

# NDA to move adjournment motion in LS



New Delhi  
23 NOVEMBER

**N**DA on Wednesday decided to move an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha on Thursday condemning the alleged receipt of money by the Congress from CIA, KGB and from the Iraqi oil deals demanding registration of the CBI case on the basis of the Volcker report.

The BJP-led alliance also decided to press for the resignation of Natwar Singh as Union minister and Sonia Gandhi as chairperson of National Advi-

sory Council and block smooth transaction of business in both Houses if the motion was not accepted, BJP parliamentary party spokesman Vijay Kumar Malhotra told reporters after a meeting of senior NDA leaders, chaired by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"We will demand an adjournment motion condemning the sale of the country by the Congress party as substantiated by the Moynihan report, the Mitrokhin archives and the Volcker committee report," he pointed out after the 30-minute long meeting.

— PTI

# NDA heads for majority

*Smaller parties lose, Nitish gains*

## BIHAR DECIDES

SANJAY Kumar, RAJEEVA  
Karandikar and YOGENDRA Yadav  
New Delhi, November 19

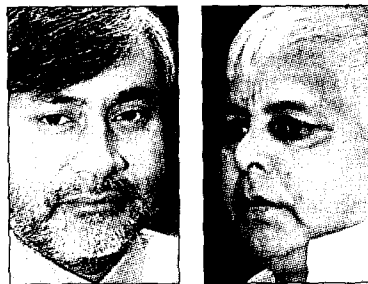
IN FRANCE they call it a 'runoff' election. If no candidate secures a majority of votes in the first round of voting, another election takes place after a week between the top two contenders. This Assembly election in Bihar looks like a runoff to the polls held in February. All the clutter and messiness of the February outcome is gone. Parties have come together in neat coalitions. Voters have moved towards the bigger players. Caste groups have polarised.

And, yes, like a runoff election, there is a clear winner. The first two rounds of the HT-IBN Bihar Poll conducted by CSDS had reported that the NDA had established a clear lead of three per cent points over the RJD-Congress combine. A post-poll survey in the third phase and an exit poll on Saturday, the last day of polling, confirms this trend. The long Diwali-Chhat-Id break does not seem to have improved Lalu Yadav's fortune. If anything, the NDA has increased its lead to five points.

Lalu stayed where he was, everyone else shed votes and Nitish Kumar mopped it all up. The NDA has increased its vote share by a whopping 10 per cent points since February. Most of the gains have come at the expense of small parties and Independents who have dropped seven points. LJP has lost two and the RJD alliance has lost one point.

These innocuous percentages are likely to translate into a political earthquake in Bihar. The NDA is expected to get a clear majority with at least 130 seats, well above the magic figure of 122. Of course, we could be in error. But the error is likely to be in the direction of even more seats for the NDA. When the EVMs are opened on Tuesday morning, we could be looking at a stronger pro-NDA wave.

It looks like curtains for the 15 years of Lalu-Rabri government in Bihar. Our best case scenario puts RJD and its allies at 80 seats. Ramvilas Paswan may not have lost many



Nitish Kumar (left) and Lalu Yadav

### HT-IBN POLL

conducted by CSDS

A decisive verdict for the NDA

| Party  | Feb 2005<br>(Actual) | Nov 2005<br>(Projected) |
|--------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| NDA+   | 92                   | 130-140                 |
| RJD+   | 89                   | 72-80                   |
| LJP+   | 32                   | 9-14                    |
| Others | 30                   | 17-22                   |

Note: Seats for different alliances in Feb 2005 are by current alliances

Huge swing for NDA (%)

| Party  | Feb 2005<br>(Actual) | Nov 2005<br>(Projected) |
|--------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| NDA+   | 25.5                 | 36                      |
| RJD+   | 31.7                 | 31                      |
| LJP+   | 14.2                 | 12                      |
| Others | 28.6                 | 21                      |

votes, but the defection has hit him hard and his tally is likely to be reduced to just about 10. Other parties and smaller players are likely to be reduced to less than 20, down from 30 last time.

**Agencies add:** The fourth and final phase of polling held in 41 constituencies of the state was peaceful, with an estimated 45 to 50 per cent of the electorate turning out to cast their votes.

In Danapur on the outskirts of Patna, a group of people burst two powerful crackers at a polling station to intimidate voters but polling remained unaffected. The three previous rounds of polling, too, were by and large peaceful. Saturday's exit polls, which predict a clear edge for the NDA combine, were a departure from earlier projections which predicted a hung House.

Related report on Page 2

# NDA tells Kalam to blame PM for Bihar bungle

5/11/10  
14/10

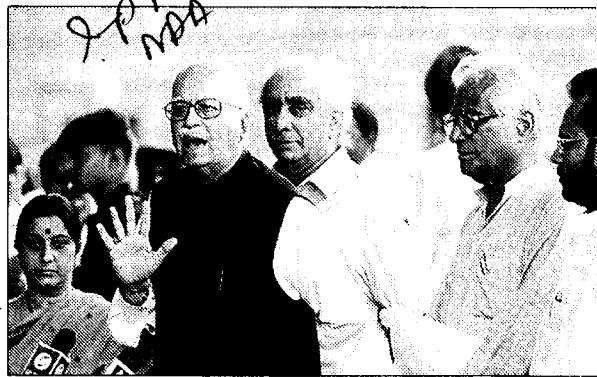
Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 13 OCTOBER

**T**HE political confrontation over Bihar on Thursday intensified after the NDA asked President, APJ Abdul Kalam to hold Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, responsible for the constitutional mess.

A delegation of the NDA, which called on Dr Kalam for ramming in the alliance's political point that there was a massive subversion of the Constitution under the sponsorship of Mr Singh, said his continuation was a threat to constitutionalism.

"We have been constrained to bring to your notice the facts of case and the governor of Bihar and the Union government are guilty of violation of constitutional norms. We, therefore, urge you to recall the governor and advise the Prime Minister to tender his resignation owning responsibility for this fraud on the Constitution," a memorandum submitted to the President during the course of the meeting said. The delegation's attempt was equally on driving home the point that there was no constitutional ground for recommending the dissolution of the House.

The delegation said Dr Singh had misled the country by alleg-



**WE ARE THE STAR PARIVAR:** Opposition leader LK Advani answers the media in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

ing that Bihar was witnessing horse trading of the worst kind.

"The Centre could not produce a shred of evidence in support of this assertion of the Prime Minister. He and his government are guilty of recommending to you the dissolution of the Assembly, on the basis of an advice which was based on irrelevant and non-existent considerations. The meeting of the Union Cabinet was convened at midnight to prevent Nitish Kumar from staking claim on the morning of May 23. The issue of serious concern is that a government headed by a Prime Minister which misleads the country and misleads the

President has no moral authority to continue in office," the memorandum said.

The NDA petition also made it a point to tell Dr Kalam that Buta Singh "manufactured proof" for backing his claim of breakdown of constitution. It backed this argument by placing before the President an EC order directing the state government to put on hold all appointments to agencies such as the Bihar Public Service Commission, state minority commission, backward classes commission, 15-point programme implementation committee and the Bihar State Nagrik Parishad.

# NDA seeks Buta ouster, steps up onslaught

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 3 OCTOBER

**T**HE NDA on Monday stepped up its attack on Bihar governor Buta Singh seeking his recall for his alleged attempts to influence the electoral process in the state. A delegation of NDA leaders, including its chief ministerial candidate Nitish Kumar and BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley, met the Election Commission, and sought its intervention in neutralising the governor's role. As part of its oust-Buta campaign, the JD(U)-BJP combine is also likely to take their battle to President APJ Abdul Kalam shortly.

"It is common knowledge Bihar does not have an elected government presently. The governor is being seen as nursing a strong bias in favour of certain political parties and there is strong evidence of these parties providing a surrogate administration in the state," noted the memorandum submitted by the NDA delegation. "It is very important the commission ~~is to~~ ~~over~~ ~~the~~ ~~district~~ ~~administration~~ ~~thoroughly~~ ~~and~~ ~~conduct~~ ~~the~~ ~~elections~~ ~~only~~ ~~through~~ ~~impartial~~ ~~and~~ ~~non-partisan~~ ~~officials~~," it added.

"The governor is not confining himself to the role demarcated by the Constitution and is playing an active political role in the state," Nitish Kumar said



**IMAGE BREAKER:** NDA leaders after a meeting with the Election Commissioner in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

later while reiterating the "partisan" charge against Mr Singh. With just a fortnight before the first phase of Assembly elections, the NDA has decided to go all out to capitalise on the governor's image.

With allegations of widespread corruption swirling around him, Opposition leaders feel this has been dented beyond repair. The NDA has decided to hammer home the perceived resentment among the people over the manner in which the Assembly was dissolved in May this year to prevent Nitish Kumar from occupying the chief minister's chair.

## NDA split on Dalit reservation

New Delhi: Differences between two major NDA constituents — BJP and JD(U) — surfaced on Wednesday over the issue of reservations for the Dalits converted to Islam and Christianity. Participating in a discussion in the Lok Sabha on Chief Justice R C Lahotia's remarks on the government move to enact a new legislation to protect reservations in the private professional institutions, JD(U) leader **Nitish Kumar** suggested that the government bring a bill to ensure reservations for the Dalit converts. He argued that the caste



stigma did not end with conversion. The Dalit converts need reservations as well, he said. Known for its stand against conversion of Dalits, the BJP members shouted that religion could not be the basis of reservations. The treasury benches were amused by the rift between two major NDA allies slated to fight the Bihar elections together. Some RJD members, were quick to point out that the JD(U) leader had raised the demand to woo Dalits keeping an eye on the coming assembly elections in the state. TNN

# বুটাকে সরাতে রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে দাবি এন ডি এর

নয়াদিল্লি, ১ অগস্ট: নির্বাচনের কথা মাথায় রেখে বিহার নিয়ে জোরকদমে কেন্দ্রের বিরোধিতায় নামল এনডিএ। আজই রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আব্দুল কালামের কাছে গিয়ে বিহারের রাজ্যপাল বুটা সিংহকে ফিরিয়ে নেওয়ার দাবি জানায় এনডিএ। একই সঙ্গে যে ১৭ আইপিএস অফিসারকে বুটা বদলির নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন, তাঁদেরও আগের দায়িত্বে ফিরিয়ে নেওয়ার দাবি জানান এনডিএ নেতৃত্ব। বিষয়টি নিয়ে নির্বাচন কমিশনের কাছে যাওয়ারও সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে বিরোধীরা। বিহারের বিজেপি নেতা সুশীল মোদী জানিয়েছেন, বিহারের নির্বাচনের কথা মাথায় রেখে এই বদলির সিদ্ধান্ত খতিয়ে দেখার কথাও কমিশনকে বলবেন তাঁরা।

বিরোধীদের এই বিক্ষোভ সামাল দিতে আজই দিল্লিতে বুটাকে ডেকে পাঠিয়ে ৩৫ মিনিট কথা বলেছেন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল। বৈঠকের পরে রাজ্যপাল সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, দুই আমলার বদলি নিয়ে আপত্তি জানিয়েছিলেন মুখ্যসচিব। রাজভবন সূত্রের খবর, পাটিল বুটাকে বিতর্ক থেকে দূরে থাকতে পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন।

রাজ্যসভায় অবশ্য বিরোধীদের প্রশ্নের জবাবে পাটিল বুটার পক্ষ নিয়ে বলেন, একমতের মাধ্যমেই একটি কমিটি এই বদলির সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। এই কমিটিতে রাজ্যের মুখ্যসচিব, স্বরাষ্ট্রসচিব-সহ বিভিন্ন কর্তাই রয়েছেন। তাঁরা সবাই এই বদলির বিষয়ে একমত। একই সঙ্গে তিনি জানান, নির্বাচনের নোটিস দেওয়ার আগেই এই বদলির সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিল ওই কমিটি।

আজ সকাল থেকেই বিহার নিয়ে রাজ্যসভা উত্তাল হয়ে ওঠে। রাজ্যে রাষ্ট্রপতির শাসন আরও ছ'মাস বাড়ানোর বিরোধিতা করে এনডিএ। শিবরাজ পাটিল অবশ্য বলেন, নির্বাচন কমিশনই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে এ বছরের শেষে ভোট করার। সরকারের কিছু করার নেই। পাটিলের বক্তব্যে সন্তুষ্ট না হয়ে ওয়াকআউট করেন এনডিএ সদস্যরা। তবে এই নিয়ে কাল ফের লোকসভায় সরব হতে তৈরি হচ্ছে এনডিএ। বুটা সিংহকে আরজেডি প্রধান লালুপ্রসাদের 'হাতের পুতুল' হিসাবে বর্ণনা করে বিজেপি সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, দলের সব সদস্যকে কাল লোকসভায় বিতর্কে উপস্থিত থাকার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে।

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# NDA to raise IMDT Act in Parliament

Internal security, including attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, Ayodhya, to be discussed

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will raise a number of issues during the monsoon session of Parliament, to begin from Monday, including an adjournment motion on "the Government's failure" to implement the Supreme Court order scrapping the Illegal Migrants Determination by Tribunal (IMDT) Act.

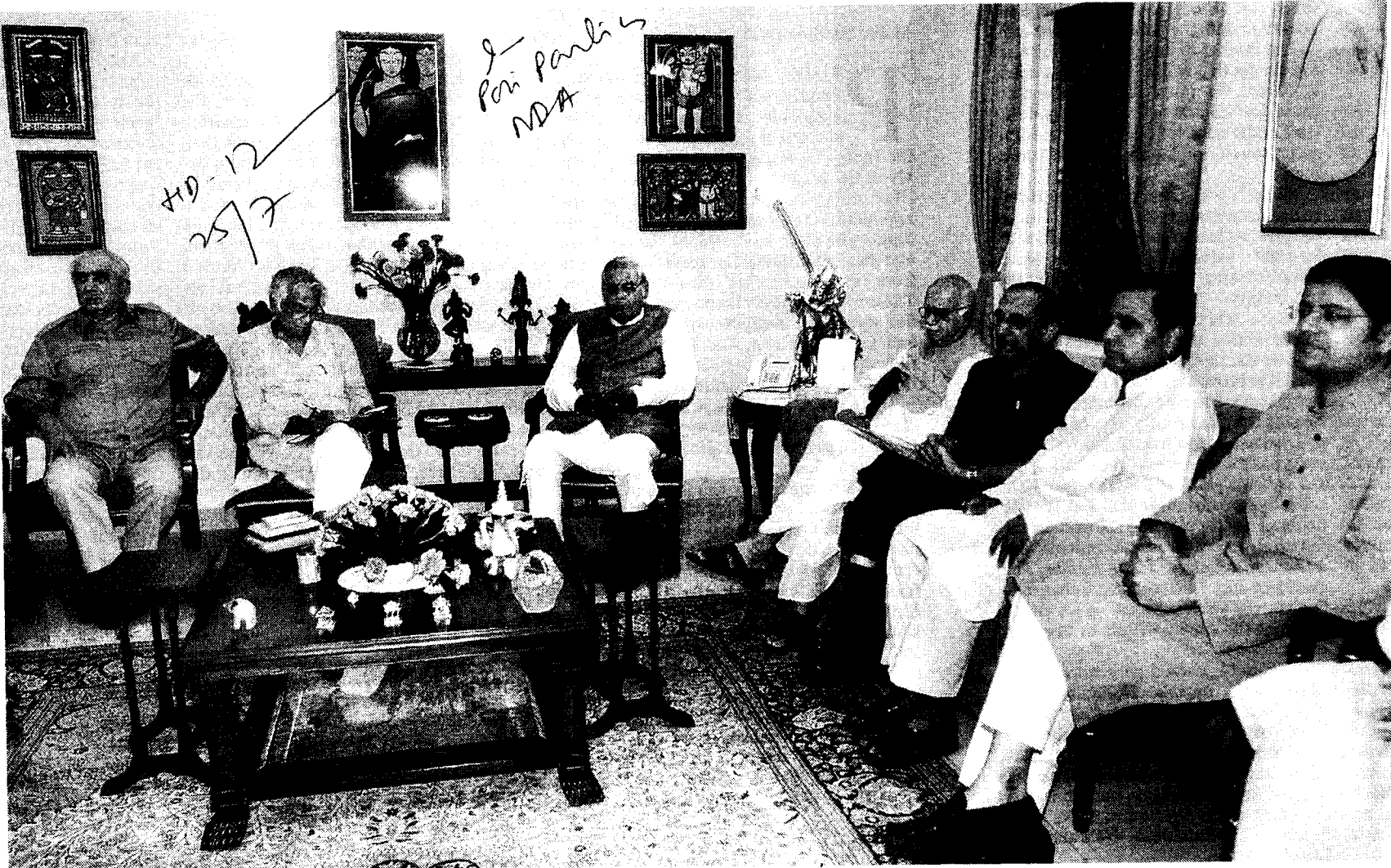
At a meeting of the NDA, presided over by the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, it was decided to demand discussion on several issues relating to internal security such as the militant attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, the attack on the disputed site in Ayodhya, the attempts to revive militancy in Punjab and the heightened threat from naxalite violence in the country.

## Price rise to be discussed

Briefing reporters here on Sunday, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP and spokesperson, Sushma Swaraj, said the NDA also seek a discussion on how hurriedly the decision was taken by the Centre to dissolve the Bihar Assembly. She said that the price rise in essential commodities and the proposal to bring foreign direct investment (FDI) in retail trade would be two other crucial issues raised. She said the BJP was opposed to FDI in retail trade as it would destroy local business.

She said that a censure motion on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's statement in Oxford during his recent visit to the U.K. would also be brought. "We would also like to have a full length discussion on the Prime Minister's U.S. visit," she said.

The NDA would also raise the Hurriyat Conference leaders' visit to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and how they were allowed to proceed to Pakistan without passports. The Government stand on agriculture in the com-



**THINKING STRATEGY:** National Democratic Alliance leaders (from left) Jaswant Singh, George Fernandes, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani and others at a meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. - PHOTO: PTI

ing World Trade Organisation meet in Hong Kong would also be discussed.

She said the NDA members would take recourse to adjournment motion, short duration discussion and call-attention motion to raise the issues.

Representatives of the Shiv Sena, which has differences with the BJP on the issue of the Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra, and the Trinamool Congress,

which reportedly has reservations on the IMDT issue, did not attend the hour-long meeting. Ms. Swaraj said that the Shiv Sena representatives were busy with meetings in Mumbai.

## "Lackadaisical approach"

Earlier, NDA convener George Fernandes said the Opposition alliance "will not tolerate any effort to dilute the Supreme Court decision which would help

in stopping the illegitimate intrusion into the country's North-Eastern states."

He charged the Government with adopting a "lackadaisical approach" towards the Maoist threat only for political advantage and for allowing it to survive and expand to the west coast of India. The NDA would put up a fight against the proposal to allow multinationals in retail trade and raise the issue of

disinvestment of BHEL, he said.

