

Quit offer & late-night visit to Sonia

# Natwar goes after shove

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Dec. 5: The Congress announced late tonight after Natwar Singh visited Sonia Gandhi with his wife that the minister had offered to resign.**

Congress spokesman Anand Sharma said Natwar spoke to the Prime Minister, who is in Moscow, to tell him that he would hand in his resignation on Manmohan Singh's return on Wednesday.

After talking to the Prime Minister, Natwar went to 10 Janpath to inform Sonia of his decision to finally quit, a move she might have forced him to make by dropping him from the party's highest decision-making body last night.

Natwar told Manmohan Singh that he was going to see Sonia. After announcing yesterday he was not going to quit, the minister without portfolio did not speak to the media once he emerged from Sonia's residence.

Observers interpreted the visit as the final exercise to assess the Congress president's mind. Not that any confirmation was needed after Sonia dropped him from the steering committee.

Once that decision had been taken, the Congress leadership had expected Natwar to take the hint and step down. But he did not oblige through the day.

To make sure Natwar did not miss the message, Kapil



**Natwar leaving Sonia's house on Monday night. (PTI)**

Sibal, party leader and minister, had said earlier in the day: "Description of his stay in the steering committee by the highest body of the party headed by Sonia Gandhi as untenable is a clear message (to Natwar). There can be no clearer message."

Natwar was not seen in Parliament all day and was described by people close to him as being extremely depressed.

Sibal said: "He is a mature and thoughtful politician. He will understand the circumstances in which the decision has been taken. The message is clear. If he (Natwar) takes time to understand it, what can we do?"

As Natwar kept the party and the government waiting, the Opposition had a free run.

Opposition leaders made it clear that they would not allow regular business to be conducted until the government took action that satisfied them.

While the demand still was that Natwar be sacked, the leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, alleged that the Congress had "something to hide" and was making the former external affairs minister a "sacrificial goat".

The fuel for the allegation was provided by Natwar's son Jagat Singh who said: "We want whatever probe there is to get over soon and let the country know its findings. What I find very objectionable is that in today's day and age, this kind of witch-hunt is going on to try and find a scapegoat. We will not be scapegoats."

Advani also latched on to Sibal's statement. "This government has gone berserk. What does one make of statements made by some ministers — that there are signals and messages to Natwar to resign? What is the meaning of this statement? It shows the ruling government in very bad light. They are putting the blame of the entire sordid affair at Natwar's doorstep.

"How can there be two standards? Why should Natwar be blamed and let the Congress go scot-free? Why is Sonia Gandhi still continuing as the chairperson of the National Advisory Council?" he asked.

■ See Page 8

# I am not quitting: Natwar Matherani Back in India, Quizzed by Sleuths

*9. Council of Ministers* *9-1 5712*

**New Delhi:** Intelligence and Enforcement Directorate officials swung into action and grilled Aniel Matherani, India's envoy to Croatia, on his claims that the Natwar Singh-led delegation to Iraq in 2001 had received 'oil coupons' from the Saddam Hussein regime, but the person in the thick of it all—Natwar Singh—ruled out resignation from the cabinet, saying such a step would look like "admission of guilt".

"It is not because of any love of office that I am not resigning. To resign now would look, to many people, as an admission of guilt," the former foreign minister said in a statement. Asserting that he was not guilty of any wrongdoing in

law or spirit, Singh said: "I refuse to sacrifice myself." He claimed that the row over the Volcker report would not stop with his resignation. "The Opposition will use my resignation to further tarnish the reputation of the Congress party. I will not let this happen."

Singh denied allegations that he added the name of his son Jagat Singh and his friend Andaleeb Sehgal to the official Congress delegation that visited Baghdad in 2001. "I had no authority to do so."

A key participant, Matherani, arrived in India late on Saturday night from Vienna, and was interrogated by officials of the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing, apart from ED, at

an undisclosed location.

Matherani's claims to a news magazine that Singh was involved in getting 'oil coupons' for Jagat and Sehgal has set off a storm.

In his reactions, Jagat hinted at a conspiracy to malign his father and said Matherani's comments had created confusion.

He said he was not part of the official delegation, but had accompanied it in an individual capacity as Youth Congress leader to assist his ailing father and then Youth Congress president R Surjewala knew about it. However, Surjewala is denying the claim. Jagat also denied Sehgal, owner of Hamdan Export, was a part of the delegation. TNN and Agencies

05 DEC 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Natwar won't resign, won't be asked to

## No decision on replacement

HT Correspondents  
Moscow/New Delhi, December 4

NATWAR SINGH is staying on, despite mounting Opposition pressure on him to resign.

The government will not ask him to quit, though it will consider the situation if he elects to resign on his own. And Natwar has no intention of doing that either.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday made it clear that the government would not ask Natwar to quit the Cabinet, having already stripped him of the external affairs portfolio.

But when Singh, now on a visit to Moscow, was specifically asked about the possibility of Natwar Singh's resignation, he replied: "If the person takes a decision voluntarily we will consider the situation."

He denied there were differences between him and Sonia Gandhi on what to do with Natwar. Sonia reportedly has been of the view that the foreign minister should have been allowed to go the day after the Volcker charges on the Iraq oil-for-food programme were reported. The Prime Minister, it has been said, let the minister continue maintaining that the charges against him were unverifiable.

Manmohan had met Natwar on Saturday. "We discussed what has happened — nothing significant," the Prime Minister said. He said he had not "made up his mind" on whether to name a replacement for Natwar Singh in the next Cabinet reshuffle. "Don't know yet which way to go — have not made up my mind," he said.

In New Delhi, Natwar ruled out his resignation. Such a move "will look like an admission of guilt" and "will not stop" with him, he said.

"It is not because of my love of office that I am not resigning. To resign now would look, to many people, as an admission of guilt... It will not stop with me. The Opposition will use my resignation to further tarnish the reputation of the Congress party. I will not let this happen," he said.

Natwar's statement will douse hopes of some Congress leaders, who said the minister should step down on his own. But even these leaders acknowledge that Anil Matherani's allegations against Natwar are "unverified". Matherani, who returned to Delhi on Saturday night, was grilled by ED and other intelligence officials on his statements.

**If the person takes a decision voluntarily, we will consider the situation**

MANMOHAN SINGH



**To resign now would look like an admission of guilt**

NATWAR SINGH

ON PAGE 2

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Natwar meets PM, but may not be asked to quit

New Delhi: A day after the



political storm over his allegedly receiving oil vouchers from the Saddam Hussein regime in

Iraq, Union minister Natwar Singh met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday, fuelling speculation about his resignation. However, highly placed sources said he would not step down.

Natwar, who was accused by his close aide and India's ambassador to Croatia Aniel Matherani of receiving oil allotment from Saddam's regime for his "personal services", had a 40-minute meeting with the Prime Minister at his official residence. Though there was no official word on what transpired at the meeting, the sources said he was not resigning.

