

Vidharbha: cry, the beloved countryside

P. Sainath

FOR HEARTLESS cynicism, the Government of Maharashtra is hard to beat. The agrarian crisis in Vidharbha has spun almost out of control. Appeals for swift measures by many have fallen on deaf ears. Calls for remedies by the National Commission on Farmers have been ignored. Farm suicides are on the rise. Sometimes there are two or three in a day. None of this was unforeseen. In fact, it was expected. (See *The Hindu*, October 28. "Vidharbha: Awaiting a deadly harvest.")

Many inquiries have been held. Some set up by a government that hopes at least one will yield a friendly finding. That has not happened. The latest such study by the Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research further damages the Deshmukh outfit. So did one by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (done at the behest of the Bombay High Court) in March this year. Both point to big, policy-driven failures.

Vidharbha's mainly cotton farmers have been hit by rising input costs and the crash of output prices. They have also been ruined by the collapse of rural credit. The banks will simply not help them. So they turn to moneylenders. While 58 per cent of all farm households in the State are in debt, it's a lot worse in Vidharbha. Here, close to 90 per cent of short-term credit needs are met by private loan sharks. Meanwhile, farmers have also been crushed by fake seed dealers. Mindless de-regulation has crippled the sector.

The farm suicides are the tip of the huge crisis raging here, not its whole. They are, though, its most powerful symbol. The Maharashtra Government has given out three divergent figures on the deaths. It told the National Human Rights Commission that 140 farmers in the whole State had taken their lives. This was during 2001-04. These deaths, it said, were debt-driven. (*Indian*

The agrarian crisis in Vidharbha has spun almost out of control. Appeals for swift measures by many have fallen on deaf ears.

Express, July 7, 2005.) A little later, it shifted ground. In a note this year, it hiked the number to 524 for the same period. Yet, this October, it told the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) something startling. Well over 300 suicides had occurred in Yavatmal alone between 2001 and September this year. That is, in just one of Vidharbha's 11 districts.

The same data show that farm suicides in Yavatmal have doubled almost every year in that period. There's more. Just 11 of the 307 families who lost a loved one this way got any compensation at all. Since the day the NCF team arrived in Nagpur on October 18, there have been 60 more suicides in Vidharbha. As many as 32 of them in Yavatmal alone. A worried NCF made vital recommendations for relief. These have mostly been ignored by the State.

The crisis captures the decay of the political class in Vidharbha. No MP or MLA tried to even meet the NCF team led by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. This, although the team had in tow the young Rana Patil, Maharashtra's Minister of State for Agriculture. It gets worse. The MLAs from the districts most affected are mainly from the Shiv Sena and the BJP. Why help your rivals?

Meanwhile, the advance bonus normally paid to cotton farmers has been scrapped. This amount of roughly Rs.500 used to be added on to the minimum support price for cotton declared by the Centre. The State admits it costs around Rs.2200 to produce a quintal of cotton. Yet the scrapping of the advance bonus means farmers will get Rs.1700 a quintal. A price last seen in

1994. The Maharashtra Cotton Federation is a mess. This year, the Federation had its first elections in living memory. That too, an indirect one. Since 1972, this body set up for *kisans*, has never had a ballot where farmers could vote directly. Those who grow cotton have little say in its running. And none at all in the shaping of larger policy.

Huge delays in paying farmers their dues (on the cotton it had procured) was just one failure. The Federation made things worse by paying them in instalments. Making their need for quick cash much sharper. It also increased their burden by cutting bank dues from their earnings. So more and more farmers turned away from the body towards moneylenders.

New sahuucars

About the only action the Government has taken after the NCF's visit is a crackdown on moneylenders. Very good. But here's the problem. One, the new *sahuucars*, the powerful input dealers, are barely touched. They are not seen in the village, anyway. The small-time village lender is. And he is taking the heat. Ending harassment is right and deserves support. But it comes at a time when the formal credit system has packed up. Thus the banks won't give the farmer money. And the little lender is afraid to. So even weddings and funerals are held up.

Meanwhile, the State Government has helped boost private traders. Those who exploit this mess to lift the farmer's produce at rock bottom prices. Their parallel markets can now function

openly. Also, the State has never pushed the Centre to stop the dumping of highly subsidised cotton from the rich nations. Giant subsidies by the United States to its producers have killed the price of cotton. The duty on cotton imports is just 10 per cent. On sugar — affecting western Maharashtra — it is 60 per cent.

Meanwhile, few other governments have brought in so many anti-poor measures. The Prime Minister's distaste for the two-child norm means nothing to his party in Maharashtra. Here, the State passed an Act that will make irrigation water charges one and a half times costlier for those farmers having more than two children. It has already played havoc with the norm in the panchayats. This is punishing people for being poor.

Poorer families tend to be larger than better off ones. That is an insurance against higher child mortality. (See *The Hindu*, Nov. 18)

In barring them from contesting local body polls, the Government stifles their voices. Its new bright idea is to punish those who have no toilets in their homes. It has a Bill coming that would bar members of such households from fighting local body elections. A move that is anti-democracy in a profound sense. But that means little to a regime which delights in demolishing the homes of the poor. Meanwhile, Mr. Deshmukh's Ministers call for selling off the last green spaces in Mumbai to private, mostly corporate hands.

Vidharbha is a happy hunting ground for money-grubbers. Ministers, officials and film stars have done paid-for propaganda for Bt cotton. The hard sell has worked, too. Many small farmers for whom this risk will prove fatal have embraced it. One last desperate throw of the dice. Some film stars earned undisclosed lakhs for their skills. But it will be some time before these 'brand ambassadors,' dare visit the region again.

The resources and energies of this State, in agriculture at least, flow mostly towards western Maharashtra. That province too, has its share of small farmers in distress. But the loot is conducted in their name. The super rich who rule the region have seldom lacked for credit. Or much else. The last year alone has seen thousands of crores of rupees going in credit and subsidies to cooperatives. Bodies that have ripped off massive sums from the provident funds of their members and employees. To sick sugar mills run by healthy barons who will never repay their loans. To units that owe hundreds of crores in power bills that they have no intention of paying. To rich horticulturists, some of whom are hobby farmers based in the city.

Contrast this with Vidharbha's farmers taking their lives for lack of a minor crop loan. Or with small farmers in western Maharashtra who find their funds siphoned off by the rich bosses of their cooperatives. Political heavies who will not be brought to book. The big new idea from the region? Wine to be freely sold in shops and stores. Never mind the public interest issues involved. This would boost an elite already locked into State largesse. It would do little for Vidharbha where a litre of milk sells for a lot less than a litre of bottled water. The just announced waiver of Rs.100 crore of interest on loans bypasses poor cotton farmers. It does, though, help rich horticulturists in irrigated Western Maharashtra.

One good development though, is that political protests have begun in the region. The sense of a great letdown by the Shetkari Sanghatana had kept people away from such action for years. This week saw dharnas and sit-ins. And they've drawn not just farmers but playwrights and professors, teachers and journalists. And others as well. People moved by their conscience and the misery they are witness to. And with the knowledge that this is man-made. Vidharbha might yet see the power of moral reasoning beat back the mad rush for profits from human misery.

CARTOONSCAPE



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2005

Unstable peace in Madhya Pradesh

The change of guard in Madhya Pradesh, with Shivraj Singh Chauhan chosen to succeed Babulal Gaur as Chief Minister, cannot serve as a lasting solution to the active dissidence within the State unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Senior leader Uma Bharti, who was seeking to return as Chief Minister, has already broken ranks by attacking the selection process that bypassed the party legislators. Through her strong disapproval of the naming of the new Chief Minister before the party legislators had met, Ms. Bharti has virtually signalled that she will mobilise her supporters for a fresh toppling game. After all, the demand for a change had more to do with Ms. Bharti's personal ambitions than with Mr. Gaur's failings as Chief Minister. In nominating Mr. Chauhan, the BJP national leadership relied on the well-worn methods of bringing about a compromise. It wanted to be seen as respecting the views of a majority of the party legislators. At the same time, it was acutely conscious of the long-term implications of caving in to the demands of a volatile Ms. Bharti. Thus, while removing Mr. Gaur, the national leadership kept Ms. Bharti out of the picture. The dissidents were met half way, but their leader who has a penchant for challenging party authority got nothing for her troubles. Interestingly, the compromise had to be effected by the central parliamentary board, which must have felt that the choice of the Chief Minister was too important to be left to party legislators. Mr. Chauhan, who was president of the State unit, has his own supporters but he will derive much of his authority from the national leadership rather than the party legislators who formally elected him as their chief. Under such circumstances, Mr. Chauhan will no doubt be vulnerable to dissident activities.

By deciding to accommodate Ms. Bharti as a general secretary at the national level, the BJP national leadership has in effect given her little more than a face-saver. She did not get the job she wanted, but in the public eye she was being moved up the party hierarchy. In contrast to the Chief Minister's office, which would have enabled her to cultivate her own political space in Madhya Pradesh, the post of party general secretary is only as powerful as the party president and other decision-makers will allow it to be. Since Ms. Bharti's previous attempt to create a national support base using the Tiranga yatra came to naught, she is justified in being sceptical about what is in store for her now. In any case, she will be one among several general secretaries and will not be allowed to meddle in the affairs of her home State. Not surprisingly, Ms. Bharti is in no mood to hold her peace. Mr. Chauhan's troubles seem to have begun before he has been sworn in.

29 NOV 2005

Stung Uma blasts BJP for picking Chouhan

TNN AND AGENCIES

Bhopal: Two days after the BJP leadership named Shivraj Singh Chouhan as the next Madhya Pradesh chief minister, a "hurt" Uma Bharti on Monday made a fierce attack on the party leadership saying such a decision was unprecedented as legislators were not given a chance to elect their leader, a charge denied by the saffron party.

Breaking her silence after Chouhan's selection, the firebrand leader, who arrived here from New Delhi to attend the BJP legislature party meeting, said she was hurt by the decision which has been taken without consulting the party MLAs.

"It was for the first time in India's history (that this has happened). A new chapter in Indian politics was created when the parliamentary board announced the leader even though the

gress or BJP or any other political party. Usually the leader's name is informally proposed and the announcement is made after the legislature party meeting. This is for the first time that the announcement has been made and the election will follow it," she said surrounded by her supporters.

Refuting her charge, BJP parliamentary party spokesperson V K Malhotra said in Delhi: "It is not for the first time that such a decision was taken. In Uma Bharti's case itself as also that of Vasundhara Raje in Rajasthan, the board had taken the decision to name them chief ministers. Such decisions are taken according to the need of the hour."

However, Bharti said: "The MLAs had made the demand to change the leadership in a memorandum, drafted by me, on October 16." But the BJP leader claimed she herself had never wanted to be reinstated as the MP chief

minister but said she was "hurt" with the decision to replace Gaur with Chouhan. "I was elected chief minister of the state... Elected by the people. I may be a 'sanyasin', but I am a human also. Obviously, I was hurt by the decision," she said. She was greeted by scores of her supporters who raised slogans in her favour. Bharti said she had made her stand on the issue clear to senior party leaders Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L K Advani and Jaswant Singh on Saturday itself when the decision was taken.

Asked whether she would support Chouhan at Monday's meeting or there was likelihood that her supporters would nominate her, Bharti said: "Whatever I had to say (about Chouhan being made CM) I have conveyed to Atalji and Advaniji the day before yesterday. I am sorry but I cannot share these."



Sanyasin Breaks Silence

MLAs demanded a chance to elect their leader," said Bharti, who was a contender for chief ministership and had launched a campaign for the removal of Babu Lal Gaur from the top post.

"This has never happened in Con-

Chauhan is new M.P. Chief Minister

Vinay Kumar 9 8

NEW DELHI: Shivraj Singh Chauhan will be the new Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. The BJP central parliamentary board's decision to replace Babu Lal Gaur with Mr. Chauhan ends the nearly month-long uncertainty in the State where the party swept to power two years ago.

BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley told reporters here on Saturday that Mr. Gaur had offered to step down and sent his resignation to the central leadership. "The BJP parliamentary board held discussions on Madhya Pradesh affairs and the political situation in the State. It was decided that Shivraj Singh Chauhan will be the leader of the BJP legislature party in the Assembly and the new Chief Minister.

ter," he said.

The party's highest decision-making body met twice during the day at the residence of the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Vajpayee and attended among others by party president L.K. Advani, Jaswant Singh, Murlidhar Manohar Joshi, Sushma Swaraj, Pramod Mahajan, Sanjay Joshi, M. Venkaiah Naidu and Rajnath Singh.

Mr. Jaitley said the date for the BJP legislature party meeting in Bhopal would be decided by Mr. Advani, who would also name the central observers for the meeting. It was decided to utilise the services of the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, at the national level and she would be appointed BJP general secretary.

on the State, but should ascertain and implement the views of party MLAs. Ms. Bharti's supporters were getting restive, even as those favouring Mr. Chauhan, State unit chief, were also equally vocal in drumming up support for him.

Ms. Bharti was asked to resign as Chief Minister last year following a case in a Hubli court in Karnataka. Ms. Bharti and the BJP later launched "Tiranga Yatra." The reins of power were handed over to Mr. Gaur. The campaign launched by Ms. Bharti's supporters, demanding a change in the Chief Minister-ship, gained momentum over the past couple of months. The choice of 46-year-old Chauhan as the new Chief Minister indicates that the second-generation leadership in the BJP has



While senior party leaders had indicated that the State leadership issue could not be put off indefinitely, the party had deferred a decision due to lack of consensus.

One section held the view that the central leadership should not impose a new chief minister

had its say. Currently serving his fifth term in the 14th Lok Sabha as BJP member from Vidisha constituency, Mr. Chauhan began his career as a Rashtriya Swayam Sevak volunteer in 1977.

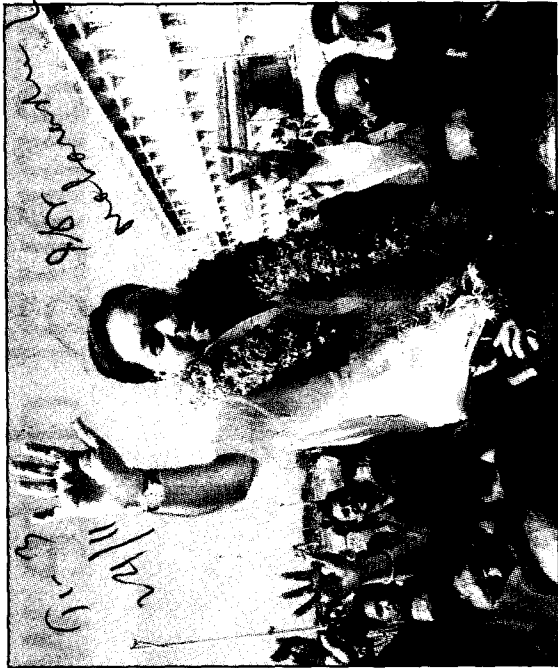
Welcomed in Bhopal

Our Staff Correspondent in Bhopal adds:

The BJP announcement in Delhi about the change of leadership in Madhya Pradesh has been welcomed by the rank and file of the ruling party in the State.

Mr. Chauhan's residence in the State capital was flooded by his supporters on Saturday evening. There was euphoria and excitement as they went about distributing sweets amid bursting of crackers.

Rane's win brings Sena gloom



By Yogesh Naik/TNN

Malwan: "Sena stronghold" Malwan handed out to Bal Thackeray one of the most humiliating defeats in his political career as party candidate Parshuram Uparkar failed to retain his deposit in a direct contest with Narayan Rane.

Rane won the bypoll, which took place on Saturday by a margin of over 63,000 votes, leaving Sainiks wondering about the party's future in the Konkan region. Three Sena MLAs from the region have already quit the party and seven others have said they are going to follow; all of them plan to contest the bypolls that will ensue on Congress tickets. In doing this, they would be following the route their leader took after his expulsion from the Sena in July; Rane resigned his assembly seat, necessitating the bypoll. The defeat must be hurting the Sena even more as it has come despite Bal Thackeray and party executive president Uddhav Thackeray campaigning in Malwan to defeat Rane. A jubilant Rane thundered after the result was declared: "This is not Uparkar's defeat. This is Uddhav Thackeray's defeat. He must own up responsibility for this defeat and resign as executive president."

This bypoll assumed extraordinary political significance as the Sena tried to pull out all

stops to defeat Rane who, before quitting the Sena in July, accused Uddhav of selling party posts and election tickets. A furious Bal Thackeray sacked him, following which Rane crossed over to the Congress which lost no time in giving him the revenue minister's job.

The huge margin of victory has given the Congress a major fillip in the Konkan region that has been a Sena stronghold since the 1990s. Rane's supporters have already planned something that will rub it in: they have decided to take out a cavalcade of 1,000 vehicles through the coastal belt to convey the message that the Sena's days here are numbered. Rane, however, ordered that keeping victory rallies peaceful was a

must. "Tell our supporters that I do not want any untoward incident," he told an aide. Congress leaders said party chief Sonia Gandhi had conveyed to Rane, through AICC functionary Margaret Alva, the necessity of avoiding violent reprisals.

All the seven Sena MLAs supporting Rane and three former Sena MLAs were present at the counting sta-

tion to express their support. "Three MLAs have resigned and the other seven will resign in a phased manner. All of them will win in the byelections," Rane said. "I have spent only one-tenth of my energy for my re-election. The rest is reserved for the 10 other bypolls," he added.

"I am waiting for Rane's order. I will quit the Sena soon so it does not matter even if it takes action against me," Shivajinagar Sena MLA Shivaji Nhiman said.

Rane said Bal Thackeray's visit helped him get more votes: "I thought I would win by 50,000 votes. But, with Balasaheb abusing me, 14,000 more voted for me to register their protest."

Uparkar was accompanied by chief polling agent Arvind Sawant. "Rane said he would ensure that the Sena did not get a single vote. But I got more than 15,000 votes. I could have won but Rane's supporters did not allow me to put tables outside the counting stations on polling day," he said. He refused to answer questions like whether his defeat was a setback for Uddhav and why Bal Thackeray's magic wand failed to work in this election.

Rane's chief election agent, Rajan Teli, was happy: "I promised Dada (as Rane is called) that we would ensure that Uparkar lost his deposit."

the Cabinet as dairy development and animal husbandry minister; gets the more important revenue portfolio later.

1999: Replaces Manohar Joshi as chief minister.

2005: Rebels against the Sena leadership and is expelled; quits his seat in the Assembly, joins the Congress and is made revenue minister; gets re-elected from Malwan.

1980: Becomes a Shiv Sena shakha pramukh in Chembur; livelihood comes from selling chicken.

1985: Becomes a BMC corporator and chairman of the BEST committee.

1990: Goes to the Assembly from Malwan, Sindhudurg district.

1995: Is re-elected to the Assembly and sworn into



THE RISE OF AND RISE OF NARAYAN RANE

Old friends now foes in the Konkan

The November 19 byelection for the Malvan-Kankavali seat of the Maharashtra Assembly, promises to be a no-holds-barred fight.

Arunkumar Bhatt

for Malvan

THE BYELECTION for the Malvan-Kankavali seat of the Maharashtra Assembly, scheduled for November 19, will prove a real test for the Shiv Sena. In the past, it used muscle power in this region to win votes. This time it has to work against its former leader Narayan Rane, who is now the Congress nominee and State Revenue Minister.

Both sides have said that violence will be met with violence. Mr. Rane's utterances drew flak from Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar who said they were not in accordance with Congress culture. At the Shiv Sena's customary Dussehra rally in Mumbai's Shivaji Park, party supremo Bal Thackeray warned that his activists would retaliate if attacked. Political activists in Malvan, in the Konkan region, fear it will be a "Bihar type" campaign and point to over a dozen recent clashes between Rane supporters, mostly ex-Shiv Sainiks, and those who continue to be with the Shiv Sena workers.

Mr. Rane has made deep inroads into the Sena's following. Of the 30 Shiv Sena members in the Sindhudurg Zilla Parishad (ZP), 29 have become his supporters. And so have most of the party's office bearers. Mr. Rane's detractors allege that many of them crossed over as they feared violence. The lone Sena loyalist in the ZP, Parshuram Uparkar, who stayed back now heads the party's district unit and is also its nominee for the election.

Despite Mr. Thackeray's rhetoric, most people feel that a weakened district unit of the Shiv Sena will not be able to take on Mr. Rane's brigade. However, this could change. Inaugurating Mr. Uparkar's campaign in Kankavali, Sena deputy leader and MLC Arvind Sawant advised his party men to adopt "hit and run" guerrilla tactics. The talk might have been aimed at boosting the Sena's morale since the district activists are afraid of moving about freely not only in the Malvan-Kankavali constituency but throughout the district. But it was also a warning to the Rane camp.

The entire Thackeray clan will campaign in Kankavali and Malvan, according to Sena executive president Uddhav Thackeray. The stakes are very high for the Congress and the Shiv Sena. But a taste of what could follow was already evident when Mr. Bal Thackeray's nephew, Raj, had to cut short his tour of Mr. Rane's home district in August because



Narayan Rane ... a lot at stake. - PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY.

of the growing division in the Sena's ranks. "The fact is that when Mr. Raj Thackeray came here not a single Shiv Sainik dared to display the saffron flag of the party or erect a welcome arch for the visiting leader," said Vaibhav Naik, vice-president of the Kankavali Municipal Council. "Now Mr. Rane's target is the Shiv Sena and not the Congress and that is the only change," said Mr. Naik, who is the nephew of slain Congress worker Shreedhar Naik. Mr. Rane was one of the accused. In protest against Mr. Rane's entry

into the Congress, he resigned from the post he held in the party. Although Mr. Rane was acquitted, Mr. Naik continues to be bitter.

The potential threat to the law and order has been noted by Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister R.R. Patil. He said the police would not hesitate to use weapons if they are targeted in political clashes. But both Mr. Rane and the Congress party have criticised Mr. Patil, who belongs to the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), with Mr. Rane complaining that the police favoured

the Shiv Sena. In the past, the chief clash in the constituency has been between the Sena, at that time led by Mr. Rane, and the NCP.

Mr. Rane's supporters, however, insist that there will be no law and order problem. "The election would be peaceful and we are going to win. There were problems but we are all together now," said Rajan Teli, a former president of the Sindhudurg Zilla Parishad and a close confidante of Mr. Rane. Both sides are gearing up for what promises to be a fight to the finish, literally.

THE HINDU

27 OCT 2005

I myself am a victim of underworld: Govinda

Says He Performed In Dubai Under Pressure, And Wasn't Even Paid For It

New Delhi: Actor-MP Govinda, who has been shown in a video footage with Dawood Ibrahim, on Thursday denied that he had any links with the gangster and said he was being framed by his political rivals.

