

# RSS backs early polls...

Sudesh K Verma in New Delhi

Dec. 26. — The RSS has advised the BJP to hold an early election in order to cash in on the feel good factor after the assembly election results. The RSS leadership has told the BJP about the cadre's ebullience and its readiness should the Prime Minister decide on an April poll.

The BJP seems to be working on this advice. It has scaled down its target from 250 days to 125 for achieving the goal of 300 seats. For the record it has decided to make plans both for April and September polls. Alternative plans would be ready soon, the party president, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, said.

Both the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani, and Mr Naidu had an hour-long meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the political situation. Mr Vajpayee cancelled his Jaipur holiday because of pressing engagements. Various possibilities, including advancement of the polls, were discussed. No decision is likely before the national executive meeting in Hyderabad, sources said.

2711 Senior RSS leaders have told BJP leaders such as Mr Advani and Mr Naidu that a delay in polls could complicate matters for the BJP if the party fails to deliver in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh where it won on the development plank.

RSS leaders were uncertain about the Prime Minister's thinking on the issue but they are now assured of early polls after Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's address to the BJP parliamentary party where he hinted at advancement, sources said.

To demonstrate the BJP's seriousness, Mr Naidu gave primary membership of the party to the Araria Lok Sabha member, Mr Sukhdeo Paswan, who was elected on an RJD ticket but formed his own party after splitting from an offshoot of the main party.

The BJP president said the main plank for the Lok Sabha polls would be development and the party would force the Congress to join issue with it on issues such as irrigation, drinking water, agriculture, industry, development of Scheduled Tribes and women.

What the Congress did in 47

years and what the NDA did in five years would be compared and there would be open debate before people, he said. "We will not allow the Congress to run away from the debate," he added.

Mrs Sonia Gandhi's leadership will definitely be an issue as she would be pitted against a leader who has universal acceptance, experience and knowledge about issues affecting a common man, Mr Naidu said. The Congress may eventually shy away from projecting anyone as the leader of the proposed secular progressive front, he felt.

The RSS clarified that it would oppose Mrs Gandhi's leadership of the country. The organisation has been opposed to a person of foreign origin holding the top constitutional posts, the spokesperson, Mr Ram Madhav, said.

Mr Naidu said the BJP would favour a strong opposition as it was good for the country. But is was appalled at the negativism of the Congress. The way Congress boycotted the defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, and refused to ask questions on defence-related issues would be placed before people, he said.

## ... but wary of PM-Pervez one-on-one

NEW DELHI, Dec. 26. — The RSS favours India extracting some concessions from Pakistan such as Dawood Ibrahim's repatriation but is apprehensive that any concession to Pakistan outside the Saarc parameters would be politically unwise in the event of early Lok Sabha elections.

They would not mind Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee meeting General Pervez Musharraf on the sidelines of the Saarc meet in Islamabad but any structured meeting between the two could cause trouble, an RSS leader said. "This is not the right time for summit level talks between the two countries," the RSS spokesperson, Mr Ram Madhav, said. Until Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism and completely dismantles terrorist camps, talks would not yield results, he said. — SNS

# BJP to return Kalyan compliment on Jan 4

Party may announce Kalyan's return on eve of his 70th birthday in January

AMIT SHARMA  
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 25

**F**OR the BJP, it's a season of birthday politics. With former chief minister Kalyan Singh choosing the eve of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's birthday to send out feelers of his return to the BJP fold, the party may well pay him back in the same coin by announcing a formal decision on the issue on the eve of his birthday on January 4.

Kalyan will turn 70 on January 5 and has called a meeting of his Rashtriya Kranti Party (RKP) workers, office bearers and legislators at his 2, Mall Avenue residence on January 4 to thrash out a strategy on how the party "could

play an effective role in present and future politics".

"If the game is of birthday politics, the BJP can also give him a similar surprise (a formal announcement of his joining the BJP) on January 4," said a senior BJP functionary.

So far, no senior BJP leader from the state has met Kalyan after he shared tea with the PM at BJP leader Lajji Tandon's residence last evening. Meanwhile, senior party workers are also avoiding being seen at his residence. All a formal announcement is made by the BJP high command.

However, the phone at 2, Mall Avenue (Kalyan's official residence) continues to ring incessantly. "The BJP workers from distant districts rejoiced after I

Throughout the day today, Mulayam Singh avoided the media and no SP leader was willing to come on record as to why Kalyan had gone to meet the PM.

BJP sources say that the message for Kalyan to accompany the PM to Tandon's place had come directly from the PMO and that Tandon was asked to convey the same to the former CM and that too after the PM had arrived in the state capital.

Insiders say the PM, while leaving for the airport, told him: "Acha Kalyan, phir milenge (Ok Kalyan, we will meet again)" to which he replied: "Aap jab kahenge hazir ho jaoonga (Whenever you call, I'll come)".

Senior BJP leaders admitted that the BJP workers who had been disenchanted for the last few years could also be enthused with

Kalyan's return to the party, but they also added that the party should not expect a miracle with his return.

"While in the BJP, Kalyan had earned the image of a Hindu leader and after his expulsion, he became a caste leader (Lodh). Now it depends on him as to how soon he regains that image as being with Mulayam he has lost the pro-Hindu image," said a senior party leader.

"My visit to Tandon's place has no political meaning, as I had gone there on his invitation," Kalyan said at his official residence where BJP leaders and workers were conspicuous by their absence and he was almost alone on today. But come January 4 and the same place is likely to be swarming with BJP leaders and his workers.

Senior BJP leaders admitted that the BJP workers who had been disenchanted for the last few years could also be enthused with



Kalyan with the Prime Minister in Lucknow on Wednesday. P71

met the PM and kept congratulating me till late in the night," said Kalyan Singh.

"The RKP has a coalition with Mulayam Singh Yadav and that will continue," said Kalyan. However, Raman Singh instead.

# BJP rolls with its own poll

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Dec. 24:** The question of holding early polls may be unresolved, but the BJP has quietly started a survey of 350 Lok Sabha constituencies spread across the country.

These seats include those won in the 1999 elections and some that were not contested.

The objectives of the survey, being conducted by five agencies, are: identify states where the BJP is strong and weak; spot seats won or lost by a 5,000 margin; locate seats that could see triangular fights or where smaller parties matter and work out the caste arithmetic.

It will also report on the performance of sitting MPs, identify senior workers in each constituency who are expected to be assigned responsibilities by January-end and obtain feedback on the Centre's policies.

The parameters of the survey are derived from the Rajasthan-Madhya Pradesh model the BJP used in the recent elections.

Sources said that in Rajasthan, the identification of 30-odd marginal seats by a professional

pollster made a big difference because the BJP managed to neutralise its own rebels and prop up those of the Congress. In Madhya Pradesh, the co-option of senior workers, representing the old guard, took care of whatever damage they could have done to Uma Bharti's prospects.

A meeting of the central office-bearers tomorrow, which will be attended by deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, is expected to discuss the blueprint for Mission 2004 — the poll campaign — and finalise the agenda for the Hyderabad national executive.

BJP spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi virtually suggested that Mission 2004 would be launched tomorrow when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee addresses party workers who will greet him on his birthday.

Tomorrow will also mark the launch of the *Vijay, Vikas Sankalp Par* (victory and development pledge festival) the BJP will "celebrate" for a fortnight.

The "festival", Naqvi said, would be a medium of communicating the Centre's "achievements", as well as the BJP's work and policies, to the people.

# Bribe bombshell blows up in Jogi face

**TAPAS CHAKRABORTY**

**Raipur, Dec. 6: Ousted chief minister Ajit Jogi lurched into another crisis when alleged BJP legislators exploded in his face today, barely 12 hours before a new regime takes over in Chhattisgarh.**

The dramatic sequence of events unfolded as Jaitley al-

leged at a news conference here that Jogi had offered a bribe of Rs 45 lakh to BJP MP Baliram Kashyap to split the party and become chief minister with Congress support. A tape, purportedly containing Jogi's voice, was played at the conference.

Jaitley also showed a letter which, he said, Jogi had written to the governor extending support to Kashyap if he managed to

effect a split. He said Kashyap should be given a chance to prove his majority.

At a news conference late at night, Jogi admitted writing to the governor but denied offering money. Jogi also said he had written the letter after former BJP legislator Virendra Pandey met him at his residence today and sought his support for a government led by a tribal. He said the

tape was "concocted" and "forged" and asserted that the recorded voice was not his.

According to Kashyap, he was yesterday asked by Jogi to meet him. Today, Jogi, his son Amit and some Congress workers picked him up at 10 am from Raipur town, he said. They came in a Tata Safari driven by Amit. Before Kashyap got into the car, he was handed Rs 25 lakh, while

the rest of the money was given later, the BJP leader said at the conference.

Jaitley, who reached Raipur around 9 this evening, met the governor and then held the news conference. He said the tape and the letter will be handed over to the CBI.

In the taped conversation, Kashyap is heard asking for a written assurance from Sonia

that she would not withdraw support. The voice, which the BJP claims to be that of Jogi, says he has Sonia's nod.

Congress spokesman Rajendra Tiwari said it was "a calculated move to defame Jogi because he exposed BJP leader Dilip Singh Judeo with the cash-on-camera scandal for which the BJP blames Jogi. "The conversation is not acceptable in court," he said.



Ajit Jogi

7 DEC 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

# BJP meets on govt formation in three states

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, December 6

THE BJP leadership on Saturday deliberated upon the formation of governments in MP, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan where the party was swept into power in the Assembly elections. Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and BJP president Venkaiah Naidu met during the day for a detailed discussion on issues such as formation of cabinet and its size in these states. They are also said to have discussed the broad outline of developmental activities that need to be given priority in an at-

tempt to consolidate the party's base in these states before the Lok Sabha polls next year.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister-designate of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje, who arrived in Delhi after being elected leader of the legislature party, met Naidu to finalise the composition of her Cabinet and other important issues. She is likely to meet Advani, too, before returning to Jaipur for being sworn in as the Chief Minister on Monday.

The Deputy PM will attend the swearing-in ceremony of Chhattisgarh CM Raman Singh in Raipur on Sunday.

Meanwhile, even as the BJP leadership has sought to play down the element of religion in their victory maintaining that development was the main issue before the people, the Sangh Parivar hotly contests the claim and insists that Hindutva was a major contributing factor in the party's unexpectedly good performance at the hustings.

"No doubt the BJP worked hard for its deserved victory. But the cutting edge was provided by the Sangh Parivar cadres which helped them win the extra number of seats that marked the difference between the predictions of the opinion polls and

the actual number of seats they bagged," according to RSS spokesman Ram Madhav.

The Sangh's influence on the elections was particularly strong in Madhya Pradesh, where, according to its leaders, the polls had assumed the form of a "battle" between the RSS and Chief Minister Digvijay Singh. Incensed with him ever since he tried to clamp down on a massive Hindu sammelan organised by the RSS in the tribal Jhabua district in 2000, cadres from various Parivar outfits worked overtime to bring about the downfall of the Congress government.

## SAFFRON SMILES

The saffron flag flies high in three of the four states that went to the polls on Monday. The victories of the Bharatiya Janata Party are convincing and pregnant with messages for the BJP, the Congress and the overall political scenario in northern India. The BJP entered the campaign without what has always been the most important item on its ideological agenda: *Hindutva*. The party leadership kept aside communal and divisive issues, and focussed on development, governance and the ability to rule. These have been the three pillars of the tenure of Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who has tried, since the day he assumed office, to underplay the Hindu fundamentalist image of the BJP. He has tried to project his party as the party of governance and to position it as a viable replacement of the Congress of yore. This was reflected in the campaigning and has come up trumps as the election results amply demonstrate. This achievement notwithstanding, it will be facile to see the election results as a triumph only of Mr Vajpayee and his line. The victories are rooted in the work done by the foot-soldiers of the party and by the campaign managers in the three provinces. They played on the incumbency and the fatigue factors and was able to convince the electorate that a BJP government once installed would be better on performance and delivery. It is significant that in the only state which the Congress has retained, Delhi, the voters have favoured a chief minister who delivered and was committed to a programme of improvement. These were elections in which achievement or lack of it counted for more than ideology.

The focus on development and governance has important implications for the BJP. It shows to the faithful that religion is not the only vote-winner in Indian politics. It is conceivable that in the general elections next year, for which these assembly elections were only a dry run, religion and fanaticism will take back seats. Mr Vajpayee would like to project the BJP under his leadership as the only party capable of providing a stable and reasonably efficient government. This will also enable him to cement further the National Democratic Alliance. These state-level victories give Mr Vajpayee and his supporters a strong enough perch within the BJP to ignore the *Hindutva* hardliners and to make them irrelevant to the outcome of elections. If the BJP succeeds in this, it would have brought Indian democracy out of its adolescent shell to maturity.

The Congress can only stand by and watch its sails being taken away by the BJP. Under Ms Sonia Gandhi, the Congress is a party without an agenda. Like water, confusion also always flows downwards. The leadership's lack of direction is reflected in the failure of the campaign. The Congress is the originator of economic reforms, but it still swears by Nehruvianism. It claims to be secular, but does not hesitate to campaign around a soft-*Hindutva* banner. It is an upholder of democracy, that refuses to disown the Emergency and owes allegiance to a family. Yesterday's party of governance is today's also-ran.

'EXIT' CALL SETS BIG TWO THINKING

# BJP mulls shift to Shukla



Sudeesh K Verma  
in New Delhi

Dec. 2. — With most exit polls saying the Chhattisgarh verdict will be too close to call, the BJP is mulling its strategy. The party may accept NCP leader Mr VC Shukla as the chief minister if he gets enough numbers to swing the Assembly equation in the BJP's favour. The party, however, may ask him to join the BJP with his MLAs, sources said.

After Mr Dilip Singh Judeo's fall, the BJP doesn't have a leader of stature for the chief minister's post and to fight Mr Ajit Jogi. Since Mr Shukla is unlikely to have the numbers to

become chief minister on his own, he could join the BJP to prevent Mr Jogi from returning to power if the Congress runs short of numbers.

There is also some discussion on whether Mr Shukla could be offered the chief minister's chair even if the BJP gets a simple majority.

Mr Shukla's predicament could be a split in his party as he isn't slated to win more than 10 seats. If Chhattisgarh produces a cliffhanger, the NCP could play a crucial role. The BJP fears Mr Jogi will do everything to wean away the NCP MLAs.

BJP leaders also fear that Mr Shukla could support the Congress if the party leadership decides to replace Mr Jogi with Mr Shukla's brother, Mr Shyama Charan Shukla.

Meanwhile, confident of victory after positive predictions by various exit polls, Miss Uma Bharati has embarked on a pilgrimage to shrines in the south.

## Congress looks at Rajasthan sans Gehlot

Vijay Thakur  
in New Delhi



Dec. 2. — In Rajasthan, a nervous Congress may dump Mr Ashok Gehlot if the exit poll surveys which have predicted a hung Assembly come true. According to sources, Mr Gehlot will be found wanting if a substantial number of MLAs have to be won over and the task may be left to one of the powerful local satraps.

"Cost" and "caste politics" will play a major role in forming the next government. Not surprisingly, some of the chief ministerial aspirants have already started sending feelers to Independents who are potential "winners". "Caste and cost will decide who'll be the chief minister. The leader who fits both roles will rule the state if there is a hung House," a senior leader said.

"We're confident of getting a majority, but we see no harm in sending feelers to Independents who've scope of winning," another leader said, admitting that his party has done so. "This doesn't mean we are going in for horse trading, but we want to add more legislators to our party, which every party would like for a strong government. It could be an alliance, or support from outside — even if we get a majority," he said.

THE STATESMAN

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# Code red: EC puts BJP on notice

9-1  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK 1/12

**New Delhi:** The Election Commission (EC) on Sunday issued a show-cause notice to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) asking it to explain why action should not be taken against it for distributing on Saturday night pamphlets in tourism ministry bags in the Gole Market constituency here. Poonam Azad, wife of BJP MP and former cricketer Kirti Azad, is pitted against Delhi chief minister Shiela Dikshit in the constituency.

While the BJP has been asked to reply to the notice within three days, another notice has been sent to Ms Azad and she has been asked to reply within 24 hours. The notices came hours before polling began on Monday.

The EC's decision followed complaints from the Congress that central government publicity material and BJP pamphlets were distributed in the constituency in violation of the model code of conduct. Appeals to vote for Ms Azad were made by tourism minister Jagmohan and Mr Azad, the Congress complained.

The EC said that on inquiring into the complaint, it found that tourism ministry materials were distributed in the constituency. The EC said it was of the view

that these materials were distributed among voters to "promote Poonam Azad's prospects at government cost in violation of the model code". The notice to the BJP said that if it failed to respond within three days, "it will be presumed that the party has nothing to say in the matter and the EC will take appropriate action or decision without further reference to the party".

In its notice to Ms Azad, the EC asked her to state or clarify whether tourism ministry materials were printed or distributed to voters under her authority and, if so, whether the expenditure in this regard had been accounted for in the account of election expenses kept by her. The EC added, "If no reply is received from you within the stipulated time, it would be presumed that the printing/distribution of the above materials, and the expenditure in respect thereof, have been made without your authorisation and further action would be taken as per the law, without any further reference to you."

**PJI adds:** The BJP on Sunday night said it was examining the notice issued to the party and Ms Azad. "We are examining the EC notice and after that we will reply accordingly," said party spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi.

**ELECTION  
2003**



# Jaitley sees Jogi hand behind Judeo scam

P R Ramesh  
RAIPUR 28 NOVEMBER

**W**ITH just a day left for the electioneering to close, BJP stepped up its attack on Chattisgarh chief minister Ajit Jogi in a clear attempt to chip away at his legitimacy and whip up sympathy for itself over the alleged frame-up of Dilip Singh Judeo

BJP which has been playing the "victim", on Friday ratcheted up the attack, fielding union law minister Arun Jaitley for a last-minute offensive inspired by what the party strategists call "positive feedback from the grassroots".

Taking time off his primary assignment as the spearhead for

BJP's Madhya Pradesh campaign, Mr Jaitley reached Raipur on Friday to drive home the point that the episode was planned, funded and executed by the Chattisgarh chief minister and the Akash Channel, widely perceived to be controlled by the Jogi clan.

At the crowded press meet, the Union minister, who relied on media reports about the breakthrough that the CBI has made in the case, said those who hatched the plot have close links with the chief minister. "It was carried out by a team comprising Rajat Prasad, director of Akash Channel and Rohit Prasad, the CEO of the channel. Email communications from Amit Jogi to his friends clearly



JAITLEY: SEEING RED

point him up as the de facto honcho of the channel. It is surprising that no one is taking credit for the expose," the minister said.

The decision to squeeze the press conference in Mr Jaitley's

gruelling MP campaign schedule was prompted by the in-house assessment about improvement in BJP's prospects in Chattisgarh. The campaign managers feel that Judeo gate has failed to stick to the BJP and are now working to transform the embarrassment into an opportunity to corner Mr Jogi.

Mr Jaitley, who brought the chief minister directly in the firing line, said Rajat Prasad's family runs a private finance company, R.R. Finance, in New Delhi's Indraprastha Building and the relationship between the two may not be restricted to just running of Akash channel.

As is known, many of those allegedly involved in the VCD expose are known to have been

close to the Jogi clan. There have also been reports saying that the protagonists — Rohit Chaudhary, Arvind Vijay Mohan and Shekhar Singh were in regular touch with these men?

Mr Jaitley appeared to be challenging Mr Jogi to own up these contacts when he asked "Who are these men?"

Mr Jaitley, complimented the newspaper which broke the story, but also wondered why the identity of the persons who carried out the exercise is being kept secret. "Is it because the source of the story is a source of embarrassment." His full scale assault on the chief minister also involved the accusation that Mr Jogi subverted every institution of governance.

# BJP lashes out, demands apology

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Nov. 22:** Stung by Congress allegations that six of its ministers had "milked" public sector units, the BJP today demanded that it apologise to the nation, the President, the BJP and its ministers as the central vigilance commission had denied the accusations.

At its daily briefing, the BJP distributed photocopies of an agency report in which vigilance commissioner P. Shanker had denied the allegations against the ministers.

Raking up Sonia Gandhi's foreign origins, the BJP said the Congress was indulging in a "spit and run" policy and "mak-

ing charges like this" because it faced poll defeat in four states.

"With the central vigilance commissioner clearing all those who have been accused by the Congress, that party owes an apology to President, the entire nation, six central ministers and the BJP for giving a false memorandum to the President," BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu said.

"This has clearly exposed the Congress' bankruptcy and such an action does not behove a national party like the Congress," Naidu added.

He charged the party with needlessly involving the highest constitutional authority in its politics by submitting a memorandum based on "sheer

gossip and speculation".

The BJP also decided to counter the "misinformation campaign" that the Centre had discriminated against Congress-ruled states by not releasing adequate foodgrain to tide over the drought conditions. It said lakhs of tonnes of foodgrain had been supplied to these states and it would release relevant data in a day or two.

Naidu said instead of indulging in "cheap propaganda and raking up non-issues", the Congress "would do well to explain its own silence on the scams and the substantiated charges being made against its four state governments, specially those of Maharashtra and Karnataka on the Telgi

stamp scam issue."

In a bid to turn the tables on the Congress, Naidu said: "Jogi says that only an *asli Chhattisgarhi* should become the chief minister of the state thus attracting a response that only an *asli Bharatiya* should become Prime Minister of India."

"In Rajasthan, Gehlot has raked up parochial feelings by charging Vasundhara Raje with being an outsider even though she has won four elections from Jhalawar and the distance between Jhalawar and Jaipur is far less than the distance between Delhi and Rome. Gehlot appears to have also forgotten that Gwalior, where Scindia was born, is in the heartland of India."

On Madhya Pradesh chief

minister Digvijay Singh questioning BJP's chief ministerial candidate Uma Bharti's educational qualifications, Naidu said Singh was again conveniently forgetting that the educational qualifications of his party's prime ministerial candidate were yet to be known.

Quoting a report from a Rajasthan daily, Naidu said Sonia, while addressing an election rally at Karori, appealed to the people to vote for the Congress on November 20, the day Mizoram went to polls.

Poking fun, the BJP chief said her speechwriters had got mixed up and the speech meant for Mizoram was read out in Rajasthan.

"It is strange that the Con-

gress party raises such issues which in fact embarrasses their own party president. This approach for narrow political gains will have a telling effect on prospects and future of Congress party," Naidu said.

Targeting the Congress for corruption, he said their governments in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra "are sitting pretty on the negative reports of the Lok Ayukta on their ministers."

He said the Congress leaders, instead of going to the President, should have gone to Sonia and requested her to direct the two scam-riddled state governments to hand over the Rs 30,000 crore Telgi stamp scam probe to the CBI.



