

Govt wants to shut us down, allege Liberhan panel officials

OUR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, Dec. 27. — The Central government is expecting an "unfavourable" report from the Liberhan Commission inquiring into the Babari Masjid demolition and is therefore citing the "delay" by the commission to wrap up its inquiry as an "excuse" to close it down, commission sources here charged.

Reacting to reports that the commission would be denied the usual six months extension it has hitherto been getting and would possibly only get a three-month extension to complete its

proceedings, commission sources said the Centre's stand that the enquiry had taken too long to complete work is an "excuse".

"The government is clearly unhappy with the way the commission has been working. They are also not expecting a favourable report. All this talk of a delay in wrapping up work is just an excuse to close us down," a commission official said.

However, the commission is yet to hear from the government on the issue of extension. The commission's current term lapses on December 31 and the Ministry of Home Affairs usually notifies an extension if any on the last day

of a commission's working term.

A commission official said "although evidence has been closed, arguments have not been completed. These hearings cannot be dispensed with." "So even if arguments were to begin tomorrow, they cannot be completed within three months. Writing the report would also take time in view of the enormous mass of evidence that has to be gone through and analysed."

The official also argued that since the subject is "sensitive and with obvious political ramifications", compiling the report is a "task of great responsibility".

"We would not like to approach it in a flippant manner."

Plus, arguments cannot be resumed till January 9, when the Delhi High Court decides on Kalyan Singh's plea against deposing before the Liberhan commission. Counsel for the Central government and Mr LK Advani have been strongly opposing any move in the High Court to get Kalyan Singh to depose before the commission.

Mr Advani, Mr MM Joshi and Ms Uma Bharati, three senior BJP leaders, have been already cleared of involvement in the Babari demolition case by a special court.

Advani discharged, Joshi to be charged

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

Rae Bareilly New Delhi: In a verdict which could have far-reaching political repercussions, the special CBI court at Rae Bareilly on Friday discharged deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani in the Babri masjid demolition case while allowing the CBI to frame charges against seven other accused, including Union HRD minister Murlis Manohar Joshi and BJP leader Uma Bharati.

Mr Joshi promptly resigned from the Union cabinet. "Yesterday, I had said I would resign if charges were framed against me. So, I have sent my resignation today," he told reporters after sending his resignation to the Prime Minister, who was in Istanbul.

While the PM asked Mr Joshi to reconsider his decision, BJP president M.

Venkaiah Naidu said, "There is no need for any minister, including Mr Joshi, to resign even if charges are made. There is no moral turpitude. There is no corruption."

Mr Advani, on the other hand, said he had "mixed feelings" since he had been personally exonerated but charges were being framed against his colleagues. "It would have been a feeling of elation if all my colleagues had also been exonerated, which has not happened," said Mr Advani, who was discharged of all charges under Sections 147 (rioting), 149 (unlawful assembly), 153-A, 153-B (spreading communal frenzy) and



L.K. Advani



Uma Bharati

the judge said the statements of a few witnesses did lead to a prima facie case against Mr Advani but the accounts of the remaining witnesses had contradicted these. Witnesses claimed that Mr Advani had attempted to control the unruly mob and had made frequent appeals to the kar

505 (promoting enmity between communities) of the IPC.

Special judicial magistrate V.K. Singh also ordered the cancellation of Mr Advani's personal bond and the release of his sureties.

Pronouncing his judgment in a jam-packed court, amidst chants of 'Jai Sri Ram' by VHP and Shiv Sena supporters, the judge said the statements of a few witnesses did lead to a prima facie case against Mr Advani but the accounts of the remaining witnesses had contradicted these. Witnesses claimed that Mr Advani had attempted to control the unruly mob and had made frequent appeals to the kar

sevaks who were on top of the mosque to come down, the court said. "From the accounts of witnesses, it could be made out that Mr Advani was unhappy about what was going on in there on that fateful day (December 6, 1992)," the order noted.

"Only suspicion has been raised to implicate (Mr) Advani," the court said while discharging him, citing a supreme court ruling (Union of India versus Praful Kumar Samal and others) which says that "if an accused has committed a crime and there are two viewpoints, it is within the bound of suspicion and the court can discharge the accused".

Apart from Mr Joshi, and Ms Bharati, those against whom charges were allowed to be framed were BJP state chief Vinay Katiyar, VHP leaders Ashok Singhal, Giriraj Kishore, Vishnu Hari Dalmia and Sadhvi Ritambhara.

