

13 DEC 2005

# MP OR MONEY FOR POSERS

## OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 12: Some past and present stalwarts have been known to ask questions in Parliament in return for money, but for the first time a group of unknown MPs has been caught in the act on camera, thanks to technology.

A sting operation, carried out by the web portal Cobrapost headed by Aniruddha Bahal, who was also involved in the Tehelka revelations, showed 11 MPs taking money for putting posers before ministers in the House.

The MPs—10 from the Lok Sabha and one from the Rajya

Sabha—belong to the BJP, Congress, Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

But it was the BJP, which took the moral high ground in the oil-for-food scandal, that bore the deepest scars because six were from the party.

The operation began to be telecast on a news channel from eight in the morning. By the time Parliament met at 11, the presiding officers of both Houses had firmed up a strategy for damage control.

Rajya Sabha chairperson Bhairon Singh Shekhawat referred the matter to the House ethics committee. Headed by Karan Singh, the committee issued a showcause notice to BJP member Chhattrapal

Although the Lok Sabha has its own ethics panel, its rules have yet to be codified. In

consultation with the parties, Chatterjee formed an inquiry committee, which was mandated to seek explanations and statements from the MP XI by Wednesday morning.

The committee, headed by Congress chief whip Pawan Kumar Bansal, was tasked to give its report by 4 pm on December 21. Chatterjee said the committee had been authorised to follow its own procedure and the report would be presented before the House.

Karan Singh said if proven guilty, the MPs could be censured, reprimanded, suspended or punished in any other

way, including expulsion, deemed fit by the House.

In 1951, Jawaharlal Nehru had moved for expulsion of Congress MP H.G. Mudgal who had received monetary benefits in connection with his dealings with the Bullion Merchants Association. Mudgal had resigned.

Congress and BJP sources said given the mood of the political class, almost everybody favoured expulsion. Congress sources said they wanted to adhere to the precedent set by Nehru.

In private, most members acknowledged that while accepting bribes for asking leading questions was not exactly unheard of, the sight of some

“selling their souls” for Rs 15,000 was “disgraceful and disgusting”.

“It is not a question of Congress and BJP but of the dignity of the House,” said a Congress MP, who claimed that Aligarh MP Choudhury Bijendra Singh had thrown out the Cobrapost team.

“The footage on members refusing to bite the bait should also have been played to give a more objective picture,” said Congress spokesman Anand Sharma.

The Congress and the BJP suspended their MPs from their parliamentary parties. The BJP will conduct an internal probe.

■ Cash for questions, Page 6

## TAINTED XI The 11 MPs accused of taking money for asking questions in the House

- Anna Saheb M.K. Patil (BJP): MP from Erandol in Maharashtra and ex-minister. Rs 45,000 for 8 questions
- Y.G. Mahajan (BJP): Jalgaon in Maharashtra. Rs 35,000 for 15
- Suresh Chandel (BJP): Hamirpur in Himachal. Rs 30,000 for 2
- Chhattrapal Singh Lodha (BJP): Rajya Sabha MP elected from Orissa. Rs 15,000 for 6
- Pradeep Gandhi (BJP): Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh. Rs 55,000 for 5
- Chandra Pratap Singh (BJP): Sidhi in UP. Rs 35,000 for 5
- N.K. Kushwaha (BSP): Mirzapur in UP. Rs 55,000 for 6
- Lal Chandra Kol (BSP): Robertsganj in UP. Rs 35,000 for 4
- Raja Ram Pal (BSP): Bilhaur in UP. Rs 35,000 for 5
- Manoj Kumar (RJD): Palamau in Jharkhand. Rs 110,000 for 8
- Ram Sevak Singh (Congress): Gwalior in MP. Rs 50,000 for 5

# "Any secular party can jump on our bandwagon"

Says RJD, and extends indirect invitation to LJP, CPI

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) began on Monday seat-sharing talks with the Congress, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and decided to accommodate any other secular party desirous of joining the coalition for the Bihar Assembly elections.

The reference is to the Lok Jan Shakti Party and the Communist Party of India (CPI), which have decided to form a separate front with other Left parties and the Samajwadi Party, RJD sources said.

## The formula

The meeting here decided to re-allot all seats the four parties held in the dissolved House and those constituencies, where their candidates finished second.

The formula includes staking claim to seats, which they lost by less than 5,000 votes.

After this exercise, the alliance will have about 110 seats to share. The CPI (M) and the NCP

handed over to the RJD Congress the lists of seats they would like to contest, the sources said.

