

Shape up or wind up, airlines told

HD-1
28/12

Private airlines asked to train their pilots for operations in low visibility conditions

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Shape up or wind up flights in and out of Delhi airport by the next winter.

The Government on Tuesday delivered this stern message to private airlines found faltering on training their pilots for operations in low visibility foggy conditions.

Civil Aviation Secretary Ajay Prasad on Tuesday warned the private operators after a review meeting that unless they took some "positive steps," the Government might consider not giving them any flights in and out of Delhi during the next winter schedule.

"We have told private carriers that they should take necessary steps, including training pilots under the newly installed Instrument Landing System Category II-B. If they do not do so, we may consider not to give them flights in and out of Delhi in the next winter schedule," he said.

"Not commercially viable"

However, private carriers pointed out that training pilots at "very high costs" on the CAT-III B system for a short period of two to three weeks was not commercially viable. Industry sources say the cost of training a pilot for CAT-III B operations is between Rs. 10 and 15 lakhs.

Mr. Prasad said the private carriers should respond to the situation in the larger national interest and shore up their own image. They could train a limited number of pilots needed to operate flights out of north Indian airports usually hit by fog.

• **Low-cost carriers asked to take care of passenger needs**

• **Compliance needed before next winter schedule**

Mr. Prasad admitted that arrangements at airport terminals to handle the rush of passengers during the fog-hit flight schedules were grossly inadequate.

All travel agents and booking offices had been instructed to take down the mobile phone numbers of passengers so that they could be sent SMS in case of flight delays. Airlines had also been told to increase the number of phone lines at their call centres and to update their websites frequently for giving out information on flight schedules.

"Low-cost carriers have been told to take care of the needs of the passengers, which may include offering light refreshments, drinking water and tea to those waiting for their flights. Senior officials of private and public sector airlines who are authorised to take decisions will be deputed round-the-clock at airport terminals to attend to the needs of the passengers," Mr. Prasad said.

Only the public sector Indian (previously Indian Airlines) operates flights in and out of Delhi during the peak fog period using CAT-IIIB. It has about 90 pilots trained for the purpose. The Airport Authority of India had allotted separate parking bays to Indian for the rapid exit and entry of aircraft using the system.

RS 1,000-CR REBATE WRESTED

A-I fleet deal cleared

571
25/12

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 24. — The empowered Group of Ministers (e-GoM) today gave Air-India the go ahead to purchase 68 aircraft from the US manufacturer, Boeing. Three different types of aircraft would be acquired at a cost of Rs 35,000 crore but a discount of Rs 1,000 crore was wrested from Boeing.

The airline is buying new aircraft after a gap of nearly 10 years. The carrier currently has a 37-strong fleet. The e-GoM nod came at the end of a five-hour meeting that the ministers and Air-India officials had with Boeing representatives. The lawmakers' group was headed by finance minister Mr P Chidambaram with law minister Mr HR Bhardwaj, programme implementation minister Mr Oscar Fernandes and civil aviation minister Mr Praful Patel as members.

Boeing has also offered to set up maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) and training facilities in India at a cost of nearly \$205 million. The company has also agreed to source material from India, the value of which will be 30 per cent of the aircraft cost, which works out to be approximately Rs 8,000 crore.

Mr Patel said the relevant documents would now be sent to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, for his approval. Mr Patel had

earlier told Parliament that the deal would cost Rs 38,900 crore. Officials said A-I had converted its options to buy 16 aircraft into a firm order, taking the total number of the same to 50. It is also acquiring 18 more aircraft for its subsidiary Air India Express.

Orders are expected to be placed for eight Boeing 777-200 (Long Range), 15 B777-300 (Extended Range) and 27 B787s, besides 18 Boeing 737-800s for AI's subsidiary Air India Express. The AI Board has selected engines for all 68 aircraft from CFM International, a 50:50 joint venture between Snecma of France and General Electric Aviation of the US. Both the proposals had been cleared by the Public Investment Board on 13 October.

Of the \$205m investment promised in India by Boeing and GE, \$75 million would go into setting up four training simulators, \$100m towards MRO facilities for Boeing aircraft and \$10m for training and other civil aviation requirements, besides the \$20m pledged by GE for an engine shop.

Air Deccan

Air Deccan today announced its plans to purchase 30 more Airbus A 320's at a list price of \$1.5 billion from Airbus Industrie. The delivery will begin from 2008, airline sources said.

Photograph on page 9

25 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

"Bharat Nirman will help tap rural potential"

Urban-rural divide a major challenge of reforms: Manmohan

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Friday that the Government had proposed a "specific financing window" for the ambitious Rs. 17,000 crore Bharat Nirman programme through the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

He was inaugurating a national conference on "Bharat Nirman: Unlocking rural India's development potential through infrastructure creation," organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CID). The function marked the formal launch of the programme.

Role of local bodies

Dr. Singh said the proposed model of delivery involved the panchayats and the private sector as partners. The Planning Commission was working on ways to enhance the management of rural infrastructure programmes by panchayats. The State Governments and local bodies were critical to effective programme delivery. Reiterating the Government's commitment to achieve the targets set under Bharat Nirman by 2009, he said it would provide a platform on which to build rural India's growth potential. "Taken together with our initiative to guarantee rural employment through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the initiative to improve rural health through the National Rural Health Mission and the rural education

programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, it should be clear that our Government is indeed giving a new deal to rural India."

Danger to stability

Describing the divide between rural and urban India as "a major challenge of our economic reform programme," the Prime Minister said this gap was not filling; hence, it posed a danger to social, economic and political stability. "We have to reverse this trend, and bridge and ultimately eliminate this gap."

Transformation exercise

"It is up to the captains of industry and leaders of enterprise to understand the true potential of Bharat Nirman and participate in it. It is without doubt the largest trans-

formation exercise taken in this country for rural infrastructure. The growth of rural India will grow Indian business and the business in turn can fuel growth. It is a situation of mutual advantage," Dr. Singh said.

Planning Commission Chairperson Montek Singh Ahluwalia said the Government had identified key sectors that needed attention.

Ten million hectares of land had to be added to the irrigated areas, 67,000 villages had to be connected by road, 65,000 habitations had to be given water supply and 60 lakh houses had to be constructed.

"All this need a massive investment, and the Centre and State Governments would have to come together to make this possible," he said.

BOMB SCARE AT PARLIAMENT

HOUSES EVACUATED AFTER E-MAIL THREATENS TO BLOW UP SEAT OF DEMOCRACY

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 16. — The fear of a terror strike returned to haunt Parliament today, four years after the attack on the seat of democracy. A bomb threat set off panic and members and others were told to leave the building. The threat eventually turned out to be a hoax.

A terse e-mail warning of an explosion in the Parliament building was purportedly issued by an "Osama bin Laden supporter". The e-mail was received by the US Consulate in Chennai.

The Rajya Sabha Chairman, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, and the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, adjourned the two Houses abruptly just before noon and asked the members to vacate the premises.

Sirens wailed and the bomb detection and disposal squad swung into action with sniffer dogs. The security forces inside and outside the Parliament complex were put on a high alert. After nearly two hours, an "all clear" signal was sent out as no explosives were found.

The Prime Minister was escorted out of Parliament and taken to his office in South Block by Special Protection



Security personnel with sniffer dogs rush to Parliament House following the bomb threat. — PTI (More reports on page 4)

Group personnel. Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, were not present in the House. All roads leading to Parliament House and South and North Blocks, which house the PMO and key ministries, were sealed. Teams of the elite

National Security Guards carried out a second round of searches.

After both Houses reassembled at 3 p.m., the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, told the members that the American Consulate in Chennai had re-

ceived an e-mail which said that there would be explosions in Parliament as well as American consulates at 11.46 a.m.

The e-mail said: "If you can stop, try and stop (the explosion)", adding "long live Osama bin Laden". It was said to have

come through the Sify domain and had been subsequently traced to Tirunelveli in southern Tamil Nadu.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee told the Lok Sabha: "Nothing can cow us down. We reiterate our resolve to be alert and be in

preparedness to combat all such threat."

Mr Patil said the e-mail was also addressed to him, the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman. "But, owing to a mistake (in the e-mail address) it was not received."

17 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

Democracy no monopoly of the West, says Amartya Sen

"Public discussion and public interaction have a role in democracy...." 16/12

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: From literature to history, economics and problems facing the world and India, it was a lesson in democracy by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen here on Thursday. Delivering a lecture on "Democracy and its Critics" organised by the United Nations Foundation, Dr. Sen said it would be incorrect to believe that democracy is a Western or European phenomenon.

Founded this year, the U.N. Democracy Fund aims to provide financial, legal and technical advice to new and emerging democracies.

Traditions in India

While crediting Athens with democracy, he said it was not a European tradition only. History was witness to elected councils and traditions of democracy in Iran and India around the same time.

"If Iran does not have a non-sectarian democracy now, it is not because there has been no evidence in history. If we turn away from the tradition of voting and understand democracy in



Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen flanked by Ted Turner, Chairman of the Board of Directors of U.N. Foundation (right) and Gopalkrishna Gandhi, the West Bengal Governor at a public forum in New Delhi on Thursday. - PHOTO: V.SUDERSHAN

the broader public reasoning, religious and sectarian issues. The dissociation of public discussion across communities made balloting more sectarian, he said. On the success and failure of

no public discussion on divisive

democracy in India, he said the rise of casteist politics was a failure.

"There is a need for caution, however, for those who believe that invocation of caste in any form in democracy is an evil force. As long as caste is invoked in speaking for a lower caste or uniting it, it is good," Dr. Sen said.

He also rubbished the school of thought that democracy hinders development. "There have been arguments that say that democracy slows development compared to authoritarian regimes."

It is important to pay attention to the interpretation of democracy and what is called development to deal with these issues, he said.

"Political freedom and democracy are part of development," he said.

The forum, which has on its panel eminent people, started off with an address by U.N. Foundation Chairman Ted Turner. West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi moderated the interactive session that followed the lecture.

15 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

বহিষ্কারই হতে চলেছেন ক্যামেরাবন্দি ১১ সাংসদ

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়া দিল্লি, ১৩
ডিসেম্বর: সংসদে প্রঙ্গ তোলার জন্য
নেওয়া ঘুষ-কাণ্ডের জেরে লোকসভার
দশটি আসনে উপনির্বাচন ও রাজ্যসভার
একটি আসনে শূন্য স্থান পূরণ কার্যত
অনিবার্য হয়ে উঠল।

রাজনৈতিক সূত্রের খবর, সংসদ
থেকে অভিযুক্ত ১১ সাংসদের বিদায়
এখন সময়ের অপেক্ষা। প্রবল চাপের
মুখে পড়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট দলগুলি যে তাঁদের
বহিষ্কার করার পথেই হাঁটবে, তা নিয়ে

সংশয়ের অবকাশ
নেই। বর্তমান আইনে
দল বহিষ্কার করলে
সংসদের সদস্যপদ

খারিজ হয়ে যাবে। ফলে ওই সব
আসনে ফের ভোট অনিবার্য।

যে এগারো জন সাংসদ ঘুষ-কাণ্ডে
অভিযুক্ত, তাঁদের মধ্যে এক জন
রাজ্যসভার। বিজেপি'র সেই সাংসদ
ছত্রপাল সিংহকে আজ সাসপেন্ড করা
হয়েছে। রাজ্যসভার এথিক্স কমিটির
চেয়ারম্যান কর্ণ সিংহ ছত্রপালকে
সাসপেন্ড করার প্রস্তাব দেন। সেই
প্রস্তাব সভায় সর্বসম্মতিতে গৃহীত হয়।
গতকালই বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব তাঁকে
সংসদীয় দল থেকে বহিষ্কার করেছিল।

ঘুষ-কাণ্ড খতিয়ে দেখতে
লোকসভার বিশেষ কমিটিও আলোচনা
শুরু করেছে। লোকসভার অভিযুক্ত ১০

সাংসদকে কাল সুকাল সাড়ে ১০টার
মধ্যে ওই কমিটির কাছে তাঁদের অবস্থান
ব্যাখ্যা করতে হবে। কমিটি ২১
ডিসেম্বরের মধ্যে রিপোর্ট পেশ করবে।
রাজ্যসভার ক্ষেত্রেও তাই হবে বলে
জনান সভার এথিক্স কমিটির সদস্য
সুষমা স্বরাজ। সংসদের চলতি
অধিবেশন চলবে ২৩ ডিসেম্বর পর্যন্ত।
আশা করা হচ্ছে, তার মধ্যেই অভিযুক্ত
সাংসদদের ভাগ্য নির্ধারিত হয়ে যাবে।

ঘুষ-কাণ্ডে সব চেয়ে বেশি ধাক্কা

সবের অপব্যবহার করা চলবে না।
সাংসদ হিসাবে পাওয়া ফ্ল্যাটের গ্যারেজ,
সার্ভেন্ট কোয়ার্টার কেউ যদি ভাড়া দেন,
তা হলে দল কঠোর ব্যবস্থা নেবে।”

সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন
দাশমুখিও মনে করছেন এই ঘুষ-কাণ্ড
সংসদীয় রাজনীতির মাথা হেঁট করে
দিয়েছে। তাঁর কথায়, “শত চেষ্টা করেও
তো মানুষকে বোঝানো যাবে না যে,
সবাই এতে জড়িত নয়। কয়েক জন
অসাধু লোকের জন্য সবার মুখে কালি

লাগল।” এই সাংসদদের
বিরুদ্ধে ফৌজদারি মামলা
দায়ের করার সম্ভাবনা নিয়ে
প্রশ্ন করা হলে প্রিয়বাবু

সিদ্ধান্ত চলাতি অধিবেশনে

খেয়েছে বিজেপি। অভিযুক্ত এগারো
জনের মধ্যে ছ'জনই তাদের সাংসদ। এ
নিয়ে আজ সকালে সংসদীয় দলের
বৈঠকে তীব্র ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করেছেন
বিজেপি সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী।
তিনি বলেন, “যা হয়েছে তাতে আমি
মর্মান্বিত। এই ঘটনা শুধু যে দলের মুখে
কালি লেপে দিয়েছে তা নয়, এটা গোটা
সংসদীয় রাজনীতির পক্ষেও কলঙ্ক।”
দলীয় সাংসদদের হুঁশিয়ারি দিয়ে
আডবাণী বলেন, “দিল্লিতে অসৎ
লোকের ছড়াছড়ি। তাই সতর্ক থাকতে
হবে। সাংসদ হিসাবে যে সব সুবিধা
পাওয়া যায়, যেমন বিনামূল্যে বিমান ও
রেল ভ্রমণের সুবিধা, টেলিফোন, এ

বলেন, সংসদীয় কমিটি তথা সংসদ
আগে সিদ্ধান্ত নিক। তার আগে কোনও
প্রশাসনিক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া সম্ভব নয়। এর
পাশাপাশি এই প্রশ্নও ওঠে যে,
অভিযুক্তেরা ফের নির্বাচনে প্রার্থী হতে
পারবেন কি না? প্রিয়বাবুর জবাব, ওটা
নির্বাচন কমিশনের বিবেচনার বিষয়।

সিপিআই কিন্তু মনে করছে, এই
ঘুষ-কাণ্ডে অনেকেই জড়িত। দলের
সংসদীয় নেতা গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত আজ
বলেন, “জঙ্গি হানার থেকে এই ঘটনা
সংসদকে অনেক বেশি আঘাত করেছে।
ঘুষ-কাণ্ডে কয়েক জন ধরা পড়েছেন।
অনেক রাঘব বোয়াল আড়ালে রয়ে
গেলেন। তাঁদের সংখ্যাও কম নয়।”

Gates in India: making a difference

In an exclusive interview, **Bill and Melinda Gates** share their thoughts on their commitments to furthering health equity in India with **Jaya Shreedhar**. Excerpts:

What is it about India that draws you here?

Bill Gates: The first is that a lot of the inequities in the world in health are here in India – malaria, TB, VL – most of the top 20 diseases. It's not surprising; there are a lot of people! Secondly a lot of the solutions will come from here and that's why. We are also here to meet some of the grantees and got updated on the work that we are doing.

Melinda Gates: The one thing I would like to say about Indian people that also draws us here is not only the disease inequities, but just like anywhere else I've seen the mothers and what lengths they'll go to save their children. In the vaccination programmes that we do, I've just been blown away when you go into the slums and see how long women will wait or from how far they will come to get their children vaccinated. There's a chance to make a real difference in saving newborn lives here because I think moms will do a lot to lift themselves and their children if you give them the tools and the chance.

What do you perceive as the biggest challenge to the work of the Foundation in India?

Bill Gates: The challenge here in India is the limited resources applied to health and there's a commitment now to increase that. Our commitment is quite necessary, but even with drug breakthroughs you need people like the link workers we saw here in Delhi or their equivalents out there in the rural areas...Science is on our side but it's going to take more – in terms of resources. The doubling that's been discussed will make a huge, huge difference. I hope that can happen soon and that hopefully we can be a partner in making sure that the investment is effective. We've done pilot programmes to help that money be particularly effective.

Melinda Gates: I think there are also challenges at certain stages. We know that the immunisation rate is quite low in some States and in other States it's gotten quite good. But in a State like Bihar where we work, the immunisations rate is still very low. As far as polio in the world is concerned, there are still some pockets of polio that remain in India and so that remains a challenge. There are a few States that make things particularly challenging but we are still very optimistic overall.

Bill Gates: Yeah ... everybody says if they were like *that* State it would be an amazing thing.

So does that interest you? To see peninsular India emerging as a distinct, more developed, responsive subregional entity within India?

Bill Gates: We are not really 'regional' in what we do. We believe that human lives are of equal value. Some of the things we are going after in India are of personal interest. But Visceral Leishmaniasis [kala azar] – we went after that because of the disease burden, not because we have some particular region. Malaria is in different parts of India and JE [Japanese Encephalitis] – that's also in different regions. We go wherever the need is. Infectious diseases are not in the U.S., one doesn't need to go there. We end up



Bill and Melinda Gates: "There's a chance to make a real difference in saving newborn lives." – PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

mostly in Asia and Africa.

HIV/AIDS was partly responsible for reigniting greater interest and investment in basic science research. To what extent does the Foundation see itself contributing in that area?

Bill Gates: By necessity, some of the things we are doing have been basic science. There's no good line between basic science and ... it's all immunology...

The research budget for medicine and basic science has gone up every year. The primary basic research budget for the world is the NIH [The U.S. National Institutes of Health] budget. Six years ago it was \$14 billion and it's \$30 billion now. It never went down, it always goes up. It's a phenomenal thing. The European equivalent is less than a

tenth of that and if you could take all the countries in the world it would still not add up to that. And that creates a foundation. We take that foundation and use it to go after developing world unique things. Big pharma and biotech take that and go after the diseases burden, where there is a market for their drugs.

Do you see the Foundation helping countries – particularly those in this part of the world – with epidemic outbreak preparedness such as surveillance systems, in view of recent outbreaks such as SARS that have had a serious economic fallout?

Bill Gates: No, not really, that's WHO's job and the job of the people at the CDC [Centres for Disease Control]. We are still focussed on the big challenges such as TB

and malaria.

But as someone committed to working towards greater global equity in health and with global cooperation becoming an increasingly decisive factor in determining our response to epidemic outbreaks, how do you envision the role your Foundation will play in furthering such cooperation?

Bill Gates: I will help WHO hire the very best people and have the very best tools – this is WHO's job supplemented by the strongest national organisations. The CDC in many respects is the best at some of those things and it does not make sense to have multiple organisations trying to do disease tracking. You want one organisation that's clearly responsible for reporting standards and systems and can galvanise the resources.

What impressions did you come away with following your meeting with Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss?

Bill Gates: I still remember going into that meeting and thinking how much the Minister himself was knowing all the specific things we are doing in India. I was really pleased at his interest in the broad set of things we are doing and his awareness of how we are working together. We talked around a little bit about can Visceral Leishmaniasis really be eliminated by 2008... we're the best partners to make that as likely as possible but it may take a little while longer than that. You had all these key people there [at the meeting] and they made it clear that we have a lot of shared goals.

Melinda Gates: I don't think that we are focussed on a lot of the same things but they seem to have their specific goals now that they are trying to achieve in some health topics. Sometimes you go into a Minister's meeting and they don't have very concrete goals. In this case it felt like they did.

The Health Minister seems keen on building Indian Institutes of Health across India, similar to the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management in approach and commitment to excellence. Would you consider supporting such an endeavour?

Bill Gates: Well we are looking at it and I've asked Ashok [Alexander, Project Director of Avahan] to talk about this with Rajat Gupta [Mckinsey] and we would take a look at the proposal.

To end with my first question, what quality or qualities would you say defines India for you?

Melinda Gates: I think it's the amazing human spirit here; people want to lift themselves up.

Bill Gates: In some ways you think of it in terms of historical things and then in terms of new approaches for ITE, or embracing the future in this big way... in some ways it's the most futuristic and in some ways most historical country in the world and this aspect has a certain beauty to it because you don't want to really give up either one of those things.

(Dr. Jaya Shreedhar is Technical Health Adviser, Internews Network.)

Gates impressed by India's amazing spirit

Gates Foundation investing in India's health. Expects many solutions to challenges to come from the country

Jaya Shreedhar

CHENNAI: Asked what is the one quality that defines India for him, Bill Gates counters: "You mean with reference to Microsoft or the Foundation?" Clearly, Mr. Gates sees two Indias: an India that is a market for Microsoft and a fascinating pool of human resource and another India that is over populated and weighed down by its own history and burdened by illiteracy, poor health and poverty. An India rooted in history and reaching out to the future seems to have found a friend in the Gateses.

Their clearly delineated yet inseparable approach of doing business with market India and joining hands with the community to face challenges in the health sector seems to embody their respect for the Indian spirit. With his announcement of \$1.7 billion to Microsoft, Bill Gates' relationship with India surged another predictable byte forward, but that the man is also investing in the other India, the one that exists in its most impoverished districts, has been less talked about.

"In some ways it is the most futuristic and in some ways it is

• **Doing business with market India and joining hands with the community to face health challenges**

• **Over a quarter of a billion dollars committed to India's health programmes**

the most historical country in the world and this aspect has a certain beauty to it because you don't want to really give up either one of these things," was how Mr. Gates put it in an exclusive interview. To Melinda Gates, India is defined by "the amazing human spirit here; people want to lift themselves up."

While the Gates Foundation

has made significant investments in the prevention and care of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and tuberculosis in India and other countries, its more recent investments indicate a growing interest in maternal and child health, one indication of which is its commitment to the Global Alliance on Vaccines Initiative (GAVI). Indeed, Ms. Gates ob-

served "vaccination is our favourite thing." Mr. Gates spoke animatedly of the underutilisation of the fruits of the Green Revolution and the importance of promoting micronutrients as a critical factor in improving the health of mothers and children. He said that while India bore the burden of many of the world's top 20 diseases, the local potential to find solutions to these challenges was great.

To date, Bill and Melinda Gates have committed well over a quarter of a billion dollars from their personal wealth towards health and emergency grants to

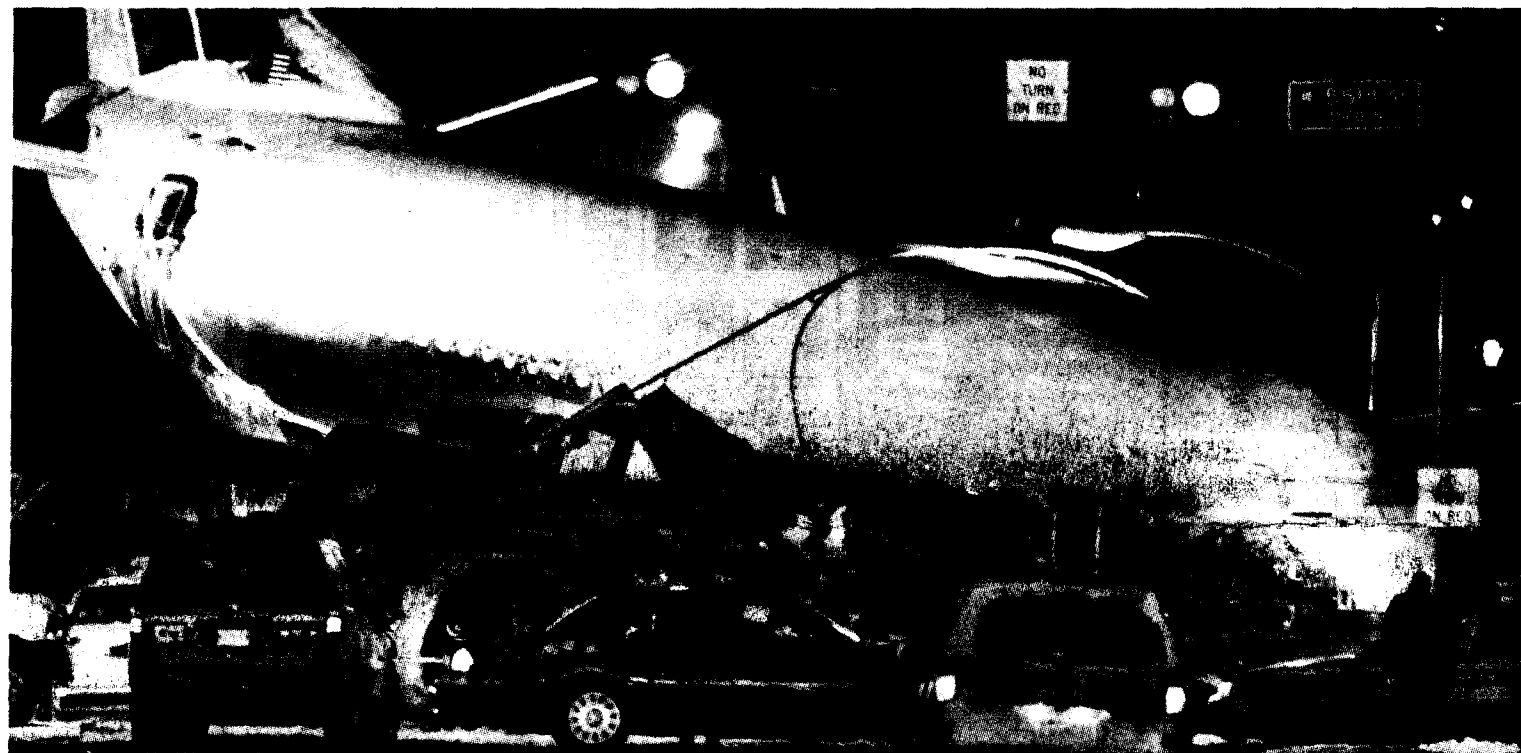
India, making the country the largest recipient of their support. In addition, India is among those countries standing to benefit from over half a billion dollars that the Gateses have committed to various health challenges confronting the developing world. Besides investing in the five-year HIV/AIDS programme — Avahan — which runs on a \$200 million grant and is 18 months into operation, they have put \$46.2 million in drug development for visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as kala azar.

Since flying into New Delhi on

December 5, Melinda and Bill Gates seem to have hit the ground running, taking in their stride a slew of meetings with Ministers, policy advisers and business heads. In the midst of these high-level meetings, the couple found time for intimate conversations with children from the slums of Delhi, members of the transgender and sex worker communities, and people living with AIDS at a hospital in Chennai.

Q&A on Op-Ed Page

Cruise to crash



RESTING ON THE NOSE: A Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 rests at a busy intersection of Chicago on Thursday night after it skidded off the runway at the Midway Airport. The flight from Baltimore tried to land in heavy snow before sliding off the runway, crashing through a fence and striking vehicles on the street, hitting one and pinning another beneath it. A six-year-old boy was killed and 10 others were injured. — PHOTO: AP (REPORT ON PAGE 15)

Intel puts \$1b on India

6/12/05
New Delhi: Leading chip-maker Intel Corporation on Monday announced a multi-year investment plan for India, totalling over \$1 billion, including \$800 million over the next five years for business expansion.

The investment roadmap includes a huge chunk (\$800 million) for expanding the company's business operations in India, Intel chairman Craig Barrett said. But he remained non-committal on plans for a chip-manufacturing plant in India, saying it was involved in "pragmatic" discussions with the government and at this point of time it was not appropriate to say anything.



Intel chief Craig Barrett hedged on a chip plant in India

"We are still in discussion with the government on the possibility of setting up a manufacturing plant in India. At this point of time we are not ready to announce anything," he said.

The investment would focus on expanding the research and development centre in Bangalore, in addition to marketing, education and community programmes. The investment roadmap also has a provision for setting up a \$250 million venture capital fund in the country. "The

investment demonstrates the company's long-term commitments and builds on the foundation we created in the last 10 years," Barrett said. TNN and Agencies

06 DEC 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

FILE NOTINGS | Babus wanted blanket ban, PM says file notings on social issues to come under law

PM strengthens your right to know

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THE bureaucracy went all out to deny access to "file notings" in official documents under the Right to Information Act—keeping it out of the definition of information in the new law. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has stepped in to fix that. File notings are crucial information on the Government's decision-making process because these help track responses, identify who did what, when and why. For honest officers, this can usu-

ally be their only defence.

Today's statement by PM's media advisor Sanjaya Baru said that the Prime Minister had decided that "substantive file notings on plans, schemes, programmes and projects of the Government that relate to development and social issues may be disclosed." Other notings, protected by exemption clauses under Section 8(1)—including national security—would remain out of RTI purview.



Instructions have been sent to the Department of Personnel to make the "requirement changes."

Significantly, President A P J Abdul Kalam, while giving his assent to the Bill, had indicated he was not in favour of making file notings public since it would hamper bureaucrats from writing their honest opinion.

However, there was a demand from the public and the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SHIVAROOR
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

THE Army today withdrew an internal circular which ordered the withholding of information until the Government got back on its request for exemption under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The withdrawal came three days after the order, issued by the Military Secretary Branch and ap-

proved Army chief General J J Singh.

In a statement issued this evening, the Army said, "The Army's internal circular withholding furnishing of certain categories of information till the clarification has been received, has been withdrawn."

Earlier in the day, the decision to withdraw the order was taken at a high-level meeting convened by the

Army takes back its no-RTI order

Army. Ministry sources said that top South Block officials had also held a meeting this afternoon, after which it was recommended that the Army should withdraw the circular.

The crux of the November 28 circular was a paragraph which said: "The COAS (Chief of Army Staff) has approved the proposal of MS Branch that till a formal

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PM gives more teeth to your right to know

NGOs to bring file notings under RTI. Baru said the PM took the decision "after considering various representations made by concerned citizens and taking into account all relevant factors."

Also taking the President's cautionary note into account, it was left to the discretion of the Principal Information Officer, appointed under RTI, who could withhold the individual identity of the functionary who made the notings.

It had also been decided that file notings relating to identifiable individuals, group of individuals, organizations, appointments, matters relating to inquiries and departmental proceedings, shall not be disclosed, the media advisor said.

Manmohan orders changes in Information Act

110-1
2/12
9(6)

File notings related to identifiable individuals, organisations to be exempted

Siddharth Narrain

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has instructed the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to exempt file notings relating to identifiable individuals, groups of individuals, organisations, appointments, matters relating to inquiries and departmental proceedings from the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The DoPT, which is the nodal agency in charge of implementing the RTI Act, has been instructed to make appropriate changes to the RTI rules to make a distinction between file notings that cannot be disclosed and "substantive file notings" which can be disclosed.

Dr. Singh's announcement has come after citizen's groups protested against the DoPT's website listing file notings as exempt from the RTI Act. They argued that section 2 (f) of the RTI Act, which defines information broadly, was intended to include file notings in its ambit. Thursday's announcement says that the decision to categorise file notings into "substantive" file notings that should be disclosed and those that should not be taken after considering "various representations made by concerned citizens" and taking into account "all relevant factors."

However, the Government's move has come in for criticism from citizen's groups. Shekhar

Singh, Convenor, National Campaign for People's Right to Information, said, "This kind of a change needs an amendment to the RTI Act. It cannot be done by an instruction from the Prime Minister's office. What happens to subjects that fall between these two categories?"

When asked about the Prime Minister's instructions, Central Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah declined to comment until he had examined the details.

However, in a recent interview to *The Hindu*, Mr. Habibullah had said the issue of whether file notings are exempt should be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Related to development

"Substantive" file notings that can be disclosed include those on plans, schemes, programmes, and projects of the Government related to development and social issues except those protected by the exemption clauses in section 8 of the Act. However, the Principal Information Officer appointed under the Act may withhold the individual identity of the functionary who has made the file notings. The DoPT has been asked to incorporate these changes to the Rules under the Act in consultation with the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Army chief withdraws circular

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Chief of Army Staff J. J. Singh on Friday withdrew a circular directing officials to withhold furnishing of information under the Right to Information Act till the Defence Ministry considered the Army's plea to exempt the three armed services from its purview on certain issues.

Faced with mounting

applications, mainly from officers, Gen. Singh had, earlier this week, approved the proposal of the Military Secretary (MS) branch that till a formal ruling is received from the Ministry of Defence on exemption, the status quo be maintained on providing information of any nature from the branch. Gen. Singh also directed that information about individual cases be not released.

02 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

Making RTI Act work is the task ahead, says Aruna Roy

'States are still in the process of creating necessary infrastructure'

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: A month after the passage of the historic Right to Information Act by Parliament, the votaries of transparency in utilisation of public funds got together here to review the current position and to sharpen the tools of the Act so that the results are optimised.

The time period under review may have appeared too brief for the uninitiated but it was pointed out that first 30 days were crucial as the stipulated time period for providing information once an application for the same is put up is 30 days. Thereafter on denial of information the applicant can go in for appeal.

"The RTI Act has given hope to so many people. Making it work is the task ahead. We will take it forward," Aruna Roy, whose Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) first took up the cause, said addressing the gathering. She felt that a forum has to be created so that people all over the country can make use of it through the time-tested method of social audits.

Even as the States are still in the process creating the necessary infrastructure in their departments to provide information sought by the public the gathering of activists, media persons, NGOs, representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and

• **Votaries of transparency in utilisation of public funds review the current position**

• **'Suo motu information makes the job of Govt. easy'**

Government officials, brought together by the Hyderabad-based National Institute of Rural Development, felt the provision of suo motu declaration in the Act would facilitate both the seeker and the provider of information. "Suo motu

information makes the job of the Government easy," Ms. Roy noted.

"The sky is the limit. Everything can be put in the suo motu list," noted R.S. Tolia, Chief Information Commissioner of Uttaranchal. "The process is going to be a great opportunity for education to everyone," Dr. Tolia said suggesting that there could be a list of areas where most of the questions are likely to be sought so that the departments could get ready accordingly. "The State is also a stakeholder and the CIO would act as a fair referee," he maintained.

"It is time the country recognised that the panchayati raj system is not decentralisation of corruption. The panchayats can provide a forum for social audits," said Nikhil Dey of MKSS.

25 NOV 2005

তথ্যের অধিকার

আইন রাজ্যে

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন : রাজ্যে তথ্যের অধিকার আইন চালু হয়ে গেল। রাজ্যে সব থেকে প্রথম যিনি এই আইন চালু করলেন তিনি হলেন রাজ্যপাল গোপালকৃষ্ণ গাঙ্গী। রাজভবন সংক্রান্ত যে কোনও তথ্য এবার জানাবেন রাজ্যপালের সচিবালয়ের মুখসচিব দীপককুমার গৌতম। সাধারণ মানুষের যদি রাজভবন সংক্রান্ত কোনও প্রশ্ন থাকে তবে সেই তথ্যের জন্য তাঁরা যোগাযোগ করতে পারেন দীপককুমার গৌতমের সঙ্গে। তার ফোন : ২২০০-১৬৪১, (এক্সটেনশন ২০৩), ফ্যাক্স ২২০০ ২৪৪৪, ওয়েবসাইট : <http://rajbhavankolkata.nic.in>. যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা : রাজভবন, কলকাতা-৬২। ই মেল-govsec@wb.nic.in

AAJKAL

Saffron Party Shifts Spotlight From Internal Problems To Congress Failings

Volcker report gives a leg-up to BJP

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 NOVEMBER

A direct fallout of the revelations about the Congress and foreign minister Natwar Singh's involvement in the Iraqi oil scandal has been the resurrection of the BJP as the credible Opposition voice.

With the Left coming under the spotlight for using the morality index selectively and backtracking after initially raising issues such as the Patents (Amendment) Bill and the Pensions Fund and Regulatory Development Authority Bill, the saffron party, which was seen as a house divided, unsure of itself, has emerged as the sole Opposition voice.

It's been exactly a week since the damning disclosures of the UN-mandated independent inquiry committee surfaced. The interregnum has been enough to catapult the BJP as the sole occupant of the Opposition space. It pounced on the opportunity to tear into the morality cloak adorned by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Sonia Gandhi-led Congress.

Using a mixture of aggression and political adroitness, the BJP, for a change, has been successful in shifting the spotlight from its internal problems to the failings of the Congress. The crusade also has the potential of pumping up its support base, which has been lying comatose since the drubbing received by the NDA in last year's general election.

Parallels are now being drawn to the aggressive campaign mounted by the BJP against late Rajiv Gandhi's Congress in the mid-80s to expose the Bofors kickbacks. It pitched the party to the centre stage of Indian politics — a trend which gained momentum after the party decided to back the Ayodhya movement.



Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 NOVEMBER

AS THE BJP mounts the campaign for removal of the external affairs minister for his alleged involvement in the oil scam, Mr Natwar Singh has begun mobilising support of the Left parties, the UPA government's "conscience keepers".

Signalling his resolve to

fight it out, Mr Singh is persisting with the stand that he was not given an opportunity to offer clarifications on the report's findings. Sources close to the minister said Mr Singh is in no mood to resign.

In the morning, the beleaguered minister met Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi and briefed them about his position in the wake of new reports linking his family and friends with the oil scam.

Mr Singh reportedly expressed anguish over the Congress' decision to serve legal notices to the UN and the Vol-

Natwar drums up support

cker Committee as he felt that such moves were legally, diplomatically and politically unsound. He has also expressed his unhappiness over the AICC's media briefing where it delinked his case from that of the Congress.

By evening, Mr Singh had managed the support of the CPI(M) and the CPI. Mr Singh, who had a meeting with Mr Prakash Karat on Thursday, met CPI's AB Bardhan and D Raja on Friday and gave them his line of defence.

He told the CPI leaders that the two earlier reports of Volcker committee had not referred

to his or the Congress party's involvement in the Iraqi oil scam, but their were put in a section which talks about around 1,000 alleged "non-contractual beneficiaries" in the final report. Rejecting Mr Volcker's stand in New York that those who have been named were given a chance to explain, the minister told the Left leaders that neither he nor the Congress received any letter from the commission.

Incidentally, what the panel has said was that clarifications were sought from those who executed the contracts. Masfield had executed the contract allegedly procured by Mr Singh. Masfield is yet to clarify whether it has received notice from the United Nations.

He also challenged reports suggesting that his son's repeated visits to Jordan was for executing oil vouchers allegedly procured by his father.

It could be a difficult transition

The move from the Maharashtra Right to Information Act 2003 to the new Central Act could pose several problems.

Meena Menon

MAHARASHTRA IS gearing up to enforce the Central Right to Information Act that came into effect on October 12, and has appointed a retired bureaucrat, Suresh Joshi, as the new State Chief Information Commissioner. However, activists in the field say the Maharashtra Right to Information (MRTI) Act 2003 had been working well and should not have been repealed. Over a thousand applications are pending under the State Act and the transition to the Central law could bring several problems.

According to the principal secretary, general administration department (GAD), S. S. Dodd, 60 per cent of the over 1,000 pending applications are appeals. The GAD has issued a circular that while these applications will be dealt with, applicants will not be able to appeal if the public information officer (PIO) concerned does not give the information within the required period. Mr. Dodd justified this saying the MRTI had ceased to operate.

Fresh applications must be filed under the new central Act.

However, Mr. Joshi says it is only fair that those who applied for information under the

MRTI should also have the right to appeal under the new Act. He has sought legal opinion on the matter.

Taking away the right to appeal is arbitrary, says Shailesh Gandhi, member of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI). He said: "All those whose applications are pending will face the prospect of arbitrary decision making by the public information officers (PIO). The worry is that the average citizen who has filed applications and does not know the nitty-gritty of the law, will be discouraged and it could cause a major set back to the right to information movement."

