

Spotlight shifts to seven MPLADS tainted

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 24. — After yesterday's expulsion of 11 MPs from Parliament for their involvement in the cash-for-posers scam, the spotlight has now been focused on another batch of seven MPs cutting across the party line, who were caught on camera by the second latest sting operation that purportedly showed them asking for kickbacks from undercover reporters for sanctioning projects under the MP local area development scheme (MPLADS).

Both the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, and the Rajya Sabha Chairman, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, have already referred to the inquiry into this MPLADS scam to a special committee and the ethics committee of their Houses respectively.

The scandal allegedly involves five members of the Lok Sabha — three BJP and one each from the Congress and the SP — and two MPs from the upper House, who belong to the Rashtriya Kranti Dal and the BSP. Of them, the BJP MP Chandra Pratap Singh has already been expelled since he was also implicated in the first sting on cash-for-questions scam.

With 11 heads already rolled, the sword would be now hanging over the six MPs in the

exposed MPLADS-related corruption. Any action against them would await the next session of the Parliament which is due in the third week of February, 2006.

It is to be seen whether the fate of these "tainted" MPs would be any different from their colleagues expelled yesterday. The two House committees would evidently follow their own procedures in these separate cases.

But given the political parties' soft reaction to the exposure of MPLADS, in sharp contrast to their outrage over the cash-for-questions scandal, there are indications that the second batch of seven MPs might not necessarily meet the same fate as their colleagues. The back-to-back stings have also triggered a backlash of sorts against the pro-active media, and particularly the sting operations from the MPs and politicians across the political divide, some of whom even expressed their sympathies with the tainted members.

Contrary to their swift crack-down against the 11 accused of the cash-for-queries scandal, the parties concerned did not resort to the same disciplinary action against the seven of the MPLADS infamy. The Congress and the BJP spared their one MP each from the suspension axe this time round on the ground that the



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Expelled MPs may move court

NEW DELHI, Dec. 24. — Expelled BJP MPs are considering moving the Delhi High Court against the decision claiming they have been denied natural justice and an opportunity to be heard.

"We are seeking opinion of legal and constitutional experts over the matter as our expulsion goes against the principles of natural justice," BJP MP from Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh, Mr Pradip Gandhi told reporters after meeting some of his colleagues at the residence of another "tainted" BJP MP Mr MK Anna Patil here.

Mr Gandhi claimed that the Bansal Committee did not give them "enough" time to respond to the charges levelled against them. BJP MPs Mr Gandhi, Mr CP Singh and Mr Patil met here.

"Even in the 1951 HG Mudgal case, cited by the Committee in its report, the accused MP was given 45 days notice to respond to the charges levelled against him," he said adding that the entire process leading to his (Mudgal's) expulsion was about five months. We were expelled within just 11 days of levelling of charges. We did not get enough time to present our case properly before the committee," Mr Gandhi said, adding most BJP MPs held a similar view.

BSP MP Mr Rajaram Pal claimed that he had written letters to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh and the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, when undercover journalists had offered him money to raise questions in Parliament. "I had also asked the Speaker to allow me to present my case before Parliament, but my requests were not heeded to," Mr Pal claimed.

Mr Pal said he was seeking the advice of legal experts over his expulsion from the Lok Sabha. "My case was completely different," the BSP MP said. **PTI**

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member Lok Sabha

mittee until the completion of the

probe. These members are — Mr

Alemao Churchill (Congress), Mr

Faggan Singh Kulaste (BJP), Mr

Ram Swatooop Koli (BJP), Mr

Singh (BSP).

The accused House MPs have

been asked to submit their

responses to the panel by 2

January. The Speaker has also

asked them not to attend the

headed ethics committee to sub-

mit its report "at the earliest".

The accused members are SP-

supported Sakshi Maharaj

(Rashtriya Kranti Dal) and Isam

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প্রশ্ন-ঘুষ কাণ্ডে বহিষ্কৃত এগারো জন সাংসদই

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৩ ডিসেম্বর: প্রশ্ন ঘুষ-কাণ্ডে ১১ জন সাংসদই বহিষ্কৃত হলেন সংসদ থেকে। 'অনৈতিকতা'র দায়ে একসঙ্গে ১১ জন সাংসদের বহিষ্কারের ঘটনা ভারতীয় সংসদে অভূতপূর্ব।

লঘু পাপে গুরু দণ্ড— এই যুক্তিতে বিজেপি অবশ্য এই সিদ্ধান্ত সমর্থন করেনি। তারা পদ্ধতিগত ত্রুটির কথাও বলেছে। তবে কংগ্রেস-বাম তথা ইউপিএ-র শরিক ও সমর্থক দলগুলি বহিষ্কারের প্রশ্নে এককাতাই ছিল।

এর আগে ১৯৫১ সালে এইচ জি মুদগল, ১৯৭৫ সালে সুব্রহ্মণ্যম স্বামী ও ১৯৭৮-এ ইন্দিরা গান্ধী বহিষ্কৃত হয়েছিলেন। এ যাত্রায় লোকসভার ১০ জন এবং রাজ্যসভার এক সাংসদকে একযোগে বার করে দেওয়া হল আইনসভা থেকে। বহিষ্কৃতদের মধ্যে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ ছ'জনই বিজেপি-র। কংগ্রেস এবং আরজেডি-র রয়েছেন এক জন করে। বাকি তিন জন বহুজন সমাজ পার্টির। স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় ও সংসদীয় মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুণ্ডি জানিয়েছেন, পূর্ববর্তী প্রক্রিয়ার জন্য নির্বাচন কমিশনের কাছে সুপারিশ পাঠানো হচ্ছে।

মুদইয়ে দলের রজত জয়ন্তী বর্ষের মহাঅধিবেশনের তিন দিন আগেই লোকসভার পাঁচ ও রাজ্যসভার এক জন মিলিয়ে মোট ছয় সাংসদের বহিষ্কার বিজেপি-র পক্ষে শিরঃপীড়ার কারণ হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। অন্তত সংখ্যাগত দলের বিচারে কংগ্রেসের কাছে ধাক্কাটা অপেক্ষাকৃত লঘু মাপের। শূন্য আসনগুলিতে ফের নিজেদের প্রতিনিধিদের ফিরিয়ে আনার ব্যাপারে চিন্তিত বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব। সরাসরি এই কথা স্বীকার না-করলেও বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ নেতাদের বক্তব্যে তার ছাপ পড়েছে।

যেমন, লোকসভায় বিজেপি নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী এই মন্তব্যই করেন যে, “বিষয়টা যতটা না দুর্নীতির প্রশ্ন, তার চেয়ে বেশি নির্বুদ্ধিতার পরিচয় দেয়। দুর্নীতির প্রশ্নকে আমি কখনও লঘু করে দেখি না। তাই টিভি-তে ঘুষ-কাণ্ডের খানিকটা দেখেই আমি সংসদীয় দল থেকে অভিযুক্ত সাংসদদের সাসপেন্ড করার নির্দেশ দিয়েছিলাম। কিন্তু তাঁদের আচরণের মধ্যে ঘোর বোকামির দিকটাও অস্বীকার করা যায় না।”

এই যুক্তিতে, আডবাণীর মতে, বহিষ্কারের সিদ্ধান্ত লঘু পাপে গুরু দণ্ড। কোনও দলের নাম না-করে তার পাল্টা কটাক্ষ, “অনেক সাংসদ তো তাঁদের সরকারি আবাসনের গ্যারেজ ঘরটাও ভাড়া দেন। সেটা কি অসদাচরণ নয়?” বস্তুত, লোকসভায় বিজেপি-র সহকারী নেতা বিজয় মলহোত্র ও রাজ্যসভায় অরুণ জেটলি-সহ দলের শীর্ষ সাংসদদের অনেকেই পদ্ধতিগত ত্রুটির প্রশ্ন তুলে বহিষ্কারের মতো কোনও সিদ্ধান্তে আপত্তি জানান। আডবাণী বলেন, “যে অপরাধ, তাতে এই ধরনের শাস্তি হতে পারে না। এটা তো মৃত্যুদণ্ডেরই নামান্তর। এটা কি ঠিক হচ্ছে? আমরা কী ধরনের দৃষ্টান্ত স্থাপন করছি!”

লোকসভায় আজ বহিষ্কারের সুপারিশ পেশ করেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। তিনি অবশ্য মনে করেন, অভিযুক্ত সাংসদদের উচিত শাস্তিই হয়েছে। তাঁর কথায়, “যতই বেদনাদায়ক হোক, কখনও কখনও কর্তব্যে অবিচল থাকতে হয়। বিশেষ করে, নিজেদের সহকর্মীদের ব্যাপারে কড়া সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া খুব সহজ নয়। যাঁদের সঙ্গে আমরা কাজ করেছি, দীর্ঘ সময় কাটিয়েছি।”

লোকসভার নেতা প্রণববাবুর মতে, ‘অর্থবহ’ কিছু একটা করা জরুরি হয়ে পড়েছিল। বিশ্বের বৃহত্তম গণতন্ত্র কী ভাবে পরিস্থিতির সামাল দেয়, সেটা দেখার জন্য দেশের আমজনতা উদগ্রীব। বিশেষ করে, আইনসভায় প্রশ্ন তোলায় যে ক্ষমতা সদস্যদের রয়েছে, কোনও ভাবে তার অপব্যবহার করা মেনে নেওয়া যায় না। তিনি উদাহরণ দেন, ব্রিটিশ আমলে ভাইসরয়ের জমানায় কলকাতায় রাজ ভবনের (এখনকার) ছোট একটি ঘরে আইনসভার কাউন্সিলের বৈঠকেও সদস্যেরা প্রশাসকদের কাছে নানা বিষয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলতে পারতেন।

হৃদয় বনাম আইনের প্রশ্নেও আজ সরগরম হয় লোকসভা।

প্রণববাবুর বক্তব্য, “আমাদের মনের অন্দরটা এক বার তলিয়ে দেখি। টিভি-র পর্দায় আমরা যা দেখছি, যেমন, সাংসদ টাকা লুকিয়ে রাখছেন গদির তলায়— এর পরেও কি আইনি মারপ্যাঁচে যাওয়া উচিত?” অন্য দিকে, মলহোত্রের পাল্টা প্রশ্ন, “মন চাইলেই কাউকে কি আমরা ফাঁসিতে ঝোলাতে পারি? ইন্দিরা গান্ধীর হত্যাকারীদের আমরা সবাই ছবিতে দেখেছি। তাদের কি পর দিনই ফাঁসি হয়ে গিয়েছিল? আত্মপক্ষ সমর্থনের সুযোগ সকলেরই পাওয়া উচিত।” আত্মপক্ষ সমর্থনের এই প্রশ্নই সামনে এসে পড়েছে বহিষ্কৃত সাংসদ রাজা রাম পালের বক্তব্যে। সংবাদসংস্থাকে বি এস পি-র এই সাংসদ বলেছেন, ‘রহস্যজনক’ সংস্থার প্রতিনিধি যে প্রশ্ন তোলার ব্যাপারে তাঁর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করেছেন, সে কথা তিনি

এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

● বিজেপি বিরোধীদের হাতেই মোক্ষম অস্ত্র তুলে দিল...পৃঃ ৪

প্রশ্ন-ঘুষ কাণ্ডে

প্রথম পাতার পর

লোকসভার স্পিকারকে রেজিস্টার্ড পোস্টে লিখে পাঠিয়েছিলেন। তাঁর ব্যাপারটা স্পিকারের জানা ছিল বলেই ওই সাংসদের দাবি। রাজ্যসভার পালের সঙ্গেই বিজেপি-র বহিষ্কৃত সাংসদ প্রদীপ গান্ধী এখন আদালতে যাওয়ার কথা ভাবছেন।

রাজ্যসভার সদস্য তথা প্রখ্যাত আইনজীবী জেঠমালানিও আজ পদ্ধতিগত প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন, “অভিযুক্ত সাংসদকে ন্যায়বিচারের সুযোগ দেওয়া হয়নি। সাংসদকে বহিষ্কার করার এজিয়ার এথিক্স কমিটির নেই। সংবিধানেও রাজ্যসভায় নির্বাচিত সদস্যের মেয়াদ কমানোর সংস্থান নেই।” রাজ্যসভার এথিক্স কমিটির চেয়ারম্যান কর্ণ সিংহ অবশ্য জানান, বহিষ্কারের সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার অধিকার রয়েছে সভার।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ সমস্যার গভীরে যাওয়ারই পক্ষপাতী। রাজনৈতিক দল ও নেতাদের খরচখরচার সংস্থান প্রসঙ্গে বিতর্কের সূচনা হওয়ায় তিনি খুশি। প্রশ্ন-ঘুষ কাণ্ডের পূর্বকৈ অত্যন্ত দুর্ভাগ্যজনক বলেও তিনি মনে করেন। তার জেরে যে ‘সিদ্ধান্ত’ নেওয়া হয়েছে, গণতন্ত্রে মানুষের আস্থা টিকিয়ে রাখতে তা অত্যন্ত জরুরি ছিল।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

11 MPs expelled for cash-for-questions scam

BJP, BJD walk out of Lok Sabha; punishment disproportionate to offence, says L.K. Advani

K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI: Parliament on Friday expelled 11 members — 10 from the Lok Sabha and one from the Rajya Sabha — whose conduct was found to be “unethical and unbecoming” of Members of Parliament.

For the first time in the annals of Indian Parliament, the membership of the 11 MPs was terminated by voice vote, 11 days after the sting operation on the cash-for-questions scam hit the headlines.

The Rajya Sabha agreed with the recommendation of its Ethics Committee while the Lok Sabha endorsed the report of the Pawan Kumar Bansal Committee set up to go into the allegations.

Differences over procedure

Though the thrust of the debate was on acting against corruption, the members differed on the procedure adopted to arrive at the decision. Cracks in the Opposition approach were seen in both the debate and the voting in the Houses.

Of the 10 Lok Sabha MPs whose membership was terminated, five belong to the Bharatiya Janata Party, three to the Bahujan Samaj Party and one each to the Congress and the Rashtriya Janata Dal.

The BJP and the Biju Janata Dal staged a walkout in the Lok Sabha after Leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani said the punishment was disproportionate to the offence.

Mr. Advani termed the act of the expelled members “stupidity,” as they believed that those carrying out the sting operation were representatives of non-governmental organisations and fell into their trap.

JD(U) questions BJP move

Prior to this, BJP leader Vijay



WITNESSING HISTORY: The expulsion of 11 MPs on Friday for taking bribes to raise questions highlights the need to restore public trust in elected representatives. These visitors were privileged to witness an act of expiation unprecedented in the history of any parliamentary democracy.

— PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Kumar Malhotra’s amendment to refer the issue to the Privileges Committee was negated. Braja Kishore Tripathy said the BJD could not be a party to a House that stood divided.

On the other hand, the Janata Dal (United) questioned the BJP’s move with its leader Prab-

hunath Singh stating that if the principles of morality made the party demand the resignation of Natwar Singh as External Affairs Minister following the Volcker Report, a different approach could not be taken now.

Contrary to the BJP’s stand in the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Op-

position in the Rajya Sabha Jaswant Singh preferred to go along with the House in expelling Chhatrapal Singh Lodha (BJP). While asking the House to reflect on the “virtually limitless powers” at its disposal, Mr. Jaswant Singh did not want the Rajya Sabha to be divided on the

issue; yet, he concurred with the views expressed by the members.

The resolution

At the end of a five-and-a-half hour discussion on the Bansal Committee report, the Lok Sabha passed the resolution, which

said: “That this House having taken note of the Report of the Committee to inquire into the allegations of improper conduct on the part of some members, constituted on 12 December, 2005, accepts the findings of the Committee that the conduct of the ten members of [the] Lok

Sabha, namely Narendra Kumar Kushawaha, Annasaheb M.K. Patil, Manoj Kumar, Y.G. Mahajan, Pradeep Gandhi, Suresh Chandel, Ramsevak Singh, Lal Chandra Kol, Rajaram Pal and Chandra Pratap Singh, was unethical and unbecoming of members of Parliament and their continuance as members of [the] Lok Sabha is untenable and resolves that they may be expelled from the membership of [the] Lok Sabha.”

Painful duty: Pranab

Leader of the Lok Sabha Pranab Mukherjee moving the resolution, said it was a painful duty to perform.

The Bansal Committee was mandated to evolve its own procedure, and it kept in view the dignity of Parliament as also the mood of the House on the day the members spoke with one voice seeking stringent and immediate action. “There may be implications [of the expulsion decision] but that does not mean we will not take action.”

A sad event: Somnath

At his customary end of the session press conference, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said it was a “very sad event” that 10 MPs were expelled.

The Privileges Committee had the same powers as any other parliamentary committee, including the ad-hoc panels set up under Mr. Bansal.

Mr. Chatterjee said he did not interfere with the committee’s work, and it was for the House to take a final view on its recommendation.

There was no request from the Bansal Committee seeking more time to submit the report.

Editorial on Page 10
Collective will of MPs
asserted: Page 12

11 MPs expelled from Parliament

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 23. — Parliamentary history was made today when both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha expelled 11 MPs, despite reservations voiced stridently by the BJP and its allies about the procedural correctitude of the move, for accepting money for raising questions.

In a precedent-setting decision, the two Houses, acting swiftly on recommendations of the committees which had reviewed the "cash-for-query" scam exposed by a sting operation on a TV news channel, adopted the motions which described the disgraced MPs' conduct as "unethical" and "unbecoming" of their stature and said their continuance would be "untenable".

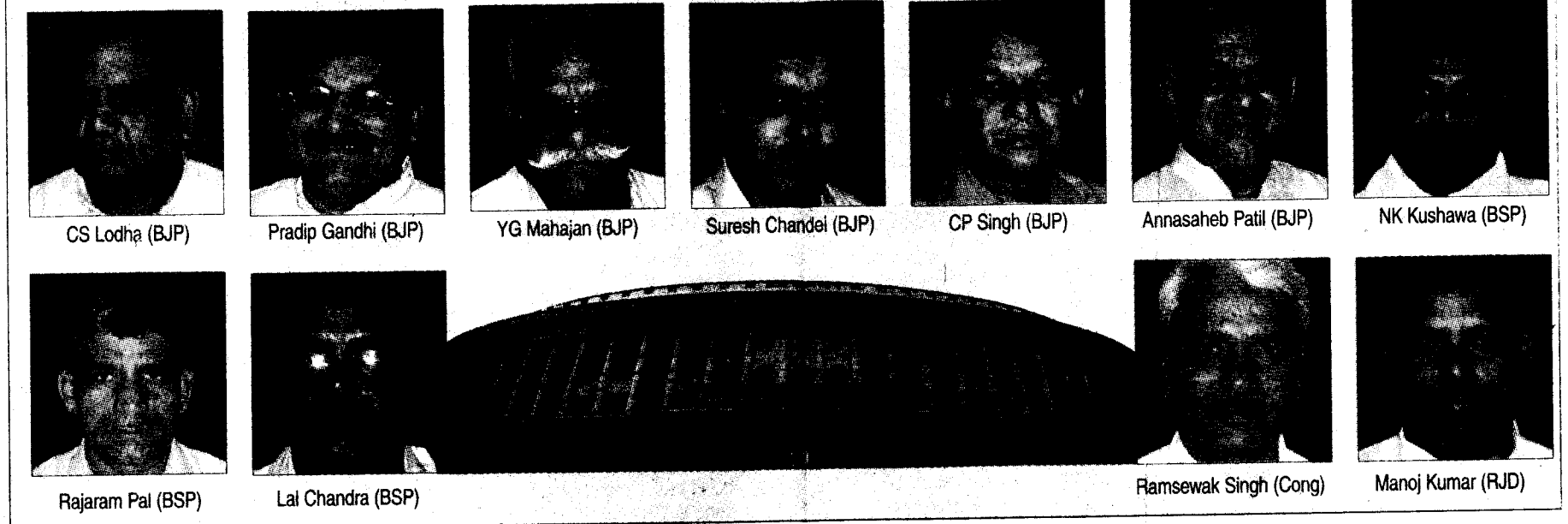
Ten of the 11 MPs, who were not present, belonged to the Lok Sabha. Of them, five belonged to the BJP, three to the BSP and one each to the Congress and the RJD. The lone Rajya Sabha member belonged to the BJP which, interestingly, did not press for a division during the voting.

In the Lok Sabha, the party and its allies, barring the JD-U, staged a walk-out before the Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, put the motion, moved by the leader of the House, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, to the vote.

Both the Houses adopted the motion by a voice vote.

For a similar offence in 1951, the Provincial Parliament ousted HG Mudgal. He had taken money from bullion traders in what in those days was Bombay. His resignation was not accepted.

Those expelled from the Lok Sabha today were Mr Anna-
3 saheb MK Patil, Mr YG



CS Lodha (BJP)

Pradip Gandhi (BJP)

YG Mahajan (BJP)

Suresh Chandel (BJP)

CP Singh (BJP)

Annasaheb Patil (BJP)

NK Kushawa (BSP)

Rajaram Pal (BSP)

Lal Chandra (BSP)

Ramsewak Singh (Cong)

Manoj Kumar (RJD)

Mahajan, Mr Pradeep Gandhi, Mr Suresh Chandel and Mr Chandra Pratap Singh, all BJP, Mr Narendra Kumar Kushwaha, Mr Rajaram Pal and Mr Lal Chandra Kol, all BSP, Mr Ramsewak Singh, Congress, and Mr Manoj Kumar, RJD.

The lone Rajya Sabha member was Mr Chhatrapal Singh Lodha of the BJP.

Throughout the debate, both the Houses were unanimous that the guilty MPs should be punished as what was at stake was Parliament's dignity and honour. But the BJP and its allies said the move, coming as it did 10 days after the expose, seemed hasty with the MPs being denied their right to defend themselves in accordance with Parliament's rules. In the words of the leader of the Opposition, Mr LK Advani, the punishment was disproportionate to the offence.

The Ethics Committee report recommending the expulsion of Mr Lodha was presented to the

Rajya Sabha today to which the BJP member, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, appended a note suggesting that the issue be referred to the Supreme Court for its opinion on the legal position and procedure to be followed for action to be taken against an MP.

The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, told the Rajya Sabha: "We have had no choice but to act to protect the integrity of this citadel of our democratic way of life."

The Opposition, ~~barring~~ the JD-U, said that the guilty MPs should have been given the opportunity of being heard with the right to question the evidence before the Committee of Privileges as the other panels were neither equipped nor empowered to take a decision of such a magnitude.

Moving the motion in the Lok Sabha seeking the expulsion of the 10 members, the leader of the House, Mr Pranab Mukherjee said the members

should rise to the occasion to maintain the dignity of the House "as certain duties ought to be discharged, however painful they may be".

"After what had been telecast on 12 December... all of us felt that something had to be done," Mr Mukherjee said, adding that the country was looking at how the largest functional democracy of the world was going to respond to a situation which had "challenged the very essence of our presence here".

The Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, said it was not a "happy day" for the Chair or the House and asked the members to ensure that the dignity of the House was not lowered further.

The BJP deputy leader, Mr VK Malhotra, said there was no disagreement on the proposition that anybody found indulging in corruption and violating the dignity of the House must be punished. Mr Malhotra, who moved an amendment

We have had no choice but to act to protect the integrity of this citadel of our democratic way of life. — Manmohan Singh



The punishment meted out (to the 11 MPs) has been disproportionate to the offence. — LK Advani

This is not a happy day for the Chair or the House... Members must ensure that dignity of the House is not lowered further.

— Somnath Chatterjee



for sending the issue to the Privileges Committee, said the 12 December TV expose had shocked the nation. The stigmatised MPs were suspended

by their parties immediately after the bombshell disclosure he said. His amendment was rejected by a voice vote.

More reports on page 5

Ten LS members face expulsion

28/12
New Delhi: Ten Lok Sabha members, caught on camera accepting money for raising questions, were on Thursday held guilty by a House Committee which recommended their expulsion but the BJP dissented on the punishment being given "without" following "proper procedure".

The five-member committee, headed by senior Congress MP Pawan Kumar Bansal, held the continuance of the membership of the ten accused as "untenable", but BJP member V K Malhotra appended a note of dissent to the report.

The 10 members are Narendra Kumar Kushwaha (BSP), Anasaheb M K Patil (BJP), Manoj Kumar (RJD), Y G Mahajan (BJP), Pradeep Gandhi (BJP), Suresh Chandel (BJP), Ramsevak Singh (Cong), Lal Chandra Kol (BSP), Rajaram Pal (BSP) and Chandra Pratap Singh (BJP).

"Considering the totality of the facts and circumstances of the case, the committee is of the opinion that the allegation of accepting money by the ten members have been established," it said in its 38-page report tabled in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. As a follow-up action for implementing the committee recommendation, a resolution is likely to be moved in the Lok Sabha on Friday, last day of the current winter session, for expelling them from the House.

If the House adopts such a course of action, the BJP would be the biggest loser as its strength would deplete by five from 136, followed by three of BSP (18) and one each of Congress (147) and RJD (24).

Such a resolution would be second in the history of Indian Parliament, the earlier being in 1951 when an ad hoc Committee of the House in the Provisional Parliament expelled H G Mudgal, who was found guilty of entering into an arrangement with Bombay Bullion traders for raising questions and other issues in the House for money. He gave his resignation but the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru insisted on a House resolution expelling him. And he was expelled. Agencies

MPs



STING OPs

Corruption undermining democratic governance

C. Raj Kumar

TWO RECENT events have brought to the forefront the issue of corruption in India. The first is the saga of the demolitions of illegal structures by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). It has demonstrated how corruption and abuse of power are deep-rooted in India as no action was taken when all these structures were being built. Palms were greased to break every law in the book. It took an order from the Delhi High Court for the MCD to do its long overdue duty.

The second concerns the recent revelations about cash-for-questions by 11 MPs. Ten of them have now been found guilty of breach of privilege by the Lok Sabha's own inquiry committee, which has recommended that 10 of them be expelled; the eleventh is a member of Rajya Sabha where a probe report is expected on Friday. The fate of seven other MPs caught in allegations about use of funds from the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme hangs in the balance.

These two cases of corruption have underlined the need for understanding this problem from a human rights and democratic governance standpoint. It is well known that corruption is widely prevalent in India. Both domestic and international assessments of India have demonstrated its poor track record. Time and again, acts of corruption become an issue in the public domain but like many other ills affecting this country this also is forgotten after some action for a brief while. However, "we, the people" know very well to what extent corruption affects our daily life. Corruption has a profound negative impact on the social, economic, and political fabric of Indian society. It violates human rights, undermines the rule of law, distorts the development process, and dis-empowers the Indian state. This leads to the state losing its capacity to govern. Corruption violates the legal and regulatory framework in India. Clearly, the building laws the MCD was under an obligation to implement were violated. While there are laws against corruption in India, the gap between the law in the books and the law in practice is wide.

Corruption violates human rights of the people of India as it hinders the process of fulfilling civil, political, economic, and social rights. The unequal application of law leading to selective

Corruption violates human rights, undermines the rule of law, distorts the development process, and dis-empowers the Indian state. The way forward is to increase the say of civil society in governance issues.

enforcement due to corruption creates an environment of scant regard for law and legal institutions. This is also demonstrated at two levels in the recent demolitions in Delhi. There are allegations that MCD officials were bribed to ensure they do not enforce the law and do not order demolitions. This is notwithstanding the fact that the MCD officials were aware illegal structures were being built. It is also alleged that those who did not bribe were harassed.

Rule of law means a society is governed on the basis of laws enforced equally. Corruption in India creates an environment whereby some people are given privileges due to their ability to pay bribes. A rule-of-law society is based upon the trust and faith of the people that they are governed on the basis of laws enforced in a fair, just, and reasonable manner. Corruption undermines this basic trust. This especially weakens sovereignty in democratic polities, where legitimacy and popular will are essential requisites for an authority to call itself 'sovereign.'

In India, corruption is recognised as a law enforcement issue. The laws against bribery are part of the criminal law enforcement mechanisms. Even the institutional mechanisms available are largely based on the law enforcement machinery investigating allegations of corruption and the prosecution of the wrongdoers. But this approach puts corruption along with other offences criminal law attempts to punish. However, corruption, if understood from the standpoint of its consequences for the rule of law, human rights, and development has a negative impact on state sovereignty. Transparency in governance is crucial to ensure the state exercises its powers in a responsible manner. Corruption of the institutions of the state, including the recent alleged acts of corruption committed by Indian parliamentarians, does not allow the

state to exercise its sovereign powers. In fact, corruption of the state and its institutions means the state is not functioning to capacity and the law enforcement machinery is weak.

There are five dimensions to how sovereignty is impacted by corruption:

1) **Security:** The goal of every sovereign state is to ensure national security for its people so that peace and stability prevail in society. Corruption has the potential to threaten national security. Human security is another dimension of sovereignty. This is to ensure people of a state are empowered to face a wide array of threats, including from terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, deadly diseases such as AIDS and SARS, and other environmental disasters due to global warming and climate change. It is important to recognise the connections between corruption and sovereignty from national and human security standpoints so that all issues of public policy and governance a state is engaged in by way of its sovereign functions are pursued on the basis of transparency. Corruption is an all-pervasive phenomenon that affects the exercise of the functions of the state in a wide manner.

2) **Law Enforcement:** A sovereign state ought to ensure laws are enforced in a non-discriminatory manner. Corruption does not allow this. Hence, criminalisation of politics and politicisation of crimes have become common in Indian society. The sovereign state becomes too weak to enforce the law and all institutions of governance suffer from a crisis of legitimacy as well as of autonomy and independence, which are required to enforce the law including that against corruption.

3) **Good Governance:** A sovereign state ought to ensure the best practices of good governance. A corrupt state cannot ensure that its legal and

political existence is duly supported by the governance process. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India can play an important role in ensuring good governance. It is important that issues relating to corruption become an integral part of the mandate of the NHRC.

4) **Development:** The goal of any sovereign state is to ensure there is social and economic development. Contemporary international initiatives in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underline the need for ensuring development of the people. The UN Declaration on the Right to Development also emphasises this point. It is the responsibility of a number of players, the most important being the state itself, to ensure the MDGs are achieved. The fulfilment of the MDGs is inextricably related to the state exercising its sovereign functions. However, it is seldom recognised that corruption plays a very important role in the state not fulfilling its functions. Often, the resources allocated from domestic sources or development aid from international sources are diverted, in the form of corrupt transfer of wealth to a few persons who are governing the country. The alleged acts of corruption in the MPLADS is an example of how corruption in India undermines the development process. Development aid becomes a source of huge internal conflict and improper use of resources, thereby undermining the sovereignty of the state. These actions delay and undercut the development process.

5) **Human rights:** The recognition of corruption as a serious human rights issue is based on the realisation that corruption of the state and its institutions hinder the full realisation of civil, political, economic, and social rights, which are all related to the exercise of the right to development. Sovereignty as a facet of state responsibility demands that the state exercise its powers in a manner that ensures corruption-free governance. This will ensure better protection and promotion of human rights. Further, the recognition of corruption as a factor that undermines the sovereign exercise of power means our efforts to prevent and fight corruption lead to empowerment of the people. Empowered people will have a greater commitment to ensuring good governance and development. The new Right to Information Act in India has the potential to empower the Indian populace, but it remains to be seen how effectively the Act will be enforced.

Corruption in the two cases examined provides a telling example of how the agents of the state either assume that their individual and clique prosperity translates into state prosperity and sovereignty or simply do not care for anything beyond personal enrichment. In both cases, the example of Louis XIV who claimed, 'I am the state,' serves as a sensible reminder. I have argued in favour of a humanistic and liberal reinterpretation of 'sovereignty' in India in the wake of new acts of corruption that have come to the forefront. Sovereignty in India exercised as untrammelled power to exploit and to dis-empower the citizens is an anachronistic idea that sadly prevails at many levels of governance in India. Sovereignty exercised as a responsibility with human development as the end is the wave of the future that has not yet gained prevalence.

That corruption ultimately hurts the Indian state and its legitimacy needs to be impressed upon the many Indian parliamentarians and bureaucrats who are persons of integrity and are performing public service with utmost rectitude. The way forward in the fight against corruption in India is to ensure responsibility and accountability for strengthening, not weakening, sovereignty, along with large-scale efforts to increase the say of civil society in governance issues. A corruption-free Indian state enhances its ability to govern, reduces possibilities of unwarranted external interference, and raises its international stature. A non-discriminated against, content and well-governed population confers internal stability, a key requisite for projecting power internally and externally.

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at the School of Law, City University of Hong Kong. He is also Honorary Consultant to the National Human Rights Commission in India.)

CARTOONSCAPE



Bribes for development projects

More MPs fall for money

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 19: More MPs have been caught in a bribe scandal even before the probe into 11 of their fellow members taking cash to ask questions in Parliament is complete.

In another sting operation conducted by STAR News, seven MPs are seen on camera demanding/accepting bribes for sanctioning projects under the local area development scheme. Under the scheme, each MP gets to spend Rs 2 crore a year on work in their constituencies.

Of the seven, five are from the Lok Sabha and the two others from the Rajya Sabha. Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, who had boasted after the first expose on 11 MPs that none of them was from his party, had to eat crow today.

Samajwadi member Paras Nath Yadav is among the compromised seven and has been asked to resign as MP by the party. It must be said though that the eighth MP targeted by the sting, Toofani Singh Saroj, refused the bribe offer. He is a Samajwadi member.

Former Goa chief minister Churchill Alemao, who is now with the Congress, and a former minister of state in the Vajpayee government, Fagga Singh Kulaste, of the BJP, have been filmed asking for a cut to give projects to Ashray Abhiyaan, a fictitious NGO used

as decoy by STAR News.

The rest of the Sinning Seven are Chandra Pratap Singh and Ramswaroop Koli (BJP), Sakshi Maharaj (Rashtriya Kranti Party) and Isam Singh (Bahujan Samaj Party) — the last two from the Rajya Sabha.

The amounts ranged from Rs 25,000, which one MP accepted, to Rs 50 lakh, which another demanded.

CASH FOR WORKS

MPs caught in the scandal

Churchill Alemao	Cong
F.S. Kulaste	BJP
Chandra Pratap Singh	BJP
Ramswaroop Koli	BJP
Paras Nath Yadav	SP
Sakshi Maharaj	RKP
Isam Singh	BSP

'Some took money while the others demanded 'commission'

REFUSED

T.S. Saroj	SP
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Still to recover from the cash-for-questions scam, the political establishment was stunned into silence.

Kapil Sibal, the science and technology minister, said: "The system is rotten to the core. Unless we get the rot cleaned, how are we going to survive as a democracy? When you have the kind of discretionary powers granted by the scheme, an element of corruption seeps in."

Sources close to the Speaker, Somnath Chatterjee, and the Rajya Sabha chairperson,

Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, said they would confer with leaders of all parties tomorrow morning before they assemble and decide what to do. The Lok Sabha committee, probing the cash-for-questions scandal, may be asked to inquire into the latest revelations.

The view, cutting across parties, that was emerging was whether the scheme had more pitfalls than advantages. Sources close to the Speaker said his opinion was it should be scrapped because it interfered with district planning.

Under the scheme, each MP submits a list of works he wants done to the head of the district who executes them according to procedures laid down by the state government. But panchayati raj institutions and NGOs, approved by the district heads, can also be engaged. The scheme bars private contractors. In urban areas, the scheme is implemented by municipal corporations.

Chatterjee has received two reports, one from the comptroller and auditor-general and the other from former parliamentarian Era Sezhiyan on the scheme's shortcomings.

The leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and BJP chief, L.K. Advani, also feels the scheme should be replaced with a more transparent mechanism. BJP sources said Advani had shared his views with Chatterjee and Shekhawat. He had mooted the idea of forming a high-powered committee to revisit the scheme.

20 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

এলাকা উন্নয়ন তহবিল নয়ছয়

চক্রব্যূহে বন্দি চার দলের সাত সাংসদ

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৯ ডিসেম্বর: 'আশ্রয় অভিযান', ৭৬বি, স্কুল ব্লক, শঙ্করপুরা, নয়াদিল্লি।

এমন কোনও এনজিও-র অস্তিত্ব তুড়ারতে নেই। তবু তার হাতেই এলাকা উন্নয়নের জন্য সাংসদ তহবিল থেকে লক্ষ লক্ষ টাকা তুলে দেওয়ার সুপারিশ করেছেন লোকসভা ও রাজ্যসভার একাধিক সদস্য। মুফতে নয় অবশ্যই। ১০ থেকে ৪৫ শতাংশ কমিশনের বিনিময়ে। স্টার নিউজ ও ডেভিলপমেন্ট ইনভেস্টিগেটর্স (ডিআইজি)-এর পাতা ফাঁদে পা দিয়েছেন নয় নয় করে সাত জন সাংসদ। যাদের মধ্যে এক জন প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী, এক জন প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী। বিজেপি, কংগ্রেস, সমাজবাদী পার্টি ও বহুজন সমাজ পার্টির সাংসদদের দিকে উঠেছে অভিযোগের আঙুল।

স্থানীয় এলাকা উন্নয়নের জন্য প্রতি সাংসদ বছরে যে দু'কোটি টাকা পান, তা নিয়ে দুর্নীতির অভিযোগ দীর্ঘদিনের। পরিস্থিতি এমন জায়গায় গিয়ে পৌঁছেছে যে, তহবিলটাই তুলে দিতে চলেছে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। এ ব্যাপারে বিরোধী দল বিজেপি'র সঙ্গে একমত্যও হয়েছে সরকারের। লোকসভার ৫৪৩ জন ও রাজ্যসভার ২৪০ জন সদস্যের মোট বাৎসরিক প্রাপ্য ১৫৬৬ কোটি টাকার একটা বড় অংশ কী ভাবে নয়ছয় হয়, সেটাই আজ চোখে আঙুল দিয়ে দেখিয়ে দিয়েছে স্টার নিউজের 'অপারেশন চক্রব্যূহ'। তাদের জালে ধরা পড়েছেন এনডিএ আমলের আদিবাসী



আলেমাও চন্দ্রপ্রতাপ সান্ধীমহারাজ পারশনাথ ফরোজ সিংহ

প্রতিমন্ত্রী ফরোজ সিংহ কুলান্তে, গোয়ার প্রাক্তন কংগ্রেসি মুখ্যমন্ত্রী চার্লি আলোমাও, সমাজবাদী পার্টির টিকিটে রাজ্যসভায় জেতা প্রাক্তন বিজেপি নেতা সান্ধী মহারাজ, উত্তরপ্রদেশের জেীনপুরের সাংসদ পারশনাথ যাদব, মধ্যপ্রদেশের সিদ্ধির সাংসদ বাবাসাহেব চন্দ্রপ্রতাপ সিংহ এবং উত্তরপ্রদেশের রাজ্যসভার সাংসদ ইশম সিংহ। আর তাঁর কাছে যাওয়া হলেও প্রলোভনের ফাঁদে পা দেননি সমাজবাদী পার্টির সাংসদ সরোজ তুফানি।

সাংসদ তহবিলের টাকা নয়ছয়ের পিছনে কাজ করছে একটা চক্র। খোদ রাজধানীর বুকে ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছে একাধিক দালাল। সাংসদদের বাড়ির অন্দরমহলে যাদের অবাধ যাতায়াত। তাদের মাধ্যমে গেলে কোনও প্রশ্ন না-করেই প্রকল্প অনুমোদন করে জেলা শাসককে লেখা চিঠিতে সই করে দেন সাংসদ। তাঁর হয়ে কমিশনের টাকাও নেয় ওই দালালেরা। কোনও কোনও ক্ষেত্রে সাংসদের আশু সহায়কই দালালের কাজ করে।

মধ্যস্থত্বভোগীর ভরসায় থাকেন নই এমন সাংসদও আছেন। যেমন সান্ধী মহারাজ। স্টার নিউজ-ডিআইজির দল

তাঁর কাছে গিয়েছিল ইউনিসেফের আড়াই কোটি টাকার প্রকল্পের গল্প ফেঁদে। তাকে বলা হয়, উত্তরপ্রদেশে গরিব শিশুদের শিক্ষার জন্য ওই প্রকল্প মঞ্জুর করেছে ইউনিসেফ। মাফিয়াদের হাত এড়িয়ে যাতে কাজটা করা যায়, সে জন্য তাঁর সাহায্য চাই। সাহায্য করতে সাংসদ এক পায়ে খাড়া। দশ জন বন্দুকধারী মোতায়েন করে দেবেন। কিন্তু কমিশন চাই।

সান্ধী মহারাজ নিজেই পরিষ্কার জানিয়ে দেন, সব টাকা তো আর আপনারা খরচ করবেন না। কতটা আপনারা নেবেন, কতটা আমাকে দেবেন, খোলাখুলি কথা হয়ে যাওয়া ভাল। তিনি যে ধোঁকা দেবেন না, জোর গলায় সেই আশ্বাসবাণীও শুনিতে দেন তিনি। বলেন, দালাল ধোঁকা দিতে পারে, কোনও সাংসদ দেবে না। তাদের কথার দাম আছে।

আড়াই কোটি টাকার এই প্রকল্পের জন্য ১০ শতাংশ কমিশন দাবি করেন সান্ধী মহারাজ। পাশাপাশি, কম্পিউটার ইনস্টিটিউট খোলার জন্য নিজের সাংসদ তহবিল থেকে আশ্রয় অভিযানকে ২৫ লক্ষ টাকার প্রকল্প মঞ্জুর করে দেওয়ার আশ্বাস দেন। এ জন্য কমিশন অবশ্য বেশি লাগবে— ৫০ শতাংশ। দরাদরির পরে ৪৫ শতাংশেই রাজি হয়ে যান সান্ধী মহারাজ। তবে টাকা দিতে হবে নগদে। এক হাতে টাকা, অন্য হাতে চিঠি। শুধু তা-ই নয়, বিজেপি

বিধায়ক ছত্রপাল সিংহের তহবিল থেকে এমন ভাবেই টাকা পাইয়ে দেবেন বলে দাবি করেন তিনি। প্রশ্ন-ঘৃষ কেলেঙ্কারিতে

ইতিমধ্যেই ফেঁসে আছেন ওড়িশার এই বিধায়ক। অপারেশন চক্রব্যূহের প্রথম দু'দিন গোপন ক্যামেরার সামনে কমিশনের বিনিময়ে সাংসদ তহবিলের টাকা পাইয়ে দেওয়ার কথা বলেন দক্ষিণ গোয়ার কংগ্রেস সাংসদ চার্লি আলোমাও। ছদ্মবেশী সাংবাদিকেরা তাকে প্রস্তাব দেন, রাজ্যে কোঙ্কনি ভাষার একটি পাঠাগার খুলতে চান তারা। সাংসদ কুড়ি লক্ষ টাকা বরাদ্দ করলে ২০ শতাংশ কমিশন পাবেন। আলোমাও দাবি করেন তিন লক্ষ টাকা। গোড়ায় তিনি বলেছিলেন, তাঁর এ বছরের তহবিল আর বাকি নেই। কিন্তু পরে বলেন, এক লক্ষ টাকা আগাম দিলে 'ব্যবস্থা করে দেবেন'। সাংবাদিকেরা রাজি হতে চিঠিও তৈরি হয়ে যায়। কিন্তু তাতে কিছু তুল ছিল। পরের দিন সাংবাদিকেরা গেলে আলোমাওয়ের সন্দেহ হয়, এটা গোপন অপারেশন হতে পারে। তাই তাঁদের সামনে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আর মুখই খোলেননি তিনি।

ফরোজ সিংহ কুলান্তে আর চন্দ্রপ্রতাপ সিংহ অবশ্য সরাসরি সুপারিশের চিঠি তুলে দেন সাংবাদিকদের হাতে। এর পর আটের পাতায়

চক্রব্যূহে বন্দি চার দলের সাত সাংসদ

প্রথম পাতার পর ফরোজের কাছে সাংবাদিকদের নিয়ে যায় এক দালাল সুদীপ মিশ্র। প্রাক্তন মন্ত্রীর হয়ে গোটা 'ডিলটা' করে তাঁর আশু সহায়ক যুবরাজ সিংহ। সে-ই সাংবাদিকদের নিয়ে যায় চন্দ্রপ্রতাপের কাছে। নিজেই সাংসদের বালিশের নীচে গুঁজে দেয় ঘুষের টাকা। তৎক্ষণাৎ নিজের হাতে সুপারিশপত্র লিখে দেন চন্দ্রপ্রতাপ।

চিঠি লিখে ফেলেছিলেন পারশনাথ যাদবও। তাকে বলা হয়েছিল এলাকা উন্নয়ন তহবিলের টাকা পাইয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য কমিশনের পাশাপাশি ইউনিসেফের প্রকল্পের কাজে সহায়তার জন্য মোট ৫০ লক্ষ টাকা ঘুষ দেওয়া হবে। জেীনপুরে ডিগ্রি কলেজ করার নামে নগদে এই টাকা নেবেন বলে জানিয়ে দেন পারশনাথ। টাকা নেওয়ার জন্য দিল্লির বাইরে যাওয়ার পরিকল্পনাও বাতিল করে দেন তিনি। কিন্তু পরের দিন সাংবাদিকেরা মাত্র ৫০ হাজার টাকা নিয়ে আসায় রীতিমতো

রেগে যান সমাজবাদী পার্টির এই সাংসদ। সুপারিশপত্র কেড়ে নিয়ে সাংবাদিকদের ধমক দিয়ে বলেন, আপনাদের দম নেই। সাংবাদিকেরা যখন পরে টাকা নিয়ে আসার কথা বলছেন, তখন আবার ওই পঞ্চাশ হাজার টাকাই রেখে দেওয়ার জন্য চাপ দিতে থাকেন। স্টার নিউজের পর্দায় এই দরকষাকষির ছবি দেখার পরেই তাঁকে লোকসভা থেকে ইস্তফা দিতে নির্দেশ দিয়েছে সমাজবাদী পার্টি। অনেক সংযত ছিলেন বহুজন সমাজ পার্টির সাংসদ ইশম সিংহ। কমিশনের বিনিময়ে কাজের সুপারিশ করার প্রস্তাবে আপত্তি জানাননি ঠিকই, কিন্তু নিজের থেকে মুখ ফুটে চানওনি কিছু।

আর আছে এক ব্যতিক্রমী চরিত্র। সমাজবাদী পার্টির সাংসদ সরোজ তুফানি। আড়াই কোটি টাকার প্রকল্প বা সাংসদ তহবিলের টাকায় কম্পিউটার ইনস্টিটিউট— কোনও প্রলোভনের ফাঁদেই পা দেননি তিনি। সাংবাদিকদের স্পষ্টই বলেছেন, "আমার এলাকায়

কাজ করতে চাইলে স্বাগত। কিন্তু তার জন্য আমাকে কিছু দিতে হবে না।"

প্রশ্ন-ঘৃষ কাণ্ডের পরে অপারেশন চক্রব্যূহ রাজনৈতিক মহলে তোলপাড় তুলেছে। লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় বলেন, "আমি স্তম্ভিত। কাল সব দলের নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলব। আমি তো এই তহবিল তুলে দেওয়ার পক্ষে।" স্তম্ভিত বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীও। অভিযুক্ত দলীয় সাংসদদের ব্যাপারে সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে দলের বৈঠক ডাকা হবে বলে জানান তিনি। আর সংসদীয়মন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাসমুন্সির কথায়, "এ ব্যাপারে প্রতিক্রিয়া জানাতেও দুঃখ হচ্ছে। প্রশ্ন-ঘৃষ কাণ্ড নিয়ে পবনকুমার বনসলের নেতৃত্বে যে সংসদীয় কমিটি গঠন করা হয়েছে সেই এই অভিযোগের তদন্ত করবে, না নতুন কমিটি গড়া হবে সে ব্যাপারে শীঘ্রই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে।" চার্লি আলোমাওয়ের মতো কোনও কোনও অভিযুক্ত সাংসদ আবার আইনি পথে যাওয়ার কথা ভাবছেন।

29 DEC 2005

'Most politicians corrupt'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Fifty-one per cent of respondents in New Delhi and 45% in Bangalore of a poll conducted for The Times of India by market research agency TNS said the MPs guilty of accepting cash to raise queries in parliament should not be allowed to contest elections again.

