

Probe into Bihar bonded labour

FROM TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Patna, July 28: Jugeswar Das, 41, appears emaciated. His freckled face tells the story of a man who has been in chains for several years. Jugeswar, a bonded labourer, used to put in eight hours of work on his landlord's farm. Then in the evening for four hours he slogged it out at his master's iron foundry. He was not compensated for the two shifts he did for his landlord.

After slaving it out for five years in Aldier village, under Bakhtierpur police station, without any wages, one day Jugeswar decided to do the unthinkable. He demanded his pound of flesh from his "master". Predictably, the landlord threatened him with dire consequences — "I will lock your wife and son in a room for their lifetime," he reportedly told him. Jugeswar had enough. He wanted to break free. With his family members, he fled the village. They landed up at the district magistrate's office in Patna and lodged a complaint against the landlord.

"If my landlord was generous he would give me Rs 5 to 10. Occasionally, he would offer me 10 kg of vegetables. But for months there would be no payment," he said.

Jugeswar is not alone. A number of such cases have come to light in north Bihar districts. In Mar-

ch, the state government had released 35 bonded labourers from the clutches of landlords at Katihar.

Dubbing the prevalence of the bonded labour system in Bihar and Jharkhand as "serious", the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has ordered probes in 24 districts. In Bihar, the worst-hit districts are Muzaffarpur, West and East Champaran, Motihari and Sitamarhi. In Jharkhand, the NHRC has ordered investigations at Deoghar, Ranchi and Giridih.

According to V.K. Singh, commissioner of labour and social security, in Bihar of the 7,868 bonded labourers, 7,763 have been rehabilitated. In the last six months, cases of 37 bonded labourers have come to light. However, the NHRC has asked for fresh probe in 24 more districts.

NHRC officials said they had been getting complaints about the existence of the bonded labour from several districts in the last few months. In March, a brick-kiln owner in Maner police station in Vaishali district is reported to have beat a bonded labourer to death. The incident sparked protest against the prevalence of the system. The commission has asked Bihar's chief secretary and director general of police to submit a report about the incident within two weeks.

Ministers attend secret VHP conclave for temple

Swati Chaturvedi
New Delhi, December 5

SOME UNION ministers and BJP and Shiv Sena MPs met yesterday under the VHP's auspices and hailed its president Ashok Singhal as he declared that the Government would have to go unless construction of a Ram Mandir began in Ayodhya by March 12. The meeting came two days before the ninth anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition.

The 'secret' meeting was held at Pune BJP MP Pradip Rawat's

North Avenue residence. The ministers attending the meeting were Ved Prakash Goyal, Minister for Shipping, Shripad Naik, Minister of State (MoS) for Agriculture, Jaiwanti Behm Mehta, MoS, Power, and M Anna Patil, MoS, Rural Development. All of them are from the BJP. Bala Sahab Vikhe Patil, MoS, Finance, was the lone Shiv Sena minister. Some half-a-dozen MPs were present as well.

When contacted by *Hindustan Times*, the ministers refused to comment on the meeting. But one



Vikhe Patil



Goyal



Naik



Mehta



M A Patil

CAUSE FOR APPLAUSE

'Either construction starts (on March 12) or the Government goes'

Ashok Singhal, speaking at a VHP gathering attended by BJP and Sena MPs and ministers

of those who attended the meeting said, "First Singhal spoke. We listened with rapt attention as he said that construction of the temple must start by March 12 (next

year). This would be Shivratri, the anniversary of February 8 1986 (in the sense that that was also Shivratri), when the campaign for the temple began."

Singhal said either construction would start, or the Government would have to go. Everyone present applauded the statement. BJP spokesman Vijay Kumar

Malhotra told *HT*: "All ministers are expected to follow Government policy." At the meeting, however, the ministers' oath of office didn't seem to cut much ice.

Singhal reportedly circulated documents after swearing those present to an oath of secrecy. The documents included a note outlining the VHP's defence of the October intrusion into the disputed Ayodhya site. The note says, "Where a barrier has been put in front of Ram Lalla there is a tradition to go and pray. We Nobody can take action against us."

Opposition motion on Ayodhya today

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 5. Carrying forward their coordinated move against the Vajpayee Government, the Opposition parties today decided to bring forward an adjournment motion on the Ayodhya issue in Parliament tomorrow, the anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992. The Opposition leaders assembled here today at

the residence of the CPI(M) Parliamentary Party chief, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, and agreed to continue raising issues in a coordinated manner. The current exercise is to associate the Opposition members from the Rajya Sabha.

Briefing correspondents, Mr. Chatterjee said the parties had arrived at a broad agreement on floor coordination in both the

Houses and raise issues jointly. The attempt was to focus on one issue at a time instead of each Opposition party taking up separate issues which blunted the attack against the Government. As part of the agreement, the parties decided to move an adjournment motion on the Ayodhya issue tomorrow. The Congress member, Mr. Kapil Sibal, said the Opposition also decided to meet on a regular basis.

Apart from Ayodhya, other issues that would be raised and on which there was complete unanimity included the reinduction of the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, the plight of farmers, unemployment, disinvestment and opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO).

The POTO issue continued to be high on the agenda with the Nationalist Congress Party asserting that it would oppose the ordinance as long as the amendments suggested by the party were not incorporated.

Those who attended the meeting included Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy and Mr. Kapil Sibal (Congress), Mr. Amar Singh (SP), Mr. Prem Gupta (RJD), Mr. Praful Patel (NCP), Mr. J. Chittaranjan (CPI), Mr. Abani Roy (RSP), Mr. Chatterjee, Mr. S. Ramchandran Pillai, Mr. Hannan Mollah, Mr. Rupchand Pal, Mr. Nilotpal Basu and Mr. Dipankar Mukherjee (CPI-M).

THE HINDU

- 6 DEC 2001

Advani sings dual tune on Ayodhya

9-
ministry
5-8
4/12

FROM KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, Dec. 3: L.K. Advani today spoke in two voices about Ayodhya, saying there was nothing communal about the movement but that the Babri demolition day had been the "saddest day" in his life.

"I don't associate it (the Ayodhya movement) with any communal sentiment. It has strengthened cultural nationalism and there is no communal tinge in it at all," he said during a debate in the House.

Replying to a discussion on the storming of the disputed site at Ayodhya on October 17, he likened it to the Chauri Chaura incident, which forced Mahatma Gandhi to call off the Quit India movement.

At the end of the five-hour debate, Advani

did not give any assurance to the Opposition or the allies that the Centre would do anything to rein in provocative statements by VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders and their threat to construct a Ram temple.

He made no reference to the demand by the Opposition and NDA allies — the Trinamul Congress and the INLD — that VHP leader Ashok Singhal and others should be booked for trespass.

Merely condemning the October 17 incident, Advani quoted a 1993 Supreme Court order — on maintaining status quo at the disputed site — to establish that the VHP leaders had not exactly violated it and that the Centre would allow normal maintenance work there.

But in what appeared to be a balancing act, he assured hawks in the House that the government would not allow any violation of status quo and would ensure full implementation of court orders.

"The government will not allow any addition or alteration or structural changes at the disputed site," he said.

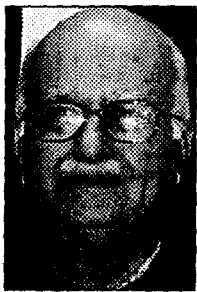
Advani added that the Uttar Pradesh government had stepped up security and clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC to block any attempt to defy the police cordon at Ayodhya.

Earlier, the Opposition attacked the government for failing to protect the disputed site and sought to know how the government would ensure security at the site given the VHP's plans to

begin construction from March 12.

Congress chief whip Priya Ranjan Das Munshi alleged that the Centre showed "inaction and lethargy" during the forcible entry as "courage" to arrest Singhal even for 24 hours would have led to the collapse of the government.

Alleging that Advani and his ministry were to blame for the inaction, Das Munshi rued that the offence of the VHP leaders was not even made cognisable. Terming the Bajrang Dal and the VHP as "neo-fascist forces", he asked the government how it would deal with "these fanatics" if the matter was not disposed of by the Supreme Court by March 12.



Advani

THE TELEGRAPH

4 DEC 2001

Their own burden

The conversion war in Orissa

There is something in Orissa called the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act. It requires any person wishing to change his faith to submit an affidavit, subsequent to which an official verification takes place to determine whether the conversion is voluntary or not. The legislation can only be aimed at one thing — conversions to, but also from, Christianity. In June last year, the district administration was forced to pull up the Banabasi Kalyan Parishad — the same organisation which burnt churches in Gujarat — when 22 were found to have converted without informing the authorities, in the presence of the Shankaracharya of Puri, at Manoharpur where, precisely, Graham Staines had been burnt alive with his two sons. The existence of such a legislation can only mean that Christian missionaries are active, especially in the tribal belt, and that the BJP portion of Naveen Patnaik's government, along with the VHP and its appendages, are worried.

Why? Disputes have been engaged by the state secretary of the VHP, whether the conversions to Christianity are voluntary, where the meaning of the word "voluntary" is sought to be interpreted as the absence of a *quid pro quo*. It would be naive to think that poor tribals convert to Christianity only out of an unshakeable conviction in the redeeming properties of the crucifix. They are looking for a better life, in material terms, and human dignity. There is an offer made by the Church, there is no need for a discussion as to how it should be interpreted. Besides which, the missionaries can level the same charge at the VHP reconversions. The state secretary argues against himself when he asks anyone to cite an instance "where educated and economically well-off people convert to Christianity". The point is their status makes them relatively immune to the kind of pressures that organisations like the VHP can exert and, besides, don't need to bother about faith, except as a personal matter. What is certain is that such an interpretation of the word "voluntary" is entirely pernicious. A man can change his faith for pieces of silver if he wants, his conscience is his own burden, but should not be made to do so at gunpoint, at which point the burden shifts to the converter. The VHP let it be added, is more likely to be suspected of the latter than the Church.

THE STATESMAN

• 3 DEC 2001

Malegaon and manipulation

By Jyoti Punwani

MARATHI-SPEAKING HINDU and Urdu-speaking Muslim school children in Malegaon, Maharashtra, may soon become 'pen friends'. This was actually suggested at a peace march organised by Gandhians and the local teachers' federation a fortnight after Hindu-Muslim riots there claimed 13 lives.

Yet, this is the town where the relationship between the majority Muslims and the minority Hindus is described as being as interwoven as the strands on the powerlooms which give Malegaon its identity. The Hindu traders and Muslim weavers here cannot do without each other, and their dealings are based on trust rather than official bank transactions.

From Mumbai, the statistics of the Malegaon riots which began on October 26 and lasted almost a week, seem a disturbing reminder of the post-Babri Masjid Mumbai riots of December 92-January 93. In a Muslim-majority town, mobs killed four Muslims and one Hindu; yet, the eight who died in police firing were all Muslim. Three masjids and two temples were attacked. What else can explain these figures but that the police and the Hindu rioters worked hand-in-hand as in January 93 in Mumbai?

But in Malegaon, the pattern doesn't seem to fit quite so neatly. True, there seems to be no explanation other than communal bias for the police not preventing Hindu mobs from torching an entire powerloom complex and killing a popular former Congress leader as he prayed in the complex's masjid at night. Similarly, the main water pipeline was systematically damaged at almost a dozen places by Hindu mobs, affecting the town's water supply, but no one died in police firing there.

However, other factors contradict the 'police-backed-Hindu-rioters' theory. For one, the first police firing took place a full hour after the scuffle outside the town's main mosque between Muslim boys and the SRP, which is seen to have sparked off the riots. Secondly, in a horrific incident, a Shiv Sena 'social worker' was stabbed repeatedly and then thrown into a bonfire, but the Muslim mob who did this encountered no police firing. Third, the police remained unavailable to both communities

as violence raged through the night of October 26.

Indeed, the specifics of the Malegaon riots do not fit into any pattern, except one which has dominated our life since 1985 — the cynical manipulation of religion for votes. In Malegaon, the 70 per cent Muslim population is largely illiterate, poor and increasingly unemployed as the powerloom sector declines. The man desperate to claim its loyalty is an irreligious Muslim brought up on Lohia's teachings, who wears khadi and has spent most of his political life with Socialist stalwarts such as

The specifics of the Malegaon riots do not fit into any pattern, except one which has dominated our life since 1985 — the cynical manipulation of religion for votes.

Mr. George Fernandes, Mr. Madhu Dandawate and Ms. Mrinal Gore.

Mr. Nihal Ahmed has been elected MLA six times from Malegaon and was Minister once, yet few Hindus — and not a few Muslims — have a good word for him except those in his party. Even among them, all six Hindu corporators are contemplating leaving the party to be able to face their largely Hindu electorate again.

Mr. Ahmed's repeated election from a backward, Muslim-dominated township could have proved an exciting experiment — a non-Congress, progressive Muslim leader practising secular politics, working for the advancement of his hometown. Malegaon could have become a trend-setting, riot-free, modern, Muslim-majority town.

Instead, the majority community in this frequently riot-hit town is poorer and more uneducated, while the minority shares economic power equally with it. By his own admission, Mr. Ahmed's main achievement has been regularising the slums in which his mostly migrant Muslim voters live in abysmal conditions.

Had he used his hold over the community on October 26, by rushing to pacify the Muslim youths outside the mosque who turned aggressive after the SRP prevented them from distributing 'Be Indian Buy Indian' Urdu pamphlets, he may have salvaged his loss of face in 1999, when he lost

his Assembly seat to his own protégé, a Congress Muslim backed by the entire Opposition against Mr. Ahmed. Indeed, he could have vindicated his entire political career. Instead, Mr. Ahmed chose to stay away, knowing he would be the biggest beneficiary of the Muslims' rage against the police.

A week before the riots, he himself had fuelled his community's simmering anger by organising a rally of Muslims against the United States' bombing of Afghanistan. Mindful of the TV cameras, he had led the rally, flanked by a handful of youths

holding Osama bin Laden portraits. It was easy therefore for the 70-plus out-of-power politician to sit back during the riots and reap the fall-out of the explosive pro-Osama, anti-police, anti-ruling party and eventually anti-Hindu hysteria that swept his deprived community. The municipal elections were then less than two months away (they have now been postponed).

"I have to re-build my base," explains Mr. Ahmed frankly. Much the same way, the Shiv Sena and other communal organisations are re-building their bases in the villages of Maharashtra. Two months before Mr. Ahmed's rally, members of these organisations had attacked Muslims and their mosque in a village near Malegaon, turning a private dispute between two families there into a Hindu-Muslim affair. Mr. Ahmed had spread the flames of this incident to Malegaon by addressing a public meeting in the town.

Significantly, the villagers, who had never seen a riot before, offered to repair the mosque, but their offer was turned down by the village's Muslims on the instructions of "Maulanas". It is these "maulanas" who have indirectly helped the Hindu communal parties in their aim of uniting Hindus against Muslims in Maharashtra's villages, which have no history of communal conflict. Bearded preachers of the Tableeghi-Jamaat who have for long toured villages teaching

Muslims the 'true' path, the "maulanas" have now begun to make a dent in the villages' composite culture.

Over the last three months, renovated mosques in Maharashtra's villages have been levelled in a series of communal incidents. Within a day of riots breaking out in Malegaon, Muslims, who have lived in its surrounding villages peacefully for generations, became a special target of "outsiders". Three Tableeghi members were beaten badly, a peshinam burnt alive and a woman gang-raped by her neighbours as wild rumours of Hindu women having been raped in Malegaon spread to the villages. The former Chief Minister and current leader of the Opposition, Mr. Narayan Rane of the Shiv Sena, gave a specific figure to this rumour: 20, at a press conference in Malegaon 10 days after the riots. Neither during the riots, nor after, did the administration try to reassure people that no such incident had taken place.

As Mr. Nihal Ahmed and the Sena reap the harvest of their labours over the last six months, Muslims in Maharashtra are wondering why riots take place every time the Congress is in power. In Malegaon, Hindu Congressmen are increasingly talking like Sena members, provoked by the way they have been ignored by their local Muslim MIA after the riots. Even the grant of compensation to those who died in the riots has become a communal issue.

Why didn't the Democratic Front Government pay heed to the build-up and instruct its police to be both stricter and more sensitive? It is a grave provocation to march through the main road with Osama's portraits, but it's not a crime to distribute swadesh pamphlets, even if they are in Urdu and are distributed outside a mosque. But the police allowed the former and forbade the latter. The army was called in, but not told to control the situation, even though the police were clearly outnumbered. Arresting Mr. Nihal Ahmed may make him a hero, but he has not even been removed from the post of convener of the co-ordination committee of coalition parties supporting the Government. And Saanna continues to report exaggerated and incendiary reports from Malegaon.

Turnaround in Advani Aayodhya pitch

Silence gives way to strong words

FROM MONOBINA GUPTA

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Home minister L.K. Advani was not in the least apologetic about the Ayodhya break-in when he made a statement in the Rajya Sabha this morning, but by the end of the day he was singing a different tune.

"I want to condemn the incident in no uncertain terms and am not prepared to condone any act by the VHP which will disrupt public life. The incident should never have taken place," said the home minister in his reply after hearing out both the Opposition and belligerent partymen.

Advani added that the Uttar Pradesh government would take action against those who have violated the law.

VHP activists had stormed into the disputed Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri masjid site on October 17 to offer puja, breaching a Supreme Court order.

Hoping that the Ayodhya tangle would be solved through talks between Hindus and Muslims, Advani said: "There is also another way of solving the problem — legally — but that seems difficult. It may take years."

It seemed Advani was embarrassed by the unqualified and aggressive defence of the break-in by some BJP MPs. Narendra Mohan, an MP from Uttar Pradesh, had pitched his defence high, saying: "Nobody can take away our right to do puja at Ayodhya."

The home minister's confident statement on the incident in the morning did not have a word of condemnation. But his reply at the end of the acrimonious day-

long discussion was laced with regret, platitudes on the country's secular Constitution and a thinly-veiled warning to VHP chief Ashok Singhal and his own partymen who had justified overturning the Supreme Court order.

"Singhal has tried to justify the incident by citing a high court order which had said that the circumstances at Ayodhya were not conducive to offering puja. But the Supreme Court had not upheld this observation — in which case Singhal has to abide with the order of the Supreme Court," Advani said.

"I have told the VHP that you have no right to violate a Supreme Court order when it has overruled the high court order," he added.

Advani also cut his party colleague to size and said: "I do not agree with Narendra Mohan that it is within anybody's right to offer puja at Ayodhya. It is wrong to disrupt peace in public life and create a law and order situation."

To add a "healing" touch, the home minister said: "It is indeed a cause of concern if minorities begin to feel insecure. India's biggest strength is its secular Constitution."

Earlier, a united Opposition hit out at the government for not taking action against the VHP culprits. It charged the BJP-led governments in the state and at the Centre with playing a communal card ahead of the Uttar Pradesh polls.

Tempers ran high with BJP members cutting short speeches of Opposition members, forcing the chairperson to briefly adjourn the House.



A file picture of LK Advani arriving to depose before the Libertain commission in New Delhi. (AFP)

VHP furious, BJP covers up

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Home minister L.K. Advani's condemnation of the VHP in the Rajya Sabha for forcibly entering the Ayodhya makeshift temple on October 17 has ruffled the outfit's feathers, but a defensive BJP said his criticism was a "tactical retreat".

VHP general secretary Acharya Giriraj Kishore insisted they had flouted no order when they forced their way in. Kishore, working president Ashok Singhal and some others had barged in despite a Central Ordinance directing that worship and other rituals has to be performed at a distance of 15 metres from the sanctum sanctorum.