Emerging from the two-hour meeting, Railway Minister and RJD chief Lalu Prasad said, "We held preliminary talks today and by tomorrow we will finalise the seat-sharing adjustment so that we can start the campaign jointly. If any other party wants to join the secular compartment, we have no objection."

Extending an indirect invitation to the LJP and the CPI, Mr. Prasad dismissed the alternative coalition saying, "I have seen many such fronts. The voters will teach them a lesson." He did not comment on whether the RJD-led alliance would project a chief ministerial candidate during campaigning. "Everyone knows, in Bihar it is always Lalu versus the rest," he said.

Others present at the meeting included All-India Congress Committee general secretary Digvijay Singh, CPI (M) politburo member Sitaram Yechury, NCP leader Tariq Anwar and Pradesh Congress Committee chief Sadanand Singh.



**STRATEGY FOR POLLS:** CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, Congress leader Digvijay Singh and RJD chief Lalu Prasad emerge from a meeting in New Delhi on Monday.

— PHOTO: PTI

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HILUSTAN TIMES

# Third front begins to take shape in Bihar

## HTC and Agencies

New Delhi/Patna, September 18

IN A setback to Congress-RJD's efforts for a united front against BJP-led NDA in forthcoming Assembly elections in Bihar, Ramvilas Paswan-led LJP on Sunday firmed up alliances with CPI, Forward Bloc and SUCI for the electoral battle, setting the stage for a triangular contest.

After a two-day meeting of its national council, convened to discuss Bihar elections, CPI made public in Delhi its tie-up with LJP asserting that the two parties were against the "misrule" of Lalu Prasad's RJD and wanted to defeat NDA in the coming polls in the state.

"We are opposed to the misrule of the RJD. That is the single most reason why we have formed a separate secular al-

## Election Commission transfers DM, 10 SDOs

THE DISTRICT magistrate of Kaimur and 10 sub-divisional officers were on Sunday shifted in poll-bound Bihar on the directive of the election commission, official sources said. Sources in the personnel and administrative reforms department said

the district magistrate of Kaimur had been transferred. Sources said the officers were transferred after the Election Commission found complaints against them during the last Assembly polls were found to be true. **Agencies, Patna**

liance", CPI general secretary A. B. Bardhan told reporters.

"There will be an alliance between our party and Paswan-led LJP. Talks with CPI(ML) are going on. We are also talking to parties such as Forward Bloc and RSP and Samajwadi Party", he said adding the alliance proposed to contest all seats in the election on this basis.

## Perfect accord

In Patna, Paswan said LJP has arrived at a "perfect" seat-sharing accord with CPI, Forward Bloc and SUCI. He said seat-sharing agreement with CPI, For-

ward Bloc and SUCI would be announced soon.

Paswan said Congress would be committing "political hara-kiri" if it forged an electoral tie-up with RJD.

Asked to comment on the CPI-ML setting a precondition that it would have electoral understanding with the LJP after the latter snapped its ties with UPA and Congress, Paswan said everybody knows that CPI-ML is not on good terms with the Congress.

Paswan charged Lalu Prasad with being responsible for the phenomenal growth of the "communal and fascist" forces represented by the NDA in Bihar.

"Lalu weakened secular parties, including the Congress and the Left and bolstered the electoral prospects of the NDA", he charged. Paswan claimed that Dalits and Muslims were favourably inclined towards the LJP.

9/19/05



CPI leader A. B. Bardhan with D. Raja at the Press conference.

ARVIND YADAV/H

# Discord in Bihar NDA over seats for LJP rebels

PRESS Trust of India  
Patna/Siwan, July 8

SHARP DIFFERENCES cropped up in the NDA in Bihar on Friday, a day after rebel LJP MLAs of the dissolved Assembly joined the JD(U), with the BJP declaring it was not prepared to spare any of the 105 seats the saffron party had contested in the last Assembly elections under seat-sharing arrangement with the JD(U).

"We are not prepared to part with any of the 105 seats we contested last time and have already decided the names of our nominees for some seats for which the JD(U) is planning to nominate former LJP mlas who joined them yesterday", state BJP general secretary Giriraj Singh and vice-president Ramdeo Yadav said in a statement.

"JD(U) is unnecessarily creating a dispute over fielding its candidates from the seats where we have strong base and we will not spare a single seat we had contested last time", they said.

Advising the JD(U) leaders to work for consolidation of NDA's position in Bihar to help instal a government after the Assembly polls, the BJP leaders said the party would not tolerate any pressure (on sparing seats).

