

Banning the headscarf

By Vaiju Naravane

Religion
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Backers of the ban on headscarves in schools say they are defending the principles on which French society has been founded.

IT ALL began in 1989 in the small suburb of Creil near Paris when three girls of North African descent were expelled for wearing the Muslim headscarf to school. They were thrown out for violating the principle of laicity, the strict separation of church and state that is the bedrock of French republican values. Their expulsion gave rise to a lively debate about the place of Islam in France and, more generally, the issue of the integration of immigrant communities, their religious beliefs and lifestyles in a society that has kept religion out of the public arena for over a century.

With more schoolgirls defying the ban on the Islamic headscarf in state schools, the debate recently came to a head with calls for a full-fledged law — as opposed to Education Ministry rules — banning the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in schools.

France has the largest Muslim population in Europe. Many Muslims in France feel they are ill-integrated into the fabric of French society. Young French Muslims are often people with an attitude, born with a chip on the shoulder in the country's sordid suburban localities rife with delinquency, gang warfare, despair and drug abuse.

Official estimates place the number of Muslims in France at close to five million. Unofficial sources say they may be closer to seven million. Unemployment in the Muslim areas peopled mainly by North Africans is as high as 40 per cent against the national average of 12 per cent. In a post-September 11 world traumatised by terrorist attacks and haunted by the spectre of an aggressive, militant and fundamentalist Islam, the decision by a handful of schoolgirls to defy the laws of the Republic has been widely interpreted as symptomatic of a rise in sectarianism and communalism.

A specially appointed commission headed by Bernard Stasi, former Minister and a close adviser to President Jacques Chirac, held consultations with people from all walks of life and more specifically with religious leaders of every shade and hue. A new law banning the wearing of conspicuous or ostentatious religious insignia was its major recommendation, one that the Government has evidently decided to accept.

On December 17, Mr. Chirac in a major policy speech said that France's secular republican values were "not negotiable". He said he would

ask Parliament to pass a law banning conspicuous religious symbols in state schools. His speech however also underlined the real fears behind the headscarf ban — that Islamic fundamentalism was gaining ground in France and unless curbed would lead to religious tensions in a society that was, until a couple of years ago, remarkably free from communal strife.

"The danger is that of letting loose centrifugal forces, the exaltation of specific interests that separate people. Division, discrimination, confrontation — that is the danger. Communalism will not be France's choice. We will not tolerate, under the guise of religious freedom, a contestation of the laws and principles of the republic. Laicity is one of the great conquests of the republic that we should work to consolidate... The Islamic veil — whatever name we give it — the *kippa* and a cross that is of plainly excessive dimensions: these have no place in the precincts of state schools. State schools will remain secular. For that a law is necessary," Mr. Chirac said in his address.

For over 100 years France has maintained a strict separation of church and state. Article 1 of the Constitution promulgated on October 4, 1958 says: "France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs."

But this consensus around secularism was reached after tremendous upheaval and turmoil that included wars, persecution and bitter quarrels. The source of French secularism lies in the 1789 Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man followed by the Concordat of 1801 that recognised the equality of all religions. Right up until the early 20th century however, France was divided into two camps, one pro- and the other anti-clerical. The former argued that France should once again become the "elder daughter of the Catholic Church". The latter held that France was the "daughter of the Revolution" and thus could not conceive of herself in religious terms. These quarrels ceased with a broad consensus emerging in favour of secularism and the debate appeared to have ended. Until 1989 that is, when

it was suddenly jerked back to life.

Ironically, the expulsion of the schoolgirls from Creil in 1989 resulted from a decision of the teachers to oblige Jewish students to attend school on Saturdays. As Luis Cardoso, Professor of History and Geography at the Gabriel-Havez School in Creil where it all began, explains: "For several years, certain orthodox Jewish students did not attend classes on Saturday morning. At the start of each school year in September, these students began attending classes ten days after everyone else. The principal and staff decided that absence from class for religious reasons would no longer be tolerated. It was then that certain professors brought up the matter of the headscarf, which the school had tolerated alongside the Jewish absences. If Jewish children were going to be asked to abide by the secular rules of the school system, shouldn't Muslim students wearing headscarves also be expected to respect the same rules? That is how it all started."

Opponents of the Islamic headscarf say it is a symbol of women's subservience and inferiority and as such intolerable in a republic that claims to uphold and defend equality of the sexes. They stress the need for a distinction between belief and knowledge. Allowing the headscarf in a public space that must remain neutral would be tantamount to undermining republican values, they say.

Those who favour a more tolerant approach say that the transmission of knowledge need not necessarily take place in a void, that the Republic is strong enough to admit and tolerate individual quirks of dress and manner. Banning the headscarf, they say, would be an infringement of the freedom to practise one's religion. It will tend to push the Islamic community into the hands of extremists who favour a more fundamentalist, hardline approach.

The question is, will legislation resolve the problem? The law will give school principals clear guidelines that have been in scant supply so far. But social workers, especially in the difficult suburbs around France's big cities where North African Muslim populations are generally concentrated, have warned about the risks of further marginalising a community that already feels rejected by the

country's white mainstream.

Moderate Muslims tend to favour what they call *Islam de France* — French-style Islam with maximum integration into the host community — rather than *Islam en France* (Islam in France), a transplant from purely Muslim societies. *Islam de France*, the home-grown variety, would incorporate the principle of laicity.

As John R. Bowen, a researcher at the Washington University in St. Louis, wrote: "Many Muslims with university positions urge Muslims to follow a French lifestyle in France, shaping their Islam around either private prayer or an appreciation of Arabo-Muslim history and civilisation. ... This foreign/local tension emerges in particular combinations of languages and objects at Islamic events."

"Non-Muslim French expectations from Muslims are strongly shaped by the idea of laicity, the idea that public institutional life in France should be devoid of religious representations, because citizens are to fashion themselves through their participation in these institutions."

Human rights organisations say that France is violating a fundamental principle, the freedom of free religious practice. Others who fear a backlash say the Government is making a mountain out of a molehill and that this approach will surely lead France to grief, alienating the five-million-strong Muslim community and further hampering its smooth integration into the national fabric. That this will only encourage *Islam en France* and scotch any chances of developing an *Islam de France*.

Already there have been demonstrations in France and warnings of dire consequences from various Islamic leaders including those of Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Backers of the ban say they are defending the principles on which French society has been founded and that any compromise on the issue of secularism would be a betrayal of those principles.

When asked what would happen to young Sikh students in French school, a teacher said: "Well, the turbans will have to go of course." When told Sikhs were not allowed by their faith to cut their hair and that the hair itself was a symbol of religious faith, her response was: "Well, either they will have to cut it off or we'll have to cross that bridge when we reach it. But when it comes to laicity there is no possibility of *Vive la difference!*"

THE HINDU
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US report flays Gujarat anti-conversion law

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: The 'International Religious Freedom Report 2003' released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour of the US State Department has focused on Christian related issues in Gujarat and specifically mentioned the anti-conversion law passed by the state assembly earlier this year.

The report, which was released in Washington last week, says there was a gradual but continual institutionalisation of Hindutva. "This institutionalisation manifested itself through the spread

of anti-conversion laws in some states, the rewriting of textbooks to favour Hindu extremist interpretations of history, and illegal surveys of Christians by the police in some areas of Gujarat to collect statistical information not sought from other religious groups".

It said during the period covered by this report, the states of Tamil Nadu and Gujarat passed anti-conversion laws. Under both laws, those "forcing" or "alluring" people to convert are subject to criminal action.

It further said the Gujarat state government aggressively surveyed Christian families and Christian agencies during the reporting period, allegedly under

the orders of chief minister Narendra Modi. The survey work was done by police, often in the middle of the night. The survey was first implemented in February and continued through May, even after the Gujarat high court ruled in March that the survey was illegal. The survey included questions about the number of converts in the household or parish, the circumstances of conversion, and the

American charges

- Police conduct survey of Christians
- Textbooks condone Nazism
- Dang tribal kids threatened

sources of funding received from abroad. The report states that the Gujarat State Higher Secondary Board, to which nearly 98 percent of schools in Gujarat belong, requires the use of certain textbooks

in which Nazism is condoned.

In October 2002, the Gujarat minister for social Justice and empowerment, Karsan Patel, instructed 400 Dang tribal children, who were boarders at a Christian school in Subir "to decide whether they want to live as Hindus or die as Christians". Patel made this statement at the 'Ram Katha' in Subir, the report alleges.

The report also mentions the marriage in Ahmedabad between a Catholic, Anthony Rebello, and a Hindu, Reema Sompura. They were married in a legal Hindu marriage ceremony, but due to strong family and Bajrang Dal opposition, the couple was forced into hiding. Search warrants were

BJP is upset

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: No previous government in this country has had as cosy a relationship with the US as the BJP-led government at the Centre. But on Monday, the BJP was cut to the quick by a US State Department report which described it as a Hindu nationalist party with links with Hindu militant organisations.

Lashing out at the US State Department report, BJP spokesperson V.K. Malhotra said: "We are a nationalist party but have no links with any Hindu fundamentalist organisation indulging in violent acts against Muslims, Christians or other minorities. In the BJP, we have members from all these communities."

issued against them when Sompura's mother made a complaint against Rebello. Sompura testified in court that she went with Rebello willingly. The couple was attacked by VHP and Bajrang Dal members outside the court. Sompura, who was pregnant, was kicked in the stomach, and the baby was subsequently aborted. When at the police station, the couple was separated, Rebello was beaten further by VHP and Bajrang Dal members, and Sompura was handed over to her family.

Ultimatum to declare Ahmadias 'non-Muslims'

Relax By Haroon Habib

DHAKA, DEC. 6. Religious extremists in Bangladesh have warned that they would "capture" a mosque in Dhaka belonging to the minority Ahmadi sect if the Government failed to declare members of the community "non-Muslims", within 30 days.

Addressing a huge gathering near the mosque in Dhaka's Tejgaon area on Friday, leaders of the extremists warned that they would oust all the Ahmadias from Bangladesh by waging a "civil war" if their ultimatum went unheeded.

On November 21, a similar attack was launched by the extremists to capture the mosque but failed in their bid because of the police presence.

The extremist leaders declared the Ahmadias *kafer* (unbelievers) and announced that they did not have any right to stay in the country. The demonstrators also dubbed several Bengali newspapers as "enemies of Islam" and threatened to destroy any newspaper that called them "fundamentalists".

Last month, the imam of an Ahmadi mosque was killed by a frenzied mob in western Bangladesh, causing panic among members of the sect.

Europe is in grip of new anti-semitism, say Jews

Chris McGreal
Jerusalem, December 4

SIXTY YEARS after the Holocaust, European Jews and Israelis are increasingly wondering if Europe is being sucked into the worst wave of anti-semitism since World War II.

In the past few weeks, a German MP was forced to resign after saying Jews were responsible for Soviet atrocities, and the commander of the German army's special forces was sacked for agreeing with him. Then came the observation

by Greek composer Milki Theodorakis that Jews are at the root of all evil, and the fire-bombing of a Jewish school in Paris. But Israelis felt their fears were confirmed by an opinion poll of EU citizens that placed Israel as the greatest danger to world peace. Israelis were shocked, perplexed and outraged that they should be seen as a bigger threat than North Korea or Iran.

"Anti-semitism has become politically correct in Europe," said Natan Sharansky, former Soviet dissident and minister

in Ariel Sharon's government. Sharon has told European governments they need to do more to combat the rising anti-semitism. For instance, anti-semitism has spread to countries such as Denmark, previously renowned for efforts to save Jews during the Holocaust.

For the chairman of Israel's Holocaust memorial council, Avner Shalev, Theodorakis's anti-Jewish statement is a "symptom of the systematic flooding of Europe with incitement against the Jewish people and the state of Israel".

The Israeli Forum to Coordinate the Struggle Against Anti-semitism — a group of Israeli intelligence and foreign ministry officials — defines anti-semitism in three forms: classic, new and Muslim.

That view was confirmed for many Israelis when it was revealed that the European Union's racism watchdog has suppressed a report on anti-semitism because it concluded that Muslims were behind many incidents.

Israeli officials say the comments of Theodorakis and the

German MP, and a claim by the outgoing Malaysian leader, Mahathir Mohamad, that Jews rule the world by proxy and get others to fight and die for them, fall into the category of "classic" anti-semitism.

But it is the "new" anti-semitism that most disturbs some Jewish leaders because they say it emanates from influential groups such as academics, politicians and the media and is dressed up as criticism of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land.

The Guardian

Attacks

UK: Arson at Hillock Hebrew Congregation synagogue near Manchester in Nov. In Aug, headstones smashed at Jewish cemetery in Prestwich and in May, 386 Jewish graves at the Plashet Cemetery London desecrated

Germany: In Gundersberg in Oct, vandals sprayed Nazi slogans on headstones and cemetery gate. Wreaths laid at a memorial for Kristallnacht defaced

France: In Nov, Mercaz Hatorah school in Paris set on fire. In July, synagogue in Saint-Denis ransacked, prayer books torn

China heat on Bibles, media

Beijing, November 25

VILLAGERS IN southern China's Guangxi province on Tuesday accused local police of arresting Bible owners and sentencing them to labour camps as part of a campaign to weed out "illegal religious organisations". In another development, the government has suspended 673 state newspapers "for yielding no economic profit".

Written testimony supplied by villagers in Xilin county accused up to 40 policemen of descending

on Christian villages in the middle of the night and ransacking homes in search of Bibles and other religious materials.

Official arrest documents also show that the three people detained from Weishan and Tianbao villages were sentenced without trial to 18 months in a labour camp run by the Nanning Glass Factory in the provincial capital. The three were taken away on April 27, but it was only on September 26 that police told villagers the three Bible owners had been sent to the labour camp. Af-

ter repeated efforts, relatives of the men were finally allowed to visit them on October 21.

Meanwhile, in a bid to reform and trim down the newspaper sector, China has suspended the publication of 673 state newspapers. Another 87 have been turned into free publications. The step was taken as the publications were "yielding no economic profit", Xinhua reported on Monday. China's mainland has 2,119 newspapers, 9,038 magazines and 568 publishing houses.

AP



Archbishop Rowan Williams

Gay bishop faces an uphill task

London, November 3

CONSERVATIVE ANGLICANS refused on Monday to recognise the consecration of an openly gay bishop in the United States and said the move had split the church in two. But Liberals hailed the installation of Canon Gene Robinson in New Hampshire, saying it spelt an end to hypocrisy and double standards.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, battling to keep 70 million Anglicans together, said the divisions were "a matter of deep regret". Williams now faces

an uphill battle for consensus among Anglicans in 164 countries. Nigeria's Anglican Church leader Peter Akinola signalled a north-south divide, saying: "We cannot and will not recognise the office or ministry of Canon Gene Robinson as a bishop."

"We deplore the act of those bishops who have taken part in the consecration which has now divided the church," he said in a statement representing over 50 million Anglicans in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Archbishop Greg Venables, the Anglican leader in South America, said: "I think the

chances of consensus are very slim. We are having a time of separation and thinking. We are not saying it is a divorce yet."

Australian church leaders also joined the conservative camp. But the Liberal wing of the church sought to quell Conservative outrage. In Britain, Southwark Cathedral's Dean Colin Slee said Anglicans should rejoice that "at last there is an open and honest consecration of a homosexual bishop within the Church. There have been many before but they have not been honest or open".

Reuters

Mahathir gives a parting kick to Jews

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Kuala Lumpur, Oct. 30
(Reuters): Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, speaking on the eve of his retirement, said today that the Jewish people's past sufferings in Europe were no excuse for taking Arab land and persecuting Muslims.

The 78-year-old Muslim leader, who steps down tomorrow after 22 years in power, provoked howls of protest two weeks ago by saying that the Jews had emerged from the Holocaust to "rule this world by proxy."

A staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause, Mahathir said the Jews were now guilty of persecuting Muslims in the same way that Europeans had persecuted Jews down the ages.

"They must never think they are the chosen people who cannot be criticised at all," Mahathir said today when asked if he had one last message for the world's Jews.

His October 16 speech to leaders of Islamic nations had centred on the need for Muslims to join the modern world, use their brains, make peace and stamp out suicide bombing.

It also contained grudging admiration for the way Jews had prospered despite their persecution, but the comment on their world influence evoked memories in the West of the conspiracy theories used in Czarist Russia and Nazi Germany to whip up anti-semitism. But Mahathir said the past suffering of Jews was a source of sadness for Muslims. "They suffered a great deal in the past. They were killed, they were massacred," he said.

"We sympathise with them. We were very sad to see how the Jews were so ill-treated by the Europeans."

Mahathir denies being anti-Semitic and says he has Jewish friends, but in his controversial speech he failed to draw any distinction between Jews, Israelis and Zionists.

He reiterated today that the root problem between Jews and Muslims was the occupation of Arab land to form the state of Israel. "It is not religion at all. It is territorial. You take somebody's land and they will fight for it."

Minority Report

Setting Citizen Above Community

By Dipankar Gupta

Earlier this month, the white male who killed an American Sikh of Indian origin post-9/11 was given the maximum sentence by the American courts. That this violent, criminal act occurred in the wake of the terrorist strike of September 11 on the World Trade Center did not, in any way, mitigate the seriousness of the crime in the eyes of the law. Neither the state, nor the judiciary explained away the killing of the Sikh in terms of action and reaction.

Surcharged emotions post-9/11 did not in any way mitigate the seriousness of the crime. All of this happened notwithstanding Bushism and Bushspeak. In India, on the other hand, the state can never get cracking to actually punish those who are guilty of hate crimes. Somehow, community passions once aroused by a criminal act can condone the worst forms of collective brutality. The Best Bakery case is the most recent example of this.

Though America and India are both democratic states with a federal structure and a written constitution, the meaning of citizenship is not quite the same in both countries. While American policing round the world is worthy of condemnation, the way they protect their citizens from community and religious hatred is certainly worth emulating. There are many in the BJP who admire America for its aggressive policies worldwide, but they are unprepared to draw any lessons from how America treats its own citizens. Not just hate murders, American law comes down heavily even when there is a perceived threat against a community.

In fact, as late as 2003, as pointed out in a recent seminar, the American supreme court sentenced members of the Ku Klux Klan for cross-burning as this traditionally symbolised white supremacy in the US. And yet, in India, we pay no attention to the *trishul dikshas* that are being carried out by the VHP. What the *trishul* is to the aggressive VHP, cross-burning is for the KKK. In both cases, they are meant to arouse fear in minority communities. More than anything else, this clearly demonstrates the contrasting ways citizenship is viewed in both these countries. The community, whether majority or minority, can expect no favours from the state in America. This is the substance of the first amendment to the American constitution. Ironically, the first amendment to our Constitution privileges the community over individuals, especially in the case of caste.

As N J Demerath argues in his brilliant work, *Crossing the Gods*, in so-called religious politics there is hardly any religion, but there is a lot of politics. This politics is fanned by people who do not know

the fundamentals of their respective religions, nor have any time for them. Neither the white supremacists of the KKK, nor the Hindu rioters in Gujarat or Ayodhya care much for religion. It is community hatred that they espouse, and, therefore, it is all-important that the citizen should stand above the community in matters of law without the slightest prevarication.

If the citizen is in the centre, then many of the dilemmas we face in putting secularism to work become less intractable. For example, what is the point of arguing, as we do now, that conversion should not take place by inducement, coercion, bribes, etc? There are straightforward laws already against false inducement, coercion, bribes, threats and so forth, and there is just no point in linking that to religious conversion. Not just that, there are a number of formalities that have to be fulfilled in case a person declares a change of faith to demonstrate that fraudulent measures have not been employed. And yet, no such restrictions apply when it comes to the various *shuddhi* ceremonies that VHP activists routinely conduct, especially among the tribal people of India.

The first amendment to the American constitution not only said that the state would not be a party to any religious establishment, but also allowed for the free exercise of religion. This is how citizens are respected, and yet communities are kept at bay. A citizen should have the right to practise any religion, perhaps no religion at all. How can the state legislate on how conversions take place? Moreover, as Hinduism is not



a proselytising religion, the state's involvement in enacting laws that sets restrictions on conversion, actually makes it a partisan of the majority community. Too often, as a reaction to the majoritarianism of the current Indian government, there is a tendency on the part of secularists to talk in terms of minority rights. Most often they do not realise that they too are arguing within the broad parameter that sets the community above the citizen.

The first point is that individuals have rights and states have policies. Rather than minority rights which give precedence to virtuosos and elite spokespeople within communities, the state should have a policy that makes persecution of minorities punishable in the extreme. The danger of emphasising minority rights is precisely the leverage it gives communitarian leaders on both sides, but it is the citizen who suffers. As Prof Demerath also points out, hotheads in rival communities need each other, and often, even admire each other. This is why any concession to communities is always at the expense of citizenship. No matter which way one looks at it, it is always the minorities who suffer.

Mahathir renews his attack on 'arrogant Jews'

Bangkok: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad renewed his attack on "arrogant" Jews on Tuesday, saying in a newspaper interview that the world's reaction to his controversial recent comments confirms that "they do control the world."



M. Mohamad

The veteran leader, who retires later this month, launched his latest salvo despite US President George W. Bush pulling him aside at the APEC summit on Monday to bluntly denounce his "wrong and divisive" charge that Jews rule the world.

Mr Mahathir also criticised Western media who he said took his comments at last week's summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Malaysia out of context.

"In my speech I condemned all violence, even the suicide bombings, and I told all Muslims it's about time we stopped all these things and paused to think and do something that is much more productive," he said in a lengthy interview with the *Bangkok Post*.

"That was the whole tone of my speech, but they picked up one sentence where I said that the Jews control the world. Well, the reaction of the world shows they control the world."

The comments attracted a volley of international criticism, led by Mr Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who on Monday slammed the remarks as "slandorous."

Mr Mahathir though was unrepentant and launched a fresh broadside on Tuesday. "The Europeans and the Americans and others want to condemn me when, in fact, one chap said all Muslims are terrorists. (Italian Prime Minister Sylvio) Berlusconi himself made a statement that Muslims are terrorists."

"Did the European Union pass a resolution to say that this is against Muslims?" he asked. "Why is it that when people condemn Muslims the European Union does not try to say anything?" he said.

"Israel is a small country. There are not many Jews in the world. But they are so arrogant that they defy the whole world. Even if the United Nations say no, they go ahead. Why? Because they have the backing of all these people." AFP

Church & the state

India, sadly, can host another Mother

The beatification of Mother Teresa by the Vatican on Sunday raises two contradictory emotions. First, celebratory, thanks to the fact that one of the most remarkable human beings of our time who lived and worked in Kolkata till her death has been given a honour that her many admirers all over the world would value most. Second, discomfiting, because the basis of the honour — miracles — sits uneasily with almost every precept of rational thought. This is, of course, a problem with all organised religion. To the extent they are all political movements — in that they aim to command mass allegiance through various means of persuasion — all organised religions advertise special demonstrations of divinity on earth.

One of the greatest achievements of modernity has been to empower common people with the mental wherewithal with which to question such advertising. Many, of course, still do not. But that, as this newspaper will be the first to argue, is their private business. Faith can be a purely personal, even non-institutional, affair. Or it can be an experience that is shared with large numbers of co-religionists in a structured setting. The basic concept of miracles propounded by Catholicism — like similar aspects in other major religions like Hinduism and Islam — can, and should be a matter between the church and the faithful.

So, is at one level, the recognition of Mother Teresa's "miraculous" powers. But at another level, it is a public issue. Not so much because Mother Teresa was a public figure. But because of the nature of the "miracle". Ms Monica Besra's claim that faith healed her cancer directly clashes with science, which says such a thing simply cannot happen. If we do claim to live in a modern society, and we indeed do despite the areas of darkness in some parts of the world, we can scarcely ignore the implicit confrontation. The Hindu godmen and, these days, godwomen, the Islamic fantasists and the tribal animists who make or bless similar claims are charged with obscurantism. So, should be the Vatican. The assessment of Mother Teresa's wondrous and memorable public career is not affected by that. But her posthumous glorification is.

There's another issue, that is also essentially secular. Mother Teresa's work in India was, as Western commentators routinely describe again and again, among the wretched. To admit that the adjective is right is the first job. The second job is to see that the adjective can no longer be applied. But more than half a decade after India became a master of its own destiny, and despite its extraordinary progress in several fields, the country still teems with the impossibly poor and the inconceivably unfortunate.

Another Mother Teresa could find a lifetime's work here. That is not a cause for celebration but for shame. Politicians, officials and members of India's impressive, first world-comparable establishment who pay Mother Teresa automatic tributes should also reflect on how they have failed.

Banning the headscarf

By Vaiju Naravane

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With more schoolgirls defying the ban on the Islamic headscarf in state schools, the debate recently came to a head with calls for a full-fledged law — as opposed to Education Ministry rules — banning the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in schools.

France has the largest Muslim population in Europe. Many Muslims in France feel they are ill-integrated into the fabric of French society. Young French Muslims are often people with an attitude, born with a chip on the shoulder in the country's sordid suburban localities rife with delinquency, gang warfare, despair and drug abuse.

Official estimates place the number of Muslims in France at close to five million. Unofficial sources say they may be closer to seven million. Unemployment in the Muslim areas peopled mainly by North Africans is as high as 40 per cent against the national average of 12 per cent. In a post-September 11 world traumatised by terrorist attacks and haunted by the spectre of an aggressive, militant and fundamentalist Islam, the decision by a handful of schoolgirls to defy the laws of the Republic has been widely interpreted as symptomatic of a rise in sectarianism and communalism.

A specially appointed commission headed by Bernard Stasi, former Minister and a close adviser to President Jacques Chirac, held consultations with people from all walks of life and more specifically with religious leaders of every shade and hue. A new law banning the wearing of conspicuous or ostentatious religious insignia was its major recommendation, one that the Government has evidently decided to accept.

On December 17, Mr. Chirac in a major policy speech said that France's secular republican values were "not negotiable". He said he would

ask Parliament to pass a law banning conspicuous religious symbols in state schools. His speech however also underlined the real fears behind the headscarf ban — that Islamic fundamentalism was gaining ground in France and unless curbed would lead to religious tensions in a society that was, until a couple of years ago, remarkably free from communal strife.

"The danger is that of letting loose centrifugal forces, the exaltation of specific interests that separate people. Division, discrimination, confrontation — that is the danger. Communalism will not be France's choice. We will not tolerate, under the guise of religious freedom, a contestation of the laws and principles of the republic. Laicity is one of the great conquests of the republic that we should work to consolidate... The Islamic veil — whatever name we give it — the *kippa* and a cross that is of plainly excessive dimensions: these have no place in the precincts of state schools. State schools will remain secular. For that a law is necessary," Mr. Chirac said in his address.

For over 100 years France has maintained a strict separation of church and state. Article 1 of the Constitution promulgated on October 4, 1958 says: "France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs."

But this consensus around secularism was reached after tremendous upheaval and turmoil that included wars, persecution and bitter quarrels. The source of French secularism lies in the 1789 Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man followed by the Concordat of 1801 that recognised the equality of all religions. Right up until the early 20th century however, France was divided into two camps, one pro- and the other anti-clerical. The former argued that France should once again become the "elder daughter of the Catholic Church". The latter held that France was the "daughter of the Revolution" and thus could not conceive of herself in religious terms. These quarrels ceased with a broad consensus emerging in favour of secularism and the debate appeared to have ended. Until 1989 that is, when

it was suddenly jerked back to life.

Ironically, the expulsion of the schoolgirls from Creil in 1989 resulted from a decision of the teachers to oblige Jewish students to attend school on Saturdays. As Luis Cardoso, Professor of History and Geography at the Gabriel-Havez School in Creil where it all began, explains: "For several years, certain orthodox Jewish students did not attend classes on Saturday morning. At the start of each school year in September, these students began attending classes ten days after everyone else. The principal and staff decided that absence from class for religious reasons would no longer be tolerated. It was then that certain professors brought up the matter of the headscarf, which the school had tolerated alongside the Jewish absences. If Jewish children were going to be asked to abide by the secular rules of the school system, shouldn't Muslim students wearing headscarves also be expected to respect the same rules? That is how it all started."

Opponents of the Islamic headscarf say it is a symbol of women's subservience and inferiority and as such intolerable in a republic that claims to uphold and defend equality of the sexes. They stress the need for a distinction between belief and knowledge. Allowing the headscarf in a public space that must remain neutral would be tantamount to undermining republican values, they say.

Those who favour a more tolerant approach say that the transmission of knowledge need not necessarily take place in a void, that the Republic is strong enough to admit and tolerate individual quirks of dress and manner. Banning the headscarf, they say, would be an infringement of the freedom to practise one's religion. It will tend to push the Islamic community into the hands of extremists who favour a more fundamentalist, hardline approach.

The question is, will legislation resolve the problem? The law will give school principals clear guidelines that have been in scant supply so far. But social workers, especially in the difficult suburbs around France's big cities where North African Muslim populations are generally concentrated, have warned about the risks of further marginalising a community that already feels rejected by the

country's white mainstream.

Moderate Muslims tend to favour what they call *Islam de France* — French-style Islam with maximum integration into the host community — rather than *Islam en France* (Islam in France), a transplant from purely Muslim societies. *Islam de France*, the home-grown variety, would incorporate the principle of laicity.

As John R. Bowen, a researcher at the Washington University in St. Louis, wrote: "Many Muslims with university positions urge Muslims to follow a French lifestyle in France, shaping their Islam around either private prayer or an appreciation of Arabo-Muslim history and civilisation. ... This foreign/local tension emerges in particular combinations of languages and objects at Islamic events."

"Non-Muslim French expectations from Muslims are strongly shaped by the idea of laicity, the idea that public institutional life in France should be devoid of religious representations, because citizens are to fashion themselves through their participation in these institutions."

Human rights organisations say that France is violating a fundamental principle, the freedom of free religious practice. Others who fear a backlash say the Government is making a mountain out of a molehill and that this approach will surely lead France to grief, alienating the five-million-strong Muslim community and further hampering its smooth integration into the national fabric. That this will only encourage *Islam en France* and scotch any chances of developing an *Islam de France*.

Already there have been demonstrations in France and warnings of dire consequences from various Islamic leaders including those of Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Backers of the ban say they are defending the principles on which French society has been founded and that any compromise on the issue of secularism would be a betrayal of those principles.

When asked what would happen to young Sikh students in French school, a teacher said: "Well, the turbans will have to go of course." When told Sikhs were not allowed by their faith to cut their hair and that the hair itself was a symbol of religious faith, her response was: "Well, either they will have to cut it off or we'll have to cross that bridge when we reach it. But when it comes to laicity there is no possibility of *Vive la difference!*"

THE HINDU
THE HINDU

2003
25 DEC 2003

MOTHER TERESA BEATIFIED

Richard Owen/ The Times, London

ROME, Oct. 19. — Brushing aside doubts over the "miracle" attributed to Mother Teresa, the Pope today beatified the "Saint of the Gutters" in Rome before a crowd of 300,000, which included Muslims and Hindus.

He declared her an icon of the Good Samaritan who had served the hungry, the naked, and the sick.

At the ceremony in St Peter's Square, the blue and white saris of Mother Teresa's order and saffron robes of Indian dancers contrasted with the Pope's gold robes and the red hats of the 150 cardinals who were in Rome to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's pontificate.

Beatification, which requires evidence of a miracle, is the final step before sainthood. Though the process normally begins five years after death, this was reduced by the Pope to two years in the case of Mother Teresa. It is an open secret in the Vatican that he would have preferred to make her a saint straightaway.

The Pope, who is 83 and losing the power of speech because of Parkinson's disease, was unable for the first time to read any of his homily, which was read by an aide. It said: "Even in our times, God inspires new models of sainthood".

The Albanian-born Mother Teresa, "this courageous woman whom today we add to the ranks of the Blessed", had "imposed herself by her radicalness" and by her work for "the poorest and most forgotten, the last of the last".

The Mass was attended by Monica Besra, who, the year after Mother Teresa's death in 1997, claimed that she had been cured of stomach cancer after a medal bearing Mother Teresa's image was placed on her abdomen. The doctor who initially diagnosed her says that she recovered because of normal medical treatment. However, the medical



Monica Besra, whose claim that she was cured of stomach cancer by Mother Teresa's intercession, at the beatification Mass in St Peter's Square, Vatican, on Sunday. — AFP

panel advising the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints ruled that it was a miracle.

Many of the pilgrims waited all night to enter the square, where the front rows were reserved for 3,000 of Rome's homeless and destitute, who were given lunch in the Vatican afterwards.

The service was also attended by heads of state, including Queen Fabiola of Belgium, President Moisiu of Albania and President

Trajkovski of Macedonia. Archbishop Telesphore Toppo of India, one of 31 prelates to be created cardinal by the Pope at a consistory on Tuesday, said he hoped that the beatification would promote harmony among religions.

Corriere della Sera suggested that one of the cardinals, whose name is being kept secret by the Pope, was Mother Teresa. Vatican officials denied this, saying that cardinals, like priests, had to be male.

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Oct. 19. — The celebrations of the Missionaries of Charity saw the doors of Mother House opened wide which people from all walks of life visited to pay their homage to Mother Teresa.

The day began at 6 a.m. with Mass in the chapel from where the gathering proceeded to Mother's tomb on the ground floor. Illuminated with candles, the marble tomb was supremely serene, and throughout the rest of the day, sisters of the Missionaries of Charity and visitors sat praying in the room.

