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CONTENTS

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POLITICAL

International Affairs

Analyst: South Asia Not High on U.S. Agenda [THE HINDU 6 Mar]	1
Correspondent Reports on Relations With Israel	2
Interview With Peres [THE TIMES OF INDIA 3 Mar]	2
Israeli Officials Comment [THE TIMES OF INDIA 6 Mar]	4
Success of Singh Talks With ASEAN Reported [THE TIMES OF INDIA 17 Mar]	5

Regional Affairs

Government Said Anxious To Deport Chakma Refugees [THE WEEK 14 Mar]	6
ISI Conspiracy Said Behind Bombay Explosions [JANSATTA 20 Mar]	7
Daily Expresses Concern Over Instability in Pakistan [THE HINDUSTAN TIMES 20 Apr]	8

Internal Affairs

Professor Explains Why Nation's Secularism is 'Pseudo' [ORGANISER 21 Mar]	8
Hindus Said Gradually Shedding Nehruvian Secularism [SUNDAY 20 Mar]	11
Postponement of Tripura Elections Questioned, Criticized	16
Congress Wants President's Rule [ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA 5 Mar]	16
Difficulties Seen Ahead [ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA 4 Mar]	17
Congress's Internal Weakness Blamed [ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA 12 Mar]	18
CPM Reaction Seen Ineffective [ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA 11 Mar]	19
Congress Legislator Chastised for Pro-BJP Sentiments [THE TELEGRAPH 17 Mar]	21
Congress (I) Spokesman Comments on Bombay Explosions [THE TIMES OF INDIA 17 Mar]	21
Congress (I) Policy in Punjab Said Alienating Akalis [THE TELEGRAPH 18 Mar]	22
Struggle Within Congress (I) Viewed [JANSATTA 15 Mar]	23
Rao Criticized for Flirting With CPM [ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA 20 Mar]	25
RSS Leader Interviewed on Muslim Indians, Role of Islam [ORGANISER 21 Mar]	25
BJP Seen Dependent on Mix of Politics, Religion [THE STATESMAN 17 Mar]	27
Jayalalitha Alliance With BJP Analyzed [THE TELEGRAPH 21 Mar]	29
Telegu Desam Leader Said Ready to Join BJP [THE TELEGRAPH 23 Mar]	31
Rao Speaks in Upper, Lower House Debates [THE HINDU 12 Mar]	31
Rao Meets With Carnegie Endowment Delegates [THE TIMES OF INDIA 10 Mar]	33
Officials Note Weakness of Intelligence Bodies [THE TIMES OF INDIA 17 Mar]	33
Mafia Leader Behind Explosion Said Connected With CPM [THE TELEGRAPH 18 Mar]	34
CPM Backing of Mafia Leader Alleged [THE STATESMAN 18 Mar]	35
Mafia Leader Relationship With CPM Said Very Close [THE TELEGRAPH 19 Mar]	36
Mafia Said Running Lotteries Without Hindrance [THE TELEGRAPH 19 Mar]	36
Scholar Quotes Western Scholars to Refute Hindu Claims [THE STATESMAN 19 Mar]	38

ECONOMIC

New National Mineral Policy Announced	40
Minister Explains [THE TIMES OF INDIA 6 Mar]	40
Coal Monopoly Retained [THE TIMES OF INDIA 8 Mar]	40
Inspection Report Flays Bombay Stock Exchange [THE TIMES OF INDIA 10 Mar]	41
Dunkel Draft Assessed as Holding Promise [THE TIMES OF INDIA 11 Mar]	42
Russian Firm To Buy Transport Aircraft Design [THE TIMES OF INDIA 11 Mar]	43
Trade Agreement Signed With Czech Republic [THE TIMES OF INDIA 17 Mar]	43

International Affairs

Analyst: South Asia Not High on U.S. Agenda

93AS0736A Madras *THE HINDU* in English 6 Mar 93
p 9

[Article by K.K. Katyal: "Spotlight on Indo-U.S. Relations"; boldface words as published]

[Text] New Delhi, March 5. Non-official seminars and study groups on foreign policy, normally, are academic exercises which help refine thinking on the given subject but do not by their very nature reflect the working of the official mind. At times, they may influence, intangibly if not directly, the decision-taking process. The recent studies and discussions by groups of experts in the U.S. could provide, because of their timing and the standing of the participants, small but significant inputs to the Clinton Administration's policy-making in regard to India and the rest of the region. But let that not create the impression that South Asia is high on its agenda.

India International Centre and the Carnegie Endowment are co-sponsoring a three-day conference on Sunday on "Indo-U.S. relations in a changing international environment," with leading academicians, political figures, retired Generals and bureaucrats as participants. This also was the theme of a report, prepared by the study group of the Carnegie Endowment, which was revised so as to include developments till December 8, 1992. It dealt with the new substantive content of Indo-U.S. relations, India's stability, human rights, Kashmir, Indo-Pakistani relations and nuclear proliferation. That some of these matters were the major concerns of the leading figures of Democrats (most of whom now occupy positions of responsibility) added to its relevance.

Then there was the non-official dialogue, in January, convened by the U.S. Institute of Peace, a U.S. think-tank founded by the U.S. Congress, which concentrated on "Conflict Resolution in South Asia: Creative Approaches to Kashmir". It was attended by retired civil and military officials, South Asia experts from India, Pakistan and the U.S., journalists and public figures from the two sides of the Line of Control in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

So far there has been only one institutionalised official contact between India and the new administration in the U.S.—in the Joint Working Group on Narcotics. It was a modest exercise, related to a minor irritant (which if not sensibly handled could however develop into a major issue). Political and other substantive matters have yet to be addressed in structured exercises. Till then, the trends and ideas thrown up in non-official studies have to be given serious attention.

Some comfort: Of the two reports, the one by the Carnegie Endowment would certainly have provided some comfort to the policy-makers in New Delhi, while the other—by the U.S. Institute of Peace - would, equally certainly, have caused annoyance. In the second case,

there was an impressive Indian representation at the dialogue but as the report itself pointed out it was "not a consensus document in the sense that all participants in the dialogue agree to all its terms or that any participants exercised veto over the inclusion or exclusion of any provision." In particular, New Delhi would not be happy with the assumption—that "the people of Kashmir must be central actors in this political process (for resolving the problem) along with the Governments and citizens of India and Pakistan."

Some of the points dealt with by the Carnegie Endowment are:

India's importance to the U.S.: India and the United States share common security concerns stemming from the rise of extremist forces of Islamic fundamentalism in areas adjacent to India, and have common interests in preserving regional stability, freedom of the sea lanes in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf and access to Gulf oil. For this reason cooperative relations with India, including nascent military cooperation, will be of growing importance to the U.S. in maintaining regional stability and in resolving a wide range of global problems. The U.S. could upgrade its contacts with the Indian defence establishment, bringing them at par with its contacts with Pakistan and many other Asian countries. Such contacts could eventually extend to American access to Indian military facilities under agreed criteria, without involving, however, any formal military alliance or concessional arms sales.

Human Rights: India's pledge to establish a Human Rights Commission should be implemented and the Commission should be given sufficient powers and independence to carry out effective, impartial investigations. The deployment of poorly-disciplined paramilitary forces and police in Kashmir, Punjab, Assam and Andhra Pradesh and the use of draconian security laws against the press, human rights activists and other critics in these States, is deplorable.

Nuclear issue: The most sensitive emerging problems in Indo-American relations are likely to relate to India's potential to produce nuclear weapons. It builds from the premise that both India and Pakistan are already capable of deploying nuclear weapons, and concludes that instead of seeking to induce India to give up its nuclear option, the U.S. should promote a policy of nuclear restraint in South Asia. To this end, Washington could join in a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing, a multi-lateral freeze on the production of fissionable material and an agreement on no-first-use of nuclear weapons. India, without signing the NPT [Nonproliferation Treaty], should unilaterally make a formal pledge to abide by the NPT provisions barring the export of nuclear weapons or of military related technology. India should also agree to join the five-power regional nuclear dialogue proposed by Pakistan and the U.S., provided that all States involved agree to participate as equals and to accept an agenda in which reciprocal obligations involving all participants can be discussed.

Relations with Pakistan: The recent upsurge of Hindu-Muslim animosity throughout South Asia has heightened the danger of a war between India and Pakistan that could escalate to the nuclear level. India should engage in a diplomatic dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir and unilaterally withdraw from the Siachen glacier as a stimulus for a broader dialogue on military confidence building measures between the two countries. Forces of both countries should pull back from the border to the accompaniment of mutual termination of cross-border assistance to insurgents. Pakistan would stop its support for insurgents in Kashmir and Punjab and India would end its operations in Sind.

The U.S. should formally terminate the 1959 mutual security agreement with Pakistan and make it clear that it has no residual commitment to assist Pakistan in the event of an Indo-Pakistan war.

Kashmir: India should consider greater autonomy for Kashmir within the Indian Union and negotiate with Pakistan on Kashmir provided Islamabad agrees to resolve the issue within the framework of the Shimla Agreement. The American policy on Kashmir should continue to promote bilateral Indo-Pakistani negotiations within the framework of the Shimla Agreement. The U.S. could also support some form of U.N. involvement provided that both parties accept a U.N. role and that such a role is not predicated on adherence to past U.N. relations on Kashmir.

The USIP's [expansion not given] president, Mr. Sam Lewis, is now the head of the State Department's Policy Planning Council in the new administration and, as such, the scenarios worked out in its report may well receive official attention.

The report recommended four phases for "building foundations for dialogue on long-term resolution".

Phase one—reciprocal implementation of the agreement:

End of "militant" acts. End of curfew and "people's curfew".

Jammu and Kashmir Police assume prime responsibility for law and order. Indian troops and para-military forces return to deployment areas.

Within an agreed period after the cessation of violence: (a) release of political prisoners and general amnesty for political prisoners; and (b) return of displaced persons.

Phase two—preparing for dialogue about the future:

Organisation by Kashmiris of an intra-Kashmiri dialogue involving a broad spectrum of regional leaders of Jammu and Kashmir, including Pakistan-held areas of the Northern Territories and Azad Kashmir; and the Indian-held territories of Ladakh, Kashmir, Poonch and Jammu, and representatives of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Indian and Pakistani commitments to: (a) facilitate this dialogue (visas, travel assistance, etc.); and (b) begin discussion with Kashmir partner about the longer-term future as soon as a suitable Kashmiri partner has been formed.

Phase three—dialogue on the long-term future:

Arrangements will be made to organise an exploratory dialogue on long-term relationships and a process for moving toward them. In the first instance, the emphasis will be on dialogue—not negotiation. The purpose is to identify the subjects and sequence for negotiation and perhaps to lay out a process through which negotiation and implementation might evolve:

Phase four—negotiation: As issues for formal negotiation are identified, begin with one subject at a time.

Correspondent Reports on Relations With Israel

Interview With Peres

93AS0701A Bombay *THE TIMES OF INDIA*
in English 3 Mar 93 p 17

[Article by Dileep Padgaonkar: "Israel Sees Greater Role for India"; italicized words as published]

[Text]

West Asia Peace Talks

If Israel's Prime Minister, Mr Yitzhak Rabin, is widely regarded here as a wily and discrete "real politician," the foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, has earned an enviable reputation as a thinker-statesman *par excellence*.

"I've always voted for him," said Issac, the guide who drove me up and down Israel. "He is above the hurly-burly of politics. He chooses his words carefully. He is balanced. He is wise."

A foreign service official agreed: "His mind is focussed on the future. He is concerned about trends and processes. You could call him a visionary." And a well-known journalist who recently published a book on prominent Israeli personalities said: "Shimon Peres has inherited the finest qualities of his mentor Ben Gurion. He tends to be a loner. It seems he is really at home in the company of writers and thinkers. You will see this for yourself if your questions reflect his interest in ideas."

The meeting with Mr Peres took place in his office at the foreign ministry. The U.S. secretary of state, Mr Warren Christopher, was in town on an official visit and I expected the foreign minister to be wholly preoccupied with the American guest. If he was, he did not show it. The conversation, which lasted for three-fourths of an hour, covered a wide range of subjects: the intellectual scene in France (Mr Peres is a Francophone), Egyptian perceptions about peace prospects in West Asia (I had just spent a week in Cairo), the growth of religious fundamentalism worldwide, population pressures, the

promise of high-tech, Tolstoy and Gandhi, the present situation in India and so on. Mr Peres speaks slowly and softly, so softly at times that his voice turns into a hoarse whisper which adds to his charisma.

Excerpts:

India has taken certain positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict all these years. Is this likely to cause problems in promoting co-operation between our two countries?

I do not think so. On the contrary, the Indian position began by having relations with both sides. We on our part never believed that if you wanted to have friendly relations with Israel you should have unfriendly relations with the Arabs. On the contrary, we understand perfectly India's desire to have friendly relations with the Arabs. We ourselves are trying to have friendly relations with them.

India is already involved in the West Asia peace process. Do you see prospects of a greater involvement?

Why not? Negotiations are presently being conducted on two tracks. The bilateral track which is basically face-to-face negotiations in these groups. Their purpose is to solve the problems of the past: Frontiers, territories etc. and then we have the track of multilateral negotiations with the participation of 30 countries outside West Asia and 12 Arab countries and Israel. The subject of these negotiations is not the past but the future. They do not involve talks between parties but talks which address issues: economy, refugees, water sharing and so on. These problems cannot be solved either nationally or militarily. They must be solved regionally. For that framework I am sure that India can play an important role.

We in India are deeply concerned about the rise of religious fundamentalism. I find a similar concern expressed in other parts of the world. These fundamentalist groups put "faith" above constitutions, parliament, the rule of law and governments find that the mechanisms they are familiar with are inadequate to handle them.

Fundamentalism is not a religion. It is a protest, a state of mind. In every country fundamentalism has a different significance, a different expression. You cannot compare fundamentalism in India with fundamentalism in Algeria. Or fundamentalism in Gaza with fundamentalism in Tunisia. One can quote the first sentence of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* which says that all happy families are happily alike but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. Fundamentalism is like the unhappy family—unhappy in its own way.

The Muslim world is deeply divided. Some recognised the nature of the new times: that the world has become a global village, that today markets are more important than countries, that the economy has become global while politics has remained national. The Arab world is becoming aware of all this. It is recognising the virtues of

democracy and the fact that its problems do not derive from the outside but from within Arab countries themselves.

In the Muslim world you have two trends. One, a fundamentalist fanatic trend and the other a secular trend. The first trend is expressed in Iran and the second in Turkey. And you can see the competition between the two. I believe in the trend of modernism, pluralism and democracy because of the growing intervention of modern phenomena such as the media. The media played a vital role in bringing about the downfall of communism and of totalitarian systems. Eventually it will affect all undemocratic trends. Governments will never know a moment of self-assurance. They will be under constant pressure.

Yet you don't see too many efforts at the international level to devise policies in order to cope with these problems in the light of the analysis you have made.

Some important things are well known. You know them in India very well. For example, what is happening is that the fertility of the people goes up while the fertility of land goes down. The gap leads to various catastrophes. They are expressed in terms of sickness: sickness of man which is AIDS, sickness of the soil which is called deserts. We have to wage a worldwide battle to fight this sickness. We have to fight against the desertification of land. Look around us. Arabs possess an enormous amount of land. But 89 per cent of it is desert. And the remaining 11 per cent is threatened on account of salination and misuse of the top soil. A body of land needs the same attention and treatment as the human body. Remember that today there are 240 million Arabs. In 20 years they will be 500 million. And India will be larger than China in the next century.

It is very difficult to introduce family control. So if you cannot bring down the fertility of people you must increase scientifically the fertility of the land. We must have water to stop the desertification of land. We need new systems of cultivation of recycling water, to prevent the destruction of the top soil.

For me the dream is to take out the desert from the land, take out salt from the water, take out violence from nations and from the minds of people.

And yet we cannot cope with violence because violence now is the expression of the alliance between terrorism and religious fundamentalism. We face this in Kashmir and I want to ask you what Israel's position is on this issue?

Basically, without introducing the rule of the majority, you will have the rule of the gun. Democracy is a protection; it also needs protection. The time has come to control the sources of arms and the financing of terrorism. There must be a real beginning to put pressure on supplies of violence and not only on the users of violence.

There should be a clear warning that atrocities committed by individuals in or out of uniform will not be allowed. We have to introduce democratic system in the hearts and minds of people. The 20th century has shown clearly that we cannot guarantee political stability unless economic progress is rooted in democracy. Undemocratic systems are very expensive. They don't produce anything; they only offer a stirring arm to oppression. They live in an atmosphere of suspicion and lack of initiative. They misuse two commodities which are free of charge: fresh air and real freedom.

Another area of concern is the proliferation of nuclear arms. India and Israel are not signatories of the NPT [Nonproliferation Treaty]. But pressure will come on both countries—from public opinion and from various governments—to curb proliferation. How will Israel cope with the pressure?

I am not much impressed by nations who are signatories of the NPT. One of them is Iraq. How can you accede to the NPT without real peace? Israel has announced that we are for a West Asia free of nonconventional weapons, including nuclear weapons. But in order to do so we have to have verification. And for verification we need peace. Free zones should follow peace zones. Israel has said that we will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in West Asia. But some of our Arab neighbours are suspicious. They want us to agree to a nuclear free zone. But our contention is that the only way to remove suspicion about our nuclear capability is to create conditions of peace in the region.

There is still much speculation about what Israel means by "peace." What is the architecture of the final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict?"

When you speak of architecture we must consider, as in any building, how to organise space, proportions, corridor holes, materials. We have to negotiate space, define borders, we have to think about materials i.e. about a new economy in West Asia. And here the question is not so much about land as about water. Water is not necessarily a match to land. Waters flow in the belly of the land totally unconcerned about sovereignty.

Rivers do not follow frontiers and rains do not go through customs. If you really want an arrangement in this region you need to think not only about land but about water too. A building also needs defence and in times of missiles there is no national defence but regional defence. No matter how large a country is missiles go much beyond its frontiers.

Israeli Officials Comment

93AS0701B Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA
in English 6 Mar 93 p 17

[Article by Dileep Padgaonkar: "Israeli Role in India's Development Possible"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The burden of all conversations on India-Israel relations one hears in Israel runs roughly along these lines: Israel has always extended a hand of friendship to India. For more than 40 years India chose not to clasp it. But once it did, the prospects of cooperation between the two countries seemed almost limitless. However, in terms of concrete action, the progress so far has been niggardly. Why?

As evidence of India's lacklustre response to Israeli overtures, it is pointed out, for instance, that the visit of the foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, to New Delhi has been postponed three times. The reason, at least insofar as the third postponement is concerned, was that such a visit would be "misunderstood" in the context of the aftermath of the destruction of the Babri masjid on December 6.

The foreign ministry here, it is learnt, made it known to the Indian authorities through the normal diplomatic channels that Mr Peres "appreciated" New Delhi's difficulties. But in private, senior officials, journalists and academics who take a professional interest in India do not fail to express a sense of disappointment. "In the recent past India took a position which was more hostile towards Israel than the position taken by some of our Arab neighbours" a highly placed official in the foreign ministry told *The Times of India*. However, the day India discovered that it was in its interest to be involved in the peace process it found that it was imperative to establish relations with Israel. Since then our relationship has developed relatively smoothly. Goodwill exists on both sides. But the Indians still appear to be somewhat reluctant to step up contacts."

This reluctance, according to another senior foreign ministry official, stems from the assumption that India does not cosy up to Israel in order not to annoy Muslim opinion in India and Muslim and Arab countries. But the same official quickly adds that the assumption may be quite misleading.

"There was no hostile reaction from the Muslim community when India announced the resumption of full diplomatic relations with Israel. As a matter of fact a large number of Indian Muslims come to do business in Israel," the official said.

"As for Muslim and Arab governments, please note that we already have excellent relations with Egypt. Syria is willing to sign a peace accord on the dotted line. And once Syria signs, can Lebanon be far behind? Jordan, too, is eager for an early settlement, partly on accounts of its own problems with its Palestinian population and partly to curry favour with Washington. Remember that Americans are not prepared to forget so soon that King Hussein sided with Saddam during the Gulf war. So what is India worried about? Arafat? But, sensing his own isolation from the Palestinian movement within Israel, even Arafat has begun to speak about disbanding the PLO."

"We are told that India is interested in the peace process" the official said. "But where is the evidence for India's interest? We are keen on India's greater involvement in the peace process precisely because of India's standing in the third world and especially because of its close links with the Muslim and Arab countries and the PLO. However, 'interest from a distance' is something hard for us to grasp. Here, out of sight means out of mind."

The Israelis appear to be equally saddened and puzzled by the postponement of the visit to Israel of India's agriculture minister, Mr Balram Jakhar. This is so because on more than one occasion Israel has offered its state-of-the-art technology to stimulate agriculture growth at competitive prices.

The offer was reiterated by the Prime Minister, Mr Yitzhak Rabin, and the foreign minister, Mr Shimon Peres, in their interviews with *The Times of India*.

"Thanks to drip irrigation and a judicious use of fertilisers Israel has been able to make its deserts bloom," an agricultural expert said. "Our technologies, which have already proved their worth in some projects in Maharashtra, could produce miracles in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, in the Konkan belt and wherever the top soil is not favourable enough to grow crops, fruits and vegetables."

According to information available here, a report by Mr M. S. Swaminathan recommending the use of Israeli technology and expertise in Rajasthan is already with the authorities in New Delhi. On the basis of this report, a decision has reportedly been taken in principle to send a team of Israeli experts to Jaipur. But the apprehension among Indophiles, I spoke to here is that such a visit would not go far enough unless there is the political will in New Delhi for a massive Israeli involvement to help feed a population which in a few years will cross the one billion mark.

The term "political will" is used even more emphatically when conversations relate to cooperation in the diplomat and security fields. Israeli analysts believe that India and Israel can, for instance, adopt complementary strategies on issues such as curbing terrorism, halting the spread of religious fundamentalism, working along with turkey to enable the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union to move towards democracy, a free market and a secular political order and, finally, to effectively deal with matters pertaining to nuclear proliferation. (Both India and Israel are non-signatories of the NPT).

While the analysts will not spell out the tangible nature of cooperation, especially in the security field, they leave no room for doubt that Israel will respond positively to Indian demands for Israeli material and know-how. "We are aware of India's constraints and we appreciate them. This is why we expect India to make a move. On our part, we are ready, even eager to offer our cooperation" one analyst with the foreign affairs ministry said.

Success of Singh Talks With ASEAN Reported

93AS0702 Bombay *THE TIMES OF INDIA* in English
17 Mar 93 p 19

[Text] New Delhi, March 16 (PTI)—India and the six-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Tuesday took a major step forward by agreeing to set up a joint sectoral co-operation committee and encourage the formation of a joint business council encompassing areas of trade, investment and tourism.

Opening the sectoral dialogue to establish institutional links with ASEAN which constitutes the fastest growing region in the world, the external affairs minister, Mr Dinesh Singh, also suggested the setting up of a body of experts to identify project areas where Indian enterprise could be utilised.

Mr Dinesh Singh said India and ASEAN could work together in software development and marketing, small and medium enterprises, institutionalised linkages in major sectors, such as petroleum and natural gas, joint ventures and development of infrastructure, particularly in power generation, transportation and construction.

The ASEAN secretary-general, Mr Ajit Singh, said the strides made by India in advanced technology, particularly in the processing of primary products, could be of great use to the regional grouping.

Calling for an increased exchange of trade missions and trade fairs, Mr Ajit Singh also laid emphasis on the active participation of the private sector. ASEAN comprises Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei and the Philippines.

Mr Ajit Singh lauded India's economic reforms and a discernible shift in its overseas investment towards ASEAN, largely in joint ventures in industrial products and textiles. He saw more opportunities for expansion and suggested that ASEAN and India could examine the setting up of an ASEAN information and promotion centre for trade and investment.

