

Somnath calls expulsions a step in the right direction

49-17 Parliament
The step taken by Parliament would at least help retrieve some credibility

28/12
Venkitesh Ramakrishnan

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said the decision to expel 11 members of Parliament, including 10 from the Lok Sabha, on charges of misconduct and corruption, would help cleanse public life and instil faith in the people that elected representatives are somewhere responding to a sense of accountability and the aspirations for a just and humane society. In an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*, he characterised the action as a step in the right direction that underlined that the Parliament, as a whole, was committed to its responsibilities and duties.

Damning picture

Mr. Chatterjee pointed out that the stock and image of the politician had come down considerably during the past few years and the current step taken by Parliament would at least help retrieve some credibility. He recounted the meeting he had with a group of bright schoolgirls sometime ago to highlight the point. "I asked them what their ambition was and the response stunned me: 'anything but a politician.' It certainly presented a damning picture of the politician and needs to be corrected, whatever the sacrifice we do to achieve it."

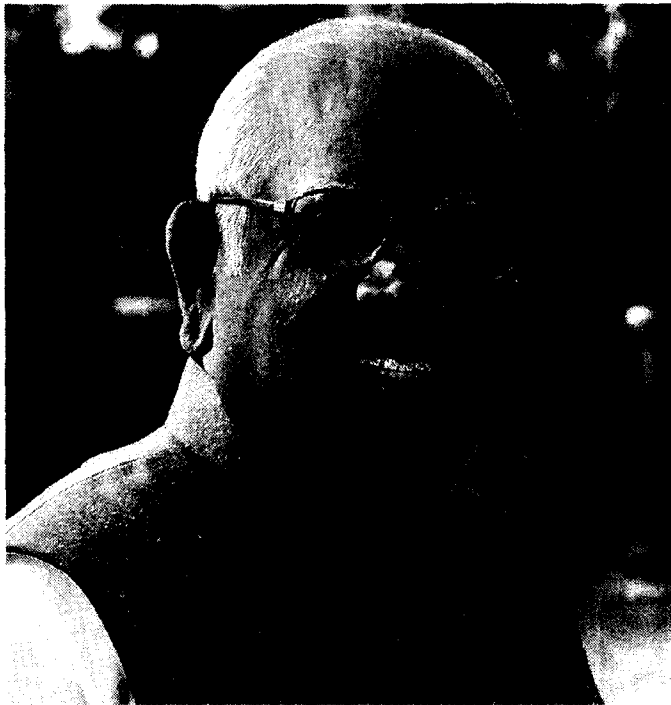
In the interview, Mr. Chatterjee addressed almost all the

"The stock and image of the politician had come down considerably during the past few years"

questions that have come up in the context of the expulsion, including the contentious ones. His response to the argument that the expelled MPs should have been given more time to respond to the bribery charges contained two points.

First, Mr. Chatterjee said, the Special Committee that went into the allegations against the MPs was formed with the unanimous consent of leaders of all parties and had representative participation of all sides of the House. Second, the procedure of the functioning of the committee as well as its time schedule was decided by the committee itself. "At no point during its functioning did any party or its leaders or any committee member say that the time given to the MPs was insufficient."

The Speaker was also of the view that as in the case of the debate on time given to the MPs, the contention of L.K. Advani, Leader of the Opposition, about the punishment not being commensurate with the crime is also an afterthought. "At no point during the inquiry was this raised or brought to my notice. In fact, the Leader of the Opposi-



Somnath Chatterjee

tion talked about this disproportionate punishment only when the completed report of the committee was being discussed in the House."

Mr. Chatterjee maintained that referring the matter to the Privileges Committee would not have made a substantive difference to the proceedings against the MPs. "The Privileges Committee is a committee of the House, bound by pre-defined

rules and regulations. In fact, the committee that was specially selected for the present inquiry had more powers because it could regulate its own procedure."

The Speaker said that an impression was being sought to be created that if the issue had gone to the Privileges Committee, there would have been an elaborate procedure, lawyers would have been involved and that the

committee would have given a clear verdict whereas the truth is far from it. The veteran Parliamentarian pointed out that any parliamentary committee, including the Privileges Committee, can provide assistance of a lawyer to those who are facing its procedures only with the Speaker's permission and that nobody had asked his permission to engage a lawyer when the Special Committee's investigation was on.

"No new precedent set"

Responding to the perception that the "big sharks" in the corruption game went scot free while the naive and small players got caught, the Speaker said: "It is for responsible political parties and the people to evolve ways and means to overcome such a situation. Mr. Chatterjee dismissed suggestions that the new precedent created by the Parliament could be used by ruling parties with a big majority to cook up charges against MPs and dismiss them at will from the House.

"Our country and its people have overcome misuse of power, including parliamentary and executive power, even during extremely oppressive situations like the Emergency. I have confidence that anybody who tries to do something like that would be given a fitting reply by our people and the system of parliamentary democracy," he said.

Powerpoint President

Kalam Discusses The Press, Economics, Science And Culture

Team TOI
REPORTING FROM
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

Most editorial meetings are animated affairs but they don't usually — alas — end with a sumptuous high tea. Then again, it's not every day you spend Christmas with Kalam. And so it was that an excited contingent embarked from The Times of India to meet the President and seek his inputs on the special edition to mark the first anniversary of the tsunami.

Having entered the imposing Rashtrapati Bhavan, we were ushered into the Yellow Dining Room. "Hope the colour of the room doesn't reflect his opinion about journalism today," quipped one of us as we awaited the Presidential entry. Far from it. As our interaction unfolded, he made it clear that he believed the media has a hugely important role to play. By the end of a 90-minute session, he had even hardened cynics amongst us nodding and smiling in appreciation. "Golden moments," muttered the same wag as we filed out. Talk about a change of perspective brought on by an ignited mind.

But that was later. To begin with, the Prez entered to a standing ovation and was quickly into his stride. He looked at the special pages we'd made on his suggestion and briskly cleared most of them with a few 'Goods', the occasional 'Fantastic', and some gentle pointers for further improvements.

As he scanned the news list, the Prez also threw up a couple of story ideas. "You've asked big guns what they want to be remembered for. But after I asked the question during a chat session, I got three very moving replies from little-known people. Why don't you publish those?" He also wanted an article done on three successful PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) models, and had the data all ready. The tasks were quickly assigned.

Presidential Presentation

The Prez then settled down for a chat. "I want to talk about an important subject for 15 minutes. Then we'll have a free-wheeling discussion about anything you like," he promised. And launched into a powerpoint presentation about how to rid India of poverty by 2020.

Broadly, according to the Prez, there are five major interlinked challenges to be tackled. The first is lifting 260 million people in rural areas above the poverty line by setting up 7,000 PURAs and encouraging a second green revolution to double farm output. The second is maximising the potential of India's rich human resource by providing education, health care, social and nutritional security. Third: Boosting information and communication technology. Fourth: Developing infrastructure, including electric power, and river networking. And finally, developing critical technologies and strategic indus-

tries and ensuring economic security so that "developed countries can't threaten us with sanctions as they did in 1998."

The Prez & The Press

He wrapped up the presentation with a final point: "According to me, politics should be 30% political politics — in which parties contest for votes — and 70% development politics — in which they challenge each other to provide faster development for the country and put the national interest upfront. Right now, unfortunately, it's the other way around. I keep making this point — to state assemblies, my Prime Minister, my Cabinet. In a democracy, you can't ignore the need for political politics. But once you've been elected, surely you can think of some development politics? It's a message I try to market wherever I go; the media is an important partner."

Having made his power points, the Prez settled back for questions. They flew in thick and fast, and he handled them with the kind of finesse Greg Chappell would surely love to see the Indian batting display in Pakistan — an appropriate analogy, since the very first query was what he thought of Sourav Ganguly. "He's back in the team, what's there to discuss?" responded the Prez as laughter swept across the room.

Other, more serious questions too followed. A sample:

You often talk about the need to maintain our spiritual heritage. But what about the poor examples of personal morality set by so many of our leaders?

Government can't provide enlightened leadership—that can only start at home, through parents, and later teachers. At best, government can be a facilitator, by ensuring quality education. Good teachers can make so much difference to lives. In 1950-54, when most of you weren't even ideas, I was in St Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli, and the rector would, once a week, talk to us about great people like Jesus, Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln and Caliph Omar. That moulded me for the rest of my life. We may be a secular nation, but I believe children must have moral science classes.

You've spoken about the need for people to develop themselves. Don't our reservation policies act against that?

We need to lift people out of destitution. Young people must have the opportunity to study whatever they want to. Once we have enough institutions and jobs, the issue will fade away. Developed countries don't need to distinguish amongst their people.

Do you think fewer young people want to pursue higher studies in science?

I think it's more that their parents prefer they take up safer career options. A few years ago, I was promised a fantastic dinner if I could convince a young girl to either take up medicine or engineer-

ing. Within a few minutes, I knew she was totally in love with physics, and she's doing very well in it now. But I had to pass up a great dinner.

I think we should create a science cadre and make sure 200-250 bright young people are absorbed in organisations like ISRO, DRDO and CSIR every year. Once youngsters feel science is a secure career option, more may take it up.

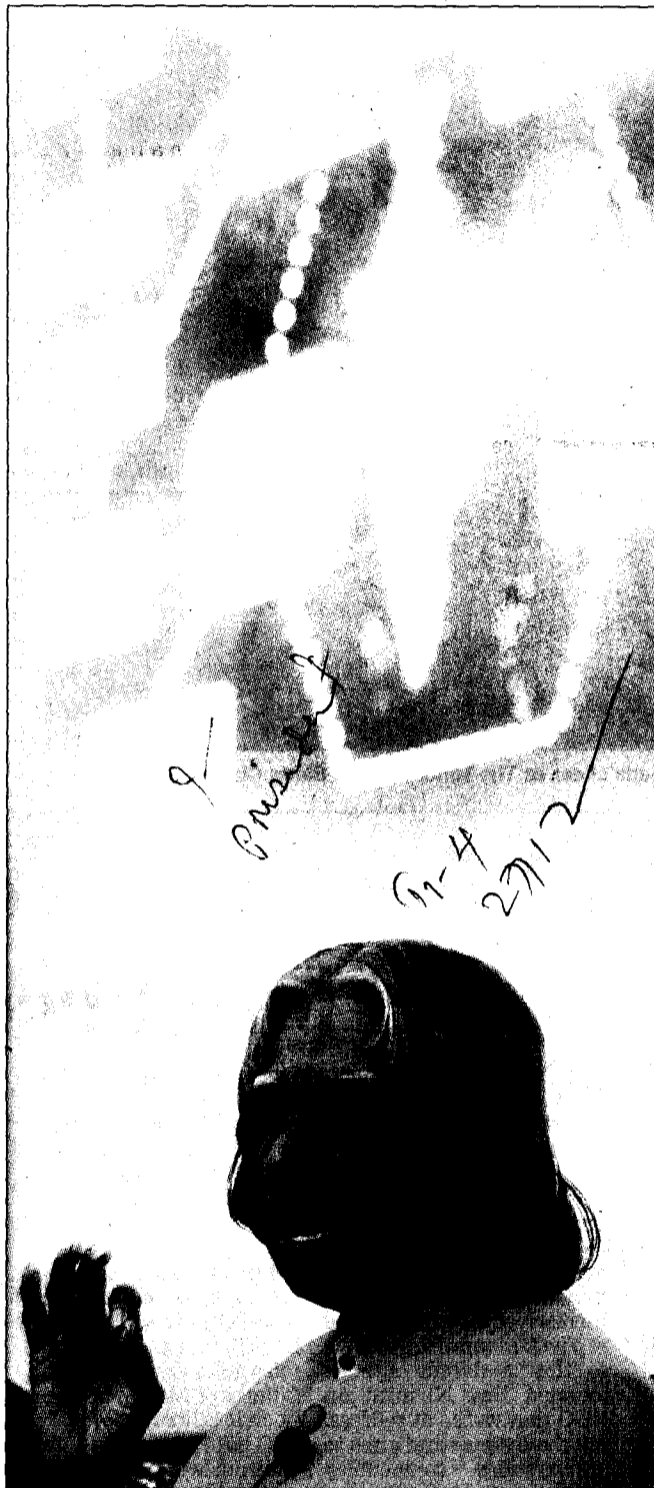
Do you think the benefits of faster economic growth will actually reach the masses?

Look at Kerala. It's the least corrupt Indian state, according to Transparency International. There are two major reasons: the high level of public education there and the fact that the media acts as a fierce watchdog and pounces on any irregularity.

You've spoken of completely wiping out poverty by 2020. Isn't that too ambitious?

When I was growing up, people scoffed when visionaries like Sarabhai and C Subramaniam spoke of Indian satellites and food self-sufficiency. Well, today we have a hugely successful space research programme and overflowing granaries.

You are young, why are you indulging in negative thinking? Remember, dreams lead to thoughts and thoughts to actions. So dream, dream, dream!



Wary MPs *of Parliament* slam door *on* on strangers

New Delhi: No middlemen or front men and no unknown visitors to be allowed. Instructions to the personal secretaries are clear and unambiguous as Members of Parliament appear to become cautious now to ward off any unwanted visitor in the disguise, thanks to the cash-for-query string operation.

As both houses of Parliament expelled the members caught on camera by television channels, shocked Members of Parliament issued strict instructions to their secretaries on do's and don'ts. "I have told my staff not to allow unknown visitors—just tell them sahib nahin hain," a Rajya Sabha MP said.

Stories doing the rounds of the North and South avenue where most of the first-timers and back-benchers live said that over 70 MPs were accosted by the scribes on the sting mission. Eleven of these fell to the trap.

It is an open secret that most of the MPs leave blank signed letters, railway reservation slips with their secretaries. Requests come from all and sundry for recommendations to ministries, to getting a railway reservation.

The MPs simply cannot afford to entertain such requests personally nor can he annoy the members of the constituency. The job thus is left to the trusted personal secretary who knows who is to be entertained.

With the "sting" having

caused enough damage, these signed letters and reservation slips are being quietly withdrawn, a personal secretary to an MP said.

"No instructions for me," said PS to another Member of Parliament. "I have been in this field for over 40 years and know how to filter the visitors, he said adding that the inexperienced MPs who threw caution and morality to the wind landed themselves in trouble.

There is sudden "silence", said a scribe. The MPs have kind of become introvert. The fallout, first of the sting operation and, the action against the members will be that no MP would now entertain visitors at home," he said.

MPs' quarters in Lutyen's Delhi normally are quiet during the inter-session period but buzz with activities once parliament sessions begin. 'Netas' of various levels, voters with various jobs to be done descend on Delhi and as a matter of right camp at the MP's quarters. "With the latest development, one does't know who is carrying a hidden camera and with what intention," an MP said.

On the MPLAD, another MP said that the fund of two crore a year is not enough even to repair a stretch of a road in a constituency. "Given the size of the Rajya Sabha constituency there are demands from voters that vary from building roads to schools, water supply and so on. Agencies

STING EFFECT

28 DEC 2005

THE HINDU OF INDIA

Leniency May Result In Credibility Crisis For UPA • BJP Worst Hit • Focus Now On Natwar

House expels cash-on-camera XI

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 23 DECEMBER

PARLIAMENT on Friday slammed the door on 11 members, who were shown accepting wads of currency notes by a TV channel a fortnight ago. A section of the MPs, particularly from the BJP, sought a detailed legal process for arriving at the extreme decision. But the majority mood in the two Houses, for a stringent and swift action, ended the parliamentary career of the tainted 11.

Sensing an opportunity to occupy the high moral ground, the UPA, the Left and a section of the NDA argued forcefully for the immediate expulsion of those 11 MPs. They were of the view that any leniency would



result in a crisis of credibility and re-spectability for Parliament. The BJP, which was the worst hit by the scandal — six of the 11 MPs shown accepting money belong to the party — made a desperate attempt to delay the decision. It said the decision was arrived in a hurry — the scandal broke out on December 12 and the committees submitted their reports

on December 22. Only the privilege committee could recommend the expulsion of the members. The treasury members argued that the committees had the mandate of the House to recommend action.

The expelled Lok Sabha members were: the BJP's Anna Sahib MK Patil, YG Mahajan, Pradeep Gandhi, Suresh Chandel and Chandra Pratap Singh; the BSP's Lal Chandra Koi, Raja Ram Pal and Narendra Kumar Kushwaha; Ramsevak Singh of the Congress and Manoj Kumar of the RJD. The lone dismissed Rajya Sabha member was Chhatrapal Singh Lochi of the BJP.

With Friday's decision, the BJP's tally in the Lok Sabha has come down to 133. While the 145-member Congress lost one member, the

BSP's tally dropped by three. Lalu Prasad Yadav's RJD, too, has lost one member. A by-election to these seats could compound troubles for the BJP, as two of them belong to the hostile terrain of Maharashtra. The other expelled members belong to Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.

The politicians, who found themselves at the wrong end of the law, will now find it difficult to purvey conspiracy theories. Its immediate impact could be on the Volcker-tainted Natwar Singh, who has been claiming that he was targeted for being anti-US.

A badly-affected BJP can be expected to demand similar stringent actions against those who are involved in the oily deals.

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24 DEC 2005

The Economic Times

Lok Sabha expels 10 MPs Rajya Sabha Creates History By Sacking Member

TNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi: Ten Lok Sabha members, caught on camera accepting money for raising questions, were expelled on Friday from the house after the BJP and some of its allies walked out. In the Rajya Sabha, history was created when the Upper House expelled BJP member Chhatrapal Singh Lodha on the recommendation of the ethics committee, with the BJP not pressing for a division after a voice vote.

The 10 LS members are Annasaheb M K Patil, Y G Mahajan, Suresh Chandel, Pradeep Gandhi and Chandra Pratap Singh (all BJP), Narendra Kumar Kushwaha, Lal Chandra Kol and Rajaram Pal (all BSP), Manoj Kumar (RJD) and Ramsevak Singh (Cong) who were caught on camera accepting money for raising questions in the house.

The motion, moved by leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee, was adopted by a voice vote after leader of the opposition L K Advani led a walkout of his party and some allies, saying he could not associate himself with the expulsion which was disproportionate to their offence.

However, the BJP, which was totally opposed to the punishment, did not choose to press for a division.

In the Rajya Sabha, the

committee headed by senior Congress leader Karan Singh, recommended the expulsion of Lodha, disagreeing with the views of BJP member Sushma Swaraj that the matter be referred for judicial advice.

This is for the first time that the upper house has taken such a stern action against a member.

Moving the motion, Singh said, "This house is fully empowered to take any action in the matter of ethics" and asked the members not to bring the judiciary into it.

A close examination of the member in question and evidence gathered from cobrapost.com and Aaj Tak showed the member had lowered the dignity of the house, Singh said.

Maintaining that Lodha's action was a clear case of "misdemeanour", and that the House needs to deal with it sternly, former law minister Arun Jaitley said expulsion of the member in the absence of breach of privilege would leave loopholes.

Describing the proposed action by the ethics committee as the first of its kind in parliamentary history, the BJP member said the House wanted to ensure that no loopholes should be left as this move would be quoted extensively in the future not only in parliament but also in state legislatures.

MPs



STING OPS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2005

Rebuilding trust in Parliament

History of sorts was made by Parliament when the Rajya Sabha expelled one and the Lok Sabha 10 members who were caught on camera accepting money for asking questions in the Houses. Elected representatives accepting bribes is not new — the very first Parliament had expelled in 1951 a member, B. M. Mudgal, when he was found to have accepted money for raising a question. Yet the wholesale expulsion of so many across the political spectrum — with the Bharatiya Janata Party accounting for six of the 11 — for corruption is unprecedented perhaps in the history of any parliamentary democracy. It is a tribute to the vigilance of the free media that they were able to bring to light venality that existed on so massive a scale. Strangely for an organisation that had at one time projected itself as a “party with a difference,” the BJP sought to gain time by getting the cases referred to the privileges committee and its president, L.K. Advani, even termed the expulsions a “disproportionate” penalty. In rejecting this dilatory and permissive stand, the two Houses have taken a significant first step in restoring public confidence in elected representatives. The path the two Houses had to take was obvious when the Bansal Committee in the Lok Sabha and the Ethics Committee of the Rajya Sabha found after enquiry that the evidence against the members was incriminating and recommended their expulsion. Parliament’s standing would have dipped irretrievably had it delayed a decision or opted for a lesser penalty.

With the courts kept out of the picture in matters relating to the conduct of MPs, the onus devolves on Parliament to ensure the probity of elected representatives. The Constitution provides in Article 105(2) that a member of Parliament shall not be liable to court proceedings “in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament.” In an interpretation that, in the view of the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, “runs counter to all notions of justice, fair play and good conduct expected from members of Parliament,” the Supreme Court ruled in the case of P.V. Narasimha Rao that the Article would grant bribe-taking MPs immunity from prosecution under the Prevention of Corruption Act if the bribe was for something said or done in Parliament. Parliamentary enquiries are much faster than court proceedings and, after enquiries and hearings spread over 10 days, the two committees were able to pronounce their opinion and the Houses acted promptly on their recommendations. If in comparison with a trial this might seem summary justice, the MPs who have been expelled have got off relatively lightly, losing only their seats and escaping possible prison sentences and fines under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Quite apart from removing the immunity from prosecution by amending the Constitution as recommended by the NCRWC, Parliament will have to go beyond the expulsions and address the issue of loss of trust frontally. For a start, devices like the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme that are obvious founts of corruption need to be dismantled.

THE HINDU

Parties for MPLADS with better safeguards

Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI: At a meeting convened by the Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee here on Thursday, most party leaders favoured retaining the controversial Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), but with new and stringent safeguards.

Minister of Statistics and Programme Implementation Oscar Fernandes has been asked to coordinate with the MPLADS parliamentary committee, chaired by Prasanna Acharya of the Biju Janata Dal, to study the current guidelines and suggest new ones plugging loopholes, if any.

The Government view became clear when Parliamentary

Affairs Minister Priyaranjan Dasgupta felt the scheme should continue and be better regulated.

Copies of reports given

Party leaders attending the meeting were given copies of a report on MPLADS prepared by the former MP, Era Sezhian, as a study conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences, as well as copies of two reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. A letter written by the Speaker to Mr. Acharya suggesting that his committee study the report and Mr. Acharya's response to it were also circulated as background papers.

But most importantly, the meeting was held against the

backdrop of a sting operation televised recently that showed several MPs allegedly haggling for commissions on projects to be implemented with MPLADS funds. Each MP gets Rs. 2 crore a year and he can decide how that money will be spent for development work in his constituency although it is executed by the bureaucracy.

By and large party leaders attending the meeting felt that some corrections were necessary, but the scheme itself should not be scrapped as suggested by some.

It is learnt that some MPs wanted the guidelines changed to enable them to place part of their constituency fund with the Prime Minister's Relief Fund

and then recommend funds be given from this to needy patients from their constituencies.

It was pointed out that almost all MPs are faced with this problem and their constituents expect them to find funds to meet their medical expenses.

Leaders representing the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Telugu Desam Party

were among those who opposed the continuation of MPLADS. Mr. Basudev Acharya (CPI-M) wanted stringent guidelines if the scheme were to continue;

Mr. D.P. Yadav (RJD) said the scheme was "unconstitutional", while K. Yerrannaudu (TDP) later said that his party president was against the scheme.

Parliament passes reservation Bill

9-Parliament

HD-7

23/12

172 vote in favour; two against the Bill

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Constitution (104th) Amendment Bill providing reservation for the socially and educationally backward classes, besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, in private unaided educational institutions was passed in Parliament on Thursday with the Rajya Sabha adopting the Bill by a majority vote. The Bill was passed in Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

While 172 members voted in favour of the legislation, two members opposed it. An amendment to drop the provision of excluding the minority educa-

tional institutions from the purview of the Bill, moved by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Sushma Swaraj was defeated in the House, also by a majority vote.

Moving the Bill, Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh described it as an "enabling legislation" and said all States would be required to draft their own laws to ensure implementation of the Constitution amendment.

He appealed to the State Governments to fulfil their responsibility of drafting the laws in the next two or three months so that guidelines are in place before the next academic session begins.

This would ensure that a proper admission and fee structure is in place by then, he said, adding that he had no doubt that all the States would fulfil their responsibility in this regard.

Pointing out that the present scenario on the higher education front was not "pleasant enough," Mr. Singh said efforts were to be taken to correct this.

Reacting to the observation made by Sharad Yadav of the Janata Dal (United) on inclusion of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) under the purview of the legislation, Mr. Singh said the issue needed to be debated on a national level for a consensus.

23 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

Parliament approves quota Bill

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 22. — Decks were cleared today for the enactment of the constitutional amendment Bill providing reservation for SCs, STs and "socially and educationally backward" classes in unaided private educational institutions following Parliament's approval of the legislation today.

In the wake of a day-long marathon discussion on the Bill today, the Rajya Sabha passed it virtually unanimously. While 172 members voted in favour of the Bill, only 2 members voted against it.

The Bill's easy sailing in Rajya Sabha had become a certainty yesterday when it

was passed in Lok Sabha rather smoothly, with even the BJP, despite its fierce opposition to the exclusion of minority institutions from the Bill's ambit, voting in favour of it along with most of the NDA allies. Constituents such as the JD(U) and TDP were already believed to have taken a pro-Bill position.

The upper House's approval of the Bill was nearly unanimous after a BJP-sponsored amendment was defeated by a voice vote. Though some NDA members voiced their concern over possible misuse of the legislation, the highly-populist Bill saw them voting in favour. The 104th Constitution (Amendment) Bill required a two-thirds majority for pas-

sage as it sought to overturn an August Supreme Court judgement terming the quotas in private educational institutions unconstitutional.

With the passage of this Bill, students belonging to the SCs/STs and OBCs can benefit from the quotas in government as well as private colleges from the coming academic session. In reply, HRD minister Mr Arjun Singh said the Bill would address "frontally and holistically" the question of reservation in central institutions not covered so far. Giving figures on students in the 18-24 age group seeking higher education, Mr Singh said among moderate students, nine out of 100 sought admission, four of 100 SCs/STs students and a mere

one of 100 minority students sought a higher education. This Bill, he said, would address this.

Moving an amendment motion seeking deletion of the words "other than the minority educational institutions" from the Bill, the BJP leader Mrs Sushma Swaraj demanded that the legislation should be applicable to all institutions, including those run by the minorities.

EPF walkout

Angry with the government's reluctance to restore the EPF interest rate to 9.5 per cent, the members of Left parties and the Samajwadi Party, both UPA supporters, today walked out of Lok Sabha. They later met Dr Manmohan Singh.

THE STATESMAN

EXPULSION FROM HOUSE RECOMMENDED

Panel indicts tainted ten

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23/11
Statesman News Service

Parties back MPLADS

NEW DELHI, Dec. 22. — The Pawan Kumar Bansal Committee, constituted by the Lok Sabha Speaker to probe the cash-for-questions scam, has held the 10 MPs guilty and recommended their expulsion from the House. A resolution is likely to be moved in the House tomorrow, the last day of the winter session, to expel the 10 members.

A senior parliamentarian, on the condition of anonymity, said: "This (resolution) seems to be the logical course at the moment." If the House adopts such a course of action, the BJP would be the biggest loser. Till late tonight, however, there was no official word on the subject.

The committee, in its 38-page report tabled in the Lok Sabha today, held the continuance of the membership of the 10 accused MPs as "untenable".

The BJP, however, expressed its opposition to "the punishment recommended by the committee without following the proper procedure". The BJP member of the committee, Mr VK Malhotra, has placed a note of dissent on the report.

The BJP and the BSP declared that they were against the expulsion of the 10 members. The BJP indicated that it would oppose any move to expel them and demanded that the accused be given "a fair opportunity" to defend themselves.

The BJP insisted that the committee be accorded the status of Special Privileges Committee where "the tainted members will have the right to cross-examination, arguments and defence which are necessary for natural justice," said Mr

NEW DELHI, Dec. 22. — At an all-party meeting convened by the Lok Sabha Speaker today, a majority of the parties favoured continuance of the MP local area development scheme (MPLADS). The meeting was called to deliberate on whether the scheme should be continued or scrapped. The move comes after the recent sting operation exposed seven MPs in MPLADS-related corruption cases. The MPs were caught on camera allegedly extracting kickbacks for sanctioning projects under the scheme. — SNS

Malhotra.

Apart from the Congress, the Left parties and the SP are believed to be in favour of expelling the 10 members.

In its report, the committee said: "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that accepting money had a direct connection with the work in Parliament" and held that such conduct of the said MPs was "unbecoming" of them and also "unethical". Disturbed over the acceptance of bribes by members, the panel said: "It is by such actions that the credibility of Parliament as an institution and a pillar of our democracy is eroded."

The committee found "no merit" in the claims made by the 10 MPs that the video footage was doctored or morphed or edited. The panel refrained from pointing an accusing finger at the media, declaring: "The media is in no way to blame for exposing genuine wrong-doing."

The Bansal Committee was constituted by the Speaker after the sting operation was telecast on 11 December.

Parliament passes quota Bill: page 4

23 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

৫ 'ঘুষখোর'কে সোমনাথ: তদন্ত হবে সংসদে আসবেন না

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ২০ ডিসেম্বর— অপারেশন চক্রবর্তী ক্যামেরা-বন্দী কেলেঙ্কারিকে গুরুত্ব দিয়ে লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ চ্যাটার্জি অভিযুক্তদের বিরুদ্ধে তদন্তের নির্দেশ দিলেন। বলেন, সংসদের স্থানীয় এলাকা উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পে (এমপি ল্যান্ড কিম) ঘুষ নেওয়ার যে অভিযোগ উঠেছে তা অত্যন্ত গুরুতর। সংসদের এই আনৈতিক আচরণের তদন্ত হবে। যতদিন তদন্তের কাজ চলবে, ৫ অভিযুক্তকে লোকসভায় আসতে নিষেধ করেছেন স্পিকার। এই ৫ সাংসদ হলেন কংগ্রেসের আলোমাও চার্ভিল, বি জে পি-র ফয়সাল সিং কুলোস্টে, রামস্বরূপ কোলি, চন্দ্রপ্রতাপ সিং, এবং সমাজবাদী পার্টির পরশনাথ যাদব। আজ, বুধবার অপারেশন দুর্ঘোষনের তদন্ত রিপোর্ট জমা পড়ছে স্পিকারের কাছে। রিপোর্টে কড়া শাস্তির সুপারিশ করা হয়েছে। যদিও কমিটির শীর্ষকর্তা পবনকুমার বনসাল এ নিয়ে কোনও মন্তব্য করতে চাননি। এই রিপোর্টের ভিত্তিতে ১০ লোকসভা সদস্যের কঠোর শাস্তি হতে পারে। সোমনাথ চ্যাটার্জি বলেন, বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক দলের নেতাদের সঙ্গে আমি কথা বলেছি। সাংসদ তহবিল কেলেঙ্কারিতে অভিযুক্তদের বিরুদ্ধে তদন্তের সিদ্ধান্তে তাঁরা সহমত হয়েছেন। রাতে স্পিকার ৭ সদস্যের তদন্ত কমিটি গঠন করেন। প্রশ্ন-ঘুষ কেলেঙ্কারির তদন্তে গঠিত কমিটির ৫ সদস্যের সঙ্গে অভ্যুক্ত হয়েছেন আরও ২ জন। তাঁরা হলেন আর জে ডির দেবেজ যাদব ও বি জে ডির প্রসন্ন আচার্য। আজ লোকসভায় স্পিকারের বক্তব্য শেষ হওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে কয়েকজন সদস্য উঠে দাঁড়ান। সাংসদ তহবিল বাতিলের দাবি জানান তাঁরা। বলেন, এম পি ল্যান্ড কিম কোনও কাজ হয় না, এবং এই কিম সংসদের মর্বাদা ক্ষুণ্ণ করছে। রাজ্যসভায়ও একই দাবি তুলেছেন সদস্যরা। সি পি এমের নীলোৎপল বসু, আর এস পি-র এন কে প্রেমচন্দ্রন,

আর জে ডির রামদেও ভাণ্ডারী, টি ডি পি-র সি রামচন্দ্রাইয়া, বি জে পি-র এস এস আলুওয়ালিয়া ও মুরলীমতোহর যোগি সাংসদ তহবিল প্রকল্প বাতিলের পক্ষে বলেন। নীলোৎপল বসু সর্বদলীয় বৈঠক ডাকার পরামর্শ দেন। তবে কয়েকজন কংগ্রেস সাংসদ এই প্রকল্প চালিয়ে যাওয়ার পক্ষে মত দেন। রাজ্যসভার চেয়ারম্যান ভৈরো সিং শেখাওয়ান্ড অপারেশন চক্রবর্তী অভিযুক্ত দুই সদস্য রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্রান্তি দলের সাক্ষী মহারাজ ও বহুজন সমাজ পার্টির ইশম সিংয়ের বিষয়টি এখিঞ্জ কমিটিতে পাঠিয়েছেন। তিনি বলেন, কিছু সাংসদের দুর্নীতির খবরে আমরা সবাই উদ্ভিন্ন। বিষয়টি নিয়ে তদন্ত হওয়া জরুরি। আশা করি, এখিঞ্জ কমিটি যত শিগগির সম্ভব সুপারিশ করবে। এদিকে 'ঘুষখোর' সাংসদ ফয়সাল সিং কুলোস্টেকে সংসদীয় দল থেকে সাসপেন্ড করেছে বি জে পি। প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর সভাপতিত্বে আজ সংসদীয় দলের বৈঠকে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়। দলের আরেক অভিযুক্ত সাংসদ চন্দ্রপ্রতাপ সিং প্রশ্ন-ঘুষ কেলেঙ্কারিতে আগেই সাসপেন্ড হয়েছেন। সুতরাং তাঁর কথা বৈঠকে ওঠেনি। তবে দলের তৃতীয় অভিযুক্ত সাংসদ রামস্বরূপ কোলির বিরুদ্ধে কোনও ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হচ্ছে না। কারণ 'অনুসন্ধানকারী' দলের ক্যামেরার ছবিতে রামস্বরূপ নেই এবং টেপে যে গলা শোনা যাচ্ছে তা রামস্বরূপের কিনা স্পষ্ট নয়, টেপের কথাবার্তাও স্পষ্ট নয়। উল্লেখ করা যেতে পারে, অপারেশন দুর্ঘোষনের পর গত সপ্তাহে বি জে পি রাজ্যসভার সদস্য-সহ ৬ সাংসদকে সাসপেন্ড করে। 'অপারেশন দুর্ঘোষনের' পর বি জে পি সংসদীয় দলের বৈঠকে সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আদবানি নাকি খেপের সঙ্গে বলেছিলেন, দলের কিছু কিছু লোকের কাজকর্মে মাথা ঝেঁ হয়ে গেছে। সেবার ক্যামেরায় ধরা পড়া ১১ 'ঘুষখোর' সাংসদের ৬ জনই ছিল বি জে পি-র। এবার

'অপারেশন চক্রবর্তী'-এ ক্যামেরা-বন্দী ৭ 'ঘুষখোর'র ৩ সংসদীয় দলের বৈঠকে নেতাদের সতর্ক থাকতে বলেছেন। বি জে পি মুখপাত্র বিজয় মালহোত্রা ব্যাখ্যা দিয়েছেন, কিছু নেতার দুর্নীতিকে দলের দুর্নীতি বলা ঠিক নয়। এদিকে রামস্বরূপ কোলি সব অভিযোগ অস্বীকার করেছেন। স্টার নিউজ চ্যানেলের নামে মামলার হুমকি দিয়েছেন। তিনি বলেন, ওম প্রকাশ নামে আমার কোনও ব্যক্তিগত সহকারী নেই। লেটারহেডে সেইটি আমার নয়, জাল। আজ সাংসদ তহবিল প্রকল্প খারিজের দাবিতে লোকসভায় সদস্যরা যখন সোচ্চার হয়েছেন, অধ্যক্ষ সোমনাথ চ্যাটার্জি বলেন, প্রশ্নপূর্বে বিষয়টি আপনারা তুলতে পারেন। দয়া করে সংসদের মানমর্বাদা আর নষ্ট করবেন না। আমরা সঙ্কটে আছি। প্রত্যেকে আমাদের সমালোচনা করছেন। আমাদের লজ্জা কি এখনও যথেষ্ট হয়নি? দায়িত্বশীল আচরণ আর কবে করব? লোকসভায় তখনও এক অভিযুক্ত বসে আছেন দেখে একজন বলেন, উনি কি থাকবেন? সোমনাথ বলেন, আমি ওঁকে চলে যেতে বলেছি। বসে থাকলেও সতীর কক্ষে অংশ নিতে পারবেন না। লোকসভায় এদিন কংগ্রেসের মুখপাত্র ও রাজ্যসভার সাংসদ আনন্দ শর্মা জানান, তাঁদের দলের সাংসদ চার্ভিল আলোমাও-র বিরুদ্ধে এখনই কোনও ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হচ্ছে না। তাঁর বক্তব্য, চার্ভিল সম্পর্কে স্টার টিভিতে চারবার করে যা দেখানো হয়েছে তাতে যথেষ্ট গলপ আছে। তিনি তো টাকাই নেননি, তা হলে তাঁকে সাসপেন্ড করা হবে কেন? আনন্দ শর্মা জানান, তুমি, তুমি, তুমি নাম করে ব্যবসায়িক স্বার্থ সিদ্ধির জন্য যারা চার্ভিলের কাছে কোঙ্কনী পাঠাগার গড়ার টাকা চাইতে গিয়েছিলেন তাঁদের বিরুদ্ধে এফ আই আর দায়ের করেছেন চার্ভিল। এক আই জারের প্রতিনিধি কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সোনিয়া গান্ধির কাছেও পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছেন তিহি।

Twice stung, forever shy

Parliament gropes for solution

HT Political Bureau
New Delhi, December 20

ON WEDNESDAY, the country's elected leadership will be faced with two key questions. First, what action to take against the MPs trapped in the cash-for-questions scam? Second, should the MPLAD scheme be continued?

