

Decline and fall of the RJD

119-10
23/11
98P
RJD

Fifteen years after he took Bihar by storm, Lalu Prasad has been handed a drubbing so severe it has stunned pundit and pollster alike. That the sun was setting on the 15-year reign of the Rashtriya Janata Dal was obvious enough. Yet neither the exit polls nor reports emerging from the field captured the scale of voter dissatisfaction with what, in the final months, came to be seen as the Lalu-Buta regime. In the event, it was a clean sweep for the Janata Dal (United)-Bharatiya Janata Party combine spearheaded by Nitish Kumar. Of the 243 seats on offer, the JD (U)-BJP has mopped up 143, leaving 65 to the RJD-Congress-Communist Party of India (Marxist) alliance. As expected, the Ram Vilas Paswan-led Lok Janshakti Party-Communist Party of India alliance finished at the bottom of the pile with 13 seats. Without any doubt the election belongs to Mr. Kumar. Working determinedly among the people, the JD(U) leader capitalised on the many follies of Governor's rule. A key strategy was to woo oppressed caste groups long neglected by the RJD. The addition of a good chunk of the votes of Most Backward Classes to the JD (U)-BJP's kurmi-upper caste base appears to have tilted the balance against the RJD. Who would believe that 18 months ago, Mr. Prasad's party with its allies, the Congress and the LJP, made short work of the National Democratic Alliance, capturing 29 of Bihar's 40 Lok Sabha seats on a 44.4 per cent vote share?

This picture-perfect alliance was in tatters by February 2005. With the Congress opting to go with Mr. Paswan, the RJD lost that Assembly election. But it was still the single largest party, with 75 seats and a vote share of 25.05 per cent. Since then, it has lost 21 seats and a couple of percentage points in vote share. This is a huge decline from the 30.7 per cent the RJD polled in the May 2004 Lok Sabha election. The RJD-Congress-CPI(M) alliance seemed to have conventional arithmetic on its side but what is clear is that this cannot overcome swings in the popular mood. Two factors appear to have done in the alliance. The first was the perception that Mr. Prasad was a proxy ruler who manipulated the Raj Bhavan and refused to play fair. The second factor was the Union Cabinet's midnight decision to dissolve the House. The Supreme Court's verdict holding this act to be unconstitutional sealed Mr. Prasad's fate. The RJD chief is not one to be underestimated: he retains considerable support among the deprived. Meanwhile, there is a need for serious reflection on the recent trend of low voter turnout in Bihar. It declined from 46.5 per cent in February 2005 — itself a massive drop from 2000 — to 45.5 per cent this time. Such evidence of voter apathy is all the more intriguing considering the nature and size of the JD(U)-BJP victory. A high voter turnout, signifying protest on the one side and enthusiasm on the other, was a feature of recent elections that delivered emphatic mandates — in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Haryana. Nitish Kumar's triumph is a significant break from this pattern.

Bad day for RJD

Siwan don snared in Delhi

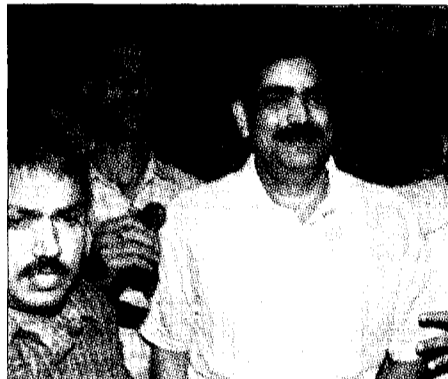
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 5. — The Rashtriya Janata Dal MP, Mohammad Shahabuddin Khan, wanted in about three dozen criminal cases, was arrested today. The MP from Siwan was picked by Bihar police from his official residence at 5 Bishambhar Das Road. The officers, camping in the Capital, had been tipped off by Delhi Police.

The MP from Siwan was not even allowed a change of clothes, brought to Parliament Street police station by an aide. A five-member Bihar Police team led by sub-inspector Gauri of Hussainganj police station raided Md Shahabuddin's residence around 1 p.m. today. The RJD leader had apparently arrived there late last night. Bihar police are seeking transit remand of Md Shahabuddin to take him to Siwan. The MP was first taken to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital for a checkup after he complained of chest pain. "He will be produced at the court of the designated magistrate hearing the transit remand plea later," a Bihar officer said.

Md Shahabuddin had been evading arrest since eight non-bailable warrants were issued against him. A nation-wide alert was sent out in August by Bihar Police after it was accused not doing much to nab the RJD leader. The MP has as many as 34 criminal cases and eight non-bailable arrest warrants pertaining to seizure of foreign-made arms, ammunition and currency, pending against him.

The Siwan district and sessions judge, Mr Abhijit Sinha, had rejected Md Shahabuddin's anticipatory bail plea on 24 October. He was hearing a case in which the MP had been accused of falsify-



Md Shahabuddin after his arrest in New Delhi on Saturday. AFP

ing the number of cases pending against him in the affidavit affixed to his nomination papers submitted ahead of the Lok Sabha polls last year.

On the instructions of the then district magistrate of Siwan, Mr CK Anil, a case had been registered against Md Shahabuddin for putting down the number of cases pending against him as 19 when it was in reality 34. Mr Sinha again rejected the MP's anticipatory bail petition on 28 October in a case pertaining to recovery of firearms of foreign make during raids on his house in April 2005. At that time, automatic pistols of German make and cartridges made in Pakistan had been recovered.

The RJD MP, who has never lost an election in his life, was externed from the district last month until 20 December by district magistrate Mr SK Mal in apprehension of a breach of the peace during the Bihar elections.

Another report on page 5

Paswan's ultimatum on Bihar

'Choose between me and the RJD'

PRESS Trust of India
Patna, September 10

LJP PRESIDENT Ram Vilas Paswan on Saturday said it was for the Congress to decide whether it wanted to go to polls in Bihar on a "larger" UPA platform comprising a majority of its allies or with the RJD.

Asking the Congress leadership to steer clear of the controversy over the issue of a Muslim chief minister, Paswan asserted he was ready to make any sacrifice for the uplift of minorities, dalits and other weaker sections.

"By stating that our party's demand for a Muslim chief minister is unreasonable and impractical, the Congress has done political harakiri. Its secular credentials are now at stake," Paswan said.

LJP'S CASE

STATE FACTS

Paswan said he had recently urged Sonia Gandhi not to drag national-level politics to the states

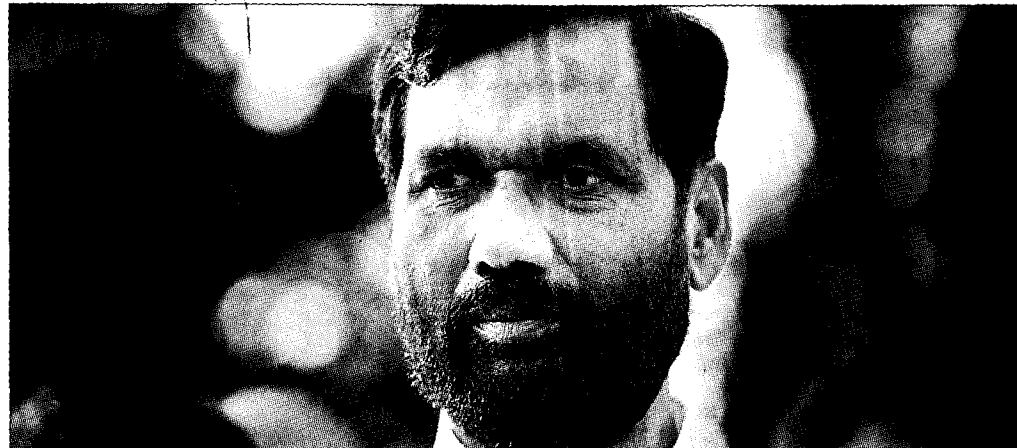
WHAT ABOUT LEFT?

He reminded her that even the Left parties are set to cross swords with the Congress in West Bengal & Kerala

for the Congress to align with Lalu Prasad who is instrumental in increasing the communal and fascist forces represented by the NDA?" "It is now for the Congress to choose between the RJD and the LJP and retract from its stand describing my party's insistence on a Muslim becoming chief minister as unreasonable and impractical," he said.

Reiterating that the LJP would not make any compromise and would maintain an equal distance from both the RJD and BJP, Paswan claimed "the LJP represents the larger UPA with support of majority of its allies in Bihar and the ball is now in the court of the Congress, to decide whether it wants to stay with us or join hands with the RJD."

The Union minister for steel, chemicals and fertilisers also ruled out the possibility of his resignation from the UPA "under pressure". "If the LJP's demand is unreasonable, what can we say about RJD leader Lalu Prasad's obduracy in projecting his wife Rabri Devi as chief minister? Does it augur well



Ram Vilas Paswan: Defiant

Third front by Sept 23?

Patna, September 10

LJP leader Ram Vilas Paswan said efforts were on to have a perfect seat-sharing arrangement among UPA partners minus the RJD in Bihar. However, Paswan said the picture of the third front, comprising the LJP, CPI and CPI-ML (Liberation), was likely to get clearer by September 23 when the Election Commission notifies elections in constituencies going to polls in the first phase, on October 18.

Referring to CPI-ML general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya's statement advising Paswan to break ranks with the UPA and strive for "a broader front" against the RJD and NDA, Paswan said though the LJP had not initiated any talks with the CPI-ML, CPI leaders were in touch with the latter. "The CPI-ML's anti-Congress and anti-RJD stand is known. The CPI-ML cannot join hands with any party having a poll pact with either of the two parties," he said, hinting at the possibility of seat-adjustments with the CPI-ML. PTI

No truck with Cong: CPM

AGENCIES

Dhanbad (Jharkhand), September 10

THE CPI(M) has made it clear that it will not forge any alliance with the Congress in the forthcoming Assembly election in Bihar, but will try to prevent split in the secular votes.

The party's politburo member, Brinda Karat, said here on Saturday that the CPI(M) had ideological differences with the Congress and just for the sake of secularism it did not wish to join any alliance with it.

Rather, it would like to maintain equidistance between the Congress and the BJP.

However, she said, the party would try its best to check division of secular votes in the election. And keeping this in mind the leadership favoured formation of a third front, which, she felt, was not possible without the Janata Dal (United) participating in it. But unfortunately, the JD (U) is not in a mood to leave the BJP.

Talking to newsmen, Karat,

CONCERN FOR SECULAR VOTE



Brinda Karat

who arrived here on Saturday morning to attend a party function, however, clarified that the third front be formed on the basis of policy and not as an electoral arrangement. "It did not last long when experimented in the past".

She said her party had decid-

ed to go along with the RJD in Bihar and a seat-sharing formula would soon be finalised.

