

RSS, Jamait leaders discuss Ayodhya

NEW DELHI, Dec. 28. — The Sangh Parivar top brass has held the first-ever meeting with the Jamait-e-Ulema-e-Hind leaders to resolve the decades-old Ayodhya tangle and other issues of communal discord.

RSS chief Mr KS Sudarshan, its spokesman Mr Ram Madhav and VHP president Mr VH Dalmiya met Jamait-e-Ulema-e-Hind president Maulana Mehmood Madani and its top leaders Mr Niaz Farouqi and Maulana Nomani here four days ago. Aiming to "clear misunderstandings" about each other, they discussed, among other topics, the Ayodhya issue and how to resolve it, sources privy to the meeting said.

During the three-hour meeting, in which the conceptions of both sides were aired frankly, the leaders "agreed that the Ayodhya issue should be resolved through talks", the sources said about the face-to-face, arranged by the founder-president of Universal Association for Spiritual Awareness, Mr NK Sharma. "The talks were aimed at building mutual trust and understanding over contentious issues, includ-

ing Ayodhya," the sources said, adding the leaders agreed to meet again.

Significantly, two days after the meeting, RSS spokesman Mr Ram Madhav expressed the hope on Friday that a "solution to Ayod-

The conceptions of both sides were aired frankly... the leaders agreed that the Ayodhya issue should be resolved through talks

hya was expected soon" as "talks are on".

When contacted about the development, Mr Madhav confirmed that the meeting had taken place and said it was aimed at "building understanding" between the two communities. Although he admitted that the Ayodhya issue "came up for discussion" at the meeting, Mr Madhav said RSS was not involved in talks over this issue and that it was being handled by VHP.

He said he had the feedback that VHP was

holding talks with Muslim groups which were progressing "well", and cited that as the reason behind his optimism about an early negotiated resolution of the dispute. The RSS spokesman said the government may also be involved in such talks.

Maulana Madani, when asked about the meeting, said it had no pre-decided agenda, but various issues came up during the "detailed and frank" discussions. "There are a lot of misunderstandings among Hindus and Muslims about each other. The meeting deliberated upon ending these differences between the communities in the national interest," he said.

Pointing to the government's aim of making the country a developed nation by 2020, the Jamait-e-Ulema-e-Hind chief said the communities needed to end their petty differences if the national goal was to be achieved. When asked about the Ayodhya issue, he said the meeting did not "concentrate" on it, but added that there was no issue which could not be resolved through talks. — PTI

HC rejects appeal for Bakery retrial

Reasons to be given after vacation

HT Correspondent
Ahmedabad, December 26

9 min
HT-1

THE GUJARAT High Court on Friday dismissed the state government's "amended" appeal seeking a retrial of the Best Bakery case, but cited no reason for the judgment which is likely to have far-reaching consequences.

"We could assign the reasons, but as today is the last day before the winter vacation, the reasons would follow later (when the court reopens)," the Division Bench of Justices B.J. Sethna and J.R. Vora said.

A fast-track court had on June 27 acquitted all the 21 people accused in last year's Best Bakery riots, in which 14 Muslims were burnt to death in Vadodara. The state had filed the "amended" appeal at the behest of the Supreme Court, which had condemned its original appeal against the acquittals as "eyewash".

Commenting on the High Court judgment, defence advocate Sushil Kumar said, "The dismissal of this appeal will have an effect on the legal history of India as the entire judicial system was on trial." Eminent lawyer and human rights activist Girish Patel said, "It means that the chapter is closed in Gujarat."

The state government can, however, ask for special leave to appeal in the Supreme Court. But it may not do so on the pretext that it has already fulfilled its Constitutional obligation of abiding by the Supreme Court's directive. The victims' families, too, can approach the apex court with an appeal for justice.

The High Court dismissed the Gujarat government's plea requesting permission to bring on its record the evidence filed with the Supreme Court by key witness Zaheera Sheikh and three others. The affidavits by these witnesses were a part of a special leave petition filed by Mumbai-based NGO Citizens for Justice

Case study

► **What's likely:** Victims' families can approach Supreme Court with an appeal for justice. Best Bakery case may move to SC

► **What's not:** Gujarat can ask for special leave to appeal in SC. But Team Modi is relieved; Gujarat has fulfilled its Constitutional obligation by appealing for retrial

and Peace, which has sheltered Zaheera.

The state had also sought re-examination of some witnesses who had turned hostile and collection of "additional" evidence for retrial. These too were dismissed along with the appeal.

Defence advocate Kumar cited "contradictions" between the statements Zaheera made to the police and those in her affidavit before the Supreme Court. He questioned the "very presence" of Zaheera at the site of the incident, and contended that one of her family members had said in a statement to the police that she was 100 km away in Chhota Udepur when rioters torched the bakery.

In her statement to the police, Zaheera had said her sister-in-law Yasmin Bano was in Chhota Udepur, whereas her affidavit says Yasmin was at the site of the rioting, Kumar maintained. He said Zaheera had claimed in her statements she was injured and profusely bleeding, but the state government's appeal said "she did not receive any injuries".

"Having heard the learned counsel for the parties, we are of the considered opinion that all the applications and the appeals are required to be dismissed," the Bench said. "Accordingly, applications and appeals are dismissed."

Muslim law board rejects AJMT proposal

Shahid Pervaz in New Delhi

Dec. 25. — The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has outright rejected the proposal mooted by the Ayodhya Jama Masjid Trust (AJMT), believed to be backed by the Union home ministry, pressing for construction of the Ram Temple at the Ramjanambhoomi site and establishment of a grand mosque somewhere else in Ayodhya.

The board said the AJMT's proposal was "unacceptable", while questioning its locus standi on the Ayodhya issue.

The AJMT managing trustee, Mr SAA Rizvi, is engaged in behind-the-scenes negotiations with various parties in a bid to break the Ayodhya deadlock. He has reportedly said his initiative is being supported by the Central government, saying his formula — a Ram temple at the disputed site and a mosque elsewhere in Ayodhya — is aimed to create communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims.

Mr Rizvi said a Muslim delegation led by his Trust will participate in a meeting convened by the VHP in Ayodhya tomorrow to

discuss the issue. Besides the AJMT office-bearers and noted Shia and Sunni clerics, he claimed, the delegation would comprise leaders of several Muslim organisations, including Syed Shahabuddin.

The AJMT's decision to attend the VHP meet was taken after holding talks with the VHP leaders, Mr Vishnu Hari Dalmia and Mahant Avaidyanath, as well as the RSS

with the board in 1993.

Mr Shahabuddin conceded that the Centre has been talking to some Muslim bodies at various levels, but said the efforts are "misdirected and useless". "These are part of the BJP government's designs in view of the coming Lok Sabha polls in which bodies like AJMT are working as tools".

In a severe blow to Mr Rizvi's initiative, the Muslim leaders of Ayodhya and Faizabad, including the plaintiff in the title suit, Mr Hashim Ansari, yesterday passed a resolution distancing themselves from him, questioning his authority, and terming his organisation as "bogus and self-styled". The resolution also stated that only the Board has the authority to represent the Muslim community over any Ayodhya talks.

Mr Rizvi's proposal was also shot down by the leading Shia cleric, Mr Kalbe Sadiq, who said Shias are not supporting his move.

The Board said it is open to negotiations to resolve the Ayodhya tangle, but it has not been approached by the Centre "directly" so far, said its spokesman Dr SQR Ilyas. The Board would, however, prefer adjudication as the solution.

The Ayodhya Jama Masjid Trust, believed to be backed by the Union home ministry, is pressing for construction of the Ram Temple at the Ramjanambhoomi site

chief, Mr KS Sudarshan. Mr Shahabuddin, however, denied that he will attend tomorrow's Ayodhya meeting. "There is unanimity in the Muslim community that the board is its sole representative on the Ayodhya issue," he said pointing out that the two leading organisations, Babri Masjid Action Committee and Babri Masjid Coordination Committee, had also vested their authority

Anti-Christian pamphlets surface

By Harit Mehta

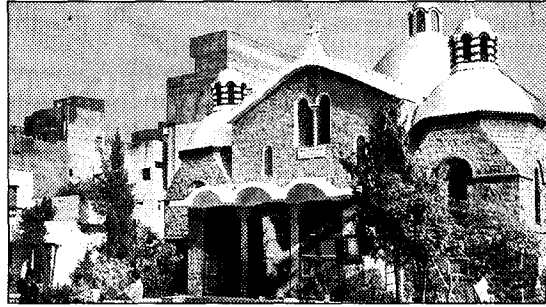
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Pamphlets targeting Christians have surfaced in various parts of Gujarat in the build-up to Christmas this year and fears are being expressed of a repeat of the incidents of 1998 when several prayer halls in the south Gujarat district of Dangs were attacked by militant organisations.

The pamphleteering, allege Christian organisa-

lished by the same house, *Bharat Ko Isai Banane Ka Shadyantra*, says: "The propaganda carried out by priests is a conspiracy which has been going on for a long time. It has become intensive recently because of our neglect.." says the booklet.

The booklet warns that all the religions in the country, including Islam and Sikhism, will have to suffer if the Christian propaganda is not checked. A section of the booklet



tions, comes at a time when a deliberate attempt is being made to generate heat on the conversions issue, particularly in tribal areas of the state which have had a history of Hindu-Christian conflict in recent years.

Yeh Hain Asaliyat (this is reality), a pamphlet in Hindi published by the Ahmedabad-based Bharat Jagruti Morcha, talks about the missionary 'invasion' and cautions Hindus to take the Christian threat seriously or else perish. "Hindus are in danger because of pseudo-secularists", says the pamphlet. It accuses missionaries of abusing Hindu religion, its saints and places of worship. A story about a 'swayamsevak', who preferred his religion over the money offered by Christian missionaries has also been highlighted in the pamphlet, which ends with the slogan "*Hindu jagega... rastra jagega... rashtra jagega.. vishwa bache ga*".

Another booklet, pub-

Kuch Ghatit Satya Ghatanaye talks about how Hindus have suffered at the hands of Christians in Goa and how they were forced to remain spectators when around 280 temples were razed to the ground.

The other two booklets "*Hindu O! Ab to jaago..*" and "*Ab samay nahin hai sone ka..*" too contain similar attacks on the missionaries. This pamphlet gives some figures about the rise in conversions in Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi.

All-India Christian Council state convenor Samson Christian said, "The council is planning to knock at the doors of the high court that Christians should be allowed to celebrate their festival".

Cedric Prakash, the convenor of Prashant, an NGO active in the area of human rights, said, "We have found these pamphlets being circulated openly all over the state, they even have the printers' name, telephone numbers and website addresses".

21/10
110-11

Indian Muslims are not a minority: Saudi Arabia

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, OCT. 20. The Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud al-Faisal, has told Islamabad not to consider Indian Muslims as a "minority" who needed "outside help" to resolve their problems.

Prince Faisal was provoked into making these remarks at a press conference here on Sunday when a Pakistani journalist attacked India for its alleged atrocities against Muslims in general and Kashmiris in particular.

"I would hate to think of the Muslims in India as a minority coming from a country that had less Muslims. These Muslims are not scattered in

the wind. They are people with substance. They are people with courage and with enough of that courage to stand up for their interests by themselves and not to wait for the help of others."

Asked by the scribe what Saudi Arabia was planning to alleviate the "sufferings" of Indian Muslims, Prince Faisal said they neither needed the help of Saudi Arabia nor Pakistan even as the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, looked on.

On the Kashmir issue, the Prince said Saudi Arabia thought "a wise leadership from Pervez Musharraf in seeking peaceful settlement with India is the right way to

go. We will do everything we can to help in bringing about this peaceful settlement".

The main problem that divided India and Pakistan and threatened peace in the region was Kashmir. "So anything we can do for peace and to settle the issue of Kashmir, we will certainly do that," he added.

Prince Faisal's remarks must have come as an embarrassment to the Pakistani establishment as it would like the rest of the world to believe that Muslims in India were not only a minority but also a helpless community.

Islamabad had stepped up its campaign on these lines particularly since the Gujarat riots in February last.

THE HINDU 21 OCT 2003
21 OCT 2003

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2003

10/10

A 'CRISIS' DEFTLY DEFUSED

9-Minute 20/10

THE LATEST ROUND of Ayodhya-centred mobilisation spearheaded by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has made one thing clear to political India. It is that, in India's most populous State and also elsewhere, the Ramjanabhoomi movement does not evoke anything like the mass response the campaign to demolish the Babri Masjid did more than a decade ago. This is the principal reason for the "sankalp sammelan" programme flopping. No doubt, considerable pressure was put on the State and its resources by tens of thousands of VHP activists threatening to congregate at the site where the Babri Masjid used to stand. But what was conspicuous by its absence was any kind of ground-level popular support for the programme. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP's political stock has declined perhaps to the lowest level witnessed in the past decade and a half. The VHP leaders are openly at odds with the BJP-led Central Government and not a week passes without Ashok Singhal or Praveen Togadia or some other senior VHP functionary hurling abuse and insult at Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his "pseudo-Hindu", "power-inebriated" and "secular" ways.

The other reason for the frustration of the communal troublemakers is the firm but deft way in which the recently installed Government of Mulayam Singh Yadav responded to their challenge. Adopting a sober and cool stance and making his intentions clear in advance, the U.P. Chief Minister sought and won cooperation all round. An unassailable weapon in his armoury was the Allahabad High Court's directive of October 14, 2003 asking the State Government not to allow the VHP or any other organisation to hold a meeting at, or in the vicinity of, the 'disputed' site. With the law firmly on his side, Mr. Yadav succeeded in winning the practical cooperation of the Vajpayee Government. The Cen-

tral Government fulfilled its responsibility by sending in more than 100 companies of Central paramilitary forces, which is actually more than what the State Government sought to help keep the peace. The police as well as civil administration in Faizabad did the U.P. Chief Minister proud. Such no-nonsense but restrained and indeed bloodless handling of potential trouble has rarely been witnessed in recent law enforcement history. Interestingly, testimony to the Mulayam Government's success has come from the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu. He has responded to the VHP's predictable demand for the dismissal of the Mulayam Singh Government by saying "there is no need for it" since there has been "no major untoward incident".

What next? The VHP leadership, identifying secularism as "the biggest enemy" of the nation and declaring itself ready for "any sacrifice" to "wipe out" secular ideology and install "Hindu Rashtra", has issued yet another ultimatum to Mr. Vajpayee: "If you don't come to us, we will abandon you." The provocation for this is the reiterated 'no' from the BJP to the VHP's demand for special legislation to facilitate the construction of a temple at the site where the mosque stood. Significantly, the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, whose 1990 *rath yatra* provided a powerful boost to the Ramjanabhoomi campaign, has ruled out such legislation as politically unfeasible. Further, the Central Government is bound by the Supreme Court's March 2003 ruling ordering that the *status quo* be maintained at the disputed site until the title suits are adjudicated by the special bench of the Allahabad High Court. True to type, the VHP has promised more Ayodhya-related fireworks. Fortunately for democratic India, there is every indication that these, like the "sankalp sammelan" programme, will fizzle out.

20 OCT 2003

THE HINDU

20 OCT 2003

●ACTIVISTS LATHICHARGED ●MULAYAM

ORDERS RELEASE OF 'RAM BHAKTS'

VHP bid to hold meet in Ayodhya foiled

AYODHYA, OCT. 17. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad-sponsored congregation here today fizzled out as the security forces sealed the temple town and prevented 'Ram bhakts' from gathering at Ramsevakpuram, venue of the proposed assembly.

Though by and large Ayodhya and the rest of the State remained peaceful, Karsevakpuram, the complex housing VHP's central office, witnessed a lathicharge and the firing of rubber bullets by police against VHP cadres and supporters in the morning after the Parishad leader, Ashok Singhal, was arrested.

Later in the evening, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, told presspersons in Lucknow that he had ordered the release of over 30,000 VHP activists, including Mr. Singhal.

Mr. Singhal accused Mr. Yadav of "using the Central forces to persecute and beat innocent kar sevaks". He said the time had come for enacting legislation for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. Mr. Singhal refused to leave Karsevakpuram until he had 'darshan' of Ram Lalla.

After his release, Mr. Singhal conducted a symbolic 'Sankalp Sabha' at Karsevakpuram in the presence of over 1,000 activists from different States, VHP sources said.

Before the start of the 'Sankalp Sabha' (meeting to take a pledge), police rounded up the senior VHP leader, Ram Vilas Vedanti, and a few thousand activists and ferried them outside Faizabad, foiling their plans.

Around noon, Karsevakpuram appeared deserted with police barricading the area and arresting the 'Ram bhakts' at various locations in the town. As thousands trooped in through various points, including along the railway tracks, police prevented them from reaching the venue. But in many places, despite the police clampdown, hundreds of 'Ram bhakts' sneaked into the town. They were seen moving in small groups towards the venue. Some of them damaged a Government bus and squatted on the roads protesting the arrests.

Angry over the police action, the VHP gave a call for a 'Bharat bandh' on Sunday in "protest against police atrocities on the Ram bhakts". Though their plan was defeated, the VHP leadership claimed that the turnout was a 'moral victory' despite attempts at repression by Mr. Yadav.

Mr. Yadav said his Government had passed the 'agni pariksha' (ordeal by fire) when it foiled the plans of "communal forces" to disrupt peace. The Centre's role in the entire episode was worthy of appreciation and exemplified the federal set-up of the country.

The Commissioner, Faizabad division, and receiver of the acquired land at Ayodhya, J.P. Sharma, said normality has been restored. He said that had the Central Government stopped all the trains to Faizabad and Ayodhya, the situation could have been more peaceful.

In Lucknow, the Chief Secretary, A.P. Singh, said that all the detained persons would be re-

leased and the barricades and blockades erected at different places would be lifted immediately. The situation in Ayodhya was peaceful and normal 'darshan' was under way at the disputed site. In the first shift from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m., altogether 1,127 devotees had 'darshan'.

Mr. Sharma said that Mr. Singhal had refused to heed the request of the administration to move to the Sugar Corporation Guest House here from Karsevakpuram.

Police were forced to arrest Mr. Singhal as he was leading about 1,000 people, violating Section 144. He said that in Ayodhya, 800 VHP activists were arrested in the morning from the railway station while 1,000 more were arrested from Karsevakpuram later.

Mr. Singhal, who was sporting a saffron outfit, admitted that he had been tacitly camping in the temple town for the past three days.

The Inspector-General of Police, V.N. Rai, said that police had not wanted to use force and remove Mr. Singhal in view of his age.

The VHP office has been cordoned off and workers have been prevented from approaching it. While the VHP leaders claimed that thousands of cadres were arrested, police put the figure at around 4,000. They have been taken out of Faizabad for release.

More than 35,000 people had been arrested in the State during the past couple of days. — PTI, UNI

VHP calls bandh; Cong. demand: Page 12

Gujarat riot rapes under CBI scanner

OUR LEGAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 16: The Supreme Court today directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to probe cases of mass rapes during the Gujarat riots last year.

A three-judge bench of Justices S. Rajendra Babu, A.R. Lakshmanan and G.P. Mathur, which ordered the CBI probe, directed the bureau to file a status report within eight weeks.

The Gujarat government had initially opposed a probe by the bureau but relented after the judges said if the state did not order a CBI inquiry, the apex court would. At this, additional solicitor-general Mukul Rohtagi, who appeared for the Gujarat government, said the state would request the Centre for a probe by the CBI.

The order came in a case of alleged gangrape of a pregnant woman, Bilkis Yakoob Rasool. Rohtagi also said the govern-

ment would order a CBI probe into other cases, especially the alleged gangrape of women from the minority community at Panivala village six days after the Godhra train massacre.

The additional solicitor-general told the court that the CBI would "confine" itself to these cases as the state police was competent to probe other cases.

Analysts felt the government's decision to agree to a CBI probe was a "strategic move". Human rights activist Girish Patel said the decision was not prompted by a "desire for justice" but the "compulsion not to displease the Supreme Court".

The Congress termed it a defeat for the Narendra Modi government, which was forced to bow down before the apex court. However, both BJP spokesman Suresh Gandhi and government spokesman Saurabh Patel claimed they were not aware of the state government's commitment to the Supreme Court.

THE TELEGRAPH 17 DEC 2003

Riots kill six in Hyderabad

Ashok Das
Hyderabad, December 7

9-87-11 AP

WIDE AREAS of Hyderabad were placed under an indefinite curfew on Sunday after six people died and 31 were injured in communal clashes on Saturday night, the 11th anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition.

The violence, provoked by a black flag raised in front of a place of worship at Gowlipura, spread soon to wide areas, including Sultan Shahi, Aliabad, Shah Ali Banda, Hari Bowli and Nasheman Nagar where warring mobs fought with stones, looted shops and set fire to houses. The situation almost went out of hand after hoodlums set fire to three transformers, plunging



PTI
Relatives of Md Azam, who was critically injured by a bullet, at a Hyderabad hospital on Sunday.

extensive areas into darkness and started attacking shops and hotels. Police fired over 150 rounds after tear gas and a lathi-charge failed to disperse the rioters who had come armed with

lethal weapons. Thirteen people were injured in the police firing; 18 others were injured in stabbing, arson and stone-pelting.

Senior police officers led reinforcements, including several RAF platoons to the riot-hit areas. They also had to call in fire tenders before the situation was controlled around 1.30 am — five hours after rioting began.

Areas under eight police stations — Chandrayangutta, Falaknuma, Chatrinaka, Moghalpura, Shah Ali Banda, Bhavaninagar, Rein Bazar and Dabeerpura — were placed under curfew and prohibitory orders under Section 144 clamped on another 12 police station areas. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced a judicial probe.

Minority Movement

Original and outspoken, he is one of India's most outstanding scholars. Political psychologist Ashis Nandy in conversation with Ameena A Saeed on the Muslim question in India:

What are the reasons for the failure of the Indian Muslim leadership?

There is no pan-Indian Muslim leader but there is no pan-Indian Hindu leader either. There are regional and local leaders and there is nothing wrong with that. Ethnic nationalism or religious nationalism smother the natural process of displacement of traditional leadership. Middle class Muslim nationalism sabotaged the natural process of electoral democratisation. This natural process of democratisation has not taken place in Pakistan too where electoral process is still dominated by the feudal class. Today, we are faced with a new breed of leaders who have not tasted power for centuries and when they do they will remain in power come what may. Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Laloo Prasad, Vajpayee are all examples.

Again, when we talk of Muslim leadership, we generally refer to north Indian Muslims. But can a northern Muslim really represent the interests of a Tamil or Malayalam Muslim? I don't think so. Even among Hindus, a northern leader is not acceptable in the south.

How far is Partition responsible for the present conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims?