Kishore invoked a January 1, 1983 ruling by the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court to justify his claim. The ruling stated that a "reasonable" distance would have to be maintained from the idol but did not specify a distance.

However, the factual position is different from what was put out by the VHP.

First, the Central Ordinance, called the Ayodhya Special Area Acquisition Ordinance issued on January 7, 1983, nullified the high court ruling. The apex court then upheld the Ordinance twice — on October 24, 1994 and May 10, 1996 — saying categorically that status quo ante, as on January 7, 1983, would prevail at the disputed site.

But the VHP today gave enough indication that it would pay no attention to the apex court's orders. International general secretary Praveen Togadia

was quoted by agencies as saying in Bangalore that he was ready to face any legal action in his "pursuit" of building the Ram temple. Togadia also said the VHP would hold a meeting in Delhi on January 27 and serve a final warning to the Centre to either hand over the disputed land or face a "mass agitation".

The VHP leader said his organisation was "not hopeful" of a solution from the Centre, although government sources said the specially constituted cell on Ayodhya would have its official head from Monday. Shatrughan Singh, the Uttaranchal cadre IAS official who was appointed for the job, will be relieved this week. But the sources were clueless about who Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee intended to talk to in a bid to resolve the mandir-masjid issue.

BJP sources said one reason why the government was dragging its feet on Ayodhya was the feedback that it would not have much of an impact on the Uttar Pradesh elections. Vajpayee's contradictory statements last year — describing the temple as an "expression of nationalist sentiments" and then waxing eloquent on religious tolerance and pluralism in his Kumarakom musings — were apparently a "trial balloon" to test whether Ayodhya would click as a poll issue.

Much of the BJP's present disregard for the VHP stems from the trust and confidence the RSS has in Vajpayee's leadership. Even the last thorns in his flesh like K.S. Sudarshan and Dattopant Thengadi have been neutralised.

SC notice to UP on Babri case revival

HT Correspondent/PTI
New Delhi, November 19

THE SUPREME Court today issued notices to the Uttar Pradesh Government and the CBI on petitions seeking fresh prosecution of three Union Ministers and five others in the Ayodhya demolition case. The Ministers include L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti.

A Bench comprising Justice G B Pattanaik and Justice N Santosh Hegde asked the authorities to file their replies within four weeks on petitions by a Delhi-based organisation, Society For Social Justice, and columnist Kuldeep Nayar.

The petitions challenged the Allahabad High Court order quashing the CBI charge sheet against eight persons, including the Ministers. On February 12, the Lucknow Bench of the High Court had held as defective a notification by the UP Government in 1993 for the trial of the accused in the case.

However, the High Court had said that the State Government could correct the defect in the notification for reviving the proceedings against the accused. It said, "The mistake in issuing the notification is curable and it is open for the State Government to cure the legal infirmity."

The petitions before the Apex Court said the State Government had failed to rectify the defect because several leaders of the BJP, the VHP and the RSS were involved in the case. Also, the CBI has not requested the State Government to issue a fresh notification.

Earlier, a similar petition by Mohammed Aslam had sought

9-minutes
the apex court's direction to the State Government to prepare another notification paving the way for the trial. The petition maintained that the Government need not issue a fresh notification, since there were several other notifications granting special powers to the Court to deal with cases pertaining to the demolition of the disputed structure.

The five others accused in the case include VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders Ashok Singhal, Giriraj Kishore, Vishnu Hari Dalmia, Vinay Katyar and Sadhvi Rithambara.

The Centre had, on August 16, 1993, entrusted the investigation into the demolition of the disputed structure to the CBI and by notifications on September 9 and October 8 that year set up the special courts.

The high court had held that the trial of cases falling under the notification dated September 9 was valid. "The impugned September 1997 order passed by the special/sessions judge (Ayodhya Prakaran), Lucknow, for framing of charges upheld as far as 48 cases referred to in the notification dated September 9, 1993", the high court had said.

The petitioners contended that the high court quashed the framing of charges and the trial on the basis of minor technicalities and this could not be allowed to trample upon the rule of law and the course of justice.

Terming this as a fit case for the Supreme Court to interfere, the petitioners said the offence committed by the accused persons was serious and they could not be allowed to go scot free on a "trifle technical ground".

NCM directive on Malegaon

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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9/11

NEW DELHI, Nov. 8. - The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has asked the Maharashtra government to repair the mosques and temples damaged during the Malegaon riots at the state's expense. It has also advised that policemen belonging to the Muslim community be posted in Malegaon to restore the minority community's "eroded confidence" in the police.

According to the NCM, the situation in the textile town, which witnessed communal riots in October end, is still tender. It has suggested measures to improve the situation, including socio-economic development of the area and con-

9-minutes

ferring the status of a separate district on Malegaon.

The NCM has also recommended a relief package including ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of those killed in the riots.

The NCM members, Mr John Joseph and Mr A M Sethna, on a fact-finding mission to Malegaon observed that inflammatory speeches made during a rally on 19 October against American strikes in Afghanistan triggered the tension. The police could not properly appreciate the situation, they added.

Thirteen people, including a woman, were killed in stabbing incidents and police firing in the riots that followed.

THE STATESMAN

9 NOV 2001

Malegaon backlash sends CM rushing to Delhi

Times News Network

MUMBAI: The recent communal riots in Malegaon are creating political aftershocks in the Congress here with the central team despatched by party president Sonia Gandhi reportedly blaming the state government for its alleged failure to handle the situation. MPCC president Govindrao Adik is also learnt to have drawn the same conclusion.



V. Deshmukh

AICC general secretary Sushilkumar Shinde flew into the city on Monday and held talks with chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, Mr Adik and other senior leaders at Sahyadri, the government guest house.

A worried Mr Deshmukh is flying to Delhi on Wednesday to present his case before Sonia Gandhi. His supporters say the Congress cannot be blamed for the riots since the home portfolio is handled by deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal who belongs to the NCP.

Ms Gandhi's team, comprising Ahmed Patel, Oscar Fernandes and AICC general secretary in charge of Maharashtra Motilal Vora, visited the powerloom town over the weekend.

According to informed sources, the team blamed the state administration for not taking appropriate action immediately after Janata Dal (Secular) president and former MLA Nihal Ahmed took out a morcha against the bombing of Afghanistan by U.S. forces. Placards of Osama bin Laden were also allegedly displayed by the protestors.

The Congress high command is especially worried about the adverse impact the riots in a Congress-ruled state may have on its campaign in Uttar Pradesh, where assembly elections are round the corner. The looms in Malegaon employ a large number of people from U.P. who have sent reports back home about the alleged mishandling of the riots. The Congress leadership is also worried that the party has to bear the brunt of the Muslims' anger even though the home department is handled by Mr Bhujbal. The NCP, which is assiduously wooing

Muslims in Maharashtra, had proactively demanded a judicial inquiry into the riots and compensation for the victims' families.

The failure of the Congress-led government to order a judicial probe immediately and its reluctance to offer compensation have further angered the Muslims, party sources said.

Former chief minister and chairman of the minorities cell of the Congress party A.R. Antulay also expressed deep reservations about the state government's handling of the situation. He said that the police firing was uncalled for and that the Muslim youths distributing pamphlets calling for a ban on Coke and Pepsi could have been handled more tactfully by the police.

The Congress high command is worried about the impact the police firing in Malegaon could have on the ensuing assembly elections in five states and the municipal council and zilla parishad elections in Maharashtra.

Meanwhile, Mr Deshmukh convened a high-level meeting to take stock of the law and order situation in the state.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

6 NOV 2002

IAS officer to head cell on Ayodhya

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, OCT. 23. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today took the first step towards setting up an Ayodhya cell in his office when he signed a file clearing the name of an IAS officer Mr. Shatrughan Singh of the Uttaranchal cadre, as the man who would head it.

The cell will be set up as soon as it is notified, official sources indicated. It will be part of the Prime Minister's Office located in the Cabinet Secretariat and is expected to be operational in a few days.

Officials indicated that the cell would monitor the Ayodhya "negotiations". The Prime Minister has already indicated that "negotiations" are taking place although he has repeatedly refused to disclose the names of the people negotiating and has not said on whose behalf they are

discussing the matter.

At the kumbh mela in January last, the 'dharam sansad' organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had virtually issued an ultimatum to the Government to hand over the disputed land in Ayodhya to the trust run by it for starting construction of a Ram temple by March 12, 2002 or face the prospect of "sadhus and sants" forcibly occupying the land.

More recently, after a meeting with some VHP leaders, the Prime Minister was reported to have assured them that the matter would be settled by March 2002 and that he would be setting up an Ayodhya cell in his office to monitor the progress.

Today, some senior officials of the Uttar Pradesh Government met the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pandey. The Home Ministry let

it be known that it would firmly remind the State Government that security arrangements at the makeshift temple at Ayodhya must be foolproof.

On October 17, a few senior VHP leaders, including Mr. Ashok Singhal and Mr. S.C. Dixit, broke the security cordon to go up to the sanctum sanctorum of the makeshift temple in violation of the Supreme Court allowing devotees to have 'darshan' from a specified distance. Since then, the CRPF has lodged an FIR in relation to this incident and the State Government has strengthened security arrangements at the site.

But today, the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Kalyan Singh, is reported to have said that the breaking of the security cordon by the VHP leaders had the prior approval of the Chief Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh.

THE HINDU

24 OCT 2001

Dimension
A DRY RUN? *5/10*
VHP mounts pressure on the government

IT is clear that the VHP wants to go ahead with the construction of the temple at Ayodhya and that the re-constitution of an Ayodhya cell attached to the prime minister's office is not deemed to be a satisfactory response. There is no other way to explain the outrage at Ayodhya which saw Ashok Singhal and Praveen Togadia of the VHP with a sprinkling from the BJP in tow breaking through the security cordon around the makeshift temple, in order to have "darshan". This is a political move aimed at putting pressure on the government to give in to the VHP demand to hand over what it calls the undisputed area so that construction of the temple can begin on the date that will ostensibly be fixed by the sadhu sammelan some time in March next. Questions have already been raised about the degree of collusion that allowed these people to reach to the makeshift temple.

The Faizabad commissioner says two civil magistrates had ordered CRPF men posted in the area to arrest the people concerned, but they apparently refused to do so. Singhal and company couldn't have just walked in. Besides, the Supreme Court order says that only the priest can enter the sanctum sanctorum, while others are restricted to a barricade placed 20 feet away. Darshan implies, if not entering the sanctum sanctorum, then at least getting considerably closer than 20 feet, in which case it is an infringement of a court order, a prima facie contempt open to prosecution. Praveen Togadia says that no one can take away their right to worship, but in this case the right is circumscribed by a judicial order. The incident itself is not serious, but its implications are — that a complacent and perhaps, collaborationist security arrangement can be breached. It is good that the prime minister and UP chief minister Rajnath Singh have reacted promptly. One hopes they realise that the business of winning upper-caste Hindu votes in the state, by breaking the law, cannot be allowed to jeopardise the other components of the party's strategy. The presence of former and actual BJP MPs among those who accompanied Singhal also suggests that a conflict is brewing within the BJP itself over the temple issue that the prime minister may not find easy to handle.

Vajpayee: VHP has derailed temple talks

SP1 2/10
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, Oct. 22. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today said the ongoing talks to resolve the Ayodhya dispute had received a setback after VHP activists stormed the makeshift temple last week.

The Prime Minister told a press conference here that he considered the incident as "unfortunate and serious." and he didn't like it.

He refused to reveal the names of organisations and leaders of the two communities involved in the talks and said a congenial atmosphere was needed for the talks to progress. The 17 October incident in Ayodhya had indeed "affected" the process, he said.

Security should be strengthened to prevent such incidents, he said. Uttar Pradesh has already begun an inquiry into the incident.

Why no action had been taken against those who had stormed the the makeshift temple? Mr Vajpayee said an FIR had been lodged.

But the UP government had registered a case against the incident, treating it as a non-cognisable offence? Mr Vajpayee said the Centre had not stopped the state from taking action.

Addressing the platinum jubilee celebrations of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram here, Mr Vajpayee said the world today is confronted with religious fanaticism. The problems are not because of any religion but because of lack of understanding of their basic tenets.

THE STATESMAN

23 OCT 2001

Advani springs temple reminder

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 21: The golden jubilee celebrations of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh-BJP provided the perfect backdrop for leaders to articulate the importance of balancing the party's commitment to "Hindutva" with compulsions of governance.

If home minister L.K. Advani waxed eloquent on the Ram temple, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee dwelt on stability of the 24-party NDA experiment at the Centre.

Seated on a dais displaying huge cut-outs of the lamp and the lotus — the Jan Sangh and the BJP's election symbols — Vajpayee asserted that a stable government was essential to counte-

nance both internal and external challenges. The NDA is "marching ahead" to tackle both, he added.

"Two or three years ago, I was asked by foreign visitors how long will your government continue? I was fed up of answering them. Today, nobody poses this question any more because they know the government is here to stay," Vajpayee said.

Vajpayee referred to US secretary of state Colin Powell's visit. The Prime Minister said he told Powell about the national coalition in which he had to "take everybody along". "He asked me how many parties were there and when I said 24 he could not believe. He said in the US 'we have only two parties but even that has created so much of a headache, so how do you run this coalition'? I

told him there's no great secret because we have learnt to take everyone along," said Vajpayee.

If consensus was the *leit motif* in the Prime Minister's address, Advani reverted to the BJP ideology. "The BJP was catapulted to its present position thanks to the Ramjanmabhoomi issue," he said, adding that it was inextricably linked to the party's cultural nationalism.

Advani said there was a need to project the temple issue "in the right perspective and carry it forward" — a point echoed in a resolution adopted today. The Ayodhya issue had bounced back on the political landscape after activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad barged into the makeshift temple last week.

Referring to the party's decision to withdraw support to the

V.P. Singh government in 1990, the resolution said: "The Ayodhya movement became reflective of India's cultural personality. It convinced the people of the certain and sharp distinction between positive secularism and pseudo secularism. Symbols of India's cultural personality are not consistent with secularism."

It went on to claim that the movement "created a massive national impact and changed the mindset of millions of Indians. Our acceptability grew. We spread into those areas of the country where we earlier had little presence. We found legislative representatives in almost every major state".

Both the leaders had words of advice for partymen. "It is not enough that the government should continue running. Some more spe-

ed is required and the organisation can also play its part. It should be strong, take each and every community along, face every challenge and crisis and win over people's trust," Vajpayee said.

Stating that the government and the party were complimentary, Vajpayee said: "Every party in the coalition has given up a small share of its ideology. So has the BJP in order to build the NDA and run it successfully. But that should not dishearten anyone, nor hinder the growth of the BJP. Although we are in power and have no experience of its limits, we are moving in the right direction and I see no reason why we cannot attain our goal."

Advani asked party members not to take their problems to the press.

HT-8

The ghost of Ayodhya

22/10/92
minutes

HOW MANY more years will the Justice M.S. Liberhan Commission take to complete its inquiry into the Babri masjid demolition? This question acquires a serious dimension because various organisations of the Sangh parivar, with the tacit backing of the Rajnath Singh government in UP, are seemingly intent on playing the Ayodhya card to communally polarise the electorate before the assembly elections. As much is evident from the open defiance of the Supreme Court by the VHP leaders and their incendiary speeches. Yet, the first reaction from the Centre was to take the security men at Ayodhya to task. It was only after an uproar by the opposition parties that FIRs were filed against the law-breakers from the VHP. With such double standards being displayed by the ruling BJP, it becomes all the more necessary for the report to be submitted as soon as possible.

The commission was set up by the Narasimha Rao government 10 days after the demolition of the Babri masjid on December 6, 1992. The order clearly stated that it should complete the inquiry "as soon as possible but not later than three months". It is ironical that though set up on December 16, 1992, the commission could begin work only in March

1993. Apart from infrastructural problems, its work was hampered by the delaying tactics adopted by the witnesses and those charge-sheeted for the demolition who included top leaders of the *parivar*, some of whom are ministers in the current regime.

Then there were other hitches. Uma Bharati suddenly developed amnesia about what happened on that day. Others like Vinay Katiyar and Giriraj Kishore have waxed eloquent on how they care two hoots for the country's laws. Indeed, the commission has been transformed into a political platform for crass communal propaganda. Contrast this with Jyoti Basu's deposition to the effect that in the National Integration Council meeting of November 23, 1992 (which the BJP did not attend), the Narasimha Rao government was given the power to take urgent measures to save the structure. Mr Basu said he had called up Mr Rao on December 4, 1992, warning him that the mosque would be attacked. Nine years later, perpetrators of the crime committed during one of the darkest chapters in Indian history are yet to be booked. To a large extent, they are being helped by the delay on the part of the Liberhan Commission in reaching a conclusion.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 OCT 1992

Minorities panel tries for patch-up

■ Displaced Kashmiris and the Centre have been brought to the table to talk over their problems

AASHA KHOSA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 19

IN AN unusual intervention, the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has managed to bring displaced Kashmiris and the Centre to the negotiating table to debate the community's problems 12 years after their exodus from the Valley due to insurgency.

Taking cognisance of the problems of Kashmiri Pandits was an unusual move for the Commission that is constitutionally-bound to look into the grievances of five designate minority communities — Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastrians, sources here said.

Recently on the NCM's direc-

tives, Home Ministry officials and delegates of the Kashmiri Samiti, the nodal agency for official relief to about 2.5 lakh displaced Kashmiris, met and decided to carry on talks, NCM secretary Gurbachan Singh said.

Samiti chief Sunil Shakdhar said that his foremost contention before the government would be to "coin a definition for the tragedy of the displaced community as our battle for justice has to be waged through legal and Constitutional wings of the government".

He said that the talks initiated at the NCM's intervention would center around immediate problems such as the need to hike monthly subsistence allowance extended by

the government to the displaced families.

Shakdhar also said that there was a need for re-opening registration of migrants from Kashmir as a large number of families had left their homes following the militants' targeted killings after the 1995 cut-off date.

He said that such migrants were leading miserable lives without any state assistance.

"There is a discriminatory clause for registration after the cut-off date. While Muslims fleeing Kashmir can get registered easily, Hindus have to get a certificate of migration from the district magistrate which is impossible in the terrorism-infested scenario," he said.

Claiming that the NCM's intervention was a "major victory", Shakdhar said that the displaced community needs to focus the government's attention on basic issues regarding their status.

"We are wondering what would

be the legal status of our children born in migrant camps — would they be considered as bona fide Kashmiri residents under the state government's Permanent Residency Act?" he said. The government would have to answer these issues at the proposed meetings.

Shakdhar says that as the chances of their immediate return to Kashmir were bleak, the Kashmiris were wondering how would they preserve their identity and have a representation in governance. "Our elders don't have identity cards to avail of concessions for senior citizens," Shakdhar said.

Gurbachan Singh clarified that the Commission had heard out the Kashmiri Samiti on "compassionate grounds".

"We summoned MHA officials also and here we realised there was lot of communication gap between the Kashmiris and the government and we decided to get a facilitator," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

20 OCT 2001

FIR filed against VHP leaders

AYODHYA, OCT. 19. The Central Reserve Police Force, in-charge of inner cordon security at the makeshift temple at the Ramjanma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid complex, today filed an FIR against Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders in connection with the storming of the sanctum sanctorum on Wednesday even as proposals have been made for declaring Ayodhya a 'no-flying zone' and strengthening of police deployment. The CRPF Deputy Commandant, Mr. Tarmeh Singh, lodged the FIR under Section 186 of IPC for violation of security cordon at the disputed complex against the VHP president, Mr. Ashok Singhal, its vice-president, Mr. S.C. Dixit, and 40 others.