Denying that her party was responsible for a division in the Left Front in the state ahead of the polls, she said the CPI-M and the CPI had contested assembly election separately in the last edition.

The CPI-M, she added, had differences with the Congress on many points, especially on the implementation of the Common Minimum Programme and the 'party is protesting in its own way.'

She said her party would try its best to manage Central aid for drought-hit Jharkhand.

Holding the state's BJP government responsible for the panchayat election mess, Karat said the CPI-M would file a writ in the Supreme Court if the government failed to implement the Bhuria committee report. Brinda had come here to campaign for the proposed nationwide trade union on September 29.

UPA Yet To Decide On Fate Of Alliance

Congress issues Sept 23 deadline to Paswan

819 New Delhi 672 J.P.P. LJP
7 SEPTEMBER

THE Congress on Wednesday gave a deadline to LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan upto September 23 to decide whether it wanted to come with RJD-led UPA in the coming Bihar Assembly polls.

"It cannot be open ended, the obvious deadline is September 23 when the notification for the polls will be issued," AICC general secretary Digvijay Singh told reporters after Mr Paswan had an hour-long meeting with Sonia Gandhi. Ms Gandhi told the LJP leader that "we cannot wait forever", according to Mr Singh.

Mr Singh said during the meeting Mr Paswan conceded that if a third front is floated it would obviously benefit the BJP-led NDA. Mr Digvijay Singh, who is in charge of Congress affairs in Bihar, said Mr Paswan had sought some time and his party wanted the LJP chief to decide about his position as early as possible.

"You tell me is it viable?" Mr Singh shot back at a questioner when told Mr Paswan was still insisting on an "anti-RJD, anti-BJP formulation" for the coming



polls. He merely said it was not for him but for the UPA to decide whether Mr Paswan could remain in the alliance at the Centre if he failed to be with it in Bihar.

Asked whether the Congress was exasperated with Mr Paswan and making efforts to rope him in the UPA in Bihar, Mr Singh said it

was not so. "One has to have patience. The Congress president has immense patience," he said.

Mr Singh dismissed it as hypothetical, a query whether Mr Paswan had agreed to help the UPA form the next government in Bihar if the assembly throws up a hung verdict.

—PTI

Paswan's Muslim card may help LJP

Shantanu Nandan
Sharma

NEW DELHI 27 AUGUST

LOK Jan Shakti party chief and Union steel, chemicals and fertilisers minister Ram Vilas Paswan has been pushing his case hard to install a Muslim as the next chief minister of Bihar. While talking to *ET*, Paswan has clearly stated that his advocacy for a Muslim candidate will help him break the MY (Muslim-Yadav)

combine of his rival Lalu Prasad Yadav's RJD and allow 17% Muslims in Bihar to group with Dalits (18%).

"I have been very clear about who are our voters this round. Dalits have been my traditional voters. They don't want to see me as the chief minister of Bihar. Rather, their dream is to see me as the Prime Minister of the country. But my persistent call for having a Muslim chief minister in Bihar has made Muslims in the state rallying around

my party," he said.

"A lot of Muslim youths including some Bihari students from Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University have joined my party. Also 109 Most Other Backward Castes (MOBC), which comprise 35% of Bihar's total population, have begun to join my camp in a big way," he further pointed out. Interestingly, the LJP put up 41 Muslim candidates in the last Assembly polls, but none of them was elected.

CM SHOULD BE A MUSLIM, INSISTS LJP CHIEF

Paswan game for RJD govt

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/RANCHI May 22. — Following the rebellious mood of the Lok Janashakti Party MLAs, its chief, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, today gave tacit consent to the process of an RJD-led government formation in Bihar — provided the chief minister is from a minority community.

The government formation process was accelerated today after a majority of LJP MLAs came out openly against Mr Paswan. Worried over a possible split, the LJP chief today met the Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil and the AICC leader in-charge of Bihar, Mr Harikesh Bahadur.

Mr Paswan paraded 10 of his 29 MLAs before Mr Bahadur and claimed that he had the support of two more MLAs who are in jail.

He reportedly accepted Mr Bahadur's "formula" of an RJD-led government minus Mr Lalu Prasad's family. Mr Patil also met Mr Prasad after which he reportedly sought a detailed report from the Governor, Mr Buta Singh.

Mr Paswan said that he had no objection whether RJD gave outside support or joined the proposed government in Bihar. "My only demand is that the chief minister should be a Muslim and Mr Prasad's family should not take part in the government," he said.

The leader of the LJP rebel MLAs, Mr Narendra Singh, however, said most of the MLAs were in favour of a non-RJD government. Ruling out possibility of a split, Mr Singh said that it was only because of Mr Paswan's stubbornness that LJP MLAs were in rebellious mood.

Also today, the dissident LJP MLAs who had shifted base from Chandil to Ghatshila threatened to split the party if Mr Paswan does not join hands with the NDA. The 12 LJP MLAs and five from the JD-U were today joined by three more legislators — Mr Munna Shukla (LJP), Mr Lallan Singh (JD-U) and Mr Jagdish Sharma who is the leader of the 17 Independent legislators in Bihar.

Patna bandobast fuels speculation

PATNA, May 22. — Amid the political high drama, all roads leading to Raj Bhavan in Patna have been sealed, fuelling speculation.

The police have been put on maximum alert. In addition, four companies of RAF have been deployed in and around Raj Bhavan and the state government has sought another 50 companies of paramilitary forces from the Centre. The Bihar Governor, Mr Buta Singh, is in New Delhi.

Two theories are doing the rounds. Some one from among the "secular" parties may be administered the oath as Bihar CM. This will spoil the NDA's chances of causing a split in the LJP and staking claim to form the government. Second, the Governor may dissolve the state Assembly kept in suspended animation. — SNS

Taraiyya MLA Mr Janak Singh said that Mr Paswan should give up his rigid stand. He claimed the support of 22 LJP MLAs and said that it is now left to Mr Paswan to join them. However, another legislator, on condition of anonymity, said that the LJP was still well short of 20 MLAs. With Mr Munna Shukla's arrival, the number of LJP MLAs camping in Ghatshila has gone upto 13. There were reports that some senior JD-U leaders were also heading to Ghatshila to meet the dissident LJP MLAs.

Lalu threatens to file FIR

Mr Lalu Prasad today threatened to file an FIR against "horse-trading" and "wrongful confinement" of MLAs, adds PTI. "I will file an FIR against the horse-trading and wrongful confinement of legislators in Bihar." Mr Prasad said just as cattle were sold and purchased at the Sonapur cattle fair in Bihar, MLAs were being bought. He, however, remained non-committal on the issue of government formation in Bihar when asked whether his party would stake claim.

23 May 2001

THE STATESMAN

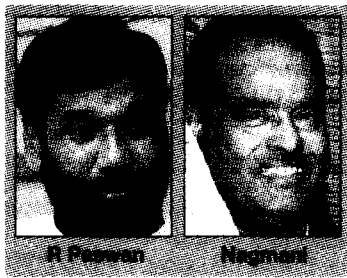
Crisis for Paswan as Nagmani quits LJP

Rumours Of Talks Between Several Party MLAs, JD(U)

Patna/New Delhi: The Ram Vilas Paswan-led Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), which holds the key to power in Bihar, was thrown into turmoil on Saturday when party secretary-general Nagmani resigned amid claims that a section of LJP MLAs were "holding talks" with the Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal(U) over the formation of the state's government.

Nagmani, who quit the primary membership of the party, accused Paswan in Patna of "intransigence" on the issue of supporting the BJP-led NDA and claimed a revolt by LJP MLAs was imminent.

Paswan, whose party has 29 MLAs in the 243-member house, told reporters in Delhi that attempts to split his party would not succeed even as he hinted at the involvement of both the NDA and Lala Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Nagmani's move.



The RJD, which lost power in the assembly polls over two months back, has 75 MLAs while the NDA has 92—JD(U) 55 and BJP 37. The Congress, which has thrown in its lot with the RJD, has 10 members, the CPI-ML seven, Samajwadi Party four, the NCP and CPI three each, the BSP two and CPI(M) one. In addition, there are 17 independents.

Nagmani himself maintained that at present there was no revolt

and dismissed as "rumours" reports that a sizeable number of LJP MLAs were in Jamshedpur to explore with the JD(U) the possibility of installing a popular government in Bihar. However, his wife Suchitra Sinha, an LJP MLA, said if Paswan was not becoming the chief minister, the only option was Nitish Kumar.

Amid speculations of a split in the 29-member LJP legislature party, president of the party's dissolved Bihar unit Narendra Singh urged Paswan to offer support to Nitish Kumar to form a non-RJD government.

Meanwhile, Bihar governor Buta Singh had a 30-minute meeting with Union home minister Shivraj Patil on Saturday after which he said he was keeping a constant watch on the situation and would intervene at the "right moment".

LJP rebels root for JD-U

VARGHESE K. GEORGE
PATNA | MAY 21

RAMVILAS Paswan's LJP tottered on the verge of a split on Saturday with at least a dozen MLAs revolting in favour of a government led by JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar.

Munna Shukla, the don-turned-MLA, galvanising the pro-NDA elements within the LJP, told *Express* that Paswan must now see reason and support Kumar in forming a government. Shukla, however, denied his involvement in ferrying MLAs out of Bihar. "MLAs are doing it on their own and I am unaware of the developments. I spent time in the LJP office even today. But I do request to Ramvilasji that he come around in support of a Nitish government," Shukla said.

Though there are versions on how many MLAs have crossed over — it varies from 12 to 17 — it is already clear that a larger number of LJP MLAs are in support of the NDA government. Sources in



**Party faces split;
more than 12 MLAs
in safe custody in
BJP-ruled Jharkhand**

the rebel camp, dominated by upper caste MLAs, said they read Paswan's recent moves as reaching out to the RJD. "We could not tolerate it any longer. At this rate, he (Paswan) would have supported a Rabri government soon. And under Governor's rule, it has been Laloo's wishes that get implemented," an MLA said.

Sources said more than a dozen LJP MLAs had reached Jharkhand and were in the "safe custody" of a BJP-led government in the state. Four other MLAs languishing

in jails were also learnt to have extended written support for the JD(U) government. Except four, the rest of the 29 LJP MLAs now appear to be susceptible. Though the operation engineered by the NDA was on for some time, the move was busted after the MLAs landed in Jharkhand. Coinciding with this development was the resignation of LJP's national general secretary Nagmani from the party. At a press meet here, he declared that he had chosen to resign to form an anti-RJD government led by Kumar. His wife is an LJP MLA. Along with him LJP state president Narendra Singh too spoke in favour of a Kumar-led government.

