

বিরোধী দলনেতা পার্থই, স্পিকার নির্বাচনে প্রার্থী দিচ্ছে না তৃণমূল

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা: স্পিকার নির্বাচনে প্রার্থী দিচ্ছে না প্রধান বিরোধী দল তৃণমূল কংগ্রেস।

দশমিক অঙ্কের নিয়ম মেনেই ২৯৪ আসনের বিধানসভায় এক-দশমাংশ অর্থাৎ ২৯.৪ সংখ্যাটি কমে ২৯-ই দাঁড়াচ্ছে। বিরোধী দলনেতার মর্যাদা দেওয়া হচ্ছে তৃণমূল কংগ্রেসের পরিষদীয় দলের নেতা পার্থ চট্টোপাধ্যায়কেই। এই মুহূর্তে তৃণমূলের পরিষদীয় দলের সদস্য-সংখ্যা ২৯।

এই দু'টি সিদ্ধান্ত কাকতালীয় সমাপত্যন কি না, তা স্পষ্ট নয়।

১২ জুন বেলা ১১টায় চতুর্দশ বিধানসভার সদস্যেরা স্পিকার নির্বাচন করতে বসবেন। নির্বাচন পরিচালনার ভার রয়েছে প্রোটেম স্পিকার, কংগ্রেসের জ্ঞানসিংহ সোহন পালের হাতে। ২০০১-এ স্পিকার নির্বাচনে তৃণমূল পরিষদীয় দল বামফ্রন্টের প্রার্থী হাসিম আব্দুল হালিমের বিরুদ্ধে ইসলামপুরের তৎকালীন বিধায়ক আব্দুল করিম চৌধুরীকে প্রার্থী হিসেবে দাঁড় করিয়েছিল। এ বার তিন-চতুর্থাংশ সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ বামফ্রন্টের প্রার্থীর বিরুদ্ধে প্রার্থী না-দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্তই নেওয়া হয়েছে। তৃণমূল পরিষদীয় দলের সূত্রে বলা হয়, এই 'একতরফা' নির্বাচনে হালিমের বিরুদ্ধে প্রার্থী দেওয়ার কোনও মানেই হয় না। প্রার্থী না-দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত সেই কারণেই। তবে তা আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে না-ও ঘোষণা করা হতে পারে। অবশ্য পরিষদীয় দলনেতা পার্থবাবুর বক্তব্য, "এখনও আমরা এই বিষয়ে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নিইনি। নির্বাচনের নিয়মকানুন খতিয়ে দেখি।"

তবে স্পিকার নির্বাচনে যা-ই হোক, স্পিকার-পদে হালিমের নির্বাচন এবং নির্বাচিত হওয়ার পরে স্পিকারের চেয়ারে তাঁকে বসানো পর্যন্ত বিরোধী দলনেতার একটি নির্দিষ্ট ভূমিকা থাকে। সেই ভূমিকা পালনের জন্য বামফ্রন্ট সরকারের অনুমোদনক্রমে বিধানসভার সচিবালয় বৃহত্তম বিরোধী গোষ্ঠী তৃণমূলের পরিষদীয় নেতা পার্থবাবুকেই 'বিরোধী দলনেতা' হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করেছে। হালিম স্পিকার নির্বাচিত হওয়ার পরে তাঁকে বিধায়কের আসন থেকে স্পিকারের চেয়ার পর্যন্ত 'এসকট' করে নিয়ে যান বিধানসভার নেতা তথা মুখ্যমন্ত্রী এবং বিরোধী দলনেতা। ১২ জুন বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের সঙ্গে এই দায়িত্ব পালন করবেন পার্থবাবুই।

এবং তার পরেই আনুষ্ঠানিক

ভাবে পার্থবাবুকে বিরোধী নেতা হিসেবে ঘোষণা করবেন নবনির্বাচিত স্পিকার।

বনগাঁর নির্বাচিত বিধায়ক ভূপেন শেঠের আকস্মিক মৃত্যুতে ৩০-এর জাদু-সংখ্যাটি হাতের মধ্যে এসেও হাতছাড়া হয়েছে তৃণমূলের। ২৯ সদস্য নিয়ে তৃণমূল বিরোধী দলের মর্যাদা পেতে পারে কি না, তা নিয়েও সংশয় আছে। ২৯৪ আসনের বিধানসভায় এক-দশমাংশের অর্থ ২৯ না ৩০? পরিষদীয় রাজনীতির বিশেষজ্ঞদের বক্তব্য, মোট সদস্য-সংখ্যা ২৯৬ কিংবা ২৯৮ হলে এই জাদু-সংখ্যা অবশ্য ৩০-ই হয়। কিন্তু এই ক্ষেত্রে ২৯৪-এর এক-দশমাংশ ২৯ হতেই পারে দশমিকের নিয়ম

মেনে। স্পিকারের সচিবালয় সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, বিভিন্ন স্তরে আলাপ-আলোচনা করে, মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে পরামর্শ করে শেষ পর্যন্ত তৃণমূলের ২৯-কেই মেনে নেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে। এখন ঘোষণার অপেক্ষা।

স্পিকার নির্বাচনে তৃণমূলের প্রার্থী না-দেওয়া এবং জাদু-সংখ্যার নীচে থেকেও বিরোধী দলের মর্যাদা পাওয়া, দু'টি ঘটনাই এত গায়ে গায়ে ঘটছে যে, তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে বলে আশঙ্কা রয়েছে তৃণমূলের মধ্যেই। তৃণমূলের একাংশের বক্তব্য, তৃণমূলের সদস্য-সংখ্যা অর্ধেক হয়ে গেলেও কটর সি পি এম-বিরোধী চরিত্র বজায় রাখতে স্পিকার-পদে অবশ্যই প্রার্থী দেওয়া উচিত।

Jan Morcha renamed

A new party, Jan Dal, will be its political arm

Special Correspondent

LUCKNOW: Sticking to its separate identity as a people's party, the Jan Morcha was on Tuesday renamed Jan Morcha Alliance of its constituents with a new party, Jan Dal, being its political arm.

The twin decisions were taken at a meeting of the Jan Morcha presided over by its president Raj Babbar. Former Prime Minister V. P. Singh, who is the chief patron of the Morcha, was also present.