The afternoon saw processions, mostly of children from impoverished backgrounds, come to Mother House from different parts of the city carrying placards with Mother's message and hand-made flags of white

Prayers, homage in city

and blue stripes, symbolising the colours of her sari. Even the rain later in the day lent ambience with the haunting sound of nuns invisibly singing hymns to the accompaniment of an organ. The warm, welcoming smiles of the sisters reflected Mother's message of love for all humanity and harmony to mankind. Every visitor received the "miraculous medal", which Mother herself used to distribute to anyone visiting any of the MC homes. Special Mass in the evening was exclusively for members of the MC. An international film festival on Blessed Teresa and her life's work will be held at New Empire and Lighthouse from 1 to 4 November. The films are made by stalwarts like Dominique Lapiere, Cristobal Guiterro, Jose Antony Kurisunkal and Pierre Belanger, SJ.

More photographs, reports on page 3, Kolkata Plus I & III

Italy to push for reference to Christianity in E.U. statute

419-15
3/110
By Vaiju Naravane *felson*

PARIS, OCT. 2. Italy is expected to push hard for the inclusion of a reference to Europe's Christian roots in the European Union's future Constitution, which will be under discussion at a conference that opens in Rome this weekend.

At present, Italy presides over the 15-member Union soon to be enlarged with 10 new members, mainly from Eastern Europe. Some members of the E.U., chiefly Italy, Spain and Ireland and Poland, one of the 10 future members, are in favour of a specific mention of Christianity in the document, a move opposed by other secular republics such as France. Pope John Paul II has repeatedly urged mention of Christianity in the final document.

"Italy will work for an ever more united Europe and do all it can to ensure that the Pope's proposal for a reference in the European Constitution to Europe's Christian roots has a good reception," the Italian Foreign Minister, Franco Frattini, said following meetings in Rome with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul. "Italy believes this fundamental point in the Constitution's preamble can be modified without changing the overall draft put together with such effort," Mr. Frattini said. Many countries are opposed to the membership of Turkey, a predominantly Muslim, albeit constitutionally secular state, in the E.U. Any reference to Christianity would vastly diminish the chances of Turkey's inclusion.

There are no references to Christianity in the present draft document prepared after much wrangling by a European Convention headed by the former French President, Valery Giscard d'Estaing. He opposed the Pope's appeal for a specific reference to Christianity on the grounds that European democracies were founded on the principle of secularism.

Mr. Frattini said secularism was a principle underlying political institutions. "A reference to the Christian tradition is a historical value uniting all the European peoples."

The inter-governmental conference will be a major test for Italy's Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, who has often angered fellow Europeans by his abrasive personal style and his apparent reluctance or inability to put an end to his conflict of interests. Mr. Berlusconi, a committed Catholic, will push hard for changes. It will be a difficult task since unanimity is required for text changes.

The risk of failure is high. Smaller countries are opposing the blueprint, fearing that the Constitution, as it stands, concentrates too much power in major nations such as France and Germany.

The heads of Government of four East European states said they were ready to fight for their interests. Leaders of the so-called Visegrad group — Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia — said they wanted to see the Constitution include the principle of "one country, one commissioner (minister)" and have a collective, rotating E.U. presidency.

THE HINDU

3 OCT 2004

The Sangh Parivar has put the country in the hands of some holy men about whose existence we had no knowledge till the other day *Belur*

TOWARDS HINDUTVA

By RK DASGUPTA

IT is reported in the press that Professor Amartya Sen is contemplating a dialogue with LK Advani to see how far secular is India's deputy prime minister in his political conduct. The report is confusing if only because none of us can think of worthwhile conversation between an economist with his standing as a philosopher and one of the leaders of the Sangh Parivar who can claim the credit for being the inaugurator of the Hindutva movement with his Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in October 1990 which brought his party in power in New Delhi less than a decade later.

The opposition which blames the BJP coalition on various counts is seldom if ever very powerful in exposing the political misdeeds of its adversary. It fears losing Hindu votes if it goes too far in condemning the Sangh Parivar's Hindutva doctrine. The Congress has fallen on evil days and its leaders are too mediocre to raise a strong voice against the BJP and its allies. But it is the Congress which stood for liberal ideals for about 80 years from its creation in 1885 to 1964 when Jawaharlal Nehru died. That ideal was the philosophy which inspired the makers of modern India — Raja Rammohun Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Pandit Nehru. That philosophy has now been supplanted by the Sangh Parivar which has put the country in the hands of some holy men about whose existence we had no knowledge till the other day.

We should now seriously reflect on the circumstances and the psychology which brought the BJP in power in New Delhi. Advani sitting on the chariot was looked upon as Shyama Krishna who advised Arjuna to

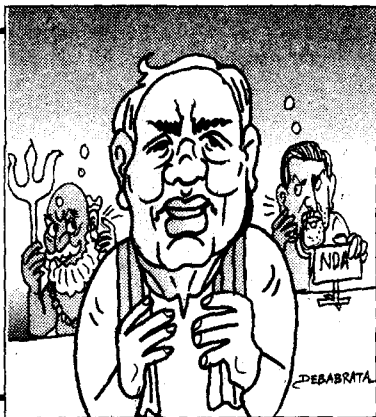
fight a holy war in the Mahabharata. The chariot displayed the RSS symbol, the saffron flag and the BJP lotus symbol. There were militant slogans calling for the building of a Ram temple in Ayodhya while slogans for the cause of Hindutva were repeated again and again.

The Danish historian, Professor Thomas Blom Hansen, has described the Rath Yatra in his 293-page *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationa-*

Mahmud of Ghazni raided the Somnath temple in 1024 and carried away its stately gates as booty. Advani very cleverly chose the site of the temple as the starting-point of his Rath Yatra and he did not care for anti-Muslim slogans just as Mahmud did not think of shouting against the Hindus. Both concentrated on their deed.

Advani's Rath Yatra created the Hindutva mentality which instigated the *kar sevaks* to bring down the mosque built by

The NDA now ruling the country is the result of a shameful strategy of exploiting small regional parties' desire for a taste of power



lism in Modern India published by the Oxford University Press in 1999. He says: "the Yatra which the RSS forthrightly called a dharma yuddha, an expression borrowed from Savarkar's writings received an enthusiastic response, often organised and encouraged by local Sangh Parivar activists, was a mixture of traditional pious worship, political militancy and muscular kshatriya traditions which had become the trademark of the Hindutva campaign".

In his two-volume *The Saffron Swastika* (2001), a brazen-faced defence of the BJP, Koenraad Elst, a Dutch-speaking Belgian, says that Advani was "never caught in the act of making even a single anti-Muslim remark". When his anti-Muslim acts are so inspiring for the RSS why should Advani waste his time in using words?

Let us reflect on Advani's anti-Muslim strategy in his Rath Yatra. He makes it a highly dramatic movement between Somnath and Ayodhya. Sultan

the founder of the Moghul Empire. Advani fulfilled the dream of Savarkar who wrote his *Hindutva* (1923) to say that the "holy land of the Muslims of India is far off in Arabia or Palestine". Savarkar's *Hindutva* is the bible of the Sangh Parivar and their politicians, Vajpayee and Advani, subscribe to its ideas. It does not matter to either of them that this idea is a Hindu confirmation of the Muslim League's two-nation theory. Savarkar's last words in his *Hindutva* — "Oh Hindus, consolidate and strengthen Hindu Nationality" are the cry of the Sangh Parivar and the words express the spirit of the Rath Yatra of Advani.

Advani was arrested by the Janata Dal administration of Bihar in late October and a group of *kar sevaks* attempted to storm the Babari Masjid on 30 October 1990 and managed to place a saffron flag on its top. This led to police firing killing more than 50 persons. The BJP called the Uttar Pradesh gov-

ernment "pro-Muslim pseudo-secularist". There is no doubt that the demolition of the Babari Masjid barely two years later was inspired by Advani's Rath Yatra. The man who kept alive the spirit of Advani's Rath Yatra is none other than Murlu Manohar Joshi who launched an *ekta yatra* from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir in December 1991.

How the BJP used the demolition of the Babari Masjid in its electoral battle in four states — UP, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh in 1993 — is seen in its description of it as "the largest national movement in the history of India" and presenting Kalyan Singh of UP as the hero of Ayodhya. The VHP turned the elections into what it called Virat Hindu Sangram. Although the BJP lost all the four states it became the single largest party in UP and Rajasthan. This led to the BJP coalition at the Centre in 1999.

The National Democratic Alliance now ruling the country is the result of a shameful strategy of exploiting small regional parties' desire for a taste of political power. What is even more shameful is BJP outwardly abandoning the Hindutva ideal and wearing a mask of secularism to maintain the coalition.

The Sangh Parivar is allowing it as a step towards a Hindu Raj. But Mr Vajpayee knows how to please the RSS by occasional statements with a fundamentalist overtone. Actually Vajpayee has two voices, one for the ears of the NDA and the liberal elements in Indian politics and the other for the ears of the Sangh Parivar.

Let me end with a quotation from Professor Hansen who says in his work that the "Hindu nationalist movement, arguably the most authoritarian movement ever in power in the country, has come to power at a time when the prospects for actually imposing cultural homogeneity, political unity and uniform governance of the country as a whole has never been bleaker".

The author, an eminent scholar, is former Director, the National Library of India.

German court rejects headscarf ban

Karlsruhe (Germany),
September 24

GERMANY'S TOP court said on Wednesday that a Muslim woman teacher could wear a traditional headscarf in school, ruling on a highly contentious issue across Europe.

The Federal Constitutional Court said school authorities in the southern city of Stuttgart had been wrong to bar Afghan-born Fereshtha Ludin from a teaching job. It said there was no law prohibiting teachers from covering their heads.

Ludin had been barred on the grounds that her headscarf would violate the state's neu-

trality in religion. The hijab, as it is called in Arabic, has offended teachers, bureaucrats and modern-minded women in Europe for more than a decade.

Wednesday's ruling opened the way for Muslim women teachers across Germany to cover their heads while at school unless the country's federal states have laws expressly forbidding religious symbols in the classroom.

Talking to reporters outside the court and wearing a pale yellow headscarf, Ludin said: "For years in all the court cases I felt stigmatised just because I wear a headscarf. The decision is a big relief for me."

Deputy presiding judge Winfried Hassemer, overturning rulings by lower courts in the case, said it was up to state legislatures, not courts, to decide on the matter.

Germany's Central Council of Muslims, which represents over three million Muslims in the country, said the ruling gave Muslim women more work opportunities and independence.

"The ruling takes into account the fact that headscarves in Germany have long been a part of everyday life," the council said in a statement.

Ludin's case was the second the constitutional court has handled in as many months. In

August, it ruled that Muslim shop assistants could not be fired for wearing a headscarf, despite managers' complaints that they put off customers.

In France, a state commission is debating whether Paris should forbid Muslim girls from wearing a scarf to class.

Not all Europeans have made such a fuss. The British, for example, generally shrug at the headscarves in their Muslim neighbourhoods as just another part of a multicultural society.

Germany's Constitution obliges the state to maintain strict neutrality in matters of religion. Authorities in the traditionally Catholic state of

Bavaria had to fight a long battle to keep the right to display crucifixes in the classroom.

Ludin had been banned from taking up a post in 1998 to teach English and German in primary and secondary schools. Ludin had appealed to the constitutional court after lower courts had ruled in favour of the regional government in the southwestern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

Koe Kumira, a Muslim woman wearing a patterned headscarf on a shopping errand in the western city of Cologne, said: "You have to be able to be true to your religion. I wish the headscarf debate would be left alone."

Reuters

19.15.2019

revenue

Unfazed BJP tells Muslims to hand over disputed land

Shekhar Iyer & PTI
New Delhi, September 20

UNFAZED BY the special court's ruling, the BJP on Saturday said it is proud to be associated with the Ram temple movement and appealed to Muslims to hand over the disputed site to Hindus.

"We appeal to Muslims to hand over the site to Hindus to resolve the issue in the wake of the ASI report," said BJP president Venkaiah Naidu. The Ram-Janmabhoomi issue is a political issue and the BJP would face it legally as well as politically, he said. The party will appeal in the High Court against the special court's ruling asking the CBI to frame charges against seven leaders.

The CBI, however, said it wasn't yet sure whether to appeal against the acquittal of Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, and was going through the court order to



Murli Manohar Joshi
In limbo

make up its mind.

BJP leaders said they were confident of persuading M.M. Joshi to take back his resignation. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's speech on 14 December 2000 in the Lok Sabha might be a pointer to the way he will handle the resignation.

Before the government defeated an Opposition censure motion, a determined Vajpayee had said: "Neither the Constitution nor law disqualifies a minister from holding office because of charges filed by the police or because of charges

framed by a court."

Shortly after that statement, the Opposition motion — seeking the removal of Joshi, Advani and Uma Bharti, and disapproving the stand taken by the Prime Minister on the Ayodhya issue — was rejected by 291 votes to 179.

Vajpayee's speech had elements that form the BJP's stand today: no minister needs to quit following the court's order to nail Joshi and other leaders.

BJP sources say if Joshi doesn't press for his resignation, the PM will let the party stand prevail and go by the counsel of Advani, who did not want Joshi to quit. The RSS, too, wants Joshi to continue as minister.

The PM spoke to Joshi on Saturday, but the latter declined to say what transpired. A PMO official said Vajpayee would decide the matter in consultation with his colleagues.

Related report on Page 4

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 SEP 2003

Court convicts Dara Singh, Gladys forgives

DEBABRATA MOHANTY

Bhubaneswar, Sept. 15: Dara Singh and the 12 other accused were silent as a designated CBI court here today convicted them of the murder of Graham Staines and his two minor sons (in picture on right).

Khurda district and sessions judge M.N. Patnaik, also the designated CBI judge, convicted them under IPC Sections 120, 120(B), 148, 149, 302, 435 and 436 for conspiracy, unlawful assembly, burning of vehicle and house, and murder. The sentence and its quantum will be specified on September 22.

As an unperturbed, *khadi* *kurta*-clad Dara was being whisked away to the judicial lock-up, he said: "*Chinta nahin* (Don't worry). We will appeal in higher court." His lawyer, Bana Mohanty, said as much.

About 300 km from the court, at Baripada, Staines' wife Gladys sounded calm on the phone. "I have full faith in the Indian judiciary. The law of the land has taken its own course. But I have forgiven Dara and others," she said.

The families of Rajat Kumar Das, Renta Hembram, Mahendra Hembram, Ojen Hansdah, Umakanta Bhoi, Rabi Soren, Dayanidhi Patra, Mahadeb Mahanta, Harish Mahanta, Thurr- am Ho, Surath Nayak and Kartik



Lohar, however, were crushed. Kartik's mother Laxmi wept inconsolably outside the court as her son was driven away to Choudwar jail. She had spent Rs 1.5 lakh on the legal fight. "How will I live if my son is sent to jail? How can I appeal in higher courts? He has been framed by my Christian neighbours," she cried.

Ojen, whose three daughters, a son and a sister in Manoharpur felt let down, said: "We are not satisfied with the verdict. We have been framed by the CBI."

Of the 18 people the CBI chargesheeted on June 19, 1999, three are absconding. Among the remaining 15, Aniruddha Dandapat, alias Anaha Nayak, was acquitted today for want of evidence. Thirteen-year-old Chenchu Hansdah had been sentenced in 2000 to 14 years in jail.

Today's conviction more or

less brought the curtain down on 31 months of trial that began on March 1, 2001. "We are very happy with this verdict," CBI counsel K. Sudhakar said.

Australian high commission diplomat Mark Webslor, who was in court to convey the verdict to his office, said: "Our government attaches a lot of importance to the case." Staines was an Australian missionary who had spent over 30 years working for leprosy patients in Baripada.

He and his sons, Philip and Timothy, were burnt alive in their station wagon in Keonjhar district's Manoharpur village on the intervening night of January 22-23, 1999.

The All Orissa United Christian Forum commended the judiciary while emphasising that Christians had forgiven the main accused, Dara.

"The Indian judiciary has demonstrated that one can depend on the fact that the guilty will not go unpunished," said a forum statement issued here.

The government, alive to the likely reaction to the verdict, posted a police team at the murder site and the church in Manoharpur. Police officials in Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj said security had also been beefed up around other churches in the region.

See Page 5



Dara Singh being taken to court on Monday. (AFP)

Cow bill heads for the slaughterhouse

KAY BENEDICT AND
K. SUBRAHMANYA

New Delhi, Aug. 21: The Sangh parivar might not like it, but the proposal to ban cow slaughter is likely to go the way of women's reservation, which is hanging fire since 1996 when a bill was first introduced.

Key allies Telugu Desam, DMK, Trinamul Congress and Janata Dal (United) today aborted the government's attempt to introduce the cow slaughter bill in the Lok Sabha.

After the loss of face — the BJP had been crowing about the NDA's unity during the no-confidence debate — parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj announced that an all-party meeting would consider the bill before it was introduced. Many such meetings have failed to yield a consensus on the women's bill.

With several states — West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and the northeastern states among them — making it clear they would not enforce the law, it would be tough to get it passed.

Even if the BJP-led government manages to table the bill, sources said, it would be referred to the standing committee on

agriculture for an in-depth study. The committee has 45 members — 30 from the Lok Sabha and 15 from the Rajya Sabha. Out of the 30 in the Lower House, only 10 are from the BJP. The Opposition-dominated committee can delay the bill if it chooses to, writing report after report.

Opposition MPs belonging to the Left parties, Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal and Muslim League protested strongly as agriculture minister Rajnath Singh stood up to table the bill.

But the allies were at the forefront, raising a banner of revolt. Desam, Trinamul, DMK, PMK and Dal(U) MPs rushed to the well of the House as Rajnath rose.

When they refused to be quietened, Speaker Manohar Joshi adjourned the House briefly. He then called the floor leaders, Swaraj and Rajnath for consultations in his chamber.

When the House reassembled, Swaraj announced that the government has decided to convene an NDA meeting followed by an all-party meeting.

Telugu Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu, who was in Delhi, met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the morning

to ask him not to rush the bill.

Naidu said his party was not consulted and added that a law on the "sensitive issue" should be enacted only after a consensus.

"It is not a priority item for the country. The issue is a state subject and concerning the economy," the Andhra Pradesh chief minister said after the meeting. The Desam would have no objection if everyone else agreed.

Trinamul chief Mamata Banerjee echoed the call for all-party consensus.

CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee grabbed the opportunity to needle the BJP. "Sushmaji, you were talking about consensus when it came to the women's reservation bill. Why are you not talking about it now? You have not even consulted your own allies."

The Congress, which was quiet in the House in view of the upcoming Madhya Pradesh elections where cow slaughter is a big issue, later said it did not have any problem with the bill's objective.

"Our only objection is about the Parliament's competence to legislate," the party spokesperson said, pointing out that it was a state subject.

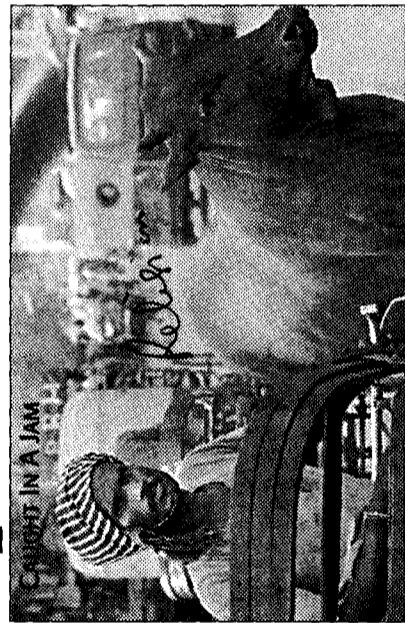
BJP To Convene All-Party Meeting As NDA Partners Concur With Oppn To Oppose Move

Govt drops Bill on cow slaughter ban

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 21 AUGUST

ALLIES on Thursday caused a major embarrassment to the BJP when they joined hands with the Left and Muslim League to stall the introduction of the Bill proposing an all-India ban on cow slaughter.

Protests from the allies — DMK, TDP and Trinamool Congress — helped a belligerent Left and Muslim League to beat back the government's efforts to introduce the Bill which was conceived as a poll-eve gesture to the pro-Hinduva sections. The allies complained that they were not consulted on the Cows (Prevention of Cruelty) Bill, 2003, strengthening the hands of the Left and the Muslim League who opposed the very concept of the



proposed Bill, calling it an intrusion in the jurisdiction of states.

Though the parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, while announcing the retreat, said an all-party meeting will be convened soon, government's failure to introduce the Bill has

dashed hopes to humour its Hinduva constituents in the poll-bound states.

The Congress which has found it difficult to craft a clear stance on a country-wide ban on cow slaughter for the fear of offending the sentiments of majority and

minority communities, could not conceal its glee over BJP's misstep. Relieved that it had been spared the challenge of fashioning a response that would pass muster with both communities, it was busy poking fun at its safety from adversary.

A jubilant party spokesperson S. Jaipal Reddy called the retreat on the Bill a major embarrassment for the BJP. The resistance from within the NDA partners as well as the TDP, which has been extending outside support to the government, stung the BJP with its spokesman V.K. Malhotra openly acknowledging that it did not expect DMK to oppose the Bill which was cleared by the Cabinet. The confession may appear to be genuine, considering that the DMK, unlike the Trinamool and the TDP, is part of the government,

and its senior most representative, T.R. Baalu, part of the Cabinet which cleared the bill for introduction in Parliament.

The Bill is among the legislations designed by the government to appease the Hinduva constituency on the eve of polls. Besides, it is also expected to outsmart Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh who has turned into a vocal votary of a ban on cow slaughter.

The twin objectives were the main driver behind the innovative approach of the law ministry. The ministry shifted the objective of the legislation from "preservation" — listed in the Constitution as the preserve of states to an area — prevention of cruelty — where it enjoyed the right to ingress, in order to escape the charge of poaching the jurisdiction of states.

Religion - VV

No beef in this law

Cow slaughter! Does Parliament have nothing more urgent to consider? 18/8 9h 8

THIS Bill could have been drafted by the VHP. In this parliamentary session, before the upcoming assembly polls in November, the government is set to shepherd legislation that proposes a nationwide ban on cow slaughter. Sale and export of beef would be outlawed in all states — even Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, which have refused to enact a state-level ban on cow slaughter so far. And a permanent National Development Commission on Cows would be constituted. A ban on cow slaughter has been a cardinal point of VHP campaigns since its inception; its Goraksha Vibhag, mandated to look into issues of “protection of cow progeny” and “cow development”, was activated way back in 1986. This Bill could have been scripted by Digvijay Singh. In recent months, Madhya Pradesh has seen the testfiring of soft Hindutva, Congress style, and the cow has been its visible totem. It is Diggy Raja who has been the most articulate on the virtues of cows and bans most recently. His state played host to the tawdry war of pamphlets and posters in which the Congress accused Vajpayee of eating beef and the BJP immediately countered by asking when Sonia had stopped doing so. Last heard, Madhya Pradesh's CM had announced his government's decision to declare the cow as the state animal either by remov-

ing the unsuspecting and already endangered barasingha from its privileged perch, or along with it.

Actually, this Bill has the fingerprints of the cynical politician all over it: Shrewd eye on polls, competing for the supposedly monolithic Hindu Vote. While religious taboos on beef-eating have probably existed for centuries, legislative bans on cow slaughter reek of an unacceptable intolerance. They also violate the right to livelihood in a plural society. In the name of the cow, we have seen some of the most bigoted, most hate-filled politics in independent India. Several riots have been spurred by reports of slaughter of cows. In Jhajar last year, after the lynching of Dalits for the alleged crime of the skinning of a cow, the VHP's leading light, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, quoted Hindu scriptures to say that the life of a cow was more precious than that of a human being.

This Bill is also about the trivialisation of politics. In the name of the cow, development issues are being given the go-by once again. Surely, Parliament has more important business to transact this session. Surely, in a country where the basics of a healthy and dignified life are yet to be assured to all, the proposed national development commission for cows can wait. It is sad that the government should frame such a Bill. And sadder still that it will hardly be opposed.

INDIAN EXPRESS

13 AUG 2003

States cry foul over bid to ban cow slaughter

OUR BUREAU

Aug. 11: Three Northeast chief ministers have slammed the Union cabinet's decision today to ban cow slaughter and warned they would not accept any legislation that clashed with their indigenous cultures of their states.

The political leadership in Bengal, which also has a substantial beef-eating population, reacted strongly, calling it a move "designed" to sway Hindu voters.

In the Northeast, Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga said India is a multiethnic state. "If a bill banning cow slaughter

is passed, it could set the ball rolling for efforts to ban the slaughter of pigs. But both beef and pork are part of the food habits of the hill people. So, it will not be feasible to implement such measures and we will oppose them, if need be."

Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio said there was no question of prohibiting cow slaughter or ratifying a central legislation on the subject. "India is a secular country and the cultures of all communities have to be respected. We will have no hesitation in opposing any move by the Centre to impose a ban on cow slaughter," the chief minister said.

In Nagaland, such a law has to be ratified by the Assembly for it to take effect. According to Article 371 (A) of the Constitution, no act of Parliament is applicable to the state without the Assembly's ratification.

"It is impossible to change our food habits," Meghalaya chief minister D.D. Lapang said. "The Northeast as a whole does not have a very high per capita income and the majority of the people cannot afford an expensive alternative to beef. The dietary pattern of our people has evolved over a long time and cannot be changed overnight."

The veteran Congress leader, however, said a decision on the

cow slaughter bill would be taken by his party only after consulting its allies. The state unit of the BJP also voiced its opposition. "The proposal does not suit our people and, therefore, I am not in favour of it," state BJP chief W.Knarshiing said.

According to statistics available with the veterinary and animal husbandry department, over 14 lakh people in Meghalaya eat beef. The state has a population of 23 lakh. Apart from the predominantly Christian Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram, the sizeable non-Hindu population in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh also eat beef.

In Left-ruled Bengal, minis-

ter for animal resources development Anisur Rahman said the Centre's move to make the ban on cow slaughter "binding" on all states would evoke "strong protests" from the people of the state. "This is a political move designed to woo Hindu voters," he said, adding that the decision was taken keeping in mind the coming elections in five states.

Rahman said he would discuss the matter with chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee after he returns from Delhi.

Bhattacharjee and other senior CPM leaders like Jyoti Basu and Biman Bose were not available for comment. According to Rahman, the state government

allows slaughter of cows above 14 years of age under the Cattle Slaughter Control Act. "However, this restriction is not applicable for slaughter of buffalo and we regularly export buffalo meat from a processing unit at Mourigram," he said.

Speaker Hasim Abdul Halim said the Centre could enact a legislation on banning cow slaughter across the country. "But it is not clear to me how it could be binding on all states."

Cow slaughter is a state subject and for the Centre to enact a law, it is essential that at least two states adopt resolutions authorising it to do so.

Mamata Banerjee's Trin-

mul Congress, an ally of the BJP, said the cabinet should have first discussed the issue with the coalition allies. "This is a serious issue...", said party MLA Sougata Roy. "Mamata will react to the proposed legislation after considering its pros and cons."

Former state Congress chief Somen Mitra said his party would oppose a ban on cow slaughter if it is made "binding" on all states. "We shall oppose the move since this will hurt the sentiments of a particular section of the people here, no matter whether Digvijay Singh (the Congress chief minister of Madhya Pradesh) bans cow slaughter or not," he added.

Advani puts govt before Ram temple

HTC and Agencies
New Delhi, August 9

DEPUTY PRIME Minister L.K. Advani sparked a war of words with the VHP on Saturday by telling the outfit the BJP cannot "sacrifice" its coalition government over a law for a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"The VHP wants us to bring such a legislation which will definitely not get passed in Parliament," Advani told reporters. "The government will fall. It wants us to contest elections on this plank. We are not ready to sacrifice the government."

Advani's comments came a day after the VHP decided to spite the BJP by suspending its planned agitation for a temple, which would have given the party some mileage during the upcoming state polls. But the Deputy Prime Minister's salvo again had the VHP brass talking of an agitation.

VHP leader Acharya Giriraj Kishore said, "We knew from the beginning that these people (the BJP) will not like to leave the government. That is why we have decided that we will start an agitation. We will decide on September 13 (at the outfit's *margdarshak mandal*) what kind of agitation we will launch.

"We don't need the sacrifice of any government to construct the temple. Let him continue to govern, we will work for the construction of the temple. The temple is not at his mercy. It will be built through the devotion and strength of the Hindu society."

Advani had said, "We are not



L.K. Advani

A snub for VHP

ready to bring legislation to create a division. A real solution lies in an agreement between the two communities, and I am optimistic that it is going to come." He said the government could bring in a law "only in case of consensus not only within the NDA but also the Opposition".

This is the first time a senior BJP leader has been frank enough to declare that the party would not sacrifice its coalition at the Centre, which VHP has been telling it to do.

The relations between the VHP and the BJP have been steadily worsening over the hardline outfit's demands relating to Ayodhya. VHP leaders had said on Friday that with several state polls and the general election due next year, the BJP would be forced to seriously reconsider the demand for legislation to build a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

But Advani said the BJP stand is clear from its resolution calling for a solution to the Ayodhya dispute either through a court order or an agreement between the two communities.

Advani turns down Temple prayer

ALOKE TIKKU
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ON BOARD SPECIAL IAF AIR-CRAFT, Aug. 9. — The BJP has refused to put its government on the line to fulfil the VHP's Ayodhya demand — introduce a legislation on the Ayodhya issue, let it be defeated, and then go to the electorate with Temple construction as the main poll plank.

"The VHP wants us to bring such a legislation which will definitely not get passed in Parliament. It wants us to contest polls on this plank," Mr LK Advani said, pointing out that the VHP's demand

that would not have, in any case, resolved the Ayodhya issue.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the BJP-led government was "not ready to bring a legislation to create a division". "We'll bring a legislation only when there's a consensus, not just within the NDA but also with the Congress", whose support will be crucial for the Bill's passage in the Rajya Sabha.

"That's why I say the real solution lies in negotiated settlement between the two communities and I'm optimistic that it's going to come up," Mr Advani told reporters accompanying him to Hyderabad.

Bleach repatriation

ON BOARD SPECIAL IAF AIR-CRAFT, Aug. 9. — The prime accused in the Purulia arms-drop case, Peter Bleach, may be among the first batch of convicts to benefit from the Repatriation of Prisoners Bill passed by Parliament. Mr LK Advani today suggested the government could consider repatriating the British national under this law. — **SNS**

bad. The Deputy PM, who has made clear several times that he considers negotiations as the most

likely route to a lasting resolution of the issue, indicated that talks were on between leaders of the two communities in that direction.

The BJP, he said, had passed a resolution in the recent national executive meeting at Raipur calling for a solution to the Ayodhya issue either through court judgment or an agreement between the two communities.

Mr Advani's assertion is seen as an attempt to strengthen the NDA that had witnessed some odd moments over the last week following the Prime Minister's remarks on the issue at Ramchandra Parmhans' funeral.



10 AUG 2003

10 AUG 2003

Atal snatches initiative from Singhal at funeral

Big Two in temple thunder

2/8
rejection
1-1
2
of vajpayee

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi/Ayodhya, Aug. 1: For the first time in years, Atal Bihari Vajpayee got the better of Ashok Singhal.

The VHP leader used the death of Mahant Ramchandra-das Paramhans to issue the warning that he would be forced to adopt a hard stance towards Vajpayee if the Prime Minister stuck to the NDA agenda and ignored the demand for a Ram temple.

"It appears from the Prime Minister's attitude that he has decided to stick to the NDA agenda on the Ram temple. He should openly state his views even if he wants to support the NDA agenda," Singhal told PTI some time before Vajpayee spoke at the mahant's funeral in Ayodhya.

Before hundreds of mourners, Vajpayee announced that a "grand" temple would be built at the birthplace of Ram.

"We would fulfil the mahant's last wish. We are confident that all obstacles would be removed and the path paved for it," he said. Vajpayee added that he hoped "good sense" would prevail on those opposed to the temple and "together we will fulfil his dream. We feel confident in front of his funeral pyre".

Singhal did acknowledge the significance of Vajpayee's presence. "We had always wished that Atalji should have come to Ayodhya, especially when we had been spearheading such a movement. We are happy that he has come today."

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani joined the show of solidarity. He said: "Nobody would be able to stop fulfilment of the mahant's dream for the temple. It would be definitely fulfilled."

Earlier, Advani said on television: "I have no doubt that the Ram temple will be built at the birthplace of Lord Ram." But he preferred settling the dispute through negotiations than a court verdict.

"It is believed that the issue will be resolved either by a court verdict or with a settlement. But I personally feel that even if the court gives a verdict in favour

of temple construction, the controversy will not end. It will continue. But if a settlement takes place, it will be very beneficial."

Advani, who has reportedly been deeply involved in the latest Ayodhya initiative which engaged the Kanchi Sankaracharya as the principal mediator, added: "The feelings I have seen among Hindus and Muslims have given me the confidence that there will be an agreement between the two on temple construction."

He said the Centre wanted to resolve the dispute either through the courts or through a negotiated settlement. "Beyond this the government would not do anything," he said in another repudiation of the VHP's demand for a law to build a temple.

But the BJP was sceptical. Sources wondered if the two leaders had "got carried away" by the atmosphere at Paramhans' funeral.