They said the Prime Minister would not act on the basis of mere allegations or charges and would await the report of the Justice Pathak inquiry authority set up to probe the issue.

Earlier, putting up a brave front, Natwar told reporters on the margins of a function here that he would "face the struggle". "There is a struggle, we will face it," he said, refusing to make any further comments on the issue.

Meanwhile, former petroleum minister P Shiv Shankar, who was part of the Congress delegation which visited Iraq in January 2001, said the minister's son Jagat and Delhi-based businessman Andaleeb Sehgal had indeed travelled with them till Jordan. He said Jagat, who was part of the delegation in his capaci-

## BJP bays for Sonia's head

New Delhi: Even as the NDA on Saturday reiterated that Congress chief Sonia Gandhi must resign immediately owning responsibility for the corruption in her party over the Iraq affair, the CPI(M) said the Volcker report should not be treated as "final and conclusive".

BJP chief L K Advani said, "After Matherani's allegations against Natwar about his involvement in the oil coupons scam, the UPA government and the congress cannot deny the truth and have lost the right to disown the Volcker committee report as unverified. Natwar should be removed forthwith from the UPA ministry and the same criteria should be applied to Sonia." Agencies

ty as the general secretary of the Youth Congress, did not attend any of the meetings, contrary to the claims made by Matherani, also member of the delegation. "They (Jagat and Andaleeb) travelled till Jordan. I am not sure if they came from Jordan to Baghdad. We were in Baghdad for two-three days. Sehgal was not with us, I'm not sure about Jagat," he told a news channel on Saturday.

Asked if he smelt a rat during the trip, Shankar said, "We never bothered, neither myself nor A R Antulay (another member of the team) that they were with us. We never thought there was any hanky-panky going on." Agencies

► Related reports on Page 9

# Natwar got oil coupons for personal services: Envoy

## PM's Promise To Make Guilty Pay Fails To Mollify Oppn

New Delhi: In a sensational disclosure, India's ambassador to Croatia Aneil Matherani on Friday claimed that Natwar Singh, who was stripped off the external affairs ministry portfolio after being named in the Volcker committee report on Iraq's oil-for-food scam, had received oil allotment from Saddam Hussein's regime for his "personal services".

Matherani, who worked closely with Natwar in the AICC foreign affairs cell before the Congress came to power, told a magazine that both the allottees of oil coupons—Natwar and the Congress—were "exactly the same". "The fact of the matter is that both allottees...in my view are exactly the same. One has been to Natwar and the other to the Congress. One for Natwar's personal services. Don't forget that he has been the one who has been espousing Iraq's cause," he said.

Matherani said Natwar's son Jagat and relative Andaleeb Sehgal had joined the delegation in Iraq in 2001 and stayed with them at the same hotel owned by the then ruling Baath Party. He claimed that the former external affairs minister told the Iraqi ambassador that he would like his son to accompany him as it would be a difficult journey. "When we reached the airport, Jagat Singh came there and he took the flight with us. At the airport (in Baghdad) we were received by Indian embassy officials and taken to Hotel Intercontinental. After we assembled in the lobby, Andaleeb Sehgal appeared."

Natwar, Matherani said, introduced Andaleeb as "his son's cousin and somebody who is familiar with Iraq and whose visit to Iraq was timed at the same time by coincidence". Matherani claimed that both Jagat and Andaleeb were present at the dinner hosted by the then Indian ambassador to Iraq. "The hotel, Al Rashid, where the delegation stayed was a Baath Party hotel and all those who stayed there were guests of the party. Now you see the transition in Baghdad. Jagat became part of the delegation and he and Andaleeb checked-in with us. You can't check into a Baath Party hotel unless you are part of the delegation. So local hospitality was offered to Jagat and Andaleeb, which they accepted," he said.

Meanwhile, minister of state for

## Natwar to sue Matherani

New Delhi: Union minister Natwar Singh on Friday termed as "outrageous and malicious" Indian ambassador to Croatia



Natwar and Matherani during friendly times

Aneil Matherani's reported claims on the Iraq scam involving him and said he was contemplating legal action. "I have read Mr Aneil Matherani's outrageous allegations against the Congress and myself. These are totally false and malicious. I shall consult my lawyer for further action," he said in a statement, adding that he was ready to face any time-bound inquiry on the issue so that his name could be cleared at the earliest. Questioning the motive behind Matherani giving the interview to the magazine, Natwar said his conscience was clear. "The obvious question is why did Mr Matherani give this interview at this time. If he was so concerned about the matter, why did he not go public earlier. He was in Delhi when the Volcker report controversy came up." Agencies

## Govt recalls Croatian ambassador

New Delhi: Amid new revelations by India's ambassador to Croatia Aneil Matherani on the Volcker issue, the Centre on Friday said the envoy had been "transferred back" and the process to send a replacement had started. Rajiv Mishra, India's deputy permanent representative to WTO, will replace Matherani. "Matherani has already been transferred back to India sometime ago and I have no doubt that he will be returning soon," foreign secretary Shyam Saran said at a press briefing. He said an "agreement" for appointing a replacement had been sought from the Croatian government. Agencies

external affairs Inderjit Singh on Friday claimed that the Volcker panel had not named the Congress in its report. He, however, said a debate would be held on the issue in parliament after the Pathak inquiry authority submitted its findings. "The report says Congress, India. It does not say Indian National Congress," Singh said as the opposition mounted its attack against the government in the wake of new revelations.

Meanwhile, the Volcker issue exploded in parliament again on Friday with a surcharged opposition demanding Sonia Gandhi's resignation as NAC chairperson even as PM

Manmohan Singh appealed against prejudging the outcome of the Justice Pathak inquiry authority.

The opposition stalled proceedings both in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha targeting Sonia, saying it will not allow the government to get away by making the Union minister a "scapegoat". The PM said the Enforcement Directorate would take cognisance of Matherani's statements and asserted that the guilty would not go unpunished. Both Houses were adjourned for the day amid uproarious scenes and slogan-shouting by opposition members who trooped to the well. Agencies

# কিছু মন্ত্রীকে অতিরিক্ত দায়িত্ব

## আস্থা সনিয়ার, বাড়তি গুরুত্ব প্রিয়রঞ্জনেরকে

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৮ নভেম্বর: কাল রাতে ঘুমোতে যাওয়ার সময়েও প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুন্সি জানতেন না, আজ তাঁর মুকুটে একটা নতুন পালক সংযোজিত হতে চলেছে।

সাতসকালে ১০ জনপথ থেকে ফোন। ডেকে পাঠান সনিয়া গাঁধী। তখনও প্রিয় জানেন না, সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রকের সঙ্গে তথ্য ও সম্প্রচারের দায়িত্ব তাঁর কাঁধে তুলে দেওয়া হবে। সনিয়া তাঁকে বলেন, “এই দফতরটা খুবই সংবেদনশীল। তোমার উপরে ভরসা আছে। আশা করি, তুমি সফল হবে।”