He described Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's statement in the U.K. in praise of the British Raj as an "insult to martyrs." Mr. Fernandes said the Opposition would seek an explanation and also raise questions on his recent U.S. visit.

## Gas pipeline project

The confusion over the India-Iran gas pipeline, the lack of any

job guarantee scheme even one year after the UPA's promise, terrorism and the rising prices of consumer items would be the other issues the NDA would seek to raise in Parliament, Mr. Fernandes said.

The issue of 'fatwas' and the plight of Muslim women and the demand for tabling the Nanavati Commission report on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots would also feature on the NDA agenda.

THE HINDU

# NDA focus on issues of public concern

Government may get different treatment from Left

K.V. Prasad

**NEW DELHI:** The monsoon session of Parliament opens here on Monday with the National Democratic Alliance-led Opposition promising to take up issues of public concern during the five-week sitting in which the Government plans to introduce important Bills.

The Manmohan Singh Government can expect a different kind of treatment from supporting Left parties, which have already expressed dissatisfaction over the recent developments in key areas of defence and foreign policy.

The Left parties, at a meeting on Sunday, decided to demand a structured discussion on the larger implication of foreign policy and defence cooperation framework agreement signed recently between India and the United States.

Signalling the end of its budget session strategy of boycotting Parliament, the Opposition promised to use tools such as censure motion against the Prime Minister on his Oxford University address and adjournment motion, and press for discussion on issues, including the Ayodhya terrorist strike, to mount attack on the Govern-

ment. Since the session is primarily devoted to legislative business, the Government proposes to introduce important Bills for consideration and passage. These include the much-awaited social security measure in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill and the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council Bill for the restoration of the Upper House.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill to prevent witnesses from turning hostile and a Bill to increase the wage ceiling to Rs. 6,500 per month are among the other Bills in the pipeline. Yet, there is no word about the Government's move on the Women's Reservation Bill except Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad remark here on Sunday that an all-party meet could be organised on the issue.

The Left parties had last week demanded that the Bill be introduced in the monsoon session in its original form. Women organisations too have been pressuring the Government on the subject. The UPA Government had asked Home Minister Shivraj Patil to evolve a consensus on the Bill.

In an attempt to ensure a

smooth session, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee held a series of meetings with leaders of various political parties culminating in an all-party meeting on Sunday. At the meeting, the BJP complained about the Government's tendency to reduce the duration of the session. It found support in the Communist Party of India, which had raised the issue ahead of the winter session.

Refuting the criticism, Mr. Azad said the monsoon sessions during the previous NDA regime comprised between 19 to 22 sittings unlike the 23 sittings scheduled this time. Of the 138 hours, about 80 were marked for Government business.

Mr. Chatterjee told the leaders that he planned to earmark 30 minutes after question hour as zero hour so that members could raise matters of national and international importance.

The Speaker's office said that special mentions used by members to highlight constituency-related problems would be shifted towards the end. The leaders agreed. In addition, the Speaker had sought their assistance to nominate members to the Parliamentary Forum on Water Conservation and Management.



# NDA stages fresh attack on Centre

Patna  
25 JUNE

**T**HE NDA on Saturday intensified its offensive against the UPA, governor Buta Singh and RJD president Lalu Prasad Yadav, staging state-wide demonstrations and blaming them for dissolving the Bihar Assembly.

"We have decided to wage a relentless struggle for justice. Our leaders have already approached the judiciary and petitioned President APJ Abdul Kalam against the dissolution of the House which is a murder of democracy, illegal and unconstitutional," NDA chief ministerial candidate Nitish Kumar said addressing the 'Mahadharna' organised by NDA

at the historic Maidan in Patna.

"If the judiciary fails to deliver justice and the President maintains silence over the dissolution (of the House), the people's court is the ultimate forum from where we are sure to get justice," he said expressing confidence that NDA together with the bloc, comprising rebel LJP members of the dissolved House and independents would get absolute majority.

Hundreds of NDA activists led by Mr Kumar, BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley, state president Sushil Kumar Modi, besides former Union ministers Sharad Yadav, CPThakur, Ravishankar Prasad and several members of the dissolved House, staged demonstration to coincide with the 30th anniversary

of the Emergency.

They shouted anti-UPA government and anti-governor slogans and charged Lalu Prasad with having exerted "undue pressure" on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union home minister Shivraj Patil to get the Bihar Assembly dissolved to prevent the NDA from coming to power.

Launching a scathing attack on the UPA government at the Centre, Mr Jaitley said the Assembly was dissolved, despite the fact that "(Mr) Kumar had the support of 135 MLAs in the 243-member house, 13 more than the magic figure of 122 required to form a government."

He also questioned the hurry in which an emergency meeting of the Union Cabinet was called

on May 22 to recommend dissolution of the House and alleged that Congress-RJD-Paswan combine was "responsible" for the dissolution. Mr Kumar said the NDA leaders would launch "Nyaya (justice) Yatra" on July 11 from Champaran to mobilise people's support against the dissolution of the Assembly.

Describing President's rule in Bihar as an "extension of the RJD regime," he said people will not forgive Lalu Prasad and Congress for thrusting yet another election on the state.

Mr Kumar held the UPA government and RJD "responsible" for the "ills" facing Bihar and said NDA would strive for building a new and forward-looking Bihar.

— PTI

# NDA pummels govt on Sonia, Lalu and guys

## Demands Disbanding Of National Advisory Council

**New Delhi:** Dubbing the UPA's first year in office as a "year of non-performance and misgovernance", the opposition NDA on Tuesday sought to put the ruling coalition on the mat on all fronts, charging it with devaluing the Prime Minister's office and demanding disbanding of the National Advisory Council (NAC) headed by Sonia Gandhi.

In its 28-page report card, released by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the opposition also took to task the Congress-led government for "criminalisation of governance, misuse of governors, gagging the voice of the opposition and discriminatory treatment against non-Cong, non-UPA state governments".

Alleging that the NAC's real purpose was not to tender advice to the government, the NDA said it is a "thinly disguised arrangement for someone who the world had been told had 'sacrificed power' to exercise enormous power in the UPA government".

Several NDA leaders including L K Advani, George Fernandes and Nitish Kumar addressed the press conference where the report card, titled 'A year of non-performance and misgovernance', was released.

Describing the NAC as a "strange creature" as such a committee had been created for the first time since Independence, the NDA demanded that it be either disbanded or its chairperson be made accountable to Parliament.

"Within one year of its rule, the UPA government has done more damage to the democratic insti-

tutions, norms and standards of our polity than any other government in Independent India's history, barring the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi in 1975," the NDA said.

Alleging that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was not in command of his own government, the NDA report card said "the Prime Minister of India is not the CEO of

It charged the Congress-led coalition with "systematic assault" on the opposition. "From day one after coming to power, this government, under direct orders of Gandhi, decided to destroy the institution of opposition in Parliament."

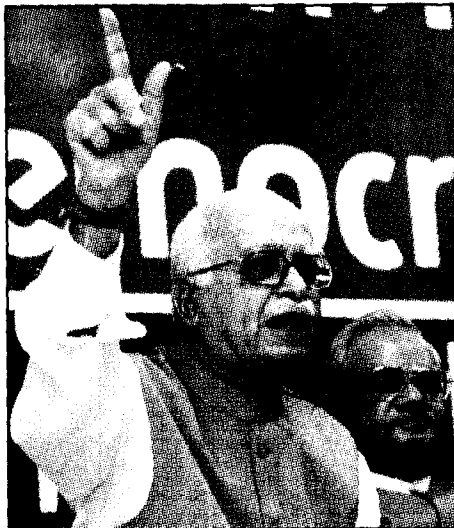
The NDA also tore into the Left, describing it as the "second extra constitutional centre of power" in the government.

Taking a dig at the Left, it said the bloc claimed to be a party to the CMP but supported the government only from the outside. It had, therefore, no responsibility or accountability for the acts of omission and commission of the UPA government.

In his turn, Advani wondered what he could call a government in which the principal party and its principal ally were at loggerheads on economic policy. He said while the Prime Minister says his government would get six out of 10 marks for its performance in the first year, the Left says the marks should be zero out of 10.

On criminalisation of governance, the report card said for the first time in the history of Indian democracy, persons with well-known criminal records had become ministers. These ministers face charges as serious as murder, rape, dacoity and extortion in various courts of law.

The opposition alliance also charged the UPA with treating the institution of governors in a cavalier way. "The actions of the governors of Goa, Jharkhand and Bihar have shown that their ideology is to carry out the political diktat of the Congress president," it alleged. PTI

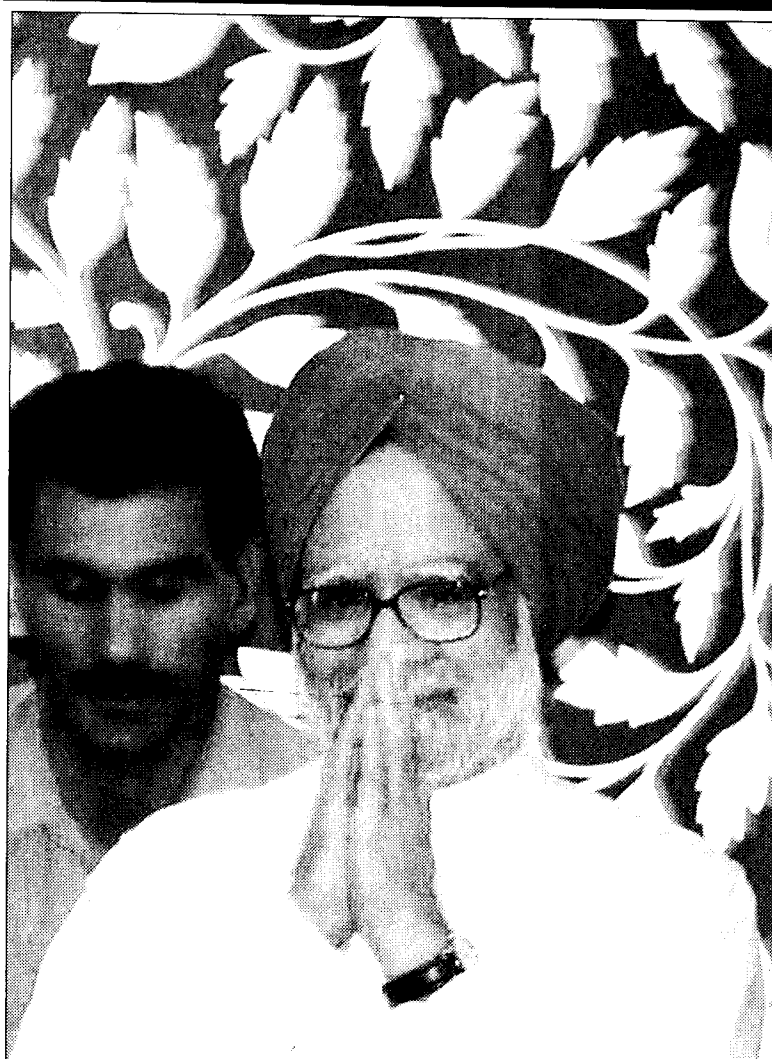
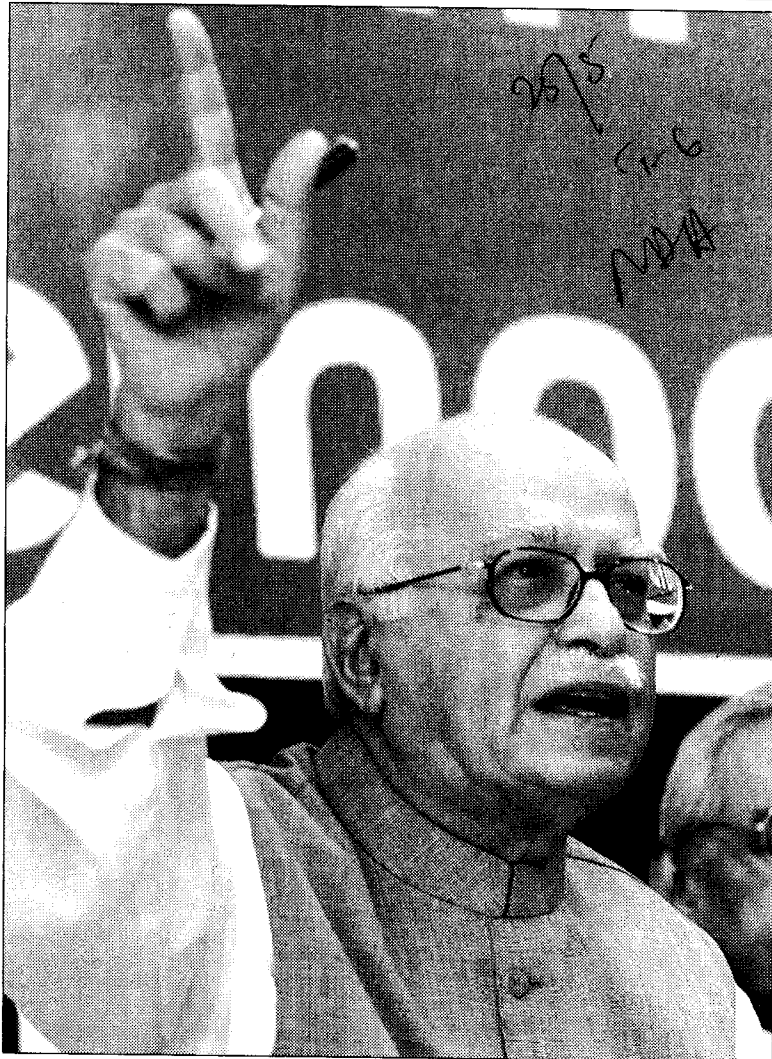


India Inc, stripped of political power that are exercised by some other person". It claimed Singh's lack of control was apparent in his "total failure" to rein in railway minister Lalu Prasad.

Listing the "misdeeds and muscle-flexing" of Prasad, including his recent attack on the Election Commission, the NDA said "all this is proof of the power the railway minister wields in this government, with a weak Prime Minister remaining a silent spectator in every sordid episode".

# NDA acid rain on Singh & Sonia

ROAR IN CAPITAL, REALITY CHECK IN TIGER COUNTRY



L.K. Advani gestures while answering questions during the release of the booklet on the UPA's "misgovernance" in New Delhi. (Right) Prime Minister Manmohan Singh smiles at a meeting with Project Tiger directors in Ranthambore. (AFP and PTI)

## Beginner's brush with Lady of the Lake

Ranthambore, May 24: Weak, as L.K. Advani claims? Not in tiger territory.

The Prime Minister's cavalcade today ventured up to five feet of Lady of the Lake, one the tigresses in the Ranthambore national park. Not bad for a first-timer.

The disappearance of Lady's fellow cats from other parks had brought Manmohan Singh on an overnight stock-taking tour to Ranthambore.

After a 20-minute drive into the national park, the vehicle carrying the VVIPs came across the tigress. With the Prime Minister today was his wife Gursharan Kaur.

Both were apparently happy to have "luckily" spotted the animal, officials said. Singh later said this was the first time he had seen a tiger under such circumstances.

The Prime Minister, who spent about an hour at the national park on a "learning mission", also met forest officials who explained their problems, particularly regarding their efforts to keep people away from the reserve.

Singh spent around 20 minutes with them.

Yesterday, during discussions with wildlife officials and experts, Singh had said "all is not well" with the way the national parks are being managed. "Disappearance of tigers is a matter of national concern," Singh said.

The Prime Minister today described the situation as "problematic".

He stressed that more effective means were needed to tackle the problem. The future of the big cat was in "our hands and if we do not act, we will be doing irretrievable damage", Singh said.

The Prime Minister said he heard the problems and suggestions on his interactions with forest officials and assured them that "sincere action" would be taken after the task force set up by him presents its report in two months.

WRITTEN WITH AGENCY REPORTS

## Swipe at 'puppet' and sacrifice

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 24: Manmohan Singh was dubbed a "puppet", as someone who was "not the leader of his own party, who is not in command of his own government, who has to report to his boss" and a "weak Prime Minister" who remained a "silent spectator in every sordid episode" involving his government.

In its "report card" on one year of the UPA government, the thrust of the BJP-led Opposition was to prove India was governed by a "proxy dynastic rule" and the Prime Minister's Office has been "denigrated and devaluated".

The report, released to the press this morning, was titled "A year of Non-Performance and Misgovernance: National Democratic Alliance exposes UPA government's record of

unkept promises, infighting and vendetta".

In his opening remarks, NDA convener George Fernandes said: "This is a government run by a particular *khandaan*. When there is one family at the helm of the rule, corruption will grow because the whole idea is to line this family's nest and throw democratic principles to the wind."

The "report card" was supposed to have been made public yesterday but Bihar upset the NDA's plans. While its news conference on Monday was entirely on Bihar, even today the obsession with the Assembly dissolution and a second election showed in the leaders' submissions.

Fernandes used his time to rubbish Bihar governor Buta Singh, who he called "jhoota (liar) Singh", and defend his own position in the defence deals which the CBI is probing.

The document — 28 pages in English and 36 in Hindi — pilloried Sonia Gandhi's rejection of the Prime Minister's post and tried to show how she wielded the "real reins of power" as chairperson of the National Advisory Council (NAC).

"People have not forgotten the soap opera of 18 May, 2004, when Smt Gandhi declined to become the Prime Minister — heeding her mysterious 'inner voice'," it said.

The report maintained that the "assault" on the institutions of democracy — a leitmotif running through the "report card" — began on that day when the "Great Renunciator" anointed Singh as the Prime Minister instead of allowing the Congress Parliamentary Party to elect its leader even as a "mere formality".

The NDA's articulation on the UPA policies and decisions was as rhetorical. The issues

on which the "report card" was specific were the Centre's "failure" to evolve a policy on Naxalism, dragging its feet on power reforms, "ineptness" in dealing with problems on the India-Bangladesh border and the "unprecedented flip-flop" on Nepal.

It said the "tyag murti" (epitome of sacrifice) mask fell off Sonia's face when she created a "strange creature" called the UPA with herself as the chairperson.

"... the real purpose of the NAC is not to tender advice to the government; rather it is thinly disguised arrangement for someone who the world had been told had 'sacrificed power', to exercise enormous power in the UPA government," it noted.

The examples cited in the "report card" of the Prime Minister's "weakness" were: ■ The creation of a diarchy by

which Sonia would look after the "politics" of the government as the NAC chairperson and Singh its "administration". This system, it said, had no constitutional sanctity.