# Tehelka rerun stings BJP

## Taped 'evidence' of Union minister taking bribe

HT Correspondents  
Raipur/New Delhi, November 16

*HT 17/11*  
**THE SUNDAY Express** report implicating Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests Dilip Singh Judeo in a graft case sent the BJP into fire-fighting mode on Sunday. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, who returned from abroad on Sunday night, said a probe was under way and Judeo will be punished if found guilty. But he was non-committal on a CBI probe. The minister has been summoned to New Delhi.

Meanwhile, rattled by the expose, the BJP went into an aggressive denial campaign. Though Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani refused to comment, Judeo and other party leaders said the videotape showing the minister taking a bribe was fabricated. The Congress said Judeo should be dismissed and arrested.

In its Sunday edition, *The Express* newspaper said Judeo had taken a bribe to give mining rights in Chhattisgarh and Orissa to an Australian company, on the basis of a videotape that showed him accepting bundles of cash. In Raipur, Judeo held a press conference, denying the charges of corruption and refusing to resign from the Union

ministry. The minister alleged that Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi had "hatched the conspiracy" to defame him. Judeo said the videotape was "fabricated" with the help of an international Christian lobby to spoil the BJP's chances in the coming elections.

The Election Commission, however, refused to take *suo motu* cognisance of the incident. "On the face of it, the incident does not appear to be a violation of the model code of conduct," an EC source said. No action will be taken till a formal complaint is lodged. No one has done that yet.

AICC general secretary Ambika Soni dismissed the BJP's allegations and spelt out three demands. A case must be registered against Judeo under the Prevention of Corruption Act and he must be arrested. Second, Judeo must be sacked from the government. And third, all evidence in the case must be immediately secured to prevent any damage.

Meanwhile, a gang attacked the house of *The Express's* special correspondent Ashwani Sharma in Raipur in the evening, throwing stones and eggs and shouting abuse at the newspaper. They ran away after the police arrived.

Related report on Page 4

### THE MAN IN THE DOCK



#### The case

► Bribery charge against Dilip Singh Judeo, Union minister of state for environment & forests

#### The evidence

► Videotape shows him accepting money

#### His defence

► It's a conspiracy by the Congress and Christians

#### The fallout

► Big blow to BJP a fortnight ahead of the Assembly polls

#### What now

► Judeo summoned to Delhi. PM to decide his fate

## MINISTER QUESTIONS AUTHENTICITY OF VCD

# 'Expose' on Judev puts BJP in a fix

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 16.** The controversy generated by a video compact disk (VCD) purportedly showing the Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Dilip Singh Judev — dubbed as the BJP's chief ministerial candidate in Chhattisgarh — accepting cash in an 'expose' by *The Indian Express* today has come as a bombshell in the run-up to Assembly elections in five States. (Mr. Judev was shown allegedly taking money from men who claimed they needed "help" in obtaining mining rights within Chhattisgarh and Orissa.)

The VCD, if authenticated, would deal yet another blow to the political establishment in the manner of the thelka.com tapes that exposed alleged corruption in defence deals. The thelka.com tapes cost the then

BJP president, Bangaru Laxman, his job as he was 'seen' on a videotape accepting cash and keeping it in his drawer. The latest 'expose', coming just a fortnight before Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi go to the polls to elect new Assemblies, has raised the temperature in the political arena as the two traditional rivals — the BJP and the Congress — are pitched in a keen electoral tussle in these States.

Though the authenticity of the VCD has been questioned by the Minister and the BJP who described it as "doctored and fabricated", the 35-minute VCD, which was played by all the major private television news channels throughout the day, shows Mr. Judev accepting what looks like wads of currency notes. He is then shown keeping the cash on the sofa next to him.

Mr. Rateria and centres around distribution of tickets for the coming Assembly polls. Mr. Rateria is also seen talking at length on his cellular phone. It appears that there are more than two persons in the room, possibly in a hotel, as a couple of times a waiter is seen entering. Noise from a television set and the rustling of papers is heard on the VCD.

The recording is steady and the film has been shot entirely from one angle. Twenty-three minutes into the recording a man appears in the room offering cash to Mr. Judev who then receives it and utters a few words stressing that money was not less important than God. The cash is left on the sofa for a few minutes and then a man appears and keeps it in a polythene bag. The room is seen empty for some time but noises of conversation, possibly over

dinner, are heard. Towards the end — 34th and 35th minutes — the cash is transferred to a bigger paper bag, and both the Minister and his assistant personal secretary are seen leaving the room. The brief conversation with the other man in the room refers to mining licences in Chhattisgarh and Orissa and words such as "MNCs" are dropped.

A brief note, appended along with the VCD by *The Indian Express*, said that the visuals published in today's edition were prints of frames from the VCD. "Upholding transparency in the public interest and in tune with the unique *Express* tradition of fairness and accuracy, the 35-minute CD is being released actively in the form in which it was received — without any editing," the note said.

**Cong. seeks dismissal:**  
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# Sudarshan blasts Christian missionaries

THE STATESMAN

10 NOV 2007

Statesman News Service

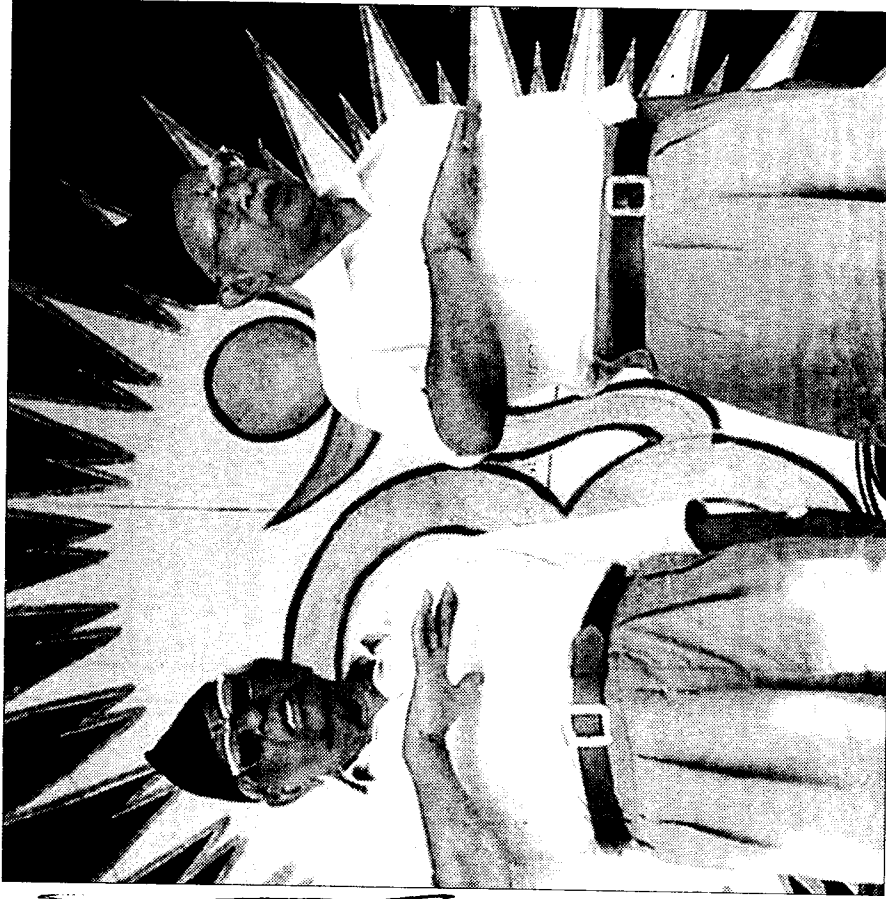
RANCHI, Nov. 9. — RSS chief Mr KS Sudarshan today lashed out at Christian missionaries for allegedly trying to target tribals and those from the weaker sections of society, and providing inducements to them to convert to Christianity.

While addressing RSS cadres in Ranchi, Mr Sudarshan said the missionaries, after being successful in the North-east, were targeting Jharkhand since a major chunk of population in the state lives below the poverty line. He blamed international politics for denying the economically backward sections of the society the right to exercise their franchise.

On the issue of Naxalism, Mr Sudarshan felt that Naxalite outfits do not have a specific goal, and only go about killing innocent people and create trouble among villagers. He said political parties, especially those parties in the Opposition, are providing whole-hearted support to Naxalite outfits.

The RSS chief said the need of the hour is to work towards development. Mounting a scathing attack on Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Sudarshan said Gandhi's biggest mistake was making Jawaharlal Nehru the Prime Minister of India. He said Mr Nehru did not work towards the development of villages and made no changes in the policies framed by the British.

Mr Sudarshan said the present government was trying its best for rural development and allocation of Rs 6,500 crore by the Planning Commission for the development of villages was a step in the right direction.



Mr KS Sudarshan (right) with an RSS leader in Ranchi on Sunday. — PTI

569 10/11

# BJP names 72 candidates for Chhattisgarh polls

By Neena Vyas

110-11  
2/11

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 6.** The Bharatiya Janata Party today declared the names of 72 candidates for the Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, which has a total of 90 seats. With no official announcement on the party's chief ministerial candidate, some of its top leaders in the State who are currently Members of Parliament may not contest the elections at all.

The party State unit president, Raman Singh, today said a decision had been taken that Dilip Singh Judev, Ramesh Bains (both Union ministers), Karuna Shukla (a niece of the Prime Minister) and he himself would not contest the polls. The BJP general secretary and party spokesperson, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, indicated that the decision was part of the strategy to allow them to move around the State freely and campaign "everywhere" instead of being tied down to their constituencies.

However, the Leader of the Opposition, Nand Kumar Sai, BJP's chief tribal leader, will seek re-election from Tapkara, a reserved tribal seat.

Other party sources disclosed that one of the senior State leaders would be asked to contest against the Chief Minister, Ajit Jogi. The person who would challenge Mr. Jogi would depend on the constituency from where he would decide to contest.

A senior BJP leader has already hinted that Mr.

Judev could be the party's choice for Chief Minister but the party has refrained from declaring this as it fears that the Congress would unleash a tribal versus non-tribal campaign.

Mr. Judev, who was wearing an olive green shirt and trousers — almost like a military uniform — was quite uninhibited when he affirmed that religious conversions would be a main issue in the State.

"Mr. Jogi was sent here as Chief Minister to help spread Christianity, to help those who are engaged in conversion of tribals... if our party comes to power, we will stop all that, and within a week 'ghar vapasi' (home-coming) programmes will be started to bring back to the Hindu fold those who had been converted," Mr. Judev said.

"Lakhs of Hindus are cutting their 'chotis' (length of hair) and are hanging crosses instead... I will stop that." And then, ironically, he told some reporters that when he was installed as a Union Minister, the Prime Minister had warned him: "*Apni vani par sayam rakhen* (keep control over what you say)."

The BJP's list of 72 includes 21 of the 22 sitting MLAs. One legislator was not re-nominated as he was not well, Mr. Naqvi said. The list has five women candidates, nine Scheduled Caste and 28 Scheduled Tribe candidates. Two of the ST candidates will contest from the general category seats — Shakuntala Singh from Pamgarh and Pritam Singh Diwan from Khallari.

# BJP pits Shivraj against Diggy

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI, 3 NOVEMBER

**T**HE BJP on Monday attempted to encircle Mr Digvijay Singh, perceived to be popular in his home turf of Raghogarh, by pitting party general secretary Shivraj Singh Chauhan against him.

The BJP hopes the candidature of Mr Chauhan, MP representing Vidisha for the past 13 years will force the chief minister to sweat it out in Raghogarh. The party's chief ministerial candidate Ms Uma Bharti, who de-

scribed Mr Chauhan as a leader having the credibility and stature to take on Mr Singh, will be seeking election from the Bada Malara constituency.

The announcement of the candidates for these two key constituencies were part of the 137 seats in the 230 member Assembly cleared by the BJP's central election committee. The BJP, which has tried to put its winning foot forward, has also decided to refuse nominations to around 35% of its sitting MLAs. The process could see stalwarts in the state

unit like Krishna Murari Mughe, a powerful former general secretary, being denied a nomination. The plan is to extract the maximum out of the incumbency disadvantage facing the Congress. At the same time the BJP wishes to ensure that its own non-popular leaders do not interfere in this process.

The party, which has put winnability as the prime criterion for awarding nominations, may not accommodate the demands of Union ministers, Vikram Verma and Sumitra Mahajan, to accommodate their

sons in the candidate list. The party has also fielded formidable candidates against Digvijay Singh's key Cabinet colleagues deputy chief minister Subhash Yadav, Sajjan Singh Verma and K.P. Singh. While a former MP will be seeking election against Mr Yadav, the party has fielded a former IPS officer Panna Lal against Sajjan Singh Verma.

Mr K.P. Singh, will find the going tough in the Lodh-dominated Pichhore constituency where the BJP has fielded Ms Uma Bharti's brother Swami Prasad Lodhi.



# BJP finalises first list for Madhya Pradesh

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, NOV. 3. The Bharatiya Janata Party today declared the names of its candidates for 139 of a total of 230 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh while trying hard to arrive at some understanding with the Samata Samaj Party of Phool Singh Baraiya who had broken away from the Bahujan Samaj Party to form a separate party five days ago.

Although, officially, the BJP leaders have said that they were not looking for any alliance in any form, Kailash Joshi, president of the Madhya Pradesh State party unit, told *The Hindu* that "for reasons of strategy we have not declared candidates for more seats today... we are in touch with Baraiya... if something works out we could leave seats for him."

The biggest surprise for the ruling Congress is that the BJP has decided to challenge the Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, in his constituency, Raghogarh. The party's general secretary, Shivraj Singh Chauhan, will contest against him and the BJP leaders have pointed out that he will "tie him down to this constituency" as Mr. Chauhan can be sure of some 30,000 votes of his own community while the party's chief ministerial candidate, Uma Bharti, could attract the roughly 20,000 backward caste votes.

However, reacting quickly to the BJP's decision, Mr. Singh welcomed the "challenge" in the form of Mr. Chauhan who has been a youth wing leader of the BJP. "He is most welcome," Mr. Singh said with a smile.

Ms. Bharti herself will contest from Bada Malara in Chattarpur district, the general secretary in-charge of elections, Pramod Mahajan, said.

The constituency is not part of the two parliamentary constituencies Ms. Bharati has represented — earlier Khajuraho and, currently, Bhopal. Clearly, there are good reasons for her not wanting to contest from a segment of her own constituency. Apparently, to prevent faction fights from breaking out — the party has been able to put up a united show in the State so far — all the 58 sitting MLAs in the 139 seats for which candidates were declared today have been accommodated with a few allowed to change their consti-

tuency. Mr. Mahajan said the central election committee meeting chaired by the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, at the Prime Minister's residence here today cleared the list.

He was confident that the rest of the Madhya Pradesh list, and candidates for Rajasthan and Delhi, would be cleared tomorrow and the day after.

All the names declared today were "unanimously recommended" by the State election committee, making the task of the CEC that much easier, Mr. Mahajan added.

A notable absentee at the meeting was the former BJP president, Kushabhau Thakre, whose writ has run in the party in the State for over 50 years, since its Jana Sangh days. "Ill health" was cited as the reason for his absence.

A big lacuna in the list — which the party has promised to fill in the subsequent list — is that very few women have been nominated.

Only nine women candidates, including Ms. Bharti, figure in a list of 139, but there are 24 Scheduled Castes and 29 Scheduled Tribes candidates.

The Prime Minister's nephew who is a sitting MLA, Anoop Mishra, has been allowed to change his constituency from Lashkar West (which he currently represents) to Lashkar East (which he will contest); Mr. Kailash Joshi's son, Deepak Joshi, has been accommodated in Bagli, the former Chief Minister, V.N. Saklecha's son, Om Prakash Saklecha, has been given the ticket from Javad, while the son of the former MP, Laxminarain Pandey, Rajendra Pandey, has been cleared as the party candidate from Jawara. Apparently, this was part of the exercise for peace making among different groups.

## Narasimha Rao hospitalised

NEW DELHI, NOV. 3. The former Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, has been admitted to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences following severe backache. Mr. Rao was admitted on November 1 and would stay there for a couple of days, his office said today. — PTI

# Atal, Advani & Modi lead BJP line-up

## RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

**New Delhi, Oct. 29:** The BJP has drawn up an itinerary for its top three campaign leaders in the run-up to the Assembly elections.

From November 18 to 24, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee will travel to poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Delhi and address 14 public meetings. His deputy L.K. Advani will spend an additional three days on the election trail and Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi will be out of Gandhinagar for 10 days.

The decision was taken at a strategy session this morning at

the residence of BJP general secretary and overall election in-charge Pramod Mahajan.

Advani later told reporters that "good governance" would be the poll's principal campaign plank. BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu seconded the proposal, saying: "Elections will be fought not just on (the basis of) personalities but big issues like the feel-good factor generated by the NDA government."

But the campaign schedule leaves little doubt that the Prime Minister is still the party's USP.

The BJP decided that the leaders would address only one meeting a day in a particular state and then fly to another.

Having decided to allow its chief ministerial candidates to contest the elections, sources said, the BJP is likely to field Vasundhara Raje from an Assembly segment of Jhalawad, her parliamentary constituency. Madan Lal Khurana will probably contest from a segment in his Sadar Lok Sabha constituency while Uma Bharti has been asked to identify a seat of her choice.

However, the Chhattisgarh issue still remains unresolved. The state has three prospective candidates — Dilip Singh Judeo, Ramesh Bais and Raman Singh. "None of them is a tribal so we don't want to project a chief minister as the fight will be convert-

ed into a tribal versus non-tribal one," a source said.

Among the decisions made today were that no MP, barring the chief ministerial nominees, would be allowed to contest. The BJP was reportedly inundated with applications from Lok Sabha MPs looking to secure their political future by bagging an Assembly seat, now that the present Lok Sabha term is about to end.

Leaders attending today's session felt that sitting legislators should be renominated to stave off a rebellion. "We are in the Opposition in all these states. It is to the credit of the sitting MLAs that they bucked the nega-

tive trend against the BJP in the last elections and wrested their seats. How can we deny them tickets?" a source asked.

At a post-Diwali lunch hosted by Khurana, Advani said: "From 1997, our effort has been to shift the focus of election campaigns from political issues to governance. Our message to the voter was if the incumbent party has given you a good government, return it to power. If not, vote for change. We have gained some success because even Opposition parties have started talking of governance."

Naidu rubbished the findings of a recent pre-poll survey that projected the Congress as being

comfortably placed in Rajasthan and Delhi, trailing in Madhya Pradesh and neck-and-neck with the BJP in Chhattisgarh.

"The BJP will win all four states, including Delhi, because of the feel-good sentiment for the Centre and the anti-incumbency wave against the Congress-ruled governments," the BJP president declared.

BJP sources, however, sounded less optimistic and said that while Madhya Pradesh was a "sure shot victory", Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh were "dicey" and Delhi, "not good". In Rajasthan, the sources added, the BJP never secured a majority even at the best of times.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 OCT 2000

30 OCT 2000

# Defiant VHP on collision course

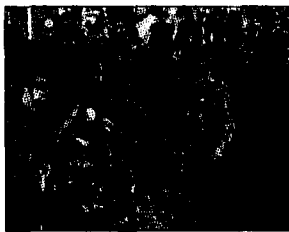
Vijay Sharma  
Ayodhya, October 16

JUST WHEN the Centre and the Uttar Pradesh governments looked set to arrive at a working solution for Friday's Sankalp Sammelan at Ayodhya, the VHP's stubborn refusal to change its original plan put a question mark on the law and order situation in the state and elsewhere on Friday.

Earlier, the Uttar Pradesh government seemed to be buckling under pressure from the Centre to reach an understanding with the VHP that would allow its members a *darshan* of Lord Ram 5 km from the disputed site in Ayodhya. Stating that he didn't want any confrontation with the Centre on the issue, Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had said security forces in Ayodhya and elsewhere in the state would not fire a single shot on Ram *bhakts* and allow them to offer prayers "peacefully".

But the VHP continues to be rigid on holding the Sankalp Sammelan at Ramsewakpuram — a pro-

**No deal on darshan**



**UP GOVT** No Sankalp Sammelan. VHP leaders can assemble 5 km from the disputed site. Not more than 4,000 activists would be taken in groups to Ayodhya for darshan, but not allowed to stay at the temple town

**VHP** Unacceptable. Sammelan will be held in its original form and at the original venue

gramme that the Mulayam Singh government is dead against.

A breakthrough of sorts came after daylong consultations between state and central officials. As per the 'partial' deal, VHP leaders could assemble at the Saket College instead of Ramsewakpuram and not more

than 4,000 detained activists would be taken in groups to Ayodhya from Faizabad, Sultanpur, Barabanki, Basti and Gonda jails and freed after darshan. But they won't be allowed to stay at the temple town.

The VHP, however, was adamant that the proposals were unacceptable. Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas president Nriya Gopal Das and Nyas member Ram Vilas Vedanti said the VHP would go ahead with its scheduled programme of holding the Sammelan at the Ramsewakpuram and then proceed for *darshan*.

Das said he had discussed the issue with almost all senior VHP leaders, including Ashok Singhal and Pancham Rai, and all of them said the VHP should not change its earlier programme or venue. Faizabad Commissioner J.P. Sharma maintained that no permission for any meeting had been sought.

The police have sealed off all roads leading to Ramsewakpuram. VHP chief Ashok Singhal has already reached Ayodhya.

# BJP stars outshine Bollywood names in poll call

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. — The BJP does not want the Bollywood Khan brigade to steal the thunder from its own stars — Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and his deputy Mr LK Advani — on the election campaign trail. The party's campaign bandwagon is not going to be driven by Bollywood star power in the run-up to the coming elections in five states.

The BJP today strongly refuted reports that it has roped in a slew of Bollywood stars, including Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Aamir Khan, Rani Mukherjee and Juhi Chawla, to canvass for votes in the four Congress-ruled states — Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh.

"We will not use any Khan or Pran (yesteryear star baddie) or *sundar sundariyan* (beautiful people) in our election campaign," said BJP general secretary and spokesman Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi. He made it clear that "the BJP has neither discussed the participation of stars for electioneering, nor invited them to do so for the party".

The BJP said it perceives election campaign to be a "serious affair" and not an "entertainment campaign". "We have made our campaign strategies in accordance with this principle," Mr Naqvi said.



NO TAKERS: Salman Khan and Shah Rukh Khan

On this issue, the party will make the exception only for those screen and TV stars who have been associated with it for a long time. The party puts Shatrughan Sinha, Vinod Khanna, Hema Malini and Dara Singh in this category, saying it will have no problems if they campaign for its candidates.