বাড়িতে আসতে না-আসতেই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ফোন। অতিরিক্ত দায়িত্ব কেন, সেটা বুঝিয়ে বলেন মনমোহন সিংহ। আগামী কাল প্রয়াত প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইন্দিরা গাঁধীর জন্মদিন। সকাল এগারোটায় শাস্ত্রী ভবনের ছ'তলায় নতুন দফতরের দায়িত্ব গ্রহণ করতে যাবেন তিনি। প্রিয়বাবুর কথায়, “ইন্দিরাজি তথ্যমন্ত্রী ছিলেন। কাল দায়িত্ব গ্রহণ করে প্রথম তাঁকেই স্মরণ করব।” এই দফতরে প্রিয়ই প্রথম বাঙালি পূর্ণমন্ত্রী। রাজীব গাঁধীর আমলে তথ্যমন্ত্রী হলেও অজিত পাঁজা ছিলেন প্রতিমন্ত্রী।

প্রিয়রঞ্জন ছাড়া আরও কিছু পরিবর্তন হয়েছে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভায়। যেমন, জয়পাল রেড্ডির হাতে সংস্কৃতি মন্ত্রকের সঙ্গে নগরোন্নয়ন। অস্কার ফার্নান্ডেজের অতিরিক্ত দায়িত্ব ক্রীড়া ও যুবকল্যাণ এবং অনাবাসী ভারতীয় বিষয়। ভারী শিল্পমন্ত্রী সন্তোষমোহন দেবের অতিরিক্ত দায়িত্ব প্রিয়র ছেড়ে যাওয়া জলসম্পদ।

দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই মন্ত্রিসভায় রদবদলের চেষ্টা করছিলেন সনিয়া-মনমোহন। কিন্তু বারবার চেষ্টা করেও ঐকমত্য না-হওয়ায় কাজটা করা যায়নি। এ বারেও ঠিক ছিল, আজ মন্ত্রিসভার সম্প্রসারণ ও রদবদল করা হবে। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত এ বারেও পিছিয়ে এলেন মনমোহন। সংসদ অধিবেশনের আগে কাজের সুবিধার জন্য শুধু কয়েকটি দফতরে মন্ত্রীদের অতিরিক্ত দায়িত্ব দিয়ে পরিস্থিতি সামাল দিয়েছেন। সংসদ অধিবেশন শেষ হলে নতুন বছরে মন্ত্রিসভার রদবদলের চেষ্টা হবে। সেই দিক থেকে দেখতে গেলে আজকের পরিবর্তনটাও অস্থায়ী।

আজকের রদবদলে অবশ্য সব চেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ঘটনা জয়পাল রেড্ডির দফতর বদল। বিরোধী দলে থাকার সময়ে জয়পাল দলের মুখপাত্র ছিলেন। গুজরালের জমানায় তথ্যমন্ত্রী হয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু এ বার ইউপিএ-র দেড় বছরে জয়পাল তাঁর দফতরের কাজকর্ম সম্পর্কে নিজেও যেমন উৎসাহী ছিলেন না, তেমন দশ নম্বর জনপথও ছিল যথেষ্ট হতাশ। জয়পাল নিজে অর্থ-সংক্রান্ত দফতর

চাইছিলেন। সনিয়া গাঁধী ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে জয়পালকে অপছন্দ না-করলেও মন্ত্রী হিসাবে তাঁর সক্রিয়তার অভাবে বেশ বিরক্ত হয়ে পড়েছিলেন। অধিকা সোনিকে এই দায়িত্ব দেওয়ার কথা চলছিল। কিন্তু সোনি প্রথম থেকে সংগঠনে থাকাই শ্রেয় বলে মনে করেছিলেন।

এ বার অবশ্য বাইরে থেকে কাউকেই আনা হয়নি। ভিতর থেকেই মন্ত্রীদের বাছাই করতে হয়। সে ক্ষেত্রে তথ্য মন্ত্রকের জন্য প্রিয়কেই সনিয়া-মনমোহন বেছে নিয়েছেন। কারণ

ও সাংবাদিকের স্বাধীনতা রক্ষা করা।”

এখন স্বভাবতই প্রশ্ন উঠছে, মন্ত্রিসভার সম্প্রসারণ হল না কেন। তার কারণ প্রধানমন্ত্রী আপাতত বিদেশ ও কয়লা নিজে হাতেই রাখলেন। শিবু সোরেন কয়লা মন্ত্রক ফিরে পেতে চান। আর প্রধানমন্ত্রী রাজি নন কোনও ‘দাগি’ মন্ত্রী রাখতে। সতীশ শর্মাকে পেট্রোলিয়াম মন্ত্রক দিতে রাজি নন তিনি। মণিশঙ্করের দফতর দুটুকরো করার প্রস্তাব ছিল। তেল ও গ্যাস আলাদা করতেও রাজি নন মনমোহন। বিহার নির্বাচনের ফল না-দেখে

### কার কী মন্ত্রক



#### প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুন্সি

ছিল জলসম্পদ, পেলেন তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার, থাকল সংসদীয় বিষয়



#### জয়পাল রেড্ডি

ছিল তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার, পেলেন নগরোন্নয়ন, থাকল সংস্কৃতি



#### সন্তোষমোহন দেব

আছে ভারী শিল্প, বাড়তি দায়িত্ব জলসম্পদ



#### অস্কার ফার্নান্ডেজ

আছে পরিসংখ্যান ও পরিকল্পনা রূপায়ণ, বাড়তি দায়িত্ব ক্রীড়া, অনাবাসী ভারতীয় বিষয়

প্রিয়রঞ্জন ১০ জনপথের ঘনিষ্ঠ। সনিয়া তাঁকে বিশ্বাস করেন।

তথ্য মন্ত্রকের দায়িত্ব যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। কারণ, এই দফতরের মন্ত্রীকে চলতে হয় সবাইকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে। আর এই দফতরের মন্ত্রীদের পরিবর্তনের হার সব চেয়ে বেশি। তা যে জমানাই হোক। নরসিংহ রাওয়ের সময়ে অজিত পাঁজা, কে পি সিংহদেও থেকে শুরু করে পি এন সাংমা। আবার বিজেপি জমানায় প্রমোদ মহাজন, সুখমা স্বরাজ, অরুণ জেটলি, রবিশঙ্কর প্রসাদ। প্রিয়বাবু বলেন, “আমার চেষ্টা হবে সবাইকে নিয়ে চলা। ঘরে ঘরে তথ্যের অধিকারকে পৌঁছে দেওয়া। সংবাদপত্র

