

Chandrababu blamed for farmer suicides

'Poor farm credit system pushed peasants to take desperate step'

ASHOK Das

Hyderabad, December 13

IN MAY 2004, the Chandrababu Naidu government's dramatic ouster was hailed as the vengeance of the state's farmer community. Over a year later, a commission of inquiry has endorsed the charge that the info-tech savvy CM was responsible for the spate of farmers' suicides in Andhra Pradesh.

The commission investigated the causes of suicides by peasants between July 1998 and May 2005 and submitted its 200-page report to the government on Sunday. It was headed by retired judge L. Ramachenna Reddy.

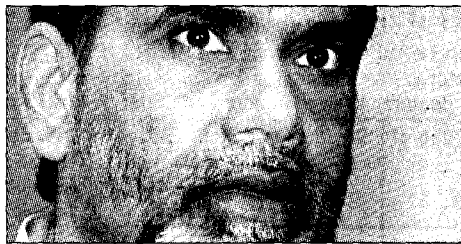
The commission, constituted by the Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy government, has nailed the Telugu Desam government for failing to strengthen the agricultural credit delivery system, the agricultural extension advisory system and quality input delivery system to small and marginal farmers, thereby pushing them into the clutches of despair.

Worse, the commission said, it displayed little sensitivity to villagers traumatised by the suicide of a family member. Compensation to the families of suicide victims was paid only for seven months.

The payments were stopped because the government argued — cynically — that relief measures would prompt more distressed farmers to commit suicide, the commission has observed.

"Had the government continued the scheme, it would have been useful for several agricultural families who were in distress due to failure of crops and the number of suicides would have been reduced to a great extent," the commission said.

When the irrigation facilities in the Rayalaseema and Telangana regions were abysmal, the TDP regime allocated a pit-



Life vs debt

High interest rates on loans have left farmers reeling under huge debts

Punjab:	Rs 41,576*
Kerala:	Rs 33,907
Haryana:	Rs 26,007
Andhra:	Rs 23,965
TN:	Rs 23,963
Karnataka:	Rs 18,135

* Average debt burden on farmers

tance for the irrigation sector, the commission has pointed out. Successive droughts and the sale of spurious seeds resulting in crop failure also led to the deaths.

The TDP has slammed the report as biased. "The report is politically motivated, one-sided and tailor-made to please chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy," said S.V. Subba Reddy, former minister and senior TDP leader.

14 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

AP moves SC on job reservation

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 14

THE Y. RAJSHEKHAR Reddy government in Andhra Pradesh moved the Supreme Court on Wednesday against the November 7, 2005 high court order striking down five per cent reservation for Muslims in educational institutions and government jobs.

A Special Leave Petition has been filed in the court registry and will be mentioned in court on Thursday, sources said. However, they refused to give any details.

Andhra Pradesh High Court had described a state government ordinance introducing such a quota as "unconstitutional and void". The state had initially brought in an ordinance and later replaced it with an Act. Both were struck down

by the high court. The order had come on a batch of petitions filed by some students. A five-judge Bench of the court had said the Muslim Reservation Act was violative of Articles 14, 15(1) and 16(1).

They had also objected to the entire Muslim community being declared as "socially backward". Instead, they had indicated that they could be included in the "backward class" category. The court pointed out that the five per cent quota was in excess of the cap of 50 per cent laid down by the SC.

It criticised the methodology adopted by AP Backward Class Commission, in deriving the conclusion that the entire community was "socially backward".

15 DEC 2005 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

CHANGE IN BIHAR

The Better Man Has Won

By SHREE SHANKAR SHARAN

One good man can and has turned Bihar around. It was Mahatma Gandhi who did it in 1917 in Champaran. A seemingly docile population, which meekly submitted to every mean levy of the English indigo planters, rose in revolt as one man under the Mahatma's magical and courageous touch.

It was then Rajendra Prasad who set up the Congress, more a movement than a party in every nook and corner of Bihar and instilled in Congressmen, by his personal example, and Gandhi's exhortations values of integrity, selfless service and patriotism. He became the model for Congressmen in Bihar, of simplicity, frugality, humility and of being above temptation. He became an icon in the country for people imbued with similar values, was one of the five of the constellation of leaders in the country and was elected the country's first President against the wishes of Jawaharlal who wanted Rajagopalachari India's last governor general for the office.

In hindsight Nehru's proposal may have been more beneficial if Rajendra Babu rather than be President had continued in Nehru's cabinet as a counterweight to Nehru's penchant for things western, tempered with mild socialism, and forced a greater rural bias.

Excellent pair

The first Bihar Government both in 1937 and 1946 was also characterised by the values of the Mahatma and Rajendra Babu. Its two eminent leaders Sri Babu and Anugrah Babu were men of unimpeachable integrity and great public spirit. They ran an exemplary government till the second rung of leadership drove a wedge between them. An imperious Sri Babu and a humble but very capable Anugrah Babu complemented each other and made an excellent pair of popular rulers, enriching Bihar with wealth and wisdom. But the second rung had started an internecine struggle for power setting the party and the state on a downward course, putting an end to Congress supremacy in 1967.

Then it was Jayaprakash Narayan, who soaked Bihar in the famous JP movement against corruption, unemployment, rising prices and the fall in education, to demand the right to recall of representatives and dissolution of the Bihar Assembly for its weak moral fibre and suddenly stirred and transformed Bihar to great moral heights. When challenged at the hustings the Janata Party hastily cobbled by him by merging all opposition parties from the right to the socialists threw Indira Gandhi out of power at the Centre and not just Bihar.

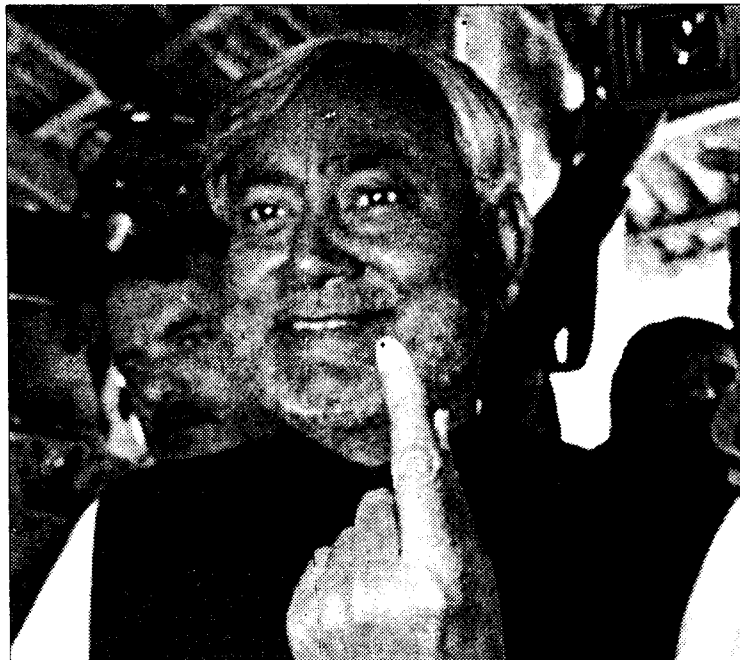
Then it was VP Singh in 1989-90 with his campaign against corruption and promise of making

The author is a retired LAS officer

the right to work a fundamental right. He ended up with nothing better than Mandal reservations for the OBC which Nehru had wisely relegated to the states. But Mandal politics for a time fractured the polity into castes and threw up a redoubtable leader Lalu Yadav who with his rustic charisma and beguiling political acumen by cleverly playing the

BJP.

Bihar indeed has had a history of being long on patience but bringing about dramatic changes once disillusioned. Even a conservative, fatalist, god-fearing people are not averse to change and firmly believe in being delivered by god through a chosen agent. But taking a cue from extraordinary events in the coun-



caste and secular card was able to survive three terms. During his tenure he was the accused in fodder and many scams and was asked to resign but held on to power by getting his unlettered wife elected as chief minister. He, as he claims, gave the OBC a voice but little else in development, security or employment. He once even brashly said that you do not need development to win elections. While development withered, crime flourished, often with political patronage and corruption both political and bureaucratic reached new heights. Yet he held the loyalty of the OBC. Charges against him were either disbelieved or forgiven. He did give the OBC a heightened sense of dignity and the confidence that they could win and keep power. His permanent contribution is to have put the OBC centre stage in power and dispatch the upper caste from the seat of power for years to come.

Rule of law

And now it is Nitish Kumar who has dislodged from power by a massive mandate the legendary Lalu Yadav on the plank of re-starting development, rebuilding Bihar, restoring the rule of law and giving the poor the chance to survive in Bihar without migrating elsewhere. He has the advantage of being OBC and bearing their interest at heart but does not raucously proclaim it from the housetop. Instead he has promised a casteless society and won upper caste votes either for his own party or its ally the

party's history and ethical teachings from the medieval saints to Gandhi, people have also a good understanding that their troubles are man-made and are remediable. There have been long time spans before the people change to reverse gear. But it has happened repeatedly and they have always rewarded good work and punished the pretender.

The people have also responded to and rewarded the services of lesser leaders. The state has had eminent revolutionaries and socialists. A whole host of them led by Ram Nanda Misra who is credited with giving shooting lessons to Bhagat Singh in the jungles of Champaran and helping Jayaprakash Narayan to escape the Hazaribagh jail, Suraj Babu an inveterate trade union leader who died of a lathi blow under a Congress government, Basawan Singh, yet another union leader, BP Sinha, an LSE intellectual, Phulan Prasad Varma, the founder of the Bihar Socialist Party in 1934 before the founding of the Congress socialist party and member, DVC Ganga Sharan Singh, the eminent parliamentarian and scholar of many languages. Karpoori Thakur, the well remembered OBC leader and twice chief minister of Bihar and not just Jayaprakash Narayan one of the architects of the country's socialist movement.

There were eminent and dedicated communists as well — Sunil Mukherjee, Chandrashekhar Singh, Chaturanand Misra, Jagganath Sarkar, Indradeep Sinha and the venerable Karyanand

Sharma. Some of these leaders were sons of Congress ministers and rebels from what they considered a bourgeois government which promoted bourgeois class interests. Finally there came the Naxalites in pockets of Bihar.

The good work by these good men led to the first toppling of a Congress government in Bihar in 1967 in which Lohia laid the strategy of opposition votes not being split and scripting a coalition from the right to the left to form the first United Front Government. But as is the wont of radicals they soon split and new splinter groups captured the government till the Congress recaptured power.

But this was not the same Congress that had moved people's hearts. It was a devalued Congress full of infighting, allegations of corruption, and finally of leaders and chief ministers who did not get elected on popular or party support but by the good opinion of the Congress suprema and Prime Minister.

Rudderless state

Bihar has for long stretches been like a rudderless state because its most famous son in recent history has been playing Nero while Bihar has burnt, and has often been Machiavelli's most perfect prince. His power came from defections from other parties, including the Left by caste appeal, ministerial offers and once by agreeing to bifurcate Bihar and not lose the support of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. He overestimated his personal charisma and underestimated the innate intelligence of the people.

Nitish Kumar has been a familiar name and face in Bihar. He was once Lalu's closest ally. But though pragmatic he was not as cynical and not as raucous as Lalu and they parted company. Lalu arrogance had cost him many friends. He finally left the JD and formed the Samata Party, later merged with the JD-U. He was the kind of man that Bihar was waiting for. Not just the upper caste but the numerically larger extremely backward caste whom Lalu always tricked or gave a raw deal to favour the more prosperous OBC, and the low class Muslims of Kishanganj and Katihar and disillusioned Yadavs of Madhepura an Saharsa joined to vote him to power.

One does feel sorry for Lalu, the man with such supreme confidence, elan, magnetism when he was not being rude and whom a foreign newspaper called the male version of Mother Teresa. He has none but himself to blame. He had no sense of governance, no respect for institutions, no respect for rectitude. Politics to him was the art of capturing and holding to power by dividing enemies and destroying institutions. Nitish may be less colourful but is saner. The better man in terms of what Bihar needed has won.

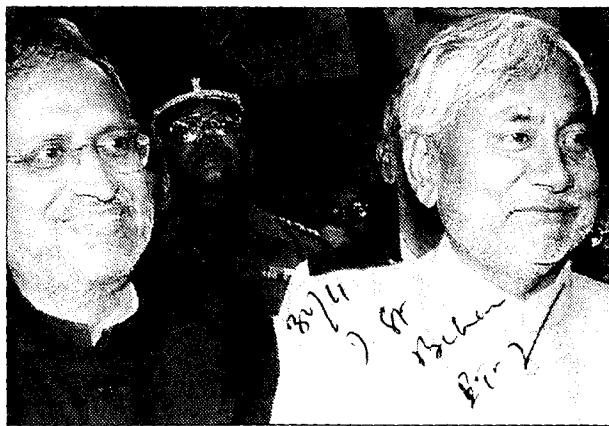
FOCUS TO STAY ON INTER-LINKING OF RIVERS TOO

Nitish wants Centre to declare Bihar backward

Ashok K Mishra
PATNA 29 NOVEMBER

DEMANDING special treatment for Bihar, chief minister Nitish Kumar said the Centre should declare Bihar a backward state. This would enable it to avail of concessions which are available to other northeastern states and Uttaranchal. "The special economic status should be accorded to Bihar for creating an atmosphere conducive for investment. There are states which are being allowed concessions in the form of tax holidays and other benefits. However, Bihar's case should not be ignored and the Centre should be sympathetic to its cause," Nitish Kumar pointed out.

Nitish Kumar, who was talking to reporters here at his Assembly chamber, said he would take up the matter with the Centre which he maintained was aware of the level of backwardness the state was steeped in. The chief minister admitted he had written a letter to the Prime Minister for the inclusion of all 38 districts of the state in the rural employment guarantee scheme. "As of now, only 15



STATUS SYMBOL: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi on the first day of the Bihar Assembly session in Patna on Monday - PTI

districts are covered under the scheme. I have made a request to the Prime Minister for the inclusion of all the districts. This will help mitigate the problem of rural migration," the chief minister said. He added that Bihar was grappling with myriad issues ranging from Naxal activities to burgeoning unemployment and abject poverty. "Bihar deserves special treatment and the Centre must act in this regard," Mr Kumar said.

Mr Kumar added that he

would also take up the issue of interlinking of rivers with the Centre, besides other proposals related to thermal and gas-based projects. He expressed concern over the fate of the Rs 4,000-crore Nabinagar power project. The project had been finalised during his tenure as railway minister but it seems its fate is uncertain now. There was some problem with the state pollution control board and as a result the project has failed to take off.

Nitish offloads tainted minister

Manjhi was allegedly involved in fake degree racket

Rousing reception for Munna at home

PRESS TRUST OF India
Patna, November 25

JITAN RAM Manjhi resigned from the Nitish Kumar Cabinet late on Thursday night, barely hours after being sworn in, when the chief minister summoned him and apprised him of his resolve not to have any tainted minister in the government.

Manjhi, who claimed he had stepped down voluntarily, is facing charges in a fake bachelor of education (B Ed) degree racket.

"On coming to know about a vigilance case pending against the minister I summoned him and apprised him of my resolve not to have any tainted ministers in my government and

he immediately put in his papers," Kumar told reporters here before leaving for his home at Bakhtiyarpur, about 55 km from here.

"His (Manjhi's) resignation has been received and forwarded to Governor Buta Singh for acceptance," he said.

Barely hours after the swearing-in of the NDA government on Thursday, accusing fingers were raised against Kumar for inducting an alleged tainted man in his cabinet.

Embarrassed by queries of media-men at his maiden press conference on Thursday about Manjhi's induction despite his resolve to have a clean government, Kumar hurriedly called chief secretary, G.S. Kang and director general of police

Ashis Ranjan Sinha to go into the veracity of Manjhi's involvement in the case being probed by the state vigilance bureau. Nitish thanked Manjhi for his "gesture" and said distinction should, however, be made between people involved in corruption cases and those charged for various offences for political reasons.

Earlier, speaking to reporters before leaving for Gaya, Manjhi, who belongs to JD(U) of which Kumar himself is a leader, said he had tendered his resignation following a "conspiracy" against him within the party though he was "not even remotely" connected with the scam. "I have resigned voluntarily and the chief minister did not ask me to quit... I have no grievance against the chief minister. I have quit as I want the NDA government to have a clean image." Asked why he joined the Cabinet in the first place, Manjhi said, "I had not thought the matter will become so serious despite my innocence." According to the FIR registered by the state vigilance department in 1999, the fraud involved senior officials of the National Council for Teachers' Education (NCTE), a government body formed in 1995 to grant recognition to teachers' training institutes, senior bureaucrats in the education department and politicians, including Manjhi.



Neighbours greet Nitish Kumar as he reaches his residence in Patna on Friday.

PTI

PRESS Trust of India
Bakhtiyarpur, November 25

NITISH KUMAR for the world but "very own Munna" for Bakhtiyarpur, arrived to a tumultuous welcome at his home town, about 55 km from the Patna on Friday. Kumar, accompanied by his teacher wife Manju Kumari Sinha and son Nishant, was greeted by a delirious crowd beating drum and shouting "Nitish Kumar zindabad".

Kumar, who visited his home for the first time after being appointed chief minister, went straight into his brother Satish Kumar's double storey house to seek the blessing of his mother Parmeshwari Devi.

"Maa ke ashirwad mein badi shakti hoti hai. Main woh lene aaya hoon (there is great strength in mother's blessings and have come to receive it)," said Kumar after his nonagenarian mother held him in tight embrace, her eyes filled with tears and heart with pride. "Deerghayu Howa (may you live long)" Parmeshwari Devi blessed her son in Magahi, the local dialect.

Thousands of people had gathered on the streets since early morning as the news came that Munnaji was coming home.

Asked how he felt at being here, Kumar shot back asking, "Aapko kaisa lagega apnon ke beech aane mein"? Bahut achha lag raha hai. (how would you feel on being among your own people? it feels great)." A beaming Satish Kumar, his elder brother, and an ayurveda doctor, was seen welcoming guests and distributing laddus to them.

Nitish came out waving to his "very own people" who showered flower petals and marigold garlands on him. Nitish's friend since childhood, Shivnath Singh alias Judgesaheb, who had played an important role in his marriage to Manju, said, "People have great hopes and I am confident that Munnaji will not let them down". "Munnaji is a man of convictions. He turned down Karpoor Thakur's offer of appointing him an engineer with the Bihar government after his two successive losses in Assembly elections but he refused as destiny would otherwise," he said.

"Bahut beri Lalu ke bhi yehan khana khilaili, dunu dost halo. (I fed Lalu several times here, both were friends)," Nitish's mother Parmeshwari Devi said.

POST-POLL POSTURES

Paswan-Lalu rift did us in: Sonia

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi on Friday had a veiled message for both Ram Vilas Paswan and Lalu Prasad implying that division between them was responsible for the "disappointing results". In an apparent reference to Paswan, whose party contested the polls separately despite being part of the UPA at the Centre, she told the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting that the result was "a signal for secular forces to remain united. Her reference to "development" was also seen as a criticism of Lalu Prasad under whose leadership the Congress fought the Bihar polls.

PTI, New Delhi

How BJP helped JD-U

SHEKHAR Iyer
New Delhi, November 25

NITISH KUMAR may be the hero of the moment, having achieved what seemed once impossible: dethroning of Lalu Prasad in Bihar. In this, he was aided by not only by the mood of the electorate but also by the BJP brass that saw prudence in keeping the NDA united at all costs, by playing a second fiddle to the Janata Dal(U). The BJP gave into every demand of the JD(U) whether it was number of seats or even candidates. It organised men and material for the campaign.

Whether it was publicity materials or helicopters, BJP's management was in place to provide what Nitish and the JD(U) leaders badly needed.

Interestingly, the BJP brass had not discovered the importance of Nitish and his ability to swing the caste arithmetic until the second phase of the campaign for the February elections in Bihar. It was only in the third phase of that poll, Nitish was declared as NDA's



RJD elects its Assembly leader

The RJD legislature party on Friday elected Rabri Devi as its leader setting the stage for her appointment as the leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly. She was elected to head the RJD legislature party at a meeting of the newly-elected RJD MLAs on Friday.

PTI

"candidate" for the CM's post.

The outcome of this poll showed the NDA within a striking distance of capturing

power but the Centre dissolved the House at the behest of Lalu. Consequently, when the polls were announced again, the BJP kept projecting Nitish as CM, which put the alliance ahead of the RJD-Congress-CPI(M) combine.

The role of Arun Jaitley as BJP general-secretary in-charge of Bihar in this regard contributed in no small measure. Since he set foot on Bihar for the February polls, Jaitley brought with him the poll management skill he used in MP. Secondly, he drove home to Bihar BJP leaders that the party had to allow Nitish Kumar and the JD(U) to be the big partner. When it came to sharing of seats, Jaitley led the BJP in negotiations with Nitish and Sharad Yadav to ensure the JD(U) was kept happy.

The issues taken up for campaign for jointly decided by the JD(U) and BJP leaders. The BJP strictly kept out Hindutva and refused to join issue with the JD(U) when Nitish Kumar came out in support of reservation for Dalit Muslims, much to the chagrin of the RSS.

Secular swipe after Bihar slight

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Nov. 25: In her first response to the Bihar poll debacle, Congress president Sonia Gandhi today said the results were a "disappointment" for her party.

Sonia, the chairperson of the UPA, also made an indirect swipe at her warring allies — Lalu Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan — saying the verdict was a "signal for secular forces to remain united to more effectively propagate the principles of equity, democracy and development".

"The Congress faces a big challenge, but in this challenge lie many opportunities for strengthening the party," she told the general body meeting of the Congress parliamenta-

ry party this morning, which was attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Sonia, however, did not say what these "opportunities" were.

Asked if it was a veiled suggestion that the Congress must chart a course independent of Lalu Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), sources maintained a firm "no".

"What she possibly meant was that the five-year interregnum between now and the next Assembly election and even the next Lok Sabha election should be used by the Congress to rev up the organisation and build a state leadership so that we are in a better position to bargain with our allies," a source said.

The sources stressed that the dominant view within the party was that with the RJD

being one of the principal crutches for the UPA coalition, the Congress should do nothing to rile Lalu Prasad.

But a section of the Congress — especially upper-caste leaders — said in private that the time was ripe to distance it from the RJD and try and regain the support of the Brahmmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs.

Sonia said the next big task on hand was gearing up for the string of Assembly polls due in 2006 — in Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Kerala. The Congress rules in three of these states — Assam, Pondicherry and Kerala — while it is part of the anti-ADMK front led by the DMK in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

Sources said a "realistic" endeavour would be to wrest Tamil Nadu, keep Assam and

Pondicherry and Kerala and put up a fight in the Left-ruled Bengal.

The AICC plenary in Hyderabad on January 20, 21 and 22 would "provide an occasion for imparting a new momentum to our organisation", the Congress chief said.

Attacking the NDA for disrupting the first two days of the winter session of Parliament, in keeping with its "track record", Sonia said the Congress was ready for a debate on the Vocker report, but the opposition was "simply not interested".

She emphatically denied the Congress's involvement in the Iraq oil-for-food scam. But, she added, action would be taken against "anyone who may have misused the party's name for personal gain" if the "pro-

be findings so warranted".

The Congress leader rejected the "so-called Mitrokhin disclosures" outright on which the NDA has demanded a separate discussion.

Criticising the BJP for accusing the Congress of "betraying the interest of the country", she said: "Our leaders have lived, worked and died for the country. It has been national interest that has driven our domestic and foreign policies and it will continue to do so."

To underscore her point, Sonia spoke of the Iran nuclear issue and countered the Left's viewpoint of the Centre being "soft" on the US and "harsh" on Iran. "We are also aware of our traditional ties with Iran. I am sure that our government will continue to work for a just and fair solution."

Rabri ready to vacate

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Patna, Nov. 25: Rashtriya Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad today said wife Rabri Devi has no problems vacating 1 Anne Marg if chief minister Nitish Kumar wants to move in.

Lalu Prasad, who was addressing new party MLAs, however, added that the former chief minister should be provided an alternative official accommodation.

The state building construction department had yesterday issued notices to Rabri Devi and several former ministers to vacate official bungalows "at the earliest" so that their successors could be accommodated.

The meeting today formally elected Rabri Devi as the leader of the RJD legislature party. She is thus tipped to be designated the leader of the Opposition in the new House.

Lalu Prasad asked his party's Union ministers to give priority to development schemes in the state, especially those related to electricity, roads and drinking water.

"I will implement the railway schemes chalked out for Bihar," the railway minister said.

Taking potshots at his squabbling rivals, Lalu Prasad said: "This government has two chief ministers, one each from the Janata Dal (United) and the BJP. Their contradictions have already started showing. I do not understand how chief minister Nitish Kumar can function without playing into the hands of the RSS."

Minister quits

Patna, Nov. 25: Within 10 hours of assuming charge, chief minister Nitish Kumar asked one of his cabinet ministers, Jitan Ram Manjhi, to resign because his name figured in a fake degree scandal that had surfaced during the tenure of the RJD government.

A journalist had drawn Nitish's attention to the "tainted" politician soon after the new chief minister promised that no such person would be inducted into his ministry.

Nitish said today Manjhi has submitted his resignation. Manjhi said he was implicated in the case because he was opposed to Lalu Prasad.

SWEETS FOR CAMERAS, NOT FOR DIABETIC MOTHER TO EAT

Munna runs for mama's touch

ASHISH SINHA

Bakhtiarpur, Nov. 25: Nitish Kumar offered sweets to his mother a day after taking over as Bihar chief minister, but said: "Khana mat (Don't eat)."

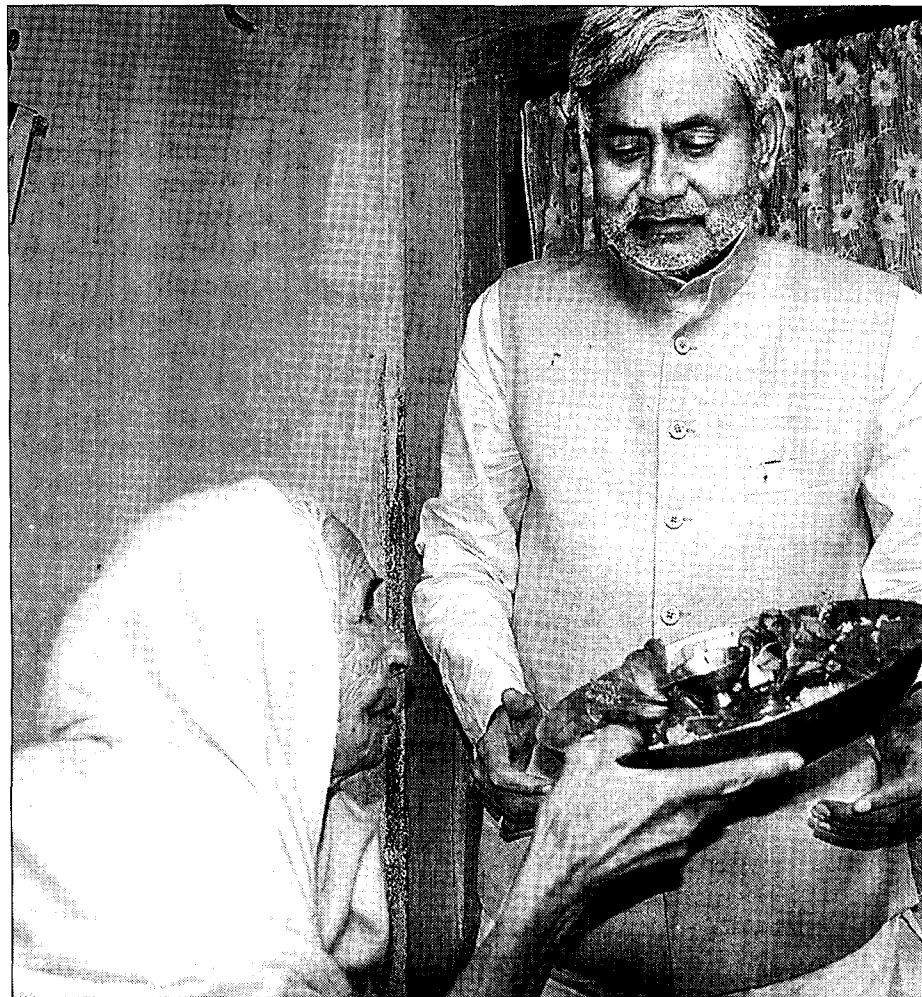
The sweets were for the benefit of the cameras — photographers had followed Nitish to Bakhtiarpur, 55 km from Patna, where his mother lives with her elder son. Parmeshwari Devi, who is diabetic, didn't even take a bite.

"Maa ke ashirvad mein badi shakti hoti hai. Main woh lena aaya hoon. (There is great strength in a mother's blessings and that is what I have come to receive)," he said, after his nonagenarian mother tearfully held him in a tight embrace.

"Deerghayu howa (May you live long)," Parmeshwari Devi blessed her son in Magadhi, the local dialect.

Someone asked the man who had ended Lalu Prasad's 15-year rule what was behind his success. "If you're talking about my becoming chief minister, I give credit to the people of Bihar. But if you mean my entire political career, with its highs and very deep lows, it has been due to my mother's blessings," Nitish said, his head bowed. After a pause, he looked up and added: "And most of all, to my wife."

Manju Devi, a Patna schoolteacher who takes an au-



Nitish Kumar with his mother in Bakhtiarpur on Friday. Picture by Deepak Kumar

torickshaw to work every day, tried to wipe away tears that had begun to roll down her cheeks. Manju and son Nishant had accompanied Nitish on the visit to his family home.

