

11 Gujarat riot accused sent to jail for life

Fast-Track Court Hands 10 Years' RI To Three Others, Acquits 18

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Vadodara: A fast-track court in Godhra on Wednesday sentenced 11 people to life imprisonment for killing 11 members of a minority community in Anjanwa village of Panchmahals district during the post-Godhra riots. But 18 accused were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Fast-track court judge R D Thacker sentenced prime accused Dalpa Baria and 10 others—Kalu Soma, Kalu Sana, Bana Fata, Raising Fula, Dhana Rupa, Salam Aba, Balvant Jeeva, Natwar Kalu, Ratna Kalu and Rupa Soma—for life.

Three others—Raising Punja, Bharat Punja and Dhana Rupa—were sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment for arson and rioting.

The court examined 80 witnesses before delivering the verdict. Two separate offences were registered regarding the incident. The first FIR was registered regarding arson and rioting at

Anjanwa village, the second was regarding the massacre. The case pertains to the attack on a group of members of the minority community on March 5, 2002.

The victims, represented by advocate Shiraj Malik, had



left their homes on March 3, 2002, after a mob attacked the village. The mob torched houses and shops in the village where about 40 Muslim families lived. Three women and five children were killed by the mob near the sarpanch's house and were thrown into his well.

Another woman was killed by throwing her into a dry well in the vicinity while two elderly men were burnt alive by the mob.

Gohana: Protests during bandh, parties seek probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GOHANA (SONEPAT),
SEPTEMBER 2

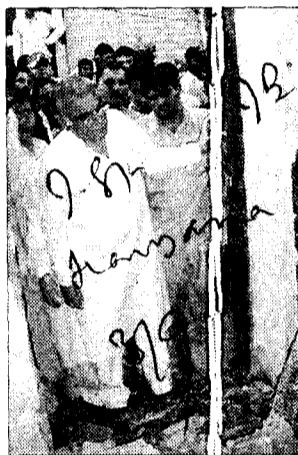
EVEN as violence broke out today during the Dalit-sponsored Haryana bandh in response to Wednesday's arson in Gohana, political parties demanded a probe into the incident.

Some CPI(M) politburo members and the BSP chief Mayawati, who visited the site, demanded a CBI inquiry.

Led by Rajya Sabha member Brinda Karat, the CPI(M) leaders later met home minister Shivraj Patil and demanded immediate action against the police for connivance with the perpetrators of the crime.

"We have asked for immediate action against the police superintendent and the district commissioner who remained mute spectators while over 50 Dalit houses were being burnt down in Gohana," Karat told reporters.

The Scheduled Caste Commission has summoned the DGP and IG police to depose before it on September 5.



Haryana CM Bhupinder Hooda in Gohana. Express

Patil promises probe

NEW DELHI: The Centre said it will "thoroughly investigate" the incident and assured all help, including adequate compensation, to the victims. "I will speak to the state government and the matter will be thoroughly investigated," home minister Shivraj Patil said after meeting a delegation of Dalit leaders led by CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat.

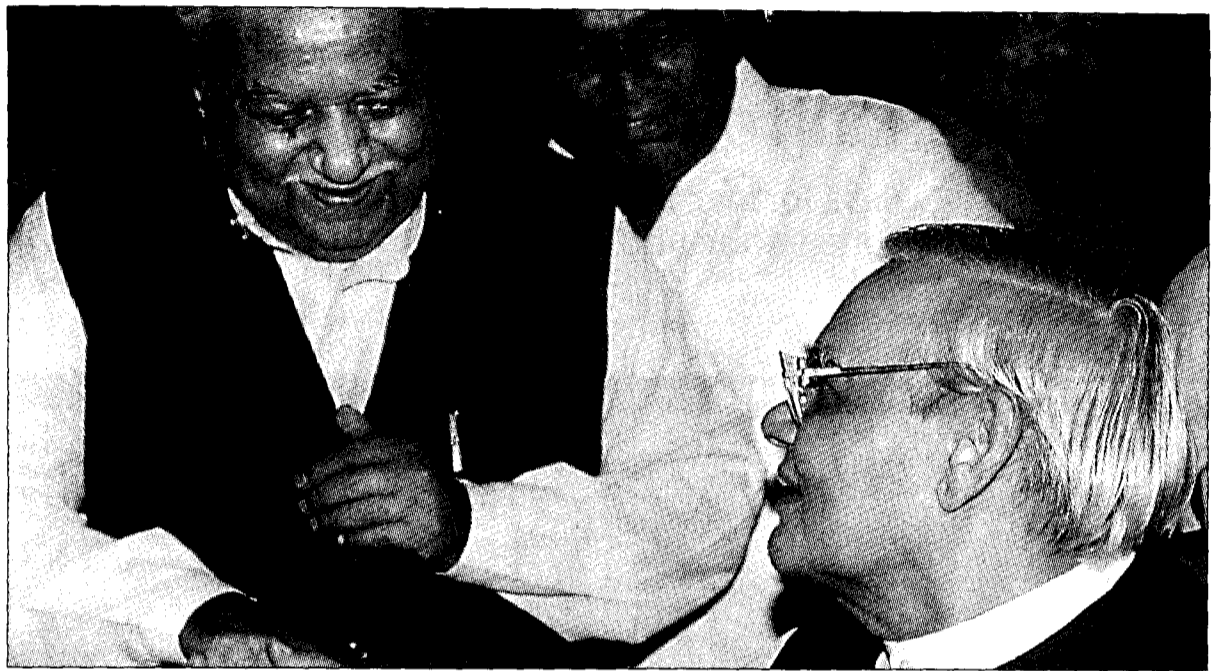
Meanwhile in Panchkula, a mob attacked three buses and the national highway was blocked at several places in the state. The Sonapat-Purkhas road was blocked for an hour.

In Ambala, too, protesters demanding compensation for the victims and the dismissal of the Hooda government blocked the national highway.

In Hansi, shops and commercial establishments stayed closed and the Delhi-Hisar highway was blocked.

In Gohana, the situation limped back to normal today under strict police vigil. At the Balmiki Colony, where 30 houses were burned on Wednesday, the victims started returning to their homes and banks and business establishments reopened.

A panchayat of people belonging to the Jat and other communities demanded the withdrawal of cases against the 23 people and action against the killers of the Jat youth, Baljit Singh. The latter's death had sparked off the arson.



Dissident Gujarat BJP leader Keshubhai Patel greets Atal Bihari Vajpayee at a dinner hosted by BJP president L.K. Advani at his residence in New Delhi on Monday.

Gujarat rebels see hope

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 30

THE GUJARAT rebels, who have been depressed since BJP president L.K. Advani's praise of Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, had reasons to cheer on Tuesday, the last day of Parliament's monsoon session.

Advani invited their leader, Keshubhai Patel, for lunch, which was followed by a second round of discussions between the two leaders after Parliament adjourned sine die.

Advani's discussions with Patel came ahead of the BJP chief's meeting with Modi, who is to attend Wednesday's meeting of the Na-

tional Integration Council.

Both Advani and Patel declined to speak to the media on the issue. Advani was said to be working on a solution that might not see the exit of Modi, but certainly ensure that the decision-making process in Gujarat was made in consultation with other BJP leaders. A party-government coordination mechanism could also be considered, party sources said.

Patel is said to have explained to Advani why the MLAs were upset with Modi and what needed to be done to tone up the party affairs in Gujarat if it wished to avoid an electoral setback. Patel has been leading

the campaign against Modi, along with several dissident MLAs, who had earlier come to Delhi to air their grievances.

They had met former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, senior leader Murli Manohar Joshi and some other leaders, but returned to Gujarat without meeting Advani.

Advani upset the rebels by praising Modi during his visit to Gujarat recently, although he visited Patel's residence along with Modi to inquire about his wife's health. BJP MP Kashiram Rana, who is against Modi, met party general secretary Pramod Mahajan to discuss the issue.

PM sycophant: BJP

BJP deputy leader in Lok Sabha V.K. Malhotra described as 'sycophancy' Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's appreciation of the "leadership provided by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi" in his address to the Lok Sabha before the conclusion of the monsoon session. He said, "The PM's speech is usually a formality in which he thanks the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and the panel of chairmen - but his appreciation of Sonia was totally out of context".

HTC, New Delhi

31 AUG 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

'Sulking' Modi minister offers to quit, BJP says OK

Comes To Party Office in Ambulance, Says He Is Mentally Tortured

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: The Khanpur headquarters of the Gujarat BJP on Monday evening became the venue of a political drama when the minister of state for sports, youth and cultural affairs, Bavkubhai Unghad, came in an ambulance to seek permission to resign from the Narendra Modi ministry.

After receiving Unghad's resignation, BJP president Vajubhai Vala asked Narendra Modi to drop Unghad from the cabinet.

Unghad was hospitalised after being pulled up by

the chief minister at Wednesday's cabinet meeting for attending the rebels' show-of-strength at Keshubhai Patel's residence the previous day.

However, the BJP unit chief said he had checked Unghad's allegations that he was subjected to "mental torture" at the cabinet meeting and found them to be false.

A die-hard Keshubhai supporter, Unghad became the second person to resign from the Modi cabinet.

Earlier, Gordhan Zadaphia had refused to be the part of the expanded ministry on August 1.

Unghad suffered a mild heart attack after he got a dressing down from Modi at the cabinet meeting.

On Monday, he came to the BJP office in the ambulance belonging to BJP MP Harin Pathak's Madhuram Trust. Unghad's sealed letter was submitted by his nephew, Dilip Patel, to the party's office secretary Paresh Patel, as the minister preferred to stay in the ambulance.

It is learnt that the minister, in his letter, wrote: "I felt that it was my duty to visit Keshubhai's residence and enquire about the health of his ailing wife Leelaben who

had undergone heart surgery in Chicago. I have committed no crime in doing so."

He said all the ministers and even chief minister Modi and president Advani had gone to Patel's residence and therefore it was improper for Modi and other seniors to scold him for the same.

Unghad said it was painful for him to continue in the ministry in such adverse circumstances and it would be better if he was relieved of his responsibilities. The minister also sent copies of his letter to the CM and national BJP general secretary Om Mathur.

24 AUG 2005

Rebels insist on Modi scalp

Keshubhai leads dissidents, meets Vajpayee but skips Advani

New Delhi, August 18

THE BJP is expected to see some more stormy days ahead. A day after the party's general secretary in charge of Gujarat, Om Mathur, ruled out Narendra Modi's removal as chief minister, dissidents from the state, led by former chief minister Keshubhai Patel, stepped up their offensive and met senior party leader A.B. Vajpayee.

The dissidents, who met other senior party leaders as well, reportedly apprised him of the "situation" in the state. "We have apprised the party high command of the situation

of the government, the party and the people on every aspect. But we cannot tell you what exactly transpired as it is an internal matter of the party," Patel, who was accompanied by another former chief minister, Suresh Mehta, and former Union minister Kashiram Rana, told reporters after the 45-minute meeting with Vajpayee. Senior party leader Jaswant Singh was also present.

Taking strong exception to Mathur's statement that disciplinary action would be taken against those who make public statements on the issue, Patel said: "We have not violated any discipline. Only party president L.K. Advani can decide on that issue, not anybody else."

"The responsibility of the in-charge is to coordinate and take everyone along. It would not be fair on his part to take sides." Asked why the dissidents did not meet Advani, he said, "We will meet him, if necessary."

Later, Patel, Rana and Mehta met senior party leader Murli Manohar Joshi. Some dissident leaders also met party vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu and party general secretary Pramod Mahajan. Modi loyalists, too, have gone on the offensive. State ministers Kaushik Patel and Amit Shah met Naidu and Mahajan are understood to have countered the complaints and insisted on Modi's continuance.

PTI

Friend turns foe: The Hindutva episode

WHEN BJP won in Gujarat a decade back, RSS pracharak-turned-state party general secretary Narendra Modi was the most trusted lieutenant of then CM Keshubhai Patel.

Last straw

Modi, sure of his ground having repulsed several of Keshubhai's attempts, expanded his ministry recently at a time when Keshubhai was away in the US. The Patel pride was hurt.



When chips were down

Modi ousted Keshubhai in October 2001. Ever since Keshubhai has been licking his wounds.

Wait and watch

Keshubhai could have struck in 2002, but post-Godhra polarisation was clearly favouring Modi.

Sticking together

Called as architect of BJP landslide victory in 1998, Modi's support to Keshubhai continued.

Striking hard

2001 quake rehab exposed Keshubhai. BJP suffered defeats in by-polls. Modi's hour had arrived.

Intrigue: The circle of clique



The VHP factor

Modi earned VHP's anger for siding with Advani during Jinnah controversy. Advantage Keshubhai So, he strikes

VHP's Pravin Togadia & party rebel Zadaphia (who started latest dissidence) are both Patel — and Keshubhai's friends

Cool player, hard bargainer



Remote control

Anti-Keshubhai lobby has worked for Modi ever since he orchestrated rebellion sitting in Delhi in 2001

He knows the party boss

Modi has been able to stay on as both Advani and state party chief Vala have supported him

Rebels rally behind Patel

60 MLAs support the former Chief Minister, says Rana

Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR: In an apparent show of strength, dissidents in the Gujarat unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party assembled at the residence of the former Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, here on Tuesday ostensibly to "enquire" about his wife's health.

Mr. Patel and his wife, Lilaben, who underwent heart surgery in the United States, returned here on Monday after a long stay abroad.

Except for the former Union Minister, Kashiram Rana, and the former State Minister, Becharbhai Bhadani, no leader was prepared to give any political colour to the "spontaneous gathering." Mr. Rana admitted that even while calling on Mrs. Patel, the disgruntled MLAs and MPs were expressing their "sentiments against the present State leadership." Mr. Bhadani said the dissidents' demand for a change in leadership "still stands."

Other leaders, including MP Rajendrasinh Rana, claimed that it was a "mere social occasion" and no politics was involved. "At least I have come because of my long personal relations with Mr. Patel," he asserted.

As many as 44 MLAs called on the Patels while at least eight others spoke to them over telephone or sent fax messages.

Minister also present

Mr. Kashiram Rana claimed that 60 MLAs of the 129-member BJP Legislature Party had openly expressed their loyalty to



DISSIDENCE BREWING: Gujarat BJP leaders meet the former Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. - PHOTO: PTI

Mr. Patel. Six MPs were also present but the key attraction was the presence of Baukubhai Ugad, a Minister in the Narendra Modi Cabinet. Another Minister, Jasumatiben Korat, who was inducted in the State Cabinet a fortnight ago, was among those who sent fax messages.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad international general secretary, Pravin Togadia, unhappy with Mr. Modi's support for BJP president L.K. Advani, and senior RSS leaders Pravin Maniar and Amrut Kadia also met Mr. Patel

in the morning. Thousands of party workers also made a beeline to Mr. Patel's residence.

Talking to mediapersons, Mr. Patel said some leaders told him that "some attempts" were made to stop people from calling on him. If such attempts were made, "it is very wrong."

During his long political career, he had come to know thousands of people and it was "but natural" that they would come to see him.

He could "clearly see people's

dissatisfaction about the goings-on" in the State. Mr. Kashiram Rana said he would again try to call on Mr. Advani to brief him about the "sentiments" of the party workers.

BJP MLA from Vadodara, Yogesh Patel, in a letter to Mr. Modi not only expressed his "anguish" over the non-performance of the Government, but also made it clear that he was siding with the dissidents because he was "unable to answer questions being asked by the people."

Honda official attacked

P. S. Manjari
SNS and PTI *5/1 30/7*

NEW DELHI, July 29. — Close on the heels of the violence that rocked Gurgaon for two days, following clashes between workers of Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India Limited and policemen, a senior Honda engineer was assaulted today and a showroom containing the company's motorcycles was attacked.

Mr Anil Kumar Yadav, a maintenance engineer at the company's Manesar factory, was beaten up by a group of people in Sector 14 of the satellite town, the Gurgaon deputy commissioner Mr Sudhir Rajpal said. An FIR has been registered against several employees of the company. They were charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code. No arrests had been made till late in the evening.

At least six motorcycles in a Honda showroom in Kaithal town were damaged by a group that stormed into its premises after smashing the window panes. A passerby overpowered one of the attackers while they were escaping and handed him over to the police. The arrested person is being interrogated, said police superintendent. The police is conducting raids in the town to arrest the other five involved in the attack who are reported to be from Kaithal and the adjoining Jind district.

Immediately after the attack, seven

other automobile showrooms in Kaithal downed their shutters.

The Honda workers had fought pitched battles with the police on Monday. They were agitating against the dismissal of four employees and the suspension of 50 others. Various political parties had protested against what they termed police high-handedness and alleged that many union leaders had gone missing after the police lathicharge. The Gurgaon violence, which continued for two days, has prompted the Japanese ambassador to express reservations about FDI investment in India.

In Geneva today, on the sidelines of the meeting of the WTO General Council, the commerce and industry minister, Mr Kamal Nath, and Japan's economy, trade and industry minister, Mr Shoichi Nakagawa, discussed the issue.

Mr Kamal Nath assured the Japanese minister that the Gurgaon incident is an isolated case. Mr Nakagawa said this one-off incident would not affect Japanese investment in India. In this context, he emphasised that Japanese companies were investing in West Bengal in a big way.

Mr Kamal Nath also referred to the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act passed recently by Parliament and requested the Japanese government to encourage their enterprises to invest in these zones.

THE STATESMAN

Left catches Honda headwind

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, July 26: Infuriated women grappling with burly, baton-wielding policemen. Cat-and-mouse fights on the streets famed for high-rise office blocks and swanky shopping malls. And a public ultimatum by the Left to a foreign company.

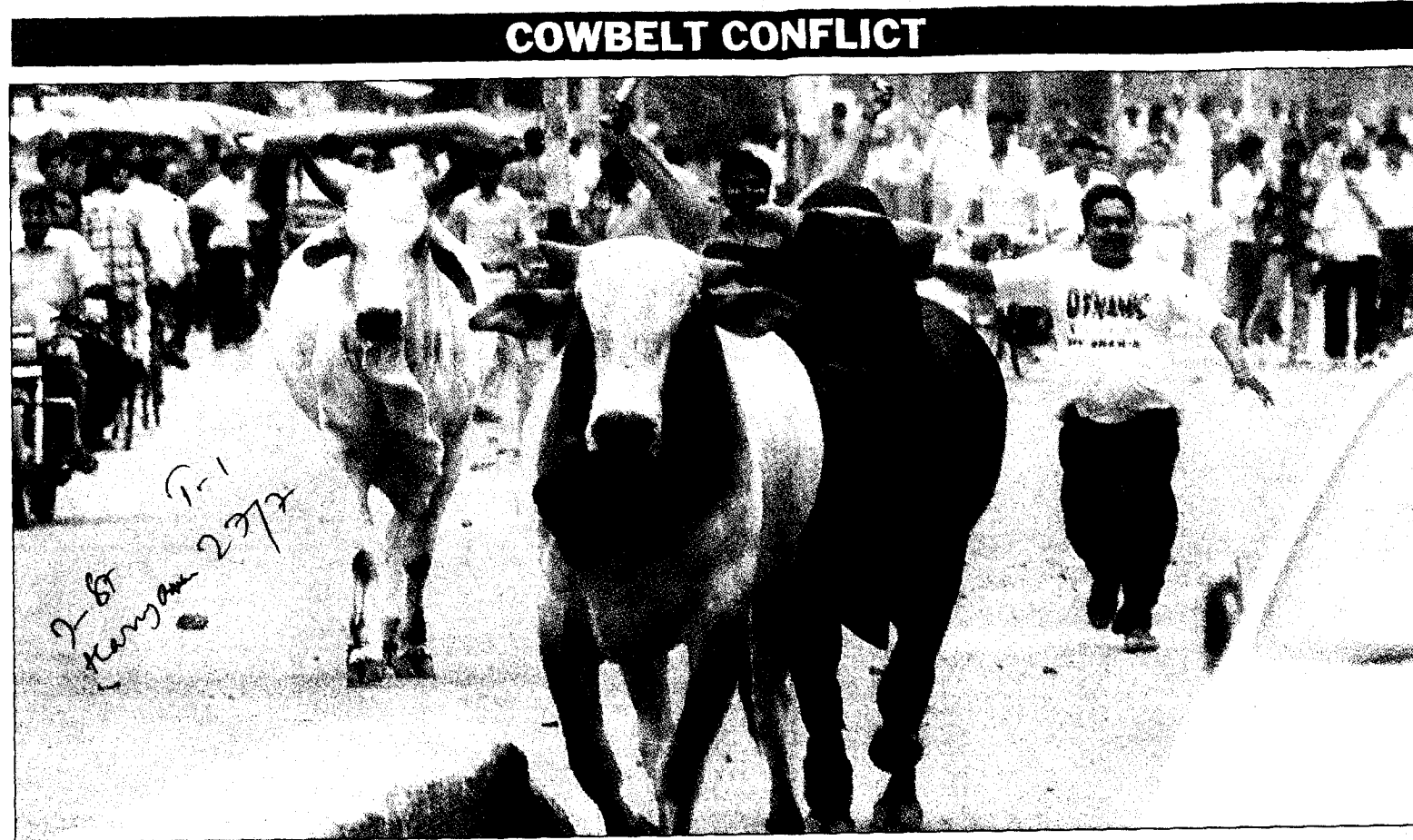
Fresh images of strife in Gurgaon continued to transfix the country for the second day today, handing the Left an emotive issue to stage the first walkout on the UPA government and warn of a widespread campaign against Honda, the company at the centre of the controversy.

Hundreds of employees of Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India, a subsidiary of Japan's Honda Motor, were injured yesterday in a police crackdown. The employees have been agitating to get their suspended and sacked colleagues reinstated. The company today declared a temporary shutdown.

The issue also threatened to assume wider overtones with the Japanese ambassador to India striking a warning note on investment prospects and the external affairs ministry stepping out of its usual preserve to calm nerves.

Seizing on an issue that appears to have struck a sympathetic chord across the country largely because of the brutal images of the police action, Left leaders seem intent on using the momentum to push their pet themes and address the concerns of their constituency.

They brought up the matter during a meeting with the



COWBELT CONFLICT

Protesters drive cattle towards police after tear-gas shelling in Gurgaon on Tuesday. Picture by Rajesh Kumar

Prime Minister in the evening to discuss the outcome of his trip to the US.

The Left leaders demanded an immediate settlement, including lifting of the "illegal lockout" at the Honda plant.

They said unless all dismissed or suspended employees are taken back and cases withdrawn, a nationwide movement would be launched. August 1 would be observed as "protest day".

"Even the Honda dealers could face the music," CPI leader A.B. Bardhan said after the meeting with the Prime Minister, which was also attended by the CPM's Prakash Karat.

Perhaps fearing an escalation, Japanese ambassador Yasukuni Enoki had told reporters earlier in the day: "This is a disadvantage for India's image as an FDI destination and also this is a negative

image for Japanese business."

The comment prompted the Indian foreign ministry to put out a statement describing the clash as an isolated incident, adding: "The legal interest of foreign investors will be fully safeguarded."

Told about the envoy's comments, Bardhan said: "If they (multinationals) do illegal things, we will stop them. They have to abide by the law of the land."

Some industry representatives said the controversy highlighted the need for "flexible" labour laws.

In the morning, as distraught relatives of employees fought a pitched battle with the police force in riot gear in Haryana, another brawl broke out in Parliament.

Catching both the government and the Opposition by surprise, the Left spearheaded the assault in the House. Home

minister Shivraj Patil's statement that only 92 people — unofficial estimates put the figure close to 500 — were injured enraged the Left further.

Left MPs accused the minister of making a lukewarm statement and walked out of Parliament as Sonia Gandhi, Arjun Singh and Pranab Mukherjee looked on. The "official" Opposition, the NDA, soon gathered its wits and followed in the Left footsteps.

27 JUL 2005

Police savage striking Haryana workers

J. Sr. Hansane
HD-1
26/2

700 workers, several policemen injured in pitched battles in Gurgaon; strong political protests, probe ordered

GURGAON: Scores of employees of Honda Motorcycle and Scooters (HMSI) Limited fell to police blows near the Gurgaon Mini Secretariat on Monday in a crackdown that followed a violent labour protest.

Tension prevailed in Haryana as several hospitals were packed with the injured, most of them bleeding profusely.

The incident triggered strong reactions from politicians, with the Left and the BJP declaring they would raise it in Parliament on Tuesday.

HMSI workers had been on a strike for a month over wage-related demands until most of them joined duty after an agreement with the management.

Monday's protest was by the workers who were still dissatisfied with the deal.

Earlier in the day, a clash left several policeman, including Deputy Superintendent of Police J.P. Dahiya, seriously injured after police tried to stop the stone-pelting workers from taking out a protest march, according to eyewitnesses.