NDA leaders claimed they had mustered more than the magic figure of 122. In the 243-member Assembly, the NDA has a strength of 92 — 55 of JD(U) and 37 of BJP. Of the 17 Independents, 15 had extended their written support in favour of a JD(U)-led government. But the support of LJP MLAs was needed to garner a simple majority.

22 MAY 2008

INDIAN EXPRESS

পাসোয়ানের দলে ভাঙন

❖ রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানের বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহ করে নীতীশ কুমারের সঙ্গে হাত মেলান লোকজনশক্তি পার্টির বেশ কিছু বিধায়ক। তাঁদের নেতৃত্ব দিচ্ছেন প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী নাগমণি। শনিবার তিনি দলীয় পদ থেকে ইস্তফা দিয়ে সঙ্গী বিধায়কদের নিয়ে জামশেদপুরের একটি রিসর্টে গিয়ে উঠেছেন। পাসোয়ানের দল ভাঙার এই উদ্যোগে মুখ্য উদ্যোক্তা অরুণ জেটলি ও প্রমোদ মহাজন। এ বার বিহারে সরকার গড়া যাবে বলে আশা প্রকাশ করেছেন লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী। কংগ্রেস অবশ্য বলছে, পাসোয়ানের অনুমতি নিয়ে গোটা দল বিজেপি শিবিরে গেলে অন্য কথা। তা না হলে দলত্যাগীদের বিধায়ক পদ বাতিল হবে। বিজেপি অবশ্য এই দাবি মানতে নারাজ। আর বিধায়কদের উয়ার কথা স্বীকার করেও আরজেডি এবং বিজেপি বিরোধী সরকার গড়ার ব্যাপারে অনড় পাসোয়ান। (সবিস্তার পৃঃ ৫)

মোদীর রাজ্যের প্রশংসা

❖ নরেন্দ্র মোদীর রাজ্য গুজরাতের প্রশংসায় পঞ্চমুখ কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধী পরিচালিত রাজীব গান্ধী ফাউন্ডেশন। ফাউন্ডেশনের সাম্প্রতিক রিপোর্টে আর্থ-সামাজিক নানা ক্ষেত্রে গুজরাতের অগ্রগতির ভূয়সী প্রশংসাই করা হয়েছে। আইনশৃঙ্খলার মাপকাঠিতেও গুজরাত অন্য অনেক রাজ্যের চেয়ে কয়েক যোজন এগিয়ে বলে রিপোর্টে মন্তব্য করা হয়েছে। নয়াদিল্লি থেকে স্টাফ রিপোর্টার জানান, ওই রিপোর্ট অনুযায়ী, উত্তরপ্রদেশ, ঝাড়খণ্ড, বিহার, অসম বা কাশ্মীরের তুলনায় গুজরাত, তামিলনাড়ু, অন্ধ্র বা হরিয়ানায় দাঙ্গা-খুন-ধর্ষণ-অপহরণের ঘটনা অনেক কম। গুজরাতে ধর্মঘাটে শ্রমদিবসও অপেক্ষাকৃত কম নষ্ট হয় বলে রিপোর্টে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে।

22 MAY 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Another rap on Lalu

Charges framed against 39 in fodder case

Ranchi, May 17

A SPECIAL CBI court on Tuesday framed charges against railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav in yet another fodder scam case in connection with the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 3.13 crore from a government treasury after rejecting his discharge plea.

This is the second fodder scam case in over a fortnight in which charges have been framed against Lalu.

The charges were read out in the court of CBI special judge Sanjay Prasad in the presence of former Bihar chief minister Jagannath Mishra and 37 others in connection with the case pertaining to the illegal withdrawal of funds from Dumka treasury between

December 1995 and January 1996.

Forty-nine people were accused in the case. While six have died, three have turned approver.

On April 25, a special CBI court of Umashankar Prasad had framed charges against Prasad, Mishra and 68 others in a case relating to fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 37 crore in 1996 from Chaibasa treasury, now in Jharkhand.

The CBI has filed chargesheets in 60 cases, out of which 53 are being tried in the courts at Ranchi and seven in the courts at Patna.

The Rs 950-crore fodder scam was unearthed in Bihar in 1996 when Lalu was chief minister. He had resigned from the post in 1997 after a court issued a

warrant in one of the cases.

After the creation of Jharkhand in 2000, 39 of the 61 cases were transferred to the new state.

Meanwhile, with a special CBI court framing charges against Lalu, the BJP stepped up its offensive demanding his dismissal from the Union Cabinet.

"Charges have been framed against Lalu for the second time in a fortnight for cheating, conspiracy and under the Prevention of Corruption Act and not for involvement in any political movement. He should resign on moral grounds, or else the Prime Minister should dismiss him", party spokesman Prakash Javadekar said.

Agencies

Quit, demand RSP, FB

Agencies

New Delhi, May 17

THE FORWARD Bloc and RSP, two of the Left parties supporting the UPA at the Centre from outside, on Tuesday demanded the resignation of railway minister Lalu following framing of charges against him in a Jharkhand court in another fodder scam case.

"In view of the fresh charges against him, the second in over a fortnight, Lalu must resign (from the UPA government) on moral grounds", Forward Bloc MP Debrata Biswas told reporters after a 90-minute meeting of the four Left parties ahead of Wednesday's UPA coordination committee meeting.

He said that, till the time Lalu came out clean, he should not join the government.

Biswas said the CBI court in Ranchi rejecting Lalu's discharge petition and framing charges had come up for discussion at Tuesday's meeting of the four Left parties supporting the UPA government from the outside.

Without naming Lalu, RSP MP Abani Roy said any politician - either an MLA or an MP - should resign from office on moral grounds if there was any allegation against him.



A. B. Bardhan No comments

"This will enhance his image and the prestige of the party", Roy said.

Meanwhile, CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan said both his party and the CPI(M) had just come to know about the fresh charges framed against the railway minister and they would give their comments after going through them.

Lalu meets PM, firm on demand to sack ECs

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 11. — Amidst continuing unease, created by his charges against the Election Commission, the railway minister, Mr Lalu Prasad, today stuck to his demand for the dismissal of the two election commissioners even after meeting the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, who had only yesterday said the Constitutional Authority (EC) should be respected.

"I still hold the view that the two election commissioners, Mr BB Tandon and Mr N Gopaldaswamy, should step down," Mr Prasad said after his meeting with Dr Singh.

"I met him as he returned from his foreign visit. I inquired about his well being," the Bihar strongman said, refusing to give further details.

Mr Prasad has been demanding resignation of

the two constitutional functionaries after the IAS officer, Mr LV Saptharishi, who was the commission's observer for the Chapra Lok Sabha poll last year, had alleged that the two election commissioners had acted at the behest of BJP leader and the then home minister, Mr LK Advani, regarding the decision on countermanding the poll.

During the day, a petition was filed in Delhi High Court for removal of the two election commissioners.

National interest, no less

A day after being given a show-cause notice by the personnel department, Mr Saptharishi said he had done what he had done in the national interest as it was the duty of IAS officers to "protect" the Constitution. The rural development minister, Mr Raghuvansh

Prasad Singh, has said that Mr Saptharishi wrote to the law minister, Mr HR Bhardwaj, and held a briefing for the press "keeping the Constitution in view." Mr Saptharishi's reply has been sent to the personnel department, Mr Singh said.

Last week, the controversial IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre wrote to Mr Bhardwaj saying that the two election commissioners had attempted to get the poll in Chapra, where the railway minister was a candidate, countermanded. The rail minister is also Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh's party boss.

Outgoing CEC Mr TS Krishnamurthy called on Dr Manmohan Singh here this evening, adds PTI.

Describing his meeting as a "courtesy call" Mr Krishnamurthy, whose term ends on Sunday, said the Prime Minister was appreciative of the EC's role in conducting polls.

THE STATESMAN

লালুপ্রসাদের কুনাট্যরঙ্গ

লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব জানেন, আক্রমণই আত্মরক্ষার শ্রেষ্ঠ পন্থা। বিহার বিধানসভার নির্বাচনে তাঁহার আগের জৌলুস অনেকটাই ম্লান। পশুখাদ্য কেলেঙ্কারি ও সংশ্লিষ্ট অন্য নানা মামলায় তিনি উত্তরোত্তর কোণঠাসা। সংসদে তাঁহার সমালোচনা এবং তাঁহাকে মন্ত্রিসভা হইতে বরখাস্ত করার বিরোধী দাবি উত্তরোত্তর মুখর। প্রত্যাঘাতের পন্থা হিসাবে তিনি বাছিয়া লইয়াছেন বিরোধীদের। প্রথমে গোধরা তদন্তের রেল মন্ত্রক কৃত তদন্তের রিপোর্ট দিয়া তিনি বিজেপিকে আঘাত করার চেষ্টা করেন। তাহার পর রেল দুর্ঘটনায় আহতদের গুজরাতের হাসপাতালে দেখিতে গিয়া বিজেপি সমর্থকদের তাঁহাকে 'হত্যার ষড়যন্ত্র'র গল্প ফাঁদেন। এগুলি ধোপে না টেকায় এ বার এক আমলার লেখা চিঠির ভিত্তিতে তিনি নির্বাচন কমিশনারদের ইস্তফা দাবি করিয়াছেন। অভিযোগ: নির্বাচন কমিশনাররা তাঁহার কেন্দ্রে ভোট বাতিল করিয়া পুনর্নির্বাচনের নির্দেশ দেন বিজেপিকে জিতাইতে, 'নিম্নবর্ণের মসিহা' লালুপ্রসাদকে হারাইতে। কমিশনকে 'নিম্নবর্ণীদের প্রতি ঘৃণা ও বিদ্বেষ পোষণকারী' বলিয়াও তাঁহার পুরানো অভিযোগ এই সূত্রে আর এক বার ঝালাইয়া লইয়াছেন লালুপ্রসাদ। এই সর্বশেষ অপকর্মটি মনমোহন সিংহ সরকারকে অত্যন্ত বিব্রত করিয়াছে। সরকার এই অভিযোগ হইতে নিজেকে দূরে রাখিতে ব্যস্ত।