Quote hanger

Uma Bharati: I am ready to face any punishment for my role in the Ram temple agitation, of which I am proud

RSS: There is no need for Mr Joshi to resign as the case is politically motivated. The verdict will not deter the Sangh Parivar from going ahead with its Ram temple agitation

Muslim Law Board: Muslims will not let L.K. Advani go scot-free in the and will challenge the Rae Bareilly court decision in a higher court in case the CBI fails to file a revision petition soon

Congress: Framing of charges against the seven means they were involved in the demolition...and after enjoying power for four years Mr Joshi is responding to his conscience and resigning on grounds of political morality

CPI: What defies logic and cannot be understood is how Joshi and six others are to be charged while the main organiser and initiator has been let off. Is it because he is deputy PM and home minister?

CPI-M: It is not the court which had acquitted Mr Advani but the CBI

Forward Bloc: It is unbelievable that the team captain of a crime was found clean and the other members of the gang were proceeded against

THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 SEP 2003

Liberhan's warrant illegal, says Kalyan

Press Trust of India
Lucknow, September 3

HARDENING HIS stand, Rashtriya Kranti Party chief Kalyan Singh on Wednesday said the warrant issued by the Liberhan Commission against him was "illegal" and "nobody in the world" can force him to appear before it.

"Under the commission of inquiry act, no commission has the jurisdiction to issue warrants. Therefore, the warrant issued by the Liberhan Commission is illegal," Singh told reporters here.

He clarified that the commission had issued only a warrant and not non-bailable warrant as reported earlier. "We will challenge the commission's order in the court," he said adding "no commission can threaten Kalyan Singh by issuing warrants. "If the commission wants me to depose before it, it should rather take me there in chains," he said.

Singh said he would appear before the commission only if Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister L.K Advani

were also asked to depose before the commission.

Singh's counsel in Liberhan Commission Brij Bahadur Saxena, who was present during the press conference, said the commission's order seems to be "politically motivated".

He said as recording evidence was closed in the commission there was no need for fresh witnesses. But Kalyan Singh was asked to appear after the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and Aslam Bhure filed an application asking the commission to call Singh as witness.

Saxena said the commission had been asking Singh to appear before it for the last five years. "We have pleaded that as a criminal case regarding Babri masjid demolition was going on in a CBI court in Lucknow, any statement in the commission could influence the case there", he said.

By not deposing before the commission, it can at the most draw an adverse inference against Singh but in no way can it issue a warrant against him, Saxena said.

Court reserves verdict on Advani and others

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: The Special CBI court in Rae Bareilly on Wednesday reserved its verdict for September 12 on framing of charges against Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, Union minister Uma Bharti and five others, who are accused in the Babri demolition case.

Special CBI Judge V.K. Singh pointed out that the case file was 'thick' containing heaps of documents relating to arguments, affidavits and rejoinder from the defence as well the CBI. "I need some time to study the file before coming to some conclusion," he told counsel fixing September 12 to pronounce his verdict.

Mr Advani, HRD minister Murlu Manohar Joshi, VHP working president Ashok Singhal, vice-president Giriraj Kishore, Vishnu Hari Damlmia, BJP state president Vinay Katiyar, Ms Bharti and Sadvi Ritambhara are accused in case no 198/92 which was shifted to the Rae Bareilly special court in February 2003 following a Supreme Court order dated November 29, 2002.

That the prosecuting agency seems to have got wind of the special CBI court's mind was evident from its top counsel S.K. Gandhi not turning up at Rae Bareilly for the crucial verdict. The CBI was represented by another senior CBI counsel in the case, R.K. Saini.

Awaiting judgment day



L.K. Advani



Uma Bharti



Manohar Joshi

Keeping the suspense in the packed court room, the special CBI judge adjourned the court for half an hour, saying that he would pass an order at 11.30 a.m.

The special court had directed the CBI on August 19 to file a rejoinder on defence objections by August 27 to enable it to pronounce its verdict on September 3. The CBI had filed rejoinder running into about 70 pages on August 26.

Usually the prosecution is not required to submit evidence at the stage of framing of charges, but in this case, the CBI submitted four video and three audio tapes, which were played by the court in camera on July 5.

Barring the speech of Ritambhara, none of the cassettes contained speeches of Mr Advani and other leaders.