A large crowd of neighbours and well-wishers gathered to cheer the chief minister whom they know as "Munna". A beaming Satish Kumar, his elder brother, an ayurveda practitioner like their father, welcomed guests with laddoos.

Among the guests were a few of Nitish's teachers and at least one former classmate who do not remember him as a naughty boy. "Nitish was not at all naughty. Instead, he was grave and disciplined, and extremely brilliant," said Anandi Prasad Singh, the chief minister's Hindi teacher at the local Ganesh High School.

Former classmate Manik Chandra Mehta, now a government employee, had a good

word, too. Stressing Nitish was stubbornly principled, he recalled: "His father had taken a paltry sum of Rs 1,100 from his father-in-law on account of some wedding expenses. Nitish made a big issue out of it and called it dowry. Out went the warning from the son to the father, 'Refund it, else I won't get married.' Chachaji (Nitish's father) had no option."

Asked how he felt being he-

re, Nitish shot back: "How would you feel being among your own people? It feels great." As the crowds shouted "Nitish Kumar zindabad" and beat drums, he came out to the balcony and had flower petals and garlands showered on him.

Amid all the cheering, Parmeshwari Devi did not forget to recall her son's friendship with the man he has ousted. "Bahut beri Lalu ke bhi yehan

Crime spurt

Nitish Kumar got a taste of the challenges ahead as five murders and two kidnappings were reported in Bihar within 24 hours of his takeover.

Five people were killed in Madhepura in a suspected vendetta strike by a gang. In Patna, the owner of a coaching centre was kidnapped apparently on his way back from the swearing-in ceremony. In Katihar, a jeweller was abducted.

The BJP pointed fingers at the RJD, alleging that the ousted party was trying to derail Nitish's promise to rid the state of crime.

khana khilaili, dunu dost halo. (I fed Lalu here many times, both were friends)," she said.

All that has changed. Yesterday, neither Lalu Prasad nor his wife Rabri Devi whom Nitish has replaced as chief minister attended his swearing-in at Patna's Gandhi Maidan.

Some things have changed at home, too. "Pahile maiya kaha halai ab munna hamra maaji kaha hai. Bhagwan ke ashirvad hai (He used to call me maiya earlier but now he addresses me as maaji. May god bless him)," said Parmeshwari Devi as Nitish touched her feet.

POLL VAULT: Sonia Acknowledges The Index Of 'Secular' Unity Was Critical For UPA

Paswan may stay on in Cabinet, for now

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 25 NOVEMBER

THERE is no threat to Mr Ram Vilas Paswan's position in the Union Cabinet. For, both the Congress and the CPM — which had claimed that the UPA would review the LJP's status in the ruling alliance after the Bihar polls — have retraced their steps.

The good news for Mr Paswan came on Friday morning in AICC president Sonia Gandhi's address to the CPP. Ms Gandhi, who said a split in the anti-NDA votes led to the defeat of the RJD-Congress alliance in Bihar, acknowledged that the index of "secular" unity was critical for the UPA's electoral projects.

In other words, Mr Paswan continues to be an important component of the ruling alliance.

The CPM too has washed its hands of its politburo member Sitaram Yechury's demand for removing Mr Paswan from the government. A meeting of the politburo, which discussed the Bihar results, was of the view that it was not possible to lay the entire blame of the defeat on Mr Paswan. The politburo felt that Lalu Prasad Yadav had lost much of his vote catching ability, and the alliance's backing for Bura Singh only complicated matters for the alliance.

The Left's stand is not surprising as the party, which had hoped for a "secular" resurgence, did not make any electoral impact. In most of the ten constituencies that it contested election, the party nominees got less than 3,000 votes.

In any case, Lalu Yadav, who had made threatening noises before the election, is now a melted man. Mr Yadav, who never spared any opportunity to attack Mr Paswan, has said he would not seek the steel minister's removal from the government.

The decision to put up with Mr Paswan stems from the realisation that the current movement of numerically preponderant social sections could prove fatal in the coming electoral bouts. While the M-Y alliance of Lalu Yadav has collapsed, the four upper caste communities are now firmly with the NDA.

What is making matters worse for the UPA is the gravitation of the MBGs towards the NDA. The section, for the first time, has found decent representation in the state Cabinet.

Given this, signals from Bihar do not augur well for the UPA. Breaking the NDA's hold in its newly-found constituencies is a difficult task as Mr Nitish Kumar has been successful in reconciling their conflicting interests. The track record of Lalu Yadav will also be a handicap for the forward movement of "secular" parties.

Although the Congress made brave noises on Friday that it will chalk out independent action plan to revive the party, it does not have a credible organisation structure or grassroot support. The social groupings, which once pitched for the Congress, are now part of other major political platforms.



REASON TO SMILE: LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan

Nitish sacks Manjhi

Ashok K Mishra
PATNA 25 NOVEMBER

MAKING amends for inducting a 'tainted' minister in his newly-constituted government, chief minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, acted swiftly to ensure removal of Jeetan Ram Manjhi from the Cabinet.

Mr Manjhi, who is facing a vigilance probe in connection with a scam, was asked to quit within hours of being sworn in as minister with Mr Kumar, making it clear his government would not compromise on its policy on ministers with records.

Perhaps the chief minister wanted to drive home a point to the Manmohan Singh government at the Centre, which is having to face the heat due to the inclusion of four 'tainted' RJD ministers.

"Once it was brought to my notice, I consulted my officials and found there was a vigilance case pending against Mr Manjhi. I called for him and put the matter before him. It was highly gratuitous on the part of Mr Manjhi to im-

mediately decide to put in his papers," said Nitish Kumar, even as he claimed he wanted to start with a clean slate.

The newly-appointed chief minister faced some embarrassment on Thursday when newsmen raised questions on the inclusion of a tainted minister like Mr Manjhi. He only responded to queries by saying he was not aware of any such thing. "But then I will check up on the facts with the officials," Mr Kumar added.

Mr Manjhi, however, claimed he had quit voluntarily to avoid any embarrassment for the Nitish Kumar government. At the same time, he maintained he had been falsely implicated in the case and would eventually prove his innocence.

Mr Manjhi is facing charges in the fake BED degree racket cases in which the Munger RJD MP Jaiprakash Narain Yadav is also accused, along with 37 others. While Mr Manjhi was the state minister of the education department at the time, Mr Yadav happened to be his senior minister in the same department.

The State Vigilance panel had filed an FIR against Mr Manjhi in 1999.

Ousted minister claims he had quit voluntarily to avoid embarrassing govt

TWO LJP TURNCOATS 'REWARDED' WITH CABINET BERTHS THOUGH ONE LOST & THE OTHER DIDN'T CONTEST POLL

Nitish takes charge as Bihar CM



BRAVE FRONT: Mr. Lalu Prasad arrives in Parliament on Thursday. — AFP

Statesman News Service

PATNA, Nov. 24. — Senior JD-U leader Mr Nitish Kumar was today sworn in as the new chief minister of Bihar at a ceremony at Gandhi Maidan this afternoon. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by the Governor, Mr Buta Singh. The BJP Member of Parliament from Bhagalpur, Mr Sushil Kumar Modi, was sworn in as the deputy chief minister.

Aside from Mr Kumar and Mr Modi, 25 other ministers, including 15 holding Cabinet ranks, also took oath. Mr Ramashray Prasad Singh, Mr Nandkishore Yadav, Mr Narendra Singh, Mr Bijendra Yadav, Mr Brishen Patel, Mrs Sudha Srivastava, Mr Chadra Mohan Roy, Mr Monazir Hasan, Mr Ashwini Kumar Choubey,

Mr Ramnath Thakur, Mr Prem Kumar, Mr Jitan Ram Manjhi, Mr Baidyanat Prasad Mahato, Mr Janardan Sigariwal and Mr Narendra Narayan Yadav took oath as the Cabinet ministers. In the 15-member Cabinet, eight ministers belong to the BJP and the rest to the JD-U.

Of the Cabinet members, Mr Ramasharya Singh and Mr Narendra Singh have been apparently rewarded for having "revolted" against Mr Ram Vilas Paswan to lend their support to Mr Kumar last June. These two leaders had been herding the disgruntled LJP legislators. Significantly, none are members of any House. While Mr Ramashraya Singh lost to the RJJD candidate in Makhdumpur, Mr Narendra Singh did not contest the polls.

Soon after taking oath,

Mr Kumar met the bureaucrats in his office. Later talking to reporters, he iterated his pledge to make Bihar crime-free. "Have patience, things will look up soon," he said and added, restoring law and order and good governance and putting Bihar on the development track were his priorities.

"I am confident about the Centre extending full cooperation to bring the state back on the path of development," he said during his maiden Press conference after assuming office.

Mr Kumar said that during his meeting with the Prime Minister in New Delhi before flying down to Patna to form the NDA government, Dr Manmohan Singh had assured him as much. "And I am reasonably sure that he will keep his word."



FRONT RUNNER: Mr Nitish Kumar with Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee after being sworn in. In Patna on Thursday. — AFP

লালুপ্রসাদ আছেন

বিহার বিধানসভার নির্বাচনে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের পূর্ণগ্রাস গ্রহণ হইয়াছে, এমন একটা ধারণা রাজনৈতিক পর্যবেক্ষক ও आम जनता, উভয়ের মধ্যেই জাগিয়াছে। তাঁহার দেড় দশকের অপশাসনে বিরক্ত রাজ্যবাসী বিরোধী পক্ষকে শাসনভার দিয়া নিশ্চিত হইতে চাহিয়াছেন, এমন ধারণাও। যদিও এমন কোনও প্রমাণ নাই যে লালুপ্রসাদের বিকল্প হিসাবে যাঁহারা আসিবেন, তাঁহারা বিহারকে দুর্নীতিমুক্ত, সুশাসিত প্রদেশ করিয়া তুলিবেন। ঠিক যেমন ইহাও জোর দিয়া বলা যায় না যে লালুপ্রসাদের আগে বিহার কখনও একটি সুশাসিত রাজ্য ছিল। সুতরাং এমন হইতেই পারে যে, সুশাসন বা অপশাসন নয়, অন্য কোনও কারণে লালুপ্রসাদ ও তাঁহার জোটের নির্বাচনী ভরাদুবি হইয়াছে। অন্তত সরল পাটীগণিতের ইঙ্গিত, ঠিক মতো জোট গঠন করিতে না-পারার ফলেই লালুপ্রসাদ পর্যুদস্ত হইয়াছেন। তিনটি প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী জোটের ভোট-কাটাকাটিতে লাভবান নীতীশ কুমারের নেতৃত্বাধীন সংযুক্ত জনতা-বিজেপি জোট এবং তাহার ফলে লালুপ্রসাদের জোট হইতে মাত্র চার শতাংশ বেশি ভোট পাইয়া নীতীশের জোট লালুপ্রসাদের জোট হইতে ৭৭টি আসন বেশি পাইয়াছে।

গত বছর লোকসভা নির্বাচনে যখন বিহারের জোট রাজনীতি ত্রিধাবিভক্ত হয় নাই, অর্থাৎ লালুপ্রসাদ, রামবিলাস পাসোয়ান, কংগ্রেস ও বামপন্থীরা বিজেপি-বিরোধী অভিন্ন জোটের শরিক ছিলেন, তখন এই জোট ৪৫ শতাংশের বেশি ভোট পায়। কিন্তু তাহার পর হইতেই রামবিলাসের রাজনৈতিক উচ্চাকাঙ্ক্ষা এবং তাঁহাকে এক ইঞ্চিও জমি না-ছাড়িতে লালুপ্রসাদের জেদ এই জোট ভাঙিয়া দেয়। কংগ্রেস রামবিলাসের জোটে যায় আর বামেরা রহিয়া যান লালুপ্রসাদের জোটে। রামবিলাস-কংগ্রেস জোটও নীতীশ কুমারের সংযুক্ত জনতা-বিজেপি জোটের মতোই ফেব্রুয়ারির বিধানসভা নির্বাচনকে লালুপ্রসাদের বিরুদ্ধে গণভোটে পরিণত করেন। পর্যবেক্ষকরা যাহাকে বলিতেছেন 'ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ শিবিরের ভাঙন', আসলে তাহা ছিল মুখ্যমন্ত্রীদের গদি দখলের লড়াই। সেই লড়াইয়েও লালুপ্রসাদ অন্তর্মিত হন নাই। তখনও তিনি বিহারের একক বৃহত্তম দলের নেতা। সর্বশেষ নির্বাচনে জোটের বিভাজন আরও জটিল হইয়া পড়ে। কংগ্রেস রামবিলাসকে ত্যাগ করিয়া লালুপ্রসাদে ফিরিলেও সি পি আই এম ছাড়া অন্য বাম দলগুলি রামবিলাসের সহিত জোটবদ্ধ হয়। নীতীশ কুমার-সুশীল মোদীদেবের প্রতিপক্ষ জোটকে পরাস্ত করা অপেক্ষাও পরস্পরকে পরাস্ত করিতে লালুপ্রসাদ ও রামবিলাস কোমর বাঁধিয়া নামিয়া পড়েন। লালুপ্রসাদের সঙ্গে সি পি আই এম এবং রামবিলাসের সঙ্গে সি পি আইও দোহার হইয়া যায়। রামবিলাসের জোট ১৪ শতাংশ ভোট পাইয়া লালুপ্রসাদের জোটের শক্তিক্ষয় ঘটাইয়া দেন।

অর্থাৎ ২০০৪-এর লোকসভা ভোটের মতো লালুপ্রসাদ-রামবিলাস-কংগ্রেস একই জোটে থাকিলে এ বারও নীতীশ কুমারের ভাগ্যে শিকা ছিড়িবার সম্ভাবনা ছিল না। কেননা সংযুক্ত জনতা-বিজেপি জোটকে পরাস্ত করিতে বদ্ধপরিকর দলগুলি একত্রে অনেক বেশি ভোট পাইয়াছিল। কিন্তু অন্তর্কলহের কারণে সেই ভোটাধিক্য বাড়তি আসনে রূপান্তরিত হয় নাই, লালুপ্রসাদ-রামবিলাসদের মোট প্রাপ্ত আসনও নীতীশ কুমারদের আসনসংখ্যার ধারেকাছে যায় নাই। ইহাই প্রমাণ, লালুপ্রসাদের জনপ্রিয়তা বা গণভিত্তি ধসিয়া গিয়াছে, ইহা ভাবিবার হেতু নাই। বস্তুত, বহুলাংশে তাহা অক্ষত। তাঁহার প্রাপ্ত ভোটের হারও উল্লেখযোগ্য হ্রাস পায় নাই। এমনও নয় যে যাদব-মুসলিম ঐক্যের যে সূত্র রূপায়ণ করিয়া তিনি নির্বাচনী বৈতরণী অতিক্রম করিতেন, তাহা কাজে দিতেছে না কিংবা বিহারের অনগ্রসর, অতি-অনগ্রসর ও দলিতরা নীতীশ কুমারের মধ্যে নূতন মসিহা বা পরিভ্রাতা খুঁজিয়া পাইয়াছেন। তাই লালুপ্রসাদকে খরচের খাতায় নিক্ষেপ করা অর্থহীন। তবে তাঁহাকে যদি রাজ্য-রাজনীতিতে পুনরায় আধিপত্যে ফিরিতে হয়, তবে জোট-রাজনীতির অধ্যয়ন-অনুশীলনে আরও দক্ষ হইতে হইবে। কেবল চতুর সংলাপ, ব্রাহ্মণ্যবাদের চক্রান্তের ধূয়া এবং অনগ্রসরের ক্ষমতায়নের বাগাড়ম্বর তাঁহাকে বেশি দূর পৌঁছাইয়া দিতে পারে না। এ ব্যাপারে কংগ্রেসকেও অস্থিরমতিত্ব দূর করিতে হইবে।

Nitish promises "good governance"

All sections of society given representation in Cabinet, he says after the swearing-in

Special Correspondent

PATNA: Senior Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar took over as the Chief Minister of Bihar on Thursday in front of a huge cheering crowd.

As he performed the ritual of administering the oath of office to Mr. Kumar and 26 Ministers, Bihar Governor Buta Singh passed on the business of administration to a democratically elected Government, thus bringing to an end the eight-and-a-half month-old President's rule on the State. It also heralded a new political equation at the helm of affairs.

The former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, BJP president L.K. Advani, JD (U) chief George Fernandes, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Babu Lal Gaur, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, Akali Dal leader Prakash Singh Badal and Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee were present on the occasion.

The crowd at the historic Gandhi Maidan, where the swearing-in ceremony was held, shouted slogans against the Governor, asking him to resign for dissolving the Assembly after the last elections.

Ransacked

Some BJP workers ransacked the State party office here and beat up several persons protesting the non-inclusion in the Cabinet of Navin Kishore Prasad Sinha, a four-time MLA from Patna.

After the oath taking ceremony, BJP workers let loose their anger on their own leaders. They gheraoed State unit chief S.K. Modi, who was inducted as a Cabinet Minister and was set to

take over as the Deputy Chief Minister.

There were scenes of resentment at the BJP party office on Wednesday, when supporters of Ashwini Chaubey protested against Mr. Modi's selection for the post of Deputy Chief Minister. On Thursday, Mr. Sinha's supporters gheraoed a posh hotel where several top BJP leaders were staying and threatened revolt if they did not rectify the mistake. During his first informal interaction with the press after assuming office, Mr. Kumar declined to comment on the dissent and was against the issue being blown up.

Representative ministry

In Mr. Kumar's opinion, the new Ministry with 16 Cabinet and 10 Ministers of State was a good one in which all sections of the society had been given representation. He denied knowledge that one of his Ministers, Jitan Ram Manjhi, was allegedly tainted.

Notwithstanding the fact that both Mr. Kumar and Mr. Modi, being MPs, would have to become a member of either of the two Houses of the Bihar Legislature, two others who are not members of either the lower or the upper house were inducted as Cabinet Ministers.

They are Narendra Singh, the former Lok Jan Shakti Party State chief, and Ramashray Prasad Singh, the former LJP legislature party leader, both of whom had defected to the JD (U).

The induction of Ramashray Prasad Singh was a matter of debate within the JD (U) for the reason that he had lost the election. Narendra Singh, on the other hand, had not contested



CAMARADARIE TIME: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar after he was sworn in, with Governor Buta Singh in 1 on Thursday. — PHOTO: PTI

the elections, giving the ticket to his son A. Singh who emerged victorious.

Altogether, four "defectors" were rewarded with a ministerial berth. The former LJP leader Nagmani, who joined the JD (U) following Ram Vilas Pas-

wan's refusal to extend support to Mr. Kumar to form the government, succeeded in getting his wife Suchitra Sinha a place in the Cabinet.

The former Chief Minister, Jagannath Mishra and JD (U) MP Arun Kumar secured fa-

vours for their son and brother, Nitish Mishra and Anil Kumar respectively.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Kumar promised to ensure "good governance" shorn of partiality in his bid to develop infrastructure and improve law

and order to attract investment. He referred to his meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday as a "hopeful" one, saying he was hopeful that he would bring about the necessary assistance for the State.

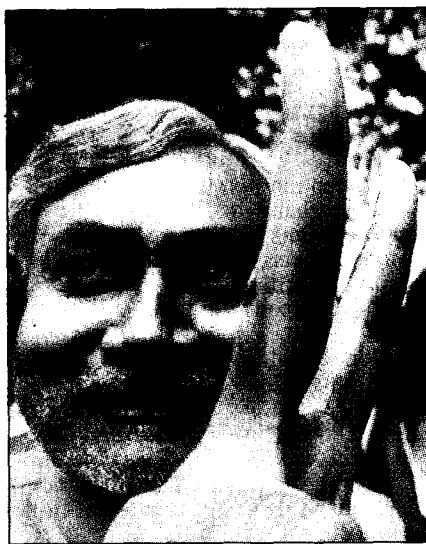
Fragile caste matrix stares at Bihar's 'Chanakya'

By Akshaya Mukul/TNN

New Delhi: In Bihar's highly fragile and competitive caste calculus, Kurmis have always been also-rans in the fight for social justice space. Nitish Kumar has broken the jinx by becoming the first Kurmi chief minister not only in Bihar but entire north India. For a community with barely 5% presence in Bihar and a history of lurking in the shadows of powerful Yadavs since the days of powerful Triveni Sangh of 1933, 54-year-old Kumar's elevation could be the beginning of yet another phase of new social alliances in the post-Mandal phase.

What the results mean in terms of crystallisation of the new caste/community combine could be new fodder for the metropolitan media to analyse for days to come, but Kumar's elevation marks the culmination of the first chapter of his fight against Lalu Prasad, once a friend, whom he left in 1994 against the Yadavisation of Janata Dal.

Another detail not to be missed is Kumar is the second successive political progeny of Karpoori Thakur, the fountainhead of OBC assertion in Bihar, to come to power. While Kumar has his plates full administratively, the tougher task would be to carry together the backward-upper caste alliance (JDU-BJP) ably



through the term. And then, comes the toughest of all: take Bihar to the path of progress and prosperity, now almost spoken in past tense.

Anyone acquainted with Kumar would know that the burden always sits lightly on him. With an image of being a good administrator, he did a commendable job as railway minister in the NDA government, it should not be a tough call for the

engineer-turned-politician to put the nuts and screws back in Bihar's machinery. In all ministries—agriculture, surface transport—he left his mark with sincerity and when it came to the crunch he owned responsibility as he did by resigning after the Gaisal train accident in 1999.

This is how the son of a village *vaid* began his political journey. Attracted by the egalitarian appeal of Ram Manohar Lohia, he joined the Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha. A plunge into the JP-led student movement, which triggered a train of events resulting in the imposition of the Emergency and the first-ever defeat of Congress, was a logical corollary.

His foray into electoral politics in 1977 was a disaster. He lost to his rival, a heavyweight, Bhola Singh, in the assembly elections despite the Janata wave sweeping through the state. The next time, he succumbed to the sympathy wave in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination.

It took a threat to the voters to call it quits to support a man whom they had liked but never voted for, to enter the assembly. He had never looked back since. After making his mark as a legislator, he defeated political heavyweight, Ram Lakhani Yadav, once a member of Triveni Sangh to enter Parliament.



Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) soldier stands in front of a damaged vehicle during an encounter in central Srinagar

Fairest of fair election in Bihar

By Sachchidanand Jha/TNN

Patna: It was the fairest of fair polls ever held in the country which ensured the NDA sweeping to power in Bihar riding an anti-Lalu wave.

And the credit for organising a clean vote goes to none other than the "one-man-army" and adviser to the Election Commission K J Rao, who within a span of 11 months has become a household name in Bihar.

It was for the first time in 20 years of democracy in Bihar that no official on poll duty was killed despite a poll boycott call given by Naxalites. Barring the Jehanabad jailbreak, which wasn't poll related, so peaceful were the elections this time that despite the Maoists boycott call not a single landmine went off anywhere during the four-phased vote.

In fact, Rao improved upon upon his February performance. He remained unfazed by the volley of barbs from RJD and Congress. He instead ensured that the polls were violence free.

Rao, in turn, glances off credit to the Central forces and poll officials for the exemplary organisation and watertight bandobast. In fact, people of Bihar will now closely

monitor the role of the EC legal advisor in the coming West Bengal and Assam Assembly polls. "His role in the coming West Bengal and Assam Assembly elections will be interesting to watch," is the common refrain among people here.

Such has been Rao's popularity among the commoners of Bihar that even an illiterate poor or a Dalit today has the confidence to walk up to him. He air-dashed to almost all the violence-prone constituencies of the states and ensured that the administration remained neutral all through the poll process. Apart from his daily chopper sorties, Rao even pillion rode on bikes, travelled by boats, walked long distances to reach remote and far flung areas to see that things went as per the book.

He in fact, rode the pillion of a bike during the arrest of Vijay Yadav, Jamui RJD nominee and brother of former Union minister of state Jai Prakash Narain Yadav, for threatening voters in the first phase of elections on October 18.

Not only was Vijay Prakash beaten up by the police for disturbing polls and carrying arms, but the police also lodged an FIR against Jai Prakash for securing the release of his brother from police custody illegally. Jai Prakash had to resign.



K J RAO

Hum Hoon Naa: Survivor!

By Kanika Tandon and Allen O'Brien/TNN

What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of Lalu Prasad? 'The man with ideas' that helped him rule for 15 odd years! Surprised? That's the GenX decode of the Lalu metaphor...

The Survivor: Says ad man Prahlad Kakkar, "Lalu is the survivor in the real sense for he'll be back! Though we might think that he is a joker, our opinions really don't matter at the grassroots level. Lalu treats us like a minority and does whatever he can to grab the *kursi*. Just look at what he did with Paswan. He'll now make Nitish a soft target as well." Adds author Shobhaa De, "No matter what one might say, he is the ultimate epitome of the survivor in politics. Even as every Indian claimed that Lalu is to be blamed for the sad state of affairs in Bihar today, nobody could create a barrier for him during 15 years of his reign."



He's unlikely to throw his hands up yet

The Puppeteer: Thanks to his wife Rabri Devi, many feel that the politico qualifies as the "perfect puppeteer. He really knows what it takes to make the show run. And when he could not play his own cards, he made sure to get someone—his wife—who would do exactly what he wanted," states image consultant Anil Thakur. Moreover, some feel there is more to come. "He is one man who has never accepted defeat and now one wonders what lies in store," claims CEO, Tops Security, Rahul Nanda.

The Joker: What could best sum up the saying that the first impression is the last one but the "persona of

Lalu. There are 52 cards in the pack and Lalu is the 53rd one—the joker—mind you with the brains of a manipulator." Agrees Nanda, "Had it not been for his looks, Lalu would have never got away with 15 years of nuisance. His joker looks are a feather in the crown!"

The Manager: In case you thought the 'joker' image was the only metaphor that best suited the politician, think twice. As student Praveen Kumar of DU says, "There is just one metaphor that best describes the neta—a shrewd politician. He knows his voters. He knows how to convince them. His image of a joker is only a facade to win votes."

Adds another DU student Barnana Sarkar, "Though he claims to be a funny politician, it is the media that has made him an item of spoof. But he knows his job. He has managed his position excellently. In fact, he is a great management guru. Despite being portrayed as funny and foolish, he has a strong political hold on Bihar."

The rise and fall of Lalu

The rise and rise of Lalu Prasad—and his great fall—covers 15 long years. The rise of Lalu Prasad, the "garib ka beta" and "chaprasi ka bhai", began in 1989-90 after the sudden death of Karpoori Thakur, the patriarch of Lok Dal politics in the state. Lalu managed to become leader of opposition, a post which Thakur had held, mobilising the support of some of the Yadav MLAs of what was then the Lok Dal (it later merged with other groups to form Janata Dal) and striking deals with others like Nitish Kumar and Jagadanand Singh.

A nominee of Devi Lal, he became CM even though he didn't have majority support among the Janata Dal MLAs largely because Chandrashekhar would not let V P Singh's nominee, Ramsundar Das, occupy the post. The Old Turk, smarting under the loss of prime ministership to the Raja of Manda, joined forces with Devi Lal, Sharad Yadav and Nitish Kumar to scupper Das' pitch.

But Lalu came into his own only after his bold gambit of ditching his original mentor, along with Nitish Kumar and Sharad Yadav, for V P Singh in August 1990—in exchange for a commitment to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations.

Then came the arrest of L K Advani in October 1990, when his rath was heading towards Ayodhya.

The two moves earned Lalu a reservoir of goodwill among OBCs and Muslims which helped him sweep the 1991 Lok Sabha polls in Bihar. The support from the two communities, and his credentials as the champion of social justice, helped him to survive a split with Nitish Kumar and win the 1995 assembly elections on his own.

In fact, he seemed so invincible at one point that his supporters boasted, "Jab tak rahega samosa mein alu, tab tak rahega Bihar mein Lalu."

But soon, his support started dwindling. In the 1996 LS polls, Nitish joined hands with BJP to pare his Lok Sabha tally. As Lalu's sheen wore off after his alleged involvement in the fodder scam, which forced him to step down from chief ministership in favour of his spouse Rabri Devi, his political stock continued to dip. He was worsted by the Vajpyee-led NDA both in 1998 and 1999 LS polls.

Hubris prevented him from paying heed to the "changin" times. The solid phalanx of supporters had begun to fray.

The February polls dented his aura of invincibility. Finally, he had to bite the dust on Tuesday in the state arena; damage that could not be fully repaired even after Lalu, invoking the fear of regime change, managed to bring Yadavs and, to a lesser degree, Muslims back into the fold. TNN

Bihar joins the national mainstream

Harish Khare

UTTAR PRADESH went to the polls in March 2002. The Bharatiya Janata Party was in power in Lucknow and New Delhi. The country had been whipped into a frenzy, especially after the December 13, 2001, terrorist attack on Parliament House. L.K. Advani was playing sheriff in New Delhi. In Lucknow, the incumbent Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, had banned the Muslim outfit, SIMI, and was threatening to put in place a POTA-like law if voted back to power. On the other hand, Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Vishwanath Pratap Singh were predicting that the National Democratic Alliance regime in New Delhi would collapse after the BJP got routed in Lucknow. Both believed Mulayam Singh Yadav was the ideal instrument to lead the secular offensive against the Bharatiya Janata Party.

STATECRAFT

In the event, the BJP lost but that was about it. After a few months of President's Rule, the BJP joined hands with the Bahujan Samaj Party and installed Mayawati as Chief Minister in Lucknow whereas Atal Bihari Vajpayee went on to complete his term at the Centre.

This little bit of recent history is recalled in the context of the Bihar election outcome. Just as a BJP defeat in Uttar Pradesh had no bearing on the last Lok Sabha, the Rashtriya Janata Dal-Congress-CPI(M) combine's debacle cannot possibly have any ramifications for the United Progressive Alliance Government at the Centre. Just as the 2002 U.P. defeat lent a degree of coherence to the Vajpayee Government, the

Lalu Prasad refused to understand that Bihar could not remain a stranger to the larger process of growth and development that characterises much of the rest of India.

