

February 17, 2004
Sabrang English Print Monitor
Annexure

NEW DELHI

1. De-recognise BJP, petitioner tells HC

New Delhi: Judge C K Mahajan also issued notices to Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, Human Resource Development Minister Murli Manohar Joshi and the Election Commission.

The notices were issued on a plea by social activists Swami Agnivesh, Nirmala Deshpande, Nafisa Ali and Valson Thampu that the BJP be de-recognised for, what they termed, the violating the basic tenets of the Constitution.

[Source: The Times of India]

2. India Not Shining

Looking Bad, feeling Worse

Looking Bad And Feeling Worse (Opinion: Phalguni Matilal)

Whatever the government may say, the man on the street has very little reason to “feel good”, argues **Phalguni Matilal**

By the 2001 census, India’s population is 102.70 crores. It went up to 104.95 crores in mid-2002 and would have been much higher but for the deaths of millions of infants owing to the lack of healthcare. The population is expected to double by 2031, if not earlier. Everyone accepts that the population is a time bomb. Yet apart from creating a population commission, the government has not done much. Even 28 years after the Emergency, the words “population control” are taboo. The subject is referred to as family welfare and attached to the ministry of health at both the Central and state levels.

This has an offshoot. According to government statistics, 26.20 per cent of the people were living below the poverty line in 1999 — in absolute terms, about 26 crore people. The poverty line was defined by a planning commission task force back in 1979 as minimum daily per capita consumption of 2,400 calories in the cities and 2,100 calories in the villages, and an expenditure of Rs 49.09 and Rs 56.64 on non-food expenditure like clothing, shelter, transport and so on, in the villages and cities respectively. If 26 crore people fall short of the 1979 index even today, one can imagine the number of people below the poverty line if the norms had been updated. Both the tenth plan and the last budget promised a 15 per cent poverty alleviation — but what are the specific proposals to do this, and how far have they succeeded?

There are almost 6 crore unemployed in the cities, going by government statistics; no reliable data for the rural and unorganized sectors is available. The

numbers of the jobless is fast increasing with educational institutions spewing more educated youth and arable land being fragmented owing to population pressure. Where are the jobs for these people?

[Source: The Daily Pioneer]

3. Original author of 'India Shining' (Opinion: Sidharth Bhatia)

A whole new generation has grown up since Rajiv Gandhi was elected Prime Minister in 1984 with the best-ever mandate in independent India's history. The image of Rajiv, as created by the media, is that of an earnest but gullible politician, thrust into the Prime Minister's chair by a tragic accident of history. Bofors, Shah Bano, and Ayodhya are all touted as examples of Rajiv's lack of maturity; till the other day, Bofors was also shorthand for his willingness to tolerate, if not indulge in, corruption. Now that he has been exonerated, perhaps that ghost will be laid to rest.

Yet, though today's youth-the SMS generation, for want of a better phrase-may not remember much about him, they owe their current "feel-good" mood to him. He was the first one to speak about computers (and was ridiculed for it). He ushered in the telecom revolution, the fruits of which we are enjoying today. Panchayati Raj may not sound attractive to our hip youngsters, but it promised to usher in a revolution in the country. It was Rajiv who created the vision of a new India, and indeed, a new Asia. He began building bridges with Pakistan and China. And he even began, in earnestness, a new phase of ties with the US.

[Source: The Daily Pioneer]

The common man votes for atal's image

Moving his scissors carefully behind a customer's ears Hamid Bhai whispers, "agli sarkar kendra mein kiski banegi?" (Who will form the next government in the Centre?). It would be better, he continued, if Atal Bihari Vajpayee becomes Prime Minister again. But why? Because, combing softly, he replies, the PM's personality has got no match in the country. Even Musharraf has lauded him.

Forty-year-old Hamid, a barber by profession feels that the NDA government led by "Atalji" should continue in power. Else, the "initiatives" taken by him on the international level particularly that of normalising relations with Pakistan may suffer a setback.