প্রধানমন্ত্রী রামবিলাস পাসোয়ানের ভবিষ্যৎ নির্ধারণ করতে চান না। নটবর সিংহকে মন্ত্রিসভা থেকেই সরিয়ে দিতে পারলে তিনি খুশি হন। এখনই সে কাজটি করতে পারছেন না। খাদ্যপ্রক্রিয়াকরণ মন্ত্রী সুবোধকান্ত সহায়ের বাড়িতে গত কাল এনফোর্সমেন্ট তল্লাশি চালিয়েছে। তদন্তের ফল দেখে সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে চান প্রধানমন্ত্রী। অধিকা সোনি, মতিলাল ভোরা প্রমুখকে মন্ত্রিসভায় আনার কথা হচ্ছে। চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেবেন সনিয়া গাঁধী। এমনই হাজারটা সমস্যায় জেরবার মনমোহন-সনিয়া আপাতত ফের পিছিয়ে দিলেন সম্প্রসারণ।

# Cabinet rejig: No new faces in PM's team

## Manmohan Retains Foreign Affairs, Dasmunshi Gets I&B

*2-20-04*  
*20-11-04*

**New Delhi:** Giving up plans of any fresh induction into his cabinet, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday effected a minor reshuffle of portfolios, retaining external affairs ministry while shifting S Jaipal Reddy from information and broadcasting to urban development and replacing him with Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, who was the water resources minister.

Manmohan confined the reshuffle, necessitated by the winter session of parliament beginning next Wednesday, to portfolios held by Congress ministers. He also retained the coal portfolio, which was taken from Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader Shibu Soren last year when he was sent to Ranchi as Jharkhand chief minister.

The Prime Minister had taken charge of external affairs from

Natwar Singh in the wake of the Volcker report on Iraq oil-for-food



Jaipal Reddy



Manmohan

controversy naming him as a beneficiary of the scam. While Reddy will retain the culture portfolio, Dasmunshi, the Congress chief whip in the Lok Sabha, will also retain parliamentary affairs portfolio, which he acquired after the exit of Ghulam Nabi Azad who took over as Jammu and Kashmir chief minister. Azad had also held

the urban development charge. Both Reddy and Dasmunshi are ministers of cabinet rank.

Effecting changes at the level of ministers of state, Manmohan gave heavy industries and public enterprises minister Santosh Mohan Deb the additional charge of water resources. Another minister of state with independent charge, Oscar Fernandes, has been given the portfolios of sports and youth affairs and overseas Indians, in addition to his existing portfolio of statistics and programme implementation. The sports and youth affairs portfolio had fallen vacant following the death of Sunil Dutt, while Jagdish Tytler had resigned as the overseas Indians minister following the report on the Delhi Sikh riots. Agencies

# Ready to face any question: Natwar



Natwar Singh

**Says he was the first person who wanted a probe; welcomes Sonia's remark**

Diplomatic Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The former External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, on Wednesday said he was ready to face any question from the R.S. Pathak Inquiry Authority, appointed to probe the charges in the report of the United Nations-appointed Volcker Committee. There was "no substance" in the allegations contained in the Volcker Report on the Iraqi oil-for-food scandal.

"He [Paul Volcker] didn't even know my name. Where did he send a letter [of inquiry]?" Mr. Singh asked answering questions after addressing a conference organised by *Hindustan Times* here. Welcoming Congress president Sonia Gandhi's remark that action should be taken against anyone found

agreeable" even though he was a "gutsy" person, Mr. Singh said. He wanted to make a *suo motu* statement in Parliament but now the Pathak Inquiry Authority was looking into the matter. Mr. Singh questioned the wisdom of Mr. Volcker changing the language used in his Report at the instance of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "Should he have done so?"

Asked how India should vote on Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) governing board, Mr. Singh said the question should be posed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is now looking after External Affairs.

It would be a "great tragedy" if Teheran was taken to the U.N. Security Council. The Iranian nuclear issue should be resolved

within the IAEA framework and Dr. Manmohan Singh was trying to do this, he said. By its September 24 vote, India got a two-month "respite" to resolve the issue within the IAEA framework, according to Mr. Singh.

On the July 18 India-U.S. nuclear deal, Mr. Singh said it required New Delhi to take reciprocal measures in response to the steps taken by Washington. It could not be that India should take all the steps while the U.S. was exempt from taking any. He was "very proud" to have been associated with the deal.

Mr. Singh said India was recognised as a de facto nuclear power by the U.S. through the deal. The "loose ends" in the deal should be tied up before U.S. President George W. Bush visited India early next year.

## • No "substance" in allegations

## • Questions Volcker changing language at the instance of Kofi Annan

guilty by the Inquiry Authority, Mr. Singh said he was the first person who wanted a probe. "It was very necessary for Mrs. Sonia Gandhi to say what she did."

To a question whether his name or that of the party was misused by some individuals, he said, "Please don't personalise this."

Asked how he felt about his name being dragged in by the Volcker Committee, Mr. Singh said: "If I had done something wrong, I wouldn't be here today." What had happened was "dis-

Comments by Natwar Singh 17/11/05



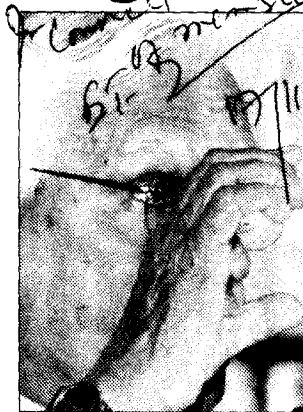
# Natwar regrets loss of portfolio

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 16 NOVEMBER

**T**HE Natwar Singh episode appeared to be getting messier on Wednesday, with the minister saying the decision to strip him of the charge of external affairs ministry was unpleasant.

"It is disagreeable. There is no substance in the allegations," Mr Singh said. However, he agreed with Congress president Sonia Gandhi's views that the government should get to the bottom of the scam.

The minister's statement is confirmation that he was reluctant to leave his job at South Block. This also contradicts the statement put out by the PMO after his removal from the ex-



ternal affairs ministry: "Dr Manmohan Singh has accepted Natwar Singh's request to relieve him of the charge," as well as Sonia Gandhi's assertion on Tuesday that the minister had

stepped aside on his own.

Although Mr Singh took care not to take cudgels against the Congress leadership, he made his displeasure over the action plain. He repeated his stand that the Volcker panel report contained "unverified allegations" against him and the Congress party.

It may be recalled that Ms Gandhi had refused to buy the allegation and had gone to the extent of voicing her suspicion that someone had made a quick buck using the Congress' name. She had also said she would not hesitate to take action if the contents of the report turned out to be authentic.

Natwar Singh's stand cannot but be discomforting for the Congress. It comes at a time when the two establishments

are on a publicity overdrive to ram in their point about the outrage everyone in the party has felt. There is also the apprehension the minister could drag the Congress into the picture if the probe panel turns the heat on him.