Claiming that he himself had been a victim of underworld, Govinda said he had performed in Dubai under pressure and had been cleared by the CBI, CID and the police way back in 1989. "A chance meeting does not mean having links (with Dawood)," Govinda said, reacting to the footage telecast by a TV channel on Wednesday.

"I am disturbed myself. An artist is just picked up and taken to perform for someone under pressure and then one is not even given money," Govinda said. "What was stunning is that there were about 25 artistes who had been taken to Dubai."

Without questioning the authenticity of the footage, he said, "What is baffling is why only my footage. Why not of the others. Instead of sympathising with me, I am being framed," said the actor, who represents North Mumbai in the Lok Sabha.

Meanwhile, the Mumbai police said they will have to examine the video footage of Govinda with Dawood to decide if it amounted to any offence. Senior crime branch officials were tightlipped on the issue, only saying the issue will be discussed with top officials before they decide if the MP's statement must be recorded. "The video is quite old and we will have to examine the entire content of the tape," a crime branch official said, adding that any premature action could lead to a fiasco similar to the Salman-Aishwarya tape.

Joint commissioner of police Arup Patnaik said, "The video clip appears to date back to a period when it was a



BJP activists burn a poster of Govinda in Bhopal to protest against his alleged links with Dawood Ibrahim

common practice for film stars to make Dubai trip under underworld pressure. We will have to see if that constitutes crime."

Latching on to an opportunity to pin down the Centre on the issue, the BJP on Thursday demanded that Congress chief Sonia Gandhi tell the nation what action she proposed to take against her party MP for his alleged links with Dawood. "We would like Sonia to tell the nation what action will be taken against Govinda for his relations with India's most wanted man," party spokesman Prakash Javadekar said.

Reminding Sonia that even Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had raised the Dawood issue during his talks with George Bush and Gen Musharraf, he said, "The tape is a sensational revelation and action must follow."

RAIN ALERT CONTINUES IN MUMBAI

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation on Saturday sounded a high alert for the next 24 hours following a weather bureau prediction on heavy showers. A 15-year-old girl was killed and four persons were injured early Saturday in a landslide at Vikhroli Parksite as heavy rain continued to lash the city since early Saturday morning. Around 1,200 people in Kranti Nagar, Kurla and another 300 people in Daulat Nagar, Dahisar were shifted to safer areas.

Having learnt a lesson from the 26/7 deluge, the BMC on Saturday informed all cell phone companies to warn people about water logging. The civic search and rescue team deployed two boats in the Kurla-Kalina area, but the area remained incident free. Heavy overnight showers paralysed suburban train services for the second consecutive day on Saturday as some trains got cancelled while a majority of them ran late. The overnight showers were



DOGGED LUCK! Animals may have been at the receiving end of nature's fury, be it here or in the US, but canine lovers swung into action as witnessed at Mumbai's Air India colony no 1 on Saturday and a flooded New Orleans street on Friday

strong enough to disrupt services on the Western line, something that had not happened even on Friday. A Western Railways spokesperson said about 50 trains were cancelled between

Churchgate and Borivali between 4 am and 12 noon.

His Central Railway colleague told TOI that trains were running late on both main and harbour lines. "Frequency was hit but the

impact was limited as it was a Saturday", he said.

As for the harbour line, water-logging at Wadala in the morning hours, drastically slowed down the trains.

War in the parivar

As the Bharatiya Janata Party prepares to hold its National Executive meeting in Chennai next week, dissonance within the organisation over questions of ideology, leadership and politics is clearly visible.

JYOTIRMAYA SHARMA

AFTER the election defeat in May 2004, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has gone through a series of crises. As the Party prepares to hold its National Executive meeting in Chennai shortly, dissonance within the Party over questions of ideology, leadership and politics is clearly visible. The legitimacy of its senior leaders has periodically been called into question, while all is not well in most BJP-ruled State units of the Party. On questions of ideology, the BJP seems to be locked in a battle with its "parent" organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and its many affiliates.

The view from the outside is that the RSS wants the BJP to return to its core ideological moorings and to adhere strictly to the core issues that fall under the rubric of *Hindutva*. In this seeming tug of war, the RSS presents a picture of ideological clarity and certitude, while the BJP of today seems to be faltering and confused. A closer look at the RSS, however, suggests that there is an equal, if not greater, degree of ambiguity within the RSS over questions of ideology and politics than appearances suggest.

Clear split

At the level of ideology, there is a clear split within the RSS between those who style themselves nationalists (*Rashtravadis*) and those who profess their allegiance to *Hindutva*. The nationalists claim that the term "Hindu" merely constitutes the cultural matrix and identity marker of India. They refer to the RSS founder, Dr. K.B. Hedgewar's insistence that "Hindu" refers to the unbroken civilisational heritage of India that emotionally binds people with a common history and shared purpose.

The *Hindutva* votaries claim that while the RSS rejects Savarkar's idea of *punyabhoomi* or holy land (a concept that automatically excludes Muslims and Christians from being part of the putative Hindu *Rashtra*) to constitute part of their conception of *Hindutva*, it would be a great error to abdicate the claims of Hindus in favour of any abstract and formal notion of nationalism. This was the conclusion Golwalkar arrived at in the seven-day conclave of the Sangh in October 1972.

On the face of it, there seems little difference between the two views other than a question of emphasis. Nothing, however, explains the subtle difference between the two views better than BJP President, L.K. Advani's formulation that while *Hindutva* for him represented idealism, nationalism was his ideology. Advani's typology illustrates the schism, not merely within the BJP, but also within the RSS. A senior RSS member and historian of the Sangh, Dilip Deodhar, likens this to grafting an apple tree on to a mango tree.

After Dr. Hedgewar's death in 1940, this subtle distinction has constantly been in play within the RSS, with an unspoken "war" being constantly waged for dominance of one over the other. The misconception, however, is that the RSS functions on the basis of ideology and its practices are governed by a strict fidelity to its core principles. This is not to suggest that the Sangh does not harbour a telos, an ultimate goal or purpose; that is articulated as the vision of making India a great power.

In its day-to-day functioning, the RSS embodies the notion of transience, or *mayavaad*. Following that, there is nothing that it swears eternal allegiance to except the primacy of the organisation. In this sense, whatever the organisation says becomes ideology. It takes its cue from Chhatrapati Shivaji's strategy of "hit and run". Absolute commitment to any issue or principle is, therefore, detrimental to the goal of making India a great power. In recent years, this has become the dominant view in the Sangh's interface with politics as well.

The RSS, as well as the Sangh Parivar, has now devised a formula that prevents any absolute commitment to a single ideological position. When in power, the Sangh Parivar swears allegiance to nationalism, and while out of power it propagates *Hindutva*. Advani's transgression, apart from his remarks on Jinnah, seems to lie in his unwillingness to buy this formula. This is partly to do with the constraints of coalition politics and a lot to do with incommensurable views on what constitutes the orthodoxy for the Sangh Parivar.

In the 1980s, the RSS felt that the BJP had turned into a pale imitation of the Congress



CONFUSED?: (From left) L.K. Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, K.S. Sudarshan and Mohan Bhagwat salute the RSS flag. PHOTO: AP

(1) Rajiv Gandhi's initiative in permitting the *shilanyas* in Ayodhya had robbed the BJP of its identity and political edge. Reluctantly, it was felt, without political muscle would lead to nothing. The future, then, had to be crafted on the basis of a combination of politics, religiosity and movement.

Relations after 1998

Once this leap was taken, the Sangh decided to use its perceived power within Hindu society to set its agenda. The RSS, it is believed, also persuaded a reluctant Atal Bihari Vajpayee to accept office in 1996 despite lacking in numbers. The RSS wanted a signal to be sent that it rejoiced in the fact of a *swayamsevak* becoming the prime minister of India, even though he lasted in power at

that juncture only for 13 days.

It is widely known that after the formation of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government in 1998, relations between the BJP and the RSS became increasingly strained. It is widely believed that the BJP, under the "guise" of running a coalition government gave short shrift to the agenda of the RSS. Stories of personal bitterness between RSS Chief, K.S. Sudarshan and Vajpayee and Advani abound, each narrative slightly more fantastic than the other in certain details.

One version goes as follows: In 1998, the then RSS Chief, Rajubhaiyya wanted to hand over his responsibilities due to reasons of ill health. At this juncture, Vajpayee, Advani and Seshadri persuaded him to post-

pone handing over the job to Sudarshan. They argued that Sudarshan being an idealist would not take kindly to the cut and thrust of politics. Sudarshan had to wait till 2000 to become *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS. This was a period of chaos within the Sangh Parivar. It witnessed the maximum number of attacks on Vajpayee and his government. Unwittingly, these attacks helped consolidate Vajpayee's liberal image.

RSS' power

In this context, an RSS insider refers to an interesting conversation between Rajubhaiyya and Moropant Pingle, a senior RSS leader. Rajubhaiyya expressed concern over the anarchy prevailing among various constituents of the Sangh Parivar. Pingle ad-

vised him to refrain from killing the diversity of voices within the Sangh. Let each constituent pull the other in extreme ways, Pingle is believed to have said, as long it does not lead to breaking-off from each other permanently. Each constituent must fight as much as they can, but must restore order once the RSS chief blows the whistle.

Whether this anecdote has any formal authenticity or not is a different question. The problem today is that the RSS seems to have lost the ability to broker peace and restore order among its various affiliates. The BJP National Executive in Chennai, therefore, will not be a test of Advani's longevity as Party president alone, but also a test of the RSS' strength and hold over its political wing.

9-1
1099

Mumbai tastes fury of heavy rains once again

98. rebanda

People Scurry Home, Landslide At Antop Hill Injures Four

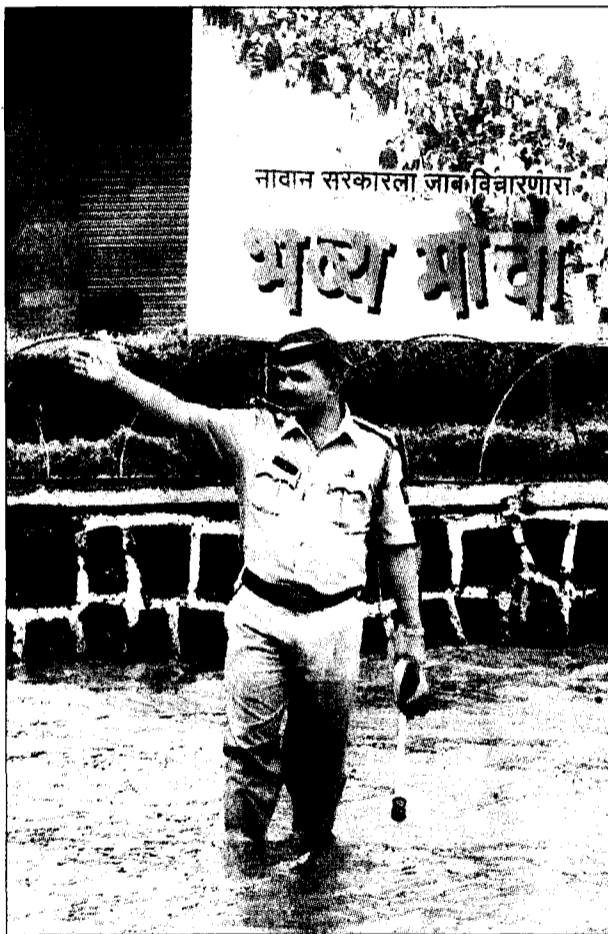
Mumbai: With memories of July 26 deluge yet to fade away, the city got a fresh lashing from heavy rains on Friday, inundating several areas and disrupting road traffic, rail services and airline schedules. Barring a solitary incident of landslide at Antop Hill in north-central Mumbai which left four persons injured, not much damage to life or property was reported, police said.

The four injured were residents of slums near Hanuman Tekdi, a hillock near Ramabai Ambedkar garden, and have been rushed to Sion hospital, police said.

Inundation of several areas, mostly in the suburbs, led to slowing down of vehicular traffic while poor visibility affected the flight schedule for some time at the domestic and international airports, sources said.

Suburban and long-distance rail traffic was disrupted as the low-lying Sion-Matunga section of the central railway was under water but the western railway services and the harbour line suburban service of central railway continued to ply normally, railway sources said.

Police control room authorities said water level rose to nearly one and half feet at Andheri, Khar and Milan subway, Sahar-Bahar junction, Vile Parle Junction, Condvita lane in MIDC (all in western suburbs), Ghatkopar-Narayannagar



THE CALL OF DUTY: Heavy rains and water-logging in most parts of the city on Friday brought back memories of 26/7

junction, Kurla depot-Wadia junction and Sion Circle (eastern suburbs), and Hindmata and Bharatmata junction. "As a result, traffic had come virtually to a halt," police said.

Several flights of Jet Air-

ways and Sahara Airlines were also delayed due to check-in system malfunctioning at the domestic airport, sources said. The check-in systems of both the airlines were down from 5.30 am To 7.50 am, airport

sources said. However, Indian Airlines flights were unaffected, they added.

The meteorology department has, however, predicted heavy showers in the city during the next 24 hours and at isolated places in Greater Mumbai, neighbouring Thane and Raigad districts in the next 38 hours.

A statement by the Maharashtra government said collectors of the Konkan region and BMC have been instructed to be on high alert and the additional secretary (home) will review the situation in the evening. Meanwhile, Municipal commissioner Johny Joesph has appealed to the public not to panic.

Mumbai was battered by the century's heaviest rain in July-end, bringing the city to a standstill for two days and killing more than 400 people in rain-related incidents. Police too have swung into action to ensure rumour mongers do not make hay, the same way as last time leading to a stampede in a slum in western Mumbai that killed nearly a dozen people.

The rains disappeared equally fast in the late afternoon, bringing respite to the city populace and government authorities.

But, already wary of the July 26 experience, a large number of employees from government and private offices in south Mumbai preferred to return home early due to the lashing. Agencies

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rajasthan on terror alert

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Jaipur: Security has been beefed up in jails across Rajasthan as well as the Pink City, following a threat from a Kashmir-based terrorist organisation that it would carry out blasts, between September 7 and 14.

The threat was issued by a group which calls itself 'al-Mansoor' said Omendra Bhardwaj, additional director general of police (intelligence). The outfit had sent the letter, written in English and Arabic, to a local newspaper and a hotel, stating that it would blow up five major hotels if the state

government did not release Pakistani prisoners in Rajasthan jails.

"A local Hindi newspaper office received a letter written in English and Arabic dated September 2 in which al-Mansoor has threatened to blow up five centrally located hotels in Jaipur, if Pakistani prisoners lodged in different jails in Rajasthan are not released immediately," he said.

The letter says: "This is an open warning to the government of Rajasthan: release all the Pakistani nationals from various jails in the state, otherwise our army would start action."

The letter has been signed by Anis-Ur-Rehman, who claims to be an area commander of the terrorist group.

"We are trying to gather information on this terrorist outfit... as of now neither we nor anyone in Delhi has any detail on this organisation," Bhardwaj said. Police has been put on high alert. "We are keeping a close watch on the entire situation and a strict vigil on suspects in the city and various public places that can possibly be targets of the strike," an officer said.

He refused to divulge the names of the hotels.

FLOODS | Leptospirosis or dengue—we are still in the incubation period, say doctors

More deaths in Mumbai



(Left) Congress chief Sonia Gandhi visits patients at Santa Cruz hospital. Patients are being treated at R Cooper Hospital. Mahendra Parikh & Vasant Prabhu

SWATI ALI & SONIYA TRIPATHI

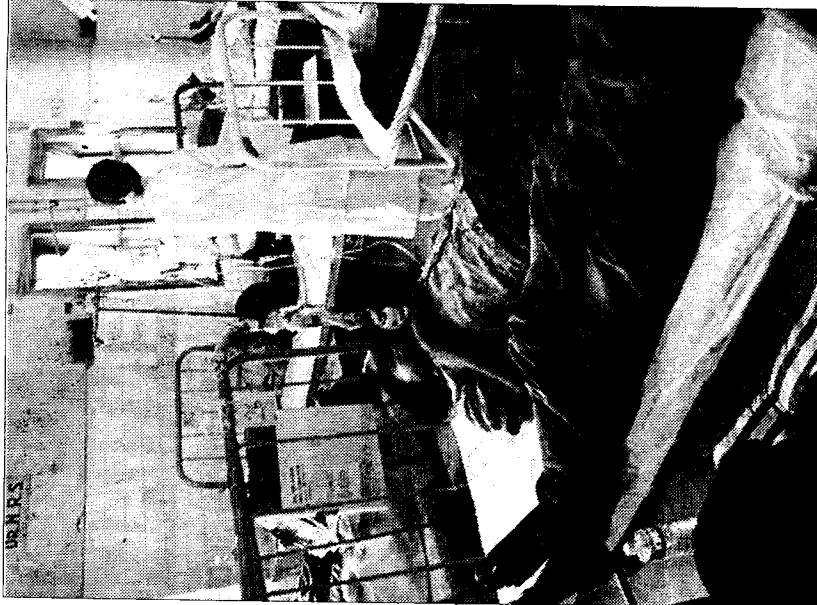
THE post-floods fever raging through several parts of Mumbai and neighbouring Thane district claimed 72 more lives till Saturday evening, taking the death toll to 189. Thousands of others are admitted in hospitals. Doctors and civic officials say there's nothing to indicate that the situation is getting any better in Mumbai.

In fact, more patients are coming in with symptoms of leptospirosis or dengue, or malaria. The number of patients admitted to hospitals in the Thane belt, however, saw a decrease with only 196 new cases reported as against 353 on Friday. As of Saturday, the breakdown was: 89 dead in Mumbai and 100 in Thane district—20 in Mumbai alone; 4,310 recov-

ering in Mumbai's hospitals, 570 in the Thane belt. Many of these patients are in a serious condition. Dr Seema Malik, Medical Superintendent of Bhabha hospital at Bandra in Mumbai, said: "The numbers are rising everyday." Bhabha alone is treating 223 patients, and has no space left for new ones. So Zeenat Sheikh (7), who was brought in early on Saturday, was given medicines and told to go home. "They said she would be okay, but later in the day she started vomiting again and had high fever," said Riyaz, her brother. "So we brought her back."

B Y L Nair Hospital, near Bombay Central, which is treating 286 patients, has seen four deaths. Dr Damle, the Dean of the hospital, said: "The number of patients admitted has decreased with 91 admissions on Friday, and 48 on Saturday (only till afternoon, though)." R N Cooper Hospital in Vile Parle saw a steady increase in the number of patients from 12 to 13 to 19 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, but there was a jump on Friday when 59 people were rushed in. Doctors expect the figures to rise as the incubation period for leptospirosis is just getting over. Dr K G Nair, managing director of the Holy Family Hospital, Bandra, said: "The incubation period for leptospirosis is 20 days, which is the reason we're seeing so many deaths."

The dengue danger, he added, has not passed yet. "Though the incubation period for dengue is 8-10 days, what happens is the fever that appears after this period goes away. A patient may think that it was momentary and not take any treatment. But in the case of dengue, the fever subsides and then comes back. People



should not be fooled by this." In some cases, the fever is because of Hepatitis B and E, the numbers of which are also rising, says doctors. In Thane district, Central Hospital at Ulhasnagar is packed to capacity with 200 patients as cases from Kalyan have been referred to it. "While most of patients with gastroenteritis and cholera have been cured, those still in hospital are out of danger," said Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation Commissioner Ramnath Sonawane.

Thane Municipal Commissioner Sanjay Sethi said the situation is under control: "Today, the number of admissions in hospitals here has decreased, but we are taking all possible care as the incubation period of these diseases is 21 days." Rashid Compound in Mumbai is one of the badly-hit areas, having seen 28 cases of

suspected leptospirosis over the past three days. In Kalyan-Dombivli, the situation is not very different. Five deaths were reported on Saturday. "Additional teams of doctors from Delhi, Pune and Nashik have reached Kalyan and this has been of tremendous help," said R Shinde, Commissioner, Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation. In Badlapur, two people died on Saturday due to fever and vomiting. "There are 4 cases of suspected leptospirosis, all of whom are responding to treatment," said Chief Officer to the Badlapur Municipal Council, Prakash Borse.

In Ambernath, 60 people were admitted to the municipal hospital with viral infection, but no deaths have been reported. The next two days are important for the administration as results of cases of suspected leptospirosis are awaited.

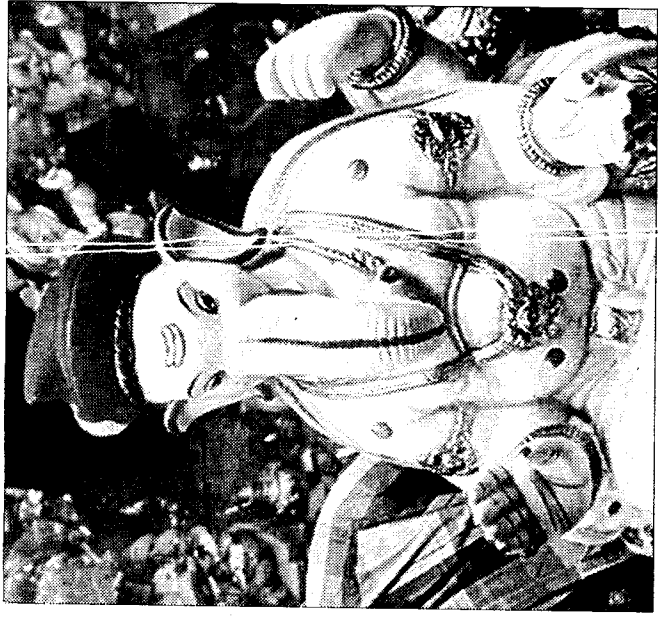
Ganeshotav may be a washout after deluge

Not many Pen idols arrive in city and local sculptors cannot match the demand

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE PUNE, AUGUST 14

THIS Ganeshotsav may be low-key after all. While it may have nothing to do with the Shiv Sena deciding to keep it that way in the aftermath of the floods in the State, Pune is short of the idols following the torrential rains that lashed the State, and Pen, the centre where Ganesh idols are made. Ganeshotsav falls on September 7 and preparations are afoot both in procuring idols and making them. Several stockists in the city have confirmed the expected shortage. Director of Desai Bandhu Ambewale Mandar Desai said they expected 20 per cent less idols this year and the prices will go up by 25 per cent. So far, they have received 1,500 idols which arrived before the floods. "While the shortage is because of the flooding in and around Pen where entire houses were submerged, the increase in transportation charges due to hike in petrol prices and painting costs will add up to more expensive idols," says Desai who sells 5,000 idols every year.

At Pen, while the flood has affected the seasonal Ganesh idol-making industry, Shrikant Deodhar, president of Sri Ganesh Murtikar Ani Vyavasay Mandal, says the mandal members are trying to make as many deliveries as possible. The shortfall has worked to local craftsmen's advantage. "We expect to sell more this year because Pen and Mumbai were flooded. However, we have not been able to make more idols in time



An idol with a Purneri pheta is the novelty this time

because this calamity caught us off guard. However, the shortage will lead to a rise in prices by at least Rs 20," says Hemant Shinde, owner of Lavlekar offers.