Raj Babbar will act as the convenor of the Jan Morcha Alliance and will also coordinate the Jan Dal, which consists of about a dozen lesser known parties in the context of Uttar Pradesh including Lalu Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal and Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party.

After completing the formalities, the alliance announced a detailed programme of political action which would be launched on June 13 and continue till August 9.

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Addressing a press conference, Mr. Babbar and Mr. V.P. Singh said all the constituents of JMA would hold a protest demonstration against the hike in diesel price on June 13.

The former Prime Minister clarified that the Jan Morcha protest would be separate from that of the Samajwadi Party and the Left, though the issue is common.

Mr. Babbar said the Mukti Sangram would be launched on June 11 and will continue till first week of August. He said the party workers would take out prabahat pheris and stage "nukkad natak" and street corner meetings.

He said "Mandal Diwas" would be celebrated in Delhi on August 7 where Mr. V.P. Singh would be given a roll call of honour by the Indian Justice Party of Udit Raj, the organisers.

Mr. Babbar said a padyatra would be taken out from Kakori to Lucknow on August 8. It would culminate in a gherao of Vidhan Bhavan on August 9 (Quit India Day).

The JMA constituents would stage a "kursi-chhoro" demonstration at divisional headquarters on August 9.

Both Mr. Singh and Mr. Babbar clarified that the objective of the Jan Morcha Alliance was to focus on issues concerning farmers, OBCs, minorities and other deprived sections and secure them their rights.

Tuesday's meeting was attended by former MP Sakshi Maharaj, who represented the Rashtriya Kranti Party, and Masood Ahmed of National Loktantrik Party.

The convenor said the number of alliance partners would swell.

Oil price hike: NDA leaders to court arrest

'They say they are for *aam aadmi* but make his life much harder'

Gargi Parsai

10-12-06
8/6
NEW DELHI: The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Wednesday decided to stage protests on June 12 and 19 against the seventh hike in the price of petroleum products in the two years of the United Progressive Alliance regime.

After an emergency meeting of the NDA at BJP leader L.K. Advani's residence here, the parties constituting the alliance passed a resolution condemning the hike in the prices of petrol and diesel and demanded an immediate rollback. "Each time petroleum prices go up, the Government makes more money through higher customs duty, sales tax and educational cess. So it is ironical that while the common man suffers, the government that came to power, using his/her name, prospers," it said.

Among those who attended the meeting were Janata Dal (United) leaders Sharad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, Digvijay Singh, Akali leader K.S. Bajwa, Swatantra Bharat Paksha leader Sharad Joshi, BJP leaders Raj-

nath Singh, Jaswant Singh, S.S. Ahluwalia and representatives of the Shiv Sena, the Trinamool Congress and the Biju Janata Dal.

"Satyagraha" planned

Speaking to mediapersons, BJP spokespersons Sushma Swaraj and V.K. Malhotra said leaders of the allies would hold a "satyagraha" and court arrest at Jantar Mantar on June 12. NDA chairman Atal Bihari Vajpayee and NDA convenor George Fernandes, both of whom were not in Delhi, may also join the protest.

On June 19 party workers would hold countrywide demonstrations at district headquarters to expose the 'anti-people' policies of the UPA Government. "They came to power on the slogan that they were for the *aam aadmi* but every action of theirs in the last two years has been to make the life of the *aam aadmi* much harder. This is the seventh time that the price of petrol and diesel has been hiked. The prices of all essential commodities including wheat, rice, pulses, vegetables, steel and cement that

affect the common man are skyrocketing," said Ms. Swaraj.

The increase in the prices of petrol and diesel would have a cascading effect on the entire price situation.

"In effect the price of every essential commodity will go up and the UPA Government is taking it lightly."

Cut down expenditure

Warning the UPA Government against adopting such 'anti-people' measures, the NDA called upon it to cut down its wasteful expenditure and reduce duties on petroleum products so that the increase in the imported price of crude could be absorbed without impacting the economy.

The resolution demanded that the stagnating domestic oil production be increased on a "war footing" so that the country could become self-sufficient in the energy sector.

The resolution said that the price of petrol had been increased by Rs. 17.24 a litre between June 14, 2004 and June 6, 2006 and diesel by Rs. 12.06 a litre during the same period.

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THE HINDU

1,000 TMC workers join Congress

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, April 4. — Last week, hundreds of party workers quit the Trinamul Congress party in the Diamond Harbour Assembly constituency owing to a feud over the selection of a candidate. Today, it was Kulpi's turn.

There was a major setback for the party in the Assembly polls at Kulpi, with more than a 1,000 party workers from different villages in Gajipore panchayat joining the Congress. The slide in the support base could be a major blow for the poll prospects of Mr Jogoranjana Halder, a Trinamul Congress legislator, who won the seat by a slim margin in the 2001 Assembly election. People in political circles are now discussing how the sudden rise in the number of supporters of the

Congress party might prove to be an eye-opener for the contesting Left Front candidate.

Those who quit the Trinamul Congress today include a former pradhan of the Trinamul-controlled Gajipur panchayat, a member of the same panchayat, and some key block leaders of Kulpi. And they celebrated their induction into the party by participating in a rally attended by the Congress contestant for the coming Assembly polls — Mr. Krittibas Sardar.

Unhappy about losing a 1,000 supporters, the Trinamul Congress district leaders accused the CPI-M and the Congress.

A district Trinamul Congress leader said: "Our workers stepped into a trap laid by the CPI-M. It is party politics. The Congress is trying to weaken us only to strengthen the CPI-M."

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THE STATESMAN

Mamata ultimatum to Cong

Q. P. S. K. G. R. M. P.

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta, March 16: Mamata Banerjee today warned that she would put up candidates for 93 seats if the Congress "is not serious about fighting the CPM" by joining an anti-Left platform in the Assembly elections.

Mamata had announced on Tuesday the names of her party's 201 candidates out of 294, leaving room for an electoral understanding with the Congress. But state Congress president Pranab Mukherjee reasserted yesterday that there would be no electoral alliance with the Trinamul Con-

gress until it severs ties with the BJP

"Why is the Congress talking about the NDA now?" Mamata asked. "We are not objecting to the Congress taking the CPM's support to run its UPA government at the Centre. So, they should not ask us to snap ties with the BJP. Let us forget about national politics and bring together all anti-Left forces to oust the communists from Bengal."