2005 Bihar defeat can only have a salutary effect on the UPA partners and friends who have of late developed rather complacent mind-sets. In any case, the Bihar verdict is not a licence for the NDA to instigate disruption in the polity.

Is there anything in the latest Bihar vote that can be construed as distracting from the *raison d'être* of the UPA at the Centre? Nothing, indeed. The vote is not at all an endorsement of the BJP's brand of aggressive Hindutva. It should be kept in mind that in Bihar the BJP is not a senior partner in the alliance with the Janata Dal (United). The BJP did not show its Hindutva colours at any time; and, Nitish Kumar, the Chief Minister-apparent, had been careful to distance himself from any BJP-instigated suggestion of any kind of calculated hostility to the minorities. If anything, in recent months the JD(U) has not been averse to being seen to be in agreement with the UPA plank of some kind of affirmative action in favour of the minorities. Whether the Bihar verdict provides Mr. Advani any elbow-room to linger on for a few more months as BJP president is between him and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh bosses. But there is little comfort in the Bihar vote for the BJP ideologues.

Is Lalu Prasad's rout a defeat of the secular platform at the Centre? On the face of it, the vote is a setback only because the Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) had chosen

to justify their alliance with the Rashtriya Janata Dal in terms of secular consolidation. On the other hand, Ram Vilas Paswan's single-point chant of "Muslim Chief Minister" denied Mr. Prasad the luxury of painting himself in secular colours. The secular "card" worked in the 2004 Lok Sabha election because the BJP/RSS/VHP combine loomed large; by the time the Bihar electorate was asked to vote a second time in 2005 for the Assembly, the Hindutva threat was a distant memory. In this round of electioneering, the RJD itself did not raise the secular war cry. Mr. Nitish Kumar's decisive victory will not allow the RJD/UPA leaders to point accusing fingers at the Election Commission. A narrow margin would have invited attention to the Commission's bias. The nature of Mr. Nitish Kumar's victory should put an end to all arguments as to whose cause Mr. Paswan helped most and hurt most. Bihar was ready for a change.

Mr. Prasad got entangled in a politics of preserving a narrow caste support base, which had nothing to do with the secular *versus* communal divide not to speak of the larger issues of the rulers' obligation to be sensitive to citizens' needs. He wallowed in a partisan politics of an extremely self-serving kind, craftily invoking caste antagonisms to his electoral advantage. He stumbled upon the winning formula of combining Yadav consolidation with Muslim insecurity.

Admittedly, Mr. Prasad did not invent caste or the political usefulness of the caste appeal in Bihar; he was merely carrying on the traditions and habits established by the Sri Babus and the K.B. Sahays in the 1950s and the 1960s. Like the Bhumihars, the Brahmins, and the Kayasthas, he too finessed the art of producing legislative majorities based on limited caste appeals. His politics was relevant to the Bihar of the 1990s. But he forgot that Bihar was part of a changing India.

Obviously, Mr. Prasad refused to understand that Bihar could not remain a stranger to the larger process of growth and development that characterises much of the rest of India. Though a considerable section of the Bihar population opted to migrate out to other parts of India in search of security and stability, the majority (most of them poor) had to stay put, most of the time on Mr. Prasad's terms. But those who stayed back were not oblivious to the change and growth in the rest of the country. In these times of ever-increasing connectivity, the Bihar voter was in a position to have a fairly good idea of how growth, development, and governance were changing people's ambitions and aspirations. This voter could not remain content with what Mr. Prasad had to offer. What began in 1990 as a refreshing promise of genuine social change degenerated in 15 years into crony rule. Nobody in Bihar was amused when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh chose to bestow the "Vikas Purush" salutation on Mr. Prasad.

One lesson emerges. No political leader or party can ignore the obligation to undertake some basic tasks of governance. A strong, well-oiled party machine helps electoral mobilisation; an emotional pitch may work magic temporarily; but the business of democratic politics has to centre around governance and delivery. Democratic politics, especially if it insists on seeking its very legitimacy from the welfare of the masses, cannot sustain for long a leadership style that thrives on contempt for the masses and their minimum needs. In a way Mr. Prasad should be grateful to the voters for their rebuff; otherwise he and his cronies would have remained untutored in this basic obligation.

Task for Nitish

No one knows whether Mr. Nitish Kumar himself would be able to answer the crux of the Bihar voter's desire for change. Bihar was always a much divided society and politicians of all varieties have deepened those divisions. And these divisions are now sorted out by private armies. The only course open to Mr. Nitish Kumar is to summon a higher *raj dharma*, instead of getting sucked into numerous demands and intractable claims of past grievances and vendettas. This would be a very exacting task, especially because his rivals and enemies can be relied upon to provoke violence and animosities. The eruption recently in Jehanabad was a reminder, if a reminder was indeed needed, that Patna's writ does not run in large chunks of Bihar. The benighted State needs a new idiom of argumentation and a new political culture.

Does the Bihar vote mean the politics of social justice has run its course in the country? Can, for example, Mr. Mulayam Singh or Ms. Mayawati persist with their preference for the caste idiom? This appeal of caste-based regional parties will continue to find favour with the voter as long as the national political parties do not find the leadership and the vision to tap all-India passions and aspirations. But it is becoming increasingly clear also that a family-based political outfit can no longer appropriate the promise of the politics of social justice. The voter will reject all those leaders, political parties and outfits that refuse to observe democratic decencies and remain indifferent to the ruler's fundamental obligation to govern, fairly, firmly and equitably. It would be an outright absurdity if the NDA crowd or the third-front hopefuls chose to interpret the Bihar vote as a mandate to destabilise the Centre. The country is in a business-like mood and does not want to favour manipulators at the expense of administrators.

THE HINDU

23 NOV 2005

“A vote for change, governance”

We will explode the myth that Bihar is non-governable, says Nitish Kumar

Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: The mandate in Bihar is a vote for “change” and “governance”, the victorious National Democratic Alliance (NDA) chief ministerial candidate, Nitish Kumar, said here on Tuesday in his first reaction to the Assembly poll results that brought to an end 15 years of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) rule in the State.

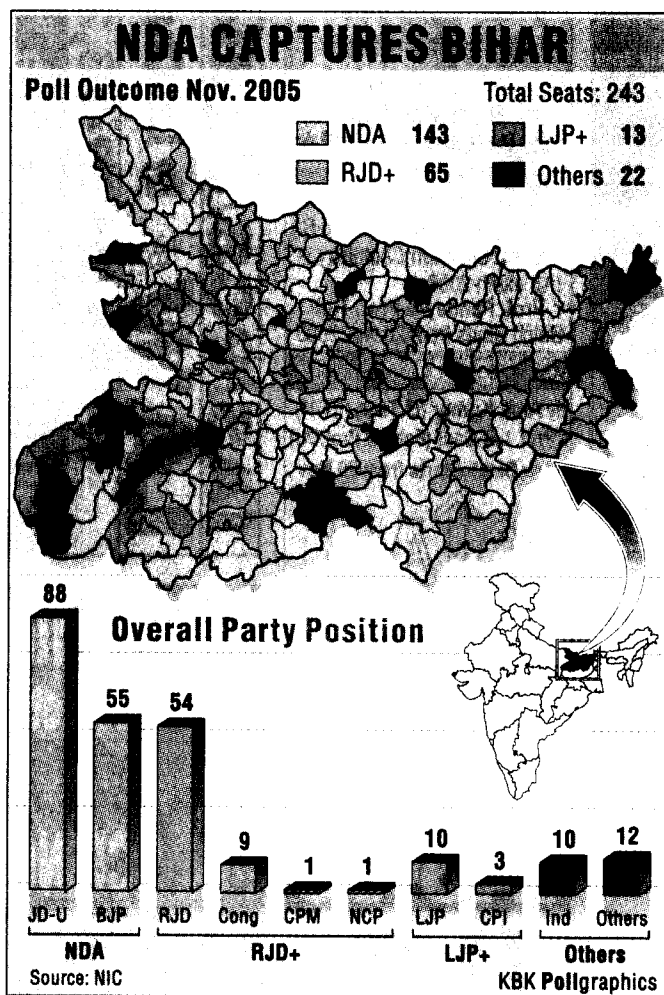
Flanked by JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav and BJP's Arun Jaitley, Murli Manohar Joshi, Rajnath Singh and Ravi Shankar Prasad, Mr. Nitish Kumar, however, parried questions whether the State would have a Deputy Chief Minister and if ‘tainted’ MLAs would find berths in the new Cabinet. “You will know when the Cabinet is formed,” he said adding, “but first the legislators have to elect their leader.”

It was not until after 12.30 p.m. when the trends revealed more than a clear majority for the Janata Dal (United)-Bhartiya Janata Party combine that Mr Nitish Kumar stepped out of his house to address mediapersons who thronged every nook and corner of his driveway. Cool and collected, he was seen asking party revellers to take it easy.

Call from Prime Minister

Even as he was speaking to the press, he received a congratulatory call from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. “That was the Prime Minister. He said the Centre would extend all cooperation to the State,” he said.

Asked whether the newly elected government would pursue (fodder scam) cases against



RJD chief Lalu Prasad, Mr. Nitish Kumar asserted that there would be “no vendetta or confrontation.”

“Laluji is like my elder brother. I expect cooperation from him. This is a moment of satisfaction for us. We are not going overboard with joy at our victory

and accept it with all humility and gratitude to people.”

Stressing the need for “nav nirman” (re-construction) of Bihar, the JD (U) leader, who was closely associated with Jaya Prakash Narayan’s student movement, said the priority of the new government would be to

bring back the State on rails.

“Bihar’s governance is a big challenge and an onerous responsibility. Work would have to begin from day one. In this process we would take all people along without any discrimination of caste, creed, community, religion or sex and try to live up to their expectations,” he said.

The former Central Minister said the NDA would come out with a Common Minimum Programme (CMP). On the issue of reservation for dalit Muslims on which there is a difference of opinion with the BJP, he said that the issue had to be dealt with at the Central government level. It would not come in the way of the CMP with the BJP as there were no differences on minority welfare.

Praise for poll panel

He was all praise for the Election Commission for the manner in which Bihar elections were conducted.

“The myth that elections would not be fair and free in Bihar was exploded this time. We will explode the other myth that Bihar is non-governable by providing good governance,” he said.

Asked to comment on the forthcoming final verdict of the Supreme Court on the dissolution of Bihar Assembly in March, Mr. Kumar said, “The people have given their verdict. Their decision is supreme.”

Later at the party office, Mr. Fernandes said the party was fully behind Mr Nitish Kumar. “The results are the culmination of a 12-year-long struggle. Finally truth has triumphed.”

Nitish Kumar leads NDA to victory in Bihar

Lalu Prasad's combine gets a drubbing

K. Balchand and Gargi Parsai

PATNA/NEW DELHI: Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar on Tuesday led the National Democratic Alliance to a resounding victory in the Bihar Assembly elections. This brings to an end the 15-year Lalu Prasad-led Rashtriya Janata Dal rule in the State.

Mr. Kumar's combine won 143 seats in the 243-member Assembly, with the JD(U) bagging 88 seats and the Bharatiya Janata Party getting 55. The RJD has just 54 seats to its credit.

JD(U) leaders said the legislature party meeting would be held in Patna on Wednesday to elect Mr. Kumar as the chief. After consultations with the BJP and a formal letter of support from its chief, he would approach the Raj Bhavan and stake claim before Governor Buda Singh to form the next Government. Mr. Kumar is likely to be sworn in Chief Minister along with about a dozen Ministers at a public function at the Gandhi Maidan on Thursday.

Unlike in the February elections, the electorate handed a clear mandate to break the political uncertainty that prevailed in the State for over eight months. RJD supremo and Railway Minister Lalu Prasad has since conceded defeat and extended "support to Nitish but

not the BJP." The NDA had fallen short of the halfway mark of 122 by 31 seats in the February elections when the JD(U) won 55 seats and the BJP 37. With no party in a position to form a government, President's Rule was imposed and consequently the House was dissolved and elections called.

The JD(U) combine wrested 51 seats belonging to independents and smaller parties besides the RJD-led alliance. Apart from the JD(U) and the BJP, the only party that increased its tally was the Bahujan Samaj Party, which bagged four seats as against the two it won in February.

The strength of the RJD-led alliance decreased by 24 members. The party contested the elections in alliance with the Congress, the NCP and the CPI(M). The CPI(M) retained its position with one seat, while the RJD yielded 21 seats and the Congress got just nine seats, having given up one seat. The NCP lost two of its seats and was left with just one seat.

Lok Jan Shakti Party chief and Union Steel Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, who declined to be part of the UPA and sought to project a third front in alliance with the CPI, the RSP and the FB, fared the worst. He lost almost two-thirds of his seats and was left with just 10 seats. The CPI retained its position winning three seats. The elections negated the

importance of smaller parties and independents. The CPI(M) lost ground in three constituencies to retain four seats this time. The Samajwadi Party too conceded two seats to be left with two members. Only 12 independents won.

Those who registered victories including the former Chief Minister and RJD leader, Rabri Devi, RJD State unit chief Abdul Bari Siddiqui, the LJP chief's brother, Pashupati Kumar Paras, the State convener of the NDA and BJP leader Nand Kishore Yadav and JD(U) State unit chief Bijendra Prasad Yadav.

A vote for new Bihar

Addressing newsmen in New Delhi, Mr. Kumar said the mandate was a vote for "change" and "governance." He stressed the need for "nav nirman" (reconstruction) of Bihar and said the priority of the new Government would be to bring back the State on rails.

Lalu concedes defeat

In Patna, Mr. Prasad conceded defeat and extended his greetings to Mr. Kumar, but added that his greeting was limited to the JD(U) chief, and not to the BJP. He said he honoured the people's verdict. Mr. Prasad alleged that forces that he sidelined had spread a campaign that he had not cared for the development and prosperity of the people and the State.



THE VICTOR: Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar, flanked by BJP leader Arun Jaitley (right) and party colleague Sharad Yadav, in a jubilant mood after the Bihar election results, in New Delhi on Tuesday. He will stake claim on Wednesday to form a government.

BIHAR RELOADED

Will the new politics survive, will the old economy change, and what on earth will Rabri Devi do now?

Back in the picture



ASHOK MALIK

TWO days before the Bihar assembly election results, Nitish Kumar was at a dinner in Delhi, still answering questions from doubting Thomases about why he felt so confident — quietly confident, as befits the man's understated demeanour — of victory.

Finally, exasperated and allowing himself a hint of a smile, Nitish broke his silence, "Are bhai I agree there has been some MY consolidation, but there are others who vote also... Don't non-MY's vote?"

Having made his point, he threw his head back and said, almost wistfully, "I have no complaints. The Election Commission did a good job, all our grievances were addressed. This election has been a genuine test of popularity — if Laloo wins he is more popular, if we win we are more popular. There will be no scope for doubt."

A little later the same evening, Sushil Modi — BJP leader and Nitish's ally in Bihar — silenced another interrogator keen to know the difference between the February and November elections. "The mood for change," replied Sushil, "was strong, very strong."

The two politicians were to prove prophetic. Between them they had spelt out the three reasons that made the difference in Bihar this time. They even named the final tally: "140 plus".

So it turned out to be, thanks to the arithmetic of caste coalition building, the rigorous physical framework laid out by the EC — and the chemistry of change in a society yearning to move on.

In Laloo's defeat Bihar has made the journey to post-Mandalism. Caste is still important, OBC empowerment is still a dominant theme — Nitish, after all, is a Kurmi — but no longer can "Backward assertion" be seen as synonymous with Yadav raj and substitute for proactive government.

Laloo, the Mandal movement's poster boy, had started to think of himself as the whole poster. He's been shaken out of his time warp — much like his mustachioed man Friday who told NDTV 24x7 at 9 am on Tuesday, "Hum dus bahe ka baad jeetenge, jab gaon ka vote gina jayege (We'll win after 10 am, when the rural votes are counted)."

In a sense, this election welcomes Bihar back to India. In the years after the decline of the Congress, state after state went through a chaotic interlude before settling into a sort of bipolarity. From Tamil Nadu to Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh to Kerala, Indian states are increasingly two-party — or two-alliance — battlegrounds.

Bipolarity — as opposed to menacing monopoly or messy multipolarity — lends itself to relative stability, keeps governments under watch and curbs the space for blackmailing "third forces" who jump from one ship to the other.

The two states that spent the 1990s resolutely resisting the natural evolution towards a bipolar system were Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. With this

election, Bihar has ended its boycott. Two coalitions centred on individual core groups — Yadavs for the RJD; non-Yadav OBCs and the upper caste for the BJP — have demonstrated a certain sustaining power.

Are there larger, national implications of the Bihar election? For a start, the NDA is back in business, having conquered a state where it was a write-off a year ago. That the alliance remained intact despite 18 months out of power — even if Congress functionaries were happily planting stories all of this past winter about how "Nitish could join the UPA" — indicates its resilience.

If they continue to define the Bihar polity — such as it is — the state could be far more pacific than the imminent "caste wars" direly predicted by Congress cronies on DD News right through Tuesday.

Evidence clearly indicates that the decline in Bihar's economy is a direct consequence of misrule and the failure of the state. The economic decline is evident from various outcomes such as income, employment, maternal mortality and education. So that question must be posed: why is it that Biharis do well everywhere else but in their own state? The answer in a word: misrule.

The biggest problem will be that of the Left. No longer can it afford the luxury of being the UPA's in-house opposition. "Fascist forces" have captured the ultimate citadel of "secularism". It is the NDA that will now lead the attack on the government, and play the real opposition. Prakash Karat's phoney war is over.

At the back of his mind, however, the Left will not be thinking of Bihar 2005 as much as West Bengal 2006. As a senior IAS officer in Patna stressed, the EC's arrangements this time were designed to negate "scientific rigging".

For the first time, Central paramilitary forces didn't just patrol a district generally but actually manned booths. Two and a half million "bogus voters" were removed from the rolls. The EC requisitioned army and air force helicopters for aerial surveillance.

"It was almost exciting for the voter," said the civil servant, "to vote under the security of a Punjab commando. He felt that much more confident that his vote would count... This triggered the mood for change, so much so that by the third and fourth phases, even the bureaucracy felt it."

The only people who didn't sense the "mood for change" were, of course, Delhi's election tourists, the "national" correspondents who happily reported a "kaante ki takkar". On the contrary, among those who did sense change were election observers from West Bengal. As one of them confessed to a Bihar cadre colleague, "If the EC insists on similar measures in West Bengal in May 2006, heaven knows..."

From the land of Gautam Buddha to the land of Chief Minister Buddha, how far can the EC's dogged struggle for a foolproof election make it a catalyst for change? We'll know next summer. For the moment, grant Nitish his nirvana.

Hope floats in a basket case



I LA PATNAIK

PILOO Mody once demanded of the prime minister of the time, why is it that Indian businesspersons do so well under every national government but your own? As the people of Bihar peer at the final result tally for signs of change, a similar question must run through their minds. The rest of India thrives because of Bihar out-migration at every level. And they thrive there. In Bihar, however, socio-economic indicators remain abysmal. So that question must be posed: why is it that Biharis do well everywhere else but in their own state?

The answer in a word: misrule. Evidence clearly indicates that the decline in Bihar's economy is a direct consequence of misrule and the failure of the state. The economic decline is evident from various outcomes such as income, employment, maternal mortality and education. So that question must be posed: why is it that Biharis do well everywhere else but in their own state? The answer in a word: misrule.

casual labourers who head 54 per cent households in Bihar and are often unable to find work in rural Bihar. Employment opportunities outside agriculture have not grown either. Deterioration in public finance and rising deficits have led to lower public investment. A poor investment climate has kept private investment away from Bihar. The freight equalisation policy allowed investment to go far away from Bihar even when the state was undivided with a large share of mineral resources. The transfer of mining resources to Jharkhand worsened Bihar's investment prospects.

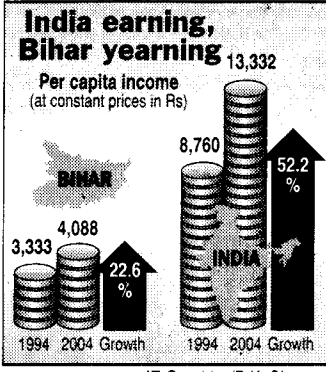
Rs 18 crore out of the Rs 250 crore for the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Program. It spent barely 5 per cent of its Rs 10 crore allocation under the National Old Age Pension Scheme. Excessive centralisation of decision making, paralysis of decision making, capacity constraints, procedural delays and antiquated systems have been identified as among the reasons why nearly 20 of the money approved for Bihar was unspent. The poor infrastructure, poor delivery of services and corruption add to the public's woes.

The response to the lack of employment opportunities in Bihar compared to the rest of India, has been out-migration. Many studies show that out-migration is a crucial survival strategy in Bihar. Twenty five per cent of households in Bihar have absent male members — 95 per cent of out-migrants are male. Among the poor migration is short-term in nature. However, among the top 25 per cent of households, migration is long term. This leave Bihar with few people who have the incentive to make law and order protect private property in the state.

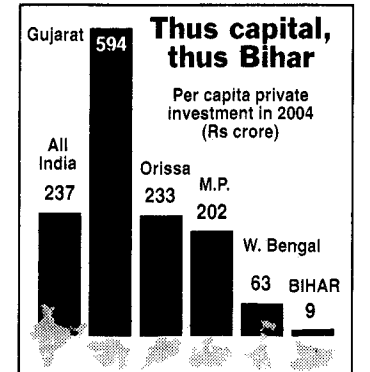
The new government will face

Social justice? Ha!	BIHAR	INDIA
Population below poverty line (%, 1999-00)	43	26
Literacy rate (% 2001)	48	65
Gross enrolment ratio class IV (8-11 yrs, 1999-00)	79	95
Teacher-pupil ratio (Primary school, 1999-00)	63	43
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 births, 1999-00)	62	68
Maternal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births, 1998)	452	407

IE Graphics/B.K. Sharma



IE Graphics/B.K. Sharma



The investment climate in Bihar is characterised first and foremost by lack of law and order. When life and property are not safe and kidnapping and murder are common, private companies are averse to investing in the state. Interestingly, official crime statistics do not indicate that Bihar has a higher crime rate than the India. Kidnappings, abductions and dacoities are below the all India average. It is, however, suspected that official data does not capture the extent of crime in Bihar. The concern over law and order in Bihar is a significant deterrent to investment in

Bihar. Also, there has been no proactive policy to attract private investment as has been seen in some other states such as West Bengal or Andhra Pradesh. In addition, poor infrastructure such as unreliable power supply, poor roads connectivity and telecom reduce the attractiveness of Bihar as an investment destination even further.

The unreliability of the power supply with frequent breakdowns and heavy fluctuation have led the majority of industrial units in the state to have captive power plants. This pushes up costs and reduces competitiveness. With nearly 70 per cent of inhabited areas not connected by motorable roads, Bihar is among the worst connected states in the country. Bihar has only 77 km total road length per 100 sq km, worse than its poor neighbour Orissa, which has 169 km. Further, Bihar has the lowest teledensity in India. While in the rest of India, 9 per cent of households have telephones, Bihar missed out on the great Indian telecom revolution, and only 2 per cent of its households have telephones.

It is not as if more grants by the centre would help. Year after year, Bihar has been unable to utilise the funds available to it. For example, under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana it was proposed that more than Rs 7000 crore would be spent for Bihar, but Bihar failed to utilise the funds. Bihar spent barely

many challenges. But the most important challenge on the economic front is to protect life and property. Failure to that will push Bihar even further below the rest of India as both labour and capital move away from the state.

If Nitish Kumar is to make anything of the responsibility the voter has given to him, he must do enough to be able to counter Laloo's contention that he gave the people a voice. Nitish must, as his most urgent task, place himself in a position to tell the Biharis: I have given you confidence to aspire.

Business as Usual
By UNNY

You only got the house dissolved. People have bombed ours.



VARGHESE K GEORGE

AS results were trickling in after the closely fought 2000 assembly elections in Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav was a worried man. Things were not quite going his way, and he was impatient for details of the results that could mean the end of his raj. His wife, chief minister Rabri Devi was concerned about more important things. "Will we have to vacate the house if we lose?" she asked her husband. "Yes," Laloo replied. "No... no... I will not! Not before I harvest the potatoes [cultivated in the compound of the official residence of the chief minister]," she screamed. Laloo himself would narrate this after she was sworn in as CM again.

Rabri Devi took charge as the chief minister of Bihar in 1997, after Laloo decided to surrender in the fodder scam case. As he was preparing to go to jail, Laloo convinced Rabri to occupy his place. However, her concern was more about the impending arrest of her husband. While

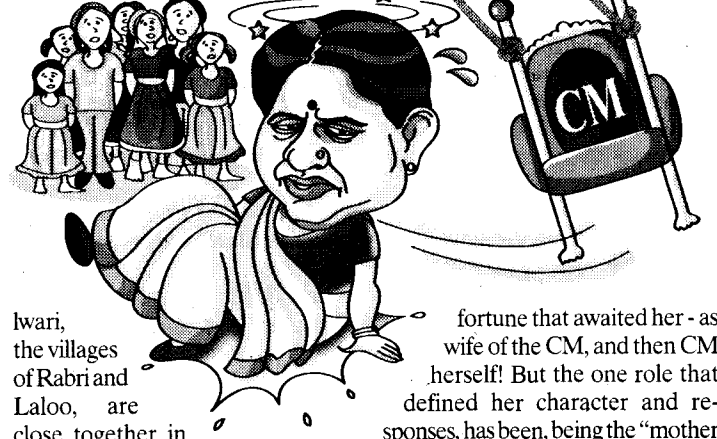
The cows have come home

she was crying and protesting inside the house, Laloo addressed his supporters in the middle of the night. "The fodder scam case is also a political fight. While I am away, Rabriji will be your leader." On July 25, with Laloo by her side, she signed the first file as CM. "Write your name, and then draw a line under it," Laloo instructed his wife. She thus became the first woman CM of Bihar.

After that first visit, Rabri may not have visited the CM's chamber in the state secretariat many times in the eight years that ended with the February 2005 assembly elections. The files would come to I, Anney Marg and officials briefed Laloo. After his nod, the files would wait for Madam's name and a line under it. She enjoyed making a meal for her husband rather than worrying over governance. Or taking care of her cows. Speaking of which — cows have been very profitable for her. As per an affidavit filed in a case of dispropo-

portionate assets, Rabri-Laloo have explained nearly Rs 46 lakh as income from dairy. Salarkalan and Phuri,

the villages of Rabri and Phuri, are close together in Bihar's Gopalganj district. Her's was a rich family, and after her marriage to Laloo in 1974 at the age of just 14, Rabri's relatives pitied her misfortune. Who knew then the



fortune that awaited her — as wife of the CM, and then CM herself! But the one role that defined her character and responses, has been, being the "mother of seven daughters."

Having seven daughters in a traditional society such as Bihar's is a huge responsibility. Such mothers tend to save up each penny for the marriage

of the daughters. Rabri grieved in the process. She may have been the rubber stamp of the husband, but she too learnt to make a phone call to get someone a transfer or a contract. The ministers who could not bend Laloo would wait for an opportunity to get a hearing from Rabri.

The early years of the Laloo-Rabri marriage were a time of struggle. Laloo was barely surviving in politics and both were staying in the official quarters of Laloo's brother in Patna Veterinary college. Rabri developed a bitterness with her in-laws during this time and she never forgot the ill-treatment meted out to her even after fortune came her way. Laloo's relatives had no access to the CM's bungalow. She kept the CM household in her firm grip. The dynasty politics in the first family of the RJD would branch out in the Rabri direction — Sadhu and Subhash, her brothers were inducted into politics.

Sadhu was brought in first. He was nominated to the upper house of the state legislature in the artist quota! When Laloo was contemplating a replacement CM, Sadhu pitched for it.

Laloo learnt that he had grown too much. After his failed bid for chief ministership, Sadhu's access was restricted in the CM bungalow. In came Subhash Yadav, the younger one, who was a peon in the state assembly. From peon, he became legislator overnight. Whenever Laloo came under pressure for the actions of his brothers-in-law, Rabri Devi put her foot down to defend her brothers. She took it as her duty to be a good sister for the brothers who helped her in being a good mother of seven daughters.

Though a reluctant chief minister in the beginning, Rabri learnt fast — not the art of governance — but the fact that her new role was an inevitable extension of her role as Laloo's wife. As Laloo's charisma waned and he had fewer people to trust, the more intense the family coterie became. Rabri began to campaign alone in elections. She did this for the sake of her daughters, perhaps.

RJD may or may not survive to fight another battle. But one will never see Rabri Devi as CM again.

- 1. When investigating agencies do their duty sans partiality. ANITA THAKUR
- 2. When a lady can travel in a bus without being harassed by male passengers. SWAPNIL KOTOKY
- 3. When India and Bharat develop at the same pace. AYUSH VYAS
- 4. When every government official will understand that he is paid by the citizens not by government. AMIT JIVANI
- 5. When even the common man will come out of the "chalta ha?" attitude. TANVI GUPTA

Send us your take on empowerment through SMS at 8558. The best five SMS everyday will be printed on the Op-Ed page. To send SMS, type IE (space) followed by your empowerment SMS, your name and send it to 8558. Please note that your SMS must not exceed 157 characters

BIHAR SACKS LALU



Statesman News Service

PATNA/NEW DELHI, Nov. 22. — After an uninterrupted 15 years in power, Mr Lalu Prasad's Bihar citadel collapsed today in a manner worse than the projections made by opinion and exit polls, setting the stage for an NDA government in the state.