The downturn has also dampened the booking of the mannequins placed in crowd-pulling tableaux. Satish Taru who makes these mannequins in his Budhwar Peth workshop agrees business is down by half. "Usually, half the orders are booked by now. But I haven't got any confirmed orders especially from Satara, Sangli and Nashik," says Taru. So while he has thought up themes including the Mandhardevi hill temple stampede, corruption in educational institutes, helmet rules, the Manmohan-Musharraf meeting and dance bars there are few take-aways for now. "No one seems to be in the mood for celebration yet—we will have to wait and see," he says.

The Alternatives

THE Sadguru Shri Aniruddha Upasana Trust plans to make 350 papier mache idols. Rotarian Beena Sapre had put up three stalls of clay idols at following 12 LIC Colony, Paud Road, Dilasa Centre near Dhananath Mangeshkar Hospital and Status Health Club on Bhandarkar Road. These stalls will be open from September 1 Environmental organisations and people urged the use of a brass or silver idols

Gora Kumbhar stall at Kumbharwada who makes 2,000 idols every year.

At the P S Lavalekar's workshop in Shivajinagar, the 5,000 idols being made will cost 30 per cent more.

MUMBAI TRAGEDY

Saving Our Cities From Total Collapse

15/8
9.67
rehab
57.8

By JAGMOHAN

In my recently published book, *Soul and Structure of Governance in India*, I had ended the chapter on Urban Governance as follows: It should be clear how mind-boggling problems of immense magnitude are staring in the face of our machinery of urban governance, how the fast emerging phenomenon of super-urbanisation and super-impoveryishment of the urban poor is causing a huge storm to gather on the horizons of our cities, how an unholy alliance of unsavoury elements in our civic and national set-up is giving rise to further complications and how poor understanding, poor vision and poor motivation of the wielders of political and bureaucratic power are preventing well-intentioned persons to apply the correctives and save our cities from reaching a point of no return.

Urban problems

The nation, including the enlightened section of it, is showing little concern over the growing complexity of our urban problems and the crumbling edifice of our cities. History, it is said, is no blind goddess and does not excuse blindness in others. She is not going to make an exception in our case. We all have to pay a heavy price for acting like blind men with lanterns in our hands.

The heavy price that the nation has paid in billions of rupees and 800 lives in Mumbai on account of rains has, therefore, not come as a surprise to me. The tragedy was inbuilt in the manner in which our cities are being mis-managed. In fact, "mini tragedies" of this nature are happening all the time. According to a study conducted by the World Bank, about 30,000 premature deaths, 17 million respiratory hospital admissions and 1.2 billion restricted activity days are occurring annually in Indian cities due to poor quality of life. Three cities — Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata — account for 44 per cent of these deaths. New and more virulent forms of diseases are appearing. The present unhealthy conditions are estimated to cause an annual loss of 30.5 million "Disability Adjusted Life Years" which is equivalent to Rs 36,000 crore.

Our unskilled and unhealthy democracy, coupled with the civilisational and cultural arthritis

The author is former Union Minister

from which our nation is presently suffering, is crippling our cities. The overpowering influence of land and building mafias, the narrow politics of slums, the ever increasing disposition of the Executive and the Legislature to sacrifice its legal and moral obligations at the altar of expediency and the failure of even constitutional authorities like the Election Commission to check the



nefarious practice of creating "vote-banks" of squatters have all combined to make our urban life generally nasty, brutish and chaotic. We tend to forget that the maladies that afflict our cities are not merely localised wounds that could be cleaned, disinfected, bandaged and healed. They extend to large areas and have deep roots. Cities shape civilisations and are also shaped by them. They are so inextricably enmeshed that it is impossible to view one without the other. The diseased and dehumanised civilisations are bound to give birth to the sick and soulless cities, which, in turn, add to the debasement and disorientation of civilisations. Mutual infirmities get reinforced. A vicious circle comes into being.

Vicious circle

It is in this vicious circle that the tragedy of the present-day urban India basically lies. The predatory forces in politics, bureaucracy and civic life and social forces inherent in the general pursuit of shallow materialism have come to dominate the landscape and mindscape of our cities.

India's governance machinery has turned a blind eye to the deep linkages that exist between civilisation and cities and done nothing to clean up and purify the civilisational current that flows underneath the surface of our cities. Nor has it understood, in any meaningful sense, the various grim challenges that the world-

wide phenomenon of fast urbanisation is throwing up. The special features of the Indian urban scene, such as the simultaneous growth of population both in urban and rural settlements, too, have been overlooked. So is the position with regard to the need for enforcing strict urban discipline, making the implementation machinery effective and locating new financial, technical and man-

agerial resources. All in all, this has been a case of a foggy vision, inadequate understanding and colossal casualness.

Consequently, today, in every aspect of city life — density of population; availability of land; housing; slums and squatters' settlements; municipal services; open spaces; the scale and character of migration; employment; traffic/transport; energy; communication; crime; health and environment, civic set-up and finance — the prevailing conditions present a sad picture.

At present, there is no sanitation worth the name for 52 per cent of the urban population. The sewerage system covers only 35 per cent of the population of class IV cities and 75 per cent of class I cities. About 34 per cent of urban population does not have any arrangement even for drainage of rain water around its habitats. Sixty per cent of the municipal bodies in India collect less than 40 per cent of the solid waste generated daily.

At least 28 per cent of the urban waste is allowed to decompose and putrefy on the roadside and around houses and factories. Quite a substantial portion of it goes into the drains, choking them and creating slush and stink all around, besides providing breeding ground for pests, flies and mosquitoes and cockroaches.

We have the dubious distinction of having the highest congestion rate in the world — about 19

per cent of Indian families live in less than 10 square metres of space. About 44 per cent of families in the urban areas live in one room accommodation only. On an average, the slums and squatters' population has been increasing at more than double the general growth rate of population of cities. At present, at least 35 per cent of our cities' population lives in the slum-settlements. In Kolkata, about 1.5 million people are living in 2011 registered and 3500 unregistered slums. Half of them have been there for two generations or more. The percentage of the slum-dwellers to the total population is now 55 in Mumbai. This percentage rises to 80 if the population living in squalid and dilapidated chawls is taken into account. In the capital, New Delhi, if the katras of the walled city are added to its unauthorised colonies and 1,080 jhuggi-jhompri (hutments) clusters, about 77 per cent of its population would be found to be living in slums.

Things fall apart

Things have truly fallen apart. Only an elevating vision and strong implementational will can save our cities from a total collapse. The new vision must include comprehensive planning, a new urban land policy which treats land as a source for creating socially and environmentally harmonious communities; a new framework of urban institutions which answers the current and emerging requirements of growing metropolises; a new cadre of urban administrators who have the training and motivation to meet new challenges; a new human settlement technology which promotes technological adaptations and focuses on special problems of poor urban migrants and involves a strategy of changing this neglected lot of today into urban pioneers of tomorrow.

But for all this, we would require a new environment and a new urge to reform our civilisational roots. Neither a great city nor a great country can be built unless the current culture of corruption and callousness is replaced by a new culture of compassion and commitment and it is realised that regeneration of our cities involves the much wider task of national regeneration. Cities, in essence, are the spiritual workshop of the nation. They mirror the mind and the motivation of the people at large.

Killer lepto strain is attacking lungs

Respiratory stress syndrome cases rising

\$12.5m medicines stuck at airport

By Ashley D'Mello & Malathy Iyer/TNN

By Viju B/TNN

Mumbai: The Mumbai outbreak of leptospirosis can be pinned down to a strain of the leptospira bacterium that attacks the respiratory system, say experts. "This is a strain that seems to affect the patient's lungs rather than his kidneys," Dr K G Nair, director of Holy Family Hospital, Bandra, who had been with the civic-run KEM Hospital, Parel, told TOI on Saturday.

Figures emerging from the civic administration seem to bear this out. There has been a substantial number of patients with 'fever' admitted to various hospitals in the flood aftermath who showed infection in their lungs rather than the sudden bleeding normally associated with leptospirosis.

At Saturday's press briefing at the BMC headquarters, Nair Hospital dean Dr Sanjay Oak highlighted the fact about lung infection, adding patients were suffering from acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) which required them to be connected to a ventilator (artificial respirator).

While Nair Hospital, Mumbai Central, has seen 28 ARDS cases since the outbreak started earlier in the week, KEM Hospital, Parel, has seen 32 cases. In private hospitals too, there have been cases of patients lapsing into ARDS. According to a doctor, "ARDS is a rare condition that is normally associated with intensive care units. But usually there are no more than two or three patients in any ICU with this condition. If there is a sudden increase in the number of ARDS cases, it could be an indirect pointer that something is wrong," he said, stating a standard protocol in community medicine.

Mumbai: Mumbai may be reeling under an epidemic and facing a severe shortage of life-saving drugs, vials and medical equipment. But the sense of urgency evidently hasn't touched the babus who seem to have vanished on a long weekend holiday. The result—4,500 emergency medical and relief consignments from the US, worth \$12.5 million, have been awaiting clearance in the Chhatrapati Shivaji international airport cargo section for the last four days.

The relief package is the biggest medical aid that has come from abroad for both Mumbai and Thane after the 26/7 deluge. But its donor, Americares, a

US-based non-profitable foundation, is worried that the medicines have still to reach the needy.

The first phase of the aid (the total relief package is \$15 million), which is now lying at the airport, consists of seven lakh anti-diarrhoea tablets, 13.5 lakh water purification packets and antibiotics that are effective against water-borne viruses.

There is also a WHO-approved hygiene kit which functions as a mini-hospital that can treat 10,000 people for three months. The kit has syringes, anti-tetanus and hepatitis injection bottles, surgical equipment and even buckets and folding tables that can be erected at any place like a tent in a matter of hours. "The kit can be erected at marooned places in Kalyan, Thane and Badlapur, where people are dying as there are no good hospitals nearby," says Zelma Lazarus, CEO of Impact India foundation, the nodal agency in charge of co-ordinating this relief operation across the city.



Flood of patients at hospitals

Toll rises to 93; CM rules out chances of epidemic

Mumbai, August 12

DOCTORS STRUGGLED to attend to the sick as hospitals were packed with at least 2,850 cases of suspected water-borne diseases, loosely called "fever cases". Health officials said the tally could be much higher as not all cases had been reported. So far, 93 people have died of leptospirosis, diarrhea and typhoid fever since the floods hit the city, state health minister Vimal Mundada said.

At the city's hospitals, dozens of patients slept on floors since there were no spare beds. Others waited outside to be admitted. "We've been waiting for five hours but no doctor or nurse has checked my daughter," said Abdul Nadeem, who had taken his 10-year-old daughter to hospital because she was running a high fever. He said several people with high temperatures or nausea had rushed to hospital after five people died of suspected leptospirosis in the slum where he lives in north Mumbai. "We have more and more cases of people with fever," said senior state health official P. Doke. "Instead of giving antibiotics orally, now we're giving them intravenously."

Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh visited several hospitals in northern Mumbai and said the situation was under control and there was no epidemic. Television stations broadcast government warnings for people to take symptoms of fever and vomiting seriously and seek immediate medical attention.

A major worry was the outbreak of leptospirosis that officials believed was responsible for many deaths but a multitude of cases of gastroenteritis, viral fever, dengue fever and other illnesses was also reported. Leptospirosis is caused by exposure to water contaminated with animal urine.

"The outbreak is of concern, but under control", said R.R. Katti, a senior state health official said. Health officials said time was a key factor in treating the illness.

Many patients had waded through neck deep water during the week-long deluge that ended August 2.

SICK BAY



- 2,850 cases of water-borne diseases reported
- Many slept on floors as hospitals ran out of beds
- People waited for hours outside hospitals



Doctors attending to a child at the Bhabha Hospital in Mumbai on Friday.

AFP

'FEVER' KILLS 44 IN 3 DAYS

LEPTO, DENGUE OUTBREAK FEARED. MONITOR HIGH TEMP

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The wave of infectious diseases, which was anticipated after the floods, has now hit the city and its extended suburbs, with the death toll already up to 44. Most of these deaths are attributed to leptospirosis, dengue or malaria in the last three days.

Director General of Health Services Dr Subhash Salunkhe told TOI that the Kalyan-Dombivli belt was the worst-affected in the state with 18 confirmed deaths due to leptospirosis and dengue haemorrhagic fever.

Of the 14 deaths reported in Mumbai city on Wednesday, one has been put down to malaria. Common symptoms in the bad cases have been high fever, vomiting and acute respiratory distress syndrome, usually associated with an advanced stage of leptospirosis.

"As of now, these may be cases of suspected leptospirosis, dengue or malaria," said BMC commissioner Johny Joseph, who rushed to Kherwadi in Bandra (E) which has reported an

Malaria
291

Source Mosquitoes
Symptoms Fever, chill, headache
Treatment Chloroquinol
Affected areas Santa Cruz, Kalina, Parel, Andheri

All figures mentioned are no. of cases recorded since July 29, not deaths

Dengue
38

Source Tiger mosquitoes
Symptoms Fever, headache and, in advanced cases, haemorrhage
Treatment Symptomatic treatment and, in bad cases, transfusion of platelets
Affected areas Santa Cruz, Kalina, Kalyan, Panvel, Kherwadi (Bandra)

Cholera
10

Source Water contaminated with bacterium vibrio cholerae
Symptoms Diarrhoea, vomiting and, in some cases, fever
Treatment Antibiotics, replacement of fluids, rest
Affected areas Mazgaon, Byculla, Wadala, Sion, Kuria, Prabhadevi

Gastroenteritis
1074

Source Contaminated water
Symptoms Diarrhoea, vomiting
Treatment Antibiotics, replacement of water
Affected areas Bandra, Santa Cruz, Andheri, Virar, Nallasopara, Virar, Kuria, Chembur, Thane, Kalyan

Leptospirosis
97

Source Water contaminated with urine of infected animal
Symptoms Fever, chills, aches in head and muscles, vomiting and, in rare cases, jaundice, rashes and multi-organ failure
Treatment Antibiotics
Affected areas Kalina, Bandra, Sion, Dharavi, Kalyan



11-year-old Immemuddin Sheikh with his grandmother in Bandra on Wednesday

upsurge in post-flood diseases.

A doctor at V N Desai

Hospital, Santa Cruz (E), said many patients had high fever and blood in

their sputum. Irfan Merchant, who runs a school at Bharat Nagar, Bandra

(E), said that more than ten persons had died in the slum in the past few days after high fever and "bloody vomit".

The BMC admitted that the next few days were critical as the 15-day incubation period for most infectious diseases has just ended. According to one civic estimate, about 20,000 people in Mumbai are being treated for diseases that begin with the benign symptoms of "fever, diarrhoea and vomiting". "This is certainly not an epidemic in an area that has a population of more than 1.8 crore and which includes Thane and Navi Mumbai," said a BMC official. "It's a cause for concern, but not for panic."

But additional municipal commissioner Vijaysinh Patankar admitted that the corporation was worried about the rising toll since Tuesday night.

At Bhabha Hospital, Bandra (W), seven deaths have been reported in the last two days. At V N Desai Hospital, Santa Cruz, unconfirmed reports said there were ten deaths in the last three days, but official sources confirmed only one death in the last two days.

Epidemic fever in Mumbai

SATISH NANDGAONKAR

Mumbai, Aug. 11: The high court had warned of it, residents are scared of it and the civic body is shy of it. It was left to the public health minister to spell it out: Epidemic.

After the rain, India's financial capital is battling another killer. At least 66 people have died of suspected leptospirosis in Mumbai and Thane since the July 26 deluge. About 2,000 are in hospital with symptoms of infectious diseases, 447 of them wheeled into the wards today.

The symptoms are of leptospirosis, but only lab tests can confirm the disease.

"The situation is serious but under control. We have asked the municipal corporation of Mumbai and Kalyan-

Dombivli to declare an epidemic under the Epidemic Act," public health minister Vimal Mundada told reporters around 4.30 pm, with medical education minister Dilip Walse-Patil by his side.

But three hours later, municipal commissioner Johny Joseph was still insisting that an epidemic had not been declared. "I haven't been officially asked to do so by the government," he said.

Joseph, though, did issue a circular declaring leptospirosis as a "notifiable" disease, which means every medical practitioner must report any case he comes across to the civic body.

Doctors said in private that there indeed is an epidemic sweeping across the city and the number of patients admit-

THE SUSPECT

●**Leptospirosis:** Also called rat fever, is caused by bacteria

●**Carriers:** Rodents; contracted through wounds exposed to standing water

●**Symptoms:** Fever, vomiting, body ache and redness of eyes

●**Treatment:** Antibiotics

ted to hospitals is much higher.

The medical education minister hinted that the numbers could get worse. "The disease has a gestation period (between catching the infection and showing the symptoms) of four to 21 days," Walse-Patil said.

"So, people who waded through water on July 26-27

need to be careful and watch for symptoms of fever and vomiting in the next five days."

Leptospirosis is caused by the bacterium *Leptospira interrogans*, which is transmitted to humans through the urine of rodents. The symptoms are fever, vomiting, severe body ache and redness of the eyes. The infection is contracted through cuts or wounds exposed to standing water.

Additional municipal commissioner Manoj Shrivastava provided the official statistics: 127 suspected leptospirosis cases in city hospitals, with 15 admitted today, 42 being treated for suspected dengue, 52 for typhoid, 179 for hepatitis, 1,223 for gastro-enteritis, and 341 for malaria.

There's nothing political about

PIL says Memon

By Bachi Karkaria/TNN

Mumbai: A political colour is sought to be given to the public interest litigation filed by Mahesh Bhatt, Majeed Memon, Alyque Padamsee and the Project Smita Trust, a group neither political or even

"Bollywood"—has been another label attached to the petition. Certain parties have begun to attribute motives to an instrument of public recourse, which is manifested by apolitical and motivated by nothing other than a right

Majeed Memon, with the greater cool of a lawyer, attribute a political agenda to the PIL.

He says, "If you look at the petition it shows very clearly that the petitioners only seek to find out if the calamity could have been mitigated had there been proper administrative efforts and alertness on the part of the establishment. Much of the problem arose because there was a lack of timely communication."

Memon continues, "Mumbaikars realise that we could



Mahesh Bhatt



Alyque Padamsee



Majeed Memon

to call elected leaders to account and prevent Mumbaikars from being subjected to the kind of hardship and loss of July 26.

A pained Mahesh Bhatt pointed out, "The tone and tenor of the PIL clearly explains what prompted our action. I as an individual voted for this party. I took on the Modi govern-

**POST
26/7**

ment on the riots. I had taken a public stand against Hindu right wing politics and parties."

"But when I see the lead-ers which I helped put in place bungle up and without expressing remorse try to cover up, I cannot remain silent," he said.

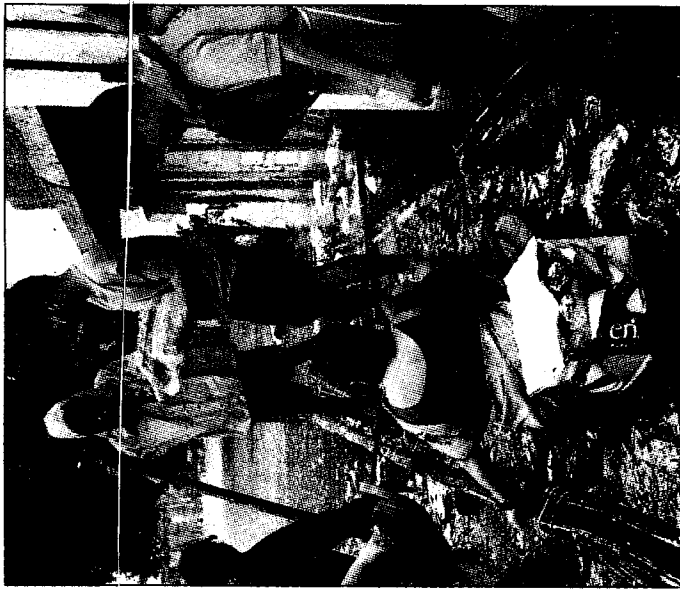
"It is with utmost despair that I approached the courts along with other public minded citizens. This is the last resort of law-abiding people and the only civilised and legal way to express my anguish," Bhatt added.

Where is there anything in the PIL which is personally against the police commissioner or the CM or any other leader?

"We are not asking for any heads to roll. We are simply asking for answers and as citizens this is our right."

Babus demand a judicial probe into 26/7 flooding

By Nitin Yeshwantao/TNN



of India should share the blame to some extent as they had reclaimed the Mithi river and constructed their airstrip above it. There is no drainage system and as the water did not find any outlet, it inundated the airstrip," he added.

The officials said they are holding the BMC responsible for the failure of the pumping stations in suburban Mumbai and would press for an internal inquiry.

"The pumping stations should have been functional and discharged the flood water, as was done in Mumbai city," one of them said.

"But they were non-functional because of power failure. We have learnt that all the pumping stations had a dedicated power connection as long as the BSES was in charge.

After its takeover, this connection was diverted to other consumers. Who in the BMC took this decision to discontinue a dedicated power supply line? It is time responsibility is fixed and officials are punished for taking things too casually," the bureaucrat said.

create the water-holding capacity of the region and there was no worry of any flooding.

But the ponds have been reclaimed for either scores of hutments or tall buildings. In a situation where there is no outlet for the rain water, it is natural it will flood the streets and

"The Airports Authority

Mumbai: The rage against the inefficiency coursing through the city on and after 26/7 has found an echo in the upper echelons of the state administration, where consensus is building up on instituting a judicial inquiry to identify the lapses of the various government agencies and fix responsibility.

"Agreed, it rained heavily in Mumbai, but one has to be naive to believe the city collapsed only because the skies opened up. Preliminary investigation suggests ineffective drainage, failure of suburban pumping stations to discharge the flow, absence of a land-use policy and most importantly, illegal diversion of the Mithi river, reducing it to a virtual nallah, led to the disaster," a top bureaucrat in the core committee set up to coordinate relief and rehabilitation told TOI.

He said the civic authorities had turned a blind eye to the encroachments that mushroomed in the Kalina village area. "Once there used to be huge ponds in Kalina. They would in-

enter houses," the official said.

The other reason for the flash flood in the Kurla-Kalina area, officials said, was unchecked growth of commercial and residential structures along the banks of the Mithi in Kurla.

of the first space shuttle flight since the 2003 Columbia disaster. REPORT BY PAGE 10

20 die in Kolhapur floods

Nine Missing As Boat Ferrying Villagers Capsizes In The Krishna

Kolhapur: The heavy rains which began last week and are showing no signs of stopping have claimed 20 lives and affected about 70,000 people living in 35 marooned villages of Kolhapur district. In Sangli, over 200 villages are under water, affecting over one lakh people.