The Trinamul chief made it clear that she would put up candidates for all the remaining seats within the next two days if the Congress refused to "toe the anti-CPM line".

"I will wait for one or two



Pranab, Mamata: Firm stand

days and then announce our candidates for the remaining seats. The Congress should realise that I am not going around with a begging bowl. Our compulsion is to fight against the CPM, while Congress is to run the UPA government with CPM's support. Let the people decide which is the real

ate from the AICC stand."

State CPM secretary Anil Biswas said: "When Pranab babu says that there will be no tacit understanding, there remains the possibility of such a deal. But we are not bothered about any secret tie-ups."

Mamata today named Trinamul general secretary Mukul Roy as the party's nominee for the Rajya Sabha elections slated for March 28. In another development, Trinamul MLA from Bowbazar Nayana Bandopadhyay councillor Mala Roy and former councillor Dibyendu Biswas joined the Congress. Nayana said she would not contest the Assembly polls from Bowbazar.

Buddha seat

The Congress has decided not to put up a candidate against Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee in Jadavpur. It will back Anuradha Deb of the Party for Democratic Socialism.

anti-CPM force in Bengal," Mamata said.

Mukherjee has warned party activists against any deal with Trinamul at the grassroots. "There cannot be any tacit or secret tie-up. I wanted an alliance with Trinamul but it refused to snap ties with the BJP. We cannot devi-

ক্ষুব্ধ বিজেপি'র সঙ্গে দূরত্ব বাড়ছে

কংগ্রেসের আশায় ৭০

আসন ছাড়লেন মমতা

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, কলকাতা ও নয়াদিল্লি: কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে এখনও জোটের আশায় রয়েছেন মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। সোমবার তাঁর নেতৃত্বাধীন গণতান্ত্রিক ফ্রন্টের (সংক্ষেপে গণফ্রন্ট) প্রার্থী তালিকা ঘোষণার মধ্য দিয়েই সেটা স্পষ্ট করে দিলেন তৃণমূল নেত্রী। সেখানে কংগ্রেসের জন্য ৭০টি আসন ছেড়ে রেখেছেন তিনি। গতবার যে ৩০টি আসনে জিতেছিল কংগ্রেস, সেগুলিতেও প্রার্থী দেননি মমতা। এর পাশাপাশি, আসন রফা নিয়ে বিজেপি'র সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক যে ভাবে তিক্ত হতে শুরু করেছে, তাতে কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে জোটের আশা ছাড়ছেন না তিনি।

মমতার কথায়, “প্রার্থী দেওয়া নিয়ে আমার সঙ্গে কংগ্রেস নেত্রী মার্গারেট আলভা ও প্রদেশ কংগ্রেস সভাপতি প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের এক দফা আলোচনা হয়েছে। আমি গত ৬ মাস ধরে একের বিরুদ্ধে এক প্রার্থী দাঁড় করানোর চেষ্টা করছি। এখনও কংগ্রেসের নেতাদের সঙ্গে আমাদের আলোচনা হতেই পারে। আমি আলোচনার দরজা খোলা রাখছি।” আরও ২-৩ দিন যে তিনি সেই দরজা খোলা রাখবেন তা-ও জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন তৃণমূল নেত্রী।

কংগ্রেসের জন্য ৭০টি আসন ছেড়ে রাখার পাশাপাশি বিজেপি'র জন্য ২৩টি আসন ছেড়েছেন মমতা। বিজেপি'র রাজ্য নেতৃত্ব কিন্তু এতে খুশি নয়। দলের রাজ্য সভাপতি তথাগত রায় পরিষ্কার জানিয়েছেন, “যখন অরুণ জেটলির সঙ্গে বৈঠক চলছে, তখন একতরফা ভাবে প্রার্থী তালিকা কেন প্রকাশ করা হল, তা আমার বোধগম্য হচ্ছে না।” তাঁদের যে সমস্ত আসন দেওয়া হয়েছে তার অনেকগুলিই গ্রহণযোগ্য নয় বলেও তথাগতবাবু জানিয়েছেন। দলের রাজ্য সম্পাদক রাহুল সিংহ জানিয়েছেন, তাঁরা এই তালিকা মানছেন না। তিনি বলেন, “প্রয়োজনে তৃণমূলের জোট ছেড়ে বেরিয়ে এসে আমরা ‘বন্ধুত্বপূর্ণ’ লড়াইতেও যেতে পারি।” এই বিষয়ে দলের পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ স্থির করতে আজ, মঙ্গলবার বিজেপি'র রাজ্য নির্বাচন কমিটির বৈঠক বসছে।

মমতার এই অবস্থান সম্পর্কে কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্ব অবশ্য এখনই কোনও মন্তব্য করতে নারাজ। মমতার আসন ছাড়ার বিষয়টি খুঁটিয়ে জানার পরে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত এআইসিসি-র সাধারণ সম্পাদক মার্গারেট আলভা বলেন, “আমি এখন কোনও মন্তব্য করব না। বিষয়টি নিয়ে কংগ্রেস হাইকমান্ডের সঙ্গে আলোচনা না করে কিছুই বলা যাবে না।” তবে দলীয় সূত্রে খবর, বিজেপি'র সঙ্গে মমতার সম্পর্ক কোন দিকে গড়ায়, সে দিকেই আপাতত লক্ষ্য রেখে চলেছেন কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্ব।

বিজেপি যদি তৃণমূলের সঙ্গে ছাড়ে, তা হলে কংগ্রেসকে যে আরও আসন ছাড়া সম্ভব তার ইঙ্গিতও মিলেছে মমতার বক্তব্যে। ২০০১ সালে কংগ্রেসকে ৫৮টি আসন দিয়েছিল তৃণমূল। এ বার ৭০টি আসন ছেড়ে রাখার পরেও মমতা বলেন, “আমি কিন্তু ৯৩টি আসনে এখনও প্রার্থী দিইনি।” এর ফলে, প্রায় এক টিলে দুই পাখি মারার মতো মমতা এক দিকে যেমন জোট না হলে তার দায়ভার কংগ্রেসের ঘাড়ে চাপিয়ে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করলেন, তেমনিই কংগ্রেসের জেতা আসনে প্রার্থী না-দিয়ে একটা চাল দিলেন। এ বার কংগ্রেসের ভিতরে যারা জোটের দাবিতে সরব ছিলেন, তারা দলীয় নেতৃত্বের উপরে আরও চাপ সৃষ্টি করবেন। এতে কংগ্রেসের সমস্যাও বাড়বে।