Sixteen rebel LJP MLAs of the dissolved Bihar Assembly, who broke away from their leader Ram Vilas Paswan and pitched in for Nitish Kumar as chief minister, had joined the party on Friday.

Kumar had earlier gone on record saying the rebel LJP MLAs would be accommodated while giving tickets to contest the coming assembly poll.

Some of the seats from where the rebel LJP MLAs had emerged victorious were also contested by the BJP in alliance with JD(U) in the last assembly elections.

## BJP seeks CBI probe

The BJP on Friday charged the vigilance bureau with acting 'under pressure' to save RJD supremo Lalu Prasad and some former state ministers, including Ramai Ram and Ramvihar Rai, allegedly involved in the multi-crore flood relief scam and demanded a CBI inquiry.

"The inquiry by the state vigilance bureau into the scam is nothing but an eyewash. It is aimed at saving the politicians, including RJD boss Lalu Prasad and former party ministers Ram and Rai whose names have cropped up during the investigation", said state BJP president, Sushil Kumar Modi.

Modi alleged that the jailed former Patna district magistrate, Gau-

## Row over jailed LJP MLAs joining JD(U)

Patna, July 8

THE EXODUS of rebel LJP members of the dissolved Bihar Assembly to JD(U) got mired in controversy on Friday with the LJP threatening to file a case against its expelled former state president for submitting false affidavits on behalf of three jailed MLAs declaring their intention to join JD(U).

"We are going to file a case of cheating and forgery against expelled former Bihar LJP president Narendra Singh for submitting forged affidavits on behalf of three of our MLAs who are in jail in which they were purported to have declared their intention to join JD(U)", Bihar LJP president Ghulam Rasul Baliawi said.

He claimed at a press conference that these former MLAs—Ramakishore Singh, Sheel Kumar Rai and Shanker Singh—had written to Paswan expressing their unflinching faith in his leadership. Baliawi said the 'vakalatnama' (power of attorney) of the three men for filing the case against Narendra Singh, former principal general secretary Nagmani, former general secretary Munna Shukla and others who joined JD(U) on Thursday would reach the party headquarters in a day or two.

PTI

tam Goswami, was appointed the nodal officer for carrying out relief in flood-hit districts in Bihar at the behest of Lalu Prasad.

He claimed that names of Ram and Rai, besides Lalu's brother-in-law and Lok Sabha member from Gopalganj, Anirudh Prasad alias Sadhu Yadav, had also cropped up as beneficiaries during the interrogation of the alleged kingpin of the scam and supplier of relief material, Santosh Kumar Jha.

"The vigilance bureau is acting under pressure and will book only small fries while allowing the politicians who allegedly patronised the scamsters to go scot-free", he charged.

# Don't ride two boats, CPI warns Paswan

**New Delhi:** The CPI on Monday warned LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan against "riding in two boats", saying there was no point in his talking to JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar on government formation in Bihar as the latter had never said he would sever ties with the BJP.

"Paswan is talking to Nitish while still being part of the UPA. On his part, Nitish has not said that his party will break ties with the BJP. Till the time he is with the BJP, there is no point in talking to him," CPI general secretary A B Bardhan said. He said it was unfortunate that UPA constituents like the RJD and the LJP were having differences. "But Paswan is trying to ride two boats. Those who ride two boats are drowned in the middle and cannot reach the shore," he said.

Criticising the Congress for trying to increase its clout in Bihar and Jhark-

hand, he said, "The Congress formed a unilateral alliance in Jharkhand without consulting the Left and other parties and tried the same thing in Bihar. It resulted in the BJP, which could have been easily defeated in Jharkhand, retaining power there while Bihar does not have a government today."



Accusing the Congress of not realising that the days of single-party politics were over, he said, "Some Congress ministers have not learnt the coalition dharma required to run a government in an alliance." Maintaining that there had never been a major difference between the Congress and the BJP on economic policies, the veteran Communist said, "In today's context, what is important is that the Congress government's survival is dependent on 61 Left MPs. We will never allow anti-people direction in economic policies." PTI