A whopping 66% of the people surveyed felt only one in 10 politicians was honest.

Delhi was the harshest on the lawmakers, with 13% respondents saying an "honest politician" was an oxymoron—not a single politico was clean, they felt. Bangalore, by contrast, was willing to lend its leaders more credibility, with 23% of those surveyed feeling more than half the politicians were honest.

A staggering 86% of those questioned in Kolkata—in perhaps a wake-up call for the long-ruling Left Front—said only up to 10% politicians were above board.

For the poll, 473 people across Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore were surveyed on December 14 and 15. All the respondents were English newspaper readers, with women comprising 46% of the sample size. While ire over the cash-for-query revelations ran high, almost three-fourths of the respondents felt politicians caught in corruption cases were always the small fish.

Political waters, they said, were actually being muddied by those wielding far more power than those caught in the sting operation.

Across cities, 74% respondents were of the opinion that

What made RSS go soft on BJP MPs

By Mohua Chatterjee/TNN

New Delhi: If the RSS' reaction to the six BJP MPs who were caught on camera in the cash-for-questions scam was rather weak, there was good reason. At least four of these six members of Parliament have strong RSS links, an obvious embarrassment for the Sangh which has always come out vociferously condemning corruption.

Apart from Lok Sabha MPs Annasaheb M K Patil from Erandol in Maharashtra and Chandra Pratap Singh from Sidhi constituency in Madhya Pradesh, who have only tenuous Sangh links, the rest have been known to be Nagpur faithfuls.

Chatrapal Singh Lodha is a well-known RSS face from UP. He is currently a Rajya Sabha MP from Orissa and earlier won the Lok Sabha seat four times from Bulandshahr, before opting out for Kalyan Singh in the last parliamentary polls. Lodha has been an active swayamsevak all

the small fries get caught while the big fish always evades the net in Indian politics. The feeling was strongest in Bangalore, where 82% felt this was indeed the case, followed by Mumbai (79%).

Kolkata and Delhi were more

through his political career.

Suresh Chandel, Lok Sabha MP from Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh, and Pradeep Gandhi, representing Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh, have not only been swayamsevaks to begin with but have also been closely working with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, respectively. Chandel had in fact, come out in support of government officers in Himachal Pradesh who were asked by the state government not to involve themselves in RSS activities.

Maharashtra MP from Jalgaon, Y G Mahajan, also moved into BJP from being a swayamsevak and has maintained live contact with the Sangh.

Naturally, RSS, which spares no opportunity to criticise BJP leaders from straying away from the probity path, was remarkably reticent when the party MPs were caught on camera accepting cash for asking questions.

optimistic on this score, with 27% and 25% respectively, saying big leaders do not always get away with corruption. In fact, 8% respondents in Delhi felt that top politicians are invariably caught if they resort to dishonest means.

LS panel hears out three 'stung' MPs

Statesman News Service

RSS quotes from Bible!

NEW DELHI, Dec. 17. The Lok Sabha inquiry committee, probing the cash-for-questions scam involving ten MPs, today heard the versions of three of them. Another MP has sought more time to appear before it and permission for a lawyer to accompany him.

The former Union minister, Mr MK Anna Patil of the BJP, Mr Narendra Kushwaha of BSP and Mr Manoj Kumar of RJD appeared before the committee headed by Congress MP Mr Pawan Kumar Bansal. Seven other MPs have been asked to come tomorrow.

The versions of Aniruddha Bahal and his colleague, Suhasini Raj, of the news portal Cobrapost.com, which conducted the sting operation that exposed the "corrupt" MPs, were also heard today. The panel members thought they had been "cooperative and forthcoming". The duo has promised the committee some more documents and transcripts that it sought.

Sources said the BJP Member of Parliament from Himachal Pradesh, Mr Suresh Chandel, has written to the panel seeking some more time before make an appearance. His request for a lawyer is being referred by the panel to the Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, as there are no provision in the rules to grant it.

NEW DELHI, Dec. 17. — The RSS today sought to portray the BJP's cash-for-question MPs as victims and quoted from the Bible to make its point. "The collective disdain for the bribe-scarred MPs sets one thinking of the famous Biblical caution 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.' (New Testament John VIII, 7)," an editorial in the latest issue of the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* said. **SNS**

The Speaker had directed the committee to submit its report by 21 December for consideration of the House and necessary action. The winter session of Parliament is ending on 23 December.

The Rajya Sabha has already suspended its lone member implicated in the scandal, Mr Lodha (BJP), on the basis of the Dr Karan Singh-headed Ethics Committee's interim report. This panel is also supposed to give its final report before the conclusion of this session.

All the 11 MPs: six belonging to the BJP, three to the BSP, one to the Congress and one to the RJD were caught on camera accepting bribe from undercover reporters for raising questions in Parliament. The respective parties have already suspended the "tainted" MPs and asked them to reply to show-cause notices served to them.

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THE STATESMAN

Stung MPs reply to notices

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — An inquiry committee, constituted by the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, to go into the “cash-for-query” scam, began working today after getting the replies of all the 10 MPs concerned. It asked for the relevant video footage and decided to hear the members.

The work on preparing transcripts of the video footage has begun and the inquiry committee would be asking the private television channel which aired the sting operation to depose before it, according to Mr Pawan Kumar Bansal, chairman of the committee.

In their replies, all the 10 MPs denied that they had taken money from the undercover journalists and alleged that they had been framed.

They claimed in “almost similar” replies to the Lok Sabha committee probing the scam that the video tapes had been “doctored as part of a deep-rooted conspiracy”.

15 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

One MP axed, 10 in hiding

HT Political Bureau
New Delhi, December 13

THE RAJYA Sabha has suspended its lone MP among the 11 who had been caught taking a bribe for raising questions in Parliament.

As for the other 10, the Lok Sabha is yet to decide on their fate. They appear to have gone into hiding, with journalists failing to contact them anywhere.

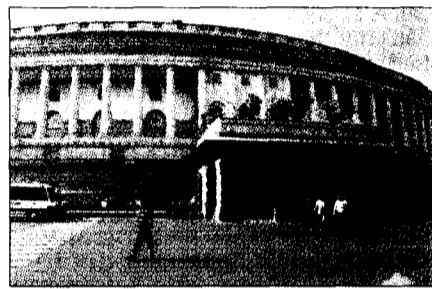
BJP member Chhatrapal Singh Lodha was suspended on the recommendation of the Rajya Sabha's ethics committee. The committee recommended that he stay suspended till it gives its final report during the ongoing winter session. The panel will meet again on December 16. "We are waiting for the member's reply," said Dr Karan Singh.

Another panel is investigating the charges against the Lok Sabha MPs. The BJP will petition the panel to suspend the party's five tainted Lok Sabha MPs. The Congress has already suspended its Lok Sabha member, Ram Sevak, who also figures in the scandal.

The 10 Lok Sabha MPs will have to reply to their showcause notices by Wednesday morning. As of now, they kept themselves out of reach. Some stayed put at their homes and some fled to vague locations. No two reports of their exact whereabouts were consistent.

BJP MP Chandra Pratap Singh took refuge at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, getting himself treated for fever. "He is running a high fever and was in hospital even before the scandal broke. He will reply to all charges once he comes out of hospital," said his aide. The MP was discharged on Tuesday, but couldn't be contacted even then.

The supporters of another BJP MP, Suresh Chandel, said he was with lawyers. His colleague, Pradeep Gandhi, hasn't been seen since the sting hit TV. At the home of a fourth party MP, Y.G. Mahajan, no one answered the bell though the guard said he was inside. As for the fifth, Annasaheb M.K. Patil, his family



AFTER THE EXPOSÉ

WHIPLASH

The Rajya Sabha has suspended the BJP's C S Lodha till a report on him is ready

DECISION TODAY...

The ethics committee will submit its final report on Wednesday

...DECISION PENDING

The Lok Sabha is yet to take similar action on its 10 tainted MPs

SPEED-UP CALL

The BJP has urged a Lok Sabha panel to suspend the 10 party MPs involved

and supporters kept everybody guessing. One said he was in Maharashtra; another said he had gone to meet his senior leaders and would return late.

At BSP MP Narendra Kumar Kushwaha's home, 20-odd supporters shielded him from journalists. Kushwaha's lawyer ignored the bell as long as possible, but reluctantly opened the door on the 12th ring. "All three party MPs have gone to meet Mayawati. They won't speak to you," he said. A policeman conceded that all three MPs were in, but also confirmed that they wouldn't speak.

Congress MP Ram Sevak Singh didn't answer the doorbell at his home, either. One of his aides said the MP was out of Delhi and would take time to return.

Full coverage on Page 2

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Sansad sell-out

Shankar The guilt is collective *5-6*
14/12

Unacceptable but not unexpected. There is a hollow ring to the outrage of parliamentary leaders across the board at the cash-on-camera expose that is the focus of national attention. Hollow because — without detracting from the sting operation's revelations — just about everybody associated with the apex legislature was aware, or suspected, that MPs were tendering loaded questions under undesirable influences. Only the hypocritical would profess ignorance, and they ought to be reminded of the sarcastic quip, "you have become a drug addict" from Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma when presiding over the Rajya Sabha to a member whose queries indicated involvement in a dispute between pharmaceutical majors. Or they could recall how MPs took sides in the Bombay Dyeing vs Reliance punch up. The only difference between then and now is that the present going rate is decidedly cheap. Which is also not surprising taking the "quality" of contemporary legislators into account.

And it would be silly to assume that only the 11 that were "stung" are involved in the sell-out. While no punishment would be too severe for this despicable lot, they remain essentially symptoms of a bigger rot. It would be so convenient to trace the root of the malaise to the nexus between criminals and politics, money-power in the poll game, the need for sweeping electoral reform, "winnability" being so important when tickets are granted, but that would only divert attention from a grave dereliction of duty. Surely the leaders of political parties in the legislature must assume responsibility for the conduct of their legislators? Any monitoring of the manner in which MPs function in and out of the House would point to their misdeeds — ranging from sub-letting official accommodation to using their clout to get regulations bypassed or even to asking questions aimed at pressuring someone or favouring somebody else. Party leaders have consistently evaded such responsibilities, now is the time to let them know that their job involves more than being in the van of walkouts, or other protests. The well-being of the institution, not just its day-to-day functioning rests on their shoulders. They are collectively guilty of not providing the leadership that would have averted the present scam.

Given the fact that previous revelations of corruption in the political establishment have generated only short-lived indignation with no remedial or preventive measures, the man on the street would doubt if anything positive would result from the current furor. The critical impact being further erosion of the credibility of parliamentary democracy in the public perception. A cancer is eating the innards of our legislative system. The cancer of a shamelessness of cynical magnitude.

Tarred House seeks balm in expulsion

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 13: A senior member of Parliament said fellow travellers on a flight to Delhi last night badgered him for an answer to what possessed 11 of his colleagues to take money to ask questions in the House.

The MP recounted the incident on condition that his name, his party and his travel route will not be disclosed.

While persistent questions from other passengers left him deeply embarrassed, his wife was enraged. He closed his eyes and feigned sleep to avoid the questions. When the flight landed, he quietly slipped away.

In and outside Parliament, there was a sullen silence tinged with anxiety the day after the Money-for-Posers (MP) XI was shown on TV accepting cash.

The only time the oppressive air lifted a little was when the members clapped as the chairperson of the Rajya Sabha ethics committee,

FIRST CASUALTY

The Rajya Sabha has suspended BJP member Chhatrapal Singh Lodha — the lone MP of the upper House linked to the scandal. The resolution recommending the suspension was passed unanimously

See Page 6



Karan Singh, read out a resolution recommending suspension of the BJP's Chhatrapal Singh Lodha, who was caught taking Rs 15,000.

But the dominant view was that nothing less than expulsion from Parliament would be enough. "Look at the sentiments on the ground. Their own voters feel betrayed and are burning their effigies. If any of these MPs appears before them, he will be thrashed," said a former associate of BJP member Pradeep Gandhi whose "price" was Rs 55,000 for six questions.

The government is considering criminal action against the MP XI because bribe-tak-

ing is a criminal, and not a civil, offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act. But sources clarified that this option would be weighed after the Parliament session and on completion of the House probe and action.

The BJP, to which six of the MP XI belong, recommended suspension of the five Lok Sabha members to the inquiry committee of the House. The panel, headed by Congress chief whip Pawan Kumar Bansal, has set a deadline of 10.30 am on December 14 for the members to file their replies.

Congress sources said efforts to speak to the members, including the lone one from

their party, on phone proved futile. Only Suresh Chandel of the BJP responded to queries from TV reporters, but he, too, could not be traced by the government.

Addressing his MPs, BJP president L.K. Advani said: "It has hurt the party's prestige."

Spokesperson Sushma Swaraj quoted him as saying: "If anybody says it was done carelessly or unintentionally, it is unacceptable because it has lowered every member's dignity."

Advani reminded them that new members were always told the practice of taking money for asking questions and misusing development funds given to MPs should be shunned. "Despite our warnings, this happened," he said.

The BJP set up an internal committee headed by Bal Apte to probe the conduct of its members.

The Congress — relieved that Volcker was out of the BJP's sights for now — said this was an "opportunity for enforcing very strict rules of ethical behaviour".

13 DEC 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2005

The cash for questions scandal



hat some Members of Parliament routinely accept bribes to ask parliamentary questions is one of the worst kept secrets in New Delhi's corridors of power. What the sensational sting operation, conducted jointly by *Aaj Tak* television channel and a website, cobrapost.com, reveals is how smooth and well-oiled the system of cash-for-questions is. The journalists who posed as lobbyists for small scale manufacturers were lent a helping hand by political secretaries, who acted as go-betweens, and welcomed by MPs who greedily accepted wads of cash without bothering to check the genuineness of the organisation they claimed to represent. In political terms, the Bharatiya Janata Party has been the worst hit by this shameful scandal, with six of the 11 stung parliamentarians belonging to it. For a party that launched a political offensive against the Congress on the Volcker report — and even disrupted Parliament on this issue — the expose could not have come at a more embarrassing time. However, with MPs from three other parties involved (the Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal) the scandal cuts across party lines and has wrought considerable damage to the prestige of Parliament itself.

In dealing with those exposed by the camera, there is a lesson to be drawn from parliamentary history. In 1951, the media drew attention to the fact that H.G. Mudgal routinely took money from industrialists in exchange for tabling questions on their behalf in the House. A Parliamentary Committee confirmed this and the MP was forced to resign after Jawaharlal Nehru moved a resolution to expel him. If the 11 caught on camera fail to provide a satisfactory explanation to the inquiry committee, constituted to present a report on what exactly transpired, they must be dealt with in the strongest possible manner. In an intensely competitive milieu where television channels are ever on the lookout for sensational stories, the MPs who had devised the system of asking questions for cash were a ready target. It is true the 11 MPs did not actively seek bribes but were lured by offers of money into an entrapment. However, while there may be legal defences against entrapment, the practice of cash-for-questions is shocking and undermines the public service character of representative institutions. The scandal also brings into focus the stark irony of providing MPs with blanket immunity that was evident in the JMM case, when the Supreme Court ruled that MPs who took bribes could claim legal immunity if such money was received in connection with what they said or how they voted in the House. As the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution has suggested, the immunity enjoyed by MPs should not cover corrupt acts such as "accepting money or any other valuable consideration to speak and/or vote in a particular manner." For such acts of bribery, MPs and members of State legislatures should be dealt with under the ordinary criminal law. The latest sting operation highlights the importance of defining and delimiting privileges in a manner that does not tacitly license acts of corruption.

14 DEC 2005

CASH FOR QUERY: MPs caught on camera

91-18112

BJP, Cong Suspend Tainted Members Parliament Shocked Two MPs Are From State

New Delhi: Eleven Members of Parliament, including six of BJP, were on Tuesday shown accepting money for raising questions in the House in a sensational sting operation forcing embarrassed political parties to suspend them and the Lok Sabha speaker to ask them to stay away from proceedings.

Those caught on camera, in an operation conducted by Cobrapost.com of the Tehelka fame Anuruddha Bahal and Aaj Tak TV channel, were Lok Sabha members Y G Mahajan, Anna Patil, Suresh Chandel, Pradeep Gandhi and Chandra Pratap Singh (all BJP), Narendra Kumar Kushwaha, Raja Ram Pal and Lal Chandra Kol (all BSP), Manoj Kumar (RJD) and Ramswak Singh (Congress). The lone Rajya Sabha member was Chatra Pal Singh Lodha (BJP), hailing from Uttar Pradesh and elected from Orissa.

As the news channel started telecast of the story in the morning, a shocked Lok Sabha speaker Somnath Chatterjee spoke to political leaders, including leader of opposition L K Advani, and discussed with them the course of action to be taken.

Taking serious note of the expose, Chatterjee made a statement in the House shortly after it met for the day



Certain very serious events have come to my notice as also of many other honourable members. The matter will be looked into with all the importance it deserves. I shall certainly ask the honourable members to explain what has happened. In the meantime, I am making a personal request to all of them to please do not attend the session until the matter is looked into and a decision is taken

Somnath Chatterjee, Lok Sabha Speaker

senior party leaders and announced suspension of the six MPs from the parliamentary party and instituted an internal inquiry into the episode. If necessary, the party would refer it to the privileges committee.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi also directed suspension of Ramsewar Singh from the party while BSP supreme Mayawati took a similar action against three of her party MPs. RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav also promised stern action against his party MP Manoj Kumar.

In a letter to Shekhawat, four Rajya Sabha members said the behaviour of the MPs had not only denegated the dignity of Parliament but also lowered the image of individual MPs. "We feel the MPs in question should be forthwith suspended from the Houses pending inquiry which would be conducted by an Independent Authority." The MPs who wrote the letter are Dinesh Trivedi (Trinamool Congress), Chandan Mitra (BJP), Tariq Anwar (NCP) and Robert Kharshing.

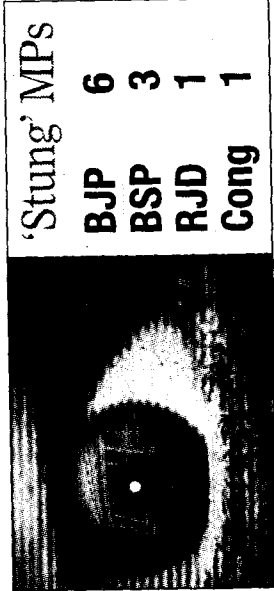
Acting quickly, the Lok Sabha secretariat issued show-cause notices to the 10 members belonging to the House, asking them to give their replies by Wednesday. The ethics committee of the Rajya Sabha sent a similar notice to Chaturpal Singh Lodha.

The BJP the worst sufferer in the expose, constituted an internal committee comprising Sushma Swaraj and Anant Kumar to probe the issue of six of its MPs taking money.

Cobrapost-Aaj Tak, said in a release, that the sting operation lasting more than nine months logged 56 video and 70 audio tapes besides recording more than 900 telephone calls.

Cobrapost Editor Bahal, who had participated in the Tehelka operation against Bangaru Laxman and others in 2001, and woman reporter Suhasni Raj posed as representatives of a fictitious organisation called North Indian Small manufacturers Association (NISMA) to ask questions in Parliament.

The release claimed that the MPs were paid between Rs 15,000 and Rs 1,10,000. Several MPs also wanted an "annual fee" of Rs 5-6 Lakh from NISMA to put in as many proxy questions as it wanted.



'Stung' MPs

BJP	6
BSP	3
RJD	1
Cong	1

asking the members caught on camera not to attend the proceedings till the matter is looked into with all the importance it deserves. "Nobody will be spared. We shall certainly respond to it in a manner that befores us," he said.

In the Rajya Sabha, chairman Bha-iron Singh Shekhawat referred the matter to the ethics committee and directed it to urgently give its recommendations for necessary action. He expressed anguish over the members' behaviour and said it had brought down the dignity of Parliament. Members cutting across party lines demanded stringent action against erring MPs, with some of them even calling for their disqualification.

Just ahead of a meeting of BJP-ruled chief ministers here, Advani consulted

প্রশ্ন তোলায় জন্য টাকা

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১২ ডিসেম্বর: ভোলকার কাণ্ড বা ইপিএফ সুদের হার নয়। সংসদের শীতকালীন অধিবেশন কাঁপিয়ে দিল কিঙ্কু সাংসদের টাকা নেওয়ার সচিব বিবরণী। সংসদে প্রশ্ন তোলায় জন্য ওই টাকা নিশ্চিন্তে তারা। বাকি সদস্যরা বলছেন, ভারতীয় সংসদের ইতিহাসে আজকের দিনটি সব চেয়ে কলঙ্কিত। শেষ প্রবাহের প্রথম ধাক্কাই বেশি ধরাস্বামী অকশাই বিজেপি। যে এগারো জন সাংসদকে বেসরকারি টিভির পর্দায় সংসদে প্রশ্ন তুলে দেওয়ার বিনিময়ে টাকা নিতে দেখা যাচ্ছে, তাঁদের হ'জনই বিজেপি-র। বাকিদের এক জন কংগ্রেসের, বসপা-র তিন জন, এক জন আরজেডি-র। দশ জন লোকসভার সদস্য, এক জন রাজ্যসভার।

সংসদ ভবনের আনাচে কানাচে এই একই আলোচনা চলছে। শুণ্ড ক্যামেরা কী রকম দেখতে হয়, কতটা ছোট, কত রকমেরই বা হতে পারে, তা নিয়ে কৌতূহলের শেষ নেই। ঘুরিয়ে ফিরিয়ে সব রাজনৈতিক দলের নেতাদেরই প্রশ্ন, ক্যামেরায় আরও সাংসদের কীটি কি ধরা আছে? থাকলে ক'জন? তারা কোন দলের? আর সংসদের দুই কক্ষে কাজ চলেছে একদম অশাসনমাহিক। সভা রসার আগেই স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় বিরোধী নেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী থেকে শুরু করে বিভিন্ন দলের



শো-কজের সিদ্ধান্ত ঘোষণা স্পিকারের F-পিটিআই

পৃথক ভাবে দেখছেন কেন? সুখার জবাব, “আগের ছবিগুলি বানানো হয়েছিল। ওগুলি সত্য বলে বিশ্বাস করি না। যদিও তার জন্য এক জন দলের সভাপতির পদ ও অন্য জন মন্ত্রিসভা থেকে পদত্যাগ করেছিলেন।”

কিন্তু একই সঙ্গে সুখমা এ কথা মানতে নারাজ যে, অভিব্যক্ত সাংসদের মধ্যে তাঁদের দলের ভাগ বেশি মানেই তাঁরা বেশি দুর্নীতিগ্রস্ত। তাঁর মতে, দুর্নীতি সংখ্যা দিয়ে মাপা যায় না। পাশাপাশি আডবানীও বুঝিয়ে দেন যে, তাঁরা বিষয়টি নিয়ে যথেষ্টই উদ্বিগ্ন। আরএসএস-ও

নিয়ে ক্যামেরাবন্দি এগারো সাংসদ

উদ্বিগ্ন। বিজেপি-র ছয় সাংসদের মধ্যে রাজ্যসভার সাংসদ ছত্রপাল সিংহ এবং লোকসভার অন্নাসহেব পাটিল আরএসএসের বিভিন্ন কাজে যুক্ত। বিজেপি-র পক্ষেই বসপা, কংগ্রেস সকলেই অভিব্যক্ত সাংসদের দল থেকে সাসপেন্ড করেছে। বিজেপি-র অন্য সদস্যরা হলেন, চন্দ্রপ্রতাপ সিংহ, ওয়াই জি মহাজন, সুরেশ চামেল ও প্রদীপ গাধী। বাকিরা হলেন বসপা-র নরেন্দ্রকুমার কুশভাও, রাজারাম পাল ও লালচন্দ্র কল, কংগ্রেসের রামসেবক সিংহ এবং আরজেডি-র মনোজ কুমার। কংগ্রেসের মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মা অভিব্যক্ত সাংসদকে সাসপেন্ডের কথা জানিয়ে বলেন, বিষয়টি লজ্জাজনক। বসপা নেত্রী মায়াবতী বলেছেন, “এটা শুধু রাজনৈতিক অপরাধই নয়, জড়িয়ে রয়েছে নৈতিক দুর্নীতিও।”

এর মধ্যে অনশ্য ‘আমরা অন্যদের মতো নই’ মনোভাব নিয়ে ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছেন বামপন্থীরা। বাসুদেব আচারিয়া, নীলোৎপল বসু সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করে বলছেন, এই বিষয়টি সংসদকে দুর্ভোগমুক্ত করার সুযোগ এনে দিয়েছে। সে কারণে দ্রুত বিষয়টি নিয়ে এগিয়ে সংসদের বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা ফিরিয়ে আনতে হবে। গুরুদাস দাশগুপ্ত বলছেন, এর সঙ্গে কালো টাকার রহস্যময় ও ওতপ্রোত ভাবে জড়িত। সেই বিষয়টিও এখন সংসদকে

খতিয়ে দেখতে হবে বলে তিনি দাবি তুলছেন। লোকসভার স্পিকার ও রাজ্যসভার চেয়ারম্যান এর বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার প্রক্রিয়া শুরু করেছেন। রাজ্যসভার রয়েছে নিজস্ব ‘এথিক্স’ কমিটি। তারা আজ সিদ্ধান্ত নেয় আগামিকাল চেয়ারম্যানের কাছে প্রাথমিক রিপোর্ট দেওয়া হবে। রাজ্যসভা যুগ্মে জানানো হয়েছে, দোষী প্রমাণিত হলে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার চারটি আলোচনা সময়ের জন্য ওই সাংসদকে সাসপেন্ড করা অথবা কমিটি নির্দেশিত অন্য কোনও ব্যবস্থা।

স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখতে পাঁচ সদস্যের কমিটি গড়েছেন। চেয়ারম্যান হয়েছেন কংগ্রেসের পবন কুমার কমল। বাকিরা হলেন, বিজেপি-র বিজয় মলহোত্র, সিপিএমের মহম্মদ সেলিম, বসপা-র রামগোপাল যাদব ও ডিএমকে-র সি কুম্বুস্বামী। স্পিকার জানিয়েছেন, যে দশ জন সদস্যকে দেখা গিয়েছে তাদের ওই কমিটির কাছে ১৪ ডিসেম্বর সকাল সাড়ে দশটার মধ্যে বিবৃতি দিতে হবে। ২১ ডিসেম্বর বিকেল ৪টের মধ্যে ওই কমিটি স্পিকারের কাছে রিপোর্ট জমা দেবে। তার পরেই বিষয়টি নিয়ে সংসদে আলোচনা হবে।

● সংসদে প্রশ্ন বাছা হয় লটারিতে... পৃ: ৭

Cong's probe call puts BJP on defensive

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 9. — The Congress' demand for expanding the scope of the Justice Pathak Inquiry Authority to probe the latest allegation against the NDA has put the BJP on the defensive.

The Congress started picking on the NDA after its Rajya Sabha members, Mrs Ambika Soni and Mr Anand Sharma, revealed in the House yesterday the former Indian Ambassador to Baghdad, Mr Romesh Bhandari's suggestion that a close aide of former Prime Minister Mr

Atal Behari Vajpayee and NDA government functionaries had been involved in murky oil deals during the Saddam Hussein regime.

The BJP said the allegations were based on "hearsay" and should be rejected "in all forms". "Yeh suni hui aafwah hai" (These are all rumours), the party leader, Mr Jaswant Singh, said.

The Pathak Authority has the mandate to inquire into the Volcker committee indictment of Mr Natwar Singh and the Congress. However, Congress leaders maintain that there are some provi-

sions in the terms of reference of the Authority which empower it to probe disclosures against the NDA as well.

A senior Congress leader said the agencies handling the Volcker probe would bring to the Pathak Authority any "incriminating material or evidence, if found substantive", against members of the Vajpayee government.

Congress spokesperson Mr Anand Sharma said: "The government has assured us in Parliament that any new disclosure about the Volcker issue will be turned over to the Pathak Authority. Let

there be a comprehensive probe." The Congress leader echoed him: "If the panel seeks more powers, the government will oblige as it has made a promise in the House."

Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Mr P Chidambaram and Mr Priya Ranjan Das Muzhi have said in Parliament and outside that the latest allegations against the NDA could be taken up by the Pathak Authority.

Mr Jaswant Singh said there was a difference between the Volcker panel's indictment of Mr Singh and the Congress and Mr Bhandari's allegations against Mr Vajpayee

and the NDA, both in terms of degree and credibility.

Mr Singh chose to debunk Mr Bhandari's suggestions by offering to release details of visits made by Indian leaders to Iraq between 1990-2005. "We have nothing against any inquiry," he said, pointing out that the Pathak Authority was yet to start functioning. "It is a non-functional committee in its present format. The government should reconsider the (Congress) demand for a probe by the panel for the sake of justice," he said.

Another report on page 5

Government rules out JPC probe into Volcker findings

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Government on Friday ruled out a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the findings of the Volcker Report but assured the Lok Sabha that Parliament would be taken into confidence on the Justice Pathak Inquiry

Authority's findings. Dissatisfied with the Government's response, the Opposition staged a walkout.

Making statements in both Houses of Parliament after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders demanded a JPC probe, the Government argued that it was too late in the day to order an-

other investigation, especially after the progress made so far. Besides, a JPC on the same issue would cast aspersions on the ability of Justice Pathak to conduct the probe.

Leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee said in the Lok Sabha that the demand was "unacceptable" and questioned its ratio-

nale. "Let the Inquiry Authority do its job. No purpose will be served by setting up a JPC. There should be some rationale in the Opposition's demands — first they wanted a CBI enquiry, then a FIR to be lodged, and now a JPC. They can demand that whatever new material comes up is sent to the Inquiry Authority,

but to set up a new mechanism is not acceptable to us."

The issue generated a lot of heat with V. K. Malhotra (BJP) alleging that the Congress was spreading canards about Opposition leaders to "save its skin." Since the Inquiry Authority had no authority, it could well become a "cover-up job," he said.

10 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

An expensive last stand

Belying the hope of Congress party crisis managers that the appointment of the Justice Pathak Inquiry Authority would buy peace, the Volcker report controversy seems to be spinning out of control. The news media have remained one step ahead of the official investigating agencies in this case — ever since it was revealed by this newspaper that the Volcker report had named External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh and the Congress party as “non-contractual beneficiaries” or favoured parties who were allotted oil quotas that could be sold at a handsome commission. The latest round has been sparked by the reported remarks of Anel Mathrani, a member of the Congress delegation to Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and the just-recalled Indian Ambassador to Croatia, on the significance of the presence in Baghdad, during the delegation’s January 2001 visit, of not only Mr. Natwar Singh’s son, Jagat Singh, but also businessman Andaleeb Sehgal. The latter’s Hamdan Exports has been listed in the Volcker report as paying the surcharge on the oil quotas allotted to Mr. Natwar Singh and the Congress party. Mr. Mathrani’s surmise in an ‘off-the-record’ conversation with an *India Today* journalist that was secretly recorded and published is that “when Natwar introduced his son and Sehgal to all the Iraqi officials he didn’t have to say anything. All that he had to do was to show that they were in the delegation, that they were his son and his cousin, and therefore it was confidential...The groundwork was laid at that time, and then one could come back and accept whatever [oil] vouchers were given...The Iraqis needed a green signal...and it was provided by Natwar.” Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s response, in statements made in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, has been to admit that Mr. Mathrani’s statements were “a matter of concern,” to announce that the Enforcement Directorate would investigate them, and to reiterate the Government’s assurance that “no one who is guilty will go unpunished.”

What has emerged so far from the Volcker Committee report and media accounts is material for further investigation, but it falls well short of proof of wrongdoing. The Volcker exercise damned Mr. Singh on the basis of unverified records found in Baghdad without giving him notice and a hearing. What has emerged in media accounts subsequently is in the nature of accusations of guilt by association. (Even Mr. Mathrani’s ‘off-the-record’ testimony against Mr. Natwar Singh is contradicted by a senior member of the Congress delegation, P. Shiv Shankar, who says he was not even aware of the presence of Mr. Jagat Singh and Mr. Sehgal in Iraq during the 2001 visit.) Yet all this has been enough for the Opposition to mount a sustained campaign and for public opinion to wonder if something is not amiss. Politicians facing graver charges going into more advanced stages of investigation and prosecution have remained in office in governments, past and present. Yet there are signs that the political costs of *l’affaire* Natwar are becoming unbearable. With new facts and fresh allegations emerging continually, the United Progressive Alliance Government is hard pressed to come up with an adequate response. It is not just that Parliament and the polity are being held hostage to this one issue. Even the Congress party seems tiring of it. Sonia Gandhi’s public acknowledgement that she was “hurt” and “very angry,” the party spokesman’s ominous statement that it was up to the Minister without Portfolio to decide whether or not to continue in Government, and the latest move dropping him from the Congress Steering Committee are clear signals that the party is unwilling to bear the costs of defending him. For 74-year-old Mr. Singh, who is given to literary pursuits, has been schooled in diplomacy, and is not inured to the rough and tumble of political life, it must be an entirely new and bitter experience. His last stand is costing the Government, his party, and himself heavily. He would do well to resign without any further delay.

Natwar rules out resignation

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 4. — As the Congress braces itself for the BJP-led NDA's onslaught in Parliament tomorrow and beyond over the Iraqi oil deal scam, Union minister Mr K Natwar Singh today ruled out resigning from the Cabinet.

After the Prime Minister's return from Moscow, the situation may be reviewed and a decision taken on Mr Natwar Singh's continuance as a minister, Congress sources said.

In a late night development, Mr Singh was removed from the Congress Steering Committee. The decision was taken by the steering committee at a meeting here presided over by Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

Earlier, Mr Singh said: "It is not

because of any love of office that I'm not resigning. If I resign now, many people will see it as an admission of guilt." Saying that he was not guilty of any wrong-doing, he said: "I refuse to sacrifice myself... The Opposition will use my resignation to further tarnish the reputation of the Congress party. I will not let this happen."

Mr Singh denied he had added the names of his son, Mr Jagat Singh, and his friend, Mr Andaleeb Sehgal, to the official Congress team that visited Baghdad in 2001. "I had no authority to do so. The Congress team comprised Mr P Shivshankar, Mr AR Antulay, Mr Aniel Matherani and myself. The AICC paid for our travel. Jagat's ticket was not bought by the AICC."

Jagat hinted at a conspiracy against his father and said Mr Matherani's

statements had created confusion.

"The Congress has adopted a middle path by reserving the right to take action till the probe is complete. Besides, the Prime Minister has to decide on the continuation of Mr Singh as a minister," AICC spokesman Mr Abhisek Singhvi, said.

Mr Matherani returned to Delhi last night. He was reportedly questioned by Enforcement Directorate and Intelligence officials but his family denied this.

Dr Manmohan Singh told reporters that he would consider what to do if Mr Natwar Singh decided to resign on his own and dismissed suggestions that he had differences with the Congress chief, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, on the Volcker issue, adds PTI.

CPI stands by Sonia, page 4

05 DEC 2005 THE STATESMAN

Party grapples with cabinet dilemma

Natwar knot ties up Cong

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 3: Natwar Singh today called on the Prime Minister amid mounting concern in the Congress over the political cost of retaining the portfolio-less minister after fresh claims linked him to the Iraq oil-for-food scandal.

Official sources said after Natwar met Manmohan Singh that the former foreign minister did not offer to resign from the cabinet and neither did the "government" indicate he should.

The "unscheduled", 40-minute meeting at the Prime Minister's residence was also attended by national security adviser M.K. Narayanan.

While the government stuck to the position that the minister without portfolio will not be "pressured" to resign, there was perceptible anxiety in the Congress on how events would pan out in Parliament next week if Natwar stayed on.

The Opposition, which has concentrated its firepower on Congress president Sonia Gandhi, has begun to marshal its forces to renew the assault in the House. The BJP has issued a whip to its members to be present in Parliament "all



Natwar: 'Struggle'

through five days" next week. Other NDA allies are also expected to issue similar whips.

Congress sources conceded that Natwar has become a liability but the party is apprehensive that out of office, he might end up playing the "victim" and point a finger at the Congress for its "culpability" because the Paul Volcker report had mentioned the party also as a "beneficiary".

Natwar's son Jagat Singh, also named in the report, has already sought to drag the party leadership into the muddle, suggesting in an interview that his father was the target of an internal "conspiracy". Natwar out of work, said a Congress leader, was "perhaps more troublesome than in office".

Anil Mathrani, whose purported remarks linking Natwar to the scandal touched off

the new round of uproar, arrived here late tonight. Sources said Mathrani, who has been recalled from the post of Croatian ambassador, would be told to surrender his diplomatic passport.

Sources said Mathrani is likely to be questioned by the Enforcement Directorate on the allegations he made against Natwar, Jagat and Andaleeb Sehgal, an associate of the minister's son.

Officially, too, the Congress indicated that while it was prepared to go the whole hog to defend its president, Natwar will have to take care of himself.

"Our stand does not get strengthened by anybody resigning and neither does it get weakened by someone continuing. Everybody can take care of himself," AICC general secretary Ambika Soni said.

An isolated Natwar today put up a brave face and almost likened himself to Mangal Pandey, the "hero" of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, while releasing an eponymous book.

Natwar said he would face the "struggle" that arose from the chain of events set off by the Volcker report. "There is a struggle, we will face it," he said, asked if he found himself in the same situation as Mangal Pandey.

04 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

03 DEC 2005

OIL ALLOTMENT FOR PERSONAL SERVICES RENDERED, SAYS ENVOY WHO LATER ISSUES A DENIAL

Natwar 'nailed' by aide, PM offers no aid

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 2. — In a sensational twist to the raging controversy over the Volcker inquiry committee report on the Iraqi oil-for-food scandal today, India's Ambassador to Croatia, Mr Aniel Matherani, was quoted as having charged that Mr K Natwar Singh had been given oil vouchers by the erstwhile Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq for his "personal services", setting off a fresh political storm.

A close aide of Mr Natwar Singh, Mr Matherani's "disclosure" gave the BJP-led Opposition additional ammunition to target the government, Mr Singh and Mrs Sonia Gandhi, triggered a furore in Parliament and paralysed both Houses.

An understudy of Mr Singh in the erstwhile AICC foreign cell, Mr Matherani, who accompanied the former to Baghdad as part of a Congress delegation in January 2001, reportedly said the two oil voucher allottees — Mr Singh and the Congress party — whose names figured in the Volcker report were "exactly the same".

"One has been given to him (Mr Natwar Singh) by name and the other is in the name of the Congress party," Mr Matherani told a private news channel in an "interview". Asked if the vouchers did not go to the Congress but to Mr Singh, Mr Matherani was quoted as having said: "Naturally... In my view both are exactly the same."

However, Mr Matherani later claimed that he did not give any interview and had only made "off-the-record obvious comments" that were "distorted and twisted" by the TV channel-magazine group which, in turn, stood by its interview on tape. He denied the allegations attributed to him against Mr Singh and the Congress delegation.

The Volcker panel report has implicated both the Congress and Mr Singh, among others, as alleged beneficiaries of the Iraqi oil scam. Armed with Mr Matherani's purported revelations, an aggressive Opposition demanded that Mr Singh, who after being stripped of his foreign ministry charge was now a minister without portfolio, be sacked and an FIR registered against him. The Opposition also pressed for the resignation of Mrs Sonia Gandhi as the Congress president



Dr Singh with Mr Singh, in better times.
— A file photograph

and the UPA chairperson.

The new turn in the Volcker affair put a big question mark on the continuance of Mr Singh in the Cabinet. Evidently, the Congress has not been defending Mr Singh since the day the scam came to light. A formidable section of the party has also been gunning for his scalp. With a section of the Left also joining the oust-Natwar chorus, there are indications

that his days in the Cabinet could be numbered. To checkmate the Opposition's blistering attack, the Prime Minister made identical statements in both Houses of Parliament, saying the Enforcement Directorate would take cognizance of Mr Matherani's claims and pursue its investigations and that "no one who is guilty will go unpunished".

Referring to the ongoing Justice Pathak Authority inquiry into the scam, Dr Manmohan Singh said the government had been "firm, consistent and clear in its stand on the matter".

"We had said that the references, as they are found in the Volcker Committee's report, are 'unverified references'... that we are determined to go to the root of the matter and establish the truth or otherwise of these references. We stand by that position even now," he added.

In his interview, Mr Matherani said that Mr Natwar Singh's son, Mr Jagat Singh, had accompanied the Congress delegation while his cousin, Mr Andaleeb Sehgal, joined the team in Amman and then travelled to Baghdad in the same flight. He said the "groundwork" for the Iraqi oil deal was done during that

visit. He said Jagat and Andaleeb were included in the delegation since they were to be introduced formally to Iraqi leaders and officials for the future deal.

"The Iraqis needed a green signal (for oil allocation) and it was provided by Natwar. He organised the delegation and introduced the ones who would execute whatever was given."

To a question about Mr Natwar Singh's stand that he was unaware of his name having been linked to the Iraqi oil scam, Mr Matherani said: "I refuse to believe... Of course, he knew all these things from the beginning, but preferred to keep quiet... That Natwar and the Congress never knew is a hogwash."

On his part, Mr Singh denied Mr Matherani's "outrageous allegations", saying: "My conscience is clear. I am ready to face any inquiry, which is time-bound, so that my name is cleared at the earliest." Dismissing the charges as "totally false and malicious", he questioned Mr Matherani's motive behind making the allegations weeks after the controversy erupted and added that he was contemplating legal action in the matter.

More reports on page 5

Can Natwar wriggle out of this one?

A tragedy, but not the first of its kind

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 2

THE STORM in Parliament on Friday over an interview given by former Natwar Singh protégé Aniel Matherani demonstrates three things. One: It is now going to become increasingly difficult for Natwar Singh to maintain that his son's involvement in the Iraq oil controversy is a CIA plot. Two: The rats are leaving the sinking Natwar. Matherani's revelations suggest that he knows that investigators will unearth the extent of Jagat Singh's involvement and that he is therefore trying to distance himself from his former benefactor.

And three: The Prime Minister should have gone along with Sonia Gandhi when she suggested that the best thing would be for Natwar Singh to resign from the Cabinet till the inquiry reports came in. Natwar's ambivalent position as minister without portfolio demonstrates how he is still a massive embarrassment to the government. From the time the Volcker revelations first made the news, Natwar Singh has maintained that he went on an official trip to Iraq representing the Congress party. He has been more circumspect about his son's presence in Baghdad. Sometimes he says "It's not a crime" and at other times he seems to go along with Jagat's claim that he represented the Youth Congress. What is clear is that both Jagat and his relative Andaleeb Sehgal were in Baghdad at the same time as Natwar. Matherani, a middle-level Congress official attached to the party's foreign affairs cell (run by Natwar Singh), was also part of Natwar's party.

Sceptics have long suggested that Jagat Singh used his father's position to secure cheap Iraqi oil for himself. Andaleeb Seh-

BEHIND THE NEWS

Natwar managed to wangle minister without portfolio status for himself... Anybody who heard or saw Sonia at the HT Summit was left in no doubt that she was deeply unhappy with this arrangement

gal managed the deal, re-selling the oil and sharing the profits. Whoever secured the oil in Natwar Singh's name also took the oil in the Congress's name: The dates and the companies used to re-sell the oil leave one in no doubt.

The importance of the Matherani interview is that it confirms this thesis. According to Matherani, Natwar had intended to arrange business deals for his son even before he got to Baghdad. That is why Jagat went along and brought Sehgal with him — Matherani dismisses the claim that Jagat represented the Youth Congress.

Further, suggests Matherani, Natwar had a pretty good idea of what his son was up to. Worse still, Jagat misused the Congress's name to secure even more oil allegedly for the party. "In this case both oil voucher allottees are exactly the same," he says. "One has been given to Natwar by name, and the other in the name of the Congress party."

Some questions now arise. Why does Natwar Singh keep protecting a son whose reputation has done nothing but harm to

his father's political career? Could it be that he does not know the truth? Or is it just a father's love for a wayward child?

Why has Matherani chosen to speak out now? He was in Delhi when the controversy broke and stuck close by Natwar and family. The obvious answer is that he has worked out that the independent enquiries will reveal the truth and he wants to clarify his own position — a wise move given his previous closeness to Natwar and Jagat — before the reports are in.

And the final question: Is this the end of Natwar Singh's political career? It is no secret that Sonia Gandhi has been livid with him ever since she first suspected that Jagat Singh had used the Congress's name to enrich himself. It was she who urged the Prime Minister to set up the enquiries and to get Natwar to resign.

Natwar managed to wangle minister without portfolio status for himself through a mixture of media manipulation and bullying. Anybody who heard or saw Sonia at the HT Summit was left in no doubt that she was deeply unhappy with this arrangement. Nor is it any secret that she has cut off Natwar's access to 10, Janpath because she believes that he has allowed fatherly feelings to cloud the Congress's reputation for probity.

After the latest set of revelations, it seems extremely unlikely that Natwar Singh will ever be able to recover his position within the government and with his party president.

It is a human tragedy. But he will not be the first Indian politician to have sacrificed his political career at the altar of fatherly love — should these revelations be substantiated.