According to official sources,

the FIR described Wednesday's incident as obstruction of public servants while discharging their duties. It said the VHP activists led by Mr. Singhal had forced their entry into the gate-way area of the disputed complex "misbehaving and pushing security personnel in the prohibited area" in front of the temple. — PTI

'Orders not violated'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 19. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad today came out in defence of the forcible entry by its leaders at the makeshift Ram temple at Ayodhya and maintained the organisation leaders did not violate any orders. The VHP senior vice-president,

Acharya Giriraj Kishore, told correspondents here that the outfit had not planned the event but entered the temple after permission to have a closer 'darshan' of the idols failed to come through.

Addressing the press, he said the Government was willing to spend Rs. 2 crores each month for security and incur heavy expenditure to prevent the devotees from having a closer 'darshan'.

He said on that day, the VHP leaders waited for 30 minutes for senior officers to arrive and grant permission but when no one turned up, they went inside. Referring to Mr. S.C. Dixit, he said, the 80-year-old leader had even offered to be physically frisked.

More reports on Pages 11, 13

THE HINDU

20 OCT 2001

19/10 'NO FORMAL TALKS WITH PAK.' #10-1

Security lapse at Ayodhya: PM

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, OCT. 18 The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, made it clear today that "there is no proposal to have formal talks with Pakistan," though the two countries are in touch.

In a brief chat with the media at the airport before emplaning for Delhi, Mr. Vajpayee said "We had free and frank talks with Gen. Colin Powell and India's position has been explained." He said he was happy with the discussions with the U.S. Secretary of State.

Replying to a question on the forced entry of Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders into the Ayodhya temple on Wednesday, he said "We felt that the security arrangement there was slack and it is to be further tightened." His Government was committed to preserving the secular fabric.

Asked whether the Government would evacuate the VHP leaders if they were still there, the Prime Minister shot back: "There are no VHP leaders there."

To a query on complaints against the Tamil Nadu Government and police, Mr. Vajpayee said: "There are complaints and if they are genuine, action must be taken." He said complaints had been coming in since the arrest of

the former Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi.

The Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, left by a special IAF aircraft. They were seen off by the Governor, Dr. C. Rangarajan, the Chief Minister, Mr. O. Paneerselvam, the Chief Secretary, Mr. P.

Shankar, and representatives of the three Defence services in the city. Mr. Vajpayee, who stayed overnight at the Raj Bhavan, attended the wedding of the son of the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy, at Purasawalkam here this morning. The press was kept off the hotel during the wedding.

U.P. Govt. orders probe

LUCKNOW, OCT. 18. The Uttar Pradesh Government today ordered an inquiry by the Additional Director-General of Police into the laxity in the security arrangements in and around the disputed site at Ayodhya where VHP activists, led by Mr. Ashok Singhal, had forced their entry into the sanctum sanctorum of the makeshift Ram temple and offered prayers on Wednesday.

The Principal Secretary (Home), Mr. Naresh Dayal, said the ADG (Intelligence and Security), Mr. Himanshu Kumar, would probe the incident and report to the Government within three days.

Top officials of the Central Reserve Police Force, which is responsible for the overall security, especially in and around the isolation zone at the disputed site, held a meeting with the Faizabad district and police officials and visited the complex to look into the security lapses. They ordered stepped-up security and extra barricades were put up. The Additional Inspector-General of CRPF, Mr. Sri Kant, denied that any action had been taken against those responsible for laxity and said "let the inquiry be over." Meanwhile, the DIG (Faizabad) has asked the Senior Superintendent of Police to probe the security lapse, an official report said. The probe would include the role of the local policemen posted in and around the disputed site. No FIR has been registered so far in connection with the incident, the sources said.

Opposition blasts Govt.: Page 15

HT-8 19/10
9 - mibankis

Communal card, once again

IT MAY be a mistake to regard the crudely provocative act of the VHP leaders in barging into the makeshift Ayodhya 'temple' as an isolated incident. What is far more likely is that this despicable attempt to raise communal tension is part of a wider design in which the entire Sangh parivar, including people in power, is involved. Nor is it difficult to identify the objective or the compulsion behind such reckless tactics. The objective is to bolster the BJP's position in the UP elections and the compulsion is born of the fear that the party's prospects are not too rosy at the moment. Indeed, many of the BJP's and the Sangh parivar's recent acts — the fixing of quotas for most backward castes in UP, the ban on SIMI, the refusal to ban the Bajrang Dal and the tampering with voters' lists — are all part of a desperate ploy by the parivar to boost its electoral chances.

The antics of Ashok Singhal and his cohorts have to be seen in this context. The purposeful defiance of the judicial order against entering the 'temple' may have been meant to test the limits of what the VHP can or cannot do in connection with its plan of starting the construction of the temple in March next year. But, the provocative act was

also probably aimed at widening the Hindu-Muslim divide at a time when the war in Afghanistan is believed by the Sangh parivar to have helped in consolidating the so-called Hindu vote. Although the BJP leaders are maintaining, for form's sake, that the anti-terrorist campaign has nothing to do with Islam, there is no doubt that, at the ground level, the Hindutva activists make no distinction between the two. Hence, the vandalism by them at the Taj and renewed calls by the RSS to scrap Article 370 of the Constitution.

None of these acts, including Mr Singhal's defiance of the law, would have been possible without a wink and a nod from the Centre and the government of UP. Nothing underlined this tacit collusion better than the reported directive by the Centre to the UP home department to take action against those policemen who allowed the VHP leaders to get through the barricades. Had the Centre been serious, it would have called for action against Mr Singhal and the other VHP stalwarts. It is now up to the judiciary to rectify this deliberate lapse on the Centre's part and make it abundantly clear that those who break the law to whip up communal tension would receive exemplary punishment.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19/10/84

S. Narayan

110-12
19/10

BRAZEN DEFIANCE

BY STAGING A forced entry of its activists, led by Mr. Ashok Singhal, into the prohibited area of the disputed site at Ayodhya on Wednesday in defiance of the court-ordained curbs, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has, true to form, thrown yet again an open challenge to the governmental authority and to the law of the land. Mr. Singhal was 'candid' enough about it when he said "we do not accept any such restrictions" on entry into the cordoned-off site where the make-shift temple is situated. This brazen act, which was meant to underline the VHP's proclaimed intent to go ahead with the construction of the Ram temple (on the very site where the Babri Masjid stood) from March 12, 2002, as decided by the 'Dharm Sansad' early this year, is of a piece with the elaborate preparations that have been under way on various fronts to meet the target date, including the one the VHP has mounted to raise a huge army of trishul-wielding personnel. Nothing could be more naive than to dismiss the incident as a mere case of 'trespass' committed in a fit of 'emotion' by a group of 'Ram Bhaktas'. Nor would it do to trot out the much-too-facile explanation, 'security lapse', as the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has chosen to do. The very fact that the intruders could make their way into the sanctum means there has been a breach of security.

The moot point, however, is whether it was a case of mere 'lapse' or of 'wilful negligence' or — as all credible pointers clearly suggest — of looking the other way. A piece of tell-tale *post facto* evidence is that the administration did not think it necessary to at least formally take the intruders into custody for what admittedly was a case of trespass. Above all is the stark reality that the VHP's virulent temple campaign eminently fits into, and is perhaps a part of, the BJP's own cynical calculation to 'consolidate' the majority community vote in the coming elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly by facilitating the revival of the

so-called Ram temple movement. Mr. Vajpayee's promise to the Sangh Parivar to reopen the 'Ayodhya cell' in the PMO with the ostensible objective of 'resolving' the temple issue and the ban imposed on the extremist minority outfit, the SIMI, have also to be seen in this context.

The position which the VHP and those of its ilk have taken on the Ayodhya issue — that 'matters of faith' cannot be determined by the Judiciary — is repugnant to the rule of law and the consensus that seems to have emerged across the political spectrum, apart from the fact that it militates against the Muslim community's rightful claim to reparation in the post-Babri Masjid demolition context. On its part, the BJP has been deliberately prevaricating in its stance. If this, reflecting as it does a ruthless pursuit of a majoritarian exclusivist agenda, is in itself a serious threat to the nation's integrity and secular matrix, the sort of strains the communal equations are likely to come under in the context of the current global anti-terrorism campaign has served to heighten it manifold. Indeed, it needs an extraordinary degree of irresponsibility to see in the prevailing times of uncertainty an opportunity to make sectarian gains and a rare order of perversity to attempt to raise the temperature over Ayodhya — which the VHP appears to be doing without much discomfort. Given the systematic and audacious manner in which passions are sought to be whipped up over 'Ayodhya' and the pace at which the construction-related works are proceeding, it is imperative that the Centre realises its responsibility in upholding the Constitution and intervenes effectively, and swiftly, to stop the frenetic campaign for the Ram temple construction. This, in the immediate context, means the Vajpayee regime and the Rajnath Singh Government in Uttar Pradesh should desist from using the Ayodhya card to draw electoral mileage for the BJP.

110-12

19 OCT 2001

9 -
minutes
H.D-1

VHP leaders force entry into disputed site in Ayodhya 18/10

By Our Special Correspondent

LUCKNOW, OCT. 17. senior leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, including its international president, Mr. Ashok Singhal, Mr. Pravinbhai Togadia and the former BJP MP, Mr. S. C. Dixit, today, defying the security arrangements, entered the makeshift Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya and offered "puja" to the deity.

(Pilgrims are allowed only a "darshan" of the idol from a distance and priests alone are permitted to enter the sanctum sanctorum).

Reports from Ayodhya said Mr. Dixit, who went for a "darshan" around 9.00 a.m., insisted on performing individual worship. As the security personnel told him that it was not allowed, he went on a sit-in strike.

Mr. Dixit was later joined by about 200 VHP activists, and other

Hindu leaders, when they forced their way into the sanctum sanctorum, performed "puja" and raised slogans in favour of a Ram temple.

Officials later brought the leaders to a local temple and sought to arrest those who had violated the security arrangements. The VHP leaders insisted on being arrested along with the other activists. At this, the administration decided not to insist on their arrest and the VHP leaders left Ayodhya.

PTI reports:

Security personnel posted at the temple complex said securitymen of Mr. Singhal and Mr. Dixit misbehaved and forced their entry into the isolation zone.

Of the other VHP activists who defied the security, a former BJP MP from Delhi, Mr. Baikunth Lal Sharma alias Prem, was carrying a sword. The activists broke the locks of the "kop bhawan" adjacent to the sanctum sanctorum, it

was reported. Mr. Singhal justified the entry into the isolation zone, saying that "Ram Lalla" was imprisoned in a condition "worse than the prisoners of war," and added "we do not adhere to the restrictions imposed upon the entry into the complex nor do we accept any such restrictions."

The Police Commissioner, Mr. Anil Gupta, told presspersons that he would submit a detailed report to the Centre on the "security breach".

U.P. Govt. denial

The Uttar Pradesh Government tonight denied that the VHP activists, led by Mr. Singhal, had entered the sanctum sanctorum of the makeshift temple.

The U.P. Principal Secretary (Home), Mr. Naresh Dayal, said Mr. Singhal and other activists had only entered the "prohibited area" in the complex.

THE HINDU

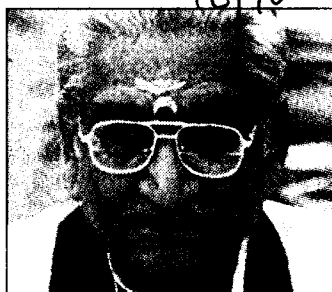
18 OCT 2001

VHP storms Ayodhya site

HT Correspondent
Lucknow, October 17

92 minutes (8/10) ✓
HT-1

SENIOR VISHWA Hindu Parishad leaders defied a Supreme Court order today and forced their way into the sanctum sanctorum of the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi temple. Among them were VHP president Ashok Singhal, former president S.C. Dixit and international general secretary Praveen Togadia.



ASHOK SINGHAL

The Supreme Court has said that only the priest can enter the sanctum sanctorum and others cannot cross a barricade that is 20 feet from the spot.

Security guards could not prevent the VHP leaders from forcing their way through the barricade, though they tried to persuade the leaders not to violate the court order. "There is no such court order," said S.C. Dixit, a former UP Director Gen-

eral of Police.

The Prime Minister's Office has sought an explanation from the state home department and said that action will be taken against the policemen who allowed the leaders to get through the barricade.

The VHP activists reportedly reached the disputed site at about 9.30 in the morning and demanded a closer 'darshan' of

the idol in the makeshift temple. They demanded permission to enter the sanctum sanctorum to offer prayers on the first day of the Navratri.

After the officials said that they could not grant them permission, the VHP activists forced their way through the barricade.

By the time senior officials reached the site, the VHP activists had offered prayers. They later shouted slogans.

Later senior district officials reached the site and threatened to arrest them. Faizabad Commissioner Anil Kumar said that the VHP leaders could not actually enter the sanctum sanctorum. While he said that the men remained inside the prohibited area for barely 15 minutes, VHP leaders later claimed that they were there for two hours.

No action has yet been taken.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10/17/87

ASSAM DISCORD

Balanced approach towards minorities

THE Centre has disagreed with Tarun Gogoi before, notably over the repeal of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act. The Centre felt that the law was discriminatory since its purview was limited to Assam. Gogoi didn't think so, he believes that the act prevents the unnecessary harassment of legitimate residents in the name of detecting illegal migrants. Gogoi again refused to consider the Prime Minister's proposal to issue work permits to some Bangladeshi nationals who couldn't be evicted, saying that this would only encourage infiltration, besides aggravating communal tensions. Gogoi has a point. Employment cannot be a very strong point in Assam's economy. The whole problem obviously emanates from the fact that the detection of migrants into the state from Bangladesh, for the periods in question, has not been completed in spite of several efforts made in good faith since the Assam Accord in 1985. It is to the credit of the Assam Chief Minister that he is trying to take a balanced view of the subject, in view of the potential for political mischief of the problem.

The Centre has asked the state government to keep a watch on madrassas and see if they are indulging in activities inimical to the state. The apprehensions on which the Centre has made this request are reasonable in view of the fact that similar madrassas have sprung up, almost overnight, on the UP-Nepal border, many of them funded from abroad. The direction has probably been given in view of the prevailing international situation. Assam may be considered particularly vulnerable since there is a strong fundamentalist current in Bangladesh and the ISI is also said to be involved. However, Gogoi is right in saying that an indiscriminate approach should not be adopted, since the minorities may feel singled out in a context where they are already under all sorts of suspicion. The general secretary of the AICC's minority cell says there is no evidence of any madrassas indulging in anti-national activities. There may be some point-scoring going on in view of the UP assembly elections where the Muslim vote, effectively out of the BJP's reach, is there for the taking.

THE STATESMAN

16 OCT 2002

Pak fire may singe India, Sonia warns Atal

THE UNREST in Pakistan could hit India hard, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Sunday told the Prime Minister.

"I have no doubt that you are closely monitoring the situation," she said in a letter to the Prime minister, adding that "there is a possibility that the Pakistan Government will be unable to control events within Pakistan. This is bound to have an effect on our minority community."



She said the disturbances in several parts of Pakistan televised round the clock were sure to affect the Indian minorities. Urging the Government to be vigilant, Sonia said she had heard "disturbing" reports about the growing "resentment and bitterness among certain sections" of the society following the strikes.

She said even a minor incident

could lead to a major communal conflagration. "This we must avoid at all cost," she said.

She said the country was passing through turbulent times as the region had become an arena of conflict and added that: "In some ways the situation is perilous and could get out of hand. Extreme caution and wisdom are exercised by all concerned."

She expressed concern over a new syllabus being formulated by the NCERT and the Human Resource Development Ministry.

Describing the secrecy surrounding the exercise as "alarming" and "unprecedented", she suggested in a separate letter to Vajpayee that the syllabus must be scrutinised by an expert panel before being introduced in schools.

HTC, New Delhi

BJP dividing Hindus, Muslims: Surjeet

By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, OCT. 14. The CPI(M) general secretary, Mr. Harkishen Singh Surjeet, has alleged that the BJP establishment is trying to divide Hindus and Muslims in India by exploiting the Afghanistan war.

Addressing a meeting organised here in memory of Moturi Hanumantha Rao, veteran communist leader, Mr. Surjeet said the Vajpayee Government was attempting to gain political mileage by creating distrust between the two communities in view of the elections in Uttar Pradesh next year.

Mr. Surjeet deplored the stand of the Centre over the American attack in Afghanistan. "The BJP Government has virtually surrendered to the U.S.," he alleged.

Mr. Surjeet said the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) was being exploited by the Bush administration to impose American imperialism all over the world. A disturbing fall-out of the U.S. effort would be the rise in Muslim fundamentalism. All Muslim countries were getting united against the U.S. and there had been demonstrations against the war in most countries.

The CPI(M) leader said the Taliban was originally the creation of American imperialism and Pakistani terrorism. America could not tolerate the Taliban turning against it and declared a war without proving the hand of Osama bin Laden in the attacks on the WTC. It was ridiculous that the Vajpayee Government should also blindly support the U.S. in propagating the theory of Osama's involvement in the WTC attack.

Mr. Surjeet said the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf,

had his own compulsions in supporting the U.S. as the largest political party in that country, the PPP and the PML of Mr. Nawaz Sharif were the supporters of America. To wriggle out of an internal mess, he had no option but to support the U.S. But it was unfortunate that India should become a "stooge" to America.

He said the war was going to last long and unfortunately the demand for independent Kashmir would be fevived.

The CPI(M) leader said socialism was relevant now as never before and India should return to the path of socialism. The Communist parties could play a major role in this context.

'Infiltration on the rise'

By Our Correspondent

JAMMU, OCT. 14. Two more infiltrators were killed today in Rajouri district of Jammu region raising the number to eight since Saturday night, when six militants were killed. Defence sources said that there has been an increase in infiltration on the Line of Actual Control in the Jammu region in the past few days.

In the first fortnight of this month 34 militants were killed in this sector. According to sources most of the infiltrators are foreign nationals. The reason for massive infiltration during this season is that in a short while from now the mountain passés, especially those in the Pir Panjal ranges will be snow-bound making it difficult for the militants to cross over.

THE HINDU

15 OCT 2002

Sangh opposes Muslim leaders' anti-US rally

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE 5-6

NEW DELHI, Oct. 11. - The Sangh Parishad is unhappy that a rally is being organised by some Muslim organisations tomorrow to oppose the US strikes on Afghanistan.

The BJP today said such rallies would fan communal passions and, the VHP demanded that the Shahi Imam be put behind bars for his anti-India utterances. Some of the likely participants in the rally said the saffron brigades' demands weren't justified, for the government hadn't declared Taliban anti-national. The Imam of Fatehpuri Masjid, Mufti Mukarram, considered a liberal, disagreed with the Jama Masjid's Shahi Imam that it was a war against Islam

but argued that the USA should prove Osama bin Laden's involvement. Had the US fight been against Islam, mosques in that country would have been the first target, he said.

But he argued that the rally wasn't in support of terrorism, instead it was against the killings of innocents. The International Court of Justice, the Organisation of Islamic Conference or the Arab League could adjudicate whether the US contention on Osama was right. Given a choice, the BJP would like the government to ban such rallies that some senior BJP leaders term as anti-national.

They also argue that imposing a ban would create more problems for the government. The best way would be to put some restrictions on such rallies, a se-

nior party leader said.

Supporting Bin Laden or the Taliban which has been responsible for terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was not correct. The government had clarified that terrorism had no religion, the BJP leader said. Hence, an attempt to paint the USA strikes as an attack on Islam wouldn't go down well in the country, he said.