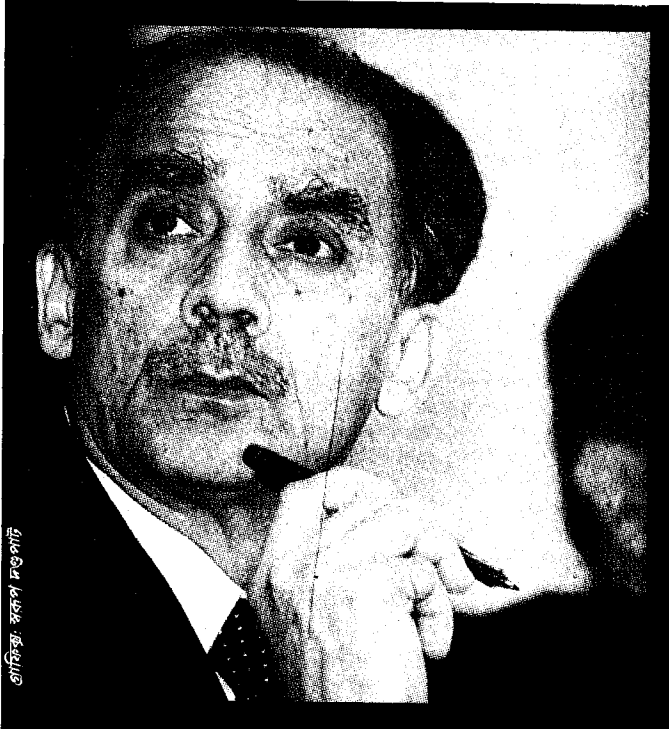
"The PM of India is not the CEO of India Inc, stripped of political powers that are exercised by some other person," it noted.

■ The projection of the NAC chairperson in official ads and the omission of Singh. "No wonder the people of India recognise Manmohan Singh as the weakest PM our country has ever had. No wonder he remains largely invisible," it said.

■ Singh's "total failure" to rein in Laloo Prasad Yadav.

Asked if he agreed with Singh's rating of 6/10 for the government, BJP chief L.K. Advani said: "He is a gentleman, a good person but he is a weak PM and not a successful one."

# কাঠগড়ায় অটলের 'ভারত উদয়'

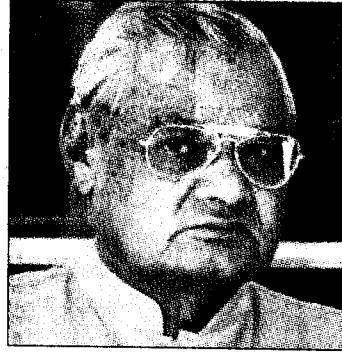


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## অরুণ শৌরি

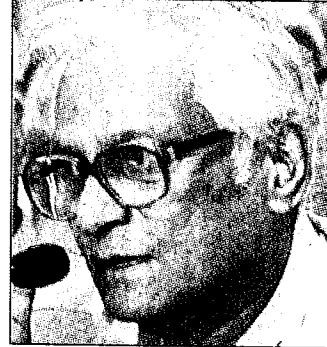
একটি করে সংস্থার দরপত্রের ভিত্তিতেই জুহু সেন্টুর ও এয়ারপোর্ট সেন্টুর হোটেল বিক্রি করে বিলম্বিতকরণ মন্ত্রক।

## অনিয়মের জালে



## অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী

'ভারত উদয়' বাবদ প্রায় ৬৩ কোটি টাকা অবৈধ ভাবে খরচ করা হয়।



## জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ

মাইন তোলার যন্ত্র কিনতে দেরি করে জওয়ানদের জীবন বিপন্ন করে প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক।

## সেন্টুর নিয়ে প্রশ্ন, সি এ জি রিপোর্টে তুলোধোনা শৌরিকে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৬ মে: এন ডি এ সরকারের আমলে বিলম্বিতকরণ মন্ত্রী হিসাবে বিতর্কের কেন্দ্রে ছিলেন অরুণ শৌরি। সেই বিতর্ক এ বারে আরও বাড়তে চলেছে। এ বারে কয়েকদিনের অ্যাড অডিটর জেনারেলের (সি এ জি) রিপোর্টে সরকারি সেন্টুর হোটেল বিক্রি করা নিয়ে শৌরির সিদ্ধান্তকে তুলোধোনা করা হয়েছে। ভোটের আগে কোটি কোটি টাকা খরচ করে এনডিএ সরকার যে ভাবে 'ভারত উদয়' বিজ্ঞাপন তৈরি করেছিল, তা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন তুলেছে সি এ জি। সংসদের কাছ থেকে এই বাবদ খরচের অনুমোদন যে নেওয়া হয়নি, তা পরিষ্কারই জানিয়েছে সি এ জি।

সি এ জি-র বক্তব্য, যে ভাবে দু'টি সেন্টুর হোটেলের দাম ধার্য করা হয়েছিল, তা বিলম্বিতকরণ মন্ত্রকের নীতির সঙ্গে সঙ্গতিপূর্ণ ছিল না। রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, "দু'টি হোটেলের বিক্রিবাটা চূড়ান্ত করা হয়েছিল কোনও প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতার সুবিধা ছাড়াই এবং এক জনের দরপত্রের ভিত্তিতে।" আরও বলা হয়েছে, "এয়ারপোর্ট সেন্টুরের ক্ষেত্রে সম্পত্তির মূল্যায়ন এবং ন্যূনতম দর ধার্য করার সময় যে ভাবে এগোনো হয়েছিল, তা ওই একই মন্ত্রক যে ভাবে অন্যান্য ক্ষেত্রে এগোত, তার সঙ্গে সঙ্গতিপূর্ণ ছিল না। বিক্রির ব্যবস্থা করতে জুহু সেন্টুরের জন্য বারংবার ক্রেতাকে বাড়তি সময় ও ছাড় দেওয়া হয়েছিল।"

ওই দু'টি সরকারি হোটেল জলের দামে ঘনিষ্ঠ লোককে বিক্রি করা হয়েছে বলে শৌরির বিরুদ্ধে তখন থেকেই কংগ্রেস ও বাম মহল অভিযোগ তুলে আসছে। ক'দিন আগেই অর্থমন্ত্রী চিদম্বরম সংসদে কংগ্রেস ও বাম সদস্যদের আশঙ্ক করে বলেছেন, সি এ জি রিপোর্ট হাতে আসার পরে প্রয়োজনে নিরপেক্ষ কোনও সংস্থা (সি বি আই)-কে দিয়ে তদন্ত করানো যেতে পারে। এ বার সেই দাবি যে আরও বাড়বে আজ তার ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্রও। তিনি বলেছেন, সরকারকে এ-নিয়ে অবিলম্বে একটা সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে হবে। বামপন্থীরা আগেই রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থার বিলম্বিতকরণের বিরোধিতা করছিলেন। আজ সিপিএমের নীলোৎপল বসু বলেছেন, অবিলম্বে সেন্টুর বিক্রি নিয়ে সি বি আই তদন্ত করতে হবে। সিপিআইয়ের গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত বিচারবিভাগীয় তদন্তের দাবি তুলেছেন। এই অবস্থায় সি এ জি রিপোর্টকে কেন্দ্র করে অরুণ শৌরির বিরুদ্ধে রাজনৈতিক আক্রমণও বাড়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে।

অরুণ শৌরি অবশ্য বলেছেন, তিনি যে কোনও তদন্তের মুখে দাঁড়াতে রাজি। তাঁর বক্তব্য, "পদ্ধতিগত বিষয় নিয়ে সরকারের যা দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি, সি এ জি-র দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি যদিও তার বিপরীত, আমি তা সঙ্গেও একটা কথা বলতে চাই। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বা অর্থমন্ত্রী যেমন তদন্ত উচিত বলে মনে করেন, আমি তার মুখোমুখি হতে রাজি।" শুধু শৌরির মন্ত্রকই নয়, এন ডি এ সরকারের বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রকের কাজকর্মে সরকারি কোষাগার ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত বলে সি এ জি রিপোর্টে মন্তব্য করা হয়েছে। যে সব মন্ত্রকের বিরুদ্ধে রিপোর্টে আঙুল তোলার তোলা হয়েছে, তার মধ্যে রয়েছে অর্থ, রেল, প্রতিরক্ষা এবং অবশ্যই বিলম্বিতকরণ মন্ত্রক। ভোটের মুখে যে ভাবে 'ভারত উদয়' বিজ্ঞাপন দেওয়া হয়েছিল তা নিয়ে বিরূপ মন্তব্য করেছে সি এ জি। এই রিপোর্টে যে সব মন্ত্রীর বিরুদ্ধে আঙুল তোলার হয়েছে, তার মধ্যে অরুণ শৌরি ছাড়াও রয়েছেন জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ, মমতা বন্দোপাধ্যায়, নীতিশ কুমার ও যশোবন্ত সিংহ।

আর বিভিন্ন অজুর্জুতি নিয়ে চাপে থাকা জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের বিরুদ্ধে একটি নতুন অভিযোগ যুক্ত হয়েছে। তা হল, মাইন তোলার যন্ত্র কিনতে দেরি করার ফলে জওয়ানদের জীবন বিপদের মুখে ঠেলে দেওয়া। বাকিদের ক্ষেত্রে রিপোর্ট বা বলেছে তার মূল কথা, তাঁদের কিছু প্রশাসনিক সিদ্ধান্তের জন্য কোষাগার ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছিল। কিন্তু তার পিছনে কোনও বেনিয়ম ছিল, এমন কথা রিপোর্টে বলা হয়নি।

সি এ জি-র বক্তব্য, জুহু সেন্টুরের ক্ষেত্রে আগ্রহী ৩টি সংস্থাকে বাতিল করে দেওয়া হয়। ১৬টি সংস্থা নিজেরাই সরে যায়। থেকে গিয়েছিল শুধু টিউলিপ হসপিটালিটি সার্ভিসেস। এয়ারপোর্ট সেন্টুরের ক্ষেত্রে ৪টি সংস্থাকে বাতিল করা হয়, ১৩টি সংস্থা সরে যায়। ৪টি সংস্থা মূল্যায়নপর্ব পর্যন্ত আসে। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত দর দেয় বাত্রা হসপিটালিটি প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড। এই ঘটনার প্রেক্ষিতেই রিপোর্টে সুপারিশ করা হয়েছে, বিলম্বিতকরণের প্রতিটি পর্যায়ে স্বচ্ছ নথিপত্র রাখা উচিত।

ভারত উদয় নিয়ে সি এ জি-র বক্তব্য, সরকার যে ভাবে ৬৩ কোটি ২৩ লক্ষ টাকা খরচ করেছিল, তা অবৈধ ছিল। কারণ এই খরচের অনুমোদন সংসদ থেকে নেওয়া হয়নি। এই প্রসঙ্গে তৎকালীন অর্থমন্ত্রী যশোবন্ত সিংহ বলেন, "সি এ জি-র এই তথ্য ঠিক নয়। মোট ১০০ কোটি টাকা সংসদ থেকেই অনুমোদন করা

এর পর এগারোর পাঠ্য

## প্রাইভেট প্র্যাক্টিসে বাধা নেই শিক্ষক-ডাক্তারদের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: প্রাথমিকে ইংরেজি ফেরাতে সি পি এমের সময় লেগেছিল ১৬ বছর। মেডিক্যাল কলেজগুলিতে প্র্যাক্টিসিং বা নন-প্র্যাক্টিসিং ব্যবস্থা কার্যত তুলে দিতেও সময় লাগল ১৬ বছর।

ইংরেজি ফিরিয়ে আনার ক্ষেত্রে সি পি এম দেরিতে হলেও বর্তমান সমাজের চাহিদাকে স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছিল। এ বার মেডিক্যাল কলেজ হাসপাতালের চিকিৎসকদের ক্ষেত্রে বাইরে প্র্যাক্টিসের উপরে বিধিনিষেধ তুলে নিচ্ছে বাজারে প্রতিযোগিতার মুখে পড়ে। সরকারি হাসপাতালের অভিজ্ঞ ডাক্তারদের বেসরকারি হাসপাতালে চলে যাওয়ার প্রবণতা বন্ধ হয়নি। রাজ্য বেসরকারি মেডিক্যাল কলেজ খোলার চেষ্টাও চলছে। এই অবস্থায় সরকারি মেডিক্যাল কলেজে ভাল ডাক্তারদের ধরে রাখতে বা বাইরে টেনে আনতেই সি পি এমের সিদ্ধান্ত, এখন থেকে কোনও ডাক্তারকে বাইরে প্র্যাক্টিস করতে বাধা দেওয়া হবে না। শুক্রবার রাজ্য কমিটির বৈঠকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য এবং স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রী সূর্যকান্ত মিশ্রের উপস্থিতিতে বিষয়টি

অনুমোদিত হয়। দলের রাজ্য সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস এ কথা জানিয়েছেন। এ বার ঘোষণা হবে মহাকরণ থেকে। একটি বড় বেসরকারি হাসপাতাল বহু টাকা বেতনের প্রলোভন দেখানোর কলকাতার বিভিন্ন মেডিক্যাল কলেজের বেশ কিছু শিক্ষক-চিকিৎসক চাকরি ছেড়ে দিতে চান বলে সরকারি সূত্রের খবর। এর ফলে সরকারের উপরে আরও চাপ পড়ে এবং সেই চাপ এই সিদ্ধান্তকে আরও ত্বরান্বিত করেছে।

মেডিক্যাল কলেজগুলির নামী ডাক্তারেরা প্রাইভেট প্র্যাক্টিসেই বেশি উৎসাহী— এই অভিযোগের জেরেই বামফ্রন্ট সরকার দ্বিতীয় বার ক্ষমতায় আসার পরে প্রাইভেট প্র্যাক্টিস বন্ধ করার সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়। তা কার্যকর হয় ১৬ বছর আগে। কলকাতা ও জেলার মেডিক্যাল কলেজগুলির অনেক নামকরা চিকিৎসকই শিক্ষকতা ছেড়ে দেন। ১৬ বছর বাদে সি পি এমের মনে হচ্ছে, ভাল চিকিৎসকেরা পড়ানোর কাজ ছেড়ে দেওয়ায় রাজ্য মেডিক্যাল শিক্ষার মান ক্রমেই পড়ে যাচ্ছে। তাই ১৬ বছর আগের সরকারি ঘোষণার

থেকে পিছু হটছে সি পি এম। রাজ্যে, ভিন রাজ্যে, এমনকী দেশের বাইরে অনেক ভাল চিকিৎসক আছেন। তাঁরা যাতে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে এসে প্রাইভেট প্র্যাক্টিসের পাশাপাশি মেডিক্যাল কলেজে পড়াতে পারেন, সেটাই সরকারের লক্ষ্য। অনিলবাবুর কথা, "আমরা চাই, ওঁরা আসুন। পড়ানোর কাজে যুক্ত হোন।"

এখন ইন্ডিয়ান মেডিক্যাল অ্যাসোসিয়েশন বা আই এম এ-র সর্বভারতীয় সভাপতি কলকাতারই সুদীপ্ত রায়। ঢেঁমাই থেকে তিনি জানান, সরকার এত দিন যে-নীতি নিয়ে চলেছে, তার জেরে গত কয়েক বছরে অসুস্থ ৬২ জন নামী চিকিৎসক-শিক্ষক কলকাতার বিভিন্ন মেডিক্যাল কলেজ ছেড়ে গিয়েছেন। তাতে সরকারি হাসপাতালে চিকিৎসা ও মেডিক্যাল কলেজে পঠনপাঠনের ক্ষতি হচ্ছিল।

সুদীপ্তবাবু জানান, "আই এম এ-র ৭৫ বছর পূর্তি উপলক্ষে অনুষ্ঠানে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে অনুরোধ করেছিলাম, মেডিক্যাল কলেজের ডাক্তারদের বাইরে প্র্যাক্টিস করার ক্ষেত্রে ছাড়

দেওয়া হোক। তাতে রোগী ও ছাত্র, উভয়েই উপকৃত হবেন। এখন সরকার ভুল শুধরে নেওয়ায় আই এম এ খুশি।" আই এম এ ইতিমধ্যেই পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকারের কাছে যৌথ উদ্যোগে একটি মেডিক্যাল কলেজ গড়ে তোলার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে। রাজ্য সরকার স্বাস্থ্য পরিষেবায় বেসরকারি বিনিয়োগকে যে-ভাবে উৎসাহ দিচ্ছে, এই সিদ্ধান্ত তাকে আরও এক ধাপ এগিয়ে দেবে বলে আশা করছেন সুদীপ্তবাবু।

সি পি এমের তরফে অনিলবাবু জানান, "প্রাইভেট প্র্যাক্টিস করা, না-করার ব্যাপারে চিকিৎসকদের কাছ থেকে 'অপশন' নেওয়া হবে। যাঁরা প্রাইভেট প্র্যাক্টিস করতে চান, তাঁরা নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে মেডিক্যাল কলেজের দায়িত্ব পালন করে তা করতেই পারেন। যাঁরা তা করবেন না, তাঁরা অতিরিক্ত ভাতা পাবেন।" কেবল সুপার, ডেপুটি সুপারের মতো প্রশাসনিক কাজে নিযুক্ত ব্যক্তির যাতে বাইরে প্র্যাক্টিস করতে না-পারেন, সেটুকুই দেখবে সরকার। অনিলবাবু বলেছেন, "কাউকে নন-প্র্যাক্টিসিং চিকিৎসক হতে বাধ্য

করানোর প্রয়োজন নেই।" বুদ্ধবাবু মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পরে রাজ্যের স্বাস্থ্যনীতিতে পরিবর্তন এসেছে। হাসপাতালে রোগীদের চার্জ বৃদ্ধির পাশাপাশি সরকার আরও বেশি করে বেসরকারি স্বাস্থ্য পরিষেবাকে উৎসাহ দিচ্ছে। স্বাস্থ্য ক্ষেত্রে বেশ কিছু বড় বিনিয়োগ হয়েছে। আগামী দিনে আরও হবে। 'হৃদয়' বিনিয়োগের সম্ভাবনাও দেখা যাচ্ছে। সরকারের নীতি পরিবর্তনের সিদ্ধান্ত যে সে-দিকে তাকিয়েই, তা বলার অপেক্ষা রাখে না।

মেডিক্যাল কলেজগুলিতে যাঁরা পড়ান, এখন থেকে তাঁরা প্রাইভেট প্র্যাক্টিসের নামে বেসরকারি হাসপাতালের সঙ্গে যুক্ত হতে পারবেন। আগে সেই ব্যবস্থাই চালু ছিল। সরকারি মেডিক্যাল কলেজ ও আগামী দিনে রাজ্যে গড়ে ওঠা বেসরকারি মেডিক্যাল কলেজের চিকিৎসকদের জন্য আলাদা বিধি থাকবে না। নামী চিকিৎসকদের মধ্যে একটা বড় অংশ নানা কারণে মেডিক্যাল কলেজে পড়ানোর যুক্ত থাকতে চান। সেই সুযোগ তাঁরা পাবেন।

# NDA regime's decisions questioned

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## CAG picks holes in the sale of Centaur Hotels

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** In a series of reports tabled in Parliament on Friday, the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India criticised several decisions taken by the erstwhile National Democratic Alliance Government.