Of the 35 villages in Kolhapur, ten are completely flooded. The worst affected was Shirul taluka, where nine people went missing after their boat capsized in the swollen Krishna river on Friday evening.

The boat had been carrying eight army men and 19 flood victims who had been rescued from Rajapur. They were on their way to Akiwat when the overloaded boat capsized. The army men were able to save ten people, but the others, including five

women and a child, are still to be traced. A senior official said on Saturday of the



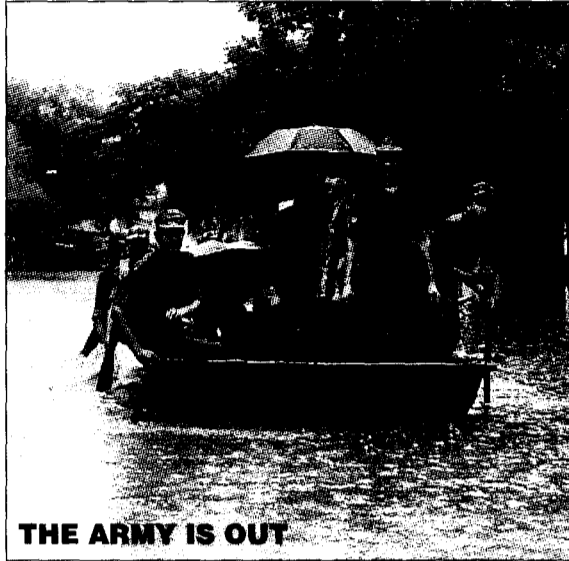
People use a canoe to cross a waterlogged road in Sangli

70,000 people hit, 40,000 had been shifted to 53 relief camps set up at various parts of the district. Resident deputy collector D K Shinde said while the flood situation in Kolhapur city and its surrounding areas was improving, the same could not be said about the other areas. The city has received 158 mm rains in the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the incessant rainfall and rising waters of the Krishna in spate has severely hit the rescue and relief operations in Sangli district where the floods have marooned over 200 villages and affected over one lakh people. "The rising waters of the Krishna and the non-stop rains are hampering our rescue operations," resident deputy collector Ashok Kakde said. However, there has been no casualty so far. TNN & Agencies

THE HINDU OF INDIA

Mum-Del: Rs 58,000cr. Del-Mum: Rs 100cr



THE ARMY IS OUT

By Mahendra Kumar Singh/TNN

New Delhi: Mumbai, the financial capital of the country, is expected to contribute almost Rs 58,000 crore this year in personal and corporate income taxes to the Centre but does not even get Rs 100 crore in central assistance for development of its core infrastructure.

To put Mumbai's contribution in perspective, at Rs 57,723 crore it's more than the combined share of Delhi (Rs 27,623 cr), Bangalore (Rs 15,194 cr) and Chennai (Rs 11,234 cr), according to a recent statement by the chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes. Yet, when it comes to sharing central funds for urban infrastructure, this megacity of 13 million gets short shrift despite grand statements.

In this year's budget, finance minister P Chidambaram proposed to make Mumbai a regional hub for finance. He also proposed to appoint a high-powered expert committee, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, on how to make Mumbai a regional financial centre, almost midway between London and Tokyo, two nerve-centres of world finance.

The Centre also promised Mumbai a big cut of the Rs 1,000 crore for the National Urban Renewal Mission (NURM) aimed at pushing urban infrastructural projects like the Mumbai Metro Rail Project, Mumbai Trans Harbour Link and Mumbai Western Expressway Sealink. But the ambitious 'mission' of the urban development ministry has not yet taken off.

Interestingly, the only central assistance for Mumbai's urban infrastructure development comes under the centrally-sponsored scheme for infrastructure development of megacities initiated in 1993-94. Under this scheme, Mumbai received only around Rs 54 crore during 2004-05, while Bangalore got Rs 39 crore and Kolkata nearly Rs 47 crore.

Delhi, of course, is in a different league—as National Capital Territory, the Planning Commission has approved an annual plan for 2005-06 at Rs 5,100 crore for the NCT, all of which will come as central assistance. Apart from this Plan assistance, Delhi will also get Rs 72 crore under various centrally-sponsored schemes during the current year.

It's true that the corporate income tax collections credited to Mumbai come from companies with their registered offices in the city which may be operating all across India, but that would be true, even if to a lesser extent, of the collections from other cities as well.

City gets respite from rains

Toll In State Rises To 942, Rail, Air Services Improve

Mumbai: After three days of rain fury, life in the metropolis is slowly getting back on track with improvement in weather conditions since Monday night, even as the toll due to heavy rains in the city rose to 436 on Tuesday.

The cloud cover over Mumbai region has begun to decrease but the gusty winds will continue to blow at about 50 km per hour, the meteorological office said. However, the fishermen have been warned not to venture into the sea as it will continue to be rough to very rough, the weather office said adding Signal flag No 3, indicating the danger, had been hoisted along the coast. Till 8.30 am, the rainfall recorded in Colaba was 86.8 mm while Santa Cruz recorded 149.5 mm, it added. Fifty-nine people were reported missing, according to Mantralaya control room.

The suburban rail services were on Tuesday restored on Central, Harbour and Western Railway sections. While trains on the Harbour line trains are plying from CST to Andheri and Panvel, the Central Railway is running services up to Kalyan, officials said.

Flight operations also improved, though the airport was shut for a brief period from 5 am to 5.45 am due to poor visibility, airport sources said. The schools and colleges were declared closed for the second day.

Trading at Bombay Stock Exchange commenced on a normal note and attendance in offices was reported to be better than Monday.

The death toll in Maharashtra rose to 942 with Mumbai accounting for 436 deaths, Navi Mumbai 60, Thane 206, Raigad 136, Ratnagiri 18, Sindhudurg seven, Kolhapur 11, Parbhani six, Nanded nine, Yavatmal 10, Satara four, Beed seven, Aurangabad seven, Jalna two, Hingoli one, Wardha two, Pune seven, Nasik one, Bhandara five, Washim two and Amravati five.

However, rains continued to lash Pune, resulting in waterlogging in some areas. Water overflowed from Khadakvasla, Panshet and Vanganga dams inundating low-lying areas.

In Vidarbha region, there was also a let-up in rainfall and water level receded in Vainganga river in Bhandara.

In Nasik, incessant rains since Monday night disrupted normal life and the civic body issued notices to residents of old houses in Kazi Gadhi locality, facing threat of collapse due to heavy rains.

The district authorities have also alerted people staying on the banks of Godavari river after more than 13000 cusecs of water was released from Gangapur dam. Indian Meteorological Department said in Pune that there was a possibility of revival of monsoon with a building of a low pressure area in the north of Bay of Bengal shortly.

City power utility Reliance Energy Ltd, whose supply areas in central suburbs are in dark for almost a week now, on Tuesday said it expected to restore power by the evening. "We expect to restore power in suburbs of Kurla, Saki Naka and Kalina by this evening," an REL official here said. Agencies



WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE, NOT A DROP TO DRINK: Women wade through waist deep water after purchasing drinking water in Mumbai on Tuesday while railway commuters return to work after enduring a week-long deluge

After the flood, Kurla faces epidemic

By Clara Lewis/TNN

Mumbai: Powerless and waterless for five days, and plagued by mounds of garbage at every street corner, Kurla seems to be teetering on the brink of an epidemic. Already, workers at the 12 civic health posts here have their hands full treating patients with fever and vomiting—the first symptoms of viral and bacterial infections spread through water.

Barely 20 kilometres from the BMC headquarters, in the putrid bylanes of Kurla, women have been washing clothes and utensils in sewage. No wonder then that the last few days have seen a surge in cases of water-borne diseases.

TOI toured the area on Saturday and found garbage heaps—even rotting foodgrains dumped by wholesalers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: No electricity, no food, no water and the stench of rotting garbage everywhere. In the four days following torrential rains, Mumbai has been hell and back, and anger against the appalling apathy of officialdom is exploding all over the city.

Raasta rokhs were staged at 16 places in Mumbai in 24 hours, as nearly one lakh citizens came out into the streets to condemn the "failure of the civic and state administration" and shouted slogans against Reliance offices at Vakola, Dahisar, Shivhara, Goregaon and other areas. Even as police commissioner A N Roy warned chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh that the situation could get out of hand if the power supply was not restored soon, furious citizens heckled local politicians and manhandled media persons.

On Saturday, more than a thousand people blocked traffic on LBS Marg near the Kurla bus depot to protest the absence of water and power supply in the area. At Goregaon, a mob of 150 went berserk when they found that the garbage in their area had not been lifted, as did hundreds of residents of Mumbra in Thane, who pelted stones at vehicles and blocked traffic on the Thane-Mumbra road to protest the administration's ignoring their repeated requests to clear the filth that had entered their streets and houses. A policeman in plain clothes also allegedly pushed a woman protester, prompting stone-pelting by the protesters.

With mounds of garbage everywhere, citizens are petrified about the outbreak of a health epidemic. Said a police officer who is posted at Kurla, "There is so much filth in the area. Not a single

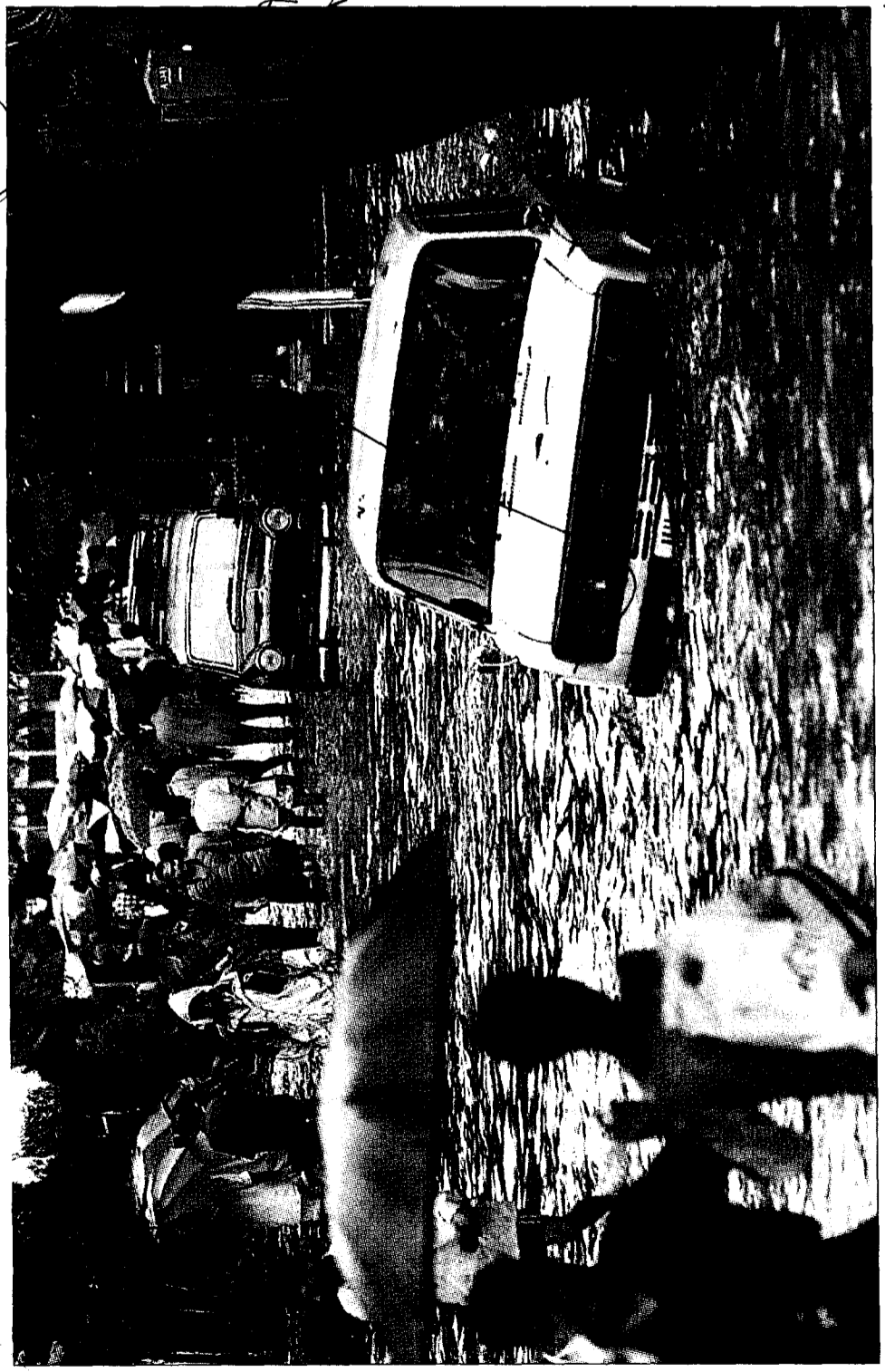
citizen official had sprayed DDT or any other pesticide until Saturday afternoon to prevent the possible outbreak of disease." On a survey of Kurla, TOI found mounds of garbage—among the filth, there were sacks of rotting foodgrains dumped by wholesalers after the floods—on arterial roads, including the Andheri-Kurla Road, 90 Feet Road and S G Barve Marg.

The police, meanwhile, are unable to tackle the street aggression in their usual strong-arm fashion. "This is not the kind of crowd we would like to lath-charge to disperse," said Mumbai's joint commissioner (law and order) Arup Patnaik, who visited the Kurla-Kalina area on Saturday morning. "We sympathise with the citizens and are holding meetings with them, requesting them to maintain peace. But we don't know how long we will succeed in controlling their temper."

DEATHS IN MUMBAI

Total	406
Drowning	233
Landslide	116
Stampede	24
Trapped in vehicle	16
Shock	12
Accidents	5

A top IPS officer pointed out that the situation was unprecedented for a city like Mumbai where people were used to getting a continuous supply of electricity and water. "It's natural for them to go berserk if the facilities are cut off for four days," he said. The police control room was flooded with an unprecedented 30,000 calls on Thursday and Friday. On Saturday, a parallel control room was set up at the Bandra-Kurla complex to control the situation in the Kurla-Kalina area and to mobilise forces.



THAT SINKING FEELING: Mumbai awoke to a soaking Sunday and a forecast of heavy rains with gusty winds in the next 24 hours. As the water level rose in the low-lying areas, so did the nervousness among both the people and the administration, which has announced a school holiday on Monday and put municipal authorities on alert

Downpour revives deluge fears

Mumbai: Torrential rains lashed Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra since Saturday night, disrupting flights, hampering rescue efforts and bringing more misery to the state reeling under unprecedented showers. Flooding and landslides had so far claimed 891 lives in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra since the rain began last Monday, announced chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh. Officials said 47 more bodies had been recovered overnight.

The driving rain disrupted rail and air services, the officials said, as the weather office forecast heavy to very heavy rain with gusty wind in the next 24 hours in Mumbai, Konkan and Goa. The municipal authorities in the area has been put on alert Deshmukh said. The government announced closure of schools, colleges and other educational institutions in Mumbai, Thane and Raigad on Monday. However, offices in these areas would be open.

The government also formed a high-powered committee of district guardian ministers and senior bureaucrats to monitor the situation and relief in the affected areas of the state, he said. "We have formed the committee to monitor the situation," Deshmukh said. His deputy, R R Patil, who is touring some of the affected suburbs of Mumbai as well as

Thane district, ordered the administration in Mumbai, Thane, to immediately reach relief and Rs 5,000 each to the affected families after less absolutely necessary.

Incoming flights to the city were routed to nearby destinations while outbound flights were cancelled due to poor visibility. International and domestic flights resumed later in the day when the downpour eased.

"Water levels are rising in Mahad, Panvel and Roha in Raigad and warnings have been issued in the area," Deshmukh said adding, people from five villages in Raigad were shifted to safer areas. "Officials have been instructed to shift people staying in areas which were prone to landslides," he said.

The chief minister said 1138 areas in Mumbai were identified for disinfection operations and 50% of it had been covered. Mobile medical teams were placed in various parts of the state to tackle the health hazards that might arise after the flooding.

About power supply, he said the Maharashtra State Electricity Board had managed to restore power in all parts of the state where the supply was disrupted due to flooding. For Kurla, where power is provided by Reliance Energy Limited, company officials have been asked to restore supply by Monday evening, Deshmukh added. Agencies



A boy waits for flights to resume in Mumbai airport, where poor visibility after morning showers held up flights till noon. Civil aviation minister Praful Patel said the backlog was being cleared and as many as 32 flights had operated in and out in the one-and-a-half hours since operations resumed

► Kurla's dubious record, Page 5

Rane joins Congress, sworn in Minister

Several of his followers follow suit; tight security at function venue

HD 8 9-87 Mumbai

Special Correspondent

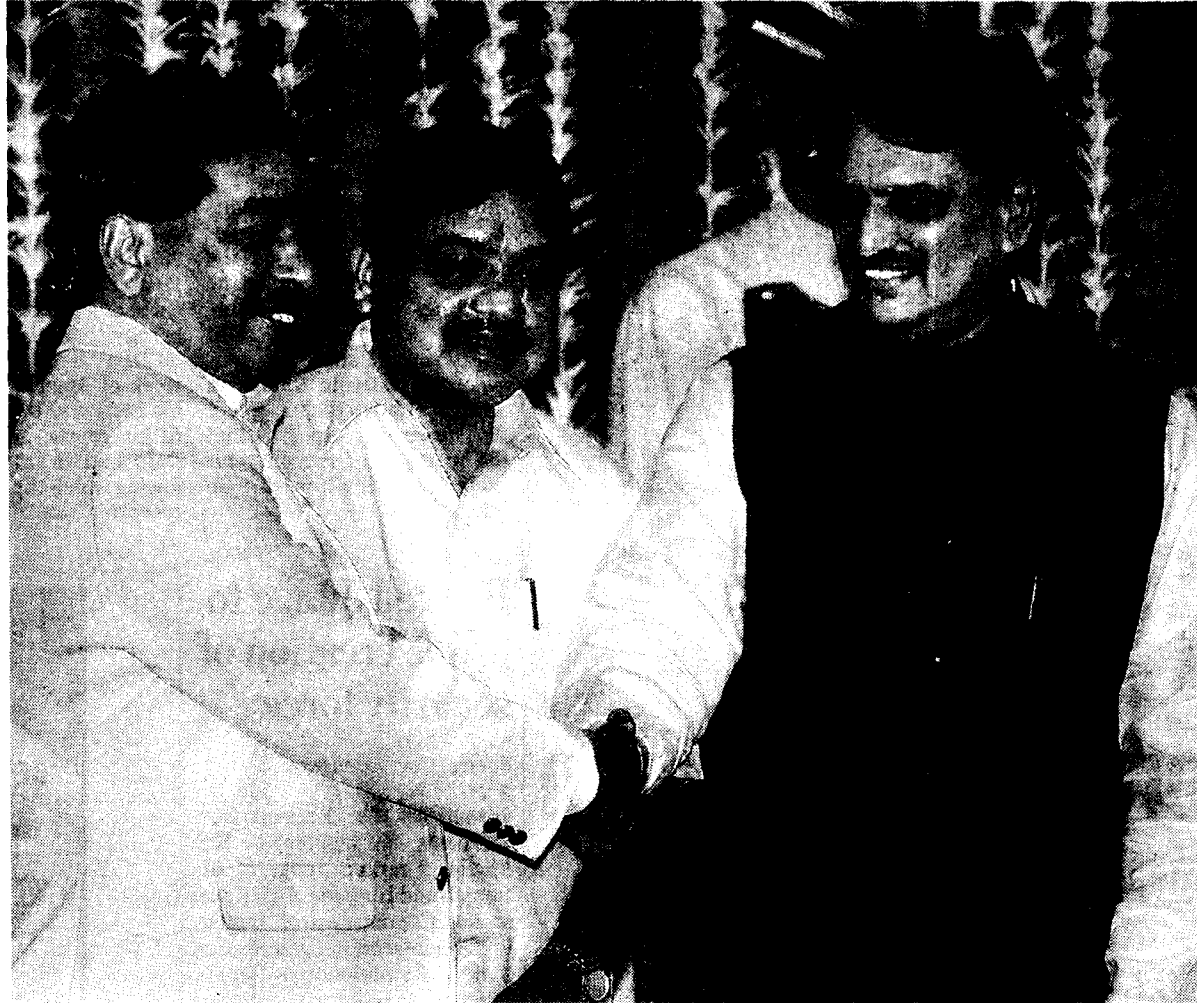
MUMBAI: Expelled Shiv Sena leader Narayan Rane on Saturday was formally inducted into the Congress along with several of his supporters at a function at Tilak Bhavan in central Mumbai. Later in the evening Mr. Rane was sworn in as Cabinet Minister.

Along with Mr. Rane, both his sons Nitesh and Nilesh joined the Congress. The former Minister, Suresh Navle, the ex-Mumbai mayor, Hareshwar Patil, the former MLA, Srikant Sarmalkar, and several Shiv Sainiks from Konkan, Satara, Dhule and other places joined the Congress.

The Mumbai police were taking no chances this time, and posted tight security at the venue. Metal detectors checked people who entered the road leading to Tilak Bhavan, teeming with Rane supporters from the Sena. Even though the function was supposed to be a low-key affair with only select invitees, the whole place was crowded with Congress workers and hundreds of enthusiastic Sainiks.

"I will uphold the sanctity and purity of the Gandhi cap as well as the tricolour," said Mr. Rane. "If I was told a month ago that I would be joining the Congress, I would have thought it impossible," he said. He said joining this party was the only way he could work for the people of the State. While he did criticise the Congress when he was a Sainik, now he would abide by the policies and objectives of his new party, he said. His main aim would be to strengthen the party. He exhorted workers to engage in flood relief work and help people in returning to normality.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, Pradesh Congress Committee chief Prabha Rau, Gurudas Kamat, MP, the former Chief Minister A.R. Antulay and others attended the function. Welcoming Mr. Rane, Mr. Deshmukh said his entry would strengthen the party in the Konkan where it was rather weak. Mr. Deshmukh said



INTO THE FOLD: The former Shiv Sena leader, Narayan Rane, being greeted by Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil after he was inducted into the Cabinet in Mumbai on Saturday. —PHOTO: PTI

whoever accepted Sonia Gandhi's leadership was welcome to join the party.

Mr. Rane was leader of the Opposition when Mr. Deshmukh first became Chief Minister and then again last year. "I had joked that we should have such ideal leaders of the Opposition," Mr.

Deshmukh remarked, adding that it was not easy for a person to have first been Chief Minister and then Leader of the Opposition as Mr. Rane was. He said he was witness to Mr. Rane's hard work and persistence and such qualities would enhance the strength of the

Congress.

