BAND OF LADIES

The power women — the Madam, Behenji, Didi and Amma — called the shots in their respective spheres of influence

By Uttam Sengupta

LL four of them are feisty women, each heading a political party in power. Three are chief ministers while the fourth could have been the Prime Minister but opted out. While one of them loves to flaunt her diamonds another has a her diamonds, another has a bizarre dress sense, hiding her ample girth beneath a cape. Only one of them can be said to be ele-gant while another has made a virtue of crumpled cotton and hawai chappals. Figuratively, all of them wear pants. They are ruth-less and autocratic. Three spin-

of them wear pants. They are ruth-less and autocratic. Three spin-sters and a widow.

Each has kept her flock together with an iron hand and the future of the control of the control of the control out them. The Congress appeared rudderless when Sonia Gandhi was away in the United States earlier this year, undergoing surgery for an ailment that remains undisclosed. All decision-making in the respec-tive political parties is concentrated in their hands and none of them forgives dissent or criticism. While Mamata Banerjee is called elded Mamata Banerjee is called elded Mamata Banerjee is called elded All of the control of the control of the Mamata Banerjee is called elded All decisions and the control of the Mamata Banerjee is stalled elded All decisions with the stalled elded Mamata Banerjee is stalled elded Mama

and hated in equal measure. Jokes about them abound and all four of them have a love-hate relationship them have a love-hate relationship with the media. Barring one, the other three do not seem to care much about the media and are rarely heard giving sound bytes. Mamata Banerjee, on the other hand, thinks nothing of holding meetings with Union Ministers in television studios, where she loves

television studios, where she loves giving interviews that can extend to several hours. Mamata is arguably the most powerful of the four. Her 19 MPs in the Lok Sabha have time and again held the Government to ran-som. Politically, a mid-term poll for the Lok Sabha would suit her substantially improve the tally of her party in the Lok Sabha. By refusing to accompany the Prime refusing to accompany the Prime refusing to accompany the Prime Minister to Bangladesh, forcing a



POWER: (Clockwise) May Mamata Didi and Jaya A

re-think on the Teesta river treaty, prodding oil companies to reduce petrol prices for the first time and by her rigid stand on FDI in retail, Mamata has demonstrated how badly the UPA needs her.

Dr Jayalalithaa, like the other three ladies, has enormous faith as a side ritticism for pursuing poor economies, the lady in Chennai has merily splurged on doling out

economics, the lady in Chennal has merrily splurged on doling out food grains and even gold to the poor. Like Mamata and Mayawati, she also expects the Centre to reimburse her generosity. Irked by New Delhi's refusal to humour her, she inched closer to the BIP and brought in a contraversial. and brought in a controversial ordinance to make 'forcible conordinance to make forcible con-version' a cognisable offence. She is reaping the harvest of populism though as she struggles to deal with an empty exchequer and cases related to her allegedly disproportionate assets.

cases related to her allegedly disproportionate assets. Mayawati spent much of her time and energy to blunt the onslaught of Rahul Gandhi. No matter what the 'Yuvraj', as she prefers to address him, did, she invariably reacted with an acerbic statement, ridiculing Rahul and his scathing criticism of her governance. It wasn't too difficult either because all that she did was to cite governance issues in Congressiveld states. Forced to dump strength of the ministers indicted by the





Lokayukta, she has had a roller coaster relationship with the courts, which allowed her to inaugurate the grandiose Ambedkar Park in Greater Noida but set aside land acquired and handed over to real estate companies.

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The Congress president enigmatic as ever. Dignified and ice-cool, even when under fire, she has relentlessly pushed the Government to implement reforms, the Food Security Bill and the Lokpal Bill, indicating for good measure that she is always ready for a fight. While her unknown and undisclosed illness has caused consternation in the Congress, she has been cool. She has also been firecely protective of her son, Rahul, seeing to it that he does not get singed by the swifting charges of corruption against the government.



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BETI IN 2G MESS

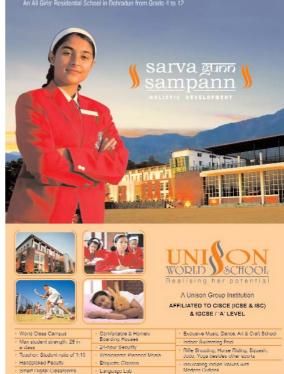
BELITIN ZG MESS
The 43year-old daughter of former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. Karunanidhi, Kanimczhi
swais in news for a major part of the year for her
alleged involvement in the Z6 spectrum scam.
She was arrested and was lodged in 18tha Jial
after her repeated bail pleas were rejected. She
was inally gartened bail on November 28 by the
swais inally granter bail on November 28 by the
authorities she was one of the most disciplined
inmates and took a keen interest in welfare
activities for the inmates.



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