

FIR against VHP leaders

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI. Oct. 19. — The CRPF filed an FIR against VHP leaders today at the Ramjanambhumi police station in Faizabad, for forcibly entering the "inner cordon" and the sanctum sanctorum of the makeshift Ram temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday. The FIR named top VHP leaders, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, Mr Ashok Singhal and Mr Satish Chand Dikshit.

The ex-Uttar Pradesh BJP minister, Mr Ashok Yadav, has also moved the Supreme Court seeking action against the VHP leaders, removal of the UP governor and the imposition of President's rule in the state.

Along with senior VHP leaders, the deputy commandant of the CRPF has also named about 40 unknown VHP supporters in the FIR, under section 186 of the IPC.

The state government has already ordered a police inquiry into the incident.

Meanwhile, following the Prime Minister's statement yesterday, Mr LK Advani too "disapproved" of the VHP action. However, going soft on the vandalism at the Taj Mahal by the BJP's youth wing activists, he said it wasn't an expression of religious extremism. He ruled out action against the Bajrang Dal and VHP, saying there was no evidence of their indulging in terrorist and subversive activities.

There are indications that the VHP's recent action in Ayodhya was part of a strategy "to test the public reaction." The issue is significant for the coming UP polls.

THE HINDU

28 OCT 2001

CRPF may have helped VHP leaders enter temple

Religion & Politics HT-1 19/10

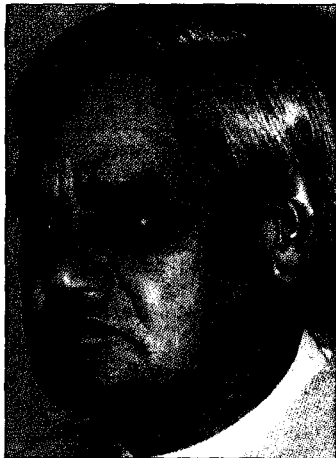
HT Correspondent & PTI
New Delhi/ Ayodhya/ Chennai,
October 18

THE PRIME Minister today blamed "slack" security for yesterday's intrusion into the prohibited sanctum sanctorum of the makeshift Ram temple at Ayodhya by VHP leaders. But in Lucknow, senior officials hinted at something more sinister: collusion by the CRPF guards.

CRPF and IB officials have arrived in Ayodhya for informal inquiries. They suspect that the security personnel opened the narrow gate in the barricade for the VHP men, for "it is difficult to believe that such a number of people could have passed through the narrow gate in a few minutes without collusion".

The State Government says that the VHP activists jumped over the barricade, and that they never entered the sanctum sanctorum. But the investigating officials are not buying this version, especially since the VHP men had remained in the prohibited area for over an hour.

Faizabad Commissioner Anil Kumar said that two civil magistrates had ordered the CRPF to arrest the VHP activists, but they



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

disobeyed the order.

On paper, security at the 67-acre site is tight. Visitors have to pass through metal detectors and frisking is part of the security drill. Twelve companies of central and state security forces are deployed there. This strengthens the collusion theory.

The UP Government today asked the ADG Intelligence and Security Himanshu Kumar to conduct an inquiry into security lapses in the temple complex. Principal Secretary (Home) Na-

resh Dayal said the ADG has been asked to submit his report within three days.

In Chennai, the Prime Minister, under fire from the Opposition and ally Samata Party, admitted that security at the site had been "slack". It will be tightened, he promised.

Three additional companies of provincial armed constabulary personnel have been stationed in the area and barricades around the temple strengthened.

The Opposition alleged that the VHP leaders' act was "a deliberate and defiant violation of law". The Samajwadi Party demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister on moral grounds. The party said the Chief Minister too should take responsibility for the security breach.

Samata Party president VV Krishna Rao said the party will oppose "whoever breaks the law or wants to use religion for their own needs".

A defiant VHP dared the Government to arrest its leaders. The All India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) threatened to move the Supreme Court over the VHP's forced entry into the temple.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 OCT 2001

Temple drive before UP polls worries allies

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, October 18

THE VHP'S temple stir has once more raised serious questions about the BJP's commitment to keeping the status quo at Ayodhya. There is speculation also over whether the party will throw caution to the winds to win the crucial UP Assembly polls.