The fate of the 10 MPs caught taking bribes on tape for raising questions in the Lok Sabha will be decided by the P.K. Bansal committee. The panel has to submit its report by 4 pm on Wednesday.

It is hard to say when the House will act on its recommendation, if any. But before adopting any resolution, the Lok Sabha might need to take note of lawyer and Rajya Sabha MP Ram Jethmalani's letter to House chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.

"Action of suspension against a member by way of suspension under Rule 297(c) can be taken by the whole House after proper enquiry and an adverse report and recommendation by the ethics committee," wrote Jethmalani. "The alternative procedure is to refer the matter to the committee of privileges." Jethmalani's intervention — provoked by the suspension of the lone RS member in the scam —

Will they be expelled?

On Wednesday, Bansal committee will submit report on cash-for-questions scam

No knowing if the Lok Sabha will accept its recommendation, if any

Matter could even go to court if there is any shortcoming in conduct of inquiry

Lone Rajya Sabha member in the scam was suspended.

raises the question whether it was legally sound to refer the probe to the specially constituted Bansal panel, instead of the Privileges Committee of the House.

Jethmalani told HT: "Bringing Parliament to disrepute is a breach of privilege." He said even if the five-member panel was accorded the status of a special privileges committee, it would have to be seen whether it followed the procedure established by law.

The warning also applies to the expanded Bansal panel — it

now also includes Prasanna Acharya (BJD) and D.P. Yadav (RJD) — which will submit its report before January 31 on the MPLAD-related graft charges against the five members. The remaining two MPs are from the RS, where the matter is before the House ethics committee.

On Wednesday, within hours of the Bansal committee submitting its report, ruling party and Opposition leaders will join Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee over dinner. The agenda: whether the MPLAD scheme should be retained or scrapped. Chatterjee's position is that it is "unscientific".

Another report on P2

21 DEC 2005

Divide & Rule: House in pieces over MPLAD

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 20 DECEMBER

THE legislature, it would seem, cannot make up its mind about the utility of the MPLAD scheme which has parliamentarians receiving Rs 2 crore annually towards development work in their constituencies. The Congress on Tuesday went on record with its opposition to the scrapping of the scheme while the BJP, and a section of ruling UPA spoke in its favour.

Even the Left is not of one mind over the issue — the CPM wants the scheme to be discontinued but the CPI has left the decision to the government.

The scheme, which has found disfavour with the likes of BJP president LK Advani, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee and even the Sonia Gandhi-led NAC among others, was discussed in both Houses of Parliament after a sting operation purportedly showed MPs offering to sell developmental

schemes for a price. The BJP is asking if the funds currently diverted to MPLADS be used for the state-funding of elections. LK Advani had spoken to Somnath Chatterjee about this proposal after the cash-for-questions scam rocked Parliament earlier this session.

As for the Congress, party spokesman Anand Sharma rejected the demand for scheme to be done away with. Mr Sharma said a sweeping indictment could not be made against a majority of members on the basis of the demand made by less than 1% of the MPs.

Mr Sharma, however, evaded a question on UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi writing a letter to Manmohan Singh suggesting scrapping of the MPLAD scheme.

"I am not aware of any such letter by Ms Gandhi to the Prime Minister," he said. The RJD, a section of the Left — the CPM and RSP — and TDP have also raised their voices for having the scheme axed.

Narrow escap for Alemao

THE Congress on Tuesday held back any action against its Lok Sabha member Churchill Alemao, who figured in a news channel expose on "MPs allotting funds from the MPLAD scheme for a bribe".

The Congress spokesman said there should be further probe into the matter before deciding on the action against its member, since Alemao has filed an FIR against those who conducted the sting operation and alleging that the tapes had been tampered with. Alemao has written letters to the prime minister, the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Congress president, giving his side of the story. He said, it was for Parliament to decide on the next course of action. — Our Bureau

Reservation Bill tabled in Lok Sabha

J. Parthasarathy
HD-1
21/12

Slated for discussion today

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Constitution Amendment Bill to reserve seats for socially and educationally backward classes, besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, in private unaided educational institutions other than those run by minorities was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday amid protests from the Bharatiya Janata Party and reservations expressed by some allies of the government.

Though he is in favour of the Bill, Devendra Prasad Yadav (Rashtriya Janata Dal) said the term "Other Backward Classes" should be included in the body of the amendment. It uses the term "socially and educationally backward," which is explained in the Statement of Objects and Reasons as another way of referring to the OBCs.

Scope for misinterpretation

But this provided scope for misinterpretation. In the absence of the use of the term "OBCs", premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and Jawaharlal Nehru University were not providing reservation to the OBCs, he said.

Echoing Mr. Yadav's point, Santosh Gangwar (BJP) said the OBCs would not benefit from this amendment. Also, he articulated the party's stated position on the need for bringing minority institutions under the amendment.

"Constitutional point"

Ram Gopal Yadav (Samajwadi Party) said the term "socially and educationally backward" included the OBCs as maintained by the government. "We should trust the government on this." His party colleague, Mohan Singh, said the explanation in

• BJP voices protest

• We are opposed to Bill on a constitutional point: CPI (M)

the Statement of Objects and Reasons addressed his apprehensions, which initially made him oppose the Bill.

Clarifying that he was opposed to the Bill on a "constitutional point," Varkala Radhakrishnan (Communist Party of India-Marxist) said the amendment, by excluding minority institutions, would result in removal of reservation now available there. States should have the power to identify the minorities as their composition varied from State to State.

Mr. Radhakrishnan found support in C. K. Chandrappan of the CPI.

New clause

The Bill seeks to amend the Constitution by inserting a new clause (5) in Article 15 for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes or SCs/STs. But, minority-run institutions have been exempted as they are covered by Article 30 (1), which gives them the right to establish and administer educational institutions. The amendment will also enable Parliament as well as the State legislatures to make appropriate laws to provide greater access for a large number of students belonging to the socially and educationally backward classes, besides SCs/STs, to higher education including professional courses. The Bill is slated for discussion and passage on Wednesday. If passed by the Lok Sabha, it will go to the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

See also Page 12

21 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

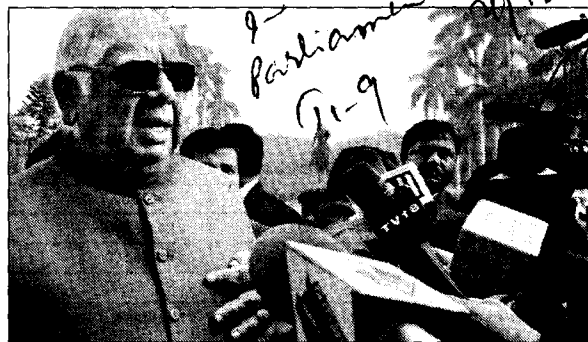
Speaker for curb on MPLAD funds

By Mahendra Ved/TNN

New Delhi: The misuse of Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) may rank as one of the most ill-kept secrets in the capital, but it is a powerful privilege no MP is ready to give up.

This was evident when Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee made a pitch for curbing the discretion of MPs in how funds under the scheme should be used. Chatterjee's stance found few takers outside the CPM on whose ticket he has been getting elected.

While he wasn't against money being given by the government, Chatterjee had argued that the District Development Board, of which each MP is an ex-officio member, be given a greater say in the execution of the scheme. Asked to react to "Operation Chakravyuh" surrounding the spending of funds (MPLADS), the minister in charge, Oscar Fernandes, maintained not only did MPs, by and large, want the scheme to continue, they also wanted more money,



Somnath interacts with the media outside parliament

and thereby, power.

"Let us accept that overall, the scheme has worked and that it has benefited a large number of people. Also, a number of projects has been executed under this scheme under the gaze of our elected representatives," Fernandes told TOI.

What was conceived as a democratic means to put monetary power into the hands of MPs to facilitate their serving their constituencies better has invited charges of corruption. Interestingly, the MPs themselves have time and again protested against the scheme's implementation. Utilising Zero Hour, they have complained that the

government was slow to release funds; that the funds remained under the control of the bureaucracy that was at times, both high-handed and ham-handed in its spending and that the amount, at present Rs 2 crores, was grossly inadequate.

Significantly, no MP admits to any irregularity, leave alone accepting any commission or underhand payment.

The scheme began with then PM P V Narasimha Rao announcing on December 23, 1993 and placing it under the control of the Rural Development Ministry. Guidelines were issued in February 1994.

2 1 DEC 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

5 MPs asked to stay away from House

Somnath announces seven-member committee to probe sting operation on alleged corruption in MPLADS

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee on Tuesday asked the five MPs, shown by a TV channel as being allegedly involved in corruption in allotting work under the Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), to stay away from the House pending an inquiry.

A seven-member committee, headed by Pawan Kumar Bansal, will go into the sting operation.

In the Rajya Sabha, Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat referred the matter to the Ethics Committee. Two Rajya Sabha MPs were also named in the expose.

Asked for explanations

The Inquiry Committee, announced by Mr. Chatterjee in the evening, has been asked to submit its report by January 31.

It will be free to follow its own procedure. The five MPs have been given time till January 2 to tender explanations. The report would be presented before the House for consideration, Mr. Chatterjee said.

Besides Mr. Bansal, the committee comprises Vijay Kumar Malhotra (Bharatiya Janata Party), Mohammad Salim (Communist Party of India-Marxist), Ramgopal Yadav (Samajwadi Party) and C. Kuppasami (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), who are also part of the panel looking into the cash-for-questions scam. The two other members are Prasanna Acharya (Biju Janata Dal) and Devendra Prasad Yadav (Rashtriya Janata Dal).

No unanimity

With the latest sting operation exposing alleged corruption in the MPLADS, members

across the political spectrum demanded that it be scrapped without delay. However, there was no unanimity on the issue. The Congress stated outside the House that it would not be prepared to rush to any such conclusion.

CPI leader Gurudas Dasgupta said he was not prepared to take the blame for the fault of some members and said he would not support the move to scrap the scheme.

In the Lok Sabha, the day began with Mr. Chatterjee's observations on the issue. Stating that he had discussed the matter with the leaders of different parties and that there was agreement on the need for a probe into the allegations, he "named" the five MPs — Alemao Churchill (Congress), Faggan Singh Kulaste, Ramswaroop Koli and Chandra Pratap Singh (all BJP), and Pa-

rasnath Yadav (SP) — and requested them to stay away from the proceedings. They have been asked to submit statements in the matter.

Pleads innocence

Of the five, only Mr. Koli was present in the House. Some members heckled him and asked him to leave. As the member, who later circulated a statement pleading innocence, refused to budge, Mr. Chatterjee said he would not be able to take part in the proceedings.

Referring the matter to the Ethics Committee, Mr. Shekhawat said in the Rajya Sabha that 'Operation Chakravayuh' had "certainly impacted on the dignity of Parliament." Expressing anguish, he said: "We all have been extremely outraged by this incident, and this has no doubt become a matter of great con-

cern."

Mr. Shekhawat recalled that he had referred a similar issue to the Ethics Committee. He hoped that the panel would carry out an in-depth probe and give its recommendations as early as possible.

All-party meet sought

A number of members, including S.S. Alhuwalia and Murlidhar Manohar Joshi (BJP), Nilotpal Basu (CPI-M), N.K. Premachandran (Revolutionary Socialist Party), Ramdeo Bhandari (RJD) and C. Ramachandrababu (Telugu Desam Party), favoured the scrapping of MPLADS. Mr. Basu demanded an all-party meeting to discuss the issue.

In the Lok Sabha, the RJD found itself in a minority while pressing for the abolition of the scheme as other members objected to the suggestion.

Somnath for regional cooperation to tackle calamities ^{19/12} *I-Parliament*

"Involve the community as a whole in disaster preparedness"

Special Correspondent ^{19/12}

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee on Sunday stressing the need for strengthening regional cooperation in Asia to tackle natural calamities. He called upon parliamentarians to be "more proactive rather than being reactive to emergent situations."

At a press conference at the conclusion of the India and Asia Regions Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, Mr. Chatterjee said the need of the hour was to involve the community as a whole in disaster preparedness.

Adequate budgetary allocation and appropriate legislation in respect of disaster management and development of requisite infrastructure were also needed.

The conference had two themes: disaster management and children's welfare.

Mr. Chatterjee said sharing of information and expertise, pooling of resources, backed by appropriate legislation, would go a long way in reducing the intensity of

• **Parliamentarians should be more proactive**

• **Adequate budgetary allocation also needed**

• **Requisite infrastructure should also be developed**

• **India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka represented**

natural calamities.

The conference was significant as large parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Pak-occupied Kashmir were hit by a devastating quake on October 8.

About a year ago, tsunami waves caused widespread havoc and loss of lives in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand.

Child-friendly policies

In his valedictory address, Mr. Chatterjee called upon the delegates to take up the cause of children and help mobilise resources, create awareness in society and

influence governments in evolving child-friendly policies.

"Our part of the world is marked with growing economies which are confronted with the challenging task of the socio-economic which are confronted with the challenging task of the socio-economic development of a substantial segment of the world population.

In the midst of this challenge, we also have to confront the vagaries of the weather and the uncertainties of nature. Destabilising effects of natural disasters are very evident in our region. What is needed is cooperative effort to confront them.

We also have to ensure that our children are helped to realise their full potential and the benefits of development do not bypass our most promising human resource," he said.

As many as 120 delegates, observers and secretaries from India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka attended the conference, hosted by the India branch of the CPA.

13 DEC 2005 THE HINDU

Bomb hoax disrupts Parliament

E-mail threatening attacks came from browsing centres in Tamil Nadu



WAR AND PEACE: A security personnel taking position beside the Gandhi statue after a bomb hoax at Parliament House in New Delhi on Friday. — PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: A bomb threat through e-mail on Friday led to the abrupt adjournment of both Houses of Parliament and the quick evacuation of the members and others. Work remained suspended for about three hours, and the Houses reassembled after the "all-clear" signal was given.

The e-mail, received by the American Consulate in Chennai from browsing centres in south Tamil Nadu, threatened to blow up Parliament and American consulates in the country. On receiving the message, purportedly from a supporter of Osama bin Laden, the Consulate informed the Chennai Police, who alerted the authorities in Delhi. This was quickly passed on to Parliament.

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee adjourned the Lok Sabha at 11.52 a.m. during question hour when he was informed of the threat; he did not give any reason for his action. The Rajya Sabha followed suit.

With Parliament having observed the fourth anniversary of the December 13 attack this week, the sudden dispersion led to some confusion. As the news spread, calm was restored. Many MPs could be seen standing in the driveways watching the security personnel go about their work while others crossed over to the Library Building.

When the Lok Sabha resumed work, Mr. Chatterjee said the

sudden adjournment was necessitated by the threat perception, but asserted that "nothing can cow us down." There was no breach in security nor was any suspicious article found.

The Leader of the House, Pranab Mukherjee, apologised for the disruption, and assured the members that efforts would be made to make up for the lost time.

The Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, suggested that a drill be put in place for such emergencies. Union Home Shivraj Patil said this could be done with the permission of the presiding officers.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was in his Parliament office, was escorted out. The Special Protection Group whisked away Rahul Gandhi, who was present in the Lok Sabha. All Ministers, MPs and staff were asked to leave immediately and all roads leading to Parliament House and nearby Government buildings were sealed. Sniffer dogs and bomb detection squads swept every nook and corner of the multi-storied building.

In the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Shekawat remained in the House till 12.30 p.m. and left his chamber only to facilitate security checks. The Leader of the Opposition, Jaswant Singh, also remained in his office throughout.

As he did in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Patil explained in the Rajya Sabha the circumstances in which Parliament was adjourned.

Sever ties with U.S., says e-mail

NEW DELHI: A three-line e-mail message asking India to sever all ties with the United States and purportedly sent on behalf of Osama bin Laden read:

"Today, there shall be a

bomb blast in Parliament and U.S. consulates in India at 11.46 a.m. Stop it if you could. Cut relations with the USA. Long live OSAMABINLADEN ASADHULLAH ALKALIFS." — UNI

Sourav Ganguly issue raised in House

In Parliament
Discussion on sports next week: Somnath

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The exclusion of Sourav Ganguly from the cricket team for the third Test against Sri Lanka found its echo in the Lok Sabha on Friday.

The issue is likely to feature prominently in the general discussion on sports slated for next week.

The matter was raised by Mohan Singh (Samajwadi Party). He wanted a discussion on the manner in which Ganguly had been dropped. He lamented the politicisation of sports in general and cricket in particular and said this would demoralise good players.

With other members — particularly from the Opposition benches — lending their voice to his statement, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee sought to calm them down by stating that there would be a discussion on sports next

week. The Speaker has admitted a notice given by Congress member Navin Jindal for a discussion under Rule 193 on the general state of affairs in sports in the country.

Pranab extends support to Ganguly

PTI adds:

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Friday threw his weight behind Sourav Ganguly saying the former cricket captain deserved a place in the Test team.

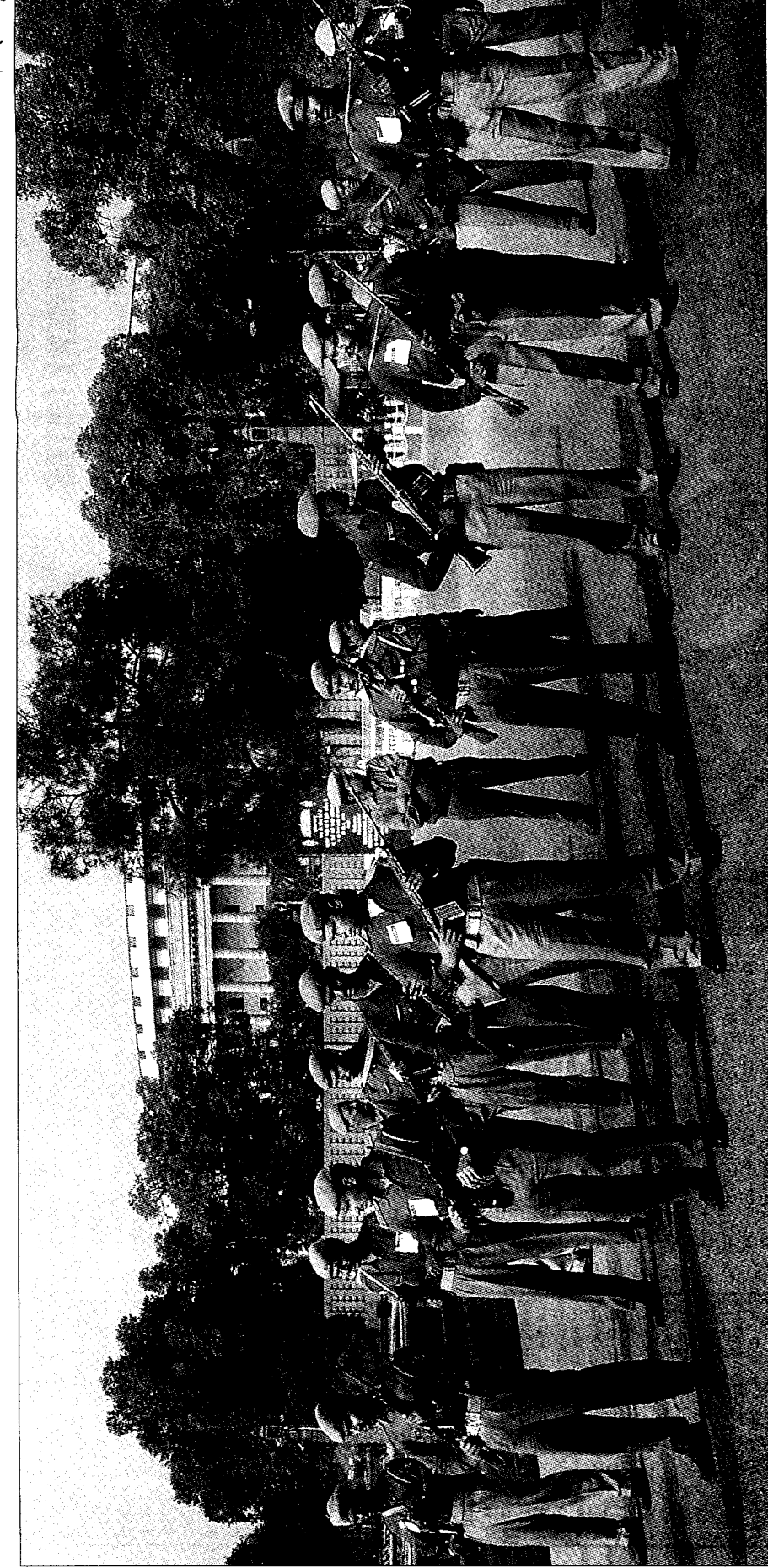
"I think we should not play politics in cricket or any kind of game. He is a good player, he should find a place in the team," Mr. Mukherjee told reporters here.

Ganguly was overlooked for the third Test against Sri Lanka, beginning on Sunday, in spite of a decent performance in the second Test at Delhi.

Nightmare on Parliament Street

HF-3

17/12



Elders thought it was a tea break

DEEPAK Razdan
New Delhi, December 16

CHEMICALS AND fertiliser minister Ram Vilas Paswan was answering Congress member Anand Sharma's query on sedative drugs at 11.55 a.m. This was when Rajya Sabha chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat entered the chamber and said the House was adjourned till 1 p.m. The elders were confused and so were those sitting in officials' and visitors' galleries. The members said they had questions to ask. Shekhawat agreed, and said even he had some queries to make.

In no time it was clear there was a security threat. The members were asked to vacate the premises, the media knew it was breaking-news time. But for Parliament's Watch and Ward, who took over, the immediate priority was to get everybody out to safety. Many MPs were, however, still clueless about the threat as they trooped into the Central Hall for a cup of tea. But their orders didn't materialise as the catering staff was pushed out of the chamber.

Soon, the scene around Parliament's gates turned chaotic. Staff, MPs, visitors and newsmen crowded around the main gate. Many MPs did not have their cars in the parking lot and they couldn't get them in because of the blockade.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee abruptly adjourned the House for an hour on Friday noon, without giving any reason, and all members as well as mediapersons were taken by surprise. Animated conversation broke out in the House as Chatterjee got up from his chair and left for his chambers after the unusual announcement that came even before the Question Hour was over.

While most of the ruling alliance members trooped out of the House, many Opposition members hung back, discussing the matter — no one had told them that a security alert had been sounded following a bomb threat. It was out in the corridors that security staff informed members about the threat and asked them to rush out of Parliament premises. Word reached inside the House soon thereafter and the rest of the MPs scurried for the exit.

According to parliamentary affairs minister Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, the security chief on receiving information about the threat rushed to secretary general PDT Achary while the Question Hour was on. Achary immediately consulted the Speaker who, in turn, had a quick word with Das Munshi and adjourned the House at 11.50 a.m. Probably, to avoid a panic situation, he did not announce that there was a bomb alert.

AJAY AGGARWAL/HT

Policemen stand guard outside Parliament on Friday after an e-mail claimed a bomb was ticking away inside, forcing hasty evacuation of the premises. Security personnel with sniffer dogs found no bomb before Parliament reconvened in the afternoon.

Lesson or two to be learnt

VINOD Sharma
New Delhi, December 16

THE BOMB threat to Parliament turned out to be a hoax. Still, the security establishment has lessons to learn from the prank that saw top-notch protectees and MPs being evacuated from the main premises into an adjoining complex that houses Parliament's library.

First, there wasn't any guarantee that the newly constructed building which has two underground levels (basements) was itself a secure place to lodge the country's top leadership for nearly three hours.

Second, the bomb threat was to be carried out in Parliament and the US consulates in India at 11.46 a.m.. The presiding officers of the two Houses were, however, alerted at 11.52 a.m.

Had the worst happened, these six minutes could have proved costly. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and leader of the opposition L.K. Advani were at Parliament House at that time. Also, the two Houses — and the press and visitors' galleries — are normally packed during zero hour that starts at 12 noon.

"If not incorrect in the given sit-



SUNIL SAXENA/HT

ever, surfaced in the confusion. Advani, who was in his room with a visitor, got to know of the bomb scare much later.

A member of his personal staff, Deepak Chopra, began making inquiries on seeing the Houses being adjourned on Parliament's CCTV. While a watch and ward hand attached to Advani was of little help, the first confirmation of the threat reached him from another staffer and party colleague V.K. Malhotra.

Failing to get through to the speaker and home minister Shivraj Patil in the first attempt, Advani was on the line with national security adviser M.K. Narayanan, who confirmed the threat. But he stayed in his room and dialled Patil on his mobile phone. On his way to Parliament House from Raj Path at that time, Patil went straight to Advani's room and persuaded him to move to the library complex, where the BJP chief spent a few minutes before leaving for his residence.

The MPs returned to work at 3 p.m. after a thorough search by seven different teams — including the police, Parliament's watch and ward staff, the SPG and the special detection group.

Aided by sniffer dogs and bomb-

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"If not incorrect in the given situation, it was not entirely correct to lodge the MPs in another building," said a senior official.

The hoax has left the security agencies wiser and more conscious of the loopholes in the system sought to be reinforced and streamlined after the December 13, 2001 terrorist attack on Parliament. In the Lok Sabha, the drama un-



SUNIL SAXENA/HT

Members of Indian Army's bomb disposal squad scan the Parliament complex. The speaker immediately adjourned the House, then in the middle of question hour, without assigning any reason. On returning to his chambers, he summoned security officers, who briefed him on the threat. Thereafter, on their advice, he walked down to the library building with the other MPs.

As the members rushed to safety, the SPG drove the PM to his South Block office. Another loophole, how-

ever, surfaced in the confusion. Advani, who was in his room with a visitor, got to know of the bomb scare much later.

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The MPs returned to work at 3 p.m. after a thorough search by seven different teams — including the police, Parliament's watch and ward staff, the SPG and the special detection group.

Aided by sniffer dogs and bomb-disposal squads, the search teams could quickly comb the huge complex because they do such exercises daily, even when Parliament isn't in session. The drill has been religiously followed since the 2001 attack, after which Rs 100 crore was invested in hi-tech security gadgets for protecting the country's elected leadership.

chambers till 12.30 p.m., when a security team appeared with a dog squad in search of the explosives.

As the two Houses had initially been adjourned only for one hour, the Rayya Sabha's quorum bell went off at 1 p.m. — without a soul in sight. Around 1.15 p.m., home minister Shivravi Patil appeared before the media to confirm the bomb threat. "The building has been searched. There is no cause for worry; the second check is on," he said.

Around 1.30 p.m., the security staff said Parliament would meet only at 3 p.m. Later, Patil in his statement in the two Houses, said the threat origi-

nated from Chennai. The US consulate there had informed Tamil Nadu Police that there would be an explosion in Parliament House at 11.46 a.m.

"The state police informed Delhi and the information was confirmed by the US embassy here," he said. Patil said such threats had also been received in the past but it was considered prudent to evacuate the premises in view of the prevailing situation.

A case has been registered against unknown persons at Parliament Street police station and a special police team has already left for Chennai.

Bomb scare empties Parliament

Continued from Page 1

In the chaos, some MPs, mediapersons and visitors crowded Parliament's main gate. Members wanting to leave the premises immediately found themselves stranded as their vehicles were parked outside and the main gates were sealed by the security staff.

Jaswant Singh, leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, did not feel compelled to leave his room. His argument: "If the security personnel could go about their work, why couldn't he and his staff?"

Shekhawat, too, stayed put in his

Manmohan: not skirting Volcker issue

HD - 16/12
2. Parliament (R S)

Ambiguity in statement: Jaswant

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had a busy day in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday trying to ward off Opposition allegations on the Volcker Report on the oil-for-food issue and the India-U.S. nuclear deal.

Making an intervention during question hour, Dr. Singh said there was no stalemate in the talks between India and the U.S. under the July 18 Joint Nuclear Statement, which were proceeding on 'strict reciprocity.'

"If the United States does not carry out its commitments under the joint statement, then India is also free not to carry out its reciprocity."

Responding to clarifications sought by members on the Volcker issue, the Prime Minister said an inquiry had been ordered, investigations were progressing and the Enforcement Directorate was doing its duty. "There is nothing else for me to state in the matter."

Asserting that he was not skirting the issue as alleged by the Leader of the Opposition, Jaswant Singh, Dr. Singh said his December 2 statement was not made *suo motu*, but the Opposition wanted him to take note of the observations attributed to the former Croatia Ambassador, Aneil Mathrani. He then "clearly and unambiguously" stated that the Enforcement Directorate would take cognisance of these and pursue investigation.

The Prime Minister's brief reply came at the end of clarifications sought by the Opposition.

Mr. Jaswant Singh expressed "disappointment" at the time lag between the statement and the clarifications. "Though the Prime Minister claims his statement is clear, consistent and firm, it is a dense forest of ambiguity from which it is difficult to find out what he means."

Charging the Prime Minister with "consistently skirting" the issue, Mr. Singh said his statement did not address the centrality of the new facts thrown up by Mr. Mathrani's claims on television and later in a news magazine. "It is a rather boxed-in statement that throws no light on new facts."

Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat intervened several times to restore order when Treasury benches objected to the lengthy clarification sought by Mr. Jaswant Singh which they said was outside of the statement.

P.G. Narayanan (AIADMK) asked whether the government would allow a panel of leaders of political parties to examine the evidence collected by the Enforcement Directorate.

Ram Jethmalani (Ind) wanted the Prime Minister to confirm whether it was true that Mr. Mathrani wrote to the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, two years ago asking for an enquiry into the Iraqi oil payoffs and that the Prime Minister's Office ignored the plea.

Nuclear deal on course: Page 12

Rajya Sabha suspends BJP member

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday suspended BJP member Chhatrapal Singh Lodha on the recommendation of the House Ethics Committee that observed that the sting operation showing him allegedly accepting money on camera had damaged the image of Parliament.

Dr. Lodha was suspended after the House unanimously

adopted a motion to this effect moved by the chairman of the Ethics Committee, Karan Singh. He will remain suspended pending the presentation of the final report of the Committee.

The 10-member Committee has decided that an opportunity be given to Dr. Lodha to explain his position in the matter within 48 hours.

Tabling the Fifth (preliminary) Ethics Committee report after the Question Hour, Dr. Singh

said the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, referred to the panel on Monday the matter pertaining to the telecast of a programme entitled 'Operation Duryodhan' by a private television channel showing actions tantamount to a serious violation of the Code of Conduct by some MPs. The matter was referred for "examination, investigation and report" under Rule 303 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the

Council of States.

The Committee, in its sitting on Monday, held preliminary discussions. It appreciated the deep sense of concern expressed by the Chairman and resolved to act with urgency in the matter. It took serious note of the situation arising out of the telecasting of the programme, which had damaged the image of Parliament and brought the august institution to disrepute.

The Committee noted that Dr.

Lodha was one of the members (of Parliament) shown in the programme.

"Since the member has been caught on tape accepting money for asking questions, the Committee unanimously recommends that Dr. Lodha should be suspended from the House, pending presentation of the final report," it said. The recommendation of the report was unanimously appreciated by the House by thumping of desks.

DIRTY ELEVEN

The present Indian political class has never been valued for its scruples and its integrity. In fact, most people consider an honest politician to be a contradiction in terms. This is not to suggest that there are no exceptions to the generalization. One has only to think of the prime minister, Mr Manmohan Singh, whose principal political asset is his integrity. But the presence of the exceptions only serves to prove the rule. The latest revelations about some members of the Lok Sabha accepting money to ask questions in parliament are thus not really shocking. This is a measure of the cynicism that is prevalent about politicians and their scruples. It is significant that the 11 members of parliament who have been caught with their hands in the till, as it were, cut across political parties: they are from the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Bahujan Samaj Party. Corruption, obviously knows no ideology, or what is worse, it is an ideology by itself. The left parties are conspicuous by their absence from the list of the tainted. The matter has been referred to an inquiry committee but as a pro tem measure the speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, has asked the 11 MPs not to attend parliament till the matter was settled. Both the Congress and the BJP have also taken the step of suspending these MPs from their parliamentary parties. *9-Parliament*

This is not the first time that the phenomenon of corrupt MPs has surfaced. But the scale of the dishonesty is new and disconcerting. In other countries too, including Britain, the same phenomenon has been visible. What is frightening is that only those who have been foolish enough to be caught on camera have been exposed. There is always the lingering suspicion that there other fish who have not been caught in the net. Moreover, the matter of probity in public life on the part of MPs does not relate to their behaviour within the House. MPs often abuse their power and position outside the House. The dictum that even Caesar's wife should be above suspicion has all but disappeared from Indian political life. Two issues need to be considered while discussing the lack of integrity of politicians. One is that with the deepening of democracy in India, people who are unaware of the unwritten conventions of democracy are entering politics. The other is that in general, there has been a decline in ethical standards in society. A society gets the politicians it deserves.

14 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

ELEVEN MPS CAUGHT ON CAMERA ACCEPTING CASH FOR QUESTIONS

HOUSE OF SHAMIE

51-1
9-
Parliament

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 12.—

A sensational cash-on-camera expose showing 11 MPs — six from the BJP and the rest from the BSP, the Congress and the RJD — taking bribes rocked the political establishment in the Capital today.

The sting operation caught the members of Parliament accepting money from undercover reporters for raising planted questions in the Houses. The shocking TV footage made waves across the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha during the day, stunned the Speaker and the Chairman, and severely embarrassed leaders and parties across the political spectrum.

The sting operation was carried out by a news portal, Cobrapost.com, in collaboration with Aaj Tak TV channel. It caught Lok Sabha members — Mr YG Mahajan, Mr Anna Patil, Mr Suresh Chandel, Mr Pradeep Gandhi and Mr Chandra Pratap Singh (all BJP); Mr Narendra Kumar Kushwaha, Mr Raja Ram Pal and Mr Lal Chandra (all BSP); Mr Manoj Kumar (RJD); and Mr Ramsewak Singh (Congress) — indulging in what virtually the entire political spectrum called a "disgrace" for the record.

The lone Rajya Sabha member thus exposed was Mr Chhatra Pal Singh Lodha (BJP), who hails from Uttar Pradesh but was elected from Orissa. Rattled by the expose,

the BJP, the Congress and the BSP suspended the accused MPs from their parties.

An anguished Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, asked them to stay away from the proceedings of the House. "Nobody will be spared. We shall certainly respond to it in a manner that behoves us," he said.

The 10 Lok Sabha MPs have been asked to submit their explanations by Wednesday morning to an inquiry committee set up by Mr Chatterjee.

Making this announcement in the House, the Speaker said the Committee, headed by Mr Pawan Kumar Bansal, has been asked to give its report by 4 p.m. on 21 December.

"The Committee is authorised to follow its own procedure. The report will be presented before the House for its consideration," the Speaker said making the suo motu statement after consultations with leader of the House, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, the Opposition leader, Mr LK Advani, and leaders of other political parties. "In view of the extreme gravity of the matter... all of them have agreed with the course of action I propose to take," said Mr Chatterjee.

Similarly, the Rajya Sabha Chairman, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, took serious note of the scandal and said that the incident had undermined the dignity of the Upper House and that members would have to think seriously on how to maintain

its dignity. Mr Shekhawat also referred the matter to the Ethics Committee for "necessary action" and "its recommendations for due consideration by the Rajya Sabha".

Acting swiftly on the Chairman's directive, the Ethics Committee decided to issue a notice to the BJP member, Mr Lodha. "We are issuing a show-cause notice to the member to reply within 48 hours," the chairman of the Ethics Committee, Mr Karan Singh, said.

The sting operation — reportedly involving 56 video and 70 audio tapes besides recording more than 900 phone calls — was said to have been conducted over a nine-month period. The undercover reporters, posing as representatives of a fictitious organisation, the North Indian Small Manufacturers Association (Nisma), struck deals with these MPs to get their questions raised in Parliament in exchange for cash. Their Press note claimed that each of these MPs had been paid between Rs 15,000 and Rs 1,10,000. Several MPs also wanted an "annual fee" of Rs 5-6 lakh from the Nisma to put in as many proxy questions as the latter wanted.