The senior BJP leader, Mr JP Mathur, said the minority had equal responsibility to maintain peace in the country along with the government and other sections of society. Minority community members should refrain from openly siding with the Taliban or in an indirect manner support Pakistan that is inimical to India's interests.

While asserting that human rights and

fundamental rights couldn't be used for creating chaos in the country, he said these rights could be legitimately restricted under the Constitution. These couldn't be allowed to be used for creating tension and chaos, he added.

Mr Akhtar ul Vasey of the Jamia Millia Islamia justified the rally on the very same principle. Expression in democracy cannot be suppressed, he said.

While Mr Mathur was careful in articulating the BJP's point of view, the VHP said those contemplating the rally were anti-national. The VHP senior vice-president, Mr Giriraj Kishore, told **The Statesman** that these Ulemas and Muslim intellectuals didn't plan similar rallies to oppose terrorism in the Kashmir Valley.

Subhan
J. M. Kishore

THE STATESMAN

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Vajpayee to revive Ayodhya cell

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By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 10. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has assured the Vishwa Hindu Parishad that he will be reviving the Ayodhya cell in the Prime Minister's Office soon and that the Ayodhya problem would be sorted out by the March 12 deadline, set by the Dharam Sansad at the Kumbh Mela in January.

Two VHP leaders — Paramhans Ramchandra Das, president of the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas, and Mr. Ashok Singhal, international working president — met Mr. Vajpayee for about an hour on Tuesday. It is said they tried to press Mr. Vajpayee to hand over the "undisputed land" (about 40 acres) to the VHP-run trust to enable it to start construction of four outer gates of the proposed Ram temple complex. However, the

proposal did not find favour with the Prime Minister, sources close to the VHP said.

But, the VHP leaders extracted a commitment from the Prime Minister to reactivate the Ayodhya cell, which could follow the negotiations on the Ayodhya issue. Mr. Vajpayee had claimed that negotiations were continuing (presumably between Hindu and Muslim leaders) but he was not willing to say where these were taking place and between whom. Several Muslim leaders had denounced the claim and stated that no known Muslim leader was involved in the negotiations.

At a press conference here today, Paramhans Ramchandra said Mr. Vajpayee had assured him and Mr. Singhal that he would "sort out the problem by March 12" and "set up an Ayod-

hya cell". Mr Singhal hoped that Mr. Vajpayee would hand over the land acquired by the Centre around the disputed site to enable the VHP to build 'gopurdwars' for the proposed temple.

Although the VHP has repeatedly denied that its attempt to revive the Ayodhya issue at this time is not connected to the coming Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, the timing of its proposed agitation coincides with the U.P. election. At the Kumbh Mela, the VHP-led Dharam Sansad had announced the plan for a "chetavani yatra" (procession of sadhus marching to Parliament) in the early part of the budget session. So far there is no change in the plan, but some in the BJP feel that at this juncture when the global focus is on 'jehadi' terrorist groups, the BJP-led Government

may not want a display of Hindu fundamentalism and would, therefore, discourage the VHP. In fact, the setting up of an Ayodhya cell in the PMO now may be a way out.

'Bamiyan demolition led to Taliban's doom'

PTI reports:

The demolition of the world famous statues of Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban in Afghanistan earlier this year has led the militia to its doom, Paramahans Ramchandra said. "It is the curse of the gods. The seeds of Taliban's destruction were sown the day they blew up the Bamiyan Buddhas and slaughtered hundreds of cows".

He made the observation to substantiate his point with reference to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue that "idols were not lifeless".

THE HINDU

11 OCT 2001

THERE ARE SYMMETRIES!

Bajrang Dal and VHP are ^{g- from the government} internal threats.

THE Centre's answer to the MP Chief Minister's demand to ban the Bajrang Dal to counterbalance the ban placed on SIMI, is that the Bajrang Dal may be a communal organisation to some, but it cannot be called anti-national. This depends on what kind of nationalism is at issue. There may be a discrimination factor working here. It should be clear that espousing the cause of international radical Islam in a country like India would lead an organisation to adopt postures hostile to this country, but a similar translation doesn't occur in the Bajrang Dal's case, even though its philosophy, rhetoric and actions may not be much better than those of SIMI. For the simple reason that India has external enemies who are Muslims, it has none that are Hindu. Besides, Hinduism being confined to a single geographical region, its pan-Hindu character does not translate into militant activity on a global scale. But, apart from that the similarities are striking. Using derogatory language for other religions and propagating their own version of holy war — witness their attitude towards Christians and the atrocities committed upon them — comes easily to the Bajrang Dal and VHP. If SIMI glorifies "the valour of death-defying mujahideen" in Kargil, the Bajrang Dal is willing to raise a volunteer force to fight them in the same conflict. The Bajrang Dal has symmetrical views on the subject.

One can, of course, shift the perspective a little and say that the definition of nationalism which exempts the Bajrang Dal and the VHP is flawed, because it is contrary to the constitution. We are a secular country and any organisation that promotes hostility between religions is anti-national in the sense that it undermines our nationhood from within. But then, the perspective these days is determined by an external threat and the government obviously feels that this is not the time nor the occasion to address internal ones. We may have occasion to remind all concerned later.

JUL 2002

Christian panel seeks Simi pill for Sangh

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai, Oct. 3: The All-India Christian Council today demanded immediate "legal" action against the Sangh parivar in light of the ban on the Students' Islamic Movement of India. The council offered to provide "credible" evidence of communal activities of some parivar outfits.

However, Union heavy industries minister and Shiv Sena leader Manohar Joshi ruled it out, calling the outfit "nationalist".

Council president Joseph D'Souza called the ban on Simi "selective", accusing the Sangh parivar of indulging in "similar anti-national" activities. He said the council was ready to turn over the evidence it had of the parivar's attacks on minorities.

Joshi, on a visit to Nagpur, said: "There is no question of the Centre imposing a ban on the Bajrang Dal. There is a difference between nationalist and anti-national outfits," the minister said.

The Samajwadi Party's Mumbai unit, too, submitted a memorandum today to Governor P.C. Alexander, demanding action against the VHP and the Bajrang Dal. It said the government should withdraw the ban on Simi unless it made public the evidence of "anti-national" activities it claimed to have against the organisation.

D'Souza expressed concern over the Centre's "reluctance" to take action against the parivar outfits.

"We are increasingly worried that instead of taking action against the members of the Sangh parivar, the Prime Minister and his ministers continue to defend, praise and uphold these violent political elements," D'Souza said.

The Centre, he said, "cannot act selectively" by banning Simi, while condoning the acts of the Sangh parivar that "amounts to anti-national activities".

Abraham Mathai, joint secretary of the council, alleged that the Sangh parivar was "maligning and demonising" the minorities through a disinformation campaign. He said this would not have been possible without "official connivance".

The council expressed shock at the attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, which 38 people. It called for a global effort to end terrorism.

The council said it backed the Centre's effort to combat terrorism, but added that "the same diligence must be shown in the action against those within the country who terrorise religious minorities and traumatise Dalits and other subaltern groups".

"We are not asking for a ban on the Sangh parivar but we want the government to initiate legal proceedings against those who were involved in attacks on the minorities," D'Souza said.

THE TELEGRAPH

4 OCT 2001

PM meets Muslim leaders, defends ban

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 28. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's bid to establish direct contact with the minority community after 11 September terrorist attacks on the USA seems to have gone quite well. A gathering of about 700 people, mostly Muslim leaders, at Mr Vajpayee's residence today was an indication of this.

The leaders listened to Mr Vajpayee in rapt attention and clapped when he said India was a democratic country governed by law and if the ban on the Simi was illegal, the judiciary could be approached. Also, a tribunal would find out within six months if the ban was correct.

Terrorism has no religion and anyone trying to give it a religious colour is trying to divide the nation and the world, he said. He asked them not to be guided by such propaganda and said terrorism has no boundaries, as was demonstrated by the attacks on the USA. The gathering proved wrong the apprehension that it would be difficult to persuade Muslims to attend a Vijay Goel-sponsored show, particularly with the general impression that many minority community members were opposed to India's supporting the USA against Osama bin

Laden and the Centre's decision to ban the SIMI.

While most Muslim organisations and major Opposition parties have come out against the ban, Mr Vajpayee defended it today, saying that certain people were trying to foment trouble in the name of religion. He asked the minority community to be vigilant against such people who were trying to utilise religion for political aims.

The spirit of brotherhood between Hindus and Muslims should be maintained at all cost, Mr Vajpayee asserted. He described the police firing in Lucknow, his home constituency, as unfortunate and said, he was in constant touch with Lucknow authorities to ensure that peace returned fast and those who created the trouble were nabbed.

Among those who shared the dais with Mr Vajpayee, were the prominent Muslim scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Sheikh Shaheed Meherdi, vice-chancellor of the Jamia Millia University and Mr Kamaluddin Ahmed of the Planning Commission.

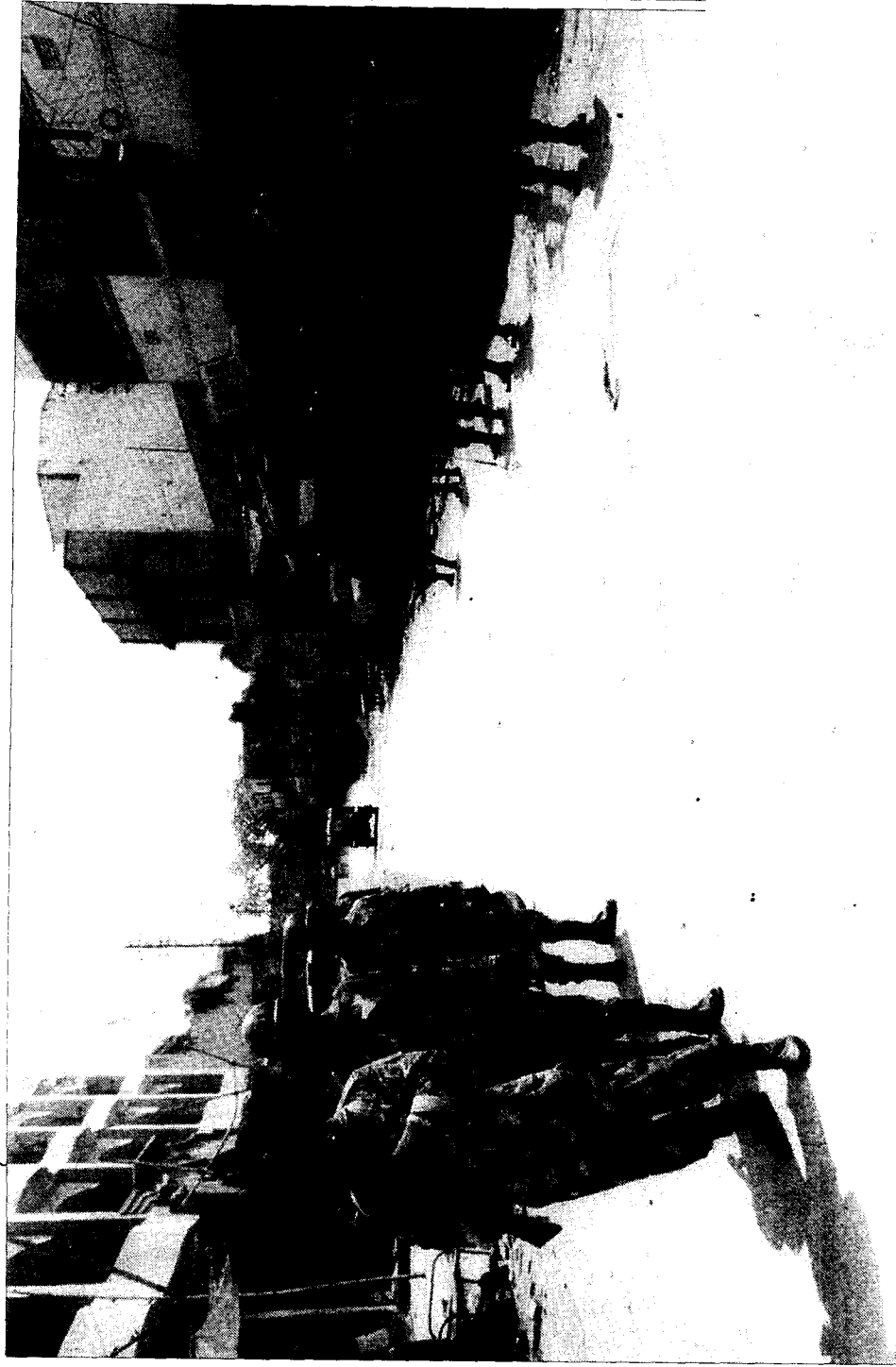
Mohammad Hamif from Badarpur, like many other lesser known faces in the crowd, told **The Statesman** later that Mr Vajpayee was right and was speaking in favour of the "mulk"

(nation). The crowd might have been stage-managed by the Delhi BJP unit, but the members appeared to have been moved by the Prime Minister's message of peace and unity. One person tried to ask about America's locus standi to fight terrorism before Mr Vajpayee began his speech, but he was dissuaded by Mr Vijay Goel.

Mr Vajpayee lashed out at the Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, for terming the terrorists operating in Kashmir as freedom fighters. He said, he had told the General that resorting to guns was no solution. Jammu and Kashmir had an elected government and those resorting to violence could easily test their popularity by participating in the elections, the Prime Minister said. He also pointed out that there was a national consensus among parties on fighting terrorism.

Although the show was arranged by the minister of state in the PMO's, Mr Vijay Goel, the person who set the tone of the meeting was the civil aviation minister.

Thackeray happy: Mr Bal Thackeray congratulated Mr LK Advani for the ban. "I was waiting for the moment, SNS adds from Mumbai. It was long overdue," he said.



RAF jawans on vigil in the curfew-bound walled city areas of Lucknow on Friday. — API/PTI

PM's quandary over SIMI ban

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 28. Late last night the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, felt constrained to direct the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, to order an inquiry into the police firing on SIMI activists in Lucknow. That the violence and firing had taken place in his own constituency was enough to prompt Mr. Vajpayee to describe the police action as "unfortunate". PMO suggested that Mr. Vajpayee was particularly upset that whereas the ban was enforced all over the country violence broke out only in Lucknow.

But is Mr. Vajpayee's concern limited to avoidable killings in his constituency or is he concerned that once again his Home Minister has upended a larger policy paradigm? It is a fact that the decision to ban the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) was approved by the entire Cabinet early this week. To that extent the Prime Minister was very much a party to the decision, and would have been mindful of the possible repercussions and responses to the ban.

Nor could he be unaware that police officers in a number of States have periodically demanded a ban on various extremist organisations, including the SIMI and the Bajrang Dal. A few weeks ago at the annual conference of the top police officers, the Directors-General of Police in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh had demanded that a ban be imposed both on the SIMI and the Bajrang Dal. Though for the record, Union Home Ministry officials were asserting that no State had formally asked for a ban on the Bajrang Dal, at least three States had asked for a ban on the

SIMI. Yet there is an acute awareness that perhaps unwittingly, the Union Home Ministry has struck a contrary note at a time when the Prime Minister is trying hard to make the point that India's enthusiastic endorsement of America's war on terrorism was not directed against Islam, and certainly not against Indian Muslims. It is both a measure of the Home Minister's depleted credibility and of the restiveness among the minorities of the new America led-'crusade' that the ban on the SIMI has not been seen as the decision of a fair administration.

Indeed, Mr. Vajpayee found himself in a quandary today, as he was scheduled to meet a group of Muslim elders. The meeting was planned days before the SIMI ban, and it was intended to convey to the Muslim community leaders that there was no need or reason for them to feel insecure on account of the Government's foreign policy.

In his remarks this evening, Mr. Vajpayee referred indirectly to the ban on the SIMI and sought to impress on his Muslim guests that the proscription had come about in a legal manner and that the legal process itself provided an opportunity for appeal and possible correction of the grievance of the banned organisation.

The Prime Minister's Office found itself engaged in a damage limitation exercise. It is believed that senior Muslim clerics have agreed to advise restraint to the community. At the same time, it is also acknowledged that the Home Ministry must be having a credible reason to take the step now. In fact, Mr. Vijay Goel, Minister of State in the PMO, is on record having demanded in the Lok Sabha a ban on the SIMI.

Politically motivated, say Muslim bodies

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 28. Leaders of various Muslim organisations today strongly protested the ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and accused the BJP-led Government of adopting "double standards in totally ignoring the openly anti-national stand and terrorist activities of several fascist organisations."

After a meeting held at the initiative of Maulana Qazi Mujahidul Islam Qasmi, the representatives issued a joint statement protesting the ban imposed on the basis of "inadequate evidence and concocted charges." They said that while scores of SIMI activists had been detained and prosecuted in various parts of the country in the last few months, no one had yet been convicted by a court of law.

"We are of the firm view that the ban is politically motivated and calculated to polarise the people on communal lines on the eve of the Assembly elections in U.P. to the advantage of the BJP and to widen the distrust and suspicion about Muslims in the minds of our non-Muslim brethren by identifying all Muslims as anti-national as well as terrorists in the background of the global war against terrorism declared by the U.S. even though the Prime Minister had stated that the war is not against Islam but against terrorism," the statement said.

Accusing the Government of double standards, they said sever-

al fascist organisations that were actively involved in planning and executing the "worst terrorist act in the country since Independence, the demolition of the Babri Masjid," had gone unpunished. Without naming the Bajrang Dal, they said some of them were en-

Ban Bajrang Dal, says Bukhari

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 28. The Jama Masjid Shahi Imam, Syed Ahmad Bukhari, today demanded a ban on the Bajrang Dal for providing armed training to its activists and distributing tridents among them. Talking to presspersons after the Friday prayers, he said, "why is the Government not banning the Bajrang Dal which is giving armed training to its workers and distributing 'trishuls' among them?"

Alleging that it was the Bajrang Dal which was behind the brutal slaying of the Christian missionary, Graham Stewart Staines and his sons in Orissa, the Imam said, "Why is the Government giving these people a free run?"—UNI

gaged today in openly challenging and defying the Constitution, giving military training to their volunteers and distributing arms.

The representatives said that while they do not subscribe to the

views and approach of the SIMI, they do deem it their duty to defend the democratic right of the organisation to express its views within the limits of the Constitution and the law, as they saw the attack on it as the continuance of the long-term strategy to vilify Islam and demoralise the Muslim community and their organisations and institutions in order to pave the path towards their goal of "Hindu Rashtra."

While condemning the Lucknow firing, they demanded a CBI probe and judicial inquiry and requested the human rights and civil liberties organisations to take note of both aspects — the politically-motivated misuse of power and violation of human rights.

The representatives also formed a committee of Muslim leaders with Maulana M I Qasmi and Mr. Kamal Faruqi as its joint convener and spokesman, to defend the Constitutional and human rights of Muslims and resist the movement of the nation towards a "fascist order." The Committee called upon SIMI to defend itself through political and legal means. The signatories to the statement included Maulana Qasmi, President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Maulana Mohad Sirajul Hasan, Ameer of Jamaat-i-Islami Hind, Syed Shahbuddin, President of the All India Muslim Majilse Mushawart, Maulana Anisur Rahaman Qasmi of the All India Milli Council, and others.

THE HINDU

29 SEP 2001

Simi's Osama tilt not the provocation: Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 28. — The Centre today said its decision to ban the Simi was not provoked by the organisation's office-bearers defending Osama Bin Laden and pasting posters against the USA and India.

The home secretary, Mr Kamal Pandey, today said the Centre had been keeping tabs on the organisation's activities for the past few months to prepare a foolproof case against it before the Union Cabinet, which met on Wednesday night, took a decision on the ban. States like Maharashtra, UP and MP had demanded banning the outfit.