[Source: The Daily Pioneer]

UTTAR PRADESH

Another Cong leader rejoins BSP, more to follow suit

Barely two days after Akbar Ahmad 'Dumpy' left the Congress to rejoin the BSP, yet another Congress leader Ms Talat Aziz switched loyalties to join hands with Mayawati's blue brigade on Monday.

If BSP insiders are to be believed, in the coming days a few more from the Congress may follow suit. "Some more Muslim leaders from the Congress are in touch and the next leader who is set to join us is Mohammad Mukim, former legislator from Etwa, an Assembly segment of Domariaganj parliamentary constituency," confided a BSP leader.

[Source: The Daily Pioneer]

BAGALKOT, KARNATAKA

Constituency Profile: Two giants had fought here (BAGALKOT)

Caste is the deciding factor in this constituency which has the fame of making former chief minister Veerendra Patil a victor and yet another former chief minister Late Ramakrishna Hegde taste defeat.

Until now about 8 people belonging to Lingayat and one each belonging to Ganiga and Kuruba Community have been elected to the Lok Sabha from this constituency. Congress won the constituency from 1967 till 1991. Later in 1996 H Y Meti of Janata Dal belonging to Kuruba Community and in 1998 Ajaykumar Sarnaik of Lokshakti were elected. In 1999 R S Patil of Congress was elected. R S Patil won the elections by 76,434 votes. A total of 8 Assembly constituencies come under Bagalkot Lok Sabha seat, of which 7 are from the same district and Ron from Gadag district.

[Source: The Deccan Herald]

AHMEDABAD/GUJARAT

Dead men could win BJP votes!

A high-tech crematorium, which has a contribution of Rs 16 lakh from the local MP, Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani .

Advani is one among several BJP MPs in Gujarat who have taken a fancy for crematoria to woo the Hindu votebank, since the MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) guidelines prevent spending on religious places. The MPs have obviously found that serving the dead should secure them votes of the survivors.

Kutch MP Pushpadan Gadhvi allocated Rs 6 lakh in Bhuj for repairs and renovation of a crematorium, which was damaged in the earthquake. In Godhra, the Samast Hindu Samaj Trust is developing a crematorium at a whopping cost of Rs 1 crore, with Rs 10 lakh from BJP MP Bhupendra Solanki's MPLADS fund and another Rs 10 lakh from Rajya Sabha MP Jana Krishnamurthy.

[Source: The Times of India]

Madhya Pradesh

Meat Ban: TOI makes Uma change her mind

The Uma Bharti government has gone back on its decision to ban public sale and consumption of non-vegetarian items and liquor in all of Amarkantak and Maheshwar, after The Times of India carried a story titled, 'Uma's Choice: Faith Against Livelihood', on Saturday.

The story had noted that more than half of Maheshwar comprised Muslims and fisherfolk. Also, that there is a tradition of animal sacrifice in many Hindu communities and temples here.

In a letter addressed to the Editor, the MP public relations department clarified that the ban will be enforced only in "notified areas" of the towns.

[Source: The Times of India]

MUMBAI

'Govt schemes short on effect'

India shining? Yeah, sure. Feel-good factor? Of course. Eight per cent growth? If the official figures say so.

To begin at the beginning, there is a Government scheme that provides reasonably generous financial support (Rs 5 lakhs a year) to enable promising sportspersons to meet their travel, living and training expenses abroad.

In September 2003, Pankaj Advani, Yasin Merchant, Rafath Habib and Manan Chandra were selected under the scheme and left for a stint of snooker training in the UK.

For some reason, three of the talented quartet did not receive a paisa of the sanctioned amount before leaving the shores of India, while one got part payment in advance. [Source: The Mid-day]

A vote to 'vote out' all!

As political parties gear up to field the 'best' of their lot for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, like-minded activists demand the right to vote against all candidates

This then is the ground reality. But like-minded activists from Gujarat and some other places in the country have a suggestion and a demand for an option to vote against all candidates. In a letter to President A P J Abdul Kalam and the Election Commission, they have demanded that people should be given the right to Vote Against All Candidates (VAAC) in the electronic voting machines or ballot papers. This, according to them, will reflect the real democratic choice.