Echoing each other, the BJP, the Congress and the BSP described the scandal as "shocking and disgraceful" while promising they would take "stern action" against the MPs, if they are found guilty.

More reports on page 4



Suresh Chandel, BJP MP from Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh, took Rs 30,000 to ask two questions in LS



Pradeep Gandhi, BJP MP from Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh, took Rs 55,000 to ask five questions in LS



Anna Patil, BJP MP from Erandol, Maharashtra, took Rs 45,000 to ask 15 questions in LS



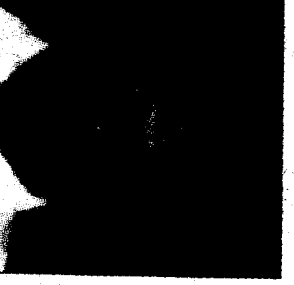
YG Mahajan, BJP MP from Jaigaon, Maharashtra, took Rs 35,000 to ask 15 questions in LS



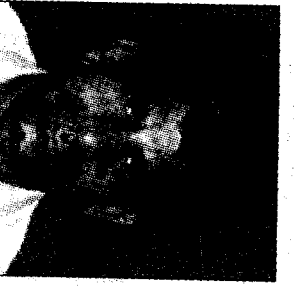
Chandra Pratap Singh, BJP member from Siddhi, MP, took Rs 35,000 to ask five questions in LS



Chhatra Pal Singh Lodha, BJP Rajya Sabha member from Orissa, took Rs 15,000 to ask six questions in RS



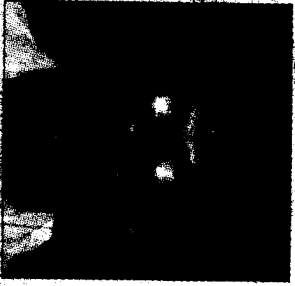
Narendra Kumar Kushwaha, BSP MP from Mirzapur, UP, took Rs 55,000 to ask six questions in LS



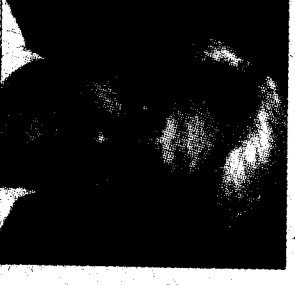
Raja Ram Pal, BSP MP from Bilhaur, UP, took Rs 35,000 to ask five questions in LS



Lal Chandra, BSP MP from Robertsganj, UP, took Rs 35,000 to ask four questions in LS



Ramsewak Singh, Congress member from Gwalior, MP, took Rs 50,000 to ask five questions in LS



Manoj Kumar, RJD MP from Palamau, Jharkhand, took Rs 1,10,000 to ask eight questions in LS

Rogues' Gallery

11 MPs accused of taking cash for raising questions

Speaker orders probe, says none will be spared

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Members across the political spectrum have demanded stringent action, including expulsion, against 11 Members of Parliament, who allegedly accepted money to raise questions in Parliament as shown by a television news channel on Monday.

The Lok Sabha set up an inquiry committee to go into the charges and submit a report by 4.00 p.m. on December 21 and the Rajya Sabha referred the case of its lone member to the Ethics Committee.

MPs asked not to attend session

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee told the House on Monday that the 10 members were asked not to attend the session until the matter was looked into and a decision taken.

They were asked to submit their individual statement/explanation on the allegations made by television channel *Aaj Tak* before 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday.

The members' statement/explanation would be placed before the inquiry committee that would comprise Pawan Kumar Bansal (Chairman-Congress), Vijay Kumar Malhotra (Bharatiya Janata Party), Mohammed Salim (Communist Party of India-Marxist), Ram Gopal Yadav



Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee

(Samajwadi Party) and C. Kuppusami (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam).

The Committee, the Speaker said, was authorised to follow its own procedure and present the report before the House for its consideration.

The winter session of Parliament is scheduled to conclude on December 23.

Earlier, the Speaker made a statement as soon as the House

assembled. He said he discussed the matter with leaders of different parties, including Leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee and Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani and they agreed that the matter was extremely serious if proved correct.

House is deeply concerned, says Speaker

"I have no manner of doubt that all sections of the House feel deeply concerned about it. I know that we should rise to the occasion and we should see that such an event does not occur ever in future and if anybody is guilty, he should be punished. Nobody would be spared. We shall certainly respond to it in a manner which behoves us."

Action demanded at the earliest

Leaders of various parties demanded action at the earliest. Gurudas Dasgupta (CPI) said what was shown was a reflection on the parliamentary system. Harin Pathak (BJP) expressed anguish and announced that the party had suspended its MPs involved.

Mr. Bansal said it should be ensured such acts were not repeated. Prabhunath Singh (Janata Dal-United) said the acts had lowered the image of the MPs. Basudeb Acharia (CPI-M) said the incident had lowered the dignity of the House.

13 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

ক্যামেরায় বন্দী ১১ ঘুষখোর সাংসদ

৬ জনই বিজেপি-র • সংসদে সওয়াল করতে টাকা

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আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ১২ ডিসেম্বর— অপারেশন দুর্ভেদন! তহলকা উট কন্সের পর এবার বোমা ফাটল 'কোবরা পোস্ট' এবং বেসরকারি টিভি চ্যানেল 'আজ তক'। এবার সাংসদের ঘুষ নেওয়ার দৃশ্য! সংসদে প্রশ্ন তোলার জন্য লাজলজ্জা হারিয়ে রীতিমতো মোটা অঙ্কের টাকা নিয়েছেন ৪ রাজনৈতিক দলের ১১ জন সাংসদ! বিজেপি-র ৬, বাস পা-র ৩, কংগ্রেসের ১ এবং রা জ দ-র ১। আজ সকাল ৮টা থেকেই আজ তকে সম্প্রচারিত হয়েছে এই দৃশ্য। সংসদ কসর ঘণ্টাদুয়েক আগেই দেশবাসীকে তোপ-দাগা-ভিডিও দেখিয়ে ইচ্ছাই ফেলে দেয় নিউজ চ্যানেলটি। রাজনৈতিক দলগুলো নড়েচড়ে বসে। সংসদে উজ্জল বাড ওঠে। অপারেশন 'দুর্ভেদন' চলছে আট মাস ধরে। ৫৬টি ভিডিও, ৭০টি অভিও টেপ, ৯০০টির বেশি ফোন কলের রেকর্ড ব্যবহৃত হয়েছে। সংসদে প্রশ্ন তোলার জন্য জনপ্রতিনিধিরা ভালই দর হেঁকেছেন। টাকা নিয়েছেন ১৫,০০০ থেকে এক লাখের ওপরে। প্যাকেজ ট্রায়ের মতো সারা বছরে প্রশ্নও ছহ তোলার জন্য এককালীন দামও হেঁকেছেন কেউ কেউ। ৫-৬ লাখ টাকা! আট মাসের অপারেশনের পরে 'নিসমার' ৬০টি প্রশ্ন সাংসদেরা পেশ করেছিলেন। ২৫টি

গৃহীতও হয়েছিল। নর্থ ইন্ডিয়ান মাল ম্যানুফ্যাকচারার্স অ্যাসোসিয়েশন (এন আই এস এম এ) বা 'নিসমার' প্রতিনিধি সেজেই এসেছিলেন দুই সাংবাদিক। অনির্কল্প বহেল এবং সুহাসিনী রাজ। কোবরা পোস্ট উট কন্সের সম্পাদক অনির্কল্প বহেলের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা ছিল তহলকা কেলেঙ্কারি ফাঁসেও। এদিকে তুমুল বাড উঠতেই

লালচাঁদ কোল ও রাজরাম পাল। এ ছাড়া রয়েছেন কংগ্রেসের রামসেবক সিং এবং রাষ্ট্রীয় জনতা দলের মনোজ কুমার। ঝাড়খণ্ডের পালারামোয়ের সাংসদ মনোজ কুমারই পকেট ভারী করেছেন সব থেকে বেশি। ১ লাখ ১০ হাজার! নেহাতই কম পেয়েছেন ওড়িশা থেকে নির্বাচিত দলের রাজ্যসভা সাংসদ ছত্রপাল সিং লোধা, ১৫,০০০। দু'জন নিয়েছেন ৫৫,০০০। নরেন্দ্রকুমার আর প্রদীপ। বাকিরা ৩০,০০০ থেকে ৫০,০০০ টাকার মধ্যে। ঘুষকাণ্ড ফাঁস হওয়ার পর বাম নেতারা দুইসাতলক্ষ শাস্তির দাবি জানিয়েছেন। দুর্ভেদন, দুর্নীতি, ঘুষের মতো যে সব অপরাধ ভারতের রাজনীতি ও গণতন্ত্রকে দুর্বল করছে, সেখানে ক্ষমা প্রশ্র্ননের কোনও প্রশ্নই নেই বলে তাঁদের অভিমত। সি পি এমের বাসুদেব আচারিয়া এবং নীলোৎপল বসুর প্রশ্ন, এর পর সাংসদের মানুস আর শ্রদ্ধা করবেন? অথচ, সকলেই তো দুর্নীতিপ্রস্তু নন। কিছু মানুষের জন্য সংসদ এবং সাংসদেরা মর্যাদা হারান কেন? সি পি আই নেতা এ বি বর্ধন বলেছেন, যত তাড়াতাড়ি সংসদের ভাবমূর্ত্তি উদ্ধার করা যায়, ততই মঙ্গল। বামেরা একবন্ধভাবে এটাকে বড় ইস্যু করবেন বলে তিনি জানান।

তহলকা-বাটকার পর কোবরার ছেবল!

বিজেপি অভিযুক্ত সাংসদের সংসদীয় দল থেকে সাপশেড় করেছে এবং শোকজ নোটিস দিয়েছে। বুধবারের মধ্যে জবাব দিতে বলা হয়েছে। তবে এটা হাস্যকর। কারণ, এই পদক্ষেপ নিতে পারেন পিপকার বা সংসদ। বিরোধী নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আদবানি-সহ সংশ্লিষ্ট নেতাদের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেছেন লোকসভার পিপকার সোমনাথ চাটার্জি। তদন্তের ফলাফল প্রকাশের আগে পর্যন্ত ১১ সাংসদকে সংসদের অধিবেশনে যোগ দিতে বারণ করেছেন তিনি। লোকসভায় বেশিরভাগ সদস্যই

হবে। রাজসভার চেয়ারম্যান ভৈরৌ সিং শেখাওয়াত আচরণবিধি কমিটির (এথিকস কমিটি) কাছে একমাত্র সাংসদের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগটি আজই পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছেন। উল্লেখ্য, ১১ সাংসদের মধ্যে রাজসভার সদস্য শুধু একজনই।

৫ পাতায় • কোণঠাসা বিজেপি • তদন্ত কমিটি গড়লেন সোমনাথ

“Sonia, Natwar should quit”

Both Houses adjourned after lunch

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Practically no business could be transacted in either House of Parliament on Monday as an unrelenting Opposition disrupted proceedings, demanding the resignation of Congress president Sonia Gandhi as chairperson of the National Advisory Council and Natwar Singh from the Council of Ministers over the Volcker Report issue.

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha witnessed two quick adjournments amid slogan shouting from across the floor before the presiding officers in both Houses decided to call it a day after lunch. Amid noisy protests by the Opposition members who were objecting to the Enforcement Directorate “whisking away” the former Indian Ambassador to Croatia, Aneil Mathrani, from the airport on arrival, Home Minister Shivraj Patil introduced the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005, in the Rajya Sabha.

While no business could be transacted in the Lok Sabha in the pre-lunch session — with Speaker Somnath Chatterjee adjourning the House within minutes of it meeting twice after rejecting an Opposition notice for suspension of the question hour — a few papers listed for the day were laid on the table when it met after lunch. However, with the Opposition moving into the well in protest, Deputy Speaker Charanjit Singh Atwal adjourned the House for the day.

Raising the issue as soon as Rajya Sabha assembled in the morning, Sushma Swaraj (Bharatiya Janata Party) wanted to know about Mr. Mathrani's

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• Demand for information about Mathrani's whereabouts

• Patil introduces Communal Violence Bill in Rajya Sabha

whereabouts. She charged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with being a silent spectator to the Volcker issue.

The Opposition said the Prime Minister had never travelled abroad when the Parliament was in session, except for meetings such as SAARC. Stating that it would not allow the House to function till he returned, the Opposition wanted to know why Mr. Natwar Singh had been stripped of the External Affairs portfolio and removed from the Congress Steering Committee.

Later, briefing mediapersons, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi said that because of the Opposition's insistence on disrupting business, the Lok Sabha could not take up for discussion a calling attention motion on the floods in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Also, discussion and passage of important legislation, including the Disaster Management Bill, 2005, was stalled.

According to Mr. Dasmunsi, the Government had made it clear to the Opposition in the morning that it was prepared to discuss any fresh issue pertaining to the Volcker Report. “We told the Opposition that if the Chair allowed it, we were prepared to respond to any fresh issue under any rule except an adjournment motion because the same issue cannot be discussed under the same rule twice.”

Volcker stalls Houses again

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 5.—An unremitting Opposition, demanding the sacking of an "obdurate" Mr Natwar Singh from the Cabinet over the Volcker report, today forced the adjournment of both the Houses of Parliament that did little business since Friday.

Taking off from where they left on Friday afternoon, slogan-shouting NDA members, led by the BJP, made their defiant mood clear as soon as the Houses assembled for the day. Besides Mr Natwar Singh's resignation, they also demanded the resignation of Mrs Sonia Gandhi as the chairperson of the National Advisory Council that is a Cabinet rank government post. "Ab to yeh *spasht hai*, Sonia Gandhi *bhrasht*

hai (Now it plain that Sonia Gandhi is corrupt)," they said.

BJP leader Mr VK Malhotra said the party had given notice and the leader of the Opposition, Mr LK Advani, should be permitted to speak.

The Speaker ruled that because of the importance of Question Hour, he would allow the issue to be raised only at noon. The Speaker adjourned the House for half-an-hour as there was no sign of any response to his appeal.

He again adjourned the House till 2 p.m. when it reassembled, as there was no let up in the uproar.

Seeing no change in the belligerent mood of the Opposition when it met after lunch, the Speaker adjourned the House for the day. An expressionless Mrs Sonia Gandhi was present during the turmoil.

In the Rajya Sabha, the BJP members did not allow business to be conducted as they sought to know the whereabouts of the Indian Ambassador to Croatia, Mr Aniel Matherani.

When the House assembled for the day, as per prior decision in the Chairman's chamber, BJP leader Mrs Sushma Swaraj took the floor and berated the Treasury Benches for not allowing the leader of the Opposition, Mr Jaswant Singh, to speak on Friday after the Prime Minister's statement.

She wondered how the Prime Minister, during his Moscow visit, said that he did not take the BJP's allegations seriously. "On what grounds was Mr Natwar Singh removed from Congress Working Committee and his portfolio taken away, if the allegations were

baseless," she thundered.

The Chairman, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, tried in vain to allow parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Suresh Pachourie, to speak on the matter.

As BJP members kept up a the din with their slogan-shouting, an angry Chairman questioned the need to hold prior meetings in his chamber if the intention was to disrupt proceedings and not allow the other side to speak. "You are not listening to me. From tomorrow, don't speak to me in my chamber," he stated before adjourning the House till noon.

When the Rajya Sabha reassembled, Deputy Chairman, Mr Rehman Khan, faced a similar situation. "The Chair" then adjourned the House till 2 p.m. and then for the day.

Volcker rocks Parliament again

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 2. — After a brief spell of calm, the explosive Volcker report issue returned with devilish force, acquiring a dramatic twist from fresh allegations made by the Indian envoy in Croatia and forced adjournment of both Houses of Parliament for the day after completion of question hour.

The new twist to the issue came from fresh allegations of corruption against Mr K Natwar Singh, in the Iraqi oil-for-food scandal. Even a statement from Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh that "no one will go unpunished" failed to pacify Opposition members.

The new charges against Natwar Singh, contained in an interview to a TV channel by Indian ambassador to Croatia, Anil Mathrani, led to pandemonium in the Lok Sabha when it met for the day.

After a few minutes, the Speaker ruled that he would allow members to raise the issue after question hour was over. The end of question hour signaled return of trouble and amidst din created by the BJP-led NDA Opposition, the Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, adjourned the House till 12.30 p.m. It was then adjourned to 2 p.m. The Prime Minister made a statement in the House when it resumed its sitting but slogan-shouting by the Opposition forced the Speaker to adjourn the house till 3.30 p.m.

The Speaker then adjourned the House for the day as the noisy protest by the Opposition continued, clearly indicating they were in no mood to let normal proceedings go on. In the process, even the Private Members' Business which was to begin at 3.30 p.m. was given a go-by.

In a change of strategy, the Opposition trained its guns on Ms Sonia Gandhi in the wake of the sen-



WINTER CHILL: The CPI's Mr Gurudas Dasgupta talks to BJP leader Mr Arun Jaitley outside Parliament on Friday. — PTI

sational disclosures by Mathrani. They demanded that the Congress president resign as chairperson of the National Advisory Council, which is a cabinet rank post.

Mr LK Advani, demanded that Mrs Sonia Gandhi should resign from the NAC as it is also a government post. With Mathrani's statements, the references to Congress party were "no longer unverified", he argued.

Mr Advani contended that this was because a member of the delegation led by Mr Natwar Singh to Iraq in 2001 has dismissed as "hog-wash" the claim that Congress and Natwar Singh had no knowledge about the scam. Soon the Opposition MPs stormed the well of the House shouting anti-Sonia slogans. The treasury benches countered with slogans against Mr Advani and Mr George Fernandes. The Speaker then adjourned the House till 3.30 p.m. and for the day when it reassembled only to face more fury of the Opposition.

Left criticises Opposition

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 2. — The Left Parties today hit out at the BJP for disrupting proceedings in Parliament over new revelations in the Iraqi oil-for-food scam. "We are not defending anyone in this case. But Mr Paul Volcker has himself said the materials on which his report was based were unverified. Can we hold anyone guilty at this stage? Let the inquiry (by Mr Justice Pathak) be over," CPI-M leader Mr Nilotpall Basu said.

Mr Basu along with another CPI-M leader, Mr Rupchand Pal, wondered why no FIR had been filed when the "entire nation saw the then BJP president Mr Bangaru Laxman receiving money".

"Let the RS Pathak inquiry and the Enforcement Directorate take note of the fresh claims made in the scam, but the BJP-led Opposition should not be allowed to disrupt parliamentary pro-

ceedings on the issue," Mr Basu said. The Left leaders said the ambassador to Croatia, Mr Anil Mathrani, should testify before the Pathak panel and "it is for the inquiry committee to take cognizance and decide on its authenticity".

Natwar should quit, says CPI

The CPI today did a volte face on the continuance of beleaguered Mr K Natwar Singh in the Union Cabinet saying it would be "better" if he stepped down to take the wind out of Opposition's sails on the Iraqi pay-off scam, adds PTI. Party general-secretary Mr AB Bardhan said: "In view of latest developments, it will be better for Mr Natwar Singh to step down. "It will take the wind out of the sails of the malicious campaign of the BJP who are holding Parliament to ransom and are trying without justification to escalate the issue further..."

DEC 2006

THE STATESMAN

Adjournment motion defeated

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9-Parliament

Allies to Government's defence

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Opposition-sponsored adjournment motion on the allegations in the Volcker Report was defeated in the Lok Sabha on Monday, giving the United Progressive Alliance Government the much-needed political breather.

During the eight-hour debate, the Opposition had neither the votes nor the arguments to carry the day. The debate also saw the allies extending enthusiastic support to the Manmohan Singh Government in a controversy that has brought considerable embarrassment to the Congress. Ahead of the voice vote, the Samajwadi Party and the Telugu Desam Party staged a walkout expressing dissatisfaction over the Government's response.

Advani unpersuasive

Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani opened the debate with a surprisingly unpersuasive performance. The initial reactions of the Congress and the Government did not enhance the reputation of the country, he said and admitted that had Congress president Sonia Gandhi's categorical statement on the issue come earlier, the Opposition may not have raised as many questions.

While repeating the contents of the Volcker report, Mr. Advani said the larger issue of concern was the vulnerability of politics, politicians and political parties in the context of both the report and the Mitrokhin Archives. He suggested the setting up of an expert committee to examine the influence of foreign money and how it could be contained.

In this backdrop, Mr. Advani said he could not understand the Congress party's unwillingness to discuss the Mitrokhin Archives and urged the Speaker to

• **Speaker urged to examine the House of Commons records**

• **Report unverified with no proofs or substantiation, says Chidambaram**

examine the House of Commons records that discussed the issue.

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram's dexterous defence of the Government forced Mr. Advani to concede that he could not match the lawyer's skills. In his 35-minute measured intervention, Mr. Chidambaram reiterated the Government's commitment to punish anyone found guilty and to table the report of the Justice R.S. Pathak Inquiry authority in Parliament along with an action taken report.

Dispelling doubts over appointing an inquiry authority instead of a commission, Mr. Chidambaram said Justice Pathak himself sought full powers under the relevant section of the Commission of Inquiry Act and the Government did not place any restrictions. "Justice Pathak wanted complete flexibility to have own rules and powers... it is a full-fledged commission of inquiry for all purposes," he said adding that if Justice Pathak wanted any other power the Government would give it.

Mr. Chidambaram said the report was unverified with no proofs or substantiation.

Earlier, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee rejected Mr. Advani's request for tabling the documents collected by Mr. Dayal. The issue was also raised by Leader of the Opposition Jaswant Singh in the Rajya Sabha with Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Suresh Pachauri making an observation similar to that of Mr. Mukherjee.

Govt locked in battle with Opposition as Dayal heads home

Housewarming with oil fight

OUR BUREAU

Parliament 7-8 25/11

New Delhi, Nov. 24: The Opposition today ignored the government's offer to discuss the Iraqi oil-for-food controversy and paralysed Parliament, demanding the resignation of Sonia Gandhi and Natwar Singh.

Both Houses were adjourned shortly after the winter session opened, with NDA members stalling proceedings though the Lok Sabha agenda included a discussion on their adjournment motion.

"(The) Government is prepared to discuss the Volcker Committee report today and now," a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office said.

The Opposition wouldn't relent, making it clear that Parliament would not be allowed to function till Sonia stepped down as chairperson of the National Advisory Council and Natwar quit the cabinet.

In the face of the Opposition onslaught, the government decided to react with counter-aggression. It would go for a discussion on the Volcker report in the Lok Sabha, possibly on Monday, through an adjournment motion, subject to it being in tune with rules.

This means the NDA or whoever serves the notice cannot club two or more issues with the main subject because

under the rules an adjournment motion is intended to discuss issues of "immediate public importance".

The NDA had hoped to club Volcker with other issues such as alleged payoffs by foreign agencies like the CIA and the KGB — as revealed in the recently published Mitrokhin papers — to the Congress and the Left.

Accusing the Opposition of running away from the debate, parliamentary affairs minister Priya Ranjan Das Munshi said the government had made the unprecedented gesture of agreeing to hold a discussion under rule 184, which calls for voting.

Das Munshi said the government was even prepared to face an adjournment motion. He cited rule 188 which disallows debate on a subject under inquiry. "Despite the matter being inquired (into) by Justice R.S. Pathak, the government agreed to have a debate," he said.

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee, who looked lost as the two sides went for each other's throat, was keen on the debate starting today itself, but the NDA stalled the House.

An indication of a discussion on the Volcker report came after a meeting of the business advisory committee of the Lok Sabha in which the government expressed its willingness. The Rajya Sabha committee meets tomorrow to

take a decision.

Government sources said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh might intervene in the discussion, if necessary, and finance minister P. Chidambaram could be fielded as the principal speaker.

Natwar Singh, who has resigned as external affairs minister after being named an indirect beneficiary in the Volcker report but continues in the cabinet, should be given a chance to speak, feels a section in the Congress. But, a cabinet minister explained, the government believes: "Ethically, since the matter is before a committee, one should not say anything that will prejudice or influence the committee."

At best, he could make a clarification, if it was sought.

It is believed that at today's BAC meeting, BJP representative V.K. Malhotra was reminded of how the Vajpayee government had refused to even entertain suggestions to discuss the Tehelka disclosures in the House, invoking rule 188.

Malhotra was told that the Tehelka case was grounded in India, while the boundaries of the Volcker report went beyond its borders. Despite the international "ramifications" and rule 188, the government was ready to discuss it. Even an inquiry in the Tehelka case, sources maintained, was instituted, "under great pressure".



Newly elected Congress MP Priya Dutt, daughter of the late Sunil Dutt, at Parliament House on Thursday.

Picture by Rajesh Kumar

Volcker Report rocks Parliament

“Sonia, Natwar should quit”

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Demanding the resignation of Sonia Gandhi as chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance and Natwar Singh from the Union Council of Ministers, the Opposition on Thursday forced the adjournment of both Houses of Parliament over the Volcker Committee Report. Though the issue was listed for discussion in the Lok Sabha, the Opposition said it would not relent until the resignations were tendered.

The issue came up as soon as the proceedings began and saw brief adjournments before the presiding officers decided to call it a day in the face of an unrelenting Opposition, which first wanted the Question Hour suspended.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee allowed Bharatiya Janata Party deputy leader V.K. Malhotra to refer to his notice for suspension of the Question Hour but refused to allow it as the matter was listed for discussion immediately afterwards.

Much of what transpired was lost in the din that followed. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi objected to Mr. Malhotra digressing from his notice as the BJP leader took the names of Ms. Gandhi and Mr. Singh in his intervention. In the notice submitted by Mr. Malhotra and Santosh Gangwar (BJP), no names have been mentioned.

As Opposition members trooped into the well, the Speak-

er adjourned the House for 20 minutes. But within minutes of its meeting again, he called it a day as the Opposition said the “House will not function till they resign” despite Mr. Dasmunsi asking: “Why don’t you want a discussion, we are ready.”

Mr. Chatterjee said: “Since many Opposition members are determined not to let the House run, I am adjourning the House for the day.”

While Ms. Gandhi was present in the House through it all, Mr. Singh — whose continuance as Minister without Portfolio was questioned by the Opposition — did not attend.

In the Rajya Sabha, Leader of the Opposition Jaswant Singh demanded a discussion on the Volcker Report and a CBI probe. Replying, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Suresh Pachauri said the Government was ready for a discussion in whatever form allowed by the Chair but objected to suspension of the Question Hour without notice being given.

Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat said the Opposition had raised several sensitive issues and he would have to examine their admissibility. Not satisfied with his stand, Opposition members stood up and started raising slogans.

The noisy scenes continued for 15 minutes, resulting in an adjournment for 45 minutes.

The situation was no better when the House reassembled with Deputy Chairman K. Rahman Khan in the Chair.

HD-1
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of Parliament

THE HINDU

25 NOV 2005

Volcker heat in winter session

OPPOSITION TO MOVE ADJOURNMENT MOTION IN PARLIAMENT

HT Correspondent

New Delhi, November 23

THE NDA will move an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha on Thursday against the government — on the issue of alleged receipt of money by the Congress from CIA, KGB and from the Iraqi oil deals demanding registration of CBI case — on the basis of the Mitrokhin Papers and the Volcker report.

A meeting of senior NDA leaders presided by former Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee also decided to press for the resignation of Natwar Singh as Union minister and Sonia Gandhi as chairperson of National Advisory Council.

They did not rule out blocking business in both Houses of Parliament if the motion was not accepted, BJP's deputy leader in Lok Sabha Vijay Kumar Malhotra said. "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 said after the 30-minute long meeting.

In the Rajya Sabha, the NDA would move a notice under Rule 167 seeking a debate on the issue. "We are demanding only an open debate and we will press for it till the government accepts our demand."

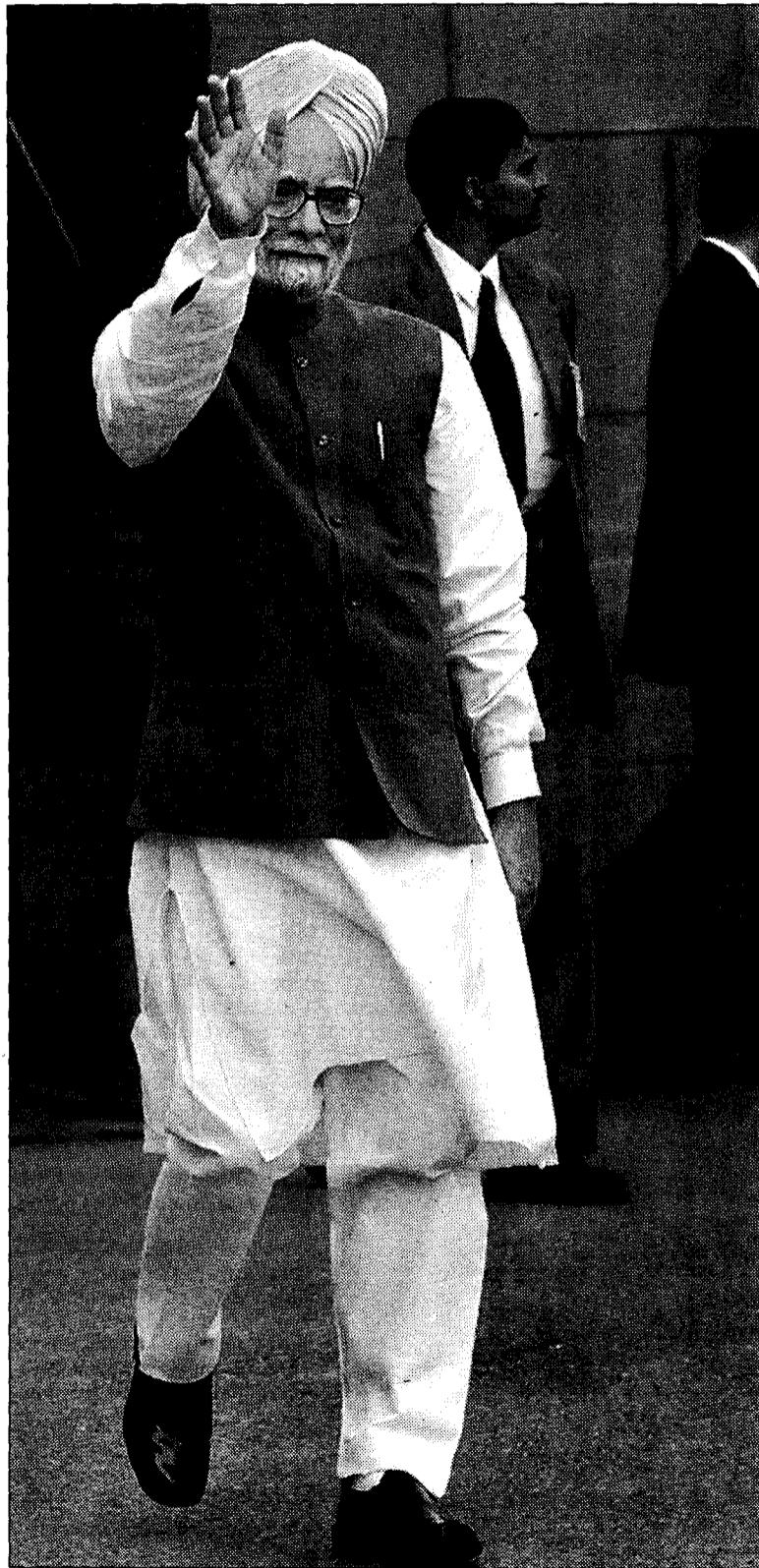
The NDA meeting was attended among others by Leader of Opposition L K Advani, NDA convenor George Fernandes, senior BJP leaders Jaswant Singh and Sushma Swaraj besides leaders of various NDA constituents.

Advani referred to the Mitrokhin Archives and the Volcker Report and asked the members to effectively voice their concern over the influence of foreign interests on political parties.

He also said the "deteriorating" internal security situation, particularly the bomb blasts in Delhi and Srinagar should also be raised in Parliament.

Parliament condoles KRN

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned on the opening day of the winter session on Wednesday after paying tributes to former President K.R. Narayanan. The MPs also condoled the deaths of a sitting member and former members of both the Houses.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his way to Parliament on Wednesday.

PTI

Cong pads up to play on front foot

SAROJ Nagi

New Delhi, November 23

THE CONGRESS and the Left see offence as the best form of defence in the face of the BJP-NDA's proposed adjournment motions for a parliamentary debate on the Mitrokhin papers (which alleged that the Congress and the CPI received KGB money) and the Volcker report (naming Natwar Singh and the Congress in the Iraqi oil deal).

"If a book has to be discussed, then there should be a debate on other books and allegations, including Vishnu Baghwat's (against George Fernandes over Kargil), Balraj Madhok's (against A.B. Vajpayee) and Hersh's (against Morarji Desai) along with others relating to the VHP-RSS' funding..." said a senior minister, warning that the ruling combine too could indulge in mud-raking.

Even as the issue threatened to disrupt Thursday's proceedings, the Congress dismissed as "fictional" the former KGB agent's book and maintained that "fiction" cannot be debated in the House.

Asked about it, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said: "It is a book. Whether we can allow a discussion on it is a point I have to take a decision..." He, however, said he has no objection to a discussion on the Volcker report.

But if the Congress' threat to raise dirt on the Opposition is meant to douse the JD(U)-BJP-NDA's aggressiveness—heightened by its Bihar victory—the Left, too, has turned on the heat on the saffron camp by demanding that the probe into the Volcker report should include the oil deals of the Vajpayee era. If the government is willing to discuss the oil deal controversy "under any rule," there is no indication yet whether Singh would be allowed to make a statement on the subject.

Quizzed on it during an interaction with journalists, the Speaker said he hasn't so far received any request from Singh.

Iran, Volcker & Bihar to rock winter session

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 20 NOVEMBER

THE Volcker committee revelations, IAEA vote on Iran, Supreme Court judgment on Bihar Assembly dissolution and even the outcome of the elections there are likely to be some of the issues which will bring the Manmohan Singh government in the Opposition's line of fire when the winter session of Parliament begins on Wednesday.

By the time the two Houses of Parliament resume their proceedings, the Bihar Assembly poll verdict would have been out. With all exit polls tilting in favour of Nitish Kumar, the Opposition is likely to renew its assault on the government.

The monsoon session, which drew to a close in end-August, had seen the government warding off with relative ease the challenge thrown by a battered Opposition. The BJP was then a completely divided house, led by a president who had lost the confidence of his juniors, and the RSS following skirmish over the Jinnah issue. Unable to put its own house in order, the BJP catapulted meekly before the ruling combine.

But the developments in the interim have the potential of redrawing this equation. Even before the first phase of the staggered Bihar Assembly polls could be held, the Supreme Court delivered a severe blow to the UPA government by terming its decision to recommend the dissolution of the Assembly "unconstitutional."

The order not just came as a huge embarrassment to the Manmohan Singh government, but also handed out another electoral plank to the NDA. The BJP-JD(U) combine saw the apex court verdict as a vindication of its stand that its attempts to form a popular government in the

state had been thwarted by the patently unconstitutional reflexes of governor Bata Singh and the UPA government.

While the impact of the Supreme Court judgment was to be felt the most in Bihar, the bombshell dropped by the Independent Inquiry Committee on the oil-for-food programme (more popularly, the Volcker committee report), gave the Opposition a political mileage.

The revelation that the Congress party and external affairs minister Natwar Singh were among the beneficiaries of Saddam Hussain's largesse, brought cheer to the Opposition camp. Armed with the disclosures, the BJP mounted a

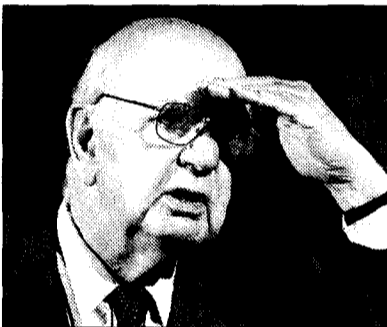
vicious attack on the UPA government and Congress president Sonia Gandhi. The party drew first blood when the government, after an initial phase of reluctance, booted a rebellious Natwar Singh out of the external affairs ministry.

With the Left backing Mr. Singh in his shrill campaign which, at one stage, had threatened to put India on a confrontationist course

with the US, the entire Opposition was all charged up.

If Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav loses Bihar, as all exit polls have predicted, the government's floor managers in Parliament will have a lot to worry about. They would also be wary of the outcome of the IAEA vote on Iran. The Left has threatened that the government would have to pay a heavy price if it goes along with the US and the European nations.

The prospect of a Left-government confrontation on the issue is something being relished by the BJP and its allies. With the government's foreign policy mandarins dropping enough hints to suggest that it would not make an about turn on the issue, the NDA is looking forward to adding its bit to the government's discomfiture.



HOUSES' RIGHT TO FRAME LAWS: SPEAKER

MPs resent CJI remarks

J. Parliament Sr-1
25/8

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 24. — The Supreme Court's stinging outburst against the government drew sharp reactions from members in the Lok Sabha today, with MPs describing the court's remarks as "uncalled for" and "very unfortunate". The Speaker and the government spoke of avoiding a confrontation with the judiciary but asserted Parliament's power to frame laws.

The Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, allowed an impromptu discussion on the Chief Justice's remarks, ticking off the government for critically commenting on the Supreme Court's recent judgment, ruling out government reservation in private, unaided educational institutions.

Taking umbrage at the CJI's remarks, the members said the judiciary should "not cross the *Lakshman rekha*" while holding that they were not for any confrontation between the legislature and the judiciary.

The Speaker was against creating an "avoidable controversy", but made it clear that Parliament was "not giving up its rights to make laws".

Mr Chatterjee said: "A legislative body has its own rights and Parliament, as the supreme legislative body, surely will act according to its rights under the Constitution. Similarly, the courts have their own rights to function in their own sphere without any interference."

The Speaker, however, acknowledged that it was the "undoubted right" of the court to "construe" the laws passed by Parliament.

Mr Chatterjee pointed out that several pieces of legislations passed by Parliament had been declared "ultra vires" by courts. "What is important is that there should be a harmonious relationship between major

Domestic violence Bill

NEW DELHI, Aug. 24. — The Lok Sabha today unanimously passed a landmark Bill to protect



women from all forms of domestic violence and to check the harassment and exploitation by family members or relatives.

Winding up a two-day discussion on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Bill, 2005, minister of state for HRD Ms Kanti Singh said the government would also bring in a piece of legislation to check sexual exploitation of women in the workplace. — SNS

Details on page 5

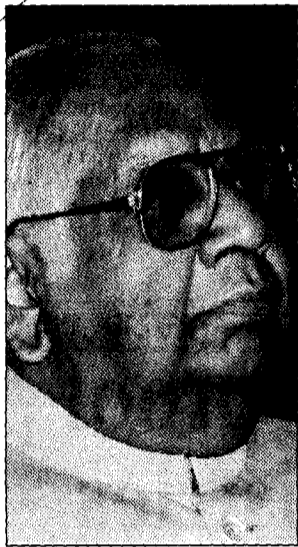
constitutional bodies like the legislature and the judiciary and nothing should be done or said which may create an avoidable controversy."

According to the Speaker, the Supreme Court's observations yesterday were not part of any judgment. "Therefore, we are only requesting ourselves that we should not do or say anything which may be misunderstood. But we are not giving up our right to make laws according to constitutional provisions, which the Supreme Court will have power, no doubt, to construe at the appropriate time."

The leader of the House, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, said: "There has been no confrontation of any kind and there is no occasion to express anguish on account of any legislative action."

Mr Mukherjee said as far as the government's stand was concerned, he would like to make it clear that "the independence of the judiciary is the foundation of our democracy and rule of law". He added: "We also recognise that the legislature has to perform its duties to translate into action the programmes of the government."

25 AUG 2005 THE STATESMAN



Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 24 AUGUST

Mind Your Job, Speaker Tells Judiciary

Parliament
25/8



travagant claims in the name of public interest to justify their angry response, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee asserted that "we are not giving up our rights to make laws." Describing Tuesday's remarks of Chief Justice RC Lahoti on the issue as "very unfortunate", "unprecedented" and "uncalled for", the members contended that while they did not want any confrontation between the legislature and the judiciary, the court should "not cross the *lakshman rekha*."

THE Supreme Court's refusal to have the judiciary attuned to the agenda of the political class on Wednesday drew sharp reaction. Members of Parliament termed the court's outburst on the issue of reservation in private and professional colleges as "very unfortunate."

While the members made ex-

In an obvious reference to Justice Lahoti's critical remarks about "unwanted criticism" the apex court has been subjected to for its ruling on the reservation of seats in private institutions, leader of the House and the

Union defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said: "There has been no confrontation of any kind and there is no occasion to express anguish on account of any legislative action."

The Speaker said: "Legislature has its own rights and Parliament, as the supreme legislative body, surely will act according to its rights under the Constitution. Similarly, the courts have their own rights to function in their own sphere without any interference and nobody can interfere." He said it was the "undoubted right" of the court to construe the laws passed by Parliament. Thus, many laws passed by Parliament are being declared ultra vires and it was binding on everybody.

"What is important is that

there should be a harmonious relationship among major Constitutional organisations like the Legislature and the Court and nothing should be done or said which may create an avoidable controversy," he said. What struck the Speaker was that the observations made by SC were not in any judgement and was expression of certain views with regard to what may have happened inside the House.

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25 AUG 2005 The Economic Times

No conflict with court, say MPs

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25/8

Parliament
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“Parliament is well within its rights to enact legislation”

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday held a discussion on the Supreme Court's observations made on Tuesday, with the Government and members stressing that there was no confrontation between Parliament and the judiciary.

(The court expressed its displeasure over the Centre and others criticising a seven-judge Bench judgment abolishing government quotas and reservation in private, unaided colleges.)

Underlining the need for a law to provide reservation in ensuring social justice, the members said while the courts had the right to interpret the law, Parliament was within its rights to enact legislation. Leaders of political parties across the spectrum took part in the discussion.

“There has been no confrontation of any kind and there is no occasion to express anguish on account of any legislative action,” said Defence Minister and Leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee.

“We are proud that we have an independent judiciary, which has been assigned the task of interpreting the laws and the Constitution. The Government recognises that proper respect is to be shown to judicial pronouncements,” Mr. Mukherjee said.

At the same time, it recognised that the legislature had to perform its duties to translate

government programmes into action; on occasions when the interests of the nation demanded that laws be made to carry forward social and economic programmes, the Government enacted laws keeping in view the judgments of the apex court.

Special procedure

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said he allowed the issue to be raised, and not to comment on the remarks of the Supreme Court, following a request from members. The special procedure was adopted only for the day and the matter should be dealt with caution.

Mr. Chatterjee said the legislature had its own rights and Parliament, as the supreme legislative body, would surely act according to its rights under the Constitution. Similarly, the courts had their own rights to function in their sphere without interference; and nobody could interfere.

Many laws passed by Parliament were declared *ultra vires* and the ruling was binding on everybody. Therefore, he said, it was important to have harmonious relationship between the legislature and the court and nothing should be done or said which could create an avoidable controversy, he said.

More reports on Page 12

25 AUG 2005

THE HINDU

EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEED FOR 100 DAYS

Nod for rural Bill in Lok Sabha

9th Parliament
21/8
SFA

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 23. — Parliament today witnessed one of the most momentous occasions since Independence as the Lok Sabha passed the ambitious, landmark National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill. The bill seeks to give 100 days of employment a year to each rural household in the country. Before the Bill was passed, the House received with thumping of desks, the government's promise for a similar Bill to cover the urban poor. The Bill was passed with 52 official amendments that expanded the scope of the historic rural welfare measure to cover a wider population than was originally intended. It also deleted the word "poor" from the definition of rural households eligible for coverage.

Replying to a marathon, emotion-filled two-day discussion, the rural development minister, Mr Raghu-

vansh Prasad Singh, said the scheme would go a long way in changing the face of rural India that encompasses 80 per cent of the population. He said the measure assured a minimum daily wage of Rs 60 per head and one-third reservation for women. The Bill was moved last Thursday. The UPA chairperson, Ms Sonia Gandhi, in her spirited speech had described the Bill as the cornerstone of the UPA's agenda for social transformation. The House sat close to midnight yesterday to complete the discussion which saw participation by scores of members.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, 2004, was passed by the House by a voice vote after rejecting some Opposition amendments. These were moved by the BJP's Mr VK Malhotra and others, some of whom, however, did not press for their amendments and withdrew them.

Mr Singh also promised that the government would provide an equiv-

alent amount as unemployment allowance if it failed to provide the promised job. "The government will soon take up another bill to remove urban poverty by ensuring employment in urban areas," he said, amidst thumping of desks.

The original provision in the Bill seeking to restrict the benefit to only those under the Below Poverty Line was removed through one of the 16 amendments that the government had moved. These were incorporated in the Bill on the basis of the recommendations of the National Advisory Committee, headed by Ms Sonia Gandhi, a Parliamentary Standing Committee, headed by Kalyan Singh and a Group of Ministers (GoM).

First introduced in Parliament in December 2004, the Bill was referred to a Standing Committee following reservations expressed on certain provisions, mainly the Left Parties. Their main objection was to the provision restricting the purview of the Bill to families under BPL.

24 AUG 2005 THE STATESMAN

Lalu-Buta storm in Parliament

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 23. — The government today rejected in the Rajya Sabha any immediate discussion on the Bihar Governor maintaining it required at least 14 days' notice and a substantive motion after the Lalu Prasad-Buta Singh issue rocked both Houses of Parliament, leading to their adjournment before noon.

The issue led to adjournment of the Lok Sabha till 2 p.m. after a 20-minute wrangle and the Rajya Sabha till noon as a strident Opposition demanded an immediate discussion suspending the Question Hour. Led by BJP and JD-U members, the Opposition referred to media reports quoting the railway minister, Mr Lalu Prasad, as saying: "Mr Buta Singh is my nominee, he is doing a good job and he will not go."

When the Rajya Sabha met after the adjournment, BJP leader, Mr Ravi

Shankar Prasad, said the Governor was appointed by the President and wondered how any cabinet minister could claim that honour. "This was no casual comment by Mr Lalu Prasad. He is exercising the powers of the Prime Minister and the President," Mr Prasad said, sparking shouts of protest from RJD members.

Mr Digvijay Singh of JD-U asked the ruling party to reflect on its minister's actions and whether or not it amounted to an insult to the President. Defending his party leader, RJD member, Mr Ram Deo Bhandari, said the House cannot take cognisance of media reports.

Putting an end to the issue, at least for now, the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, said three issues emerged from the matter - the minister's statement, allegations against the Governor and elections in the state. "We all know how the Governor is appointed. So it is not necessary for us to discuss the matter on

the floor of the House," Mr Patil said. Quoting the Rule Book, he dismissed any discussion on the role of the Governor, pointing out that no matter could be raised "against any person in responsible position unless a substantive motion is moved with a 14-day notice". Elections in Bihar, he assured, would be held "in a proper manner".

Earlier, BJP members, led by Mr SS Ahluwalia, raised slogans such as "Lalu raj, jungle raj" and "Lalu ko barkhast karo" "Buta Singh ko vapas lao". Three questions were taken up in the midst of the dim before Mr Shekhawat adjourned the House till noon.

As the Lok Sabha met for the day, BJP leader Mr VK Malhotra backed by his party colleagues and NDA allies JD-U and Shiv Sena, demanded recall of the Governor alleging that he had "interfered" in the functioning of the railway ministry. Mr Malhotra's remarks that Mr

Lalu Prasad had claimed that Mr Buta Singh was his appointee sparked a furore with RJD members charging the BJP leader with "misleading" the House.

Mr Malhotra said NDA MPs have given notices for Adjournment Motion against Mr Yadav's statement. The Speaker said he would take a decision on the motion in the afternoon but the BJP insisted that the question hour be suspended to discuss the issue. As the BJP-led NDA continued shouting, Mr Somnath Chatterjee remarked that too much was being made of Mr Lalu Prasad's remark. "You know and I know, only the President can appoint a Governor. What Mr Lalu Prasad said is just his bravado."

However, the furore continued before Samajwadi Party MP Mr Ram Gopal Yadav suggested that the house be adjourned till 2 p.m. The Speaker then adjourned the lower house till 2 p.m., saying he had also received the consent of the Opposition leader, Mr LK Advani.

24 AUG 2005

THE STATESMAN

LS discusses domestic violence

Press Trust of India

Session extended

NEW DELHI, Aug. 22. — A landmark Bill that seeks to deter domestic violence in all forms against women by providing for punishment up to one year in jail for culprits, was today introduced in the Lok Sabha.

The protection of women from domestic violence Bill, 2005, introduced by minister of state for HRD, Mr Kanti Singh, defines the expression 'domestic violence' to include actual abuse or threat of abuse that takes into account physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic violence. According to the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill, harassment by way of unlawful

NEW DELHI, Aug. 22. — The ongoing monsoon session of Parliament has been extended till 30 August, according to the secretariats of both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The session, which was scheduled to end on 25 August, will now continue for two more days — 29 and 30 August — to complete the transaction of "heavy parliamentary business". It was also said that faced with criticism from the Left parties and the BJP over "shoddy management of Parliament's business" by the Congress-led UPA government, the Centre decided to extend the session. — SNS

dowry demands would also be covered under this definition.

The measure empowers a magis-

trate to pass protection orders in favour of the aggrieved person to prevent the respondent from aiding or committing an act of domestic violence or any other specified act. Breach of protection order by the respondent shall be an offence, punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or fine which may extend to Rs 20,000 or with both. The magistrate can prevent the respondent from entering a workplace or any other place frequented by the aggrieved person, attempting to communicate with her, isolating any assets used by both the parties and causing violence to the aggrieved person, her relatives or others who provide her assistance from domestic violence.

23 AUG 2005

THE STATESMAN

Parliament voices concern over ^{FRD 12898} death sentence to Indian in Pakistan

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Parliament on Monday voiced concern over the death sentence awarded to an Indian national in Pakistan for his alleged involvement in bomb blasts there, saying it was a case of mistaken identity and New Delhi should urgently take up the matter with Islamabad.

Raising the issue in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, members said that Manjit Singh, the man sentenced to death, was actually Sarabjit Singh from Amritsar. The issue was taken up by Avinash Rai Khanna (BJP) and Ratan Singh Ajnala (Shiromani Akali Dal), who were supported by several members. This prompted Speaker Somnath

Chatterjee to say that the Government should take appropriate action.

In the Rajya Sabha, the issue was raised by BJP member S.S. Ahluwalia, who found support from members cutting across party lines. He said 550 Indians were languishing in Pakistani jails and demanded that efforts be made by the Government to seek their release.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Suresh Pachauri said he would convey the sentiments of the members to External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh. Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat wanted the Government to inform the House about the state of Indians in Pakistani jails.

Consular access sought

B. Muralidhar Reddy reports from Islamabad:

India has asked Pakistan to provide consular access to Sarabjit Singh whose death sentence for spying has been upheld by the Pakistan Supreme Court.

Officials in the Indian High Commission said the request for consular access was also made for 100 other Indian prisoners lodged in different jails of Pakistan. "The request was made before the Pakistan Supreme Court upheld the death sentence. We have not heard anything from the Government so far. There is no truth in reports in a section of the media about India taking up the matter of Sarabjit Singh in recent

days," an official in the mission said.

Mr. Singh, a resident of the border village of Bikhiwind in Punjab, went missing in August 1990. According to his family members, he inadvertently strayed across the border into Pakistan and was taken into custody after being mistaken for an agent of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). He was accused of masterminding bomb blasts in Lahore. A Pakistani court handed Mr. Singh — whom it identified as a RAW agent Manjit Singh — a death sentence, which was upheld by the apex court last week.

Another report on Page 12

2 AUG 2005 THE HINDU

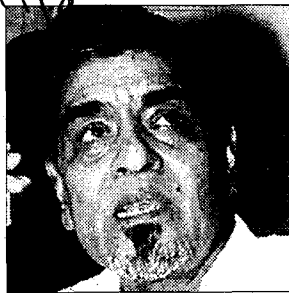
NANAVATI ■ Left, SP MPs protest as Tytler slams riots report

Opp walks out on Tytler

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 18

FORMER union minister Jagdish Tytler's defiant statement in the Lok Sabha today criticising the Nanavati Commission for naming him in connection with the 1984 anti-Sikh carnage not only impelled the Opposition to walk out of the House but also brought forth strong protests from Left and Samajwadi Party members.

Congress MPs, too, looked distinctly uncomfortable as Tytler's speech threatened to undo the damage control that



'My name was dragged in'

had been achieved by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's unconditional apology for the 1984 violence.

As soon as Tytler rose to speak, Akali Dal MPs staged a noisy walkout but the rest of the Opposition stayed behind.

But as Tytler began defending himself—insisting that all previous inquiries had negated the allegations against him—other constituent members of the NDA also walked out.

Undeterred by the protests, Tytler insisted that he had had nothing to do with the 1984 violence and repeated much of what he had said to the media when the Nanavati report was tabled earlier this month.

And then in a direct attack on the Commission, he said, "For reasons best known to the Commission, the Commission found it fit to drag my name, unnecessarily, merely to give credence to baseless

and vile accusations, arranged by my adversaries."

He described the accusations against him as "bizarre" on the grounds that "the blood in my veins is from a Sikh-Kapoor family" and that his brother had married into a Sikh family.

After the Prime Minister told the Lok Sabha that cases would be re-investigated, "my conscience guided me to put in my resignation," he said.

The tone and tenor of his statement—allowed by the Speaker under Rule 199—appeared to irk several members but their comments were struck off the record.

Speaker wants to put an end to debate on libellous article

'I don't give my consent, ...I treat the matter as closed'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 18

LOK SABHA Speaker Somnath Chatterjee on Thursday ruled that the issue of privilege raised by several members against the "grossly libellous" article in a newspaper be treated as closed.

"I don't give my consent as requested by members and I treat this matter as closed, of course with the observation that, in future, reckless and contumacious conduct indulged in by whosoever may be, will be dealt with in an appropriate manner, to preserve and enhance the dignity of the highest public forum in our country", he warned in a four-page statement in the Lok Sabha. The House heard the Speaker in hushed silence.

The privilege notice under Rule 222 against the *Pioneer* newspaper that carried the contentious article in its August 7, 2005, issue had been pressed by Ramji Lal Suman (SP) and supported by several others from the non-BJP parties on August 12 in the Lok Sabha.

Referring to the disapprobation by large sections of the House of the contents of the impugned article, the Speaker said

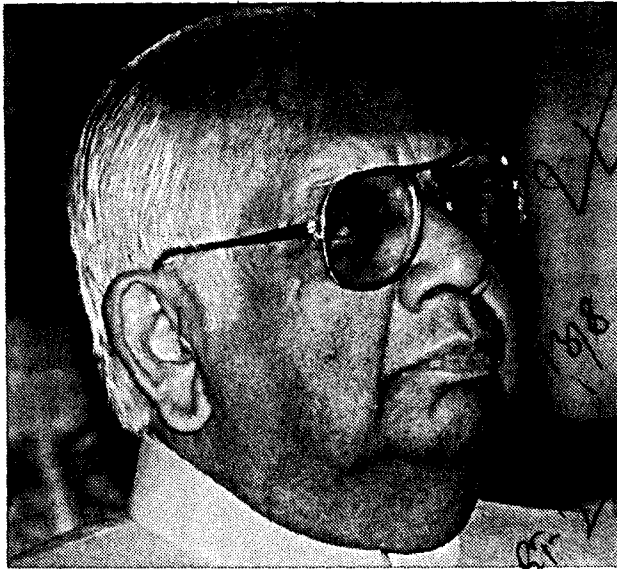
that it clearly indicated that, in their opinion, the publication was grossly contumacious and "a deliberate affront to this Honourable House", whereby gross breach of privilege had been committed. Chatterjee said submission by members had been made with considerable force and justifica-

tion for reference of the matter to the Committee of Privilege. "However, to my mind, in view of the condemnation on the floor of the House and, since it will be beneath the dignity of this great institution to take further note of the motivated imputations in the impugned article, I don't give my consent to the privilege motion as requested", he ruled. Chatterjee observed that the position in law was beyond any doubt and to anyone concerned with the Parliamentary system the impugned article not only reeked of malice, but was also highly contumacious in its conception and in its contents.

"The write-up deliberately accuses the Speaker of partiality and reflects on his actions as Speaker, which amounts to gross breach of privilege of the Speaker and also of the House", he said. Without naming the BJP that had contended that freedom of the Press should not be tampered with and the Speaker was not above criticism, Chatterjee informed the House that he had not claimed any immunity from any bona fide criticism.

He asserted that freedom of the Press also encompassed fundamental duties that called for showing respect to others and responsible behaviour.





Is LS Speaker above scrutiny?

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 12 AUGUST

THE Lok Sabha was adjourned for some 20 minutes this afternoon after the treasury benches and the BJP crossed swords with each other on the issue of slapping privilege notice against a newspaper columnist for casting doubts about the Speaker's impartiality.

The issue generated a lot of heat during Zero Hour, as angry BJP members entered into a verbal duel with the Samajwadi Party MPs, who were backed by the Left, RJD, Congress and the JD(U)'s Prabhunath Singh. At one point, it appeared as if the spat would transform itself into a full-blown confrontation, with the RJD's Ram Kripal Yadav advancing menacingly towards the well of the House, gesticulating wildly at the BJP benches. Sensing trouble looming ahead, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee adjourned the House for some 20 minutes.

The Speaker, who gave his ruling on the subject, met leaders of various parties during the break. He's now scheduled to give another ruling on Tuesday. The NDA has, meanwhile, convened a meeting of its leaders to discuss the issue.

The article 'Speaker asks for trouble', interestingly, appeared in a local daily five days ago. Thus when Samajwadi Party MP Ramjilal Suman chose to talk about it on the floor of the House on Friday, it left many in the Lok Sabha bewildered. "The Speaker's powers have been challenged by the arti-

cle. It levels serious allegations against the Speaker," he said, demanding that the matter be referred to the privileges committee. Having concluded his argument, he egged on his party colleagues as well as the Left members to join in the debate.

The BJP members, led by their deputy leader Vijay Kumar Malhotra, protested. Amid the din, the Speaker handed out his ruling. "I am thankful to you for raising the matter. I have also read the article," Mr Chatterjee said, adding, "I feel that there are some people who pay lip service to parliamentary democracy, but try their best to denigrate this great institution. We need not take notice of all irresponsible and immature utterances made out of frustration and desperation. I treat all motivated insinuations with the contempt they deserve and I close the matter."

His ruling, however, failed to pacify the treasury benches who had by now received support from an unexpected quarter, the JD(U)'s Prabhunath Singh.

Mr Malhotra said: "I'd request you to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the issue. The Speaker has on a few occasions criticised Supreme Court rulings. How is it that we cannot question the Speaker's rulings? In our Constitution, there are provisions which allow us to move a no-confidence motion against the Speaker and seek action against him. Besides, it also entails the question of freedom of press. Don't take us back to the emergency days."

"If the Supreme Court judgements can be criticised, if the President can be criticised, if the Election Commission can be pilloried day in and out by the RJD, why is it that the Speaker's ruling cannot be criticised?" Mr Malhotra wondered before reporters later on Friday.

Citing various instances and statistics, the article in question made a strong case for a sense of fair play in the Speaker's conduct in the House. "Is Comrade Somnath Chatterjee guided by Westminster conventions or the codes of the erstwhile Supreme Soviet? Since assuming office, Chatterjee has not been inclined to 'stand aside' temporarily from politics," the article stated, referring to the Speaker's observations on various subjects, including Supreme Court orders.

"Having journeyed from Indira Gandhi's 'committed' bureaucracy and judiciary to the outrageous realities of 'committed' governors, it may only be evolutionary for India to encounter the delights of a committed Speaker. Certainly, Mr Chatterjee has done nothing to foster the belief that he is economical with his opinions," it further said.

Din In House Over Media Article Criticising Somnath's Observations

AUG 2005 The Economic Times

Parliament ✓ work stalled

1078 HD-1
Opposition seeks action against those named in Nanavati report

New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI: Parliament was adjourned on Tuesday after irate Opposition members stalled proceedings in both Houses demanding an immediate discussion on the Nanavati Commission report and the Government's Action Taken Report (ATR).

The All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Telugu Desam Party and the Samajwadi Party joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Akali Dal in demanding action against those named in the Nanavati report.

The Opposition went on the offensive after the presiding officers, on the occasion of the 63rd anniversary of the Quit India Movement, made a brief reference to "the watershed event in India's struggle for freedom" and the members observed silence.

"Suspend question hour"

The Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day soon after, as Vijay Kumar Malhotra (BJP) sought the suspension of question hour to discuss the Nanavati report. As soon as he mentioned "Nanavati," Congress members were on their feet with some countering the criticism of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 with what happened in Gujarat in 2002.

Though Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said he appreciated the concern of the members and would allow a discussion, his remark failed to end the impasse and the Opposition — led by the Akali Dal members — moved into the well, waving the morning newspapers.

As the Opposition made it clear at a leaders' meeting earlier that it would not relent, the Chair adjourned the House.

Newspapers waved

The Rajya Sabha was adjourned twice after the BJP and Akali Dal members trooped into the well raising slogans and demanding the resignation of the

• **Government must resign: Akali Dal**

• **AIADMK, TDP, SP back BJP demand**

• **Congress role in riots shameful: Sushma Swaraj**

• **Not satisfied with Chair's ruling in Rajya Sabha**

United Progressive Alliance Government. Akali members V.S. Bajwa and Raj Mohinder Singh Majitha waved newspapers, and demanded an immediate discussion on the Nanavati report and criminal action against those named in it.

In the din that followed, Sushma Swaraj (BJP) was heard saying Sikhs were massacred in 1984 and those responsible were in power now.

It was "unfortunate and shameful" that the Congress, which played an important role during the freedom struggle, was responsible for the massacre of more than 3,000 Sikhs during the 1984 riots.

Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat said the House had on Monday decided that the Commission report and the ATR be taken up for discussion any day but if the members so desired, it could be taken up even on Tuesday.

Dissatisfied with this ruling, the BJP members moved into the well, shouting slogans.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Suresh Pachouri and Congress member Anand Sharma tried to counter the Opposition allegations but much of what they said was lost in the din.

As the uproar continued, Mr. Shekhawat adjourned the House within 10 minutes.

More reports on Page 12

10 AUG 2005

THE HINDU

Bigger Parliament push for women

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 5: The United Progressive Alliance today tried to build consensus on a 33 per cent women's quota in the Lok Sabha by suggesting that seats in the House be increased from 545 to 775.

But this plan that aims to please everybody — by getting more women into Parliament while ensuring the men don't lose out — found few takers other than the BJP.

The government had got its arithmetic right. The women's reservation bill sets

aside a third of state and central legislature seats for women. In a 775-seat Lok Sabha, 258 would be thus reserved leaving 517 open for men.

Armed with this argument, home minister Shivraj Patil and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee did the rounds of the major parties this morning, meeting leaders. They presented the new draft proposing a bigger Parliament that will have a quota for women but will not "hurt" the male MPs' interests.

The Left pointed out the flaw in the logic: if the plan

were to be put into effect, it would mean the delimitation (redrawing of constituencies) process — which has progressed a great deal — will have to start all over again.

"Increasing the size of Parliament will lead to a lot of problems. It will derail the ongoing process of delimitation of constituencies," said CPM member Nilotpal Basu.

Congress spokesperson Anand Sharma played it safe. "We have today re-initiated the consultation process (to reach a consensus on the proposal)," he said.

Support came only from

the main Opposition party. "We are ready to give the UPA government a blank cheque on the bill," BJP leader Sushma Swaraj said. "We will support the bill in whatever form it comes."

The Constitution now bars any expansion of the House. Leaders said Parliament needs to pass a Constitution amendment bill to increase the Lok Sabha's size. The new draft rules out dual candidatures and says there can be only one MP for one seat.

Patil and Mukherjee justified the proposal to expand Parliament. The Union home

minister said there has been a "phenomenal" population rise in several constituencies, with the voter strength going up to 20-25 lakh. This, he argued, called for the creation of new constituencies.

Sources say the Centre has been forced to resume its efforts to push through the reservation bill following petitions from women's organisations and pressure from Congress president and ruling alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi. The coalition's common minimum programme, too, is committed to the quota.

Yet there are few supporters of

the bill in the Congress as in many other parties.

The bill is stuck on the issue of creating a quota for backward caste and Muslim women within the 33 per cent quota. A section of the BJP led by Uma Bharti, the Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal have refused to back the legislation unless it creates this sub-quota.

But Basu said: "We want the bill in its original form — the form in which the United Front government had introduced it."

The original bill provided for no sub-quotas.

68 Parliament 5-6

Speaker, Left corner Mamata

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 5. — Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee today described the charges voiced against him by Trinamul Congress chief Miss Mamata Banerjee as “grossly defamatory insinuations”.

She alleged that Mr Chatterjee had not allowed her to raise the issue of illegal migrations by Bangladeshis into West Bengal because of his political affiliation. “I wish to repudiate categorically and with all the authority of the Chair and with all sincerity the reprehensible insinuation that my decision was prompted by political considerations,” Mr Chatterjee said in a statement when the House met for the day.

Miss Banerjee was not present when the Speaker said this.

He regretted that a “somewhat one-sided report has been given in some quarters, raising questions about the impartiality of the Chair in dealing with the issue desired to be raised by an honourable member”. His comments come in the wake of the incident yesterday when Miss Banerjee flung a sheaf of papers at Deputy Speaker Mr Charanjit Singh Atwal and submitted her resignation that was later rejected on the grounds that it had not been given in the proper way.

Mr Chatterjee, however, said he had not asked for any apology from Miss Banerjee for her conduct. “I have not asked for any apology. I have said yesterday it is entirely for her. If she had said something, it would have probably added to her stature,” he told reporters.

The Left parties and the BJP have locked horns over the issue. While CPI MPs gave a notice of privilege motions in the Lok Sabha seeking unqualified apol-

ogy from Miss Banerjee, BJP national spokesman, Mr Prakash Javdekar, who was in Kolkata today, said the Left parties had no moral right to criticise the Trinamul chief.

Raising the issue shortly after question hour, Mr Gurudas Dasgupta of the CPI wanted to know the fate of his motion. The Speaker said this and all other privilege motions were under his consideration. “It’s entirely up to the Speaker to decide whether Miss Banerjee violated parliamentary rules. But the Left parties, who have an inglorious record of violating parliamentary norms, have no moral right to question the propriety of Miss Banerjee’s action,” Mr Javdekar said.

The CPI-M would do well to “deal firmly with infiltrators and their agents instead of attacking the Trinamul Congress chief,” he said. “It’s only natural that Miss Banerjee would be agitated on a very serious issue the BJP has all along been highlighting,” he said.

Trinamul MLAs today marched from the Assembly towards Raj Bhavan and courted arrest to protest against the “curtailment of Miss Banerjee’s right” to raise the issue in the Lok Sabha.

Cong breaks silence

Congress today came out strongly against Miss Banerjee’s conduct, calling her behaviour “most unfortunate and highly regrettable”. Party spokesman Mr Anand Sharma told reporters that such conduct had no place in parliamentary democracy. “All leaders must respect rules and the dignity of the Chair,” he said. Congress MPs had kept quiet yesterday when the Left members had protested Miss Banerjee’s conduct.

Editorial: Quit threats, page 6

06 AUG 2009 THE STATESMAN

Somnath's hint at an apology lost on Mamata

HT Correspondents

New Delhi/Kolkata, August 5

Parliament
HTF

THE LOK Sabha Speaker on Friday dropped a hint on how Mamata Banerjee could have behaved, but the Trinamool Congress chief stuck to her guns.

A day after Mamata threw a tantrum in Parliament, Somnath Chatterjee said she could have enhanced her stature by "saying something". "I have not asked for any apology... It is entirely for her. If she had said something, it would have probably added to her stature."

Proceedings in the House, he said, should be conducted in a manner that "justifies the responsibility imposed on us by the people of this great country".

CPI and CPI(M) leaders moved privilege motions seeking an apology, and even the Congress hit out at Mamata.

But Mamata, who did not attend Parliament, said, "There is no question of apologising since I have already resigned." She also dismissed Somnath's rejection of her resignation letter and said: "Why should I return to a House that doesn't give me an opportunity to voice the problems of my problems? It was a Left conspiracy."

Somnath rejected this charge. Mamata had wanted a discussion on immigration from Bangladesh, he said, but this had been discussed in the House on July 26. Mamata had been absent then.

Mamata plans to meet the President on August 12, raise the infiltration issue and justify her behaviour.

In her support, Trinamool MLAs marched to Raj Bhavan on Friday and courted arrest. If her resignation is accepted, all 54 MLAs too plan to quit. "She has not asked us not to quit. She has told us that she was as frustrated in Parliament as we are in the Assembly," Jyotipriya Mullick said. Rivals, however, said a mass resignation would be of no consequence with the Assembly due for dissolution next year.