Mr. Rane will visit the affected parts of the city on Sunday and tour the Konkan region, which was the worst affected by the monsoon. Mr. Rane is a four-time MLA from Malvan in the Konkan region.

WHEN WORDS KILLED

The tsunami, which struck south India exactly seven months ago, was used with a cruel twist in Mumbai on Thursday. The lead, at last count, was 24 as word spread—without basis—that the tsunami had hit the city

987
11/3
18/12



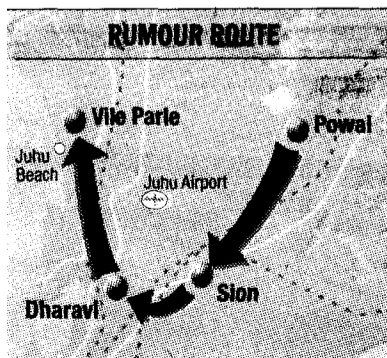
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: By 9.30 pm on Thursday, Nehru Nagar was turning in for another dark night, exhausted by a day spent cleaning their flooded houses and counting their losses.

"The children had gone to sleep," recalls Revathy Maran, a domestic worker. "I was cleaning the house. Suddenly there was a huge roar outside. Tsunami, tsunami, they were shouting," she says. Within seconds, the rumour had spread like wildfire and Nehru Nagar was on its feet and running. Seconds later, a sea of people had passed over and in its wake lay 18, including 10 children, dead.

Nirmal Nagar, a few kilometres south, too, had tucked in when it heard the same rumours. The same mad rush occurred, leaving four dead.

And, a few kilometres north in Goregaon, the rumours claimed two;



both were elderly men who died of cardiac arrests during the mad rush to get out.

But Nehru Nagar was hit the worst by the rumours. Around 15,000 people poured into the alleys of the slum, just a few feet wide at most places and eight feet across in the central alley. Streams of people from every small cluster of houses converged. The reason

so many deaths, residents said, was because of the sheer number of people—roughly 40,000—and the narrow alleys. Also, the 'tsunami' rumour touched a particularly raw nerve—the slum is predominantly South Indian.

The police beat chowky is situated just outside the Nehru Nagar slum and the police station is less than a kilometre away but that was of no use as the chowky had no constables

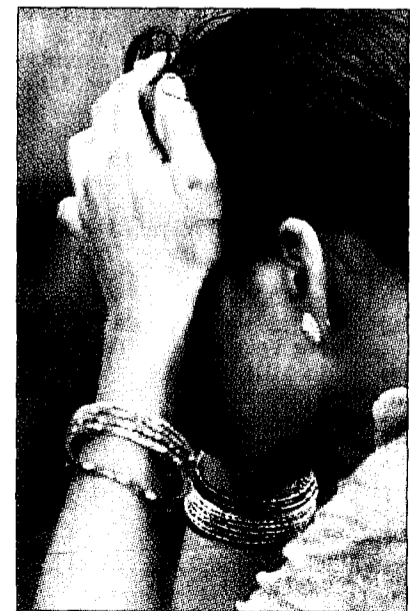
rushed to the scene but were unable to handle the situation.

The injured and the dead were taken to the hospital by the residents. Police reinforcements came almost an hour and a half after the incident, residents said.

Tempers ran high at the Cooper hospital where the dead were taken and the injured were admitted. The police and the hospital security closed the

gates as more and more residents of the slum crowded there. The situation at the hospital was grim with wailing women mourning the loss of their loved ones and agitated residents cursing the authorities including the hospital staff. The hospital doctors made an announcement over a microphone advising people to remain calm and assuring treatment for all. Announcements were also made in Tamil.

Neither police commissioner A N Roy nor home minister R R Patil were spared. "It takes our deaths to bring you here," one woman shouted. "Our slum is closed to politicians for ever—don't you dare come begging for votes," she said.



Candles throw up ghostly shadows in room of dead

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Cooper Hospital was inundated throughout Tuesday and Wednesday. The water went down by Thursday evening but—in a couple of hours—the hospital was again swamped, this time with victims of a mindless stampede that was sparked off by a sick rumour.

But, although the water had receded, the hospital was in no position to accommodate the dead and the injured.

There was no power and the generator set that tried to light up the hospital was adequate only for the ICU and the ICU.

The effect this had was quite ghostly: relatives—with candles and lanterns—went about the room in which bodies had been piled up, looking up each body and hoping it would not be their son's or mother's. Missing after the stampede, clearly, was an option that was infinitely better than dead.

Savitri Sivanandan was one of those who had turned up to look for her brother and his family. And she was one of the many who went back in a happier frame of mind than when they had walked in.

The males in her family first went through the room of the dead. Slightly happier when they did not find any of their relatives, they went to the room where the injured were (again with the candles) to find the faces they were looking for.

Jumbo skids off Mumbai tarmac



A Boeing 747-400 from Bangalore stands at a tilt after overshooting the secondary runway of Mumbai airport amid a downpour around 7 am on Saturday. It ground to a halt after its nose wheels jammed into the soft earth beyond the tarmac, which was thrown open on Thursday after the main runway was submerged for 48 hours after Tuesday's torrential rain. None of the 335 passengers or crew on the Chicago-bound aircraft were

injured in the incident that shut down the airport for two hours. The plane damaged some runway lights and narrowly missed a guard's shack. After the scheduled stop-over that could have ended in disaster, the passengers continued their journey on another plane around 12 noon. In Delhi, civil aviation minister Praful Patel blamed the incident on pilot error, saying he did not apply full brakes on a wet runway

Capital! FM delivers Marx lesson on Marxist turf

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: The Left was left speechless in its homeground on Saturday after Union finance minister P Chidambaram quoted Karl Marx to justify the need to use all means possible to raise capital.

Though he did not directly refer to the Left's strident opposition to the BHEL disinvestment, the message was loud and clear in his first visit to the Marxist bastion since taking charge as FM in the UPA government.

"There is no conflict between growth and social justice. With growth, there is chance for social justice; without it, there is none. And growth is a product of investment and incremental capital-output ratio. To provide roads, schools, hospitals, drinking water facility in rural India, we must have growth by attract-



FULL MARX

ing more capital," he said.

"Marx was not against capital. Don't equate capital to capitalists. Had he (Marx) been alive, his main concern would have been infrastructure constraints in the way of capital formation. Marx would have written about the blocks that clog investments, foreign exchange transactions, customs procedures, and about lack of adequate banking and insurance facilities," Chidambaram said at the inaugura-

tion of Asia's largest integrated leather facility, Calcutta Leather Complex (CLC).

Terming CLC a "shining example" of public-private partnership, the FM added that he was happy to see the West Bengal government promote partnerships with private firms, domestic and foreign.

"I am glad that chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee shares my views and is trying his best, both in India and outside, to attract capital," he told business honchos at a subsequent Indian Chamber of Commerce meeting.

Making a strong case for foreign investment, the FM said: "A wise country uses its savings. A wiser country uses it as well as the savings of other countries. Since our savings is only 25-27% against China's 40%, we must tap into all sources of capital."

Is there a tenth planet?

By Kenneth Chang and Dennis Overbye

Add a tenth planet to the solar system—or possibly subtract one.

Astronomers have announced that they had found a lump of rock and ice that was larger than Pluto and the farthest known object in the solar system. The discovery will probably rekindle debate over the definition of "planet" and whether Pluto still merits the designation.

The new object—as yet unnamed, but temporarily known as 2003 UB313—is now 9 billion miles away from the Sun, or 97 times as far away as Earth and about three times Pluto's current distance from the Sun. Its 560-year elliptical orbit brings it as close as 3.3 billion miles. Pluto's orbit ranges from 2.7 billion miles to 4.6 billion.

The astronomers do not have an exact size for the new planet, but its brightness and distance tell them it is larger than Pluto, the smallest of the nine planets.

"It is guaranteed bigger than Pluto," said Michael E Brown, a planetary astronomy prof at the California Institute of Technology and a part of the team that made the discovery. "Even if it were 100% reflective, it would be larger than Pluto. It can't be more than 100% reflective."



An artist's impression of the cold and dark 'planet'. It will be visible for six months directly overhead in the early-morning eastern sky in the cetus constellation

The discovery was made on January 8 at Palomar Observatory in California. Dr Brown and the other members of the team—Chadwick A Trujillo of the Gemini Observatory in Hawaii and David L Rabinowitz of Yale University—then found that they had, unknowingly, taken images of the planet, using the observatory's 48-inch telescope, in 2003.

The astronomers have proposed a name for the "planet" to the International Astronomical Union. News of the discovery was announced earlier than expected after hackers broke into Brown's website, he charged. *New York Times News Service*

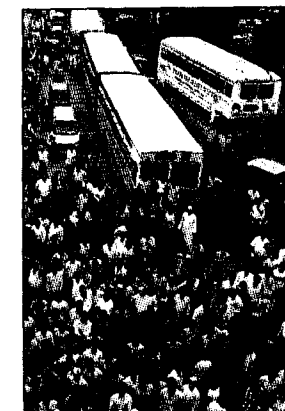
Kalyanyug: Forgotten town

By Viju B/TNN

Mumbai: If London earned the sobriquet of the City of Black Death after it was devastated by the great plague of 1665, the mini-township of Kalyan could well inherit the title today.

Afloat with tonnes of garbage and hundreds of carcasses of humans and buffaloes, casualties of the flood that has turned this township into a stinking drain, Kalyan has gone without power, drinking water and basic commodities for the last four days. All communication and road links have been damaged. It's a miracle that the 500,000 people living here are still surviving without any grave illness.

In a severe administrative lapse that could have fatal consequences, no government agency—municipal officials, Rapid Action Force personnel (stationed



Residents on Kurla block traffic on Saturday to protest against non-supply of power and water even after the flood water have receded. The toll across the state rose to 853—420 of them in Mumbai

here like mannequins near the municipal headquarters), or police—has come forward to help the marooned residents. Except at

Murbad Road, where senior officials reside (Kalyan municipal commissioner Dhanraj Khamatkar, deputy commissioner of police Dr She-rin Dorje and senior MSEB officials), the 87 wards across Kalyan have been left to darkness.

Two days ago, about 2000 frustrated residents from across Kalyan stormed into the municipal headquarters and vandalised the vehicles and towing machine. The police responded by arresting three youngsters from Durgadikila, one of the worst-hit areas. "We lost three volunteers who were helping to lift carcasses from an area where not a single municipal official has bothered to step into," says Sharfudin Karte, a resident.

Nearly 40 people died in Kalyan and many are still missing. Bodies still spring up from nowhere and float in the open grounds.

► KMC not equipped, Page 5

DID MINISTER RE-OPEN MUMBAI AIRPORT TOO SOON AFTER DELUGE?

9815 Melbourne
SF 1 31/7

Plane skids off wet runway

Statesman News Service

MUMBAI, July 30. — A major disaster was averted today after a Chicago-bound Air-India aircraft with 335 passengers and crew on board skidded and overshot the rain-soaked runway at Mumbai airport early today and got stuck in the soft ground.

The emergency services were immediately put on alert. The passengers were made to disembark and taken to the safety of the airport terminal by bus.

The nose-wheel of the Boeing 747-400, which had come from Bangalore, damaged some runway lights before getting stuck in the soft turf on the edge of the secondary runway. The runway — called 14/32 — was thrown open to air traffic on Thursday after the Union civil aviation minister, Mr Praful Patel, had insisted on resuming domestic and international flights after the Mumbai deluge despite hesitant officials who



The plane is being pulled back on to the tarmac after it skidded and overshot the runway at Mumbai airport on Saturday. AFP

wanted to wait till the whole of the adjacent area had dried up. Today, however, the minister blamed an "error of judgement" on the part of the flying crew for the incident. Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, Mr Patel said a probe had been ordered. He said preliminary

information suggested that the pilot had not applied the brakes fully to avoid skidding off the wet runway. He said the pilot had thought that the plane would come to a halt before the end of the runway. "It did so but the nose-wheel went out of the runway by a few feet."

Capt Jagdish Singh and Capt U Khadate, commander and co-pilot have been taken off the flying roster till the inquiry is complete, DGCA sources said. The passengers were accommodated in another Boeing 767-400, which took off at 12.05 p.m. with a total of 408

passengers and crew for Chicago via Frankfurt, the spokesman, Mr Jitender Bhargav said. "The immobilised plane was pulled out in a record time of 90 minutes and towed to a hangar," he added. Singapore Airlines has cancelled its flights from Mumbai

to Singapore till Monday due to non-availability of the main runway.

In recent months, sources said, up to 17 planes were forced to make emergency landings in the morning, either delaying or canceling take-offs. All these landings were caused by some minor technical defect, they added. Mumbai's international airport has two runways. The primary one is due for repairs since last year. The maintenance work, after some postponements, is now scheduled for March 2006.

Emergency landing

A two-seater Cessna trainer aircraft of a private flying school, made an emergency landing in a field in Anajpur village, about 40 km from Hyderabad, today. Two trainee pilots onboard escaped unhurt.

■ Mumbai goes down the drain, page 5

After rain, rumours kill 20 in Mumbai



A nine-year-old child is consoled by a neighbour as he prepares to perform the last rites of his grandmother killed in the stampede started by tsunami rumours. In Mumbai on Friday. — AFP

Statesman News Service

Met mix-up

MUMBAI, July 29. — Mumbai police cracked down on rumour-mongers who fuelled panic in this disaster-struck city by arresting 17 persons who precipitated major stampedes last night in two precincts of the western suburbs that resulted in the death of over 20 people. As if this was not enough, the city was today agog with the buzz that a cyclone warning has been issued for south Mumbai.

In a macabre twist to the death and destruction that rained down on the mauled metropolis on Tuesday evening/night, rumours of a dam burst and an approaching tsunami created another wave of panic and resulted in stampedes as people tried to flee homes for safety late last night (around 10 p.m. onwards). It resulted in the death of reportedly over 20 people, including eight children and five women, who were trampled underneath by milling crowds as they tried to exit from the narrow gateways of their slum. A few of the injured are still in a critical condition in hospital.

The deceased were mainly from the Nehru Nagar slum in Vile Parle and Nir-

MUMBAI, July 29. — Mumbai's met department is covering its face in embarrassment after getting its predictions all mixed up about the deluge which engulfed Mumbai and its aftermath. The met office did predict "heavy-to-very heavy rainfall accompanied by strong winds" for 26 July but put the expected rainfall figure to only over 19 cm. The city received an unprecedented 94 cm, a record for the century, that night. It also predicted heavy showers for the next 48 hours but Mumbaikars were relieved when the city received hardly any rainfall during the past two days, a denouement which, did not rebound to the credit of the met office. — SNS

mal Nagar slum in Bandra East in the western suburbs who were fleeing the approaching tsunami although people were taken in by the dam burst rumours in the eastern suburbs of Kurla and Kalina where rumours circulated of a spillage from the massive Powai lake that supplies water to the city.

The police did their best to quell the rumours by making announcements in the localities from loudspeakers attached to their vehicles but to no avail. Announcements were even flashed on TV but were not

noticed by the people affected. The cops' attempts to restore order were stymied by a black out in the Juhu-Vile Parle area.

The Mumbai cops decided to take action against the mischief mongers and in a massive swoop against those responsible for the tsunami rumour that created panic all along the western coastline in the vicinity of the popular Juhu beach, picked up ten suspects late last night and a few more this morning. They were travelling in a car and spreading the rumours, the police alleged. The cops suspect that they were a bunch of thieves who were planning to loot the empty residences of the people who had fled their homes.

Investigations have been launched into their role in spreading the panic. If found guilty, the accused will be charged with murder, the cops said. Police Commissioner Mr AN Roy threatened that he would take strict action against such rumour-mongers in future, a warning echoed by state home minister Mr RR Patil. Chief minister Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh said here today that over 690 people have died in Maharashtra, including 370 in Mumbai, due to the torrential rains this week.

Rage of rain: Mumbai death toll rises to 700

Mumbai, July 29

RESCUERS SCOURING the flood-ravaged neighbourhoods in Mumbai and outlying villages found dozens of new bodies, pushing the death toll to 700 from the record monsoon rain this week in western India, officials said on Friday.

Some 370 victims were from Mumbai and the surrounding areas in Maharashtra, said N. Nayar, an official in the government's emergency control room in the city.

Rescuers continued to search for more bodies in the flooded western state, Nayar said. The toll included at least 15 people, who were trampled to death late Thursday in a stampede at a slum set off by rumours of a dam burst. More than 25 others were injured.

Residents of the Nehru Nagar slum in northern Bombay panicked after rumours of a burst dam, said R.R. Patil, Maharashtra's deputy chief minister. "People died due to false rumours," Patil said. "Fifteen people have been killed of which seven are children." On Tuesday, the city was hit by an unprecedented deluge of up to 37 inches (94 cm) of rain — the heaviest since India began keeping weather records in 1846.

Much of it came over a few hours, transforming roads into gushing rivers and causing landslides that buried dozens of people and cut off villages.

The rains stretched into Wednesday, paralysing Mumbai and devastating huge areas, but ended Thursday, leaving an overcast sky. The government imposed a mandatory holiday on Thursday, ordering workers to stay at home and forcing the closure of banks and the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The BSE was set to reopen on Friday. In the northern Mumbai suburb of Saki Naka, relief workers and survivors searched the ruins of a slum crushed by the collapse of a water-soaked hill.

At least 110 people were killed and more than 45 were missing and presumed dead.

"It was terrible to pull out little babies from under boulders and mud," said fire-fighter S. Shinde.

"The very young and the old just didn't make it. Rescuers piled bodies on to trucks and flagged down private cars to carry the injured to hospitals," he said. In Mumbai, most victims were either drowned or crushed by falling walls or were electrocuted.

On Wednesday morning, the government warned people to remain in their offices or homes. But for some the warnings came too late. AP

Rumour kills 18

TWO MORE persons succumbed to injuries taking the death toll in Thursday night's stampede at a suburban slum to 18. The stampede was a result of panic following rumours of a reservoir burst and tsunami scare.

Seventeen people were arrested on Friday for spreading the rumours leading to the commotion in Nehrunagar and Subhashnagar in northwest Mumbai.

Sixteen people, including six children and seven women, died on Thursday night in the stampede.

PTI, Mumbai



THE DAMAGE

INDUSTRY

- Bombay Chamber estimates loss at Rs 2,500 cr, Assocham at Rs 1,000 cr
- Export losses over Rs 800 cr
- Companies affected: Reliance-Patalganga, L&T, Godrej, Nicholas Piramal
- Small pharmaceutical units on Thane-Belapur complex flooded

INSURANCE

- For cars: Rs 30 cr
- Property: Rs 20 cr
- Shops: Rs 50-60 cr
- Godowns: Rs 200 cr

(Estimated claims)

30 JUL 2005

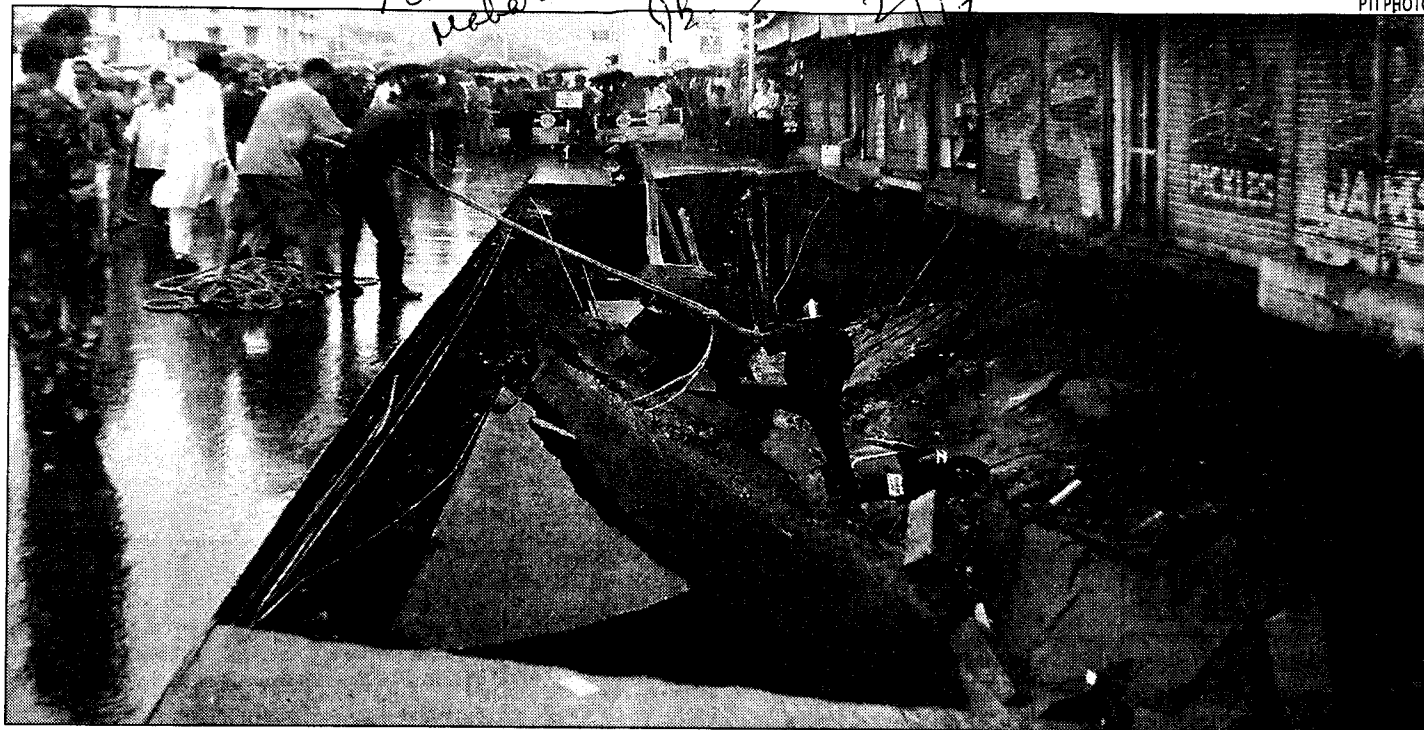
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



RETURN ■ Airport operational, railways on track, rescue on in districts

Mumbai back in business

PTI PHOTO



(left) Rescue workers remove bodies from under the debris at Sakinaka while in Ahmedabad (above) a road caved in at Walled City

ENS & PTI
MUMBAI, JULY 28

MUMBAI limped back to normal today with partial restoration of rail and air services while relief and rescue operations were on in Raigad district. The toll rose to 350 today — Mumbai alone accounting for more than 260 casualties.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced Rs 700-crore aid for relief and rehabilitation efforts in the state, stressing restoration of infrastructure would be priority. "In addition to the Rs 200 crore already announced from the national contingency fund and the national calamity fund, we are now releasing Rs 500 crore as special assistance," Singh told reporters here after conducting an aerial survey of the affected areas of Mumbai, Raigad and Thane.