Partition took away the political bargaining power

from the Indian Muslims. They say Jinnah was myopic since he left behind a large chunk of Indian Muslims. I don't think so. He knew that the Muslims of India will be sacrificed for Pakistan. Though I must add that all classical liberals, both Hindus and Muslims, of the 1930s were myopic. They didn't comprehend that nation-states have their own logic. Look at history. None of the Asian states followed the European model. They didn't even copy each other's model. Kashmir is a separate problem, an isolated tragedy. Truth is, no one is interested in Kashmiris, neither Indians nor Pakistanis.

How is the conflict with Pakistan responsible for tensions between Indian Muslims and Hindus?

The two are not related. This association has been deliberately built up by Hindutva propaganda. And Pakistan's role in this process is not helpful either. Maulana Moudoodi, a religious Pakistani scholar, once said, "I don't care if Indian Muslims are treated like untouchables." This is the direct result of Jinnah's concept of nation-state — essentially a Bombay corporate lawyer's concept.

Is the media responsible for propping up

the hardliners?

Yes, to a great extent the media explosion has made leaders out of Togadia and Shahi Imam. They are the media's gift to us. The secular media is more at fault since it is ignorant and contemptuous of religion. It also looks for easy divisions.

Global Islam is not interested in the affairs of the Indian Muslims — whether it is the demolition of Babri mosque or the Gujarat carnage. What explains this?

There is an urban floating mass of Muslims who are looking for ideology. This religious fervour is a metropolitan phenomenon. The Babri demolition had more impact in Bombay and Birmingham than in Kerala or the villages of India with a large Muslim population. The uprooted NRI is more troubled by India than the average Indian here. I remember Arafat once said he can handle the Israeli Jews but the real problem is the American Jews. Fanatic torchbearers of Hindutva are more numerous in America than in India. Just as there are more fanatic Muslims in America than in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. It might surprise you that 90 per cent of Hindutva leaders in India are secular and 90 per cent of NRIs abroad are religious zealots. They support extremist

parties here in an effort to hold on to their identity by electronic means.

The real ideologues are VHP and Bajrang Dal leaders. Their constituency: 'modern' Indians and well-to-do technocrats in the USA — the IT professional who lives in America,

Q&A

To a great extent, the media explosion has made leaders out of Togadia and Shahi Imam. The secular media is more at fault since it is ignorant and contemptuous of religion.



Udayshankar

makes decent money, sees himself being McDonaldised and does soul-searching on Sundays. To atone for their sons marrying young Christian women, producing Eurasian children they look for an ideological package. This package is simplified by the VHP and Bajrang Dal who tell them to continue to make their dollars, join yoga, listen to bhajans and sermons on hi-fi systems and contribute \$100 monthly to these organisation to reinforce their Indian roots.

What is the future of the Indian Muslim leadership?

There are local and regional leaders who cater to the needs of the community. Please recognise that there are regional non-English speaking leaders we don't know about... But I do see two potential Muslim leaders of the future — Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah. In them, I see a new generation of Muslim leaders.

What is the future of Muslims in India?

Their future is bright. There is tremendous churning and soul-searching going on among Muslims. Gujarat did cause a temporary withdrawal but the influx of Muslim talent into the mainstream will continue, despite the BJP.

BJP is targeting church

THE TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kunkuri\Pathalgaon: Is Ajit Jogi a Christian? It shouldn't really matter, except that this is election time and his opponents are the Sangh Parivar. Indeed, the only doubt here seems to be about Mr Jogi's denomination. The Parivar claims he is a Catholic, but the Catholics say he belongs to the Church of North India.

In Chhattisgarh, where conversion has replaced Islamic terrorism as the BJP's main political issue, the target of all attack is the Catholic church.

Interestingly, the "religious war" is being fought for the minds of those people who are not supposed to have a mind of their own. And most local leaders who can articulate their views to the outside world are in the church.

The church, too, has braced itself against the Parivar's attacks. There is an attempt to forge a tribal identity to break the religious barrier and bring forth political leadership from a homogeneous group that has both Christian and non-Christian tribals. The Adivasi Vikas Parishad has become active lately in this sphere.

On Sunday, the Parishad held a meeting at Pathalgaon to discuss social and political issues. Around 50 youngsters, both Hindus and Christians, participated. "We debated the political situation and finally decided to support Mr Jogi," said Vinay Kumar Ekka, the Parishad's local general secretary. After all, Mr Jogi is the Parishad's chief patron.

The Sangh's allegations of conversion fall flat in the face of the work done by the church: 186 schools; 47 pri-

mary health centers; two hospitals; two leprosaria; one old age home; one centre for the handicapped; 510 village health workers; 491 self-help groups and more in just the Raigarh diocese.

Founded in 1951 in Kunkuri, this diocese comprising Jashpur and Raigarh districts is the biggest in the state with 2.4 lakh followers. The cathedral here has been made famous by the Sangh's claims that this is the second largest in Asia. "We have never got it confirmed. It has a capacity of 5,000," said Vicar General Paul Toppo. He points out that Catholics comprise hardly six lakh of the state's two crore population.

However, the socio-economic imbalances like the bureaucracy being dominated by Christians has added to the alienation of the deprived non-Christian tribals.

ASSEMBLY POLLS 2003 FACT FILE					
	DELHI	MADHYA PRADESH	CHHATTISGARH	RAJASTHAN	MIZORAM
Seats	70	230	90	200	40
Male Electors	46,31,422	1,97,33,756	67,89,782	1,77,28,635	2,53,299
Female Electors	36,27,403	1,80,19,930	67,29,914	1,61,16,846	2,54,770
Total Electors	82,59,125	3,77,67,295	1,35,22,729	3,39,01,985	5,08,069
Polling Stations	8666	41,436	15,732	35,689	798
Number of EVMs	10,641	49,240	19,000	50,050	1500
Election Photo I-Cards Issued	71.81%	58.35%	54%	77%	80%

KBK Pollgraphics

15 convicted for post-Godhra killings

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, Nov. 24. — In complete contrast to the Best Bakery case, 15 people were today convicted for the post-Godhra killing of 14 people in the fields of Ghodasar village in Kheda district on 3 March 2002. Forty-eight others were acquitted.

The conviction of the 15 accused, 12 of whom have been found guilty of murder, was announced today by district and sessions judge Mr CR Rane at Nadiad, the district headquarters. All the accused were present in the court at the time of the judgment. Three of the accused have been convicted for unlawful assembly and violence.

The Ghodasar village killings were done brutally in open fields, even as people tried to escape the wrath of the angry villagers. The majority of those killed were old people who could not make good their escape. The dead also included two women.

The sentence in the case is expected to be pronounced tomorrow.

Modi heckled



NEW DELHI, Nov. 24. — Nearly 25 protestors from an NGO barged into a conference organised by the CII and World Economic Forum, shouting anti-Modi and anti-globalisation slogans, where Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi had been invited to deliver a lecture. Slogans comparing Mr Modi to Hitler were raised with protestors shouting: "Modi should be sent to jail" in the 45-minute protest led by Sahmat, an NGO, and social activist Ms Nafisa Ali. — SNS

Details on page 4

Out of the 64 accused in the case, one died a natural death during the trial. Forty-six witnesses deposed before the court. Earlier the sentence in the case was expected

on 6 October, but it kept on getting postponed.

Trouble had started in Ghodasar village on 1 March when a mosque was burnt in the aftermath of the Godhra train massacre. The following day when three members of the majority community were found murdered, people from the minority community fled the village. They were hounded and killed in the fields.

Till now only seven families have returned to the village.

This is the second conviction in cases related to the post-Godhra violence in Gujarat. Three accused, in what is known as the Lal Akhada case, of Vadodara, were convicted about a month ago for Pankaj Chauhan's murder in the last phase of violence in the city which carried on till April 2002.

Mr MS Hassan Jowher, from the Society for Promotion of Rational Thinking welcomed the Nadiad judgment: "I am glad. This restores faith in the system thereby preempting retaliatory terrorist thinking." He said, "Both communities will also realise that the law will ultimately catch up."

Fresh arson in Nanded, 15 injured

HTC and Agencies
Mumbai, November 23

AT LEAST 15 people were injured, including one in police firing, as a fresh bout of arson erupted in Nanded town on Sunday afternoon even as Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who visited the town and trouble-torn Parbhani, directed the police to strictly implement curfew and to curb any law and order problem.

"Around 15 people were reported injured following stone throwing in various areas under Itwara police station," Nanded District Magistrate, Tanaji Satre said.

Special Inspector General of Police B.N. Raut said: "One person was injured when police fired in Nanded in the afternoon to quell some anti-social elements who had resorted to arson, stone pelting and damaging commercial establishments.

"Earlier, we had received information that three people had sustained injuries in police firing. However, a closer

probe revealed that one person was injured in police firing while the other, both police personnel, had sustained injury in the mob attack," Raut clarified.

However, according to Civil Hospital sources, 24 people had been admitted there for injuries due to stabbing, stone pelting and assault by sticks. The injured include five police personnel, the sources added.

"Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC have been imposed in the trouble-torn areas which fall under Itwara police station, till 6 am on Monday," Satre said.

Bhujbal, who rushed to the spot, held meetings with senior officials and reviewed the law and order situation.

He also directed the police to strictly clamp curfew and urged leaders of all sections of society to cooperate with the district administration.

Nearly three companies of State Reserve Police Force and over 1,000 district police personnel continued to be stationed in the area.



A STICK IN TIME: A policeman canes a youth who ventured out during curfew hours in riot-hit Parbhani town on Sunday.

REUTERS

35 injured in mosque attack

Press Trust of India

PARALI, Nov. 21. — At least 35 people were injured today when two unidentified persons on a motorcycle lobbed crude bombs at a mosque in Parbhani in south Maharashtra.

A curfew was imposed in the district after the incident, police said.

Mr Madhukar Chaudhari, district collector, said, condition of three among those injured was serious. The situa-

tion was tense but under control in the town, he said. The injured have been admitted to civil hospital.

Security in the area has been stepped up and companies of the State Reserve Police Force have been deployed.

Special inspector general of police, Nanded Range, Mr Bhimrao Raut, who rushed to the trouble-hit town, said soon after the explosion occurred at 1:50 p.m., a mob set two shops on fire.

Maharashtra deputy chief minister Mr Chhagan Bhujbal, who also holds the home portfolio, said a high alert has been sounded across the state.

The explosion triggered angry reaction among the people who ransacked market places in Gujri Sarafa and Shivaj Nagar in the town.

Minister of state for home Mr Kripa Shankar Singh said paramilitary forces have been deployed in the district following the incident.

NHRC PLEA FOR TRIAL OUTSIDE GUJARAT

Supreme Court stays proceedings in 10 Godhra-related cases

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, NOV. 21. Disapproving of the manner in which the Narendra Modi Government in Gujarat was conducting the trial of 10 Godhra-related cases, the Supreme Court today stayed all further proceedings in them.

The cases are a fallout of the Godhra train carnage in Gujarat on February 27, 2002 when the State witnessed large-scale communal violence in which hundreds of people were killed.

A three-judge Bench, comprising the Chief Justice V.N. Khare, Justice S.B. Sinha and Justice A.R. Lakshmanan, stayed the proceedings on a petition from the National Human Rights Commission seeking the transfer of these cases for trial outside Gujarat.

The NHRC had sought the transfer of trial in all major cases — such as Godhra, Best Bakery, Gulbarga Society, Naroda Patia and Sardarpur — in which hundreds of people were killed, to neighbouring Maharashtra or any other State, apprehending gross miscarriage of justice.

The Bench gave two weeks' time to the Narendra Modi Government to file a status report in all these cases.

The Bench asked the Gujarat Government to respond to suggestions made by the amicus curiae, Harish Salve, that a special investigation team headed by a retired High Court Judge be constituted to look into all the cases independently without the State's interference and report directly to the Supreme Court whether appeals in the cases which ended in acquittals were necessary or not.

When Mr. Salve narrated incident after incident of "gross miscarriage of justice" and how the State had not preferred any appeal, the Chief Justice said: "If this is the state of affairs, then we will transfer all cases outside the State."

The Chief Justice told the Additional Solicitor General, Mukul Rohtagi, appearing for Gujarat, "Don't you know that it is the duty of the State to file an appeal in such cases? Why did you not come to this court? He said: "Several times, High Courts might err, but is it not the duty of the State to come in appeal? How many times should we remind you of your duty?"

Mr. Rohtagi said that, "since bail was granted to an accused by the High Court exercising its discretionary power, how can the State Government be blamed for the same?" He further said that it would not be possible to prefer a special leave petition against every interim order.

The Bench then fixed December 19 for further hearing and monitoring of the case.

9. November
AYODHYA CASE / U.P. FILES FRESH AFFIDAVIT

I've been judged hastily by my friends: Mulayam

By Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, NOV. 18. The Uttar Pradesh Government today filed a fresh affidavit in the Ayodhya case that the Babri Masjid was demolished "due to a criminal conspiracy of some organisation." The affidavit stated that since the trial of the demolition case was before the Special Judge in Lucknow, "no further comment on the case was necessary."

The affidavit described the demolition of the Babri Masjid as "barbaric, shameful, condemnable and against the national interest and integrity of the nation."

On the charge that political pressure was applied on the CBI to drop the conspiracy charge against the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and others, the affidavit said that it was something that had to be determined by the apex court, which was now seized of a review petition.

Keen on limiting the damage caused by the affidavit filed yesterday, the Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, today disowned it, and replaced the advocate who had filed it.

Mr. Yadav said that yesterday's affidavit had been filed by the lawyer concerned on his own "without consulting either him or the Advocate General of the State."

Seemingly stung by the reaction to yesterday's affidavit, particularly from his allies, the Left parties, Mr. Yadav mounted a vigorous defence of his secular credentials. "All my life I have fought the communal forces, I can never have any understanding with them."

He said that he had been judged hastily, especially by his friends.

"I am particularly hurt by the criticism from the Left parties. We have worked together for years, they should have at least verified the facts from me before jumping to conclusions."

He reminded the Congress and the Left parties that when it came to actually fighting the BJP it was the Samajwadi Party which was in the forefront. "The

BJP does not exist in the areas where the Left is strong. I am the one who is fighting them in their stronghold. Where is the Congress or the Left in Uttar Pradesh?"

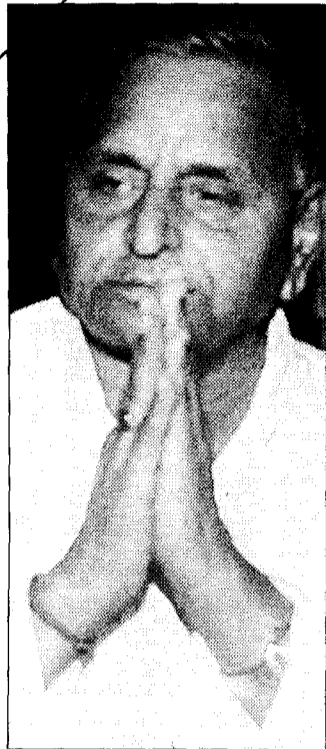
Mr. Yadav said that it was the Samajwadi Party, which was leading the battle against the communal forces. "I have fought them all my life and have paid a big political price for opposing them... it is out of place to accuse me of being soft on them."

Interacting with the media on the occasion of the Uttar Pradesh Day at the India International Trade Fair, he said the power situation in the State had improved and investment was beginning to flow.

However, the law and order situation left a lot to be desired, and he accused the Sangh Parivar of trying to foment trouble every time he was at the helm. "They never spoke of Ayodhya while the BJP was part of the Bahujan Samaj Party-led coalition Government in the State, but the moment I came to power they upped the ante," he said.

THE HINDU

19 NOV 2003



Mulayam Singh Yadav

Mulayam passes buck

YOGESH VAJPEYI

18/11
 Lucknow, Nov. 17: Faced with a furore from allies, the Congress and the Left, the Mulayam Singh Yadav government today blamed its clean chit to BJP leaders in the Babri demolition case on a "lawyer's goof-up".

"The affidavit seems to have been ill-drafted, giving rise to interpretations not intended in the government's brief," state chief secretary A.P. Singh said.

As if to prove the point, the government decided to replace R.C. Verma, its advocate on record. The government will file a supplementary affidavit in the Supreme Court tomorrow.

"Our stand is that since a central agency is investigating the case and the matter is sub judice, the state government had no role to play and can neither confirm nor deny whether there

was a conspiracy," Singh said.

The state's stand had remained the same during the terms of Kalyan Singh, Rajnath Singh and Mayavati, he said.

The explanation has left Mulayam Singh's allies far from convinced. They now want him to prove his secular credentials. "It's difficult to believe that the government's stand on such a sensitive issue could be dictated by a counsel. The responsibility rests on higher ups," CPI leader Ashok Mishra said.

State CPM leaders went further. "If Mulayam wants to convince us of his commitment to secularism, he must issue a fresh notification transferring the case against Advani and others from the Rae Bareilly Court to the Lucknow Court where a joint chargesheet about the conspiracy was originally filed by the CBI," said Vijay Shant, a mem-

ber of the party state executive.

Congress leaders, too, spewed fire. "This is not the first time Mulayam has shown his pro-BJP inclination. We have asked the high command to reconsider backing him if he does not change tack," state chief Jagdambika Pal said.

Legislature party leader Pramad Tewari said Mulayam Singh's acceptance of a BJP man as Speaker had strengthened the suspicion that he was hobnobbing with the BJP.

Muslim outfits said they would launch a countrywide protest if the state government tried to shield the Babri accused.

"The affidavit saying no political party was involved in the demolition of the mosque on December 6, 1992 was a travesty of truth," Babri Masjid Action Committee convener Zafaryab Jilani said.

Congress pullout bell

K. SUBRAHMANYA

9-11/11
 New Delhi, Nov. 17: Encouraged by the Mulayam Singh Yadav government's about-turn on its Babri affidavit, the Congress today chose to downplay its differences with the ruling Samajwadi Party but issued a veiled threat of parting ways if status quo was not restored.

Chief spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy said this evening that since the government has removed its counsel who submitted the affidavit and also disowned its contents, "we do not know the final stand of the Uttar Pradesh government".

"But we will even consider a review of our support to the government if the criminal conspiracy charges are not restored

against (L.K.) Advani and other BJP leaders," he added.

With Assembly polls to five states round the corner, the Congress leadership has decided to play safe. The party, which privately believes Mulayam Singh is playing a "double game" with the BJP and the secular allies, is waiting for the chief minister to make a move that will end all doubts among his Muslim constituency about his "secret understanding with the BJP".

That would be the time to part ways with him and, perhaps, formally forge an understanding with Mayavati's Bahujan Samaj Party. Congress leaders said this should be done closer to the general elections, scheduled next year.

Till such time, the Congress, without any prospect of getting

solid support of state Muslims, is unlikely to commit the "indiscretion" of dumping Mulayam Singh in a hurry.

The Congress leadership is hoping the chief minister, through a new government counsel, will approach the Supreme Court with a fresh affidavit that would reopen the criminal conspiracy charge against the Babri demolition accused.

For instance, Jaipal asserted the government's move today was prompted by the strong reaction of his party in the state and of other "friendly parties". But privately, Congress leaders were unsure of Mulayam Singh reviving the charge. "Mulayam," they believe, "had entered into a secret pact with Advani before he became chief minister".



Sonia Gandhi

Cong leaders demand arrest of Bharti for 'communal' speech

9 minutes
11-5-18/11

Times News Network and PTI

Bhopal: Senior Congress leaders in a memorandum to Madhya Pradesh chief electoral officer (CEO) have demanded arrest of BJP leaders Uma Bharti and Shivaraj Singh Chauhan for allegedly delivering what they said "objectionable and communal" speeches. The Congress leaders, under the leadership of AICC member Mohammad Salim, on Wednesday submitted the memorandum, claiming that communal violence could flare up in the state due to "provocative and indecent" speeches being given by the two senior BJP leaders.

Mr Salim said the Congress leaders had demanded immediate stoppage of "inflammatory, provocative and communal" speeches besides the arrest of Ms Bharti and Mr Chauhan.

Ms Bharti has levelled fresh corruption charges pertaining to the real estate scam against chief

minister Mr Digvijay Singh.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, Ms Bharti claimed she would approach the Union government for an inquiry into the scam and if the BJP came to power, the state government

ness to the chief minister. Mr Gupta's assets and property are presently under the scrutiny of the Directorate of Income Tax.

Mr Gupta's mobile phone details revealed that he had made two calls to Mr Singh on August 20 followed by two more calls the next day.

The chief minister spoke to the industrialist on the latter's cell-phone for about 12 minutes on the two days, she said.

Last month, after extensive raids on Mr Gupta's official and residential

premises, the I-T department claimed it had "incriminating documents" to prove Mr Gupta's involvement in a land scam in Indore. The I-T department also named officials of the Congress-controlled Indore Development Authority and the Madhya Pradesh State Housing Board as

being part of the scam.

Ms Bharti challenged Mr Singh to make public his foreign tours along with the names of the delegates who accompanied or joined him. The BJP has been repeatedly alleging that Mr Gupta was a regular part of the CM's delegations abroad. Ms Bharti reiterated that Mr Gupta was a vital link to corruption amounting to Rs 15,000 crore in the state during the past 10 years' rule of Mr Singh.

She said the Digvijay government through the state housing board had provided out-of-the-way favours to the real estate dealer. Property worth crores has been allotted to Mr Gupta at nominal prices. Ms Bharti accused the state government of having given one property worth Rs 13 crore for Rs 2 crore in Dewas, another at a prime location in Bhopal worth Rs 2 crore for Rs 40 lakhs and acquisition of other property, including a heritage monument valued at Rs 40 crore in Indore to Mr Gupta.

Real estate scam

- Uma Bharti levels corruption charges pertaining to the real estate scam against Digvijay Singh
- Provides copies of telephone call details made to Indore-based industrialist and real-estate dealer as proof



Uma Bharti

along with the CBI would start investigation to expose corruption in land deals.

She provided copies of telephone call details made from the cellphone of Indore-based industrialist and real-estate dealer Subhash Gupta as proof of his close-

Togadia released after airport detention; UP gov't gives kid-glove treatment

Sammelan a washout, VHP virulent

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW/AYODHYA, Oct. 18. — If the aggressive chief minister, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, managed to foil the VHP programme yesterday, it appeared today that Mr. Yadav was acting under pressure of a different kind after all. The VHP did get away with holding a *Sankalp Sammelan*, inasmuch as a washout, at Karsew-
puram in Ayodhya today.

The government had first detained the VHP general secretary Dr. Pravin Togadia, no sooner he landed at Lucknow's Amausi airport. He was kept at the irrigation department's Utratia guest house on the ground of apprehension of breach of peace. Within hours, however, he was allowed to proceed to Ayodhya to take part in the outfit's programme.

In the programme, both Mr. Ashok Singhal and Mr. Togadia attacked the BJP and the state government for foiling yesterday's function by preventing the Ram Bhakts from reaching the venue. "It is a part of a conspiracy to tarnish the image of the organisation," they said.

In the speeches, Dr. Togadia got a better response than Mr. Singhal from the gathering, in which hardly any locals took part. VHP working president Mr. Singhal was strong in his criticism of the organisation and people "opposing construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya". Even Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee was not spared.