This is not the only glitch in the transition. The GAD circular also says that applications in the old format should be returned and people should be advised to file in the new format.

Mr. Gandhi pointed out that there was very little difference between the old and new formats for applications. The new rules were messing up the transition from the State Act to the Central Act and stalling the momentum of the right to information campaign, he said.

According to Mr. Gandhi's estimates, since 2003 at least 30,000 people all over the State have used the provision of the Act. But

the new government *diktats* could dampen the people's enthusiasm, he says.

Some plus points

Activists point out that the new Central Act does have some plus points — including the inspection of office files or samples of concrete or foodgrain. This was not allowed under the MRTI. Another advantage under the new Act is the existence of a Central Information Commission. The Act also exempts people below the poverty line (BPL) from having to pay anything for the information.

However, there are some disadvantages too. The third party clause introduced in the Central Act could pose problems. Says Mr. Gandhi: "If the information sought from the PIO affects a third party, then it is the PIO's sole discretion to overrule the party or take his/her interests into consideration. If the third party says the information is confidential, then the PIO has to take a call on this. There is also a provision for appeal for the third party. A lot of time can be wasted in this procedure."

The NCPRI vehemently opposed this third party clause. It has also been opposing the appointment of bureaucrats as information commissioners. "We were hoping that

other eminent persons would be appointed as the Act does not specify that only bureaucrats should be appointed," adds Mr. Gandhi.

Mr. Joshi says there is very little awareness about the right to information despite the MRTI being in force for three years. "My first priority will be to travel and speak to people about it," he said. He hopes to use the Act to make the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) more transparent. "Muster rolls must be available to people," he said. A special website will also be launched in a fortnight.

The recent irregularities in the EGS work in Solapur district and in Satara underlines the importance of greater transparency in government schemes, especially those that affect the poor.

While the bureaucracy is still reluctant to part with official data, and often delays the process, the MRTI has helped hundreds of citizens access information that otherwise would be denied to them.

Now that the Central Act is in force, the State Government and the bureaucracy will be tested. Do they really believe in public participation and transparency or will they create fresh hurdles to using an untested Act?

9-10 40-11 25/10

Court tells Centre to throw out Buta, Surjeet

Squatter VIPs face eviction

R. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, Oct. 24: Buta Singh may stay on at Patna Raj Bhavan, but in Delhi he is going to be shown the door.

The Supreme Court has ordered a host of political heavyweights — from Buta and Harkishen Singh Surjeet to Mulayam Singh Yadav — to be “thrown out” of the bungalows and flats they illegally occupy in Delhi, costing the taxpayer crores of rupees every year.

Former ministers George Fernandes, A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury and Yashwant Sinha, too, face a similar fate

HANGING ON

Unauthorised occupants

● Buta Singh ● H.S. Surjeet
● Mulayam Singh ● Jaswant Singh ● 3 Congress leaders

Above entitlement

● Ghani Khan Choudhury
● George Fernandes
● Jyotiraditya Scindia
● Amar Singh ● Arun Jaitley

Source: Government affidavit
List not exhaustive

See Page 6

over one of VVIP India's most widespread scams, which ties the saffron politician to the Marxist and involves freedom fighters and artistes, too.

The Centre today handed the Supreme Court a list of 465 people occupying government quarters against rules and said eviction proceedings are on. Some of these quarters can fetch a monthly rent of Rs 1.75 lakh in the market.

An anguished two-judge division bench said the “unauthorised occupants should be thrown out”. Justices B.N. Agrawal and A.K. Mathur picked Buta as an example.

“He is governor of Bihar. How can he be occupying a house here in Delhi? Throw him out,” the bench said.

The Centre explained that there are two classes of illegal occupants: those not entitled to government accommodation at all, and those who are entitled to a lower grade of bungalow or flat than the one they are occupying.

The second group mainly features former ministers who are now ordinary MPs but haven't shifted from their ministerial bungalows to MPs' quarters. The 36 such na-

mes on the list include those of Fernandes, Arun Jaitley, Ghani Khan, Yerran Naidu, Niti-sh Kumar, Sharad Yadav, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Najma Hettullah and Yashwant Sinha.

The remaining 429 belong to the first group, many of whom are facing eviction proceedings in courts. The list includes three Congress general secretaries who haven't been named.

Former minister Jaswant Singh, now an MP, has been named in the first group (sub-headed “unauthorised occupants”) rather than the second (“above entitlement”). His party, the BJP, said this was one of several “discrepancies” on the list and threatened to move a privilege motion in Parliament against the Centre for “misleading the court”.

The judges have given the Centre till November 16 — the next date of hearing — to come out with guidelines on who gets accommodation and what kind, when they should vacate it and, if they don't, how they should be forced to.

The government bungalows and flats come in eight categories, with type VIII being the highest.

The Centre, represented by additional solicitor-general Gopal Subramanian, told the apex court that 182 bungalows and 338 flats had been set aside for Lok Sabha members and 81 bungalows and 135 flats for those of the Rajya Sabha. The pool for Supreme Court judges had 27 type VIII bungalows and the Delhi High Court pool 32.

There are other pools: defence, Delhi state, post and telegraph, artistes and journalists including press photographers, writers and theatre personalities, social workers and freedom fighters, NGO activists and eminent organisations. The latter groups are allowed a stay of three years.

The issue had had a modest beginning: as a public interest litigation in Kerala, filed by a certain S.D. Bandi, against those illegally staying in Kerala State Road Transport Corporation accommodation.

It took an all-India turn when the apex court issued notices to the Centre and all state governments and Union territories on September 19, asking them to explain what action had been taken to evict illegal occupants.

PSU PULL: COME AGAIN, COMRADE?

Take VRS & come back on contract!

5/21
4/10
Mukesh Ranjan in New Delhi

Oct. 3. — It could well turn out to be a “second lottery” for those employees who had opted for the voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) from public sector undertaking Indian Drugs & Pharmaceutical Ltd (IDPL) in 2002, as the government now plans to re-employ them on contractual basis in the same company.

Highly-placed government sources said senior CPI leader and AITUC chief, Mr Gurudas Dasgupta, has been lobbying the Union chemicals & fertiliser ministry for re-employment of these employees who have already availed of the VRS. When The Statesman contacted Mr Dasgupta and asked him why he was asking the government to re-employ employees who had opted for a VRS from IDPL, his response was a curt, “no comment. I will speak on the issue only after I check with the ministry concerned.”

Following the move by the Appellate Authority for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (AAIFR) to quash the order of the Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) to close down five units of IDPL on 13 September, the chemicals & fertilisers minister, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, called a meeting of ministry officials along with senior IDPL officials on 20 September, where Mr Dasgupta was also present as a special invitee. The meeting was held to discuss matters relating to revival of IDPL's five units. It

is learnt from a source at the meeting that Mr Dasgupta floated the idea of re-employment to which the minister also gave his consent, verbally directing the IDPL chairman, Mr R Mohan, to look into the option.

Interestingly, the previous NDA government had spent several crore by way of giving VRS to employees when it decided to shut down the IDPL units in 2002. But now, as the UPA government has decided to revive the company, it apparently plans to re-employ the same people again at the expense of the public exchequer. Before the 2002 VRS, the total strength of IDPL was 6,592 employees. As the possibility of its closure loomed large, a majority of employees opted for the VRS. Currently, the sick company has only 413 employees, who work in its administrative and accounts departments.

Upon its proposed revival, the IDPL would need technical staff to handle its research & development and production departments. Every year a sizeable number of young pharma graduates pass out of college and start looking for jobs in their chosen field. So, clearly, if the government finally does hand out jobs to the same people who have already secured a decent sum as VRS, it would effectively torpedo the prospects of fresher and young professionals wanting to enter IDPL.

Indeed, an official pointed out, the company had gone into the red in the first place thanks in large part due to the “deadwood” that was got rid of with the VRS.

THE STATESMAN

Advani seeks white paper on KGB charges

Releases copy of letter written to Manmohan Singh on the issue

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Bharatiya Janata Party president L.K. Advani demanded on Sunday that the Government come out with a white paper on the role of foreign intelligence agencies and order a judicial inquiry on the allegations in *The Mitrokhin Archive II*.

Releasing the copy of a letter dated September 23 to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by National Democratic Alliance chairman Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Jaswant Singh, and himself, Mr. Advani said it was over a week since the letter was written. Having received no response, the party decided to release copies of the letter.

He said the focus would be on this issue in the winter session of Parliament.

"Shocking disclosures"

Mr. Advani referred to the allegation in the book, *The Mitrokhin Archives II*, that "India was the easiest country for KGB operatives to penetrate" and that some top politicians, 10 newspapers and a news agency received slush funds from the Soviet intelligence agency. He said "the nation's good name" was the BJP's concern. The shocking disclosures went "beyond individuals, or even particular political parties," making out "as if India had been sold."

The letter said there was "an imperative need of rebutting robustly" all these allegations, and therefore, it was hoped Dr. Singh would initiate a public inquiry within four weeks.

Mr. Advani indicated that the political parties against whom allegations had been made, specifically the Congress and the Communist parties, should be "encouraged" to file defamation suits against the author of the book.

Though the letter did not mention it, at his press conference Mr. Advani demanded that

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119-12
• Issue to be taken up during winter session

• Congress, Left parties should be encouraged to file defamation suits against author

the Government bring out a white paper covering the role of the KGB, the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan in making funds available to political parties, politicians and the media.

When asked why the NDA Government did not bring out a white paper on the ISI although he himself promised one before coming into power, he said, "The [Indian] handlers of ISI modules felt that such a white paper would hamper their work." He did not respond when asked whether that situation had changed.

Moynihan's allegations

Another question related to allegations made by the former U.S. Ambassador, Daniel Moynihan, that CIA funds were made available to Indira Gandhi to help topple the first Communist Government in Kerala and the publication, nearly 25 to 30 years ago, of a list of names of persons who allegedly received CIA funds. Mr. Advani was asked why the NDA Government did not think it fit to bring out a white paper on the subject. He did not respond to this too.

Mr. Advani said the Manmohan Singh Government needed to "come clean" on the issue that had "scandalised the country." The recent allegations suggested that the KGB penetrated (in the 1970s) the Prime Minister's Office, the Defence Ministry and even the Intelligence Bureau. There were security concerns, which needed to be addressed urgently. And for this, a white paper and a judicial inquiry were necessary.

Sharp fall in migration from Bangladesh

Maharashtra No. 1 Choice For Migrant Indian Population

TIMES INSIGHT GROUP

New Delhi: Even as some people cry themselves hoarse over burgeoning Bangladeshi migrants, their flow into India has actually reduced, and significantly at that. Census figures for 2001 released on Friday show that the number of Bangladeshi migrants during 1991-2001 was about 280,000, a decrease of 53% from close to 600,000 migrants between 1981 and 1991.

While Bangladeshi migration has slowed considerably, Indians are increasingly going places. The migrant population in the country is now 314 million, a considerable increase of more than 35% over the 232 million migrants in 1991. The figures for 1991 didn't include J&K, where no census was held that year. However, even if we exclude the two million migrants in J&K in 2001, there's still been an increase of about 35% over the decade. These figures include people migrating from one place to another within a state or even within a district. The population has increased by 21.5% in the decade between the censuses, but migration has outpaced that by quite some way. Of the 314 million "migrants" in the country, as many as 98.3 million moved between 1991 and 2001, while the others moved earlier. The census data also reveals that over 700 million people in India still live at their place of birth.

While the common perception is male migrants moving to cities to provide for their families back

Going Places

Bangladeshi Migrants

1981-91

5,91,572

1991-2001

2,79,878

In-migration

Figures for 1991-2001 (in millions)

Maharashtra 4.28

Delhi 3.22

Haryana 1.26

Out-migration

UP 7.31

Bihar 7.24

Rajasthan 1.00

home, men account for less than 30% of all migrants.

The figures show that the bulk of the migrant population — over 221 million, or more than 70% — consists of women. The main reasons for migration in the last decade makes it apparent why women account for the bulk. Seeking employment figures only third on the list of the reasons for migration and accounts for only 14.7%. The leading reason is marriage, accounting for a huge 43.8%, while the second biggest reason, accounting for 21%, was moving with the household.

Migration also isn't just about moving from the village to the city. A little over 61% of migrants move within the same district. A further 24% move within the same state, while only a little over 13% of migrants move from one state to another.

মিত্রোখিনিএর নথিতে মুজিবের দলেরও নাম

আবনী বসু • লন্ডন

২৩ সেপ্টেম্বর: মিত্রোখিনি আর্কাইভ নিয়ে বিতর্কের ঢেউ এ বায় ভারত ছাড়িয়ে আছড়ে পড়ল প্রতিবেশী পাকিস্তান ও বাংলাদেশের মাটিতেও।

ব্রিটিশ অধ্যাপক ক্রিস্টোফার অ্যাডুর দাবি, পাকিস্তান ও বাংলাদেশের দীর্ঘ নেতৃত্বের উপরেও প্রভাব বিস্তার করতে চেয়েছিল সোভিয়েত

গোয়েন্দাসংস্থা কেজিবি। বাংলাদেশের প্রথম প্রধানমন্ত্রী মুজিবের রহমানের দল আওয়ামী লিগকে টকা জোগাত কেজিবি। পাকিস্তানের সেনাশাসক

জেনারেল জিয়া উল হককে হত্যার জন্য জুলফিকার আলি ভুট্টোর ছেলে মুর্তজা ভুট্টোকেও পরোক্ষ অর্থ সাহায্য করেছিল কেজিবি।

কেমব্রিজের অধ্যাপক অ্যাডুর লেখা 'দ্য মিত্রোখিনি আর্কাইভ, ভল্যুম ২: দ্য কেজিবি অ্যান্ড দ্য ওয়ার্ল্ড' বইটি প্রকাশ হওয়ার পর থেকে একের পর এক চাঞ্চল্যকর তথ্য বেরিয়ে আসছে।

অ্যাডুর ও কেজিবির প্রাক্তন কর্মী ভাসিলি মিত্রোখিনের লেখা ওই বইয়ের তথ্য অনুযায়ী, নয়াদিল্লির সরকারি

অদরমহলে যত সহজে প্রবেশ করতে পারেনি কেজিবির চরেরা, পাকিস্তানে ততটা পারেনি। পাকিস্তানের সেনাশাসন তাদের কাজটা

অনেক কষ্ট করে দিয়েছিল।

সে জনা, জেনারেল ইয়াহিয়া খানের মনে চিন ও আমেরিকা সম্পর্কে সংশ্লিষ্ট ও অরিশাস তৈরি করাটাই সে সময় তাদের প্রধান কাজ ছিল। ১৯৬৯

সালে একটি জাল নথি তৈরি করে কেজিবি। দেখানো হয়, কাশ্মীরকে চিনপন্থী একটি স্বাধীন রাষ্ট্র তৈরির পরিকল্পনা করেছে ভারত ও চিন।

ইয়াহিয়া প্রশাসনের দুর্নীতিতে ক্ষুব্ধ আমেরিকা ইয়াহিয়ার উপর আস্থা হারিয়েছে— কেজিবির এই প্রচার

সফল হয়েছিল। কারণ সেই বছরই পাকিস্তানের মার্কিন দুতবাস ওয়াশিংটনে পাক প্রশাসনের দুর্নীতি নিয়ে একটি রিপোর্ট পাঠায়। পূর্ব পাকিস্তানে বিদ্রোহীদের উস্কানির

পিছনেও যে চিনের হাত আছে তা-ও প্রমাণ করতে চেয়েছিল কেজিবি। অ্যাডুর দাবি, মুজিবের রহমানের

উপরেও প্রভাব বিস্তার করেছিল কেজিবি। ওই সংস্থা তাঁকে বোঝাতে সক্ষম হয়েছিল যে, ১৯৬৮ সালে আগরতলা যত্নস্ব মামলায় মুজিবের

শ্রেণিকারির পিছনেও আমেরিকারই

হাত ছিল। '৭১ সালে বাংলাদেশ তৈরি হওয়ার পরে খুশি হয়েছিলেন মস্কোর

কর্তারা। মুজিবের ভোটপ্রচারেও টকা ঢালে কেজিবি। এমনকী মুজিবের

সচিবালয় এবং গোয়েন্দা দফতরে চর নিয়োগ করেছিল মস্কো। সচিবালয়ের সেই চরের ছদ্মনাম ছিল 'মিত্র'।

১৯৭৭ সালে পাকিস্তানের প্রধানমন্ত্রী জুলফিকার আলি ভুট্টোকে

সারিয়ে ক্ষমতা দখল করেন জেনারেল জিয়া উল হক। মিত্রোখিনিের তথ্য

অনুযায়ী এই সময় থেকেই কেজিবি তাদের লক্ষ্য হিসেবে বেছে নেয়

ভুট্টোর ছেলে মুর্তজাকে। আফগান গোয়েন্দাসংস্থা 'খাদ'-এর প্রধান মহম্মদ

নাজিবুল্লাহর সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠতা ছিল মুর্তজার। 'খাদ'-এর মাধ্যমেই মুর্তজার

সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করে কেজিবি। তাদের যত্নস্ব 'অপারেশন আলমগির' অনুযায়ী, পাকিস্তান

এয়ারলাইন্সের দামাস্কাসগামী একটি বিমান ছিনতাই করে কাবুলে নিয়ে

যাওয়া হয়। যাত্রীদের মুক্তির বিনিময়ে পাক জেলে বন্দি প্রায় ৫০ জন

অভিযোগ মিথ্যা, বলল আওয়ামী লিগ

জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন মুক্তিযুদ্ধের পরবর্তী সময়ে দলের নবীনতম সাংসদ।

শাসক দল বিএনপি-এর এক নেতা মুজিবের রহমানের উপরে কেজিবির

প্রভাবের দাবি করলেও অর্থ সাহায্যের অভিযোগ সম্পর্কে 'কিছু জানেন না'

বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন। বাংলাদেশের স্বাধীনতা যুদ্ধের সময়ে অনশ্য বিএনপি-

র কোনও অস্তিত্ব ছিল না। তবে দলের এক বর্ষীয়ান নেতা, যিনি সে সময় চিন-

ঘনিষ্ঠ একটি দলের সঙ্গে জড়িত ছিলেন, দাবি করেছেন, মুজিবরকে নানা ভাবে

প্রভাবিত করেছিল কেজিবি। নাম গোপন রাখার শর্তে ওই নেতা জানান,

ক্ষমতা হাতে পাওয়ার পর প্রশাসনের অনেক ক্ষেত্রে সোভিয়েত মডেল অনুসরণ করেছিলেন মুজিব। পাশাপাশি তার মন্তব্য, "মুজিবের গরিব ছিলেন না আর দুর্নীতিগ্রস্ত



বিদেশি অর্থ সাহায্যের দরকার ছিল না বা নেই, দুততার সঙ্গে ছিলেন না। তাঁর বিদেশি অর্থের দরকার ছিল না।"

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, ঢাকা, ২৩ সেপ্টেম্বর: আওয়ামী লিগকে কেজিবি

অর্থ সাহায্য করেছিল, এই অভিযোগ 'ডাহা মিথ্যা' বলে উড়িয়ে দিলেন দলীয়

নেতারা। দলের বর্ষীয়ান নেতা ও সাংসদ আব্দুল হামিদ বলেছেন, বাংলাদেশের

মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বন্ধ করতে সেই সময়ে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে আমেরিকা

যে প্রস্তাব এনেছিল, তাতে 'ভেটো' দিয়ে সত্যিকারের বন্ধুর মতো কাজ করেছিল

পূর্বতন সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়ন। কিন্তু তাদের কাছ থেকে অন্য কোনও রকম

সাহায্য নেওয়ার প্রশ্নই ওঠে না। তাঁর কথায়, "স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের সময়

আওয়ামী লিগ দেশের মানুষের কাছ থেকে নেওয়া হতো জেতার জন্য তাই ছিল ভালবাসা পেয়েছিল, লড়াইতে জেতার

ডাঙ্গে-রাজেশ্বরকে ঘুষ দিত কেজিবি, আরও বোমা মিত্রোখিন আর্কাইভের

শ্রাবণী বসু • লন্ডন

২১ সেপ্টেম্বর: মিত্রোখিন আর্কাইভের বুলি থেকে বার হল আরও একটি বেড়াল।

সত্তরের দশকে ইন্দিরা গান্ধী সরকারের সঙ্গে সোভিয়েত গোয়েন্দা সংস্থা কেজিবি-র ঘনিষ্ঠতার অভিযোগ আগেই উঠেছিল। জানা গিয়েছিল, জরুরি অবস্থার সময় ইন্দিরাকে সমর্থন করার জন্য ভারতের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির উপরে চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছিল কেজিবি, এমন তথ্য রয়েছে মিত্রোখিন আর্কাইভে। এ বার এই কেলেঙ্কারিতে আরও স্পষ্ট ভাবে জড়িয়েছে সিপিআইয়ের নাম। আর্কাইভ জানাচ্ছে, দলের অন্যতম শীর্ষ নেতা রাজেশ্বর রাও এবং শ্রমিক সংগঠনের নেতা এস এ ডাঙ্গে নিয়মিত কেজিবি-র কাছ থেকে ঘুষ নিতেন।

দীর্ঘ বারো বছর ধরে কেজিবি-র গোপন দলিল নকল করেছিলেন সংস্থার কর্মী ভাসিলি মিত্রোখিন। সেই তথ্যের উপর ভিত্তি করে কেমব্রিজের শিক্ষক ক্রিস্টোফার অ্যান্ড্রুর লেখা 'দ্য মিত্রোখিন আর্কাইভ, ভল্যুম ২: দ্য কেজিবি অ্যান্ড দ্য ওয়ার্ল্ড' বইটি কালই প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। তবে ইন্দিরা সরকারের সঙ্গে ক্রেমলিনের ঘনিষ্ঠতা ও ইন্দিরা প্রশাসনকে ঘুষ দেওয়ার অভিযোগ সংক্রান্ত অংশটি ব্রিটেনের একটি সংবাদপত্রে প্রকাশিত হয়ে শোরগোল ফেলে দিয়েছিল আগেই।

বইটি প্রকাশের পরে দেখা যাচ্ছে সত্তরের মাঝামাঝি দিল্লিতে পার্টির সদর দফতর ও অন্যান্য গোপন স্থানে কেজিবি চরদের সঙ্গে প্রায়ই দেখা করতেন সিপিআই নেতারা। সিপিআইয়ের এক সময়ের সাধারণ সম্পাদক রাজেশ্বর রাও ঘুষের টাকার রসিদও দিতেন।

চরদের সঙ্গে বাম নেতাদের সাক্ষাৎকারগুলিও ছিল প্রায় গোয়েন্দা গল্পের মতোই চমকপ্রদ। সিপিআইয়ের জাতীয় পরিষদের এক প্রধান নেতার সঙ্গেই মূলত আদানপ্রদান ছিল কেজিবি-র। পরিচয় গোপন রাখতে ওই নেতা 'বাক্সির' ছদ্মনামে নানা জায়গায় দেখা করতেন রুশ গোয়েন্দাদের সঙ্গে। একবার দিল্লির অদূরে এক জায়গায় টাকা লেনদেনের ব্যবস্থা হয়। সকাল ছটা নাগাদ সোভিয়েত দূতাবাস থেকে দু'জন সঙ্গীকে নিয়ে মাছধরার অছিলায় একটি লোকের উদ্দেশে রওনা হন



শ্রীপাদ অমৃত ডাঙ্গে

'৭৫-এ কেজিবি-র দিল্লি রেসিডেন্সির প্রধান লিওনিদ শেবারসিন।

আটটায় লেকে পৌঁছে প্রায় আড়াই ঘণ্টা মাছ ধরার পরে তাঁরা গাড়ি নিয়ে রওনা হন বাক্সিরের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে। সওয়া এগারোটা নাগাদ নির্দিষ্ট জায়গায় এসে পৌঁছয় বাক্সিরের গাড়ি। দু'টি গাড়ি কিছুক্ষণ পাশাপাশি চলার পর নির্জন একটি স্থানে দুই গাড়ির জানালা দিয়েই হাতবদল হয়ে যায় টাকা ভর্তি সুটকেস। অবশ্য শুধু গল্প বলেই ক্ষান্ত হননি মিত্রোখিন ও অ্যান্ড্রু। ১৯৭৫ সালের অগস্ট থেকে '৭৬-এর জুন পর্যন্ত সিপিআইকে দেওয়া কেজিবি-র ঘুষের পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খ তথ্যও রয়েছে ওই বইতে। তার থেকেই দেখা যাচ্ছে প্রতি মাসে অন্তত চার থেকে আট লক্ষ টাকার লেনদেন করা হত।

'৫৩ সালে রাশিয়া যান ইন্দিরা। সেই সময় থেকেই তাঁকে নজরে রেখেছিল কেজিবি। গোয়েন্দা রেকর্ডে ইন্দিরার ছদ্মনাম ছিল 'ভানো'। ওই সফরে ইন্দিরাকে প্রায় মাথায় তুলে রেখেছিলেন রাশিয়ানরা। রাশিয়া থেকে জওহরলালকে লেখা এক



চিঠিতে মুঞ্চ ইন্দিরা লিখেছিলেন, "রাশিয়ানরা আমার সঙ্গে এত ভাল ব্যবহার করছেন যে এখান থেকে ফেরার আগেই আমি পুরোপুরি বখে যাব।" ইন্দিরা প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পরে এই ঘনিষ্ঠতা আরও বাড়ায় কেজিবি। কেজিবি-র প্রভাবে ইন্দিরাও বিশ্বাস করতে শুরু করেন, পঞ্জাবের বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদী আন্দোলনের পিছনে রয়েছে পাক গোয়েন্দাসংস্থা আইএসআই এবং মার্কিন গোয়েন্দাসংস্থা সিআইএ-র হাত।

জাল নথিপত্রের উপর ভিত্তি করে '৮১ সালে 'অপারেশন কনট্যাক্ট' নামের একটি গোয়েন্দা অভিযান শুরু করে কেজিবি। পৃথক খালিস্তান রাজ্যের দাবিতে পঞ্জাবে যে আন্দোলন শুরু হয়েছিল তার অস্ত্র ও অর্থ জোগান দিচ্ছে আইএসআই— অপারেশন কনট্যাক্টে সে কথাই 'প্রমাণ' করেছিল কেজিবি।

'৮২ সালে সোভিয়েতের জেনারেল সেক্রেটারির পদ থেকে সরে যান লিওনিদ ব্রেজনেভ, আসেন ইউরি আন্দ্রোপভ। কিন্তু ইন্দিরাকে নিয়ে সোভিয়েতের পরিকল্পনা পাল্টায়নি। '৮৪ সালে স্বর্ণমন্দিরে 'অপারেশন ব্লু স্টার'-এর পরে নিজের শিখ দেহরক্ষীদের হাতে খুন হন ইন্দিরা। আর 'ভানো'র মৃত্যুর পরে কেজিবি-র প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য হয়ে দাঁড়ায় এই হত্যার পিছনে সিআইএ-র হাত প্রমাণ করা।

● মিত্রোখিনের নথিকে গুরুত্ব দিতে চায় না সিপিআই...পৃঃ ৫

KGB story: Don't miss footnotes

AMITROY

London, Sept. 20: The KGB had "contacts" with CPM leaders in Bengal after the party's victory in the Assembly elections in June 1977, it is claimed in the book on Soviet intelligence written by the Cambridge historian, Professor Christopher Andrew.

There is no suggestion, however, that the CPM leaders were bought off in the way that CPI politicians and front organisations had apparently been paid.

The book, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the World*, due to be published shortly by Penguin India in India, has been written by Andrew on the basis of documents brought by a senior KGB archivist, Vasili Mitrokhin, when he defected to the West in 1992.

The book, which has now been read by *The Telegraph*, has two chapters, 17 and 18, devoted to "The Special Relationship with India". Part I is subtitled "The Supremacy of the Indian National Congress", while Part II analyses "The Decline and Fall of Congress".

The book deals with KGB operations in the Third World. While India, especially under Indira Gandhi, merited the most attention from the KGB because the country was considered the most crucial to Soviet interests, Chapter 19 deals with Russian intelligence-gathering in "Pakistan and Bangladesh".

The Indian chapters don't make for easy reading, filled as they are with Russian acronyms for KGB departments and code names for agents and informers.

Andrew's problem as a historian and a scholar is that he did not have access to original KGB documents but only to what Mitrokhin claimed were copies.

That Mitrokhin spent years copying documents suggests he must have had an idea of one day making use of them, possibly when he defected. He came out with six boxes but it is safe to assume he took out what he thought would please those who would debrief him in the West. Mitrokhin cannot be questioned by independent journalists since he died last year.

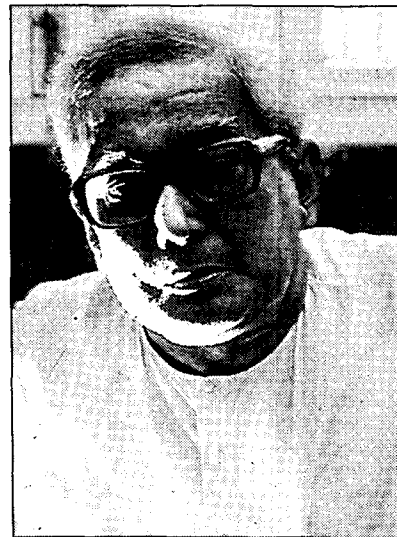
FROM THE MITROKHIN ARCHIVE II



"India under Indira Gandhi was also probably the arena for more KGB active measures than anywhere else in the world... Suitcases full of bank notes were said to be routinely taken to the Prime Minister's house"



The KGB headquarters in Moscow



"According to a KGB report, an investigation into Promode Das Gupta, who became secretary of the West Bengal Communist Party in 1959, concluded he had been recruited by the IB in 1947"

In India, the book will be read anxiously by some readers who will hope they haven't been outed as KGB informers. They needn't worry. Precious few names are mentioned and when they are, it is usually of people who are dead — this is legally safe since the dead cannot be libelled.

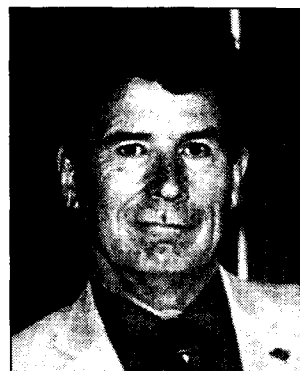
What comes across is that the KGB was mind-numbingly bureaucratic. It also does not seem to have been very good at its work. It is hard to compare it with the CIA, which must have been equally active in India, because Andrew's concern in this book is only with Soviet intelligence-gathering.

At the end, the reader is left with the impression that some Indians may have received KGB handouts but the organisation was not able to influence a big and chaotic country like India.

Even Andrew, who tries to show that the KGB was a menace in India, accepts: "India under Indira Gandhi was also probably the arena for more KGB active measures than anywhere else in the world, though their influence appears to have been considerably exaggerated by the Centre, which overestimated its ability to manipulate Indian opinion."

"Centre" refers to KGB's Moscow headquarters in this context. Again and again, Andrew says that the KGB flattered itself by taking credit for developments in India that were going to happen anyway for other reasons.

The Indian chapters and footnotes require careful read-



ing because many of Andrew's comments, conclusions and factual accounts are based not on Mitrokhin's archives but Indian press reports and what the author has gleaned from books such as biographies of Mrs Gandhi by Inder Malhotra and Katherine Frank.

For example, Andrew writes: "Suitcases full of bank notes were said to be routinely taken to the Prime Minister's

house. Former Syndicate member S.K. Patil is reported to have said that Mrs Gandhi did not even return the suitcases."

Was this a KGB disclosure?

This turns out to have been taken from page 143 of Malhotra's book on Mrs Gandhi. There is nothing wrong with that except the revelation be-

Andrew's problem as a historian and a scholar is that he did not have access to original KGB documents but only to what Mitrokhin claimed were copies

comes less exciting.

Of course, Andrew does rely heavily on Mitrokhin's notes but the reader may be a little confused as to what is based on KGB material and what comes from articles in the public domain in India. As professor of contemporary history at Cambridge, Andrew would be the first to agree that a "cuttings job" cannot be represented as original scholarship.

Andrew discloses that the KGB spent a great deal of energy on forging documents of one sort or another — for example, that the Pakistanis were helping the Khalistanis in Punjab or that the CIA was planning to bump off Mrs Gandhi — but Mrs Gandhi herself did not always take the forgeries seriously. On one occasion, her reaction was to laugh.

So what does the book tell us about the KGB links with the CPM in Bengal?

Andrew tells the reader that the Soviets had "responded cautiously" to the CPM victory in Bengal in 1977. "Though (Yuri) Andropov was eager to set up covert communications with the new state government, he was anxious not to offend the CPI. It was therefore agreed after discussions between (Leonid) Shebarshin (recently promoted to deputy head of the FCD Seventeenth Department) and a senior CPSU official that, though KGB officers could make contact with CPM leaders, they must claim to be doing so on a purely personal basis. According to FCD files, 'important information' about CPM policy was obtained by the Delhi main residency with Party leaders."

Now, this does come from

Mitrokhin's files but whether the contacts were sinister depends on what information was disclosed. The reader is not told.

It was the undivided CPI that was much more closely linked with the KGB, the book claims. "According to a KGB report, an investigation into Promode Das Gupta, who became secretary of the West Bengal Communist Party in 1959, concluded he had been recruited by the IB in 1947. Further IB penetrations were discovered in the Kerala and Madras parties."

What this means is that Indian spies were spying on Russian spies. The KGB headquarters in India was their "residency" in Delhi.

The book claims that in 1959, Ajoy Ghosh, the CPI general secretary — the book refers to him as "PCI General Secretary, Ajoy Gosh" — "agreed with the Delhi residency on plans to found an import-export business for trade with the Soviet bloc, headed by a senior party member codenamed DED, whose profits could be creamed off for party funds. Within little more than a decade its annual funds had grown to over 3 million rupees. The Soviet news agency Novosti provided further subsidies by routinely paying the CPI publishing house at a rate 50 per cent above normal charges."

Andrew's intention seems to be to show the KGB was up to no good in India. "The KGB was also confident of its ability to organise mass demonstrations in Delhi and other major cities. In 1969, for example, Andropov informed the Politburo, 'The KGB residency in India has the opportunity to organise a protest demonstration of up to 20,000 Muslims in front of the US embassy in India. The cost of the demonstration would be 5,000 rupees and that would be covered in the ... budget for special tasks in India. I request consideration.' Brezhnev wrote 'Agreed' on Andropov's request."

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, India was not clearly as close to the Russians, says Andrew. "The Indo-Soviet special relationship, to which the KGB has devoted so much of its energies for most of the Cold War, was at an end."

IB officials amused at Mitrokhin Archive II

Say persons named weren't involved

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 20

AMID THE raging controversy on the just-released *Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the World* — authored by Soviet defector Vasili Mitrokhin — serving and retired officials of Intelligence agencies alternated between amusement and denials. While none of them disagree that there is always some amount of "activity" on the lines of what is suggested by Mitrokhin, most feel that those whose names have emerged so far could not have been involved, as described. Retired joint director of the Intelligence Bureau, M.K. Dhar, who has, himself, authored exposes of the intelligence community's activities, says, "Accusing Promode Dasgupta of being on the IB's payroll amounts to blasphemy."

Dhar, who knew the former secretary of the Bengal Communist Party in his personal capacity, asserts, "Promode Dasgupta was a man who had no home, no family. He lived in Alimuddin Street in the most austere manner. There was no sign of affluence about him. He couldn't have been on the payroll of any Intelligence organisation". "In all the good sense of it, Dasgupta was a real communist, a real revolutionary. Anyone who casts doubt on him must produce proof as I can state from person knowledge of the man that he was a very honest person".

Dhar, similarly, rubbishes allegations that the CIA was funding former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi: "It's a matter of record that Mrs G did use the communists to stabilise her government

and negotiate with Moscow, but, for anyone to say that she directly received material benefit from any quarter is ridiculous", he told *Hindustan Times*. Former director of the Intelligence Bureau, V.G. Vaidya, now retired and living in Pune, was unwilling to comment on the allegations, since he had not read the book. He, however, contended that, "Anyone can write anything. It doesn't mean that the world has to accept it as gospel truth". "One must remember that American author Seymour Hersh had written that Morarji Desai was on CIA payroll when he (Desai) was Deputy Prime Minister of India, serving under Indira Gandhi. But then, Morarji Desai sued him", Vaidya recalled and added, "It's for you journalists to research and determine what the truth is".

Serving Intelligence officials are dismissive about the Mitrokhin book. A few admitted they wanted to read the book "out of curiosity", but maintained that the allegations publicised in the media so far, appeared to lack credibility.

"These things do take place. Agencies routinely pay people who can access information in a foreign country to acquire that information. But to suggest that a serving Prime Minister was taking money is downright stupidity", said one official. Another official was more forthright and said, "If a serving PM needs money, there's no dearth of means to get it. Why would any Prime Minister, let alone a dynamic person like Mrs Gandhi, run the risk of taking money from a foreign power?"

In the case of Dasgupta, the charge that he was on IB payroll seems "incongruous".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

US Funded Indira To Restrain Us: Basu

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 19 SEPTEMBER

EVEN as the BJP today projected the KGB papers as yet another instance of how foreign secret services penetrated the political set up of the country at the highest level, CPM added fuel to the fire by saying that Americans had funded Indira Gandhi and the Congress for "curbing" the Communists.

"I can't say whether the KGB had provided funds to them. Both the CPI and the Congress had good rapport with them (former Soviet Union). But the Americans had paid money to Indira Gandhi and the Congress to curb the Communists in India. The former US Ambassador to India



oughly. "Continuing disclosures of the publication as appearing in the Indian media reveal that routes were repeatedly paid to the Congress, some of its ministers and the CPI," BJP general secretary Arun Jaitley said, adding that "the then other contemporaneous political conduct of these two parties lends credence to the allegations".

He said, "Several media publications had sprung up in the early 1970s and the same carried on supporting the Congress and Communist Party of India lines. Curiously, most of these publications were without commercial advertisements. The publications have revealed that not only did the assistance continue during the Emergency but also subsequent to that when the Congress

was attempting a revival in the later part of 1977."

The BJP leader alleged payment of money was made through commercial business houses involved in the import-export business with the erstwhile Soviet Union. "Can all this be brushed aside on the mere pretext of them being late revelations and that some of the concerned players are no longer in this world?" Mr. Jaitley asked. A shaken Congress termed the allegations baseless and slanderous. "The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship of 1971 or rupture of the agreement and closer relationship with the then Soviet Union were the outcome of the policies of socio-economic justice pursued by the government at that time," the Congress said.

Congress and its ally CPI said these sensational disclosures about the manner in which the Soviet secret service had penetrated the political set up of the country at the highest levels needed to be investigated thor-

Daniel Patrick Moynihan had stated this in his book. But I do not know how much money they had paid," agency reports quoting Mr. Basu said.

The BJP, which seized upon the opportunity to hit at the

KGB story concocted: Congress, CPI

Statesman News Service & PTI

NEW DELHI, Sept. 18. — The Congress and CPI today dubbed as "pure sensationalism" and "concocted" reports that the KGB had bribed their politicians in a new book by a former archivist of the intelligence agency. The BJP, however, seized the issue alleging that the country was not safe in the hands of the ruling party.

"This is pure sensationalism and not even remotely based on facts or records," Congress spokesman Mr. Abhishek Singhvi said reacting to the disclosures contained in the book, *The Mitrokhin Archives II: The KGB and the World*, excerpts of which were published in *The Times, London* yesterday.

"These are vague allegations," he said pointing out that they were not the officially released USSR archive records and were based on

papers "stolen" by a person who defected in 1992. "It's the version of a person who is publishing it after 15 years of his defection and nearly 50 years after everybody involved in the incidents was present... almost everyone has died... there is no way of checking..."

Describing as "concocted" the allegations that the KGB had funded the CPI, the party said they were born out of the desire of "some English writer wanting to make some money".

Dismissing as a "spy thriller" the book, CPI general secretary Mr. AB Bardhan said Communists have survived such "slanders". He said: "Many such spy thrillers have come out in the past based on the so-called theft archives of Soviet government."