অভিযোগের তির ঘুরাইয়া দিতে অতীতেও লালুপ্রসাদ এবম্বিধ নানা কৌশল অবলম্বন করিয়াছেন। কিন্তু নির্বাচন কমিশনের বিরুদ্ধে জাতিভেদ অনুশীলনের অভিযোগটি কেবল কৌশলের ব্যাপার নয়। ইহা একটি সাংবিধানিক সংস্থার মর্যাদা ও নিরপেক্ষতা বিনাশের অপপ্রয়াস। টি এন শেখন যখন মুখ্য নির্বাচন কমিশনার ছিলেন, তখনও নির্বাচনী আচরণবিধি লঙ্ঘনের অভিযোগকে লালুপ্রসাদ ফুৎকারে উড়াইয়া দিতেন এই অজুহাতে যে, কমিশন উচ্চবর্ণীদের ধামাধরা, তাই অনগ্রসরদের দেখিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সে সময় আরও অনেকেই (বিশেষত জ্যোতি বসুর নেতৃত্বে বামপন্থীরা) শেখনের কর্তৃত্বের বৈধতা খর্ব করিতে রকমারি কটাক্ষ বা গালমন্দ করিয়াছেন। সে দিনও কিন্তু নির্বাচন কমিশনারদের পদত্যাগ কেহ দাবি করেন নাই। এক আমলার একটি চিঠির ভিত্তিতে লালুপ্রসাদ সেই দাবি করিয়াছেন। ওই আমলা নির্বাচন কমিশনের তরফেই ছাপরা সহ বিভিন্ন লোকসভা আসনের পর্যবেক্ষক নিযুক্ত হইয়াছিলেন। তাহার পর এক বছর কাটিয়া গিয়াছে, তিনি কোনও অভিযোগ জানান নাই। এখন লালুপ্রসাদেরই দলীয় মন্ত্রীর দফতরে অবসর গ্রহণের প্রহর গনিতে গনিতে সহস্রা তাঁহার অভিযোগ রহস্যময়। সরকারি আমলা হিসাবে তিনি যে অধিকারের সীমা লঙ্ঘন করিয়াছেন, কেন্দ্রীয় আইনমন্ত্রী তাহা জানাইয়া দিয়া ঠিক কাজই করিয়াছেন। সেই সীমা যে লালুপ্রসাদও লঙ্ঘন করিতেছেন, এই বার্তাটিও কি ইহার মধ্যে প্রচ্ছন্ন নাই?

মণ্ডলায়নের রাজনীতির নেতিবাচক দিকটি দিনে দিনে প্রকট হইতেছে। অনগ্রসরদের ক্ষমতায়ন এক জিনিস। পশ্চাৎপদদের উপরে টানিয়া তুলিবার জন্য তাহা জরুরিও বটে। কিন্তু লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের রাজনীতি বিহারের যাদবকুলের ক্ষমতায়নেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকে নাই, আইনের শাসন ও সংবিধানের শাসনকেও জাতপাতের হাতিয়ার দিয়া অন্তর্ঘাত করিতে চাহিয়াছে। যখন পশুখাদ্য কেলেঙ্কারির তদন্ত শুরু হয়, তখনও দুর্নীতিতে জড়িত থাকার ও সেই সূত্রে কারাবাসের ঘটনাকে লালুপ্রসাদ মনুবাদীদের চক্রান্ত আখ্যা দিয়া লঘু করিতে চাহিয়াছেন। 'জনতার আদালত'-এর রায় লইয়া তিনি সাংবিধানিক শাসন ও আইনের রায় পালাইয়া দিবার আশ্বাচলন করিয়াছেন। ঘটনাচক্রে খণ্ডিত বিহারের সীমা ছাড়াইয়া তিনি জাতীয় রাজনীতির প্রসারিত পরিসরে তাঁহার নষ্ট রাজনীতি আমদানি করিতে পারিয়াছেন। জোট রাজনীতির বাধ্যবাধকতায় মনমোহন সিংহ সরকার লালুপ্রসাদের মতো রাজনীতিক ও তাঁহার অন্যায় বরদাস্ত করিতেছে। কিন্তু জোটধর্মের নমনীয়তারও একটা সীমা নির্দিষ্ট হওয়া দরকার। আইনমন্ত্রী লালুপ্রসাদ-অনুগত আমলার দূঢ় নিন্দার মাধ্যমে একটা বার্তা পৌঁছাইয়াছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর উচিত লালুপ্রসাদকে সংযত করা। 'জাতের নামে বজ্জাতি' যে উচ্চবর্ণীয়রাই অনুশীলন করিতে পারেন, এমন নয়।

Poll Commissioners should resign: Lalu

"It was Sangh Parivar conspiracy against me"

Special Correspondent

PATNA: Railway Minister and Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad on Saturday demanded the resignation of the Election Commissioners, B.B. Tandon and N. Gopalswamy, and the re-constitution of the Election Commission in the "greater interest of democracy."

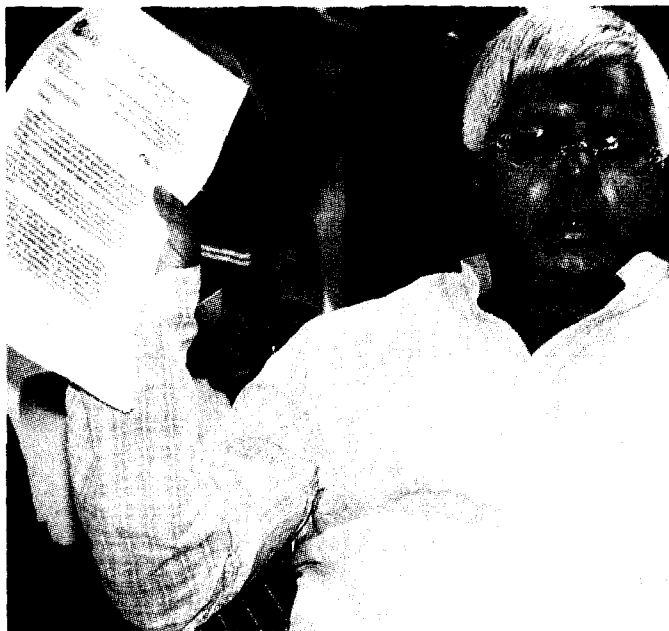
He made the demand here on Saturday in the wake of the charges made by L.V. Saptharishi, Special Observer for Bihar during the Lok Sabha elections last year, that two Election Commissioners made "every attempt" to "countermand" the poll in Chapra after listening to the "unreasonable demands" of the Bharatiya Janata Party leader L.K. Advani and Rajiv Pratap Singh Rudy [BJP candidate] after the poll was over.

Mr. Prasad, RJD candidate in the constituency, defeated Mr. Rudy in the repoll.

Mr. Prasad released copies of the four-page letter written by Mr. Saptharishi, now Director-General of the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, to Union Law Minister H.R. Bhardhwaj on Friday, charging the Election Commissioners with bias.

"A conspiracy"

Mr. Prasad said the BJP, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Singh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had "conspired" to prevent him from entering the Lok Sabha. Mr. Prasad contested from Chapra and emerged victorious in the re-poll defeating Mr. Rudy. He regretted that a constitutional authority had been "politicised" and "demolished" for "petty, political interests." He said that it would not be in the interest of democracy to allow such persons with "communal ideologies" to continue in



HERE IS THE PROOF: Railway Minister and RJD leader Lalu Prasad showing, at a press conference on Saturday, a letter purportedly written by L.V. Saptharishi, the Special Observer for Bihar during last year's general elections. The official has alleged attempts to countermand the Chapra poll contested by Lalu Prasad.

- PHOTO: RANJEET KUMAR

such high posts, which called for probity and uprightness.

Quoting the letter, Mr. Prasad that it was an example of how a section of the elite sought to deprive Dalits and backward classes of their rights.

The RJD would take up the issue in Parliament and expects the Law Minister to take action on the basis of Mr. Saptharishi's letter.

Mr. Prasad said he would meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, urging him to reconsider the appointment of Mr. Tandon as the Chief Election Commissioner from May 15.

He demanded that T.S. Krishnamurthy, CEC, make public Mr. Saptharishi's report, which held that there was no abnormal

occurrence in Chapra during polling. Until the inquiry into Mr. Saptharishi's allegations was completed, the two Commissioners should dissociate themselves from their posts.

Denying that Mr. Saptharishi sat on the matter for well over a year, Mr. Prasad said the officer submitted a report to the Election Commission soon after the first poll. It was "rather improper" on the part of the two Commissioners to have ignored his report, which was backed by six Secretary-level officers, and "chart a separate course with ulterior motives."

The consequent report was fabricated, the RJD chief alleged, to countermand the election and hold a re-poll.

Charges are politically motivated: BJP

Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party has described as "politically motivated" the charges of bias during Bihar elections levelled by a senior bureaucrat against Election Commissioners B.B. Tandon and N. Gopalaswamy. Mr. Tandon is to take over as next Chief Election Commissioner.

"It appears that L.V. Saptharishi has done this at someone's behest or else why should he have kept silent for almost a year," BJP national vice-president Sushil Kumar Modi told re-

porters here on Saturday. He felt the reason could also be personal rivalry. Mr. Saptharishi, who was Special Observer for Bihar in the last Lok Sabha election, on Friday wrote to the Union Law Minister, alleging that attempts were made by the two Election Commissioners to countermand the election in Chapra.

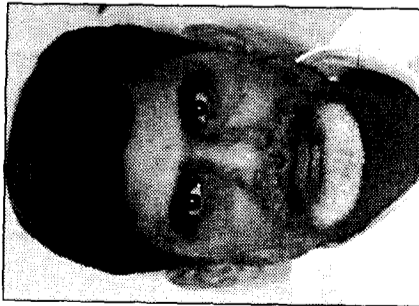
Rajiv Pratap Rudy, who was the BJP candidate in Chapra, said it was for the Election Commission to come out with details of the reports based on which it had ordered repoll.

Mr. Rudy asked how Mr. Saptharishi could suggest that

the election was peaceful when 10 persons were killed on the polling day and the entire media reported about booth capturing. The Election Commission would have had its own understanding of the situation based on facts and figures before ordering repoll.

Mr. Rudy said that it appeared the episode was aimed at achieving a "post-retirement resettlement". "Why else should he [Mr. Saptharishi] have kept quiet for 11 months when the issue could have been taken up as soon as the UPA Government took over," he asked.

Chandrababu warms up to Left



Naidu: Secular turn?

MONOBINA GUPTA AND
KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, May 7: Telugu Desam Party chief Chandrababu Naidu has told the Left that he wants nothing to do with a party which is "going back to Hindutva".

The Desam chief had a long conversation on telephone with CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan a couple of days ago. According to sources, when Naidu told Bardhan that he wanted to quit the NDA, the Left leader advised the Desam chief to break away immedi-

ately. The timing was perfect, said the CPI leader.

Naidu has also spoken to Prakash Karat, the new CPM general secretary.

The CPI leader also told the Desam chief that he must change his economic policies and not behave like a "CEO".

There have been serious differences between the Desam and the Left over economic reforms. The Left has bitterly attacked Naidu's liberalisation policies and said the Desam's rout in the last Assembly polls was mainly because of its "anti-poor" policies.

Naidu, for his part, told Bardhan that the Left Front government in Bengal was also following World Bank policies and, therefore, the Left should not complain about the Desam's economic policies. Bardhan said Bengal was only taking the help of the World Bank for projects.