The main aim of the VHP's programme was to press for a legislation for the construction of the Ram Temple by the centre. Dr. Togadia criticised the UP government and said the restrictions on sewerage will not keep people from constructing the Ram Temple at Ayodhya.

The VHP function today went ahead despite the prohibitory orders still in force as it was yesterday. The atmosphere in the temple town was much more relaxed than yesterday. While district administration went on the defensive, it was obvious its stance towards the VHP was soft today. That the chief minister was in Agra for the better part of the day was a pointer to the fact that the administration did not expect anything untoward to happen.

According to rough official estimates, merely 20,000 Rambhakts from different parts of the country converged at Ayodhya today.

PATNA, Oct. 18. — The All India Muslim Personnel Law Board has described the VHP's stepped up activities in Ayodhya as "illegal" and "detrimental" to country's peace and harmony.

The AIMPLB began its two-day working committee meeting here today to discuss the situation arising out of the VHP's action in Ayodhya. "The VHP is trying to whip up communal passion among the Hindus

through its grossly unlawful action in Ayodhya", the AIMPLB general secretary, Syed Nijamuddin said. When asked what the Muslim Board proposed to do to counter the VHP sponsored "movement", Mr. Nijamuddin said we have already stated that we will abide by the court's verdict on the issue.

Illegal, says Muslim Board

About Muslim families fleeing from Ayodhya in the wake of the VHP's campaign, Mr. Nijamuddin said the government must ensure safety and security to Muslim families in Ayodhya and Faizabad. "The AIMPLB appeals to the Muslims not to get provoked by the VHP's action." The AIMPLB leader said

the Sangh-sponsored allegations regarding Madrasas were "thoroughly unwarranted and baseless. Madrasas are there in our country for thousands of years educating the poor people."

Mr. Nijamuddin accepted the need to introduce science, Hindi, English and other modern subjects in Ma-



TRISHUL POWER: VHP activists at the Sankalp Sammelan in Ayodhya on Saturday. — AFP

BJP bowing to secular forces: Singhal

AYODHYA, Oct. 18. — In a veiled attack on Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the VHP internal president Mr. Ashok Singhal today said he was "taking the BJP closer to secularism as a result of which the very foundation of the party stands threatened". "Those BJP had abandoned the Ram temple issue and now the people would abandon them, Mr. Singhal said, which was never the basis of the party," Mr. Singhal said.

He said the VHP was "dead against secularists" and alleged that the "BJP is working under the pressure of secular forces", defeated on the floor of Parliament yesterday.

drasas. "But the fundamental structure of madrasas can't be changed which aims to create good and honest human beings."

Mr. Nijamuddin said the Uniform Civil Code is "unacceptable and impractical". He, however, said the Muslim Board never opposed the family planning policy to control population. "But family planning should not be forced on people," he said. — SNS

Naidu no to Mulayam dismissal demand

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 18. — The BJP president, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, today rejected the VHP's demand for dismissal of the Mulayam Singh Yadav government but stressed its commitment to construction of the proposed Ram temple at the site of the makeshift temple in Ayodhya.

As if to counter the VHP's attack on the BJP and the government being anti-Ram temple, he said "We are as concerned and committed for the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya as anyone else. Let everybody understand this, but we would like it to happen in a proper, dignified and peaceful manner." Mr. Naidu appealed to the minority community to forego their claims on the site for the sake of long term peace and development in the country. Ayodhya was not Mecca or Medina for Muslims but for Hindus it was a matter of faith, he said.

The Ram Jammabhoomi temple should not be equated with Babri Masjid as the latter was constructed by the invader Babur and symbolised his victory, he stressed.

Mr. Naidu also urged the minority community not to fall into the trap of pseudo-secularists.

Mr. Naidu also urged the minority community not to fall into the trap of pseudo-secularists. "There is no danger to the Ram Lala from Ram bhakts. In fact Ram Lala faces danger from the VHP sponsored programme yesterday."

"There is no danger to the Ram Lala from Ram bhakts. In fact Ram Lala faces danger from the VHP sponsored programme yesterday."

SC to monitor 9 more riot cases in Gujarat

'Police mustn't harass Best Bakery witnesses'

S. Narasimhan H.T. 5 18/10

Syed Liaquat Ali
New Delhi, October 17

AFTER Best Bakery, the Supreme Court has decided to monitor nine other sensitive riot cases pending before the trial courts in Gujarat to secure justice for the victims.

A Bench, comprising Chief Justice V.N. Khare, Justice S.B. Sinha and Justice A.R. Lakshmanan on Friday sought a status report from the state government on these cases, including the list of witnesses, besides their statements to the police and copies of FIRs, in four weeks. It asked the government to file an affidavit in connection with the acquittal of the accused in three major riot cases last October.

Friday's order came on two affida-

vits filed by *Citizens for Justice and Peace*, an NGO, which said the police did not properly investigate the nine cases and the state government had not filed appeals in the high court against the trial courts' orders acquitting the accused.

Referring to the affidavits, *amicus curiae* and senior lawyer Harish Salve urged the SC to suspend the trial.

He suggested a fresh probe by a special investigation team of Gujarat Police in certain areas. Salve feared the cases might go the Best Bakery way after the trial began since most witnesses named in the chargesheets were relatives of the accused. On the Best Bakery case, Salve said the prosecution had not prayed for re-investigation of the case in the HC. *Amicus curiae* submitted

this on the ground that the trial court submitted that the police had booked the wrong accused and presented false witnesses. The police, however, said otherwise.

The Bench left it to the HC to decide. On allegations that witnesses in the Best Bakery case were being questioned by the police when there was no order for re-investigation, it asked the state government to ensure they were not harassed.

Meanwhile, defence counsel KTS TulsI objected to the continuation of the case before the apex court, since this would influence the hearing of the Best Bakery appeal pending before the HC. The Chief Justice asked, "Do you want to be acquitted through an eyewitness appeal?"

Whatever had happened in the



A witness waits for her turn during a hearing on the Naroda Pantiya case.

Best Bakery case was not in line with procedure, he observed. He clarified that the SC had not expressed any opinion on the merit of the

Panels squabble

- The chairman of the Commission for SC/ST on Friday told the Supreme Court that the NHRC had filed the Best Bakery petition without consulting him

- Counsel P.C. Mishra, representing the panel chairman, alleged his client, an ex-officio member of the NHRC, had been kept in the dark about the decision to move the Supreme Court in connection with the case

- SC refused to interfere, saying it was an internal matter of the panels

appeal. This could affect the rights of the accused. It asked the HC to proceed with the appeal without being influenced by any observation.

ALTERNATIVE SITE NOT ACCEPTABLE, SAYS VHP

9.11.10

VHP activists can meet 5 km away from disputed site: Mulayam

10-1
17/10

AYODHYA, OCT. 16. In a last minute bid to avoid a showdown, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, today offered a compromise formula to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad planning a massive congregation tomorrow by allowing a regulated 'darshan' and prayers of Lord Ram's idol at the disputed site here.

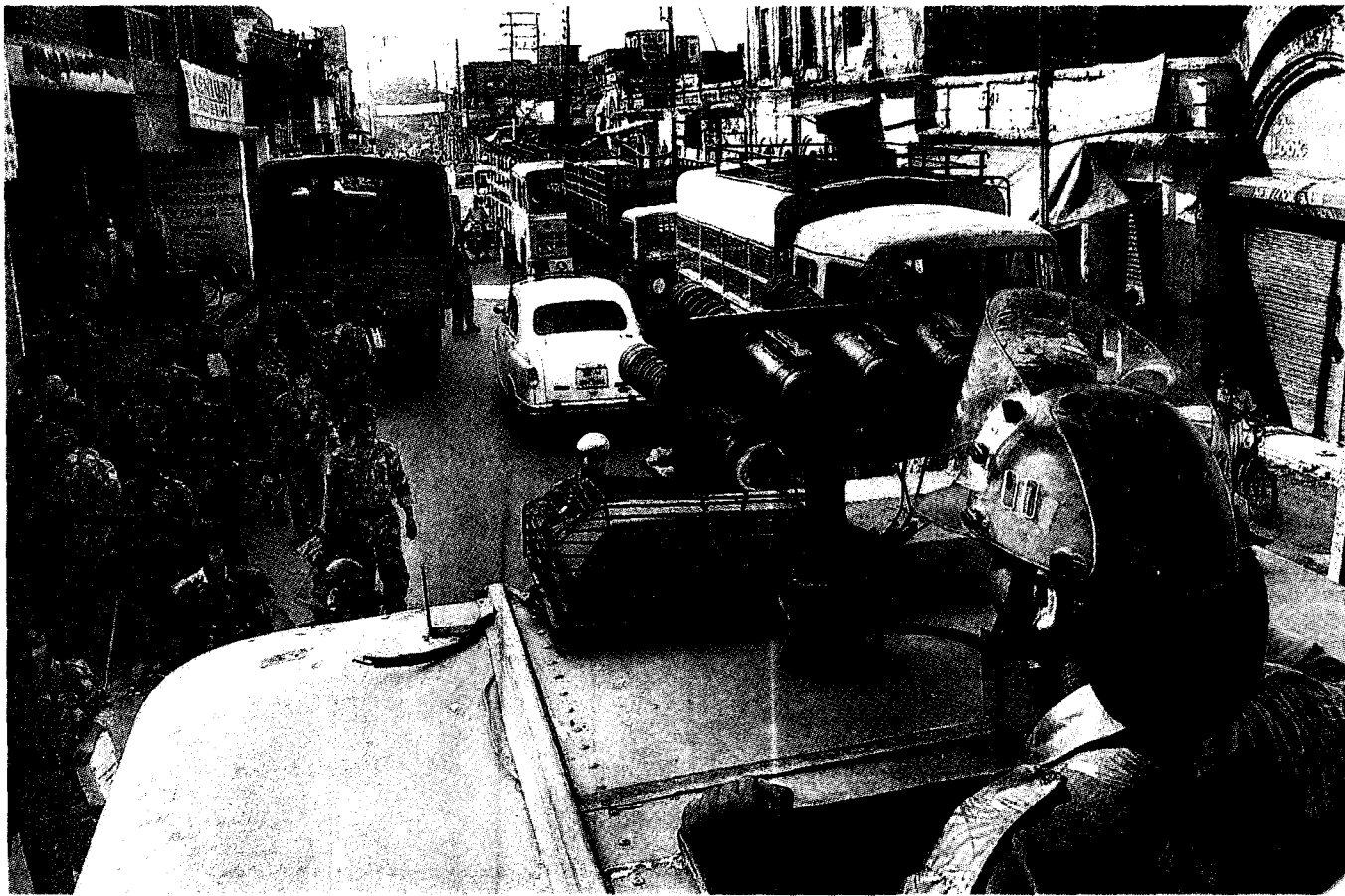
The reaction of the VHP to the Government's late night offer was still not known but the Union Minister of State for Home, Swami Chinmayanand, the Centre's pointman with the State and the VHP, told PTI from Delhi that the outfit should welcome and consider the offer.

An apparent lowering of temperature came about after Mr. Yadav offered in Lucknow to the VHP that its cadres could congregate five km away from the disputed site for their 'sankalp sabha' (meeting to take a pledge). He also said there would be no excesses committed on anyone.

The VHP media in-charge, Sharad Sharma, however, rejected Mr. Yadav's offer and suggested an alternative site for the assembly of its cadres near the Ramghat Halt Railway Station on the banks of the Sarayu.

However, the outfit's Uttar Pradesh in-charge, Purushotam Narain Singh, said over the telephone that "though belated it is good."

Following up on Mr. Yadav's offer, the State Chief Secretary, Akhand Pratap Singh, told reporters in Lucknow that the Government would facilitate prayer and worship by 'Ram bhakts' who had thronged



Security forces taking up positions in the temple town of Ayodhya on Thursday. — Photo: Akhilesh Kumar

Ayodhya from across the country. They would be ferried by bus from the Saket College, located on the outskirts of Ayodhya, to the disputed site, he said but ruled out extending the facility to arrested VHP activists. The prayers would be allowed between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. as per

the court order.

Swami Chinmayanand said in Delhi that the Uttar Pradesh Government should also release the arrested devotees. He said no one wanted a confrontation in Ayodhya, specially with the Deepawali festival round the corner.

The Chief Secretary said offi-

cial were in touch with the VHP leaders in Ayodhya but had not been successful in contacting Ashok Singhal.

The Inspector-General of Police, V.N. Rai, approached the VHP leader, Ram Vilas Vedanti, with the offer that the organisation could hold its programme in Darshan Nagar on the out-

skirts of Ayodhya.

The Ram Janmbhoomi Nyas president, Nriitya Gopal Das, said three venues were under consideration for the Sankalp Sabha which included the original site of Ramsevakpuram, three km from the disputed site, which the Government has not allowed. — PTI

U.P. Govt. bracing for VHP programme

By J.P. Shukla

AYODHYA, OCT. 16. In view of the tough and extensive security measures taken by the Uttar Pradesh Government, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has decided to organise symbolic demonstrations here tomorrow.

While no important VHP leader was available to get an idea of the strategy for holding the "sankalp sammelan" and "Ayodhya darshan", the Ram Janmbhoomi Nyas president, Mahant Nriitya Gopal Das, has said that 'Ram bhakts' would

appear from nowhere and offer worship at eight decided places after a bath in the Sarayu. "A sankalp sammelan would also be held but the venue cannot be disclosed," he added.

The two important centres of VHP activity — Karsevakpuram and Ramsevakpuram — have been deserted following police raids. The 'pandals' put up to provide shelter to 'Ram bhakts' and hold the "sankalp sammelan" have been dismantled.

A press release issued by the media centre at Karsevakpuram, quoting the VHP working

president, Ashok Singhal, claimed that several VHP officer-bearers would participate in tomorrow's programme.

It stressed that all the programmes would be conducted peacefully. Mr. Singhal alleged that some State Government officials who "subscribed to a particular ideology" were determined to victimise the 'Ram bhakts'. The VHP had repeatedly said that its programme would be limited to offering worship and holding a 'sankalp sabha', he said and urged the administration not to

create any hurdle. The restrictions, however, mean different things to different people. The common man thinks it is "unnecessary harassment".

For the thousands earning their bread by serving the pilgrims it means going without work for days. With the Sarayu's ghats looking empty without pilgrims, the priests, flower vendors and petty shopkeepers have been deprived of their income. Siya Sahchari, who used to earn about Rs. 60 a day by selling puja materials, made just Rs. 5 today. The situation was

almost the same in the main market along the national highway connecting the town with Lucknow.

The VHP and the BJP saw in this a "repetition" of 1990 when on October 30 and November 2 that year police opened fire to control karsevaks.

The State BJP president, Vinay Katiyar, reacted angrily to the curbs. "The entire region has been placed under a curfew-like condition and even the monkeys of Ayodhya have been forced to starve," he said.

Instead of helping the construction of a Ram temple by persuading Muslims to withdraw their claim over the disputed site, the Government had created a reign of terror in Ayodhya, Mr. Katiyar said.

The administration is in no mood to relent. The Faizabad district magistrate, Deepak Kumar, said that all the restrictions would remain in place.

More reports, picture on Page 13

THE HINDU

17 OCT 2003

9- sumit "Don't twist ASI report" H.D. 13 17/10

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 16. The matter of the Archaeological Survey of India's report on its excavation in Ayodhya is sub-judice and should not be interpreted to suit anyone's interests the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court said today.

While passing the orders on a petition from the Sunni Central Wakf Board, a three-Judge Bench said the court was yet to decide "whether the ASI report is to be confirmed or rejected or how it will be dealt with".

In the interregnum, it expected "every responsible person including leaders — religious and non-religious — not to issue any statement pertaining to

the ASI report or interpret or twist it to suit his interest." The Wakf Board's petition followed the VHP's claims that the ASI report provided "proof" that a temple had existed at the site prior to the construction of the Babri Masjid. It had attached to its petition a VHP press release which expressed the hope that there would be an "amicable settlement" of the dispute as there was "after all, a temple before the disputed structure".

The petition had also asked the court to direct the Uttar Pradesh Government to ensure that no public rally was held at Ayodhya tomorrow and to maintain the status quo at the site.

In reference to this, the court

directed the State Government to take all steps to ensure that "no one is allowed to derive any advantage out of the situation" and that the Supreme Court's order to maintain the status quo of the site was upheld.

The U.P. Chief Minister's announcement reported from Lucknow that the VHP's gathering would be permitted 5 km from the disputed site falls in line with the court's October 10 direction "not to allow congregation on or around the disputed site".

The court, however, also directed the Government to ensure that "no religious activity of any kind by any one, either symbolic or actual" is permitted "at or around the disputed site".

OVER 15,000 HELD ALL OVER UTTAR PRADESH

Gathering of Ram bhakts thwarted in Lucknow

H.D-1
18/10

By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, OCT. 15. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad's "Ram bhakt" rally and "shobha yatra" in Lucknow were conducted in a low-key manner today as a determined Uttar Pradesh Government prevented any largescale gathering.

The rally remained limited to a small meeting within the precincts of the Saraswati Shishu Mandir, run by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, in the Niralaga locality at which the senior VHP vice-president, Giriraj Kishore, was among those who addressed the gathering.

Around noon, the activists, many of them wearing saffron scarves, came out of the Shishu Mandir in vehicles and on foot. As they started marching ahead in an apparent bid to take out the announced "shobha yatra" they were stopped a little away by the police who had erected barricades.

The slogan-raising VHP activists, a majority of whom were outsiders, waited for some time and then courted arrest. They were taken away in five buses

chartered by the police.

While Giriraj Kishore and another senior VHP leader, Purushottam Narain Singh, were detained in the State Guest House in the Dalibagh locality, about 300 arrested VHP workers were sent to jail, the Chief Secretary, A.P. Singh, said, briefing newsmen in the evening.

Giving details of the situation prevailing in the State in the wake of the VHP programme at Ayodhya on Friday, Mr. Singh said that arrests of VHP workers going to Ayodhya were continuing and so far 15,500 people

had been taken into custody all over the State.

About 10,600 people continued to be detained while the other arrested activists had been released. The largest number of arrests was made in Varanasi (2,788). More than 1,000 people each had been arrested in Kanpur, Jhansi and Allahabad. In Faizabad, 480 people were arrested today.

Flag march in Ayodhya

AYODHYA, OCT. 15. A curfew-like situation prevailed here today in view of the VHP's proposed 'Ram Darshan' programme on October 17 even as paramilitary forces staged a flag march.

The Faizabad Commissioner, J.P. Sharma, said the flag march was taken out in the major areas of Ayodhya, including Hanumangarhi, Naya ghat, Ramghat and the area surrounding the disputed site.

With 25 arrests today, a total of 1,887 persons have been rounded up here.

The District Magistrate, Deepak Kumar, claimed that the VHP was yet to seek permission for holding its programme and said puja at the disputed site and other temples was not affected today.

The Centre has rushed in over 100 companies of Central Para-Military Forces (CPMF) to strengthen the security arrangements in and around Ayodhya. Over 75 companies of the forces have reached Ayodhya while the rest are on their way from other States, and will be deployed soon. — UNI



Acharya Dharmendra, Pravin Togadia and other Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders at a rally in New Delhi on Wednesday, demanding the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya. — Photo: R. V. Moorthy (Report on Page 11)

Rail traffic to and from Ayodhya remained almost static with the authorities having diverted only two trains — the Sabarmati Express and the Doon Express. Other trains were running through Ayodhya as usual.

The Chief Secretary said the situation was under continuous observation and more trains could be diverted during the next two days, if necessary.

Editorial on Page 10
More reports on Page 11

AYODHYA TRAINS NOT TO BE STOPPED

PM seeks to defuse tension

g. m. u. n. i. t. i. o. n. ✓

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 14. — The Prime Minister today convened a meeting at his residence to discuss ways to defuse tensions arising ahead of the VHP's Ram Temple campaign in Ayodhya on 17 October. The VHP, however, continues to hold Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee responsible for the Centre's "anti-Hindu" attitude.

Mr Vajpayee conferred with Mr LK Advani, Mr Jaswant Singh and Mr Venkaiah Naidu on how best to contain the fallout of the VHP's insistence on congregating in strength in Ayodhya. They decided not to do anything that could be construed as putting up hurdles in the VHP's way. Minister of state for home Swami Chinmayananda has been assigned the task to coordinate with the VHP to ensure that the programme passes off peacefully. The meeting also decided not to stop or divert any train to Ayodhya because that would inconvenience the public.

The UP chief minister will be allowed to take steps he deems fit to maintain law and order. The leaders concluded that there was no need for the state government to act harshly against VHP activists who

SFI 15/10

Vajpayee once more, says Advani

PANIPAT, Oct. 14. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee must get another term as Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani said here today. The statement is an indication that Mr Vajpayee's hold on the party is getting stronger as the Lok Sabha polls come closer. — SNS

Details on page 4

only want a "peaceful *darshan*". (Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav today commended the Centre for "actively cooperating" with his government in its efforts to maintain peace, PTI adds from Lucknow.)

RSS chief Mr KS Sudarshan spoke to Mr Vajpayee and also urging the UP government not to be "repressive" against Ram *bhakt*s.

VHP leader Mr Surendra Jain alleged that diversion of some trains to Ayodhya and arrest of Ram *bhakt*s from coaches exposed the Centre's "anti-Hindu" attitude. The Centre, he said, should get the Ram *bhakt*s released from jail immediately, restore train services to Ayodhya and withdraw para-military forces from the area.

Another report on page 4

VHP defiant, vows to enter Ayodhya

By V.N. Arora

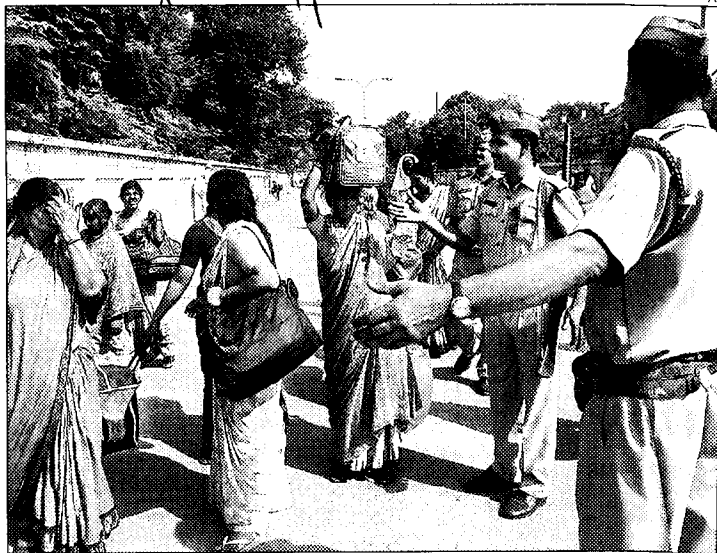
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ayodhya: With an eight-layer "impregnable security cover" already enforced by the district administration to prevent the entry of Ram sevaks in the pilgrim city, the defiant Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) said here on Monday that no force on earth could deter Rambhakt from reaching Ayodhya on October 17 to participate in the Sankalp Sammela.