The CAG questioned the Vajpayee Government's handling of the sale of the Centaur Hotels, the slow pace of acquiring defence equipment even after putting in place a "fast track procedure," the sale of the security press at Nasik (which led to the Telgi scandal), the "India Shining" campaign and the appointment of "Ambassador Agnihotri." The various reports add up to a serious indictment of the Vajpayee regime.

In the case of the Centaur Hotels, "repeated extensions and relaxations were allowed to the bidder of Juhu Centaur to facilitate the sale." The Disinvestment Ministry departed from its own assumptions and procedures to facilitate the sale to "the sole bidder."

In another report, the CAG in-

dicted the External Affairs Ministry for incurring an "avoidable expenditure" of Rs. 15.95 crores on the post of "Ambassador-at-large". The post was created to accommodate and grant an ambassadorial status to Bishma Agnihotri, a known Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh partisan.

Cataloguing the delays in the purchase of de-mining equipment, the CAG noted that the Army was forced to manually recover most of the mines laid during Operation Parakram. This resulted in the death of 60 soldiers and loss of limbs to 100 more.

The Vajpayee Government came in for questioning on the expenditure on the "India Shining" campaign undertaken on the eve of the last Lok Sabha elections. The CAG also questioned the procedures adopted in selling the security press at Nasik, reviving the controversy about the origin of the Telgi scam.

The Comptroller and Auditor-General also listed many other instances of indifference to established fiscal procedures.

## Ready to face probe: Shourie

**NEW DELHI:** The former Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, on Friday said he was ready to face any inquiry that the Prime Minister or Finance Minister may deem fit with regard to the sale of two Centaur hotels in Mumbai.

"Even though the Comptroller and Auditor General has taken a view contrary to the view of the Government on technicality and procedure, I reiterate my offer to face any inquiry that the Prime Minister or Finance Minister may deem fit," he said.

Stating that the CAG report

strained at technicalities, the senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader declined to take any query on whether he or the NDA Government's privatisation policies were being targeted politically.

He said CAG report had two kinds of comments — one set dealing with some technical issues and the second set "betray[ed] an attempt" to paste a colour on the work that was done. — PTI

More reports on Page 12

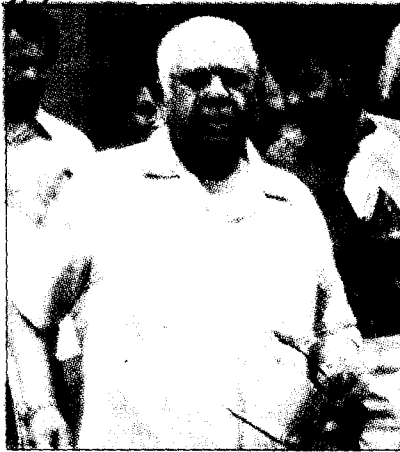
# NDA to continue House boycott <sup>2</sup>

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 4. — The NDA, led by the BJP, today decided not to attend the rest of the Budget session of Parliament in protest against the “undemocratic and intemperate attitude” of the UPA government towards the Opposition and its disregard to parliamentary norms.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the NDA constituents this morning chaired by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. Mr George Fernandes, Mr LK Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh were among others present at the meeting.

Mr Fernandes accused the UPA of making use of the absence of the Opposition from both Houses to “humiliate” and “raise ridiculous issues” against it with the objective



Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee comes out of Parliament on Wednesday. — PTI  
of tarnishing its image. The NDA leaders also took strong exception to a statement by Dr Manmohan Singh's press adviser yesterday that

the PM would not appeal to the Opposition to return to Parliament. Mr Advani said the assertions reminded him of the Emergency days.

Taking note of the Speaker's letter to Mr Vajpayee, they maintained that a similar letter should have been sent to Dr Singh. Mr Jaswant Singh said: “Dr Singh, during his meeting with Mr Vajpayee, said that he would call him and Mr Advani for talks. But after what the PM's press adviser said it appeared that there had been no change in the government's stand.”

The TDP is likely to join the boycott. TDP leader Mr Yerran Naidu, later said that the party's boycott was valid till today. He said the party leaders would meet again on Thursday to decide whether to continue the boycott or not.

# "Fernandes okayed IAF aircraft for Phukan's travel"

Phukan also visited Ajanta and Ellora: Pranab

Vinay Kumar

**NEW DELHI:** The approval for providing an Indian Air Force (IAF) service aircraft to the Justice Phukan Commission for travel to Pune, Mumbai and other places in December 2003 was granted by the then Defence Minister, George Fernandes, Parliament was told on Wednesday.

The Commission was looking into defence deals reached during the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime following disclosures of corruption made by a newsportal in its videotapes.

Apart from visiting Pune, Ahmednagar, Mumbai and the Shirdi shrine, the Commission members made a trip to the Ajanta and Ellora caves on December 25, 2003, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee told the Rajya Sabha while replying to queries seeking clarifications on his statement about the visit.

"Since I received the information about the visit to the Ajanta and Ellora caves late, it could not be included in my statement." He did not say what was the mode of transport.

In his statement the Minister said: "Normally for visits of a Commission, IAF aircraft are not provided." As for entitled personages, when the journey was not for defence purposes, the cost would be recovered according to scales prescribed from time to time, he said suggesting that the Commission had committed a gross impropriety by asking for and using

IAF aircraft. Mr. Mukherjee said he was informing the House after ascertaining the facts contained in an article in a newsweekly earlier this week about the Commission's visit to Pune and other places. "Justice K. Venkataswami, who headed the Commission earlier, did not find it necessary to visit any of the places to inspect the defence equipment," the Minister said. Justice Venkataswami quit in November 2002 and Justice Phukan was appointed in January 2003. On October 4 last, the United Progressive Alliance Government did not extend the term of the Phukan Commission and it had to wind up.

## Sequence of events

Mr. Mukherjee said the Commission's Secretary on December 19, 2003 wrote to the Defence Ministry saying the Chairman had directed that equipment bought in past defence transactions and located at various places be inspected at Pune, Ahmednagar, Bangalore and Mumbai from December 22, 2003. Mr. Fernandes approved the provision of an IAF service aircraft on December 22, 2003.

Justice S.N. Phukan was accompanied by his wife and eight officers - Vijay Hansaria, senior counsel; Yogesh Malhotra, Pragnan Sharma, Rahul Bezbaruah, S.K. Dasgupta, Secretary to the Commission; J.P. Mehta, Suresh Chander Chawla and S.L. Bunker from the Defence Ministry. None of them was a weapons expert. The Commission and its

entourage did not visit Bangalore. Mr. Mukherjee said instructions on the use of VIP aircraft were issued by the Defence Ministry on January 6, 1981 and these remained unchanged till now. Only the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister were entitled to the use of the VIP aircraft. The Ministers for Defence and Home, the Minister of State in the Defence Ministry, the three services chiefs, the Defence Secretary, other ministers of the Central Government, senior services and civilian officers who were connected with the defence organisation and the Cabinet Secretary were also entitled to the use of the VIP aircraft, if it was essential and an aircraft was available. For them, the Defence Minister's written permission for the use of the VIP aircraft was mandatory, Mr. Mukherjee said.

"It is expected that, except the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister, users will make use of commercial air services on official duty, whenever possible. The aircraft of the VIP flight are to be used on official duty only," as per the guidelines. Mr. Mukherjee said there was nothing on the files to suggest whether the then Defence Minister wanted the Commission to travel or the Commission wanted to undertake the visit.

Phukan's reaction: Page 12

# NDA to boycott House over Lalu

HT Correspondents  
New Delhi, April 26

RAILWAY MINISTER Lalu Prasad Yadav has got all the Opposition united against himself. In what could be a repeat of its stand on the "tainted" ministers issue last year, the NDA decided on Tuesday to boycott Parliament for the next three days. Reason: To show its ire on a host of issues and demand the dismissal of Lalu against whom charges have been framed in a fodder-scam case.

The NDA's demands for Lalu's dismissal and expunging of his remarks on the "involvement" of the Sangh Parivar in the attack on him in Gujarat rocked both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday. The boycott decision was taken at a meeting of the Opposition alliance chaired by A.B. Vajpayee. Earlier, top NDA leaders were upset with the government as well as the "attitude" of Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee. The NDA's decision pre-empts Chatterjee's efforts to break the logjam in the Lok Sabha through an all-party meeting tomorrow.

Also on Tuesday, the Supreme Court asked the Centre to explain why it had refrained from appealing against the Income Tax Appellate Authority's decision to dismiss several cases against Lalu. The Centre's counsel, however, denied any attempt to shield Lalu. "There's no cover-up job. I will revisit the case," he said.



# Govt in U-turn, says George will pay if guilty

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Doing a somersault, the Centre on Wednesday retracted from its earlier affidavit, which was purported to have given a clean chit to former defence minister George Fernandes in the Kargil purchases scam, and told the apex court that it was determined to take action against any official or authority, including Fernandes, if guilty.

Criticised by its various constituents, including the RJD and the Left, for "absolving" Fernandes, the Congress-led UPA government amended its stand, saying since the earlier affidavit was said to be "evasive", attorney-general Milon Banerjee had assured the court that he would file a fresh one.

The crucial paragraph filed in its March 10 affidavit saying the modified procedure adopted by the defence ministry headed by Fernandes to facilitate purchases during the Kargil conflict and later in "no way violated any of the financial rules" of the Defence Procurement Procedures stands deleted in the fresh affidavit filed by the defence ministry's under secretary R Chaturvedi.

Earlier, Chaturvedi's colleague M M Singh had filed the affidavit in response to

the apex court notice on a PIL filed K G Dhananjay Chauhan Kumar seeking action against those who were responsible for the Rs 2,175-crore Kargil scam. Reacting to the new affidavit, Kumar's counsel D K Garg said, "It's an eyewash. Nothing is new except that the government has named Fernandes in this affidavit."

The second affidavit says, "The government is committed to taking strict action against officials or authorities, including the former defence minister, if it is found that the excuse of Kargil war was taken to make

the purchases with a motive of personal benefit in violation of rules and regulations." The government also said of the 35 purchases, 20 were being referred to the CBI for a detailed probe.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had found irregularities in 35 deals after looking into 123 contracts. The CAG report placed before parliament in 2001 said the modified procurement procedure had been used to push through deals in the name of Kargil long after the hostilities had ceased. The affidavit said if the deals were to be scrutinised in normal circumstances, they would not have been entered into.



# Munda wins confidence vote

Opposition contests the outcome, raises a storm

By Venkitesh Ramakrishnan

**RANCHI, MARCH 15.** The Arjun Munda-led National Democratic Alliance Ministry demonstrated a majority in the Jharkhand Assembly today amid pandemonium on issues of procedure and the election of the Speaker. The majority was declared by the Speaker, Inder Singh Namdhari, through a head count of the legislators on the treasury benches. This was promptly contested by the Opposition.

After the head count, the Speaker announced that the procedure had established the support of 40 legislators to the motion of confidence in the Ministry whereas there were only 37 MLAs of the Opposition United Progressive Alliance in the Assembly. The head count was confined to the NDA members as almost all the UPA MLAs were in the well of the Assembly raising slogans against the manner in which the Speaker was elected. Mr. Namdhari later told journalists that he had arrived at the number of UPA MLAs by verifying the attendance register.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Namdhari further clarified the trust vote procedure. According to him the "trust vote has not merely shown that the NDA is superior to the UPA in numbers, but has a clear majority." Mr. Namdhari's contention is that, along with him, the NDA has the support of 41 MLAs in the 81-member Assembly and has thus crossed the half-way mark. The Chief Minister, Mr. Arjun Munda, told journalists that with the nomination of an Anglo-Indian member, the NDA's support would go up further in the Assembly.

The UPA condemned the entire process as "unconstitutional and undemocratic." The Opposition leaders, including the unseated Deputy Chief Min-



**VICTORY AT LAST:** Jharkhand Chief Minister Arjun Munda being congratulated by State BJP leaders after he won the trust vote in Ranchi on Tuesday. — AP

ister, Stephen Marandi, and the UPA's Speaker candidate, Annapoorna Devi, claimed that all their 39 MLAs were present in the Assembly, though one member, Joba Manjhi, had come in late. A UPA delegation led by Mr. Marandi met the Governor, Syed Sibtey Razi, later in the day seeking his intervention to "re-establish

democratic systems in the conduct of the Assembly and cancel the fraudulent trust vote obtained by the Arjun Munda Government."

## Unruly scenes

The conduct of the House on Tuesday was as unruly as it was on March 11, when the Shibu Soren-led UPA Government —

which resigned later — was scheduled to undergo a floor test. But there was also one striking difference in the proceedings. The Assembly had failed to carry out its agenda because of repeated interruptions on March 11, but on Tuesday it went through its scheduled tasks, one after another in less than half an hour. The election

of the Speaker as well as the passage of the motion of confidence were all completed in a matter of 36 minutes, which included an adjournment of 12 minutes.

The commotion in the Assembly started even as the pro tem Speaker, Karia Munda, initiated the proceedings for the election of Speaker. Mr. Maran-

di drew the pro tem Speaker's attention to two members — Enos Ekka of the Jharkhand Party and Kamlesh Prasad of the NCP — and argued that both MLAs were under a whip from their party leadership to oppose the NDA. Mr. Prasad had not attended the Assembly and had not even taken his oath as MLA as he was, self-professedly, unwell and was hospitalised. Mr. Ekka, who is already a Minister in the Munda Government, was sitting on the treasury benches with NDA members. Mr. Marandi claimed that the members were violating their parties' whip and hence had to be disqualified as MLAs. He further contended that the Speaker's election could take place only after the fate of these two MLAs was decided. The pro tem Speaker stated that he had no powers to decide on issues of defection, as his role was only to complete the swearing-in of MLAs. The UPA members immediately started raising slogans and rushed to the well of the House. Amid this bedlam, the pro tem Speaker took a voice vote on the Speaker's election and declared that Mr. Namdhari had been elected.

The UPA members became more aggressive as Mr. Namdhari took the Speaker's chair; they overturned chairs and tables.

The new Speaker adjourned the Assembly immediately after assuming his chair. Resuming after 12 minutes, Mr. Namdhari took up the motion of confidence even as the slogan shouting of UPA MLAs rose to a crescendo.

He took less than three minutes to put the motion to a voice vote and then conduct a head count. Immediately after the announcement of the head count, the Speaker adjourned the House *sine die*.

Editorial: Page 10

# NDA to boycott Somnath meeting

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, March 14

CHARGING LOK Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee with creating an "unwarranted controversy between legislature and judiciary", the NDA on Monday asked the Speakers of states ruled by the alliance not to attend the Speakers' Conference called by him and kept open the issue of a no-confidence motion against him.

A meeting of top leaders of the Opposition alliance, chaired by leader of Opposition L.K. Advani, decided to adopt a "wait and watch" approach before deciding on bringing a no-confidence motion against the Speaker.

"The NDA is deeply disturbed with Chatterjee's attitude and his role in creating the unwarranted controversy between the legis-

lature and the judiciary," the alliance stated in a resolution passed after the hour-long meeting. Asserting that the Jharkhand issue related to the "constitutional misconduct" of the Governor, it said, "The challenge to the action of the Governor and the judicial review in that context has been deliberately misinterpreted to create a 'Legislature versus Judiciary' issue. There was no challenge before the court proceedings within the House nor can such a challenge be ever made. The Lok Sabha Speaker, instead of being concerned with the subversion of democracy by the Governor and the pro tem Speaker, was concerned with the remedy adopted to check the subversion."

Expressing serious concern over Chatterjee convening a Speaker's Conference on April 20 "in pursuance of his judiciary versus legislature design," it said, "what is required is vi-

sion and statesmanship rather than a confrontational posture by one occupying a high legislative responsibility."

Not willing to be seen as encroaching on the independence and impartiality of the Speakers, the resolution in a veiled message said, "The NDA is sure that Speakers of Legislative Assemblies would exercise statesmanship with a Constitutional vision before deciding to attend this Conference and assisting the Lok Sabha Speaker to pursue an agenda which can be harmful to Indian democracy."

Asked about the suggestion for a no-confidence motion against Chatterjee, NDA convenor George Fernandes said, "No decision has been taken." On whether the alliance was indirectly asking Speakers of NDA-ruled states to skip Chatterjee's meeting, he said, "We are appealing to everyone."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 MAR 2005

# Munda takes oath, with famous five

OUR BUREAU

**Ranchi, March 12:** Jharkhand witnessed the second swearing-in ceremony in 10 days as Arjun Munda took oath as chief minister from governor Syed Sibtey Razi, who had triggered a controversy by asking Shibu Soren to form the government on March 2.

Munda was sworn in at the Morabadi grounds along with the five legislators whose support is crucial for the National Democratic Alliance government. Present at the ceremony were BJP president L.K. Advani and NDA convener George Fernandes.

The swearing-in came a day after Soren was forced to resign by the Centre to avert a constitutional deadlock where the Assembly was adjourned without the floor test mandated by the Supreme Court.

In a curious turn of events that showed that the drama is not over yet, a notification issued by the governor that was read out prior to the swearing-in also included the name of Nationalist Congress Party MLA Kamlesh Singh, who had taken oath along with Soren in the United Progressive Alliance ministry on March 2.

Singh got himself admitted in the intensive care unit of Apollo Hospital an hour before the Assembly session yesterday. But though his name was read out today, Singh, whose party is a partner in the Congress-led alliance, did not turn up for the oath-taking.

Doctors attending on Singh at the hospital in Irba said Singh was still complaining of chest pain. "We cannot release him till we are satisfied of his recovery. However, Singh is free to leave provided he gives a personal undertaking that would free us from all obligations," said a doctor who did not wish to be named.

That Munda will have a tough time juggling his ministry was evident when he

took aboard all the five MLAs who are either Independents or represent smaller parties. Sudesh Mahto, Chandra Prakash Choudhary (both Ajsu), Independents Madhu Koda and Harinarayan Rai and the controversial Enos Ekka of the Jharkhand Party are crucial for the NDA's survival as the BJP and JD(U) together have 36 MLAs.

Given that the size of the ministry cannot exceed 12, the chief minister will have to do a deft balancing act to ensure that rumblings in the BJP and JD(U) are minimised. Munda will have five berths to pick from when he decides to expand his ministry. The chief minister said he would expand his council after securing the confidence of the House, which he has to get by March 21.

In one of its first decisions, the government withdrew the recommendation of a CBI inquiry against Sudesh Mahto. Soren had ordered a CBI inquiry against Mahto in connection with alleged "irregularities" in the road construction department during his tenure as the minister in the previous NDA government.