Property damaged

An SDM vehicle was also set on fire by mobs, which damaged government and public property before additional police forces in riot gear pushed them back.

Protesters accused the police of high-handedness, saying they were surrounded and beaten mercilessly while they were on their way to the Mini Secretariat to hand over a memorandum to the administration.

But police sources said the crackdown came under Section 144 that was imposed following the trouble.

AITUC condemns action

Meanwhile, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) condemned the police action on the Honda workers.

MP Gurudas Das Gupta sought the Prime Minister's intervention over the reopening of



LIKE A WAR ZONE: Police beat up dismissed Honda factory workers at Gurgaon, Haryana, on Monday after they blocked a highway and attacked a small police squad escorting them. - PHOTO: AFP

the Honda Industrial establishment at Manesar in Gurgaon.

"The attack was brutal, barbaric and a blot on civil society. We will raise the matter in Parliament on Tuesday," Mr Gupta said.

BJP Parliamentary Party

spokesman V.K. Malhotra said: "It was unfortunate that while the Government has failed to pin down terrorists and criminals, it is demonstrating its might against those protesting for their rights."

Both Mr. Das Gupta and AI-

TUC general secretary D.L. Sachdev visited the scene, but said they were not allowed to meet the injured people.

200 workers arrested

They said the police have arrested more than 200 workers.

Besides, more than 150 workers were injured in the "brutal" police action.

The Honda management-employee discord had its origins in the registration of an employees union, the AITUC said.

Later, the company dismissed

four employees and suspended 50 others, prompting the strike.

A report from New Delhi said the Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Monday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the clash between the police and the workers of Hero Honda in Gurgaon.

The probe will be conducted by Gurgaon Divisional Commissioner Avtar Singh, an official spokesman told PTI.

The Chief Minister instructed that the inquiry be completed within 15 days, he said.

Advani speaks to Manmohan

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and BJP president L.K. Advani on Monday night spoke to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Home Minister Shivraj Patil expressing serious concern over the alleged "brutality" by Haryana police on workers of Hero Honda in Gurgaon.

"Advani sought the immediate intervention of the Centre in the matter more so as there is a Congress Government in power in the state," party spokesperson Sushma Swaraj told PTI.

She said a three-member NDA delegation comprising H.S. Ahluwalia, Kishen Singh Sangwan and Dinesh Trivedi had left for Gurgaon on a fact-finding mission.

Honda talks tough

Maintaining its tough posture, Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) said on Monday that it would not reinstate any of its suspended workers without completion of an inquiry against them.

"Even though today's incident is unfortunate, we cannot take back any of the suspended employees till a third-party inquiry against them is completed," a company official told PTI from its factory in Manesar.

The official refused to comment on the clash, saying, "this is an event that has taken place outside our factory premises."

Asked whether the company was ready to provide financial assistance to those injured, he said it could be considered in case a specific request came in. - UNI, PTI

HT 26/7

LEFT LIVID AT THESE IMAGES OF POLICE BRUTALITY

9/8
Haryana



AJAY AGARWAL/HT

Cops hand out their brand of punishment (left) and carry away an injured Honda employee (above).

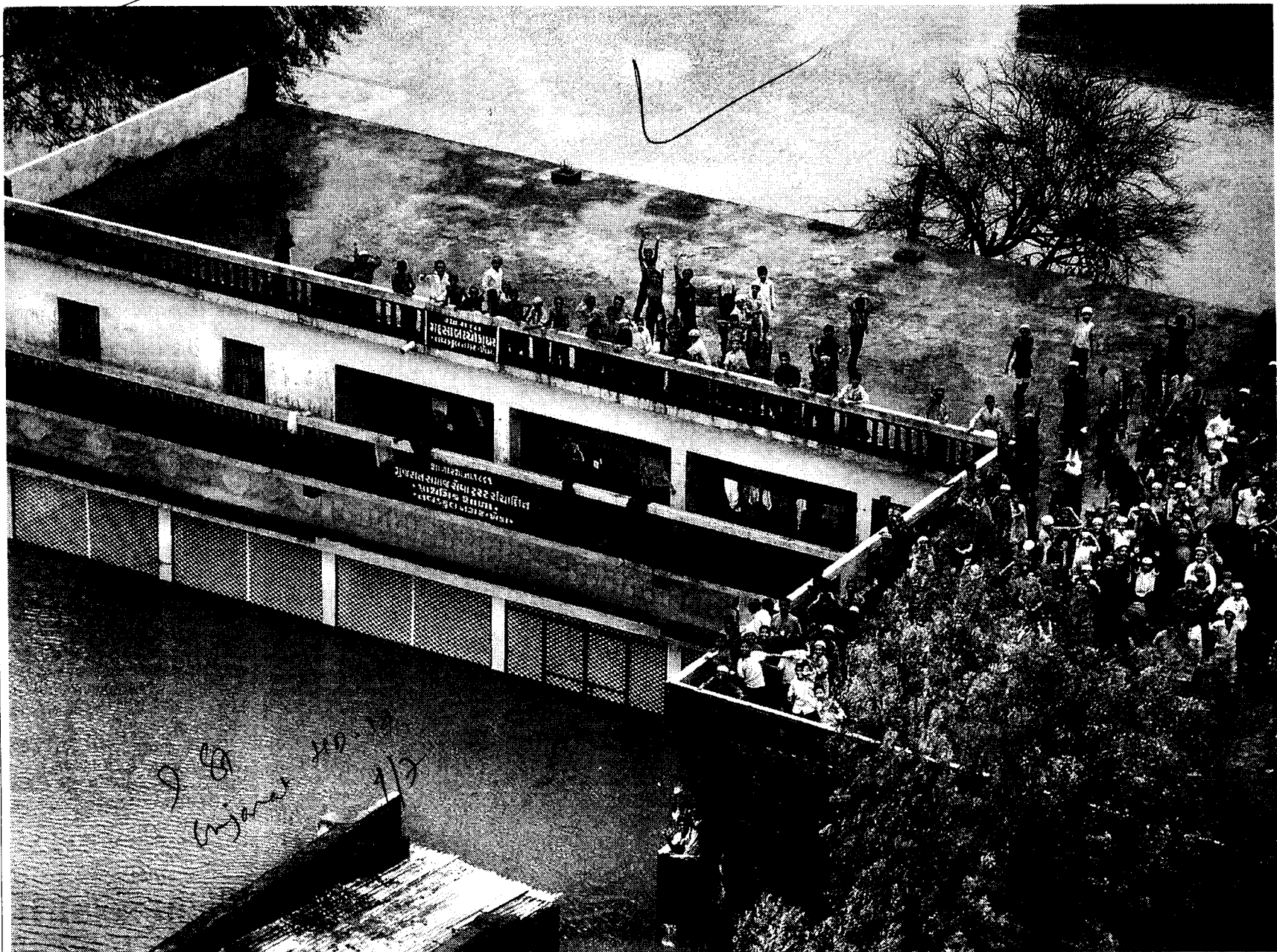
Lathis rain on Honda workers

HT Correspondent
Gurgaon, July 25

IN WHAT could come as a major embarrassment for the UPA government at the beginning of the monsoon session of Parliament, the Haryana police brutally lathicharged and injured more than 1,000 workers of Japanese auto giant Honda's two-wheeler unit at Manesar in Gurgaon on Monday afternoon. The employees were protesting the company's decision to retrench some workers. In the mayhem, the protesters set fire to the sub-divisional magistrate's car, a police motorcycle and attacked senior cops who tried to stop them. A DSP and six po-

licemen were also injured. Trouble began around 12.45 pm when the police tried to stop a protest march by around 5,000 Honda staffers. Some of them started pelting stones at the SDM's car and when the cops on duty tried to intervene, they too were attacked. The situation soon went out of hand and the police fled the scene. Later, a posse of about 500 arrived on the scene led by SSP Yogender S Nehra. They surrounded the protesters from all sides and started beating them up brutally. In a matter of 20 minutes, over 1,000 workers lay bleeding. The injured were then packed in buses and sent to hospital.

CPI MP Gurudas Das Gupta, who reached the hospital to meet the injured workers, was manhandled by the cops. He flashed his identity card and yelled repeatedly that he was a sitting MP, but the policemen dragged him away. Murmurs of the incident soon reached Delhi. Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, L.K. Advani, took up the issue with home minister Shivraj Patil. Congress president Sonia Gandhi, too, spoke to Patil on the issue. Later in the evening, Haryana chief minister B.S. Hooda ordered a magisterial inquiry into the incident and promised to punish the guilty policemen.



CRY FOR SUCCOUR: Flood-affected people awaiting airdrop of relief at a village in Kheda district of Gujarat on Saturday. — PHOTO: PTI

Focus on relief work in rain-hit areas

Breather for central Gujarat; heavy rain in north Gujarat and Saurashtra

Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR: With the flood situation showing considerable improvement in central Gujarat since Saturday, the attention is now diverted towards relief work and prevention of possible outbreak of epidemics in the hitherto waterlogged areas.

However, Bulsar, Navsari, Surat and Dangs districts in south Gujarat, Mehsana and Sabarashtra districts in north Gujarat and Surendranagar and Amreli districts in the Saurashtra region continued to receive heavy rainfall (between 100 mm and 200 mm) since Saturday night. Though the water level receded in some parts of Vadodara city and some of the main thoroughfares reopened for traffic, Padra and Karjan towns in the district continued to remain under water. So did most parts of Anand and Kaira districts in central Gujarat.

Major rivers in south Gujarat,

• Major rivers in south Gujarat overflowing again

• Rs. 260 crores for relief placed under the disposal of district collectors

• Many parts of central and south Gujarat regions still under water

including Ambica and Purna, are overflowing again. Many dams and check-dams in the north Gujarat and the Saurashtra regions have crossed the danger level. Revenue Minister Kaushik Patel said high alert had been sounded in the downstream of 51 dams while in 13 others, the people had been asked to remain prepared for evacuation. With eight more deaths reported in the last 24 hours, the death toll in the State has reached 132.

While 43,000 people had to be

evacuated in Broach district and another about 800 in Surendranagar, Mr. Patel said no evacuation work was taken up in most other districts where attention had been focused on rescue and relief.

With the local weather office issuing another heavy to very heavy rainfall warning all over the State in the next 48 hours, the relief and rescue operations have been further intensified to take advantage of the little respite on Sunday. Chief Minister Narendra Modi held a high-level meeting to take stock of the situation and instructed the officials to take spot decisions.

The State Government also made a special sanction of Rs. 260 crores for the purpose and placed it under the disposal of the district collectors. Mr. Patel said 10 helicopters of the Indian Air Force and 56 mechanised and non-mechanised boats had been pressed into service. In addition, at the suggestion of

Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, who returned to Delhi after a two-day visit of the affected areas in the State on Saturday, the Centre had dispatched 10 more helicopters and two battalions of paramilitary forces for rescue and relief operations.

Medical personnel sent

To take preventive steps against outbreak of epidemics, the Centre had sent 500 medical personnel to the state. In addition, the State Government had deployed 573 medical teams with 202 medical officers and 1,310 paramedical staff in the 18 flood-affected districts. Steps were also being taken for chlorination of the drinking water sources besides educating the people how to avoid water-borne diseases.

Governor Nawal Kishore Sharma, accompanied by Union Textile Minister Shankarsinh Waghela, and Minister of State for Railways Naran Rathwa, took

an aerial survey of the affected areas of Ahmedabad and Vadodara.

As many parts of central and south Gujarat regions continued to remain under water, the Government had declared closure of all schools and colleges in these regions for two more days from tomorrow while in the other parts of the State, it had been left to the discretionary powers of the collectors.

While the rail links between Ahmedabad and Mumbai remained dislocated between Ahmedabad and Vadodara, the highways between Ahmedabad and Vadodara were partly opened on Sunday for emergency services to carry relief materials. In the rest of the State, only 453 of the 1,300-odd roads affected by floods could be restored for traffic so far, Mr. Patel said. Besides a large number of villages, Kaira, Anand, Matar and Chaklasi towns have still remained without power.

More rain forecast in Gujarat

9-8x - 4/2

Flood toll crosses 132 • 500,000 displaced

PRESS Trust of India
Ahmedabad, July 3

HEAVY TO very heavy rainfall has been predicted at a few places in Gujarat till Monday afternoon even as massive rescue and relief operations have been launched in the state where the death toll has mounted to 132. Eight days of incessant rain have displaced over five lakh people.

There could be heavy to very heavy rainfall at few places during the next 24 hours while thunder showers are likely in most parts of the state, the meteorological department said.

Meanwhile, power supply has been disrupted in over 4,000 villages and telecommunication network badly hit, especially in Ahmedabad (rural), Anand, Vadodara, Amreli, Bharuch and Nadiad. Over 170 highways have been affected.

With Army, IAF and central para-military forces pressed into service for the massive rescue and relief operations, the government is now focussing more on rehabilitation work and waiting for water to recede, an official spokesman said.

Death of a jawan

A JAWAN who went to save passengers of the Indore-Gandhinagar Shanti Express lost his life after he drowned in the swirling waters, the Army informed on Sunday. Briefing reporters on the relief work, the general officer in command of Golden Katar division, Tejinder Singh, said the jawan was wading through the waters near Dakor railway station when he was dragged away by the flowing water.

PTI, Ahmedabad

On Saturday the IAF carried out 10 sorties from here and Vadodara, dropping food and relief materials to the flood affected areas. The air force is using Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters to carry out relief operations at Nadiad, Dakor, Anand and Kheda while at other Air Force bases, additional helicopters and fixed wing aircraft are standing by for any emergency operations.

Army speedboats have been pressed into service to bring marooned people to safer places. In

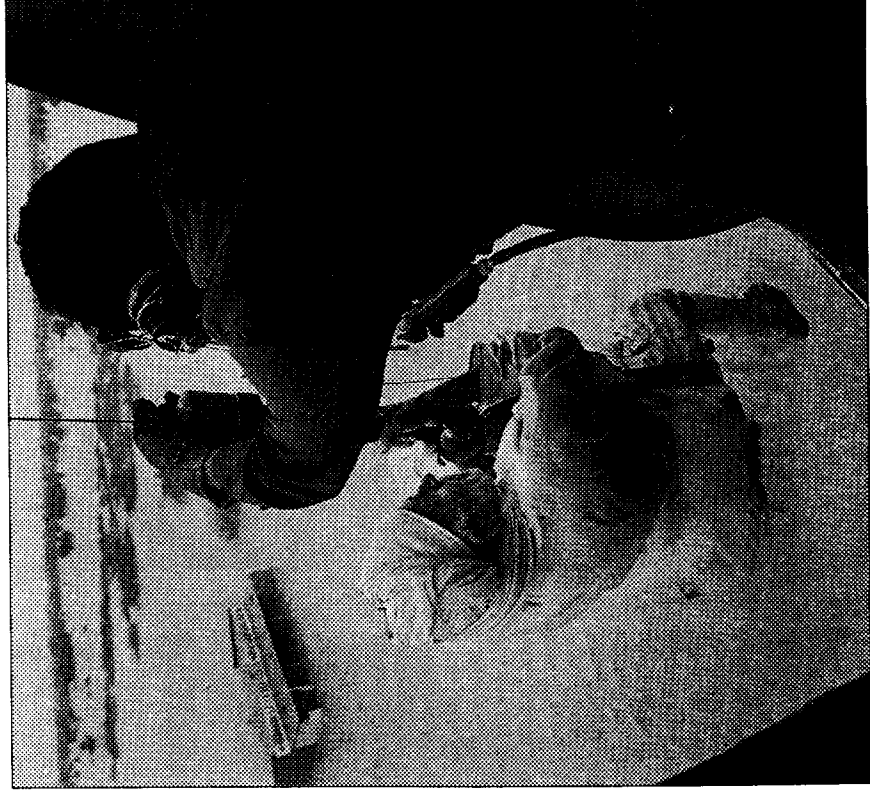
all, 56 mechanised boats of the Army and Navy are engaged in rescuing marooned people.

Absence of much rain in the state since Saturday night has helped in relief operations, said revenue minister Kaushtik Patel. He said chief minister Narendra Modi has released Rs 260 crore to the revenue department for immediate relief work.

The minister said that the state has already received 607 mm rain against the season's average of 863 mm. Of the 25 districts in Gujarat, as many as 12 have received more than 75 per cent rainfall of the season while five districts have received more than 50 per cent of the season's average, he told reporters.

Pranab's visit

DEFENCE MINISTER Pranab Mukherjee will undertake an aerial survey of Gujarat on Monday to supervise rescue and relief operations by the armed forces. Mukherjee, who cut short his visit to the US by a day to supervise relief operations, was to go to Gujarat on Sunday morning. But, his plane was unable to take off due to poor weather conditions.



A man is rescued by a naval helicopter from the flood-affected Vataman village, 70 km west of Ahmedabad, on Sunday. REUTERS

Advani visits flood-hit areas in Ahmedabad

Aerial survey of Vadodara dropped due to bad weather

Special Correspondent

GANDHINAGAR: The BJP national president and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, L. K. Advani, on Saturday dropped his plan for an aerial survey of flood-hit Vadodara city and other areas in central Gujarat due to bad weather.

Accompanied by Chief Minister Narendra Modi, he visited some of the affected areas in Ahmedabad district before returning to Delhi. He hoped that the people in the State would face the situation as bravely as they did during other natural calamities in the past — earthquake, plague, dam disaster and cyclone.

Kalam's sympathy

A State Government spokesman said that President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam had sent a special note to Mr. Modi expressing sympathy for the flood-affected people. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had a detailed telephonic talk with Mr. Modi on the prevailing situation.

Ahmed Patel, political adviser to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, said he also talked to Mr. Modi though could not meet him personally.

Even as the intensity of the rainfall reduced over the south and central Gujarat regions, heavy rain had been lashing north Gujarat and most parts of Saurashtra since Saturday

• Kalam expresses sympathy for flood-affected people

• 30 major dams overflowing; high alert for 37 others

• Centre reviews flood situation

• Nine Army columns deployed in flood-hit areas

morning. Mehsana and Patan districts in north Gujarat and Surendranagar, Bhavnagar, Junagadh and Amreli districts in the Saurashtra region received about 250-300 mm of rainfall during the last 24 hours inundating villages and roads. Nearly 30 major dams have been overflowing while high alert have been declared in 37 others.

Reach Dakor

About 400 passengers of the marooned Indore-Gandhinagar Shanti Express, held up near Dakor since Thursday due to heavy floods, managed to find their way out and reached Dakor station.

At least 300 students are reported to be marooned in a Swaminarayan Gurukul in Kaira. An official spokesman said Army personnel with boats had been sent to rescue them.

6 more helicopters for relief operations

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Saturday pressed six more Air Force helicopters into service for rescue and relief operations in flood-hit areas of Gujarat.

While 150 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) have been deployed in Kheda, 400 more personnel are in the process of being deployed.

A meeting of the high-level inter ministerial committee, presided over by Home Secretary V. K. Duggal was held here to re-

view the flood situation. The meeting was informed that flights between Vadodara and other parts of the country resumed on Saturday. Production in the Baroda refinery had also resumed. Nine Army columns have been deployed in the flood-hit areas to assist the civil administration. Attempts are also being made to make the Express Highway operational at the earliest. The latest report put the death toll at 108. President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has conveyed his condolences to Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and the people of Gujarat following the loss of lives in the floods.

Crocodiles missing from Vadodara zoo

VADODARA: As if the floods were not enough, the woes of the city's residents seem to be only increasing with crocodiles missing from the Vadodara zoo.

Even though the water started receding on Saturday, zoo officials discovered during a headcount that at least seven crocodiles, four deer and a blue bull (neelgai) were missing. The floodwaters of the Vishwamitri river had engulfed the Kamatibag

Garden on Friday.

The blue bull, which jumped the fence, was sighted at a nearby hospital complex. One sambhar, which had escaped from its cage, was caught.

The Vadodara Municipal Corporation, which maintains the zoo, had to shift several birds from their cages yesterday. Some non-governmental organisations are assisting the zoo authorities in their search for the missing animals. — UNI

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Gujarat rejects Pota panel's observations

Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD, June 10. — The Gujarat government today rejected the observations of the Central Pota Review Committee (CPRC) that had recommended dropping Pota charges against all the accused in the Godhra train carnage case.

Filing its reply before the special Pota court, the state government's counsel, Mr HM Dhruv, said: "Not only there is a prima facie case under provisions of Pota but there is also more than sufficient material evidence to attract its provisions."

"Under these circumstances, I request the court to proceed further against the accused for all the alleged offences against them," special public prosecutor told the additional Pota court judge Mr BS Parikh. Detailed arguments on this reply filed by the Gujarat government would be held on 13 June.

The government's stand on the train carnage case got a jolt when the CPRC recommended that there was no need to apply the anti-terrorism law on all the accused as

there did not appear to be any conspiracy and they could be tried under sections of the IPC and CrPC.

The public prosecutor stated that after careful examination of CPRC's opinion, he came to the conclusion that there is a "strong prima facie case to attract provisions of Pota in view of the relevant material on record" against the accused. He said the review committee "has not considered in detail and in true perspective the confessional statements of some of the accused given as per Section 32 of Pota" which is admissible as evidence under Pota.

Five accused identified in Bilkis case

A child witness in the case of alleged gangrape of Bilkis Bano and murder of her family members today identified five of the 12 accused in the special court during an in-camera trial, adds PTI from Mumbai. Special public prosecutor Mr RK Shah said Saddam (11), who was only eight at the time of incident, told Special Judge Mr UD Salvi that the accused were from Randhirpur and that he had seen them.

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THE STATESMAN

Rane to be sworn in as Goa CM today

Press Trust of India

PANAJI, June 6. — Newly-elected Congress Legislature Party leader Mr Pratapsinh Rane will be sworn in as chief minister of Goa tomorrow morning after he presented a letter of support from Congress allies, the NCP and the MGP, to the Governor, Mr SC Jamir, this evening.

"We have presented letters of support from the NCP and the MGP to His Excellency this evening and staked our claim to form the government. The swearing-in ceremony will be held tomorrow at 10 a.m.," Mr Rane told reporters outside Raj Bhavan as he and PCC chief Mr Ravi Naik emerged from their meeting with Mr Jamir.

Mr Rane parried questions on who would be included in the ministry tomorrow along with him, saying: "You will know tomorrow." The names doing the rounds for possible ministerial berths tomorrow are NCP chief Mr Wilfred d'Souza who is likely to be given the post of deputy chief minister and his partymate Mr Francisco "Mikky" Pacheco. The



Mr Pratapsinh Rane

three winning Congress candidates, Mr Atanasio Monseratte, Mr Digambar Kamat and Mr Pandurang Madkaikar also likely to get berths in the Cabinet.

Mr Pacheco, Mr Monseratte, Mr Kamat and Mr Madkaikar are among the five BJP MLAs, the other being Mr Isidoro Fernandes, who had quit the Assembly reducing the Manohar Parikkar ministry to a minority.

Earlier, the AICC general secretary in-charge of Goa affairs, Mrs Margaret Alva, said the Centre would revoke President's Rule and revive the Goa Assembly, currently under sus-

pending animation, by tomorrow morning.

"We informed the Governor of the position yesterday and he asked us to go ahead and choose a leader because he had already sent a report to the Union home ministry regarding the changed situation in Goa," she added.

BJP MLAs challenge disqualification in SC

Meanwhile, two BJP leaders Mr Rajender Arlekar and Mr Dayanand Mandrekar from Goa today approached the Supreme Court challenging the Bombay High Court judgment disqualifying them as MLAs, a report from New Delhi adds.

Senior advocate Mr Mukul Rohatgi mentioned the petition on behalf of the two leaders before a Bench comprising Mr Justice PV Reddi and Mr Justice Arijit Pasayat, which said the matter will be considered before the vacation Bench.

The Panaji Bench of Bombay High Court had set aside the election of the two BJP MLAs on grounds of holding office of profit during the May 2002 Assembly polls.

07 JUN 2005

THE

MAN

Goa in Cong kitty, SP enters South

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, June 5. — Congress today stormed back to power in Goa, where it had come under attack during the turmoil set off by the resignations of three BJP MLAs three months ago, and made a clean sweep of the three by-elections in Haryana, but suffered a rude shock at the hands of the Left in Kerala, the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, and the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. The SP opened its account in the southern state by winning the Shimoga Lok Sabha constituency where its candidate, former chief minister Mr S Bangarappa, defeated his nearest Congress rival by a margin of 16,633 votes.