“If she had said something, it would have probably added to her stature”

—Somnath Chatterjee



“No question of apologising since I have already resigned”

—Mamata Banerjee

স্পিকার কড়া, নেত্রীও অনমনীয়

ইস্তফা গৃহীত নয়, মমতাকে বলাই হয়নি

কংগ্রেস আর এন ডি এ-র দড়ি টানাটানি

অগ্নি রায় • নয়াদিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৫ অগস্ট: চব্বিশ ঘণ্টা পরেও সংসদে মমতা-কাণ্ডের জের কাটল না। আজ সকালেই এক দীর্ঘ বিবৃতি দিয়ে কড়া ভাষায় এই ঘটনার নিন্দা করেছেন স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়। সি পি আই ও সি পি এমের পক্ষ থেকে একাধিক সাংসদ আজ মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের বিরুদ্ধে অধিকার ভঙ্গের প্রস্তাব এনেছেন। কালই স্পিকার সংসদে ঘোষণা করেছিলেন, মমতার ইস্তফাপত্রটি তিনি স্বীকার করছেন না। কিন্তু সরকারি ভাবে সে কথা এখনও মমতাকে জানানো হয়নি। ফলে মমতার পক্ষে এখন সংসদে ফেরাটাও যথেষ্ট অসম্মানজনক বলে ধারণা তৃণমূল নেতাদের।

২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত সংসদের বাদল অধিবেশন চলবে। তত দিন মমতাকে রাজনৈতিক ভাবে একঘরে করে রাখতে আজ কোমর বেঁধে আসরে নেমেছেন বাম নেতৃত্ব। গতকালের পর আজও বিষয়টির জের তুলে সি পি আই সাংবাদিক সম্মেলন করে মমতার তীব্র নিন্দা করেন। তাঁকে ক্ষমা চাইতেও বলা হয় বাম শিবির থেকে। স্পিকার অবশ্য বলেছেন, “আমি কাউকে ক্ষমা চাইতে বলিনি। তবে তিনি যদি নিজে থেকে কিছু বলতেন, তা হলে তাঁরই মর্যাদা বাড়ত।” তবে মমতা যথারীতি অনমনীয়। তিনি সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, “ক্ষমা চাওয়ার প্রশ্নই ওঠে না। এ সব নিয়ে ভাবছিই না। ওরা যা পারে করে নিক।” সব মিলিয়ে যে জট পাকিয়েছে তা খুলবে কী করে? তৃণমূল শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের বক্তব্য, নিয়মের বাইরে গিয়ে স্পিকারই এই সমস্যার সূত্রপাত করেছেন। তাই এই জট খোলার দায়িত্বও তাঁর।

স্পিকার নিজে অবশ্য আজ রীতিমতো খড়গহস্ত হয়েছেন তাঁর বিবৃতিতে। স্পষ্ট করে বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন, মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় যে দাবি তুলেছিলেন তা অন্যায়। স্পিকারের কথায়, “বাংলাদেশ-সহ বিভিন্ন বিদেশি রাষ্ট্র থেকে অনুপ্রবেশের বিষয়টি নিয়ে একটি মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব ২৬ জুলাই আমি অনুমোদন করেছিলাম। সম্পূর্ণ এবং সর্বস্বীকৃত আলোচনা হয়েছে এই বিষয়ে। সংশ্লিষ্ট সাংসদ ওই আলোচনায় অংশ নেননি। আমি যত দূর জানি উনি সদনে উপস্থিতই ছিলেন না। নিয়ম অনুযায়ী একই বিষয় নিয়ে একই অধিবেশনে দু'বার আলোচনা করা যায় না।”

ডেপুটি স্পিকার যে শুধুমাত্র তাঁর সিদ্ধান্তই নির্ভুল ভাবে মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়কে জানিয়েছিলেন, সে কথাও উল্লেখ করেছেন সোমনাথবাবু। তাঁর পর বলেছেন, “ওই একই প্রস্তাব নিয়ে দ্বিতীয় বার আলোচনা করতে সমস্যা কোথায় তা জানার জন্য কেউ আমার সঙ্গে দেখা করেননি। কাল যা ঘটেছে সেই ব্যবহার করুনওই প্রশ্রয় দেওয়া যায় না।” তাঁর মতে, এই ধরনের অভিযোগের অর্থ (তিনি রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্যপ্রণোদিত ভাবে কাজ করছেন) চেয়ারকে ইচ্ছাকৃত ভাবে অপমান করা। অর্থাৎ গোটা সংসদকেই অপমান করা।

সি পি আই সাংসদ গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত, অজয় চক্রবর্তী এবং সি পি এমের বাসুদেব আচারিয়া আজ মমতার বিরুদ্ধে অধিকারভঙ্গের প্রস্তাব এনেছেন। পরে সাংবাদিক সম্মেলন করে গুরুদাস বলেন, “গতকাল যা হয়েছে তা সংসদীয় গণতন্ত্রের বিরুদ্ধে জঘন্যতম আক্রমণ। আমার দীর্ঘ সাংসদজীবনে আমি এই ধরনের ঘটনা দেখিনি। সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যক্তির উচিত নিঃশর্তে ক্ষমাপ্রার্থনা করা। তাঁর নিজেরই বোঝা উচিত তিনি কী ভুল করেছেন।” এখানেই না থেমে তিনি কংগ্রেসকেও দুষতে ছাড়েননি। বলেছেন, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের রাজনৈতিক বাধ্যবাধকতার কথা মাথায় রেখে কংগ্রেস এই

এর পর আটের পাতায়

৫ অগস্ট: গতকালের সংসদ-কাণ্ডের উচিতা নিয়ে বিতর্ক চলতেই থাকবে। তবে তৃণমূল শিবিরের দাবি, পশ্চিমবঙ্গে ভোটের আগে সি পি এম-বিরোধী বিশ্বাসযোগ্য মুখ হিসাবে নিজেকে প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে গতকালের ঘটনা পুনরুজ্জীবনের সুযোগও দিয়ে গেল মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়কে।

গতকালের কাণ্ড থেকে রাজনৈতিক ফসল তুলতে মমতা আগামী সপ্তাহ থেকেই কোমর বেঁধে নামছেন। আপাতত তিনি বলছেন, “বাম-বিরোধী সর্বস্তরের মানুষ একজোট হয়ে তৃণমূলের পাশে দাঁড়ান। কমিশন অবাধ ভোটের ব্যবস্থা করুন। কংগ্রেস সি পি এম জোষণ বন্ধ করুন।”

বিধানসভা ভোটের বেশি দিন বাকি নেই। সাংসদ হিসাবে ইস্তফা স্পিকার গ্রহণ না করলেও মমতার দাবি, তিনি আর সেখানে ফিরতে চান না। বরঞ্চ চান এই ইস্তফাকেই (সি পি এম আশায় কথা বলতে দেয় না) অস্ত্র করে বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়তে। দলীয় সূত্রের খবর, এ বার বিধানসভা নির্বাচনে লড়তে পারেন মমতা। ভোটের আগে আর মাত্র দু'টি অধিবেশন (ছ' সাত মাসে) হওয়ার কথা। তাই সেখানে আর নিজেকে না জড়িয়ে বিধানসভার জন্য ক্ষেত্র প্রস্তুত করাটাই রাজনৈতিক ভাবে প্রেয় মনে করছেন তিনি।

মমতা নিজেও আজ জানান, সংসদে ফিরবেন না। বরঞ্চ এই ঘটনার পর আরও জোরদার হবে তাঁর বাংলার ‘গণতন্ত্র বাঁচাও’ আন্দোলন। সোমবার থেকে শুরু হবে তাঁর লড়াই। প্রথমে যাবেন রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে। তারপর নির্বাচন কমিশন ও ডিলিমিটেশন কমিশনে। সর্বত্রই বিষয় পশ্চিমবঙ্গ। মমতা আজ বলেন, “কী ভাবে প্রতিবাদ করা হয়েছে তার পদ্ধতি নিয়ে শোরগোল তুলে আসল বিষয় থেকে চোখ ঘুরিয়ে দেওয়া হচ্ছে। আসল বিষয় হল পশ্চিমবঙ্গে অনুপ্রবেশ এবং ভুতুড়ে ভোটের।”

কাল লোকসভার মধ্যে কান্নায় ভেঙে পড়েছিলেন। কিন্তু আজ, ঘটনার চব্বিশ ঘণ্টা পরে যথেষ্টই চাঙ্গা শোনাচ্ছিল বহু দিন পর প্রচারের আলোয় ফিরে আসা মমতাকে।

আর তার মধ্যেই তৃণমূলনেত্রীকে ঘিরে রাজনৈতিক দড়িটানাটানিও শুরু হয়েছে। সনিয়া একান্ত ভাবেই চান মমতা ‘ঘরে ফিরুন।’ মমতা যদি ফেরেন তা হলে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে বামবিরোধী ভোটকে সুসংহত করা যাবে। মমতাকে পাশে পেলে জাতীয় স্তরের রাজনীতিতে বামদের সঙ্গে দরকষাকষির ক্ষেত্রেও সুবিধা হবে বলেই মনে করেন সনিয়া। রাজ্যের দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত কংগ্রেস নেত্রী অম্বিকা সোনিও কংগ্রেসে ফেরার আহ্বান জানিয়ে রেখেছেন তৃণমূলনেত্রীকে।

অন্য দিকে, এন ডি এ তথা বি জে পি-ও কোনও মূল্যেই হারাতে চায় না তাঁকে। গতকালের ঘটনার পর বি জে পি সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী পশ্চিমবঙ্গের ভারপ্রাপ্ত নেতা রাজনাথ সিংহকে বলেছেন মমতার সঙ্গে বসে কথা বলতে। রাজনাথ সিংহ আজ উত্তরপ্রদেশ থেকে দিল্লি পৌঁছেছেন। রাজ্য ইউনিটকেও বলা হয়েছে মমতার সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ রেখে চলতে। পশ্চিমবঙ্গে এন ডি এ-র রাজনৈতিক ভবিষ্যত মমতা চলে গেলে যে আরও অন্ধকার, সে কথা ভাল করেই জানেন জর্জ-আডবানীরা। তাই কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে তিনি যাতে না যান তা নিশ্চিত করতে সক্রিয় হয়েছেন তাঁরাও। কংগ্রেস মমতার ব্যাপারে উৎসাহী হয়ে উঠেছে এই খবর দিল্লিতে পৌঁছাতেই সম্প্রতি রাজনাথ কলকাতা গিয়ে বৈঠক করে এসেছিলেন মমতার সঙ্গে। এই ঘটনার পর সেই সম্পর্ককে ধরে রাখতে মরিয়া চেষ্টা করবেন এন ডি এ শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব।

মমতাকে বলাই হয়নি

প্রথম পাতার পর

বিষয়টি নিয়ে যথেষ্ট নরম অনোভাব নিয়েছে। সরকারের প্রতি তাঁর আবেদন, “বাংলার রাজনীতি যেন সংসদীয় প্রক্রিয়াকে প্রভাবিত না করে।” এই অভিযোগ অবশ্য সম্পূর্ণ উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন সরকারের অন্যতম শীর্ষ কর্তা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। তাঁর বক্তব্য, “এর মধ্যে বাংলা, বিহার, ওড়িশা আসছে কোথা থেকে। সংসদীয় প্রথা হল এই সব ক্ষেত্রে হয় সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রী অথবা সদনের নেতা বিবৃতি দেবেন। সেই প্রথা মেনেই সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রী বিবৃতি দিয়েছেন। তার আগে বিষয়টি নিয়ে স্পিকারের ঘরে একমত তৈরি হয়। সমস্ত দলই সেখানে উপস্থিত ছিল।”



06 AUG 2015 ৭৯

No compromises on energy security: PM

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 AUGUST

UNDER fire from the Opposition for agreeing to separate the country's civilian and defence nuclear installations under the recently inked Indo-US pact, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today clarified that all safeguards had been provided to protect the country's strategic interest while taking "calculated risks" for the sake of energy security.

Replying to the issues raised during a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on the statement made by him on his recent US visit, Mr Singh maintained that the country's nuclear autonomy had in no way been compromised and that

"our strategic assets programme will remain exclusively in our own hands. What we have done during our visit is if there are risks, it is our calculated risks. They are worth taking to achieve 8% economic growth and develop infrastructure to prevent what we saw in Mumbai during the recent downpour from happening in other cities," he told the Rajya Sabha.

The prime minister, specifically replying to the allegations of BJP leader Sushma Swaraj that India had committed "a blunder" and effected a surrender to the US by agreeing to separate its defence nuclear facilities from civilian ones, clarified that separation of the nuclear establishment would be solely be India's prerog-



ative. "We would decide what would be civilian and what would be military...no one outside will tell us that," he insisted.

But at the same time, Mr Singh said, if what US President George Bush has assured and if implemented by the Congress, India

would have a full equal status with regard to international trade in civilian nuclear facility.

"If that comes about, it will open up to new possibilities for development of India's nuclear energy system," he said adding the country might have 30,000 to 40,000 MWs of nuclear capacity for the next 20 to 30 years to bring about a new burst of creativity and a second industrial revolution based on high technology. Mr Singh denied the Opposition charge that it was not consulted on the pact saying he had two separate meetings with BJP leaders and those from Left parties before and after the visit.

During the debate, however, he faced flak from the Opposition parties as well as Left allies who

accused him of "only getting a promissory note from the US in return for virtually agreeing to do everything that is prescribed under the Nuclear non-proliferation treaty even though India was not a signatory."

Claiming what had been mentioned in PM's statement did not fully reflect facts, Ms Swaraj of the BJP quoted US assistant secretary of state Nicholas Burns as saying that India has virtually conceded to everything that signatories to NPT have agreed to.

India agreed to a seven-point formula on nuclear cooperation, she said adding in return, it got from the US only a promise to consider amendment to its laws to lift restrictions on civilian nuclear cooperation with India.

Mamata casts shame at House

Paper throw at Speaker

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 4: Mamata Banerjee threw a sheaf of papers at the Speaker's chair today, taking street-level protest into Parliament and drawing condemnation from fellow MPs on the other side who sought her apology.

She had once earlier chucked her shawl at then Speaker Purno Sangma and it wasn't quite clear if today's was the worse offence.

Not quite comparable, but

House? Ha, ha

Mamata: Throws papers, 'resigns'

Somnath: Throws tantrum, threatens to quit

Shivraj: Absent, earns Speaker wrath

Natwar: Late in RS, where no minister was present

Last word: This House is becoming a laughing stock — Somnath

earlier in the day the Speaker himself, Somnath Chatterjee, threatened to quit over the behaviour of an MP of his own party from Bengal.

But it's not Bengali tantrums alone that added a blot or two to parliamentary records. Home minister Shivraj Patil was absent from the Lok Sabha when he was expected to respond to a motion. His colleague in external affairs, Natwar Singh, committed the sa-

me offence in the other House, forcing adjournments to cries of "shame, shame".

After hurling papers at the presiding officer — deputy Speaker Charanjit Singh Atwal was in the chair — Mamata later sent her resignation through an officer of the House. It was later turned down by Chatterjee.

Mamata's target was not Atwal but Chatterjee, her rival in Bengal politics. Atwal only informed her that the Speaker had disallowed her notice to raise the subject of illegal Bangladeshi migration.

"Illegal migrants from Bangladesh are also part of the voters' list in West Bengal. The state government has done nothing about it. Therefore, the issue must be discussed," she had said.

Atwal said the subject had already been debated for four hours on the opening day of the session.

"Whenever I want to raise an issue, I am not allowed to speak. As a member of this House, I also have the right to raise issues of concern to my people," she said, attributing motives to the Speaker.

She said the Speaker was politically biased, but the comment was expunged.

What could not be expunged, because it was entirely visual, was the paper attack on Atwal. The sight would remain in collective memory, much like the incident where a Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) member snatched the wom-

en's reservation bill draft from the then minister of state for law, Thambidurai, when he stood up to present it in 1998.

Railway minister then, Mamata had spoken out strongly against the hooliganism.

After the paper-throwing incident, she stormed back towards her seat and appeared to be sobbing when Samajwadi member Jayaprada rushed to her as the rest of the House

watched in shocked silence.

She then sent across her resignation to the deputy Speaker and walked out. "There is no point in my being a member if I am not allowed to raise people's issues," Mamata said once outside.

The Speaker, who rushed to the House after it adjourned twice over the incident, announced that the resignation was not in "proper order".

First, it was addressed to the deputy Speaker and not the Speaker. Second, the resignation was "conditional", officials said. Mamata said in the letter that if she was not allowed to speak, she would quit.

Pressure mounted from parties — the Left was joined by the Samajwadis, BSP and RJD — for an apology. The Speaker said he wanted Mamata to come back and act ac-

ording to her conscience.

He stopped short of initiating action. While it is true that her allies in the BJP-led combine tried to shield her, surprisingly, the Congress appeared to be going soft.

"If the chair is not protected, it is a sad day for parliamentary democracy," Chatterjee said, alluding to the Congress's attitude.

■ See Page 8



Apex court upholds Gilani's acquittal

Death for Afzal upheld, 10 years' RI for Shaukat Guru

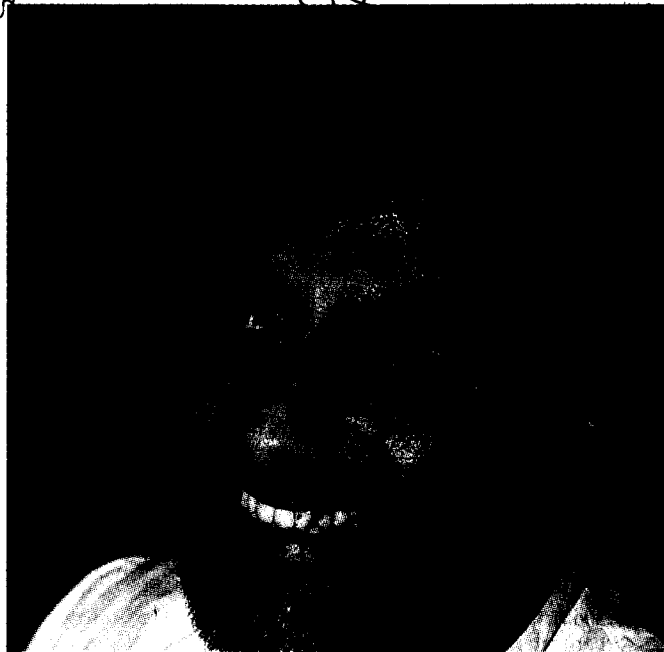
J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the Delhi High Court judgment acquitting S.A.R. Gilani, college lecturer in the Delhi University, one of the four accused in the Parliament attack case, while confirming the death sentence awarded to the key accused, Mohd. Afzal.

The apex court modified the death penalty imposed on another accused, Shaukat Hussain Guru, into one of 10-years' rigorous imprisonment. Besides Gilani, the apex court acquitted Navjot Sandhu alias Afsan Guru, wife of Shaukat Hussain.

Giving Gilani the benefit of doubt, a Bench of Justice P. Venkatarama Reddi and Justice P.P. Naolekar observed that his conduct at the time of attack on Parliament was disturbing to note and created a serious suspicion about his role as he reportedly approved the terrorist act. Further, the Bench referred to Mr. Gilani's untruthful pleas about his contacts with Afzal and Shaukat and said it pointed the needle of suspicion at him. However, holding that "suspicion alone is not sufficient to convict a person," the Bench acquitted him. Five Pakistani militants — Mohammed, Haider, Hamza, Rana and Raja — had attacked Parliament on December 13, 2001 and were killed by security personnel. In the encounter, nine security personnel were also killed and 16 others were injured.

The apex court Bench, in its 271-page judgment, described the attack as a grave crime of enormous severity and said it was a classic case of "rarest of rare cases." The Bench said, "The collective conscience of the society will be satisfied only if



THE SMILE IS BACK: Syed Abdul Rahman Geelani addresses a press conference after his acquittal in the Parliament attack case by the Supreme Court, in New Delhi on Thursday. — PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

death penalty is awarded to Mohd. Afzal." The Judges said there was clinching evidence against Afzal regarding his nexus with the slain terrorists who carried out the December 13 attack.

The trial court on December 18, 2002, had awarded death penalty to Afzal, Shaukat, and Mr. Gilani while sentencing Ms. Afsan Guru to five years' imprisonment. On appeal, the Delhi High Court on October 29, 2003, had upheld the death penalty to Afzal and Shaukat under Sections 302 (murder), 121 (waging war against the nation) of the Indian Penal Code and Sections 3 (2) and 4 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act but had acquitted

both Mr. Gilani and Ms. Afsan Guru. While Afzal and Shaukat filed appeals in the apex court against the death sentence, the Delhi Police appealed against the acquittal of Mr. Gilani and Ms. Afsan Guru. Disposing of all the appeals, the apex court Bench upheld the death sentence on Afzal saying there was not even a shred of doubt about his complicity in the hatching of the criminal plot to commit the attack on Parliament and evidence showed that he actively participated in its execution.

Gilani's stand: Page 12

5 AUG 2005

THE HINDU



HIGH DRAMA: A television image of Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee throwing papers at Deputy Speaker Charanjit Singh Atwal in the Lok Sabha on Thursday after she was not allowed to speak on illegal migration of Bangladeshis into West Bengal. - PHOTO: PTI

578 HD-1 9 Parliament-

Mamata flings papers, resigns

"I was not allowed to speak"; Speaker rejects her resignation as MP

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Thursday caused a sensation in the Lok Sabha by flinging papers at the Speaker's podium and announcing her resignation from the House as she was "being denied to speak."

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee rejected her resignation after the House witnessed two adjournments over the issue that flared up into a verbal duel between members of the Left-United Progressive Alliance and the Bharatiya Janata Party-led opposition.

Ms. Banerjee's action came up at a time when the House was taking matters of public importance with Deputy Speaker Charanjit Singh Atwal in the chair. The Trinamool leader sought to know the fate of her notice for an adjournment motion on Bangladeshi migration

into West Bengal and continued to speak even after Mr. Atwal informed her that it was rejected by the Speaker.

With some Left party members joining issue Ms. Banerjee suddenly moved into the well of the House and was seen flinging a sheaf of papers on to the podium leading to a brief adjournment.

(Several Left-UPA members issued a statement separately condemning Ms. Banerjee's behaviour and demanded an unqualified apology from her before allowing her to take part in the proceedings of the House. "Ms. Mamata Banerjee has dishonoured the chair, insulted the Deputy Speaker by throwing a bunch of papers coming near to the podium. She has even uttered derogatory statements about the Speaker accusing him of politically discriminating her," they said.)

When the House re-assem-

bled, opposition members rallied around Ms. Banerjee with the Leader of the Opposition, L. K. Advani, suggesting the issue be sorted out in the Speaker's chamber. Members of the Left, Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal insisted that she apologise for "insulting the chair."

Mr. Atwal sought to carry on the business stating the notice was rejected since the House had taken up an adjournment motion last week on the issue moved by Mr. Advani. Scenes of sharp exchanges forced Mr. Atwal to adjourn proceedings again.

When the House reconvened, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad condemned Ms. Banerjee's action. Urging party leaders to ensure that their members maintained decorum he sought all round cooperation to carry on with House business but the Left members continued

to demand an apology from Ms Banerjee.

As the Left and BJP members refused to relent, Mr. Chatterjee came in. Refuting the aspersions cast by her on the Chair, Mr Chatterjee's response to the demand for an apology from her was that "it is for the member to decide" adding it would only add to her stature if she did so. About her resignation letter, he informed the House that it was not being treated as one.

In her resignation letter — first addressed to the Speaker [the word Deputy was included later] — Ms. Banerjee said she was resigning from the House because she was not allowed to speak and her democratic right was being denied.

The resignation letter, sources said, was found faulty on technical grounds as it was addressed to the Deputy Speaker and it was not "unconditional."

0 A THE HINDU

Approval for President's rule in Bihar

Lok Sabha rejects Opposition motion

K.V. Prasad

9. Parliament

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Tuesday rejected the Opposition-sponsored motion expressing serious concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Bihar under President's rule and simultaneously extended Central rule in the State by six months by voice vote.

The motion, moved by Janata Dal (United) leader, Nitish Kumar, was defeated with 172 votes against it and 100 in favour. This was the first division on any motion discussed by the 14th Lok Sabha constituted last year.

The statutory resolution moved by Home Minister Shivraj Patil, seeking the Lok Sabha's approval for continuation of the March 7 proclamation of President's rule in Bihar beyond September 6, received parliamentary assent. The Rajya Sabha passed it on Monday.

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee put Mr. Kumar's motion to vote, abruptly terminating Mr. Patil's intervention, after a procedural wrangle. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led Opposition insisted that the Home Minister table a communication complaining of "horse-trading" in Bihar. Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani advised Mr. Patil to place the letter on the table. But Mr. Patil said he could not do so without proper verification. This led to noisy protests. Mr. Advani said the Home Minister should not have indicated to an unverified communication.

The Speaker had earlier ruled there was no need to table the communication Mr. Patil waved in the House as part of a bunch of papers he had with him. Mr. Patil said the complaint was to Governor Buta Singh and he would have to check with him.

With the Opposition benches unrelenting, Mr. Advani echoed the Chair's suggestion that the motion under Rule 184 be put to vote without further discussion. The debate lasted over six-and-half hours. The mover of the motion did not get to reply.

In his intervention, the Home Minister defended the Governor's recommendation to dissolve the Assembly. "Do not doubt the intention of the Government of India or the Governor," he said.

The Governor "waited, and waited and waited but nothing happened" for parties to come together and form a government. It was only when there were reports that some individuals were being weaned away "by allurements" and break free from parties on whose tickets they won, the Governor arrived at the conclusion that the situation was going in the wrong direction. He wrote two letters to the Centre, which preferred to wait after the first communication. On President's rule, he said that since the Election Commission ruled out holding elections between June and September, the Government had to come to Parliament seeking its extension.

3 AUG 2005 THE

Opp walks out on Bihar rule

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

AMIDST a walkout by the Opposition, Parliament tonight approved extension of President's rule in Bihar by another six months beyond September 7.

The passage of the statutory resolution in the Lok Sabha, moved by Home Minister Shivraj Patil, capped a tumultuous seven-hour exchange between the Opposition and treasury benches. Leader of Opposition L K Advani said the step would "add to the long list" of instances of Central rule being wrongly imposed in states.

"We will not be party to this voting at all," Advani said in the House before leading a walkout by the opposition NDA.

The Lok Sabha also rejected a motion moved by JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar—by 172 to 100 votes—which expressed deep concern over the de-

teriorating law and order situation in the state and the developments arising out of Chief Secretary G S Kang proceeding on leave.

Replying to a marathon debate, Patil strongly defended the Governor's recommendation for dissolution of the Assembly,

"We will not be party to this voting at all," Advani said in the House before leading a walkout by the NDA

saying that he was left with no option as no party or group was in a position to form a stable government.

Patil, whose reply was repeatedly interrupted by angry Opposition MPs, said the Governor had taken the decision to prevent horse-trading as he was convinced on the basis of

numbers that a popular government could not be put in place.

Claiming that the law and order situation in the state had "deteriorated", NDA MPs said that imposition of President's rule, without allowing any party to prove its majority, amounted to "murder of democracy."

On the IPS transfers, they said that the conduct of Governor Buta Singh will "prove to be the final nail in the UPA coffin."

Referring to the row between the Governor and State Chief Secretary over the transfers, they said that it was an embarrassing incident and asked the Home Minister Shivraj Patil to clarify the situation. They also demanded an explanation from the Centre as to why President's rule was imposed, under Article 356, in the first place.

The Rajya Sabha had approved extension of President's rule in Bihar yesterday.

PM clears nuclear doubts in House... And on home turf

K. SUBRAHMANYA

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 29: The Prime Minister today allayed fears of a "sellout" to the US, telling Parliament that India will keep its side of the bargain only if the Americans keep theirs.

Mannohan Singh's statement in both Houses of Parliament sought to counter the criticism from the Left and the Opposition and reassure his own party.

If the BJP felt the US was "far from recognising India as a legitimate and responsible nuclear weapons state" despite the agreement signed in Washington, the Left was worried by what it saw as a "pro-US" shift in India's foreign policy. The CPM and CPI also wondered if India was jettisoning its nuclear disarmament policy.

"Our commitment to work for universal disarmament, so passionately espoused by Rajiv Gandhi, in the long run will remain our core concern," Singh said.

India as a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology. The pact was based on the "principle of non-discrimination", allowing India the same benefits as other nuclear powers, including the US, and imposing the same responsibilities and obligations.

"Our commitments would be conditional upon, and reciprocal to, the US fulfilling its side of this understanding," Singh stressed.

Nor will India brook any discrimination while voluntarily placing its civilian facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, he said. Delhi will ensure that all restrictions on it are lifted and no attempt is made to curb its "autonomy of decision-making".

The joint statement imposes no limits on the country's strategic nuclear weapons programme; India's control over it would continue to be "unrestricted, complete and autonomous".

A discussion on the statement will take place in both Houses on August 3.

New Delhi, July 29: After clarifications to the Left and the Opposition, the Prime Minister today had to meet senior leaders of his own party to explain the nuclear pact with the US.

The doubts in the minds of many Congress leaders about the July 16 joint statement prompted party chief Sonia Gandhi to call a working committee meeting at her residence, attended by Mannohan Singh.

"It was important to hold the meeting as we are concerned about perceptions about the Indo-US joint statement," a Congress leader said.

Party general secretary Ambika Soni told reporters some party leaders had suggested such a meeting but did not name them. It is widely believed that Arjun Singh had cast doubts on the nuclear cooperation agreement.

The human resource development minister, whose interaction with the Prime Minister is said to have been minimal in recent weeks, did not attend the meeting, though.

Soni put this down to "ill-health". But he had been to Parliament in the morning and, according to an aide, was in his office till 4 pm — around the time the meeting began.

Singh, however, received full support from Sonia on the nuclear deal. She opened the meeting with praise for the "successful" US visit. He faced three specific questions — on his controversial remark about the Indo-Iranian gas pipeline, on India's bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council and on how friendly countries like Russia and China might view the Indo-US joint statement.

Singh said his remark on the pipeline was made at a news conference. There was no US pressure — "the matter was not discussed with the US leadership at any level". As for Russia and China, "they have welcomed the joint statement".

Foreign minister K. Natwar Singh said efforts for a Security Council seat will continue whatever the US feels about it.



Singh with Congress chief Sonia Gandhi at the CWC meeting. Picture by Rajesh Kumar

He packaged this assurance with a reference to the freedom struggle in an attempt to blunt criticism that his Oxford speech had romanticised colonial rule.

"All of us... recognise that inspired by our freedom struggle, we have inherited a proud and patriotic tradition.... Our belief gives us conviction to assert today that our nation stands on the threshold of an even better future," Singh declared.

The joint Indo-US statement, he argued, recognised

RS passes Dual Citizenship Bill

NEW DELHI, July 29. — The Rajya Sabha today passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2005, providing for dual citizenship to persons of Indian origin (PIO) residing overseas. Replying to yesterday's debate in the House, the minister of state for home, Mr Shriprakash Jaiswal, said the Bill did not give these citizens voting rights or political rights like contesting elections.

Mr Jaiswal said the Bill sought to expand the scope for grant of overseas citizenship of India (OCI)

to PIOs of all countries except in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

"People migrated to these countries of their own volition post partition. But Indians living in other countries had gone there seeking livelihood and were also responsible for repatriating a substantial amount of foreign exchange," he elaborated.

The minister clarified that the only condition imposed in the Bill was that the facility could be availed by only those overseas Indians who had simi-

lar provision of dual citizenship in the country they were citizens of. So far 71 countries have confirmed having such a clause.

The OCI would be different from the NRIs holding Indian citizenship while residing in other countries. But they would be allowed to invest and stay in the country as long as they wanted. He also allayed apprehensions of some members that secessionists elements might take advantage of the new legislation and indulge in terrorist activities. — SNS

30 JUL 2005

THE STATESMAN

Dual citizenship Bill passed in Rajya Sabha

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 29

THE RAJYA Sabha on Friday unanimously passed with a voice vote the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2005 providing dual citizenship to Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs).

Minister of state for home Sriprakash Jaiswal said the only condition for grant of dual citizenship to OCIs is that it must be allowed by the country of which they are citizens. He said laws in 71 countries allowed dual citizenship and more countries are likely to follow suit. Jaiswal said Pakistan and Bangladesh have been left out of this because the Indians who migrated there after Partition did so voluntarily and there was

Hope for NRIs

NRIS HOLDING Indian passports may be able to vote in elections in the country.

Intervening in a discussion on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the Rajya Sabha on Friday, Overseas Indians minister Jagdish Tytler said: "The government is seriously considering a proposal in this regard made by political leaders from Kerala." He said the government was considering allowing NRIs holding Indian passports, if present in the country at the time of elections, to vote, subject to clearance by the Election Commission.

HTC

expressed the view that Indians abroad could play an important role in contributing to the development of the country and therefore, deserved to have the right to vote.

Among those in favour of granting NRIs voting rights were the Congress' Narayan Samy, P.J. Kurien and M.S. Gill, RSP's N.K. Premchandran and Fali S. Nariman (nominated). Narayan Samy had said NRIs who wanted to invest in India had great hopes of this Bill, and that granting them the right to franchise would lead to increased investments.

But even as some members had appealed for voting rights, there had been a word of caution from others as they had told the government that steps must be taken to ensure that overseas Indians engaged in anti-India activities don't take advantage of the law.

no justification in granting them dual citizenship. However, the minister said, Indians who are citizens of other countries are "emotionally attached" to India and want to return to the country and invest here.

Jaiswal said that there would be checks before dual citizenship was granted so that people did not take advantage of the provisions. He said dual citizenship would be granted only after screening and verification by the ministry of home affairs.

Jaiswal made it clear that Indian citizens with dual citizenship would not have any constitutional right or the right to vote or contest elections to the Parliament. The dual citizenship facility is mainly for hassle-free and frequent entry into the country, he added.

During the introduction of the Bill in the House on Thursday, several members from different parties had said that the grant of dual citizenship should come with the right to franchise. They had expressed

Haryana echo in Parliament

Opposition, Left parties stage walkout; Hooda announces judicial probe

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Amid a walkout by the Opposition and the Left parties, the Government told Parliament on Tuesday that the Haryana Government had agreed to a judicial inquiry into the lathi-charge on agitating workers in Gurgaon on Monday.

The "police brutality" dominated the proceedings in both Houses during the pre-lunch session. It ended with a walkout led by the Left parties demanding a statement from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Dr. Singh summoned Home Minister Shivraj Patil during the lunch recess after which Mr. Patil returned to the Lok Sabha to make the statement on judicial probe.

Earlier, in both Houses, Mr. Patil said he did not want to take sides as there was a "contradiction" in the versions given by the State Government and three MPs who had visited the spot.

Members joined issue with Mr. Patil when he said that the report sent to the Centre by the State Government said 92 workers were injured. The probe would verify this. The workers took out a procession through an area where prohibitory orders were in force and the police lathi-charged them as they felt the situation was getting out of control. Over 30 policemen, including an officer, were injured. A government jeep and two motorcycles were burnt. "I have been told repeatedly that no one was killed," he said.

Mr. Patil said "we will do whatever possible according to the law. There will be no obstacle in doing that. We are also feeling sad."

The members wanted to know whether the police were on the payroll of multinational companies or the Government; would those maimed for life be ade-

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27 JUL 2005

THE HINDU

LS rejects NDA motion on illegal migrants

New Delhi
26 JULY

AN Opposition-sponsored adjournment motion to censure the government for its failure to check infiltration from Bangladesh in eastern parts was rejected in the Lok Sabha Tuesday night as the Centre announced several steps including completing border fencing by next year to stop illegal migration. The motion, moved by Leader of the Opposition LK Advani, was defeated by a voice vote. This is the first adjournment motion taken up in the 14th Lok Sabha since the Congress-led UPA came to power 14 months back.

Intervening in the debate, home minister Shivraj Patil said as part of intensified efforts to check illegal migration, fencing of India's long porous border with Bangladesh will be completed by next year, border security beefed up and multi-purpose identity cards issued to people living in border areas. He said the government was also in the process of

floating border outposts in riverine areas. It was considering a proposal of having a battalion of Border Security Force now at every 70 km radius to be posted 30 km to enhance border vigil.

Hitting out at the Opposition for unnecessarily seeking to spread a fear psychosis, he warned that adopting divisive tendencies in the name of religion or language cannot help keep the country united. The desire to use this issue for vote bank politics was harmful, he contended.



Replying to the debate, Mr Advani sought to clear the air on his remarks on MA Jinnah in Pakistan, which had triggered a fierce controversy with the sangh parivar taking strong exception to his alluding to Jinnah as secular and asked him to step down as party chief for 'ideological erosion'. Mr Advani clarified that he had recalled MA Jinnah's speech to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly only to remind the people of that country that their founder wanted to establish a secular state.