The entire VHP leadership, which has gone underground, is believed to have asked its rank and file to adopt cross-country routes to reach Sammela Sthal.

Closing the main gates of its sprawling campus of Karsevakpuram—the VHP headquarters in Ayodhya—for the outsiders, including journalists, the VHP spokesperson, Sharad Sharma, said that thousands of activists from across the country would manage to reach Ayodhya.

Sealing the borders of Faizabad division which comprises four districts Faizabad, Barabanki, Sultanpur and Ambedkarnagar, the administration has virtually made the pilgrim city as "no-entry" zone for outsiders. Only local residents having passes especially issued for the occasion, and of course, the journalists are allowed to enter within the municipal limits of Ayodhya—described as yellow zone for security purposes.



VHP activists are directed towards the Allahabad police station after a number of activists were detained on Monday to prevent a mass rally in Ayodhya.

Though there is no ban on the 'darshan' of Ramlalla at the makeshift temple in the RJB complex, which stands fortified from all corners by the paramilitary, the number of visitors to the temple has gone down due to lack of pilgrims.

Security is being enhanced in and around the areas surrounding Karsevakpuram, Ramsevakpuram and the two VHP-run workshops to keep a close watch on the movements. Strong pickets of paramilitary and RAF in the minorities dominated localities have been stationed. Patrolling in the lanes and by-lanes as well as on the borders of the city has been intensified.

Sri Ram Hospital in Ayodhya and District Hospital in Faizabad have been put on high alert with standing orders to the medical staff of the district not to leave the station till October 20. More than half-a-dozen ambulances have been kept ready to meet the situation. Emergency wats and

safe rooms for VIPs too have been created at different places.

However, trains, except Sabarmati Express and Doon Express, are still passing through Ayodhya despite the administration's best efforts to get them diverted.

The buses originating from Faizabad have already been suspended and 600 other buses passing through the district have been diverted.

With the reports of Ram sevaks reaching the nearby villages, the gradual build-up to October 17 has got locals worried. The reason for such anxiety is not unfounded. Not for those who remember October 31 and November 2, 1990, kar seva movement, the gradual rise, the superficial calm and the sudden bang that took most by surprise on October 31, 1990.

October 17, 2003 and October 31, 1990 have several similarities. To begin with Ram sevaks are trickling into Ayodhya. A considerable number are lying in wait in the villages of Faizabad, Ambedkarnagar and Sultanpur district.

Getting into Ayodhya may not be as much of a problem as it may appear, even with tight security on the district borders. Past experience says that kar sevaks never do the obvious being from the Sangh Parivar cadres. They are more likely to find their way into Ayodhya by moving through the villages and crossing the Sarayu river during night-time.

CENTRE PROMISES ALL POSSIBLE HELP

Arrests continue in U.P., VHP defiant

AYODHYA, OCT. 13. The Uttar Pradesh Government today rounded up over 1,100 Ayodhya-bound Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists across the State even as it fortified the temple town deploying 100 companies of paramilitary forces ahead of the proposed VHP rally on October 17.

About 450 people were picked up from trains at the Ayodhya and Faizabad railway stations, 400 in Varanasi and 350 in Allahabad as the authorities hinted at taking the Army's help if the situation so warranted. About 4,000 karsevaks have so far been detained in the State.

The Additional DGP (Law and Order), Bua Singh, told reporters that 100 companies of paramilitary troops were deployed in Ayodhya and neighbouring areas to ensure law and order. Mr. Singh reviewed the situation in a meeting with top PAC, CRPF, ITBP and BSF officials.

In Lucknow, the Chief Secretary, A.P. Singh, said the temple town was peaceful and that all necessary steps were being taken to deal with any eventuality. The status quo would be maintained at the disputed site as per the directives of the High Court, he said and denied the VHP's allegations that karsevaks were being ill-treated.

The Additional DGP, IGP (Lucknow), V.N. Rai, and other senior police officials went round sensitive places in the city as prohibitory orders were promulgated in Basti, Jaunpura and Sant Kabirnagar districts adjoining Faizabad. Mr. Rai said buses and heavy vehicles would not be allowed to enter Faizabad without the permission of the district authorities. However, the district administration's representations to the Centre and the Railway authorities for a complete ban on the rail traffic here failed, and only the Sabarmati Express and the Doon Express had been rerouted.

In Allahabad, police intensified searches of trains and buses passing through the town and arrested 324 VHP activists. Over 100 activists

10-1 14/10
were arrested last night at the Allahabad Railway station, the SP (City), Ajay Mohan Sharma, said.

In New Delhi, the Union Minister of State for Home, Swami Chinmayanand, told reporters that the Centre would extend all possible help to the State Government in tackling the situation. The State had demanded 100 companies of paramilitary forces and "we have given 105", he said.

Even as the authorities diverted trains and stopped buses to prevent karsevaks from heading towards Ayodhya, the VHP organising secretary, Raghavulu, told reporters in Allahabad that his organisation was determined to hold the proposed meeting even if the entire State was converted into a jail. Over one lakh people had already arrived in Ayodhya and its vicinity, he added. Mr. Raghavulu appealed to political parties to work for enacting legislation

Togadia's warning: Page 11

for handing over of the undisputed land at Ayodhya to Hindus for construction of a Ram temple. Other VHP sources said the organisation's proposed demonstration in Lucknow and in Delhi on October 15 and 16 would be a low-key affair and that senior VHP leaders were likely to sneak into Ayodhya secretly and would surface on the D-day.

Separately, BJP sources said several "Ram Bhakts" would try to enter Ayodhya in small groups and breach the security cordon to hold a symbolic programme on Friday.

Sena challenges VHP

In Lucknow, the Uttar Pradesh Shiv Sena chief, Vijay Tiwari, challenged the VHP to start the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya immediately and said that if the VHP felt "incompetent", it should withdraw from the temple movement and let the Sena spearhead the cause. The Sena would get the temple constructed within a year, he claimed. — PTI, UNI

Mulayam alarmed at VHP influx

CM seeks info on Centre's preventive measures

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 13

ALARMED BY the influx of VHP activists in Ayodhya, a worried Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav on Monday got in touch with the Centre and demanded to know what steps it was taking to prevent the law and order situation from getting out of hand.

Yadav first tried to speak to Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani. The harried chief minister called up Advani's North Block office and then at his residence, but was unable to speak to him because of the Deputy PM's busy schedule.

He then spoke to Minister of State for Home Swami Chinmayanand who had allegedly organised the VHP's October 17 programme at Ayodhya. Yadav and Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh had described this act as "shameful" on Sunday. Chinmayanand was closely associated with the VHP's Ram temple movement and was a member of the Sangh outfit's Marg Darshak Mandal.



VHP men with tridents on board a Faizabad-bound train near Ahmedabad on Monday

REUTERS

Confirming that Yadav spoke to him over the phone, Chinmayanand said he had told the UP chief minister that the VHP's programme and his outburst against him should not be "turned into a political issue". The minister said, "I told him that, in the past, whenever political capital had been sought to be made, the situation worsened. His comments will only vitiate the atmosphere further".

Yadav also sought to

know what steps the Centre was taking to prevent the prevailing situation in Ayodhya from worsening. He is also believed to have sought additional Central paramilitary forces.

Home Ministry sources said that the Uttar Pradesh chief minister's request "has been considered", but it was unlikely that it would be met at this juncture because plans were being prepared to dispatch security forces to the five states — Madhya Pradesh, Chhat-

tisgarh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Mizoram — where elections are to be held in December. Already, 12 companies of the CRPF have moved from Jammu and Kashmir to Ayodhya.

Security tightened

The Central security forces have stopped the movement of people from the adjoining districts of Barabanki, Gonda, Basti, Sultanpur, Gorakhpur and Bahraich to Ayodhya. The police have also issued permits for en-

try into the temple town. However, the Faizabad administration claimed that there was no scarcity of essential commodities in Ayodhya. Vehicles carrying essential commodities were being allowed entry.

So far, the state government has deployed 120 companies of security forces. The Central government has provided 80 companies. The Central security forces have been deployed in the adjoining districts from where there is a fear of mobilisation of activists. "We will not permit movement of people beyond these districts", said the state Director-General of Police, VKB Nair. However, reports said a large number of sadhus from all over the country has already reached there.

Ayodhya has been divided into four zones, which have been further divided into 16 sectors and 36 sub-sectors. Every zone would be looked after by an officer of the rank of police superintendent, while deputy SPs would be in-charge of sectors and sub-sectors.

The Railways have also decided to bypass all trains to Faizabad. Tight security arrangements have been made at all stations en route to Faizabad. While Faizabad-Varanasi and Mughalsarai-Faizabad trains have been suspended most of the other trains passing through Faizabad have been diverted to Sultanpur-Varanasi route.

All routes to Ayodhya sealed

AYODHYA, OCT. 12. Intensifying the crack-down ahead of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's proposed meeting here on October 17, the Uttar Pradesh Government today arrested more than 1000 people heading for the temple town, even as the VHP went ahead with its preparations for the programme. The Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, has sought the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's help to resolve the impending "crisis".

The Divisional Commissioner of Faizabad, J.P. Sharma, said the State administration had sealed all routes leading to Ayodhya, diverted trains coming here and stopped the movement of buses in the twin cities of Faizabad-Ayodhya and all possible means were being used to stop the congregation of Ram bhakts.

Mr. Vajpayee, back from a foreign tour, told reporters in New Delhi that the VHP should be trusted in its claim that it would hold the meeting peacefully. Meanwhile, the State Government sought 100 companies of paramilitary personnel from the Centre to check the VHP activists, and Mr. Yadav accused the Sangh Parivar of trying to destabilise his Government.

At least 12 companies of the CRPF were diverted from Jammu and Kashmir to Ayodhya. "Para-military forces have started reaching Lucknow, and by tomorrow, we

will have sufficient forces to control the VHP activists," the U.P. Chief Secretary, Akhand Pratap Singh, told reporters in Lucknow.

A report from Jhansi said 1037 Ram bhakts were detained at the Jhansi railway station since last night. Of them, 150 were women and 15 children. Personnel of the Rapid Action Force, the CRPF and the PAC have already been deployed in strength at Hanumangarhi, the Ram Janambhoomi complex, the Kanak Bhavan temple, the borders and other areas of the district where prohibitory orders are in force till the month-end in view of the VHP programme.

The District Magistrate, Deepak Kumar, said there was no restriction on the entry of common people and they were being allowed after thorough checking.

In Lucknow, Mr. Yadav said that since a major portion of the acquired land at Ayodhya was under the control of the Union Government, the Centre was equally responsible for protecting it.

"I appeal to the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Swami Chinmayanand, to help me to resolve the crisis," he told reporters. He said Mr. Vajpayee should use his good offices to placate the VHP leadership to withdraw the proposed meet.

Mr. Yadav, however, said his Government was determined to thwart any move by the VHP and its associates to create communal tension in the State. "The High Court has asked the State Government to maintain status quo at the disputed site at Ayodhya... Specific directions have been issued to the district administration to implement the court order in letter and in spirit."

Mr. Yadav blamed Swami Chinmayanand for "leading" the proposed "VHP campaign". "This act of the Minister is a blatant violation of the oath taken by him," he said adding that he would lodge a complaint against the Minister with Mr. Vajpayee. He alleged that the BJP, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the VHP were trying to destabilise his Government. The Narendra Modi Government in Gujarat was "sending fundamentalist and extremist Hindus under police protection to Ayodhya without proper rail tickets," he charged.

Meanwhile, preparations were on at the VHP headquarters at Karsevakpuram here for religious sermons by Dharmacharyas beginning tomorrow. VHP sources said more than 2,000 Ram bhakts had arrived here from the southern States, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal, while a group of over 5,000 was slated to leave for Ayodhya soon. They were being put up at five "secret" places in Varanasi, he said.

AYODHYA TURNS INTO A FORTRESS

1,900 Shiv Sainiks held for defying ban

AYODHYA, OCT. 11. Foiling the Shiv Sena's attempt to hold a 'Ram Bhakt Sammelan' here today defying ban orders, police arrested about 1,900 party activists, including two State unit vice-presidents, near the venue of the proposed meet and other places in the temple town.

The party's State unit vice-presidents, Babu Mishra and Mahesh Ahuja, were arrested with over 500 party workers near Naya Ghat, close to the Ram Katha Park, the venue of the proposed meet, when they tried to breach the security cordon this morning, the Circle Officer, S.S. Baghel, said. Some arrests were made at the railway station and bus stands from where the party workers tried to head for the meeting in small groups. Sena activists had started arriving here from Friday evening and many of them had spent the night in various temples, he said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mishra and Mr. Ahuja claimed that they had "succeeded in holding the meet despite the ban". About 20,000 people participated, they claimed and appealed to the Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, to pave the way for early construction of a Ram temple.

The Shiv Sena leader in the Lok Sabha and in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, Chandrakant Khare, urged the Centre to enact a law to facilitate the construction. Mr. Khare was arrested by the Faizabad police on Friday while trying to enter the district with another Sena MP, Shivajirao Mane.

Uneasy calm

An uneasy calm prevails in the town ahead of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad-sponsored 'Mass Awareness Campaign' on October 17 to press for the construction of a Ram temple. With the VHP adamant on its programme, a showdown between it and the administration could not be ruled out, official sources said.

"Our programme stands," the VHP media in-charge, Sharad Sharma, said and warned that "any attempt to crack down on peaceful Ram Bhakts may charge the atmosphere".

The Centre has despatched over 80 companies of paramilitary forces to strengthen the security cover. Sources here said that most of the forces would be deployed by tomorrow. They would mainly be deployed in the Barabanki, Sultanpur, Gonda, Basti, Bahraich and Gorakhpur districts, adjoining Faizabad.

The Faizabad Commissioner and in-charge of the disputed site and the acquired land, K.P. Sharma, said the action against the Sainiks was an exercise in preparation for the VHP's October 17 programme. He said a letter had been sent to the Railway Board Chairman to re-route train traffic on October 17. The administration had also decided to change the road transport routes.

At the Barabanki Railway Station, over 500 'Ram Bhakts' were held. Police sources said that the activists were travelling to Faizabad on the Howrah-Dehra Dun Express. The 'Ram Bhakts' and VHP activists were later moved to the police lines, where they will be kept till arrangements for their return are made.

VHP to go ahead with plan

In Kanpur, the VHP working president, Ashok Singhal, said there was no change in the organisation's October 17 programme in the wake of the crackdown on the 'Ram Bhakts'. The Rashtriya Kranti Party chief, Kalyan Singh, said that nobody would be allowed to flout the High Court directive on maintaining status quo at the disputed site. Mr. Singh, whose RKP is a partner in the State Government, said elaborate security arrangements would be made so that nobody took the law into their own hands. — PTI, UNI



Activists of the Shiv Sena who gathered for their proposed meeting in Ayodhya on Saturday. — AP

Gujarat owns up to Bakery trial lapses

SC orders vetting of prosecutors

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 9

THE GUJARAT government on Thursday departed from its earlier stand in the Best Bakery case and admitted before the Supreme Court that it had made serious mistakes in handling riot cases.

But while stating that the truth had not come out before the trial court, the state asked the three-member bench to close the Best Bakery case in the Supreme Court. The court rejected the plea and, signalling its intention to tighten its monitoring of riot trials, appointed former Solicitor-General of India Harish Salve as amicus curiae (friend of the court) to assist it with these cases. In a show of lack of confidence in the state government, the court asked it to get all its special public prosecutors for riot cases vetted by the Attorney-General of India.

The state government had argued for closure of the case saying the situation had improved a lot in Gujarat. It said the prosecution had filed chargesheets in other sensitive cases and engaged an IGP to co-ordinate between lawyers and the police for smooth conduct of proceedings.

"We will not close the case. Keep us informed about the development of the appeal," the CJI said. The court posted the next hearing for October 17.

The Gujarat government, in its appeal for a retrial of the Best

ACTION REPORT

- ▶ 13 of the 21 accused acquitted in the Best Bakery case re-arrested and freed on bail on a surety of Rs 10,000 each. Remaining 8 to be arrested soon
- ▶ State police file affidavit in HC, promising to provide protection to Best Bakery witnesses. Police say five witnesses had earlier refused protection
- ▶ DGP asks 2 senior officers to 'closely monitor' 4 riot cases, including the Best Bakery massacre, and oversee protection of eyewitnesses

Bakery case, blamed the trial court for the accused being acquitted. First, it had failed to examine four eyewitnesses and wound up proceedings very quickly, the state argued. Second, the trial court accepted the FIR containing a general statement about the incident instead of taking into account the statement of Zahira Sheikh, who had given a specific statement to the police, naming the accused.

Senior counsel P.P. Rao, representing the National Human Rights Commission, took exception to the contention and told the court that the Best Bakery case had failed because the investigation agency was not able to gather evidence that could lead to conviction. He asked for a CBI probe into the case.

Prosecutors to need Delhi sanction

Closer watch on Gujarat trials

OUR LEGAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 9: The Supreme Court today appointed former solicitor-general Harish Salve amicus curiae to assist it in monitoring trials in Gujarat riot cases, particularly the one involving the Best Bakery massacre.

Chief Justice V.N. Khare and Justices S.B. Sinha and A.R. Lakshmanan, who took a serious view of the Narendra Modi regime's lacklustre handling of the cases, also ordered that the state government could not appoint public prosecutors on its own.

The bench said lawyers of impeccable quality should be appointed in consultation with attorney-general Soli Sorabjee and asked him to "vet" all the appointments of public prosecutors in riot cases.

The judges directed the state government to furnish the names of the special prosecutors to Sorabjee but warned that persons who had earlier conducted trial of riot cases should not be appointed again as public prosecutors. "Do not associate old public prosecutors who prosecuted the cases before the trial court," the bench said.

Additional solicitor-general Mukul Rohtagi, who appeared for the Gujarat government, agreed to all the proposals.

The apex court asked the amicus curiae to "go through all pe-



Jafri's widow outside the Supreme Court. (PTI)

titions and paper books" filed in the court in riot cases and give his recommendations by the next hearing. October 17 has been fixed for further hearings.

The court treated a petition by the National Human Rights Commission as a public interest litigation so that various recommendations on ways to prevent witnesses from turning hostile could be examined and guidelines set for the future.

In the Best Bakery case, most of the witnesses had turned hostile. It resulted in the acquittal of all the 21 accused of burning alive 14 people at the Vadodara bakery in March last year. The witnesses later complained that they were forced to turn hostile.

Rohtagi told the court that the state government has already amended its appeal before Gujarat High Court against the trial court order acquitting the accused.

The court clubbed two other petitions, one filed by danseuse

Mallika Sarabhai and the other by Zakia Jafri, the widow of former Congress MP Ehsaan Jafri, who was burnt alive by a mob on February 28.

Sarabhai contended that compensation given to riot victims was inadequate and less than that given to the victims of the Uphaar fire tragedy in Delhi and the Bhopal gas tragedy. The bench asked the state government to respond to the complaint within six weeks and posted the matter for further hearing after eight weeks.

The judges, however, told senior counsel Indira Jaisingh, who appeared for Sarabhai, that she was going too far when she said the two-member Nanavati commission probing the riots should be expanded to include members from the minority community. "This is too much," the bench said and asked Jaisingh to limit herself to legal arguments.

Jaisingh also appeared for Ehsaan Jafri's widow, who was present in court today. She said her petition demanded a CBI probe rather than an investigation by state police. She said Jafri had repeatedly called the police control room when a mob surrounded his bungalow, but no help arrived.

The counsel alleged that the current Gujarat law minister, Ashok Bhat, was "sitting" in the police control room and "virtually" monitoring the riots which included the one at Gulbarg Society, where Jafri was killed.

Sangh attacks rights panel

RADHIKARAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Oct. 4: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief K.S. Sudarshan today questioned the National Human Rights Commission's objectivity and virtually called it "anti-Hindu" for its intervention on behalf of the Best Bakery massacre victims.

The double-barrelled attack also targeted Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh for "promoting a sense of alienation in the minds of tribals" to create a vote bank for himself.

In the customary Vijaya Dashami-eve address delivered by the RSS chief at the Sangh's Nagpur headquarters, Sudarshan compared the Best Bakery case with the acquittal of those accused of killing the Hindus of Radhabai Chawl in Mumbai in 1993 for want of evidence.

"In the Best Bakery case, when the accused were set free because the main eyewitnesses turned hostile, the NHRC rushed to the Supreme Court saying that justice cannot be rendered to the victims in Gujarat and hence the case be retried in a court outside Gujarat," he said.

"Why did not the NHRC come forward to take that case also to the apex court?" he asked, referring to the Radhabai Chawl incident. "Is it because those killed in the Radhabai Chawl episode were all Hindus...? Will not the extreme concern for Muslims and Christians and utter disregard for Hindus by the NHRC make people question the impartiality of it?"

Sudarshan said another manifestation of this mindset was seen in the treatment given to the photograph of Qutubuddin Ansari which showed him pleading with his attackers to spare his life during the Gujarat riots.

"After three days, there appeared another picture of the same boy, this time with a smiling face, thanking god for saving his life. A question crops up as to how a murderous crowd, which was alleged to have not even spared pregnant women, could become so benign in that frenzied situation to let go of the boy unharmed."

Sudarshan's solution for changing this mindset was to redefine the notion of who minorities and Dalits were.

"In reality, minorities are those who migrate from other countries and settle here. In that sense, only the Jews and Parsis fall under the category of minority. But they refused to call themselves minorities...," he said. Christians and Muslims, on the other hand, were converts, he added.

Sudarshan made a plea for merging the Dalits into the "mainstream". "How far is it appropriate to call a section of our own people Dalits...?" he asked.

The RSS leader slammed Digvijay for propagating the view that Dalits do not have a written history. "Being the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, he should at least have known how Rani Durgawati had fought the Mughals and attained martyrdom.... But the chief minister does not want to see them as part of the Hindu society," he said.

5 OCT 2003

Joshi stays after HC relief

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 30

HRD MINISTER M.M. Joshi's 11-day resignation drama came to an end on Tuesday with Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee asking him to stay on. Vajpayee's decision came after the Allahabad High Court stayed the framing of charges against Joshi, ordered by the Rae Bareilly special court in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

After Joshi informed Vajpayee about the High Court's decision, the Prime Minister congratulated him and said his resignation had been rejected. Joshi said he accepted the Prime Minister's decision with "humility". He told reporters he had resigned to honour the special court ruling, though he did not consider himself guilty.

Joshi had filed a criminal revision petition in the High Court on Monday, challenging the special court's order. He sought a stay on the proceedings, claiming that his case was "at par" with that of Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, whom the Rae Bareilly court had discharged.