The CBI has also listed 49 witnesses, including 22 scribes, to substantiate its charges against the eight accused. Ironically, it had listed one journalist from Faizabad M.G. Gupta who had died on January 31, 1996.

**BABRI
CASE**

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 SEP 2003

NON-BAILABLE WARRANT ISSUED

Liberhan move to get Kalyan before panel

Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Sept. 2. — The Liberhan Ayodhya commission of inquiry, probing the sequence of events that led to the demolition of Babari Masjid, today issued a non-bailable warrant against former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mr Kalyan Singh, summoning him to depose before it as its witness on 23 or 24 September.

"I find no sufficient cause for his (Mr Kalyan Singh's) non-appearance, specially when no date for a vote of confidence has been fixed either for 2 or 3 September and it was merely an apprehension of a date being fixed for a vote of confidence," Mr Justice Liberhan said in his order.

During the commission's last hearing, Mr Singh's counsel, Mr BB Saksena, had sought and secured from the commission three weeks' time on an undertaking that Mr Singh would appear before the commission as its witness.

The counsel today cited the fluid political situation in the state as the reason for his non-appearance before the panel. Mr Singh, he said, had to be in Lucknow for the floor test of the chief minister, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, either today or tomorrow.

Mr Justice Liberhan saw no substance in his contention and asked Mr Singh to appear before it on 23 or 24 September.

Mr Justice Liberhan also regretted Mr Singh's "non-cooperative"

Ex-CM sets terms



LUCKNOW, Sept. 2. — Mr Kalyan Singh today said he would depose before the Liberhan commission only when it questioned Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Mr LK Advani. Mr

Singh insisted that though the commission could not force him to depose, he was neither avoiding it nor refusing to depose before it. Asked about the non-bailable warrant, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said he did not have any information about it. He had filed a petition in Delhi High Court in this regard and the matter would come up for hearing on 5 September, he said. — SNS

attitude, saying his deposition was needed as the commission was nearing the end of its term — December. Mr Singh's statements are needed for preparing the final report.

Yesterday, Mr Singh had approached Delhi High Court seeking certain clarifications in the commission's orders issued last time. The court has issued notices in this regard to all parties and would take up the matter again on 5 September.

The commission also rejected the plea of the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani's counsel that Mr Singh be dropped as witness as it was the last opportunity for him to depose.

THE STATESMAN

3 SEP 2003

Liberhan panel asks Kalyan Singh to depose by Sept. 2

9. Sep. Court

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By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 7. The Liberhan Commission of Inquiry today granted time to the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh, till September 2 to adduce evidence as a witness subject to his giving an undertaking that he would appear on that day.

Justice Liberhan had directed Mr. Singh to depose before the Commission today and tomorrow.

However, when the matter was taken up today, his

counsel filed an application seeking four weeks' time to enable Mr. Singh to peruse the records connected with the Babri Masjid demolition on December 6, 1992.

The counsel said that since the mode of inquiry seemed to be totally against Mr. Singh and the then Government, Mr. Singh's position was like a defendant and not a witness. Mr. Singh had passed hundreds of orders on the files of the Uttar Pradesh Government and had also filed affidavits before the

Supreme Court and other authorities, and these would be the subject matter of examination and cross-examination.

Since Mr. Singh was out of Government, he was not in a position to inspect the record and he must be allowed to inspect the whole record of the Commission and the Government, the counsel said and sought time to do so.

The Commission accepted the plea and directed Mr. Singh to adduce evidence on September 2 and 3.

THE HINDU

8 AUG 2003

Liberhan panel summons Kalyan

Reprieve for Vajpayee, L.K. Advani

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Stating that it would not allow "legalism" to come in the way of "public interest", the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission on Monday decided to summon former UP chief minister Kalyan Singh for cross-examination.

The commission, however, said it would not be summoning Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee or recalling deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani.

Mr Singh, who has been summoned to testify on August 7 and 8, is to appear as a witness of the commission and not of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board. "There can be no doubt that Kalyan Singh is a pivotal witness, especially in the context of rumours or reports about a conspiracy. The matter can be more fully, effectively and justly gone into after recording the statement of Kalyan Singh," noted the

commission, which is probing the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

The order, insiders say, is likely to cause unease in the top BJP leadership since Mr Singh has publicly alleged that Mr Advani and Mr Vajpayee were part of the conspiracy to demolish the Babri masjid.

