are wanted in this country for serious crimes and terrorism-related activities and are based in Pakistan," home secretary V.K. Duggal said.

Though Duggal refused to spell out names, there can be little doubt that Dawood is on the list. He has been wanted in India for over a decade, since serial blasts rocked Mumbai in 1993. He is also a suspect in several other serious crimes and has been declared an international terrorist by the United States.

During the NDA's rule, India had handed Pakistan a list of 20 wanted men. The list to be given on Monday comprises nearly 30 names. L.K. Advani, deputy Prime Minister during the NDA's rule, has welcomed the move. "We hope Islamabad will take constructive steps in curbing terrorism and hand over the terrorists named," he said.

India and Pakistan will also discuss cross-border drug trafficking. Efforts will be made to setting up an institutional mechanism to tackle the menace.

The two sides will also discuss prisoners languishing in each other's country, but Duggal was noncommittal on Sarabjit. "The issue is being taken up through diplomatic channels. We are thankful to Pakistan for granting consular access to Sarabjit. We are seeking further details as part of our efforts to get clemency for him. We will do what is proper and required," Duggal said.

Efforts continued elsewhere, too. In Bhopal, the Vishwas Cultural Sports Society plans to send 2 lakh e-mails to Pervez Musharraf asking him to free Sarabjit. A Pakistani NGO, Ansar Burney Welfare Trust International, plans to meet Sarabjit's relatives and then file a mercy plea.



Dawood Ibrahim



Hamid Karzai whispers into Manmohan Singh's ear in Kabul on Sunday. The two leaders released a joint statement on cooperation. PTI

## Gift to Afghanistan: \$50m

YASHWANT Raj  
Kabul, August 28

UNDER THE cooling shade of massive chinar trees, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh looked completely at ease. And the vibes with one of the most charming heads of state, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, were perfect.

If Singh wanted, he could have behaved the arrogant donor. He had just finished telling Karzai at a one-on-one that India was committing an extra \$50 million (in addition to the \$500 million already on the table) to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

But he chose to simply enjoy the excellent atmosphere

at the joint press conference venue. (The last time an Indian Prime Minister visited Kabul was 29 years ago.) There was easy banter between the two. The two leaders agreed to take their relationship to a "new stage of partnership".

The two leaders could afford to take it easy at the press conference. The substantive talks were over by then. The news conference was preceded by a meeting between Singh and Karzai, and delegation-level talks attended by K. Natwar Singh, Rahul Gandhi, Shyam Saran and others.

The joint statement released before the joint press conference reaffirmed India's

commitment to help Afghanistan. It also said the two countries had signed cooperation agreements in the areas of agriculture and health.

India offered all support to war-ravaged Afghanistan to tackle terrorism. "Both countries have to work together to deal with terrorism which poses a serious threat to civilised existence," Singh said. Karzai agreed: "India, Pakistan and Afghanistan need to join hands to fight this global menace."

Karzai, opening the press conference, said: "We welcome what India has done for Afghanistan's reconstruction." To this Singh began by saying, "This is a special visit

— India and Afghanistan have centuries-old ties and I hope to make them better and learn from the heroic efforts being made by the country under President Karzai."

The importance of the visit, said Indian officials, lay in the fact that the Prime Minister had led such a big delegation to a two-day visit. "He told Karzai that there was an all-party consensus in India on helping with Afghanistan's reconstruction," said an official.

Later in the day, Singh and Karzai threw open Habibia School, which India has built from the rubble it had been reduced to during the civil war.

Singh returns on Monday.  
Another report on P3

# India grants Afghanistan \$50-m aid

Ajay Kaul

KABUL 28 AUGUST

INDIA on Sunday announced a fresh \$50 million assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Asserting that a democratic and prosperous Afghanistan was essential for the stability of the region, it offered all support to the war-ravaged country to tackle terrorism and extremism.

At their wide-ranging talks here, lasting



for about two hours, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Afghan President Hamid Karzai agreed to take the bilateral relationship into a "new stage of partnership." At a joint press conference with Karzai Singh said both the countries have to work together to deal with terrorism, which poses a "serious threat to civilised existence." He is the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Afghanistan in 29 years. Emphasising on regional efforts to fight terrorism, Karzai said "India, Pakistan and Afghanistan need to join hands to fight this global menace."

A joint statement issued at the end of the talks said both leaders affirmed their commitment to work together to ensure that Afghanistan would "never again become a safe haven for terrorism and extremism."

It said India remains fully supportive to the goal of a sovereign, stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. The two countries signed three accords in the areas of education, healthcare and agricultural research in the presence of Dr Singh and Mr Karzai.

In addition to earlier commitments of providing more than \$500 million for infrastructure development, humanitarian assistance and other areas, Dr Singh pledged an additional \$50 million for the reconstruction programmes.

— PTI

# Outcome budget is out

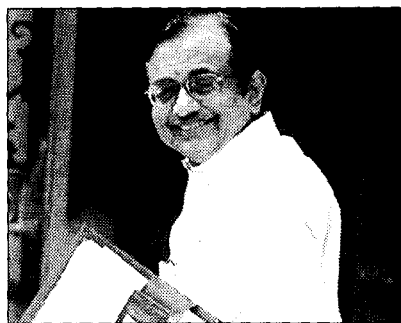
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**May not be perfect, but great beginning: Chidambaram**

**HT Corporate Bureau**  
New Delhi, August 25

SETTING A 'historic' precedent, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Thursday presented an 'outcome budget' in Parliament with an aim to measure the physical targets achieved on the financial outlays of various ministries. It was a pre-expenditure instrument to help realise the ministries' vision through clearly-defined outputs as a supplement to the current system built around post-expenditure scrutiny, he pointed out.

Laying the 725-page document on the table of Lok Sabha, he said it might "not be perfect", but it was a "great beginning" in response to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's directive to attempt such an exercise. This is the first time that such an attempt has been made. Chidambaram had said in his budget speech, "I must caution that outlays do not necessarily mean outcomes. The people of the country are concerned with the outcomes." The 'outcome budget' is an exercise in this direction.

The Finance Minister exuded confidence that the 'outcome budget' would become as important as the general budget. He said this was a mechanism to measure the development outcome of all major programmes. It stressed upon the importance of converting fi-



## Balanced exercise

- Repayment of Rs 308.74 crore aircraft loans
- Indian Airlines Rs 911.73 crore expenditure to augment capacity and acquire new aircraft
- Major outlay in oil exploration, acquisition and equity oil and refining capacity
- Nine infrastructure projects under public private partnership, CCEA approval by September 2005
- National Equity Fund will be released by September

nancial outlays into physical outcomes, with fixed quarterly measure-

ble and monitorable targets, so as to improve the quality of implementation of developmental programmes.

Chidambaram said converting outlays into outcomes was a complex process, which differed from ministry to ministry and programme to programme. Outlining the important steps in this conversion process, he pointed out that outcomes had to be specifically defined in measurable and monitorable terms. Along with this, there had to be standardising unit cost of delivery and benchmarking the standards, he said.

The Finance Minister underlined the need to ensure flow of right amount of money at the right time to the right level with neither delay nor 'parking' of funds. It was an effort at involving community/ target groups with easy access and feedback systems, he added.

Chidambaram stated that appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms would be put in place in due course. Initially, the focus of evaluation would be the flagship programmes and schemes of the government, he said. These schemes include 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan', food for work, (to be converted into the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme), mid-day meal, integrated child development, national highways and the components of 'Bharat Nirman'.

# Stop cribbing, get facts right: Court to govt

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, August 23

CHIEF JUSTICE R.C. Lahoti on Tuesday slammed the Centre for criticising the Supreme Court's judgments "without understanding" them. He even suggested that the courts be wound up so that the government could do what it wished.

Lahoti's observations have their context in the criticism of the judiciary by the political class over the recent judgment on education denying the state any quota in "unaided" professional institutions.

"You must tell your people (read the government) to exercise self-restraint. You do your duty and we will do ours," the chief justice, sitting alongside justices G.P. Mathur and P.K. Balasubramanyan, told attorney-general Milon K. Bannerjee.

The outburst spurred an all-party meeting. It decided to set up a political committee to draft a central legislation on the issue, as instructed by the court. HRD minister Arjun Singh said efforts would be made to introduce the legislation during the winter session of Parliament.

The chief justice's outburst was prompted by the attorney-general's remark, "We are grateful to the court for not precipitating the matter;" minutes after the court had granted him an adjournment on another contentious issue — that of extending reservation to Dalit converts to non-Hindu religions.

"You don't understand our judgments. Yet, time and again you criticise them," the angry Chief Justice said.

"Eleven judges, five judges and now seven judges of this court (TMA Pai, Islamic Academy, and the recent judgment) have all said that the government should come out with a law on this. Yet when this (August 12) judgment goes out, you say it is confrontationalist. Why are you saying day in and day out, 'We (government) are not taking a confrontationalist attitude?'"

When the AG tried to explain that his stand was not "personal", justice Lahoti told him: "You tell your client (the government), we will wind up the courts and then you do whatever you want.... Should



## Court view on quota

SC refers to Art. 30 (1) & 19 of the Constitution on minorities' rights over educational bodies and the right to practise any profession

### THE INTERPRETATION

#### NO QUOTA

State cannot demand that institutions, receiving no state aid, implement state policy on reservation. Cannot insist on any other criterion except merit

#### MAKE A LAW

Filling up seats by the state may mean nationalisation of education. Instead govt should enact law providing for a regulatory mechanism



you not tell your client to give the courts the respect they deserve?"

Justice Lahoti ultimately adjourned the matter for six weeks to permit the government to firm up its stand on extending reservation to Dalits who had converted to non-Hindu religions.

See also Page 3



# Rural job guarantee bill gets LS nod

New Delhi: A landmark bill guaranteeing at least 100 days' employment per year in every rural household was on Tuesday approved by the Lok Sabha, ensuring fulfilment of a major promise of the UPA in the National Common Minimum Programme.

The national rural employment guarantee bill, 2004, was passed by the House by voice vote after all amendments moved by the opposition were rejected at the end of a marathon discussion. In a spirited reply to the debate, rural development minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh sought to allay opposition's apprehensions that funds would go down the drain saying strict monitoring and vigilance would be ensured at the level of village committees.

Panchayats will play a principal role in selection, implementation and monitoring of schemes, he said, drawing applause from the ruling coalition members, including UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

In his reply, Singh said 50 more districts would be added to the list of 150 districts where the scheme would be initially implemented in the first year.

Rejecting the opposition charge that selection of districts could be guided by political considerations, he said the choice would be done only on the basis of SC/ST population, productivity and prevalent wage structure. Agencies

# Govt yet to reach consensus on Women's Reservation Bill

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 22 AUGUST

YET another 'political drama' to find a 'consensus' on the Women's Reservation Bill ended up on predictable lines. The government managers willingly allowed the Mulayam Singh-Lalu Yadav duo to scuttle the process by chanting 'kangaroo quota' mantra.

While the Congress chose to sit on the fence by not taking a stand in the UPA-Left meeting, the Communists, like the BJP, lobbed the ball into the government court. They said they would be ready to support the Bill either in its original form or the new proposal to increase the number of seats.

The Left leaders also said the government should go ahead and introduce the Bill instead of waiting for a consensus. Even though majority of the Lok Sabha members representing the Congress, BJP, Left and a major section of the UPA back the Bill, the usual search for consensus is seen as a ploy to scuttle the proposed legislation.

Within the UPA, DMK and Ramvilas Paswan's LJP this time chose to extend support to the Bill along with other UPA allies like the NCP. Though the meeting was meant for the UPA-Left partners, the invitation extended to SP and



BSP representatives this time is seen as its way of ensuring lack of consensus on this tricky Bill.

And as expected, SP chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Yadav demanded 'quota within quota'. The SP president also made it clear that he has no love for the Bill and would rather prefer political parties giving 10% seats to women. Ms Mayawati also joined the 'quota within quota' brigade.

While the home minister placed the option of the 'the original Bill and the proposal to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha' before the participants, for some strange

reason the Congress representatives in the meeting, including Ms Sonia Gandhi chose not to speak on the pretext of assessing others' views. At the end of the meeting, the Prime Minister merely said the government had taken note of the sentiments expressed by the participants.

While ducking the reasons for the government insisting on the consensus, Congress spokesman Anand Sharma said the 'spirit of the meeting' was in favour of the Bill and that the government shall continue to make its efforts to hammer out a consensus.

# Sonia fights for job bill in House

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Sonia Gandhi today forcefully defended the Centre's rural job scheme in Parliament, advertising it as the "human face" of the economic reforms programme.

The ruling alliance chairperson was countering the proposed law's critics who, citing the enormous funds the scheme would require, had dubbed it a "populist giveaway".

Rising to make her first intervention in a debate in the 14th Lok Sabha, the Congress president said: "We see the national employment guarantee act as the human face of economic reforms, making the process of economic growth more inclusive, more equitable."

She dismissed the pro-reform lobby's fears that the scheme will use up huge sums of money, saying there is no conflict between the imperatives of economic growth and the proposed law. The two go hand-in-hand.

But she said that nobody should see the job scheme as a substitute for steady economic growth. If the country can sustain an annual GDP growth rate of 7 per cent, finding the money for the scheme would not be a problem at all.

Probably, "a time will

## HUMAN FACE



● Work to kick off at village level when a minimum of 10 members register

● Centre to release funds in advance to states each quarter

● Women to get priority

● Work to cover improvement of property of SCs/ STs

● No role for contractors

● Mandatory for panchayats to make public the master roll, budget and work done

● To start with 200 districts, and cover all 600 in five years

● Minimum daily wage fixed at Rs 60

come, and I hope not too far in the future, when there will be no need for such an extensive programme", she said, for the economic reforms will have created enough jobs for rural India. But for this to happen, people, including those in the government, must rid themselves of the "sab chalta hai" attitude.

She trumpeted the move as a brainchild of her party. The Congress manifesto had promised the law during the 2004 Lok Sabha polls and had now delivered on that promise.

"To this (law) I am committed, to this the Congress party is committed, to this the UPA government is committed," she said.

Despite the seriousness with which she tackled the issue, Sonia had time for a little banter. As soon as she had begun reading out her speech in Hindi, Samajwadi Party member Mohan Singh applauded her.

"Pura Hindi mein nahi hain (the entire speech is not in Hindi)," Sonia shot back with a smile on her lips and began her 25-minute argument, the latter half of it in English.

She was at it again, launching into impromptu Hindi to calm tempers as the Opposition briefly threatened to break into an uproar. The provocation was the Congress chief's comment that the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government had refused to supply additional stocks of foodgrain to drought-hit Congress-ruled states three years ago.

As Opposition leaders began shouting their protests, Sonia said: "Aap baad mein jawab do naa. Koi problem nahin hai (Why don't you save your comments for later? We have no problems with that)."

Rural development minister R.P. Singh had tabled the bill, proposing several amendments to the original bill, introduced last December.

# Rural job Bill tabled in House

9- UPA 6/18  
Statesman News Service

## CPM denies arm-twisting

NEW DELHI, Aug. 18. — The "radical" National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, which seeks to guarantee 100 days of wage employment to every rural household within a year, was finally introduced in the Lok Sabha today.

Mrs Sonia Gandhi declared that the Bill was the "most important pledge made by the UPA government's Common Minimum Programme".

The members, cutting across party lines, welcomed the Bill when it was moved by the rural development minister, Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, for consideration after the government incorporated a number of amendments to the original legislation introduced in the House in December last year.

Participating in a debate in Parliament for the first time since the UPA government assumed power last year, Mrs Gandhi described the Bill as "historic with far-reaching and profound consequences".

Taking note of massive deprivation, destitution and poverty in rural India, the Congress chief said: "This legislation was a response to the needs of millions of Indians who have a right to a better life for themselves and their children." She added: "Through this legislation we will begin to deliver to them what is their right, their entitlement — guaranteed employment."

In its amended form, the Bill seeks to expand its ambit to one member of all rural households, instead of restricting it only to

NEW DELHI, Aug. 18. — The CPI-M MP, Mr Nilotpal Basu, today said the party had never arm-twisted the UPA government to accede to its amendments to the Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, but maintained the success of the Bill would depend on the level of coordination between the Centre and state governments. — SNS

below-poverty line families in rural India besides assuring a minimum wage of Rs 60 per day to a worker. The food-for-work programme and other schemes have been incorporated into this overarching countrywide programme.

The rural development minister said the amended Bill promised wage employment to every rural house, in which adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work for which the minimum wage would be Rs 60.

Altogether 200 districts, including 150 districts under food-for-work programme, would be covered initially under the legislation, and the programme would be extended subsequently to all 600 districts in the country within the next four years, the minister added.

BJP leader Mr Kalyan Singh picked holes in the Bill. He said it was strange that after ruling the country for 50 years, the Congress had realised the need for such a law now. He, however, congratulated the government for bringing the Bill, but observed that not enough preparation had gone into it.

THE STATESMAN

# 'Historic' Bill on jobs in Lok Sabha

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UPA SWA

Guarantees 100 days of work for rural households in 200 districts

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The United Progressive Alliance Government on Thursday moved in the Lok Sabha the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill. It aims to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment for rural households in 200 districts.

The amended Bill, introduced by the Government last year, was moved by Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh amid the thumping of desks. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was present in the House and his contribution came in for a special mention by UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

## "Banishing poverty"

Describing it as a "historic bill," Dr. Singh said it aimed at banishing poverty through assured employment. It was only through the amelioration of poor economic conditions in the rural areas that prosperity could be achieved.

The Bill, promised by the Congress in its manifesto and part of the National Common Minimum Programme, was fine-tuned over the last two days; the Left Parties sent in five suggestions.

It promises wage employment to every rural house, in which adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work, Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad said, moving a separate list of amendments.

Initially 200 districts, including 150 under the Food for Work

• 100 days not enough:  
Nitish Kumar

• The word "poor household" replaced with "household"

Programme, would be covered under the Bill. It would be extended to all 600 districts in the country in five years. It provides for unemployment allowances if the job, under the scheme, is not provided.

Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad said some 72 crore people lived in rural areas. The minimum daily wage had been fixed at Rs. 60 under the Bill. As per the amendment approved by the Cabinet, the word "poor household" was replaced with "household" for guaranteeing jobs for one person in each household. The original Bill identified families below the poverty line as beneficiaries.

Reaffirming the commitment of the UPA Government to improve conditions in the rural areas, the Minister said it had raised the allocation for the Ministry to Rs. 24,000 crores in the current budget.

## Insufficient: Kalyan Singh

Initiating a discussion, Kalyan Singh (Bharatiya Janata Party) said the decision to provide Rs. 60 a day for 100 days of guaranteed employment would in effect mean only Rs. 500 a month; it would not be sufficient to run a family.

# UPA-BJP row intensifies over strategic PSU sale

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 17 AUGUST

THE rhetorical skirmishes between the UPA and the BJP over disinvestment on Wednesday intensified with finance minister P Chidambaram saying that strategic sale can never be a preferred route and BJP leader Yashwant Sinha maintaining that such sale alone was the best way to realise maximum funds from privatised PSUs.

"The UPA has rejected this NDA policy, as strategic sale raises more questions than it answers," Mr Chidambaram said and claimed that the government had detected a number of defects in valuation of assets, bidding process, reserve price and post-

closure adjustment claims. He countered the claims of Mr Sinha that strategic sale of PSUs ensured a higher price-earning ratio (P/E) of their shares, saying there was no difference in the ratio whether disinvestment was done through book-build public offers or the previous practice of strategic sale.

Countering the finance minister, Mr Sinha said that "the finance minister was wrong on facts." Mr Sinha, who said that he was prepared for a debate with Mr Chidambaram on the issue said: "Even in those companies where shares have been disinvested earlier, receipts through the strategic sale route have been higher. Mr Chidambaram has access to the files and he can com-



pare the receipts from the two methods," Mr Sinha said.

On his part, the finance minister on Wednesday attempted to soothe the frayed nerves of the investing community by claiming that the government has not made any new announcement with regard to abandoning strategic sale or retaining at least 51% government stake in PSU banks. "These objectives have been clearly laid down in the National Common Minimum Programme". Elaborating on the "defects" of the strategic sale route, he cited the Balco privatisation and said it had raised questions on the valuation of assets by taking into account only the productive assets and excluded unproductive assets.

He also pointed to "loopholes" in the NDA policy of going through strategic sale even when there was single bidding and said it was not truly transparent and open, as it was the case in the sale of two hotels.

There were number of instances when banks have been arm-twisted to fund the bidders of PSUs, he said.

In the case of the Paradip Phosphates disinvestment, he said the post closure adjustment claim were more than the bid price of Rs 155 crore. Referring to a Supreme Court judgement, Mr Chidambaram said if the money (to set up a PSU) had come from the Consolidated Fund of India, the government will have to retain 51% stake in the company.

# Central push for quota

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, August 17

THE GOVERNMENT has reiterated its resolve to ensure reservations in educational institutions to offset the adverse impact of a recent Supreme Court judgment over the issue.

Armed with unprecedented unanimity from all sections of Lok Sabha, HRD Minister Arjun Singh said on Wednesday the enactment providing constitutional protection to the government's reservation policy in educational institutions would be in place ahead of the next academic year.

Singh informed the House that since the SC judgement would come into force only in the next ac-

ademic session, "we have time to deliberate and legislate".

Underlining the finer aspects of this approach, Singh said the government would convene a meeting of leaders of all political parties to discuss the issue before the current session of Parliament ended on August 26.

This will be followed by a meeting of state ministers in charge of professional education in Delhi on August 27.

"We hope to come to a common understanding on this issue," Singh said.

In an effort to evolve a consensus, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee even went beyond the rules to permit a larger participation of members from several polit-

ical parties in the debate that followed a calling-attention motion moved by the MDMK's Gingee N. Ramachandran and four others.

Cutting across party lines, members demanded that the government come up with a comprehensive legislation that ensured continued reservations for SCs/STs and other backward classes and minorities.

Left leaders met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with this demand. The Left leaders, including A.B. Bardhan and D. Raja (CPI), Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M), Debabrata Biswas (Forward Bloc) and Abani Roy (RSP), said the Supreme Court judgment against the quotas would "go against the spirit of social justice".