Mr. Bardhan's party colleague and CPI national secretary Mr. D Raja said: "These are all old allegations, which are baseless, untrue

and false. I dismiss them with the contempt that they deserve."

The RSS and BJP today said the country was not safe in the hands of the Congress and sought an explanation from the ruling party. RSS spokesman Mr. Ram Madhav said while the charges contained in the book related to the 1970s, another book, *The State Within the State — KGB and Its Hold on Russia*, had also referred to such ties between the KGB and Congress leaders in the 1980s.

He alleged that the book published in 1994 contained serious allegations against the Gandhi family. "The country cannot be safe in their hands. We need to give serious thought to the implications for the country over the links the Congress and the Gandhi family had with the USSR."

In Chennai, the BJP vice-president, Mr. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said: "It is a very serious issue.

The Congress and the Communists have been accused of taking money from the KGB. Both, particularly the Congress, which is at the helm of affairs owe an explanation to the country."

In Kolkata, the Union water resources minister, Mr. Priyaranjan Dasgupta, today expressed strong dismay to the latest controversy over former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's alleged connection to the KGB. "Smearing the Congress by maligning Indira Gandhi is an old game," he said.

The sensational revelation that the former railway minister in Indira Gandhi's Cabinet, Lalit Narayan Mishra, was among the KGB's "beneficiaries", has stirred a hornet's nest on eve of elections in the Bihar. Former chief minister, Dr Jagannath Mishra, today said the allegations were "absurd, imaginary and based on pure hearsay".

কেজিবি-কাণ্ড নিয়ে অস্বস্তিতে কংগ্রেস, জবাব চায় সিপিআইও

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৮ সেপ্টেম্বর: দু'দিন আগেই বিহার নিয়ে রাছলের বেঁফাস মন্তব্য। আর, তার পরেই ইন্দিরা সরকারের প্রতি ঘৃণা নেওয়ার মারাত্মক অভিযোগ। ঠাকুরমা-নাতির দুই প্রজন্মই কিন্তু বিহার নির্বাচনের আগে কংগ্রেসকে যথেষ্ট বিভ্রম্নায় ফেলে দিল।

কেজিবি-কাণ্ড নিয়ে গত কাল বোমা ফাটার পর আজ রাজধানীর রাজনৈতিক অলিন্দে তার জল স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই গড়াতে শুরু করেছে। অভিযোগকে ভূয়ো-ভাঁওতা বলে উড়িয়ে দিতে কসুর করছে না কংগ্রেস। কিন্তু অস্বস্তি যাচ্ছে না। চেন্নাইয়ের চিন্তন অধিবেশন থেকে বি জে পি-র আজ সমালোচনার তোপ দেগেছে। 'কংগ্রেসের হাতে ভারত কতটা নিরাপদ'—এই প্রশ্ন তুলে বিজেপি সার্বিক ভাবে পরিস্থিতির রাজনৈতিক ফায়দা তুলতে চাইছে। আরও এক পা এগিয়ে আরএসএস বলেছে, শুধু ইন্দিরা নন, টাকা নিতেন রাজীবও।

তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ভাবে সরকারের বন্ধু দল সিপিআইয়ের বিরুদ্ধেও কেজিবি-র প্রাঙ্গন কর্মী ভাসিলি মিত্রোখিনের অভিযোগ রয়েছে। সিপিআই কিন্তু গোটা ব্যাপারটায় নিজেদের হাত ধুয়ে ফেলে বলেছে, কেজিবি আঁতর্ভীতে ইন্দিরা মন্ত্রিসভার কেউ জড়িত ছিলেন কি না, তার জবাব দিক কংগ্রেস।

কালই তাৎক্ষণিক প্রতিক্রিয়ায়

প্রবীণ নেতা প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেছিলেন, 'এই অভিযোগ ভিত্তিহীন। বইয়ের বিক্রি বাড়ানোর কৌশল।' যার বিরুদ্ধে টাকা তোলার অভিযোগ আনা হয়েছে, সেই প্রাঙ্গন রেলমন্ত্রী ললিত নারায়ণ মিশ্রের ভাই জগন্নাথ মিশ্র (বিহারের প্রাঙ্গন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী) আজ বলেন, "এই অভিযোগ অবাস্তব, কাল্পনিক এবং শোনা কথার ভিত্তিতে তৈরি।" বামেদের প্রতি তাঁর দাদার কিছুটা ষাঁক ছিল সে কথা অবশ্য অস্বীকার করেননি তিনি। কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র অভিষেক মনু সিংহভির অভিযোগ, "এগুলি সরকারি নথি নয়। 'চুরি' করা কিছু কাগজপত্রের ভিত্তিতে অভিযোগ আনা হচ্ছে।" রবিবার কলকাতায় কেন্দ্রীয় জলসম্পদউন্নয়ন মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুঙ্গিও পাল্টা অভিযোগ তুলে বলেন, "এক জন মৃত মানুষের নামে এ ধরনের কুৎসা যারা রটাচ্ছে, তারা কাপুরুষ।"

কিন্তু বিজেপি নেতা মুখতার আব্বাস নকভির আজকের বক্তব্য থেকেই পরিষ্কার, বিষয়টি সহজে হাত থেকে বেরিয়ে যেতে দেবেন না বিরোধীরা। নকভির কথায়, "এটা অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়। কেজিবি-র কাছ থেকে ঘৃণা নেওয়ার অভিযোগে অভিযুক্ত কংগ্রেস এবং কমিউনিস্টরা। দু'পক্ষেরই দায় রয়েছে দেশের সামনে জবাবদিহি করার।" পাশাপাশি, আরএসএস মুখপাত্র রাম মাধব

বলেছেন, "দেশ এদের হাতে নিরাপদ নয়। কংগ্রেস এবং গাঁধী পরিবারের সঙ্গে সোভিয়েতের যোগাযোগের ফল দেশের উপর কী ভাবে পড়েছে, তা গুরুত্ব দিয়ে ভাবার সময় এসেছে।" এখানেই না খেমে মাধব কেজিবি সংক্রান্ত অন্য একটি বইয়ের (দ্য স্টেট উইদিন দ্য স্টেট—কে জি বি অ্যান্ড ইটস হোল্ড ইন রাশিয়া) উল্লেখ করেছেন। যেখানে বলা হয়েছে, আশির দশকেও কংগ্রেস নেতাদের সঙ্গে কেজিবি-র দেওয়া নেওয়া ছিল। রাজীব গাঁধীও জড়িত ছিলেন।

সিপিআই সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধন অবশ্য গোটা ঘটনাকে 'স্পাই থ্রিলার' বলে উড়িয়ে দিয়ে বলেন, "বামপন্থীরা দেশে ক্রমশ জনপ্রিয় হচ্ছেন। সেই জনপ্রিয়তা হ্রাসের চেষ্টা করতেই এই ঘটনাকে হাতিয়ার করা হয়েছে। ১৯৪০ সালে দলে যোগ দিয়েছি। রুবল-ডলারের গন্ধ শুঁকে আমরা বড় হইনি।" এই ধরনের রিপোর্টের অন্তঃসারশূন্যতা প্রমাণ করতে তিনি ইরাকের উদাহরণ তুলে ধরে বলেন, "ভুল গোয়েন্দা রিপোর্ট ইরাক আগ্রাসনের মতো ঘটনাও ঘটিয়েছে।" একই সঙ্গে তাঁর দাবি, "ইন্দিরা মন্ত্রিসভার কেউ এই বিষয়ে জড়িত কি না, জবাব দিক কংগ্রেস।"

সব মিলিয়ে কংগ্রেসের কাছে পরিস্থিতি কিছুটা অপ্রত্যাশিত ভাবেই জটিল হয়ে উঠেছে।

BJP blasts govt over infiltration

Statesman News Service

CHENNAI, Sept. 18. — The BJP today lashed out at the UPA government for its "greatest failure" to effectively deal with the growing menace of "terrorism", "Naxalism" and "illegal infiltration from across the Bangladesh border" into India's bordering states of Assam, Tripura and West Bengal. The party blamed the failures on the internal security front on "a directionless Prime Minister and an inert home minister" at the Centre.

The issue of national security was the last item on the agenda of the BJP national executive meet today, the last day of the three-day session, which was attended by all top BJP leaders including party president Mr LK

Advani, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Dr Murlidhar Joshi, among others.

Terming "the continuing illegal infiltration into India" from Bangladesh as "another great threat" to internal security, Mr Pramod Mahajan said India at present has a population of more than 2 crore illegal infiltrators spread not only across bordering states but also across other ones, like Maharashtra, Delhi, Goa and Kerala. "The presence of about 2 per cent illegal immigrants among the total population is a grave threat to national security," he said.

The party resolution on internal security expressed concern over the fast-changing demographic complexion of border states. "In the districts adjoining Bangladesh, the demographic balance is changing so fast that there

is a threat of the local population getting outnumbered by illegal infiltrators. For all practical purposes, the territory of Bangladesh has increased by 15 to 16 km inside India automatically," the resolution said.

The party has also warned the UPA government of stiff resistance if it made any attempt to "revive" the IMDT Act which was recently set aside by Supreme Court. The party, however, appeared soft towards the illegal migration of members from the Hindu "minority community" in Bangladesh and demanded enactment of a law to grant them Indian citizenship.

The party resolution also called for identification and deportation of "illegal infiltrators" and removal of their names from voters'

lists. It suggested "fluorescent fencing", adequate force presence and speedboats to stop infiltration. "The work of registration of national citizens and granting multi-purpose identity cards to citizens along the border with Bangladesh should be completed on a war-footing" the party demanded.

On containing terrorist activities, Mr Mahajan said a coordinated effort by the Centre and the states should be made accorded top priority so that a close watch can be kept on the activities of terrorist outfits. Emphasis was also laid on remaining vigilant about "Pakistan's role in instigating terrorist activities in India". The BJP has strongly advocated a strong force presence in Kashmir notwithstanding the pressure from Pakistan.

Congress, CPI deny receiving funds from KGB, dismiss reports in book

The book has come out when most of the principal players are no longer alive, says Abhishek Singhvi

10-13
19/9

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Congress and the Communist Party of India have dismissed reports in a book that the parties and their leaders received funds from the erstwhile Soviet Union intelligence agency, KGB.

The Congress said the book, *The Mitrokhin Archive Volume II - the KGB and the World*, was based on copies of documents stolen by a former KGB man and published by a British professor and had come out when most of the principal players, including the KGB man, were no longer alive.

Abhishek Singhvi, party spokesperson, said not a single detail of any kind was furnished except "bald vague" statements. It was misleading because it looks as if the report was based on declassified documents according to Indian or Russian rules. "The Congress party has better things to react than to every such report."

CPI general secretary A.B. Bardhan said the report was a "spy thriller" and said the party had survived slander in the past and would do so again. He ac-

• Congress says it has better things to react to

• It's a spy thriller, we have survived slander in the past: CPI

cused the British and U.S. intelligence agencies of having a hand in the latest report.

Mr. Bardhan said that at a time when the credibility and prestige of the Left parties was going up among the people in the country "these agencies are at their job to slander us and use it as a weapon. We Communists have survived slander and would do [so] this [time] too."

He said the book was written by an English writer and based on copies of documents stolen by a former KGB person who was no longer alive. "The British and U.S. intelligence agencies have concocted stories" he said, adding that the latest was the reports on Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction that subsequently proved wrong.

The CPI leader also quoted an episode of 1926-27 when a letter claimed to have been written by

a Communist leader Zinovive was used by the British to crush a workers strike.

The letter, he said, was later proved to have been forged by the British intelligence.

The CPI leader said having been associated with the party for over six decades he could say with authority that funds were always collected through donations from people.

"Attempt to malign Indira"

PATNA: The Former Bihar Chief Minister, Jagannath Mishra, on Sunday termed as "absurd, imaginary and based on hearsay" the allegations against Indira Gandhi and his elder brother, late Lalit Narain Mishra, by a former Soviet archivist that they had received money from the KGB.

Denying that Indira Gandhi and his brother had links with the KGB, Mr. Mishra said it was an attempt to "malign the former Prime Minister and Lalit babu both of whom are not alive to deny the charge." He, however, admitted that his brother, who was the Railway Minister in the Indira Gandhi Cabinet, was "left leaning" and so was Indira Gandhi and

that "Lalit Narain Mishra had brought the Congress close to the CPI."

"Lalit babu Indira Gandhi ke kattar samarthak te aur yeh kahna ki Congress aur Communiston ne KGB se paisa liya bilkul galat hai (Lalit Babu was a staunch supporter of Indira Gandhi and the allegation that Congress and Communists took money from the KGB is baseless)," the three-time Chief Minister of Bihar told PTI.

The Mitrokin Archive and another book *The State within a State: The KGB and its hold on Russia - Past, Present, and Future* have referred to the Congress and the Communists taking money from the KGB. — PTI

10-13-1995 THE HINDU

'KGB moles infiltrated Indira's PMO'

Pumped Millions into Cong, Seduced Indian Diplomats

By Rashmee Roshan Lall
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

London: Indira Gandhi's India was awash with KGB spies, a Left-leaning bought-up media, wild, well paid-for rumours about CIA conspiracies to foment trouble in Assam and Punjab, millions of Soviet roubles pumped into the governing Congress party and remarkably successful Soviet plots to use honey traps and 'swallows' to seduce Indian diplomats, one of the world's leading Cold War historians has told The Times of India.

The astonishing revelation, totally undreamt of in scale, ambition and detail, says India was the only country outside the Soviet bloc to be most successfully penetrated by the KGB, right up to the office of the prime minister. The man who has seen the KGB files and written a book about them is Cambridge University professor Christopher Andrew.

On Saturday, he told TOI that his astonishing account of "the secret history of the 20th century, including the extent to which the KGB was so good at intelligence-gathering and so bad at interpreting it", was important to have a full picture of our world today.

On Monday, Andrew publishes the second volume of the astonishingly detailed KGB files brought to the West by disaffected former KGB agent, the late Vasily Mitrokhin. The 'Mitrokhin Archive II', which goes on sale in India on October 15, deals with the KGB's attempts to 'communistise', 'Sovietise', make friends and influence people in the developing



Indira Gandhi with Leonid Brezhnev in Delhi in 1973

world. It includes, Andrew told TOI, a remarkable account by the KGB's main India and South Asia specialist in Delhi, Leonid Shebarshin, telling the story of how, in one instance, he paid a midnight visit to Delhi's corridors of power, "bringing two million rupees around as a gift from the Politburo to Congress (R)".

"The Mitrokhin Archive II' is the sequel to a whistle-blowing volume that set the western world aflutter six years ago because of the authoritativeness, quality, minutiae and detail of the information copied from thousands of KGB files by Mitrokhin, who defected to Britain after the USSR collapsed in 1992.

"The Mitrokhin Archive', based on six large containers of top secret KGB documents copied by one of its senior agents in a 12-year period, has been described by the FBI as "the most complete and extensive intelligence ever received from any source".

► India was hot theatre of Cold War game, Page 8

'India most penetrated country by KGB'

LONDON, Sept. 17. — India was one of the countries most successfully penetrated by Soviet Intelligence, it claimed, testified a new book on the KGB's global operations.

Extracts from the book carried by a daily here today, said the Kremlin spent a fortune trying to influence the Press, police, ministers and the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Such claims have previously been ignored or brushed aside by Delhi.

The daily, quoting from the book *The Mitrokhin Archive, Volume II: The KGB and the World*, said a huge cache of Soviet Intelligence records smuggled out of Moscow after the fall of communism revealed that "in the 1970s, India was one of

the countries most successfully penetrated by Soviet Intelligence."

A number of senior KGB officers, it claimed, testified that, under Indira Gandhi, India was one of their priority targets. "We had scores of sources through the Indian government — in Intelligence, counter-intelligence, defence and foreign ministries and police," said Oleg Kalugin, once the youngest General in Soviet foreign Intelligence and responsible for monitoring the KGB's penetration abroad.

India became "a model of KGB infiltration of a Third World government," he said.

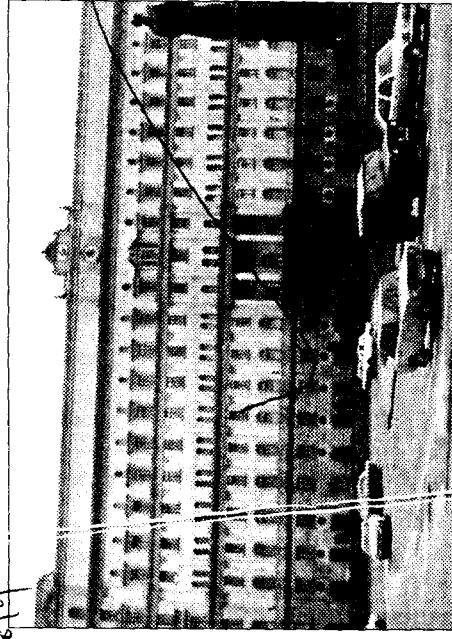
According to the top-secret records, brought to the West by Vasili Mitrokhin, a former

senior archivist of the KGB, Soviet Intelligence set out to exploit "the corruption that became endemic under Indira Gandhi's regime," the extracts quoted by the daily said.

It further claimed that Moscow had funded through the KGB the then ruling party.

The KGB "residency" in Delhi was one of the largest in the world outside the Soviet bloc, and was awarded the rare honour by the Centre (KGB HQ in Moscow) of being promoted to "main residency". The report said Indians lifted restrictions on the number of Soviet diplomats and trade officials in the country, thus allowing the KGB numerous cover positions.

One of the KGB heads of



The KGB headquarters at Lubyanka Square.

political Intelligence in Delhi, Vyacheslav Trubnikov, went on to head Russian foreign Intelligence, became a confidant of President Vladimir Putin and was appointed Ambassador to Delhi last year. The Russians were also extremely active in trying to influence Indian opinion. According to KGB files, by 1973, it had several Indian news organisations on its payroll. The previous year, the KGB claimed to have planted 3,789 articles in Indian newspapers.

How India became a battleground for CIA and KGB in the seventies

It seemed like the entire country was on sale, says book

18-9 1879

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: Damaging new claims about how India became a battleground for the CIA, the U.S. spy agency, and the KGB — the erstwhile Soviet intelligence agency — in the 1970s as they competed for influence in the subcontinent are made in the second volume of *The Mitrokhin Archive*. The book is based on secret KGB papers smuggled into Britain by Vasili Mitrokhin, a former archivist, after the fall of the Soviet regime.

According to extracts published in *The Times* on Saturday, people in high places, including ministers, were willing to provide sensitive information to the highest bidder and “it seemed like the entire country was for sale.”

Oleg Kalugin, who became the head of the Soviet Foreign Counter-Intelligence in 1973, is quoted as saying that on one occasion the KGB “turned down an offer from an Indian minister to provide information in return for \$50,000 — on the grounds that it was already well supplied with material from Indian foreign and defence ministries.”

Mr. Kalugin is reported to have remarked: “It seemed like

“People in high places, including ministers, were willing to provide sensitive information to the highest bidder”

the entire country was for sale; the KGB and the CIA had penetrated the Indian government. Neither side entrusted sensitive information to the Indians, realising their enemy would know all about it the next day.”

Covert funding

The Mitrokhin Archive, Volume II: the KGB and the World by Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, to be published by Penguin, reveals details of KGB activities in India such as covert funding of the Congress, and “individuals and media associated with the CPI [the Communist Party of India].”

It says the reason why the KGB was more successful than the CIA in buying influence was “partly because of its skill in exploiting the corruption that became endemic under Indira Gandhi’s regime.”

It does not make any allegation against Mrs. Gandhi personally and says she was “unlikely to have paid close attention to the dubious origin of some of the funds that went into the Congress’s coffers.”

“That [funding] was a matter she left largely to her principal fund-raiser Lalit Narayan Mishra who, though Mrs. Gandhi did not realise it, also accepted Soviet money. Short and obese, Mishra looked the part of the corrupt politician. Indira Gandhi, despite her own frugal lifestyle, depended on the cash he collected from various sources to finance her party. Money also went to her son and anointed heir, Sanjay, whose misguided ambition to build an Indian popular car and become India’s Henry Ford depended on government favours,” says the book.

Critics are likely to seize on the claim that “suitcases full of banknotes were said to be routinely taken to her [the Prime Minister’s] house and one of her opponents claimed that Mrs. Gandhi did not even return the cases.”

‘Money was for party’

The money, it says, was meant for the party and Mrs. Gandhi

was unlikely to have known its source.

Model of KGB infiltration

In his account of the extensive KGB presence in India in the 1970s, Christopher Andrew, Cambridge historian who collaborated with the late Mitrokhin, says it became “one of the largest outside the Soviet bloc” and was seen as a “model of KGB infiltration of a Third World government.”

He says: “According to KGB files, by 1973 it had on its payroll ten Indian newspapers [which cannot be identified for legal reasons] as well as a press agency... India was also one of the most favourable environments for Soviet front organisations.”

According to Professor Andrew, the KGB also claimed “exaggerated credit” for using its agents to influence Mrs. Gandhi to impose the Emergency in 1975. And, crucially, it failed to grasp that the “Emergency had not turned Indira Gandhi into a dictator and that she still responded to public opinion” which led her to call elections in 1977 resulting in a crushing defeat belying the KGB’s “misplaced confidence” that she would win.

18 APR 2005 THE TIMES

Soviet spy den in Indira's India

AMIT ROY

London, Sept. 17: A Cambridge professor claimed today in an exclusive interview with The Telegraph that the KGB established a huge operation in India under Indira Gandhi.

But Christopher Andrew, professor of contemporary history, admitted that the Soviet intelligence-gathering machine may have convinced itself it had far greater influence on Indian politics than it exercised in reality.

Andrew has written a book based on six large containers of documents smuggled out of the Soviet Union by senior KGB official Vasili Mitrokhin who defected to the west in 1992 at 70 and lived with his family in Britain until his death last year.

The book, co-authored by Andrew with the KGB defector, is called *The Mitrokhin Archive Volume II* — this is a sequel to the first part — and is published tomorrow by Penguin/Allen Lane in the UK. The Indian edition is expected to be published in a fortnight by Penguin India.

The names of alleged KGB informers in India as well as 10 Indian newspapers which were said to be in the pay of the Russians have been removed for legal reasons, said Andrew. Where references are made, the authors use the code names given by the KGB.

"There is no other way to write contemporary history," Andrew said.

The first extracts from the book, serialised today in *The Times*, give the impression that under Mrs Gandhi, India became almost a client state of the Soviet Union, with its foreign policy heavily influenced by the KGB.

The publishers say that the extracts "reveal that India in the 1970s was one of the countries most successfully penetrated by Soviet intelligence".

They add: "Revelations from the KGB documents brought to the west by Vasili Mitrokhin show Soviet intelligence set out to exploit the corruption that became endemic under Indira Gandhi's regime.

"Despite her own frugal lifestyle, suitcases full of bank notes were said to be routinely taken to the Prime Minister's house to finance her wing of the Congress Party. The Prime Minister was unaware that some of the suitcases, which replenished Congress's coffers, came from Moscow via the KGB.

"Her principal fundraiser, Lalit Narayan Mishra, knew, however, that he was accepting Soviet money."

They go on to claim: "In 1972, the KGB claimed to have planted over 3,500 articles in Indian newspapers. Yet despite spending 10.6 million roubles (more than £10 million at old exchange rates) to influence operations to support Mrs Gandhi and undermine her opponents, Moscow did not foresee the sudden end of emergency rule."

Assessing the book, *The Times* reports: "A huge cache of KGB records smuggled out of Moscow after the fall of communism reveal that in the 1970s India was one of the countries most successfully penetrated by Soviet intelligence."

However, even *The Times* is forced to admit that the KGB may have wasted its money by acknowledging: "Christopher Andrew, the Cambridge historian who co-operated with Mitrokhin after his defection to Britain, says in his account of this huge operation that the

KGB fatally overestimated its own influence. It also failed to anticipate the backlash against Mrs Gandhi after her imposition... of emergency."

It is not entirely clear why the KGB felt it had to invest so much energy on winning over India when American hostility to Mrs Gandhi and Washington's decision to back General Yahya Khan over the Bangladesh war had done the trick for Moscow.

Andrew accepted that perhaps Indian newspapers and journalists were writing anti-US articles which they would have written anyway. But the KGB convinced itself it was responsible for those articles.

When it came to intelligence-gathering, even in countries which could be considered friends, the KGB went in for an overkill, said Andrew. "The KGB felt it could win friends and influence people

in the Third World in a way the Americans couldn't."

One area where the KGB may have influenced Mrs Gandhi is perhaps in convincing her she was in danger of being assassinated by a "foreign hand", according to Andrew, who has not been to India and may not appreciate the cliché status of the term, "foreign hand".

The extract is headed, "Indira's India and the KGB".

In it he says that when Mrs Gandhi went to Moscow in 1953, the KGB "surrounded her with handsome, attentive male admirers". Two years later, when she accompanied her father on another trip, "Khrushchev presented her with a mink coat which became one of the favourite items in her wardrobe".

He also states: "In August (1971) she signed a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-op-



Vyacheslav Trubnikov, who was one of the KGB heads of political intelligence in Delhi, went on to head Russian foreign intelligence, became a confidant of President Putin and was appointed ambassador to India last year

eration with the Soviet Union. Both countries immediately issued a joint communiqué calling for the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam.

"India was able to rely on Soviet arms supplies and diplomatic support in the conflict against Pakistan which was already in the offing. Despite diplomatic support from both the United States and China, Pakistan suffered a crushing defeat in the 14-day war with India."

Andrew was unapologetic about what readers might consider the lack of context. "The role of the CIA is known in Third World countries, but not so much is known about the KGB. This corrects the balance a little."

SKELETONS FROM 70s

The KGB had access...

- India became a model of KGB infiltration of a Third World government, KGB archives claim. In the 70s, it was among the countries most successfully penetrated by Soviet intelligence
- Suitcases full of bank notes were said to be routinely taken to the Prime Minister's house to finance the Congress... Some of the suitcases came from Moscow via the KGB
- By 1973, it had on its payroll 10 Indian newspapers as well as a press agency

...Did it have influence?

- Despite spending 10.6 million roubles... Moscow did not foresee the sudden end of Emergency rule
- Both the KGB and the Soviet leadership found it difficult to grasp that Emergency had not turned Indira Gandhi into a dictator

NIC | PM sounds warning to insurgents, says violence will be dealt with firmly

'Give up arms, prove point at polls'

ENS & PTI

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 31

Sending a warning that communalism, insurgency and violence would be dealt with firmly, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today called upon political groups to use the poll mechanism to prove their popularity.

Addressing the National Integration Council (NIC), which is meeting after almost 13 years, the PM said that any grievance can be redressed through democratic means and dialogue.

"Every political group that claims to represent the interests of any section of our people must test and demonstrate its popularity through democratic institutions," Singh said, adding that any overt challenge to the nation in the form of communalism, extremism, separatism, insurgency or violence would be "firmly dealt with".

He said there would be some grievance or the other at all times and the country's democratic system gave everyone the right to articulate such complaints in a democratic manner.



PM Manmohan Singh greets his predecessor Atal Behari Vajpayee at the National Integration Council meeting on Wednesday. Express photo by Anil Sharma

ture, the PM referred to the launching of the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme as a social safety net in the poorest regions.

The day-long meeting was attended by former Prime Ministers A B Vajpayee, V P Singh and I K Gujral, besides BJP President L K Advani, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and key political leaders, media-persons, industrialists and public figures. Vajpayee had also attended the first NIC meeting in 1962, when Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister. Welcoming members of the reconstituted NIC, Home Minister Shivraj Patil said the government proposed to enact a law to deal with communal violence, disturbances, and provide for a proper investigative machinery, special courts and compensation for victims.

The NIC, in the 12 meetings held in the past, has taken up issues like Kashmir and Punjab, Ayodhya dispute, regionalism, communalism, role of educational institutions, mass media and responsibility of the press.

"No civilized society can tolerate violence and extremism... no society can pardon those who kill innocent people..." he said adding that the government would fight such groups and their "ideology of hatred."

The meeting had communal harmony, role of government, education and media on the agenda.

On national integration, Singh said that communalism, casteism, and regional or linguistic chauvinism would have to be fought in a more sustained and intelligent manner.

He asked the Chief Ministers to invest in education, health, infrastructure, better governance and in transforming rural economy.

"An improvement in the lives and livelihood of the rural poor is an important element of national integration," Singh said adding that the 142-member NIC should meet periodically to discuss challenges.

Promising a new deal for rural India through the Bharat Nirman Programme to improve rural infrastruc-

The rejection of the IMDT Act was an ill-considered step

The foreign hand

BY AMULYA GANGULI



GET BACK: Aasu activists celebrate the striking down of the IMDT Act

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THE SUPREME Court's description of the influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh into Assam as 'external aggression' is reminiscent of the dangerously chauvinistic mood that prevailed in the state during the anti-foreigner movement between 1979 and 1985. The success of the movement, evident in the subsequent assumption of power by its leaders, was reflected in the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, which was intended to detect the aliens. The Act has now been struck down by the court on the grounds that it violates a basic principle of international law under which it is up to the immigrant to prove his bona fides. It is the other way round under the Act, where the accuser had to substantiate his charge against the suspect.

While going by the rule book, however, what the judiciary has overlooked is Assam's violent history where the non-Assamese are concerned. Not only that, the non-Assamese did not always include immigrants from Bangladesh but also other Indians, especially the Bengalis. The Act has to be seen in that disturbing context. It is necessary to remember that there was a series of riots aimed specifically at the Bengalis who lived in the state and regarded themselves as Assamese. These outbreaks took place in 1960, 1961, 1963, 1968, 1970 and 1972 and finally petered out in the aftermath of the liberation of Bangladesh, when the influx from there palpably became a greater problem than the presence of the people from West Bengal.

But what is to be kept in mind is that the influx from that part of the subcontinent to Assam long pre-dated the creation of a new country and was a part of the migrations which took place in undivided India. The inflow from East Bengal was sarcastically described by Lord Wavell as a Grow More Muslims project favoured by the then Assam premier Mohammed Saadullah (who had initiated a 'grow more food' programme) since the East Bengali Muslim peasants were known to be more hard-working than their Assamese counterparts.

So, the 'aggression' noted by the Supreme Court has been a feature of the region from way back in the Twenties when a local Congress leader Chandranath Sharma expressed his fears about how 'our na-

tional identity will disappear' as a result of the inflow of the 'foreign settlers'. East Bengalis, therefore, were regarded as aliens in Assam even in undivided India. The apprehension about the loss of Assamese identity was also expressed by the intensely parochial Lachit Sena during the anti-Bengali agitations in the Sixties and later by its ideological successors, the All Assam Students Union (Aasu) and the Ulfa. Given this animus against the linguistic minorities, both Hindu and Muslim, it is not surprising that the Aasu's anti-foreigner movement in the late Seventies and early Eighties led to the flight of a sizeable number of Bengalis to Cooch Behar and other West Bengal districts.

One can understand, therefore, why the IMDT Act placed the onus on the accuser rather than on the accused. In an atmosphere of parochial hate and paranoia created by an agitation directed against the Bengali-speaking people, both Hindu and Muslim, the accused is always at a disadvantage, especially if the animus has a history which is several decades old. At the time when the Act came into force, Assam was still experiencing the intense chauvinism which the AASU had fostered. Incidentally, it will do well to remember that this feeling did not represent Assamese society as a whole but mainly the upper caste and upper class gentry of the Brahmaputra valley.

Needless to say, the Bengalis of the Barak valley in lower Assam did not reciprocate such sectarian senti-

ments, nor did the tribals. However, seeing the 'success' of the AASU's movement, the tribals also set up their own students union, the All Assam Minority Students Union (Aamsu), and started raising their own divisive demands, as for Bodoland, preparing the ground for further turmoil. As is known, sectarianism breeds sectarianism. The Ulfa emerged from this atmosphere of prejudice and xenophobia to raise the demand from the eviction of illegal immigrants to the eviction of all non-Assamese, including other Indians, and creating a 'sovereign' state. If, after a while, it moderated its stance on the illegal immigrants, it is because of the 'rest and recreation' facilities which its leaders were offered by Dhaka.

It is clear, therefore, that the IMDT Act was a specific response to a highly volatile situation and was intended to reassure the linguistic as well as the religious minorities that they will not be targeted, for harassment and worse, by roaming bands of hooligans as between 1979 and 1985, not to mention the earlier years. A recourse to the Foreigners Act in that atmosphere of provincial chauvinism would have reignited the worst facets of the agitations against 'foreign settlers', both Bangladeshi and Bengali.

Once the Aasu's leaders came to understand the responsibilities of power, they, too, realised the value of the Act. If they had tried to implement it with greater care, it might have served the purpose of identifying and deporting the illegal immi-

grants. But the usual bureaucratic lethargy and incompetence, coupled with the loss of zeal among the leaders of the new ruling party, the Asom Gana Parishad, sealed the fate of the Act. Then, of course, there was the customary infighting, which saw the two top leaders of the AASU, Prafulla Mahanta and Bhriugu Phukan, go their separate ways.

There were other complications as well. While those who came from Bangladesh after 1971 were to be sent back, those who entered Assam between 1966 and 1971 were only to be disenfranchised for 10 years while the presence of those who arrived before 1966 was to be regularised. The status of the middle group was dicey. They were to become Indian citizens in all respects except for the fact that they couldn't vote. But they could own property and earn a living. What if they went to live in another state? Could they vote there or wait for the 10-year period to end? In any event, separating the three groups was not easy.

In its diversity, Assam is a mirror image of India, with its many communities and racial groups ranging from Caucasian to Mongoloid. One of the most prominent of these groups, the Ahoms, came to Assam in the 13th century from Thailand. Even today, two decades after the anti-foreigner agitation ended, the application of the Foreigners Act is fraught with danger because of the state's complex demography. This is obvious from the present joint efforts of the Aasu and the minority organisations to maintain communal peace.

The threat is all the greater because parties like the BJP would love to fish for support in the troubled waters. In the Eighties, Arun Shourie was one of the foremost campaigners on behalf of the Aasu and he may replay his role all over again, for all the incendiary ingredients of the Sangh *parivar's* philosophy are there — minorities, illegal immigrants, a background of violence. The BJP's own internal problems may also induce it to light a communal fire in Assam to divert attention. It has already peddled the theory that a third partition is in the offing with the aliens teaming up with the unpatriotic indigenous Muslims. The rejection of the IMDT Act, therefore, was an ill-considered step, reflecting a tunnel vision which focused on a problem but ignored the context.

Search on for IMDT alternative

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 23. — The government is considering several measures to check the inflow of illegal migrants into the country, including issue of identity cards to citizens, fencing of borders and setting up more tribunals under the Foreigners' Act.

Replying to a short discussion spilling over from yesterday, the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, today said the Supreme Court judgement declaring the IMDT Act as ultra vires would be respected. At the same time care would be taken to prevent illegal migration into the

country. ^{21/8 9-0}
The IMDT Act was enacted to avoid any harassment of genuine Indian citizens as it placed the onus of proof on the authorities to label someone a foreigner, Mr Patil said. However, with the apex court having rendered it null and void, there was no question of invoking this Act.

However, to ensure that illegal entrants were identified without any harassment of genuine Indian citizens, the government had set up a Group of Ministers to suggest

The Supreme Court, the minister said, had removed the tribunals with the scrapping of the IMDT Act, and recommended creation of tribunals

under the Foreigners' Act. This, he added, was being done.

In addition the borders were being fenced to prevent any illegal crossing-over. For those using the river route, he informed that floating barriers would be used to check large boats.

On I-cards being issued to the local citizens, Mr Patil said a pilot project to this effect was being carried out in the border districts. He appealed to the members not to divide the people on the basis of religion, community and region but to stand united and fight the menace of infiltration. "The sovereignty and integrity of the country will thus be protected," he noted.

21 AUG 2001

THE STATESMAN

Rural job guarantee Bill passed by Lok Sabha

A hundred days of assured employment every year for every rural household

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, 2005 — seeking to provide 100 days' assured employment every year to every rural household in 200 districts — was unanimously passed by the Lok Sabha with 52 amendments on Tuesday after a marathon 13-hour debate spread over three days.

While the Opposition gave in to the overwhelming support for the Bill and withdrew most of its amendments, the few that it insisted on — including the one moved by Vijay Kumar Malhotra (Bharatiya Janata Party) to ex-

tend the scheme to the entire country within two years — were negated by voice vote. The official amendment promises to extend the scheme throughout the country over the next five years.

Ahead of his reply, Union Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh moved a last-minute amendment on minimum wages. While the Minister did not refer, during his re-

ply, even once to the issue of minimum wages — a point raised by many a member right through the debate — he responded to a specific question later and said the minimum wages of States would apply to the programme and the amendment enabled the Centre to step in to ensure a minimum rate of not less than Rs. 60 a day in States where it was lower.

- **Programme to be launched in 200 districts across the country in the first phase**

- **Minimum wages of States would apply to the programme**

Beginning his reply with an acknowledgment of the across-the-floor support to the Bill, Mr. Singh set aside apprehensions that the Parliamentary Standing Committee's recommendations on the Bill had been ignored by the Government. Of the 22 suggestions, 16 had been accepted; nine in totality.

Also, it was not true that the Government had not done its homework well while drafting the legislation and that earlier employment programmes had been a failure.

According to the Minister, 50 more districts would be added to the original list of 150 districts

where the programme would be launched in the first phase. On the apprehension that political affiliation would be the criterion for selection of the 50 districts, he said the Planning Commission had been given the task of drawing up the list.

Referring to the oft-repeated question why only 100 days of employment was being guaranteed, Mr. Singh said the programme was aimed at providing jobs during the lean periods in rural areas where agriculture is the main source of livelihood.

"We do not want to kill the agricultural sector by driving away labour from it."

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THE HINDU

হয়রানি রুখতে বিদেশি আইন

নয়াদিহ্লি, ২৩ অগস্ট: বাংলানিভাষী ভারতীয়দের অনুপ্রবেশকারীর তকমা দেওয়া ঠেকাতে আরও ট্রাইবুনাল গঠন করার কথা ভাবছে কেন্দ্র। আজ রাজ্যসভায় প্রমোদ মহাজনের এক প্রশ্নের উত্তরে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল বলেন, “বিদেশি আইন (ফরেনার্স অ্যাক্ট) বলবৎ করার চেষ্টা করবে সরকার। তা ছাড়া, বাংলানিভাষী বা অন্য ভারতীয়দের হয়রানি ঠেকাতে আরও ট্রাইবুনাল গড়া হবে।” তবে সুপ্রিম কোর্টের পরামর্শ মতো অসম থেকে আই এম ডি টি আইন তুলে নেওয়ার কথাও ভাবছে সরকার। কোর্টের এই রায়ের বিরুদ্ধে আদালতে পাল্টা আবেদন করা হচ্ছে না। বরং বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখার জন্য কয়েক জন মন্ত্রীকে নিয়ে একটি গোল্টি গঠন করা হয়েছে। ওই মন্ত্রিগোল্টি এ বিষয়ে সপারিশ করবে। —পি টি আই

Irish scholar reveals Netaji death order

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, August 14

DID BRITAIN assassinate Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose? It's been one of the theories on Netaji's disappearance and now an Irish scholar has claimed documentary evidence of it. Prof Eunan O'Haplin of Trinity College, Dublin — while delivering the Sir Bose lecture here on Sunday — said that the British foreign office had issued the order in March 1941 and reconfirmed it in June.

On March 7, the British special operations executive (SOE) in-

formed its representatives in Istanbul and Cairo that Bose was "traveling from Afghanistan to Germany via Iran, Iraq and Turkey". "I came across certain SOE telegrams at the British National Archive a year ago. The SOE was asked 'to wire what arrangements they could make for his assassination,'" said O'Haplin.

"There was a striking absence of consideration of alternative methods. If British agents could get close enough to kill him, they surely could have attempted to capture him. Also, it's significant that it was not an initiative dreamt up by an ov-

er enthusiastic local operative, but a measured step determined at a high level in London."

But, Netaji did not travel through West Asia as was anticipated. He went via Russia disguised as Orlando Mazzotta and reached Berlin on April 2.

"But this remained secret," said O'Haplin. In May, Delhi informed London that they had expected Bose "would be used for radio propaganda from Russia, Italy or Germany, but nothing of the sort has eventuated. It seems probable that he is still in Afghanistan".