The perception is that BJP has no credible strategy in UP. It is left with no other tactics than dividing voters at the risk of heightening communal tension and causing fissures in the already fragile security scenario.

Most supporting parties believe the BJP is inching towards making the temple issue a central plank for the UP polls.

They see a well-chalked out plan by the VHP in consultation with the BJP to polarise voters without disturbing the NDA.

Today, the Samata Party, whose leader George Fernandes is back in the Cabinet as Defence Minister, condemned yesterday's incident at the makeshift temple in Ayodhya and asked the Uttar Pradesh Government to enforce law strictly.

"Whoever breaks the law or wants to use religion for their own needs we will oppose," Samata Party chief V V Krishna

Rao said.

The NDA would stick by its agenda, which leaves out the Ram temple, Article 370 and uniform civil code, he said.

But other allies like the Trinamool Congress, which are waiting to return to the Government, are not quite ready to oppose the BJP's plans.

Even as Prime Minister A B Vajpayee's statement today that security needed to be tightened at the site addressed some concerns, the strident note struck by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders left little doubt about their plans.

Last week, several BJP leaders at a youth rally at Agra made speeches to blend the temple issue with the mood against terrorism following the Unites States retaliatory attack on Afghanistan.

If Chief Minister Rajnath Singh warned people who support terrorism will be sent to jail, BJP chief K Jana. Krishnamurthi endorsed Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan's view that building a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya still remained the desire of BJP workers.

Sports Minister Uma Bharti also spoke of the temple movement as a success story of the BJP's youth workers.

In fact, the Ayodhya issue was revived when Prime Minister Vajpayee made a surprise

announcement on August 26 that the Government had initiated talks to resolve the dispute before March next year, the deadline set by the VHP for starting the construction of the temple.

Vajpayee's announcement drew a negative reaction from Muslim groups.

Till date, it is not clear who is involved in the talks. Vajpayee's Cabinet colleagues have said he is directly dealing with the issue.

Recently, the Prime Minister's Office announced the revival of the Ayodhya cell, which was criticised by the Opposition parties as a move to please the RSS.

In January this year, Vajpayee ended a controversy over his remark that the temple was an expression of national sentiment.

He authored a newspaper article to clarify his position on the temple-mosque dispute. "Should any organisation attempt to disturb the status quo," the Prime Minister said, "the Government will not remain a silent spectator and adopt delaying tactics as unfortunately happened eight years ago."

Prime Minister Vajpayee's article came after the Government lost the Ayodhya debate in the Rajya Sabha after easily winning it in the Lok Sabha.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 OCT 2001

VHP barges into Temple

18/10

Religion & Politics 5/1

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI, Oct. 17. - Many VHP activists, including the outfit's working president, Mr Ashok Singhal, forcibly entered the sanctum sanctorum of the makeshift Ram Temple in Ayodhya today.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has sought a report from the UP government on the incident.

The activists, including the VHP general secretary, Dr Pravin Togadia, were there for about 30 minutes and left only when threatened with "physical removal" by senior officials, the UP home secretary said. No arrests have been made.

Reports from Ayodhya say the administration was slow to react to the situation. The commissioner said there was a serious breach of security and that he would submit a report to the Centre.

Securitymen said the VHP leaders, along with the former BJP MP, Mr Shrish Chandra Dixit, first entered the premises for offering prayers at the makeshift temple. When they insisted on perform-

ing puja at the sanctum sanctorum, they were refused entry by the CRPF personnel in charge of the temple's security. But the bodyguards assigned to two leaders misbehaved with them and forced their way into the restricted zone.

Twenty VHP activists then entered the disputed area. One of them, Mr BL Sharma "Prem", a former BJP MP, was carrying a sword.

After the puja, Mr Singhal addressed a small gathering, expressing the VHP's commitment to build the temple. The VHP activists also reportedly broke the locks of the kop-bhawan adjacent to the sanctum sanctorum.

Mr Singhal justified the entry, saying "Ram was imprisoned in conditions worse than that of prisoners-of-war. We do not adhere to the restrictions imposed upon entry into the complex."

He asked the government to pave the way for temple construction or be prepared for an agitation. Darshan from a distance of 51 feet and worship with one's shoes on violated the tenets of religion. "If the Prime Minister or chief minister come here like ordinary people, they'll understand a common devotee's hardships," he said.

THE STATESMAN

18 OCT 2001