According to Section 4 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act under which the outfit was banned, the Centre, within 30 days of publication of the notification, has to refer it to the tribunal for adjudication to ascertain whether there was sufficient cause for declaring the organisation unlawful. Simi would get a chance to clarify its position in the tribunal.

The Centre has asked the Jammu and Kashmir government to ban militant organisations like Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jish-e-Mohammed and others.

Mr Pandey said even though these organisations were not banned the Armed Forces were never hesitated in killing their activists during encounters.

In Simi's case, he said, there was definite proof that it indulged in anti-national activity, propagating secessionism and jeopardising peace and

communal harmony.

It had contacts with the Hizbul Mujahideen, the Palestinian militant organisation Hamas, and other militant groups in West Asia. There could also be a link the with Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida.

The anti-national stance of Simi was clearly manifest in the speeches of its leaders who glorified pan-Islamic fundamentalism, used derogatory language for deities of other religions and exhorted Muslims for jihad, Mr Pandey said.

Over 241 Simi activists have been arrested since yesterday from across the country. Several of its offices in many states have been sealed and computers, provocative literature and other incriminating documents seized.

Ninety Simi activists were arrested in Uttar Pradesh, 45 in Maharashtra, 35 in West Bengal, 19 in Tamil Nadu, 17 in Madhya Pradesh, five in Andhra Pradesh, four in Delhi (including its national president) and four in Kerala.

Simi has been "unabashedly lauding Osama bin Laden as the quintessential Mujahid and portraying Maulana Masood Azhar (a terrorist released in exchange of Kandahar plane hostages) as Mehmood Ghaznavi", Mr Pandey said.

"After the 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests, Simi had condemned India's nuclear preparations as being directed against the Islamic world and justified Pakistan's nuclear tests," he said. The outfit had eulogised the "valour of the death-defying Mujahideen" in Kargil and absolved Pakistan of any involvement in the 1999 conflict.

'LACK OF POLICE-INTELLIGENCE COORDINATION COST DEAR'

SANTOSH SINGH & BHAVATOSH SINGH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 28. — Better coordination between Delhi Police and Intelligence agencies could have prevented the suspected destruction of evidence by activists of the Students Islamic Movement of India.

A report submitted by the Intelligence Bureau to the Union home ministry suggests that lack of co-ordination between police, central agencies and the ministry itself gave Simi activists ample time to destroy evidence.

The joint commissioner of police, Southern Range, Mr Anod Kanth, said: "Everyone knows we carried out a swift operation" and dismissed reports that there was a lack of co-ordination among the police and Intelligence agencies. "All bogus" was Mr Kanth's reaction on the IB report.

The report hints that the evidence suspected to have been destroyed proved Simi's links with the Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan, the Taliban and terrorist groups, including the Jish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen and even Al-Qaida, which bin Laden heads.

According to sources, the IB report says Simi has 500 members including 100 students in Delhi and blames the Delhi Police for being unable to arrest more than four men in the case.

The Intelligence report says that Simi has been targeting Delhi's peripheral areas due to the lower police concentration in these areas.

It further suggests that there could be an immediate backlash by the outfit but doesn't specify what form it could take. Even Delhi Police officers didn't rule out the possibility of Simi activists being involved in some of the bomb hoaxes that hit the capital today.

Sources said, though the Delhi Police claims to have seized some documents from the Simi office at Zakir Nagar, Intelligence inputs question if there was any "substantial evidence" regarding the outfit's activities.

A police officer, however, contradicted this saying that when the four arrested Simi activists were produced in court today, the government counsel had shown the court a copy of the *Islamic Movement* a magazine published by Simi.

Regarding an article titled *Taliban, Bamiyan and Buddha* in the magazine, metropolitan magistrate Mr Vinod Kumar, said: "The reading of this article is enough to show that this magazine and article has been published with the sole aim of hurting and causing ill-will to the followers of Buddha. I've seen the notification dated 27 September. In of the opinion at this stage this is sufficient to reject their bail application."

Healing-touch PM lobs Simi ban to tribunal

national integration 9-21-21



FROM RADHIKA
RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Sept. 28: A day after the Students' Islamic Movement of India (Simi) was outlawed for two years, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee tried to salve the hurt feelings of the minority community by telling them the ban could be overturned if it was found to be unlawful.

Vajpayee told a gathering of Muslims at his residence this evening that the ban could be challenged in a tribunal that would have the last word on the issue. But the Prime Minister defended the ban, saying it was "entirely lawful".

Clerics in Lucknow had reacted sharply to the Simi ban, calling it a "biased step, aimed at harass-

ing and terrorising Muslims". But the imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, did not mention it in his sermon during Friday's *namaaz* (Reuters picture on left).

Arrests of Simi leaders continued across the country and many of the outfit's offices were sealed. Thirty activists were held in West Bengal.

The evidence against Simi will be placed before a tribunal, headed by a high court judge, within 30 days. The tribunal will give its verdict on the legality of the ban within six months.

"If an organisation is outlawed by the executive and somebody has a problem, he can always go in appeal to an independent tribunal which will judge if the ban will help put an end to terrorism and is lawful or not. If the tribunal judges it is unlawful, then the ban will be lifted. We have a rule of law in our country and not a military government," said Vajpayee, taking a potshot at Pakistan.

The BJP used the same argument to shoot down the Opposition's demand for a ban on Sangh parivar outfits such as the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which have issued inflammatory statements against Islam and Muslims after the US terror attacks.

"In 1992, after the Babri Masjid demolition, the government of the day had outlawed the VHP and the Bajrang Dal but a tribunal subsequently struck down the order and lifted the ban. So where is the question of bringing in a ban against them all over again?" asked BJP general secretary and spokesman Narendra Modi.

The Prime Minister described yesterday's violence in Lucknow — his Lok Sabha constituency — as "most unfortunate" and said the government would hunt down the "mischief-makers" behind it.

Modi demanded a ban on other organisations suspected to be involved in subversive activities. He refused to name them on the plea that "it would be given a communal colour" — a tacit admission that the BJP had Islamic outfits in mind. (See Pages 6, 10)

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Communal tension in India

BANNING the Students' Islamic Movement of India (Simi) has been on the cards for a while, and it is a fair guess that the context provided by the 11 September outrage was used to turn the plan into a decision. Opportunism by itself does not invalidate the decision. Simi's record has been at best radically obscurantist and at worst shown a partiality to communalised violence. Simi stands in direct contrast and can cause irreparable damage to those Muslim community leaders who have acted responsibly and been alive to the need for preventing polarisation on the streets and mohallahs. To the extent Simi could have acted as the nodal point and banner waver for thuggery masquerading as injured Islamic hubris, official action against it is welcome. What won't be welcome is if the Centre considers the proscription as sufficient deterrent. Banned extremist organisations often become more attractive rallying points. Thursday's violence in Lucknow is the first danger sign. Simi is strong in parts of north, west and south India. Cities like Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Lucknow and even Mumbai and Delhi can all too easily turn into communal cauldrons.

Such horrific possibilities must be fought at two levels. Ground level Intelligence and high level official interaction with Muslim leaders. For the second strategy, the Prime Minister's interaction with minority leaders should merely be the first step. More such interactions are necessary and chief ministers of states with a history of communal violence must be brought into confidence and on a common discussion platform. In this context, the BJP's reported plan to use extremist Muslim enthusiasm for Osama bin Laden as an election card in Uttar Pradesh can only be severely deplored. The party's efforts to woo Hindu middle and lower castes — who may not have voted BJP — by tarring the Muslim community as a bin Laden fan club will almost certainly raise tensions, especially since others, the Samajwadi Party, for example, is also certain to opt for the flip side of the same coin. If UP burns before elections, the rest of India can hardly stay unaffected. If no one else in the BJP understands this, the Prime Minister must. And he must also remember what price Indian Christians paid when he chose not to use his authority and personal standing in time and with force in the face of Bible and missionary-burning mobs.

As for Intelligence gathering to prevent engineered riots, there's much to be pessimistic about the capabilities of India's spooks. Indian agencies have an awful record in anticipating or stemming the tide of communal violence. Home Minister LK Advani has not really been tested on this count so far. He did well to quickly move on Simi. The harder part is now — he has to ensure that the vast monitoring and law and order resources he commands are put to effective use.

Finally, the government should make one thing very clear now, not later. That security and diplomatic strategy is not up for bargaining in the name of communal harmony and/or overarching religiosity. Some Opposition leaders have tried this, and more may try as they see votes in it. A firm official stand may give short term rhetorical advantage to some spoilers. But hesitancy will cause immeasurable damage to India's secular policy establishment.

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THE STATESMAN

29 SEP 2001

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2001

SELECTIVE FOCUS

THE CENTRE'S ACTION of clamping a ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India, which has come under the adverse notice of law-enforcing agencies over the past few years for its perceived links with pan-Islamic extremist organisations and suspected involvement in certain specific subversive episodes, would not be called into question especially in the post-September 11 context of an all-out global 'war' against terrorism. While the demand for such a ban has been there for quite some time now from States such as Congress-ruled Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, besides the BJP-led Government in Uttar Pradesh, the blatantly provocative pro-Osama bin Laden campaign mounted by the SIMI leadership has apparently impelled the Centre to outlaw the radical group, a decision that does make sense, given that India is a committed partner of the anti-terrorism alliance forged worldwide. But the provocative and clearly sectarian manner in which the Uttar Pradesh Government has handled the immediate backlash to the ban and the police action resulting in the death of at least three persons needs to be strongly condemned.

One cannot also but point to the biased approach of the Atal Behari Vajpayee regime to the aggressive hate campaign that the Sangh Parivar, mainly the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal, has been systematically running against the minorities and the physical attacks its outfits have been carrying out on their places of worship and institutions. In a sense, the arrogant display of majoritarian exclusivism, as manifested in the whole range of diabolical acts targeting the minorities and their symbols — the demolition of the Babri Masjid, attacks on Christian institutions in Dangs and the murder of Graham Staines and his two young sons, to name just a few — contributed substantially to the escalating aggression of the increasingly insecure minorities and, by extension, to the religion-centric militancy striking roots in the vulnerable segments of these communities. The official es-

tablishment at the Centre, presided over by the BJP, has invariably sought to exonerate the Sangh Parivar elements or downplayed their role in hate crimes. Contrast this with the zeal that it has shown in rushing to declare the minorities as culprits where the hand of any of their groups is suspected. Only five months ago, the Centre outlawed another Islamic outfit, Deendar Amman, a Hyderabad-based nondescript fringe organisation accused of engineering a series of bomb blasts in churches in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Goa during May-July 2000, for having links with Pakistan and indulging in anti-national activities.

The impression is unshakeable that the BJP-led coalition is highly selective — and calculatedly so — in applying the 'unlawful activity' yardstick as between the Sangh Parivar outfits and those belonging to the minority communities. The VHP and the Bajrang Dal, apart from indulging in vicious propaganda and distributing hate literature against the minorities, have been conducting camps across the country where arms training is given to their cadres and members of Durga Vahini, an outfit of women, and there is nothing clandestine about it. It should not be difficult to visualise the destructive potential of this manifestly unlawful venture from the standpoint of public order and communal harmony. The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Digvijay Singh, had, while seeking a ban on the SIMI, made out a strong case for similar action against the likes of the Bajrang Dal also. The Vajpayee Government cannot escape the charge of double standards as long as it refuses to move decisively against the Hindutva fundamentalist elements and, what more, the Prime Minister's statement that the anti-terrorist campaign is not Islam-specific will fail to carry conviction. Outfits like the Bajrang Dal, whose provocative character and socially destructive potential differ very little from those such as the SIMI must also be banned.

THE HINDU

27 11 2001

Communal split spectre looms in heartland

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Sept. 27: The ban on the Students' Islamic Movement of India (Simi) threatens to polarise Uttar Pradesh along communal lines as in the heydays of the mandir-masjid agitation.

The major players have expectedly seized the bait, and their responses suggest that if it was the Ram mandir which had divided the state's urban electorate into religious groupings, the attempt would be to use Simi to achieve the same end again.

Senior BJP leader J.P. Mathur said: "The ban was long overdue. However, it is tragic that a section of the minority community in Lucknow lost its balance and attacked thanas in the Chowk area." Mathur told the community that in the "present circumstances" they had as much of a "national responsibility" as the government and other sections.

"They should align themselves with national interests in the present scenario and not let religious zeal overshadow national interest," he said.

Samajwadi Party leader

and former chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav said the government should have first outlawed the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal — both RSS fronts — because of their alleged "anti-national antecedents".

Mulayam told **The Telegraph** that the Centre's decision to ban Simi was a "diversionary tactic" to deflect attention from the "failures" of the Rajnath Singh government in the run-up to the Assembly polls.

He claimed that the chief minister had called a meeting of

a few handpicked IPS officers on September 18 and unveiled his "plans" to get minority community members beaten and harassed across the state "from the point of view of getting the Hindu votes".

"Everybody has turned against him — the kisan, lawyers, students. The state is reeling under floods and drought, there is no water and electricity in the villages and even his great most backward castes (MBC) card has failed. So he is playing the communal card but even this will fail," the former

chief minister said.

The Samajwadi Party-led People's Front proposes to oppose the ban and has demanded that an all-party meeting be convened to discuss the issue.

BJP sources, however, claimed that the other two Opposition parties in the state, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Congress, may find it difficult to protest the ban because both were "actively courting" the upper-caste votes.

The bomb blasts in Coimbatore, allegedly engineered by the Al-Umma just before the 1998 general elections, was cited

as an example of how a terrorist attack ended up polarising voters on religious lines and worked to the BJP's advantage.

The party won the Coimbatore Lok Sabha seat as well as the neighbouring Nilgiris.

If the minority community retaliated against the ban, the BJP's assessment is that at least the upper-caste Hindu electorate in the towns and cities, which is disenchanted with the government for various reasons, may get swayed "emotionally" and vote with its heart rather than its head.

28 SEP 2001

RSS, churches on patch-up path

Nagpur, September 12

IN A bid to patch up differences over controversial issues, leaders of the RSS and National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) today met for the first time and described the meeting as "satisfactory and a good beginning".

The leaders discussed several controversial issues including attacks on churches and killing of four RSS workers in Tripura.

The leaders expressed satisfaction over removal of some misconceptions, misgivings and admitted that they did not know each other all too well.

The NCCI represents 29 member churches and allied organisations. Its president Bishop G Varghese Mar Coorilose and general secretary Rev Dr Ipe Joseph said both the groups discussed general issues, appreciating and acknowledging differences and respecting each other's stand.

The NCCI rejected charges of involvement of the Baptist Church in killings of four RSS workers in Tripura and said the RSS and churches had their roles distinctly cut out and hoped that mutual trust would exist in their relationship. An RSS spokesman described the discussions as positive.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 SEP 2001

Christian Council against talks with RSS, VHP

9-10 minutes
By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, SEPT. 7. The All-India Christian Council on Friday rejected holding of dialogue with the RSS-VHP and sought Government action against alleged "mass distribution" of "trishuls" by Bajrang Dal activists in Gujarat and stoppage of "saffronisation" of education.

Briefing the media after the two-day executive committee meeting of the organisation, Dr. K. Rajaratnam, senior member of the Council from Chennai, Dr. John Dayal, secretary-general, Mr. Sam Paul, secretary, and Mr. Abraham Mathai, member, Maharashtra State Minorities Commission, said their stand "not to have a word" with the Sangh Parivar was guided by the fact that the RSS and the VHP were not the true representatives of Hinduism or Hindus who were "democratic and secular" to the core. They, however, offered to participate in a broad-based meeting on religion and related issues with the Sankaracharyas or monks of the Ramakrishna Mission. The RSS-VHP were perpetrators of violence against minorities, and Christians at the moment, they said.

If Christian leaders held any

such dialogue, they would betray secularism and other minority groups. The only issue that the RSS-VHP would raise at any such a meeting would be "stop conversion", they said, adding that they already demanded action on

VHP warns Centre

MUMBAI, SEPT. 7. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad today warned the Centre of stringent agitation by Hindus if they were not allowed to go ahead with the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"There will be a huge agitation by Hindus, if the Centre prevents us from constructing Ram temple at Ayodhya after the deadline of March 12, 2002," the VHP international general-secretary, Dr. Pravin Togadia, told newsmen here. — PTI

forced or induced conversions, if any, but no single instance was shown so far.

In a development going against the Council stand, Dr. D.G.S. Dinakaran, Chennai-based prominent gospeller, and his son, Dr. Paul Dinakaran, met the RSS chief, Mr. K.S. Sudharsan, in Delhi and discussed ways to achieve

communal harmony in the country, according to a press note issued by Prayer Tower in Secunderabad, a branch of Dr. Dinakaran's Jesus Calls Mission.

They alleged that the Bajrang Dal had distributed 3.3 lakh trishuls in Gujarat and was planning to distribute 30 lakh more all over the country. They wanted the Government take action.

On "saffronisation of education," they criticised the Human Resources Development Minister, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, for his statement challenging his critics to show one sentence in the textbooks going against the education policy. Saffronisation was being institutionalised with the induction of RSS-VHP activists into the various committees and boards on education. The matters which were sought to be introduced into the textbooks by the RSS were such that Prof. M.L. Sondhi, a BJP member, who resigned as ICSSR chairperson. "There were passages against Muslims and Christians in the books distributed to sishu mandirs," they said. The council, through a resolution, decided to identify itself with Dalits inside the Christian bodies as also outside.

Former Faizabad SSP says he had attended a secret meeting

'Vajpayee was privy to Ayodhya plans'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
AND AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, Aug. 30. — Mr D B Roy, who was the Faizabad SSP when the Babari Masjid was demolished, today alleged that Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was privy to the BJP leadership's plans regarding the Babari Masjid. Mr Roy claimed that he had attended a "secret meeting" of senior BJP leaders in Lucknow, a day before the demolition of the mosque.

"If there was any conspiracy to demolish the Babari Masjid, Mr Vajpayee was privy to it," Mr Roy, a former BJP MP, said after taking over as Hindu Mahasabha's working president. Mr Roy had resigned the job in 1996 to join the BJP and won Lok Sabha polls twice. He was denied a ticket for a third time.

The Congress demanded an explanation from the Prime Minister saying that Mr Roy's statement had alleged that the Prime

Minister knew about the conspiracy which was hatched at the residence of the then Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mr Kalyan Singh.

The BJP pooh-poohed the allegation saying this was the allegation of a man who was already expelled from BJP. Anyway, it was false, baseless and mischievous, the BJP spokesperson, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said. Mr Roy's allegation has come after his failure to attract public attention through a *rath yatra*. Senior BJP leaders privately said Mr Vajpayee didn't even participate in the Ayodhya movement what to talk of attending a meeting a day before the demolition.

Mr Roy claimed that the meeting was held at Mr Kalyan Singh's residence on the evening of December 5, 1992. The then leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, Mr LK Advani, and the then BJP president, Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, also attended

the secret talks.

"Mr Vajpayee is as much guilty as Mr Advani, Mr Joshi and Mr Kalyan Singh are considered to be," is Mr Roy's contention. The Faizabad police authorities and the district administration were constantly in touch with the Uttar Pradesh government on December 5, 1992, as lakhs of karsevaks had gathered at Ayodhya, he said.

"We were receiving minute by minute information from Lucknow on telephone as well as wireless. We were told that Mr Advani and Mr Joshi, who were scheduled to reach Ayodhya that evening, were held up in a meeting with Mr Vajpayee at the CM's residence," he claimed.

After the meeting, Mr Vajpayee left for Delhi on the Lucknow Mail while Mr Advani and Mr Joshi reached Ayodhya at midnight, he said. "Mr Vajpayee can't now claim that he was not in the know of developments leading to the demolition of the

Babari Masjid."