05 APR 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Third front sees Delhi hope, not BJP

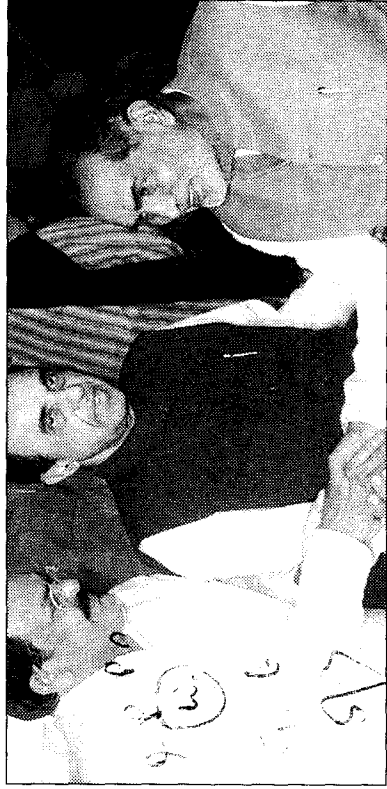
## OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 4: Third-front hopefuls have begun reworking political configurations post-Bihar and Jharkhand, claiming that the count-down to the UPA government's downfall has started.

Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, Janata Party chief Subramanian Swamy and Samajwadi Party general secretary Amar Singh were seen closeted in Parliament's central hall for much of this week after it became clear that the cracks in the UPA had deepened with Laloo Prasad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan parting ways irrevocably.

The trio — reportedly unhappy with the Centre for their own reasons — worked on the calculation that the time was "ripe" to put in place a "third front" government, propped up by the BJP, George Fernandes was seen as the "perfect" candidate to head it.

Their hopes surged after Laloo Prasad became bitter for being "done in"



BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu greets Chandra Shekhar as Subramanian Swamy looks on outside Parliament on Friday. (PTI)

numbers if the BJP agreed to back it. The BJP, they added, was all too willing to play ball.

The BJP had a more pragmatic take on the scenario. Sources said while the gubernatorial controversies in Panaji and Ranchi had "chipped" away at Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh's images and restored to the BJP the "moral ground" it had lost after the Lok Sabha polls, there was no "real threat" to the Centre — "at least not for a while".

The party's assessment was that even if Paswan and Shibui Soren left the UPA, it would be safe numerically. "If you recall, the NDA followed the same trajectory. Smaller parties like the NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) and Ajit Singh's Indian National Lok Dal walked out. While we had the numbers, the underpinning was slightly weakened," said a BJP functionary.

The unravelling would start only if Laloo Prasad is mishandled. "How they tackle Laloo Prasad and how he tackles them has to be watched," a source said.

by the Congress in Bihar, Sharad Pawar for not getting his man as Maharashtra chief minister and the DMK because a central Congress minister had needed its chief M. Karunanidhi with his "casteist" remarks and because of a suspicion that the Congress was out to split the party and take away the

PMK and the MDMK. To top that, the Left was restive with the Congress's reforms agenda.

But the three excluded the Left and Laloo Prasad from the oust-UPA blueprint and were looking at a non-Congress, non-Bahujan Samaj Party government, which, they claimed, had the

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## NOTIONAL FRONT

J.P.P. 10-12

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of India (Marxist) has done well to dissuade Mulayam Singh from chasing the elusive dream of a non-Bharatiya Janata Party, non-Congress 'third front.' This is not the first time the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister has floated this trial balloon. Mr. Singh visited the project just before the 14th general election, when the Vajpayee Government was widely believed to be poised for a third term. The Samajwadi Party leader's open talk of a third front in that context was taken to mean that he was ready to fill any shortfall in numbers and prop up the new government. The shock defeat of the National Democratic Alliance in that election and the surprising ease with which the Congress alliance managed majority support put paid to that ambition. Mr. Singh has since revived the proposal twice, leading to only one conclusion: The U.P. strongman desperately wants to be in the thick of action at the Centre. The third front is a legitimate political idea, which, at least in theory, is a tribute to the genius, diversity and resilience of the Indian polity. By definition, a third front is situated outside of the two-party system with its constituents expected to maintain equal distance from the major players.

In practice, of course, this has rarely been the case. In the Indian context the third front has always been more of a second front — formed largely as an interim if not a momentary response to one or another ideological excess. Once this purpose was served, the front would invariably fall to rank opportunism and greed for power, leading to the resurgence of the very force against whom the constituents united in the first place. The early alternative fronts were born mostly in opposition to the Congress; Ram Manohar Lohia and Charan Singh propounded anti-Congressism as a political philosophy. Jaya

Prakash Narayan's 1974 call for a 'Total Revolution' and the imposition of the Emergency by Indira Gandhi culminated in the formation of the Janata Party one of whose constituents was the Jan Sangh, forerunner of today's BJP. The target of that grand alliance as well as that of the 1989 three-way understanding between the National Front, the Left Front, and the BJP was the Congress, then seen as corrupt and authoritarian. Only a united Opposition, the BJP included, was thought to be able to confront the undemocratic concentration of power that the Congress then represented. Yet on both occasions, the alternative formations collapsed, paving the way for the return of the Congress.