Soon after Munda was sworn in, pro tem (temporary) Speaker Pradeep Kumar Balmuchu resigned from his post. The cabinet, which met late in the evening, nominated Khunti MLA Karia Munda of the BJP as the temporary Speaker.

The cabinet resolved that nomination for the post of Speaker would be invited tomorrow. The election of the Speaker would be held in the pre-lunch session of the Assembly on Monday while the Munda government would table a confidence motion the same day in the second half.

The new cabinet also decided to strike down the UPA nomination of R.S. Mazumdar as the advocate-general and that of Alfred George de Rozario as the Anglo-Indian member.



Arjun Munda with Jharkhand governor Syed Sibtey Razi in Ranchi on Saturday. Picture by Prashant Mitra

## BJP balks, Left won't let go

OUR BUREAU

**New Delhi, March 12:** Unsure of allies' response, the BJP has developed cold feet on pressing ahead with a no-confidence motion against the Speaker for an initiative to demarcate the powers of the judiciary and the legislature.

But the Left is not keen on sweeping the issue under the carpet and is expected to push for a debate in the House.

The BJP had yesterday floated the no-trust proposal against Somnath Chatterjee for suggesting that a presidential reference be made to the Supreme Court following its ruling to advance the Jharkhand trial of strength.

However, BJP president L.K. Advani said in Raipur the

issues against the Speaker and the Jharkhand governor "have ended" with the installation of an NDA government in the state. "The issue of no-confidence was only mentioned in the NDA meeting but no decision was taken," he said.

"The NDA would meet soon, but I am not aware what will be the outcome. I think the issue has ended," the BJP chief said.

The first hint of a rethink came earlier in Delhi when BJP leader Sushma Swaraj said: "The circumstances have changed but we will take a formal decision at the NDA meeting on Monday."

NDA sources said the main reason for the change of mind was the fear that some of the

allies are unlikely to back the motion.

A source in the Janata Dal (United) said some BJP allies, like the Telugu Desam Party and the Biju Janata Dal, would not have supported the motion as the Speaker was only advocating the supremacy of the legislature.

The three parties had also refused to walk out of the all-party meeting convened by the Speaker on Thursday, leaving the BJP red-faced.

The CPM wants a debate in the House on the powers of the judiciary and the legislature.

"We welcome the BJP's suggestion for a no-trust vote... We want a full-fledged discussion on the larger issue of separation of powers," said Nilotpal Basu, the CPM's

leader in the Rajya Sabha.

He said the party would force a discussion in and outside Parliament regardless of what the BJP decides to do. "We have to decide the rule under which the debate can take place," Basu said.

CPM leader Prakash Karat echoed Basu, saying: "We will take up the issue of the Supreme Court's intervention."

Basu and Karat delinked the debate from the Jharkhand turmoil. "It is a larger issue not linked to the recent Jharkhand episode," Karat said.

Chatterjee has already called an emergency meeting of presiding officers of all states and Union territories on March 20.

# NDA move against Speaker

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 11. — The NDA is planning to move a no-confidence motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, for seeking a presidential reference against the Supreme Court ruling. It is likely to take up the matter on Monday. It has also sought time from the President to apprise him of the developments in Jharkhand.

The BJP is also considering moving a contempt of court petition against the Jharkhand government for not holding the vote of confidence as directed by the Supreme Court.

The issue of a no-confidence motion against the Speaker was raised by about half-a-dozen mem-

## Somnath sticks to stand

NEW DELHI, March 11. — Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee today stuck to his suggestion that a presidential reference be made on the Supreme Court order on Jharkhand Assembly despite the government deciding against such a move. "Irrespective of who thinks what, I am not for retracting my statement nor am I adding a sentence to it," he said. He made it amply clear that his job was to protect the dignity of Parliament and his conscience was clear and he had done nothing wrong. — PTI

bers during the NDA meeting today, a senior leader said. However, no decision was taken as the alliance requires more time to bring about a consensus on the issue.

It was generally agreed that the role of the Centre, the UPA, the Governor and the pro-tem Speaker has been extremely disturbing. They were accused of conspiring to ignore the principle of majority rule inherent in the Constitution. "The NDA believes that both the legislature and the judiciary are supreme in their own fields. Both must serve the purpose and goals enshrined in the Constitution," Mrs Sushma Swaraj said.

Asserting that there was no "dissension or division" within the NDA over a presidential reference, Mrs Swaraj said: "We are opposed to it. We hope that the government will use its wisdom and exercise restraint. We don't think they will do it, but if they do, we will evolve a unanimous response."

THE STATESMAN

12 MAR 2005

# NDA goes to Kalam over Soren vote

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 9. — The NDA today urged the President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, to appoint an observer to keep an eye on the 'trial of strength' in the Jharkhand Assembly where the Supreme Court has ordered floor test on 11 March.

An NDA delegation led by its convener, Mr George Fernandes, met the President for about 15 minutes and requested police protection for all the MLAs till the process of the vote of confidence by the Sibu Soren government is completed.

The meeting, which was actually a 'follow-up meeting' after the NDA paraded its MLAs before the President on 3 March, was first scheduled for 7 March, but later it was rescheduled for 9 March because of Dr Kalam's other engagements.

Asking President to ensure "no coercive or punitive action" against Jharkhand legislators, the NDA delegation said the entire proceedings of the vote of confidence should

## Cong not good in coalitions: Singh

BHOPAL, March 9. — Conceding that Congress was "not mature enough with coalition politics", party general secretary Mr Digvijay Singh today said single-party rule at the Centre was not assured in near future because of the party's "weakness". — PTI

have uninterrupted video recording.

Besides Mr Fernandes the delegation included senior BJP leaders, Mr Jaswant Singh, Mr Rajnath Singh, Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Mr Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Later talking to media people, the BJP welcomed the SC directive. Terming it a big slap on the Congress and failure of "Mrs Sonia Gandhi's strategy on Jharkhand", the BJP spokesman, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, accused the Congress of trying to distance Mrs Gandhi from the entire controversy. From Goa to Jharkhand, whatever happened, it was on the instructions of Mrs Gandhi, he added.

# Soren in chair, NDA grounded

HT Correspondent  
Ranchi, March 2

RANCHI AND Jamshedpur were in flames and Delhi in uproar today as Jharkhand's Governor anointed JMM chief Shibu Soren as chief minister, ignoring apparent proof of the NDA's majority in the Assembly.

Then, as the BJP-JD(U) combine herded its MLAs and allies into a Delhi-bound plane to prove its majority before President Kalam tomorrow, the new chief minister got the police to detain the chartered aircraft on the tarmac tonight, accusing the NDA of "ab-

ducting" one of the passengers.

The daylong drama had centred around this passenger, Ehos Ekka, and fellow Independent MLA Harinarain Rai, whom the NDA had paraded before Governor Syed Sibtey Razi in the morning along with two lawmakers from the AJSU and a BJP rebel. The NDA's point was clear: With 36 MLAs of its own and the support of these five, it had a majority 41 votes in the 81-member Assembly.

All equations, however, changed after Soren met Razi, a former Congressman, and handed him a list of 42 MLAs. Apart from the Congress-

JMM's 26 members and ally RJD's 7, the list had the names of 9 others — two of them being Ekka and Rai. Interestingly, JMM rebel Stephen Marandi, too, met Razi and expressed support for the Cong-JMM alliance.

In the afternoon, Razi invited the JMM chief to form the ministry. Soren was sworn in with Marandi as his deputy and was asked to prove his majority in a trust vote on March 21. But of the seven others who were to take oath as ministers, only five did. Ekka and Rai, expected to be at Raj Bhavan, were on their way to the airport to fly to Delhi with NDA lawmakers.

But unknown to Ekka, his father had by then filed an FIR in his hometown alleging his son had been abducted by the NDA. The police swung into action and surrounded the plane before it could take off. Till late tonight, the aircraft was stranded at the Birsa Munda airport, awaiting orders whether it should take off or offload the "abducted MLA".

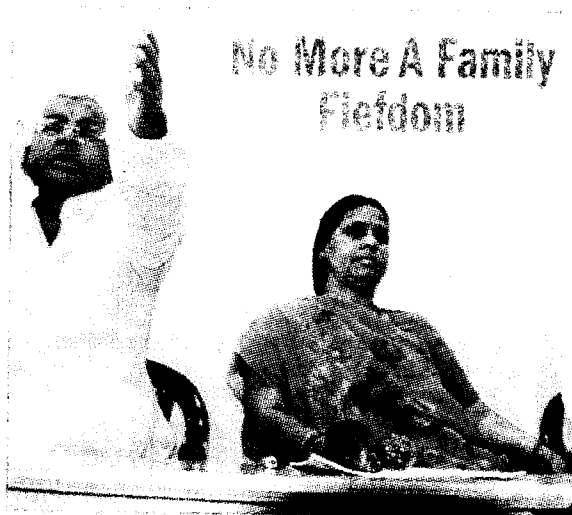
Yet, on a day of serial twists in the plot, it was the NDA that was laughing in its sleeves. For, Ekka had never been on the plane — he had been smuggled to Bokaro by road and from there had taken the train to Delhi.

# NDA tells Bihar governor not to entertain RJD claim

Patna: Even as caretaker chief minister Rabri Devi appeared set to be re-elected as the leader of the RJD legislative party, the NDA on Tuesday asked Bihar governor Buta Singh not to entertain any claim by the RJD for forming the next government in the state.

An NDA delegation led by BJP state president Gopal Narayan Singh and his JD-U counterpart Vijendra Yadav called on the governor on Tuesday morning and submitted a letter requesting him to decline if the RJD staked claim as "an overwhelming majority of MLAs are dead against extending support to Lalu Prasad's party", BJP vice president Sushil Kumar Modi said.

Rubbishing the claim of RJD president that his party should be invited first for government formation as it had emerged as the single largest party, Modi said the NDA delegation urged the governor to consult it before taking any decision on the issue.



"We have also requested the governor that the NDA with 92 MLAs, besides assured support of 10 independents is the obvious choice to be invited by him to form the government first and prove the majority in the state assembly," he said.

He said Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP with 29 MLAs, the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and several independents were also averse to

formation of an RJD-led government. The Samajwadi Party told the governor that it would not support the RJD or the NDA in the formation of a new government in Bihar.

Meanwhile, close on the heels of the RJD claiming that it has the required numbers to form the new government of secular parties in Bihar, Union minister and party leader P C Gupta held a meeting with Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday.

Ram Vilas Paswan also met Gandhi on Tuesday and told her that a new government could be formed in Bihar taking the help of JD(U) and anti-RJD and anti-BJP parties or President's rule could be imposed if it did not materialise.

Declining to reveal Gandhi's response to his suggestions, Paswan said that he sought to impress upon the Congress president that her party should not extend support to the RJD in government formation as the "mandate is against the RJD". Agencies

THE TIMES OF INDIA

02 MAR 2005



# NDA, Cong in Jharkhand race

INDIAN NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI, Feb. 28. — The NDA and the Congress-led alliance today stepped up their efforts to have a shot at power in Jharkhand, where polls resulted in a hung Assembly, by meeting the Governor and staking claim to form government.

Governor Syed Sibtey Razi asked both sides to come back to him after electing their legislature party leaders and with a list of MLAs backing them.

The BJP MLAs promptly elected chief minister Mr Arjun Munda as their leader amid murmurs of protest by supporters of former chief minister Mr Babulal Marandi. Mr Munda informed Governor Syed Sibtey Razi about his re-election as BJP's legislature party leader tonight and staked his claim to form the government.

The NDA was the first to call on the Governor with a delegation. The UPA followed a few hours

later with the RJD also joining in. While none of the JMM leaders was present, the UPA was, however, armed with two letters bearing signatures of Mr Sibtey Razi. AICC general secretary Mr Harikesh Bahadur said the Governor has given the UPA time till Wednesday.

Speculation is rife about the next moves of the 12 Independents. While three Left legislators (two from Forward Bloc and one from CPI-ML) and the lone NCP legislator will not support the NDA, the legislators targeted by the NDA include two from the AJSU and BJP rebel Mr Madhu Koda who is sure to give his support to the BJP.

JMM rebel Mr Stephen Marandi has emerged as a dark horse and is likely to return to his parent party as he had stated time and again that he would not join the NDA. The UDGP winners, Mrs Joba Manjhi and Mr Bandhu Tirkey, are also likely to play important roles.



BJP leaders, led by Mr Rajnath Singh, and JD-U leader Mr Inder Singh Namdhari in Ranchi on Monday. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

01 MAR 2005

# Advani admits riots blot

RADHIKARAMASESHAN

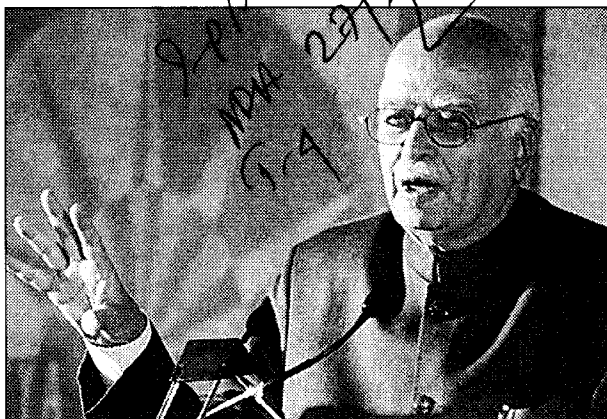
New Delhi, Feb. 26: For the first time, BJP president L.K. Advani today admitted that the post-Godhra riots were a "black spot" in the NDA's copybook when it ruled at the Centre.

The former deputy Prime Minister, however, added that they did not have an impact on the NDA in the last parliamentary elections.

Addressing reporters after delivering the keynote address at a conclave organised by a weekly newsmagazine, the BJP president said: "The events in Gujarat were a black spot for us in the sense that during the six-year rule of the Vajpayee government, the communal situation had been good."

However, he defended Narendra Modi, saying there is a mismatch between the "reality" of his government and the "image that has been created in the last few years". Advani added that the Gujarat chief minister and the BJP would ensure that the state emerges in a "different light".

He stressed that the government has acquitted itself



Advani at the conclave. (PTI)

politically and economically. "The government is honest and corruption-free, which even the rivals agree upon," he said, adding that the state is a popular destination for investors.

Muslims, too, are better off in Gujarat than in other states, the BJP leader said, as the per capita income of the community is higher there.

After Modi was cleared by Advani, Jawaharlal Nehru came in for unexpected praise. While the BJP has had a good word for most leaders involved in the Independence struggle, the party

had reservations about Nehru and the "dynastic rule" he allegedly perpetuated. However, today Advani praised the first Prime Minister as a "true believer in democracy" who has "erected strong edifices of democratic institutions that continue to serve us even today".

Manmohan Singh, too, got a pat on his back. Speaking about the economic resurgence of India in the 1990s, Advani said: "For effecting this radical, reform-oriented change in the direction and content of economic policy, I have no hesitation in giving

credit to our present Prime Minister who was the finance minister then."

Singing paeans to economic reforms, Advani said: "When we look at the strengths of India's economy today, it is self-evident that these could be acquired only because we took a fundamentally different path in the beginning of the 1990s. It was a path that turned away from the one that the Avadhi resolution (of 1955) had dictated for the previous four decades."

He stressed that the NDA's defeat in the last Lok Sabha elections was not a reflection on the economic policies pursued by the Vajpayee government.

"Just because our performance in the economic field did not yield a renewed electoral mandate, it is tempting to conclude that reform-oriented economics is bad politics. That would not only be incorrect but highly injurious to India's development in the future. If winning elections by hook or by crook were to become the sole criterion of good politics, those who have ruled Bihar for the past 15 years would qualify as its best practitioners," Advani said.

THE TELEGRAPH

27 FEB 2003

# NDA cries foul over PM's <sup>MS-2</sup> letter to <sup>27/2</sup> Sonia

Agencies

New Delhi, February 26

A LETTER written by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Congress president Sonia Gandhi has become the centre of a controversy. Singh had written a letter to the UPA chairperson about the forthcoming Union budget.

The letter replies to specific concerns raised by Sonia about the budget and makes certain commitments. These include the setting up of a national rural health mission, an urban renewal mission and a Rs 2,450-crore road package for the North-East.

The National Democratic Alliance says it amounts to leaking the budget and is a breach of privilege. The Prime Minister, however, maintains there is nothing improper about it and no rules have been broken.

"What is breach of privilege? These are all discussions within the government system outlining the government's thinking without revealing anything substantial. I think no impropriety has been committed", said Singh.

But a combative Opposition, which has already boycotted the rail budget, is now set to disrupt parliamentary proceedings on Monday, before the finance minister makes his budget speech. They say they will seek a privilege motion against the PM and demand an explanation.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 FEB 2005

# NDA to boycott Lalu's budget

## To move adjournment motion on the dismissal of Parrikar govt

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 25

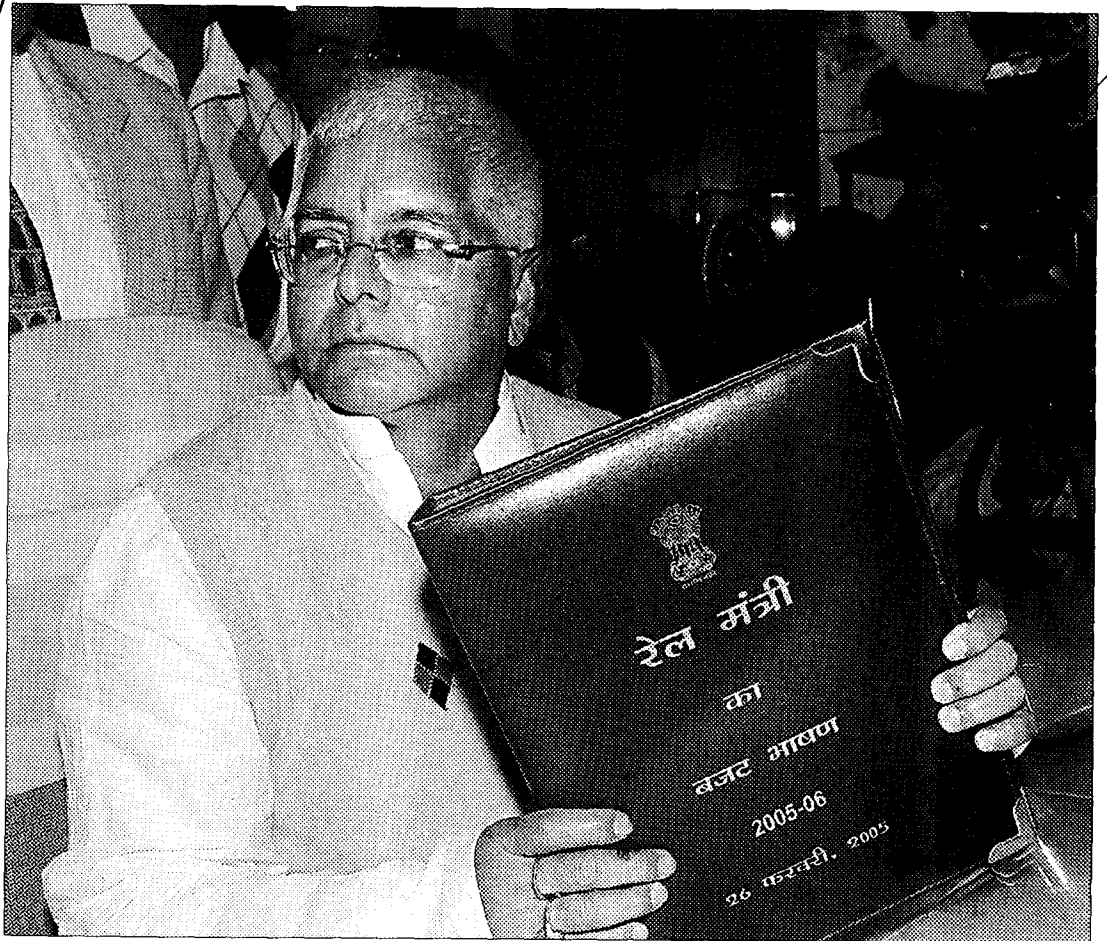
THE NDA will boycott the presentation of the Railway budget by Lalu Prasad Yadav in the Lok Sabha on Saturday. The BJP-led Opposition, however, said NDA members would take part in the discussions on the budget.