কংগ্রেসকে জোট টানতে তৃণমূলের এই চেষ্টাকে কটাক্ষ করেছেন সিপিএম নেতৃত্বও। দলের রাজ্য সম্পাদক অনিল বিশ্বাস বলেন, “এটা তো নতুন কিছু নয়। তৃণমূল, বিজেপি এবং কংগ্রেস একে অপরের সঙ্গে সমঝোতা করে চলে। এটা তো আমরা গত ৬ মাস ধরে বলছি।” বামফ্রন্টের প্রার্থী তালিকা প্রকাশ করার প্রায় ২৫ দিন বাদে রাজ্যের প্রধান বিরোধী দল প্রার্থী তালিকা প্রকাশ করায় অনিলবাবু বলেন, “অবশেষে তৃণমূল প্রার্থী তালিকা ঘোষণা করেছে। এটা মন্দের ভাল।”

তৃণমূল নেত্রী অবশ্য বলেন, “সিপিএম কী ভেবেছিল তারা ফাঁকা মাঠে গোল দেবে।” মূলত, কংগ্রেস কী করবে, না-করবে তা চূড়ান্ত ভাবে না জেনে এত দিন প্রার্থী তালিকা ঘোষণা করেননি মমতা। কিন্তু এ দিন তিনি বলেন, “এটা কি শরীর প্রতীক্ষা নাকি? মনোনয়নপত্র জমা দেওয়ার দিন তো আমি প্রার্থী তালিকা ঘোষণা করতে পারি না।” এ দিন নিজাম প্যালাসে মমতা তৃণমূলের ১৯৩ জন-সহ গণফ্রন্টের ২০১ জন প্রার্থীর নাম ঘোষণা করেন। এর মধ্যে ফ্রন্টের বাইরে নকশাল নেতা অসীম চট্টোপাধ্যায়কে তিনি বেলেঘাটায় প্রার্থী করেছেন। আর ফ্রন্টের ভিতরে থাকা ঝাড়খণ্ড পার্টি (নরেন) ও জনতা দল(সংযুক্ত)-কে দিয়েছেন দু'টি করে আসন। একটি করে আসন দিয়েছেন শোণিত সমাজবাদী পার্টি, সংযুক্ত গণ পরিষদ ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গ গণতান্ত্রিক মঞ্চকে। মমতা জানিয়েছেন, এ বার ৩২ জন মহিলা ও সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায় থেকে ৩১ জনকে প্রার্থী করেছে তৃণমূল।

গতবার জেতা দলের সব বিধায়ককেই প্রার্থী করেছেন মমতা। তবে শিশির অধিকারী, সুব্রত বস্তু, সোমেন মহাপাত্র ও দীপক ঘোষের কেন্দ্র বদল হয়েছে। দীপকবাবু যাদবপুরে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যের বিরুদ্ধে প্রার্থী হয়েছেন। বিষ্ণুপুর

এর পর সাতের প্রত্যয়



Raj launches party

1973
P.P. Shiv Sena
S.V.
Mumbai: Two-and-a-half months after he resigned from the Shiv Sena, Raj Thackeray on Thursday announced the formation of his political party, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), which would formally take off on March 19 with a public rally in the city.

Raj, who severed his ties with the Sena on December 18 and later embarked on a two-month-long statewide tour, has retained the 'Sena' title in his new outfit. "I shall elaborate on the party's stance on issues like Hindutva, its agenda for development of Maharashtra and the significance of the party flag colours at the March 19 public meeting," he told reporters here.

The meeting is scheduled at Shivaji Park in central Mumbai, venue of the Sena's annual Dussehra rally. Asked if the MNS would also organise such an annual rally, Raj said he had no such plans. "You can say that March 9 is the Foundation Day of my party," he added. Asked if there was any scope for a fifth party in the state after Congress, NCP, BJP and Shiv Sena, Raj said he would make a place for his party.

Raj also unveiled the party flag which contains blue, saffron



I shall elaborate on the party's stance on issues like Hindutva, its agenda for development of Maharashtra

and green colours. Asked about the significance of these colours, Raj said he would elaborate on the same on March 19. When it was pointed out that many of his supporters belonged to the second generation of Sena leaders and workers, Raj said he had not 'invited' anyone to join his party.

Asked about his experiences in his statewide tour ahead of launching the party, Raj said "I

had not undertaken the tour with any expectations. I wanted to know if there are people with me in the task I have undertaken," he said.

"Some people had ridiculed my announcement that I would be forming a new party. They said I will eventually return to Sena fold... that I will patch up," he said. Asked if he should also be called 'pramukh' (chief) of the new party, Raj said it would be okay if he was referred to as 'adhyakshya' (president) of MNS.

Raj said he would provide jobs to blood relations of mill workers who used to work in the Kohinoor Mill before it was closed down. Raj, along with Sena leader Manohar Joshi's son Unmesh, had recently acquired the mill land. "The jobs would be provided to them in the company that would manage the mill development affairs," he said. "I expect others who have acquired the mill land to follow suit," he said.

Asked if MNS would consider having a tie-up with any other party while contesting next year's BMC polls, Raj replied in the negative. "Right now, I am bothered about my party and not about alliances," he said. Agencies

Raj floats front



Mr Raj Thackeray

MUMBAI, March 9. — Mr Raj Thackeray today launched a new political party called Maharashtra Navanirman Sena. The flag of the party has blue, saffron and green hues symbolising a marked departure from the "mere saffron" ideology professed by him while in the Shiv Sena. The direction and policies will be spelt out on 19 March at a Shivaji Park rally, Mr Thackeray said. As he unveiled his new party's name and colours, he paid tribute to his grandfather the late Mr Keshav Sitaram Thackeray, father of Mr Bal Thackeray since his uncle had asked him not to use his

name or photos.