Yet another possibility was for joint ventures to take advantage of the lucrative opportunities that prevailed outside India and ASEAN. An example could be the Indo-China market which had much potential in areas such as pharmaceuticals, food processing and textiles, the ASEAN secretary-general stated.

He emphasised that India could complement ASEAN's efforts in technology and human resource development. In the same spirit, ASEAN, with its expertise in computer informatics, capital market development and financial deregulation could be of assistance to India.

Mr Ajit Singh also said that although trade between ASEAN and India had grown at 11 per cent for the last few years, the fact remained that India still accounted for only one per cent of ASEAN's global trade.

ASEAN exports to India grew by more than 40 per cent over the last six years to stand at \$1.4 billion. This has, however, been eclipsed by the 500 per cent increase in ASEAN imports from India—increasing from \$376 million in 1985 to \$1.86 billion in 1991.

Mr Dinesh Singh noted that the ASEAN economy comprising 325 million consumers generated a gross domestic product of \$320 billion, one of the fastest in the world.

Regional Affairs

Government Said Anxious To Deport Chakma Refugees

93AS0734G Cochin THE WEEK in English 14 Mar 93 pp 14-15

[Article by Tapash Ganguly: "Nowhere People"; quotation marks as published]

[Text]

India wants to pack off Chakma refugees. But Bangladesh is reluctant to take them back.

With bleary eyes and puffy pouches below them, the nameless old man's face is a mound eroded in the flood of time. The hollow cheeks become cavernous as he puffs hard from the bamboo hookah spiked with opium which dulls memories of his home in the hills. He is lucky: most of the half of lakh Chakma refugees in tripura have no escape from their past or present.

A wave of despair seems to crash inside Suresh Kanti Chakma, who fled Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh seven years ago along with his wife and five children. In Kobakhali, his village, Kanti was a man of social standing—a primary school headmaster with 25 acres of land, ten cows and a dozen goats. "There I was somebody," says the broken man in a breaking voice. "Here I am nobody."

The feeling of being nobody, a loss of self-esteem, haunts Ranajit Narayan Tripura, too. He also had acres of land and a handsomely paid teacher's job. Says he: "I was a well-respected person in Boalkhali. I have been reduced to an unknown refugee."

Narayan cannot brush into oblivion the night of June 14, 1986, when he and his wife and their five children fled to the forests just before their village was torched by Muslims. By then the entire village of 500 people had reached the forest. "We knew that the marauders would soon discover our hideout," recalls Narayan. "So we set out on a long journey" and surrendered to the Border Security Force after a three-day, non-stop trek. They were among the half a lakh other Chakmas, mostly Buddhists, who sought refuge in India.

The Chakmas now have no place to call their own. Dhaka would be happy if nobody talks about them. The

country which reluctantly granted them asylum feels that they have overstayed their welcome.

Life in the six refugee camps (the largest of them at Takumbari holds 16,000 people) in South Tripura district is on a tight leash. No stirring out of the camp limits without official permission; no permission to do business outside the camps, no communication with the local people; no opportunity to write school final exams or go to college.

The refugees are not allowed to shop in the nearby market even for medicines and other essential commodities, and hospitals are closed to them. Medical help is supposed to be provided at the camps but doctors do not turn up for months though gastroenteritis is a frequent visitor. Women invite the killer epidemic by fetching not-so-clean water from streams and nullahs some four kilometres away. Who can blame them? Tubewells in the camps have broken down, like their lives.

Eager to pack them off, the officials have prepared a list of property lost in Bangladesh. The amounts to 360 crore taka. And India has been spending Rs 8 crore a year on the refugees. "On an average we spend Rs 160 on a refugee a month," says Tripura Chief Secretary Meleveetil Damodaran.

There are other compulsions for the state government. "The refugees are destroying the fragile socio-economic fabric of the state. They must go now," says a senior official. His litany of complaints; tripura is losing 600 hectares of forests a year because of tree-felling for firewood by the refugees. They rob the local people of work by accepting lower wages and this is causing social tension. Chakma leaders admit that some trees have been cut "because firewood was not distributed in our camp for the last three months" and that some refugees accept low wages to keep body and soul together.

The Chakmas are also accused of prostitution, robbery and smuggling. The refugees, on the other hand, lament that their girls are abducted by the local youth and gang-raped. But it never catches public attention, "as the police refuse to register any of our cases," said a refugee. The district officials hold the Chakmas squarely responsible for the spreading lawlessness in South Tripura.

Though politicians with vote-crazed eyes have been encouraging them to stay on in India with promises of Indian citizenship, most of the refugees are keen to return home. Says Suresh Kanti the former headmaster, who is also Takumbari camp committee chairman: "Believe us, we have not come here to settle down. We'll go back if security is guaranteed and our lost property is restored to us."

The tribals Chittagong Hill Tracts enjoyed autonomy during British rule and also in the undivided Pakistan. The privilege was taken away in 1971 by the Mujibur Rahman government. The tribal groups joined hands to form a political outfit—Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samihiti Samity (JSS)—which eventually took up arms. Thus

was born the Shanti Bahini, the 'peace force' armed and trained by India. By then, fundamentalists had captured Dhaka and assassinated Mujib.

The Shanti Bahini launched an armed struggle in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Police stations, army units and the colonies of the newly-settled Muslims were its favourite targets. The government struck back forcefully; police torched villages, raped women, desecrated Buddhist shrines. The Chakmas were denied jobs and their lands confiscated.

That led to an exodus in 1978 but when Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, she made President H. M. Ershad take back the refugees. A second wave of exodus began in 1986, when a less assertive Rajiv Gandhi was faltering in Delhi and Ershad was going from strength to strength. "If we had not fled, we would have been butchered," said a refugee. Still, thousands of Chakmas were killed in the hills.

The last seven years saw tumultuous political changes: four governments ruled New Delhi and democracy returned to Bangladesh. But the plight of the Chakmas did not change. The India visit of Prime Minister Begum Zia last year did not help them either. She promised Prime Minister Narasimha Rao that Dhaka would welcome home all "genuine Chakma" refugees. She agreed to send officials to all six camps to discuss repatriation with the refugee leaders. But the whole process has got stuck with the postponed elections in Tripura. Much to Dhaka's glee.

"A section of the Bangladesh bureaucracy is against any amicable settlement of the Chakma issue," said a Tripura official. That apparently was why 100 Chakmas were killed at Langong just before Begum Zia's visit to Delhi. The massacre led to an exodus but India refused to grant them asylum.

After the Langong massacre, the Chakmas have been swearing by a charter of demands the JSS submitted in December 1987. Apart from autonomous regional council for Chittagong Hill Tracts and constitutional protection for all the 10 tribal dialects, they want an "inner line regulation." This means a non-tribal except government servants should enter the tracts. The attitudes are hardening again.

ISI Conspiracy Said Behind Bombay Explosions

93AS0681C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 20 Mar 93
p 1

[Article by Pramod Pagedar: "The Brain of ISI is Behind This Conspiracy"]

[Text] Bombay, Mar 19. The agencies investigating the 12 March Bombay bomb explosions have found convincing common links between the Inter-Services Intelligence [ISI] of Pakistan, the Sikh radical group allied to the Panth Committee, and certain underground groups of Bombay. This information has been provided by

highly placed government officials. Questioning of local suspects has also yielded phone numbers of people working for ISI and living in both India and Pakistan.

Investigators have established links between the ISI and a man named Bittu, resident of Lahore, and working as an informer for ISI. Bittu is a Sikh terrorist who master-minded the Bombay explosions and provided classified information. These explosions resulted in the death of over 300 people and more than 1,000 injuries. According to knowledgeable sources, Bittu is a former activist associated with the All India Sikh Students Federation and presently directs his activities from a location ten kilometers out of Lahore. He acted as an intermediary in arranging contacts between the ISI and a local Bombay hoodlum, Yakub Memon. It is said that Bittu's financial resources and his reach in the international terrorist world is stupendous.

The ISI agents, after the blueprint for explosions was ready, asked Yakub to use his gang to implement the plan. Once the gang was in place he selected the site. He bought new cars and scooters to transport the bombs and had the bombs assembled after the fatal explosive chemical RDX was smuggled into the country.

It is believed that Yakub had very carefully selected the members of his gang to execute the explosions. The one common bond detected among the members of the gang was that they all were very much swayed by the communal riots of past January. With the help from Yakub the ISI took full advantage of the sentiments of these oppressed people and used them very effectively. These people were totally ignorant of the results of the conspiracy and the explosions.

Sources have stated that the ISI arranged for a two week training camp in Dubai for Yakub and his associates so that nothing hindered the execution of the bombing plan. To attend the camp all conspirators flew to Dubai in early February. The Bombay police have successfully arrested all local gang members involved with the explosions. But the tactful flight of the gang leader Yakub to Dubai before the explosions has proved to be an obstacle in establishing clear links of an international involvement.

In any case, the world leaders such as the President of the United States Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister John Major, and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl have agreed to assist Narashima Rao's administration to repatriate Yakub to India. It is believed that these three world leaders are personally pressing the Dubai officials to handover this major suspect to India.

According to reliable sources, the investigating agencies have not found any evidence of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam's [LTTE] involvement in these explosions. However, they suspect that this activist Tamil organization may have provided technical know-how to the ISI and its agents. In addition to the Tamil group's opposition to India, one reason for it to be a partner in such an activity is that Sharad Pawar is still the chief minister of

Maharashtra. It was during his tenure as defense minister that the Indian Navy killed the senior LTTE leader Krishna Kumar, alias Kittu, on the shores of Sri Lanka.

The central home ministry is extremely concerned about the finding of the investigating agencies that only a third of the smuggled RDX was used in the Bombay explosions. It is believed that the remainder has been shipped to Gujrat and Karnataka. Next possible targets are Ahmadabad, Surat, Bangalore and Hubli.

Daily Expresses Concern Over Instability in Pakistan

BK2704122793 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 20 Apr 93 p 11

[Editorial: "Ishaq's Coup"]

[Text] History has repeated itself yet again in Pakistan, both as a tragedy and as a farce. Every feeble attempt at democracy over the past 40 years has been defeated, as a Pakistani commentator summed it up recently, by either a military or a civilian coup d'etat. In the latter category falls the dismissal on Sunday by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan of the Nawaz Sharif Government. The fourth instance of its kind—after similar presidential liquidation of parliamentary power in 1984, 1988 and 1990—is proof of how little a difference the worldwide winds of change have made to the pattern of political primitivism in Pakistan and to its long-suffering people. And, as in every earlier instance, the civilian strike against a heavily circumscribed democracy has been made possible by a hardly hidden military support. The writing on the wall for the overthrown Premier was clear, in fact, weeks ago when he sought without success to prevent the President from handpicking the Chief of the Armed Forces, and the noninterference in the latest developments by Gen. Abdul Waheed does not evidently spell a stance of neutrality. Mr Ishaq Khan has acted not to ensure governance of the country in accordance with the Constitution—plausible as his charges against Mr Sharif are—but to protect his own office, to preserve the powers usurped for it by Gen. Ziaul Haq, and to extend the predominance of a feudal-bureaucratic Establishment.

It would be erroneous, however, to cast his opponents on the side of angels, considering the very dubious role they have played in their avowed cause of democracy. By abjectly abandoning his earlier campaign against the Eighth Amendment, which empowers the President to act in this utterly arbitrary manner, Mr Sharif only ensured its use against his own Government. By compromising on the question of the main ruling party's leadership, likewise, Mr Sharif has not prevented the success of the presidential efforts to split the Pakistan Muslim League. No more consistent and principled has been the role of Ms Benazir Bhutto—she has shown readiness to forget the similar fate that overtook her elected Government in August 1990 and shelved her crusade for a systemic change, preferring to rejoice over the rival's discomfiture and the reward of a share of

unrepresentative power for her People's Democratic Alliance [PDA]. The critical state of country's inter-provincial disunity has also considerably helped the presidential coup.

Ms Bhutto and the PDA can, of course, claim a victory in the promise of fresh elections within three months. But, Pakistan's experience with its past dictators does not exactly make this anything like an assured prospect. Mr Sharif's resolve to "fight in the courts of the people and justice" may not raise widespread expectations of his early return to office, but may well presage serious enough unrest in Punjab, the seat of military-propped power so far. What the syndrome of decades has made clear, and stands confirmed once again today, is that Pakistan cannot acquire a semblance of political stability without achieving a less accident-prone democracy. And India cannot but be concerned over the continuance of the kind of instability in Pakistan that makes peaceful co-existence with its neighbours an unnatural cause for its successive rulers.

Internal Affairs

Professor Explains Why Nation's Secularism is 'Pseudo'

93AS0734I New Delhi ORGANISER in English 21 Mar 93 pp 39-40, 42

[Article by Hari Om, professor at the post-graduate Department of History, University of Jammu: "Debate on Secularism"; italicized words and quotation marks as published]

[Text] The secular intellectuals seem to have cast off all etiquettes and norms of debate in the aftermath of the December 6, 1992 Ayodhya episode which is being glorified by the Hindus across the country as their crowning "triumph." They have, in fact, gone berserk.

They are using filthy and highly outrageous language to castigate those who, on the eventful day, demolished what the Sangh Parivar calls an "edifice of slavery" raised by Babur after bulldozing the magnificent Ram temple and emancipated the Ramjanmabhoomi, a spot sanctimonious to the Hindus, from usurpers. The champions of fake secularism have turned so desperate to keep their constituency intact, and create a counterpoise to the rising tide of the Hindutva that they are striving to force down the nation's throat a proposition that the Hindu assertion for self-respect or, for restoration of India and Hinduism to their pristine glory will tear the nation apart; repudiate all that we have striven for in recent times; hurtle us back to the middle ages; and paint the Indian nation black and uncivilized in their so-called modern and eclectic world.

Unscrupulousness

The story of the communal and ambivalent Congress, the parochial and casteist Janata Dal, the pro-JKLF

[Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front] and ideologically bankrupt CPI [Communist Party of India], CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] and Forward Bloc, Mulayam Singh's Samajvadi party and the SJP [Samajwadi Janata Party], a party of defectors and of no consequence, is no different. These parties have displayed unscrupulousness and rank opportunism of sorts before and after the Ayodhya demolition and forged an unholy alliance to counter with full might what they term as Fascist onslaught on the Indian composite culture and their secularism (based on purely electoral considerations) and controvert and insidious influence the "communal and anti-national" Sangh Parivar.

Backed to the hilt by the Left parties, the Janata Dal and other anti-Sangh Parivar political formations and forces, the Narasimha Rao's beleaguered dispensation has initiated certain actions to "uphold secular character of our society" by appeasing Muslim communalism and exclusiveness at the cost of the Hindus' religious sentiments. Restrictions on *darshan* of Lord Rama have been imposed and the patriotic RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] and Bajrang Dal banned. The duly elected BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] governments in MP, HP and Rajasthan have been dismissed under the most hated Article 356 and the widely acclaimed leaders like L. K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Ashok Singhal and Vishnu Hari Dalmia booked and arrested under concocted criminal charges. Not content with all these, a propaganda blitz against those who vouch for "Justice for all and appeasement of none" has been unleashed through the print and electronic media. Still worse, an unambiguous promise that the Babri Masjid shall be rebuilt at the Ramjanmabhoomi has been held out. In other words, a fullscale *jihad* has been launched to malign the Hindutva ideology and keep the BJP out from the country's political arena.

However, it must remain a matter of shame that Narasimha Rao's vindictive government let the governments of the worst affected Congress-ruled States of Maharashtra and Gujarat—apart from the Congress governments of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and Jyoti Basu's Left dispensation in W. Bengal—go scot-free, and that the Left and other non-BJP outfits, barring the AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam], connived with the murderer of democracy and perpetrator of curse on the Indian Constitution, Narasimha Rao, in seeking the dismissal of the BJP governments under the same Article which they have all along vehemently opposed. It must also remain a matter of disgrace that there is no move whatsoever to ban the rabidly communal BMMCC, AIBMAC [expansions not given], Islamic Students' Movement and similar other outfits or, book Syed Shahabuddin, Zafaryab Jilani, Ebrahim Suleiman Sait, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, Wasi Kahn and others of their ilk, who are working with utmost zeal to create another Pakistan.

Chief Element

Has the modus operandi of the anti-Hindutva ideology succeeded in turning the Hindus away from the Sangh Parivar? Certainly not. Reports emanating from different States eloquently demonstrate that the perfidy of the Narasimha Rao-led unholy alliance has boomeranged. There are clear indications that the awakened Hindus have refused to be defrauded and bamboozled anymore by the unprecedented propaganda campaign against the believers in the doctrine of "positive secularism," based on equality and justice for all. Reports also suggest that the Indians appear firm on defeating and marginalising the anti-Hindutva forces as and when elections are held.

The reason for the emergence of the Hindutva ideology as the chief factor in the country's political situation is not far to seek. The Indian soul has all along been secular. In 1947, it was hoped that secularism would be the watchword, cattle-cry of the Congress and that the post-Independence India will not accord any respectability to communal forces. But it was not to be. The Congress' lust for loaves and fishes of office and the Muslim leadership's inherent urge for contriving as many political concessions from the Centre to hold the Muslim community aloof from the mainstream politics and maintain its distinct identity soon reencouraged a trend towards politics of communalism. And it was this trend which created a suspicion that an insidious influence was at work to further divide India on communal lines, or, to create another Pakistan.

The suspicion was well-founded. The last forty years or so have witnessed a number of onslaughts on secularism and Constitution. It is, however, a different matter that these perversions have not been denounced as manifestations of rank communalism and separatism by the secular intellectuals who, in the wake of the Ayodhya event, feel ashamed, badly let down by the Hindu vandals, and who condemn December 6 as "a Black Sunday," "a national shame," "an attack on the Indian composite culture" and as what not.

Perversions

When the powers-that-be, create a Muslim majority district in Kerala, it is legitimate need, but when the Sangh Parivar clamours for *ek nishan*, *ek vidhan* and *ek pradhan* in respect of Jammu and Kashmir and demands abrogation of the separatist communal Article 370, these are Fascist tendencies and attempts to alienate secular Muslims. When, in Kerala, political outfits of all hues enter into an electoral alliance with the Muslim League in pursuit of the Muslim electorate, it is at worst deceitful politics, but when the BJP seeks the VHP support for the Hindu vote, it is rabid communalism. When V. P. Singh fields Syed Abdullah Bukhari to influence the Muslim vote in favour of the Janata Dal, it is mere opportunism, but when the BJP enlists the support of the Hindu *matts*, it is outrageous communalism. When a Congress prime minister subverts the

Supreme Court verdict in the Shah Bano case with his own measure, it is reactionary, but when the BJP advocates a uniform civil code as per the directive principles enshrined in the Constitution, it is interference in the socio-religious life of the Muslims. When the Indian Prime Minister declares a holiday on the birthday of Prophet Mohammad, it is commitment to secularism, but when the Sangh Parivar strives to construct a temple of Lord Rama at his *janmabhoomi*, it is attack on Indian composite culture. When the Congress government attacks the Holy Durbar Sahib, it is national duty, but when the BJP demands stern action against the Congress goons, who lynched and burnt alive more than 3,000 innocent Sikhs after the inhuman killing of Indira Gandhi, it is humbug. When the Kashmiri fundamentalists and terrorists rigorously hound the Pandits out of the Valley, physically liquidate them, set afire their property and burn and demolish their temples, these are acts of the misguided youth, but when the BJP protests against these, it is just vote politics. When the BJP chief minister acquires the disputed land for the temple to overcome legal impediments, it is naked communalism and misuse of political power, but when the Indian Prime Minister takes over the disputed land and creates a permanent cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims by proposing to reconstruct Babri mosque at the site so dear to the Hindus, it is step in the right direction. When the Union government nullifies the court verdict to the contrary to restore the Muslim character of the Aligarh University, it is "political sagacity," but when the Hindutva ideology refuses to accept the court verdict on the plea that a matter of faith cannot be decided by the judiciary, it is outrageous assault.

Trends

These are just a few instances from the big catalogue of perversions. Where do we go from here? Should we allow the present impasse to destroy the nation? Should we encourage measures which promote exclusiveness and communalism? These are the fundamental issues which need to be pondered over dispassionately and clinched forthwith. Let there be a full-scale and not lop-sided debate on secularism as a concept. In this context a thorough discussion on the two major trends that run through the whole course of the religio-political thought of the Muslims is not relevant. For these trends are squarely responsible for many a traumatic event and acrimonious and rancorous Hindu-Muslim relations in the pre and post-Independence India.

First is the unwillingness of the Muslims to favour "eclecticism" of the Hindus who, unlike the former and the Christians, draw inspiration from a variety of sources, indigenous and foreign. "Eclecticism" has all along remained the gospel of Hinduism which not only preaches but also practises universal brotherhood, peaceful co-existence, toleration and reverence for other denominations. But the zealots among the followers of the proselytising Islam, who have all through propagated

fanaticism and contempt for anything which they consider un-Islamic, have missed no opportunity whatsoever to dismiss the non-Muslims, including the Hindus, as "non-believers" (*kafirs*), and to Islamize India.

In their passion and zeal, the fanatics, unlike the Christians, demolished no less than 3,000 Hindu temples, including those of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva, and thus outraged the religious sensitivities of the Hindus. Still worse and humiliating, they erected mosques at the places and sites which have been regarded by the Hindus as the Holiest of the Holy. The zealots did all these deliberately to demonstrate their religio-political superiority over the Hindus. It is no wonder that these structures are being dubbed "marks of slavery" or "historical wrongs" as also an affront to its self-respect by the nascent Hinduism.

The second crucial trend is reflected in the unequivocal assertion of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the father of two-nation theory, and his Aligarh brigade that either the Muslims would rule or they would snap their ties with the majority Hindus to have an exclusive Muslim dispensation.

It needs to be emphasised that it was Sir Syed who in 1875 launched the Aligarh movement not to fight out the British but to make the Muslims compete with the rising Hindu middle class and "make the Mussalmans of India worthy and useful subjects of the British Crown." (*Aligarh Institute Gazette*, May 14, 1875). In addition, he, in 1886, unleashed a bitter anti-Congress campaign, and denounced the Congress movement as "seditious" as also a "Bengali movement," "a Hindu movement" and "a civil war without arms" aimed at crushing the minority Muslims and establishing a "Hindu raj". (*Aligarh Institute Gazette*, November 23, 1886; Syed Ahmad Khan's *On the Present State of Indian Politics*, pp 11-12, 27-28; *The Moslem Chronicle*, January 9, 1897). So much so, he would declare on December 28, 1887, at Kaiserbagh Baradari, Lucknow, that "if you (Muslims) accept that the country should groan under the yoke of Bangali rule and its people lick the Bengali shoes, then, in the name of God jump into the train, sit down, and be off to Madras" to attend the 1887 Congress of which Badruddin Tyabji was the President.

Again, it was Syed who vehemently opposed the Congress demand for election system/democratic institutions in India. His refrain was that if these proposals met with success, the Muslims would suffer "grievous injury" for the Hindu members in the elected bodies would be four times that of the Muslims as their population was four times more. In fact, Syed injected the deadly poison of communalism in the Indian body politic and successfully persuaded the Muslims to believe that "in a political system of the sort which the Hindu Congress advocates the Muslims of India would find their legitimate rights and interests thwarted by the majority Hindus."

Such was the influence of Syed's views that even Muslim leaders like Badruddin Tyabji, President of the third

Congress, would declare: The Congress could not be termed as a National Congress." (*The Pioneer*, April 2, 1888). Haji Mohd, Ismail Khan, Nawab Viqarul-Mulk, Nawab Mohsin-in-Mulk, the Agha Khan, Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, Moulvi Rafiuddin Ahmad, Ali Imam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Mohd Iqbal and many others, and the Muslim League, which came into being in 1906, followed with renewed vigour and determination the path of separation shown by Sir Syed, fought with the Congress tooth and nail and sabotaged the freedom movement at every stage and in every form. Their principal demands were: separate Muslim electorates, creation of new Muslim majority provinces of Sindh, Baluchistan and NWFP [North-West Frontier Province], weak Centre and ultimately, Pakistan.