The minister, who is blaming a group of Congress leaders for the action against him, has been signalling his resolve to fight it out. Although the Congress' studio warriors came to his support in the initial days, Ms Gandhi's assertions are sure to refrain them from backing Natwar Singh.

He brushed aside suggestions that his exit was hastened because of his anti-American remarks concerning Iran and Iraq.

THE HINDU 17/11/08

MANMOHAN, SONIA GO INTO HUDDLE AGAIN

# Natwar refuses to step down

*of Council of Ministers*

**Statesman News Service**

NEW DELHI, Nov. 5. — A week after the Volcker Committee's report on murky Iraqi oil deals rocked the Congress, the government and the party carried on hectic deliberations today to work out a damage-control strategy, even as the beleaguered external affairs minister, Mr K Natwar Singh, rejected the demand for his resignation claiming he had the backing of Mrs Sonia Gandhi and the Prime Minister.

The Congress top brass went into a huddle to devise ways to tackle the controversy's fall-out. Mrs Gandhi met Dr Manmohan Singh at his residence for the second time in two days, apparently, to discuss the course of action the ruling party would need to take to deal with the raging controversy.

Later, Dr Singh called the finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram, reportedly, to discuss the nature and mode of the proposed government probe into the scandal. Mr Chidambaram is a known legal expert. The national security adviser, Mr MK Narayanan, too was present. Mr Natwar Singh, who today received support from two of Congress allies, the DMK and the IUML, expressed "indignation" at the Volcker panel's findings.

On the demand for his resignation, he said: "What for? ... I will fight back... The BJP is not going to decide who the foreign minister of India is going to be."

Mr Singh said the Volcker findings were

based on records of the present Iraqi government which had "no credibility" in the world. He dubbed the Volcker report as "bullshit and full of lies". Reacting to Mr Volcker's statement that he did not know that he (Natwar Singh) was the foreign minister of India, Mr Singh wanted to know where did Mr Volcker send the notice to — India or Pakistan?

The Congress dismissed as "false" allegations that Mrs Sonia Gandhi had written to Saddam Hussein on the oil-for-food programme.

Interestingly, Mr Natwar Singh described the Congress' bid to send legal notices to the UN and the Volcker Committee as "trivialising the issue ... and surprising".

The AICC spokesman, Mr Abhishek Singhvi, however, said the proposed notice would seek details from the Volcker committee. "Based on the material we receive, we might sue Volcker, or the committee members, or any other organ of the UN depending on local laws of the country where we might initiate such an action," he added.

## 'Iraqi officials sought surcharge'

Mr Ram Naik, petroleum minister in the previous NDA government, today said senior Iraqi officials had sought a "surcharge" for supplying crude oil to India under the UN food-for-oil programme in 2002. **(Details on page 5)**

■ **Editorial: Why Natwar must go, page 6**

■ **More reports on page 5**

## 'IOC, Reliance beneficiaries'

NEW DELHI, Nov. 5. — The public sector oil giant, Indian Oil Corporation, figures in the list of 130 Indian companies which allegedly benefited from the Iraqi oil sales under the UN oil-for-food programme during the Saddam Hussein regime.

According to the Volcker Committee report, the IOC lifted 4.2 crore barrels of crude oil worth Rs 80 crore with an outstanding surcharge of \$8,93,914.

Reliance Petroleum too has been listed as an alleged beneficiary because its contracting company, APL, lifted 15.76 million barrels of crude oil and allegedly paid a surcharge of \$3.5 million.

Reliance's name figures in the list of dubious Iraqi oil sales by non-contractual beneficiaries. In three contracts, the company lifted 67.38 lakh, 49.94 lakh and 40.48 lakh barrels of oil through Alcon Petroleum Limited. Reliance Petroleum is also mentioned as a contractual company that lifted 28,32,811 barrels out of the 50 lakh barrels allocated in two contracts worth \$7,20,49,346.

Of the 3,614 companies mentioned, about 130 Indian companies have been listed as beneficiaries and are alleged to have collectively paid over \$22 million in "humanitarian kickbacks". **SNS**

06 NOV 2005

Singh says report 'insufficient' to nail minister

# PM shield for Natwar

PRANAY SHARMA

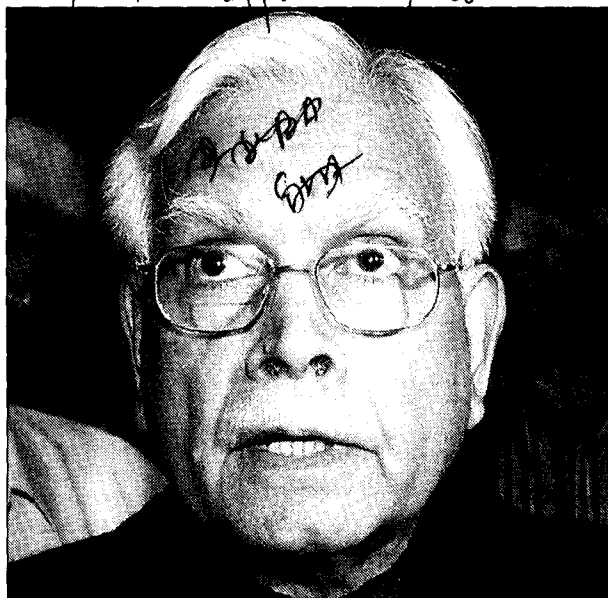
New Delhi, Oct. 30: The Prime Minister today defended K. Natwar Singh against the charge of being one of the "non-contractual beneficiaries" of Iraq's oil-for-food programme during Saddam Hussein's reign.

Manmohan Singh made it clear that the facts mentioned in the UN probe report are "insufficient" and one cannot draw any "adverse conclusion" against the foreign minister from them.

The Prime Minister's defence will be a morale-booster for Natwar. The Congress, which, too, has been tainted with the same brush by the UN report, has so far not offered much of a defence for the foreign minister.

Many had seen the party's reaction yesterday — when it said "individuals" were competent to defend themselves — as an attempt to distance itself from the foreign minister. But the Prime Minister's public statement has sent out a signal that Natwar is not being abandoned in his hour of crisis.

The foreign minister, who returned from Moscow last night, held a closed-door meeting with the Prime Minister.



Natwar Singh after landing in Delhi on Saturday. (PTI)

"Natwar Singh categorically denied any involvement in the alleged illicit payments on oil transactions under the oil-for-food programme, as stated by the UN independent inquiry, the Volcker Committee report," the Prime Minister's media adviser, Sanjay Baru, told reporters.

"The Prime Minister agreed that the facts mentioned in table-3 of the report of the independent inquiry com-

mittee are insufficient to arrive at any adverse conclusion against the foreign minister and stands by him."

Natwar had already denied the allegation. "I am deeply shocked and outraged by these allegations which are baseless and untrue," he had said in a statement from Frankfurt yesterday before he boarded his flight to India.