Mr Roy, who is a strong supporter of the Ayodhya movement, rubbished the claim of the Prime Minister that negotiations were on to resolve the Ayodhya tangle. Mr Vajpayee was once again making false promises with an eye on the UP elections, he alleged. "Why doesn't he tell us whom are they talking to? It seems the so-called talks were going on in the PMO itself among his own officials," he said.

Order to VHP: The Liberhan Commission, probing the Babari Masjid demolition, today ordered the VHP to place before it all records pertaining to its role on the Ayodhya issue. The panel's counsel had alleged that the VHP president, Mr Vishnu Hari Dalmia, was not cooperating.

Later, Mr Dalmia said he was optimistic about a solution to the Ayodhya dispute, but said no talks were held with the VHP on the issue recently.

THE STATESMAN

31 AUG 2001

'Ayodhya land not negotiable'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 30. Any plan to hand over to any trust the 47 acres of land in Ayodhya acquired by the Centre through an ordinance in March 1993, is simply not feasible legally, said Mr. Syed Shahbuddin of the Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee. He pointed out that the land in question was under a "mandatory restraint of the Supreme Court". The Government "as custodian" has "no authority" to transfer even one square inch of the area to anyone, he added.

The only legal way the Government could get around this difficulty would be through petitioning the Supreme Court and get its approval to transfer some part of the land. But that would not satisfy the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, whose site plan for the Ram temple includes the land on which the Babri Masjid stood and not only the area outside that complex, he said.

The site of the demolished Ba-

bri Masjid was "not negotiable". The matter was in the court and a judicial verdict alone could lead to the land being handed over to the person or body in whose favour the court decides the title deed, Mr. Shahbuddin stated.

It was possible to resolve the dispute only if the VHP were to agree to change its site plan to keep out of it the land occupied by the Babri Masjid earlier, for, as he pointed out, the disputed Babri Masjid area constitutes less than 10 per cent of the total land needed for the proposed Ram temple. His plea was that the Government should not "twist the law" to help the VHP to execute its "unlawful plan".

UNI reports:

Alleging that the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, was privy to the BJP leadership's plans regarding the Babri Masjid, the former Faizabad SSP, Mr. D. B. Roy, today claimed that he had attended a "secret meeting" of the senior BJP leaders in Lucknow a day before the demolition.

31 AUG 2001

Mosque demolished

By Our Staff Correspondent

JAIPUR, JULY 30. A decrepit mosque built by a battalion of the Moghul army in the 16th century near Asind town in Bhilwara district of south Rajasthan was demolished by a mob of hoodlums and a temple built in its place on Friday last, sending shock waves across the State and leading to tension between the two communities.

The incident — which was concealed by the district administration for fear of a communal backlash — came to light today, with the local residents approaching the Rajasthan Waqf Board here. The Waqf Board records refer to the mosque as "Masjid Sawai Bhoj" which was in use till 1956 and abandoned thereafter apparently because of the thin population of Muslims in the vicinity.

The mosque was situated near the Sawai Bhoj temple — frequented mostly by the Gurjar community — 3 km from Asind. An old dargah, known as Badia dargah, is also at some distance from the temple premises and an 'urs' is organised there on a large-scale every year.

The trouble reportedly began during the three-day 'urs' celebrations which started on July 26. There was a dispute over the closure of the traditional route to the dargah, which used to pass through the temple complex. The temple trust had provided a new route, passing through the nearby Khari river, that had caused resentment among those visiting

the dargah. The dispute took a violent turn when a mob objected to the raising of tents near the dargah for organising qawwalis (devotional songs) during 'urs' on Friday and burnt them down. The mob later reportedly attacked the mosque and razed it to the ground in no time in full view of the policemen deployed to keep a vigil around the dargah.

The mosque had been built in the "Qalandari" style — with no roof over it and a single high wall raised on the western side, facing the Holy Kaabah. It had a raised platform and three minarets. Since the old structure was already fragile, it took little time for the 300-strong mob to demolish it.

A fresh marble platform was hurriedly built at the site of the demolished mosque and an idol installed by Friday evening. According to reports received here, the temple has been named "Mandir Peer Pachhar Hanuman Ji" (temple of Lord Hanuman who defeated Peer — the Muslim saint buried in the dargah).

The mosque is said to have been built by a battalion of Emperor Akbar's army in the 16th century when Akbar's forces were returning from Chittaurgarh after a battle. The army had stopped over briefly near Asind in the vicinity of Sawai Bhoj temple — which existed at that time — and built the mosque to mark the place. Akbar had later granted 700 bighas of land to the temple.

THE HINDU

Houses in uproar over UP minority killings

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 30

THE CONGRESS today turned the heat on the Government in both Houses of Parliament for the killing of six members of the minority community at Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh on July 23.

Lok Sabha Speaker G M C Balayogi adjourned the House for two hours after Congress members rushed to the Well, seeking action against the guilty Samajwadi Party MPs too joined the Congress.

Congress Deputy Leader Madhavrao Scindia, who raised the issue, said the law and order machinery in Uttar Pradesh had collapsed and the Government should issue a statement on the killings at Sirswan village.

He said there have been a series of attacks on women from the Dalit and minority communities of UP. The assailants first chloroformed the women and then raped them. Even a pregnant woman was not spared.

One of the three Congress MPs who had visited the scene of carnage and met the victims said a police cap and belt were recovered near a tree where a woman was raped.

Protesting against the Congress allegation, BJP MPs too moved to the Well.

In the Rajya Sabha, Congress

DO NOT COMMUNALISE MORADABAD ISSUE: BJP

THE BJP today urged the Congress not to add a communal colour to the killing of Muslims in Moradabad for political mileage.

BJP spokesperson V K Malhotra said: "The Congress should not present it as an issue of violence against minorities since Sansi criminal gangs are believed to be involved in the incident." He claimed that the law and order situation in UP was better than that in the Congress-ruled States.

Malhotra said the Congress should await the result of police investigation into the Moradabad killings. It should not rush into judgement as it had done after the attack on nuns at Jabua (MP).

The BJP spokesperson said the Samajwadi Party leaders had initially blamed the BJP and the Government for the killing of Phoolan Devi but preliminary investigations point at a different motive.

HTC, New Delhi

members demanded a judicial inquiry into the killings. They expressed anger that no one has been arrested even eight days after the incident.

Ghulam Nabi Azad, who raised the issue during Zero Hour, said six people were killed and 13 injured in a most brutal manner.

He said the Congress wanted a probe by a High Court judge into the facts of the case.

Loud protests came from the Treasury Benches as CPI(M) member Nilotpal Basu said the incident was not a mere law and order issue but one that involved exploitation of the minorities.

The House, he said, had every

right to know from the Government as to what exactly had happened.

He was supported by Suresh Pachauri of Congress, who charged that the UP Government was not treating the case with the seriousness it deserved and this indicated its collusion in the crime.

Basu deplored the Government for not issuing a statement on the matter in the House even though the issue had been raised last week.

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs O Rajagopal said Home Minister L K Advani would make a statement on Wednesday after collecting information on the matter.

31 JUL 2001

Nuns attacked

28/8
By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, AUG. 28. Three Christian nuns from an orphanage in Jobat village of Jhabua district, Madhya Pradesh, and some drivers, all Muslims, were allegedly beaten up by Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal activists in Dahod town of Gujarat on Saturday and were also later subjected to harassment at the police station there when they went to lodge a complaint.

The All-India Christian Council executive member, Mr. Samson Christian, said here today, that the nuns were accompanying the children of the orphanage run by the I. P. Mission at Jobat village on a picnic to Kali Dam near Dahod on August 25 when the incident occurred.

The four vehicles which carried the picnic party had stopped near a shop in Dahod on way to the Kali Dam for refreshments when some of the children felt like vomiting. One of the nuns, Ms. Anju Ashwin, had taken the children, for a wash, to a nearby petrol pump, which happened to be owned by a local VHP leader and activist. Mr. Christian, who visited Dahod on Monday, claimed that even as the petrol pump owner was engaged in heated discussions with the nun, who was joined by others accom-

panying the picnickers, about 30 VHP and Bajrang Dal workers gathered there and started beating them up with sticks. The workers asked them "to clear out of Dahod immediately."

As the nuns spotted a senior police officer driving past, they stopped the vehicle and requested him to come to their rescue but the official, on seeing the VHP leader, refused to intervene and told them to lodge a complaint at the city police station.

But the police personnel at the station not only refused to entertain a complaint, they also summoned the drivers, and started to beat them up, along with the nuns for arguing with the VHP and Dal workers. One of the drivers ran away in fear leaving the vehicle behind.

Finally, the missionaries returned to Jobat in the night and registered a complaint with the Jobat police who in turn sent it to the Dahod SP. office for further inquiry. Mr. Christian, who has written a letter to the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission for intervention, however, was also unhappy with the behaviour of the Dahod SP, Mr. K. L. Rao who, he said, refused to meet the AICC delegation which called on him at his residence on Monday night to inquire about the incident.

28/8

29 AUG 2001

Rajasthan: from a peaceful state to communal frenzy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE 5.1.8

JAIPUR, Aug. 20. — Once known for communal harmony, Rajasthan is now becoming a playground for fundamentalists trying to sow the seeds of communal hatred.

Police see a new pattern in the recent communal disturbances. For, instead of targeting sensitive towns, the fundamentalists are targeting remote, less sensitive areas.

A police officer, analysing the recent communal disturbances, said the state is worried because most of the religious leaders or priests are from outside the state.

The trend started about two decades ago, but it has taken an alarming proportion only recently, he said.

"Though we have nothing in hand to prove their direct involvement in these disturbances, these outsiders have definitely destroyed the communal fabric of the state as most of them belong to states known for communal disturbances.

These people, intentionally or unintentionally, have become an instrument in increasing communal hatred in Rajasthan," the officer said.

"Every second maulvi in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, Aug. 20. — Mrs Sonia Gandhi has sought a report on the recent communal disturbances in Rajasthan and directed Mr Ashok Gehlot to take strong action to avert such incidents. The Congress president sought the report after some anti-Gehlot Congress leaders and MPs told her about the increase in communal disturbances.

The chief minister has ordered police to arrest all criminals trying to disturb communal harmony. He held a high-level meeting with senior ministers and officials yesterday to review the law and order. — SNS

is from outside Rajasthan. Similar pattern has been noticed in other religious organisations as well," states a senior officer of the intelligence department.

"We have observed that in almost all

SONIA WANTS REPORT FROM GEHLOT

cases — it started with a trivial issue, and later assumed an alarming proportion.

The issue could have been settled amicably by the two communities, but intervention of the outsiders worsened the situation leading to communal riots," he commented.

"Take the Asind case for example. People were living peacefully for centuries. It was the Hindus who constructed Dargah in Asind, and were paying salary to the maulvi of the Dargah.

"Then what happened was that the local people of majority community demolished a kalandari mosque, or

burnt tents of Muslim pilgrims. Very few people noticed that the main accused, who instigated the local crowd, is from Meerut, and had shifted recently to this place," said the officer requesting anonymity.

"Attack on the Punder mosque is another example. The mosque was attacked, and a few holy books were burnt. Here again the main maulvi migrated from Nepal a week before the incident," he said.

"What the government should study seriously is why communal elements are preferring remote areas of Rajasthan, ...where communal riot new word," he said.

2 1 AUG 2011

THE STATESMAN

40-1 Christian leaders ✓ criticise PM remarks 20/8

CHANDIGARH, AUG. 19. Catholic leaders today criticised the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, for his remarks on Christian missionaries, saying this would only encourage extremist elements.

John Dayal
"The Prime Minister's remarks will only encourage communal and extremist elements such as the Sangh Parivar. Our anxiety is more because the statement was made at a function lauding the RSS," the chairman of the Northern Region Catholic Council (NRCC), Mr. Vincent M. Concessao, told presspersons here.

At a function in New Delhi on Saturday, Mr. Vajpayee said there was a "conversion motive" behind the welfare activities being carried out by some Christian missionaries in the country's backward areas and it was "not proper", though conversion was permissible under law.

"Mr. Vajpayee's remarks cast aspersions on the long history of social service by Christians and has brought in a cloud of insecurity for the minorities, in general, and Christian missionaries, in particular," Mr. Concessao said in the presence of other bishops attending a regional conference here.

The All-India Christian Council secretary, Mr. John Dayal, said Christians could approach the

President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, to discuss the matter threadbare. "We can go to the President as time and again he has ventilated his anguish and concern on violence perpetrated on Christians in almost all BJP-ruled States." Christians no longer had faith in constitutional bodies such as the National Commission for Minorities.

"Such remarks from none less than the Prime Minister will be seen as condoning the hate campaign and canards, lies and half-truths being spread by the RSS and other units of the Sangh Parivar," Mr. Concessao said. "The Prime Minister's remarks come when the country is facing a renewed violence against Christian priests, nuns and religious workers."

Mr. Dayal said, "The Prime Minister should disown his statement immediately. He should behave as the Prime Minister and not as a partisan leader addressing a select group of people." Stating that the Christian doctrine always "denounced fraudulent and forcible conversions", the Catholic leaders urged Mr. Vajpayee to "reassure" the country that his Government was committed to the rule of law and the letter and spirit of the Constitution, which guaranteed religious freedom. — PTI

THE HINDU

20 AUG 2001

Centre collecting proof on Simi for ban, says Advani

BY AMITA VERMA

AA-3 19/8
Lucknow, Aug. 18: Union home minister L.K. Advani has said that the reports received by the Centre about the activities of the Students Islamic Movement of India were "disturbing." He said that the home ministry was collecting evidence about the organisation from various state governments where the Simi was active and wanted to prepare a foolproof case before taking a decision on clamping a ban on it.

"Whenever any organisation is banned under the Unlawful Activities Act, the case is reviewed/assessed by a judicial tribunal and we want to have sufficient evidences which can be put up before the tribunal. This must be done before taking any decision about the ban on Simi," he explained.

Mr Advani who was addressing a press conference here on Saturday, claimed that the Centre was "moving towards success" in the Kashmir Valley where cross-border terrorism had led to a spate of innocent killings in the recent weeks.

"The killing of innocent persons cannot be termed jihad and this is certainly not acceptable to us. We

are firm that Kashmir is and always will be an integral part of India, irrespective of the fact that one particular community dominates the population. In fact, during the Agra summit, a major point of difference was that President Musharraf wanted India to recognise Kashmir as a disputed area. Our Constitution also tells me that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India. We will never compromise with national integrity and dignity, come what may," he said.

Mr Advani, however, was evasive when asked whether, as Union home minister, he would own moral responsibility for the recent Doda massacres and quit his post.

The senior BJP leader who arrived on a one-day visit to Lucknow to felicitate old Jana Sangh cadres and activate them on the eve of UP Assembly elections, said that he was satisfied with the new state leadership that had helped the party regain lost ground in recent months.

"We had suffered reverses in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections but now under the new leadership, we are confident of our victory in the Assembly elections," he pointed out.

THE ASIAN AGE

19 AUG 2001

HARMFUL MODERNITY

for 5/16 In Asind, the tradition was better *or movement*

THE demolition of a mosque in Asind, Rajasthan is a good example of how communal organisations can vitiate the atmosphere in an area otherwise not known for communal tension. The 16th century mosque was in relative disuse and situated within the compound a temple dedicated to a saint revered by the local Gujjar community. The site was used more by Hindus, visitors to the temple, than by Muslims. End July, Muslim pilgrims were forced to change their pilgrimage route and prevented from pitching their tents close to the temple. Subsequently, on July 27, a Gujjar mob demolished the mosque, in the presence of top district officials and policemen, laid marble slabs and installed an idol. The presence of elements belonging to or sympathetic towards the BJP and the RSS has been ascertained and the fact that it was so meticulously carried out attests to a degree of planning. The temple trust has a BJP MLA among its members and the demolition was hailed by the VHP and the Bajrang Dal as an assertion of tribal culture, of all things.

If this is indeed the case, then how is it that a century ago, the same trust, run by members of the same tribal community, had built a dargah a kilometre away from the temple and that it continues to pay the dargah caretaker's salary even today? Answer: a hundred years, there was no right-wing Hindu politics in the area, the notion was probably foreign to the local way of thinking. Communal politics was invented under the Raj and not just through divide et impera. We simply wish to point out that the debate between secularism and its opposite is not contiguous with the one between tradition and modernity, in all contexts. Indian modernity includes Hindu political consciousness, while tradition often means peaceful cohabitation based on a culture of compromise, although as an overall posture towards society and culture it may be both unviable and retrograde.

The Economic Times

17 AUG 22

Violence against MP Christians on the rise

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

519 1989
BHOPAL, Aug. 12. — The incidents of violence and crimes against the Christian community seem to be on the rise in Madhya Pradesh over the last few years. The state was generally dubbed as "peaceful" when compared to other Hindi belt states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Sister Leena (30), was seriously wounded on 6 August afternoon when she was shot at by four hoodlums at point-blank range near Nirmala missionary hospital for handicapped children and elderly people at Chandesri village in Ujjain district. Sister Leena, who is associated with the Chandesri-based Aradhana Sadan run by a Christian organisation, was then returning from Ujjain town, barely seven km away, where she had gone with a colleague for some shopping. The four hoodlums riding two motorcycles had been waiting for her at the village and shot at her the moment they spotted her there.

Sister Leena, who sustained bullet injuries in her jaws and face, was immediately taken to a local hospital in a critical condition. She was then shifted to the Indore-based Choithram Hospital where she was operated upon. Her condition is now stated to be "stable and out of danger." She is from Kerala and had come to Ujjain only last year.

The Ujjain police is baffled by the incident which is said to be the first of its kind in the district. The SP, Ujjain district, Mr SL Thaosan, told **The Statesman** over phone yesterday that the accused have not been arrested so far. "We have also not been able to ascertain the motive behind the attack till now", he said. A criminal case against the unidentified assailants has been registered in the local Narwar police station.

Various state Christian organisations have condemned the attack on Sister Leena's life and demanded action against the accused. They have also pressed for security for Christians and their institutions in the state.

Archbishop Pascal Topno, head of the Catholic Church in Madhya Pradesh, termed the Ujjain incident as "shocking and disturbing". "Sister Leena is absolutely innocent and had only recently come to Ujjain to do her work. Why anybody should attempt to kill her is beyond comprehension". He conceded that attacks on Christians and their establishments are rising in the state over the past few years, especially in the Malwa region.

THE STATESMAN

13 AUG 2001

Fear stalks MP Christians after attack on nun

YOGESH VAJPEYI

CHANDSERA (UJJAIN), AUG 9

FEAR stalks Aradhana Sadan, a school for handicapped and home for the aged run by a Christian mission in this sleepy village on the Dewas-Ujjain Road ever since 30-year-old nun, Leena Verghese, was shot at and seriously injured by unidentified assailants in Ujjain city, eight km away on Monday.

Leena, whose bullet wounds were operated upon at Indore's Choithram Hospital and Research Centre on Tuesday, is still unconscious. And till she speaks, police remain clueless about the identity of her assailants or the motive behind the attack.

So are the members of Sisters of the Adoration of Blessed Sacrament, who run the Chandsera centre as well as the Nirmala Hospital in Ujjain City nearby.

"We never had any problems with local people," says Maria, a nun who has worked at

the Sadan for 30 years. Leena had come to work here from Kerala only a year ago, she says. "She had no personal enemy."

Leena and Sister Anupa had gone to Ujjain for shopping. They were about to leave for the Chandsera centre when the assailants shot Leena outside Nirmala Hospital in Prem Nagar locality of the city.