A resurgent Nitish Kumar-led NDA posted a landslide victory, with the JD(U)-BJP combine bagging as many as 142 seats in a House of 243 (See chart above). In sharp contrast to the hung verdict of the February polls, the NDA emerged as the comprehensive victor defeating the RJD-Congress alliance across regions and communities in Bihar.

Riding on the anti-Lalu wave, Mr Kumar's JD-U won 87 seats, while the BJP clinched 55. The NDA went to the elections projecting Mr Kumar, the backward classes leader and a former confidant of Mr Prasad, as the chief ministerial candidate. This seems to have paid rich dividends.

Mr Kumar will meet the Governor, Mr Buta Singh, tomorrow to stake claim to form the government. He is likely to be sworn in as chief minister, along with other ministers, on Thursday. "We have fought the elections together and it will be a coalition government," he said. On whether there would be a deputy chief minister, Mr Kumar said it had not been decided.

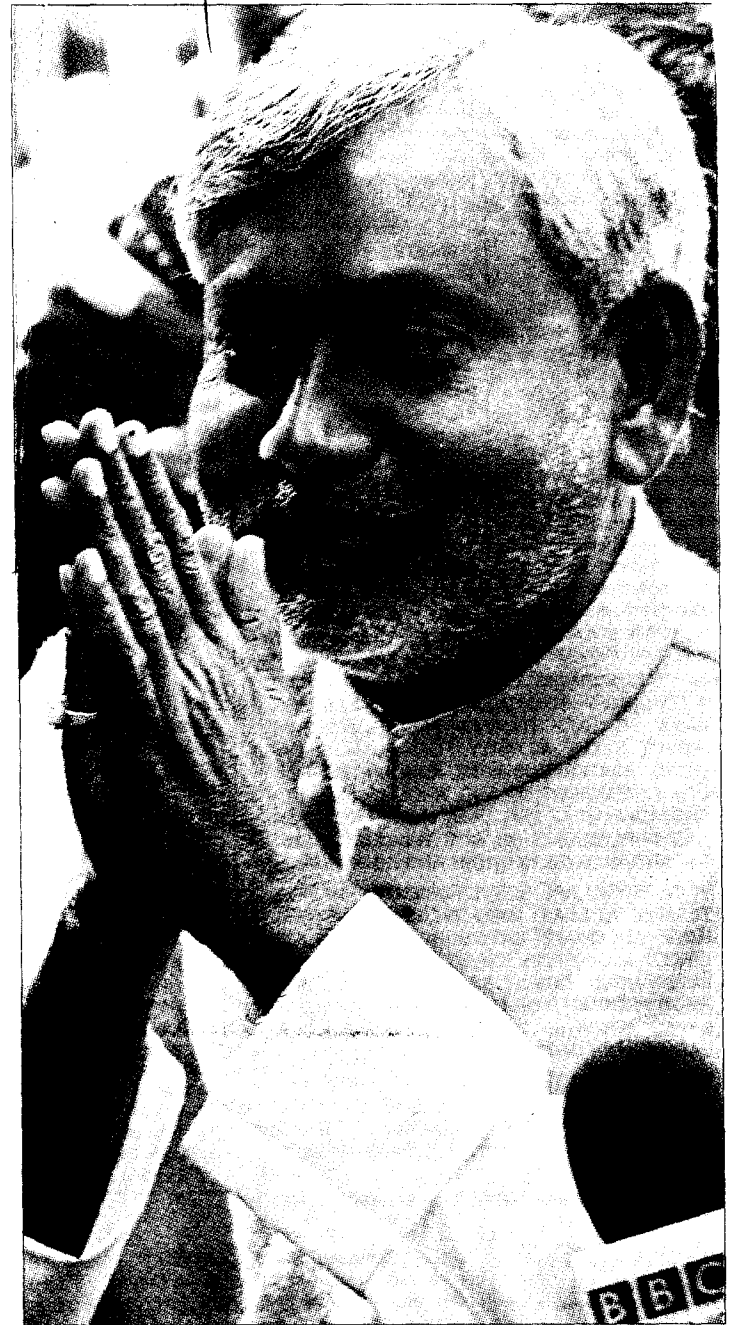
The NDA's united fight devastated both the RJD-led Secular Democratic Front (comprising the Congress, CPI-M and the NCP) and the Third Front, comprising Mr Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP and smaller Left parties. The SDF could win only 65 seats, including 54 won by the RJD and 9 by the Congress, with the two parties suffering respective losses of 21 and 1 as compared to their tallies just nine months earlier.

The "would-be king-maker" of the February polls, Mr Paswan was relegated to an irrelevant position this time round, with only 18 seats going to his front. The LJP won only 11 seats, against its previous figure of 29. A pall of gloom descended on the 1 Anne Marg residence of Mrs Rabri Devi in Patna. In the company of his few trusted supporters, Mr Lalu Prasad remained indoors for most part of the day.

According to an RJD source, Mr Prasad got even more restive with reports indicating that Mr Rabri Devi was trailing in the initial rounds from her constituency, Raghogar. She did, however, save the RJD chief's face by managing a victory with a slim margin of around 4,000 votes.

A sullen Mr Prasad finally talked to the media before leaving for Delhi. He tried to put up a brave face saying he did not have any problem with anyone gaining power in the state.

■ See BIHAR: page 4

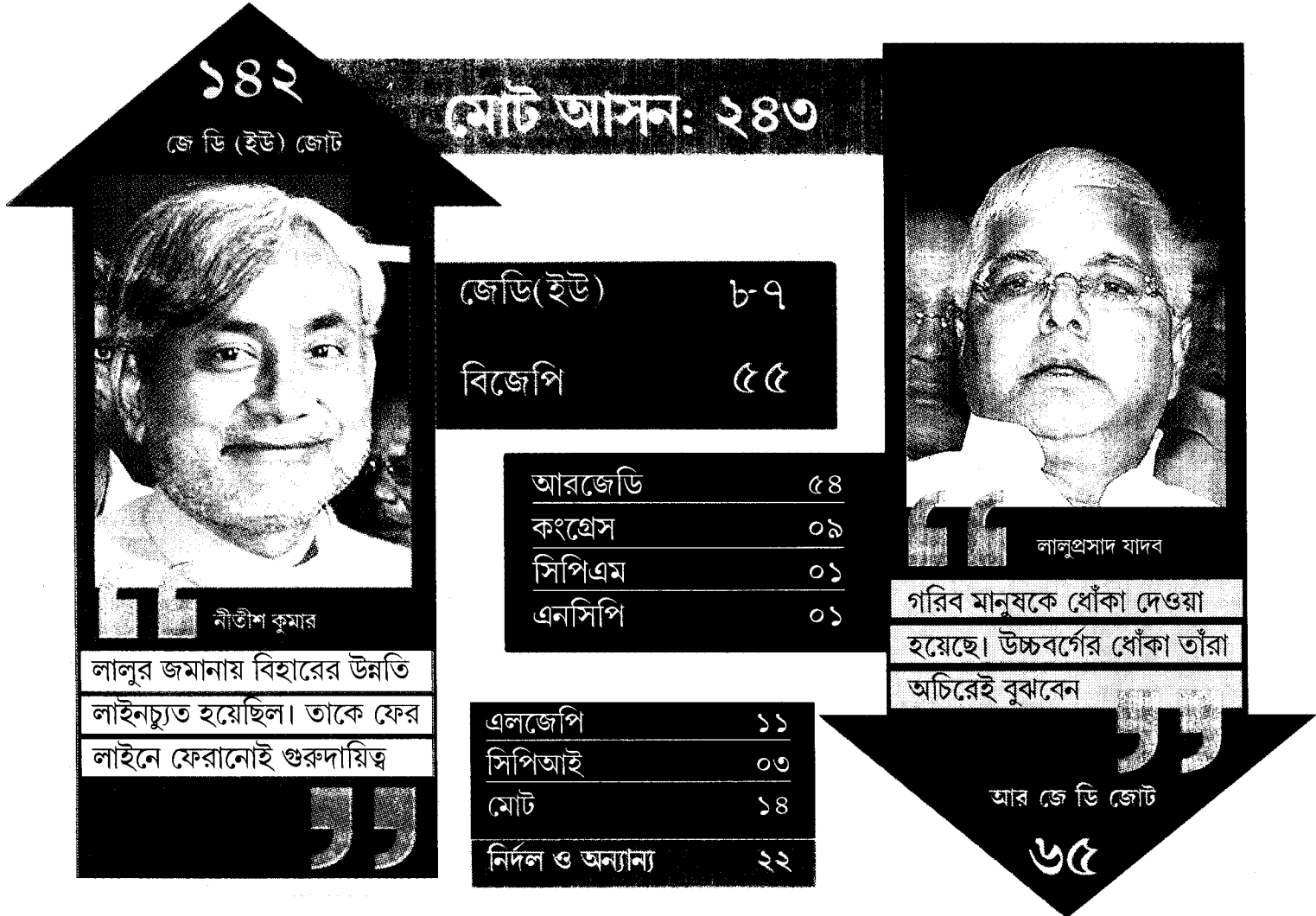


ENTER, NITISH! Mr Nitish Kumar in New Delhi after the poll results were announced. — AFP

লালু সাম্রাজ্যের পতন

১৪/১১/১১

১১/১১/১১

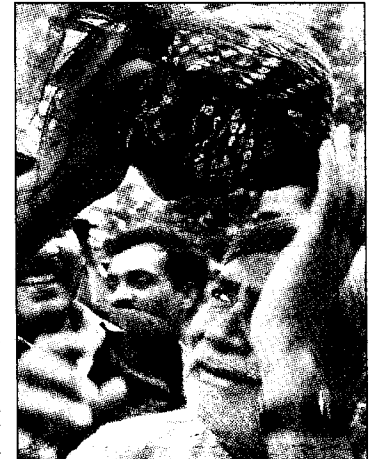


মুসলিম-যাদবরা জিতিয়ে দিলেন নীতীশ কুমারকে

সূত্রত বসু • পটনা

২২ নভেম্বর: শেষ হল বিহারে ১৫ বছরের লালু-রাবড়ীর শাসন। লালুপ্রসাদকে যে বিহারে এ ভাবে দূরমুশ করতে পারবেন, তা আজ সকালেও ভাবেননি নীতীশ কুমার। ভোট গণনার ফল দেখে তামাম দেশবাসীর সঙ্গে তাই ছানাবড়া হয়ে গিয়েছে এনডিএ জোটের নেতাদের চোখও। বিহারের ভোটারেরা যেন 'ছপ্পড় ফাড়কে' ভোট দিয়েছেন নীতীশ কুমারের জোটকে। লালু-রাবড়ীর ১৫ বছরের শাসনের বিরুদ্ধে ঢালাও ভোট দিয়ে বিহারের পিছিয়ে পড়া মানুষও বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন, লালুপ্রসাদ সরে গিয়েছেন 'সামাজিক ন্যায়ের' রাস্তা থেকে। ভোটারদের রায়ে তাই এ বারে একেবারে 'সাইডলাইনের' বাইরে লালুপ্রসাদ-কংগ্রেস-সিপিএম-এনসিপি জোট। ফলাফলে লালু হারলেও শতাংশের হিসাবে তাঁর ভোট বেড়েছে। সেটি ৩.২ শতাংশ। তবু তিনি হেরেছেন নীতীশের ভোট ১১.৬ শতাংশ বৃদ্ধি পাওয়ায়। ভোটারেরা সেই সঙ্গে কার্যত প্রত্যাখ্যান করেছেন ইউপিএ জোটের আর এক শরিক দলিত নেতা রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানকেও। গুরুত্ব দেননি নির্দলদের। অর্থাৎ মানুষ ভোট দিয়েছেন সরকার গড়ার জন্যই।

বিহারের উত্তর-দক্ষিণ সর্বত্রই এবার নীতীশের জয়রথ সমান ভাবে ছুটেছে। কোশি এলাকা-সহ লালুপ্রসাদের বেশ কয়েকটি ঘাঁটি গত নির্বাচনেই দখল করে নিয়েছিলেন নীতীশ কুমার। এ বারে তিনি হানা দিয়েছেন অন্য এলাকাগুলিতে। মধ্য বিহারের নওয়াদা জেলার উদাহরণ দিলেই ব্যাপারটা স্পষ্ট হবে। নকশাল অধ্যুষিত অনুন্নত এই জেলার পাঁচটি আসনের সব ক'টিই পেয়েছে এনডিএ জোট এবং তাদের সমর্থিত নির্দলরা। একই চিত্র তিরহুত, মগধ এবং মিথিলাঞ্চলেও। লালুপ্রসাদের হাতের টেকা মুসলিম-যাদব (এমওয়াই) সমীকরণেও বড়সড় থাবা বসিয়েছেন নীতীশ কুমার। তবে লালুপ্রসাদকে সবচেয়ে বড় ধাক্কাটা দিয়েছেন অত্যন্ত অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির (ইবিসি) মানুষ। বিহারের নির্বাচনের ফল বিশ্লেষণ করে দেখা যাচ্ছে, ইবিসি ভোটাররাই সবচেয়ে বেশি সমর্থন করেছেন নীতীশ কুমারকে।



এত দিন লালুপ্রসাদের শক্তি ছিল বিহারের ১৬ শতাংশ মুসলিম ও ১১ শতাংশ যাদব ভোট। এই ২৭ শতাংশ ভোট দিয়ে লালু টিকিয়ে রেখেছিলেন তাঁর 'সাম্রাজ্য'। সঙ্গে ছিল বিহারের ৩০ শতাংশ ইবিসি-র বড় অংশ। এদের মিলিয়ে ভোটবাক্স থেকে 'জিন' বের করতেন লালু। কিন্তু ফেব্রুয়ারি নির্বাচনে তাঁর মুসলিম এবং যাদব ভোটব্যাঞ্চে বড় ফাটল ধরে। এর একটি কারণ ছিল, প্রতিটি এলাকাতাই শক্তিশালী এক এক জন যাদব গোষ্ঠীপতি (পাণ্ড, সাধু, দাদন, কৌশল) গড়ে ওঠা। সাড়ে তিন বছর আগে বিহারে ত্রিস্তর পঞ্চায়েত নির্বাচন হওয়ার পরে এই যাদব-গোষ্ঠীপতির আরও শক্তিশালী হয়ে ওঠেন। লালুর চেয়েও এলাকায় এলাকায় তাঁদের কথাই যাদবদের কাছে বেশি মূল্যবান হয়ে ওঠে। লালুর ধারণা ছিল, এ বারে 'মাফ চেয়ে' প্রচার করলে ফের যাদবেরা তাঁর সঙ্গে চলে আসবেন। এই ভাবে তিনি পারবেন যাদব-আবেগের ছিড়ে যাওয়া তার ফের জুড়তে। কিন্তু 'যাদবরাজ' টিকিয়ে রাখার

এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

● বিহার ভোটের আরও খবর পাঁচ ও ছয়ের পাতায়

এত নৈঃশব্দ্য ও হতাশা কখনও দেখেনি ১ আন্নে মার্গ

প্রসূন আচার্য • পটনা

২২ নভেম্বর: উঠোনের আম গাছটা থেকে একটা পাতা ঝরে পড়লেও শব্দ শোনা যাবে। এতটাই নৈঃশব্দ্য।

১ আন্নে মার্গের উঠোনের এই বৃদ্ধ আমগাছটি তে ঘটনার সাক্ষী।

১৫ বছর আগে লালুপ্রসাদ প্রথম বার মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হওয়ার কয়েক মাস পরে কাচ্চাবাচ্চা নিয়ে নহাতাই 'আনপড়' রাবড়ী দেবীর সংসার পাতা থেকে আরম্ভ করে জেলে যাওয়া স্বামীর অনুরোধে তাঁর মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হওয়া, হাতির পিঠে চড়ে নকটোল পিটিয়ে লালুপ্রসাদের বেউর জেল থেকে ঘরে ফেরা, ২০০০ সালে মাত্র আট দিনের জন্য নীতীশের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পরে আবার যাদব বহুরানির রাজ্যপাট ফিরে পাওয়া, এ সব ঘটনারই সাক্ষী এই আমগাছ।

কিন্তু এত হতাশা, স্তব্ধ পরিবেশ কোনও দিন

আসেনি। এত শূন্যতা? "কেউ দেখেননি"— বাগানে আলুর খেতে কাজ করা মহেন্দ্র প্রসাদ থেকে গেটের পাহারাদারদের একই কথা।

যে মাঠে সবুজ ঘাসের উপরে ক্রিকেট খেলতে

খেলতে লালু-পুত্র তেজস্বীপ্রসাদ আজ রঞ্জি টফিতে খেলছে, সেই মাঠে লালুর প্রেস কনফারেন্সে আসা সংবাদমাধ্যমের প্রতিনিধিরা ছাড়া কেউ নেই। কংক্রিটের পিচ পড়ে আছে নিজের মতো। সেখানে দুটো শূন্য প্লাস্টিকের চেয়ার পাতা। আরও করুণ অবস্থা 'গরিব চেতনা রথ'-র। এই রথ বিহারে লালু-মাহাত্মা প্রচার করে বেড়িয়েছে এই সে দিনও। আজ বাড়ির পিছনের



দিকে, যেখানে গোয়াল আছে, সেখানে পড়ে থাকা রথটিও (সুসজ্জিত বাস) যেন বলাচ্ছে— সব শেষ হয়ে গিয়েছে।

আরও খারাপ অবস্থা ২ নম্বর বীরচাঁদ পটেল

পথে আরজেডি অফিসের। একই রাস্তায় কিছুটা দূরত্বে যখন বিজেপি আর জনতাদল (ইউ) অফিসে আবার খেলা, মিষ্টি মুখ হচ্ছে, তখন আরজেডি অফিসে মাত্র চার জন, হ্যাঁ, মাত্র চার জন কর্মী বসে। আর তাদের পাহারা দেওয়ার জন্য ওই চারজনই পুলিশ কর্মী!

যে দুই শ্যালক সাধু, সুভাষকে নিয়ে এত বিতর্ক, এত বদনাম, তারা কেউই সকাল থেকে

সন্ধ্যা পর্যন্ত দিদির বাড়িমুখো হননি।

লালু সংবাদমাধ্যমের সামনে এলেন ঠিক দুপুর ২টায়। পরাজয় স্বীকার করে নিয়ে, নীতীশকে সাহায্যের আশ্বাস দেওয়া ছাড়া লালু আর যা বলতে পারতেন, তাই বললেন। তাঁর সমর্থক গরিব-দলিত-অনগ্রসরদের ধোঁকা দিয়ে উচ্চবর্ণের মানুষ নীতীশকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী করল। কিছু দিনের মধ্যেই তাদের এই ধোঁকা পরিষ্কার হয়ে যাবে। রামবিলাস মুসলিম মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর ডাক দিয়ে, আর নীতীশ দলিত মুসলিমদের কথা বলে, লালুর মুসলিম ভোট-ব্যাঞ্চে থাবা বসালেও লালু এখনও নিজেকে মুসলিমদের 'মসিহা' বলে মনে করেন। আর তা বোঝাতেই সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে মৌলবী লাডেন-সাহেবকে পাশে বসিয়েছিলেন লালুপ্রসাদ। আগ্রাণ চেষ্টি করছিলেন, নিজের ভেঙে পড়া চেহারাটা আড়াল করার। পরিবেশকে কিছুটা হাল্কা করার ভঙ্গিমায় বললেন— হামারা তাজ বোঝা

এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

এত নৈশক্য ও হতাশা দেখিনি!

প্রথম পাতার পর অব হাঙ্কা হো গয়া। এখন থেকে স্বেচ্ছা রেলের উন্নতির দিকেই মন দেব।

এমনটি যে হতে পারে দুঃস্বপ্নেও আশা করননি লালু। একান্তে তা স্বীকারও করলেনও। সুখের দিনের মতো আজ দুঃখের দিনেও তাঁর সঙ্গে থাকা শিবানন্দ তিওয়ারি আরও এক ধাপ এগিয়ে গিয়ে বললেন, “লোকে বলছে, উন্নয়ন করিনি বলে আমরা হেরে হেলাম। কিন্তু এমপি ফান্ড থেকে কোটি কোটি টাকা এনে আমি আমার কেন্দ্রের যা উন্নতি করেছি, গোটা বিহারে দশটি বিধানসভাতেও হয়নি। তা হলে আমি নিজেই হারলাম কেন? আসলে ১৫ বছর ধরে ক্ষমতায় থাকার পরে একটা ‘জবরদস্ত অ্যান্টি-ইনক্যাশেসি’ হাওয়ায় আমরা হেরে গেলাম।”

সোমবার সন্ধ্যাতেও লালু বিধানসভা ধরে ধরে যা হিসাব করেছিলেন, তাতে আরজেডির নিজস্ব আসন দাঁড়ায় ১২৫। কংগ্রেসের ২৮। সিপিএম এবং এনসিপি ৩টি করে। আর আজ বাস্তবে লালুর দল তৃতীয় স্থানে। সিপিএম এক। গত বার রামবিলাসের হাত ধরে কংগ্রেস পেয়েছিল ১০। এ বার ৯।

সকালে উঠে পূজো পাঠ করে নিজের আউট-হাউসের ঘরে টিভি-র সামনে বসেছিলেন লালু। সকাল সকাল স্নান করেই চর্চা এসেছিলেন

শিবানন্দবাবুও। প্রথম থেকেই যে ভাবে তাঁর দল পিছিয়ে পড়ছিল, তা বিশ্বাস হয়নি লালুর। তাঁর ধারণা ছিল, শহরের ভোট তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে যাচ্ছে।

কিন্তু গ্রাম দিয়ে ‘মেক-আপ’ হয়ে যাবে। পূজো সেরে রান্নাঘর ছুঁয়ে রাবড়ীও এসে বসেছিলেন টিভির পাশে। লালুর নির্দেশে বার বার চ্যানেল পরিবর্তন করছিলেন ব্যক্তিগত চাপরাশি।

রাবড়ীও আশ্বাস দিচ্ছিলেন লালুকে। বলছিলেন, তাঁর নির্বাচনী সভাগুলিতে যে ভাবে উপচে পড়া ভিড় হয়েছে, তাতে ক্ষমতায় না আসলেও, ত্রিশকু হবেই। নীতীশ কোনও ভাবেই মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হতে পারবেন না।

কিন্তু বেলা যত বাড়তে থাকে, ততই ছবি বদলাতে থাকে। গত বারের মতো এ বার কোনও বৈদ্যুতিন সংবাদমাধ্যমকে লালু বাড়িতে ঢুকতে দেননি। তাঁর আশা ছিল, ফল বেরোলে এক্সিট-পোলার বাপ-বাপান্ত করবেন। কিন্তু বার কয়েক চা আর খইনি খাওয়ার পরে যখন দেখলেন কিছুতেই তিনি এনডিএর কাছে পেরে উঠছেন না, তখন লালুর মুখ রাগে থমথমে হয়ে গেল রামবিলাসের বিরুদ্ধেই। প্রকাশ্যে রামবিলাসের বিরুদ্ধে একটি কথাও লালু বলেননি।

কিন্তু একান্তে বলেছেন, “কী করে ও মন্ত্রিসভায় টিকে থাকে, দেখে নেব। এখনও আমার সঙ্গে ২৫ জন সাংসদ

রয়েছে।” শিবানন্দের কথায়, “রামবিলাসের একটাই উদ্দেশ্য ছিল। ভোট কেটে আমাদের হারানো। সেটাই উনি করেছেন। ওঁকে ফল ভুগতেই হবে।”

দুপুর একটা নাগাদ লালু রাবড়ীকে বলেন, “না! আর হল না।” তখন আব্দুলবারি সিদ্দিকি বা জগদানন্দ সিংহের মতো কয়েক জন বিজয়ী বিধায়ক এসে উপস্থিত হয়েছেন। সবাই পরাজয় মেনে নিয়েছেন।

কিন্তু সাধু, সুভাষ আসেননি। কেন জিঙ্গামা করায় এক জন জবাব দিলেন, আরে দিল্লিতে সংসদের অধিবেশন শুরু হচ্ছে না? কিছুক্ষণ পরে এলেন কেন্দ্রীয় গ্রামোন্নয়ন মন্ত্রী রঘুবংশ প্রসাদ। কিন্তু তিনিও আজ কথা বলতে নারাজ। সবাই মৌন। এমনকী লালুর পুত্র-কন্যাদেরও জানলা দিয়ে উঁকি মারতে দেখা যাচ্ছে না!

পটনার অদূরে ফুলওয়ারি আসন জিতে বিজয় মিছিল নিয়ে আবির্, পটকা-সহ এসেছিলেন প্রাক্তন মন্ত্রী শ্যাম রজক। কিন্তু আনন্দ আটকে গেল গেটেই। ১ নম্বর আন্নে মার্গে যে আজ মৌনতার দিন, বোধহয় প্রাক্তন বিদ্যুৎমন্ত্রী তা ভুলে গিয়েছিলেন।

আর একটি তথ্য— সারা দিন লালু দাঁতে কিছু কাটেননি। ফিরিয়ে দিয়েছেন রাবড়ীর অনুরোধও।

বিহারবাসীর সঙ্গে তাঁর যে— ‘বিশ সাল কা কষ্টান্ত থা’!

মুসলিম-যাদবরা জিতিয়ে

প্রথম পাতার পর ডাকে সাড়া দেননি যাদবেরাও। তার সবচেয়ে বড় প্রমাণ, রাণোপুরের মতো যাদব অধ্যুষিত এলাকায় প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী রাবড়ী দেবীর হারতে হারতে মাত্র ৪ হাজার ভোটে জেতা।

অথচ গত ১৫ বছরে বিহারের ‘উন্নতি’-র প্রায় সমস্ত সুফলটাই ভোগ করেছে যাদব সম্প্রদায়ের একাংশ। রাজনৈতিক, সামাজিক এবং অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে বোলবোলা হয়েছে ‘বাহুবলী’ যাদবদের। তারা একচেটিয়া আধিপত্য প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছে ঠিকাদারি, রঙদারির মতো অপরাধের ক্ষেত্রেও। আর এতেই লালুপ্রসাদের কাছ থেকে সরে গিয়েছেন অত্যন্ত পিছিয়ে পড়া অন্যান্য সম্প্রদায়ের মানুষ।

যাদববিরোধী এই আবেগকে উন্নয়নের সঙ্গে মিশিয়ে ভোটবাক্সে বড় ফয়দা তুলেছেন নীতীশ কুমার। নির্বাচন কমিশনের ভূমিকাও নীতীশের পক্ষেই গিয়েছে। লালুপ্রসাদের বিপর্যয়ের এটাও বড় একটা কারণ। যে জন্য লালু ভোটের কারণ বিশ্লেষণ করতে গিয়ে বলেন, তাঁর গরিব ভোটারদের লাঠি মেরে বুকের বাইরে পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

একই আবেগ কাজ করেছে পিছিয়ে পড়া মুসলিম সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যেও। বিহারের ১৬ শতাংশ মুসলিম ভোটারদের মধ্যে ১২ শতাংশ অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির। আরএসএস-এর চোখ রাঙানি এবং বিজেপি-র অসন্তোষ সত্ত্বেও নীতীশ কুমার এই সব মুসলিমদের জন্য সংরক্ষণের প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছেন তাঁর

নির্বাচনী ইস্তাহারেই। এরপরেই অনগ্রসর মুসলিমদের সংগঠন অল ইন্ডিয়া পসমন্দা মুসলিম মহাজ নীতীশ কুমারের সমর্থনে খোলাখুলি প্রচারে নামে। এ বারেই প্রথম পিছিয়ে পড়া মুসলিমরা লালুকে ছেড়ে ভোট দিয়েছে বিজেপি-র জোটসঙ্গী নীতীশকেও। শহরের শিক্ষিত মুসলিমদের একাংশ আগেই লালুকে ছেড়েছিল। এ বার অনগ্রসর মুসলিমদের একটি বড় অংশ ছেড়ে যাওয়ার আঘাত আর সামলে উঠতে পারেননি লালুপ্রসাদ।

এ সবেের সঙ্গে লালুপ্রসাদের অস্ত্রেই লালুর কফিনে শেষ পেরেকটি পুঁতেছেন নীতীশ কুমার। লালুর হাতের তুরূপের তাস ছিল তাঁর অন্যবদ্য জনসংযোগ।

গ্রামে গ্রামে গিয়ে খাটিয়ায় বসে ছাতু-জল খেয়ে লালু মাত করতেন তাঁর গরিব ভোটারদের মন। গত দু’টি নির্বাচনে লালু প্রচার পদ্ধতি বিলকুল পাল্টে ফেলেছেন। এ বারে রেলের উন্নতি নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী কী প্রশংসা করল, তাই নিয়েই প্রচারে বেশি সময় ব্যয় করেছেন তিনি।

অন্য দিকে, নীতীশ ছ’মাস আগে বিধানসভা ভাঙার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই শুরু করে দিয়েছেন তাঁর ‘ন্যায়যাত্রা’। গ্রামের মানুষ লালুর বিকল্প হিসাবে তাকে আরও বেশি করে চিনেছেন। লালু বনাম নীতীশের এই লড়াইতে এখানেও লালুকে মেরে বেরিয়ে গিয়েছেন নীতীশ কুমার।

তাই সমোসাতে আলু থাকলেও বিহারে আর থাকলেন না লালু।

23 NOV 2005

Missing in Bihar

Opinion poll puts social justice in perspective

AN opinion poll conducted by Times Now in Bihar has come up with interesting information. One, social justice no longer tops the agenda in elections; it is employment. Two, an overwhelming number of people (75% according to the survey) claim that living conditions in the state have not improved after the Lalu Prasad era began in the 90s. Three, over 60% of those who participated in the poll believe that Lalu isn't pro-poor. Opinion polls aren't foolproof, but they do reflect public sentiment to a large extent. Recent trends from elections also support the findings of the poll. Over the past decade or so, the influence of Lalu on the Bihar electorate has significantly declined. In February, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) failed to win a mandate. Its limited success in recent elections has more to do with a lack of unity among political parties opposed to Lalu than its record in office. Social justice has ceased to be a single-point agenda to rally oppressed sections of society. People need jobs, roads, schools and much more. Literacy and life expectancy levels in Bihar are lower than the all-India averages and the state contributes a major chunk of migrants in all metros. Industries, public or private, hardly exist in the state, and agriculture is in a limbo owing to skewed land-owning patterns and lack of public investment.