The party does not believe that Bollywood star power could help it garner votes. "They can pull crowds, but the story ends there," said a senior party leader. "The masses flock to see them and demand their film dialogues, but ultimately the stars are not capable of influencing any voter."

The BJP leader also said even a helicopter in rural areas can attract crowds, but large turnouts do not necessarily translate into votes. "And, then there is the financial aspect," he said. "Buying stars for campaigning purpose is exorbitantly expensive, they charge lakhs of rupees for their appearances."

## Party to finalise candidates by 5 Nov

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. — The BJP is set to finalise its lists of candidates for the four states of Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh during its 3-5 November central election committee meeting to be held at Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's residence here.

Besides Mr Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani, the 17-member CEC headed by party chief Mr M Venkaiah Naidu comprises of a host of Union ministers. The party's CEC will hold

another meeting between 7-8 November to work out its poll strategies in the four states going to the polls on 1 December. The BJP's state election committees are required to send in their respective panels of candidates to the CEC before 3 November. The criteria for selection includes "winnability, image and popularity" in the Assembly constituency in question, BJP general secretary Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said. — SNS

## Election notification

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. — With the notification issued for the 20 November polls in Mizoram by Amolok Rattan Kohli, the ball was set rolling for the coming Assembly elections in all the five states today. The term of the 40-member House of Mizoram Assembly would expire on 7 December. While Mizoram would go to polls on 20 November, the other four states — Delhi, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh — would go to polls on 1 December. The notifications for the four states would be issued on 7 November. While counting of votes in Mizoram would take place on 2 December, for other four states it would be on 4 December. Electronic Voting Machines would be used in all the five states. In view of the festival season and the Constitutional requirement to have a new Assembly in each of the states on or before the term of the respective House expired, the EC decided to go in for a two-phased polling. Biennial polls: The EC has decided to hold biennial elections to 69 seats in legislative councils of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh on 1 December. While eight MLAs of Maharashtra would be retiring on 1 December, 25 members of Legislative Councils in Karnataka and 36 members in Uttar Pradesh would superannuate on 5 December and 15 December respectively. The EC has recommended to the Governors of these states to issue a notification on 7 November for poll purposes. Counting of votes would take place on 3 December. — SNS

RSS INTERVENES TO AVOID VHP-CENTRE CONFRONTATION

# PM reviews Ayodhya situation

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 14.** On a day of fast developments related to the situation in and around Ayodhya, the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, reviewed the situation this morning and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh intervened in support of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to try and avoid a confrontation between the Centre and the VHP.

The Minister of State for Home, Swami Chinmayanand, who is also a VHP activist, has been asked to "coordinate" with the outfit.

Matters came to a head on Monday evening itself after the VHP leader, Praveen Togadia, directly attacked Mr. Vajpayee and held out a warning that the country would be engulfed in communal riots if the "Ram bhakts" were stopped from having a "darshan" of the deity, Ram Lalla, in Ayodhya.

The RSS chief, K.S. Sudershan, talked to Mr. Vajpayee and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, over telephone. While expressing full support for the VHP programme, he asked the Government not to stop or divert trains to Ayodhya or in any way prevent VHP volunteers from reaching Ayodhya for their "sankalp" programme on October 17.

On Monday evening, Mr. Sudershan reportedly summoned Mr. Togadia and Ashok Singhal, another VHP leader, to the RSS headquarters here in Jhanda-wala. The Sangh chief apparently expressed annoyance with Mr. Togadia's open threat of communal violence.

At the same time, the VHP has been appealing to the RSS to come to its rescue by asking the Centre to withdraw what it considers "repressive measures" to prevent "Ram bhakts" from reaching Ayodhya.

This evening, another meeting took place between Mr. Togadia and RSS leaders, H.V. Seshadri and Madan Das Devi.

The Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, met Mr. Advani today as did Madan Das Devi and Ram Madhav, another RSS leader.

Later, Mr. Madhav said that "we fully support the VHP programme. We reiterate that the VHP programme will be peaceful. We have appealed to the Centre to restore train services to their normal schedule. Creation of hurdles in the way of those going to Ayodhya will create unnecessary tension."



'Ram bhakts' boarding a train in Ahmedabad on Tuesday to attend the VHP congregation in Ayodhya. — Reuters

He also added that once the train services were restored, "the onus will then be completely on the State Government," suggesting that it would then be the problem of the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Somewhat similar sentiments were expressed by the VHP secretary, Surendra Jain, who made

three demands: train services should be restored, the arrested "Ram bhakts" should be released — he said over 17,000 had been arrested or detained — and the Centre must withdraw its security forces. "If any untoward incident takes place, the Centre and the State Government would be responsible."

This morning Mr. Vajpayee,

Mr. Advani, the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, and the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, met

at the Prime Minister's residence and reviewed the Ayodhya situation at length. Officially, no information was available on what transpired.

However, it seems the main concern was how the developments would affect the coming

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at the Prime Minister's residence and reviewed the Ayodhya situation at length. Officially, no information was available on what transpired.

However, it seems the main concern was how the developments would affect the coming

schedules.

"It is festival season, and many people are travelling home, we do not want anyone to be disturbed or inconvenienced," an official of the Prime Minister's Office said.

However, the Centre may not withdraw the security forces as the State had sought them to help maintain law and order. Denial or withdrawal would in-

vite blame, an official explained.

The BJP cautiously avoided any direct criticism of Mr. Togadia or any VHP leader; its spokesperson pointedly saying that the party did not want to join issue with the VHP.

Not even the direct attack on Mr. Vajpayee could provoke the party into criticising Mr. Togadia. "We do not have to respond to everything and we do not take seriously Mr. Togadia's threat of communal violence... we should trust the VHP, as the Prime Minister said."

Those were the words of the BJP spokesperson, Prakash Javadekar.

Senior Home Ministry officials are taking stock of the security arrangements in the pilgrim town which has already been declared a "no-entry" zone for outsiders by the district administration. Paramilitary and Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel have been deployed in the town.

More reports on Page 11

## Senior VHP leaders may be arrested

**LUCKNOW, OCT. 14.** The Uttar Pradesh Government is contemplating a ban on the VHP programme in Ayodhya and the arrest of senior leaders of the organisation if they attempt to enter the State.

Senior VHP leaders, including its working president, Ashok Singhal, the vice-president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, and the general secretary, Praveen Togadia, would be arrested if they tried to enter Ayodhya or Luck-

"Ayodhya agitation" till the courts delivered their judgment on the issue.

Mr. Yadav said that since the VHP was "linked to the BJP", Mr. Vajpayee's advice to the organisation would certainly have an impact. The Prime Minister should stop the VHP from entering Ayodhya and ensure that the issue was left to the courts.

He claimed the VHP's programme lacked public support and even the saints were annoyed with the activ-

ities of the organisation. He appreciated the role of some 'sadhus' who were visiting Muslim dominated areas in Ayodhya to boost their morale and reassure them about their safety.

Mr. Yadav denied that the situation was tense in the temple town and refuted claims that over one lakh VHP activists had been detained. "The situation is fully normal in Ayodhya and only 6,000 people have been detained." — UNI

Mr. Advani, the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, and the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, met

at the Prime Minister's residence and reviewed the Ayodhya situation at length. Officially, no information was available on what transpired.

However, it seems the main concern was how the developments would affect the coming

# RSS follows VHP talk <sup>11</sup> on Ayodhya <sup>15/10</sup>

## Says situation could worsen if VHP activists are stopped

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** A day after VHP general-secretary Pravin Togadia said there could be communal riots if its activists were stopped from marching to Ayodhya, RSS spokesman Ram Madhav too talked about violence.

"The atmosphere could turn foul (*'vatavaran bigad sakta hai'*) if the state government represses the VHP activists. We don't want to create problems, but the state government would be held responsible for the violence," Madhav said on Tuesday.

Over the last two days, the RSS leadership has been in close consultation with the government. RSS chief K S Sudarshan, leaders H V Seshadri and others have been in touch with the PM and the Deputy PM.

Madandas Devi, joint general-secretary, according to sources, met the PM on Tuesday afternoon. Madhav met Advani to apprise him of the VHP's complaints of its activists being detained at railway stations and trains being diverted. Some RSS workers too have apparently been taken into preventive custody in UP.

The RSS's argument is

that the UP government has only been asked by the High Court to maintain law and order and not to arrest VHP activists.

The HC order said: "This court expects that the state government and the district administration, as also the authorised person, will pass necessary orders to regulate the behaviour of the crowd and not to allow any congregation on or around the disputed site and further they shall not permit any religious activity of any kind by anyone, either symbolic or actual, to take place."

### 300 more held in Kanpur

**Kanpur:** Continuing its offensive, the police on Tuesday arrested about 300 VHP activists on their way to Ayodhya at the railway station here.

A large number of VHP men from southern states, travelling in the Lucknow-bound Cochin Express, were rounded up as the train reached the Kanpur central station, the police said.

# VHP on warpath, Ayodhya on edge

HT Correspondent  
Lucknow, October 13

TENSION HUNG on Ayodhya like a menacing storm cloud on Monday, with police detaining 4,500 VHP activists marching towards the temple town to take part in the October 17 *sankalp divas* programme, senior Parishad leaders going underground to flee a statewide crackdown and Praveen Togadia warning the Prime Minister in Delhi that the nation could plunge into communal violence if Ram *bhakt*s are denied a peaceful *darshan* of Ram Lalla.

"The Vajpayee government should let Ram *bhakt*s reach Ayodhya and the Mulayam Singh government should allow them to have Ram Lalla's *darshan*. Otherwise, if the nation plunges into communal violence, the PM will be responsible," he said.

Asked if his remarks didn't amount to threats, Togadia said, "I am only apprising the government of the position". On why he was not targeting Advani, he said that Vajpayee,

## The gathering storm



- ▶ Twin towns sealed off
- ▶ VHP leaders go underground
- ▶ 4,500 VHP activists arrested
- ▶ UP deploys 120 companies of forces, Centre provides 80 companies
- ▶ Special vigil on rail routes to Faizabad

being the head of the government, must own responsibility for its actions. Reminded that deployment of forces was the home ministry's (read Advani's) job, Togadia shot back: "The PM has not stopped the repressive actions against Hindus. He should decide whether he is support-

ing Mulayam or the Ram *bhakt*s. People won't tolerate double standards".

Togadia's attack on Vajpayee comes just a day after the Prime Minister gave his outfit the benefit of the doubt. On Sunday, Vajpayee had said: "The VHP is saying it will go about it (the Ayodhya meeting) in a peaceful manner. We should have faith in what they say."

On the ground, security forces sealed off the twin towns of Ayodhya and Faizabad. UP additional DGP (law and order) Bua Singh and IG Lucknow V.N. Rai, who surveyed the arrangements, directed the forces to watch all "vulnerable points". Throughout the day, security forces stopped people streaming in from adjoining Barabanki, Gonda, Basti, Sultanpur, Gorakhpur and Bahraich. The state deployed 120 companies of security forces; the Centre provided 80.

A report from Mumbai said the families of the Godhra victims have urged Advani and Mulayam to ban the October 15 *rathayatra* to Ayodhya, fearing a repeat of the train carnage.

# Ayodhya charge of saffron brigade on

8. 8. 50 3 14/10

SNS & PTI

**LUCKNOW/ GANDHINA-** GAR, Oct. 13. — The Uttar Pradesh government today rounded up over 1,100 Ayodhya-bound VHP activists across the state even as it fortified the temple town, deploying paramilitary forces to thwart the saffron party's proposed rally on 7 October.

Nearly 450 people were packed up from trains at Ayodhya and Faizabad railway stations, 400 in Varanasi and 350 in Allahabad as authorities hinted seeking Army's aid help if the situation so warranted. With today's drive, nearly 4,000 karsevaks have been detained statewide.

Additional DGP (law and order) Mr Bua Singh said 100 companies of paratroopers had been deployed in Ayodhya and neighbouring areas. As authorities diverted trains and copped buses to prevent karsevaks from heading towards Ayodhya, VHP organising secretary Rahgavulu said in Allahabad that his organisation was determined to hold the 17 October rally even if the entire

state was converted into a jail. However, prohibitory orders have been imposed in Basti district and barriers set up to check the inflow of VHP activists from Faizabad. Senior police officers patrolled the sensitive places in the city as prohibitory orders were promulgated in Basti, Jaunpura and Sant Kabirnagar districts adjoining Faizabad.

Undeterred by all prohibitory orders, VHP activists left Gujrat in thousands for the Friday congregation at Ayodhya, shouting slogans: "Ram Lalla Hum Ayerge, Bhavya Mandir Baneyage" (We will come and build a grand temple for Ram) and "Kashmir ki Galian Sooni Hain, Pakistan Khooni Hai". Some 6,500 people boarded trains and other vehicles bound for Ram Lalla's territory. Gujrat is to send some 15,000-20,000 people to the rally, a VHP spokesman said.

In anticipation of the huge congregation, some eight trucks carrying "sukhadi" (sweets) have been dispatched from Gujrat, besides a huge quantity of milk powder, wheat and rice for the kar sevaks.



NO COMEBACK: Kar Sevaks detained by police on their way to Ayodhya relax at a camp in Allahabad on Monday. — PTI



# Joshi petition: BJP in fix

By Srawan Shukla  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Lucknow:** The review petition being planned by the accused, including Murlu Manohar Joshi, to challenge the September 19 verdict of the Rae Bareilly special court in the Babri masjid demolition case, threatens to act as a double-edged sword that takes the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) infighting into the courtroom.



M.M. Joshi

the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) infighting into the courtroom.

The court gave the CBI permission to frame charges against BJP leaders Mr Joshi, Uma Bharati and Vinay Katiyar and VHP leaders Ashok Singhal, Giriraj Kishore, Vishnu Hari Dalmia and Sadhvi Rithambhara. However, it acquitted deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani.

Filing a review petition may not be easy for Mr Joshi and the others, as it would amount to hitting Mr Advani directly. Ironically, the defence would be doing the prosecution's job, because the CBI is yet to decide on whether to

file a review petition.

"Clearly, this would mean challenging Mr Advani's acquittal, or, in other words, raking up those points on which the Rae Bareilly court exonerated Mr Advani, but allowed the framing of charges against Mr Joshi and the others," said a former CBI counsel.

Although Mr Joshi has announced his decision to go ahead with a review petition, the BJP is yet to take a final decision on the matter. The issue is likely to be discussed on

Monday with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who is also yet to accept Mr Joshi's resignation as Union human resources development minister.

Mr Joshi's resignation letter has already fuelled bickering within the BJP.

Mr Joshi's counsel, Mridul Rakesh, has discussed the review petition with the Union minister. "Our petition is almost ready, but I have yet to get a final word from my client," Mr Rakesh told TNN.

Mr Rakesh, who is also counsel for Ms Bharati and Ms Ritambhara, was in Delhi for two days. It is learnt that both Ms Bharati and Ms Ritambhara have given their go-ahead for filing the petition.

**BABRI  
CASE**

# Joshi meets Atal, moves High Court

9-13-89 11:1 23/9

## Decision on resignation after talks with Advani

**HT Correspondents**  
New Delhi/Lucknow, Sept 29

HRD MINISTER Murli Manohar Joshi moved the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court on Monday, challenging the Rae Bareilly special court's decision to charge him in the Babri Masjid demolition case. He also met the Prime Minister, reportedly to discuss the circumstances under which he had resigned.

There was no official word on the PM's stance or what had transpired at the meeting, but Joshi is understood to have criticised the BJP establishment's conduct after the court's decision to charge him with six others but discharge Deputy PM L.K. Advani. BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan met the PM after the meeting.

BJP sources said that though Vajpayee's reluctance to spell out his stand on Joshi's resignation may be unlinked to any development in the High Court, a stay on the lower court's decision — before the actual framing of charges against Joshi on October 10 — could facilitate a rejection of his resignation.

Joshi's case before the Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court is that the court should not have charged him when it had let Advani off, because the charges against both of them were similar.

As he put it, the special court's approach had been far from judicial, because it had applied Sec-

tion 32 of Indian Penal Code (illegal omissions) against him, though his case stood completely at par with that of co-accused Advani, who had been discharged.

Joshi said the special court had committed a judicial error in ignoring the total non-compliance of the mandatory provisions contained in Section 129 of CrPC.

Seeking a stay on the proceedings, the HRD minister pleaded that he had not delivered any speech on the fateful day and was prevented from moving away. He also said that the special court's reliance on the testimony of media people was improper, because the media always tried to colour and spice up stories.

Joshi said the lower court should have "pursued and read the speech of each individual accused and formed its own opinion rather than accept a witness's claim that leaders present on the *manch* (platform) made provocative speeches."

Vajpayee and Advani had said Joshi need not resign over the case, which would be fought both legally and politically. Joshi is believed to have pointed out to the PM that the BJP establishment had kept him in the dark on the party's strategy on the Ayodhya case. He is reported to have sought a change in the party's consultative mechanism and involvement of all sections of partymen in the decision making process.

# Joshi piles temple plea on PM plate

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 27: Murli Manohar Joshi is likely to move Allahabad High Court on Monday for a review of the Rae Bareilly court's order of frame charges against him in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

Sources close to Joshi, who quit as human resources development minister after the verdict, said the appeal would be made only on his behalf. It will not be a collective plea for the other 10-accused — including VHP leaders Vishnu Hari Dalmiya, Ashok Singhal and Acharya Giriraj Kishore and the BJP's Jma Bharti and Vinay Katiyar — because the verdict treated them as separate entities.

BJP sources believe the main reason why Joshi has decided to file a review petition is to get a stay order, which would make it easier for the Prime Minister to reject his resignation.

Officially, the BJP's stand is Joshi should not have resigned

## HOME WORK

- Accept or reject Joshi's resignation
- Tackle Jayalalithaa's threat to arrest Kannappan (MDMK) under terror law
- Decide whether Venkaiah Naidu will stay on as BJP chief
- Debate if Centre will intervene in VHP's temple agitation in October
- Decide if govt will appeal against stay on HPCL and BPCL divestment



because the Ayodhya case was "politically motivated" and was different from a corruption charge. But some feel a chargesheeted minister could pose problems for the government as the Opposition has hinted that should Atal Bihari Vajpayee reject the resignation, it could see Joshi being boycotted in Parliament like defence minister George Fernandes.

Joshi today indicated he would use the verdict to extract mileage for the temple "cause". After the exoneration of deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, the "case will now be Joshi and the others", he said. "Earlier, it was L.K. Advani and the others."

Earlier, addressing BJP workers from Uttaranchal at his residence, Joshi asserted that a temple should be built at Ram's birthplace according to "people's wishes". "If people's sentiments are strong, it becomes the voice of god. Temple will be constructed on the birthplace," he said and expressed hope that he would emerge "clean".

BJP sources expect Vajpayee, after he returns from the US tomorrow, to convene a meeting with Advani and finance minister Jaswant Singh on Monday to discuss Joshi's resignation. It is not clear if party chief M. Venkaiah Naidu would be included because

of the belief that he was somehow responsible for setting the BJP against Joshi and ensuring that he did not become a "martyr" to the Ayodhya "cause".

The RSS has made it clear it would not like to be a party to the final decision, although Sangh chief K.S. Sudarshan and his colleagues conferred with Joshi and Naidu to get the "opposing" viewpoints and were in the capital "understanding" the resignation drama.

Another of Vajpayee's problems is the fate of minister and MDMK MP M. Kannappan. Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalithaa has sought his removal and threatened to arrest him under the anti-terror law because of an alleged pro-LTTE speech.

Other issues that could bother Vajpayee are the resentment building up against Naidu after the way he handled Joshi's resignation; the VHP's plan for an agitation in Ayodhya from October 15; and filing of a review petition against the Supreme Court order stalling oil majors HPCL and BPCL's divestment.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 SEP 2003

# Team BJP

5-6/09  
Joshi deserves his position

The BJP's "third man", Murli Manohar Joshi, is tired, as often happens in cricket to those banished to that position — fielding on the boundary. Hence his threat to walk out of the field post-Rae Bareilly ruling. The men who hold the first and second positions, or as Venkaiah Naidu once put it, to his subsequent mortification, "development man" and "iron man", have both made soothing noises. But Joshi still feels what is happening to him in the BJP is not cricket. As an ex-party president and a senior leader, he should not be a distant third in party protocol and an also-ran in serious issues. But what does Joshi have to offer, though? He doesn't shine at public rallies. He is not a dependable debater on weightier matters, like Arun Jaitley or Arun Shourie. He is not known to have a knack for political strategy. Or for "managerial functions". That attribute still makes Pramod Mahajan valuable for the party, even after his ambitions, and therefore his wings, have been clipped. Joshi has tried to carve out a niche — the BJP's "intellectual-in-chief". But there's more than a suggestion of self-appointment here. Even in a party still woefully short of "brainy" fellow travellers — social science PhDs who turn phrases and put spin — Joshi does not exactly stand out. His efforts as HRD minister to give education an ideological spin has been no more successful than the Left's in West Bengal and has attracted as much unwelcome criticism. Joshi, in fact, has been less than clever. As Indira Gandhi so adroitly proved the best way to deal with Left eggheads is not put them on toast but to raise one to them. Joshi tried to take on the entrenched Left academia, which hates him. And he hasn't done enough for those who matter in the BJP to really love him.

Nor will they if the erstwhile physics professor becomes the RSS's and the VHP's chief representative in the party. If Newtonian physics has been kept above the fray in Joshi's battle for swadeshi against western science, he should remember the action-reaction principle and know that neither Vajpayee nor Advani, for similar and for different reasons, will appreciate a Hindu Right fifth column headed by a cabinet minister. And the RSS, if not the VHP, is clever enough to know that it can't win against the BJP Big Two with Joshi leading the attack. The Sangh will drop Joshi before provocation comes to push. Joshi may come back to the cabinet but in party games, lonely vigil near the sidelines will continue to be his lot.

THE STATESMAN

25 SEP 2003

# RSS plays it safe, strikes neutral stand on Joshi issue

By Rajesh Ramachandran  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

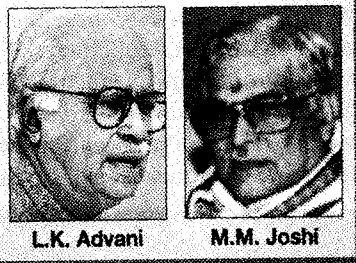
**New Delhi:** The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) claims it has "no role to play" and appears to be publicly distancing itself from the controversy over the resignation of HRD minister Murli Manohar Joshi from the Union cabinet after the Rae Bareilly special court chargesheeted him in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

Now, it appears that Mr Joshi could be the "ultimate loser" if he holds on to his stand that he would not withdraw his resignation. This is also an indication that the Sangh may not have an alternative plan for Mr Joshi to be given the top BJP post.