The commission rejected the argument of the Centre's counsel, R.N. Trivedi, that "it is the prerogative of only the central government to summon or recall any witness after the evi-



Kalyan Singh

dence has been closed and arguments have commenced. The commission has no adjudicatory power and its powers are only investigatory. Courts have inherent power to do justice and consequently have inherent powers while a commission of inquiry has no such power."

● Inscription puzzle, Page 5

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 JUL 2003

Doublespeak on security lapse: Liberhan panel

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TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Despite attempts by the Centre's counsel, Lala Ram Gupta, to deny that he ever criticised the 1992 Kalyan Singh government in UP for the security lapse which led to the demolition of Babri Masjid, the written submission by the Centre before the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission says just the opposite.

The voluminous written argument reiterates that Kalyan Singh's government did not comply with the decision of the then central government, led by P.V. Narasimha Rao, that para-military forces be deployed in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

Although much of Mr Gupta's submission is in tune with his oral arguments in the commission, sources point out that it would have its repercussions on the UP government's arguments in the commission which would begin on July 10.

"Considering the Centre's attack on the then UP government, it should actually be defending the Kalyan Singh government's decision. But then the current political equation would come into play. Today, Kalyan Singh is not only openly attacking the top BJP leadership but is also a political opponent of chief minister Mayawati. The UP government would have to strike a fine balance or openly admit that Mr Singh's government did not pay heed to the Centre's advice on Ayodhya," says a source.

According to the source, the Centre's submission that it did not want to sour its relationship with the state on the issue of deployment of para-military forces and that there was a clear-cut guarantee from the state that it would protect the mosque at all cost, is a clear attack on the UP government.

He feels that if the UP government's submission goes against Mr Singh's government, there are chances that he would have to come to the commission for cross-examination. "Kalyan Singh would get a chance to spill the beans about the plans to demolish the Babri Masjid as well as the Centre's role," he says.

According to the Centre's counsel, there were differences between the Centre and the state when the new security plan for the masjid was coming up.

Liberhan team maps gaps in Babri security

By Akshaya Mukul
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Liberhan Ayodhya Commission's recent visit to Ayodhya—its second in ten years—was an “eye-opener”, bringing to light new facets about the Babri masjid-Janmabhoomi complex and the security arrangements that were in place on December 6, 1992.

For instance, the panel found that none of the maps, either those with the commission or the ones with the district administration, was to scale. In the process, many important buildings, like the VHP office in front of Ved Mandir, were left out of the maps. The commission has now asked district officials to prepare a new map.

Incidentally, the three-member commission led by chairman Justice M.S. Liberhan did not pay obeisance to the Ram idol in the complex.

According to sources, armed with site maps and security plans, Justice Liberhan and his team began the visit last Saturday by following the same route which was taken by the central security forces on the day of the demolition. It began with the Dogra Regimental Centre and the Saket Degree College, where the para-military forces had been stationed since November 24, 1992, but could not move to Ayodhya on December 6 that year as the road was blocked by kar sevaks.

Sources say that the commission was “keen” to verify two important facts. The first was the distance from Babri masjid to the Ram Katha Kunj Manch, where BJP leaders L.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi and Uma Bharti and RSS and VHP leaders were sitting on December 6. “We visualised the scene from the Ram Katha Kunj Manch and feel that not only could the domes of the Babri masjid have been visible from there but even an appeal by the leaders

to stop the demolition could have been easily heard by the kar sevaks,” said a source.

During their cross-examination, Mr Advani, Mr Joshi and Ms Bharti had said that the kar sevaks were far away and could not hear their appeals to stop the demolition. In fact, Ms Bharti had claimed that she was sitting far behind on the manch and could not see the domes at all.

The second aspect which the commission wanted to verify was a thorough examination of what the VHP calls the “Ram divar” from inside and outside. In fact, Justice Liberhan went through the entire area of the ‘divar’ and matched actual positions on the ground with the maps given to the commission. One gate shown in the site plan, the commission found, did not exist on the ground.

The team also took another approach to the Babri masjid from the side of Dorahi Kuan from where Mr Advani, Mr Joshi and Ms Bharti had entered the complex.

ASI seeks more time

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: In a surprise move, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has sought permission from the special Ayodhya court to stop excavation work between July and September and submit its final report by the end of December.