On June 13, the SOE in Istanbul enquired whether the assassination order still stood. "Once the decision was confirmed, London cabled the SOE that the foreign office agreed to liquidation of Bose on Turkish territory," said O'Haplin, who has handed over the documents to Netaji Research Bureau chairperson Krishna Bose.

Prof Sugata Bose, Gardiner Professor of history at Harvard University and grandnephew of Netaji, said: "The British and Indian governments should make public all documents relating to Netaji."

Political turf wars

Bureaucracy in the line of fire

When politicians rise above partisan considerations to target a single individual, there is definitely more to it than meets the eye. The turf war in the Delhi Congress is set to claim the head of an IAS officer known for his integrity and efficiency. Municipal Corporation of Delhi commissioner Rakesh Mehta is the individual in question; chief minister Sheila Dikshit and Delhi Congress chief Ram Babu Sharma are the two politicians playing out the turf war; and the issue that has ostensibly brought things to a head is alleged corruption in the construction of a state-of-the-art abattoir in east Delhi's Ghazipur area. Mehta, a bureaucrat of known calibre, is said to enjoy the confidence of Ms Dikshit. Mr Sharma, who held complete sway over the MCD during Mr Mehta's predecessors' tenure, is now out in the cold. Ergo, he organises Congress councillors, most of whom owe allegiance to him, to join hands with the Opposition BJP to demand the commissioner's ouster over alleged kickbacks in the abattoir deal.

Political pressure on bureaucrats is nothing new. Nowhere is it more rampant than in the MCD where there is a constant power struggle between the deliberative wing (the elected councillors) and the executive (officials). There have been precedents of commissioners walking out of meetings rather than be humiliated. And when one commissioner decides to chart a course of his own and bring some accountability to the organisation he heads, there is an all-out war against him. This brings us to the larger question of a pliant bureaucracy increasingly toeing the line of the political masters of the day. Networking, of course, has become a way of life in most professions, and government officials are certainly not free from the malaise. The earlier healthy, if sometimes hostile, balance between politicians and bureaucrats has been upset. In the process, outstanding officials suffer. It is time bureaucrats are protected, not targeted, for doing their jobs well.

13 AUG 2005

Truth & Reconciliation

Why India should face up to
the past, not bury it

It is logically — and morally — impossible for India's secular parties, the Congress and the Left, to condemn the role of the Narendra Modi regime during the 2002 Gujarat carnage, while winking at Delhi's anti-Sikh riots of 1984. The UPA government's position — summarised in the action taken report (ATR) which accompanies the main 339-page Nanavati enquiry volume that was tabled in Parliament on Monday — is inadequate. The ATR takes a narrow legalistic position on the 1984 violence by listing convictions and acquittals. Thus, when the enquiry says there's evidence to show that Jagdish Tytler, now a legislator and minor minister in the UPA government, 'very probably had a hand in organising attacks on Sikhs', the ATR argues that innocence or guilt is not probabilistic, but has to be proved beyond reasonable doubt. No cases were filed against Tytler. Ergo, he walks. Sajjan Kumar, another incumbent legislator from Delhi, fares equally well: The ATR shows that in every case he's listed, Kumar has been acquitted. The Congress is relieved and the Left is tongued for once. The BJP should be elated: this way chances are slim that culpability for Gujarat riots will ever be nailed on Modi and his henchmen. But the Nanavati report and the ATR have exposed serious issues about how we deal with state-endorsed crimes. They also show a way forward.

In crimes where local administrations, police and politicians are involved, it is pointless to look for clear-cut judicial outcomes, especially for cases whose trails have run cold. Police refuse to register complaints, files go missing, witnesses are tough to find or turn hostile in court. Any retrial of 1984 will, doubtless, find people like Tytler and Kumar innocent once again. The only way forward is moral and morality, in this case, is good politics. The government must ask Tytler to resign from office: India can't have ministers who've 'very probably' incited mobs to riot. It should also set up a truth and reconciliation commission, akin to what South Africa did. There, victim and oppressor can face each other and talk about what happened. Through such encounters, truth will emerge. That will make way for reconciliation. Remember, Congress president Sonia Gandhi eloquently apologised for the 1984 riots in 1998. With Manmohan Singh, a Sikh as prime minister, some of the reconciliation has taken place. It is time to face up to the past, not bury it.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Joint declarations and 'secret clauses'

Inder Malhotra

IN THE ongoing debate on the India-America nuclear deal — at times a classic example of the dialogue of the deaf — an intriguing new element has entered. There is a sudden search for the "secret clauses" in the joint statement signed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush of the United States. Several MPs and others suspect, indeed insist, that these exist but are not being disclosed. Far from being a surprise, this is entirely true to type. Rare is the international agreement India has been party to during the last 40 years that has not evoked exactly the same suspicions not only in this country but also across the subcontinent.

The first time this happened was immediately after the signing of the Tashkent Declaration on January 10, 1966 by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Field-Marshal Ayub Khan, then President of Pakistan, a short few hours before Shastri's tragic death in the Central Asian city, then a part of the Soviet Union, now the capital of Uzbekistan. Hardly was the ink on this document dry when there was uproar in Pakistan about a "sellout" by

Ayub and strident demands for immediate disclosure of the declaration's secret clauses.

No one exploited this sentiment more effectively than Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, at one time Ayub's Foreign Minister and principal protégé who eventually turned into the nemesis of the man he used to call "Daddy." Even at Tashkent, Bhutto had made no secret of his disapproval of the declaration. After returning home, he privately spoke against it even more harshly. Ayub first sacked him and then imprisoned him briefly. Once out of jail, Bhutto deemed discretion to be the better part of valour, and went away on an extended "lecture tour" overseas. But, sensing that Ayub was already on his way out, he came back and delivered the coup de grace to his erstwhile mentor. He would go from one public meeting to another and assure rapturous audiences that at an "appropriate time" he would disclose the Tashkent Declaration's "secrets." He knew, of course, that there was nothing to reveal.

But then, as happens in life often and oftener in politics, Bhutto fell into the pit that he had so successfully dug for Ayub. No sooner had he returned home after signing the Shimla Agreement with Indira Gandhi

in July 1972 than his opponents pounced on him to demand the revelation of its "secret clauses." They also asked him how was the accord at Shimla better than that at Tashkent he had denounced as an "act of betrayal."

This paled, however, compared with the clamour in this country against "secret clauses" in the Shimla Agreement. Was it a "settlement or surrender?" demanded Indira Gandhi's critics. They argued that since she had let go a "golden opportunity"

agitated House, that after making the most detailed inquiries and examining every scrap of classified papers, the Government had come to the conclusion that the Shimla Agreement contained no secret clauses. By then, it was known that Bhutto had verbally assured Indira Gandhi that "over time" he would "gradually" convert the Line of Control — into which the earlier Cease-Fire Line had significantly been converted — into a permanent border. But then as the Hollywood film producer, Sam Goldwyn, had famously remarked, "A verbal agreement is not worth the paper it is written on." In any case, this was not the only promise artful "Zulfi" had no intention of honouring.

The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was signed in New Delhi 11 months before the Shimla Accord was. As the sensational news broke, familiar shouts of "secret clauses" were duly heard.

No one, however, pursued the matter because the Bangladesh crisis was at its peak and was to escalate into a full-scale war soon enough. But after the Janata assumed power, it made as thorough an investigation into the possible existence of classified clauses in this treaty as it had done in relation to the Shimla Agreement. With the same result — that there were no secret clauses to be found. This caused some embarrassment to Morarjibhai who had declared that he would ask for a revision of the treaty with Moscow "if he discovered any objectionable secret clauses" in it.

Tailpiece

The most widespread comment on Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee's latest tantrum in the Lok Sabha is, "Mamatadi behaved exactly like herself."

RARE IS THE INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT INDIA HAS BEEN PARTY TO IN THE LAST 40 YEARS THAT HAS NOT EVOKED THE SAME SUSPICIONS AS THOSE EVOKED BY THE INDO-U.S. NUCLEAR DEAL.

to dispose of the Kashmir problem once and for all, there must be some secret commitments by both sides, especially by Bhutto in the accord signed at the famous hill station. During the Emergency these allegations, along with much else, were suppressed. But they bounced back, with renewed vigour, particularly after Indira Gandhi was defeated in the 1977 general election and the Janata Party came to power under the leadership of Morarji Desai.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was Foreign Minister in the Desai Government. He found it necessary to make a formal statement in Parliament, assuring an

Delhi's definition of terrorism forms no part of the US agenda

Terror will come home

Travel broadens the mind. During his recent visit to the United States of America, our prime minister had an attack of such broadmindedness. He was speaking, straight from the heart, to the American press. It was a remarkable performance, with beggar-my-neighbour eloquence at its very best. Don't you know, quite unlike India, where you will not find a single al-Qaida man, Pakistan is infested with Osama bin Laden's acolytes. In any case, because it is a military dictatorship, Pakistan's administration is highly unstable; that country could any day come under the control of the taliban. Bereft of the blessings of a strong democracy, Pakistan would be putty clay in the hands of Muslim fundamentalists. It is frightening to contemplate what might happen should these species come to possess a stockpile of nuclear bombs; Western civilization, the prime minister implied, would be in deep peril; India, in contrast, always thinks and prays for the safety, security and prosperity of the Western world, including the great United States.

The twist, of course, is in the tail. The prime minister has rushed to sign some sort of a nuclear agreement with the US. The Americans have kindly agreed to supply us "heavy water", thereby making full utilization of the capability of the Tarapore plant possible. The fuel will be available for our other nuclear installations too, including new ones that might be set up. The price we have to pay is to concede to the Americans the unfettered right to enter and inspect our nuclear plants. Such inspection will hardly be in the nature of innocuous perambulation though. The US inspectors will henceforth control our nuclear activities. This condition is not overtly mentioned in the agreement signed with the Americans. But, then, there are more things in heaven and earth than are written in formal covenants.

Is it the will-o'-the-wisp of a permanent seat in the United Nations security council — stated to be an American bounty — or is it a deeper malaise, a manifestation of the fear of freedom Erich Fromm wrote about more than sixty years ago? Whatever it be, our prime minister is obviously striving to be the number one drum-beater of the US bandmaster. To give Pakistan a bloody nose is an equally strong urge: the Americans should take us in as a nuclear ally, and, at the same time, deny the same dispensation to Pakistan.

Suppose the Pakistanis decide to embark on a *riposte*, and plaintively warn the US administration of the

pitfalls of an Indian connection? They could, for instance, make the following points *seriatim*. First, India is full of congenital America-haters, and it would prove to be a most unreliable ally. Second, unlike Pakistan, where the military dictatorship works as a factor of stability, India, as a practising democracy, suffers from the debility of periodic elections which lead to frequent

CUTTING CORNERS

ASHOK MITRA

these wretched communists will not pass on to Castro some of the nuclear secrets the Americans could conceivably share with the Indians in terms of the agreement just signed?

It is a depressing scenario. In their desperate anxiety to curry American favours, the regimes of both countries might go to the most vulgar length to present their own



‘ The PM was speaking, straight from the heart, to the American press ’

case and vilify the rival country. This frenzy to be a vassal of the US is particularly intriguing in the context of what is happening in the United Kingdom. Leave out the verdict of the former prime minister, John Major, or of the current London mayor, Jack Livingstone, or of the opinion polls; even an official committee set up by the British government has explicitly suggested that the terrorist outbursts in London are a direct consequence of Tony Blair's decision to make the UK an active partner of the US in the blatant act of aggression in Iraq. Till as long as the British government does not agree to withdraw troops from Iraq, life is likely to continue to be chancy for Londoners. Neither normal nor special security measures can really prevent the

penetration of ideas.

Let there be no illusion, there are enough zealots living in Britain who have total sympathy for the Arab cause. They are not necessarily of Arab descent nor have Asian or Latin American roots. Almost every country in each continent now has enough haters of US foreign policy who are willing to convert themselves into flaming activists. Terror will remain a ubiquitous phenomenon till as long as the American system is not rid of its imperial ego and its admirers elsewhere too do not draw their lessons from what has happened in London and Sharm el-Sheikh.

In his recent pilgrimage to the US, the Indian prime minister went overboard in praising the virtues of American democracy. He was equally stentorian in his pledge to be a fitting partner of the US in its war against global terror. He has his problems, in Kashmir, along the North-east and in those parts of the country's interior where tribal populations have been experiencing unspeakable deprivation. It would however be awesomely difficult to prove that the troubles in Assam or Manipur are instigated by Osama bin Laden. Nor can the ubiquitous landlessness and related underdevelopment in the tribal belt be attributable to the taliban. In Kashmir, too, the crucial issue is self-determination of its people; if one or two members of al Qaida lend a helping hand to the militants there, much of the fault perhaps lies, it can be argued, with those who decided, in the first place, to move the Indian army into the valley.

Till now, the record says, Osama bin Laden has exhibited no enmity towards India. What is then the rationale of the bravado in claiming to be the staunchest ally of the US in its war against terror? The American war has a single focus: the annihilation of Osama bin Laden and his followers. Terrorism as defined in the lexicon of New Delhi forms no part of the American agenda. To be blunt, in our enthusiasm to join the US president, we are only advancing the dawn of the day when Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, each will be the constant target of so-called terrorist activities.

The prime minister has asked for it, terror will come home. Our parliament condoles the deaths of those killed in the London and Sharm el-Sheikh explosions; it did not bother to commiserate with the innocent citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq who were victims of the butchery perpetrated by Western troops. What if the appropriate conclusion is drawn by some people somewhere?

Securing India's Energy Future

R.K. PACHAURI

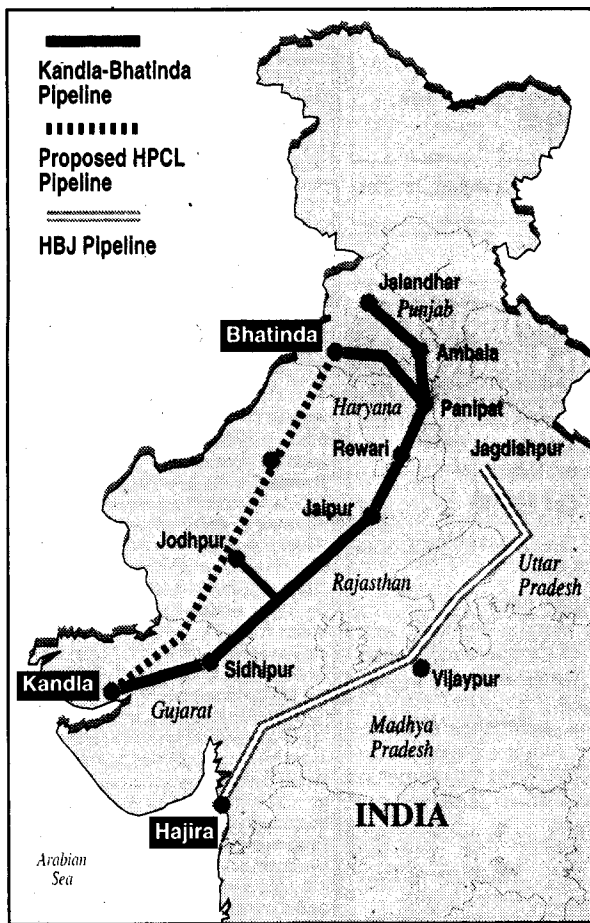
THE Iran-India pipeline has been in the news. As one of the two co-authors of this project way back in 1989, I feel gratified by the movement forward, even though impediments continue to dog its prospects. The risks attached to the project have been highlighted in these columns, but the fact is that our energy future is itself fraught with risks that need careful evaluation.

India's policy has rightly been to increase dependence on coal, given our abundant resources of this fuel. But several other realities must define India's plans for ensuring energy security. The concept of security is not confined merely to ensuring adequate supply of energy physically, but also securing it at steady and reasonable costs. Our mounting dependence on oil imports exposes us to major price fluctuations in the global market. Additionally, we have even today serious constraints in the supply of coal, as a result of which power stations are having to shut down, even as the country faces dire shortages of electricity.

India's coal industry is beset with several problems including generally low productivity levels, inherently high ash content and inadequate transport infrastructure. These problems could be bypassed partly with commercially viable technologies for coal gasification or conversion into liquid fuels as South Africa has succeeded in doing for over half a century. But the lack of a technological dimension in India's energy decision-making has stalled development or acquisition of such technologies.

Much of the problem facing India in the energy sector is the result of a slow, almost paralytic, pace of reform. The coal industry will not attract large-scale investments, because its main customer is the power sector, an industry largely characterised by bankruptcy. If energy security is to be attained for ensuring healthy economic growth, then the building blocks of the energy sector, namely the enterprises producing electricity, petroleum products or other forms of energy have to be upgraded to healthy and vibrant business entities.

India's oil companies have performed well over past



decades, as a result of which petroleum products become a swing fuel whenever the supply of other forms of energy fails. If power cuts occur, oil products are used for captive generation in industry, households and commercial establishments, just as diesel pumpsets are used for costly irrigation in agriculture. But

with unusually high international oil prices and an artificial lid on product prices, oil companies are hemorrhaging, adversely affecting their ability to expand distribution or upgrade technology.

Previous governments had a unique opportunity to bury this problem by faithfully implementing an earlier decision

for dismantling the Administered Pricing Mechanism in 2002 but avoided the political hot potato of deciding on future price increases, which the current government has difficulty in handling now. Higher oil prices are now inevitable, and the sooner we adjust our economic structure to a more efficient and less import dependent pattern of energy consumption the more secure our economic future would be. By regulation, every home in Cyprus is fitted with a solar water heater, as is the case in Israel. Yet every home in Delhi uses electricity for water heating, such that barely 5 percent of the heat in every tonne of coal used for power generation actually reaches in the form of hot water in the shower.

Our new shopping malls with which Indians are engaged in a passionate affair are huge guzzlers of energy. As reported, 300 of these malls are currently under construction country-wide, implying several thousand megawatts of consumption. With enlightened architecture and construction techniques, as established by TERI's training complex called RETREAT on the outskirts of Delhi, consumption can be curbed drastically. Another area for intervention is the transport sector where the lack of efficient public transport intra-city and the decline of the railways in inter-city traffic is leading to in-

creased use of petroleum products for private transport.

In the ultimate analysis, India has to move towards greater use of renewable forms of energy, of which we have abundant resources. Globally, the renewable energy industry is no longer in a state of infancy, with global investments in 2004 totaling \$28 billion as compared to \$6 billion in 1995. Total installed capacity based on renewable energy was 155,000 MW in 2004, of which wind power itself totaled 48,000 MW. A focused, goal oriented programme of R&D would bring down costs of renewable energy devices and meet the needs of a diverse range of applications and customers.

The Prime Minister has recently established an Energy Coordination Committee, which is a step in the right direction, but it would be vitally important for a forward-looking energy policy to draw on the best talent available in India defining technological and policy initiatives to create a secure and stable energy future. Otherwise, economic growth could falter and India's ambitions to grow at a healthy rate in excess of 8 per cent would have to be left behind.

The writer is Director General, TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute)

Panel to look into IMDT Act repeal

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 1

THE GOVERNMENT on Monday constituted a seven-member group of ministers (GoM), headed by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, which will suggest the future course of action following the Supreme Court's directive to scrap the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act, 1983.

Other members of the GoM include home minister Shivraj Patil, HRD minister Arjun Singh, finance minister P. Chidambaram, law minister H.R. Bhardwaj, telecom minister Dayanidhi Maran and minister of state for heavy industries Santosh Mohan Dev.

The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) had, on July 14, decided to constitute the GoM, which will study the Supreme Court's order in detail and advise the Centre on the future course of action.

Highly placed home ministry sources said

the GoM would explore two possibilities. First, whether the government can introduce a new law by replacing the IMDT Act while keeping in view the concerns expressed by the apex court in its judgment.

The other option that the GoM will examine is making amendments in some of the existing laws, such as the Foreigners Act and the Unlawful Activities Act by incorporating some of the provisions of the IMDT Act. The government had made a similar arrangement while scrapping Pota when it made changes in the Unlawful Activities Act to include some of the organisations banned under Pota.

The IMDT Act had become a bone of contention for the Congress and the NDA, with the latter demanding that the Act be scrapped, since it was ineffective. Even the All-Assam Students' Union (Aasu), at its meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in June, had demanded that the IMDT

Act be withdrawn.

Although no deadline has been fixed, the GoM is likely to submit its recommendations in about two months. Earlier, the Centre had decided against a review petition since the petition would have gone to the same Bench.

On Saturday AGP MP Sarbananda Sonowal, on whose plea the Supreme Court struck down the controversial Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983, has called for the framing of a national immigration policy to deal with the problem of migration into the country.

"Every developed country, including the US and the UK, has a national immigration policy," Sonowal said on the sidelines of a seminar on the implications of the apex court judgment of July 12 declaring the IMDT Act as "unconstitutional". "There's an urgent need to frame a national immigration policy on these lines every in our country," he said.

02 AUG 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

The dividing pipeline

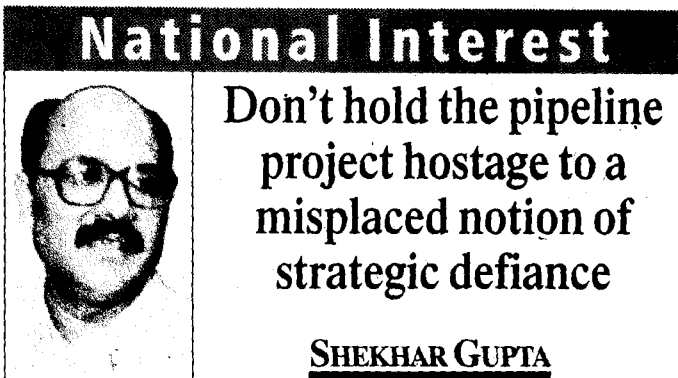
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FINALLY, our political and parliamentary debate is breaking out of the straight-jacket of national consensus. This writer has often complained that no democracy that conducted its foreign policy on a permanent consensus was ever going to have a dynamic, fleet-footed approach to a rapidly changing world. Sure enough, the NDA did move on from the fake, old, third-worldist, pro-Soviet Bloc and allegedly non-aligned consensus, but even that was accompanied by circumstances that forced the creation of another consensus. The Congress was too scared to question Pokhran II and the Left — which did — did not matter then. What followed, first the defiance and then engagement with America, first the peacemaking (Lahore) and then conflict with Pakistan (Kargil), a renewed effort at rapprochement (Agra) and fresh confrontation after the Parliament attack — with 9/11 thrown in the middle — made it that much easier for Vajpayee to push the shift, with the Congress too rattled by the rising jingoism to even complain.

That is why the current debate, even if acrimonious, is welcome. But what is also significant are the facts and factors on which different sides are building their arguments. Are these based on fact, or prejudice? On sound reasoning, or political interests? On the national interest, or narrow ideologies?

PREDICTABLY, the three clear streams in our politics come up with three differing views. Not only that, it would seem that even within the Congress core there are two views. One, led by the prime minister and the external affairs and defence ministries, prefers a more cautious approach and the other, under Mani Shankar Aiyar and Talmiz Ahmed, the additional secretary seconded out to him by the MEA, wanting to run with the ball ahead of the mid-field.

The Aiyar-peacenik argument is, let's push with the pipeline. Economic benefits will be great, but even greater will be the permanent engagement this will create with Pakistan, giving its establishment and elites a stake in a peace with India. The way the pipeline is structured, it would first run along Pakistan's western coast, enter India for a short distance in Gujarat and then loop back into the Pakistani mainland to enter India at some point much later. What this ensures is that should Pakistan ever want to cut off your gas supplies you could do exactly the same to them by blowing up the little loop in Gujarat. This is the cheapest imported gas India can access, it would incentivise a moderation of Pakistan, weave Iran into a



permanent tripartite relationship with the subcontinent and, at another level, strengthen our bargaining position vis-a-vis the US politically, and with other energy suppliers financially.

The BJP is confused, as most punch-drunk people are. They started the pipeline idea but, like many other dreams, the voters stole it from them and handed it over to the Congress. That is why they are latching on to the prime minister's innocu-

ous, though avoidable statement on security concerns on the pipeline due to Iran's internal situation. If such are the risks involved, the government should come clear and junk the project. You talk to senior BJP leaders privately, and not one believes in this line. But they are still so short of ideas that they have abdicated high-policymaking to their dimwit spokesmen. Finally, the Left. They have suddenly discovered in the

The nub of the issue is that India needs the pipeline and so do Iran and Pakistan. The Americans do not like Iran, but they also see the larger gain for their own strategic interests in a project that would tie India and Pakistan into economic inter-dependence

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even mention it to Manmohan Singh. He only needs to have a very short conversation with Musharraf. Unless it is somebody's point that not only has India prostrated itself before Washington, it has become even more of a client state than Pakistan!

THE nub of the issue is that India needs the pipeline and so do Iran and Pakistan. The Americans do not like Iran, and they have to be

Given the complexities of regional relationships, this pipeline is not merely a project of economic gain or ideological defiance. It is a big picture issue, and needs to be dealt with as such — with flexibility, pragmatism as well as hard-headedness

pipeline a great new opportunity to show defiance of America. Whatever the economic and other benefits, India must now build the pipeline to show it is capable of defying Washington like North Korea, Iran or Venezuela. This is not only tactically self-defeating, this misses the big picture entirely. While India can play the game one way or the other, and Iran would be quite happy to join any alliance to spite America, what about the joker in

seen to be making protests, but they also see the larger gain for their own strategic interests in a project that would tie India and Pakistan into economic inter-dependence and also strengthen what is obviously a religiously moderate, and unabashedly pro-American regime in Pakistan. Indian diplomacy has to move forward keeping this central postulate in the mind.

But a debate that sees the pipeline through a domestic ide-

ological prism weakens India. The Pakistanis misread such things easily, believing that given such pressures to build the pipeline for reasons of ideology or strategic defiance (that sounds familiar? Remember General Mirza Aslam Beg?) India would be forced to scale down its own bargaining position as any take-it-or-leave-it posture by the UPA government will be seen, by its domestic allies, not as usual diplomatic hard-ball, but a surrender to Washington. That is why the Pakistanis have been unrelenting on anything sought as their side of the bargain. Terrorism and infiltration are on the up in Kashmir. Punjab is showing new signs of trouble and, after years now, we have seen an RDX bombing in the heart of our mainland. Perhaps emboldened by the UPA government's domestic ideological predicament, they have hardened their position, whether it is on trade with India or, more important, a much simpler question of transit rights to Afghanistan. If you want India to trust you with an energy pipeline and pay out to you several hundred million dollars a year as revenue, what justification do you have in blocking India's access to a dirt-poor, land-locked Afghanistan? So unreasonable have the Pakistanis been on this that they have not even allowed the UN Food for Work officials to take to Kabul consignments of high-protein biscuits India has committed to supply free for Afghan children. A consignment of buses gifted by India to Kabul has been turned back. Both, the biscuits and the buses, have had to be taken to Mumbai, shipped to Bandar Abbas in Iran and then driven, over nearly 2,000 km, into Kabul. Reporters of *The Indian Express* will tell you more about this cynical, cold-blooded Pakistani cussedness over the next few days.

Given the complexities of regional relationships, this pipeline is not merely a project of economic gain or ideological defiance. It is a big picture issue, and needs to be dealt with as such — with flexibility, pragmatism as well as hard-headedness. Indian negotiators should bargaining chips. Pakistan need not be allowed to think it can write the rules of engagement, given India's desperation for energy and the UPA's compulsion to not look like it is buckling to Washington. India should go for the pipeline if everything makes sense, financially, strategically and politically. This is too important a project to be made an icon of a completely misplaced notion of strategic defiance.

Write to sg@expressindia.com

NDA raps Centre on IMDT Act

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 26. —

The Opposition-sponsored adjournment motion on the issue of infiltration from Bangladesh in eastern parts of the country was defeated by voice vote in the Lok Sabha today after it made a scathing attack on the government, charging it with attempting to bring IMDT Act in a different form to perpetuate its vote-bank politics.

Initiating a discussion on the motion, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr LK Advani, said vote-bank politics had become the "biggest disaster for the country".

Replying to the discussion, the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, said the government was still studying the Supreme Court's verdict to would consider measures to solve the problem of illegal migrants. He said the government was looking at laws such as the Citizenship Act to find amicable ways to solve the problem. He alleged that the problem was being raised time and again to gain "political mileage".

27 JUL 2005

আইএমডিটি নিয়ে কেন্দ্রকে সতর্ক করলেন আডবাণী

নয়াদিল্লি, ২৬ জুলাই: সুপ্রিম কোর্টের রায় এড়িয়ে ঘুরপথে আইএমডিটি আইন ফেরানোর চেষ্টা করলে তার ফল ভাল হবে না বলে কেন্দ্রকে আজ সতর্ক করে দিলেন বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী। এ দিন লোকসভায় তিনি বলেন, সরকারের উচিত, শীর্ষ আদালতের রায় পূঙ্খানুপূঙ্খভাবে বলবৎ করা। লোকসভার নেতা, প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় অবশ্য পাল্টা বলেন, সুপ্রিম কোর্টের রায় অমান্য না-করলেও তার সঙ্গে সহমত না-হওয়ার অধিকার সরকারের আছে। হাজার হাজার মানুষকে বেয়নেটের খোঁচা দিয়ে দেশ থেকে বের করে দেওয়া সম্ভব নয় বলেও সাফ জানিয়ে দেন তিনি।

ইউপিএ সরকারের ১৪ মাসের শাসনকালে আজই প্রথম মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব এসেছিল লোকসভায়।

আডবাণী বলেন, ১৯৯৬-৯৭ সালে তৎকালীন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ইন্দ্রজিৎ গুপ্ত সংসদে স্বীকার করেছিলেন যে, এ দেশে প্রায় ১ কোটি বাংলাদেশি বেআইনি ভাবে বসবাস করে। তাঁর দাবি, এর পরে গত আট বছরে পরিস্থিতি আরও সঙ্কটজনক হয়েছে। ভোট ব্যাঙ্কের রাজনীতি করতে গিয়ে এই সঙ্কট অনুপ্রবেশকারীকে মদত জোগাচ্ছে কংগ্রেস। সুপ্রিম কোর্টের সিদ্ধান্তকে 'ঐতিহাসিক' হিসাবে বর্ণনা করে তিনি বলেন, অনুপ্রবেশকারীদের আগ্রাসন থেকে রাজ্যকে রক্ষা করতে সরকার ব্যর্থ।

আডবাণীর বক্তব্য খারিজ করেন প্রণববাবু। তাঁর দাবি, বিদেশি আইনের যথেষ্ট অপব্যবহারের কারণেই আইএমডিটি আইন বলবৎ করা হয়। অলোচনার পরে ধর্মি-জোটে খারিজ হয়ে যায় মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব। —পি টি আই

2017 JUL 27 11:00 AM

ঐশ্বর্য্যাকে সেই ফোন সলমনের মোবাইল থেকেই

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, মুম্বই, ২০ জুলাই: দাউদ ইব্রাহিম, ছোট্টা শাকিল, আবু সালেমনদের নাম করে হুমকি দিয়ে ঐশ্বর্য্য রাইকে যে ফোন করা হয়েছিল, সেই ফোনের মালিক সলমন খানই। বিধানসভায় মহারাষ্ট্রের উপ-মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী আর আর পাটিলের বিবৃতি থেকে আজ এই তথ্য স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে। ফোন তাঁর হলেও সেই গলা সলমনেরই কি না, সেটা অবশ্য এখনও নিশ্চিত নয়।

বলিউড তারকার অস্বস্তি বাড়িয়ে দিয়ে বিধানসভায় আজ পাটিল বলেছেন, চার বছর আগে মাফিয়া ডন আবু সালেমনকে একটি নির্দিষ্ট নম্বর থেকে ফোন করা হচ্ছিল বলে অভিযোগ আসে। অভিযোগ পাওয়ার পরে পুলিশ ওই নম্বরটিতে আড়ি পাতার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় ছাড়পত্র আদায় করে। সেই মতো ২৮ অগস্ট থেকে ২৫ অক্টোবর, ২০০১ পর্যন্ত নজরদারি চালিয়ে ধরা পড়ে যে, ওই

মোবাইল নম্বরটি সলমন খানের। হায়েছিল। সুতরাং অন্য কেউ নয়, সলমন খান-ঐশ্বর্য্য রাইয়ের যে পুলিশই যে কথোপকথন রেকর্ড করেছিল, তা নিয়ে সংশয় রইল না। চলছে, সেই সংলাপ ২০০১-এর ২৮ থেকে ৩০ অগস্টের মধ্যে রেকর্ড করা

ফোন করা হলেও সেই ব্যক্তি সলমনই

কি না, সে ব্যাপারে নিশ্চিত হতে সমস্ত টেপ চণ্ডীগড়ের ফরেনসিক পরীক্ষাগারে পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে। পাঠানো হয়েছে সলমন-ঐশ্বর্য্যর সদ্য রেকর্ড করা কণ্ঠস্বরের নমুনাও। ওই টেপের

মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণের অন্যতম পাতা সালেম ও তার সঙ্গিনী মনিকাকে ভূয়ো পাসপোর্ট নিয়ে পর্ভুগালে ঢোকান অপরাধে ২০০২-এর সেপ্টেম্বরে লিসবন থেকে পুলিশ গ্রেফতার করে। তার পর থেকেই সিবিআই তাকে দেশে ফেরানোর ব্যাপারে চেষ্টা চালাচ্ছিল। সালেমের এক সময়ের দাউদ-মনিষ্ঠতার কথা জানা থাকায় তাকে বিচারের জন্য দেশে আনতে তৎপর ছিল সিবিআই। কিন্তু ভারতে মুম্বইয়ের কথা রয়েছে, এই কারণ দেখিয়ে সালেমকে প্রত্যর্পণে আপত্তি তোলে পর্ভুগাল সরকার। শেষ পর্যন্ত ভারতের পক্ষ থেকে আশ্বাস দেওয়া হয়, দেশী সাবাস্ত হলেও সালেমকে মুম্বইয়ে দেওয়া হবে না। — পি টি আই

নয়াদিল্লি, ২০ জুলাই: কুখ্যাত মাফিয়া ডন আবু সালেম ও তার সঙ্গিনী, চিত্রাভিনেত্রী মনিকা বেদীকে ভারতে আনার রাস্তা আরও পরিষ্কার হয়ে গেল। সিবিআইয়ের এক মুখপাত্র জানিয়েছেন, ভারতে প্রত্যর্পণের বিরোধিতা করে সালেমের আবেদন আজ খারিজ হয়ে গিয়েছে পর্ভুগালের সাংবিধানিক আদালতে। সিবিআইয়ের আবেদনের ভিত্তিতে মাস ছয়েক আগেই সালেম ও মনিকাকে ভারতে প্রত্যর্পণের ব্যাপারে সবুজ সংকেত দিয়েছিল পর্ভুগালের সূত্রিম কোর্ট। আজকের রায়ে পরে ওই ট্রিউনালে খুব দ্রুত দেশে ফেরানোর ব্যাপারে সিবিআই পর্ভুগাল সরকারের কাছে ফের আবেদন জানাতে চলেছে।



মুম্বই বিস্ফোরণের অন্যতম পাতা সালেম ও তার সঙ্গিনী মনিকাকে ভূয়ো পাসপোর্ট নিয়ে পর্ভুগালে ঢোকান অপরাধে ২০০২-এর সেপ্টেম্বরে লিসবন থেকে পুলিশ গ্রেফতার করে। তার পর থেকেই সিবিআই তাকে দেশে ফেরানোর ব্যাপারে চেষ্টা চালাচ্ছিল। সালেমের এক সময়ের দাউদ-মনিষ্ঠতার কথা জানা থাকায় তাকে বিচারের জন্য দেশে আনতে তৎপর ছিল সিবিআই। কিন্তু ভারতে মুম্বইয়ের কথা রয়েছে, এই কারণ দেখিয়ে সালেমকে প্রত্যর্পণে আপত্তি তোলে পর্ভুগাল সরকার। শেষ পর্যন্ত ভারতের পক্ষ থেকে আশ্বাস দেওয়া হয়, দেশী সাবাস্ত হলেও সালেমকে মুম্বইয়ে দেওয়া হবে না। — পি টি আই

কণ্ঠস্বরের মালিক সলমন কি না, সেটা নিয়ে যেমন সংশয় রয়েছে, তেমনই ঐশ্বর্য্য রাইকে সলমন-সালেম যোগাযোগ নিয়েও। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শুধু বলেছেন, সালেমকে একটি নম্বর থেকে (যা সলমনের বলে পরে জানা যায়) ফোন করা হচ্ছিল বলে অভিযোগ এসেছিল। কিন্তু সলমন-সালেমের কথোপকথনের ফোনও রেকর্ড পুলিশের কাছে আছে কি না, তা তিনি বলেননি। মুখ খুলতে চাননি পুলিশকর্তারাও।

পাটিল আজকের বিবৃতিতে এটাও জানিয়েছেন যে, মুম্বই পুলিশের দুই উচ্চপদস্থ অফিসার সলমন-কাণ্ডের তদন্ত করবেন। পুলিশের হাত থেকে তদন্তের ভার সিআইডি-কে তুলে দেওয়ার জন্য বিরোধীদের দাবি উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন তিনি। বিধানসভায় তিনি জানিয়েছেন, মুম্বইয়ের অতিরিক্ত পুলিশ কমিশনার এ. এল. বিশনয় এবং এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

সলমনের ফোন

প্রথম পাতার পর সহকারী পুলিশ কমিশনার টি কে ইয়েংডেকে এই তদন্তের দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে। দুই বছর সংলাপকে অপরাধের আওতায় ফেলা যায় কি না, সে ব্যাপারে আইনি মতামত নিয়েই পুলিশকে এগোতে হচ্ছে বলে পাটিল মন্তব্য করেন।

রাজ্য স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের বক্তব্য অনুযায়ী, ভারত শাহের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগকে ঘিরে 'চোরি চোরি চুপকে চুপকে' ছবিটি যখন বিতর্কের কেন্দ্রে, সেই সময়েই সলমনের টেপ আড়ি পাতা হয়। ভারত শাহের বিরুদ্ধে মামলা চলার সময়ে সেই প্রসঙ্গ উল্লেখ করা হয়নি কেন, সে ব্যাপারে অবশ্য পাটিল আজ মুখ খোলেননি।

সরকারি ভাবে কেউ মুখ খুলতে না-চাইলেও প্রশাসনের অন্তর মহলের খবর, কেঁচো খুঁড়তে সাপ বেরিয়ে যাওয়ার ভয়ে কেউই খুব বেশি এগোতে চায় না। ফরেনসিক পরীক্ষাগার থেকে রিপোর্ট আসা এবং আরও নানা অনুসঙ্গ জুড়ে আপাতত কিছু দিন কাটিয়ে দিতে পারলে পুলিশ থেকে বলিউড থেকে রাজনীতি, সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলেরই মঙ্গল। সলমনের পক্ষে যাচ্ছে আরও একটি তথ্য। তাঁর সাম্প্রতিক ছবি 'ম্যায়ন প্যার কিউ কিয়া'র বাজার বেশ ভাল যাচ্ছে আর এই অর্থনীতির প্রভাব রাজনীতিতে পড়তে কতক্ষণ!

Symbols of national power

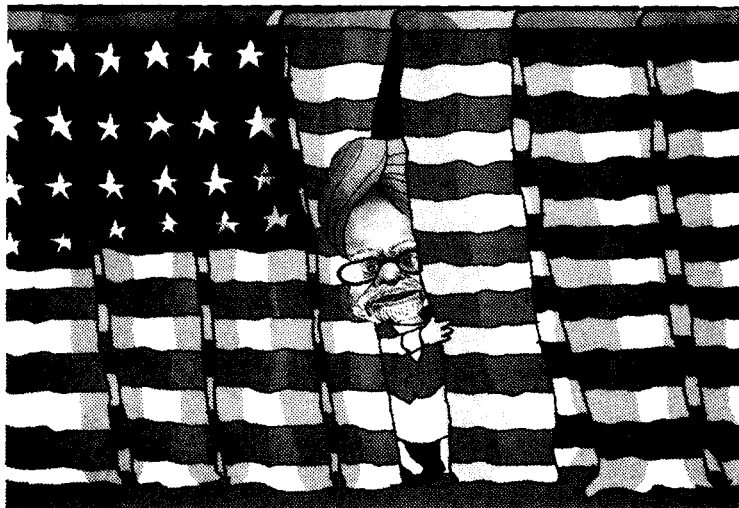
The Indian ruling and political classes represented both by the BJP and the Congress have recognised the fact that without the consent of the US, India will remain a toothless paper tiger, says C P Bhambhri

THE first official visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to the United States from July 18 to 20, 2005, preceded by defence minister Pranab Mukerjee's signing of a 10-year defence agreement between India and the US on June 29, 2005, deserves to be understood and analysed in the context of changing perceptions of the ruling classes about the status of India in the 21 century.