Though there was much speculation that Mr Joshi would meet the top RSS brass on Tuesday, the leadership met here at Jhandewalan and decided not to get involved in the political controversy over the resignation.

In fact, Mr Joshi was not expected to attend the RSS' internal meeting nor was a meeting scheduled for him with RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan till late evening, Sangh sources said.

Mr Sudarshan, joint general secretary H.V. Seshadri, Madandas Devi



L.K. Advani

M.M. Joshi

**Though the Sangh does not want to be seen as washing its hands of Mr Joshi, it also does not want to get involved in a controversy that is fast being seen as a Joshi-Advani tussle for power within the party**

and spokesman Ram Madhav attended the stock-taking meeting. After the discussion Madhav told 'The Times of India', "We had an internal meeting and decided that we shouldn't interfere in this matter. There is a lot of unhappiness within the RSS that the organisation is being dragged into

the controversy. We have no role to play in this issue at all."

Mr Madhav said that the decision on whether to accept or reject Mr Joshi's resignation should be taken by the party, the Prime Minister and Mr Joshi himself. Though the Sangh appreciates that Mr Joshi has upheld probity in public life by offering his resignation, the RSS does not seem keen to complicate the BJP's organisational affairs on the eve of crucial assembly elections.

Also, the Sangh leadership is miffed at what it terms "media manipulation" about its perceived role in the Joshi issue. Though the Sangh does not want to be seen as washing its hands of Mr Joshi, it also does not want to get involved in a controversy that is fast being seen as a Joshi-Advani tussle for power within the party.

In this context, RSS sources said that even if Mr Joshi called on Mr Sudarshan, as he usually does, "he would be told that we are not getting involved in the issue. We neither want to give an impression that we are favouring him or opposing him. The problem is that Mr Joshi knows it very well, but some others are spreading all kinds of rumours".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24 SEP 2003

# FIR missiles chase Mayavati

**DALIPSINGH**

**New Delhi, Sept. 21:** The CBI is giving finishing touches to not one, but two first information reports against Mayavati, covering the Taj corridor project as well as prime properties linked to either the former chief minister or her relatives.

The Taj FIR, which deals with charges that Mayavati and top Uttar Pradesh officials allowed preparatory construction without statutory clearance from the Centre, could be filed in Lucknow as early as tomorrow.

But more damaging could be the other FIR, which will be registered later in the week and will focus on the disproportionate assets Mayavati, who also held the environment ministry, has allegedly acquired.

The Supreme Court had directed the CBI last week to look into the assets of the politicians and bureaucrats involved in the Taj project.

Sources said the second FIR will initially focus on Mayavati's wealth. After further investigations, the CBI will include the assets linked to the other accused.

The agency's brief will be to prove if Mayavati and the others misappropriated funds meant for the Taj project. The Rs 175-crore project envisaged filling a 2-km stretch of the Yamuna bed between the Agra Fort and the Taj Mahal to build a "heritage corridor" on the reclaimed land, complete with shopping malls, parks and restaurants.

Besides Mayavati, her former cabinet colleague Naseemuddin Siddiqui will be booked in

the cases. Former Uttar Pradesh chief secretary D.S. Bagga, Mayavati's principal secretary P.L. Punia, former principal secretary (environment) R.K. Sharma, former environment secretary V.K. Gupta, former Union environment secretary K.C. Mishra and National Project Construction Company chief S.C. Bali will also be named in the FIRs for cheating, forgery and official misuse of power under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Sources said the CBI has managed to trace about 10 properties (valued at Rs 11 crore) Mayavati allegedly purchased in her and her family's names.

The number could go up once the CBI extends the scope of the probe beyond Mayavati and her immediate family. The agency has also come across bank de-

posits of Rs 4.5 crore.

Among the properties under the scanner are a Lucknow house worth Rs 1 crore Mayavati is alleged to have bought, two multi-storeyed houses her brothers are said to have purchased in south-west Delhi's Inder Puri and others spread across Noida, Ghaziabad, Bulandshahr, Jaipur and Mussoorie.

The sources said the CBI has questioned Mayavati's father about a 350-acre farmhouse at Bulandshahr that was transferred to a "third person, Tej Singh".

Mayavati is also alleged to have bought a bungalow at Delhi's Patel Road for Rs 7 crore, but in the BSP's name. The sources said the property's market value is around Rs 40 crore.

■ See Page 8

THE TELEGRAPH

22 SEP 2003

## HRD Minister Lashes Out At Rakhi Sister Mayawati To Score Brownie Points

# Joshi fights back after Rae Bareli debacle

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 21 SEPTEMBER

**K**EPT on tenterhooks by the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, HRD minister Murlidhar Joshi today hit his hometown of Allahabad to launch into a scathing attack on his one-time rakhi sister and BSP leader Mayawati.

Visiting his constituency of Allahabad, his first since the booby trap he set for his estranged colleague L.K. Advani backfired forcing him to offer his resignation from the Cabinet, Mr Joshi lashed out at Ms Mayawati for trying to raise the smokescreen of Manuavad to cover her misdeeds. "I am not sure whether she understands Manuavad by loosely



NOOSE END

when he rejected the quit offer of Mr Nitish Kumar long ago.

With not many party colleagues stepping forward to commiserate publicly, Mr Joshi was constrained, according to sources, to express his desire for a

meeting with the deputy prime minister when the latter called him yesterday to persuade him not to press for the acceptance of his letter. He was also trying to rally around others chargesheeted by the Rae Bareli court and is believed to have placed a call to BJP's chief ministerial candidate for Madhya Pradesh, emphasising the virtue of solidarity.

But even as he kept up a defiant posture, many of his party colleagues feel that Mr Joshi has begun to recognise that he wrongfooted himself by wrongly estimating the Rae Bareli verdict, and that he, as he gropes his way out of the crisis, might still allow himself to be persuaded. This assessment is derived from the isolation that Mr Joshi faces in the

organisation with the response of the majority towards his predicament bordering on indifference.

His efforts at portraying his decision as in keeping with the "protocol" requiring the chargesheeted persons to quit has failed to impress the BJP. Both party chief M Venkaiah Naidu and law minister Arun Jaitley were quick to remind him that, going by the "protocol", Mr Joshi should not have accepted a Cabinet berth in the first place. The VHP has come out in the open to support him.

However, this may not mean much as the Hinduwa hawks, have lost the goodwill they once enjoyed in the BJP, courtesy their repeated attacks on the government and the BJP.

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 21 SEPTEMBER

**T**HE verdict of the Rae Bareli court in the Ayodhya case against the BJP leaders, letting off L.K. Advani while chargesheeting M.M. Joshi and others, seems to have split BJP's opinion about country's premier investigating agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation.

While Mr Joshi, according to an agency report, called against him as baseless, BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu took the field to rebut the Opposition's charge that it was government's pressure on the CBI which resulted in the exoneration of the deputy prime minister.

Mr Naidu's strong defence of the CBI came at Kochi where he denied that the agency was under any pressure. But even as he handed the certificate of impartiality to CBI, his party colleague termed

# Rae Bareli verdict splits views in BJP ranks

the charges levelled against him by the very same agency as baseless. Interestingly, Mr Naidu did not seem to disagree with the HRD minister on the count. For, Mr Naidu's defence of the CBI did not extend to the period when it brought the charge against the BJP leaders including L.K. Advani. It was "politically foisted, born out of political consideration prompted by the vote bank politics," Mr Naidu said of the case lodged by the CBI in the Rae Bareli court.

The ambivalence is hardly surprising, given the "split" verdict of the Rae Bareli court which gave the benefit of doubt only to Mr Advani. It also coincides with the growing attack on the CBI, which started after the court pronounced its much-awaited



NAIDU: CAUGHT IN A BIND

verdict and picked up with the Opposition unwilling to let Mr Advani enjoy the respite he got from the judiciary. While Congress has shown some restraint in questioning the verdict, the Left and Rashtriya Janata Dal have been more bold.

Ayodhya 'martyr' unsung in party

# Lonely Joshi in wait for PM

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Sept. 20: All eyes are on Atal Bihari Vajpayee who is expected to take a decision on Murli Manohar Joshi's resignation from the cabinet after his return from New York as the human resources development minister appeared to get increasingly isolated in the BJP.

The RSS continued to "transmit signals" that Joshi could return to head the BJP in place of M. Venkaiah Naidu and the party viewed the regrouping of L.K. Advani and Pramod Mahajan after an eight-year interregnum with interest.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office said Vajpayee was in touch with his colleagues and would take a decision "in consultation with them". Joshi told reporters that Vajpayee spoke to him. "What happened is between him and me."

The minister, who had just former Uttar Pradesh Rajya Sabha MP Rajnath Singh for company, said he congratulated the deputy Prime Minister on his acquittal, to which Advani replied: "We will have to fight the (Rae Bareli) judgment."

Sources close to Joshi expressed bitterness that not one person from the BJP had offered help or even moral support. They contrasted this with how the party rose as one to defend Advani in 1996 when he was im-



Joshi: Friendless

plicated in the hawala scam.

Some Uttar Pradesh legislators called on Joshi, but the party, particularly Naidu's team, turned its back on the minister who had hoped his resignation in the Ayodhya "cause" would make him a martyr.

All that the BJP did was proffer advice not to quit. In Mumbai, Naidu told reporters that "we will convince him to withdraw his resignation".

Law minister Arun Jaitley said he need not have resigned because the charges against him did not involve corruption or moral turpitude. "It is only a case of unlawful assembly."

Joshi himself was silent on his plans and said he was leaving for his Lok Sabha constituency

Allahabad tonight. Sources close to him said the visit would help him gauge the "popular mood".

BJP sources began to speculate what his resignation, if accepted, would mean for the party. Although the RSS has evinced an interest in Joshi inheriting Naidu's mantle when the organisational polls conclude in December, the sources wondered if this was practical given Advani's sway over the party.

The sources said there is a feeling that in the run-up to the general elections, it is preferable to have a president who will understand the complexities of heartland politics and that Naidu, a southerner, is not the best candidate for the job. However, even the RSS, which was privately gung-ho about Joshi's resignation yesterday, today had mixed feelings about his ability to head a party which refused to connect with him.

The old guard, including two former party presidents Bangaru Laxman and K. Jana Krishnamurthi, are battling for Joshi. "But with Advani and his young turks up against this order, the RSS and Joshi will have their task cut out," they said.

If Joshi goes out, the name of BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan is being mentioned with a degree of seriousness. He was with Advani throughout yesterday when the Rae Bareli court verdict was pronounced.

■ See Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

21 SEP 2003



# Day of reckoning for BJP

## Joshi to quit if chargesheeted, puts pressure on Advani

Shekhar Iyer & Agencies  
New Delhi, September 18

UNION HRD Minister Murlu Manohar Joshi dropped a bombshell on Thursday, saying he would resign if the Rae Bareilly court frames charges against him in the Babri demolition case on Friday.

Joshi's statement stunned the BJP as it braced for an adverse court decision and its potentially explosive political fallout. Many party leaders felt that the statement would put pressure on Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, a fellow-accused in the case, to quit if chargesheeted.

Advani himself, though, stayed unfazed, parrying the inevitable questions from the media. "I know about Joshi (his statement)," he said. "I have nothing to say. I will speak tomorrow evening."

Party president M. Venkaiah Naidu, however, rushed to clarify from Goa that the BJP didn't think it necessary for any of the accused party leaders to resign if the special court orders charges to be framed against them. Naidu said the case against four BJP and four VHP leaders was a politically motivated one, involving no "moral turpitude".

But Joshi said "normal protocol" demanded that a chargesheeted minister quit. He wouldn't comment whether other ministers accused in the case should follow suit. "Ask them. I have nothing to say about them. This is my view. I can't say about anyone else."

At a party briefing, spokesman Prakash Javadkar refused to discuss what the accused BJP leaders — who include Uma Bharti and Vinay Katiyar — might do if chargesheeted. "It will not be proper for anyone to comment till a decision is taken by the court," he told reporters.



Far away from the politically explosive situation at home, Prime Minister Vajpayee unveils a bust of Tagore in Ankara on Thursday. A street in the Turkish capital was also named after the poet.

But BJP sources said the party was weighing several options, including Advani becoming party chief again and leading *yatras* across the country.

Whatever the Rae Bareilly court orders, it will be only one of several court decisions in the next few days that may set the pace for the BJP's Hindutva politics, which remains the party's best bet to woo voters in the upcoming Assembly polls.

On Friday, the Supreme Court will hear the Gujarat chief secretary and DGP explain who had drafted an "eyewash" of an

appeal in the high court against the acquittal of the 21 Best Bakery case accused. The apex court had earlier asked the Modi government to punish the guilty or quit.

On Monday, a designated CBI court in Bhubaneswar will sentence Dara Singh and 12 others for the murder of Graham Staines and his two minor sons.

Besides, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court will soon begin hearing a case relating to the disputed site in Ayodhya in the light of the ASI report that a temple existed there.

### Case line-up

- ▶ **Sept 19** SC to hear Gujarat chief secy and DGP explain the "eyewash" of an appeal against the Best Bakery acquittals
- ▶ **Sept 22** CBI court in Orissa to award sentences to Dara and others in the Staines murder case
- ▶ Lucknow Bench of Allahabad High Court to begin hearing case on disputed Ayodhya land in the light of the ASI report

19 SEP 2003

# Appeased RSS calls Mamata Durga

KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, Sept. 15: Mamata Banerjee today appeared to shed her antipathy towards the Sangh parivar brand of politics even as a flattered RSS hailed her as Bengal's Durga.

The Trinamul Congress chief, who is still without a portfolio, was seeking the Sangh's support in her fight against communist "terror". "If you (the RSS) give us just 1 per cent support, we will be able to fight red terror," she told the assembled RSS brass, including H.V. Shashtri, Mohan Bhagwat and Madan Das Devi.

"I have never got to meet so many RSS leaders, though I have met some individually. You people are true patriots. I know you love the country, you care for even small, remote areas of the country," she added.

Mamata was speaking at the release of the book, *Communist Terrorism*, compiled and edited by the editor of RSS mouthpiece *Panchajanya*, Tarun Vijay.

The book — which she said "hum log dil se (we wholeheartedly) welcomes" — highlights the "terror" communists have unleashed in Bengal and Kerala and includes chapters on MCC militancy in Jharkhand and Nepal.



Mamata: Forging friendship

Defence minister George Fernandes, boycotted by the Opposition in Parliament, egged her on. After releasing the book, he told Mamata to visit state capitals and educate the people about red "terror".

Mamata said "we are with you (the RSS) in your fight against the communists".

An apparently overwhelmed Balbir Punj, BJP's Rajya Sabha MP, said: "Hamari pyari Mamata di, sakshaat Durga (Our sister Mamata, who is Durga herself)..." Political murders, he claimed, were limited to Bengal and Kerala where the Marxists are strong.

The Trinamul chief attribut...

ted her entry in politics to her fight against the party that was "itna bhayankar (so terrible)".

"Pitai khake khake hum log yahan pahuncha (We are here after suffering their excesses). We are fed up saying that the CPM is a dangerous party. They say the CPM is a fascist party... they are fascist, opportunists, hypocrites and (practice) double standards," she said.

Showing some injury marks on her elbows suffered in an alleged attempt on her life, Mamata said she has more evidence to prove Marxist "terror", such as video cassettes, photographs and documents.

Vijay claimed that over 9,000 people died in communist violence till this June. "If you vote for the Trinamul, your hands are chopped off; a teacher was done to death inside the classroom before stunned students in Kerala," he added.

Taking a dig at Leftists and secularists, he said: "Some people go with candles to the Wagah border, demanding dialogue with Pakistan, but turn a blind eye to what is happening in our own country."

Fifty-five districts in the country, he claimed, were in the grip of red "terror". Vijay then turned to Mamata, to "appeal to Bengal ki Durga... to speak."

# VHP will launch stir for temple on Oct 15

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The Sangh Parivar will go into the agitational mode during the heat of the coming assembly elections. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Monday announced that it would launch an agitation for the Ram temple construction on October 15.



**A. Singhal** After a meeting of the VHP's 'uchchadhikar samiti' (top policy-making body), VHP working president Ashok Singhal told a news conference here that the organisation would hold simultaneous protest demonstrations in Lucknow and Delhi on October 15. This will be followed by a march towards Ayodhya by lakhs of Ram bhakts. The march will end at Ayodhya on October 17.

The VHP has also asked the government to call a special session of Parliament before its programme begins to pass the necessary legislation for the construction of the temple. In fact, the purported aim of the demonstration and the march to Ayodhya, Mr Singhal said, was to ask all political parties to bring in such legislation.

The VHP used the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI's) report on excavations at the Babri site to bolster its cause, claiming that it had waited long enough but as the Muslim bodies wanted to continue with the litigation that could drag on for another 25 years, it was time to launch the agitation.

Asked why the VHP wants to march to Ayodhya while political parties are busy gearing up for elections and why it cannot wait till

Parliament's winter session, Mr Singhal said the organisation could not wait any longer. Besides, he pointed out there was no election in Uttar Pradesh.

But Delhi which goes to the polls along with three other states will be affected by the nationwide VHP campaign. The campaign for the programme begins on October 6 for a week till October 12 with 85 groups spreading across the country to hold 'sankalp sabhas' through which the VHP claims it will reach out to two crore people in all the villages.

The president of the VHP's 'uchchadhikar samiti', Mahant Avaidyanath, referred to the 1990-91 temple agitation and December 1992, in particular, when Babri Masjid was destroyed. He asserted: "We had showed our strength then and we will show it again."

However, the Parivar doublespeak was in evidence when Mr Singhal said that the agitation this time would be peaceful and that what the Mahant meant was that Ram bhakts would show up in huge numbers as in 1992.

Incidentally, this time around, the VHP is not calling its cadres kar sevaks because, as Mahant Avaidyanath put it, "Destruction can happen in five hours, but construction will take five years..that is why we need a piece of legislation."

Mr Singhal said the march to Ayodhya would be peaceful and that his organisation would not break laws. "But we don't know what UP chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav will do. Last time, he had opened fire but this time we don't think he will use force." Asked what the VHP would do if prohibitory orders are imposed to curb the October 15 march, Mr Singhal said the VHP would defy them.

16 SEP 2003

# BJP opts for safe path

## OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Sept. 5:** After dithering on what stand to take when Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav faces his vote of confidence on Monday, the BJP has decided to issue a whip directing its 87 legislators to vote against the motion.

The decision was the outcome of a two-hour meeting this morning chaired by deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani in BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu's residence.

The meeting was also attended by other key Uttar Pradesh players at the Centre, including human resources development minister Murli Manohar Joshi and agriculture minister Rajnath Singh as well as state leaders Kalraj Mishra, Vinay Katiyar and Lalji Tandon.

Katiyar said: "There was no ambivalence. All of us felt since the BJP has decided to sit in the Opposition, we should get into battle mode from the word go and oppose the Yadav government inside the House and outside."

But other Uttar Pradesh BJP sources said Rajnath, who opposed the BSP coalition experiment from the start and made no secret of his glee at Mayavati's exit, insisted that a whip should not be issued and legislators should be allowed to vote "according to their conscience".

However, this line was not backed by the Uttar Pradesh contingent.

Mishra and Tandon are believed to have argued that the BJP's image was "considerably dented" following the perception that it was "principally responsible" for toppling its own government and installing Mulayam Singh's.

"There was a feeling that party interests were sacrificed to

suit the whims of a few individuals and the right message was not going to the cadre," a source said, echoing what it claimed was the Mishra-Tandon "line".

Although sources said neither Mishra nor Tandon was overly keen to see Mayavati in the saddle "largely because the BJP's traditional vote base was getting eroded", they could also "not appreciate the logic of tacitly backing a Samajwadi Party-led dispensation".

Their viewpoint was if the BJP could not gain politically by being part of a Mayavati-led coalition, how would it benefit if it was seen as "collaborating" with its arch enemy Mulayam Singh, the sources said.

A whip, the sources added, was also a mechanism to project the image that the Uttar Pradesh BJP was not split along caste lines, with Rajputs having their own affiliations as was made out when Mayavati was dethroned.

The other consideration that reportedly weighed with the BJP was to "reassure" Mayavati that it was keen to distance itself from Mulayam Singh.

Sources said her declaration that she would not tie up with the Congress either for the Assembly or the Lok Sabha elections was a "positive sign" for the BJP. Therefore, the party had decided to show her that the option of allying with the BSP in the near future was still open.

However, sources conceded that in the event of Mulayam Singh failing to get his numbers, the BJP may have had second thoughts about a whip. With a one-third split in the BSP likely to see Mulayam Singh sail through the trust vote, the BJP — which is trying to ensure Kesri Nath Tripathi continues as Speaker — was spared what an official called a "political" dilemma.

# SC notice to Advani in Ayodhya case

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, September 1

THE SUPREME Court on Monday refused to stay the trial in the Babri Masjid demolition case before a Rae Bareilly court, but served notices on the accused on two other petitions that questioned the CBI move of dropping the conspiracy charges against them.

The court asked Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, HRD Minister Murlis Manohar Joshi, BJP leaders Vinay Katiyar and Uma Bharti, VHP leaders Ashok Singhal, Giriraj Kishore, Vishnuhari Dalmiya and Sadhvi Ritambhara to respond to petitions by lawyers Wajahat Ansari and C.M. Shukla that the CBI, acting under 'political pressure', had sought to

2) Bhure  
HTC

## Apex court clubs riot retrial appeals

THE SUPREME Court on Monday tagged the petition by Best Bakery case key witness Zahira Sheikh to the NHRC's application, both of which sought fresh trial of the case outside Gujarat. The court reserved its judgment

on a petition by the Gujarat government challenging an order of the Gujarat High Court, which had granted bail to four accused booked under Pota in the Godhra case.

HTC, New Delhi

dilute the case against them. Shukla had alleged that the CBI had also held back important evidence from the court.

But Aslam Bhure's appeal to stay the trial in the Rae Bareilly court earned him a rap. The Bench of Justice S. Rajendra Babu, Justice K. G. Balakrishnan and Justice Arun Kumar

pulled up the petitioner for "offensive portions" in his petition.

The Bench asked Bhure's counsel O.P. Sharma to delete the "offensive portions" of the petition. If the offending portions were not removed it would not take up the petition for hearing, the Bench warned.

Bhure had sought review of

the apex court's decision last year dismissing petitions against a UP government notification transferring the trial to Rae Bareilly after Allahabad High Court had ruled that that the special court at Lucknow was not properly constituted. "Proceedings in Rae Bareilly are going on. Let them go on," the Bench said.

Bhure had also sought initiation of contempt proceedings against the CBI for filing an "incorrect, truncated and diluted" chargesheet.