Winning three of the five seats that went to the by-polls and with ally NCP bagging another, the Congress-led United Legislature Party raised its tally to 21 in a House of 39 in Goa. BJP won the fifth seat and raised its tally to 17. It also has the support of an UGDP MLA. The CLP will meet tomorrow in Panaji to elect its new leader. Mr Pratapsinh Rane, Mr Ravi

'Third alternative'

LUCKNOW, June 5. — A buoyant Samajwadi Party president today exhorted the Left parties to provide an alternative to the voters by combining with the regional parties after the SP and its ally, the RLD, swept the by-polls in UP and opened its account in south India. Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav said the results showed that the voters had lost faith in the Congress and the BJP. — SNS

Details on page 5

Naik and Mr Lusinho Faleiro head the race for the chief ministerial slot.

Haryana chief minister Mr Bhupinder Singh Hooda won the Kilo Assembly seat in his state with a massive margin of over one lakh votes, trouncing his nearest rival from the INLD. Two of his party colleagues, Ms Savitri Jindal and Ms Kiran Choudhary, rode a sympathy wave to secure similar margins of victory in Hissar and Tosham in the aftermath of their husbands' deaths. Both OP Jindal and Surender Singh were ministers and were killed in a helicopter crash. All the seats were retained by the Congress which has 67

members in a House of 90.

In UP, the SP-RLD combine won all the four seats that went to the by-polls. While the SP bagged Allahabad (West), Varanasi (North) and Haiser Bazar (reserved), the RLD won in Khairagarh.

In Chamrajpet Assembly constituency in Karnataka, vacated by former chief minister Mr SM Krishna, the Congress lost to its coalition partner, the JD-S, when its candidate Mr RV Devaraj was humbled by Mr Jamir Ahmed Khan by 3,278 votes.

In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP's Ms P Sunita defeated Mr B Sriramulu of the Congress by 18,850 votes in the Penukonda Assembly constituency. She also rode a sympathy wave generated by the killing of her husband Paritala Ravi, a TDP MLA, late last year in the faction-ridden Rayalaseema region of the state.

In Kerala, both the Congress and its ally, the CMP, lost the by-elections to the CPI-M in Koothuparamba and Azhikode Assembly constituencies with record margins of defeat. The LDF improved on its performance in the 2001 Assembly polls.

More reports on page 5

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Haryana waives arrears for farmers

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, June 17. — The Haryana government today decided to waive off arrears of electricity bills of both domestic and tube wells, of rural sector amounting to over Rs.1600 crore. as on date and also announced a package of incentive for all those rural consumers who had been paying their bills regularly.

Chief minister Mr Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who was talking to media persons after making a statement on the floor of the House said that farmers and all rural households would be permanently freed from this burden of past arrears. He said that this comprehensive package would begin a new era in the history of Haryana. He sought cooperation of all sections of the society including concerned officers and farmers to implement this decision in letter and spirit. He said that it had been decided that entire outstanding arrears of each individual would be divided in 10 equal installments spread over a period of 20 months. On payment of every current bill, 10 per cent of the arrears would be waived automatically. Thus, on payment of 10 current bills uninterruptedly starting from today, the entire arrears would be waived. While referring to those who were paying their bills regularly, he said that the government was equally aware of the feelings of such large number of villagers. "We have not forgotten their concerns and we have provided for unique incentive to such loyal bill payers."

18 JUN 2005

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Modi warning on Sir Creek

Statesman News Service

Bombs found

GANDHINAGAR, May 29. — Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi today made it clear at a function in Ahmedabad that “the people of the state will not accept any concession made to Pakistan regarding Sir Creek or any other part of the Rann of Kutch.

“The divisions were made at the time of Partition and no further demarcation will be accepted by the people of Gujarat, Mr Modi told the audience. He, however, had a suggestion for the replenishment of water resources in the dry Kutch region. Mr Modi said water from Sindhu river in Pakistan is wasted as it exits into the sea. “This should be directed to Kutch and we will make good the expenses,” he said.

New state BJP chief: Mr Vajubhai Vala today took over as the president of the BJP's Gujarat unit in place of Mr Rajendrasinh Rana. Mr

GANDHINAGAR, May 29. — Four crude bombs and 14 plastic bottles full of petrol were found just outside gate No. 6 of the Assembly secretariat here this morning. The bombs were packed in two hand-bags and were discovered by policemen on duty. The bomb squad and sniffer dogs were brought to the spot. — SNS

Vala who is at present the finance minister in the Modi government, is expected to resign from his ministerial berth soon.

With Mr Vala's appointment, dissidence in Gujarat BJP is expected to stem down. The matter of the BJP president has been solved after about two years. Now, with Mr Vala's expected resignation from the Cabinet, other hopefuls can aspire for a Cabinet berth.

In Delhi, it was the turn of Mr LK Advani to firmly rally behind Mr Modi today. Mr Advani said efforts to “demonise” Mr Modi will not succeed.

30 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Modi wants rioters kept out of polls

RAJNISH Sharma
New Delhi, May 25

LEARNING FROM the political fallout of the Godhra riots in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the Gujarat government, in a proposal to the Union home ministry, has sought an amendment in electoral laws to bar those "indulging habitually in serious offences related to communal violence" from contesting elections.

Documents accessed by *HT* reveal that the issue was also on the agenda of the Western Zonal Council meeting in Mumbai on Tuesday. The meeting, held after 11 years, was chaired by home minister Shivraj Patil. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Daman and Diu are part of the Council.

Ministry sources said the state's proposal would be discussed with the law ministry and the EC.

This, they said, was a significant amendment and could be carried out only after wide consultations with all parties, law ministry and the EC.

The state argued that the move would help improve the internal security scenario by keeping a check on "fundamentalist politics". It has also expressed the

Amnesty rap

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S annual report, released across the globe on Wednesday, expressed serious concern over the failure of the Gujarat government to bring those responsible for the post-Godhra riots to book.

HTC, New Delhi

view that the ISI and other subversive elements are trying to disturb religious and communal harmony in coastal and border states. For this, it has suggested that IPC provisions on communal violence be made more stringent.

Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi supported the proposed Bill on communal harmony, which the UPA government plans to introduce in the Monsoon Session. The state however, objected to the listing of Surat as a "communally hyper sensitive area" by the Standing Committee of the Inter State Council.

The state has informed the home ministry that following the 2002 riots the situation in Gujarat has been peaceful.

গুজরাতে লালু

আক্রান্ত, পাল্টা

হুমকি মোদীকে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ এপ্রিল: ফের সংবাদ শিরোনামে সর্বরমতী এক্সপ্রেস। এ বারেও সর্বাধিক ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত সেই এস-৬ কামরা। এ বারের ঘটনাস্থল গোধরার কাছেই। এবং এই বারেও ঘটনার গায়ে লেগে গিয়েছে রাজনৈতিক রং।

বারাণসী থেকে আমদাবাদ যাওয়ার পথে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকা একটি মালগাড়িকে ধাক্কা মারে সর্বরমতী এক্সপ্রেস। সংবাদসংস্থা পিটিআই জানাচ্ছে, গোধরা ছেড়ে এসে বডোদরা থেকে ৩০ কিলোমিটার দূরে সমলয়ায় কাল রাত সাড়ে তিনটে নাগাদ দুর্ঘটনায় পড়ে ট্রেনটি। সর্বরমতীর চালক ও সহকারী চালক-সহ অন্তত ১৮ জন মারা যান, আহতের সংখ্যা ৮০-র বেশি। আমদাবাদে রেলেরই পরীক্ষা দিতে অনেকে এই ট্রেনে আসছিলেন। কর্মীদের ভুলেই দুর্ঘটনা ঘটেছে বলে রেল স্বীকার করে নিলেও রেলমন্ত্রী লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব বিষয়টি থেকে নজর ফেরাতে নরেন্দ্র মোদী সরকারের 'ব্যর্থতা' নিয়ে হইচই বাধান।

সকালে দুর্ঘটনাস্থল পরিদর্শন করে ফেরার পথে রেলমন্ত্রীর গাড়িতে ইট ছোড়ে এক দল



২০০২-এর ২৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি গোধরায় এই সর্বরমতী এক্সপ্রেসের এস-৬ কামরায় অগ্নিকাণ্ডে মারা যান ৫৯ জন। তার জেরে

ক্ষিপ্ত জনতা। লালুর অভিযোগ, সঙ্ঘ পরিবারের সমর্থকেরা হামলা চালিয়েছে। এমনকী, তিনি নেমে যাওয়ার পরে পেট্রোল ঢেলে তাঁর গাড়ি পুড়িয়ে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা হয়েছে বলেও লালুর অভিযোগ। গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে সরাসরি এই হামলার জন্য দায়ী করে ক্রুদ্ধ রেলমন্ত্রীর হুমকি, এর উচিত জবাব তিনি দেবেন। দিল্লি ফিরেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও লোকসভার স্পিকারের সঙ্গে দেখা করেছেন লালু। রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছেও দরবার করবেন বলে জানিয়েছেন। দুর্ঘটনার পরে লালুর গাড়িতে ইট ছোড়া নিয়েই দিনভর হইচই চলেছে। মূলতুবি হয়ে গিয়েছে রাজ্যসভা ও লোকসভা।

কিন্তু রেল দুর্ঘটনা থেকে নজর ফেরাতে লালু যে ভাবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে গুজরাতের মোদী সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য চাপ দিয়েছেন, তাতে কোনও ফল হয়নি। লালুর মন রাখতে আজ রাতে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনৈতিক বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকে এ

নিয়ে কথা হলেও তা বেশি দূর এগোয়নি। তাঁর উপরে সত্যিই পাথর ছোড়া হয়ে থাকলে আলাদা তদন্ত হতে পারে বলে আশ্বাস দেওয়া হয়েছে কেবল। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় পরে সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, রাজ্য সরকার লালুকে নিরাপত্তা দিতে ব্যর্থ। মোদী সরকারকে দোষীদের চিহ্নিত করতে বলে চিঠি দেবে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক। রিপোর্ট চাওয়া হবে রাজ্যপালের কাছ থেকে।

বডোদরা পুলিশের আই জি জানিয়েছেন, একটি অসংরক্ষিত ও একটি শীতাতপ নিয়ন্ত্রিত কামরা-সহ সর্বরমতী এক্সপ্রেসের পাঁচটি কামরা দুর্ঘটনায় ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে। ইঞ্জিন লাগোয়া এস-৬ কামরাটি একেবারে দুমড়ে মুচড়ে গিয়েছে। প্রায় একই হাল এস-৭-এর। দুর্ঘটনার পরেই স্থানীয় মানুষ উদ্ধারে হাত লাগান। পরে রেল ও রাজ্য প্রশাসনের উদ্ধারকারী দল এসে মই ও গ্যাস কাটার দিয়ে আটকে পড়া যাত্রীদের বার করেন। প্রসঙ্গত, ২০০২-এর ২৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি গোধরায় এই সর্বরমতী এক্সপ্রেসের এস-৬ কামরায় অগ্নিকাণ্ডে মারা যান ৫৯ জন। তার জেরে

গুজরাতে ভয়াবহ দাঙ্গা বাধে। গোধরার সেই ঘটনার তদন্ত নিয়ে তৎপর হয়ে কিছু দিন আগেই নতুন করে বিতর্ক উস্কে দিয়েছিলেন লালু। রেল জানিয়েছে, রেলের দুই কর্মীর ভুলেই দুর্ঘটনা ঘটেছে। পশ্চিম রেলের জেনারেল ম্যানজার এম জেড আনসারি বলেছেন, "দুর্ঘটনা এড়ানো যেত। আমাদের কর্মীরাই ভুল করেছেন।" প্রাথমিক তদন্তে জানা গিয়েছে, দুর্ঘটনাস্থলের কাছে জ্যাক বোল্ট ভাঙা ছিল। সিগন্যাল বিভ্রাটও হয়েছিল। এমনকী, 'মেকানিক্যাল ইন্টারলকিং সিস্টেম' গোলমাল ছিল। মৃতদের আত্মীয়দের ১ লক্ষ এবং আহতদের প্রত্যেককে ১৫ হাজার টাকা করে ক্ষতিপূরণ দেবে রেল।

দিল্লি ফিরে লালু সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, "আমি প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে জানিয়েছি যে, গুজরাতে আইনের শাসন নেই। ওখানে অবিলম্বে রাষ্ট্রপতির শাসন জারি করা দরকার। আমি পুরো

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

গুজরাতে আক্রান্ত লালুর হুমকি

প্রথম পাতার পর

ব্যাপারটা সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়কেও জানিয়েছি। আমি তাঁকে অনুরোধ করেছি, সোমবার লোকসভায় এই ব্যাপারে বিবৃতি দিতে।"

রেল নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে সাড়স্বর নানা ঘোষণার পরেও কেন ফের দুর্ঘটনা, সেই বিতর্ককে আজ বারেকারেই ছাপিয়ে গিয়েছে লালু-পর্ষ। সমলয়ায় দুর্ঘটনাস্থল ঘুরে আহতদের দেখতে বডোদরার এস এস জি হাসপাতালে গিয়েছিলেন রেলমন্ত্রী। এক দল স্কিপ্ত জনতা সেখানে তাঁর গাড়ি ঘিরে ধরে। জনতার ছোড়া ইটে গাড়ির কাচ ভেঙে যায়, লালু অবশ্য অক্ষতই ছিলেন। তবে হাসপাতালের ছাদ থেকে বিক্ষোভকারীরা ইট এবং জলের পাউচ ছুড়তে থাকায় তাঁর ব্যক্তিগত সহকারী আহত হয়েছেন বলে লালু জানান।

জনতা এর পরে রেলমন্ত্রীকে ঘিরে ফেলে শ্লোগান দিতে থাকে। লালুর অভিযোগ, 'ফাসিস্ট মুখ্যমন্ত্রী' মোদীর নির্দেশে সঙ্ঘ পরিবার ষড়যন্ত্র করে আক্রমণ চালিয়েছে। আডবাণীর নির্দেশে মোদী তাঁকে খুন করতে চাইছেন। আডবাণী তাঁর কাছে কেন ক্ষমা চাইবেন না, তা-ও জানতে চান রেলমন্ত্রী। আগে বুঝলে রেলরক্ষী বাহিনীকে দিয়ে বিশেষ নিরাপত্তার ব্যবস্থা করতেন বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন তিনি। পি টি আই-এর খবর, ঘটনাস্থলে গিয়েছিলেন মোদীও। লালুর অভিযোগ উড়িয়ে দিয়ে গুজরাতের স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী অমিত শাহ বলেছেন, নিরাপত্তা ঠিকই ছিল। লালুর মন্তব্যে খেপে জনতা এই কাণ্ড ঘটিয়েছে। তবে হামলাকারী সম্পর্কে কয়েক জনের নামে এফ আই আর করা হয়েছে বলে তিনি জানান।

Modi & his aides ordered 'elimination' of minorities

CM Also Wanted Phones Tapped, Alleges Top Cop

By Leena Misra/TNN

Ahmedabad: In an explosive submission to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) where he has challenged his recent supersession, additional director general of Gujarat police R B Sreekumar has revealed how chief minister Narendra Modi and his bureaucrats issued illegal orders like "elimination" of minorities and distorted facts about the actual situation in the state during his tenure as state intelligence chief.

He also revealed how Modi himself issued instructions to keep a watch on and tap the phones of state Congress chief Shankersinh Vaghela, his former cabinet minister Haren Pandya and certain Muslim police officers and municipal corporators.

Sreekumar, whose earlier revelations also created a furore, has made these revelations in a blow-by-blow account contained in a "semi-official" diary annexed to his petition before the CAT. This diary contains details of his interactions as additional DGP (intelligence) between April 16 and September 19, 2002 with Modi and many others in the state government.

An entry of June 28, 2002 says that after a meeting to discuss preparations for the forthcoming rath yatra, then chief secretary G Subbarao told Sreekumar, "if someone is trying to disturb the rath yatra or planning to spoil the same, that person be eliminated". He added that "this is the policy and well-considered decision of the chief minister, Narendra

Modi". When Sreekumar objected saying it was illegal, Subbarao told him that "such action can be taken on the basis of situational logic". Subbarao was not available for his comments.

In the entries Sreekumar notes that right from day one, Modi wanted him to keep tabs on Vaghela. Modi first told him on April 16, 2002 to tap Vaghela's phones, then on 26 July to watch his movements as GPCC chief, and

Sreekumar notes how top bureaucrats in the state did not like his candid presentation before chief election commissioner J M Lyngdoh on the prevailing scenario in the state. He was even admonished for giving a reply that did not conform to that given by deputy PM L K Advani before Parliament.

One entry of April 17, 2002 notes how Modi asked director general of police K Chakravarthi to book a few Muslim leaders who were likely to disturb the holding of board examinations beginning the following day. Modi apparently suggested that "such persons be booked for some pending cases under investigation". The same day, Modi asked Sreekumar to keep a watch on police inspector Y A Shaikh, then in CID (crime), Congress corporator Hasan Lala and other Congress leaders "who are allegedly instigating the Muslims to attack the Hindus".

Sreekumar says that Modi rubbished a note prepared by him on the communal situation at a meeting on May 7, 2002, and asked him to concentrate on "Muslim militants". He told him "not to concentrate on the Sangh Parivar as they are not doing anything illegal". In fact Modi said he would provide him intelligence on the Sangh Parivar. Modi was not available to reply to Sreekumar's charges.

Sreekumar was transferred out of the intelligence branch in September 2002 after he submitted a report on Modi's utterances against minorities during the Gaurav yatra before the National Minorities Commission.



R B Sreekumar

If someone is trying to stop the rath yatra...that person (must) be eliminated

-Chief secy G Subbarao



Narendra Modi

CAT issues notice to Modi on additional DGP's plea, Page 8

Cong seeks Modi's ouster

Ahmedabad: The Congress in Gujarat on Thursday demanded the ouster of chief minister Narendra Modi over the application filed by additional DGP R B Sreekumar before the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) accusing the government of denying him promotion for "politically motivated" reasons.

"Modi had asked the police officer to eliminate minorities in Gujarat and protect Sangh parivar leaders. This exposes his criminal mind and we demand his immediate ouster by the BJP high command," GPCC president B K Ghadvi said.

The CAT had on Wednesday

issued notices to Modi and other government officials after Sreekumar filed an application alleging that the government's decision of "not promoting him was politically motivated and prejudiced, as he had exposed the government's role during the post-Godhra riots". The CAT had asked them to reply by May 9.

"Sreekumar's statements before the CAT that Modi had also instructed him to tap phones of senior Congress leader Shankersinh Vaghela and slain BJP leader Haren Pandya is also appalling and that he (Modi) could be booked for such offences and instructions to policemen," Ghadvi said.

again on September 2, 2002. On June 7, 2002, Modi's principal secretary Mishra gave Sreekumar Haren Pandya's mobile number and asked him to tap the phone.

September 2002 after he submitted a report on Modi's utterances against minorities during the Gaurav yatra before the National Minorities Commission.

15 APR 2005

Legality of denying visa

By Rajeev Dhavan

IN 1964, Peter Griffiths became the Member of Parliament from Smethwick in England after an ignominious racist campaign won him his election. In response, the then British Prime Minister famously retorted that Mr. Griffith would "serve the rest of his term (in Parliament) ... as a parliamentary leper." Those politicians responsible for genocidal violence, fascism and communal strife are political outcasts — both in and out of the country in which they live. Many people feel that Narendra Modi falls in this class of politicians and deserves to be treated as such.

This view is not shared by the BJP and others who revere Mr. Modi as an electoral mascot. Since the Gujarat riots of 2002, report after report criticised his Government for inaction, indifference and complicity whilst Gujarat witnessed riots, arson, pillage and murder. The view was supported by the National Human Rights Commission, which did not get responsible responses from the Gujarat Government. Nothing could have been more embarrassing for Mr. Modi than the Supreme Court speaking of 'modern-day Neros' when it transferred the Best Bakery case to Maharashtra because it believed Gujarat could not provide justice in the case in which Muslims were torched alive. Despite this, the BJP stood by Mr. Modi. When the young BJP politician, Smriti Irani, raised the banner of revolt in 2004 to demand Mr. Modi's removal, she had to withdraw her demand within 12 hours of making it! But although many believe that Mr. Modi and his Government have brought shame to both Gujarat and India, the BJP maintains that as Chief Minister of a BJP-ruled State, he is officially entitled to universal respect and concern.

The present controversy has arisen because on March 18, 2005, Mr. Modi was denied a visa for a private visit to the United States on the invitation of the Asian-American Hotel Owners' Association. As far as the Indian law is concerned, even after Maneka Gandhi's case (1978), the right to travel abroad has not been recognised as fundamental. American authorities maintain they acted according to law. Under Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, Mr. Modi was denied a diplomatic visa because he was on a private visit. Likewise, Section 212(a)(2)(g) obliges the U.S. immigration

The controversy over the U.S. denial of a visa to Narendra Modi cannot be raised to the level of an international crisis.

authorities to deny a visa to "any government official who was responsible for, or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom." The law is unusually phrased, but is not, by itself, unusual. Instead of the general category of 'undesirable alien,' this provision is specific and concerned with the complicity of government officials in "severe violations of religious freedom." Since Mr. Modi was not on a diplomatic visit, this clause applied.

How is a U.S. official to go about his business of enforcing such a law? Can he ignore it? Or must he make a reasonable decision on the material available to him? Should the U.S. Embassy in India have asked Mr. Modi to present himself for interrogation? Or left this for his arrival in New York? On March 18, Mr. Modi asked: "On what judicial evidence has the U.S. based its conclusion about the violation of religious freedom?" But judicial evidence is not necessary in such cases.

In 1998, the U.S. set up an official Commission under the International Religious Freedom Act which reports on denial of religious freedom throughout the world. Whether the U.S. should become the moral policeman of the world is another matter. The Report of the U.S. Religious Commission of 2002 concluded that the Gujarat Government's complicity in perpetrating religious atrocities "was tacit if not explicit."

In 2003, the U.S. Commission drew further conclusions on further actions and inactions in Gujarat. In May 2004, the Commission criticised Mr. Modi by name and even called upon the BJP to denounce the RSS and anti-religious policies to recommend that India be treated as a 'Country of Particular Concern.' These reports have to be read with the U.S. Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights in India from 2002 — specifically referring to Gujarat and Mr. Modi's "disrespectful remarks about Muslims" in his speeches. On March 15, 2005, the U.S. Religious Commission sent a special report advising against Mr. Modi's visit. More significantly, on the same day, the House of Repre-

sentatives passed a resolution saying it "condemns the conduct of Chief Minister Narendra Modi for condoning or inciting bigotry and intolerance against any religious group in India, including people of the Christian and Islamic faiths." This is a resolution by one of the Houses of the highest legislature in America.

Indians may not like these reports. Significantly, for the years 2002-04, neither the NDA Government at the Centre nor Mr. Modi made a public issue of these reports or the indictments in them. In any event, no U.S. immigration official discharging his duty under Section 212 of the Immigration Act could possibly ignore these reports. And if they are taken into account, there can be little doubt that under the American law, the decision to deny Mr. Modi entry into the United States was valid and proper.

Now can it be argued that there was a serious violation of international law and policy? The preamble to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, emphasises that "the purpose of (diplomatic) ... privileges and immunities is not to benefit individuals but to ensure the efficient performance of the function of diplomatic missions as representing (nation) states." Quite apart from the fact that diplomatic status could have been refused, Mr. Modi has no special privileges as an individual and was not representing India. He was not even on an official or trade mission. He was merely an individual on a private visit.

However, under pressure from the BJP and its chorus of voices, on March 18, the Centre protested saying the U.S. Government's action "displays lack of courtesy and sensitivity towards a constitutionally elected Chief Minister of a State in India." Is this really an international discourtesy? All countries retain the right to ostracise both individuals and countries who they feel are unworthy. By limiting its boycott to the denial of an individual visa, America has stayed within diplomatic limits to enforce its immigration law. Mr. Modi's view that this was an insult to the Indian Constitution is not even shared by many Indians who believe

that it is Mr. Modi's Government that has undermined constitutional governance in India.

America's decision on Mr. Modi does not necessarily open up a diplomatic Pandora's Box. India too retains the right to deny entry to such government officials of other countries whose entry it considers undesirable. This is one moral right that every nation is obliged to retain. Some states go further. They have passed extra-territorial laws to try dictators for international crimes against human rights even if committed outside the territories of these states.

These laws were invoked against President Augusto Pinochet who sought cover of extradition procedures. Apart from its Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789, the U.S. also enacted the extra-territorial Torture Victim Protection Act, 1992. India claims jurisdiction over its own citizens abroad and wants to extend this to various classes of international criminals. Along with America, India has not objected to the various international tribunals on atrocities in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia but refuses to accede to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

India is answerable to various human rights committees set up by the United Nations to which periodic reports are submitted by the Government. In other words, India broadly accepts that there are valid international law norms that can be taken into account while adjudging the quality of a nation's governance. India is not answerable to America for what it does but it is answerable to the peoples of the world. There are moral humanitarian issues on which all peoples and all nations are entitled to take a stand.