The advent of Mandir politics altered that equation forever. The Hindutva party's narrow, sectarian world-view posed a new type of challenge to the multicultural vision that had sustained the idea of India over long years. Thus it is that the United Front reversed the earlier arrangement — components of the National Front now took the help of the Congress to prevent the BJP from gaining power. Predictably, the experiment was short-lived. What was more, most members of the anti-BJP front showed they could as easily co-habit with their once sworn enemy. There has never been a genuine third front for the simple reason there has been no unifying vision among its constituents. As the CPI (M) has pointed out, the third front has become a convenient slogan for those wanting to negotiate power. Mr. Mulayam Singh, long known for his fierce opposition to the BJP, should know better than to upset a ruling coalition that has only recently wrested power from the Hindutva party. Indeed, simple arithmetic will tell him non-Congress numbers will not amount to anything worth talking about without the BJP.

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2005

## ADVANTAGE UPA

*J-Paswan  
Partner  
(w)*

THE COUNTDOWN HAS begun for elections to the State Assemblies of Bihar, Jharkhand, and Haryana, and what better evidence of this than the hectic behind-the-scenes bargaining for seats by the major political players. And although the final picture — the composition of the various alliances as well as the terms of seat sharing within each grouping — is yet to emerge, the stakes look weighted in favour of the United Progressive Alliance, and not least because of the unravelling of the BJP's once formidable grouping in the wake of successive electoral reverses. To be sure, the Congress camp has its share of problems. It must offend the party that heads the government at the Centre that its new-found celebrity status has not cut much ice with its partners in the States. In battleground Bihar, the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief, the imperious Lalu Prasad, seems determined to yield only the minimum space to the Congress, after appearing to weaken the UPA's prospects through the alienation of Ram Vilas Paswan, a key member of the combine that trounced the National Democratic Alliance in the 14th general election. In neighbouring Jharkhand, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha clinched a deal that effectively reduced the national party to a junior partner. The Congress was also faced with Mr. Prasad's sudden, if mercifully brief, rebellion over the Jharkhand formula.

Not that the Congress alliance is in any danger because of these manoeuvres. Pre-election posturing is often the process by which political parties arrive at a final settlement, and indeed Mr. Prasad acknowledged as much on Sunday when, in an equally dramatic turnaround, he promised not to rock the UPA boat. The constituents understand only too well the significance of their victory in the May 2004 general election. That the arithmetic is on its side is a bonus for the UPA.

Mr. Paswan's stand aside, the numbers favour the RJD in Bihar, largely because no rival alliance of any significance has taken shape so far. The BJP and the Janata Dal (U) moved in swiftly to exploit the rift between Mr. Prasad and Mr. Paswan, only to be rebuffed by the Dalit leader. Mr. Paswan's pre-condition for an alliance with the JD(U) was that it must break with the BJP. Unable to meet that condition, the JD(U) has since announced a seat-sharing pact with the BJP that leaves little room for an understanding with the Lok Jana Shakti Party. In any case, such an alliance was improbable, given the LJSP leader's interest in retaining his Central Ministership and also in building and sustaining a coalition of Dalits, Muslims, and other marginalised groups.

The NDA is in an even greater disarray in Jharkhand and Haryana. In Jharkhand, the fight is between an increasingly isolated and beleaguered BJP and a grand alliance comprising the JMM, the Congress, the RJD, and the two Communist parties. The Opposition alliance is not merely a statistical power bloc; the constituents represent a potent social coalition drawn from Dalits, Adivasis, and Other Backward Classes. Not surprisingly, the alliance swept the Lok Sabha election. Chief Minister Arjun Munda's indifferent record and his running battles with the JD(U) — whose members have begun defecting to the Opposition alliance — have expectedly added to the BJP's misery. In Haryana too, the BJP is left friendless, having snapped ties with the Indian National Lok Dal led by Om Prakash Chauthala just before the Lok Sabha election. It will hardly be a surprise if the State turns out to be a happy hunting ground for the Congress. The odds in this round are stacked against the BJP, which is desperately in search of a break from its recent run of electoral defeats.