The three-member special bench comprising Justice Sudhir Narain, Justice S.R. Alam and Justice Bhanwar Singh allowed a day's time to the Sunni Central Wakf Board (SCWB) and other plaintiffs to file objections and fixed Wednesday for hearing arguments.

Liberhan panel visits Ayodhya

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AYODHYA, JUNE 28. The Liberhan Commission, which arrived here this afternoon, visited the Saket Degree College and other area close to the acquired land to gain first hand knowledge of circumstances leading to the demolition of the disputed structure on December 6, 1992.

Justice M.S. Liberhan, who led the four-member team, visited the Saket Degree College, where the Rapid Action Force was then stationed but was not given orders to proceed towards the disputed site by the district authorities.

The team also visited 'Do Rahi Kaun', Ved Mandir crossing and the Rang Mahal crossing to study the topography of the areas. It studied the revenue map of the localities and also spoke to the revenue departmental officials. — PTI

'Advani must quit'

UNI, PTI report from Raipur: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) today urged the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, to

^{29/6}
quit if the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, did not permit him to take the initiative to bring in legislation for construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya.

"If Mr. Vajpayee allows his deputy to solve the Ayodhya problem, we are confident that Mr. Advani will be able to do that," the VHP working president, Ashok Singhal, told reporters here.

Mr. Singhal was briefing the reporters about the deliberations at the two-day VHP working committee meeting, which concluded here today.

Asked if the VHP was of the view that Mr. Advani should become the Prime Minister to find an early solution to the vexed issue, he said, "there is no need for a leadership change. It could be done without that".

Asked why the VHP leaders were targeting Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Singhal alleged that the Prime Minister "tried to keep the VHP out and made efforts to strike a deal with Muslims. Mr.

^{9. gov. limits}
Vajpayee was never associated with the temple movement".

Meanwhile, a resolution adopted at the VHP working committee meeting condemned the 'attempts being made to strike a deal on Ayodhya, saying this was being done by the NDA Government with an eye on the coming elections.

The VHP also decided not to allow construction of any mosque in the entire Ayodhya town.

Ulemas' warning

PTI reports from Mumbai: Ulemas in Maharashtra today warned the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) against compromising on the Babri Masjid issue, saying otherwise the board would not be able to "confront the Muslim masses".

"Desist from any compromise on Babri land, otherwise you will have to face repercussions across India. You will not be able to confront Muslim masses", they warned.

29 JUL 2003

THE HINDU

Liberhan BJP mulls way out of legal web

BHAVNA VIJ-AURORA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 27

SERIOUSLY concerned about the twists and turns of Justice Liberhan Commission, the BJP has put its legal heads together to formulate a strategy for damage control.

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani today called a meeting of trusted BJP leaders — Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj — to discuss the direction Liberhan Commission findings were taking. Both the leaders were called because of their legal background.

Set up to probe the events leading to the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, the Liberhan Commission had asked the Centre to explain in detail, the role of then BJP government in UP, led by Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, its Council of Ministers, of various other organisations represented at the site including VHP and RSS, and also of Narasimha Rao-led Union government. Justice M.S. Liberhan had also asked the centre to explain what the then Union government could have done to prevent the demolition.

Centre's counsel Lal Ram Gupta

had accused both, the then state and Union governments of not having adequate security forces and a contingency plan ready at hand. He has to give his reply on Monday. Gupta too was present at the meeting today.

Sources said that the government was not too happy with the way Gupta was handling things and the statements he was making before the Commission. Therefore, he was also asked to attend the meeting, called mainly to thrash out a strategy for the future.

Senior BJP leaders including Human Resource Development Minister Murlidhar Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti and Advani, had also been named in the supplementary charge-sheet filed earlier this month in a Rae Bareilly court by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), probing the demolition case.

Jaitley refused to divulge any details of the meeting with Advani, saying he had to discuss "several things" with him. Centre's counsel Gupta admitted that he was present at the same meeting as Sushma and Jaitley but said that he had gone to discuss some other thing with the Deputy PM. A usually vocal Sushma refused to comment on the meeting.

'Liberhan Commission should summon Kalyan Singh'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI JUNE 21. The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has decided to request the Liberhan Commission to summon the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh, to testify before it. It will also ask the Commission that it be given a chance to place its views before it.

The Babri Masjid Committee of the AIMPLB, which met here today is also reported to have "discussed in general terms" the statement made by the Kanchi Sankaracharya, Sri Jayendra Saraswati, on June 8.