## Kalyan plea rejected

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked former UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh to appear before the Liberman Commission on Tuesday as scheduled. Singh had filed a petition for a stay on his appearance.

# ASI report stokes temple fire in Venkaiah again

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 27 AUGUST

**E**NCOURAGED by ASI's findings, pointing to the existence of a 10th century temple-like structure at the disputed site in Ayodhya, the BJP today ratcheted up its Mandir rhetoric. Party president M. Venkaiah Naidu, shaking off the restraint that has so far marked the reflexes of the BJP on the issue, on Wednesday said findings of the ASI have vindicated party's Ram Janmabhoomi campaign.

The BJP president said leaders of the two communities, in light of the ASI findings, should sit down and settle the issue.

"There have been literary, historical, epigraphical and scientific evidences to establish that the Babri structure was built after demolishing a temple. All communities should now cooperate in the construction of the temple at Ayodhya," Mr Naidu pointed out.

The BJP president targeted



NAIDU: HARD DRIVE

the "secular intelligentsia" and their cheer leaders for the attack. He said these two sets have been shifting their positions frequently, in the face of inconvenient findings. "It is unfortunate that some of them are now saying that the ASI report has no merit. Some of them are saying that it is doctored," he added and reminded them that the court had accepted several demands made by them in the

course of ASI investigation.

"The court had removed an internationally reputed archaeologist, Mr Mani, when these two groups questioned his impartiality. Even the workforce used for digging the site was picked up on the basis of the religious ratio because of their insistence. In this backdrop, the criticism is not justifiable," Mr Naidu said. The timing of Mr Naidu's statement is sure to be interpreted by BJP's political rivals as a sign of its decision to fall back on the Mandir issue to recharge the ideological battery of a moribund organisation in UP. Having tested various issues and combinations, the party is now relegated to the sidelines.

But Mr Naidu sought to counter this view. He said his party's support to the Ram temple cause is aimed at correcting a discourse that was sought to be projected as the mainstream view. He added that the success of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement showed that most people differed with this view.

# Maya dumps BJP, UP wide open

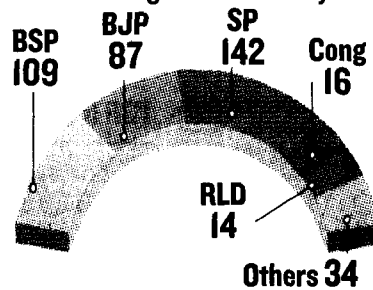
HT Correspondent  
Lucknow, August 25

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Mayawati pushed her state into a political crisis on Monday, snapping ties with coalition partner BJP and recommending dissolution of the Assembly.

Seeking fresh polls, she said she would continue as Chief Minister until fresh elections are held. But minutes before she met Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri, the BJP — which has 87 MLAs in the House — rushed to scuttle her move and withdrew support, reducing the government to a minority. The BJP doesn't want early polls and is aware that Mayawati cannot manage the numbers to keep her government from

## How they stack up

Current strength: 402 Vacancy: 1



falling. The party favours President's Rule till the state goes to the polls.

Mayawati's BSP has 109 MLAs in a House of 403, which has one vacancy. Governor Shastri, who

promptly summoned legal experts to find out if Mayawati could carry on as Chief Minister, said he would take "appropriate" action.

In an obvious search for allies, Mayawati said she was ready to "forgive" arch-rival Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav if he apologised for the state guesthouse case. "I can also forgive the Congress if it atones for its past mistakes".

But the Samajwadi Party, the largest presence in the House with 142 MLAs, opposed early polls and seemed to be looking at an alternative government with support from the Congress. The Congress, too, opposed early polls and said it would support the Samajwadi Party in forming a government.

Related reports on Page 4

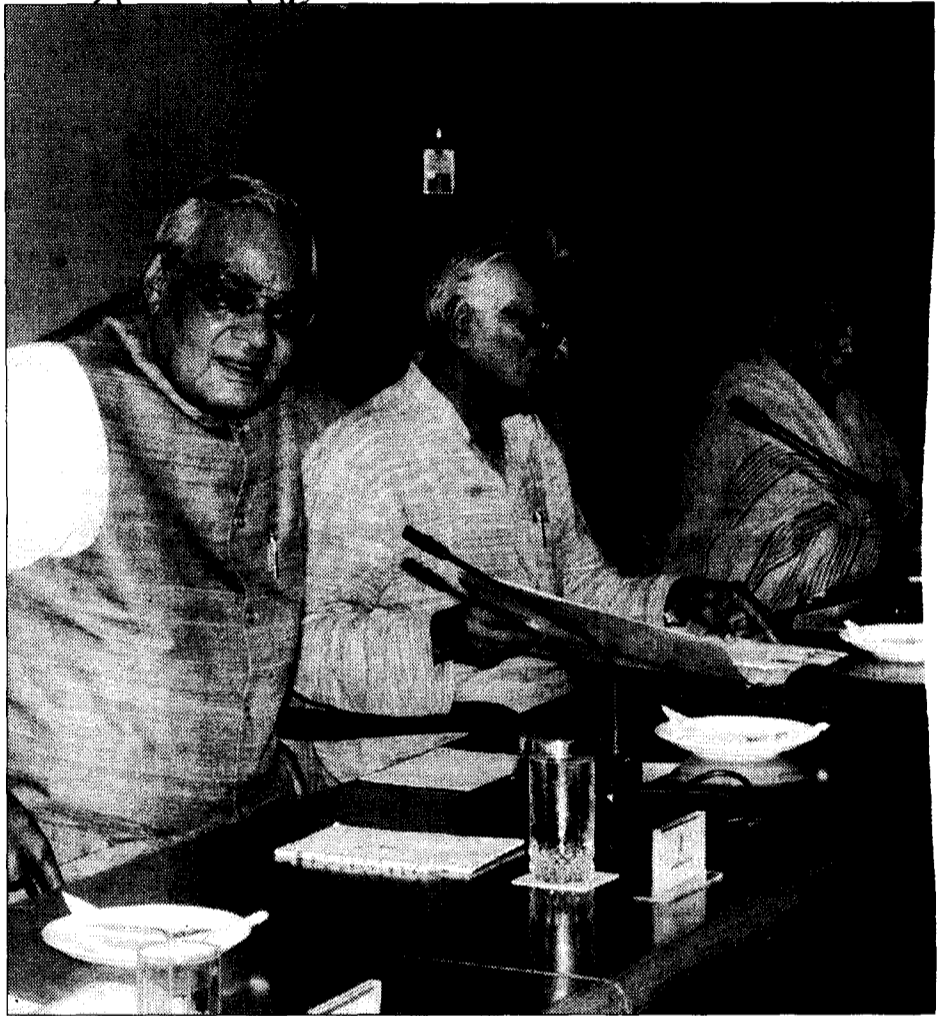
# BJP may seek Jaya support

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, Aug. 16. — Despite having the numbers, the BJP may seek the support of the AIADMK against the Congress-sponsored no-confidence motion to parade its strength in the Lok Sabha. And quite expectedly, this has put off Mr M Karunanidhi of the DMK, an NDA constituent.

After today's NDA meeting, convener Mr George Fernandes said the alliance, if necessary, may seek Miss Jayalalitha's support against the motion. And almost in response, Mr Karunanidhi said in Chennai that his party was yet to make up its mind on how to react to the motion. He suspects that the move is aimed at embarrassing him.

At the NDA meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, DMK representative Union forest minister Mr TR Baalu questioned the alliance's decision to flirt with Miss Jayalalitha when it had enough MPs to defeat the motion. Mr Baalu reportedly apprised NDA leaders how Miss Jayalalitha was bent on a witch-hunt against DMK leaders, including Mr Karunanidhi.



*Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr George Fernandes and Miss Mamata Banerjee at the Prime Minister's residence on Saturday. — PTI*

NEW DELHI, Aug. 16.

— While battle lines are being drawn for the Lok Sabha debate on the "no confidence motion" moved by the Congress, Mrs Sonia Gandhi held a meeting of the party's political affairs committee at her residence this morning to give final shape to the strategy the party is going to adopt.

After their long boycott of the defence minister, the Congress has finally decided to listen to Mr George Fernandes, who will be one of the key participants from the Treasury Benches to speak against the motion. The

## Cong open to Georgespeak

explanation party leaders have to offer is, Mr Fernandes will be speak-

ing as a member of the Lok Sabha — a status the Congress has not denied to the defence minister.

Mrs Gandhi also decided to hold a meeting of "like-minded parties" on Monday around the same time when NDA MPs will be meeting in the Central Hall of Parliament. Congress leaders conceded that the fight is not over numbers and it hardly matters even if the motion is defeated in the House. The party plans to highlight corruption in defence deals and NDA misrule. — SNS

17 AUG 2003

THE STATESMAN



## Giriraj Kishore sent back

By Our Staff Correspondent

PATNA, AUG. 16. The Bihar Government sent back today yet another senior VHP leader, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, not allowing him to leave the Jaya Prakash Narain International Airport on arrival here.

On Friday, the VHP general secretary, Praveen Togadia, was prevented from entering the city. In a similar manner, Giriraj Kishore, who was scheduled to address VHP State workers in Muzaffarpur, was told that his programme had been banned and that he was not permitted to leave even the airport as it was feared that it could lead to breach of peace.

While Giriraj Kishore arrived by an Indian Airlines flight, the officials booked his return flight to Delhi by Sahara Airlines. The airport was cordoned off and only passengers were allowed inside.

The State VHP unit has given a call for a Bihar bandh on August 19 to protest against the alleged "anti-democratic functioning" of the State Government.

The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, who was in Darbhanga a couple of hours later, was silent on the issue at his public meeting.

## Bihar sends back Togadia

VHP  
NXP  
By K. Balchand  
MD-1  
16/8

**PATNA, AUG. 15.** The Vishwa Hindu Parishad general secretary, Praveen Togadia, was today sent back immediately on his arrival at the Jaya Prakash Narain International Airport here, on apprehensions of law and order problems. The Patna District Magistrate, Deepak Prasad, and the City Superintendent of Police, O.N. Bhaskar, served him an order to the effect on the tarmac itself and handed him a return ticket to Delhi.

They informed him that prohibitory orders had been clamped around the airport and his programmes in the State were banned. Mr. Togadia

took the same flight back without even meeting his supporters. The airport was cordoned off and passengers had a harrowing time.

The VHP supporters who gathered outside the airport premises were rounded up. The State Government had taken particular exception to a flag hoisting function arranged for him at the Saraswati Vidya Mandir School located in the sensitive Phulwarisharif area dominated by the minorities and also a "trishul diksha ritual".

The RJD president, Laloo Prasad Yadav, said the Government would not tolerate any attempt at breaking the unity of the country or disturbing the prevailing harmony.

# November outcome to decide BJP LS poll strategy

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 12. - The BJP leadership today decided to wait till the outcome of the November Assembly elections to frame its strategy for the Lok Sabha elections. Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee reportedly opposed the proposal for November polls.

That the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr JM Lyngdoh, may not oblige the BJP by holding general elections in November helped arrive at the decision, sources said. The BJP's antagonism to Mr Lyngdoh was

apparent when the party president, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, pooed those who had differences with the party proposal for synchronisation of polls.

Simultaneous elections took place during the time of Jawaharlal Nehru but "there was no cheating like hell" and there was voting through the normal democratic process, he said.

Normally, there are differences between political parties but in this case differences came from other corners, he said, leaving nobody in doubt that he was talking about Mr Lyngdoh. The CEC had said that simultaneous

polls may lead to "cheating like hell and unfair polling".

The BJP may still consider advancing the Lok Sabha elections to February and avoid presentation of another populist budget if the party wins the majority in the four states - Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Delhi. It can even seek a vote-on-account if elections are to be delayed beyond February. If the performance is bad and the BJP loses a majority of the states, the NDA may go for another populist budget, sources said.

In the meeting of the party

postpone or prepone Lok Sabha elections."

The proposal for synchronisation of elections was intended to initiate a national debate on the issue, he clarified.

He declared the party would formally launch the first phase of its campaign for "2004 Lok Sabha elections" from 16 August and this would continue till 16 October. Among those who attended today's meeting were the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani, Mr Venkaiah Naidu, and the Union finance minister, Mr Jaswant Singh.

Another report on page 4

# BJP loses a Scindia

RASHEED KIDWAI

**Bhopal, Aug. 8:** Yashodhara Raje Scindia quit the BJP today, causing huge embarrassment to the party in election-bound Madhya Pradesh and to sister Vasundhara Raje Scindia.

Vasundhara is the BJP's candidate for chief minister in the coming Assembly polls in Rajasthan.

There was no official confirmation of her resignation here. But senior state BJP leaders acknowledged that Yashodhara, an MLA, was sulking and a serious difference of opinion had cropped up during her meeting with Uma Bharti two days ago.

Among other things, Yashodhara apparently wanted to shift from Shivpuri to Gwalior, the Scindia family pocketborough. She

was also disappointed at the party's failure to take on K.P. Singh, a local Congress strongman, in and outside the Assembly.

Yashodhara told some of her supporters today in Shivpuri that she was leaving the party. She, however, declined to confirm or deny speculation that she would join the Congress.

A few days ago, Yashodhara had thrown a dinner for state leaders, giving no indication of her intention.

Congress leaders said chief minister Digvijay Singh had been sending her feelers over the past few months. Yashodhara is said to be extremely close to her nephew Jyotiraditya Scindia, the so-called new maharaja of Gwalior and emerging number two in the state Congress.

Sources close to Bharti said

her exit would not make much difference in Madhya Pradesh as Yashodhara, unlike mother Rajmata Scindia or brother Madhavrao Scindia, has not been politically important outside the Gwalior-Shivpuri region.

But senior BJP leaders concede that Yashodhara's departure could hurt Vasundhara in Rajasthan, particularly if the younger sister decides to join the Congress. The timing of her exit would provide the Congress a handle to embarrass the BJP's chief ministerial nominee.

The Scindias have seldom spoken against one another in public in spite of their political differences. Only once, the late Rajmata Scindia had launched a tirade against Madhavrao Scindia but the son held his silence.

# Ayodhya tapes have no speeches by BJP leaders

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

**Rae Bareilly:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday said that the video and audio tapes sub-

mitted by it as evidence in the Ayodhya demolition case at a special court here did not contain the speeches of Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, Union minister Murlī Manohar Joshi, BJP leader Uma Bharti and some others.

Briefing mediapersons outside the court, CBI counsel S.S. Gandhi said that of the four video and three audio cassettes screened in the chamber of special judge V.K. Singh, one audio cassette contained the speech of Sadhvi Ritambhara.

However, Mr Gandhi said that the CBI had "oral evidence" against all the eight accused persons, including Mr Advani, Mr Joshi and Ms Bharti. He said the CBI had oral evidence that these people were present at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 and incited the crowd, resulting in demolition of the disputed structure.

He claimed that the video and the audio cassettes did establish they were on the stage deliver-



L.K. Advani



Uma Bharti



Ritambhara



M.M. Joshi

ing provocative speeches. The hearing in the matter would continue on Thursday when defence counsel would advance arguments on the charges.

The cassettes were played inside the chamber of the special judge in the presence of counsel for the concerned parties.

Defence counsel Mahipal Ahluwalia claimed that there was nothing in the tapes that implicated his clients. "No case is made out against the defendants by the tapes," he claimed. Mr Ahluwalia said his clients would appear before the court as and when required. "We are not above law". He justified the screening of the tapes inside the judge's chamber saying it was usual practice. "It was mere viewing of the tapes and not any proceeding," he said.

According to Kunwar Mridul Rakesh, counsel for defence, the CBI showed video coverage of the incidents of 5th and 6th December, 1992 at Ayodhya. The incidents of December 5 were to-

tally irrelevant, he said. The coverage of December 6 incidents showed that karsewaks were getting assembled and the president of the Ram Janmabhumi Trust Mahant Ramchandra Paramhans gave an interview.

"At 10.45 am, Mr Advani, Mr M.M. Joshi and Kalraj Mishra came to the scene. There was no speech by any of the eight accused. At 11.45 am, some people broke the barricades and ran, Mr Rakesh disclosed.

"Don't climb, don't go inside," some people were shouting but they could not be identified. The only slogan that was heard was "Ek dhakka aur do, Babri Masjid tor do" (Give one more push and demolish the Babri mosque). "Who was giving this slogan, was not clear," Mr Rakesh said. "Who spoke what from the manch, was also not heard".

Earlier, the court granted exemption to all the accused from personal appearance for Wednesday and Thursday. The judge also justified the screening of the tapes in his chamber saying it was done keeping in view the sensitive nature of the case.

31 JUL 2003

# RSS brass meets BJP on Ayodhya

Shekhar Iyer  
New Delhi, July 25

RSS TOP brass met BJP president Venkaiah Naidu on Thursday and held discussions on the Ayodhya issue. The meeting was held as part of the decisions taken at the Raipur BJP national executive.

Naidu is understood to have briefed RSS number 2, Mohan Bhagwat and joint general secretary Madan Das Devi and RSS spokesman Ram Madhav on the deliberations of the Raipur conclave, which had refused to fully endorse the Sangh's demand for immediate legislation, saying that negotiated settlement between Hindus and Muslims was the best option.

A resolution of the party's national executive merely said the legislative course

could also be explored but the government did not have the numbers in Parliament for enacting a law for Ram temple at Ayodhya.

The discussion between Naidu and RSS leaders, which lasted more than three hours, centred on a plan finalised by the two sides to induct the "whole-timers" at the organisational level. These functionaries will assume responsibility as general-secretary in charge of organisation and ensure that the BJP set-up is toned up.

The party had decided at the Indore conclave to enlist more than 5,000 Sangh activists throughout the country for the Lok Sabha polls. The idea was given a greater thrust when senior BJP leaders including Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee met in Mumbai for a brainstorming session last month.

Recently, the Raipur conclave approved a 26-point programme, including closer coordination with the Sangh bodies, for winning the Lok Sabha polls. The BJP also amended its constitution outlining new set-up having six general secretaries, eight vice-presidents and as many secretaries at the national level. Currently there are five posts of general secretaries, seven posts of vice-presidents and secretaries.

Similar increase in the number of posts is to be effected at the state, district and right down to the mandal level in accordance with recommendations by a panel. BJP state unit executives will see the increase in their membership ranging from 50 to 70 to accommodate what the party says the phenomenal increase in the number of active members.

The BJP statute's stipulation that no one can be party president for more than one term of three years was also amended to provide for a second term after a break.

Meanwhile, the VHP is training its functionaries in media management skills with a view to improving its public image. The idea is to get more positive coverage in newspapers and TV channels rather than being seen as a Hindu fundamentalist outfit. A nine-day workshop is being held at the VHP headquarter.

# BJP banks on 'tested' Vajpayee

Sudesh K Verma in Raipur

July 20. — The BJP president today announced that the party would contest the next Lok Sabha polls under the "tried and tested" leadership of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, whom the Congress has been targeting over his advancing age.

The party executive expressed the confidence that the BJP would get a renewed mandate to rule the country. "Executive ka sandesh dubara janadesh," Mr Venkaiah Naidu said. The campaign would focus on "national unity, security, good governance and development."

Mr Naidu ruled out imposing the BJP's agenda on NDA partners and said every attempt would be made to take the allies along. "Ram Temple is not an issue as far as the NDA is concerned. The BJP will not take any initiative to convince or start dialogue with the allies on the issue."

Mr LK Advani too stepped in to remove any doubts in the minds of the allies on the issue. Delivering the valedictory address, he said: "A settlement (of the Ayodhya dispute) by dialogue is the best option." The issue, he said, has become "unfrozen" because several Muslim groups are now talking of a solution.

Talking about the party's 'Vision 2020', Mr Advani said the BJP had done what it had promised. "During the Jan Sangh days we stood for developing nuclear deterrent. We

fulfilled our commitment in 1998."

He sought to paint a bright picture of the country's security scene by giving figures of tourist arrivals in J&K — 322 in 1995 to 90,000 now.

Speaking on the BJP's stand on the temple issue, Mr Naidu said the party favoured the legislation route but did not have the numbers to pass the Bill. The executive, he said,

iterated the party's stand on core issues such as Article 370, uniform civil code, Ayodhya, anti-conversion law, cow slaughter ban, infiltration and population control.

The BJP would not deviate from its core ideology while answering people's queries, Mr Naidu said. Then will Hindutva be on the party's poll agenda? "Hindutva is India's soul. We're proud of it. But this is not a poll issue. We'll, however, reply when asked."

The BJP chief described the Congress' proposed coalition as "non-starter" and said the party's personal attack on Mr Vajpayee was "a panic reaction". He said the executive did not discuss the issue of Mrs Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin.

The nation, Mr Naidu said, has accepted Mr Vajpayee's leadership because of his capabilities and has rejected the Congress for the lack of the same in its leader. The Congress, he said, would face its fourth successive defeat in Lok Sabha elections next year.

Photograph on page 4

## PM should take sanyas: Cong

NEW DELHI, July 20. — The Congress has again trained its guns on an "ageing" Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. The Prime Minister is too old to hold office and should retire, the party said today.

Responding to the BJP's charge that the Congress had violated India's tradition of decency by attacking an elderly person such as Mr Vajpayee, Mr Jamial Reddy said: "It's also in accordance with the tradition that the aged should take sanyas". — SNS

PARTY TO FOCUS ON ASSEMBLY, LOK SABHA POLLS

# BJP stands by old agenda but won't thrust it on allies

By Neena Vyas

RAIPUR, JULY 18. The Bharatiya Janata Party today declared that it was ready to re-assert its old agenda — Ayodhya, a uniform civil code and scrapping of Article 370 of the Constitution conferring a special status on Jammu and Kashmir — but would “not thrust it” on its political allies.

The party's three-day national executive committee meeting got under way here today with the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, addressing the 125-member strong body.

The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, arrived here this morning — he was received by the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister, Ajit Jogi, and he will be here till tomorrow evening. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Human Resource Development Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, and a number of Cabinet Ministers and party leaders have also arrived.

Mr. Naidu's 10-page address is a clear indication that the party wants to give a strong message to its restive cadre — as well as the cadre of other Sangh Parivar organisations — that it has not abandoned its Hindutva ideology, which, he said, “cannot be projected as a narrow religious concept”. At the same time, he asked the party members to “remember” that the BJP was leading a coalition Government at the Centre, and that “there is no question of thrusting our agenda on any of our partners”.

The focus of attention at the committee meeting will be a strategy for “Operation 2003” — the general secretary, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said the “BJP was determined to wrest at least four of the five States going to the polls” — and “Mission 2004” for which the aim is to get “300 Lok Sabha seats on our own and a two-thirds majority with allies”.