Of course, development can't be a trade-off for social justice. In the context of Bihar, social justice has manifested as traditionally oppressed sections of the community gaining access to a few basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution. But rights have no meaning if they don't translate into material benefits. No political force can survive on the rhetoric of social justice if that justice doesn't lead to economic empowerment. The two have an organic link. People aren't willing to fall for a trade-off between social empowerment and economic development. That explains why the NDA, which highlights lack of development in the state during elections, has failed to convince large sections of the Bihar electorate. The disillusionment with Lalu can be traced to the same source; empowerment has to be social and economic, and certainly inclusive.

Laloo wave, Nitish undercurrent

There's consolidation of RJD's traditional votes but NDA thinks that's not enough this time

MANINI CHATTERJEE
PATNA | NOVEMBER 19

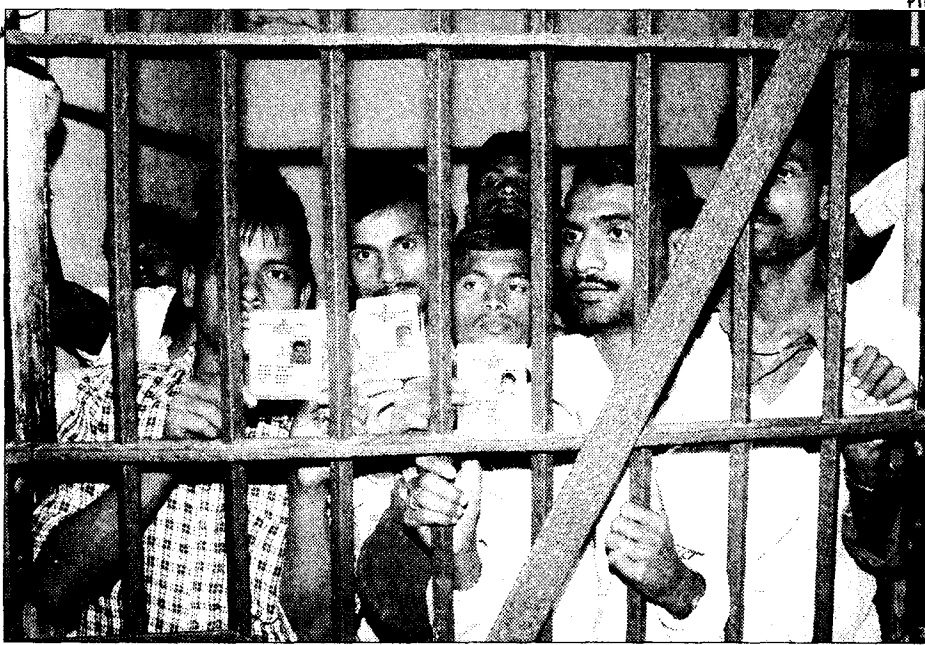
IF THE Elvis Presley classic *It's Now or Never* was Nitish Kumar's theme song all through this election, Laloo Prasad Yadav has been haunted by that lesser-known Beatles' gem *I, Me, Mine* (spelt *Myne* in this case). As the long drawn out four-phase Bihar polls finally ended today, the song sounded a lot more defiant—and desperate—than George Harrison ever meant it to be.

Nitish Kumar, denied a chance to form a government last time, started out with an edge and over the last six weeks of relentless campaigning has managed to create a palpable undercurrent of support. Laloo Prasad Yadav, especially towards the end, has marshalled all his forces to stop that undercurrent from turning into a wave.

One reason even seasoned observers of the Bihar political scene are unsure of the success of Laloo's strategy is the nature of the polls this time. The one line heard over and over again in every part of the state today is: "This has been the most free and fair poll in Bihar's history."

Candidates belonging to both NDA and the RJD-led Secular Democratic Front (SDF) admit that this time they cannot predict their own margins of victory or defeat. In previous elections, ground-level political workers had a fair idea of how many votes had been cast in their party's favour.

The reason was simple. "If the RJD was strong in an area, then they would cast the bulk of votes; and in forward-dominated villages, it would go to the anti-RJD force," said a polit-



Detained voters in Danapur constituency hold out their IDs to convince authorities they are not trouble-makers. Saturday was the last day of polls in the state

2005: Bihar's most peaceful polls ever

► **PATNA-NALANDA:** WHO wins in Bihar will be decided on November 22 when the counting begins but the Election Commission's pointsman in the state — advisor K.J. Rao — clearly emerged the winner as elections drew to a close today. Bihar witnessed the most free and fair and peaceful elections in its history.

As in the past three phases, no major incidence of violence was reported today. "I have never witnessed this kind of election before," said Ramsewak Prasad (50) at Saidpur under Bakhtiarpur constituency.

At Chainpur in Nalanda district, the scene was different from the February polls. The place which had witnessed a fierce clash between Kurmis and Yadavs, was peaceful this time. Kurmis had not allowed Yadavs and Paswans of the neighbouring village to cast their votes as the booth was located in their area of influence. — **JP Yadav**

ical activist, explaining the "democratic booth-capturing" that was the norm in Bihar till K.J. Rao arrived on the scene.

"But this time," said a senior bureaucrat, "all calculations have gone haywire. You

cannot count on the basis of booths anymore. Bihar has witnessed person to person voting just like in Kerala—with voters standing in long queues to cast their vote."

Although Laloo has been sharply critical of the Election

Commission's tough ways, the free and fair polling can benefit him too because his supporters—after being initially on the defensive—have come out aggressively to counter the pro-Nitish tilt.

This was evident in Danapur today, a bellwether Yadav-dominated constituency in the outskirts of Patna, which the RJD lost in the February polls. Having cast their votes earlier in the day, a group of men of various ages were busy discussing the elections at a chai shop in the Takiyapur locality of Danapur.

And after some initial hesitation, they soon revealed that they had all voted for *lalten*. Since they were mostly Yadavs, their support for Laloo may seem a given. But the significant thing is that just eight months ago, a large section of Yadavs who had always voted for Laloo (who had personally contested and won Danapur in 1995 and 2000) had shifted loyalties. As a result, the

RJD's Ramanand Yadav lost to the BJP's Asha Sinha by a margin of around 8,000 votes, while the LJP's Suresh Prasad Yadav polled around 17,000 votes.

In Danapur, we hear the same refrain as elsewhere in the state. "The LJP doesn't count anymore. It's a straight fight, and those of us who voted for Paswan then have gone back to the lantern now."

Ranbir Yadav admits the change has come about for one reason alone: "Since Laloo failed to form the government, we have gone back to him." The logic is simple. Last time they decided to give a jolt to Laloo but expected him to form a government with Paswan's help. But this time, the prospects of an upper castes-backed government, has made them scurry to defend the crumbling "backwards" fort.

NDA leaders have maintained that a Muslim-Yadav consolidation alone will not help Laloo this time. But what they overlook is that Laloo's "counter consolidation" could stall the NDA's march to power. How far Laloo succeeds in cementing the cracks in his own base (as compared to February) will determine whether the NDA gets a clear majority or remains only the largest pre-poll combine in yet another hung Assembly.

Shaken by the overt pro-Nitish mood this time, the RJD's hopes are now pinned on a hung Assembly. Mohammad Maqsood, a Laloo supporter, put it best. "Agar bahumat ka sarkar bane, to Nitish ka banega; agar tod-phod se banega to Laloo ki. (Nitish will form the government only if he gets a majority; Laloo will manage to form one in case of a hung verdict.)

20 NOV 2005

48% polling in Bihar

9 87
Bihar
HD-1

More women voters in last phase

J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI: An estimated 48 per cent of the 8.86 million electorate on Saturday voted in 41 constituencies in the fourth and final phase of elections to the 243-member Bihar Assembly.

Deputy Election Commissioner Anand Kumar told presspersons that polling was peaceful. The average polling percentage for all four phases was 47 against 46.37 in the February elections. In the fourth phase, it was 48 per cent. The figures for the earlier phases were 44.84, 47.57 and 46.82 per cent, he said.

About 80 per cent of the electorate was covered by photo identity cards. The voters were allowed to exercise their franchise on the basis of the identity cards and other documents. The highlight of Saturday's polling was the large turnout of women, who voted fearlessly, despite the alleged intimidatory tactics of miscreants in some booths.

Mr. Anand Kumar said a total of 56,144 electronic voting machines (EVMs) were used in the elections and no damage to the EVMs was reported in any of the polling stations in the fourth phase. The Central Paramilitary Forces were deployed in almost all booths. A total of 322 people,

including two candidates, were arrested. Muneshwar Choudhry, Independent, and Kamrul Haq, Samajwadi Party candidate, were held for intimidating voters. Firecrackers were burst near two polling booths in Danapur constituency. The polling, however, was not affected and there was no report of any loss or damage to life and property.

Border sealed

Bihar's border with Uttar Pradesh was sealed. A total of 3,980 digital cameras were installed in sensitive booths to prevent bogus voting. Repoll, if any, would be held on November 21. Counting would be taken up on November 22 and the results are expected to be announced the same day. The Assembly was dissolved on February 23 and the entire election process would end within six months, he said.

K. Balchand reports from Patna:

The police ordered the arrest of RJD MP Shubash Yadav, brother-in-law of Railway Minister Lalu Prasad, for violating externment orders and being present in Gopalganj on Friday night. Chandrika Rai, RJD candidate in Parsa, was arrested.

Mr. Lalu Prasad and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar cast their vote in Patna and Bakhtiarpur.

NDA leads in Bihar exit polls, LJP in doldrums

JD(U) Likely To Emerge Main Gainer With 74 Seats

New Delhi
13 NOVEMBER

EXIT polls at the end of third phase of polling in Bihar Assembly continued to project a fractured verdict, with an edge for the NDA. The RJD-led alliance clearly fell short of the magic figure of 122 despite improving its performance in the 57 seats that went to polls on Sunday, according to an exit poll conducted by Zee News.

It predicted 112 seats in the NDA kitty while the RJD camp led by Lalu Prasad Yadav to have only 89 seats in the 243-member House.

According to the poll, based on voting till 1200 hours, Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP was set to emerge as the worst hit, losing 18 of the 29 seats it had won in the last Assembly polls. JD(U) is likely to come up as the main gainer with 74 seats while its partner BJP is projected to marginally improve its tally to 38 from 37 it held in the last Assembly.

The RJD figure is likely to come down by four to 71. Its main ally Congress has performed better, increasing its number from 10 to 17 while the NCP managing to send only one representative to the House, the poll said. The independents and others appear set have 22 MLAs in the House, it added. Reflecting a pro-NDA current, the exit poll said there was a 9% swing in favour of the alliance. —PTI

Rao bent on free and fair polls

MORE than Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav, if there is any one person who has emerged as the real hero from the ongoing round of Assembly polls in Bihar, it is KJ Rao, the 63-year-old Election Commission advisor who has made it a mission to ensure free and fair polls in the state. And he seem to have succeeded in his endeavour.

With just one-and-a-half phases left, the exercise has so far been a relatively smooth affair. Complaints of booth-capturing and rigging have been reduced to a trickle. With the gun-totting, no-nonsense personnel of the central para-military forces keeping a close eye on the process, poll-related violence has been brought down to a minimal level.

Not surprisingly, for most people in a state bereft of real, modern-day heroes, Mr Rao has emerged as the saviour. He is getting brickbats too, but he remains unruffled as he gets down to finalise his strategy for the next day. Mr Rao spoke to **Devesh Kumar and CL Manoj** in his hotel room in Patna late on Saturday night.

Q: How're the preparations for the next two rounds?

A: We're all set. They should go as smooth as the previous rounds.

Q: You seem to know more about Bihar than many people hailing from the state?



KJ Rao (in white shirt) on an inspection in the polling areas on Sunday. —PTI

A: I've been associated with the electoral exercise in the state for two decades now. It was I who, after undertaking a close scrutiny, recommended the countermanding of election to the Patna Lok Sabha constituency in 1998 as well as in Chhapra and Bettiah last year.

Q: The RJD-Congress combine has accused you of being prejudiced against them.

A: I'd not like to respond to those charges.

Q: What is your mantra for conducting a hassle-free, smooth election?

A: If you want to have good elections, first of all put a cap on the number of vehicles being used by each candidate.

14 NOV 2005

The Economic Times

Delhi in dark, but defiant

Terror flashes obscure face

OUR BUREAU

Oct. 30: Delhi summoned up a message of defiance today by keeping the two blast-devastated markets open as a little-known outfit calling itself the Inquilab group claimed responsibility for Saturday's three explosions that killed 59 people.

A caller identifying himself as Ahmad Yar Gaznavi phoned the Srinagar-based news agency Kashmir News Service to say: "Our activists carried out the bombings in Delhi yesterday."

A senior police official in

SAFETY TIPS

Delhi police advisory after the blasts

Be suspicious of

- Person wearing unseasonal clothes
- Clothes suggesting hidden objects
- Vehicle with mismatched number plates
- Vehicle parked for a long time in a busy area
- Vehicle with a sagging boot

What to do

- Dial 100 and give as many details as possible
- Keep an eye on suspicious person or object but wait for police

What not to do

- Touch suspicious objects
- Let out house to unknown persons
- Sell vehicles without checking buyer's credentials

During an attack

- Move to open space
- Do not form or join a crowd
- Make way for rescue vehicles

Srinagar said: "We have not heard of the group so far. However, it is possible some other militant group is using the name to throw us off the scent."

There was a militant group called Islami Inquilab-e-Mahaz that police said was active till the mid-'90s.

Karnail Singh, Delhi police joint commissioner, special cell, said: "We are investigating these claims. However, Lashkar-e-Toiba is connected to this organisation."

In the past, little-known groups had claimed responsibility for attacks, but were later found to be linked to bigger outfits.

Home minister Shivraj Patil, who had advised Delhi residents yesterday to return

home after the blasts, struck a different note by assuring people that the government was doing all it could to make Diwali and Id safe.

"We have already gathered a lot of information about the blasts and the possible outfit responsible for them but would not like to disclose it at this juncture as it would hamper the investigations," he said after an emergency cabinet meeting.

People entering Delhi and other metropolises were being watched, he added.

Both Sarojini Nagar and Paharganj markets — the scene of blasts — opened today as the government and mourning traders decided to try and get back to normal as quickly as possible. Crowds were thinner than usual, but Delhi was not hiding indoors.

Security was stepped up in sensitive and crowded areas with strong police presence in markets and locations like the Metro and railway stations and airports.

Some 2,600 additional armed personnel, besides central paramilitary forces, were deployed in the capital. The police set up sandbag pickets and erected metal detector doorframes in some markets.

Karnail Singh, who is heading the inquiry into the blasts that also left 210 people injured, said over 300 guesthouses and small-budget hotels were raided through the night.

Registers of some of these guesthouses were taken away for verification. A reward of Rs 1 lakh was announced for information leading to the arrest of the culprits.

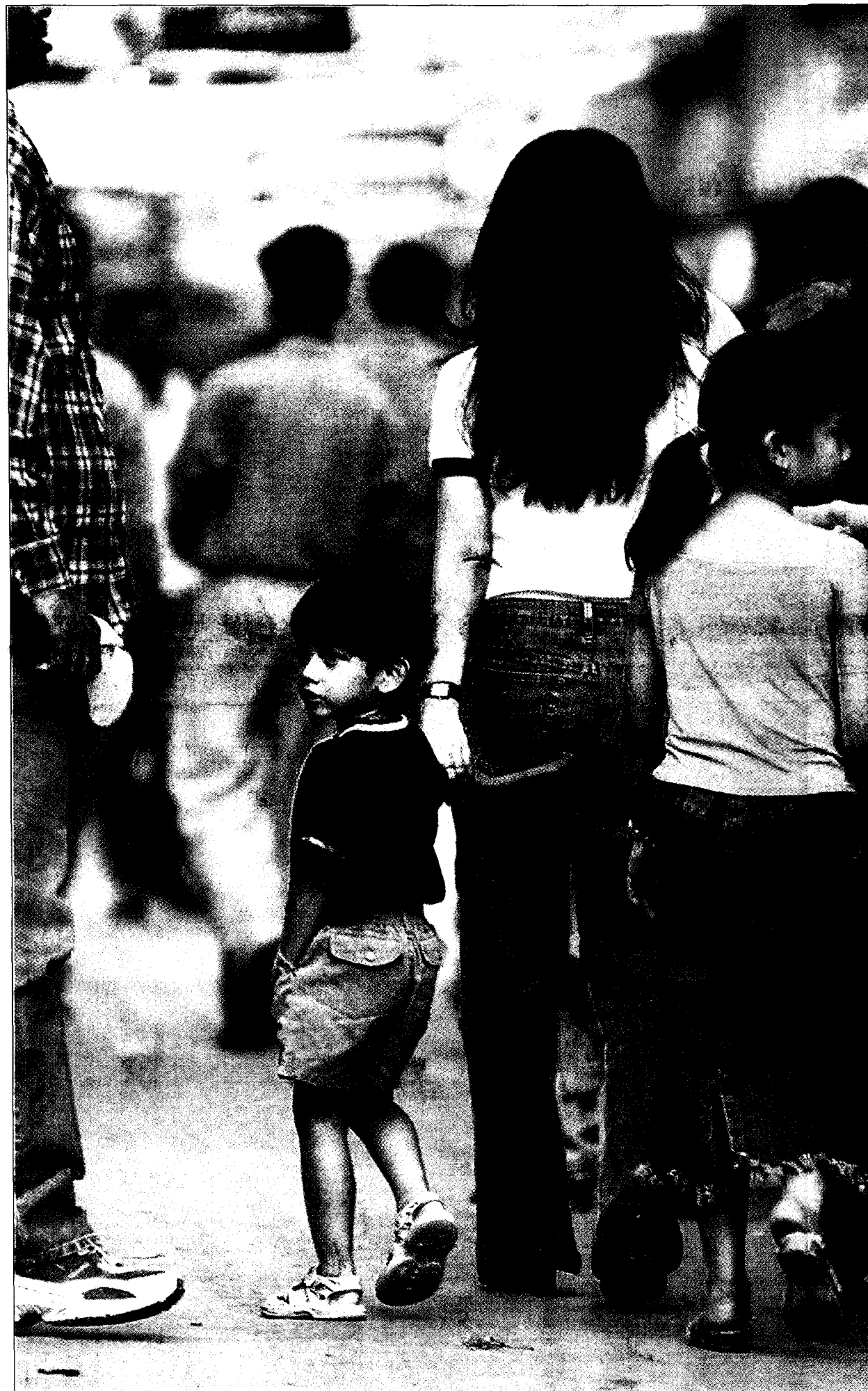
Sources said over 25 people were picked up for questioning. Singh said no arrests or detentions had been made.

Singh said it would be premature to link the blasts to the sentencing in the Red Fort attack case that was due on Saturday evening, but was put off.

Security around Karkardooma Court complex was tightened for tomorrow's sentencing of Pakistan-based Lashkar militant Mohammad Arif and six others convicted in the December 2000 attack.

The pattern of the blasts indicated that a single group was responsible. "By looking into the timing and process of operation, it seems that the blasts were triggered by a single group. In one of the places, in Govindpuri, an electronic timer was used," Singh said.

DAY AFTER: IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL, ALMOST



A child with his mother in Sarojini Nagar market on Sunday. (PTI) ■ Carnage in capital, Page 6

Protocol belt around PM

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 30: Sonia Gandhi was on television to exhort terrorism must be faced with all our might after visiting Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit told people not to panic, BJP president L.K. Advani said he could not recall an incident that had claimed so many lives in Delhi.

As three blasts rocked the capital yesterday evening, the one face and voice that was not seen and heard was of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Blame it on the security protocol.

He was on a visit to Tripura and Bengal that was aborted once the extent of the devastation became known. Singh's media adviser Sanjay Baru said he received a message on his mobile just as the Prime Minister's plane took off for Calcutta from Agartala.

For the next hour or so, there was a virtual news blackout, though the special aircraft used by prime ministers is usually equipped with a communication network, including a fax machine. Baru, however, said the pilot alone could pick up messages and signals. It is not known if the pilot of yesterday's aircraft was updated on the blasts.

It was only when the plane landed in Calcutta that Singh started to get the details, said Baru. Bengal governor Gopal Gandhi and the chief minister received him and Singh spoke to Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee for a while before leaving for Raj Bhavan.

He spent an hour there, briefly meeting a delegation of local Congress members. Baru said he was mostly on the phone to home minister Shivraj Patil.

Baru explained that the Prime Minister could not have departed from his original schedule and left for Delhi from Calcutta airport. "There is so much security protocol involved that no Prime Minister can change his programme on the spur of the moment."

If, for instance, Singh had wanted to bring his departure to Delhi forward, it would have involved changes in timings of several flights moving in and out of the capital to clear the air space and the tarmac. A source said this was "untenable" in a few hours.

In Calcutta, Singh was not

available to the media, but Baru made a statement on his behalf. After the London Underground blasts, Prime Minister Tony Blair had addressed the nation in about three hours.

The media adviser said Singh could not have addressed the nation on Doordarshan from Calcutta because it would have entailed security clearance to facilitate his travel to the TV studio. That would have taken nearly a couple of hours. The security "trap" made it impossible for the Prime Minister even to leave Raj Bhavan to address the media.

Here....

Manmohan Singh after Delhi blasts

5.32 - 6.05 pm: Blasts in Delhi

6.30 pm: PM takes off from Agartala

7.10: Lands in Calcutta

7.35: Arrives at Raj Bhavan

7.45 to 8.40: Meets Congress delegation. Gets updates on phone from Delhi

8.40-9: Dinner with governor

9.10: Leaves for airport

10: Leaves the city for Delhi

11.30: Reaches Delhi

12.20 am: Reads out statement

and there....

Tony Blair after London blasts

8.51 am: Underground explosions begin. Blair in Scotland for G8 summit

12 noon: Blair addresses nation

12.07 pm: Blair says attacks are "barbaric"

1.25: Blair boards helicopter

3.31: Arrives at Downing Street

5.33: Blair on TV, promises "most intense police and security service action"

Singh decided in Calcutta to address a news conference at Delhi airport on landing. It took place 20 minutes past midnight, but by then Baru had informed the journalists.

"We ensured that the Prime Minister's statement was on TV from the early hours of Sunday," he said.

Blair was at Gleneagles in Scotland when the London blasts occurred. In six and a half hours he was at Downing Street conferring with his ministers and security officials, addressed the nation yet again and returned to the G8 summit.

Singh's security protocol ensured that when the nation wanted to see and hear the Prime Minister, it could not.

After mourning, a message to terror

Angry families confront Singh

MANAN KUMAR

New Delhi, Oct. 30: The Prime Minister today faced angry families as he visited Safdarjung Hospital and the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to visit those injured in yesterday's serial blasts.

Manmohan Singh had been walking towards his car at Safdarjung Hospital after talking to the media when some relatives began shouting slogans against him.

Singh immediately turned back and walked up to them, to be told that the wards had been turned into a "fortress" and the families were not being allowed to meet the patients.

Singh calmed them down and promised that the patients would receive the best possible treatment. "Expenses in getting treatment is not a consideration. Human lives are important," he said.

Kaushalya Madan, an elderly woman who lost her 26-year-old niece in the Sarojini Nagar blast, spoke to the Prime Minister. She later said Singh had assured help to the parents of the girl, who was the family's sole earning member.

Singh, accompanied by health minister Anbumani Ramadoss, earlier visited the burns ward and wished the injured speedy recovery.

Many other visitors to the hospital, who had come to claim relatives' bodies, were agitated because they could not identify them from among the mangled corpses. At the Safdarjung Hospital, some relatives were seen fighting over the mutilated body parts.

The Prime Minister today tried to calm Delhiites down, striving for normality in the run-up to Diwali and Id.

Yesterday, in the hours after the blasts, home minister Shivraj Patil and the police had asked people to hurry back home, triggering a mad rush on the streets.



A policeman on vigil at Sarojini Nagar market. Picture by Rajesh Kumar

TEARS & FAREWELL



(Clockwise from left) Sunita Devi cries on seeing daughter Neha's body; relatives of a blast victim weep outside the mortuary of Safdarjung Hospital; Vidyannand watches the cremation of his brother; relatives of a blast victim weep outside the mortuary of Safdarjung Hospital. Pictures by Prem Singh and agencies



Markets open to thin flow of shoppers

AYSWARIA VENUGOPAL

New Delhi, Oct. 30: Sarojini Nagar Market mourned its dead in the morning and in the afternoon crept back slowly into the arms of at least a pretence of normal life as traders grimly lifted the shutters.

Of the 59 people killed in yesterday's three blasts here, 43 died in Sarojini Nagar.

"The market should remain open and we should let the terrorists know that they can't defeat us and that we are with the mainstream. We had meetings with the commissioner of police, the deputy commissioner of police as well as area MP Ajay Maken and they all requested us to open the markets because they wanted the message to go that everything is normal," said Mohan Kukreja, the president of Sarojini Nagar Market Traders' Association.

"We agreed but because many of our members were also victims we wanted to keep the shutters down till 2 pm," he added.

A couple of days before Diwali and on the occasion of Dhanteras, the market would have been thick with shoppers making last-minute buys. Traders who had opened their shops to clear the gloom said local residents from nearby government flats had trickled in.

"They are not customers from outside Sarojini Nagar. They are either residents or people who have come to see the tamasha. When the blasts happened in Lajpat Nagar (May 1996), it took them quite a while to get back up on their feet. It is going to be the same," said Jagdish Prasad who runs a dry cleaner's.

At Paharganj, the site of the other big explosion, shops opened, too, but business was thin.

In other Delhi markets, there were crowds, but not as



A roadside vendor does business in Paharganj market on Sunday. Picture by Prem Singh

much as might be expected on a festival day — Id is also approaching. In markets like Greater Kailash M Block, a tony shopping area, metal detector door frames had been put up.

Vivek and Ekta, a young couple, were among those who had come to Sarojini Nagar from outside. Carrying their sleeping baby in his arms, Vivek said: "Life goes on. I was so used to coming here even during my college days."

They had come all the way from Faridabad in neighbouring Haryana to buy a dartboard as a gift for his little cousin. "It is less crowded today. On other Diwali days, no one has the time to show you their wares. There is hardly any place to walk and there is a traffic jam. We just took a chance," said Ekta.

By Sunday afternoon, the Sarojini Nagar blast site — the fruit juice and chaat corner which was popular with shoppers and now cordoned off with yellow tape — had become somewhat of a curiosity as people gathered around it to see the remains of a terrorist

attack. Members of Delhi police's special cell and crime branch were at work there.

Kamal Gupta, who owns a flour mill in front of the blast site, said: "The owner and his two sons died in the blast. The bomb was placed there right next to the cylinder."

Representatives of the Confederation of All-India Traders met chief minister Sheila Dikshit today and decided that all markets would remain open.

At Paharganj, Sumit Kakkar of the traders' association, said: "We want to show the terrorists that they can't defeat us."

There was this intrepid couple who Ram Lal, a grocer, spotted. "I saw a couple one of whom had been injured in the blasts. They were back in the market today to make Diwali purchases," he said.

"What is there to be afraid of? Terrorist attacks have become part of our lives. What can the police do? In Delhi, everyone has to look after their own security," said Suresh Malhotra who had gone to Paharganj to buy gifts.

City couple dead, son missing

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Oct. 30: Satyabrata and Supriya Mukherjee were to return home on Monday with 13-year-old son Sayan, loaded with Diwali gifts from Delhi for the entire family.

They will indeed be back at their Kalighat home tomorrow — in coffins hiding the couple's charred, mutilated bodies. Sayan is still untraced.

The family had chosen Sarojini Nagar's Babu Market to shop last evening. That one blast has darkened the Mukherjees' Diwali this year.

"I received a phone call around midnight from Delhi and came to know that my brother, his wife and Sayan are no more," elder brother Debabrata Mukherjee said. "I could not believe my ears. I



The Mukherjee home in Calcutta on Sunday. Picture by Aranya Sen

didn't know what to tell my parents, who are above 80. I called back Satyabrata's brother-in-law (N.K. Bhat-tacharjee, at whose home the Mukherjees were staying in Delhi) and he confirmed the news." Satyabrata is completely charred; Supriya has had the

lower portion of her body blown off.

This morning, Satyabrata's mother Kalyani and younger brother Nababrata flew to Delhi to claim the bodies. His ailing father has been fainting repeatedly.

"Please leave us alone. Don't keep asking questions. A family is ruined, that's all I have to say," Debabrata shouted from the first-floor balcony.

Satyabrata, 45, was the second of Sukumar Mukherjee's five sons. His and Debabrata's families lived at 18/C Kali Lane, near the Kalighat temple, with their parents.