Mr Raj Thackeray had left Shiv Sena in November last year. Before starting his own party, he had toured Maharashtra and claimed that he enjoyed the support of young population. Mr Thackeray said his party would fight election to the Greater Mumbai municipal corporation in 2007.

The first announcement of public interest by him was about employment for those who were displaced by the closure of Kohinoor Mills at Dadar. He has bought the land. He said first kin of those who had lost jobs would be given jobs. Sources close to him said the new party would not be anti-minorities. But neither will it profess the policy of appeasement. The blue colour in the flag signifies plan to win over Dalits.

Raj working on new party's name

Name to have two words—Maharashtra & Sena—to create new Maharashtra

ABHIRAM GHADYALPATIL
MUMBAI, MARCH 6

RAJ Thackeray is working thoughtfully on the name of his new party to be announced on March 9, his supporters said. The scion of Maharashtra's most celebrated political family will announce the name of his new party, its policy document, blueprint and flag at a press conference on March 9.

Raj is keen that everything about his party professes core Maharashtrian identity, like the Shiv Sena. "The name of the party that he chooses would have two words—Maharashtra and Sena. The party's name would reflect its mission to rebuild Maharashtra," sources said, adding that names like *Maharashtra Sena*, *Maharashtra Gaurav Sena*,

and *Maharashtra Nav-Nirman Sena* are being considered for the new party.

"I want to create a new Maharashtra. My party will work towards making the state the envy of others," he had said on Friday.

During his statewide tour between January 16 and February 25, Raj harped on two lines—the need for an unconventional political party that has a definite programme beyond contesting elections, and a commitment to all-round development of Maharashtra with a comprehensive blueprint.

The policy document will accord top priority to development of Maharashtra in all sectors. "We are going to rope in experts from a range of sectors like agriculture, irrigation, urban development,



roads, information technology, industry and education. They may hold party posts also but their primary task would be to identify problems in their respective areas of expertise and suggest remedies," a Raj aide said.

Apolitical experts are also being roped in, the sources said. "There is a goodwill among the apolitical people for Rajsahab and his plans. All political parties talk of development, but hardly care for the people who know what development means in different sectors. We will set the trend by asking experts with implementation of the development agenda," the aide said.

The Raj camp is busy trying to make a dent into the Shiv Sena-affiliated unions. Shirish Parkar, one of Raj supporters, has been given the responsibility of holding meetings of BEST as well as unorganised sector workers. "Rajsahab received an overwhelming response from the unorganised sector in Vidarbha and Marathwada during his tour," Parkar said.

জোট অনিশ্চিত, ৫২ প্রার্থী ঘোষণা মমতার

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা: জোটের সম্ভাবনায় কার্যত জল ঢেলে রবিবারেই প্রথম পর্যায়ের প্রার্থী-তালিকা ঘোষণা করেছিলেন মমতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। অন্য দিকে, কংগ্রেস যে নিজেদের অবস্থান থেকে এক চুলও সরবে না, প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় এ দিন তা জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন। বি জে পি-র সঙ্গ না-ছাড়লে তৃণমূলের সঙ্গে তাঁদের জোট গড়া সম্ভব নয় বলে জানান প্রদেশ কংগ্রেসের সভাপতি প্রণববাবু। আর জোট না-গড়ার দায় যাতে ভবিষ্যতে তাঁদের কাঁধে না-চাপে, সেই জন্য মমতা ও প্রণববাবু দু'জনে আলাদা ভাবে এ দিনও বলেছেন, “আলোচনার দরজা আমরা এখনও বন্ধ করিনি।”

তবে বি জে পি-র সঙ্গ না-ছেড়ে তৃণমূলের সঙ্গে কংগ্রেসের জোট যে সোনার পাথর বাটি, দু'পক্ষই তা বুঝতে পেরেছে। তাই এ দিন দলের ওয়ার্কিং কমিটির বৈঠকের পরেই মমতা ৫১ জন প্রার্থীর নাম ঘোষণা করেন। ওই ৫১ জনই তৃণমূলের গত বারের বিজয়ী বিধায়ক। গত বারের কেন্দ্রেই প্রার্থী হচ্ছেন তাঁরা। দল থেকে সাসপেন্ড

হওয়া দুই বিধায়ক ও কংগ্রেসে যোগ দেওয়া সুরত মুখোপাধ্যায়, নির্বেদ রায়, পরশ দত্ত, অম্বিকা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়দের জায়গায় কে কে প্রার্থী হবেন, মমতা তা জানাননি। মহিষাদলের বিধায়ক দীপক ঘোষের নাম এ দিন ঘোষণা করেননি মমতা। বালিগঞ্জ তৃণমূল প্রার্থী হিসাবে আগেই পুরসভার বিরোধী দলনেতা জাভেদ খানের নাম ঘোষিত হয়েছিল।

এ দিকে, ওয়ার্কিং কমিটির বৈঠকের পরে প্রণববাবু বলেন, “জোট নিয়ে আমাদের অবস্থানের কথা পরিকার করে বলেছি। মমতাও ওদের অবস্থান জানিয়েছে। এ বার আমাদের মতো করে এগিয়ে যাচ্ছি।” তিনি জানান, এই মাসেই কংগ্রেস নির্বাচনী প্রচারে নামছে। ব্লকে ব্লকে যে-সব হাট আছে, সেখানেই বামফ্রন্ট তথা সি পি এমের দুর্নীতির কথা প্রচার করবে কংগ্রেস।

প্রথম পর্যায়ে ৫২ জন প্রার্থীর নাম

ঘোষণা করে তৃণমূল সব দলকেই টেকা দিল। বামফ্রন্ট ১৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি প্রার্থী-তালিকা ও ইস্তাহার প্রকাশ করবে। এ দিন ফ্রন্টের বৈঠকের পরে চেয়ারম্যান বিমান বসু বলেন, “২৯৪টি আসনের প্রার্থীদের নাম একসঙ্গেই জানাতে চাই।” কংগ্রেস কবে প্রার্থী-তালিকা প্রকাশ করবে, প্রণববাবু এ দিন তা জানাতে পারেননি। প্রচারে ফ্রন্ট ও তৃণমূলের থেকে তাঁরা যে পিছিয়ে থাকবেন, স্বীকার করেই তিনি বলেন, “যদি ওদের মতো তৎপর হতাম, তা হলে তো সমস্যা মিটেই যেত।”