The Indian ruling elite seems to feel that India has arrived as a 'middle power' in the international arena and now it should not play the role of just a developing country, dependent on concessions given by the super powers. Indians are not alone in their perception that their country is an 'emerging power' of the 21 century. President George Bush and secretary of state Condoleezza Rice have made public statements testifying that India is a new 'emerging power' in Asia. The latest World Bank report issued on July 13 has also declared that India has 'arrived' by joining the 'league of the world biggest 10 economies.'

It is a well known fact that nation-states search for new 'symbols of power' to assert their economic status among nations of the world. The world capitalist system is based on the structures of hierarchy because of the distribution of unequal economic power. Countries with great economic strength have to achieve new distinctive symbols of power with a view to differentiate themselves from the absolute majority of economically backward and disadvantaged category. Hierarchy of economic power has to be translated into hierarchy of military power among the unequal nations of the world.

The Indian ruling classes are involved in 'acquiring' national status symbols which they consider are commensurate with their new economic status of the 'league of 10 economic powers' in the world. Hans J Morganthu in his classic had long ago stated that 'power among nations' is determined by their military and economic capacity to influence and



SALAM

dictate policies to other nation states. Indira Gandhi was an eminent student of Morganthu school of 'power among nations' when, in 1974, she served notice to the super powers that India is a new nuclear power. The first Pokharan nuclear explosion in 1974 was a symbol of national assertion by Indira Gandhi. This journey of nuclearisation of India was completed by the Hindu Rashtravadis in May 1998 with Pokharan II.

The Indian elite, along with Hindu chauvinists and militarists, have never forgotten that China militarily humiliated India in 1962 and this powerful lobby in politics and society has created the concept of expenditure on defence 'as a holy cow' for Indians. India asserted its military power in 1971 by helping to dismember Pakistan. Every weapon of war available in international market has witnessed buyers from the Indian state and this urge for the acquisition of latest 'defence technology' has been concretised by Pranab Mukerjee who on June 29, 2005 signed an important defence agreement with the US. Military might is a symbol of national power and India's increased purchasing power is used for strengthening its mil-

itary standing among the nations.

Further, the Congress-led UPA government, following in the footsteps of Indira Gandhi's quest for 'symbols of national power' has made a permanent seat in the UN Security Council as the goal of its foreign policy. The desire of India to occupy the high table of permanent membership in UN Security Council is an agenda of the 'emergent economic power' of the 21 century.

THE Union government has not fought for the restoration of the status of UNSC, which was totally ignored by the US when it launched a war against Saddam Hussein in 2003. Neither have the policy makers in India objected to the Bush declaration that 'Americans will launch a pre-emptive war against any country'. India cannot oppose US military interventions because it cannot reach the SC status without the consent of the sole super power.

The upshot of above description is that adventurist nuclearisation and militarisation of India and its struggle to become a permanent member of the UNSC and other related goals of foreign and economic policy are based on the

premise that India has arrived on world stage. It must be stated that the quest of Indian ruling classes to receive international recognition as an emergent economic and military middle power depends on the patronage of Americans.

The Indian ruling and political classes represented both by the BJP and the Congress have recognised the fact that without the consent of the US, India will remain a toothless paper tiger. The Americans seems to be acceding to the wishes of the Indian state leaders for allowing them to play a global role. The US has announced its love for establishing 'democracy from above' in feudal, military and authoritarian countries in the Islamic world and Indians are projecting their democratic credential before the new Messiah of global democracy. Americans have a very hospitable climate in India because every influential class, strata, group or lobby is willing to do 'business with America'. Anti-Americanism is a thing of the past and prosperous social groups in India identify themselves with a prosperous and powerful America.

Will America respond to the desires of their friends in India? The pro-American powerful social constituencies are a necessary but not a sufficient reason to motivate the US to patronise India of the 21st century. If Indians have new dreams of grandeur of regional power status, Americans are unabashed interventionists and adept at playing one country against the other. In a 2003 report by American Council on Foreign Relations on South Asia, it has been clearly stated the US (has) an opportunity to influence major regional developments and India-US should work on 'genuine partnership'. In other words, India can depend on US friendship and generosity if India supports American 'interests' in Asia and unstated but well known fact is that India versus China is the American national goal in this part of the world. So India has apparently opted for a pro-American stance since without US support India cannot play its desired role of a middle power.

ASI scripts court strategy on Taj

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Lucknow, July 14: A 350-year-old Mughal manuscript, written in Persian and lying in a London library, is the focus of interest as the Taj Mahal ownership controversy heads for Allahabad High Court.

The state Sunni Central Wakf Board had referred to the *Badshahnamah* — an account of emperor Shah Jahan's rule by his paid chronicler Abdul Hamid Lahori — to justify its declaration of Taj Mahal as Wakf property yesterday.

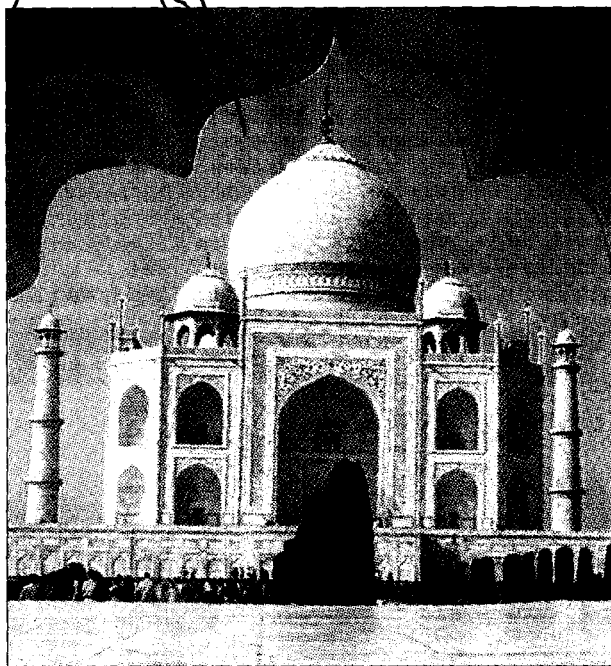
The board had accepted petitioner Mohammed Irfan Bedari's contention that, according to the manuscript, Shah Jahan had bequeathed the Taj as Wakf property.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), set to appeal against the verdict in the high court, will seek a directive to the Wakf board to produce proof — perhaps in the form of photocopies of the relevant pages of the *Badshahnamah*, attested by the library where it lies.

Board chief Hafiz Usman admitted he did not have access to the manuscript, but he had "checked and cross-checked" the matter and gone through "copies" of pages. Usman didn't clarify if the copies were photocopies and whether the pages were of the Mughal manuscript itself or of later book versions of it.

ASI sources said senior officials have collected several such books which vary in their text.

"When we don't know what



Taj Mahal: Who owns it?

exactly is written in the original *Badshahnamah*, how can the Wakf board rely so much on the petitioner's version of the book?" asked ASI official S.K. Sharma.

The *Badshahnamah* has gained the status of a Mughal classic and many Indian scholars, backed by the Centre, have been lobbying in Britain for years to have it back in India.

The ASI has another argument for the high court: once a monument is registered as Wakf property, its maintenance is hobbled by board members' interference.

The dargah of Sheikh Salim at Fatehpur Sikri, about 37 km from Agra, had been encroached on by dozens of

shops "in connivance with Wakf board members", ASI sources said. It took a Supreme Court directive to the Agra administration, on a petition filed by a local citizen, to free the "red-stone wonder" of squatters.

Hordes of encroachers have invaded the Imambarah in Agra after its registration with the Wakf board. They have virtually choked the entrance passage and blocked the view of the gate.

The board yesterday decided the Taj was originally a graveyard, accommodating the graves of Shah Jahan, Mumtaz, another of the emperor's wives and those of two of Mumtaz's friends.


15 JUL 2004

15 JUL 2004 The Hindustan

Taj not a teardrop, but a 'grave'

MONUMENTAL MOMENTS, THE GOOD AND THE BAD

| 1650s | 1836 | 1857 | 1914 | 1920 | 1983 | 1984 | 1999 | 2004 |
|---------------------|---|--|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Taj Mahal completed | East India Company officials try in vain to auction the Taj | East India Company formally takes over the Taj | The Taj a teardrop on the cheek of time, writes Tagore | Govt takes over the Taj. ASI becomes custodian | The Taj makes it to Unesco World Heritage Site list | PIL says pollution ruining Taj walls | SC orders closure of many factories in Agra | The Taj is more beautiful than me, says Ashwarya Rai |



WHAT THE ORDER MEANS

- **Caretaker:** The Wakf board will appoint a caretaker
- **Rituals:** The board can set rules on rituals. Now *namaz* is allowed only on Fridays
- **Cash:** The caretaker gets 7% (Rs 1.05 crore) of the Taj's annual revenue of Rs 15 crore
- **Delist cloud:** If the case drags on, Unesco may delist the monument from the World Heritage Site, fears the Archaeological Survey of India

TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Lucknow, July 13: Taj Mahal was today declared Sunni Wakf property on the grounds that it is the grave of a woman whose emperor husband was a Sunni.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the monument's custodian since 1920, said it would challenge the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Wakf Board's verdict in the high court.

With the BJP protesting the judgment and asking the Centre to step in, the issue has the potential to stoke controversy at a time when the Imrana row was dying down.

The Wakf board — asked to decide the ownership of the Taj by Allahabad High Court — cited the Friday prayers at the heritage structure in support of its judgment.

According to a Supreme Court ruling, a site or a building is considered Wakf property "by user" if it is used for religious purposes at a stretch.

"(From) today, the ASI ceases to have absolute right of possession over the monument," said board chairman Hafiz Usman. "Henceforth, we would have the right to manage all religious rituals inside the Taj Mahal premises."

He ordered his office to im-

mediately register the Taj — declared a nationally protected monument in 1920 and listed as a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1983 — as Wakf property. The ASI will continue to look after the monument — described as "a teardrop on the cheek of time" by Rabindranath Tagore — but the board will have a say in its running and maintenance.

For instance, the board will decide how often *namaz* can be held at the monument, where prayers are now allowed only on Fridays. Also, the ASI will not be able to decide on its own which material to use for repairs.

The board will appoint a *muttawali* (caretaker) for the monument after a meeting with the ASI and the state government. Under Wakf rules, the caretaker should get 7 per cent of the revenue from the Taj to be spent on its maintenance.

According to the board, emperor Shah Jahan, who got the monument built, was its first *muttawali*.

The Taj will now be "like a house owned by two warring brothers, no one keen on its proper maintenance", said the assistant director of ASI, Agra, S.K. Sharma. "The order is not against the ASI, it is against the Taj Mahal."

Usman said he accepted

the petitioner's claim that in Abdul Hamid Lahori's authoritative *Badshah-namah*, the Taj has been described as Sunni property.

Also, the board, which owns Sunni graves in the state, considers the Taj as one and insists that Shah Jahan and his wife were Sunnis. But some leaders of the state's Shia Wakf board say the emperor was a Shia; so their community should own the Taj.

A Sunni board member, Mohammed Irfan Bedar, had moved Allahabad High Court last November claiming the Taj for his sect. The court had referred the matter to the Wakf board, a quasi-judicial body authorised to hear such property disputes.

This prompted at least six other claimants — including the Shia Wakf board, a Sangh parivar activist and a descendant of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar — to jump into the fray. Their claims were rejected, either by the high court or the Sunni board.

State BJP leader Vinay Katiyar said: "The Sunni board is unnecessarily communalising the issue. There is no evidence to show it is a Sunni property. I am going to campaign against it."

■ See Page 6

13 undertrials escape from Tihar jail; three captured

Police hunt under way for the others in Delhi and Haryana

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: In a sensational jail-break, 13 under-trials escaped from the court complex of the high-security Tihar Central Jail here on Wednesday. Two of them were arrested soon after, while one was overpowered within the jail premises.

The police said 13 under-trials lodged in various jails were produced in the Tihar court complex around 3 p.m. After the hearing, all of them were assembled in the corridor to board the van to their respective jails. Even as personnel of the Third Battalion of Delhi Armed Police -- who were escorting the under-trials -- were waiting for the van to arrive, the under-trials broke the latch of the iron grill at the rear of the corridor and ran out. They then scaled the boundary wall with the help of a ladder and escaped.

Some bystanders who saw two of the under-trials boarding a bus on the main road raised an alarm which alerted the Deputy Commissioner of Police of Third Battalion, P. Das, who happened to be passing that way in his official vehicle. He chased the bus and intercepted it on Pankha Road and arrested them. The police are now interrogating them to find out if the escape was pre-planned.

Following the jailbreak, an alert was sounded in the Capital and pickets put up at various



IT ALL HAPPENED HERE: *The Tihar Jail court complex from where the undertrials escaped.*

— PHOTO: V.V. KRISHNAN

places. The police authorities in neighbouring districts of Haryana were also alerted.

The under-trials who escaped were involved in cases of dacoity attempts, robbery and rape; some were booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Prevention) Act and Arms Act. A couple of them were involved in petty offences.

Even as investigations were taken up, senior officers admitted that Delhi Armed Police personnel were outnumbered by the under-trials. "We had also written to the authorities concerned to increase the height of the wall from where the under-

trials escaped, but no action was taken," said the Joint Commissioner of Police (DAP), Deepak Mishra.

Ironically, the court complex, located in the administrative block, was inaugurated last year to ease pressure on DAP whose personnel escort the under-trials from the jail to various courts for regular hearings. A video-conferencing facility that was launched to do away with the need to take the under-trials all the way to the courts was not very successful after which it was decided to open a court complex within the jail premises.

India — Next decade

VIJAY Dutt
London, June 27

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS minister Natwar Singh, speaking at Chatham House in London on India: The Next Decade, said, "India is a force of stability in Asia. It's now spoken of as a country of the future with a great potential. Witness the transformation of India in the decade since we embraced economic liberalisation in the '90s".

"However, it seems to me — from what respectable forecasting institutions have projected — that India, together with China, is more the flavour of the century than of the decade". Singh — quoting the highly optimistic economic forecasts by the likes of McKinsey & Co. Inc., Deutsche Bank and Goldman Sachs — predicted that, in the next decade, "We could see India positioning itself for greater accomplishments as the century progresses. Not so long ago, India was a byword for poverty. This is

no longer the case. The number of poor as a percentage of the population has been shrinking steadily, but a fifth of the population is unable to escape extreme poverty". The audience, comprising British foreign secretary Jack Straw, diplomats and academics, heard Singh outline the "core challenge before India" that will remain in the next 10 years, "despite dramatic advances, therefore, will be that of a developing country. It'll be centred on full literacy, vastly improved statistics for maternal and

Not long ago, India was a byword for poverty. Not any more. The number of poor is shrinking steadily. But a fifth of the population is unable to escape extreme poverty

— Natwar Singh

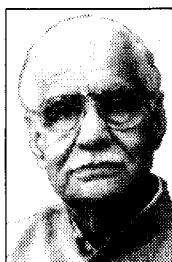
infant mortality and acceptable standards of nutrition and health care". But, he asserted, "India is today in a confident mode — not a self-congratulatory one". He outlined the sectors where reforms were needed immediately: Infrastructure — pertaining to airports, railways, ports, roads, energy and telecommunications. He predicted that, in the next decade, the integration of India with the global economy will grow apace and "we'll seek partnerships and alliances to mutual advantage".

The view from Pakistan

THE controversy over opposition leader L.K. Advani's praise of Mohammed Ali Jinnah has had an adverse fallout in Pakistan. People there have come to infer that Indian opinion towards Pakistan is rigid and unaccommodating. If this were the attitude at the time of on-the-track talks, they argue, what would happen when the two countries reach the stage of give and take? This question seems valid. But where Pakistan goes wrong is in assuming that the BJP represents Indian opinion. It does not represent even dominant opinion among the Hindus. The BJP has a parochial appeal and does not draw attention beyond loyal Hindu chauvinists.

My view is that Advani wanted to test the waters while in Pakistan. Realising that his party had come to the end of the road, he wondered whether he could give a new entity to the BJP. That meant wooing the Muslims who were totally opposed to the party. Advani gained in purpose and rose in stature by departing from his usual communal line. But when it came to the crunch, he lacked courage. He feared the wilderness. He fell between the two stools. He did not realise that the compromise resolution was an epitaph — a sort of goodbye gesture.

It is also not fair to judge Indian opinion when the question is that of Partition, which has always been too emotional an issue. Of course, the country has been hurt following the division. It did not know how to cope with the two-nation theory when it had more Muslims than Pakistan. It is true that Jinnah agreed to the Cabinet Mission Plan, which gave autonomy to the Muslim majority areas and kept India together through a weak Centre. But the Congress had a bitter experience after giving Liaquat Ali Khan the portfolio of finance in the interim government. No ministry could recruit even a peon without his sanction. Jawaharlal Nehru and



People there have a different take on the Jinnah spat

■ KULDIP NAYAR

Sardar Patel were so exasperated that they preferred Partition to another struggle to oust the British.

Has Partition served the purpose for the Muslims? In Pakistan, people avoid the word, Partition. On August 14, they celebrate their "deliverance", not so much from British rule as from "Hindu rule". During my trips to that country, I have heard people often saying they are happy that at least they have "some place" where they feel secure, free from "Hindu domination". The fact is that the Muslims have been the biggest losers of Partition. They are now spread over three countries — India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Imagine the influ-

tact in lakhs may demolish the walls of suspicion between the two countries. But the establishment on either side is not yet ready for it.

Still, I would like to know what the Pakistanis have in mind when the stage of give-and-take is reached. If it is Kashmir, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has made it clear more than once that India can neither redraw the borders nor divide the state on the basis of religion. If President General Pervez Musharraf can still reach a solution within a fortnight, as he claims, he must have come to terms with what Manmohan Singh has said. But Musharraf's remark that it all depends on the courage of

Muslims have been the biggest losers of Partition. Imagine the influence their numbers—and votes—could have commanded in an undivided subcontinent

ence their numbers — and their votes — could have commanded in an undivided subcontinent. They would have been more than one-third of the total population.

In any case, all this is history and no purpose is served by going over it again and again. In fact, the youth in both India and Pakistan are sick of the never-ending debate on Partition. What is relevant today is how the mistrust on both sides can be removed. The dialogue on confidence building measures is vital but the meeting of people from both sides is more important. All the resolves on both sides to relax visa facilities have little to show. People-to-people con-

leaders is too simplistic. What holds good in Pakistan may not hold good in India. The change of borders in India is not only dependent on a two-thirds majority in Parliament but also on the Supreme Court which assesses whether a constitutional amendment violates the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

The Hurriyat — some of its leaders have talked about a united states of Kashmir — has its main support in the Valley. It does not represent either Jammu or Ladakh, the two other areas of the state. This has been the tragedy of the Hurriyat. I never cultivated those areas. The "Azad Kashmir" leaders, who consider themselves closer to

Jammu than the Valley, noted that the Hurriyat delegation to Pakistan did not include anybody from Jammu. "Azad Kashmir" speaks Punjabi and does not understand a word of Kashmiri. I wish the Hurriyat leaders had discussed these issues with the people in Jammu before going to Pakistan. Even now they can — and should — but they will have to do something more to remove Jammu's suspicion after their "long and intimate talks" with Pakistani leaders.

Also, how will the Hurriyat remove fears which one of its leaders has raised by disclosing that Pakistan's information minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, helped them with arms and training during the insurgency in the nineties? No amount of denying it will do because the Pakistan People's Party has confirmed it. The Sheikh's involvement is an open secret, as a leading Pakistani commentator has said. Strange, the Sheikh should have changed because he is a prodigy of the late Shoorish Kashmiri, leader of Ahrar, a party that was an ally of the Congress in fighting against the Muslim League and the British.

The revelation by the Hurriyat leader has come at a time when Manmohan Singh is trying to traverse quickly on the road to peace with Pakistan. He has already said that the Siachen glacier is a mountain of peace. He looks amenable to withdrawing forces from there provided he is sure that Pakistan will not reoccupy the area. This reminds me of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's words when he was briefly Pakistan's president after the Bangladesh war. He characterised the ceasefire line (now LoC) as the "line of peace". But when he was asked at the Simla Conference to make good his words, he said that he would not be able to sell it to his country. Something like that should not happen if and when Islamabad agrees to something concrete for rapprochement between India and Pakistan.

Nepali vs. Nepalese

Nepali speaking Indians are often confused with the Nepalese of Nepal

Vimal Khawas

ONE OF my friends recently complained to me of being verbally abused by a woman. The immediate basis of the quandary was his motorcycle parked at the allotted space. On that fateful day while the woman was on her way through the area a part of her sari accidentally happened to mesh with the edge of one of the parts of his motorcycle. She allegedly roared at him by means of some of the most improper and unfounded statements as far as the Nepali speaking Indians are concerned. "You Nepalese! You foreigners! I know you people! You people do not know how to live!" were some of her remarks.

The point here is not a mere abuse of an individual by another individual but connotes a much larger issue that needs serious discourse among the responsible Nepali speaking Indian nationals. The victim is a bona fide citizen of India and permanent resident of Kalimpong located in the district of Darjeeling, West Bengal. Like many other Indians he too is struggling in Delhi in search of better economic pastures.

There are Bengalis, and Punjabis, for example, with their counterparts residing in other countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. But they have never been lamented as Bangladeshis or Pakistanis. In our case, however, the term Nepalese or foreigner has often been used by the mainstream Indians. So where is the problem? Why are Nepali speaking Indians often confused with the Nepalese of Nepal? Why don't the mainstream Indians appreciate that there are about a crore Nepalis who have been the bona fide citizens of India for generations?

Before going further with

the discussion let us be clear with the terms 'Nepalese' and 'Nepali.' The former is basically used to represent people with Nepalese citizenship while the latter is used to denote the Nepali speaking Indian nationals. 'Nepalese' refers to the national identity or nationality of the people of Nepal while the term 'Nepali' connotes the ethnic identity of the Indian Nepalis. Bengali, Tamil, Oriya, Punjabi, etc., are all ethnic identities of respective social groups with Indian nationality. The Nepalese from Nepal have scattered across the length and breadth of the Indian territory and got into the blue-collar jobs notably in the hotel industry, security services and as domestic helps. They are here mainly as seasonal migrant workers who would visit their country from time to time.

Two factors

Two important factors need serious debate here. First, India and Nepal signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship on July 31, 1950. Among other things Article 7 of the treaty grants, on reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and privileges of a similar nature. The treaty is, however, silent with respect to the impact of such agreement on the already settled and bona fide Nepali Indians. Over the years on the strength of this agreement the Nepalese have been crossing the borders and spreading across the Indian territory.

Secondly, the crux of the issue has been the ill reputation carried by the Nepalese in India. Take the following points that appeared in a

leading newspaper in the capital as examples: 'A Nepalese servant strangles a 60-year-old woman,' 'A Nepalese servant killed a 62-year-old businessman,' 'A retired lieutenant colonel and his wife were murdered by their Nepalese servant.'

What are the repercussions of such activities of the Nepalese on the settled Nepali speaking Indians? They look identical; speak almost the same language with some dialectical variations; and bear similar names. The consequences of their deeds and misdeeds have, however, often to be borne by the settled Indian Nepalis.

Alternative arrangement

The government of India either needs to abrogate this treaty or the settled Indian Nepalis have to be protected from such onslaughts by some other means. The GNLF led 'Gorkhaland' agitation had rightly highlighted this grave issue before the relevant authorities in the 1980s. But the agitation petered out before achieving any of its objectives. Mention should, however, be made that the GNLF led by Mr. Ghisingh has been successful in bargaining for and negotiating an alternative arrangement for the settled Indian Nepalis and other social groups of the Darjeeling hills in the recent talks held in New Delhi.

It is time to highlight relevant issues such as the ones mentioned above before the government. Since the Darjeeling hills and Sikkim are the places where the Nepali speakers constitute a majority of the inhabitants, it is from these regions that voices towards these ends need to originate.

(The writer is an Executive Member, Hill and Mountain Forum, New Delhi)

19 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

New moves in the Malacca Straits

New ideas have been floated on protecting shipping along the Malacca Straits — a vital lifeline of global trade in oil and energy.

P.S. Suryanarayana

IT IS almost a year since the United States, self-appointed "guarantor" of peace and stability across the Asia Pacific region since the end of the Second World War, proposed the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) for the protection of global shipping from potential terrorist attacks along the busy Straits of Malacca. While the RMSI has not taken off owing to reasons of political opposition from two key states along the Straits, some new ideas have been floated by countries bordering this vital lifeline of global trade in oil and energy supplies.

A significant proposal came up during the International Maritime Defence Exhibition [IMDEX Asia-2005] held in Singapore in mid-May. Singapore Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean suggested that the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) "could consider moving beyond discussions on maritime security to work towards a maritime security exercise in the near future."

For the first time, an anti-terror "maritime security exercise" was held as an event directly related to IMDEX. India, Australia and Japan, besides Singapore, were among the regional powers that participated in the naval exercise, deploying some of their state-of-the-art warships that had come for the main exhibition.

While ASEAN is the prime mover within the ARF, the Forum has much relevance to the international community as a whole.

ASEAN, comprising 10 South-East Asian states, includes those bordering the Straits — Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. It is the composition of the ARF that lends it a stature independent of ASEAN's.

The Forum includes three of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, barring the United Kingdom and France. The three are the U.S., Russia and China. The European Union, as an 'ARF participant' (the official nomenclature for membership of the Forum), represents the U.K. and France, too.

Not to be discounted on the power-plank of the ARF are India, Japan and Australia. The navies of these three countries and the U.S. had formed a short-lived "core group" for relief works after the December 26, 2004 tsunami strike.

The ARF officials and diplomats tend to downplay or even dismiss the possibility that the post-tsunami "core group" can or will evolve into an informal naval alliance for Asia-Pacific stability. Japan and Australia, independently, are of course military allies of the U.S., while India's "independent mind" in foreign policy, especially in regard to China, is increasingly being recognised by some key East Asian leaders, in Japan and Singapore, for example.

The ARF's agenda of "cooperative security", without a powerful "leader" at its helm, is one of the reasons for Washington's failure until now to have its way over security along the Malacca Straits. Michael Leifer, an acknowledged expert on East Asia, had em-

phasised that "ASEAN's insistence on retaining the central diplomatic role in the ARF" was a factor for the "frustrations among northeast Asian and Pacific participants."

This view is variously echoed by the protagonists of China or Japan, at one end, and importantly, the U.S., at another. The viewpoint, first articulated by Yuen Foong Khong to contest Leifer's view, was that the "cooperative security aspects of the ARF are not adjuncts to the workings of the balance of power" considerations.

Given such cross-currents of views, a relevant question is why has the U.S. failed so far to have its way on the RMSI. Indonesia and Malaysia have taken the general line that no such pan-regional initiative, involving external powers such as the U.S., should be allowed to wash away the sovereignty of the littoral states in regard to the safety of shipping along the Malacca Straits. This accounts for the "coordinated patrolling" of the Straits by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. For the moment, this is an alternative to the RMSI.

The Singapore and Indonesian navies launched on May 27 a project called SURPIC — a sea-surveillance system based on a real-time picture of the Singapore Strait that lies close to the Malacca Straits.

Given these new realities, the proponents of an "ARF maritime security exercise" believe that an anti-terror drill or a sequence of such drills involving a number of major users of the Straits, can lead, over time, to an in-

situ system based on cooperative endeavours. The questions to be addressed, as in the case of the RMSI, are: Where does the national jurisdiction of each of the littoral states end along the Straits of Malacca? What is the 'international space' along this waterway? The U.S. tends to argue that the entire stretch of the narrow Straits of Malacca is 'international space'.

Some Western diplomats within the ARF domain say that the members of the Forum could perhaps conduct exercises together, now and then, but act independently to maintain day-to-day security within their respective maritime zones. The example of the Five-Power Defence Arrangements is cited. The FPDA consists of the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Another view within the ARF diplomatic circuit is that there could be a "coalition of the willing" among the members of the Forum to ensure real-time maritime security.

This issue, as in the case of the qualitatively different Proliferation Security Initiative of the U.S.-led "coalition of the willing", raises unresolved questions under international law about the permissibility of maritime interdictions, especially those on the high seas.

It is in these circumstances that naval professionals of India have taken the line that New Delhi should help the littoral states patrol the Malacca Straits only if it is requested to do so. The international debate on real-time ways to maintain security along this waterway has just begun, though.

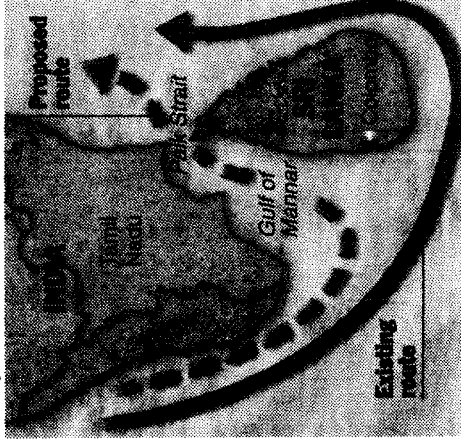
MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Finally, seal of approval on Suez of east

Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project

- **What will it do?** Create a navigable channel across the Gulf of Mannar, the Palk Bay and the Palk Strait
- **How long will it be?** 260 km long and 300 meters wide
- **How much will it cost?** Rs 2,427.40 crore
- **What is the gain?** It will reduce maritime distance by about 400 nautical miles (around a day's sailing time)
- **Is it safe?** The fragile ecosystem of the area could be affected. Plus what will happen to the 84.5 million cubic metres of dredged sand?
- **Should the coastal areas worry?** The tsunami did not ravage the Ramanathapuram coast in south Tamil Nadu because of the shallow waters. The dredging for the canal will make the seabed deeper and the stretch could become more vulnerable to calamities



OUR BUREAU

New Delhi/Chennai, May 19: The Suez Canal of the east has been green-flagged, 145 years after it was conceived by a Briton.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs today cleared the Sethusamudram ship canal project. The Rs 2,427.40-crore canal will shrink the distance between the eastern and western coasts.

Ships now have to go around Sri Lanka because of the shallow waters between the island nation and India. The long-pending project

appears to have been cleared with an eye on the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections scheduled for next year.

Announcing the decision, finance minister P. Chidambaram said the government has fulfilled a promise in the common minimum programme and the budget. "It opens up a channel that will enable ships to avoid going around Sri Lanka," he said, adding that the channel would bring benefits as was the case with the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal.

The Chennai and Tuticorin ports stand to gain from the channel that will take at

least five years to build. The canal will also address India's strategic concerns.

The Centre has set up the Sethusamudram Corporation Ltd as the nodal agency to raise resources and implement the project through the Tuticorin Port Trust. The project will entail a foreign exchange debt component of Rs 1,456.4 crore. The canal is the brain-child of Commander A.D. Taylor, who served in the Indian Marines — the precursor to the Indian Navy.

After Independence, repeated efforts were made to implement the project. However, a

rethink set in after a cyclone in 1964 washed away Danushkodi island near Rameswaram. The safety concerns are at play even now. (See chart)

The canal is unlikely to be popular in Lanka because Colombo will lose considerable shipping business. However, the canal has no parallel with the bridge Hanuman built in the Ramayana.

Such a bridge has been proposed from north Sri Lanka to Rameswaram but chief minister Jayalitha opposes it as she fears that Tamil Tiger extremists might use it to sneak into India.

অপারেশন বর্গার ধাঁচে গোটা দেশে ভূমিসংস্কার চায় কেন্দ্র

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৯ মে: কৃষিতে উৎপাদন বাড়াতে মনমোহন সিংহের দাওয়াই, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের 'অপারেশন বর্গা' অন্য রাজ্যেও চালু হোক। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনে করেন, কৃষি জমির মালিকানা সংক্রান্ত নানা প্রশ্ন বিশেষত ভাগচাষি তথা রায়তের অধিকারের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়টি অনেক রাজ্যই এড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে। ফলে, এক দিকে কৃষি ক্ষেত্রে উৎপাদন ব্যাহত হচ্ছে। আবার সামাজিক কল্যাণের দিকটিও উপেক্ষিত হচ্ছে। এই অবস্থায় পশ্চিমবঙ্গের 'অপারেশন বর্গা'-র মডেলকে সামনে রেখে অন্য রাজ্যেও যে ভাগচাষি যে জমিতে চায় করেন, সেই জমিতে তাঁর নাম নথিভুক্ত করে 'বর্গাদার' হিসাবে স্বীকৃতি দেওয়ার জন্য রাজ্যগুলিকে উদ্যোগী হতে বলতে চায় কেন্দ্র।

গত বছর ২২ নভেম্বর কেন্দ্রীয় গ্রামোন্নয়ন মন্ত্রকের উদ্যোগে এই ব্যাপারটির গুরুত্ব বোঝানোর জন্য বিভিন্ন রাজ্যের ভূমিরাজস্ব মন্ত্রীদের সম্মেলনে প্রসঙ্গটি তোলা হয়। সেখানে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের তরফে 'অপারেশন বর্গা'-র বিষয়টি বোঝানো হয়েছিল। তার পরে পশ্চিমবঙ্গকে আরও বিশদ তথ্য ও ব্যাখ্যা দিতে বলা হয়। প্রধানমন্ত্রী চাইছেন, এ নিয়ে গড়িমসি না করে রাজ্যগুলিকে সক্রিয় করার চেষ্টায় নেমে পড়ুক গ্রামোন্নয়ন মন্ত্রক। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এই প্রয়াসের সূত্র অবশ্য লিখিত রয়েছে ইউপিএ'র অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচির মধ্যেই। কিন্তু কাজ ততটা দ্রুত এগোচ্ছে না বলেও কিছুটা ক্ষুব্ধ মনমোহন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এই মনোভাব প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রকের মূল্যায়ন সংক্রান্ত তাঁর রিপোর্টেই। সেখানে স্পষ্টই বলা হয়েছে যে, বেশির

ভাগ রাজ্যেই ভাগচাষিদের জমিতে অধিকারের বিষয়টি এড়িয়ে যাওয়ার প্রবণতা দেখা যাচ্ছে। "...ভাগচাষের জমির ক্ষেত্রে রেকর্ডপত্রও ঠিক মতো থাকে না। যা দরিদ্র রায়তকে অনিশ্চয়তার অন্ধকারে ঠেলে দেয়। এটার সংশোধনে আইনের বদল অত্যন্ত জরুরি। এই কারণেই রাজ্যগুলিকে অপারেশন বর্গার উপযোগিতা বোঝাতে হবে। অবশ্য বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে নানা ধরনের পরিস্থিতি অনুযায়ীই ভাগচাষির অবস্থার উন্নতি করতে হবে।" এ ব্যাপারে স্বচ্ছতা আনার জন্য রাজ্যে রাজ্যে কৃষিজমির রেকর্ড কম্পিউটারে তুলতে বলা হয়েছে। তাতে রাজস্ব সংগ্রহের ক্ষেত্রেও যে উন্নতি হবে, সে কথাও মনে করিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, 'অপারেশন বর্গা' অনুসরণ করা যে কতটা জরুরি সেটা প্রয়োজনে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীদের সম্মেলন ডেকে রাজ্যগুলিকে বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করবে কেন্দ্র। গ্রামোন্নয়নমন্ত্রী রঘুবংশপ্রসাদ সিংহের বক্তব্য, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ 'অপারেশন বর্গা'য় ভাল ফল পেয়েছে। কোনও রাজ্য যদি পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মডেল অনুসরণ করে ভূমিসংস্কার করতে চায়, তা হলে তো ভালই হয়। ভূমিসংস্কারের বিষয়টিতে কেন্দ্রের কোনও সাংবিধানিক এজিয়ার নেই বটে, তবে রাজ্যগুলিকে এ ব্যাপারে কেন্দ্র পরামর্শ দিতেই পারে।

কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী যে কথাটি বলেননি, সেই প্রতিবন্ধকতার কথাটি খোলাখুলিই বলেছেন অবসরপ্রাপ্ত আইএএস দেবব্রত বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের 'অপারেশন বর্গা' কর্মসূচির সফল রূপকার এই আমলা পরে এক সময়

কেন্দ্রীয় গ্রামোন্নয়ন মন্ত্রকেও সচিব ছিলেন। তিনি স্পষ্টই জানান, বর্গাদারদের নাম নথিভুক্ত করার কাজটি সত্যিই করতে হলে শুধুই সরকারি ইচ্ছাপ্রকাশ যথেষ্ট নয়, রাজনৈতিক সদিচ্ছা থাকাও প্রয়োজন। নিজের অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে তিনি বলেন, ১৯৭৮ সালে অপারেশন বর্গা শুরু হয়ে ১৯৮১ সালে শেষ হয়। তখন ক্ষমতাসীন দলের রাজনৈতিক সদিচ্ছা থাকায় আমলারা কর্মসূচি রূপায়িত করতে পেরেছিলেন।

তাঁর মতে, কাজটা আমলারাই করেন, কিন্তু তার পিছনে রাজনৈতিক সমর্থন না থাকলে এগোনো অসম্ভব। হিন্দি বলয়ের রাজ্যগুলিতে এই কাজ করতে গেলে ক্ষমতাসীন দলগুলিরই স্বার্থে যা পড়বে। বিহারে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব, মধ্যপ্রদেশে দিশ্বিজয় সিংহ এবং অন্ধ্র চন্দ্রবাবু নায়ডু বিভিন্ন সময় ভূমিসংস্কার ও বর্গা নথিভুক্তি নিয়ে মাথা ঘামিয়েও সেই কারণেই পিছিয়ে এসেছেন। তাঁরা বুঝতে পেরেছিলেন, এটা করতে গেলে তাঁদের নিজস্ব রাজনৈতিক সমর্থনের ভিতটাই ধসে পড়তে পারে।

বামপন্থীরা বহু দিন ধরেই অন্য রাজ্যে ভূমিসংস্কারের দাবি তুলছেন। বাম-সমর্থিত কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারও এখন তারই কিছুটা প্রতিধ্বনি তুলে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের মডেলকে দৃষ্টান্ত হিসাবে ব্যবহারের পরামর্শ দিচ্ছেন অন্য রাজ্যকে। কিন্তু বড় বড় ভূস্বামী ও জোতদাররাই যেখানে অন্য রাজ্যের ক্ষমতাসীন দলগুলির মেরুদণ্ড, সেখানে বর্গাদারদের অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার কর্মসূচি 'অপারেশন বর্গা'-এর মডেল কতটা গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে, তা নিয়ে সংশয় থেকেই যায়।

20 MAY 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Disinvestment should not be held hostage to settling scores

Washington's watching

Two months before the prime minister, Manmohan Singh, arrives in Washington to meet the president of the United States of America, George W. Bush, his trip, which had raised high expectations when it was put on the table at the beginning of this year, is in serious danger of conforming to the adage, "The mountain laboured and gave birth to a mouse."

When a foreign leader is expected on an official visit at the White House — with the US president scheduled to return that visit soon thereafter — America is in the habit of watching that visitor's country with an eagle eye. India has been under such scrutiny in Washington for months now, but the signals that are coming out of New Delhi in recent days are far from comforting. Last week has been particularly distressing, what with Laloo Prasad Yadav's attack on the Election Commission and the United Progressive Alliance government's decision to probe two former ministers who are highly regarded in America.

India's EC has a reputation for independence among Americans, which towers far above the credibility of their own institutions engaged in the task of filling elected posts in the US — ever more so after the election fiasco in Florida in 2000, which made the first-term presidential election of Bush the butt of ridicule all over the world. K.J. Rao, consultant to the EC and a key target of the UPA government's railway minister in his latest fight to discredit the commission, is a familiar name among politically enlightened Americans who have admired the way India conducts its elections. Rao was special adviser to the commission and one of two officials sent by the poll panel to Chhapra to investigate charges that the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief had rigged his April 26, 2004, election to the Lok Sabha.