A senior BJP functionary said: "It is but natural that at Paramhans' funeral, the leaders could only have said we will make his dreams come true. But nobody, including the government, knows how this will happen even today — through the courts or by a dialogue."

Observers believe that there were reasons for Vajpayee and Advani to say what they did today in Ayodhya. First, Paramhans was as central to the temple movement as Ram himself by virtue of being the sole living witness to the unexplained "appearance" of Ram Lalla's idol inside the Babri mosque.

"This one incident caused a series of others which culminated in the demolition. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the BJP's career and those of its leaders were thanks largely to Paramhans. They had to pay a debt of gratitude and this is what they did today," a source said.

There were "purely electoral" reasons, too. "Vajpayee and Advani sought to make up with their traditional Hindutva-minded voters." The source

hoped by "out-doing" Singhal on his political turf, Vajpayee and Advani would silence the VHP for the moment. (See P 6)

QUOTE

We would fulfil the mahant's last wish

A.B. VAJPAYEE

2 AUG 2003

SC clears statute path for common civil code

R. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, July 23: The Supreme Court today called for a common civil code for all citizens of the country, holding that it would not go against the two key constitutional provisions governing religion.

The court said the effort to secure a uniform civil code across India — Article 44 — would not come in the way of the right to freedom of religion or the freedom to manage religious affairs as laid down in Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution. Rather, it would “help the

cause of national integration”. This is a huge step forward from the arguments made during a similar call seven years ago by Justice Kuldip Singh in the case of a woman, Sarla Mudgal, who was denied maintenance. The matter has generated a lot of heat since the Shah Bano case, in which an apex court judgment granting a Muslim woman maintenance was overturned by a parliamentary legislation.

The B.J.P. reacted with cautious optimism, saying it would try to convince its allies and the Opposition of the need for a code. But the Muslim personal law board trashed the suggestion

as “totally unacceptable” and likely to infringe on the community's religious rights.

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani declined comment. “I am part of the government and, therefore, it will not be proper on my part to make a statement,” he said. (See Page 6)

The court today clearly distinguished between the articles providing for freedom of religion and the one calling for a common civil code. Pointing out that they were mutually exclusive, it said that Article 25 “confers freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion” but Ar-

ticle 44 mandates that the “state shall endeavour to secure... a uniform civil code”.

So, Article 44 “divests religion from social relations and personal law”. Further, it is “based on the premise that there is no necessary connection between religious and personal law in a civilised society”.

Chief Justice V.N. Khare, who made the observations, said: “It is a matter of regret that Article 44... has not been given effect to. Parliament is still to step in for framing a common civil code in the country.

“A common civil code will help the cause of national inte-

gration by removing the contradictions based on ideologies.”

The court's call came while it was hearing a petition by a priest, John Vallamattom, challenging the validity of Section 118 of the Indian Succession Act for discriminating against Christians. This section imposes restrictions on Christians donating by will property for religious or charitable purposes.

As he quashed the section, Justice Khare also struck at the root of arguments against a uniform code. “It is no matter of doubt that marriage, succession and the like matters of secular character cannot be brought wit-

hin the guarantee enshrined under Articles 25 and 26...” he said. Any legislation that sought to do this was “suspect”, he added.

The two other judges on the bench, Justice S.B. Sinha and Justice A. Lakshmanan, concurred with Justice Khare but added their reasons for quashing Section 118 of the succession act.

Justice Lakshmanan said a Christian “having a nephew or niece or nearer relative cannot bequeath any property for religious or charitable use unless:

- a) The will is executed not less than 12 months before the death of the testator
- b) It is deposited within six

months from the date of execution in some place provided by law

c) It remains in deposit till the death of the testator”.

Under the succession act, these provisions do not apply to Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs or Jains. This was challenged by the priest today.

In 1999, Ram Jethmalani had pushed for a common civil code when he was Union law minister. “A Hindu is not compelled to perform *nikah* and a Muslim *szapta*.” But in matters of inheritance, right to property, maintenance and succession, common law should be enacted for all.”

ARTICLES OF FAITH

• **Article 25:** Guarantees the right to freedom of religion

• **Article 26:** Guarantees the freedom to manage religious affairs

• **Article 44:** Declares that the state should secure a uniform civil code across the country



WHAT'S NEW?

The Supreme Court has ruled that Articles 25 and 26 do not come in the way of implementing Article 44 which “divests religion from social relations and personal law”

THE TELEGRAPH

S-1 2972

Indic. Civil Religion

Religion

Witness for retrial in Best Bakery case

Gutsy girl says she was forced to lie in court

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai\Ahmedabad: Zahira Sheikh, one of the main complainants in the Best Bakery massacre case of Vadodara who turned hostile in court, leading to the acquittal of all the 21 accused, has demanded a retrial of the case. The dimunitive girl emerged in Mumbai after weeks of absence from Gujarat and told journalists on Monday that the retrial should be held outside her home state.

"Whatever I said in court was false. I was compelled to lie under pressure," the 19-year-old told a packed room at the Mumbai Press Club. Zahira's statement coincides with the National Human Rights Commission's visit to Vadodara to examine the papers in the case.

The bakery carnage in which 14 persons, including Zahira's father and seven other relatives, were brutally massacred over a period of 12 hours on March 1, 2002, was one of the most gruesome incidents marking the post-Godhra mayhem.

Zahira was accompanied by Javed Anand and Teesta Setalvad of the voluntary organisation, Citizens for Justice and Peace. Among the others who addressed the media were film personality Javed Akhtar, ad guru Alyque Padamsee, architect I.M. Kadri and human rights activist Mihir Desai. According to Ms Setalvad, Zahira and her entire family had ap-

proached their NGO seeking legal aid to jointly ask for a retrial.

Zahira alleged that she was being threatened by the local BJP MLA, Madhu Shrivastava, Vadodara councillor Chandrakant Shrivastava alias Bhattu, and another witness Lal Mohammed who said that they would "kill her family". All of them have, however, denied the allegation.

Earlier on Monday, Zahira told TNN in Ahmedabad over the phone that she had left for Basti in Uttar Pradesh after the court hearing to stay with her maternal uncle. She said she had come back to "clear my name from allegations that I had taken money to turn hostile in the court".

She said, "I would not have given up the fight if a single person from my community had stood by me in that crisis, but even members of the relief committee ditched me when I needed them the most. In fact, certain members of the relief committee even demanded four lakh rupees from me to fight my case," she said. "Main akeli ladki kahan kis kis se ladti? (how could a single girl like me fight all those people?)," she asked in despair.

Zahira said Lal Mohammed, the witness who told the court that the accused had in fact saved the Muslim families from the mob on the day of the massacre on March 1 last year, was a close associate of the Shrivastavas and had been constantly issuing threats to her.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

5 8 JUL 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

In search of the real Savarkar

The Congress and the Left have every right to criticise Savarkar's ideology. But it is unfortunate that their ardour has resulted in the suppression of truth about a great son of India, argues G N S RAGHAVAN

FEW know that in 1913 the Home Member of the then Governor General's Council, Sir Reginald Craddock, conducted an interview at Port Blair with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the revolutionary held from 1911 there as a convict in the Cellular Jail.

Published here is Craddock's account of the interview. It shows that the British rulers were not taken in by his forswearing of revolutionary violence in the 'mercy petition' of 14th November 1913. This is in contrast to the way in which critics of Savarkar, in the controversy over the installation of his portrait in Parliament, have taken at face value his professed apostasy.

It was a common practice those days for convicts consigned to the Andaman to submit petitions, not with serious expectation of obtaining release but in the hope at least of transfer to a jail on the mainland where prisoners were treated less brutally and were granted certain privileges like receiving visitors. Following reports of serious unrest among the prisoners, Craddock undertook the visit to Port Blair to see things for himself. While sailing back to the mainland, he put down a note for the Governor General on his interview with Savarkar and four other petitioners. Craddock also commented the following year, in the Home Department's file, on a further petition from Savarkar dated 3rd October 1914.

All these documents (Savarkar's two petitions and the Home Member's two notes) are to be found in the files of the Home Department which are kept in the National Archives and which have long been open for study by researchers. Noted historian R C Majumdar drew on them in the monograph titled *Penal Settlements in the Andaman* edited by him and published as far back as in 1975 by the Gazetteer Unit of the Union Educa-

tion Ministry. Savarkar's critics have quoted only from the first petition and ignored the other documents.

Home Member Craddock said in his note for the Governor General on his interview with Savarkar: "He cannot be said to express any regret or repentance but he affects to have changed his views, urging that the hopeless condition of Indians in 1906-07 was his excuse for entering upon a conspiracy. Since that time, he said, the Government had shown itself much more conciliatory in the matter of councils, education and so forth, and that the case for revolutionary action had disappeared. Mercy for him would have a calming effect upon those who still conspired against British rule.

"I pointed out that he had been convicted of abetment of murder in the case of Mr Jackson of Nasik. He had been instrumental in sending out twenty Browning pistols — Your followers are still advocating terrorism and they still swear by you." Craddock told Savarkar that since conspiracy was continuing, he could not be released.

An English daily published on its front page on 27th February 2003 a report from its special correspondent in New Delhi quoting an unnamed Congress leader as saying that Indira Gandhi's tribute to Savarkar on his birth centenary in May 1983 and the contribution she made to a memorial fund, were "before official documents pertaining to Savarkar's role in the freedom struggle were declassified and made public". These documents have been open and accessible since at least 1975. The "declassification" was, thus, pure invention. This suggests that the campaign to paint Savarkar as a rebel-turned-coward is deliberate and perverse.

If the so-called declassification of Savarkar-related files after 1983 is an

on condition of keeping out of politics. He applied himself to anti-untouchability and other social reform work. It was not till 1937 that all restrictions were lifted after popular governments were formed in the provinces.

It is only if the freedom movement is equated with the Congress led by Gandhi and Nehru that Savarkar can be said to have kept out of it. His own credo was set out in a work that he published pseudonymously in 1924. It was entitled *Hindutva*, which can be translated synonymously as either Hindu-ness or Indian-ness, since the words Hindu and India are both derived from the river Sindhu. As Gandhiji used to point out, most Indian Muslims and Christians are descendants of Hindus who were converted to the alien religions after the conquest of parts of India by Muslim and Christian powers. Yet many of them have not regarded India as their ancestral land and holy land but have looked outside for inspiration; so with Communists. Savarkar called for consolidation of the Hindu nationality, transcending differences of caste and province, "not to give wanton offence to any of our non-Hindu compatriots," but to counter the disruptive effect of 'pan-isms' as he called them.

When restrictions were lifted in 1937, Savarkar became president of the Hindu Mahasabha which had been established in 1924 as a counter to the Muslim League formed under British inspiration in 1906 at Dacca a ter Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal. This is the real grievance of the anti-Hindutva forces. Savarkar led the Mahasabha for seven consecutive years and was followed among others by Syama Prasad Mookerjee. A share Indian-ness transcending creedal differences was advocated by Syama Prasad Mookerjee who left the Mahasabha in 1948 because he felt that it had become an anachronism following partition and independence. After serving in the Nehru Cabinet for some years he formed the Jana Sangh (precursor of the present BJP) in 1951 as a non-communal and nationalist alternative to the Congress.

The anti-Hindutva forces of the Congress and the Left have every right to criticise Savarkar's ideology. But it is unfortunate that their ardour has resulted in the suppression of truth and suggestion of falsehood concerning a great son of India.



Craddock said in his note for the Governor General on his interview with Savarkar: "He cannot be said to express any regret or repentance but he affects to have changed his views, urging that the hopeless condition of Indians in 1906-07 was his excuse for entering upon a conspiracy"

information about them, show that they intend rather to take advantage of the war, and there are signs of a tendency on the part of anarchists, Sikh seditionists and pan-Islamists, to join hands." The Superintendent, Port Blair, was told to inform Savarkar that the Government could not entertain his request.

The campaign against Savarkar has included a sly suggestion that after the 1913 petition he enjoyed a cosy relationship with the British rulers. The same newspaper which spoke of a post-1983 declassification of files carried an article on the editorial page on 3rd March 2003 which said: "In accordance with this undertaking (in 1913) Savarkar never thereafter took part in the freedom movement." The fact is that he languished as a convict in the Andaman till 1921 when he was brought to the mainland at the urging of Mahatma Gandhi and C F Andrews among others. After being kept in different jails for three years, Savarkar was granted limited freedom of movement within Ratnagiri district

untruth, so was the charge made by a writer in an English magazine that "Savarkar pleaded only for himself" and did not bother about fellow prisoners. In the petition of 3rd October 1914, soon after the outbreak of World War I, Savarkar urged a general release of all persons convicted of political offences so that they could volunteer "to fight against the common foe in defence of this country and the Empire". Savarkar added: "If the Government suspect that my real motive in writing all this is only to secure my own release, then I beg to submit: let me not be released at all; with my exception, let all the rest be released, let the volunteer movement go on, and I will rejoice in that as if myself was allowed to play an active part."

When this petition was put before him, Reginald Craddock, in a note for the Governor General, confessed to "a sort of weakness for Savarkar, who has prostituted great talents" but said that the conspiracy was being continued by his followers: "Their theft of pistols, their leaflets, and all our secret

Muslim board shoots down seer's formula

7/7
Times News Network & Agencies

New Delhi: As the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Sunday rejected the Kanchi seer's proposals to settle the Ayodhya issue, the VHP hardened its stand saying that if they did not agree to hand over the disputed site for construction of the Ram temple, they would lose not only Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya, but "many more things".

Abdul Mannan, a lawyer representing the Sunni Central Waqf Board in the Ayodhya case and a special invitee to the AIMPLB working committee which discussed the seer's proposal, said, "we have rejected the proposal". There could be no compromise on constructing the mosque at the place where it was, he said.

"We had expected such a decision," VHP senior vice president Acharya Giriraj Kishore told reporters, adding that the Kanchi seer should not have sent the proposal to the AIMPLB in the first place. VHP leader Praveen Togadia said in Kanyakumari that this was the "last opportunity for Muslims to earn the goodwill of the Hindu community".

Mr Togadia said it was evident that the Muslims did not want to take the path of the Hindus, but that of invaders like Babar, Ghouri and Ghazni. He said that the rejection was an insult to the Kanchi seer and that it was now the duty of the BJP-led NDA government to pass legislation to build a temple in Ayodhya.

Asked how that could be accomplished when the BJP did not have the requisite numbers, Mr Togadia said, "Ayodhya is the national Hindu highway to Delhi. Even if you are going from Chennai or from Thiruvananthapuram, you will have to pass through

Delhi 5/17
Ayodhya to reach Delhi."

BJP spokesman Prakash Javedkar said, "We do not think this is the end of the road. The negotiations have just begun and we hope things will move ahead in times to come." He said the BJP stand on the issue had been consistent—that a Ram temple had to come up at the birth place of Ram. "When and how is the only thing to be watched and as we have said, there are two very clear paths ahead—one is mutual agreement among both the communities and two, a court verdict, and we are hopeful that something will come out even before the court verdict," Mr Javedkar said.

Claiming that the Kanchi seer's new proposal to solve the Ayodhya issue would not bear results, Congress spokesman Anant Sharma said that his party had not expected much from the discussions and alleged that the BJP and the Sangh Parivar were raking up the issue with an eye to the elections in four states. Anjuman Minhaj-e-Rasool chairman Maulana Syed Athar Hussain Dehlavi urged the AIMPLB to find a way for continuing talks to resolve the temple-mosque issue in Ayodhya.

Road to Ayodhya



AIMPLB's demand
A mosque must be constructed in the place where it existed

VHP's warning
Muslims will lose not only Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya, but "many more things"

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21/6
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The government has betrayed Hindus

Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Ashok

Singhal on the Centre's policy of 'appeasing' Muslims and why there cannot be a trade-off on the Ram temple issue

Sunita Aron
Lucknow

ASHOK SINGHAL is an angry man. The VHP leader believes that the NDA government's latest attempt to resolve the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute amounts to a trade-off that the Sangh Parishad cannot and will not allow. Kashi and Mathura are not negotiable, he insists, and the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister must understand that if these leaders don't honour their promise on the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya, he warns, new leaders will be found to replace them. Excerpts from an interview:

The Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram, Jayendra Saraswati, is working on an amicable formula to resolve the Ayodhya dispute. Are you aware of the formula?

According to my information even Shankaracharya ji has backed out as someone misled him into believing that RSS will eventually agree to concede Kashi and Mathura for Ramjanmabhoomi. The question is who misled Shankaracharya ji when neither the RSS nor VHP had given any such assurance? (RSS chief K.S.) Sudershan ji has already made it explicitly clear that Kashi and Mathura cannot be traded off. I am told that Shankaracharya ji was very angry as he was told a lie.

Still, what are the contents of the formula?

According to my information, nine per cent quota for Muslims, permission to offer namaz in 1,000-odd mosques currently under the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) and withdrawal of Hindus' claims for Kashi and Mathura.

Do you think this formula can help resolve the decades-old dispute?

I doubt it. I don't even understand the locus standi of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) in the case. Though the AIMPLB has formed an 11-member committee to

take decisions on the Ayodhya dispute, the plaintiff in the case is the Sunni Central Waqf Board. Moreover, we are determined. We'll not allow the Centre to trade off the emotive issue. Who are they (the BJP, the NDA) to enter into an agreement, that too against the interests of Hindus?

Why has the NDA government sidelined the VHP and involved the Shankaracharya to resolve the dispute when it knows that the VHP, and no one else, had built the entire movement?

No, it is not (merely) a question of sidelining the VHP. They have betrayed lakhs of Hindus who had supported the movement and also the BJP. The party grew from two in Parliament to its current strength, thanks to the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. The BJP had committed to remove all obstacles that impeded temple construction in Ayodhya. But they failed to keep their word during their five-year rule. And, instead of removing the obstacles they want to remove the very people who actually launched the movement.

Now that they are in power, they are only talking about a settlement either by the courts or through negotiations. What negotiations? Ramjanmabhoomi cannot be traded off. They have hurt the sentiments of lakhs and crores of Hindus and they must be punished for that.

But without an absolute majority, what can the BJP do?

Not one but 8,000 saints have demanded that the government bring a law in Parliament. Why can't they bring a Bill in Parliament? Let it fall on the floor of the House. After all, if they cannot keep their promise to the people then they should resign. How can they continue to cheat the Hindu masses and play with their religious sentiments only for the sake of secularism?

Is the entire party or the alliance responsible for sacrificing the issue that brought them to power or only Prime



ASHOK SINGHAL: We will continue to hammer away on issues that are anti-Hindutva and anti-India

Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee?

Why did L.K. Advani embark on a Somnath-to-Ayodhya *raih yatra*? The saints were running the movement and Advani was no saint. Nor had he asked the VHP before embarking on the *yatra*. And now he has not consulted the parishad (before) dropping the issue.

He himself decided to set aside the Hindutva issue and adopt secularism. Why? Every Hindu is going to question him on his newly found love for secularism, which in other words means appeasement of Muslims.

Did Advani talk about the 30,000 temples that were demolished or 3,000 Masjids were built before offering them quota or permission to offer prayers in the 1,000 odd ASI controlled mosques?

As for Vajpayee, he always preferred a secular mask and thus did not associate himself with the Ayodhya movement. Why is he meddling with the issue now? Why can't he keep his hands off the issue? Vajpayee should understand that the entire

BJP organisation is with (us on) the Ramjanmabhoomi issue and not him. Not even five per cent of the MPs are with him on this issue.

I have spoken to almost all of them and they have made it clear that though the NDA government has set aside the temple issue, they have not. Moreover, what are the MPs going to do without us? In almost all the constituencies we have from 50,000 to 100,000 supporters. They have no option but to depend on us and thus remain committed to the construction of the temple.

If Vajpayee and Advani have sacrificed the temple issue for the sake of secularism, then whom will you support? From where will you get a leader committed to the construction of the Ram Mandir?

A leader will soon emerge on the political horizon of the country. We have the power to give the right leader to the country. A leader who is committed to Hindutva. We have the *farma para* of all and we will create circumstances that will give birth to a

new star. Moreover, can the BJP win elections without us? They should not undermine the strength of the Sangh Parishad. As of now, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Kisan Sangh — all are unhappy with the BJP.

But even Swami Chinmayanand, the torchbearer of the temple movement, is speaking the government's language on the Ram Mandir issue. There has been a lot of change in his tone and tenor since he became a minister.

He is being made a tool, which he should understand and keep away from *saudebbaazi* (deal making). However, if he gets alienated from the movement, then his condition too will become pathetic.

The BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal, etc., are members of the Sangh Parishad. But why are they all fighting so bitterly? Is it just a camouflage or is the rift real? What is the RSS doing for a patch-up?

No, there can be no patch-up because he himself says that how can he resolve an issue alone which involves thousands of saints.

There can be no patch-up because the BJP is drifting from the real issues... doing *saudebbaazi*. Here they are willing to trade off Kashi and Mathura. Who gave them the power to trade off Hindutva? We will not concede an inch. The fact is 'ab Mahabharat tal nahin saktra'...

patch-up as the BJP is doing *saudebbaazi* and not *samjhauta vaarta*. The Pandavas were refused five villages. They were told they would not get even an inch of land. Here they are willing to trade off Kashi and Mathura. Who gave them the power to trade off Hindutva?

We will not concede an inch. The fact is "ab Mahabharat tal nahin saktra" (the movement cannot be stalled any longer).

Why is the BJP reluctant to ban conversions or bring stringent laws to ban cow slaughter? In my personal opinion, the country is going to the dogs because of this so-called secularism. We will continue to hammer away on issues that are anti-Hindutva, anti-India.

But even the ASI excavations have not strengthened the VHP's contention that a temple existed where the mosque was later built.

Of the 72 trenches, ASI has found no evidence in 10 of them. In the remaining they have found 38 pillars, walls, floors and it is wrong to say that they all reveal habitation. Instead, they only prove our point that a temple had existed at the site of the Babri Mosque. For the sake of so-called secularism, they are willing to play with the sentiments of Hindus, do injustice with them.

You have been accused of dividing the Hindu society by calling the Shankaracharya a Shaiva?

No, I never made this statement. The media has misreported. We all respect and revere Shankaracharya. It is wrong to involve him in this task because he himself says that how can he resolve an issue alone which involves thousands of saints.

Seer letter on Lucknow table

Hawks caged on either side

RASHEED KIDWALAND
YOGESH VAJPEYI

Bhopal/Lucknow, June 20: The fate of the Ayodhya dispute now lies in an envelope that arrived in Lucknow today from Kanchi containing what is believed to be the Sankaracharya's formula for a negotiated settlement.

"The sealed envelope cannot be opened because Maulana Rabey Nadvi is out of town and is expected to be back tomorrow. The envelope will be opened on Saturday," a member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board said.

Nadvi heads the board and had a meeting with the Kanchi seer who visited Lucknow a couple of weeks ago. Maulana Sajjad Nomani said the Sankaracharya had sought confirmation of receipt of the envelope.

He did not say how soon the formula would be put before the board. "The future course of action would be decided by the board's president."

The board finds itself in a stronger position now to deal with the Sankaracharya's proposals, having succeeded in isolating the hawks.

Board office-bearers claimed two key achievements. First, the country's most influential Muslim organisation has kept its unity intact. Second, the so-called gang of four lawyers — Syed Shahabuddin, Zafaryab

Jeelani, Yusuf Hathim Muchala and Abdul Raheem Qureshi — which has openly attacked efforts at a negotiated settlement has found itself in a minority.

"Our vision is clear and we want the issue settled either through court verdict or negotiations," Nomani said.

Jeelani, the most outspoken of the hawks, continued the shrill tirade, arguing that the seer's effort was a cover-up for the VHP's unwillingness to accept an adverse court verdict.

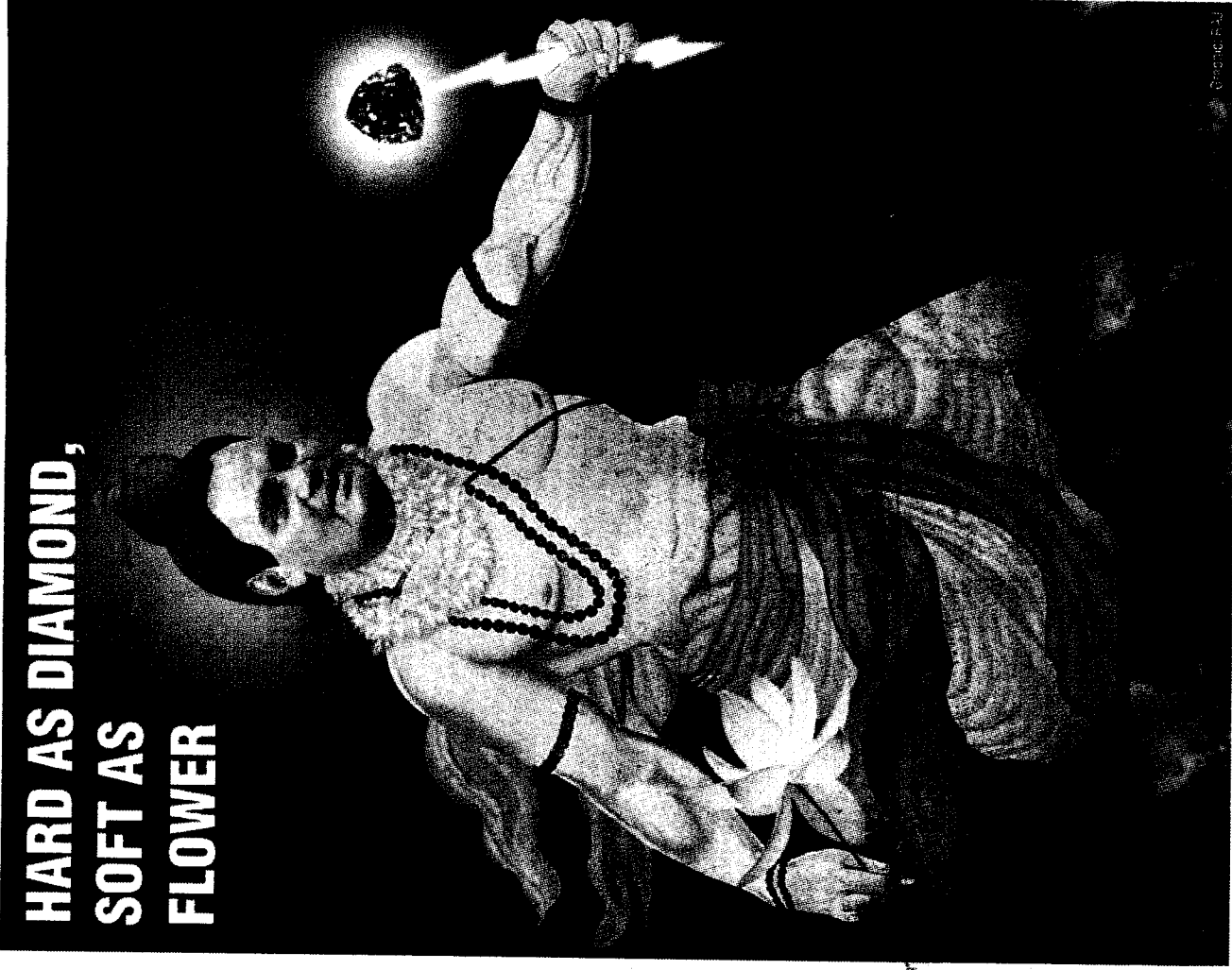
Unlike in the past, the moderate Muslim voice is coming out strong. Maulana Kalbe-Sadiq dismissed Jeelani's charge: "I believe that a religious head like the Sankaracharya will have no mischief to play."

For, perhaps, the first time, hardliners on either side are finding themselves marginalised and on the same side — opposed to a negotiated settlement.

VHP leader Giriraj Kishore today rejected the move altogether. "Any formula that gives Muslims a right to Mathura, Kashi or any premises under Archaeological Survey of India's supervision is unacceptable," he said.

For the hawks on both sides, an end to the Ayodhya dispute — possibly with a Ram temple at the site with a mosque nearby, Kashi and Mathura settled and handover of 100-odd mosques to the Muslims — represents an existential crisis, stripping them of any purpose in life.

HARD AS DIAMOND,
SOFT AS
FLOWER



Leader and line,
Atal all the way

RADHIKARAMASESHAN AND
ANAND SOONDAS

New Delhi/Mumbai, June 20: The BJP emerged from its *chintan batithak* today carrying the unmistakable stamp of Atal Bihari Vajpayee on policy, sealed by a eulogy delivered by Lal Krishna Advani to a "great leader".

He described Vajpayee as "*vajradapi kathorani, muruduni kusumadapi* — which means he is as strong as the diamond when firmness is demanded but also as soft as a flower".

Summing up the outcome of the session, party president M. Venkaiah Naidu said: "Leadership clear, comradeship clear, companion clear, thrust clear."

It means the end of the leadership controversy, at least for now. And it implies the victory of the Vajpayee line on virtually every matter.

The Lok Sabha polls will be held at the appointed time — in the latter half of 2004 — the BJP will walk with its allies, even try to increase their ranks, and a hint that governance and development and not Hindutva will be the theme song.

Part of this was confirmed by Advani himself. "The greatest strength of the BJP is that we have a great leader and we have continued to remain wedded to our principle of collective deliberation and decision-making."

Few in the BJP had doubted that Vajpayee would allow his authority to be undermined —

as had appeared after the setbacks he suffered at the time of the Cabinet reshuffle last month. The so-called *chintan batithak* settled whatever doubts there might have been.

As the party went into the Mumbai session, there was a covert effort to push what was loosely labelled the "Advani line" — whether the next Lok Sabha polls should be brought forward, if the BJP should have its own manifesto to reinforce its commitment to Hindutva and if it should contest the maximum number of seats and junk some allies.

Naidu settled the question of the timing of polls, saying: "The BJP's top leadership feels that we must continue with the tempo of development till elections are held in the latter part of next year."

The BJP renewed its commitment to the allies. Naidu said: "We are not cutting ties with any of our coalition partners. In fact, by the time we go to elections, we may have more partners in the NDA coalition."

Stability, national security, development and good governance will be the bases on which the coalition will seek a new mandate, Advani said.

Hindutva was on a low key. The BJP only stuck to its stand against illegal immigration and conversions — it suggested that every state enact a preventive law — and for a wider consensus on cow slaughter ban.

Muslim body denies row over Ayodhya solution

New Delhi
13 JUNE

AN influential Muslim group on Friday dismissed speculation of internal differences over Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati's proposed solution to the Ayodhya temple-mosque dispute. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board, an umbrella of Muslim outfits that is one of the main parties to the dragging dispute over the site of the razed Babri mosque in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya town, denied reports that one of its members had quit his Babri panel in a huff. "There is no question of any differences within our organisation — these reports are being floated by vested interests who want to claim

that the Muslims have agreed to the Shankaracharya's formula," the board's spokesperson Qasim Rasool Ilyas said.

Ilyas emphatically denied that the board vice president Kalbe Sadiq had quit the 11-member Babri mosque panel of the board over differences, asserting that he was still very much a part of it. "Sadiq had written to us six-seven months ago explaining he was unable to participate actively in the Babri mosque committee's functioning due to his frequent trips abroad and other engagements," said Ilyas. "We have not accepted his resignation."

The panel was appointed to negotiate on behalf of the board with the government and Hindu religious leaders in the wake of the razing of the 16th century

Babri mosque in December 1992 by Hindu zealots who believed it was constructed on the ruins of an ancient temple marking the birthplace of Lord Ram.

The Shankaracharya, who claims to have initiated fresh efforts to resolve the Ayodhya tangle with a new formula, was reported to have met board president Rabe Hasan Nadvi in Lucknow even as the Muslim group denied being a part of any such negotiations. Ilyas insisted that the pontiff had not spelt out any formula in his meeting with Nadvi. "He made a courtesy call on Nadvi, who was unwell. During their discussions, the Shankaracharya mentioned a formula but Nadvi asked him to give it in writing so that it could be discussed with everyone.

There has been no development after that." The board said it would not agree to any out of court formula that called for giving up the Babri mosque site. The Shankaracharya's formula calls for constructing the temple around what is termed the sanctum sanctorum at the disputed site under Centre's supervision.

A mosque would be built about 10 km from the site. Under the formula, both the communities would give up their legal claims in the main title suit over the land. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a rightwing group that is leading the temple movement, would give up similar claims to mosque sites in Varanasi and Mathura.

Also, the Muslims would be allowed to offer prayers in 100

mosques under protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. But the Shankaracharya's formula is just one more in the decade-old dispute that has divided Hindus and Muslims. And evidently the Hindu community is not united on a solution either. Another pontiff, the Allahabad-based Madhvanand Saraswati, claims to have another formula that can resolve the dispute in 90 minutes. He reportedly favours building a temple and a mosque at the site.

In a joint press meet with World Sufi Council president Mohammed Jilani Qattal, Madhvanand Saraswati challenged Jayendra Saraswati to produce documentary proof about his reported negotiations with the Muslim leaders. — IANS



UNITED FRONT: Shankaracharya Swami Shri Adhokshjanand gestures during a press conference as chairman of Anjuman Minhaj-E-Rasool, Moulana Syed Akhtar Hussain Dehlawi (R) looks on in Srinagar on Friday. AFP

Talks open deep divide

1376
YOGESH VAJPEYI

Lucknow, June 12: Talks for a settlement of the Ayodhya dispute are driving a wedge through the Muslim leadership.