বিতর্কিত সেন্টুর বিক্রির পক্ষে সওয়াল শ্বেতপত্রে

# চিদম্বরম-বিরোধিতা সরকারেই

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৩ অগস্ট: শুধু বামেরাই নয়, কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার ভিতর থেকেই বিরোধিতার মুখে পড়ছেন পি চিদম্বরম। সেই বিরোধিতা আরও স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় অর্থমন্ত্রীর প্রস্তাবিত একটি শ্বেতপত্র ঘিরে।

সংসদের চলতি বাদল অধিবেশনে বিলম্বিকরণ নিয়ে শ্বেতপত্র প্রকাশের পরিকল্পনা নিয়েছিলেন অর্থমন্ত্রী। সেই মতো খসড়া শ্বেতপত্র তৈরি করেও ফেলেছিল অর্থ মন্ত্রক। এই খসড়ার কপি পাঠানো হয় সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রীর কাছে। তার পরেই শুরু হয় বিপত্তি।

২৬ পৃষ্ঠার খসড়া শ্বেতপত্রে বাজপেয়ী জমানার আর্থিক সংস্কারেরও যথেষ্ট প্রশংসা করা হয়েছে। শুধু তা-ই নয়, এই খসড়াপত্রে সেন্টুর হোটেলের বিলম্বিকরণের যৌক্তিকতাকেও মেনে নেওয়া হয়েছে। বালকো বিক্রির বিষয়েও সরকার আপত্তি তোলেনি। এই বালকো বিক্রি নিয়েও বাজপেয়ী জমানায় বিরোধীরা সরব ছিল।

এ ছাড়া, আগামী দিনে চিদম্বরম বিলম্বিকরণের বিষয়ে আর কী কী ব্যবস্থা নিতে চলেছেন, তার সবিস্তার বিবরণ দিতে গিয়ে লাভজনক রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থা বিক্রির কথা বলা হয়েছে। এই খসড়া শ্বেতপত্রটি পেয়ে বেশ কিছু কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী 'গেল গেল' রব তুলেছেন। পেট্রোলিয়াম মন্ত্রী মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ার, বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী কমল নাথ প্রমুখ চিদম্বরমের এই শ্বেতপত্রের বেশ কিছু নীতির বিরোধিতা করেছেন।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রের খবর, বেশ কিছু কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী সেন্টুর হোটেল বিক্রির যৌক্তিকতা সম্পর্কিত অনুচ্ছেদটিকে শ্বেতপত্র থেকে বাদ দিতে চেয়েছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে গিয়ে এই আপত্তির কথা জানিয়েও এসেছেন তাঁরা। এনডিএ জমানায় সেন্টুর হোটেল বিক্রি হয়, অরুণ শৌরি তখন বিলম্বিকরণ মন্ত্রী। বাম দলগুলি অভিযোগ তোলে, এই হোটেল বিক্রিতে দুর্নীতি হয়েছে। অভিযোগের ভিত্তিতে সিবিআই তদন্তের কাজ শুরু করেছে। সিপিএমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাট সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করে এই সেন্টুর বিক্রির ঘটনায় প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর জামাতা রঞ্জন ভট্টাচার্যকে পর্যন্ত কাঠগড়ায় দাঁড়

করিয়েছেন। এত কিছু পরে এই বিক্রির যৌক্তিকতার কথা যদি চিদম্বরমের শ্বেতপত্রে লেখা হয়, তবে সংসদে পেশ হলে সরকারের পক্ষে সেটা ব্যামেরাং হয়ে যেতে পারে। সেই কারণেই শ্বেতপত্র থেকে সেন্টুর হোটেল সম্পর্কিত অনুচ্ছেদটি বাদ দেওয়ার দাবি তুলেছেন এই মন্ত্রীরা।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী বিষয়টি নিয়ে চিদম্বরমের সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন। অর্থমন্ত্রী তাঁকে বলেন, আমলারা রিপোর্টটি তৈরি করেছেন। অর্থ মন্ত্রকের অফিসারেরা এখনও মনে করেন না যে, সেন্টুর হোটেল চুক্তিতে কোনও দুর্নীতি ছিল। খুব শীঘ্রই বিষয়টি নিয়ে মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার কথা। তবে সংসদের বাদল অধিবেশন শেষ হবে ২৬ অগস্ট। এই দু'সপ্তাহের মধ্যে শ্বেতপত্রটি পেশ হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা কম। যদিও এই শ্বেতপত্রটি প্রকাশ হওয়ার কথা গত বাজেটেই অর্থমন্ত্রী ঘোষণা করেছিলেন। বাদল অধিবেশনে সম্ভব না-হলে শীতকালীন অধিবেশনে শ্বেতপত্রটি প্রকাশের চেষ্টা করবেন অর্থমন্ত্রী।

চিদম্বরমের বিরুদ্ধে বাম নেতারা সরব, আবার ঘরের ভিতরেও বেশ কিছু মন্ত্রী ও কংগ্রেস নেতার সঙ্গে তাঁর সম্পর্ক ভাল যাচ্ছে না। মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ার তো কিছু দিন আগে অর্থমন্ত্রীকে চিঠি দিয়ে পেট্রোলিয়াম মন্ত্রকের অধীন অয়েল ইন্ডিয়া লিমিটেডের বিক্রির সম্ভাবনার তীব্র বিরোধিতা করেন। এই সংস্থাটি এখন পুরোপুরি সরকারি নিয়ন্ত্রণে, কিন্তু পাঁচ শতাংশ বিক্রির কথা হয়েছে। ভেল-বিতর্ক তুঙ্গে থাকার সময়েই আইয়ারের এই চিঠি নিয়ে সরকারের ভিতরে ঝড় ওঠে। কংগ্রেস নেতা রাজ্যসভার সদস্য জয়রাম রমেশও চিদম্বরমকে বিলম্বিকরণের বিষয়ে বেশ কিছু মতামত জানিয়ে চিঠি দিয়েছেন।

পেনশন বিল এবং নানা ক্ষেত্রে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ নিয়ে চিদম্বরম অর্থ মন্ত্রকের কর্তাদের বলেছেন, রাজনৈতিক বাধা যা-ই আসুক, আর্থিক সংস্কারের প্রক্ষেপে সব রকম প্রস্তুতি নিয়েই চলতে হবে। মনমোহন সিংহ নিজেও আর্থিক সংস্কারের পক্ষে এবং এ ব্যাপারে তিনি চিদম্বরমকে পূর্ণ সমর্থনই করছেন। মন্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়াও এই প্রক্রিয়ায় সক্রিয়। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও শ্বেতপত্র প্রকাশের ব্যাপারে সতর্ক হয়ে পা ফেলাতে চান মনমোহন, যাতে এই প্রক্ষেপে জোট রাজনীতির নতুন কোনও বিতর্ক মাথা চাড়া না-দেয়।



1 AUG 2005

ANAND-BAZAR



12 AUG 2001

# Shame on Day II of penitence

**OUR BUREAU**

**New Delhi, Aug. 11:** No apology for 21 years and today the country's biggest head "bow(s)... in shame".

"I am not standing on any false prestige and I bow my head in shame on behalf of the government and the people of the whole country for what happened in 1984," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said.

It was the second day of the scramble to save face, this time in the Rajya Sabha, which listened with rapt attention to Singh's reply to the debate

on the Nanavati Commission report on the anti-Sikh riots.

Although the Prime Minister has taken much of the Opposition sting out, first with his promise in the Lok Sabha yesterday to pursue the trail of suspicion that leads to Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar, both Congress leaders, and then with the apology, observers were left wondering about the delay.

All the action on behalf of the government followed an empty action taken report on the findings of the commission, both of which were presented on Monday.

Nearly six months had

elapsed between the commission submitting the findings and the government preparing the action report, giving enough time to the political authorities — Singh, Sonia Gandhi and home minister Shivraj Patil — to formulate a response the Sikh community had been waiting 21 years to receive.

"I do not have any hesitation in apologising because what happened was the negation of nationhood," Singh said. He did not say what hesitation held his tongue all this time.

Tytler resigned as minister yesterday. Today, Sajjan Kumar quit as chairman of the Delhi Rural Development Board.

Within the Congress, whispers were being heard that the trio of Singh, Sonia and Patil had not taken the advice of other experienced leaders, which explained the belated reaction after the outrage at the government's handling of the report.

Singh tried to make amends. "All those against whom the commission drew adverse inference, we will have a re-look at them."

He revealed that the then BJP-led government formed the commission on the basis of

a supplementary question. Singh said he believed question hour was not the appropriate time to discuss an important issue, but had kept quiet.

"But Mr Advani, the then home minister, said outside the House that 'I want to constitute a commission on 1984 anti-Sikh riots but Manmohan Singh stopped me from doing it... Mr Advani owes an apology to me on this count.'"

Although the government's response has been late, it has made the BJP apprehensive that, a precedent having been set with two resignations, trouble might be in store for Narendra Modi once the

Nanavati report on the Gujarat riots comes out.

Quite unlike his usual soft-spoken self, Singh was in an unsparing mood as he also took on the Akali Dal.

"They were busy dividing the people of Punjab on communal lines," he said.

At the end of the debate, Patil announced two committees — one to look into compensation for riot victims and another to consider rehabilitation programmes for the widows and their children.

"I have committed my government to do all we can do to support the widows," Singh said. (See Page 6)



A Delhi protester helps up a policeman



I bow my head in shame that such a thing took place

— Manmohan Singh

# টাইটলারকে ইস্তফা দিতে বাধ্য করিয়ে বাজিমাৎ মনমোহনের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১০  
অগস্ট: আটচল্লিশ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে একশো  
আশি ডিগ্রি ঘুরে দিল্লির শিখনিধন-কাও  
নিয়ে জগদীশ টাইটলারকে ইস্তফা  
দিতে বাধ্য করল কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার।  
দাঙ্গা-প্রশ্নে সরকারের এই সংবেদনশীল  
মনোভাবের নেতৃত্ব দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী  
মনমোহন সিংহ নিজে। বামপন্থীরা  
ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার জন্য যতটা চাপ তৈরি  
করেছিল, তার থেকে আরও কয়েক  
কদম এগিয়ে সন্দেহভাজন মন্ত্রীকে  
মন্ত্রিসভা থেকেই ছেঁটে ফেললেন  
তিনি। রাতে রাষ্ট্রপতি ভবন সূত্রে  
জানানো হয়েছে, রাষ্ট্রপতি কালাম  
টাইটলারের ইস্তফাপত্র গ্রহণ করেছেন।

বিরোধীদের আনা মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব  
এবং বামপন্থীদের প্রবল চাপের মুখে  
সরকার আজ লোকসভায় নানাবর্তী  
কমিশনের উপর আগের ব্যবস্থাগ্রহণ  
রিপোর্টটিকে কার্যত নাকচ করে দেয়।  
পরিবর্তে কমিশনের সুপারিশ মেনে  
প্রত্যেক সন্দেহভাজন ব্যক্তির বিরুদ্ধে  
নতুন করে তদন্ত শুরু বা মামলা রুজুর  
সিদ্ধান্ত ঘোষণা করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।  
স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই এই সিদ্ধান্তের  
আওতায় এসে যান মন্ত্রী জগদীশ  
টাইটলার ও কংগ্রেস সাংসদ সজ্জন  
কুমার। সন্তুষ্ট বামপন্থীরা লোকসভায়  
সরকারের পক্ষে ভোটও দেন।

কিন্তু সরকারের এই পরিবর্তিত  
মনোভাবের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে এর পর  
টাইটলারের পক্ষে মন্ত্রিসভায় থেকে  
যাওয়া কার্যত অসম্ভব হয়ে পড়ে।  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজে টাইটলারকে ডেকে  
পাঠিয়ে তাঁর সঙ্গে কথা বলেন। সেই  
সময় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল ও  
প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ও  
উপস্থিত ছিলেন। এর পরেই টাইটলার  
চলে যান সনিয়া গান্ধীর কাছে। নিজের  
অসন্তোষ স্পষ্ট করে দিয়ে টাইটলার  
তাঁর পদত্যাগপত্র সনিয়ার হাতে তুলে  
দিয়ে তাঁকে তা প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে  
পাঠিয়ে দিতে বলেন।

তার আগে প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজ  
বিকালে লোকসভায় জানিয়ে দেন,  
“ব্যবস্থাগ্রহণ রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছিল,  
কমিশন নিজে যেখানে নিশ্চিত নয়,  
সেখানে সরকারের কিছু করার নেই।  
...কিন্তু ধারণা এবং সংসদের ভাবাবেগ  
বলেও একটা বিষয় আছে। সরকার  
তাকে মর্যাদা দেয় এবং তার সামনে  
মাথা ঝাঁকায়। এই ভাবাবেগের কথা  
মাথায় রেখে সরকার আশ্বাস দিচ্ছে,  
যেখানেই কমিশন কোনও ব্যক্তির নাম

করে বলেছে আরও তদন্ত হওয়া  
দরকার, বা যেখানে কোনও মামলা  
ফের রুজু করার বা পরীক্ষা করার কথা  
বলেছে, আইনত সম্ভব হলে সরকার তা  
করার সমস্ত রকম চেষ্টা করবে।”

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কথাতেই সরকারের  
মনোভাব স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছিল। এর পর  
টাইটলারের সামনে আর কোনও পথ  
খোলা ছিল না। কিন্তু রাজনীতিকদের  
মধ্যেই থেমে থাকেননি প্রধানমন্ত্রী।  
একই সঙ্গে, অবসরপ্রাপ্ত সরকারি  
অফিসারদের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া  
যায় কি না, তা নিয়ে আইন মন্ত্রকের  
পরামর্শ নেওয়া হবে বলে জানিয়েছেন।  
তা ছাড়া প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছেন, দাঙ্গায়  
ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত পরিবারের প্রত্যেক ‘বিধবা ও  
শিশুকে’ মর্যাদাসম্পন্ন জীবনযাপনের



ব্যবস্থা করে দেওয়ার। সেই সঙ্গেই  
মনমোহন জানিয়ে দেন, শিখনিধন  
পর্বটি ছিল ‘জাতীয় লজ্জা’। ওই ঘটনার  
পিছনের সত্যের সন্ধান চলতেই থাকবে  
বলেও তিনি মন্তব্য করেন।

আটচল্লিশ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে লোকসভায়  
সরকারের মনোভাব বদলে যাওয়ার  
পিছনে তিনটি কারণ কাজ করেছে বলে  
রাজনৈতিক সূত্রের খবর। এক,  
প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ নিজে শিখ  
হয়ে এমন একটা বিতর্ককে স্বেচ্ছ  
সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতার জোরে উড়িয়ে দিতে  
চাননি। দুই, চারটি ব্যবস্থা নিলে তবেই  
ভোটাভুটিতে সরকারের পাশে  
দাঁড়াবেন, বামপন্থীদের এই দাবির পরে  
সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতা পাওয়াটাই সমস্যা হয়ে  
দাঁড়িয়েছিল। বামদেদের চার দফা দাবি  
ছিল টাইটলারের বিরুদ্ধে তদন্ত, সজ্জন

কুমারের বিরুদ্ধে মামলা ফের রুজু  
করা, অফিসারদের শাস্তির ব্যবস্থা করা  
এবং ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত প্রত্যেক পরিবারের এক  
জনের কাজের ব্যবস্থা করা। তৃতীয় যে  
কারণটি সরকারের সিদ্ধান্তের পিছনে  
কাজ করেছে তা হল শিখনিধন পর্বটি  
ফের সামনে এসে যাওয়ায় সাধারণ  
মানুষের মধ্যে দাঙ্গাকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে  
তৈরি হওয়া কড়া মনোভাব।

আজ মূলতুবি প্রস্তাবটি আনেন  
অকালি দল ও বিজেপির সাংসদেরা।  
বিরোধী নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী  
চেয়েছিলেন বিষয়টি নিয়ে আজ একই  
সঙ্গে দুই কক্ষ আলোচনা হোক।  
সরকার তা মানেনি। তা সত্ত্বেও দলের  
একাংশের সংসদ অচল করে রাখার  
প্রস্তাব খারিজ করে আডবাণী শুধু  
লোকসভায় আলোচনার বিষয়টি মেনে  
নেন। কিন্তু সরকারের পক্ষে অবস্থা  
কঠিন হয়ে দাঁড়ায় যখন বামপন্থীরা  
সরাসরি টাইটলার-সজ্জন কুমারদের  
বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার শর্ত রাখেন।  
সকালে সরকার-বাম সংসদীয় সমন্বয়  
কমিটির বৈঠকে প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের  
সঙ্গে গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্তের বচসাও  
বাধে। সিপিএমের বাসুদেব আচারিয়া  
বা মহম্মদ সেলিম থেকে আরএসপি-র  
মনোজ ভট্টাচার্য, সকলেই সমান অনড়  
থাকায় সরকার নতিস্বীকার করতে হয়।

বামেরা সংসদেও সরকারের কাছে  
ওই চার দফা দাবি মেনে নেওয়ার  
আহ্বানই জানান। পাশাপাশি বিজেপির  
বিরুদ্ধেও আক্রমণ শানান ‘রাজনৈতিক  
ফয়দা’ তোলার চেষ্টার অভিযোগে।  
শেষ পর্যন্ত এই বিতর্কে বামপন্থীরাই  
বেশি ফয়দা তুলছেন দেখে বিকালের  
সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে বিজেপি নেত্রী সুসমা  
স্বরাজ বলেন তাঁদের ভূমিকার কথা  
মাথায় রাখতে। এক সময়ে হাত জোড়  
করে তিনি বলেন, “সব কৃতিত্ব  
আপনারা বামপন্থীদের দিচ্ছেন কেন।  
আমরাই তো মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব আনলাম।  
আমরাই কাল সংসদ অচল  
করেছিলাম।” এক দিক থেকে কিন্তু  
বিজেপি মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব না-আনলে  
সরকার বিপাকে পড়ত না, বামদেদের  
দাবির সামনে নতিস্বীকারের  
বাধ্যবাধকতা থাকত না।

তবে শেষ পর্যন্ত আরও অনেকখানি  
গিয়ে সরকারের ভাবমূর্তিকে ঝকঝকে  
করে দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রীই। টাইটলারকে  
পদত্যাগে বাধ্য করার পরে  
বিরোধীদেরও আর সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে  
আক্রমণ শানানোর অস্ত্র থাকল না।

# Nanavati panel report rocks Houses

## Punish The Guilty, Demand Agitated NDA Members

**New Delhi** The Nanavati Commission report on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots rocked Parliament on Tuesday as BJP and Akali Dal members demanded action against those involved in the violence, leading to adjournment of both Houses for the day.

Hardly had the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha met in the morning, agitated NDA members, mostly belonging to BJP and Akali Dal, sprang to their feet and charged the Congress-led UPA government with trying to protect their leaders.

Waving newspapers carrying stories with regard to the Nanavati Commission findings, which were tabled in Parliament on Monday, the members trooped into the well in both the Houses and chanted slogans demanding action against those guilty.

Lok Sabha speaker Somnath Chatterjee was forced to adjourn the House for the day barely five minutes after it assembled. The Rajya Sabha, which also witnessed similar scenes, was adjourned first during question hour and then for the entire day.

As soon as the Lok Sabha met, the NDA members, led by BJP's



**Activists of the All-India Sikh Conference (Babbar) protesting against the government's refusal to prosecute Central ministers implicated in the Nanavati Commission report, in New Delhi on Tuesday**

Related reports, pictures on Page 10

V K Malhotra, raised the issue. They charged the Congress-led UPA with trying to save their leaders who, the members alleged, were responsible for the riots. This triggered strong reaction from Congress benches.

Amidst the uproar, BJP, Shiromani Akali Dal and other NDA members trooped into the well forcing the speaker to adjourn the House for the day, within minutes after it met.

The NDA members continued to shout slogans even after the speaker asked Malhotra to raise the issue saying "it is a matter of concern for all sections of the House." The slogan-shouting opposition members alleged that each and every page of the Nanavati report had blamed the Congress for engineering the riots. The Congress members shouted back charging the BJP with launching a pogrom

### I AM INNOCENT: TYTLER

Union minister Jagdish Tytler on Tuesday claimed innocence and ruled out his resignation. Projecting himself as a "victim of misperception", he claimed that not a single person affected by the violence had filed an FIR against him in the last 21 years.

against minorities in Gujarat.

In the Rajya Sabha, the matter was raised by BJP leader Sushma Swaraj who said going by the Nanavati Commission report, it seemed the entire Congress party was involved in the riots which left 3,000 Sikhs dead. The opposition members, led by Raj Mohinder Singh Majitha (Akali Dal), then moved into the well demanding action against the guilty.

When BJP leader M Venkaiah Naidu said a notice had been given for suspension of the question hour, chairman Bha-iron Singh Shekhawat said he had not received it. The chairman told the agitated members that he was prepared for a discussion on the Nanavati report on Tuesday itself if the members so desired.

AGENCIES

10 MAY 2005 THE TIMES OF INDIA

# RAJIV, RAO CLEARED

**RAJIV SHARMA**  
New Delhi, August 8

THE JUSTICE Nanavati Commission has not found any evidence linking former PM and Congress president Rajiv Gandhi and the then home minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to the 1984 riots. Giving a clean chit to Gandhi, the commission observed: "There is absolutely no evidence suggesting that Rajiv Gandhi or any other high-ranking Congress(I) leader had organised attacks on Sikhs."

The report states that acts (of violence) were "done" by "local Congress(I) leaders and workers" for personal political reasons. "If they were the acts of individuals only, then the killing of Sikhs and looting of properties would not have been on such a large scale," the report says.

Some persons who deposed before the commission alleged that "Rajiv Gandhi had told one of his officials that Sikhs should be taught a lesson". But Justice Nanavati has rejected the allegation, saying the evidence on this count was very vague and it was not "believable" that Gandhi could have said so.

**Continued on Page 2**

## What report says



Sajjan Kumar

Recommends examination of those cases where the witnesses had made accusations against Kumar specifically



H.K.L. Bhagat

While there was evidence indicating his involvement, the commission did not pursue the matter in view of his failing health



Jagdish Tytler

Considers it safe to record a finding that there is credible evidence against him to the effect that "very probably" he had a hand in organising attacks on Sikhs



D.D. Shastri

Say there was "credible evidence" against him and recommends re-examining relevant material. The panel directs further investigation

## Action taken

An FIR in Sutanpuri PS was registered against unknown persons and Sajjan Kumar was not named as an accused

Nothing against Bhagat in the ATR as the panel was not keen to pursue the matter in view of his "mental and physical" health

Criminal action cannot be initiated against Tytler on basis of probability. Commission failed to provide evidence against the minister

Shastri was not named as an accused in a riot-related FIR in Karol Bagh PS. However, ATR says govt pursue matter



## Political storm erupts

THE NANAVATI Commission report has stirred a hornet's nest, triggering a fresh round of allegations and counter-allegations. The NDA said its leaders would soon meet the President to demand action against the guilty. However, Congress defended its leaders. "There is no indictment. No evidence," Congress spokesperson Anand Sharma said on Jagdish Tytler.

The CPI(M) maintained it was "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" with the panel's recommendations. Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) accused the government of "deliberately delaying" tabling of the report. The All India Riot Victims Relief Committee chief, Kuldeep Singh Bhogal said, "We were denied justice 21 years back and no justice has been given now."

**See also Page 2**

## Long, winding course

Nanavati commission was the ninth to probe the 1984 riots. The earlier panels had been under Ved Marwah, Rangnath Mishra, Dilip Kapoor-K.L. Mittal, P. Subramanian Poti-P.A. Roshia, M.L. Jain-E.N. Renision, Jain-A.K. Banerjee, Jain-D.K. Aggarwal, R.K. Ahuja

# 9<sup>th</sup>

# Left awaiting political move by UPA on BHEL

Contrary to Congress claims, Left parties say there was no further discussion on disinvestment

K.V. Prasad

**NEW DELHI:** Contrary to the Congress claims, the Left parties maintain that there was no further discussion on disinvestment in Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited and are awaiting a political move by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance.

While announcing that the party had put on hold the decision on disinvestment in BHEL, the Congress and the Government said discussions were on with the Left parties to find a way out of the impasse. On Saturday, the Left parties said they did not hold any discussion apart from the two rounds of talks they had with UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi last month.

Left sources said there had been no informal contact either.

The standoff with the UPA led to the Left suspending participation in coordination committee meetings since June 26.

Left leaders are planning to meet here next week to discuss

the BHEL issue, among others. The interaction is part of regular meetings among leaders of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the All-India Forward Bloc during the Parliament session.

Among the suggestions the Congress made to address the Left concerns is a Parliament resolution to bind future governments to come before both Houses in case they want to reduce the government holding in "navratna" companies to below 51 per cent. The proposal is to ensure that the public sector character of the "navratnas" will not be changed.

## Proposal with a rider

In addition, the Congress made the offer that the Government would offload just five per cent of its equity instead of the proposed 10 per cent in BHEL and put a freeze on disinvestment in other "navratnas". However, the proposal carried a rider

— the Left parties should allow the Government to disinvest its holding in other profit-making public sector undertakings.