The Desam chief, according to the Left, seems "fed up" with the NDA but his main dilemma is about the Congress, which is his principal adversary in Andhra Pradesh.

Bardhan told Naidu he can continue to fight the Congress

in his state — the way the Left is doing in Bengal and Kerala — but that should not be reason for him to continue with the NDA.

Desam sources said by distancing his party from the BJP, Naidu's immediate goal is to win the municipal elections coming up in July-August.

At a Desam meeting last week, a vocal section said the party won the 1999 polls as a good chunk of Muslims had voted for it though it was with the BJP, but after the Gujarat riots and five-years' of NDA rule, the community bloc

shifted to the Congress.

It said if the party severed ties with the BJP, at least a chunk of the 17 per cent Muslims could return to its fold.

Even before it decided to lift the boycott of Parliament, the party had in its meeting in the first week of April decided to junk the BJP at the state level while continuing outside support to the NDA at the Centre.

The idea was if a third front does not emerge, Naidu has the option of sticking with the NDA at the Centre and enjoy some leverage at national level.

Naidu justifies stand on House boycott

Chennai, May 6

JUSTIFYING TDP'S decision to attend Parliament, party chief Chandrababu Naidu on Friday said the TDP had decided to end Parliament boycott in public interest and it was against boycotting Parliament "totally".

"We have joined the NDA boycott for four-five days. But now the party felt that we should not boycott totally and hence we are now attending Parliament. We have even criticised the UPA," he told

reporters at Chennai airport soon after his arrival here on a private visit from Hyderabad. Replying to a question on sudden change in its decision to end boycott of Parliament, Naidu said from the beginning his party had made it clear that it was not part of the NDA.

"We are not part of the NDA. We are supporting the NDA on issue basis. That is why we did not attend NDA meetings either," he said, adding that, in the public interest, TDP MPs had decided to attend Parliament.

Naidu said his party also felt that the "treatment of the Opposition is not good. They (UPA) should treat opposition well. The government should take the opposition with it."

Replying to another question Naidu said his party's "Mahadu" would take place soon during which the current political situation would be discussed.

Meanwhile, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee requested the NDA "to help in the functioning of democratic system".

Meanwhile, in Kolkata, veteran CPI-M leader Jyoti Basu said the TDP's decision would pave the way for a 'split' in the NDA. Welcoming the TDP's decision Basu told: "It is a good move initiated by the TDP which has now realised its mistake of getting along with the BJP-led NDA."

Basu said that the Left leadership was prepared to talk to the TDP if it was interested. It had worked well during the reign of H.D. Deve Gowda.

PTI

Changing tack



Chandrababu Naidu

Charges framed against Lalu, 69 others in fodder scam case

Lalu, Jagannath Mishra plead innocence, to move the Jharkhand High Court

RANCHI: A special court of the Central Bureau of Investigation on Monday framed charges against the Railway Minister and Rashtriya Janata Dal president, Lalu Prasad, in a case relating to the multi-crore fodder scam.

Besides Mr. Prasad, charges were also framed against the former Bihar Chief Minister, Dr. Jagannath Mishra, the former Union Minister Chandradeo Prasad Verma and 67 others under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 420 (cheating) and 120B (criminal conspiracy).

Mr. Lalu Prasad, Dr. Mishra and 68 other accused were present when the Sections were read out in the special court of the CBI Judge IV (CBI animal husbandry scam cases), Uma Shankar Prasad Sinha.

Conspiracy cases

Mr. Lalu Prasad, who was Chief Minister of Bihar when the scam surfaced, also appeared in another CBI court in a separate fodder scam case. Both Mr. Lalu Prasad and Dr. Mishra pleaded innocence. Their lawyers said they would move the Jharkhand High Court against the CBI court's framing of charges. Mr. Lalu Prasad is also facing corruption charges in six other conspiracy angle cases of the Rs. 950-crore fodder scam.

The trial in the disproportionate assets case against him and his wife, the former Chief Minister, Rabri Devi, is in the final stage of hearing. The disproportionate assets case, an offshoot of the fodder scam, charges Mr. Lalu Prasad with having accumulated assets worth over Rs. 46 lakhs disproportionate to his



"FALSE CHARGES:" Railway Minister Lalu Prasad comes out of the special CBI court in Ranchi on Monday after it framed charges against him in the fodder scam case. — PHOTO: PTI

known sources of income when he was Chief Minister.

The CBI has filed chargesheets in the six cases, while charges have been framed against Mr. Lalu Prasad and others in two cases — (RC 20(a)/1996 and RC 68(a)/96). While RC 20(a) relates to "fraudulent withdrawals" of Rs. 37 crores from the Chaibasa treasury, the other case relates to "fraudulent and

excessive withdrawals" of more than Rs. 37 crores from the same treasury by Animal Husbandry Department officials through "forged and fake" bills.

Four other cases against the RJD leader deal with "fraudulent withdrawal of Rs. 3 crores from Dumka, Rs. 182 crores from Doranda, Rs. 3 crores from Dumka and Rs. 47 lakhs from the Bhagalpur treasuries." Mr. Lalu

Prasad resigned as Chief Minister on July 25, 1997 after the Supreme Court rejected his anticipatory bail plea and asked him to surrender in case no. RC 20(a)/96.

Those against whom the charges were filed included R.K. Rana, MP, MLA Jagdish Sharma, the former minister, Rajo Singh and Shajjal Chakarvorty, IAS.

Mr. Lalu Prasad said the

charges framed against him were "false". Dr. Mishra also contested the charge, saying he was "innocent." After hearing the accused, the Judge said their version would be included in the proceedings of the court.

A total of 76 were accused. Of them, three have died including a former Minister, while three others turned Government witnesses. — PTI, UNI

26 APR 2005

চার্জগঠন নিয়ে ইস্তফা দাবি, লালুর পাশে সরকার

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৫ এপ্রিল: রেল-দুর্ঘটনার পরে গুজরাতে গিয়ে হেনস্থা হওয়া নিয়ে আসর গরম করার চেষ্টার মধ্যেই তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে ঝাড়খণ্ডের আদালতে পশুখাদ্য কেলেঙ্কারি মামলায় চার্জগঠনের খবর এসে রেলমন্ত্রী লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবকে বেশ অস্বস্তিকর অবস্থায় ফেলে দিয়েছে। বিরোধীরা সেই সুযোগের সন্ধানবহার করেছেন পুরোদমে। আজ সকালে সংসদ শুরু হওয়ার পর থেকেই লোকসভা ও রাজ্যসভা দুই কক্ষেই এই নিয়ে হৈচৈ শুরু হয়। বারবার অচল হয় রাজ্যসভা ও লোকসভা। বিকালে লোকসভায় লালুপ্রসাদ একটি বিবৃতি দিয়ে যখন জানাচ্ছেন, 'পেট্রোল ভর্তি জেরিকেন ও দেশলাই বাস্ক নিয়ে আমার গাড়ির উপর আক্রমণের চেষ্টা হয়েছিল' তখনই স্কেভে ফেটে পড়েন বি জে পি সাংসদেরা। পাল্টা চিৎকার করেন আর জে ডি সাংসদেরাও। 'আমরা গাড়ির উপর আক্রমণের চেষ্টা করেছি' তখনই স্কেভে ফেটে পড়েন বি জে পি সাংসদেরা। পাল্টা চিৎকার করেন আর জে ডি সাংসদেরাও। 'আমরা গাড়ির উপর আক্রমণের চেষ্টা করেছি' তখনই স্কেভে ফেটে পড়েন বি জে পি সাংসদেরা। পাল্টা চিৎকার করেন আর জে ডি সাংসদেরাও। 'আমরা গাড়ির উপর আক্রমণের চেষ্টা করেছি' তখনই স্কেভে ফেটে পড়েন বি জে পি সাংসদেরা। পাল্টা চিৎকার করেন আর জে ডি সাংসদেরাও।

রেলমন্ত্রীর পদত্যাগের দাবিও তুলেছে। বি জে পি নেতারা আরও ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, আগামী কদিন সংসদে লালুর ইস্তফা দাবিতে তাঁরা বাড় তুলবেন। তাঁর আগে আজ সকালেই প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর নেতৃত্বে এন ডি এ সাংসদেরা বৈঠকে বসে তাঁদের রণকৌশল ঠিক করে নিয়েছিলেন। পরে বি জে পি-র বিহারের সাংসদ সুনীল শৌরী সাংবাদিক সংলেন করে বলেন, "সংসদীয় ইতিহাসে কেনও কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রীর বিরুদ্ধে চার্জ গঠন হওয়ার ঘটনা এই প্রথম। রেলমন্ত্রীর পদ থেকে তাঁর অবিলম্বে ইস্তফা দেওয়া উচিত।" উল্লেখ্য, রাঁচির আদালতে আজ পশুখাদ্য কেলেঙ্কারির একটি মামলায় রেলমন্ত্রীর বিরুদ্ধে জালিয়াতি ও অপরাধমূলক যত্নের অভিযোগ আনা হয়। কাল আবারও একই কেলেঙ্কারির আর একটি মামলায় চার্জগঠন হওয়ার কথা। পশুখাদ্য কেলেঙ্কারি নিয়ে মোট ছ'টি মামলায় লালু জড়িত, তার মধ্যে এ নিয়ে দুটি মামলায় চার্জগঠন করা হল। বাকি

এনেছেন রেলমন্ত্রী। তা হল পেট্রোল দিয়ে তাঁর গাড়িতে অগ্নিসংযোগের চেষ্টার অভিযোগ। বিবৃতিতে তিনি বলেন, "আমি যখন বডোদরাঃ হাসপাতালে আহত যাত্রীদের দেখতে যাই, বজ্রং দল, আর এস এস, বি এইচ পি-র সদস্যরা চিৎকার করে শ্লোগান দিচ্ছিল। মুখে জ্বলন করা হয়, উইস্‌জক্রিম ভেঙে দেওয়া হয় জলের বোতল ও বরফের টুকরে ছোঁড়া হয় আমার দিকে। আমার ব্যক্তিগত সচিব (অতিরিক্ত) দেখেন যে কয়েকজন ব্যক্তি জেরিকেন ভর্তি পেট্রোল ও দেশলাই নিয়ে আমার গাড়ির দিকে এগিয়ে আসছে। উদ্দেশ্য, গর্ভস্থ সেই উদ্দেশ্য সফল হয়নি।" কিন্তু লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের এই সব অভিযোগে যে চিড়ে যে কিছুতেই ভিজবে না, পশুখাদ্য কেলেঙ্কারির মামলায় তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে চার্জগঠনের কথা বার বার স্মরণ করিয়ে বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন বিরোধীরা।

● লালু আগাগোড়া গভীর... পৃঃ ৪

Lalu attacked at crash site, blames Modi

HT Correspondents
Vadodara/New Delhi, April 21

RAILWAY MINISTER Lalu Prasad Yadav's car was stoned on Thursday when he arrived at the site of the train accident. The attackers are believed to be BJP and Bajrang Dal activists; Lalu accused chief minister Narendra Modi of trying to "eliminate" him and demanded the dismissal of the Gujarat government.