Last year, in the run up to the election of Bush for his second four-year term, there was widespread apprehension across America that the Florida fiasco would be repeated in a closely fought US presidential poll. Global Exchange, a California-based international human rights organization, which has a 17-year record of international partnerships for peace and democracy, launched Fair Election, a project to get international civil society to monitor the 2004 elections. Rao was one of those chosen for the task of monitoring the US poll exercise. Besides, Americans also know him as one of those who enabled post-taliban Afghanistan to take the first tentative steps towards representative government.

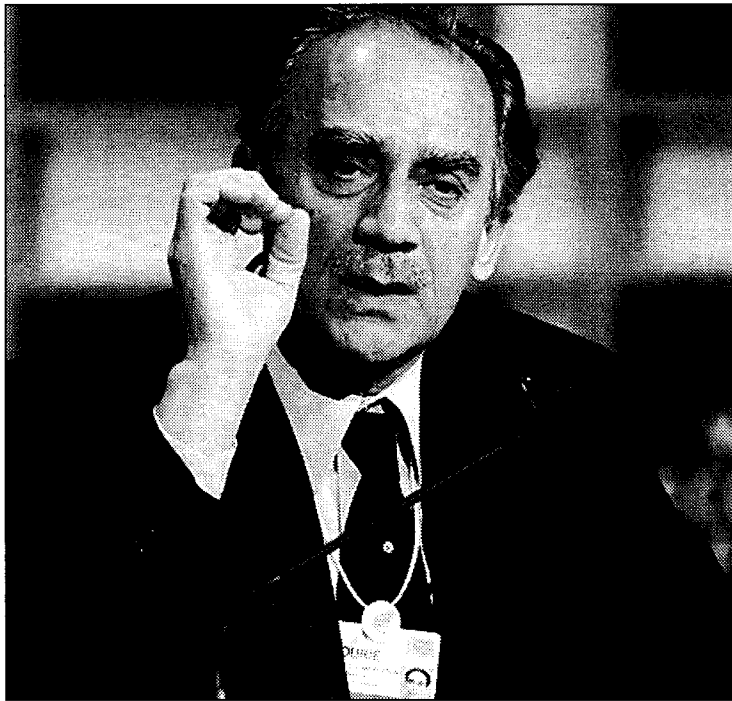
When the RJD chief waved L.V. Satharishi's controversial letter to his minister at a press conference last week, alleging that "the irregu-



DIPLOMACY
K.P. NAYAR

larities, improprieties and unlawful actions of Rao have not so far been questioned in any court of law and he has done these things with impunity", what was at stake in America was, in fact, not the credibility of the EC, but that of the UPA government. To his credit, the prime minister did not go for political expediency and take the side of his RJD ally, but the presence of a tainted minister in the Central government attempting to destroy one of the pillars of Indian democracy is not a

ter as much as substance. Last week's decision to probe some of the ministerial decisions of Shourie and Fernandes suggests that the UPA government has learned few lessons although it burned its fingers badly in both Panaji and Ranchi. A less charitable explanation is that the same Congress backroom boys — and girls — who thrust Goa and Jharkhand on the prime minister are still pulling powerful strings behind the political curtain on the UPA stage.



sight that advances confidence in India in capitals like Washington. It has not helped matters that the railway minister is also trying to manipulate the judiciary, another independent Indian institution that has won high praise in India, an arm of the state with which the US supreme court is now in the process of forging ties. The antics which have helped the Bihar leader remain in the limelight — and diminish India abroad — had barely receded into the background when it was announced on the last day of the parliamentary session that two former ministers in the NDA cabinet, George Fernandes and Arun Shourie, would be targeted in probes by the Manmohan Singh government.

In a democracy, it is not enough that things must be done properly and fairly: they must also have the appearance of having been done properly and fairly. Common sense expected that after the government-forming fiascos in Goa and Jharkhand earlier this year, the UPA would have realized the imperative of applying this thumb rule of democracy to its actions — at least to the ones where impressions mat-

Any obstacle in Shourie's way is not a difficulty, but a challenge

Most of those who have had occasion to deal with Shourie professionally over the years, including this writer, will readily attest that he can be difficult to impossible, to put it mildly. But many of those men and women will also swear that in the murky world of Indian politics, Shourie shines like a precious jewel. Be it in an editorial office or in a ministerial chamber, you can give Shourie a task and rest assured that it would be done. That is Shourie's problem. Any obstacle in his way is not a difficulty, but a challenge. Few people in New Delhi know this better than Sonia Gandhi, who saw her husband's biggest mandate in India's electoral history crumble into defeat in mere five years. Shourie's role in bringing about that defeat was larger than life.

Because Shourie has been recog-

nized with a string of honours such as the Magsaysay award, because he is one of the "World Press Freedom Heroes", he is better known the world over than many of his peers in India's public life. Precisely because Shourie did not sell off India's family silver unlike most reformers from Budapest to Bucharest, because he did not create Boris Yeltsin-style oligarchs in India through privatization, the way he went about the task of disinvestment is actually seen outside India as a model for economic reform.

Any enquiry ordered by the present government will not raise questions about Shourie and his ways. It will only raise questions about the motives of the UPA government in ordering such a probe and create doubts about New Delhi's commitment to disinvestment, which is integral to India's economic reform. It will bring back putrid memories of how V.P. Singh's government, in an act similarly smacking of political vendetta 15 years ago, grounded A-320s, one of the finest aircraft of its time, and probed the Rajiv Gandhi government's decision to purchase those planes for Indian Airlines.

In capitals like Washington, those who deal with India know enough about the due processes in New Delhi, which required the report of the comptroller and auditor general of India on the Centaur sale during Shourie's ministership to be sent to the public accounts committee instead of being fodder for the kind of shoddy enquiry ordered by the finance minister. Leaders like Manmohan Singh have emphasized, in interactions with their counterparts abroad, that what sets India apart from China is its rule of law. Probes like the ones announced in parliament last week have the effect of giving short shrift to due processes and the rule of law. If such acts, which smack of political vendetta, become the norm in New Delhi, what stops General Pervez Musharraf from reminding his friends in Washington that what he is doing to Benazir Bhutto — or what Nawaz Sharif earlier did to Benazir — is no different from what happens in New Delhi, that at the end of the day, India is no different from Pakistan.

When the prime minister travels to Washington in about eight weeks, he will once again talk of the huge infrastructure investment that he is looking to Americans to make so that India can prepare itself to be a robust, competitive economic power. But what he says in Washington, come July, will have far less credibility than what he told American CEOs last September in New York, unless he can restrain his petty-minded party colleagues and the left parties from holding disinvestment hostage to settling political or ideological scores against ministers in the Vajpayee government.

Anthem is immortal

Hence cannot be touched, says Supreme Court

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 13

THE NATIONAL anthem is immortal and cannot be changed, the Supreme Court ruled on Friday.

The ruling followed a petition that the word "Sindh" be deleted from the verse beginning "Punjab, Sindh, Gu-

jarata, Maratha..." The petitioner, Sanjeev Bhatnagar, argued Sindh is now in Pakistan and the word should be replaced by "Kashmir".

Dismissing his petition, a Bench of judges R.C. Lahoti, D.M. Dharmadhikari and G.P. Mathur said, "The national anthem is representative of the ethos of the country. Any classic, once created, becomes immortal and inalienable; even its creator may not like making changes in it. Any tampering with the script of the poem would be showing disrespect to the great poet Rabindranath Tagore."

It said the anthem need not reflect the territorial composition of the country. "It isn't and never was a chronicle of states."

The Bench also slapped a cost of Rs 10,000 on the petitioner for filing a "publicity interest litigation" and wasting the court's time.



■ The national anthem is not a chronicle that defines the territory of the nation that has adopted it ■

— Supreme Court

Right to Information Bill passed ^{12/5}

It will usher in a new era of governance, says Manmohan

K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Right to Information Bill, in keeping with a promise the United Progressive Alliance had made in its Common Minimum Programme. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated that it would usher in a new era in the process of governance, performance and efficiency.

146 amendments

The Bill, with 146 amendments, was adopted by voice vote. The Opposition benches remained empty owing to the boycott.

Intervening in the debate, Dr. Singh said the legislation would ensure that the benefits of growth would flow to all sections of the people, eliminate corruption and bring the concerns of the common man to the heart of all processes of governance.

The Government accepted an amendment proposed by the Congress chief whip, Pawan Bansal.

The architecture

The Bill, Dr. Singh said, lays down the architecture for accessing information, which is simple, easy, time-bound and inexpensive.

There will be stringent penalties for failing to provide information or affecting its flow. "In fact, it imposes obligations on

agencies to disclose information *suo motu*, thus reducing the cost of access."

The Prime Minister wanted civil servants to view the Bill in a positive spirit. They should not see it as a "draconian law for paralysing Government, but as an instrument for improving Government-citizen interfacing, resulting in a friendly, caring and effective functioning."

Dr. Singh emphasised that the Bill was more far-reaching and effective than the existing Freedom of Information Act. He praised the role of the National Advisory Council headed by Sonia Gandhi in bringing into focus major drawbacks in the earlier legislation. He urged the State Governments to take the initiative and establish State Information Commissions.

Sonia's enthusiasm

Ms. Gandhi was among those who took an active part in the voice-vote exercise: she was seen thumping the desk with both hands.

She later walked up to the Speaker Somnath Chatterjee's chair to exchange greetings. She also had word with the Telugu Desam Party leader K. Yerran Naidu.

While supporting the legislation he had said that its "poor drafting" showed up as the Government itself had brought forward nearly 150 amendments.

The Telegraph

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RIGHT TO ASK

What is the role of secrecy in modern statecraft? And to what extent is the right to information central to the functioning of a democracy? These questions have been at the heart of the long debate over the right to information bill, which has at last been passed, with important amendments, by the government. The nominal changes are important here. The Official Secrets Act, 1923, became the Freedom of Information Act, 2002, which, in turn, has been renamed the Right to Information Act. The movement from a feudal and colonial notion of necessary secrecy to the notion of a democratic right is essential to the nature of this legislation. It is, therefore, important to consider the significant amendments to the draft bill that was introduced in the last session of parliament and was examined by a parliamentary standing committee under the supervision of the national advisory council.

First, the bill does oblige agencies to disclose information *suo motu*, and there is a system of penalties if there is delay in providing information. Further, erring officials would be subjected to departmental proceedings. Second, the right to information has also been more radically democratized, by exempting applicants below the poverty line from the charges. Third, exemption from this law granted to security and intelligence agencies is not without its exceptions. There are provisions for a "public benefit test" that might deem disclosure less damaging than secrecy. Also, these exemptions may be vetoed if the reason for information sought involves allegations of corruption or human rights violations. Fourth, there is a more or less independent system of implementation through commissions set up at the state and Central levels. Yet, as with any legislation, the concept of the citizen's right to know is also a matter of attitude, a democratic mindset that has to be put into practice by politicians and bureaucrats as well as ordinary citizens. That every Indian is entitled to bringing certain standards of transparency and accountability to the various forms of governance that determine his social and political existence is a notion that does not come naturally to most. By endorsing this prerogative as a "right" — and not a favour bestowed by the state — this law, if taken seriously, would be a step towards resolving the conflict between the state and the citizen — and in favour of the citizen.

13 MAY 2005 THE TELEGRAPH

Two steps forward for India

The passage of the Right to Information Act and the introduction of the national Rural Employment Guarantee Bill are welcome steps with far-reaching consequences.

V.P. Singh

THE UNITED Progressive Alliance Government has taken two major steps in a little over a year of being in office. One is the passage of the Right to Information Act and the other, the introduction of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill. These are most welcome steps with far-reaching consequences. I feel particularly pleased as these were two unfinished tasks of the Government of which I was Prime Minister. The Right to Information Act effectively empowers the people to monitor government spending at all levels. The Employment Guarantee Bill, which is expected to be passed early next week, opens the door of hope for poor people for employment.

Suggestions for changes in the original Bill were made by the Left parties and various people's organisations such as the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and the People's Action for Employment Guarantee. I also appeared before the Parliamentary Standing Committee and gave my suggestions in consonance with them. Many of these suggestions have been incorporated in the Bill that has been introduced in Parliament. These suggestions include extending the coverage of the Act to the whole of

rural India within five years; disentangling the scheme from the bureaucratic web tied to the identification of below the poverty line (BPL) beneficiaries and, instead, making it universally applicable to all who want to work; ensuring that the scheme functions as a real guarantee and not a tentative one that can be withdrawn by the Government at will. In addition we had pressed for an effective social audit at the gram panchayat level to be included in the provisions of the Bill.

However, two issues still remain to be addressed. The first, is a provision in the Bill that if the Central Government thinks that there is corruption in the implementation of any "scheme," it can stop funding the scheme. This is highly unjust, because with such a step instead of the corrupt being punished the people, who themselves are the victims of corruption, are being punished.

This affects not only the EGA, but the Right to Information Act 2005 as well. For instance, one of the ways in which people are prevented from monitoring rural works is the threat used very effectively that if they do so their names will not be entered in the muster rolls, their payments and the work itself will be stopped. Even in major cases of misuse, proven by government enquiry, the Government and the district authorities

themselves stop issuing sanctions for new works, thereby "punishing" people for exercising their right to protest against mismanagement and fraud. The net result would be that the people would stop complaining for fear of losing employment so necessary for their survival. This clause would embolden the already adept and corrupt mafia, providing them with an additional stick to beat the disempowered with. Instead, the hands of the complainants should be strengthened with prompt action against the guilty. And there should be rigorous punishment for those who resort to corrupt practices that deny the poor their due share. Provisions for social audit can only be made effective if the people are given an incentive to monitor and blow the whistle against malpractices. In any case, to shut down rural works because of corrupt officials is an argument that reveals a bias against the rural poor. If there is corruption in the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), will the Government talk about winding it up? Would that be fair to the investor?

The second issue is regarding minimum wages. The present Bill provides for a uniform minimum wage rate of Rs. 60 a day. In many States, the minimum wage is higher than Rs. 60 a day. This has taken away what is statutorily provided for in such States. What is worse is that this provision explicit-

ly overrides the Minimum Wages Act. This will set a dangerous precedent. For instance many programmes are going to be merged with the EGA and will therefore deny the minimum wage which they have had to pay so far. The private sector contractors and landlords might also use this as an example to argue against the need to be bound by the Minimum Wages Act. It must be remembered that minimum wage has been one of the only protective legislation for the unorganised sector, in urban and rural areas. It has given them the legitimacy to fight for survival, with dignity.

Therefore, from our perspective, the wage paid should be either the minimum floor wage or the State minimum wage, whichever is higher. This is also what had been recommended by the all-party Standing Committee.

Finally, I hope that the Government will heed these suggestions while ensuring that the Employment Guarantee Bill is passed without further delay. The Manmohan Singh Government should be complimented for enacting these historic legislation, and also Sonia Gandhi whose keen interest and efforts facilitated the necessary changes needed to strengthen these legislation.

(The writer is former Prime Minister of India.)

22 APR 2006

THE HINDU

জানার অধিকার

তথ্য জানার অধিকার এ দেশের আইনে নবাগত। ২০০০ সালে রাজস্থান সরকার 'রাইট টু ইনফর্মেশন' আইন প্রণয়ন করিয়া এক নূতন পর্বের সূচনা করিয়াছিল। তাহার পর ক্রমে ধারণাটি প্রসারিত হইতে থাকে। গত জুন মাসে কেন্দ্রীয় স্তরে তথ্য জানার অধিকার সংক্রান্ত আইন দেশব্যাপী কার্যকর হইয়াছে। এই আইন উদ্দেশ্যে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকারও উদ্যোগী হইয়াছে। সুসংবাদ বইকী। গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থায় এই আইনের গুরুত্ব অবিসংবাদিত। ইহার মূল্য লক্ষ্য, নাগরিকেরা সরকারি প্রশাসন সংক্রান্ত তথ্য জানিতে চাহিলে তাহা জানাইতে যেন প্রশাসন বাধ্য থাকে। বাধ্য না করিলে প্রশাসন স্বতঃপ্রণোদিত ভাবে তথ্য জানাইবে, এমন আশা মোটের উপর দুরাশা মাত্র, কোথাও কোথাও কোনও কোনও গণতন্ত্রমনস্ক প্রশাসক এমন উদ্যোগ করিতে পারেন বটে, কিন্তু সাধারণ ভাবে প্রশাসন 'কিছু বলিব না' মন্ত্রেই আস্থাসীল। বিশেষত, সেই সকল ক্ষেত্রেই তথ্য জানার দাবি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হইয়া ওঠে, যে সব ক্ষেত্রে প্রশাসনের কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত বা আচরণ লইয়া প্রশ্ন থাকে, অভিযোগ থাকে। সেই সব ক্ষেত্রে কর্তারা উপায় থাকিলে তথ্য আড়ালে রাখিতে তৎপর হইবেন, ইহা বুঝিতে অতিবুদ্ধির প্রয়োজন নাই। সব বিষয় আইন করিয়া নিশ্চিত করা যায় না, কিন্তু কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্রে আইনের চাপ জরুরি।

জরুরি, কিন্তু যথেষ্ট নয়। তথ্য জানার অধিকার আইনে থাকিলেই বাস্তবেও সেই অধিকার মিলিবে, এমন নয়। আইন মোতাবেক নাগরিক তথ্য জানিতে চাহিতে পারিবেন বটে, কিন্তু প্রশাসন সেই দাবি তৎক্ষণাৎ পূরণ করিতে ব্যস্ত হইবেন, তাহা নাও হইতে পারে। এ ক্ষেত্রে তিন ধরনের প্রতিক্রিয়ার আশঙ্কা প্রবল। এক, কী ধরনের তথ্য জানানো যাইবে না, আইনে সে বিষয়ে নির্দেশ আছে; না রাখিয়া উপায় নাই, কারণ কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্রে, যেমন প্রতিরক্ষার প্রয়োজনে বা সাম্প্রদায়িক অশান্তির ভয়ে, সব তথ্য প্রকাশ করা যুক্তিযুক্ত না হইতে পারে। প্রশাসনের কর্তারা এই সব রক্ষাকবচের অপব্যবহার করিয়া অন্যায় ভাবে তথ্য গোপন করিতে চাহিতে পারেন। আইনের পথে তাহার প্রতিকারের চেষ্টা নিশ্চয়ই করা যায়, কিন্তু আইনের পথ সচরাচর দ্রুতগামী নয়। দ্বিতীয়ত, তথ্য জানিতে চাহিলে সরাসরি আপত্তি না করিয়া নথিপত্র দেখাইতে দেরি করিবার আশঙ্কা থাকিয়াই যায়। তৃতীয়ত, প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য সং ভাবে না দেখাইয়া অপয়োজনীয় বা গৌণ তথ্য ঠেকাইয়া দেওয়ার সম্ভাবনাও কম নয়। আইনে এই ধরনের অনাচারের কথাও নিশ্চয় ভাবা হয়, কিন্তু সব অনাচার বাস্তবে আইন করিয়া আটকানো মুশকিল।

সুতরাং, আইন করিলেই চলিবে না, নাগরিকদের তথ্য জানার অধিকারের মর্যাদা সম্পর্কে প্রশাসকদের সচেতন ও শ্রদ্ধাসীল করিতে হইবে। স্পষ্টতই তাহা এক দিনে হইবার নয়, সহজেও হইবার নয়। এই রাজ্যে সংশয় সমধিক, কারণ কী প্রশাসকবাহিনী, কী তাহাদের চালক রাজনীতিকমণ্ডলী, কোনও পক্ষই সচরাচর নাগরিকদের খোলা মনে সব কিছু জানাইতে অভ্যস্ত বা আগ্রহী বলিয়া মনে হয় না, বস্তুত অন্য অনেক রাজ্যে যে সব তথ্য অনায়সলভ, এ রাজ্যে তাহাও প্রায়শই, আক্ষরিক অর্থেই, দুর্লভ। পঞ্চায়েতি রাজের পরিসরে তথ্য জানাইবার একটি আপাত-উদ্যোগ সরকার করিয়া থাকে বটে, কিন্তু তাহার প্রকৃত রূপটি অভিজ্ঞ ব্যক্তিমােই বিলক্ষণ জানেন। রাজ্য সরকার কেন্দ্রীয় আইন বলবৎ করিবার জন্য সমস্ত দফতরের কর্তাদের তৎপর করিতে যে উদ্যোগ লইয়াছে, তাহা এই পরিপ্রেক্ষিতেই বিশেষ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। দেখা দরকার, সেই উদ্যোগ যেন নিছক একটি শাস্ত্রীয় আচারে পর্যবসিত না হয়।

সরকারের 'গোপন তথ্য' জানবে आमजनता

পার্থসারথি সেনগুপ্ত •
নয়াদিব্লি

৩ অক্টোবর: জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপের ব্যাপারে দেশের নানা প্রান্তে গোয়েন্দারা কী কী খবর সংগ্রহ করেছেন, তা জানতে চান? জানতে পারবেন। নকশালেরা কোথায় কোথায় ঘাঁটি গেড়েছে, কী ভাবে গোপনে সংগঠন গড়ার কাজ চালাচ্ছে, বা কেন্দ্রীয় নিরাপত্তা বাহিনী দেশের কোথায় কোথায় মোতায়েন করার পরিকল্পনা করছে ভারত সরকার? জানতে চান? নিশ্চিন্তে থাকুন, তাও জানতে পারবেন।

কারণ এই জাতীয় 'সংবেদনশীল' তথ্য পরিসংখ্যান জানাতে এখন প্রস্তুত ভারত সরকার। 'তথ্য জানার অধিকার' সংক্রান্ত আইনের আওতায় আবেদন করলে কোন কোন বিষয়ে आमজনता খোঁজ খবর পাবেন, তার একটি বিস্তারিত তালিকা প্রস্তুত করেছে কেন্দ্র। এত দিন যে সব তথ্য হাতে গুণে

কয়েক জন মাত্র আমলার মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকত, এখন থেকে তার নাগাল পাবেন সাধারণ নাগরিকেরাও।

নয়া আইন অনুযায়ী, এই সব তথ্য পরিসংখ্যান জানার 'মূল্য' হিসাবে তাঁদের অবশ্য সরকারি কোষাগারে কিছু অর্থ জমা দিতে হবে। কিন্তু, ২১ সেপ্টেম্বরে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের জারি করা নির্দেশে চোখ বোলালে এটাই পরিষ্কার হয়, এত দিনে গোপনীয়তার বাতাবরণ থেকে বেরিয়ে আসছে ভারত সরকার। গণতন্ত্রের প্রাথমিক শর্ত মেনেই। কারণ, কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের নির্দেশে যে বিষয়গুলি উল্লিখিত হয়েছে, সে গুলি সম্পর্কে এত দিন পর্যন্ত জানার ইচ্ছা থাকলেও তাকে 'সংবেদনশীল' বা 'গোপনীয়' আখ্যা দিয়ে সাধারণের নাগালের বাইরেই রাখা হত।

যেমন, কোন কোন অফিসার দুর্নীতির দায়ে অভিযুক্ত, ডিজিটেল কমিশন কাদের বিরুদ্ধে তদন্ত করছে, তদন্তের ফলাফল কী, কোন অফিসার

শাস্তি পেলেন, এই জাতীয় বিষয়গুলি এত দিন বিস্তারিত জানার সুযোগ প্রায় ছিল না। বা, দেশভাগের এত দিন বাদেও যদি কোনও নাগরিকের জানার ইচ্ছা হয় যে, পূর্ব ও পশ্চিম পাকিস্তান থেকে আগত উদ্বাস্তুদের দশা কী, তাঁদের পূর্ববাসনের কাজই বা কতটা এগিয়েছে, সেটা আর ব্যস্ততার ভান করে এড়াতে পারবেন না আমলারা। তাঁরা এই সংক্রান্ত তথ্য পরিসংখ্যান যে বিস্তারিত ভাবে জানাতে বাধ্য, তা স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের সাম্প্রতিক নির্দেশনামায় পরিষ্কার জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

রাজভবন বা মন্ত্রীদের বাংলোও আর आमজনতার নজরদারির বাইরে নয়। রাজ্যপাল বা মন্ত্রীদের কাজকর্ম সংক্রান্ত নানা বিষয়ে খবরাখবর পেতেই পারেন নাগরিকেরা। কেন্দ্রীয় পুলিশ বাহিনীর হাতে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের বিষয়ে জাতীয় মানবাধিকার কমিশনের তথ্য পরিসংখ্যান তো এখন চাইলেই পাবেন সাধারণ নাগরিকেরা। এমনকী,

জেনিভায় হাইকমিশনার ফর হিউম্যান রাইটস এ দেশে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের যে বিষয়গুলি নথিভুক্ত করে ভারত সরকারের নজরে এনেছে, তাও এখন থেকে জানতে পারবেন উৎসাহী মানুষ। একই ভাবে, জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের নানা ঘটনাও আর নিতান্ত ফাইলবন্দি হয়ে থাকছে না।

বিমানবন্দরের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ জায়গার নিরাপত্তা সংক্রান্ত তথ্যের ব্যাপারে উৎসুক হলেও আর গোয়েন্দারা তেড়ে আসবেন না। বা, ভিআইপিদের নিরাপত্তার বন্দোবস্তের খুঁটিনাটি নিয়ে জানতে চাইলে পুলিশের বিষয় নজরে পড়তে হবে না। সরকার সব কিছু জানাতেই চায়। জঙ্গি সমস্যা সংক্রান্ত সংবেদনশীল বিষয়ও এখন থেকে আর নাগরিকের চোখের আড়ালে থাকছে না। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক নির্দেশ দিয়েছে, "উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতের জঙ্গি সমস্যার ব্যাপারে নাগরিকেরা জানতে চাইলে, তাঁদের প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য দিতে হবে।"

তথ্য জানার নতুন আইনে সরকারি আমলারা ফাঁপরে

পার্থসারথি সেনগুপ্ত • নয়াদিল্লি

২৪ অক্টোবর: নিশ্চিত এ বার আর চাকরি থেকে অবসরও নিতে পারবেন না সরকারি অফিসারেরা। ছুটিতে যেতেও হাজারো বিঘ্ন। কারণ, তথ্য জানার অধিকার আইন তাঁদের পায়ে বেড়ি পরিয়েছে।

নতুন আইনে যদি সাধারণ নাগরিক কোনও বিষয়ে কিছু জানতে চান, তবে নির্দিষ্ট সময়সীমার মধ্যে তাঁকে সেই তথ্য না জানানো পর্যন্ত সংশ্লিষ্ট অফিসারের 'ছুটি' নেই। তা তিনি অবসরই নিন, ছুটিতে যান বা বদলি হন। বরং, এ ব্যাপারে দায়িত্ব ঠিক ভাবে না পালন করলে অফিসারদের মাথায় শাস্তির খাঁড়া নেমে আসতে বাধ্য। সব মিলিয়ে, আমলাতন্ত্রের চিরাচরিত অচলায়তনে এ বার কুঠারাত্যাত করতে চলেছে তথ্য জানার আইন।

এ যাবৎ আমলাদের ধমক খেতেই অভ্যস্ত ভারতীয় আমজনতা। তাঁদের টেবিলের সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে যতই বিনীত ভাবে কেউ কিছু জানতে চান না কেন, আসমুদ্র হিমাচল উত্তরটা মোটামুটি একই ছাঁচে ঢালা। অর্থাৎ, 'ব্যস্ত আছি,

পরে আসবেন।' সেই 'পরে' ভবিষ্যতের কোন গর্ভে নিহিত আছে, তা সকলেরই অজানা! ফলে, এক আমলার টেবিল থেকে আর এক আমলার টেবিল, সেখানেও বিফল মনোরথ হয়ে আর এক অফিসারের সামনে কুঁকড়ে দাঁড়ানো- সরকার বদলালেও এই ছবিটা কিন্তু বদলায় না।

এ বার অবশ্য ইউ পি এ জামানায় তথ্য জানার আইনের জেরে পরিস্থিতি খানিকটা বদলাতে পারে, এই আশায় বুক বাঁধতে পারেন সাধারণ নাগরিক। কারণ, আইন প্রণয়নের পরবর্তী পর্যায়ে যে বিধিনিয়মগুলি তৈরি হয়েছে, তাতে পাল্লা ভারী আমজনতার দিকেই। সম্প্রতি স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের যুগ্মসচিব যশবন্ত রাজ একটি নির্দেশনামায় বলেছেন, "কোনও নাগরিক কোনও বিষয়ে জানতে চাইলে সংশ্লিষ্ট অফিসারকে সেই আর্জি পাওয়ার এক মাসের মধ্যে তথ্যাদি জানাতে হবে। যদি সরকারি নিয়মনীতির জন্য ওই বিষয়ে তথ্য জানানোর সমস্যাও থাকে, তবে আবেদনকারীকে তা ব্যাখ্যা করে ত্রিশ দিনের মধ্যেই জানাতে হবে।"

ভারত সরকারের আইনের বিধি

অনুযায়ী আমলারা পাশ কাটানোর কোনও রাস্তাও পাবেন না। যশবন্তের নির্দেশনামায় বলা হয়েছে, "এমন পরিস্থিতি দেখা দিতেই পারে তথ্য জানানোর দায়িত্ব রয়েছে যে অফিসারের উপর, তিনি অবসর নিয়েছেন। সে ক্ষেত্রে অফিসারের বাড়তি দায়িত্ব হচ্ছে, তাঁর চেয়ারে নতুন যে অফিসার বসছেন, তাঁকে ভাল করে বুঝিয়ে দেওয়া যে কত জন ব্যক্তি তথ্য জানতে চেয়েছেন, কত জন সেই তথ্য পেয়েছেন এবং কত জন পাননি। যাঁরা তথ্য পাননি, তাঁদের আর কদিনের মধ্যে তথ্য দিতে হবে, কী কী তথ্য জানাতে হবে, তা নতুন পদাধিকারীকে বুঝিয়ে তবেরই অবসর নেওয়ার কথা চিন্তা করবেন সংশ্লিষ্ট অফিসার।"

সরকারি নির্দেশনামায় এটাও স্পষ্ট করে দেওয়া হয়েছে যে এই আদেশে না মানলে জরিমানা দিতে হতে পারে অমনোযোগী আমলাকে। তিনি অবসর বা বদলির দোহাই দিয়েও পার পাবেন না। তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে বিভাগীয় শাস্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থাও নেওয়া হতে পারে। অর্থাৎ, আটকে যেতে পারে অরসরকালীন পাওনাগণ্ডাও।

Right to Information — path to Swaraj

Shailesh Gandhi

A SIMPLE yet very powerful example of the use of the Right to Information (RTI) is of a slum dweller who applied for a new ration card. He was told he would have to give a bribe of Rs.2000 to obtain it. Our friend — an RTI-empowered citizen — smiled, and just went ahead and applied for the ration card without offering any bribes. His neighbours warned him he would never get his ration card. They also told him how he would now have to keep visiting the rationing office. Some well meaning friends praised him for being courageous. They suggested he should approach some non-governmental organisation to take up his case, so that ultimately he would get his ration card.

Our citizen had decided to become an enforcer of good governance. He found out in how many weeks everyone who paid bribes got their ration cards. He waited for an extra four weeks after applying for his card, and then applied for information under the RTI. Using the simple format with an application fee of Rs.10, he delivered it to the Public Information Officer of the Food and Supply office. He had asked up to which date applications for ration cards had been cleared and the daily progress report of his application. This shook up the officials, since they would have to acknowledge in writing that they had given ration cards to others who had applied after him, which would be conclusive evidence that they had no justification for delaying his card. Happy ending: the ration card was given to him immediately.

No bribes, no endless visits. Our citizen was

The Right to Information Act comes into force all over the country on October 12. Citizens should make use of it to ensure transparency and good governance triumph.

able to use the might of the Right to Information. This story has been repeated a thousand times to get a road repaired, an electricity connection, admissions to educational institutions.

The Right to Information is derived from our fundamental right of expression under Article 19. If we do not have information on how our Government and public institutions function, we cannot express any informed opinion on it. This has been accepted by various Supreme Court judgments, since 1977. All of us accept that the freedom of the press is an essential element for a democracy to function. It is worthwhile to understand the underlying assumption in this well entrenched belief.

Why is the freedom of the media considered one of the essential features of a democracy? Democracy revolves round the basic idea of citizens being at the centre of governance — rule of the people. We need to define the importance of the concept of freedom of the press from this fundamental premise. It is obvious that the main reason for a free press is to ensure that citizens are informed. If this is one of the main reasons for the primacy given to the freedom of the press, it clearly flows from this that the citizens' right to know is paramount. Also, since the govern-

ment is run on behalf of the people, they are the owners who have a right to be informed directly.

Justice Mathew ruled in the *Raj Narain case*, "In a government of responsibility like ours, where all the agents of the public must be responsible for their conduct, there can be but few secrets. The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing. Their right to know, which is derived from the concept of freedom of speech, though not absolute, is a factor which should make one wary when secrecy is claimed for transactions which can at any rate have no repercussion on public security."

Nine States in India have an operational Right To Information Act. Parliament passed this as Act no.22 of 2005 in May this year. It will become operational across the country on October 12. It promises to be a single piece of legislation that can result in the victory of participatory democracy. There are some signs of the various power-wielders of government seeking to regress on the provisions of the Act, but citizens will not permit this. It is a right that has belonged to us for the last 55 years, and now we

shall not allow it to be diluted.

The Right To Information Act is a codification of this important right of citizens. The right has existed since the time India became a republic, but was difficult to enforce without going to court. The Act and its rules define a format for requisitioning information, a time period within which information must be provided (30 days), method of giving the information, some charges for applying, and some exemptions. The principle is that charges should be minimum — more as a token. They are not at all representative of the costs that may be incurred. Citizens can ask for information by getting Xerox copies of documents, permissions, policies, and decisions. Inspection of files can also be done and samples can be asked for. All administrative offices of public authorities have to appoint 'Public Information Officers (PIO)'. Citizens can apply for information to the PIO of the office concerned. If it is not provided or is refused, the citizen can go to an Appellate Authority who would be an official in the same department, senior to the PIO. If this too does not produce a satisfactory result, one can appeal to the State or Central Information Commissioner, an independent Constitutional Authority being established under the Act.

Penalty provision

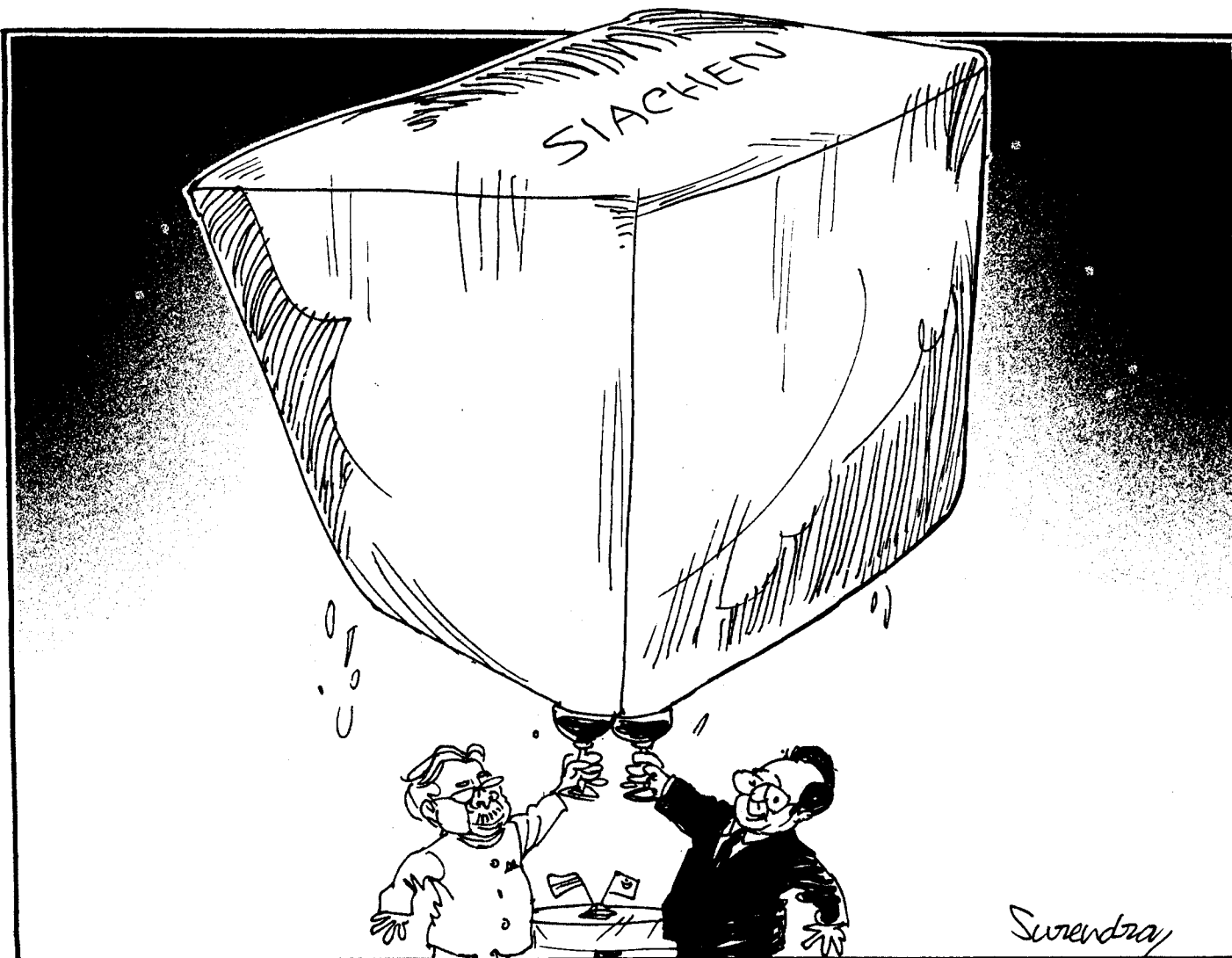
One of the major reasons for the success of the Maharashtra and Delhi Acts is that there is a provision for penalising the PIO in case he does not give the information within the mandated period. The National Act, which has drawn a lot of inspiration from the Maharashtra Act, also provides for a penalty for delay on the PIO at a rate of Rs.250 a day. There is also provision for disciplinary action against recalcitrant PIOs in some cases. Thus the Right to Information provides for a time bound and defined process for citizens to access information about all actions taken by public authorities. The penal provisions are the real teeth of the Act, which ensure that the PIO does not treat citizens' demands for information in a cavalier manner.

I have myself used the Right to Information in a variety of ways. It has been possible to get a Commission report to be made public using the RTI. In another case, a police inspector had raped a minor and was reinstated in service within five months! Using RTI as a pressure device resulted in the inspector being dismissed from service. In another instance, proof has been obtained about political interference in police transfers. The major fraud of looting money meant for providing livelihood under the employment guarantee scheme (EGS) has been going on for years. Presently, a campaign has been initiated in Maharashtra to get citizens across the State to ask for EGS muster rolls using RTI and then auditing them with people's participation. The primary power of RTI is the fact it empowers individual citizens to requisition information. Hence without necessarily forming pressure groups or associations, it puts power directly into the hands of the foundation of democracy — the citizens. There will certainly be an attempt to subvert this revolutionary right by the ruling coterie, since it strikes at the basics of their power. This can easily be countered if enough citizens use the Act. Citizens can use the right from their own houses — and usually it does not take more than about two hours to make an RTI application.

A few million applications across the country by concerned citizens on issues that interest them will bring a major change in India and be a determined move towards the Swaraj we desire. There is a great need to spread the usage of this countrywide, so that transparency and good governance triumph. We now have the power; we only need to use it. It is simple to use, and the benefits are immense.

(The writer works closely with the National Campaign for People's Right To Information.)

CARTOONSCAPE



Right to information eludes villagers

Under the Maharashtra Act, information has to be provided to people within 15 working days

Meena Menon

SOLAPUR: Ratanjan village, over 50 km from here, in Maharashtra hit the headlines after heavy rain lashed the village destroying thousands of hectares of crops. A month later, about 60 houses in the Dalit basti in the village are still uninhabitable.