"We are trying to get the assailants with the help of computer print outs prepared on the basis of eye witnesses. But we'll know something definite only after we can talk to Leena," says IGP Panna Lal.

While police grope in the dark, the incident has left Madhya Pradesh's Christian community aghast. "It's not an isolated incident but part of a hit-and-run policy of anti-Christian elements," says Father Clarence Strambical of the United Christian Forum.

A meeting of 60 Christian organisations of Madhya Pradesh, led by Indore Bishop Dr George Anathil, today strongly condemned

the attack on nuns and demanded tighter security for Christian missionaries. Attacks on Christians have increased since the infamous gang rape of three nuns in Jhabua in September 1999, they charged.

Last December, five armed men raided a church at Dultaria village in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district and assaulted Catholic priests and nuns before looting Rs 3,58,000, ornaments and other valuables. The next month armed hoodlums forced their way into the home of 60-year-old priest C. Alphonse and attacked him with sticks and rods in Gwalior. In yet another recent incident, miscreants demolished a small chapel belonging to the Pentecostal Christian mission in Gopalpura village of Jhabua.

What worries Christians is that these outbreaks against missionary workers seem to follow in wake of a systematic campaign by fundamentalists. "Recently, Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad workers entered St Pauls

school forcibly, raised slogans against the school management and charged that students with *rakitis* were being disallowed," says Father Verghese.

Venjamine Khan, another priest has a similar story. "In Hat Pipalya, the parents sending their children to the Christian school are being intimidated," he says. Earlier, the principal of a missionary school in Bhopal was publicly humiliated and forced to perform *Ganesh pooja* by a group of ruffians allegedly of the Bajrang Dal.

The assailants who shot Leena may or may not have a religious agenda — those involved in the 1988 Jhabua rape case turned out to be criminals.

But the incident shows the fundamentalists' campaign against missionaries have made them soft targets, says Indra Iyengar, president of Madhya Pradesh Christian Association. BJP and VHP leaders vehemently deny any hand.

Attack on priest shocks minorities

By Mahesh Vijapurkar
MUMBAI, AUG. 8. The Maharashtra Government has taken "serious note" of the attack on a parish priest, Fr. Oscar Mendonca, by Bajrang Dal activists in Thane on Monday night. The assault was allegedly in retaliation for the killing of four RSS activists in Tripura.

According to a UNI report, the Bajrang Dal and the VHP had organised a meeting in Thane to condole the deaths of the RSS activists. They distributed pamphlets, condemning the killing allegedly by Christians belonging to the Baptist and Presbyterian churches. After the meeting, a group of Bajrang Dal activists marched to the St. John Baptist Church, ransacked it and also attacked the priest. The Archbishop of Bombay, Rev. Ivan Dias said the attackers "struck Fr. Mendonca on the head with a flower pot and beat him up badly, giving him a black eye and causing large bruises on his chest and back."

Thane police have arrested 18 Bajrang Dal and VHP activists in this connection.

The attack on the priest has sent shock waves among the minorities in the state with priests of various dioceses protesting the incident and expressing concern

The Maharashtra State Minorities Commission sought "stringent action" to curb this "activity of extremists." Mr. Abraham Mathai, a member of the Commission, called on the attacked priest.

What has irked the Church here

'Protect minorities'

NEW DELHI, AUG. 8. The Muslim League member in the Lok Sabha, Mr. G.M. Banatwala, today raised the issue of the attack on the priest in Maharashtra and urged the Government to ensure the safety of minorities in the country.

During zero hour, Mr.G.M. Banatwala, said there had been several instances of attacks on Christians and their institutions. The Government should take effective steps to ensure that due protection was given to the minorities. — PII

at the development which they said "hurts the tolerant fabric of our country's society."

A church spokesman told *The Hindu* that the incident had "extremely disturbed" the community "dedicated to service and education" in the country.

is not so much the attack but the pre-meditated manner in which Bajrang Dal activists, rushed to the church and picked Fr. Oscar Mendonca — an assistant priest ordained about three weeks ago.

The Church wanted "firm determination" from the govern-

ment to punish the culprits. The Archbishop opted to "pray for those who persecute" and asked, at the same time, that all the Catholic schools remain closed on Monday, August 13, as a protest a day after he himself conducted a mass at the spot in the parish rectory to "purify the place where this sacrilege was committed."

Since the attack was pre-meditated, "it was more sacrilegious than an attack in a church, temple or mosque."

All other Catholics, he suggested, in other institutions and in the Church, "wear a black tag as a sign of silent prayer and protest the shameful incident."

He described the incident as "senseless and barbaric" and called for prayers for the "perpetrators of the criminal act so that they may be touched by God's grace and be led to change their lives for the better."

Mosque reconstruction defies solution

By Mohammed Iqbal

110-11 1/8

ASIND (RAJASTHAN), AUG. 3. The vexed issue of reconstruction of the 16th century mosque which existed in the Sawai Bhoj temple complex here continues to defy solution a week after its demolition. Rumours are having a field day in the town and tension, accentuated by resentment against the Government, is again rising to a new level.

In a new twist to the entire episode, the predominant Gurjar community here has started claiming that the decrepit mosque — pulled down by a 300-strong mob on July 27 — was in fact a "Dhooni" (hermitage) of Baba Roopnath, which was frequented by Hindu monks crossing the temple during their journey. The community sees nothing wrong in converting the "Dhooni" into a temple, though the idol installed at the spot has since been removed.

The way the historic Sawai Bhoj complex has been converted from an epitome of communal harmony into a battle-field for supremacy makes a disturbing account. Asind, which attracts devotees from far-off places, has this time gained prominence for wrong reasons. The people in the town are evidently unhappy over the turn of events.

Major challenge

The State Government faces a major challenge. In addition to the Congress Gurjar leader and Minister of State for Public Relations, Dr. Jitendra Singh, camping here since Wednesday, the Home Minister, Mr. Gulab Singh Shaktawat, arrived in the town today to negotiate with the Gurjar community, representatives of the Sawai Bhoj Temple Trust and the Muslim community.

The chairman of the trust and a former MLA, Mr. Laxmilal Gurjar, had initially admitted that some "illiterate" people, agitated over a dispute concerning the route to the nearby Badia Dargah, had razed the mosque to the ground. However, speaking to this correspondent, he said the structure had wrongly been registered in the State Waqf Board's record as a mosque.

"The structure said to be the mosque had a single wall of seven-foot height and 10-foot width and a small platform. There is no evidence of 'namaaz' ever having been offered there," he said. The settlement records of the complex, measuring 700 bighas, did not refer to the existence of any mosque in it, though they mentioned the Badia Dargah situated one kilometre away from the temple, he claimed.

Even as the community elders assert that they are willing to resolve the "dispute" amicably, their emphasis during the hurriedly-formed peace committee's meeting has been on the issue of giving way to the devotees to the dargah through the temple land. While a consensus seems to have emerged on the demarcation of the route, the main issue of demolition continues to be a thorn in the flesh.

Unable to convince both the sides to reach a mutually acceptable solution, the district administration intends to refer the matter to the Waqf Board.

"When the peace committee meets again on August 6, we will formally request the Waqf Board to clarify its position on the status of the mosque," the District Collector, Mr. P.C. Vyas, said.

The Government is aware of the fact that the issue would get more complex with the passage of time. "Our first priority was to restore normality and control the shocking impact of demolition," Mr. Vyas pointed out, and added that the "voluntary" removal of idol from the mosque site had helped normalise the situation.

The three-foot idol of Lord Hanuman was shifted in the night intervening between July 31 and August 1 and installed beside the wall of a nearby temple. A visit to the complex revealed that the platform built to mark the newly-erected temple existed in the same position while the rubble of the mosque's wall and minarets was lying adjacent to it.

As a precautionary step, the Badia Dargah — where two saints, Sultan Shah Baba and Ghaffar Sahib Baba, are buried — has been taken over by the Special Task Force (STF), whose jawans are protecting it round the clock. The trouble had originally started from this place and its three-day Urs remained inconclusive because of the ugly events.

Mr. Rafiq Ahmed, the much-respected leader of the Muslim community and head of the Sheikh Committee, regrets that the matter has been given a communal colour. "It is essentially a matter of title. The mosque had been abandoned for the past 50 years and had only a symbolic value. Its reconstruction will restore the same position," he said.

Muslims for negotiations

The Muslim community too is in favour of a negotiated settlement, but points out that the rumours spreading in the town had led to fear among the people. "We have asked the youth and children not to move around on roads till next Monday," Mr. Ahmed said.

The alleged assailants responsible for destruction of the mosque continue to be at large. One of them, Mansukh Singh — who is a named accused in one of the two criminal cases registered by police — remains an enigma for the administration. He is the "international president" of a nondescript organisation, Rajesh Pilot Brigade, and was instrumental in getting a statue of late Rajesh Pilot installed in the complex a few months ago.

According to police, Mansukh Singh is still absconding while investigations are in progress to confirm the role of others in the episode. The resentment among the people in the town is ascribed to the absence of any indication of the arrest of any of the 300 people who were involved in the crime.

Asind, which had never experienced communal tension of this scale earlier, is today helplessly witnessing its once strong foundation of community relationship crumbling down. The people here can only pray that the situation does not flare up any further.

CBI moves petition in Ayodhya case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE 5/18

LUCKNOW June 26. — The CBI has embarked upon a two pronged move — one judicial and and the other executive — to get over the Allahabad High Court order in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

The agency has approached the High Court with a revision petition against the order of the Special Court hearing the case. It has also written to the state government to issue a fresh notification for the constitution of the special court as the High Court had found the previous notification "defective".

The 12 February order of the High Court had resulted in the eight of the accused including Mr LK

Advani, Mr MM Joshi and Ms Uma Bharti getting a technical reprieve. Following the High Court order, the Special Court judge, Mr SK Shukla dropped the framing of charges against the eight accused till the "defect" in the notification was cured". He added names of another 13 accused to the list.

Mr Rajnath Singh confirmed that his government had received a letter from the CBI requesting for a fresh notification to facilitate trial of all the accused.

The 12 February order by Justice Jagdish Bhalla said the "defect" in the notification was "curable". The defect was that the the notification constituting the Special Court had

been done without the High Court's

consent. Justice Bhalla had not issued any order to the government but had said a fresh notification could be issued.

Mr Singh said he was seeking legal opinion on the matter and a "decision cannot be taken in haste". "A legally proper decision will be taken", he said, repeating what he had said on 12 February.

On Monday, in the High Court, Justice Bhagwan Deen summoned the file of the Special Court order dropping charges against 21 of the accused including the three Union Ministers. Justice Deen also ordered the case to be listed in the first week of July.

The CBI lawyers had challenged the findings of the Special Court.

They said the Justice Bhalla order covered only eight persons but the Special Court had added another thirteen to the list which was based on "wrong findings and without any substance".

The CBI lawyers argued since a joint charge-sheet had been filed against the accused on the basis of common evidence relating to the crime no.197 and crime no.198, the trial judge could not bifurcate it at this stage and drop proceedings.

The CBI also said the High Court may have found the notification to constitute the Special Court to try the crime no.198 involving the eight "defective". But all the 47 accused (including the eight) were covered in the notification issued by the govern-

ment to constitute the Special Court to try crime no. 197.

The CBI lawyers said the 47 accused should be directed to appear before the Special Court for the framing of the charges.

Singhal: The VHP president, Mr Ashok Singhal, today said the movement for construction of the Ram Temple at ayodhya was not being carried out by his organisation but by saints, adds PTI.

He said there would be no change in the date for starting the temple construction which is 12 March, 20002.

"The final decision on this will be taken by the saints" he said. It will be acceptable to the VHP.

A new twist: BJP MP from Faizabad, Mr Vinay Katiyar, today gave a

new spin to the Babri Masjid demolition claiming the felled structure was a Ram Temple, adds PTI.

Deposing before the Liberhan Commission of inquiry, Mr Katiyar said: "Angry devotees pulled down the dilapidated structure to construct the temple or else it would have collapsed a day and many devotees would have been injured".

Citing historic accounts by several Islamic scholars in support of the fact that a temple existed there, Mr Katiyar said, "First, let me say it was not a disputed structure. It was a Ram temple."

Mr Katiyar, who was also the MP from the same seat in 1992, would further depose before the commission on 24 & 25 July.

Muslim law board to assess *Gadar*

HT Correspondent
Lucknow, June 24

THE ALL-INDIA Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) will decide whether the brouhaha over *Gadar* is justified.

Prominent cleric and Board vice-president Maulana Kalbe Sadiq said on Saturday that the future course of action regarding the so-called objectionable scenes and dialogues in the movie would be decided after consulting the Board president.

The renowned Shia cleric was miffed at the manner in which his name was included in the film's credit without his consent. Maulana Sadiq, however, ruled out any immediate action against the producers of the con-

troversial film, shot extensively in and around the city.

"I have not seen the movie. But judging from what I have been told by some responsible members of the community who have seen the film. It appears that the producers have retained certain dialogues and scenes which they were told to omit," he said.

"For instance, I am told that there is a scene in which the hero, prior to his willing conversion to Islam, is compelled to chant *Hindustan murdabad*. There is no such stipulation anywhere in the tenets of the religion laid down to say anything for or against a country," he pointed out.

What the Maulana, however, has obviously not been told is that Amrish Puri, who compels

Sunny Deol to say the anti-Indian slogan, is portraying a villainous character.

"I had also told the producers to change the name of the heroine from Sakina to some other as the name holds a special significance in the religion. But they did not pay heed," he complained. He emphatically denied having granted permission to the film's shoot inside the Bara Imambara.

"And, as I understand the movie has only been shot outside and not inside the precincts of the monument," he said.

Replying to whether he was contemplating taking legal action against the film's producers, he said that a final decision would be taken after consulting the Board president.

TEN PROTESTORS ARRESTED OUTSIDE DELHI CINEMA

TEN ACTIVISTS of the Ali Sena were arrested outside the Plaza Cinema in the heart of the capital on Sunday after they tore posters and damaged banners of the controversial movie *Gadar*.

Over 50 activists of the Sena, equipped with ladders, arrived at the cinema hall in Connaught Place around 12 in the afternoon and began tearing the posters of the Sunny Deol-Amisha Patel starrer, protesting against "objectionable scenes" in the film, eye-witnesses said.

PTI, New Delhi

THE HINDUSTAN

Sonia presses Atal for Babri notice

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 22

HT-9
SONIA GANDHI has sought Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's "personal intervention" to ensure a fresh notification by the UP Government for resumption of trial of Union Ministers involved in the Babri demolition case.

In her second letter to the PM on the issue in less than a fortnight, Sonia expressed alarm over media reports that the UP Chief Minister has refused to issue a fresh notification free of legal infirmities. "I am sure you will personally intervene to sort out this important matter in consonance with your own oft-repeated belief that justice and

AYODHYA CHARGES ON JULY 27, SAYS SPECIAL COURT

CHARGES AGAINST the accused in the Ayodhya demolition case will be filed again on July 27, a special CBI court said on Friday. The order follows Thursday's ruling by Allahabad High Court directing the court to fix a date in July for framing charges in the case. The special court had earlier fixed June 22, but the High Court wanted it deferred after two of the accused filed a petition seeking directives to the special court to drop proceedings against them.

HTC, Lucknow

the law should be allowed to take their own course," she wrote.

Sonia further stated that the CBI's decision to file a revision petition against the court's May 4 order (to drop proceedings against the ministers) was a renewed opportunity for the Vajpayee Government "to strength-

en the CBI's intended action by initiating steps for issuance of a new notification".

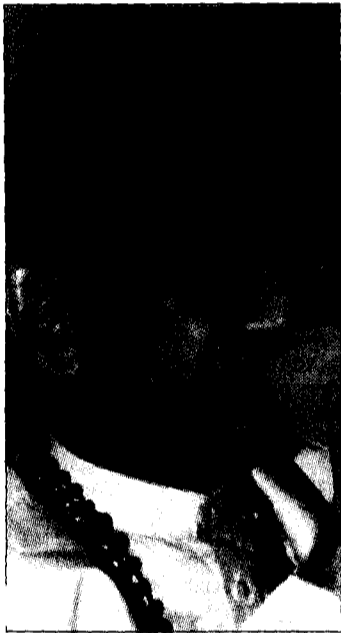
The Congress president's letter was released at the regular AICC briefing here today by party spokesman Jaipal Reddy. On the Manipur issue, he held the Centre squarely responsible

for the turmoil in the State over expansion of the scope of the Naga ceasefire accord.

However, while criticising the NDA regime for having imposed its decision in a matter falling in the State List, Reddy assured that the Centre would have the Congress's cooperation for restoration of peace and normalcy in Manipur. "The Government must take all sections of Manipur and other affected people of the North-east into confidence."

On the recent events in Pakistan, Reddy said democracy was for Congress a paramount political principle. "A development that adversely affects this principle is naturally unpleasant. But neighbours cannot be choosers."

Thackeray calls on Hindus to take up arms



BAL THACKERAY

HT Correspondent
Mumbai, June 20

SHIV SENA supremo Bal Thackeray is back to his old ways.

He marked the 35th anniversary of his party with a taunt for the Prime Minister, a call to Hindus to take up arms, an attack on a minority community and a warning that another riot might be in the offing.

The verbal blast couldn't have been better timed to embarrass the BJP, coming as it does the day after the date and venue of the Indo-Pak summit was announced.

Thackeray's "talk" to Shiv Sainiks also comes ahead of the civic elections in Mumbai, in which the Congress-NCP combine seems to be the favourite to win.

He described Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee as ineffective: "He will wring his hands

and say: *Hum Musalmanon ke mamle mein kya kar sakte hain?*"

He challenged the Maharashtra Government to do its worst on the basis of the Srikrishna Commission report and warned that "there might be an occasion for a second riot".

In Thackeray's view, the Army, the law-and-order machinery and the Union Government are completely incapable of protecting the nation's interests because they are not belligerent enough towards Muslims.

"Of what use are all these when the people are in danger? These people are not even ashamed of their incapacities. No one questions whose aulad (offspring) these Muslims are. No one is worried what happens to Amarnath Yatris. I fully endorse the Bajrang Dal's moves to arm the people."

Relations between the BJP and Shiv Sena have not been too good lately.

The invitation to the Pakistani CEO has only added fat to the simmering fire.

Thackeray has been no less put off by carefully "misplaced" loose talk by Pramod Mahajan that have given out the message that the Union Government increasingly has no room for the Shiv Sena.

The Maharashtra Government's steady progress in action taken on the Srikrishna Commission's report has also had him cornered, presumably making him feel like a caged tiger.

Some of his "well-wishers" are believed to have told him that his USP is his anti-Muslim rhetoric. He has lost electoral ground, they have told him, because his responses have been rather "soft" lately.

Opposition plans to pin Advani over Ayodhya

MOHAN SAHAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 19. — Uttar Pradesh government's refusal to issue a fresh notification to facilitate criminal proceedings against Mr LK Advani, Dr MM Joshi, Miss Uma Bharati and 14 others in the Babari Masjid demolition case may not help the Vajpayee government brush aside the CBI charge-sheet.

The combined force of the Opposition (which used Tehelka as the rallying point to disrupt the Budget session of Parliament for weeks) is set to raise the Babari case when the Parliament meets for its monsoon session from 23 July. The Opposition, however, is un-

likely to stall proceedings of the two Houses.

After facing criticism for not allowing Parliament to function on Tehelka, the Congress in particular, has decided to hammer its demand for the trial of Mr Advani and others under parliamentary norms.

"The government can't hide under the trivia of technicalities in obstructing the law to take its own course in the Babari Masjid trial," a senior Congress leader and Member of Parliament said. The Congress would rally the Opposition in Parliament to demand a directive from the Centre to the Uttar Pradesh government to issue a fresh notification so that the three ministers and others face CBI

charges as "accused".