The Left parties do not subscribe to the Congress argument that a Parliament resolution could prevent any government from changing the public sector character of the "navratnas." All that is required to undo the binding clause is the passage of another resolution by any party or combination that has majority in Parliament, say the Left parties.

As for raising resources to fund social security measures, they say this issue can be dealt with separately, and need not be linked to the move to disinvest in either "navratnas" or other profit-making public sector undertakings.

There is a difference in approach between the CPI and the CPI (M). The CPI (M) thinks that there is no need for taking up the issue in Parliament as a decision on BHEL is something the UPA has to take politically.

07 AUG 2005 THE HINDU

# OK or not, Karat to split atoms

## OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 31: What was "in general okay" for Jyoti Basu need not be so for Prakash Karat.

A day after the veteran leader gave a grudging certificate to the Prime Minister's statement in Parliament on the outcome of the recent US visit, CPM general secretary Karat repeated the objections the party had raised against the nuclear agreement between Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush.

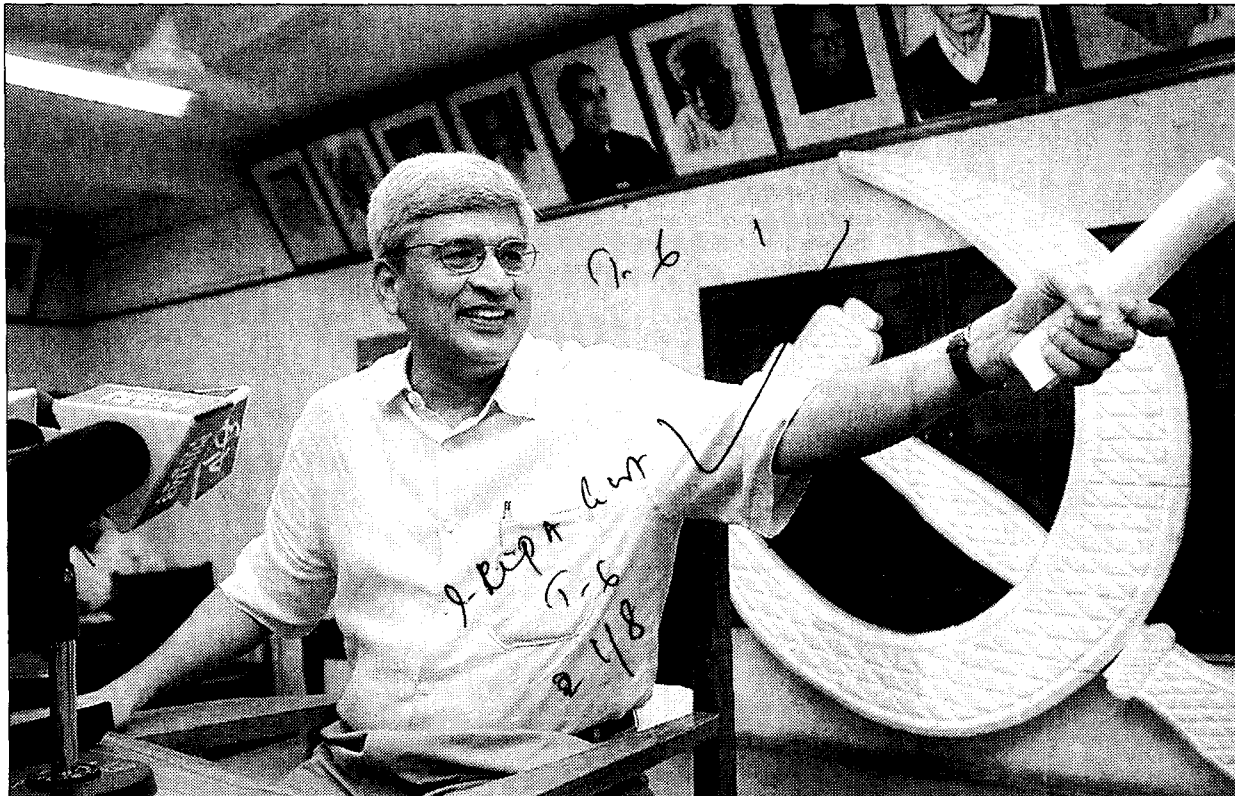
Karat made it clear that the CPM will voice its criticism of the Prime Minister's statement in Parliament and outside, indicating that his party had no intention of retracing its steps.

The Prime Minister had said in Parliament that India would fulfil its commitments only if the Americans keep their side of the bargain — an assertion that seemed to have satisfied Basu yesterday.

Karat's comments today at a media conference at the end of a politburo meeting suggest that he is keen to prepare the ground for a debate to dissect the US pact and highlight perceived pitfalls.

He declared that the party, through nationwide seminars and meetings, would focus on what in the agreement was "harmful" for India's strategic and security interests.

The CPM leader said the "trend of becoming a strategic US ally, started by the erstwhile NDA government, continues". An indication of this was India's willingness to accept the US' leadership in the fight against terrorism, which the Singh-Bush statement re-



Karat at the news conference in New Delhi. (PTI)

flected, he said.

Karat added that the department of atomic energy should not be weakened while implementing the nuclear co-operation agreement on the basis of structural reciprocity and stressed the need for India to maintain its independence in developing nuclear technology for peaceful use.

He said the CPM would list these concerns when the Prime Minister's statement is debated in Parliament on Wednesday.

Taking a cue from the CPM — which has of late been more vocal than the principal Oppo-

sition party in Parliament — the BJP has decided it would also target the government in the House.

A senior leader said: "The points raised by Atal Bihari Vajpayee in his letter to the Prime Minister (a day after the joint statement) will be reiterated by him in the Lok Sabha and our other speakers in both the Houses." This leader emphasised there would be no "deviation or dilution" of the "Vajpayee line".

Sources said the leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and former external affairs minister, Jaswant Singh, was

initially "upset" with Vajpayee's letter, which basically articulated the observations made in media interviews by the national security adviser of the NDA government, Brajesh Mishra.

At party meetings, Jaswant Singh reportedly argued that the BJP's response should be more "subtle", given the background of the nuclear pact and the fact that the NDA government had agreed to put some of India's nuclear reactors under safeguards while negotiating with the US.

Singh also pointed out that the BJP and its principal func-

tionaries had laid the foundation for India's nuclear diplomacy between 1998 and 2004.

Faced with these "facts", sources said Vajpayee was reluctant to speak during the debate. However, this morning, Jaswant Singh met him and reportedly "clarified" that Vajpayee's letter of July 20 would be the "baseline" for the BJP.

The thrust of Vajpayee's criticism was India was giving away too much for too little — a point countered by Manmohan Singh through specific examples in his Parliament statement.

## CPM can't bury Bhel in a hurry

### OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 31: The CPM today sought to keep the Bhel pot boiling, ruling out any compromise on its stand against divestment in the public sector company.

The party has renewed its opposition, though the Centre had made it clear that no decision has been taken on the divestment — a stand in line with suggestions that the government has agreed to shelve the proposal to offload 10 per cent stake without saying so.

The CPM's continued public posturing is being seen as an attempt to raise the temperature in the run-up to next year's Assembly polls in its two strongholds, Bengal and Kerala.

CPM leader Prakash Karat told a news conference that the Left parties would continue to stay away from the coordination committee meetings with the United Progressive Alliance.

Karat rejected a "compromise formula", which apparently entails reducing the divestment from 10 to five per cent. He did not say who mooted the proposal or when it was conveyed to the CPM.

The CPM leader welcomed the agreement between Honda Motorcycle and its workers but said some questions — like whether the 60-odd people still in jail would be re-employed — remained unanswered.

# চিদম্বরমকেই আক্রমণ করবে সিপিএম

দীপ্তেন্দ্র রায়চৌধুরী • নয়াদিল্লি

৩০ জুলাই: আমেরিকা নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের বিরুদ্ধে অসন্তোষ সঙ্কেত মোটের উপর বোঝাপড়া করে নিতে তৈরি আছে সিপিএম। কিন্তু অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরমের সঙ্গে নৈব নৈব চ। বরং, এখন যে সব বিষয় নিয়ে দল আক্রমণ শানাতে চায়, তার সব কিছুই অর্থমন্ত্রক সংক্রান্ত। পেনশন বিল সংসদে না-আসার পর এই মুহূর্তে অর্থমন্ত্রী বামেদের তোপের মুখে দাঁড়িয়ে আছেন কর্মসংস্থান নিশ্চয়তা বিল নিয়ে। সি পি এমের পলিটব্যুরোর আলোচনায় স্থির হয়েছে, বিলটিতে বেশ কিছু পরিবর্তন করা দরকার এবং তার জন্য টাকার সংস্থান অর্থমন্ত্রীকেই করতে হবে।

সিপিআই তো আগেই চিদম্বরমকে মন্ত্রিসভা থেকে সরানোর দাবি তুলেছে। কিন্তু 'ব্যক্তি' গুরুত্বপূর্ণ নয়, এই অবস্থানে অটল থেকে সিপিএম তেমন কোনও দাবি তুলছে না।

কমিউনিস্টরা ইতিমধ্যেই সনিয়া গাঁধী ও সরকারের মধ্যে একটা ফারাক রেখে এগোতে চেষ্টা করছেন। সনিয়া যে কতটা ছাড় দিতে রাজি আছেন, তার প্রমাণ পাওয়া গিয়েছে হাজার ক্ষেত্রে।

সনিয়ার হস্তক্ষেপে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ভূপিন্দর সিংহ হুড়া সক্রিয় হওয়ার পর আজ হুন্ডা কর্তৃপক্ষ সমস্ত কর্মীকে (ছাটাই ও সাসপেন্ড-সহ) ফিরিয়ে নিয়েছে। এটাকে তাঁদের আংশিক জয় বলে অভিহিত করে বিবৃতি দিয়েছে এইটাক, সিটি ও এইচএমএস। গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্তের মতো কটর কংগ্রেস-বিরোধী নেতাও এই বিষয়টিকে স্বাগত জানিয়ে হিন্দি বলয়ে 'অগ্রগতির সূচনা' বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন। কোমলও সংশয় নেই, সনিয়ার হস্তক্ষেপ ছাড়া পুরো বিষয়টাই অন্যরকম হয়ে দাঁড়াতে।

পলিটব্যুরোর বৈঠক শেষে ইয়েচুরি যা বলেছেন, তার অর্থ হল প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বিবৃতিতেও যে হেতু স্পষ্ট মার্কিন আশ্বাসের কথা বলা হয়নি, তাই তাঁরা আপাতত ততটা উত্তপ্ত থাকছেন না। জ্যোতি বসু জানিয়েছেন, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বিবৃতি মোটের উপর 'ঠিকই আছে'। এর পর সংসদে বিষয়টি আলোচনা হলে সাংসদেরা সমালোচনা করবেন ঠিকই; কিন্তু আপাতত বিষয়টি নিয়ে জল খুব বেশি গড়াবে না।

অন্যদিকে চিদম্বরমের বিরুদ্ধে কিন্তু বামপন্থীদের মনোভাব আরও গোঁড়া হয়েছে। দলীয় মুখপত্রে ব্যঙ্গ জাতীয়করণ থেকে শুরু করে পেনশন

সংস্কার প্রভৃতি নিয়ে লাগাতার নিবন্ধ প্রকাশ করা হচ্ছে। দলীয় সূত্রের বক্তব্য, বিলম্বিতকরণ বা বিদেশি বিনিয়োগ ছাড়াও পেনশন ও ব্যাঙ্কিং সংস্কার এবং কর্মসংস্থান নিশ্চয়তা বিল নিয়ে সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে অনড় অবস্থান নিতে চলেছেন তাঁরা। এ সব প্রশ্নেই চিদম্বরম বামেদের সঙ্গে সম্মুখসমরে নেমেছেন।

তা ছাড়া রেশন ব্যবস্থা জোরদার করা (যার জন্য প্রয়োজন আরও ভর্তুকি), কাজের বদলে খাদ্য কর্মসূচি আরও ব্যাপকভাবে শুরু করা এবং কাজের সুযোগ বাড়ানোর দাবিতে অগস্ট-সেপ্টেম্বর মাস জুড়ে দেশব্যাপী আন্দোলনের ডাকও দিয়েছে সিপিএম। নিঃসংশয়ে এই বিষয়গুলি নিয়েই এর পর সরকারের উপর ব্যাপক চাপ তৈরি করবেন কমিউনিস্টরা।

এর মধ্যে কাজের বদলে খাদ্য সংক্রান্ত (পোশাকি ভাষায় যার নাম হয়েছে কর্মসংস্থান নিশ্চয়তা) বিলটি এই অধিবেশনেই সংসদে আসার কথা। অর্থমন্ত্রী এই কর্মসূচিকে শুধু অনগ্রসর জেলাগুলির মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ রাখার পক্ষপাতী। তবে সংসদীয় কমিটি এর উপর কিছু সংশোধনের কথা বলেছে, যেগুলি মেনে নিতে গ্রামোন্নয়ন মন্ত্রকের তেমন আপত্তি নেই। কিন্তু প্রশ্ন হল

বাড়তি টাকার সংস্থান কী ভাবে হবে। এ সম্পর্কে সিপিএম কিন্তু পাঁচ দফা দাবি এখনই জানিয়ে রেখেছে।

এই পাঁচ দফা দাবি হল: এক, যত লোক কাজের জন্য আসবেন তাঁদের সকলকে দারিদ্রসীমার নীচে ধরে নিয়ে সেই অনুযায়ী খাদ্যশস্য দিতে হবে; দুই, চিহ্নিত অনগ্রসর অঞ্চল ছাড়াও রাজ্য সরকারগুলিকে অন্যান্য অঞ্চলে কর্মসূচি প্রসারের স্বাধীনতা দিতে হবে; তিন, স্থানীয় প্রয়োজন অনুযায়ী প্রকল্পটিকে পরিমার্জিত করতে দিতে হবে; চার, রাজ্যের ঘোষিত ন্যূনতম মজুরি অনুযায়ী মজুরি দিতে হবে এবং পাঁচ, অবিভক্ত এই প্রকল্পটিকে আরও ছড়িয়ে দিতে হবে। চিদম্বরমের পক্ষে যদি এই অনুযায়ী প্রকল্পটিকে চালানোর মতো টাকার সংস্থান করা সম্ভব না-হয়, তা হলে নতুন করে সংঘাত শুরু হবে। টাকা কোথা থেকে আসবে, তার উত্তরে এম কে পাণ্ডে জানান, "বামেরা চিদম্বরমকে টাকা তোলার রাস্তার সন্ধান (কর বাড়ানো) দিলেও অর্থমন্ত্রী তা মানেননি।"

সব মিলিয়ে, বিলম্বিতকরণ ও বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পর কর্মসংস্থান নিয়েও বামেদের তোপের মুখে দাঁড়িয়ে অর্থমন্ত্রী চিদম্বরম।

# UPA blamed for toeing US line

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 29 JULY

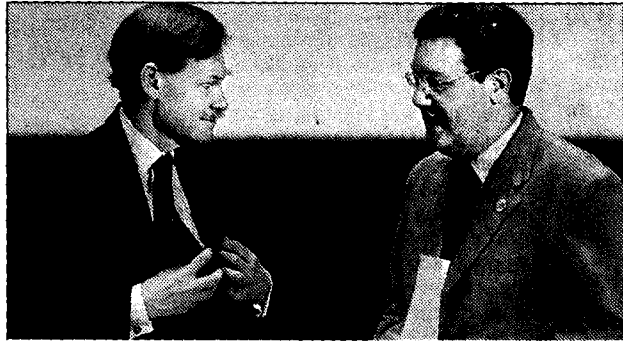
**T**he Left appears to be more than prophetic when it comes to commenting on the UPA's approach on Indo-US relations. New Delhi's surprise tango with the United States on climate protocol is fast snowballing into a major controversy as the Manmohan Singh government desperately fights sharp criticism that the new environment partnership unveiled in Laos yesterday has pushed India into the US coalition of the willing.

What was supposed to be a sideshow at the Asean Regional Forum meet in Vientienne has suddenly acquired centre stage here. Training its guns on the Manmohan Singh dispensation, Opposition leaders have questioned the "secret deal" worked out at the behest of the United

States, which they charge has sounded the death knell for the Kyoto protocol. "This is aimed at sidetracking the Kyoto protocol. The fact that it has come immediately after the Prime Minister's visit to the United States says a lot," said former environment minister Suresh Prabhu.

Adding to it, former external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha charged that the signing of the vision statement had let the "cat out of the bag". Mr Prabhu said he would move a privilege motion in the Lok Sabha tomorrow as Parliament, despite being in session, was kept in the dark on the Indian decision to be a signatory of the new framework agreement.

Significantly, the agreement comes less than three weeks after comments by US president George Bush at the G-8 summit attended by Prime Minister Singh about an alternative to the Kyoto



LEADING THE PACK: US deputy secretary of state Robert Zoellick and Australia's foreign minister Alexander Downer in Vientienne

Protocol. By aligning with the US, close on the heels of the defence agreement and the civil nuclear cooperation, opposition leaders charge that the government has upturned the tenets of Indian foreign policy.

"This goes against the grain that the corner stone of our foreign policy is to be leader of developing countries" Mr Prabhu said.

Government's discomfiture level has only climbed further with several Congress members voicing concern on the issue. Rajya Sabha member Jairam Ramesh, who has given a notice for a short duration discussion,

said he was caught unawares by the move. He however, said he had only sought details of the agreement and its implications from the government.

Government managers are parroting the US line that the agreement does not undermine the Kyoto protocol, rather, complements it. They say China is a signatory of the partnership. The pact, called Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, signed on Thursday will develop new technology aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions as an alternative to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

30 JUL 2005 The Economic Times



# Mannohan tells Left what happened in America

## Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 26. — The Prime Minister today apprised Left leaders of the details of the Indo-US nuclear agreement as well as his talks with President Mr George W Bush. Dr Mannohan Singh would make a statement in Parliament on Friday on

his US visit.

In his meeting with the Left leaders tonight, Dr Singh, who was assisted by foreign minister Mr K Natwar Singh, informed them about the highlights of the joint statement issued after his meeting with the American President in Washington.

Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, Mr Prakash Karat

## PM calls on President

NEW DELHI, July 26. — Dr Mannohan Singh today called on Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and apprised him of the highlights of his recent visit to the USA. During the 30-minute meeting, the Prime Minister briefed the President on his meetings with political and business leaders in the USA. The current session of Parliament also figured during the discussion, a spokesman of the President's secretariat said. — SNS

and Mr Sitaram Yechury of the CPI, Mr Abani Roy from the CPI-M, Mr A B Bardhan and Mr D Raja Forward Bloc leader Mr

Debabrata Biswas attended the meeting.

Asked whether the Left parties would raise the Indo-US engagement issue in Parliament, Mr Bardhan said: "Of course, we will. There will be a discussion after the Prime Minister makes a statement in the House."

The Left leaders have criticised the Indo-US

pact saying it "marks an end to India's disarmament policy" while continuing the previous BJP-led NDA government's "pro-US shift".

They have also held that there are "legitimate apprehensions" that the nuclear deal would restrict and hamper India's independent nuclear policy for peaceful purposes.

# Centre okays more powers to *navratnas*

## Bid to blunt criticism

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 25

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IN A bid to buy peace with its Left allies, the Centre on Monday set aside the finance ministry's objections and cleared heavy industry minister Santosh Mohan Deb's proposal to give more financial and functional autonomy to blue-chip PSUs.

Information & broadcasting minister S. Jaipal Reddy said profitable PSUs would be able henceforth to invest in joint ventures and subsidiary companies up to 30 per cent of their net worth.



### Sensex shining

- On Monday, Sensex breached the 7,500-mark and touched a fresh closing peak of 7505.60
- Sustained FII buying coupled with short covering by operators were the driving forces

### Powers to PSUs

- Centre has enhanced blue-chip PSUs' powers for investment in JVs, subsidiaries
- Profitable PSUs given powers to make appointments, transfers

The current limit for such investment is 15 per cent. For a single project, the exposure limit will be raised to 15 per cent from the current 5 per cent level. In real terms, the *navratna* PSUs will be able to invest up to Rs 1,000 crore in one project while this limit has been set at Rs 500 crore in category-I *mini-ratnas*. For category-II *mini-ratnas*, the investment limit in one project has been pegged at Rs 250 crore.

The decision, which has varied political and economic implications, will allow wide-ranging financial powers to blue-chip PSUs and blunt the Left parties' opposition to sale of 10 per cent equity in Bhel through the IPO route. It should also enable the Congress-led UPA to put up a united front along with Left parties in the current session of Parliament.

What's more, the move is expected to give momentum to major PSU joint ventures, now progressing at snail's pace. Also, it

will clear the roadblocks for NTPC and GAIL, which want to invest Rs 500 crore each in the Dabhol Power Project's revival.

The new entity — Ratnagiri Gas & Power Ltd — will be a three-way joint venture among NTPC, GAIL and public sector banks and financial institutions. The move will speed up Dabhol's revival and give a leg-up to ONGC-Mittal joint ventures in the energy sector. Thanks to the Monday's Cabinet decision, ONGC won't anymore need to seek the government's permission to invest up to Rs 1,000 crore in ONGC-Mittal Energy Ltd to acquire oil and gas assets abroad. The oil major can decide on investing up to Rs 1,000 crore in ONGC-Mittal Energy Services Ltd.