# Congress pays Lalu back

Shahid Pervez  
in New Delhi

Jan. 9. — Reeling under RJD strongman Mr Lalu Prasad's high-handedness during seat-sharing in Bihar, the Congress chose to display its big brotherly attitude to the RJD in the neighbouring state.

By striking a seat-sharing deal with the JMM "unilaterally" without keeping RJD in the loop, the Congress dealt a tactical blow to Mr Prasad. Apart from sending out a clear signal to the RJD that it is not a player in Jharkhand, the Congress also succeeded in driving a wedge

between the RJD and the JMM, at least for now. Wary of the RJD Supremo's growing proximity to JMM chief Mr Sibhu Soren, the Congress chose to appease the JMM with two more seats than its 33. Any crack in Lalu-Soren relations suits the Congress' ambition to be in control of Jharkhand affairs.

The Congress is yet to get over the "severe humiliation" meted out by the RJD in the parliamentary elections when the latter left just four of 40 seats for it. Next, came the current seat-sharing negotiations with the RJD for the Bihar Assembly polls. The

RJD simply turned a deaf ear to the Congress' persistent demand for a "respectable" deal.

The Congress is, however, aware that Mr Prasad had all along been its staunchest ally. The RJD is a major partner in the Congress-led UPA government, accounting for maximum seats after the Congress. It will not take the risk of disturbing the Central government's stability by completely alienating Mr Prasad, who enjoys an excellent rapport with Mrs Sonia Gandhi. It is also a constituent of the Rabri Devi government in Bihar.

So, despite giving a jolt

to Mr Prasad, the Congress would continue to do business with him in both Jharkhand and Bihar.

Another reason why the Congress would not review its alliance with the RJD is that it does not want to be blamed for "the division of secular votes", which, the party feels, will only benefit the BJP.

It is a different matter that the Congress still has the option of going it alone in Bihar or securing several times more seats than the RJD's paltry offer by tying up with Mr Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP.

In Bihar, the Congress barely has a choice other

than riding piggyback on the RJD. But, Jharkhand, where the party has a substantial support base, is strategically significant. The party wants to capture Jharkhand as it is not in power in any other state in the Hindi belt.

As the ruling party at the Centre, the Congress desperately needs to be in power in Jharkhand. Despite allotting more seats to the JMM, the party feels it could scalp more seats than the tribal outfit, which, it believes, would enable it to grab the chief ministerial chair in the event of the alliance's victory.

# Congress-JMM seat deal upsets RJD

**New Delhi:** The Congress and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha on Friday reached an electoral understanding for the assembly polls in Jharkhand in which the JMM would contest 35 seats and the Congress 33.

Upset with the move, the RJD has accused the Congress and the JMM of "betrayal" by "unilaterally" finalising seat-sharing in Jharkhand and said it was now free to chart its own course of action for the assembly polls in Jharkhand. "The Congress and JMM have badly hoodwinked us by

formalising seat-sharing without taking the RJD into confidence. It amounts to betrayal and has dealt a

crushing blow to the duty of the alliance," RJD national spokesman Shivanand Tiwari said.

The remaining 13 seats in the 81-member house have gone to the RJD and the left parties. "Under the agreement, the JMM will contest 35 seats and the Congress 33 and the remaining 13 will be shared by other allies," JMM chief and Union minister Sibhu Soren told reporters here after meeting UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

Senior Congress leader and Union minister Arjun Singh, who was negotiating on behalf of the party with

JMM leaders on seat-sharing arrangement, was present when Soren met Gandhi.

To a question as to who would be the chief minister in the event of the combine getting majority, Soren said the issue would be decided after the polls. Asked what formula would be adopted on the issue, Soren said there was only one formula, that is, Sonia Gandhi taking the decision.

Arjun Singh, commenting on the issue, said it has been agreed upon that Gandhi would decide the matter after the elections. Replying to a

question whether he was satisfied over the seat-sharing agreement, Soren said, "We are fully satisfied."

When his attention was drawn to the reported demand by the RJD for more seats, Soren said he would discuss the matter with RJD leader and Union minister Lalu Prasad.

Asked whether JD(U), whose four MLAs had joined RJD, was part of the alliance, Soren said he would not comment as it was a matter between the JD(U) and the RJD.

The central election committee of the Congress is scheduled to meet here for two days beginning on Saturday to finalise names of candidates for the assembly polls in Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana. Agencies



Sonia Gandhi



Sibhu Soren