Any impartial investigator would vouch for the fact that even after securing India's partition in 1947 on rabidly communal lines the Muslim leadership's attitude to the Hindus has remained unchanged. The January 9, 1993, Muslim Personal Law Board's resolution deploring the permission to the Hindus for *darshan* at the makeshift temple or, its flat refusal to allow a concession to the Hindus for constructing a temple of Lord Rama at a spot where the Muslims have not offered any *namaz* for the last 55 years, or, the AIBMAC's [expansion not given] January 10, 1993, call to boycott the Republic Day on January 26 reflects the Muslims' attitude towards the Hindus and the nation.

Hindus Said Gradually Shedding Nehruvian Secularism

93AS0727K Calcutta SUNDAY in English 20 Mar 93
pp 29-38

[Article by Namita Bhandare, Sarat Chandra, Devina Dutt, Gauri Lankesh and Arindam Sarkar: "Winning Back the Hindu"; italicized words and quotation marks as published]

[Text] Last week when ten-year-old Akash Sharma returned home from school, in Delhi, he had a lot to complain about. This time round it wasn't that the classroom bully had stolen his mid-day tiffin. Nor had his teacher yelled at him again for not doing his homework. He had merely repeated what his mother had been telling him at home: Muslims were not 'dirty' people and they were as loyal as anyone else to their country. But the defence hadn't gone down well with the other boys in class.

Fortified with his new classroom perceptions, he asked his mother, "Isn't it true that Muslims would rather be in Pakistan, and that because of them we have no country to call our own? Why isn't India a Hindu state when most of the people who live here are Hindus?"

Akash Sharma's mother could probably explain to her son that modern India was born on the principles of a secular democracy. And that Hindus had no fear of being discriminated against. But logic and reason are not always enough to counterbalance emotion. And much as

Akash Sharma's mother would like to believe to the contrary, more Hindus than ever genuinely believe that they are strangers in their own land.

Conversation these days in homes both rich and poor seems to bear this out. "Hindus are a discriminated lot in a country where they are in a majority," says a top-ranking bureaucrat in Lucknow.

"More than feeling discriminated against, I feel that all importance is given to the minorities," says Sudha Sathyanarayana, a copywriter in Bangalore. "The Indian Muslim is not only extremely clannish, but is unpatriotic and is adding to the population."

"I don't really subscribe to the view that Hindus are discriminated against in this country," says a college professor. "But my interaction with thousands of people has led me to believe that such a feeling is quite rampant."

Much as the much-maligned secularists would like to pretend it isn't happening, the fact is that a growing number of Hindus—who make up over 80 per cent of the country's population—believe that the government is following a policy of selective discrimination in favour of the minorities, particularly the Muslims, who are citizens of the country.

Not that this nascent and fast growing Hindu consciousness is limited to the north alone. In Karnataka, in Andhra Pradesh and in Tamil Nadu, where chief minister Jayalalitha's flirtation with the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] is giving several congressmen sleepless nights, the militant Hindu party has begun making serious inroads since 6 December when the Babri Masjid was demolished in Ayodhya.

Quiz the wronged Hindu a bit and the answers are vague and illogical. The Muslims are appeased because of the Shah Bano judgement, they argue. But how does this judgement benefit Muslim women? There is no answer.

Clearly something is seriously amiss if a sizeable section of the majority community of this country begins to fervently believe that it is being kicked around. "To be a Hindu, to be called a Hindu, is a political and even a constitutional disadvantage. To be a minority means political premium," said former *Indian Express* legal advisor and occasional columnist S. Gurumurthy, addressing a symposium on secularism in Madras last year.

"The people feel that this country is being hijacked to a different destination, totally different from the one towards which it has been moving for thousands of years," continued Gurumurthy. "The central question is: Is the concept of Indian secularism or its practice consistent with our timeless heritage of equal respect for all religions? Or is it a cover for political appeasement to communal vote banks?"

"The charge that Muslims are being appeased is patently false," says columnist Girilal Jain. "But there is a psyche

behind it and unless we understand and accommodate this feeling we are going to be in a lot of trouble."

What exactly does this feeling comprise? In a shadowy netherworld of emotion and outrage a growing number of Hindus cutting across socio-economic lines genuinely believe that they have been pushed around for too long now. You could argue for hours on end that if the Muslims and other minorities were being appeased they would not make up the bulk of the poorest people in this country *see SUNDAY 7-13 February, 1993*).

But the important thing is not so much whether Muslims are being appeased or not, as the growth of a silent majority in the country that carries on its shoulder a sense of injured innocence. And unless, as Girilal Jain says, this silent majority is acknowledged and addressed, India will soon have crossed that fine line where public debate ends and emotion and feeling become paramount. Where the gap between the secularists and the outraged Hindus becomes unbridgeable. "Hindutva may seem ideologically inexact and philosophically amorphous, but it is, all the same, manifest in its impact," writes Sunil Adam, assistant editor of *The Pioneer*, in a recent column for his newspaper.

Rightly or wrongly, more and more Hindus are beginning to feel alienated in their own country. What exactly is going on?

Delhi sociologist Veena Das says she is amazed at how some Hindus have succeeded in creating a sense of immediacy around a very distant historical event—the building of the Babri Masjid. "The sense of personal loss is very perplexing," she says.

Dileep Padgaonkar, editor of *The Times of India*, has a few answers. "I have been coming across a certain degree of fashionable saffronism in some of the people I have grown up with," he says. "What was once a fringe phenomenon has begun to engulf the Western, upper-middle class elite. What is it," he asks, "that drives them to espouse a cause, which not only in substance but also in tone, is so far removed from the kind of discourse they have been used to?"

According to Padgaonkar, the lure of saffronism is a result of three main factors. First, it's a reflection of a profound degree of frustration with the Congress and other non-BJP parties. Second, he says, "With the collapse of communism an entire ideology, which despite all its horrendous flaws still incarnated hope, has left people with nothing to turn to except religion or an insensate kind of self-indulgence.

And third, the globalisation in such areas as information and the economy carries with it the very dangerous potential to uniformise tastes, lifestyles and values. "When your identity is threatened there tends to be a return to ritual and religious symbolism," he says.

The disgust with the Congress government's policies is all too real. Foremost in the minds of many Hindus is the

Shah Bano case in which a Supreme Court verdict granting maintenance to a divorced Muslim woman was overturned by the Rajiv Gandhi government. Instead, the government introduced a special Muslim Women's Bill, despite pleadings to the contrary by several secularists, led by Arif Mohammad Khan.

Today, the Shah Bano case seems to have become one of the main issues on which the charge of Muslim appeasement rests. This, despite the fact that the law denies Muslim women the rights and protection granted to their Hindu sisters. The case appeased no one but the fundamentalists in both communities. "In point of fact," wrote Arun Shourie in one of his columns, "the Muslims are not the ones whom governments and politicians have been appeasing. They have been appeasing brokers of Muslims—politicians and priests who set themselves up as leaders of Muslims."

Afraid that the hue and cry over the Shah Bano case would cost them the Hindu vote, the then Congress government ordered the opening of the locks to the Babri Masjid. But in trying to straddle two horses the Congress fell midstream, failing to win back the Muslim vote and further alienating many Hindus.

"Basically we have deviated from our basic principles of equality," admits veteran congressman Vasant Sathe. "We have tried to utilise the communal card for the sake of a vote bank, whereas in fact the vote bank itself is a wrong concept. People have not voted according to religion."

Sathe looks back at the Indira years with some nostalgia. "She used slogans like '*Garibi hatao*' in order to unite people on economic and developmental issues," he says. "It was during the post-Indira years that we began pandering to various vote banks, taking the first false step with Shah Bano—although Rajiv Gandhi's own initial reaction was not to interfere with the Supreme Court decision."

The shift in the ruling party's emphasis from economic to religious issues, and its reliance on caste-based and vote bank policies is what caused the Hindu backlash, believes Sathe. "It is," he says with refreshing candour, "the result of our recognising and perpetuating the concept of religious minorityism."

Girilal Jain has a slightly different viewpoint. "One aspect of this problem which has generally escaped attention," he says, "is that by and large the Congress party has ruled the country all these years without the support of a clear majority amongst the Hindus, especially the caste Hindus."

With the possible exception of 1984, when the Congress came into power with a sweeping majority, Jain believes that the Congress party has ruled with less than 50 per cent of the votes polled—of these half have come from the Muslims and other minorities as well as members of

the scheduled castes and tribes. "A very significant majority amongst the caste Hindus has not been voting for the Congress," he says.

In addition to the Shah Bano case, many Hindus regard the banning of Salman Rushdie's book by the Congress government as unacceptable. This, despite the fact that one of the first calls for a restriction on its import was placed by Penguin's editor, Khushwant Singh, who believed that the book could cause a law and order problem in the country.

In Kerala, the party's alliance with the Muslim League and in Maharashtra the ruling party's tacit support to the fascist Shiv Sena has exposed its culture of doublespeak and hypocrisy. Had the party not professed to do and die by secularism, it would not have become vulnerable to the charge of pseudo-secularism which the BJP and its believers so frequently and effectively hurl at it.

"Secularism means equality," says Sathe. "But politicians, with their narrow selfish motives, have themselves been playing the communal card. Today you are secular if you pamper the rabidity of religious minorityism."

Even now the Congress continues to grapple with its definition of secularism. Its manifesto talks of the building of a temple to Ram—much in the same way as the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) does. Even after the demolition of the mosque, it aims to set up two separate religious trusts, one for the mosque and the other for a temple, to find a solution to the vexatious issue.

Once again it is trying to straddle two horses, first in mutely witnessing the demolition of the mosque and wringing its hands helplessly while the country burned in riots. And then in banning the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] and dismissing the three remaining BJP governments while announcing the setting up of the temple trust, giving rise to the suspicion that the Congress was trying to hijack the BJP's Hindutva platform.

Then there is the reservation policy that seems to annoy many people. "For the upper caste Hindu who constitutes the backbone of the Hindutva movement, the announcement of Mandal came as a most dire threat," says Dileep Padgaonkar. "Mandal is the sharpest weapon to have ever been deployed to cut to pieces the fabric of Hindu society. And there is certainly some merit to the argument that Advani's Rath Yatra was meant to counter the consequences of Mandal."

But the Hindu backlash is not a result of congress policies alone. Now more than ever the Hindu identity is under threat, and the Hindu brigade is marshalling its forces in a do-or-die effort before it is snuffed out altogether.

The last 10 years have ushered in societal changes as never before. The joint family has broken up as more and more people move in from rural areas to small towns

and cities to earn a livelihood. Our cities itself have become nightmares in uniformity as Star TV and BBC teach a new generation of young aspirations how to clothe themselves, speak and even decorate their homes.

"The Indian elite is desperate to copy everything from the West—its notion of a good life comes from there. What its bedroom, bathroom, office should look like comes straight out of Western magazines and movies," says Madhu Kishwar the editor of *Manushi*, a journal about women and society. "What you have here is an utter loss of self-respect."

At the time of Independence, continues Kishwar, India was a poor but proud nation. Gandhiji had instilled a certain kind of morality and the nation was born amidst great hopes and expectations. "Despite the traumatic experience of colonisation we felt we had a message for the world," she says.

Less than 50 years later that pride has turned to self-loathing. "In the eyes of the world we are a drastic failure and nobody pays us any attention," she points out. Back home the average Indian is being constantly made to grovel, regardless of whether he is applying for a ration card or for a factory licence. "It's just not very conducive to a healthy self-respect."

The result of this is an enormous pent-up frustration with the Muslims becoming a very convenient scapegoat. "Just as a self-hating man is a very dangerous husband who in all likelihood will be a tyrant and a bully, a self-hating nation is also very dangerous," she points out.

The birth of a modern Indian democracy was based on the three principles of socialism, non-alignment and secularism. While the first to Nehruvian principles have been soundly rejected, we are still trying to come to terms with the third.

Today's militant Hindu questions the negation of his religious identity at the altar of nationalism. And it is precisely this emotion that the BJP is trying to tap. When a Vajpayee or an Advani says he is not allergic to the word Hindu, he is trying to imply that other political parties are—despite the fact that Indira Gandhi's religious inclinations were well known, and that a professed secularist like Arjun Singh makes no secret about his reliance on holy men.

The sense of insecurity amongst many Hindus has been growing in recent years thanks to several factors. Foremost amongst these is the rise of separatist movements in different parts of the country.

In Punjab, Sikh fundamentalism has affected peace-loving Hindus and Sikhs alike. But from 1982 to 1989 there is little doubt that the principal victims of terrorism were the Hindus. Similarly, in Kashmir, Hindus are being driven out in hordes. Separatist movements still exist in the north-east, and even in a small place like Coorg demands for a separate nation are being heard.

After having been ruled by 'foreigners' for 1,000 years, the Hindu is faced with the terrifying prospect of seeing his country disintegrate into fragmented states right under his nose.

The Hindu as a refugee is also an undeniable fact of life on the Indian subcontinent. Weeks after Najibullah's bloodless ouster in Afghanistan last year, Hindus and Sikhs became fair game for the Mujahideen and fled to Delhi in large numbers. One estimate put the figure of Afghani Hindu refugees at 50,000 in Delhi alone (see *SUNDAY 5-11 July, 1992*).

Delhi is full of little colonies which house Hindu refugees from Afghanistan, Kashmir and Punjab. In July last year, *SUNDAY* estimated that an average of two to three Hindu families trickle into the city every day. This does not include the constant stream of Hindu refugees into West Bengal from Bangladesh, or the 2,00,000-odd Sri Lankan Tamils living in Indian refugee camps.

Add to this cauldron of seething resentment another ingredient: the mushrooming of Islamic fundamentalism. While Khomeini's Islamic revolution in Iran was a distant movement, events in Pakistan are not. The Islamisation of Pakistani politics is complete and even a liberal like Benazir Bhutto dare not appear in public without covering her head. The saffronite has a paranoia of being surrounded by hostile Islamic neighbours.

Adds Arun Shourie, "Over the last few years the stereotype among Hindus of the average Muslim has been the visage of Bukhari, the intransigence of Shahabuddin and Suleiman Sait, the bargains of Owaisi."

The Hindutva forces have been attempted to consolidate themselves since the 1920s, believes R.K. Hepsur, a professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Bombay. Hepsur feels that the Muslim community has been growing assertive in a manner that has grated on the Hindu mind since the late 1960s. "The problem with some of our Muslim brothers is that they have a fear that they will be devoured by Hindu culture," he says. "I would like to plead with every Muslim and ask him to explain to me what is wrong with the singing of the *Vande Mataram* or the breaking of coconuts."

The collapse of communism and a global preoccupation with ethnic origins has not by-passed India. The only difference is that in Bosnia you have a return to ethnicity, whereas in India there is a return to religious rituals and symbolism. Even the ethnic chic that is so much in vogue is partly a reflection of this. The building of the Ram temple and the burgeoning popularity of the political party that has made this building its *raison d'être* them become symbols of Hindu aspiration.

"Ram is a political issue," says Girilal Jain. "He has symbolized Hindu political aspirations like no one else in Indian history or mythology. And with this revival there is the hope that a party for Hindus can get into power."

But what precisely is this Hindu party's agenda?

"The concept of the Hindu Rashtra is not based on religious theocracy," explains VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] chief Ashok Singhal in *The Organiser*. "The concept of the Hindu Rashtra is based on *sarva dharma samabhava*. Moreover, the word Hindu is representative of a nation of people having common traditions, history, culture and sociology. Those who call us communal are themselves confused and do not have a clear-cut vision of either secularism or nationalism."

With its vague concepts of a Hindu Rashtra and a promise of Ram Rajya, the BJP has been rather successfully tapping the silent Hindu majority's sense of injured innocence. "Hindus are still not clear about the Hindu Rashtra," says Sudip Bandhopadhyay, a Congress member of the legislative Assembly in West Bengal. "They are not clear whether it is going to be a theocratic or an ideological state. The BJP is definitely trying to sell this package of a Hindu Rashtra, but for how long people will be carried away by it is a million dollar question."

Questions sociologist R.K. Hepsur, "What principles will the BJP follow? Is there an organised religion for them to follow? A theocratic Hindu state is a contradiction in terms."

Even believers of the Hindu cause remain sceptical of the BJP's intentions. "Even though I support the BJP," says Bangalore-based stage actress Bhargavi Nani, "I would not like it to come to power. Ideally I would like its presence to force some changes in the way that this country is ruled, but 6 December has proved that the BJP is violence-oriented."

What precisely does the BJP have to offer? Should the party fulfil its agenda of building a temple to Ram in the city of Ayodhya—a promise which may well be fulfilled given that now the Congress too is publicly committed to it—what will the BJP be left with?

It could, of course, begin whipping up passions in Mathura and Kashi. Then it could continue its campaign against Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants. When all that is done it will shout in favour of *Vande Mataram*. And it will push through a common civil code—a demand which is already being raised in sections of the Congress.

When all that is done where will the BJP stand?

Can it, for instance, drive out the 12 crore Muslims in this country? Or force them to describe themselves as Hindu Muslims? Or can it deny this country's heritage which has absorbed and assimilated diverse influences and been shaped to a large extent by Islamic culture and influences? Will a BJP government entail not only the rewriting of our history books but also the induction of a rigid definition of Hinduism where sadhus rule the roost and where the Sadhvi Rithambaras and the Bal Thackerays are its principal visionaries?

How, for instance, will a party rooted in a medieval ideology accommodate the aspirations of the Indian

woman, wonders Dileep Padgaonkar. "In the last five years the Indian woman has grown tremendously in confidence. How will the BJP, which believes that women should stay at home and protect the hearth and the interests of their husbands, accommodate these new-found aspirations?"

Padgaonkar laments the fact that the revival of Hindutva has not been accompanied by any effort to critically appraise the country's extremely rich repertoire of philosophical texts.

Sociologist Veena Das echoes the sentiment. "There is absolutely no question that Hinduism is on the decline. There has been a decline of critical consciousness—such as that witnessed in the 19th century. Today no one is even formulating questions. There is no debate, no thinking or formulation of what it means to be a Hindu."

But given that a growing number of Hindus have begun to carry on their shoulders a sense of being wronged and left out by the political system, how do you stem the backlash and convince them to the contrary?

For Madhu Kishwar the answer is fairly obvious. "What you have right now is a very parasitic government machinery that dilly-dallies with all problems. The key task really is to set the government right."

But if there is a silver lining to be found in an increasingly communalised society it is that India remains a country of multitudes, where the *dhokla* and the *dosa* are both regarded as delicacies. We have survived not only the trauma of colonisation but the ravages of Partition, the excesses of the emergency, experiments with different political parties, the assassination of two heads of government. There is no reason to disbelieve that we will not emerge unscathed, yet.

"India remains a democracy. Deeply flawed, perhaps, but yet democratic," says an old India hand, *The New York Times* columnist Abe Rosenthal in a recent interview. "Somehow, you instinctively trust India to stumble through."

And stumble through it will. Already there seems to be the birth of a new sort of questioning. The Muslims are looking askance at their old leaders and questioning what advantages they have allegedly received. The Hindus, on the other hand, are trying to reorganise themselves as they begin to grope towards coming to terms with a modern world.

"I am not sure if the current Hindu backlash will endure or not," says Padgaonkar. "My hunch is that it is only a passing phase because I believe that the Hindu is a profoundly pragmatic being whose beliefs are eclectic."

So long as there is public debate and a willingness to listen to the other side, all is not lost. Things can never be the same again in a post-6 December India, but as Hindus and Muslims, secularists and saffronites, range up against each other they would do well to define what their expectations of the emerging nation are. We could

move towards establishing a modern nation, or we could succumb to the politics of hate and remain frozen in a time warp that imprisons us in a medieval era.

The choice is quite clear. Which way will we go?

[Box p 38]

The Hindu backlash

Was it inevitable, anyway?

There are many reasons for India's Hindu revival. In the accompanying story, we examine some of them. Often the causes of the Hindu backlash can be traced to specifics, i.e., the Shah Bano case or *The Satanic Verses* ban.

But many people believe that if these specific causes hadn't been there, new ones would have been found. And that the Hindu backlash is inevitable because of various global and political factors.

Some of these:

The end of the Nehruvian consensus

The modern Indian State was built on the three pillars of Jawaharlal Nehru's beliefs: socialism, non-alignment and secularism.

Over the last four years, the first two pillars have collapsed. By the beginning of the 1980s, it was clear that socialism was in trouble and the process of liberalisation began. In 1991, the Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh regime finally buried the socialist dogma.

Much the same is true of non-alignment. The essence of this policy was that India would not tilt towards either of the two superpowers. By the end of the Eighties, it was clear that there was only one power left—the United States.

In these circumstances, could the third pillar—secularism—have survived? Probably not. In many ways, the anti-secular feeling is a consequence of the collapse of Nehruvianism.

Economic failure

People have various expectations of a political system. They expect it to guarantee their security and to protect their rights. But increasingly, they expect it to ensure their economic well-being.

By 1980, it was clear that India had missed the bus economically.

History demonstrates that when a system is seen as failing to deliver, two things happen. First, people return to the ethnic and religious loyalties that pre-dated the emergence of that system. This is precisely what happened in India with the religious and separatist movements all taking off after 1980.

The second inevitable consequence is that a disaffected majority tends to look for scapegoats—for people who are alleged to have benefited from this system. In Germany in the 1930s, the Jews were the scapegoats. Today, the BJP is trying to make the Muslims, India's scapegoats.

Marxism, RIP

It was Marx who said that religion is the opiate of the masses. The essence of all Marxist societies was the denial of religion and the subsumation of ethnic loyalties to the concept of a nation state.

It is no coincidence that as Marxism has failed all over the world, the very religious and ethnic loyalties that were sought to be buried have now reasserted themselves with a terrifying vigour.

In India, where we rejected the excesses of communism in favour of a watered-down Marxism that we called socialism, we have been spared the horrors of Bosnia and much of Eastern Europe.

But here too, religious loyalties, buried for so long, have become the guiding force of our politics. Thus, the rise of the BJP may have as much to do with the global failure of Marxism as with L.K. Advani's strategic brilliance.

[Box p 34]

Politicians and secularism

By publicly playing down their religious beliefs, have politicians left the field clear for the BJP?

Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi had different conceptions of secularism. For the Mahatma, secularism represented a tolerance of all religions, best symbolised by his favourite bhajan:

*Raghupati Raghav, raja Ram
Patita pavan, Sita Ram,
Ishwar Allah tero naam,
Sab ko sanmati de Bhagwan*

To Nehru, secularism sprang from his Fabian roots, and was part and parcel of his commitment to a scientific temper. While Gandhiji would happily use Hinduism to mobilise crowds, Nehru had little patience with religion and was an agnostic himself.

It is Nehru's conception of secularism that the Indian State chose to embody. Through the Fifties and into the Sixties, secularism came to mean a denial of religion. It was customary to decry obscurantism, poke fun at sadhus, and to talk of a scientific approach to the world.

Many people regard this denial of religion—perhaps, the single-most potent force in Indian society—as being responsible for today's state of affairs. With the state making a fetish of its irreligious nature, the field was left clear for anybody who wished to exploit religion for political purposes—from Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to Lal Krishna Advani.

And yet, while Nehru's successors continued to mouth his anti-religious stand in public, they followed a very different approach in private.

His own daughter, Indira Gandhi, once told a press conference, "All my life, I have fought a battle against astrology, superstition and obscurantism." This was in marked contrast to her dependence on astrologers and tantrics in private. As Pupul Jayakar notes in her recently-published biography, she was fascinated by "the way of Chandi, of primordial female energy wielding the sword of power."

Since then, nearly every Congress politician has walked a fine line between mouthing Nehru's aggressively secular lines in public and falling back on religion in private.