One of the signatories and trade union leader Thakorebhai Shah says that rejecting all the candidates is also the right of the masses.

The signatories include Soma Marik and Sushovan Dhar from Kolkata, Madhumitta Dutta from New Delhi, Persis Ginwalla and Prasad Chacko from Ahmedabad and Rohit Prajapati from Vadodara.

[Source: The Deccan Herald (Ahmedabad)]

SABRANG PRINT MEDIA MONITOR

February 17, 2004

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

1. Delhi Police Brutality Continues

SHOW HUMANE FACE, ADVANI TELLS DELHI POLICE

Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani on Monday reiterated the need for security forces to project a humane profile. "Delhi Police will have to be more people friendly" was the message of the Deputy Prime Minister on the Raising Day ceremony of the Delhi Police on Monday.

Source: The Daily Pioneer

MAN ALLEGEDLY BEATEN BY COPS

A businessman was allegedly beaten by some policemen after he refused to part with money demanded by a constable near Hotel Taj Palace here in the early hours of Monday. According to the complainant, it all happened around 2 a.m. when Nand Gopal Aggarwal, a resident of Shastri Nagar, was on his way home from Dhaula Kuan. He was passing by Hotel Taj Palace when he found the road blocked due to an accident. Mr. Aggarwal slowed down and waited for the road to be cleared. **[Source: The Hindu]**

TIPS

Even as deputy prime minister lectured the Delhi police on becoming more people-friendly, an incident of the crass brutality of the force surfaced as a Delhi businessman was beaten up after he allegedly refused to pay a bribe.

This issue combined with the issue of two ghastly rapes in Delhi this week and two in December 2003 should be highlighted.

Details of Rapes in Delhi

14 Oct 2003, 10 p.m. Swiss Embassy Employee way back home after watching a movie at International Film Festival was abducted and rape

14 Oct 2003, One hour later, documentary film maker was assaulted in the same parking lot
No arrests Made

14 Feb 2004, 12.30-1p.m. 20 year old woman from Jharkand was gangraped on a moving bus from Faridabad to Delhi Railway station No arrests made

16 Feb 2004 16 year old girl molested in toilet, secondary school at RKpuram

Where is the decency left in public life in the nation's capital?

There is violence, sexual violence and killings every other day.....

Does Atal feel good about this?

TABLE on Delhi Violence BELOW]

| | | | | |
|-------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Delhi | Rapes 376 | Dowry Deaths 102 | Sexual Harassment 488 | Female infanticide 1000/865 |
|-------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|

Congress pioneered Reforms with a Human Face

If Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had not invested in the modern temples of India, the massive irrigation project, the public sector investment in steel, the institutions of higher level in the department of atomic energy, space programme, India would not have been able to reap the benefits of globalisation which we are now able to claim in the changed environment.

Senior parliamentarian and former Finance Minister who led India into Reforms Manmohan Singh:

- with the RSS and Swadeshi Jgran Manch there could be inconsistency in reforms process
- reforms with a humane face
- reduction of problems and creation of employment
- the opening up of the insurance sector; it would not have been possible without the support of the Congress party
- the new Electricity Bill, which is reform-oriented, it would have not been possible but for the Congress party
- the Congress's record is that when reforms are in the interests of the nation, we have backed it.
- Congressmen are the original reformers, we are better reformers and our commitment to reforms with a human face, to work for a new India free from the fear of war, want and exploitation... there should be no doubt about our total commitment. [**Source: The Indian Express**]