Two members of the 11-strong committee — entrusted with handling the Ayodhya issue — of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board have resigned over what seem to be differences on continuing efforts to arrive at a solution through the mediation of the Sankaracharya of Kanchi, Swami Jayendra Saraswati.

Maulana Kalbe Sadiq and Maulana Abdul Karim Pariq, known doves on the committee, resigned yesterday.

"I sent my resignation on Wednesday," Sadiq said, refusing to elaborate on the reasons. He only added that he would speak "at the right time".

Sadiq is the leader of the country's Shia community, which forms about 17-18 per cent of the Muslim population.

Pariq, from Nagpur, is believed to have ties with former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, whose role, if any, in the effort for a negotiated settlement, is not known. Sadiq is also vice-president of the personal law board, a post he does not appear to have relinquished.

9/11
"He has only resigned from the board's committee on the Ayodhya dispute and not from the vice-presidency of the board," said Zafaryab Jilani, who represents the hardline section.

Ever since the Sankaracharya revealed last Sunday that the exercise to cobble together an out-of-court settlement was apace, Jilani has been among the most vocal in denying that any talks have been held.

Earlier, Sadiq and Pariq had issued a release challenging this right Jilani and others of his ilk claim as spokespersons for the community. "The Muslims have paid the price for a hardline stance and the time has come for an amicable solution to the Ayodhya dispute through talks," the release had said.

Their resignation comes in the wake of the Sankaracharya's visit to Lucknow on Saturday to hold talks with Maulana Rabey Nadvi, who heads the board.

It is significant that after

these talks the Kanchi seer lifted the veil off the negotiation process. At the hour-long meeting with the Maulana, the Sankaracharya laid out his plan for a consensus solution, said a cleric close to the Maulana.

"He was asked to give it in writing so that the issue could be discussed with other members of the board and the meeting ended in a cordial atmosphere," he added. The Maulana confirmed the talks. "I told him that once we get his proposals (in writing), we will put them before the board members for discussion. But so far I have not received anything," he said.

"Till the board has received and discussed the Sankaracharya's proposals, there is no sense in more talks."

He refused comment on Sadiq's resignation. Sources said clerics were sharply divided over the seer's proposals. "Kalbe Sadiq's resignation is a reflection of it," said a board member.

Senior functionaries of Sadiq's Tohidul Muslim Trust indicated that the Shia leader favoured a positive response from the board. "He resigned because most other members of the committee did not want talks with the Sankaracharya to continue," they said.

■ See Page 6

QUOTE

He had been sad since then (meeting Advani)

GIRIRAJ KISHORE
after Ramchandradas Paramhans
suffered a heart attack

Bharti back to Hindutva at Bhojshala

RASHEED KIDWAI

Dhar, June 3: BJP chief ministerial candidate Uma Bharti and Union minister of state for tourism and culture Bhavnabehn Chikalia today declared during a visit that Bhojshala was a Hindu temple, indicating a return of Hindutva in the BJP's campaign for the November elections in Madhya Pradesh.

Accompanying Bharti for the *darsshan* at the disputed shrine, Chikalia performed puja, recited the Hanuman Chalisa with Bharti and several BJP workers, and circumambulated the shrine before declaring: "It is a temple."

Asked how she arrived at the conclusion, the minister said "there is proof", unconcerned

about a plethora of documents, including an affidavit submitted by her ministry, describing the disputed shrine as "Bhojshala/Kamal Maula Masjid".

When someone produced the entrance ticket issued by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) — for visits to Bhojshala, except on Tuesdays and Fridays — that described the monument as "Bhojshala/Kamal Maula Masjid", she cast a stern look and said her ministry and the ASI will examine how such a thing was printed.

Pressed further to cite proof, Chikalia said: "People's faith is involved." Agreeing with Hindu Jagran Manch activists, who are spearheading the Bhojshala movement, she added that Muslims

had encroached on the area with the help of the administration.

Bharti, too, backed the Manch demand that a Saraswati idol, currently in a London museum, be installed in Bhojshala to change its status, singing: "London se kab aao gi, hum aas lagaye baethie hain (when are you going to return from London, we are waiting for you)." The *sadhi* sang another *bhajan* in praise of Hanuman as the crowd watched mesmerised.

The chief ministerial candidate also endorsed Chikalia's point of view. "It is a temple," she said, adding that it was an established fact, established by society". She then offered a possible solution. "Let it be settled like the Somnath temple issue. Let

chief minister Digvijay Singh take a lead in that direction. Let there be no politics," she said.

Earlier, Chikalia made sure their statements would find wide circulation by overruling objections from officials to electronic mediapersons and photographers accompanying them inside.

Responding to a police plea that the ASI rules do not permit photographers inside the monument without written permission, the agitated minister said: "I am the minister and I am giving verbal orders here and now."

Chikalia's ministry controls the ASI that is entrusted with looking after the 11th century Bhojshala that Muslims claim to be a mosque and Hindus a temple-cum-seat of learning.

The duo later visited the neighbouring dargah of Sufi Kamal Maula, but their presence failed to cheer local Muslims. The dargah functionaries stood stone-faced as Chikalia went around spotting "encroached areas".

Bringing the focus back on Bhojshala clearly marked a shift in the BJP's poll strategy. Leaders like Bharti, Pramod Mahajan, Arun Jaitley and Kailash Joshi had been asserting for some time that the party would not contest on the "Hindutva agenda", ruling out Bhojshala as an election plank.

"We will fight the election on development issues. The Digvijay Singh regime has failed on all fronts," Bharti said, but admitted that the Bhojshala issue was

a matter of faith for her and her supporters.

The BJP's shift comes when Congress chief ministers have decided to bail out Digvijay on the power crisis. The anti-incumbency factor has been gaining ground due to late-night or pre-dawn power cuts, acute water shortage, poor roads and drought.

But the BJP is unsure of pushing ahead on the development plank, fearing that a good monsoon supplemented by power supply from Congress-held Uttaranchal, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh could give Digvijay a booster.

In such a scenario, they believe the Bhojshala issue could influence voting in the Malwa region that sends about one-fourth of the state's MLAs to Assembly.



Uma Bharti: Temple card

Gujarat ignores conversion

BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, June 1: A mass religious conversion programme scheduled for June 15 has failed to raise eyebrows in the state government which had enacted the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003, banning such conversions.

About 1,00,000 Dalits from across the state are likely to embrace Buddhism at the programme organised by the Vishwa Boudh Sangh in Vadodara.

The mass conversion, touted to be the biggest in the state's cultural capital, appears not to have unsettled the state BJP government. The reason is simple: the government does not consider Dalits' conversion to Buddhism an act of defiance.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the most vocal opponent of religious conversion, has gone a step further and welcomed the move.

The Boudh Sangh is clearly puzzled by the apparent lack of opposition. "I do not know what the VHP is up to," said Bhante Sangh Priya, Boudh Sangh national general secretary.

"On the one hand, their state and national leaders claim the VHP is not against Dalits embracing Buddhism. On the other, their local activists are threatening us with dire consequences if we go ahead with our programme of mass conversion," Sangh Priya said over phone from Vadodara.

He has been camping there for the last three weeks to organise the conversion programme.

State VHP joint general secretary Kaushik Mehta and vice-president Jotirkar have dissociated

themselves from Anant Anand, a Vadodara leader of the outfit, who disrupted the Boudh Sangh's news conference last week threatening to stall the conversion.

VHP international general secretary Praveen Togadia clarified the outfit's stand: "We have no objection if Dalits convert to Buddhism, which is part of Hindu society."

A wary Boudh Sangh, however, is not taking any chances. Sangh Priya met Vadodara police commissioner D.D. Tuteja yesterday, seeking police protection. Tuteja has assured protection until the conversion programme gets over.

Jotirkar, a practising Buddhist and president of the All India Buddhist Society, equated the proposed conversion with Dalit liberation.

The VHP, he said, supports Dalits who want to become Buddhists. "As for me, I will dance with joy. I will celebrate. It will be a great moment. I would like to be in Vadodara on that day."

Mehta, however, was quick to add that if some Dalits decide to embrace Christianity, "then we will oppose it".

"The change of religion — from Hinduism to Christianity or Islam — amounts to changing one's nationality and national loyalty. It is dangerous. We have seen what happened in some of the Christian-dominated states in the Northeast," he said.

According to political analyst Prakash Shah, the VHP is not opposing the programme because conversion to Buddhism would be convenient for the outfit as the Dalits would still remain within the broad Hindu fold.

Hindutva not a poll issue Venkaiah

Statesman News Service

31/5
HYDERABAD, May 30. — BJP president Mr M Venkaiah Naidu today said that Hindutva was not an election issue for his party, and that it would rather focus on developmental issues. He was speaking at a press conference after the BJP meet of state party presidents.

He assured that the BJP would fight the 2004 Parliament elections under Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, and dismissed speculations that the polls would be pre-poned. Questioned about new alliances, he said that the BJP has decided not to talk about it, saying that new partners would be sought depending on the suitability.

“The BJP wants to fight elections and plan its campaign under the leadership of Mr Vajpayee. He is being projected as the *Vikaas Purush* and Mr Advani as the *Loh Purush* and the elections would be fought under them,” he said.

He said the BJP was committed to the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya and that there was no dichotomy on the issue. He denied having made a statement that a mosque should be built beside the temple, saying that his flawed Hindi caused a misunderstanding. “The place is important for Hindus, as it is the birth-place of Ram. The place has no importance for Muslims,” he said. He ruled out enacting a legislation to effect the temple construction, saying that the BJP does not want to force its view upon NDA allies.

Party state presidents, MPs and MLAs have been asked to develop a programme whereby the party could reach every village and household by the end of this year. This was necessary to assess the mood of the people, to help formulate an appropriate election strategy, he said.

THE STATESMAN

31 MAY 2003

Conversion law faces court test

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, May 18: The controversial Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act is likely to be challenged in the state high court by a broad-based group of human rights activists, peace workers and Dalit parties.

According to Father Cedric Prakash of the Ahmedabad-based United Forum for Human Rights, the Act affects "not just religious minorities but (raises) a wider question which affects all communities".

The Act, which came into being on March 26 this year, has been criticised on three main grounds.

First, it stipulates that everybody involved in the act of conversion — from the proselytisers to the person who was to be converted — should seek permission of the district magistrate concerned. This provision does not exist in the anti-conversion laws legislated so far, including the recent Prohibition of

Forcible Conversion Act passed by the Tamil Nadu government.

"This is the first Act which involves the state directly in the conversion process," said Ahmedabad-based lawyer and human rights activist Girish Patel. "It means every case of conversion, including those which are purely voluntary and have no allegation of force or fraud, will require the sanction of the state."

Patel contended that this provision was a "flagrant" violation of Article 25 of the Constitution that enshrines the right to propagate religion.

"It means the state is in picture before the event and not after it, like censorship of the press which requires publications to obtain official clearance before printing a news item," he said.

Patel said he feared that prior intimation may cause the word to spread and "once that happens, religious fanatics will start their protests".

"This will naturally create a

law and order problem and that will be a reason to stop conversions, including the voluntary ones," he pointed out.

The second point of contention is the "over-inclusive" definition of conversions that includes everything in its sweep — allurement, force and fraud.

"Establishment of educational institutions and hospitals by private religious groups are constitutionally permissible activities but by stating that allurement includes grant of any material benefit, either monetary or otherwise, the Act has ended the distinction between constitutional and unconstitutional activity," Patel said.

And finally, Prakash contends that the Act is "anti-Dalit". He quoted from Section 4 that states: "Whoever contravenes the provision of Section 3 (prohibition of forcible conversion) shall, without prejudice to any civil liability, be punished with imprisonment for a term

which may extend to three years and also be liable to fine, which may extend to rupees fifty thousand."

But, Prakash points out, it also underlines that whoever attempted to proselytise minors, women, Dalits and tribals would face an enhanced punishment of four years' imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 1 lakh.

"This is nothing but using brute state force to prevent tribals, Dalits and others who want to choose other faiths and liberate themselves from inhuman discrimination," he said.

Sources said that given the circumstances in Gujarat after the BJP's return to power, those who wanted to contest the law were being counselled to exercise "patience and restraint" rather than plunge into the court.

"We wish to move the petition on behalf of a widely represented group instead of just minority organisations," they said, which is why outfits like

Sabrang, Lokadhikar Sangh, Setu and Dalit Panthers were expected to be in the forefront. "Otherwise, in the communalised ambience the reaction would be to see it as just another anti-Hindu move and this would be most unfortunate because going by statistics, Gujarat is one state which has not been affected by religious conversions," the sources said.

The other point being considered is that the Supreme Court had earlier upheld similar laws passed by non-Congress coalition governments in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Eminent constitutional jurist H.M. Seervai had then made a case for a review appeal and termed the apex court's ruling as "against the Constitution and without logic".

Sources, however, claim that there is enough substance in the Constituent Assembly debates to buttress the view that "conversion was an essential part of proselytising religions".

Decks cleared for cow Bill

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE Cabinet yesterday approved amendments which will grant dual citizenship to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), introduce a uniform law banning cow slaughter and make it simpler for women suffering from a broken marriage to seek legal relief.

In a move to overcome the problem of legislative competence of the Centre on a state subject, the Cabinet approved enactment of a Central law for Prohibition of Slaughter of Cow and its Progeny under Article 252(1) of the Constitution. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj told reporters that the Centre would enact a model legislation banning cow slaughter if two or more states request it to formulate it. However,

the model law would not be binding on the states, she said.

The Cabinet approved dual citizenship for PIOs living in countries with similar laws thereby limiting it to PIOs from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy in the first phase. "Indians living there will have to apply for dual citizenships and government could grant it after due verification," she said. The PIOs will have all privileges that Indians enjoy except for voting rights, holding constitutional offices or jobs in the three defence services.

In a major move to help

women, the Cabinet decided to amend the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act to enable them to file petitions for redressal in courts in places of their stay in the event of collapsed marriage. "A woman suffering due to a broken marriage will be able to file a petition where she is ordinarily residing," Swaraj said. She can file the petition from her place of stay even when the whereabouts of her husband are unknown or he is abroad.

The appeal period against judicial orders for women would be also increased to 90 days from existing 30 days, making it mandatory for the husband to remarry only after the stipulated time is over.

The Cabinet also approved

setting up of a National Judicial Commission for appointment of judges of the Supreme Court and high courts. It will be chaired by the Chief Justice of Supreme Court and its two seniormost judges, the Law Minister and an eminent citizen, possibly a legal luminary, she said.

It would recommend names for appointment of Supreme Court and high court chief justices, judges of high courts and transfer of chief justices and judges of high courts.

"The advice of the Commission will normally be accepted by the President. If its advice is not accepted, it would be for reasons to be recorded in writing which would be conveyed to the commission," she said. It decided to repeal the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 to check illegal immigration from across the border in Assam.



Centre to write to States on cow slaughter ban law

10.1 ✓
15 ✓

By P. Sunderarajan

NEW DELHI, MAY 6: The Union Cabinet today took the first step towards the formulation of a stringent Central law to ban cow slaughter by deciding to write to all States requesting them to allow the Centre to come out with such a legislation.

The letter to be written by the Department of Animal Husbandry in the Union Agriculture Ministry would specifically urge the States to adopt resolutions in their legislative assemblies seeking such a legislation.

This was necessary as under the Constitution, cow slaughter is a State subject and for the Centre to pass a law on a State subject, it is

essential that the legislative assembly of at least two States adopt resolutions that authorised the Centre to come out with such a law.

Announcing the Cabinet decision, the Union Minister and Cabinet spokesperson, Sushma Swaraj, noted that even now almost all States, except Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, had some law banning cow slaughter. But they were not stringent enough and had several loopholes.

For instance, many of them allowed the slaughter of old cows and this provision was misused to slaughter younger and healthier cows also. The Animal Husbandary Department's letter is

consequently expected to pinpoint the loopholes in the present legislations and emphasise the need for a law that imposed a total ban, without any exception, and provided for old cows to be sent to gaushalas.

The Cabinet, which met here this evening, also decided to amend the Citizens' Act to meet a long-pending demand of Persons of Indian Origin for dual citizenship.

It would, however, not be applicable to PIOs in all the countries since the other country should have a corresponding provision. Currently, such a provision existed only in eight countries, where there was also a sizeable population of

PIOs. The countries are U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, Italy, Ireland, Finland and Netherlands.

The dual citizenship would, therefore, be available only to PIOs in these countries.

Dual citizenship would also not be conferred automatically. PIOs would have to make an application and their credentials would be scrutinised.

Those who get dual citizenship would enjoy all benefits that an Indian citizen is entitled to, except the right to vote, the right to occupy constitutional positions and the right of employment in the three armed forces.

Judicial Commission:
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FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2003

Pelishim

VIOLETING THE RULE OF LAW ¹⁰ _{18/4}

FOR TOO LONG, the international general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Praveen Togadia, has been throwing a direct challenge to the rule of law, not only making inflammatory speeches of communal hatred, but also defying bans and prohibitory orders in force. At each of his meeting venues in States ruled by parties other than the BJP, Mr. Togadia has been inviting arrest, seemingly determined to achieve his own version of 'martyrdom' in the cause of Hindutva. Whether in Dhar in Madhya Pradesh, where he played on the communally-sensitive Bhojshala issue, or in Anantpur in Andhra Pradesh, where he sought to address public meetings despite being denied police permission, or in Ajmer in Rajasthan where he distributed tridents in violation of prohibitory orders, Mr. Togadia looked like he was desperate to be seen on the wrong side of the law. On each occasion he tested the tolerance limits of the State administration, and it was only a matter of time before he found himself having to face the consequences of his speeches and actions. The Congress Government in Rajasthan, in arresting the VHP leader for possessing and distributing a banned weapon, did what was essential under the circumstances, and ended what would have been a series of highly provocative 'trishul diksha' ceremonies. Any dithering by the State Government on this issue would only have emboldened the VHP and other Hindutva outfits to introduce blatant threats and violence in their majoritarian agenda. Of late, Mr. Togadia had taken upon himself the task of projecting the aggressive brand of majoritarian politics, attacking even the leaders of the BJP. There have been several instances of Mr. Togadia ridiculing the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, thus making the hawks in the BJP appear as moderates.

The tridents have now come to symbolise the violent face of Hindutva, with VHP activists

provocatively displaying them at every available opportunity. But the Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, has been quick to clarify that the ban on tridents, which could be extended to other Congress-ruled States, does not cover those trishuls traditionally associated with Shiv in religious iconography. Apparently, he is wary of the ban being interpreted as an action directed against Hindus. The issue, like Mr. Gehlot himself says, relates to the rule of law. The Government could not have watched in silence the distribution of sharp-edged weapons, especially by those with a track record of having incited communal violence.

Although it is not clear if the 'conspiracy to wage war' charge slapped on Mr. Togadia would survive judicial scrutiny (the charge was not mentioned in the First Information Report), the Government did well to send a message that there is no place for the politics of communal violence. Indeed, the arrest of Mr. Togadia confirms that there is a welcome departure in the attitude of the Governments of Congress-ruled States which have often chosen to adopt the line of least resistance when confronted by the provocative politics of forces exploiting the label of Hindu identity. Last month, the Congress Government in Madhya Pradesh similarly gave room to another Sangh Parivar leader, Acharya Dharmendra, who was held in Ujjain for trying to "foment trouble". Unless the state stands up to such forces unleashing violence, there would be no end to the provocative politics of Hindutva outfits which have often used the fear of supposed 'Hindu backlash' to get away with violating laws of the land. The poor response to the Rajasthan bandh called by the VHP and supported by the BJP to protest the arrest of Mr. Togadia should reassure the State Government in this regard. There can be no leniency toward those who cross the line of legitimate political action and seek to undermine the rule of law.

18 APR 2003

THE HINDU

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18 APR 2003

THE HINDU

Britain to cut down military in Gulf

LONDON, April 11. —

British naval and air forces will soon leave the Gulf region after completing their missions in Iraq, with the first four planes coming home today, British officials said.

“Our commitment to Iraq remains 100 per cent. We still have a very sizable deployment of active people out there. This is by no means the beginning of a full-scale reduction,” Armed Forces minister Mr. Adam Ingram said. The withdrawal would not affect British efforts to maintain public order. — AP

Putin criticises US failure to find WMDs



German Chancellor Mr. Gerhard Schröder and Russian President Mr. Vladimir Putin at St. Petersburg's University on Friday. — AP

Agence France Presse

ST. PETERSBURG, April 11. — President Vladimir Putin has criticised the United States for failing to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, saying the search was a waste of money.

Mr. Putin, referring to the United Nations report on Iraq on 20 March, told reporters: “There is nothing to be found out there. Something that the German Chancellor Mr. Gerhard Schröder and President Mr. Jacques Chirac in Paris said about alleged weapons were found in the United States. It has not been admitted.”

“The regime did not use weapons of mass destruction. I don't know that a quarter of the world,” Mr. Putin asked Saddam to quit. Mr. Putin asked Saddam Hussein to accept his fate. Saddam, he said, is a “criminal” and “must be punished by the international community.”

Omnifence of the heir

LS adopts resolution against cow slaughter

By Our Special correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10. The Lok Sabha today adopted by voice vote a private member's resolution

moved by a BJP member, asking the Centre to enact a law banning cow slaughter. The move, however, met with stiff resistance from the Opposition parties, which walked out in protest.

Hours of wrangling and heated exchanges preceded the adoption of the resolution moved by Prahlad Singh Patel. The Opposition argued that Parliament did not have the legislative competence to take up the issue as it fell within the purview of the State List. Significantly, it was the BJP alone which was pushing for the resolution. None of its NDA allies was present in the House when it was taken up.

Later, outside the House, some BJP MPs said that a bill to ban cow slaughter would be brought up but since it would need an amendment to the Constitution needing a two-thirds majority, it could only be done with Congress help. Party leaders said that since the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, had virtually challenged the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to bring up such legislation, the BJP now had no option but to do so. Ahead of the Assembly elections, it would also be seen as a good signal to its hardline Hindutva supporters.

In the House, Opposition members such as Shivraj Patil, Somnath Chattejee, Banatwala, and Priyaranjan Das Munshi argued against the resolution saying that since the matter was a State subject, Parliament was not competent to adopt such a resolution. "We cannot accept a resolution that is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, nor can we give Parliament that kind of authority," Mr. Patil said. It was also pointed out that in his reply, the Minister of State for Agriculture, Hukum Deo Narain Yadav, had admitted that the subject was part of the State List.

The Samajwadi Party members, Ramjilal Suman and Akhilesh Singh, demanded that the Government make clear its

1 1 APR 2003

THE HINDU

SPREADING HINDUTVA

In What Sense Is Savarkar A National Figure?

By RK DASGUPTA

The BJP took its fourth step towards full power at the Centre when it tainted the walls of the Parliament of the world's largest democracy by placing on one of them an oil portrait of Veer Savarkar. Their first step was taken in September 1990 when L.K Advani launched the Rathayatra from the rebuilt Somnath Temple in Gujarat, the chariot passing through some 10,000 kilometres in western and northern India the ultimate destination being Ayodhya. A modern Toyota van was decorated like a chariot used by Arjuna. The sacred vehicle carried the RSS symbol, saffron flag, side by side with the BJP lotus. Nor do we forget that on 30 October a crowd of Hindu volunteers attempted to storm the heavily guarded Babari Masjid in Ayodhya and managed to place a saffron flag on top of the structure.

Second step

The second step towards the goal was the demolition of the Babari Masjid in Ayodhya built by the founder of the Moghul Empire which produced the Hindu Renaissance its greatest literary figure being Tulsī Das (1532-1623), the poet of Ramacharitmanasa. Then the third step was Narendra Modi's pogrom of Muslims in the last Assembly elections in Gujarat. Modi's victory in the election encouraged the BJP, the political wing of the RSS, to take the fourth step, unveiling a portrait of the father of Hindu communalism, Veer Savarkar, in Parliament.

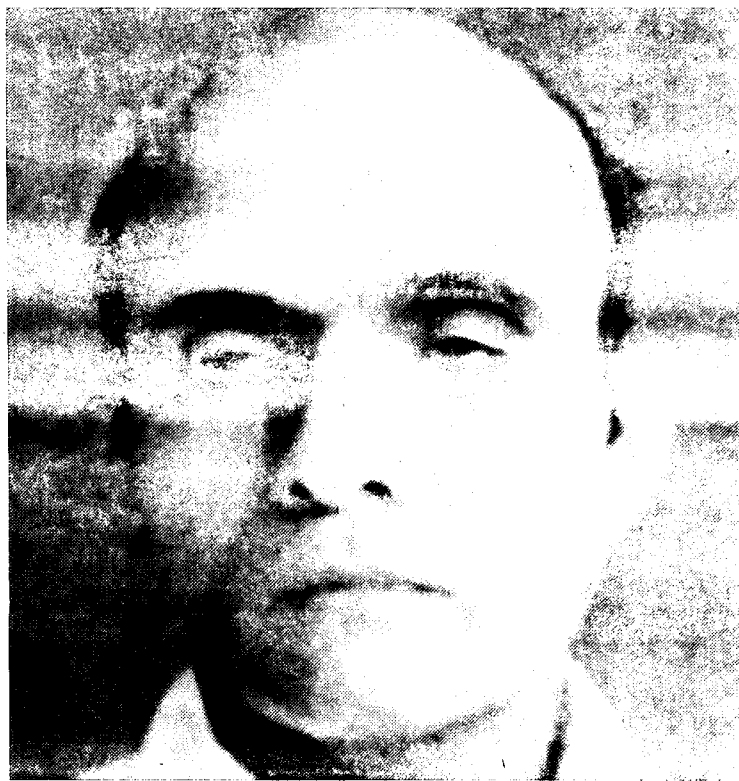
The BJP realised that the electoral victory in Gujarat was actually a victory of Hindutva. Gujarat was no longer the land of Gandhism: it was the land of Modism, that is, of Hindutva. Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani then thought that it was now necessary to assure a clear majority in Parliament, to acknowledge in public, that Savarkar was a national figure.

But in what sense is Savarkar a national figure? And why should it take 56 years after our attainment of national freedom to realise that Savarkar was a national figure? Which historian of India has called Savarkar a national figure? He has no presence in the serious political and historical literature of our country. There is no mention of Savarkar in the 945-page *Oxford History of India* published in 1958. Nehru does not mention him in his autobiography and Subhas Chandra Bose too does not mention him in his two autobiographies. There is not a word on him in RC Majumdar, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri and Kalikinkar Datta's 1122-page *An Advanced History of India* published in 1946. There is not even a passing reference to Savarkar in the 940-page *The Role*

The author, an eminent scholar, is former Director, the National Library of India

of Honour: Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs edited by KC Ghosh and published by the National Council of Education in 2002.

Savarkar has, however, a strong presence in our books on communalism an instance of which is David Ludden's *Making India Hindu* (1996). In this work Richard H Davis calls him "the ideological progenitor of the RSS". In the same work another authority on our modern political history calls him a propagandist of the doctrine of Hindutva. How then Savarkar is a national figure? When the BJP has



a majority in our Parliament, God forbid it, we will see portraits of Keshab Baliram Hedgewar who founded the RSS in 1925 and MS Gollwalkar who succeeded him as the head of the Hindu Organisation in 1940. If the BJP becomes all-powerful we may have a marble statue of Nathuram Godse in the Central Hall of Parliament. Godse assassinated Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948, as Narendra Modi destroyed Gandhism in Gujarat which is now a BJP state.

Two-nation theory

Savarkar is the father of Hindu communalism and has the distinction of spelling out the two-nation theory about two decades before Jinnah. We can now accuse Savarkar of subverting, through his doctrine of Hindutva, the ideological foundation of our 3,000-year tradition as interpreted by Sri Ramakrishna, Bankim, Vivekananda, Rabindranath, Sri Aurobindo and others. The portrait of the philosopher of Hindutva has virtually tarred with a large brush the other portraits which so long gave a moral and spiritual lustre to the hall of the Parliament.

In Savarkar's 117-page *Hindutva*

(1923), strong poison need not be served in a larger dose, in which he outlines his two-nation theory which created Pakistan. In the key passage of his book which is the Bible of the Sangh Parivar, its author says about the Muslim citizens of our country: "their holy land is far off in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of foreign origin". Savarkar further says: "The Hindus being the people, whose past, present

and future are most closely bound with the soil of Hindusthan as fatherland and holy land, they constitute the foundation, the bedrock, the reserved forces of the Indian state".

From this Savarkar concludes - "Therefore, even from the point of view of Indian Nationality, must ye, Oh Hindus, consolidate and strengthen Hindu Nationality." These words are still ringing in the ears of the Sangh Parivar. The less than Hindu tone of the National Democratic Alliance is just an interim political accommodation necessary as a condition for the Hindu army. Even in this interim period the Sangh Parivar has filled our political arena with sadhus with tridents and acharyas holding synods to assert the prowess of the Hindu community.

The violent threats of the Visva Hindu Parishad and its leader Togadia demanding lands for a Rama temple is the voice of the BJP which has Hinduised the North and will gradually create a Hinduised India. Indian education is being saffronised to expedite the process. The glory of the Congress of Gandhi and Nehru is extinguished forever. The BJP is thriving on

the ashes of that great party to which the British transferred power in 1947.

Our problem is that the parties which now seem to be opposed to the BJP have no notion of the danger ahead. The opposition to the BJP is concentrating on electoral strategies to capture power. I do not find anywhere an ideological passion, a passion for power being the only active force in Indian politics today.

Happily, there are some foreign observers who have analysed the political scene in our country and forcefully expressed their conclusions. A group of senior scholars of the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Washington, Selig Harrison, Paul H Keisberg and Dennis Kux, came together to edit a book, *India and Pakistan* containing essays on our two countries and our politics since independence.

Without fear

The book published in 1990 contains an article entitled "India: Democratic Problems and Problems" by Dr Paul R Brass. He has expressed his views freely without any fear of Hindu opinion. He calls the National Democratic Alliance a "fragile coalition" (p 39) and observes: "At the North India town of Ayodhya, on 6 December 1992, a huge crowd of militant Hindu massed under the leadership of a 'family' of militant Hindu organisation, including the BJP, and destroyed a mosque there known as the Babari Masjid". Dr Brass does not hesitate to include the BJP in this operation. He further says: "There are several affiliated organisations in the militant Hindu family. The parent organisation, the RSS, founded in 1925, stands for the consolidation of all Hindus into a united community. The BJP is its political arm, whose goal is to unite Hindus politically to achieve power at the centre and to transform India into a Hindu nation. The VHP, the spearhead of the Ayodhya movement, has been largely responsible for the mass mobilisation of Hindus that converged in Ayodhya on several occasions, including 6 December 1992".

If this is so, the political parties affiliated to the Sangh Parivar should be banned. In the years preceding the BJP regime at the Centre, no Union government had the courage to ban the RSS and its allies. Our secular parties do not have the courage to do anything that may adversely affect their electoral fortunes. Let us remember that the Congress began its election campaign in Gujarat from a temple. Nor should we forget that Rajiv Gandhi made concessions to the Sangh Parivar on several occasions. How can you deal with the communal organisations if you are not ready to sacrifice your interests in the defence of secularism?

filed in 8/9
5/6

ALERT SOUNDED!

Security angle to Hindutva

IT is becoming increasingly rare for Parliament to yield insights or fresh thinking on an issue that is politically contentious. Hence the greater need to appreciate the new dimension injected into the debate on the snowballing of Hindu extremism by the former army chief, Gen Shankar Roy Chowdhury; if unchecked it could pose a threat to national security he cautioned the Rajya Sabha in a presentation that, not unsurprisingly, attracted scant media attention. While his demand that POTA be invoked against Pravin Togadia and his description of that VHP torch bearer as "Hitler of Hindutva" can be understood as a tactical ploy to drive home a point in a rhetoric-ridden forum, it is prudent to give serious consideration to his drawing a parallel with the way things were allowed to get out of hand in Punjab. Having been in uniform when the army had to step in to contain violence in that region, he has first-hand experience to recall how it suited certain political interests to allow, even encourage, the growth of elements that subsequently turned on their mentors. Communal passions are divisive, and those divisions could be exploited by agencies inimical to this country.

This was not the hype in which politicians revel. Who can deny the links between the demolition of the Babari Masjid, the Bombay blasts, the torching of the railway carriage at Godhra and the state-encouraged carnage that followed? Politicians will argue over who "started it," and in their convoluted scale of values conclude that one bad turn deserves another. The military mind senses the potential for danger. A nation burning within is not well positioned to counter the fire from without. Only time will tell if those for whom the General's message was meant will muster the courage not to turn a Nelson's eye to his flashing beacon.

15 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

Muslims claim right to parts of undisputed Ayodhya site

By Rakesh Bhatnagar
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

of file *11-5* *12/3*
New Delhi: The "undisputed" 67.703 acres of acquired land in Ayodhya is in the thick of a dispute. Though an impression has been created that the entire acquired land adjacent to the disputed Babri site belonged to some pro-temple Hindu individuals and organisations, at least 22 plots in the sprawling area belong to the Muslims.