- Narasimha Rao has taken part in religious ceremonies with Chandra Swami.
- Arjun Singh will not make a move without consulting the Mauni Baba.
- Former President R. Venkataraman is a dedicated Sai Baba follower.
- Satish Sharma and R.K. Dhawan are both regular visitors to Tirupati.
- Balram Jakhar used to visit the late Devraha Baba, who would bless him with his foot.
- Even Rajiv Gandhi would stop at the Durga temple in Mehrauli every Sunday before spending the day at his farmhouse.

Congress politicians argue that there is no contradiction between being religious and secular. They say that their religion is a private affair, whereas the BJP seeks to turn it into a political issue.

There is merit in the argument. But it is also true that by denying in public the religion that provides them with so much sustenance in private, they have left the field clear for the BJP to hijack Hinduism.

Postponement of Tripura Elections Questioned, Criticized

Congress Wants President's Rule

93AS0669A Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA
in Bengali 5 Mar 93 p 1

[Congress Wants President's Rules]

[Text] Within two or three days, the caretaker government in Tripura is going to be replaced by president's rule. Having been asked by the Central Government to prepare the necessary papers, Governor Raghunath Reddy came to New Delhi after cancelling his vacation. On the other hand, Santosh Mohan Deb, the central minister elected from Tripura, was informed that the Central Government had decided to impose president's

rule in Tripura. The CPM [Communist Party of India-Marxist] was also informed. After making the decision to impose president's rule in Tripura, the central home ministry contacted Raghunath Reddy at Hyderabad last night. He was asked to come to New Delhi immediately after cancelling his vacation. Immediately after that Raghunath Reddy talked to Santosh Deb in Delhi by telephone. This morning, Rajesh Pilot, minister of state of the home ministry talked to Santosh Deb about the affairs in Tripura. He insisted to Santosh Deb: "There is no other alternative but to impose president's rule in Tripura. Please agree to it." In reply Santosh Deb said, "I don't want to be a hindrance, because, if the party leadership wants to present the state of Tripura to the CPM, let them do it." Regarding Tripura, the central home minister S.B. Chavan yesterday gave hints in the Rajya Sabha that the governor might change the decision to keep the caretaker government in the state.

As Santosh Deb was informed about the Central Government's decision on Tripura, the CPM leaders were also informed. For that reason, the CPM members of Parliament did not utter any word about Tripura in Parliament today, though, for the last two days they shouted, protested, and walked out of the house demanding the imposition of president's rule in Tripura. They did not open their mouths about it in the Rajya Sabha. In the Lok Sabha, Basudev Acharya once raised the issue, but it was never pushed seriously. The CPM leaders are now waiting for the declaration of president's rule in Tripura.

On the other hand, the affairs of Tripura caused anxiety in the minds of the other Congress leaders of the north-eastern region. The way Santosh Deb was treated on the Tripura issue annoyed many other Congress leaders of the region. "One central minister from the north-eastern region said, "If we accept, for arguments sake, that the allegations of Mr. Sheshan are true, still we have to admit that Santosh Deb did not do all of this for his own interest. He did this for the interest of the party. And now if he is harassed from outside the party for all of this, we would also have to think about the matter seriously. On the other hand, a portion of the Congress workers of Tripura are happy to see the harassment of Santosh Deb. Mrs. Bibhu Devi, a member of Parliament, does not try to hide her joy. Apart from sending a written complaint to the prime minister, she is now spending more time with the CPM members inside Parliament. She has also invited some of the CPM members to a dinner. The way she is busily conversing with CPM members inside the Lok Sabha concerned Vidya Charan Shukla, the minister for parliamentary affairs."

After president's rule, when the election takes place in Tripura, Santosh Deb probably will not himself be involved. Regarding this, his argument is that, as an elected member of Parliament from this state, he will do his duty for his constituency. He will be available for the activities of the party workers and for any organizational matters. But nothing more than that. "This morning, when Rajesh Pilot was insisting that he agree with the

proposal of president's rule, Santosh Deb told him with a clear hint—"Then you take the responsibility for the victory of the Congress in the state." If Santosh Deb is not available in the election campaign of Congress, there is also doubt about the availability of Mamata Bandyopadhyay. Until now, Santosh Deb and Mamata Bandyopadhyay worked together in election campaigns. And now, if Santosh Deb does not get involved, Mamata may not be a party to it. Mamata said, "Otherwise, I have to wish to go. But if Santosh Deb asks me, I will definitely go for a campaign in Tripura."

The staff reporter from Agartala has stated that the chief election officer of Tripura, Mr. K. Arya, has already left for Delhi. Ajir Vidya, the secretary for the governor, has also left for Delhi. M. Damadoran, the chief secretary of the state, is already in Delhi. The decision to reserve three constituencies of the state assembly for scheduled tribes has been challenged in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has taken the issue for trial. The names of the constituencies are Charilam and Promodnagore of western Tripura and Shantir Bazar of southern Tripura. But the appeal to postpone the election in those three constituencies has been rejected by the Supreme Court.

In the Bamutia constituency of western Tripura, a Congress procession near Kamalghat was attacked. The state Congress alleged that the miscreants belonging to CPM attacked the procession with bombs. As a result, six Congress workers were injured. To protest the incident, Congress called for a 12-hour strike in Bamutia. It began as an argument on the question whether president's rule would be imposed or the caretaker government would continue and about the rights of the election commissioner, T.N. Sheshan. The argument finally turned into a fight. Two persons were injured.

The staff reporter from Calcutta has reported that nine members of the state assembly of West Bengal wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao asking him not to yield to the CPM demand for president's rule in Tripura. This is a CPM "blackmail" tactic. They argued that if CPM's pressure tactics win, that will create a serious reaction in the minds of the Congress workers of the state.

Difficulties Seen Ahead

93AS0669B Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA
in Bengali 4 Mar 93 p 4

[Editorial: "New Complexities in Tripura"]

[Text] The political situation in Tripura is becoming more complex daily. By the order of the chief election commissioner, Mr. T.N. Sheshan, the election of the state assembly was postponed at the last moment. In the meantime, because the term of the present government was over, the chief minister resigned and the governor asked him to carry on his administration—which means, a caretaker government was established in the state. The chief election commissioner has again threatened to

postpone the election. Mr. Sheshan's first order to postpone the election came after the allegation was made that one Central Government minister held meetings with the police and administration just before the election. After investigating the matter, the state election commissioner submitted a report to Mr. Sheshan. But it appeared that Mr. Sheshan was not happy with the report. Though the state election officer declared the allegation baseless, the office of the Central Election Commission did not take the matter in the same way. Mr. Sheshan, therefore, demanded punishment for those accused police officers and removal of those accused officials from elected duties. Otherwise, he has threatened to postpone again the election scheduled for 3 April. This threat of Mr. Sheshan made the whole situation more complex. If this order of the election commissioner is to be implemented, the present caretaker government of the state has to make a policy decision. But it is not clear whether a caretaker government can legally make such a decision. That is the reason for the present complexities.

But it is difficult to hold Mr. Sheshan responsible for what he has done. As the chief election commissioner, Mr. Sheshan must want to see that the election in a state is conducted freely and fairly. The Election Commission had set regulations as conditions for a fair and impartial election, and, if they think that those conditions have been violated, they can postpone and even nullify an election. An allegation has been raised against one of the Central Government ministers of the ruling party of being involved in such unwanted activities in Tripura that are, in the judgment of the Election Commission, wrong and contradictory to holding a fair election. Just a few days before the election, he met with the police officers and high ranking officials of the state government, which is against the norms and violation of election rules and regulations. After knowing about this allegation, as an honest, conscientious, and impartial election commissioner, Mr. Sheshan did what he had to do. In fact, by this decision Mr. Sheshan made it clear that, though he is appointed by the Central Government, he will not be a party to fulfilling the narrow political interests of the ruling party in the Central Government. It is his duty to make it certain that impartiality is maintained in the election. After the appointment of Mr. Sheshan as chief election commissioner, it was becoming more and more apparent that the Election Commission is actually an autonomous institution. He has foiled any previous attempt to manipulate the popular verdict by abusing the election procedure. And, in this respect, he did not spare any political party, either ruling or opposition. The example of Tripura proves that Mr. Sheshan is determined to maintain impartiality and trustworthiness of the Election Commission in holding a free and fair election. Mr. Sheshan's impartial stand antagonized the vested interest groups. Previously, the Janata Party, BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], and the leftist parties showed disapproval of him on many different occasions. Whenever any decision of Mr. Sheshan obstructed any attempt to make false voter lists, capture polling booths,

or rig the election process, the leaders of all these political parties condemned him by calling him "an agent of the Congress Party" or a "crazy man." Even the opposition parties once considered a proposal to remove him from the position of chief election commissioner through impeachment in Parliament. But Mr. Sheshan was not at all perturbed by these things. He went on doing his work in his own way. Today, when Mr. Sheshan held one central minister of the ruling Congress Party responsible for unwanted election activities, all his once-anti-forces came forward to praise his impartiality. But it should be remembered that Mr. Sheshan did not make this decision to make them either obligated or happy. He did what appeared to him as just, according to the existing rules and regulations. This is the same kind of decisions he has made and steps he has taken in earlier cases. He has no stake in making the opposition leftist parties happy in Tripura. Similarly, he has no interest in displeasing or putting the ruling Congress Party into a corner in Tripura. The Congress leaders and ministers of Tripura should consider the matter in the same light.

Congress's Internal Weakness Blamed

93AS0669C Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA
in Bengali 12 Mar 93 p 4

[Editorial: "President's Rule in Tripura"]

[Text] Tripura's politics are marked by unexpected developments. The firmness of the Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Sheshan, or you may call it his ego, has not only put the ruling Congress Party of the state in trouble, it also put the so-called Congress Party high command in a state of uneasiness. But in spite of all sorts of criticism, there is no doubt about the fact that Mr. Sheshan postponed the election in the state of Tripura, fully conscious of his rights and responsibilities. Whatever threats some Congress Party leaders could make, nobody has the power to touch the chief election commissioner at this moment. Besides, the weak Central Government is not in a position to harass or get Mr. Sheshan in trouble. One cannot say definitely that Prime Minister Narasimha Rao has that desire at all. Rather, the development of the situation indicates that the prime minister is so much concerned about the smooth passage of the budget in Parliament that he is even ready to sacrifice consciously the ruling group of his own party in Tripura. To put it simply, the prime minister is very much anxious to be certain that the leftist parties, in spite of their opposition to the budget, will not vote against the government or at least they will abstain at the time of voting. To make the leftist parties, especially the leading leftist party CPM [Communist Party of India-Marxist] happy, the prime minister is even ready to sacrifice half of his advantage. Apart from the majority of the Congress workers of the state of Tripura, many others within the Party believe that the path toward imposing president's rule in Tripura was made following the demand of CPM. In fact, when the chief election commissioner postponed the election in Tripura, it was guessed that Tripura was going to be placed under

president's rule. After the end of the term of the present assembly on 28 December, the Congress party could have kept its rule over the state through a caretaker government. Accordingly, Samir Ranjan Barman became the chief minister of the caretaker government. But within 11 days, he had to step down, otherwise, he could have been dismissed. If that happened, the pathetic condition of Congress could have been more acute. And in that case, its rivals would have been in a more advantageous position.

The main rival of Congress is CPM and there is no doubt that the political development of the last few weeks increased their happiness. There is no Congress government at Agartala and there is even no caretaker government. The Congress workers are frustrated, dishonored, and upset. The Central Government minister Mr. Santosh Mohan Deb, who is known as the main architect for the victory of Congress, has fallen to a disturbing position. Mamata Bandyopadhyay, who threatened to snatch the good night's sleep of the CPM leaders, is not that active because of the pressure of the prime minister. The prime minister himself is continuously indulging them. Due to all these factors, Alimuddin Street (the CPM's main office in Calcutta) could think that the southern wind is blowing in their favor, and they are to wait for a final victory. But there are some problems too. Because, whenever there is an election in Tripura, they have to win in order to prove that Congress was not voted into power, but rather captured power for such a long period of time. Because the ruling party could not manipulate the election in Tripura, the people of the state could vote freely in the election. So, the popular verdict went against the Congress. But there are also some problems with this argument. The demand of the leftists that elections in West Bengal be held freely and fairly and according to the rules is not accepted by the political parties like Congress, BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], SUCI [Socialist Unity Center of India], etc., Mr. Sheshan, who is now praised by the leftists, did not give a good certificate to the leftist government in this regard. If a demand is made that elections in West Bengal be held under president's rule, the leftists must reject that demand. But as a result of that, someone should not expect that all kinds of criticism will be stopped. The local unit of the Congress Party is responsible for the trouble Congress is facing in Tripura. The Congress Party lives on the culture of factional rivalry and does not feel the need to maintain party discipline, and, naturally, fails to keep the unity of the party. The small leaders of the party get the opportunity to complain against each other at the level of the high command. In such a situation, what other result could be expected from the party? Is Congress, as the largest party of the country, able to place a high ideal in front of the nation? As the largest party of the nation, Congress has to accept the highest responsibility for the present wretched and immoral political condition of the country. Since independence the nation has probably not faced such an uncertain situation. Has Congress been able to play a proper role in a situation like this? All the efforts of the

prime minister are directed to remaining in power at the Center at any cost. This has definitely damaged the image of the party. This cannot be considered a good sign.

CPM Reaction Seen Ineffective

93AS0669D Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA
in Bengali 11 Mar 93 p 6

[Article by Debashis Bhattacharya: "Even By Cursing Sheshan, CPM is Just Facilitating His Work in Tripura"]

[Text] Everyone knows that the position of the chief election commissioner is important and great in a large democratic country like India. The senior IAS [Indian Administrative Service] officer, T.N. Sheshan, has made the position controversial by his activities and decisions. There is no doubt about it. How much of a "tight nut" Mr. Sheshan is, or, whether he has crossed the limit of his power or not—all these issues are a matter of discussion for the past, present, and future. But the CPM [Communist Party of India-Marxist] is playing a dirty political game with Mr. Sheshan. Following their opportunistic tactics, CPM is trying to utilize every step or decision of Mr. Sheshan to earn political profit. Moreover, the way the CPM is publicly trying to disregard the position of the chief election commissioner, the time has come to consider whether a national political party can do this, or, what kind of steps should be taken against that party.

The recent controversy with Mr. Sheshan began with the issue of Tripura. The Election Commission's decision to postpone the election in the state of Tripura on the grounds of "lack of appropriate condition for election" made CPM happy. Surely, they can. Nothing is wrong there. There is nothing to say if any decision of the Election Commission puts one political party in an advantageous position. But the matter has some importance in the context of relations between Mr. Sheshan and the CPM. The interesting thing is that when any decision of Mr. Sheshan goes against the CPM or the government of Jyoti Basu, all the leaders of CPM from all levels start to criticize Mr. Sheshan as "crazy, an agent of Congress, unqualified, worthless," etc. But when any decision of Mr. Sheshan creates some political advantages for the CPM, all the top ranking leaders of CPM start to claim in black and white that Mr. Sheshan "has joined hands with us."

I would like to know why an honest, idealistic, and impartial officer like Mr. Sheshan is maintaining silence while watching the degradation and indignity of the post of the chief election commissioner? We have seen from the incident of Tripura that Mr. Sheshan demanded strong steps be taken against the police officials who were present in the meeting of the Congress Party with central minister Santosh Mohan Deb. The chief election commissioner of Tripura, in his report after investigating the matter, wrote that those police officers were present there for the "security" of the central minister.

But by disregarding that report, Mr. Sheshan proved that he is not ready to spare anyone. Whatever explanation is given for Mr. Sheshan's decision, his mental firmness cannot be denied. And there lies the question. While Mr. Sheshan can show the firmness to defy the report of his subordinate officer, how can he be indifferent to a serious comment that is like joining hands with the CPM? Especially, since this comment was made by a CPM leader like Nripen Chakrabarti, a member of the CPM Politbureau. This was not Mr. Chakrabarti's verbal comment. In a letter addressed to Mr. Rajesh Pilot, the minister of state for home affairs of the Central Government, dated February 10, Mr. Chakrabarti wrote, "Now the question of Tripura is not a matter for any particular party. At present, the real question is we all have to throw the criminal coalition government to the dustbin. It is a matter of pleasure that the election commission of Delhi joined hands with us in this great task." Now, let Mr. Sheshan say that does he consider this comment of the top ranking CPM leader of Tripura as derogatory to his great position, and if he does, what steps did he take against that? Needless to say, at least at the time of this writing, there is no knowledge that the election commission has taken any step, or, is going to take any.

The CPM created precedents on several occasions to undermine the importance of the election commission and to embarrass Mr. Sheshan personally. CPM leaders made many insulting comments about Mr. Sheshan in a reckless manner. But until now, the chief election commissioner has not taken any steps against them. Naturally, if someone raises questions about Mr. Sheshan's sudden firmness in a too idealist manner, can one argue against that?

Let us take the example of the parliamentary election of 1991. After the voting of 20 May in West Bengal, Mr. Sheshan ordered revoting in 34 booths in the Howrah constituency. He definitely took this decision after careful consideration of some allegations. The CPM fiercely protested that decision. The CPM party theoretician Mr. Biplab Das Gupta wrote an article in the party newspaper DESHHITOISI on 14 June. In the heading of the article, Mr. Das Gupta wrote—"In that post (the chief election commissioner), there should be a person who is impartial and who is known by everyone to be like that. He must not be a power hungry person and be capable of making a decision with a cool brain. If we consider all those good qualities, and as we have understood the situation until now, Mr. Sheshan is not a qualified person for that high office."

Conscious reader, please judge the matter. As soon as revoting was ordered in 34 booths in Howrah, the CPM raised the question of the "impartiality" of Mr. Sheshan and painted him as "unqualified." And when that same Mr. Sheshan postponed elections in 1993 in the Congress ruled state of Tripura, the CPM politbureau leader approved of him for "joining hands" with the CPM in their "great task." The important thing to note is that, according to the idealist principles of Mr. Sheshan, neither Mr. Biplab Das Gupta in 1991 nor Mr. Nripen

Chakrabarti in 1993 did anything "wrong" or committed any "offence." But it is reported that Mr. Sheshan was tremendously angry and felt insulted when his assessment of the deterioration of law and order in Tripura was called "totally untrue" by the then chief minister of Tripura, Mr. Samir Barman.

The chief minister of West Bengal, Mr. Jyoti Basu also called him "crazy." What did Mr. Sheshan say in reaction to that? He said, "I respect Mr. Jyoti Basu. I don't want to say anything about it." Mr. Sheshan's latest order about Tripura was that the allegation that the Central Government minister Mr. Santosh Deb used the police and the administration in the election activities of the party should be investigated. It must be admitted that, if Mr. Sheshan holds such an investigation and takes legal action if the allegation is proved true, then his impartiality, firmness, and action will remain exemplary. But the point is, when Mr. Sheshan wanted to prohibit the use of a government plane by the chief minister of West Bengal Comrade Jyoti Basu for his election campaign, could he do that? If not, why? In that case, why did Mr. Sheshan allow the things to go on? Who will answer these questions? If it is said that the chief minister deserves special security arrangements, then the question could arise in the case of Tripura whether Mr. Santosh Deb falls in the "Z category," which means he is allowed to have special security arrangements. The people should also be informed about that fact. People should also know if at the time of the election campaign in Tripura, whether the middle and lower ranking ministers of West Bengal used government VIP cars with flashing red lights encircled by police in front and back, and if that happened, should it be a violation of election regulations? If the election commission thinks it necessary, it can call as a witness the following West Bengal ministers, Mr. Subhas Chakraborty, Mr. Gautam Deb, Mr. Dinesh Datta, Mr. Kalimuddin Shams, Ms. Chhaya Ghosh, etc. Let us not ask about Mr. Jyoti Basu.

It was on the basis of the allegation of Mr. Dasharath Deb, the secretary of the Tripura state CPM party, that Mr. Sheshan ordered the removal of all the administrative and police officials involved with the election activities in Tripura. The allegation of Mr. Deb was that the Central Government minister, Mr. Santosh Deb, held secret meetings with those officials in the circuit houses and bungalows in different towns of Tripura. By the order of Mr. Sheshan, the chief election officer of Tripura submitted his detailed report on 25 February, after investigating the whole matter, which included the taking of testimonies of all the persons, including Mr. Dasharath Deb. The report stated that the allegation of those secret meetings were completely baseless and those allegations were made on the basis of rumor. The presence of the officers in those meetings was out of the question, and in almost all the cases they remained outside the circuit houses or bungalows supervising security arrangements. But in Mr. Sheshan's 27 February order, the report of the chief election officer of the state

was virtually rejected. That may happen, because it was after all a matter of the office of the Election Commission. But we want to point out the role of the CPM in this regard. In 1991, when the order of re-election in the 34 booths of Howrah was made, the CPM raised the question as to what the basis of the order was when the IAS [Indian Administrative Service] officers of the state in charge of the election wrote in their reports that the election was "free, fair, and peaceful." The CPM leader Mr. Biplab Das Gupta wrote that the discussion about the decision of Mr. Sheshan was "insulting for the IAS officers of the state and is more than enough to break the morale of the administration." I would like to ask this question to an intellectual person like Mr. Biplab Das Gupta: Do you and others consider the rejection of the report of the chief election officer of the state of Tripura by Mr. Sheshan equally objectionable. If you don't, why not? And if you do, why are you not saying that? I know that it is not easy for the CPM leaders to answer these questions. If they want to answer these, they have to unmask their own character of political opportunism. It is impossible for them to do that. Moreover, it is easy to understand why they did not want it in West Bengal, but they wanted it in Tripura. So, they have closed their eyes, ears, and mouths—as if, they do not want to see evil, hear evil, or say evil. Only they will not tolerate the "threats" of Mr. Sheshan in West Bengal, because Jyoti Basu has the complete "mastery" over here. So, when Mr. Sheshan wanted to take a strong stand on the question of appointing the chief election officer for the state of West Bengal after the state government's playing around with the matter for a long time, Jyoti Basu's party and government gave a counterthreat and warning—be careful, do not cross the limits of your power.

It has been said that Mr. Sheshan is a "tight nut." His eyes and ears are always open and they are very sensitive. But recently, after seeing all these things, I am becoming a little puzzled. Did he finally register his name with the party that does not want to "hear any evil?"

Congress Legislator Chastised for Pro-BJP Sentiments

93AS0691D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English
17 Mar 93 p 7

[Text] Calcutta, March 16: The Congress(I) Legislature Party may take action against Mr. Sadhan Pande, MLA [Member of Legislative Assembly], for his "pro-BJP" statements in the state Assembly today.

The CLP(I) [Congress Legislature Party] leader, Dr. Zainal Abedin, has called a special meeting tomorrow of the 42-member party to discuss Mr. Pande's statement and, if necessary, take strong action against him. Dr. Abedin refused to say whether Mr. Pande will be suspended. However, he said a decision will be taken after the Assembly records are examined.

Distancing himself from the MLA, who is loyal to Ms. Mamata Banerjee, Dr. Abedin said Mr. Pande made such statements in his personal capacity.

"Our party's stand is very clear. We are fighting the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] at the Centre and the BJP and CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] in the state. The people should not believe that the Congress(I) is sympathetic to the BJP. Mr. Pande is wondering why the BJP should not be allowed to hold rallies in Bengal. What did the Centre do on February 25?" Dr. Abedin said.

Meanwhile, Mr. S.R. Bapuli, the former deputy leader of the CLP(I) who contested against Dr. Abedin, blamed the CLP(I) leadership for Mr. Pande's outburst and regretted that the CLP(I) leader had not briefed the legislators on specific issues.

He said he, along with some other MLAs, would oppose any punitive action taken against Mr. Pande simply because the legislators had not received any guidelines.

Mr. Sadhan Pande remains intransigent, saying that preventing the BJP from holding any rallies would only make people more sympathetic towards it. "The Centre had rightly prevented the Boat Club rally because mosques were located nearby," Mr. Pande said, and added that if the BJP is allowed to contest the panchayat polls why can't it be allowed to hold rallies.