The controversy over the U.S. denial of a visa to Mr. Modi cannot be raised to the level of an international crisis. It is just another reminder to the politicians of the world that they are not just accountable to their own electorates but to the peoples and nations of the world who must eventually decide who must be ostracised as a political outcast and who must not. America's denial of a visa to Mr. Modi was neither a constitutional affront nor a diplomatic insult to India. Mr. Modi has no social, political or diplomatic immunity to shield him from what the global community thinks of him. Mr. Modi is out of line, not the U.S. Government.

01 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Jindal, Bansi's son killed

Chopper crashes in Saharanpur

Utpal Parashar and Agencies
Mahngi (Saharanpur), March 31

TWO HARYANA cabinet ministers were killed in a helicopter crash at Mahngi village, 45 km from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday afternoon. The pilot too died.

The two ministers — power minister Om Prakash Jindal (also a noted industrialist) and agriculture minister Surender Singh (son of former Haryana chief minister Bansi Lal) — were killed on the spot. The pilot, T.S. Chauhan, died on the way to hospital. Two others injured — Ved Goyal, a relative of Jindal, and head constable Vinod Yadav — were admitted to the Saharanpur district hospital.

The accident took place around 1 pm when the five-seat Eurocopter Colibri EC 120B chopper "fell from the sky" into a wheat field near the village. Official sources in Chandigarh said the victims were going from Chandigarh to Delhi.

Preliminary reports suggest that the accident occurred due to some technical fault. Sources reported Goyal as saying 30 minutes into the flight, at 2,000 ft: "The engine has failed, sir." He tried to control the chopper, but it crashed within the next 45 seconds — indicating that the pilot got very little time. The helicopter tilted and fell on the pilot's side. Goyal and Yadav survived by virtue of being the other side.

The scene at the accident site suggested the chopper did not catch fire upon crashing. However, the entire left side of the craft was mangled.

"We saw the aircraft falling rapidly while flying over our village," said Ajaib Singh, a resident of Mahngi. "At first we thought it would fall right into the middle of the village, but it veered off and crashed in a field at the last minute."

The bodies of Surender Singh (59) and Jindal (75) were taken to the civil hospital. The cremations will take place on Friday.

Both of them had been inducted into the Hooda cabinet after the Congress returned to power in Haryana after nine years.

Jindal had been elected to the state assembly for the third time from Hissar. He was elected MP from Kurukshetra in 1996. Father of Lok Sabha MP Navin Jindal, he was elected three times to the Haryana Assembly — in 1991, 2000 and 2005.

Surender Singh, younger brother of BCCI president Ranbir Mahendra, returned to the assembly as agriculture minister after 22 years.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has ordered an inquiry into the crash.

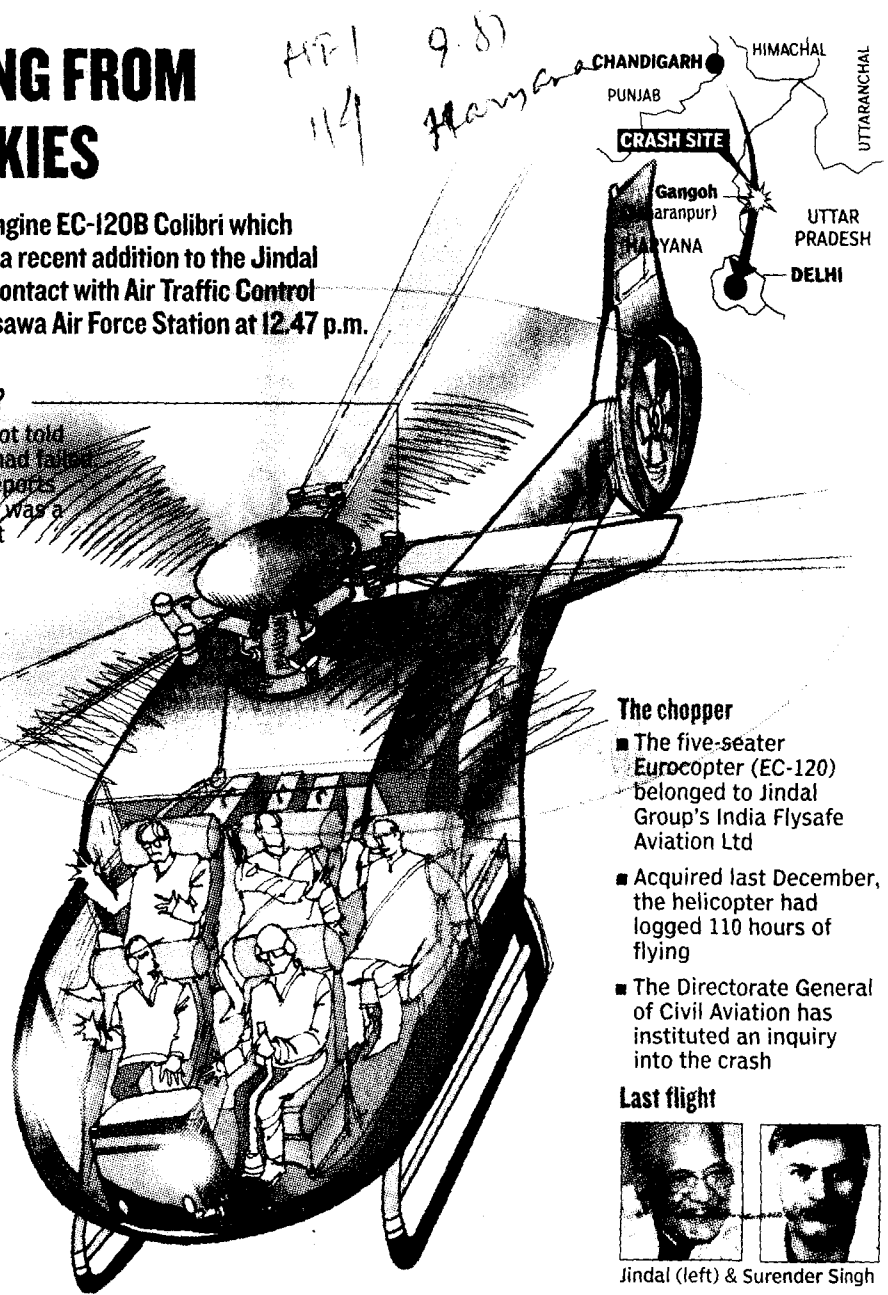
See also Page 2

FALLING FROM THE SKIES

The single-engine EC-120B Colibri which crashed was a recent addition to the Jindal fleet. It lost contact with Air Traffic Control tower at Sarsawa Air Force Station at 12.47 p.m.

Engine failure?

Goyal says pilot told them engine had failed. Preliminary reports suggest there was a technical fault.



The chopper

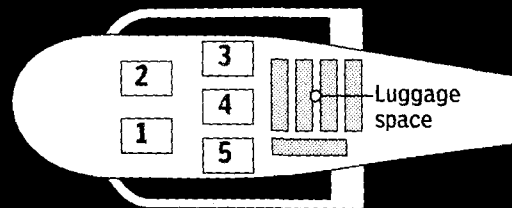
- The five-seater Eurocopter (EC-120) belonged to Jindal Group's India Flysafe Aviation Ltd
- Acquired last December, the helicopter had logged 110 hours of flying
- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has instituted an inquiry into the crash

Last flight



Jindal (left) & Surender Singh

Who was sitting where



1 Pilot S.S. Chauhan (died)

2 Surender Singh (died)

3,4 Vinod Yadav, Ved Goyal (survived)

5 O.P. Jindal (died)

Graphic: JAYANTO

01 APR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Zaheera wants SC to grill NHRC chief

Agencies
New Delhi, March 29

QUESTIONING THE veracity of a petition by the National Human Rights Commission on Gujarat riots, Best Bakery case star witness Zaheera Sheikh has sought before the Supreme Court appointed probe committee an opportunity to cross-examine the NHRC chairperson. She also asked for a probe into the wealth of social activist Teesta Setalvad.

This has been stated by Zaheera in an affidavit

filed before the committee headed by registrar general B.M. Gupta who, along with Kanwaljeet Deol, has been assigned the task of finding the truth behind the alleged conflicting statements made by Zaheera and Setalvad in the Best Bakery case.

It was on the petitions of NHRC and Setalvad that the apex court had started monitoring the post-Godhra riots cases.

It was alleged by Zaheera that her statements made before the NHRC were doctored and placed

before the Supreme Court, which had set aside the acquittal of all 21 accused before ordering fresh trial of the case at Mumbai.

Accusing Setalvad of "tutoring her" in the matter prior to her deposition before the commission, Zaheera said in a sworn affidavit that: "I was taken to the NHRC office and was made to say orally what Teesta had told me to say."

Zaheera said her so-called statement produced by the NHRC before the apex court during the hearing on Gujarat riots cases

BEST BAKERY



Zaheera Sheikh

was not what she said orally before the commission. She requested the com-

mittee to summon the records of the human rights body on this aspect.

Stating that the chairperson of the commission and two members took part in the recording of her statement, Zahira said: "I would like my lawyer to examine the chairman of the NHRC in respect of her statement, which formed part of the affidavit filed on behalf of the human rights body."

Giving details of the manner in which Setalvad allegedly marketed the Gujarat riots to get pecuniary

advantage from abroad, the witness said "neither Teesta nor her husband is running any NGO called Communal Combat, which is a business venture of a company or firm known as Sabrang Publication."

"I and Best Bakery were the symbols to ensure money was collected in the name of Combat Communalism," she said.

Zaheera also took a dig at the US state department reports for 2003-04 presenting Best Bakery as a "notorious case" and depicting a communalised Gujarat.

The US gives India with one hand to take away with another

Why Modi piped down

SUNANDAK. DATTA-RAY

Narendra Modi's tantrums would have been of little account if private hankering for the United States of America were not now also an essential — and, perhaps, necessary — part of public diplomacy. Sign of changing times, while a defiant Hiren Mukherjee was once content to sit it out at New York airport without a visa, a grateful Jyoti Basu promised not to indulge in politics in the US if they granted him a visa.

Modi's loss is the government's grievance, now that Condoleezza Rice's mission has reminded us again that support for Pakistan, irrespective of the regime there, is the one constant in the flux of American policy changes. In spite of bus and cricket bonhomie, India's political relations with a neighbour basking in the glow of the US secretary of state's approbation are destined for a rough patch. Encouraged by his mentor, Pervez Musharraf is already returning to a strident posture on Kashmir while his foreign minister accuses India of renegeing on an agreement on Siachen. Nor can the smaller countries of south Asia fail to draw a lesson from Rice's compliments to Pakistan's military ruler as America's sturdy ally against the forces of terror, with only a token mention of the democracy that is supposed to lie at the heart of George W. Bush's global crusade.

Jawaharlal Nehru might have retorted "Just as well!" to the refusal to grant Modi a visa. But that would not have honestly reflected Indian thinking even then. "When I call on cabinet ministers, the president or governors, they all love to talk about their sons, sons-in-law and daughters in the US and how well they're doing and how well they like things," mused William B. Saxbe, American ambassador in the Seventies. "The next day I read in the papers the very same people are denouncing the US as a totally different kind of country." With people like Modi setting such high store by the connection, and almost every educated urban Indian a potential green card petitioner, Oscar Wilde's aphorism about good Americans and Paris can be adapted to read that good Indians go to New York before they die.

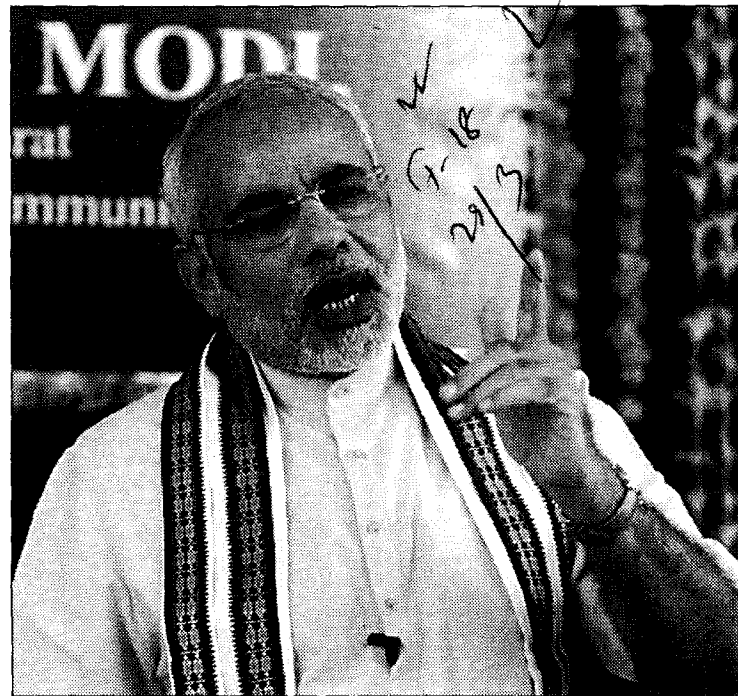
That is why, unconstrained by any sense of self-respect, Modi piped down when he addressed expatriate Gujaratis via satellite. Forgetting earlier bluster, he praised Uncle Sam and blamed only wicked non-resident Indians. But though the US state department has assured India that this petty controversy has no bearing on bilateral relations, the denial does reek of the moral high ground that the US claims for itself. It reflects America's self-image as "emperor of the

world", to cite George Fernandes, and its understanding of its global responsibilities.

That might have been more convincing if the Americans themselves had not rejected the concept of universal justice enshrined in the International Criminal Court. Otherwise, it might have been argued that the law dispensed with political boundaries long before economic globalization just as the trade union movement was a torchbearer of internationalism. I recall an occasion when print-workers in a Fleet Street office downed tools the moment a Sri Lankan newspaper

might refer to an applicant's domestic credentials but cannot be bound by them. Otherwise, someone like Slobodan Milosevic would be entitled to demand admission to any country in the world. Though some of history's worst tyrants boast the *imprimatur* of the hustings, electoral legitimacy proves nothing in this age of money and muscle manipulation.

What concerns India is how the US uses its power in the unipolar world it commands. In the past, it used that power to keep India in what Americans no doubt thought of as its place. The origins of that



Forgetting earlier bluster, Modi praised Uncle Sam and blamed only wicked NRIs

proprietor, visiting England as a government guest, entered it. Apparently, the Sri Lankan newspaper had behaved badly with its London correspondent (a Sri Lankan) who had complained to the National Union of Journalists, of which he was a member. The NUJ instructed all its units to display their disapproval of the Sri Lankan organization's conduct. Understandably, perhaps, the US shrinks from such retributive reaction.

All the same, the Bharatiya Janata Party's need for a tub to thump or the eternal search for slights by notoriously thin-skinned Indians should not be allowed to inflate the importance of the Modi affair. Manmohan Singh rightly acknowledged the US's "sovereign right" to refuse entry to anyone it chooses. All countries exercise that right, often without giving a reason. India does so too. Sovereignty cannot be accountable to an external authority.

It is neither here nor there that Modi holds elective office or that the charges against him have not been proved. A visa-granting authority

Cold War strategy lay in a 1947 state department memorandum that "from the military point of view, the countries of South Asia excepting Pakistan have, under present and prospective conditions, little value to the US." Pakistan provided bases and watchposts on the fringes of the enemy's sprawling empire. It was the potential launching pad of an invasion of the Soviet heartland.

American policy in Europe and the Far East has changed dramatically since then. But time seems to stand still in south Asia. In spite of an incremental increase in India-US economic and strategic cooperation — borne out by the latest proposal for a defence agreement — America's regional priorities remain the same. If India is less an adversary,

Pakistan is even more a friend.

Larry Pressler, the former republican senator from South Dakota who thwarted the sale of 28 F-16s to Pakistan, attributes this to the continuing influence of what Dwight D. Eisenhower called "the military-industrial complex". That ties in with A.B. Rosenthal's analysis in the *New York Times* that many US officials prefer Pakistan to India not despite its militarism but because of it. "Man, the military fellows can get things done for you." With Pakistan remaining central to all American calculations, US planners advance different reasons at different times for continuing the same policy.

First, it was the Soviet threat, then securing Afghanistan for the free world, then getting rid of the Taliban, and now the war against Osama bin Laden and Al Qaida. Those military fellows can get it done, even if the evidence suggests otherwise.

So much then for the constantly repeated claim that the world's oldest and largest democracies are natural allies. Values have never played any part in the hard reality of US foreign policy but it should be enough for India that a coalescence of national interests has brought the two countries closer. But Rice's reiteration of her boss's promise during his first term to remove the "hyphen" between the two countries is a facile public relations exercise that exploits Indian gullibility. Whether or not the US hyphenates its relations with the two neighbours, everything it does in relation to Pakistan resonates in India.

Bush first praised Musharraf even before his election. Colin Powell then anointed Pakistan America's "major non-Nato ally." Rice has now promised to sell the F-16s for which Pakistan has been clamouring since the Eighties. They will be of no use against shadowy *jihadis*. But as with all the sophisticated hardware (especially tanks and submarines) the US has given Pakistan over the years, they can — and will — be deployed against India. Even if they are not, the possibility will compel New Delhi to squander money on similar or better fighters. Bush is sparking another arms race in the subcontinent.

It bears repeating in this context that Pakistan's GDP is one-eighth of India's. It has one-seventh the population and one-fifth the area. Thanks to the US and China, only its military strength enables it to claim parity with India. Irrespective of the Modi fracas, there will be no stability in south Asia as long as that pretension lasts; and the pretension will continue as long as it suits the Americans to give India with one hand and take it away with the other.

Modi sings new tune

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, March 27. — First, Mr Narendra Modi was denied a visa to go to the USA. Then he had to cancel his UK trip. As a face-saver, it was said that the Prime Minister and the Union home minister had requested him not to go ahead with his visit to Britain owing to security reasons.

The PMO strongly denied this saying no such request was made. What was meant to be a face-saver, left the BJP squirming. And today, the Gujarat chief minister was heard singing a different tune.

Mr Modi told a TV channel that whatever had happened after Godhra "did not do credit to any civilised society". He added that he was not against Islam but against *jihad* and

terrorism. No true Hindu can be against Islam because Hinduism teaches equality of all religions, he said. But when asked if he felt that he had become an international symbol of hate, Mr Modi replied: "It is not for me to analyse (this) but for my critics to do so."

Asked whether the US action was a slap on him and whether he would take corrective measures, Mr Modi, in an oblique criticism of Washington, said there was no judicial system in the world in which the same person can level the charge and also pass judgment. He also suggested that the denial of a visa to him was like President George W Bush taking a leaf from RJD chief Mr Lalu Prasad's criticism of him to project a secular face.

The Gujarat chief minister also attacked "five-star

activists" in the country for indulging in acts that tarnish the image of India, only to bag international awards and aid.

The denial from the PMO in connection with the cancellation of Mr Modi's UK trip and the Congress accusing him of politicising the issue has put the BJP on the defensive. "It does not matter who called up whom, the fact is that the Government of India expressed its fears on Mr Modi's visit to London and asked him to reconsider his decision," BJP spokesperson Mr VK Malhotra said today.

But for the Congress it was an opportunity to criticise the chief minister. "Mr Modi unnecessarily dragged the PMO and politicised the issue to serve his vested interests," said Congress leader Mrs Ambika Soni.

THE STATESMAN

8 MAR 2005

On video, Modi goes mild

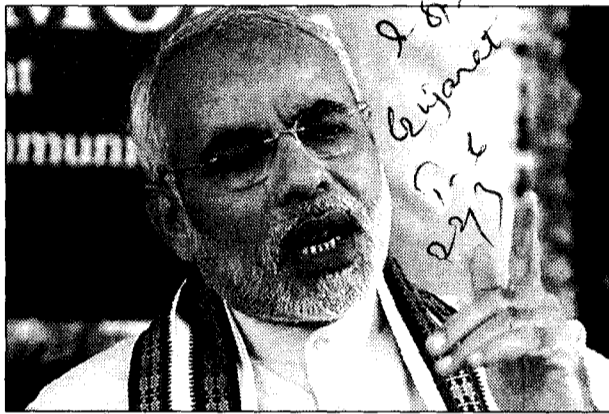
BASANT RAWAT

Gandhinagar, March 21: Trademark arrogance missing and face not betraying any signs of rancour, Narendra Modi today came across as almost too large-hearted as words of praise for the US flowed over satellite to his Gujarati friends overseas.

"India and the US are the two largest democracies of the world. They are tied together by many common traditions and beliefs," he said cheerfully, addressing the Indian-American crowd at Madison Square Garden in New York as though the visa refusal row had not happened.

Studiously avoiding any America-bashing during the teleconference and being all praises for Indo-US friendship instead, he appeared to be proving a point as he refused to retaliate to the visa snub.

"I have no grievance against the US or the people of that country over the visa denial... I have no reaction, I believe only in action," Modi, dressed in an orange kurta, said.



Modi addresses the Indian-American gathering in New York from his official residence in Gandhinagar. (PTI)

"I take inspiration from Gandhiji and believe in Gandhian methods to fight injustice."

But the chief minister insisted his "brothers and sisters" in faraway US should ensure that "opinion about your motherland is not formed on the basis of propaganda and the contention of a handful of vested interests". There should be verification of facts, he said.

Going on to liberally tug at

the heartstrings of the 5,000-strong community, he said the reason Indo-US friendship was flourishing was the Gujarati diaspora in that country.

Whether he was in New York or not, "my heart is there at your function", Modi said. "Gujarat remains yours as it ever was."

Dubbing Gujarat the "growth engine of India", he said the state represented the "very best" of India and was among

"the most progressive and promising".

"I will see to it that Gujarat becomes a global destination where some day Americans will line up for visa."

Modi said the best way an overseas Gujarati could contribute to his motherland was by motivating at least five families to visit India. If 5 lakh Gujaratis motivated 25 lakh families, the tourism industry would get a big boost, he said.

Stirring national pride as he fielded a query on brain drain, he said: "Let Indian brain reach every nook and corner of the world. There is no dearth of brain in India."

The only occasion Modi was a trifle critical about the US was when he said it was given to treating military dictators rather too well.

The teleconference began in the hall of the chief minister's official residence at 5 am. Since 3 am, Modi's additional principal secretary A.K. Sharma and IT secretary J.N. Singh were seen busily instructing technicians to set up a link that would not crash midway.

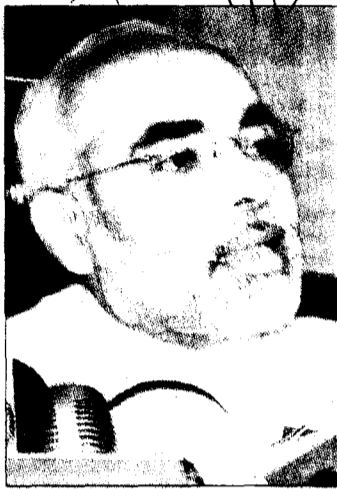
CM's American scream

SNS & PTI

981 migration 5/1 1713
AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI, March 18. — "The one-sided US decision amounts to an insult to India's Constitution and self-respect," was Mr Narendra Modi's reaction to the US move. It only exposes Washington's attempt to show this country in "poor light". He intends to write to the Prime Minister.

Mr Modi pointed out that "no court had given any decision" against his government or himself on the Gujarat riots. He had received the "political clearance" from the Prime Minister before applying for the visa two months ago. "No country can impose its laws on the citizens of another country while granting visas. If an American citizen wants to come to India, are we going to question what the Americans did in Iraq and deny him visa?"

He questioned the decision to revoke his tourist/business visa, issued in 1998, just two days before his visit to the USA. "What happened in Gujarat was in 2002. Why didn't they cancel my visa earlier?"



"The decision is totally against democracy, human rights, and is a violation of judicial norms," he said. "This clearly shows that the intention of America is only to insult and downgrade India."

The BJP, the Congress and the CPI criticised the US decision. Congress spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said the issue should be looked at beyond politics. "Mr Modi holds a constitutional post, and he should not be denied the

The decision clearly shows that the US intention is only to insult and downgrade India. If an American citizen wants to come to India, are we going to question what the Americans did in Iraq and deny him visa?

diplomatic visa. He is a chief minister and he has every right to go on a diplomatic visa."

BJP praised the Centre's "prompt action" and criticised the USA's "intruding into our domestic affairs". CPI's Mr Gurudas Dasgupta called the action a "discourtesy". CPI-M MP Mr Nilotpal Basu remarked: "BJP leaders like Jaswant Singh and Yashwant Sinha are better equipped to offer explanations as their relations with Washington are very good."