A meeting of NDA leaders held at the residence of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee also decided to move an adjournment motion on the dismissal of the Mohan Parrikar government in Goa.

Soon after the meeting, BJP's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha V.K. Malhotra, who was flanked by NDA convener George Fernandes, said the Opposition had heard out Yadav's statement in Parliament on the Punjab rail mishap as an "exception, as many people had died in it".

Malhotra said the Supreme Court had left the tainted ministers issue to Parliament to decide upon. "Till such time as Parliament decides, we don't accept them as ministers", he said, adding that the NDA also wanted to register its protest against the "illegal and immoral" constitution of the U.C. Banerjee Committee to probe the Godhra fire tragedy by the Railway minister.

Malhotra said, "We'll continue to boycott all major statements by tainted ministers and won't ask them questions till the time the issue (tainted ministers) is not discussed and decided by Parliament as observed by the Supreme Court". He said the BJP and its allies would "vociferously demand that the Nanavati Commission report on the



Lalu Prasad Yadav holds the Railway budget file during a Press conference at Rail Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday. AFP

1984 anti-Sikh riots be placed along with the Godhra report".

Describing as "colourless, tasteless and odourless" the President's Address to Parliament, the BJP spokesperson said it gave no "direction" and spoke only of committees, commissions and an-

niversary celebrations.

Those who took part in the NDA included Ananth Geethe (Shiv Sena), Nitish Kumar and Sharad Yadav (JD-U), Braj Kishore Tripathy (BJD) and S.S. Dhindsa (Shiromani Akali Dal). The meeting was also attended by

Yerran Naidu of the TDP (which is not an NDA member) "from the viewpoint of floor coordination", Malhotra said.

Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee could not attend the meeting as she was said to be unwell.

# Centre orchestrated Parrikar govt's ouster: NDA

New Delhi: Bringing the dismissal of the BJP government in Goa to the forefront of its campaign against the UPA government, the opposition NDA on Tuesday hit the streets accusing the Centre of "orchestrating" the ouster and indicated that it will stall proceedings in the coming budget session of Parliament on the issue.

Kick-starting its nation-wide agitation against the dismissal of the Manohar Parrikar government, NDA staged a day-long sit-in here demanding its reinstatement and recall of governor S C Jamir.

Lashing out at the Congress, BJP president L K Advani said, "The question is not about the dismissal of the Goa government. It is about the Congress' attitude towards democracy".

"Whenever Congress feels that it is losing its primacy, it tramples democracy and Congress never believes in democracy and this agitation is to save the power of democracy," he said.

Asserting that the governor has set a "dangerous precedent," Advani said, "Our constitutional fathers have never imagined that Article 164, which says a particular state government can remain in power only when the governor has full pleasure in it, would be used in this manner".

He claimed the direction to dismiss the government was given in advance, even before the trial of strength on the floor of the House.

Addressing the gathering, BJP general secretary Sushma Swaraj said normal functioning of

Parliament during the budget session would not be possible in the given situation.

"In a situation like this, when democracy has been murdered, the Parliament may not be able to function normally," Swaraj said, adding the fight was not against the governor, but against the Congress-led UPA government.

Parikkar, who was also present, alleged that he was a victim of a conspiracy hatched by the Congress. "Goa was the leading state in the country in terms of development and figures by the RBI and the planning commission are proof to that".

"Since the UPA government came to power, they started attempts to dethrone my government. First they removed the governor and then sent a person, who himself has six defection cases against him, with a single target to destabilise the government," he charged.

He said the chaotic scenes witnessed in the assembly was pre-planned and accused the Congress of masterminding it.

Criticising Jamir's action, he said "The governor has no right to give any ruling on the speaker's decision to disqualify any member...He was partisan and had made up his mind that the government has lost majority much earlier".

In a show of strength, all top BJP leaders, including chief ministers of Gujarat, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, NDA convenor George Fernandes, leaders from Shiromani Akali Dal, Trinamool Congress and Biju Janata Dal attended the day-long sit-in. PTI



BJP president L K Advani (left), Sushma Swaraj and JD (U) leader George Fernandes protesting the dismissal of the Parrikar government

# Atal warns over Goa

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 8

WHAT HAPPENED in Goa was not an ordinary incident, but an indication of future events, said former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee on Tuesday as he cautioned all political parties – including those in the UPA government to be wary of the Congress.

Addressing a day-long BJP demonstration to protest against the axing of the Parrikar government in Goa even after a trust vote, Vajpayee said, “Events, such as the dismissal of an elected government at midnight, do warn us. After Goa, which government will face the axe is difficult to say”.

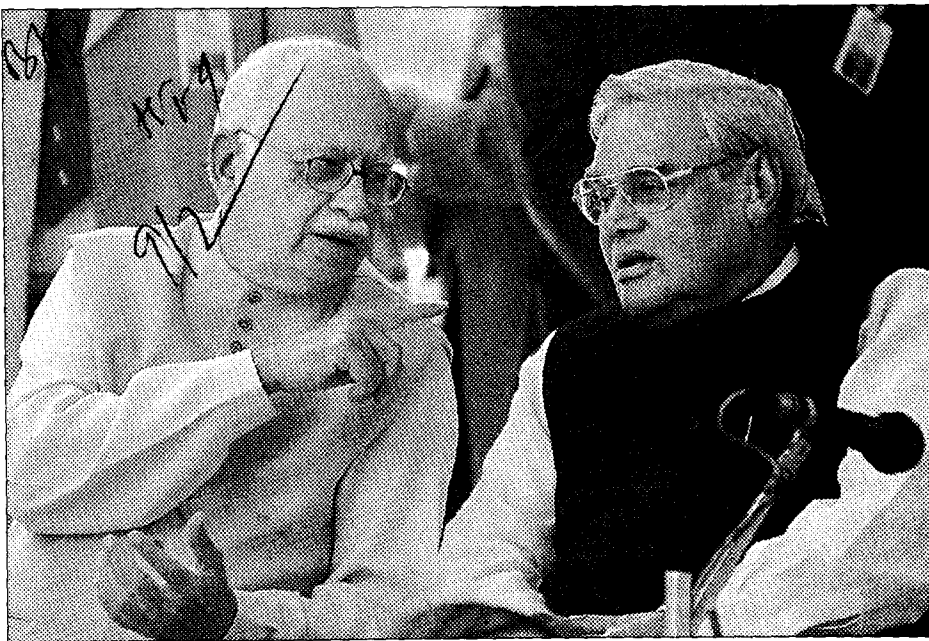
He said, “I would like to ask members of the ruling coalition, doesn't this ring alarm bells for you?”

In a show of strength, all top BJP leaders, including the chief ministers of Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, NDA convener George Fernandes, leaders from the Shiromani Akali Dal, Trinamool Congress and Biju-Janata Dal attended the daylong sit-in at the capital's Jantar Mantar.

Calling it a “shameless act”, Vajpayee said the governor's action in Goa had taken place with the Centre's approval and its instance. “There was no reason for the Goa governor to interfere at midnight. His action has put democracy in danger”.

Fernandes said the UPA government was “moving towards emergency”. Every NDA chief minister he spoke to expressed fear of dismissal of their government. “Even before assuming power, they'd started planning for unseating governments not finding favour with them”.

BJP chief L.K. Advani



BJP chief L.K. Advani with former Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee at a meeting protesting against the dismissal of the Parrikar government in Goa in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

said, “The question isn't about the dismissal of Goa government. It's about the Congress's attitude towards democracy. Whenever the Congress feels that it's losing its primacy, it tramples democracy. The Congress never believes in democracy and this agitation is to save the power of democracy.”

Asserting that the governor set a “dangerous precedent”, Advani said, “Our constitutional fathers have never imagined that Article 164, which says a particular state government can remain in power only when the governor has full pleasure in it, would be used in this manner”.

Manohar Parikkar said he was a victim of a conspiracy hatched by the Congress. “Goa was the leading state in the country in terms of development and figures by the RBI and the Planning Commission are proof to that.”

# Govt sets up a fund for PSU money

■ **Proceeds will go into corpus for social sector, sick PSUs; Maruti, BHEL decisions put off**

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 27

**T**HE Cabinet today decided to set up a National Investment Fund—a corpus made of proceeds from disinvestment of PSUs, a promise it made in the Common Minimum Programme—but put off the issue of disinvestment of Maruti and BHEL.

Announcing the government's decision, Finance Minister P Chidambaram said that proceeds from all disinvestment after April 1, 2005 would go into the corpus which would be managed by public sector fund managers. Returns on these funds would be used in the social sector—for education, health and employment generation—and as capital outlays for the revival of ailing PSUs.

With the new fund, the government has also bought time—from the screaming Left—before its next announcement for disinvestment. "What's the hurry, it will be taken up in the next

few weeks," Chidambaram said after the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. Chidambaram said the issue of disinvestment in BHEL was also on the agenda "but could not be taken up as the discussion on formation of the National Investment Fund took a lot of time."



He said that when in Opposition the Congress and the Left parties had criticised the NDA government for using the proceeds from disinvestment of PSUs for current expenditure. "These are capital receipts and should not be used for revenue expenditure," Chidambaram explained.

Earlier this week, the government had decided to sell 10 per cent equity in BHEL and 7.5 per cent shares in Maruti Udyog Ltd in the next fiscal to raise close to Rs 2,500 crore. In fact, on last Tuesday, Minister for Heavy Industries Santosh Mohan Deb had met the Finance Minister to discuss the modalities of the disinvestment in BHEL and MUL and its timing.

28 JAN 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

## MEN ON MOVE: BOSSES TAKE GUARD

# Narayanan replaces Dixit as NSA

# Tharakan to take over as RAW head

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 25 JANUARY

Dalip Singh  
NEW DELHI 25 JANUARY

THE government on Tuesday moved in to end speculation about M.K. Narayanan being the stop-gap national security advisor (NSA) by formally anointing him on the post. The formal appointment of Mr Narayanan, who was made the officiating NSA after the demise of J.N. Dixit on January 3, signals the prime ministerial decision to make his office a nodal point for the management of foreign policy issues. External affairs minister Natwar Singh did not share a good rapport with the former NSA and this had led to a turf war in the government.

A section of the media had, in fact, in the past few days unleashed a sustained campaign to press for the dismantling of the post and handing over its functions to the external affairs ministry. The arguments dished out in support of this campaign was that the NSA invariably ran into conflict with the MEA, and that the concept itself was alien to the kind of democracy practised in India. Examples of the conflict between external affairs minister in the Vajpayee government and the NSA, Brajesh Mishra, and between Natwar Singh and J.N. Dixit during the Manmohan Singh regime were cited to buttress this argument. The way out, the "anti-NSA" camp suggested, was to take steps to end this institutionalised conflict by abolishing the post.

Arguments were also made against the practice of empowering the NSA with the right to oversee the functioning of RAW, India's external intelligence wing. The practice of the RAW chief reporting to anyone other than the Prime Minister was frowned upon. The British model, in which the country's external espionage arm, the SIS (MI6) was part of the foreign office, was held out as another case for doing away with the post of NSA.

By appointing Mr Narayanan as a full-fledged NSA, the Prime Minister has made it clear that he did not exactly share this view.

KERALA DGP Hormis Tharakan will take over as the new Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) chief from C.D. Sahay after the latter retires on January 31. Mr Tharakan will be the second "outsider" to head the country's external spying agency.

The UPA government on Tuesday took the formal decision after Mr Tharakan became the unanimous choice among the final three shortlisted contenders. Other than Mr Tharakan, RAW special secretary Amber Sen and Tamil Nadu DGP I.K. Govind's name figured in the list.

It is learnt that RAW secretary C.D. Sahay, national security advisor M.K. Narayanan and Intelligence Bureau director A.K. Doval rooted for the 1968-batch Kerala cadre IPS officer.

Mr Tharakan, who will have less than six months of tenure, will be in Delhi on Wednesday to have a meeting with the top brass in the government.

Mr Tharakan is also expected to tighten structural loose ends in the RAW.

A.S. Dullat, who was the first "outsider" to become RAW secretary, has submitted a report on cadre restructuring in the external spy agency.

A highly decorated police officer, Mr Tharakan had a long stint in RAW before reverting to his parent cadre more than three years back.

His last posting in RAW was in the Kathmandu embassy during the IC-814 hijacking. He was awarded the President's Police Medal, for his exemplary work.

Mr Tharakan was also sent to Sri Lanka for the damage control exercise after the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) from Colombo. He had also served in Rome. With his elevation, the debate in the media on the insider against the outsider has come to an end. RAW officials were apprehensive of an outsider taking over the reigns of the organisation.



# Knowing global power

9B-8  
19/11

**W**HEN I read the report of the National Intelligence Council of CIA, 'Mapping the global future', which has assessed the rise of China and India as major global powers by year 2020, my mind went back 34 years to 1970 and the conversation I had with Dr Vikram Sarabhai who had just then released the ten-year nuclear profile, the space department's plan and the science and technology plan. When he asked me what would be the international alignment in the 21st century, I had said that the US, USSR, China and India would be the major actors. He disagreed. He said that in the 21st century, knowledge would be power and China and India with their large populations, and civilisational traditions, becoming knowledge-based societies would overtake the US and USSR. The present US intelligence assessment would have us believe that the visionary in Vikram Sarabhai could anticipate the CIA assessment by more than three decades.

Prime minister Manmohan Singh appears to be yet another visionary who believes in knowledge empowering India. In his speech at the CII partnership summit at Kolkata he announced his intention to set up a Knowledge Commission to strengthen our capacity and capability building so that we are better prepared for the challenge of the 21st century. He added that building a knowledge economy and a knowledge society was the only way in which we can meet the challenges of globalisation. The CIA report also deals with meeting the challenges of 21st century and of globalisation.

Although the NDA government did not phrase it that way, its resolution of April 1999, implies that to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to tackle the problems of national security, a National Security Council (NSC) was needed for initiating integrated thinking and coordinated application of the political, mili-



It's a good thing the PM is serious about building knowledge institutions

■ K. SUBRAHMANYAM

tary, diplomatic, scientific and technological resources of the state to protect and promote national security goals and objectives. Although Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Brajesh Mishra did not interpret it to mean so, this would amount to application of a knowledge-based approach to national security. Such an approach involves assessment of the long term future and likely future developments in various areas listed earlier and integrated and coordinated thinking to deal with these problems. As against this, the current decision-making approach is precedent based and reactive and often restricted to dealing with problems in specific areas limited to the jurisdiction of the ministry. While the US CIA is assessing the

one the CIA has produced to be generated with reference to this country's needs. Prime minister Manmohan Singh recognised in his Kolkata speech the need for such "knowledge institutions" in advancing and speeding up India's economic development and manufacturing competitiveness.

National security management involves India having to act in the world arena and consequently matching its wits with other competing major powers. The present state of appreciation for knowledge-based decision making in India's national security establishment is illustrated by the report on establishing a National Defence University, already cleared with the chiefs-of-staff, that is gathering dust in a

## The UPA government's NSC should aim at developing a knowledge-based national security needed to meet the challenges of globalisation in the 21st century

future of various major nations, including India and China, in this country the main assessment agency, the Joint Intelligence Committee, became part of the NSC secretariat and lost its autonomy for assessment.

The ministries are manned by generalists who can attend to day-to-day problems. They do not have either the time or capability to develop long term knowledge-based assessments and long-term policies to meet future challenges. Such long term policy making necessitates senior cabinet ministers, who make policy, having to be educated to be in a position to direct future-oriented thinking. That in turn requires long-term assessments like the

ministerial shelf for over three years. The CIA's National Intelligence Council report has listed, after detailed analysis, factors of relative certainties and key uncertainties from which US strategic policies are to be derived. If India were to benefit from this analysis and be prepared to deal with the US there is at present no institution to prepare papers on the subject and bring them to the notice of the ministers.

The CIA analysis refers to the impact of the aging of populations in the industrial world, its strategic consequences in terms of migration patterns, energy demands, growing power of non-state actors, political Islam as a force, the unlikelihood of great

power conflicts escalating, US still retaining its status as the most powerful nation and several others. Each one of them has relevance for long-term Indian national security policy-making. But there are no institutions available for knowledge generation and knowledge sharing. The role of the National Security Council (NSC), as envisaged in the resolution of April 16, 1999, was to fill this void. The Pant Committee report on setting up the National Security Council had this concept as its basis but not the NDA prime minister and NSA. Nor, would it appear, the NSA of the UPA government. In these circumstances, Manmohan Singh has no precedent to go by. The idea of NSC will fit in better with his ideas of building up a knowledge economy and knowledge society than the ideas tried out during V.P. Singh's or Vajpayee's time. His NSC should aim at developing a knowledge-based national security needed to meet the challenges of globalisation in the 21st century.

If this approach is adopted there will be no clashes between day-to-day policy-making, which is the responsibility of the ministries and long-term knowledge-based assessments, and policy responses which will have to be focused on by the NSC. The National Security Advisor will have to be a knowledge-friendly person. Such a NSC should generate thinking out of the box which is beyond the capacity of the ministries. As a knowledge generating and sharing body, the NSC has to be a deliberative body. That is not the role of CCNS which gives its decisions within the framework of alternatives formulated by the ministry. The two functions of NSC and CCNS cannot be mixed up. Whether the rise of China or India would occur smoothly is an issue which is listed to be considered seriously by US policy-makers. Do we want to devote attention to such issues? That is the challenge before us and that is what the NSC debate is about.