But Ratanjan was recently in the news for another reason too. About 50 persons sat on a hunger strike in front of the Taluka Agriculture Office at Barshi earlier this month demanding information on the schemes implemented in their village under the Employment Guarantee Scheme. In May, the villagers had sought information under the Maharashtra Right to Information Act (MRIT) on nallah bunding, farm ponds, contour bunds and other works going on in the village. However, it was not given to them. This gave rise to suspicion that all was not well. There were complaints of inflated muster rolls, fudged payments and false work records. Under the MRIT, infor-

- In May, details were sought on nallah bunding, farm ponds, contour bunds and other works

- 50 villagers sat on hunger strike recently demanding information

- Muster rolls were faked and villagers not paid for two to three months

- Collector issues notices for submission of all muster rolls

ter. Our crops have been ruined and there is no hope of even a winter crop now as we cannot do anything on our land." The lands are slushy and overgrown with tall weeds. The village has not been declared flood-hit and, therefore, the people are not entitled to compensation for crop loss. "In this situation what are we supposed to do? We need work more than ever and that is not forthcoming."

The worst affected are the Dalits.

Ratanjan symbolises the plight of many villages. Though the heavy rain was unexpected, it was as good as a drought, says Jayant. For the last three to four years, Solapur district has been affected by drought. Every year, Rs. 100 crores is spent on EGS works. The irregularities that surfaced this year, of which no estimates are officially available, could just be the tip of the iceberg. Thanks to the controversy over the EGS works, the number of labourers has reduced considerably and few works are in progress. However, payments have been made for

ments made and how much work was really carried out." Muster rolls were faked and the villagers not paid for two to three months. "I have just been paid for work done in June-July and I am yet to get the coupons for grains."

Ratanjan has a population of 3,500. About 600 are daily wage labourers. The village is located in the drought-hit Barshi taluka and has no irrigation. Since July, there has been very little work. The villagers say they work only for 10 to 15 days. This year, the situation was critical because of the rain. Jayant Kulkarni said he planted four acres with maize. "All our lands are soggy with wa-

work done in June-July.

Three cases of fraud have been lodged. An inquiry is under way. Manoj Nimbalkar, a clerk in the Collector's office and nine others from the Agriculture Department have been charged with forgery, misappropriation of funds and faking muster rolls. They are absconding.

The EGS Act stipulation that muster rolls have to be displayed at the time of the work has never been implemented. The Government initially stopped Collector Manisha Verma's plans to conduct a social audit of the EGS works. Last week, she issued notices demanding that the Agriculture Department, which carries out a large part of the works, submit all the muster rolls.

Ms. Verma had also prepared a time-bound chart of payments, amounting to over Rs. 11 crores for June and July, which would be supervised by a local official. But it was not implemented by the Department concerned. The order to display muster rolls at the time of payment was also ignored.

Cong MPs join chorus against aircraft deal

VINOD Sharma
New Delhi, May 3

IN A move that could deliver a blow to Indian Airlines' and Air India's fleet acquisition plans, Congress MPs have joined hands with Opposition members to pick holes in the proposed deal valued at Rs 40,000 crore.

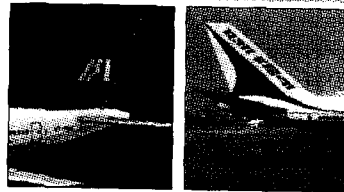
In two broadly similar letters to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the MPs have objected to the Rs 10,000 crore (\$2 billion) IA is likely to pay Airbus for the supply of forty-three A319, A320 and A321 aircraft. Also questioned by them is the validity of Air-India revisiting — after the change of government — the fleet plan it had put up to the civil aviation ministry in January 2004.

Civil aviation minister Praful Patel told *HT*: "IA and A-I are autonomous. We come into the picture only when they take a decision. Not a single issue raised by the MPs has been transacted. All institutional mechanisms are free to vet the proposals. We are for maximum transparency and will be too happy to cooperate."

The Congress' Rajya Sabha member V. Narayanasamy's letter bears signatures of seven MPs. Among other things, it seeks "serious examination" of a *New Straits Times* report that Airbus has offered 40 similar aircraft at half the price to Air Asia.

Why should IA pay an extra Rs 5000 crore for 43 aircraft when the EU major has offered Air Asia a

BUMPY RIDE



- **VALUE OF DEAL** Rs 40,000 crore
- **PROPOSED PURCHASES** Forty-three A319, A320 and A321 aircraft for IA
- **PROPOSED SUPPLIER** Airbus
- **MPs' ARGUMENT** Airbus has offered 40 similar aircraft at half the price to Air Asia of Singapore/Malaysia. Why should IA pay more?

price of \$26 million or less per aircraft for delivery in 2006, the MPs asked. If IA bench-marks its contract on the price offered to Air Asia, it would spend \$1.2 billion instead of \$2 billion.

IA spokesperson Manjula Khurana refused to comment on the Airbus deal or the MPs' letter. It is learnt that IA's price negotiating team, led by deputy MD Sushma Chawla, was guided by an "Overseeing Committee" comprising former CAG and CVC, C.G. Somiah, civil aviation secretary Ajay Prasad and Dharendra Swarup, then secretary, expenditure.

Continued on Page 4

01 MAY 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

The New Deal

India as an Emerging Player in the World Order

By K Subrahmanyam

A new balance of power is taking shape in the world. India is gaining in stature as a major player in the unfolding scenario, a full 58 years after Independence. On March 25, the US announced its new strategy to help India to build itself as a major world power in the 21st century. Following that announcement, visiting Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao, for the first time, recognised that India was more than a regional power and had a global role. His enthusiasm, in fact, envisioned China and India dominating the world economy.

Russia has never had any difficulty in recognising India's international role. The European Union treats India as a strategic partner. When the Japanese premier visits India at the end of this month, he is expected to come to terms with the new reality and look at India beyond the traditional India-Pakistan hyphenation.

This new global balance of power system is different from the 19th century European balance of power under Pax Britannica. In that system Russia, Germany, France, Austro-Hungarian Empire and Britain were able to maintain peace in Europe for almost a century. That broke down in 1914, leading to the first World War. While there were no wars of the magnitude of Napoleonic war or first World War in the 19th century, there were a number of balance of power wars — the Prussian-Austrian war, the Franco-German war, the Crimean war, the Balkan wars and wars of Italian unification. The 20th century bipolar world, too, was a balance of power era. China switched sides leading to the containment of the Soviet Union and its break-up.

The 2020 vision document of the National Intelligence Council, called Mapping the Future, forecasts that the new balance of power in the 21st century will not lead to any war among the major powers, armed as they are with nuclear weapons and missiles. It is not just the destructive potential of such a conflict but the globalisation process that has reduced such a war to a near-impossibility.

Today, the US and China, the top two rivals in the international system, are also the two engines of global economic growth, symbiotically linked together. As spelt out by Condoleezza Rice in her Foreign Affairs article in 2000, the US strategy towards China is not containment as was adopted towards the Soviet Union in the Cold War, but of economic interaction which will bring about transition to democracy within China. US appears to have rightly concluded that a strong India's interaction with China will help in that transition to democracy.

Bipolar deterrence ensured that there was no war between the two superpowers. The unprecedented global arms race ended in Paris Agreement of November 1991. Multipolar balance will be even more stable. The globalised economy will make every power pause and reflect on the global economic and demographic consequences of war, which were not considered in detail during the bipolar era and the second World War. The industrialised world is ageing and its fertility rate is declining. These are serious disincentives in considering the possibility of a global war.

Therefore, the new balance of power will operate without military might as the primary currency of power. That does not mean there will be no global rivalries. Major nations will compete with each other over trade, technology, R&D and per capita incomes. Leading nations will become knowledge-based societies, with knowledge becoming the primary currency of power. The new balance of power will be determined by knowledge pools that nations are able to develop on their own, or in collaboration with one another.

The US understands this well; hence its avowed intention to help make India a major world power in the 21st century. China understands it too, as is evident from the Chinese prime minister's plea to augment cooperation with India. President Putin paid a visit to Bangalore to woo Indian minds. Therefore, those who look at the world in terms of blocs led by the US and China and suggest that India

should join China-Russia bloc are totally out of sync with the emerging situation.

In the emerging reality, there are likely to be no blocs and no wars. The six actors — the US, Japan, the European Union, China, Russia and India — can compete and cooperate with each other to optimum advantage. When his attention was drawn to the emerging proposals for Sino-Indian cooperation, the US state department spokesperson said China was a friend and India a very good friend of US; therefore, the US was not concerned about the growing cooperation between the two.

The US has come out with its new strategy. China has its strategy of "rising peacefully". Is India ready with its own strategy in the new world order? Indian reactions to the March 25 announcement of the US and the Chinese premier's visit to India only suggest that large sections of the political, administrative and academic establishments are trapped in the Cold War mindset. They have yet to adjust themselves to the international system of the 21st century. This is the kind of issue the National Security Council is meant to address. Will it?



গণতন্ত্রের মর্যাদা রক্ষায় সংসদে এ বার সব হলেন রাষ্ট্রপতি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ মার্চ: ঝাড়খণ্ডের রাজ্যপালকে ডেকে পাঠিয়ে তিনি 'অতি-সক্রিয়তার' পরিচয় দিয়েছেন কি না, তা নিয়ে সবে বিতর্ক হয়েছে। কিন্তু রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আব্দুল কালাম তাতে এতটুকুও দমাচ্ছেন না। আজ সংসদের সেন্ট্রাল হল স্টেটাই স্পষ্ট করে দিলেন তিনি।

ঝাড়খণ্ড-পর্বের পরে এখন গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার মর্যাদা এবং মানুষের প্রত্যাশা অনুযায়ী এগোনো যাচ্ছে কি না, তা নিয়ে আত্মসমীক্ষার প্রয়োজন রয়েছে বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন রাষ্ট্রপতি। তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ভাবে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহও বলেছেন, ঝাড়খণ্ড-পর্বের পরে সংসদীয় ব্যবস্থার প্রতি মানুষের আস্থা কমছে কি না, ভেবে দেখার সময় এসেছে।

রাষ্ট্রপতি এবং প্রধানমন্ত্রী দু'জনেই যেখানে মুখ খুললেন, সেই অনুষ্ঠানটি ছিল সেরা সাংসদ খেতাব প্রদানের। মনমোহন সিংহ, অর্জুন সিংহ, লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী এবং যশোবন্ত সিংহ— এই চার জনকে চার বছরের সেরা সাংসদের সম্মান দেওয়া হয়েছে। সেই মঞ্চকেই ব্যবহার করে চাঁছাছোলা ভাষায় 'কিছু নগ্ন সত্য' তুলে ধরেছেন

কালাম। সেখানে ঝাড়খণ্ড বা বিহার-কাণ্ডের নাম না-করলেও কালাম নিশানা করেছেন 'বিধানসভার আসন নিয়ে কেনাবেচা'কে। গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার উপরে আক্রমণের ঘটনাকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং বিরোধী দলনেতার সামনে কিছুটা নজিরবিহীন ভাবেই আক্রমণ করেছেন।

বক্তৃতায় কোথাও কোনও নির্দিষ্ট রাজনৈতিক বিচ্যুতির দৃষ্টান্ত দেননি। শুধু বলেছেন, "আমি নিশ্চিত, কিছু নগ্ন সত্য বলার জন্য আপনারা আমায় অনুমতি দেবেন। যে সত্যের কথা আমরা সবাই জানি। আমার বলতে কোনও দ্বিধা নেই, কারণ আমি আপনাদেরই একটি অংশ। আপনারা যেমন সংসদীয় ব্যবস্থার সাফল্য চান, আমিও তেমনই চাই।"

সংসদীয় ব্যবস্থার সাফল্য এখন কোথায় দাঁড়িয়ে, তার ব্যাখ্যা দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করেছেন রাষ্ট্রপতি। তাঁর বক্তব্য, বাড়তি সংখ্যা জোগাড়ের বাধ্যবাধকতা এবং কিছু বিধানসভায় অগণতান্ত্রিক এবং সন্দেহজনক উপায়ে আসন কেনাবেচার মতো অভিযোগ এসেছে। তাতে গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার উপরে সাধারণ মানুষের মনে অনাস্থা জন্মেছে।

কালামের সাফ মন্তব্য, "বেশ কিছু মারাত্মক হিংসাত্মক ঘটনার পরে নির্বাচনী ব্যবস্থা অত্যন্ত চাপের মধ্যে রয়েছে। এই বিষয়ে নিজেদের কাছে সং থাকা উচিত।" এর পরে কড়া ভাষায় রাষ্ট্রপতি বলেন, "যদি রাজনীতি নিছকই রাজনৈতিক 'আ্যাডভেঞ্চার'-এ পর্যবসিত হয়, তা হলে দেশ কলেঙ্কারির পথে যাবে। যার অবশ্যম্ভাবী পরিণতি বিপর্যয় এবং ধ্বংস। সেই ঝুঁকি আমাদের নেওয়া উচিত নয়।"

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহও অশনি সংকেত দেখেছেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, যদি কোনও দিন সংসদের উপরে মানুষের বিশ্বাস চলে যায়, তবে গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার এই মহান কেন্দ্রটিও বিরাট চাপের মুখে পড়বে। তাঁর মতে, সামাজিক পরিবর্তনের অস্ত্র হিসাবে রাজনীতির ভূমিকায় সাধারণ মানুষ যে হতাশ, তা স্বীকার না-করে উপায় নেই। মনমোহনের কথায়, "কারও দিকে আঙুল না-তুলেই বলছি, স্বাধীনতার সময়ের মহান সাংসদেরা যে মান তৈরি করে দিয়েছিলেন, আমরা তা বজায় রাখতে পারছি কি? সেটা খতিয়ে দেখার সময় এসেছে।"

18 die as Sabarmati Express rams goods train

Quoted
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Sabotage ruled out; "human error to blame"

Manas Dasgupta

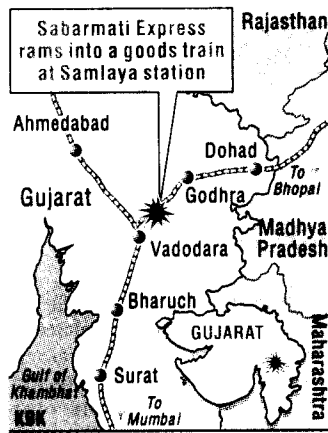
VADODARA: Eighteen persons were killed and 114 injured when the Ahmedabad-bound Sabarmati Express from Varanasi rammed a stationary goods train at the Samalaya railway station, 26 km from Vadodara, early on Thursday.

Dr. S.B. Saxena, medical superintendent of the Vadodara SSG hospital, where most of the deceased and injured were brought confirmed 15 deaths. He said at least 20 persons were critically injured.

The Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad Yadav, who reached the site by noon, was heckled by Sangh Parivar activists, who staged demonstrations and raised slogans against him when he visited the SSG hospital in Vadodara.

The Western Railways general manager, M.Z. Ansari, attributed the accident to "human error" and ruled out sabotage. He said the signal man of the Samalaya 'B' cabin had apparently disengaged the automatic inter-locking system by pulling out the lever but could not re-link the track. This wrongly put the Sabarmati Express on track four on which the goods train was standing. The signal man, J. Singh, and his assistant were absconding, he said.

The train, which left Godhra around 2.30 a.m., was running at 100 kmph to reach Vadodara at 3.45 a.m. when it rammed the goods train at 3.13 a.m. just as it was to pass through the Samalaya station. It was not clear why the signal man had tampered with the automatic locking system but railway sources said the train was to make an unsched-



uled halt at Piplod, two stations away from Samalaya, to allow the Rajdhani Express from Mumbai to Delhi to overtake it.

The driver of the Sabarmati Express, Rai Singh, and his assistant, Kishan Lal, who had taken over at Ratlam junction, were killed on the spot. However, the guard of the stationary goods train, who was in his cabin when the passenger train rammed it from behind managed to jump out of the cabin and escaped with injuries.

The first seven coaches of the Sabarmati Express were the worst affected. The railway police sources said that most of the deceased were the passengers in the first coach. Two other coaches piled up on to the engine under the impact of the collision.

Rescue hampered

The loud noise woke the local villagers who rushed to the spot and tried to rescue those trapped and provide relief to the injured. But the coaches were so mangled that it was difficult for them to reach the affected people with

their bare hands.

Bhailalbhaji Prajapati, an elderly resident of Samalaya, said he reached the spot within minutes and found people running helter-skelter crying for water. The local youth swung into action and rescued many of the injured but there were very few facilities available to rush them to Vadodara.

The darkness at the accident site hampered the rescue and relief operations as nothing could be seen in the worst-hit coaches. Rescue operations could be started only after daybreak, almost three hours after the accident.

Railway rescue and relief trains were rushed from Godhra, Vadodara and Ahmedabad. The State Government also dispatched fire brigades from Rajkot and the three nearby major centres to assist the railway rescue team. Two companies of the State reserve police were sent to maintain law and order and keep the thousands of curious on-lookers at bay.

Railway traffic was restored within a few hours after clearing the debris, as the main track was not affected. By late evening, the mangled coaches were removed from the site. But parts of the engine lay beside the track.

Mr. Modi, who reached the site by 9 a.m., stationed four members of his Cabinet, including the Minister of State for Home, Amit Shah, at Samalaya to co-ordinate the relief and rescue operations.

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22 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Dam negligence

Despite knowing of the annual dip in the Narmada during Bhutri Amavasya, the district administration in Dewas seemed to have forgotten to check the calendar ~ and 67 devotees drowned because of monumental inefficiency, writes SANTOSH SINGH

MONSOON is still a few months away. There is no question of floods this time of the year in Madhya Pradesh. But the Narmada did swell in April, killing 67 devotees on the night of 7 April at Dharaji in Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh. Thousands of people had gathered on the banks of the Narmada to take a holy dip during Bhutri Amavasya. As unsuspecting devotees were taking the holy dip, the river waters released by the Indira Sagar Dam dam swelled with no prior warning and drowned scores of devotees. Dozens of people are still missing.

The Madhya Pradesh government, as it does after every serious incident, announced a compensation to the relatives of the dead and also instituted an inquiry under a principal secretary. With this face-saving exercise in place, nobody seems to be taking responsibility for the tragedy. Common sense and sensitivity are lost in bureaucratise and technicalities.

The only action taken was the summon given to the Dewas Collector, Ashish Srivastava, from the Bhopal headquarters. But is that enough? The National Hydroelectric Development Corporation, which releases water regularly for power

generation at the Indira Sagar Dam has washed its hands of the matter, saying the District Collector had not informed it about the holy dip.

The bereaved, however, find it hard to come to terms with the truth as the holy dip is a ritual followed every year during Bhutri Amavasya. The tragedy took place because neither the district administration nor the NHDC checked the calendar for the day of the holy dip.

Those who have lost their near and dear ones have to be content with the Rs 1 lakh compensation being paid to them. Though Chief Minister Babulal Gaur has done some hard talking in public, there is no official word of the gov-



Volunteers deal with the tragedy. — AFP

that those who drowned were "illiterate and superstitious" and were adamant about taking the holy dip between 10 pm and midnight — during the time when the NHDC releases the water.

If this is the mindset of the authorities at the helm of affairs, one can well imagine what fate the inquiry is likely to suffer. As for the NHDC, it has taken a firm stand by giving its disclaimer that it had no information about the occasion.

The Opposition Congress has a fresh issue to arm-twist the incumbent government. But the outcries are sure to die down after a few Press releases. The real culprits of the Dharaji remain

untouched. And even if some people are proved guilty, the matter will end with some transfer of officials.

Local volunteers and Army divers continue with their task of retrieving the dead from the Narmada waters. Madhya Pradesh, which recently organised Simhastha at Ujjain successfully, has failed at Dharaji miserably. The administration seems to have lost its focus as that too was a religious occasion.

There is every possibility that there was no adequate police deployment on the banks of the Narmada during the holy dip. The police were supposed to ensure that the devotees did not go beyond the danger mark. The debate will continue for a while and then die down. The government will move on to other topics and so will the media.

Public memory is short. If a tsunami can be forgotten, Dharaji is a minor incident in comparison. The loss of lives may be irreparable for those who lost their near and dear ones but they are no match for the government's apathy and inefficiency.

(The author is The Statesman's Bhopal-based correspondent.)

people&places

A blast with Bush

SYDNEY— A Chinese-born Australian man explained on Saturday that he had wanted to discuss architecture and the weather with the US President George W. Bush when he created a bomb scare outside the Capitol building in Washington. Wen Hao Zhao (33) told reporters on arrival at his home town Sydney's airport that he had not intended to cause alarm when he stood outside the Capitol on Monday with two suitcases by his side and demanded to speak to the President. Zhao said he wanted "just to speak about normal topics like weather, architecture and buildings," with Mr Bush. "Things about his family, his daughters, about myself," Mr Zhao said. Mr Zhao stationed himself, with the suitcases, on the west side of the Capitol and told police he wanted to see Mr Bush. After a stand off, he was dragged away by the police who feared he was a suicide bomber. Police later blew up the suitcases, which contained a CD player. He was deported to Australia on Friday. — AP

No bullying Eminem

MICHIGAN— A man who admits bullying Eminem when they were schoolmates cannot sue the rapper over a song that depicts his bullying as a brain-jarring attack, the state appeals court said. *Brain Damage*, released on 1999's *The Slim Shady LP*, was not intended to be taken literally, a three-judge panel said, dismissing a lawsuit filed by Deangelo Bailey, Eminem, whose real name is Marshall Mathers III, says in the song Bailey beat him up in a school bathroom, banging his head on a urinal and choking him. Bailey sued in 2001, accusing the Detroit-area rapper of invading his privacy by publicising untrue information about him. — AP



Hero of our time?

new vistas

JEREMY SEABROOK

THE waves of grief created by the death of Pope John Paul II are unprecedented. The Western media suspended programmes for saturation coverage of his dying hours, to record the sorrow and tears of the tens of thousands of "pilgrims" in St Peter's Square. An era had passed. Tributes to his humanity, courage and tenacity were unstoppable. George W Bush said the Catholic Church had lost its shepherd, the British Queen expressed her sorrow, and Tony Blair called him a "shining example of faith". Everyone was, it seems, united, in a feeling of inconsolable bereavement and the urge to celebrate the reign of the third-longest serving Pope in history.

The funeral, with its flags and banners *Santo Subito* (Sainthood Now), a mixture of football fan exuberance (it should be remembered that the word "fan" is an abbreviation of fanatic) and unashamed emotion, had commentators reaching for poetic and archaic vocabulary, and sounding like readings from Dante. There were "hosts of pilgrims"; this was a celebration of Christendom; this is "the oldest institution in the world". Cardinal Ratzinger spoke of the Pope addressing the crowds on Easter Sunday from his window in the Vatican, and now looking down upon them from the window of the house of God. The medieval belief was repeated that those who die within eight days of Easter go straight to Heaven, riding on the back of the risen Christ. (The Pope died six days after Easter.)

Now it is a curious thing that a Pontiff, known not only for having visited more than 120 countries and having been seen by more people than any other Pope, but also for his conservatism — his prohibition of contraception, his refusal to countenance women priests, his reassertion of the sinfulness of homosexuality — should be regarded at the same time as a rare

champion of human rights. It is even more curious that the West, when it scours the backwardness and superstition of Islam, does so precisely by contrasting its own liberal view on women and homosexuals with what it describes as the regressive intolerance of Islam.

Why is it, that when the Pope enunciates his conservatism in this same regard, he is nonetheless regarded as "a moral voice for the world", while when expressed by Islam, it becomes something abhorrent and inimical to the interests of humanity?

There are, clearly, other forces at work. No religious leader has ever been accorded such exhaustive, sustained and carefully stage-managed eulogies. For one thing, his visit to his native Poland in 1978, in the words of one BBC commentator "gave the Polish people back their identity". It demonstrated to the world the fragility of the apparently immovable Communist dictatorship, and assisted the rise and triumph of Solidarity. Many insisted that it was he who had aimed a mortal blow at the soulless ideology which had controlled Eastern Europe since the end of World War II and the Soviet Union for 60 years.

Part of the media extravaganza surrounding his death was an expression of the hope that, just as he had contributed in life to the downfall of the material rival to capitalism, so in death, his power might be deployed to equal (if not vanquish) its religious rivals, especially Islam.

This was religion as politics, and politics as religion: when Christian leaders employ marketing and business methods to preach their secular,

as well as their spiritual message, it is regarded as the triumph of truth. When other faiths do the same thing, it becomes the manipulation of superstition. The conspicuous Polish presence in Rome was symbolic: the Poles



Two girls stand at Pope John Paul II's tomb in the Vatican crypt. — AFP

have a significant role in the Christian revival of Europe: they bring the renewal of their intense piety to the cynical secularism that increasingly characterises western Europe.

John Paul II had certainly done his best to quell dissent, in the form of liberation theology, in his own church: clearly his hatred of totalitarianism did not lead him to accept any kind of pluralism within the Universal Church.

Indeed, his papacy represented a counter-revolution against the re-positioning of the Catholic Church by Pope John XXIII, with the Vatican II Council; John Paul II entered into a political alliance with Ronald Reagan against the alleged infiltration of Marxist ideas into the Church. When Oscar Romero, El Salvador's Archbishop was murdered by a Right-wing death squad while saying mass in 1980, John Paul II attempted to ban any discussion of the beatification of Romero for 50 years.

He not only failed to criticise Pinochet in Chile, but blessed him; at the same time, refusing to meet the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, campaigning for news of their disappeared sons and husbands.

It was, of course, one thing to help finish off states constructed on the rickety ideology of Communism, but quite another to contribute to the ending of secular societies, and the creation of the vacuum in which reli-

gious fundamentalisms have subsequently been able to flourish. Indeed, the Pope's work did not only accelerate the demolition of Communist tyranny, but also caused to wither and decay other forms of socialism, most of which had, to one degree or another, depended upon the strength of the Soviet system.

This meant not only the faltering attempts by governments of developing countries to redistribute wealth,

but equally, weakening commitment to greater equality by socialists in the western world.

The fact that inequalities have grown dramatically since the end of socialism is partly attributable to the premature termination of ideologies of social justice. No matter that the Pope himself "spoke out" against capitalism, materialism and consumerism. Speaking out is one thing; but nothing he said in criticism of the Western world has had the slightest effect upon either the conduct of its affairs, its economic system or the beliefs which underpin it.

While the sorrow and grief expressed at the papal funeral were no doubt deeply felt, people can nonetheless remain secure in the knowledge that no conceivable successor to John Paul II is going to threaten positions of wealth and power in the temporal world.

For it is clear that faith is a kind of optional extra, which makes little difference to the way people actually conduct their lives. The late Pope's denunciation of contraception and his "pro-life" agenda (so enthusiastically embraced by the religious Right in the USA) has had little effect it had on Catholics. For the birth-rate in Catholic countries, and nowhere more so than in Italy ("a country in mourning" sang the lugubrious media chorus) has fallen so dramatically that there is a severe danger that populations will fail to replenish themselves and leave an excess of stranded, isolated elderly, without care or resources, within a generation.

Neither has the papal celebration of marriage lowered divorce rates. Neither have the strictures upon homosexuality prevented growing tolerance of this "abomination". Neither has the more prudently enunciated belief in women's place prevented record numbers of women from entering the workforce and participating in the wider work of society.

What, then, is the political purpose behind this tear-stained festival - for one can hardly imagine that the Bush retinue would join so many other world leaders if the event were with-

out political significance?

Perhaps, it is an effort to re-assert the superiority of Christendom, beleaguered by an Islam which is so intensely - and painfully - critical of the apparent nihilism of the West — the culture of self-indulgence, incontinence, binge-drinking, acquisitiveness, crime and violence. Perhaps, it is a desire to negate those unstoppable forces of disintegration in the West which go hand in hand with its busy global economic integration.

Are the outpourings over the Pope substantially different in kind from the mawkishness which manifested itself over the death of Diana, Princess of Wales — a consequence of the celebrity conferred by TV and instant communications networks, an outcome of a society of omnipresent spectacle? Or is it a reclamation by the West of its 2,000 years of history, a re-assertion of its moral as well as its material supremacy in the world?

The mortuary exaltations over a Pope who had paraded in all his infirmity and vulnerability in his last days, when he should have been in intensive care rather than appearing at the balcony of his Vatican apartment, represent a competitive attempt to demonstrate to the world that we do religion as well as any other creed, indeed, better. The great phalanx of heads of state present at the pope's funeral, the congregation of some of the largest crowds ever seen, the ceremony in the ornate grandiose setting of St Peter's — which other religion can put on such a powerful material display of its spiritual loss?

It seems that Christian fundamentalisms of all stripes are, like George Bush's version of freedom "on the march", called into vibrant life by the resurgence of Islam. For the moment, actually existing secular forces hold its excesses in check. But for how much longer? The capacity for reaction and intolerance remains, waiting to re-animate ancient forms of persecution, whether against heretics, homosexuals, terrorists, asylum-seekers or even witches and other manifestations of diabolic forces?

That the Pope loved the poor so much that he desired nothing so much as that they should continue to increase in number, and his solidarity with AIDS victims did not extend to conceding the right to contraception demonstrates the malignancy of all eternal truths, revelations and creeds when applied to our vulnerable, inconsistent, complex humanity.

The work of John Paul II may have done a great deal to rid the world of one totalising creed, but he has been attempting to lead it into the rehabilitation of another, far older absolute belief, the power of which to destroy the lives of actually existing people through the centuries yields nothing to the ostensibly godless creed of Communism.

The death of a Pope may be a very sad passing; the macabre details of ritual and precedent - emptying the apartment of his papers and effects within an hour of his death, the calling out of his name to verify that he has indeed departed, destroying the silver ring, lying in state and the *pompes funebres* of a religion supposed to be dedicated to raising up the humble and the meek - suggest that his work is far from finished. Let those of us who have nothing to gain by the forward march of the cruel exclusions of intolerance tremble, and apprehend the worst from the eerie garishness of the age of darkness in which we live.

(The author lives in Britain. He has written plays for the stage, TV and radio, made TV documentaries, published more than 30 books and contributed to leading journals around the world.)

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Opening-up burst sweeps away cloud of flight restrictions

Flying freedom to US & UK

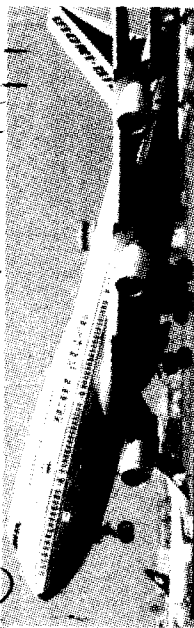
OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 13: In two landmark pacts, India today opened up its air links to the US and the UK.

A pact negotiated earlier and ratified today by the cabinet opens up Indian skies to unlimited flights to and from the US. Though the actual number of flights which might be added this year could be between 20 and 35 a week, theoretically, it completely opens up Indian and US skies to airlines of the two countries.

Industry observers expect prices to drop on India-US routes by as much as 20 per cent.

A separate deal struck by Indian officials in London today allows 56 more flights a week out of Delhi and Mumbai to Heathrow besides permitting an unlimited number of flights from other Indian cities to destinations in the UK other than



ROUTE TO AMERICA

- Restriction of flying to only four cities scrapped
- Airlines of each country can fly to any city

PATH TO BRITAIN

- 56 flights from Delhi/Mumbai to Heathrow
- No limit on India-UK flights on other routes

Heathrow. It also allows doubling of flights from 40 to 84 a week out of the UK.

Scarcity of traffic out of Indian cities other than Mumbai and Delhi would mean additional flights to the UK would not be too many from the low-load centres.

The new pact with the US ends the restriction that each can fly to only four cities in the other country and grants airlines the freedom to fly to other destinations. The deal will be formally signed tomorrow by US transport secretary Norman Mineta and civil aviation minister Praful Patel.

Now, Air-India serves Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and New Jersey. Patel told reporters: "Now, we want to start services to Washington, Houston, San Francisco and other US cities."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Flights

FROM PAGE 1

The government has already allowed Jet Airways to fly to New York thrice a week via Brussels, while Air-India has been given permission to fly to San Francisco via Frankfurt.

Three big US airlines — Continental, Northwest and American Airlines — are slated to fly to India soon. Northwest, which already has a code-sharing arrangement with KLM to service Delhi and Mumbai from the US, is likely to launch a daily Minneapolis-Bangalore service via Amsterdam from end-October.

Currently, Air-India operates 28 flights a week to the US and American carriers just about 14. Officials said the existing agreement already provides unlimited access to airlines of both sides, though the number of destinations in either country is restricted to four, a curb that will now go.

Under the new accord, restrictions on code-sharing will also be removed.

The deal with the British says there can be 56 flights from Delhi and Mumbai to London (Heathrow), and unlimited flights from India to the UK on all other routes. There is a staggered increase of flights from Heathrow to Delhi and Mumbai — 42 in winter 2005, 49 in summer 2006 and 56 in winter 2006. Besides, British airlines can add 14 flights a week from the UK to Bangalore and Chennai and seven flights a week to any other Indian city.

Currently, British Airways operates 19 flights to India weekly, while Air-India has 12 to the UK. The India-UK sector is one of the most lucrative markets and airlines have been wanting it opened up for long.

Andy Stern, British Airways South Asia head, said: "We are delighted by the opening up of the UK-India market. The agreement will provide us the opportunity to operate at least double daily services from the UK to Mumbai and Delhi, something that British Airways has long aspired to."

Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic said the agreement would lead to many extra flights.

14 APR 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Govt's first step towards better rural health care

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

THE Government today launched its ambitious National Rural Health Mission with the focus on decentralisation of health care at the village and district level. Launched by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at a function in the Capital, the mission aims at providing healthcare facilities to the poor through a range of interventions at different levels — individual, household, community and health system.

While the mission has been allocated an outlay of Rs 6,713 crore for the year 2005-2006, the amount in subsequent years will be dependent on the outlay of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The mission will cover all the states and Union Territories

PM launches National Rural Health Mission to 'radically overhaul' health care services

with special focus on 18 states with weak health infrastructure and demographic indicators. It will lay stress on reducing infant and maternal mortality ratio, universal access to public health services, prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable

diseases, ensuring population stabilisation, maintaining gender and demographic balance, revitalisation of local and health traditions and promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Inaugurating the mission, PM Manmohan Singh said the Government is fulfilling one of the promises made in the National Common Minimum Programme. Singh added that the slow improvement in the country's health care system has been a matter of great concern. "There is no denying the fact that we have not paid adequate attention to this dimension of development thus far. We need to act quickly to bridge the income gap, education gap and health gap of our people," he added.

"The Indian health care system is perhaps guilty of many sins of omission and commission... That we have grievously erred in the design of our many health programmes," the PM said.

Singh further said the mission will seek to "radically overhaul" the manner of delivery of health care services in the country.

He added that the Government was committed to increasing the budget allocation in the health sector from 0.9 per cent to 2 per cent of the GDP in the next few years. "A beginning has been made in this year's budget by increasing it by Rs 2,000 crore," he said.

Dandi yatra ends, path declared heritage route

Dandi: Braving scorching heat, people turned up in large numbers in this remote village in Navsari district as the re-enacted Dandi yatra came to a close on Wednesday.

Addressing the concluding ceremony of the yatra on the shores of the Arabian Sea, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced a Rs 10 crore development package for Sabarmati Ashram and conversion of the path between the ashram and Dandi as a "heritage route". He said all the places where the Mahatma and his followers had halted during the 26-day march would be converted into memorials and the region developed in a big way. "The government will also erect statues of the 78 people who had walked along with Gandhiji during the salt

satyagraha," he added.

Stating that it was an honour for him to be present on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the historic event, the



Prime Minister said, "Dandi is a revered place and I have come here as a pilgrim." Appealing to the people to take inspiration from Gandhiji's life and help all sections of society, he said the government would set up a library housing books on the Mahatma to inspire people.

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, who received the flag from the marchers at the conclusion of the yatra, asked people to take a pledge to preserve social unity. She said Gandhiji's thoughts were as relevant today as it was during his time and no nation could progress unless it believed in Gandhian values. PTI

07 APR 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Nation honours its heroes... ADP



The President, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, presenting the Padma Vibhushan to the distinguished cartoonist, R. K. Laxman, at the Investiture Ceremony in Durbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Monday. At right, Bollywood super star Shah Rukh Khan on his way to receive his Padma Shri amid loud applause. Photos: Sandeep Saxena *of Gandhinagar 9-6*

Padma awards presented to 91 distinguished personalities

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, MARCH 28. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, conferred the country's three major civilian awards — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri — on 91 distinguished personalities from various walks of life in the Darbar Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan here this evening.

The second most important civilian honour after Bharat Ratna, the Padma Vibhushan, was presented to the distin-

guished cartoonist, R. K. Laxman; acclaimed cardiologist, Dr. Bal Krishna Goyal; parliamentarian, Dr. Karan Singh; renowned cardiac surgeon, Dr. M.V.S. Valiathan; the Attorney-General, Milon Kumar Banerji; eminent public figure of Maharashtra, Dr. Mohan Dharia; renowned Sarangi exponent, Pandit Ram Narayan; and posthumously to the former veteran diplomat and National Security Adviser, J.N. Dixit. Besides, 28 people were honoured with the Padma Bhushan and

55 with the Padma Shri.

On many occasions through the investiture ceremony, the President showed he is truly a "people's President" by breaking the protocol and coming forth to present the roll of honour and the medallion to the awardees either out of sheer respect for them or because the person appeared unwell or was on a wheelchair.

While a statue of Lord Buddha surrounded by a 'cola-coloured velvet cloth on all sides provided a perfect backdrop to

the presentation ceremony, the presence of a number of stars — both from the world of sports and performing arts — lent the hall an aristocratic touch. And the group which drew the loudest applause from the audience included the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh; his wife, Gursharan Kaur; the Lok Sabha Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee; the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, Sonia Gandhi; the former President, K.R. Narayanan; his wife, Usha Narayanan;

and the former Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral.

Among the well-known public figures who were awarded the Padma Bhushan were industrialist B.M. Munjal; well-known historian, Irfan Habib; Dr. (Ms.) Kiran Mazumdar Shaw of Biocon fame; the legendary figure of Indian music, Manna Dey; prominent Urdu novelist, Qurratulain Hyder; and veteran film director, Yash Raj Chopra.

The loudest applause, however, went out for Padma Shri

recipient Gladys June Staines who "remained steadfast in her devotion to care for people affected by leprosy, despite her personal tragedy." Her husband Graham Staines and two sons had been burnt alive in January 1991 in Orissa by religious fanatics.

From the Fourth Estate among those who were awarded the Padma Shri were the Editor of Malayala Manorama, Mammen Mathew, and the vice-chairperson and editorial director of the Hindustan

Times Limited, Shobhana Bhartia.

Many a star also shone in the "Padma Shri" category of awards. Identifying easily with the celebrities, the audience applauded loudly when Bollywood super star Shah Rukh Khan, seasoned singer Kavita Krishnamurti, renowned filmmaker Muzaffar Ali, badminton player Pullela Gopi Chand and Olympic Silver Medal winning ace-shooter Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore received the awards.

CABINET CLEARS EURO-III FUEL FOR 11 CITIES

Green light for clean fuel

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 24. — India will begin supply of ultra low sulphur content petrol and diesel in all but seven states from 1 April, the government announced today. Petrol and diesel conforming to Euro-III vehicular emission norms would be available in 11 major cities and Euro-II grade petrol in rest of the country from next month.

Euro-III grade petrol and diesel will be supplied in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Pune, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Surat, Kanpur and Agra and Euro-II grade petrol in the rest of the country. But due to supply constraints, diesel of Euro-II (Bharat Stage-II) grade would be available by 1 October as against 1 April. However, the implementation of the auto fuel policy has been delayed by six months in seven states. They are Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. The Union Cabinet gave six months' extension to these states for introduction of Bharat Stage-II diesel fuel, information and broadcasting minister Mr S Jaipal Reddy said after a Cabinet meeting here today. Now, these states will introduce the clean fuel on 1 October.