FRESH FIRE OVER OIL-FOR-FOOD DEAL

PM's statement is totally disappointing. Despite revelations by the ambassador, Manmohan Singh has sought to give a very routine response

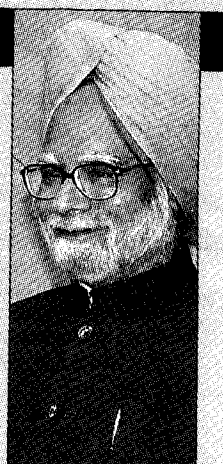
BJP deputy leader
in Lok Sabha V.K. Malhotra

It would be better for Natwar Singh to step down. The probe must go on and whoever is found guilty thereafter should be punished

CPI general secretary
A. B. Bardhan

There are two ways: It is for the PM to decide who should be in the Ministry. It is also for the individual minister under any controversy to decide whether to remain in the government

Parliamentary Affairs Minister
Priyaranjan Dasgupta



We had said that the references, as they are found in the Volcker Committee report, are 'unverified references'. I can assure the House that no one who is guilty will go unpunished

Manmohan Singh



The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is in possession of facts and documents. Investigation will also take into cognisance the statements attributed to Matherani

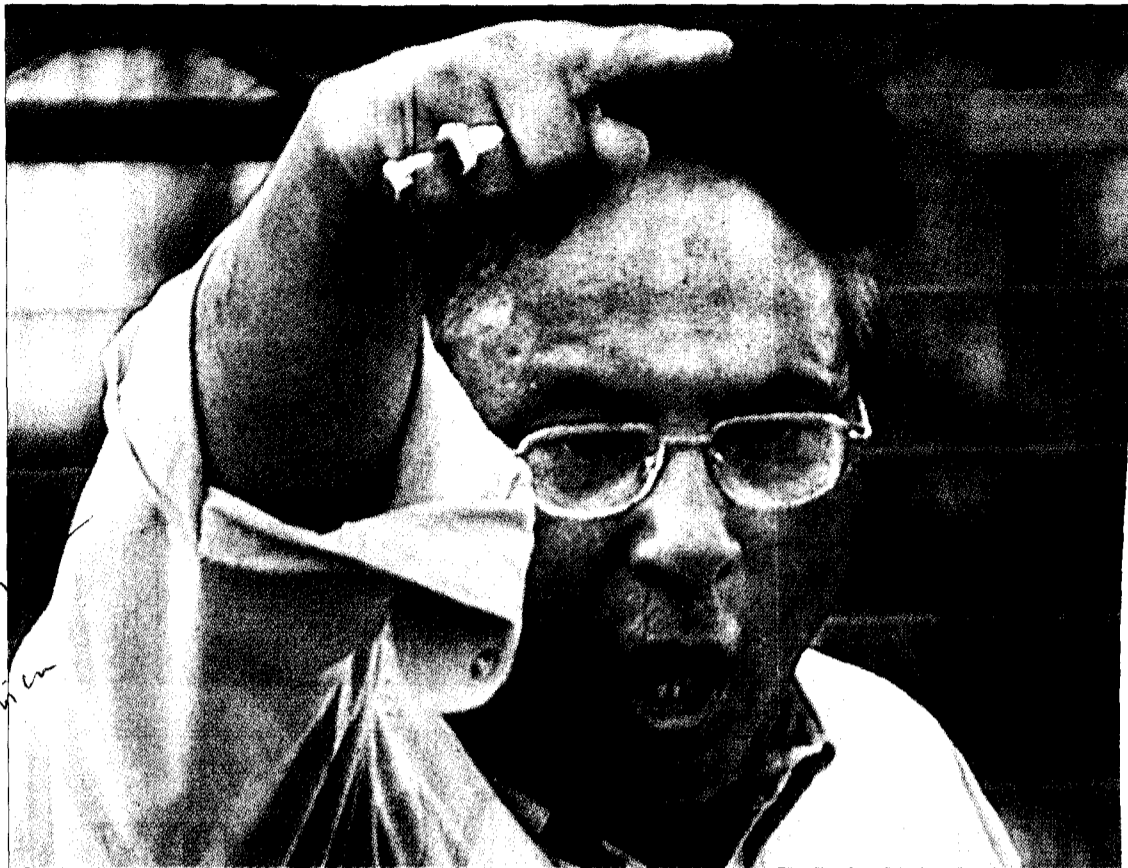
Finance Minister P. Chidambaram

Graphic: PRANAY KAMAL, ABHIMANYU

03 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Coach caught taking bribe



CBI chases, nabs Subhas Bhowmick outside South Club

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, December 2

EAST BENGAL coach Subhas Bhowmick was arrested for taking a bribe on Thursday. CBI officers chased and nabbed him in front of South Club — a tennis mecca known as the Wimbledon of the east.

The bribe had nothing to do with football. Bhowmick is also a superintendent in the anti-evasion unit of the central excise department and was trapped while taking Rs 1.5 lakh from a businessman at 4.30 pm. He apparently sensed the trap and tried to flee with the money, but CBI officers got out of their car and gave chase.

When they caught him, Bhowmick argued heatedly with the officers. The CBI said he threatened them and even punched one of the officers, but passers-by said they saw him being led away quietly. "He is not cooperating; he is behaving very rudely with us," an officer said.

The arrest followed a tip-off from the man who was bribing Bhowmick. The

CBI did not disclose his identity.

On Wednesday, Bhowmick had gone to the businessman's factory and threatened to book him for not paying his dues. Though the businessman insisted that everything was in order, he buckled under Bhowmick's pressure and agreed to bribe him. "Bhowmick told him that if he didn't shell out Rs 4 lakh, he would be in trouble. The scared businessman bargained and the amount was fixed at Rs 1.5 lakh," a CBI officer said. The businessman informed the CBI on Thursday. The sleuths reached the spot and laid the trap.

If convicted, Bhowmick could be in jail for seven years. East Bengal couldn't contact him or his family till late in the evening but have called a meeting of the top office-bearers on Saturday. East Bengal's sponsor, United Breweries, wouldn't say anything either. "We will find out what happened before reacting," executive vice-president Shekhar Ramamurthy told *HT*. Sources at the club and UB, however, said it would be difficult to continue with a man whose integrity had been questioned.

This is as bad as it gets for East Bengal. The arrest comes a year after Sasthi Duley and Dipankar Roy were charged with harbouring a notorious criminal, and a day after the team's ignominious ouster from the IFA Shield.

Bhowmick, part of the team that won the Asian Games bronze medal in 1970, had starred in East Bengal's 5-0 triumph over Mohun Bagan in the IFA Shield final 30 years ago. As coach, he had led East Bengal to an ASEAN Cup triumph in 2003. The club paid him around Rs 1 lakh a month.

After the arrest, CBI officers led Bhowmick to their Nizam Palace office. Booked under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, he was shifted to Lalbazar at night and will be produced at Alipore Court on Saturday.

The CBI continued raids on various premises owned by Bhowmick. These included his house in Alipore and his palatial house at Santiniketan, Subhadeep. Officers confirmed the raid on Subhadeep, but did not give details. The caretaker refused to speak.

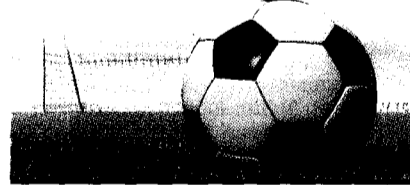
See also Page 7

THE PLAYER

- 1969:** Joined Mohun Bagan
- 1970:** Part of India team that won Asiad bronze
- 1973:** Joined East Bengal, scored 24 goals in Calcutta League. Team won the league from 1970 to 75
- 1974:** Played Asian Games
- 1975:** Part of team that thrashed Mohun Bagan 5-0 in IFA Shield final.
- 1976:** Joined Mohun Bagan, which won league
- 1979:** Retired

THE COACH

- 2003:** Won ASEAN Cup. Under him, East Bengal unbeaten in eight international matches, a national record
- 2004:** AFC Cup quarter-finals
- 2002-05:** 12 trophies for East Bengal. Two National League titles



03 DEC 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Charges outrageous: Natwar

"If Matherani was concerned, why did he not go public earlier?"

Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The former External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, has described as "totally false and malicious" the allegations levelled by India's Ambassador to Croatia, Aniel Matherani, that he had arranged for "oil vouchers" in the Iraqi oil-for-food programme.

In a statement issued on Friday, Mr. Singh said he had seen the "outrageous allegations" levelled against the Congress and himself. "I shall consult my lawyers for further action."

"The obvious question to ask 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 controversy came up."

Mr. Singh said his conscience was clear. "I am ready to face any

- "Totally false and malicious"
- Says he will consult his lawyers for further action
- Ready to face any inquiry that is time bound
- Matherani "already transferred": Shyam Saran

inquiry, which is time bound, so that my name is cleared at the earliest," the statement added.

Transferred

In a related development, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said Mr. Matherani had "already been transferred" to India. He said he had no doubt that Mr. Matherani would be returning to the country very soon.

Senior officials said that Mr. Matherani had been recalled much before the current controversy arose.

Mr. Matherani, who has been

associated with the Congress party's foreign affairs cell, told *India Today* that the "groundwork" for obtaining the oil vouchers had been done during the visit of a delegation led by Mr. Singh to Iraq in January 2001.

"Green signal needed"

"The Iraqis needed a green signal [for oil allocation] and it was provided by Natwar. He organised the delegation and introduced the ones who would execute whatever was given,"

the Ambassador, who has been asked to return home, alleged.

"When Natwar introduced his son [Jagat Singh] and [Andaleep] Sehgal to all the Iraqi officials he didn't have to say anything. All that he had to do was to show they were in the delegation, that they were his son and cousin, and, therefore, it was confidential. They could go later and do whatever business they wanted to ... The fact that they were introduced was a clear signal to the Iraqis," Mr. Matherani alleged.

A related write-up in the magazine, however, stressed that "while Matherani's revelations provide vital clues, they do not as yet prove Natwar's or his family's involvement in the deals."

More reports on Page 12

03 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

Fresh allegations against Natwar

✓
Competition
HID - 1
8712

Ambassador Aniel Matherani quoted as saying Natwar Singh was involved in getting oil coupons

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Volcker controversy took a dramatic turn on Friday with a close aide of Natwar Singh alleging that the former External Affairs Minister was directly involved in getting "oil coupons" for his son (Jagat Singh) and his son's business friend [Andaleeb Sehgal].

Aniel Matherani, Indian Ambassador to Croatia and a functionary of the Congress' foreign affairs cell in 2000-2001, is reported to have told a television channel/*India Today* that he was a witness to Mr. Natwar Singh's involvement in the oil-for-food scam.

While Mr. Natwar Singh denied Mr. Matherani's allegations as "false and malicious," Prime Minister Manmohan rejected the Opposition demand in Parliament that immediate action be taken against Mr. Singh.

Mr. Matherani's allegation was used by the Opposition to widen the scope of criticism to include Sonia Gandhi, Congress president and United Progressive Alliance chairman.

"Sonia must resign"

The Opposition demand for Ms. Gandhi's resignation as UPA chairman was vocally countered by the Congress benches in the two Houses. The Congress leadership and party MPs are determined not to allow the Opposition to resurrect the controversy in the House.

Soon after Mr. Matherani's allegations were aired on Friday, and the Opposition stalled the proceedings in Parliament, Dr. Singh went into a huddle with his senior Ministers, including Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Home Minister Shivraj Patil and Finance Minister P. Chidambaram. The Ministers' inclination was to opt for a legalistic approach and that the Pathak Inquiry Authority could look into the allegations.

There were unconfirmed reports that Mr. Natwar Singh had rejected a suggestion that he re-

sign from the Union Cabinet in view of the latest allegations. Later, Mr. Natwar Singh read out a statement to the media saying "my conscience is clear."

Enforcement Directorate will look into it: Manmohan

Arguing that the Government had been "firm, consistent and clear in its stand," the Prime Minister told the Lok Sabha that the Government remained "determined to go to the root of the matter and establish the truth or otherwise of these references. We stand by that position even now."

Terming the latest allegations against Mr. Natwar Singh "a matter of concern," Dr. Singh added that "the Enforcement Directorate will take cognisance of the recent statements attributed to the Indian Ambassador to Croatia and pursue its investigations."

According to Dr. Singh, "the Enforcement Directorate has assured the Government that their investigations are proceeding on the right track and they would be able to establish the facts expeditiously. We should not pre-judge the final outcome of the

investigation or pre-empt the findings that may be given by the Justice R.S. Pathak Inquiry Authority. For us in the Government, the trust is of utmost importance. We are determined that truth must prevail in this matter. Our Government believes in maintaining high standards of probity and transparency in public life and I can assure the House that no one who is guilty will go unpunished."

The Opposition, led by L.K. Advani, was unimpressed. Going for the Government's jugular, he demanded Ms. Gandhi's resignation, provoking the Congress to match lungpower for lungpower.

Later, in the evening, the Congress party's core group consisting of Dr. Manmohan Singh, Ms. Gandhi, Mr. Mukherjee, Mr. Patil and Ahmed Patel and special invitee Mr. Chidambaram met. The group took note of Mr. Matherani's contradictory stand as well as Mr. Natwar Singh's statement. The consensus was that the Opposition was needlessly being confrontational and that the Prime Minister's statement was sufficient evidence of the Government's sincere intention.

"Comments misrepresented"

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: India's Ambassador to Croatia, Aniel Matherani, on Friday denied he had granted an interview to *India Today*, the news magazine that in its latest edition carried a report on the Volcker issue and said an informal off-the-record conversation was "totally distorted" and reproduced "out of context."

Mr. Matherani told television networks that he had not granted any interview and charged that publishing an informal interaction was a

"breach of privacy."

"I gave no interview to *India Today*. It was an off-the-record conversation and it is completely unethical to have clandestinely recorded an off-the-record conversation and publish it. This is a complete breach of privacy," he told the networks over phone.

He said the magazine had reported and presented his off-the-record conversation totally out of context. "It has completely misrepresented my comments in the off-the-record conversation and totally distorted it."

Govt dismisses NDA cry to file FIR in Volcker case

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 29 NOVEMBER

AN NDA-sponsored adjournment motion on the Volcker committee report was defeated in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday with the government ruling out either the removal of K Natwar Singh from the Cabinet or the lodging of an FIR unless the kickback charges were sufficiently proved. The government's response came even as the Opposition — led by BJP leader Arun Jaitley, who's masterminded the attack on the Volcker committee revelations so far — mounted a high-voltage attack on the treasury benches, accusing the UPA of a "crude cover-up attempt that deliberately followed a faulty investigation route." As finance minister P Chidambaram rejected the Opposition's demand to register a criminal case on the basis of Volcker committee findings, Mr Jaitley insisted that there was no way that the money trail could be established without registering an FIR, as the Swiss laws required a court to hand over secret bank documents only on the basis of a criminal case.

The BJP leader — who virtually cornered the government on the investigation route adopted by it, a contrast from

FIR had been filed in the case.

The moot point in the investigation, argued Mr Jaitley, was who actually received the oil coupons and on whose behalf, and who passed them to the Swiss trading company, Masefield. Accusing the government of "trying to hide behind the veil of banking secrecy," he said that to crack the Swiss banking secrecy, charges should have been framed on various counts. The BJP leader also took a dig at Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and his flip-flops. Quoting an editorial from prestigious British journal "The Economist", he said: "The PM has to decide whether he wants to remain merely in office, or also in power."

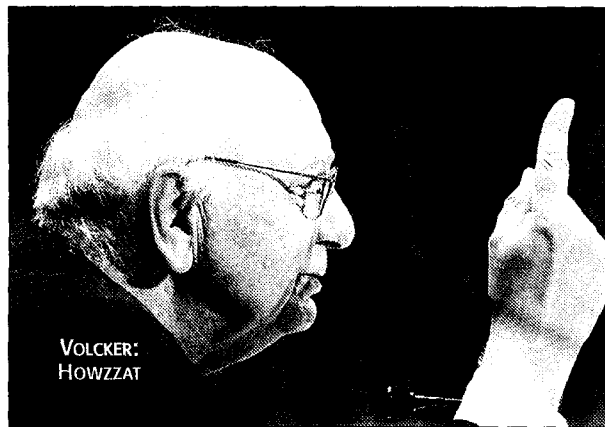
Mr Jaitley not only criticised the UPA government for tripping on its probity plank, but also attacked the Left, saying that though their "anti-imperialist" cry was understandable, what disappointed him was the fact that when "this anti-imperialism was converted into an office of profit, the Left leaders failed to stand up to it." Earlier, Mr Chidambaram, while replying to the debate, promised action against any person or entity found to have acted in violation of the law by the Justice Pathak committee, but said the same could not be done merely on the



charges were substantiated.

Describing Volcker's observations on the list of entities as not substantiated, Mr Sibal said the UPA government had, however, acted promptly in setting up an inquiry authority "even though there was no primary or secondary evidence in the issue." He said in the Volcker case, no criminal liability under Fema or FCRA, nor any case of corruption against any public servant, had been proved.

"Volcker was not operating as a grand jury. He was going by voluntary submissions," he said and pointed out that in his first interim report, neither the Congress nor Natwar Singh's name had figured. He said the entities list had come to light when submissions had been made before the Committee on International Relations of the US Congress by reproducing the list carried by an Iraqi newspaper. Sitaram Yechury of the CPI(M) said the Justice Pathak enquiry should cover all aspects and look into the matter such as naming of countries which criticised the sanctions on Iraq. Speaking to reporters later in the afternoon, Mr Jaitley claimed that the government did not have the integrity to reach out for the truth on the matter. "Spokespersons of the government have concentrated on being lawyers for the defence," he adding that the Justice RS Pathak Inquiry Authority and its terms of reference did not inspire any confidence about unearthing the truth. He also demanded a discussion on the Mitrokhin revelations, which had named senior Congress and Left party functionaries as beneficiaries of Soviet funds.



the Lok Sabha debate on Monday when NDA leaders put up a rather weak show — while responding to Mr Chidambaram's reply to the debate, cited the Bofors payoffs case wherein the Swiss court refused to entertain any probe into the secret Swiss bank accounts on the ground that no

basis of Volcker committee findings as they were "unverified."

Union minister for science and technology Kapil Sibal, too, in an hour-long intervention, affirmed that the government would not hesitate to file an FIR or send Letters Rogatory or empower the Pathak Inquiry Authority to issue notices if any

"Centre has always been open for discussion"

Handwritten: 14.11.09, 10:10 AM, Comments

Dasmunsi underscores differences in Centre's approach to Volcker Report and NDA's approach to Tehelka scam

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Monday used the debate on the adjournment motion on the Volcker Report in the Lok Sabha to underscore the difference in its approach to allegations of corruption vis-a-vis the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance which refused to discuss the Tehelka scam in Parliament.

Leading the offensive, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi said the Government had been open for a discussion from the outset and it was the Opposition, which had backtracked. Drawing parallels between the Government's approach to the Volcker Report

and the NDA regime's attitude in the wake of the Tehelka scam, he said, "Forget an adjournment motion or a discussion under Rule 184, you were not even prepared for a short duration discussion under Rule 193."

Similarly, Mr. Dasmunsi said, "Instead of taking action against the guilty, you went after the journalists and the media house which exposed the scam." The United Progressive Alliance Government, he said, had taken action within 10 days of the report becoming public though the allegations made against the Congress and Union Minister K. Natwar Singh were based on unverified documents. Critical of the habit of character assassina-

"The UPA Government had taken action within 10 days of the report becoming public though the allegations made against the Congress and Union Minister K. Natwar Singh were based on unverified documents"

tion, he sought to remind the BJP that its own leader L.K. Advani had been a victim of such charges in the Jain hawala case.

Midway through the discussion, the Congress charge was handed over to Pawan Kumar Bansal who said the Government's resolve to get to the truth was evident from the speed with which relevant documents had been secured from the United Nations. He also tried to set the

member — while opposing the

adjournment motion — had said Mr. Natwar Singh should have resigned on his own or the Prime Minister should have dropped him from the Council of Ministers. Also, he said, the Government should clarify its position on India's relations with Iran in particular given Mr. Natwar Singh's controversial statements ahead of his removal from the External Affairs Ministry.

Though the Opposition fielded Janata Dal (United) leader George Fernandes, much of what he said was struck off the records as time and again he sought to widen the scope of the adjournment motion. Heckled by the ruling benches from the very beginning, the former Defence Minister's inter-

vention saw heated exchanges between the sides with more than one minister rising to challenge him.

Another key flag-bearer for the BJP was Maneka Gandhi who wanted to know whether the Congress had opposed sanctions against Iraq because of the payments it got as a "non-contractual beneficiary" in the United Nations' Oil-for-Food Programme.

When Union Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar pointed out that the charge had not been substantiated, she said, "If Mr. Natwar Singh was not culpable, then why was he removed. And, if he was culpable, why has he been retained as Minister without portfolio?"

While the Left parties maintained that they were not holding a brief for the Congress, Rup Chand Pal (Communist Party of India-Marxist) said the Volcker Report was another trick of neo-conservatives to calumniate anyone who came in the way of imperialism.

Also, he underlined the fact that the world over the report had been rejected.

Speaking in a similar vein, C.K. Chandrappan (CPI) said Mr. L.K. Advani had tried to lionise the report and make it look like the "gospel truth".

The Volcker Report, he said, "is a biased report targeted against those who took a stance against sanctions and the U.S.'s unilateral action against Iraq."

LS rejects Oppn motion on Volcker

There Appears To Be No Direct Responsibility Of Govt, Rules Speaker

New Delhi
25 NOVEMBER

LOK Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee on Friday rejected Opposition-sponsored adjournment motions on Volcker Committee report, Mitrokhin Archives and former US envoy Daniel Patrick Moynihan's book on alleged payoffs to Congress and its leaders, ruling that these did not relate to the Union government, nor were they matters of recent occurrence.

The notices given by BJP deputy leader in the House V K Malhotra, NDA convenor George Fernandes and five others "do not refer to one specific issue and there does not appear to be any direct responsibility of the government in the matter", Mr Chatterjee said in his ruling.

The House was rocked for the second consecutive day over the Volcker issue with the Opposition unrelenting on its demand for the resignation of UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Union minister Natwar Singh.

"As the notices relate to more than one matter and even then not very definite, and do not justify adjourning all other business in the House for immediate discussion and further do not relate to a matter for which the Union government is responsible, over and above not being matters of recent occurrence, under the rules, notices are not eligible for admission by the Chair," he observed.

The notices for the motion were also moved by Braja Kishore Tripathy (BJD), S S Dhindsa (Akali Dal), Anant Geete (Shiv Sena), K Yerranaidu (TDP) and Yogi Adityanath (BJP). It was on "alleged involvement of Congress party and its leaders for compromising the interests of the country for monetary gains as revealed by Mitrokhin archives, the



EXPLOSIVE ISSUE: BJP leaders are not in a mood to compromise

Volcker Committee report and Moynihan's book and need for an investigation by the CBI".

The Speaker said he had already admitted a notice of a motion under Rule 184 by Malhotra and his BJP colleague Santosh Gangwar, which entailed voting, on the Volcker findings. Although such discussions even under Rule 184 were precluded because the matter was pending enquiry, Mr Chatterjee said he had admitted it by exercising his discretion.

Quoting the rules of procedure and conduct of business, Mr Chatterjee said it clearly laid down conditions of admissibility of a notice of adjournment motion. It was provided that such a notice should be restricted to a specific matter of recent occurrence involving government's responsibility.

The rules also make it clear that any motion which seeks to raise a matter before any statutory tribunal or authority or any commission or court of inquiry would not be ordinarily permitted to be moved, the Speaker said.

He noted that government had set up a single-member Inquiry Authority headed by Justice R S Pathak, former Chief Justice of India, to investigate the findings contained in the Volcker report.

— PTI

The ...

Volcker report rocks parliament

NDA Unrelenting, Says Business Only
After Sonia, Natwar Put In Papers

New Delhi: The winter session of parliament began on a stormy note on Thursday with an unrelenting opposition forcing the adjournment of both Houses over the Iraq oil pay-offs scam and sought the resignations of Union minister K Natwar Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, named as beneficiaries in it.

While the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day after a first half-an-hour suspension, proceedings in the Rajya Sabha ended abruptly at noon amidst slogan shouting by the NDA. Parliamentary affairs minister P R Dasmunshi's assurance of a discussion on the Volcker committee report, in which the Congress and Natwar are enlisted among "non-contractual" beneficiaries of the pay-offs, went unheeded as an agitated opposition said the Lok Sabha could function only if both of them resigned. "The House can function only if Sonia Gandhi and Natwar Singh resign. It cannot work till then," BJP deputy leader V K Malhotra asserted repeatedly in the Lok Sabha.

As the din continued, speaker Somnath Chatterjee asked the protesting members what they wanted. "You do not want this House to function," he asked, but with members persisting with their demand, Chatterjee adjourned the House for the day.

Sonia was present in the House when the opposition raked up the issue, but Natwar was not. The trouble started soon after the speaker allowed Malhotra to speak on an adjournment motion moved by the BJP leader on the issue. Malhotra demanded the resignation of Sonia and Natwar.

Similar scenes were witnessed in the upper house as the BJP's Rudra Narayan Pani spearheaded the attack, shouting, "We want Natwar

'Oppn running away from debate'

Criticising the BJP-led NDA for disrupting the Lok Sabha



proceedings over the Volcker committee report, parliamentary affairs minister **Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi** on Thursday accused

the opposition of "running away" from debate even after its motion was accepted for discussion under a rule that entailed voting. "They are running away from debate. We admitted their motion under rule 184 (which calls for voting at the end of debate)... They are not for discussion but for disruption," he said after the House was adjourned for the day 30 minutes.

Referring to rule 188 of parliamentary rules and procedures, Dasmunshi said although it disallowed debate on a subject that was under inquiry, there was a provision that the speaker could take a decision on allowing a debate if he felt so. Agencies

Singh to go". With the opposition members unrelenting, deputy chairman K Rahman Khan adjourned the House amid acrimonious scenes barely five minutes after it reassembled following a 45-minute adjournment at noon. Amidst the din, the papers listed for tabling were laid in the Rajya Sabha. Agencies

নটবর-সনিয়ার ইস্তফার দাবিতে সংসদ অচল

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ নভেম্বর: যথারীতি প্রথম কাজের দিনই ভঙুল। কালও সরকারি কাজ হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা কার্যত নেই। সোমবার থেকে ভোলকার রিপোর্ট নিয়ে আলোচনার মধ্যে দিয়ে সংসদ ফিরবে সংসদে।

অথচ সরকারপক্ষ আজই ভোলকার রিপোর্ট নিয়ে আলোচনায় তৈরি ছিল। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের প্রচার উপদেষ্টা সঞ্জয় বাড়ু আজ দুপুরেই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর তরফে দেওয়া বিবৃতিতে বলেছেন, “সরকার ভোলকার রিপোর্ট নিয়ে আজ এবং এখনই আলোচনা করতে রাজি।”

কিন্তু তাতে কাজ হয়নি। নটবর সিংহ এবং সনিয়া গাঁধীর ‘পদত্যাগ’ দাবি করে বিজেপি-সহ গোটা এনডিএ সংসদ অচল করে দেয়। রাজনৈতিক সূত্রের খবর, আগামিকালও তাঁরা এই একই পথে চলবেন। অবশ্য সোমবার থেকে ফের সংসদে আলোচনাতে অংশ নেবেন তাঁরা।

বিজেপি অবশ্য এটাকে ছেলেমানুষি বলে মানতে নারাজ। সংসদীয় দলের মুখপাত্র বিজয়কুমার মলহোত্র বলেন, “আমরা সমস্ত (ভোলকারের পাশাপাশি প্রাক্তন কেজিবি কর্তা মিত্রোখিনের নথি সংক্রান্ত বই) বিষয় একসঙ্গে করে নিয়ে আলোচনার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলাম। কিন্তু সরকার তাতে রাজি নয়।”

কিন্তু ঘটনা হল, মিত্রোখিনের বই নিয়ে সরকার আলোচনা করতেই দেবে না। বিরোধীদের আজকের ভূমিকাকে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ‘দুর্ভাগ্যজনক’ বলেছেন। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় থেকে

সংসদ বিষয়কমন্ত্রী প্রিয়রঞ্জন দাশমুঙ্গিরা তো বটেই এমন কি বাম নেতারাও বিজেপি-র ভূমিকার নিন্দা করেছেন। একই সঙ্গে সরকারপক্ষ এটাও বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছে যে কোনও বই নিয়ে আলোচনা হবে না। প্রিয়রঞ্জনের বক্তব্য, “তাহলে তো অর্থবর্ষে, যজুর্বেদ নিয়েও সংসদে আলোচনার দাবি উঠবে।”

পরে বিকালে বিষয়টি নিয়ে উপদেষ্টা কমিটির বৈঠক বসে। সেখানে বিজেপি-র উপস্থিতিতেই সোমবার থেকে লোকসভায় কী কী কাজ হবে, তা নিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত হয়। জাতীয় পতাকা সংক্রান্ত বিল, প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয় সংক্রান্ত বিল পেশ করা হবে। তা ছাড়া ভোলকার রিপোর্ট সংক্রান্ত মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব নিয়েও আলোচনা হবে।

পুরো ঘটনাটায় লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় এতই বিরক্ত যে তিনি সভাতেই বলেন, “এই প্রথম বিরোধীপক্ষের আলোচনার অনিচ্ছায় সভা মূলতুবি করতে হল।” আর প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেন, “এটা খুবই দুঃখজনক ব্যাপার। এর পর তো কারও ব্যক্তিগত কারণেও সভা মূলতুবি করতে হবে।” লোকসভার নেতার এই মন্তব্যের কারণ, সংসদ মূলতুবি হওয়ার পরেই বিজেপি-র শীর্ষ নেতারা পটনার উড়ান ধরেন নীতীশ কুমারের শপথের অনুষ্ঠানে হাজির হওয়ার জন্য।

আজ সকালেই বোঝা গিয়েছিল সংসদ চলবে না। লোকসভা শুরুর পর স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় মলহোত্রকে সুযোগ দেন ভোলকার সংক্রান্ত মূলতুবি প্রস্তাব নিয়ে বলার। মলহোত্র বলতে শুরু করেন,

সনিয়া গাঁধী এবং নটবর সিংহের নাম করে তাঁদের অপসারণ দাবি করলে সভায় তুমুল হট্টগোল বাধে। ট্রেজারি বেক্সের পাশাপাশি বাম নেতারাও চিৎকার করে প্রতিবাদ শুরু করেন। পরে ফের অধিবেশন চালু হলে সেই একই ঘটনার পুনরাবৃত্তি হয়। গোটা দিনের মতো মূলতুবি হয়ে যায় সভা। পাশাপাশি এই একই বিষয় নিয়ে রাজ্যসভায় গোটা দিনের জন্য মূলতুবি হয়ে যায়।

সংসদের বাইরে এই গোটা ঘটনার তীব্র সমালোচনা করেছে সরকারপক্ষ। প্রণববাবুর বক্তব্য, “আমরা আলোচনায় রাজি ছিলাম। গত দেড় বছরে ওরা বারবার সভা ভঙুল করেছে। করদাতাদের সাড়ে চার লক্ষ কোটি টাকা (সংসদের বার্ষিক খরচ) বরবাদ হয়ে যাচ্ছে বিরোধীদের দায়িত্বজ্ঞানহীনতায়।” প্রণববাবু জানান, অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির শিক্ষা ক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণে সংবিধান সংশোধন করতে একটি অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিল আনার কথা রয়েছে। বিরোধীরা মুখে বলছে অনগ্রসরদের জন্য সুবিধা বাড়াতে। কিন্তু সে জন্য যখন সংবিধান সংশোধনের প্রয়োজন হয়ে পড়ছে, তখন সংসদ চলতে দিচ্ছে না।

অন্য দিকে বিজেপি-ও তাদের সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে কড়া ভাষায় সরকারের নিন্দা করেছে। মলহোত্র সরাসরি বলেন, “বিদেশিদের কাছে ঘুঘের বিনিময়ে দেশের স্বার্থ বেচেছে কংগ্রেস।” তাঁর যুক্তি, “জ্যোতি বসুই বলেছেন কেবল সরকার ভেঙে দেওয়ার জন্য সিআইএ-র কাছ থেকে টাকা নিয়েছিল ইন্দিরা গাঁধীর সরকার।”

ANANDARAZAR PATRIKA

25 NOV 2005

Volcker: NDA plans adjournment motion

To demand resignation of Sonia as UPA chairperson and that of Natwar Singh from Cabinet

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Opposition has made up its mind to press for an adjournment motion demanding the resignation of Sonia Gandhi as chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance and of Natwar Singh from the Cabinet on the basis of the Volcker Committee Report. After a meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party parliamentary wing and another session of National Democratic Alliance MPs here on Wednesday, the BJP deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, V.K. Malhotra, said an adjournment motion would be moved in the House and a

motion under Rule 176 in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Allies attend meeting

Members of the Janata Dal (United), the Shiv Sena, the Akali Dal, the Biju Janata Dal, the Trinamool Congress and other allies were present at the NDA meeting chaired by the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"They have said they would welcome a discussion on any subject under any rule," Mr. Malhotra said, referring to the stand taken by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Priyaranjan Dasgupta on Tuesday.

It would not be up to the ruling party to object to the adjournment motion, Mr. Malhotra said to a question whether not allowing the discussion would mean disruption. Asked whether or not they would abide by the Speaker's decision, he said if both the Opposition and the ruling parties agreed, the Chair would surely allow the motion.

"Selling national interest"

The Opposition would try to make out a case against the Congress of "selling national interests" and of "creating an opportunity for foreign powers to interfere in India's policy," Mr. Malhotra said.

Privately BJP leaders indicated that the Opposition, by bring-

ing in the Moynihan allegation, was trying to embarrass the Left. For, the former Ambassador alleged that the CIA helped to finance the toppling of the first Communist Government in Kerala.

The other "top priority" subject was internal security with special reference to the Deepavali-eye blasts in Delhi, the violent incidents in Jammu and Kashmir and the recent naxal attack at Jehanabad, Bihar.

Speaker' stand: Page 12

Left backs Cong on Volcker issue

New Delhi
23 NOVEMBER

LEFT parties on Wednesday dubbed those raising the issue of Iraqi-oil scam, including the alleged involvement of K Natwar Singh as "stooges of the US", a statement that would be music to the ears of the Congress-led coalition. The parties, however, demanded that the Women's Reservation Bill should be brought in Parliament at the earliest and did not buy government's argument that the delay was because of lack of consensus.

"We do not agree with that (Volcker issue). It is taken out of context. Those who are raising the allegations (against) Natwar Singh are stooges of the US", CPI leader Gurudas Dasgupta said. He was addressing a press conference along with Left leaders after talks with senior

government leaders on floor co-ordination during the Winter session of Parliament which is almost set to be stormy.

Mr Dasgupta preceded his statement by claiming that the entire public discourse on the issue was "singularly one-sided" and declared the Left parties clearly dissociated from the BJP-led NDA's stand to "disrupt parliamentary proceedings" on the issue.

CPI(M) leader Nilotpal Basu said the Volcker Committee adopted "questionable" methods and the chairman of the panel himself said he had not enquired into anything but went into the material made available by the Iraqi regime.

At the same time, RSP leader Manoj Bhattacharya made it clear that the Left was holding "no brief" either for the government or Natwar Singh.

— PTI

Natwar Singh's name not in "original list"

Minister's name was first added by CIA-run survey group

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Though Natwar Singh's name figured in the Volcker Committee Report as a "non-contractual beneficiary" of Iraq's oil-for-food programme, the former External Affairs Minister was not on the original list of 270 oil allottees named by a Baghdad newspaper.

The list was published by *al-Mada* on January 25, 2004, based on the Oil Ministry documents leaked to it. It was translated into English by the Middle East Media Research Institute — a think tank established by former Israeli military intelligence officials — and circulated on the Internet.

The list had the names of prominent international political personalities and parties as the Volcker report would eventually publish — including Benon Savan and George Galloway — and fuelled demands in the U.S. that the entire oil-for-food programme be thoroughly investigated.

Figuring in the transliterated *al-Mada* list were two names from India — 'Biham Singh,' at serial number 128, and the 'Indian Congress Party,' at serial number 160. In Arabic, the letters spelling 'Biham' and 'Bhim' are identical. In no version of the list, however, Mr. Singh's name does figure.

For the first time 'Natora Singh' appears in a report issued on September 30, 2004 by the CIA-run Iraq Survey Group of Charles Duelfer.

The 'Comprehensive Report of the Special Adviser to the Director of Central Intelligence on Iraq's WMD' couched its widely

anticipated findings on the absence of WMDs within a supposed expose of the erstwhile Saddam Hussein regime's corruption in oil deals. Appendix B of the section on 'Regime Finance and Procurement' presents a list of beneficiaries of Iraqi oil vouchers.

According to Mr. Duelfer: "This annex contains a copy of the 13 secret lists maintained by Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan al-Jizrawi and the Minister for Oil, Amir Rashid Muhammad al-Ubaydi. A high-level Iraqi State Oil Marketing Organisation (SOMO) official provided the Iraq Survey Group with both the English and Arabic versions of these lists on 16 June 2004. The lists reproduced here are the original SOMO translations in English."

Though the CIA list repeats *al-Mada's* allegations against the Congress Party and 'Biham Singh,' the name of the former External Affairs Minister was also added. For contract number M/09/54, the entry says: 'Mr Natora Singh (Indian)-Masfield AG (Swiss), 1936 thousand barrels'; for M/09/120, it says 'Mr Natora Singh-Indian Congress Party-Masfield AG, Not Performed.'

Listed separately

The 'Indian Congress Party' and Masfield AG are listed separately for 1,001 thousand barrels under M/10/57.

Among the 'individuals and entities who were assigned quantities but did not sign contracts or lift said quantities' are 'Biham Singh (Indian)' and 'Indian Congress Party' on three separate occasions respectively.

Com-005
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Volcker tales unfold as Dayal reaches New York

19/11

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: The Indian government's special envoy Virendra Dayal, appointed to look into charges contained in the Volcker report against Union minister Natwar Singh among other Indian individuals and entities, arrived in New York on Thursday, even as a distinguished French diplomat named in the report admitted to having benefited from the oil-for-food scandal.

While Indians implicated in the report have been fuming in outrage and running for cover, Jean-Bernard Merimee, a French diplomat who holds the title "ambassador-for-life" has confessed to an investigating judge that he accepted oil allocations from Saddam Hussein. Merimee, who was a special advisor to UN secretary general Kofi Annan at the time of the allocations, told French authorities that he regretted taking the payments in 2002. He said the \$156,000 that he received was used to renovate a home he owned in southern



Uncovering The Truth: Natwar

Merimee is among the first Western diplomats to begin to explain how the oil-for-food scam worked and how they profited from it, candid confessions that contrast with the outrage and obfuscation in India. Like some of the other beneficiaries named in the report, Merimee was also a distinguished out-of-work envoy at the time he was compromised.

According to the French diplomat, who was at one time the French ambassador to India, he began working for a Moroccan bank, BMCE, after he was retired by the French foreign ministry. The bank was owed large sums by Saddam's regime. In 1999, Merimee flew to

Morocco. "I should not have done what I did. I regret it," he told an investigating French judge on October 12, according to an account in the French newspaper Le Figaro.

Baghdad to discuss the repayment and met Tariq Aziz, the deputy prime minister, who offered to use oil-for-food money.

But that idea was rejected by BCME's president, who feared an American backlash. So Merimee decided to go into business on his own. "Tariq Aziz recognised the interest I had taken in Iraq, and the advice I had given him," he was quoted as telling the paper.

Meanwhile, special envoy Dayal is expected to meet Volcker on Monday and seek further details, including access to documents which served as the basis for naming Natwar Singh, the Congress and other Indian individuals and entities. Dayal is accompanied by four officials, including one from the Enforcement Directorate specialising in foreign transactions.

It is still not clear how he will extract the relevant documents from the Volcker committee which has insisted that all material will remain under its control and has even resisted demands from the US Congress for the documents for the investigations it is conducting.

Nothing wrong with Volcker firms: Gupta

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 18. — The Union company affairs minister, Mr Prem Chand Gupta, is of the opinion that those companies whose names have appeared in the Volcker Committee report, may not have violated the country's company laws. "On the face of it, this does not seem possible," Mr Gupta said at the Economic Editors' conference here today.

Asked about any probe which his ministry has launched, he said: "I have just asked my officials to see if any violation of company law has been done by any of the companies named in the report."

The 623-page UN inquiry report by former US Federal Reserve chairman Mr Paul Volcker has named more than 100 Indian companies which include STC, Tata International, Hamdan Exports, Kirloskar Engines, Ajanta Pharma, Mohan Exports, L&T Overseas Ltd, Jord Engineers and National Electrical Industry.

Mr Gupta, however, said the government had decided to initiate action against companies that vanished after raising public money in the mid-90s and also decided to strengthen the Serious Frauds Investigation Office to nail big corporate offenders. He said: "Our crusade against vanishing companies and defaulters continues. We are committed to the pro-

Special envoy lands in New York

NEW YORK, Nov. 18. — India's special envoy Mr Virendra Dayal will have discussions with Mr Paul Volcker, head of the UN-appointed probe panel on oil-for-food scam, and top officials of world body over the next few days to seek information and documents on the basis of which Union minister Mr K Natwar Singh and Congress were named beneficiaries of the Iraqi programme.

Mr Dayal, who arrived here yesterday, is accompanied by four officials to assist him in identifying the specific information the Indian investigating agencies are seeking.

Indian diplomats and officials at

the Indian mission to the UN were so much tightlipped about the visit that they even declined to confirm that Mr Dayal has arrived in New York, saying they have no information on that. "He might have come on his own," one official said when told that Mr Dayal was in fact in New York.

The reason for unusual secrecy was unclear but apparently they want to keep the press away from him at least until he had had discussions with Mr Volcker.

The reason for unusual secrecy was unclear but apparently they want to keep the press away from him at least until he had had discussions with Mr Volcker. — PTI

tection of small investors."

He said 115 FIRs had been filed against such companies and their directors. In all 21 arrests had been made, he said. "We have published names of such companies, their directors and promoters in the media so that there is better public awareness on their activities." The government will now be taking up cases beyond 1995, he added. "The issue of their identification should be taken up."

Mr Gupta said his ministry was in the process of constituting an expert group for advice on strengthening the SFIO, which was set up in 2003 as a specialised multi-disciplinary organisation to deal with cases of serious corporate frauds.

ED searches

The Enforcement Directorate, probing possible illegal money transfers in the Iraqi oil-for-food scam, today searched the office of a businessman allegedly linked to the controversy even as it continued questioning youth Congress leader Mr Jamal Saidi, adds PTI. ED officials searched the office of Mr Arvind Khanna in Hauz Khas in Delhi and are believed to have seized some documents. Mr Khanna had been questioned earlier along with the directors of Hamdan Exports Mr Andaleeb Sehgal and Vikas Dhar after the Volcker report alleged that the company was paid kickbacks in the scam.

Action against anyone found guilty: Sonia Gandhi

“Hurt” and “very angry” over Volcker Committee Report

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: Congress president Sonia Gandhi said on Tuesday that action would be taken against anyone found culpable by the R.S. Pathak Inquiry Authority. The Authority has been appointed by the Central Government to investigate the charges in the United Nations-appointed Volcker Committee Report on the Iraqi oil-for-food scandal.

Taking questions after addressing a conference organised by the *Hindustan Times*, Ms. Gandhi said the findings of the Volcker Committee had both “hurt” her and made her “very angry.”

She said if the documents were authentic, then some individuals had misused the name of the Congress. As soon as the inquiry report was given, the Government would take action against any individuals found



Sonia Gandhi

“not innocent,” she promised. “We can no longer look the other way when such incidents take place.”

To a question whether she

was “protecting” the former External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, while Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wanted him to go, the Congress president said, “this is not accurate.”

“I kept saying that if what has come out, if the documents are authentic, I shall certainly not protect them [the individuals involved],” she said. According to her, people already looked at political parties with considerable cynicism — that all of them were the same and corrupt. It was “sad and bad” that people should have such a view of political parties, she said.

Stressing that there was a need to correct this impression, the Congress president said if immediate and credible action was taken after such incidents [Volcker report], the people were bound to change their opinion.

It was necessary, she said, for the Congress to clear its name in

the wake of the allegations made by the Volcker Committee. When the issue came up, Ms. Gandhi said she took the view that the Government must institute an inquiry.

She said she was “fully behind” the Government and its decision to set up the Pathak Authority. She hoped that it would get to the “bottom of the issue” and do it in the shortest possible time. Asked about the impact on the Manmohan Singh Government of the differences between the Congress and the Left parties, she said there was not a single issue that could not be resolved through discussion.

Though 14 parties made the coalition, the United Progressive Alliance had not faced a serious problem so far. She was more than confident about the stability of the Government and suggested that the differences with the Left might be a “little exaggerated” by the press.

The Star

BJP seeks CBI probe into Volcker scandal

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 6. — After the Prime Minister's Office hinted at an independent inquiry into the Volcker committee allegations against the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, the BJP today made it clear that nothing less than a CBI probe would serve the purpose.

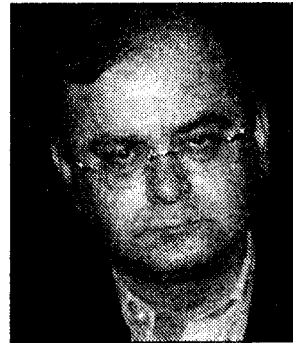
Merely an independent inquiry by a retired judge or a diplomat, as hinted by the PMO is not enough and the government should tell the CBI to launch an investigation, as it did in Tehelka expose case.

Instead of initiating an independent probe into the allegations of Iraqi oil pay-offs to the Congress and Mr Natwar Singh, the government should refer this case to the CBI as the offence comes under the purview of laws regulating foreign contributions and exchange, the BJP spokesman, Mr Arun Jaitley, said.

"The facts stated in the Volcker report constitute sufficient material to merit registration of a criminal case by CBI. Under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) ACT 1976, no person can accept a foreign contribution or agree to acquire any currency from a foreign source on behalf of any political party," Mr Jaitley said.

While demanding resignation of the Foreign Minister, who has been listed an non-contractual beneficiaries of pay-offs in Iraq's oil-for-food programme, the BJP said his continuation has not only become morally unacceptable but also become "some what disoriented".

Attacking the UPA gov-



Mr Arun Jaitley: No independent inquiry will do.

ernment for its "double standards", he said that when it came to Tehelka expose it "disbanded the Phukan Commission on Tehelka" after coming to power and referred the entire matter to the CBI for investigations so why now in case of Volcker committee report it is going to constitute an independent enquiry instead of letting the CBI investigate the matter. "How can the Prime Minister, the Congress chief and the UPA government adopt different standards? They should be bound by the same yardsticks by which they had insisted that when facts constitute a criminal offence, the CBI alone should investigate."

Acceptance of money outside India and payment outside the country by persons not so authorised would constitute an offence under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) 1999, Mr Jaitley said. "If person involved in these transactions, including those responsible for running political parties were public servants, a case of criminal conspiracy under the Prevention of Corruption Act would also arise," he added.

"The appropriate course that would be to register a regular case with the appropriate investigate agency and further the investigation in the matter," said Mr Jaitley.

He also said that since "bulk of the evidence in the case was available outside the country including Iraq, Jordan, New York and Switzerland", an individual would be required to be interrogated and documentary evidence to be obtained. "If most of this evidence is available outside India, neither a retired diplomat nor a retired judge under the Commissions of Inquiry Act would be empowered to take coercive procedures to collect these evidence."

Venkaiah ups the ante

The BJP along with other Opposition parties will take up the Iraq oil-for-food scam in the Lok Sabha because it is a national issue, senior BJP leader Mr Venkaiah Naidu said at the NSC Bose Airport today, a report adds from Kolkata.

Replying to questions on the Congress' statement that the party was contemplating to serve a legal notice against the UN, Mr Naidu said it would be a "foolish act". He said that the Congress was trying to hide facts while it should accept the truth and take right action to this matter.