The Prime Minister said the families of those killed would receive Rs 1 lakh each. "There has been widespread loss to property and

civic infrastructure as well. Private properties have suffered extensively and I sympathise with those who have been affected," Singh said. Manpower, boats, aircraft and helicopters have been placed at the disposal of the state government.

The railways are working overtime to restore operations and the airport is functional, Singh said.

"The first commercial flight — an Indian Airlines aircraft — took off for Delhi from Mumbai at 1.20 pm with 145 passengers on board," Civil Aviation Secretary Ajay Prasad said. Air services from Delhi to Mumbai have also resumed and airliners have been asked to operate special flights to clear the backlog of passengers stranded at the airport.

Prasad said air services began af-

ter the instrument landing system (ILS) at the alternate runway at the Mumbai airport (14-32) was made operational. Air India was to begin its international operations later today. The ILS at the main runway (09-27) will be restored by tomorrow.

You have suffered a lot in the last three days but have shown resilience, fortitude, courage and patience ... You've shown the world what a Mumbaikar is made of and I salute you all

PM Manmohan Singh

On the Central Railway route, suburban local trains were plying on Chhatrapati Shivaji terminus and Thane and on the western route, about 80 per cent of the services have been restored, railway sources said. Long-distance trains on the Western Railway have resumed while on the Central Railway, all out-bound trains have been cancelled till tomorrow morning.

Power supply too got back on track with full restoration at various

places in the metropolis, Reliance Energy sources said. The Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange, however, remained closed today.

Vehicular movement was restored on the Bombay-Ahmedabad highway. However, the Mumbai-Goa highway, Mumbai-Nasik and Mumbai-Pune highways continued to be blocked as a result of traffic congestion due to waterlogging at certain points.

In the districts, rescue efforts are still on to save hundreds trapped under debris in landslides. In Jui village in Raigad, where 20 houses were crushed under the debris and 100 feared killed in a landslide, rescue workers have found only eight bodies so far, Collector Bhaskar Wankhede said.

In Nanded district, the Godavari river is flowing above the danger mark with 20 villages around marooned. Incessant rain continued to lash Nashik and surrounding areas for the second consecutive day with major rivers overflowing the danger mark.

GUJARAT

► The Met department has forecast heavy rains across Gujarat following development of a cyclonic circulation over the state. "Heavy rains have been forecast for the state, including the Saurashtra region, for the next 24 hours after the development of a cyclonic circulation over the state," Director of Meteorology Bakhliwal said.

However, he felt that the rains will not be as severe and intense as it was in the later part of June when floods had wrecked havoc in South and central districts of the state. The Gujarat State Disaster Management Authorities have asked the fire brigade personnel in different places to be on alert.

GOA

► Konkarn railway services in the Goa section remained paralysed for the fifth day on Thursday due to flooding of tracks. Authorities said all trains origi-

nating from Goa have been cancelled at least for the next couple of days. "There were landslides and flooding of tracks near Mangaon and Chiplun, which were yet to be cleared. The water has not yet receded," Konkarn Railways PRO Baban Ghatge said. "We are making attempts to resume services but it will take at least a couple of days more." Torrential rains lashed Goa and neighbouring Konkarn region on Sunday.

NAGPUR

More than 2,000 residents from Wardha district of Maharashtra were evacuated on Wednesday night as the water level in the Pakdi rose to an alarming level in at least three villages, official sources said. Residents of Belora, Jirkar and Jalgaon were evacuated as revenue officials from the headquarters rushed to the site. Rain also lashed eastern Vidarbha region, with Lakhadur in Bhandara recording the highest rainfall, at 206 mm. —PTI

থমকে গেল ব্যাঙ্কিং ব্যবস্থা, শেয়ার হস্তান্তর, কাজ করেনি এ টি এম

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: মুম্বইয়ের তুমুল বৃষ্টিতে আজ বিপর্যস্ত হয়ে পড়ে গোটা দেশের ব্যাঙ্কিং ব্যবস্থা। শুরুতে তেমন তেজী ছিল না শেয়ার বাজারও। ভেঙে পড়ে রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কের সদর দফতরের চেক ক্লিয়ারিং ব্যবস্থা। ফলে প্রায় ১২ লক্ষ চেক আটকে রয়েছে। মুম্বইতে বৃষ্টির জেরে মঙ্গলবার ওই দফতরের প্রায় দু'হাজার কর্মী বাড়ি ফিরতে না-পেরে অফিসেই আটকে ছিলেন। কিন্তু বিদ্যুৎ ও টেলি যোগাযোগ বিপর্যস্ত হয়ে পড়ায়, তাঁরা অফিসে থেকেও কাজ করতে পারেননি।

শেয়ার বাজারে আজ সকাল থেকে লেনদেন শুরু হয় ঠিকই, কিন্তু ব্যাঙ্কিং পরিষেবা অচল হয়ে যাওয়ায় টাকা মেটানো বা শেয়ার হস্তান্তরের কাজ ঠিকমতো হতে পারেনি। তবে দিনের মাঝামাঝি, রিলায়েন্স ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ ও টিস্কোর ত্রৈমাসিক ফলাফল প্রকাশ হওয়ার পরে কয়েক মুহূর্তেই বাজার ফের চাপ্তা হয়ে ওঠে। এমনকী এই বর্ষণমুখর দিনেও নতুন রেকর্ড ছুঁয়ে ফেলে সেনসেব। ৭৫৫৯-এ দিন শুরু করে বাজার বন্ধের সময়ে তা পৌঁছে যায় ৭৬০৫-এ।

তবে অভূতপূর্ব দুর্ঘোষের জেরে আজ বুধবার দেশের সব শেয়ার বাজার বন্ধ রাখার নির্দেশ দিয়েছে সেবি। প্রাকৃতিক দুর্ঘোষের জন্য শেয়ার লেনদেন বন্ধ রাখার ঘটনা এর আগে ঘটেনি। বৃষ্টির জন্য এন আই অ্যাক্টে মহারাষ্ট্র সরকার ছুটি ঘোষণা করায় বৃহস্পতিবার বন্ধ থাকছে রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কের সদর দফতরও। সব মিলিয়ে সারা দেশে ব্যবসায় ঠিক কত কোটি টাকার ক্ষতি করল এই বিপর্যয়, সেই অঙ্ক এখনও অজানা।

এই বিপর্যয়ের জের হাড়ে হাড়ে টের পেয়েছে কলকাতাও। দুর্ঘোষের ঠেলায় বুধবার অচল হয়ে পড়ে গোটা দেশের এ টি এম ব্যবস্থাও। বিশেষ করে যে সব ব্যাঙ্কের হিসাবপত্র মূলত মুম্বইয়ে কম্পিউটারের মাধ্যমে পরিচালিত হয়, নজিরবিহীন বর্ষণের ফলে ব্যাহত হয় তাদের পরিষেবা। এ দিন কলকাতার বিভিন্ন ব্যাঙ্কে এটিএম থেকে টাকা তুলতে গিয়ে ফিরে এসেছেন বহু গ্রাহক। ব্যতিক্রম কয়েক জন ভাগ্যবান। আগামী কাল পরিস্থিতি স্বাভাবিক হবে বলে বিভিন্ন ব্যাঙ্ক কর্তৃপক্ষ অভয় দিলেও, তা কতটা কার্যকর হবে বলা কঠিন। কারণ, আবহাওয়াবিদেরা আরও ৩৬ থেকে ৪৮ ঘন্টা বৃষ্টি হতে পারে বলে জানিয়েছেন। সে ক্ষেত্রে আগামী দু'দিন ব্যাঙ্কিং ব্যবস্থা যে সচল থাকবে, তা হালফ করে বলতে পারছেন না সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যাঙ্ককর্তৃপক্ষগণ।

কলকাতার যে ব্যাঙ্কগুলির এটিএম ব্যবস্থা সব থেকে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়, সেগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে এইচডিএফসি, আই ডিবিআই, ইউটিআই, আইসিআইসিআই এবং স্টেট ব্যাঙ্ক অব ইন্ডিয়া। ওই সব ব্যাঙ্কের তরফে পরে জানানো হয়, তাঁদের 'টেলি এটিএমগুলি মুম্বইয়ের সঙ্গে যুক্ত। সেখানে বিদ্যুৎ এবং টেলিযোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থা অচল থাকায় কলকাতা বা অন্য রাজ্যের এটি এমগুলিও কাজ করছে না।

এইচডিএফসি ব্যাঙ্কের সুরেন্দ্র চাওলা জানান, বুধবার সকাল থেকে তাঁদের এটিএমগুলি অচল হয়ে পড়ে। তবে বিকেল থেকে সেগুলি কাজ করতে শুরু

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়



আটকে থাকা বা

শেয়ার হস্তান্তর

প্রথম পাতার পর করেছেন। আরও বৃষ্টির দরুন অবস্থার অবনতি না হলে আজ, বৃহস্পতিবার গ্রাহকেরা স্বাভাবিক পরিষেবা পাবেন। একই কথা জানান আইডিবিআই ব্যাঙ্কের পূর্বাঞ্চল শাখার প্রধান বৈশাখী বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় এবং ইউটিআই ব্যাঙ্কের ডাইস-প্রেসিডেন্ট তারিক আর্শাদ।

শেয়ারবাজারগুলি আজ বন্ধ রাখার নির্দেশ দিয়েছে সেবি। সোমবার থেকে বুধবার পর্যন্ত তিন দিন ধরে ন্যাশনাল স্টক এক্সচেঞ্জ এবং বম্বে স্টক এক্সচেঞ্জে শেয়ার কেনাবেচা হলেও, দাম মেটানো বা শেয়ার হস্তান্তরের কাজ করা সম্ভব হয়নি। এই অবস্থা চলতে থাকলে, দাম মেটানোর ব্যাপারে সমস্যা হতে পারে। এই আশঙ্কায় লেনদেন পুরোপুরি বন্ধ রাখতে নির্দেশ দিয়েছে সেবি।

মুম্বইয়ে মোবাইল পরিষেবাও ব্যাহত। হাচ, বিপিএল-এর তরফে জানানো হয়েছে, যে সব জায়গায় তাদের বেস ট্রান্সমিসিভার স্টেশন খারাপ হয়ে গিয়েছে, সেই সব জায়গায় বিদ্যুৎ নেই। ডিজেলচালিত জেনারেটর পাঠানো যায়নি। তারা গ্রাহকদের পরামর্শ দিচ্ছে, কম সময়ে কল সেরে প্রয়োজনে এসএমএস করুন।

মুম্বই থেকে হাচের এক অফিসার জানান, শহরে তাঁদের সংস্থার 'অরেঞ্জ' ব্র্যান্ড নামে মোবাইল পরিষেবা ব্যাহত হয়েছে। মহানগরীতে সংস্থার মোট ২০০টি বিটিএস-এর মধ্যে প্রবল বৃষ্টিতে ১০০টি খারাপ হয়ে যায়। জেনারেটর চালিয়ে অবশ্য ৬০টি বিটিএস ফের চালু করা গিয়েছে। মুম্বইয়ে হাচ ছাড়াও এয়ারটেল, বি পি এল, টাটা ইন্ডিকম, এমটিএনএল-এর মোবাইল পরিষেবা আছে। এই পাঁচটি সংস্থার মোট গ্রাহক সংখ্যা ৫০ লক্ষ। বিপদগ্রস্ত মুম্বইবাসী যাতে বিনা পয়সায় স্থানীয় কল করতে পারেন, তার ব্যবস্থা করেছে এয়ারটেল। সংস্থার পক্ষ থেকে জানানো হয়েছে, এই ব্যবস্থা ২৮ জুলাই সকাল ৬টা পর্যন্ত চালু থাকবে।

28 JUL 2005

ANADAR ZAF

বাণিজ্য রাজধানী অচল হল বিরল বৃষ্টিতে, উদ্ধারে সেনা

প্রশান্ত কুণ্ডু • মুম্বই

২৭ জুলাই: অগুস্তি বার্তার মধ্যে ঘুরেফিরে আসছিল কথা ক'টি— “কালিনা বিদ্যায়ের মার্গে পাওয়ারগ্যাস হাউসে আটকে আছি আমরা ১০০ জন। খাবার নেই, জল নেই, বিদ্যুৎ নেই। সাহায্য পাঠাও।”

টিভির পর্দায় ভেসে উঠছিল একের পর এক নাম। কেউ খোঁজ নিচ্ছেন, প্রিয়জনেরা কেমন আছেন। কেউ বাড়িতে জানাচ্ছেন, চিন্তা কোর না। তা ছাড়া উপায়ই বা কী? ভারতের বাণিজ্যিক রাজধানীর বৃকে বিদ্যুৎ-ফোন-ব্যাঙ্ক পরিষেবা নেই। এটিএম কাজ করছে না। চলছে না যানবাহন। এমন দুর্ভোগ মুম্বইয়ের ইতিহাসে এই প্রথম। প্রথম ভারতেও। এক দিনে ৯৪.৪ সেন্টিমিটার রেকর্ড বৃষ্টিপাত মাথা পেতে নিয়ে মুম্বই টেকা দিয়েছে মেঘালয়ের মৌসিনরামকেও। সঙ্গে ফুলেফেঁপে উঠেছে সমুদ্রের জল।

এখনও পর্যন্ত মুম্বই-সহ সারা রাজ্যে ৪৮ ঘণ্টা টানা বৃষ্টিতে ১০০রও বেশি মানুষের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। বেসরকারি মতে সংখ্যাটা ৩০০ ছাড়িয়েছে। প্রাথমিক হিসাবে ক্ষয়ক্ষতির পরিমাণ এখনই ৫০০ কোটি টাকা। আজ বিকেলে অবশ্য বৃষ্টি থেমেছে। জল নামতেও শুরু করেছে। কিন্তু আগামী ৩৬ থেকে ৪৮ ঘণ্টায় আরও বৃষ্টি হতে পারে বলে আবহবিদদের পূর্বাভাস। নান্দেড়ে বিষ্ণুপুরী বাঁধের দিকে সতর্ক নজর রাখা হয়েছে। ত্রাণ-উদ্ধারে নেমেছে সেনাবাহিনী।

মহারাষ্ট্রে এখন পুরোপুরি বিপর্যয়ের পরিস্থিতি। মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর কথায়, “বিরল থেকে বিরলতম ঘটনা।” আজকের পর কালও রাজ্যে সরকারি ছুটি ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে। বন্ধ থাকবে ব্যাঙ্ক এবং শেয়ার বাজার।

মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বিলাসরাও দেশমুখ জানিয়েছেন, মুম্বইয়ে ২২ জন, নবি মুম্বইয়ে ১৬ জন, ঠানেতে ৮ জন এবং রত্নগিরিতে ৬ জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। সাতটি শিশু-সহ ১৪ জন মারা গিয়েছেন আন্ধেরি এলাকায়। ৬০টি গ্রাম সম্পূর্ণ বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে পড়েছে। সবচেয়ে খারাপ অবস্থা রায়গড় জেলার। মৃতের সংখ্যা ৫৬। সোমবার থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে থাকা জুই গ্রামে অবশেষে জওয়ানেরা আজ ঢুকতে পেরেছেন। সেখানে এখনও ধসের তলায় শতাধিক মানুষ আটকে রয়েছেন। নতুন করে ধস নেমেছে দসগাঁওয়ে। মৃতের সংখ্যা ৮। আটকে আছেন ৪০-রও বেশি।

ভারতের বৃহত্তম শহরে বেশি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত এলাকা হল বান্দ্রা, দাদার, মাহিম, সান্তাক্রুজ, কুরলা, ঘাটকোপার, মুলুন্ড ও ঠানে। বহু বাড়িতে নীচের তলায় চার-ছ'ফুট জল। শহরতলির মারোল এলাকার রাস্তায় জলের তোড়ে ভেসে গিয়েছে দু'টি কিশোর। সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে, তারা মানহোলের গর্তে প্রাণ হারিয়েছে। এখনও পর্যন্ত ৪০ হাজার লোককে নিরাপদ স্থানে সরিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়েছে। মুম্বই থেকেই সরাতে হয়েছে ১০ হাজার মানুষকে।

কাল সারা রাত বাড়ি ফিরতে পারেননি অনেকেই। কর্মীরা অফিসে, বাচ্চারা স্কুলে, পর্যটকেরা হোটেলে, যাত্রীরা স্টেশনে আটকে পড়েন। প্রায় দেড় লাখ লোক আটকে ছিলেন শুধু বিভিন্ন রেলস্টেশনেই। ফ্লাইওভারের উপরে সারি সারি গাড়ি, বাস। কেউ নড়ছে না। নীচের রাস্তায় অন্য গাড়িগুলো জলে ভাসছে। আজ 'বেস্ট' পরিবহণের কর্মীরা কালিনা বাস ডিপো থেকে ১০০ জনকে উদ্ধার করেছেন। দশ ফুট জলের মধ্যে দাঁড়িয়েছিল বাসটি। সাধারণ মানুষ ক্ষুব্ধ

কণ্ঠ বলেছেন, “সরকার নাকি সুনামি ঠেকিয়ে দেবে। দু'দিনের বৃষ্টিতেই তো এই অবস্থা।”

নিজের বাড়ি মাতৃশ্রীতে জলবন্দি হয়ে ছিলেন বালসাহেব ঠাকরেও। ছেলে উদ্ধব শেষ পর্যন্ত নৌকা করে তাঁকে তাজ হোটেলে নিয়ে যান। পাশাপাশি, কোন্ধান এলাকায় শিবসেনা থেকে সদ্য-বহিকৃত নেতা নারায়ণ রানে যাতে ত্রাণ-রাজনীতির ফায়দা তুলতে না পারেন, সে দিকেও দৃষ্টি রাখতে হয় তাঁকে। কার্যনির্বাহী সভাপতি শিবসৈনিকদের ওই এলাকায় গিয়ে উদ্ধারে হাত লাগাতে নির্দেশ দেন। আজ নিজের জন্মদিনটি এই ভাবেই পালন করতে চান বলে জানান তিনি।

বৃষ্টির তোড়ে জায়গায় জায়গায় বেঁকে গিয়েছে রেললাইন। আন্তর্জাতিক বিমানবন্দরের রানওয়ে ভাসিয়ে দিয়েছে মিঠি নদীর জল। কাল দুপুর আড়াইটের পর থেকে আর কোনও উড়ান ওঠানামা করতে পারেনি সেখানে। আটটি ভেসেল আটকে রয়েছে মুম্বই পোর্ট ট্রাস্টে। চলেনি ট্রেন। শহরের রাস্তা জলে ডোবা। কাল থেকে দেশের বাকি অংশের সঙ্গে কার্যত কোনও যোগাযোগ ছিল না মুম্বইয়ের। এখনও পর্যন্ত বিমানবন্দর চালু করা যায়নি। ট্রেন চলাচল শুরু হয়েছে আংশিক। চার্চগেট-মহালক্ষ্মী এবং বান্দ্রা-বিরারের মধ্যে ট্রেন চলছে। ভিটি থেকে দাদার পর্যন্ত আধ ঘণ্টায় একটি ট্রেন যাচ্ছে। বেস্ট পরিবহণের ২৪০০ বাসের মধ্যে পথে নামতে পেরেছে ৩৯০টি। মুম্বইয়ের বাইরে বিভিন্ন জায়গায় যে সব ট্রেন আটকে রয়েছে, তার যাত্রীদের উদ্ধার করার জন্য রাজ্য

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

- ভয়ানক জল-বাত্মা গরিব-আমির মুম্বইয়ের ... পৃঃ ৫
- উদিত নারায়ণের গাড়িতে ঘুরছে মাছ ... পৃঃ ৫

বিরল বৃষ্টিতে অচল

প্রথম পাতার পর

সরকারকে নাসিক, মানমাড় এবং পুণেতে বিশেষ বাসের ব্যবস্থা করতে বলা হয়েছে। হাওড়া থেকে মুম্বইগামী আগামী কালের চারটি ট্রেনই বাতিল করা হয়েছে। বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগে আজ মুম্বইয়ে বহু সংবাদপত্র প্রকাশ করা যায়নি। যেগুলি বেরিয়েছে, বেহাল শহরে তা সময় মতো তুলে দেওয়া যায়নি গ্রাহকদের হাতে। তবে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের ভারপ্রাপ্ত সংস্থা রিলায়েন্স এনার্জি লিমিটেড জানিয়েছে, আজ ৭০ শতাংশ জোগান চালু করা হচ্ছে।

মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে নিয়মিত

যোগাযোগ রাখছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ সব রকম সাহায্যের আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল এবং কৃষিমন্ত্রী শরদ পওয়ারের সঙ্গেও তাঁর কথা হয়েছে। তিনি নৌবাহিনীর বিশেষ নৌকা এবং হেলিকপ্টার চেয়ে পাঠিয়েছেন। নৌবাহিনী এবং উপকূল রক্ষীবাহিনী ইতিমধ্যেই সাহায্যে এগিয়ে এসেছে। ত্রাণের কাজে পাঁচ হাজার জওয়ানকে নিযুক্ত করা হয়েছে। আবহাওয়া একটু ভাল হলে কাল পরিস্থিতি পর্যবেক্ষণে যেতে পারেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। যেতে পারেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ও।

Mumbai 94.4 cm; record rain in 95 years

27 killed in city; thousands stranded; suburban train services sporadic; Army, Navy called out

Mumbai Bureau

MUMBAI: The rain that lashed Mumbai continuously for the last 24 hours, submerging large parts of the city and bringing it to a standstill, has broken all records. From 8.30 a.m on Tuesday to 8.30 a.m on Wednesday, Mumbai's suburbs recorded an unprecedented rainfall of 944.2 mm, exceeding the previous high of the world's wettest place Cherrapunjee which received 838.2 mm on July 12, 1910. Mumbai's highest till now, recorded more than 30 years ago on July 5, 1974, was 575.6 mm in the city (Colaba) and 375.2 mm in the suburbs (Santa Cruz), the weather bureau said.

Wednesday dawned with some respite from the continuous rain. However, large parts of the city were inundated and there was little relief for thousands of people stranded on roads and railway platforms, in offices, at the airport and even in schools and colleges. The suburbs went without electricity and telephone, the local trains ran sporadically and the major arterial roads were either inundated or jammed with abandoned vehicles. A massive landslide in Saki Naka brought down a slum settlement killing at least 25 people. The city recorded 27 deaths while the death toll in the State crossed 100. These do not include more than 100 feared buried under a landslide in Jui village in Raigad district. Six districts in the State and 60 villages have been affected. The Army and the Navy were called out to help in rescue and relief operations.