তৃণমূলের নেতৃত্বাধীন ‘পশ্চিমবঙ্গ গণতান্ত্রিক ফ্রন্ট’ তাঁকে নেত্রী করে সি পি এমের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াইয়ে নামলেও মমতা যে এখনই বিধানসভায় প্রার্থী হবেন না, তা এ দিন জানিয়ে দেন। মমতা বলেন, “আমি তো দক্ষিণ কলকাতার সাংসদ। যেখান থেকে আমি

নির্বাচিত হয়েছি, সেখানকার মানুষের প্রতি আমার দায়বদ্ধতা আছে। সি পি এমের জালিয়াতি সঙ্গেও আমি যে জিতেছি, তা ছেড়ে দেব কেন?” কিন্তু বামফ্রন্ট বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্যকে সামনে রেখে নির্বাচনে লড়ছে। তৃণমূলের জোট কাকে ‘ভবিষ্যৎ মুখ্যমন্ত্রী’ হিসাবে তুলে ধরে লড়বে? সরাসরি জবাব এড়িয়ে মমতা বলেন, “যে-দিন ২৯৪টি আসনের শেষ প্রার্থীর নাম ঘোষিত হবে, সে-দিন এই উত্তর মিলবে।”

নির্বাচনী সংগঠনে বরাবর এগিয়ে থাকা সি পি এম ইতিমধ্যেই বিধানসভা ভোটের ইস্তাহারের খসড়া তৈরি করে ফেলেছে। ওই খসড়া ১০ তারিখের মধ্যেই শরিক দলগুলির কাছে পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হবে। প্রার্থী-তালিকাও চূড়ান্ত করে তাঁর কাছে পাঠিয়ে দেওয়ার কথা বলা হয়েছে। বিমানবাবু বলেন, “মাধ্যমিক পরীক্ষার্থীদের কথা ভেবে মাইক ব্যবহার না-করে প্রচার চালানো হবে। পরীক্ষা চলাকালীন আদালতের আদেশ মেনে প্রচার হবে।” মাধ্যমিক পরীক্ষা ২৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি শুরু হচ্ছে।

● সংসদে ফিরছেন মমতা...পৃঃ ৯

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

- 6 FEB 2006

Trinamul names 52 candidates

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Feb. 5. — Trinamul Congress today announced a list of 52 sitting MLAs who will be contesting from their respective seats in the forthcoming Assembly poll.

Talking to newsmen at Trinamul Congress Bhavan here after her meeting with the working committee members of her party,

Miss Mamata Banerjee said the list had been unanimously approved by the members of the working committee at today's meet.

The seats of those legislators who had been either expelled or had deserted the party would be announced later, it was learnt.

Names of candidates who would contest from Chowringhee, Behala East, Bowbazar and Tamluk will be announced in the

second phase. Mr Subrata Mukherjee, Mr Paras Dutta, Mrs Nayana Banerjee and Mr Nirbed Roy had won from these seats in the 2001 election.

The Trinamul also did not announce the name of its candidate from Mahisadal from where Mr Dipak Ghosh was elected in the last Assembly poll.

The party also did not declare the name of the candidate for the Dum

Dum seat from where Mr Arunava Ghosh was elected during the last poll. Mr Ghosh had resigned as an MLA a few months ago.

Asked when the names of candidates for these seats would be declared, the Trinamul supremo said that the names would be announced after getting the approval of the party's working committee.

Briefing mediapersons on today's working com-

mittee meeting, the leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, said all efforts and discussions to unite all anti Left Front parties to bring them under one umbrella — that of the West Bengal Democratic Front — would continue.

Miss Banerjee said she still believed that one-to-one fights with the Left Front was absolutely necessary to deal a blow to the

Congress still on 'woo Mamata' mission

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, Feb. 5. — The Congress today indicated that it had not yet given up on its "woo Mamata" mission. AICC general secre-

tary Mrs Margaret Alva said here today that the party would fight the Left Front to secure a victory in the next Assembly election in West Bengal. The Congress' in-charge of the state said the party would hammer out alliances with

NCP, RJD and PDS, a splinter group of erstwhile CPI-M members, led by Mr Saifuddin Choudhury for the poll.

On Congress' alliance with Miss Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress, Mrs Alva claimed that she

had a long-time friendship with Miss Banerjee. She said she was likely to meet the Trinamul chief sooner or later. She also set aside the Left Front's criticism of the Trinamul as a communal party. Mrs Alva said only the BJP was a communal party.

BJP chief Mr Rajnath Singh had recently said that his party was in a process of firming up ties with various parties for the coming Assembly elections in Kerala and West Bengal. He said the aim was to defeat the Left parties in the polls.

Mr Singh had said that in West Bengal the Trinamul and the BJP had an alliance. He claimed that the Congress' talks for an electoral understanding with the Trinamul had failed. The BJP chief had said his party would enter into an alliance for the Assembly election in Assam too, though he did not name the prospective alliance partners in Assam.

In Kolkata, the state Congress today announced that the party would start its poll campaign in the districts from this month, highlighting the failures of the Left Front government and the successes of the UPA.

West Bengal PCC chief and defence minister, Mr

Pranab Mukherjee, told newsmen that PCC will publish names of its candidates soon. Earlier, he held a meeting with the district presidents and office bearers of PCC at Bidhan Bhavan this afternoon and briefed them about his meeting with Trinamul Congress chief Miss Mamata Banerjee which was held on 28 January over the alliance.

He said that the district party presidents have been asked to strengthen booth and block level committees. Mr Mukherjee said that the leaders from the districts have been asked to hold meetings at places where weekly markets (hats) are held as this will help them to build mass contact. PCC leaders will visit some of these meetings.

Mr Mukherjee refused comment when asked whether the proposed alliance with Trinamul Congress can be called a closed chapter. He also refused to say anything when asked in how many seats Congress candidates are going to fight in the forthcoming Assembly poll. He said the AICC office bearer in charge of West Bengal, Mrs Margaret Alva, will come here on 13 and 14 February to meet PCC leaders. But it was not sure if she would meet Miss Banerjee too.