Purely legal matter: State Department

WASHINGTON, March 18. — The USA today described its decision to deny a visa to Mr Narendra Modi as a purely legal matter and not a reflection on India's political or judicial system.

This was the first time the US law under which Mr Modi was denied the visa had been used, said State Department official Mr Len Scensny. "The law is relatively new. Our job is to carry out the US law," Mr Scensny said. Asked if the decision had been taken by Ms Condoleezza Rice, Mr Scensny said: "It's not the secretary's job to make this decision, but she's aware of it. We sent out the instructions to our Delhi office last night and told

Modi's people this morning." The US law used to deny Mr Modi a visa has been in existence for several years. But before December 2004, it applied to religious rights violations committed in the two-year period prior to a person's applying for a visa. A December 2004 revision removed the two-year provision and it now applies to anyone who had anything to do with severe religious persecution, regardless of when that occurred. So when Mr Modi applied, though it was just a little over two years since the Gujarat violence occurred, he was held accountable. "We looked at the law and the judgment we made in our own

human rights report," Mr Scensny said. "The law says 'any foreign government official who was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom, is ineligible for a visa to the USA,'" he said. Mr Modi had applied for a diplomatic visa and was denied that because he was not coming on a diplomatic visit. "But he also had a B-visa and we cancelled that as well," he said. Asked whether it was a well-thought-out move, Mr Scensny said: "I think a lot of thought went into this." However, Mr Scensny emphasised: "This is not an attempt by the US to intervene in India's justice system." — IANS

THE STATESMAN

19 MAR 2005

President's rule in Goa

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4. The Union Cabinet today recommended that Goa be brought under President's rule and the Assembly kept under suspended animation, even though the Pratapsinh Rane Government earlier won a kind of vote of confidence in the House.

The Cabinet decided to act without waiting for any recommendation from Governor S.C. Jamir about the far-from-correct procedure adopted by protem Speaker Francisco Sardinha, which resulted in a technical victory for the Rane Government.

After the Cabinet meeting, Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil told a press conference that "what has happened in the

Legislative Assembly of Goa today is not acceptable to the Government."

'Not proper'

Mr. Patil said: "It was not proper not to allow one member to vote and then get the confidence motion passed with a casting vote given by the Speaker. This is exactly what was done by the previous government [headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party]. If that was wrong, this is also wrong."

The general view in the Cabinet was that the manner in which the vote of confidence had been secured was "not tenable." Given the current political uncertainty, it was not possible for the Assembly to pass the State budget within the stipulated time (that is, by

March 31), and it was therefore necessary to take steps to ensure that there was no financial crisis.

Before the Cabinet meeting today, Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met briefly and took stock of the Goa developments.

Rane wins trust vote

By Our Staff Correspondent

PANAJI, MARCH 4. Goa Chief Minister Pratapsinh Rane won the vote of confidence in the Assembly today with protem Speaker Francisco Sardinha casting his vote in favour of the Congress when there was a 16-16 tie.

The tie was the result of Mr. Sardinha restraining United

ing his vote.

Ignoring their protests, Mr. Sardinha asked Mr. Rane to table the motion. Those in favour and against was 16 each, as Mr. Sardinha ignored Mr. Saldanha who stood up against the motion. Declaring that there was a tie, Mr. Sardinha cast his deciding vote and declared the motion passed by 17 to 16.

Mr. Rane, heading the United Legislature Party coalition government — comprising the Congress, the Nationalist Con-

gress Party, the UGDP and the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGp) — was sworn in on February 2 after Governor S.C. Jamir dismissed the BJP-led Manohar Parrikar Government. He could not seek the trust vote on February 28 due to the dramatic exit of the Speaker and the Dep-

uty Speaker from their posts to strengthen the BJP camp.

The lone UGDP MLA, Mr. Saldanha, who was a Minister in the Parrikar Government, ignored the party's direction and continued in the BJP camp saying he was not a weathercock to shuttle between fields for gain.

Soon after the trust vote, Mr. Parrikar termed it a sham. He told reporters that the protem Speaker had no power to restrain the member from casting his vote.

He displayed a letter from the Raj Bhavan which was in response to his letter expressing apprehension that Mr. Saldanha would be restricted from voting. The Governor had made it clear in the letter that he had authorised the protem Speaker to conduct only the confidence

motion and nothing else. "He [the Governor] dismissed me on February 2, stating that the Speaker had exceeded his brief and murdered democracy. Now the same thing has been done by the protem Speaker and I demand immediate dismissal of the Rane Government," he said.

Rane happy

Mr. Rane expressed happiness at the outcome of today's session and said he had the numbers to run the Government.

The party break-up in the now 34-member Assembly, excluding the protem Speaker, who is from the Congress, is as follows: ULP — 16 (Congress 14, NCP and MGP one each) and BJP — 17 (BJP 16, UGDP 1).

Editorial on Page 10

THE HINDU

05 MAR 2005

SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2005

A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

IT HAS BEEN a competitive debasement of values in Goa over the last four weeks, with not just the Congress and the BJP but the two constitutional functionaries — the Speaker and the Governor — using more foul means than fair to shape government formation. The Bharatiya Janata Party, desperate to keep the Parrikar Government alive, called to its aid the Speaker who could not save the Government but could make it impossible for the Congress to hold on to power. And if the Congress was successful in pushing the BJP regime out, its attempt to take office through the agency of former Congressman, Governor S.C. Jamir, has turned out to be a botched deal — it has been tainted by the same type of manipulated voting that brought about the dismissal of the Parrikar Government. Politically, it has been a virtual replay of the confidence vote the Parrikar Government sought, and the BJP cannot really complain against the tables being turned now. In constitutional terms, however, if an outcome manipulated by a partisan Speaker could not be taken as a true indication of the support for the Parrikar regime within the Assembly last time, it cannot legitimise the Rane Government either. Whatever Mr. Jamir's predilections in the situation, the Centre could not allow double standards to be applied and in imposing President's Rule without waiting for his recommendation, the right thing has at last been done. The invoking of Article 356 will now have to go before Parliament, with the State Assembly suspended, and it remains to be seen how the politics of approval will play out in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The prospects of forming a viable government out of the Assembly as it stands seem quite remote. At least five bye-elections brought on by resignations of MLAs in recent weeks are due to be held and if they can be completed within the time taken for Parliament to consider the situation, one or the other side may gain a majority. The much better course, which is likely to have a wholesome and cleansing effect in an atmosphere of all round venality, will be for Parliament to approve the proclamation, after which the Assembly can be dissolved and elections held to bring in a new House.

It all started with the fragile situation the BJP-led Government, formed after the elections of

2002 with the support of smaller parties and independents, was placed in, and even a routine change of portfolio of a Minister could spark a major revolt, with four supporting legislators resigning from the Assembly. The resignations themselves, obviously induced by the Congress, are the more drastic alternatives to the party splits that have been barred along with outright defections under the amended anti-defection law. Faced with a loss of majority, the BJP sought to disqualify an independent MLA who had declared his support for the Congress on the ground that he had joined the BJP earlier. Even before the disqualification petition could be decided upon, the Speaker in a blatantly partisan move had the MLA physically removed during the vote, prompting the Congress to walk out. As though that were not enough, the presiding officer counted an Opposition legislator for the Government, before pronouncing it had won the vote. The Parrikar Government could not legitimately be allowed to continue on the basis of such a blatantly manipulated floor test.

Act II turned out to be equally murky, with the Governor swearing in Pratapsinh Rane hurriedly and not even setting a date for him to prove his majority support. In a bid to tilt the numbers in its favour, the Congress persuaded a BJP MLA to resign from the Assembly, but with the Speaker disqualifying a Congress supporter and then resigning along with the Deputy Speaker, the numbers were distinctly unfavourable to the Rane Government, with both sides tied at 17. It was in this situation that Mr. Rane "won" the vote after the pro tem Speaker prevented an MLA facing a disqualification petition from voting and used his own vote to break the 16-16 tie. In all, it has been a no-holds-barred, sordid story of induced resignations, blatantly partisan disqualifications, vote manipulation, swearing in a new government in indecent haste in the dead of night — and clearly, in terms of political decency, a race to the bottom. As in the case of the drama now being played out in Jharkhand, Goa is an object lesson in the havoc political partisans in constitutional offices that call for a fair and impartial enforcement of the rules of the game can inflict in situations of narrow and shifting majorities.

THE HINDU

05 MAR 2005

President's rule was only option: BJP

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4. Imposition of President's Rule in Goa was the "only option" left to the Centre after its Government failed to pass the confidence test on the floor of the Assembly, 'despite all kinds of manoeuvres', the Bharatiya Janata Party said here today.

The general secretary, Pramod Mahajan, said he hoped that when Parliament meets the Government would suggest early elections in Goa so that a popularly-elected government can once again be formed.

"We can hardly welcome the imposition of President's Rule, but it was the only option before the Centre. The Congress changed the Governor and then used him to destabilise our government," Mr. Mahajan said, charging that defections were engineered, the anti-defection law was circumvented, a duly-elected Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, was

dismissed, and an attempt was made to legitimise the Pratapsinh Rane Government. "When all that failed they imposed President's Rule."

"A fraud"

Earlier, the party described the vote of confidence 'won' by the Congress-led Rane Government in Goa as a "fraud on the Constitution" and "thoroughly shameful."

The party demanded — and this was what happened a few hours later — that the Governor, S.C. Jamir, not give his approval to the vote of confidence and was hoping that President's Rule would be imposed and early elections called.

The BJP said before the trust vote the Governor had assured its leaders that the pro tem Speaker had been specifically told that no other business should be taken up except the vote of confidence. They were angry that while the pro tem Speaker did not dis-

qualify Mr. Saldanha, his action of not taking into account his vote had the same effect. "How could he have not allowed a legitimate member of the Assembly to vote ... this was shameful," they said.

They pointed out that the Goa issue was already before the Supreme Court and was expected to come up on Monday, March 7, when lawyers of Mr. Parrikar, would bring up this latest development to the notice of the court. The party would decide its further strategy on Goa after the Supreme Court gave its view.

The BJP had considered asking all its MLAs and those supporting it to resign from the Assembly in the event of the Centre not imposing President's Rule.

Earlier the BJP had favoured restoration of the Parrikar Government, but today the mood was for early elections, a demand made a few days back by former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

THE HINDU

05 MAR 2005

Speaker seals Goa vote

OUR BUREAU

Panaji/New Delhi, March 4: Goa's acting Speaker used his casting vote today to save the month-old Congress government only to have the Centre impose President's rule, calling the proceedings "wrong".

Acting Speaker Francisco Sardinha moved the motion after ruling that UGDP legislator Matanhy Saldanha, who is backing the BJP against his party's diktat, was not entitled to vote. Saldanha is facing a disqualification petition that Congress's Jitendra Deshpurabhu has filed.

Amid loud BJP protests, ousted chief minister Manohar Parrikar asked Saldanha to stand and be counted. The parties, with an effective strength of 34 in the 40-member House, were tied at 16-16 following the disqualification.

The acting Speaker, elected as a Congress member, said he would use his casting vote in favour of the confidence motion, thus helping the Pratapsinh Rane government win.

Three hours later, however, the Union cabinet "took suo motu action without waiting for any recommendation from the governor" to "impose President's rule in Goa and keep the Assembly in suspended animation".

"It was not proper not to allow one member to vote and then get the confidence motion passed with a casting vote given by the Speaker. This is exactly what was done by the previous government. If that is wrong, this is also wrong," home minister Shivraj Patil

said after the cabinet meeting.

Parrikar called the vote a "sham" and contended that Sardinha had no right to bar a legislator from voting. His party said an acting Speaker has no power to "requalify or disqualify" a member.

The Constitution allows an acting Speaker all the powers of a Speaker and his actions inside the House are as valid as that of the latter. "All powers of the Speaker are vested in acting Speaker," said Shanti Bhushan, constitutional lawyer and former Union law minister.

He defended the "letter of governor S.C. Jamir" that had "pointed out that Sardinha would discharge the functions of the Speaker on an acting basis during the vote of confidence".

Bhushan said a member of the House had to be appointed to the chair in the absence of the Speaker and the deputy speaker, both of whom had resigned in Goa.

The Speaker's decision, however, can be challenged in a court of law. M.N. Krishnamani, former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, said the acting Speaker's action could thus be legally challenged as it "is questionable". This, he added, "is certain to be reflected on Monday when the Supreme Court takes up the issue for further hearings".

The court, on Parrikar's petition challenging his regime's dismissal, today said it would watch the Goa developments and hear the matter on Monday.

Dissolve Goa Assembly, says Vajpayee

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 1. The former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said today that the Goa Assembly should be dissolved and new elections ordered to end the political stalemate there. He criticised the Governor, S.C. Jamir, for "dismissing an elected BJP Government" and "crossing the limits of his powers."

He was addressing a meeting of the BJP parliamentary party here.

The Goa issue was raised by the BJP through an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha this morning, but was disallowed by the Speaker on the ground that the matter was in court and that it concerned a Governor.

The BJP decided at the parliamentary party meeting that it would press for the adjournment motion. Later, there were uproarious scenes in the House when the issue was not taken up, forcing the Speaker to adjourn the House for the day.

Mr. Vajpayee told reporters that "democracy has been murdered in Goa ... this is not a good precedent ... the Governor crossed the limits of his powers." At the start of the Goa crisis, the BJP had demanded that the Governor be recalled and the Parrikar Government be reinstated. But today Mr. Vajpayee demanded the dissolution of the Assembly.

The change in stand is apparently due to the changed circumstances — one more BJP MLA has resigned (the resignation by four MLAs earlier had triggered the Goa crisis) and party strategists had asked the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, to resign yesterday when the Rane Government was to move a motion of confidence. Since the Speaker does not vote, his resignation helped the BJP add one more to its falling strength. At present, the BJP and its supporters do not seem to have the numbers with them, hence a change of stand.

Rane to seek vote before budget

By Anil Sastry 10/11

PANAJI, MARCH 1. The Goa Chief Minister, Pratapsinh Rane, who could not seek a vote of confidence on Monday, following resignations of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, today said he would present the budget on March 28. He said "very soon" he would seek the vote of confidence well before the budget.

After the Cabinet meeting here today, Mr. Rane told reporters that as the House was adjourned *sine die* on Monday, it has to be prorogued by the Governor and reconvened at a later date. He said that the Government would urge the Election Commission to hold early byelections for the five constituencies that became vacant due to the resignation of BJP MLAs.

Asked about the disruption of Parliament proceedings by NDA members today, Mr. Rane said there was nothing new in it. "Every time they do it." He said the Government was functioning and the full Cabinet was taking decisions.

On the forgery allegation regarding the Deputy Chief Minister, Filipe Neri Rodrigues' disqualification proceedings, Mr. Rane said the police were 'going slow' on the instructions of the former Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar. They would now investigate the case speedily, he said.

'Intimidatory tactics'

The ousted Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, alleged that the Rane Government resorted to intimidatory tactics by pressuring the police to investigate the alleged forgery case and arrest the petitioner and MLA, Sa-

danand Shet Tanvade.

Mr. Parrikar told reporters here today that fresh summons had been issued by Mr. Tanvade asking him to appear before the police for investigation and cautioned the Government that the BJP would fight it on every possible forum.

He said he was surprised by the Director-General of Police's justification that he had taken advice from the Advocate-General (AG) and the Law Secretary. He said the DGP should have sought the advice of the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha and not that of the AG, "who has been a lawyer of the Congress."

"By doing all these, they are digging their own grave," he said. He said it was an "illegitimate government" as no notification declaring that Mr. Neri, who has been disqualified, ceased to be a Minister under Article 164 (1) (b) of the Constitution, has so far been issued. The Speaker had already informed the Election Commission about the vacancy in the Goa Assembly and the disqualification order was irreversible, he claimed.

Reiterating his demand for the dismissal of the Rane Government, Mr. Parrikar said Mr. Rane was afraid of facing the Assembly since he was in minority. The House could have been convened at short notice as it has only been adjourned *sine die*, he claimed.

Lodges police complaint

Francisco Sardinha, who was appointed the pro tem Speaker by the Governor, S.C. Jamir, on Monday, has lodged a police complaint that the files regarding the Deputy Chief Minister

were missing from the Speaker's office. Mr. Sardinha, who assumed office this afternoon, told *The Hindu* that he had to get the lockers forcibly opened in the presence of the police and the Legislature Secretary as the former Speaker did not hand over the keys till late evening.

The action was necessitated following a request by the police to the Legislature Secretary for copies of the allegedly forged documents to continue with their investigation on the complaint of Mr. Neri, Mr. Sardinha said and alleged that the absence of the files led him to suspect that Mr. Neri's complaint must be genuine and that files had been taken away to protect the accused.

Mr. Neri was disqualified by Mr. Satarkar, on Monday on the disqualification petition filed by Mr. Tanvade, alleging that the member had ceased to be an Independent MLA as he had joined the BJP in 2002.

Mr. Neri had lodged a complaint with the police alleging that his signature had been forged on the membership form. Following a complaint by Mr. Tanvade that the police were intimidating him, Mr. Satarkar had directed the police not to interfere in the proceedings pending before him.

However, Mr. Satarkar and the Deputy Speaker, Narahari Haldankar, resigned from their posts on Monday ahead of the trust vote to be sought by the Chief Minister and the House was adjourned *sine die*. With their resignations and with Mr. Sardinha's appointment as the pro tem Speaker, the Congress camp has 16 members and the BJP 17 members.

THE HINDU

02 MAR 2005

BJP, Cong want fresh polls in Goa

Suresh K Verma in New Delhi

March 1. — After making a mess of the Goa Assembly, both Congress and BJP appear to be looking for an honourable exit now. Leaders of both parties are now privately talking about President's Rule in the state, followed by fresh elections.

While leader of the Opposition, Mr LK Advani, spoke to Union defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee and Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patil, the leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Mr Jaswant Singh, spoke to Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to know the Congress' mind about the matter.

The feedback, sources said, indicated that both sides are keen on a fresh mandate. Mr Mukherjee and others reportedly expressed unhappiness about the way things were going in Goa. The BJP, which had earlier demanded that Mr Manohar Parikkar be given a chance to

prove his majority, today said that this was the time to go to the people.

While the Congress is embarrassed because of its failure to take the floor test, the BJP too is unsure about the righteousness of its conduct. In a House of 40, the spate of resignations of MLAs has brought the effective strength to 35. Even if one side proves its majority, the government would be unstable and prone to blackmailing by individual MLAs.

If President's Rule is imposed, the Governor has the option of keeping the Assembly in suspended animation or dissolving it. The latter would lead to fresh polls within six months. The BJP hopes it would get the benefit of a sympathy wave in such a scenario as it was a BJP government that was dismissed in the first place. In addition, Mr Manohar Parikkar's image may also help the party.

The Congress, on the other hand, has the advantage of having Mrs Sonia

Gandhi's leadership and her image, given that Goa has a sizeable Christian minority population which, the party believes, will tilt the balance of power in its favour. BJP had won Goa at a time when the NDA government was in power at the Centre. There was also much talk of development. Mr Parikkar's image also helped. Mr Parikkar inched closer to stability by making other MLAs resign and getting them elected on BJP tickets. Those MLAs who quit the BJP and created the Goa crisis last month belonged originally to the Congress and other parties.

Congress today said it was ready to discuss Goa with the Opposition in Parliament and blamed the BJP for the uproar in the House, leading to the adjournment today. When pointed out that BJP had asked for an adjournment motion, Congress spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said the business advisory committee should decide on when a debate should be held.

Big two differ

NEW DELHI, March 1. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani today differed on the party's Goa strategy in Parliament. Mr Vajpayee expressed reservations on disrupting the House saying this could set a "wrong precedent," but Mr Advani wanted the members to force the government to accept an adjournment motion.

But at the parliamentary party meeting, Mr Vajpayee clarified that he was talking in terms of what was good and he would finally abide by the party line. Members wanted to know what they could do but raise their voice if the government did not accept the adjournment motion. Mr Advani clarified that the BJP had already moved the motion. — SNS



Sardinha sworn in as Goa's pro-tem Speaker

Hearing on Parrikar plea adjourned

PANAJI, Feb. 28. — Hours after the resignations of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of Goa Assembly led to the cancellation of the confidence vote to be sought by the Congress-led government today, Congress MLA Mr Francisco Sardinha was sworn in as the pro-tem Speaker of the House. "The appointment letter was issued this evening," Goa Congress chief Mr Luisinho Faleiro said.

Mr Faleiro, a minister in the Pratapsinh Rane government, said the Cabinet would meet later to decide on recommending proroguing of the House to the Governor. "We will be meeting tonight to recommend that the House be prorogued as that is constitutionally required," he said.

Mr Faleiro, however, denied that the Cabinet would recommend a fresh date for the vote of confidence, saying: "The 4 March deadline does not stand now as the situation has changed, nor is it our fault that the vote of confidence was not held. The Governor should give us a fresh date. In fact, we feel that we have already won the vote of confidence," he said.

NEW DELHI, Feb. 28. — The Pratapsinh Rane government which came to power under controversial circumstances, today complained before Supreme Court



Mr Manohar Parrikar

about the Goa Speaker's "unethical" actions ahead of today's trust vote.

Recording the submissions of counsel for the Rane government and former chief minister Mr Manohar Parrikar, who has challenged his dismissal by Governor Mr SC Jamir, a Bench comprising Chief Justice Mr RC Lahoti and Mr Justice DM Dharmadhikari adjourned the hearing on the petition till 4 March.

Appearing for the former Goa chief minister, former Attorney-General Mr Soli J Sorabjee said it was unfortunate that a matter challenging the Governor's decision which has no bearing on the petition was being brought before the court. — PTI

Goa issue rocks both Houses

Speaker Denies Consent For Adjournment Motion

New Delhi: The political developments in Goa rocked both houses of parliament on Tuesday with the BJP-led NDA terming the dismissal of the Parrikar government as "a murder of democracy", forcing their adjournment for the day.

In the Lok Sabha, slogan-shouting BJP members insisted on admission of an adjournment motion moved by leader of the opposition L K Advani on the issue but speaker

Somnath Chatterjee disallowed it, saying, "I withhold my consent" on it.

After the first 15-minute adjournment, Chatterjee held a meeting with leaders of political parties and later, when the house reassembled, announced that following a "request from all sides", he was adjourning the house for the day.

Both houses plunged into turmoil as soon as they assembled on Tuesday morning with opposition members charging governor S C Jamir with "murdering" democracy in Goa by dismissing a democratically-elected government.

In a bid to drive home the point on the admissibility of the motion, Advani said such an action was never resorted to during the NDA rule at the Centre. "A democratically-elected government in Goa was dismissed a month ago in an arbitrary manner," he said.

Dissatisfied with the explanation given by Advani

for admission of the motion, Chatterjee ruled that he was not admitting it and the matter could be discussed in some other form.

The Rajya Sabha too was in turmoil with opposition members storming the well



leading to a two-hour adjournment and later for the day without transaction of any business except tabling of listed papers.

Amidst slogan-shouting, the papers were tabled by ministers before deputy chairman K Rahman Khan adjourned the house.

Quoting rules and procedures, speaker Chatterjee observed that since the matter was pending in the supreme court, he could not allow a discussion on it. The conduct of a governor also could not be debated by the house by way of an adjournment motion, he said.

Recalling that on November 27, 1996, then leader of the opposition Atal Bihari Vajpayee had given a notice for an adjournment motion on the alleged "unconstitutional" action of the Uttar Pradesh governor and continuation of President's rule in the state, Chatterjee said since the matter was sub judice, the notice was disallowed. Agencies

01 MAR 2005

Bhajan Lal's son is deputy chief minister

Press Trust of India
Chandigarh, March 15

FORMER CHIEF minister Bhajan Lal's son, Chander Mohan, was on Tuesday made Haryana deputy chief minister. He will hold the food and supplies department.

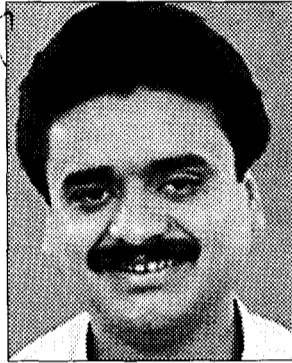
Chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said the decision to appoint Mohan as his deputy was taken by the party high command and brushed aside reports that there was "political pressure" on him in this regard. Dismissing as "speculation" reports that there was "political pressure" to make the Kalka MLA his deputy, Hooda told reporters that "it is entirely a party decision and we all respect it".

Ten Cabinet rank ministers were allocated portfolios. Senior state Congress leader Birender Singh was given the finance and labour portfolios.

Hooda, who allocated the portfolios to the Cabinet ministers sworn in last week, met Governor A.R. Kidwai at the Raj Bhavan here in this regard.