Many believe that Natwar is perhaps being singled out

from the long list of alleged "beneficiaries" because of India's stand on Iran. The foreign minister's visit to Tehran in September had raised concerns in Washington about the growing India-Iran ties.

Volcker's allegation about him came out a day after he met the Iranian Vice-President in Moscow and stressed that Delhi would like the controversy over Tehran's nuclear programme sorted out in the International Atomic Energy Agency rather than the UN Security Council.

Although Washington hasn't officially reacted to the Moscow meeting, indications are the Bush administration may not be too happy with it or with Natwar's comments.

But if the foreign minister has to prove his innocence and link the disclosure of Volcker's charge with India's stand on Iran, he needs the Left's support.

The Left today demanded a probe into the allegations. "It should be noted in this context that the US and other Western countries who were instrumental in imposing the brutal sanctions for 11 years are biased against all those who had dealings with the then Iraqi government," a statement issued by the CPM added.

31 OCT 2005

# Govt names envoy for UN liaison

Council of  
Minister

HT

## I-T, ED question Sehgal

HT Political Bureau and Agencies

New Delhi, November 6

HT 7/11

IN THE face of a raging political storm, the government on Sunday night appointed a special envoy to collect material on the allegations made in the Volcker Committee report on Iraqi oil payoffs involving external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh and the Congress. A judge to head the panel of inquiry is likely to be announced on Monday.

Virendra Dayal, a former UN under-secretary-general and former member of the NHRC, will liaise with the UN and its member states to gather relevant material, including those on the unverified references in the report regarding the "involvement of Indian entities and individuals", a Press release issued by the Prime Minister's media adviser, Sanjaya Baru, said. The announcement comes amid growing Opposition demand for a CBI inquiry into the Paul Volcker Committee report that named Natwar Singh and Congress as non-contractual beneficiaries in the payoffs made in the corruption-ridden Oil-for-Food programme during the Saddam Hussein regime in 2001.

The 70-year-old Dayal, a former Chef de Cabinet of UN secretary-general Pervez de Cullar, will be granted the full powers and authority of the Indian government to execute the responsibilities entrusted to him. His appointment would be for an initial term of three months or until the completion of his task, whichever was earlier, the statement said.

Earlier, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Congress's top leadership spent a busy and anxious weekend discussing the broad contours of the proposed inquiry into the Volcker panel's report on the oil-for-food scam. Among the options explored at Sunday morning's discussions — after which external affairs minister Natwar Singh met the PM — was an inquiry headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court under the Commissions of Inquiry Act. Perhaps getting a scent of it, BJP's Arun Jaitley demanded a CBI inquiry, citing the stand the Congress took in the Tehelka case, in which the party initiated a probe by the CBI after packing off the Justice Phukan panel.

The strategy session at the PM's residence was attended by Sonia Gandhi, Pranab Mukherjee, Arjun Singh, Shivraj Patil and Ahmed Patel, besides finance minister P. Chidambaram and law minister H.R. Bhardwaj.

Meanwhile, the ED questioned businessman Andaleep Sehgal, a partner in Hamdan Exports — the firm which, according to Volcker's report, was allegedly involved in the scam. Sehgal is a distant relative and a friend of his son, Jagat Singh, Natwar Singh had said. Searches were also conducted by ED and I-T sleuths at the residence and offices of Sehgal, besides the offices of partner company Koyla.

### VOLCKER FALLOUT



### Busy Sunday

- PM called Natwar Singh for a discussion after he met Sonia Gandhi, senior ministers
- ED and I-T officials questioned Andaleeb Sehgal, considered a close friend of Natwar Singh's son Jagat
- They also searched Sehgal's offices and residence
- Searches are also believed to have been conducted at the offices of Hamadan's partner company, Koyla

# CBI may now probe '84 riots cases

9. November 84

## Damage control: After Parliament promise, PM set to deliver

**RAJNISH Sharma**  
New Delhi, October 3

MANMOHAN SINGH has been as good as his word. Riot cases against four top Congress leaders — Jagdish Tytler, Sajjan Kumar, H.K.L. Bhagat and Dharam Dass Shastri — are set to reopen after 21 years, with the CBI likely to take over the investigation.

Months after the Prime Minister had promised re-investigation of the charges against the leaders indicted in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, the home ministry has recommended that the cases be referred to the CBI. The CBI has been recommended because the home ministry felt the Delhi police's investigations had been faulty.

A final decision will be taken at a high-

level meeting on Tuesday. And it is the Prime Minister who will chair the meet.

Singh had made the assurance during an emotional address to Parliament during the recent Budget session. Though

the Nanavati Commission had indicted the four leaders as "probably involved"

in the riots, the government's action-taken report implied that they had been let off. Amid the outcry that followed, the

Prime Minister had apologised to the nation for the riots and assured Parliament that investigations would begin afresh against his four party colleagues.

At Tuesday's meeting, the Prime Minister will review how his assurances have been followed up. He had promised not only a re-investigation but also compensation and jobs to riot victims' relatives.

The ministry has constituted two committees to look into these aspects. The committees have almost finalised their reports. The compensation panel has recommended a Rs 1,000-crore package for nearly 22,000 family members of riot victims all over the country. The committee has suggested that one member from each family be provided employment with a central paramilitary force.



### FOLLOW-UP ACTION

#### ■ Riot cases

**PM PROMISED** Fresh probe against Tytler, Sajjan, Bhagat and Shastri

**MINISTRY RECOMMENDS** Cases to be probed by CBI, not Delhi police

#### ■ Other assurances

**PM PROMISED** Compensation and jobs for victims' relatives

**MINISTRY RECOMMENDS** Rs 1,000-cr package for 22,000 people; jobs for one member of each affected family

# FM should quit,

**New Delhi:** The issue of Nalini Chidambaram taking up an income-tax department case rocked the Rajya Sabha for the second consecutive day on Tuesday while the Lok Sabha witnessed noisy scenes with the opposition demanding the resignation of Finance Minister P Chidambaram over the "gross impropriety".

Not satisfied with the FM's statement that he had "no knowledge" about his lawyer wife's appointment, the BJP-led opposition staged a walkout in the Lok Sabha.

It was the same story in Upper House with AIADMK member N Jothi expressing dissatisfaction with Chidambaram's personal ex-

planation to the House on Monday saying "he has not covered any issue we have raised".

The AIADMK members soon trooped to the well of the House, who were instantly supported by BJP members shouting slogans against the FM. With the Congress countering, noisy scenes broke out, forcing chairman Bha-iron Singh Shekhawat to adjourn the House for an hour.

In the Lok Sabha, the issue was raised for the first time by BJP deputy leader V K Malhotra who sought to know whether any minister could plead ignorance about what was happening in his department and his house, leading to heated exchanges between the opposition and treasury benches.