The main political enemy being the Congress — as a rival for power at the Centre and as the ruling party in four of the five States going to the polls this year — Mr. Naidu trained his attack on its “new-found fondness” for coalition politics. He also focussed on the “area of leadership” juxtaposing “Atalji”



In the presence of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, lights a lamp to inaugurate the party's national executive meeting in Raipur on Friday. — Photo: A.M. Faruqui

against Sonia Gandhi, Congress president. Mr. Naidu attacked the Congress for falling back on the “worn out bogey of communalism” at its Shimla conclave. He challenged it for a debate on secularism and development, maintaining that 47 years of

Congress rule was a “misrule” and the five years of NDA Government were development-oriented.

The BJP is keen on getting the stalled Women's Reservation Bill moving and could formally make a new proposal on in-

creasing the Lok Sabha and Assembly seats by creating “double-member constituencies” to accommodate more women after a detailed discussion expected tomorrow. It seems that a law on population may be forthcoming as Mr. Naidu “demanded” it and Mr. Advani had a few days ago talked of this. Against the backdrop of the Prime Minister's “commitment” to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the party would consider legislation on Ayodhya, a new resolution on the subject is also being considered.

The view among party leaders is that while asserting that the party is open to resolving the Ayodhya dispute through legislation in Parliament, it may sound a note of caution that this will not be possible unless it has a clear majority of its own in Parliament.

## Ayodhya: PM leaves it to party

RAIPUR, JULY 18. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said he did not want to get into the controversy over the demand of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh for legislation for construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya as the issue was being discussed at the BJP national executive meeting here.

“Mein in vivadon mein nahi par raha hoon ... charcha chahi hai (I am not getting into the controversy. The issue is being discussed at the national executive). Whatever the decision, you will come to know,” he told reporters on arrival at the airport here to attend the meeting.

The Prime Minister was replying to a question on the VHP's and the RSS's demand for legislation for building a Ram temple in Ayodhya. — PTI, UNI



# BJP to consider VHP demand for 'legislation'

By Our New Delhi Bureau

**NEW DELHI, JULY 12.** Leaders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh today extracted a promise from government leaders that the Bharatiya Janata Party, at its national executive next week, would consider the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's demand that a "mandir legislation" be introduced in Parliament.

This was stated by Madan Das Devi, senior RSS functionary, after a conclave at the Prime Minister's residence. The meeting was attended by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, and the RSS chief, K.S. Sudershan.

Mr. Devi said the RSS would, in turn, be telling the VHP lead-

ers to stop demanding Mr. Vajpayee's resignation. Today's meeting took place in the context of the growing rhetorical stridency of the VHP against the Vajpayee Government, especially after the collapse of the Kanchi Sankaracharya, Sri Jayendra Saraswati's initiative to bring about an amicable solution to the Ayodhya/Babri masjid dispute.

As if to prepare the ground for today's meeting, the VHP had earlier in the day toned down its attack on the Vajpayee Government for "failing" to secure the disputed site of Ayodhya "for Hindus". Nevertheless, it persisted with its demand for legislation on Ramjanmabhoomi, maintaining that there would be no going back on its claim to this and the mosques

in Kashi and Mathura. <sup>1787</sup> Without naming the Kanchi seer, the 'sants', in the resolution, were critical of the recent efforts to negotiate with the Muslim community on Ayodhya and were particularly resentful of being left out of the process.

Also, they rejected the talk of "giving up" the claim to the disputed structures in Mathura and Kashi to secure the Ramjanmabhoomi.

Reluctant to field questions on its earlier tough stance, Mr. Singhal diverted all questions to the convener of the Samiti, Mahant Parmanand; maintaining that the VHP was only following the direction provided by the 'sants'.

According to Mahant Parmanand, the 'sants' will meet in

mid-September again to decide the course of action. To repeated questions on whether the 'sants' had faith in Mr. Vajpayee's ability to deliver vis-à-vis Ayodhya, he said: "He has our trust as of now; if he fails, he will be answerable."

About his earlier demand for Mr. Vajpayee's resignation should the Government fail to legislate on Ayodhya, Mr. Singhal sought to blame the media for "misinterpreting" his remarks.

"All I did was remind the BJP of its Palampur resolution wherein the party had favoured legislation to hand over the site in Ayodhya to Hindus. And, if the BJP fails to do so, then it should seek a mandate from the electorate to realise a goal it had committed itself to."

do so.

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# RSS unlikely to soften Ayodhya stand

By Swati Das and Anita Katyal  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kanyakumari/New Delhi:** The national executive of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), scheduled to meet in Kanyakumari from Saturday, is most likely to continue its tough stand on Ayodhya, while ruling out any bargain on the Kashi or Mathura issues. It is also hoping that any negotiation by the Kanchi Shankaracharya would take into consideration sentiments of the RSS-Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

The meeting will see 150 to 170 provincial heads of the RSS interacting with 40-odd senior functionaries of the Sangh Parivar. VHP leaders Ashok Singhal and Pravin Togadia will be there, as will Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) general secretary Sanjay Joshi.

Briefing journalists in Kanyakumari on Friday evening on the Ayodhya talks, RSS spokesman Ram Madhav said: "If they really need to succeed, they should accommodate the views of those organisations and individuals leading the issue for more than two decades."

He said the RSS believed that all proposals given so far were "well intended." "For us it's an issue of self-respect and honour. We appeal to all parties to look in this perspective to facil-

itate the construction of the temple where Ram Lala is sitting (the site of the demolished mosque)." He said he was hopeful and confident that Kanchi seer Jayendra Saraswathi kept this in mind when sending his proposal to the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB). He was confident, he said, because the RSS had been constantly in touch with the Acharya.

However, Mr Madhav said he was not aware what the Acharya had proposed to the AIMPLB.

He ruled out accepting the use of Mathura or Kashi as a bargaining counter for Ayodhya. Each should be dealt with as a separate issue, he said. He also said that legislation on Ayodhya would be the only alternative if negotiations did not succeed.

He, however, dismissed Mr Singhal's demand for the resignation of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. "We respect the independence of a party to decide who should be prime minister and deputy PM," he said.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi, the BJP found itself distinctly embarrassed by the VHP's continued tirade against the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government and the PM on the Ayodhya issue. However, it found itself in a bind over how to silence the outspoken leaders

of its sister organisation.

There is a growing belief in the BJP that it will be difficult for the party to make Ayodhya its primary poll plank in the next Lok Sabha election as the 1991 Ram wave cannot be revived. But it is unable to tell this to the VHP, which has been at the forefront of the Ram temple movement.

At the same time, the BJP cannot forsake the issue completely as that would alienate its committed vote-bank. This is the reason that the BJP has not openly condemned the VHP tirade.

When pushed, BJP spokesperson Prakash Javadekar on Friday expressed his disapproval at the VHP attack on the PM but, but also said the BJP wants a Ram temple at Ayodhya.

Unable to rein in VHP leaders, the BJP has been depending on the RSS to play a mediatory role. So far, the latter has met with little success. On the contrary, the RSS even backed the VHP as it is in no position to jettison the Hindutva agenda and distance itself from the mandir issue.

Barely two days before the RSS meet in Kanyakumari to discuss the seer's proposal, VHP international president Singhal had lashed out at the PM and demanded his resignation for his failure to enact a Central legislation to construct the Ram temple.

# Pressure others, BJP tells VHP

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 4. — The BJP today continued to be apologetic about the defence of its top leaders, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani, both at the receiving end of an unrelenting attack from the VHP over Ayodhya. The party merely said: "We do not approve of the VHP's criticism".

VHP leader Mr Ashok Singhal had yesterday demanded Mr Vajpayee's resignation. Singling out the Prime Minister, Mr Singhal said he was the "only" Sangh Parivar and BJP leader opposed to the Ram Janambhoomi movement, and who also suggested

that a temple and a mosque could be built side-by-side in Ayodhya.

Rejecting this, the BJP today said "there is no case or cause for the Prime Minister to resign". Instead of criticising the "pro-temple and pro-legislation" BJP, the VHP should exert "pressure" on those parties who have always opposed construction of the temple, BJP spokesman Mr Prakash Javadekar said.

In another development, briefing the media on the eve of its national executive, RSS spokesman Mr Ram Madhav said: "If the negotiations (on Ayodhya) are really to succeed, they should accommodate the

views of those organisations and individuals which have spearheaded the Ayodhya issue for more than two decades."

The RSS hoped that the proposal sent by the Kanchi Shankaracharya to the Muslim Personal Law Board had taken into consideration the sentiments of both the Sangh and the VHP.

To pacify the VHP, the BJP said it wants "the construction of the Ayodhya temple at Ram Janmashtan soon but the legislative route is not feasible now, given the opposition to it from every quarter".

The BJP said it would like the VHP to recall that Mr Vajpayee had "approved" the party's Ayodhya

resolution at the 1989 Palampur session that stated: "The sentiments of the people must be respected, and Ram Janmasthan handed over to Hindus — if possible through a negotiated settlement or else, by legislation. Litigation certainly is no answer".

This is what Mr Ashok Singhal meant when he said that the BJP has now gone back on its Palampur resolution.

The BJP, however, feels that the VHP wants it to commit "suicide" over Ayodhya, which is an "unacceptable" proposition for the party. It hopes that the VHP would be finally "reined in" soon with the help of the RSS.

**SAFFRON BRIGADE TO FOCUS ON UPCOMING ELECTIONS**

# Ayodhya to Tibet on RSS agenda at Kanyakumari

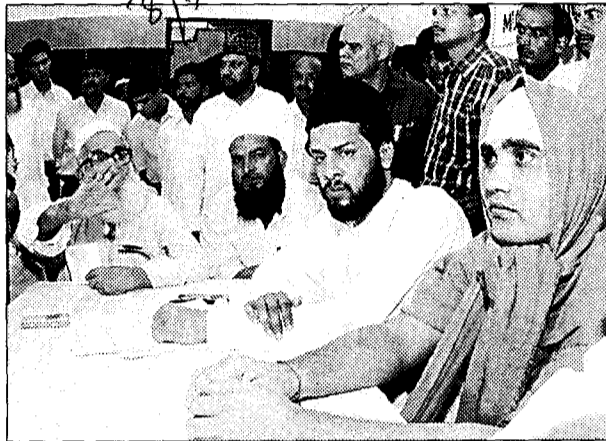
Chennai  
2 JULY

**T**HOUSANDS of activists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have gathered in Kanyakumari to discuss issues ranging from Ayodhya to Tibet as well as next year's general elections. The RSS, the ideological mentor of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is holding a two-day leadership meet on July 5 and 6 at Kanyakumari. But thousands of RSS activists are already in Kanyakumari for debates and discussions that will be spread over three days and help prepare a firm agenda for the weekend conference.

On the agenda will be diverse issues ranging from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's trip last month to China, which has drawn criticism that New Delhi had made concessions to Beijing over Tibet, to Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati's proposals to resolve the Ayodhya temple dispute.

In recent days, RSS leaders have had meetings with the Kanchi seer and have made it clear that they are keen to see a grand Ram temple coming up at the site of the razed Babri mosque. Also on the anvil will probably be the issue of taking over similar disputed shrines in the towns of Varanasi and Mathura. The RSS will also discuss the upcoming elections in five states as well as parliamentary elections due next year.

The recent public spat between the BJP and the hard-line Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) over Shankaracharya's efforts to resolve the Ayodhya row will be under the RSS spotlight as well. — IANS



**SPIRIT OF UNITY:** Shankaracharya Swami Shri Adhoshyanand Dev Teerathi Maharaj with Muslim priests at the second annual joint meeting of Muslim and Hindu religious leaders in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

## AIMPLB wants no compromise

Hyderabad  
2 JULY

**A**LLAYING fears among sections of Muslims, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) indicated on Wednesday that it will never agree to a temple coming up on the ruins of the Babri mosque.

AIMPLB said there will be no compromise on the site of the demolished Babri mosque at Ayodhya. The board secretary Rahim Qureshi and member Moulana Rizwanul Qasmi said the board was aware of the community's feelings over the sensitive issue.

The board, an apex body of Indian Muslims, is to meet at Lucknow on Sunday to discuss a proposal of Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati of Kancheepuram.

The proposal is aimed at ending the Ayodhya row out of court.

Some Muslim leaders, including Shahi Imam Ahmed Bukhari of New Delhi's Jama Masjid, have opposed the Shankaracharya's proposal and warned the board against any "compromise" — an euphemism for allowing a Hindu temple to come up on the ruins of the 16th-century Babri mosque that was destroyed. "There will be no compromise on the site where Babri Masjid stood till December 6, 1992," said Rahim Qureshi, before leaving for Lucknow. He, however, hinted that the board might consider any proposal for constructing a temple on the undisputed land around the Babri site but this will be subject to certain conditions. — IANS

# Sangh, Kanchi seer sailing in same boat: RSS

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND PTI

**Chennai:** Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief K.S. Sudarshan does not see any "real differences" between Kanchi seer Jayendra Saraswati and the VHP over the proposal sent to the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on the Ayodhya issue.

RSS spokesperson Ram Madhav, who along with Mr Sudarshan is on his way to Kanyakumari to attend the two-day working committee meeting of the RSS from July 5-6, said VHP leader Ashok Singhal had already met the Shankaracharya, and hence there was no scope for a difference of opinion between the seer and the VHP.

The RSS, too, shares the seer's stand on the issue, Mr Madhav told reporters here on Monday. "After Mr Sudarshan's meeting with the Shankaracharya this morning, we came to the conclusion that we sail in the same boat," he said.

Describing the RSS chief's meeting with the pontiff as a courtesy call, Mr Madhav refused to comment on the seer's proposal, saying he was not aware of its contents. The meeting was held mainly to discuss the issue.

"The Shankaracharya's formula has not been made public yet. We have to wait for a response from the AIMPLB, which will meet on July 6," said Mr Sudarshan. The Ayodhya issue will be discussed on Tuesday as well as at the working committee meet, said Mr Madhav. The issue will be discussed threadbare during the RSS national executive meet, added Mr Sudarshan.

Asserting that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was not involved with the seer's proposal in any way, the RSS spokesperson observed that both the VHP and the Centre would have to play a role at some point of time.

Asked if he would accept the Shankaracharya's mediation in the Ayodhya issue, Mr

## Road to Ayodhya

### Panel gets extension:

The term of the Liberhan commission probing the circumstances leading to the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992 has been extended by six months

### Plea to summon PM:

An application was filed before the commission on Monday seeking to summon Atal Bihari Vajpayee in light of the allegations made by former UP CM Kalyan Singh. The application was filed by Mohd Aslam alias Bhure

### 'No role in demolition':

Rebutting Mr Singh's charges, the Centre told the panel on Monday that the PM, the deputy PM and the HRD minister did not have any role in the demolition

Sudarshan said, "That is not an issue. Since the Shankaracharya has taken the initiative to solve the temple issue, people from all quarters will have to come and meet him."

Meanwhile, apparently not wanting to sour relations with members of the Sangh Parivar, the BJP said on Monday that the views expressed by Mr Sudarshan and Mr Singhal on Kashmir and Ayodhya were "theirs" and "everybody is free to express their opinion".

"The RSS is not a political party and it also never spoke of forcing its agenda on the BJP. We are a political party and the VHP is a separate organisation and it is free to draw up its own agenda. If anybody has a view, he is free to do so," party spokesperson Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi told reporters in New Delhi.

# PM and deputy united on Ayodhya, asserts BJP

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 29. — Dismissing the VHP's demand for Mr LK Advani's resignation over Ayodhya, the BJP today said Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr Advani had no differences on the matter.

The VHP wants Mr Advani to push a legislation in Parliament, setting the stage for construction of the Ram temple since it has no hopes from the "secular" Mr Vajpayee who, it says, had never been associated with the Ramjanambhoomi movement in the first place.

"Advani should take the lead to bring the legislation now," said the VHP working president, Mr Ashok Singhal in Raipur yesterday. "And, if Mr Advani feels Mr Vajpayee poses a hurdle, he should quit the government." BJP general secretary Mr Pramod Mahajan today dismissed the VHP allegation that a "secret deal" had been struck at the behest of Mr

Vajpayee to resolve the Ayodhya tangle.

Mr Mahajan said in Raipur that Mr Vajpayee also had always supported the BJP's demand for Ram temple at Ayodhya, pointing out he had consented when the party first passed a resolution in its 1989 Palampur session pressing for the temple's construction. He said, the BJP manifestos for Lok Sabha polls in 1991, 1996, and 1998, prepared with Mr Vajpayee's "consent and permission", had mentioned the party's resolve to build the Ram temple.

He ruled out a legislation despite the party's willingness since allies would veto it. Mr Mahajan also dismissed the possibility of anyone resigning or the party seeking a fresh mandate after pulling out of the NDA. In a bid to placate the VHP, he said the government was not considering any proposal for job quota for Muslims. There is no move to allow Muslims to offer their prayers in ASI-protected monuments, Mr Mahajan said.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

30 JUN 2003

TDP, BSP Emerge As Allies

# BJP prepares for Feb polls

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 24 JUNE

**T**HE BJP leadership has started preparing for a February election in the right earnest. The just-concluded brainstorming session of the Sangh Parivar saw the BJP brass seeking and getting approvals for stitching poll alliances for Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

While the party has decided to team up with Andhra chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party yet again, it wants to take the BSP as its partner in Uttar Pradesh to make up for the loss of its influence in the once-Saffron power house.

The desirability of early polls featured prominently in the deliberations held at Utthan near Mumbai and the seriousness — regardless of the denials — of the intent has already been recognised by its partners like the TDP. Mr Naidu is believed to have told his colleagues to start getting ready for a February poll at Monday's meeting of the state Cabinet.

The BJP leadership has been flirting with the idea of February polls since the opinion

polls showed it as sitting pretty in three of the four poll-bound states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and New Delhi. The survey, commissioned by the party and corroborated at least in the case of Madhya Pradesh by an A.C. Nielsen's study show the party trailing Congress only in New Delhi.

The BJP leadership wants to keep the matter under wraps because it fears that an acknowledgement of its intention might encourage the bureaucracy to go into the "wait and watch" mode.

The Utthan meet also discussed the issue of alliance in Tamil Nadu where the DMK has been showing signs of discomfort with its status as a NDA partner. This is mainly due to arch rival Jayalithaa's pro-Saffron vibes and the continuing detention of Vaiko of MDMK under Pota.

While the alliance with the TDP is all but wrapped up, save the inevitable haggling over seats, the party is yet to engage Mayawati in the discussions for a UP alliance. Party estimates the BSP leadership to respond positively, but is bracing itself up for some hard knuckle bargaining.

988  
26/6  
57-6

## VHP's anger

### Shankaracharya's proposal leaves VHP out

What is making the VHP so angry, so much so that high-profile leaders like Ashok Singhal and Praveen Togadia are launching tirades against their sister organisation — the BJP? The answer is obvious. A negotiated solution of the controversial Ayodhya issue in which they have no role will end their raison d'être, and show up their inconsequence in the RSS parivar. It will mean an end to their histrionics under constant media glare. They are not exactly ready to lie down and die. The Kanchi Shankaracharya, who until not so long ago was being touted by the VHP as one of the tallest leaders of Hinduism, is stealing their thunder. Neither the seer nor the Muslim Personal Law Board are ready to divulge what is touted as a possible solution to this protracted problem until 7 July. But more importantly the MPLB is very clear that they will enter into no dialogue with the VHP whom they rightly hold responsible for the demolition of the Babari Masjid. Out in the cold, the VHP can only brand the seer's overtures as "appeasement of Muslims". Where is the appeasement? *7 wprh* *Delhi*

The Babari Masjid was demolished even as the court cases to decide on the ownership of the title deeds of the land were still in the Supreme Court. Before and after the demolition, the MPLB has been consistent in saying that the Muslims will abide by the verdict of the court as to whom the land will eventually be given. It is the VHP and the Sangh Parivar which are shouting from the rooftops that they will not accept the Supreme Court verdict if it is against them. The current round of negotiations were initiated by the BJP government which would like to be seen as building a Ram Temple. The BJP is worried that the Supreme Court when it finally does give its verdict will be in favour of the Muslims and contravening that would be difficult. Hence a negotiated settlement ahead of verdict. But for "negotiations" to be fruitful there has to be give and take. The VHP would actually like the Muslims to voluntarily give up all claims to the Babari Masjid, and leave them free to do a repeat performance at the Gyanvapi mosque and the Mathura idgah. Why should anyone accept such an idea?



# We cannot say anything now on Kashi, Mathura: BJP

109-1  
24/6

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 23.** The Bharatiya Janata Party is unwilling to make a commitment or give an assurance that it will not support any organisation raising the "mandir-masjid" disputes in Kashi or Mathura in future if the Ayodhya issue is resolved amicably.

A change in tone was also noted on the question of involving the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on any agreed formula for resolving the Ayodhya matter with the BJP noting: "at some later stage VHP leaders would have to be involved".

The party's stance today suggested that it has fallen in line with the RSS view clearly expounded by the RSS chief, K.S. Sudershan, that "Hindus" cannot bargain away Kashi and Mathura, and that for any viable solution on Ayodhya, the VHP which has been in the forefront of the Ram temple "movement", would have to be taken into confidence.

It is assumed that the change in tone and tenor of the BJP was the result of the meeting between Mr. Sudershan and party president, Venkaiah Naidu, yesterday.

The party spokesperson and general secretary, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, was today repeatedly asked whether the BJP leaders in Government were ready to give an assurance that their party would not support the Kashi or Mathura issues if the Muslim community agreed to give up its claim on the disputed land in

Ayodhya. His response at a press conference was: "the party has not discussed the Kashi and Mathura issues and we cannot say anything now."

When it was pointed out that the Places of Worship Act enacted by the Narasimha Rao Government placed the Kashi and Mathura issues out of the purview of courts and their current status could not be disputed legally, Mr. Naqvi's response was rather oblique. "The BJP is a political party, it is not in the business of building temples. We have stated that we are in favour of a Ram mandir (in Ayodhya)... Kashi and Mathura have not yet been discussed by the party, we

have not taken a view," Mr. Naqvi said. He insisted that it was "in the national interest" not to delay a solution to the Ayodhya dispute. "A Ram temple must be built there as soon as possible, through the court (judicial verdict) or some other way (a reference to the efforts of the Kanchi seer, Jayendra Saraswati)," Mr. Naqvi emphasised.

Senior BJP leaders believe that if the Ayodhya issue is resolved in favour of a Ram temple, the BJP can claim victory on the issue which it has espoused since 1989, and it could lead to an emotional wave in favour of the party, at least in North India.

## Togadia wants Kanchi seer's proposals made public

By Our Special Correspondent

**HYDERABAD, JUNE 23.** The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) general secretary, Praveen Togadia, today appeared to have softened his line on the initiative by the Kanchi Sankaracharya, Sri Jayendra Saraswathi, to resolve the Ayodhya row.