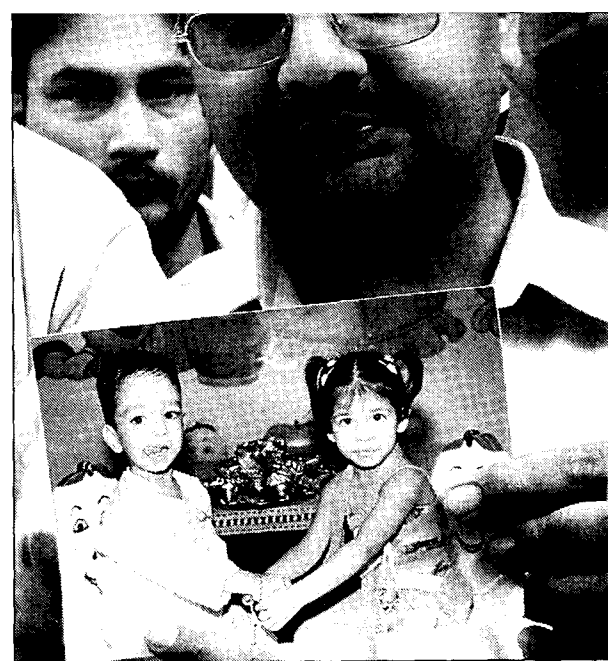
The Allahabad bank employee was popular in the neighbourhood and was involved in various social activities. Today, scores of neighbours gathered at the house to

console the family.

"Sayan studied in class VII at South Point School. Everybody liked him — he used to play the violin," said Sheli Mukherjee.

"They used to visit Delhi almost every year after the Puja. They would bring varieties of *rangmashal* from Delhi almost every year and we all used to enjoy the spectacle on Diwali night. It will be a dark Diwali this time," said Asit Chowdhury.

Deputy commissioner of police (headquarters) Anuj Sharma said the administration was ready to provide the Mukherjees any help they needed to bring the bodies back. "We are in touch with the family and have asked the local police to provide support," Sharma said.



A relative shows the picture of a boy (on left in the photograph) who died along with his mother in the blast at Sarojini Nagar. Picture by Prem Singh

The Telegraph

121

SUDOKU

		3		1				
	4			9	6			5
3			5	7		2		
2	6	7	9					
				3	1	5		6
	1	6	8					4
6		3	4					8
		8		3				

Fill in the 9x9 square grid with the numbers one to nine. The numbers should be arranged in such a way that each row, column and mini-grid contains one of each number. Solution to previous Sudoku is on the right

2	3	7	5	4	6	1	9	8
1	9	6	8	3	7	5	2	4
5	4	8	9	1	2	7	6	3
3	8	1	6	2	5	4	7	9
9	5	2	7	8	4	3	1	6
7	6	4	1	9	3	8	5	2
8	2	9	3	7	1	6	4	5
4	7	5	2	6	8	9	3	1
6	1	3	4	5	9	2	8	7

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CANCELLATIONS AND BRAVE FACES

Tremors for tourist hub

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, Oct. 30: Tourism is the first casualty after all terrorist attacks.

Although some foreign tourists were found moving around Paharganj, the site of one of the three blasts yesterday where budget hotels are popular with backpackers, cancellation was more the norm than checking in.

Gulab Mishra, manager of a small hotel opposite which the blast occurred killing over a dozen people, has seen a string of foreign tourists cancel their bookings.

"Not one customer has come since yesterday," Mishra said.

"Business is down 70 per cent, and this is the beginning of the peak season. Some have cancelled, and some have delayed their arrival."

Almost all shops in the heavily policed market opened. "We're just doing our duty by opening shops. Dhanteras

is over before it started," said Madan Gupta, a utensil seller.

Not all hotels were equally hit. "Foreigners are not scared nor are they checking out," said Govind Prushty of Hotel Vivek.

"I think there is a 10 per cent impact. Our guests are not checking out. Israelis especially are quite normal," said Roni Kumar, of Anoop Hotel.

"We are quite used to this in our country. We are not afraid of anything," said Anat, an Israeli.

"We are going ahead with our plans to see the country," said Moy, also an Israeli.

A rare pat on the back for a beleaguered Delhi police came from a tourist.

"You can see the cops around. I think they are doing everything that can be done," said Jar

Mogt tourists... immediate plans or moving out, but usually there is a dip in arrivals after an incident of this nature.



Foreigners in Paharganj market on Sunday. Picture by Prem Singh

Tug of war over bodies

New Delhi, Oct. 30 (PTI): Anupam Gupta has just returned after cremating his wife. His three-year-old son's lifeless body lies at the mortuary, waiting for its last rites.

But Gupta cannot take Ut-karsh on his final journey as the relatives of an Indian Air Force sergeant, who died in the Sarojini Nagar explosion, have also laid claim to the body.

Gupta's friend Anil Saxena blamed police for the confusion.

"Since we had made a positive identification yesterday when the body had not become coal black, what is the need of showing the body to another person today?" he asked.

An officer on the spot said it was the duty of the police to show bodies to anyone whose relative or friend is missing.

Apurba Sharma, a tourist from Assam, faces the same predicament.

He has identified two bodies as those of his four-year-old daughter Upamani and eight-year-old niece Moitrye.

But the sergeant's family has laid a claim to Upamani's "body" as well.

Identification of bodies is turning into a serious problem in blast-hit Delhi with several charred beyond recognition.

For the Gurgaon-based doctor Preeti Sahay, there is only a car she can lay claim to. Her husband Atul, also a doctor, has been missing since last evening. She has searched as many hospitals as her feet could take her to, but not one could give her any information.

"He had gone to Sarojini Nagar but did not return or call me. His car is still standing at the market," Preeti said, tears welling up in her sleepless eyes.

A relative of Preeti said they had seen two badly charred bodies, one of which could be Atul's.

"We want DNA tests done as soon as possible but neither the doctors nor the police are telling us how to go about it," he complained.

এ বারও ভোট শান্তিতে, সমীক্ষায় এগিয়ে নীতীশ

সূত্রত বসু • পটনা

২৬ অক্টোবর: ভোট লুটেরাদের প্রস্তুতির খবর গত কয়েক দিন ধরেই বের হচ্ছিল এখানকার হিন্দি কাগজগুলিতে। মুখে কাপড়বাঁধা বন্দুকধারী মাফিয়াদের দেখাও যাচ্ছিল নানা টিভি চ্যানেলে। আজ, দ্বিতীয় দফা ভোটের দিনে, কিন্তু তাদের টিকির দেখা মিলল না। নির্বাচন কমিশনের দাপটে সিটিয়ে রইল প্রায় প্রবাদে পরিণত হওয়া বিহারের মাফিয়াকুল। এমনকী রাবতী দেবীর কেন্দ্র রাঘোপুরের দিয়াড়া অঞ্চলের 'খানদানি' ভোট লুটেরারাও এ বার ট্যাঁ-ফু করতে পারেনি এলএমজি ওঁচানো জওয়ানদের সামনে।

তেজ ছিল না রাজনীতিকদেরও। তাঁদেরও কড়া হাতে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করেছে কমিশন। তেজ দেখাতে গিয়ে ভোটগ্রহণ কেন্দ্রের সামনে গ্রেফতার হন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী তসলিমউদ্দিনের ছেলে সরফরাজ। আটক করা হয় মজফ্ফরপুরের প্রভাবশালী আরজেডি নেতা ও প্রাক্তন মন্ত্রী রামাই রামকে। রাঘোপুরে বিএসএফ জওয়ানের গুলিতে এক জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। তবে স্থানীয় লোকের বক্তব্য, তিনি পুকুরে স্নান করে বাড়ি ফিরছিলেন।

সেনারা খামতে বললেও তিনি শোনেননি। এ ব্যাপারে তদন্তের নির্দেশ দিয়েছে রাজ্য সরকার। কমিশনের কড়া ভূমিকায় বিস্তর চটেছে আরজেডি। দলের মুখপাত্র শিবানন্দ তিওয়ারি বলেছেন,

“কমিশনের বিরোধী দলের মতো আচরণ করছে।” যদিও কমিশনের ভূমিকায় খুশি তাঁদের জেটসঙ্গী কংগ্রেস। প্রশংসা করেছে জেডিইউ এবং এলজেপি।

আরজেডি'র ক্ষুব্ধ হওয়ার কারণ আছে। কেননা, তিনটি সর্বভারতীয় নিউজ চ্যানেলের করা বুথ-ফেরত সমীক্ষাই বলছে, এ বারের ভোটে সরকার গড়ার সম্ভাবনা আরও ক্ষীণ হচ্ছে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের দলের। আজ ভোট হয়েছে ৬২টি আসনে। স্টার নিউজ-এ সি নিয়োলসনের করা বুথ ফেরত সমীক্ষার মতে, এর মধ্যে ২৫টি আসন যাবে আরজেডি জোটের ঝুলিতে। যদিও ফেব্রুয়ারিতে ২৮টি আসন পেয়েছিল তারা। এ বার ২২টি আসন পাবে জেডিইউ-বিজেপি জোট। গত বারের তুলনায় ৬টি আসন বাড়ছে তাদের। বড় মাপের ক্ষতি হচ্ছে এলজেপি জোটের। গত

বারে তারা পেয়েছিল ১৪টি আসন। সমীক্ষা এ বার তাদের দিচ্ছে মাত্র ৭টি আসন। ৮টি আসন পড়ছে অন্যদের ভাগে।

এটা ঠিক যে, অতীতে অনেক সময়ই বুথ ফেরত সমীক্ষার পূর্বাভাস মেলেনি। তবু রাজনৈতিক সমীক্ষার কী দাঁড়াতে চলেছে, তার একটা আন্দাজ এই সমীক্ষা থেকে পাওয়া যায়। এবং আরজেডি'র পক্ষে সেটা মোটেই আশাব্যঞ্জক নয়। প্রথম দফায় ৫৭টি আসনের ভোটের পরে তাদের ১৯টি আসন দিয়েছিল স্টারের সমীক্ষা। আর গোটা রাজ্যের ২৪৩টি আসনের প্রেক্ষিতে সেই প্রবণতাকে ফেলে বলা হয়েছিল মোট ৮৭টি আসন পেতে পারে লালুর জোট। আজ তা আরও কমিয়ে আরজেডি-কংগ্রেস জোটের সম্ভাব্য আসন সংখ্যা ৮৫ বলেছে স্টারের সমীক্ষা। অন্য দিকে, এক ধাপ এগিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে নীতীশ কুমারের জোটকে। প্রথম দফার ভোটে ৩০টি আসন দিয়ে তাদের মোট সম্ভাব্য আসন সংখ্যা ১১৪ বলেছিল স্টার। আজ বলা হয়েছে ১১৭টি আসন পেতে পারে নীতীশের জোট। রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানের দলের সম্ভাব্য আসন সংখ্যা অবশ্য ১৫ই থাকছে।

মোটামুটি এক ছবি জি নিউজ-সি ভোটারের করা বুথ

ফেরত সমীক্ষার। যদিও আজ ভোট হওয়া ৬২টি কেন্দ্রের মধ্যে লালুর জোট ২৮টি পাবে বলে তাদের পূর্বাভাস। তারা নীতীশের জোটকে দিয়েছে ২১টি আসন। ৮টি পাসোয়ানের জোটকে। অন্যদের ৫টি। কিন্তু রাজ্যের

দ্বিতীয় দফার নির্বাচনে বুথ-ফেরত সমীক্ষার ফলাফল		স্টার জি চ্যানেল		
বিহার		নিউজ	নিউজ	সেভেন
৬২ কেন্দ্র	কংগ্রেস-আরজেডি	২৫	২৮	২৪
	এলজেপি-সিপিআই	৭	৮	৭
	জেডিইউ-বিজেপি	২২	২১	২৭

যাকি আসন অনার

নিরিখে জেডিইউ-বিজেপি জোটকে এ বার অনেকটাই এগিয়ে দিয়েছে তারা। প্রথম দফার ভোটের পরে জি নিউজের সমীক্ষা বলেছিল, গোটা রাজ্যে ৯৭টি আসন পেতে পারে নীতীশের জোট। আজ বলা হয়েছে, সংখ্যাটা ১১০ হতে পারে। আর প্রথম দফায় লালুর জোটকে সব মিলিয়ে ৯৮টি আসন দিলেও আজ তা কমিয়ে ৮৩ করা হয়েছে। ২টি আসন বাড়ানো হয়েছে এলজেপি'র, ১৮ থেকে ২০।

চ্যানেল সেভেনের সমীক্ষা বলছে, দ্বিতীয় দফায় ২৪টি আসন পেতে পারে লালুর জোট। নীতীশের জোট পেতে পারে ২৭টি আসন। পাসোয়ানকে ৭টি আসন এবং অন্যান্যদের ৪টি আসন দেওয়া হয়েছে। তাদের হিসাবে গোটা রাজ্যের ছবিটা এই রকম: আরজেডি জোট ৯৬, জেডিইউ জোট ১১২ এবং এলজেপি জোট ১৪।

Winds of change in Bihar...

SF 2 2 1/10

...AT LEAST, SENIOR STATE OFFICIALS FEEL SO

some of them ministers in the Rabri Devi Cabinet, have either been arrested or caged on the polling day—something unprecedented during the past. They include Mr Vijay Prakash, RJD candidate from Jamui and brother of Union minister Mr Jai Prakash Narayan Yadav; Mr Suresh Paswan, RJD candidate from Deo and former tourism minister in the Rabri Devi Cabinet; Mr Surendra Prasad Yadav, former excise minister and RJD candidate from Belaganj and Mr Sanjay Prabhakar, the RJD candidate from Govindpur. Of them, classic is the case of the RJD candidate from Jamui, Mr Prakash whom the police not only arrested after a hot chase through paddy fields, but also gave a sound beating in full public view even as the TV cameras did their best to keep things on record.

Quite in the same fashion, police arrested another RJD don, Mr Surendra Prasad Yadav, who was vis-

tion shown extra-enthusiasm in filing model code violation cases against her. Similarly, the Jamui administration has also registered a case against Union minister of state for water resources Mr Jaiprakash Narain Yadav for forcing the release of his brother from police lock-up.

The district administration in Siwan, on the other hand, has banned the controversial RJD MP, Md Shahaabuddin's entry into the district for the next two months, besides deleting his name from the voter's list.

This is perhaps the first time during the last one-and-a-half decade that state officials have mustered up the courage to launch a virtual crackdown on RJD leaders. These are the changes, and the changes in the nuances, that were missing even in the February elections.

Except for the Siwan administration, then headed by Mr CK Anil, and the

then Gopalganj district magistrate, Mr KK Pathak, whose continued "animosity" towards the RJD has become an open secret now, almost no other official had the moral strength to clamp down on the RJD men, feel political observers. What was significant was that the then Patna DM, Mr Gautam Goswami, has now been jailed in the flood relief scam. He had also failed to initiate action against RJD leaders who painted the capital green and seized every space of the capital for publicising their "garib rally" in utter violation of the poll code until an Election Commission team headed by Mr KJ Rao arrived here to begin a probe into the matter. A fuming Mr Rao even gave a dressing-down to Mr Goswami in public for turning a blind eye towards the RJD's "misdeeds".

Yet another notable fact is that the officials have also not been kind towards Congress candidates. They have, in fact, initiated action against Mr Sadanand Singh, state Congress chief, for his name figuring in voters' lists in two separate constituencies; Mr Shamim Akhtar, Congress candidate from Bettia for whom an arrest warrant is pending with police having sounded a statewide alert. Also, Congress observer Mr Ramchandra Bharati was arrested by Gaya police for violation of Section 144 CrPc on polling day on 21 October. All these are indicative of, say pundits, the ground really slipping away from under the feet of the RJD's Yadav mascot and his family.

The officials may have got emboldened by their own Intelligence reports predicting a not-so-good performance by the RJD, said a poll expert while talking about the winds of change blowing in Bihar.



JD-U leaders Mr George Fernandes and Mr Digvijay Singh at Patna airport on Sunday. — PTI

ably irritated over his arrest on a polling day.

The authorities also do not appear to be paying "scant respect" for "high-ups" like Union railway minister Mr Prasad himself, apart from his wife and RJD candidate from Raghpur Mrs Rabri Devi. Congress leaders are

also not to be left behind. In other words, model code's violations are not being treated lightly this time in Bihar. And that is news! The officials' sudden "hatred" towards RJD leaders can also be measured from the fact that the Vaishali DM, Mr Sanjiv Hans, has hastily removed his stenographer for the "mistakes" that he committed during the filing of nomination papers by the RJD's "understood" chief ministerial candidate. Twice during the last few days have the administra-

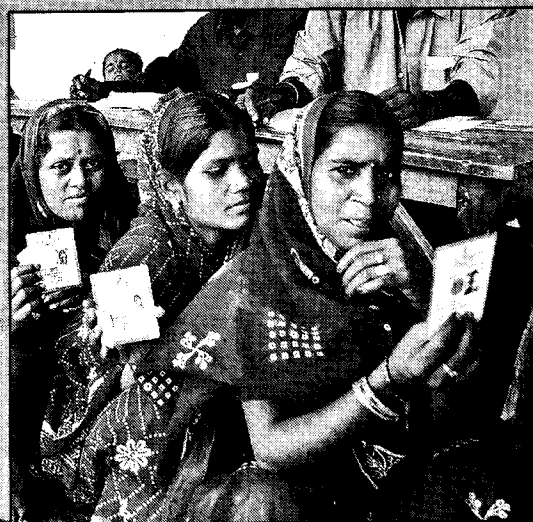
BIG DAY FOR EXTRAS

Phase II, split between October 26 and 29, offers the smaller parties a chance to pull their weight in the major alliances slugging it out in the state

SHANKAR RAGHURAMAN

The second phase of polling in Bihar was unique in one respect: just about every constituent of the three major alliances in the fray has a significant presence in the constituencies that poll on October 26 and 29, the two days over which this phase has now got spread out.

In most parts of Bihar, the Congress for instance, is at best a marginal force. That's not true of this part of the state. In the assembly elections of 2000, for instance, it got 10.6% of the vote here, the same share as the BJP. In the elections of February this year, it had a lower vote share but won one seat more than the BJP in this region. In fact 7 of the 10 seats it won state-wide



came from just these 69 constituencies.

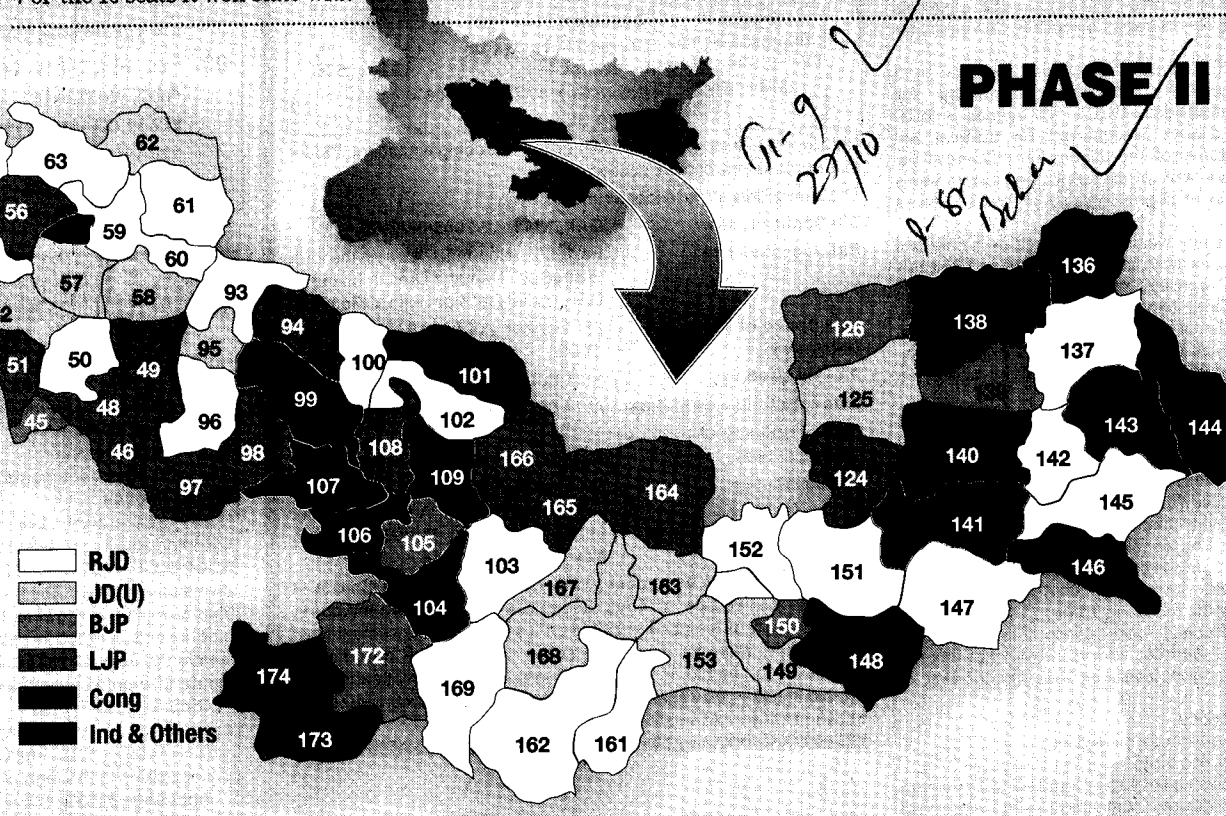
Similarly, the CPM's lone win in February came from this region as did two of three seats won by the CPI.

This, in fact, is the part of the state in which the Left can claim to have a presence, even if a modest one. The NCP too won two of its three victories in February from this region.

This phase also encompasses a region in which the LJP put up a really strong show last time round, with a vote share that was next only to the RJD's and 9 seats in its kitty. The moot question is whether the LJP's showing here was largely a result of its tie-up with the Congress.

If so, that would mean bad news for Paswan and very good news for the RJD. If, on the other hand, the LJP can do really well here again buttressed by the CPI, the man with the widest grin could be Nitish Kumar rather than Paswan.

PHASE II SEATS

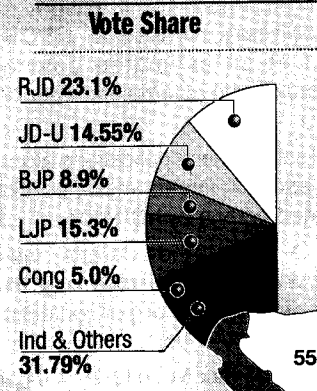
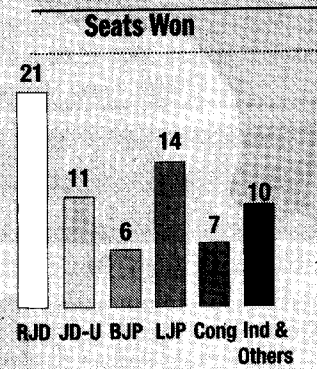


No. of constituencies	69
No. of candidates	554
No. of women candidates	42
Max. no. of candidates	16 (Kadwa)
Min. no. of candidates	3 (Alauli)
Total no. of voters	1.44 cr
No. of booths	15,724
Number of EVMs	20,218
	25% in reserve
Party-wise no. of candidates	
LJP	58
BSP	53
RJD	47
JD(U)	41
SP	38
BJP	26
CPI (ML)	22
Cong	15
CPI	11

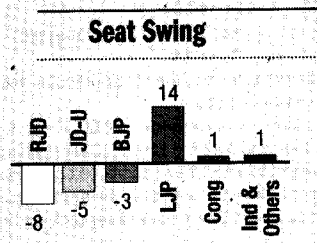
PRESENT PARTY HOLDINGS IN PHASE II CONSTITUENCIES

45 Hajipur	BJP	57 Kurhani	JD(U)	96 Dalsinghsara	LJP	124 Rupauli	LJP	145 Pranpur	RJD	164 Chautam	LJP
46 Raghopur	RJD	58 Sakra (SC)	JD(U)	99 Bibhutpur	CPM	125 Dhamdaha	JD(U)	146 Manihari	INC	165 Khagaria	LJP
47 Mahnar	LJP	59 Muzaffarpur	IND	100 Rosera	RJD	126 Banmankhi (SC)	BJP	147 Pirpanti	RJD	166 Alauli (SC)	LJP
48 Jandaha	LJP	60 Bocha (SC)	RJD	101 Singhia (SC)	INC	136 Amour	INC	148 Colgong	INC	167 Monghyr	JD(U)
49 Patepur (SC)	LJP	61 Gaighatti	RJD	102 Hasanpur	RJD	137 Baisi	RJD	149 Nathnagar	JD(U)	168 Jamaipur	JD(U)
50 Mahua (SC)	RJD	62 Aurai	JD(U)	103 Balia	RJD	138 Kasba	SP	150 Bhagalpur	BJP	169 Surajgarha	RJD
51 Lalganj	LJP	63 Minapur	RJD	104 Matthanai	IND	139 Purnea	BJP	151 Gopalgur	RJD	170 Lakhisarai	BJP
52 Valshahi	JD(U)	64 Kalyanpur	RJD	105 Bogusara	BJP	140 Korha (SC)	INC	152 Sultanganj (SC)	RJD	171 Sheikhpura	BJP
53 Paru	RJD	65 Warisnagar (SC)	LJP	106 Barauni	CPI	141 Barani	NCP	153 Tarapur	RJD	172 Barbigha (SC)	INC
54 Sahabganj	LJP	66 Samastipur	JD(U)	107 Bachwara	IND	142 Katihar	RJD	154 Kharagpur	RJD		
55 Baruraj	RJD	67 Saralaranjan	RJD	108 Cheria Bariapur	LJP	143 Kadwa	NCP	155 Parbatta	JD(U)		
56 Kanti	LJP	68 Mohiuddin Nagar	LJP	109 Bakhti (SC)	CPI	144 Barsol	CPI(ML)(L)				

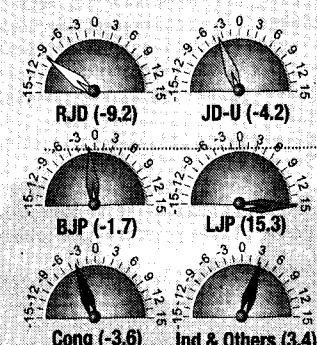
Feb '05 Results Phase II Seats



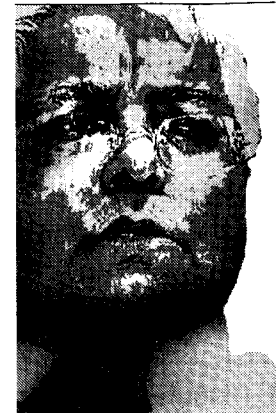
2005 Assembly Polls vs 2000 Assembly Polls



Vote Swing



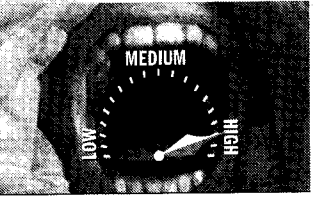
VOICES



“The EC is biased against the backward, Dalits and Muslims. They are trying to create panic among the voters with the show of force. They are working like an agent of communal forces. Paswan is also trying to weaken the UPA. But we will emerge victorious despite all odds”

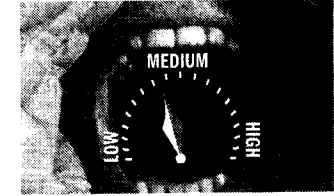
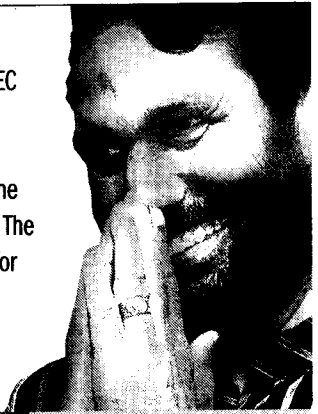
Lalu Prasad | RJD

As always, the decibel levels are loudest from Lalul Prasad, but is that a signal of desperation or a measure of the man's confidence? We'll let the 'voice of the people' decide.



“The fact that RJD is making unfounded charges against the EC everyday means it has virtually conceded defeat. The charges against EC officials only reflect the desperateness in the RJD camp. The Commission should be praised for making an impartial effort to conduct a free and fair poll”

Ram Vilas Paswan | LJP



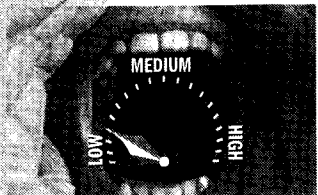
Noise levels from the LJP do not quite match up to the RJD's. Is that because Paswan would rather wait for Nov 22 to find out whether his is a voice that counts?



“I decided not to contest myself in order to devote more time to campaigning. In fact, I am contesting from all the 243 seats the NDA is contesting in the polls. As far as I am concerned, I have forgotten the distinction between JD(U) and BJP”

Nitish Kumar | JD(U)

Loudness has never been Nitish's forte and it's no different this time. The JD(U) leader, of course, would like to believe the ballot will do all the talking for him.



Phase I polling peaceful in Bihar

Statesman News Service

PATNA, Oct. 18. — Unprecedented security arrangements forced by the Election Commission for the first phase of polling in Bihar today nullified large-scale violence.

A surprise of sorts, that, considering the 24 murders reported during the February elections. Four candidates, three of them belonging to the Rashtriya Janata Dal, were arrested for law-breaking but, barring a death in police firing and some stray clashes, no major blood-letting was reported from any of the 57 constituencies that had gone to the polls. The polling percentage was 46, though. The chief secretary, Mr GS Kang, told reporters that 96 people, including four candidates, had been arrested for indulging in malpractices. The quartet consists of Mr Sanjay Prabhat (Govindpur, Nawada), Mr Suresh Paswan, RJD candidate at Deo in Aurangabad, Mr Vijay Prakash, RJD nominee at Jamui, and Mr Pradeep Joshi, an Independent aspirant at Dehri in Rohtas. Mr Prakash is said to be the brother of the Union minister of state for water resources, Mr Jai Prakash Yadav.