The BJP leader, who was on his way from Imphal to Delhi via Kolkata, said that the involvement of the external affairs minister, as referred to in the Volcker report, has damaged the country's image beyond repair.



Punjab twist to Iraq oil scandal

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, Nov. 6. — The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) asserted that there was a Punjab dimension to the multi-billion dollar oil-for-food scam allegedly involving the Congress and the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh.

Almost all principal players were not only linked to Punjab but had also been active in various questionable activities in the state because of their close proximity to the chief minister, Capt. Amarinder Singh. "Apart from the modus operandi employed by men of shady character in using front organisations, such as those figuring in the Punjab Intranet scam, there were a lot of other things providing a clue to the Punjab angle to this international scandal," the SAD

president, Mr Parkash Singh Badal, said in a statement here. Mr Badal claimed that there was enough prima facie evidence to prove a nexus between the main accused in the Iraq scam and certain persons around the Punjab chief minister.

Mr Badal said: "The key figure in the multi-billion dollar international scandal, Mr Amdy Singh, apart from being a relative of Mr Natwar Singh and Capt. Amarinder Singh, has always been the favoured beneficiary of the CM's bounty.

Not only does he get a major share in several contracts granted by the Punjab Government but has also been provided with out-of-turn and priority security umbrella by the Punjab Police. This is strange since Mr Amdy Singh is neither a public figure nor is there any threat to his life. Why he has been given security

cover is intriguing."

The SAD president said that there were reports that Mr Amdy also allegedly had major stakes in the liquor trade through some front men. He had been allotted special sand digging rights across the state in violation of the norms.

The party demanded that Mr Natwar Singh should be sacked immediately and the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, must own moral responsibility and make public the role played by Mrs Sonia Gandhi in the "disgraceful episode which has a strong bearing on the country's security, diplomatic standing and business interests. After the disclosure by Mr Volcker, the Congress and its president are left with no escape routes and must own responsibility for playing havoc with national interests."

'Resignation. What For?'

Natwar Questions Volcker Report's Credibility

TNN and Agencies

New Delhi: Unfazed by the political storm over his being named in the Paul Volcker report on the Iraq oil scam, external affairs minister K Natwar Singh on Saturday rejected the demand for his resignation and questioned the credibility of the findings of the Volcker committee. The minister also made it clear that he has the full support of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi.

During his first interview to a TV channel after the Volcker report cropped up, Singh retorted: "What for?" when asked whether he had ever considered putting in his papers. "I will fight and fight back. BJP is not going to decide who the foreign minister of India is going to be," he said.

Singh maintained that Volcker had not bothered to contact Congress party or him before recording the findings of his report on the kickbacks received by former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein during the West Asian country's oil-

► **Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh even as the premier held parleys with finance minister P Chidambaram and science minister Kapil Sibal apparently to discuss issues relating to setting up of an inquiry to go into the findings of the Volcker report.**

► **India's permanent representative to the UN Nityam Sen has been asked to meet UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Paul Volcker to find out the truth.**

► **Congress accuses NDA of "politicising" the issues arising out of the Volcker report saying its decision to approach the president for the removal of external affairs minister Natwar Singh shows it is "fishing in shallow waters".**

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for-food programme.

Asserting that the report was based on the records of the current Iraqi government that has "no credibility in the world", he said: "Let him (Volcker) produce evidence." In New York, Volcker had on Thursday said that all those named in the report were notified and given a chance to clarify on the contents about them. He also said that he was not aware of the fact that Singh was external affairs minister of India.

The report by the former Federal Reserve chairman ~~alleged \$1.8 billion~~ in bribes and illegal surcharges were paid to the Saddam regime.

The minister said allegations in the report were an attempt to malign one of the well-known, oldest, democratic and secular party in the world. Singh said his family has no business with Andleep Sehgal, who owns Hamdan exports—a firm on whose behalf Swiss company Masefield AG is reported to have lifted oil barrels "under allotments to Congress and Natwar Singh" made by the Saddam regime in 2001.

Natwar rules out putting in papers

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 5 NOVEMBER

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THE Prime Minister on Saturday held discussions with the Congress president and some Cabinet colleagues on how to go about the government's decision to institute an inquiry to "get to the root" of the Volcker Committee findings. Meanwhile, the external affairs minister, Natwar Singh, rejected the BJP's demand for his resignation even as the main Opposition party took its protests to the streets.

Manmohan Singh met Sonia Gandhi on Saturday morning and followed it up with discussions with senior ministers including Pranab Mukherjee, P Chidambaram, HR Bhadrachari and Kapil Sibal. Sources said the meeting was part of the exercise to work out the modalities for an enquiry into the Volcker Committee report, which named Natwar Singh and the Congress Party as benefactors of Iraq's oil-for-food programme.

"The ministers who have been asked to study the Volcker Committee report are on the job. Meanwhile, the government is working on the details of how to conduct a probe to get to the root of the report. A decision is expected in the coming days," said a government source. The AICC also said the party was keen to clear its name and prestige through a probe into the controversy.

On the political front, the BJP activists today staged protest march demanding action against the external affairs minister. But Mr Natwar Singh on Saturday made it clear that he has no plans to quit and said he enjoyed the full backing of the Congress president and the prime minister.

In an interview to a TV channel, Mr Singh said he had nothing to do with Iraqi oil-for-food programme and the Swiss oil exporter Masfield Export. About the links between his son Jagat Singh and Andleep Seghal of Hamdan Export which had allegedly bought oil, he said the two were friends but they

had nothing to do with Seghal's business dealings.

"What for?" he retorted when asked whether he ever considered putting in his papers. "I will fight and fight back. BJP is not going to decide who the Foreign Minister of India is going to be".



STRONG STAND: Natwar

Minister of India is going to be". Mr Singh maintained that Paul Volcker, the author of the controversial report into the UN's oil for food programme, had not bothered to contact the Congress party or him before recording the findings. Asserting that the report was based on the records of the current Iraqi government which has 'no credibility in the world', he said 'let him (Volcker) produce evidence'. He said the Volcker report has already been rejected or disputed by countries like Russia, France and South Africa. The Indian envoy to UN has been asked to talk to the UN secretary general and Mr Volcker to get the material evidence to substantiate the charge against

him and the Congress. He said neither he or the party was given a chance to clarify on the contents about them.

Meanwhile the Congress leaders, faced with allegations of internal rift in defending Mr Singh, today put up a show of unity at AICC office with general secretaries Ms Ambika Soni, S Chaturvedi and Mr Motilal Vora jointly denying any rift within the party and rejecting charges against the Congress and Mr Singh. But around the same time in Rajasthan, the supporters of Mr Natwar Singh burnt the effigy of Ms Ambika Soni, saying she was not defending their leader.

Reacting to Mr Volcker response to the Congress decision to serve legal notices that he and UN enjoyed legal immunity, the Congress spokesman, Abhishek Singhvi said the legal notice was to ask the world body and Mr Volcker to provide the Congress with material evidences to substantiate the charge against it. He said there is nothing called "blanket immunity" and said even those enjoy legal and diplomatic immunity could face defamation suits.

Volcker move that saved Annan's job

Press Trust of India

NEW YORK, Nov. 6. — With his report on Iraqi oil deals creating a political storm in India, its author Mr Paul Volcker, in a startling revelation, has said he agreed to change the language that referred to UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan's son Kojo's business dealings.

Mr Volcker, who investigated allegations of corruption in the U.N.'s \$64 billion Iraqi oil-for food programme, said he had no idea how much the 18-month probe would expose the vulnerabilities of the world body and how close he would come to toppling the Secretary-General as its leader.

"It had that potential from the start," Mr Volcker said in an interview to *Los Angeles Times*.

But when it came to the moment when he realised that Mr Annan's job hung on his words, "I felt uncomfortable," he said.

The daily said that the UN chief and his lawyer asked Mr Volcker to change the language about the business dealings by Mr Kojo Annan, that they thought could force his father's resignation, hours before the publication of the draft of the report in September. Mr Volcker agreed. "It was merely a part of the due process," he was quoted as saying.

Before releasing the September report on Mr Annan, Mr Volcker met



I agreed to change the language of the Iraqi oil deal report that referred to Kofi Annan's son Kojo's business dealings
— Paul Volcker

with the UN chief and his lawyer to discuss the harsh conclusion. "The wording we had was that Mr Annan's performance did not meet the standards of the United Nations," Mr Volcker said, adding: "And there was

more, along the same vein."

Asked on Thursday whether he thought the UN chief knew about his son's attempts to use his father's connections for his company's benefit, Mr Volcker said: "To this day, I still don't know." A UN official with knowledge of the meeting said the conclusions cited a failure by Mr Annan in management and oversight, together with a failure to keep close tabs on his son's questionable business dealings.

Mr Annan's reaction, said another person with knowledge of the meeting, was that the way the conclusions were phrased implied that he favoured Cotecha's (the Swiss firm for which Kojo worked) bid and made him look so bad that it might force his resignation.

Mr Annan's lawyer, Mr Gregory Craig, asked that the findings be dealt with separately, because Mr Annan took responsibility for the management issues, but not for his son's behaviour, of which he says he had no knowledge.

"We presented the facts, and they spoke for themselves," Mr Annan told *The Times* about the meeting. And Mr Volcker agreed. Even if he had doubts that Mr Annan was unaware of Cotecha's bid, he was convinced that Mr Annan had not influenced the contract. It was not worth toppling a Secretary-General. "No one ever said that he (Kofi Annan) had influenced the process, and that was an important consideration," Mr Volcker said.

Another report on page 2

Enter special envoy Dayal

NEW DELHI, Nov. 6. — The government tonight appointed a special envoy to collect materials on the allegations made in the Volcker Committee report on Iraqi oil payoffs involving the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh and the Congress party. There were indications that a judicial probe may also be instituted.

Mr Virendra Dayal (70), a former UN Under Secretary-General and a former member of the National Human Rights Commission, will liaise with the UN and its member-states to gather relevant materials, including those on the unverified references in the report regarding

include a judicial probe which may be announced as early as tomorrow.

Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax officials today quizzed Mr Andaleeb Sehgal, close friend of Mr Natwar Singh's son, Jagat, and a partner in Hamadaan Exports, named in Volcker report as a non-contractual beneficiary of the pay-offs. Sleuths also searched his residence and office.

Also today, the Prime Minister met a core group of ministers and later, Mr Natwar Singh, separately. The core group meeting was attended by Mrs Sonia Gandhi, among others. — SNS

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Government appoints probe into Volcker Committee report

Former U.N. Under Secretary General to head the probe

NEW DELHI: The Government on Sunday appointed Virendra Dayal, former Under Secretary in the United Nations, as Special Envoy to head the inquiry into the payoffs alleged by the Volcker Committee to External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh, Congress and Indian entities in the oil-for-food scam.

The Special Envoy will be given full powers and authority of the Government of India to execute the responsibility entrusted to him, an official announcement by the Prime Minister's Office said. L

A statement read out by Prime Minister's Media Adviser Sanjaya Baru said Mr. Dayal, a former Chef de Cabinet, will liaise with the UN and its members to gather relevant materials, including those on the "unverified references" in the Volcker Committee report regarding the involvement of Indian entities and individuals.

The statement said Mr. Dayal's appointment will be for an initial term of three months or until the completion of this task, whichever is earlier. - PTI

Special Correspondent adds:

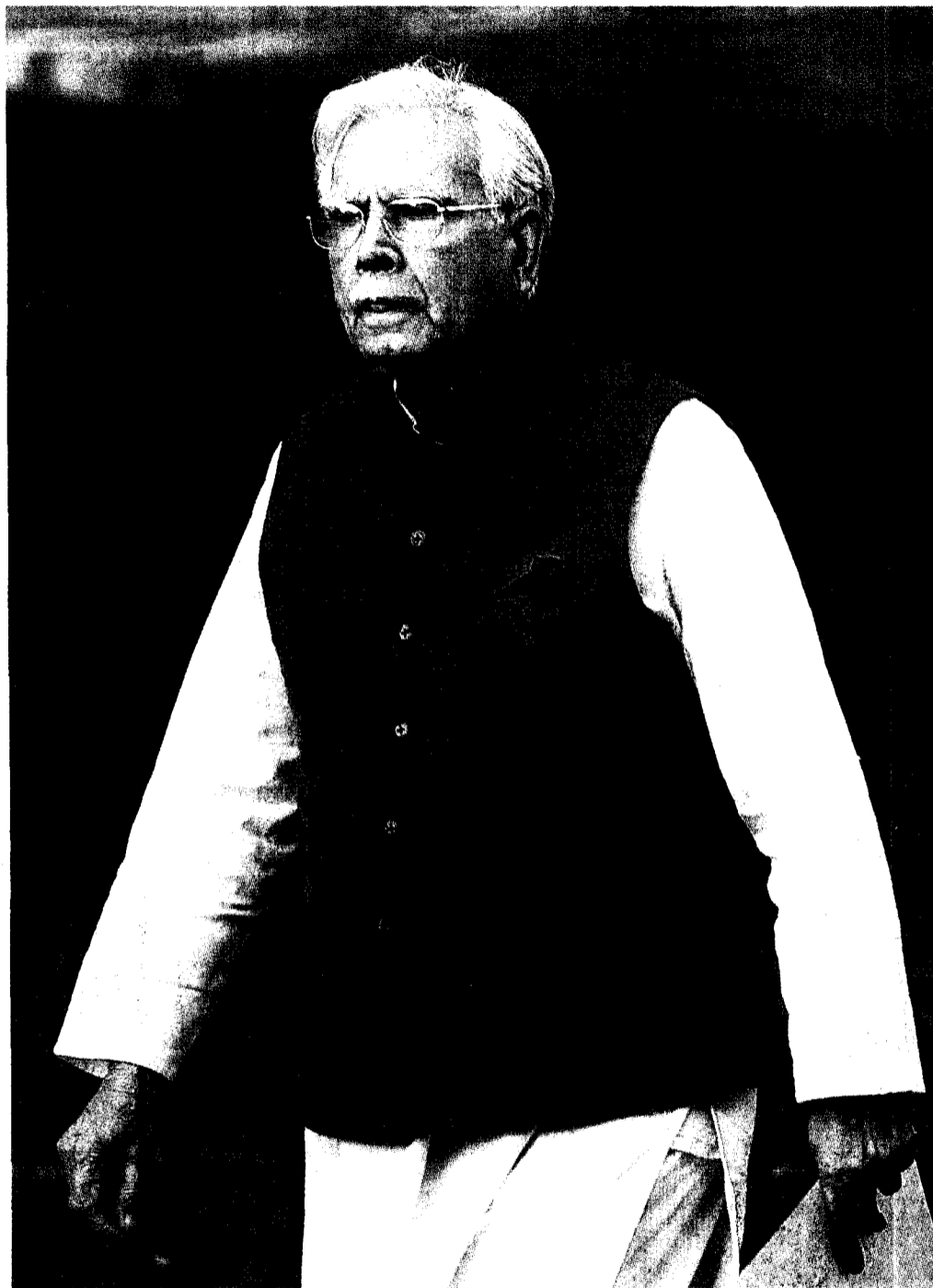
Earlier in the day, the "core group" — the Prime Minister, the Congress president, the Union Home Minister, the Defence Minister, the Human Resource Development Minister and the Political Secretary to the Congress president — met at Dr. Manmohan Singh's residence. Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and Union Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj were special invitees.

The core group finalised, what one participant described, as the "polite letter" that the Congress would be sending to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Anan.

The communication stresses the fact that the Congress had to be treated differently than individuals named in the Volcker Report and that the party would be grateful to know on what basis or evidence its name was mentioned among the "non-contractual beneficiaries". The party leadership is absolutely clear that it wants its name to be cleared of any charge.

Detailed reading

The second item before the "core group" was to firm up the "probe" into the allegations contained in the Volcker Report against the External Affairs Minister.



QUESTIONING VOLCKER: Emerging after a meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his residence in New Delhi on Sunday, External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh said that the references made to his name in the Volcker report were unsubstantiated. — PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

After a detailed and minute reading of the voluminous report the assessment is that there are too many 'matching' details for anybody's comfort.

Organisations and individual names were misused and it was imperative that the matter be probed thoroughly and credibly.

It was decided that the probe team should be empowered to travel abroad or question any of-

ficial, past or present.

Soon after the "core group" finished its labours, Mr. Natwar Singh had a meeting with the Prime Minister and the National Security Adviser.

After his interaction at the Prime Minister's residence, the Foreign Minister came out with a written statement which he read out to the media.

According to Mr. Singh the Volcker Report and the "unsub-

stantiated references" were discussed, besides "pressing foreign policy matters."

'Summons' served

Meanwhile, enforcement authorities served "summons" on the controversial Andaleeb Sehgal of the Hamdan Exports.

He is expected to make himself available for questioning on Monday when he would be asked to explain the alleged foreign ex-

- Congress keen to clear its name
- Too many 'matching' details
- Organisations and individual names 'misused'

change transactions.

Jogi defends Natwar

Congress MP and former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi came out in defence of Mr. Natwar Singh, questioning the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) moral authority in demanding his resignation. Drawing attention to NDA and BJP's own track record on such issues, he said the Volcker Report should be seen in the backdrop of India's friendly relations with Iraq, particularly the Baath Party. While defending the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jogi said he was most concerned about the allegations made against the Congress.

According to him, it was preposterous for anyone to suggest that the Congress purchased and sold oil, and took commission. "We challenge Mr. Volcker to produce even an iota of evidence."

Also, he questioned the BJP's claim to 'swadeshi' and wondered how a party which talks of 'national pride' could depend on a "so-called foreign enquiry conducted by a foreigner".

"If the BJP has any national pride, they should not take the support of an enquiry trashed by most self-respecting nations."

Pawar's caution

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar — in an interview to NDTV — cautioned the Congress against sending a legal notice to the United Nations. Of the view that there was nothing wrong in pursuing such a line if the Congress was sure of itself, the Agriculture Minister said such a strategy could well boomerang.

Earlier in the day, NCI spokesman D.N. Tripathi had dismissed the Opposition demand for Mr. Natwar Singh's resignation on the premise that mere mention of name was no evidence of his involvement.

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Volcker: all those named were given a chance to clarify

Congress party welcome to send a legal notice

NEW YORK: Paul Volcker, who authored the controversial United Nations report on the oil-for-food programme during the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, has indicated that External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh was asked for his comments when he was listed.

At a function here on Friday in which he spoke on the issue of U.N. reforms in the context of his report alleging largescale corruption in the oil-for-food programme, Mr. Volcker said, "I came to know yesterday that Natwar Singh is India's Foreign Minister." All those named in the report were given a chance to clarify. "Everybody was notified that they are going to be listed, and we also indicated what their

response was, if any."

Response listed

"If the response was that of denial, we listed it and if the response, in a few cases, was 'yes,' we did it and that was listed. Many got no response, many were in between," he said.

The report mentioned Mr. Singh as a "non-contractual" beneficiary of the programme.

Mr. Volcker, a former United States Federal Reserve Chairman, alleged that \$1.8 billion was paid in bribes and illegal surcharges to the regime of Saddam Hussein.

He was unfazed by the threat of legal action by the Congress. "The party is welcome to send a legal notice," he said with a

laugh. The Indian Government's surprise and the questions over the credibility of the 623-page report were unfounded.

Privileges and immunities

"They [the Congress] are welcome to send a legal notice. ... The U.N. has certain privileges and immunities. And, we also in some cases have the analysis but in some cases we certainly listed the information indicated from Iraqi records."

"...We didn't say what is right or wrong. We only said what was there in the Iraqi records, whether there was denial, acceptance, if there was something in between or no answers." — UNI, PTI

Volcker breaks silence

Says people named
were notified by UN

HT Political Bureau

New Delhi, November 4

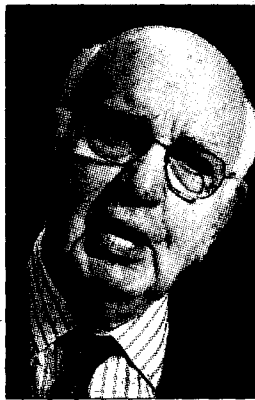
THE FORMER US Federal Reserve Chairman, Paul Volcker, has broken the silence on his report, which has caused a political storm across the globe. He claimed in New York that those named in his report had been notified and given a chance to clarify on the contents.

Volcker's remarks assume importance in the light of external affairs minister Natwar Singh's assertion, reiterated at a meeting on Friday with CPI leaders, that he wasn't ever approached by the UN panel that described him and the Congress party as "non contractual" beneficiaries in the oil-for-food scam.

Wire services quoted Volcker as saying that everyone named in the report had been given a chance to clarify. "We have indicated (that) everybody was notified that they are going to be listed and we also indicated what their response was, if any," he said. According to IANS, Volcker said: "They (recipients of the notices) said that they did not do it and, if they did do it, then they were unaware of having done (any wrong)." Interestingly, PTI reported him as claiming that he learnt only "yesterday" that Natwar Singh was India's foreign minister.

Volcker's comments came a day after the Centre decided to have the matter probed and the Congress said it would serve a legal notice on him and the UN. The latest to join the rising international chorus against the report were a South African firm and the New Zealand government.

Closer home, the CPI came out in defence of Natwar Singh with A.B. Bardhan and D. Raja saying they did not "disbelieve his innocence". After a meeting with the minister, they said they were convinced the report was an attempt to harass those who stood by Iraq. Bardhan told reporters that "there are reasons not to disbelieve Natwar Singh". They said the minister told them the main Volcker report did not mention him or the Congress party. It was only in the annexures that they were mentioned. The CPI leaders also quoted Natwar Singh as stating that no one met him or asked for his version on behalf of the UN committee. Raja said since Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was standing by the external affairs minister, there was no reason for him to resign.



Paul Volcker

See also Page 2

Accepting commission not illegal: Bhim Singh

Denies seeing Natwar's name in a document related to the oil deal

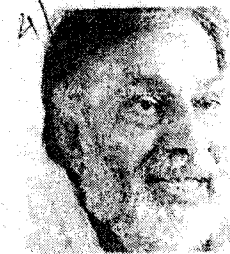
Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party chief Bhim Singh has denied having seen External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh's name in a document related to Iraq's oil-for-food deal. He said accepting a commission under the United Nations programme, as revealed in the Volcker Committee report, was not "illegal" though it could be termed "immoral."

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Prof. Singh described the report as a "politically biased" document aimed at framing the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

The report has named Mr. Natwar Singh and the Congress as "non-contractual beneficiaries" of the U.N. programme. Prof. Singh's name also figures in the report but he says he did not lift the quota of oil allotted to him.

Prof. Singh said he was misquoted in a section of media and clarified that he had seen Mr. Natwar Singh's name in the list of beneficiaries on a web site (www.lic-offp.org) last year when he was scanning it for his



• Volcker report is "politically biased"

• U.N. officials approached me to sign a deal but I declined the offer

• First resignation should come from U.N. Secretary-General

(own) name. "Mr. Natwar's name was mentioned along with that of the Congress party (Natwar Singh/Congress). Two other names were that of the British Labour M.P. George Galloway and mine."

Prof. Singh admitted that U.N. officials had approached him to sign the deal that could have

fetches him Rs. 41 crores but he declined the offer after "listening to my conscience."

"VAT worse than commission"

"Commissions are given for defence deals and activists of political parties or members of Parliament also take commission for getting work done. It is an accepted norm these days," he said, adding VAT (Value-Added Tax) was worse than commission.

"This is not a bribe but just a commission and does not violate any national or international laws. Also, the money involved is not from India."

Asked whether the External Affairs Minister should resign on "moral" grounds, Prof. Singh said it was for him and the Congress to decide. The first resignation should come from the U.N. Secretary-General, who headed the U.N. Monitoring Committee then.

"I am no supporter of the Congress but the Prime Minister is there to defend Natwar Singh. I would have been condemned had I accepted the deal," Prof. Singh said.

BJP writes to Manmohan on Volcker report

Continuation of Natwar an embarrassment

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: In a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday, the Bharatiya Janata Party demanded the immediate dismissal of Natwar Singh as External Affairs Minister, saying his continuation would be a "national embarrassment."

The two-and-a-half page letter, signed by general secretary

• Criminal proceedings sought against those indicted

• Government should seek detailed evidence from U.N. authorities

• Letter points to a series of "coincidence"

Government "deeply concerned"

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Following is the text of the statement released by the Prime Minister's Office on the Volcker Committee report:

"The Government is deeply concerned about the unverified references made in the Volcker Committee report to the Congress Party and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Natwar Singh.

The Volcker Committee report, as it stands today, is insufficient to arrive at any adverse or definitive conclusion. Therefore, the Government is determined to go to the root of the matter and establish the

CONG TO SEND LEGAL NOTICES TO UN, VOLCKER PANEL

Govt hints at probe

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 3. — As a political controversy raged over the Volcker Committee report that named the Congress and foreign minister Mr Natwar Singh as beneficiaries of Iraqi oil deals, the Centre today indicated it could conduct a probe into the allegations. It said a decision would be taken shortly.

"The government is deeply concerned about the unverified references made in the Volcker Committee report to the Congress party and the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh. The Volcker Committee report, as it stands today, is insufficient to arrive at any adverse or definitive conclusion," a statement issued by the PMO said. "Therefore, the government is determined to go to the root of the matter and establish the truth or otherwise of these references. The matter is under serious consideration... and a decision will be pronounced shortly." A Congress source said the



probe could be "informal". The statement was issued shortly after Mr Singh was called by Dr Manmohan Singh to his residence for discussions. Late in the night, the foreign minister again met the Prime Minister. CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat also met Mr Singh. It was also the day the BJP intensified its onslaught, seeking Mr Singh's dismissal. In a letter to Dr Singh today, BJP general secretary Mr Arun Jaitley

said: "Prima facie, there is compelling evidence to suggest that Mr Natwar Singh allowed himself to be used as a lobbyist for Saddam Hussein in Iraq... The Volcker Committee's indictment is sufficient ground for demanding Mr Natwar Singh's resignation." Speculation was rife that Mr Singh had offered to quit, but Dr Singh had asked him to wait till the proposed probe was over. The PMO did not confirm such reports.

Shortly after the Centre hinted at a probe, the Congress decided to issue comprehensive legal notices to the UN and the Volcker Committee demanding full disclosure of the material on the basis of which the committee reached the "unverified conclusion" that the party was a beneficiary of the Iraqi oil deals. "Failing disclosure..., the Congress party demands an unconditional apology," the AICC said in a statement.

CJI Sabharwal: Corruption cases must be on fast track



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 2

UNLIKE his predecessor Justice R.C. Lahoti, the new Chief Justice of India, Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, doesn't think there is lack of political will to fight terror.

Interacting with newsmen a day after he assumed office, Justice Sabharwal said: "I don't have any material on the basis of which I could say that there is no political will to fight terror." He was replying to a query on the delay in disposing of cases related to terrorist violence.

"I cannot say if there is political will or not. But experience shows there are a large number of witnesses in such cases and that leads

CJI Y.K. Sabharwal with his family at the press conference on Wednesday. Anil Sharma

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to their delayed disposal," he said.

"It is accepted by and large that corruption is one of our main problems. Terrorism is also one... judiciary has to do its best. Such cases deserve to be placed on a fast track... without compromising justice," Sabharwal said.

He also called for "strict moni-

'PILs have done a great service to the nation. But one has to be very careful in handling PILs. We have to be careful that it is not publicity interest litigation or private interest litigation or for blackmailing'

toring at the level of District Judge, High Court and if necessary Supreme Court" to ensure that a time limit was observed in the matter of disposal of cases related to terrorism, sexual harassment, corruption in high places and crime against scheduled

castes and scheduled tribes.

Justice Sabharwal, who will remain CJI for 14 months, said his first priority was to "cement the faith of our one billion people in the judicial system by promoting speedy and inexpensive justice".

On the large number of vacancies in the judiciary, he said it was

every day of the week, to discharge their duties.

Corruption in the higher judiciary was another issue that did not skip the CJI's address. "So far, peer pressure has worked. We will think of tightening further," he said.

To allegations that PILs were coming in the way of the government doing its duty, he said: "PILs have done a great service to the nation. But one has to be very careful in handling PILs. We have to be careful that it is not publicity interest litigation or private interest litigation or for blackmailing."

Reading out figures on cases decided by the apex court between July 1, 2004 till September 30, 2005, Justice Sabharwal said 67,888 cases were disposed of during this period but another 70,042 were also filed. "So it is not that disposal had gone down, but filing has gone up," he said.

of "utmost importance that all vacancies at every level should be filled expeditiously".

The chief justice also agreed to look into the long vacations enjoyed by Supreme Court judges through he said judicial officers are working tirelessly,

Natwar was at Iraq anti-sanctions meetings: Bhim

BHARAT BHUSHAN

New Delhi, Nov. 2: External affairs minister Natwar Singh describes the charges as "rubbish". But the chief of the J&K Panthers Party, Bhim Singh, claims that he has "information" that the Paul Volcker Committee inquiring into irregularities in the oil-for-food programme had sent a letter to Natwar Singh, giving him a chance to explain his role as a "non-contractual beneficiary" of the programme.

"I am only giving you information. I have no evidence," Bhim Singh clarifies.

Bhim Singh also makes another claim: "Natwar Singh participated as a special invitee in two or three meetings of the Iraqi government-sponsored Co-ordination Committee against Economic Sanctions."

The Panthers Party chief was a regular at the deliberations of the committee headed by then Iraqi deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

Natwar Singh's office responded to these claims with alacrity. The minister, they said, could be quoted as saying: "It's rubbish. No letter ever came to me. There was no committee meeting that I

attended. I am unaware of any such committee."

Bhim Singh returned the 7.3 million barrels of oil allotment under the programme. The Volcker Report lists him as someone who did not sell his contract to any company.

Saddam Hussein, Bhim Singh claims, was only routing the contracts through favoured individuals and entities.

The Congress, Bhim Singh says, was close to the Iraqi regime. "In fact, in Saddam's house there was only one framed picture I saw and that was of Saddam with In-

dira Gandhi. Outside the Indian embassy in Baghdad, there used to be a big joint portrait of the two — perhaps about three feet by six feet," he claims.

Bhim Singh thinks that he was being "rewarded" for his books and articles against the sanctions and several documentaries on Iraq.

Then suddenly he shows his worn-out wristwatch — a Swiss dual-time watch gifted to him by Saddam, and another designer watch, still in its original packing from Longines, with the symbol of the Baath Party on the dial.

"These two watches and

some decorative knick-knacks are the only gifts I accepted from Saddam Hussein," he says with a smile.

The attempt to reward him, however, did not end with the oil contract.

"After I returned to India, the Iraqi ambassador in Delhi called me to his residence on Prithviraj Road for a drink. I went with two journalist friends. He gave us a nice bottle to take home also. Then he brought out a thick packet and said it was a small gift from his President."

What did he think was in the packet? "Well, I suspect

there were dollar bills — lots of them. But I declined, accepting only the bottle. My journalist friends told me later, 'You are an idiot,'" recalled Bhim Singh in the manner of the fishing stories about the big one that got away.

Saddam, Bhim Singh claims, rewarded friends in a big way — from the Communist Party of Russia to British MP George Galloway.

Bhim Singh recalls: "He treated these individuals and even parties as commission agents. They got 25 to 35 per cent commission."

Galloway won a hefty damages suit against *The*

Daily Telegraph in London for its reportage on his role last December. "The damages were not granted on merits but because the right process was not adopted. Neither Volcker nor the newspaper sought his version. It was after this incident that the Volcker committee decided to issue notices to all non-contractual beneficiaries," Bhim Singh explains.

He went on to claim: "To my knowledge, Natwar Singh was issued a notice after the Galloway incident. But perhaps he did not bother to respond."

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2005

The Volcker report and troubling issues

The fifth and final report of the "Independent Inquiry Committee" on the "manipulation" by Iraq of the United Nations' Oil-For-Food Programme (OFFP) between 1996 and 2003 is an informative, but complex and deeply problematical document. The Committee was appointed in April 2004 — a year after United States-led forces invaded Iraq, bypassing the U.N. and international law — by Secretary General Kofi Annan amidst allegations of fraud and corruption on the part of U.N. officials, personnel, agents, and contracting companies. It was asked to investigate the administration and management of the OFFP, including the allegations. These terms of reference constituted the first serious problem. Following the Gulf War triggered by the Saddam regime's calamitous invasion of Kuwait, Iraq was under a deadly regime of U.N. sanctions between 1991 and 2003. According to *Iraq Under Siege*, a book of well-documented indictments and analyses edited by Anthony Arnove, the sanctions regime took a direct toll of a million Iraqi lives. Any objective and fair investigation into the working of the OFFP should have looked at the larger picture. It was a context of enormous suffering and loss of sovereignty inflicted on Iraq and its people by the sanctions regime, which allowed the country with the world's second largest proven reserves of crude oil to resume exports only in December 1996. The second major problem with the investigative exercise was the composition of the "Independent Inquiry Committee." It was headed by Paul A. Volcker, former chairman of the chief occupying power's Federal Reserve Board. The two other members were Justice Richard J. Goldstone, a former judge of the South African Supreme Court and Constitutional Court who had made his mark in the law during the days of apartheid; and Mark Pieth, a Swiss law professor specialising in the tracking of transnational corruption, money laundering, and organised crime.

This composition explains the part Spanish inquisitorial, part modern investigative, and, in consequence, biased and insufficiently transparent approach of the Committee. It explains the snap judgments and the loaded vocabulary of the report, starting with "manipulation" of the OFFP, "illicit income," and "humanitarian kickbacks." Functioning in the shadow of the U.S.-led military occupation of Iraq, the exercise fails to come clean on all its data sources, above all on the evidentiary basis of its listing of non-contractual political and other beneficiaries of Iraqi oil sales. It bears reiteration that under the OFFP, Iraq sold \$64.2 billion worth of crude oil to 248 companies, and 3416 companies sold \$34.5 billion worth of humanitarian goods to Iraq. Three types of "illicit" transactions are spotlighted by the Volcker Committee report: 139 of the oil-buying companies paid a total of \$229 million in "oil surcharges"; 2253 of the companies selling humanitarian goods forked out \$1.55 billion of "humanitarian kickbacks" under the heads of "After Sales Service Charges" and "Inland Transportation Charges"; and "non-contractual beneficiaries" of different kinds received undetermined amounts in connection with the oil sales. The Government of Iraq's estimated "total illicit income" under the OFFP constituted 1.82 per cent of the \$98.70 billion worth of oil-and-humanitarian goods transactions. Imagine a country under unjust siege, trying to beat an unprecedented regime of sanctions and peacetime bombings by the U.S. and the U.K. Would it not be natural for it to try and "manipulate" the OFFP and use the two-way transactions as "a tool of foreign policy and a sizeable source of illicit revenue," to use the language of the Volcker Committee report? Well might Saddam Hussein, in his incarceration, exclaim, recalling the 1773 response of Robert Clive to a parliamentary inquiry, "I stand astonished at my own moderation."

All this is not to take away from the plenitude of information provided by the Volcker Committee — or the seriousness of the issues its information and allegations raise for political and business India. For this country, the explosive part of the report lies in the accusation that K. Natwar Singh, now External Affairs Minister and at the relevant time the head of the Congress Party's foreign affairs department, and separately the party itself were hidden beneficiaries of Iraqi oil sales, who together were associated with oil sale contracts valued at \$63 million and surcharge payments amounting to \$748,540 (of which their alleged share has not been computed). These allegations have not been substantiated in any way other than through a claim that the information on non-contractual beneficiaries and surcharge payments is "broadly based on four sources," especially records of Iraq's Ministry of Oil and the State Oil Marketing Organisation (SOMO). What has given the allegations some plausibility is the detail provided in the relevant tables on the surcharge payments made to the accounts of Andaleeb Sehgal and Hamdan Export in the Jordan National Bank. The tables also allege that Reliance Petroleum Limited was a non-contractual beneficiary, but with the contract values and surcharge payments being much higher. The second category of India-specific allegations made in the report relates to the payment of "humanitarian kickbacks": close to 130 Indian companies, drawn from the private and public sectors and making up a who's who of business India, figure in the tables. While the Volcker Committee got in touch with the alleged non-contractual beneficiaries in a few cases and got responses, it failed to send notice to others who figure in the list, including Mr. Singh and the Congress Party, thus violating an elementary rule of fairness. This contrasts with its procedure of sending notice to thousands of companies accused of contributing to Iraq's "illicit income" of \$1.8 billion under the OFFP. Political implications aside, was any law broken by these Indian companies? The answer seems to be 'no', or at least 'not likely'. But the cases of Mr. Singh and the Congress Party are quite different. The Volcker Committee showed gross irresponsibility, if not political bias, in listing them as beneficiaries without any explanation and without being transparent about the source of the allegations. While the Manmohan Singh Government would do well to inquire into these allegations to determine their truth or falsity speedily, it need not feel politically defensive at all — given the character and fatal weaknesses of the Volcker Committee exercise.

I'm ready for any probe: Natwar

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 31. — The external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, today said that he was ready for any investigation into the Volcker report that alleges that he was one of the "non-contractual beneficiaries" of the Oil-for-food programme.

Speaking on the sidelines of the presentation function for the Indira Gandhi National Award for National Integration, Mr Singh said: "I have no objection to any probe". "The Prime Minister's statement (made yesterday) should be enough. I have also made one of my own," Mr Singh said.

"The report has as much validity as that prepared by the CIA director on the alleged existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq," he said, adding: "We have it from no less an authority than Colin Powell who stated that he was given false information on WMDs."

Reeling under the political storm started by the UN Independent Inquiry Com-

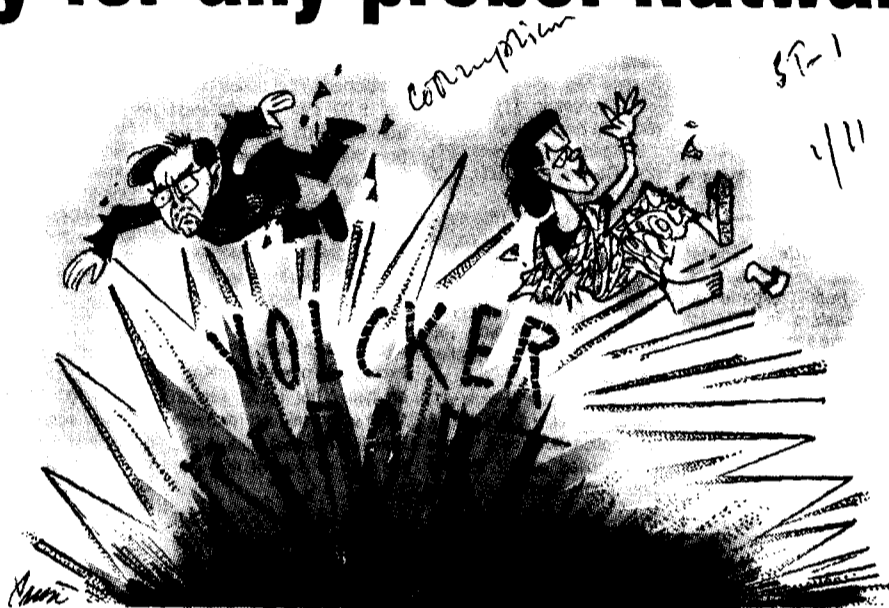
mittee report that named the Congress as well as Mr Natwar Singh, the party today rejected any need for a probe, dismissing the report as "unfair, incorrect and unsubstantiated".

The AICC spokesman, Mr Anand Sharma, said: "The Congress does not have any involvement... there is no mention of us in the main body of the report, and there is no trace of

corroborative evidence to substantiate their insinuations against us in the Table 3," Mr Sharma said. Mr Singh has also made similar points. However, there are indications that his position as the foreign minister has become shaky. Dr Singh's "clean chit" to him was seemingly guarded. "The Prime Minister agreed that the facts mentioned, in Table-3 of the report... are

insufficient to arrive at any adverse conclusion against the external affairs minister and stands by him," a PMO statement had said last night. That "facts are insufficient", as noted by the PM, might also indicate that there could be a prima facie case against Mr Singh.

Dr Singh's support came after the Left allies sought a probe. The BJP and JD-U echoed them today.



Diwali 2005

Top Cong leaders face CBI probe

PRESS Trust of India
New Delhi, October 27

ACTING ON the adverse references made by the Nanavati Commission against them, the Centre has referred the 1984 anti-Sikh riot cases against Congress leaders Jagdish Tytler, Sajjan Kumar and Dharam Dass Shastri to CBI and directed it to examine whether they should be reinvestigated.

As many as ten cases relating to the riots, looked into by the Nanavati Commission, have been referred to the CBI by the Union home ministry. While Tytler and Kumar are MPs, Shastri is a Delhi Congressman.

"We will see whether the cases, registered by Delhi police after the riots, should be reopened or reinvestigated by the CBI. Thereafter, the CBI will scrutinise them and decide what appropriate action should be taken", the sources said.

The Nanavati Commission, which had probed the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, had suggested in its report to the government to examine whether cases against Tytler, Kumar and Shastri could be looked into.

The cases against Tytler, Kumar and Shastri, who have been indicted in "varying degrees" by the commission on the basis of the evidence before it, were examined on the request of the home ministry by the law ministry which was of the view that they could be probed. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, speaking in Parliament on August 10 during the monsoon session, had apologised to the Sikh community and to the nation for the 1984 violence saying he bowed his head in shame that such a thing took place.

The Prime Minister had also promised that the government would reopen cases against those whose names figured in the Nanavati Commission report.

"Our government stands committed to do all that we can humanly do to go to the root of the problem, that all those individuals about whom the commission has drawn adverse inferences, suggestions and recommendations, we will have a relook at them", he had said.

As part of the Prime Minister's commitment, the Union home ministry went into the commission's report and sought the law min-

28/10
1984
RIOTS

istry's view on the issue. The commission's report was tabled in the Parliament during the monsoon session.

The commission indicted Tytler saying, there was "credible evidence" against him that he "very probably" had a hand in organising attacks and demanded that government take "further action as may be necessary". Tytler resigned as Union minister shortly after the report was presented in the Parliament.

The 339-page report of the commission had also pointed fingers at several local Congress leaders including Sajjan Kumar, Shastri and HKL Bhagat.

It had, however, absolved the party saying there was no evidence to suggest that former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi or any other high-ranking leader had "suggested or organised" the attacks in which nearly 3,000 people were killed.

The sources said the affidavits, filed against three Congress leaders, were likely to be looked afresh by the CBI. Delhi police has not been involved as the commission has observed that there was



A file photo of army jawans patrolling Delhi streets after the anti-Sikh riots in 1984.

"colossal failure" of law and order in the capital at that time.

On the role of Sajjan Kumar in the riots that followed the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the commission recommended examination of only those cases where the witnesses had made accusations against him specifically.

"There is credible material" against Kumar and another Congress leader Balwan Khokar that they were "probably involved as alleged by witnesses", the commission said.

However, the Action Taken Report of the government on the commission's findings rejected the recommendation against Tytler, saying "it is clear from the remarks 'very probably' that the commission itself was not absolutely sure about his involvement in such attacks".

The commission was of the view that there was "credible evidence" against Shastri and recommended that the government examine the relevant material and direct investigation or further investigation as may be found necessary.

21/10 Tackling India's 40-10 chronic corruption

Ramines, natural calamities, and political corruption scandals are acute events that evoke strong responses in democracies such as India. However, as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen pointed out many years ago, such societies seem to be far less sensitive to endemic malnutrition and other severe deprivations. Failure to confront endemic corruption on a sub-continental scale has earned India this rating from Transparency International, the anti-graft coalition: a Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score of 2.9 on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean), and a low rank of 88 among 159 countries. This is dispiriting news, coming soon after the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme placed India at a dismal 127 in a list of 177 countries. The CPI is a weighted score arrived at on the basis of responses to 14 surveys and data from the past three years; the surveys covered issues as varied as corruption within the state, misuse of public office, bribery in the economy, inducements paid to officials, and petty as well as grand bureaucratic and political graft. Going by India's persistently low national CPI score for many years now, the era of liberalisation has not fared any better in this respect than decades of the licence-permit raj.

Although the CPI is not an absolute measure of corruption, the perception of high levels of graft is sufficient cause for soul-searching in government. Despite the existence of a Central Vigilance Commission and State laws against graft, bribery is today looked upon as a systemic scourge in several citizen-related departments such as police, taxation, transport, revenue records and land registration, civil supplies, and municipal services. Corruption in government tenders, contracts, commercial taxes, and the working of official certifying agencies may be less visible but is no less disturbing. The implied poor rating of India's systems and processes should have a deflating effect on the Centre and several State Governments that claimed to have ended speed money demands through e-governance. If officials are to become responsible, a great deal more of government re-engineering has to take place. Mandatory regulations need to be introduced to put records in the public domain. The Right to Information Act, which recently came into force, is an invaluable tool for harassed citizens to call the bureaucracy to account. Law enforcement must render corruption a high risk, low reward proposition — not just on paper. India has signed the U.N. Convention Against Corruption, which is scheduled to come into force in December. This agreement has provisions to seize ill-gotten wealth across borders, prosecute companies indulging in trans-national bribery, and stop money laundering. But the country's global standing will depend on how earnestly it moves to get on top of the corruption pandemic at home.

Court sentences 11 in fodder case

RANCHI, Oct. 6. — Eleven persons were sentenced today in the Rs 950-crore fodder scam case by the CBI special court in Ranchi. Those sentenced are senior officials of the state animal husbandry department and suppliers.

Among the accused, the sentence of Pramod Kumar Jaiswal, former supplier of the state animal husbandry department, was the focus of attention today. Jaiswal was tried under case no. RC/5/2000 and has already been accused in 22 separate cases registered with the special courts by the CBI.

Going out of the way, Jaiswal had approached special judge Mr AK Sengupta on Wednesday and expressed his desire to record his confession behind closed doors, regarding another separate case (no. RC/5(A)/96). It is reported that

Jaiswal admitted his guilt while undergoing trial during confession. The case for which he admitted his guilt yesterday involves fraudulent withdrawal of over Rs 1 crore from the Ranchi treasury between 1990 and 1995. Jaiswal is co-accused along with railway minister Mr Lalu Prasad in one of the cases. It is learnt that Jaiswal's confession may be used by the CBI as evidence against other accused in the case, including Mr Lalu Prasad. Jaiswal's wife and one of his sons are co-accused in the scam. His role was confined to fake deals in the name of M/s Bhagat & Co., M/s PK Jaiswal & Co. and M/s RK Bhagat & Co. for supplying to the state animal husbandry department and submitting bills and vouchers in various state treasuries. He was the proprietor of all the three firms.

Special judge Mr AK Sengupta, while delivering the sentence on case no. RC/5/2000, sentenced Jaiswal to five years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 35,000. In case of non-payment of the fine, the accused would have to serve another year rigorous imprisonment.

In another sentence delivered today by special judge Mr Sanjay Prasad, ten persons were sentenced to imprisonment. Out of the ten, nine were sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 30,000 each. In case of non-payment of the fine, the accused would serve another year rigorous imprisonment. The tenth person, Saraswati Chandra, was sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000. All ten accused were officials of the animal husbandry department. — SNS

Court sacks chief secy

OUR BUREAU

5/11
9/10
Corruption ✓
Oct. 6: Neera Yadav today became the first chief secretary in the country to be shown the door by the Supreme Court.