Lalu was unhurt but his car's windowpanes were broken in the stoning by slogan-shouting activists. Even when Lalu visited the injured at a hospital, some VHP activists booed him. They also tried to torch his car, Lalu alleged in an FIR.

Lalu met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to demand the immediate dismissal of Modi's government. "I apprised the Prime Minister of the situation and the attack, and demanded dismissal of the Modi government and imposition of President's rule," he said after meeting Singh. He has also complained to Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee and vowed to take up the matter with the President.

In fact, Lalu wanted to make a statement in the Lok Sabha on Thursday itself, but by the time he reached Delhi, both Houses had been adjourned for the day. But though he could not make it to the floor of Parliament, his party MPs took up the cudgels on his behalf. Blaming Modi for the "attempt on Lalu's life", RJD members prevented transaction of all business in both Houses of Parliament.

Lalu has demanded an apology from BJP chief L.K. Advani. He charged the "biased" Gujarat government with cooking up exaggerated figures of the dead to give the UPA government a bad name.

"At the hospital, I saw some people with petrol cans. They wanted to set the entire floor on fire," Lalu said, adding: "When I was leaving, some people dropped large ice chunks and water cans on my car. The vehicle was badly damaged."

7-11-04
504

Nitish Kumar woos Paswan

By K. Balchand

PATNA, APRIL 2. The senior Janata Dal (United) leader, Nitish Kumar, today began a fresh exercise to form a minority government in Bihar. He sought the support of six political parties and 17 independents. This effort comes almost a month after the failed attempts of the Rashtriya Janata Dal to form a government and the imposition of President's rule in the State.

Mr. Kumar made his plan to form a non-RJD, non-Congress Government public after meeting the Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJP) chief and the Union Steel Minister, Ram Vilas Paswan, at the residence of the Bihar chief of the Samajwadi Party, Daddan Pahelwan, here this morning. According to Mr. Kumar, they have decided to hold parleys in Delhi from April 3 to 5 to work out the modalities for a government minus the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Mr. Kumar has written to the LJP, the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), the Samajwadi Party, the Nationalist Congress Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the 17 independents seeking their support for the 16-point common minimum programme that he has outlined on the basis of the salient features contained in the manifestoes of these parties.

He said the BJP had not been sidelined; it had been taken into confidence while drawing up the blueprint to break the deadlock that had stalled the formation of a government. His idea was clear — the BJP would sup-



A NEW ALLIANCE?: The JD (U) leader, Nitish Kumar, the Samajwadi Party MLA, Daddan Pahelwan, with the Lok Jan Shakti party chief, Ram Vilas Paswan, after a meeting in Patna on Saturday. — PTI

port the new dispensation from outside. Mr. Kumar said he was unwilling to seek the support of the Congress as it had been part of the RJD-led coalition that had been defeated by the people.

However, Mr. Paswan continues to maintain that he is opposed to the formation of any

government, which has even the indirect support of the RJD or the BJP. He also insists on having a Muslim as Chief Minister. The BJP vice-president, S.K. Modi, however, is of the view that Mr. Paswan has since softened his stand.

The BSP and the CPI(ML)

have made it clear that they would not support any ministry that would have even the outside support of the BJP. The RJD chief and Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, said the move was a mere "eyewash."

UPA warning to Paswan: Page 8

03 APR 2005

THE HINDU

After 15 yrs, MY turn their back on Laloo

VARGHESE K. GEORGE
PATNA, FEBRUARY 27

THE formidable MY (Muslim-Yadav) combination that had been the bedrock of Laloo Prasad Yadav's empire cracked for the first time in 15 years. The results show that in several regions across the state, the RJD is no longer the sole choice for either the Muslims or the Yadav voters.

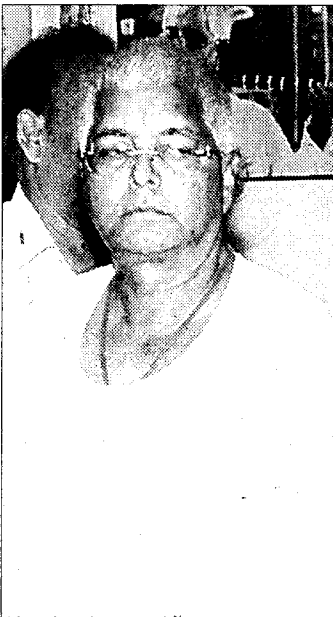
Though the details are still trickling in, the erosion of Laloo's support in some areas considered the bastion of Yadav political assertion is more than evident. In Madhepura, the RJD's sitting MLA lost and finished third. The winner is M.K. Mandal, son of B.P. Mandal of Mandal Commission fame. Of the district's five seats, the RJD lost four. In Alam Nagar, the RJD finished third; sitting MLA Ravindra Charan Yadav lost in Kishanganj. In Purnea, as the Yadavs rallied behind the Samajwadi Party, the BJP emerged the winner. In Darbhanga, the RJD lost the Keoti seat because the Yadavs preferred the BJP's Yadav candidate to the RJD's. Amar Yadav lost in Champaran's Chanpatia for the same reason.

In Gopalganj, the RJD's president's home district, the party lost to the BSP as Sadhu Yadav's wife entered the fray as an Independent candidate. Such infighting between competing sections of Yadavs cost the RJD dear across the state. And Laloo admitted as much this evening — "it is infighting among ourselves which has turned out to be our problem". Pappu Yadav, Laloo's foe-turned-friend-turned-foe harmed the RJD no end in the entire Kosi region — the RJD won only one seat out

Politics, back to student days

NEW DELHI: The blood feud between the leading lights of the RJD, Congress and NDA has a history to it. In an interesting coincidence, many of the top players in Bihar were part of Patna student politics three decades ago, at the cusp of the JP Movement. Laloo Prasad Yadav's hostility to Ram Jatan Sinha, now president of the Bihar Congress unit, can be traced back to 1971. That year, Laloo filed his nomination for the presidency of the Patna University Students' Union (PUSU). Sinha, a Bhumihar, put together an upper caste alliance and defeated Laloo.

Two years later, Laloo hit back, tying up with the ABVP. The combined "opposition" defeated the Congress nominees and, in 1973, Laloo became president of the PUSU. His general secretary was Sushil Modi, while Ravi Shankar Prasad was elected joint secretary. Both are now senior BJP leaders. In 1973 too, the Patna Engineering College Students' Union threw up a backward caste president — Nitish Kumar. Nitish and Laloo became close friends. In 2005, of course, it's another story. — ENS



Monazir Hassan (JD-U) was elected from Munger. That Zarfaraz is the son of Union minister Mohd Taslimuddin, who claims to be the sole Muslim leader in the Seemanchal region, only underlines the Muslims' lack of enthusiasm for the RJD this time. In Darbhanga's Manigachi, the RJD failed to retain the seat as Muslims preferred the LJP candidate who finished third.

Muslims constitute 16.5 per cent of the state's population and Yadavs 13 per cent, and both have voted for Laloo in the last 15 years. While a marginal section of the Yadavs had strayed earlier too, Muslims had always rallied behind the RJD. This time, trouble had already begun for Laloo when more and more Yadavs started clamouring for Assembly seats. And Ram Vilas Paswan added to the RJD's woes by questioning his credentials in protecting the interests of Muslims.

Infighting has turned out to be our problem, admits Laloo

of the 14.

The tendency among Muslims to look for non-RJD alternatives also did the party in. The JD(U), an ally of the BJP, emerged victorious in Muslim-dominated areas like Kishanganj. In Jokhikhat, Manzar Alam (JD-U) defeated sitting RJD MLA Zarfaraz Alam, while

সিডি-র দায়িত্ব অস্বীকার করল লালুপ্রসাদের দল

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, পটনা, ১৩
ফেব্রুয়ারি: গুজরাত দাঙ্গা নিয়ে পূর্ণিয়ায়
যে সিডি দেখানো হয়েছে, তা
আরজেডি-র নয় বলে আজ নির্বাচন
কমিশনকে জানাল লালুপ্রসাদের দল।
আরজেডি সাংসদ রামকৃপাল যাদব
আজ বলেন, “যে সিডি নিয়ে
বিরোধীরা অভিযোগ তুলেছেন, তার
সঙ্গে আমাদের দলের কোনও সম্পর্ক
নেই। এ কথা লিখিত ভাবে নির্বাচন
কমিশনকে জানিয়েছি।” কাল কমিশন
এই সিডি নিয়ে আরজেডি-র বিরুদ্ধে
নোটিস জারি করেছিল।

আজ পূর্ণিয়া জেলার রূপোলি
এলাকায় দাঙ্গার এই সিডি দেখানোর
অভিযোগে পুলিশ একটি এফআইআর
দায়ের করে। পূর্ণিয়ার পুলিশ সুপার
বলেন, “কয়েকজন অজ্ঞাত পরিচয়
ব্যক্তির বিরুদ্ধে জন প্রতিনিধিত্ব আইনে
মামলা দায়ের করা হয়েছে।” তবে

রূপোলি বিধানসভা কেন্দ্রের
আরজেডি প্রার্থী বিমা ভারতীর বিরুদ্ধে
পুলিশ অভিযোগ দায়ের করেনি।

পুলিশ সুপার বলেন, “এই সিডির
ব্যাপারে বিমা দেবীর হাত আছে কি না,
তার তদন্ত হচ্ছে।” শুক্রবার বিজেপি
নেতা সুশীল মোদী অভিযোগ করেন,
কমিশনের নিষেধ সত্ত্বেও লালু এই
সিডি নিয়ে প্রচার চালাচ্ছেন। এর
পরেই কমিশন আরজেডির বিরুদ্ধে
নোটিস জারি করে।

অন্য দিকে, বিহারের ভোটের
দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ের প্রচার আজ শেষ হল।
শেষ দিনে লালু-রাবড়ী, মীতীশ কুমার
এবং রামবিলাস গড়ে প্রায় ৮টি করে
জনসভা করেন। নির্বাচন কমিশন
জানিয়েছে, দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ের মোট
৮৬টি আসনের মধ্যে তিনটি আসনে
নির্বাচন বন্ধ রাখা হয়েছে। বাকি ৮৩টি
আসনে ভোট হবে আগামী মঙ্গলবার।

Lalu losing ground in Bihar: Exit polls

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The exit polls for the first phase of assembly elections spelled trouble for the incumbents in Bihar and Haryana while providing a thin ray of hope for the ruling BJP in Jharkhand.