See also Back Page



AFTER THE DELUGE: It is a long, slushy trek for these commuters in Mumbai on Wednesday after torrential rains lashed the city, flooding many areas and bringing all modes of transport to a standstill. - PHOTO: AFP

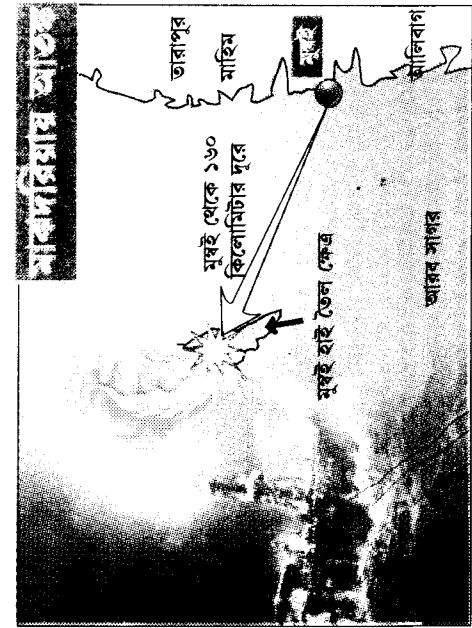
বিপর্যয়ের আর এক নাম মুম্বই

২৪/৭ ১৯৮২ - ১৯৮৩ - ১৯৮৪ - ১৯৮৫ - ১৯৮৬ - ১৯৮৭ - ১৯৮৮ - ১৯৮৯ - ১৯৯০ - ১৯৯১ - ১৯৯২ - ১৯৯৩ - ১৯৯৪ - ১৯৯৫ - ১৯৯৬ - ১৯৯৭ - ১৯৯৮ - ১৯৯৯ - ২০০০ - ২০০১ - ২০০২ - ২০০৩ - ২০০৪ - ২০০৫ - ২০০৬ - ২০০৭ - ২০০৮ - ২০০৯ - ২০১০ - ২০১১ - ২০১২ - ২০১৩ - ২০১৪ - ২০১৫ - ২০১৬ - ২০১৭ - ২০১৮ - ২০১৯ - ২০২০ - ২০২১ - ২০২২ - ২০২৩ - ২০২৪ - ২০২৫

বিধবংসী আঞ্জন মুম্বই হাইয়ে, বছ মৃত্যুর আশঙ্কা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, মুম্বই ও নন্দাঙ্কি, ২৭ জুলাই: জনজীবন শুধু করে দেওয়ার সঙ্গেই মুম্বইয়ে আরও বড় বিপর্যয় ডেকে আনল বৃষ্টি ও জলোচ্ছ্বাস। আজ বিকেল চারটে-সাতটে চারটে নাগাদ উত্তাল সমুদ্রে নিয়ন্ত্রণ হারিয়ে মুম্বই হাইয়ের একটি তেল উৎপাদন প্ল্যাটফর্মে ধাক্কা মারে শিপিং কর্পোরেশনের ভেসেল। প্ল্যাটফর্ম, আঞ্জন লেগে যায়। হতাহতের সংখ্যা নিয়ে নির্দিষ্ট কিছু জানা না-গেলেও বেশ কিছু কর্মী যে মারা যাবে, সন্দেহেই সে কথা কার্যত স্বীকার করে নেন কেন্দ্রীয় পেট্রোলিয়ামমন্ত্রী মণিশঙ্কর আইয়ার। ওএনজিসি-র তরফে বেশি রাতে জানানো হয়, অন্তত পাঁচ জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। এখনও অন্তত ৪৪ জন নিখোঁজ থাকায় মৃতের সংখ্যা বেশ

অভিযানে নামানো হয়েছে। উদ্ধার পাওয়া কর্মীদের বিমানবাহিনীর চপারে মুম্বই বিমানবন্দরে নিয়ে আসার চেষ্টা করা হবে বলে রাত্রে এক সময় জানানো হয়েছিল। পরে আবার ওএনজিসি কর্তৃপক্ষ জানান, খারাপ আবহাওয়ার জন্য উদ্ধারপ্রাপ্তদের মুম্বই নিয়ে আসার ব্যবস্থা হচ্ছে জলপথেই। তাঁদের নিয়ে কাল বিকালে জাহাজ মুম্বই পৌঁছবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে। মুম্বইয়ের সমুদ্রতট থেকে প্রায় ১৬০ কিলোমিটার দূরে আরব সাগরের মাঝে তেল ক্ষেত্র মুম্বই হাই। সেখানে একাধিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম তৈরি করে তেল তোলে ওএনজিসি। দেশের মোট তেল উৎপাদনের বড় অংশই আসে মুম্বই হাই থেকে। দুর্ঘটনার ফলে তেল উৎপাদন যে বড় রকমের ধাক্কা খাবে, তা জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন আইয়ার। ক্ষতির পরিমাণ



রাহা অবশ্য জানান, মুম্বই হাইয়ের অন্যান্য প্ল্যাটফর্মে উৎপাদন সাতাধিক। বর্ষশে বিপর্যয় মুম্বইয়ে দুর্ঘটনার খবর এসে পৌঁছয় সন্ধ্যায়। যেখানে দুর্ঘটনা ঘটেছে, সেই জায়গাটা জলপথে যেতে সময় লাগে প্রায় ছ'ঘণ্টা। এই অবস্থায় আকাশপথে উদ্ধার চালানোই ছিল সুবিধাজনক। কিন্তু বাপ মায়ে বৃষ্টি মুম্বইয়ে পবনহংসের যে ক'টি হেলিকপ্টার আছে, তার কোনওটিই বিমানবন্দরে ও হেলিপ্যাডে জল জমে থাকায় উড়তে পারেনি। ফলে নৌসেনার দ্বারস্থ হয় ওএনজিসি। তখনকার মতো নৌবাহিনীর দু'টি জাহাজকে পাঠানো হয়। সাহায্য চাওয়া হয় উপকূল রক্ষী বাহিনীর। ওএনজিসি-র সব ভেসেলকেও উদ্ধারে নামার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়। কিন্তু তাতেও বাদ মায়ে খারাপ আবহাওয়া।

দিয়েছেন। তাঁদের সম্পর্কে খবর মিলতে মিলতে সকাল হয়ে যাবে। এর পরে বেশি রাতে ওএনজিসি এবং উপকূল রক্ষী বাহিনী সূত্রে জানা যায়, ৩৩৬ জনকে উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে। তবে এটাই চূড়ান্ত সংখ্যা কি না, সে ব্যাপারে ধোঁয়াশা কাটেনি। ওএনজিসি-র হট লাইন-সহ অন্য যোগাযোগ ভেঙে পড়ায় খবর পেতেও অসুবিধা হচ্ছে। দুর্ঘটনার খবর পেয়েই দিল্লিতে শাস্ত্রী ভবনে জরুরি বৈঠক করেন আইয়ার। সঙ্গে ছিলেন সুবীর রাহা-সহ ওএনজিসি-র পদাধিকারীরা। আইয়ার ও সুবীরবাবু তখনই চাটার্জি বিমানে মুম্বই যেতে চান। কিন্তু সেখানে সমস্ত বিমানবন্দর বন্ধ থাকায় তা সম্ভব হয়নি। কাল মহারাষ্ট্রে বন্যা দেখতে যাওয়ার কথা প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন

ANADABAZAR PAINA

মুম্বই হাইয়ে
প্রথম পাতার পর
সিংহের। সবটাই অবশ্য নির্ভর করছে
আবহাওয়ার উপরে। মুম্বই যেতে
পারলে আকাশপথে মুম্বই হাইয়ের
পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখবেন তিনি।
উদ্ধার কাজে সাহায্য চেয়ে
প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের
সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করেন আইয়ার। নৌ-
সেনাপ্রধানকে ডেকে পাঠিয়ে
প্রয়োজনীয় নির্দেশ দেন প্রণববাবু।
সুবীর রাহাকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে আজ
সাংবাদিক সম্মেলন করেন আইয়ার।
গোড়াতেই জানিয়ে দেন, বড় ধরনের
বিপর্যয় ঘটে গিয়েছে। প্রাণহানির
সম্ভাবনাও যে যথেষ্ট, তা-ও কবুল করে
নেন। বলেন, ঠিক কত জন ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত,
তা কাল সকালের আগে বলা যাবে না।
১৯৮২ সালে কানাডার পূর্বতটের
ড্রিলিং রিগ গোটাটাই তলিয়ে
গিয়েছিল সমুদ্র গর্ভে। প্রাণ
হারিয়েছিলেন রিগে থাকা ৮৪ জন
কর্মী। মুম্বই হাইয়ে আজকের দুর্ঘটনা
প্রাণহানির নিরিখে তাকে ছাপিয়ে যাবে
কি না, তা বলার সময় আসেনি।
কোনও তরফের গাফিলতিই দুর্ঘটনার
জন্য দায়ী কি না, তা-ও এই মুহূর্তে
বলা সম্ভব নয়। কিন্তু ঘটনা হল, তিন
বছর আগে আঞ্জন লাগার জেরে গড়া
কমিটি নিরাপত্তার ব্যাপারে যে সব
সুপারিশ করেছিল, তা বাস্তবায়িত
হয়নি এখনও।

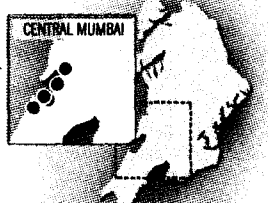
এর পর পাতের পাতায়

Manohar Joshi's son buys mill land at Rs 15,000/sq ft

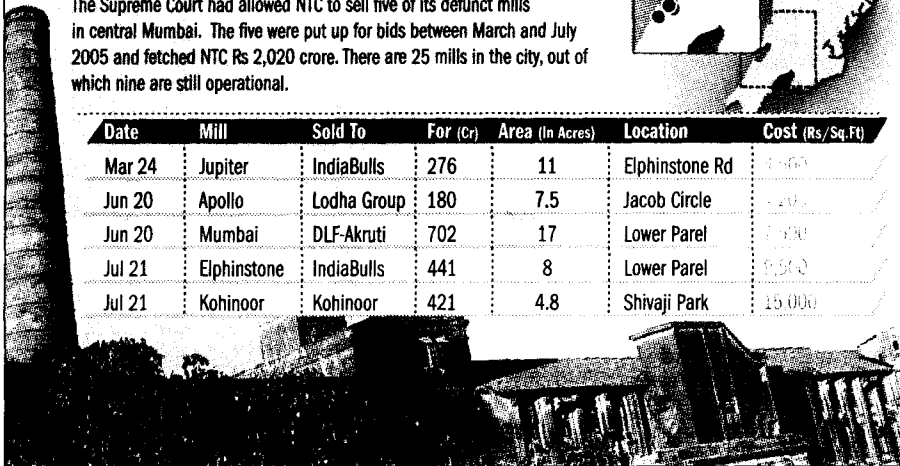
Teams Up With Raj Thackeray's Associates In Rs 421 Crore Bid For Kohinoor

Kohinoor For Kohinoor

The Supreme Court had allowed NTC to sell five of its defunct mills in central Mumbai. The five were put up for bids between March and July 2005 and fetched NTC Rs 2,020 crore. There are 25 mills in the city, out of which nine are still operational.



Date	Mill	Sold To	For (Cr)	Area (In Acres)	Location	Cost (Rs/Sq.Ft)
Mar 24	Jupiter	IndiaBulls	276	11	Elphinstone Rd	2500
Jun 20	Apollo	Lodha Group	180	7.5	Jacob Circle	2400
Jun 20	Mumbai	DLF-Akruti	702	17	Lower Parel	4100
Jul 21	Elphinstone	IndiaBulls	441	8	Lower Parel	5500
Jul 21	Kohinoor	Kohinoor	421	4.8	Shivaji Park	15,000



TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Umesh Joshi, 40-year-old son of Shiv Sena leader Manohar Joshi, sent the city's real estate market rocketing into the stratosphere on Thursday when his Kohinoor Projects bagged the National Textile Corporation's (NTC) Kohinoor Mill No 3 at Shivaji Park for a mind-numbing Rs 421 crore. Umesh has teamed up with Matoshri Re-

► **JOSHI'S RICHES:** Former CM Manohar Joshi, who lost the '04 LS elections from Mumbai North-Central, had declared that he didn't even own a car. P 3

altors, headed by Sena leader Raj Thackeray's associates Rajan Shirodkar and Ashutosh Rane, to develop the prime real estate.

Three hours later another NTC property, the eight-acre Elphinstone Mills at Lower Parel, fetched the highest bid of Rs 441 crore from IndiaBulls, a financial services company. IndiaBulls had in March snapped up the 11-acre Jupiter Mills at Elphinstone Road, where it is plan-

ning two 40-storey commercial buildings.

When NTC put the 4.8 acre landmark Kohinoor Mills (located close to the Dadar railway station) on the block, virtually every big builder in Mumbai and Delhi had evinced keen interest in the property. In fact, just last week, as many as 35 representatives of different developers turned up for the pre-bid meeting.

Many in the property market were expecting a dog-eat-dog fight among builders for this lucrative real estate. But on Thursday, when the bids were finally opened at the Ballard Estate office of the NTC, it turned out that only three developers were in the fray. This has led to raised eyebrows in the industry. The two other bidders were Varun Industries Limited (Rs 411.11 crore) and Akruti Nirman (Rs 355 crore).

The location of Kohinoor No 3—one of the five defunct NTC mills in Mumbai which have been sold so far—helped in its value being settled at Rs 14,898 per sq ft, nearly double that of Mumbai Textile Mill (Rs 7,500 a sq ft), which last month was sold to Gurgaon-based devel-

opers DLF and Akruti Nirman for Rs 702 crore. Dadar is not only Joshi's political stronghold, but also an area where his family has vast business interests. The Kohinoor Group is the most prominent real estate developer in Dadar with nearly 50-60 projects there.

► **UNREAL ESTATE?** Is too much money chasing too few plots in the city? Will rates of residential property zoom after the gravity-defying prices fetched by NTC mill plots recently? TOI brings you the ground reality. P 3

The Joshis are forking out about Rs 87 crore for each of the 4.8 acres of Kohinoor. In contrast, the DLF-Akruti Nirman combine is paying Rs 41 crore per acre for the 17-acre Mumbai Textiles Mill.

"At this rate, the Joshis can only go in for a retail mall and sell the space in excess of Rs 18,000 a sq ft if they are to make the normal 30% profit," said Knight Frank (India) chairman Pranay Vakil.

► **'Joshis can sell retail mall land at Rs 25,000/sq ft', P 3**

পুলিস্কো নিয়ে
৭ রাজনৈতিক
চাপান-উত্তোর

০৮/০৮/৫৬

ভুবনেশ্বর, ২০ জুলাই: ওড়িশায়
কোরীয় ইম্পাত সংস্থা পক্ষের ৫১
হাজার কোটি টাকা লগ্নির ইম্পাত
কারখানা তৈরির চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরের পর
শিল্পমহলে উদ্দীপনার পারদ চড়লেও,
প্রকল্পকে ঘিরে রাজনৈতিক চাপান-
উত্তোর চরমে পৌঁছেছে। রাজ্যের
বিরোধী কংগ্রেস দলই শুধু নয়,
কোরীয় সংস্থা পক্ষের সঙ্গে রাজ্য
সরকারের চুক্তির 'স্বচ্ছতা' নিয়ে শাসক
জোটের দুই শরিক বিজেডি এবং
বিজেপির মধ্যেও চলেছে বাকবিতণ্ডা।

বুধবার ভুবনেশ্বরে রাজ্যের
কংগ্রেস সভাপতি জয়দেব জানা এবং
বিরোধী নেতা জে বি পট্টনায়কের
নেতৃত্বে বিক্ষোভকারীরা ভুবনেশ্বের
অতিরিক্ত জেলাশাসকের দফতরে
জড়ো হয়ে পক্ষো চুক্তিতে রাজ্য
সরকারের ভূমিকার কড়া সমালোচনা-
সহ অতিরিক্ত জেলাশাসকের ক্বাছে
একটি দাবিপত্র পেশ করেছেন।

গত ২২ জুন পক্ষো চুক্তি স্বাক্ষরের
সময় রাজ্যের বিজেপি শীর্ষনেতা তথা
রাজ্যের শিল্পমন্ত্রী বিশ্বভূষণ হরিচরণের
অনুপস্থিতি থেকেই এই প্রকল্প সম্পর্কে
বিজেপির মনোভাব স্পষ্ট। দুই
শরিকের মধ্যে প্রকল্পকে ঘিরে
মতবিরোধ ঢাকার সমস্ত চেষ্টি সত্ত্বেও,
মতানৈক্য আরও উস্কে দিয়েছে
মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নবীন পট্টনায়ককে লেখা
রাজ্যের বিজেপি নেতা জুয়াল
ওরামের পক্ষো প্রকল্প সংক্রান্ত এক
চিঠি। ওরামের অভিযোগ, রাজ্যের
কিছু আমলা মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে বিপথে
চালিত করেছেন। মন্ত্রীসভার
সতীর্থদের সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে অবহিত
করেননি মুখ্যমন্ত্রী।

এ ছাড়া প্রকল্পের জন্য বাজার
থেকে লৌহ আকরিক কেনার কথা না
বলে কোরীয় সংস্থাকে খনি লিজ
দেওয়া নিয়েও চিঠিতে প্রশ্ন তোলা
হয়েছে। — পি টি আই

BJD defends Posco plan, dissenters raise pitch

Nageshwar Patnaik
BHUBANESWAR 19 JULY

WITH the CPI, CPM, Orissa Gana Parishad (OGP) and JD(S) gearing up for a protest rally and public meeting again on July 24 for the Posco project, the Naveen Patnaik government and the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) are leaving no stone unturned to defend the project.

Mr Patnaik's problem has further compounded with the coalition partner, BJP raising a hue and cry on allowing Posco to export iron ore from the country in the name of swapping high-grade ore. Even the Congress party is opposed to certain conditions in the MoU recently signed by the state government with Posco.

The defence for the Posco project unexpectedly came from Ersama MLA and BJD general secretary, Dr Damodar Rout, who has privately expressed his unhappiness over the Posco project in the past.

"The Posco project will ensure holistic development of the state. The Opposition parties have lost sight of the positive impact of the country's biggest-ever foreign direct investment in the state. The Opposition leaders are envious

and intolerant of Naveen Patnaik's dynamic leadership", Mr Rout, who is also panchayati raj and cultural minister in the Patnaik-led Cabinet said here at a press conference.

Mr Rout made it clear that the Rs 51,000-crore steel plant project at Paradip had the blessings of the Manmohan Singh government from the very beginning.

"Even the Centre has agreed to invest Rs 2,321 crore on the four-laning of roads and Rs 1,623 crore for the rail linkages. Posco will also build a port which will be ultimately handed over to the state government. If the Orissa government gains by all these infrastructural developments without spending a single penny besides sparking off development all around Paradip due to the Posco project, why should anyone cry foul?" he asked.

Hitting hard at the Left parties and the Congress, Mr Rout pointed out that the Orissa government could not have proceeded an inch on the Posco project, had the Manmohan Singh government backed by the Left parties not cleared the single largest FDI project. "The Union government only has the authority to lease out mines and give forest and environmental clearance to the Posco

project", he pointed out. The entire opposition to the Posco project revolved around the concessions to the company to mine and export iron ore at a price which is about 6% of the market price.

"In 2004, Posco sold 30 million tonnes of crude steel for \$190 billion with a net profit of \$37 billion. From 12 million tonnes of crude steel Posco will produce from Orissa's iron ores per year, it can thus generate an estimated net profit of \$14.8 billion per year even if Posco buys our iron ore at prevailing market prices".

"Why should Shri Naveen Patnaik agree to sell Orissa's iron ore to Posco at a meagre 6% of market price fetched by the Orissa mining corporation from the same mines slated to be transferred to Posco, unless, of course, private deals for kickbacks have been made?" US based financial economist, Sankarshan Acharya on Tuesday told *ET* over the phone from Chicago.

Mr Rout, however, countered saying that a tonne of iron ore costs about Rs 250-400 at the pit head and transport of a tonne of iron ore to Paradip costs about Rs 1,800-2,000. "People should not confuse the price of ore at the pit head and at the port dockyard", he said.

The Economic Times

20 JUL 2004

Naxalites kill five in Orissa

Fourth attack in 4 months; alert on

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, JULY 7

STRIKING late Wednesday night, Left extremists killed five people across Tamparsingha, Banjaridikira and Larabira villages in a remote part of Orissa's Sambalpur district.

It is suspected that the attacks were carried out by members of the CPI(ML). An alert has been sounded in all Naxal-hit districts.

DGP Suchit Das, who reviewed security arrangements on Thursday morning, has ordered a Central Reserve Police Force mobilisation from Mayurbhanj to boost the Orissa State Armed Police presence at Sambalpur.

Combing operations have been intensified and all bordering areas have been sealed. Three Special Operation Group teams have been pressed into service, while the IG (Operations) has been deputed to inquire into the inci-

dent. The Sambalpur SP SK Nath has also rushed to the area, the DGP said.

Police sources said more than 30 heavily-armed Naxals descended on Tamparsingha at about midnight on Wednesday. There they attacked Gurucharan Nayak, the husband of a village panchayat samiti member. They then went on to loot a grocery shop before bombing the shop-owner's house.

The extremists then trekked to Banjaridikira where they killed three people—Janma Majhi, Iswar Majhi and Desi Majhi. At about 4.30 a.m., they reached Larabira where they slit the throat of a teacher, Surubabu Podha.

The ghastly operation took five hours. Police said the villages are all located in dense forests. Larabira, the last point of attack, was the closest to Jujumara Police Station—17 km away.

This is the fourth incident of Naxal violence in the state in as many months.

INDIA'S BIGGEST-EVER FDI DEAL

Orissa govt signs MoU with Posco

2361
Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, June 22. — Global steel major Posco today signed an MoU with the Orissa government for a 12-million ton steel plant at Paradip, entailing the biggest ever FDI in the country worth Rs 51,000 crore, all over the next 11 years.

A final Memorandum of Agreement will be signed later this year after Posco sets up a local corporation in August and undertakes a feasibility analysis. The land purchase, rehabilitation and resettlement programme will be worked out on the basis of the detailed study and then an MoA will be signed.

The project will also include setting up of a dedicated port and a captive power plant. The first module of 3-million ton is expected to be completed by June 2010. It involves an investment of \$3 billion.



Orissa chief minister Mr Naveen Patnaik and senior Posco officials during the signing of the MoU. — Prahlad Mahato

The MoU said Posco would build a 3-million ton capacity steel plant, blast furnace or Finex route, during the first phase between 2007-2010 and expand the final production to 12 MT.

Posco chairman Mr Ku Taek Lee said that through this project the company would become a part of the Indian economy and contribute to realising its potential. Chief minister Mr Naveen Patnaik claimed that the state would

earn Rs 700 to Rs 800 crore per year through direct and indirect taxes, cess.