The bureaucrat who is facing 18 corruption cases heard the news on TV at 11.30 am in her Lucknow office, switched off her cellphone, picked up her bag and went home.

For the next four hours, Neera waited for the reaction of chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, who had promoted her five months ago.

At 3.30 pm, he said in Allahabad the order was not an embarrassment for his government. "I know who were behind the cases. So I am not surprised," said Mulayam.

That was the cue for Neera to speak up. "I don't think this is a handicap in my career," said the bureaucrat who has thrived irrespective of which party is in power. "This is an issue between the state government and the court. I will fight on and discharge my duties to the government."

The apex court, acting on a PIL, had ordered that Neera should step down as chief secretary and be transferred to "some other post in the cadre/grade to which she belonged within a week".

In the evening, she was named chairperson, revenue board, and R. Ramani, the principal secretary, urban development and employment, given additional charge as chief secretary.

A three-judge bench of Justices Ruma Pal, Arijit Pasayat and C.K. Thakker said: "A time has come when postings of officers holding sensitive posts should be done in a transparent manner giving no scope for any grievance."

The Centre for Public Interest Litigations had pointed out in its petition that 18 cases are pending against Neera and that the CBI has filed criminal chargesheets in seven. All the cases are related to the land allotment scam in Noida, a Delhi suburb, that allegedly took place when she was CEO.

■ See Page 7

City homoeopath, BSNL engineer raided by the CBI

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, September 30

THE CBI on Friday seized nearly Rs 40 lakh from Samir Kumar Bhattacharya, director of the city-based National Institute of Homeopathy, and Rs 25 lakh from BSNL engineer S.C. Mondol in Uttarpara. Both are alleged to have acquired the wealth by unfair means.

Bhattacharya was reportedly involved in an admissions racket. He had reportedly taken money from students to get them admitted to his institute. "The racket involved the sale of entrance papers for Rs 2 lakh. Most beneficiaries were students from Bihar," a CBI officer said.

Of the 25 students admitted last year, 22 were from Bihar. Bhattacharya has opened two correspondence colleges in Bihar, from where he sold the question papers, and the CBI plans raids there too.

Officers seized documents relating to property, securities and cash from Bhattacharya's home and office. They seized his flat worth Rs 18 lakh, land-related documents worth Rs 4.5 lakh, a vehicle worth Rs 4.5 lakh and National Savings Certificates worth Rs 2.23 lakh. They froze his bank balance amounting to Rs 8.16 lakh. "We also seized receipts worth Rs 2 lakh from his wife's home at Khardah," the officer said. The seizures revealed another aspect of the man's character: he had landed his job with fake experience papers, the CBI said.

In Uttarpara, the CBI raided seven places and documents and cash implicating Mondol, sub-divisional engineer of Uttarpara Telephone Exchange.

The targets of the country-wide raids included State Bank of India branch manager S.K. Mishra in the city. He is suspected of cheating and forgery. The raids yielded Rs 10 lakh. "In connivance with some promoters, he had sanctioned a loan of Rs 98.41 lakh. The loan was meant for the construction of a building. However, no such building was constructed though the promoters got the money from the bank," the officer said.

The Gold Rush

Raids were carried out nationwide on corrupt officials. A look at some of the big fish that landed in the net:



Match-fixing sleuth

Ishwar Singh, the main investigator in the 2000 cricket match-fixing scandal, is worth Rs 75 lakh, including Rs 40 lakh in unaccounted assets. CBI found that he owns a duplex flat worth Rs 40 lakh at Vasant Kunj and invested Rs 25 lakh in a petrol pump in Haryana

Rs 94-cr scamsters

ONGC employees P.L. Motiwala and K. Subba Rao colluded with Kulashchharan Sreedharan, manager of a private firm, and caused a loss of over Rs 94 crore to ONGC. The firm had obtained insurance policies worth Rs 17.36 crore but claimed Rs 112.19 crore from ONGC

Raided raider

B.R. Meena, income tax commissioner in Mumbai, found himself at the receiving end of a raid for once. Owns 18 plots in Jaipur and a palace worth Rs 1 crore

IIT engineer

S.N. Girotra, an engineer posted at IIT Delhi, owns property worth Rs 1.1 crore

Wagon seller

K. Ramakrishna Rao, railway engineer in Vishakhapatnam, sold off 12 junk wagons; scrap value Rs 54 lakh

Lalu, Mishra charged in fodder scam

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ranchi: Special CBI courts on Monday framed charges against railway minister and RJD president Lalu Prasad Yadav and former Bihar CM Jagannath Mishra in two cases of the Rs 900-crore fodder scam.

Of the two cases, one deals with misappropriation of Rs 182 crore from the Doranda treasury of Ranchi through forged bills and documents, which with 148 accused, is the biggest case in the scam. The other case involves fraudulent withdrawals of Rs 96 lakh from the Deoghar treasury.

Charges against Lalu have come at a time when Bihar assembly elections are round the corner and RJD chief is campaigning hard for his party and wife CM Rabri Devi. Lalu's path ahead doesn't look smooth considering brothers-in-law Subhash Yadav and Sadhu Yadav are all set to revolt against him ahead of the elections. The NDA, which has been crying hoarse for removal of tainted ministers from the Union cabinet, is also likely to use the latest tool to renew its demand in Parliament.

A huge crowd of RJD leaders and curious onlookers gathered at the court premises on Monday morning. Appearing in the court of special CBI judge Sanjay Prasad, Lalu appeared composed, refraining from his usual style of bantering with the media and his followers.

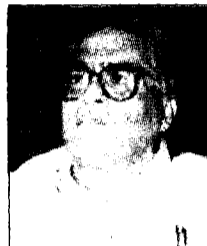
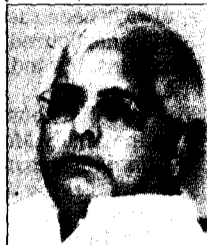
Charges were framed against him and Mishra under sections 420, 467, 471 and 468, 120 B of the IPC and Prevention of Corruption Act related to fraud, forgery and cheating. Answering the court's query whether he was guilty, Lalu said he had been falsely implicated by political parties. Mishra too pleaded innocence claiming that the CBI had no evidence against him.

There were 38 accused in this scam - AHD officials, suppliers and politicians - of which, four died and three turned approvers, leaving 31 accused including Lalu and Mishra, who appeared in court on Monday. According to CBI counsel B M P Singh, "Trial in the case will be held from November 24 to 27. This is the fourth case in which the court has fixed charges against Lalu and Mishra."

Meanwhile, dashing Congress hopes of stitching a post-poll alliance with LJP, Ram Vilas Paswan on Monday rejected having any truck with the RJD either before or after the Bihar Assembly elections. There will be no pact with RJD neither before nor after the elections," he told a press conference in Delhi.

Asked whether framing of fresh charges against Prasad in the multi-crore fodder scam by two special CBI courts in Ranchi would be a poll issue, Paswan said corruption was already an issue and the RJD was thrown out of power mainly because of that.

Asked if his party was favourable to extending post-poll support to NDA's chief ministerial candidate Nitish Kumar to end the RJD "misrule", he claimed that LJP and allies would form the government on their own and therefore the "question does not arise."



Charges framed against Lalu

Competition
no 1 2719

Cases pertain to fodder scam; Mishra also in the dock

RANCHI: Charges were framed against Railway Minister Lalu Prasad and the former Bihar Chief Minister, Jagannath Mishra, on Monday by two special CBI courts in the fodder scam even as Mr. Prasad pleaded innocence, arguing that it was he who ordered the filing of the cases.

Mr. Prasad, also the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief, faces charges under various sections such as abusing his official position for causing wrongful gains to self and others, using forged documents as genuine, falsification of accounts, cheating, misappropriation and conspiracy.

Pleads innocence

Pleading innocence before the special CBI judge, Sanjay Prasad, who framed the charges against him and 146 other accused in the RC 47(A)/96 case pertaining to the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs. 182 crore from the Doranda treasury in Ranchi, Mr. Prasad said he should be discharged as it was he who gave directions to file the cases.

However, CBI counsel B.M. Singh contended that the plea did not stand scrutiny as the same court earlier rejected his discharge petition in the same case.

The court of another special CBI judge, Alok Sengupta, also framed charges against Mr. Prasad, Mr. Mishra and 29 others accused in the RC64(A)/96 case pertaining to the fraudulent withdrawal of over Rs. 90 lakh from the Deogarh treasury.

Here too, the RJD chief pleaded for his discharge with the same argument, but CBI counsel

said the case was filed by the CBI *suo moto*. Both the former Bihar Chief Ministers appeared before the courts.

Alleges conspiracy

Accusing the investigating agency of hatching a conspiracy against him, Mr. Prasad urged the court to discharge him from the cases as the CBI was making the same charges in all cases.

The CBI court has completed the framing of charges in all 48 cases. Two cases have been closed. So far, five cases have ended in the conviction of 26 people.

Besides producing over 150 sheets containing the probe report, the CBI appended thousands of documents, which included bills and other materials, in the two cases.

It also submitted a supplementary report adding the names of some other accused, including the former MP, Rajo Singh, who was killed earlier this month. The CBI also dropped S.K. Sharma from its original list of 149 in the RC 47 case. This is the fourth time this year that charges have been framed against Mr. Prasad and Mr. Mishra. On April 25, a special CBI court framed charges against the RJD chief in connection with the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs. 37 crore from the Chaibasa treasury (RC 68a/96). In May, Mr. Prasad appeared before another CBI court for framing of charges in the RC38a/96 in connection with the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs. 3.13 crore from the Dumka treasury. He is also facing a disproportionate assets case in Patna, an offshoot of the Rs. 950 crore fodder scam case. — PTI

SC notice to CBI in petrol pump scam

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 5

6/9
Common Cause
HT-3

THE SUPREME Court on Monday issued notices to the Union government, the CBI and Captain Satish Sharma on a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the Manmohan Singh government's refusal to sanction prosecution of Sharma, who was petroleum minister in the Narasimha Rao government when the petrol pump allotments scam was unearthed.

A three-judge Bench headed by Justice Y.K. Sabharwal issued the notices on an application, filed on behalf of NGO Common Cause, alleging that the "Central government had without appreciating the CBI's investigation report and the evidence therein denied sanction in an arbitrary manner without any cogent and valid grounds".

Counsel Prashant Bhushan, appearing on behalf of the NGO, contended that after investigating the case against Sharma the agency had found prima facie evidence against him under the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) and filed a chargesheet in court.

But since Sharma was a civil servant at that time, the CBI sought sanction from the Union home ministry for his prosecution. The Manmohan Singh government in a letter to the CBI on September 27, 2004, refused to grant sanction for it.

0 8 1 006

THE HINDU

Prosecute Mayawati: CVC

Mr Justice SB Sinha and Mr Justice SH Kapadia, which had referred the matter to CVC in the wake of Attorney-General Mr Milon K Banerjee concurring with the CBI director that the heritage corridor scam case against Ms Mayawati should be closed.

23/8
Taking into account the investigation carried out by the CBI into the case on the directions of the Supreme Court, the CVC also recommended prosecution of former state environment minister Mr Naseemuddin Siddiqui and former state environment

Comptroller - SGT
secretary Mr RK Sharma, both of whom have been named as key players in the scam by the premier investigating agency.

Ms Mayawati's counsel, Mr KK Venugopal, challenged the power and jurisdiction of the CVC to recommend pros-

11/11/2011 11:11:11 AM

CVC: Prosecute Mayawati in Taj Corridor scam

CONVICTED
9/1
22/8

New Delhi: In a view diametrically opposite to that of the attorney general, the Central Vigilance Commission on Monday, in a report to the supreme court, recommended prosecution against former UP chief minister and BSP supremo Mayawati in the Rs 175-crore Taj Heritage Corridor Scam case.

The report was given to a bench comprising Justice Ruma Pal, Justice S B Sinha and Justice S H Kapadia, which had referred the matter to the CVC in the wake of attorney general Milon K Banerjee concurring with the CBI director that the heritage corridor scam case against Mayawati should be closed.

Taking into account the investigation carried out by the CBI into the case on the directions of the apex court, the CVC also recommended of prosecution of former state environment minister Naseemuddin Siddiqui and former state environment secretary R K Sharma, both of whom have been named as key players in the scam by the premier investigating agency.

Mayawati's counsel and senior advocate K K Venugopal promptly challenged the power and the jurisdiction of the CVC to recommend prosecution of any person when the investigating agency and the attorney general have opined otherwise.

The court agreed to hear Mayawati and other persons, against whom the CVC had recommended prosecution, on the question whether the court should direct the CBI to proceed with the case against them on the basis of this recommendation.



The CVC also recommended prosecution of three other persons— Rajendra Prasad, Kamal Radhu and M Sharma.

However, the commission concurred with the CBI in closing the cases against former chief secretary of UP D S Bagga, Mayawati's former personal secretary P L Punia, former Union environment secretary K C Mishra, former state environment secretary V K Gupta and S C Vali, MD of the PSU given the construction contract for the Heritage corridor.

The opinion of the attorney general not to prosecute Mayawati had come as a surprise as the Investigating Officer of the case, the Superintendent of Police, the deputy legal advisor, the DIG, the joint Director, additional legal advisor and additional director CBI had all opined that a case was made out for her prosecution.

The court had ordered the registration of FIR against Mayawati and others when an application filed by amicus curiae Krishan Mahajan and a petition filed by Ajay Agrawal alleged that crores of rupees were being siphoned out of the Rs 175 crore project, which was yet to receive environmental clearance. Agencies

23 AUG 2009

Centaur hotels sale: probe initiated

Preliminary enquiries registered against officials during NDA regime

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered two Preliminary Enquiries (PEs) regarding the alleged irregularities in the sale transactions of Centaur Airport and Centaur Juhu hotels in Mumbai belonging to the state-owned Hotel Corporation of India (HCIL) on the basis of documents provided by the Department of Disinvestment, Ministry of Finance.

Sources said on Friday that both the PEs had been registered against unknown public servants of the then Ministry of Disinvestment, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Air India, Hotel Corporation of India and others. The deal for the two hotels was struck during the previous National Democratic Alliance regime.

The PE regarding the transaction of Hotel Juhu Centaur was instituted on Thursday following the initial scrutiny of the material which *prima facie* indicated that the efforts of the then Government in generating competition were inadequate and inconsistent in the assumption made for valuation of the hotel which ap-

peared to be on the lower side due to the assumption of higher costs of debt and equity.

It was further revealed that during October 2000, Expression of Interest (EoI) was received from 20 parties, of which three did not qualify and 16 withdrew later. Only one party, M/s Tulip Hospitality Services Pvt. Ltd. remained in the fray. The hotel was subsequently sold to this company for a sale consideration of Rs. 153 crores in March 2002. It is alleged that the chairman of this company, Ajit Kerkar, is also a member of the Board of Directors of Air India and the sub-committee formed for disinvestment of HCI Hotels during 1998-99.

It was also found that there was no adequate scrutiny of the financial strength of the bidder; repeated extensions were allowed to the successful bidder for final payment; bank guarantee was not encashed despite breach of terms and conditions; and no interest was charged on delayed payments. It is further alleged that when M/s Tulip Hospitality Services Pvt. Ltd. was unable to raise finances to make payment, the Ministry of Disinvestment inter-

vened and helped the company to raise funds through various nationalised banks, LIC and others.

The PE regarding the sale/disinvestment of Hotel Centaur Airport, Mumbai, has been registered on the basis of several suspected irregularities and allegations revealed during scrutiny of the material and documents.

It was observed that adequate efforts were not made to generate competition and the sale transaction was finalised on the basis of a single bid.

HCI, owner of Hotel Centaur Airport and the Airport Authority of India Ltd. (AAI), owner of the land on which the hotel was constructed, entered into a 30-year lease agreement in December 2000 to facilitate the disinvestment process.

A Lease Agreement was entered into between HCI and AAI at a lower lease rent rate than the prevailing market price resulting in a likely loss of Rs. 58.44 crores to the Government.

Against the reserve price of Rs.76.2 crores, a sale bid submitted by the bidder, M/s. Batra Hospitality Pvt. Ltd. was Rs.65 crore. Hence, the bid was not accepted. During

December 2001, the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment decided to reduce turnover levy from 6 per cent to 2 per cent on the basis of which the Global Advisors, M/s Jardine Fleming India Securities Ltd., valued the property afresh in January 2002 in the range of Rs.78.3-Rs. 105.7 crores (base case Rs. 92 crores). The Evaluation Committee, in January 2002, instead of fixing the reserve price at the base case value fixed the reserve price at the minimum range of Rs. 78.3 crores, sources said.

While the reduced turnover levy was likely to entail a loss of Rs. 86.25 crores (accrued) over a period of 30 years, the reduced turnover levy resulted in only a marginal increase of reserve price.

Hotel Airport Centaur was sold at a price of Rs. 83 crores in April 2002 to M/s. Batra Hospitality Pvt. Ltd. which, in turn, sold the hotel within a period of six months for Rs.135 crores, earning a profit of Rs. 52 crores.

The former Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, defended the deal, maintaining that he was prepared to face the CBI probe "anywhere and anytime."

Papers on Volkswagen deal sent to CBI

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Government on Tuesday said it had sent to the Central Bureau of Investigation the papers it had received from Andhra Pradesh seeking an inquiry into the controversial Volkswagen deal to set up a car unit in Visakhapatnam.

"The Andhra Pradesh Government had sought a CBI inquiry on July 19, and the request, along with the papers, were received by the Department of Personnel on July 22. They have been sent to the CBI on July 25," Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Suresh Pachouri said in the Rajya Sabha.

Mr. Pachouri was responding to queries from the Telugu Desam Party members led by Ravula Chandra Sekar Reddy.

They wanted to know whether the Centre had referred the matter to the CBI. Congress members protested against this.

The Minister said the papers sent by the State Government showed that the project was originally conceived in 2002 when the TDP was in power.

Walkout by TDP

Dissatisfied with the response, the TDP members staged a walkout.

In the Lok Sabha, TDP leader K. Yerran Naidu and his party colleagues staged a walkout for not being allowed to raise the Volkswagen issue when the BJP-led Opposition was insisting on tabling of the Nanavati Commission report.

03 AUG 2006 THE

CBI raids 77 premises: Rs.4,000-crore housing scam

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2/8

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation, which had registered four cases against officials of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS), Delhi, some builders and others for fraudulently recommending allotment of land to revived cooperative group housing societies (CGHSs) in the Capital at a cost which was 1/6th to 1/7th of the prevailing market price, on Monday conducted searches at 77 official and residential premises of the accused to unravel the Rs.4,000-crore scam.

The raids, according to the CBI, led to seizure of a truckload of files besides about Rs.50 lakhs in cash. Nearly 50 CBI teams took part in the raids which sought to expose discrepancies pertaining to four CGHSs -- Taj, Sartaj, Rajeshwari and UNI CGHS.

- **Early morning operation across Delhi**
- **Truckload of files, cash seized**
- **Cases against housing officials**

CBI spokesman G. Mohanty said the raids were carried out at 77 places that included the residential and official premises of former officials of the Registrar of Cooperative Group Housing Societies, including the then Registrar, N. Diwakar. "We have taken a sample of four group housing societies and we will be definitely examining more after we scrutinise the truckloads of files that we have recovered from these places," he said.

The CBI had been working on

these cases for four months. After getting source information and developing it, the agency struck early on Monday morning. During the searches, a large number of documents relating to irregularities in recommending allotment of land, blank stamp papers and other instruments were allegedly recovered.

According to the FIRs filed by the CBI, between 1970 and 1980 or thereafter a number of group housing societies were registered in Delhi. Some of them became defunct due to non-operation or non-submission of auditable accounts, membership lists and other documents to the RCS for verification which are mandatory requirements under the Delhi Cooperative Societies Act, 1972.

It is alleged, the CBI said, that in several cases for various reasons, including non-allotment of

land, the societies were subsequently wound up by the RCS. In 2003, when Delhi Development Authority was developing plots of land in five areas for allotment to about 80 CGHSs, certain builders and individuals hatched a conspiracy in collusion with the then Registrar of Cooperative Societies, the then Assistant Registrar (SW) and other officials of the then RCS to fraudulently revive these CGHSs on the basis of false or forged documents and recommend them to DDA for allotment of land. With this intention, the CBI said, the accused caused disappearance of the original files of the CGHSs and constructed new files by accepting bogus/forged records from the so-called office-bearers of these societies. The then RCS officials allegedly decided not to approach DDA for the original files.

CBI files 67 chargesheets in Telgi case

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 26. — The CBI today filed charge-sheets in the Telgi case against 67 people, including nine senior police officers, Telgi's wife and two politicians — a former MLA of Maharashtra and a former minister of Andhra Pradesh.

Of the 63 cases registered in the Telgi scam, this is the first case that unearthed the role of various politicians and police officers. The 302-page charge-sheet was filed today in the MCOCA court, Pune, after CBI completed its investigation in the Bund Garden Police Station case in which printing machinery as well as fake government stamps and non-judicial stamp papers worth about Rs 2,900 crore were seized.

Besides the main accused, Abdul Karim Telgi, the charge-sheet includes the name of his wife, Shahida Telgi, his associates, Siraj Nasipudi, his nephew Tabrej Telgi, Sabbir Sheikh, Sajju, a printer Udai Sawant, former Maharashtra MLA Anil Gote, former Andhra Pradesh minister CBK Yadav, former Mumbai Police Commissioner RS Sharma, a former Joint Commissioner of Police, Crime Branch, Mumbai SS Bhagal and former DCP (Detection) Pradip Sawant. The CBI took up the case on instructions from Supreme Court, which asked for an in-depth probe into the scam and asked the CBI to find out the nexus between politicians, senior police officers and other government servants who might have helped Telgi in his unlawful activities.

27 JUL 2005

বীজ কেলেকারিতে ফের অভিযুক্ত ছেলে, তদন্ত চান কৃষিমন্ত্রীও

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, কলকাতা ও নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, পুরুলিয়া: নিম্ন মানের বীজ সরবরাহ নিয়ে কৃষিমন্ত্রী কমল গুহের ছেলের বিরুদ্ধে ফের অভিযোগ উঠল। এর আগে পশ্চিম মেদিনীপুরের ঘাটালে কৃষকদের মধ্যে নিম্ন মানের সূর্যমুখীর বীজ সরবরাহ নিয়ে তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ উঠেছিল। এ বার পুরুলিয়ায় কেন্দ্রীয় প্রকল্পে গরিব চাষীদের চাষ করার জন্য দেওয়া সজি (লাউ, কুমড়া, ঝিঙে, টেডস ও করলা)-র বীজ নিয়ে একই অভিযোগ তুলে তদন্তের দাবি জানিয়েছে জেলা প্রশাসন, জেলা পরিষদ থেকে শুরু করে সি পি এমের কৃষক সংগঠন। কমলবাবুর ছেলে উদয়ন গুহের সংস্থা ওই বীজ সরবরাহ করেছে বলে বি জে পি-র রাজ্য সম্পাদক রাহুল সিংহ অভিযোগ জানিয়েছেন।

উদয়নবাবু অবশ্য এই অভিযোগ উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন। তবে এই ব্যাপারে তদন্ত কমিটি গড়ার জন্য তিনি মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বৃদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যকে অনুরোধ জানাবেন বলে কমলবাবু সোমবার বিধানসভায় জানিয়েছেন। সি পি এম নেতৃত্বের নাম না করে তিনি পাল্টা অভিযোগ করেন, “রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্যপ্রণোদিত হয়েই এই ধরনের অভিযোগ তোলা হচ্ছে।” কমলবাবু হুমকি দিয়েছেন, “বীজ কেলেকারির সঙ্গে আমার ছেলে জড়িত বলে যদি প্রমাণিত হয়, তা হলে সাত দিনের মধ্যে আমি পদত্যাগ করব।” বিষয়টি নিয়ে সি বি আই-তদন্তের দাবি জানাতে আজ, মঙ্গলবার রাজ্যপাল গোপালকৃষ্ণ গাঁধীর সঙ্গে দেখা করবেন বি জে পি-র রাজ্য নেতারা।

জেলার ২০টি ব্লকের প্রতিটি অঞ্চলের গ্রীষ্মকালীন সজির বীজ ‘মিনিকিট’ হিসাবে চাষীদের মধ্যে বিতরণ করা হয়। জেলা কৃষি আধিকারিক রজত পাল বলেন, “সাত্বে আট হাজারের কিছু বেশি বিতরণ হয়েছে। বাকিটা হয়নি।” পুরুলিয়া-২ নম্বর ব্লকের কলবাঁধ গ্রামের চাষি বিনন্দ মাহাতো, সর্বেশ্বর মাহাতো, শোভারাম মাহাতোরা বলেন, “শুধু লাউয়ের ফলনই ভাল হয়েছে। কুমড়া চাষ করেছিলাম, এত দিনে গাছে শুধু পুরুষ ফুলই এসেছে। অন্য চাষ হয়নি। গাছ তুলে ফেলেছি।” কলবাঁধ গ্রামের চাষিরা ঝিঙে, করলা টেডস গাছ তুলে মুলো চাষ করেছেন। সব বীজ খারাপ, মানতে চায়নি জেলা কৃষি দফতর। রজতবাবু বলেন, “সজির ফলন হয়নি বলে রিপোর্ট পাইনি। কয়েকটি জায়গায় দেখেছি, ফলন ঠিকই আছে।” কিন্তু জেলা পরিষদের কৃষি সেচ দফতরের কর্মাধ্যক্ষ লক্ষ্মণ মাহাতো বলেন, “বীজ খারাপ হওয়ায় গত বছর বহু চাষি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হন। তাই কৃষি দফতরকে বলেছিলাম, এ বার যে-বীজ দেওয়া হবে, তা যেন আগে পরীক্ষা করা হয়।”

পুরুলিয়া কৃষি দফতর বর্ধমানে ও কলকাতায় রাজ্য সরকারের আঞ্চলিক বীজ পরীক্ষাগারে বীজের নমুনা পাঠিয়েছিল পরীক্ষার জন্য। বর্ধমানের পরীক্ষাগারের রিপোর্টে বলা হয়, ওই বীজের অঙ্কুরোদগমের ক্ষমতা কম। কলকাতার পরীক্ষাগার বীজ সম্পর্কে সন্দেহ প্রকাশ করেনি। অঙ্কুরোদগমের ক্ষমতা কম দেখেও কেন তা চাষীদের দেওয়া হয়েছে, তা নিয়ে ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করে পুরুলিয়া জেলা পরিষদের সভাপতি মিঠু সিংহ সর্দার বলেন, “বর্ধমান ল্যাবরেটরি ‘জারমিনেশন লো’ বলে রিপোর্ট দিলেও বীজ বিতরণের ক্ষেত্রে নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করা হল না কেন? এতে তো চাষীদের ক্ষতি হবে। কৃষি দফতরের কাছে ব্যাখ্যা চাইব।”

জেলাশাসক মুকুল সরকারও কৃষি দফতরের কাজে ক্ষুব্ধ। তিনি বলেন, “যখন জারমিনেশন লো রিপোর্ট পাওয়া গেল, তখন কৃষি দফতরের আধিকারিক এসে বিষয়টি জানান। বললাম, চাষীদের ভাল বীজ দেওয়ার ব্যবস্থা করুন। এর পরে ওঁরা কেউ আর আসেননি। দফতরকে পূর্ণাঙ্গ তদন্ত করে রিপোর্ট দিতে বলেছি।”

কৃষিমন্ত্রীর ছেলে উদয়নবাবু বলেন, “এই ধরনের মিথ্যা অভিযোগ তুলে মাঝেমধ্যেই আমার চরিত্রহননের চেষ্টা চলছে। ২০০১ সালের মে মাসের পর থেকে যদি কোনও কৃষি-ভিত্তিক ব্যবসায়িক প্রতিষ্ঠানের সঙ্গে আমার যুক্ত থাকার কথা কেউ প্রমাণ করতে পারেন, তা হলেই এ-সব অভিযোগের উত্তর দেব। আসলে রাজ্যের কৃষিমন্ত্রীর ছেলে বলেই আমার বিরুদ্ধে এ ধরনের অভিযোগ তুলতে একটি চক্র সব সময় সক্রিয়।”

সি পি এমের কৃষক সংগঠন সারা ভারত কৃষক সভার রাজ্য কমিটির সদস্য মণীন্দ্র গোপ বলেন, “ঘটনা যা-ই হোক, পূর্ণাঙ্গ তদন্ত দরকার।”

20 Jun 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

CBI asked to probe Centaur Hotels deal

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation has received a communication from the Government to probe the Centaur Hotels disinvestment case. The privatisation of the two hotels at Sahar airport and Juhu in Mumbai that sparked off a controversy was taken up and executed by the previous National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government.

Well-placed sources said the Government had asked the CBI to probe the alleged infirmities in the privatisation of the two State-run hotels in Mumbai.

The Government is learnt to have sent a note to the CBI, asking it to probe the multi-crore deal finalised when Arun Shourie was Disinvestment Minister.

The deal has come under attack from the Left parties and the Congress.

BJP spokesman Prakash Javadekar described the Government decision as a "politics of revenge."

He said the Government "knows there is nothing to inquire."

He said that after a detailed examination of the Juhu Hotel disinvestment, this Government itself submitted a note to the Comptroller and Auditor-General in January this year justifying the concepts used and the procedures followed.

Mr. Shourie had already stated that he was ready to assist every authority in whatever inquiry Government decreed, Mr. Javadekar said.

Mr. Shourie defended the deal and said he would cooperate with every inquiry and agency, which the Government chooses. "I will go to any office at any time the CBI designates," he said.

22 JUL 2005

Govt orders CBI probe into Centaur

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 20 JULY

In an attempt to appease the Left parties, the Manmohan Singh government has directed the CBI to probe the disinvestment in the Centaur hotels. The decision, ruling party managers hoped, could help the government to get the Left to tone down its stand-offish approach in the monsoon session of Parliament. The decision to use the CBI against the Left's tormentor Arun Shourie was taken at a meeting of senior functionaries of the government and the Congress last week. The meeting was of the view that a CBI investiga-

tion into the sale of hotels was an important political requirement. Sources in the government said necessary instructions were issued to the CBI on Monday.

On May 13, the government had announced a probe into the disinvestment in the Centaur hotels, but did not specify the nature and scope of the inquiry. Making a statement in both Houses of Parliament, the finance minister had said the government would order the inquiry after examining the CAG report. The Left has been demanding a CBI investigation into the Centaur sale ever since the CAG made adverse observations against the sale of the ho-

tels. The Left, which demanded a "quick and thorough probe" into the transactions, took up the matter with both Sonia Gandhi and the Prime Minister.

The government leadership, which met here last week to decide on its strategy to tackle the belligerent Left, felt that compliance of their demands was crucial for the smooth transaction of legislative business. The Left has been using its critical numerical strength for sending out the message to the cadre that it controls the levers of power.

The Left, which enjoys a clout disproportionate to its strength, has so far been successful in shelving key initiatives like dis-

investment. The Left MPs, who opposed the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Bill (PFRDA) in the standing committee, it may be recalled, forced the government to take off the matter from the legislative agenda for the monsoon session.

There is fear in the government that such capitulation to pressure from the Left could, in the long-run, harm the credibility of the ruling arrangement. The spectacle of Left leaders like Prakash Karat self-righteously commenting on the quality of governmental decisions is worrying to many ruling party leaders.



তিস্তা সেচ প্রকল্পে অভিযুক্ত ইঞ্জিনিয়ারের জেল হেফাজতে মৃত্যু

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, জলপাইগুড়ি ও স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, কলকাতা: তিস্তা সেচ প্রকল্পের অর্থ আত্মসাতের মামলায় ধৃত এক এগজিকিউটিভ ইঞ্জিনিয়ারের অস্বাভাবিক মৃত্যু হল জেল হেফাজতেই। শুক্রবার ভোরে জলপাইগুড়ি সেন্ট্রাল জেলে ঘটনাটি ঘটেছে। পুলিশ জানায়, মৃতের নাম অরুণোদয় বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় (৫৭)। হৃদরোগ, ডায়াবেটিস ছাড়াও নানা ধরনের শারীরিক অসুস্থতার জন্য বৃহস্পতিবার রাত থেকে তিনি জেল হাসপাতালে ভর্তি ছিলেন। ১ জুলাই সন্টলেকের জলসম্পদ ভবন থেকে পরিকল্পনা ও অনুসন্ধান বিভাগের এগজিকিউটিভ ইঞ্জিনিয়ার

অরুণোদয়বাবুকে গ্রেফতার করে রাজ্য পুলিশের এনফোর্সমেন্ট শাখা। তবে, এ ভাবে 'অপবাদ' নিয়ে তাঁর চলে যাওয়ার খবরে শোকস্তব্ধ অরুণোদয়বাবুর পরিবার।

শুক্রবার ভোর সওয়াটো নাগাদ তাঁকে জলপাইগুড়ি সদর হাসপাতালে ভর্তি করানো হয়। পৌনে ৬টা নাগাদ তাঁর মৃত্যু হয়। জেল হেফাজতে পাঠানোর সময়ে বিচারক অসুস্থ অরুণোদয়বাবুর চিকিৎসার বন্দোবস্তের নির্দেশ দেন। কিন্তু অসুস্থ বন্দির সূচু চিকিৎসা হয়েছে কি না তা নিয়ে জেলকর্মীদের একাংশেই সংশয় আছে। পাশাপাশি, এ দিন জেল থেকে জলপাইগুড়ি সদর হাসপাতালে অসুস্থতার জন্য ভর্তি হয়েছেন ধৃত অবসরপ্রাপ্ত এক ইঞ্জিনিয়ার ব্যোমকেশ গুহ নিয়োগী। তিনিও এই মামলায় অভিযুক্ত।

অরুণোদয়বাবুর ছেলে সপ্তর্ষি এ দিন সন্টলেকের বাড়িতে বসে জানান, গত মাসেই রক্তপরীক্ষায় তাঁর বাবার ৩৬৫ সুগার ধরা পড়েছিল। তাঁর

ভগ্নিপতি দেবব্রত মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেন, আদালতে জামিনের আবেদনে সুগার ও হৃদরোগের কথা জানানো হয়েছিল। তাঁর চিকিৎসায় গাফিলতির অভিযোগ প্রসঙ্গে জেল সুপার দেবাশিস মুখোপাধ্যায় এবং জেলের চিকিৎসক দেবাংশু ঘোষ মন্তব্য করতে রাজি হননি। তবে কারামন্ত্রী বিশ্বনাথ চৌধুরী বলেন, "ঠিক কী হয়েছে তা এখনই বলতে পারব না। বিশদে খোঁজখবর নিচ্ছি। দফতরের অফিসারদের রিপোর্ট পেলে যথাযথ ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।"

এ দিন দেহটি ময়নাতদন্ত করা হয় উত্তরবঙ্গ মেডিক্যাল কলেজ হাসপাতালে। হাসপাতাল সূত্রের খবর, মৃতের হৃৎপিণ্ডের একাংশে রক্ত সঞ্চালন ঠিক ছিল না বলে জানা গিয়েছে। তা ছাড়া, ময়নাতদন্তে দেহের ডান চোখের নীচে, গালে ও কুঁচকিতে আঘাতের চিহ্ন মিলেছে। তা মাথা ঘুরে পড়ে যাওয়ার জন্যও হতে পারে বলে চিকিৎসকদের একাংশ মনে করছেন।



জেল সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, চিকিৎসার ক্ষেত্রে বেশ কিছু ত্রুটির অভিযোগ উঠেছে। গুরুতর অসুস্থ বন্দির ক্ষেত্রে না-নিয়ে জেল হাসপাতাল থেকে অনেকটা পথ হাঁটিয়ে অ্যাথুল্যাসে তোলা হয়েছে কেন সেই প্রশ্নও জেলকর্মীদের একাংশ তুলেছেন। কারা দফতরের আই জি জয়দেব চক্রবর্তী বলেছেন, "অসুস্থ বন্দির প্রতি বাড়তি যত্ন নেওয়া হয়নি ও চিকিৎসার ক্ষেত্রে গাফিলতি হয়েছে, এই অভিযোগ আমিও শুনেছি। ডি আই জি পরিমল দাস তদন্ত করবেন।"

জেল সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, জেলের ৮ নম্বর সেলে আরও কয়েক জনের সঙ্গে অরুণোদয়বাবু ছিলেন। বাড়িতে

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

তিস্তা বাঁধ প্রকল্পের ২.৫ কোটি আত্মসাতে রাজ্য জুড়ে ধৃত ১৩

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার ও নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, কলকাতা ও শিলিগুড়ি: তিস্তা সেচ প্রকল্পের প্রায় আড়াই কোটি টাকা আত্মসাতের অভিযোগে ৮ জন ইঞ্জিনিয়ার এবং ৫ জন ঠিকাদারকে গ্রেফতার করল রাজ্য পুলিশের এনফোর্সমেন্ট শাখা। শুক্রবার সকাল থেকে একযোগে কলকাতা, শিলিগুড়ি, বিধাননগর, বীরভূম, পশ্চিম মেদিনীপুরের ঘাটাল ও দক্ষিণ ২৪ পরগনার সোনারপুরে অভিযান চালিয়ে অভিযুক্তদের ধরা হয়।

পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, ধৃতদের মধ্যে রয়েছেন সাসপেন্ড হওয়া এগজিকিউটিভ ইঞ্জিনিয়ার গুরুদাস চক্রবর্তী, অবসরপ্রাপ্ত এগজিকিউটিভ ইঞ্জিনিয়ার সুশীলকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়, সল্টলোকের জলসম্পদ ভবনের অরুণোদয় বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, বীরভূমের ময়ুরাঙ্গী প্রকল্পের চঞ্চল নন্দর, সোনারপুর থেকে বেয়ামকেশ গুহনিয়োগী এবং শিলিগুড়ি থেকে অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার সুমিলন ঘোষ এবং ফণীভূষণ মজুমদারকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছে। এ ছাড়া, ঘাটাল থেকে ধরা হয়েছে তিস্তা সেচ প্রকল্পের অবসরপ্রাপ্ত ইঞ্জিনিয়ার অরুণ গিরিকে। পাশাপাশি, শিলিগুড়ি ও লাগোয়া জলপাইগুড়ি এলাকা থেকে অভিযুক্ত ৫ জন ঠিকাদার অমলেন্দু দত্ত, প্রসূন ঘোষ, জয়ন্ত ঘোষ, তপন সাহা ও সুব্রত ঘোষকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়। রাজ্যের অন্যত্র ধৃতদের সকলকেই তদন্তের জন্য জলপাইগুড়ি নিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে।

রাজ্য পুলিশের এনফোর্সমেন্ট ব্রাঞ্চের (ই বি) আই জি নজরুল ইসলাম বলেন, “৯৮ সালের ওই

মামলায় শীঘ্রই চার্জশিট দেওয়া হবে। তার আগে অভিযুক্তদের গ্রেফতার করা হল। ১৯টি দল রাজ্য জুড়ে অভিযানে অংশ নেয়।” ‘৯৬-’৯৭ সালে ডুয়ার্সের মালবাজার থানা এলাকায় কাজ করার সময় ওই ঠিকাদারেরা তিস্তা বাঁধ প্রকল্পের কয়েক জন অফিসারের যোগসাজশে ওই টাকা বেআইনি ভাবে তুলে নেন বলে অভিযোগ। এ দিন ধৃত ঠিকাদারদের জলপাইগুড়ি আদালতে তোলা হলে তাঁদের জামিনের আর্জি নাকচ হয়ে যায়।

জলপাইগুড়ির পুলিশ সুপার রাহুল শ্রীবাস্তব বলেন, “জেলা পুলিশ প্রথমে মামলাটি দায়ের করে। পরে মামলাটি কলকাতায় এনফোর্সমেন্ট বিভাগের হাতে দিয়ে দেওয়া হয়। তারাই তদন্ত শুরু করে।” একই ভাবে দার্জিলিঙের পুলিশ সুপার রাজীব মিশ্র বলেন, “অভিযুক্ত ঠিকাদারদের শিলিগুড়িতে অফিস রয়েছে। কলকাতার অফিসারেরা অভিযান চালানোর জন্য আমাদের সাহায্য চেয়েছিলেন। আমরা তা করেছি।” উল্লেখ্য, তিস্তা প্রকল্পের বহু কোটি টাকা নয়ছয়ের অভিযোগ নিয়ে বহু বার সি এ জি-র রিপোর্টে রাজ্য সরকারের সমালোচনা করা হয়। এ দিন অভিযানে ওই অভিযোগই স্পষ্ট হয়ে গেল।

পুলিশ সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, ‘৯৫ সালে সেচ বিভাগের তিস্তা ব্যারাজ ডিভিশনের ওদলবাড়ি থেকে ব্যারাজের কাজের জন্য টেন্ডার ডাকা হয়। মালবাজারের প্রায় এক কিলোমিটার এলাকায় বাঁধের কাজের জন্য প্রায় সাড়ে ৫ কোটি টাকার টেন্ডার হয়। শিলিগুড়ি দু’টি ঠিকাদার সংস্থা

কাজের বরাত পায়। কাজও শুরু হয়। তার পরেই শুরু হয় দুর্নীতি। তিস্তা ব্যারাজের ছয় আধিকারিকের সঙ্গে মিলে ঠিকাদারেরা দফতর থেকে টাকা তোলা শুরু করেন।

সেচ দফতরের তরফে পুলিশের কাছে অভিযোগে বলা হয়েছে, ভুয়ো বিল এবং খরচ দেখিয়ে টাকা তোলা শুরু করেন ঠিকাদারেরা। তাঁদের কাজে মদত দেন দফতরের ওই অভিযুক্ত আধিকারিকেরা। বিধি ভেঙে বেআইনি ভাবে ঠিকাদারদের দফায় দফায় লক্ষ লক্ষ টাকা পাইয়ে দেওয়া হয় বলে অভিযোগ। একই ভাবে, অগ্রিম দেওয়ার কোনও নিয়ম না থাকলেও ঠিকাদারদের তা-ও দেওয়া হয়। ‘৯৬-এর মার্চ থেকে ‘৯৭-এর জুলাই পর্যন্ত এই ভাবে প্রায় ২ কোটি টাকা তুলে নেওয়া হয় বলে অভিযোগ।

ঘটনাটি জানার পর প্রথমে সেচ দফতরের তরফে বিভাগীয় তদন্ত শুরু হয়। সেখানে আর্থিক অনিয়মের বিষয়টি সামনে আসার পরে ‘৯৮-এর জুলাইয়ে তিস্তা সেচ প্রকল্পের তৎকালীন এগজিকিউটিভ ইঞ্জিনিয়ার মালবাজার থানায় অভিযোগ (কেস নম্বর-১১৮/১১৯/১৬-০৭-৯৮) দায়ের করেন।

এ দিন কলকাতায় বিধাননগরের জলসম্পদ ভবনে পুলিশি অভিযানের সময় চাঞ্চল্য ছড়িয়ে পড়ে। রাজ্য সরকারের কর্মচারী ফেডারেশনের নেতা মনোজ চক্রবর্তীর অভিযোগ, “আমরা এই দুর্নীতির বিরুদ্ধে দীর্ঘ দিন ধরেই অভিযোগ জানিয়ে আসছিলাম। টাকা নয়ছয়ের জন্য প্রকল্পের কাজ বন্ধ হয়েছে। তদন্ত হওয়া দরকার।”

02 JUL 2005

PATNA FORMER DM TO FACE PROBE

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1/2

Goswami sent to jail

Statesman News Service

PATNA, June 30. — The former Patna district magistrate and an accused in the multi-crore flood relief scam, Gautam Goswami, today surrendered in the court of the designated vigilance judge, Mr Jitendra Mohan Prasad, after evading arrest for a month. He has been remanded in judicial custody till 6 July and sent to Beur jail. Sources said he would be lodged in the jail hospital as he had complained of serious heart ailments and hypertension.

The state government is reported to have sent the file to the President seeking Goswami's dismissal from the IAS. The government is still to accept his resignation or put him under suspension even after a formal graft case was lodged against him. His bail petitions were rejected twice. He sent in his resignation in January right in the middle of the Assembly elections. "We will probe how Goswami misused his authority," the Bihar Governor, Mr Buta Singh, told reporters here today adding that detailed inquiries would be made into all the cases pending against him.

His surrender came a day after his lawyer, Mr Tuhin Shankar, had announced his plan to move the Supreme Court following the rejection of Goswami's bail petition by Patna High Court yesterday sealing almost all exit routes. The vigilance court had already dismissed his bail petition on 6 June.

"My client decided to surrender to respect the court's verdict", quipped Mr Shankar who accompanied Goswami to the court this morning, adding: "We did not even file the bail petition in time". All through those



Gautam Goswami at the Patna civil court on Thursday. — PTI

proceedings, he sat quietly even as his counsel moved an application for surrender of his client. The government counsel, Mr Vijay Kumar Himanshu, however, said the accused was forced to surrender under the pressure of circumstances. He accused Goswami of misusing the state exchequer and claimed to have evidence to back up the allegation. Goswami, who was chosen among Asia's 20 heroes by the *Time* magazine for his "terrific" performance during the devastating floods that rocked the whole of North Bihar last year, is one of the key accused in the case. The other key accused, Santosh Jha, has already surrendered in the court and has been lodged in the same Beur jail. The court had issued an arrest warrant against him on 31 May in connection with the case but Goswami remained elusive.

CBI files 30 cases against public servants

For allegedly amassing assets disproportionate to their legitimate sources of income

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Continuing its nationwide crackdown on public servants of doubtful integrity, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday registered 30 cases against 31 public servants for allegedly amassing assets disproportionate to their legitimate sources of income.

Addressing a press conference here, CBI Director U.S. Misra said that in all 48 cases against 106 persons, including 50 public servants and 56 private persons were registered after the agency conducted raids and searches across the nation at about 185 places.

Searches were carried out at 41 places in Delhi, 16 in Mumbai, 11 each in Kolkata and Jaipur, 10 places in Dehra Dun, three places in Chennai and also in smaller and far flung towns such as Behrampur, Surat, Hazaribagh, Hathras, Eranakulam, Sahibabad and Gorakhpur.

While a majority of cases have been registered under the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, cases have also been registered under Sections 420, 468, 470, 471 and 120-B of the Indian Penal Code relating to cheating, forgery and criminal conspiracy.

Mr. Misra said that as per in-

formation collected at the CBI headquarters till Thursday evening, properties worth Rs. 10 crores have been detected which include cash, jewellery and other valuables.

Cash worth Rs. 60 lakhs has also been recovered and many bank lockers were yet to be opened.

"This is our third special drive against corrupt public servants this year. It will have a definite impact. Public servants of

doubtful integrity are under our constant gaze and they should not think that they are safe. This helps us hit at the root of corruption," he said.