Justice Y.R. Tripathi of the High Court's Lucknow bench, who heard Joshi's appeal, called for the case diary and other records of the case against Joshi. The next hearing of the case has been scheduled for November 4.

Joshi's counsel, Mridul Rakesh, said in Lucknow that although the court did not use the word "stay" in its order, it had in effect stayed the framing of charges against Joshi. This means proceedings in the special court will be in limbo till the

revision petition is disposed of. Soon after the order was passed, Joshi said, "The Allahabad High Court has stayed the Rae Bareilly special court order which made me submit my resignation — to uphold the highest moral traditions. I believe and agree with the view (the BJP's official stand) that the demolition case is political. I am motivated and that it does not involve issues of criminal and moral turpitude."

Advani spoke to Joshi and congratulated him and the party expressed happiness at the High Court's decision. BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu said the party had always believed that no one needed to resign. Upbeat Joshi supporters said Vajpayee had decided to reject Joshi's resignation independently.

Related reports on Page 5

Changing order

▶ **New rules:** PM's stand is that he will reject the resignation of a minister charged in a criminal case only if there are some legal grounds in his favour

▶ **Old stand:** Had said in Parliament on December 14, 2000, that ministers need not resign if charges are framed against them by the police or a court

▶ **Grey area:** It is not clear what will happen in a case like Joshi's. The question is: Will Joshi have to quit if HC vacates its stay and charges are framed against him?

Joshi decides to fight own war in court

Udayan Namboodiri

New Delhi, September 27

HRD MINISTER Murli Manohar Joshi said on Saturday that he would wage his own legal battle to clear his name in the Babri Masjid demolition case. Joshi's lawyers would file a petition in Allahabad High Court on Monday against the Rae Bareilly special court's decision to frame charges against him.

Sources close to Joshi said the minister's decision to go it alone does not mean he is determined not to withdraw his resignation. Joshi himself brushed off the question whether he would continue in the ministry, terming it "hypothetical". He argued that the ball is in the Prime Minister's court, and that his fate will be known only after Atal Bihari Vajpayee returns on Sunday.

But Joshi's decision to plough a lone furrow is being seen as a statement by itself. Despite the initial talk about a common legal stand, the party has kept Joshi in the dark about any progress on this front.

The absence of any communication from the BJP high command on the Ayodhya case has been a significant feature of the Joshi resignation drama, which has now entered its eighth day. Joshi's move to file his own petition would make it clear to the Prime Minister how strongly he feels about the attempt to marginalise him within the party. Joshi was not invited to meetings of senior ministers, convened by Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, before and after the court order.

Whether Joshi continues in office will be decided the same day his petition is submitted before the court. Vajpayee is likely to meet him on Monday. Like most Cabinet members, Joshi is likely to be at the airport to receive the Prime Minister on Sunday night.

On Saturday, Joshi attended the inauguration of the Swabhiman Sports Festival to observe the 96th birth anniversary of Bhagat Singh, but did not make any political statement.

28 SEP 2003

Kalyan appears before Liberhan commission

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND PTI

New Delhi: After more than ten years, former UP chief minister Kalyan Singh appeared before the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission of Inquiry on Tuesday.



Kalyan Singh

His lawyers sought adjournment of cross-examination till Mr Singh's petition in the Delhi high court challenging the commission's notice for appearance is decided.

The commission has now asked him to appear on October 28 and 29. The Delhi high court on September 19 had given Mr Kalyan Singh five days to submit his rejoinder to the commission and had also noted that he could file an application to the commission seeking a later date.

But when Mr Singh's counsel B.B. Saxena moved a detailed application for adjournment, the commission's counsel Anupam Gupta pointed out that it raised old questions which would "invite detailed order from the commission."

Mr Saxena agreed, withdrew his application and filed a simpler version asking for a

later date.

Mr Singh, who was the chief minister when the structure was demolished on December 6, 1992, later told reporters that his future course of action before the commission would depend upon the outcome of pending petition before the high court.

"I have moved the high court and am waiting for what it says on my petition," he said.

On being asked why he was avoiding appearance before the commission despite repeated summonses, Mr Singh said he did not appear before it because a criminal case was pending on the demolition where he was a defendant.

"Since there is a criminal case going against me in the demolition case where I am not a witness but a defendant, I did not appear before the commission," he said.

But the proceeding was not without its usual repartee and some high-pitched argument.

Virendra Bhatia, the new advocate general of UP, appearing for the first time before the commission, raised objections to the demand for the ASI report on Ayodhya made by S.P. Jain, counsel for L.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi and Uma Bharati.

24 SEP 2003

Steins murder case

558 Justice must be seen to be done

To no one's surprise Ravindra Pal, alias Dara Singh and his twelve associates have been found guilty of first degree murder of the missionary Graham Steins and his two minor sons by setting the jeep in which they were sleeping, on fire on the night of 22 January 1999. The case of Dara Singh is distinguished from his accomplices and while they go to jail for life, Dara is sentenced to death subject to confirmation by the High Court under the CrPC. Dara evaded arrest for a year and was nabbed only in January 2000. The trial began on 1 March that year and has lasted three years with 56 prosecution witnesses and 25 defence witnesses examined. The CBI must be complimented on their investigation and for their conduct of the case — both were thorough, professional and competent. That Dara is supposed to have an ailing father and a not quite normal brother is neither here nor there. That he failed to heed the cries of the two young children suggests that he was not normal either. The fact that he was cool, calm and confident he was doing the right thing supports the judge's finding that this was one of those *rarest of rare cases* that deserves the death penalty. Nor does it help to suggest that Dara was consumed by religious frenzy. The judge's quotation from Swift is apt — *We have just enough religion to make us hate one another, not enough religion to make us love one another*. It was said that Dara was a hero to Bajrang Dal supporters and this may lead to at least one conclusion. When religion degenerates into bigotry and hatred, reason and tolerance fly out of the window.

It may be recalled that within a few days of the horrendous incident, when suspicions of involvement of the Bajrang Dal and also perhaps the VHP were voiced, Home Minister LK Advani pitched in with his comment that he knew these organisations well and they were incapable of such an act. Events as they have developed, point to caution in pronouncing on matters which lie within the province of law enforcement, specially on the part of those whose departments are not unconcerned with due process of law. Within days of Narendra Modi's exploits in Gujarat, Advani was in Ahmedabad and complimenting the Chief Minister on controlling the riots within 72 hours. The National Human Rights Commission had no difficulty in concluding on the evidence, not mere perceptions, that the claim was untenable. Two points survive. One, Advani has a reputation to lose, he is prime minister in waiting; he ought not to wear his loyalty to colleagues and all their works upon his sleeve; it could cause embarrassment. The other is thought-provoking. Whether Dara Singh was acting alone or was influenced at the very least, by the Bajrang Dal is of less moment than to remember that no one, not even the plainly demented, could have alleged that Dara Singh was influenced by the Ramakrishna Mission, for instance! Why not? Because it is all a matter of reputation. And of being entirely predictable.

Gladys Steins has forgiven Dara and the others. This elevates her above the rest of us and commands respect. It cannot however be a substitute for law enforcement. Whether or not the death penalty should be retained is a proposition that can be debated till the cows come home. But as long as it is on the statute book, the law declared by the Supreme Court that it should be applied in the rarest of rare cases will prevail and the High Court can confirm the sentence or amend it but it cannot amount to a retrial. Nor should Orissa emulate the West Bengal case where a politically influential convict on death row is still alive, years after the sentence on the plea that the government cannot find a hangman.

25 SEP 2003

PM calls, says decision should be deferred

Joshi may take judicial way back

MOHAN SAHAY &
SUDESH K VERMA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 20. — Mr Murli Manohar Joshi stayed away from his office today but indications are that he "may be back soon". One option easing his way back could be judicial. Mr Joshi and the six others charged in the Babari Masjid demolition case by the Rae Bareilly special court will appeal against the court's decision, BJP sources said. The appeal could come as early as Monday.

Politically, Mr Joshi received assurance from party leaders. The Prime Minister, visiting the USA, called Mr Joshi from New York. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee told Mr Joshi that he should not take any decision till he (the PM) comes back. The PM returns from his foreign tour on 28 September. BJP sources said that Mr Vajpayee was a party to the decision that no minister should resign if charged by the Rae Bareilly court. A meeting on the Ayodhya ruling fallout is likely to be held on 29 September, with the PM attending. Mr Joshi reportedly told the PM that he wanted to "discuss certain issues" with him.

Other senior party leaders also pitched in. Mr LK Advani, who has not been charged by the court, wanted to meet Mr Joshi today but could not as the latter left for Allahabad, a BJP leader said. The two could meet on Monday.

At the post-court ruling strategy meet yesterday at Mr Advani's residence, BJP leaders, among them the party president Mr Venkaiah Naidu, had decided on

appealing against the Rae Bareilly court's ruling.

A BJP leader present at that meeting said the consensus was that if and when a stay was obtained, the case for Mr Joshi withdrawing his resignation, or better, the Prime Minister rejecting his resignation, would become stronger. Other BJP leaders today reiterated that Mr Joshi can and should continue in the Union cabinet. Repeated assertion by the BJP on retaining Mr Joshi as minister could form the basis for a second "reason" for withdrawing or rejecting the resignation.

Mr Joshi can say, according to a senior BJP leader, that since the party wanted him to continue, he, as a "disciplined party man", is "bowing to its wishes".

Support for Mr Joshi came from Ms Mamata Banerjee as well. The Trinamul leader had sent a party leader to Mr Joshi's house as a sign of solidarity, a BJP leader said. Mr Shanta Kumar, BJP leader and former Union minister, also called. As did other BJP leaders.

Cadre support too was visible. Mr Joshi's loyalists travelled from Haryana and UP and had set up a musical support group at his residence. Between *dholak* beats there were cries of Murli Manohar Joshi zindabad. Mr Joshi, perhaps mindful that the Prime Minister has the ultimate authority on ministerial longevity, however, intervened and asked his supporters to switch the focus of their goodwill. "Don't say Joshi zindabad", he said. "Say Atal Behari Vajpayee zindabad since he is the only leader in the BJP".

■ More reports on page 10

21 SEP 2003

JOSHI RESIGNS, ADVANI CLEARED

Court asks CBI to frame charges against Sangh seven

AFK 1 7 1979

gpinwiter

Umesh Raghuvanshi
Rae Bareilly, September 19

A SPECIAL court on Friday cleared Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani in the Babri Masjid demolition case, while seven others, including HRD Minister Murlidhar Joshi, will be charged on October 10.

As special judicial magistrate V.K. Singh read out the operative portion of his 130-page order to a packed court room around about 3.25 p.m., local BJP leaders shouted slogans outside.

The judge, however, said charges would be framed against Joshi, Ashok Singhal, Uma Bharti, Vinay Katiyar, Vishnu Hari Dalmia, Giriraj Kishore and Sadhvi Rithambhara. They have been ordered to be present in person in court on October 10.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board said it would go to a higher court, challenging the verdict discharging Advani unless the CBI filed a revised petition early enough.

Asked about the grounds on which Advani had been discharged, defence counsel M.S. Ahluwalia said, "We prayed that all the accused be discharged. Charges against all the

eight were almost the same, how the honourable judge has differentiated between them would be clear from the court's order."

Mridul Rakesh, counsel for all the accused, said he would challenge the verdict if his clients wanted such a line of action.

Sources said the magistrate had relied on various Supreme Court rulings and citations made during the course of arguments in the case.

Besides other Supreme Court rulings, the special magistrate is learnt to have referred to the Union of India vs Prafull Kumar and others (1979) and the State of Bihar vs Ramesh Singh (1977) cases and said if "two different view points were possible" and the "judge was satisfied that the available evidence was raising doubts" then it was within his rights to discharge the accused.

The case was transferred to Rae Bareilly recently following a fresh notification issued by the Mayawati-led BSP-BJP government on the directive of the Supreme Court.

Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Vinay Katiyar headed for Ayodhya soon after the special court delivered its verdict.

ACQUITTED

L.K. Advani: 'It gives me relief. It would have been a feeling of ciation if all my colleagues had also been exonerated'



IN THE DOCK

M.M. Joshi: 'I'm neither happy nor sad (at the verdict). But I have kept my word and sent my resignation to the Prime Minister'



Uma Bharti



Vinay Katiyar



Vishnu H. Dalmia



Ashok Singhal



Giriraj Kishore



Sadhvi Rithambhara

Resignation hasty, says PM

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, September 19

HRD MINISTER M.M. Joshi resigned hours after the special CBI court in Rae Bareilly discharged L.K. Advani but told the investigating agency to frame charges against him and six others in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

Joshi's move jolted the BJP, especially because he said "normal protocol" required a minister against whom charges were framed to quit. Yesterday, Joshi had said he would resign if charges were framed against him.

Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee asked Joshi to reconsider his decision. Vajpayee, on his way from Ankara to New York, said: "He hastily put in his papers. He should have waited till the party reacted to the verdict." A decision on Joshi's resignation will be taken after the PM returns on September 28.

Advani met BJP leaders earlier in the day to plan the party's line, and asked Joshi to accept the BJP's view. Advani said he had "mixed feelings", for even though he had been exonerated, his colleagues had been charged.

Related reports on Page 4

Gujarat yes to Bakery case retrial

Syed Liaquat Ali
New Delhi September 19

IN A major climbdown from its earlier stand, the Gujarat government on Friday agreed to fresh investigations and retrial in the Best Bakery case. It admitted that witnesses in the case might have been "coerced or won over" to turn hostile, leading to acquittal of the accused, but firmly refused to hand over the probe to the CBI.

Representing the state government, additional solicitor-general Mukul Rohatgi told the apex court that there was no need for a CBI probe. The government would amend its appeal to seek the high court's directions for fresh investigations by the state police, retrial and collection of additional evidence, he added.

Chief secretary P.K. Lahiri assured the court that the government had decided to amend its appeal to incorporate these additional prayers. In an affidavit, Lahiri said the state's advocate-general would argue the case in the high court. The government was in the process of appointing special public prosecutors to assist in other sensitive riot cases, the affidavit added.

Senior counsel P.P. Rao, who was representing the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), took ex-

DGP's Best defence



DGP K. Chakrabarti was examined by the Chief Justice on Friday.

► **CJI: In May, many witnesses turned hostile. What steps did you take for their re-examination?**

DGP: I came to know that they had turned hostile much later.

► **CJI: In May and June, more witnesses turned hostile. What did you do?**

DGP: The police commissioner told me that the witnesses were won over by the accused.

► **CJI: Then why didn't you take steps for their re-examination?**

DGP: Yes, I didn't take any step.

ception to the state's reluctance to get the case investigated by an independent agency like the CBI. He said the government had never bothered to

pay heed to the NHRC's suggestions that the CBI be ordered to probe five important cases, including the Best Bakery case.

The NHRC had sought a fresh probe by CBI and retrial of the case outside the state.

Responding to the state's contentions, the Supreme Court Bench of Chief Justice V. N. Khare, Justices Brijesh Kumar and S.B. Sinha directed it to file an affidavit detailing the steps taken to amend the grounds of the appeal.

The CJI made it clear that the SC had not committed itself to the government's suggestions. "We don't want the same mistake to be committed in other cases," he added.

Chief secretary P.K. Lahiri and DGP K Chakrabarti appeared in person before the Bench in response to a September 12 summons.

The Bench indicated that it might appoint amicus curiae in the case and fixed October 9 to examine the state government's affidavit.

Of the 43 witnesses in the Best Bakery case, 37, including star witness Zaheera Shaikh, had turned hostile and approached the apex court seeking transfer of the trial to a place outside Gujarat. The trial court, while acquitting all 21 accused in the case, had castigated the police for doing a shoddy job.

20 SEP 2003

Hindus can pray at Bhojshala

MP High Court allows prayers at premises on Tuesdays

HT Correspondent
Jabalpur, September 18

MADHYA PRADESH High Court on Thursday upheld the April 7 ASI order, allowing the Hindu community to access the Bhojshala-Kamal Maulana Mosque premises free of charge to offer prayers every Tuesday from sunrise to sunset.

Justice Arun Mishra dismissed the writ petition moved by Qazi Zakullah, Haji Muneer Ahmad, Haji Ata Mohammad, Farooque Mohammad and Sayyed Ahmad seeking directions to stay the execution of the Union and state governments' recent orders permitting Hindus to offer prayers at the site on Tuesdays.

But the court observed that for seeking relief and qu-

THE RULING

► HC upholds the April 7 ASI order allowing Hindus to pray every Tuesday from sunrise to sunset free of charge

► The court dismissed the writ petition seeking directions to stay execution of the ASI order contending that in order to do so investigation needs to be made in a properly constituted civil suit

ashing of the conditions mentioned in the ASI order and restraining the entry of Hin-

us, investigation must be made in a properly constituted civil suit — and not in a writ petition.

Earlier, petitioners' counsel Sobha Menon contended that the Muslim community offered *namaaz* five times a day between 1307 to 1952 AD and the ASI director-general is not competent to pass the orders allowing the Hindu community to offer prayers.

To this, ASI counsel N.S. Kale and Abhijeet Bhoumick had contended that Bhojshala-Kamal Maulana Mosque is a national monument and the ASI officials are competent to pass order under the relevant Act.

While dismissing the plea, the HC on Thursday held that a writ petition is not an appropriate procedure to examine that Bho-

jshala-Kamal Maulana Mosque is exclusively a Kamal Maulana mosque and only the Muslim community has the right to access it — and not the Hindu community.

The high court said no observations or findings recorded in its order should come in the way of the petitioners, any other person or either of the community to establish their rights over the monument owned by the Government of India, in the civil court.

Besides, the court refrained from entering into other disputed questions raised out of facts mentioned in the petition, stating that a writ petition was not the proper procedure to seek relief for restraining the entry of the Hindu community into the monument.

19 SEP 2003

Joshi lays Babri booby trap for Advani

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 18: Murlidhar Manohar Joshi, a member of the BJP triumvirate, put its second head, Lal Krishna Advani, in trouble by announcing he will resign if charged in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

"If charges are framed against me, I will tender my resignation," Joshi told PTI.

A day before a Rae Bareilly court hears the case, the human resources development minister spread turmoil in the party, whose leaders have been insist-

ing in private that there is no need for Advani to resign if charges are framed against him.

If Joshi sets a precedent by quitting, it will be difficult for Advani to continue. Uma Bharti, BJP's chief ministerial candidate in Madhya Pradesh.

Asked why he was contemplating such a move since the BJP has said the case is political and not criminal, Joshi said: "It is up to the Prime Minister to decide what he considers of the order. It is up to the party to decide."

BJP sources said Joshi's offer took them by surprise because for the last two days their consis-

tent stand has been that none of the accused should step down even if charges are framed. But the BJP's assertion was made in the context of Advani and not Joshi and the others.

"But now that he has said this, he has taken the moral high ground and has virtually forced the hands of Advani," a functionary said ruefully.

Joshi rubbed salt into the wound by emphasising he was speaking only for himself and not on behalf of the other ministers. "Ask them. I have nothing to say about them. This is my view. I can't say about anyone else."

Advani's cheerleaders at

cases and those in political movements. Advani backers refused to even accept the legal classification of the Babri charges as "criminal".

"When an agitation like the one for the Ram temple had the backing of the entire community, how can a leader's role in it be termed criminal?" they asked.

Joshi abolished the argument by taking the line that it is "normal protocol" for a minister to resign if charges are framed against him.

This statement has embarrassed the BJP most. General secretary Pramod Mahajan rushed to Advani. BJP president

M. Venkaiah Naidu cancelled his programmes in Maharashtra and headed to Delhi. He is likely to hold a meeting of office-bearers tomorrow after the court verdict.

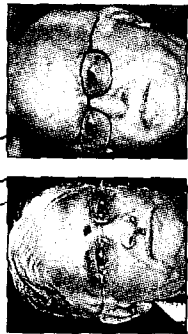
The BJP planned to felicitate law and commerce minister Arun Jaitley for the Cancun "success" tomorrow. Sources said if the special court exonerates Advani and the others, it will be occasion for a "double celebration". "If it does not, we will regret having organised such a function," sources said.

The best-case scenario the BJP is hoping for is that if charges are framed, Advani and

Joshi will send their resignations to the Prime Minister who will turn them down following "pressure" from the party. "The party line will be a crucial input in whatever decision Atal Bihari Vajpayee (who completes the triumvirate) takes," they added.

On the outside chance of the resignations being accepted, the BJP's best bet is for Advani to return to head the party.

In the worst-case scenario, the party is mentally preparing itself for its senior ministers' career being impaired for at least 10 years because appeals to higher courts could be an endless process.



Joshi, Advani

party headquarters 11 Ashoka Road felt Joshi should not have "pre-empted" the court's judgment. "What was the hurry to take a moral position with less than 24 hours left?" they asked.

The BJP believes a distinction should be made between those implicated in corruption

19 SEP 2003

9 N. W. M. 1879

Deja vu

5-6 1879

Churning Ayodhya again

There is a sense of deja vu; it has started again. VHP lays down an ultimatum that if appropriate legislation is not enacted by 15 October to build a Mandir in Ayodhya thousands of Ram bhakts (no longer kar sevaks after the Babari Masjid demolition) will descend on the holy city for the purpose, coupled with a threat of violence. This is a repeat of 1984 to 1992 when finally on 6 December the Babari Masjid was demolished. For a while it fell silent and then revived ahead of every election. With elections round the corner, the Sangh parivar seems to have no other issue in hand. The bankruptcy of thinking is painfully apparent.

In the aftermath of the strictures from the Supreme Court over the Best Bakery case, Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani went into a huddle with senior RSS leaders at BJP president Venkaiah Naidu's house and emerged with the party's plans for November — the decision was to bring the Ram Mandir issue to the forefront. A couple of days later VHP held its meeting where the same RSS leaders are present and announce that they will again step up their agitation for the Ram Mandir, insisting that their demands be met or else...! The ultimatum is not to the central government alone but to the new UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Ashok Singhal, who has been silent for some time, tells his old adversary not to re-enact 1990 and impose prohibitory orders — but appears to want him to do just that. Singhal can then play on religious sentiment again, hoping to polarise voters along religious lines and hold elections in a communally vitiated atmosphere. But how many times will the electorate keep biting the same bait? The saffronites may believe that it has worked for them in the past and will work again — they may be surprised. Without an issue to electrify the voters they are falling back on the old favourites — cow slaughter, Ram Mandir and so-called "jehadi" terrorism, all leading to one goal, Muslim-bashing. These were Narendra Modi's tactics in Gujarat and they worked, so the BJP hopes the same can be repeated elsewhere too. Gujarat is mercifully unique and Digvijay Singh is no Narendra Modi.

18 SEP 2003

VHP sets 15 Oct deadline for Ayodhya legislation

Statesman News Service

5/1 169

NEW DELHI, Sept. 15. — The VHP today demanded parliamentary legislation before 15 October to hand over the disputed site in Ayodhya for temple construction. On that day, lakhs of "Ram Bhakts" (devotees of Ram) would organise a peaceful march from Delhi and Lucknow to Ayodhya if the demand was not met through convening a special session of Parliament.