Gujarat Carnage

TRANSFER OF GODHRA CASE: APEX COURT NOTICE TO GUJARAT

The Supreme Court today issued notice to the Gujarat Government on a petition filed by the Citizens for Justice and Peace seeking transfer of trial in the Godhra train carnage case outside the State. A three-Judge Bench comprising the Chief Justice V.N. Khare, Justice A.R. Lakshmanan and Justice S.H. Kapadia, also asked the Gujarat Government to file an appeal against the High Court judgment acquitting all the 21 accused in the Best Bakery case in which 14 people were burnt alive in the aftermath of the Godhra train carnage. [**The Hindu**]

GUJARAT TRANSFERS 26 IPS OFFICERS

In A major reshuffle of police force ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, the Gujarat government today transferred 26 IPS officials. Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Ahmedabad, Shivanand Jha has been transferred and appointed as Special IG (Welfare of Schedule Castes and Weaker Sections) at Gandhinagar, while Special IG (CID-Crime) Pramod Kumar has been appointed in place of Jha on deputation, an official release said. Three Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) rank officials have been promoted to the post of Superintendent of Police (SP). DSP (Savar Kundla) V. Chandrashekhar has been promoted as SP (Dangs-Ahva) in place of Rajnish Rai, who has been shifted as SP (Intelligence), Surat. Also DSP (Kutch) Nipuna Torwane has been promoted as SP (Narmada) in place of Brijesh Kumar Jha who was transferred as SP Godhra District. DSP (Armed unit), Ahmedabad, A.I. Bunet, has been promoted as Commandant, SRPF (Group-2) in the city, the release added. [**Source: The Indian Express**]

TIPS

Justice for those guilty of mass crimes is an issue linked intrinsically to the battle for secularism and communalism. It needs to be spoken about and highlighted. The CBI findings in the Bilkees rape case show how brutally the Gujarat police connived to hide the fact and evidence of the crime. This needs to be brought into the campaign

Gujarat Carnage Does not figure in Electioneering at all. Why?

Feel Good or India Shining?

NOW BUMPER HARVEST TO ADD TO GOVT'S FEELGOOD FACTOR

The Government has found another reason to spread the "feel good" feeling: India is likely to have a bumper grain production of 208-215 million tonnes this year as compared to 183 million tonnes last year. Unfortunately, the government has the monsoon, and not its policies to thank. These estimates for 2003-04 were announced at the National Conference on Agriculture being held here.

"This is one of the best agricultural seasons in a number of years and the estimate is that foodgrain production will be 208 million tonnes and oilseed production will be 23-23.5 million tonnes including 5.8-5.9 million tonnes of mustard," said Agriculture Commissioner C.D. Mayee. [

Source: The Indian Express]

Vajpayee Shining (Opinion: Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay)

There will be few arguments against the contention that Verdict 2004 is the first one since the 1971 Lok Sabha poll that is being fought not only on the basis of the incumbent government's performance, but also on the positives of the man heading it. If Indira Gandhi used the slogan 'Garibi Hatao' as her launch vehicle, 33 years later 'India Shining' is a metaphor being used to catapult the NDA back into office.

Even at these early stages of campaigning, the positive development is that the BJP has decided to keep contentious issues on the backburner.

The party's electoral campaign is being constructed on the three pillars of Development, Vajpayee and India. If dissected, the cornerstone of the campaign makes it clear that votes are being sought not just in the name of the government's performance since March 1998, but also in the name of Vajpayee, his work and his vision of India. [**Source: The Hindustan Times**]

TEMPLE BELLS (EDITORIAL)

With the BJP being so voluble lately on issues like economic development and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's record in office, there may have been fair expectation that the campaign for the Lok Sabha poll would remain free of communal acrimony.

Alas, the RSS does not see things that way. In the election season, its spokesman has declared that Mathura and Kashi, and not just Ayodhya, are very much on the agenda, though it is Ayodhya that is to be kept in focus for poll purposes. [Source: The Hindustan Times]

TIPS

What were this government's policies for the farmer from 1999,2000, 2001 and 2002? There were suicides, drought and starvation deaths.

There was the Tehelka scam, Coffingate [after Kargill], the UTI scam and the Petrol Pumps Scam.