If the polls offer any surprise, it is an indication of deep erosion in the RJD base in Bihar just eight months after Lalu Prasad propelled the UPA to a landslide win in the Lok Sabha polls.

All the three polls—Zee-C-Voter, Aaj Tak-ORG Marg, Star-AC Nielsen—indicated trouble for Lalu Prasad, reinforcing the assessment in political circles that Ram Vilas Paswan and his covert partnership with the Congress may cut into Lalu Prasad's support base among Muslims.

While a split among Muslims should help the JD(U)-BJP alliance, Paswan is perhaps hurting the NDA partners by eating into their upper caste following. The Star-A C Nielsen poll showed the RJD winning 28 of the 63 constituencies which went to polls on Thursday. The JD(U)-BJP team was in the second spot with a likely tally of 21. Paswan was expected to get six seats, and the Congress drawing a blank.

The Aaj Tak-ORG Marg poll showed the RJD-Left alliance winning 26 seats. With an improved performance, the JD(U)-BJP alliance was coming second with 21 seats. Though this opinion poll gave a tally of



headed for a rout, with the Congress well on its way to end its decade-long power drought in the state. According to the Star-AC Nielsen poll, the Congress was poised to win 55 of the 90 seats in Haryana, with Chautala being pared down to just 15. The BJP, which is contesting the poll on its own, is putting up a smart performance, and is expected to get 11 seats.

The Zee TV-C-Voter poll also put the Congress on the top with 49 seats. The INLD was expected to get 20, and the BJP tipped to win 18.

Aaj Tak-ORG Marg showed the Congress winning 64 of the 90 seats with a positive swing of 10.9%. It gives the INLD 14 seats.

In Jharkhand, however, the exit polls pointed to a tough contest with the BJP-JD(U) alliance, which crashed to a massive defeat in May, recovering considerable parts of the lost ground. Star TV-AC Nielsen showed the ruling alliance winning in 14 of the 24 seats, with the Congress-JMM alliance the projected winner for six. Lalu Prasad's RJD was the favourite in four seats.

Zee TV-C-Voter projected the Congress-JMM alliance and the BJP-JD(U) combine tied at nine seats each. The Aaj Tak-ORG Marg poll, however, showed the BJP-JD(U) alliance ahead in 11 seats, with the Congress-JMM trailing far behind with four seats. Independents, who will hold the key in a hung assembly scenario, were projected as winners in five seats.

TOO EARLY TO SAY EXIT RABRI, BUT CHAUTALA APPEARS TO BE ON WAY OUT

HARYANA		BIHAR		64*/243		JHARKHAND		24*/81	
Cong	60	BJP-JD(U)	20	RJD	28	BJP-JD(U)	9	14	11
INLD	11	RJD	17	BJP-JD(U)	21	Cong-JMM	9	6	4
Others	10	Cong	16	LJP	6	RJD	4	4	4
BJP	9	Others	10	Cong	0	Others	2	-	5

*Zee-C Voter ■ Star-AC Nielsen ■ Aaj Tak-ORG

Seats that went to the polls on Thursday (Projections may not add up to number of seats as all figures not in)

just five to Paswan, it confirmed that the JD(U)-BJP combine was in the lead with 20 seats, with Paswan bringing up the rear with a basket of 12. The Congress was languishing with 4 seats.

All the exit polls indicated that Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala was

We have right to discuss Godhra report: RJD

By Our Special Correspondent

PATNA, JAN. 19. Even as the Election Commission's team arrived here today to oversee the electoral preparations, the Rashtriya Janata Dal has warned that it would knock at the door of the judiciary if the Commission took any action against it or prohibited it from publicising the U.C. Banerjee

Committee report relating to the fire in the Sabarmati Express in Gujarat that triggered the riots there.

The Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad's brother-in-law, Shubash Yadav, MP, wondered on what basis the Commission could take any action against the RJD or infringe on its right to educate the people of the facts of the matter relating to

the cause of the fire and how the Sangh Parivar had spread a canard to spread a riot for its electoral gains in Gujarat.

He argued that the Committee had submitted its report within the stipulated period of three months and it was the right of political parties to discuss the matter publicly and that any action that the Commission might

take to stop its discussion would only defeat its purpose of strengthening the democratic system in the State and the country in general.

Mr. Yadav said the RJD would take the matter to court if the Commission sought to stifle the voice of the party and its leaders. He said they would put forward their stand before the Commission.

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18/1

REVOLT IN JD(S)

9.8.05
JD(S)

THE REVOLT IN Karnataka by four second-rung leaders of the Janata Dal(Secular) against the party president, H.D. Deve Gowda, might have been prompted by their sense of alienation within the organisation. But the issues raised in this process deserve serious consideration. The four, led by Vaijnath Patil, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, have faulted Mr. Gowda for promoting his relatively inexperienced son, H.D. Kumaraswamy, as the working president of the State unit of the party and for taking unilateral decisions. Quite evidently, these dissenters had great expectations after the JD(S) formed a coalition Government with the Congress following the fractured verdict of the 2004 general election. With the party returning to power after a gap of five years, senior functionaries of the JD(S) were hoping to have a say in the running of the new Government. Not surprisingly, some of those left out of the recent Cabinet expansion felt that Mr. Gowda had betrayed them. The elevation of Mr. Kumaraswamy merely provided an opportunity for Mr. Patil, a former Minister, to bring together other disgruntled leaders against Mr. Gowda. As denial of ministerial berths could not have been projected as an issue of public importance, the "dynastic succession" in the party became the rallying point.

Differences within the JD(S) were earlier activated by the nomination of an industrialist from Tamil Nadu as the party candidate for the Rajya Sabha. The giving away of the seat to a non-member of the party, that too from outside the State, did not go down well with middle level leaders, who were already aggrieved that seniority in the organisation was being bypassed. The dissenters have cited this as another instance of Mr. Gowda taking unilateral decisions guided by personal motives. Not surprisingly, the main de-

mand of the dissident group, which includes former Minister A. Laxmisagar, former Member of Parliament P. Kodandaramaiah, and former Member of Legislative Council A.K. Subbaiah, is the formation of a collective leadership. The group is also threatening to open up old wounds by blaming Mr. Gowda for yielding the chief ministership to the Congress. The argument of the rebels is that Mr. Gowda did not want the party's candidate, Siddaramaiah, to become the Chief Minister as that would have affected the prospects of Mr. Kumaraswamy over the long term.

Dynastic succession is, of course, not unique to the JD(S). Most political parties in India — the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Left parties, at the two ends of the political spectrum, are exceptions — openly promote dynastic succession, with sons or daughters or close relatives taking the place of the parent figure in the hierarchy. Almost inevitably, family-centred politics creates disaffection at all levels, besides thwarting inner-party democracy, and encouraging sycophancy and personal loyalties at the cost of democratic debate and discussion. Mr. Gowda, who ran a good campaign in the last election and brought his party back into contention for power after it was swept out in the 1999 election, should know better than to run the organisation as a family enterprise. If the party is to expand its support base beyond caste affinities and grow in the northern parts of Karnataka, it must become more representative by giving second-rung leaders their due. Although it might be too late for a patch-up with the dissident group, the JD(S) leadership must henceforth adopt an accommodative approach and learn to carry along all sections of the party. Otherwise, the efforts of the last couple of years will be undone, and the JD(S) might be pushed into the wilderness again.

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THE HINDU

LALU LIST FOR BIHAR, JHARKHAND MAY MAR POLL EQUATIONS

Secular parties play spoilsport



Ashok K Mishra
PATNA 17 JANUARY

RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav on Monday released the list of party candidates for the first phase of Assembly polls in Bihar and Jharkhand. Clearly, the discord among the UPA partners has come out in the open with RJD deciding to field candidates in 21 out of the 24 seats going to polls in the first phase in Jharkhand.

Again, for the first phase of polls in Bihar, RJD has decided to contest in 58 out of 64 constituencies, leaving three constituencies to CPI, two to CPM and just one to Congress. The RJD decision to contest from 21 seats will inevitably lead to division of the so called "secular" votes in Jharkhand. In the last Lok Sabha elections, "secular" parties, including JMM, Con-



ROLL CALL: RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav releasing his party's list of candidates for the polls in Bihar & Jharkhand in Patna on Monday. — PTI

gress, RJD and the Left parties had notched up a far more credible alliance at the ground level and this accounted for a spectacular electoral performance. The "secular" alliance then won 13 seats and BJP could manage to win just one seat in Jharkhand.

But JMM and Congress this time firmed up a seat sharing pact among themselves leaving RJD in the "lurch". As part of the pact, Congress got 33 and JMM

35 seats leaving the 13 remaining seats to RJD and the Left. This was, however, unacceptable to Lalu who, if Monday's list is any indication, has decided to play free in Jharkhand in a bid to mainly target JMM. No doubt, RJD will cut into the "secular" votes at the expense of the other UPA partners. This in turn will boost the electoral prospect of BJP-JD(U) nominees.

It remains to be seen how

many more seats RJD will contest from the remaining 57 seats. Even the alliance between JMM and Congress is plagued by confusion as both the parties are headed for friendly bouts in a number of seats. Opposed to the UPA partners, both BJP and JD(U) amicably agreed on the seat sharing formula.

IRJD has decided to field the former Congress chief of united Bihar Sarfraz Ahmad from Gandey in Jharkhand. The other prominent candidates include Gautam Sagar Rana (Hazaribagh), Girinath Singh (Garhwa), Annapurna Devi (Koderma), Mohammad Yasin Ansari (Bhawnathpur) etc. Altogether, the party has fielded five candidates belonging to the Yadav community and three from the minorities.

In Bihar, during the first phase, RJD will contest in 58 seats but it has decided to leave three seats — Dumraon, Gaya town and Dhuraiya — to CPI, two seats — Hisua and Buxar — to CPM and Kahalgaon seat to the Congress candidate Sadanand Singh who is the Speaker of the Assembly.

EC rebukes RJD chief for breaching model code

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 17 JANUARY

THE Election Commission (EC) on Monday severely reprimanded railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav for violating the model code of conduct by bribing voters. However, the EC let him off the hook in the wake of assurances by Mr Yadav that he and his party would do nothing that amounted to an offence under the electoral laws.

Rejecting Mr Yadav's explanation that he was only distributing money to some ladies to buy sweets on his having become a Union minister, the EC ruled that "even the gratification in the form of treating, which would include giving of mithai or giving of

money for mithai, would fall within the ambit of the offence of bribery". Besides, the EC held, "giving money after nearly seven months of his assumption of office...and that too when the election to the Bihar Legislative Assembly is so imminently close... cannot but have only one inescapable inference that the same was for inducing the voters".