6 FEB 2006

THE STATESMAN

Raj Babbar suspended from party

New Delhi: Cracking the whip against its rebel MP, the Samajwadi Party on Tuesday suspended Raj Babbar from its parliamentary party for his outbursts against party general secretary Amar Singh accusing him of being hand in glove with the Congress.

The action came hours after an unruffled Babbar had launched a fresh attack on Amar Singh demanding his removal from the party for promoting "broker culture" and "weakening" its secular credentials.

An actor-turned politician who had won from the Agra Lok Sabha constituency twice, Babbar would have to face a three-member party committee headed by senior leader Mohan Singh, which would go into the "entire conspiracy" that led to his outbursts.

A day after Babbar had a meeting with party supremo and UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, who continued to back the party general secretary, SP parliamentary party leader Ram Gopal Yadav wrote a letter to Babbar and accused him of levelling "baseless charges" against Amar Singh and the entire party "which was certainly an act of indiscipline."

"Your action becomes all the more serious, as prima facie, it is being felt that your statements have come at the behest of the Congress," the letter said.

Babbar's revolt was the first open attack from within against Amar Singh, who has risen to prominence sidelining many a veteran to become the most trusted lieutenant of Mulayam Singh in the last few years. Amar Singh had recently been in the news with his allegations against Congress

President Sonia Gandhi of having ordered the tapping of his telephones.

The suspension also came at a time when SP was in a turmoil in the wake of poor showing in panchayat elections as also defeat in the two assembly bypolls which were won by its arch political rival BSP.

The Congress, which is at loggerheads with the SP on several issues, had on Monday come out strongly in support of Babbar for



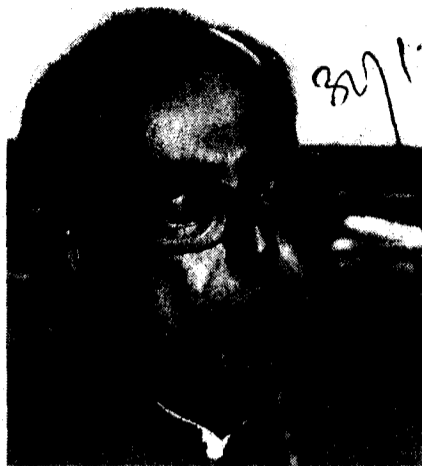
Raj Babbar after his meeting with CPM general secretary Prakash Karat in New Delhi on Tuesday

exposing the "five-star culture" in the Yadav-led party. The committee headed by Mohan Singh comprises of Rajya Sabha Member Shahid Siddiqui and Akhilesh Yadav, Lok Sabha member and son of Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Soon after his suspension from the parliamentary party, Babbar went to CPM headquarters to meet Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury in what he described as efforts to "bring together secular forces." Reacting to his suspension, Babbar said "It feels good. I accept this," he said in a sarcastic tone. After meeting CPM leaders, Babbar continued to be his caustic best about Amar Singh, but hailed Mulayam Singh Yadav as his "elder brother" and asserted that he would continue to remain in the Samajwadi Party. Agencies

Grand alliance against Left Front dissipates

Quit NDA, Congress tells Trinamool



Pranab Mukherjee

Special Correspondent

KOLKATA: Formation of a "mahajot" (grand alliance) to prevent a division in the anti-Left Front vote in the West Bengal Assembly elections dissipated after a meeting between Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee, late on Saturday night. The two stood firm in their resolve not to make concessions.

Their uncompromising stand notwithstanding, both, however, fell short of calling off the move to forge an alliance of sorts. Both put up a brave front at the end of the meeting and insisted that there was still room for discussions to fight united the Left Front.

Echoing the decision of the All-India Congress Committee at its recent plenary in Hyderabad against any electoral alliance which involved the Bharatiya Janata Party, Mr. Mukherjee, who is also president of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, reportedly reiterated at the meeting that his party would welcome an anti-Left alliance, provided Ms. Banerjee disassociated herself from the National Democratic Alliance led by the BJP.

The BJP is nowhere in the reckoning in the race for the honours in the State.

The Trinamool leader ruled out such a possibility even as she maintained that her efforts to get the Congress yield to some electoral arrangement between the two parties that could minimise the impact of a division in the anti-Left vote would continue.

Though the possibility of her ensuring a "one-to-one" contest against the Left Front in the coming polls is appearing increasingly improbable Ms. Banerjee remains in search of allies within the Congress such as veteran leader A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury who have endorsed her argument for direct contests against can-



Mamata Banerjee

didates put up by the Left Front.

What she has made clear is that with the idea of a formal "mahajot" falling flat, electoral adjustments in as many constituencies as possible are still worth working for. The "mahajot" is a working concept in Mr. Chowdhury's home district of Malda where the alliance is in control of the zilla parishad.

This was the second time in less than a month that the two leaders had met to deliberate on the issue, both under pressure from sections within their respective parties to come to an agreement over seat sharing in the elections.

Speaking to *The Hindu* senior leaders of both parties have agreed that the task of taking on the might of the Left Front on their own is a formidable one.

The Left Front leadership has remained undaunted over the prospects of a "mahajot" against the Left Veteran Marxist leader Jyoti Basu has been repeatedly cautioning against a tacit electoral understanding between the Congress and the Trinamool on the lines of the one in Malda district.

Tie-up possible: Das Munshi

PTI reports from Raiganj:

The Congress would strive till the "very last moment" for a political understanding with the Trinamool Congress, said Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Priyaranjan Das Munshi.

"We are ready for a political understanding in seats which will not be contested by the BJP, which fields candidates for only about 30 out of the total 294 constituencies," he told newsmen at Raiganj on Sunday.

Mr. Munshi's statement comes on the heels of Ms. Banerjee's statement on Saturday that a formula could be worked out for putting up a one-to-one contest against the CPI (M).