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# Oil PSUs may be restructured: Manmohan

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By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JAN. 16.** The Government is exploring the possibility of restructuring the public sector oil companies to bring in a greater degree of professionalism and make them globally competitive, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said here today.

He said the oil company managers needed to take quick decisions and use the available opportunities on the demand and supply side. China, he said, was ahead of India in planning in the field of energy and the latter could no longer be complacent.

### 'Focus on technology'

Emphasising that the focus needed to be on technology, the Prime Minister said the new winners would be firms which had a grip on the emerging new technologies. This offered an opportunity for Indian firms to jumpstart and leapfrog the competition through a command over the latest technologies in hydrocarbons and related sectors.

Delivering the inaugural address at Petrotech-2005, Dr. Singh stressed the need for a proper policy strategy based on accurate forecasting of increase in energy demand and stepping up energy-use efficiency. This would not only save millions of tons of oil but also be ecologically sustainable.

He recalled that in 1995, when the first Petrotech conference was held here, the econo-

my was undergoing a major transformation. "The challenge for our policy makers is to deal with the two transitions that are taking place now — one, from the use of traditional non-market forms of energy to commercial energy, and two, from low energy consumption to higher consumption due to rapid industrialisation."

Though the per capita consumption of commercial energy would have to increase if the quality of life for the underprivileged was to improve, this would have to go along with increased efficiencies in the use of that energy so that the environment damage would be moderated as well as the impact of growth on the demand.

He said the potential cost of environment damage had been assessed at 10 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

### Hydrogen-powered vehicle

This year's Petrotech conference is the sixth in a series that started in 1995 and focussed on the scientific and technological advances in the field of hydrocarbons.

The Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Mani Shankar Aiyar, revealed that in two months from now Indian Oil Corporation would unveil the prototype of a hydrogen-powered vehicle.

Reform panel approved  
: Page 11

# সংস্কার-যাত্রায় বুদ্ধ ও সঙ্গী, আস্থা চান শিল্পমহলের

অভিজিৎ ঘোষাল

ভরসা রাখুন কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের উপরে। কারণ, বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের মতো সংস্কারমনস্ক বাম প্রশাসক কেবল সহযোগী নন, সহযাত্রীও বটে— সংস্কারের পথে তাঁদের যাত্রা কতটা মসৃণ, বিদেশি শিল্পপতিদের তা বোঝাতে বুদ্ধবাবুকে এ ভাবেই অভিহিত করলেন আর্থিক সংস্কারের অগ্রপথিক প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

প্রশাসক মনমোহন ও প্রশাসক বুদ্ধবাবু একই মেরুর বাসিন্দা— বুধবার কলকাতায় বণিকসভা সি আই আই আয়োজিত ‘পার্টনারশিপ সামিট’-এ বুদ্ধবাবুকে পাশে বসিয়ে এই দাবি করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। এবং সেই সঙ্গে সংস্কার নিয়ে বামদেবের উপরে চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছেন তিনি। কারণ, এ দিন তিনি সংস্কারের এমন চিত্র পেশ করেছেন, বামপন্থীদের সমর্থন ছাড়া যা রূপায়ণে তিনি অসমর্থ।

সংস্কার নিয়ে দু’টি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সিদ্ধান্তের কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। ১৯৯৮ সালের যে-‘প্রেস নোট-১৮’ নিয়ে বামপন্থীদের আপত্তি, তারই ধারা সংশোধন করে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পথ উন্মুক্ত করে দিচ্ছে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। এ দেশে স্থানীয় সংস্কার সঙ্গে যে-সব বিদেশি সংস্থা যৌথ উদ্যোগ গঠন করেছে, সেগুলির জন্য নতুন বিনিয়োগের পথে প্রতিবন্ধক ছিল এই ধারা। কারণ, সে-ক্ষেত্রে স্থানীয় শরিকের সম্মতি ছাড়া নতুন বিনিয়োগের অনুমতি মিলত না। কিন্তু সংশোধিত নিয়ম অনুযায়ী, ভবিষ্যতে যে-সব বিদেশি সংস্থা যৌথ উদ্যোগ গড়বে, তাদের ক্ষেত্রে এমন কোনও প্রতিবন্ধক থাকবে না।

মনমোহনের দ্বিতীয় প্রতিশ্রুতি, আমদানি শুল্ক শীঘ্রই আসিয়ান-স্তরে নামিয়ে আনা হবে। তার অর্থ, ২৪ শতাংশ থেকে কমে তা হতে পারে ১২-১৬ শতাংশ। প্রসঙ্গত, আগামী এপ্রিল থেকেই বিক্রয়করের বদলে চালু হচ্ছে ‘ভ্যাট’ বা যুক্তমূল্য কর। ফলে আগামী বাজেটে পরোক্ষ কর-চিত্রের অনেকটাই সম্ভবত এ দিন প্রকাশ করে দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

যে-মনমোহনের হাত ধরে ভারতের আর্থিক সংস্কারের শুরু, এ বার সেই একই ব্যক্তি প্রধানমন্ত্রী হয়ে জাতীয় গ্রন্থাগারের মাঠে ঘোষণা করলেন আর এক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সংস্কারের সূচনার কথা। একটি ‘নলেজ কমিশন’-এর কথা ঘোষণা করে প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়েছেন, পাঁচটি বিষয়ে শিক্ষা ও তার প্রয়োগে আমূল পরিবর্তন চান তিনি। এই কাজ কেমন করে সম্ভব, তা নির্ণয় করবে ওই নতুন কমিশন। এই পাঁচটি ক্ষেত্র হল: উচ্চশিক্ষার নতুন ধারা উদ্ভাবন; বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তির প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলির উন্নতিসাধন; শিল্পের দক্ষতা বাড়াতে প্রযুক্তির নতুন প্রয়োগ; সাধারণ মানুষের উপকারের জন্য জ্ঞানের প্রয়োগ (প্রযুক্তির) এবং সরকারি পরিষেবা নাগরিকদের হাতে পৌঁছে দেওয়ার জন্য প্রযুক্তির প্রয়োগ। মনমোহনের কথায়, মৌলিক গবেষণা ও উচ্চশিক্ষায় বিশ্বে বরণ্য হতে না-পারলে শুধু আর্থিক প্রগতি নিয়ে উন্নত দুনিয়ায় জায়গা করে নেওয়া যায় না।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এ দিনের বক্তৃতার বিষয় ও শব্দচয়ন ছিল তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। রাষ্ট্রনেতার ভূমিকা অতিক্রম করে তিনি বলেন, বাণিজ্য সহযোগিতার জন্য আসিয়ান অঞ্চল তৈরি। তবে আর্থিক সহযোগিতাই বৃহত্তর সহযোগিতার প্রথম ধাপ। অবশ্য সব প্রসঙ্গের পরেও এ দিন সভায় থেকে গিয়েছে বামদেবের সঙ্গে মনমোহনের সম্পর্ক স্থাপনে মুস্কিয়ানা। যা শুধু তাঁর সরকারের দক্ষতা নয়, অস্তিত্বের জন্যও জরুরি।

পশ্চিমী শিল্পমহলকে আশ্বস্ত করতে মনমোহন যাঁর উপরে বাজি ধরেছেন, সেই বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের উদার নীতিতে রীতিমতো বিস্মিত ইংল্যান্ডের বাণিজ্য ও শিল্পমন্ত্রী প্যাট্রিসিয়া হিউইট। এক জন কমিউনিস্ট মুখ্যমন্ত্রী যে এতটা বিনিয়োগ-বান্ধব হতে পারেন, তা তাঁর ধারণায় ছিল না বলে এ দিন স্বীকার করেছেন তিনি। তার আগেই সভার মঞ্চ থেকে বিশিষ্ট শিল্পপতি রতন টাটা বলেছেন, বুদ্ধবাবুর নেতৃত্বে এ রাজ্যের পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তাঁরা উপলব্ধি করেছেন, পশ্চিমবঙ্গে তাঁদের যতটা বিনিয়োগ করা উচিত ছিল, ততটা তাঁরা করেননি। এখন তাই কয়েকটি ক্ষেত্রে বিনিয়োগের সম্ভাবনা যাচাই করছেন তাঁরা।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, বামপন্থীরা সংস্কারের চাকা স্তব্ধ করে দেবেন কি না, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে এই সংশয় নিরসনে তাঁকে সাহায্য করেছে বুদ্ধবাবুর নজির। এই প্রশংসায় যে খাদ নেই, তা বোঝাতে মনমোহন বলেন, আমেরিকা সফরে বামদেবের সংস্কারমনস্কতা প্রমাণ করতে বুদ্ধবাবুর প্রসঙ্গ তুলেছিলেন অনাবাসী শিল্পপতি পূর্ণেন্দু চট্টোপাধ্যায়। একই নিঃশ্বাসে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বলেন, উইপ্রোর চেয়ারম্যান আজিম প্রেমজি যখন বুদ্ধবাবুকে ‘দেশের সেরা মুখ্যমন্ত্রী’ বলেন, তখন তিনি বিস্মিত হন না। এর পরে তাঁর সংযোজন, “কমিউনিস্ট চিন যদি বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের আকর্ষক গন্তব্য হতে পারে এবং পশ্চিমবঙ্গে বাম সরকার যদি বিদেশি লাগি টানতে উঠেপড়ে লাগে, তা হলে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার যে ভারতকে বিদেশি লাগির জন্য সমান আকর্ষক করে তুলতে পারবে, তাতে কোনও সংশয় নেই।”

আর্থিক সংস্কার ও বাম-নির্ভরতা— সরকারের ভার নেওয়ার সময় থেকে এই দুই আপাতবিরোধী বিষয় তাঁকে গত আট মাস তাড়া করে ফেরার পরে বাম দুর্গে বাম নেতাদের সঙ্গে শিল্পসভায় এ দিনই ছিল মনমোহনের প্রথম উপস্থিতি। এই সুযোগের পূর্ণ সদ্ব্যবহার করেছেন তিনি। এক দিকে তিনি ২৬টি দেশের শিল্পপতিদের বুদ্ধিয়েছেন, বামেরা প্রতিবন্ধক তো ননই, বরং সংস্কারের পথে সহযাত্রী হতে পারেন তাঁরা। অন্য দিকে, বুদ্ধবাবুর নেতৃত্বের উজ্জ্বল ছবি একে সম্ভবত বোঝাতে চেয়েছেন যে, সংস্কার-বিরোধিতা প্রশাসক বুদ্ধবাবু এবং তাঁর রাজ্যের ভাবমূর্তিকেই আঘাত করতে পারে।

বাম-নির্ভরতা সংস্কারের পথে কতটা প্রতিবন্ধক, এ দিনের সভায় সেই বিষয়ে প্রশ্ন ওঠেনি। কিন্তু নিজেই তার অবতারণা করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। সংস্কারের প্রশ্নে প্রশাসক মনমোহন ও প্রশাসক বুদ্ধদেবের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি যে অভিন্ন, তা বোঝাতে মন্ত্রীর উদ্ধৃতি দেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী— “যে-ভাবনা মানুষের মনে দাগ কাটে, তা-ই সামাজিক শক্তির চেহারা নেয়।” তাঁর ব্যাখ্যায়, সংস্কার নিয়ে দিল্লি ও কলকাতার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির ফারাক নেই। কারণ, তাঁর ও বুদ্ধবাবুর সংস্কার-ভাবনা মানুষের মন ছুঁয়ে গিয়েছে।

অর্থনীতিবিদ জন কেইনসকে উদ্ধৃত করে মনমোহন বলেন, “শেষ বিচারে সব বিনিয়োগই আস্থার ফল।” এ দিন প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজেই শিল্পমহলের কাছে তাঁর সরকারের জন্য আস্থা প্রার্থনা করেছেন। আস্থা প্রার্থনা করেছেন বামপন্থীদের জন্য। হয়তো বামপন্থীদের কাছেও।



পার্টনারশিপ সামিট-এ বুদ্ধদেব ও মনমোহন। — নিজস্ব চিত্র

# Press Note 18 scrapped to increase FDI

By Our Special Correspondent

**KOLKATA, JAN. 12.** In a measure aimed at smoothening the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI), the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, announced today the withdrawal of the restrictive provisions of Press Note 18 for all future joint ventures between Indian and foreign partners.

Press Note 18, issued in 1998, made it obligatory on the part of foreign companies having joint ventures in India to obtain government approval before setting up new ventures in the same or allied fields. This stipulation was seen as restrictive by foreign investors. They said they were tied to their existing Indian partners, irrespective of the status of the existing venture, and were unable to venture out on their own or with new partners. But sections of Indian industry wanted the protection under Press Note 18 to continue as some foreign partners had the tendency to "jump out" and align with rival parties or set up independent ventures.

## "An anachronism"

Announcing the scrapping of the provision at the Partnership Summit of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here, Dr. Singh said this was a regulatory provision causing discomfort to investors. Amid tales of success of Indian firms at the global market place and the optimism of Indian industry as revealed at the recent meeting of the National Manufacturing Competitive Council, measures such as Press Note 18 seemed like an anachronism, having outlived

their purpose, he said.

Elaborating on the Prime Minister's decision, the Commerce and Industry Minister, Kamal Nath, later told the meeting that Press Note 18 would not apply to any joint venture entered into after today, and that future ventures should include a conflict of interest clause in their agreements to protect the interests of the parties concerned. The Minister explained that even among the old or existing ventures, three categories would be excluded from the purview of Press Note 18. These include sick or defunct joint ventures, collaborations in which either partner had less than three per cent stake and venture capital funds registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

Another modification is that even among the existing joint ventures that do not come under the excluded categories, Press Note 18 will apply only for the same field and not similar or allied fields. Secondly, the onus to prove whether the new joint venture will or will not adversely affect the existing joint venture will be equally on the foreign and domestic partners, unlike now when it is only on the foreign partner.

## Fresh Note issued

Consequently, Press Note 18 so far prohibited access to the automatic approval route for foreign ventures. The Government has also issued a fresh Press Note 1 (2005 series) to replace the scrapped Press Note 18.

See also Page 14

# কর্মসূচি মানব, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দৃঢ় আশ্বাস সি পি এম-কে

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: কলকাতায় সি পি এমের কেন্দ্রীয় কমিটির সভার পরে ২৪ ঘণ্টাও কাটেনি। প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে মঙ্গলবার কলকাতায় প্রথম সফরে এসে ন্যূনতম সাধারণ কর্মসূচি (সি এম পি) অক্ষরে অক্ষরে মেনে চলার ব্যাপারে সি পি এম-কে আশ্বস্ত করলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ।

আলিমুদ্দিন স্ট্রিটে বাম-ইউ পি এ কো-অর্ডিনেশন কমিটির সদস্য সীতারাম ইয়েচুরিকে পাশে বসিয়ে সোমবার কংগ্রেসের বিরুদ্ধে ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করেছিলেন সি পি এম নেতা প্রকাশ কারাট। তাঁর অভিযোগ, অনেক ক্ষেত্রেই কেন্দ্র সি পি এম পি অনুযায়ী কাজ করছে না। তা নিয়ে তাঁরা সংসদের ভিতরে-বাইরে সর্বব হবেন। মঙ্গলবার রবীন্দ্র সরোবরে কংগ্রেসের কর্মসভায় মন্ত্রিসভার দু'নম্বর ব্যক্তি প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়কে পাশে বসিয়ে বামদেবের আশ্বস্ত করলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তাঁর কথায়, “সরকার গরিব, কৃষক, শ্রমিকদের স্বার্থ দেখছে। সাড়ে সাত মাসে কোনও বিষয়ে সি এম পি থেকে আমরা এক চুলও সরিনি।”

প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানেন, বামদেবের সমালোচনা আসন্ন বাজেট অধিবেশনে ইউ পি এ সরকারের অস্বস্তি বাড়াতে পারে। সি এম পি নিয়ে ভুল বোঝাবুঝির অবসানের লক্ষ্যে প্রণববাবু বলেন, “আমরা ইউ পি এ-বিরোধী পদক্ষেপ করছি বলে যে-ভাবে হুঙ্কার দেওয়া হচ্ছে, তা ঠিক নয়। এতে অহেতুক অস্বস্তিকর পরিস্থিতির সৃষ্টি হচ্ছে।” বামদেবের দাবি অনুসারে লোকসানে চলা রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থাগুলির ঝাঁপ বন্ধ না-করে তাদেরও হাল ফেরানোর আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। জলসম্পদ মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুঙ্গিরও দাবি, কেন্দ্র সি এম পি থেকে আদৌ সরেনি। কারাটদের অভিযোগ ছিল, পেটেন্টের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়েও সংসদকে এড়িয়ে গিয়ে অর্ডিন্যান্স

করা হয়েছে। জবাবে প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর যুক্তি, বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য সংস্থায় চুক্তির কারণেই তা করতে হয়েছে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আশ্বাসে সি পি এমের কেন্দ্রীয় কমিটির সদস্য শ্যামল চক্রবর্তী বা মহম্মদ সেলিমের মন্তব্য, “উনি ভালই বলেছেন।” শ্যামলবাবুর মতে, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী যখন রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব কারখানার প্রসঙ্গে বলেছেন, তখন নিশ্চয় দায়িত্ব নিয়েই বলেছেন। আমরা তাঁর বক্তব্যকে স্বাগত জানাই।” তবে শ্যামলবাবুর অভিযোগ, “উনি এখানে এক রকম বললেন। কিন্তু দিল্লি অন্য রকম করছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দেখা উচিত, উনি যা বলছেন, সেটা পুরোপুরি কার্যকর হচ্ছে কি না।” দলীয় সূত্রের খবর, তাঁরা সি এম পি মেনে চলবেন বলে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তথা সি পি এমের পলিটবুরোর সদস্য বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যকেও একান্তে আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

মনমোহন বলেন, “কংগ্রেসের সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গাঁধী পরিকার জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, সি এম পি মেনেই চলতে হবে। গত সাড়ে সাত মাসে আমরা তার থেকে এক চুলও সরিনি।” এই সময়ে কৃষি, শিল্প থেকে আরম্ভ করে রফতানি ক্ষেত্রেও উল্লেখযোগ্য অগ্রগতি ঘটেছে বলে তাঁর দাবি। তিনি বলেন, “আগের সরকার লাভজনক রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব শিল্পের জন্য কিছুই করেনি। আমরা কেবল তা মজবুতই করছি না, সেগুলি কী করে আরও বড় হয়, সেই চেষ্টা করছি। লোকসানে চলা শিল্পগুলির অবস্থা বদলানোর চেষ্টা করছি। কারণ, এর সঙ্গে বহু শ্রমিকের স্বার্থ যুক্ত।” কাজের বদলে খাদ্য কর্মসূচি যাতে পুরোপুরি রূপায়িত হয়, বেকারদের ১০০ দিন কাজ যাতে সুনিশ্চিত হয়, সেই বিষয়ে এবং সব চেয়ে বড় কথা, স্কুলপড়ুয়াদের জন্য ‘মিড-ডে মিল’ দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে তাঁর সরকার পুরোপুরি সচেতন বলে জানিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

# CPM not to rock UPA government

## Formation of third front ruled out for now

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, January 10

CAUGHT BETWEEN the devil and the deep sea — increasing pressure from the party's lower levels for terminating its ties with the Congress and the political compulsions of keeping the BJP away from power — the CPI(M) central committee has decided to intensify its criticism of the UPA government. But at no point in time will the Marxists withdraw support from the government and force a mid-term poll.