Gujarat Carnage 2002, has blackened the face of the Indian Democratic Establishment as well as the BJP and NDA Alliance.

Yet issues raised by the Gujarat Carnage do not figure in the campaign.

Why?

GANDHIS IN POLITICS

As Smt Maneka Gandhi and her son, Varun formally announced their decision to join the BJP, Varun also said that he did not believe in campaigning against the family as blood is thicker than water.

MANEKA, VARUN GANDHI JOIN BJP

Speaking to the media after joining the BJP, Varun Gandhi, grandson of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and great-grandson of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, said, "Historically, my family has been part of the Congress and has led it through its most glorious era. I do believe, however, that what my family was true to was not a party but a value system, a tradition of self-sacrifice, national pride and independence of spirit. I consider joining and strengthening the BJP to be in the nation's best interest and, therefore, decided to do so." Asked if he would campaign

against his first cousins, Rahul and Priyanka, if they contested the Lok Sabha elections, he replied, "I would try not to campaign against the family. I do not believe in attacking someone. I would only discuss the poll issues that include good governance and the leadership of Prime Minister Vajpayee. I will follow the principles of BJP." He brushed aside charges that he was joining a communal party. "If the BJP were a communal party then I would not join it. I have met Prime Minister Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister Advani; they are liberal in their attitude, progressive, and forward looking persons," he insisted. **Source: The Hindu**

And the Parivar said give us our Gandhi

Source: The Indian Express

The Politics of Alliances

ANOTHER MAYA-SONIA DINNER, SACKING MULAYAM ON MENU?

It is not as if Mayawati ruled out an alliance during her dinner meeting with Sonia. The BSP chief is believed to have reiterated her demand for the Congress to withdraw support to Mulayam Singh Yadav's government in UP, among other things. Mayawati has almost finalised all the 80 seats in UP. Some BJP observers argue she is using her meeting with Sonia to mount pressure on the BJP to sack the UP government. Only then would it be worthwhile for her to go it alone. This is an option the BJP is looking at with Kalyan Singh said to have indicated that polls to the LS and the UP Assembly could be held simultaneously. Mulayam could be in trouble if the Congress withdraws support and the Speaker of the Assembly, a BJP man, derecognises the BSP split.

At a two-hour meeting at the Prime Minister's residence — with the party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, presiding — the Board concluded that the party's alliance with the Indian National Lok Dal in Haryana had ended and therefore gave its approval to the State unit's demand to contest all the 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana. The general secretary, Pramod Mahajan, told the media later that the BJP would have no truck with the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam. In Jharkhand too it would contest all the 14 seats on its own, as also in Himachal Pradesh where the understanding with Sukh Ram's Himachal Vikas Party had ended.

In Tamil Nadu, where the BJP is having difficulty over seat-sharing with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Mr. Mahajan is hopeful of reaching a decision in two days. Altogether, the BJP would contest "roughly 350 Lok Sabha seats," he said.

Mr. Mahajan saw no difficulty finalising seat-sharing with old partners such as the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the Akali Dal in Punjab and the Janata Dal (United), comprising the old Samata Party and the JD (U), in Bihar. In these States, seat-sharing formulas in place in 1999 would be repeated, with a few adjustments here and there. The Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, and Mr. Mahajan would soon go to Hyderabad to finalise seat-sharing with the TDP.

[Source: The Indian Express]

BJP PARLIAMENTARY BOARD REVIEWS ALLIANCES

Source: The Hindu

AYODHYA ISSUE

MUSLIM BOARD REBUFFS NCM ON AYODHYA

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has rebuffed the National Commission for Minorities' move to resolve the Ayodhya issue through talks at this juncture, saying it was initiated with the polls in mind. **[Source: The Statesman]**

Vindictive Uma

'FOUL PLAY' BY HABIB TANVEER?