—PTI

2-7 JUL 2005 The Economic Times

গুড়গাঁও-কাণ্ডের জেরে সংসদে বিপাকে কংগ্রেস

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৬ জুলাই: গুড়গাঁওয়ে শ্রমিকদের উপরে পুলিশের লাঠি চালনার জেরে সংসদে কার্যত একঘরে হয়ে পড়ল কংগ্রেস।

লোকসভায় আজ গুড়গাঁও-কাণ্ড নিয়ে আলোচনার মাঝেই প্রায় একযোগে কক্ষ ছেড়ে বেরিয়ে গেলেন বাম এবং বিজেপি-র সাংসদেরা। এই দুই প্রবল প্রতিপক্ষের এক সঙ্গে সংসদ ত্যাগ করার ঘটনা ইউপিএ জমানায় এই প্রথম। গুড়গাঁও-কাণ্ডে দু'তরফই চরম ক্ষুব্ধ সরকারের উপরে। লাঠি চালনার ঘটনটিকে কোনও কোনও কংগ্রেস সদস্য লঘু করে দেখানোর চেষ্টা করা মাত্রই বাম-বিজেপি সদস্যদের এক যোগে প্রতিবাদ করতেও দেখা গিয়েছে। তাঁদের গলা মিলিয়ে বলতে শোনা যায়, “কংগ্রেস সদস্যেরা মিথ্যা কথা বলছেন।”

এক কথায়, বাদল অধিবেশনে সাধারণ ভাবে বামেরা যে কৌশল অবলম্বন করতে চেয়েছিল, গুড়গাঁও তা খানিকটা ভেঙে দিল। সরকারের বিরোধিতা চালিয়ে গেলেও বিজেপি-কে সুযোগ বা সঙ্গ দেবেন না তাঁরা, এমন পরিকল্পনাই ছিল বামদের। সরকারের উপর থেকে সমর্থন তুলে নেওয়ার কোনও পরিকল্পনা বামদের না-থাকলেও এই ঘটনার আকস্মিকতায় আজকের দিনটিকে বাম-বিজেপি মিলেমিশে যেতে বাধ্যই হল। ফলে কংগ্রেসকেও পিছু হঠতে হয়েছে।

প্রথমে হরিয়ানা সরকার ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটকে দিয়ে তদন্ত করাবে বললেও পরে ইউপিএ চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গাধীর হস্তক্ষেপে বিচারবিভাগীয় তদন্তের সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়া। পঞ্জাব ও হরিয়ানা হাইকোর্টের প্রাক্তন বিচারপতি জি সি গর্গের নেতৃত্বে বিচারবিভাগীয় তদন্ত হবে। হরিয়ানার মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ভূপিন্দর সিংহ ছড়াকে দিল্লিতে ডেকে এনে সিদ্ধান্ত বদলাতে বাধ্য করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ও সরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল।

প্রশাসনিক ও রাজনৈতিক টানা পোড়েনের পাশাপাশি হুন্ডা মোটরসাইকেল অ্যান্ড স্কুটার ইন্ডিয়া লিমিটেড আজ কারখানায় উৎপাদন পুরোপুরি বন্ধ রেখেছিল। সংস্থার এক কর্তার কথায়, “নিরাপত্তাজনিত কারণেই আমরা উৎপাদন পুরোপুরি বন্ধ রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছি। তবে এটা নেহাতই সতর্কতামূলক ব্যবস্থা। কাল থেকে উৎপাদন শুরু হবে।” বাইরের কিছু লোক শ্রমিকদের বিভ্রান্ত করেছিল বলে মন্তব্য করে কর্মীদের কাজে ফেরার আহ্বানও জানিয়েছে সংস্থাটি। তবে তদন্তে নির্দোষ প্রমাণিত না-হওয়া পর্যন্ত সাসপেন্ড শ্রমিকদের যে ফেরানো হবে না, তা-ও জানিয়েছেন কর্তৃপক্ষ।

জাপানের সংস্থার কর্তা বিষয়টিকে দু-এক দিনের মামলা বললেও ভারতে জাপানি রাষ্ট্রদূত ওয়াই ইনোকি অবশ্য আশঙ্কা প্রকাশ করেছেন যে, এই ঘটনা ভারতে বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের পক্ষে অশনি সংকেত হতে পারে। দিল্লিতে ইনোকি বলেছেন, “প্রত্যক্ষ বিদেশি বিনিয়োগের গন্তব্য হিসাবে ভারতের ভাবমূর্তির ক্ষেত্রে এই ঘটনা স্বস্তিদায়ক নয়। বিষয়টির মীমাংসা অবশ্য করতে হবে হুন্ডা কর্তৃপক্ষকেই। এই ব্যাপারে জাপানের দূতাবাসের হস্তক্ষেপ করার কোনও প্রস্তাব নেই।” এর সঙ্গে জাপানের রাষ্ট্রদূতের এই মন্তব্যও বিশেষ প্রণিধানযোগ্য

“শিল্পবাণিজ্য সংস্থার পরিচালনার ক্ষেত্রে জাপানের নিজস্ব ধরনের উপরেও নেতিবাচক প্রভাব ফেলছে এই ঘটনা।” অন্য দিকে ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রক আশ্বাস দিয়েছে, বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীদের আইনি স্বার্থের দিকে নজর রাখা হবে।

গুড়গাঁওয়ে আজও সারাদিন পুলিশের সঙ্গে জনতার খণ্ডখণ্ড চলেছে। দিল্লিতে হরিয়ানা ভবনে ছড়ার বিক্ষোভ বিক্ষোভ দেখিয়েছে সিপিআই-সহ বিভিন্ন বাম দল। বিক্ষোভকারীদের হঠাতে পুলিশ জলকামান ব্যবহার করেছে।

অধিবেশনের শুরুতেই আজ লোকসভায় শোরগোল পড়ে যায় গুড়গাঁও-কাণ্ড নিয়ে। এক দিকে বিজেপি-বামের ক্ষোভ, অন্য দিকে কংগ্রেসেরও ভূমিকা ছিল আক্রমণাত্মক। এ সবে মধোই স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় জানান, ঘটনাটি একটি রাজ্যের বিষয় হলেও পরিস্থিতির গুরুত্ব বিবেচনা করে তিনি তা নিয়ে আলোচনার সুযোগ দিতে চান। তবে অহেতুক অশান্তি, হাঙ্গামা যেন না-হয়।

লোকসভায় বিজেপি-র সহ-দলনেতা বিজয় মলহোত্র বলতে শুরু করা মাত্রই শোরগোল ওঠে ট্রেজারি বেঞ্চে। মলহোত্র বারংবার আনছিলেন জালিওয়ানালাবাগের তুলনা। বিরোধী শিবির থেকে এমন মন্তব্যও ভেসে আসে, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী তো বিলেতে গিয়ে ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যের ‘ভাল’ দিকগুলির প্রশংসা করে এসেছেন।” তাতে আরও চটে যান কংগ্রেস সাংসদেরা। তখন বিজেপি নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী সোমনাথবাবুকে বলেন, “যদি বলতেই না দেওয়া হয়, তবে আর লাভ কী?” দলীয় সাংসদদের নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে লোকসভায় কংগ্রেস নেতা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়কে অনুরোধ করেন স্পিকার। প্রণববাবুও সংযত হতে বলেন নিজের দলের সাংসদদের।

সব চেয়ে বেশি আক্রমণাত্মক ছিলেন সিপিআই সাংসদ গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত। তাঁর হাতে তখন পুলিশের লাঠিতে আহত শ্রমিকদের রক্তমাখা জামা। গুরুদাসবাবু বলেন, “সোমবার আমার জীবনের সব চেয়ে দুঃখজনক দিন। আমি যা দেখেছি, তাতে স্তম্ভিত হয়ে গিয়েছি। আহতদের নিয়ে যখন হাসপাতালে যাচ্ছিলাম, সেই সময় পুলিশ গাড়ি খামিয়ে লাঠি নিয়ে তেড়ে আসে। আমি সাংসদ হিসাবে পরিচয় দিলাম, আমার পরিচয়পত্র দেখলাম। তাতেও পুলিশ গাড়ির উপরে লাঠি চালালো। হাসপাতালের চিকিৎসকেরা অবশ্য আহতদের যথেষ্ট দেখভাল করেছেন।”

জেডি (ইউ)-এর নীতীশ কুমার জালিওয়ানালাবাগের প্রসঙ্গটি ফের তোলে। তিনি বলেন, “আমাদের প্রধানমন্ত্রী উপনিবেশিক ব্রিটিশ সরকারের প্রশংসা করে এসেছেন।” রাষ্ট্রীয় জনতা দলের দেবেন্দ্রপ্রসাদ যাদবের ক্ষোভ, “জানোয়ারের সঙ্গে মানুষ এমন ব্যবহার করে না, যে ভাবে পুলিশ পিটিয়েছে।” কংগ্রেস সাংসদ শ্রীপ্রকাশ জাওয়ালের মন্তব্যে অবশ্য আগুনে ঘুতাহতি পড়ে। তিনি বলেন, “আরএসএস লোকজন নিয়ে এসে গুণ্ডাগোলা পাকিয়েছে গুড়গাঁওয়ে।” উত্তাল হয়ে ওঠে বিজেপি শিবির। গুরুদাসবাবু দাঁড়িয়ে উঠে বলেন, “আপনি মিথ্যা কথা বলছেন।”

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

উত্তাল গুড়গাঁও

প্রথম পাতার পর হেফাজতে যে শ্রমিকের মৃত্যু হয়েছে বলে অভিযোগ, তিনি থানায় পৌঁছানোর আগেই মারা গিয়েছিলেন। ঘটনাস্থলে এসেছিলেন সিপিএমের পলিটবুরো সদস্য বৃন্দা কারাট ও রাজ্যসভার সদস্য নীলোৎপল বসু। বৃন্দা বলেন, যে পুলিশ শ্রমিকদের উপরে বর্বর অত্যাচার করেছে, তারা কাউকে খুঁজে বার করতে উদ্যোগী হবে, এটা ভাবাই উচিত নয়। মানবাধিকার কমিশনের তরফে সিবিআই তদন্ত দাবি করা হয়েছে। তবে এখনই গুড়গাঁওতে তাঁরা পর্যবেক্ষক দল পাঠাচ্ছেন না বলে জানান চেয়ারম্যান এ এস আনন্দ। এরই মধ্যে প্রশাসন জানিয়েছে, কালকের গোলমালে বহিরাগত ৪৪ জন ছিল বলে তারা চিহ্নিত করতে পেরেছে। তবে তদন্ত কী হবে, তা নিয়ে মাথা ঘামানোর অবস্থায় নেই লীলাধর বা রাজু। হাসপাতালের বিছানায় হাত-পা-মাথায় একাধিক চোট নিয়ে শুয়ে থাকা এই শ্রমিকদের একটাই চিন্তা, বিপুল চিকিৎসার খরচ কোথা থেকে আসবে। সেই সঙ্গে ‘নিখোঁজ’ সহকর্মীদের চিন্তাও ঘুরছে। আহত এক শ্রমিকের

অভিযোগ, কাল আন্দোলনকারীদের অনেককে কান ধরে পুলিশভাণ্ডে তোলা হয়। যাঁরা তখনও চলাফেরা করতে পারছিলেন, তাঁদের আরও মারধর করা হয়। আহত ও নিখোঁজ শ্রমিকদের মধ্যে স্থানীয় লোক ছাড়াও বিহার ও মহারাষ্ট্রের প্রচুর অধিবাসী রয়েছেন। তাঁদের অনেকের পরিবারের অভিযোগ, কাল মাঝরাতে বাড়ি থেকে শ্রমিকদের তুলে নিয়ে গিয়েছে পুলিশ। পুলিশের ভয়ে কেউ কেউ বাড়ি ছেড়ে পালিয়েছেন বলেও শোনা যাচ্ছে। মোড়ে মোড়ে জটলায় আলোচনা, নিখোঁজ শ্রমিকেরা কোথায় গেলেন? স্থানীয় প্রশাসনের ভূমিকা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন উঠছে। অভিযোগ, এক তরফা জিতে কংগ্রেস ক্ষমতায় আসার পরে এই ধরনের প্রশাসনিক গুণ্ডাতার ঘটনা বারবারই ঘটেছে। রাজনীতিতেও জলঘোলা হচ্ছে। ছড়া মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হওয়ায় কুমারী শৈলজা বা ভজনলালের মতো যে কংগ্রেস নেতারা বিরোধিতা করেছিলেন, তাঁরা এই মওকায় ‘মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হটাণ্ড’ আন্দোলন করছেন। হরিয়ানা সরকার অবশ্য জানিয়েছে, হুন্ডা মালিক-শ্রমিক আপস করিয়ে দিতে তারা উৎসাহী। —পি টি আই

Manmohan, Speaker regret boycott of Parliament 110-1

Special Correspondent 19/5

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Lok Sabha Speaker on Friday regretted the absence of the Opposition from Parliament during the latter half of the budget session. They hoped the Opposition parties would attend the monsoon session.

In his valedictory address to the Lok Sabha, Dr. Singh reiterated his Government's offer to discuss and debate all issues of concern and emphasised that both the Government and Opposition had a role to play in ensuring checks and balances. He said it would be a sad day if people were to lose faith in the institution of Parliament.

Mr. Chatterjee said he had made repeated requests to the

Opposition members to participate in the proceedings of the House and reiterated his assurance that he was prepared to allow any discussion permissible under the rules. "But they have chosen to continue with the boycott. Nevertheless, I am happy that the Opposition did constructively participate in the discussion on the Finance Bill," He noted with satisfaction the Telugu Desam Party's participation in the parliamentary proceedings.

The Speaker also referred to the "disturbing trend of absenteeism" that led to adjournment of the House on several occasions for want of quorum.

Later, at a press conference, Mr. Chatterjee said the Opposition had stayed away from the daily meetings called by the

Speaker. The Opposition could disagree with the Government but to extend it to meetings called by the Speaker was unfortunate. The meeting would have facilitated interaction within leaders on either side.

He said the budget session had 38 sittings spread over 212 hours during which 26 Bills were introduced and 26 Bills were passed. Considering the manner in which the Employment Guarantee Bill was held up in the standing committee since its Chairman, (Kalyan Singh of the Bharatiya Janata Party) cancelled a meeting due to the boycott, Mr. Chatterjee said he was contemplating setting a three month stipulation to send back the Bill to House, as was the case when it was referred to joint select committee.

Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha adjourned sine die 111

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned sine die on Friday after a nearly three-month-long budget session. The proceedings in both the Houses took place in the absence of an Opposition for three weeks, as the National Democratic Alliance continued with its boycott of Parliament.

In his valedictory address, Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Bhairon Singh Shekhawat regretted that the House missed the participation by the Opposition members. "In the absence of participation by the Opposition,

the conduct of business in the House lacks the flavour that comes only with active and vibrant participation by members belonging to all political groups and parties," he said.

Mr. Shekhawat reminded the members that they were responsible for the fulfilment of the aspirations and expectations of the people and to promote their welfare through constructive and purposeful discussion and debates on all relevant issues.

'Serious interpretation'

"We, therefore, need to do serious introspection as to how we together should ensure effective

functioning of the House with full and complete participation by all sections. I urge you all to address these issues with a sense of urgency, seriousness and shared concern," Mr. Shekhawat said.

He expressed the hope that when the House meets in the Monsoon session, "all of us will be working together with a sense of shared responsibility and joint commitment to strengthen our parliamentary democracy."

During the session, Rajya Sabha considered and passed or returned as many as 26 Bills, including the Right to Information Bill.

12 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

CM

Parliament ruckus over Mayawati's CBI grilling

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 12

ANGRY BSP members disrupted proceedings in both Houses of Parliament on Thursday over their party president Mayawati's interrogation by the CBI in connection with the Disproportionate Assets case.

Minutes after the Lok Sabha assembled on Thursday morning, the BSP members were on their feet to raise slogans against the CBI. The agitated members even stormed the well of the House despite Speaker Somnath Chatterjee's warnings. The Speaker even threatened to name them.

When the BSP members refused to relent, Speaker adjourned the House for 10 minutes.

In the Rajya Sabha, a combative Mayawati herself raised the issue saying that the CBI, which questioned her in the DA case must do the same with presidents of other parties.

"If the CBI is working at the behest of the government in her case, then her party will be compelled to withdraw its support to the UPA", Mayawati said in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Minister of state for personnel and parliamentary affairs, Suresh Pachauri, assured the House that the government had no hand in the investigations.

When the minister remarked that investigations were being conducted as per the directives of the apex court, a visibly angry Mayawati charged him with misleading the House. She also contested Pachauri's statement that the Supreme Court had ordered the probe into her property. She went to the extent of offering to quit politics, if the case against her was proved.

Even as charges interrupted the proceedings for around 20 minutes, chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat brought the curtains down over the controversy by observing that the issue was sub-judice. He remarked that no discussion on the issue can be permitted since it impacted the independence of judiciary.



Why have they filed two FIRs against me? Just because I am a Dalit?... Dalits are very angry ... law and order in the country might deteriorate. The matter is very serious

Lok Sabha passes WMD Bill

Statesman News Service

Prithvi testfired

NEW DELHI, May 12. — India is and will remain a responsible nuclear power, the external affairs minister, Mr K Natwar Singh, asserted in the Lok Sabha as it passed the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Bill today. The Bill provides an integrated legislative basis to the country's commitment to prevent proliferation of WMD.

Without directly mentioning disgraced scientist Dr AQ Khan, Mr Singh took a dig at Pakistan by

BALASORE, May 12. — *Prithvi*, the indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile, was successfully testfired from LC-III of the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur at 1.04 p.m. today. — SNS

assuring that "India will not be a source of proliferation of sensitive technologies and ensure that these do not fall into wrong hands, especially terrorists".

The Bill also seeks to build upon the regulatory framework related to control of the export of WMD-usable materials, equipment and

technologies.

Mr Singh said India was "fully committed" to safeguarding its security as a nuclear weapons state and to deepen its autonomous, scientific and technical capability for meeting its security imperatives as well as its development goals.

Explaining India's "impeccable record" in this regard, the minister said it would continue to work to prevent proliferation of WMD.

The foreign minister added that it was "essential" to adopt the new legislation to prohibit unlawful activities in relation to WMD and their means of delivery.

13 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Parliament approves Information Bill

It is a pace-setting measure, says Manmohan Singh

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Right to Information Bill received parliamentary approval on Thursday with the Rajya Sabha passing it by voice vote, a day after the Lok Sabha passed the legislation.

Moving the Bill, Minister of State for Personnel Suresh Pachauri said the "historic legislation" would radically alter the administrative ethos and usher in a new era of openness, transparency and accountability.

Opposition benches remained vacant as the National Democratic Alliance is continuing its boycott of Parliament.

Public empowerment

Intervening in the debate, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the Bill was a "pace-setting measure" and the intention was to enlarge interface between citizens and the Government and further empower the public. "People should be able to judge for themselves if governments are functioning in accordance with [the] public interest. All information can be misused also. A lot will depend on how information seekers approach it but the danger of its misuse is not that much. Access to information is not a monopoly of a few."

Dr. Singh assured the House that the Bill had adequate safeguards to prevent misuse and the penalties had given it teeth. "I think the Bill strikes a right balance. It is the not the inten-

Historic legislation that will radically alter the administrative ethos, says Pachauri.

tion to paralyse the public administration."

The Bill would see the "dawn of a new era", eliminate corruption and strengthen democracy.

Agreeing with P.C. Alexander (Independent), Dr. Singh said the next three-four years would be crucial for the operation of the Act. Security and intelligence agencies were not covered under the Bill, except in cases of allegations of human rights violations and corruption.

'Better than U.S. law'

Lauding the effort in bringing the Bill, Ram Jethmalani (Independent) said it was an improvement over the American law, which had 13 exceptions against seven in the Indian law. It would drive home the message among civil servants that they should treat the public as their masters.

He wanted an informal consultation held with the Leader of the Opposition when public information officers were appointed at the Centre and in States.

Winding up the debate, Mr. Pachauri allayed apprehensions that the bureaucracy would not be forthright in taking decisions because of the "stringent" penal provisions in the Bill.

The Minister disagreed with

the contention of Bimal Jalan (nominated) that the Official Secrets Act (OSA) would have to be scrapped.

The Bill clearly defined the areas where information would be given to citizens. It had a provision to deal with situations where it came into conflict with the OSA.

Selection panel

Mr. Pachauri defended the dropping of the Chief Justice of India from the selection committee of public information officers on the ground that the judiciary was never involved in the selection of persons for executive functions.

This was the case with the Election Commission, the Central Vigilance Commission, the Comptroller and Auditor-General and the National Human Rights Commission.

The legislation differed from the one passed by the NDA Government. "The main change is in the nomenclature itself. Besides, the previous law did not have penal provisions."

Penalty

Responding to C. Ramachandraiah's (Telugu Desam Party) remark that the penalty for withholding information was inadequate, Mr. Pachauri said this was in line with what was specified in a similar Maharashtra law.

The other seven States and Union Territory which enacted similar laws had lower penalties

13 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

10/5 Chapra rocks Parliament... 10-5

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 9. — Pandemonium prevailed in both Houses of Parliament today as RJD members sought to raise the issue of the countermanding of the Chapra Lok Sabha election as well as allegations that an Election Commissioner had made casteist remarks against a community.

Though the Chair in both Houses disallowed the issue raised during Zero Hour, an unrelenting RJD vociferously demand-

ed an immediate debate, leading to an abrupt adjournment of the Lok Sabha shortly before lunch.

Former poll observer and a senior IAS officer, Mr LV Saptarishi, had levelled allegations against two ECs. He charged them with wrongly countermanding the May 2004 Lok Sabha polls in Chapra from where railway minister Mr Lalu Prasad had contested, as also casting aspersions on his community.

In the Lower House, RJD members, supported by their Congress col-

leagues, waved a piece of letter purportedly written by Mr Saptarishi to law minister Mr HR Bhardwaj and sought to know what action was being taken by the government.

In the Rajya Sabha, RJD leader Mr Ram Deo Bhandari said he had given a notice on the matter and sought an immediate debate. He was joined by his party colleagues. Congress MPs maintained their silence.

Both Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, and Rajya Sabha

Nod for CrPC Bill

NEW DELHI, May 9. — Parliament today approved the amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure when the Lok Sabha passed the Code of CrPC (Amendment) Bill, 1994 by voice vote. The Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha last week. Participating in a lively discussion, members called for humane treatment of women in police custody and demanded stringent punishment to culprits in cases of rape in custody and custodial deaths. They also demanded that women should not be arrested during night, while a few others suggested that they (women) should not be arrested from dusk to dawn. Home minister Mr Shivraj Patil said many suggestions were valid and that these would form part of police reforms. — SNS

Chairman, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, refused to allow the issue, stating that anything involving the constitutional bodies such as the EC could not be discussed without proper notice.

10 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

9/5 'House without Opp is home sans mother-in-law'

Parliament may have completed its main business of the Budget session — the passage of the Finance Bill, giving effect to all the proposals in the General Budget 2005-06. It may have passed the Railway Budget and introduced and adopted quite a few other Bills and discussed some issues of public importance. Yet, what seems to stay in public memory as the session enters its final week is the pandemonium over a few divisive issues and the continuing boycott by the NDA Opposition.

Controversial issues seem to pop up in a "never-ending and still-beginning" fashion to paralyse proceedings. After Goa and Bihar, in the first phase of the session in February-March, Kargil and Lalu overrode all else and became tools in the hands of both the Opposition and the Treasury Benches to hold Parliament, alternately, to virtual ransom.

As it enters the last week of the session, Parliament is faced with an unseemly verbal duel that embarrassingly suggests that either the government or the Opposition is not speaking the truth. Of course, "lie" is not parliamentary.

The issue in question is the charge of the NDA that the UPA government had tried to prevent President Pervez Musharraf's meeting with former Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee during his

recent visit to India. Of course, this was said outside Parliament. But this has upset the Prime Minister so much as to bring it to the notice of Parliament last week. Dr Manmohan Singh took serious exception to the "type of language" used against him in the NDA memorandum submitted to the President. He told the Rajya Sabha: "For example, in that memorandum, our government has been accused of prevailing upon President Musharraf not to see Mr Vajpayee. This is the length to which the Opposition goes. I think the country should know that between the two — what they say and what they do — there is a world of difference."

week in PARLIAMENT

For the record, Parliament passed the Finance Bill, completing the Budget exercise after Mr P Chidambaram announced more sops to senior citizens and women. A memorable feature of the discussion in the House was Congress MP and noted economist Mr Jairam Ramesh closely questioning his former boss on Savings Bank withdrawal cess.

Now that the Speaker, the Prime Minister and the defence minister have all appealed afresh to the NDA to return, we can only wait to see what happens next. As a wag in the Press Gallery quipped: "House sans Opposition is like home minus the mother-in-law."

— RC Rajamani in New Delhi

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09 MAY 2005

07 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Part 5-1

NDA to boycott entire session

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 6. — The BJP-led NDA today intensified its verbal duel with the government, accusing Dr Manmohan Singh of "adding insult to injury" by his remarks in the Rajya Sabha yesterday and decided to boycott the entire session of Parliament, scheduled to end on 13 May.

The leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and senior BJP leader, Mr Jaswant Singh, said the NDA seriously objected to the "tone, tenor and content" of

what the Prime Minister had said.

Mrs Sushma Swaraj, a senior BJP member of the Upper House, said the Prime Minister's statement showed that the government wanted the Opposition marginalised. She described the Prime Minister's remarks as being "short on truth".

Dr Singh, in his Rajya Sabha remarks, took exception to the "type of language" used against him in the NDA memorandum submitted to the President. "For example, in that memorandum, our government has been accused of prevailing upon President

to which the Opposition goes. I think the country should know that between the two — what they say and what they do — there is a world of difference," the Prime Minister said in the Upper House.

Today's NDA meeting, called to discuss the Prime Minister's statement and attended by its convener Mr George Fernandes, BJP president Mr LK Advani and other senior BJP leaders, took "serious consideration of this kind of attitude" which made it difficult for the Opposition to cooperate with the government, Mr Jaswant Singh said.

TDP justifies stand

CHENNAI, May 6. — The Telugu Desam Party was against a "total" boycott of Parliament and had decided to attend the proceedings in public interest, party chief Mr Chandrababu Naidu, said. "We have joined the boycott of the NDA for four-five days. But now the party felt that we should not boycott it

totally and hence we are now attending Parliament," Mr Naidu said at the airport here. On the sudden decision to end the boycott of Parliament proceedings, he said his party had made it clear that it was not part of the NDA. — PTI

Musharraf not to see Mr Vajpayee. ... This is the length

In what is seen as a quibble in semantics, he said the Prime Minister was "off the mark" in his statement regarding NDA on Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's meeting with Mr Vajpayee. He explained that the NDA memorandum to President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam said, "it is reported" that there had been an attempt to prevent Gen. Musharraf's meeting with Mr Vajpayee. Therefore, this was not attributable to the Opposition alliance, the former foreign minister said, using all his diplomatic

More reports on page 5

NDA making false charges: Manmohan

TDP participates in Parliament proceedings

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Government on Thursday reiterated its preparedness to discuss all issues in Parliament and urged the Opposition to end its boycott even as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh charged the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with going back on its words and making false allegations in the memorandum submitted to the President on the impasse.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said that accepting the Opposition demand that he write to the Prime Minister would be an "unwarranted exercise of power" of the office he holds. Interventions to this effect were made in both Houses — Dr. Singh in the Rajya Sabha, and Leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee in the Lok Sabha — after the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) decided to break ranks with the NDA and participate in the "Parliamentary proceedings under protest."

An hour after the TDP leader in the Rajya Sabha, R. Chandra Sekar Reddy, accused the Government of precipitating the situation, Dr. Singh said the allegation that the House was not allowed to function because of the Government was not borne out by facts.

Dr. Singh said that as soon as the NDA announced the boycott,

he called up the Leaders of the Opposition in both Houses, L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh, and the NDA chairperson, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, requesting them to "end this chapter" and assuring them that all issues could be discussed on the floor of the House. "I was promised — I won't name the person — by one of the three that they would come for the Finance Bill and thereafter they would decide what they would do."

"Type of language"

Dr. Singh also took exception to the "type of language" used against him in the memorandum submitted to the President.

Stating that false things have been stated, he said: "For example, in that memorandum, our Government has been accused of prevailing upon President Musharraf not to see Mr. Vajpayee. ... This is the length to which the Opposition goes. I think the country should know that between the two — what they say and what they do — there is a world of difference."

Dr. Singh appealed to the Opposition "to be serious and cooperate with us in conducting the business of the House. This Government is prepared to discuss all issues and there is no issue which, I think, is barred from discussion in the House."

Oppn won't end House boycott

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 5 MAY

THE Prime Minister's statement appealing to the NDA to end its boycott of the Parliament only forced the latter to further harden its position. Rejecting the plea, BJP spokesperson Sushma Swaraj termed it as "a mere formality" which was akin to "rubbing salt to the wound".

For the government managers, the joy of seeing the Opposition unity collapse was short-lived as the TDP, which broke ranks with the NDA on Thursday over the boycott plan, tore into the UPA regime for adopting "a hostile and vindictive attitude" towards the Opposition — a trend which it described as "unhealthy" for parliamentary democracy.

"The government should treat the Opposition as friends, and not as enemies," TDP parliamentary party leader K. Yerran Naidu told the Lok Sabha during the Question Hour. He was, in effect, echoing the views expressed by the leader of Opposition in the House, L.K. Advani.

The BJP and its allies, on the other hand, came down heavily on the latest prime ministerial intervention. "We had ourselves informed the media about the Prime Minister's telephonic conversations with the NDA leaders. They were in the nature of a formality. Neither did he redress our grievances, nor did he make any assurance to that effect," Ms Swaraj said.

She charged the Congress leaders with stooping low to denigrate the Opposition. To buttress her argument, she referred to the statements made in the Rajya Sabha by



MPs such as Ambika Soni, Rajiv Shukla and Hanumantha Rao who, while poking fun at the BJP over the boycott strategy, referred to nominated member Dara Singh's presence in the House on May 3. "The person concerned was, in fact, BSP member Dara Singh Chauhan. Mr Dara Singh, who is a BJP member, had sought the leave of the House to remain absent till the end of

TDP Breaks Ranks

this session because of illness. On May 3, he came to the Parliament after a long gap. On entering the House, he saw the Opposition benches empty, and realising something amiss, withdrew after erasing his signature from the register. The provocative statements made by the Congress leaders was against parliamentary decency," the BJP spokesperson observed.

The BJP leader tried to justify the NDA stand by asserting that this was not the first time the Opposition had adopted boycott as a tool to force its point. "The Congress-led Opposition had, under the leadership of Manmohan Singh, boycotted the Rajya Sabha from August 14, 2003, to August 22, 2003," she pointed out, adding, "Boycott is among the many means adopted to oppose something."

Speaker not to meddle in political matters

New Delhi
5 MAY

LOK Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee on Thursday expressed disappointment at the Opposition's decision to boycott the Parliament till the end of the budget session but declared he would not intrude into political matters.



"I cannot but express my deep sense of disappointment at the decision taken by the Opposition parties to continue to remain absent from the House," Mr Chatterjee said after welcoming to the Lok Sabha Telegu Desam Party (TDP) MPs, who decided to end the boycott.

Though the BJP-led Opposition announced on Wednesday it would continue its boycott of the Parliament to press for the dismissal of railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, the TDP, which is part of the Opposition alliance attended the House on Thursday.

The Opposition has been boycotting the Parliament since April 28, demanding the ouster of Mr Yadav, as a court in Bihar had formally charged him in the multibillion-rupee fodder scam.

Mr Chatterjee said he had "almost every day" requested Opposition MPs to participate in proceedings.

— IANS

শরিকদের বুঝিয়ে সংসদ বয়কটেই অটল বিজেপি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩ মে: জোট শরিকদের মধ্যে যাবতীয় মতভেদ মিটিয়ে শেষ পর্যন্ত সংসদ বয়কটের সিদ্ধান্তেই অনড় থাকল এনডিএ।

তবে এই একমতো পৌঁছাতে প্রধান বিরোধী দল বিজেপি-কে যথেষ্ট কাঠখড় পোড়াতে হয়েছে। দিনভর চলছে রাজনৈতিক বোঝাপড়া। আজ সকালে এক দফা বৈঠকে বসেন এনডিএ সাংসদেরা। পরে বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে তেলুগু দেশম এবং জেডি (ইউ)-এর আলোচনা হয়। এনডিএ-কে একজোট করার ক্ষেত্রে খানিকটা অনুরূপের কাজ করেছে কংগ্রেসের সাধারণ সম্পাদক অম্বিকা সোনির মন্তব্য। সোনি সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, “বিরোধীরা নিজেদের দোষ স্বীকার করে এগিয়ে এলে আলোচনা হতে পারে।” এর পরে বয়কট তুলে নিলে নাজেহাল এনডিএ রাজনৈতিক ভাবে কোণঠাসা হয়ে পড়ত।

সিদ্ধান্ত তেলুগু দেশম কালই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিল, আর বয়কটের রাস্তায় নয়। তাদের বোঝাতে আজ সকালেই হায়দরাবাদে চম্ভাবাবু নায়ডুকে ফোন করেন বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী। চম্ভাবাবুকে বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিধাভিত্তক না হতে অনুরোধ করেন তিনি। কিছুটা চাপে পড়ে চম্ভাবাবু তখন ভিডিও কনফারেন্স করে দলের সব সাংসদ ও নেতার সঙ্গে কথা বলেন।

তাদের তিনি বোকান, এ ক্ষেত্রে ভিন্ন পথে চলাটা বিরোধী রাজনীতির পক্ষে ‘ভাল হবে না। পরে বিজেপি নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে জেডি (ইউ)-র একদফা কথা হয়। অবশ্য তা সত্বেও আজ জেডি (ইউ) নেতা প্রভুনাথ সিংহ প্রকাশ্যেই কেসুরে গিয়েছেন। তিনি বলেন, “বয়কট তুলে নিয়ে লোকসভায় যোগ দেওয়া উচিত। আমরাই এখন দেশে সবচেয়ে বেকার!” শেষ পর্যন্ত অবশ্য কোনও বিরোধী সাংসদই আজ অধিবেশনে যোগ

দেননি। স্থির হয়েছে ‘পরিস্থিতি ধর্তব্যে দেখতে প্রতিদিন দু’বার করে বেঠকে বসবে এনডিএ নেতৃত্ব। অন্য দিকে, সরকারি সুত্রের খবর অনুযায়ী, অর্ধবিল অধিবেশন আর চালাতে উৎসাহী নয় ইউপিএ। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, “বিরোধীদের বারবার লোকসভায় যোগ দেওয়ার অনুরোধ করতে পারেন না প্রধানমন্ত্রী।” এনডিএ বয়কটের সিদ্ধান্তেই অনড় থাকলে চলতি সপ্তাহের পরে বাজেট অধিবেশন শেষ করে দেওয়া হতে পারে।

বিরোধীদের সংসদে যোগ দিতে অনুরোধ জানিয়ে আজ এনডিএ-র চেয়ারপার্সন বাজপেয়ীকে আবার চিঠি দেন লোকসভার শিপকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়। তিনি লেখেন, “আমার অনুরোধ এনডিএ-র সতীর্ষেরা যাতে অধিবেশনে যোগ দেন তা দেখুন। যাবতীয় বিষয় সংসদে উত্থাপন করে তা

নিয়ে আলোচনা চলতে পারে, এই আশ্বাসটুকু অন্তত আমি দিতে পারি।” কিন্তু শিপকারের এই চিঠিতে যে তাঁরা আদৌ সন্তুষ্ট নন, তা বারংবার বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন এনডিএ সাংসদেরা।

পাশাপাশি তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছেন তাঁদের ঐক্যের ছবিটাও। বিকালে শিবসেনার অনন্ত গীতে, তৃণমূলের দীপেশ দিবেনী, সন্তোষ গান্ধার্যারদের নিয়ে সাংবাদিক সম্মেলন করেন বিজেপি মুখপাত্র বিজয়কুমার মলাহোত্র। তাঁদের মূল অভিযোগ, বিরোধীরা দিনের পর দিন সংসদে গরহাজির থাকা সত্বেও সরকার বিষয়টিকে আমল দিচ্ছে না। প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজে একবার টেলিফোন করা ছাড়া আর বেশি কিছু করতে উদ্যোগী হননি। অম্বিকা সোনির মন্তব্য সম্পর্কে মলাহোত্র বলেন, “সংসদে যাওয়ার জন্য আমাদের কারও কাছ থেকে অনুমতি নেওয়ার প্রয়োজন নেই। ক্ষমতা এদের

মাথায় চড়ে গিয়েছে। অহংকারের কোনও সীমা নেই। অম্বিকা সোনিকে এই কথা বলার জন্য নিশ্চিত ভাবেই কেউ নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন।”

অনন্ত গীতের মতে, এনডিএর আমলেও কংগ্রেস বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে এই ধরনের বয়কট করত। কিন্তু তখন তৎকালীন প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাজপেয়ী নিজে এগিয়ে এসে বিরোধীদের সমস্যার কথা শুনতেন। এ ক্ষেত্রে কিন্তু মনমোহন সিংহকে সেই ভূমিকা পালন করতে দেখা যাচ্ছে না।

কংগ্রেস অবশ্য এই অভিযোগ উড়িয়ে দিয়েছে। মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মা বলেছেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী বিরোধীদের আমন্ত্রণ জানিয়েছিলেন। তা সত্বেও ওঁরা সংসদে এলেন না। এটা ঠিক নয়। প্রধানমন্ত্রী আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন সব বিষয়ে আলোচনা হবে। সব বিষয় মানে সমস্ত বিষয়। আসলে এনডিএ-র মাথোই বিচারিতা রয়েছে।”

4 MAY 2005

ANADARAZAR PATRIKA

Q Parliament

Absent, Sir

W

Parliament's empty treasury benches signify a ruling party that has lost its focus

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SAME time, last year, these very men and women were begging for our votes. Today, they think they are doing the rest of us a favour by putting in an appearance in Parliament. Last Friday, when the Finance Bill was to be debated in the Lok Sabha, the session had to be delayed because there was no quorum. The absence of opposition MPs was inevitable, given the NDA's misguided boycott of Parliament. But what of the UPA's MPs? What excuse did they have to take their parliamentary duties so casually? Was it the arrogance of power or just the complacency of office? Have they — one year down the line — already forgotten their effervescent promises to be accountable to the people of this country?

It is reported that Congress President Sonia Gandhi was very incensed over party's no-show on parliamentary benches. So, indeed, should she be. This newspaper has been unsparing in its criticism of the BJP's negative tactics in boycotting

Parliament as the main party of opposition. It cannot, similarly, condone laggardly behaviour on the part of those who jointly constitute the ruling coalition. Occupying the treasury benches brings with it executive responsibilities which of course include the smooth conduct of parliamentary proceedings. Empty treasury benches indicate a ruling coalition that has lost its focus.

As it is, Parliament's working days have dwindled over the years. According to official records, the Lok Sabha met for 138 days in 1953. Today we should be grateful if it touches the 80 mark, as indeed we would be if our MPs conduct business for the five hours that make up their working day. This lack of accountability has a significant impact not just on everyday governance but, in the long term, on the nature of Indian democracy. It is imperative that Congress MPs get the message that these columns had sent their BJP counterparts last week: just get back to work.

02 MAY 2005 INDIAN EXPRESS

Laloo in, rivals to sit out the week

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, April 26: The BJP-led Opposition has decided to boycott Parliament during the rest of this week, capping a tumultuous day that put Laloo Prasad Yadav under the glare simultaneously in the Lok Sabha as well as the Supreme Court.

The NDA will stay away from Parliament to protest a host of issues but the prime target is the railway minister. The Opposition, which has been demanding Laloo Prasad's resignation over the Gujarat attack controversy, stepped up its offensive after he was charged in another fodder scam case yesterday.

In the middle of the uproar in the House today, the government drew legal fire from the Supreme Court for not contesting the clean chit given to Laloo Prasad by the income-tax department in a disproportionate assets case.

The court also ordered Patna High Court to set up a bench to see whether Laloo Prasad can be prosecuted on charges of trying to misuse his official position to bury the case. The court took the unusual step of naming the judge who will head the bench. (See Page 6)

The boycott decision was taken at an Opposition alliance meeting chaired by NDA chairperson A.B. Vajpayee.

The NDA decided not to attend any meeting of the parliamentary committees slated to take place this week or claim the allowances of its MPs.

The alliance will also skip an all-party meeting that Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee will convene tomorrow morning in an effort to break the Laloo Prasad impasse. Chatterjee termed the decision "unfortunate" and appealed to the NDA to reconsider it.

However, the Telugu Desam Party, which technically is not part of the NDA but has been coordinating with the coalition on floor strategy, did not attend this evening's meeting.

BJP sources said the strategy the coalition will adopt next week — whether they will continue the boycott — would depend on what "initiative" the government takes to "soften" its "intransigent stand" towards the Opposition.

Before the NDA met, parliamentary affairs minister Ghulam Nabi Azad had tried to end the stalemate by calling a meeting of Opposition leader L.K. Advani and senior ministers Pranab Mukherjee and Arjun Singh.

NDA plans to boycott Parliament

Campaign against Lalu to be stepped up

K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI: Stepping up its campaign against the Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, and the "attitude" of the United Progressive Alliance government, the National Democratic Alliance announced on Tuesday night that its constituents would boycott the proceedings of Parliament this week.

The decision came after Parliament witnessed tumultuous scenes and repeated adjournments with the Opposition demanding resignation of Mr. Prasad and the ruling coalition benches especially the Rashtriya Janata Dal joining issue. Besides verbal duels in both Houses, members in the Rajya Sabha on either side physically restrained some of their colleagues to prevent the situation from going out of hand.