# যৌথ আক্রমণ এড়াতে

## মূলতুবি প্রস্তাবও মেনে নিল ইউ পি এ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫ জুলাই: সংসদে বাম এবং বিজেপি শিবিরের আক্রমণ যাতে একই সঙ্গে সামলাতে না হয়, সে জন্য আজ এক কৌশলী চাল দিল সরকারপক্ষ।

বিজেপি আগামিকাল আইএমডিটি নিয়ে মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়কে আনার কথা জানালে সরকারপক্ষ কোনও আপত্তি জানায়নি। প্রস্তাবটি গ্রহণ না করার জন্য স্পিকারের উপরে কোনও চাপ দেয়নি। মূলতুবি প্রস্তাবটি আলোচনার জন্য গৃহীত হয়। ফলে, আগামিকাল থেকে সংসদে এনডিএ উত্তর-পূর্ব সীমান্তে বাংলাদেশি অনুপ্রবেশ রোধে সরকারের 'ব্যর্থতাকে' তুলে ধরতেই ব্যস্ত থাকবে। চলবে দীর্ঘমেয়াদী বিতর্ক। সব মিলিয়ে বেশ কিছুটা সময় জোগাড় করে নিল সরকারপক্ষ।

কারণ যে প্রসঙ্গ (প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মার্কিন সফর সংক্রান্ত) নিয়ে বাম এবং বিজেপি দু'শিবিরেরই সরকারকে আক্রমণ করার কথা ছিল, মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব নিয়ে বিতর্কের কারণে তা সংসদে আপাতত তোলা যাবে না। মধ্যবর্তী সময়ে বিষয়টি নিয়ে বামদলের নরম করার চেষ্টা চালাবে ইউপিএ। স্পিকার এবং সরকারের তরফ

থেকে বিজেপিকেও বোঝানোর চেষ্টা হবে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীও ইতিমধ্যে মার্কিন সফর প্রসঙ্গে সবিস্তার বিবৃতি দিয়ে তাঁর অবস্থান ব্যাখ্যা করবেন। তখন সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে বিরোধীদের বলা সহজ হবে যে প্রধানমন্ত্রী যখন নিজেই ব্যাখ্যা দিচ্ছেন, বিষয়টি নিয়ে ফের কাঁটাছেঁড়া করা উচিত নয়।

গতকালই এনডিএ-র বৈঠকের পর বিজেপি নেত্রী সুসমা স্বরাজ জানান, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মার্কিন সফরে পরমাণু সংক্রান্ত চুক্তি, ইরান গ্যাস পাইপলাইন নিয়ে তাঁর মন্তব্য, অক্সফোর্ডে মনমোহনের ব্রিটিশ শাসনের প্রশংসা এবং ভারত-আমেরিকা সামরিক চুক্তি-এ সবের বিরুদ্ধে তাঁরা ভর্তসনা প্রস্তাব আনবেন। তার পরেই সন্ধ্যায় চার বামদল দাবি করে, মার্কিন সফর নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বিবৃতির পরেও বিদেশনীতির বৃহত্তর পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা প্রয়োজন। তখনই স্পষ্ট হয়ে যায় আমেরিকার সঙ্গে সামরিক চুক্তি এবং প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মার্কিন সফরে যৌথ বিবৃতি নিয়ে চাঁচাছোলা আক্রমণের মুখে পড়বে সরকারপক্ষ।

স্পষ্টতই এই বিষয়ে বিজেপি-র সঙ্গে বামদলের গলা মিললে লোকসভা এবং রাজসভায় নাজেহাল হতে হবে সরকারপক্ষকে। কোণঠাসা হয়ে পড়বে ট্রেজারি বেঞ্চ। এ সব ভেবেই কৌশল বদলানো হয়। সাধারণত বিরোধী শিবির কোনও বিষয়ে মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব আনলে তা কার্যকর না করার জন্য সরকারপক্ষের তরফে স্পিকারের উপর চাপ থাকে। দীর্ঘ টালবাহানা, তার জেরে সংসদ বয়কট ইত্যাদি

এর পর আটের পাতায়

# সরকার-বিরোধিতা

## চালুতেও বিজেপিকে সুযোগ দেবে না বাম

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫ জুলাই: প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের মার্কিন সফর নিয়ে সরকারকে প্যাঁচে ফেলতে সংসদে বিজেপির সঙ্গ নেবে না বামেরা। এই নিয়ে বিজেপির আশাতে জল ঢেলে দিয়েছেন বাম শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব।

সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকে বিজেপির বিজয়কুমার মলহোত্র সেই আশাতেই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মার্কিন সফরের বিরুদ্ধে প্রস্তাব আনার কথা বলেছিলেন। কিন্তু সিপিআই নেতা গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত তৎক্ষণাৎ তাঁকে বুঝিয়ে দেন দেন, বিজেপির 'রাজনৈতিক সুবিধা হয়' এমন কিছুই বামপন্থীরা করবেন না। অর্থাৎ, সংসদের চলতি অধিবেশনে কংগ্রেসের সমালোচনায় লক্ষণগরেখা পার হবেন না বামপন্থীরা।

বামেরা সরকার পক্ষকে এর মধ্যেই জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, নতুন বিলের পরিবর্তে পুরনো মহিলা বিল আনলে এবং কর্মসংস্থান নিশ্চয়তা বিলে তাঁদের বক্তব্য মেনে নিলে সংসদের চলতি অধিবেশনে অস্থিরতা তৈরি করবেন না তাঁরা। দলগত এবং সংসদীয়, উভয় পর্যায়ের বৈঠকের সময়েই বিষয়টি স্পষ্ট করে দেওয়া হয়।

আমেরিকা বা অন্যান্য প্রসঙ্গে আক্রমণের ক্ষেত্রেও সংযত থাকবেন তাঁরা।

বামেরা এই ছাড় দিতে সম্মত হয়েছেন সরকার পেনশন বিল না-

আনায়। এই সমঝোতা সূত্র তৈরি করতে গত এক সপ্তাহ ধরে দফায় দফায় আলোচনা চলেছে। সেই সব বৈঠকে এক দিকে হাজির ছিলেন সনিয়া গাঁধী-সহ শাসক জোটের শীর্ষ নেতারা, অন্য দিকে এ বি বর্ধন-সহ বেশ কয়েক জন কমিউনিস্ট নেতা।

তবে কয়েকটি বিষয় সংসদে তুলছেনই বামেরা। এর মধ্যে রয়েছে পেট্রোপণ্যের মূল্যবৃদ্ধি থেকে শুরু করে অসংগঠিত ক্ষেত্রের কর্মীদের অবস্থা বা শ্রম আইন লঙ্ঘন-সহ নানা বিষয়। কাল থেকেই এ সব নিয়ে সংসদে সরব হবেন তাঁরা। কিন্তু সবটাই ঘটবে লক্ষণগরেখার মধ্যে থেকে। তাঁরা এমন সরকার বিরোধিতায় যাবেন না, যাতে বিজেপির সুবিধা হয়ে যায়। একই সঙ্গে সুযোগ পেলেই বিজেপি এবং বিশেষ করে লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর বিরুদ্ধেও আক্রমণ শানাবেন তাঁরা। তা ছাড়া বিহার এবং অসমের মতো বিষয়ে সরাসরি সরকারের পাশেই দাঁড়াবেন কমিউনিস্টরা।

আলোচনার সময় সরকারের তরফে দুই কমিউনিস্ট দলকে একটাই কথা বলা হয়েছে: বামেরা যে ভাবে সরকার-বিরোধী মনোভাব দেখাচ্ছে তাতে অস্তিত্ব বিপন্ন না-হলেও ইউপিএ অস্তিত্বের মধ্যে পড়ে যাচ্ছে। তারই জবাবে কমিউনিস্টদের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, পেনশন বিল না-আনার সিদ্ধান্তের পরে সরকারকে অযথা বিভ্রমণায় ফেলার ইচ্ছে নেই তাঁদের। তবে সনিয়ার প্রতি তাঁরা যতটা নরম,

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

# যৌথ আক্রমণ এড়াতে

প্রথম পাতার পর

চলে। এ ক্ষেত্রেও সরকারপক্ষ প্রথমে টিক করেছিল, আইএমডিটি নিয়ে বিরোধীদের মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ না করার জন্য চাপ দেওয়া হবে। আইনটি বাজপেয়ী জমানার, এই যুক্তি দেখিয়ে প্রস্তাব উড়িয়ে দেওয়া হবে বলেই প্রাথমিক ভাবে স্থির হয়েছিল। কিন্তু বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি বিচার করে বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিতর্ক গড়াতে দেওয়াই সমীচীন বলে মনে করছে কেন্দ্র। 'সভা-পকালে' স্পিকারের ঘরে বৈঠকে বসে সরকার এবং বিরোধী পক্ষ। সেখানেই স্পিকারের সক্রিয় হস্তক্ষেপে স্থির হয়, বিজেপি যখন আইএমডিটি-র বিষয়টি নিয়ে মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব আনতে চাইছে, তা মেনে নেওয়া হোক। পরে অন্য প্রস্তাব নিয়ে ভাবা যাবে। আপাতত তাই একই সঙ্গে বিজেপি ও বামদলের আক্রমণের নিশানা হতে হচ্ছে না ইউপিএ-কে।

তারপর আজ যথেষ্টই আশ্বিন্বাসী এবং আক্রমণাত্মক দেখিয়েছে কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বকে। দলের মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মার বক্তব্য, "সংসদে আমরা যে কোনও বিষয়ে আলোচনায় প্রস্তুত।" বিজেপি-র সঙ্গে বামদলের আক্রমণের সুর কি কিছুটা এক হয়ে যাচ্ছে না? জবাবে আনন্দ বলেন, "বামেরা সরকারের বন্ধু দল। তাদের কিছু আপত্তির কথা গোড়া থেকেই আমাদের জানিয়ে এসেছে। তাদের সঙ্গে বিজেপির সঙ্কটজন্য কোনও মিল নেই।" বামও 'মিলের' জায়গা থেকে নিজেদের সরিয়ে আনতে সচেষ্ট। সিপিএমের রাজ্যসভার নেতা নীলোৎপল বসু বলেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রী অক্সফোর্ডে যা বলেছেন তা আমরা সমালোচনার দৃষ্টিতেই দেখছি। তবে আরএসএস বা বিজেপি-র সঙ্গে দেশের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের সম্পর্কই নেই। তাই ওদের বক্তব্যের কোনও গুরুত্ব নেই।"

# BJP readies to nuke UPA govt

## 'Doublespeak' On Pipeline Issue Provides Ammo To Saffron Brigade

## Rural Job Bill Likely To Be Tabled This Session

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The Trans-Asian gas pipeline project from Iran to India threatens to become a barrel-bursting firework when Parliament gathers for its monsoon session on Monday.

As petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar persisted with his public pitching for the pipeline, the opposition seems to be homing in on his apparent divergence with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, to embarrass the government in Parliament next week.

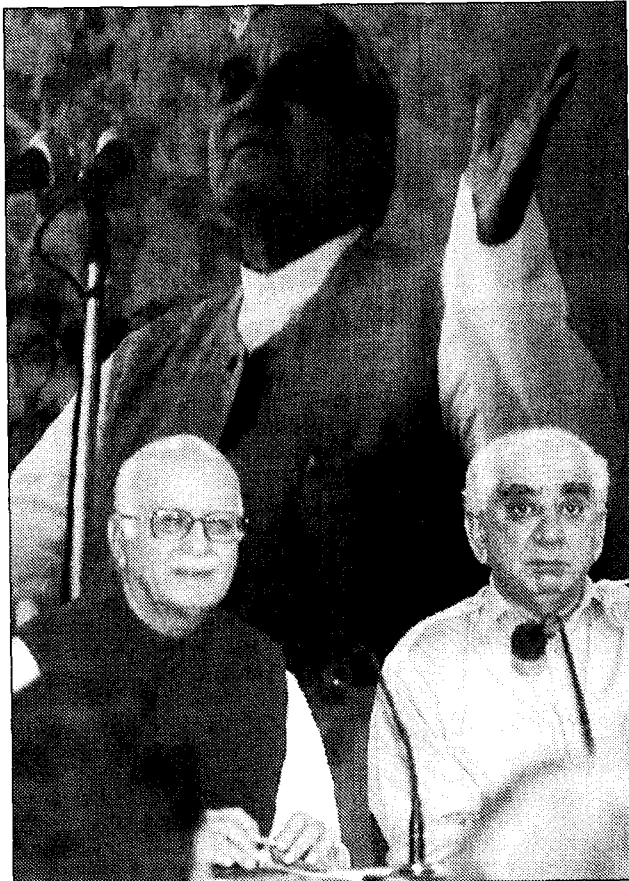
The prime minister had said in Washington that the project was fraught with risks and expressed doubts whether any international consortium of bankers would underwrite the project. On Saturday, Aiyar made his take on the issue clear by telling reporters in the Capital that the nuclear deal in Washington was not a quid pro quo for abandoning the project.

"I don't think there is any connection between the two," said Aiyar.

However the minister did say that in his view, "It is going to be extremely difficult to put together a financial consortium to finance the project and run it as a world class project. Criticising the government's "double speak," BJP on Saturday geared up for a stormy monsoon session of Parliament and expressed doubts whether the ambitious project would see the light of day.

Senior BJP leader and former external affairs minister Jaswant Singh said, the prime minister's remarks amount to "cutting the feet of an important project of the government."

Taking potshots at "the energetic, active and able" petroleum minister, he said while the minister was projecting the pipeline as crucial to India's energy requirements, the Prime Minister had undone the work of the last 18 months. "We doubt whether the project will see the light of the day," he said. Asked whether the Prime Minister was under "US pressure," Singh said, "I am unable to speculate what other thought process he had."



BJP chief L K Advani and senior leader Jaswant Singh at a party meeting in New Delhi, ahead of the monsoon session of Parliament

By Bisheshwar Mishra & Chandrika Mago/TNN

**New Delhi:** A crucial piece of UPA commitment, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, is expected to make it to the monsoon session of Parliament starting Monday.

The final draft is not ready yet. It is learnt

that a group of ministers, which was to meet on Thursday to decide the final shape of the Bill, deferred a decision — two of its members, Planning Commission deputy chief Montek Singh Ahluwalia and agriculture minister Sharad Pawar, were not there. It is learnt, however, that GoM chairman Pranab Mukherjee was clear that this Bill must make it to Parliament in the coming session.

Finance minister P Chidambaram and law minister H R Bharadwaj, too, on Friday gave the green signal to the proposed law, according to



WILL THE LOAD LESSEN?

People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG), a voluntary group.

When some representatives of PAEG met the two ministers, they were apparently assured that "they had no objection to the Bill". The Bill was introduced in Parliament on December 21 last

year. It was referred to the standing committee headed by BJP MP Kalyan Singh. The standing panel has come up with 105 suggestions and amendments in its report, handed over earlier this month.

The report is now with the GoM which has, apart from Mukherjee, Chidambaram, Bharadwaj, Sharad Pawar, Ahluwalia, labour minister K Chandrashekhhar Rao, petroleum and panchayati raj minister Mani Shankar Aiyar. Once it decides government's position, changes will be made to the draft before it is sent once more to Parliament.

# Left sore over Manmohan's remarks

## Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 22. - In an indication of their mood ahead of the monsoon session of Parliament, the Left parties today sought the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh's clarification on his reported comments in a US newspaper that the India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project was "fraught with difficulties".

The Left parties have termed the project as an "acid test" for the Congress-led UPA government's "commitment" to chart a course independent of US influence.

The demand for a clarification came after a meeting of four Left parties here lasting over an hour and held ahead of the Parliament session beginning Monday. They dwelt on issues to be taken up during the session. The Prime Minister's comments over which the Left parties have already taken umbrage are an indication of things to come during the session. The CPI(M) general secre-

tary, Mr Prakash Karat, later termed Dr Singh's reported comments on the pipeline project as "unfortunate".

"It is very unfortunate that the Prime Minister has made such remarks in Washington when it is well-known that the United States is opposed to the project. The Prime Minister should immediately clarify whether the commitment to the pipeline project has been diluted as a result of his visit to the United States," Mr Karat said after the meeting.

A joint statement by the Left parties later said, "The Left parties consider the going ahead of the pipeline project as an acid test for the UPA government's commitment to an independent policy serving national interests." The four Left parties had earlier also objected to the Indo-US defence agreement describing it as a threat to the country's sovereignty. They have also expressed apprehension over the Indo-US agreement on nuclear energy.

Among other issues, the Left leaders deliberated on the

pending Women's Reservation Bill allowing for one-third reservation for women in Parliament and state legislatures. They demanded that the government bring "the original bill" in the forthcoming session. "Further delay in the matter will be unwarranted," they warned.

Despite the Left's hard-hitting criticism of the government on various policy matters, it is unlikely to precipitate any trouble for the government beyond a point. The Left parties have clearly indicated that they would work out an appropriate strategy jointly to take on the combined might of the BJP-led NDA during the session. Mr Karat said the Left parties were supporting the government from the outside. This virtually rules out any major showdown between the Left and UPA on issues.

"We can at the most press for debate on issues of our concern but are unlikely to ask for any voting or for that matter any thing which might pose any threat to the government," a senior Left leader said.



Left leaders at a meeting in New Delhi, on Fri — PTI

# Left smells fuel for fire in gas pipeline

## OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 22: The Prime Minister's remark in the US about the "many risks" associated with the proposed Indo-Iranian gas pipeline could set off another controversy with the Left.

"Only preliminary discussions have taken place (on the pipeline)," Manmohan Singh had told *The Washington Post* on Wednesday.

"But I am realistic enough to realise that there are many risks because, considering all the uncertainties of the situation there in Iran, I don't know if any international consortium of bankers would probably underwrite this. But... we desperately need the supply of gas that Iran has."

The Left parties have read in the remarks an indication that the pipeline could be put on hold. They today stressed that going ahead with the project will be seen as an "acid test" for the Centre's commitment to an "independent policy serving (the) national interest".

In the past few months, Washington has dropped enough hints that it is opposed to



Yechury and Karat arrive for the meeting on Friday. (PTI)

the pipeline coming up. The Left parties want an explanation from Singh whether his remarks were made under American pressure.

"It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister has made such remarks in Washington when it is well known that the US is opposed to the project," the CPM, CPI, RSP and the Forward Bloc said in a joint statement after a meeting this afternoon.

"The Prime Minister should immediately clarify whether the commitment to the pipeline project has been diluted (during his) visit to the United States."

Petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, however, said negotiations with Pakistan were on to ensure the pipeline would be safe from all risks.

"The project entails taking the required measures to mitigate (the) risks involved," Aiyar said here. "Negotiations are on schedule. We are working towards that."

Singh is scheduled to make a statement in Parliament on his US visit and the agreement he has signed with Washington on cooperation on civilian nuclear energy. He may take the opportunity to clarify his remarks on the gas pipeline. The Left is likely to wait till then before saying anything more on the subject.

The Left had yesterday accused the Centre of a "pro-US shift" as reflected in the joint statement signed by Singh and President Bush on a strategic Indo-US partnership. The CPM and the CPI feared the Centre was compromising the national interest by conceding too much to Washington.

# N-deal in bag, PM seeks US trust

S. Rajagopalan  
Washington, July 19

A DAY after US President George Bush's go-ahead for reviving nuclear cooperation with India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday went all out to solicit the US Congress' support for realising the benefits of a transformed relationship over a broad front.

In an address that was well-received on both sides of the political aisle, Singh took the opportunity to assure American lawmakers that India "will never be a source of proliferation of sensitive technologies".

The import of his message was seen by observers in the context of the congressional nod that the Bush administration will need in the coming weeks and months to "adjust" US laws and

policies to implement the nuke deal. But it was not all nuclear. Singh painted a broad canvas in the course of a 45-minute address to the joint session that was punctuated by repeated applause and a standing ovation at the end.

The Prime Minister laid on the table a host of issues where New Delhi expects Washington's understanding and joint endeavour. India's ongoing war against terror, multilateral trade negotiations and energy security were among the ones he flagged.

He also brought up the issue of expansion of the UN Security Council and put forth the Indian case for a permanent seat. As he put it, "The voice of the world's largest democracy surely cannot be left unheard on the Security Council when the United Nations is being restructured."

On terrorism, he drove home the point that there should not be any selective approach in this battle. The US and India, as democracies and victims, must work together "to counter all forms of terrorism", he said.

Dealing with economic reforms, the PM defended India's pace of reforms. "We have to assuage the doubts and calm the fears that often arise when people face the impact of change," he said. He referred to the massive funding needed for developing India's infrastructure sector and invited American companies to "participate in the opportunities that we are creating".

After the address to the joint session, the PM was slated to meet the Senate and House leaders followed by a lunch hosted by The India Caucus.

More reports on Page 2

## Summit phraseology

What they said, what they meant

### Global partnership

Post-Cold War there are no alliances any more. It's about countries working together on certain issues.

What both sides admit is that India and US today have plenty of things in common including terror, democracy promotion, AIDS and now nukes.

### Full civil N-energy cooperation

Exactly what it means. Bush has now committed himself to changing US law to allow all the nuke tech that India has been denied. UNSC to look like 2005, not 1945

US believes India deserves a seat but not an aging Germany.

20 JUL 2005

# Manmohan optimistic on summit talks

Hopes on nuclear cooperation

**NEW YORK:** Ahead of his crucial summit with the U.S. President George W. Bush on Monday, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said he was hoping to persuade the U.S. to share more of its nuclear technology with India and reverse the perception that the two democracies have "estranged" relations.

"People have described in the past our two countries' relations as two estranged democracies. I would like to work towards a new era where our two democracies are engaged," he said in an interview to *The New York Times*, published on Sunday.

Dr. Singh, heading a high-level delegation, is arriving on a three-day visit, during which he will have wide-ranging talks on bilateral issues as well as international developments with key U.S. officials.

He was optimistic that he would be able to convince the U.S. on nuclear cooperation, as he felt encouraged by previous meetings with Mr. Bush on the issue. "The President himself has mentioned to me that a country like India needs to be helped to reach its full potential in the area of nuclear energy," he said.

Dr. Singh dismissed the notion that growing Indo-U.S. ties would affect its relations with neighbouring China.

## Independent power

"I think a strong India is in the interest of Asia and I think in the interest of the world, but that doesn't mean we are in competition with China.

"We're an independent power, we are not a client state, we



• Ties with China will not be hit

• Strong India in the interest of Asia

• We're not a client State

• Emphasises nation's democratic traditions

are not a supplicant. As two equal societies, we should explore together where there is convergence of interests and work together," the Prime Minister said.

"I don't think our relationship with the U.S. is at the cost of our relationships with China, with Russia or, for that matter, the EU."

He emphasised the democratic traditions of India describing it as a unique social experiment based on "an open society and an open economy".

"It's much too presumptuous on my part to say that I can predict the outcome, but I am looking forward, with hope, that out of this visit we will have a stronger, more durable, more productive relationship with the United States," he said. — UNI

9-  
USA SM  
18/7



## Cooperation In Tech, Trade & Energy To Top Agenda

# Talks with US will be on equal terms, says PM

MK Razdan  
FRANKFURT 17 JULY

AFTER an overnight halt in Frankfurt, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday left for Washington, where he would seek a new era of engagement with the US on issues of mutual interest, having made it clear that India was not a "supplicant" but an independent power. He would meet the US President, George W Bush on Monday at the White House, where a red carpet welcome awaits him, a reception that would reflect New Delhi's importance in Washington's scheme of things.

Terrorism, energy dialogue comprising cooperation in civilian nuclear energy, comprehensive review of bilateral relations including accelerated cooperation relating to trade, investment and technology collaboration will come up in his discussions with Mr Bush. The focus of the trip would be on the economic dialogue for which a newly-set up CEO's forum, which include select industrialists from both the countries, would be meeting during the visit. On the eve of his departure, he indicated in an interview to *The New York Times* that India would persuade the US to share more of its nuclear technology and hoped that both countries would move from being "estranged" to "engaged" on issues of mutual interest.

"We are an independent power, we are not a

client state, we are not a supplicant," Dr Singh said. "As two equal societies, we should explore together where there is convergence of interests and work together." Dismissing the idea that India could work as a bulwark against China, he said, "I think a strong India is in the interests of Asia and that of the world, but that doesn't mean we are in competition with China." "I don't think our relationship with the US is at the cost of our relationships with China, with Russia or, for that matter, the EU," he added.

The Prime Minister described India as a unique social experiment based on an "open society and an open economy." About the issue of nuclear technology, he said Mr Bush himself had mentioned to him that a country like India needed to be helped to reach its full potential in the area of nuclear energy.

On what he expected from the visit, Dr Singh said, "It's much too presumptuous on my part to say that I can predict outcome, but I am looking forward, with hope, that out of this visit we will have a stronger, more durable, more productive relationship with the US." "People have described in the past the two countries' relations as two estranged democracies," he said. "I would like to work towards a new era where both the democracies are engaged." Describing the meeting as a "historic step forward," a senior US official said, "we are very, very close now to completion of the NSSP (Next Steps in Strategic Partnership)." — PTI



*The Economic Times*

18 JUL 2001

# Centre ready for talks on IMDT

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 15. — Holding that it is not seeking a review of the Supreme Court's recent judgement scrapping the Assam-exclusive illegal migrants law, the Central government today said it will hold talks with all parties concerned on the situation emerging from quashing of the controversial IMDT Act.

The Centre also sought to downplay the apex court's remarks that Assam had been facing "external aggression and internal disturbance" due to large-scale illegal migration from Bangladesh.

The Union law minister Mr H. R. Bharadwaj told media persons, "We have no hesitation to say that the issue will be resolved amicably." Mr Bharadwaj is part of the group of ministers (GoM) constituted by the Prime Minister to examine the apex court's verdict and advise the government on its future course of action on the issue.

"I have already talked to the Assam chief minister and would hold talks with MPs, MLAs and all parties concerned,"

Mr Bharadwaj said parrying questions relating to the hard-hitting court's remarks while striking down as unconstitutional the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983.

Referring to the comments of the apex court on the disturbing ground situation in Assam, the law minister said the government is mainly concerned with the "decision part" of the judgement. "Every judge has his own language. We go by the ratio of the judgement. Some judges use polite language and some are aggressive," he said refusing to elaborate any further.