Is playwright Habib Tanveer engaged in "foul play"? Or is he paying the price of taking on the BJP during the Assembly polls campaign in Madhya Pradesh? After the nationally renowned theatre icon refused to pay over Rs 4 lakh as rent for a government residence, over a dozen artistes of the playwright's Naya Theatre Group had to vacate the house. [**Source: The Statesman**]

New Election Sops from the Centre

NEW INCOME INSURANCE SCHEME FOR FARMERS

The Union Government has decided to introduce an income insurance scheme for the farm sector, replacing the previous crop insurance scheme, as well as cover the risk factor caused by fluctuations in the international market prices of agricultural produce.

The decisions would be implemented from the coming "paddy" season.

This was announced by the Union Agriculture Minister, Rajnath Singh, while addressing a rally organised by the Youth Wing of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) here this afternoon.

He also promised that in case the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was voted back to power, the interest rates on farm loans would be further slashed to seven per cent. [**Source: The Hindu (Ludhiana)**]

TIPS:

What has the NDA given to farmers in past four-five years? Suicides, starvation and hunger deaths, drought etc. Why all the sops suddenly?

PANJA BEATS VAJPAYEE ON USE OF MP FUNDS

On the eve of the Lok Sabha polls, government records show virtually all top leaders, including Mr Vajpayee, Mr LK Advani, most senior Cabinet members, top Opposition leaders and eminent parliamentarians have spent over 70 per cent of their allotment. But some MPs, for a variety of reasons, lagged behind. And among those who haven't spent the allotted Rs 2 crore per year plus entitlements from previous years is Mr Rupchand Murmu, the CPI-M MP from Jhargram. While the Centre released Rs 16.05 crore to Mr Murmu for development work, he could spend only Rs 1.34 crore, or 8.32 per cent. Next noteworthy in this respect from West Bengal is Sk Khabiruddin Ahmed, MP from Nadia district. He spent 25 per cent of what was released to him. Among those who received an entitlement of over Rs 16 crore — most full-term MPs who won the previous term as well — Mr Panja is virtually unsurpassed. He has got officials in his constituency to sanction Rs 17.43 crore (108 %) worth of projects and has spent the entire amount. [**Source: The Statesman**]

Election Norms

EC SHOOTS DOWN PLEA TO LET ADVANI USE IAF AIRCRAFT

The Election Commission will not allow Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani to use the IAF aircraft — that the President, Vice-President and Prime Minister use — once the model code of conduct comes into force. The EC had received a request to this effect from the government recently. However, the EC has agreed that around 175 VIPs in the Z and Z-plus category can retain their security with their pilot and escort vehicles during campaigning. [**Source: The Hindustan Times**]

Campaign Strategy

EXPECT SIDHUISMS IN BJP CAMPAIGN

Don't be surprised to find the BJP's poll campaign peppered with "Sidhuisms". The party has managed to rope in spunky cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu for its election campaign.

Sidhu, famous for his repartees, is expected to join the BJP on Tuesday, according to the schedule worked out by the party leaders. BJP leaders are also talking to the evergreen hero of yesteryears, Jeetendra. [Source: The Hindustan Times]

UTTARANCHAL AND JHARKAND: DROPPING CHARGES

UTTARANCHAL'S PRE-POLL REQUEST –BENDING THE LAW?

All those who took part in the agitation for Uttarakhand can't be treated like hardened criminals." — N.D. Tiwari, Chief Minister, Uttaranchal

The six CBI cases

Relate to a 1994 mob attack in which a DSP was killed. Cases in final stages

Relates to attack on house, office of ex-state president of the SP. In final stage

Relate to burning down of a former district judge's house. An activist was held guilty in one; other pending. [Source: The Hindustan Times]

MUNDA GOVT DROPS CHARGES, 'RIOTERS', KAR SEVAKS FREED

- FIR (22/90) filed by the Sahebgunj police in 1990: A group of people, including Lohra Murmu and Ashok Sharma, caused mischief damaging public property
- FIR (68/91) filed by the Sadar police in Hazaribagh: A mob led by Sudhakar Agrawal and Praful Sharma stole "food materials" in a dhaba
- FIR (108/92) filed in Saraikela-Kharsawn in 1992: Sudama Singh and Roshan Singh indulged in rioting and damaged public property