While Mr Prabhat has been accused of smashing an electronic voting machine, Mr Paswan allegedly carried firearms and Mr Joshi clashed with some voters in Karmain, leading to his bodyguard open-

SC dismisses plea to stay election

NEW DELHI, Oct. 18. — Yet another attempt to stall the polling process in Bihar failed today as the Supreme Court declined to entertain a plea seeking a stay order on the elections there. A Bench comprising Mr Justice YK Sabharwal and Mr Justice CK Thakker dismissed an application filed by advocate Mr Viplav Sharma, who had contended that fresh elections to the Bihar Assembly could not take place in view of the 7 October verdict. He said that as the Supreme Court had described as "unconstitutional" the 23 May presidential proclamation dissolving the Bihar Assembly, the House would remain in suspended animation in accordance with the 7 March notification. — PTI

ing fire before being beaten back, his revolver taken off him. How Mr Prakash came to be held was not known, though. According to the chief secretary, the police, in trying to quell an unruly crowd at Chautam in the Obra area of Aurangabad, fired, resulting in the death of a person identified as Mahendra Singh. Police firing was reported also from Nawada and Warisaliganj, though no one was said to have been injured. A group clash took place at Chakai.

Poll-boycotting was reported from Warisaliganj, Brahmpur, Foolwarisharif, Vikram and Sahar in protest against an alleged lack of some civic amenities.

যাদব জমানার দেড় দশক বিহার কোথায় বদলেছে

সুরত বসু

দুটি গ্রামের মানুষই যাদব সম্প্রদায়ের। কিন্তু বিয়ে-শাদি দুয়ের কথা, দুই গ্রামের মানুষ পারলে একে অপরের মুখ দেখেন না। মুখ না দেখলেও অবশ্য আপত্তি ছিল না। কিন্তু তার চেয়ে অনেক বড় ঘটনা ঘটে চলেছে ভাগলপুর থেকে বিশ কিলোমিটার দূরের এই দুটি গ্রামের মধ্যে। কইলি এবং খুটা নামের এই দুটি গ্রামের বাসিন্দারা একে অপরের সঙ্গে লড়ে চলেছেন গত পাঁচ বছরে ধরে। এই লড়াইয়ে খুন হয়েছেন দুই গ্রামের বাইশ জন মানুষ। লড়াই এমন পর্যায়ে পৌঁছেছে যে দুই গ্রামের মানুষ রাতবিরেতে একা চলতে ভয় পান।

এই রক্তক্ষয়ী লড়াইয়ের কারণ: একটি বিদ্যুতের খুঁটি। বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ করার জন্য কংক্রিটের খুঁটিটি ফেলা হয়েছিল গ্রামের একধারে। পরদিন থেকে নিজেদের গ্রামে সেটি বসানো নিয়ে শুরু হয় বিবাদ। খুটা গ্রামের লোকেরা জোর করে নিজেদের গ্রামে নিয়ে এসেছিল খুঁটিটি। পরদিন কইলি গ্রামের লোকেরা দল বেঁধে যায় খুঁটি উদ্ধারে। বেধে যায় লাঠালাঠি। মারা যান একজন। এর বদলায় অন্য গ্রামের এক বাসিন্দা খুন হন কয়েক দিনের মধ্যেই। এই বদলা-পাল্টা বদলা চলছে এখনও। বিদ্যুতের সেই খুঁটিটি এখনও বসানো হয়নি। সেটি সাকো হিসাবে বসানো রয়েছে একটি ছোট নালার উপরে। দুই গ্রামের মধ্যে কোনও শান্তির সাকো তৈরি হয়নি।

ঘটনাটি এক দিকে বিহারের উন্নয়ন, অন্য দিকে যাদব সম্প্রদায়ের লড়াই— এই দুইয়ের টানা পোড়নের প্রতীক। এক সময় লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের হাত ধরে যে জনপ্রসার সম্প্রদায়টি হয়ে উঠেছিল বিহারের শাসক শ্রেণি, এখন ক্ষমতার ভাগ নিতে সেই সম্প্রদায়ের নেতারা লড়ছেন একে অপরের সঙ্গে। বিহারে ভোটার হিসাবে (১১ শতাংশ) যাদবরাই বৃহত্তম সম্প্রদায়। এক সময়ে এই ভোট ছিল বরফের মতো জমাট, এককাটী। ‘যাদব স্বাভিমান’-এর জন্য তাঁরা অকুপণ ভাবে ভরিয়ে দিয়েছেন লালুপ্রসাদের ভোটবাক্স। যাদবরা মনে করতেন, কুর্সিতে রয়েছেন তাঁদের ঘরের ছেলে। তাঁর হাত ধরেই আসবে সামাজিক ন্যায়। যে ন্যায়ের কথা এক সময় শুনিয়েছিলেন লালুপ্রসাদ। তখন যাদবরা লালুপ্রসাদের হেলিকপ্টার দেখিয়েও গর্ব করে বলতেন, “এই উড়নখাটোলায় এতদিন চড়েছেন উচ্চবর্ণের মানুষ। এখন তাতে চড়ে রাজত্ব করছে যাদব-পুত্র।”

লালুপ্রসাদের কথা শুনে তাঁরাও স্বপ্ন দেখতেন, একদিন ‘হস্তিনাপুরের সিংহাসন’ হাতে আসবে যাদবদের।

এই স্বপ্নের পিছনে রয়েছে বিহারে নিম্নবর্ণের মানুষের দীর্ঘ বঞ্চনার ইতিহাস। মাধেপুরার এক যাদব গ্রামে বসে অতীতের নিরন্তর অপমানের কথা শুনিয়েছিলেন বৃদ্ধ রামপ্রবেশ যাদব। বলেছিলেন, “গ্রামের উচ্চবর্ণের ভূস্বামীদের বাড়িতে এক সময় বিনা পয়সায় দুধ দিয়ে আসতে হত। দাম চাওয়ার সাধ্য ছিল না কারও। খাটিয়ার উপরে বসে কথা বলতেন ভূস্বামী। মাটিতে বসতে হত আমাদের। উচ্চবর্ণের বাড়ির শিশুরাও তুই-তোকারি করত বৃদ্ধদের।” লালুপ্রসাদ ক্ষমতায় আসার পরে যাদবদের আর কথায় কথায় অপমান করার সাধ্য নেই উচ্চবর্ণের মানুষের। যাদবরা এখন শাসক। থানা-পুলিশ-প্রশাসন সর্বত্রই তাঁরাই পেয়ে থাকেন বাড়তি সুবিধা।

এই বাড়তি সুবিধা বিহারের আর্থিক উন্নয়নে বিশেষ কোনও সাহায্য

**এটা ঘটনা যে, বিহারের
সামাজিক জীবনে,
বিশেষত যাদব সম্প্রদায়ের
ক্ষেত্রে বিপুল পরিবর্তন
ঘটে গিয়েছে ১৫ বছরে।
ক্ষমতায় থেকে এই
সম্প্রদায়ের একটি
অংশ এখন গ্রামের
মাথা হয়ে বসেছেন।**

করেনি, লালুপ্রসাদের সে রকম কোনও তাগিদও ছিল না। তিনি বাস্তব থেকেছেন চমক তৈরিতে, সে চরবাহা বিদ্যালয় তৈরিই হোক বা দলিত শিশুদের চুল কেটে জলের পাইপ দিয়ে স্নান করানোই হোক। কিন্তু এটা ঘটনা যে, বিহারের সামাজিক জীবনে, বিশেষত যাদব সম্প্রদায়ের ক্ষেত্রে বিপুল পরিবর্তন ঘটে গিয়েছে এই ১৫ বছরে। ক্ষমতায় থেকে এই সম্প্রদায়ের একটি অংশ এখন গ্রামের মাথা হয়ে বসেছেন। রাজনৈতিক ক্ষমতার কেন্দ্রে থেকে ঠিকাদারি, রঙদারি (তোলাবাজি) ইত্যাদি নানা উপায়ে অঢেল টাকা কামিয়েছেন। উচ্চবর্ণের ভূস্বামীদের মতোই তাঁদের হাবভাব। লালুপ্রসাদের লক্ষ্যও উচ্চবর্ণের ভূস্বামীদের মতো হয়ে ওঠা। তাঁর কথাবার্তা হাঁটাচলা আচরণেই সেটা পরিষ্কার। গ্রামেগঞ্জে

তাঁর সমর্থক নেতারাও এখন তাঁকেই নকল করেন। বিহারের প্রতিটি এলাকায় গড়ে উঠেছে ছোটখাটো গোষ্ঠীপতির দাপট। তিন বছর আগে বিহারে প্রথম ত্রিস্তর পঞ্চায়েত নির্বাচনে জিতেছেন এঁদের একটি বড় অংশ। এঁরাই এখন আরও রাজনৈতিক ক্ষমতা চাইছেন। টাকা বা পেশির জোরে জিততে চাইছেন ভোট। এর জন্য দরকার যে কোনও দলের টিকিট। টিকিট ‘কিনতে’ যত টাকা লাগে তা তাঁরা দিতে রাজি। কোনও দলের টিকিট না পেলে দাঁড়াচ্ছেন নির্দল হয়ে। জলের মতো টাকা খরচ করছেন।

একটি উদাহরণ দিলে অবস্থাটা অনেকটাই স্পষ্ট হয়ে যাবে। গত বারের বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে নওয়াদা জেলার গোবিন্দপুর কেন্দ্রে থেকে আর জে ডি-র টিকিট চেয়েছিলেন কৌশল যাদব। গোবিন্দপুর থেকে পরপর দুবার নির্বাচনে জিতেছেন তাঁর মা গায়ত্রী দেবী। কৌশল যাদব ছিলেন আর জে ডি-র জেলা সভাপতি। এলাকার সমস্ত ঠিকাদারি তাঁর হাতে। সমস্ত বড় মস্তান এবং পুলিশ তাঁর কথায় ওঠে-বসে। কিন্তু লালুপ্রসাদ চাননি গোবিন্দপুর থেকে তাঁর মা গায়ত্রী দেবীকে সরিয়ে এই বাহুবলী নেতাকে টিকিট দিতে। ক্ষিপ্ত কৌশল আর জে ডি ছেড়ে নির্দল হিসাবে দাঁড়ালেন এই যাদব অধ্যুষিত কেন্দ্রে। নিজের স্ত্রীকেও নির্দল হিসাবে দাঁড় করালেন নওয়াদা কেন্দ্রে। আর জে ডি-র ভরাডুবি ঘটিয়ে দুটি কেন্দ্রে থেকেই জিতলেন তাঁরা। এ বারে তাঁরা দাঁড়িয়েছেন নীতীশ কুমারের দলের প্রার্থী হয়ে। এই ভাবে লালুপ্রসাদের যাদব ভোট ভাগভাগি হয়ে গিয়েছে।

একই ঘটনা ঘটেছে মাধেপুরায় পাণ্ডু যাদব বা গোপালগঞ্জে সাধু যাদবের ক্ষেত্রেও। নিজের নিজের এলাকায় গোষ্ঠীপতি এই সব যাদব নেতারা আর জে ডি-র প্রার্থীদের বিরুদ্ধে নিজেদের ‘যাদব’ প্রার্থী দাঁড় করিয়ে হারিয়েছেন যাদব কুলপতি লালুপ্রসাদকে। এ বার রাজ্যের বিভিন্ন এলাকায় একই ঘটনা ঘটতে চলেছে। ‘বিদ্রোহী’ যাদব নেতারা ক্ষমতার জন্য এখন লড়তে পারেন যাদব মসিহা লালুপ্রসাদের সঙ্গেও।

এই কারণেই চিন্তিত লালুপ্রসাদ। এত দিন যাদবরা যে ‘স্বাভিমান’-এর তারে বাঁধা ছিলেন লালুপ্রসাদের সঙ্গে, তা ছিড়ে গিয়েছে মাঝখানের এই গোষ্ঠীপতির ক্ষমতামালা হওয়ায়। যাদব আবেগ ফের কাজে লাগানোর জন্য এ বারের নির্বাচনে লালুপ্রসাদ অবশ্য চেষ্টা চালাতে কসুর করছেন না। কিন্তু সমাজ বিবর্তনের এই পর্যায়ে এসে লালুপ্রসাদের পক্ষে আর সম্ভব নয় এই হেঁড়া তার জোড়া দেওয়া।

First phase of Bihar campaign ends



Former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi at an election rally at Vikramganj in Bihar. Campaigning for the first phase ends on Sunday.

BJP star leaders hit the road with theme blitzkrieg

VIJAY Swaroop
Patna, October 16

IT'S A theme campaign for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Bihar. With barely a day to go for the first phase of Assembly polls, the BJP has gone in for campaign blitzkrieg. Barring the former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, all top leaders of the party are now camping in the state. And each has a work division and a separate message to deliver.

While party's national vice-president Venkaiah Naidu is propagating the development mantra, Sushma Swaraj is asking the voters to choose the right person.

Party's general secretary Rajnath Singh is concentrating on farmers and rural issues whereas national president Lal Krishna Advani's speech has the theme of swaraj (freedom from misrule).

"The political brief to the leaders revolve around two types of campaigning — first, the anti-incumbency factor and second, the positives of the NDA," said Arun Jaitley, party's national general secretary and in-charge of Bihar affairs.

The BJP leadership feels that people of the state are angry with the 15-year misrule of Lalu Yadav. "Angry voters vote a government out while happy voters vote back a government," feels Jaitley. "The anger is more due to failure of the state government on all fronts and the injustice done to the NDA in government formation leading to a fresh poll and undue burden on the state coffers," he adds.

STARSHOW



L.K. Advani Swaraj (Freedom from 15-year misrule)

Venkaiah Naidu Development issues

Rajnath Singh Rural issues

Sushma Swaraj Leadership (Focus on Nitish)

Crorepatis candidates in cash-strapped state

AMITABH Jha
Patna, October 16

THE GOVERNMENT of Bihar may find it tough to pay the salary of its staff, leave alone get development work done but there is no dearth of aspiring lawmakers with assets running into crores of rupees.

Going by their affidavits, there are at least 13 candidates in the fray in the 61 constituencies going to polls on October 18 who boast of property worth Rs 1 crore or more in their own name or in that of family members.

The place of pride among the "haves" is taken by JD(U) nominee from Barhara, Asha Devi, who admits having assets worth a whopping Rs 6.77 crore. She is closely followed by Independent candidate Ramesh Sharma of Bikram who values his property at Rs 5.69 crore. Sheo Bachan Yadav contesting from violence prone Konch constituency on the ticket of RJD, the party of "garib gurbas (poor and indigent)," has a little over Rs 5 crore in his kitty.

Among the parties the RJD and the JD (U) share the top slot with three



CANDIDATES	PARTY	ASSETS
Asha Devi	JD(U)	6.7
Ramesh Sharma	Ind	5.6
Seo Bachan Yadav	RJD	5
Umashankar Bhagat	LJP	4.6
Krishn Kumar Singh	BJP	4.5
Sanjay Sahay	Cong	4.3
Raghvendra P Singh	RJD	4.1
Ramashray P Singh	JD(U)	3.6
Virendra Pradhan	LJP	3.5
Sushil K Singh	JD(U)	1.4

(figures in crore Rs)

crorepatis each followed by the LJP and Congress with two. The BJP has just one crorepatis and shares the third place with little known National Loktantrik Party (NLP).

Interestingly, the NLP nominee from Gaya Town Jawaid Karim with assets worth over Rs 1.26 crore, mostly in shape of land, does not have a PAN number issued by the Income-Tax Department.

He need not worry. The Income-Tax Department seems to suffer from amnesia when it comes to getting candidates who have assets worth crores cough up their tax dues. Association of Democratic Reform (ADR), coordinator Vibhu P Mahapatra said that after the last round of State Assembly polls the Election Commission had forwarded to the Income-Tax Department the asset details of the candi-

dates. However, to this date the I-T authorities are sitting on the files and have taken no follow up action on the information.

Borrow-and-make-merry

In stark contrast to candidates flush with funds are those who owe huge if not astronomical sums. Leading the pack of borrow-and-make-merry candidates is Virendra Pradhan, the LJP nominee from Chakai, who has a whopping debt of Rs 42.62 lakh.

A distant second is Rajshekhar Prasad alias Pappu Yadav contesting on an RJD ticket from Katoria. He has a loan of Rs 19.83 lakh to service.

The other notables are Awadhesh Kumar Singh fighting on a Congress ticket from Gaya Mufassil (Rs 14.8 lakh) and former Minister in the Rabri Ministry Dadan Singh alias Dadan Pehelwan of AVJD (Rs 11.6 lakh). There are three others who are in debt to the tune of Rs 1 lakh. They are Ramanuj Pandey from Obra, Kumar Gautam from Atri (both Independents) and Kameshwar Prasad of Samajwadi Party from Bhabhua.

The party leaders have also been asked to highlight the bond of JD(U)-BJP, NDA's achievements at the Centre and leadership of Nitish Kumar. "We had projected Nitish Kumar as the CM during February polls and have concentrated our campaigning with him as the focal point," informs Jaitley.

Venkaiah Naidu and Sushma Swaraj maintain that they are toeing a particular line. "I am basically emphasising the development related issues and telling voters how Bihar is lagging behind in every sphere," said Naidu, while talking to *Hindustan Times* on Saturday.

"My message to the voters revolve round the point that the NDA is the only alternative, there should not be any division of votes, chose the right person and go to vote," said Swaraj.

Rajnath Singh, informed Naidu, is mainly highlighting issues related to farmers and rural folks. Asked, if Advani, too has been given a specific theme, he said, "Advani speaks on all issues but his broad theme is swaraj (freedom from 15-year misrule)."

The BJP has left it to the JD (U) to handle the minorities with its leader Shahnawaz Hussain lending his hand to the ally's leaders.

Sonia explains Laloo ties

OUR BUREAU

Oct. 15: Before the February polls, the Congress president had obliquely accused the Rashtriya Janata Dal of not doing enough for Bihar during its 15 years in office. Eight months later, sharing the campaign dais with the RJD chief, Sonia Gandhi blamed the National Democratic Alliance government's six-year rule at the Centre for Bihar's backwardness.

"The NDA government discriminated against Bihar on all fronts. People suffered because of this. The UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government has made a new beginning and the good work will continue in Bihar," Sonia told a moderate gathering at Patna's Gandhi Maidan today.

But her uneasiness at the change of stance was apparent at an earlier meeting in Gaya, where she was defensive as she justified the tie-up with Laloo Prasad Yadav.

Without naming either the RJD or its chief, Sonia said "fingers were being raised" at the Congress over its political alliance in the state. But the arrangement had been made in the interests of the people of Bihar, especially the deprived sections and the minorities.

"It's not a matter of an individual (read Laloo Prasad); it's a question of principles (read secularism)," she said.

The UPA chairperson, however, was certain of her alliance's victory because the "confusion of last time" — when no grouping got a clear mandate — had vanished.

"There is no confusion now and I am sure you will



Laloo Prasad Yadav and Sonia Gandhi at the Patna rally. Picture by Deepak Kumar

support our alliance," she told the Patna audience flanked by Laloo Prasad and Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar.

Sonia said the UPA government had opened "a new chapter of change" in the country and its natural corollary was the development of Bihar, provided her alliance came to power.

"Bihar needs a government that can care for each citizen. Bihar has problems and the environment in the state needs to be improved."

She cited the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

and the Right to Information Act as examples of her government's commitment to change.

"The employment guarantee programme will be implemented across the country within five years. We believe in providing equal rights to women. The legislation to check domestic violence and to provide daughters an equal share in paternal property will help us meet this objective."

Laloo Prasad said he had always believed that "madam" was, first of all, a "bahu" (daughter-in-law); and her "supreme sacrifice" — that of

declining the Prime Minister's chair — had only strengthened his viewpoint.

"I have also struggled, but your sacrifice has mobilised people across the country. Bihar will change," he said.

Ally Sharad Pawar declared that Bihar needed Laloo Prasad at the helm if it was to develop. "The state needs a new programme and the path has already been shown by the UPA government at the Centre," the Union agriculture minister said.

Sonia also addressed a meeting at Singhia in Samastipur.

Now, battle royal on in Bihar

Sonia snubs Paswan, defends ties with RJD

RAI Atul Krishna/ALOK Kumar/PRABHAT Kumar
Patna/Gaya/Singhia, October 15

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi on Saturday sought to make a virtue out of the popular disenchantment with frequent elections to seek a clear mandate for the Secular Democratic Front (SDF) in the Bihar Assembly poll.

"None of you must have expected elections to be held again so soon (after the February poll). It wouldn't have come to this had there been a clear verdict then. Make sure of it and there'll be no confusion this time", Sonia said while addressing an election meeting at Patna's historic Gandhi Maidan. She made identical pleas in Gaya and Singhia earlier in the day.

Sharing the dais with her in Patna were RJD president Lalu Prasad and NCP chief Sharad Pawar. Also present were a host of Congress, RJD and NCP leaders, including the state presidents of these parties. Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee president Sadanand Singh chaired the function. But leaders of the CPI(M), an SDF constituent, did not attend.

Although it was an election meeting, Congress nominees Sanjiv Prasad Tony (Fatuha) and Gurjit Singh (Mokama) were neither present on stage nor were referred to by name in the speeches. Also excluded from presence on the dais or any specific reference were the RJD candidates. The NCP's Aquil Haidar (Patna Central) was the only candidate to find space on the dais.

On her first election trip to Bihar, Sonia sought to distinguish the SDF (a UPA variant) from the BJP-led NDA. "We've entered into a principled alliance to serve the interests of the nation and its people. It hasn't been motivated



LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan with CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan at Patna airport on Saturday.

by the pursuit of power", she said, while promising a better life for the Dalits, minorities, women and other weaker sections.

Referring to Bihar's glorious past, Sonia said the SDF was the way to go to restore that era. She dwelt on the UPA government's steps to empower women and declared that the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme would cover the entire country in the next four years. "Biharis have suffered under NDA rule, but we'll make amends", she promised.

Yet, the UPA chairperson stopped short of handing over an unequivocal certificate of merit to the erstwhile Rabri Devi regime in which the RJD and Congress were partners. Much progress had been made in Bihar, which needed to be taken forward, she said. "But we also need to examine what shortcomings there are and how they can be removed", she added.

Inexplicably, Lalu chose the occasion to reiterate his loyalty to Sonia and the RJD's commitment to the alliance with her party. "Lalu will never let you down. We'll move shoulder to shoulder with the Congress. We'll never let the RSS realise its dream of ruling the country", he said while reminding her that he, more than anybody else, had wanted her to be PM.

The railway minister assured the UPA chairperson that under guidance, the SDF would banish communal forces from Bihar. "You shunned the opportunity to become PM and, instead, handed over that position to a person belonging to the minority Sikh community", he added.

Lalu said Sonia had ensured the inclusion of the 1989-Rajiv package in the SDF's common minimum programme for Bihar. He also reiterated the SDF promise for providing job reservation to "Dalit".



Police troubles

Attacks at times leave cops dazed. Reason: Lack of resources

Grim figures

Posts of about 200 constables, 35 SIs lying vacant in almost each district

Naxal power

Cadres are trained in guerrilla warfare and have sophisticated arms, such as AK-47s. They are reported to have hit-and-run squads, including women, which form hit-and-run squads

RED ALERT

32 districts out of the 40 police districts of Bihar are officially recognized as Naxal-affected as the state goes to the polls in four phases from October 18.

Worst-hit districts

East Champaran, West Champaran, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Araria, Kishanganj, Sheohar and Supaul



How can we expect policemen to fight Naxals when police stations have no batteries, no wireless sets and no vehicles?

A DIG on condition of anonymity

Text: Ramashanker/Graphic: Sanjay Kapoor

Poll boycott charade

RASHMI Saksena
Gaya, October 15

THE REGULATION poll boycott call has been issued in Bihar's dreaded 'Red Zone'. It will be ignored again. Blood-red posters threatening life and limb should anyone dare to vote do not even elicit a turn of the head. Pamphlets carrying sinister messages from the outlawed Naxalite leaders are swept away every morning along with the day's marketplace trash.

This is no brave defiance. Nor is it a sign that the people are breaking free of the hold of the Maoist Communist Centre of India and People's War, now merged under the umbrella of the CPI(Maoist).

The voter in rebel-infested districts of Jehanabad, Arwal, Gaya, Aurangabad, Kaimur and Rohtas is fully aware that the Naxal poll boycott is a mere symbolic gesture. Security

forces posted in the area anticipate little confrontation between voters and the ultras. Naxals are more likely to attack government property and the police to highlight their anti-government stance. PW men may well carry out blasts that will not affect voter turnout but will harm officials and security forces.

"Political worker by day and Naxal by night" goes the commonplace wisdom. Those who extort money and demand levy from contractors engaged in development projects masquerade as political workers. But, in reality, the Naxals want people to vote — but in keeping with caste loyalties. The Naxal leadership, after last year's merger, has split on caste lines. Although still dominated by the Yadavs, there is a sprinkling of chieftains from the Dushadh and Harijan communities. Now, the major caste groups have their own leaders interested in a now-or-never poll.

SC no to Bihar poll stay plea

9 87 15/10

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 14

THE SUPREME Court on Friday dismissed a plea for a stay on the election process under way in Bihar in view of the October 6 Constitution Bench order holding the dissolution of the erstwhile Assembly "unconstitutional".

A Bench — comprising Justices Ruma Pal and B.N. Srikrishna — dismissed the petition filed by advocate Viplav Sharma saying they would not want to comment on the Constitution Bench judgment.

Incidentally, Sharma had filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in the original matter in which the Constitution Bench struck down the presidential proclamation dissolving the House. However, the five-judge Bench did not deem it fit to restore status quo ante in view of the advanced stage of poll preparations in the state.

The Constitution Bench is, however, yet to come out with its reasoned order explaining its decision.

Sharma had, in his fresh plea before the apex court on Friday, sought a direction to



L.K. Advani with BJP's Bihar unit president Sushil Modi in Patna on Friday. PTI

the Election Commission to stop the election process in the state. A new Assembly cannot come into existence when the old one still exists, he claimed.

He stated that, since the presidential proclamation dissolving the Assembly had been struck down, it would imply that the old Assembly was still in suspended animation. Therefore, fresh polls cannot be held. But the Bench rejected his contention.

Advani steps up pressure on Kalam

BJP chief L.K. Advani on Friday demanded that President APJ. Abdul Kalam advise Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to step down on moral grounds in the wake of Supreme Court's order declaring the dissolution of Bihar Assembly as "unconstitutional" and remove Governor Buta Singh to ensure "free and fair" elections in Bihar.

"PM has said he doesn't disown the moral responsibility for the dissolution of the House declared unconstitutional by the apex court. He should quit immediately," Advani told reporters at the Jayaprakash Narayan International airport here soon after his arrival from New Delhi for campaigning for NDA Charging the Union cabinet with having "misled" the President while seeking dissolution of the House. Advani said the NDA delegation which met Kalam in New Delhi on Thursday had urged him to advise the PM to resign on moral grounds. "We told the President that you have been misled by the Union Cabinet. There was no basis for recommending the dissolution of the House," he said.

MANMOHAN DEFENDS DISSOLUTION OF ASSEMBLY AS PRACTICAL, KEEPS SILENT ON BUTA'S RECALL

PM takes responsibility for Bihar

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH / NEW DELHI, Oct. 8. — A day after the Supreme Court order quashing the Congress-led UPA government's controversial move to dissolve the Bihar Assembly and terming it as "unconstitutional", the Prime Minister today said he owned up his responsibility over the dissolution of the Bihar House.

"I don't disown our (government's) responsibility and my responsibility as Prime Minister," Dr Manmohan Singh said in his first comment on the issue since yesterday's dramatic developments.

Facing a volley of questions on whether his government was not morally responsible for the dissolution of the Bihar Assembly and whether the controversial Bihar governor, Mr Buta Singh, would be removed, Dr Singh refrained from making any comments on his government's future course of action in the matter following the apex court's order. He said he will have to wait for the detailed court's judgement.

Dr Singh said: "The honourable court had by majority judgment held it (the Union Cabinet's dissolution decision) unconstitutional. I still don't know the reasons that led the honourable court to arrive at that decision. I have to wait for a detailed judgement."

Delivering its landmark interim order yesterday, the Supreme Court's Constitution Bench had said that it will give the reasons behind its order in a detailed judgement later.

Addressing a joint news conference along with the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, in Chandigarh at the end of the Congress CMs' conclave, which was completely overshadowed by the Bihar-related development, Dr Singh, however, tried to defend his Cabinet's

Cabinet meets on court order

NEW DELHI, Oct. 8. — The Prime Minister held a meeting of the Cabinet tonight to deliberate upon the Bihar situation arising out of yesterday's stinging Supreme Court order which held the Centre's decision to dissolve the Assembly as "unconstitutional".