The crucial point, said Mr Bharadwaj, remains that the Centre "does not want any section of people in Assam to feel insecure". The law minister also said: "What is the purpose to seek review of the judgement as the petition would again go before the same Bench. So we thought it was better to prepare for the eventuality."

Indicating a constitutional failure, the apex court stated that the Centre has not done its duty to protect Assam from "external aggression" due to continuance

of the IMDT Act that could not curb rampant illegal migration from Bangladesh.

Hinting that no drastic steps could be taken in the matter, Mr Bharadwaj said the question of human rights is involved and cited the case of Chakma refugees. When Chakma refugees were detected and process was undertaken for their deportation, the Supreme Court itself ruled that they could not be thrown out.

Mr Bharadwaj said the BJP-led NDA wanted to repeal the IMDT Act but the Congress did not have the same views on the issue. He said the issue was related to detection and deportation of illegal migrants as well as harassment of innocent Indian citizens in the guise of the law on illegal migrants.

Meanwhile, the BJP today asked the Centre to take steps to detect and deport illegal migrants in the country after deleting their names from documents like voters list and ration card in the wake of scrapping of the IMDT Act.

The Centre and four North Eastern states of Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and

## Top NDA leaders flock to Assam

GUWAHATI, July 15. — Top leaders of National Democratic Alliance constituents have started flocking Assam to hammer out strategies in the post-IMDT Act Assam which is going for polls early next year. The NDA convener and Janata Dal-U president Mr George Fernandes and BJP general secretary in charge of Assam affairs, Mr Pramod Mahajan, arrived here this afternoon to closet themselves with party workers.

Although spokespersons of the BJP and the JD-U here maintained that the leaders were here to carry out pre-assigned responsibilities related to party's organizational works, party workers on condition of anonymity admitted that IMDT formed the key part of their interactions with the leaders. — SNS

Meghalaya today decided to set up a joint intelligence sharing mechanism to thwart attempts by major militant groups to join hands and prevent cross-border movement of insurgents.

# PM pacifies Left on defence agreement

## Yechury & Co get 'sovereign' assurance

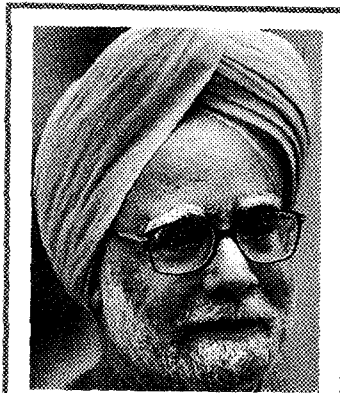
HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, July 15

ON THE eve of his US visit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has told Left leaders that India will not participate in any multilateral military exercise unless it is sanctioned by the United Nations and serves India's interests.

In a meeting with the Left leaders, the Prime Minister allayed fears that defence minister Pranab Mukherjee had signed a military agreement with US, which could affect India's sovereign rights.

"The Prime Minister told us that India merely renewed the framework of defence cooperation with the US, which had first been signed during former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's tenure. He assured us that India will participate in joint military exercise only under UN sanction, that too if it serves the interest of the country", CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechury said in Kolkata on Friday.

The Prime Minister also assured the Left leaders — Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Yechury of the CPI(M) and Debabrata Biswas of Forward Bloc — that he will not bow under US pressure and agree to any non-military



### Promises

- India won't participate in any multilateral defence exercise unless sanctioned by the UN
- India won't bow under US pressure and sign any pact that could put its sovereignty under threat

pacts such as training of senior government officials in the US and involvement of the Election Commission of India in holding of polls in countries such as Iraq.

Yechury, who was officially elected to the Rajya Sabha from West Bengal on Friday along with Brinda Karat, alleged that

US defence strategy in South Asia was primarily aimed against China and said the Left leaders asked the Prime Minister "not to fall into the US trap".

In the meeting, also attended by Pranab Mukherjee and foreign minister Natwar Singh, the Left leaders demanded that the Prime Minister should not allow FDI in the retail sector. This, if done, would be disastrous for eight per cent of the population engaged in retail business, Yechury said, adding, "The Prime Minister agreed to our point of view".

He, however, said that during the talks with the Prime Minister, the Left leaders did not raise the issue of disinvestments in BHEL. "We've made our stand clear to UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and asked her to resolve the deadlock. There has to be a climb down on their part. They can't take us for granted forever", said Yechury.

Giving no indication of softening the Left's stand, Yechury also said that his party might consider voting against the controversial Pension Bill if it was tabled in Parliament in its present form. "We will decide our stand in our politburo meeting on July 29. We will also consider voting against this Bill," he said.



Brinda Karat and Sitaram Yechury at the Legislative Assembly in Kolkata on Friday.

SUBHENDU GHOSH/HT

# কংগ্রেসও বোঝাচ্ছে ভেল নিয়ে পিছু হটবে না

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৩  
জুলাই: ভেল নিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত এখন স্বেচ্ছ  
সময়ের খেলা। বামেদের চাপ সত্ত্বেও  
ভেল বিলম্বিকরণ নিয়ে পিছু হটতে  
কংগ্রেস নারাজ। কোনও মতেই  
পশ্চাদপসরণ তো নয়ই, বরং পেনশন-  
সহ বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে সংস্কারের ব্যাপারে  
কংগ্রেস তথা কেন্দ্রের ইউ পি এ  
সরকার এগিয়ে চলারই পক্ষপাতী।  
কিন্তু আপাতত সেই 'ধীরে চলো'  
নীতিই তাদের হাতিয়ার।

কংগ্রেস শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব দলীয়  
সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধীকে বারবারই  
বলেছেন, ভেলের বিলম্বিকরণের  
ব্যাপারে ইউ পি এ সরকার যে সিদ্ধান্ত  
নিয়চ্ছে, বামেদের চাপে তা প্রত্যাহার  
করে নেওয়া অসম্ভব হবে। তাঁদের  
মতে, বামেদের সমর্থন নিয়ে সরকার  
ঠিকিয়ে রাখার জরুরি দায় থাকলেও,  
প্রকাশ কারাট-ডি রাজা-এ বি বর্ধন-  
অবনী রায়দের কাছে প্রতি মুহূর্তে  
আত্মসমর্পণ কংগ্রেসের কাছে  
রাজনৈতিক ভাবে সম্মানজনক নয়। তা  
ছাড়া, ভেলের সিদ্ধান্ত থেকে পিছিয়ে  
এলে সংস্কারের ব্যাপারে সরকারের  
সদিচ্ছা নিয়েই প্রশ্ন উঠবে। তাই তাঁ  
রদ করা সম্ভব নয়। তবে সময় নিয়ে  
আশু সঙ্কট এড়ানো সম্ভব।

কিন্তু এ ভাবে কত দিন? কী  
ভাবেই বা সরকার এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে  
টালবাহানা চালাবে? সেই সব প্রশ্নের  
উত্তর খুঁজতে আপাতত মনমোহন  
সিংহ, পি চিদম্বরম ও সন্তোষমোহন  
দেবকে ভার দিয়েছেন সনিয়া গান্ধী।  
আর যে সব সমাধানসূত্র আপাতত  
সামনে এসেছে সেগুলি হল:

● সিদ্ধান্তটি এই মুহূর্তে রূপায়িত  
না করে, ত্রিশঙ্কু অবস্থায় রেখে  
দেওয়া।

● ভেলের মতো লাভজনক  
সংস্থার ক্ষেত্রে প্রথমেই ১০ শতাংশ  
বিলম্বিকরণ না-করে, আপাতত ৫  
শতাংশ বিলম্বিকরণই শ্রেয় বলে মনে  
করছেন সন্তোষবাবু।

● তা ছাড়া, সরকার বামেদের  
আশ্বস্ত করতে চায় ভেলের শেয়ার  
এমন কোনও সংস্থার হাতে যাবে না,  
যাতে ভবিষ্যতে প্রতিযোগিতার  
বাজারে ভেলের জোর কমে যায়।  
সংস্থার কর্মী ও সাধারণ মানুষের  
মধ্যেই এই শেয়ার বিক্রি সীমাবদ্ধ  
রাখা হবে।

বিলম্বিকরণের সুযোগে ভেলের  
প্রতিযোগী বহুজাতিক সংস্থাগুলি  
বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারী সংস্থাগুলির  
মাধ্যমে শেয়ারের দখলদারি নিতে  
পারে, এমন আশঙ্কা রয়েছে কোনও  
কোনও মহলের। এই 'আশঙ্কার' কথা  
মাথায় রেখেই তৃতীয় সূত্রটি প্রয়োগে  
আগ্রহী সরকার। যাতে এই বিষয়টি  
নিয়ে বামেরা অহেতুক বিভ্রান্তি না-  
ছড়াতে পারে, সরকার আগেই তা  
সুনিশ্চিত করতে চায়। এক কথায়,  
কংগ্রেস চাইছে বামেদের সাময়িক  
ভাবে ঠেকিয়ে রাখতে। যার ফলে, সি  
পি এমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ  
কারাট চিন যাত্রার আগে জানতেই না  
পারেন, ভেলের কী গতি হল! অন্তত,  
কংগ্রেস শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের আন্তরিক  
বাসনা, বিলম্বিকরণের প্রক্ষে এই  
ধরনের সিদ্ধান্ত ২০০৬ সাল পর্যন্ত

# ভেল বিলগ্নি নিয়ে সন্তোষের সঙ্গেও বিরোধ চিদম্বরমের

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল ● নয়াদিল্লি

১১ জুলাই: ভেল প্রসঙ্গ এ বার ইউপিএ মন্ত্রিসভার অভ্যন্তরীণ বিরোধকেও প্রকাশ্যে নিয়ে এল।

শুধু বামদলগুলির সঙ্গেই নয়, ভেল বিলগ্নিকরণ নিয়ে অর্থমন্ত্রী চিদম্বরমের সঙ্গে বিরোধ দেখা দিয়েছে ভারী শিল্প ও রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার স্বাধীন দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত প্রতিমন্ত্রী সন্তোষমোহন দেবেরও। কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী ও ইউপিএ-র চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গান্ধীকে সন্তোষবাবু জানিয়েছেন, কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভায় সিদ্ধান্ত হওয়ার আগেই তিনি এই প্রস্তাবের বিরোধিতা করেছিলেন। কিন্তু তাঁর আপত্তিতে আমল দেয়নি অর্থ মন্ত্রক।

বাম নেতাদের সঙ্গে বিতর্ক শুরু হওয়ার পরে সনিয়া গান্ধী সন্তোষবাবুর কাছে পৃথক রিপোর্ট চান। সন্তোষবাবু সনিয়া ও তাঁর রাজনৈতিক সচিব আহমেদ পটেলকে তাঁর বক্তব্য জানিয়েও দিয়েছেন।

মন্ত্রিসভা ভেল বিলগ্নিকরণের সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগেই সন্তোষবাবু চিদম্বরমকে একটি নোট দিয়ে জানিয়েছিলেন, “বরং অন্য লাভজনক রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার শেয়ার বিক্রি করা হোক, কিন্তু নবরত্নে হাত না দেওয়াই ভাল।” মন্ত্রী গোষ্ঠীর বৈঠকেও তিনি বলেছিলেন, “বাম নেতাদের মেজাজ জানি। নবরত্ন সংস্থায় হাত দিলে প্রতিক্রিয়া হবে।” কিন্তু সন্তোষবাবুর মত অগ্রাহ্য করা হয়।

এখন ভেল বিতর্ক মেটানোর দায়িত্ব সনিয়া গান্ধী নিজের হাতে নিয়েছেন। সন্তোষবাবু তাঁর মন্ত্রকের পক্ষ থেকে প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন, আগামী দিনে রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার বিলগ্নিকরণ ও বেসরকারীকরণের বিষয়ে ‘কেস টু কেস’ সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণের জন্য কেন্দ্রে একটি উচ্চপর্যায়ের কমিটি গঠন করা হোক। এই কমিটির প্রধান করা হোক পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যকে। ক’দিন আগে একটি ঘরোয়া আলোচনায় তিনি এই প্রস্তাবটি বুদ্ধদেববাবুকে জানিয়েও ছিলেন।

সন্তোষবাবুর এই প্রস্তাব লুফে নিয়েছেন কংগ্রেস শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব। কিন্তু বুদ্ধদেববাবু তথা সিপিএম এই প্রস্তাবে রাজি হবে কি না, সেটাই সবচেয়ে বড় প্রশ্ন। কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বের বক্তব্য, ভ্যাটের ব্যাপারে যেমন পশ্চিমবঙ্গের অর্থমন্ত্রী অসীম দাশগুপ্তকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে, ঠিক সে ভাবেই বিলগ্নিকরণ এবং বেসরকারীকরণের বিষয়ে বুদ্ধদেববাবুকে বিশেষ দায়িত্ব দেওয়া যেতেই পারে। সন্তোষবাবুর যুক্তি, রাজ্য স্তরে বুদ্ধদেববাবু দক্ষতার সঙ্গে কাজ করছেন। তাঁকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হলে বামদলগুলিও এ ব্যাপারে প্রত্যক্ষ ভূমিকা নিতে

পারে। তবে অনেকে মনে করছেন, বুদ্ধদেববাবুকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়ার কথা বলে আসলে কংগ্রেস একটা রাজনৈতিক চাল দিতে চাইছে। সিপিএম রাজি হলে বিলগ্নিকরণ নিয়ে সমস্ত সিদ্ধান্তের দায় তাদের উপরেই বর্তাবে। আর রাজি না হলে প্রশ্ন উঠবে, দায়িত্ব এড়াচ্ছে কেন?

এ দিকে, চিদম্বরম এখনও বাম নেতাদের দাবি মেনে নিতে নারাজ। উল্টে সংসদের আসন্ন বাদল অধিবেশনে তিনি রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থা ও অন্য সরকারি ক্ষেত্রে বিলগ্নিকরণের বিষয়ে একটি শ্বেতপত্র প্রকাশের সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন। এই শ্বেতপত্রেও আপত্তি জানিয়েছেন সন্তোষবাবু। এনডিএ জমানার বিলগ্নিকরণকে (বিশেষত হোটেলের ক্ষেত্রে) সমর্থন জানানো হয়েছে এই শ্বেতপত্রে। সেফ্টার হোটেলের মতো রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থা বিক্রি নিয়ে বাম দলগুলি ইতিমধ্যেই সরব ও বাজপেয়ী সরকারের বিলগ্নিকরণমন্ত্রী অরুণ শৌরির সমালোচনায় মুখর।

সেখানে শ্বেতপত্রে বিলগ্নিকরণের সমর্থনে খোদ অর্থমন্ত্রী এগিয়ে এলে তা-ও বিপদের কারণ হবে বলে সন্তোষবাবুর ধারণা।

কেন্দ্রীয় অর্থ মন্ত্রক সূত্রেরও খবর, প্রথম থেকেই ভেল নিয়ে সন্তোষবাবুর আপত্তি ছিল। তিনি নবরত্নে হাত না

দিয়ে অন্য লাভজনক রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থা বেচে রাজকোষে অর্থ সংগ্রহের প্রস্তাব দেন। কিন্তু অর্থ মন্ত্রক ভেলের বিলগ্নিকরণ নিয়ে চাপ দিলে শেষ পর্যন্ত তিনি মন্ত্রকের নোটে পাঁচ শতাংশ শেয়ার বিক্রির প্রস্তাব দেন। তিনি লিখেছিলেন, যদি একান্তই এটা করেন, তা হলেও পাঁচ শতাংশের বেশি নয়।

এর সঙ্গে দু’টি শর্তও আরোপ করেছিলেন সন্তোষবাবু। প্রথমত, এই বিক্রির ফলে সংগৃহীত অর্থের শতকরা ২৫ ভাগ রুগুণ রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার উন্নয়নের কাজে লাগাতে হবে। দ্বিতীয়ত, ভেলের প্রতিটি শেয়ারকে একাধিক শেয়ারে ভাগ করে দিতে হবে। এতে ভেলের শেয়ারের সংখ্যা যেমন বাড়বে, দামও তেমন কমবে। ফলে সাধারণ মানুষ আরও বেশি করে শেয়ার কিনতে পারবেন। ডিভিডেন্ডও বেশি পাবেন। ভেলের কর্মচারী সংগঠন অনেক আগেই এই দাবি করেছিল।

মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে চিদম্বরম প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে বলেন, “আমি ও সন্তোষ স্থির করেছি, রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থা বিক্রির টাকার শতকরা ২৫ ভাগ রুগুণ শিল্পের উন্নয়নে খরচ হবে। এ জন্য ভেলের শতকরা ১০ ভাগ বিলগ্নিকরণের প্রস্তাব পেশ করছি।” সন্তোষবাবু বলার চেপ্টা করেন, মন্ত্রকের নোটে পাঁচ শতাংশ লিখেছি, কিন্তু তত ক্ষণে নাটকীয় ভাবে দশ ভাগ শেয়ার বিক্রির সিদ্ধান্ত হয়ে গিয়েছে।



SONIA URGED TO TALK TO PM

# Left sticks to its guns on BHEL

9-UPA 9M ✓

Statesman News Service 5/21 11/7

NEW DELHI, July 10. — The hour-long meeting between the top Left leaders and the UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi today failed to break the deadlock over the 10 per cent disinvestment in BHEL shares. Both sides, however, agreed to meet again to find an "amicable solution" to the tangle soon.

The Left parties asked Mrs Sonia Gandhi to take up the matter with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

That a solution to the lingering controversy on BHEL, over which the Left has boycotted the Coordination Committee meetings, was in the offing was indicated by Mrs Gandhi during her morning meeting with the Left leaders at her 10 Janpath residence in New Delhi.

"Mrs Gandhi said that she appreciated the Left Parties' principled stand on disinvestment of the BHEL, a profit making *navaratna* PSU. She said she would try and find a solution within the basic parameters of the Left's stand on the issue," a senior Left party leader told The Statesman here after the meeting. The Left and the Congress leaders, meanwhile, have agreed to further continue the dialogue process.

At today's meeting — the second one between the Left leaders and the UPA chairperson after the Left's decision to boycott the Coordination Committee meeting on 26 June — top Left leaders, including CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat, former CPI-M general secretary Mr HS Surjeet, CPI general secretary Mr AB Bardhan, CPI-M Politburo member Mr Sitaram Yechury and RSP leader Mr Abani Roy reasserted their opposition to disinvestment.

Mr Karat said Mrs Gandhi had assured them that she would be talking to the Prime Minister and others and get back to the Left leaders.

The Forward Bloc general secretary, Mr Debabrata Biswas, who was in Kolkata in connection with his party's convention, had earlier conveyed his party's objections on disinvestment of *navaratna* companies.

Talking to reporters soon after the meeting, Mrs Gandhi's political secretary



CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat with other Left leaders during a Press conference at Gopalan Bhavan after their meeting with UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi. In New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Mr Ahmed Patel termed the Congress chief's interaction with Left leaders as "cordial and positive". He said that the matter would be sorted out "amicably". He, however, said that no timeframe had been fixed. "They have suggested something. We have also suggested something." Mr Patel declined to specify saying: "It would not be good as talks are still on with the Left leaders".

At the CPI-M headquarter at Gopalan Bhawan at a press conference with Mr D. Raja and Mr Aboni Roy Mr Karat said that they were hopeful of an amicable solution.

The Left parties, however, were non committal on ending their boycott of the Coordination Committee. A senior Left leader had said yesterday that the outcome of the Left-UPA meeting would set the pace of future stand of the Left party. "This would mean we would continue to boycott the Coordination Committee. Such a stand would help the Left distance itself from the policies and programmes of the government. On the other hand, we can go on supporting the government from outside without being held responsible for its omissions and commissions. Thus henceforth it will not only be purely issue-based support but also issue-based criticism of the government's functioning," the Left leader had said.

11 JUL 2005

THE STATESMAN

9-17-2005  
Dipankar Chakraborty  
in New Delhi

# Now, pension fund Bill irks Left

U.P.A.

July 4. — After having taken on the Congress-led UPA on the issue of BHEL disinvestment, the Left is all set to train its guns again on the government over its objections to various provisions of the Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority (PFRA) Bill.

The PFRA Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament, amid a walkout by the Left parties. The Left is now apprehensive that the BJP-led NDA may come to the

rescue of the UPA government to help it pass the Bill without much trouble during the coming monsoon session of Parliament.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, chaired by Maj. Gen. BC Khanduri — a BJP Lok Sabha MP — today discussed various aspects of the Bill. The Left members voiced their serious objections to the Bill's existing provisions.

The Left's main objection pertains to the use of pension fund for investment in fixed income instruments and in equity.

In the 27 March issue of the People's Democracy, the CPI-M's

Mr WR Varada Rajan wrote: "The present ordinance on PFRDA and the subsequent Bill has been resorted to without any consultations with the trade unions, in a blatant violation" of the UPA's commitment to the CMP.

CPI's Lok Sabha member Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, who is a member of the Parliament Standing Committee on Finance is said to have prepared a "dissent note" on the PFRDA Bill. The said note will be sent to the standing committee chairman Maj. Gen. Khanduri soon.

When contacted, Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, however, refused to comment on the subject.

## 'Resolve BHEL matter'

NEW DELHI, July 4. — The Left parties sought the UPA government to resolve the deadlock over their opposition to the 10 per cent disinvestment of stakes of the public sector navaratna, BHEL, before the monsoon session of Parliament beginning on 25 July. "We are hopeful that something will emerge before the monsoon session of Parliament," said a Left party leader here. He said the government basically has to address a "fundamental" issue. — SNS

The standing committee is likely to complete its process of consultation in the next couple of days.