Even the supreme court had declared in 1994 that "the remaining (except for 2.77 acres of land on which the disputed structure once stood) property acquired under the Act was such over which no title was claimed by the Muslims".

But the Organisation of Indian Muslims for Change (OIMFC) and O.P. Sharma, counsel for Mohammad Aslam alias Bhure, who is litigating for the protection of Muslim religious rights, say that four mosques (plot nos 590, 593, 580 and 595), a graveyard called Ganje-e-Sheedan (plot no 13) and a 'dargah' were situated on the so-called undisputed land.

The Sunni Wakf Board was also litigating over these

properties and for a 'nuzul' plot based on 12 plots situated on the "undisputed" land acquired under the Acquisition of Certain Areas at Ayodhya Act, 1993.

"The word 'undisputed' would be wrong to use for the same as the acquired land has both Hindu and Muslim claims," said the OIMFC.

However, the majority judgment by then Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah Justice J.S. Verma and Justice G.N. Ray (all retired since then) had noted that the Act had affected the rights of both the communities and not merely those of the Muslims. It also said, "The interest claimed by the Muslims is only over the disputed site where the mosque stood before its demolition."

Meanwhile, the full bench of the Lucknow high court ruled that the general survey of the site and layout of the trenches at the disputed site at Ayodhya, if already done, should be done again in the presence of the contesting parties or their counsel or nominees at 10 a.m. on Wednesday. However, Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi of Kanchi on Tuesday said that the outcome of the excavation at the disputed site should be accepted by all parties.

1 2 MAR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

The march of Hindutva

THE INQILAB
 انقلاب

FINALLY, Hindutva's greatest ideologue and founder of the Hindu Mahasabha V.D. Savarkar's portrait adorns the Central Hall of Parliament. It is one of the most significant events in the history of Independent India. Savarkar was father of the two-nation theory. He said India was a Hindu country and Muslims and Christians would have to live like second-class citizens. By putting up his portrait in Parliament, the BJP-led government has made its message loud and clear: it has not only accepted Savarkar's ideology, it has also rendered the Constitution a mere document. Savarkar, who was accused in Gandhiji's assassination, now stands exactly opposite him. It means the Government equals him to the father of the nation. If the BJP comes to power in 2004, it may dump Gandhiji's portrait into an insignificant corner and upgrade Savarkar's stature. The Opposition parties, including the Congress, protested but couldn't stop the BJP. The BJP moves with a firm, clear agenda while the Opposition shoots in the dark. The BJP knows it can get away with anything since the divided Opposition can't sustain its pressure for long. All secular parties will have to come together and face this march of Hindutva.

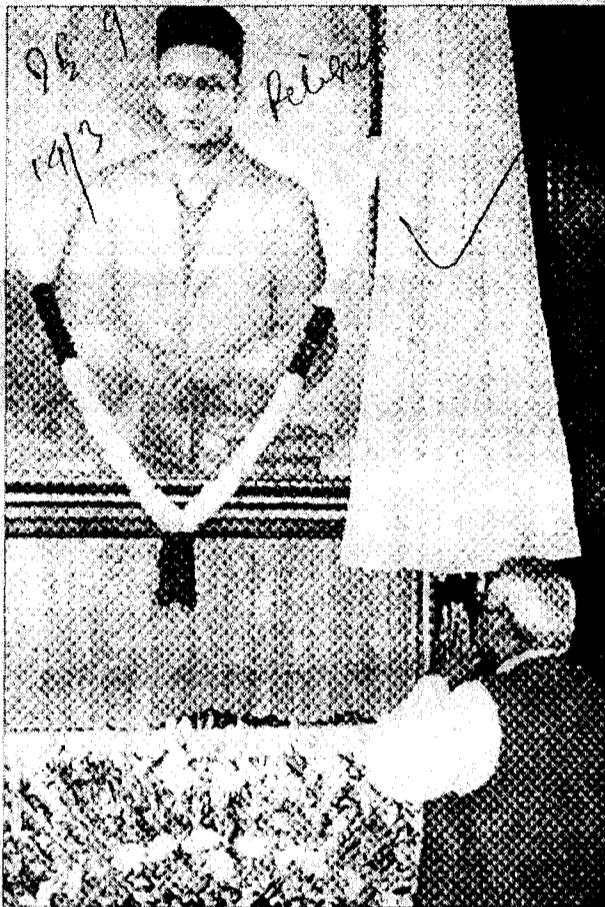
(The Inqilab)

The BJP agenda

TRAGICALLY, traitors

Far to the ground
 News, Views
 Snippets
 from the
 Language Newspapers

Urdu newspapers attack the NDA Government for "dishonouring Gandhiji by putting Veer Savarkar in the Mahatma's company"



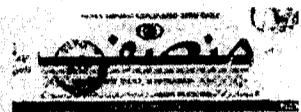
are being turned into heroes. Those who laid down their lives for the country are forgotten while traitors who harmed the Independence movement are being honoured. The BJP has every right to honour its ideologues within its party's platform. But it has no right to install them as national heroes in Parliament. The Central Hall of Parliament has a historic importance, it bears memories of

the night when Jawaharlal Nehru delivered his *Tryst with Destiny* speech. Nehru paid tribute to the lakhs of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians who brought us freedom. Many eminent historians are hurt at Savarkar's portrait being installed. A group of writers, historians and social workers from Maharashtra dashed off a letter to the President, arguing how Savarkar had

begged the British for pardon. He had agreed to co-operate with the British government in lieu of his release from prison. He was acquitted in Mahatma Gandhi's murder case only on "technical" grounds—the Justice Kapoor Commission had found him party to the plan of the murder. Savarkar propounded the two-nation theory which later led to the demand for Pakistan. The BJP has started implementing its agenda. Now even the portraits of our national leaders in Central Hall have been politicised.

(The Siasat Daily)

An insult to Parliament



THE Parliament houses so many statues and portraits that it look like a huge gallery today. But installing Savarkar's portrait amounts to an insult to the Constitution and Parliament. Savarkar, who didn't want to give all citizens equal rights, who didn't believe in a democracy based on adult franchise, now stands opposite Gandhiji. It's an insult to the Mahatma. Why does the Sangh Parivar adore Savarkar? Because he coined the word "Hindutva" and advocated the theory that only Hindus deserved the right to be citizens of India. The credit for giving birth to the idea of a Hindu Rashtra and Hindutva goes to Savarkar. Hence the Parivar's affection for him. To be fair to him, Savarkar did participate in the freedom struggle initially. He suffered rigorous imprisonment at Andaman. However, he begged for release, after which he propagated Hindutva at the behest of the British. Even

Sardar Patel had merited his role in the Mahatma's assassination. That the partners in the NDA allow this to happen in Parliament only shows their narrowish ends. We can't expect much from these partners.

(The Muslim)

Blow to freedom



SAVARKAR is not the hallowed comparison leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad. That is not very far off when the secular Constitution composite culture will be changed completely. Savarkar started the Muslim *bakhara* (confrontation) and provided momentum to the country's partition. Did they need to put Savarkar in the league of heroes? Sardar Bhagat Singh, Shaheedullah Khan and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Why did the Sangh Parivar controlled BJP Government take so long to realise Savarkar was a patriot? The BJP wants to encash Savarkar for its political gains. Savarkar is not a guru to L.K. Advani, Singhal, Praveen Togadia, Narendra Modi and Giriraj Kishore. The Adaman Freedom Fight Association chief, Viswanath Mukherjee, called him a blot on the name of freedom fighters. The BJP, by installing him in the Central Hall, insulted the freedom fighters.

(The Urdu Times)

—Cor.

MOHAMMED WAJID

SC reserves verdict on Ayodhya plea

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 6

A FIVE-JUDGE Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice Rajendra Babu reserved its verdict on Thursday on the Centre's plea for reconsideration of the ban on religious activities on the undisputed land in Ayodhya.

The Centre told the Bench that it would like to address the aspirations of a particular community, which wanted to use the land for religious purposes.

Counsels for the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and the All India Babri Masjid Action Committee vehemently opposed the Centre's plea.

VHP counsel P.S. Mishra supported the Centre's stand, but said the Parishad would favour creation of a trust that would facilitate religious activity on the undisputed land. This had become necessary because the main dispute would take a long time to be resolved, he said.

The government argued that since the 1994 Supreme Court judgment had not extended its status quo order to cover the undisputed parts, the Centre

THE ARGUMENTS

Centre's stand

THE STATUS quo order given last year on the undisputed land should be vacated as it runs counter to the SC's 1994 judgment that envisaged status quo only on the disputed site

Muslim Law Board

TO ALTER the status quo there has to be substantial change in the circumstances, but the Centre has cited no such circumstance. Till the Allahabad HC decides the title suit, the character of no area can be changed

should be allowed to deal with it in any way it felt necessary.

Solicitor-General Kirit Raval reasoned that though the government was obliged to keep the country's secular fabric in mind, it could not be indifferent to the religious aspirations of the particular community.

AIMPLB counsel Kapil Sibal

said the Centre should come out with a concrete plan about what it meant to do with the undisputed land. Recalling that the land had remained unused for 10 years, he wondered why the government had suddenly woken up to say that an extraordinary situation had arisen, making handover of the land necessary.

Disputing the Centre's contention that the 1994 judgment had not extended the status quo to cover the undisputed parts, Sibal said the verdict had an indirect bearing on peace and tranquillity in Ayodhya. If status quo was not preserved on the undisputed land, the real object of the judgment would be frustrated.

Raval said the 1994 judgment had allowed the government to revert the undisputed land to anyone after providing for access to the disputed part. The undisputed land, he argued, was not a subject matter before the Allahabad High Court which was dealing only with ownership of the disputed part.

All India Sunni Wakf Board counsel S.S. Ray said the Centre should await the Allahabad High Court's decision on ownership of the disputed plot.

7 MAR 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

COW SLAUGHTER / NO BAN IN BJP-RULED GOA

Cong. help needed to pass legislation: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent *of the*

AD-11
13

NEW DELHI, MARCH 12. In at least two States in which the Bharatiya Janata Party is in power — Goa and Nagaland — there is no ban on cow slaughter.

Admitting this today, the BJP leader Uma Bharati, and the party spokesperson, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had already announced that Central legislation — which would have to be a constitutional amendment — was to be brought for passing in this session to bring the subject on to the Central List for banning cow slaughter throughout the country.

Since the bill would need the support of a two-thirds majority, the BJP expected the Congress to help pass the legislation, Mr. Malhotra said.

However, Ms. Bharti admitted that in Goa where there was a majority BJP Government and where there was no difficulty in adopting legislation banning cow slaughter, the BJP Government had so far not done it. "Yes, we will ban cow slaughter," was all she would say. The BJP did not

want to assume any responsibility for any legislation in Nagaland on the plea that "it was a coalition Government and we are not in a majority".

Mr. Malhotra lamented that "within 24 hours" of promising to stick to certain norms of behaviour in Parliament, members of several parties entered the well of the House on Monday and prevented voting on a private members' resolution on cow slaughter.

Mr. Malhotra and Ms. Bharati charged the Congress with "double standards" on this issue — the senior party leader, Shivraj Patil, had challenged a vote on the issue on a point of order in the House, but the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, had written to the Prime Minister asking him for an all-India ban on cow slaughter through legislation.

But, as for the BJP's own double standards — while taking to the streets on the issue in Madhya Pradesh but keeping quiet in Goa and Nagaland — Ms. Bharti and Mr. Malhotra preferred to look the other way.

Their main demand was that the Congress should clarify its position.

13 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Russia
H9-10

A DICTATOR'S RESURRECTION

DOUBLE AND TREBLE the guards lest he rise up from the grave, wrote the dissident poet, Yevgeni Yevtushenko, at the height of the de-Stalinisation drive launched by the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. It was an expression of a widespread fear that the old black days of Josef Stalin might return to stamp out the little freedoms that the Soviet people had begun to enjoy under his successor. When Khrushchev stunned the world with his denunciation of the dictator's stifling cult of personality and opened the gates to a flood of personal accounts of sufferings under him, hardly three years had gone by since the passing of Stalin, on March 5, 1953. Within a decade, Stalin's embalmed body was removed from the mausoleum next to Lenin in the Red Square even as the drive to expose the mass murders during his reign and his controversial legacy continued in fits and starts under successive leaders. The final denouement came under Mikhail Gorbachev and his twin policy of perestroika and glasnost, which led ultimately to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, a half century after Stalin's death, it looks as if the guards at his grave have fled amid a growing longing among the younger generation for an iron-fisted leader to return and pull the country out of the morass. Russia appears still unable to break out of his spell.

A degree of nostalgia was always extant in post-Stalin Soviet Union, with the older generation never ceasing to long for the giant who led the communist nation to a remarkable victory in World War II and turned it into a superpower of unrivalled industrial strength. Of a piece with this was the recent attempt by septuagenarian war veterans to restore to Volgograd its post-war name of Stalingrad. This was explainable nostalgia for the glory days. What must baffle one however is the response of the younger generation, which has heard mostly only denunciation of Stalin and his brutal record as an autocrat. This is apparently the generation that

has been worst affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The trappings of democracy that this has brought have done little to relieve the pain of loss of employment opportunities and generally the hope for the future.

The Putin Presidency's success in halting the slide after the chaotic decade under the flamboyant Boris Yeltsin has done little to stem the nation's desperation — and a consequent longing for the return to the old days. Perhaps, Mr. Putin's austere style and ways of governance, resulting from the rigours of his experience in the Soviet spy agency, the KGB, might themselves be inducing the nostalgia for "a leader like him". In some ways, Mr. Putin has shown himself ready to use Stalinist ways to bring order back while not straying from the democratic path. "The poor want a Stalin to make short shrift of the rich, their enemies, while the rich want a Stalin to keep the poor at bay," says a member of the much-respected Russian Academy of Sciences. Few will disagree with Saltan Dzarasov's comment that the resurrection of Stalin is the result of the failure of democratic reforms in Russia, reviving the debate over whether democracy must precede or follow development. Russia's experience offers no clear clue except that the path of democracy is full of unknown obstacles. As Mr. Putin strives to strike a balance, he must be aware that in present day Europe there can be no going back to the ruthless dictatorships of the last century. The current nostalgia for Stalin among the young Russians may mean two things. One, that he continues to provoke the widest of emotions, from fierce loyalty to bitter hatred, and two, that there is a time bomb ticking that the Russian leadership can ill afford to ignore. Posterity, haunted by Stalin, perplexed by the legacy of his rule yet still unable to master and transcend it, for the time being sought merely to cast him out of its memory, wrote Isaac Deutscher. Maybe the time of recall has come.

11 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Digging up the past

THE COUNTRY'S most famous real estate dispute has taken a new turn. Or has it? The Allahabad High Court has directed the Archaeological Survey of India to carry out excavations at the contentious site in Ayodhya. The ASI's brief is to determine whether a temple existed or not at the place where the demolished Babri masjid once stood. It's not yet clear, though, how this pertains to solving the imbroglio that has held the nation's attention for the last decade and much more. Finding an earlier structure under the area adjoining the demolished mosque — something that a geological survey company using radar technology reportedly attested to in its findings to the ASI last month — will prove exactly that: the existence of an earlier structure, nothing less, nothing more. Even if evidence suggests that Mughal governor Mir Baqi did build a commemorative mosque to honour Babar after razing a Ram temple, does an event that took place in 1528 merit the 'corrective measures' taken on December 6, 1992, or those being insisted upon by the Sangh parivar today?

Being fixated on 'fixing past mistakes' and thereby creating communal ruptures today is a dangerous trend if allowed to continue. Even as an attempt to get to the bottom of archaeological truth, the high court order to dig up the

past is a dangerous precedent. What happens if the Taj Mahal or the Khajuraho Temple is found to be standing atop once-demolished structures? And does the digging stop only after Hindu relics are found? Apart from the handle provided to dig up every mosque to ascertain whether a temple lurks under it — not to mention digging up every temple to check whether it stands under a destroyed Buddhist stupa — the business of knowing which community holds proprietorship of a piece of land using a 'first-come first-served' logic is insane and impractical. For those buying for the 67-acre undisputed land in Ayodhya — and by extension the 2.77 acres of disputed land — to be 'returned' to its 'rightful owners', however, sanity and practicality are matters for the birds and the bees.

The ASI has been told to start excavations within a week and present its findings in a month's time. The ruling, coming a day before the Supreme Court reserved its verdict on the Centre's plea to vacate the status quo order on the undisputed site, is bound to make the Sangh parivar play up a link between the buried past and the future of the dispute. But the court must make it clear to both opposing parties in the wrangle that regardless of whether a Ram temple is found in subterranean Ayodhya or not, it's the law that will decide on the contentious issue on the ground.

7 MAR 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kalam ignores Oppn plea, unveils portrait



GRACING THE OCCASION: Parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, vice-president Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Speaker Manohar Joshi gather before a portrait of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in Parliament House on Wednesday. — AP

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 26 NOVEMBER

EVEN as the President, Mr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, on Wednesday ignored the protests from the Opposition to unveil the portrait of the Hindutva ideologue, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, in Parliament's Central Hall, the controversy over the issue was threatening to snowball into a major confrontation between the BJP and the Congress.

While the Congress, along with the Left parties, boycotted the ceremony as a mark of protest against what it considers to be the latest in a series of measures to subvert the "secular" character of the polity, an unfazed BJP and its saffron ally, the Shiv Sena, were readying plans to convert the portrait face-off into a case of insult to the Marathi pride. The Shiv Sena was already in agitation mode. Its members took out demonstrations and made an aborted attempt to burn the Congress president's effigy in Mumbai on Wednesday after-

noon and the BJP president, Mr M. Venkaiah Naidu, reportedly instructed the party members to take the "insult" to the people.

Despite emerging red-faced from the entire episode, protests from the Congress and the Left continued unabated for the second consecutive day, even though the voices of dissent were decidedly feeble. After initially agreeing to join the "boycott" call, NCP leader and Maratha strongman Sharad Pawar made himself scarce, refusing in the process to append his signature to the letter sent to the President by the non-Congress opposition block.

The BJP remained unrepentant. It was off the mark quickly, brandishing how members of both the Congress and the Left had acquiesced in the decision to put up Savarkar's portrait, and recalled various honours conferred on the Hindutva ideologue by the late Prime Minister, Ms Indira Gandhi. It also referred to the stamp released in the honour of the renowned freedom fighter in the year 1970.

The Economic Times

27 FEB 2003

FOR CONNOISSEURS OF THE INDIAN POLITICAL MAINLINE

Cong, Left see red over Savarkar portrait

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 25 FEBRUARY

THE unveiling of Veer Savarkar's portrait in Parliament's Central Hall on Wednesday has put the Opposition on a collision-course with the NDA government. Taking the proposed unveiling of the Hindutva ideologue's portrait as part of the continuing saffron subversion of "secularism", the Opposition, along with the BSP, has decided to keep away from the ceremony while urging President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam not to oblige the saffron camp by unveiling the portrait formally.

The government, however, hit

back asserting that the protest was a political ploy and an afterthought as all those opposing the honour for Savarkar had supported the idea. "There is a committee which recommends the names of luminaries whose portraits have to be put up in the Central Hall. At a meeting held on December 5, the members, which comprised Somnath Chatterjee (CPM), J. Chittaranjan (CPI), Shivraj Patil and Pranab Mukherjee (Congress), besides the Speaker who chaired the meeting, unanimously endorsed Savarkar's name.

There was no one from the BJP. Orders for the portrait were subsequently placed and invita-



VEER-ING IN

tions sent. I don't see why the Opposition should raise such a hue and cry now," parliamentary

affairs minister Sushma Swaraj said, adding: "Proper procedure was followed and decisions were taken in collective wisdom."

Realising they had been caught on the wrong foot, the Opposition leaders sought to make amends by claiming they had, indeed, made a mistake by not opposing the move in the meeting. CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee admitted as much while speaking to newsmen on Tuesday afternoon. The Opposition, for a

change, has been able to drive a wedge between the BJP and at least one of its allies, the BSP, on the issue, sees red in the move, and views it as part of the Sangh Parivar's large gameplan.

Urging President Kalam not to grace the occasion, a move which they alleged was designed to provide legitimacy to Savarkar and his "divisive" ideology, the Opposition found fault with Hindutva ideologue on three counts — that he was an advocate of the two-nation theory, that he was an accomplice in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and that he had sought clemency from the British authorities by pledging loyalty to the Raj during freedom fight.

In a letter to the President, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi expressed her party's inability to be present at the unveiling of the portrait in the Central Hall of Parliament on Wednesday.

When the sants march in

The VHP is making full use of the political leadership's silence

THE rhetoric is tamer, the threats seem blunter. They say the VHP is not on the rampage, as it so raucously was, this time a year ago. But that is small consolation for those who helplessly watch the twists and turns of the never-say-die 'Ayodhya issue'. The marching sants, holding aloft their tridents and placards and threatening an Ayodhya (and/or Gujarat) in every village may have been prevented from actually gheraoing Parliament on Monday, but there's little comfort to be had in that. The drama played out during the dharam sansad in the country's capital culminating in the abortive gherao reinforces some very depressing messages. Of a festering problem and a paralysed political leadership. Of an emotive national issue virtually surrendered to the street. Of debate drowned out by slogans. And yes, of Parliament under siege.

For the VHP, we are told, it's a climbdown because all through the sound and fury of the last few days, it did not lay down a date for temple construction. It issued only the agitational programme, presumably announced in order to provide the assorted assembly of sadhus and sants who had converged in the capital from different parts of the country with something to do. 'Commander in chief' Praveen Togadia and his foot soldiers seem to

have seen the foolishness of behaving too badly even while the Vajpayee government pleads their case in the Supreme Court. But it is tragic that the nation should have to watch with bated breath while the VHP decides just how to play it this time. It is disturbing that Togadia and Co should be able to raise the temperature on Ayodhya, fling challenges and insults to the political leadership and the government at a time of their choosing every year. The discourse on Ayodhya is much too crucial to be left to the VHP but the nation's political leadership continues to do exactly that.

The Supreme Court may decide in a few days whether or not the 'undisputed' land can be uncoupled from the 'disputed' land and given back to the VHP-controlled nyas. Having lobbed the ball to the court, the government must now ensure that the judicial verdict is respected. That includes telling the VHP rabblers to hold their threat-making in the run-up to the verdict. That includes being prepared to enforce the rule of law in case they threaten to defy an unfavourable ruling. But whichever way it goes, it will take time for that tableau of Monday's near-siege of Parliament by the marching sants to fade out — the shouting without and the silence within.

25 FEB 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

VHP distributes copies of Koran at Dharam Sansad

119.11 29/2/2003
NEW DELHI, FEB. 23. A translated version of the Koran was distributed on the concluding day of the 'Dharam Sansad' here today. The VHP mandarins worked overnight on the book — *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran - An explanatory translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickhall* — to specifically mark the portions which they considered as "preaching hatred against other communities." The book contains paragraphs which were marked with a pen to highlight the "intolerance" of Islam. Both the RSS and VHP leaders have been urging the Muslims to delete portions from their scripture which "preach hatred against non-believers."

Asked why the entire book was distributed, a VHP functionary said "earlier when we used to distribute selected portions, people accused us of misinterpretation and misquoting. So we decided to give the entire scripture while highlighting the objectionable portions." Some sadhus were seen carrying the Koran in one hand and a trident on the other. — PTI

Dharam Sansad out to fuel unrest, says BMAC

AYODHYA, FEB. 23. The Babri Masjid Action committee (BMAC) has alleged that the announcements made at the Vishwa Hindu Parishad-sponsored Dharm Sansad were meant to fuel communal disharmony in the country. The Government should intervene and check the VHP leaders from making provocative speeches, the BMAC's local convenor, Yunus Siddiqui, said here today.

Sants plan march to Parliament today

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, FEB. 23. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad-led 'Dharam Sansad' today threatened to create a "hundred Gujarats" in different parts of the country as part of its nation-wide Ram temple agitation. "Jo Gujarat mein hua tha woh sab jageh hoga (what happened in Gujarat will happen everywhere)," a star speaker, Dharmendra, warned today.

Mr. Dharmendra and the VHP leader, Pravin Togadia, together spewed hatred in their fiery speeches at the Ramlila

Maidan here on the second day of the Dharam Sansad, where resolutions were passed on cow protection, action against pollution in the Ganges, on "jehadi" terrorism and "infiltration" from Bangladesh.

At the end of the day, Mr. Togadia announced that "sadhus" would march through various points in the city to meet at Jantar Mantar tomorrow at 11 a.m. in an attempt to "March to Parliament", an announcement which was applauded by the gathering.

Throughout their speeches they attacked the Government,

especially the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, for "betraying" the Ram temple cause, they attacked the media for saying that the Dharam Sansad had watered down its programme of action under pressure, they attacked the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, and finally they appealed to the Congress and MPs in other parties to join the Ram temple agitation to be led by them to prove that "Hindu blood flowed in their veins".

Mr. Vajpayee was once again mocked for his "fight to the finish" statement on Pakistan.

Mr. Togadia said the Ram "sevaks" who had shed their blood and women who sacrificed their sons and husbands did not do so "so that BJP leaders could grab power and sit in comfort". The Centre was also assailed for failing to act to protect the cow.

They found fault with the ruling party and some of their coalition partners for sticking to power.

"What will you do with your 'gaddi' (chairs) when tomorrow you will not be able to find a place to stand," Mr. Togadia said.

Recalling the Godhra and Gujarat incidents of last year, Mr. Togadia said that on February 28 (last year) a few thousand people in the State took to the streets to defend Hindus, for the Ram temple agitation tens of thousands of people would come out on the streets and the "fight will not be limited to Gujarat but will be taken to every corner of the country".

"Ya Ram Ke Saath Hain, Ya Babar Ki Aulad Hain (either you are with Ram or you are the progeny of Babar)" was the slogan given by Mr. Togadia who said that thousands and "crores" of volunteers, men, women and youth, would come out into the streets to fight the "second Mahabharat at Indraprastha (one of the old cities at Delhi)".

Cong. rejects VHP demand

By Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, FEB. 23. The Congress today refused to rise to the VHP's bait, and rejected outright its demand that the party support it in the construction of the Ram temple. "We will go by the verdict of the courts, and there is no question of responding to their call," said the CWC member, Pranab Mukherjee.

The VHP and its Dharam Sansad on Sunday, had called on the Congress not to forget its past, and help in the construction of the Ram temple. Jaipal Reddy, Congress spokesperson, promptly debunked the call. "We are of the view that only the court verdict is the way out," he said.

Senior Congress leaders believe that both the VHP and the BJP are working in concert and have called on the Government to discharge its duty and go exactly by the law. "What the Government

is doing amounts to leaning on the side of one of the interested parties. All of it is being done for political gains," says a senior AICC functionary.

Conscious of the Sangh Parivar's attempts to brand it an 'anti-Hindu' party, the Congress appears keen to draw a distinction between its "principled" stand on the temple issue and that of the BJP. "We are not against Hindus or any other religion, but we are clearly against mixing temporal and spiritual issues," Mr. Mukherjee said.

Senior party leaders also debunk charges of the Congress changing tack and opting for the soft Hindutva line. "It is absolutely untrue. We are wedded to secularism, there can be no compromise on the issue. The Congress will not exist if it is not secular," Mr. Mukherjee said. But he was quick to point out that being secular did not in anyway mean that it was against any religion.

24 FEB 2003

THE HINDU

VHP claims hi-tech proof of temple

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 21

VHP CHIEF Ashok Singhal dropped a bombshell on Friday, claiming an underground survey of the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya, carried out with advanced radar technology, had conclusively proved that a Hindu temple once existed there.

The findings of the deep penetration radar (DPR) survey were submitted to the Allahabad High Court's Lucknow Bench on February 15, Singhal said.

"The findings are entirely in our favour," he added, disclosing that copies of the confidential report had been given to all 26 parties involved in the main Ayodhya title suit pending before the High Court.

Disclosing that the court had directed all of them not to make the report's contents public, Singhal regretted that he had "inadvertently" leaked the information to the media.

The survey was carried out by a Canadian company on orders from the High Court Bench which had sought to ascertain

whether the site had a Hindu shrine in the past, Singhal said. An elated VHP leadership made strident claims on Friday

that the survey had vindicated their stand on the temple issue, but there was no official confirmation of the claim. Govern-

ment sources said the VHP claim could be based on a selective interpretation of the report.

But Singhal's claim is significant all the same, coming as it does after the Prime Minister's statement at a Himachal Pradesh election rally on Thursday that the BJP wanted a Ram temple in Ayodhya, and the party leadership was "confident" that historical evidence would prove that a temple existed there.

Meanwhile, the PM's initiative to untie the Ayodhya tangle cleared a major legal hurdle on the day when the Supreme

Court ignored objections from Muslim bodies and decided to hear on March 6 the Centre's plea for review of the SC ban on any religious activity on the undispputed 67 acres of acquired land even before the issue of its ownership is settled. But the court stressed that it could not be pressured into taking up expeditious hearing of the plea.

The BJP hailed the Supreme Court decision as a "slap" on the face of the Congress, which had opposed hearing of the Centre's plea before resolution of the title dispute.

House to have Veer Savarkar portrait

THE CENTRE will unveil freedom-fighter Veer Savarkar's portrait in the Central Hall of Parliament on February 26 to the discomfiture of Opposition parties who see such as the Congress.

HTC, New Delhi

that the survey had vindicated their stand on the temple issue, but there was no official confirmation of the claim. Govern-

Ayodhya, replayed?

ECHOES OF Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. Only this time, the number of *kar sevaks* was small and the state didn't have a BJP chief minister. So, the attempt by a new Sangh parivar outfit, the Hindu Jagran Manch, to forcibly enter an 11th century shrine — the Bhojshala-Kamal Moula mosque in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh — on Tuesday was foiled. The Hindutva lobby has been trying to foment trouble for some time at this place, although it isn't a 'disputed' structure but simply a place of worship for both Hindus and Muslims. The two communities have been quietly offering prayers in accordance with an Archaeological Society directive which permitted Muslims to offer *namaz* every Friday and Hindus to offer prayers on Vasant Panchami day every year.

But the continuing peace and quiet were obviously unacceptable to the saffron brigade. Forever on the lookout to whip up communal tension, the Sangh parivar floated the Hindu Jagran Manch, which threatened to enter the shrine forcibly and install an image of Goddess Saraswati. As may be expect-

ed, the BJP offered its support to this venture just as it had supported the VHP's Ramjanmabhoomi agitation when it was first started in 1985.

There will be a sense of *déjà vu* over these disruptive tactics. The Sangh parivar seemingly never tires of locating potential trouble spots. A few years ago, it made strenuous efforts to foment communal disturbances by trying to take over the Idgah Maidan in Hubli in Karnataka. However, the state government's stern measures served to dissuade it. Now, it is focusing on Bhojshala. There is little doubt that the scheduled elections in MP and Chhattisgarh later this year have been factored in by the Hindutva camp in this context. It is clearly looking at reaping electoral benefit, as in Gujarat, by raising the communal temperature. The *parivar* has also been accused of starting a riot in Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh some time ago over the slaughtering of a cow. Since Ayodhya is caught in a legal tangle, the saffron camp is obviously searching for other disputes — or creating one where none exists, as in Bhojshala — which can be exploited for political purposes.

19 FEB 2003

THE STATESMAN

COW SLAUGHTER / BJP FOR ALL-INDIA BAN

PM upset with partymen for not refuting charges

By Neena Vyas

110-11 19/2

NEW DELHI, FEB.18. Exercised over the political storm caused by the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, on the cow slaughter issue, Bharatiya Janata Party MPs today demanded that the Centre act expeditiously to ban cow slaughter throughout the country. But to their surprise the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was chairing the BJP parliamentary party meeting, chided them for acting in a defensive manner and not taking on the Chief Minister.

It was with some trepidation that several party MPs from Madhya Pradesh — Uma Bharati, Kailash Joshi, Sumitra Mahajan and others — protested that the Youth Congress had put up posters everywhere in the State saying: "*gau hamari mata hai, Atal Behari khata hai* (cow is our mother, but Atal Behari eats it)."

An angry Prime Minister said out that during elections political parties would do mischief but why should the BJP be defensive, why were the charges not met? "Do you expect me to refute the allegation and say that I do not eat beef," he is reported to have asked.

The Prime Minister wanted to know what the BJP had been doing in Madhya Pradesh, why it had not strongly countered Digvijay Singh's allegation about "growing beef exports", during the

four years of his Government's rule, and, worst that he, Mr. Vajpayee, ate beef. Why was the BJP defensive on this, he wanted to know. When the State MPs said they had organised rallies to counter this, Mr. Vajpayee looked displeased, that was clearly not enough.

Mr. Vajpayee described as a "lie" the Congress allegation and said there was a ban on beef exports from India, and, therefore there was no question of increasing exports. Barring a few States cow slaughter was banned in most.

Later, the BJP party spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, said there was unanimity of view in the party on the need for an all-India ban on cow slaughter. And the Vajpayee Government would consider bringing a bill on this.

The party president, Venkaiah Naidu, is reported to have asked MPs to "speak aggressively" on the subjects of religious conversion, POTA and national security. A cell would soon be set up in the party to monitor the work of MPs in their constituencies and their effectiveness in Parliament.

Later, Mr. Malhotra indicated that his party was ready for a CBI inquiry into the alleged "sex scandal" involving some Punjab Ministers in Gujarat, but such an inquiry should also cover the "goings-on" in Punjab (where the Congress is ruling).