Addressing presspersons here, he said the VHP was not questioning the Sankaracharya's locus standi but only demanding that his proposals be made public. Describing the Kanchi seer as 'my Sankaracharya', he said the nation had a right to know details of the proposed accord. Ayodhya, he said, was not a personal matter but involved the faith of the entire Hindu community.

PTI reports from New Delhi:

Senior VHP vice president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, said today that the organisation stood for an honourable settlement of the Ayodhya issue, asserting that it would not accept any solution that would hurt the sentiments of Hindus.

He, however, asked the Sankaracharya to come out with details of his formula.

**Togadia plans new Hindutva party: Page 11**

9.00.11  
SJP

## REALITY KNOCKS

MP-10  
25/6 ✓

AT THE END of its brainstorming session, *chintan baithak*, at Utthan, the BJP seems to have come to terms with the realities on the electoral ground after briefly toying with the idea of advancing the Lok Sabha poll due next year. All the talk of capturing 300 seats on its own gave way to a renewed commitment to existing alliances in different States, and a reiteration of the common agenda of the National Democratic Alliance. Evidently, the introspection in the party conclave revealed a greater need for exercising caution than for charting an adventurous course towards the goal of an independent majority in the Lok Sabha. Thus, the brainstorming session, instead of unveiling some grand strategy for Mission 2004, wound up as another routine: papering over internal differences and circumventing inconvenient issues. The zoom on the Lok Sabha poll was readjusted to focus on the Assembly elections due later this year. From the high-risk option of combining the Lok Sabha poll with the Assembly elections, the BJP quickly moved to the possibility of a general election in Spring 2004, and finally deferred a decision until after the Assembly elections. Understandably so, as there are still several loose ends to be tied up on the domestic front as also in foreign relations. A time of flux, as at present, is hardly opportune for choosing an election date. The question of advancing the Lok Sabha poll would now be reopened only if the BJP performs creditably in the Assembly elections. The party would ideally like to wrest from the Congress at least three of the States going to the polls: Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Delhi. Until such time, the BJP might want to utilise the months in power to add to the list of achievements.

Nevertheless, the *chintan baithak* had its uses for the BJP. The leadership question, which

brought into open the power struggle between the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and his deputy, L.K. Advani, was given a public burial. Both Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani used the occasion to praise each other in glowing terms. Mr. Vajpayee dwelt on how Mr. Advani was a source of strength for him in the Government, and also a guiding light of the party. Mr. Advani, for his part, complimented Mr. Vajpayee for the Pakistan policy, describing him as "strong like a diamond, and soft like a flower." After the *vikas purush-loh purush* controversy created by the party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, who wanted to project Mr. Advani alongside Mr. Vajpayee in the BJP's election campaign, the conclave served the purpose of putting up a show of unity at the very top.

For the same reason that it was too early to think of the Lok Sabha poll, the BJP also put off deciding on any reworking of alliances. The difficulties in the relations with the BSP in Uttar Pradesh, the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the INLD in Haryana figured during the discussions at the conclave, but since none of the three States is going to the polls this year, there was no sense of urgency in dealing with such alliance issues. However, more than the problems created by political allies, what was of pressing concern for the BJP at the conclave was the stand of its ideological ally, the VHP, on the Ayodhya issue. Mr. Naidu found it necessary, not only for the sake of the "secular allies" of the BJP, but also in the interests of the party, to express disagreement with the VHP. As Mr. Naidu himself admits, the BJP is constrained only by coalition politics and the "responsibility" as a ruling party from siding with the VHP on the Ayodhya issue. For the moment, at least, the BJP leaders appear to be distinctly aware of the limitations of seeking a mandate on emotive subjects such as Ayodhya.

# Kalyan Singh's comments absurd, says BJP chief

By Our Special Correspondent

**HYDERABAD, JUNE 21.** The BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, on Saturday described as "absurd" and "totally baseless" the comments made by the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Rashtriya Kranti Party leader, Kalyan Singh, that he was betrayed by senior BJP leaders, including the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister during the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

The comments only reflected the frustration of a "new convert to pseudo secularism" and it took 11 years for Mr. Singh to understand that he was influenced. The comments were prompted by, what Mr Naidu said, the political thought of Mr. Singh over the present course adopted by him.

At a press conference here, Mr. Naidu said though the party initially chose not to react to such remarks made by individuals who changed their stand, the media coverage given to Mr. Singh's remarks prompted him (Mr. Naidu) to give the party's version. Since the pulling down of the Masjid, the BJP had been firm on its stand that the incident was unfortunate and unintended and it occurred under circumstances beyond

its control. Mr. Naidu said several attempts had been made earlier too to influence public opinion by raising such charges, but they failed as the people were aware of the situation.

Explaining the highlights of the 'Chintan Baithak', he said the party had resolved to request the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to set up three separate Commissions to study reservation to the economically backward people in the forward castes, problems faced by the disabled and matters pertaining to the denotified or nomadic tribes. Communications had been sent to the Union Finance Ministry to take up with the RBI issues pertaining to the cooperative sector and health of cooperative banks for ensuring safety of security of the consumers.

Mr. Naidu said the party would focus its energies on winning the elections in the five States scheduled later this year. The party would take up nationalism as an emotive issue and seek another chance with stronger mandate. "People want the connectivity, be it highway, rural, rail, air and tele-connectivity to be completed and we will seek a strong mandate for all the programmes to be completed."

# Fiery Kalyan spills BJP's Babri 'secret'

YOGESH VAJPEYI

Lucknow, June 20: Stung by the Centre's deposition before the Liberhan Commission, Kalyan Singh, who was Uttar Pradesh chief minister when Babri masjid was demolished, today accused the BJP of betraying him.

The Centre's counsel, Lala Ram Gupta, had yesterday told the commission that Singh's government did not have a contingency plan ready. "The state government failed in its duty to deploy the already stationed Central forces," Gupta had said.

Lashing out at deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, human resources development minister Murlidhar Manohar Joshi and six others chargesheeted in the Rae Bareilly CBI court, Singh threatened to testify against them in the court.

The Rashtriya Kranti Party chief alleged Advani and senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leaders had kept him in the dark about their "deep and secret conspiracy" to demolish the mosque. "They not only kept their designs hidden, but also betrayed me," Singh said.

"The then BJP leadership, even after assuring me that nothing would go wrong in Ayodhya, stabbed me (in the back) on the issue."

Singh said he was prepared to stand by his allegations in the Rae Bareilly special court. "If the court summons (me), I will depose against the BJP leadership responsible for the 1992 incident."

As the chief minister then, Singh said he was "only morally responsible" for the demolition and had owned up by going to jail for a day. "The BJP is trying to make me a scapegoat. But I know it will never succeed," he said.

Singh said Gupta was wrong in inferring that the state or the Centre — of P.V. Narasimha

Rao's Congress — had not prepared a contingency plan.

"I also want to clarify that the Central forces which were rushed to Ayodhya for protection of the mosque were not allowed because of the conspiracy of these (BJP and RSS) leaders," he said in a carefully worded statement.

"At their instance, the mob put up roadblocks in the narrow lanes leading to the disputed site to ensure none could enter without using brute force."

"If the forces were given orders to move ahead by using bullets," he emphasised, "there would have been a massacre which would have had nationwide repercussions."

The BJP leaders, Singh said, did not have the courage to own

moral responsibility.

"They are simply trying to tarnish my image because I am trying to forge a national alternative to the BJP at the state as well as the national level."

The RKP chief presented an 11-point clarification to prove he was unaware of the BJP and RSS leaders' plans.

The Supreme Court, Singh said, had not banned the entry and movement of *kar sevaks* in Ayodhya on the basis of an affidavit he signed along with other leaders such as Chinmayanand, now minister of state for home, and Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia, the late BJP leader. The *kar seva*, the affidavit had assured, would be symbolic.

"The affidavit was completed in the presence of lawyers, including Lala Ram Gupta. Now he is stating just the opposite, and has betrayed me," Singh said.

He also raised the question "why had Advani and others criticised the then Union government for dismissal of my government when the BJP-led NDA government says my government was at fault"?



Kalyan Singh

# Softly, softly, Hindutva and elections

Statesman News Service

MUMBAI, June 20. — The BJP today distanced itself from the VHP on the Ayodhya issue and was non-committal on the Lok Sabha elections.

The party president, at his post-*chintan baithak* press conference, said: "The VHP speaks for the Hindus, while the BJP, being a nationalist party, speaks for the country."

Mr Venkaiah Naidu attributed the VHP's outburst against the Kanchi Seer's latest initiative to resolve the Ayodhya dispute to its leaders' restlessness. They are using aggressive language because

the issue has remained unresolved for so long, he said. BJP leaders have agreed to stay clear of the VHP. "Thus far and no further," said Mr Naidu.

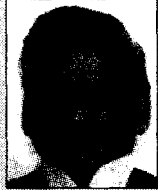
On the timing of the general elections, the party is still undecided. Mr Naidu said it was the government's prerogative to decide when the Lok Sabha would be dissolved. The consensus at the meeting was to wait till the Assembly polls due later

this year in four states. The outcome will determine the dates of the LS polls.

Besides, Mr Naidu said, the party's organisational poll will be held before the general elections. And in the meantime the government would try to speed up its development programmes.

Mr Pramod Mahajan, head of the party's election campaign committee, has been asked to assess the performance of

BJP's 182 MPs and prepare a report. He has also been asked to find out why the party was in the second position in 112 LS seats in the last polls. Setting at rest the doubts of BJP allies in the NDA, Mr Naidu said that



## 'Kept in the dark'

LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI, June 20. — Mr Kalyan Singh today alleged that the Babari Masjid demolition was the result of a "conspiracy" by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr LK Advani and RSS leaders. "I was kept in the dark," the former UP chief minister said. The BJP dismissed Mr Singh's statement as an attempt to get a "certificate of secularism" from prospective allies. — SNS

though the party was aiming to notch up 300 seats, it was not thinking of forming the next government alone.

**Advani praises Vajpayee:** Mr LK Advani today iterated his faith in the Prime Minister's leadership, saying the NDA would return to power with a stronger mandate under Mr Vajpayee.

Another report on page 4

# PM placates pro-Advani camp

By Dilip Chaware  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Efforts to placate the pro-Advani faction in the BJP were put into high gear on Wednesday when the Prime Minister himself showered liberal praise on deputy PM L.K. Advani while inaugurating the three-day BJP chintan baithak at Uttan near here. And living up to his promise of restoring an "appropriate" moment party president M. Venkaiah Naidu's prestige—which had taken a knocking after the latter stirred up the leadership controversy—the PM ended his speech by endorsing his faith in his ability to lead the party.

Mr Naidu, too, attempted a balancing act. After acknowledging the supremacy of Mr Vajpayee, he com-

pared Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani with Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, the first president of the Jan Sangh, and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the best-known ideologue of the party.

This is being read as the BJP leadership's strategy to scotch the possibility of any internecine feud in the midst of preparations for the forthcoming elections. However, insiders said party general secretary Pramod Mahajan had spoken on Tuesday about Mr Vajpayee continuing to lead the party into the polls only after a clear signal from the top leadership.

Party leaders, sources said, felt it was necessary to clarify the situation so that no reservation lingered about the status of the deputy PM, who will arrive late on Wednesday night from the UK, and will deliver the valedictory on Friday.

So, Mr Vajpayee, describing Mr Advani's role, said: "Not only is he

a source of strength for me in the government but he also devotes a lot of his time and energy to guide the party." Mr Vajpayee also cautioned his audience, saying political power had an intrinsic quality of reducing people's trust in rulers. Therefore, the conduct of BJP workers in the government and party should be exemplary.

Exhorting party workers to work single-mindedly towards victory in the coming assembly and subsequent parliamentary elections, Mr Vajpayee claimed the atmosphere in the country favoured the BJP and the NDA because of the NDA government's achievements within the country and in the international arena. Mr Naidu applauded the PM, stressing the BJP was fortunate to have a "great leader" like Mr Vajpayee, whose popularity has been growing even after five years in office.

**CHINTAN  
BAITHAK**

# Vajpayee, not Advani, is BJP's PM candidate

HT Correspondent  
Thane, June 17

LAYING TO rest the leadership debate, the BJP on Tuesday officially declared that Atal Bihari Vajpayee is its supreme leader and the NDA's sole candidate for Prime Minister, with L.K. Advani's role limited to "effectively supporting" Vajpayee.

Ahead of the party's high-profile *Chintan Baithak* (brainstorming session) on its strategy for the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan made the announcement a few hours before 27 BJP stalwarts and a lone RSS representative were to go into the session under Vajpayee's leadership. The session will continue till June 20 in Thane, near Mumbai.

The announcement assumes importance in the light of the controversy created by BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu's statement that both Vajpayee and Advani would be the party's mascots in the 2004 polls.

"A.B. Vajpayee will be the BJP's prime ministerial candidate and the NDA's leader for the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. There are no doubts about this and there are no differences within the party over the issue. Ever since Vajpayee assumed the office of Prime Minister in 1998, his popularity has been on the rise and this will benefit us in the 2004 elections. Advani has always effectively supported Vajpayee and will continue to do so in future," said Mahajan.

Outlining the possible themes at the session, Mahajan said it would primarily focus on the coming Lok Sabha elections. "This is an informal meeting for introspection and review of the



## Atal challenge

PRIME MINISTER A.B. Vajpayee on Tuesday answered President Pervez Musharraf's recent hint at a Kargil rerun by declaring that Islamabad was preparing for a fourth defeat in a war against India. "Musharraf has reminded us of Kargil but he should remember Pakistan was defeated thrice in wars and is now preparing for a fourth defeat," Vajpayee said at a meeting in Mandla, about 100 km from Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh.

PTI, Mandla

performance of the BJP, the NDA and the government. There will be open discussions on wide-ranging issues pertaining to the BJP's attempts to win the majority and the NDA's efforts to win a two-thirds majority. The party plans to seek a renewed mandate for the next five years in Parliament, which is Mission 2004 for the BJP."

Mahajan said no resolutions would be passed or decisions taken at the session. "Appropriate decisions will be taken at appropriate fora in due course based on the discussions at this meeting."

# VHP lashes out at Govt. for 'betraying' temple movement

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 16.** The Vishwa Hindu Parishad today castigated the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's effort towards resolving the Ayodhya issue.

In a strongly-worded attack, bordering on being abusive, the top VHP leadership — Ashok Singhal, Praveen Togadia and Giriraj Kishore — charged the government leaders with "using the Kanchi Sankaracharya as a tool" in their political game, of "betraying the Ram Janmabhoomi movement which had catapulted them into power", of "appeasing Muslim leadership" and, finally, of trying to "bargain on matters of Hindu pride".

It seems that the VHP leaders are especially angry that the Government is trying to work out some "formula" that would sideline the VHP. When a pointed question was asked about this, Mr. Singhal said "we will tell you about this later".

Mr. Togadia made one thing clear — under no circumstances would the VHP and "Hindus" give up their claim on Kashi and Mathura, in addition to Ayodhya. "We can negotiate with the Muslims and talk to them, but we will not bargain away Kashi and Mathura ... we cannot tolerate hurting 'atma gaurav' (the pride of the Hindu

soil)," Mr. Togadia said. Mr. Singhal charged that the Prime Minister had kept the Sankaracharya "in the dark" that he was being "used as a tool" and all that the BJP leaders were interested in was to "somehow build a Ram temple and win the next elections on this and stay in power."

The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, was also not spared. Mr. Singhal repeated his earlier allegation that Ramchandra Paramhans, the leading 'sadhu' in the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation, had suffered a heart attack after Mr. Advani said certain things to him during their meeting some 15 days ago. "I cannot tell you what Mr. Advani said as the Paramhans is in the intensive care unit in hospital ... when he is out he himself will tell you," Mr. Singhal said. 'Hindus' were not pressing their claim to 30,000 temples allegedly destroyed under the Mughal rule or the 3,000 temples allegedly destroyed on which mosques were built, they were asking for the return of only three temples where mosques had been built — in Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura, and there could be no bargaining on this, the VHP leaders said.

Mr. Singhal said the Ayodhya "formula" being dished out was like "serving halwa-puri in a commode" which "not even dogs would eat". The burden of the VHP song

was that the BJP came to power on votes gathered on the Ayodhya issue, it should bring legislation in Parliament handing the land for building a temple, and if that did not go through, they should resign and ask the people to give them a clear majority. That would be the honourable thing to do.

Mr. Togadia spelt out what he called the "appeasement of Muslims" — for giving up the claim on the Ayodhya land, the Government was prepared to open about 1,000 mosques protected by the Archaeological Survey of India to regular 'namaaz', it had recently included some Muslim groups in the backward castes list and could offer nine per cent reservation for Muslims, it was ready to sacrifice Kashi and Mathura, it had agreed to give financial help to 'madrasas' and finally, it was ready "to please" the Muslim leadership. On the last point, the hint was that the Government was trying to "bribe select Muslim leaders".

"*Lein dein ki charcha chala rahi hai sarkar*" (hard bargaining is taking place in the talks on Ayodhya), Mr. Singhal alleged, and the VHP was against this. Finally, the VHP leaders said that if Muslims gave up their claim to the Ayodhya land without bargaining, "Hindus" would shower unlimited love on them, but "if a Mahabharat (civil war) has to take place, who can stop it".

27.6.03  
VHP 191



# PM-Naidu meet clears the air

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 14.** At a two-hour meeting between the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Bharatiya Janata Party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, on Friday night, the recent misunderstanding between the two on the leadership of the party was cleared. In fact, it seems, Mr. Vajpayee promised to speak out "at an appropriate time" and wanted Mr. Naidu to "carry forward the party work without worrying".

Mr. Naidu's statement about 10 days ago that during the polls the party would project a twin leadership — Mr. Vajpayee as 'vikas purush' (the development man) and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, as 'loha purush' (iron man) — led to an outburst by Mr. Vajpayee that the electoral battle should be led by Mr. Advani. Mr. Naidu's statement was seen as an effort to project Mr. Advani as the strong man — the real power centre in the party and perhaps the man most appropriate

for the prime ministerial office. The meeting cleared the air, with Mr. Naidu reportedly telling Mr. Vajpayee that his statement had been completely misinterpreted. Sources said the Prime Minister agreed that the matter should be treated as closed. "There is no controversy, take the party forward, do not worry," he is reported to have said and also promised to "clear the wrong impression" at "an appropriate time".

The statement of the Human Resource Development Minis-

ter, Murlidhar Joshi, that no party forum had authorised Mr. Naidu to make the statement he made, and that he himself was responsible for what he had said, also came up during the meeting.

It is understood that Mr. Naidu said he was "hurt" by "various statements coming from various quarters in the party". At that point, Mr. Vajpayee apparently said the issue should be treated as closed and that he did not approve of it being unnecessarily carried forward by anyone in the party.

At the start of the meeting, Mr. Naidu briefed Mr. Vajpayee in detail on the various party meetings that had taken place in Jaipur, Guwahati, Chennai and Delhi as well as the agenda of the 'chintan baithak' to be held near Mumbai from June 17.

On Friday, Pramod Mahajan, general secretary, also discussed with the Prime Minister the detailed agenda of the four-day 'baithak'.

## Vajpayee will lead BJP in LS polls: Advani

**NEW YORK, JUNE 14.** Reaffirming that there were no differences in the Bharatiya Janata Party on the leadership issue, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, said on Friday that the party would contest the next Lok Sabha elections under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

At a gathering of the Indian-American community here, he said, "even in the 2004 elections, the party will return to power under Mr.

Vajpayee's leadership." Mr. Advani said, "phir janadesh Vajpayee ji ko hi milega (Mr. Vajpayee will once again get the mandate)". Mr. Vajpayee had provided a stable Government and there had been political stability and development over the past five years.

The gathering was particularly happy when Mr. Advani said that the much-awaited dual citizenship would become law by year-end. — UNI

# PM not for early polls

...But Advani and most BJP leaders are

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 14. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee is reluctant to advance the Lok Sabha polls to early 2004 — his term ends in October — as suggested by an increasing number of BJP leaders who believe an early poll would boost the party's chances of coming back to power.

Mr LK Advani too favours early polls and had even spoken to the Prime Minister twice on the subject, but a senior BJP leader said Mr Vajpayee seemed to have some reservations.

The Congress, however, has put up a brave face, saying it is prepared to fight the BJP and NDA anytime. "The Congress's brain-storming session in Shimla next month will firm up its strategies for the coming Assembly polls as well as the general elections," party spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said.

The BJP is likely to make up its mind on the timing of the general elections at the three-day "Chintan Baithak" in Maharashtra, beginning on 17 June. The Prime Minister will attend the meet. Mr Advani will miss most of the discussions because he is scheduled to return from his USA-UK tour late on 18 June. But several leaders who favour early polls will speak there.

Four Congress-ruled — Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi — face Assembly elections later this year. Those in the BJP who want the general elections in February next year argue that it would be easier for the party to tackle the anti-incumbency factor at the Centre if it does well in the Assembly polls. Some leaders even suggest that the party should time the elections with the Assembly polls in the four states to capitalise on the anti-incumbency factor in these states.

An early poll would also reduce the time for the Congress to prepare for it or forge an anti-NDA front — for instance, the possibility of a drastic improvement in the Congress-Samajwadi Party relations would be almost nil if the polls are advanced to February, a BJP leader said.

A BJP leader said the economy too would stand to benefit if the polls are held in February, that is before the budget. For, the government will not be under the compulsion to present a budget with strong doses of populism.

On the other hand, if the monsoon is good this year, it would make sense to hold the polls in October. Because good harvest and higher procurement prices would help the BJP tide over the anti-incumbency factor.

# Much ado about nothing

5-6 There is no leadership battle in BJP

It is the same old story, repeated often particularly in the last few years — is there a leadership tussle in the BJP? Is LK Advani going to replace Atal Behari Vajpayee as prime minister? Is Vajpayee going to retire? The answer is always the same — no! The drama is enacted by peripheral characters who go scurrying between the two leaders trying to advance their own agendas and Advani and Vajpayee are left in exactly the same positions as they have always been — twin heads of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Both have their own unique place in the party, and the BJP can not do without either.

Advani is the ideologue, the face of Hindutva and the organisation man who has been responsible for bringing the BJP from two to 200 MPs, and would like to make it 350 next time round. He appeals to the RSS/VHP and the other Sangh outfits because he speaks their language. Vajpayee, on the other hand, is projected as the “soft, moderate” face of the BJP — he is the statesman who can carry his allies along and make the National Democratic Alliance of motley parties work. He is the poet with a conscience who appeals to the masses when he cries at the Babari Masjid demolition or when he visits refugee camps in Gujarat after the riots. But do not be fooled by the tears because he can as easily turn them to his advantage like he did at the Goa party convention.