The RSS has given full support to the VHP's plan of action, the organisation's working president, Mr Ashok Singhal, said after a meeting of the Ram Janambhoomi temple construction movement committee that concluded today.

The meeting was attended by the RSS general secretary, Mr Mohan Bhagwat, who has assured that RSS workers would participate in the temple agitation, Mr Singhal said.

The BJP will not participate in the temple movement, the party president, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, has clarified. The party spokesman, Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said the ASI report had strengthened the temple cause and the need to resolve the issue through court or negotiations.

A gathering of about 200,000 *Ram Bhakts* is planned in Ayodhya on 17 October, the chairman of the committee for temple construction, Mahant Avaidyanath, said after today's meeting.

Mr Singhal said that the agitation would be peaceful and not the same as the one in the 1990s. It was merely a show of support to the temple cause. He described the agitators as "*Ram Bhakts*" and not "*Kar Sevaks*" (a term used for construction by devotees). He demanded that Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav should exercise restraint and not impose prohibitory orders.

As part of the mass mobilisation programme before the deadline, 85 groups of religious leaders comprising 100 sadhus each will tour the country to address "*sankalp sabha*" (meeting for taking pledge) between 6 and 12 October, Mr Singhal said.

He said the VHP would not talk to the BJP on the issue. "We do not have any hope from the BJP. It has not done anything in the last five years. Rather it has dropped the three important issues, including Ayodhya, from its agenda." He also refused to refer to his earlier statement demanding the Prime Minister's resignation for failure on the Ayodhya front.

16 SEP 2003

SENTENCE IN STAINES CASE ON 22 SEPTEMBER

Dara, 12 others convicted

Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, Sept 15. — The District and Sessions Judge of Khurda, Mr Mahendranath Patnaik, today convicted Ravindra Pal, alias Dara Singh, and 12 others in the Staines murder case and posted the hearing on sentences for 22 September. He, however, acquitted Anirudha Dandapat, one of the accused in the case.

Pronouncing his verdict in a packed courtroom, the judge found all 13 guilty of conspiring to murder Graham Staines. They were convicted under Sections 302, 148, 149, 435, 436 and 120B IPC. Dara Singh was also separately convicted for direct murder under Section 302.

Due to lack of evidence Anirudha Dandapat is acquitted of the charges, the judge said.

Those convicted are Dara Singh, Rajat Kumar Das, Mahendra Hembram, Thuram Ho, Renta Hembram, Ojen Hansda, Umakanta Bhoi, Rabi Soren, Daya Patra, Mahadeb Mahanta, Harish Mahanta, Surat Nayak and Kartik Lohar. Chenchu Hansda, a minor, was earlier sentenced by the Juvenile Justice Bench.

The crowd inside the courtroom prompted the judge to observe that "people are standing like matchsticks in a match box". He wanted the

crowd to clear out from the area around the dock. Lawyers, media persons, an Australian diplomat and several others jostled for space.

Even outside the court, a huge crowd had gathered to have a glimpse of the accused and listen to the verdict. People had lined up along the road leading to the court giving the police a tough time since morning.

Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two minor children, Philip and Timothy, were burnt alive when they were asleep inside their station wagon at Manoharpur on 22/23 January 1999. The missionary had gone to Manoharpur to attend a "jungle camp".

The case was handed over to the CBI. A commission of inquiry was also ordered and it was conducted by Mr Justice DP Wadhwa. His report was submitted in the same year.

Dara Singh had evaded the police for nearly one year. He was arrested by the Mayurbhanj police in January 2000.

The CBI chargesheeted 18 persons, of whom Ghanashyam, Ramjan and Buddhi Nayak were shown as absconding.

Mrs Gladys Staines, widow of Graham Staines, refused to comment on the verdict. She iterated that she had "forgiven" the accused persons four years ago.



Dara Singh, surrounded by policemen, arrives at a special court in Bhubaneswar on Monday. —AFP

16 SEP 2003

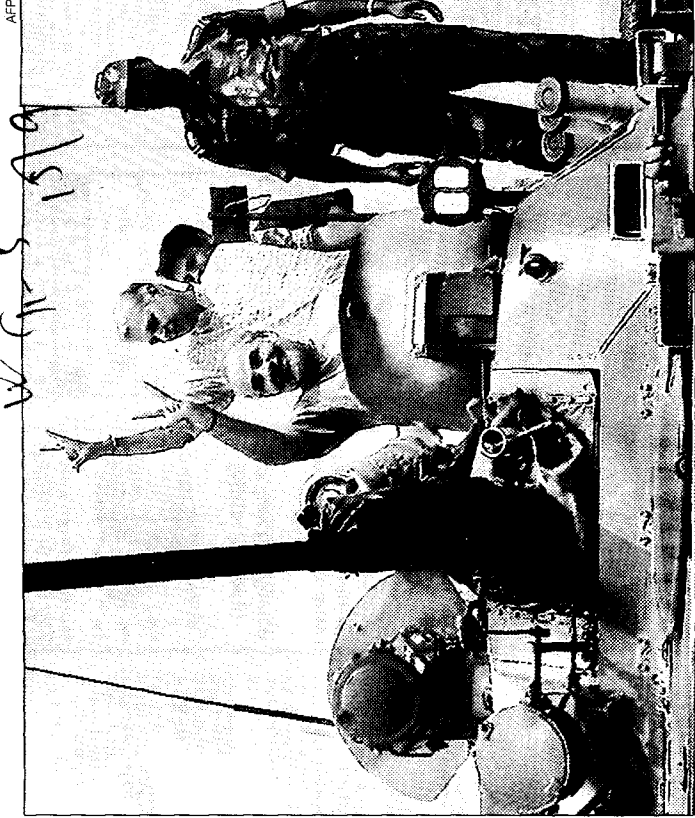
Only minorities figure in Gujarat's Pota list

By Leena Mishra
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Chand Usman Khan, who was brought here from Jammu and Kashmir on Friday, will be the latest accused to be added to the Pota list of the Narendra Modi government which already figures heavyweights from the underworld like Chhota Shakeel and Sharif Khan.

Although Gujarat cannot compare with the huge list of accused booked under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Pota) in the states of Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu, it may perhaps be the only state where all the 240-odd persons booked under it are from the minority community. The only non-Muslim in the list is a Sikh, Liversingh Tej Singh Sikkigar, who was under Pota for the attempt on the life of Surat lawyer Hasasmukh Lalwala, and allegedly hung himself in a police lock-up in Surat in April this year.

Pota has been invoked in 11 cases in the state including the Godhra carnage, the Akshardham massacre case and the Haren Pandya murder which was investigated by the CBI. Among the 241 accused booked under the terror law, there are some 20-odd accused who have been booked under this law in three cases — the overarching conspiracy case booked



Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi flashes a victory sign from the turret of an armoured vehicle during a weapons exhibition in Ahmedabad on Sunday.
by Ahmedabad's detection of crime Jagdish Tiwari case which were branch and the Haren Pandya and the chargesheeted together.

A section of senior police officials and human rights activists feel that Pota is being used indiscriminately, the biggest irony being that till date the Anti-Terrorist Squad has not booked a single case of Pota. In fact a senior police officer told TNN that as Pota is a stringent law, one has to examine the case thoroughly before applying it.

This officer compared the present circumstances to when Tada was in force and said, there was a time when everyone who was spotted with a weapon was booked under Tada "only to show short-term results".

Noted human rights lawyer Girish Patel said that an absolutely discriminatory and hostile enforcement of Pota was being carried out against one community though equally serious offences are committed by members of the other community.

Although the state government has constituted a review committee headed by a retired judge for Pota, human rights lawyers call it a blatant misuse of the act while the minority community members have taken to the streets several times for what they allege is discrimination.

Senior lawyer Mukul Sinha said, "We believe that Pota is being used with a deliberate intention to victimise the Mus-

Cases under Pota

- Godhra carnage: 131
- Waging war against nation: 82
- Haren Pandya murder: 19
- Tiffin blasts on buses: 25
- Akshardham: 6
- Hasasmukh Lalwala case: 5

lims and it is a part of the long-term plan of the government to create a divide."

Gujarat, also showed a lot of enthusiasm in applying the terror law, when it invoked the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (Poto) on the Godhra carnage case where 59 persons were killed in February last year, even before the Parliament endorsed it as an act.

Three minors figured in this list of accused under Poto in the Godhra case, who were identified as Firoz Sikandar-khan Pathan (16), Hasan Waheedkhan Pathan (16) and Haroon Tayyab Iqbal (17) from Signalpalia. However the accused got respite for 11 months when the state government withdrew Poto in March following representations in the Parliament only to re-invoke Pota in February this year. But the minors have been kept out of it since, say sources.

VHP vows to unleash a
'Hindu movement'

**Temple cry
in Sangh
chorus**

**OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT**

New Delhi, Sept. 14: The VHP today said it would unleash a "Hindu movement" and build a Ram temple at Ayodhya amid indications of endorsement from the Sangh and winks from at least a section of the BJP as election time draws near.

After a meeting of the VHP here, its leader Praveen Togadia declared: "We are not seeking the permission of any political party for building a Ram temple. We do not care if it pleases or displeases anybody."

The statement was clearly targeted at the BJP and the Vajpayee government, which has frequently been embarrassed by the acts and announcements of the VHP. "A Hindu movement has been unleashed to put an end to jihad," Togadia announced.

The VHP is going to lay down an action plan to make good its pledge to build a temple at its margdarshak mandal meeting beginning here tomorrow.

A less strident, but an equally determined, vow came from the Sangh. In Bhopal, RSS spokesman Ram Madhav said that if the road was not cleared for tem-

ple construction, the Sangh would launch a "massive mobilisation of national will".

His comments and Togadia's ultimatum came a day after a meeting between top BJP and RSS leaders where the Ayodhya issue as well as the question of "greater co-ordination" with the VHP were discussed.

BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu today said the party was committed to the temple movement, which, he claimed, had received a moral boost after the Archaeological Survey of India said a structure existed at the spot where the Babri Masjid had stood.

There was no deviation from the party's and the government's stand, though, that a legislation to hand over the disputed site for temple construction could not be enacted because it will be defeated in the Rajya Sabha where the BJP does not have majority.

Naidu said polls — coming up in November — and the temple were unrelated. He also said the BJP would not join any agitation for a temple. But his statement indicating that the ASI finding has provided encouragement to the movement matches with the RSS and VHP sentiments.

■ See Page 8

15 SEP 2003

ASI report spurs Sangh Parivar

BJP to push for Temple

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 13. — Buoyed by the ASI's report on the excavations at the disputed site in Ayodhya, the BJP and the rest of the Sangh Parivar today decided to intensify their campaign for construction of the Ram Temple.

Mr LK Advani and two senior RSS leaders, Mr Mohan Bhagwat and Mr Madandas Devi, today met at BJP president Mr M Venkaiah Naidu's house to deliberate on the need to evolve better coordination between various Parivar outfits over Ayodhya.

The meeting, which lasted about three hours, also discussed the situation which might arise if the special Rae Bareilly court orders framing of charges against the Deputy Prime Minister and other senior BJP and Parivar leaders in the Babari Masjid demolition case, sources said. The meeting came barely two days before the VHP's Ramjanambhoomi Committee is scheduled to hold a conference here.

The BJP and RSS leaders also discussed the Supreme Court's indictment of the Narendra Modi government in the Best Bakery case and also the BJP's preparations for the November Assembly elections in five states. Yesterday, Mr Naidu had

dismissed Mr Modi's resignation on the issue. The RSS too had played down the Supreme Court's observations, saying protecting the people and punishing the guilty are the responsibility of all state governments, not just of Gujarat.

The decision to convene today's meeting was taken after Mr Naidu held consultations with the Prime Minister last night.

The ASI report has clearly helped Parivar outfits to close their ranks again for the cause of the Ram Temple. A few days ago, Mr Advani had said the report was a "vindication" of the BJP's stand on Ayodhya.

After today's meeting, BJP general secretary Mr Pramod Mahajan said that in light of the ASI report, it was decided that the temple campaign should be stepped up. He, however, reiterated the BJP's stand that the party wanted an early resolution of the issue through negotiations or court verdict or a legislation, though its coalition compulsions did not permit it to bring in a legislation.

Seeking to bury the hatchet with the VHP, Mr Mahajan said the BJP had no problems with the latter's agitation in support of an Ayodhya legislation.

■ Editorial: Stop Modi!
page 8

14 SEP 2003

Punish rioters or quit, SC tells Modi govt

There appears to be some collusion between state govt and prosecution, says court

By Rakesh Bhatnagar
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

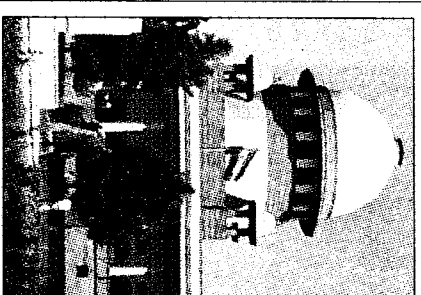
New Delhi: Short of suggesting the dismissal of the Narendra Modi government in Gujarat for its failure to get the accused involved in murders and rioting punished, the supreme court on Friday said the "government should quit if it cannot punish the rioters".

Taking the government to task for its apathy towards the riot victims, especially in the Best Bakery case in which all 21 accused were acquitted for want of evidence on roasting alive 14 persons in 2002, the court questioned the Modi government's "rajdharna".

You have to protect people and punish the guilty. What else is 'raj dharna'? You quit if you cannot prosecute the guilty," Chief Justice V.N. Khare said.

But the state government's counsel and additional solicitor-general Mukul Rohatgi said this was not an earlier system in which chief ministers depended on the mercy of others as "he is elected democratically".

The CJI then remarked, "Democracy does not mean you will not prosecute anyone."



Crisis of faith
I have no faith left in the prosecution and the Gujarat government. I am not saying Article 356 be imposed. You have to protect people and punish the guilty. What else is raj dharna? You quit if you cannot prosecute the guilty.
V.N. Khare
Chief Justice of India

The bench, comprising the CJI and Justices Brijesh Kumar and S.B. Sinha, was hearing the petitions filed by the National Human

Rights Commission director-general of police be presented in the court on September 19 to answer as to "who has drafted case Zahira Sheikh seeking re-investigation and retrial of the case outside Gujarat. The court also termed as "eyewash" the state government's appeal before the high court in the case and doubted the government's intentions to punish the guilty, observing that "it should quit if it cannot punish the

director-general of police be presented in the court on September 19 to answer as to "who has drafted such an appeal". The CJI said, "Is this an appeal? You do not take any plea and it is for the courts to do everything. Even counsel with one year's experience will not draft such an appeal. I know there are several eminent lawyers in Gujarat. It appears to us that it is an eyewash. It is just an eyewash and nothing else." Warning the state government, the bench said, "We will not be silent spectators. We do not have any trust left in your prosecution agency. There appears to be some collusion between the government and the prosecution. It is a case where 14 persons were burnt alive and is this the way prosecution is conducted?"



Zahira Sheikh: I feel deeply satisfied that my patience and suffering have been justified. My faith in getting justice is very firm. All the loneliness that we have suffered has been worthwhile for this

BJP: "There is no need for (chief minister Narendra) Modi to resign. The Gujarat government will take note of the observations made by the apex court and act accordingly. There is no embarrassment at all.

RSS: The court has not said anything specific. It said the Gujarat government should quit if it could not punish the rioters. This is applicable also in the 1984 riots case. How can the government be asked to resign?"

Congress: The Prime Minister should follow his raj dharna and impose President's rule in Gujarat. The court's observations are unprecedented in the annals of independent India and the Union government cannot remain a mute spectator. Something drastic needs to be done

Silence reigns in Modi's court

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: There was a stunned silence, broken by occasional bouts of bravado, in the corridors of power in Gujarat's capital after the supreme court's observation on the Best Bakery case on Friday.

In the absence of any directive from chief minister Narendra Modi on how to react, his ministerial colleagues tried to pass the buck to each other as the media chased them for their reactions.

Elsewhere at Sachivalaya, officials huddled together and speculated on the implications of the strong indictment from

the highest court in the land.

Mr. Modi himself preferred to remain at his residence up to 3 p.m., ostensibly in an effort to find out what the apex court's judgment meant to him and his government. He later conveyed to his officials that he would not like to say anything on the matter.

At 3 p.m., Mr. Modi entered Sachivalaya for a meeting on industrial policy. But the unidirectional of frustration was clearly visible among the chief minister's confidantes. One of them said, "The people have elected us democratically and we are here to

Rae Bareli court defers Ayodhya verdict by a week

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 12 SEPTEMBER

AS the Rae Bareli special court on Friday deferred the judgement in the Ayodhya case to September 19, the BJP and the government leaders faced an anxious wait to see the outcome of the case. The judgement in the case that involves deputy prime minister L.K. Advani and senior leaders of the government as well as the saffron parivar will have major ramifications as it could reconfigure the equations within the government as well as the party. The deferment has disappointed those who have been waiting for a respite from the government leaders from the judiciary.

In the Rae Bareli court, Special



Judge V.K. Singh passed the order after hearing the objections of the defence counsel on the written arguments filed by the CBI earlier in the court. Agency reports said that soon after the proceedings began this morning, the judge pointed out to the defence counsel Mridul Rakesh that he had not filed his objections on the agency's arguments. The court told the defence wanted to file any objections, on Friday itself.

The defence counsel, while accusing the CBI of working under the "influence of the rival political parties" said the agency had listed over 800 witnesses and 700 documents in the composite chargesheet filed by it in the special CBI court at Lucknow but had chosen to list only 149 witnesses in the case.

Kalyan to depose before Liberhan

Lucknow
12 SEPTEMBER



FORMER Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh, on Friday, expressed his readiness to appear before the Liberhan Commission probing the Babri Mosque demolition, if the Delhi High Court turned down his appeal against the summons.

The Rashtriya Kranti Party (RKP) chief told reporters: "I will appear before the commission on September 23 in case the Delhi High Court turns down my appeal against the commission's summons."

— IANS

13 SEP 2003

Staines verdict after 4 years

Bhubaneswar, Sept. 7 (PTI): Four years and seven months after Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two sons were killed at Manoharpur village in Orissa, all eyes are focused on a local court that will pronounce its judgment tomorrow.

District and sessions judge of Khurda M.N. Patnaik will give the verdict after hearing the case for about two-and-a-half years.

Staines and his sons — Philip, 11, and Timothy, 7 — were asleep in their station wagon at Manoharpur in Keonjhar district on the night of January 22, 1999, when it was attacked. A mob set it ablaze, burning the missionary and his children to death even as terror-struck villagers watched in fear; the prosecution lawyers had told the court.

Based in Baripada, the district headquarters of neighbouring Mayurbhanj, Staines had been running a home for leprosy patients. With his two sons and friends, he had gone to Manoharpur to conduct a camp for the villagers — an annual gathering of Christians for fellowship and teaching.

The killings sparked outrage within and outside the country. The Centre had set up a judicial commission headed by Supreme Court judge D.P. Wadhwa to inquire into the crime.

The commission concluded that prime accused Dara Singh alias Ravindra Kumar Pal was responsible for the crime as he had motivated tribal youths to attack the missionary. The act of murder was inspired by Dara and no authority, organisation or any other person played any role in the killings, the report, submitted in June 1999, said.

The commission also said that though Staines was involved in spreading the gospel as

a missionary, he was not involved in conversions, an accusation held against Dara during the trial.

When the commission held him guilty, Dara was still at large, roaming the forests of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, and had turned into a sort of local legend. He was nabbed by police a year after the incident.

Two months after the triple murders, the investigation was handed over to the CBI. The agency submitted its charge-sheet against 18 persons, including Dara, on June 22, 1999. Fifteen of them were arrested. Three are absconding.

Chenchu Hansda was tried in a juvenile court and convicted. He is now in a remand home. The 14 others who faced trial, besides Dara, were Rajat Kumar Das alias Dipu Das, Aniruddha Dandapat alias Andha Nayak, Mahendra Hembram, Ojen Hansda, Umakanta Bhoi, Kartik Lohar, Rabi Soren, Dayanidhi Patra, Mahadeb Mahanta, Harish Mahanta, Thuram Ho and Surath Nayak.

The trial began on March 1, 2001. The CBI had submitted a list of 108 witnesses, which included Gladys Staines, the missionary's widow.

The court proceedings took a twist on February 1, 2002, when Hembram shouted from the dock that he wanted to confess. He claimed responsibility for the murders, saying he had set the station wagon on fire.

However, this April, Patra confessed that he was part of the group that attacked Staines. He added that Dara had set fire to the vehicle.

The case took an ugly turn towards the fag end when a defence witness, Hemalata Karua, claimed that the missionary had attempted to molest her a day before his death.

Curfew in Godhra after clash

SNS & PTI

GODHRA, Sept. 5. — At least 23 people, including three policemen, were injured and two vehicles torched and several damaged as communal violence broke out after two groups pelted stones at each other when a Ganesh immersion procession was passing through Polan Bazar here, forcing police to clamp curfew in parts of this communally-sensitive town.

According to police, trouble began in Polan Bazar when a Ganesh immersion procession was weaving its way through the locality and the devotees raised provocative slogans. It

escalated into a stone pelting spree and then a clash between two groups.

Police fired three rounds in the air, lobbed tear-gas shells and swung batons to quell the violent mob, official sources said. At least 10 people, who were part of the procession, were injured, the sources said adding three policemen, including a DSP, also received injuries when a police picket was attacked. The mob went on the rampage setting two trucks ablaze, damaging several other vehicles and attacking properties, prompting authorities to clamp curfew on violence-hit areas. The situation was under control and Ganesh immersion at other places of the town

passed off peacefully, sources said.

Director General of Police Mr K Charavarthi said a company of Rapid Action Force had been deployed in sensitive areas to prevent any untoward incident. He said the Inspector General of Police (Vadodra range) was supervising the situation. One company of Rapid Action Police had already been deployed in the town for additional security measures during the Ganpathy celebrations apart from local police.

The devotees were carrying Ganesh idol and nearing Rani Masjid when trouble broke out, the sources said. As violence flared up, police intervened and fired in the air to bring the situation under control.

6 SEP 2003

ASI findings: Opposing sides line up experts

Udayan Nambodiri
New Delhi, September 4

BOTH SIDES to the Ayodhya divide have lined up experts to comment on the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)'s findings at the disputed site.

Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court had given the litigants six weeks to file their observations. The pro-temple group's Devendra Swaroop, a senior RSS ideologue, told *Hindustan Times* that they have already held a meeting of experts to finalise their response.

On the other hand, Jafaryab Gilani, counsel for the Sunni Central Wakf Board, said the ASI report had been circulated among several archaeologists for inputs. Swaroop said his side would defend not only the ASI's report, which vindicated the temple theory, but the institution as well. "Leftist scholars are bent upon destroying the credibility of the ASI, which is not right," he said.