In Thursday's raids, two officers of the level of joint secretary and above were among those against whom cases were registered by the CBI. Cases also in-

volve officers from the departments of Income Tax, Customs, Central Excise, BSNL, Narcotic Control Bureau, Na-

tional Insurance Company, Delhi Development Authority, Ministries of Information Technology and Water Resources, NALCO, RITES, State Bank of India, National Institute of Design, Central Bank of India, erstwhile Global Trust Bank, PGI Chandigarh, Employees Provident Fund, Delhi Government and Delhi Police.

A case was registered against a former CMD of erstwhile Global Trust Bank, Hyderabad and six

other Directors of the bank for cheating, criminal misappropriation and criminal conspiracy. It involved sanctioning of loan overdraft limit of Rs. 40 crores to a private company. Searches were conducted in this connection at 11 places in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

Two superintendents of Central Excise, Anti-Evasion cell, Kolkata were arrested while allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs. 1 lakh and accepting Rs. 25,000

as the first instalment.

A case of disproportionate assets was registered against a Deputy General Manager, BSNL, Gorakhpur and searches unearthed his investment in 12 plots, 12 bank accounts and a locker.

A case of disproportionate assets was registered against Chief Project Manager, Railway Vikas Nigam, Raipur, an officer of the joint secretary level. The CBI proceeded after obtaining permission from the competent authority.

During searches at Jabalpur, Nagpur and Gorakhpur, cash worth Rs. 7 lakhs was recovered along with 500 grams of gold ornaments and biscuits. The officer also allegedly owned landed property of more than 100 acres near Nagpur, CBI claimed in its official release.

An Assistant Commissioner of Delhi Police, working in the Crime branch, also came under the CBI microscope and searches at his premises disclosed his reported ownership of a farmhouse in South Delhi, a house in Delhi, a fleet of four luxurious cars and total assets running in to Rs. 2 crores.

A case of disproportionate assets has been registered against him, CBI said.

Defence deals during Kargil conflict to be probed

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is probing 10 defence deals contracted during the Kargil conflict by the previous National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.

"We are analysing the report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) sent alongside by the Government. We will be requesting the Government to give complaints in each of the 10 defence deals. As of now, only the CAG report is being scrutinised by us where these deals are mentioned," CBI

Director U.S. Misra told reporters on Thursday during a press conference on the agency's nationwide special drive conducted against public servants of "doubtful integrity."

The defence deals mainly relate to the acquisition of aluminium caskets, bullet-proof jackets, general ammunition and AK-47 ammunition.

"Notes from Ministry"

Mr. Misra said the CBI was in touch with Defence Ministry officials and would soon get "specific notes" from the Ministry on each deal.

On the case against Denel, the South African armaments firm, the CBI chief said the agency was preparing Letter Rogatories to be sent to South Africa and the Isle of Man for seeking formal assistance in investigations.

Asked if the CBI would move the Supreme Court against the Delhi High Court order in the Bofors payoffs case quashing the charge sheet, Mr. Misra said the agency had only recently received the certified copy of the High Court order and it was being scrutinised.

"We will form our opinion. There is ample time for that." When his attention was

drawn to the Court's criticism of the agency's probe into the Bofors case, spending nearly Rs. 250 crores on investigations abroad over the past 15 years, Mr. Misra said:

"The CBI did not give this figure to the Court. We are trying to find out what was the basis for arriving at the figure of Rs. 250 crores."

Asked about the failure of Amit Jogi, son of the former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister, Ajit Jogi, to appear before the CBI for questioning in the Jaggi murder case, Mr. Misra said Mr. Amit Jogi was expected to present himself for questioning soon.

Goswami withdraws resignation from IAS

Patna, June 17

FORMER PATNA district magistrate Gautam Goswami, evading arrest in the multi-crore flood relief scam, on Friday withdrew his resignation from the IAS even as Governor Buta Singh said the process for his dismissal had already been set in motion.

Goswami sent a letter withdrawing his resignation to his counsel Tuhin Shanker who forwarded it to the state's personnel secretary Ravi Kant. "With this,

his resignation has become a nullity. It is settled by law that a person who withdraws his resignation prior to its acceptance will be deemed part of the service," Shanker said.

Kant, however, neither confirmed nor denied receiving Goswami's letter.

Goswami, a 1991 batch IAS officer, had resigned from service in January this year and joined the Sahara group of companies as a senior vice-president before being dismissed on June 6 follow-



ing the surfacing of the scam.

The government had recently served a show cause notice to Goswami as to why action should

not be initiated against him for joining a private company even before his resignation was accepted.

According to the Government of India Service Rules, clearance from the vigilance department and the Lokayukta is mandatory for acceptance of resignation.

As for the Governor, he said the process for Goswami's dismissal has been initiated and that it was only a matter of time before he would be arrested.

PTI

গৌতমের বিরুদ্ধে আরও অভিযোগ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, পটনা, ১৩ জুন: আরও একটি বড়সড় কেলেঙ্কারিতে জড়িয়ে পড়তে চলছেন বন্যাভ্রাণ কেলেঙ্কারির মূল অভিযুক্ত পটনার প্রাক্তন জেলাশাসক গৌতম গোস্বামী। বন্যাভ্রাণ কেলেঙ্কারির তদন্তে গৌতমবাবুর বিরুদ্ধে আরও কয়েক কোটি টাকার নয়-ছয়ের তথ্য প্রমাণ পেয়েছেন তদন্তকারী গোয়েন্দা অফিসারেরা। প্রাথমিক তদন্তে জানা গিয়েছে, গরিবদের উন্নয়নের জন্য বরাদ্দ প্রায় ৬ কোটি টাকা নয়ছয় হয়েছে গৌতমবাবুর আমলে।

বন্যাভ্রাণ কেলেঙ্কারির মূল অভিযুক্ত গৌতমবাবু বর্তমানে ফেরার। গৌতমবাবুর আইনজীবী অবশ্য আজ ফের আগাম জামিনের জন্য পটনা হাইকোর্টে আবেদন জানিয়েছেন। আগামী দু'এক দিনের মধ্যেই এই আবেদনের শুনানি হবে।

আজ পটনার ডিজিটাল বিভাগের এক পদস্থ কর্তা জানিয়েছেন, পটনার প্রাক্তন জেলাশাসক গৌতম গোস্বামী পদাধিকার বলে ডিস্ট্রিক্ট আরবান ডেভলপমেন্ট অথরিটির (ডিইউডিএ) চেয়ারম্যান ছিলেন। পটনা জেলার দানাপুর, খগৌল, ফুলওয়ারি শরিফ, ফতুয়া, মানের, পটনা সিটি, বিহটা, বক্তিয়ারপুর এলাকার দরিদ্র মানুষের জন্য স্বনির্ভর প্রকল্পের ৩ কোটি ৬৫ লক্ষ টাকা বরাদ্দ করেছিল বিহার রাজ্য সাব আরবান ডেভলপমেন্ট অথরিটি (এসইউডিএ)। এই টাকা পটনা জেলার মোট ১১টি এলাকায় খরচ করার কথা বলা হয়েছিল। নিয়ম অনুযায়ী, এই প্রকল্পে গরিব যুবক-যুবতীদের স্বনির্ভরতার প্রশিক্ষণ এবং অনুদান দেওয়ার কথা। এই টাকা খরচের ব্যাপারে প্রাক্তন জেলাশাসকের যে রিপোর্ট পাওয়া গিয়েছে, তাতে বলা হয়েছে, এই টাকার পুরোটাই ব্যয় করা হয়েছে প্রশিক্ষণের জন্য। কাগজে

কলমে প্রশিক্ষণের ব্যয় দেখানো হলেও এই টাকার সিংহভাগ আদৌ খরচ করা হয়নি বলে তদন্তকারী অফিসারেরা জানিয়েছেন। এ ছাড়াও গরিবদের বস্তি উন্নয়নের জন্য ডিইউডিএ-র বরাদ্দ ৮০ লক্ষ টাকার নয়ছয়ের অভিযোগ উঠেছে গৌতমবাবুর বিরুদ্ধে।

পটনার বর্তমান জেলাশাসক সুধীর কুমার এই অভিযোগের তদন্ত করার নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন। জেলা প্রশাসন সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, বস্তি উন্নয়নের জন্য বরাদ্দ টাকা দেওয়া হয়েছে কয়েকটি স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংগঠনকে। কিন্তু তদন্তে দেখা গিয়েছে, এই সব সংগঠনগুলির কোনও অস্তিত্বই নেই। এই টাকায় কোনও বস্তিতেই উন্নয়নের কাজ করা হয়নি। পটনার জেলাশাসক সুধীর কুমার বলেছেন, তদন্ত রিপোর্ট হাতে পাওয়ার পরে এই ব্যাপারে উপযুক্ত ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।

রাজ্যসভার এক সাংসদের উন্নয়ন তহবিলের দেড় কোটি টাকা নয়ছয় করার একটি অভিযোগ নিয়েও তদন্ত শুরু হয়েছে গৌতমবাবুর বিরুদ্ধে। তদন্তকারী অফিসারদের বক্তব্য, গৌতমবাবু যে সময়ে পটনার জেলাশাসক ছিলেন সেই সময়ে বরাদ্দ উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পের কোটি কোটি টাকা নয়ছয় করা হয়েছে বলে তথ্য প্রমাণ পাওয়া গিয়েছে।

কলসি, মোমবাতি নিয়ে রাজ্যপালের কাছে। বিদ্যুৎ এবং জলের দাবিতে আজ খালি কলসি এবং মোমবাতি নিয়ে বিহারের রাজ্যপালের সঙ্গে দেখা করলেন এনডিএ নেতারা। রাষ্ট্রপতি শাসনে রাজ্যের বেহাল বিদ্যুৎ পরিস্থিতির প্রতিবাদে এনডিএ-র পক্ষ থেকে রাজ্যপালের কাছে একটি স্মারকলিপিও দেওয়া হয়েছে। রাজ্যপাল বুটা সিংহ বিষ্ণুর নেতাদের আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, বিদ্যুৎ পরিস্থিতির উন্নতির জন্য সরকার ব্যবস্থা নিয়েছে।

4 JUN 2005

ANADABAZAR PATINA

Several cricketers linked to 'tips'

Bookie rebirth for scandal

OUR BUREAU

June 11: The scandal every cricket fan would love to declare a "dead-ball" has sprung back to life.

Ahmedabad police today said a top international cricket bookie has described to them how Mohammed Azharuddin, Ajay Jadeja and Nayan Mongia offered him "tips" on factors that decided the fate of matches.

Shobhan Mehta, whose business spanned India, Pakistan, England and Australia from his Mumbai headquarters, also named Australian Mark Waugh and the late South African captain Hansie Cronje, the police said.

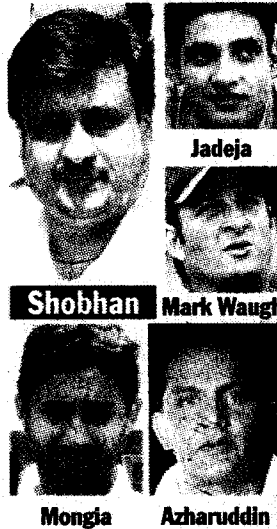
Asked if the police would proceed against the three Indian cricketers, the additional police commissioner (crime branch), D.G. Vanzara, replied: "Investigations are on and we cannot disclose anything. But the crime branch will do whatever needs to be done. We will go step by step."

The allegations will increase pressure on the CBI, which had probed the match-fixing scandal, to revive the case which is now in cold storage.

They have also, for the first time, brought the police forces of Mumbai and Ahmedabad — the hubs of cricket betting in the country — on to the centre-stage of the probe.

Mehta was arrested by Ahmedabad police from a

BLAST FROM PAST



Mumbai hospital in a betting case while Mumbai police today raided the home of another alleged bookie, Arjun Nihalchandani alias Sindhi, in Gujarat's Rajkot after having arrested him in Ahmedabad.

If what Mehta, who has been given conditional bail, told the police is true, the players are guilty of much more than offering tips on weather and pitch condition — as some tainted Australian cricketers had told their board before being let off.

"Mehta used to bet on the result of a particular match — like whether it will be a win or loss for one team or a draw," Vanzara said.

The bookie and his associ-

ates used to get "tips about factors affecting a match, directly or indirectly, from the players. Tips about pitch condition, weather, toss, individual team strategy, physical fitness of important players and other matter," the officer said.

The revelations are unlikely to damage the players any further in cricketing terms. Azhar was banned for life after the Indian board found him guilty; Delhi High Court recently allowed Jadeja to play first-class cricket after the board slapped a five-year ban on him in December 2000. Mongia was given a clean chit and retired last year.

However, none of the players has been criminally prosecuted. The Mumbai police spokesman underlined the difficulty of this when asked if they would move against the cricketers.

"A bookie taking names does not prove a crime. The police can summon the named people for clarification and cross-checking... but they cannot be interrogated unless there is clear evidence of a crime," the officer said.

"It becomes a crime if there is evidence to show that the individuals profited from betting activities."

Mongia and Azhar denied having "ever met or known" Mehta. "People just come out and take names which is not a very good thing to do," Azhar said. The BCCI said it would "seriously" discuss the matter if the police sent a report.

12 JUN 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Goswami in fresh trouble: Sahara shows him door

Press Trust of India
Patna, June 9

FORMER PATNA district magistrate Gautam Goswami, evading arrest in the flood relief scam, suffered another setback with the management of Sahara India Parivar dismissing him from the post of senior vice-president.

The move follows the vigilance bureau's threat to take legal action against the company. Additional D-G of the bureau, Neelmani, said the department had sought legal advice to proceed against Sahara India Parivar for not cooperating with the agency sleuths camping in Lucknow to arrest Goswami.

A Sahara group spokesperson from Lucknow said, "The services of Goswami, who joined as senior vice-president of the company in January, have been terminated with effect from June 6". It added, "Goswami had failed to submit the necessary papers to meet the organisational requirement, which led to termination of his services. He was given 15 days' time, till June 6, to furnish us the clearance certificate. Since this time has lapsed and he remains incommunicado, we have terminated his services".

Goswami's lawyer Tuhin Shankar confirmed this.

Designated vigilance judge J.M. Prasad had on Monday dismissed Goswami's anticipatory bail application in connection with the scam relating to embezzlement of over Rs 17 crore meant for providing relief to the flood-hit poor in Bihar in 2004.

Shankar said he would move the Patna High Court on Monday against the order of the designated CBI judge dismissing his client's appeal for an anticipatory bail. "We were supposed to file the petition in the high court today itself but could not do so due to some technical reason," he said.

Goswami had quit the IAS to join the Sahara group but the state government has not accepted his resignation as yet. It recently issued a notice to Goswami asking him to explain why action should not be taken against him for joining a private company when his resignation has not been accepted.

The bureau announced a Rs 1 lakh reward for anyone providing information leading to Goswami's arrest. It had registered an FIR against him and 27 others on May 28. It has also already alerted all airports, besides the authorities manning immigration check-posts across the country, to prevent Goswami from flying out of the country.

The vigilance court had on May 31 issued a non-bailable warrant of arrest against Goswami and eight others. Six of the accused, including Santosh Kumar Jha, the owner of a fake firm have already been remanded in judicial custody till June 10 and lodged in the high security Beur jail.



Gautam Goswami

Bihar Governor Buta Singh on Thursday said vigilance bureau sleuths are on the job to apprehend Gautam Goswami and others allegedly involved in the flood relief scam.

"I am fully satisfied with the inquiry by the vigilance bureau. All the accused, including Goswami, will be arrested soon," Singh told reporters at his secretariat chamber here.

State police chief Ashish Ranjan Sinha, who was present during the meet, said he had already approached his Uttar Pradesh counterpart seeking his cooperation to trace Goswami.

"Vigilance sleuths are on the job in Lucknow and Varanasi and raids are being carried out at different places to arrest Goswami and the others," he said.

Umadhar ready to face probe

Patna, June 9

THE CPI-ML (towards new democracy) leader and former MLA, Umadhar Prasad Singh, on Thursday dismissed allegations of his involvement in the multi-crore-rupee flood relief scam as 'absurd and baseless' and said he was ready to face a probe by any independent agency. "My name is being dragged by the BJP in the irregularities relating to distribution of relief materials during floods in 2004 in my Hayaghat constituency in Bihar. It is absurd and baseless," he said.

Singh said that he had received 21 truckloads of relief materials dispatched from Patna by then Patna DM Gautam Goswami, for Hayaghat in Darbhanga district and the materials had been distributed under the supervision of the district authorities.

"I had also informed the Darbhanga DM soon after I received the trucks laden with foodgrains. I am nowhere in the process of distribution of relief materials," he said adding he had also not received the details of materials supplied by the Patna DM.

CBI registers FIR in Denel case

Four charges of corruption and pay-offs mentioned

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday registered a First Information Report (FIR) on alleged corruption in the purchase of arms and ammunition from the South African armaments major, Denel.

The FIR follows a month-long scrutiny of the papers submitted by the Defence Ministry to the CBI. The case, the first in a deal finalised during the previous National Democratic Alliance regime, was filed against unknown public servants of the Ministry of Defence; M/s. Denel (Pty) Limited and their officials; M/s. Varas Associates and their officials; and others in connection with the alleged payment of 12.75 per cent commission to M/s. Varas Associates. The payment was for securing contracts for the supply of anti-materiel rifles.

The case was registered under Section 120-B read with Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code and various provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, a CBI spokesman said here. The FIR mentioned at least four allegations of corruption and pay-offs. It alleged that Denel had paid \$24,08,373 and \$10,00,672 to Varas Associates, a company based in the Isle of Man, on January 27, 2003 and

It alleged that Denel had paid \$24,08,373 and \$10,00,672 to Varas Associates, a company based in the Isle of Man

\$1,51,350 on June 19, 2003.

The invoices in question were sent by the Varas office to the Denel headquarters. The first signed by an unknown person of May 1, 2002 is for \$1,43,446 for "fees for technical services as per agreement." The third signed by Marc Craig Veitch, in his capacity as Director, on May 30, 2003 is for \$4,50,364 also for "technical services." The second, apparently signed by Veitch on December 8, 2002, for \$3,93,720 "fees for consulting and technical services as per agreement" allegedly related to the arms deal with India, giving as a reference project AM-2 and AM-3 which reportedly was the contract for Denel-produced rifle.

Varas Associates, which was appointed to act as an agent for Denel by its head office, was paid 12.75 per cent commission on all deals that it secured for Denel. Varas traded on its influence with the Indian Military's Price Negotiation Committee (PNC) in New Delhi.

A document purporting to be

secret minutes of the PNC meeting on May 23, 2003 to procure 200 anti-materiel rifles and one lakh rounds of ammunition had allegedly been provided by Varas to Denel as part of its "consulting and technical service." The FIR alleged that in spite of the specific prohibition for engagement of agents in the procurement process, Denel had appointed Varas its agent.

The South African newspaper, *Cape Argus*, had carried a report in April alleging that Denel had paid a British company about Rs. 20 crores to obtain confidential documents from the Indian Defence Ministry.

It claimed that an anti-corruption unit was probing allegations of pay-offs to the British company for giving Denel a classified report of the PNC on a tender for anti-materiel rifles (bunker busters).

Following the Bofors scandal, a mandatory clause in defence procurement agreements states that a company can be blacklisted and all contracts cancelled if it uses middlemen. Apart from supplying the rifles, Denel is involved in putting up an ordnance factory in Nalanda, Bihar.

It is also in the race for a Rs. 6,000-crore tender for supplying artillery guns to the Army.

Court rejects ex-Patna DM's bail petition

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Compete

Ashok K. Mishra
PATNA 6 JUNE

THE designated vigilance court on Monday turned down the anticipatory bail plea of the former Patna DM Gautam Goswami who has been evading arrest in connection with the multi-crore flood relief scam case. The Special Judge Vigilance, J M Sharam, while rejecting the bail petition, said there were prima facie allegations of irregularities against Goswami in the flood relief scam. Mr Goswami is now expected to move his bail plea in High Court in the next few days and according to sources close to him, the former DM will surrender only after exhausting the legal options.

Arguing on behalf of his client, the defense counsel Tuhin Shankar told the Court that the former DM was ready to cooperate with the Vigilance Bureau, which had not even bothered to interrogate him in the course of two months of investigation. The then DM, his counsel contended, followed all the procedural requirements of awarding the contract to supply relief materials for the flood victims to a government undertaking. The undertaking, under its own arrangement, sub let the contract to a firm Baba Satya Sai Enterprises. Mr Shankar claimed the payment made against the supply of the relief materials was in tune with the

supply. At times, he said, the supply even exceeded the payment and the then DM acted with transparency while dealing with the flood relief operations. "To err is human and not satanic and this cannot be made culpable" said the counsel, adding the government had even relaxed financial rules relating to expenditure incurred on the flood relief operations in view of the unprecedented flood. The Special Public Prosecutor, Vigilance, O P Singh opposed the bail petition and said the accused persons, including the DM, had inserted interpolations in the document granting tender for the supply of the relief materials. Mr Singh also maintained that cheques running in crores were issued to a fake firm Baba Satya Sai Enterprises instead of Bihar Small Scale Industries Corporation.

The vigilance court had issued a non-bailable warrant of arrest against Goswami and eight other accused in the flood relief scam case. The Vigilance Bureau probing the case has so far arrested 5 of the 28 accused whose names figure in the FIR filed by the investigating agency against them. Besides, one of the key accused Santosh Kumar Jha surrendered in the Vigilance last week.

Mr Jha who is now in remand of the Vigilance has divulged, in course of interrogation, the names of politicians who were in close touch with the key accused.

CAPITAL TALK

Corruption in the civil services

Inder Malhotra

FEW CAPITAL cities in the world are so bureaucracy-ridden as New Delhi is. No wonder then that the principal subject of discussion here has been the unending decline of the civil services in general and the shenanigans of Patna's former District Magistrate, Gaurav Goswami, in particular.

Long is the list of officers of the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Police Service, the Indian Revenue Service, and so on who have been suspended, arrested, and even tried on charges of corruption and wrongdoing over the years. Some of them have done time behind bars though few have actually been convicted and sentenced, thanks to judicial delays.

However, Mr. Goswami's case is in a class by itself because it is the first time that a price of Rs.1 lakh has been put on the head of a member of the elite IAS, something that used to happen so far only in relation to dacoits, underworld dons, and proclaimed absconders. The dividing line between the outlaws and those recruited and trained to uphold the rule of law has

begun to be blurred.

Moreover, there is something deeply distressing about the fact that precisely when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was telling a gathering of 354 District Magistrates in Delhi that they should have a fixed tenure and that, in any case, they must never be transferred for political reasons, two District Magistrates in Bihar, a State under President's rule, were given abrupt marching orders. Their only fault was that they had stood up, in their respective districts, to powerful politicians, each facing an array of criminal charges.

Bleak scenario

Against this bleak backdrop the Goswami episode acquires an even sharper edge than it would have done in any case. The guilt or innocence of those concerned can be determined only by courts of law though it is far from certain whether that stage would ever be reached. However, let some incontrovertible facts speak for themselves.

First, in the American newsmagazine, *Time's* list of the future movers and shakers Mr. Goswami was one of only two Indians,

the other being actor Shah Rukh Khan.

No one can blame the civil servant if this went to his head, because such praise by foreigners is the ultimate accolade in the eyes of the middle class in this country that immediately embarked on praising and pampering him.

His stock rose further when during the Lok Sabha elections last year he told the Bharatiya Janata Party leader and then Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, to end his election meeting before the time limit

one knows by who and how) the "authoritative" to hand around flood relief.

What both the Vigilance Department of Bihar and the CAG have discovered and alleged — in the first case rather belatedly — is that huge sums supposedly paid to the Bihar Small-Scale Industries Corporation (BSSIC) actually found their way into the coffers of a "fake firm" happily sharing the same acronym (Baba Satya Sai Industries Corporation).

By some strange coincidence this firm belongs to Santosh Jha (now under arrest), a close associate of Sadhu Yadav, a brother-in-law of Mr. Lalu Prasad.

Powerful patrons

When things began to get hot for him in Patna, Mr. Goswami ostentatiously resigned from the coveted IAS and, without waiting for the acceptance of his resignation, went to Lucknow to occupy a highly paid post in the private sector. Could effrontery of this kind be possible unless the wayward official had powerful political patrons in both Patna and New Delhi?

Mercifully, there are still enough members of the higher bureaucracy that are honest, competent, and diligent enough. Otherwise, the entire country would have sunk to the standards of Bihar.

But the rot has gone deep and is spreading fast, thanks to the cosy nexus between overbearing and venal politicians and over-ambitious and servile servants in a milieu dominated by unbridled greed, on the one hand, and unlimited

permissiveness, on the other. How to stem this rot is a painful question that must be answered but would have to be discussed separately.

HOW TO STEM THE DEEP ROT IN THE HIGHER BUREAUCRACY IS A PAINFUL QUESTION THAT MUST BE ANSWERED.

fixed by the Election Commission. So much so that at one stage there was a move to induct the much-lauded District Magistrate into the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), but this was somehow derailed.

Needless to add that the Rashtriya Janata Dal of Lalu Prasad, then in power in Bihar was very pleased with Mr. Goswami and his ways, and that is where the disbursement of the flood relief largesse came in. There was, as the Comptroller and Auditor General has pertinently pointed out, no flood at all in Patna and therefore the district was not entitled to any relief.

Yet Mr. Goswami not only managed to get over Rs.13 crore but also could "divert another Rs.17 crores from other heads" on the ground that he had been appointed (no

Give him the money, said Chief Secretary

FLOOD | On day Goswami asks for Rs 32.5 crore, Chief Secy asks for disbursal, same day money comes and is siphoned off to fake firm

VARGHESE K GEORGE
PATNA, JUNE 3

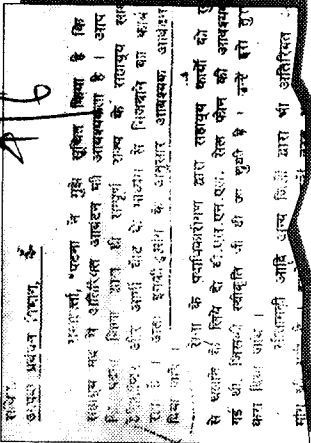
ON the face of it, the Bihar Chief Secretary's note directing immediate release of funds to the Patna District Magistrate Gautam Goswami for flood relief shows how prompt the bureaucracy was. But that's just on paper.

For, the day K A H Subramanian, then Chief Secretary, sent

that note to the Relief Secretary on July 19, 2004, is the same day Goswami asked for funds and it's the same day that Rs 1 crore was transferred and then siphoned off to the fake account run by Sadhu Yadav's aide, contractor Santosh Jha. Jha is under arrest now.

Consider these:
■ Between July 12 and July 18, Goswami receives Rs 1.5 crore for relief. Of this, only Rs 30 lakh is paid to the legitimate Bihar Small Scale Industries Cor-

poration, the rest to the fake Baba Satya Sai Industries run by Jha.
■ On July 19, Goswami writes to Relief Secretary C Ashokvardhan: "Patna district administration is supplying relief to Samas-



Letter Subramanian wrote without asking any questions on why, who

Secretary: "DM Patna has informed me that he needs more funds for relief operations. You are aware that supplies for the entire state, by helicopters and army boats, are being done by Patna district. There-

fore, as per his demands allotments must be made, without any delay... Treat this urgent." Incidentally, there is no official order authorising Goswami to manage relief for the entire state. There is no record of any questions being asked by the Chief Secretary.

■ July 19 is also the day when Subramanian writes to the Relief

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

from the front page

'Give him money'

Or for that matter, any official record of a request made by Goswami to the Chief Secretary.

When asked why he did not check on the relief work and where the money had gone, Subramanian told *The Indian Express* today: "My order to the Secretary, Relief, was a general instruction to ensure that there was sufficient fund flow for relief. At my level, it is neither possible nor required to be informed if the District Magistrates are spending the money as per rules and procedures. So my order is proper within

the eyes of the law."

■ This "proper" order led to the release by the Relief Department of an instalment of Rs 1 crore to the Patna DM who immediately withdrew the money from the account. Santosh Kumar Jha, now a co-accused with Goswami in the flood relief scam, has admitted receiving this money the same day.

■ And it's after the Chief Secretary's letter on July 19 that money begins to flow to Goswami's account, over the next few days. A total of over Rs 13 crore.

রাজীবের পরে ছাড় হিন্দুজাদেরও বফর্স মামলায় কড়া ভৎসনা সিবিআইকে

নয়াদিল্লি, ৩১ মে: ভারতীয় রাজনীতিতে উথালপাথাল ঘটানো বফর্স মামলা শেষ পর্যন্ত প্রায় অসার হয়ে গেল। দিল্লি হাইকোর্টের রায় প্রশ্ন তুলে দিল ৬৪ কোটি টাকার এই যুব মামলার ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে।

সরকারি কোষাগার থেকে ২৫০ কোটি টাকা খরচ করে পনেরো বছর মামলা চলার পরে প্রবাসী শিল্পপতি হিন্দুজাদের তিন ভাই শ্রীচাঁদ, গোপীচাঁদ ও প্রকাশচাঁদের বিরুদ্ধে যাবতীয় অভিযোগ খারিজ করে দিয়েছে দিল্লি হাইকোর্ট। সুইডেনের অস্ত্র নির্মাতা সংস্থা এ বি বফর্সকেও অব্যাহতি দেওয়া হয়েছে। যে সব নথিপত্রের ভিত্তিতে বফর্স মামলা মাজানো হয়েছিল, সুইজারল্যান্ড থেকে তার মূল কাগজপত্রই আনতে পারেনি সিবিআই। ভবিষ্যতে এই ধরনের মামলা নিয়ে এগনোর আগে 'আরও দায়িত্ববান' হতে সিবিআই-কে সতর্কও করে দিয়েছে আদালত।

রাজীব গান্ধী প্রধানমন্ত্রী থাকাকালে হাউইংজার কামান কেনার জন্য বফর্সের সঙ্গে ১৪৩৭ কোটি টাকার চুক্তি করে ভারত সরকার। ১৯৮৬ সালের সেই চুক্তি ঘিরে যুবের অভিযোগ ওঠে পনেরো বছর, সুইডিশ রেডিওতে এ.ই. মর্সে খবর প্রচারিত হওয়ার পরে। সিবিআই যুবের অভিযোগের তদন্ত শুরু করে ১৯৯০ সালে। তার আগেই অবশ্য ভারতের রাজনীতিতে বফর্স-কাণ্ড ঘিরে শোরগোল পড়ে যায়। ১৯৮৯ সালে রাজীব গান্ধীর ক্ষমতাচ্যুত হওয়ার পিছনে অন্যতম কারণ ছিল বফর্স সংক্রান্ত প্রচার। এই প্রচারের জেরেই পালাবদল ঘটে ভারতীয় রাজনীতিতে, উত্থান ঘটে বিশ্বনাথ প্রতাপ সিংহের।

আদালতের রায় শোনার পরেও নিজের অবস্থানে অনড় বিশ্বনাথ প্রতাপ। তিনি বলেন, "অভিযুক্ত সকলের বিরুদ্ধেই প্রমাণ আছে। আমাদের সময়ে প্রমাণ করেছি যে, গোপন অ্যাকাউন্ট আছে এবং তাতে টাকাও জমা পড়েছে। কিন্তু এত টাকা খরচ করেও সিবিআই কিছু প্রমাণ করতে পারল না। এটা তাদের অপদার্থতা। আমরা লোকপালের

আওতায় কোনও নিরপেক্ষ সংস্থাকে দিয়ে ফের তদন্ত দাবি করছি।"

আর বফর্স-কাণ্ড একদা যাদের কোণঠাসা করেছিল, সেই কংগ্রেসের পক্ষে অধিকা সোনির বক্তব্য, "আমরা গোড়া থেকেই বলে আসছি যে, বফর্সকে হাতিয়ার করে আমাদের দল এবং প্রয়াত নেতা রাজীব গান্ধীকে কালিমালিপ্ত করার চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। আইনি প্রক্রিয়া বুঝিয়ে দিল, ওই অভিযোগ কতটা অসংসারশূন্য ছিল।"

বফর্স নিয়ে অভিযোগকে রাজনৈতিক অস্ত্র হিসাবে ব্যবহার করেছিল বামপন্থীরাও। বিশেষ করে, পশ্চিমবঙ্গে নির্বাচনী প্রচারণে সেই সময় সব চেয়ে বড় বিষয় ছিল বফর্সই। রাজ্য জুড়ে স্লোগান ছিল, 'গলি গলি মে শোর



হ্যায়, রাজীব গান্ধী চোর হ্যায়।' এখন অবশ্য সে সব দিন ভুলে বামেদের সমর্থনেই দিল্লিতে ক্ষমতাসীন কংগ্রেস। তাই রায় জানান পরে রাজনৈতিক বিশ্লেষণে না-গিয়ে সিপিএমের পলিটব্যুরো সদস্য অনিল বিশ্বাস বলেন, "সিবিআই-এর উচিত, মামলাটি জীবিত রাখার ব্যবস্থা করা এবং সাক্ষ্যপ্রমাণের ফাঁকফোকর খতিয়ে দেখা। কারণ, এর সঙ্গে দেশের নিরাপত্তার প্রশ্ন জড়িত।"

এ হেন যুগান্তকারী মামলা নিয়ে কৌতূহল ছিল তুঙ্গে। ভিড়ে ঠাসা আদালত কক্ষে আজ দিল্লি হাইকোর্টের বিচারপতি আর এস সোপি বলেন, "মূল নথিপত্রের অনুপস্থিতিতে হিন্দুজা ভাইদের বা বফর্স কোম্পানির বিরুদ্ধে মামলা চালানো যায় না। হিন্দুজা এবং এ বি বফর্সের বিরুদ্ধে মুখ্য মেট্রোপলিটন ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট যে চার্জ গঠনের নির্দেশ দেন, তা খারিজ করে দিচ্ছি।" এত বছর ধরে জনগণের টাকা ও সময় অপচয়ের জন্য সিবিআই-কে

ভৎসনা করেন বিচারপতি।

হাইকোর্টের এই রায়ে বফর্স মামলা প্রায় অসার হয়ে গেল। অভিযুক্ত বলতে থাকলেন শুধু অস্ত্রাভিও কুত্রোচ্চি, সিবিআই বহু চেষ্টাতেও যাঁর প্রত্যাশনের ব্যবস্থা করতে পারেনি। প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষাসচিব এস কে ভাটনগর, বফর্সের এজেন্ট উইন চাড্ডা এবং সংস্থার প্রাক্তন প্রধান মার্টিন আর্ডবো প্রয়াত হওয়ায় তাঁদের নামে মামলা এখন তামাদি। সিবিআই-এর চার্জশিটে প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী রাজীব গান্ধীর নামও ছিল। কিন্তু মৃত্যু হওয়ায় তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে চার্জ গঠন করা হয়নি এবং পরে দিল্লি হাইকোর্টই রাজীবকে নির্দোষ ঘোষণা করে।

দিল্লির মুখ্য মেট্রোপলিটন ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট ২০০৪-এর ফেব্রুয়ারিতে হিন্দুজাদের বিরুদ্ধে প্রত্যারণার অভিযোগে চার্জ গঠনের নির্দেশ দেন। হিন্দুজাদের আবেদনের পরিশ্রেক্ষিতে ২০০৫-এর ফেব্রুয়ারিতে সেই রায়ে স্থগিতাদেশ দেয় দিল্লি হাইকোর্ট এবং সিবিআই-কে মূল নথি পেশ করতে বলে। মাত্র চার দিন আগে অতিরিক্ত সলিসিটর জেনারেল বি দত্ত আদালতে জানান, এখন সিবিআই-এর পক্ষে মূল নথি জোগাড় করা আর সম্ভব নয়।

এত কিছুর পরে সিবিআই মামলা দাঁড় করানোর জন্য যে সব নথিপত্র পেশ করেছে, ভারতীয় প্রমাণ আইনে তা গ্রাহ্য নয় বলে জানিয়েছে আদালত। মূল নথিপত্র তো নয়ই, এমনকী প্রামাণ্য কিছু তথ্যও হাজির করতে পারেনি সিবিআই। যা দেওয়া হয়েছিল, সবই ফটোকপি এবং তাতে হাতে লেখা বেশ কিছু 'নোট' ছিল। সেই হাতের লেখার মালিককেও চিহ্নিত করা যায়নি। সিবিআই-এর প্রাক্তন অধিকর্তা যোগিন্দর সিংহ অবশ্য বলেছেন, সিবিআই মূল নথির প্রত্যায়িত নকল জোগাড় করেছিল।

রায় জানান পরে হিন্দুজা ভাইদের প্রতিক্রিয়া, "এত দিন ধরে বারবার বলেছি, আমরা নির্দোষ। রাজনৈতিক বা অন্য কারণে আমাদের ফাঁসানো হয়েছে।" অন্য দিকে, সিবিআই-এর মুখপাত্র বলেন, রায় খতিয়ে দেখে পরবর্তী সিদ্ধান্ত হবে। — পি টি আই

Non-bailable warrant issued against Goswami

Ashok K. Mishra

PATNA 31 MAY

EVEN as the search for former Patna DM, Gautam Goswami continues, J.M. Sharma, judge, court of special vigilance on Tuesday, issued a non-bailable warrant against him. Eight other people in connection with the multi-crore flood-relief scam is also on the search list. The court also issued orders to carry search operations in the houses of those accused. Instructions have been passed to impound Goswami's passport along with the 27 accused in the FIR filed against them by the state vigilance.

The state vigilance has so far arrested five accused but the arrest of Goswami and Santosh Kumar Jha, considered to be the kingpins, will have an important bearing on the outcome of the investigation. Both Goswami and Jha however, continue to give a slip to the state vigilance which has now alerted the domestic and international authorities to nab them if they made a bid to flee the country. That non-bailable arrest warrants have been issued against Goswami and eight others will further help tighten the noose around them. Vigilance sources said it would also move the special vigilance court for obtaining non-bailable warrants against 14 other accused whose names figure in the FIR list.

In a strange turn of events for Goswami, the man is now being hounded by the state vigilance after his name got linked in the flood-relief scam. Few months back, the same man earned recognition from the prestigious *Time* magazine for doing a commendable job while handling the flood-relief operations in the state last year.

Though the Opposition has been mounting pressure on the state government to recommend a CBI probe, governor Buta Singh on Tuesday ruled out such a probe saying the vigilance was doing a fine job. He also sought to make it clear that no one involved in the scam would be spared.

As for the former DM, he is unlikely to surrender. Instead, he is expected to move court for seeking an anticipatory bail.

**Buta rules
out CBI
probe,
says
vigilance
doing a
good job**

গৌতমের নামে হুলিয়া

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, পটনা, ৩০ মে:
বন্যাভাগ কেলেকারির মূল অভিযুক্ত
পটনার প্রাক্তন জেলাশাসক গৌতম
গোস্বামী নামে হুলিয়া জারি করল
বিহার পুলিশ। আজ দেশের সব
বিমানবন্দরে গৌতমবাবুর পাসপোর্টের
প্রতিলিপি পাঠানো হয়েছে। পুলিশের
আশঙ্কা, তিনি দেশ ছেড়ে পালাতে
পারেন। তাঁকে গ্রেফতার করার জন্য
উত্তরপ্রদেশের পুলিশের কাছেও
সাহায্য চেয়েছে বিহার পুলিশ।
রাজ্য পুলিশের এডিজি নীলমনি
বলেছেন, “গৌতমের ব্যাপারে কেউ
কোনও তথ্য দিলে মোটা অঙ্কের
পুরস্কার দেওয়া হবে।” গৌতমবাবুর
খোঁজে রাজ্য পুলিশের একটি দলও
আজ লখনউ রওনা হয়েছে।
গত বছরের বিহারের বন্যার ভ্রাণ
সামগ্রী কেনার জন্য কোটি কোটি টাকা

নয়ছয় করার অভিযোগে পুলিশ
এরমধ্যেই পাঁচজনকে গ্রেফতার
করেছে। এরমধ্যে রয়েছেন বিহার স্মল
ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিমিটেডের প্রাক্তন
চেয়ারম্যান এবং পটনার আইডিবিআই
ব্যাকের ম্যানেজার। আদালতের
নির্দেশে তাঁদের পটনার বেউর জেলে
রাখা হয়েছে। কেলেকারির মামলায়
মোট ২৭ জনের বিরুদ্ধে এফআইআর
দায়ের করেছে রাজ্য ডিজিলাপ্স
বিভাগ। এই কেলেকারির মূল অভিযুক্ত
গৌতম গোস্বামী এবং ভ্রাণ সামগ্রী
সরবরাহকারী সন্তোষ ঝা ফেরার।
গৌতমবাবু বিহারের বিধানসভা
নির্বাচনের আগে সরকারি চাকরিতে
ইন্তফা দিয়ে লখনউয়ের একটি
বেসরকারি কোম্পানির উচ্চপদে যোগ
দিয়েছিলেন। তাঁর ইন্তফাপত্র অবশ্য
এখনও অনুমোদিত হয়নি।

Flood scam tainted official disappears

Patna, May 30

THE BIHAR police on Monday alerted immigration officials and airport authorities for the arrest of high-profile former Patna district magistrate Gautam Goswami, his assistant Amitav Arun and Santosh Jha in connection with the multi-crore flood-relief scam.

Neelmani, the additional director general of the Vigilance Bureau probing the scam, said, "We have furnished specific information about the three accused to the authorities of domestic and international airports, besides immigration officials there to help facilitate their arrest and prevent them from leaving the country."

The step has been taken ap-

prepending that some accused may leave the country on coming to know that an FIR has been registered against them, he said, adding the court was also being approached for impounding the passports of Goswami and others.

The Vigilance Bureau had lodged an FIR against 26 persons including Goswami on Saturday in connection with the scam.

Meanwhile, DGP Ashish Ranjan Sinha said he had requested his UP counterpart to direct authorities in Lucknow to assist the vigilance team camping there to arrest Goswami. "The UP police chief has assured all-

Cops issue red alert against Goswami

J.M. Prasad to obtain arrest warrants against Goswami, Jha — the alleged kingpin of the racket, and others in connection with the scam.

But Neelmani said: "As we have sufficient evidence against all the accused and the FIR has been registered under non-bailable sections of the IPC and Prevention of Corruption Act, we can take into custody any of the evading accused even without warrants of arrest."

In a bid to build up pressure on the accused to surrender on their own before the court or the vigilance sleuths, he said the Vigilance Bureau had announced a

reward for information which would lead to arrest of Goswami and Jha. The identity of the informers would be kept a secret, he said.

Goswami, an IAS officer who joined the Sahara group after submitting his resignation to the state government, had earlier featured in *Time* magazine for his exemplary role in co-ordinating flood relief operations in Bihar last year.

However, the state government has decided to showcase him as Goswami went on with his assignment in Sahara even though his resignation was not accepted.

Goswami was the focal point of the distribution of relief material to the flood-hit people in the state.

PTI



Gautam Goswami

possible help," he said.

The Bureau also moved the court of special vigilance judge

'Bihar MLAs were offered Rs. 3 crores each'

Staff Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh has alleged that the rebel Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJP) MLAs were offered "Rs. 3 crores,

a Cabinet berth and nominations for their wives in the Legislative Council" by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in an attempt to form the Government in Bihar. Talking to reporters on the

sidelines of State Secretaries of Rural Development, Mr. Singh said that "horse-trading was going on seriously in Bihar and a move was on to shift the rebel MLAs elsewhere." Describing the Presidential

promulgation of the dissolution of the Assembly by the UPA Government as "belated but right decision," he said there was no option but to dissolve the 243-member House to prevent "horse trading."

CAMPUS CALLING

DU gets ready for new academic year

For thousands of admission-seekers from the Capital and elsewhere, Delhi University has just set the ball rolling....

Lakshmi B. Ghosh

NEW DELHI: The countdown for finding a seat in the country's largest university began on Wednesday with the Delhi University authorities announcing the admission schedule for the upcoming new academic year.

Riding the new wave ushered in by it last year, the University this year has further simplified the much talked about Intelligent Character Reader (ICR) admission forms as well as made changes in the forms for Scheduled Castes / Scheduled Tribes and disabled students to make the process less cumbersome. The ICR forms, to be sold through 16 information centres spread across five different regions in the city, will be available from June 1 to 15, allowing a student to apply for 10 courses in eight colleges in just one form.

A new beginning this year will be the introduction of an information bulletin carrying all details about the admission procedures. "It is a simple, effective and efficient information bulletin and will be sold along with the ICR forms and will give students all the necessary details,"



ACTIVITY	DATE AND TIME
Sale and receipt of application forms	From June 1
Last date for receipt of application forms	June 15, up to 1 p.m.
Notification of first admission list	June 25, 10 a.m.
Admission and payment of fees	June 27 to 29, up to 1 p.m.
Notification of second list	June 30, 10 a.m.
Admission and payment of fees	July 1 to 4, up to 1 p.m.
Notification of third list	July 5, 10 a.m.
Admission and payment of fees	July 6 to 8, up to 1 p.m.
Notification of fourth list	July 9, 10 a.m.
Admission and payment of fees	July 11 to 13, up to 1 p.m.

said Delhi University's acting Vice-Chancellor C.R. Babu.

Claiming that the University had printed "enough" admission forms, the Dean of Students' Welfare (DSW), S.K. Vij, said: "We have asked the various centres to give not more than one form per person. In exceptional cases, two forms may be given to a person."

To further help students know a little more about the campus and the various courses offered by the colleges, an "Open Day" is being organised on the North Campus on May 26 and 27 and on the South Campus on May 30 and 31.

While a model of the ICR form will be available on Delhi University's website, it can only be downloaded and not used for actual submission of forms. Information about various colleges can be sought from the respective college websites.

Apart from including the sports quota segment in the ICR forms, modifications have also been made in the form for SC/

ST students.

"Last year some students had expressed difficulty in filling up the forms with the digitised number format so we have decided to allow free-hand style this time round," said an official.

Meanwhile, the admission process for the School of Open learning will begin on June 27 and continue till October 31, while admissions to the Non-collegiate Women's Education Board will on from June 6 to 17.

Asked if students will have to get their Class XII certificates attested to prove they are authentic, Prof. Vij said the University has this year received a soft copy of the CBSE Class XII results and would be able to verify the results on its own. But students coming from other Boards will need to get their certificates authenticated by the regional commissioners of their respective centres.

See also Page 3: Campus Jottings

Rabri, Lalu warm up to blanket scam

Ashok K Mishra

PATNA 18 MAY

THE skeletons are out of the cupboard. One scam after another is being unearthed, much to the discomfort of the

Rabri-Lalu duo. The latest in the series is one that refers to irregularities committed in the purchase and supply of blankets. The Opposition is targeting the fallen Rabri-Lalu duo, during whose regime the Rs 30-crore blanket 'scam' occurred.

Training his guns at Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav, the BJP national vice-president Sushil Kumar Modi on Wednesday accused the RJD chief of stalling the vigilance enquiry, which should have been ordered to probe the irregularities committed in the purchase and supply of blankets.