# 'IT dept to move SC in mills case'

**New Delhi:** Finance minister P Chidambaram said in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the income-tax department would move the supreme court on the case regarding 43 mills which went against the department in the Madras high court in which his lawyer wife had appeared as senior counsel. He also said the insinuation that one Sri Karpagam Mills Limited in Cholapuram in Tamil Nadu, said to be owned by Chidambaram's brother, was among the 43 mills in the income-tax case before the Madras high court was false.



Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav came to the defence of the FM saying that it was not proper for those in politics to tar-nish each other. "If a lawyer is competent, she can be engaged by any department".

All hell broke loose after RJD member Devendra Prasad Yadav made a remark about former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was present in the House, while de-

tending Chidambaram. It angered the BJP members so much that they stormed to the well.

Shouting slogans "Finance Minister resign", the BJP members took to their seats only after speaker Somnath Chatterjee ordered that Yadav's remark be expunged. CPM member Rupchand Pal said that the Chidambaram, who was in the House, owed an explanation in the matter.

Gurudas Dasgupta (CPI) said it was improper for the wife of the FM to take up the assignment, but also faulted the opposition for politicising the issue.

Chidambaram stated that he had no knowledge of the matter at any stage during the relevant period.

Agencies

# BJP to demand Chidambaram's resignation

27/8  
J. Council of Ministers  
H.D-1

## Row over his wife appearing for IT department

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Bharatiya Janata Party will raise in the Rajya Sabha on Monday the issue of Nalini Chidambaram, wife of Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and senior advocate in the Madras High Court, taking up a case for the Income Tax Department in the Madras High Court.

The issue had been raised in the House and the BJP would even seek Mr. Chidambaram's resignation, BJP spokesperson Sushma Swaraj said on Friday.

AIADMK member N. Jothi raised the matter in the House on Thursday but the Chairman did not allow a discussion as no notice had been given.

Ms. Swaraj said: "All relevant documents have been submitted with the Chairman and a proper

notice has been given. The matter will be raised in a big way on Monday."

In a statement from Chennai, Ms. Nalini Chidambaram clarified that she was the senior standing counsel for the department in the 1970s and 1980s. "In one case before the Madras High Court (clubbed with a batch of cases raising the same legal issues), my husband, Mr. Chidambaram, was engaged to appear for the Income Tax Department by Pushya Sitaraman, senior standing counsel for the department. The case did not come up for hearing until May 2004, when Mr. Chidambaram joined the Government. (Hence no fees were paid to him)."

When the case came up for hearing later Ms. Pushya persuaded her to accept the brief

and this was the only case in which the department had engaged her. "It was a professional matter between me and the department and my husband had no knowledge of this at any stage," she said.

"I may state that since my husband first became the Finance Minister in 1996, I have voluntarily refrained from appearing for or against the department. This is the sole case in which the department had engaged me. Perhaps, I should not have allowed myself to be persuaded by my colleague to appear for the department but I am clear in my mind that there was no illegality or impropriety."

---

CBDT regrets: Page 12

---

27 AUG 2004

# TYTLER RESIGNS

## PM promises to reopen riot cases

VINOD Sharma and SAROJ Nagi  
New Delhi, August 10

118  
I - Council  
of Ministers  
HR-1

UNION MINISTER Jagdish Tytler resigned on Wednesday night, within hours of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's assurance to Lok Sabha that he would act against Congress leaders named in the Nanavati Commission's report on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

After a daylong Lok Sabha debate on the commission's findings, Tytler called on Sonia Gandhi and handed her a personal note and a formal resignation addressed to the Prime Minister. He had met the Prime Minister before Lok Sabha took up the debate.

Tytler later said he had resigned on his own. "Why should I put the party in trouble? I want my name to be cleared expeditiously... I still say that I am innocent. There is no complaint against me and I have never been summoned by any court in this connection," he said.

The die was cast on Tuesday night with the Left parties pressing home the no-compromise message. In the face of grow-

ing public perception that the government's action taken report (ATR) was in fact a no-action declaration, his exit was believed to be only a matter of time. But he could have saved the Congress some embarrassment if he had heeded advice and quit on Monday.

In the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister conceded the four demands — including a fresh probe against Tytler and action against Sajjan Kumar — made by the Left in return for its support against the Opposition-sponsored adjournment motion.

He pledged to take "all possible steps within the ambit of law" to "reopen and re-examine" cases specifically pinpointed in the commission's report. "This is a solemn promise and commitment to this House," Singh said.

He assured measures for rehabilitation of the riot victims and said he would consult the law ministry on how to proceed against police officials figuring in the report, who have since retired.



**Jagdish Tytler**

*'I resigned on my own'*

See also Page 2

1 1 AUG 2005  
THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Mr Tytler must go

This may not be in the CMP, but it's still not late to do the right thing

**T**HE Manmohan Singh government is best advised not to try and brazen this one out. The uproar that has greeted its tabling of the belated Nanavati Commission report and the sterile Action Taken Report in Parliament resonates with a shared outrage. How can a government use up the entire six months legally permitted to it to consider the report into a longago massacre, only to duck each and every one of its recommendations for action, in full public view? The ATR has promised to "examine" the need for action when it does not reject it outright, as in the case of Union minister Jagdish Tytler. There are moments in a nation's life when a government seems frightfully out of touch with the people, when it seems to be lurching on ahead dangerously cocooned in insensitivity and arrogance. This could be one such — if the government does not do something immediately.

Minister Jagdish Tytler must be asked to step down so that his role in the anti-Sikh pogrom is impartially investigated. Cases against Congress MP Sajjan Kumar must be pursued fully and honestly. Those weak alibis must be dispensed with — that this implicated police officer is retired since

and that culpable politician too infirm. Some purposeful movement must be demonstrated on initiating systemic change. But, in the end, this is about punishing the guilty men of 1984 so that a nation can move on from that terrible moment. The calls to forgive and forget nevertheless, reek of a resignation and cynicism that have no place in a system which promises justice to all its citizens, be they a part of the majority community or in a minority.

In a democracy, if mob violence of the kind that was perpetrated on the Capital's Sikh community in 1984 is ever allowed to be glossed over, even once, if its memory is routinised — that is the biggest danger. It would be a sad travesty, indeed, if a government that professes a special commitment to India's pluralism and a more humane face to its policies, should contribute to the undermining of faith in both secularism and justice. It would be tragic, also, if the government were to correct itself as a mere firefighting exercise, because the opposition and its own allies had raised the pitch too high. The UPA government has no time to lose if it wants to salvage some modicum of decency and honour from this quicksand.