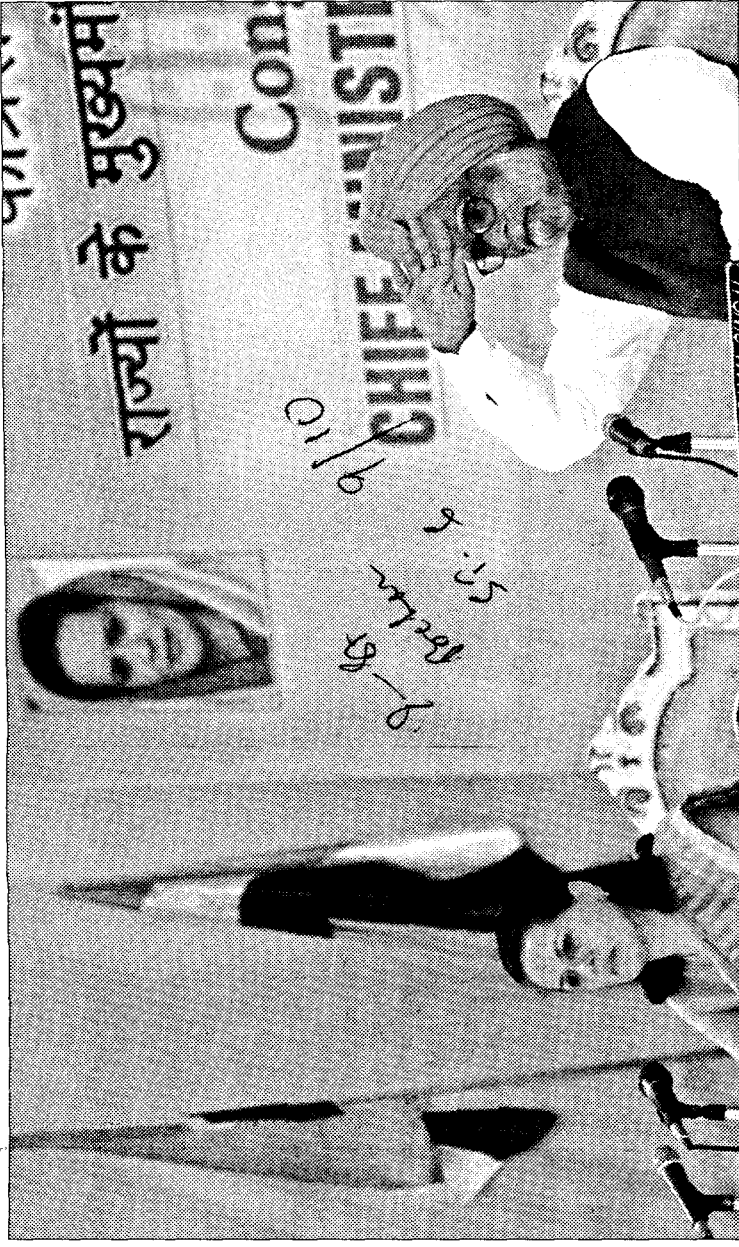
Following the meeting, I&B minister Mr Jaipal Reddy told reporters that that the controversial Bihar governor, Mr Buta Singh, might not be removed, at least not immediately. He said the Cabinet took note of three aspects of the court's order: it was a majority order; secondly, it did not stop the upcoming Bihar elections, and thirdly, it said the reasons behind the order will be given later. **SNS**

decision on the ground that it was the "only practical course open" then.

He said: "There were specific circumstances that were brought to our notice. It was our considered judgement then that taking into account the objective situation dissolution of the assembly was the only practical course open."

Seeking to explain the circumstances in which the decision to dissolve the Bihar Assembly was taken, the Prime Minister said: "The Governor made a recommendation and the Union Cabinet acted on that... The Supreme Court has declared the dissolution as unconstitutional but said the election process must go on."

Dr Singh's statement made it clear that the Congress central leadership is still struggling to formulate its response to the situation arising out of the court's verdict, even as there is no let-up of fireworks from a hyper-aggressive BJP-JD(U) combine which besides going for Mr Buta Singh's jugular is now gunning for the Prime Minister himself.



Dr Manmohan Singh and Mrs Sonia Gandhi at the Congress conclave in Chandigarh on Saturday. PTI

Sonia hails Congress CMs' conclave

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, Oct. 8. — After the conclusion of the two-day Congress chief ministers' conclave here, the party supremo, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, today said such conferences at regular intervals were "special and purposeful" for the organisation.

She said that senior

party colleagues participating in the deliberations then ask the CM concerned questions on his performance-related criticism made within the party. "It makes an important contribution to assess our performance. We also discuss possible policies." Mrs Gandhi said, "no decision has been taken on the issue so far."

What Buta wrote then 'in interest of state'

28-9 8/10

Patna, the 27th April 2005

Respected Rashtrapati jee,

I invite a reference to my D.O. No.33/GB dated the 6th March, 2005 through which a detailed analysis of the results of the Assembly elections were made and a recommendation was also made to keep the newly constituted Assembly (constituted vide Election Commission's notification No.308/B.R.-L.A/2005 dated the 4th March 2005 and 464/Bihar-LA/2005, dated the 4th March, 2005) in a suspended animation and also to issue appropriate direction/decision. In the light of the same, the President was pleased to issue a proclamation under Article 356 of the Constitution of India vide notification No. G.S.R. 162(E), dated 7th March 2005, and the proclamation has been approved and assented by the Parliament.

2. As none of the parties either individually or with their pre-election combination or with post-election alliance combination could stake a claim to form a popular Government wherein they could claim a support of a simple majority of 122 in a House of 243, I had no alternative but to send the above mentioned report with the said recommendation.

3. I am given to understand that serious attempts are being made by JD-U and BJP to cobble a majority and lay

claim to form the Government in the State. Contacts in JD-U and BJP have informed that 16-17 LJP MLAs have been won over by various means and attempt is being made to win over others. The JD-U is also targeting Congress for creating a split. It is felt in JD-U circles that in case LJP does not split then it can still form the Government with the support of Independent, NCP, BSP and SP MLAs and two-third of Congress MLAs after it splits from the main Congress party. The JD-U and BJP MLAs are quite convinced that by the end of this month or latest by the first week of May, JD-U will be in a position to form the Government. The high pressure moves of JD-U/BJP is also affecting the RJD MLAs who have become restive. According to a report, there is a lot of pressure by the RJD MLAs on Lalu Pd. Yadav to either form the Government in Bihar on the UPA pattern in the Centre, with the support of Congress, LJP and others or he should at least ensure the continuance of President's rule in the State.

Government is important. It has also noticed that the changing alignment of the members of political parties so openly really makes a mockery of our democracy.

Under the Constitutional Scheme a political party goes before the electorate with a particular programme and it sets up candidates at the election on the basis of such programmes. The 10th Schedule of the Constitution was introduced on the premise that political propriety and morality demands that if such persons after the elections changes his affiliation, that should be discouraged. This is on the basis that the loyalty to a party is a norm, being based on shared beliefs. A divided party is looked on with suspicion by the electorate.

5. Newspaper reports in the recent time and other reports gathered through meeting with various party functionaries and also intelligence reports received by me, indicate a trend to gain over elected representatives of the people and various elements within the party and also outside the party being approached through various allurement like money, caste, posts, etc., which is a disturbing feature. This would affect the constitutional provisions and safeguards built therein. Any such move may also distort the verdict of the people as shown by

4. The National Commission to review the working of the Constitution has also noticed that the reasons for increasing instability of elected Governments was attributable to unprincipled and opportunistic political realignment from time to time. A reasonable degree of stability of Government and a strong

Reproducing the two letters sent by Bihar Governor Buta Singh to President Kalam, recommending dissolution of Assembly

Patna, the 21st May, 2005
Camp: Delhi

Respected Rashtrapati Jee,

I invite a reference to my D.O. letter No.52/GB dated 27th April 2005 through which I had given a detailed

longing to LJP were being wooed by various means so that a split could be effected in the LJP. Attention was also drawn to the fact that the RJD MLAs had also become restive in the light of the above moves made by the JD-U.

combination could stake a claim to form a popular Government since they could not claim a support of a simple majority of 122 in a House of 243 and hence the President was pleased to issue a proclamation under Article 356 of the Constitution vide notification No.-GSR-162(E) dated 7th March 2005 and the Assembly was kept in suspended animation.



For the RECORD

various political parties/groups trying to allure elected MLAs. Consequently it may not be possible to contain the situation without giving the people another opportunity to give their mandate through a fresh poll.

7. I am submitting these facts before the Hon'ble President for taking such action as deemed appropriate.

With regards
Yours sincerely,
Buta Singh

tives of the people. Report has also been received of one of the LJP MLA, who is General Secretary of the party, having resigned today and also 17-18 more perhaps are moving towards the JD-U clearly indicating that various allurement have been offered which is a very disturbing and alarming feature. Any move by the breakaway action to align with any other party to cobble a majority and stake claim to form a Government would positively affect the Constitutional provisions and safeguards built therein and distort the verdict of the people as shown by the results in the recent Elections. If these attempts are allowed it would be amounting to tampering with Constitutional provisions.

Keeping the above mentioned circumstances, I am of the considered view that if the trend is not arrested immediately, it may not be possible to contain the situation. Hence in my view a situation has arisen in the State wherein it would be desirable in the interest of the State that the Assembly presently kept in suspended animation is dissolved, so that the people/electorate can be provided with one more opportunity to seek the mandate of the people at an appropriate time to be decided in due course.

With regards,
Yours sincerely,
Buta Singh

The reports received by me in the recent past through the media and also through meeting with various political functionaries, as also intelligence reports, indicate a trend to win over elected representa-

As you are aware after the Assembly Elections in February this year, none of the political parties either individually or with the then pre-election combination or with post-election alliance

account of the attempts made by some of the parties, notably the JD-U and BJP, to cobble a majority and lay a claim to form a Government in the State. I had informed that around 16-17 MLAs be-

Bihar Assembly dissolution unconstitutional: apex court

HD-1 ✓

8/10

P. Sr
Bihar

Election process, however, can go on as scheduled, rules Constitution Bench

J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday declared unconstitutional the May 23 Presidential Proclamation dissolving the Bihar Assembly but gave its nod for the present elections, the first phase of which is scheduled for October 18.

The majority judgment by Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, heading a five-judge Constitution Bench, is seen as a major embarrassment to the United Progressive Alliance Government at the Centre, which recommended the dissolution on the basis of two reports sent by Governor Buta Singh on April 27 and May 21. These reports became the subject matter of litigation in a batch of petitions, which questioned the legality of the Proclamation.

The Bench, which included Justices K. G. Balakrishnan, B. N. Agrawal, Ashok Bhan and Ari-

• **Majority verdict is seen an embarrassment to UPA Government**

• **Both sides addressed intricate questions**

• **Not a case to order *status quo ante***

jit Pasayat, said both the petitioners and the Union Government addressed many intricate and important questions of law having a far-reaching impact. The Election Commission already notified fresh elections to constitute a new Assembly. "Keeping in view the questions involved, the pronouncement of judgment with detailed reasons is likely to take some time and, therefore, at this stage, we are pronouncing this brief order as the order of the court to be followed by detailed reasons later."

The Bench said "despite [the] unconstitutionality of the im-

pugned Proclamation, having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case, the present is not a case where in exercise of discretionary jurisdiction *status quo ante* deserves to be ordered to restore the Legislative Assembly as it stood on the date of Proclamation, March 7, when it was kept under suspended animation."

Governor's letters

In the April 27 letter, Mr. Buta Singh indicated the possibility of government formation, saying "the JD-U and BJP MLAs are quite convinced that by the end

of this month or the latest by the first week of May, the JD-U will be in a position to form the government." But "the high pressure moves of the JD-U/BJP are also affecting the RJD MLAs who have become restive. According to a report there is a lot of pressure by the RJD MLAs on Lalu Prasad Yadav to either form the government in Bihar on the UPA pattern at the Centre, with the support of the Congress, the LJP and others or at least ensure continuance of President's rule."

In his May 21 letter, the Governor said "any move by a break-away faction to align with any other party to cobble up a majority and stake claim to form a government would positively affect the constitutional provisions and safeguards built therein and distort the verdict of the people as shown by the results in the recent elections. If these attempts are allowed, it would amount to tampering with con-

stitutional provisions."

Appearing for the petitioners, senior advocate Soli Sorabjee maintained that the Governor made no genuine attempt to explore the possibility of forming a government before recommending the dissolution of the House. The "indecent haste" with which the Governor acted would show that his only intention was to prevent Janata Dal (U) leader Nitish Kumar from staking his claim to form the government, as it did not suit the political ambitions of Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad. There was no explanation by the Government for the hurry shown in getting the Proclamation signed by the President (who was then in Moscow) at midnight.

Centre's defence

The Centre said the Proclamation was issued to prevent horse-trading and formation of government through foul means.

Embarrassed Centre wants to cut losses

Harish Khare

NEW DELHI: Faced with the embarrassment of having the Supreme Court declare the Bihar Presidential Proclamation unconstitutional, the Centre is reported to be examining ways of meeting the judicial concern.

After the court order on Friday, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh held consultations with Union Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj, as also with Home Minister Shivraj Patil, who was away in Chandigarh.

The three-way consultation

has produced a consensus that the least the Government could do is to shift Bihar Governor Buta Singh out of the Patna Raj Bhavan.

Manmohan meets Kalam

Later, the Prime Minister called on President Abdul Kalam at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. Among other things, they discussed the "Supreme Court Order in the Bihar Assembly dissolution case," according to a Rashtrapati Bhavan press release.

The Congress, on its part, was

mentally prepared for the Friday verdict. Senior party managers were already conceding that in case the Supreme Court were to pass strictures against the Governor, there would be no alternative but to shift him out of Bihar. The emerging view is that the Governor hardly has the kind of image that would inspire judicial confidence, especially when he is seen as using high sounding moral phrases while referring to horse-trading, etc.

There is a realisation that the judicial sensitivity would have to be propitiated. Mr. Buta Singh's

departure from Patna is certain, sooner than later, according to informed sources.

The Manmohan Singh Government and the ruling United Progressive Alliance have lost face but there is also a sense of relief at the "operative judgment."

The bottomline for the UPA political establishment is that the Supreme Court has not revived the Assembly.

The relief on Friday was in sharp contrast to the tense night of Thursday, as there was the strong apprehension that the

court could revive the Assembly. Many senior Government functionaries spent a restless night, contemplating the possibility of reviving the Assembly. Such a denouement would have been politically most unpalatable.

The frightening scenario was that if the court were to revive the Assembly, Janata Dal (U) leader Nitish Kumar would have become chief minister.

A hostile State Government in Patna would have made life difficult for the UPA ally, Rashtriya Janata Dal leadership, with an unpredictable outcome.

SC shocker for Centre on Bihar

Terms House Dissolution Unconstitutional, But Polls Will Go On

TNN AND AGENCIES

New Delhi: In a jolt to the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government, the supreme court on Friday struck down the presidential proclamation dissolving the Bihar assembly, but terming it "unconstitutional", but declined to revive the House, paving the way for the four-phased elections commencing October 18. "The proclamation of May 23 dissolving the Bihar legislative assembly is unconstitutional," a constitutional bench headed by Justice Y K Sabharwal said pronouncing the majority opinion.

However, the five-judge bench, which examined mala fides alleged against governor Buta Singh in giving reports to the Centre leading to the dissolution of the Bihar assembly, did not restore the House which was initially kept under suspended animation following a political stalemate before its dissolution.

"Despite unconstitutionality of impugned proclamation, but having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case, the present is not a case where in exercise of discretionary jurisdiction the status quo ante deserves to be ordered to restore the legislative assembly as it stood on the date of proclamation dated March 7, 2005 when it was kept under suspended animation," the bench said in a short order.

"Keeping in view the questions involved, pronouncement of judgment with detailed reasons is likely to take some time and, therefore, we are pronouncing this brief order as the order of the court to be followed by detailed reasons later," said the bench which also comprised Jus-



VICTORIOUS: An elated Nitish Kumar after the apex court judgment on the Bihar dissolution, in Patna on Friday

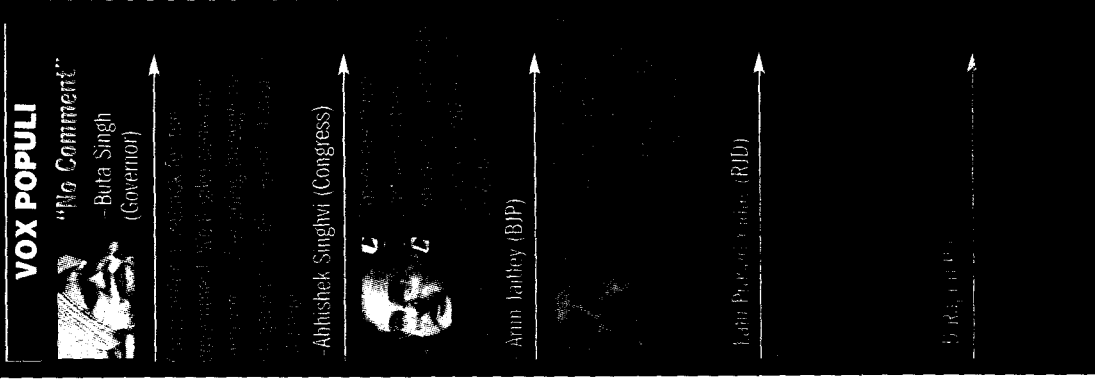
tices K G Balakrishnan, B N Agarwal, Ashok Bhan and Arijit Pasayat.

The order, quashing the Centre's proclamation on the basis of the governor's controversial report, came on a bunch of petitions filed by MLAs of the dissolved assembly which alleged that it was done at the behest of RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav to prevent JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar from forming a government.

The proclamation approval came from President A P J Abdul Kalam when he was on a Moscow visit. And the recommendation for it came after the late night Cabinet meeting on May 22-23 following a

stalemate in government formation. The petitioners had alleged that "undue haste" was shown by the governor and the Centre in recommending the House dissolution with the sole aim to prevent Nitish from staking claim for government formation.

While delivering the order, the bench examined the developments, which took place in the state since March 7 when Bihar was brought under the President's rule and the assembly was kept in suspended animation after no party or coalition mustered the magic figure of 122 to stake claim to form the government.



Apex court rules Bihar Assembly dissolution illegal

But elections
on schedule

What happens
to Buta now?

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 7

THE dissolution of the Bihar Assembly was illegal but the forthcoming elections, scheduled from October 18, can go on.

In an order delivered on Friday, the Supreme Court has ruled "unconstitutional" the May 23 presidential proclamation dissolving the Assembly. It stopped short, however, of interfering with the poll process already set in motion.

The court ruled that there would be no going back to the situation that existed on March 7 — in other words, revival of the dissolved Assembly. That had been the prayer of aggrieved former NDA MLAs who had moved the apex court against the dissolution. They had contested the Governor's action of dissolving the House, which had been under suspended animation, just when "a political realignment" was on the way.

In its short order, the court took note of the advanced stage of the election process under way. "As per the press note dated September 3, 2005, issued by the Election Commission of India, the schedule for general elections has been announced," it said.

The order, which is a major blow to the central government, reflects the majority opinion of the Bench hearing the petitions. The Bench will come out with the reasons behind the order later in a detailed judgment regarding various other constitutional issues thrown up by the petitions, including the contours of the immunity granted to the Governor under Article 361 and whether his actions can be challenged on the ground of ultra vires or mala fides.

Welcoming the order, the NDA has decided to petition President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam for the recall of Governor Buta Singh.

VINOD Sharma & SAROJ Nagi
Chandigarh, October 7

DOES HE stay or go? Friday's Supreme Court order, which says the Bihar Assembly's dissolution was "unconstitutional", has placed a huge question mark against demolition man Buta Singh's tenure.



**BEHIND
THE NEWS**

As soon as word arrived, the Congress leadership, meeting in Chandigarh to check the balance sheet of performance and pre-poll promises in states ruled by the party, slid into defence mode, refusing to speculate on Singh's future.

Though the court order seemed to make the Governor's position grossly untenable, home minister Shivraj Patil said little to suggest his early exit from the Raj Bhavan. "It's not possible to say anything before studying the text of the judgment," he said. The remarks, coming after a huddle with Sonia Gandhi and Pranab Mukherjee, remain open to interpretations.

If Patil was referring to the court's still-awaited detailed judgment, Singh could stay on until the court sits after vacation on October 18, which is also the date for the first phase of polls in Bihar.

There was no official word on what inputs had gone into the Congress strategy session. But in-house legal opinion reportedly favoured action only after the detailed judgment was available.

Continued on Page 3

Siwan bar on Shahabuddin

Press Trust of India

SIWAN (Bihar), Oct. 6. — Controversial RJD MP Md Shahabuddin, on the run in connection with eight non-bailable arrest warrants, was today barred from entering his home district of Siwan for nearly three months in connection with a case against him under the Crime Control Act.

Siwan district magistrate Mr Santosh Kumar Mal, who had reserved his judgment after the completion of hearing in the case on 29 September, today passed the order banning Md Shahabuddin from entering Siwan till 20 December. The DM, in his order, however, allowed the RJD

MP to surrender in Siwan during the duration of the ban, with no more than five persons, after taking prior permission from the administration.

This is the second externment order against the MP this year. In mid-February, the then Siwan district magistrate, Mr CK Anil, had banned Md Shahabuddin from entering the district for six months under the CCA. The order was later quashed by the Saran division commissioner, Mr C Lal Sota, in May.

Patna High Court had on 18 August quashed the arrest warrant by the Siwan district magistrate against the MP in connection with the proceedings under the CCA. The court had, however, allowed the district magistrate to conclude the proceedings initiated by him against Md Shahabuddin under the CCA within a month.

Siwan Dm Mr Mal had on 22 June ordered the arrest of Md Shahabuddin for his repeated failures to appear in court to present his views on the charges under the CCA that were slapped on him by the earlier DM, Mr Anil, following the recovery of arms and ammunition, unaccounted foreign currency and a deer during raids conducted on the MP's ancestral house at Pratappur on 22 April.



DON SENT TO EXILE? Md Shahabuddin

Prasad shot at in Bihar poll rally

Statesman News service

PATNA, Oct. 6. — It was a close call for senior BJP leader and former Union minister, Mr Ravishankar Prasad, today.

A shot fired from a very close distance hit his left hand, causing multiple fracture. Mr Prasad was attacked at the campaign rally of a local party candidate, Mr Rameshwar Chaurasia, at Nokha in Rohtas district of Bihar. Another BJP heavy-weight, Mr Pramod Mahajan, was present on the dais.

The former minister is currently recovering in a private nursing home in Patna and doctors attending on him declared that Mr Prasad was out of danger. From his hospital bed, Mr Prasad said he believed he had been the target. "He (the attacker) had gestured at Mr Pramod Mahajan as well. But party leaders there had made Pramodji get down from the dais. It was clear that the youth had come prepared to target Pramodji and myself. This is my guess."

The assailant, identified as Munna Rai, alias Thakur Hulchul Rai, of a neighbouring village, was overpowered by BJP supporters immediately after the shot was fired. He was severely beaten up and at first taken for dead. Police took him to a hospital where doctors found him breathing, though they could barely feel his pulse. The Rohtas district magistrate said the man was in a coma and chances of his survival were very little.

"We are probing whether



Mr Ravi Shankar Prasad sits in a helicopter with a bullet injury before being flown to Sasaram for first aid. In Rohtas on Thursday. — AFP

the assailant was mentally challenged or bore a grudge against the victim," the Zonal Inspector General of Police, Mr AS Nimbran, said.

According to an eyewitness, as soon as Mr Prasad settled into his seat after addressing the rally, a youth, brandishing a country-made revolver in each hand, climbed on to the dais and aimed the gun at Mr Chaurasia and fired. But the

bullet hit Mr Prasad who started bleeding profusely. The BJP supporters immediately got hold of the assailant.

Soon after, Mr Prasad was airlifted to nearby Sasaram where he was administered first aid before being flown to Patna in a party helicopter.

The attacker, BJP leaders feel, may have wanted to do in Mr Chaurasia. "I have survived such attacks twice in the

past but the state couldn't bothered to give me security, complained Mr Chaurasia, who insisted he had been the target.

"I had just begun my speech when I heard a bang... then I saw this armed young man getting ready to shoot," Mr Mahajan said on his arrival at Patna. He said things could have been worse had the local leaders not stopped the assailant in time. Mr Mahajan said the incident exposed the deplorable law and order situation in poll-bound Bihar.

The Chief Election Commissioner, Mr BB Tandon, expressing concern over the security arrangement in the state, said: "I spoke to the chief secretary and asked the district authorities to be more alert." Condemning the attack on Mr Prasad, Bihar Governor Mr Buta Singh said he would get the incident probed, a Raj Bhavan spokesman said. Mr Singh promised additional security to Mr Prasad and to all political leaders on the campaign trail.

RJD president Mr Lalu Prasad today sought a high-level probe into the attack. "It's shocking. The politics of violence must be condemned by all quarters," he told newsmen.

The Congress condemned the attack as well. "We strongly condemn this dastardly attack on Mr Prasad and wish him a speedy recovery," said the AICC spokesman, Mr Anand Sharma in New Delhi. The party asked the administration and police to identify the persons responsible for the attack on Mr Prasad and bring them to book.

Buta dissolution report made public

House falls to straws in wind

OUR LEGAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 2: Buta Singh's fears of horse-trading in Bihar were founded on media reports, the restlessness in the Rashtriya Janata Dal and information gleaned from contacts in the Janata Dal (United), his reports to the President have revealed.

The Centre dissolved the Bihar Assembly in a rush on May 23 on the basis of the two reports, made public today in what is a first in the country's history. "I am given to understand that serious attempts are being made by JD-U and BJP to cobble a majority and lay claim to form the government in the state," the governor says in the report dated April 27.

In the second report on May 21 recommending dissolution, he says: "Reports received by me in the recent past through media and also through meetings with various political functionaries, as also intelligence reports, indicate a trend to win over elected representatives of the people".

Following this report, the Union cabinet held a meeting around midnight on May 22 and sent the recommendation for dissolution to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who was then in Russia. Kalam signed and faxed it back in the early hours of May 23.

The documents, classified as "top secret", were today submitted to the Supreme Court



I am given to understand that serious attempts are being made by JD-U and BJP to cobble a majority and lay claim to form the government in the state

— Buta Singh

as annexures to the Centre's 141-page reply to a PIL challenging the dissolution as "unconstitutional". This is the first time a governor's reports to the President have been made public.

The PIL, filed by Supreme Court advocate Viplav Sharma and an Independent MLA of the dissolved Assembly, Purnima Yadav, has sought to make the governor a party to the case.

A five-judge Constitution bench will now decide whether the dissolved Assembly should be revived and the upcoming elections stalled. It will also judge whether the governor can be summoned to explain his decision. Besides, the bench will decide whether it can stop the Election Commission from notifying the Bihar elections. All these questions are being debated in the court for the first time. The hearings begin on September 6.

Fighting a tricky legal battle and hard put to establish the dissolution was bona fide, the Centre decided to make public the governor's reports hoping

this would turn the tables.

In the April 27 report, Buta says: "Contacts in JD-U and BJP have informed that 16-17 MLAs have been won over by various means and attempt is being made to win over others. The JD-U is also targeting Congress for creating a split. It is felt in JD-U circles that in case LJP does not split, then it can still form the government with the support of Independents, NCP, BSP and SP MLAs and two-thirds of Congress MLAs after it splits from the main Congress by the end of this month or latest by the first week of May."

He adds that the "high-pressure moves of the JD-U/BJP is also affecting the RJD MLAs who have become restive."

The second report refers to the resignation of Nagmani from the Lok Janshakti Party. "The LJP general secretary having resigned today and also 17-18 more perhaps are moving towards the JD-U, clearly indicating that various allurements have been offered which is a very disturbing and alarming feature," it says.

"Any move by the breakaway faction to align with any other party to cobble a majority and stake claim to form a government would positively affect the constitutional provisions and safeguards built therein and distort the verdict of the people. If these attempts are allowed, it would be amounting to tampering with constitutional provisions."

■ See Page 6

THE TIMES OF INDIA

A new complication in Andhra Pradesh



15/10/10 9/8

The entry of a suicide bomber in Andhra Pradesh's challenging security environment represents a new complication. That the terrorist was able to penetrate with ease the chambers of the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police in the Task Force complex, close to the Chief Minister's office, and blow himself up, taking the life of a Home Guard in the process, raises the threat perception in the State to a new level. The preliminary investigation points in the direction of a fundamentalist group. Over the past few years, Andhra Pradesh has been caught in the vortex of violence from two sources — the armed naxalite groups, and religious fundamentalist elements with links to other States and perhaps abroad. With the arrest of a key suspect in the Haren Pandya murder case in Gujarat, fundamentalist elements began to regroup themselves in Andhra Pradesh. Hardly a year ago, when the Gujarat police were in Hyderabad to arrest Moulana Naseeruddin from the State police headquarters complex, there was violence on the street, and police opened fire, killing a youth. At his funeral, slogans were raised against the Task Force, which was working mainly on the fundamentalist militant groups; and the mob vowed to bring down the Task Force office before long.

If the police investigation does establish a close nexus between the suicide bombing and fundamentalist terrorism, it would certainly mean a double affliction for Andhra Pradesh, which is gearing up for countering renewed violence on the naxalite-Maoist front. On the world terrorist map, Hezbollah and Hamas (among religious fundamentalist groups) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka have patented the use of suicide squads and human bombs. That a citizen bomber should have surfaced now in Hyderabad points to the level of motivation achieved by fundamentalist, extremist indoctrination, and to possible links outside the State. In contrast to the LTTE, which practises state-of-the-art terrorism with RDX or plastic explosives, the Hyderabad human bomb used gelatine, with metal balls as shrapnel. A battery-operated device is reported to have detonated the explosive. This development has serious implications for the administration of the State. Protecting VVIPs and other potential targets from human bombs is a real challenge considering that, in the course of their political or official work, they need to interact frequently with the people. Maintaining a 'sterile zone' at the venue of a public meeting is relatively easy. But affording protection round the clock to those at risk from terrorist groups that use fiendishly innovative methods of killing involves an awful amount of work and resources. The Government of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, who has shown fresh thinking as well as courage in responding to the naxalite problem, must now meet the new level of security threat on top of the prospect of renewed extremist violence.