He said the blankets worth Rs 30 crore were to be distributed in 2002-2003 among people below the poverty line. Substantiating his charges, Mr Modi said the MD of Bihar State Financial Corporation (BSFC), Ms Amita Paul, submitted a report to the state government on October 1, 2003.

It recommended a vigilance probe in the blanket purchase scam. Mr Modi, who re-

leased the copies of the report to media men, said the BSFC MD detected irregularities in the purchase and supply of blankets of Rs 1.50 crore in 2002 in Patna district.

According to Mr Modi, the state government should have noted the MD's report ordering the vigilance probe. "But the government ignored the report and dumped it in cold storage at the instance of Lalu, who ruled the state in the capacity of the de facto chief minister."



The BJP leader maintained a number of RJD leaders were made beneficiaries of the scam as they received orders for the purchase and supply of blankets. Mr Modi alleged that a number of DMs acted under the duress of Mr Lalu Prasad and gave the purchase and supply orders for blankets to the RJD beneficiaries.

Mr Modi claimed the 15-year Rabri-Lalu regime was full of scams. "First it was the multi-crore fodder scam, then bitumen and dhoti-saree scams. The flood relief scam has now come into focus. And now we have the blanket scam". He added that the people of Bihar will never forgive Mr Lalu Prasad. He said a CBI enquiry should be ordered into the blanket scam.

HC holds back judgment on Lalu's DA case

Patna

18 MAY

THE three-member new Bench of the Patna High Court, on Wednesday, reserved its judgment on the petition of RJD president Lalu Prasad and former chief minister Rabri Devi, after hearing it afresh. Their petition was one challenging sanction of their prosecution in disproportionate assets (DA) case, an offshoot of multi-crore fodder scam.

The Bench comprising Justice Ram Nandan Prasad, Justice Barin Ghosh and Justice M.L. Visa reserved judgement after hearing arguments of Lalu-Rabri's counsel P.P.Rao, additional Solicitor General Mohan Parasaran representing CBI and P.K. Shahi, advocate of JD(U) MP Rajiv Ranjan Singh Lallan, an interventor petitioner.

The new Bench constituted by the acting Chief Justice Nagendra Rai through an administrative order, began fresh hearing of the petition from Monday and on the third day, Wednesday, completed the hearing and reserved its judgement.

The Supreme Court had directed the high court to complete hearing of the petition before the summer vacation beginning from May 21. This was for the third time the Patna High Court was hearing the petition. —PTI

Charges framed against Lalu

Charges also framed against 38 others in fodder scam case

D.P. Sharan

19/5
CO-2-2004
49/1
RANCHI: A special CBI court here on Tuesday framed charges against Railway Minister and Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad in yet another fodder scam case. This is the second fodder scam case in over a fortnight in which charges have been framed against Mr. Prasad.

Charges were framed against 38 more in the case. They include the former Bihar Chief Minister, Jagannath Mishra, and the former MP, Rajo Singh. As an accused, Ramraj Ram, did not turn up, the court directed that an arrest warrant be issued against him. Complying with the

court order of April 27, Mr. Lalu Prasad arrived at 8.30 a.m. in the court of CBI Special Judge, Sanjay Prasad. A few senior bureaucrats who have been named accused also appeared.

Dr. Mishra raised objections over the framing of charges against him. He said charges had already been framed against him for a similar offence in another case of the fodder scam. He said it was a violation of Article 20 (2) of the Constitution, which envisaged that a person could not be chargesheeted and convicted more than once for the same offence. However, the Special Judge ruled out the objection and directed him to raise the is-

sue before the appropriate court.

CBI counsel B.M.P. Singh said the charges were framed in connection with the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs. 3.31 crores from the Dumka treasury of undivided Bihar between December 1995 and January 1996. The court will hear the case from June 20 to 23, he added.

Charges have already been framed against Mr. Lalu Prasad and others in two cases of the fodder scam. As such, of the five cases in the fodder scam, charges have been framed in three cases. In the rest, framing of charges was expected in two months, CBI DIG, B.B. Mishra, told *The Hindu*.

19 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Charges framed against Lalu in fodder case

Statesman News Service

RANCHI, May 17. — A special CBI court here trying the fodder scam cases today framed charges against Mr Lalu Prasad, Mr Jagannath Mishra and 37 others in a case related to a fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 3.78 crore from the Dumka treasury in December 1995-January 1996. The railway minister and the former Bihar chief minister appeared before the court today.

The Special CBI Judge, Mr Sanjay Prasad, framed charges in the case (RC 38 A/96) under Sections 120 (B) for conspiracy, 409 for misappropriating

government funds, 420 for cheating, 467 for forging valuable documents and 471 for using forged documents as genuine, of the Indian Penal Code, and Section 13(1) (d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The other prominent accused against whom charges have also been framed include the former MP, Mr Rajo Singh, and the former MLA, Mr Dhruva Bhagat. The former animal husbandry director, Mr Ram Raj Ram, was not present in the court during the framing of the charges.

There are 49 accused in the case, six of whom died during the course of the investigation.

Three of the accused later turned approvers.

On 25 April this year, the special CBI court of Mr Umashankar Prasad framed charges against Mr Prasad, Mr Mishra and 68 others in case no RC 68/96 relating to fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 37 crore from the Chaibasa treasury in 1996.

The CBI has filed charge-sheets in 60 cases. Trials in 53 such cases are being conducted in the courts here and seven in Patna. The Rs 950-crore fodder scam was unearthed in Bihar in 1996.

BJP demand

The BJP sought Mr Prasad's removal for framing of charges



Mr Lalu Prasad

against him in another fodder scam case and alleged remarks against the Election Commissioners.

Ordinance to pay salaries

NEW DELHI, May 17. — As the impasse over government formation continues in Bihar, the Centre today decided to bring in an Ordinance to pay salaries of the MLAs, and so what if they haven't even been sworn in, leave alone working. The Ordinance was required as the Bihar Legislature (Members' Salaries, Allowances and Pension) Act, 1960, prohibits any MLA from drawing salary until the member has taken oath of affirmation.

"With a view to facilitating the newly-elected members to draw their salaries and allowances, the Centre has initiated steps for issuing a proclamation under Article 356 for revoking suspension of Article 195 of the Constitution," an official notification said.

The move would pave the way for issuing of an Ordinance to amend the Act.

President's Rule was imposed in Bihar on 7 March as no party could form a government due to the fractured mandate following the Assembly polls. The Assembly has been under suspended animation with no member taking oath. — PTI

Anjali's court martial begins

Press Trust of India

HC order to Army in Tehelka case

BANGALORE, May 16. — Arraigning IAF Flying Officer Anjali Gupta with seven charges relating to financial irregularities, insubordination and indiscipline, a military court here formally commenced trial against her today and declined to release her from "close arrest."

The charges were read out to Ms Gupta in the court which asked if she would plead guilty or not guilty but a cool Gupta said she would not utter a word as the court was not listening to her to have a civil defence counsel and alleged the General Court Martial was forced on her.

Judge advocate Sq.Ldr Suhag read out the seven charges against Ms Gupta who is working at the Aircraft and Systems Establishment here.

She was warned of 'hard and harsh action' by the court, presided over by Group Captain V Ganesh, after it found as being "disrespectful" and "casting aspersions" on it certain portions of her written

NEW DELHI, May 16. — Delhi High Court today asked the Army to decide within a month Maj.-Gen. PSK Chaudhary's 'pre-confirmation petition' against the General Court Martial order dismissing him from service and sentencing to one year rigorous imprisonment in connection with the Tehelka expose.

The Division Bench (coram Khan, Kumar JJ) also asked the Army to decide his post-confirmation petition regarding plea in bar within the same period. At the outset of the hearing Maj.-Gen. Chaudhary's counsel pressed for hearing his main petition challenging the validity of GCM proceedings on the ground of limitation. However, the Army's counsel Ms Jyoti Singh pointed out that it would be premature to decide the main petition while his plea before the Army authorities was pending. Agreeing with Ms Singh's submissions, the Bench adjourned the hearing on Chaudhary's main petition to 22 July.

Acting against the second senior Army officer in the Tehelka expose on corruption in defence deals, a military court had dismissed Maj.-Gen. Chaudhary from service and sentenced him to one-year rigorous imprisonment after finding him guilty of accepting illegal gratification and committing professional impropriety. — SNS

submission on her efforts to engage the services of a civil counsel, saying it amounted to contempt of court.

The charges against her include claiming road settlement allowance of Rs 1,080 by falsely stating she travelled between Headquarters Training Command Air Force Technical College by her car in June last year and making a false claim of Rajdhani

Express fare from Bangalore to Delhi while flying in a service aircraft.

She is also charged with not being present in the station PT on five days and in the daily morning briefing for some days without sufficient reason and behaving in a manner unbecoming of an officer by snatching breakfast prepared for a senior officer and throwing it on the floor.

17 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Probe into Centaur sale

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 13

FINANCE MINISTER P Chidambaram on Friday announced an inquiry into the sale of Centaur Juhu and Centaur Airport Hotels.

The Left had demanded a CBI probe but Chidambaram did not commit himself. "The nature and scope is under consideration and will be announced in due course," he said in Parliament.

The decision was taken after the government went through the CAG report.

The Left has been intrigued by the identity and behaviour of the buyer, Ajit

What the CAG said

■ Sale of both Juhu Centaur and Airport Centaur was done in haste and finalised on the basis of single bids

■ Absence of reserve prices was not consistent with the practice followed by the disinvestment ministry

■ Repeated extensions and relaxation of rules were allowed to bidder

Kerkar. Kerkar was actually a member of the Air India sub-committee that decided to sell the two hotels in 1998.

The day after the decision, Kerkar resigned from the panel; two years later, he floated a company, Tulip Hospitality, which later became the sole bidder for the hotels. Then, less than three years after buying the hotels, Kerkar got involved in a process to sell one at twice the price at which he had bought it. All this implied that the government would have earned more if it hadn't hurried into the sale.

Shourie declared that he was open to an inquiry by any agency. But the BJP charged the government with "jumping the gun" and accused it of witch-hunting.

A LIFER TIME FORGET

14 MAY

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

তদন্তের সময়ে ফুকন

ছিলেন প্রতিরক্ষা

মন্ত্রকের বাড়িতে

অগ্নি রায় ● নয়াদিল্লি

১৩ মে: যার বিরুদ্ধে তদন্ত, তার আতিথেয় বসবাস। তদন্ত চলাকালীনই টানা একবছর প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রকেরই একটি বাড়িতে থেকেছেন তহলকা কমিশনের চেয়ারম্যান বিচারপতি এস এন ফুকন। সেই থাকা ও টেলিফোন ব্যবহার তাঁর মোট চার লক্ষ দশ হাজার টাকার বিল হয়। এই সময় তিনি তৎকালীন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্দেজের বিরুদ্ধে তহলকার তোলা অভিযোগ নিয়ে তদন্ত করছিলেন। তদন্ত চলার সময়েই ফুকনকে বায়ুসেনার বিমান ব্যবহার করতে দেওয়ায় যথেষ্ট রাজনৈতিক চাপের মধ্যে পাড়িয়েছেন জর্জ ফার্নান্দেজ। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী শ্রব মুখোপাধ্যায় লোকসভায় স্বতঃপ্রসঙ্গিতভাবে এই নিয়ে একটি বিবৃতি দেওয়ার পর খব্দ উঠেছিল রাজনৈতিক মহলে। সুতরাং খবর, ঠিক একইভাবে মন্ত্রকের ফ্লাট ব্যবহার নিয়ে অদূর ভবিষ্যতেই সোচ্চার হতে চলেছে সরকারপক্ষ।

ডিপার্টমেন্ট অব পার্সোনাল থেকে থেকে পাওয়া হিসাব অনুসারে দেখা যাচ্ছে, ২০০৩ সালের ২১ জানুয়ারি থেকে ২০০৪ সালের ৩ নভেম্বর পর্যন্ত ফুকন ছিলেন এশিয়ান গেমস ভিলেজের ৫৬৬ নম্বর ফ্ল্যাটে (যা ভারত আর্থ লিমিটেড বা বি ই এলের)। বি ই এল প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রকের একটি সংস্থা। প্রায় এক বছর দশমাস এই বাড়িতে থাকার সময় শুধু ঘরভাড়াই লেগেছে ৩ লাখ ৯১ হাজার ৮০০ টাকা। টেলিফোন বিল হয়েছে ১৮ হাজার ৯৬৪ টাকা। সরকার মোট ২৩টি বিলে ভাগ করে এই টাকা মিটিয়েছে।

স্বভাবতই প্রশ্ন উঠবে যে মন্ত্রকের কেলেঙ্কারি নিয়ে কমিশন বসেছে, তার প্রধান কোন যুক্তিতে সেই মন্ত্রকেরই বাড়ি ব্যবহার করেন? এটা সম্পূর্ণই নিম্নম ভেঙে করা হয়েছে। ইউ পি এ সরকার ক্ষমতায় আসার পরেও অবশ্য ফুকন এই বাড়ি আরও ছ মাস ব্যবহার করেছেন। কিন্তু সেক্ষেত্রে সরকার পক্ষের যুক্তি হল, দীর্ঘদিন ধরে ওই বাড়ি ব্যবহার করার পর তো আর তাঁকে তাড়িয়ে দেওয়ার কথা বলার যায় না। সংসদে বিষয়টি না তোলা হলেও কংগ্রেস কিন্তু এন ডি এ এবং ফার্নান্দেজকে প্যাঁচে ফেলার এই সুযোগ ছাড়তে চাইছে না। প্রশ্নটি নিয়ে তারা রাজনৈতিক প্রচার শুরু করতে চাইছে।

কিছুদিন আগে জর্জকে 'ক্লিনচিট' দেওয়া নিয়ে সংশয় তৈরি হওয়ার পর ফুকনকে বায়ুসেনার বিমান ব্যবহার করতে দেওয়া নিয়েও কাড় উঠেছিল। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী শ্রব জন্ম কৃতি সাংসদকে এই বিষয়ে প্রশ্নের উত্তরে সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন জর্জ প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী থাকার সময় নিয়ম ভেঙেছেন। বিচারপতি ফুকন অবশ্য সেই অভিযোগের জবাবে বলেছিলেন, তদন্তের সার্বেই তিনি বিমান ব্যবহার করেছেন। সুতরাং তিনি কোনও ভুল করেননি। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারই কমিশনের দায়িত্বে, তারা প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রকে এই নির্দেশ দিতে পারে। সংশ্লিষ্ট মহলের অভিযোগ, তদন্তের সার্বেই বিমান ব্যবহার করা না হয় এই যুক্তি দিয়ে বোঝানো যায়। কিন্তু দিল্লিতে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রকের নিজস্ব ফ্লাট ছাড়া অন্য কোনও বাসস্থান তাঁর থাকার জন্য পাওয়া গেল না, এর কী যুক্তি হতে পারে?

প্রতিরক্ষা-দুর্নীতির তদন্তই হয়নি, সিবিআইকে ডাকার চিন্তা কেন্দ্রের

নয়াদিল্লি, ১৩ মে: 'অসম্পূর্ণ' আখ্যা দিয়ে ফুকন কমিশনের রিপোর্ট বাতিল করল ইউপিএ সরকার। সংসদের দুই কক্ষেই রিপোর্টটি পেশ করে সরকার জানিয়েছে, কমিশনের সিদ্ধান্তে যুক্তির অভাব রয়েছে। তা ছাড়া, দুর্নীতির অভিযোগের ঠিকমতো তদন্তই করা হয়নি।

তহলকা-কার্ডের জেরে প্রতিরক্ষা সংক্রান্ত অভিযোগের তদন্ত করার ভার ছিল ফুকন কমিশনের উপরে। কমিশন ১৫টি প্রতিরক্ষা চুক্তি খতিয়ে দেখে ১৩টিতে 'ক্রটি' যুক্তি পেয়েছে। তবে ৪৭ পাতার রিপোর্টে প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্দেজকে ছাড় দেওয়া হয়েছে। বলা হয়েছে, ৩টি চুক্তিতে জর্জের নামই আসেনি। আর ১২টির কার্যকরীতে জর্জের কিছু করার ছিল না এবং বাকিগুলির ক্ষেত্রে তিনি জবাবদিহি কিছু করেননি। প্রসঙ্গত, তদন্ত কমিশনের প্রধান থাকাকালীন বিচারপতি এস এন ফুকন তৎকালীন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্দেজের কাছ থেকে বেশ কিছু সুযোগ-সুবিধা নিয়েছিলেন বলে অভিযোগ ওঠায় এখন ইইচই হচ্ছে।

ফুকন কমিশনের রিপোর্ট বাতিল করার সিদ্ধান্তকে ইউপিএ সরকারের

'প্রতিশোধ পরায়ণতার নজির বলে মন্তব্য করেছে বিজেপি। তাদের বক্তব্য, যে সব যুক্তিতে রিপোর্ট খারিজ করা হয়েছে, সবই ছেঁদো। জর্জকে ছাড় দেওয়াতেই ইউপিএ সরকার রিপোর্ট মানল না বলে বিজেপির দাবি। সংসদে আজ ইউপিএ সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে জানানো হয়েছে, রিপোর্টটি অসম্পূর্ণ হওয়ায় সংসদে সিদ্ধান্ত জানানোর বাধ্যবাধকতা ছিল না। কিন্তু লোকসভার স্পিকার সোমনাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের নির্দেশেই সরকার সংসদে বক্তব্য জানিয়ে দিল। কমিশনের জন্য চারটি বিচার বিষয় ঠিক করে দেওয়া হয়েছিল। কিন্তু কমিশন দুটি বিষয়ে রিপোর্ট দিয়েছে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী শ্রব মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেছেন, বিভিন্ন দিক থেকেই ফুকন কমিশনের রিপোর্ট অসম্পূর্ণ। কমিশনের তদন্ত করা ১৫টি চুক্তিই সি বি আই-কে দিয়ে তদন্ত করানোর সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে সরকার।

রিপোর্টের সঙ্গেই একটি 'নোট' পেশ করেছে সরকার। সেখানে কমিশনের কাজের 'অসম্পূর্ণতা'র কিছু নজির দেখানো হয়েছে। যেমন, ১৫টি চুক্তির মধ্যে ১৩টির ক্ষেত্রেই পদ্ধতিগত যথাযথতা মানা হয়নি বলে

জানিয়েছে কমিশন। কিন্তু ওই ১৩টি চুক্তি ফের তদন্ত করে দেখার সুপারিশ করা হয়েছে। সরকারের বক্তব্য, পূর্ণ তদন্ত করে দেখার জন্যই তো কমিশন নিয়োগ করা হয়েছিল। কাজ শেষ না করে তারা আবার তদন্তের সুপারিশ করতে গেল কেন? তা ছাড়া, পদ্ধতিগত যথাযথতার সঙ্গেই আরও অনেক প্রশ্ন আসে, যা পারস্পরের সঙ্গে জড়িত। কোনও নির্দিষ্ট প্রশ্ন খতিয়ে দেখে বাকিটা কমিশন কীভাবে এড়িয়ে গেল, সেই প্রশ্নও তুলেছে সরকার।

প্রতিরক্ষা কেলেঙ্কারির কথা তহলকা ফাঁস করে ২০০১ সালের ১৩-১৪ মার্চ। এই কেলেঙ্কারির তদন্তে ২৪ মার্চ, ২০০১ প্রথমে বেকটস্মানী কমিশন গড়া হয়। কৃতি মাস পরে ২০০২-এর ২৫ নভেম্বর বেকটস্মানী তদন্ত থেকে সরে দাঁড়ান। ফুকন কমিশন গড়া হয় ২০০৩-এর ২ জানুয়ারি। একুশ মাস পরে এই কমিশনের মেয়াদ ফুরোয় ৩ অক্টোবর, ২০০৪।

দু'দফায় দু'টি কমিশন মিলে প্রতিরক্ষা দুর্নীতির তদন্ত যে পর্বাতির মুখিক প্রসবের সামিল, তা স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর বক্তব্যে। তিনি বলেছেন, ৪১ মাস কাজ করে ৪৭ পাতার রিপোর্ট হয়। — পি টি আই

PC orders probe into Centaur sale

NEW DELHI, May 13. — Bowing to the demand of the Left parties, finance minister Mr P Chidambaram today announced an inquiry into the sell-off of Centaur Hotels in Mumbai after the CAG had passed strictures on the then NDA government over the controversial sale.

"After examining the report of the CAG in respect of the sale of two hotels, the government has decided to order an inquiry," he said amid thumping of desks in both Houses of Parliament. "The nature and scope is under consideration and will be announced in due course," he said in a brief statement.

The Opposition NDA was not present as it was boycotting both the Houses since April-end.

Mr Chidambaram's suo motu statement came days after the Left parties had given an ultimatum to the government that it should institute a CBI inquiry into the sale of the Centaur Juhu and Centaur Airport Hotels.

The BJP said the government's decision amounted to a political witch-hunt. — PTI

4 MAY 2001

THE STATESMAN

BSP threat to withdraw support to UPA govt

New Delhi: Infuriated by the CBI questioning her in a disproportionate assets case, the BSP, led by chief



Mayawati

Mayawati, on Thursday threatened in Parliament to withdraw outside support to ruling UPA unless "harassment" of a dalit was stopped immediately.

Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha immediately after the house met for the day, an agitated BSP supremo said her party might have to withdraw outside support to the Manmohan Singh government. The PM was present in the house when Mayawati raised the issue. Though the BSP has 18 MPs in the Lok Sabha, there will be no threat to the government if her party decides against extending outside support to the UPA.

Alleging that the CBI was adopting "double standards" and working at the behest of the government, she demanded that just as the CBI had questioned her in the DA case, the investigating agency should do it with Presidents of other political parties as well.

Responding to Mayawati's charges, minister of state for personnel Suresh Pachauri said that the CBI was an autonomous body and the DA and Taj Corridor cases referred by her were instituted during the NDA regime. The UPA government has not interfered with the cases which, he said, were proceeding as per supreme court directive. He made it clear that the CBI was not used for political vendetta, a charge levelled by Mayawati. PTI

CBI questions Mayawati

Asked to explain 'acquisition of property'

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation on Tuesday questioned Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati in a disproportionate assets case registered two years ago.

Officials of the CBI's Anti-Corruption Unit questioned Ms. Mayawati at her residence here for about an hour. She was asked to explain "acquisition of property in her name and in the

names of her family members," sources in the CBI said.

The CBI had registered two cases against her — Rs. 175-crore Taj corridor scam and the disproportionate assets case.

The CBI had conducted raids in Delhi and several places in Uttar Pradesh in 2003 after filing the FIR under the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The searches had revealed documents relating to purchase of property in Delhi

and parts of Uttar Pradesh between April 1, 1995 and August 29, 2003. Ms. Mayawati resigned as Chief Minister on August 27, 2003.

According to the FIR, she had several bank accounts in Delhi, a plot in Lucknow, agricultural land in Uttar Pradesh and several fixed deposits. The scrutiny of the bank accounts of her relatives revealed substantial sums, which the CBI suspected were beyond their legitimate means.

13 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

CAG picks holes in Centaur hotels' sale

New Delhi: The controversial privatisation of two Centaur hotels in Mumbai during the tenure of Arun Shourie as disinvestment minister in the NDA regime came under attack from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), which picked a number of holes in their sale. CAG said the hotels had been sold "without competition", resulting in their undervaluation.

A day after Shourie dared the government to conduct an open probe into the deals for the sale of the two hotels, the Centre tabled the CAG report. The report alleged that there were "inconsistencies" in the procedure and "relaxations and deviations" offered to the sole bidder that lowered the value of the properties.

Two days ago, finance minister P Chidambaram said in the Lok Sabha that Shourie seemed to have taken an "active interest" in the disinvestment of the Juhu hotel property to Ajit Kerkar of Tulip for Rs 153 crore. Shourie hit back, saying the minister was making it an issue based on a report by a "handpicked" former government official.

The report said, "Efforts made to balance the need and urgency to sell the properties and to obtain the best possible price from the sale were not evident." In a severe criticism of the procedure and valuation process, it said, "The sale transactions of two hotels, Juhu Centaur and Airport Centaur, were finalised on the basis of single bids without the benefit of competition. Assumptions made during the valuation of the properties and fixation of reserve price of Airport Centaur were not con-

sistent with the practice followed by the ministry in other cases. Repeated extensions and relaxations were allowed to the bidder of Juhu Centaur."

Detailing the process, including valuation and lapses by the then government, the report said, "Various relaxations allowed to the bidder and interventions by the ministry to facilitate the sale indicated inadequate efforts to mitigate the risk of transaction in a limited competent litigation scenario."

The CAG report said due to inadequate initial scrutiny of financial strengths of the bidder, the ministry had to relax several conditions and make interventions at a later stage to ensure conclusion of the sale, which cannot be viewed as a good practice. Giving details on the sale of the two hotels, CAG said expressions of interest were received in October 2000 from 20 parties for Juhu Centaur and 21 parties for Airport Centaur. In case of Juhu Centaur, three parties were disqualified while 16 withdrew, leaving a solitary bidder, M/s Tulip Hospitality Services Private Ltd in fray.

In the case of Airport Centaur, four were disqualified, 13 withdrew and the remaining four carried out due diligence exercise.

However, only one bidder, M/s Batra Hospitality Private Ltd, submitted the financial bid. Thus, from the point of financial bidding, both sales finally turned out as single bidder transactions, CAG said. PT

Pr 8 2/5
Ready for any probe: Shourie

New Delhi: Under attack in Parliament and by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) over the sale of two Centaur hotels in Mumbai, former disinvestment minister Arun Shourie on Friday said he was ready to face any inquiry that the Prime Minister or finance minister may deem fit.

"Even though CAG has taken a view contrary to the view of the government on technicality and procedure, I reiterate my offer to face any inquiry that the PM or FM may deem fit," he said. The senior BJP leader said, "The interesting feature is that the figure that was put out at some stage on the valuation of Juhu Centaur at Rs 246 crore was mysteriously brought down to Rs 101 crore finds no mention in the CAG report."

Stating that the report strained at technicalities, Shourie declined to take any query on whether he or the NDA government's privatisation policies were being targeted politically. Asked whether the statement by finance minister P Chidambaram in Parliament two days ago

that Shourie was taking "active interest" in this transaction had any political overtones, the former minister said, "I will not respond to that. The question he asked of the government," He said CAG report had two kinds of comments — one set dealing with some technical issues and the second "betrays an attempt" to paste a colour on the work that was done. PT



07 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

CAG dig at *India Shining*

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 6. — The NDA government's much touted *India Shining* media campaign came under flak as the Comptroller and Auditor General slammed it for diversion of funds and incurring unauthorised expenditure of Rs 63.23 crore.

"The ministry of finance did not obtain approval of Parliament before incurring an expenditure of Rs 63.23 crore on the media campaign," the CAG said in its report tabled in the

Parliament today. The activity, which was a new service or instrument of service, was thus unauthorised, the report stated.

Asked about the report, BJP leader Mr Jaswant Singh told reporters: "The CAG is in error. It was taken from the Rs 100 crore sanctioned and permitted by the Parliament." Mr Singh said the BJP was ready for an inquiry into it "openly and publicly, by any agency".

The finance ministry, in September 2002, had mooted a proposal for launching a media campaign for high-

lighting the benefits of economic reforms. Campaign material of two advertisement agencies styled as *India Shining* was approved in October 2003 for release to various newspapers and TV channels in three phases during October 2003, December 2003-January 2004 and from February 2004 till the model code of conduct for parliamentary polls came into effect.

As per the CAG report, the ministry incurred the expenditure through diversion of funds although this activity was not contemplated in the annual budget.

ফুকন-কাণ্ডে জর্জকেই প্যাঁচে ফেললেন প্রণব

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি ও গুয়াহাটি, ৪ মে: তহলকা কমিশনের চেয়ারম্যান বিচারপতি ফুকনকে তদন্ত চলাকালীন বায়ুসেনার বিমান ব্যবহার করতে দেওয়াই শেষ পর্যন্ত কাল হল জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের। আজ লোকসভায় স্বতঃপ্রসাদিত ভাবে বিবৃতিতে সেটাই বুঝিয়ে দিলেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। একই সঙ্গে তাঁর আজকের বিবৃতিতে আরও একটি বিষয় স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে। জর্জকে কিছু দিন আগে 'ক্লিনচিট' দিয়ে যে সংশয়ের সৃষ্টি করেছিলেন প্রণববাবু আজ নিজেই সেটি দূর করেছেন তিনি। জর্জের বিরুদ্ধে তদন্তে আর কালক্ষেপ হবে না, তাও জানিয়ে দিলেন প্রকারান্তরে।

প্রণববাবু আজ লোকসভায় বলেন, বায়ুসেনার বিমান ব্যবহারের অধিকার কোনও তদন্ত কমিশনের প্রধানের থাকে না। জর্জ প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী থাকাকালীন বিচারপতি এস এন ফুকনকে নিয়ম ভেঙে সেই অনুমতি দিয়েছিলেন। পরে সাংসদদের প্রশ্নের জবাব দেওয়ার সময়ও প্রণববাবু বুঝিয়েছেন, ফুকনের রিপোর্টই যেখানে প্রশ্নের মুখে সেখানে জর্জের বিরুদ্ধে তদন্তের কাজে টিলে দেওয়ার প্রশ্নই নেই।

বিচারপতি ফুকন অবশ্য প্রণববাবুর কথার সরাসরি কোনও জবাব দিতে চাননি। গুয়াহাটিতে তিনি বলেছেন, তদন্তের স্বার্থেই আমি উড়ান ব্যবহার করেছি। সুতরাং আমি কোনও ভুল করিনি। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারই কমিশনের দায়িত্বে, তারা প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রককে এই নির্দেশ দিতেই পারে।

সিবিআই এর মধ্যেই ডেনেলের কাছ থেকে অস্ত্র কেনাবেচা নিয়ে তদন্তেও গোয়েন্দাদের দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকায় পাঠিয়েছে। অন্য দিকে, তহলকা কেলেঙ্কারিতে আজ জয়া জেটলিকে জিজ্ঞাসাবাদ করেছে তারা। পরে জয়া বলেন, "সরকার সিবিআইয়ের উপরে প্রভাব খাটানোর চেষ্টা করছে। তবে

সিবিআই যদি নিজেদের সুনাম অনুযায়ী পক্ষপাতহীন ভাবে কাজ করে, তবে তদন্তের ফল সরকারকে খুশি করবে না।" কিছু দিনের মধ্যে জর্জকেও জেরার ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছে সিবিআই।

গুয়াহাটি থেকে স্টাফ রিপোর্টার জানাচ্ছেন, তদন্তে কোনও কোনও ক্ষেত্রে বেনিয়ম পেয়েছেন তহলকা কমিশনের চেয়ারম্যান বিচারপতি এস এন ফুকন, কিন্তু জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজের সুনাম-বিরুদ্ধ কিছুই পাননি। তবু প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীকে 'ক্লিনচিট' দিতে চাইছেন না তিনি। বলছেন, জর্জকে নিরুলুপ ঘোষণা করার অধিকার রয়েছে একমাত্র আদালতের।

কলকাতায় পড়ার সময় রাজনীতিতে হাতেখড়ি যে প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের কাছে আজ সংসদে তিনিই মুখর হন ফুকনের বিরুদ্ধে। এই নিয়ে প্রশ্নের জবাবে ফুকন বলেন, "তদন্ত-কমিশনের প্রথম চেয়ারম্যান বিচারপতি বেক্টস্বামীর আমলের নির্দেশ মেনেই প্রতিরক্ষা-সরঞ্জাম পরিদর্শনে যাওয়া স্থির করি। কমিশনের সচিব সরকারকে ব্যবস্থা নিতে বলেন। স্ত্রীকে একা রেখে যাওয়া ঠিক হবে না বলে তাঁকেও সঙ্গে নিয়েছিলাম। প্রতিরক্ষা স্পর্শকাতর বিষয়। সেখানে সরকারের অন্য দফতরের যানবাহন চলাচলের অনুমতি নেই। তাই সরকার সংশ্লিষ্ট দফতরকেই যাবতীয় ব্যবস্থা করতে বলেছে।"

05 MAY 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

04 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Lalu seeks court permission

Chandramouli

J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI: Railway Minister Lalu Prasad on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court saying he wanted to "communicate" to the judges "in confidence" his wishes and apprehensions on the composition of a Patna High Court Bench. The Bench has been constituted to hear Mr. Lalu Prasad's petition challenging the sanction to prosecute him in a disproportionate assets case.

Passing the orders on a petition filed by Rajiv Ranjan Singh "Lallan" and Sushil Modi, Janata Dal (U) and BJP MPs, seeking

the cancellation of bail to Mr. Lalu Prasad in the fodder scam cases, a Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice S.N. Variava on April 26 requested the acting Chief Justice of the Patna High Court to set up a Bench comprising Justice Aftab Alam and Justice Chandramouli Kumar Prasad to dispose of Mr. Lalu Prasad's petition in 30 days.

In his application, Mr. Lalu Prasad said the Supreme Court, while asking the High Court to constitute a Bench headed by Justice Aftab Alam, had said that the name of the other judge on the Bench would be added later

on. In the ordersheet, Mr. Justice Chandramouli Kumar Prasad was named as the second Judge.

Mr. Lalu Prasad said the first four lines of the relevant part of the order were perfectly accurate "but what follows thereafter is likely to create an impression that the applicant/respondent No. 5's [Lalu Prasad's] senior counsel [Ram Jethmalani] consented to the Bench being constituted here."

He said that it was true that his counsel did not object when one of the two names (Mr. Justice Alam) was mentioned. His

counsel also did not object when it was suggested that the other name would be found out later. "In fact, neither the advocate on record nor the senior counsel appearing for me could have had any objection to this course of view in the fact that certain facts were not known to them," Mr. Lalu Prasad said.

In his prayer before the court, Mr. Lalu Prasad said that "if the respondent's wishes and apprehensions in the matter have any relevance, he is prepared to communicate them in confidence in the chambers and not in open court."

Denel: Why the boom may end in a whimper

**Srinjoy Chowdhury
in New Delhi**

May 2. — Denel, the South African arms supplier, may or may not have hired a Channel Islands firm to influence the defence ministry to buy anti-materiel rifles — the CBI is investigating that. But the question being asked is why such “influencing” was necessary when India specifically wanted to buy the weapon and had been using it since 1999.

This is the story of the Indian Army's tryst with Denel.

The need for an anti-material rifle was felt in 1998. It would be needed to destroy high-value targets such as fuel dumps,

planes on the ground and radar equipment. They could be used instead of mortars which are accurate.

Two firms, KVP Tula of Russia and Denel, were shortlisted. The Army held trials in 1999 in an infantry division sector in March 1999 with defence ministry's consent and while the Russian outfit fell short, Denel met most of the requirements. There was a problem with its range — the two varieties both fell a few hundred metres short, but a defence ministry clearance was obtained as its performance was considered good enough. A contract was signed for 100 rifles and 1 lakh rounds of ammunition in July 1999. This was during the Kargil War.



Two years later, the defence ministry came up with a second request for purchase of another 100 rifles. While negotiations were going on, the need for a third consignment came up. This was in late 2001 and the contract for both consignments was signed in March 2002. At this time, these

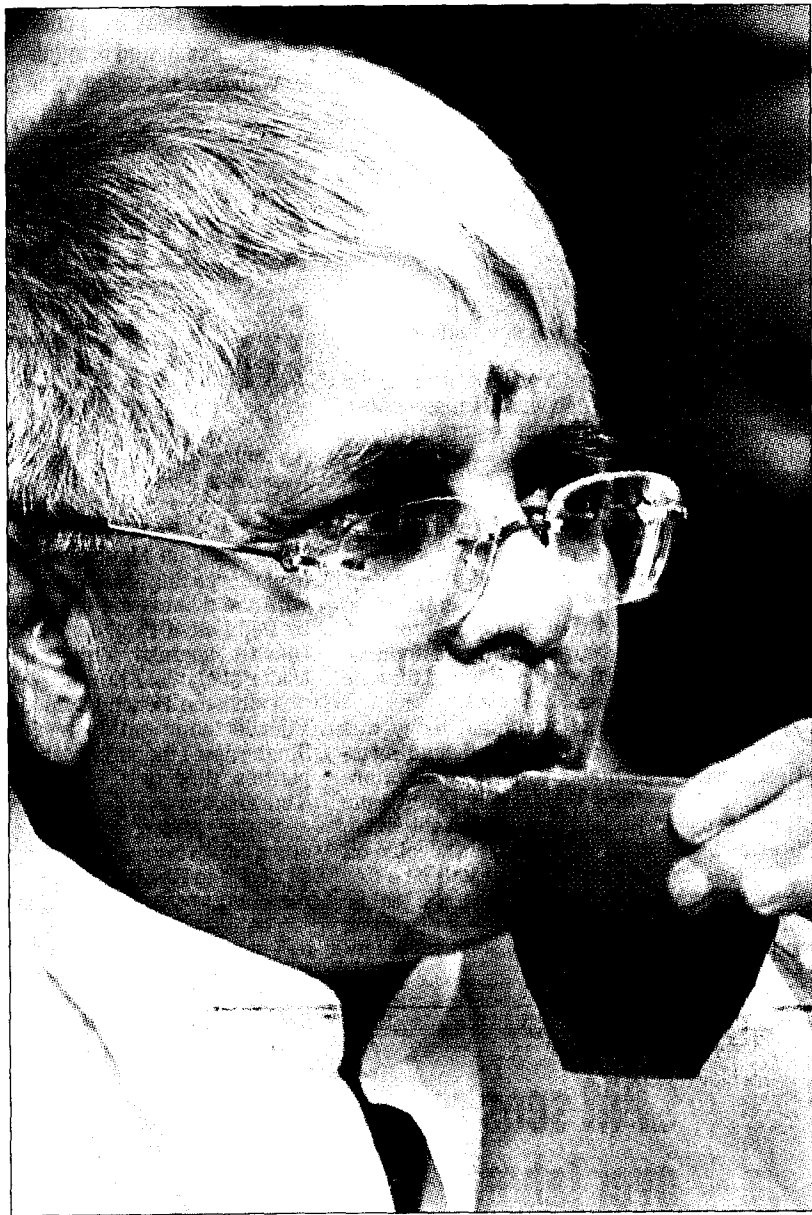
weapons were not authorised for all infantry battalions, but they were seen as ‘sector stores’ for battalions on the LoC for busting bunkers on the other side.

By then, there was no question about the quality of the weapon and its necessity. Early in 2003, the Army spelt out a requirement for more anti-material rifles. By then the new defence procurement procedures were in place and India asked Denel for 200 rifles, 100,000 rounds of ammunition and transfer of technology. But Denel said it would provide the technology so that Indian firms could manufacture the stuff here only if the defence ministry purchased more than 200 rifles. Denel wanted to sell 700-800

rifles, some in a semi-knocked down condition. This, the Cabinet Committee on Security accepted in principle late in 2003.

South African newspaper reports said the Channel Islands firm gave a copy of the secret minutes of the price negotiating committee in May 2003 to Denel. This was for the purchase of 200 rifles and 100,000 rounds of ammunition as well as transfer of technology. But defence sources wondered why the firm would have to do that as Denel officials were present at the meeting. “The meeting was attended by the vendor to clarify certain issues,” a source confirmed. Denel officials would know exactly what took place at the meeting.

Court charges against Lalu are fodder for Opposition



Suman K. Shrivastava & HTC
Ranchi/New Delhi, April 25

ALMOST A decade after the CBI lodged a case against Lalu Prasad Yadav, a CBI special court today framed charges against him after finding him prima facie guilty of hatching a conspiracy to withdraw over Rs 37 crore fraudulently from the Chaibasa treasury.

The CBI had submitted the chargesheet against Lalu and 69 others years ago. The framing of charges, however, was delayed as the sanction to prosecute one of the accused, Rajo Singh, arrived very late.

The court charges further armed NDA members, who had been buying for Lalu's blood ever since he alleged that Narendra Modi's supporters had attacked him in Gujarat. Led by the BJP, the Opposition raised the twin issues vociferously in both Houses of Parliament and demanded the railway minister's resignation.

Lalu was the chief minister of Bihar when Rs 37 crore was withdrawn from the Chaibasa treasury, ostensibly to buy cattle fodder for distribution among the poor. He appeared in three Ranchi courts — headed by Uma Shankar Prasad Sinha, Sanjay Prasad and A.K. Sengupta — and pleaded not guilty, saying he had been implicated as part of a conspiracy. Judge Sinha rejected his petition and framed corruption charges against him and the other accused.

Judge Sinha's court will now examine witnesses, to be produced by the CBI and the accused, before delivering a judgment.

In Delhi, the Opposition forced an adjournment of the Rajya Sabha during the morning and the post-lunch sessions. Business was put on hold till Tuesday morning, but the Lok Sabha managed to resume late in the afternoon. Lalu made a statement on the

Corruption HC 1 26/4

SCAM STATS

Rs 450 crore	Total amount involved in scam. Not much recovered
179 accused	including a senior govt officer. Some arrested, some made to surrender before designated CBI courts
2 truckloads	of papers related to case involving ex-CMs Laloo and J. Mishra, and 68 others
Rs 37 crore	taken in 3 months, ex-chief secy had told a court in 2002
459 witnesses	Three of them have died during the investigations. CBI's chargesheets in both Bihar and Jharkhand

Gujarat rail accident but the Opposition walked out.

Earlier, the two benches traded barbs over Lalu's charge that his car had been stoned near the accident site. RJD members demanded the dismissal of the Modi government while the BJP said the allegation was false and demanded Lalu's removal instead.

Amid the shouting, Speaker Somnath Chatterjee first admonished the members and then remarked that they could go on shouting till they were exhausted. He adjourned the House twice.

Lalu then made an appearance in the House. His statement on the accident, however, went unheard in the din. Opposition members walked out but returned once the railway minister had finished his speech.

MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2005

Denel and defence procurements

News that a South African armaments manufacturer paid commissions to help clinch a contract to sell anti-materiel rifles (or bunker busters) to the Indian Army has refocussed attention on a problem that refuses to go away – the role of middlemen in illegally influencing defence procurements. Two South African newspapers have alleged that in 2003 Denel paid Varas Associates, a shadowy company registered in the Isle of Man, a 'commission' of 12.75 per cent (approximating Rs.20 crore), for helping to secure the deal for the first batch of 200 anti-materiel rifles. This information, which has emerged at a time when Denel's operations are under the scanner of South Africa's anti-corruption unit (nicknamed the Scorpions), raises grave questions. The Centre has done the right thing by referring the alleged payoffs to the Criminal Bureau of Investigation for appropriate action. Was there a violation of Defence Ministry's rules on arms agents, which were notified in 2001? Secondly, is there any truth in the allegation that Varas Associates illegally procured secret Defence Ministry documents to advance Denel's chances of bagging the contract? Learning lessons from an unhappy past, the Government must ensure, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has emphasised, that *l'affaire* Denel does not slow down or derail the process of defence procurements. There can be little doubt that the controversy has stalled the Army's plans to acquire 1,200 anti-materiel rifles and put "on hold" other ongoing deals with Denel. Big-ticket purchases, especially of 155 mm guns (self-propelled, towed, and tracked) needed by the Army, cannot be delayed beyond a point. While it is vital that the CBI conducts its probe professionally, fairly, and swiftly, should *prima facie* evidence be found against Denel, it must be ruled out of contention.

Controversies such as this will continue to dog India's defence acquisitions until a larger issue – the role of middlemen or recipients of 'commissions' and other types of secret payment that cannot really be distinguished from bribes – is resolved. This issue, which came on political centre-stage with Bofors, has been spotlighted by the Tehelka sting operation and, more recently, by the allegation that a shadowy Panamanian company was contracted to assist in securing the sale of Mirage 2000 aircraft to India. The 2001 registration system for arms agents, which replaced the "no agents clause" that supposedly became operational in 1989 following the Bofors expose, was intended to serve the cause of transparency. With hardly anyone coming forward to register, the claimed reform has been a non-starter. Led from the front by a Prime Minister who has an enviable reputation for personal integrity, the Government must reflect deeply on the issues at stake, clean up the stables, and get the defence acquisitions system absolutely right. Getting swiftly to the bottom of the Denel affair is vital for the health of defence procurements and for clean, corruption-free governance.

25 APR 2005

THE HINDU

'CBI probe will demoralise forces'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BY GEORGE

NEW DELHI, April 23. — The former defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, today said that the proposed CBI inquiry into the corruption allegations in the purchase of rifles from a South African firm will demoralise the armed forces.

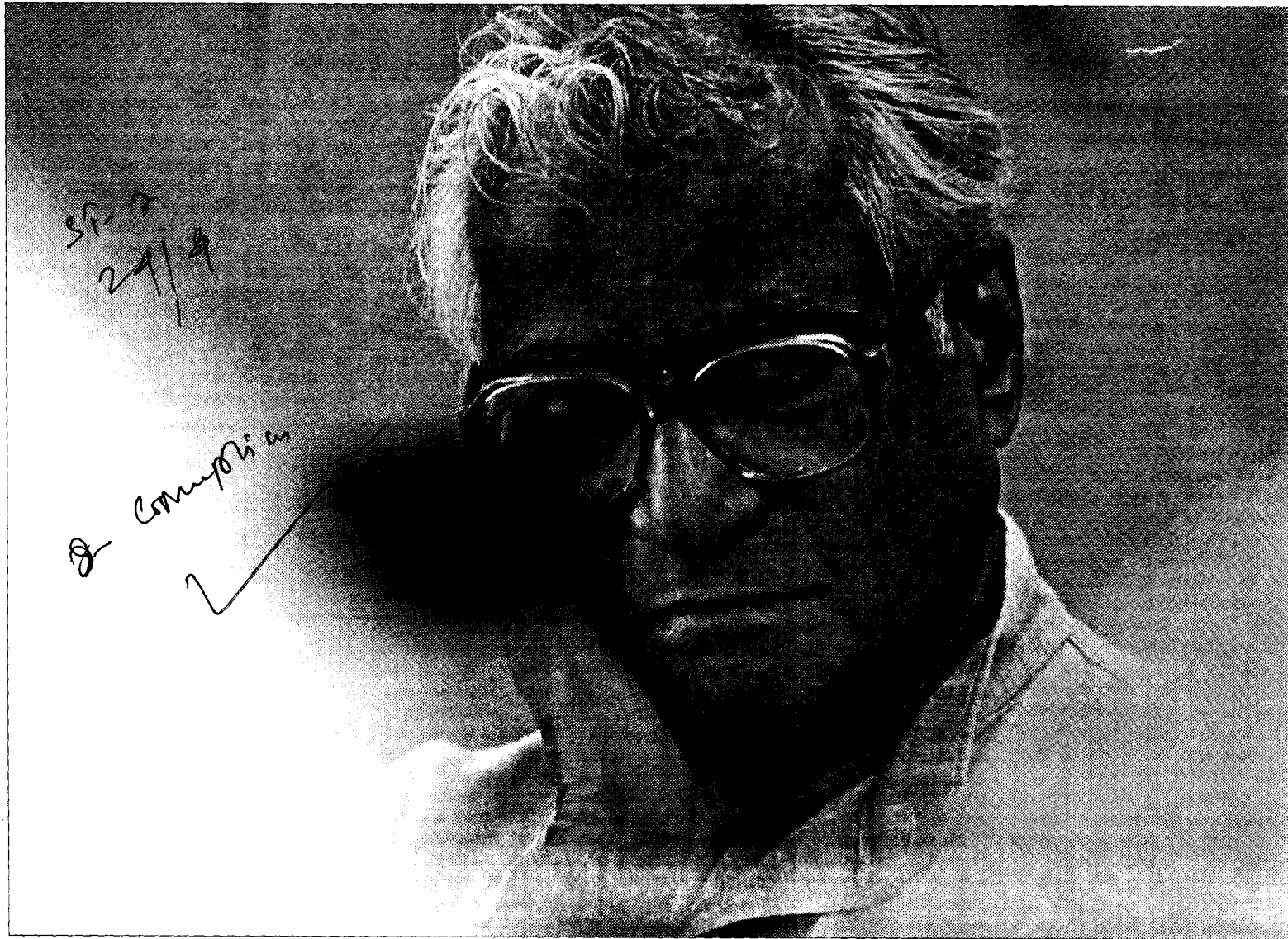
Mr Fernandes expressed his resentment over the CBI probe, "When army officers will have to appear before the CBI, it would demoralise them".