CPI(M) politburo member Prakash Karat said on Monday after the three-day central committee meeting of the party that CPI(M) would not consider withdrawing support from the UPA government at the Centre even in future.

In the same breath, Karat charged the Congress-led government with adopting policies in the interest of "big business and foreign capital but doing nothing for the working class."

The central committee finalised its political and organisational report, to be placed during the 18th party congress in Delhi in April,



**Prakash Karat**  
*Constructive criticism*

which urged the party to build an all-round agitation against the Centre "to force it to implement its promises made in the common minimum programme." The report also rules out the formation of a non-Congress, non-BJP Third Front in near future.

"We had decided to support the Congress-led government to keep the BJP away from power. We had also hoped that the government would implement the common minimum programme," Karat said and added that his party was "still not of the opinion

that the Congress will never implement the CMP. We are not thinking of withdrawing support even in the future."

Karat also described as inherently undemocratic the UPA government's practice of pushing forward policies through ordinances and not through discussions in Parliament. The ordinance to amend the Patent Act, dilution of the Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, decision to allow foreign banks to pick up stakes in Indian banks and the Centre's persistent indecision on hiking the EPF rates also came in for sharp criticism.

Reiterating the party's description of the Congress-JMM poll alliance in Bihar and Jharkhand as "unilateral and not in the spirit of the way Lok Sabha polls had been fought," politburo member Sitaram Yechury said, "A full fledged alliance of secular parties is no longer possible in Bihar and Jharkhand. But we will like to see that division of secular votes is minimised." Karat, however, hoped that happenings in Jharkhand and Bihar would not affect functioning of the UPA.

# Now, a disaster authority

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Jan. 9: After an all-party meeting on the tsunami called by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the government announced the setting up of a National Disaster Management Authority.

There are also plans to put an early warning system for natural calamities in place, home minister Shivraj Patil told reporters at the end of the two-and-a-half-hour meeting this morning.

A bill to set up the disaster management authority will be tabled in Parliament next month, he added. Defence minister Pranab Mukherjee and agriculture minister Sharad Pawar were also present to take questions.

Patil said the Centre has announced a committee to suggest the best technology available for a warning system. India will be "part and parcel of all international efforts" on tsunami forecasts, he said, adding that the government has not thought of being part of any existing warning system for the moment. It would much prefer to take the lead in forming a new grouping.

However, exchange of information with countries that have tsunami warning systems will be pursued.

Science and technology minister Kapil Sibal has invited Indian and international scientists to a conference on January 21 to give their views on the best way to put together a warning system.

Although the Centre did not give details of the disaster management body, officials said it would be multi-disciplinary and autonomous. Scientists, technocrats and experts from all fields will be invited to be a part of it.

After the 2001 Gujarat quake, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had convened a similar all-party meeting following which he had announced the setting up of a national committee on disaster management.

Mukherjee said the UPA government has accepted 64 of the panel's 97 recommendations, including setting up a cabinet committee on disaster management.

Today's meeting was attended by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and BJP bigwigs, including Vajpayee, party chief L.K. Advani and senior leaders Jaswant Singh and Sushma Swaraj. All parties were well represented.

Manmohan Singh, who has just returned from the Andamans, shared his experience with the other leaders at the meeting, which was free of the usual acrimony.

# Dual citizenship for NRIs who left after '50: PM

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8/11/05  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday extended dual citizenship to overseas Indians who migrated after January 26, 1950.

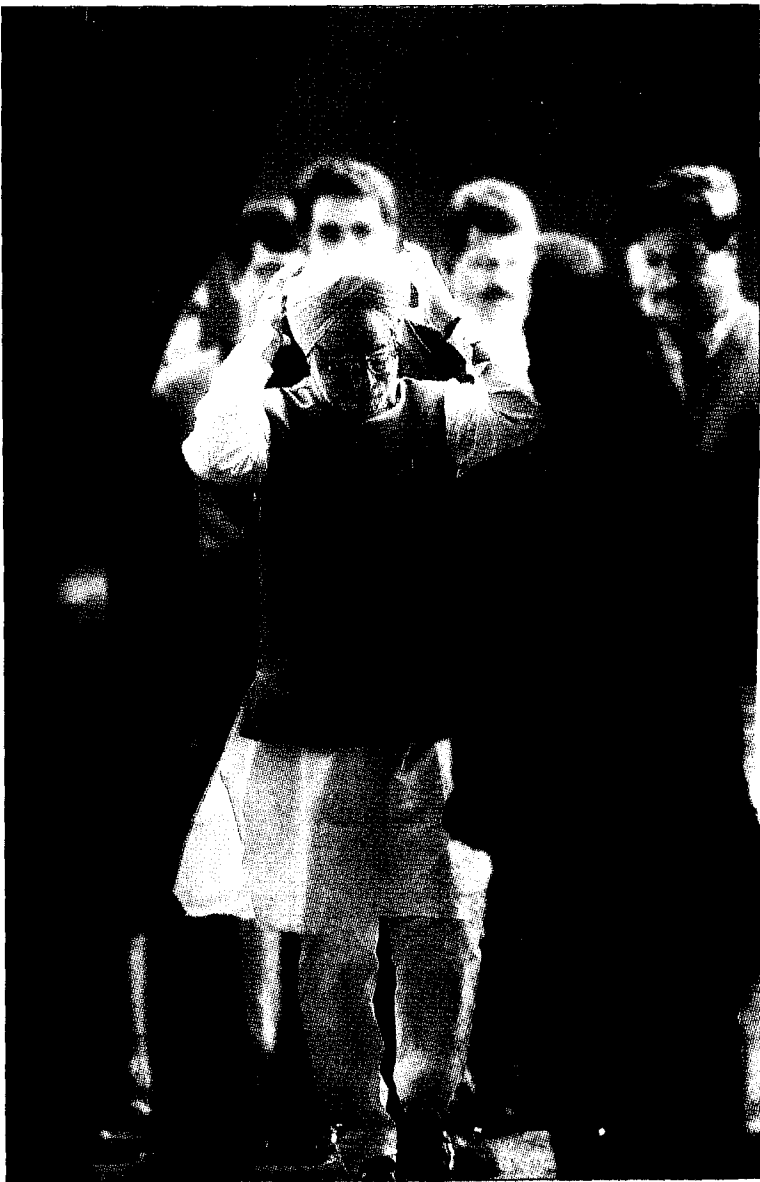
Inaugurating the third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at the Admiral S N Kohli stadium in Colaba, Singh announced that dual citizenship was open to all overseas Indians as long as their home countries allowed it under their laws. At present, it is allowed for only 16 countries that have reciprocal laws.

While overseas Indians will enjoy dual citizenship, they will not get voting rights. Singh said the government was creating opportunities at home for People of Indian Origin (PIO) to enable them to relate to their motherland. Urging NRIs to invest not just in the business sector but also in social infrastructure, Singh said a large number of NRI children were returning to India to pursue higher studies. "Apart from higher education, NRIs can meaningfully participate in extending primary education to our vast population. Contributions need not go only to the government but can be given to NGOs active in the social sector," he said.

Singh reminded the diaspora that since 1991, various governments had taken measures to liberalise the Indian economy. With a large number of NRIs pursuing professional careers and business both in their host country and in the home country, the number of Indians with two homes is increasing. On infrastructure, the PM said the government was building new international airports in major cities. He said 30 airports across the country would be modernised.

The reforms process, he said, would be carried forward in the economic field and extended to administration and the polity. He said the country needed an investment of up to US \$150 billion to build infrastructure over the next decade. This would help step up the rate of economic growth to 7-8%, he said. "Much of this must come in as foreign direct investment and, in substantial part, from overseas Indians," he added.

Union finance minister P Chidambaram rechristened NRIs as Non-Resident Investors. "While your remittances have helped shore up the country's foreign reserves to US \$131 billion, it is not enough. The



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh arrives to inaugurate the third Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at the Admiral S N Kohli stadium in Colaba on Friday

savings must be transformed into investments for business, industries and for social infrastructure," he said.

Speaking at a plenary session on India as a hub for globalisation at the National Centre for Performing Arts, Chidambaram said the government believed in an investment-led strategy for growth. He said the NRIs could invest in agriculture, mid-day meal scheme, all weather roads, toilets and water supply schemes.

The Prime Minister mentioned about remittances sent home by People of Indian Origin in the Gulf region and said this had played an important role in building the foreign exchange reserves that now amounted to over \$130 billion. Assuring NRIs that the government would try and address the issue of protecting returns on their savings, he said: "We should try and wean away NRI in Gulf from bank deposits to debt or even equity-oriented savings".



FRIDAY, JANUARY 7, 2005

110-12  
9/12

## MORE OPEN SKIES

J.P.P  
ICPA

THE UNION CABINET'S decision to allow established private airlines to operate to foreign destinations with the exception of West Asia is on expected lines and represents another step towards a liberal open skies policy in the civil aviation sector. Initially, it was felt that after letting the private airlines fly to South Asian countries, the next step would be to extend their operations to South East Asian destinations. Instead of shepherding them in measured steps, the Centre has opted to allow them into a wider theatre. The latest round of liberalisation has a few restrictive clauses — only those private airlines that have operated in the domestic sector for five years and have a fleet of at least 20 aircraft are eligible; and Gulf countries are out of bounds for another three years. Although only Jet Airways and Air Sahara qualify, this move should benefit passengers because any additional competitive pressure usually leads to a fare reduction. To that extent, the open skies policy now being pursued by the Centre and its Civil Aviation Ministry must be welcomed.

There can be no two opinions on the need to open up the skies. When it is left to the private carriers, they will tend to operate only in the viable and profitable sectors. They can now look at South East Asia, Africa, Europe, and even the United States. While the Government will take some time to formalise the procedures, the two eligible private airlines will have to equip themselves for the challenge that lies ahead. Their fleets may be new but the aircraft need to be modified or new ones inducted to suit international operations. They cannot afford to copy Indian Airlines, which continues to fly the same fleet on both domestic and international routes — without in-flight entertainment and the other perquisites and frills

associated with such flights. Working out an optimal ratio between international and domestic operations and deploying the requisite number of aircraft and crew are tasks that the private airlines need to address over the next few weeks or months. They are disappointed that this round of opening up the skies has kept the lucrative West Asian market out of their reach, but that seems to be for good reason.

This is the only "protectionist" measure that the Government has taken in the interest of the two national carriers — Air India and Indian Airlines — for whom the West Asian operations provide substantial profits. The next challenge will arise when bilateral aviation agreements are negotiated with other countries. But the Centre must realise that protectionism is not the answer to a competitive environment. At this stage, it may be imperative. The ultimate solution is to make the two national airlines competitive. Unless the Centre empowers them and enables them to augment and renew their fleet, they will not be in a position to stand up to the growing competition, both from international airlines and domestic private airlines, which will now fly out of the country. The national carriers are left with the impression that being public sector has now become a handicap, with successive Governments at the Centre taking decisions that are more favourable to private operators. It is a far cry from the monopoly status they enjoyed; they are now reduced to demanding "a level playing field." Rules and norms are stringently applied to them while the competition escapes from many of them. All the uneconomical sectors in the country are left to Indian Airlines while the private players cream away the traffic on the major metro routes. This situation needs remedying on a priority basis.

THE HINDU

7 JAN 2005

# Job guarantee Bill runs into trouble

By Bhaskar Roy/TNN

**New Delhi:** The UPA government's ambitious programme to provide 100 days of employment in a year to the rural poor has run into deep trouble with its original drafters finding fault with the Bill presented in Parliament.

Some of the experts, who as members of the Sonia Gandhi-headed National Advisory Council had prepared the blueprint of the massive scheme, have called the Bill a "travesty" of the original.

The Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 21 was "extensively reworked from the point of view of a bureaucrat who is anxious to minimise the responsibility of the state," said economist Jean Dreze, an NAC member who had contributed significantly to the draft. The clamour over the Bill being a "watered-down" version of the NAC draft, expectedly en-

joys strong backing of the Left. "The Bill is a caricature of the original document. Lack of funds cannot be an excuse for diluting it. Since the draft had the approval of Sonia Gandhi the government should go back to it," said CPI general secretary A B Bardhan.

The back-to-socialism programme, very much part of the ruling coalition's common minimum programme, has had a bumpy ride all through its passage to Parliament.

While the Left and NAC activists pitched for it, pro-reforms politicians even within the Congress, had reservations about the wisdom of spending Rs 15,000 crore of the taxpayers' money on a programme which promised no tangible returns. If the mood in the Left circles is any indication, the government is going to come under strong political pressure from its outside backers to revert back to the academics' draft.

# কপিল সিবলকে তলব করে কড়া কথা শোনােন সুনীয়া

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২ জানুয়ারি— দশ নম্বর জনপথে তলব করে কপিল সিবলকে কড়া কথা শোনােন সুনীয়া গাঁধী।

সুনামির সতর্কবার্তা ঘিরে স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক ও বিজ্ঞান-প্রযুক্তি বিভাগের মধ্যে কলহে ক্ষুর কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সিবলকে বলে দিয়েছেন, এই ধরনের 'বিব্রাণ্ডি' যেন ভবিষ্যতে না ছড়ায়, সে দিকে খেয়াল রাখতে হবে। সুনীয়ার অসন্তোষের প্রধান কারণ, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক যে সতর্কবার্তা জারি করেছিল, তাকে বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রী এ ভাবে প্রকাশ্যে খারিজ করলেন কেন? বিতর্কের প্রেক্ষিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহও সংশ্লিষ্ট দুই মন্ত্রী, শিবরাজ পাটিল ও সিবলের সঙ্গে কথা বলেছেন।

ফের সুনামি আসতে পারে এই সতর্কবার্তা নিয়ে বৃহস্পতিবার দিনভর রীতিমতো তরজা চলে স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক এবং বিজ্ঞান-প্রযুক্তি বিভাগের মধ্যে। সুনামি মোকাবিলায় সরকারি প্রচেষ্টার অন্য সব বক্তব্য ছাপিয়ে সংবাদমাধ্যম জুড়ে প্রচার পায় এই তরজাই। কংগ্রেস সূত্রে খবর, এই 'অবাস্তিত বিতর্ক'-এ একেবারেই খুশি নন সুনীয়া। তাই তিনি পর দিন রাতেই বাসভবনে ডেকে পাঠিয়ে সিবলের সঙ্গে কুড়ি মিনিট কথা বলেন। তার আগে সুনীয়া ফোনে শিবরাজ পাটিলের সঙ্গেও কথা বলেন।

কংগ্রেস সূত্রে খবর, সুনীয়ার বক্তব্য: যখন একবার এমন বিপর্যয় হয়েছে, তখন ফের সুনামির সামান্যতম সম্ভাবনা থাকলেও তাকে এ ভাবে নস্যাৎ করা সমীচীন নয়। বৃহস্পতিবার ভোরে দুটি বিদেশি সংস্থা জানিয়েছিল, ভারতের পূর্ব উপকূলে আগামী কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যে ফের সুনামি আঘাত হানতে পারে। অস্ট্রেলিয়ার উপকণ্ঠে সামুদ্রিক ভূকম্প হলে এই বিপর্যয় হবে। সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে বিজ্ঞান মন্ত্রীর বক্তব্য ছিল, ভূকম্পের আগাম পূর্বাভাস সম্ভব নয়। কাজেই সুনামির এমন

পূর্বাভাস 'অবৈজ্ঞানিক'। এই কথাই সিবল জানিয়েছেন সুনীয়াকে। কিন্তু স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের মতোই সুনীয়ারও বক্তব্য ছিল, ভূকম্প হবে সেটা বলা যেমন অসম্ভব, তেমনি হবে না, সেটাও তো একই ভাবে জোর গলায় বলা যায় না। তা ছাড়া, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের কাছে এই তথ্য সিবলেরই অধীনস্থ ভারতীয় আবহাওয়া বিভাগ (আই এম ডি) পাঠিয়েছিল। তারও উল্লেখ ছিল সুনীয়ার বক্তব্যে।

সুনামির মোকাবিলার মূল দায়িত্ব পালন করছে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক। এবং এই সতর্কবার্তা জারি করা হয়েছিল এই মন্ত্রকেরই জাতীয় বিপর্যয় ব্যবস্থাপনা কেন্দ্র থেকে। কিন্তু সেই ছুঁশিয়ারি খারিজ করেছে বিজ্ঞান বিভাগ। কংগ্রেস সূত্রে খবর, সুনীয়ার বক্তব্য যদি বা ভুল হয়েও থাকে, তা হলেও সেটা স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের পক্ষেই সংশোধন করা সমীচীন হত। এক মন্ত্রকের বক্তব্য অন্য একটি বিভাগ খারিজ করেছে, এটা সরকারের পক্ষে বিড়ম্বনার বিষয়। শিবরাজ সুনীয়াকে বুঝিয়েছেন, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক নেহাতই সাবধানতা অবলম্বন করার জন্য ওই বার্তা জারি করেছিল। প্রথমবার সুনামি আসার সময়ে কেন্দ্র আগেভাগে জানতে পারেনি বলে ইতিমধ্যেই বিস্তর সমালোচনা হয়েছে। ফলে দ্বিতীয়বার সামান্যতম ঝুঁকিও নেয়নি সরকার।

সরকারের কাজে অসন্তুষ্ট হয়ে মন্ত্রীকে সুনীয়ার ডেকে পাঠানোর ঘটনা অবশ্য এই প্রথম নয়। এর আগে একবার তিনি শিবরাজ পাটিলকেই ১০ জনপথে তলব করেছিলেন। মণিপুরে মনোরমা হত্যা এবং তার প্রেক্ষিতে অসম রাইফেলসের বিরুদ্ধে আন্দোলন শুরু হয়েছিল। সেই সময়ে শিবরাজের ভূমিকা নিয়ে বিস্তর সমালোচনা শুরু হয়েছিল। তখন সুনীয়া শিবরাজকে ডেকে পাঠিয়েছিলেন পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে আলোচনা করার জন্য।