Ray by side, BJP chief sees Bihar replay in Bengal

Advani 'welcomes' Cong

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

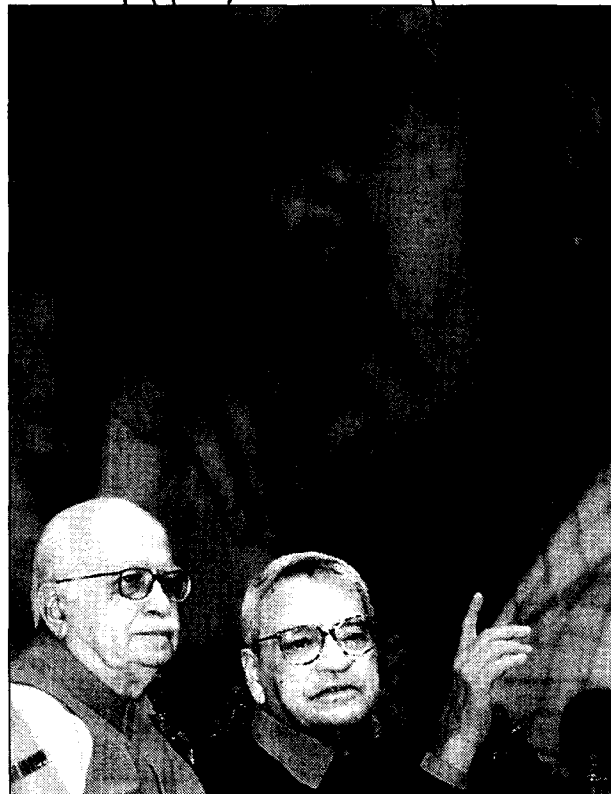
Calcutta, Dec. 18: As in Bihar, the Assembly polls in Bengal would be a challenge to the Election Commission, BJP president L.K. Advani said today.

"There was a time (when) we thought a political change would not be possible in Bihar. But the EC (Election Commission) has ensured it. Now, the Assembly polls in Bengal will be a challenge to the Election Commission," he told a convention of the Trinamul Congress youth wing at Netaji Indoor Stadium.

Former Congress chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray, a sworn enemy of the saffron party once, shared the dais with Advani, who said it is time for the people of Bengal to show their courage. "If the people cannot show courage, the EC alone cannot do anything."

Advani might have to quit his post of BJP president by the year-end, but he made it clear that his party would not mind if the Congress enters into an alliance with the BJP and Trinamul. "If the Congress (leaders) want to join the grand alliance, they are welcome. If they don't, we will fight without them," he said.

In an apparent reference to state Congress president and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee's rejection of Mamata



LK Advani and Siddhartha Shankar Ray sit in the shadow of a larger-than-life portrait of Mamata Banerjee on Sunday. Picture by Amit Datta

Banerjee's invitation to the convention, Advani said it was not necessary that all those present today should have similar views. "But our common objective is to see the end of the communist rule."

Ray, now in political hibernation, came down on the state Congress chief. "How can Pranabbabu attend this convention? He is busy back-patting Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee as we saw in Farakka yesterday,"

he said.

At the foundation-stone laying for a cement factory, the chief minister had praised the Congress-led Centre for its cooperation and Mukherjee gave credit to the Left government for agricultural reforms and a surge in industrial growth.

Advani admitted that he had not expected to see Ray at the meeting. "It has a special significance. This is a message to the people of Bengal."

He also said the Congress had no option but to stay away as it was an ally of the CPM.

Ray tried to woo Muslim voters for Mamata. He said: "If the BJP is untouchable, why is the Congress running the Englishbazar municipal board (in Malda) with its help? The NDA is not against Muslims. I have complete faith in Mamata."

Mamata followed Advani in exhorting anti-CPM forces to unite under the banner of the Paschimbanga Ganatantrik Front, which she has floated. "Those who will not join us might stay with the CPM," she said. So far, only some small parties have joined forces with the Trinamul chief.

The Congress condemned Ray's criticism of Mukherjee. "Siddhartha Shankar Ray is no longer a politician. He had deserted the party in its dark days in 1977," said Manas Bhuniya, a state Congress general secretary.

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Arrest warrant against Mamata

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Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Jan. 4. — The chief judicial magistrate of Barasat court, Mr Siddhartha Roy Chowdhury, today issued an arrest warrant against the Trinamul Congress supremo, Miss Mamata Banerjee, and five other accused on charges of arson, beating up policemen, damaging government property and possessing arms.

A police complaint was lodged with Barasat police station on 22 February, 1994 against 202 Youth Congress members including Miss Mamata Banerjee who had assembled for a 'law-violation programme' at Kachari Maidan in Barasat.

They reportedly went on the rampage beating police officers, torching and damaging vehicles and hurling bombs.

Barring seven others including Miss Mamata Banerjee, all were released on bail. But police could not arrest them. Later, one of the accused among the seven died.

The CJM has asked Miss Banerjee and five others to appear in court on 7 January.

The Trinamul Congress

described the move as a conspiracy "hatched by the CPI-M to corner" the main Opposition party before the Assembly poll which is a few months away.

Asked to comment on the development, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said: "Better leave the matter."

Mr Madan Mitra, president of the Trinamul's youth wing, said the entire move was being engineered by Alimuddin Street (the CPI-M's state headquarters) at a time when Miss Banerjee was trying to unite all anti-CPI-M forces to end the "autocratic" Marxist rule which had "pauperised" the state.

There is reason to suspect "a sinister design" of the CPI-M, since it has goaded the state administration to "rake up an old and inconsequential" case to harass the Trinamul chief, Mr Mitra complained.

However, the Trinamul will go to the people and expose the "true colours" of the CPI-M "which has started targeting Opposition leaders taking advantage of Election Commission directives so that it can bulldoze all attempts to overthrow its regime," the Trinamul leadership said.

Trinamul sans BJP alliance on: Cong

NEW DELHI, Jan. 4. — While indicating its desire for an electoral association with Miss Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress jointly to take on the ruling Left Front in the West Bengal Assembly election, the AICC today made it clear that the Congress would not go into any anti-Left alliance which included the BJP. "We will not have any truck with the BJP, directly or indirectly," said the AICC general secretary in charge of West Bengal affairs, Mrs Ambika Soni, here today.

Referring to Miss Banerjee's recent meeting with the Bengal Congress chief and defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, Mrs Soni said the Trinamul leader had underlined the need for an anti-Left alliance. "The proposal will be discussed at various levels... nothing has been finalised so far," she said.

It could run into rough weather yet if Miss Banerjee stuck to her stand on a seat-sharing adjustment with the BJP. The Congress is sending out the message that it will not refrain from battling the Left though it happens to be the UPA government's supporting partner in New Delhi. — SNS

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