"Cannot remain a Minister"

After a two-hour meeting at the residence of former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the NDA decided on intensifying the campaign against Mr. Prasad, who they said could not remain a Minister after framing of charges against him by a Ranchi court in a fodder scam case.

Addressing correspondents, the NDA leaders George Fernandes, L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh, said that the behaviour of the ruling coalition and some of its constituents with the NDA members made them feel "as if the ruling alliance does not want an opposition." Mr. Fernandes said that after a court framed charges including that of cheating against

the Railway Minister, "such a person could not be present in the House." Mr. Advani said that the NDA would explain the rationale behind this decision and made it clear there was no reference to the role of the Speaker at this meeting

Unfortunate, says Speaker

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, termed the NDA decision as "unfortunate" and said that opposition has a role in parliamentary democracy. He said as the Speaker, it was his endeavour to give time to all members within rules.

The Lok Sabha is scheduled to begin discussions on the Finance Bill on Thursday after the House applies guillotine tomorrow evening and puts to vote demands for grants for various Ministries. The Lok Sabha has so far discussed demands for grant for the Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development and is expected to take up those for the Home Ministry tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Mr. Chatterjee, has called a meeting of leaders of various political parties on Wednesday to discuss the frequent adjournments and stand-off between the Opposition and the UPA constituents. The NDA, it is understood, is unlikely to attend in the wake of the latest announcement.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Chatterjee conveyed to the BJP that he was upset since no one from the party had turned up at a meeting he called to find a way out after the first adjournment. However, after the final adjournment, the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani met the Speaker in his chamber.

Kargil arms deal report to be tabled

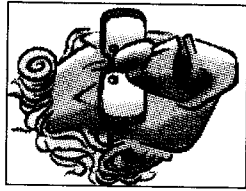
Law Minister Makes Promise after Another Day of Furore In Parliament

New Delhi: The Lok Sabha witnessed tumult for the second day on the Kargil arms purchases issue even as the government agreed to table the Phukan inquiry commission report during the ongoing session.

After sitting mum through the din on Tuesday, former defence minister George Fernandes raised his voice in the Lok Sabha, drawing angry responses from the treasury benches. "When I was asked this very question of tabling the CVC report and I refused on grounds of national security, those now in treasury benches called me a thief... I know what is in the report and you (government) also know that, then why not make it public."

"They are not concerned with national safety and security of the country," he added, prompting ruling coalition members to raise slogans against him. Immediately, NDA members were on their feet to counter them. Leader of the opposition L.K. Advani had begun the de-

bate, saying any discussion on the arms deals would be futile without the tabling of the reports of the Phukan Commission and the Central Vigilance Commissioner. At this, Pranab Mukherjee, the defence minister and leader of the House, questioned why his govern-



ment had refused to provide the CVC report to the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

As the din continued, speaker Somnath Chatterjee asked Mukherjee to table a statement on the government's second affidavit before the supreme court and ad-

ourned the House for an hour.

The furore over the tabling of the reports spilled to the Rajya Sabha, where law minister H R Bhadrwad had to give an assurance that the report of the Phukan Commission would be placed in the current session. The statement came after chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat backed the opposition's demand quoting rules to say that any inquiry commission report would have to be tabled within six months of its submission.

The report was submitted to the government this February.

In the lower House, the defence minister again took a tough stand on the arms deals, saying strict action would be taken against officials, including Fernandes, if it was found that the 'excuse' of the Kargil crisis had been taken to make arms purchases with the motive of "personal benefit". In his statement, Mukherjee said the government had decided to refer 23 cases, including the findings of the CAG, to the CBI. PTI

Govt to look into 'defence deal commission'

New Delhi: The government on Wednesday told the Rajya Sabha that it was looking into media reports alleging payment of commission on Indian defence deals by a South African arms manufacturer.

"We will look into it," defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said during question hour. Mukherjee said he had seen this report in a television news channel and a newspaper and would look into it.

The CPM demanded a thorough probe into reports about a South African arms company paying Rs 20 crore commission to access classified information on India's defence preparedness.

"There is enough ground for the government to institute a comprehensive enquiry into the matter concerning national security and how the defence establishment was breached by arms agents," CPM leaders Nilotpal Basu and Rupchand Pal told reporters here. PTI

'Court cannot decide on House issues'

By ^{26/3/05} Our Special Correspondent ^{10:11}

HYDERABAD, MARCH 25. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, today reiterated his stand that the Supreme Court observation on the Jharkhand imbroglio was a serious encroachment on the well-demarcated areas of power of the legislature. The issue was still germane and there was no considered opinion of right and wrong.

Addressing a press conference here, Mr. Chatterjee said it was unfortunate that different standards were being applied to

different situations in judging deeds and words of people. The Speaker said he had only pointed out that the Supreme Court could not possibly decide on what should happen inside the House and also that was a matter which came under the purview of the Speaker. As a Speaker, he was the custodian of the constitutional rights and powers of legislators and it was strange that people were talking in terms of political branding the Speakers. Advocating restraint on the part of the media, Mr. Chatterjee said sensationalism would not help the situa-

^{2-Parliament} tion. Disruptions in the House by even a handful of legislators with an aim to enforce an adjournment were a bad precedent. A political consensus alone could prevent the occurrence of such developments.

Mr. Chatterjee asked why nobody was answering the questions raised by someone like Fali Nariman. No lawyer had ever pointed a finger at him and it was imperative that everyone understood the consequences of dragging the Speaker's office into the controversy and upheld the dignity and the respect of the office.

Needed, a constructive Opposition

By Era Sezhiyan

J- Parliament

It is unfortunate that instead of attacking the misrule of the Government and its undemocratic actions, the BJP members are assaulting the basic existence and functioning of Parliament itself.

THE MISUSE of the office of Governor and indiscriminate action under Article 356 (imposition of President's Rule) to suspend State Assemblies and destabilise State Governments are nothing new. The 1967 general elections saw the Congress monopoly challenged in several States. It started in Rajasthan where the Congress got only 88 of the 183 seats. The United Front (Samyukt Vidhanayak Dal) that included the Jana Sangh, the Swatantra Party, the Samyukta Socialist Party, and Independents was formed with 93 MLAs under the leadership of Maharawal Luxman Singh. When Governor Sampurnanand (who was earlier Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh) found that the SVD had a majority, he refused to count the MLAs. On March 4, 1967, he called Mohan Lal Sukhadia to form the government on the ground that the Congress was "the largest party in the House." There were strong protests in the media and from the Opposition. The swearing-in ceremony of Sukhadia was scheduled to take place on March 14. But on March 13, the Governor recommended dissolution of the Rajasthan Assembly. However, the Union Government decided to suspend the Assembly.

The President's Address to the first session of the fourth Lok Sabha was delivered on March 18. Normally on this day Parliament deals only with routine business. However, on the Opposition's insistence Speaker Neelam Sanjiva Reddy allowed a discussion on the serious situation in Rajasthan. The discussion took place for two days. The inert Government did not come forward to get the affirmative vote on suspension of the Rajasthan Assembly as prescribed by the Constitution and allowed the lapse of the suspension after two months. Meanwhile, Sukhadia managed to induce some independents to his side and formed the Ministry in April 1967.

The period between 1967 and 1971 was the worst in the political history of India as far as the misuse of the office of Governor and indiscriminate imposition of President's Rule are concerned. During this period, there were 17 cases of presidential proclamations, of which eight took place after the split in the Congress. In Rajasthan and Manipur, the Assemblies were put under suspension to allow the Congress to come back to power. In Uttar Pradesh, the Assembly was first

suspended and as the Congress could not manipulate the necessary strength, it was dissolved. In Haryana, Bihar and Pondicherry where the Congress had no chance whatsoever of forming a government, the Assemblies were dissolved instantly. In West Bengal and Punjab, President's Rule was not imposed as the Congress was able to set up minority governments of defectors.

It is to the credit of the Opposition in Parliament that it took up each case and initiated a full debate under one or other of the provisions of the Rules of Procedure to expose the misuse of the office of Governor and discriminatory imposition of President's Rule.

On November 15, 1967, Nath Pai (Praja Socialist Party) moved a substantive motion: "That this House disapproves of the action of the Central Government in using the institution of the Governors of the States not as [an] instrument for proper functioning of the Constitution but as agents of the party in power at the Centre, as exemplified by current developments in Bihar and West Bengal." There was a discussion for two days on that motion.

In Haryana, the Samyukta Government of Rao Birendra Singh which had a majority of 41 out of 78 was unceremoniously dismissed based on the Governor's report which said: "Even a majority of one could enable a Government to function smoothly, but there is no certainty of majority when members change sides so frequently." On the same day — November 21 — as the Presidential Proclamation was presented to the House, Atal Bihari Vajpayee moved a substantive motion: "That this House regrets that the Government of India did not reject the report of the Governor of Haryana to the President recommending the issue of proclamation, inasmuch as the Government of Haryana enjoyed majority in the Legislature and functioned in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution." The discussion on the motion went on for the whole day.

On the very next day, November 22, Madhu Limaye (SSP) moved a no-

confidence motion with the support of all the parties in the Opposition. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Ram Subhag Singh wanted the discussion to commence immediately and the division taken on the same day. Mr. Vajpayee demanded at least three days for discussion as the scope of the motion would cover many aspects of misrule of the Government, apart from the misdeeds committed through Governors and presidential declarations. I supported him with the plea: "The entire aspect of political morality of the ruling party will be discussed. It is not a question to be decided by the numerical strength." The no-confidence motion of Limaye was discussed for three days.

The Opposition raised a large array of motions and discussions at every stage in those days under one or the other provision of the Rules, without affecting the functioning of Parliament and its dignity in any manner, or causing any disrespect or discomfort to the Speaker. Marching into the well and raising full-throated slogans to stall the proceedings were unknown in those times.

It saddens me to note that the BJP and its allies have announced that they will stall the proceedings of the House till the errant Governors of Goa and Jharkhand are removed. It is to be noted that there are distinct provisions for Parliament to vote out the Union Ministry and for the removal of the President, the Vice-President, the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker, a judge of the Supreme Court, the Comptroller and Auditor General, a judge of the High Court, and the Chief Election Commissioner. But there is no provision to impeach a Governor.

Regarding adjournment motion, Rule 59 of the Lok Sabha states that no matter pending before a statutory authority shall be permitted if it is likely to prejudice consideration of the matter by the court. There are other avenues and rules available to Members to raise the issue against the Government, either under a substantive motion or a no-confidence motion, as has been done effectively by Mr. Vajpayee, Nath Pai, Madhu Li-

maye and others in the past.

It is unfortunate that instead of attacking the misrule of the Government and its undemocratic actions, the BJP members are assaulting the basic existence and functioning of Parliament itself. It is true that a no-confidence motion can be easily defeated by the Government having a majority. Nevertheless, valid criticisms and exposure of the Government's misrule by the Opposition go a long way in inducing a loss of confidence in the Government among the public. This is what the Opposition Members in the third and the fourth Lok Sabha did, which changed the course of the political history of the country.

About the degenerating norms of parliamentary deliberations, it may be noted here what a distinguished parliamentarian has said: "Very often, members feel that the only way they can be heard or noticed by the House and especially by the Press and the television cameras, is not through the quality of their intervention, but by using their lung power to the fullest. The casualty of such behaviour is not only discipline and decorum in the House, but also meaningful debate that is so essential for giving expression to the aspirations and concerns of those who elect us. The third corrective that I would like to present here is the virtue of self-discipline. Discipline and decorum in the House cannot be enforced by diktat alone, although the people certainly expect the Presiding Officers to act more firmly while conducting the business of the House. However, all of us are aware of the limitations of punitive action. Ultimately, there is no better antidote to indiscipline than self-discipline, and discipline enforced by the political party through its whips."

These wise words have come from none other than Mr. Vajpayee, who has been a Member almost continuously of either House of Parliament since 1957. He made the above observation in his article "Making parliamentary democracy deliver on its promises" in the Lok Sabha publication (2002), *Fifty Years of Indian Parliament*.

Further, in their 2004 Election Manifesto, the BJP and its allies promised to "raise the standards and efficacy of Parliament, State Legislatures and other elected bodies." Will they honour the assurance and take some steps to raise the standards of the efficacy of Parliament?

THE HINDU

23 MAR 2005

বিচার ও আইনসভার পৃথক সত্তা বজায় থাক, চায় স্পিকার সম্মেলন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২০ মার্চ: এন ডি এ শাসিত রাজ্যের স্পিকারেরা' যাননি, মিইয়ে এসেছে ঝাড়খণ্ড-কাণ্ডের রাজনৈতিক উত্তাপ, তবে আইনসভা ও বিচারব্যবস্থার অধিকারসীমা নিয়ে দশ দিন যে টানা পোড়েন চলেছিল রাজধানীতে, আজ স্পিকার সম্মেলন আপাতত তাতে ইতি টানল। সম্মেলনে গৃহীত প্রস্তাবের সারাংশ, বিচার ব্যবস্থা ও আইনসভার পারস্পরিক শ্রদ্ধা বজায় থাকা উচিত। এই দু'য়ের সীমারেখার মধ্যে 'অস্পষ্টতা' কাটাতে আজ একগুচ্ছ প্রস্তাব নেওয়া হয়েছে স্পিকার সম্মেলনে। শেষ প্রস্তাবটিই মূল। তাতে বলা হয়েছে, বিচারব্যবস্থা ও আইনসভা, কেউ যেন কারও সাংবিধানিক এজিয়ারের মধ্যে নাক না গলায়। সম্মেলনে ২২জন স্পিকার উপস্থিত থাকলেও যোগ দেননি এন ডি

এ শাসিত রাজ্যের স্পিকাররা। লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় এই অনুপস্থিতি নিয়ে মুখ খুলতে চাননি।

তিনি বলেছেন, "কেউ আসেননি মানে তো এই নয় যে তিনি এই প্রস্তাবের বিরোধিতা করছেন।" বৈঠকের গোড়াতেই তিনি বলে নিয়েছেন যে 'ঝাড়খণ্ডে কী ঘটেছে না ঘটেছে তার রাজনৈতিক বিশ্লেষণের সঙ্গে এই বৈঠকের কোনও সম্পর্ক নেই।" বৈঠকের পর তাঁর বক্তব্য, কেউ কেউ ঝাড়খণ্ডের ঘটনা এবং রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে বিবেচনার জন্য সুপ্রিম কোর্টের নির্দেশ পাঠানোর বিষয়টি নিয়ে সরব হয়েছিলেন। তবে সেটাই তাঁদের একমাত্র আলোচ্য বিষয় ছিল না।

সোমনাথবাবুর কথায়, "বিচারব্যবস্থা ও আইনসভার মধ্যে কোনও দ্বন্দ্ব তৈরি হোক এটা কখনও

চাইনি। সুপ্রিম কোর্টের নির্দেশ সম্পর্কে আমার বক্তব্য ছিল, ওই নির্দেশে রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতা তৈরি হয়েছে।"

আজকের বৈঠকে যে প্রস্তাবগুলি নেওয়া হয়েছে তার মধ্যে রয়েছে :

● গণতান্ত্রিক প্রশাসন-ব্যবস্থা দারুণ উপকৃত হবে যদি বিচারব্যবস্থা ও আইনসভা, এই দুটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রতিষ্ঠান একে অন্যের ভূমিকাকে মর্যাদা দেয় এবং কেউ কারও সাংবিধানিক অধিকারে হস্তক্ষেপ না করে।

● আইনসভা ও বিচারব্যবস্থার মধ্যে পারস্পরিক বিশ্বাস ও সম্মান থাকা প্রয়োজন। এই সমঝোতাও থাকা উচিত একে যেন অন্যের বিপ্রতীপ কোনও কাজ না করে। বরং দেশের সাধারণ মানুষের জন্য ও দেশকে শক্তিশালী করার জন্য একাবদ্ধ হয়।

● আইনসভা ও বিচারব্যবস্থার মধ্যে মেলবন্ধন থাকা জরুরি।

ANANDAPATNA PATNA

21 MAR 2005

Speaker calls for balance of power

SNS & PTI

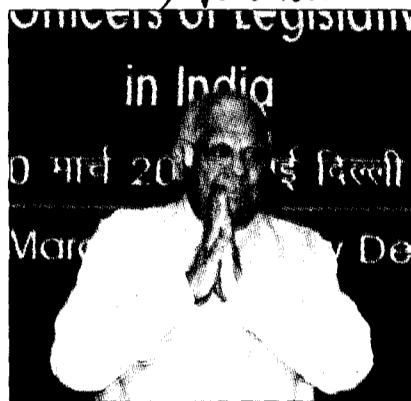
NEW DELHI, March 20. — Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee today reiterated the need for a “constitutional balance” between the different organs of the State — legislature, judiciary and executive — and called upon presiding officers of the legislative bodies to consider a constitutional scheme of “separation of powers”. He, however, sought to downplay the absence of Speakers of NDA-ruled states saying he had full confidence in all presiding officers.

Significantly, the conference was attended by Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker Mr Charanjit Singh Atwal of the Akali Dal, a BJP ally, while Tamil Nadu Speaker Mr K Kalimuthu of the AIADMK stayed away.

With the Supreme Court interim order in the Jharkhand case forming the backdrop, Mr Chatterjee told the Emergent Conference of Presiding Officers of the Legislative Bodies in India that one of the basic features of governance had been violated by the interim order. “Today’s conference is not concerned with the political merits and demerits of what happened in Jharkhand,” Mr Chatterjee told reporters. “What we discussed today is related to maintenance of constitutional balance between the different organs of the state.”

The presiding officers adopted a resolution, while taking note of the 9 March interim order which extended the Jharkhand Assembly session by a day for the trial of strength and directed videography of the proceedings.

They resolved that “there must exist mutual trust and respect



Mr Somnath Chatterjee greets invitees at the Speakers’ conference on Sunday. — PTI

between the legislature and the judiciary and also an understanding that they are not acting at cross purposes”. The conference also called for a harmonious relation between the legislatures and the judiciary.

Only 22 presiding officers attended the conference. Mr Chatterjee refused to be drawn into the issue. “I am a politician. But a member of the House who sits in the chair does not belong to any particular party,” he quipped.

Mr Chatterjee said the Supreme Court order on Jharkhand Assembly issue could not be cited as a precedent. Asked about the UPA government’s decision not to seek a Presidential reference to the Supreme Court’s directive, he said: “We never demanded a Presidential reference.” The Supreme Court interim order “is unimplementable. It is only ex-parte,” he added. “I can’t expect the Supreme Court to pass an unreasoned judgment. I am sure it will not be treated as the law of the land. It is just an interim order,” he said.

Patents bill faces rough ride in LS

New Delhi: The government on Friday introduced in the Lok Sabha the controversial patents bill amidst vehement opposition from Left parties and the NDA.

The bill, piloted by commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath, seeks to replace an ordinance issued on December 26 to meet WTO obligations of allowing product patents in pharmaceuticals, agri products and embedded software. The bill was introduced by a voice vote amid noisy protests from opposition benches and Left party members who contended that the house has no legislative competence to pass this bill which threatened fundamental right to life of people.

Suresh Kurup, CPM, said the ordinance was brought behind the back of parliament and was against all democratic spirit. He contended that once legislation was enacted, Indian pharmaceutical companies would be at the mercy of multinational companies.

V Radhakrishnan, also of CPM, accused the government of committing a "fraud on the constitution" by invoking emergency provisions under Article 123 to bring in the ordinance. PW

শেষ পর্যন্ত সোমনাথের পাশে দাঁড়াল কংগ্রেস

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়া দিল্লি, ১৫ অক্টোবর

সোমনাথের সত্তা চালানোর পদ্ধতি নিয়ে আজলে তীব্র সমালোচনা শুরু করেছেন বিরোধীরা। কিন্তু স্পিকার বুধিয়ে দিয়েছেন, বিরোধীদের আক্রমণের মুখে তিনি নরম হবেন না। নিজের আসনে ছিলেন না বলে রামদাস আটওয়ালের একটি প্রশ্ন তিনি খারিজ করে দেন। আগে থেকে নোটিশ দেননি বলে সিপিএমের মহম্মদ সোলিমকেও তিনি বলতে দেননি। অন্য দিকে বাজেট অধিবেশনের চলতি পর্বেই বেসরকারি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়গুলির বিষয়ে একটি আলোচনার জন্য সরকারপক্ষকে নিজে থেকেই বলেছেন সোমনাথ।

অন্য দিকে সোমনাথকে সমর্থন পাচ্ছিল। অন্য দিকে সোমনাথকে সমর্থন জানাতেও কোন করেছিলেন প্রিয়রঞ্জন। প্রিয় আজ বলেছেন, “আমি মনে করি সোমনাথটা উচিত কাজই করেছেন। আমি সে কথাটাই ওঁকে জানিয়েছি।” কংগ্রেসও বলেছে, “স্পিকারের বক্তব্যকে কেবল বর্তমান পরিস্থিতির ক্ষুদ্র পরিধিতে দেখা উচিত নয়। এর মধ্যে বৃহত্তর সাংবিধানিক প্রশ্ন জড়িয়ে রয়েছে।”

কংগ্রেসের একটি বড় অংশকে পাশে পাওয়ার পরে আজ সোমনাথ বুধিয়ে দিয়েছেন, তিনি লোকসভা চালানোর ক্ষেত্রে নিজের কর্তৃত্ব কোনও ভাবেই খর্ব হতে দেবেন না। আজ সকালে সোমনাথ তাই আচমকা সভায় ঘোষণা করেন, আগামী সপ্তাহ থেকে তিনি প্রমোত্তরের জন্য নতুন ব্যবস্থা চালু করতে আগ্রহী। সোমনাথের কথা, “ক্রমানুসারে প্রমোত্তরের বদলে আরি উল্লিখিত সূচির যেখান থেকে খুশি প্রশ্ন তুলব। আমি দেখেছি প্রায়

সনিয়া গান্ধীও প্রাথমিক ভাবে সোমনাথের সঙ্গে একমত। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ নিজের কোনও মতামত চাপিয়ে দেননি। কিন্তু মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনীতি বিষয়ক কমিটিতে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠদের মত, সতর্ক ভাবে সংঘাত এড়ানোর চেষ্টা করা উচিত।

খাঁরা তাড়াহুড়ো করতে নারাজ, তাঁদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন অতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রনব মুখোপাধ্যায়, শিবরাজ পাটিল, আইনমন্ত্রী ভরদ্বাজ, প্রমুখেরা। এই গোষ্ঠীর চাপেই শেষমেশ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আইনসভা বনাম বিচারব্যবস্থা বিতর্কে সাবধানে এগোতে চাইছে। এদের যুক্তি, এখনই রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে গেলে মনে হতে পারে ঝড়ঝঞ্জর জন্মই এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে কেন্দ্র। তারা চান, ঝড়ঝঞ্জরের সমস্যা খিতিয়ে গেলে বিষয়টি নিয়ে ভাবনাচিন্তা করতে। সরকারের অসুবিধার কারণগুলি বোঝাতে সোমনাথকে ফোন করেছিলেন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ

সনিয়া গান্ধীও প্রাথমিক ভাবে সোমনাথের সঙ্গে একমত। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ নিজের কোনও মতামত চাপিয়ে দেননি। কিন্তু মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনীতি বিষয়ক কমিটিতে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠদের মত, সতর্ক ভাবে সংঘাত এড়ানোর চেষ্টা করা উচিত।

খাঁরা তাড়াহুড়ো করতে নারাজ, তাঁদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন অতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রনব মুখোপাধ্যায়, শিবরাজ পাটিল, আইনমন্ত্রী ভরদ্বাজ, প্রমুখেরা। এই গোষ্ঠীর চাপেই শেষমেশ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আইনসভা বনাম বিচারব্যবস্থা বিতর্কে সাবধানে এগোতে চাইছে। এদের যুক্তি, এখনই রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে গেলে মনে হতে পারে ঝড়ঝঞ্জর জন্মই এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে কেন্দ্র। তারা চান, ঝড়ঝঞ্জরের সমস্যা খিতিয়ে গেলে বিষয়টি নিয়ে ভাবনাচিন্তা করতে। সরকারের অসুবিধার কারণগুলি বোঝাতে সোমনাথকে ফোন করেছিলেন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ

সোমনাথের সত্তা চালানোর পদ্ধতি নিয়ে আজলে তীব্র সমালোচনা শুরু করেছেন বিরোধীরা। কিন্তু স্পিকার বুধিয়ে দিয়েছেন, বিরোধীদের আক্রমণের মুখে তিনি নরম হবেন না। নিজের আসনে ছিলেন না বলে রামদাস আটওয়ালের একটি প্রশ্ন তিনি খারিজ করে দেন। আগে থেকে নোটিশ দেননি বলে সিপিএমের মহম্মদ সোলিমকেও তিনি বলতে দেননি। অন্য দিকে বাজেট অধিবেশনের চলতি পর্বেই বেসরকারি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়গুলির বিষয়ে একটি আলোচনার জন্য সরকারপক্ষকে নিজে থেকেই বলেছেন সোমনাথ।

অন্য দিকে সোমনাথকে সমর্থন পাচ্ছিল। অন্য দিকে সোমনাথকে সমর্থন জানাতেও কোন করেছিলেন প্রিয়রঞ্জন। প্রিয় আজ বলেছেন, “আমি মনে করি সোমনাথটা উচিত কাজই করেছেন। আমি সে কথাটাই ওঁকে জানিয়েছি।” কংগ্রেসও বলেছে, “স্পিকারের বক্তব্যকে কেবল বর্তমান পরিস্থিতির ক্ষুদ্র পরিধিতে দেখা উচিত নয়। এর মধ্যে বৃহত্তর সাংবিধানিক প্রশ্ন জড়িয়ে রয়েছে।”

কংগ্রেসের একটি বড় অংশকে পাশে পাওয়ার পরে আজ সোমনাথ বুধিয়ে দিয়েছেন, তিনি লোকসভা চালানোর ক্ষেত্রে নিজের কর্তৃত্ব কোনও ভাবেই খর্ব হতে দেবেন না। আজ সকালে সোমনাথ তাই আচমকা সভায় ঘোষণা করেন, আগামী সপ্তাহ থেকে তিনি প্রমোত্তরের জন্য নতুন ব্যবস্থা চালু করতে আগ্রহী। সোমনাথের কথা, “ক্রমানুসারে প্রমোত্তরের বদলে আরি উল্লিখিত সূচির যেখান থেকে খুশি প্রশ্ন তুলব। আমি দেখেছি প্রায়

সনিয়া গান্ধীও প্রাথমিক ভাবে সোমনাথের সঙ্গে একমত। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ নিজের কোনও মতামত চাপিয়ে দেননি। কিন্তু মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনীতি বিষয়ক কমিটিতে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠদের মত, সতর্ক ভাবে সংঘাত এড়ানোর চেষ্টা করা উচিত।

খাঁরা তাড়াহুড়ো করতে নারাজ, তাঁদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন অতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রনব মুখোপাধ্যায়, শিবরাজ পাটিল, আইনমন্ত্রী ভরদ্বাজ, প্রমুখেরা। এই গোষ্ঠীর চাপেই শেষমেশ কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আইনসভা বনাম বিচারব্যবস্থা বিতর্কে সাবধানে এগোতে চাইছে। এদের যুক্তি, এখনই রাষ্ট্রপতির কাছে গেলে মনে হতে পারে ঝড়ঝঞ্জর জন্মই এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে কেন্দ্র। তারা চান, ঝড়ঝঞ্জরের সমস্যা খিতিয়ে গেলে বিষয়টি নিয়ে ভাবনাচিন্তা করতে। সরকারের অসুবিধার কারণগুলি বোঝাতে সোমনাথকে ফোন করেছিলেন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ

সনিয়া গান্ধীও প্রাথমিক ভাবে সোমনাথের সঙ্গে একমত। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ নিজের কোনও মতামত চাপিয়ে দেননি। কিন্তু মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনীতি বিষয়ক কমিটিতে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠদের মত, সতর্ক ভাবে সংঘাত এড়ানোর চেষ্টা করা উচিত।

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ANADABAZAR PATRIKA 16 MAR 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Ambush on Speaker session

15/3 T-1 J-Parliament
RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

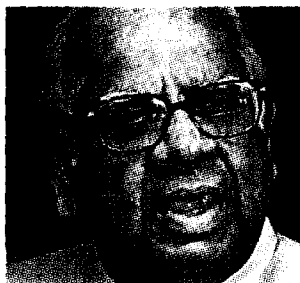
New Delhi, March 14: Barely has the Jharkhand cacophony begun to subside and Parliament resumed its business than battle lines are being redrawn in Delhi.

The BJP-led alliance has indirectly asked presiding officers of Assemblies and legislative councils of the states it rules to boycott a meeting Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee has called on March 20 to discuss the constitutional powers of the judiciary and the legislature.

The move came on a day Chatterjee indicated that he would go ahead with the conference, though the government had rejected an all-party suggestion for a presidential reference to the Supreme Court on the ruling that advanced the Jharkhand trust vote.

"I don't care what the *sarkar* says. I don't care," Chatterjee said. However, he said there is "no confrontation" be-

TELL-ALL TUESDAY



Beginning this week, Somnath Chatterjee will inform the House every Tuesday how much time has been lost due to disruptions in the previous week.

"This is to make the members aware of their responsibilities. People can also keep track of the time lost," a source in the Speaker's office said.

tween the judiciary and the legislature.

The NDA, unable to make up its mind on pursuing a threatened no-confidence motion against Chatterjee, adopted a resolution this evening.

It said: "The NDA is sure that the 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 Indi-

an democracy."

NDA sources said the resolution was phrased "cautiously" so that the coalition would not be perceived as thrusting its "diktat" on presiding officers who are deemed to be above party politics. "Our Speakers are intelligent enough to understand the message," BJP leader V.K. Malhotra said.

The sub-text was that even a "limited" boycott by presiding officers would strengthen the NDA's line that the office of the Lok Sabha Speaker was

getting "enmeshed" in partisan politics. The NDA is in power in seven states, but some are ruled by the BJP's allies, all of which are not keen on pushing the issue beyond a point.

The Telugu Desam Party attended the NDA meeting today but did not confirm whether it was party to the resolution.

The NDA is also hoping that with the government distancing itself from the Speaker's views, the presiding officers of Congress-ruled states may not show up for the meeting.

However, Congress spokesperson Anand Sharma defended Chatterjee and said: "He understands the Constitution and the role of the Speaker very well."

The CPM picked up the gauntlet thrown by the BJP and is considering moving a privilege motion against the party for "insulting" the office of the Speaker.

THE TELEGRAPH 15 MAR 2005

9- Parliament
HD- 11
17/3

“Ready to face a no-confidence motion”

VZ

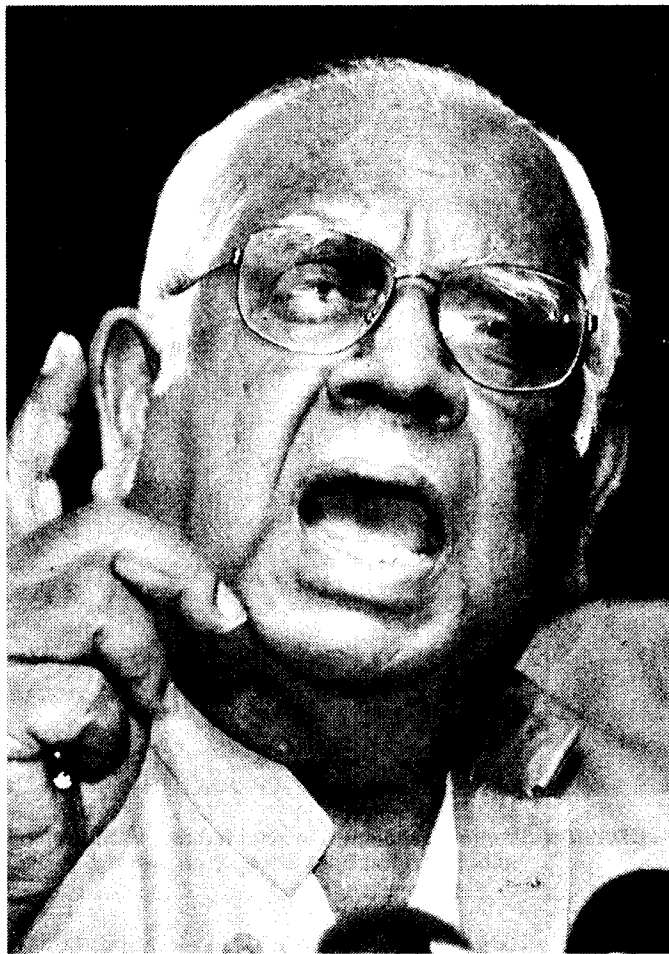
By Venkitesh Ramakrishnan

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, said today that his statement on the Supreme Court order of March 9 was “twisted, distorted and misread to serve political purposes.” If this “pursuit of political purposes” led to a no-confidence motion against him, he would face it with a clear conscience and would not run away from his responsibilities as the Speaker of the House of People. Also, there was no change in his plan to discuss the implications of the Supreme Court order with the Speakers of the State legislatures at a meeting on March 20.

Mr. Chatterjee made these remarks in an exclusive interview to *The Hindu* — the first after his March 10 statement, which evoked widespread reaction, including adverse comments from the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party. The Lok Sabha Speaker addressed all controversial issues that had come up in the wake of his statement.

Anger of judiciary

Refuting the accusation that his statement had provided ammunition to the Shibu Soren-led Jharkhand Government, which resigned on March 11, and the pro tem Speaker appointed by it to stall the implementation of the Supreme Court's directive to complete the floor test, Mr. Chatterjee said his statement was not all concerned with the political merits or demerits of the Jharkhand situation. “Whether Jharkhand is ruled by A or B or



Somnath Chatterjee (file photo)

C is of no concern to me. In a sense, I consider that the Supreme Court order is a reflection of the anger of the judiciary at the way parliamentary democracy is practised in this country. I respect that sentiment. But at the same time, I was and continue to be deeply disturbed with some basic

thrusters of the order, and that is what found reflection in my statement.”

Mr. Chatterjee said that he perceived the Supreme Court order as a serious encroachment by the judiciary on well-demarcated areas of power of the legislatures and that the contours of areas of supremacy

of different institutions had got blurred through the order. Pointing out that Articles 122 and 212 of the Constitution symbolised the supremacy of the legislatures within their own sphere, he said the provisions were equally binding on the Speaker as well as the Supreme Court.

“What will be the business to be transacted in the Assembly, how disturbance and disorderliness there will be handled, who can take steps to maintain peace, who can take pictures in the House, all these questions are related to the procedures of conduct of the legislatures. My understanding is that the Supreme Court has no role in dictating all this and an order that relates to all this has certainly disturbed my conscience. Will the judiciary send police to control disturbance in the Assembly? Will it send lawyers as observers to watch the proceedings? Is all this possible? What is the meaning of this order? All that I wanted to state was that the country should take note of it and discuss whether this is a good development,” the Speaker said, pointing out that the Jharkhand imbroglio was ultimately resolved by the executive and not the Supreme Court.

Commenting on the debate on why the Union Government refused to follow his directive to seek a Presidential reference on the Supreme Court order, Mr. Chatterjee said the Speaker's office was not concerned with the Government at all. He characterised the debate as a classic example of giving politically confrontationist connotations to everything.

Jharkhand
HD 7

No-trust move against Somnath Chatterjee?

m3

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MARCH 11. The National Democratic Alliance is planning a three-pronged attack to help install its own government in Jharkhand — it may consider bringing a no-confidence motion against the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee; it is seeking another appointment with the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, to press its view that an “unconstitutional government” (of Shibu Soren) is in office in Jharkhand and should be dismissed and instead an Arjun Munda government should be installed; and it could think of going to the Supreme Court again to point out that its interim order in the Jharkhand-related case has been violated.

The deputy leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Lok Sabha, V.K. Malhotra, said that at two meetings of NDA leaders today, the issue of a no-confidence motion against Mr. Chatterjee came up for discussion but “a decision will be taken on Monday at a full meeting of the NDA.”

He virtually said that the Speaker had no business calling such a large meeting of party leaders as he did on Thursday and he should not have issued

the statement suggesting that a Presidential reference be made to the Supreme Court on separation of powers of the judiciary and the legislature.

The NDA has also decided to approach the President once again to apprise him of the “fact” of an “illegal minority government” was continuing in Ranchi. “We demand that the Governor of Jharkhand withdraw his pleasure from the appointment of Shibu Soren as Chief Minister, and make [BJP leader] Arjun Munda the Chief Minister,” the senior BJP leader and general secretary, Arun Jaitley, said.

“Not only constitutional and democratic norms have been flouted, but the Supreme Court’s order on a trial of strength in Ranchi have also been violated,” he added. Jharkhand was witnessing “the strange spectacle of a minority government and the majority in Opposition,” he added.