"I don't care what my partymen say. I am sticking to my stand," he said.

Political experts, however, believe that both Mr. Pande's statement and the protest by Mr. Sudip Bandopadhyay are politically motivated. Mr. Pande has few minority voters in Burtola and faces a challenge from the BJP. Mr. Bandopadhyay is from Bowbazar, in central Calcutta, which has a strong minority population.

Congress (I) Spokesman Comments on Bombay Explosions

93AS0694A Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA
in English 17 Mar 93 p 17

[Article: "Declare Pakistan a Terrorist State"]

[Text] New Delhi, March 16. The Congress does not rule out the involvement of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Friday's bomb explosions at Bombay. It also urged the government to take the initiative for getting Pakistan declared "a terrorist state," reports PTI and UNI.

Commenting on the bomb blasts that claimed over 200 lives, the party spokesman, Mr V. N. Gadgil, said it was obvious that there was an international conspiracy and the involvement of the ISI of Pakistan could not be ruled out.

Mr Gadgil said "if it is so, then the nature of the challenge is one of war by proxy."

International terrorism was a menace that had to be fought by all, Mr Gadgil said.

The Congress appreciated the reactions of the United States, the United Kingdom, European Community and some of the Arab states. They themselves were victims of terrorism, he said.

"India should, therefore, make efforts to have Pakistan declared a terrorist state," Mr Gadgil suggested.

Mr Gadgil said the whole country had condemned the Bombay blasts and it was a matter of pride that the entire nation had displayed remarkable unity at this hour of difficulty.

The wide range of blasts indicated the nature of the challenge that was thrown to the integrity as well as economy of the country, Mr Gadgil said.

The Prime Minister, Mr P. V. Narasimha Rao, and the home minister, Mr S. B. Chavan, who immediately visited Bombay, and the Maharashtra chief minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, took prompt action. All the agencies including the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), intelligence bureau (IB) and the Maharashtra police were working in unison, he said.

Some clues have been found and it is heartening that the people of Maharashtra, particularly Bombay, did not panic nor were they provoked, Mr Gadgil said.

Congress (I) Policy in Punjab Said Alienating Akalis

93AS0675A Calcutta *THE TELEGRAPH* in English
18 Mar 93 p 8

[Article by Gajinder Singh: "Frittering Away the Gains"]

[Text] It had to happen. At a time when Punjab was on the brink of normalcy the chief minister, Mr Beant Singh, declared his intention to "scrap" the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee [SGPC]—the mini-parliament of the Sikhs. His statement has given a new lease of life to the Akali leaders who, till recently, were reeling under the massive onslaught the security forces had launched against the militants.

Mr Beant Singh's statement is fraught with dangerous consequences. First, it conveys an open challenge to the Akalis that his government would like to put an end to their authority on Sikh affairs. Second, it is likely to give birth to more militancy than has been witnessed so far. The Akalis are likely to use the opportunity to spread the propaganda that the move to scrap the SGPC is a direct attack on the Sikh community.

Moreover, Mr Beant Singh could have shown more political acumen by insisting the state Congress not raise the issue of the Anandpur Saheb resolution. The state Congress has "rejected" the resolution. In other words, it has rejected what is still an emotive issue for the Sikhs.

In Punjab, gurdwaras and religious consciousness continue to play a crucial role in political mass mobilisation. Hence the symbiotic relationship between the Akali Dals

and the SGPC. The Anandpur Saheb resolution encapsulates the demands that arise from the religious mobilisation of the Sikhs. Mr Beant Singh's two statements have thus both undermined the position of the Akalis.

The Beant Singh government has shown remarkable courage in bringing down violence to a negligible level. But it has as yet failed to erase the concept of an independent Sikh state from the minds of a large number of people in the state. The chief minister ought to realise the movement for Khalistan has revealed that the principles which govern nationhood in India cannot be permanent. Statecraft involves a continuing series of adjustments and compromises which establish the primacy of politics over dogma. And dogmatism—fuelled by irresponsible disinformation and archaic ideology—lies at the heart of the Punjab problem.

The solution, obviously, lies with Punjab itself. But equally the solution lies in a new leadership in New Delhi and a break from a culture which sees the Punjab problem as one of "us" versus "them." A failure now will not be Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao's alone. It will be the collective failure of an approach which disregards the fundamental principles of Indian tradition and culture—in which faith and religiosity are important elements—for the shibboleths of sham modernisation.

What is needed today in Punjab is not the bullet ridden corpse of the dreaded militant Zaffarwal but an economic package and the implementation of the Rajiv-Longowal accord. The prime minister's refusal to strengthen the hands of the chief minister by granting an economic package is sure to backfire. Punjab is crying for investment, but the satisfaction of this demand is irrelevant so long as decision makers continue to believe killing militants will kill militancy. What has sustained militancy and will continue to do so is not so much as Pakistani support or the separatist cause but the total absence of governmental concern and the lack of any checks on the police—as was amply proved by their brutality against Bharatiya Janata Party demonstrators on February 25.

There is a pattern in both police and militant violence in Punjab. While militants still enjoy the advantage of space, time and choice of targets there is no doubt that in the current phase of the battle the security forces hold the upper hand. If the Khalistan Commando Force's hand in the Bombay blasts is proved, then it is a warning to the authorities that they should not be complacent about the chances of their wiping out terrorism from Punjab. Mr Beant Singh is guilty of drawing such complacent conclusions, forgetting that killing militants in large numbers actually promotes and not ends militancy.

There can be no questioning that the situation in Punjab has improved considerably. But the situation also improved once before during president's rule. It only proved to be the lull before the storm. The wrong course of action for Mr Beant Singh is to treat the death or

surrender of each militant as a victory for his government. He will gain real and lasting support only if he is able to get the Akalis to come round to his point of view. The Akali leaders are still immensely popular. The onus to solve the Punjab problem thus lies on the chief minister and not the Akalis.

It is also time for Mr Beant Singh to realise he is the chief minister of Punjab and not just of Congressmen only. He is often carried away by his own prejudices. He allows his old habits of hatred to evolve into policies against Messrs Prakash Singh Badal, Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Simranjit Singh Mann. The populace will never share Mr Beant Singh's hatred for the Akali leaders nor the Akali leaders' dislike for him. Only a healthy and dignified electoral contest can help bring complete peace in Punjab. Mr Beant Singh is lucky Mr Mann and Mr Badal, instead of uniting, are still at each other's throats. His ministry has shown unity and strength but it is still a far cry from the ministry of Pratap Singh Kairon.

It is widely believed the full implementation of the Punjab accord would have made no difference to the situation as the militants had shown what they thought of the accord by killing Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. This is a dangerously fallacious view. The accord was not aimed at winning over the miniscule army of militants. Its purpose was to conciliate the vast majority of common Sikhs who were not obsessed by any millennial visions of Raj Karega Khalsa. Violence dropped sharply after the accord and rose again when the Akali leaders were convinced they had been taken for a ride.

Further, it is morally very important the credibility of the prime minister is maintained at all costs and his pledge honoured both in letter and spirit. Mr Rao who has always been a member of some committee or the other on Punjab should know where and why the Centre failed and brought about Punjab's tragic state.

That the security forces have done remarkably well in the past few months does not mean they are the only ones responsible for bringing peace to Punjab. The lack of character among a section of the Sikhs has also affected the Khalistan movement. Rapes and extortions by militants had become common and this lost the Khalistanis much popular support. More and more Sikhs began informing the police of the whereabouts of the militants.

Admittedly neither cynicism nor despair can yield to a solution. The first requisite for finding a solution is to stop pretending the problem does not exist. The Khalistan demand is still very real and, what is worse, threatens to assume graver proportions if this frivolous experiment of a so-called popular government is allowed to make politically self-serving statements. The ineptitude of the Beant Singh government is such that before long it could well find itself a prisoner of the very armed and paramilitary forces on whom it is increasingly banking on to snuff out the militant menace. The director general of Punjab police, Mr K.P.S. Gill, has

made it implicit that he actually runs the state when he "offered" to export his forces to other states.

It is also time for the Akali leadership to read the writing on the wall. Barring a handful who genuinely sympathise with the militant cause, all realise the disastrous effect the Khalistani cause has had on the community.

But the Akalis love power. It was the exigencies of power politics that helped them keep the Anandpur Saheb resolution in abeyance for a long time. The 1977 Akali manifesto made no mention of the resolution. In the 1977 election the Akali Dal, in alliance with the Janata Party, won a big majority in Punjab and formed a coalition government. It also joined the union cabinet. The Akali leadership, upon joining the national political mainstream, realised the implications of the resolution. They then tried to escape implementing the resolution while maintaining the facade that still supported it.

A lasting solution to the Punjab problem lies in the Anandpur Saheb resolution. The success of a federal system of governance depends on the balance maintained between the Centre and the states. Whenever there are imbalances in their powers, the federal system cracks under its own weight. The resolution demands more powers to the states.

Akali politics baffles all Akalis. Their ethnic ethos colour their politics. It is bewildering how they can start fighting over what looks like trifles to others. Outsiders are perplexed by the lightening speed with which the Akalis manage to forget their skirmishes, swear eternal friendship and loyalty, only to resume hostilities. But Mr Beant Singh's plan to scrap the SGPC is likely to unite them for all time to come.

It is true the SGPC, which ought to be engaged in the management of Sikh shrines, has turned itself into a hotbed of politics. Mr Beant Singh is wrong in blaming only the Akalis for this. Many Congress leaders are well-versed in the politics of the SGPC—and that includes Mr Beant Singh. The Congress has been playing religious politics in Punjab under a secular garb. Its campaign against the SGPC is not aimed at delinking Punjabi politics from the Sikh body but in acquiring control of, or at least, a strong say in the affairs of the SGPC.

What is also required today is an assurance to the Sikhs that India belongs to them as much as it belongs to anybody else. The slogan of Maha Punjab raised by some Congress leaders as a countermeasure to the Akalis will only complicate the situation in the state. Indian unity needs to be strengthened. One means is counter the appeal of religious divisiveness, whether it comes in the name of Khalistan, Hindu rashtra or Islamic statehood.

Struggle Within Congress (I) Viewed

93AS0681B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 20 Mar 93
p 4

[Editorial: "Struggle For Power Within Congress"]

[Text] The internal struggle for power within the Congress high command has intensified prior to its proposed convention. Arjun Singh and his followers, after being vigorously attacked by the supporters of the prime minister in the Congress working committee, eased their demand for the election of a separate individual as the Congress president. The Congress group, dismayed at the Bombay bombing episode, also said that it is not the right time to press the prime minister to abandon the Congress presidency. Due to a statement encouraged by two of the party general secretaries against the opponents, this dispute has gained new momentum. Arjun Singh in opposing this action has asked the prime minister to require the two general secretaries, Janardan Pujari and Sushil Kumar Shinde, to resign. The disputed statement claims that Narasimha Rao is in no way responsible for the expansion of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] because at the time when the number of BJP legislators in Parliament increased from three to 89 Rao was neither the Party president nor the prime minister. Similarly, it was not during Narasimha Rao's administration that the BJP emerged as a prominent opposition. Arjun Singh and other angered Congressmen have interpreted this to mean that it was Rajiv Gandhi who afforded the BJP this opportunity to expand. Obviously the aggravated Congressmen see this as a good issue on which to question and harass Narasimha Rao. Since Rao was named prime minister, certain Congress leaders loyal to Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia have attacked his administration. Arjun Singh has written to the prime minister that not merely were Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, and Nehru Congress leaders, but their ideals are a source of inspiration to the Congressmen. The general secretaries have, therefore, intentionally aimed at disgracing them. They should, to repent, tender their resignations. If not, the prime minister should appoint a committee to inquire into the facts.

This issue has unnerved the Congress administration. It appears, the two general secretaries in defending the prime minister have opened a can of worms. Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil's contention that this statement should not be considered to have been issued by the Congress high command because the prime minister's approval was not sought for it, is not persuasive. One of these general secretaries in his wisdom, in order to have the statement signed, had also contacted the Madhya Pradesh Congress President Digvijay Singh. The relationship between Arjun Singh and Digvijay Singh is universally known. In so doing, they have created difficulties for themselves. By adding this issue to his first letter, Arjun Singh tried to prove that in spite of repeated warnings regarding the BJP, the Congress administration did not act in any meaningful way. According to him the BJP has always criticized Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, and Nehru. The Congress administration never adopted any plan of action to put an end to this propaganda. Rao thus has a complex problem at hand. He may have provided an explanation to Soniya Gandhi in private, but any disciplinary action

against the two party general secretaries can prove detrimental to him, especially at a time when he needs maximum support.

The problem does not, however, stop here. Along with Arjun Singh another disgruntled Congress leader Kedarnath Singh addressed a letter to the membership of the Congress working council saying that the Party is in bad shape and has become a victim of non-directional leadership. An important allegation to note is that the Party does not make decisions in a democratic way. Important decisions are not made on the Party platform but are directed by certain members. Even nominations for the bi-elections and for legislative councils are made against the decisions of the working council and the Party constitution. Although, Kedarnath Singh says that the allegations are not directed toward any one individual, they clearly point to an effort to place the prime minister and the Party administration in an embarrassing situation.

Indeed, in the prevailing political atmosphere, even the dissatisfied Congress members realize that it is neither appropriate nor possible to remove Rao from the prime ministership. Such is not possible because Rao has close to absolute support of the parliamentary group in the Congress. In the last mid-term elections, most of the Congress legislators were elected from the southern states or from Maharashtra. Arjun Singh and his collaborators, at the most, hope to obtain the support from the Hindi speaking states only. After the Bombay bomb explosions Sharad Pawar also does not favor any changes in the central leadership. He has told his opinion to the legislators supporting him. Arjun Singh cannot, therefore, hope to successfully challenge Narasimha Rao as the leader of the parliamentary group. But the matter in regard to the Congress high command is a separate issue. This is the Party platform and election of all nominated candidates to the Parliament is not essential. Candidates from northern India dominate the high command. Pressure is, therefore, exerted on the prime minister to renounce the Party presidency. Narasimha Rao, himself, declared that the rule of "one person one post" should be exercised. Under normal circumstances he applies this rule to himself also, but at a time when the BJP is all over them and the Anna Dramuk has isolated itself, he feels that it is dangerous to pass the reins of the Congress party to the opposition. In this sense the proposed March convention will be a test of the power play. The Party leadership asserts that the convention will be held as scheduled but some members doubt that it will be postponed. There may be valid reasons for rescheduling the convention, but in light of the pressure from the opposition, such is unlikely. If the convention is postponed it may be taken as a victory for the disgruntled group of members. It may also appear that Narasimha Rao has done it because he fears the opposition. The disgruntled group of members may not succeed in its efforts at the Surajkund convention, but the Party has reached a stage where the victory of any one group will be disastrous to it.

Rao Criticized for Flirting With CPM

93AS0728B Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA
in Bengali 20 Mar 93 p 4

[Article by Sunit Ghosh: "By Reaching an Agreement With CPM in Order To Save His Throne, Rao Will Bring Down His Own Party"]

There was a time when the Congress ruling class, out of a sense of insecurity, raised the specter of a rightist conspiracy and foreign hand and wooed the left and the so-called progressive elements; they too used to bend over backwards to save them. About 24 years ago, in 1969, after the Congress split, Indira Gandhi was able to save her seat with the support of such progressive elements after losing her absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. Even though she gagged democracy much in the fashion of Hitler during the 1975 Emergency, these pro-Moscow progressive elements danced with raised hands in support of Indira Gandhi. After the Janata Party came to power, the left parties helped assure the stability of the Morarji government by extending constructive support to it. But later, for some mysterious reason, they withdrew their support for Morarji and indirectly paved the way for Indira Gandhi's return. In 1987, when the entire country was agog with Fairfax and publication of President Zail Singh's secret letter in the Indian Express, the shaky Rajiv government at that time raised the specter of a rightist conspiracy and wooed the leftist parties. But on that occasion, leftist leaders did not extend their helping hands again and backed Viswanath Pratap Singh. Now the threatened Narasimha Rao government is wooing the leftists again.

In politics, survival is an art. If one has the mentality of compromise, one can make it through many a storm and find a safe landing some day. Those who lack this attitude and always fail to compromise for ideology find it hard to survive in politics. Subhash Chandra Basu did not have this "art" of survival, but Jawaharlal Nehru and his successors did. Narasimha Rao is such a leader inspired by Nehru's ideology and nurtured in the Nehruvian tradition. He never took any risks. Whenever the top party leadership gave him any responsibility, he obeyed it like a faithful follower. He never traded the path of confrontation for the path of leadership even if there was a disagreement. That's why he never had to choose the path of living incognito politically. Though he believes in democracy, he never opposed the emergency. On the contrary, he strengthened Indira Gandhi's hands. He was India's home minister during the Indira assassination. Before his eyes, about 3,000 lives were lost during the anti-Sikh riots in the capital. But he never thought of resigning due to the sting of conscience. Today, Narasimha Rao is the number one Congress leader and the country's prime minister by virtue of his extraordinary capacity to compromise with his conscience. It is doubtful that a single Congress election manifesto pledge was implemented during Narasimha Rao's rule. The documents show a reduction in inflation, but the prices of daily necessities are still beyond the

reach of people with fixed incomes. The condition of the country did not change much even after the introduction of the market economy in consonance with the present world.

RSS Leader Interviewed on Muslim Indians, Role of Islam

93AS0734H New Delhi ORGANISER in English
21 Mar 93 pp 9-10 58

[K. S. Sudarshan interview: "Muslims Must Merge and Mingle With Motherland"; italicized and boldface words as published]

[Text] *The Joint General Secretary of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] Shri K. S. Sudarshan was recently interviewed by INDIAN EXPRESS when he pleaded for a healthy change in the Muslim outlook as a concomitant for a grand national reconciliation, for which Muslims should desist from alienating themselves from the history, culture and heritage of their own mother land. ORGANISER picked up the thread and sought further clarification from the veteran leader. Excerpts:*

Q: In your interview with INDIAN EXPRESS you said Muslim masses are as much part and parcel of Hindu Rashtra as any other section of society. Will you please elaborate?

A: Ninety per cent of the Muslims of this country have not come from outside. A few generations ago their forefathers were converted to Islam. But that should not alienate them either from their motherland or their ancestors or the cultural heritage of this land. RSS wants that Muslims should understand and accept these natural foundations of nationalism and have their primary allegiance to their motherland, because the other two flow directly from the first.

Q: But does not that go against the Islamic concept of Ummah Muslima, the Islamic brotherhood?

A: True so. The concept of Ummah Muslima does not recognise national boundaries. But actually it is more on the emotional level than on political plane. The Ummah today is divided into so many nationalities, often at variance and sometimes in conflict with one another. There is an Arab nationalism, a Turkish nationalism, an Iranian nationalism, an Indonesian nationalism. The question is what causes the differences? What made Bangladesh secede from Pakistan? Even the Arabs are divided into so many nations. When Iraq was being battered, other Arab nations not only didn't go to its succour, some of them sided with the Western powers. Today Bosnia is bleeding and Somalis is starving but the Islamic nations are unconcerned. Why? They are more concerned about their respective national interests. The pull of nationalism has proved stronger than the Ummah's.

Q: But the Muslims fear that if they accepted Hindu nationalism they will lose their separate identity and will be overwhelmed by the Hindu majority.

A: This fear has been deliberately put into their minds. But it is absolutely unfounded. Because the Hindu view of life is based on the principle of unity-in-diversity. There was never any effort on the part of the Hindu to destroy any form of diversity. Under the Hindu canopy all types of worship—right from the worship of stones, trees and icons of various shapes to the worship of the formless, attributeless and eggless (*nirakar, nirvikar, nirahankar*)—coexist most peacefully. It is because of this attitude of the Hindu mind that a handful of Jews, taking shelter in this country centuries back, never felt threatened about losing their identity. The miniscule minority of the Parsis also has kept its identity intact. Why should then Muslims fear that they would lose their identity?

Q: Will not the unbridled contact with the Hindus pollute the purity of Islam?

A: Islam as propounded in the Quran has a strong imprint of Arabic culture. That was but natural because the revelations of the Quran were basically meant for the Arabian people. There are many verses in the Quran which say: "Lo! We have revealed a lecture in Arabic so that ye may understand." Prophet Mohammad succeeded in uniting the Arab tribes into one nation and gave them a common mode of worship, way of living, customs and manners, statecraft, jurisprudence and war laws. All that was best suited to the desert conditions of Arabia. This strong imprint of Arabian culture was bound to get diluted when Islam came into contact with other cultures. Thus its interaction in Turkey with the European culture, in Iran with the Zoroastrian culture, in Indonesia with the Hindu culture has given it a different colour in those countries. In Indonesia Islam does not inhibit its adherents from accepting Ramayan and Mahabharat as their cultural epics and Rama and Krishna as their forefathers. So in Hindustan if Islam takes its own shape and colour why should it be considered a pollution?

Q: Will then not the professing of Islam be limited to a way of worship?

A: That is how it should be. The essential core of Islam together with all such elements which fit into the cultural context of this country and at the same time have a relevance in modern times, can be retained intact.

Q: In short you want an Indian version of Islam to emerge.

A: Definitely.

Q: But the Muslims believe that the whole of Quran is relevant for all times to come.

A: Only in the historical context. Many of the revelations of the Quran are only situational or contextual. Since the Prophet, faced with stiff resistance from his own people, had to pass through different situations, the revelations

came to him in that order, so much so, that many late revelations which were quite contradictory to the earlier ones, have abrogated them. For example, the *ayat-ul-saif*, the verse of the sword, which says—"And when the sacred months have passed, kill the idolators wherever you find them, and ambush them but if they are repentant then lo! Allah is merciful," is said to have abrogated 124 earlier verses, most of which are often quoted by the Islamic apologists to show the benign, liberal and tolerant nature of Islam. For the reciters of the Quran there are certain verses which should not be read at all and there are others, which though fit to be read, should not be acted upon.

Q: You mean to say that there are certain accidental and temporary regulations.

A: The Prophet himself has said that. An authentic *hadis* given in *Jama 'ul-Tirmizi* and also in *Mishkat* says—"Ye are in an age in which if ye abandon one-tenth of what is ordered, ye shall be ruined. After this a time will come when he, who shall observe one-tenth of what is now ordered, will be redeemed." Is not that a clear injunction to sift the essential core of Islam, which has a universal relevance, from the ephemeral and evoke a scheme which is not only relevant to the modern times but also in harmony with the culture of the land? The Prophet was far-sighted enough to realise that the same set of mundane laws and customs cannot have universal application for ever.

Q: Can you explain with an example how Islam can effect harmony with the culture of this land?

A: Why not? Take for instance the Quranic revelation which says that Allah has sent messengers to each and every people who have delivered His message in their own languages. In that case who were the prophets sent to this country? What was the message they delivered and what was the language? If they try to ponder along these lines then is it not possible that they might discover that the Vedic *rishis*, to whom the Vedic verses were revealed, as also Rama and Krishna were some of the 1,24,000 prophets believed by Muslims to have been sent to this earth by Allah?

Q: But the Hindus consider Rama and Krishna as avatars.

A: Many Hindus consider them only as national heroes. Interestingly, in Lebanon and Syria there is an Islamic sect called Druzes which believes in incarnations and according to them Prophet Muhammad was not an incarnation.

Q: If that be the case then how is it that such a trend has not emerged from among the Indian Muslims?