In reality, however, there are no "Leftists" in the Opposition. None from the group of the JNU historians who rallied behind the Babri Masjid Action Committee — R.S. Sharma, Suraj Bhan, D.N. Jha and Athar Ali — have been approached by the Wakf Board. Bhan, the lone archaeologist, said he would be happy to assist the litigant if he is approached.

The eminent expert on medieval India, Irfan Habib, had claimed from the SAHMAT platform last week that what the ASI dug up was actually a mosque. This, however, is not at the heart of the Wakf Board's case. Bhan, the only archaeologist in the former JNU group, told *Hindustan Times* that Habib was just putting forward a theory.

Former director of archaeology with the Bihar government, Sitaram Rai, who is advising the Sunni Wakf Board, said their argument would mainly be based on the issue of glazed tiles, which never existed in pre-Islamic India, the lack of icons on the brick structures dug up and the presence of lime-surki mortar, which



Defence counsel Mahipal Ahluwalia
Mobbed by the media

EXPERT PANELS

PRO-TEMPLE: Former ASI director-general Jagat Pati Josh; Indian Archaeological Society chairman S.P. Gupta; former superintending engineer of ASI A.K. Sharma; R. Nath, former professor of archaeology, Jaipur University

WAKF BOARD: Mumbai archaeologist Shireen Ratnagar; ex-professor Allahabad University D. Mandal; ex-director of Archaeology and Museums of Bihar Sitaram Rai, Ashoke Dutta and seven others of West Bengal

also came to India during the Sultanate times. To the pro-temple group, this is "proof of ignorance" and would cause their detractors' case to collapse. Another archaeologist, Nayanjot Lahiri, a reader in archaeology of Delhi University, has concurred with the Sangh Parivar's view that glazed tiles were found in pre-Sultanate India. Shireen Ratnagar of Mumbai University, who will support the Sunni Wakf Board's case, said: "I am writing a report which may be too difficult for a judge to ignore under the prevailing conditions, but history will be the best judge."

5 SEP 2003

Zahira plea on SC table

OUR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 1: In the first such instance ever, the Supreme Court has admitted an individual's — Zahira Sheikh — plea for retrial in the Best Bakery carnage case.

Zahira is the key witness to the March 1, 2002, killings in which 14 people were burnt in front of the Vadodara bakery owned by her father. All accused were freed after most witnesses, including Zahira herself, turned hostile in the case.

The court today directed that a special leave petition from Zahira — filed on her behalf and others by an NGO, Citizens for Justice and Peace — seeking retrial outside the state be tagged on to the National Human Rights Commission plea that comes up for hearing on September 12.

The rights panel, too, had been outraged at the acquittals and sought a retrial outside Gujarat. Zahira has alleged in her petition that "crucial evidence was shut out through threats and intimidation" made on behalf of the accused. She has named the State of Gujarat, the accused in the trial court, Vadodara police and the Union government as respondents. The apex court, in an order dated August 8,



Zahira: Hope floats

had issued a notice to the Gujarat government and others on a special leave petition from the NHRC. The reply from the state government is awaited.

Zahira has pleaded that the CBI or any independent agency carry out fresh investigations in the case under the constant monitoring of the apex court.

She has also sought initiation of prosecution against the then Vadodara police commissioner and officers of Panigate police station for acting and abetting arson, looting and killings and other related offences in the Best Bakery carnage.

Contending that the trial court judgment was based on evidence given under threat, intimidation and fear, Zahira said it was had in law and liable to be set aside. She said at all levels there had been a "miscarriage of justice".

Her petition added that investigations had been defective and witnesses not protected. The public prosecutor had glossed over his job and the trial judge mechanically acquitted the accused. The trial had been conducted in a hostile atmosphere.

Zahira said that in the eyes of the victims, it was not possible for them to get justice anywhere in Gujarat.



Mohammed Haroon, alias Mast Gul, at a police station in Peshawar. The 40-year-old Gul, a former commander of the Hizb-ul Mujahideen, was injured in an alleged attack on him on Sunday.

The militant, responsible for the burning down of the Charar-e-Sharif shrine in Jammu and Kashmir in 1995, has alleged that an Afghan warlord plotted Sunday's attack at the instance of Indian intelligence agencies.

A day after the Hizb leader was allegedly shot at by unknown assailants, Islamabad accused Atal Bihari Vajpayee of "suspending" his hand of friendship in "mid-air" and called for resumption of direct talks. It also denied involvement in the August 25 Mumbai blasts. Foreign office spokesperson Masood Khan

was responding to the Prime Minister's remarks in Jammu on Friday that a "meaningful" dialogue was not possible until Pakistan stopped cross-border terrorism.

Khan said: "You do not extend a hand of friendship saying 'look here is my hand, I will shake it with you if you do this and that'."

"This and that can be done when you talk to each other," he said.

"What kind of hand of friendship is this? It is suspended in mid-air. He has extended it and he is withdrawing it. I have never seen a hand of friendship which is extended and withdrawn so quickly," the spokesperson added.

Khan said if India wanted to be friends "then come forward and talk to us. Where is the problem?" (AP/PTI)

SC gives Mulayam Advani headache

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, Sept. 1: The Supreme Court today refused to stay the Rae Bareilly trial against L.K. Advani but took up a petition that challenged the CBI's action of "dropping" conspiracy charges against the deputy Prime Minister in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

The court has issued notices to several respondents, including the CBI and the government of Uttar Pradesh, where Mulayam Singh Yadav assumed power only last week.

The Congress, which is keeping Mulayam Singh on tenterhooks over sharing power, tightened the screws as soon as it was known that the court did not dismiss the conspiracy-charge petition.

"No decision has been taken to join the Samajwadi Party-led government. We will certainly be discussing the issue when the state government finalises its response to the Supreme Court notice," Congress spokesman Abhishek Singhvi told reporters.

The Rae Bareilly court has been hearing the case against Advani and a few others since May 30, after the CBI filed a fresh chargesheet.

A controversy had erupted when the Opposition alleged that the Indian Penal Code's Section 120 b, which relates to criminal conspiracy, was dropped to dilute the charges against the accused.

Today's court notices were issued on a petition by lawyers Wajahat Ansari and C.M. Shukla, who contended that the CBI had acted "under political pressure" and dropped the conspiracy charge.

They said the trial should have proceeded on the basis of the composite chargesheet filed by the CBI in 1993 which had the conspiracy charge.

But, the petitioners said, taking advantage of an apex court ruling in 2002, which permitted the trial to proceed in the Rae Bareilly court, the CBI had submitted a truncated chargesheet.

The two lawyers alleged that the public prosecutor, who was pleading the case since 1993, was "suddenly" replaced by an advocate who assisted a Union minister in legal practice.

The judges issued notices on this petition but did not entertain another filed by Mohammad Aslam alias Bhure until "offensive portions" were deleted. Bhure, the spearhead of several pleas linked to the Ayodhya dispute, had filed a petition contesting the transfer of the case from Lucknow to Rae Bareilly.

2 SEP 2003

Muslim Board to move court against ASI report

NEW DELHI, Aug. 31. — The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board today said it would challenge the ASI report on Ayodhya excavations even as it declared that it would accept the court's final verdict "whatever it be".

Board president Syed Mohammed Rabey Hasani Nadvi described the ASI report, which suggested the existence of a temple beneath Babari Masjid, as "concocted and politically motivated". He also said the board's doors were open for any further "result-oriented, positive negotiations" to resolve the tangle.

An internationally-renowned Islamic scholar, Maulana Nadvi said the recovery of things during the excavation did not indicate the existence of any temple beneath the site. The ASI's interim reports on this line, he noted, is contradicted by its final report.

Condemning violent and terrorist activities, Maulana Nadvi said these acts of aggression are against the Islam. He stressed on the need to build up an atmosphere of love, harmony and trust between communities. Referring

to a crisis in Hindu-Muslim relationship, he said efforts have to be made to bridge this gulf. "The teachings of Islam make this clear that we have to take others' interest into account before thinking of pursuing our own concerns".

Maulana Nadvi denied the charge that the Board was preoccupied with only "sentimental and confrontational matters" at the cost of "the Muslim community's real issues". He said the Board has been trying to focus on social and economic development of the community.

The maulana said the Board had not been contacted following the breakdown of the Kanchi Shankaracharya's Ayodhya initiative, to take forward the process meant for a negotiated settlement of the dispute. He told a news conference here that he was unaware of any negotiations currently underway.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani have been maintaining that talks were continuing at various levels involving Muslim representatives to resolve the Ayodhya tangle. — SNS/PTI

1 SEP 2003

Smoking gun?

Reading too much into ASI report

The RSS and friends are celebrating too soon at the Archaeological Survey of India reporting the excavation of a 'structure' below the demolished Babri Masjid. The ASI findings are sketchy and wholly unconvincing; their tentative conclusion is that some of the items discovered may have a resemblance to other temples found generally in north India. That is all. The *sangh parivar* still needs to prove – that the 'structure' was indeed a Ram temple, and that the temple was demolished by Mir Baqi, Babar's general, in order to make way for the Babri Masjid. Even if these propositions are proved beyond doubt, and that looks virtually impossible at present, it still doesn't hold water. If one were to assume that any edifice that has come up after demolishing another must in its turn be demolished and the original structure resurrected, that would have fundamentally destabilising effects. Virtually every historical building in the country, and a lot of more recent construction, would be in instant jeopardy.

The proposition is easily testable: King Solomon built a Jewish temple at the site where Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque now stands, but not even a hardliner like Prime Minister Ariel Sharon — a man rightwingers close to the BJP profess to admire — is proposing that the Al Aqsa mosque be razed to make way for a new temple of Solomon. Israeli security does a far superior job of safeguarding the Al Aqsa mosque than the Indian government did in protecting the Babri Masjid. For very good reason, therefore, the legal case rests only on who has title at present to the disputed land. It is surprising that even the Congress should find the ASI report to be an "input" in deciding the Babri Masjid case — it is a manifestation of the "soft Hindutva" line the party has been peddling of late. This is self-defeating as the BJP is likely to flaunt the ASI report in its election campaign as "evidence" justifying its aggressive posturing. Congress would have been better employed showing up the hollowness of that so-called evidence.

1 SEP 2003

~~Minorities~~
Minorities

ASSURANCE TO MINORITIES/ 'I PERSONALLY LOOK INTO COMPLAINTS'

10-8 **No discrimination, says PM** 4/5

By Our Staff Correspondent

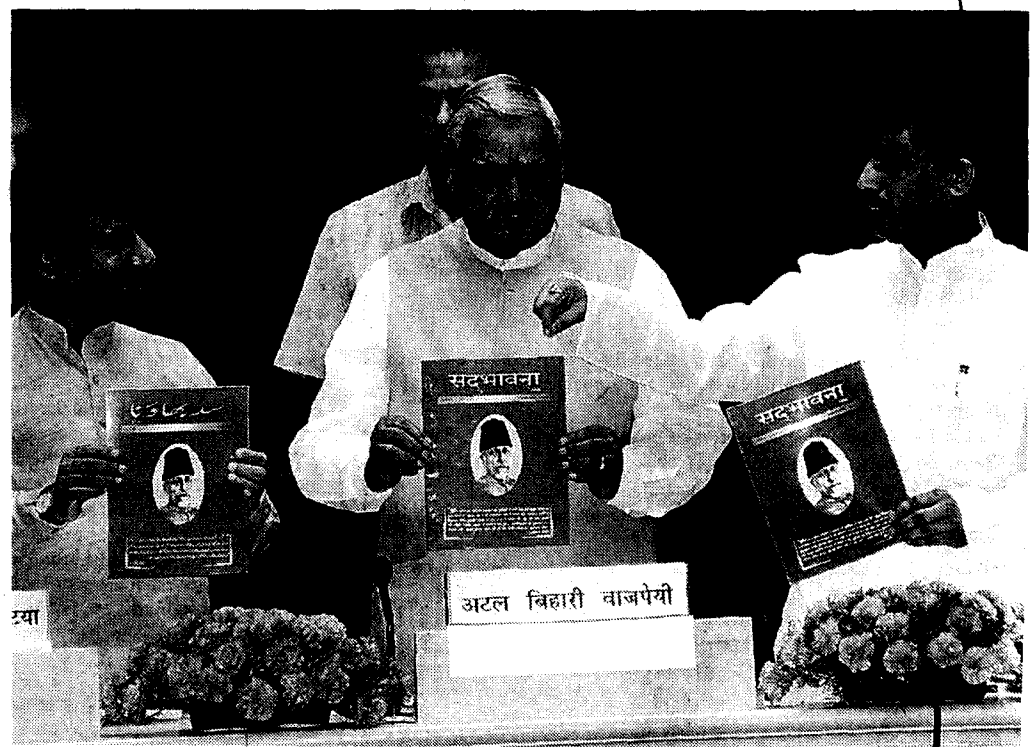
NEW DELHI, MAY 3. Calling upon the people to resolve issues through mutual negotiations, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today assured minorities that his Government was opposed to any discrimination on the basis of religion. He said he personally looked into complaints based on religious discrimination.

Inaugurating a national convention on "Educational and economic development of minorities" organised by the Central Wakf Council, the Maulana Azad Education Foundation and the Ministry of Social Development and Empowerment, here today, Mr. Vajpayee said that all issues could be resolved amicably through consultations. "If the solution does not come immediately, we should wait for the right time instead of rushing to look for a solution. But it is necessary to observe restraint, both by the majority and minority community," he said.

The Constitution gave equal rights to people of all communities and there was no harm in the will of the majority prevailing but it was important that the voice of the minority be heard particularly, though both the communities had equal rights under the Constitution.

"We have special provisions for the minority, which do not come as a favour but it can be described as the Indian way of living together in a family," he said.

Criticising those who propagated that the NDA Government was "anti-minority", Mr. Vajpayee said it was a huge country with a large number of people who had complaints and grouses. "There is nothing that cannot



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, releasing a souvenir at the national convention on "Educational and economic development of minorities" in New Delhi on Saturday. He is flanked by the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Satyanarayan Jatla (left), and the Civil Aviation Minister, Shahnawaz Hussain. — Photo: V.V. Krishnan

be resolved through talks. People are running a campaign to malign the Government," he said adding that not everyone believed in these allegations.

"There are times when people feel dejected and frustrated in their country but India belongs to everyone and each one of us has a role to play in its development," he said.

Stressing the need for education for the economic development of the minorities, Mr. Vajpayee said that any other kind of backwardness could be compensated later but educational backwardness could never be overcome.

It was not necessary that

minorities always remained a minority in politics. His party was a minority in Parliament for several decades but came into a majority eventually.

"I don't know how long I will stay in majority because one never knows when the allies decide to snap ties," he said adding that nothing can be certain in politics but hoped that his flock would stay together.

The Civil Aviation Minister, Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, called upon the minorities to be wary of the attempts being made to use them to malign the NDA Government.

"Whenever the issue of minorities comes into focus, it revolves round a few issues

such as riots and the Government spends its resources on denying allegations invariably heaped on it while the real problems remain unaddressed," he said.

Referring to a negative campaign being launched against the Centre's policy on madrasahs (Muslim seminaries), Mr. Hussain said the Government had done exemplary work in giving grants to such educational institutes as well as increasing subsidy to the Haj pilgrims.

The only major communal riots during the Vajpayee tenure was Gujarat where the Government had gone "out of its way" to "heal the wounds" of the victims.

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2003

BE FIRM

THROUGH ITS PERSISTENCE with the "trishul diksha" ceremony, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad is not only attempting a nationwide mobilisation of the adherents of Hindutva, but also cultivating religious fanaticism and sowing seeds of communal violence. Apparently unshaken by the experience in Rajasthan, where its international general secretary, Praveen Togadia, was arrested for defying a ban on tridents, the VHP is deliberately raising apprehensions in the minds of the minorities and throwing a challenge to law-enforcing agencies in different parts of the country under the guise of organising a religious ritual. The VHP international president, Ashok Singhal, claims "trishul diksha" is a right under Hindutva, and the VHP vice-president, Giriraj Kishore, says the ceremony is entirely religious in nature. But the tridents, in the hands of workers of the VHP and other Hindutva outfits, have a record of aggressive display and provocative politics. Even senior leaders of the BJP distanced themselves from the "trishul diksha" finding it difficult to defend the sale and distribution of sharp-edged weapons in public places. Indeed, there was no consensus on this issue at the three-day conclave of RSS affiliates in New Delhi where the different members of the Sangh Parivar agreed on coordinating their activities. The Sangh Parivar organisations though united in their goals, are divided on the means, and not all of them found the VHP activities acceptable.

And, just as there is no agreement among RSS affiliates on "trishul diksha", so too there is no concurrence among Congress Chief Ministers on how best to deal with the trident distribution of the VHP. While the Rajasthan Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, ordered the arrest of Mr. Togadia, and the Delhi Chief Minister, Sheila Dixit, demanded a ban on the trident programme, the Kerala Chief Minister, A. K. Antony, has given the go-ahead to the VHP in Kochi. On critical

issues such as these, it is important that Chief Ministers do not allow political considerations to play a part in decision-making. Of late, there have been accusations that Mr. Antony favours a soft approach to Hindutva outfits. Evidently, the political compulsions of the Congress in Rajasthan and Delhi, where the BJP is the main rival, are different from the political compulsions in Kerala, where the Left is the chief opponent. But, what makes any decision on ceremonies such as "trishul diksha" difficult for the Government is the invocation of religious symbols. In the same way it exploits for political purposes the "trishul diksha" ceremony, the VHP would seek to capitalise on a ban on trident distribution by whipping up religious sentiments. In either case, the very nature of the activities of the VHP ensures trouble for the law-enforcing agencies. The greater the resistance from the state, the more determined the VHP becomes in carrying through its brand of provocative politics. There are now plans for "trishul diksha" in two lakh villages across the country, according to a VHP office-bearer, Surendra Jain.

While VHP leaders have assured the National Commission for Minorities that they would not undertake activities that hurt the feelings of minorities, the experience of the past, particularly with respect to rabble-rousers like Mr. Togadia, has been very different. Indeed, the practice of Hindutva organisations such as the VHP is to take advantage of the democratic space available to push their majoritarian agenda. For the VHP, any public programme is a means to create a communal divide. And the result of the hate campaigns of the VHP was very much in evidence in Gujarat. As the VHP invokes Hinduism in the cause of Hindutva, the Government would have to be cautious and firm at the same time. There is a need to rein in the Hindutva outfits firmly, underlining the supremacy of the rule of law.

08 MAY 2003

Minorities

Minorities panel holds talks with VHP

By Our Special Correspondent

HP-11
6/5
NEW DELHI, MAY 5. The National Commission for the Minorities today held a dialogue with the top brass of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) as part of an exercise to "restore communal amity and mutual understanding between the majority and minority communities."

The two-hour long session attended among others by the VHP vice-president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, and the International Secretary, Praveen Togadia, focussed on several issues such as the nationwide "trishul diksha" (trident distribution) programme that recently been recently launched by the VHP, on the one hand, and the type of education provided by "madrasahs" (Muslim seminaries), on the other.

Briefing reporters at the end of the meeting, Tarlochan Singh, chairman of the Commission, said the meeting was very fruitful as it helped both sides understand each other's views better. It resulted in agreement on several points.

While the VHP leaders assured the NCM that they would not make any remark or undertake any activity that hurt the feelings of minorities or create a fear psychosis among them, the commission agreed to review the syllabus of 'madrasahs' schools and ensure that if there was any references that were anti-national they would be removed.

The commission also agreed to take up with leaders of the Muslim community the VHP's demand that they should avoid using words such as 'jihad', 'kafir', and 'darul Islam'. The VHP

also urged that minority communities should condemn in strong words whenever there was a terrorist attack, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir.

Acharya Kishore, who was also present at the press conference, emphasised that the 'trishul diksha' programme was only religious in nature and no other motive should be attached to it. The 'trishuls' that were being distributed were harmless. They were less than six inches in length, much smaller than what was permitted by law.

The VHP, he added, was for communal harmony and would respond positively whenever the commission wanted to have discussions aimed at promoting communal amity. Surinder Jain, former Bajrang Dal chief and presently a senior office-bearer of the VHP, also participated in the meeting.

The commission chairman parried a question whether the VHP leaders were asked to give up their 'trishul diksha' programme. In its invitation to the VHP for the talk sent 10 days ago, the commission had stated that, "the communal fabric (in the country) stands shattered and the prevalent situation through the country is rather volatile."

Stressing that the need of the hour was to make all possible efforts to create an atmosphere for peaceful co-existence of all communities, it said, "it is imperative to evolve ways and methods for removing all the irritants causing disharmony in the society."

06 MAY 2003

Togadia in custody, warning war

AGENCIES

AJMER/BIHILWADA/
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 14

VHP leader Pravin Togadia was sent to judicial custody today for two days in connection with "violation" of prohibitory orders and a ban on distribution of tridents in Rajasthan after a local court rejected his bail application.

Magistrate Lata Gaur remanded Togadia to judicial custody after declining police request for custody of the VHP leader for two days. He will be produced before the court again on April 16, District Collector Niranjana Arya said.

Speaking to reporters, Togadia threatened to wage a relentless struggle against the



"anti-religious" Ashok Gehlot government of the state. "I shall now rest only after he is out of power," he said.

Meanwhile, Gehlot asserted that the government would foil the Sangh Parivar's "conspiracy" to disturb peace in Rajasthan. He alleged that the Sangh was trying to cause disturbances in order to create

political dividends for the BJP.

"At no cost will the Parivar be allowed to disturb the peaceful atmosphere of this state like they did in Gujarat. No one will be allowed to cause bloodshed," the CM said.

Togadia was arrested last night in Ajmer district. A case was registered against him under Section 4/25 of the Arms Act for possessing and distributing a banned weapon, under Section 188 of the IPC for violating prohibitory orders, and Section 153 (A) of the IPC for inciting communal passion.

Three VHP leaders and a former Bajrang Dal president were rounded up apprehending a possible breach of peace in view of tomorrow's VHP-organised Rajasthan bandh to

protest against Togadia's arrest, police said.

DSP B.L. Jain said VHP leaders Amritlal Khemka, Chheetarmal Agrawal and Suresh Goyal were taken into custody, but later released in view of their old age. Ex-Bajrang Dal chief Subhash Baheti was arrested under Section 151 of the CrPC.

Meanwhile, condemning the arrest of their leader, the VHP's Punjab unit today said its activists would march towards Rajasthan. "If Togadia is not released immediately, about 5,000 activists of the Punjab unit of VHP carrying tridents will march towards Rajasthan to register their protest," Punjab VHP in-charge Vijay Singh Bhardwaj said.