According to the commission, the general perception in the minds of the voting public, and not strict rules of evidence, apply in the matter of violation of model code of conduct.

"It is an undeniable fact that the whole nation's conscience felt disturbed on seeing, in the print and electronic media, Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav openly hold-

ing a wad of currency notes in his hand and distributing them to several ladies, which he himself admits," the EC said while indicting the minister of violating Section 171(b) of the IPC and Section 123(A)(1) of the Representation of People's Act, 1951, with the corrupt practice of bribing voters on election eve.

As for the derecognition proceedings initiated by the poll watchdog against the RJD in the bribery case, the EC took a lenient view. Accepting assurances made by Mr Yadav in his reply to the show-cause notice served on the party that he and his party were committed to abiding by the poll code, the EC said it did not want to pursue the matter any further against the party.



The CPI leader, Gaya Singh (left), the CPI (M) leader, Sitaram Yechuri, the RJD chief, Lalu Prasad Yadav and the NCP leader, Tariq Anwar (right) at a meeting in Patna on Saturday. — Photo: Ranjeet_Kumar

No front without Congress: Lalu

By K. Balchand

PATNA, JAN. 15. The Rashtriya Janata Dal chief, Lalu Prasad, today denied that any front had been formed without the Congress. Mr. Prasad, along with the CPI (M) leader, Sitaram Yechuri, and NCP MP, Tariq Anwar, denied rumours that the RJD, the CPI, the CPI(M) and the NCP were forming any electoral front.

Firm decision

He said that they were firm in their decision to fight the elections under the same banner and efforts were on to resolve

the "prickly" seat-sharing arrangement made complex by the aspirations of workers of each of these parties.

There was no difference on the seats now held by them, he pointed out, and added that the Congress intended to contest a specific number of seats.

The objective was to prevent the division of secular votes from benefiting the communal forces. The four parties were working out the modalities "to sort out" the candidates' list with that of the Congress.

The leaders would find a solution to the problem that had cropped up, with the Congress

claiming that it would contest 80 seats in the State.

The parties are likely to release their lists on Monday.

The parties have also kept their options open on withdrawing their horses midstream basing on their assessment of the prospects of the candidates.

LJP list

The Lok Janshakti Party released its list of candidates for 56 of the 64 constituencies going to the polls in the first phase on February 3.

The person in charge of Bihar affairs, Ramchandra Paswan, the general secretary, Suraj

Bhan Singh, and the spokesman, Sanjay Singh, said they would release the names of candidates for the other eight constituencies tomorrow.

They claimed to have finalised a seat-sharing arrangement with the Congress and that they would withdraw their candidates from constituencies where the Congress had its nominee.

They parried questions relating to not leaving out the 17 constituencies for which the Congress had announced its candidates, saying that a final decision would be taken in due course.

the congress for forging an alterna- contesting

Bihar allies in unity parade

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Jan. 10: It was billed as a "dream" show of unity — the kind of spectacle the BJP-Janata Dal (United) would have wanted to mount before the 2000 elections but could not and swallowed the ignominy of watching Rabri Devi come back to power.

Today, 20 *netas* — big, bigger and biggest — sat cheek by jowl against the backdrop of a poster which proclaimed "15 *saal, bura haal, sarkar badlo, Bihar badlega* (15 years, terrible plight, change the government, Bihar's face will automatically change)" and had the BJP's lotus and the Dal (U)'s arrow symbols.

From Nitish Kumar, Sharad Yadav, Digvijay Singh, K.C. Tyagi, Prabhunath Singh and the Dal (U)'s latest acquisition, Jagannath Mishra, to Arun Jaitley, Ravi Shankar Prasad,



Jaitley and Nitish in New Delhi on Monday. (PTI)

Gopal Narain Singh and Sushil Modi — the leadership embraced virtually Bihar's caste gamut but excluded the minorities. Dal (U) president George Fernandes was away in Mumbai for a medical check-up while the BJP's minority poster boy, Shahnawaz Hussain, was absent.

Nitish announced that the Dal (U) will contest 138 seats in Bihar and the BJP 105. In Jhar-

khand, the BJP would play the senior partner and fight 63 seats and the Dal (U) 17. As if to underline the "unity" theme, Jaitley said: "If we have to decide who will be our chief minister, we will be able to decide without a problem." Nitish, however, clarified he was not a contender.

Despite the leaders' claim that their alliance would get a clear majority because the

"anti-RJD vote was stronger than the pro-RJD vote", Nitish made it clear that the Lok Jan-shakti Party, headed by Ram Vilas Paswan, was still welcome to join the alliance. "We cannot indefinitely wait for Paswan because the polls were notified today and the process of filing of nominations has begun. But if the LJP is really against the RJD, it should reconsider its strategy."

Asked how the seats would be redistributed if Paswan changed his mind and crossed over to the NDA, he said: "Both of us (the Dal and the BJP) will give up some of our seats." Nitish also said even if Paswan fought solo, the Dal (U)-BJP would not attack him in their campaign, indicating that the LJP was welcome as a post-poll ally. "Our campaign is against only the RJD and Laloo Prasad Yadav and no other individual," he stressed.

JD-U keeps BJP waiting

Arun Anand in New Delhi

Jan. 9. — In the absence of a green light from the Janata Dal-United for seat-sharing arrangements in Bihar, the BJP could not take up the list of candidates for the Bihar assembly polls in its central election committee meeting held today. The JD-U continues to explore its options of having an alliance with Mr Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Jan Shakti Party as well as the Congress.

The BJP has no other option except to wait for the JD-U to make the first move. Senior BJP leaders said they were still hopeful that the latter might be able to win over the LJP for an alliance considering that the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Congress were getting back on "friendly" terms once again.

However, a strong section of BJP leaders term it as a remote possibility given Mr Paswan's compulsions to keep away from the saffron brigade to keep his Muslim support base intact but possibility of a tacit understanding is not ruled out.

The BJP general secretary, Mr Shivraj Singh Chauhan, today said the party would finalise its candidates for the Bihar assembly polls on 11 January. He had said yesterday that the party would announce its candidates for the Bihar polls today.

BJP sources said it is clear that in the next 48 hours the JD-U would have to make its stand clear vis-a-vis the alliance with the BJP. Till then the BJP would have to wait. BJP sources also said once the air clears over this issue then only any "concrete" talks on seat-sharing arrangement in Bihar would begin.

Meanwhile, the BJP today left two more seats for the JD-U in Jharkhand as it announced the second list of 12 candidates for the assembly polls in the state.

Jharkhand rebels attack BJP office

RANCHI, Jan. 9. — In the first sign of dissension among a section of party workers after the BJP announced the first list of candidates for next month's assembly elections in Jharkhand omitting six sitting MLAs, a mob today pelted stones at the party office here in protest against the omission.

The six sitting MLAs dropped by the party include Mr Arun Mandal (Rajmahal), Mr Phulchand Mandal (Sindri), Mr RC Naik (Kankey), Mr Dinesh Oraon (Sesai), Mr AR Tuddu (Serai Kalan) and Mr Chunna Oraon (Chakradharpur). It was not clear whose supporters resorted to violence near the party office, police said. Normalcy could be restored after police dispersed the mob. The former Jharkhand chief minister, Mr Babulal Marandi's name also did not figure in the first list of party candidates for Assembly elections in the state released yesterday in Delhi by the party general secretary, Mr Shivraj Singh Chauhan. The list of 52 candidates included names of incumbent chief minister, Mr Arjun Munda, and the former Union minister, Mr Karia Munda. — PTI

The party has now announced candidates for all 63 seats it is contesting in Jharkhand. It has denied tickets to nine sitting MLAs while 22 legislators would contest for another term.

Contrary to the signals given earlier, the party has not fielded former chief minister and sitting MP Mr Babu Lal Marandi from any of the seats. "He would be asked to campaign throughout the state," said Mr Chauhan while releasing the list of candidates for Jharkhand. The party today also released a list of candidates for 36 assembly seats in Haryana. The candidates for the rest of the 15 seats would be announced on 11 January.

RJD FINED RS 15,000

EC model code shadow on Lalu

Statesman News Service

PATNA, Jan. 6. — Powered by the Election Commission's instructions to realise penalties from the parties that defaced railway property for publicising their rallies, East-Central Railways has served a notice on Mr Prasad's RJD yesterday asking the latter to pay a fine of Rs 15,000 by 12 January.

The notice has been served on the RJD for its workers' attempts to deface the premises of Patna junction by pasting banners, posters and putting up hoardings for their proposed Kisan-Mazdoor Maharaila which was earlier scheduled for 23 December.

Till recently, the entire railway department was dancing to the tune of the railway minister, Mr Lalu Prasad. None of the railway officials could muster courage to refuse when the RJD approached them for arranging special trains for their rally. The trains appeared to have become the "free" and favourite mode of transport for his party colleagues.

Thanks to the model code now in force, the entire situation has seen a reversal. The usual sight of officials apparently at the beck and call of the railway minister has changed, both at 1, Anne Marg, his official residence sharing the boundary with that of his chief minister wife Mrs Rabri Devi or at the Patna railway junction.

The much-publicised Maharaila was called off in the aftermath of the EC threatening to de-recognise the RJD and sending its legal advisor Mr KJ Rao to probe the blatant violation of the model code. Based on Mr Rao's reports, the EC directed the Railway Board chairman to realise penalty from defaulters.

It was due to this order that the RJD was asked to deposit the fine with the Hajipur zonal office. As

Marandi booked

RANCHI, Jan. 6. — Former Jharkhand chief minister Mr Babulal Marandi was booked by Dhanbad district administration for allegedly violating the model code of conduct. Dhanbad SP Mr AK Singh said Mr Marandi and two other leaders had organised a party meeting in a government accommodation yesterday.

Meanwhile, in Delhi, the EC today also summoned senior officials of the Haryana government, secretary (irrigation department), chief engineers, and executive engineers, for violation of model code of conduct. It had received information that the PWD and irrigation department had issued tender notices for two construction works worth Rs 1.33 crore and Rs 1.57 crore on 1 January. — SNS & PTI

per reports, the Railways had to spend the said amount on removing the publicity material from the official premises. Interestingly, it had earlier promised to provide 18 special trains for carrying rally participants to the state capital.

The department distanced itself from the RJD rally only after the EC directed the Railways not to provide the trains. The EC order seems to have affected the RJD supremo, who is now seen moving in a simple Marshal jeep on the streets of Patna, with no crowd of officials hanging around or security guards following him.

IMA strike

The Indian Medical Association has called a day-long medical strike across Bihar from tomorrow midnight to press for the release of orthopaedic surgeon Dr UK Raja from Purnia. Dr Raja was kidnapped by gunmen on New Year's Day while travelling from Madhepura to Purnea.