A: Many syncretic movements did emerge in our country but they were short-lived. Akbar's *Deen-e-Ilahi* was one of them. But it was resented by some of his own courtiers who were mostly from Iran and Turan. Dara Shikoh had such a syncretic mind but he had to give way to the fanaticism of Aurangzeb. Later the movements led by

Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi Waliullah, Syed Ahmed Bareilvi, Aziz Ahmed, which were anti-syncretic had a greater hold on the minds of the Indian Muslims, so much so, that they consider Akbar to be a heretic, even though many Hindus may portray him as an epitome of secularism. The greatest grouse of the leaders of these movements was that in spite of 500 years of Muslim rule, India could not be completely won over to the side of Islam. Moreover, the mechanism evoked by the Hindus to save their dharma from the deadly onslaught of Islam by making rigid the caste structure was also responsible for blocking the entry of those Muslims who wanted to come back. Subsequently, during the British regime, the Britishers went all out to widen the rift between the two communities and after Independence it is the so-called secular parties who, with a view to building up their vote-banks, have been competing with one another in pandering to them, thereby keeping them away from the national mainstream.

Q: Then what is the way out?

A: A determined apolitical social leadership should emerge from among the Muslims.

Q: Is it possible? Islam and politics appear to be so inseparably interconnected.

A: It will be difficult task, no doubt, because Islam got wedded to politics in its infancy. In the beginning the Muslims were severely persecuted. It was only after the establishment of a tiny Islamic republic at Madina that Islamic influence began to spread and since then state power has been more instrumental in the spread of Islam than anything else. So if anybody asks any Muslim whether Islam and politics can be separated, invariably the answer is No. Hence the emergence of an apolitical leadership is really very difficult, specially when the basic concepts of Islam need reinterpretation. But the scenario at the threshold of the 21st century is so different that Muslim society will have to choose between constant strife and peace. If it chooses to stick to pan-Islamism and the consequent terminology of *dar-ul-harab* (land of the enemy) and *dar-ul-Islam* (land of Islam) it is in for a long struggle with the rest of the world. But if it realises the potency of nationalism, which is evident from the division of the *Ummah* along national lines, then it will have to come to terms with nationalism and present nationalism as a logical product of the Islamic thought process. As the late Shri M.R.A. Beg, the erstwhile ambassador of India in Iran, has succinctly put it: "Muslims must therefore decide whether they are Indian Muslims of the Indian branch of the Muslim family whose heartland is in west Asia, or whether they are Muslim Indians of the Muslim branch of the Indian family which is rooted in the Indian soil." Here lies the need for a new social leadership.

Q: But such a leadership will have to face furious hostility from the Muslim society.

A: But that has been the lot of all social reformers. In order to overcome the inertia, inherent in every moribund society, strong persistent efforts will have to be undertaken to make it move. All social reformers have had to face the ire of and even ostracism from the society. But their determination and sometimes even martyrdom has slowly changed the society. The tragedy of the Muslim society is that, unlike the Hindu society, it has not been able to throw up sufficient number of social reformers who could bring about some basic changes in the outlook of the society.

Q: What type of basic change?

A: For example the concepts of *kufir* and *kafir*. You know the hullabaloo that was raised when Dr. Bedav, former Director of the Khudabuksh Library of Patna, said that Hindus should not be considered as *kafirs*. According to some Arab scholars only those who do not believe in the existence of God can be termed as *kafirs*. The rest, apart from the Muslims are either *ahl-e-kitab* meaning thereby the people who have received the message from God and are also mentioned in the Quran like the Jew's and the Christians, or *ahl-e-kitab mushabah* which means people resembling the people of the book, i.e., though they have received revelations from God they are not mentioned in the Quran. If that be the case then should not the Muslims first decide what they actually think about the Hindus, a majority of them being idol-worshippers, apparently worshipping different gods and goddesses but in reality worshipping one or more aspects of the same Almighty? If they still stick to the view held by a majority of *alims* so far then how can there be any basis for rapprochement? It is in such matters that a basic change of outlook is needed.

BJP Seen Dependent on Mix of Politics, Religion
93AS0691F Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English
17 Mar 93 p 8

[Article by Kuldeep Nayar: "The Ball Is In the BJP's Court"]

[Text] Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee has not yet become part of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] furniture. Once in a while he says things which make him look different, much to the embarrassment of the saffron-dyed Hindus. His renewed plea for negotiations on the demolished Babari Masjid site is another example of this.

True, the debris of the mosque cannot be traced. But the dispute is far from settled. The RSS and its allied organizations like the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP] remain firm in their resolve to build the temple while the known leadership of the Muslims has not abandoned the demand to raise the mosque at the same site.

Had the place been vacant, the resumption of negotiations would have been easier. But there is already a makeshift temple standing. It came up between the night

of December 6 and the afternoon of December 7 when the Uttar Pradesh administration was under the Centre and when the crowds were still there. In fact, the idols have been placed at the structure and pilgrims are visiting it.

The Prime Minister promised, at a meeting of editors and senior journalists on December 9, that the makeshift structure would be removed "before long". But it has turned out to be as unrealistic as his broadcast statement that the mosque would be rebuilt. Like leaders of other political parties, he must have realized that the demolition has complicated the matter further.

It has not only strengthened communal and fundamentalist forces in and around India but has created tremors of intolerance. What has happened at Ayodhya is a domestic problem but, over the years, it has assumed subcontinental, if not international, proportions. Even otherwise, it cannot be pushed under the carpet.

The Rao Government's announcement that it will build a temple and a mosque is of little consequence. The dispute is over the site, not whether the temple or the mosque as such should be constructed. If that were so, the BJP would not have announced that it had no objection to the construction of a mosque outside the precincts of Ayodhya. This offer has been rejected by the Muslim leadership.

The reference by the Centre to the Supreme Court of India to determine whether there was originally a temple or a mosque does not help either. The Babari Masjid Action Committee [BMAC], which once accepted this procedure, has denounced the government move after the demolition. On the other hand, the BJP (and the RSS), has said that it prefers faith to law. Both Mr. Kalyan Singh, the former BJP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and Mr. L.K. Advani, the party's chief in Parliament, have said that the call of God is more important than the obligation of law.

It would be a chaotic world if everyone were to follow what his or her God wished because all dastardly acts are done in his name. In India, nowhere has the Constitution said that when it is the question of Hindu sentiments (which can be whipped up) the law will take a back seat.

Hindu Chauvinism

I respect Mr. Vajpayee's word but I am not sure whether the rest of the BJP, the VHP and other such organizations want a settlement. Their strategy is to polarize the country and ride the wave of Hindu chauvinism to see if it can come to power at the Centre. Stirring up primitive sentiments on the masjid was the means, not the end. Even if the Babari Masjid were handed over the BJP on a platter, I would find some other reason to play the anti-Muslim card because that provides it with its ethos.

The party will go from one mosque to another because it feels that it pays dividends. That is the reason why the question of the Mathura and the Varanasi mosques,

which share the premises with temples, has been raised. They are not being projected fiercely at present because the BJP leaders have themselves said that the two mosques are "not yet on their agenda". There has never been an unequivocal statement to deny such a proposition.

I have gone round the country in the last two months and I have come back with the impression that the Muslims may be willing to withdraw their claim on the Babari Masjid provided there are no further demands on other religious buildings. Some leaders of the banned Jamaat-i-Islami have made the same point. One of them said: "If our country can be saved from bloodshed, we will persuade our Muslim brethren to offer the Babari Masjid to our Hindu brethren".

Two Mosques

I am not sure of the RSS family. I went over a similar exercise five years ago. The meeting, where some Hindu and Muslim leaders were present, broke up when Mahant Vaidya Nath, now a BJP member of the Lok Sabha, said the Babari Masjid would not suffice; the mosques at Mathura and Varanasi should also be handed over.

It is possible to pick up the thread from where it was left. But what is the guarantee that the BJP will abide by what it says? Its credibility is rather low because it demolished the Babari Masjid structure after giving an undertaking to the Supreme Court that it will protect it. The initial remorse among BJP leaders has also gone; nearly all of them have been gloating over the destruction.

While Mr. Vajpayee is aiming at peace, the BJP chief, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, is on the warpath. Sometimes I feel that they are the two sides of the same coin. But presuming there is a liberal element in the RSS family, how will it implement a settlement which gives the Babari Masjid to the Hindus and some assurance to the Muslims in return? The suggestion by an intellectual Muslim to amend the Constitution to incorporate the undertaking that no other religious building would be touched is not enough. Ultimately, it is a matter of the trust that the RSS family can instil in others.

So far its moves are aimed at consolidating the Hindu votebank for the next election. The ballyhoo over the temples is for the same purpose. The BJP increased its strength to 120 seats in the Lok Sabha by leading the *rath* in the name of Ram in 1990; its thinking seems to be that pursuing the same tactics in the name of Krishna or Shiva will give it a majority in the 546-member House.

The BJP is playing a gruesome game of creating fear in the minds of the Hindu majority against the Muslim minority. The party is not bothered about what happens to the polity or the country. It has already created enough tension. Muslim communalism is also rearing its ugly head. Communal riots have already taken a toll of nearly 5,000 people, including Hindus, and of more than Rs 10,000 crores worth of property.

The issue is not that of the Babari Masjid but of power politics. The BJP and its allies failed to make an impact till the Congress(I) obliterated the ethical considerations inherent in public behaviour and till secular forces grew weak. Communalism did not have much appeal because imaginary fears had not been aroused. Hindus were not worked up since they saw no danger to their faith. The RSS family has been systematically calling wolf and the foolish policies of Muslim fundamentalists have helped it. Now its eyes are fixed on New Delhi and it will go to any length to achieve its objective.

There may be no problem in persuading Muslims to hand over the Babari Masjid to Hindus who have been forced to believe that Ram was born at the same place. But there will be a problem in making the BJP renounce its communal brand of politics. Is it willing to give up mixing religion with politics and the State? That is what secularism is all about. The ball is in the court of the BJP.

Jayalalitha Alliance With BJP Analyzed

93AS0684F Calcutta *THE TELEGRAPH* in English
21 Mar 93 p 11

[Article by G.C.Shekhar: "Changing Partners Yet Again?"]

[Text] It was like a case of a terminally ill patient being kept on artificial support systems for too long. Just as the strain begins to tell on the doctors and the patient's relatives, it happened with the AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] and the Congress in trying to keep their alliance afloat.

Despite brave words from Mr Narasimha Rao after his luncheon diplomacy on January 18 when he declared that all irritants had been ironed out, the alliance had already suffered a psychological blow when the Tamil Nadu chief minister, Ms J. Jayalalitha, declared at her party's conference in Madurai that the AIADMK's stupendous victory had nothing to do with the Rajiv Gandhi assassination.

The state Congressmen, reduced to abject servility thanks to Mr Rao's minority government's over dependence on the 11 AIADMK MPs [Member of Parliament] for survival, dusted their vocal chords of cry foul and dubbed as nothing short of betrayal Ms Jayalalitha's observation that she would have scored a similar mandate had Rajiv Gandhi been alive.

"We knew all along that she was an unreliable ally. She is too impetuous and impulsive for our liking. But after having hunted for votes over the blood of our leader, and then to disown his martyrdom just to satisfy her ego was the ultimate betrayal," fumed a senior Congress MP.

Then came the attempt by the Moopanar faction of the Congress to re-establish the party's self respect. This coincided with Dr Subramanian Swamy's famous "oust Jayalalitha" campaign. Ms Jayalalitha, always a suspicious person, felt that Dr Swamy could not be operating

on his own and had the indirect blessings of the Congress, especially of someone at the Centre.

Despite Dr Swamy's claims that neither the Centre nor the Prime Minister had anything to do with his campaign, Ms Jayalalitha continued to be intrigued by Mr Rao's reticence. It was only after she served notice to the Rao government by endorsing the BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] stand on the kar seva that Mr Rao distanced himself from the Swamy campaign. He, however, never disapproved of Dr Swamy's efforts and this rankled Ms Jayalalitha.

But the Prime Minister had his own reasons for not letting down Dr Swamy. Mr Rao was piqued by Ms Jayalalitha's assertion before a group of editors in Delhi that the Prime Minister was angry with her for not favouring a businessman of his choice for the coal handling contract of the state electricity board.

He was also put off by the AIADMK supremo's imperious attitude and her shrill demand on the Centre as well as her interference in the Congress' internal matter. It is an open secret that the TNCC [Tamil Nadu Congress Committee] vice president, Mr V.K. Ramamurthy, resigned his Union ministership over the Cauvery issue at Ms Jayalalitha's insistence.

The way Dr Swamy continued to be pampered by the Centre with security further irked Ms Jayalalitha and convinced her that the Centre was not serious about denying its links with Dr Swamy. Added to this, Dr Swamy continued to ferret out information damaging to Ms Jayalalitha's image. A nervous Jayalalitha was on tenterhooks, anxious at what Dr Swamy would do next.

It was this insecurity which the BJP exploited. Masterminded by its shrewd general secretary K.N. Govindacharya, the BJP started making the right noises in front of the chief minister. Amidst the cacophony of criticism and conspiratorial moves, the BJP's soothing observation that the AIADMK government led by Ms Jayalalitha should not be disturbed as it had succeeded in combatting terrorism and separatism, came as a blessing. "Corruption is a secondary issue in Tamil Nadu. The matter of prime importance is fighting anti-national forces that had taken roots here," declared Govindacharya.

With that telling comment the BJP flung its bait at the chief minister. The party presented itself as being different from the Congress which destabilises uncomfortable state governments and respects differences of opinions among political partners. Ms Jayalalitha, with her own middle class Hindu mindset, began to waver.

The crunch came due to an unexpected development. Due to some mysterious reasons, the AIADMK started gunning for the TNCC president, Mr V.K. Ramamurthy. The party set his removal from the post as a precondition for normalising relations with the Congress. Not the man to let go of a fight, Mr Ramamurthy countered with open accusations of corruption and the deteriorating law and

order in the state. Then came Ms Jayalalitha's famous speech at the NIC [expansion not given] endorsing the BJP's demand for kar seva at Ayodhya.

The Congress was stunned. Mr Ramamurthy termed it a sellout to the BJP and an unforgivable act. After December 6, even while condemning the demolition, Ms Jayalalitha became convinced that the BJP was heading towards a comfortable majority in the next Parliament over the Ayodhya card. At this point the BJP declared that the deteriorating relations between the Congress and the AIADMK would prove beneficial for them.

Finally what clinched the issue was a development within the Congress. The two factions led by Mr Ramamurthy and Mr Moopanar decided to bury the hatchet and come together. Mr Ramamurthy kept the heat on from outside in a no-holds-barred statement war with the AIADMK ministers, while inside the Assembly the Congress lived up to its role of the major Opposition party.

Two attempts by Ms Jayalalitha to pin down the Congress in the Assembly over the issue of factionalism within the state unit and the reduced time slots for Tamil programmes on Doordarshan, received fitting rebuttal from the Congress.

Unable to stomach a recalcitrant Congress asserting itself on the floor of the House, previously used only for singing bhajans in Ms Jayalalitha's praise, the Speaker had the Congress MLAs [Member of Legislative Assembly] thrown out. The die was cast and despite some half-hearted mediatory efforts by the high command, the state Congress leaders decided to expose the AIADMK.

But in a clever strategy the Congress refrained from calling off the alliance. Their plan, endorsed by the Prime Minister, was to get the AIADMK to call off the alliance from its side, rather than be accused of calling for a divorce first.

The AIADMK responded by getting its senior-most leader and veteran Dravidian, Mr V.R. Nedumchezhian, to announce that a formal alliance with the BJP was a possibility and that it could help both the partners to win the majority of the Lok Sabha seats from Tamil Nadu in case of a mid-term poll. He even hinted at the possibility of the AIADMK sharing power with the BJP at the Centre, something it had not done with the Congress despite a decade of alliance.

This was a signal to the Congress to declare war. And it was done by the state Congress committee which urged the Centre to take steps against the state government for the worsening law and order situation. Mr Ramamurthy went ahead to announce that a chargesheet on the corrupt deeds of the Jayalalitha government would also be prepared.

Under Ms Jayalalitha, where corruption has become a mass-produced industry, Mr Ramamurthy's threat was a dangerous weapon.

Using the threat as a pretext, Ms Jayalalitha declared that the party was over and called off the alliance. While the state Congress leaders were elated at what they called the last wrong step taken by Ms Jayalalitha, the Centre continued to maintain that things would be sorted out. What many failed to notice was that while as party head Ms Jayalalitha pronounced the alliance to be dead, from the Congress side Mr Narasimha Rao made no personal attempt to revive it.

With the Congress(I)-AIADMK marriage in tatters, the political scenario opens up a host of possibilities in Tamil Nadu. The AIADMK definitely has a new suitor in the BJP. And for a party with just a marginal presence in the state, the BJP has achieved the impossible by breaking an invincible electoral combination.

The BJP's strategy is two-pronged. The end of the alliance would considerably weaken the Congress, since its 20 per cent evenly spread vote base cannot guarantee sizeable returns in the absence of an alliance with either the DMK or the AIADMK. With the stigma of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination still sticking to it, the DMK remains a political untouchable to the Congress. Hence the party would be in a quandry.

The second stage of the BJP's gameplan is to ride on the AIADMK's powerful shoulders and get a decent electoral return in the form of a handful of Assembly and a few parliamentary seats from where it could expand its base.

Given Ms Jayalalitha's tempestuous moods and arrogant mein, the BJP may have to do some bending while talking to the AIADMK. However, Mr Govindacharya is confident that since the BJP has a record of not being a habitual destabiliser, there would be little room for distrust between the two parties. "Our aim will also be to keep a respectable distance unlike the Congress which chose to crawl when asked to bend," said Govindacharya.

While the BJP gains, the Congress is bound to be the loser. The first test of its solitary electoral prowess would come in the Palani byelection where the AIADMK was sworn to make it hellish for the Congress. The party is now trying to buy time and get the byelections postponed. It is pinning its hopes on the disqualification petitions submitted by Dr Swamy.

The Congress calculations rest on the premise that they would be able to split the AIADMK well above the one third margin of its strength of 161. The Congress leaders talk of a time frame of six to eight months after which they are confident of installing a coalition government in the state.

The Congress is also not discounting the possibility of an inquiry commission to probe the corruption charge against Ms Jayalalitha and her ministers and thereby tarnishing her image once and for all. They are hopeful that Ms Jayalalitha's penchant for quitting politics at the

slightest obstacle could be exploited by exerting pressure on her about her various financial dealings.

Where does all this leave the DMK? Wrought by an intense internal power struggle, the party is nevertheless capable of winning at least 30 Assembly seats. The temptation to align with the Congress, if that could prevent a Jayalalitha comeback, may prove irresistible for Mr Karunanidhi.

In the past, Mr Karunanidhi has stated that there is little room for alliance as the DMK has been stabbed too often in the back by the Congress (I). But realising that politics is the art of the impossible, Mr Karunanidhi has also said that if the nation's unity were to be threatened by communal forces, then the DMK would reconsider its decision about the Congress(I).

And in the DMK's dictionary the coming together of communal forces can certainly be interpreted as the alliance between the Brahmin Ms Jayalalitha and the BJP "Ram bhakts." Linking up with the Congress would also enable the DMK to live down its image as the main cause behind Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. But if the Congress decides to spurn the DMK then Tamil Nadu may once again see a battle between the Congress, DMK and the AIADMK-BJP combine, with the PMK [Pattali Makkal Katchi] trying to make its presence felt.

Under such conditions Ms Jayalalitha's charisma, clubbed with whatever hysteria the BJP is able to whip up using the Hindu card could see the combine through, unless the Congress comes up with some other designs. And for at least two players in the Tamil Nadu arena—Ms Jayalalitha and Mr Karunanidhi—this could be the most important political battle of their career.

Telegu Desam Leader Said Ready to Join BJP

93AS0727H Calcutta *THE TELEGRAPH in English*
23 Mar 93 p 4

[Text] New Delhi, March 22: The Telugu Desam supremo, Mr. N.T. Rama Rao's former right-hand man, Mr. P. Upendra, is all set to join the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party].

The Rajya Sabha MP, who had emerged as a key figure in the Telugu Desam which he had helped to launch, had fallen out with his mentor and was later expelled from the party. Mr. Upendra is also reported to have lent his services to the Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, in splitting the Telugu Desam.

The negotiations between Mr. Upendra and the BJP leadership have stretched over the last few months and are likely to bear fruit this week. A final meeting him and the BJP leader, Mr. L.K. Advani, is expected to take place soon. In fact, the meeting was slated for Saturday, but was put off as Mr. Advani had to leave for Ahmedabad.

Mr. Upendra has already held a number of discussions with the state-level leaders from Hyderabad. The state

unit has expressed the wish that his decision to join the BJP should be announced at a public meeting Mr. Advani is slated to address in Hyderabad on March 28. This is likely to happen if Mr. Upendra meets Mr. Advani this week.

The BJP has been keen to rope in Mr. Upendra, who has a high profile as an articulate parliamentarian and, like Mr. Advani, has also held the information and broadcasting portfolio. The fact that Mr. Upendra is from the south is considered to be an asset as the BJP is trying to shed its label of being primarily a Hindi heartland outfit.

Mr. Upendra has an intimate working knowledge of the Telugu Desam and his entry is expected to be followed by a number of district-level workers and leaders. However, it is his skill as a coordinator and a "fixer" of political deals that will help the BJP when it looks for alliances with other parties before the next general elections.

Mr. Upendra is also likely to see benefit in the deal as he has had little to do of late. Despite his proximity to the Prime Minister, the MP has not had a role to play in national politics. Sources close to him said that the prevailing state of uncertainty within the Congress and the fact that Mr. Upendra would be just one among a number of other leaders, had influenced his decision.

Being a political animal, Mr. Upendra is understood to have been feeling unemployed after working an average of 20 hours a day. The calculation that in the long run, the only political party to have a future apart from the Congress is the BJP, is another factor to have motivated him.

The leader is understood to have informed his supporters that he is not unduly worried over having to take a stand on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. Mr. Upendra has publicly condemned the demolition of the Ayodhya shrine and is of the view that if the BJP was to emerge as a contender for power at the Centre, it would have to emerge as a more chastened and responsible party.

Rao Speaks in Upper, Lower House Debates

93AS0695A Madras *THE HINDU in English*
12 Mar 93 p 1

[Article: "Special Curbs Planned on Religion in Politics"; quotation marks as published]

[Text]

Motion Adopted by Voice Vote

New Delhi, March 11. The Prime Minister, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, today took a pledge in Parliament to make illegal the use of religion for electoral politics just as much as the preaching of secession is illegal. He said that this was the first and most important concern of the Government after the tragic events of last year as it was a question related to 'the survival of India as a nation.'

He promised to do this through a 'consolidation of law' and 'special means,' including 'an amendment to the Constitution,' if necessary, to ensure that 'this country will be perpetually wedded to secularism' and survival of 'secular democracy is made foolproof.' He emphasised in the Rajya Sabha that 'in this very session we have to decide this question for unless this is done, no other work is possible.'

He was replying to the debate on the President's address to the joint session of Parliament on February 22.

His strong statement in the context of Ayodhya met with loud thumping of desks from not only the ruling party but also the National Front and Left parties. And the passing of the Motion of Thanks was entirely painless as it was adopted by voice vote in both Houses.

The entire Opposition, including the AIADMK [All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] but minus the JD [Janata Dal] (Ajit Singh group) walked out before voting was taken up, separately on different issues ranging from elections to the four former BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] ruled States. Tripura, administered prices, and the reference of the Ayodhya conflict to the Supreme Court under Article 143.

The large vacant gaps in the Opposition Benches due to absenteeism made it amply clear that no party was taking chances on the 'real politik' issue of survival of the Government. Even on the BJP benches in the Lok Sabha not more than 50 MPs [Member of Parliament] were present. And after the 'walkouts' the result was that no Opposition member was present to press the plethora of amendments which were rejected in one go by voice vote.

The Prime Minister made it clear that while the Government would like to put economic issues on the top of its priority list it could be done only when the national agenda leaves behind issues connected to religion and obscurantism to take the nation into the next century.