15 APR 2003

On Ambedkar Day, Shinde flaunts Dalit link

98-3-194
ENS & AGENCIES

MUMBAI/CHANDIGARH,
APRIL 14

THE first Dalit Chief Minister Sushilkumar Shinde of Maharashtra today led the state in paying homage to Dr B.R. Ambedkar on the occasion of his 112th birth anniversary celebrations here. Shinde visited the historic *deekshabhoomi*, where Ambedkar embraced Buddhism in 1957, and paid floral tributes.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said his elevation to the coveted post was possible due to the vision of Ambedkar who did everything to uplift the Dalits and downtrodden of the society. "I am excited to pay a visit to *deekshabhoomi* today on the occasion of his birth anniversary," he said, adding, "I will not lag behind in extending support to the memorial."

In Chandigarh, as many as



President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam and Congress president Sonia Gandhi at Parliament where Ambedkar's portrait was unveiled on his 112th birth anniversary on Monday. PTI

100 people, mostly scavengers, embraced Buddhism and 10 converted to Christianity alleging discrimination. A Buddhist monk gave *deeksha* to

the Dalits, at a ceremony in Balmiki Ashram. Fifteen people tonsured their heads and 10 of them converted to Christianity. The converts also

Naidu leaves in huff

■HYDERABAD: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu was forced to leave a function, organised to celebrate the 112th birth anniversary of Dr B.R. Ambedkar on Monday, in a huff, amid sloganeering by Dalit activists.

The agitating activists were protesting against the appointment of a junior IAS officer as the state's Chief Secretary, depriving a senior Dalit IAS officer of the chance. —PTI

All India Confederation of SC and ST Organisations national chairman Udit Raj alleged: "Series of atrocities have been committed on Dalits in Haryana. This has compelled us to resort to conversions. Discrimination on caste basis is so rampant in the country that it justifies that Dalits quit the religion."

In Mhow, MP, the NDA Government drew flak from Ambedkar followers for "rejecting" a proposal to rename the leader's birthplace, Mhow, after him. At a gathering of Ambedkar supporters, a resolution, moved by state Minorities Commission member Indresh Gajbhiye, was passed condemning the Union Government for "rejecting" the proposal to rename the birthplace after Ambedkar.

pledged to worship buffalo instead of the cow at the ceremony which started with worshipping of a buffalo.

Addressing the gathering

Calendar makes Bhindranwale martyr

GAJINDERSINGH

Talwandi Sabo (Bathinda), April 14: Sikh history was made today when the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee president released the Nanakshahi calendar.

"This is a historic day for the Sikhs who did not have a calendar of their own," committee president Kirpal Singh Badungar said. Sikhs were earlier using the Vikrami calendar to determine the dates of festivals. In accordance with the new calendar, Baisakhi was celebrated a day late today in this historic town.

The new calendar significantly mentions June 4 as the day

the Akal Takht was damaged during Operation Bluestar and June 6 as the "martyrdom" day of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

The calendar, however, skips the names of many militants, including the assassins of Indira Gandhi, and the November 1984 riots, both of which were mentioned in the original draft.

Bhagat Singh's martyrdom and the anniversary of the Akali Suba agitation, too, find mention. The dates of some Sikh festivals have been changed.

Presenting the calendar to Shiromani Akali Dal chief Parkash Singh Badal, Badungar said: "I would like to request Badal *saheb* to present it to the Centre and seek holidays on days

we Sikhs consider as historic for the community. All dates in it have a lot of historical, cultural and political significance for us."

Accepting the calendar, Badal congratulated the committee for introducing it. Akali sources, however, said the former chief minister had tried till the last to drop Bhindranwale's name from the calendar.

"Badal never liked Bhindranwale and had blamed him for the turmoil in Punjab during the 1980s and early '90s,"

a senior Akali leader said.

"But he had to give his assent following pressure from the Sikh community. The calendar, incidentally, had to go through a number of chopping before its acceptance by the SGPC."

On the Akali demand that the Sikhs' historic days be declared holidays, chief minister Amarinder Singh said it was up to the state government whether to implement it or not. "I have not seen it (the calendar)," he said.



Bhindranwale: Martyred

The Vikrami calendar, like most ancient religious calendars, is lunar-based. It, however, accumulates an error of 20 minutes every year, gradually changing the timing of religious festivals over decades and centuries.

The Nanakshahi calendar, developed by Canada-based Pal Singh Purewal, is solar-based.

The calendar, supposed to have been introduced in 1999, was stalled over differences between then Akal Takht jathedar Puran Singh and committee chief Jagir Kaur.

Puran Singh was sacked for sticking to the arguments of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which said the new calendar would harm Hindu-Sikh rela-

tions as their festival dates were common.

Some common Hindu and Sikh festivals, however, would continue to be celebrated according to the old calendar. But the birth and death anniversaries of the Sikh gurus and other Sikh festivals would follow the new calendar.

SAD general secretary Kanwaljit Singh took the opportunity to hit out at the Congress. The time had come to declare war on the Congress, he said, which was hurting people by raising taxes.

"Even education has not been spared. There is a 35 per cent increase in fees. How can the common man get jobs when he won't be able to go to school?" he said.

9 15/10/1999

15/10

Gujarat governor holds back anti-conversion bill

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: Even a week after it was passed in the state assembly, Gujarat governor S.S. Bhandari has not given his assent to the controversial Gujarat Freedom of Religion Bill, 2003, seeking to ban forced conversions. This has left the state government guessing about Raj Bhavan's intentions.

Speaker Mangaldas Patel said on Tuesday that while the other six bills, also passed by the assembly on March 26 amidst pandemonium over ex-home minister Haren Pandya's murder, had been duly signed, the anti-conversion bill remains with the governor.

Sources said that while the governor set aside the suggestion by opposition leader Amarsinh Chaudhary that none of the bills be signed as they were passed when the House was not in order, he had

- Governor seems to be waiting for the advocate-general's view on the bill
- Archbishop expresses fears of harassment to minority leaders
- The bill's provision is stricter than that of the TN anti-conversion law

preferred to seek the advocate-general's view on the Freedom of Religion Bill.

The reason for Raj Bhavan's refusal to sign the bill is not far to seek. Archbishop S. Fernandes, during his meeting with the governor last week, had expressed fears of harassment to minority religious leaders, who under the bill are supposed to take permission for conducting conversion ceremony from the district magistrate. This means the process of conversion can depend on the

'sweet will' of the district magistrate, who is also the district collector. Only when the district collector is 'satisfied' that no force or allurement is involved, can a person be converted.

The bill's provision is stricter than that of the anti-conversion law enacted in Tamil Nadu last year which just requires the person conducting the ceremony to inform the district official about the deed.

Meanwhile, sources said the state government had decided to incorporate certain clauses in the bill that would allow Hindus to get converted to Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, and vice-versa, without seeking any permission. A top ministerial source told TNN that Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were part of the Hindu personal law. "Therefore, there would be no need to take permission for those coming under the Hindu code."

3 APR 2004

THE TAMIL NADU

This verdict is welcome

But solving the Ayodhya crisis entails not a tidy judicial verdict, but political sagacity

THE Supreme Court's firm rejection of the Union government's application in the Ayodhya case is entirely welcome. Status quo in Ayodhya, the apex court has laid down, must be maintained till the title suits are finally disposed in the Allahabad High Court. There can be little doubt that the proposal that the government hand over the undisputed land to any other body or trust for conducting religious activity was fraught with unfathomed dangers; the five-judge bench is wise to reiterate that there has been no change in the ground situation to justify the uncoupling of the undisputed land from the disputed area. The VHP's plans to barge into Ayodhya after having secured Gujarat have fortunately been foiled. But in this happy scenario, there's that familiar, niggling question again. The apex court has certainly given the nation a breather, but can't we hear the clock ticking still? Will the final resolution come, as the SC has indicated, with the disposal of the title suit by the Allahabad High Court? Will the roiling controversy be calmed once the ASI has finished with its digging and the high court has determined whether or not a temple preexisted the masjid?

Or does the solution to the Ayodhya issue ask for something more? This is the moment once again to underline that the festering dispute cries

out for a political solution and that a craven political leadership is steadfastly shirking the effort. It is time once more to point out that the excavation ordered by the high court is not going to unearth the anticipated full stop to the controversy. Many have already pointed out that even if the ASI were the best equipped for the task at hand, archaeological findings don't always yield certitudes. Archaeology is an uncertain science at best and the results of the digging would be vulnerable to partisan interpretations. The high court's initiative promises to solve nothing — it only sets an extremely dangerous precedent.

The VHP has reacted to the apex court's verdict with predictably defiant verbiage. It has declared the end of any possibility of 'compromise' and threatened 'direct action' on the issue. The government must impress upon the VHP that it is not above the law of the land. But, more than that, it must make another attempt to revive a process of negotiation. As these columns have argued time and again, the settlement of the wearying controversy lies not in a tidy judicial verdict but at the end of a process of give and take by leaders of both communities. It needs a political leadership with credibility and vision to steer this process. Anything less won't do.

01 APR 2003

BEST BAKERY CASE

118
118
9. 11. 1993

NHRC moves SC for re-trial

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, JULY 31. Expressing deep concern at the acquittal of the accused in the 'Best Bakery case' relating to the Gujarat riots of last year, the National Human Rights Commission today moved the Supreme Court seeking fresh investigation of the case by an independent agency and re-trial by a competent court outside Gujarat.

In a special leave petition (SLP) against the Vadodara trial court's order, the Commission said the acquittal had damaged the credibility of the criminal justice delivery system and negated the human rights of the victims.

The Commission also filed a separate application seeking the transfer of four other cases relating to the Godhra, Champanpura (Gulburga society) and Naroda Patiya incidents and the Sadarpura case in Mehsana district for trial outside Gujarat.

On June 27, the fast track court of H.U. Mahida acquitted all the 21 accused in the case on the ground that there was no evidence to prove their guilt.

It also pulled up the prosecution for its shoddy investigation. Subsequently, the key witness, Zaheera Sheikh, approached the Commission seeking its intervention for reopening of the case.

The SLP said the decision to seek the Supreme Court's intervention was based on the report submitted by the Commission's team sent to Vadodara for a spot assessment. Further, there had been repeated requests from the media regarding the action taken by the Commission in the case.

The SLP said the concept of a fair trial had been explicitly recognised in Articles 14, 19, 21, 22 and 39 A of the Constitution as well as various provisions of the Cr.P.C. and hence any violation of this right was a violation of the fundamental right.

The right to fair trial had also been recognised in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by India.

Expressing its "anguish" over the manner in which the trial was conducted, the Commission said that "whenever a criminal goes unpunished, it is society at large which suffers because the victims become demoralised and criminals encouraged. It therefore becomes the duty of the court to use all its powers to unearth the truth and render justice so that the crime is punished".

The Commission, in the interests of justice, urged the apex court to lay down guidelines and directions on the protection of witnesses and victims of crime in criminal trials, which could be adhered to both by the prosecuting and law enforcement agencies as well as the subordinate judiciary.

'Too early to comment'

By Our Special Correspondent

GANDHINAGAR, JULY 31. The Gujarat Government has declined to make any comment on the National Human Rights Commission's move to approach the Supreme Court for a re-trial of the Best Bakery case and for trying the Godhra carnage case and four other major cases outside the State.

While there was no immediate word from the Chief Minister's office, the State Law Minister, Ashok Bhatt, said it was too early to comment without studying the papers and documents before the NHRC and the Supreme Court.

However, Kashiram Rana, Union Rural Development Minister who hails from Gujarat, virtually described the move as a "censure" of a lower court's judgment.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2003

planned or
revised

REFORM-ORIENTED CHANGES *19/10/03*

THE LATEST BJP-SPECIFIC reshuffle Atal Behari Vajpayee has made in his Council of Ministers is essentially a continuation of the 'Operation Revamp' attempted less than eight months ago — and left unfinished due primarily to resistance from quite a few of those whom the party leadership wanted to shift for organisational work — in pursuance of the BJP national executive's decision at its Goa conclave, which itself was imbued with what the party called 'Poll Vision 2003-04'. In the process, there has also been a 'correction', so to say, as reflected in the re-induction of Arun Jaitley, who along with M. Venkaiah Naidu had quit office to take up party work last time around, and in the exit of Pramod Mahajan for assuming organisational responsibility. It looks as if, with the BJP returning to power in Gujarat, Mr. Jaitley's job was done and the party leadership believed that Mr. Mahajan, credited as he is with organisational skills, is the man of the moment when a string of politically important Assembly elections, as in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, are ahead. It is, however, a moot question whether, given his persona, Mr. Mahajan, as general secretary, would be absolutely comfortable working with Mr. Venkaiah Naidu as the party chief, one considered to be not so senior as he is in the party.

At the end of the two-phase revamping exercise, if Jana Krishnamurthi, the man who was required to step down as party president making way for Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, finds himself in a limbo, as it were, it is because the Prime Minister was keen on stripping him of the 'Law' portfolio — and restoring it to Mr. Jaitley — and he himself was not willing to settle for anything else. Even at the time of the last reshuffle, one may recall, Mr. Krishnamurthi was allowed to have his way (with his demand for the Law portfolio) only after some hard bargaining and as a sop to his sense of hurt on

being asked to relinquish the party presidency. In deciding to get Mr. Jaitley back as the Law Minister, Mr. Vajpayee and possibly also the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani (who has of late been playing a dominant role), must have factored in the new 'ultimatum' the VHP has issued to the Centre for handing over the 'acquired land' in Ayodhya and the serious implications it has for the Government and the party alike. After all, Mr. Jaitley, during his earlier tenure, handled a similar situation as it evolved last year.

To those who were looking for a message on the economic front, the changes effected in the Ministry carry a distinct and strong signal that the Vajpayee regime intends to stick to the path of reforms. While the exit of Mr. Mahajan conveys its own message, the fact that a vigorous champion of reforms like Arun Shourie has not only been allowed to retain charge of Disinvestment (against powerful lobbying by pressure groups) but also entrusted with Communications and Information Technology — two other key areas — is seen particularly as a clear reaffirmation of the Government's commitment to reforms. Interestingly, Mr. Jaitley too has been given additional charges, Commerce and Industry (besides Law and Justice), and with this the BJP has brought within its fold most of the major economic Ministries. And Sushma Swaraj, divested of Information and Broadcasting, has taken over Parliamentary Affairs along with Health and Family Welfare, held hitherto by Mr. Mahajan and Shatrughan Sinha respectively. Whether the vesting of such important and heavy portfolios in the three, which at one level reflects the confidence the Prime Minister has in them, is only a matter of political expediency or administrative exigency or is an emerging pattern in the context of the party leadership's avowed rejuvenation effort remains to be seen.

HP-11

CBI comes under Cabinet Secretariat

3111

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 30. Because of reports in a section of the media that the Central Bureau of Investigation had been entrusted to the Union Home Ministry in Wednesday's Cabinet reshuffle, an official spokesman clarified today that the investigative agency had, in fact, been transferred to the Cabinet Secretariat which, in turn, functions under the Prime Minister.

The confusion arose because the Rashtrapati Bhavan communique last night mentioned, correctly, that L.K. Advani would also be Minister for Personnel. The CBI has traditionally been part of the Department of Personnel.

However, it is learnt that it had been made clear to Mr. Advani that he could not be entrusted with the CBI, primarily because of the Ayodhya case. Mr. Advani himself was a party to the decision that the CBI be brought under the Cabinet Secretariat.

This proposed change, however, required an amendment in the Rules of Business, which, in turn, required Presidential consent. The process

of amending the Rules of Business began today, with the "file" going to the President for his signature.

Meanwhile, it was felt that the official spokesman should put the record straight before the confusion spread further. This "clarification" itself is being interpreted in many quarters as yet another manifestation of the unresolved power struggle within the Vajpayee Government.

In another significant development, the Government tonight decided to shift the empowered Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPP) from the Commerce and Industry Ministry to the Finance Ministry.

Also, another press communique from the Rashtrapati Bhavan announced the changes/additions in the allocation of portfolios of the following ministers: O. Rajagopal (Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence); Vallabh-hai Kathiria (Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development), and Pon Radhakrishnan (Minister of State in the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation).

THE HINDU

31 JAN 2003

MAHAJAN FOR PARTY WORK, JANA KRISHNAMURTHY DROPPED

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307/1

Jaitley, Thakur back in Cabinet, Shourie gets IT

of Council of Ministers

By Harish Khare

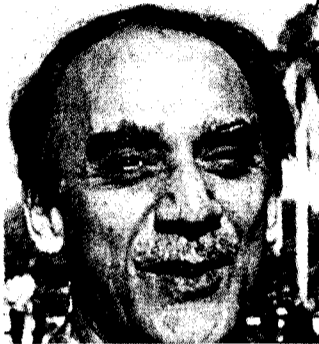
NEW DELHI, JAN. 29. The exit of four Cabinet Ministers and four Ministers of State, the return of two recently "axed" Ministers and the induction of six new faces marked the latest reshuffle of the Union Cabinet undertaken by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. The BJP-centric reshuffle of Ministers and portfolios is considered the BJP way of gearing itself for the coming electoral battles — in the States and at the Centre — in the next 18 months.

The new entrants were administered the oath of office by the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan this evening. The Prime Minister and his senior government and party colleagues attended the ceremony. At the end of the day, seven Cabinet Ministers, three Ministers of State (with independent charge), and 19 Ministers of State found additions/deletions in their charges.

Talking to mediapersons after the brief ceremony, the Prime Minister described the changes as "part of a natural process". He said "some people in the Government had been drafted for party work and some from party have been taken in the Government".

Most prominent among the evening's *dramatis personae* was Pramod Mahajan, who was asked to give up his high profile job as Communications Minister and to take up, instead, a party assignment. Though Mr. Mahajan will continue to have his working address on the same street, Ashoka Road, the decision to shift him to the party headquarters, a few bungalows up the road, reveals the BJP's changed priorities — from credible governance to electoral preoccupations.

Mr. Mahajan is widely respected for his organisational skills and is expected to more than fill the "vacuum" caused in the BJP by the departure of Arun



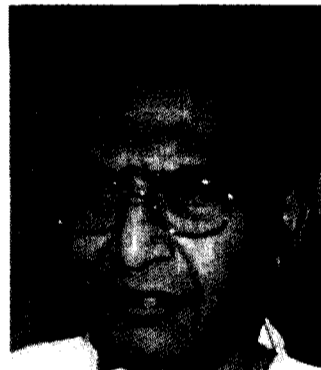
Arun Shourie



Arun Jaitley



Sushma Swaraj



C.P. Thakur

Jaitley for ministerial responsibilities.

Besides Mr. Mahajan, three Ministers leaving the Government — Uma Bharti, Vasundhararaje Scindia and Raman Singh — have been inducted for organisational responsibilities in their States, viz., Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Another departee, Jana Krishnamurthy, preferred to put in his papers rather than move from Law to another Ministry, as was suggested to him by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has left undisturbed key Ministries such as Home, Finance, Defence, External Affairs; among the senior Ministers only Sushma Swaraj has been moved from the portfolio of Information and Broadcasting to the equally crucial assignments of Health Ministry and Parliamentary Affairs.

Apart from Mr. Mahajan, the two Aruns — Shourie and Jaitley

— have caused the most excitement. They will be new hands-on Ministers. Between them, the two will have, for now, crucial portfolios with the former handling Disinvestment, Communications and Information Technology and the latter Law and Justice and Commerce and Industry.

According to the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Prime Minister was keen on having Mr. Jaitley back in the Cabinet once the Gujarat elections were out of the way. Equally noteworthy is the independent charge of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for Ravi Shankar Prasad, known for talent and integrity.

On the other hand, while the shifting of Shatrughan Sinha from the Health Ministry had been long overdue, the return of C.P. Thakur is inexplicable. Seven months ago, he was deemed unfit to continue in the Cabinet,

but today he is back and has been made Minister for Development of the North-Eastern Region (besides Minister of Small-Scale Industries).

Two aspects of the reshuffle stand out. First, the increasing assertiveness of the Deputy Prime Minister in matters that are classic domain of the Prime Minister. Mr. Advani has finally succeeded in prying the Department of Personnel away from the Prime Minister; but, it is learnt, that the most crucial "charge" of that department, the Central Bureau of Investigation, would continue to be with the Prime Minister. For administrative purposes, the CBI is being asked to report to the Cabinet Secretariat.

It is pointed out that Mr. Advani could not possibly be given control over the investigative agency, given the fact he (along with another Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi,) remains technically a suspect in the Babri Masjid demolition case being investigated by the CBI.

The second aspect, less visible but quite pronounced, is the shadow of corporate warfare on the reshuffle and reallocation of portfolios.

The unsuccessful attempt to divest Mr. Shourie of the Ministry of Disinvestment is traced to a corporate ministerial axis within the Vajpayee Government; this axis had to be content with ensuring that the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, did not have to part with the Department of Company Affairs. Nor could Ram Naik be divested of the Petroleum Ministry.

Maran to remain Minister without portfolio

UNI reports:

The DMK leader, Murali Manojan, who is undergoing medical treatment in the U.S., will remain a Minister without portfolio, a spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office said tonight.

List on Page 13

Portfolios of Union Ministers

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. L.K. Advani 2. Arun Shourie 3. Shatrughan Sinha 4. Sushma Swaraj 5. Karia Munda 6. Arun Jaitley 7. C. P. Thakur | <p><i>9-Council of Ministers
19.13
30/1</i></p> <p>Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions</p> <p>Minister of Communications and Information Technology and Minister of Disinvestment</p> <p>Minister of Shipping</p> <p>Minister of Health & Family Welfare and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs</p> <p>Minister of Coal</p> <p>Minister of Law & Justice and Minister of Commerce & Industry</p> <p>Minister of Small Scale Industries and Minister of Development of North Eastern Region</p> |
|---|---|

Ministers of State (Independent Charge)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sangh Priya Gautam 2. Ravi Shankar Prasad 3. Ramesh Bais | <p>Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries</p> <p>Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting</p> <p>Minister of State (Independent Charge) in the Ministry of Mines</p> |
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Ministers of State

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chhatrapal Singh 2. Dilip Singh Judev 3. Dilipkumar Mansukhlal Gandhi 4. Bhavnaben Devrajbhai Chikalia 5. Jas Kaur Meena 6. Tapan Sikdar 7. Subash Maharia 8. Ch. Vidyasagar Rao 9. Satyabrata Mookerjee 10. Sanjay Paswan 11. Su Thirunavukkarasar 12. Vinod Khanna 13. Ashok Pradhan 14. U.V. Krishnam Raju 15. Vallabbhai Kathiria 16. Harin Pathak 17. O. Rajagopal 18. Vijay Goel 19. Santosh Gangwar | <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment & Forests</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Shipping</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of State in the Ministry of Tourism & Culture</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Small Scale Industries and Minister of State in the Department of Development of North Eastern Region.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry</p> <p>Minister of State in the Department of Space, Minister of State in the Department of Atomic Energy, Minister of State in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and Minister of State in the Ministry of Planning.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Development.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour.</p> <p>Minister of State in the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.</p> |
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30 JAN 2003