While frontrunner for the chief minister's post Birender Singh got finance, another key man who was in the race — Randeep Singh Surjewala has been given transport and parliamentary affairs.

Former Union minister Vinod Sharma becomes the excise and taxation minis-



Chander Mohan
The son also rises

ter while Lachhman Das Arora has been given the industries department.

Surender Singh, son of former chief minister Bansi Lal, has been given agriculture and revenue portfolio. Phool Chand Mulana gets education while O.P. Jindal has been given the power portfolio.

When asked on Bhajan Lal's comments that he enjoyed the support of the majority of the MLAs and could pose a problem for his government, Hooda said,

"That is a closed chapter and the party is fully united. There were talks that my term as Haryana Congress president would last only for more than three months, but I continued to head the state unit for six years," he said. About the possibility of Cabinet expansion, he said, "When the need is felt it will be done".

Hooda is new Haryana Chief Minister

Bhajan Lal camp boycotts meet

By K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4. Bhupinder Singh Hooda, MP from Rohtak, was today elected leader of the Haryana Congress Legislature Party. The CLP meeting, which was held here, was boycotted by 20 of the 67 newly elected party legislators owing allegiance to the senior party leader, Bhajan Lal.

Factional fight, which has been the bane of the State Congress, reared its head with Mr. Bhajan Lal, who made a strong bid to occupy the top political post, keeping away from the meeting along with 19 other MLAs. His son and Bhiwani MP, Kuldeep Bishnoi, too was not present. However a majority of MPs from Haryana attended. Mr. Bhajan Lal also sent in his resignation as the State Congress chief even as he created a strong pressure group within the CLP.

Unanimously elected

At the end of the hour-long meeting, the AICC general secretary, Janardhan Dwivedi, announced that Mr. Hooda had been elected CLP leader "unanimously" by the 47 legislators who attended it. The AICC observers, P.M. Sayeed

and Ashok Gehlot, were present.

Mr. Hooda's name was proposed by senior MLA Kartar Devi and seconded by others, including the Uchana MLA, Birender Singh, and the Rewari MLA, Ajay Yadav, both of

priority would be to give an administration that is free of corruption and terror, an accusation the Congress had hurled at the erstwhile Chautala Government.

High drama marked the start of the meeting at the Parliament Annexe.

It began at 4.00 p.m., 45 minutes behind schedule, as anxious supporters tried to gatecrash the high-security venue.

With the Rapid Action Force deployed to control the crowd outside the building, security personnel prevented even the media contingent from reaching there.

Mr. Hooda and Ajay Yadav, acting CLP leader of the outgoing Assembly, kept a vigil at the entrance identifying the newly elected legislators as they waded their way through the people and security personnel.

Resigns as PCC chief

Angered over being denied another opportunity to lead the Government, Mr. Bhajan Lal sent in his resignation as the State unit chief.

Sources close to him claimed that the party high command had offered the post of Governor to him, a Minister of State at the Centre for his son and the Deputy Chief Minister post for his other son, Chander Mohan, an MLA.

Barring the offer of Deputy Chief Minister to Mr. Mohan, the other two offers purported to have been made by the Congress central leadership could not be confirmed.

When it became clear by afternoon that he had lost out in the race, Mr. Bhajan Lal made a last minute effort to turn the tables when he met Ms. Gandhi and pleaded his case.

Swearing-in today

Our Chandigarh correspondent writes:

Mr. Hooda is likely to take oath as the Chief Minister here tomorrow at 5 p.m. according to Raj Bhavan sources here.

A leader who never looked back: Page 11

Trains stopped, buses stoned

By Our Special Correspondent

CHANDIGARH, MAR. 4. Violence erupted in the Hisar district of Haryana while there was tension in Panchkula district as angry supporters of former Chief Minister, Bhajan Lal, came out on the streets and reportedly stopped trains and broke window panes of buses, according to reports reaching the State headquarters here. Sources said that while buses were reportedly damaged in Hisar, trains were stopped in Adampur, the home constituency of Mr. Bhajan Lal. The supporters were protesting against the decision of the Congress High Command to appoint sitting Rohtak MP, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, as the next Chief Minister of the State.

whom were also aspirants for the post.

Mr. Hooda's election comes three days after the CLP at its first meeting in Chandigarh passed a one-line resolution authorising the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to appoint the new CLP leader.

At a press conference, Mr. Dwivedi brushed aside differences in the State party and said that Mr. Bhajan Lal had, perhaps, come under pressure created by "hopes and aspirations."

Priorities

On his part, Mr. Hooda promised to carry along all sections of the party. He said his

Hooda sworn in as Haryana CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, March 5. — Mr Bhupinder Singh Hooda was administered the oath of office and secrecy as the 19th chief minister of Haryana by the Governor, Dr AR Kidwai at a well attended function at Raj Bhawan this evening.

Former chief minister Mr Bhajan Lal also attended the ceremony. A large number of supporters of Mr Hooda, who had thronged the venue, cheered him.

Among those present were Ch. Ranbir Singh, father of Mr Hooda and a former MP, other family members, Congress general secretaries Mr Janardan Dwivedi and Mr Ashok Gehlot, Union power minister Mr PM Sayeed and Union minister of state for urban development, employment and poverty alleviation, Ms Selja, Congress MPs and MLAs.

Mr Hooda (57), has been elected to the Lok Sabha four times from the Roh-tak Lok Sabha constituency. He has defeated former Deputy Prime Minister Mr Devi Lal

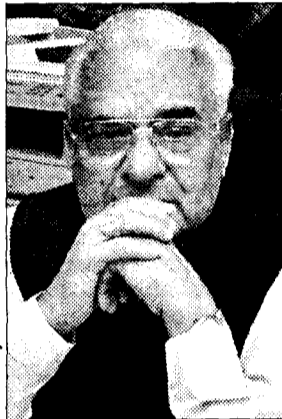
BHAJAN EXTENDS FULL SUPPORT

NEW DELHI, March 5. — Making a U-turn, Mr Bhajan Lal today extended complete support to the new government headed by Mr Bhupendra Singh Hooda and is also not insisting on his resignation as PCC chief.

His assurance came after Mr Hooda met Mr Lal at his residence this morning and sought his cooperation.

"The Hooda government will be completely stable. I will offer full cooperation to it. I will follow the direction given by the party high command," Mr Lal said. He said the party has rejected his resignation. The resignation was given to "apply pressure", he added. Claiming that as many as 42 party MLAs out of a total of 67 were supporting him, Mr Lal said that was why he was democratically fighting for the top post. "But the high command felt otherwise. You know about caste politics," he said, indicating that Mr Hooda got the job because he is a Jat.

On his reported statement that he would pull down the new government in three months, Mr Lal said cryptically "wait and watch. Why should I tell you anything now? Shall I stab him in the back?" he remarked when asked whether he would bring down the government. — PTI



thrice — in 1991, 1996 and 1998.

He was also elected to Haryana Vidhan Sabha from Kilo Assembly con-

stituency in the general elections in 2000. He was elected to the Lok Sabha for the fourth time in 2004.

MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2005

HOODA FOR HARYANA

IF THE RESULTS of the recent Assembly elections did little for the self-image of the Congress in Bihar and Jharkhand, it was an embarrassment of riches for the party in Haryana. It was not just the abundance of seats — 67 against nine for the Indian National Lok Dal in a House of 90. With the massive victory came a host of Chief Ministerial hopefuls. Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who eventually emerged as the choice of the 'high command,' was in the race with such heavyweights as thrice Chief Minister and present Pradesh Congress Committee chief Bhajan Lal; former PCC chief S.S. Surjewala (not to mention his son Randeep Surjewala); former Haryana Vikas Party leaders, Surinder Singh and Ranbir Singh; Member of Parliament Choudhary Birendra Singh; and finally Union Minister of State Kumari Shelja. While the other contenders were somewhat coy about their ambition, Mr. Bhajan Lal was upfront. The 74-year-old Haryana warhorse told the media that he considered his formal election to the post a mere formality. That he had good reason to be confident about his strength is borne out by a post-poll survey done by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies with the support of *The Hindu*. Asked to choose from among Mr. Bhajan Lal, Mr. Birendra Singh, and Mr. Hooda in the event of the Congress forming the next Government, 42 per cent of the respondents opted for Mr. Bhajan Lal and only 15 per cent for Mr. Hooda.

With the event materialising, Mr. Bhajan Lal threw a little tantrum at Mr. Hooda's election as the Haryana Congress legislature party leader (he 'resigned' in a huff from the PCC chief's post and he and his supporters boycotted the legislature party meet). However, such is the persuasive power of the 'high command' in the Congress that Mr. Bhajan Lal was soon on benevolent hand-shaking terms with the new incumbent and offering to abide by "Sonlaji's wishes." So why did the Congress president pre-

fer the less popular Mr. Hooda to Mr. Bhajan Lal? At 57, Mr. Hooda is among the younger leaders of the State and arguably qualifies as the future face of the Congress. More importantly, his selection appears to have been influenced by the presumed role of the Jat factor in Haryana politics. As a Jat, Mr. Hooda was thought to be in a position to leverage the influence and clout of the community. The CSDS survey shows that many of these assumptions have no valid basis. For a start, the Jats account for only about a quarter of Haryana's electorate. Secondly, the community (like any other community or section of society) has never voted *en bloc* for any one party, as is popularly believed; even at the peak of its popularity, the INLD polled less than 50 per cent of the Jat vote. This time, contrary to the presumption that the INLD's defeat was brought about by the 'desertion' of the Jat vote, about 40 per cent of voters from this mega-caste group voted for it as against a quarter each for the Congress and independents.

This is a heady moment for the Congress in Haryana. The Janata wave of 1977 and the Lok Dal-Bharatiya Janata Party landslide of 1987 aside, no party has ever triumphed on this scale in the State. The Congress sweep cut across the various regions and caste groups. Nonetheless the INLD remains a serious player, a party that is down but far from out. The CSDS post-poll survey's basic finding is that the Congress' superlative performance came not so much by snatching votes directly from its chief adversary or through alliance arithmetic as by capitalising on a strong wave of popular resentment against the Chautala regime's perceived heavy-handedness, nepotism, and corruption. Interestingly, 73 per cent of voters surveyed agreed with the statement that "despite shortcomings, [the] Chautala Government has worked for [the] development of the State." There is a politico-moral lesson in this for all parties, not just for the INLD and the Congress.

THE HINDU

07 MAR 2005

07 MAR 2005

HPD-12
27/2

Tussle likely over seating in Goa Assembly

9.8.05

By Anil Sastry

PANAJI, FEB. 26. A tussle between the Speaker and the Pratapsinh Rane Government appears imminent on Monday when Mr. Rane seeks a vote of confidence in the Assembly as the Congress today claimed that the Speaker has not made separate seating arrangements despite Mr. Rane's written request.

Speaking to reporters at the State Congress headquarters after meeting the Governor, S.C. Jamir, here this evening, Mr. Rane said when he was sworn in as Chief Minister by the Governor — the appointing authority — the Speaker had a very limited role. Despite the Speaker's "unfair" conduct on February 2 when the Manohar Parrikar Government "won" the vote of confidence, Mr. Rane said he was hopeful of the Speaker behaving in an unbiased and neutral manner.

The Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) president, Luizinho Faleiro, said no separate seating arrangement had been notified till late this evening, as today was the last working day before Monday. He

said the Speaker did not turn up in his office today also. Mr. Faleiro noted that despite requests by the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) member, Ramakrishna Dhavlikar, and the Independent member, Filipe Neri Rodrigues, for a separate arrangement after withdrawing their support to the Parrikar Government, the Speaker accommodated them in the Treasury benches on February 2, 'ostensibly to facilitate' Mr. Neri's ouster from the House.

When asked what would be their course of action if the Speaker did not recognise Mr. Rane as the Leader of the House, Mr. Rane said the Speaker could not do so.

He had a very limited role to maintain order in the House and conduct the proceedings as per the agenda set out by the Governor. He said, "I am going there in good faith that proper seating arrangements would be made (by the Speaker)."

Both Mr. Rane and Mr. Faleiro took serious exception to the Speaker's decision not to allow the electronic media as well as still cameras inside the House

on Monday and termed the same as denial of the fundamental right to information. They said it was due to the presence of the electronic media, that the whole country could witness the happenings in the House on February 2. They said they had apprised the Governor of all these developments.

Disqualification plea

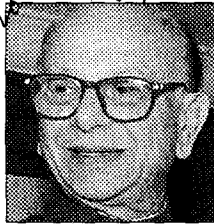
Mr. Parrikar has filed a petition before the Speaker seeking disqualification of his former lieutenant Digambar Kamat who resigned from the Assembly membership on Thursday. Mr. Kamat's resignation is yet to be accepted by the Speaker, who has been "out of town" since Thursday.

The BJP State unit president, Rajendra Arlekar, told *The Hindu* that Mr. Kamat allegedly attracted disqualification as he voluntarily resigned from the membership after the notification convening the Assembly was issued on February 22. Also, he associated himself with the Congress before submitting his resignation lending a strong ground for the disqualification proceedings, he claimed.

Rane questions judicial review

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 25

THE CONGRESS-LED Goa government has defended the Governor's decision to dismiss the erstwhile BJP government on the ground that such dismissal was well within his discretionary powers and questioned the courts' power to review any such decision.



"It is well-settled that in the appointment and dismissal of a chief minister, the Governor is the best judge... as he alone is in possession of relevant information and material on the basis of which he acts... exercise of this discretion is not amenable to judicial review," an affidavit filed by the Pratap Singh Rane government in the Supreme Court said.

The affidavit stated that the Parrikar government had already lost its majority and cited a January 31 letter, written to Governor S.C. Jamir, in which the Congress-led ULP had staked its claim to form a new government claiming it enjoyed a majority of 18 in the 38-member house.

It dubbed the happenings of February 2 in which the Parrikar government won a trust vote in the House as "pre-planned action" designed solely to deprive "Independent" MLA Filip Neri Rodrigues of his vote so as to "falsely present a majority".

The Speaker had on that day disqualified Rodrigues from voting for "unruly" conduct. The affidavit stated that the MLA had not displayed any unruly conduct to justify such action. It also contested the Speaker's report to the Governor stating that Parrikar had won with 18 votes with six members voting against. It wondered what happened to the other members present and voting.

COURT POSTS PARRIKAR'S PETITION

SC show-cause to Goa govt

SC 13
2/10
9-88
Goa

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Feb. 21. — The Supreme Court today issued a notice to Goa chief minister Mr Pratapsinh Rane to show cause why the functioning of his government should not be stayed. It posted the petition filed by former chief minister Mr Manohar Parrikar for further hearing on 28 February.

Mr Parrikar even proposed to the court that it order a composite floor test on 24 February to determine who enjoyed the majority support in the House — he or Mr Rane.

A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice Mr RC Lahoti, Mr Justice DM Dharmadhikari and Mr Justice BN Srikrishna issued notices on the petition filed by Mr Parrikar as well as the interim relief prayer seeking stay of the functioning of the government.

Appearing for Mr Parrikar, who was present in the court, former Attorney-General Mr Soli J Sorabjee termed the 2 February order of Goa Governor Mr SC Jamir as

Trust vote on 28 Feb

PANAJI, Feb. 21. — The Goa Assembly will meet on 28 February for a vote of confidence sought by the Pratapsinh Rane government amidst speculation whether the chief minister would be able to muster the majority. The Cabinet recommended to Governor Mr SC Jamir to convene one-day Assembly session on 28 February for the trial of strength which was accepted by him. Raj Bhavan sources said the recommendation had been approved by the Governor who forwarded it to Speaker Mr Vishwas Satarkar. — PTI

“patently illegal” as the petitioner had proved majority on the floor of the House.

He contended that the Governor acted in a “partisan manner” by dismissing the BJP government as he did not even wait for the report of the Speaker detailing the proceedings of the House when Mr Parrikar won the motion

of confidence.

However, he suggested to the court to direct convening of a special session of the Assembly for 24 February for a “composite floor test between Mr Parrikar and Mr Rane”. However, the Bench asked senior advocate Mr Fali S Nariman, appearing for the Rane government, to respond to Mr Sorabjee’s proposal by 28 February.

Mr Sorabjee expressed apprehension that the hurriedly sworn-in Rane government has been going ahead with certain policy decisions and it be restrained from taking any such decision.

The Bench, reluctant to issue a direction in this regard, asked the counsel to bring it to its notice on 28 February if any such policy decision was taken and observed that “any way all such decisions were subject to the outcome of the hearing of the petition”.

Mr Sorabjee also assailed the decision of the Governor to give only 48 hours to Mr Parrikar to prove his majority and not to fix any time limit for Mr Rane to do the same.

THE STATESMAN

22 FEB 2005

Goa: NDA threatens to stall Parliament

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, FEB. 8. Continuing their protest against the dismissal of the Manohar Parrikar Government of Goa, The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners today took to the streets, threatening to stall the Parliament proceedings during the budget session against, what they alleged, a conspiracy by the Central Government to oust a duly elected Government.

Led by the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the BJP president, L.K. Advani, the NDA leaders staged a day-long dharna at Jantar Mantar. They accused the United Progressive Alliance Government of orchestrating the dismissal of the Parrikar Government. The BJP is demanding that its government be reinstated and the Governor

be recalled and sacked.

The BJP's State units across the country held similar protests. From tomorrow the scene will shift to Goa where for a week the party will stage protests to focus the people's attention on the issue. The party's leader in the Rajya Sabha, Jaswant Singh, will lead the protests there.

Senior NDA leaders, including its convener, George Fernandes, and the BJP Chief Ministers of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh participated in the dharna here. Mr. Parrikar was also present. The Trinamool Congress, the Akali Dal, the Biju Janata Dal and the Shiv Sena were also represented.

Party leaders said they want to use the Goa issue to "consolidate" not only the NDA but also "other non-Congress parties" and caution them

against Congress designs. "This is a larger issue, which is not confined to what happened or will happen in Goa ... the legal alternative will be explored, but we want to fight the issue politically," the party vice-president, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said.

Kalam urged to intervene

Taking part in the protest at the fag end of the day, Mr. Vajpayee urged the President, A.P. J. Abdul Kalam, to intervene and restore the Manohar Parrikar Government. Warning that the NDA would not remain a mute spectator to such "arbitrary" actions of the Centre, Mr. Vajpayee said the nationwide agitation would continue till the BJP-led Government in Goa was re-instated. The dismissal of the Goa Government was a warning to the other non-Con-

gress ruled States, he said.

Mr. Advani said: "The Congress never believed in democracy and this agitation is to save and show the power of democracy." The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, had set a "dangerous precedent." The Constitution-framers had never imagined that Article 164, which states that a State government can remain in power only at the pleasure of the Governor, would be misused in such a manner, he said.

He claimed that the direction to dismiss the government was given in advance by the Congress leadership, even before the trial of strength on the floor of the House. The BJP general secretary, Sushma Swaraj, hinted that in the present situation it would not be possible to ensure normal functioning of Parliament during the budget session.

Rane asked to prove majority by March 4

HD-1
8/2

9.87 - Goa

By Anil Sastry

PANAJI, FEB. 7. The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, has asked the Chief Minister, Pratapsinh Rane, who was sworn in on February 2, to seek a vote of confidence on the floor of the Assembly on or before March 4.

Sebastian Zumvu, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to the Governor, who is in Delhi along with Mr. Jamir, told *The Hindu* over the phone that Mr. Rane had been given 30 days' time from the date of swearing-in to prove his majority.

When contacted, Mr. Rane said he would hold a press conference but did not specify any

date.

Though there were reports of allocation of portfolios to his ministerial colleagues by Mr. Rane, no official announcement was made till late this evening. Mr. Rane expanded his Cabinet on February 3, taking its strength to eight and keeping four more berths vacant. The Goa Pradesh Congress chief, Luizinho Faleiro, who has just returned from Delhi, said he was not aware of the allocation of portfolios.

The Union Home Ministry has relieved the Goa Chief Secretary, D.S. Negi, of his duties and has asked him to report to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as its Chief Secretary by

February 9. Mr. Negi, who received the transfer order just before the political crisis broke out last week, stayed back due to the political developments.

Confirming that he had received the relieving order, Mr. Negi told *The Hindu* that he would ask the State Government to relieve him while saying that Mr. Rane was asking him to stay back.

In another development, the Government has relieved the Director of Information, Dilip Deshpande, of his duties and asked Menino Peres, earlier a Joint Director in the Department, to take over.

It was murder of democracy, says Governor: Page 11

THE HINDU

08 FEB 1988

Goa Speaker should go: Congress

By Our Special Correspondent

HD-1
672 ✓

NEW DELHI, FEB. 5. The newly installed Goa Chief Minister, Praptapsinh Rane, said today that the Legislative Assembly Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, should step down from the post, failing which he would be removed.

Questioning the Speaker's conduct during the vote of confidence sought by the previous Manohar Parrikar Government this week, Mr. Rane said that a notice expressing no confidence in Mr. Satarkar and the Deputy Speaker, had been submitted to the Governor, S.C. Jamir.

Mr. Rane, who was here to consult the party's central leadership, said that he was sure his Government would win the confidence vote. He had already requested the Governor to set a timeframe for the new Government to prove its majority on the floor of the House.

At a press conference, Mr.

Rane, along with the Goa Congress chief, Luizinho Faleiro, and the All-India Congress Committee general secretary, Margaret Alva, in-charge of party affairs in the State, denied that dissidence had surfaced in the 15-member Congress Legislature Party after the expansion that led to the inclusion of three allies and two former BJP members, who had since rejoined the Congress.

"There is no problem absolutely... the majority of our MLAs were not asking for posts. They are glad the Government [of Mr. Parrikar] has gone. We are sure all the Congress workers are united and there would be more desertions in the BJP camp," they said.

Narrating the sequence of events since the resignation of the four BJP MLAs up to the dismissal of the BJP-led Government, Mr. Rane and Mr. Faleiro, now a Minister, accused the Speaker of being in league with

Mr. Parrikar.

9.87 -

They said the vote of confidence was taken by head count when plainclothes policemen were inside the Assembly to evict the Independent MLA, Filipe Neri Rodrigues, now the Deputy Chief Minister.

"In the melee, the then Chief Minister tells the Speaker to announce the results, and never before has it happened that voting goes on when strangers are present on the floor of the House. People who do not believe in democracy talk of its murder," Mr. Faleiro said.

Speaker rejects demand

PTI reports from Panaji:

Mr. Satarkar today rejected the demands for his resignation and attacked the Governor, S.C. Jamir, saying he had "no right to interfere in my business and ... has no right to interfere in the business of the Assembly."

BJP protest under NDA banner: Page 8

Goa: BJP plans legal action

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 4. The Bharatiya Janata Party has decided to fight the Goa case both legally and politically for it believes that the Governor's action in dismissing the Manohar Parrikar Government was "illegal and unconstitutional."

At a meeting this morning, chaired by the BJP president, L.K. Advani, it was decided that while the dismissed Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, would explore the legal avenues through a petition in the Bombay High Court, the party cadre would be galvanised to hold demonstrations throughout the country on February 8, to be observed as "Save Democracy, Sack Governor Jamir" day.

The party has already talked to the National Democratic Alliance convener and Janata Dal (United) leader, George Fernandes, who will get in touch with other NDA leaders so that all NDA parties may join the protest. In Delhi, a protest 'dharna' on February 8 will be led by the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Mr. Advani and Mr. Fernandes.

Briefing reporters, the party leader, Sushma Swaraj, refuted the allegation that the Speaker of the Goa Assembly had wrongly prevented one independent MLA from casting his vote during the trust motion moved by the now dismissed Parrikar Government.

"Even if the Speaker had done something wrong, there were only two options open to the aggrieved party: remove the Speaker through a no-confidence motion or move the court against the Speaker's ruling."

"The Speaker's wrong cannot be righted by the Governor's wrong," she maintained. If the Speaker had done wrong by not allowing an MLA to vote, the Governor had no power to dismiss the Government ignoring

the Speaker's ruling that the Parrikar Government had won the trust vote.

She regretted that a BJP MLA who had resigned from the Assembly recently had been made

a Minister in the new Rane Government. This was against the spirit of the new legislation that prohibited giving a public office to a defector to entice him, she said.

Congress confident

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 4. The Congress central leadership hopes that the Goa Chief Minister, Pratapsinh Rane, will be able to secure a vote of confidence.

Although there appears to be no deadline for the new Government to prove its majority on the floor of the House, party leaders are confident that the Chief Minister would be able to do so over the next seven days.

The Congress sent its general secretary supervising party affairs in the State, Margaret Alva, to Panaji amid reports that Mr. Rane was facing dis-sidence as many aspirants were keen on joining the Ministry. However, the party spokesman, Abhishek Singhvi, dismissed such reports as "speculative."