29 JUL 2005

THE STATESMAN

# কথা হলেও ভেলের জট

## খুলল না

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১ জুলাই: সনিয়া গান্ধী-প্রকাশ কারাটের বৈঠকের পরও ভেল নিয়ে মনমোহন সরকার ও বামেদের মধ্যে জট ছাড়ল না। যদিও সি পি এমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাটের আশা যে সনিয়ার হস্তক্ষেপে শীঘ্রই জটিলতার অবসান হবে। অনতিবিলম্বেই একটি সমাধানসূত্র বের করবেন কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী।

আজ কারাট ও সি পি আইয়ের সম্পাদক ডি রাজা'র সঙ্গে বৈঠকের সময় সনিয়া ভেল নিয়ে বামেদের সমস্ত ওজর-আপত্তি শোনেন। তার পরে তিনি সরকারের সঙ্গে কথা বলার জন্য বাম নেতাদের কাছে কিছুটা সময় চেয়েছেন। বস্তুত, কংগ্রেস শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব সনিয়ার উপর পাল্টা চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছেন যে বামদের কথায় ভেল-এর 'আংশিক' বিলগ্নিকরণের সিদ্ধান্ত থেকে তিনি যেন কোনও মতেই পিছু না হঠেন। তা হলে আমজনতার কাছে এই বাতাই পৌঁছবে যে এই সরকার নেহাতই দুর্বল, বামেদের ধমকে হাটু কাঁপে এই সরকারের। বামেরাও অবশ্য ইউ পি এ'র শরিক দল ডি এম কে'র মাধ্যমে সরকারের উপর বাড়তি চাপ সৃষ্টি করে চলেছে ভেলের বিলগ্নিকরণ ঠেকাতে। সব মিলিয়ে, গভীর রাত পর্যন্ত ভেল নিয়ে টানাপোড়েন অব্যাহত রয়েছে।

সনিয়ার নির্দেশে ভারী শিল্পমন্ত্রী সন্তোষমোহন দেব আজ ভেলের অভ্যন্তরীণ পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে একটি বিস্তারিত রিপোর্ট সনিয়ার কাছে পেশ করেছেন। ভেলের আর্থিক পরিস্থিতি কী রকম, কত লাভ হয়েছিল, প্রস্তাবিত বিলগ্নিকরণ সম্পর্কে সংস্থার কর্মীদের মনোভাব কী রকম, তা পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খভাবে সন্তোষবাবুর কাছে জানতে চেয়েছিলেন ইউ পি এ-র চেয়ারপার্সন। সরকারি সূত্রে খবর, সন্তোষবাবু সনিয়াকে জানিয়েছেন যে সাধারণভাবে কর্মী সংগঠনগুলির মধ্যে যে



ব্যাপক কোনও ক্ষেত্রের সূত্রপাত হয়েছে, তা নয়। তবে, কর্মীরা চাইছেন যেন কোনও মতেই সরকারের

মালিকানা ৫১ শতাংশের কমে নেমে না আসে।

প্রাথমিক ভাবে সনিয়া যে সমাধানসূত্র কারাটকে দিয়েছিলেন, তা বামেরা মানেনি। সেটি হল, ভেলের দশ শতাংশ বিলগ্নিকরণের পরিবর্তে কিছু কম শতাংশের শেয়ার বিক্রি করবে সরকার। বামেদের বক্তব্য, বিলগ্নিকরণ-ই চলবে না। ফলে, বামেদের সামলাতে সরকারের সামনে দুটি রাস্তাই খোলা রয়েছে। প্রথমত, সিদ্ধান্তটি পুরোপুরি রদ করা। দ্বিতীয়ত, মন্ত্রিসভার এই সিদ্ধান্তটির ক্ষেত্রে আপাতত বিজ্ঞপ্তি জারি-ই না করা। তা হলে রূপায়ণের প্রশ্নই ওঠে না।

প্রথম বিকল্পটির ক্ষেত্রে অবশ্য কংগ্রেসের শীর্ষনেতাদের যোর আপত্তি রয়েছে। বরং, দ্বিতীয় বিকল্পটি রূপায়িত হলে বামেদের সমন্বয় কমিটিতে ফিরিয়ে আনার রাস্তাও প্রশস্ত হবে বলেই মনে করছেন কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্ব।

সনিয়ার সঙ্গে বৈঠকের পর কারাট ন্যূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচির দোহাই দিয়ে বলেন, “ওই কর্মসূচিতে স্পষ্টই বলা রয়েছে যে ‘নবরত্ন’ সংস্থাগুলি চাইলে নিজেরা বাজার থেকে রসদ জোগাড় করতে পারে। সরকারের শেয়ার বেচে টাকা তোলার কথা তাতে কিন্তু বলা নেই।” তবে ভেল নিয়ে জট ছাড়বে কী করে? সমাধানসূত্র কী? কারাটের সওয়াল, “আমরা আমাদের তাস খেলেছি। এবার ওরা জবাব দিক।”

কংগ্রেস নেত্রী অম্বিকা সোনি আজ বিকালে বলেন, “সমস্যার সমাধানের প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়েছে। তবে এখনও কোনও সমাধানসূত্র মেলেনি। সনিয়া গান্ধী বাম নেতাদের বক্তব্য শুনেছেন। তিনি আবার কংগ্রেস নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলবেন। তিন-চারদিন আরও সময় লাগতেই পারে।” দু'তরফের মনোভাব কি নরম হয়েছে? অম্বিকার মতে, “এই ক্ষেত্রে মনোভাব নরম বা কঠিন হওয়ার প্রশ্ন ওঠে না। সকলকেই মাথায় রাখতে হচ্ছে যে ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ শক্তিগুলিকে এক সঙ্গে থাকতে হবে।”



# Cong-Left rift continues

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 30. — The impasse between the Left parties and the ruling Congress over the Manmohan Singh government's decision to divest 10 per cent shares of the blue-chip public sector undertaking — BHEL — continues amidst indications that the Congress and the Left leadership would sit together by this weekend to make attempts to hammer out a "compromise solution". It is a different matter that there could be no immediate solution to this imbroglio.

A top CPI-M leader today echoed the views maintained by the Left parties that "we stick to our position, now the

ball is in the Congress-led government's court".

The Congress president and UPA chairperson, Mrs Sonia Gandhi set the ball rolling close on the heels of her return from Shimla, where she had been holidaying with her family for the last several days, this afternoon.

As expected, Mrs Gandhi and the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh held a meeting of the Congress leadership's "core group" at the Prime Minister's residence tonight to deliberate on the BHEL deadlock and work out a compromise formula.

In a bid to address the anger of the Left parties over UPA government's proposal for BHEL divestment, UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi will

invite their leaders for talks on the issue as early as possible.

This was announced late tonight by the Congress president's political secretary Mr Ahmed Patel after the meeting. There are reports that the UPA government might put a "freeze" on the BHEL divestment to placate the Left.

The government's proposed divestment plans for other PSUs might also slow down considerably due to this controversy. By agreeing to halt the BHEL divestment, the government could also bargain from the Left for its no objection to the divestment of other public sector undertakings, given that it requires enormous amount of money to fund ambitious social sector programmes listed in the com-

mon minimum programme (CMP).

The CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat today also returned to the Capital from Lucknow. The CPI chief Mr AB Bardhan is, however, still out of town and expected back in a couple of days.

At their joint meeting last Sunday, the four Left parties had shot off a letter to Mrs Gandhi informing her of their decision to "suspend" their participation from the Congress-Left coordination committee meetings in protest against the BHEL divestment.

The move gave a jolt to the Congress, but even the Left leaders concede that there is no threat to the government at this stage.

# Left Won't Budge On Bhel Issue, Karat Tells PC

Lucknow/New Delhi

29 JUNE

**T**OUGHENING its stand, the Left parties on Wednesday ruled out any trade-off on the issue of Bhel disinvestment saying whatever the government does with the company has its impact on other public sector units. "Even if they (government) reduce the stake to be sold in Bhel from 10 to 5%, we will not be satisfied as a 'Navratna' PSU should not be put up for disinvestment", CPM general secretary Prakash Karat said in Lucknow.

He said the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA clearly stated that all 'Navratna' PSUs will remain a part of public sector and if they need to raise capital, they can go to the market. "The government has no right to sell the shares of profit-making PSUs in the name of disinvestment and keep the money for its own requirements," Mr Karat said and added that CPM's agitation on the issue would continue.

Mr Karat said there was no logic in attending the UPA-Left coordination committee meetings when the CMP was not being followed. "The coordination committee had been set up with the aim to ensure the just implementation of the CMP and when that objective was not being fulfilled, there was no point in our being a part of it". Though UPA government had set a target of raising Rs 10,000 crore through

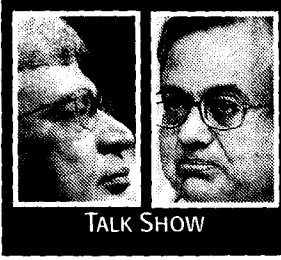
disinvestment with a list of 35 companies, including Bhel, to be put on the bloc, he said "however, our emphasis for now is only on the 'Navratna' PSUs which were profit-making and do not require disinvestment".

CPI leader D Raja said in New Delhi that there was "no question of a trade-off on Bhel disinvestment issue" as "we have strong concerns on it." Asked if the Left parties would settle for a trade-off

on Bhel disinvestment if the government addresses their concerns about social sectors' expenditure, Mr Raja said "there is no question of any trade off for whatever the

government does with regard to Bhel has its impact on other PSUs. We have strong concerns on Bhel". Mr Karat said the Left parties were waiting for UPA chairperson and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi to return to Delhi from her vacation in Shimla and discuss the issue with her.

Accusing the government of the "first serious violation" of the CMP by deciding on 10% disinvestment in Bhel, the Left parties on Sunday announced suspension of their participation in the UPA coordination committee meetings. Mr Karat took a dig at the government for hiking petrol and diesel prices despite repeated pleas to them by Left parties against the same. The decision, especially the Rs 2 jump in the prices of diesel, would only lead to a hike in prices of essential commodities. —PTI



Cong Has NCP's Backing, Sonia Invites Karat For Negotiations

# Govt's reform agenda sends adamant Left to the streets

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 28 JUNE

9-28/6/05  
BE 2

THE Congress-Left confrontation showed no sign of abatement with the prime ministerial team unveiling its reform agenda at the National Development Council (NDC) meeting on Tuesday and the Left sticking to its stand that disinvestment was a violation of the charter of governance. While Sonia Gandhi stepped in to mollify the Left by inviting Prakash Karat to the negotiation table, the Left took its protests against the economic policy to the streets.

Although the Congress leadership made conciliatory noises, the government's stand at the NDC meeting indicated its reluctance to let the Left meddle in the governance agenda. The government managers, who put on the table its 'to do' reform list, said a determined follow-up action alone can boost the growth rate.

The Left, which is angry over the Bhel disinvestment, is sure to vehemently oppose the government's call for immediate action in the pension and insurance sectors. The ongoing confrontation, many concede, would affect the time table set by the govern-



ment for each of these sectors.

The silver lining for the government was the backing of the NCP for the disinvestment programme. While agreeing with the Left's

stand that its concerns should be addressed by the government, the NCP said it was not against disinvestment. The NCP stand is prompted by the privatisation of its nominee in the UPA government, civil aviation minister Praful Patel.

Sensing a confrontation would only complicate matters for the government, Ms Gandhi rang up Mr Prakash Karat from Himachal Pradesh and promised to have discussion with the Left representatives after her return to Delhi. Mr Karat, who received Ms Gandhi's call when he was at the Delhi airport, refused to comment on the talks after he reached the UP capital. However, he made it clear that changes in the disinvestment policy alone can change his party's position.

But government managers here see a window of opportunity in Jyoti Basu's recent statement. In Kolkata, Mr Basu, after a CPM meeting, said "the boycott is not a permanent feature and I hope that there will be further discussions between our party leaders and Congress president Sonia Gandhi. When they are not listening to our concerns, pressure will have to be mounted on the government so that they realise that what they are doing is not correct."

# Sonia, Karat discuss BHEL divestment

UPA 9/11  
S17

29/6

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 28. — Despite claiming that the UPA government did not “breach” the common minimum programme by deciding to disinvest 10 per cent stakes of the profit-making blue-chip PSU, BHEL, the Congress’ central leadership has turned hyper-active in its bid to assuage the feelings of a bruised Left on the issue.

Continuing with her attempts to placate the Left, UPA chairperson and Congress chief Mrs Sonia Gandhi spoke to the CPI-M general secretary, Mr Prakash Karat, over phone this morning. She assured him that she would discuss the BHEL divestment issue with her party colleagues on her return from Shimla in a couple of days and the Left’s concerns would be addressed.

Mrs Gandhi’s discussion with Mr Karat came a day after the Prime Minister spoke to him as well as Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on the matter.

The latest initiative of the Congress leadership indicates that all efforts will be made to address the Left parties’ concerns, said AICC general secretary Mrs Ambika Soni. She added that Mrs Gandhi would return to Delhi tomorrow and set the resolution process in motion. Mrs Gandhi is expected to hold parleys with her party’s core group, which could then, in turn, set the stage for the Prime Minister to convene a meeting involv-

## Basu differs with party on panel meet boycott

LUCKNOW, June 28. — The CPI-M general secretary, Mr Prakash Karat and veteran Politburo member Mr Jyoti Basu seemed divided today on the Left’s boycott of the UPA-Left coordination committee meetings. “The boycott will continue, though we shall wait for Mrs Sonia Gandhi to return from Shimla for further discussions on the issue,” Mr Karat said while speaking at a function in Lucknow on “one year of the UPA”. He warned the government and said that if the Centre took an anti-people stance, the CPI-M would rather side with the people than with the UPA. But in Kolkata, Mr Basu contradicted Mr Karat and said the Left was not averse to a review of the boycott decision. It is “not a permanent feature and I hope there will be further discussions between our party leaders and Mrs Sonia Gandhi,” Mr Basu said. — SNS

Another report on page 5

ing the Left leaders and Mrs Gandhi to hammer out a solution. An immediate resolution of the issue, however, seems unlikely, sources said.

The four Left parties, supporting the government from the outside, gave it the first jolt on Sunday by collectively shooting off a letter to Mrs Gandhi, informing her about their decision to boycott the UPA-Left coordination panel meetings.

79 JUN 2005

THE STATESMAN

# Left-Cong rift no threat to Centre

Shahid Pervez and  
Dipankar Chakraborty

NEW DELHI, June 28.—The CPI-M-led Left parties showed their teeth to the Congress-led UPA government by deciding on Sunday that they would “suspend” their participation from the Congress-Left coordination committee meetings, but the survival of the government is clearly not at stake by far. And, the Congress as well as the Left are aware of it.

Both the Congress and the Left understand each other’s “political compulsion” and their limited options under the given situation where they are mutually dependent to fuel their ruling dispensation. Leave aside the Congress, even the Left leaders would concede the point that they could not afford to pull the rug from under the government’s feet. In the event of such a Left biting, the alternative would be a BJP-led NDA being in the hot seat or fresh elections, given that any possibility of revival of a “third front” is merely a chimera. Since the latter

options would not be viable for the Left, they will continue to operate as a “high-pressure group” or “watchdogs in the power corridors”.

The point, however, remains that the Left gave the first jolt to the government by shooting off their letter to Congress supremo Mrs Sonia Gandhi, informing her of their decision to stay away from the panel in protest against the government’s decision to disinvest 10 per cent of the Bhel stakes. The Left called it the “first serious breach of the government’s common minimum programme”. This first major expression of the Left rage was directed more against the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh than Mrs Gandhi.

Treading with caution, the Congress denied the Left’s charge that the offloading of government stakes in Bhel was tantamount to “violation of the CMP” or any “privatisation bid”. The Congress also became hyper-active in assuaging the Left’s “bruised sentiments”, appearing to be sympathetic to their concerns.

# PM sounds alarm on farm growth decline

■ NDC MEETING | Revises overall growth rate downwards to 7-8 per cent from projected 8.1 per cent for Tenth Plan

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

PAINTING a dismal picture of the economy, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today scaled down the growth rate to 7-8 per cent from the projected 8.1 per cent for the Tenth Plan.

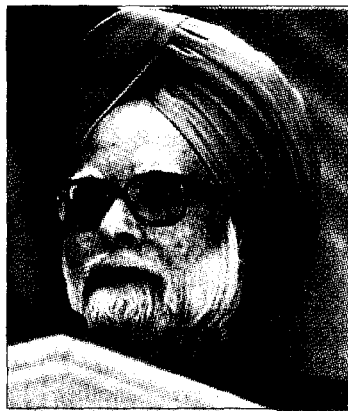
Addressing chief ministers who were in the capital to attend the first National Development Council (NDC) meeting since the UPA government took over in May last year, the Prime Minister said "unfortunately the performance of agriculture appears to have deteriorated and possibly would not exceed 1.5 per cent growth during the 10th Plan."

Even as the Prime Minister warned of a below-par performance of the economy, which meant a large part of the population below the poverty line, Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said realising "user charges" for water and electricity was important.

Considering that an amount of Rs 91,000 crore was required to complete 388 ongoing major and minor irrigation projects, Rs 70,000 crore for watershed

development to cover 77 million hectares of farm land and Rs 1,72,000 crore for building national highways upto 2012, the user charges were important.

With the poor agriculture performance weighing on his mind, the Prime Minister stressed that the cornerstone of the 10th Plan



**Manmohan to CMs: Double farm output in 10 years**

strategy was a reversal of the declining trend to achieve 4 per cent farm growth which had been belied.

"Unfortunately the performance of agriculture appears to have deteriorated and possibly would not exceed 1.5 per cent growth during the first three years of the 10th Plan," he added.

For the next two years of the Plan, Singh said it was

important to increase investments in the entire chain of activities related to agriculture — the supply of inputs and credit, diversification of crops, better production practices and improved post-harvest management.

The Prime Minister wanted the chief ministers to explore the possibility of doubling farm output in 10 years for which he suggested an NDC sub-committee for concrete action.

The two-day NDC meeting has been convened to approve the Mid-term Appraisal (MTA) of the Tenth Plan prepared by the Planning Commission. Ahluwalia highlighted the following features of the Tenth Plan's mid-term appraisal:

- Inflation under control
- External payments/forex reserves position comfortable
- Private corporate sector investment turned around
- Revival of industrial growth in 2004-05, with industrial sector recording 8.1 per cent growth
- High saving rate, Centre's fiscal deficit down
- Favourable prospect of attracting FDI

The key areas of concern

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# বামেদের বাগে আনতে নরম-গরম

## চাপের অস্ত্র টানাপোড়েন অর্থনীতির কাটাতে বেহাল দশা ভরসা সনিয়া

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

পার্থসারথি সেনগুপ্ত ও অগ্নি রায় • নয়াদিল্লি

২৭ জুন: কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে বামেদের সাম্প্রতিক মনোমালিন্যে নতুন মাত্রা।

কংগ্রেসের উপরে চাপ বাড়তে আজ যখন যোজনা কমিশন আয়োজিত জাতীয় উন্নয়ন পরিষদের বৈঠকে কেন্দ্রের বিরুদ্ধে বঞ্চনার অভিযোগ তুললেন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য, তখন তার পাল্টা হিসাবে চলতি আর্থিক বছরের যোজনা সংক্রান্ত মূল্যায়ন রিপোর্টকে হাতিয়ার করেছে কেন্দ্র। রাজ্য সরকারের কাছে পাঠানো ওই রিপোর্টে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের আর্থিক পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে গভীর উদ্বেগ প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে। এই চাপান-উতোরের মধ্যেই একটা পুরনো বিতর্ক নতুন করে মাথাচাড়া দিল— রাজ্যে বেহাল আর্থিক অবস্থার জন্য দায়ী কে?

পশ্চিমবঙ্গের আর্থিক ঘটটি নিয়ে মূল্যায়ন রিপোর্টে যে মন্তব্য করা হয়েছে তা অবশ্য নতুন কিছু নয়। আয়ব্যয়ের সমতা রাখতে গিয়ে বহু বছর ধরেই নাজেহাল হচ্ছে রাজ্য সরকার। যোজনা কমিশনের বিশেষজ্ঞদের মতে, যার পরিণামে এ রাজ্য ক্রমশ ঋণের জালে জড়িয়ে পড়ছে। বেহাল আর্থিক পরিস্থিতির কথা এ দিন তাঁর বক্তৃতায় স্বীকারও করে নিয়েছেন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী। কিন্তু একই সঙ্গে তাঁর বক্তব্য, কেন্দ্রের একের পর এক সরকারের ভুল আর্থিক নীতির জন্যই এই দুরবস্থা। বুদ্ধবাবুর এই অভিযোগ কিন্তু পুরোপুরি মানতে নারাজ কেন্দ্র ও যোজনা কমিশন।

দায় কার, এই প্রশ্নে টানাপোড়েনটা তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠেছে বামেদের ইউপিএ সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠক বয়কটের সিদ্ধান্তের প্রেক্ষিতে। সামনের বছর পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ও করলে বিধানসভা ভোটের কথা ভেবে বামেরা যেমন কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে দূরত্ব বাড়িয়েছে, কংগ্রেসও তেমনি প্রকাশ্যে না হলেও চাপ বাড়িয়ে তাদের উপরে। যোজনা কমিশনের বিশেষজ্ঞদের রিপোর্টটা এখন এই রাজনৈতিক দরকষাকষির প্রেক্ষিতে বাড়তি গুরুত্ব পাচ্ছে।



এনডিসি বৈঠকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ও মন্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়া। সোমবার দিল্লিতে। — পি টি আই

মন্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়া যোজনা কমিশনের ডেপুটি চেয়ারপার্সন হিসাবে যোগ দেওয়ার পর থেকেই রাজ্যগুলির আর্থিক শৃঙ্খলা নিয়ে চিন্তাভাবনা শুরু করে দিয়েছেন। কেননা, হাঁড়ির হাল যে শুধু পশ্চিমবঙ্গের এমন নয়, ওই তালিকায় দেশের বেশ কয়েকটি রাজ্যেরই নাম উঠেছে। মন্টেকের বক্তব্য, রাজ্যের অর্থনীতি চাপা না হলে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রীয় কাঠামোয় গোটা দেশের আর্থিক স্বাস্থ্য ফেরানো সম্ভব নয়। আর বেহাল অর্থনীতির জন্য তিনি রাজ্যগুলির দিকেই অভিযোগের আঙুল তুলেছেন।

পশ্চিমবঙ্গের ক্ষেত্রে যোজনা কমিশনের বক্তব্য, তারা দীর্ঘ দিন ধরে একটা ধাপেবাজি চালিয়ে যাচ্ছে। প্রতি বছর বিভিন্ন উৎস থেকে আয়ের আশ্বাস দিয়ে যোজনা বরাদ্দ বাড়িয়ে নিয়ে চলে যান অর্থমন্ত্রী অসীম দাশগুপ্ত। কিন্তু বাস্তবে দেখা যায় আয়ের সেই লক্ষ্যমাত্রা পূরণ করা যায়নি। ফলে প্রতি বছর বাড়ছে আর্থিক ঘাটতি। তা সত্ত্বেও কেন্দ্রে বামপন্থীদের প্রভাবকে কাজে লাগিয়ে যোজনা বরাদ্দ কমাতে দেন না অসীমবাবু।

মূল্যায়ন রিপোর্টে বলা হচ্ছে, রাজস্ব আদায় কম, তাই যোজনা খাতে রাজ্যের খরচও খুব কম। অন্যান্য রাজ্য যেখানে তাদের মোট ব্যয়ের ২৩.৫ শতাংশ পরিকল্পনা খাতে খরচ করে, সেখানে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ করে মাত্র ১২ শতাংশ।

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

- কেন্দ্রীয় সাহায্য ছাঁটাইয়ের আশঙ্কা...পৃঃ ৩
- বাম সমালোচনায় রতন টাটা...পৃঃ ৩

২৭ জুন: অদ্ভুত টানাপোড়েনে রয়েছেন মনমোহন সিংহ-প্রকাশ কারাটেরা। এবং দোটা না থেকে বেরোনের রাস্তা না-পেয়ে দু'পক্ষই আশায় আছে, ছুটি কাটিয়ে সনিয়া গাঁধী দিল্লি ফিরলে কিছু একটা সূত্র মিলবে।

বিলম্বিতরনের প্রশ্নে বাম-বিরোধিতায় রুট প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। সন্তুষ্ট নন অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরম এবং যোজনা কমিশনের ডেপুটি চেয়ারম্যান মন্টেক সিংহ অহলুওয়ালিয়াও। কিন্তু সরকার বাঁচানোর দায়ে সরাসরি বামেদের সঙ্গে সংঘাতে যাওয়া তাঁদের পক্ষে সম্ভব নয়। আবার বামেরা বাগড়া দিচ্ছেন বলেই আর্থিক সংস্কারের রাস্তা থেকে সরে আসতে হবে, এই তত্ত্বেও তাঁরা আস্থাশীল নন।

ভেলের বিষয়টি 'ইজ্জতের সওয়াল' করে তোলায় দোটা না দেখা দিয়েছে সিপিএম নেতৃত্বের মধ্যেও। সিপিএম নেতৃত্বের একাংশের আশঙ্কা, শেষমেশ ইউপিএ ভেল নিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত না-বদলালে রীতিমতো বিরত হতে হবে দলকে। কারণ, সিপিএমের পক্ষেও এই মুহূর্তে কংগ্রেসের উপর থেকে সমর্থন তোলা সম্ভব নয়।