Angered by the developments in Jharkhand where the pro tem Speaker, Pradeep Kumar Balmuchu, failed to put the Shibu Soren Government through a floor test, which has been put off till March 15, the BJP leader said: “The Speaker’s statement yesterday was being quoted by the

pro tem Speaker [in Ranchi] and this was an excuse to illegally, unconstitutionally and in violation of the Supreme Court’s orders keep the Soren Government in office for a longer period. Their view was that the Speaker had provided an excuse to the pro tem Speaker in Ranchi to violate the court’s order with impunity.

“The ruling party members created trouble in the Assembly and forced adjournments and these were then used as an excuse not to conduct the floor test. It is a grand conspiracy of the United Progressive Alliance, and the Jharkhand Governor and pro-tem Speaker have become its instruments.”

A unanimous resolution adopted at the NDA leaders’ meeting this morning stated: “The NDA believes that both the legislature and the judiciary are supreme in their own fields. However, the ultimate supremacy is that of the Constitution. Both must subserve the purpose and goals enshrined in the Constitution. The role of the Central Government, the UPA, the Governor and the pro tem Speaker of the Jharkhand Assembly is extremely disturbing.”

**‘Somnath’s approach correct’:
Page 11**

Parliament erupts over Jharkhand

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 11. — There were frequent shouts of "Shame! Shame!" during the brief discussions on the Jharkhand issue in Parliament even as the Assembly in that state was getting adjourned. The Rajya Sabha also witnessed some noisy scenes as members of the House demanded immediate central intervention in Jharkhand, which is witnessing a political turmoil.

During Zero Hour, when special mentions were being taken up, BJP leader, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, sought to intervene saying the leader of opposition, Mr Jaswant Singh, had a matter of import to convey. Similarly, the issue was brought up in the lower house, by BJP leader, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra. During the uproar, the house was briefly adjourned.

Later, when discussions began, Mr Malhotra said the pro-tem Speaker in the Jharkhand Assembly had no right to conduct the House. He feared the trou-



Mr Basu

ble would lead to President's rule. Apart from the BJP, the Left was also critical of the government. CPI leader, Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, today said he did not approve of the situation in Jharkhand and "democracy was being tinkered with." He added that the Assembly should be asked to decide and that Presidential rule must be the last resort. He also criticised the NDA for taking MLAs to Rajasthan, which was a shame, he added. Mr Rupchand Pal of the CPI(M) made a similar point about the kidnapping.

Delhi and find out. They are saying who will vote and who will not and when the voting will take place. Who are they? This has never happened before," Mr Basu said. — SNS & PTI

Who are they, asks Basu
KOLKATA, March 11. — Former West Bengal chief minister Mr Jyoti Basu and Speaker Mr Hasim Abdul Halim today criticised the role of the judiciary in the Jharkhand episode. "The Supreme Court's role is highly irregular. What was the need to intervene after the President had summoned the Jharkhand Governor". "I think Somnath Chatterjee is right. I don't think this is within the duties of the SC. I'll go to

Criticism of the Congress came from the anti-NDA Samajwadi Party MP, Mr Mohan Singh as well.

In his reply, defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee said the Centre or the Congress should not be held responsible for the situation. "It is a matter of the state and there is no occasion for government intervention." In the RS, after initial heckling from the ruling benches, Mr Singh brought to the notice of the House that the Jharkhand Assembly was adjourned repeatedly to avoid a vote of confidence as directed by the Supreme Court.

Speaker went overboard: BJP

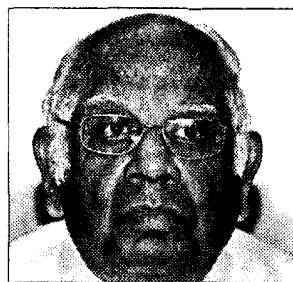
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 11. — The BJP today criticised the Lok Sabha Speaker's suggestion for a presidential reference on the Supreme Court directive on Jharkhand, saying he had gone "overboard".

Expressing concern over the 'selective anger' against the SC directive, BJP leader, Mrs Sushma Swaraj alleged that "the Speaker has become a party in it and is trying to force the government to go ahead with the presidential reference on Supreme Court directive".

Accusing the Congress of playing "dirty games", BJP spokesman, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said the Congress wants to stoop down to any level to form the government "by hook or by crook" in Jharkhand.

On the repeated adjournment of the Jharkhand House today, Mr Malhotra said it is clear from their conduct that the UPA does



Mr Chatterjee

not have a majority in the House.

The BJP also asked Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh and the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi to come clean on the issue and direct the state leadership to honour democratic values.

The jungle raj in Jharkhand Assembly cannot take place without support from the Centre, the party said. Calling it a "Central government dictatorship", Mr Malhotra accused the left parties of criticising the judiciary. "Communists have no faith in the judiciary," he added.

ASSEMBLY IMPASSE

President's rule may be lifted

PANAJI, March 11. — Congress leaders in Goa today claimed that President's rule may be lifted from the state and Mr Pratapsingh Rane be reinstated as chief minister as they have "cleared the misunderstanding about happenings here" during a meeting with President A P J Abdul Kalam and senior party leaders in New Delhi. — PTI

Razi to stay

NEW DELHI, March 11. — Centre has ruled out the possibility of recalling the Jharkhand Governor, Syed Sibtey Razi, as sought by the opposition BJP. Even while the UPA government continued to distance itself from the developments in Jharkhand, including the Governor's controversial decision to invite Mr Sibtey Razi to form the government, according to sources, there is no move to recall him. "For now, there is definitely no thinking on these lines," a source said. — SNS

12 MAR 2005

AD-11
11/3

Echo in Parliament over court order on Jharkhand

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 10. Parliament today witnessed noisy scenes over the Supreme Court directive on Jharkhand even as the Government expressed its willingness to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the matter.

As soon as the Lok Sabha assembled in the morning, the members of the Left parties led by Basudeb Acharya raised the issue, with the Rashtriya Janata Dal and Congress MPs lending support. The matter kept cropping up intermittently as agitated Left party MPs sought to draw the House's attention to the issue.

The Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, informed the House that considering the importance, he had called a meeting of the leaders in the evening after which he would make his observation. He even admonished some members who insisted that the issue be taken up immediately. "Because of the way we are behaving, other organs are getting importance," he said. "Organs of the state should conduct [themselves] within powers," the Speaker later said.

In the Rajya Sabha, the issue was raised by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s Nilotpal Basu but noisy interruptions by the BJP members drowned

the House in the din. Even when the Deputy Chairman, K. Rehman Khan, said that Mr. Basu had taken the permission to raise the matter, it made no difference to the noise in the House.

Sushma's objection

Fali S. Nariman (Nominated) stood up and had barely said that he was a supporter of judicial activism when the BJP's Sushma Swaraj raised a point of order. Ms. Swaraj said that as Mr. Nariman was a lawyer in the Supreme Court in the Jharkhand case and had a conflict of interest on the issue he should not be allowed to speak.

Her objection triggered a fresh

wave of protests, with the Congress and the Left parties accusing the NDA members of casting aspersions on the personal integrity of Mr. Nariman, a senior lawyer.

Amid heated exchanges between the ruling and Opposition benches, Mr. Nariman said that he was yielding to Ms. Swaraj and did not wish to say anything on the issue even as he was requested by the Congress members to make his observations. At one point, the Deputy Chairman expressed his helplessness by saying that he had allowed Mr. Nariman to speak but the member had chosen not to make any observations.

Lok Sabha adjourned over Fernandes' remark

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 10. The Lok Sabha was adjourned for a short while this morning over the National Democratic Alliance convenor, George Fernandes' reported "threat" that the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, would meet the same fate as that of her mother-in-law and former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

The issue was raised in the

House by Ram Kripal Yadav of the Rashtriya Janata Dal as the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address was being taken up.

With the Opposition joining issue as Congress and some Left members backed the RJD initiative, the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, adjourned the House for 10 minutes.

Later, briefing the media, the Congress spokesman, Anand Sharma, said the former Prime

Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, L. K. Advani, should take a clear position on the issue.

Stating that the Congress was agitated over the threat to the "person of the party president, Sonia Gandhi," he said: "Such a threat in our political life as part of political dialogue is reprehensible and should be condemned by all those who uphold civilised debate."

"What is implied in George Fernandes' unprovoked statement? Is this part of a diabolic plan or has Mr. Fernandes — frustrated by the CBI investigation in the Tehelka scam and registration of cases against his close associates including Jaya Jaitly — lost his sense of proportion and mental balance?" Mr. Sharma asked while demanding that the Government investigate the matter.

THE HINDU

11 MAR 2005

Ruling created disturbing situation: Speaker

Parliamentary
5/1

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 10. — Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee today termed the interim SC ruling on Jharkhand as “greatly disturbing” as it seemed to intrude into the sphere of the legislature.

“With all respect to the Honourable Supreme Court and without going into the political merits of the issue, to my mind, the order has created a disturbing situation”.

He made the statement after a two-hour all-party meeting to discuss the ruling. Mr Chatterjee said that one of the suggestions was that a request be made to the President under Article 143 of the Constitution to refer the matter to the Supreme Court.

Calling for a discussion on the issue so that “constitutional balance” can be restored, the Speaker said:

“In my opinion, as has been suggested by many honourable leaders, to resolve all questions, the respected President may be requested to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution,” adding that “this shows our faith in the judiciary”.

The Speaker pointed out that separation of powers was a basic feature of the Constitution, giving sustenance to parliamentary democracy.

“The judiciary is supreme in its own sphere and as such the conduct of the judges is not permitted to be discussed in any legislature. But bona fide views can always be expressed on any order or judgment of even the Honourable Supreme Court,” he said.

The Speaker said so far as the legislatures are concerned, Articles 122 and 212 of the Constitution are

two of the most important provisions which symbolise the supremacy of the legislatures within their own spheres.

The two Articles ensure, he said, that no officer or member of Parliament who is vested with the power of regulating the House procedure or conduct of business or maintaining order, shall be subject to the jurisdiction of any court in the exercise of those powers.

The Speaker said whether the chief secretary or the DGP can assure attendance of MLAs were issues which were strictly within the jurisdiction of the legislatures. He said the legislatures should consider the consequences of any encroachment upon their authority and jurisdiction. “It is necessary for the legislatures to assert their supremacy,” he added.

11/3

Stung by SC, UPA wants President to step in

9-10-05
11/3
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 10. — While the BJP today walked out of the all-party meeting convened by Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Somnath Chatterjee to discuss the Supreme Court order on the Jharkhand Assembly, the UPA members and the Left urged the Centre to request the President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, to approach the court and ensure that no such infringements take place in the future.

The all-party meeting was convened following uproarious scenes witnessed in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha over the Supreme Court directive on the Jharkhand issue. The matter was raised by Mr Basudeb Acharya (CPI-M) in the Lok Sabha during Question Hour, and his senior party colleague Mr Nilotpal Basu took it up in the Upper House during Zero Hour. Both stressed the need for mutual respect among judiciary, executive and the legislature.

At the two-hour meeting, while expressing serious concern over what some of them described as "extra-judicial activism", the UPA members and others said that such an incident should not go unnoticed.

Round One to NDA in Jharkhand

RANCHI, March 10. — The UPA's brief tryst with power in Jharkhand is likely to come to an end with 41 legislators unanimously expressing their support to the NDA on the first day of the Assembly session today. Day One went to the NDA with all its 41 legislators taking oath. Three legislators, including the lone NCP member and minister, abstained from taking oath, thus giving jitters to the UPA. The three are: minister Mr Karmlesh Singh (NCP), Forward Bloc MLA Mrs Aparna Sengupta and her controversial colleague Mr Bhanu Pratap Shahi. The Forward Bloc is not a recognised party in Jharkhand, so the MLAs could be termed as Independents and hence could vote for NDA. A highly-placed source said there could be a possibility that the trio might either abstain from the vote of confidence or vote for the NDA. According to a senior politician, if Mr Singh votes for the NDA, he might be expelled from the NCP but will not stand to lose his membership of the House as he would not attract the provisions of the anti-defection law. However, the NCP has given a letter of support to the UPA. — SNS

Details on page 4

The government should approach the President seeking his intervention through making a reference to the Supreme Court under Section 143. Many members said the court's decision was illogical and took serious note of the issue as the sovereignty of Parliament was in question. The defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, who spoke on behalf of the government asked for time to discuss the matter with the Prime Minister.

Walking out of the meeting midway, the BJP, however, continued to

meeting included Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Mr K Rehman Khan, noted jurist and nominated MP, Mr Fali Nariman, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mr Suresh Pachouri, Mr Omar Abdullah, Mr Ram Gopal Yadav and Mr Lalu Prasad. The BJP was represented by Mr Jaswant Singh, Ms Sushma Swaraj and Mr VK Malhotra and the Left by Mr Acharya and Mr Basu of the CPI-M and Mr Manoj Bhattacharya and Mr J Baxla of the RSP. Before the meeting, the Left leaders, Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet of the CPI-M and Mr AB Bardhan of the CPI, said: "Judicial activism was going too far." Congress spokesman Mr Anand Sharma told reporters that the dignity of the legislature had to be maintained.

Earlier, the BJP urged the Speaker not to "divide the House" on the issue of the Supreme Court's powers. Accusing the Congress of "double standard", the BJP spokesman, Mr VK Malhotra, said: "If the Supreme Court can decide on Lord Ram's birthplace, why can't it decide whether the Constitution is being followed or not." For the Congress it becomes difficult to accept the directive against "a tainted leader like Siby Soren", Mr Malhotra added.

Motion Of Thanks To President Tailormade To Hurl Censure At UPA

Oppn makes political curry of Jharkhand turmoil in House

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 9 MARCH

THE political developments in Goa and Jharkhand cast their shadow on the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address in Parliament, with the Opposition training its guns on the UPA government.

Discussions on the motion of thanks to the President's address in the two Houses of Parliament, which resumed their proceedings on Wednesday after a four-day hiatus caused by the stand-off over the role of governors in the two states, saw a determined Opposition and the ruling coalition trading charges over developments, which, at one point of time, threatened to consume almost the entire first half of Budget session.

Playing to a strategy, the BJP-led Opposition hit the government where it hurt the most.

"The manner in which various issues are being handled is a matter of grave concern," leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Jaswant Singh said.

"There are several centres of power. It is really disturbing. We have a Prime Minister who has great competence without authority. We have authority, but there is no competence. This is the price the country is paying



YES PRIME MINISTER

precisely," Mr Singh said.

In the Lok Sabha, the task of leading the Opposition charge was left to JD(U) president and former defence minister George Fernandes.

Picking points from the presidential address, in particular its assertion that "in the final analysis, power in India can only flow from the ballot box, never from the barrel of the gun", he attacked the government's political reflexes. "Our experiences in Goa and Jharkhand show how committed it (the government) is to ballot and democracy," he said. Sounding a cautious note to the Samajwadi Party, which extends outside support to the UPA gov-

ernment, Mr Fernandes said: "After the two states, now they are looking for new places and often references are being made to Uttar Pradesh." With Goa and Jharkhand providing the springboard for their assault, the NDA leaders went all out. Lamenting that institutions were being eroded, Jaswant Singh said: "If institutions are rendered inoperative or weak, we are guilty of very substantial and substantive wrong. It is saddening."

He also wondered about the functioning of the UPA government, citing a senior Cabinet minister's statement that he was not aware of the happenings in Jharkhand to buttress his point.

"The government ought to know what was happening," he said, adding: "If they do not know what was happening, how will they do the right thing?" He said the incidents of the recent past indicated that there is no unity in the ruling UPA coalition, which was neither united nor progressive. "The UPA abbreviation is a misnomer," he said.

Rising to the government's defence in the Lok Sabha, Basudeb Acharya of the CPM argued that the BJP-led NDA has no moral right to raise the Jharkhand issue as the same alliance was responsible for installing Nitish Kumar as the Bihar chief minister after the 2000 Assembly polls despite the fact that he did not have the majority. At the same time, he cautioned the Manmohan Singh government against pursuing anti-poor and anti-people policies, observing that people not only wanted change in the government, but also in policy. The policies of 'LPG' (liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation) are adversely affecting the country, he alleged.

Madhusudan Mistry of the Congress sought to counter the Opposition onslaught by asserting that while his party was committed to democratic values, the same was not the case with the BJP, which is leading the NDA.

Opposition stalls Parliament over Razi's 'conduct'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 3. Parliament was adjourned for the third successive day today without transacting much business as a determined Opposition stalled proceedings over the "conduct" of the Governor of Jharkhand in inviting a minority United Progressive Alliance coalition to form the Government.

The Rajya Sabha was initially adjourned till two p.m. within minutes of assembling as tempers ran high and Opposition members raised slogans against the Government. The All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Samajwadi Party and the Telugu Desam Party joined the NDA members in protesting the Jharkhand Governor's action and demanding his recall.

When the House reassembled, the Bharatiya Janata Party members were again on their feet along with those of the TDP, AIADMK and the SP. Even as there was pandemonium in the House, Karan Singh (Congress) moved the motion of thanks on the President's address, which was seconded by Vayalar Ravi. Amid the din the Deputy Chairman, K. Rahman

Khan, adjourned the House for the day.

In the Lok Sabha, no business could be transacted as an agitated Opposition forced two adjournments just half-an-hour into its sitting. Moments after the House began its second sitting at 11.30 a.m., Devendra Prasad, who was in the chair, adjourned it for the day.

'Undeclared emergency'

Later speaking to mediapersons, the SP leader, Amar Singh, said the Jharkhand Governor's action was "more lethal" than the Emergency declared in 1975. He alleged that the Congress was up to its old trick of toppling governments. "This is [an] undeclared emergency when Opposition voices are being muffled. However, by this it should not be taken that we are supportive of the NDA. It is a question of constitutional crisis and we oppose it."

The AIADMK leader, P.G. Narayanan, voicing his party's opposition to the "act of the Jharkhand Governor in violating the Constitution and democratic norms," clarified that this did not mean that his party was with the NDA.

Controversial, says CPI(M)

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 3. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) today said the "hasty manner" in which the Jharkhand Governor, Syed Sibtey Razi, had gone about ascertaining support for the two combinations was "controversial."

The Polit Bureau said the par-

ty held the position that the claims of majority support must be decided on the floor of the legislature. "The Governor, or the Raj Bhavan, cannot be the deciding factor." The BJP should realise that it had used Governors in a partisan manner, as seen in the installation of an unrepresentative government in Bihar in 2002, it said.

NDA protests over Jharkhand stalls Parliament proceedings

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, MAR. 2. Proceedings in Parliament were stalled for the second day today — this time over the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) not being invited by the Governor of Jharkhand to form the government.

While the Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day soon after it met in the morning without conducting any business, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, refused to yield to the Opposition demand for a day's adjournment till afternoon.

Repeatedly stating that he would not allow the House to be held hostage, Mr. Chatterjee adjourned proceedings for short durations thrice. He finally called it a day 45 minutes into

the post-lunch session after the Opposition — which picketed the well right through — raised its chorus of protest to drown the ruling benches' effort to move the motion of thanks on the President's address.

Charge levelled

The Jharkhand issue was raised by the Opposition in both Houses as soon as they met for the day. Amid protests from the ruling benches, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, L.K. Advani, said the Constitution was being violated. Citing the Sarkaria Commission recommendations, which said Raj Bhavans should not be used to subvert the Constitution, he said the Government should ask the Governor, Syed Sibtay Razi, to behave properly. Responding,

the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, said there was no question of any Raj Bhavan being misused under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government.

Turning down the demand for a discussion, Mr. Chatterjee sought to take up Question Hour, but the Opposition, demanding an adjournment, laid siege to the well till he gave in. His repeated appeals to the Opposition to use the motion of thanks to make their point on the Jharkhand situation fell on deaf ears. Mr. Chatterjee however got papers listed for the day tabled. The Government also managed to introduce the motion of thanks.

Earlier in the day, amid persistent slogan shouting by Bharatiya Janata Party

members, which was countered occasionally by the treasury benches, the Chairman, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, adjourned the Rajya Sabha for the day, upset by the conduct of the members. "Unparliamentary words are being used to raise slogans. I sought cooperation from both the sides. It is not possible to run the House in this manner," he observed.

The day began with sharp exchanges between the Congress and the BJP members when former BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, tried to raise the issue without any notice before Question Hour. Mr. Shekhawat said he should have given notice but rules did allow a member to raise an issue if permitted by the Chair. For several minutes, there were vociferous protests

from both sides. The NDA members were joined by Samajwadi Party and Telugu Desam Party members, while Congress members waved the list of questions demanding that Question Hour be taken up.

Mr. Naidu said that after Goa, Jharkhand was another example of the undemocratic attitude of the UPA Government. He said Union Ministers were not attending Parliament and were in Jharkhand to issue threats.

When Mr. Shekhawat asked senior Congress leaders Pranab Mukherjee and Shivraj Patil if they wanted to reply, several Congress members rose to their feet. Much of what they said was lost in the ensuing din, as the BJP members trooped into the well of the House raising slogans.

THE HINDU

03 MAR 2005

Uproar over Goa Government dismissal; both Houses adjourned

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 1. The Opposition today forced an adjournment in both Houses of Parliament over the dismissal of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government in Goa. While the Lok Sabha was adjourned without transaction of business in

the morning, the Rajya Sabha followed suit in the afternoon after an unrelenting Opposition maintained its fire despite a two-hour pre-lunch adjournment.

In both Houses, the Opposition raised the issue as soon as it met for the day. Amid slogan raising, the Opposition de-

manded the suspension of question hour to move an adjournment motion regarding the dismissal of the "duly elected Manohar Parrikar Government" by the Governor of Goa.

The Opposition in the Lok Sabha found support for its cause in the Samajwadi Party. Though the Lok Sabha Speak-

er, Somnath Chatterjee, allowed the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Adyani, to speak about the admissibility of the motion and the Leader of the House, Pranab Mukherjee, to respond, he turned it down on the premise that the rules did not permit it; leading to the first adjournment for 15 minutes.

But with leaders of the two main political combinations agreeing to an adjournment of the House for the day at a meeting in the Speaker's Chamber, Mr. Chatterjee — while withholding his "consent to the notice of adjournment motion" — gave in to the consensus and adjourned the Lok Sabha for the

day. Of the view that the issue ought to be discussed in the House, the Speaker, in his observations, maintained that the right to move an adjournment motion for discussing a matter of urgent public importance was subject to the condition that it did "not deal with any matter which is under adjudi-

cation by a court of law."

Further, quoting Kaul and Shakdher — a well-known book on Parliamentary practices — he said: "It has been held by Speakers from time to time that conduct of the Governor of a State should not be raised by way of an adjournment motion."

THE HINDU

02 MAR 2005

ছুতোয় বয়কট এন ডি এ-র ক্ষিপ্ত সোমনাথ

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ২৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি— পর পর দু'বছর রেলমন্ত্রী লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের রেল-বাজেট বয়কট করলেন বিরোধীরা। একই ছুতো। রেলমন্ত্রী দাগি। তাঁর কাছ থেকে বাজেট-ভাষণ তাই শোনা হবে না। এই দাবিতে আজ এন ডি এ সভা থেকে ওয়াকআউট করে। তবে এ নিয়ে আজ রীতিমতো বাকযুদ্ধ হয় লোকসভার অধ্যক্ষ সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের সঙ্গে বিরোধী সাংসদদের। পরাজ্ঞপে নামে এক সাংসদ অধ্যক্ষের নির্দেশ উপেক্ষা করে সভা থেকে বেরিয়ে যাওয়ার সময় সমানে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবকে লক্ষ্য করে নানা কথা বলে যান। অধ্যক্ষ বলে ওঠেন, এটা বাজার নয়। এভাবে কথা বলবেন না। কিন্তু পরাজ্ঞপে বলেই চলেন। অধ্যক্ষ তাঁকে সতর্ক করে বলেন, আপনি না থামলে আপনাকে সাসপেন্ড করব। পরাজ্ঞপে চ্যালেঞ্জের সুরে বলে ওঠেন, তা-ই করুন না! অধ্যক্ষকে বলতে শোনা যায়, সত্যিই খুবই দুর্ভাগ্যজনক ঘটনা। এর আগে বি জে পি নেতা বিজয়কুমার মালহোত্রা লালুপ্রসাদকে লক্ষ্য করে অধ্যক্ষকে বলেন, একজন দাগি ব্যক্তির মন্ত্রী হওয়া দেশের অপমান। আর জে ডি-র সাংসদরাও অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী বাবরি মসজিদ ধ্বংসের আগের দিনের যে বক্তৃতা দিয়েছিলেন, তার কপি তুলে ধরেন। উঠে দাঁড়ান বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আদবানি। তিনি বলেন, সুপ্রিম কোর্ট বলেছে দাগি মন্ত্রীদের বিষয়ে সংসদকেই ব্যবস্থা নিতে হবে। অধ্যক্ষকে এ সময়ে বলতে

ব্যানার্জির রিপোর্ট সংসদে

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ২৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি—উমেশচন্দ্র ব্যানার্জি কমিটির গোধরা রিপোর্ট আজ সংসদে পেশ করলেন রেলমন্ত্রী লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব। বাজেট ভাষণের পরই রেলমন্ত্রী দু'খণ্ডের রিপোর্ট জমা দেন। প্রসঙ্গত, এই সপ্তাহে মন্ত্রিসভার বৈঠকে ব্যানার্জি কমিটির মেয়াদ ৩ মাস বাড়ানো হয়েছে। আমেদাবাদের খবর, গোধরার ঘটনার সময় আইন-শৃঙ্খলার দায়িত্বে থাকা পশ্চিম রেলওয়ের ৯ পুলিশ-কর্মীকে আজ সাসপেন্ড করা হয়েছে। দায়িত্বে অবহেলার দায়ে কেন তাদের বরখাস্ত করা হবে না সেই মর্মে নোটিসও দেওয়া হয়েছে।

শোনা যায়, কেউ আমাকে সুপ্রিম কোর্টের ওই নির্দেশ দেখায়নি। একজন সাংসদ তবুও একই কথা বলতে থাকায় সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় চটে উঠে বলেন, আপনার কাছে নির্দেশের কপি আছে? এ নিয়ে সমানে এন ডি এ-র সাংসদরা হজা চালিয়ে যান। লালুপ্রসাদ বলে ওঠেন, আরে দেরি করছেন কেন? বেরিয়ে যান। পিঠ দেখান। কখনও তো আমার সামনে এসে কিছু বলতে পারেন না। এরই মাঝে দেখা যায়, বাজপেয়ী এবং আদবানি দুজনেই উঠে দাঁড়িয়ে পড়েছেন। এন ডি এ-র সাংসদরা এর পর সভা থেকে বেরিয়ে যান। লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব বলে ওঠেন, রেল-বাজেটের পর আমি গোধরা-কাণ্ড নিয়ে ব্যানার্জি কমিটির রিপোর্ট পেশ করব। তাই ওরা ভয় পেয়ে পালাচ্ছে। এদিকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজ পরিষ্কার করে বলেছেন, তথাকথিত দাগি মন্ত্রীদের নিয়ে সংসদে আলোচনা করতে সরকার বিন্দুমাত্র ভীত নয়। তিনি বলেন, আমরা ভীত নই। আলোচনায় প্রস্তুত। অন্য এক প্রশ্নের জবাবে প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়েছেন, কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সোনিয়া গান্ধী বাজেট নিয়ে চিঠি লিখে কোনও অন্যায় করেননি। বাজেট তৈরির সময় এ-ধরনের প্রস্তাব সরকার গ্রহণ করেই থাকে। এর সঙ্গে বাজেট ফাঁস হয়ে যাওয়ার কোনও সম্পর্ক নেই। প্রধানমন্ত্রী এদিন টেলিফোনে কথা বলেন ডি এম কে প্রধান এম করুণানিধির সঙ্গে। ডি এম কে-র মন্ত্রী এলানগোভান এবং কংগ্রেসের রাজ্যসভার এক সাংসদের একটি মন্তব্যকে ঘিরে ডি এম কে-র সঙ্গে কংগ্রেসের বোঝাপড়ায় সামান্য চিড় ধরেছে। এঁরা বলেছিলেন, তামিলনাড়ুতে জোট গড়ে সরকার গঠন করাই হল কংগ্রেসের নীতি। এটা নতুন কিছু নয়। ১৯৬৭ সাল থেকেই এটা চলে আসছে। করুণানিধি এমন মন্তব্যে চটে যান। তাঁকে ঠান্ডা করতে সোনিয়া এবং মনমোহন দুজনেই ফোনে কথা বলেছেন। বলেছেন, কোনও ব্যক্তি-বিশেষকে কংগ্রেসের নীতি নির্ধারণের দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হয়নি।

Laptop start to Budget Session

^{of Parliament} Kalam calls for new deal

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 25. — President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, a laptop computer before him, today reiterated India's drive towards economic development and social progress and also, called for a "new deal" for rural India in the form of more economic and employment opportunities.

Opening the Budget Session with an address to both Houses of Parliament, the President said his government was committed to the national Common Minimum Programme (CMP) and to creating an environment of social and political stability to ensure the welfare of weaker sections of society. He spoke of the government's desire for "a caring polity and a sharing economy."

After a recent shoulder injury, the President was more comfortable using a laptop than turning the pages of his 24-page address. This is the first time a head of state has

used a computer to help him deliver an address in Parliament.

Appreciating the "judicious mix of economic policies and administrative intervention" by his government, Dr Kalam said it managed to bring down the rate of inflation to 5 per cent after it had risen to above 8 per cent. He said foreign trade has grown by 5.6 per cent in April-January 2004-05.

"All macro-economic indications are robust and positive" and there is an air of optimism in the economy and the markets, the President said, adding that the government will continue to pursue policies to sustain "this recovery and accelerated growth" while maintaining a high degree of fiscal discipline.

The President spoke of India being an "inclusive society, a caring polity and a sharing economy,"

He called for a "fair deal" for the deprived sections and a "new deal" to rural India.

THE STATESMAN

26 FEB 2005

BJP to stall Parliament over Goa dismissal

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 24: As the Congress-led alliance shored up its strength in the 35-member Goa Assembly after a senior BJP legislator resigned his seat and brought down its number to 16, four days ahead of the confidence vote, the BJP's central leaders decided they would stall proceedings in Parliament on March 1 over the "undemocratic" dismissal of the Manohar Parrikar government.

The meeting of the BJP leaders this evening, chaired by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was held to draw up a tentative strategy to corner the UPA in the budget session.

The strategy will be fine-tuned in another meeting of the NDA leaders tomorrow, which will also decide whether the NDA will boycott the rail budget presentation by railway minister Laloo Prasad Yadav on February 26 as he was labelled as a "tainted" minister by the alliance.

S.S. Ahluwalia, the BJP's



Parikkar: Hard times

chief whip in the Rajya Sabha, called the Goa government's dismissal as a "bypass surgery of the anti-defection law" and said it was a "matter of public importance which we want to discuss in a democratic manner". Realising the potency of the issue, sources said it would be raised after the presentation of the general budget.

A Congress ministry headed by Pratapsinh Rane was installed on February 2 after governor S.C. Jamir dismissed the Manohar Parrikar-led BJP government.

Former Goa deputy chief minister Digambar Kamat quit the BJP today with plans to cross over to the Congress, causing a major setback to the BJP in its tussle to return to power in the state. With both the BJP and the Congress almost equally poised in the battle for numbers, every MLA counts. Rane will seek a vote of confidence on Monday.

Parrikar made desperate attempts to get back Kamat to his side. He told reporters that he "apprehended danger" to his party MLAs and also to his "own life".

The BJP leaders at today's meeting also took the view that the government must "clarify and elucidate" its position on "crucial" aspects of the latest peace package it offered to Pakistan. BJP sources objected to the "manner" in which the government announced the start of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service "without taking the Opposition and the country into confidence".

THE TELEGRAPH

25 FEB 2006

আইন আসছে : সভা ভঙ্গ করলে ভাতা বন্ধ সাংসদদের

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি—
সংসদ অচল করে রাখলে সাংসদরা দৈনিক ভাতা
পাবেন না। এখন তাঁদের দৈনিক ভাতা পাঁচশো
টাকা। একইভাবে বিধায়করাও বিধানসভায় কাজ
না করলে দৈনিক ভাতা পাবেন না। সাংসদদের এই
নিয়মে বাঁধতে খুব শিগগিরই প্রয়োজনীয় আইন ও
নিয়মবিধি তৈরি করা হবে। লোকসভার অধ্যক্ষ ও
রাজ্যসভার চেয়ারম্যানকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হবে
আইন সংশোধনের খসড়া তৈরি করার।
বিধানসভার অধ্যক্ষদের কাছেও সংসদ বিষয়ক
মন্ত্রক নিয়ম তৈরির জন্য অনুরোধ পাঠাবে। 'নো
ওয়ার্ক নো পে'— এই নিয়ম চালু করার কথা
উঠেছে সাংসদ ও বিধায়কদের মুখ্য সচেতক
সম্মেলন থেকে। হায়দরাবাদে সম্প্রতি শেষ হয়েছে
এই সম্মেলন। মুখ্য সচেতকরা মোট ১৫ দফা
সুপারিশ পাঠিয়েছেন সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রকের
কাছে। লোকসভার শীতকালীন অধিবেশনে এবার
কাজকর্ম হয়নি বললেই চলে। প্রধান বিরোধী দল বি
জে পি নানা ছুতোয় সভা ভঙ্গ করছে দিনের
পর দিন। অপচয় হয়েছে বেশ কয়েক কোটি টাকা।
সভা না হলেও বেতনের সঙ্গে সাংসদরা অনেকেই
সংসদ ভবনে এসে হাজিরা খাতায় সই করে দৈনিক
ভাতার টাকা তুলে নিয়েছেন। তাই মুখ্য সচেতক
সম্মেলন থেকে এই প্রস্তাব এসেছে। সংসদ বিষয়ক
মন্ত্রী গুলাম নবি আজাদ আজ দিল্লিতে এই
সুপারিশগুলির কথা সাংবাদিকদের জানান। সভা
দিনের মতো ভঙ্গ না হলেও যদি কিছু কাজকর্ম
হয়, তাহলেও কি সাংসদরা ভাতা পাবেন না?
গুলাম নবি জানান, এ নিয়ে লোকসভার অধ্যক্ষ
সোমনাথ চ্যাটার্জি সম্মেলনে বলেছেন, অন্তত
অর্ধেক দিন কাজ হতে হবে। তা না হলে তাকে

ভঙ্গ বললেই ধরা হবে। গুলাম নবি বলেন, অন্তত
সংসদে এ ব্যবস্থা চালু হবে। বিধানসভাগুলি বাকিটা
দেখবে। আগামী বছর মুখ্য সচেতকদের পরবর্তী
সম্মেলন। তার আগেই এই নিয়ম তৈরি হয়ে যাবে
বলে তিনি আশা প্রকাশ করেন। এই সম্মেলনে
অভিযোগ ওঠে, কোনও কোনও বিধানসভায়
বছরে মাত্র ৮ দিন অধিবেশন চলে। সুপারিশ করা
হয়েছে, এভাবে বিধানসভার অধিবেশন বন্ধ রাখা
চলবে না। সংসদের ক্ষেত্রে বছরে অন্তত ১০০
থেকে ১৩০ দিন এবং বড় রাজ্যের ক্ষেত্রে
বিধানসভার অধিবেশন কমপক্ষে ৭০ থেকে ৯০
দিন করতে হবে। ছোট রাজ্যের ক্ষেত্রে ৫০ দিন।
সরকার ও প্রধান দল ছাড়াও অন্য দলের মুখ্য
সচেতকদের জন্য বিশেষ সুযোগসুবিধা, রাজ্যেও
বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রকের পরামর্শদাতা কমিটি করা,
বিধানসভার অধিবেশন সরাসরি সম্প্রচারের
ব্যবস্থা— এই সব সুপারিশও এসেছে। সংসদ ভবনে
প্রায় প্রতিদিনই মধ্যাহ্নভোজের বিরতির পর
অধিবেশন বসার মুখে তারস্বরে দুই সভারই ঘণ্টা
বাজতে থাকে। সভার কোরাম হয় না। তাই
অধিবেশন চলে না। সাংসদদের সভায় হাজির
করানোর দায় থাকে মূলত সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রী ও
সরকারি দলের মুখ্য সচেতকের। কিন্তু এবার থেকে
প্রতিটি রাজনৈতিক দলের মুখ্য সচেতক ও
সচেতকদের এই ভূমিকা নিতে হবে। সংসদ ও
বিধায়কদের সভার মর্যাদা রক্ষার জন্য একটি নির্দিষ্ট
বিধিনিয়ম মেনে চলা উচিত। এ জন্য একটি
আচরণবিধি তৈরি করবে লোকসভা ও রাজ্যসভা।
গুলাম নবি এদিন জানান, সাত বছর পর মুখ্য
সচেতকদের সম্মেলন হল। এবার থেকে প্রতি বছর
এই সম্মেলন হবে।