He defended the Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, who has been

under attack from the BJP for dismissing the Manohar Parrikar Government. Mr. Singhvi said the Governor intervened to "stop the murder of democracy."

The Parrikar Government had lost its mandate and yet it "tried to cling [to power] by brute force by preventing one of the MLAs from voting, so as to convert a Congress-alliance majority in its favour. This manipulation and skulduggery did not succeed."

Our Staff Correspondent writes from Panaji:

Ms. Alva, who reached here in the evening, was closeted with Mr. Rane, Congress MLAs and Ministers..

Emerging from the meeting, Mr. Rane refused to comment. Ms. Alva said there was no proposal for Cabinet expansion before the Government sought a vote of confidence in the House.

THE HINDU

05 FEB 2005

মধ্যরাতে রানের নেতৃত্বে কং সরকার, নেরি উপমুখ্যমন্ত্রী গোয়া : বি জে পি কালামের দ্বারস্থ

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি— মনোহর পারিকার সরকার খারিজ হয়ে যাওয়ার পর গতকাল গভীর রাতে নাটকীয় পরিস্থিতিতে গোয়ায় প্রতাপ সিং রানের নেতৃত্বে কংগ্রেস সরকার শপথ নেয়। যে নির্দল বিধায়ককে নিয়ে পারিকারের আস্থাভাঙে তুলসীলাল ঘটে, সেই ফিলিপ নেরি রডরিগসকে উপমুখ্যমন্ত্রী করা হয়েছে। বেছে বেছে আরও ছ'জন মন্ত্রী নিয়েছেন রানে। তাঁর সরকার টিকিয়ে রাখতে ছ'জনের গুরুত্বই অপরিসীম। এঁদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন বি জে পি সরকার ফেলায় সবচেয়ে বড় উদ্যোগ যে দুই বি জে পি বিধায়কের, সেই ইসাভোর ফার্নান্ডেজ ও পাণ্ডুরং মাদগাইকার। অন্যরা হলেন এন সি পি-র উইলফ্রেড ডি সূজা, এম জি পি-র সুধীন দাভলিকর এবং কংগ্রেসের দুই প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী দয়ানন্দ নারভেকর ও লুইসিনহো ফার্নান্ডেজ। এদিকে, রাষ্ট্রপতি আর আদালতের দরজায় কড়া নাড়ছে বি জে পি। রাতারাতি বরখাস্ত মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মনোহর পারিকারকে ডেকে আনা হল দিল্লিতে। বিকেল ৫টা বাজপেয়ী এবং আদবানির নেতৃত্বে বি জে পি প্রতিনিধিদল গেল রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে, গোয়ার রানে সরকার বরখাস্ত করে ফের মনোহর পারিকারকে আস্থাভাঙে নেওয়ার সুযোগ দেওয়ার দাবি নিয়ে। রাজ্যপাল জামিরের পাশাপাশি কেন্দ্রীয় জলসম্পদ মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাসমুসিকেকেও কার্যত কাঠগড়ায় তুলেছে বি জে পি। বি জে পি-র আশঙ্কা এবার গুজরাটের মোদি সরকারকে নিয়ে। মনোহর

সরকার খারিজকে বড়সড় রাজনৈতিক প্রচারের ইস্যু করার প্রস্তুতি নিচ্ছে বি জে পি। আরেকটি রডরিগসের তল্লাশে নেমেছে বি জে পি, কংগ্রেস শিবিরে। এদিকে, আজ চার বাম দলের বৈঠকের পর সি পি এম নেতা সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি গোয়ায় নতুন করে নির্বাচনের দাবি জানান। রাজ্যপালের ভূমিকায় সমর্থন নেই বামদের। তাদের মতে, ১ সদস্যের গরিষ্ঠতা নিয়ে সরকার চালালে অনৈতিক কারবারও চলবে লাগাতার। গোয়ায় স্থিতিশীল সরকার গড়াও যাবে না এই পরিস্থিতিতে। আজ পানাজিতে নতুন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী প্রতাপ সিং রানে সরাসরি অভিযোগ আনেন খোদ স্পিকার সাভারকারের বিরুদ্ধে। অভিযোগ, সাভারকার উপমুখ্যমন্ত্রী রডরিগসকে অপহরণের ব্যবস্থা করেছিলেন, গতকাল বিধানসভায় আস্থাভাঙের ঠিক আগে। কিন্তু স্পিকারের বিরুদ্ধে অনাস্থা আনার সিদ্ধান্তও এই মুহূর্তে নিতে পারছেন না রানে। রডরিগস নির্দল সদস্য হিসেবে ভোটে জিতেছিলেন। তার পর বি জে পি-তে যোগ দেন। গতকালের আস্থাভাঙে পরিচালনায় স্পিকারের কড়া সমালোচনা করেছেন রাজ্যপাল নিজেও। তাঁর মতে, স্পিকারের নির্দেশেই রডরিগসকে গতকাল বার করে দেওয়া হয়। কাল রাতের সেই ঘটনার সময় মার্শালের সঙ্গে হাতাহাতি হচ্ছিল কংগ্রেস বিধায়কদের। রডরিগসের পক্ষে দাঁড়িয়ে তাঁরা রুখছিলেন তাঁর বহিষ্কার। ইতিমধ্যে ভোট ও ঘোষণা: ১৮/৬ ভোটে মনোহর জিতে গেছেন।

অথচ ভোটের আগে যে স্বাভাবিক পরিস্থিতি ও পরিবেশ চাই সভায় ও লবিংতে, তা অবশ্যই ছিল না। অভিযোগ, বি জে পি বাইরের লোকও ঢুকিয়েছিল সভায়। এর পরই সাংবিধানিক ভূমিকা নেন রাজ্যপাল জামির। নাগাল্যান্ডের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ছিলেন অনেক দিন। সংসদীয় রাজনীতির হাল ধরেছেন জঙ্গি রাজ্যে। দুঁদে রাজনীতিবিদ। বিধানসভার পরিস্থিতি যাচাই করার পর তিনি তাঁর 'প্লেজার' বা অনুমোদন প্রত্যাহার করেন সরকারের ওপর থেকে। রাতারাতিই প্রতাপ সিং রানেকে ডেকে শপথ নেওয়ান। মনোহর পারিকার প্রিয়রঞ্জনকেও তাঁর আক্রমণের লক্ষ্যে রেখেছেন। কারণ গোয়ায় হাজির প্রিয়রঞ্জনের সঙ্গে প্রতি আধ ঘণ্টা অন্তর আলোচনা করেছেন রাজ্যপাল জামির। উল্লেখ্য, গোয়ায় ছিলেন প্রিয়বাবু ফুটবল ফেডারেশনের সভাপতি হিসেবে, জাতীয় লিগ খেলার তদারকিতে। মনোহর যা-ই বলুন দিল্লিতে বসে, খোদ পানাজির সরকারের রং রাতারাতি বদলে দিয়ে জনজীবনে সুপরিচিত প্রতাপ সিং রানে বলছিলেন গোয়ার রাজধানীতে বসেই, কাল রাতের কাণ্ডকারখানা। তাঁর অভিযোগ, স্পিকার সাভারকার অন্তত ৫০ জন পুলিশকর্মী ঢুকিয়েছিলেন সভায়। রডরিগসকে অপহরণের মতলব ছিল। আমরা কিন্তু সরকার উল্টোতে চাইনি। চেয়েছিলাম সরকার হেরে গেলে নতুন সরকার গড়তে। তা ছাড়া আস্থাভাঙে কীভাবে হয়, সভায় বাইরের লোকদের উপস্থিতিতে?

Rane's career is a saga of political survival

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Panaji: It is not always easy for a chief minister to stay afloat for about 33 years in active politics. Many retire or simply tire out. But why would Pratapsingh Rane, who loves the ranches and has a passion for horse riding?

The Congress chief minister, who did his MBA in Texas, worked for the TATA in Jamshedpur before being handpicked by the first chief minister of Goa to lead the state as the longest-serving chief minister never fails to introduce himself first as a farmer. Down but not out since 1998, when his government was brought tumbling down by the state NCP president and sole MLA of his party in the present assembly, Wilfred D' Souza, the senior-most Congress leader has risen like the proverbial phoenix.

Rane always remembers D B Bandodkar, Goa's first chief minister who was the undisputed leader of the MGP and came to power in the first election after Goa's liberation in 1961. He did not fail his mentor who too had a long stint until he died in the early 1970's.

Suave, very watchful and one who is respected by leaders across the political spectrum, Rane bounced back when he was sworn in by the governor on Wednesday night. The mantle of leading a Congress-led government fell on him as it was an open secret that he was the only consensus candidate.

His is a known face to the governor, S C Jamir who too served long as the Congress chief minister of Nagaland before taking up the gubernatorial posting in Goa for the first time. Both shook hands and exchanged a knowing nod soon after the elderly governor was over



Pratapsingh Rane is sworn in CM of Goa by governor S C Jamir on Wednesday night

with the swearing in, a few hours after he had dismissed the Parrikar government.

Becoming a chief minister, though, does not excite Rane. "Well, you know I have been into politics for a very long period. This is the sixth time, including the time when the state was a Union territory." Soon after he signed the papers, Rane said his priority would be rural development and finding out avenues for providing employment. His ancestral house in Sattari in north Goa, considered a little remote from the capital is a ready reference when it comes to defining development.

Drinking water is still a problem, he says, while describing the backward area where farmers engage in cultivation. Urban slum problem, running the hospitals in a hospitable way and education are some of the priority issues of the new government. And Rane said he would devote much of his time to pull out the state from its present time warp as about 50 per cent of the small population of Goa live in the villages and by any stretch of imagination shall continue to do so owing to the peculiarity of the town-village concept of life.

Goa Cabinet expanded

By Our Special Correspondent

PANAJI, FEB. 3. The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, today administered the oath of office and secrecy to six Ministers of the Pratapsinh Rane Government that came to power on Wednesday after the dismissal of the Manohar Parrikar Government.

Among those sworn in were Isidore Fernandes and Pandurang Madkaikar, who was the Transport Minister in the Parrikar Government.

Mr. Rane said the Government would not seek a separate vote of confidence — it would get the budget passed during the Assembly session next month to prove its majority.

The Congress-led United

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A farcical vote: Editorial
on Page 10

Legislature Party (ULP) has 18 members in a House of 36, which has the Speaker from the BJP.

With today's expansion, the total strength of the Cabinet has gone up to eight.

The others sworn in were the Nationalist Congress Party member and former Chief Minister, Wilfred D'Souza, the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party member, Ramakrishna Dhavlikar, the chief of the Goa unit of the Congress and former Chief Minister, Luizinho Faleiro, and the Congress MLA, Dayanand Narvekar.

BJP may move court on Goa

Statesman News Service 9/2

NEW DELHI, Feb. 3. — The BJP is contemplating moving the court after the Goa Governor's decision to dismiss the Manohar Parrikar government. While some leaders are optimistic about a favourable court ruling, others believe they should defeat the Congress-led Pratap Singh Rane government during the confidence vote.

Former Goa chief minister Mr Manohar Parrikar, whom senior BJP leader Mrs Sushma Swaraj addressed as the chief minister, paraded 17 MLAs, including the UGDP MLA, Mr Mathany Saldanha, before the media at the BJP office today. Goa Speaker Mr Vishwas Satharkar was not there.

Later, the delegation met the President and submitted a memorandum demanding recall of Governor Mr SC

Jamir and reinstatement of their government. "The Governor has no powers to annul the Speaker's ruling. Judiciary is the sole forum before which an appeal can be made against Speaker's ruling," it said. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr LK Advani and former Goa Governor Lt-Gen. (Retd) JFR Jacob were also present. The BJP brass will discuss its strategy tomorrow.

The BJP said the Governor's messenger arrived at the Assembly with the dismissal letter at 5.45 p.m. "as per Assembly records" whereas the Speaker adjourned the Assembly at 5.45 p.m. "It takes at least 15 minutes to drive from the Raj Bhavan to the Assembly," Mr Parrikar said. "This means the Governor had prepared and signed the letter of dismissal before the outcome of the trial of strength and before receiving an official report from the Speaker," he said. "I

was aware that the Raj Bhavan had already set in motion efforts to destabilise my government under directions from Congress high command," he said. That the Governor asked him to prove his majority immediately but gave 30 days to Mr Rane to do so has also upset Mr Parrikar.

The BJP is awaiting the disqualification of Independent MLA Mr Phillip Neri Rodrigues, who was elected as an Independent but joined the BJP later. His disqualification is based on the provision that an elected Independent MLA cannot join a party.

Mr Rane expanded his Cabinet today inducting six ministers. Two of them were from Congress. The other four included one each from NCP and MGP and two BJP MLAs who resigned last week. Both said they had not joined the Congress yet.

More reports on page 4

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2005

9-888
A FARCICAL VOTE OF CONFIDENCE 810-10

THE SUDDEN POLITICAL convulsions that gripped Goa have seen the emergence of its 14th Chief Minister since 1990 under circumstances that are bound to be debated fiercely between the main protagonists, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress, and possibly in the courts as well. Things seemed to be following the constitutionally ordained course, with Governor S.C. Jamir asking Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar to demonstrate his support in the Legislative Assembly and the State Cabinet opting for an early session to seek a vote of confidence. Yet the floor test turned out to be an exercise tainted by the Speaker's partisan act of keeping an independent MLA (who failed to appear before him for an enquiry on his disqualification) out of the House for "disorderly conduct" in an attempt to manage a majority for the Parrikar Government. The Speaker also counted an opposition Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party MLA as a ruling camp supporter before declaring that the Government had the support of 18 members in a House of 36, down from 40 after the resignation of four BJP MLAs. In the end, the highly desirable democratic exercise was turned into a farce, with a supposedly neutral and fair constitutional functionary displaying blatant partisanship and prompting the Governor to disregard the vote and dismiss the Government.

This is not the first time that voting within a legislature has been turned into a charade with the Speaker changing the rules of the game and manipulating the outcome. A blatant instance was witnessed in the Tamil Nadu Assembly in 1988 when a large section of the Opposition was evicted from the House and the Janaki Ramachandran regime was declared to have won the confidence vote — the vote was discounted and the Government dismissed by the Governor. In Meghalaya in 1991, the Speaker disallowed the votes of four independent MLAs against whom

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810-10
disqualification petitions had been filed, even in the face of a Supreme Court directive staying his enquiry on the petitions, declared a tie, and cast his vote to "defeat" the Government. The Supreme Court in the S.R. Bommai case held that the dismissal of the Meghalaya Government on the basis of such manipulated voting was clearly unconstitutional.

If the Congress Government headed by Pratap Singh Rane assumes office under circumstances that are controversial, his hurried swearing in probably reflects the desire of the Congress Party to keep the focus on the Governor and within the State, and avoid the imposition of President's rule that would take the issue to Parliament and to the national level. The 15-member Congress Party has additionally the support of three other members — one each from the MGP and the Nationalist Congress Party, and one independent — while the BJP combine has the same strength of 18 including the Speaker. Managing the numbers is going to be a difficult task for Mr. Rane, particularly if the Speaker has to be replaced by someone from the Congress ranks. The options before him are not quite edifying — persuading the United Goans Democratic Party legislator now aligned with the BJP to cross over or persuading some of the BJP MLAs to resign (party splits even with one third or more of the members no longer being allowed under the amended anti-defection law). Given the manner in which he has taken over, it is imperative that Mr. Rane be asked to demonstrate his support in the House through a vote of confidence without delay. It does seem strange that the Governor has not asked him to seek such a vote within a specific time frame. In the hapless 25th State of the Union, ideological and political consistency has not been seen as particularly virtuous and neither electoral verdicts nor the ways of political leaders and parties have made for stability.

THE HINDU

04 FEB 2005

Trust vote was a sham, says Jamir

By Our Special Correspondent

PANAJI, FEB. 3. The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, today termed the action of the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, in conducting Wednesday's vote of confidence in the Assembly "a complete sham" and "a mockery of parliamentary democracy."

Mr. Jamir, in a written communication signed by his Officer on Special Duty, Sebastian Zumvu, said that such actions were blatant violations of all accepted democratic norms and direct assaults on the sanctity of the office of Speaker.

Any person who occupies the Speaker's chair should remain neutral and act in an impartial manner and, for all practical purposes, he should cease to be a member of any political party. It is the Speaker's

responsibility to protect the sanctity of the chair he occupies. "But the action of the Speaker of the Goa Legislative Assembly in initiating the disqualification proceedings in respect of the Independent member, Shri Filipe Neri Rodrigues, was clearly with an ulterior motive to reduce the numerical strength of the INC-led United Legislature Party," the statement said.

"Proceedings chaotic"

It was "most unfortunate" and against the spirit of the Constitution that "the proceedings of the august House were reduced to a farce." Mr. Jamir was convinced that the conduct of proceedings "was absolutely chaotic and a serious blot on democracy." Accordingly, he dismissed the Government headed by Manohar Parrikar

under Article 164 after weighing all the facts and circumstances and after due application of mind.

Having received a letter from the ULP, signed by all the 18 members, staking its claim to form the government and convinced that it could provide a stable government, Mr. Jamir had sworn in Pratapsinh Rane Chief Minister.

Charges refuted

However, Mr. Satarkar refuted the charges and said that Mr. Jamir had no authority "to pass comment on him." Whatever he had done was as per the business rules of the House and the Constitution.

Mr. Satarkar said he was also a constitutional authority just like the Governor and "the Governor had no business to interfere with his functioning." The Speaker's actions could

not be gone into by the Governor and only courts had the authority to do so, he maintained. "I am not a nominated authority and am elected by the House," he said.

The Governor had asked him to convene the session on February 2 to conduct the business of the Government seeking a vote of confidence and send the report soon after the session was adjourned. The session's timing was 2.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. However, the Governor did not even wait for his report and dismissed the Government at 6.35 p.m., he claimed.

Mr. Satarkar regretted that Mr. Jamir had prorogued the House on Wednesday, while it was entirely in his domain to do so. "I am governed by the rules of the House as well as the Constitution," he said.

Charges levelled against Modi

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, FEB. 3. Vithhalbhai Pandya, the octogenarian father of the slain Gujarat Minister of State for Home, Haren Pandya, today claimed that BJP workers were "instructed" by the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, to "avenge" the Godhra train tragedy.

Deposing before the G. T. Navati and K. G. Shah Judicial Inquiry Commission probing into the Godhra train carnage and the post-Godhra communal riots in the State, Mr. Pandya claimed that Mr. Modi and a Deputy Minister in his Cabinet, Prabhatsinh Chauhan, who hails from the same Panchmahals district of which Godhra was the district headquarter, were present at a meeting at Lunavada, near Godhra, soon after the train carnage.

He said at least 55 BJP workers attended the meeting in which Mr. Modi "instructed" them to avenge the Godhra killings and send them to different parts of the State for the purpose.

Goa Speaker's order was the trigger

By Anil Sastry

PANAJI, FEB. 3. The crisis in the Goa Legislature on Wednesday when the Manohar Parrikar Government faced the vote of confidence was triggered by the Speaker's order to an Independent MLA — whose vote was crucial for the Congress-led coalition to defeat the Government — to withdraw from the House for "disorderly behaviour."

With swift political developments since Saturday, the strength of ruling BJP had come down from 24 to 17 not including the Speaker (after four BJP MLAs resigned and two Independents withdrew support) and that of the Congress had increased to 18 (Congress 15, NCP 1, Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party 1 and Independent 1). Unless the Parrikar Government won over either the MGP MLA or the Independent MLA, it could not have ensured a tie during voting. A tie would have enabled the Speaker (who is from the BJP) to exercise his

casting vote.

When the Parrikar Government could not get the support of the MGP MLA, Ramakrishna Dhavlikar, whose party had issued him a whip, it attempted to win over the Independent MLA, Filipe Neri Rodrigues. Mr. Neri was with the Congress MLAs in the run-up to the voting. A BJP MLA then filed a disqualification petition against Mr. Neri on the grounds that he had become an associate member of the BJP in October 2002.

The Speaker issued notice to Mr. Neri and summoned him to his office thrice on Wednesday. Mr. Neri reportedly said he would meet him after the session. Congress legislators had already met the Governor on Wednesday afternoon apprehending disqualification of Mr. Neri by the Speaker. However, the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, had reportedly assured the Governor that he would allow all the 36 members to enter the House.

The session started smoothly with Mr. Parrikar tabling the one-line motion and the Oppo-

sition leader, Pratapsinh Rane, initiating the discussion. After the House reassembled at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Mr. Satarkar ordered Mr. Neri to withdraw from the House under Rule 289 (disorderly behaviour) drawing strong protests from the Congress members. When Mr. Neri was ordered to be physically removed, the Congress members rushed to his rescue. The Speaker's plea to continue the debate went unheeded; he then put the motion to vote.

During the head count, Mr. Dhavlikar, who apparently stood up to protect Mr. Neri, was also counted "in favour" of the motion. This took the total number in favour to 18 and those against were counted as six, as some Congress members were not in their seats.

On counting Mr. Dhavlikar "in favour" of the motion, Mr. Satarkar said Mr. Dhavlikar stood up when he asked those in favour to say "aye," and that he did not know about his withdrawal of support to the Parikkar Government.

BJP delegation meets Kalam

By Our Special Correspondent

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NEW DELHI, FEB. 3. A high-level delegation of the Bharatiya Janata Party today met the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, to seek his intervention to get the dismissed Manohar Parrikar Government in Goa reinstated. The party also asked for the recall of the Governor of Goa, S.C. Jamir, for what it described as his "unconstitutional and partisan" action.

Separately, the BJP has decided to approach the courts after discussing the issue thoroughly with legal experts. Summoned to Delhi by the party president, L.K. Advani, all the 16 MLAs of the BJP and the dismissed Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, arrived here and accompanied the delegation to the President, led by the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Memorandum submitted

The three-page memorandum submitted to the President charged the Governor with

mounting an "unprecedented assault on Indian democracy" by dismissing the Parrikar Government. The party claimed that the Chief Minister had proved his majority on the floor of the House — a point that is hotly contested by the Congress, which has criticised the Speaker for violating all norms by physically evicting from the House one Independent MLA just before the voting on the motion seeking confidence.

The BJP has alleged that sending Mr. Jamir to Goa as the Governor was part of a "plot" hatched by the Congress high command here to destabilise the duly elected Government in the State. The BJP told the President that the Governor had no power to annul the ruling of the Speaker. The court was the only forum before which an appeal against the Speaker's ruling could be made.

Further, the BJP delegation said that by swearing-in a Congress Government immediately after dismissing a BJP-led Government the Governor had demonstrated his "partisan and politically motivated approach."

Goa Government dismissed

By Anil Sastry

PANAJI, FEB. 2. The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, this evening dismissed the 32-month-old Manohar Parrikar-led Bharatiya Janata Party coalition government, even as the Government won a vote of confidence, albeit controversial, on the floor of the House.

The session was adjourned abruptly by the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, at 5.40 p.m. after the vote. Mr. Parrikar said he received the order dismissing him at 6.10 p.m. The one line order read: "In exercise of powers vested under Article 164(1) and other enabling provisions of the Constitution of India, I, S.C. Jamir, Governor of the State of Goa, do hereby withdraw my pleasure and accordingly dismiss Shri. Manohar Parrikar as Chief Minister of the State of Goa."

The House had earlier passed the confidence motion with 18 votes in favour and six against.

It's a violation of Constitution: Parrikar

Terming the dismissal a gross violation of the Constitution, Mr. Parrikar said he was examining the various legal options. He said the Governor, who had asked the Speaker to conduct the special Assembly session and send a report immediately, did not even wait for the report. "He not only disregarded the House, but also his own words," he added.

Mr. Parrikar said the action was pre-meditated as none of the Congress members was prepared to attend the session and went to the Governor in the afternoon.

"It was probably cooked up in the afternoon when they went to [the] Raj Bhavan in the afternoon, where [the] senior Congress leader, Priyaranjan Das Munshi, was also present, and



The scene in the Goa Assembly in Panaji when Filipe Neri Rodrigues, an Independent, was ordered removed from the House during the trust vote on Wednesday. — Photo: Rajtilak Naik

came back only to create trouble in the House," Mr. Parrikar said.

He said the Raj Bhavan messenger was in the Assembly complex by 5.40 p.m. itself, just when the session had concluded, and alleged that the order must have been prepared while the session was on.

He wondered why the Congress MLAs had to go to the Raj Bhavan just before the House was to assemble. The Governor could withdraw his pleasure only when the Chief Minister had lost the confidence of the House, he said and maintained that he had won the trust vote. The constitutional provision (Article 164) was not final and it

had to be exercised in the light of various decisions of the Supreme Court, he said.

Mr. Parrikar also reiterated his earlier charge that the Raj Bhavan had become "the Congress headquarters" and that "Mr. Jamir was acting like a Congressman."