এখন মধ্যপন্থা খুঁজতে নরম সুরে বাম নেতাদের বোঝানোর রাস্তাই নিয়েছেন মনমোহন। আজ সিপিএমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাটকে ফোন করে তিনি জানিয়েছেন, ভেল সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত জাতীয় অভিন্ন কর্মসূচির পরিপন্থী নয়। পেট্রোলিয়ামমন্ত্রী মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ারও আজ বলেছেন, ভেলের দাম বাড়ানোর যুক্তি বমেরা বুঝবেন বলেই তাঁর আশা। সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকে না-এলেও অন্য মধ্যে বামেদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা চলবে।

কারাট অবশ্য ভেল প্রসঙ্গে দাবি করেছেন, ইউপিএ চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গাঁধী ছুটি কাটিয়ে দিল্লি ফিরলেই এই সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত থেকে পুরোপুরি সরে আসতে হবে সরকারকে। বামেরা দাবি করলেও তাদের বাধ্যবাধকতার কথা অবশ্য

বোঝেন মনমোহন-চিদম্বরমেরা। ভেল-সিদ্ধান্তের সমর্থনে আজই কংগ্রেস কার্যালয়ে দলীয় মুখপাত্র জয়ন্তী নটরাজনের বক্তব্যে প্রচ্ছন্ন খোঁচা রয়েছে বামেদের প্রতি। তিনি বলেছেন, "ইউপিএ-র শরিক-সমর্থকদের মনে রাখতে হবে যে, সমস্ত সাম্প্রদায়িক শক্তিকে ঠেকিয়ে রাখার কাজটাই আমাদের অগ্রাধিকার দিয়ে করতে হবে।"

প্রকাশ্যে না-বলতে পারলেও মনমোহন-চিদম্বরম যে বামেদের আচরণে অত্যন্ত ক্ষুব্ধ, সম্প্রতি কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে অর্থমন্ত্রীর একটি মন্তব্য থেকেই তা স্পষ্ট। ঘরোয়া আলাপচারিতায় চিদম্বরম বলেছিলেন, "ঘুমন্ত কুকুরের লোজে পা দিয়ে উত্ত্যক্ত করার মানসিকতা থাকে কিছু লোকের। বামেরাও তা-ই করছে।" অর্থমন্ত্রী একাধিক বার বলেছেন, সংস্কার কর্মসূচির ব্যাপারে সহনশীল দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি নিয়েই চলতে চান তিনি। এই প্রসঙ্গে তিনি কেন্দ্রে যুক্তফ্রন্ট সরকারের উদাহরণ দিয়েছেন, যে সরকারে মন্ত্রী ছিলেন সিপিআইয়ের ইন্ড্রজিৎ গুপ্ত ও চতুরানন মিশ্র। ঘনিষ্ঠ মহলে চিদম্বরমের মন্তব্য, "ওই মন্ত্রিসভায় আমি তো অর্থমন্ত্রী ছিলাম। তাই বামেদের সঙ্গে সমীকরণ বজায় রাখার অঙ্কটা আমার জানা আছে। বামেদের বোঝা দরকার, বাজার অর্থনীতির বিকাশ আমজনতার ভালই করে। তা সাধারণ মানুষের স্বার্থের পরিপন্থী নয়।"

চিদম্বরম ও মন্টেকের স্কোভ আরও এক জায়গায়। তাঁদের বক্তব্য, পশ্চিমবঙ্গে অর্থনৈতিক সংস্কার পুরো দমে

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

# UPA has failed to adhere to CMP: Left

FD-12  
27/6

**"National investment fund plan a device to appropriate proceeds of disinvestment"**

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The following is the text of the joint letter written by leaders of four Left parties — A.B. Bardhan (CPI), Prakash Karat (CPI-M), Debabrata Biswas (Forward Bloc) and Abani Roy (RSP) — to United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi, suspending participation from the Coordination Committee meetings.

Dear Mrs. Gandhi,

"When the UPA Government was formed, the Left Parties decided to extend support to it keeping in mind the verdict of the people who had rejected the policies of the previous NDA Government. At that time, all of us felt it necessary to set up a Coordination Committee of the UPA and the Left to discuss the implementation of the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) and other policy issues.

"In the meetings of the Coordination Committee, which you kindly convened from time to time, the Left Parties raised a number of issues connected with the CMP and other policy decisions being taken by the UPA Government which affected the interests of the common people and the country as a whole. Our experience has been that on many issues where the Left had disagreements, the Government nevertheless went ahead with its decisions.

## Disinvestment

"What has perturbed us most is the manner in which the Government has decided to go ahead with the disinvestment of shares in the BHEL, to be followed by other navaratnas and profitable public sector units. The Finance Minister has set a target of realising Rs. 10,000 crores in the Union Budget for 2005-06.

"The CMP states: 'Navaratna companies to be retained in the public sector while they raise resources from the market.' There is no scope for misunderstanding

**"It is well known that successive rounds of disinvestment will pave the way for the eventual privatisation of the concerned PSUs"**

ing here. The navaratnas like the BHEL can go to the market for raising capital for their own needs. It is not for the Government to sell their shares and appropriate those proceeds. The proposal for a national investment fund is merely a mechanism to facilitate the Government appropriating the proceeds of disinvestment.

"It is well known that successive rounds of disinvestment will pave the way for the eventual privatisation of the concerned PSUs. It is not enough to say that 'disinvestment' does not mean privatisation. We are surprised by the repeated assertion that the Government will retain 51 per cent share in these enterprises which means that it intends to sell off 49 per cent shares. From 51 per cent to 49 per cent is just a small step. It is creeping privatisation.

## 'Serious violation'

"This step taken by the UPA Government is the first serious violation of the CMP. The UPA-Left Coordination Committee, despite discussing the matter, has been unable to ensure adherence to the CMP commitment.

"In the light of this, we find no useful purpose will be served in attending meetings of the Coordination Committee. Therefore, we have decided to regretfully suspend our participation in the Coordination Committee."

A copy of the letter has been forwarded to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

27 JUN 2005

THE HINDU



MONDAY, JUNE 27, 2005

## The UPA-Left honeymoon is over

**T**he decision of the Left parties to suspend participation in the committee for coordination with the United Progressive Alliance should cause no surprise to those who have closely followed the issues of discord centring on economic policy. The four Left constituents — the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, and the All India Forward Bloc — have made it clear, following Sunday's meeting, that they were generally unhappy with the experience of seeing the Manmohan Singh Government push ahead with decisions that went against the grain of the National Common Minimum Programme or otherwise harmed "the interests of the common people and the country as a whole." But they have pinpointed "the manner in which the Government has decided to go ahead" with the disinvestment of shares in BHEL — "the first serious violation" of the NCMP — as the action that perturbed them most. This is to be followed by disinvestment in other *navaratnas* and profitable units, evidenced by Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's disinvestment target of Rs.10,000 crore in 2005-2006. The Left reading is that this is "creeping privatisation"; that successive rounds of disinvestment — foreshadowed in the Government's repeated assertion that it will "retain 51 per cent" of equity in profit-making public sector undertakings — mean "eventual privatisation." The apprehension is certainly justified.

The May 2004 general election produced a major upset, with the Congress emerging unexpectedly as the single largest party and the configuration in the Lok Sabha favouring the formation of a Congress-led coalition government supported from outside by the Left, which emerged with an unprecedented strength of 61 members. It is well known that the Congress and the CPI (M), the spearhead of the Left, differ basically and sharply on several issues, most crucially in the realm of economic policy. In endorsing the NCMP while expressing their differences on certain aspects of the programme, the CPI (M) and the other Left parties hoped the UPA Government would implement the pro-people measures promised in the Programme, and would not emphasise those policies on which there was UPA-Left discord. The Coordination Committee was meant to be a political mechanism to discuss the implementation of the NCMP and other policy issues; to find common ground, perhaps craft *via media* solutions; and to contain discord. It has clearly not done its job. After Prakash Karat took over as CPI (M) general secretary, he repeatedly clarified his party's approach and the minimum the Manmohan Singh Government needed to do to fare well. In its nuanced assessment of one year of UPA rule, the CPI (M) Polit Bureau provided plenty of hints of what was to come. While the Government was found to have done well generally in the political, educational, and foreign policy spheres, it had failed to provide relief and succour to the working people and seemed bent on pursuing neo-liberal economic policies that harmed the people's, and national, interests. The UPA, in short, had failed to keep its end of the bargain in crucial areas. This is now the settled Left assessment recorded in a letter to the UPA's chairperson, Sonia Gandhi: the Coordination Committee has been "unable to ensure adherence to the CMP commitments," so no useful purpose will be served by participating in the Committee's meetings. The Left bloc will continue to support the UPA Government, and there is no question of its doing anything that will enable or permit the Bharatiya Janata Party to stage a political comeback. But what is plain is that the UPA-Left honeymoon, if there was one, is over.

# Left suspends coordination meetings

“Perturbed” over UPA Government’s decision on BHEL, parties say NCMP is not honoured

K.V. Prasad

**NEW DELHI:** The Left parties on Sunday decided to suspend participation in Coordination Committee meetings with the United Progressive Alliance after taking exception to the “first serious violation” of the National Common Minimum Programme. The transgression was the Manmohan Singh Government’s decision to offload equity in BHEL, to be followed by disinvestment in other ‘navaratnas.’ The Left characterised this as “creeping privatisation” of profitable public sector units.

Firing the first warning shot, the four Left parties supporting the UPA Government from outside made it clear that despite repeated disagreements conveyed on policy issues, the Government went ahead with its decisions.

“The Left-UPA Coordination Committee, despite discussing the matter, has been unable to ensure adherence to the CMP commitment. In the light of this, we find no useful purpose will be served in attending meetings of the Coordination Committee. Therefore, we have decided to regretfully suspend our participation in the Coordination Committee,” the Left parties leaders informed UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi in a letter.

The letter, signed by Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Prakash Karat, CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan, All-India Forward Bloc general secretary Debabrata Biswas, and Revolutionary Socialist Party central committee leader Abani Roy, was released at a joint press conference here. CPI national secretary D. Raja and AIFB secretary G. Devarajan were present.

Earlier, the four Left parties discussed the issue and were briefed about the June 19 UPA-Left coordination meeting by Mr. Raja who had attended it. The general secretaries of the CPI, CPI(M) and Forward Bloc could not attend as they were



**STRONG MESSAGE:** Left leaders Abani Roy, A.B. Bardhan, Prakash Karat, Debabrata Biswas, D. Raja and G. Devarajan at a press conference in New Delhi on Sunday. — PHOTO: SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

away. The Left parties had asked the Government not to go ahead with the BHEL disinvestment before it was discussed.

The Left leaders said what perturbed them most was the manner in which the Government decided to go ahead with the disinvestment of shares in BHEL, to be followed by other ‘navaratnas’ and profitable public sector units. “The Finance Minister has set a target of realising Rs. 10,000 crores in the Union Budget for 2005-06,” the

letter said.

Referring to the NCMP, which states “navaratna companies [are] to be retained in the public sector while they raise resources from the market,” the Left letter stated: “There is no scope for misunderstanding here. Navaratnas like BHEL can go to the market for raising capital for their own needs. It is not for the Government to sell their shares and appropriate those proceeds. The proposal for a national investment fund is merely a mech-

anism to facilitate the Government appropriating the proceeds of disinvestment.”

The Left leaders said it was well known that successive rounds of disinvestment would pave the way for the eventual privatisation of the PSUs concerned. It was not enough to say that “disinvestment” did not mean privatisation.

“We are surprised by the repeated assertion that the Government will retain 51 per cent share in these enterprises which

means that it intends to sell off 49 per cent shares. From 51 per cent to 49 per cent is just a small step. It is creeping privatisation.”

The first time the Left parties expressed concern over the proposed move by the Government to offload equity in 35 PSUs was on October 27, 2004. The next day Dr. Singh sought to know from the Left parties the basis on which they issued a statement and denied that his Government had taken any decision to dis-

invest in these units.

Dr. Singh spoke to Mr. Karat on Saturday and sought to know the reason behind the Left’s concern. On Sunday, Ahmed Patel, political secretary to Congress president, got in touch with Mr. Raja and wanted to know the reason behind the latest decision.

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THE HINDU

# সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠক বর্জন কারাটদের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৬ জুন: বছর ঘুরলেই পশ্চিমবঙ্গ, কেরলে বিধানসভা নির্বাচন। সে কথা মাথায় রেখে এখন থেকেই কেন্দ্রে সরকার বিরোধিতার সুর চড়া করল বাম নেতৃত্ব। বিলগ্নিকরণের বিষয়ে ইউপিএ সরকার ন্যূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচি লঙ্ঘন করেছে, এই অভিযোগ এনে বাম নেতারা সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন, আপাতত ইউপিএ সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকে যোগ দিতে যাবেন না। সনিয়া গান্ধীকে লেখা একটি চিঠিতে সে কথা জানিয়েও দিয়েছেন তাঁরা।

এখনই সরকার ফেলে দেওয়ার মতো পরিস্থিতি তৈরি না-করলেও আজ চার বাম নেতা জানান, 'সমর্থন থাকলেও আপাতত সমন্বয় নয়।' সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে সি পি এমের প্রকাশ কারাট, সিপিআইয়ের এ বি বর্ধন, আরএসপি-র অবনী রায়, ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকের দেবব্রত বিশ্বাসেরা তাঁদের উদ্বার কথা জানিয়ে বলেন, সমন্বয় কমিটিতে যোগ দেওয়াটা অর্থহীন হয়ে গিয়েছে। সরকার যা স্থির করছে, সে ভাবেই এগোচ্ছে। ভেল বেসরকারীকরণের ঘটনাটি তুলে ধরে কারাট বলেন, "সরকারের আচরণে আমরা গভীর ভাবে উদ্ভিগ্ন।"

বামেদের এই তীব্র উদ্বেগে ঠান্ডা করার চেষ্টায় সক্রিয় হয়েছেন ইউপিএ

চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গান্ধীর রাজনৈতিক সচিব আহমেদ পটেল। তাঁর কথায়, "এ ব্যাপারে যাতে কোনও ভুল বোঝাবুঝি না হয়, তা নিশ্চিত করতে বাম নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলব।" পাশাপাশি, কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র অম্বিকা সোনি জানিয়েছেন তাঁরা আত্মবিশ্বাসী, সমাধানসূত্র বেরোবেই। অম্বিকা বলেন, "এমন কিছুই নেই, যার সমাধান হয় না। এটিরও সমাধান সম্ভব, এবং তা হবেই।" কাল রাতেই সিপিএমের প্রবীণ নেতা হরকিষেন সিংহ সুরজিতের সঙ্গে দেখা করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

বামেদের অসন্তোষের বিষয়ে বিস্তারিত জানতে চান। তবে বিলগ্নিকরণ স্থগিত করা হবে, এ রকম আশ্বাস তিনি সুরজিৎকে দেননি। সমাধান কবে এবং কোন সূত্রে হবে, তা অবশ্য স্পষ্ট নয়। ইতিমধ্যে বামেরা সরকারের সিদ্ধান্তের প্রতিবাদে রাস্তায় নামছে। পেট্রোল-ডিজেলের দাম বাড়ার প্রতিবাদে দেশ জুড়ে চাক্কা-জ্যাম করা হবে ২৮ তারিখ। একই বিষয় নিয়ে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে শ্রমিক ইউনিয়নগুলি কাল,

২৭ তারিখ পরিবহণ ধর্মঘট ডাকছে বলে ২৮ তারিখ ধর্মঘটের আওতা থেকে সেই রাজ্যকে বাদ রাখা হয়েছে। বাম সূত্রের খবর, বিহার, কেরল, অন্ধ্র, ঝাড়খণ্ড, ত্রিপুরায় বিক্ষোভ দেখানো হবে। বিক্ষোভের ধরন কী হবে, তা স্থির করবে সংশ্লিষ্ট রাজ্য কমিটি।

আজ সকালে চারটি বাম দল নিজেদের মধ্যে একটি বৈঠক করে।



সরকার ন্যূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচিকে লঙ্ঘন করে নবরত্ন রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থাগুলিকে বিক্রি করে দিচ্ছে, এই অভিযোগে সরব হন বাম নেতৃত্ব। একটি চিঠিতে সনিয়া গান্ধীকে বাম নেতারা লেখেন, "সরকার নবরত্ন সংস্থাগুলির ৪৯ শতাংশ বিক্রি করে দেওয়ার কথা চিন্তা করায় আমরা বিস্মিত। ৫১ এবং ৪৯ শতাংশের মধ্যে ফারাক খুব সামান্যই। এ ভাবে আসলে বেসরকারীকরণের দিকেই এগোনো হচ্ছে।" এর পরই তাঁরা জানান, "এই পদক্ষেপের ফলে প্রথম বার সরকার ন্যূনতম অভিন্ন কর্মসূচি থেকে বড় ধরনের বিচ্যুতি ঘটালো। ইউপিএ-বাম সমন্বয় কমিটি বিষয়টি

নিয়ে এর আগে আলোচনা করেছে। কিন্তু অভিন্ন কর্মসূচির প্রতিশ্রুতি অনুযায়ী চলা যায়নি। এই অবস্থায় সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকে হাজিরা দিয়ে কোনও উদ্দেশ্যই সিদ্ধ হচ্ছে না। তাই সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকে আমরা আপাতত যোগ দেব না।"

গত সপ্তাহেই সমন্বয় কমিটির বৈঠকে কারাট-বর্ধনেরা সনিয়া-মনমোহনের কাছে ভেল বিলগ্নিকরণের (১০ শতাংশ) বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ জানিয়ে এসেছিলেন। তখন মনমোহন তাঁদের বলেছিলেন, সরকার বিলগ্নিকরণ করছে কিন্তু বেসরকারীকরণ করছে না। এই আপত্তিকো সত্ত্বেও হননি বামেরা। বরং, তাঁদের বিরোধিতাকে আরও উচ্চগ্রামে নিয়ে গিয়েছেন। বাম সূত্রের খবর, কাল রাজধানীতে জাতীয় উন্নয়ন পরিষদের বৈঠকে সরকার পক্ষ থেকে যে 'মিড টার্ম অ্যাপ্রোজাল' দেওয়া হবে, তাতে কিছু ক্ষেত্রে ভর্তুকি তুলে নেওয়ার কথা থাকবে। যার মধ্যে রয়েছে কেরোসিন, এলপিগ্যাস, রেশন, সারের মতো ক্ষেত্র। আরও বলা হবে, সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রে উন্নয়নমূলক কাজের জন্য কিছু রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার শেয়ার বিক্রি করার কথা। এই তথ্য আগুনে ঘুতাহতির সামিল হয়েছে। ক্ষোভ আরও বেড়েছে বামেরা।

27 JUN 2005

26 JUN 2005

# NDA steps up attack on UPA, Buta, Lalu

**PRESS Trust of India**  
Patna, June 25

THE NDA on Saturday intensified its offensive against the UPA, Governor Buta Singh and RJD president Lalu Prasad Yadav. At demonstrations across the state it blamed them for dissolving the Assembly and the ills facing the state.

"We have decided to wage a relentless struggle for justice. Our leaders have already approached the judiciary and petitioned President Kalam against dissolution of the House," NDA chief ministerial candidate Nitish Kumar said at a 'Mahadharna' organised by the NDA.

"If the judiciary fails to deliver and the President maintains silence over the dissolution, the people's court is the ultimate forum where we are sure to get justice," Kumar said.

State BJP chief Sushil Kumar Modi alleged that people of the state were not only unhappy with Governor Buta Singh (for recommending dissolution of the House) but were also peeved at President Kalam's silence over it.

"President Kalam should have taken opinion from legal and Constitutional experts before giving his nod on the Union Cabinet's recommendation," Modi said.

*President Kalam should have taken opinions from legal and constitutional experts before giving his nod on the Union Cabinet recommendation to dissolve Bihar Assembly*

**Sushil Kumar Modi**  
State BJP chief

Hundreds of NDA activists led by Nitish Kumar, BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley, Sushil Modi and former Union ministers Sharad Yadav, C.P. Thakur, Ravishankar Prasad and several members of the dissolved House, staged the demonstration to coincide with the clamping of Emergency 30 years ago.

They shouted anti-UPA and anti-Governor slogans and charged Lalu Prasad

Yadav with having exerted 'undue pressure' on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union home minister Shivraj Patil to get the Bihar House dissolved.

Jaitley said the House was dissolved despite Nitish Kumar having the support of 135 MLAs in the 243-member House, 13 more than the required number of 122 to form the government.

He also questioned the hurry in which an emergency meeting of the Union cabinet was called on May 22 to recommend dissolution and blamed the Congress-RJD-Paswan combine for it.

Kumar said the NDA leaders would launch 'Nyaya (justice) Yatra' on July 11 from Champaran to mobilise people's support against the House dissolution.

Describing President's Rule in Bihar as an extension of the RJD regime, he said the people would not forgive Lalu and the Congress for thrusting yet another election on the state. He also equated the President's Rule with the Emergency clamped by Indira Gandhi on June 25, 1975.

Modi also said that the UPA was in total disarray in Bihar with Ram Vilas Paswan backdropping the 'rock-like' unity of NDA partners will bring victory to the alliance, he said.

## George worried about NDA fate

PERTURBED OVER developments within the BJP in the wake of the Jinnah controversy, NDA Convener George Fernandes on Saturday said he was worried about the future of the NDA.

"Now, we are seeing that issues are developing within the largest party of the NDA. This makes me worry about its future," he told NDTV when asked about the Jinnah controversy and BJP leader Yashwant Sinha's criticism of the Jharkhand chief minister.

Asked if he had spoken to anyone in the BJP about this, Fernandes said, "Whom should I speak to? Everybody is attacking Advani and I do not wish to disturb Atalji (former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee)."

"Whatever is happening now should not have happened," he said.

PTI, New Delhi



BJP president L. K. Advani and NDA convener George Fernandes at a function in New Delhi to felicitate the activists of the anti-Emergency movement, on Saturday.

# Left to warn Centre, not wound it

MONOBINA GUPTA

New Delhi, June 25: The mercury is rising at the Left headquarters. Leaders believe it is time to issue a "stern warning" to the Centre to stem the slew of economic reforms it is bringing in through executive orders.

But the warning will be "short of any move" that may destabilise the government. Left parties will meet at the CPM headquarters here tomorrow to tell the government not to test their patience.

"We will take any step that falls short of bringing down the government," said CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan.

A day earlier, CPM general secretary Prakash Karat issued a similar warning from Hyderabad. He said the government should know its survival depends on the people. "It should learn from what happened to the BJP earlier," he said.

The Left believes one reason that led to the fall of the NDA government was its unbridled policies of liberalisation which hurt the poor. Left leaders said they would have to work out a strategy at tomorrow's meeting to restrain the UPA from treading the same path.

So far, the Left has tried the two most common strategies: one, protests and demonstra-

tions against what they perceive as the government's "anti-people" policies; two, using their clout in Parliament to stall the government from pushing through policies they are against.

For instance, the Left's opposition to the pension bill and the insurance regulatory authority (amendment) bill has held them up. Both are on hold as the government is not in a position to pass them without Left support. The BJP has said

it will oppose both the bills.

However, the government has also used its executive powers to checkmate the Left. The Cabinet recently sanctioned divestment worth Rs 10,000 crore in BHEL despite Left opposition. It also hiked petroleum prices and raised the FDI cap in telecom. It is also considering bringing FDI in retail.

Displeased with the oil price hike, Left parties have planned a nationwide protest later this month. But

such protests usually impact only their strongholds in Bengal and Kerala and end up as small events in the rest of the country.

"In Parliament, we can vote out any policy we don't want. But outside we are not able to stop these policies. The government is introducing them through Cabinet decisions," Bardhan said.



Karat,  
Bardhan

# Hurriyat trip beyond PoK violation by Pak: Manmohan Singh

New Delhi: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday said Pakistan violated an understanding with India by allowing Kashmiri separatist leaders to travel beyond PoK recently and ruled out any role for any third party as a "guarantor" on the Kashmir issue, an idea suggested by President Pervez Musharraf and endorsed by Hurriyat.