They were among 30 named and 80 unnamed accused in these three cases of theft, mischief and rioting, all of them BJP supporters. With Lok Sabha polls round the corner, though, all of them are celebrating. The Arjun Munda government on Saturday dropped the charges against them. [Source: The Indian Express (Jharkhand)]

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

REHAB POLICY FOR ULTRAS HAS CENTRE'S NOD: GOVERNOR

Source: The Indian Express

In his address to the joint session of the State Legislature here this morning, J-K Governor Lt Gen (retd) S.K. Sinha said that in 2003, 274 detainees, who were not involved in serious offences, were released from jails. "Now a new rehabilitation policy approved by the Centre is being implemented to provide incentives to those who want to lay down arms," he added.

PUNJAB

SUKHBIR DRAWS CROWD, BADAL MAKES PEACE WITH TOHRA

The young Akali Dal seemed to emerge from the party's grey shadow as did Sukhbir Singh Badal from his father's at the Naujawan Chetna rally here today. Sukhbir, flanked by Central leaders of the Akali Dal and the BJP, took the stage as Parkash Singh Badal and SGPC chief Gurcharan Singh Tohra made peace.

[Source: The Indian Express (Ludhiana)]

No Light in Jharkand

NEW JHARKHAND ROAD DOESN'T LEAD TO LIGHT

A road inaugurated by PM A.B. Vajpayee brought this Jharkhand village — which is 3,310 km from the capital Ranchi — closer to the outside world. Yet, it could not help villagers reach the PM with their 17-year-old plea for electricity.

While the February 1 visit made available to Dubalia a 6 km road, connecting it to the National Highway the government's plans of rural electrification are yet to see the light of day. As a result, Dubalia shares the fate of 25,116 other villages in the state and slips into darkness every

evening, notwithstanding the two dozen electricity poles put up by the erstwhile Bihar government way back in 1987 under Rural Electrification Programme. [**Source: The Indian Express (Jharkhand)**]

North East/Meghalaya

A GARO SETBACK BUT LS POLLS CAN SAVE SANGMA (EDITORIAL)

Source: The Statesman

Where once the North-east dreamed of former Lok Sabha speaker Purno A Sangma becoming India's first tribal Prime Minister, the man has now burned his bridges by severing ties with the Congress and forming his own Nationalist Congress Party. Following the recent split in the party, he has been increasingly losing ground. As of now, if the results of the three Meghalaya Autonomous District Councils are any indication, Sangma may even have a difficult time asserting himself as the leader of the Garo Hills from where he hails and whose politics he dominates.

De-recognition of the BJP?

NOTICES TO ATAL, ADVANI

Source: The Hindu

The Delhi High Court today issued notices to the care-taker Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, his deputy, L.K. Advani, and the Election Commission to file replies to a suit seeking direction to the Commission to withdraw recognition to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a political party. Justice C.K. Mahajan asked the above-mentioned respondents as well as the Union Minister for Human Resources, Murli Manohar Joshi, and the Uttar Pradesh Chief of the BJP, Vinay Katiyar, to file their replies by April 27.

The suit was filed by a group of prominent citizens— Arya Samaj leader, Swami Agnivesh, Gandhian leader, Nirmala Deshpande, social activist, Nafisa Ali, and minority leader, Valson Thampu two years ago urging the court to direct the Commission to derecognise the party for what they alleged violating the basic tenets of the Constitution.

WEST BENGAL

CPI(M) HAS SPECIFIC POLL TACTICS FOR EACH STATE, SAYS KARAT

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has worked out specific tactics in each State to join hands with the "widest democratic and secular forces" so that the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies can be defeated in the Lok Sabha elections.