"We cannot accept a religious device to be used for political appeal. We cannot allow this to be brought into electoral politics, for that would not be a level playground. There can be no secular democracy if political divisions are on religious ground," he emphasised, adding that if this were to happen, elections would be meaningless as there were 85 per cent Hindus in the country. Political divide in the country must cut across religious identities, both among the majority community as well as the minorities, Mr. Rao stated.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister clarified further and said that when making legal provisions to prevent the misuse of religion in electoral politics, there would be need to steer clear of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution—the freedom of thought and expression and of religion.

'Open Offer'

A lot of heat was generated in the Lok Sabha when the Prime Minister made an 'open offer' to consider 'even today' suggestions from the National Front [NF] and Left parties that the Ayodhya reference to the Supreme Court should be made under Article 138 and not 143 "if Mr. L. K. Advani agrees." That acted as a red rag to the bulls in the NF-Left as they demanded to know whether Mr. Advani had the veto on this matter.

Perhaps taking note of the strong feelings that this issue had brought into the open—the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] led walkout of virtually the entire Opposition, minus the BJP, was prompted by this—the Prime Minister clarified the Government stand on this issue in the Rajya Sabha. He defended the decision to refer the Ayodhya dispute to the Supreme Court under Article 143 on the ground that an expeditious solution was needed, which would not have been possible if Article 138 had been used.

In the Lok Sabha he stated firmly that no secular democracy can survive if religion is mixed with politics. "This must be made illegal. Like the preaching of secessionism is illegal." He pointed out that elections had to be stopped in Punjab when some people wanted to project them as a referendum on Khalistan.

And even as there were shouts from the BJP benches that the Congress(I) in its election manifesto had talked about giving a Christian Government to some North-Eastern States, the Prime Minister said that there was a 'wrong para' in the manifesto, that the Congress disapproves of it and disassociates itself from it.

Agriculture Policy

A major theme, after communalism, in the Prime Minister's reply was in both Houses was the increase in budgetary allocation to agriculture and rural development. The agriculture policy, he said, would soon be brought before Parliament, and he underlined the need to make investments in this sector to increase productivity and lessen dependence on rain in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar especially. He also said that the 'quantum jump' in support for rural development would help maintain balance even as the country moved forward to deregulate the economy and liberalise it.

He dwelt on the Government's determination to implement the Supreme Court's decision on reservations for the backward classes, spelt out a two-pronged policy to help create a buffer of fertilizer stocks by imports without hurting the indigenous production, and finally mentioned the visits to India by some important dignitaries. He specifically mentioned the visit of Russian President, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, and said that 'Russia was an important factor in our economy.'

Rao Meets With Carnegie Endowment Delegates

93AS0692A Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA
in English 10 Mar 93 p 12

[Article: "PM for Boosting Indo-US Ties"]

[Text] New Delhi, March 9 (PTI). The Prime Minister, Mr P. V. Narasimha Rao, today stressed the need for increasing the exchange of scholars between India and the United States.

This would diversify the basket of items for transfer of technology, Mr Rao told a delegation of Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The American delegation, which participated in a seminar here on the Indo-U.S. relations, expressed appreciation of the efforts being made by India and the U.S. to improve bilateral ties.

They included two former U.S. Ambassadors to India, Mr Robert Goheen and Mr Harry Barnes, and academicians and south Asia experts, Mr Tom Huges, Mr Sellig Harrison, Mr Stephen Cohen and Mr Geoffrey Kemp.

The three-day seminar, which concluded here this evening, discussed the report of the Carnegie Endowment Study group on the U.S.-Indian relations, co-authored by Mr Harrison and Mr Kemp.

The report says the end of the cold war had created the opportunity for a significant improvement in relations between the U.S. and India.

A growing recognition of converging geopolitical interests and shared democratic values had replaced mutual distrust resulting from differing perceptions of the Soviet threat, it opines.

The external affairs minister, Mr Dinesh Singh, and the former Maharashtra governor, Mr C. Subramaniam, spent some time with the participants at a lunch hosted by the India International Centre.

The Indian participants included the BJP leader, Mr Jaswant Singh, the former foreign secretary, Mr S. K. Singh, the former Indian ambassador to the erstwhile Soviet Union, Mr Alfred Gonzalves, a defence expert, Mr K. Subramanyam, the director of the IDSA, Air Commodore (retd) Jasjit Singh.

The Carnegie Endowment Study group report says Ayodhya developments dramatised the fact that India was one of the world's major battlegrounds in the struggle between secularism and extremist forms of religious fundamentalism.

"At the same time, the growth of militant Islamic fundamentalism in areas adjacent to India underlines the possibility that New Delhi and Washington will share common security concerns in the years ahead," it stated.

On the contentious issue of nuclear non-proliferation, the study surmised that no government in New Delhi

could survive if it abandoned the nuclear option for India in a regional and global environment in which nuclear weapons continued to be the ultimate coin of power.

"Instead of seeking to induce India to give up its nuclear option, the United States should shift from a focus on non-proliferation in South Asia to a policy designed to maintain nuclear restraint," it suggested.

The group felt that such a policy would seek to freeze the stockpiling of fissile material for weapon purposes, the development of military-related nuclear capabilities and the development, production and deployment of nuclear weapons both by India and Pakistan.

It suggested that India, without signing the NPT [Non-proliferation Treaty], should unilaterally make a formal pledge to abide by the NPT provisions barring the export of nuclear weapons or of military-related nuclear technology.

On missile development, the study group recognised that India's Agni and Prithvi missile programmes were far advanced.

They enjoyed overwhelming domestic support and were not likely to be reversed by external political and economic pressures. "The primary focus of the U.S. efforts, therefore, should be to persuade India not to transfer its missile technology to others," the group emphasised.

It recommended that the U.S. should contribute to Indian economic development primarily in the form of expanded contributions to multilateral institutions, especially the soft loan arms of World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

The budgetary support through the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank would also be necessary for a transition period of three to six years to facilitate the economic reform process, the group felt.

The group opined that the image of India as a "basket case," of no importance to the U.S. in the defence field was increasingly obsolete.

In strategic terms, the emergence of India as a major military power—with a naval reach encompassing the Arabian Sea and much of the Indian Ocean and potentially the Persian Gulf—underlined the importance of maintaining and enhancing a friendly relationship with the Indian Armed Forces, the group said in its report.

It also said if the U.N. Security Council was enlarged, India should be a prime candidate for permanent membership.

Officials Note Weakness of Intelligence Bodies

93AS0693A Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA
in English 17 Mar 93 p 17

[Article: "Intelligence Agencies in a Bind"]

[Text] New Delhi, March 16. The inability of the intelligence agencies to either accurately predict or prevent acts of terrorism in different parts of the country during the last few years, has once again focussed the nation's attention on these agencies which have had access to unlimited funds and facilities but with little accountability.

Both the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW); the premier agency dealing with external intelligence, and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) have repeatedly come under considerable criticism for their persistent "non-performance." Repeated attempts by the authorities to revamp these agencies to make them more professional have obviously failed.

According to senior intelligence officials, the root cause for all the troubles has been the fact that both these agencies have been used by influential persons to have their men posted there as a special reward since there is little accountability with the perks and facilities on par with other forces or services.

It was because of the lack of performance, in 1990 when the country was being rocked by terrorism both in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir that the government for the first time in the history of Parliament decided to form an estimates committee to have a closer look at the functioning of the two intelligence agencies.

Both the RAW and the IB have repeatedly been involved in internecine quarrels particularly between the deputationists, mostly from the Indian Police Service (IPS) and the direct recruits. This obviously had a telling effect on their performance. It was for this very reason that in 1985, the one-man committee headed by the then secretary of the RAW, Mr K. Shankara Nair, recommended the formation of a new service, the research and analysis wing administrative service (RAS) for short.

The formation of RAS, however, did not put an end to the problems within the agency. There was considerable resentment within the organisation. Due to simmering discontent, the middle ranking officials of the agency came together to form what was then called the forum for the restoration of civil liberties in RAW. This particular forum was formed with the help of former officials to bypass the restrictive clauses of the intelligence organisations (Restriction and Rights Act, 1985) which prohibits any kind of trade union activity.

The series of exposes that followed the formation of this forum caused considerable embarrassment to the organisation. Blatant acts of nepotism were revealed by some of the former officials in which senior officials, including a former secretary of RAW were alleged to have been involved. Such was the nepotism prevailing in the organisation that it was given the sobriquet of "relatives and associates wing" (RAW).

The exposes came to an abrupt end when some of the key players were given plum foreign postings. All this had a

debilitating effect on the organisation which was supposed to provide external intelligence to help the government tailor its sensitive foreign policy.

The record of the IB has been equally dismal in dealing with terrorism or providing strategy to launch counter offensives. Once again, the lack of performance has been attributed to the continuing tussle between IPS officers and direct recruits.

Mafia Leader Behind Explosion Said Connected With CPM

93AS0675B Calcutta *THE TELEGRAPH* in English
18 Mar 93 p 1

[Article by Sanjoy Basak: "CPM Satta Don Behind the Explosion"]

[Text] Calcutta, March 17—Rashid Khan, who has been arrested for the blast in Bowbazar, has established himself as the undisputed satta don of the area over the last eight years.

With the backing of the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist], to whose coffers he has liberally contributed, and the support of the police who looked the other way in exchange for money, Rashid's business empire has grown through the years.

Rashid, who is the grandson of Putlibai of Chambal fame, makes an income of over Rs [Rupees] 1 lakh from the satta dens he runs in different parts of the city.

"He provided the muscle power to the CPI(M) to rig the elections and funded the party during various functions and local meetings," a police official said. In return, the administration "overlooked" his illegal and lucrative satta business.

The police chief, Mr. Tushar Talukdar, who described Rashid "nothing but a criminal," said "apart from the satta business, we do not know of his involvement in other illegal activities."

Rashid took over as the don of Bowbazar when his arch rival and another notorious underworld kingpin, Mir Muhammad Omar, was allegedly arrested for a murder case in 1986.

With Omar out of the way, Rashid soon diversified his business and set up a number of restaurants mostly in the names of his relatives. Among the better known of these are the Shahi Durbar on B.B. Ganguly Street, near the site of the blast, and Mughal Durbar on Free School Street.

With his eateries doing brisk business, Rashid expanded further and opened several furniture shops, a medicine shop and a hardware store. Though he has been trying to project himself as a "respectable businessman," he never forgot his original source of income, satta, and carried on with it as usual.

But when Omar was acquitted in 1990, Rashid grew uneasy. Though Omar maintained a low profile after his release, Rashid seldom moved without armed escorts.

Rashid openly supported the ruling CPI(M), especially some of its senior leaders, but he was clever enough to realise that he could not flourish in business without keeping some local Congress(I) leaders "happy."

Though Rashid has been arrested for the first time, the deputy commissioner, detective department, Mr. Gautam Chakrabarty, said the police had raided his satta dens a month ago but could not arrest him. Rashid later surrendered in court and obtained bail.

Rashid inherited his gambling empire, Bowbazar Satta, from his brother-in-law, Kasim Mian, who died 10 years ago. Kasim started the business after he won a jackpot in the Calcutta races, at least 25 years ago. Kasim married Rashid's sister, Bano, a nautch girl.

Omar, who was slowly making a name in the underworld, used to take Rs 2,000 as protection money from Kasim Mian every week. Even after the death of Kasim, Rashid continued to pay Omar.

The feud started when Omar demanded Rs 50,000 from Rashid, who refused to pay. Omar was arrested in 1986 for allegedly murdering Rashid's associate, Mahesh Agarwal.

CPM Backing of Mafia Leader Alleged

93AS0675C Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English
18 Mar 93 p 1

[Text] Rashid Khan, arrested in connection with the explosion soon after Tuesday midnight on B.B. Ganguly Street, was the "uncrowned king" of gambling operations in Calcutta. Sources say his satta empire is spread over 24 police stations in the city, mainly in the central business districts, the turnover from which is in the region of Rs [Rupees] 1.5 lakhs to Rs 2 lakhs a day.

Rashid found employment with Tanvar, a big satta operator and inherited the threads of this illegal trade upon his boss' death. But he shot into prominence after the murder of Mahesh Agarwal, an employee of his establishment. Mir Mohammed Omar, kingpin of the satta racket till the early eighties, was accused in this connection. He was said to have enjoyed Congress(I) patronage and the CPI(M) decided to throw its weight behind Rashid to counter the Omar threat.

With Omar in jail, Rashid flourished. Before his arrest on Wednesday morning, he was operating at least four games—Fatafat, Bombay, Kalabagan and Mini Satta. The first and last are said to be his innovations, operated at short intervals every hour or two. The last digit of the three-digit Mini Saffa used to be declared at 11.30 p.m. and midnight and bookies would submit their books to Rashid at 266 B.B. Ganguly Street following which he himself would reveal the last number to an audience of compulsive gamblers. If all three numbers clicked, one

rupee fetched you Rs 100 and for those with just one number right, Rs 9 was the reward for a one-rupee wager.

Police sources said that though Rashid enjoyed the lion's share of the booty from gambling in the city, others ran the show on a much smaller scale—like Aziz Mirza in Kalabagan, Ram Avtar in Burrabazar, Satya Jain in south Calcutta, Bhola Chatterjee in Entally and T.T. Anwar in the Entally area.

Of late, Rashid had been diverting money earned from his operations to real estate promotion, senior police officials said. Apart from a large number of old buildings on B.B. Ganguly Street he had bought in the names of relatives, he owned at least four hotels.

The Police Commissioner, Mr Tushar Talukdar, the Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Department, Mr Gautam Chakravarty, and the Deputy Commissioner of the Central Division, Mr Deben Biswas, were at a loss when asked why Rashid had not been arrested earlier.

Mr Chakravarty argued that about a month and a half ago the police had registered a case against Rashid but he surrendered before the court. The allegations, therefore, were without basis, he said. Asked whether Rashid's CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] backing had prevented the police from arresting him, Mr Talukdar said there was "no such pressure."

But other police officials had stories to tell. One Deputy Commissioner, requesting anonymity, said Rashid was one of the biggest contributors to the party's funds and had virtually picked up the election bill for a CPI(M) legislator in central Calcutta. Soon after Mr Talukdar took over as Police Commissioner and decided to crack down on satta operations in Calcutta, there were rumours that Rashid had fled to Dubai.

But the fact that the don held sway barely 300 yards from Lalbazar police headquarters points to the fact that he had powerful political connections within the ruling Left Front, reaping a rich harvest for nine years.

The office-residential area around the blast zone is ideally suited for the emergence of criminals, and prostitutes add to the lure for transporters with money to spare. That political parties vie for the attention of such underworld bigwigs to ensure support during elections is only natural.

Our Bombay Office adds: Sources say that Dawood Ibrahim helped financially to have a base in Calcutta given its proximity to the "Golden Triangle." The Pathans of Calcutta are said to be his accomplices.

Underworld sources in Bombay indicated on Wednesday that Dawood and his men, believed to have been involved in the lethal explosions in the city, are preparing to leave their base in Dubai under pressure from the authorities. Their destination is rumoured to be Lahore and Karachi.

Mafia Leader Relationship With CPM Said Very Close

93AS0683A Calcutta *THE TELEGRAPH* in English
19 Mar 93 p 1

[Text] Calcutta, March 18—The disclosures in the wake of the Bowbazar blast have made it clear that the satta don, Rashid Khan, carried on his illegal activities not only with the knowledge, but with the full support of the ruling CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] and the state administration.

Rashid Khan openly met influential government officials, hobnobbing with important ruling party politicians and got their backing in his underworld activities. In return, he donated generously to the CPI(M) party funds and lavishly entertained both party comrades and the more corruptible among the police top brass.

Rashid's immense clout is evident from the fact that in the raid on his office sometime ago, the police failed to get even a scent of the explosives that blew of the buildings.

Rashid has often had a hand in police postings. Expectedly, his interest lay in getting "his own people" into the anti-rowdy squad at Lalbazar. Among the squad's multifarious activities is keeping a close check on satta gambling. Sometime ago, Rashid paid Rs 3 lakhs to an influential CPI(M) leader to ensure that a person of his choice became an assistant commissioner of the detective department.

Some instances of his clout with the state government:

—After Mir Mohammed Omar's arrest in 1985, the police was finding it difficult to find witnesses against him for his alleged involvement in the crime. Though Mahesh Agarwal, for whose alleged murder Omar had been arrested, was a close associate of Rashid, the satta chief was scared to stand up against Omar. An important CPI(M) leader of central Calcutta who wanted to remove Omar from his territory and thereby ensure his political hegemony sought Rashid's assistance. At a meeting openly held in Lalbazar, the police headquarters, where Rashid, the CPI(M) leader and a very important police official of the time were present, a deal was struck. Rashid provided the witnesses and in return the administration looked the other way as his satta business prospered. Soon after he started his third satta network, known as "Mini Matka" now spread over 34 city police station areas.

—Rashid's office which was blown off in the blast was not only the headquarters of his widespread satta operations and other businesses but was also used for entertaining policemen, lawyers and politicians who were treated to good food and liquor. Sources close to Rashid have said that the satta don has a plush, air-conditioned apartment in central Calcutta where "VIPs" are not only entertained to wine and food but

also to women. "These important people come in cars flashing red lights and they are discreetly entertained by Rashid," he said.

The satta king paid visits to the houses of some senior police officials. Often he would be seen leaving his Premier NE 118 parked outside the residence of some police top brass. Among the houses he frequented with gifts were those of a deputy commissioner and a superintendent of police.

Rashid's initial police contacts were at Bowbazar and Hare Street police stations. But as his business prospered and activities multiplied, his contacts spread from the thana level to the deputy commissioners' offices and finally in specialised departments at Lalbazar.

No police officer dared to inquire into the legality of his business till May last year when he was arrested for being present in a satta den on Phears Lane. Within an hour of his arrest, he was given a police station bail, rarely provided to petty criminals. It is obvious that a couple of phone calls did the trick and the thana officers complied with the wishes of their superiors to save their skin. Soon after obtaining bail, he left the city.

Two months ago, the anti-rowdy section of the detective department registered a case against Rashid and some of his henchmen but this time too, Rashid managed to get away as the charges had not been framed strongly and the offence was presented as a bailable one. The blasted den was raided only last week but even the present DC (detective department), Mr Gautam Chakraborty, is unable to explain why explosives were not spotted at the time.

Rashid often sent requests to Lalbazar to have his friends in the underworld released. A strong campaign was mounted against satta dons early this year but the anti-rowdy squad on receiving "personal requests" from Rashid forgot to frame charges against the men who were arrested.

Some policemen believe that a homeguard who had frequented the satta don's residence died on the spot but no confirmation was available.

Rashid also used to provide his many cars to CPI(M) leaders for free use, specially when the election campaign reached a feverish pitch. The CPI(M) leaders will find it hard to explain why Rashid's cars were often parked outside the CPI(M) headquarters at Alimuddin Street.

Mafia Said Running Lotteries Without Hindrance

93AS0683B Calcutta *THE TELEGRAPH* in English
19 Mar 93 p 9

[Article by Tapas Sen Gupta: "Playing for High Stakes at the Street Level"]

[Text] What was always there, flourishing, a boon to its operators, ignored by the police and the political parties

has come to the forefront thanks to an explosion which has already claimed more than 60 lives in Calcutta.

Satta, a gambling game of numbers, is being frontpaged in the city newspapers because of the possible connections of the criminal gangs that organise the game with the Bowbazar blast. But its newfound notoriety will not impress the old hands at this game.

Calcutta alone boasts of 4,000 satta centres. Its suburbs account for a further 2,500. In the metropolis the centres are concentrated around commercial areas—Dalhousie, Burrabazar and Esplanade. Many of the tea stalls and the cigarette kiosks that dot the city also play host to the game.

The clientele comprises of a vast cross section of the society. Businessman, card holders of the middle class, manual labourers and vagabonds.

Satta and the underworld are inextricably linked. The game is supervised by an organisation with nationwide reach. Clockwork precision, accurate communications and infallible punctuality characterise the satta operations. Hitches, when they do occur, usually have serious repercussions—violence and, at times, even death.

This game involves predicting numbers either in single integers called "figures" or in series of three integers in ascending order called "paathi" or both. A paathi is converted into a figure by first adding its integers. In, say, paathi 257 this will produce the number 14. The 1 is ignored, and the final figure will be 4. Thus, the payments of the illustrated draw will be given against 257 for a paathi bet and 4 for a figure one.

The paathi is determined in the gaddi, the satta headquarters. Cards are drawn at random from a deck from which the Jacks, Kings and Queens have been removed. The ace and 10 represent 1 and 0 respectively. The drawn cards are then arranged in ascending order to get the paathi.

If the paathi for a draw or its corresponding figure tallies with a person's bet, then she stands to gain nine times her investments for predicting the correct figure and 100 to 125 times for a correct paathi.

The minimum betting amount is 25 paise. Higher amounts must be in multiples of the minimum. There is no upper limit.

The largest variety of satta is called Bombay—named after the city where its headquarters are located. With the exceptions of public holidays, satta draws are held every day. The Bombay draws are held twice daily.

In addition to the basic rules of the figure and patti Bombay offers certain features like patti se figure. This involves predicting the paati in the open and figure in the close draw. The risk to return ratio is 1:1100. There is also paati se paati, predicting the paatti of both the open and close categories, risk to returns ratio is 1:8000.

Juri consists of betting on the figure in both open and close draws. This variety is less risky with the ratio being 1:81.

Bombay pads (betting slips) are written in Calcutta till 9 pm. Codes of writing pads vary from city to city and sometimes from territory to territory. Calcutta's general format follows the rupees-annas sequence. A bet of Rs 5.75 paise is written as 5/12.

The city's favourite satta is "Fhatafhat," held eight times a day. Its results are declared at 10.15 am, 11.45 am, 1.15 pm, 2.45 pm, 4.15 pm, 5.45 pm, 7.15 pm and 8.20 pm. Writing pads close 45 minutes before the respective draws.

The major regional sattas based in Calcutta are Kalabagan and Bhoothnath. Apart from the Fhataphat there are other smaller varieties like Calcutta-matka, Mini-matka, GM, GP and so on.

The retail outlets have display boards for the results of draws. Lampposts, electric switch boxes, entrances to public places also function as display boards. Those not in the know do not notice the scribbled numbers but the gamblers know where to look.

The satta network's heirarchy has the gaddi at the top followed by the bookies, the sub-bookies, the messengers and the pencillers.

A bookie may be affiliated to one or more headquarters depending upon his financial capacity. He is given a commission on the total load—the amount collected in gross sales everyday.

The results of the various draws are relayed from the headquarter to the bookies and from bookies to sub-bookies using the latest telephone facilities.

Within half an hour of the results being announced in the headquarters the messengers go to their territories on bicycles relaying the information to their numerous pencillers.

Immediately thereafter the payments for that respective draw begins from the pencillers' outlets, the thekhs. However, payments are made only by the respective penciller from whom the satta slip has been purchased.

Often the messengers are of two types, relayers and collectors. The relayers simply relay the information while the collectors—the more trusted ones—collect the counterfoils and the cash before each bazi. It is estimated that there are around 1,500 such messengers in the city.

The pencillers work on a commission of Rs 6 for every Rs 100 in sales. He also handles payments. The bookie or even the sub-rookie do not come in contact with the public. However a penciller always gets the backing of the heirarchy under which he operates. The codes of honour are scarcely violated.

Territories—elakas, are strictly adhered to and breaches of discipline often lead to violent reprisals. If there is violence the big operators step in before the police does.

Estimating the huge amount of cash floating in the satta whirlpool is difficult. However, if one works backwards from the available information the sums that crop up are mind boggling.

An average penciller in Calcutta earns around Rs 100 a day. Pencillers around prime zones like Burrabazar, Howrah and so on often make Rs 500 a day. But they have pointed out that the pedas—bribes—taken by or given to the police and the tolas—protection money—eat into more than half their earnings.

On the commission rate of Rs 6 on Rs 100 in sales, the average daily sale of a penciller's outlet works to more than Rs 3,000 per day. The average daily turnover in and around Calcutta thus grosses to more than Rs20 million.