Replying to a letter by his predecessor Atal Bihari Vajpayee criticising the government's Pakistan policy, he rejected the charge that his government had mishandled the Kashmiri separatist leaders' visit across the LoC.

"That Pakistan decided to invite them to visit Islamabad and other cities in Pakistan violated an understanding" on the "procedures" reached between the two countries for running the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, Singh said in a letter sent on Monday in response to Vajpayee's June 15 letter.

## Rejoinder



M Singh



A B Vajpayee

"It would not be, therefore, correct to state that the authorities on our side had mishandled the visit of the Hurriyat," Singh said, adding "passports were issued to those Hurriyat leaders who did not have it and made a request for such documents."

Asserting the UPA government's endeavour to fully safeguard the country's vital interests while carrying forward the dialogue process with Pakistan, the PM made it

clear that "there can be no redrawing of boundaries."

"We have also ruled out any role for a third party— either through intervention or as guarantor or as mediators— in any form," he said in his letter dated June 20 to Vajpayee.

During the Kashmiri separatist leaders' visit to Pakistan, Musharraf had suggested that the international community should be made a "guarantor" on resolution of the Kashmir issue, an idea which was endorsed by Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq.

Singh said India had consistently held that the dialogue with Pakistan was predicated on its commitment to end cross-border terrorism, as outlined in the joint statement of January 6, 2004. "The centrality of this position was recently reflected in the joint statement released after my meeting with President Musharraf," he said. PTI

# Petrol, diesel prices up; Left livid

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 20. — The government finally increased the petrol and diesel prices today even as the Left parties strongly opposed the move, scheduling countrywide protest action for 28 June. The hike comes into effect from midnight tonight.

LPG and kerosene aside, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs increased the petrol and diesel prices by Rs 2.50 and Rs 2 a litre respectively.

The fuel price hike, which the government has been deferring for the last six months owing to pressure from the Left, is the fourth since the UPA came into power in May 2004. The prices of petrol and diesel have gone up by nearly Rs 10.20 a litre and Rs 7.17 a litre, respectively, during this period.

Although today's increase was the highest during the UPA's tenure so far, the petroleum ministry claimed that the government had only shared

	PETROL	
Delhi	Rs 37.99	Rs 40.49
Mumbai	Rs 43.23	Rs 45.95
Kolkata	Rs 40.89	Rs 43.81
Chennai	Rs 41.25	Rs 44.28
	DIESEL	
Delhi	Rs 26.45	Rs 28.45
Mumbai	Rs 32.83	Rs 35.22
Kolkata	Rs 28.72	Rs 30.80
Chennai	Rs 29.30	Rs 31.52



half the burden entailed in the global rise in the price of crude oil.

Faced with the Left's antagonism on the issue, the petroleum ministry clarified that, because of the spurt in the global oil prices and the recent duty increase in the Budget, the actual increase should have been Rs 4.68 a litre for petrol and Rs 5.13 for diesel.

Despite this, the government finally settled for much less, the Union minister for petroleum and natural gas, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, said. "We have basically gone back to the principle of equitable burden-sharing between the govern-

ment, consumers and the oil companies," Mr Aiyar said after the Cabinet meeting.

The increase is said to have become "inevitable" ever since the government increased duties on petroleum products in March this year. Besides, the international price of crude oil has now shot up to an all-time high of \$59 a barrel.

Close on the heels of the decision, the Left parties said the Manmohan Singh government's "justification for this hike is misplaced". Despite declaring their agitational programme, the major Left parties, however, ruled out the question of instability at the Centre.

"This hike comes in the wake of three price hikes in petroleum products in the past one year. This has imposed an additional burden on the people. It will affect the farmers and increase the cost of living. The price increase in diesel in particular will be inflationary and have a cascading effect on the prices of all commodities," the Left parties argued.

More reports on pages 4 & 9

21 JUN 2005

THE STATESMAN

# Left against dilution of BHEL stake

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“Public sector character of  
'navaratnas' will not be altered”

Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI:** Differences between the Government and the Left parties on divestment of 10 per cent stake in Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) persisted after a meeting of the United Progressive Alliance-Left Coordination Committee on Sunday evening at the Prime Minister's residence. The Left parties will meet again next week to decide their next course of action.

A statement read out by Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram after the meeting said the public sector character of 'navaratna' companies would not be altered. Also, the future capital requirements of the 'navaratnas' would be met with. "The Left parties and the Government exchanged views on disinvestment, with particular reference to the BHEL case... The Left parties have reiterated their position on disinvestment but agreed to discuss the matter further among themselves," the statement said.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Home Minister Shivraj Patil, former CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan

Singh Surjeet, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury, Communist Party of India national secretary D. Raja, and Revolutionary Socialist Party leader Abani Roy. Mr. Yechury said the Left parties did not agree with the Government's contention that privatisation and disinvestment were two different issues.

The Government, Mr. Yechury said, argued that control would be with the State as long as 51 per cent of the stake was with it. However, the Left parties feel that any dilution would weaken the company.

Mr. Raja said such dilution of control would make the public sector undertakings vulnerable. The Left leaders, who met separately ahead of the meeting, deferred a final decision, as general secretaries of the CPI (M), the CPI and the Forward Bloc were not in town. The Forward Bloc was not represented at the meeting.

## POTA panel

The Left parties sought the Government's intervention in ensuring that the Gujarat Government implemented the recommendations of the Central Review Committee on POTA.



# Decks cleared for IISCO, SAIL merger

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

**T**HE Cabinet on Thursday cleared the decks for merger of two steel PSUs—Indian Iron and Steel company (IISCO) and Steel Authority of India (SAIL), authorising the ministry of steel to initiate the process after getting approval of the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR).

"The Cabinet today authorised the ministry of steel to permit SAIL to initiate the process of merger of IISCO with the steel giant after taking approval of BIFR," Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said after a Cabinet meeting. The move would ensure availability of high quality iron ore to SAIL's steel plants, he said.

"With SAIL's financial and managerial capabilities and availability of potential with IISCO mines, colonies, large infrastructural facilities

principle approval to the merger. IISCO is currently a SAIL subsidiary and after years of being in the red, made a profit of Rs 27 crore. It has reported a provisional profit of Rs 40 crore during 2004-05.

The government on Thursday also approved setting up of a world class drug research institute in Lucknow at a cost of Rs 190 crore. The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs also okayed Rs 184 crore for constructing a new super-speciality block and upgrading existing facilities at the Jawaharlal Institute of postgraduate medical education and research (JIPMER) in Pondicherry during the period 2002-07.

Chidambaram said the existing drug research institute is located at a place, which was not suited for research work. So, the government has decided to come up with a new set-up at Sitapur Road in Lucknow. The drug research institute is expected to be completed in four years, he said.



**Chidambaram with Aiyar after the Cabinet meet in New Delhi on Thursday. Raaj Dayal**

and good work culture, there would be greater synergy for capacity expansion and technological upgradation of the plant," he said.

Board of directors of both SAIL and IISCO have already given in-

## DECISION ON PETROL, DIESEL PRICE HIKE DEFERRED

**NEW DELHI:** The government on Thursday deferred a decision on hiking petrol and diesel prices. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), which met on Thursday, did not take up the issue though it was very much on the agenda.

However, the CCEA may meet again on Saturday to take a decision on the revision of petrol and diesel prices.

Asked if the issue of hiking petrol and diesel prices was on the agenda of CCEA, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram replied in the positive. "It has been deferred by a few days because some important ministers were not present," he added.

The finance minister said the CCEA might "possibly" meet on Saturday. Petrol and diesel prices may be raised by Rs 1.50 per litre though an increase of over Rs 4.50 a litre on petrol and more than Rs 5 per litre in diesel is needed in line with the spurt in crude oil prices and increase in tax rates. The government may settle for a moderate increase mainly due to pressure from the Left.

Meanwhile, price of international crude oil continued to hold firm on Thursday. Oil held above \$55 a barrel as brisk demand for transport fuel in the US continued to unnerve the market. US light sweet crude rose 20 cents to \$55.77, building on half dollar gains the session before, during which NYMEX oil set a two-month peak of \$56.75. Oil has now gained 28 per cent since the start of the year and has climbed nearly \$9 in the last four weeks.

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# Convert Siachen into peace zone: PM

**Siachen:** In a bold idea in the midst of peace process with Pakistan, PM Manmohan Singh on Sunday favoured the conversion of Siachen Glacier, the highest battlefield in the world, into a "peace mountain." However, Singh ruled out any changes in the "established" boundaries of the country, saying it related to the nation's "honour" and "security".

The first PM to visit the Siachen sector in Jammu and Kashmir situated at over 12,000 ft altitude, he said efforts should be made to create such an atmosphere of peace here wherein "nobody fears any threat, there is no scope for any conflict and this place becomes an example of peaceful environment."

Singh, who was briefed by top army officers about the prevailing situation, noted in an address to troops here that "Siachen is called the highest battlefield" where living is very difficult. "How long shall we allow such conditions to prevail (in Siachen)," he said, declaring "Now time has come for us to make efforts to convert this battlefield into a peace mountain." He added talks were going on with Pakistan in this regard.

Emphasising that India wanted peaceful relations with Pakistan, the PM, however, asserted that in pursuit of this, "We are not ready to accept any changes in the drawn and established

boundaries of the country. We feel, these boundaries are important not only for our security but it relates to the country's honour also. For this prestige, Indian soldiers are happily bearing difficulties here (in Siachen)."



Manmohan Singh (left) shakes hands with soldiers as army chief Gen J J Singh (second left) looks on, at the army's Siachen Glacier camp on Sunday

Hailing the contributions of the soldiers towards unity and integrity of the country, Singh assured soldiers in this inhospitable sector that all their needs would be met.

Besides a CT scan facility which would be made available here, the PM said that two home theatres would also be provided to the soldiers here for entertainment.

Noting that the government was continuously concerned about the well-being of the forces, he said he had decided on visiting Siachen to see for himself the conditions in which the troops were living here. PTI

## Telgi invested in Mumbai dance bars

**New Delhi:** Investigators probing the activities of stamp paper scam accused Abdul Karim Telgi have found that besides investing in Bollywood, he had also pumped money from the scam into dance bars in Mumbai.

CBI officials, who are wrapping up the probe for chargesheeting nearly 65 accused, said there was evidence that some proceeds of crime were diverted for the production of a Hindi film by production house 'Sanna Movies In-



ternational'.

During his custodial interrogation, Telgi told the CBI that he had no idea of where to invest the enormous proceeds he got from the printing of fake stamps and stamp papers. So he hired two consultants for finding some business ventures, official sources said.

The sources said he had also invested huge sum of money in the opening of dance bars in Mumbai and also had a project to build some theatres and hospitals. PTI

# SP to launch stir against UPA policies

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Lucknow:** The Samajwadi Party will hold demonstrations all over the country on June 15 against the anti-people, anti-student and anti-farmer policies of the Central government.

The demonstrations will be held at all the district headquarters in Uttar Pradesh, while in other states they will take place in the capital city.

The party has chosen six issues on which it will take on the UPA government: giving every individual the right to employment; ensuring that farmers get the price due to them; and making provisions for giving free medicines to the poor. The remaining three issues include equality to women, a rethink over VAT and revival of student unions.

These issues had featured prominently at the national convention of the party held in Patna in April where the

speakers including SP president and chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had spoken about the UPA government's apathy on the same.

The other speakers had also followed suit and it was decided that the party would hold protests all over the country to highlight the failure of the Central government to address these problems. In Uttar Pradesh—where the party is in power—a decision was taken not to confine the demonstration to the state capital alone, but to hold it at all district headquarters. In case of Bihar, where the assembly stands dissolved, it was decided that the demonstration would take the form of a rally and be used as a platform for kickstarting party's poll campaign.

Meanwhile, Mulayam is slated to address a meeting of all the district/city presidents, vice-presidents, general secretaries and treasurers of the state on June 10.

1 1 JUN 2009 THE HINDU

# NCP hits out at 'big brother' Congress

**Surat resolution says Cong must consult smaller UPA allies over policy issues**

**SHAIKSH GAIKWAD**  
SURAT, JUNE 10

**T**HE NCP today criticised the Congress for not taking smaller constituents of the UPA into confidence while running the government at the Centre.

"The coalition government is not supposed to run on the strength of each party but on broad understanding among constituents and supporting parties," said the political resolution, passed unanimously at its national convention held in Surat today.

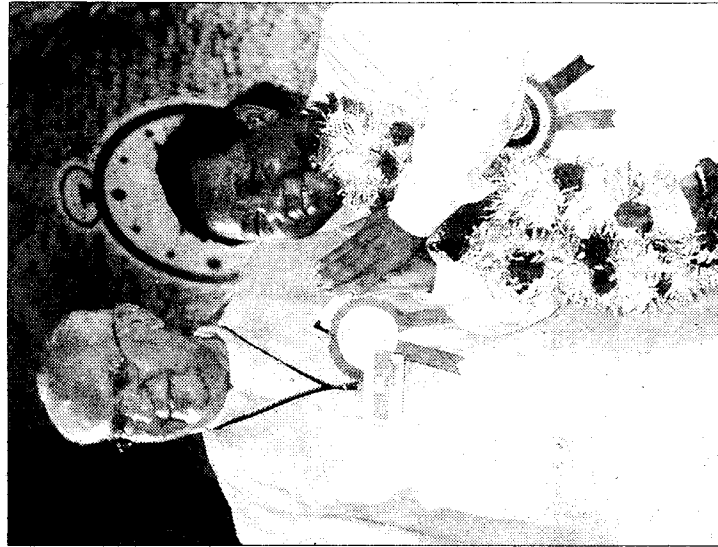
"The verdict of the people is not just against communal forces but also for a coalition government. This should be borne in mind by all concerned," the resolution said, adding that it was the NCP which brought secular parties together, before the last Lok Sabha elections.

The resolution was passed in the presence of other senior leaders of the UPA, most of whom hailed the NCP chief as a "pillar of secular forces in the country".

"For years, there was a single party rule and that party is finding it difficult to adjust to coalition politics," Sharad Pawar said in his address.



**Pawar exchanges greetings with JD(S) chief H.D. Deve Gowda as Lok Janashakti Party president Ram Vilas Paswan looks on. (right) Former Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sangma with senior NCP leader Santa Mehta after he rejoined the party. PTI photos**



Congress MP and Gandhi's representative Mukul Wasnik had to sit it all out but he did make a point of telling them that Congress was "committed to secularism."

"I hope that other parties will not do something which will damage the UPA rather than the NDA," he said in his brief address.

NCP's criticism of the Congress has also grown louder because of latter's refusal to give a ministerial berth to its Goa MLA Mickey Pacheco.

However, Pawar said, the NCP would not take a stand which would

## CPI wants Pawar to play watchdog in Cabinet

■ Praising Pawar's role in the coalition, UPA leaders who attended the convention on Friday, also chose to make a few strong points about governance. "While Left parties raise issues concerning the poor, we expect people like you to do the same inside the Cabinet," said CPI leader A.B. Bardhan.

"Pay heed to what is happening with the slumdwellers in Mumbai where your party is ruling," pointed out former PM H.D. Deve Gowda.

PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti also did some tough-talking. "For a long time, we have been calling ourselves champions of secularism and backward class. I think it is time to do something for those classes and minorities. People need some concrete work and not just lip service," she said, amidst applause from NCP workers.

—ENS

help the BJP. "We will not pull down the Congress-led government in Goa though we are not happy with the treatment meted out to NCP," he added.

Pawar has used the Surat convention to cast himself in a leadership role among the UPA constituents. Although RJD leader Laloo Prasad Yadav did not attend the meet, the likes of LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan, PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti and CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan, lauded his efforts in speaking up for secular forces.

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ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

# এ বার বিদ্যুৎ নিয়ে কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে বিরোধ বামেদের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ জুন: তেল ও তেলের পর বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্র নিয়ে সরকারের সঙ্গে বামেদের নতুন করে সংঘাত বাধতে চলেছে। কারণ, কেন্দ্র মোটেই বিদ্যুৎ পর্বদগুলিকে তিন ভাবে ভাঙার কাজ বন্ধ রাখেনি। এই বিতর্ক নতুন করে মাথা চাড়া দিচ্ছে এমন এক সময়ে যখন বাম ও মধ্যপন্থী ফ্রেড ইউনিয়নগুলি পরিকল্পিত ভাবে ধর্মঘটের লক্ষে এগিয়ে চলেছে। আজ স্পনসরিং কমিটির বৈঠকে ৯ জুলাই জাতীয় কনভেনশন ডাকার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়। আজকের বৈঠকে সিটু'র সাধারণ সম্পাদক চিত্তব্রত মজুমদার বা এইটাক-এর গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত এ কথা

গোপন করেনি যে তাঁদের লক্ষ্য দেশব্যাপী সাধারণ ধর্মঘট। ইতিমধ্যে বাম ও সরকারের মধ্যে ফাটল আরও বাড়তে শুরু করেছে বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্রের সংস্কার নিয়ে। ইউনিয়নের চাপে আইনগত ভাবে সময়সীমা পিছিয়ে দিলেও কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার বিদ্যুৎক্ষেত্রের সংস্কার মোটেই বন্ধ রাখেনি।

বহন ও বিতরণ— এই তিনটি বিষয়কে আলাদা আলাদা সংস্থায় ভেঙে দিতে সম্মতি জানিয়েছে। সমস্ৰতি কেন্দ্র বিদ্যুৎ পর্বদ ভেঙে দেওয়ার পর ধর্মঘটের নোটিস তুলে নেয় ইউনিয়নগুলি। সেই তৈরীকে সঙ্গীত যেমন উপস্থিত ছিলেন, তেমনই ছিলেন বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্রের ইউনিয়নের নেতা এবং সি পি আইয়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি

শেষ করে ফেলতে হবে। ধর্মস্বাগুলির দক্ষতা বাড়ানোর জন্যই এ কাজ করা দরকার বলে সঙ্গীত জানিয়েছেন। ফ্রেড ইউনিয়নগুলি বিষয়টি নিয়ে সরব হচ্ছেই। আজ বাম ও মধ্যপন্থী ইউনিয়নগুলির বৃহত্তর সংগঠন স্পনসরিং কমিটির বৈঠকেও এ নিয়ে আলোচনা হয়। তাঁদের অন্যান্য দাবির মধ্যে রয়েছে অসংগঠিত ক্ষেত্রের শ্রমিকদের জন্য বিল, একশো দিনের কাজ সারা দেশে প্রসারিত করা, শ্রম সংস্কার না করা ইত্যাদি। কিন্তু যত্না হল, বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্রের সংস্কারের প্রকল্পটি এ বার বাম দলগুলিও যথেষ্ট গুরুত্ব দিয়ে তুলতে চলেছে। এত দিন তাঁদের

আপত্তি সত্ত্বেও সরকার নানা বিষয়ে নিজের মতো এগিয়ে গিয়েছে। তেলের দামের প্রশ্নে তবু সরকার তাঁদের দাবি অংশত মানার ইচ্ছিত দিয়ে রেখেছে। কিন্তু তেলের ১০% শেয়ার বিলম্বীকরণ নিয়ে নতিস্বীকারের কোনও লক্ষণ সরকার দেখায়নি। এ বার বামেরাও সহজে নতিস্বীকারে রাজি নয়।

তবে বামেরদের আপত্তি আপাতত ধর্মঘটের মধ্যে দিয়েই প্রকাশ পাবে। জুলাই মাসের ১৮ তারিখ থেকে করলা ক্ষেত্রে ধর্মঘটের ডাক দেওয়া হয়েছে। এরপর বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্রের ধর্মঘটও ফের তালিকায় বৃদ্ধ হতে পারে। আর সব শেষে সাধারণ ধর্মঘট তো আছেই।

তবে বামেরদের আপত্তি আপাতত ধর্মঘটের মধ্যে দিয়েই প্রকাশ পাবে। জুলাই মাসের ১৮ তারিখ থেকে করলা ক্ষেত্রে ধর্মঘটের ডাক দেওয়া হয়েছে। এরপর বিদ্যুৎ ক্ষেত্রের ধর্মঘটও ফের তালিকায় বৃদ্ধ হতে পারে। আর সব শেষে সাধারণ ধর্মঘট তো আছেই।

# Centre reconstitutes NAC

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 3. — The Manmohan Singh government has reconstituted the high-profile National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Mrs Sonia Gandhi. The term of the reconstituted Council will be a period of one year, PMO sources said today.

The UPA government constituted the NAC in June last year to monitor

the implementation of the government's National Common Programme (NCMP) and supervise its progress. The Council comprises experts from various fields as well as social activists. It holds its meeting periodically and has forwarded recommendations to the government on a range of issues and proposals.

The NAC is "serviced" by the PMO. It was formed with the avowed objective of giving "professional

inputs and expertise" to the Manmohan Singh government to implement the NCMP effectively. The body has focused essentially on social sector issues like education, health and livelihood. It has helped Centre to draft some key pieces of legislation like the Right to Information Bill and the Employment Guarantee Bill.

The members of the reconstituted NAC, including two new members, are: Mrs Aruna Roy, the

Rajasthan-based Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan leader; Prof. CH Hanumantha Rao, chairman, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad; Mr Jairam Ramesh, the Congress Rajya Sabha MP; Dr Jayaprakash Narayan, national coordinator, Lok Satta, Hyderabad; Dr V Krishnamurthy, former Secretary to the Union government; Dr Madhav Chavan of Pratham, Delhi; Dr AK Shiva Kumar, the

UNICEF adviser, New Delhi; Dr D Swaminadhan, president, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Research and Social Action, Hyderabad; Dr NC Saxena, former bureaucrat, New Delhi; and two new members — Ms. Sehba Hussain, member-secretary and executive director, BETI (Better Education through Innovation) Foundation, Lucknow, and Prof. Mrinal Miri, vice-chancellor, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

# Congress agrees to disagree with Left on oil price hike

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 3. — Faced with the Left parties' countrywide agitation over the Manmohan Singh government's proposed hike in prices of petrol and diesel, the Congress today said it would "disagree" with the Left on the issue.

The AICC spokesman, Mr Abhishek Singhvi, said the move was "inevitable" as after careful consideration, "it seems to be a last-resort measure". He said that the issue should be left with the government in national interest.

On the Left's upcoming agitation, Mr Singhvi said: "We do not agree with them on this issue, but they have every right to determine their own course of action." Strongly justifying the proposed hike, the Congress said: "We would not have liked to hike the price. But the country is

under compulsion as the international crude oil price is at an all-time high. India depends largely on oil imports to meet its needs and the government companies have been absorbing the huge burden for the last several months."

The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, has held meetings with the Left leaders over the past two days to deliberate on the petroleum hike. He is believed to have told his Left partners that the government has no option but to raise the oil price under the prevailing circumstances. Under the Left's pressure, however, the "quantum of the proposed hike" is likely to be lowered. Apart from the Left's severe reservations, the oil hike issue has become sensitive in view of the coming Bihar assembly elections.

The Congress' major UPA ally, the RJD chief Mr Lalu Yadav, is bound to get

upset over the hike, which has a cascading effect on the prices of essential commodities.

Earlier, the Union petroleum minister, Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, had said that the Prime Minister would discuss the issue with UPA partners.

"Whenever the government revises prices, the media will come to know first," he said when asked to end speculation on the price hike that has resulted in alleged hoarding of petrol and diesel by certain retail outlets.

The minister said that he has already instructed all the oil marketing companies (OMC) to gear up their vigilance staff to check the possible hoarding because of 72 hours speculative news. "Any petroleum dealer found in violation of marketing discipline guidelines should be punished," he said.