A senior government official said a breakdown in Indian Oil Corp's Koyali

21-state salute for VAT from April

- * Central Sales Tax to be phased out in 3 yrs
- * Tax-rate cut to 0.25 per cent
- * Exemption limit for small traders doubled

NEW DELHI, March 24. — At least 21 states today made a commitment to implement Value Added Tax from April. Also, with the BJP-ruled states going slow on VAT, the West Bengal finance minister, Mr Asim Dasgupta, has requested the BJP president, Mr LK Advani, to intervene. Mr Dasgupta, who heads the empowered committee to get VAT started off, said he discussed the issue with Mr Advani and former finance minister Mr Yashwant Sinha. Mr Advani agreed to further discussions, he said, adding that BJP-ruled states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, MP and Jharkhand are fully prepared to have VAT.

So far, only 21 of the states and all the Union Territories have agreed to implement VAT by 1 April, but besides the five BJP-ruled states, others like Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have problems, as does Uttaranchal, to a smaller extent. Mr Dasgupta said he will have discussions with the UP chief minister, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, on 28 March, besides being in touch with officials in Chennai. He seemed optimistic about Uttaranchal accepting VAT. Together, the recalcitrant states constitute a third of the country. — SNS & PTI

refinery in Gujarat, tripping of a crucial unit of Reliance Industries' Jamnagar refinery and late running of refinery upgradation programmes of Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum were to blame for the non-availability of appropriate grades of fuel from 1 April.

Petrol, diesel prices likely to go up

The National Auto Fuel policy, drafted for cutting pollution, envisages supply of diesel with 0.035 per cent sulphur and cetane

No. 51 and petrol with one per cent benzene and octane No. 91 in 11 cities from 1 April.

The implementation of the clean fuel programme is likely to push up costs of petrol and diesel. Petrol's price may have to be raised by 30 paise per litre and diesel by 24 paise per litre to compensate refiners for the heavy investments they had made in upgrading refinery processes for producing the clean fuels. "The Cabinet will consider this increase plus the raise in fuel prices," an official source said.

THE STATESMAN 25 MAR 2005

জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে শব্দ বদলে নারাজ কেন্দ্র

নয়াদিল্লি, ১৫ মার্চ: জাতীয়

সঙ্গীতে কোনও রকম বদল চায় না কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। বর্তমান জাতীয় সঙ্গীতের বদলে অন্য কোনও সঙ্গীত চালু করার চিন্তাও খারিজ করা দিয়েছেন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল।

আজ লোকসভায় পাটিল সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, জাতীয় সঙ্গীতের কোনও কিছুই বদল করা হবে না।

উল্লেখ্য, ১৯০৮ সালে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের লেখা গানটি থেকে 'সিন্ধু' শব্দটি বাদ দিতে সুপ্রিম কোর্টে রিট আবেদন করেছিলেন জনৈক সঞ্জীব ভাটনগর। আজ স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী বলেন, "জাতীয় সঙ্গীতে আমরা কোনও শব্দ বাদ দিতে, বদল করতে বা নতুন শব্দ যোগ করতে চাই না। আদালতেও সে কথাই বলব।" —পি টি আই

ANADABAZAR PATENKA

16 MAR 2005

On 75th anniversary, a 2-km trek to commemorate Dandi march

Sonia retraces Gandhi steps

Home truths for American

TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Lucknow, March 12: Head clean-shaven, sporting round-rimmed glasses and clad in white dhoti, Bernie Mayer had tried to pay tribute to Gandhi in his own little way. But his good intentions all but made a joke of him.

"*Abey, Gandhi kahaan se aa gaya* (Hey, where's Gandhi sprung up from)?" yelled a student of Lucknow University as the 67-year-old American stepped on to the campus yesterday afternoon, in time to address a workshop on Gandhi.

"*Bhaiyya, agar Gandhi aaya ho to Godse ko bulao* (Brother, if Gandhi's landed, send for Godse too)," sneered another as the Roman Catholic priest walked past with a stick in hand, escorted by two students and a teacher of the history department.

"*Haan, tabhi to tamaasha pura hoga* (Yeah, only then will the circus be complete)," chipped in another, poking more fun at the priest who has been a staunch follower of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and *satyagraha* since the sixties.

The priest had flown all the way down to Gandhi's own country to taste life first-hand and spread the teachings of the man he revered so much.

phy. "As I started reading the book, I got deeply interested and wanted to know more about this great man of the 20th century. So I'm here."

London-based Geeta Mis-try is pleasantly surprised to see a packed ashram. "Now I realise what my grandfather used to tell me about Mahatma Gandhi, the charismatic leader of India's national movement," said the 26-year-old management consultant, who was thrilled to meet Tushar, the co-organiser of the event.

The Mahatma's great-grandson believes the re-enactment of the Dandi march is the mantra for communal harmony in the riot-hit Gujarat.

As for the Congress, which has been out of power in the state for more than a decade, the event is an opportunity to rejuvenate its grassroots cadre.

While Sonia steered clear of any political statement, ignoring provocation by BJP's local unit, her dinner meeting with the top brass of the Gujarat Congress has not gone unnoticed.

In Ranchi, BJP president L.K. Advani issued a statement saying that the central government had converted the anniversary into a "purely Congress affair" and misused the occasion for the "exclusive projection" of Sonia.



Union finance minister P. Chidambaram being greeted by a Congress worker during the march. (PTI)

sons, played *Vaishnavjan to tene re kahtye* — also among Gandhi's favourites.

An hour later, the Congress president flagged off the march after administering an oath to the yatriis to fight injustice, poverty and communalism.

The marchers included Gandhi's great grandson Tushar Gandhi, descendants of the 1930's *satyagrahis* and freedom fighters and several Union ministers.

Thousands gathered to catch a glimpse of P. Chidambaram, Sunil Dutt, Mani Shankar Aiyar and Renuka Chowdhury sporting Gandhi caps and holding the Tricolour.

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, March 12: Following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, another Gandhi went on a Dandi march today to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the salt *satyagraha*.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi led a band of 79 — the same as the original group of *satyagrahis* — on a 2-km trek from Sabarmati Ashram to the Income-Tax Chowk, where she garlanded Gandhi's statue before leaving for Delhi.

Hundreds more are expected to join the 26-day walk that will culminate in Dandi after covering a distance of 200 miles.

In 1930, the Mahatma had marched from Sabarmati to Dandi to oppose the British government's salt act.

Since early this morning, Sabarmati Ashram reverberated with Gandhi's favourite *bhajans* like *Raghupati Raghuwajayanti*, while a crowd shouted slogans — "Gandhi is not only the past, he is also the future."

People had started gathering at the ashram even before the break of dawn. Sonia arrived at 5.45 am, and after a short speech by Congress leader Mukul Wasnik, the event kicked off with a rendition of *Vande Mataram*.

Sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan, accompanied by his

5/8
9/3

Chilli chop

Improve food safety at home

It is easy to attribute the outcry over Sudan-I, a toxic dye, in chilli exports to Britain, to non-tariff barriers and protectionist impulses on the part of developed countries. But when food adulteration is widespread in India, and food safety not an issue as far as government is concerned, some leakage in Indian food exports is bound to happen, with negative implications for Indian agricultural exports as a whole. According to the commerce and industry minister, Kamal Nath, stringent norms are applied to chilli exports currently, which ensures that dangerous substances like Sudan-I are not present in them. If this is the case, why don't norms of any kind, whether stringent or mild, apply to what Indian consumers eat? Laws like the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act do exist on statute books, but are seldom applied. Thanks to the virtual absence of regulation, the Indian consumer is subjected to a gamut of dangerous substances in his food ranging from toxic colouring agents, pesticides, heavy metals, iron filings, sawdust, and powdered animal dung. Health effects of these substances could include anything from asthma, nausea, abdominal pain, kidney failure, developmental abnormalities in children, cardiac arrests and cancer.

Yet the authorities are blind to this mass food poisoning, and food safety is not an urgent issue. If the welfare of millions is too "soft" an issue to move our supposedly pro-welfare governments, the outcry over Sudan-I, the biggest food scare in Britain since the outbreak of mad cow disease, should help concentrate the minds of our mandarins. At stake is the crippling of India's enormous potential for agricultural exports, if it gets around of being a source of contaminated food. And the best way of ensuring this doesn't happen is to tackle the problem at its source, at the level of production and distribution instead of checking a few export consignments, particularly since production and distribution happens mostly in the small and unorganised sector. We need more food inspectors, more food labs and an effective judicial regimen that weeds adulteration out of the market. If we aspire to large-scale agricultural exports compliant with WTO norms, this should become an essential element of infrastructure, as important as roads or power. And improved health for millions will be a necessary consequence.

WE'LL LAUNCH THE SECOND GREEN REVOLUTION: PM

'New Deal' for agriculture promised

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, March 7. — Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh today promised rural India a "New Deal" to reverse decline in farm investments through increased funds for agricultural research, irrigation and wasteland development. He said the government was committed to launching the "second green revolution."

"Our government has been voted to power on the wave of agrarian distress, caused partly by the failure of the market and partly by the failure of the state," Dr Singh said while inaugurating the New Delhi office of International Food Policy Research Institute.

"What does this New Deal entail? It is intended to reverse the decline in investment in agriculture," he said.

The Prime Minister said an important dimension of the New Deal is aimed at ensuring food and nutritional security of the people, while at the same time augmenting farm incomes and employment through launching of the second green revolution.

"Our government will be launching a National Horticulture Mission that is aimed, in part, at stimulating this second green revolution in the range of new crops and commodities," he said.

The Prime Minister said with more advances in science and technology in areas such as biotechnology coming from the private sector, it was important to ensure availability of these products to the poor farmers.

"The challenge is how to encourage this creativity, this innovativeness and at the same time to ensure that new products and new processes will be far affordable for the vast majority of farmers who live on the edges of subsistence," he said. Dr Singh said though the state governments had the responsibility of dealing with the food and nutritional security, the Central government could not remain "indifferent" to the needs of people.

The Prime Minister said the Centre is actively engaged in supporting schemes and programmes for promoting agricultural production.

Besides, it is also funding programmes aimed

at enhancing the food security of the people, including the National food-for-work programme. The government is devoting as much as Rs 40,000 crore to various social programmes including strengthening of the mid-day meal scheme and the Antyodaya Anna Yojana scheme, he said.

The Prime Minister said the Planning Commission is considering setting up a Food and Nutrition Security Watch to function as a "think tank" on food and nutrition security issues as well as a programme reviewing agency.

"I hope this will help advance our understanding of the underlying causes of malnutrition and also outline the strategies on how to deal with it," he said.

He said there was a need to promote greater public-private partnership in areas such as biotechnology, power, irrigation and other rural infrastructure and in agricultural research.

The Prime Minister said organisations such as IFPRI must work closely with the local researchers and collaborate with local institutions.

Irrigation under sharp focus in farmer's budget

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 28

BUDGET 2005 was a mixed bag for farmers. While the focus was on bringing more acreage under irrigation and crop insurance, critics have pointed out that allocations have not gone up substantially.

The budget goes by the promises made in the common minimum programme, from the ambitious plan of enhancing irrigated area coverage to one crore hectares to allocation for restoration of water bodies.

Though all areas of concern have been touched upon and agriculture has been made a priority area, there is some disappointment on the allocation. "Even though all issues have been addressed. We would have liked to see more allocation," said an agriculture expert.

■ A major boost is decentralisation of procurement, as promised in the CMP. As of now, procurement has been confined to a few select states — Punjab, western UP and Haryana. States like Bihar had been asking for decentralisation, with RJD claiming that farmers in Bihar were suffering because their wheat and rice were rotting in warehouses.

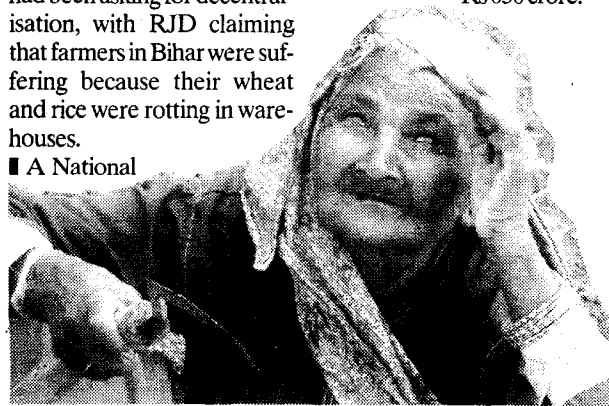
■ A National

Fund for Strategic Agricultural Research with an initial provision of Rs 50 crore has been created. Also a scheme, the Development Strengthening of Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure, Grading and Standardisation

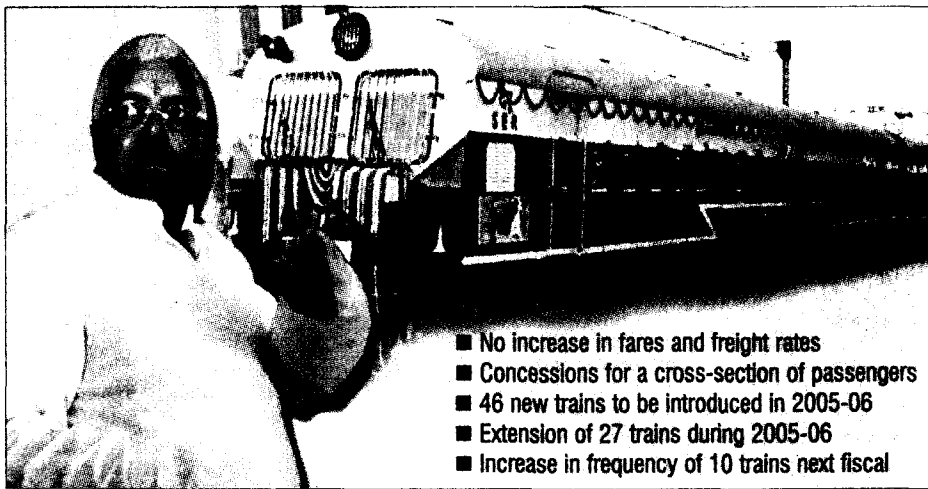
■ A farmer-friendly crop insurance scheme has been introduced while the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme for kharif and rabi crops continues.

■ The national plan for repair, restoration and renovation of water bodies is to be launched in March 2005 and it looks at increasing the irrigation option, which will cover an additional 20,000 hectares. The allocation has been increased to Rs 100 crore. The government's focus on micro-irrigation has also come through in the budget — the plan is to increase the coverage to 3 million hectares by the end of the Tenth Plan and to 14 million hectares by the end of the Eleventh Plan, with an allocation of Rs 400 crore. *

The finance minister also announced the setting up of a National Horticulture Mission by April 1, 2005, and allocated Rs 630 crore.



Lalu moves on please-all track



- No increase in fares and freight rates
- Concessions for a cross-section of passengers
- 46 new trains to be introduced in 2005-06
- Extension of 27 trains during 2005-06
- Increase in frequency of 10 trains next fiscal

NEW DELHI, Feb. 26. — The Lalu express stayed on course for the second year running with the railway minister presenting another populist budget — no fare hikes and 46 new trains.

He also proposed a rationalised freight tariff, merging various classes of commodities to bring them down from 4,000 to 80.

Though he didn't outline the revenue implications, the Railway Board chairman, Mr RK Singh, put the total earnings at Rs 650 crore.

Sops were laid out for farmers, dairymen, unemployed youth and rural students. The proposed merging of classes of commodities ended up in freight on some goods, including non-PDS/PAP (poverty alleviation programme) food-grains, sugar and iron ore, going up. It will be lower for some others, including LPG, kerosene, petrol, naphtha and milk tankers.

Full concession in travel has been extended to unemployed youth appearing for interviews of state government jobs. This concession was earlier available only for central government jobs. A 75 per cent concession in second class fares has been proposed for rural government school students, once a year, for study tours. A similar relief was proposed for girls in government schools in rural areas for attending national level entrance examinations in medical, engineering and other professional courses.

The minister also proposed 50 per cent concession in second class fares to farmers and milk producers for travel to training institutes. Bodies of those who die in major government hospitals will be carried to their home town at 50 per cent concession. — SNS

FULL COVERAGE: pages 6, 7 & 12

THE STATESMAN

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Improving the farmers' lot

By G. Venkataramani

THE NATIONAL Commission on Farmers has focussed on the "actionable and affordable" while formulating its action plan to "save farmers and farming." Its first report, submitted to the Union Agriculture Ministry at the end of December, adopted a "business plan approach" towards this end.

The report, titled "Serving Farmers and Saving Farming", has dealt in depth on various issues including the challenges, threats, priorities, and uncommon opportunities. Malady-remedy analysis, ways to enhance agricultural competitiveness using a basket of choices, and the critical role of education and health care were also highlighted.

Other needs identified were: a water policy for agriculture; a national science and technology alliance for rural livelihood security; soil health management; and technological upgrading of farm practices through development of Computerised Farm Advisory System (CFAS).

In a recent interview, the NCF Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan, said the report "is designed to serve both as a wake-up call to the nation on the deteriorating farm conditions, as well as on the opportunities available to enhance our global agricultural competitiveness and to overcome the scourges of endemic and hidden hunger now affecting nearly 25 per cent of our population by August 15, 2007, which marks the 60th anniversary of our Independence."

Prof. Swaminathan said: "Our agriculture is at the crossroads economically, ecologically, technologically, socially and nutritionally. A 'business as usual approach' in the farm sector now will lead to an unprecedented human calamity, the beginning of which we are now witnessing in the form of suicides by farmers in several parts of the country, including Punjab, which is the heartland of intensive agriculture.

"Ensuring the income, work and

with farm and tribal women and men and media representatives, a few areas were identified for priority public policy support and financial allocation in the Union and State budgets for 2005-06. A business plan approach was adopted while developing the immediate 'Save Farmers and Farming Action Plan', since we are aware that our proposals should not merely be desirable, but should be actionable and affordable.

"We would like to stress that agri-

The first report of the National Commission on Farmers provides a blueprint for strengthening the agriculture sector.

livelihood security of farming families through enhancing the productivity, profitability and sustainability of the major farming systems, strengthening the food and nutrition security of the nation, imparting value addition to the time and labour of assetless agricultural labour families through technological and skill empowerment, ensuring gender justice and equity in all agricultural development programmes, and involving panchayati raj institutions in fostering environmentally sustainable agricultural progress have been the basic principles in the approach of NCF to fostering agrarian prosperity and rural livelihood and ecological security.

Prof. Swaminathan stressed that public policies likely to result in "ecocides" (ecological suicides), should be avoided. Pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis need to be checked, if Indian agriculture was not to experience the kind of human disease-induced setback currently occurring in several countries in Africa. Based on such considerations, certain key areas were identified by NCF for adequate support in the Union and State budgets of 2005-06.

One such key area was the life-sav-

ing support for farming families experiencing acute distress. The causes for the distress are diverse and there is no simple or single remedy. "Our immediate suggestions relate to risk management through a basket of insurance options, and streamlining of delivery systems relating to credit and other entitlements. At the same time, a beginning can be made in the 150 districts identified for the National Food for Work Programme to form a consortia of public and private sector agencies for assisting resource poor farm women and men to strengthen their livelihood security through additional on-farm and off-farm income," Prof. Swaminathan said.

The areas of importance are productivity and livelihood enhancement in rainfed areas; small farmers' horticultural estates; enhancing the productivity of cotton and the global competitiveness of the textile industry; and women farmers and farm labour. Making every village a knowledge centre; building a sustainable nutrition security system; and employment generation were other priorities. "In the ultimate analysis, a sustainable end to hunger can be achieved only by providing opportunities for every woman and man to earn their daily bread. A detailed strategy for creating additional skilled jobs through horticulture, cotton, energy plantations, animal husbandry, bio-fuels and biomass utilisation is being developed," Prof. Swaminathan said.

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Oil war

constant intervention. "It also needs to be examined if any instructions from the government can be construed as Presidential Directive A separate agenda in the matter of instructions from the government be brought to the board at the earliest opportunity," said the Board on January 10.

A week later, Gail made an apparent concession. It agreed to reduce PSL's blacklisting period from three years to one — but that still did not make the company eligible to make a valid bid for the DUPL project.

The ministry was up in

arms. Tripathi ordered the appointment of his Additional Secretary on the GAIL Board in addition to the two government directors. The Additional Secretary was told to call all functional directors "to get to know the working of GAIL management better so as to initiate necessary remedial steps in the style of management working."

Tripathi said there was no malice in this. "With time, the differences between the Board and the government were increasing. As the Additional Secre-

communication between the two," he said. He added that there was no move to subvert the Gail Board.

Gail made it clear it did not want to be singled out by the ministry. It said: "A Presidential Directive has been issued in the case of DUPL gas pipeline tender. To ensure similar standards are adopted uniformly... Gail has suggested a uniform policy in this regard may be applied to all oil and gas PSUs." Following Gail's rebellion, Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar has directed

... is a mature person, he can tell the government, if something is going wrong and he can improve the

all further actions be put off until the ministry's credentials as acting in the public interest were established.

| S. NO. | NATURE OF TICKET |
|--------|--|
| A. | Un-travelled unreserved ticket |
| B. | Unreserved ticket valid for the day of issue |
| C. | Un-travelled reserved tickets |
| D. | Un-travelled reserved tickets |
| E. | Un-travelled reserved tickets |
| F. | Un-travelled WL/RAC tickets |

| TIME LIMIT FOR CANCELLATION OF TICKET | CANCELLATION CHARGE PER PASSENGER |
|--|--|
| Within 3 hrs. after the actual departure of the train | Rs. 10/- |
| Within 3 hrs. after the departure of the last train of the day for your destination | Rs. 10/- |
| More than one day in advance of the scheduled departure of the train excluding the date of journey | Rs. 50/- for AC-1 Rs. 30/- for 2AC, 3AC, ACCC & 1st Class Rs. 20/- for SL class & Rs. 10/- for 2nd class |
| One day in advance (Excluding the date of journey) and upto 4 hrs. before the scheduled departure of the train | 25% of the fare paid |
| Less than 4 hrs. before the scheduled departure of train and after actual departure of train for a distance of: UP TO DISTANCE 3 hrs. UP TO 200 Kms. 6 hrs. UP TO 201 to 500 Kms. 12 hrs. OVER 500 Kms. | 50% of the fare paid (subject to the minimum cancellation charges mentioned in condition (C) above) |
| As per the time limits mentioned in above para 'E' | Rs. 10/- |

ICE OR LAFED

Over 2.5 ft snowfall brought life in the Valley to a halt on Saturday, while the Jammu-Srinagar highway was virtually buried under 15 feet of snow, shutting it down for the third straight day. Express photo by Javeed Shah

PAGE 3

Gail battles ministry on turf

Ministry pushes in extra director on PSU board in pipeline battle; says it's not to 'stifle' Gail

AMITAV RANJAN
NEW DELHI | FEBRUARY 19

WHAT started as an argument over whether a company should be allowed to bid for a Rs 1,416-crore pipeline contract has become a full-fledged turf war between the Petroleum Ministry and Gail (India), the high-flying Navaratna.

So far, Gail seems to have held firm. PSL, the company in question, remains blacklisted from bidding for the Dahej-Uran Pipeline project. But the ministry, which asked Gail to reconsider PSL's case, is obviously

feeling that its directors on the Gail board could not swing the decision.

This has prompted it to appoint an additional government director on the Gail board, apart from its two other nominees.

As the battle rages, Petroleum Secretary S.C. Tripathi has also made an acerbic noting: "Functional directors have become zero because of Chairman & Managing Director; independent directors are perhaps not being fully briefed and government directors (are) not able

to carry the Board."

His comments came after Gail challenged the frequent suggestions and letters that the ministry kept issuing on the project and on PSL.

At first, the project consultants excluded the technology that PSL was offering but Gail had to relent when government intervened through a Presidential Directive last October.

Still, PSL could not bid for the project since it had been blacklisted by Gail for three years until June 2007 due to poor performance in

another project. The tender was to be opened on January 18.

The ministry forwarded a petition from PSL to Gail and asked it to reconsider the blacklisting of all vendors. "If the grievances of the parties are not redressed well before the tender closing date, the purpose of the government's instructions will be defeated," the ministry said on November 29.

Gail refused to budge and decided to open the tender on January 18. At the same time, its board questioned the ministry's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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Geelani gives statement, blames police for attack

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Feb. 14. — Almost a week after the attack on SAR Geelani, acquitted in the Parliament attack case, Delhi Police today finally managed to get his statement in which he pointed an accusing finger at a unit of the force, a charge denied by police.

The Delhi University lecturer, who was injured in last Tuesday's assault and is recuperating in AIIMS, told police he was attacked by a person armed with a

gun outside the house of his lawyer Ms Nandita Haksar in Vasant Enclave when he arrived there.

While police remained tight-lipped about what he had told them, Ms Haksar issued a three-page statement which she claimed was the "crux" of the questioning "minus the details like whether he was dragged, how he got into the car, etc."

Echoing what Ms Haksar had been claiming so far, Geelani alleged "the only people who seem to be determined to harm me are the police in the Special



Cell of Delhi Police ... They were visibly delighted on the day I was sentenced to death by the desig-

nated Court." "I do not know for certain whether it was the policemen of the Special Branch who tried to kill me on 8 February, 2005. But there are certain facts that need to be investigated," Geelani said, according to Ms Haksar.

Police, however, rubbished the allegation. "This is just a figment of his imagination and a motivated statement," police spokesman Mr Ravi Pawar said. Geelani claimed that he had been subjected to "continuous humiliation and verbal abuse" when he

was in the Special Cell's custody before being acquitted and there was "at least one murderous attack" on him in Tihar Jail.

He said only he and Ms Haksar knew he would go to her house on Tuesday as she had called him on his mobile phone.

"The only way of knowing my movements are by tapping our phones. Who can have access to this technology," he asked, adding he had been tailed ever since his acquittal by the High Court. He said he was "saddened" to learn that police were

trying to blame Mohammad Afzal and Shaukat Hussain Guru, who were his co-accused in the Parliament attack case and are facing death sentence.

"It was Afzal who told the media that I was being framed and police asked him not to speak about me. They expressed their happiness at my acquittal," he said. Meanwhile, Geelani's brother Bismillah was questioned by the Crime Branch today about the lecturer's movements and whether any threat had been received by him.

15 FEB 2005

THE STATESMAN

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2005

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OUTRAGEOUS ASSAULT *gauri*

THE OUTRAGEOUS ATTACK on S.A.R. Geelani is not merely “disturbing” as the Supreme Court has observed. It also raises the gravest of suspicions. It is well known that the acquittal of the Delhi University lecturer in the Parliament attack case — in which he was implicated on the flimsiest of grounds — caused considerable embarrassment and annoyance to those who had hoped the prosecution’s case would stand up in its entirety. The identities of those who shot and seriously injured Mr. Geelani are yet unknown and their motives unclear. But the Delhi police, who obstinately pursued the case against him in the face of serious reservations expressed by eminent people within and without the legal fraternity, have a lot to answer for. Why did the police fail to provide Mr. Geelani with security? After all, the lecturer in Arabic was not implicated in any ordinary case, but in an extremely high profile one that aroused tremendous (often irrational and jingoistic) passions.

Moreover, as his lawyers have pointed out, Mr. Geelani himself expressed apprehensions about a threat to his life in an affidavit submitted recently in court. It is pertinent to recall that Mr. Geelani has repeatedly maintained he was also the victim of several attacks “with blades, knife and even poisoning” during the 23 months he spent in Delhi’s Tihar jail. The Delhi police’s explanation — that he was not provided with security because he did not ask for it — is weak and unconvincing. Security is offered on the basis of threat perceptions; it is not something that is handed out on request. The Supreme Court, which has asked the Delhi police to submit a report on the assault and the progress of the investigation, has shown the required urgency about getting to the bottom of this murky and deeply disturbing incident. However, the Court

would have done even better had it accepted the plea made by Mr. Geelani’s counsel and entrusted the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation. The entire circumstances surrounding the case call for a probe that is not only sincere and independent but that is also perceived, in the eyes of an increasingly wary and suspicious public, to be so. It is arguable that having failed to protect Mr. Geelani, the Delhi police have morally forfeited the right to investigate who attempted to kill him and why.

The All India Defence Committee for Syed Abdul Rahman Geelani, which is headed by the distinguished social scientist, Rajni Kothari, and with dedicated human rights activists and social workers as members, has been in the forefront of highlighting the grave injustice done to him. Its efforts were rewarded last year when the Delhi High Court acquitted Mr. Geelani on the ground that the prosecution had failed to provide any evidence against him in critical areas. There was nothing to suggest that Mr. Geelani was in touch with the five terrorists killed in the attack, nothing to show he had a role in arranging hideouts or in procuring arms and explosives used in pursuance of the conspiracy. As a result, the Court concluded that the prosecution’s case “did not even remotely, far less definitely and unerringly, point towards the guilt of the accused S.A.R. Gilani” (*State vs. Mohd Afzal and Others, 2003*). In arriving at this conclusion, the Court overturned an extremely ill-reasoned judgment of the designated POTA court, which made a string of presumptions in favour of the prosecution and convicted and sentenced Mr. Geelani to death. The final verdict in his case will be delivered by the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, it is the responsibility of the state to keep him safe, secure, and out of harm’s way.

Attack on Geelani disturbing, says SC

New Delhi: Terming as "disturbing" the murderous attack on S A R Geelani, the supreme court on Wednesday asked the Delhi Police to submit after a week its report regarding the progress made in the probe even as his counsel sought a CBI investigation into it.

The order came from a bench comprising Justice P V Reddi and Justice P P Naolekar which is hearing cross petitions filed by the two convicted and sentenced to death in the Parliament attack case and the petitions filed by the state challenging the acquittal of Geelani and Navjot Sandhu.

Right at the beginning of the hearing of the case, pending in the supreme court for more than a year, counsel for Geelani, senior advocate Ram Jethmalani, said the Delhi University lecturer had expressed apprehensions about threat to his life from the Delhi Police as far back as March 2004. "The prophecy of the person almost came true as he is battling for his life after a murderous attack last night," he said and requested the court to hand over the probe into the case to CBI.

The bench directed the Delhi police, represented by senior advocate Gopal Subramniam, to file the progress report of its investigations

into the incident after one week. Assuring the court that a thorough probe would be conducted into the matter, he said that "the commissioner of police is personally monitoring the investigations into the case."

Jethmalani severely criticised the Delhi police for not allowing the wife of the injured lecturer to visit him on Tuesday night and said "the police threw a cordon of armed personnel around Geelani at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and did not allow the wife to be by his side."

"Only after the media started reporting the incident and asked questions that the Delhi police relented and allowed the wife near him," he alleged. When the court enquired about the condition of Geelani, Jethmalani said his intestine had been ruptured at 10 places but the doctors have not lost hope of saving him. Geelani was rushed to AIIMS after he was shot outside his lawyer Nandita Haksar's residence in Vasant Enclave locality at around 9 pm on Tuesday night.

Geelani was among the four people who were accused of masterminding the December 13, 2001 Parliament attack. However, he and Navjot Sandhu alias Afsan Guru were acquitted by the Delhi high court. PTI



No work, no pay? Not if you're an MP

RASHEED KIDWAI

Bhopal, Feb. 8: Lawmakers who agree to disagree on everything, from panchayat to Parliament, are unanimous in their rejection of a "no work, no allowance" formula proposed to check disturbances in legislatures.

Cutting across party lines, Madhya Pradesh MLAs disagree with the suggestion that MPs and members of state legislatures should not be paid their daily allowance if the House is adjourned without transacting any business as a result of trouble caused by members.

"No work, no allowance" is one of the 15 recommendations proposed at the two-day All India Whips Conference in Hyderabad on Sunday. Twenty-two party whips from the Congress, the BJP, the Left and other parties favoured linking the payment of daily allowance to attendance and conduct of business in the House.

The whips urged the Manmohan Singh regime and all state governments to amend the relevant acts quickly to bring the "no-work, no-allowance" rule into force.

But the parties themselves are singing a different tune.

Congress spokesperson Girija Vyas said: "All political parties will have to collective-

DIVIDED IN HOUSE, UNITED OVER ALLOWANCE



Opposition members in a protest march outside Parliament against "tainted" ministers in the United Progressive Alliance government. The protests had kept the Lok Sabha stalled for several days. File picture

ly take a decision in Parliament and concerned state legislatures. All that I can say is that at the moment, it is merely a proposal by the whips."

Whips are not leaders of their respective parties, Vyas added. The proposal was made at a conference of whips but the decision has to be taken by the leaders in the House.

The BJP's Vijay Kumar Malhotra rejected the suggestion outright. The party's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha said: "It is a ridiculous idea. We get a very small amount of

Only the CPM's Nilotpal functioning," the Rajya Sabha

leader said.

In Madhya Pradesh, both the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress agree with Malhotra that this is a "poor idea". State parliamentary affairs minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said the provision would hurt the weaker sections most. "Some of them are not that articulate in the House but they nurse their constituencies well," he said. Laws and fines cannot cure unruliness, he added.

"Unless the ruling party and the senior Opposition members are honest and serious, little can be done to run the House smoothly," the minister said.

State Congress leader and deputy Speaker in the Assembly, Hazarilal Raghuvanshi, agreed with the BJP minister.

"What an MLA gets as allowance is insignificant to them. Nowadays, there is a single point agenda — to stick to power — and they all do what they think will get them that," the six-time MLA said, flaunting his snow-white moustache.

Raghuvanshi said he has known MLAs who have won successive elections without opening their mouth in the House. "You see, debating on budget and scoring points in the discussions do not necessarily fetch votes."

কুয়াল্লা লামপুর, সিঙ্গাপুর উড়ান প্রতিদিন জেট এয়ার, সহারাকে দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ায় বিমান চালাতে অনুমতি

নয়াদিল্লি, ৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি: জেট এয়ারওয়েজ এবং এয়ার সহারা দক্ষিণ পূর্ব এশিয়ায় বিমান চালাতে পারবে। এই আসিয়ান গোষ্ঠীভুক্ত দেশগুলিতে দৈনিক উড়ান চালু করার অনুমতি দিল কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। ওই একই গন্তব্যের জন্য ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্স এবং এয়ার ইন্ডিয়া বিমানের আসন সংখ্যাও বাড়ানো হচ্ছে।

আসামরিক বিমান পরিবহন মন্ত্রক আজ এই ছাড়পত্র দিয়ে জানিয়েছে, কুয়াল্লা লামপুর এবং সিঙ্গাপুরে প্রতিদিন বিমান চালানোর অনুমতি দেওয়া হয়েছে দুই বেসরকারি সংস্থা এয়ার সহারা এবং জেট এয়ারওয়েজকে। তবে তাইল্যান্ডে বিমান ওড়ানোর মতো পর্যাপ্ত রুটের অভাব রয়েছে। কারণ এয়ার ইন্ডিয়া এবং ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্স সব রুটেই বিমান চালাচ্ছে বলে সরকারি সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে।

জেট এবং সহারা চেম্বাই থেকে কুয়াল্লা লামপুর পর্যন্ত প্রতিদিন একটি করে বিমান চালানোর অনুমতি পেয়েছে। এ ছাড়া, জেট মুম্বই থেকে এবং এয়ার সহারাকে দিল্লি থেকে সিঙ্গাপুর পর্যন্ত বিমান চালানোর অনুমতি দেওয়া হয়েছে। সূত্রটি আরও জানিয়েছেন, ভারতীয় বেসরকারি বিমান সংস্থার জন্য দ্বিপাক্ষিক চুক্তি সংশোধন না-করার ফলে হংকংয়ে শুধু রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থাই বিমান চালাতে পারবে।

উল্লেখ্য, বেসরকারি বিমান সংস্থাকে আন্তর্জাতিক উড়ান চালানোর ব্যাপারে গত ২৯ ডিসেম্বর ছাড়পত্র দিয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। যে সমস্ত বেসরকারি সংস্থার কমপক্ষে একটানা পাঁচ বছর বিমান চালানোর

অভিজ্ঞতা রয়েছে এবং যাদের কমপক্ষে ২০টি বিমান রয়েছে, তাদেরই বিদেশে উড়ান চালুর অনুমতি দেওয়া হবে বলে কেন্দ্র জানিয়ে দিয়েছিল। পাশাপাশি, সংশ্লিষ্ট সংস্থা কত মাইল পথ পাড়ি দিয়েছে, তারও একটি সর্বনিম্ন সীমা বেঁধে দিয়েছে কেন্দ্র। এই সব শর্ত জেট এবং এয়ার সহারাই পূরণ করতে পেরেছে বলে সরকারি সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে। তবে উপসাগর অঞ্চলে এখনও উড়ান চালানোর অনুমতি পায়নি বেসরকারি সংস্থা।

অন্য দিকে, আসিয়ান গোষ্ঠীর দেশগুলিতে আসন্ন গ্রীষ্মে চলাচলকারী বিমানের আসনসংখ্যা বাড়ানোর দাবি আগেই জানিয়েছিল ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্স এবং এয়ার ইন্ডিয়া। সেই অনুযায়ী এই অনুমতি দেওয়া হলেও গ্রীষ্মকাল কেটে গেলে আবার তা ফিরে দেখা হবে বলে সরকারি সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে। সিঙ্গাপুরের ক্ষেত্রে এয়ার ইন্ডিয়ার থাকবে ৬০৩টি আসন, ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্সের ৪৩৫টি। মালয়েশিয়ার জন্য তা যথাক্রমে ১২০৬ এবং ২০৩০।

ভারতকে এ-৩৮০ বিক্রির আগ্রহ। অদূর ভবিষ্যতেই হয়তো মুম্বই বা দিল্লি এয়ারপোর্ট থেকে উড়বে বিশ্বের বৃহত্তম ও আধুনিকতম যাত্রীবাহী বিমান এয়ারবাস 'এ-৩৮০'। নির্মাতা এয়ারবাস ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ এই বিমানের সম্ভাব্য ক্রেতা হিসাবে ভারতের দিকে নজর দিচ্ছে বলে জানিয়েছেন সংস্থার আঞ্চলিক উপদেষ্টা ডেভিড ভেলুপিলাই।

আজ এখানে ভেলুপিলাই সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, "ভারত সরকার খোলা আকাশ নীতি ঘোষণা করায়,

এ দেশের বেসরকারি বিমান সংস্থাগুলি লম্বা উড়ানের জন্য বৃহত্তর বিমান সংগ্রহে আগ্রহী হয়ে উঠবে। তাদের পক্ষে এ-৩৩০ এবং এ-৩৪০ বিমান বিশেষ উপযোগী হবে। রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব এয়ার ইন্ডিয়া উড়ানের গন্তব্য বাড়তে থাকায়, এই সংস্থারও ওই ধরনের বিমানের প্রয়োজন হবে।

বৃহত্তম এয়ারবাস এ-৩৮০ প্রসঙ্গে ভেলুপিলাই জানান, বোয়িং-৭৪৭ বিমানের তুলনায় এ-৩৮০ তে জায়গা অনেক বেশি। অথচ বোয়িং-৭৪৭ নামতে পারে এমন যে-কোনও বিমানবন্দরে এ-৩৮০ অবতরণ করতে পারবে। বর্তমানে মুম্বই এবং দিল্লি ছাড়া এ ধরনের বিমানবন্দর ভারতে আর কোথাও নেই।

ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্সকে বিমান বিক্রি বা ভাড়া দেওয়া নিয়ে এয়ারবাসের সঙ্গে কোনও কথাবার্তা চলছে কি না, প্রশ্ন করা হলে ভেলুপিলাই বলেন, "আলোচনা চলছে। ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্সের এখন নতুন বিমান খুবই দরকার। এই সংস্থার পক্ষে উপযোগী বিমান আমরা অবশ্যই দিতে পারব।"

ভেলুপিলাই প্রসঙ্গত জানান, আগামী সপ্তাহে বাঙ্গালোরে যে 'এয়ারশো' হচ্ছে, সেখানে ভারতীয় বিমান সংস্থাগুলির সঙ্গে এয়ারবাসের সহযোগিতার চিত্র তুলে ধরা হবে। বস্তুত, আজ থেকে ৩০ বছর আগেই এর সূচনা হয়, যখন ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্স তাঁদের কাছ থেকে প্রথম এয়ারবাসটি কেনে। বর্তমানে এয়ার ইন্ডিয়া এবং ইন্ডিয়ান এয়ারলাইন্স এয়ারবাস জাতীয় বিমানের অন্যতম প্রধান ক্রেতা। - পি টি আই