He also accused the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, of spreading lies about corruption in defence procurements. "No defence minister can refuse the demand for arms by the Army."

Mr Fernandes lashed out at the UPA chairperson, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, saying that "national security concerns are beyond the pale of her understanding" and the Congress was out to defame and demoralise the armed forces and defence ministry officials.

Speaking at a function, he said the Congress won elections to state assemblies in Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal because Mrs Gandhi "scream" about coffins and the blood of martyrs, a reference to the "coffin scam issue". Conceding there were some bad eggs in the armed forces, he said the system was such that they would get punished and the punishment was very harsh. On the other hand, there were people "who are illiterate on matters of security and defence of the country". He said these people wanted to weaken the nation's security. He said that these people, afraid of attacking the army, target the minister without having any idea of the procurement processes and the requirements of the armed forces.

Also attacking the



Former defence minister Mr George Fernandes in a pensive mood at the seminar. In New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

Comptroller and Auditor General, he said "his point is that he knows better than the armed forces (about) what they need, when and from where, and how much they should procure."

Bringing up the Tehelka episode, he said the journalists were actually criminals who deliberately harmed the armed forces. Procurement of weaponry was pushed back by two years, he said.

'GROSS MISUSE' OF INVESTIGATING AGENCY: BJP

NEW DELHI, April 23. — Stung by the defence deal allegations and the CBI probe which has been ordered, the BJP today hit back at the UPA government. It raked up corruption cases involving Satish Sharma, Siby Soren, Lalu Prasad and Punjab chief minister Captain Amrinder Singh.

Claiming that the Centre is misusing the CBI for political gains, the BJP leader, Mr Arun Jaitley, said: "The party (BJP) is seriously concerned about the gross misuse

of CBI by the UPA government".

The track record of the UPA government in the context of subverting investigation procedures and misusing the CBI against political opponents is glaring, he said referring to various cases where the Centre allegedly gave directions to the elite investigating agency.

Referring to the South African gun deal reports, Mr Jaitley said the government initiated the CBI inquiry without registering an

FIR. In this case, an offence can only be said to have been committed if either kick-backs have been received by public servants or have been paid to the third parties at the behest of public servants, the BJP leader said. The Congress government was doing all this because of its embarrassment over the Phukan report, which has cleared Mr George Fernandes of all allegations in relation to 15 defence deals, Mr Jaitley added. — SNS

24 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

25 defence deals under CBI scanner

Srinjoy Chowdhury in New Delhi

April 19. — The CBI will investigate 25 defence deals that the Vajpayee government was involved in during the Kargil war and immediately after. The total expenditure on the deals: Rs 2,000 crore.

The defence ministry has already handed over the documentation of the deals to the CBI. A senior government official said there has been talk of a 'clean chit' to Mr George Fernandes, the defence minister for most of the period of the Vajpayee government, but that can hardly be possible if the CBI is investigating 25

deals struck at that time. They include:

- The purchase of bullet-proof jackets worth Rs 51.65 crore, multipurpose boots worth Rs 30.37 crore, gloves for Rs 1.6 crore, special woollen socks worth Rs 5.86 crore, sleeping bags for Rs 20.69 crore and special clothing and mountaineering equipment worth Rs 95.15 crore.

- The deals relating to the Bofors guns are: illuminating ammunition at Rs 52.47 crore, spares for the guns at Rs 97.65 crore, red phosphorous ammunition at Rs 55.1 crore and tyres for the towing vehicles at Rs 55 lakh.

- Weapon systems bought include sniper rifles at Rs 9.54 crore and

automatic grenade launchers at Rs 52.13 crore. The defence ministry also bought special ammunition for 40mm L-70 guns at Rs 166.44 crore, assault rifle ammunition for Rs 9.2 crore and universal variable time fuses at Rs 8.59 crore.

- Other equipment included tyres for Rs 3.37 crore, spares for combat engineer tractors at Rs 3.18, surveillance radars for Rs 9.86, charging and generating sets for Rs 28.15 crore and underslung cargo nets for Rs 8.65 crore.

Five other major transactions that have been discussed in the past are related to the ones for which Mr Fernandes has already been criticised.

J&K Dy CM walks out

JAMMU, April 19. — The meeting of the J&K Cabinet was today postponed after a walkout by Deputy Chief Minister Mr Mangat Ram Sharma following verbal duel between him and Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed over alleged use of "improper" language by Mr Sharma while talking to the chief secretary. — PTI

The issue does not relate to the procedures of purchase during the war. The UPA government believes that this 'telescoped' purchasing policy that was necessary during the Kargil war was also continued after the cease-fire. This is where the NDA government can be cornered, an official said.

George deals back under govt scanner

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 13

THE HEAT is not yet off George Fernandes for his arms deals as defence minister, even though the Centre had declared that no rules had been violated by some of his ministry's purchases during the Kargil war.

Today, the Centre filed another affidavit against Fernandes, promising "strict action" if required. It also referred to the CBI 20 arms deals that drew adverse comments from the CAG in its 2001 report. That leaves 25 purchases under investigation, including the five cases mentioned in the ministry's original affidavit filed on March 14.

The government insists that the new affidavit has nothing to do with the controversy over the widely reported "clean chit" to Fernandes in the original one. It says it is acting on the basis of what happened in the court on March 14, when attorney-general Milton K. Banerjee agreed to look into the issue and file additional affidavits if necessary.

The AG had earlier told the court that his juniors had gone through the relevant papers and found nothing objectionable. But after the amicus stated that the government's affidavit was "evasive", he agreed to look at the matter once again.

The new affidavit said the government "is now exploring whether the facts reveal a prima facie case of commission of criminal offence under law as heavy financial losses in excess of Rs 2,000 crore as per the CAG report were caused, in addition to the fact that the equipment did not materialise at the time of its need".

It said the government was committed to initiating stern action against "officials/authorities...including the then defence

MONEY MATTERS



Deals being probed include:

Special ammunition for 40 mm L-70 guns: Rs 166.44 cr

Spares for 155 mm guns: Rs 97.65 cr

Spl clothing and mountaineering equipment: Rs 95.15 cr

155mm red phosphorous ammunition: Rs 55.1 cr

Illuminating ammunition for 155 mm gun: Rs 52.47 cr

Automatic grenade launchers: Rs 52.13 cr

Bullet-proof jackets: Rs 51 cr

minister, if it is found that the excuse of Kargil was taken to make purchases with a motive of personal benefit..."

It also said: "The CAG report has brought out that the modified (defence) procurement procedure was used to push through deals in the name of Kargil long after hostilities had ceased and if the deals were to be scrutinised in normal circumstances, these would not have been entered into, thereby suggesting serious misconduct on the part of the officials/authorities in the government, including the then defence minister. The ministry has, therefore, decided to refer the balance 20 cases which are yet to be vetted by the CAG to the CBI for investigation."

It is apparent that the government is making a distinction between the applicability of the modified DPP to meet wartime requirements and the deals finalised after the war without reverting to peace-time procedures.

14 APR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

CBI swoops on

Chautala property

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, April 7. — The CBI today raided properties of former Haryana chief minister Mr Om Prakash Chautala and his sons at a number of places in Chandigarh.

The properties that were raided included a newly-purchased bungalow of Mr Chautala in Sector 9 of the city. The house of Congress MLA from Palwal, Mr Karan Singh Dalal, was also raided by the CBI officials. Interestingly, Mr Dalal was one of worst critics of the Chautala government and criticised it both in and outside the Assembly.

The raids were conducted in connection to a recruitment scam of government school teachers while Mr Chautala was the chief minister. He is accused of changing the list of 4,000 selected candidates and replacing it with his personal favourites.

Mr Dalal said the CBI might have searched his house since he was most vocal on the issue. Another raid was conducted at the residence of an IAS officer, Mr Harbakash Singh. CBI officials said that the

raids could continue. The former chief minister was still admitted to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), undergoing treatment after fracturing his leg 20 days ago.

The Supreme Court had ordered the CBI to probe the recruitment scam after Indian Administrative Service (IAS) official Sanjeev Kumar, a former primary education director, had petitioned the court. He had said that Mr Chautala had threatened him with "dire consequences" if he did not "substitute" the list of those selected with the one he had supplied.

However, Mr Sanjeev Kumar recently raised fingers about the intention of the CBI about taking the case to the logical conclusion. He alleged that sometime ago CBI officials approached him through touts asking for bribe.

Meanwhile, Haryana chief minister Mr Bhupinder Singh Hooda today asserted that the CBI raids on INLD chief Mr Om Prakash Chautala's home were not prompted by the desire for political vendetta. "The raids were not conducted under any political pressure."



CBI officials come out of former Haryana chief minister Mr Om Prakash Chautala's residence in Chandigarh after conducting a raid on Thursday. — PTI

CBI searches premises of government officials

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 6. In the second countrywide anti-corruption drive this year, the Central Bureau of Investigation today carried out searches at the premises of senior government officials and registered cases against 85 persons, including 53 public servants, mainly for allegedly amassing property disproportionate to their known sources of income.

Addressing a press conference at the agency's headquarters here, the CBI Director, U.S. Mishra, said raids were carried out at 144 places and were spread over in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bihar, Hyderabad, Karnataka and Ahmedabad. In these cases, CBI officials have detected

moveable and immovable assets, cash, jewellery and other valuables worth Rs. 11.16 crores, Mr. Mishra said.

As a result of today's raids, he said, 30 cases were registered against 28 public servants for being in possession of assets disproportionate to their known and legitimate sources of income. The officials hail from departments such as Customs, Excise, Coal India, Posts and Telegraph, State Bank of India, United India Insurance, State Bank of India, Airports Authority of India, FCI, BSNL, MTNL, Bank of Baroda, Trifed, and Air India. The cases were registered against Section 13(1)(e) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Among the government officials booked by the CBI's searches are a Deputy Manager

of Food Corporation of India (FCI), Ferozpur, Punjab, the Project Officer of BCCL, Dhanbad, a Divisional Engineer, Telecom of BSNL Dumka, a Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax, Hyderabad, a Joint Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai, a General Manager of MTNL, Mumbai, an Executive Engineer, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of CCL, Ranchi, nine public servants of Post and Telegraph Department of Allahabad who allegedly misappropriated NSCs and KVPs worth Rs. 2.79 crores during May 2003 to December 2004.

A trap laid

Mr. Mishra said a trap was laid against Deputy Collector of Daman in the last week and further probe revealed that during the

last three years of service the officer had amassed assets valuing Rs. 15 lakhs.

In Delhi, a Deputy Commissioner of Police, posted in Supreme Court Security was booked for having assets worth Rs. 82.55 lakhs and a Director (Finance), Ministry of Urban Development, was also booked for possession of disproportionate assets worth Rs. 47.68 lakhs.

Mr. Mishra said that during January to March this year, 45 corrupt officials had been trapped by the CBI while allegedly accepting bribes. The agency had mounted surveillance against officials of "doubtful integrity and bad image." During the period, the agency also filed 147 chargesheets and the conviction rate remained at 70 per cent.

07 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Kalam conscience cry against horse-trading

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 21

MORE USED to heart-to-heart talks with children, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam today tried the same frankness with a crowd of seasoned politicians to try and awaken their conscience.

Speaking in Parliament's Central Hall, the President ticked off political parties for "trading" in seats in legislatures to capture or retain power, and thereby creating doubts in the public eye about the system.

Kalam's speech was meant to felicitate Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, HRD minister Arjun Singh and Opposition leaders L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh, who had just won the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award. But it soon took a different turn.



**Trading of seats —
through dubious means
— has created doubts**

Abdul Kalam

He used strong words and seemed to be referring to the developments in Jharkhand (where the BJP and Congress fought over independent MLAs) and Goa (where BJP legislators were lured to resign their seats to get around the anti-defection law and help the Congress gain majority).

"Let us be honest," Kalam said. "The arithmetical compulsions of

incremental numbers and the alleged tradability of certain legislative seats — won perhaps through means allegedly dubious and undemocratic — have created doubts about our democratic system in the public eye."

He said when politics degraded itself to political adventurism, the nation would be on the road to disaster. "Let us not risk it," he said. "It is time all of us did introspection."

Kalam wanted parties to shift from "political politics" to "developmental politics". As he put it, while one party would promise to make India a developed nation in 15 years, another would unveil a strategy to achieve it in a shorter period.

The Prime Minister, accepting the award, rued the decline in the general atmosphere and standard of debate in Parliament.

SC Bench approached in fodder case

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, March 15. — A Supreme Court Bench caused a flutter today by disclosing that it had been approached by "someone from the High Court" at Patna for changing the trial judge hearing the multi-crore fodder scam case against railway minister Mr Lalu Prasad.

Mr Justice SN Variava, heading a three-judge Bench also comprising justices Mr AR Lakshmanan and Mr SH Kapadia, said: "Yesterday someone contacted me from the High Court and indirectly wanted to know whether the trial judge can be changed."

Senior advocate Mr Mukul Rohtagi, appearing for MPs Mr Rajiv Ranjan and Mr Sushil Modi, who had sought

cancellation of the bails granted to Mr Prasad in the fodder scam case and former Bihar chief minister Mrs Rabri Devi in the disproportionate assets case, said he had expressed apprehension during the last hearing that the trial judge might be changed. The gameplan was "to promote him and shift him out" as political heavyweights were involved in the fodder scam and disproportionate assets cases, he said.

Mr Justice Variava said: "Now it will not happen." This view was echoed by Solicitor-General Mr GE Vahanvati, who appeared for the CBI. The earlier prosecutor would continue, he said.

Meanwhile, the president of the Income Tax Appellate Authority (ITAT) at Patna, which is accused of hurriedly dismissing the Income-Tax department's claims of nearly Rs 40



laks against Mr Prasad and Mrs Rabri Devi, filed its reply.

The court, which also received the reply of the CBI in the matter, adjourned the hearing to 12 April.

In the wake of allegations that the



UPA government was trying to "dilute" the fodder scam and Income-Tax cases against Mr Prasad and Mrs Rabri Devi, the Supreme Court had on 22 February sought "every possible" detail of the proceedings in these cases.

It had also directed the CBI to place on record as to how and why the long-standing public prosecutor in the Rs 900-crore fodder scam cases at Patna and Ranchi was replaced with Mr Oma Shankar Mishra.

On the allegations that "specific officers" were posted on deputation at the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal at Patna to dismiss the Income-Tax

demand for nearly Rs 40 lakh from Mrs Rabri Devi and Mr Prasad, the Bench had asked the tribunal president to give details in sealed cover within three weeks as to why such deputation was made and also the daily order sheets of the tribunal in the cases.

The Bench wanted to know as to whether Mr RK Tyagi was sent on deputation for two weeks to ITAT at Patna and also "why and when" the other two officers Mr Mohan Raj and Mr MK Sarkar were posted at ITAT.

The PIL filed by BJP leader Mr Sushil Kumar Modi and JD-U leader Rajiv Ranjan alias Lallan had sought cancellation of the bail of Mr Lalu Prasad and Mrs Rabri Devi for interfering in the fodder scam and disproportionate assets cases against them.

Another report on page 4

Plot judge plea rejected

CASTLE
F-13 2/21/05
A STAFF REPORTER

SC throws out revision petition against Salt Lake evict order

Calcutta, Feb. 23: The Supreme Court today rejected the revision petition filed by former judge Bhagabati Prosad Banerjee in response to the apex court's cancellation of allotment of a plot to him in Salt Lake from the chief minister's quota under "inappropriate circumstances" during Jyoti Basu's reign.

On November 19, 2004, the Supreme Court asked the state government to take over the 3.5 cottah plot in FD Block after paying the cost of construction of the house to the judge. If he wanted the market value, it would have to be auctioned. The court gave the state six months to complete the process.

The apex court had held that the former high court

judge had misused his judicial power to get the plot, describing it as a "nexus between duty and interest".

Banerjee had moved a division bench of Justices S.N. Variava and H.K. Sema last December, pleading for revision of the order on the ground that his case had been misrepresented in the court.

The judges turned down his plea and as his revision petition was heard in their chamber, there was no scope for argument. "I heard the news of (its) dismissal in the morning and I have nothing to say on it. I have not yet decided on the next course of action," Banerjee said.

His well-wishers, however, said the former judge would file a curative petition as a last-ditch effort to save his property. But legal experts see little wisdom in the move.

A curative petition allows a judgment to be "cured" if it is established that defects had crept in due to various factors.

The apex court will hold a hearing on another aspect of the case on March 7. It will take up a clarification petition filed by Dipak Ghosh and Tarak Singh, Trinamul Congress leaders whose public interest litigation had prompted the court to pass the order against Banerjee, asking why

the other judges who got plots from the chief minister's quota will be spared.

In the first week of March, the apex court is also expected to hear a separate public interest litigation filed by All India Legal Aids Forum — an organisation of the Supreme Court and high court judges and lawyers — on allotment of land in Salt Lake.

The forum has sought clarifications on the criteria of getting a plot from the chief minister's quota.

As the legal battle continued in Delhi, the state began the process of auctioning Banerjee's two-storey house. The urban development department, which deals with land in Salt Lake, had offered Banerjee Rs 8.19 lakh, but he refused, saying the amount was far lower than the market value.

Why was PP in fodder scam case changed, asks SC

Seeks Details Of Cases Against Lalu, Rabri

28/2
C. P. Mohan
G. P. Mohan

New Delhi: In the wake of allegations that the UPA Government was trying to "dilute" the fodder scam and income-tax cases against railway minister Lalu Prasad and Bihar CM Rabri Devi, the supreme court on Tuesday sought "every possible" detail of proceedings in these cases. A bench comprising Justice S N Variava, Justice A R Lakshmanan and Justice S H Kapadia directed the CBI to place on record as to how and why the long-standing public prosecutor in the Rs 900-crore fodder scam cases at Patna and Ranchi was replaced with Oma Shankar Mishra.

On the allegations that "specific officers" were posted on deputation at the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) at Patna to dismiss income-tax demand of nearly Rs 40 lakhs from Rabri Devi and Prasad, the bench asked the tribunal president to give details in sealed cover within three weeks as to why such deputation was made and also the daily order sheets of the tribunal in the cases.

The bench wanted to know as to whether R K Tyagi was sent on deputation for two weeks to ITAT at Patna and also "why and when" the other two officers Mohan Raj and M K Sarkar were posted at ITAT. The PIL

filed by BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi and JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan alias Lallan had sought cancellation of the bail of Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi for interfering in the fodder scam and disproportionate assets cases against them.



Appearing for the petitioner, senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi said "the prosecutor in the fodder scam case was supplanted at the instance of a very important accused who is part of the UPA Government."

Rohtagi said since the new PP took over, "he has done nothing but taken adjournments in the cases before the trial courts." He also expressed apprehension of the petitioners that there was a move now by the government to replace the Special Judge trying the fodder scam cases. Opposing this, Solicitor

General G E Vahanvati said the government could not transfer a trial court judge as it was a matter exclusively in the jurisdiction of the high court at Patna.

When Rohtagi persisted with the apprehension, the bench said "bring it to our notice when such a transfer takes place. We will deal with it then." The CBI, which probed fodder scam cases against Prasad as well as wealth case against him and Bihar CM Rabri Devi, has termed the petition in the supreme court seeking cancellation of their bail as "politically motivated."

The supreme court had on October 1 issued notices to Prasad, Rabri Devi, CBI and Central Board of Direct Taxes on the petition filed by BJP leader Sushil Modi and JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lallan' seeking cancellation of the bail of the accused on the ground that they have been interfering with the probe and trial. It was alleged that since the new government, of which RJD is a coalition partner, has come to power at the Centre, concerted efforts were made to scuttle the probe and trial in the fodder scam cases by changing the investigating officers and public prosecutors as Lalu Prasad is a key accused in the scam. Agencies

23 FEB 2005

PM for state funding of elections

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BANGALORE, Feb. 12. — Dr Manmohan Singh today called for collective mobilisation of will and a broad consensus to fight corruption. Underscoring the need for a national consensus to ensure greater transparency in financing of political parties and spending on elections, the Prime Minister said issues like state funding of elections should be on the national agenda against corruption.

Interacting with the media at Bangalore before leaving for New Delhi after a two-day visit to the state, he said corruption prevailed in many walks of life due to factors such as irregularities of economy and granting of industrial and import licences. The government had dealt effectively to streamline these sectors to ensure that such practices become a thing of the past. Efforts were being made to introduce a broad tax system so that scope for unscrupulous bureaucrats indulging in corruption could be reduced.

Dr Singh said other causes for corruption included providing finance to political parties which paved the way for black money. A national consensus was the need of the hour to ensure greater transparency and help clean politics of "the curse of corruption".

"Financing political parties is a major source of generation of black income in our country. No single party can say that it can deal with the problem by itself and, therefore, there has to be a national consensus," he said.

"Some measures have been taken but we have large areas where action is still called for and it requires a collective mobilisation of the will of the nation

EC move on riot CDs

PATNA/NEW DELHI, Feb. 12. — Seeking to chasten the RJD for screening CDs containing footage of the Gujarat riots, the Election Commission today asked the ruling party of Bihar to explain the factual position by 7 p.m. today. The RJD expressed its inability to do so saying both its national and state presidents were pre-occupied with campaigning.

— SNS & Agencies

■ Details on page 10

and a broad national consensus to push this process forward."

"I would be the last one to deny that corruption is a problem in the country," Dr Singh said.

Earlier at a function in Mysore, he said his government was committed to introducing National Employment Guarantee Programme for the benefit of backward areas. After inaugurating the Rs 2-crore Dasoha Bhavan at Suttur, he said the government was in the process of implementing it.

Indo-Pak relations

On confidence-building measures with Pakistan, Dr Singh said India would approach the composite dialogue with Islamabad with "utmost sincerity."

Hopeful on Nepal

Dr Singh described the developments in Nepal as a setback to democracy and hoped that the country would move in the direction of multi-party democracy.

■ UPA will last its full term: PM, page 7

Former IMD chief arrested

By Our Staff Reporter

Corruption
NEW DELHI, FEB. 5. S.K. Srivastav, former Director-General of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday for alleged criminal misconduct and for possessing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. He has been remanded to 10 days police custody for further probe.

As part of a nationwide drive against corruption, the CBI raided on Tuesday the house of Mr. Srivastav, who recently resigned as Director-General of the IMD. It conducted another raid at Mr. Srivastav's house on Friday, during which they seized papers pertaining to his mobile and immovable assets and other documents.

CBI officials said that a woman was employed in different names by two companies from 1998 to 2003 allegedly at Mr. Srivastav's instance, despite her not being qualified for the posts. These firms were handling some projects sanctioned by the IMD obtained allegedly with the help of Mr. Srivastav.

Since Mr. Srivastav and another official were "instrumental" in awarding contracts to these companies, they allegedly accepted various favours. The CBI alleged that the two officials went out of the way to award contracts to another company, in which the daughter of Mr. Srivastav worked. During 2002-04, allegedly at his instance, equipment worth over Rs. 1 lakh were bought from different companies, some of which were being run by the relatives of a former employee of the IMD.

During the raid at Mr. Srivastav's residence, the CBI reco-



S.K. Srivastava, former Director-General of Indian Meteorological Department, outside the Patiala House Courts in New Delhi on Saturday.

vered documents showing his property for Rs. 31 lakhs. Later, he was arrested and produced before a Delhi court, which remanded him to 10 days police

custody. The CBI officials also said that Mr. Srivastav had made at least 28 visits abroad. They were probing why he went to these places.

তিন টেলিকম অফিসার সাসপেন্ড

কেবল কেলেঙ্কারিতে নয়ছয় ৪০০ কোটি

নির্মাল্য মুখোপাধ্যায়

টেলিকম বিভাগে কেবল পাতা নিয়ে প্রায় ৪০০ কোটি টাকার কেলেঙ্কারি ফাঁস করেছে সি বি আই। ওই কেলেঙ্কারিতে বি এস এন এলের ২২ জন পদস্থ অফিসার প্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে যুক্ত বলে অভিযোগ। তাঁদের মধ্যে চার জনের বিরুদ্ধে দুর্নীতির মামলা করেছে সি বি আই। তিন জনকে সাসপেন্ড করেছে টেলিকম বিভাগ।

কিছু অসাধু ঠিকাদার সংস্থা টেলিকম বিভাগের ওই কেবল কেলেঙ্কারিতে জড়িত। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের ৫৫ জন ঠিকাদারকে বেআইনি ভাবে কেবল পাতার বরাত দেন অভিযুক্ত টেলিকম অফিসারেরা। ১৯৯৭-২০০১ সালের মধ্যে ওই বরাত দেওয়া হয়। বিষয়টি টেলিকম বিভাগের ভিজিলায় দফতরকেও জানানো হয়েছে।

২০০২ সালে কেলেঙ্কারির বিষয়টি সি বি আইয়ের নজরে আসে। তদন্তে নেমে দু'বছরের মধ্যেই পুরো চক্র ফাঁস করতে সমর্থ হয় তারা। তদন্তের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতেই পদস্থ টেলিকম অফিসারদের বিরুদ্ধে মামলা করা হচ্ছে। আপাতত যে-সব অফিসারের বিরুদ্ধে দুর্নীতির মামলা হয়েছে, তাঁরা সকলেই কলকাতার বাসিন্দা এবং কলকাতা টেলিফোনের সঙ্গে যুক্ত। শীঘ্রই আরও কয়েক জন অফিসারের বিরুদ্ধে মামলা করা হবে বলে সি বি আই সূত্রের খবর।

কলকাতা টেলিফোনের মুখপাত্র সলিলকুমার ভাদুড়ি বলেন, “বিষয়টি পুরো না-জেনে কিছু বলতে পারব না।” সি বি আইয়ের দুর্নীতি দমন শাখার কলকাতা দফতর জানিয়েছে, “ঘটনাটি সত্য। কিন্তু যে-হেতু বিষয়টি গোপনীয় এবং তদন্ত চলছে, তাই কোনও মন্তব্য করা যাবে না।”

মূলত দু'টি অভিযোগের ভিত্তিতে সি বি আই এই তদন্তে নামে। ১) সি বি আই জানতে পারে, '৯৭ থেকে ২০০১ সালের মধ্যে কলকাতা ও রাজ্যে একই কেবল পাতার জন্য

একসঙ্গে ১৫-২০টি ঠিকাদার সংস্থাকে বরাত দেওয়া হয়। একই কাজের জন্য ভিন্ন ভিন্ন ঠিকাদারের কোটি টাকার বিল পাশ করেছেন ওই সব অফিসার। তাঁরা ঠিকাদারদের সঙ্গে প্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে যুক্ত বলে অভিযোগ। বহু ক্ষেত্রে এক কোটি টাকার কাজের জন্য প্রায় পাঁচ কোটি টাকার বিল পাশ করেছেন বিভিন্ন অফিসার। সরকারের ঘর থেকে প্রায় ৫০-৬০ কোটি টাকার বাড়তি বিল পাশ করা হয়েছে ওই কেবল পাতার জন্য। পরিবর্তে অফিসারেরা 'কট মানি' বা ঘুষ নিয়েছেন বলে সি বি আইয়ের অভিযোগ। জেরার মুখে কয়েক জন ঠিকাদার সে-কথা স্বীকারও করেছেন।

২) '৯৭-২০০১ সালের মধ্যে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ জুড়ে ছোট ছোট টেলিফোন এক্সচেঞ্জ, যেমন রিমোট লিঙ্ক ইউনিট (আর এল ইউ) এবং রিমোট সাবস্ক্রাইবার ইউনিট (আর এস ইউ) তৈরির জন্য অনেক বেশি অর্থ অনুমোদন করে টেলিকম দফতর। তদন্তে সি বি আই জানতে পারে, বেসরকারি ঠিকাদারদের দিয়ে ওই ইউনিট তৈরি করা হয়েছিল। সরকারি হিসাবে যেখানে প্রতিটি ইউনিট তৈরির খরচ ৭৫ লক্ষ থেকে এক কোটি টাকা, সেখানে ইউনিট-পিছু ২.৫ থেকে তিন কোটি টাকা অনুমোদন করা হয়েছিল। '৯৭-২০০১ সালের মধ্যে এ-রকম প্রায় ২২০টি রিমোট লিঙ্ক ইউনিট এবং রিমোট সাবস্ক্রাইবার ইউনিট তৈরি করা হয়।

সরকারি হিসাব অনুসারে ২২০টি ইউনিট তৈরি করতে প্রায় ৩৫০ কোটি টাকা বেশি খরচ হয়েছে। সরকারের এই বাড়তি টাকা খরচ করে কাদের লাভ হল, তা খতিয়ে দেখছে সি বি আই। এক টেলিকম অফিসারের কাছ থেকে প্রায় ১২ কোটি টাকার বেহিসাবি সম্পত্তি উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে। প্রত্যেক অভিযুক্ত অফিসারের ব্যাঙ্ক আমানত, স্থাবর ও অস্থাবর সম্পত্তির খতিয়ান নেওয়া হচ্ছে। ঘুষের টাকায় দক্ষিণ কলকাতায় জমি ও দু'টি বাড়ি কিনেছেন এক অফিসার। সেই বাড়ি সিল করে দিয়েছে সি বি আই।

ANADABALAR MAMULA

21 JAN 2005

Corruption
MO-10
20/1

CASE AND CLOSURE

WHAT BEGAN WITH a judicial bang has ended with an administrative whimper. The shocking decision of the Central Bureau of Investigation to file a closure report in the Taj Corridor case — in which former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati, her erstwhile ministerial colleague and senior State bureaucrats are accused — raises troubling questions about the motives for doing so. This, after all, was not a run-of-the-mill corruption case. It was the Supreme Court that set the pace and broad direction of the investigation into the alleged irregularities relating to the Taj Heritage Corridor project — an outrageous, ecologically imprudent scheme that envisaged the construction of commercial buildings directly behind the Taj Mahal and squarely on the riverbed of the Yamuna. It was the apex court that asked the CBI to inquire into this project and later directed the investigating agency to register an FIR against Ms. Mayawati and seven others. Once again, it was judicial *diktat* that led the CBI to widen the ambit of the Taj Corridor inquiry and register a case against Ms. Mayawati for allegedly possessing assets disproportionate to known sources of income.

It is baffling how an investigation monitored so closely by the Supreme Court could result in a finding that there is a lack of evidence to sustain a charge of criminal conspiracy against those responsible for approving and executing the (now aborted) Taj Heritage Corridor. Over the past year and a half, the CBI has filed a series of progress reports before the Supreme Court. It was only in the last report, filed two months ago, that the investigating agency informed the Court it was going to seek the Attorney General's advice on certain legal points pertaining to the case. The ground for closure was prepared with the Attorney General maintaining that there is legal room

only for initiating departmental action against the accused officials. The course the case has taken reinforces misgivings about the lack of independence and impartiality of the CBI. Despite gaining a measure of autonomy, thanks to the Supreme Court judgment in the Vineet Narain case, the investigating agency remains heavily influenced by the Government of the day and, *ipso facto*, by partisan political considerations. Secondly, the sudden closure of an important case cannot but raise questions of a political nature. Is the decision related to the Congress party's long-term political strategies in Uttar Pradesh — a State in which it is weak and desperately in need of a strong ally? Could it have anything to do with the fact that the Congress wants the backing of the Bahujan Samaj Party's 19 Lok Sabha members in order to shore up support for the Government it leads at the Centre?

Ms. Mayawati may not be totally off the legal hook; the disproportionate assets case against her will remain. But she may no longer be the focus of a case relating to a controversial project that was pushed through without proper clearances and in circumstances that aroused grave suspicions about why it was undertaken. It was only two months ago that another politician, Congressman Satish Sharma, was the beneficiary of a closure report. In that case, the Home Ministry flatly refused the CBI the necessary sanction to prosecute him. Justice is in serious danger of being subverted if politicians close to the corridors of power are let off in this manner. They may well be innocent; indeed the legal presumption is that they are, in the absence of a conviction. But given the circumstances, the truth needs to be established by following the procedure laid down by law, and in a manner not vitiated by decisions that appear prejudiced and politically suspect.

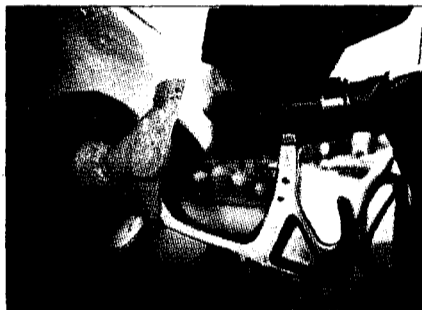
No petrol pumps to MPs: Panel

New Delhi: The Supreme Court-appointed committee, which advised cancellation of 296 petrol pump allotments of the 409 it scrutinised, has recommended that MPs should not be allotted dealership of petroleum products, and if given, they should quit parliament membership before taking up the dealership.

The two-judge committee, appointed by the apex court by its December 12, 2002 order, in its report said an MP had to attend parliament and meetings of parliamentary committees entailing long absence from his place of allotment of the retail outlet.

"They cannot run the dealership/distributorship themselves but have to engage employees to supervise work. They, therefore, do not fulfill the necessary condition of 'full time working dealer'," the report said.

The recommendations of the committee were quoted in the affidavit filed by the ministry of petroleum and natural gas while responding to the query of the Supreme Court about the supply position of petrol, diesel and cooking gas in the allotted areas in the event the court decided to cancel the 296 allotments termed illegal by the committee.



The committee felt that an MP, in the event of being allotted dealership/distributorship of petroleum products, should resign from the membership of parliament before he/she could avail such allotment.

The ministry, responding to the court query, said out of the 296 allotments not approved by the two-judge committee, only 201 dealerships had been commissioned and 95 were yet to be commissioned.

The ministry, in its affidavit, said the committee had inferred that in the matter of evaluation of merits of the candidates, there had been arbitrary marking as there was a wide variation in the marks given by the chairman and other mem-

bers of the dealer selection board.

Accepting the principles adopted by the committee in scrutinising the tainted allotments, the petroleum ministry in its affidavit said the cancelled retail outlets, where the land belonged to the company, should either be operated by the oil company or the "nearest best available existing dealer" till a regular dealer was appointed in accordance with the dealer selection policy.

In the cases where the land belonged to the allottee, the latter should be asked to transfer the land to the company, and in case of refusal the oil company would have no option but to close the retail outlet, it said.

However, it promised to increase the supply to the existing dealers in the area to meet the shortfall caused by the closure of the retail outlet.

Regarding LPG and kerosene dealerships, the ministry said that those not approved by the two-judge committee should be cancelled and the affected area could be catered by the neighbouring dealers without causing any hardship to the public.

The court, after perusing the affidavit filed by the ministry, posted the matter for further hearing after four weeks. PTI

CBI lets Mayawati off the hook

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 14. — In what is being seen as a positive signal to the Bahujan Samaj Party, the government has decided to close a case against Miss Mayawati in the Taj Heritage Corridor case.

The CBI had been entrusted with the task of investigating the construction of a corridor-cum-shopping mall around the Taj Mahal on the banks of the Yamuna by the then Uttar Pradesh government headed then by Miss Mayawati. The project was worth more than Rs 175 crore.

Following newspaper reports that the project would endanger the Taj Mahal, construction work was stopped and a case initiated against Miss Mayawati and half a dozen IAS officers by the NDA government.

The present UPA government, however, felt that there was no concrete evidence against Miss Mayawati, hence the case should be closed. Sources said the Attorney General of India, Mr Milon Banerjee, reportedly offered

his opinion on the issue.

But Miss Mayawati's troubles are not completely over as the probe into the disproportionate assets case against her would continue, CBI sources said.

It was the CBI that had sought the AG's opinion saying the investigating agency could not prosecute Miss Mayawati on the basis of the evidence in the case under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code or the Prevention of Corruption case.

The Supreme Court had directed the CBI to investigate the case. The CBI is likely to submit before the Court its latest stand on the case.

BSP to go it alone

The BSP will contest the forthcoming Assembly polls in three states on its own. Disclosing this to reporters in New Delhi, party supremo Miss Mayawati today also criticised the BJP, but was soft on the Congress. She, however, added that she would not have any electoral understanding with the Congress either in Bihar, Jharkhand or Haryana.

THE STATESMAN

15 JAN 2005

Petrol pump scam blows over Naik

Dalip Singh

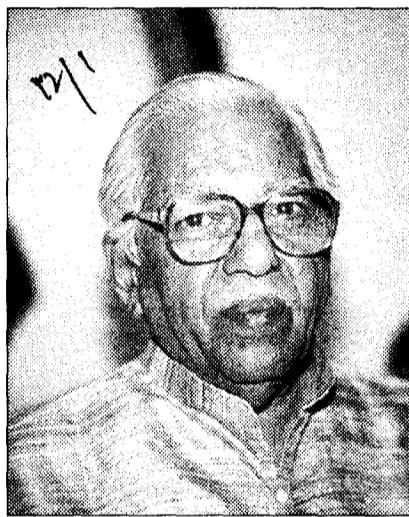
NEW DELHI 11 JANUARY

FORMER petroleum minister Ram Naik will be a relieved man now. The CBI, which recently recommended to the petroleum ministry the cancellation of a petrol pump allotted to A.G. Kulkarni in Maharashtra on the ground of "irregularities" while allotting it, has said that it has no evidence to proceed against Mr Naik.

The CBI had registered a preliminary enquiry on June 29, last year, alleging that Mr Naik misused his official position to favour a petrol pump dealer while he was the petroleum minister. After probing the case for six months, the sleuths have told the ministry that there were prima facie "irregularities" in the allotment of the HPCL retail outlet in Jalgaon to Mr Kulkarni as it was allegedly done on considerations other than the merit.

Sources said the other reason for closing the case against Mr Naik was that the government did not lose money in the case and at best it was administrative malfunctioning, apart from the Supreme Court ruling in Satish Sharma's case that petrol pumps cannot be considered as property.

Investigations have revealed that the former minister had ordered opening of the petrol pump on more than one occasion, which was against the views of the depart-



NAIK: OIL'S WELL

ment, sources alleged. In fact, former petroleum secretary B.K. Chaturvedi, who became Cabinet secretary after the UPA came to power, had recorded his dissent on the file, sources added. It is now up to the ministry to exercise its discretion to cancel the petrol pump.

The CBI had alleged in the preliminary enquiry that the former minister "directed" restarting of the Jalgaon HPCL petrol pump

despite the PSU's action against the outlet for selling adulterated fuel. Mr Kulkarni's outlet, allegedly selling adulterated fuel, was noticed for the first time by the HPCL officials more than three years back. During a random checking, the HPCL officials had picked up samples from Mr Kulkarni's pump and found that high speed diesel was adulterated.

As a fallout of the detection, the HPCL ordered that pump should remain shut for a month. Investigations have revealed that the seized samples were tested by two laboratories. Both, the labs had given contradictory opinion, which is said to have weakened the chances of taking a legal action in the case.

However, the petrol pump was found to be selling adulterated high speed diesel during another raids some time in 2001 and 2002. Finding that the pump owner was allegedly violating the petroleum laws repeatedly, the HPCL cancelled the licence of the outlet on February 12, 2002. The preliminary enquiry had alleged that under the directions of Mr Naik, the petrol pump licence was restored.

Despite all this, the petrol pump allegedly started selling adulterated high speed diesel again, inviting action from the company. Sources said the sale of fuel was terminated for the third time by the company. But, Mr Naik's ministry again intervened and reportedly asked the HPCL on September 30, last year to allow the pump to function.

The Economic Times

12 JAN 2005

মার্কশিট চক্রে শিক্ষা জগতের কর্তারাও

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার: শ্রেফ চুনোপুঁটির
নয়, আন্তঃরাজ্য জাল মার্কশিট চক্রে
জালে শিক্ষা জগতের রাঘব
বোয়ালোও জড়িয়ে পড়েছেন।
বিহার-ঝাড়খণ্ডের বিভিন্ন
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে তদন্ত চালিয়ে এমনই
প্রমাণ পাচ্ছেন কলকাতা গোয়েন্দারা।

গয়ার মগধ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে পরীক্ষা
বিষয়ক দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত আধিকারিক, খোদ
অফিসার-অন-স্পেশ্যাল ডিউটি
(ওএসডি)-কেই এ বার জাল মার্কশিট-
কাণ্ডে জড়িত সন্দেহে গ্রেফতার করা
হয়েছে। গোয়েন্দা প্রধান পীযুষ পাণ্ডে
বলেন, “মগধ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ওই
আধিকারিক নগেন্দ্রপ্রসাদ সিংহের
বিরুদ্ধে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ট্যাবুলেশন
রেজিস্টারে কারচুপির প্রমাণ
মিলেছে।” মার্কশিট-কাণ্ডে ধৃতদের
তালিকায় শেষতম সংযোজন এই
গেজেটেড অফিসারকে শনিবারই
কলকাতায় আনা হয়। ১৫ জানুয়ারি
পর্যন্ত তাঁকে পুলিশি হেফাজতে রাখার
নির্দেশ দেয় আদালত। এর আগে রাঁচি
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের স্টোরকিপারকেও
পুলিশ ধরে। মার্কশিট-কেলেঙ্কারিতে
এখনও পর্যন্ত মোট ১৫ জনকে
গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছে।

৫৮ বছরের নগেন্দ্রপ্রসাদ গয়ার
নিউপল্লির কালীবাড়িতে থাকেন। মগধ
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ডিগ্রিধারীদের
মার্কশিট-সার্টিফিকেট যাচাই করার
দায়িত্ব ছিল তাঁরই। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের
নথির বই বা ‘ট্যাবুলেশন রেজিস্টার’
(‘টি আর’)-এর দেখভালও তাঁকেই
করতে হতো। টি আর-এর মূল
কাগজপত্র বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের স্ট্রং রুমে
থাকলেও আর একটি কপি থাকত ও
এস ডি-র জিন্মায়। কপি-র ভিত্তিতে
যাচাইয়ের জন্য আসা মার্কশিট-
সার্টিফিকেট খতিয়ে দেখা হতো।

গোয়েন্দাদের অভিযোগ, ও এস
ডি-র দায়িত্বে থাকা ‘টি আর’-এর
তালিকায় বিস্তর কারচুপি করা হয়েছে।
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পরীক্ষার্থীদের
নথিভুক্তিকরণের তালিকা মিলিয়ে
গোয়েন্দারা দেখেছেন, ‘টি আর’-এর
বেশ কয়েকটি নামই ওই রেজিস্টারে
নেই। এর পরেই ‘টি আর’-এর
কারচুপির বিষয়ে নিশ্চিত হয়ে
নগেন্দ্রপ্রসাদকে ধরার প্রস্তুতি নেন

গোয়েন্দারা। লালবাজারের এক কর্তা
বলেন, “নগেন্দ্রপ্রসাদ জানিয়েছেন,
তিনি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে কয়েক জন
উর্ধ্বতন কর্তার নির্দেশ মেনেই এই
কাজ করেছেন। দিল্লির একটি সংস্থার
মাধ্যমে কম্পিউটারে নথিভুক্ত ওই ‘টি
আর’ প্রস্তুত করা হয়। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের
আরও অনেকেই জাল মার্কশিটের
কারবারে জড়িত।”

তবে নগেন্দ্রের নাগাল পেতে
গোয়েন্দাদের বিস্তর কাঠখড় পোড়াতে
হয়েছে। ডিসেম্বরে মগধ
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের উপাচার্যের সঙ্গে
যোগাযোগ করে স্ট্রং রুমের ‘টি আর’
যাচাই করার উদ্দেশ্যে গয়ায় গিয়েও
সংশ্লিষ্ট আধিকারিকদের নাগাল পাননি
গোয়েন্দারা। জরুরি কাজের কারণ
দেখিয়ে সে-যাত্রা তাঁরা গোয়েন্দাদের
সঙ্গে সহযোগিতা করতে পারেননি। এ
বার অবশ্য গোয়েন্দারা অটঘাট বেঁধেই
গয়ায় গিয়েছিলেন। আদালতের নির্দেশ
জেগাড় করে তাঁরা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ‘টি
আর’ দেখভালের দায়িত্বে থাকা
আধিকারিকদের খোঁজে যান। গয়ার
সিভিল লাইন থানার পুলিশের সাহায্যে
তাঁর বাড়ি থেকেই শুরুবার গোয়েন্দারা
নগেন্দ্রপ্রসাদকে পাকড়াও করেন।

সর্বের ভিতরেই যে ভূত, আগেই
টের পান গোয়েন্দারা। কলকাতা-সহ
পশ্চিমবঙ্গ জুড়ে জাঁকিয়ে বসা বিভিন্ন
করেসপন্ডেন্স কলেজের মাধ্যমে
‘ডিগ্রিধারী’ সন্দেহভাজনদের তালিকা
যাচাই করতে বিহার ঝাড়খণ্ডে গিয়ে
সন্দেহ বন্ধমূল হয়। গত বছর
কলকাতার বেশ কয়েকটি দুর্নীতিগ্রস্ত
করেসপন্ডেন্স কলেজের কর্তাদের
গ্রেফতার করে তাদের কাছ থেকেই
গোয়েন্দারা জানতে পারেন কারা টাকা
দিয়ে ভিন রাজ্যের বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের
ডিগ্রি কিনেছিলেন। সেপ্টেম্বরে বিহারে
তালিকা যাচাই করতে গেলে
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সংশ্লিষ্ট আধিকারিকেরা
কিন্তু সন্দেহভাজনদের ‘ক্লিন চিট’
দেন। কিন্তু পরে সন্দেহভাজন
ডিগ্রিধারীদের অনেকেই লালবাজারে
পুলিশের কাছে স্বীকার করেন যে, তাঁরা
পরীক্ষা না-দিয়েই ডিগ্রি কেনেন।
সোসিওলজি ও অ্যাকাউন্ট্যান্সির দু’জন
স্নাতক ম্যাজিস্ট্রিটের কাছে বয়ান দিয়ে
ডিগ্রি কেনার কথা স্বীকারও করেন।