000  
IAN EXP

# দাগি মন্ত্রী নিয়ে কেন্দ্রের ব্যখ্যা চাইল সুপ্রিম কোর্ট

নয়াদিল্লি, ১ অগস্ট: কেন্দ্রীয়  
মন্ত্রিসভায় 'দাগি' মন্ত্রীদের অন্তর্ভুক্তি  
নিয়ে বিতর্ক ফের মাথাচাড়া দিল।

মনমোহন সিংহের মন্ত্রিসভায় দাগি  
মন্ত্রীদের সামিল করার বিরুদ্ধে একটি  
জনস্বার্থ মামলার জবাবে আজ সুপ্রিম  
কোর্ট কেন্দ্রের কাছে জানতে চেয়েছে  
'স্বচ্ছ প্রশাসনের অর্থ কী' সেটা কে  
নির্ধারণ করবে।

কিন্তু সরকারের পক্ষে অ্যাটর্নি  
জেনারেল মিলন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় এবং  
সলিসিটর জেনারেল জি ই বাহানবতী  
আদালতকে জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন,  
মন্ত্রিসভায় কাকে নেওয়া হবে তা  
নির্ভর করছে এক মাত্র প্রধানমন্ত্রীর  
উপরে। আজ মিলনবাবু বলেন, এই  
বিষয়টি নিয়ে জলঘোলা করা সংসদীয়  
গণতন্ত্রের ঐতিহ্যের পক্ষে হানিকর।  
ঝাড়খণ্ড বিধানসভা ভোটের পরে  
বিচারবিভাগের ভূমিকায় ক্ষুব্ধ  
লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ  
চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের মন্তব্যের পরে  
আদালতে আজ মিলনবাবুর বক্তব্য  
যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ।

তাদের এই বক্তব্যের উত্তরে প্রধান  
বিচারপতি আর সি লাহোটি,  
বিচারপতি সি কে ঠাকুর এবং পি কে  
বালসুব্রহ্মণ্যমের এক বেঞ্চ জানিয়েছে,  
সংসদে কোন বিষয়গুলি নিয়ে বিতর্ক  
হবে তা বিচার বিভাগের এজিয়ার  
বহির্ভূত। কিন্তু সংবিধানের অবমাননা  
হচ্ছে কি না সেটা দেখা অবশ্যই বিচার  
বিভাগের দায়িত্ব।

কিন্তু মিলনবাবুকে আদালত প্রশ্ন  
করেছে, কারা তাদের শাসন করবে তা  
নির্ধারণ করার অধিকার কি এ  
দেশের নাগরিকদের আছে? ওই  
জনস্বার্থ মামলাটিতে বলা হয়েছিল  
বর্তমান অবস্থা চলতে দিলে, এর পর  
তো খুনি, ডাকাত বা যে কোনও  
অপরাধীই দেশের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আসনে  
বসতে পারে।

বাহানবতী বলেছেন, কোনও  
ব্যক্তির মন্ত্রী হওয়া না হওয়ার মানদণ্ড  
ঠিক করার নির্দিষ্ট সংসদীয় রূপরেখা  
রয়েছে। আদালত তাতে হস্তক্ষেপ  
করতে পারে না।

মিলনবাবু অবশ্য আজ বলেছেন,  
“আমার দায়িত্ব সংসদ ও  
বিচারবিভাগের মধ্যে সামান্যতম  
মতভেদকেও দূর করা।”

আজ আদালতে নাম না করেও  
কেন্দ্রীয় রেলমন্ত্রী লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের  
প্রসঙ্গ ওঠে।

সিবিআইয়ের চার্জশিট পাওয়ার  
পরে বিহারের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী পদ থেকে  
লালু ইস্তফা দিয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু এখন  
তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে একাধিক মামলায়  
চার্জশিট দেওয়া সত্ত্বেও তিনি কেন  
ইস্তফা দেননি সে কথা জানতে চাওয়া  
হয় ওই মামলায়। — পি টি আই

ANADABANGALATIKA

# Big four out of shuffle radar

## OUR BUREAU

**New Delhi, June 23:** The expected cabinet shuffle could happen next week but is likely to leave the major portfolios untouched.

Before the changes are announced, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi will have a final discussion on them, party sources said.

Singh will be occupied with meetings of the National Development Council and the Inter-State Council on June 27 and 28, and Sonia will return from a holiday on June 29.

Congress sources said the "expectation" is that the shuffle would be a "limited" one and those at the "top" — the ministers of finance, external affairs, defence and home af-

fairs — would keep their jobs. Till last week, there was speculation in the party headquarters that defence minister Pranab Mukherjee would get home and the incumbent, Shivraj Patil, would get petroleum, leaving Mani Shankar Aiyar with panchavati raj. But this was later ruled out.

The shuffle is expected to be mainly a Congress affair though the Prime Minister has spoken to the two key allies, Laloo Prasad Yadav and M. Karunanidhi.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal and DMK chiefs have reportedly indicated that they do not want any changes to their list of ministers. The only United Progressive Alliance partner to have sought a change was Sharad Pawar of the National-

ist Congress Party, who wants

to upgrade Praful Patel, the minister of state for civil aviation (independent charge), into a full-fledged cabinet minister.

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha chief Shibu Soren, however, is likely to return to the coal ministry after cooling his heels in Jharkhand.

Congress sources said the details of the exercise are intertwined with the changes Sonia may carry out in the party organisation.

Sources said the effort will be to try and meet the "regional and caste-based gaps" in the existing council of ministers. There is a feeling that the Brahmins of the Hindi belt are virtually unrepresented and that this "shortfall" must be made up soon so that rival parties do not exploit it. Sources

pointed to the efforts of the Bahujan Samaj Party to win over the upper castes in Uttar Pradesh.

All India Congress Committee general secretary Ambika Soni is almost certain of being inducted, although it is uncertain whether she would get information and broadcasting or power.

The AICC treasurer, Motilal Vora, who is from Chhattisgarh, is likely to be brought in and Rajya Sabha member Murlidhara Deora appointed in his place.

The other name doing the rounds is that of Anand Sharma, Rajya Sabha member from Himachal Pradesh, a state which, like Chhattisgarh, has no members in the council of ministers.

There has been talk of

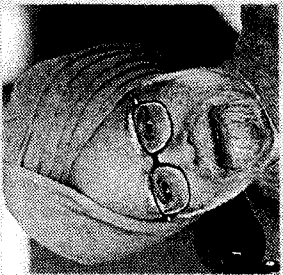
bringing in Giridhar Gamang to give Orissa its due share in the government.

Apart from being a former chief minister and a tribal, Gamang was among the few Congressmen to have won from Orissa during the last Lok Sabha polls. He could replace the present tribal affairs minister, P.R. Kyndiah, who may be shifted to another ministry.

Former Kerala chief minister A.K. Antony's induction has, however, been ruled out with sources suggesting he may be "compensated" with a governorship.

After the shuffle, Sonia is likely to attend to the organisation and complete the tasks of appointing state Congress chiefs and revamping the working committee.

## FULL PLATE



Issues pending before the Congress and the government

- AICC shuffle
- PCC chiefs' appointments
- Meet on CWC polls
- Governors' appointments
- Meeting of Congress CMs
- Bureaucratic shuffle
- Cabinet changes