Cong. silent on cow slaughter issue

Religion

10-11
1572

By Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, FEB. 14. Senior All-India Congress Committee (AICC) functionaries today refused to be drawn into commenting on the BJP's suggestion that it would be willing to bring legislation banning cow slaughter, provided the Congress agreed to cooperate in its passage.

The Congress leadership is inclined to view the BJP's suggestion as bait being dangled before it on election-eve.

"Let them make a formal proposal before the Congress president, we will give our considered opinion then," said the AICC general secretary, Ambika Soni.

The issue gained currency after the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, forwarded a request to the Prime Minister seeking a nation-wide ban on cow slaughter.

The BJP has been quick to grasp the electoral implications and has sprung the suggestion on the Congress when four States are going to the elections in the third week of the month and five more later in the year.

Given the political ramifications, the Congress is predictably guarded in its response, which reflects the internal debate on its reaction to Hindutva and other related issues.

The leadership is of the view that the forces of obscurantism and communalism, irrespective of their colour, ought to be confronted head-on. However, a section believes that the party should be realistic and adopt a position not viewed as "anti-Hindu".

The Congress poll managers in Gujarat challenged the BJP's position of being the real representatives of the Hindus. In its bid to beat the BJP on

the Hinduism issue, the Congress ended up earning the sobriquet of being a poor imitation of the former.

At the CWC meeting after the Gujarat elections, the party sought to clear the confusion by drawing a distinction between the radical brand of Hinduism being espoused by the BJP and the liberal and inclusivist brand of Hinduism that the Congress stood for.

The delicate distinction sought to be drawn appears to have been lost on the rank and file of the party and several of its Gujarat leaders are engaged in trying to outdo the BJP.

The challenge before the Congress leadership on the cow slaughter and other related issues is to reconcile the different perceptions within the party, and to adopt a stand distinct from that of the BJP and in keeping with the Congress' core secular values.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2003

CRICKET AND DOING

WHEN ONE OF the greatest bowlers the game has ever known fails a doping test, it must qualify as cricket's biggest drug bust. News that Shane Warne has tested positive for diuretics on samples he provided about three weeks ago, a development that has forced him to 'opt' out of the World Cup, has shocked cricket lovers all over the world. To many it has seemed like a depressing affirmation of the slipping standards in cricket, which has suffered in recent times due to increasing commercialism, contractual disputes and match-fixing scandals. Leaving aside the disbelief and disappointment, the sad controversy over the Australian leg-spinner raises two specific but very different questions. First, what does it mean for the man Wisden chose as one of the five greatest cricketers of the last century? Second, what does it mean for cricket?

The first question can be fully answered only after the Australian Cricket Board scrutinises Warne's explanation for what happened and after a further test is conducted on another sample taken on the same day. However, since test results of B samples usually do not vary with those conducted on A samples, Warne may have to answer some puzzling questions about his conduct. Going by the leg-spinner's statement, he has two lines of defence. One, that he did not know the tablets contained prohibited substances. Two, that these substances were not performance-enhancing drugs (and therefore had no impact on his performance). Unfortunately, neither argument is compelling. To begin with, ignorance has become an embarrassingly familiar defence against positive dope tests. It has been used so often that it now lacks all credibility, particularly at a time when today's sportsmen are provided with banned substances lists and told over and over again not to take medicines without checking with their doctors.

Warne is correct when he points out that diuretics are not performance-enhancing drugs, but in a way this is beside the point. Diuretics increase the excretion of water and dissolved

drugs through the kidneys and the principal reason why they are banned in sports is because they are capable of masking the use of steroids. Given Warne's astonishingly quick recovery from a shoulder injury he suffered on December 15 — one which many feared would end his career — his positive test for a masking agent for steroids is bound to raise serious suspicions. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, the cricketer could have a two-year ban slapped on him — something that would effectively end the career of this extraordinarily talented 33-year-old.

The controversy is bound to force cricket's administrators to take a harder look at dope testing. At the moment, only four Test playing nations have clear and formulated procedures for submitting cricketers to drug tests and the World Cup 2003 is the first international tournament in which the ICC has devised a testing programme. A comprehensive procedure for dope testing is something the ICC must insist on for all member-nations. At the same time, it is important to note that, in comparison with other sports, the risk of doping in cricket is relatively very low. This is because performance-inducing drugs, which generally boost strength and build muscle bulk, are unlikely to have a huge impact on a game that relies largely on hand-eye coordination. However, such drugs can benefit injured cricketers, something that is substantiated by recent test findings. For example, last year, an Australian fast bowler with a back problem was suspended for attempting to heal it by taking an anabolic steroid. In England, most positive findings are for recreational drugs, not performance-enhancing ones. If Warne is in fact guilty, the worst thing he could be guilty of is trying to hasten his recovery through the use of steroids and then attempting to mask this through the use of diuretics. He cannot be accused of attempting to better his performance through the use of drugs. The question is whether the Australian Cricket Board will keep this mitigating factor in mind when it passes judgment on him.

110-14

PROTECTION FOR TURKEY / NATO MEET INCONCLUSIVE

France, Germany stick to stance

RUSSELS, FEB. 12. France, Germany and Belgium refused on Tuesday to drop their opposition to United States-backed plans to bolster Turkish defences against a possible Iraqi missile attack despite mounting pressure from allies and fears that NATO's credibility was at risk.

After two postponements for informal talks, ambassadors from the 19 NATO countries came together for a second day of emergency consultations on Tuesday evening, only to adjourn 20 minutes later.

"Right now, we do not have a conclusion," the NATO spokesman, Yves Brodeur, said afterward. Consultations would continue through the night, he said, and the ambassadors would reconvene at 9:45 a.m. (local time) on Wednesday. "It is a serious issue and everyone is committed to work hard to try to find a solution to it," he said.

Asked if there were any new proposals, Mr. Brodeur said: "There are a number of options that have been discussed." He refused to elaborate.

Diplomats said Berlin might be wavering in its resistance but were unsure whether the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, would break ranks with the French Pres-

ident, Jacques Chirac, or be able to persuade him to come aboard. Mr. Brodeur, while refusing to comment directly, said only that the "context" of the dispute "has not really changed."

The division in the alliance threatens U.S. attempts to muster support in the U.N. Security Council for military action against Iraq. France and Germany, joined by Russia and China, are seeking more time for beefed-up U.N. inspections in a proposal opposed by Washington.

On Tuesday, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said his country, a permanent Security Council member, would consider vetoing any "unreasonable use of force" against Iraq. Speaking through a translator on French television, he said a unilateral attack on Iraq would be a "grave error."

"If today a proposition was made that we felt would lead to an unreasonable use of force, we would act with France or alone," Mr. Putin said.

Meanwhile, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, urged support for his hardline stand against the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, in phone conversations with the leaders of the Philippines, Angola and Bri-

tain. Ministers from Norway, Denmark, Britain, Greece also criticised the three holdouts.

The crisis, which has been bubbling for almost a month, came to a head on Monday when, in an unprecedented move, the French, Germans and Belgians rebuffed a direct appeal for help from Turkey issued under NATO's mutual defence treaty.

In an effort to sway the holdouts, diplomats said changes in the wording of the request were made to include a reference to Article 1 of its treaty, in which allies pledge "to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."

The diplomats said it did not change the substance of the Turkey's request to begin planning to send it AWACS early warning planes, Patriot anti-missile batteries and units trained to counter chemical and biological weapons. Washington, backed by 15 allies, say those measures are needed urgently to protect Turkey — the only NATO nation bordering Iraq — from an Iraqi missile strike. — AP

1 3 FEB 2003

Philippines expels Iraqi diplomat

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MANILA (PHILIPPINES), FEB. 12. The Philippine Government on Wednesday told an Iraqi diplomat allegedly linked to the Muslim extremist Abu Sayyaf group to leave the country within 48 hours.

The decision to expel the Iraqi consul, Husham Husain, came after the Government announced on Monday it had an intelligence report indicating that Mr. Husain received a call from an Abu Sayyaf member shortly after a bombing that killed three people. Victims of the bombing last year in the southern city of Zamboanga included an American soldier.

The Iraqi embassy denied Mr. Husain or any other embassy officer was involved with dissident groups, including the Abu Sayyaf, which is on a U.S. list of foreign terrorist organisations.

The Philippine Foreign Secre-

tary, Blas Ople, said he confronted the Iraqi charge d'affaires, Samir A-Masih Bolus, on Monday with the intelligence report. He said it was "detailed," but declined to elaborate.

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Mr. Ople said he expected retaliation from Baghdad but that Manila was prepared. Most of the Philippine embassy staff in Baghdad have already left for Jordan in anticipation of U.S. military action.

Mr. Bolus refused to answer calls seeking comment. A staffer at the Iraqi embassy said Mr. Bolus wasn't in because of a Muslim holiday. In a telephone conversation on Tuesday night with the Philippine President, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, expressed concern "for the direct terrorist link" of the Iraqi embassy. — AP

1 3 FEB 2003

Five-year jail term for accused in Kanishka bombing case

Penner
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VANCOUVER, FEB. 11. A Sikh activist, who pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the 1985 bombing of the Air India flight, Kanishka, was sentenced to five years in prison in a plea agreement between the Crown and defence lawyers.

Until the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, the bombing was the world's deadliest act of aviation sabotage.

The activist, Inderjit Singh Reyat's actions had consequences that were tragic and almost beyond description, Chief Justice Donald Brenner observed.

"It's imperative that on a day like today we not forget those who are not with us," he said. "Those 329 people are very much on our minds".

Air India Flight 182 went down off the coast of Ireland on June 23, 1985, killing all 329 passengers — 278 of them Canadians — and crew on board.

The Sikh activist, who grew up in Coventry after his family emigrated from India, had been due to stand trial, along with Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri, in Vancouver for the

bombing before yesterday's surprise plea.

Originally charged with 329 counts of first-degree murder, he pleaded guilty to the same amount of charges of manslaughter. Reyat, who has already served 10 years in a British prison for his role in a blast at Tokyo's Narita Airport that occurred an hour before Air India Flight 182 went down, entered the guilty plea when he appeared in a Vancouver court. Prosecutors lowered the charge against him to manslaughter in return for his plea and left open the possibility he might be called to testify as a witnesses.

'Tax fraud may have helped finance accused'

Opposition lawmakers have claimed that a major sales tax fraud may have helped finance the terrorists who blew up the Kanishka aircraft, an AFP report from Ottawa said. Some \$16.25 million was billed from the federal government with fraudulent claims for a goods and services tax (GST), Canada's equivalent to Europe's value added tax, according to a CBC Television report.

12 FEB 1991

PROHIBITED SUBSTANCE FOUND IN SAMPLE

Shane Warne fails dope test, out of World Cup

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By G. Viswanath

JOHANNESBURG, FEB. 11. Defending champion Australia's World Cup preparation received a setback on Monday night, before its crucial Cup opener against Pakistan, when legspinner, Shane Warne, "stepped down" from the 15-member squad, leaving skipper Ricky Ponting a leading bowling weapon and match-winner short.

Warne, according to the Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA), has tested positive for diuretics on samples he provided in Sydney on January 22. Warne will return home to complete the testing procedures and for a hearing to be held under the Australian Cricket Board's anti-doping policy.

The January 22 test was conducted as part of the board's internal drug-testing system. Soon after Warne stood down from the team, Australia sought permission to allow it to choose a replacement.

The ACB has asked its selectors to pick the replacement player. The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) Chief Executive, James Sutherland, while announcing Warne's decision to withdraw from the World Cup squad on his own volition revealed that the preliminary findings of the national sports drug agency were related to fluid reduction medication. "Shane notified to the ACB yesterday as soon as he received the news," Mr. Sutherland said.

'Shocked and devastated'

On Tuesday, Warne looked disappointed



Shane Warne addressing a press conference in Johannesburg on Tuesday. — Reuters

at the turn of events and read a prepared text: "I was shocked and absolutely devastated to be informed by the ASDA yesterday that a test sample which was collected in Australia on the 22nd of January indicated the presence of a prohibited substance.

The full process of analysing and testing procedures are not complete until my B sample is fully examined in Australia later this week. I am shocked because I do not take performance-enhancing drugs and do not condone them in any way shape or form. I am proud to be in the shape I am in at the moment and that is due to nothing

other than hard work and looking after myself with diet. I did take a fluid tablet before my comeback game in Sydney (following the dislocation to of his shoulder of his bowling hand) which I did not know contained a prohibited substance. The tablet actually dehydrates you and gets rid of any excess fluid in your body, and as I understand, it is not performance-enhancing. I have decided to return home to address the situation personally. The ASDA has conducted random tests for a long time now in conjunction with the ACB and my previous tests have always come back negative. So will any future ones."

'Preliminary result'

According to the ACB, which conducts about 50 to 60 random tests on its players every year, the results were preliminary and subject to confirmation.

The ACB chief, James Sutherland, said that should the Anti-Doping Committee conclude that Warne had not committed a doping offence the board would ask the World Cup Event Technical Committee for approval for Warne to be reinstated. "Now we have advised the International Cricket Council of the situation and will apply to the World Cup Event Technical Committee for approval to replace Warne in our World Cup squad."

Australia plays India in its next Group 'A' league match at the Supersport Park, Centurion on Saturday.

Australia beats Pak.: Page 21

1 2 FEB 2003

NATO fails to agree on Iraq

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BRUSSELS, FEB. 11. The NATO ambassadors today failed to resolve a damaging crisis over Iraq and would reconvene tomorrow, the alliance spokesman, Yves Brodeur, said.

"There is no conclusion yet on the ongoing discussions," he told reporters.

"The talks will continue throughout the night," he added, referring to high-level contacts between top officials from the alliance's 19 member-states.

A new meeting of NATO's policy-making North Atlantic Council was scheduled for tomorrow in Brussels at 9.45 a.m. (0845 GMT), another official said.

"They are still at the same position," a diplomat told AFP. Monday's aborted meeting, meant to tackle a divisive row over a U.S. request to bolster Turkey's military defences, had

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already been postponed twice during the day.

'Extend inspections'

In Berlin, a German Government source said today that 11 of the 15 U.N. Security Council members supported extending arms inspections in Iraq.

The U.S., Britain "in part", Spain and Bulgaria were the exceptions. "The others support the German position," the source said in response to a question about whether Germany was isolated in wanting the inspectors to be given more time to conduct their work.

Germany is a temporary, non-veto-holding member and currently holds the chair of the Security Council, which needs the support of nine of its 15 members to pass any resolution. The source said that when the work of the "weapons inspectors has been exhausted,

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then we can talk about other action."

The German Government wants to see "robust inspections carried out in line with UN resolution 1441 on Iraqi disarmament, and the international sanctions imposed after President Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Kuwait reinforced."

The source said Germany had been working together with France on a number of proposals to avoid a conflict in Iraq. The proposals included boosting the number of inspectors, tightening border controls against illegal oil exports and other smuggling, and examining more closely so-called "dual use" materials that could also be used to make weapons.

The source said the proposals did not include sending UN peacekeepers into Iraq, as suggested in news reports at the weekend. — AFP

1 2 FEB 2003

Hindutva redefined to mean 'Bharatiyata': PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 11. Continuing from where his "musings from Goa" had left off, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today once again dwelt on the Bharatiya Janata Party's ideology, saying "Hindutva has been redefined to mean Bharatiyata", but he gave no clue as to what the original meaning was and who had redefined it.

"Hindutva is not linked to any religion ... it is a 'virat darshan,'" Mr. Vajpayee said as he spoke at length on the virtues of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the BJP's political fore-runner.

"Hindutva encompasses all sections of society irrespective of caste or creed, it is timeless." It was about all of humanity, and no section of society in the country was to be ignored.

He indicated that while sometimes voices from the Sangh Parivar may be different and views divergent, "our goal is the same". It left no doubt that the affiliates of the RSS may speak in different voices, they may even criticise one another, but the "goal is the same".

The occasion was a function at the BJP headquarters here on the birth anniversary of Upadhyaya. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, and several Cabinet Ministers and party office-bearers had gathered to pay homage to the man whom later Mr. Advani praised



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, paying homage to Deen Dayal Upadhyay on his death anniversary, at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Tuesday. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, are also seen. — Photo: S. Arneja

for giving the party the "philosophy" of "integral humanism" and "cultural nationalism" which had enabled the BJP to become a major political force.

Mr. Advani clarified that when Upadhyaya had spoken of "akhand Bharat" he had in mind a "voluntary confederation of two sovereign states, India and Pakistan".

The occasion was devoted to claiming that the "ideology" given to the party by Upadhyaya was relevant, modern, and not sectarian. "Deen Dayal Upadhyaya took a holistic view

of the world...that is why he talked of integral humanism," Mr. Vajpayee noted.

Although Mr. Vajpayee himself did not say what the final "goal" of the Hindutva ideology was — various wings of the Parivar have loudly asserted that the goal was declaration of India as a Hindu rashtra — the Prime Minister did assert the unity of the goal of the Parivar.

Mr. Naidu claimed that the BJP "had never hankered after power" but had gone to the people with its allies on a common agenda.

Myanmar welcomes Amnesty team's visit

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YANGON (MYANMAR), FEB. 11. Myanmar's military Government said on Tuesday it welcomed the first-ever visit by representatives of Amnesty International, calling it a "positive step" toward developing a dialogue on human rights in the country.

Two researchers from the London-based rights group visited Myanmar from Jan. 30 through Feb. 8, meeting Government officials, police, Opposition members and political prisoners. The Amnesty representatives said on Monday that

policing, trial procedures and conditions of detention fell short of international law, but that the prisoners and former detainees they met with had all indicated things were getting better.

The Government, which allowed the researchers to meet whomever they wished and assured them that those interviewed would not be punished, appeared to be pleased with the visit. "The trip was a positive step in developing dialogue on human rights issues," said a Government statement. — AP

1 2 FEB 2003

England still undecided over Harare

Mario Rodrigues in Paarl

Feb. 10. — The issue of England playing in Zimbabwe remained unresolved till late this evening with England & Wales Cricket Board officials set to meet ICC chief Mr Malcolm Speed later tonight in Cape Town to arrive at a final decision.

Earlier reports said England confirmed their decision to boycott their Cup league tie against Zimbabwe in Harare for security reasons. Almost to the cue, South Africa said they would not tour England later this year if Englishmen did not play in Harare. Reports of England's boycott followed an ICC letter to ECB stating, "ICC Development International note that you are giving us formal notice that you are unable to fulfil the scheduled fixture in Harare".

But England later denied reports that it had pulled out of the 13 February tie. ICC spokesman Mr Mark Harrison explained that although ICC had given an ultimatum to the ECB to state if it was playing, the ECB's written reply was unambiguous. "I know this sounds ridiculous but that's the way it's for the moment and any reports that suggest that England has forfeited the match are exaggerated," he told The Statesman.

Today's developments follow the ECB's repeated requests for the match to be shifted, with the ICC refusing to comply on grounds that security was foolproof.

England players also received death threats from a group calling themselves "The Sons and Daughters of Zimbabwe". But Mr Speed said: "We have been assured by the South African Police that the group does not pose a credible threat to the safety of the England party in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, we have passed that advice to the ECB and asked them to confirm their intentions."

Armband protest in Zimbabwe, page 15

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1 1 FEB 2003

Beyond no man's land

11/17
refugee problem

DURING the last few days we have witnessed the spectacle of a group of more than 200 hapless individuals being shunted back and forth between gun-toting Indian and Bangladeshi frontier guards, neither of whom was ready to give them entry. Tensions rose, with sabre-rattling on both sides, as if these wandering folk, snake charmers by occupation, could constitute the remotest threat to either of the countries between which they were sandwiched. Humanitarian considerations, no more than the demands of plain, simple good sense, failed to move either side, until the episode was brought to a fortuitous conclusion as the group somehow melted away.

The incident would appear absurd, if it had not enmeshed so many unsuspecting victims. One must wonder why matters have come to such a pass. Close neighbours with so extensive a shared experience should have better means of handling matters along their border. Bangladesh would perhaps see the incident as the result of high-handed Indian attempts to push into its territory people arbitrarily described as illegal migrants. This has become an issue that arouses strong emotions. The recent use by India of the term 'infiltrators' to describe Bangladeshi migrants has only added fuel to the fire, for it suggests that they have been deliberately sent across to make trouble.

Here, Bangladesh may have a point. But nomenclature is only a small part of it, and for all their disclaimers, Bangladeshi authorities are well aware that there has been a considerable migration from their territory into India. It is a complex process that has been going on since the 19th century, only slightly affected by the momentous political changes in the sub-continent since 1947. How these migrants should be described and handled is no simple matter, and whether they number as many as 15 million, as some Indian authorities claim, is impossible to ascertain.

But trying to push them back has achieved little; sending a couple of trainloads towards the border can only stir things up without doing anything serious to deal with the issue. Bangladesh's failure to accept that there is an issue at all is, however, no more useful a response. More reasoned discourse is needed between the two parties.

There is a communal dimension to the situation that gives it a dangerous edge. Some political elements in India have long claimed that migrants from Bangladesh are encouraged to cross over the border to swell the numbers



A Bangladeshi woman with her children in the no man's land at India-Bangladesh border at Saigachi. More than 200 people were taken to the Cooch Behar border for deportation. Dhaka took them in after keeping them stranded for several days. — AFP

of the minority community and add to their 'vote bank', thereby playing a role determining poll outcomes in India. The validity of this claim has been contested. What is evident is that placing the matter under such a political spotlight has so far served only to make the search for a solution more problematic.

Migration issues should not be confused with genuine security questions involving Bangladesh. Not so many years ago, there was good reason to believe that external support to a variety of insurgent groups in India was being funnelled through Bangladesh. The ISI was busy supplying sophisticated arms to these groups, so much so that they were often better equipped than the security forces confronting them. Training camps for insurgent cadres along the border were reportedly established, and this formerly tranquil frontier became an area of great concern for India.

Dhaka must have had its own assessment of the situation, for it met Indian representations with a uniform, Indian representations with a uniform, may achieve little, and could induce

blank denial. This is a dark chapter in bilateral relations. One must hope that lessons have been learnt on both sides and there will be no revival of such anxieties.

Moreover, times have changed and no country can ignore, much less permit, the use of its land for support to terrorist activities. Nevertheless, insurgencies in contiguous parts of India have not abated and the temptation will remain to use Bangladesh as a channel for arms and other active support to insurgents.

Security is a problem which cannot be ignored by either side. It requires close cooperation between them rather than the mutual recrimination we have been witnessing lately. Instead of brandishing guns on the border, they should be talking. It is only through discussions that a distinction can be drawn between immigrants of doubtful status and trained terrorists whose business is violence, and effective steps taken to deal with them.

Measures such as fencing the border may achieve little, and could induce

resistance and breed bad blood. Bangladesh regards the fencing project now fitfully being pursued by India as something that reflects adversely on its dignity, and thus as something that does not merit support. Nor should issues like fencing deflect attention from the many matters where close cooperation can serve the interests of both. Trade and transit must rank close to the top of the list, as must the possible purchase of energy supplies by India from Bangladesh. There are several others in addition that await attention. Unfortunately, so long as border issues dominate the headlines, little progress on matters of long-term significance can be achieved.

As for the current standoff on the border, this must be resolved as soon as possible. The possibility of an early visit to India by the Bangladeshi foreign minister is to be welcomed. His visit should be marked by decisions to lower the temperature and to return relations to the level they should always maintain. There is no reason whatsoever for tension and acrimony between these two close neighbours.

(The author is former foreign secretary, government of India.)

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR

Chandrika not opposed to peace process: Rajapakse

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, FEB. 7. "President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, is not against the peace process. It was she who initiated the process and got Norway to act as a facilitator", Sri Lanka's Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Mahinda Rajapakse, said here today.

Asked if the President was not seen opposing the Prime Minister's peace initiatives, the visiting Sri Lanka Freedom Party leader explained: "At no stage has the President spoken against peace or the talks. She has only called for greater transparency in the process and complained that the Government was not keeping her fully informed of the talks."

He said the current debate and controversy over the on-going talks with the LTTE must be seen in the context of "suspicions" building up in the southern parts on the "reliability of the LTTE and questions on whether it can be trusted". The

Janata Vimukti Peramuna had already launched a campaign against the talks and the President was keen that the process must not be derailed. It was the duty of the Government to not only ensure that the process was on track, but also to keep the President and Parliament informed of the progress, so that it could inspire some confidence among the people.

Mr. Rajapakse, who was in New Delhi and had met the Prime Minister, prominent Ministers and leaders of the Congress, said the decision to let the LTTE run its own broadcast and Norway's handing over of the equipment to the Tamil Tigers, had raised serious concerns. "Even today, in Jaffna, people cannot receive the SLBC broadcast or see Rupavahini television programmes. So questions are being raised in the south, especially because of continued conscription going on and the free movement of LTTE cadres", he said.

The Opposition leader, who

was here on a two-day stopover, said the 'high security zone' debate was also casting a shadow over the peace process. "It will be so much better and easier if the Government and the LTTE first complete the resettlement in the non-security zones. That will create a congenial atmosphere for more displaced families and the refugees to return home. Even now, we do not see much development taking place in and around Jaffna. The Government must work on these areas first, before discussing the high security zones. After all, the concerns of the armed forces have to be addressed in all seriousness", he argued.

Mr. Rajapakse said the East was still a 'grey area'. Just as the LTTE sought assurances and guarantees from the Government, the Muslims and Sinhalese in the East, and those who should re-settle in the north, expect similar guarantees from the LTTE. They had to be protected from the LTTE, because of its track record.

8 FEB 2003

Russia still for political solution

MOSCOW, FEB. 7. The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, said on Friday that Russia did not see any need now for a new U.N. Security Council resolution authorising the use of force against Iraq and that an opportunity for a political solution still exists. "We do not see today any grounds for passing a U.N. resolution that would envisage or open the road to the use of force against Iraq. We have always underlined that the use of force is an extreme measure that would involve grave consequences for the country and grave international consequences and it should only be applied in extreme situations," Mr. Ivanov said. — AP

8 FEB 2003

STANDOFF ENDS AS SINHA TALKS TO COUNTERPART

Bangla immigrants go back

By Our Diplomatic
Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 6. The six-day-long standoff between the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) ended early today with the 213 "Bangladeshi citizens" returning to their country. The crossing over in the Cooch-Bihar sector of the border came hours after the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, spoke to his Bangladeshi counterpart, Morshed Khan, over the phone.

The conversation took place after the Bangladesh High Commissioner, Tufail K. Haider, called on Mr. Sinha on Wednesday, the Foreign Office spokesman said this evening. Mr. Sinha also renewed the invitation to Mr. Khan to visit India, which was extended in August 2002. Dates for the visit are being worked out through diplomatic channels. Asked about the Bangladesh Rifles' contention that the 213 persons had not entered Bangladesh, the spokesman said not a single person had entered India.

We do not know whereabouts: Dhaka

Haroon Habib reports from Dhaka:

The Bangladesh Foreign Secretary, Shamsheer M. Chowdhury, said Dhaka had "no evidence or information" about the 213 persons who were stranded in the "no-man's land" along the Bangladesh-West Bengal border for the last seven days. However, the "vanishing" of the group of Bengali-speaking people,



BSF men keeping watch on the India-Bangladesh border at Satgachi on Thursday. The belongings left behind by the immigrants are strewn before them. — Reuters

mostly snake charmers, into the dense midnight fog, helped defuse the potentially explosive crisis that forced the border guards of the two countries to confront each other.

The 213 persons awaited their fate as New Delhi and Dhaka argued over which country they came from. While India maintained that the group "slipped across with the help of villagers and the BDR," Bangladesh alleged that the BSF was indulging in "repeated push-in attempts" of "Bengali-speaking Indians" into Bangladesh.

Answering questions at the news conference, Mr. Chowdhury said his Government had "no evidence or information" that some persons had entered Bangladesh.

However, the BDR and the BSF would hold a high-level meeting tomorrow to settle the issue, he said.

Indian officials were quoted by the media as saying that they last spotted the group before midnight when it was extremely foggy. At dawn, the group was gone from its makeshift campsite at the border.

Reports in the Bangladeshi media said that some 25 Bengali-speaking persons from the Kamargach BSF camp were forced into Bangladesh at midnight through the Sonapatila border of Atowari upazila. But the BDR personnel and villagers pushed them back.

Quoting villagers, the reports said the BSF tried to push in more than 1,000 Indian Muslims through Mistripara of Sadar upazila, Baroshashi of Boda upazila and Dangapara of Domar upazila.

Dhaka's demand: Page 12

Release Ayodhya land, RSS tells government

By Smita Gupta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Throwing its weight behind the VHP's demand that the government should allow the immediate construction of a Ram temple, the RSS has asked the Centre to start the process by getting the "undisputed land" in Ayodhya, on whose transfer the supreme court had placed a stay last year, released.

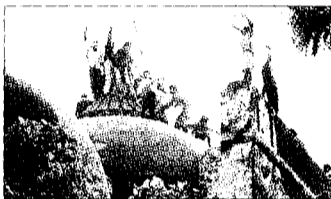
RSS joint general secretary Madan Das Devi said, "The government must remove whatever legal hurdles are there in the way of getting the undisputed land released. It should then hand it over to the Ram Janambhumi Nyas." He said it would be better the government did this before the VHP's scheduled 'dharam sansad' on February 22, 23. Stressing that the agitation for the temple would continue, he said, "Compared to last year, the VHP is very serious."

A senior BJP leader noted, "The government is working on getting the land released. There are several applications to get the stay vacated. Now the government will try and get the hearings on these applications expedited." The party wanted the undisputed land to be released soon as "patience" was running out, he said, adding that a failure to act swiftly might be counter-productive for the BJP.

With assembly elections due in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Delhi—all ruled by the Congress now—in September-October, and having recently benefitted from an enthusiastic VHP-Bajrang Dal effort in Gujarat, the BJP is anxious to keep these RSS outfits happy.

For the BJP, which has recently come up front with its Hindutva

Temple tangle



BJP stand

The BJP has asked the government to explore possibilities of removing legal hurdles and of handing over the undisputed site to bodies concerned with the construction of the temple

Samata's caution

The Samata Party has warned that it will be "extremely unwise" to hand over the undisputed land to the Ram Janambhumi Nyas Trust

Cong criticism

The Congress has accused the BJP and the Sangh Parivar of raking up the issue whenever elections are around

agenda, Ayodhya is a double-edged weapon—it has the potential to mobilise more votes even as it can cause a law and order problem. So, the PM has decided to rope in HRD minister Murli Manohar Joshi to counsel restraint as he enjoys a good equation with VHP chief Ashok Singhal.

Meanwhile, VHP leader Praveen Togadia said that the outfit would launch an agitation if the government did not announce by 6 p.m. on February 23 that it would permit the construction of the Ram temple.

ISLAM AND HINDUTVA

Harsh, Tragic And Irrational

By AD MODDIE

It has been said that the best way to tackle problems like jihadi Islam and militant Hindutva is to throw light on them by posing questions to both communal extremes and to the public of India. Hopefully self-given answers will throw some light in the dark corners of our hearts. Perhaps we may then see a lessening of hate and alienation.

First, the questions must be addressed to Indian Muslims. Question one: like Abul Kalam Azad, perhaps the greatest Indian Muslim of the 20th century, have you now learnt since the days of Partition — and the second holocaust of Bangladeshi Muslims at the hands of Pakistani generals — that the biggest damage to Indian Muslims (and also to Bangladesh Muslims) was the partition of India by the creators of Pakistan? And that the same Pakistan is now a failed state, with the ISI/ Al Qaida doctrine of jihadic hate and killing, a dangerous combine with nuclear arms, and far from the compassion of the Prophet?

Loss of power

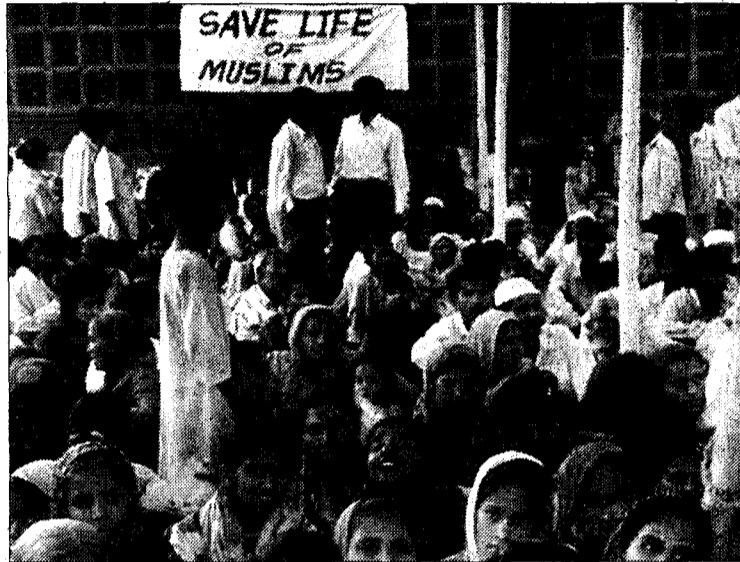
Question two: do you wish to perpetuate the insensitive ideology of earlier Muslim League leaders — brazenly continued by fatwa issuing Imams in favour of the Al Qaida terrorists — and the deep historical hurt to Hindus in the plunder and destruction of temples since Mahmud Ghazni at Somnath quite apart from the historical quibbling over the disused Babari Masjid? Are you, in an India striving to be secular, sensitive to centuries of discriminatory jizia tax on non-Muslims, an economic inducement to conversion? If you in Islam, in and outside of India, have suffered the psychopolitical hurt of the fall of Islamic power and self-esteem of the Mughals earlier and if Islam has been hurt by the domination of the West since the fall, can you be no less sensitive to the loss of political power and self-esteem by the Hindus of Bharat over the last millennia? When they recovered power in 1947, the same Hindus offered you equal citizenship under the Indian Constitution, despite the rivers of fire of the partition.