A pall of gloom descended on the State BJP headquarters, which had earlier celebrated with bursting of crackers the Government winning the confidence vote.

People were seen discussing the events that followed the withdrawal of support and resignation of the four BJP MLAs.

Centre feels relieved, BJP may go to court: Page 11

Rane sworn in CM

By Anil Sastry

represents Velim.

PANAJI, FEB. 2. The senior Congressman, Pratap Singh Rane, was sworn in as the 16th Chief Minister of Goa at a ceremony here at midnight.

The Independent MLA, Filipe Neri Rodrigues, was sworn in as a Minister. The Governor, S.C. Jamir, administered the oath of office and secrecy.

Senior Congress leaders, including Priyaranjan Das Munshi, were present.

While Mr. Rane represents Poriem constituency, Mr. Neri

The Congress-led coalition United Legislature Party enjoys the support of 15 Congress MLAs, one MGP MLA, one NCP MLA and one independent MLA in the 36-member House.

With this, Mr. Rane is becoming the Chief Minister of Goa for the fourth term after Goa attained statehood.

Mr. Neri was a minister in the outgoing Government, and later on switched his loyalty to the Congress-led coalition.

Governor sacks Parrikar govt

Panaji: The Manohar Parrikar government in Goa was dismissed on Wednesday by governor S C Jamir, Raj Bhavan sources said.

The dismissal of the two-and-half-year-old BJP government

came shortly after the chief minister won a controversial vote of confidence amidst pandemonium in the assembly when Speaker Vishwas Satarkar had In-

dependent MLA Philippe Neri Rodriguez removed from the house.

The speaker declared that the one-line motion moved by the chief minister reposing confidence in his council of ministers was carried after BJP members raised their hands in support while the entire Congress-led opposition was in the well protesting the eviction of Rodriguez.

The speaker asked the MLAs supporting the motion to raise their hands to which the BJP MLAs numbering 16 and one UGDP member responded with an "aye". Satisfied that the ruling side had the majority, Satarkar announced that the mo-

tion was carried amidst protests from the Congress benches.

Immediately after the house was adjourned, the Congress-led opposition met the governor demanding the Parrikar govern-

ment's dismissal and he obliged. The Congress accused the speaker of acting as a "stooge" of the government.

The confidence vote and dismissal of the Par-

rikar government in quick succession came five days after the state was plunged into political turmoil with the resignation of three BJP MLAs from the assembly and withdrawal of two supporting parties—the MGP and the UGDP—reducing the BJP-led ministry to a minority.

Soon after the government was reduced to a minority, the Congress had promptly formed an alliance with its supporters, including one MGP MLA and an independent and staked claim to form a government. The chief minister on the other hand refused to accept that his government had lost the number game. PTI



M Parrikar

S C Jamir

Parrikar Government wins trust vote

By Anil Sastry

PANAJI, FEB. 2. The Manohar Parrikar Government in Goa won the vote of confidence amid high drama that unfolded in the State Assembly soon after tea break here today. According to the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, the motion moved by Mr. Parrikar seeking confidence of the House on his Government was passed by 18 to six votes.

Everything was going on smoothly when the House met at 2.30 p.m. at the Assembly Complex at Porvorim near here, after the Governor, S.C. Jamir, convened an emergency session directing Mr. Parrikar to seek a vote of confidence.

The Speaker had reportedly assured the Governor that all the 36 members would be allowed to enter the House, amid reports that the independent MLA, Filipe Neri Rodrigues, against whom a disqualification petition was pending, would be disqualified before the House assembled.

When the House reassembled at 5 pm, Mr. Satarkar asked Mr. Neri to withdraw from the House under Rule 289 of the Business Rules, prompting the

entire Opposition to protest in a single voice. When the Speaker repeated his order and directed the Marshal to physically remove Mr. Neri, some Congress members formed a human fort around Mr. Neri to protect him, while some other members were seen pushing the Marshals away.

In the melee, Mr. Satarkar announced that he would put the motion to vote, making the Congress members to rush back to their seat.

However, they again came back to protect Mr. Neri who was being taken out of the House and the Speaker declared that the motion was passed by the House before adjourning it.

Neri defied Speaker's order

Mr. Satarkar later told *The Hindu* that Mr. Neri persistently disobeyed his order to make a personal appearance before him in connection with a disqualification petition filed against the latter. "I had called him at 10 am, 2 pm and 4.30 pm to my Chamber and he did not turn up," he said.

"As such, I considered it as disorderly behaviour on the

premises of the House and asked him to withdraw from the House," Mr. Satarkar maintained.

He further said Congress members resorted to violence and assault on the marshal and affected the conduct of the House.

There was no way but to put the motion to vote, as they did not heed to my request to maintain decorum of the House, he said.

He did not pass any order disqualifying Mr. Neri nor directed him to abstain from voting, he said. Mr. Satarkar further maintained that Speaker was supreme as far as the legislature was concerned.

'Democratic norms flouted'

The Congress members maintained that the action of the Speaker was in violation of the set principles of democracy. They said Mr. Satarkar had thrown all norms to the winds and allowed himself to be manipulated by the ruling front. "Democracy has been trampled in the House," they shouted and rushed to the Raj Bhavan to complain to the Governor.

Centre feels relieved

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. Though the Centre had not given any instruction to the Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, there is a sense of satisfaction in the ruling political establishment that the Goa Assembly Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, finally over-played his hand and provided the Governor sufficient justification to use his gubernatorial discretion to withdraw his pleasure from the Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar.

When the governmental crisis erupted first a few days ago, the Union Home Ministry is believed to have advised the Governor that the floor of the Assembly should be the forum to determine whether the Manohar Parrikar Government had lost its majority.

While the political judgment was that the BJP Government had been reduced to a minority, the decision still was to let the events unfold themselves in Panaji. There was no enthusiasm for invoking the Article 356, given the Left parties' as well as the allies' distaste for using the emergency provisions of the Constitution.

At the same time, the calculation was that the BJP's national and State-level leaders would raise the decibel level about the Governor's alleged partisanship in the hope that when the Speaker did play a partisan role it would not get noticed. Mr. Satarkar played as per the Congress script. His role in denying the independent MLA, Filipe Neri Rodrigues, a vote after letting him attend the debate for three hours was clearly seen as abuse of the Chair's authority. The BJP bluff got called by the Governor, thereby sparing the Centre the difficult choice of having to take a decision.

Goa: BJP may go to court

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. Both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress today described the political events in Goa leading to the dismissal of the Parrikar Government by the Governor as "murder of democracy," even as the BJP president, L.K. Advani, did not rule out the possibility of his party challenging the Governor's decision in court. As the news of the Goa Governor's decision reached here, the BJP went into a huddle with Mr. Advani calling an emergency meeting of the central party office-bearers to discuss the options.

The former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, also attended this meeting. The BJP demanded that the Governor be recalled and the Parrikar Government re-instated.

The Congress leader, Ahmed Patel, who is political secretary to the Congress president, said the independent MLA, Philip Neri Rodrigues, had participated in the discussion leading to the Government seeking a vote of confidence. It was after the tea break just before the vote was to be cast that the

Speaker disqualified him, Mr. Patel said, adding that "this was blatantly unconstitutional."

Another party leader commented that the Governor had no option but to dismiss the Government after the "unconstitutional act" of the Speaker denying an MLA the right to vote. Mr. Advani told reporters at a press conference that "even if the Governor suspected some irregularity in the Speaker's decision he should have awaited a report on the incident before taking a decision." He said the vote of confidence was cast at 5.40 p.m. and within 30 minutes, the Governor's report was ready and he sent off a letter to the Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, that he was "withdrawing his pleasure" and dismissing his Government. No reasons were given in that letter, according to Mr. Advani.

Mr. Advani said, "it was clear that the Governor had already made up his mind to dismiss the State Government ... I cannot find words to criticise his action." The BJP has decided to call on the President tomorrow and seek his intervention.

EPF rate hiked

By Our Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. The Government today raised the rate of interest on the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) to 9.5 per cent for the year 2004-05.

The Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, announced this after a meeting with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today. The interest rate had been under review for a long time and the Left parties had strongly protested against the decrease in the rates announced by the Labour Minis-

try in August when the interim interest rate had been fixed at 8.5 per cent.

An official notification would be issued by the Finance Ministry tomorrow, Mr. Chidambaram told reporters after the meeting. The rate of interest for the year 2002-03 had been fixed at 9.5 per cent while it was decreased to 9 per cent in the following year with a one-time bonus of 0.5 per cent to mark the Golden Jubilee year of the EPF Organisation Board of Trustees. However, these rates were yet to be notified.

Congress stakes claim to form Goa government

'MAJORITY DESPITE 3 MLAs READY TO QUIT'

Press Trust of India
Panaji, January 31

EVEN AS three Congress MLAs were understood to be close to resigning from the Assembly, Congress leaders in Goa on Monday staked their claim to form the government on Monday, citing majority in the state assembly, GPC chief Luisinho Faleiro said.

After meeting the Governor, Faleiro said that the newly formed United Legislative Front had elected Pratap Singh Rane as their leader.

Goa has been locked in a political stalemate after resignation of four BJP MLAs and the withdrawal of support of two legislators of the regional parties supporting the BJP-led state government.

The BJP, however, said it was close to finalising a deal with the three disgruntled Congress MLAs that could significantly dent Congress' bid to form a new government after the Parrikar ministry was reduced to a minority.

Congress has 15 MLAs of its own and has claimed the support of four more MLAs of Maharashtra Gomat Party, UGDP, Independent and NCP to claim the support of 19 MLAs in the 40-member House with an effective strength of 37.

The AICC has, for the moment, adopted a "wait-and-watch" stand even as the rival parties in Goa prepare for the big fight, presumably on the floor of the House. But sources say the party can form a stable government. AICC general secretary Margaret Alva, has already held discussions with the high command.

However, chief minister Manohar Parikkar today claimed that the Speaker had accepted the resignation of BJP MLA Pandurang Madkaikar, while Tourism Minister Mathany Saldhana, whose party has extended support to the Congress, expressed his backing to the BJP government.

With the acceptance of Madkaikar's resignation BJP now has 17 members in the Assembly and with Saldhana's support the ruling party reaches the halfway mark.

The state Cabinet, which met this morning, decided to recommend to the Governor that the Assembly session be convened on February 3, the chief



Goa Governor S.C. Jamir (left) with chief minister Manohar Parikkar (centre) at a Martyrs' Day function in Panaji on Sunday.

minister said after the meeting. The recommendation has been sent to the Governor, who had a telephonic talk with Union home minister Shivraj Patil over the political situation in the state.

Sources said Patil was of the view that the Governor, who was consulting constitutional experts, was on the "right track". The Governor had on Sunday said that the ruling party has been reduced to a minority in the Assembly but he would ask the chief minister to prove his strength in the Assembly.

Meanwhile, UGDP MLA and tourism minister Mathany Saldhana returned from Spain and was whisked by the BJP leaders to a city hotel where the party MLAs were lodged. He met the chief minister and other BJP leaders and assured them of his support. Meanwhile, cautioning Congress against daring to "destabilise" an

elected government in Goa, BJP today expressed confidence that the Parrikar government would succeed in proving its strength on the floor of the House.

"Congress is doing its best to destabilise the government in Goa. I want to caution Congress not to go for any misadventure and destabilise an elected government," senior BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu told a press conference here.

Naidu claimed that earlier Congress replaced the Governor in the state with a man, who admits to still being an active politician, with the "ulterior motive" of destabilising the BJP government in the state. "The Governor should be kept above politics," he said.

"The chief minister should be given an opportunity for a floor test and I am confident that the government will succeed in proving its strength," Naidu said.

The divide has deepened

Rathin Das
Ahmedabad, February 27

THREE YEARS after the fire in the Sabarmati Express pushed the state into a communal frenzy, the situation in Gujarat appears normal on the surface, but the divide between the two communities has really deepened.

True, most survivors of the worst-ever anti-minority pogrom have been physically rehabilitated in the newly built ghettos, mostly by the Islamic Relief Committee and other NGOs. It is also true that minority-owned shops, garages, tailoring units, restaurants and other establishments have been repaired and reopened. But the mental divide and the fear psychosis among the minorities is yet to disappear.

The case of Rehana Bano, who has been rehabilitated in the Narol area after her house in Naroda Patiya was destroyed in 2002, best exemplifies this phenomenon.

Her son, Abdul Wahid, has finally found a job in a diamond polishing unit in Bapunagar area, but only after he approached its owner with an assumed Hindu name.

Rehana Bano is still scared to disclose the Hindu name her son has 'adopted' for securing the job.

"Earlier, he was told to look for a job in a diamond fac-

GODHRA — THREE YEARS ON



tory owned by a Muslim.

But Muslims don't own any diamond units and Abdul is trained only in that trade," Rehana said. "It is not possible or affordable to train him in other trades so soon," she said.

Most Muslim youngsters have landed jobs only as cleaners and conductors — that, too, in vehicles owned or driven by Muslims. Transport related trade is considered somewhat 'safe' as the Muslims can venture out in twos or threes, she said.

Rehana, herself, is waiting for funds to buy a sewing machine so that she can restart her tailoring work, as she

has not received any compensation for the destruction of her house in Naroda Patiya though she was lucky not to have lost any family member in the carnage.

Nevertheless, some NGOs here have made the first move towards reconciliation between the two communities. Gujarat Jan Andolan, an NGO that had espoused the cause of the minorities at many forums, has suggested some concrete measures to rebuild confidence between the two communities.

In an appeal circulated to all concerned, Jan Andolan convener Dr Mukul Sinha has suggested that all riot

VHP's prayer meets

THE GUJARAT unit of the VHP on Sunday held prayer meetings in various parts of the state in memory of the 59 kar sevaks who died in the fire in the S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express at Godhra on February 27, 2002. Prayer meetings were also held in Godhra town, VHP sources said. Several NGOs gathered to remember all those who were killed on the train and in the riots that followed.

PTI

cases not involving murder and rape charges be dropped by mutual agreement.

On the other hand, the Pota charges against the minorities arrested for the carnage should be withdrawn.

He has also suggested that special courts or tribunals be set up in all districts to dispose of claims of compensation in riot-related cases. Setting up of tripartite committees comprising members from the two communities and a government nominee to supervise the conciliatory measures is another suggestion put forward by it on the eve of the third anniversary of Godhra.

Modi invades Pak pitch

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 7: Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi went hammer and tongs at Pakistan for its reluctance to play in Ahmedabad on a day the country's cricket board, in a quick turnaround, said it was governed by "security concerns", not politics.

Modi tried to queer the pitch for the Indo Pak series beginning later this month, but the neighbours went about their diplomatic business as usual.

Pakistan today said it has invited Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for a state visit and the invitation has been accepted in principle. "We had suggested March," Pakistan foreign office spokesman Masood Khan said. "But we do not have any confirmation of when he would actually come."

Sources in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the question of controversy over Pakistan's reluctance to play in Ahmedabad had not reached them so far and hoped it would get sorted out at the level of the home and external affairs ministries.

But Modi and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad were determined to make an issue out of it. Campaigning for the BJP in Jamshedpur, Modi declared that Pakistan's decision was an "insult" to Gujarat and an "insult" to India and the government should step in to save the state's "pride".

The VHP demanded that Pakistan be barred from playing anywhere in the country.

The Pakistan Cricket Board said in a statement: "...after receiving the report of the security team that recently visited India, the PCB has requested BCCI to change the venue of the second Test from Ahmedabad to any other venue of Test status in India on grounds of security."

Yesterday, board chief Shaharyar Khan was quoted as saying the reason was political.

BCCI vice-president Rajiv Shukla today left for Lahore on a private visit during which he is also expected to try to convince Pakistan to play in Ahmedabad. Shukla is going for the wedding of the son of former Pakistan Prime Minister Chowdhary Shujaat Hussain and is likely to meet Shaharyar Khan. He might call on President Pervez Musharraf, the PCB's patron-in-chief.

Modi said Pakistan's reluctance to play in Gujarat was "cowardly" and was prompted by the fear of defeat. "Come and play. You will only lose, what else?" he taunted. "The soil of Gujarat is ready and prepared to beat Pakistan."

■ See Sport

THE TELEGRAPH

08 FEB 2005

Godhra train fire accidental: Panel

New Delhi: Negating the Sangh parivar's "conspiracy theory" for the Godhra train blaze that triggered riots in Gujarat in 2002, a high-level committee that probed the incident has found that it was an "accidental fire" and ruled out the possibility of any inflammable liquid thrown from outside the coach.

"With the elimination of the 'petrol theory', 'miscreant activity theory' as well as 'electrical fire', the fire in S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express can at this stage be ascribed as an accidental fire," Justice U C Banerjee committee, appointed by the Union government at the instance of railway minister Lalu Prasad, said in its interim report.

The report, submitted to railway board chairman R K Singh on Monday, evoked immediate reaction from the BJP and JD(U). They questioned the timing of its release ahead of assembly polls in three states, including Bihar. The BJP slammed the interim report as an "extra constitutional effort to influence the course of justice" and said it was released in view of the com-



Terrorist link?

Ahmedabad: Even as the U C Banerjee committee submitted its interim report, the chief investigating officer in the Godhra case claimed before the Godhra commission that "terrorist link" had emerged during his investigation.

During his cross-examination by advocate Mukul Sinha before Justice G T Nanavati and Justice K G Shah (both retired), inspector Noel Parmar said that terrorist link had emerged in the train carnage case. "I cannot reveal the name of the terrorist organisation as the case is under investigation," he said. PTI

Kumar dubbed the report as "political stunt" and said in Patna that the UPA government should look for a fresh issue rather than harping again and again on Gujarat riots.

The panel found it "unbelievable that kar sevaks (to the extent of 90% of the total occupants) armed with trishuls, would allow to get themselves burnt without a mur-

ing Bihar assembly elections.

"Our worst fears have come true. This report is a disgraceful and unfortunate attempt to trivialise one of the worst crimes which led to a series of unfortunate incidents in February 2002," party general secretary Arun Jaitley told reporters here.

Former railway minister Nitish

mur" if someone entered the S-6 coach from outside and set it on fire.

The report pointed out that the railway administration had not made any concerted effort to preserve clues of the incident. It criticised the onward travel to Ahmedabad of S-7 coach despite some damage to it and despite it being a crucial piece of evidence. PTI

Another Zahira denial

9. 8 (m) 2004
New Delhi, Jan. 3 (PTI): Zahira Sheikh today told the Supreme Court that no affidavit sworn by her was ever filed in the court, based on which the Best Bakery trial was shifted from Gujarat to Mumbai and the acquittal of 21 accused quashed.

The bakery witness' latest affidavit came in response to an apex court notice on an application filed by Teesta Setalvad, a social activist whom Zahira has accused of pressuring her to implicate innocent people in the case.

In her application to the Supreme Court, Setalvad sought a CBI probe into Zahira's frequent flip-flops.

The apex court, taking cognisance of Setalvad's application, had issued notices to Zahira and the Gujarat govern-

ment on December 6. The bench of Justices Arijit Passayat and H.K. Sema wanted to know if Zahira's latest statement in favour of the accused did not amount to filing a false affidavit and hence be seen as a contempt of court.

In retaliation through counsel D.K. Garg, Zahira today just stopped short of accusing Setalvad of filing a forged affidavit on her behalf.

"All these matters contain an affidavit supposed to have been filed by me in September 2003. I do not recall having made any such affidavit because this one 'compulsive document', which is found in every



Zahira: Sign twist

6-7 4/1
writ or application or appeal does not contain any evidence of my having sworn it as it does not bear my signature, nor is there any sign of having been sworn to or affirmed before any authority competent to administer oath," the affidavit said.

Zahira termed the so-called affidavits filed on her behalf and another in her sister's name by Setalvad's NGO as "leaflets", as they had no official authentication on it.

"Surprisingly, also annexed with this affidavit is another so-called affidavit dated August 2003, supposed to have been filed by my sister Saira Banu, and this so called affi-

davit is neither addressed to any court nor to any authority, nor does it bear the signatures of any authority or person who is competent to administer oath. These two documents appear to be leaflets, distributed for free," she said.

Zahira termed the Tehelka sting operation — which pointed fingers at BJP MLA Bablu Srivastava for allegedly bribing her to change her statement — as "blatant falsehood".

The witness said Setalvad had "incited so much hatred against me that the Muslim Tyohar Committee... issued a fatwa, excommunicating me." She reiterated her allegation that "Setalvad and her agents" had pressured her in the name of "religion" to falsely implicate persons in the case.

Goa crisis continues

By Anil Sastry

House. Some Opposition leaders today met the Governor.

PANAJI, JAN. 30. A political stalemate continues to prevail in Goa a day after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government was rocked by the resignation of four of its MLAs and the withdrawal of support by three MLAs belonging to regional parties.

With the Governor, S.C. Jamir, reportedly considering the options available to him and with only information on withdrawal of support of regional parties' MLAs to the Government coming out of Raj Bhavan, everyone was kept guessing.

While the Congress, along with the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), the United Goan Democratic Party (UGDP) and an independent formed the United Legislature Party (ULP) and demanded the dismissal of the BJP-led Government, the Chief Minister, Mr. Manohar Parrikar, maintained that he would prove his majority on the floor of the

Parrikar defiant

Mr. Parrikar told *The Hindu* that he was putting up a great fight to save the State from the hands of "undeserving" people after having put it on the path of development. He said that the Tourism Minister Matanhy Saldanha, whose support Mr. Saldanha's party, the UGDP, claimed to have withdrawn, was still with him. In fact, he had sent a fax from an undisclosed location (presently he is out of country) extending his "unqualified and unconditional" support to the Government, Mr. Parrikar said and added that it had been handed over to the Governor.

The State BJP chief, Rajendra Arlekar, said that he welcomed the reported decision of the Governor to convene an emergency Assembly session to test the strength of the Government.

Odds against Parrikar:
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Crisis in Goa as three BJP MLAs quit

● Ready to prove majority: Parrikar

By Anil Sastry

PANAJI, JAN. 29. In a day of swift political developments, three MLAs from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party put in their papers, reducing it to a minority in the 40-member Assembly. Three Ministers belonging to regional parties also withdrew their support to the 32-month-old Manohar Parrikar Government. The BJP now has 18 MLAs.

The three BJP MLAs and two Ministers met the Governor, S.C. Jamir, who cut short his visit to his home State and arrived here this morning.

The BJP MLAs who resigned included the Taleigao MLA, Atansio alias Babush Monserrate, who resigned from the Council of Ministers on Friday after being stripped of the Town and Country Planning Department portfolio, the Poinguinim MLA, Isidore Fernandes, who recently won the by-election on the BJP ticket after resigning from the Assembly as a Congress MLA, and Francisco alias Micky Pacheco, who had merged his United Goan Democratic Party (UGDP-Micky) with the BJP on Thursday.

The Maharashtrawadi Governmentak Party MLA, Ramakrishna alias Sudin Dhavlikar, the

independent MLA, Filipe Neri Rodrigues, both Ministers, met the Governor and conveyed their decision to withdraw their support. The UGDP general secretary, Radharao Gracias, submitted a letter withdrawing his party's support, while its lone MLA and Tourism Minister, Matanhy Saldanha, was out of the country.

The Governor was learnt to have said that he would have to step in to ensure a stable government, while expressing displeasure over the BJP's "attitude of inducting MLAs from other parties by various means."

However, Mr. Parrikar claimed that he was still the Chief Minister, saying that the Raj Bhavan lawns were not the place to prove the majority and that he was prepared to prove it on the floor of the Assembly. He had the required numbers and was in a comfortable position, he claimed.

Governor 'partisan'

He told presspersons that Mr. Jamir was "acting like a Congressman." He said that the two Ministers had not submitted the resignation letters to him, which was mandatory.

Mr. Parrikar said Mr. Saldanha was still with him and added

that he had expected the present situation before taking action against Mr. Monserrate, who led the 'coup' against his Government.

Resignations accepted

The Speaker, Vishwas Satar, told *The Hindu* that he had accepted the resignation of the three MLAs after being satisfied that they were "genuine and voluntary." However, he did not accept the resignation of the Transport Minister, Pandurang Madkaikar, BJP MLA for Cumbarjua, after he felt that the member was under tension.

The BJP State chief, Rajendra Arlekar, alleged that Mr. Jamir was calling even BJP MLAs to the Raj Bhavan and asking them to resign from the Assembly.

Congress stakes claim

Leaders of the Opposition Congress, which has 15 MLAs, the support of an NCP MLA and the MLAs of three regional parties, met the Governor and staked their claim to form the Government. Ms. Alva, who met Mr. Jamir separately, told presspersons: "We are the largest party and it is up to the Governor to take a decision."

Goa in for Governor's rule?: Page 8

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