Alternatively, the government will be asked to let the CBI file a revision petition against the order of the trial court in Lucknow that dropped the case against the 17 accused in the light of the order passed by Mr Justice J Bhalla of the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court.

The Congress may come out with more facts on the CBI's point of view. Mrs Sonia Gandhi is said to be in the possession of the details of the CBI seeking the approval of the Department of Personnel, under the Cabinet Secretariat, to be allowed to frame charges against Mr Advani and others. Much, however, depends on how the leader of the Opposition handles

the subject as Mrs Sonia Gandhi's personal interests shouldn't clash with pressing the charge against the three Union ministers, another MP from the non-Congress Opposition camp said.

Tehelka has lost much fire and is unlikely to figure in Parliament in a big way as it did during the Budget session. Despite all protestations, neither the Congress nor Left parties could turn the Tehelka expose into a public movement against the government.

The Congress will pick up the thread from where it left at the end of the Budget session by renewing its demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee to probe charges of the defence deals. It's likely to be more of an academic exercise than a rabble-rouser.

YAJNA PLANNED

NEW DELHI, June 19. — The Ram Janmabhoomi Nirman Samiti, holding a two-day meeting in the capital to chalk out a strategy for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, today decided to launch a massive yajna in Ayodhya after *basant panchmi*, which might go on till the start of the construction work for the temple. Acharya Giriraj Kishore said about 20,000 people would daily participate in the yajna to be held at the Ram Janmabhoomi site after the coming *basant panchmi* which falls on 17 February. — UNI



Mr LK Advani: Back to the wall?

THE STATESMAN

Ayodhya: VP hits out at Advani

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CONG CHARGES AGAINST HOME MINISTER

VARANASI, June 14. - Mr VP Singh today accused Mr LK Advani and Mr Murlī Manohar Joshi of misusing the Liberhan Commission to attack him and said he had sought time from the panel to make his position clear.

Speaking to reporters here today, the former Prime Minister said he was willing to depose before the commission again and put on record his account of the events leading to the demolition of Babari Masjid. Mr Singh said he had asked his lawyers to seek time from the commission for recording his statement in after of "controversial" depositions of Mr Advani and Mr Joshi.

Mr Advani told the commission in Delhi yesterday that in 1990, the Centre had lost a golden opportunity to solve the Ayodhya dispute when Mr

NEW DELHI, June 14. - The Congress today accused Mr L K Advani of "obstructing" fair and smooth inquiry into the Babari Masjid case. Quoting Mr Advani's deposition before the Liberhan Commission, in which he justified the Ram temple movement, party spokesman, Mr S Jaipal Reddy, said, "So long Mr Advani is in the government, one should not expect fair and smooth trial of the Babari case". Mr Reddy said the home minister was not responding to the queries raised by the counsel of the Liberhan Commission which is inquiring into the circumstances leading to the demolition of the Babari Masjid. In the process, Mr Advani was obstructing the inquiry, Mr Reddy said. - SNS

Singh withdrew the ordinance because of its "policy of appeasement". Reacting to that, Mr Singh said he had agreed to do a *kar seva* for a Ram temple in Ayodhya at an adjoining or alternative site, but not at the disputed site.

"Mr Advani is only telling half the truth about my expressing eagerness to perform *kar seva* at Ayodhya. In fact, I

had informed the BJP and the VHP that no *kar seva* would be allowed at the disputed site, according to the Supreme Court's direction," he said.

Posing a counter question to Mr Advani, the former Prime Minister asked the home minister if he would join him in the *kar seva* at an adjoining or an alternative site, leaving the disputed site untouched.

Mr Singh also justified his government's decision to withdraw an ordinance to acquire the land around the disputed structure as parties to the dispute had raised objections to it.

"It was a correct decision. The parties to the dispute - the VHP and the Babari Masjid Action Committee had opposed the ordinance, making it useless. There was also a possibility of the court rejecting the move," he said.

Mr Singh said that the RSS chief, Mr Rajendra Singh, had said the land acquisition was aimed at constructing the masjid at the site.

He said that if the ordinance was a solution to the Ayodhya dispute, the successive governments were free to invoke it. Why is the Vajpayee government hesitating to issue an ordinance, he asked.

THE STATESMAN

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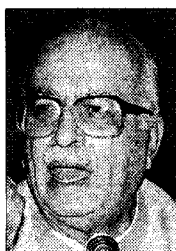
B.P. 2

Advani blames Cong for kicking off temple politics

15/6

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 14 JUNE



HOME MINISTER L.K.

Advani, who developed Hindutva into a potent tool to mobilise support for his party, on Thursday said

the Congress was responsible for the politicisation of the Ram temple issue. He said the Ram movement was a reaction to the votebank politics and that it can be resolved only through negotiation or legislation.

Deposing before the Liberhan Commission, Mr Advani asserted that the Rajiv Gandhi government's response to the Shah Bano controversy set in motion a competition for votebanks. "The turning point came in 1985 when the Supreme Court judgment was sought to be negated by a legislative Act." As a matter of fact, in late 1985, as the Shah Bano controversy was raging, the district and sessions judge of Faizabad ordered the opening of

the locks of the structure and indirectly allowed priests to enter.

In reply to another question, Mr Advani said consolidation of Ayodhya related litigations will not help resolve the dispute and it can only be resolved through negotiations or legislation.

"We have to see the history of the case, which has been going on since 1949. The history of this case is a lesson and a guide for us," he said while making his party's stand clear that it could be resolved mainly through negotiation.

Mr Advani made this submission in the wake of a question that former premier P.V. Narasimha Rao had sought four months' time from the "sadhus and sants" in July, 1992, to resolve the dispute and that he wanted to consolidate all the cases under one judicial authority.

Asked if the Rao government wanted to have a legislation to resolve the dispute, Mr Advani said: "I do remember that Kamal Nath, a member of Rao's Cabinet, had met me several time to put forth certain proposals which could be regarded as similar to some extent what former premier V.P. Singh had conceived."

On politicisation of the Ayodhya issue, he said: "We were not active in the movement as it was more of a religious movement. After 1985, we felt there was a need to fight the votebank politics."

The home minister said the late Rajiv Gandhi had kicked off his party's election campaign from Ayodhya in 1989 with a slogan of bringing "Ram rajya" to appease the Hindus.

"This made us feel why shouldn't we not do something which is a reflection of the sentiment of a overwhelming majority of the country."

Advani chairs first Cabinet meeting

Our Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI 14 JUNE

THE UNION Cabinet on Thursday met under the chairmanship of L.K. Advani in the absence of the Prime Minister to decide on the timings of the monsoon session. The Cabinet has suggested to the President to announce the monsoon session of Parliament from July 23 (Monday). The session, which will last for 40-days will end on August 31 (Friday).

During the tenure there will be 29 sitting session and six private member days.

Speaking to reporters Union Parliamentary affair minister Pramod Mahajan said: "Normally, the session lasts for 20 to 22 days. This time we are having an extended session as a fulfilment of the promise to compensate for the missed eight days during the Budget session of the Parliament."

The Economic Times

15 JUN 1992

Babri not masjid: Advani

FROM OUR LEGAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 13: Home minister L.K. Advani today opposed calling the demolished "structure" in Ayodhya a "masjid or mosque", contending that it was a "disputed structure".

Deposing before the Justice Liberhan Commission on the Babri Masjid demolition, Advani said the country had got a "bad name" by calling it a "mosque".

"Only the superimposed structure (on a Hindu temple) was a mosque. I have always referred to it as a disputed structure because we, in the country as a whole, have been unfair to Hindus as it was a place where the idols of Ram are kept with the approval of the court... despite (this fact), by calling it a mosque, we have only earned a bad name for the country in the world," Advani said during his day-long deposition.

Advani's statement came during extensive cross-examination

by commission counsel Anupam Gupta. Striking a humble posture, the minister said that as a "political worker", "I feel the movement (for the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya) was for the people in the entire country".

He wanted the "people" to contribute for the construction of the temple like they did for the Somnath temple. Construction of the Somnath temple was the decision of the "Cabinet of Pandit (Jawaharlal) Nehru", yet Mahatma Gandhi wanted the people to contribute and opposed the idea of the government spending the money, the home minister told the commission.

Advani recalled that one of the happiest moments of his life was when performance of kar seva at Ayodhya on October 30, 1990, was announced on radio, adds PTI.

"We were part of the movement, a movement which was sought to be stifled by the then government in a manner which was unprecedented. All modes of

transport to Ayodhya had been stopped. It was declared publicly that not a single bird would be allowed to enter Ayodhya," he said.

He slammed the Centre for issuing an Ordinance on October 19, 1990, to acquire 67 acres around the structure, but withdrawing it in 24 hours. "It was unprecedented in the history of Independent India," Advani said, blaming then Prime Minister V.P. Singh.

He termed Singh's "U-turn" as an act of "Muslim appeasement". "This conduct only confirmed my misgivings... that this is a government which is committed to the policy of appeasement, a policy which is not in the interest of anyone and not in the interest of even the minorities," Advani said.

With the withdrawal of the notification, the government had lost a last opportunity to solve the problem, Advani said, adding that it had also made a single-point reference to the Supreme Court to determine whether a temple pre-existed the mosque at the site.

THE TELEGRAPH

14 JUN 1991

Advani shifts blame on VP for Ayodhya crisis

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 13

LK ADVANI, who deposed before the Liberhan Commission for the third time here today, made a spirited defence of the Ram temple movement but said he disapproved of the demolition of the disputed structure.

He blamed former Prime Minister V P Singh for withdrawing the October 1990 Ordinance, saying he did it to appease the Babri Masjid Action Committee and "some other sections of society". The Ordinance would enable the Government to acquire land around the disputed structure.

Advani asserted that Singh rang him on October 18, 1990, urging him to stay put in Delhi as a solution was in sight. Advani quoted the former Prime Minister as having said: "A ray of light is visible which may be converted into a full beam. After this I may join you in the *kar seva*."

He described withdrawal of Ordinance within 24 hours, as an "unprecedented" act. The VP dispensation, he said, should have sounded out the BJP and RSS. These two organisations had accepted the Government's proposal, and could have prevailed upon the VHP, which had serious reservations about the move.

"As one who has been a part of the movement ever since the BJP associated itself with it, I regard it as a great movement and feel

APRIL 10

1. Demolition of the disputed structure unfortunate and painful.
2. I seldom felt as dejected and downcast as on December 6, 1992.
3. Kar sewaks took a wrong course of action by razing down the structure.
4. Astounding success of my rath yatra made me understand Swami Vivekanand's observation that religion was soul of India.
5. Ayodhya dispute could be resolved through negotiations or legislation.

ADVANISPEAK

MAY 14-15

1. Delayed court verdict on acquisition of land surrounding the structure led to demolition.
2. Unlocking Ram Temple gates spurred BJP.
3. BJP would not have joined Ayodhya movement had the Shah Bano episode not taken place.
4. A de facto temple already existed at the disputed site that became de jure on court directions to maintain status quo after the demolition.

proud of it," Advani said.

He disapproved of the demolition of the structure, but defended the *kar sevaks* who hoisted a saffron flag atop the structure in 1990. "It was a symbolic gesture in the backdrop of strict restrictions imposed by the then UP Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav."

He denied having ever described the disputed structure as a mosque. "We have been unfair to ourselves by calling a mosque the structure where Lord Rama's idols were being worshipped under court direction. By doing so we have earned a bad name for the country."

'Irrelevant questions': Advani ticked off the Liberhan Commission's counsel for posing "irrele-

vant" questions on the events leading to the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya.

The snub came when, towards the end of the deposition, the counsel sought to question him on the parallel he had drawn between *shilanyas puja* preceding the *kar seva* at Ayodhya and symbolic ceremonies before the 1951 reconstruction of the Somnath temple.

"You have been asking me irrelevant questions. I replied to all your queries as I didn't want to sound evasive," Advani snapped. Counsel Anupam Gupta did not press the issue, but placed on record his disagreement with the minister's disapproval of the panel's posers.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 JUN 1991

Ayodhya solution was in sight during Shekhar's term: Joshi

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: Union HRD minister M.M. Joshi's deposition before the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission of Inquiry on Tuesday focussed on the July 1992 kar seva. When the commission's counsel, Anupam



M. M. Joshi

Gupta, asked him for the background of and reasons for the kar seva, Mr Joshi replied that "a solution was in sight" during Chandra Shekhar's tenure as the Prime Minister but when P.V. Narasimha Rao came to power, he did not show any interest in any dialogue which the VHP and sants wanted. "So the VHP and sants decided to perform kar seva in July 1992," Mr Joshi said.

Mr Joshi gave a detailed account of the documents exchanged between the VHP and the All-India

Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) over their claims about the "real character" of the Babri masjid. He also gave the names of historians, archaeologists and legal luminaries who formed part of different sub-committees. He read from the BJP's white paper on Ayodhya, and said the AIBMAC backed from the talks.

When asked to elaborate on his statement that "solution was in sight during Mr Shekhar's regime," Mr Joshi said negotiations were focussed on one point: "Whether a temple or structure existed before superimposition." "Post-Chandra Sekhar", Mr Joshi claimed, "discussions were not focussed. Many issues were being discussed. The intention of the government was not to come to any solution." Mr Joshi claimed that Mr Rao was not responding to the sants' request when they met him in May 1992 to begin negotiations from where Mr Shekhar had left off.

On the kar seva of July 1992, Mr

Joshi at one point said that the BJP was imply facilitating negotiations between the government and sants and that the BJP was not coordinating kar seva with Kalyan Singh's government. At another point, Mr Joshi reiterated that "the character of the structure in Ayodhya was of a temple." He also stood by his 1992 statement that "construction will strengthen national unity."

When Mr Gupta showed him a series of news reports suggesting close coordination between the BJP and the state government during the July kar seva, Mr Joshi denied any link.

He said the BJP was trying hard to convince the sants not to pursue kar seva in view of the court injunction. Then Mr Gupta showed Joshi a portion — "42 years ago the courts had taken up the responsibility of deciding this issue but could not. Now the kar sevaks will" — from the BJP's white paper and asked him whether this wasn't a threat.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

1992

Police firing sparks Lucknow riots

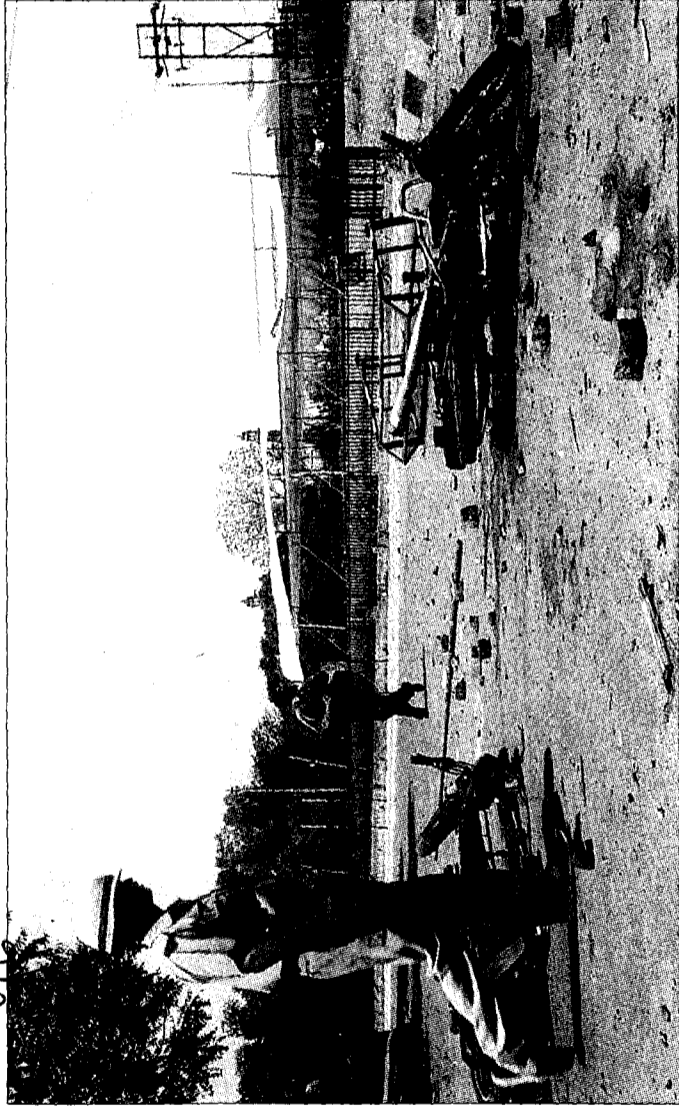
Bhupendra Pandey
Lucknow, June 5

THE KILLING of a youth by police at Tile Wali Masjid here sparked widespread violence in Khadra, in which over a dozen people were injured in the clash between police and members of the minority community.

The injured included an additional district magistrate, PAC, police personnel and reporters. The rioting mob set half-a-dozen vehicles ablaze. The DM announced Rs 2 lakh for victim's kin.

The incident occurred around 3.30 am, when three policemen deputised at the Masjid camp allegedly tried to molest a teenage girl, who had come to participate in the night-long celebrations at Tile Wali Masjid for the 12th Rabi-ul-Awwal. According to Hanif, Chand and Babu — the three witnesses — an 18-year-old boy, Naeemuddin, tried to rescue the girl and a scuffle ensued between him and the policemen.

One of the constables opened fire from his service rifle, killing Naeemuddin on the spot. But police have a different tale. Naeemuddin, they say, was found in "compromising position". When the policemen admonished the two, the girl reportedly raised an alarm and Naeemuddin got into a scuffle with the policemen. A mob had gathered there by then and roughed up the constables when they opened fire, killing the youth.



A policeman looks at vehicles damaged by a crowd in Lucknow on Tuesday, protesting against police firing that killed a youth at Tile Wali Masjid.

Naeemuddin was a resident of Bagh Aina Bibi in Hussainganj. The three constables — Surendra Tiwari, Mahendra Kumar and Rakesh Kumar — have been arrested and suspended.

As soon as the news that the youth had been shot dead reached the masjid, the mob

rushed to the spot. The cops had fled by then. The body was taken into the masjid and the mob set three houses of KGMC employees and a constable's room on fire.

The SSP rushed to the spot and tried to pacify the mob to allow the body to be taken away for

post-mortem. But the irate mob chased away the officers and the police personnel. Later, clerics Maulana Kalbe Jawwad and Maulana Aleem Farooqui were called out to appease the 5,000-odd mob.

But the pleas by the clerics and the police officers went in vain as

the mob started pelting stones at policemen, injuring several of them. Some reporters and photographers were also injured. The PAC personnel lost their patience after a few of them were injured in the brickbatting. They started lathicharging the mob, following which a youth, Afsar, was injured severely in the head. The police officers then persuaded the PAC to stop the lathicharge. This infuriated the PAC personnel, of 27th Battalion, who retracted and watched the rioting as mute spectators from a distance.

Seeing the police on the back foot, the mob ran amok and set two motorbikes on fire and demolished a police post. The mob also tried to take Naeemuddin's body to Jhandewalan Park, where the Barawafat procession was being taken out. Police waylaid them near Roomi gate and tried to persuade them to allow them take the body for post-mortem. This sparked another round of brickbatting, in which a PAC truck and a police van were damaged.

The body could somehow be taken to the mortuary, but the mob again tried to snatch it away, which resulted in fresh clashes. An Additional District Magistrate was injured. Though the police was trying to cool things down with the help of religious leaders till this afternoon, the situation continued to be tense.