The recommendation for mining lease will be made in two phases commensurate with the first two modules and the last two modules of 3 million tons each.

Opposition parties protested against the deal. Congress said it would prevent the export of iron ore from the state and the Left, OGP and JD(S) activists courted arrests.

Orissa readies for Posco D-day

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Bhubaneswar, June 21: Ignoring opposition to the establishment of Posco steel plant, the Orissa government is all set to sign a memorandum of understanding tomorrow evening with Pohang Steel Company for setting up a 12-million tonne steel plant in the state. The opposing parties had demanded a debate on certain controversial clauses in the proposal.

With less than 24 hours to go for the MoU, the state is rolling out a red carpet welcome to the 36-member delegation from the South Korean steel giant and other dignitaries, including South Korean ambassador Jung Il Choi.

The conference hall on the third floor of the state secretariat is being given a facelift for the mega event, which promises to bring in the biggest ever FDI of Rs 52,000 crore into the country.

The Posco project involves building a 12-million-tonne steel plant, a 30-million-

tonne iron ore mine, a mill for making hot-rolled coil and a sea port. The steel plant is likely to start production by 2009. The state has so far signed MoU with 36 mineral-based industries.

The Posco team will be headed by chairman Ku Taek Lee. Other members include heads of architecture, steel-making, refractory, electrification and other departments.

The CM's office along with the departments of steel and mines, forest and environment, law and the chief secretary's office are working overnight to give a final shape to the document. The steel and mines department and Ipicol are preparing the draft. Chief minister Naveen Patnaik is learnt to have issued a diktat to all departments concerned to prepare a flawless draft. Chatterjee is overseeing the drafting of the document.

The MoU allows Posco to swap 30 per cent of the 600-million-tonne iron ore allotted to it. The steel major has reduced

its iron ore linkage demand from 1 billion tonne and also agreed to 'no net export of ore'. Earlier, it had insisted on exporting a small portion of high-grade ore to Brazil.

But the state government had insisted that the company should first import low-grade ore from Brazil. Only then Posco will be allowed to export equal quantity ore, said steel and mines minister Padmanabh Behera.

He said the company would require 4,000 acres for the plant and 1,500 acres for the township at Paradip. Fifty per cent of the produce would be sold in the domestic market and the rest would be exported.

The state is expected to earn a revenue of Rs 700-800 crore per annum from this. The project would directly employ 13,000 people and provide indirect jobs to another 35,000.

Once the company starts manufacturing, the government would be able to offset a debt burden of Rs 33,000 crore from the revenue generated by this project.

Krishna snubs govt, doesn't sign dance bar ban ordinance

■ **BAN** | Governor to govt: what's the hurry, let House decide; Dy CM, ban architect, unhappy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JUNE 23

THE Congress-led state government in Maharashtra received a jolt on Thursday when Governor S M Krishna returned the controversial ordinance banning dance bars, saying the matter did not merit immediate attention.

Clearance for the dance bar ordinance had become a prestige issue for the state government, especially Deputy Chief Minister R R Patil, who announced the ban on moral grounds during the Budget session of the legislature on March 30. Patil claimed dance bars were corrupting youth and that the trade was exploitative in nature.

Despite reservations in certain sections of the government, the draft ordinance was cleared by the state Cabinet on June 1 and sent to the Governor for his approval a day later.



Krishna (extreme right) on Thursday

Announcing his decision to return the ordinance after a day-long meeting with officials at Raj Bhavan, Krishna said, "There are enough and more precedents in Maharashtra itself where ordinances were not promulgated in view of the ensuing legislative session."

"There are times when circumstances may arise which compel immediate action to be taken so that public interest does not suffer. The power to promulgate an ordinance is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Krishna snubs Maharashtra govt

essentially a power to be used to meet an extraordinary situation."

Calling for a debate on the issue, the Governor said it would be in keeping with Parliamentary conventions and tradition for the proposed Bombay Police (Amendment) Ordinance, 2005 to be introduced in the forthcoming monsoon session of the legislature as a bill.

To stress his point, the Governor said that he had approved an ordinance amending the Electricity Act, which was sent along with the one banning dance bars. The reason for this approval, he stressed, was that in the latter case, immediate action was warranted in the public good, namely prevention of theft of power.

While admitting that the Governor acted within his constitutional rights, Deputy CM R R Patil made his annoyance apparent: "It would have been better if

he (Krishna) had asked us for clarifications."

Patil said he had even written a personal letter to Krishna requesting him to sign the ordinance. "Now we will take the Bill in the monsoon session of the legislature," he announced.

Sources close to Patil said the letter had stressed on the urgency of the issue saying "delay in signing the ordinance is taking a toll on the image of the government." Sources said the government would try to clear the bill in the very first week of the legislative session beginning July 11.

The Governor had given clear indications even yesterday during a meeting with the Dance Bar Virodhi Manch that he did not consider the issue urgent enough to merit an ordinance.

Although political parties across the spectrum have backed the ban, concerns regarding the rehabil-

itation of the over 70,000 women employed as bargirls in Mumbai have grown. Congress chief Sonia Gandhi had also emphasised on the need to safeguard the women's economic rights after a delegation of bargirls met her in New Delhi.

Titled the Bombay Police (Amendment) ordinance 2005, the provision prohibits eateries and bars across the state from staging dance performances, but exempts star restaurants.

The BJP reacted to the Governor's decision by blaming the state's coalition partners. BJP state unit chief Nitin Gadkari said the lack of coordination and differences between the ruling Congress and NCP had confused Krishna. He alleged that though the ordinance was unanimously approved by the Cabinet, it was indirectly opposed by the Congress.

24 JUN 2005

State cabinet okays ban on dance bars

Mumbai: The Maharashtra cabinet on Wednesday approved an ordinance banning dance bars in the state despite stiff opposition from bar owners and dance girls.

A 'final decision' on banning the dance bars would be taken in the next cabinet meeting, deputy chief minister R R Patil told reporters here after the cabinet meeting, implying that the actual implementation may take some time.

Patil, who had announced the decision to ban the dance bars in the recent budget session of the state legislature, said the government had decided to come out with an ordinance as advised by the advocate general and in consultation with the law and judiciary department. This was also keeping in view the opposition by dance bar owners' association and their attempts at seeking legal recourse, he said. PTI

19 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Oppn mum over rape incident

By S Balakrishnan/TNN

Mumbai: The recent rape of a minor student in a police chowky by a constable in a crowded place like Marine Drive shocked Mumbai. But the opposition parties are hardly doing anything to turn the heat on the Democratic Front government.

The state unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) convened a press conference to denounce the incident but, its ally, the Shiv Sena, did not do even that. With the two main opposition parties failing to take the issue to the people, it was left to angry citizens to organise a spontaneous protest in front of the chowky where the drunk constable carried out the act.

Why is it that the opposition is going soft on the DF government? The answer could be found in an upcoming event where a pictorial biography of Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray will be launched by BJP leader A B Vajpayee in the presence of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar, BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan, and NDA convenor George Fernandes.

The function will take place on May 11 at the Gateway of India. Political observers suspect that the coming together of these leaders is indicative of a subtle political realignment taking place in Maharashtra. The NCP, which was denied the chief ministership by the Congress despite having more MLAs, is still looking for ways to capture the prime post.

Before the last parliamentary elections, BJP president L K Advani had tried to sell the idea of a BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP axis to Thackeray. However, the latter was aloof to the proposal. But now Thackeray is openly talking of joining hands with Pawar. A senior AICC functionary told TOI recently:

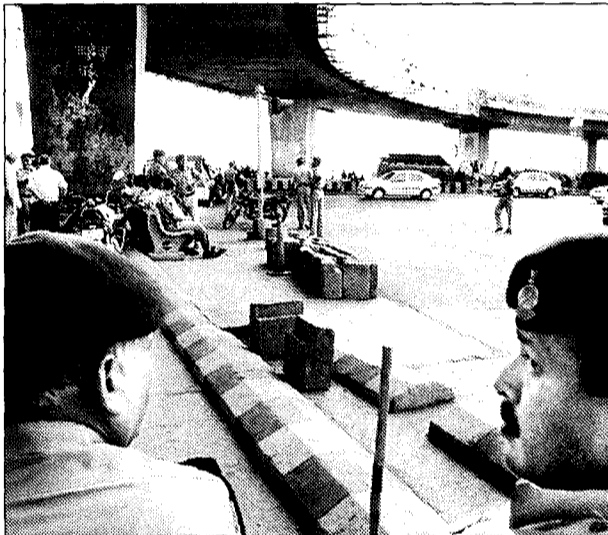
the government.

A senior BJP functionary said "The critical power situation, death of 75,000 tribal children due to malnutrition, public debt of Rs 1.1 lakh crore, the government's failure to come to the rescue of cotton and onion growers and the law and order situation are all live issues on which we ought to have put the DF on the mat. But our leaders appear to be having other priorities."

Meanwhile, differences have cropped up within the DF on the issue of banning dance bars. It is learnt that deputy chief minister R.R. Patil had argued at last week's cabinet meeting that the ban be confined to only dance bars outside Mumbai. But other ministers overruled him.

Chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh pointed out that the government cannot discriminate between dance bars in Mumbai and outside Mumbai and if such a decision is taken then it is certain to be struck down by the courts. However, Patil pointed out that there is prohibition in Wardha district, while

the rest of the state is wet. The overwhelming majority in the cabinet did not buy that argument and decided on a comprehensive ban. Representatives of the bar dancers have approached both Congress president Sonia Gandhi and NCP head Sharad Pawar in a bid to change the cabinet's decision. "I won't be surprised if, like the stay on slum demolition, the proposed ban is also put in cold storage," a state minister stated.



Four days on, Marine Drive residents are still in a state of shock after the rape of teenager in a police chowky (now removed) at this spot

"the game appears to be to isolate our party." With the NCP being an important constituent of the DF ministry, the principal opposition parties, the Sena and the BJP, apparently do not want to spoil the chances of a political realignment by coming down harshly on the state government. That is why on many issues, the saffron parties have restricted themselves to verbally criticising the government, but are not doing much to mobilise the masses against

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 APR 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

No-trust motion against Rajasthan Speaker

By Our Special Correspondent

JAIPUR, MARCH 28. After a major turmoil over communal clashes in Sojat town of Pali district during the Holi festivities, the Congress-led Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly today moved a notice for no-confidence motion against the Speaker, Sumitra Singh, accusing her of taking a "dictatorial" stand by refusing to allow raising of the issue in the House. The Assembly was adjourned for the day after over an hour of disruptions and pandemonium.

The clash over taking out of a Holi procession through a predominantly Muslim locality in Sojat had left 14 persons injured while dozens of shops were set on fire and houses and some mosques damaged by rioters on Saturday. Indefinite curfew, clamped after riots, continues to be in force in Sojat.

The trouble in the Assembly started after question hour when the Speaker rejected an adjournment motion moved by the Congress MLA, Sanyam Lodha, on the issue and ruled that the State Government would make a statement on the incident "after getting full information".

When the Congress members pointed out that the Leader of Opposition, B.D. Kalla, had already visited the troubled town and sought the Speaker's permission for informing the House of the situation there, Ms. Sumitra Singh stated that a full debate could not be called at this juncture. On this, the entire Opposition trooped into the well of the House and raised slogans against the Government.

Mr. Lodha charged that the

Forest and Environment Minister, Laxminarain Dave — elected to the Assembly from Sojat — was sitting in the town's police station and directing the mobs indulging in arson for more than three hours. "There was a complete anarchy in the town and the violence was presided over by Mr. Dave," Mr. Lodha said while demanding the Minister's resignation.

Mr. Kalla pointed out that no Minister, except Mr. Dave, had visited Sojat so far and said the victims were being terrorised even when they were at the receiving end. "The State Government extended full protection to the rioters and took no action to safeguard the life and property as well as the religious places of the minorities," he said.

The Congress members, who were joined by the Independents and the lone CPI(M) MLA, Amra Ram, demanded that the State Government institute a judicial inquiry by a sitting Judge of the High Court into the riots and pay adequate compensation to those whose shops and houses were damaged in the arson. "The assistance of Rs. 5,000 each announced by the district administration is a pittance," Mr. Kalla said.

Despite the uproar in the House, the Speaker went ahead with the business listed for the day and got the demands passed by voice vote of the treasury benches. The Opposition MLAs, led by Mr. Kalla, then moved the notice for no-confidence motion against Ms. Sumitra Singh and handed it over to the Assembly Secretary.

The Home Minister, Gulab Chand Kataria, intervening during the commotion, accused the Opposition of siding with the

"anti-social elements" who had thrown stones at the Holi procession and affirmed the State Government's resolve not to spare the culprits. He said Sojat had witnessed a similar situation during the Congress rule in 1986 when the trouble continued for over 25 days.

The Deputy Speaker, Ramnarain Bishnoi, who occupied the chair during the turmoil, adjourned the House for the day when the uproar continued with the Opposition MLAs staging a dharna in the well and raising anti-Government slogans and the treasury members retaliating by shouting counter-slogans. The Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje, sat silently during the commotion.

Meanwhile, curfew in Sojat was relaxed for five hours in two stages today and the situation was under control with no untoward incident reported from anywhere. The district administration was trying to convene another meeting of the Peace Committee late this evening to restart the dialogue between the two communities and restore communal harmony.

The CPI(M) and the Rajasthan Muslim Forum have condemned the State Government's "inaction" in controlling the violence that led to widespread damage to the places of worship, houses and shops, besides leaving a large number of people injured. The Muslim Forum alleged that the violence formed part of a conspiracy "on the Gujarat pattern" to cause financial losses to the minorities. The Forum's convenor, Qari Moinuddin, said the damage caused to the Muslim community in Sojat was to the tune of Rs. 70 lakhs.

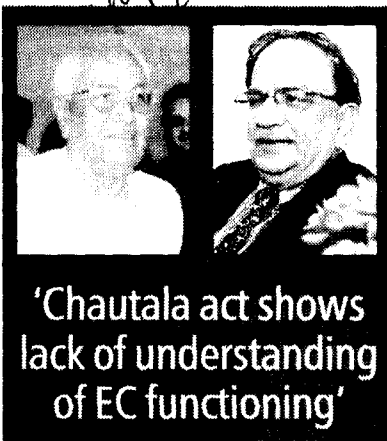
CM misunderstood: EC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI | FEBRUARY 19

PAINED and anguished over Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala's stinging remarks against Chief Election Commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy, the Election Commission today said the singling out of one of its members amounted to "character assassination".

"Apart from the fact that such remarks bring down a constitutional authority in public estimation, the same show the lack of understanding of the Commission's functioning," a statement from the EC said today.

"The allegation made against the Commission as also against its officers are categorically dismissed as beneath contempt," the note said.



Taking an indirect dig at Chautala, it said that "some misunderstanding" has been created in the minds of the people on account of the decision taken by the Commission to advance the dates

of the counting of votes from February 27 to February 23.

It has been the practice for votes to be counted after the polling process is completed in all the states and keeping this in view, the EC said, February 27 was agreed on originally for the counting of votes in all three states, the other two being Bihar and Jharkhand.

"However, the Commission, on reconsideration, felt that...the results of elections in Haryana, even if announced on the evening of February 23, would not have any adverse effect on the polling in Bihar and Jharkhand," the EC added.

On the issue of postal ballots, EC officials said, "The Commission has already directed the returning officers to count all postal ballots by 4 pm on February 23."

INDIAN EXPRESS

20 FEB 2005

State helped gutka kings flee, says Rane

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The state home department has made deliberate attempts to facilitate the fleeing of gutka kings Rasiklal Dhariwal and J B Joshi to Dubai, leader of the opposition Narayan Rane said at a press conference on Monday.

"Key police officials have been asked to go slow on the Dhariwal-Joshi case. The names of the two accused do not figure in the crime sheet," the Sena leader said.

Senior BJP leader Gopinath Munde, who too was present at the press meet, said the Democratic Front government had exhibited "a complete lack of responsibility" while tackling the Dhariwal case.

The two gutka kingpins are facing charges under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crimes Act (MCOCA) following their alleged visit to Karachi last year to enlist Dawood Ibrahim's intervention in a business dispute. The two have been accused of setting up a gutka unit in Karachi for Dawood Ibrahim's brother.

Rane questioned the DF government's move to hand over the gutka case to the CBI. "This means the state home department is not capable of resolving the case and apprehend Dhariwal," he said. "There has been no demand from any quarter to hand over the case to the CBI. We want to know what has prompted the state government to take this step."

Rane and Munde released the names of the members in the shadow cabinet launched by the Sena-BJP alliance. The shadow cabinet will keep tab on the DF government and solve people's problems, they said.

The shadow cabinet has 38 'ministers', including Dattaji Nalavade, Subhash Desai, Eknath Khadse, Raj Purohit, Sudhir Mungantiwar, Bala Nandgaonkar, Prakash Mehta and Manisha Nimkar.

The shadow cabinet will hold open-house meetings with citizens and keep a hawk's eye on state ministries.

"The exercise aims at strengthening the democratic traditions," said Rane, who will head the shadow cabinet with Munde as his deputy.



N Rane



G Munde

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Troubled times in gutkha homeland

DHARMENDRA JORE
MUMBAI/PUNE/SHIRUR, FEB 22

DEVOTIONAL songs waft out of the soaring multi-crore grey glass building, workers polish its exteriors and armed private guards patrol the entrance. Inside, a private puja is on to bring calm to the troubled, Rs 500-crore Manikchand empire.

"*Saheb log* have gathered for a *shanti puja*," says one guard. "*Kyoki woh bade saab ko police ki taklif chalu hain na*."

Bade saab is Rasiklal Manik-

hand Dharwal (66) India's premier gutka baron, India's first buyer of the Rs 5-crore Maybach ultra-luxury car — and for two months now, the target of an Interpol international alert.

Hiding in Dubai with his former partner-turned-foe Jagdish Joshi, while his lawyers fight a Mumbai police arrest warrant in Bombay High Court, Rasiklal's 60-day absence has sent his family-run conglomerate into a spiral of gloom and suspicion.

In Rasiklal's hometown of Shirur, his cronies are everywhere, trailing strangers, discouraging anyone from asking about him or his son

Pardeshi, a farmer. "My best friend's family is affected by *sade saati* (a bad phase in the horoscope)," says Pardeshi (73).

Even a childhood friend of Prakash — MD and the man now holding charge of the empire — requests anonymity as he explains that Dharwal Jr is "too young" to handle a situation where he is "overburdened" with problems. Can Prakash himself explain how the group is coping? "No way," says a manager at the Pune office. "Prakashbhai won't talk to you."

Two days of trying to get an ap-

pointment have been futile. Receptionists say Prakash works without secretarial staff, but calls either go unanswered or his cell is switched off.

The family's residences are inaccessible as well. Rasiklal lives at Koregaon Park with second wife Shobha and daughter Jahnuvi. A call to the Kothrud home brings Sakshi, Prakash's three-year-old daughter on the line, saying Rasiklal isn't home. "But he answers my calls," she says. Mother and Rasiklal's daughter-in-law Dina takes the phone. "We're not concerned with what is happening. Call the office."

HC rejects Dharwal plea

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Tuesday dismissed the plea of gutka baron Rasiklal Manikchand Dharwal urging for cancellation of non-bailable warrant issued by a lower court against him for failure to appear in a case of alleged nexus with underworld. — PTI

Prakash, from first wife Kamalabai. The only person willing to talk is Rasiklal's close friend, Kesharsigh

300 killed in Maharashtra temple stampede



Bodies of pilgrims outside the temple at Mandrachevi in Maharashtra on Tuesday. — AFP

By Arunkumar Bhatt in Wai and Our Mumbai Bureau

WAI (SATARA DT.) JAN. 25. An auspicious day turned into a nightmare today as about 300 people, mostly women and children, were killed in a stampede on the narrow road leading to the Kalubai temple in Mandrachevi, 18 km from Wai in Maharashtra's Satara district. Authorities said 270 bodies had been recovered so far.

They were among the thousands who visited the temple on the first day of the 15-day Kalubai Jatra.

According to Chandrakant Kumbhar, Superintendent of Police, Satara, the trouble began when some people fell down on the steps leading to the temple made slippery by devotees breaking coconuts.

The approach was made narrower by the presence of temporary stalls set up for the jatra. People also reported panic triggered by electrical short-circuiting. As the panic set in, angry pilgrims set some of the stalls on fire.

Gas cylinders explode

Subsequently, gas cylinders in these stalls began exploding. Eyewitnesses told *The Hindu* that about 25 cylinders exploded covering the area in dense smoke.

In the ensuing melee, devotees, a majority of them women and children, were trampled to death. The temple attracts women and girls, and today be-

ing the auspicious *paush pournima* (full moon), a lot of them had thronged the temple.

The conflagration, which spread to an estimated 100 stalls, could not be brought under control as fire tenders could not reach the spot.

A senior police official told *The Hindu* that the exact number of injured was not known. At least four State transport buses with injured people had been sent to Satara.

Most of the injured and dead were brought to the Wills F. Pierce Memorial Mission Hospital and the Rural Hospital in Wai.

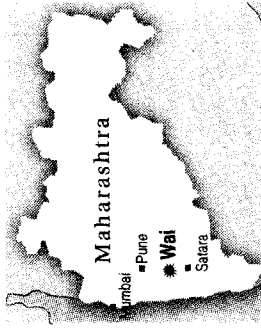
Onlookers broke down as they saw the rows of women and children, many of whom looked as if they were sleeping.

Until late in the evening, bodies were still being brought to the hospitals in buses, private ambulances and vehicles. This was the result of a massive mobilisation of voluntary effort from places such as Satara and Shirur.

At the Rural Hospital, the corridors were crowded with staff and volunteers. Many local doctors stepped in to treat the injured and feed the survivors.

Among them were Dr. M.V. Oswal and his colleagues as well as the Arogya Sena consisting of volunteers from Pune.

The Maharashtra Chief Minister, Vilasrao Deshmukh, the Deputy Chief Minister, R.R. Patil, and the Director-General of Police, K.K. Kashyap, flew to Wai



■ The stampede at the Kalubai temple in Wai of Satara district was caused by panic after reports of fire following short-circuiting.

■ Over 1,000 people were present in the 300-year temple that can accommodate 200.

■ Many of the victims were women and children.

■ Incidents of arson were also reported.

■ It was the first day of the 15-day annual Kalubai Jatra.

■ Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil have rushed to Wai.

Graphic by Varghese Kallada

where the Chief Minister announced Rs. 1 lakh as compensation to the families of the dead, Rs. 25,000 for the seriously injured and Rs. 10,000 for those with minor injuries.

All official functions for the Republic Day have been cancelled in Maharashtra as a mark of respect for the dead.