According to sources the secretary of the Babri Committee, Maulana Nizamuddin, will be leaving for Lucknow tomorrow to brief the AIMPLB president, Maulana Rabe Hasan Nadwi, about the discussions. The group that met here today also felt that the response to the

Sankaracharya must be in keeping with the earlier resolutions of the working Committee and the AIMPLB. Significantly, at its last meeting in Monghyr, the Board had passed a resolution making it clear that the issue of giving away the mosque land was not negotiable.

According to Yusuf Hatim Muchala, the Babri Masjid Committee at its day-long meeting discussed the issue of the excavations carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India. He said the AIMPLB would be moving an application before the Liberhan Commission to be allowed to make its formulations before it.

Mr. Muchala clarified that there was no deal with either the Government or with the Sankaracharya. The excavations clearly showed that "the case was in our favour".

Emerging from the meeting the former MP, Syed Shahabud-

din, said there was no proposal before the committee to discuss the contents of the letter written by the Sankaracharya. The committee had discussed the criminal cases related to Ayodhya.

Mujahid activist interrogated

By Our Staff Reporter

KOZHIKODE, JUNE 21. A youth, Jerish (26), who surrendered before the Palakkad police on Thursday night claiming himself to be a Hisbul Mujahid activist, is being interrogated by the higher police officials here.

The youth said that he had undergone training under the Hisbul Mujahid in Nepal and Kashmir.

He said that a total of 14 persons had reached Kerala after the training. The police also suspect his mental health.

NGOs boycott Nanavati panel proceedings

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 16. The G.D. Nanavati Commission inquiring into the Godhra train carnage and the communal riots that followed in Gujarat last year, had to face rough weather during its sitting in Vadodara today.

Incensed by Justice Nanavati's alleged remarks in New Delhi recently that the Commission had so far not come across anything against the Narendra Modi Government or about alleged police failure, several non-government organisations, some individual Muslim leaders and riot-victims boycotted the commission's proceedings.

Shanti Abhiyan, the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) and several other organisations told the commission that the people had lost confidence in the impartiality of the commission.

Rohit Prajapati of the PUCL, while handing over a protest memorandum to the commission, said the judge had no right to continue making a "pre-determined" statement in the media. Some other NGOs said they no longer trusted the commission.

'Riot victims scared'

Another NGO, Medico-Friend Circle, told the commission that the riot victims were scared to appear before the panel fearing reprisals.

17 JUN 2003

Babri accused say L.K. Advani instigated them

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

Lucknow: In a new twist to the Babri masjid demolition case, the five accused on Saturday alleged they had pulled down the disputed structure at Ayodhya at the instigation of Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and other senior BJP leaders, a charge denied by Mr Advani's lawyer. The five—Vinod Vatsa, Santosh, R.C. Khatri, Amar Nath Goyal and R.N. Das—made the charge while speaking to reporters outside the special CBI court hearing the case here.

They alleged that the accused VIPs had got their case separated by "exerting influence" and demanded that all the accused be treated at par as far as the trial was concerned.

Denying the charge, the DPM's lawyer Satyapal Jain said in Chandigarh, "There is no evidence against Mr Advani and the allegation seems to be tutored against him. I think there seems to be some mischief somewhere. The credentials of these people who are now saying this is yet to be established."

He said that so far as the evidence before the Liberhans Commission of Inquiry was concerned, no leader, no witness and no CBI official had

said that there was any direct evidence against Mr Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti. "I think in the court also, so far no witness has said that they did anything at the asking of Uma Bharti or Mr Advani or Mr Joshi," he said.

One of the accused, R.N. Das, was the priest of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple inside the then Babri masjid. The five accused expressed resentment at "being discriminated against those enjoying power" and on

whose instigation they had demolished the disputed structure on December 6, 1992.

Meanwhile, the Congress has demanded the resignation of Mr Advani and Union minister M.M. Joshi. Party spokesperson Anand Sharma said, "It is a well-known fact that Mr Advani and other central ministers, all chargesheeted in the Ayodhya case, were the main conspirators of the demolition."

"It would be a mockery of democracy if Mr Advani, prosecuted for an alleged criminal act, should continue in government," Mr Sharma said. The CPI also demanded the resignation of Mr Advani and Mr Joshi.



L.K. Advani