Question three: if you have felt discriminated against since 1947,

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and if the majority of Muslim men and women are still poor and illiterate, how far has it been due to (a) the refusal of your political and cleric leaders, pre and post-1947, to help Muslims come into the modern world with the process

tally modified by internationalism, human rights and environmental values, the "universal responsibility" concept of the most eminent and respected Dalai Lama himself. One fails to find a single Hindutva intellectual who



called "development"? Witness 22 families and a handful of generals as the new sultans of Pakistan since 1947, now a failed state torn by obscurantist fundamentalism away from the realities of the rest of the world, and against even Jinnah's wishes.

Question four: have some of you carried the seeds of Pakistan in your hearts, and been provokers of communal riots since 1946-47? Some supported the pseudo-secularism of the Congress as vote banks, but did you advance secularism in your own community, in the madrasas, and in the Muslim Law Board? How have you allowed this law board to usurp the right to speak for all Indian Muslims?

Incoherent idea

If the earlier questions addressed to Indian Muslims point to their harsh, tragic, and irrational past, the questions to the Hindutva school are addressed equally to their harsh, tragic, and irrational present and future.

Question one: what is the meaning and substance of the vague term "cultural nationalism"? Culture is in a separate sphere from politics. The nationalism of the 19th century is being fundamen-

has publicly formulated "cultural nationalism" as a coherent concept.

Till a coherent Hindutva mind clarifies "cultural nationalism", let us fall back briefly on the views of three distinguished Hindu Indians. The greatest mind of the 1947 nationalists, C Rajagopalachari said that just as the culture of ancient Greece was bound with a sense of beauty, and of Rome by a sense of order and law, the culture of India, based on the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagwad Gita* "is built around the central idea of self-control...It is what distinguishes culture from state regulation". (*True Freedom*, 1953).

In *The Neurosis of the Indian Intelligentsia* (1953) Dr Sampurnanand reminds us, "It is true, everyone speaks of Indian culture, claiming that no one other than himself understands what the word means". What he said of Indian communists then, could be applicable to Indian secularists, Hindutva, and Islamic fundamentalists now: "There is every reason to believe that the Indian communist has borrowed lavishly the neurosis, along with the ideology, of his mentors abroad".

Question two: How far can Hindutva coherently and credibly

compare its notion of "cultural nationalism" with these great modern and practical minds?

Question three: beyond its politics, what have been Hindutva's real contributions to the understanding and appreciation of Indian culture in the last decades, apart from strident chauvinism? Where are its Vivekanandas, its Rajagopalacharis, its Radhakrishnans, its Sampurnanands, its Amartya Sens?

Transferred hate

Question three: if Hindutva propounds, "justice to all and appeasement of none", where does it stand with the abolition of all reservations for posts and unsustainable subsidies for various sections of the people? Can the public of India see a clear policy on appeasement, reservations and subsidies?

Also flowing from the Constitution, question four: what is the place of non-Hindu Indians in the Rashtra of Hindutva, especially when they are citizens of India, when they are in India's defence and public services, and when they make their contributions to India's development and progress? Does Hindutva wish to reframe the Constitution for them, and how?

Question five: why hasn't the vast Hindutva body taken firm steps (a) to cleanse the holy Ganga and Jamuna; (b) cleanse the holiest of its temple towns, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Gaya, etc of the criminal culture of priests and sadhus with guns, land grabbing, brazen extortion, and the flesh trade? Don't these places represent the heart of Hindu tradition, mythology, religion and culture? Why is a finger not lifted by any Hindu official or politician to enforce the law in these places?

Question six: can Hindutva ask itself to what extent it carries the transferred hate of Mahmud Ghazni and Pakistan to India's own citizens in the minority communities? Is it fair, or even in India's security and economic interests?

Could a Hindutva think-tank give the nation and the world clear, coherent, and credible answers to these questions? That would be in its own interest. The people of India will want to know before their electoral choices in 2003 and 2004.

Pseudo-secularism — II

By Gail Omvedt

*Religion
10-10
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WE NEED to ask some hard questions to understand why the current form of secularism has apparently failed. There have been two forms of Congress secularism — the Gandhian version, which believed Hinduism was tolerant, and the Nehruvian version which added that whatever the characteristics of the various religions may have been, it did not matter because economic development and scientific culture would provide a sufficient basis for secular tolerance. The Gandhian faith in Hinduism's tolerance is shared by almost all intellectuals today; the Nehruvian faith is still held by the Left. Both are wrong.

First, it is impossible to "found" secular values, or any values, on reason and science alone. This has been a basic proposition of almost all sociology, whether it derives from Weber, Durkheim or even Marx: reason and science themselves have a complex relationship with socio-economic production, and require a moral foundation. Nehru was simply unrealistic in this respect, however noble his faith may have been; and Indian leftists are equally unrealistic in ignoring the particular characteristics of Indian society that have had crucial influence on both economic development and scientific progress.

Second, a defence of "secularism", or any view that the state in the modern world should distance itself from traditional religious communities, has to begin with a critique of the ideas that religion and society were uniquely intertwined in India, and that Hinduism was uniquely tolerant. Such intertwining is a characteristic of all pre-modern societies, and tolerance was never a special characteristic of varna Hinduism or of Islam. (I use the term "varna Hinduism" to distinguish the particular form of "Hinduism" which based itself on traditional ideas of varnashrama dharma and the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmins). Tolerance was also not a characteristic of medieval Christianity! In Europe itself, the supposed home of "modern secularism", it took centuries and bloody wars for the state to withdraw itself from the control of the church. Today, the process of this withdrawal is not complete in

Europe or in the U.S., in spite of the degree to which religious freedom was deeply embedded in its founding values. Even today, in the U.S., huge tax concessions are given to church-run religious educational institutions (especially Catholic schools), while citizens are forced to say that they pledge allegiance "to one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all" — an imposition on those citizens

power, treating non-Muslims as second-class citizens whose status was often precarious. Occasionally, force was used to convert people. But varna Hinduism was not that tolerant either. Kings owing allegiance to forms of varnashrama dharma destroyed the sacred places of Buddhism; it was the Shaivite Shashanka, for example, who uprooted the tree which was a symbol of the Buddha's enlighten-

values of the dominant religious and caste-class establishments. Establishing secularism today also requires a fight against religious establishments and caste-gender inequalities. One problem is that few proclaimed secularists have recognised this. An important exception has been the philosopher Akheel Bilgrami. In arguing that Nehru's secularism was at best a holding action since it was in fact imposed "from outside" the political process, he stresses that the process of building a politically negotiated agreement among different religious groups and communities requires fighting hierarchies such as Brahmanism. In fact, the mutual understanding needed to live together in peace cannot be achieved as long as the Brahmanic leadership of the VHP presumes to speak for all "Hindus," or the orthodox mullahs for "Muslims" or upper-caste church hierarchies for "Christians" and so on. The varying religious and cultural communities in India have to constitute themselves in new and more democratic ways. An example might be seen in the early 20th century movement of the Akalis to take control of Sikh holy places out of the hands of the traditional mahants — a fight that contrasts starkly with the fact that the temples of the bhakti movements are still controlled by priests of only one caste.

What are the chances for alternative processes to take place? Dalit-Bahujans and others in all the different religious communities have begun to assert themselves; this takes varying forms. There have been movements of "OBC Muslims" or "Dalit Christians"; there are alternative cultural and literary movements everywhere. There are important stirrings at the base of Indian society today, movements of cultural and religious democratisation. But these need political and intellectual support. Here, if reluctance to deal with basic ideological flaws, floundering by the Congress, sidelining of caste and religious issues by the Left, and opportunism by Dalit-based parties such as the BSP all continue, the outlook for a truly democratic and pluralistic secular society, and the concurrent dangers of intensified violence in the name of religion, will remain dismal.

(Concluded)

A defence of secularism... has to begin with a critique of the ideas that religion and society were uniquely intertwined in India, and that Hinduism was uniquely tolerant.

who are atheists or who follow spiritual teachings that do not have the concept of God.

Islam was not tolerant in its early period; neither was Christianity, neither was varna Hinduism. In pre-modern times, all religions sought to control state power in order to enforce their conceptions of the sacred and the moral life; this normally included stigmatising other views and those holding them; making such people second class citizens in various ways, often destroying their religious sites and attacking their sources of wealth. In all societies, the process of modernisation has involved a struggle against this form of use of state power — a process we call "secularisation". The intertwining of sacred and social values, the way in which religions used state power, varied. For Islam, it meant the idea that all Muslims were equal members of a socio-religious community coupled with an urge to bring all into the fold; this meant a fairly high degree of intolerance for outsiders. For varna Hinduism, in contrast, the state could "tolerate" different ways of life for different social groups while insisting on the superiority and privileges of upper castes and the disabilities of the lowest, i.e. being intolerant to claims of equality.

The spread of Islam sought to make all people faithful Muslims. It did so in various ways, by presenting them with a faith that gave universality and equality for most, that stimulated their devotion, that provided a new culture for many; it also used state

ment, while ideologically the puranas of the Gupta period endorsed killing Buddhists, shudras and others. The enforcement of the varna system was more oppressive than the Shariat to significant numbers of Dalits and low castes; thus, in later years Dalit-Bahujan leaders such as Mahatma Phule in the 19th century could see this process of conversion as a liberating opportunity for Shudras and Dalits enduring caste enslavement.

It is true that there were long centuries in India, where people of different religious ideas and cultural values lived together in peace. During these centuries, attitudes of tolerance for each other's religious faith did develop and a process of symbiosis and cultural pluralism resulted. But this was primarily due to two factors. First, practical sultans and rajahs realised the need for accommodation, and along with military and aristocratic forces evolved ways of living together and common styles of life. The Rajput-Mughal symbiosis is one example of this. Second, at the mass level, there were innumerable Sufis and Sants who fought against mullah Islam and priestly Brahmanism, pioneering equalitarian and universalistic values and practices, which established ties among communities rather than dividing them along caste and sectarian lines, as part of a critique of the existing religious-political powers. In other words, "secularism" or religious pluralism, in India, has been a struggle and an achievement, not something that has sprung automatically from the basic

THE HINDU

7 held in London mosque raid

London, January 20

SEVEN PEOPLE were arrested on Monday after anti-terrorist officers raided a mosque where the radical cleric Abu Hamza is based in an operation linked to the discovery of traces of the poison ricin earlier this month.

The "pre-planned and Intelligence-led" raid, which involved the North London Central Mosque in Finsbury Park and two three-storey properties nearby, began at 2 am and reportedly involved about 150 police, including armed officers and others carrying ladders and battering rams.

Egyptian-born Hamza said he was not one of those arrested and denied any link between the mosque and the discovery of ricin in a flat in Wood Green.

The seven people who were arrested were detained under the

Terrorism Act 2000 and taken to a central London police station for questioning, Scotland Yard said. Six of the men are north Africans aged between 23 and 48 years old. The seventh man is from eastern Europe and is 22 years old.

The operation was not linked to efforts by the charity commission to expel the controversial cleric as an agent of the mosque because of his "inflammatory and highly political" speeches at prayer meetings.

Hamza, 45, who lost both hands and an eye while fighting in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation told the BBC's London 94.9 radio programme that he was not surprised at the raid, which he said backed up what he called a "war" against UK Muslims being waged by Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

If any dangerous substances

were found in the mosque, they would have had to have been planted by the police, he said.

A Metropolitan police spokesman said: "[We are] aware of the sensitivity of such an operation but evidence gathered during recent counter-terrorist investigations in London and elsewhere has uncovered links between the premises and suspected terrorist activity."

Police wanted to make clear that the raid was not against the mosque itself or those who went there to pray, but that it had targeted specific terrorist suspects, the spokesman stressed.

Home Secretary, David Blunkett, said the operation had his "complete support", adding: "We must take firm action to investigate, and if necessary deal with, any potential threat to public safety without fear or favour."

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JAN 2003

Pseudo-secularism — I

By Gail Omvedt

OUT OF the agony that most progressive forces in the country are feeling about the results of the Gujarat elections have come many analyses, many musings about what lies ahead.

At one level, the BJP has proved its point about the uselessness of "pseudo-secularism". It has proved it over the bodies of thousands of Muslims and Hindus who have been victims of the communal hatred and fanaticism of both sides; it has proved it through appealing to Gujarati pride and anger at being targeted by "outside" forces; it has proved it through an appalling poisoning of the political culture of a whole linguistic region, a poisoning which it has been attempting to whip up and use throughout India. It is no use any more having any confidence in the moderate tones occasionally used by Atal Behari Vajpayee, L. K. Advani or even Narendra Modi himself; these are plays in the game, indeed they are responses to that same external pressure which has apparently angered many Gujaratis. Gujarat's face, and India's face, stands blackened in the world today, even more so with Mr. Modi's victory, and the ruling party feels the necessity to whiten it a bit. We should be grateful if that leads to a little slowing down on the chauvinism and the terrorism.

It is hard to have sympathy for the claims of Hindutva's followers of being defenders of religion; they have shown they are ready to kill for what they consider to be their religion, but not to die for it. But who has shown any resolve against them? Only one Congress leader, Digvijay Singh, has consciously sought to build on forces firmly opposed to Hindutva, and he was not to be seen in Gujarat. Instead, in campaigning in Gujarat, the Congress truly showed its secularism to be pseudo. The details of the way in which its leaders became "Hindutva's B team" are rather appalling. Publicising a different election manifesto in Gujarati and English; having Sonia Gandhi start her campaign from a temple; refusing to even put up a significant number of Muslim candidates or try to consolidate the Muslim and Dalit vote; Congress ac-

tivists running after Mr. Modi's Gaurav Yatra to cleanse it with cow dung chanting Vedic hymns all the while — and so on. The Congress somehow expected that it could win by combining this soft Hindutva with an appeal to development and caste vote banks. This has proved a disastrous strategy.

Voters no longer take any party at face value on development issues, and caste vote banks are not enough. A political party needs a vision; the

come not from the virulent Hindutva crowd but from leading, sophisticated intellectuals such as Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee and others. Their argument has been that the concept of secularism has been "western" (i.e. European, Christian-influenced) in the way it presumes the possibility of separating religion from politics. They argue that, in contrast, religion has been so intertwined with all aspects of life in India that this is impossible (or, as Lata Mani has poetically put it, "is a dewdrop sacred or secular?"). Their alternative is to argue that Indian tradition was inherently tolerant, that it is rather the modernising state, homogenising and interventionist, requiring a monolithic "national culture" to back it up, which has been the root cause of the rise of the various forms of violence and growing alienation of religious groups seen in India today. Mr. Nandy and Mr. Chatterjee differ in various ways, and neither would like to have his position identified with that of the Hindutva ideologues. Yet, since neither says anything concrete about Islamic tolerance, we are left with the position that it is above all Hinduism that is tolerant. The progressives want to say that Hinduism is not Hindutva; the Hindutva people say that they are the same. But the subtraction of Hindutva from Hinduism has proved impossible for the defenders of secularism to make, since their arguments remain at an abstract level without an analysis of the historical construction of Hinduism itself.

This position ends by giving a theoretical foundation to the charges of virulent Hindutva: the state needs a religious foundation and this can only be provided by Hinduism, the majority religion (or "true religion") of the Indian people. Hinduism is tolerant, Islam is not; the Congress and Left who proclaim secularism are ignoring the cultural and historical realities of India and so are "pseudo-secularists." Unless these theses can be dealt with at a theoretical and ideological level, it seems to me to be very difficult to deal practically with the Hindutva ideological challenge.

The subtraction of Hindutva from Hinduism has proved impossible for the defenders of secularism to make, since their arguments remain at an abstract level without an analysis of the historical construction of Hinduism itself.

and non-violent than others; it thus prescribes no action other than to fight globalisation and capitalism. The distinction that Marxists had once made between advanced and backward capitalism, or democratic capitalism and fascism, has almost vanished. Thus, Father Nathan can lament in *The Hindu* open pages (December 31) that "the voice of reason is powerless against the myth" projected by the Hindutva forces — the powerlessness is itself a demonstration of desperation. His talk of building as an alternative "people's movements on people's issues" does not suggest what these movements might be. The Left parties which have in the past built such movements have been conspicuously unsuccessful in recent years; the strongest mass movements, those of farmers and Dalits, have been outside the Left framework, while the most decisive political steps on Dalit issues have been taken by a Congress leader who is a liberal of the Amartya Sen type.

Secularism, meaning simply the neutrality of the state towards religious communities, may well be necessary in today's plural society — but it still requires a foundation, a moral vision to make such a state possible. The theoretical attack on the Left-Gandhian-Nehruvian version of secularism has been a strong one. It has

Congress failed to show it in Gujarat. Had the Congress stood up for its Nehruvian-Gandhian secular ideals it might still have been defeated — but at least it would have gone down with some honour, and it would have paved the way for some restoration of a sane political culture in Gujarat, rather than adding to the poison. It might even have won it a few more votes, since — it should not be surprising after all — voters like integrity.

However, we should also be ready to admit that something may be wrong with Nehruvian-Gandhian secularism or at least with the way secularism has been projected as an ideal. Editorial and analytical discussions following the elections have shown a kind of desperation on the part of most defenders of secularism. The following decades will see "a frontal attack on the concept of secularism", writes K. K. Katyal (*The Hindu*, December 30); but he does not acknowledge that the frontal attack has been going on for some time or attempt to evaluate the successes of varying strategies of dealing with it. Dipankar Gupta, in turn, writing in the *Economic and Political Weekly* (November 16), calls for an "intolerant secularism," meaning that the state must be ready to forthrightly enforce the rights of citizens against

THE HINDU

The end of secular ideologies?

new vistas JEREMY SEABROOK

THE jubilation which surrounded the fall of Communism in the former Soviet Union was supposed to celebrate the end of a godless creed. The removal of this menace to humanity cleared the way for godly creeds, with all the fervours and exaltations we have seen, and which have brought such conspicuous peace and security to the world.

The denial of human rights, the crushing of dissent, the distortions of 'ideology' — all this was to have been eliminated by the sweeping away of socialism. It was assumed that the Western way of life, with its non-dogmatic values, its tolerance and pluralism, and above all, its wealth (on which all of the preceding depend) would take the place of the profane revelations and prophecies of Marx, and the corrupt institutions set up



Christians in Indonesia, Muslims in India, Hindus in Bangladesh and Pakistan... find themselves victims of the same brutal intolerance formerly extended to capitalists in the Soviet Union and China

How bitterly ironic, that the Western version of materialism, so ubiquitous, so relentless and so insistent, should have taken on the aspect of mirage and delusion, as impossible of realisation, as nebulous, not only as the socialist dream, but as the most implausible promises of paradise!

in his name. Marxism proved to have a more restricted appeal to the poor and needy of the earth than had been anticipated; not least because the distribution of wealth depended first of all upon its creation. The poor were concentrated in areas of the earth that had been under an imperial control which had plundered them of their riches; while the principal site of industrial socialism — the Soviet Union — had been beleaguered ever since its inception after 1917. Stalinisation represented a macabre fundamentalising of the revolution. The immense loss of life in the war against fascism impoverished and traumatised the country once more. The Cold War and the arms race delayed indefinitely improvements in the lives of the people. Socialism was thin fare compared to the post-war prosperity of capitalist

extended to capitalists in the Soviet Union and China to Communists in McCarthyite-America and to dissidents in the dictatorships it fostered so carefully only the day before yesterday.

There is no religion which doesn't have its schisms, no ideology which fails to uphold the truth of believers against infidels, no faith which doesn't want to spread its light to the dark places of earth, no matter how great the sacrifice; for sacrifice is part of all religions.

Secularism has not died, for it has never existed. Is a religion of humanity a contradiction in terms? Are religion and humanity destined always to be at war in one way or another?

The failure of secularism is not a reason to abandon it; in presence of the violence engendered by ideologies of transcendence, some reformulation of its humanising power is more urgently needed than ever. It is possible that all attempts to promote a society which unites people beyond dogmas of faith, differences of culture and ethnicity, are doomed. But to give way to a fatalism that ceases to challenge wars of religion

The very sacredness of these newly revitalised faiths also expresses itself in material — and highly damaging ways — for it legitimises pogroms, holy wars, crusades and rituals of cleansing and purification, all in the name of punishing the non-believer

between the possessors of one version of truth against another is to abandon the ancient quest for a more humane and just order. Once this is given up, nothing remains to contest the forces of intolerance and hatred. The shelters against bigotry and intolerance are always pitifully flimsy by comparison with the refuges of certainty erected by faith; they have to be strengthened and reinforced against the millennial intemperancies of the time, not torn down to expose the vulnerable to the furies of racism, communalism and the righteousness of those who build their tabernacles with human bones.

(The author lives in Britain. He has written plays for stage, television and radio, made TV documentaries, published more than 30 books and contributes to leading journals around the world.)

transforms the treasures of earth into saleable goods.

The assault by the West on Socialism has had consequences for the fate of the world, the true extent of which have not yet appeared; for in destroying the only rival secular ideology to its own

materialism, it has also inflicted a grievous wound upon itself. Socialism was simply another, more just, aspiration of industrial society; and when it was brought down, the whole project of material progress was dealt a severe blow. To be more precise: when the West armed Islamic insurgents to chase the Soviets out of Afghanistan, they were preparing the ground for the assault upon themselves. The West came to believe its own rhetoric, that socialism was an alien creed, and failed to understand that it was in fact its own companion and twin.

Their vanquishing of a godless ideology also laid bare their own spiritual emptiness. And when the world reacted, as it was bound to, to this self-destruction, the West became fearful; and fear begets violence; and when it strikes the most powerful on earth, it sets free a rage without limits.

The reassertion of older identities of faith has had disastrous effects in a world where secularism appears as illusion: absolute creeds are restored, and all who do not adhere to them are a malign force to be eliminated. The very sacredness of these newly revitalised faiths also expresses itself in material — and highly damaging ways — for it legitimises pogroms, holy wars, crusades and rituals of cleansing and purification, all in the name of punishing the non-believer. Christians in Indonesia, Muslims in India, Hindus in Bangladesh and Pakistan, Muslims in Europe, ancient animist religions all over the world, Buddhists in occupied Tibet, Muslims in Russia, find themselves victims of the same brutal intolerance formerly

English-medium schools sprang up in the posh colonies, while the children of the poor squatted in the dirt without books or pens, and frequently without teachers.

After prolonged exposure to a Western iconography of the garden of earthly delights, however, the imagery has become tarnished, the lustre somewhat faded. It has been made clear that this remains the preserve of privilege.

The wealth of the West remains for the great majority of human beings a distant promise: the TV imagery of consumerism is as remote as pictures of paradise; being deferred into a secular hereafter renders it as inaccessible as the mansions of the blessed, the fountains and virgins of paradise, the state of enlightenment, the beatific vision, and all the other imagery that has comforted and succoured the needy of earth through thousands of years.

How bitterly ironic, that the Western version of materialism, so ubiquitous, so relentless and so insistent, should have taken on the aspect of mirage and delusion, as impossible of realisation, as nebulous, not only as the socialist dream, but as the most implausible promises of paradise!

Why accept these tawdry counterfeits of faith, these alien simulations of religion, when the real thing is so close to hand? It is a natural next step that, all over the world people, disillusioned by the fools' paradise of both socialist utopia and universal capital, should seek a way back from these blighted hopes, and take refuge in the fastness of older, more rooted and indigenous faiths? Of course, when these are revisited, they are also no longer as they were. They have become harder, less compromising, less accommodating, for they are in global competition with the most potent and addictive opiate ever offered to the people of the world, that is, money and the mysterious alchemy by which it

And their offer of 'development' appeared a more desirable option to the poor, especially since the West set about projecting its version of plenty to the world with such exuberance.

It now seems that the destruction of Communism was the easy part. The violence with which socialism had had to contain its restive peoples — the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland — only made these the more receptive to the seductive message of liberation promoted by the Western powers. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the socialist dream, permitted Western ideology (called 'values' by its practitioners) to flood into the vacuum. The empty shrines to a defunct socialism were swiftly invaded by the icons of Western consumerism, the triumphal arches of McDonald's, the panoramas of Marlboro Country, the logos of transnationals branding the night sky of the cities.

But it was not only what are euphemistically referred to as economies in transition that were affected by the decay of socialism. Almost all the countries of the 'developing' world emancipated from colonialism in the mid-twentieth century had pinned Socialism to their banners of freedom. When the Soviet Union fell, they, too, had nowhere to go but into the arms of their liberators. Accordingly, in the most derelict and destitute places on earth, Coca Cola became instantly available, even though clean water was withheld from a majority of the population; cosmetics and fashion filled the stores of the capital cities, while sanitation was lacking in the spreading slums; a TV shopping channel was at the disposal of the elite, while the poor had not the money to provide themselves with food; expensive medical treatment abroad for the privileged co-existed with the empty medical posts in the rural areas;

Borderline case

THERE IS reason to take the home minister's directive to 'throw out' 'illegal' Bangladeshi migrants with a pinch of salt. The Bangladeshi question has been raked up time and again by the Sangh parivar, often as political rhetoric. In the late Nineties, L.K. Advani had mooted a proposal to give 'work permits' to Bangladeshi migrants. The proposal was acclaimed as a realistic measure to cope with the exodus — including from Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan. So whatever happened to the 'work permit' idea? Also, there is no doubt the ISI will strategically use this 'migration' for cross-border terrorism in India. With reports that Al-Qaeda has found a safe haven in Bangladesh, there is a case to check the movement of terrorists. However, it's possible that the *en masse* 'throw-them-out' policy, if implemented, might backfire.

If 20 million Bangladeshi migrants are in India, then identifying and deporting them would be near-impossible. Many Bangladeshis have been here for generations and have acquired ration and photo identity cards. Even after deportation, they will keep com-

ing back. The demographic shift of this 'human flow' is often due to linkages of geography, community, religion and language, as it is for socio-economic and political reasons, as were the migrations during the 1971 war, the 1974-75 'famine', or after natural catastrophes and communal/ethnic violence. This is a historical phenomenon mirrored all over the world.

Forcible deportation most often leads to violent conflicts. For instance, due to the discrimination and attacks by fanatics, the Hindu population in Bangladesh came down to 12 per cent in 1991, from 22 per cent in 1951. Besides Hindus, 50,000 tribals of the Chittagong hills and thousands of Bangladeshi Muslims took shelter in India to escape military repression. So how will the home ministry resolve this human paradox? Despite the barbed wires, the 'porous border' is a geographical dilemma, where the 'borderline' is a myth. In fact, the solution to the 'refugee question' can never be unilateral. It has to be a multilateral project pursued with an open and flexible mind. High-decibel rhetoric, with not-so-hidden undertones, won't help.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 11 2003

Hindutva will be BJP's poll plank, says Advani

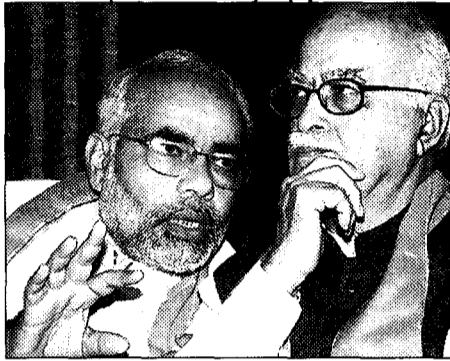
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Religion

Gandhinagar: Equating the concept of Hindutva with secularism, deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani declared on Saturday that India was a Hindu nation and hence it was secular.

Addressing the first state executive meeting of the Bharatiya Janata Party after the party's poll victory in Gujarat, Mr Advani indicated that Hindutva would be made the BJP's poll agenda during elections in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and even in the Lok Sabha polls in 2004. "People ask me whether we will make Hindutva a poll plank, I think, we should concentrate on good governance, security and development. But if the opposition raises Hindutva, we will certainly make that an issue," he warned.

Mr Advani said that this was the first-ever election where the polls in a state had affected the politics of the entire country. "We should, however, understand what Hindutva or cultural nationalism means. Historically, whoever may have ruled different parts of



Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani listens to Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi during the BJP's executive committee meeting in Gandhinagar on Saturday

the country, it is cultural nationalism alone that has united those living in India. Those living in the south visit the north, and vice versa, and this cultural nationalism needs to be understood," he emphasised. At the same time, he warned those who sought to be bit-

ter while defending Hindutva.

He suggested that the Congress had failed to understand the pulse of the people in the new situation that had developed after the Gujarat polls in the same way it had failed in 1977 after the Emergency. Mr Advani said, "If Nehru believed with conviction in his concept of secularism, those who followed him used religion for vote-bank purposes. Congress chief Sonia Gandhi has no problem in going to Ambaji for attracting Hindu vote. Rajiv Gandhi opened the gates of the disputed site in Ayodhya, again for the same purpose. We, on the contrary, firmly believe in building a temple at the Ram Jambhoomi."

Criticising the media for its alleged anti-BJP campaign, Mr Advani said, "The media campaign actually helped us in Gujarat. The more it talked of Godhra, the more it helped us. People in Gujarat took it as an attempt to defame their pride. We got a lot of protest vote." Suggesting that a similar situation might develop in the country as a whole, he added, "Gujarat should become the role model for other parts."

FOR CUNNINGSEUNG

Vajpayee musings draw flak from all religions

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 2 JANUARY

PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee came under fresh attack from the hard-core saffronites as well as the Muslim League for his New Year-eve Hindutva "musings" from Goa, even as the BJP stepped out in the open in his defence. Ratcheting up its anti-Vajpayee rhetoric, the VHP on Thursday accused the Prime Minister, if only in indirect fashion, of political opportunism, calling him a "pseudo-Hindutva waddi". He also came under sharp assault from Shiv Sena and Indian Union Muslim League.

While the Sena and VHP attacked the Prime Minister for his refusal to endorse their "muscular" interpretation of Hindutva, Muslim League chief put a

Machiavellian construction on the matter, dismissing the "Musings" as an exercise in deception. The BJP, however, was standing by the Prime Minister, reflecting the strong feeling in the party that the "Musings" were construed as an attack on "Hindutva" whereas in fact they were tantamount to a strong advocacy of the saffron concept which has been a major catalyst for the "communal-secular" divide.

Acharya Gिरिराज Kishore unveiled a fresh attack with the contention that "those ready to make any compromise to save their chair had no right to make such comments." He referred a media description of the Prime Minister as "pseudo-Hindutva waddi", and said that it was on the mark.

Acharya Kishore didn't spare deputy Prime Minister L.K. Ad-

FACES OF HINDUTVA



Pseudo (?) & the real: A B Vajpayee, Giriraj Kishore

any name, the remarks were almost universally seen as trained at the VHP which post-Gujarat, has questioned the "secular" character of polity.

Contrary to VHP's negative rating for Prime Minister, a significant section in the BJP holds that Mr Vajpayee's "Musings" qualified as the boldest defence of the concept of Hindutva. Senior leaders feel that while the usual hotheads have rushed in with extreme remarks, a closer scrutiny of Mr Vajpayee's "stray thoughts" at his Panaji holiday campaign are a scathing critique of the Opposition.

The Opposition and the Left/Liberal establishment finds Hindutva as inherently divisive. In sharp contrast, the "Musings" showed Mr Vajpayee quoting Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekanand and a Supreme

Though he didn't mention

Court verdict to equate Hindutva with Bharateeyata (Indian-ness). While criticising those engaged in the "narrow and rigid" interpretation of Hindutva in the wake of the Gujarat election, he has disapproved of the attempt to pit Hindutva against "secularism" on the ground that the two are antithetical.

Senior BJP leaders feel that the Hindutva hardliners would have appreciated Mr Vajpayee if they had ventured to go beyond the apparent. They, in particular, draw attention to Mr Vajpayee's quoting Rabindranath Tagore to say that Hindutva was the tie that has held the country together — a controversial proposition so far as the Opposition and the Left/Liberal intelligentsia is concerned.

Mr Kishore sounded particularly peeved with Prime Minister for asserting that rigidity and narrow-mindedness were antithetical to Hindutva, and that those displaying such traits were bringing a bad name to the concept. "A reaction to a provocation cannot be labelled extremism," he said and his view found an endorsement in the commercial capital of Mumbai where Shiv Sena supremo, Bal Thackeray also questioned Mr Vajpayee's stance on Hindutva.

Echoing the growing refrain in the hardcore Hindutva quarters that Hindus were subjected to unfair expectations of tolerance despite being in the firing line of Jehadi terrorists and other minority fundamentalists, Mr Thackeray said "everything has got a limit. Are we supposed to continue displaying tolerance even in the face of attack on temples".

Hinduism in danger?

By Andre Beteille

If Hinduism is in danger today, the main source of that danger may lie within and not outside it.