Bombay grosses the highest daily turnover in the nation with daily takings varying from Rs 50 million to Rs 70 million. The aggregate national turnover of this extremely efficiently organised game of numbers could be anywhere near a billion rupees a day.

The bookies' earnings vary between Rs 50,000 to Rs 500,000 per month depending on the type of satta he is distributing and the zone of his operation. To maintain their contacts, however, the bookies are forced to pay out substantial sums as bribes to various people. They include policemen as well as local toughs who help maintain "order." A bookie is also responsible for paying the salaries to messengers and relayers.

How reliable is satta's payment system. The general opinion of the regulars is that with the big satta houses payment is fully guaranteed. The smaller houses are less reliable.

If the bet is excessive on a particular figure then the bookie, fearing a financial loss, hands over the pads of the particular draw to a bookie with more financial muscle. The bigger bookie may be able to absorb the game or pass it to the headquarters. The gaddi, invariably, if the loss is high, does not open that number.

That is where manipulation comes into play. But the simplicity of the procedure, the possibilities of fabulous returns and the virtual immunity from the law make satta irresistible for the gambler with relatively small stakes but high hopes.

The bomb in Bowbazar will do little to dampen their enthusiasm. Satta will continue to flourish, long after it has been banished from newspaper headlines.

Scholar Quotes Western Scholars to Refute Hindu Claims

93AS0683C Calcutta *THE STATESMAN* in English
19 Mar 93 p 8

[Article by Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri: "Hindu Politics: Not Compatible With Congress (I) Legacy"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] The challenge to centrist politics after Independence till the late 1970s came from linguistic movements and class conflicts in the countryside, not from "confessional politics"—a term coined by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph. They write: "By using the term 'confessional politics' we mean to invoke European rather than American ideas and practice with respect to the role of religion in politics. The American constitutional doctrine of maintaining a wall of separation between religion and state—of confining religious freedom to the private realm—is as alien to the Indian as it is to most Western European political systems."

Selig Harrison foresaw authoritarian rule or the balkanization of India as a result of linguistic cleavages. The reorganization of States in 1956 averted that possibility but, says Richard Weiner, the rise of 'neoHinduism' in the current Indian political scenario poses a real threat to centrist politics as well as to the country's unity.

Strident Tone

In the 1980s, the Hinduism that had been an "artifact of categorization began to become a condition of national consciousness. This development signalled the possibility of a national Hindu confessional politics. Religious performances, celebrations, and demonstrations began to transcend localities and acquire national dimension. As they did so, they became more strident and militant.

The agitations and yatras of the Hindu solidarity and unity movements such as the Viswa Hindu Parishad [VHP] were no longer the local phenomenon they had been in the 1880s when Bal Gangadhar Tilak aroused Hindu political solidarity around the Ganesh festival in Poona. Aided by the proliferation of religious symbolism in the print and electronic media, Hindu themes and organizations crossed State boundaries and helped diverse sects, castes and classes acquire the consciousness of a popular and more homogenous Hinduism.

Social mobility has contributed to the rise of popular Hinduism and Hindu nationalism. In the years prior to the Janata Government of 1977-79 and Indira Gandhi's return to power in 1980, the support base for Hindu confessional politics had been the traditionally literate, spiritual initiated upper castes located for the most part in the relatively backward "Hindi heartland" States of northern India and in Maharashtra. But in the 1970s, new generations of mobile middle castes born after Independence and Partition and located in the countryside as well as in the city were attracted to Hindu revitalization movements and political appeals. As social

moorings gave way in a changing society, these groups found that patronizing Hinduism and practising it in new ways not only earned respect but also provided a social identity.

Patronizing Hinduism in order to acquire status and power goes back to ancient times. In the old days, alien, newly victorious or ambitious rajas seeking to legitimize their power patronized deities and temples, endowing them with land, offices, and income. Landlords, merchants and State servants used religious patronage in similar fashion. Today, newly rich sugar barons and beneficiaries of the green revolution as well as successful first-generation professionals and entrepreneurs, have channelled their new wealth into temples, Ramayana recitations and more elaborate and expensive rituals. However, this identity often becomes controversial in the context of inter-community relations and leads to resentment and envy.

In some communities in northern India and Kerala, investments in religion by Muslims returning from lucrative employment in the Gulf countries have spurred similar Hindu investments. Educated, prosperous untouchables converted to Islam in and around Meenakshipuram in 1981 to win the respect and equality that Hinduism had denied them. In Maharashtra and Gujarat, where there is a large local concentration of mostly poor Muslims, communal violence became endemic as a result of struggles between Hindus and Muslims over reservations, employment, property and business opportunities.

New Culture

Hindu confessional politics also became a form of cultural nationalism for the Hindi heartland States. Under certain conditions, such as those prevailing after 1980, Hindu nationalism was exported to regions where Hindus are a minority. In Punjab and Kashmir, Sikhs and Muslims, respectively, are the majority. In Kerala, Hindus confront large numbers of Christian and Muslim voters. In these States, minority Hindus resorted to defensive mobilization and sought outside support and protection. Hindu confessional politics was exported from the Hindi heartland to all three States.

By contrast, the social structure and consciousness needed to support Hindu confessional politics is marginal in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh where regional nationalism is the dominant ideology. These examples suggest that because Hindu confessional politics is weak in most of the periphery, it is dangerous for a national centrist party to become committed to Hindu confessional politics.

The Janata Party's victory in the 1977 national elections put proponents of Hindu confessional politics in the seats of power for the first time. This was evident in the

party's abortive effort to block conversion to Christianity through national legislation limiting the right of Christians to propagate religion and in its attempt to decertify text-books that allegedly failed to depict Hinduism in a sufficiently favourable light.

The Congress(I), for the first time, openly sought Hindu support when it came to power in 1980. This was evident in the Kashmir Assembly and Delhi Municipal Corporation elections in 1983 when voters who had traditionally voted for the Hindu-oriented Jana Sangh supported Congress(I) candidates. It was evident in Indira Gandhi's personal attention to Hindu temples, priests and gurus. Most important was the crisis involving Sikhs. The Congress(I)'s attempt to recoup its position in Punjab by patronizing Sikh extremists let loose a storm of communal politics. The Army's invasion of the Golden Temple was an event that alienated even moderate Sikhs. No wonder, when Indira Gandhi was assassinated, the Hindus, in retaliation killed at least 2,000 Sikhs in three days.

Jingoistic

With the rise of confessional politics, particularly its communal and violent version, the post-Independence generation had to relearn the lesson of Partition: in a diverse society, communal politics can destroy civil society and the State. The Congress(I) had moved dangerously close to becoming a Hindu confessional party. Denying Christians the right to propagate their religion, making war on Sikhs and threatening to deprive Muslims of their law and their mosques were signs that centrist national parties, such as Janata and Congress(I), had been tempted by the option of Hindu confessional politics. Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 election campaign was based in part on Hindu backlash support sympathy for a bereaved son whose mother had died as a martyr to a Hindu cause and a campaign appeal that drew on Hindu nationalism.

For the Congress(I) to become a confessional party would not only threaten its principles but also jeopardize its standing as a national party. The principal support for Hindu confessional politics is in the Hindi heartland, and even there the Congress(I)'s comparative advantage over rivals lies in preserving the support of the minorities. To embrace Hindu confessional politics would be to risk becoming a regional party.

Reliance on Hindu confessional politics is not compatible with the Congress(I)'s legacy as a party wedded to secularism. The meaning of that secularism encompasses the celebration and constitutional protection of cultural diversity as well as the protection of equal rights for all citizens. The result is an ambiguous and sometimes contradictory relationship between the confessional politics of the majority and the minority communities. The lessons of Partition should remind one of the consequences of allowing confessional politics to become a major cleavage in national politics.

New National Mineral Policy Announced**Minister Explains**

93AS0700A Bombay *THE TIMES OF INDIA*
in English 6 Mar 93 pp 1, 17

[Article: "Mining Opened to Private Sector"]

[Text] New Delhi, March 5. In a major policy announcement, the government today threw open mining (till now reserved for the public sector), to the private sector and foreign investment, in tune with the policy of liberalisation.

Announcing the new national mineral policy which was laid in both the houses of Parliament, the minister of state for mines, Mr Balram Singh Yadav, told newsmen that the new policy would accelerate the development of the mining sector by attracting private sector investment and foreign equity participation in exploration and mining.

The minerals which are now open for investment by the private sector are iron ore, manganese, chrome, sulphur, gold, diamond, copper, lead, zinc, molybdenum, tungsten, nickel and platinum.

The minister said the necessary changes in the industrial policy statement, 1991 and national mineral policy, 1990, and other concerned acts would be carried out to give effect to the revised national policy.

The revised policy raises the ceiling on foreign equity in the mining industry by providing for foreign equity participation up to 50 per cent in the equity of Indian companies engaged in mining activities. Equity participation over 50 per cent in non-captive mines can also be considered on a case-to-case basis.

Mr Yadav said that joint mining ventures promoted by public and private sector companies in India for exploitation of minerals in India and abroad would get a boost under the new policy. With increasing discovery of mineral deposits by application of modern exploration techniques, India could expect world-grade mines to be opened, to produce minerals at internationally competitive costs. This would help not only the needs of the domestic market, but could also generate sizeable exports.

The minister said that a large number of enquiries were already being received from the leading mining countries like Australia, Canada, the U.S. and Africa. International mining companies, NRIs [Nonresident Indian] and public and private sector companies in India were also evincing keen interest in the mining sector.

He said the government was also anticipating the formation of a number of joint ventures for the exploration and exploitation of the country's vast mineral potential. There could be a spurt in the exploration and exploitation of all the 13 minerals including gold, diamond,

copper, lead, Zinc and nickel, as a result of the revision of the national mineral policy, Mr Yadav said.

The policy takes care of the environmental aspect and lays down that mining operations will not "ordinarily" be taken up in ecologically fragile and biologically rich areas.

"Strip mining in forest areas should as far as possible be avoided and be permitted only when accompanied with comprehensive time-bound reclamation programme," it says.

As an important conservation measure, recycling of metallic scrap like steel, copper, aluminium, zinc and lead shall be encouraged and facilitated by fixation of appropriate standards for classification and grading of scrap and adoption of fiscal measures.

Coal Monopoly Retained

93AS0700B Bombay *THE TIMES OF INDIA*
in English 8 Mar 93 p 22

[Article by N. Suresh: "Government Monopoly Still in Coal Mining"]

[Text] New Delhi, March 7. The government will continue to retain its monopoly in the exploration and processing of the country's vast mineral resources as it has not dereserved the crucial coal sector in the new mineral policy.

For, the group of minerals dereserved for exploration by Indian companies as well as foreign ones with equity participation up to 50 per cent account for just about ten per cent of the annual production value.

The minerals mined in the country are classified into three broad categories. One, fuel minerals which include coal, lignite, crude oil and natural gas. Two, metallic minerals such as copper, tin, bauxite, iron ore etc. Three, non-metallic minerals.

Three fuel minerals, 12 metallic minerals and 43 non-metallic minerals are available in the country.

While coal is not dereserved, iron ore is included in the liberalised policy. In the last few years, private mining of iron ore has been allowed mainly for exports. The oil sector is not included in the policy as its exploration procedure for private companies has been announced separately. Atomic minerals such as uranium are also excluded from the purview of the policy because of their sensitive nature.

Experts say the dereservation of the coal sector too would have led to dramatic changes in its production currently stagnating around 225 million tonnes annually. The production was about 110 million tonnes in 1980 and it nearly doubled to 213 million tonnes in 1990. It seems that a saturation point has been reached since then mainly due to lack of input of capital and modern technology into coal mining.

The total value of mineral production in 1991 was Rs 16,903 crores. Of this, fuel minerals accounted for nearly 90 per cent with a value of Rs 15,032 crores. Metallic minerals contributed Rs 1,313 crores, while non-metallic minerals were valued at Rs 558 crores. The ratio of the production and value addition have not changed much since 1991.

Among the fuel minerals, crude oil with a production of 29.9 million tonnes was valued at Rs 6,720 crores and accounted for 45 to 50 per cent of the total value. The coal production, which stood at 224.7 million tonnes, and lignite contributed the remaining value.

Fifty-eight important minerals are available in India in varying quantities at 4,000 mines. The country is self-sufficient in 30 of these minerals. India has one of the largest reserves of minerals such as coal, chromite, manganese ore, mica and barytes. In three crucial minerals—copper, lead and zinc—the local production meets only 30 per cent of the annual demand.

The new policy has essentially thrown open the non-fuel mineral sector for private exploration. Prior to this, public sector units (PSUs) enjoyed near monopoly in at least 12 of the 38 non-fuel minerals. The PSUs account for over 50 per cent production of 23 non-fuel minerals.

Various government agencies, including the Geological Survey of India, are involved in continuously updating the total available reserves of all minerals. However, the actual values are kept under wraps in the national interest and only approximate estimates are made public.

According to current estimates, at the present levels of production, the reserves of crude oil, lead, kyanite and manganese ore will last for another 17 to 28 years. The reserves of bauxite, coal, copper, dolomite and magnesite are expected to last for over 50 to 1,430 years.

Priority will be given to the exploration of high-value minerals such as gold and diamond and to the largely imported (70 per cent of the demand is met from abroad) ones like copper, lead, nickel and fertiliser minerals.

The new policy hopes that with large inputs of foreign and private capital and technology, the production will rise substantially and lead to better utilisation of vast mineral resources available in the country.

Inspection Report Flays Bombay Stock Exchange
93AS0699A Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA
in English 10 Mar 93 pp 1, 24

[Article by Sucheta Dalal: "Serious Flaws in BSE Trading"]

[Text]

SEBI Inspection Report

Bombay, March 9. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), which conducted the first ever inspection of the 118-year-old Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), has found serious flaws in its market regulations, operations and financial management.

According to the SEBI report "the inspection reveals that the stock exchange, Bombay, is not so much an institution serving public interest but a private club of the member brokers being run by the member brokers for the benefit of a handful of member brokers.

"The lack of financial management, non-enforcement of market regulations, chaotic market operations and finally absence of proper administrative control clearly indicate that the exchange has not acted as a responsible self-regulatory organisation."

The report says that the governing board members evaded margins and that there is no record of disciplinary action having been taken against the directors. It points out the following irregularities:

- The first of the former president BSE, Mr Hamendra Kothari—M/s D. S. Purbhoodas—evaded daily margins to the extent of Rs 6.60 crore and carry over margin of Rs 4.81 crore in the year ended March 31, 1992. Thus a total of Rs 10 crore was evaded by the firm when Mr Kothari was its president.

Mr G. B. Desai, the present president, did not pay the margin of Rs 20.12 lakh and a late fee of Rs 40,200, while Mr Jaswantlal Chhotalal evaded daily margins to the tune of Rs 7.11 crore.

Other directors to have evaded margins are M/s K. N. Parikh, an elected director who evaded daily margin payments of over Rs 3.38 crore, and Mr Anil Mithalal Shah and Mr Sunder Iyer.

Most significantly, the report says, the executive director had allowed withdrawal of the daily margins by brokers who were in a "financial crisis." The report points out that the entire purpose of the margin collection is to avert a financial crisis through over-exposure.

Brokers who have problems honouring their trading commitments, are bailed out by the exchange by allowing them to maintain debit balances in the clearing house. Not only are such members allowed to continue to carry on trade, exposing the entire market to risk, but in certain cases the debit balances have been carried forward for an entire year.

The inspection report expresses suspicion that the BSE has been financing brokers at the time of pay-in. It says the exchange has accounted Rs one crore as interest for such advances, but could not explain to the inspectors how this interest had been earned. The report says "this figure is revealing of the possible magnitude of such cover up by the exchange."

It further says that this allows the BSE to circumvent the rules regarding broker default leading to payment problems. As a result trading restrictions are violated with impunity.

The report documents how trading restrictions were imposed and withdrawn arbitrarily at the height of the bull run, which heightened instead of curbing volatility.

The report says, "It may not be unreasonable to conclude, in spite of their lofty claims regarding alert market regulations," the inexplicable relaxation of trading restrictions, and the failure of exchange administration to monitor its trading restrictions, could have led to the unprecedented boom.

The stock quotations reported by the BSE are unreliable, as there was no monitoring or control to check whether the rates quoted were rates of actual transaction. The exchange does not even tally the printed list with the list appearing in the register. The exchange allows rectification of prices through *vandas* (mismatched transaction) which are often beyond the market band for that day.

The report at one point states that the selection of members for inspection is often subjective and has left the bigger players uninspected. Even those members who were inspected, were brought before the disciplinary action committee only when margin evasions were substantial.

The inspection revealed that the BSE had in one instance permitted a suspended member to trade and square off his position and in another permitted trading in a suspended security.

SEBI inspectors point out that the financial management of the vast sums collected by the exchange is shoddy. There is no clear investment policy for these funds and in some cases has led to a loss of interest.

The arbitration mechanism is lax, with over 300 cases pending. The enforcement of arbitration awards is casual and there is no record maintained for non-enforcement. According to the report "there were numerous instances where the exchange members had sought adjournments on unreasonable grounds and used this as a ploy to harass the investor who ultimately became indifferent to his claim on account of harassment."

Dunkel Draft Assessed as Holding Promise

93AS0697A Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA
in English 11 Mar 93 p 13

[Article by Priya Ranjan Dash: "Dunkel Draft Text Holds Promise, Says Assessment"]

[Text] New Delhi, March 10. The Dunkel draft text of a new multilateral agriculture trade agreement, far from being a curse, holds out the great promise of ushering in a new wave of export-led prosperity in the Indian farm sector. A latest official assessment of the implications of the Dunkel text shows that the country can raise its farm

goods exports manifold in the very initial years of the working of the proposed global trade regime.

In a variety of crops at present, the Indian farmer gets outpriced in the global market because of the large production and export subsidies being doled out by competing countries. As these countries start cutting subsidies to acceptable levels specified in the Dunkel text, the global prices of certain products such as sugar, rice and wheat are bound to climb up, this providing a clear competitive edge to Indian producers of these items.

According to the assessment, Indian agriculture can look forward to cash in on its real cost advantage in these products once the hefty subsidies being given at present are reduced.

From the reading of the Dunkel text and the further assurances secured by India from major trading nations, it is clear that the proposed global agricultural trade regime would not impose any restriction whatsoever on the country with regard to pursuing its present policies for agricultural growth and food security.

Notwithstanding the highly visible campaign of misinformation being carried out by certain interest groups as an attempt to create a phantom of Dunkel in public mind, top trade policy planners here are quite clear that India would be under no obligation to reduce any of the support measures for agriculture or change its policies on remunerative prices for farmers and the public distribution system.

The government has already explained in the discussion paper tabled in Parliament that the aggregate measure of support (AMS) on the basis of which Dunkel proposals envisage subsidy reduction works out to be negligible in the case of India, thus imposing no curbs on the country's policies.

The AMS, under the Dunkel proposals is to be calculated separately for subsidies which are product-specific and subsidies which are non-product specific. For developing countries like India, a limit of 10 per cent has been stipulated. This means, when in a developing country the AMS works out to less than 10 per cent of the value of the agricultural production, there will be no obligation to reduce the subsidies.

Calculations made by the ministry of commerce have shown that in India, non-product specific AMS works out to only about five per cent even if no allowance is made for a number of exemptions envisaged in the Dunkel text, including the exemption of input subsidies to low-income and resource-poor farmers in developing countries.

Similarly, the product-specific AMS in India has been estimated to be negative (that means there is a tax rather than a subsidy) in most products. In one or two products

such as oilseeds, the AMS has been calculated as positive, but the figure is much below the 10 per cent norm set by the Dunkel text.

Another myth that is being sought to be perpetuated relates to what has been termed as the Dunkel text binding India to provide a minimum market access to foreign supply of agricultural products. The reality, however, is that the Dunkel proposals clearly exempt countries facing balance of payment problems from undertaking the minimum market access commitment of three per cent.

By everyone's reckoning, India has a balance of payment problem that is not going to be resolved in the foreseeable future. A country laden with huge debt, as in the case of India, could take at least a decade or two to correct its balance of payment position as experience of the newly-industrialised nations of the Pacific has shown. Till then, the minimum market access provision in the Dunkel text could only work to the advance of agriculture exports from India.

Even the main plank of the misinformation campaign related to the so called adverse fallout of the Dunkel proposals on plant breeders' rights is built around myths.

Russian Firm To Buy Transport Aircraft Design

93AS0696A Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA
in English 11 Mar 93 p 9

[Article by N. Suresh]

[Text] New Delhi, March 10. A Russian company has offered to buy complete designs of the 14-seater light transport aircraft (LTA), developed by Indian scientists, as the government is unable to provide approximately Rs 20 crores to jointly make a prototype of the aircraft.

The Russian aircraft maker, Myasischev Design Bureau (MDB), Moscow, realising the potential market for this nine to 14-seater aircraft, designed by the scientists at the National Aeronautical Laboratory (NAL), Bangalore, is keen to go ahead with its development and production as the earliest.

Even though the NAL team has completed the designs and prepared a feasibility report in 1991, the aircraft project had failed to take off due to shortage of funds. The NAL, a constituent laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) needs about Rs 85 crores to set up the tooling facilities and make a prototype to demonstrate the aircraft.

Due to shortage of funds, the NAL has been trying to involve private sector companies to make a prototype.

While the Russian company had offered to contribute Rs 40 crores through the prototype development at its factory, NAL was asked to find other sources for the remaining amount. The CSIR's director-general, Dr S. K. Joshi, said, Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad, a

defence ministry undertaking, and a Delhi-based publishing group had jointly agreed to provide nearly Rs 25 crores.

The NAL scientists were hopeful that they will get Rs 20 crores in the budget allocations for 1993-94. However, with no allocation for this project, it is bound to remain in limbo or let the Russians go ahead with LTA's development.

The NAL's agreement with MDB said the Russian firm will contribute its expertise in engineering design and development of the aircraft and flight testing. The Indian side will offer its expertise in computer software and composites. The engine and avionics are available easily in the market.

After the development of a prototype, both the Indian and Russian sides were free to make their own versions depending on the requirements for the domestic and export market. If the plans had worked out smoothly, the first prototype would have been ready by 1994 and production started in late 1995 or early 1996. With the Indian side not in a position to honour its commitment, the schedules have gone haywire.

The NAL team, headed by Dr R. B. Damania, started work on the project in 1988 and had completed the feasibility studies in 1989 and designs in 1991. The aircraft could have nine to 14 seats in the normal configuration and six seats as an executive jet.

Trade Agreement Signed With Czech Republic

93AS0703 Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English
17 Mar 93 p 19

[Quotation marks as published]

[Text] New Delhi, March 16 (PTI)—India and the Czech republic on Monday signed a trade agreement to promote, increase and diversify trade and further strengthen economic co-operation on a long-term and stable basis.

The agreement was signed here by the commerce minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, and Mr Vladimir Diouhy, the Czech minister of trade and industry, an official release said.

As per the agreement, which will be valid for a period of five years, all payments of a commercial and non-commercial nature between the two sides would be made in freely convertible currencies with effect from January 1, 1993.

The agreement provides for the grant of 'most favoured nation' status to each other, import and export of goods and services from each other on the basis of counter trade, leasing and buy-back arrangements or any other internationally recognised form of business co-operation and establishment of joint ventures, it said.

It also provides for promotion of trade between the two countries by direct contact, holding of fairs and exhibitions in each other's territory and supply of information on all aspects of trade and economic co-operation.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this agreement, payments arising out of export-import contracts and all other contract agreements concluded before December

31, 1992, shall continue to be effected in non-convertible Indian rupees in accordance with the trade and payments agreement dated January 17, 1991, between India and the Czech and Slovak federal republic.

The rupee balances shall be used for payments towards exports from India to the Czech republic of such goods and services as shall be mutually agreed upon.

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