[Source: The Hindu]

PW INVITES LF ALLIES TO JOIN ANTI-CPM STIR

Enthused by PWD minister Mr Amar Chaudhury's proposal on having peace talks with Naxalite groups operating in South Bengal, the state committee of the CPI-ML (Peoples War) has invited all partners in the Left Front to join a campaign against the CPI-M. [**Source: The Statesman**]

Extra—Negative from Tehelka

**Sunday Feb 15, 2004
Sabrang Media Watch**

Negative Coverage from Tehelka

Why this kind of coverage from Tehelka

What the Congress really thinks of itself....

Tehelka speaks to 40 top Congress leaders to find out what the party thinks of Sonia Gandhi, its poll prospects and the potential of Priyanka and Rahul

Hoping for a miracle. This is the Congress looking at the Congress. And it doesn't make a pretty picture. It's a picture that probably frightens Congressmen most. On the eve of yet another election, the party looks less like a force geared for battle and raring to go, more like a resigned army plodding into defeat. They aren't overly enthused about their leader but they have none other than Sonia Gandhi. Alienated from the leadership, lost on policy and low on hope, they are banking desperately on some magic Priyanka and Rahul can rub up. Tehelka reports across the country spoke to 40 senior Congress leaders to get a view of the party from within. **Sankarshan Thakur** puts together the story of the Congress leaders' words

The Sonia Conundrum

This is what it boils down to – the Congress has a leader it does not want but absolutely cannot do without. Close to 75 percent senior party leaders believe that Sonia Gandhi's Italian origin is a political liability. These include those who sit with her on the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's apex decision – making body. But phrase the leadership question another way and the “foreigner issue” becomes an utter non-factor, at least for Congressmen: 99 percent of the leadership is convinced the Congress doesn't exist without Sonia Gandhi at the top.

The Power and the Kingdom

“The bulk of the Congress understands that we cannot defeat the BJP,” said one senior party-man.

“We are in the contest only if we manage to rope in Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Without the BSP we are not even in the contest.”

“We have been sitting around waiting for power to come back to us as if power is ours by some divine right,” said one leader from Uttar Pradesh, “That was never going to happen and now we have lost too much time. Look what a smart alliance the BJP has built up for all its so-called untouchability and look at what a tattered coalition we are trying to sew up. Elections are upon us and we still do not have a gameplan for UP, where the bulk of Lok Sabha seats come from.” He was among those high percentage of Congressmen (26 out of 40) who have come to believe that the BJP has grabbed the political space that the Congress once occupied; that it has become the core national party.

“Our traditional bases in the north were lost not over confusion on economic policies, that happened much later. We lost out because we could not respond adequately to Mandal and Mandir. We appeared to be anti-Mandal, we did not know what to do with the Mandir. We wanted to be secular but we launched our campaign that year from Ayodhya. The same happened in Gujarat last year. We

played soft-Hindu, second fiddle to Narendra Modi and lost out badly. We can't decide which way to go," one central leader said.

Vaiko on DMK-Congress

"I WILL ALWAYS RESIST HINDU FASCISM"

He is a true-blue character of the Tamil Political Narrative – combative, macho and hyperbolic. Leaner by six kilos, he looks fresh and defiant in his crisp veshti and shirt; its hard to believe hi is pushing 60. **Sudha G Tilak** was one of the first to speak to vaiko after his release:

You parted ways with the DMK ten years ago. Is this reunion a marriage of convenience?

Our coming together is based on affection and respect and regard. It is not just for electoral gains. Karunanidhi came to visit me in jail several times. Even after I floated a new party, I had desisted from attacking Karunanidhi and, mark my words, this time our partnership will last. We have come together for resisting communalism and for the larger interests of Tamil Nadu. The state is being destroyed by the fascist regime of Jayalalithaa.

Surely, the Dravidian ideology suffered when you joined hands with the BJP?

I don't feel guilty about that at all. Let me assure you that even though we joined hands with the BJP we did not give up resisting any means to propagate Hindu fascism because we are grounded in Dravidian ideology of social uplift. **We resisted the move by the NDA to allot government jobs to RSS cadres.** I bluntly told Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee that it was very wrong.