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SOME OF the most vivid recollections of my childhood go back to the Great Calcutta Killings when as a boy of 11 or 12 I had to travel by bus and tram between home and school in an unsafe city. I did not have a clear understanding of what was happening, but something from those days that echoes in my memory is the phrase 'Islam in danger'.

The phrase had different connotations at home and in the school. At school I came to befriend a number of Muslim boys whose social and political orientations were very different from those of my home. They spoke Urdu and English rather than Bengali. They were a couple of years older than me, took a keen interest in politics and were passionately attached to the idea of Pakistan which in 1946 seemed a fantasy to me. They had obviously been taught at home that in India there was a serious threat not only to the Muslims as a minority but also to Islam as a way of life.

My home environment was quite different. The place where we lived at that time was not my parents' home but one to which my mother, born a Bengali Hindu, was closely attached by ties of fictive kinship. It was a liberal, secular, middle-class Bengali home, strongly attached to the idea of a single India and strongly opposed to the two-nation theory. The most articulate member of the household, who was a humane and broad-minded nationalist, became my mother's political mentor. I remember him explaining to us with great clarity and conviction that the idea of Islam in danger was wrong and pernicious and that it would bring great suffering to the Muslim minority for whose predicament he had deep and genuine sympathy.

The wheel seems to be turning full circle now, and more and more people are beginning to feel and say that Hinduism is in danger. If someone strongly opposes that view, he may be denounced as a pseudo-secularist, even if he happens to be the Prime Minister of India. Surely, it is this growing hysteria about the danger to Hinduism that has led members of his own *parivar* or extended

family to describe even the stout-hearted L. K. Advani as a pseudo-secularist.

The hysteria about Hinduism in danger is growing and spreading, and it tends to catch liberal and enlightened Hindus on the wrong foot. This seems now to be the most serious challenge not only to the religious minorities but to Indian society as a whole and, indeed, to Hinduism itself. One would expect Hindu intellectuals, whether they are secularists, pseudo-secularists or plain honest Hindus, to oppose the spread of this hysteria which is being nurtured by persons whose main motivation is revenge for real or imagined injuries inflicted on their co-religionists in the past or the present. Yet one sees very little intellectual opposition to it from within Hinduism.

At the time of Independence Hindu intellectuals were by and large free from the kind of paranoia that characterised many of their Muslim counterparts, and this continued into the years of Nehru's prime ministership and beyond. But the tide may now be turning. Hindu intellectuals appear less confident about the prospects of a modern, secular and democratic political order in India than they were when the Republic came into being in 1950. Some if not many of them have begun to feel that Hinduism is in danger not only from other religions but from secular modernity itself. The attack on pseudo-secularists comes not only from those who are opposed to other religions but also from those who are opposed to secular ideas and institutions.

Is Hinduism really in danger? On the evidence, objectively considered, the presumption will be that Hinduism is far less endangered in independent India than Islam was in India before Independence. But that is not really the point, for the objective evidence of danger is one thing and the feeling of being endangered is another. It may well be that the number of Muslims now in Pakistan

who feel that Islam is in danger is larger than the number of those who felt in that way in undivided India. The partition of India did not reduce the feeling among Muslims on the Subcontinent that Islam was in danger, it probably enhanced it.

Where is the danger to Hinduism believed to come from? Does it come from other religions within or outside the country? Or does it come from the ascendance of secular ideas and institutions which tend to be represented by both Hindu and Muslim traditionalists as godless and immoral?

There has been some agitation in recent times over conversions from Hinduism to other religions. Various things may be said for and against religious conversion. But surely, one is not going to argue that the conversion of a few hundred, or a few thousand, or even a few hundred thousand Hindus to Islam or Christianity or Buddhism will bring about the collapse of an ancient, complex and vibrant religion such as Hinduism. Hinduism has withstood conversion on a far more massive scale in the past. It is most unlikely that conversion on that kind of scale will ever take place in the future.

It is said that Hindus are no longer safe in their own country since their temples are now open to assault. The assault on places of worship of no matter which religion is a criminal act which does not weaken religious faith and observance as much as it challenges the legitimacy of the secular state whose responsibility it is to protect all places of worship.

Acts of competitive vandalism aimed at the desecration of sacred places are on the increase. Sometimes they are undertaken with the open or tacit encouragement of popular religious functionaries. Today it is those who engage in such acts who are likely to raise the slogan that their religion is in danger. But the sad thing is that they are not the only ones. Those who first raised the slogan of Islam in danger in pre-parti-

tion India were not all vandals. Some of them were educated, even cultivated men. Indeed, intellectuals always play a part in creating channels for the expression of popular passions. They do not always do so with evil intentions, but they are easily intoxicated by their own ideas when they find that those ideas resonate among the masses of people.

The disquiet about the future of Hinduism seems to be more widespread among Hindu intellectuals than it was 50 years ago. How far this mirrors the disquiet among those who speak for the minority religions, and how far it is based on autonomous and independent causes, it is not easy to determine.

As the strains created in society by secular modernity become increasingly apparent, more and more Hindu intellectuals are beginning to believe that their religion and way of life are endangered. They are less confident about it than they ought to be in view of its demonstrated vitality, resilience and adaptability. One consequence of this is that the internal critique of Hinduism which began in the 19th century and continued for well over a hundred years seems to be drying up. This is unfortunate because the vitality of a religion depends upon a continuous critique of it by its own reflective members. Some years before he died, the Marxist economist and writer, Ashok Rudra, published a critique of Hinduism in Bengali entitled "Brahminical Religion and the Mentality of the Modern Hindu". I wonder how many such books are being written today in Hindi which is the most widely used among the Indian languages.

Enlightened Hindus in the 19th century felt free to attack the corruption and decay in their own religion and among their own religious leaders. Their present-day counterparts find it more convenient to train their guns on secular intellectuals than on their own religious leaders whose intolerant and vengeful acts do far greater harm to Hinduism from within. If Hinduism is in danger today, the main source of that danger may lie within and not outside it.

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MUSINGS FROM GOA

Let us celebrate and strengthen our Indianness: PM

Here are excerpts from the text of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's musings from Goa:

"I have come to Goa to see the sun set on 2002 and to welcome the first morning of 2003. I had come here more than four decades ago to participate in the Goa liberation struggle, which saw the sun set on this last enclave of colonial rule in India...

"The sight of the sea and the sound of its waves can easily make one's mind wonder about the eternal and the infinite. My wandering thoughts, however, return to India. How many waves of history have crashed at the shore of our Motherland! How many New Year suns have dawned on its vast expanse!

"I recall here the ringing words of Swami Vivekananda in his essay 'The Future of India': 'It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigour, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal; and we are the children of such a country'.

"Our diversity is as much a source of India's greatness — and of Indians' pride in their nation — as her antiquity. Foreigners have always wondered how we can embrace so much diversity in religion, ethnicity, language and lifestyles, and yet remain a united nation. What they may not understand, and which we must never forget, is that living with diversity, and yet weaving a thread of unity and harmony through it, has been a way of life throughout India since time immemorial. This is as true in Goa as it is in Gujarat, in Jammu & Kashmir as much as in Kerala, in Manipur as much as in Madhya Pradesh.

"From time to time, the theme of unity in diversity provokes intense debate, even controversies. I wish to comment on two distinct voices, which have become louder after the Gujarat elections. On the one hand, secularism is being pitted against Hindutva, under the belief that the two are antithetical to one another. This is incorrect and untenable. Secularism is a concept of the state, enjoining upon it the duty to show respect for all faiths and to practise no discrimination among citizens on the basis of their beliefs. In this sense, India has been secular since the beginning of her known history. We chose to remain wedded to secularism even when Pakistan was carved out on the basis of the spurious and communal two-nation theory. This could not have been possible if the majority of Indians were not secular.

"Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore has explained it very well. 'India has all along been trying experiments in evolving a social unity within which all the different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their differences. The tie has been as loose as possible, yet as close as circumstances permitted. This has produced something like a United States of a social federation, whose common name is Hinduism.'

"Hinduism's acceptance of the diversity of faiths is the central feature of secularism in India. As Maharshi Aurobindo points out, 'Indian religion has always felt that since the minds, the temperaments and the intellectual affinities of men are unlimited in their variety, a perfect liberty of thought and of worship must be allowed to the individual in his approach to the Infinite.'

"On the other hand, Hindutva, which presents a 'viraat darshan' (broad, all-encompassing view) of human life, is being projected by some people in a narrow, rigid and extremist manner — an unfortunate and unacceptable interpretation that runs totally contrary to its true spirit. Hindutva is an integral understanding of the entire creation, showing the way both to the Here and the hereafter. It emphasises the inseparable relationship between the individual and society, as well as between man's material and spiritual needs. Hindutva is liberal, liberating and brooks no ill will, hatred or violence among different communities

on any ground.

"We need to affirm and promote that true understanding of Hindutva which is forward-looking, not one that seeks to take us back; that which makes us capable of meeting the challenges of the modern world, not one that is stuck in the grooves of the past; that which is reform-minded, and not one that protects obscurantism and injustice, against which all the reformers of the past have fought. If understood and practised in this enlightened sense, which is how Swami Vivekananda and other great patriots propounded it, the current controversy over Hindutva will be seen as wholly unnecessary.

"There is no difference between such Hindutva and Bharateeyata, since both are expressions of the same 'chintan' (thought). Both affirm that India belongs to all, and all belong to India. It means that all Indians have equal rights and equal responsibilities. It entails recognition of our common national culture, which is enriched by all the diverse religious and non-religious traditions in India. For centuries, both have syn-



"We need to affirm and promote that true understanding of Hindutva which is forward looking, not one that seeks to take us back..."

onymously pointed to our national identity. Even the Supreme Court has held that Hindutva is neither a religious nor a political concept, but connotes a noble and elevating way of life.

"This Indianness is what we should all celebrate and further strengthen.

"It is obvious that we have to remain committed to the task of strengthening our common Indianness in spite of every provocation, big or small, coming from our western neighbour. I often find it odd that whereas India reconciled itself long ago to the creation of Pakistan, the latter continues to find it difficult to accept the unchangeable reality of a united and secular India. Pakistan, even after five and a half decades of failed pursuit, seems to be unready to face the truth that Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so.

"For the past several years, the rulers in Islamabad have, almost as a last resort, surrendered to the temptation of targeting India with terrorism, inspired by religious extremism. Innocent children, women and men are being routinely killed, temples are stormed, our symbols of democracy are attacked, and our security forces are challenged — all in the name of a 'holy religious war' and 'freedom struggle'. This campaign of jihadi terrorism, too, is doomed to fail.

"By rejecting Islamabad's call for boycott of polls, and participating enthusiastically in the free and fair elections to the State Assembly held in October, the people of Jammu & Kashmir have yet again expressed their will and preference. I am convinced that someday — hopefully soon — the people and rulers of Pakistan will realise the futile and counter-productive nature of its Kashmir policy. Pakistan cannot fight religious extremism and modernise itself as long as it chooses to be in a position of permanent confrontation with India. Therefore, it must stop cross-border terrorism and abandon its insistence on the 'centrality' of the Kashmir issue. Let our two countries agree to promote mutually beneficial trade and economic ties, strengthen cultural relations, and encourage greater people-to-people contacts. Once our two peoples experience the fruits of a tension-free and cooperative environment, we will be able to see the Kashmir issue in its proper dimension and arrive at an amicable and lasting solution.

"Dear countrymen, many pressing tasks confront us in the New Year and in the years ahead. As far as the Government is concerned, we are determined to accelerate the pace of implementation of numerous developmental initiatives that we have be-

gun in recent years and to unveil several new ones in the New Year. I would like to characterise many of these initiatives as various components of the 'Connectivity Revolution'.

"Highway connectivity and rural roads connectivity are two of the most ambitious infrastructure projects since Independence. We are also strengthening the rail and air connectivity in our country. Telecom connectivity, Internet connectivity and the attendant IT revolution have rapidly modernised our economy and society. I must also add here that our many foreign policy initiatives have yielded a better connectivity between the international community and an India that is today stronger and more self-confident than ever before. Another important endeavour will soon be added to this revolution. It is the river connectivity project.

"I would, however, place a far bigger importance on another connectivity effort, one to which I referred earlier — Connectivity of the hearts and minds of one billion Indians. No nation has ever attained greatness without first attaining success in the awakening and organising of the whole

strength of its people. Unity of minds, unity of purpose, and unity in action — this is what we have to demonstrate in every sphere of our national life. We have to strengthen the spirit of nationalism, and make it an inspiring and motivating force to drive all our endeavours.

"This is how India won the struggle for becoming a free nation. And this is how India will have to win the struggle for becoming a developed nation — free at last of poverty and unemployment, of illiteracy and disease, of poor shelter and sanitation, and of all other curses of underdevelopment. For this, we have to expand the area of consensus on economic and other urgent reforms, so that these can be implemented speedily and effectively. To me, the true test of reforms is when they beneficially touch the lives of all Indians — especially the poorest and those living in backward regions.

"We are making progress on all these fronts. But the progress is not always as rapid — and as regionally and socially balanced — as we desire. There is a lot that the Central and State Governments have to do to speed up this process. I appeal to all our legislators, both at the Centre and in States, to show the same dedication to doing their duty as was seen in the last session of Parliament, when a record number of bills were passed.

"But there is an even larger area where people's own self-initiated and self-organised effort will produce the desired results. I am convinced that there is an immense untapped energy in our society, which can and must be channelised for constructive purposes, in order to bring about a positive change, even if such change is on a small scale and its impact is felt only locally. I would like our people to reduce their dependence on Government for everything....

"As a matter of fact, there are tens of thousands of unsung or little-sung heroes of development, both individuals and organisations, all over the country. They are inspired by the spirit of nationalism and the true meaning of religion as service to society — nar seva is narayan seva. Many of them are young people. Few things bring me greater joy than when I get to meet these selfless volunteers with soaring idealism. May the number of such individuals and organisations increase a thousand fold, and may they inspire each of us to do something more for our country in the New Year.

"These are some of the thoughts and reflections that the idyllic setting in Goa has triggered in my mind, and which I wish to share with you.

"I wish you all a very Happy New Year."

Marathi stage set for saffron drama

By Vidyadhar Date
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Marathi theatre producers will meet in Dadar on Sunday to discuss how to counter threats by fundamentalist organisations to disrupt plays that they claim show disrespect to Hindu gods.

Several producers have recently been warned to tone down their work, said Macchhindra Kambli, producer and chairperson of the Marathi Natya Parishad, who described the situation as "unbearable".

In the latest act of fundamentalist censorship, a newly formed organisation calling itself the Hindu Janajagriti Samiti, which comprises members of the Bajrang Dal and VHP, threatened to burn down Thane's Gadkari Rangayatan on Wednesday unless a performance of the play 'Bighadale Swargache Daar' (The Door of Heaven is out of Order) was cancelled. The organisers took the threat seriously, and called off the show.



The play, written by Raja Gawade, is a comic fantasy about the havoc created by a power-hungry politician when he gets to heaven. He tries to grab the seat of Indra, the chief god, and wants to inflict upon heaven the inequality, corruption and terrorism prevailing on earth. It's left to the sage Narada to find a solution. The production is directed by Vijay Kenkre.

Last week, several people tried to disrupt a performance of the play in the Goan town of Ponda. This led the organisers to cancel a subsequent show in Ratnagiri. The organisers of the phenomenally popular Malvani play 'Wastraharan', a parody of 'Mahabharata', also have received threats.

"It is absurd that the self-appointed guardians of culture are taking the law into their own hands," said director and actor Machhindra Kambli. The play has been performed 4,055 times so far, he said.

Playwrights and litterateurs are concerned about the attempt of fundamentalist organisations to define Hinduism in what they believe is a restrictive manner.

3 JAN 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Oppn Refuses To Buy That PM's Keeping A Distance From Extended Saffron Family

Cong flays Atal's Hindutva musings

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 1 JANUARY

OPPPOSITION parties on Wednesday reacted sharply to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Goa musings, and accused him of trying to mainstream the concept of Hindutva as propagated by the Sangh Parivar by equating it with "Bharteyyata" (Indianness).

Incidentally, the VHP has also taken strong exception to the definition of Hindutva, as expressed by Mr Vajpayee. Criticising Mr Vajpayee for indulging in misleading propaganda, Congress contended that Hindutva, which did not find any mention in the scriptures, could not be equated with either Bharteyyata or Hinduism.

"Bharteyyata is a world view in which Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and believers in

certain that it is a ruse to divide the polity further. "The musings of the Prime Minister are part of a calculated strategy to mislead the people and to bring Hindutva, be it hard or soft, in the focus of debate. The Prime Minister wants to avoid debate on real socio-economic issues," the CPI(M) said.

The Congress, on being asked if Mr Vajpayee was giving a message to the VHP and other outfits, however, maintained that it would be commendable if the Prime Minister succeeded in injecting some sense in the Sangh Parivar. Mr Sharma said the Sangh Parivar had been speaking in different voices that even Mr Vajpayee has become confused

aiming his own "confusion" from his Goa retreat about secularism and Hindutva and India's age-old tradition of unity and diversity. "Hindutva is a political ma-

noeuvre that stokes ill will, violence and hatred among different communities with the single aim of garnering votes," he said.

The Congress spokesperson reminded Mr Vajpayee that his "extended saffron family" most definitely did not put aside their prejudices even when it came to the great cause of country's freedom movement. The RSS not only did not participate in the nationalist movement but "actively dissented along with the Muslim League," he said, adding that the Mahatma was assassinated by a follower of the RSS.

The Congress said it would have been appropriate had Mr Vajpayee reassured the nation that he will use the sovereign power of his government to bring VHP to book for its "explicitly stated objective to challenge and destroy the Constitution."



IN THE NAME OF RAMA

all other faiths set aside their theological differences to embrace Indianness," party spokesperson Anand Sharma said. The CPI(M), on the other hand, said the musings only reflected the "BJP tradition of double talk, which was a strategy to hoodwink people and sell Hindutva."

Unwilling to buy the theory that the Prime Minister was attempting to distance himself from the hardliners in the Sangh Parivar, the Opposition is of the view that the BJP leadership is now trying to legitimise Hindutva. And rather than attempt any unifying feat, the Opposition is

Musing is not enough

IN Prime Minister Vajpayee's musings from Goa there is much that is heartening, but for it to be anything more than a feel-good New Year message, Mr Vajpayee must follow up with action to match the words. In its general tone and tenor, the latest missive from the PM is not very different from the one he sent out from Kumarakom a year ago. There too, Mr Vajpayee had asserted that India's strength lies in her diversity and tolerance for differences. It is a message that he re-emphasises in his Goa musings with specific reference to the incidents in Gujarat. Significantly, while denying that there is a conflict between secularism and Hindutva, the PM takes a thinly-veiled dig at outfits like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) for projecting it in a "narrow, rigid and extremist manner". Those alarmed by the growing aggression of the VHP and other hardline elements of the sangh parivar would find some hope in this. However, given the experience of the last year, they would also be aware that year-end musings are one thing, ensuring that their spirit prevails in practical politics is quite another. If Mr Vajpayee does not want his musings to be dismissed as pious but meaningless homilies, he must show that he is prepared to take on the proponents of "rigid and extremist" Hindutva rather than merely lament about their misdeeds.

A similar — though arguably lesser — disconnect can also be found in the portions of the PM's musings that pertain to the economy. From Kumarakom, he had made an impassioned plea for broadening and further accelerating reforms and depoliticising them. As we know, in the year since then the reforms have noticeably slowed down with politicisation of issues like disinvestment not just across parties but within the ruling party and the government itself being the main reason for the deceleration. Which is why, when Mr Vajpayee talks today of the "Connectivity Revolution" — which he defines to include not only connectivity through roads, telecom, internet and IT, but also India's connectivity to the international community and the connectivity between the hearts of Indians — we are more inclined to pray he means to do it than to applaud. It is time the PM shows us he is more than just a muser.

Some of the ...

The Economic Times

2 JAN 2003

'Hindutva is liberal, brooks no hatred or violence'

It is wrong to pit secularism against Hindutva, says Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee as he attempts to silence "voices that have become louder after the Gujarat polls". In his Musings from Goa, Vajpayee calls upon all Indians "to celebrate and strengthen our Indianness":

"HEARTY New Year greetings to all my dear countrymen and to all members of the Indian diaspora living in far-flung corners of the world. I also send my greetings to our brothers and sisters, both in the neighbouring countries and in countries far and wide. May the New Year bring greater peace, prosperity and happiness to the entire humanity.

I have come to Goa to see the sun set on 2002 and to welcome the first morning of 2003. I had come here more than four decades ago to participate in the Goa Liberation Struggle, which saw the sun set on this last enclave of colonial rule in India. Since then, Goa has progressed in many ways, retaining its old charm, which is the alchemy of diverse historical influences, and yet adding many new features that heighten the appeal of its original attraction: the unique combination of the sun, the sand, the sea, swaying coconut trees, the rivers and forests, and of

as in Madhya Pradesh.

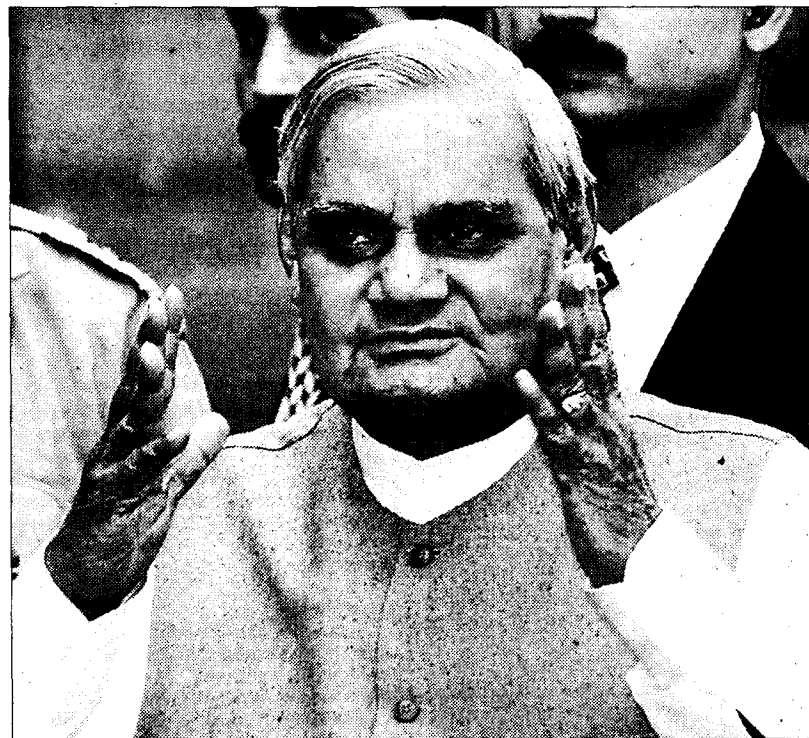
From time to time, the theme of unity in diversity provokes intense debate, even controversies. I wish to comment on two distinct voices, which have become louder after the Gujarat elections. On the one hand, secularism is being pitted against Hindutva, under the belief that the two are antithetical to one another. This is incorrect and untenable. Secularism is a concept of the State, enjoining upon it the duty to show respect for all faiths and to practice no discrimination among citizens on the basis of their beliefs. In this sense, India has been secular since the beginning of her known history. We chose to remain wedded to secularism even when Pakistan was carved out on the basis of the spurious and communal Two-Nation Theory. This could not have been possible if the majority of Indians were not secular.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore has explained it very well. 'India has all along been trying experiments in evolving a social unity within which all the

projected by some people in a narrow, rigid and extremist manner — an unfortunate and unacceptable interpretation that runs totally contrary to its true spirit. Hindutva is an integral understanding of the entire Creation, showing the way both to the Here and the Here-after. It emphasises the inseparable relationship between the individual and society, as well as between man's material and spiritual needs. Hindutva is liberal, liberating and brooks no ill will, hatred or violence among different communities on any ground.

all celebrate and further strengthen.

It is obvious that we have to remain committed to the task of strengthening our common Indianness in spite of every provocation, big or small, coming from our western neighbour. I often find it odd that whereas India reconciled itself long ago to the creation of Pakistan, the latter continues to find it difficult to accept the unchangeable reality of a united and secular India. Pakistan, even after five-and-a-half decades of failed pursuit, seems to be unready to face the truth that Jammu



We need to affirm and promote that true understanding of Hindutva which is forward-looking, not one that seeks to take us back; that which makes us capable of meeting the challenges of the modern world, not one that is stuck in the grooves of the past; that which is reform-minded, and not one that protects obscurantism and injustice, against which all the reformers of the past have fought. If understood and practiced in this enlightened sense, which is how Swami Vivekananda and other great patriots propounded it, the current controversy over Hindutva will be seen as wholly unnecessary.

There is no difference between such Hindutva and Bharateeyata, since both are expressions of the same *chintan* (thought). Both affirm that India belongs to all, and all belong to India. It means that all Indians have equal rights and equal responsibilities. It entails recognition of our common national culture, which is enriched by all the diverse religious and non-religious traditions in India. For centuries, both have synonymously pointed to our national identity. Even the Supreme Court has held that Hindutva is neither a religious nor a political concept, but connotes a noble and elevating way of life.

This Indianness is what we should

& Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always remain so.

For the past several years, the rulers in Islamabad have, almost as a last resort, surrendered to the temptation of targeting India with terrorism, inspired by religious extremism. Innocent children, women and men are being routinely killed, temples are stormed, our symbols of democracy are attacked, and our security forces are challenged — all in the name of a 'holy religious war' and 'freedom struggle'. This campaign of jihadi terrorism, too, is doomed to fail.

By rejecting Islamabad's call for boycott of polls, and participating enthusiastically in the free and fair elections to the State Assembly held in October, the people of Jammu & Kashmir have yet again expressed their will and preference. I am convinced that someday — hopefully soon — the people and rulers of Pakistan will realise the futile and counter-productive nature of its Kashmir policy. Pakistan cannot fight religious extremism and modernise itself as long as it chooses to be in a position of permanent confrontation with India.

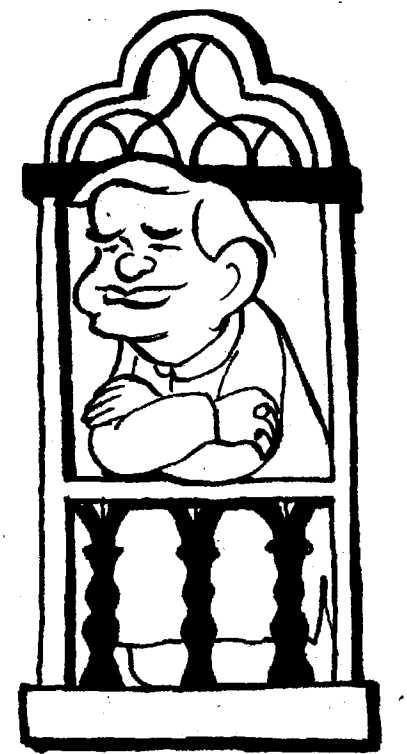
Therefore, it must stop cross-border terrorism and abandon its insistence on the 'centrality' of the Kashmir issue. Let

our two countries agree to promote mutually beneficial trade and economic ties, strengthen cultural relations, and encourage greater people-to-people contacts. Once our two peoples experience the fruits of a tension-free and co-operative environment, we will be able to see the Kashmir issue in its proper dimension and arrive at an amicable and lasting solution.

Dear countrymen, many pressing tasks confront us in the New Year and in the years ahead. As far as the Government is concerned, we are determined to accelerate the pace of implementation of numerous developmental initiatives that we have begun in recent years and to unveil several new ones in the New Year. I would like to characterise many of these initiatives as various components of the 'Connectivity Revolution'.

Highway connectivity and rural roads connectivity are two of the most ambitious infrastructure projects since Independence. We are also strengthening the rail and air connectivity in our country. Telecom connectivity, Internet connectivity and the attendant IT revolution have rapidly modernised our economy and society.

I must also add here that our many foreign policy initiatives have yielded a better connectivity between the international community and an India that is today stronger and more self-confident than ever before. Another important endeavour will soon be added to this revolution. It is the River Connectivity project.



desired results. I am convinced that there is an immense untapped energy in our society, which can and must be channelised for constructive purposes, in order to bring about a positive change, even if such change is on a small scale and its impact is felt only locally. I would like our people to reduce their dependence on Government for everything.

"HINDUTVA, a *viraat darshan* of human life, is being projected by some in a narrow, rigid and extremist manner. We need to affirm and promote true understanding of Hindutva, which is forward-looking, not one that seeks to take us back; that which is reform-minded, and not one that protects obscurantism and injustice. There is no difference between such Hindutva and *Bharateeyata*. Both affirm India belongs to all and all belong to India. Even the SC has held that Hindutva is neither a religious nor a political concept but connotes a noble, elevating way of life"

course the natural hospitality of the Goan people.

The sight of the sea and the sound of its waves can easily make one's mind wonder about the eternal and the infinite. My wandering thoughts, however, return to India. How many waves of history have crashed at the shore of our Motherland! How many New Year suns have dawned on its vast expanse! In our preoccupation with the Here and Now, we sometimes tend to forget how ancient, and yet how enduring and self-renewing is our civilisation, indomitable, inclusive, absorbing all the positive influences brought ashore by the tides of history and making them its own.

I recall here the ringing words of Swami Vivekananda in his essay: *The Future of India*: 'It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigour, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal; and we are the children of such a country.'

Our diversity is as much a source of India's greatness — and of Indians' pride in their nation — as her antiquity. Foreigners have always wondered how we can embrace so much diversity in religion, ethnicity, language and lifestyles, and yet remain a United Nation. What they may not understand, and which we must never forget, is that living with diversity, and yet weaving a thread of unity and harmony through it, has been a way of life throughout India since time immemorial. This is as true in Goa as it is in Gujarat, in Jammu & Kashmir as much as in Kerala, in Manipur as much

different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their differences. The tie has been as loose as possible, yet as close as circumstances permitted. This has produced something like a United States of a social federation, whose common name is Hinduism.'

Hinduism's acceptance of the diversity of faiths is the central feature of secularism in India. As Maharshi Aurobindo points out, 'Indian religion has always felt that since the minds, the temperaments and the intellectual affinities of men are unlimited in their variety, a perfect liberty of thought and of worship must be allowed to the individual in his approach to the Infinite.'

On the other hand, Hindutva, which presents a *viraat darshan* (broad, all-encompassing view) of human life, is being



"I OFTEN find it odd that whereas India reconciled itself long ago to the creation of Pakistan, the latter still finds it difficult to accept that J&K is an integral part of India and will remain so. For years, Pak has targeted India with terrorism, inspired by religious extremism. This campaign of jihadi terrorism is doomed to fail. Pak must stop cross-border terrorism and abandon its insistence on the 'centrality' of the Kashmir issue. Once our two people experience the fruits of a tension-free environment, we will be able to see the Kashmir issue in its proper dimension"

I would, however, place a far bigger importance on another connectivity effort, one to which I referred earlier — connectivity of the hearts and minds of one billion Indians. No nation has ever attained greatness without first attaining success in the awakening and organising of the whole strength of its people. Unity of minds, unity of purpose, and unity in action — this is what we have to demonstrate in every sphere of our national life. We have to strengthen the spirit of nationalism, and make it an inspiring and motivating force to drive all our endeavours.

This is how India won the struggle for becoming a Free Nation. And this is how India will have to win the struggle for becoming a Developed Nation — free at last of poverty and unemployment, of illiteracy and disease, of poor shelter and sanitation, and of all other curses of underdevelopment. For this, we have to expand the area of consensus on economic and other urgent reforms, so that these can be implemented speedily and effectively. To me, the true test of reforms is when they beneficially touch the lives of all Indians — especially the poorest and those living in backward regions.

We are making progress on all these fronts. But the progress is not always as rapid — and as regionally and socially balanced — as we desire. There is a lot that the Central and State Governments have to do to speed up this process. I appeal to all our legislators, both at the Centre and in States, to show the same dedication to doing their duty as was seen in the last session of Parliament, when a record number of Bills were passed.

But there is an even larger area where people's own self-initiated and self-organised effort will produce the

For example, why should our cities and villages be so unclean and unhygienic? Can this not be changed visibly by changing the habits and the mindset of each one of us? Shouldn't citizens themselves initiate a drive for water conservation, energy conservation, and conservation of our precious cultural heritage? Shouldn't our society come down heavily against those who commit atrocities against women, dalits, adivasis and other weaker sections? Shouldn't our rich people provide more philanthropic resources for the care of the orphans, disabled, destitute and senior citizens? My thoughts especially go out to our children, who are the future of our nation. The Government and society should work together with greater commitment to make all the emotional and material investment we can, to ensure that every Indian child is well fed, well educated and well looked after.

As a matter of fact, there are tens of thousands of unsung or little-sung heroes of development, both individuals and organisations, all over the country. They are inspired by the spirit of nationalism and the true meaning of religion as service to society — *Nar Seva* is *Narayan Seva*. Many of them are young people. Few things bring me greater joy than when I get to meet these selfless volunteers with soaring idealism. May the number of such individuals and organisations increase a thousand fold, and may they inspire each of us to do something more for our country in the New Year.

These are some of the thoughts and reflections that the idyllic setting in Goa has triggered in my mind, and which I wish to share with you.

Once again, I wish you all a very Happy New Year."