Vajpayee and Advani are simply two sides of the same coin, and twisting each sentence uttered to represent a leadership feud between them is pointless and naive. They have spent the last half a century as comrades in arms without a single public spat or disagreement. Together they created the BJP and brought it to its current position, they are not ready to wreck all that now. It is second rung characters around them who create a leadership crisis. With Vajpayee's advancing age and not so stable health, the BJP does need an alternative in the wings. There is only man for the job — Advani. But because of Advani's image the BJP is not sure how the allies or the electorate at large will react to a change.

Hence the occasional kite-flying indulged in by those around the big two. But so far the reaction has ensured a return to square one. Advani was going to be in charge of the BJP's poll campaign in the next election, just as he has been in previous ones, much before Venkaiah Naidu made his comments. And everyone knew that Vajpayee would eventually be projected as the prime ministerial candidate because he is the acceptable face of coalition politics; the same position after much ado about nothing.

# Avoid personality cult, RSS tells BJP

10-1 By Harish Khare 8/6

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 7.** The "leadership controversy" in the BJP may be officially over but the leaders in the Sangh Parivar continue to keep the pot boiling. It now appears that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief, K.S. Sudarshan, has chosen to offer some advice to the BJP on how to conduct itself.

Sources in the BJP and the RSS were anxious to let it be known that Mr. Sudarshan telephoned the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, on Friday night because the RSS chief was concerned over the unending leadership controversy. The sources suggest that the burden of Mr. Sudarshan's advice was that the BJP should be focussing more on "ideology" and "principles" and less on "individuals".

Mr. Sudarshan is said to have drawn Mr. Naidu's attention to the impersonal ways in which the RSS conducted itself as an organisation. Also, he told Mr. Naidu that any kind of "personality cult" should be avoided because such a trend only diluted the ideology, principles and programmes of the organisation.

On the face of it, the RSS chief's comments are an indictment of Mr. Naidu's co-mascots strategy (Vajpayee as *Vikas Purush*, and Advani as *Loh Purush*). That formula now officially stands disowned and discarded. But the RSS chief's advice is also an indirect criticism of the prime ministerial camp which has sought to elevate Mr. Vajpayee to a kind of cult figure, above any kind of criticism or reproach.

In fact, the RSS has been adopting a stance of studied neutrality in the matter of the presumed Vajpayee-Advani differences. In this Naidu-provoked leadership controversy, the RSS has taken a clinically correct position — both Mr. Advani and Mr. Vajpayee are swaymsevaks, both are equally close to the Sangh and, in any case, it is for the BJP to decide who should be its election mascot. The RSS has provided some comfort to the Prime Minister but at the same time caused no acute discomfort to Mr. Advani either.

Now, if the sources are to be believed, the RSS chief also has a good word for the BJP president. According to these sources, the RSS chief believes Mr. Naidu is doing a "fine

job". It is too early to say whether this RSS backing would suffice in helping Mr. Naidu retain his job after the October Assembly elections. A senior RSS functionary, is said to have met Mr. Naidu today, with the message that the leadership controversy had not helped the party's image.

On his part, Mr. Naidu today avoided adding fuel to the leadership crisis, though insisting that the "leadership controversy" was over. In his informal interaction with the media, the BJP chief refused to take on Murli Manohar Joshi, Union Minister for Human Resource Development. Dr. Joshi had yesterday given a new twist to the leadership controversy by suggesting that when Mr. Naidu described Mr. Vajpayee as "vikas purush" and Mr. Advani as "loh purush", he was speaking entirely on his own, without any collective endorsement of the party.

Today, Mr. Naidu told the media: "As far as this issue is concerned, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and as party president I have clarified there is no issue, no controversy. I will maintain the party's tradition of not commenting on public statements of party leaders."

THE HINDU

8 JUN 2003

# Joshi tak party pre

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 6. — Even as the Deputy Prime Minister left for a 10-day tour to the USA and UK saying the successive controversies centering around his party was a creation of the media, cracks within the BJP top leadership became more apparent today. Mr LK Advani's Cabinet colleague and former BJP president, Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, took on the present party chief, Mr Venkaiah Naidu, for the latter's description of the Prime Minister as "vikas purush".

Mr Joshi said Mr Naidu's description had limited Mr Vajpayee's appeal to "a small segment of political and economic development. I think it's Naidu's personal perception." Speaking to a private TV channel, he said the party had not taken any decision to project Mr Vajpayee as "vikas purush". The Prime Minister, he said, embodies the personality of the BJP and even the NDA. "Mr Vajpayee is not only vikas purush, he is our leader. He represents development, guidance and leadership. He represents the personality of the BJP and NDA."

He resented Mr Naidu's description of the Prime Minister

which had left scope for Mr Advani as "lauh purush" said: "I don't think the executive committee or party body has ever decided (Vajpayee) is the vikas purush."

Mr Advani and Mr Joshi

## It's okay with

NEW DELHI, June 6. RSS today agreed with Venkaiah Naidu's description of AB Vajpayee as the "vikas purush" and of Mr LK Advani as "lauh purush". Asked if Vajpayee had not with comment that Mr Advani lead the party in the past, spokesman Mr Ram Prasad Bishnoi said: "Ek avsar tha star, ya, shayed avsar aaya to karenge" (There was a star, he gave a star, may withdraw it on an occasion.) — SNS

not had the best of rel quite some time. Both angling for the second mand slot, but Mr Advani race with his appointment Deputy Prime Minister. has since been relegated

novel by an author... has made it to the US best-seller list. Launching the book at the Nehru Centre here, Tanuja, said the book reveals the pains and joys of an immigrant teenager Dimple Lala, growing up in America. — PTI



KEEP YOUR COOL: This lioness in Pakistan's Hyderabad zoo has to lick an ice slab to fight off the heat on Friday. — AFP

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# Naidu's remarks did not have party endorsement: Joshi

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JUNE 6. The leadership controversy in the Bharatiya Janata Party got revived today with the Union Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, publicly second-guessing the party president, Venkaiah Naidu. The other bad news for Mr. Naidu was that the BJP's oldest ally, the Shiv Sena, declared that the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, alone could handle the National Democratic Alliance.

Mr. Naidu started a first-rate political turmoil by suggesting early this week that both Mr. Vajpayee and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, would be projected as the party's mascots. This provoked an annoyed Mr. Vajpayee to declare that Mr. Advani would lead the party's electoral battles.

The crisis was presumed to have been capped on Thursday with Mr. Naidu retracting his "two mascots" formula and reiterating the "Vajpayee-is-the-sole-leader" formulation. The judgment all round was that Mr. Naidu was the sole culprit and had totally misread the Prime Minister's "retirement" remarks.

Though Mr. Vajpayee is believed to have conveyed to Mr. Naidu that as far as he (Mr. Vajpayee) was concerned the lead-

ership controversy was over, Mr. Naidu's embarrassment continues. The Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray, rubbed it in, at a press conference in Mumbai today: "The Prime Minister really played a nice move. Call it

a goögly or anything, he has played his cards well."

It appears that some sections in and out of the BJP are not prepared to believe that Mr. Naidu was simply carried away by his own ebullience. Dr. Joshi,

who has never fancied himself as an Advani camp follower, has stoked the leadership controversy by going public with what he and others have been arguing in private.

The Human Resource Development Minister has taken a technical stand. He said that Mr. Naidu never had the party's endorsement when the BJP president came up with his "vikas purush/loh purush" formulation. He noted that only the party's parliamentary board or the national executive could take such a decision.

What has jarred even Mr. Advani's admirers is that at no time had the Deputy Prime Minister tried to contradict Mr. Naidu's two mascots trial balloon. This reticence, from a man who is no stranger to nuances of silence, has been noticed. A senior Cabinet Minister said "Mr. Naidu is the obvious loser, but the bigger loser is Mr. Advani who till this day has not been heard from."

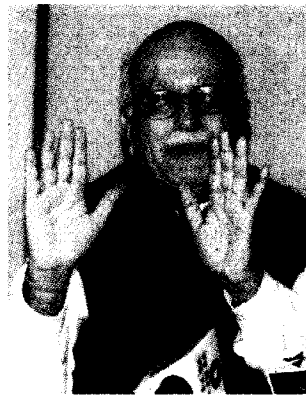
"The unkind part of the leadership hullabaloo is that Mr. Naidu raked up a controversy at a time when the Prime Minister was out of the country. Now the same controversy refuses to go away when the Deputy Prime Minister leaves on a longish foreign trip.

Thackeray's stand: Page 11

## There is nothing to it, says Advani

NEW DELHI, JUNE 6. Breaking his silence on the BJP leadership issue, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today dismissed the controversy as "absolutely nothing" and blamed the media for creating it.

"Sometimes I feel like laughing about how controversies are made (in the media) without any basis. I didn't comment and I don't want to comment, make any statement. There is absolutely nothing in it," he said before explaining for Mumbai en route to his 12-day visit to the U.S. and the U.K. Asked about the controversy, Mr. Advani said he was a newspaperman and as a newspaperman he knew how controversies were made. "My respect for newspapers has gone down that much, (because of the reports over the BJP leadership)." — PTI



**'LEADERSHIP CONTROVERSY' STANDS CLOSED: PM**

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# Cabinet, party rally behind Vajpayee

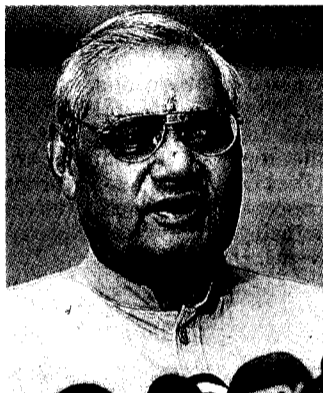
The topic

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 5.** For the second day in a row, the Bharatiya Janata Party tried to put a cap on the "leadership controversy". The party, the Union Cabinet and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh all chipped in to proclaim the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, as their unquestioned leader. Indications are that as far as the Prime Minister is concerned the current chapter of the "leadership controversy" stands closed.

The controversy erupted with the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, saying that in the next Lok Sabha elections, the BJP would seek votes in the name of both Mr. Vajpayee and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani. What added bite to his observation was his assertion that the proposal was decided upon at a gathering of State presidents of the party in Hyderabad last week.

The controversy acquired a different dimension on Wednesday when Mr. Vajpayee



came close to suggesting that come next general elections the onus of leading the BJP to victory would be on Mr. Advani. These "on-to-victory-with-Advani" remarks were his way of conveying his unhappiness with Mr. Naidu for "wanting to inject factional notes at the very top". Subsequently, Mr. Naidu and the rest of the party found themselves having to "propitiate" the Prime Minister.

The rites of propitiation continued to be performed for most of the day. At the Union Cabi-

net's weekly meeting this morning, the senior Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, is believed to have taken the lead in assuring the Prime Minister that the Cabinet continued to regard him as the sole leader and that hopefully he would continue to lead the nation. Dr. Joshi's salutation to the Prime Minister was greeted with applause. Mr. Advani was also present.

The RSS leadership also made it clear that Mr. Vajpayee remained their choice for the BJP's leadership role. The standing assumption is that Mr. Advani remains the RSS's preferred choice for prime ministership.

But most of the explanations and elaborations came from Mr. Naidu. He is believed to have received a call this morning from Mr. Vajpayee and the latter is supposed to have reassured him that the controversy was over. Mr. Naidu called on the Prime Minister in the evening.

In various pronouncements and comments during the

course of the day, Mr. Naidu reiterated that Mr. Vajpayee was "our unquestioned leader", while Mr. Advani was Number Two. "Mr. Vajpayee himself has named Mr. Advani as his deputy. Where is the confusion? Where is the question of anyone being unhappy? If some people outside the party and a section of the media are unhappy over our happiness, we cannot help it," he told a news agency.

In the evening, Mr. Naidu repeated his formulation of propitiation again at a public function organised by the Union Labour Minister, Sahib Singh Verma.

## Trinamool stand

Meanwhile, the Trinamool Congress brought out the NDA dimension of the leadership controversy. The party made it clear in Kolkata that the NDA arrangement hinged on Mr. Vajpayee as the leader and should there be a change of leadership, the party would want to examine afresh its relationship with the alliance.

PM SPRINGS A SURPRISE; NO CONFUSION, SAYS NAIDU

# Advani will lead BJP in next polls: Vajpayee

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JUNE 4. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, this evening came pretty close to suggesting that the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, would "lead" the Bharatiya Janata Party to victory in the next general elections.

"The party is full of self-confidence, not tired, nor retired. In the next elections, the party would be victorious under Advani's stewardship," Mr. Vajpayee told a gathering of senior BJP leaders.

His remarks were immediately seen as potent and significant, especially in the context of

the last few days' confusion created by the party president, Venkaiah Naidu's conflicting statements.

Mr. Naidu had first said that the party would project Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani as co-mascots in the next Lok Sabha elections. A day later, he retracted his statement and observed that Mr. Vajpayee would be the party's sole standard-bearer.

A close prime ministerial aide described Mr. Vajpayee's remarks this evening as "a googly". It was also pointed out that they were made "half in jest".

The remarks came towards the end of Mr. Vajpayee's reply to a felicitation Mr. Naidu had

organised (for the Prime Minister on his "successful diplomacy"). The NDA convener, George Fernandes, Mr. Advani himself, the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, as well as Union Ministers and party office-bearers were present.

It was believed that Mr. Naidu had organised the get-together only to make up with Mr. Vajpayee for having made the "co-mascots remarks". But Mr. Naidu was given no comfort. Instead, Mr. Vajpayee made "a clarification" which further confused the issue.

In fact, as soon as the Prime Minister made his remarks, Mr. Naidu himself was the first to

assert that the "next elections would be contested under Mr. Vajpayee's stewardship". As Mr. Naidu put it: "Vajpayee was the party's leader, the NDA's leader, the Government's leader and the country's leader."

Mr. Naidu made a similar clarification later to newsmen outside the Prime Minister's residence. He reiterated his earlier election campaign mantra, "Vajpayee ka naam; vajpayee ka kaam" (Vajpayee's achievements, Vajpayee's face).

He added that there was "no confusion in the party in the matter" and that Mr. Vajpayee would lead the party in the 2004 Lok Sabha polls.

The Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, who was present, appeared before television cameras to caution newsmen against "over-reading" Mr. Vajpayee's remarks.

The media, according to him, had similarly over-interpreted Mr. Vajpayee's "retirement" quip. All that was meant was that Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani respected each other. The party general secretary, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, was even more categorical in his interpretation of the remarks: "Mr. Vajpayee will lead the campaign; he will be the Prime Minister of the BJP-led Government after the next election. And as usual, Mr. Advani would devise and guide the election strategy."

By the end of the day it was becoming obvious that the Prime Minister and his advisers were enjoying the turmoil and confusion after Mr. Vajpayee's enigmatic comments. One aide firmly insisted that the PMO had no plans to issue any kind of clarification.



# Naidu rolls back his twin-leader theory

NEW DELHI: BHP

**New Delhi:** A day after BJP president Venkaiah Naidu announced that his party would "simultaneously" project the Prime Minister as 'Vikas Purush' and deputy PM L.K. Advani as 'Lauh Purush' in the run-up to the general elections in 2004, he was forced into damage-control mode.

Hours before the PM was scheduled to touch down at Palam after a three-nation foreign tour on Tuesday, Mr Naidu clarified, "There can't be two leaders. Our campaign will centre around 'Vajpayee ka naam, Vajpayee ka kaam' (Vajpayee's name, Vajpayee's work). He is our prime ministerial candidate. The entire party is with him. Our leader is Mr Vajpayee."

In fact, Mr Naidu phoned the PM in Geneva on Tuesday morning and congratulated him on his successful trip, paid tribute to his statesmanlike demeanour which had ensured India an honourable place among the top nations of the world, and emphasised that his tour had generated a great deal of goodwill for India.

## Mission damage-control



**A.B. Vajpayee**



**Venkaiah Naidu**



**L.K. Advani**

said, "Advani is the undisputed number two in the party and government, but this is not a dynasty in which you can talk of a successor."

Pressed further on the PM's comment that the Pakistan peace process was his last attempt and that if he failed, he would retire, Mr Naidu explained, "The PM is neither tired nor retired. He meant that if he failed this time, he would retire from the process (of trying to make peace with Pakistan)."

Indeed, Mr Naidu's announcement on Monday of the party's twin mascots being projected simultaneously—notwithstanding the attempt at damage control on Tuesday—has once again put the relationship between the PM and his deputy as well as their relative strengths under scrutiny. Adding fuel to the current speculation is the fact that only recently, the DPM appeared to have a greater say than the PM in the ministerial reshuffle, as well as the fact that the DPM's rather than the PM's statements on Pakistan appeared to reflect more closely the position of the BJP.

And lest newspaper reports about the BJP's 'twin mascots' create a misunderstanding, the BJP chief is scheduled to call on the PM on Wednesday evening to convey his congratulations in person. He will be accompanied by 100-odd BJP activists—office-bearers, members of the party's think-tank and such others.

Asked whether Mr Advani could be described as Mr Vajpayee's successor, Mr Naidu

# We will win proxy war: Advani

By Our Staff Reporter

**HYDERABAD, MAY 29.** The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, has expressed confidence that India will win the proxy war against Pakistan having defeated its neighbour in the 'direct war' four times in the past.

"Operation sarp vinash" in the 'indirect war' against Pakistan would be carried out even as India extended the hand of friendship to the nation, Mr. Advani told a meeting of the presidents and general secretaries of the BJP's State units here today. He termed the two-day brainstorming session, considered a prelude to the party's poll-preparedness, 'Mission 2004'.

Briefing presspersons about the deliberations on the opening day, the party general secretary in-charge of organisations, Shivraj Singh Chowhan, said that Mr. Advani had stressed that India was clear in its stand about Kashmir and stood by the Parliament resolution about Kashmir being an integral part of the country, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and that part of Kashmir which was annexed by China belong to India.

It was for the Pakistani Prime Minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, to change his perspective on Kashmir. Pakistan must take steps to pull down terrorist hideouts and put an end to the source of terrorism if it wished to improve bilateral relations accepting the Indian offer of friendship. The proxy war of Pakistan must end.

Referring to media reports that the Indian peace moves were initiated under U.S. pressure, Mr. Advani said the NDA Government had never worked under pressure in its five-year tenure. At the same time, the Government did not follow a policy of appeasement towards anyone. He expressed confidence that in the coming elections the BJP would get a popular mandate on the basis of good governance and the mess the Congress was in.

The party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, said the elections in four States this year were a 'semi-final contest' for the party.

Mission 2004 was to win 300 Lok Sabha seats on the party's own strength and two-thirds majority with the help of partners.

He called for an expansion of the BJP's social base and for strengthening all the party wings.

Mr. Chowhan said the meet-

ing was convened to discuss the organisational polls, preparations for Assembly elections in four of five States during the year and Mission 2004.

The presidents and general secretaries of the northeastern States were not invited as a separate meeting for them was planned in Mizoram, which also goes to the polls this year.

The meeting paid tributes to Savita Ambedkar, wife of B.R. Ambedkar, who passed away in Mumbai early this morning.

## BJP has broken myths: Advani

By Our Staff Reporter

**HYDERABAD, MAY 29.** The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today said the BJP had succeeded in providing political stability in the country. "This is our biggest achievement," he said.

Addressing party workers, he listed the myths broken by the party as only being North-based, urban-oriented, could administer only municipalities, even if being the largest party the Government led by it will not last, its allies will not continue with the BJP and the coalition Government at the Centre will not last.

"The BJP is a cadre-based party and its leaders' objectives are not to promote dynasty, family rule or self-development, but make the country a strong and developed by the year 2020. I am confident that we would emerge 'vishwa guru' (super power)." The NDA Government had provided material prosperity to the people.

He referred to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's proposal to link rivers in the country in the next five to 10 years and said this network would result in tremendous development.

Mr. Advani urged the cadres to develop a sense of self-confidence among the people. This confi-

dence would enable the country to find solutions to any problem.

He expressed happiness that the State BJP had enrolled 38,000 active workers and that it had done well during the three-year stewardship of Ch. Ramachandra Reddy, who is to lay down office shortly.

The BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, ridiculed the Congress for trying to forge alliances with parties led by Ajit Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav. "The Congress remembers the poor only before the elections, but forgets them later," Mr. Naidu said.

The BJP would approach the ensuing elections with the slogan '*shakthishali bharat ke liye shakthishali BJP*'.

Its mission was to win 300 seats in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections and secure two-thirds majority for the NDA.

The Vajpayee Government had achieved tremendous development during its five-year rule. "We have converted the country to a surplus one from that of shortages. Everything is available on demand." The NDA would approach the electorate with stress on good governance and positive mandate.

30 MAY 2003

THE HINDU

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# BJP for mosque alongside temple

**RAMPUR (U.P.), MAY 28.** In a bid to woo Muslim voters ahead of the crucial Assembly polls, the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, today for the first time favoured the construction of a mosque alongside the Ram temple at Ayodhya and promised more ministerial berths to the community in lieu of electoral support.

Addressing a '*Samarasata*' (social harmony) rally in this Muslim-dominated constituency organised by the party general secretary, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, he listed the Rs. 120-crore Haj subsidy and the recently launched Lucknow-Jeddah flight among the achievements of the BJP-led NDA Government which, he claimed, did not discriminate between Hindus and Muslims.

The proposed Commission on reservation for the economically backward in Government jobs would also benefit the Muslims, he said. "There is no question of imposing our agenda on others. The Ram temple should be built either through court, legislation or negotiation. There is no question of acting under pressure (from the Sangh Parivar) or violating the law," Mr. Naidu said. Asserting that the Hindus were the soul of India, he said the BJP wanted a grand temple built at Ayodhya but also favoured a mosque constructed alongside.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the BJP's Sangh Parivar ally, has been opposing the construction of a mosque anywhere in the 'Panchkosi Parikrama' surrounding the temple.

Pointing out that it was the Congress that had opened the locks of the disputed shrine and allowed *shilahnayas*, Mr. Naidu said the Congress had always used Muslims as a vote bank and the community should not get into that trap. "We are one nation, we are one people, join the BJP, it is your party," he told the largely Muslim audience.

Though the party wanted more Muslims in the Cabinet, it did not have enough candidates. "If you send more numbers of your community to the Lok Sabha on the BJP ticket, the Ministers will also increase in proportion," he promised.

The film star-turned Union Minister, Sha-

trughan Sinha, a star attraction at the rally, dismissed the "propaganda" about the party being communal and appealed to the minorities to join the mainstream and support the BJP.

Mr. Naqvi, who was defeated from here in the last Lok Sabha polls, sought a mandate for the party on the planks of security, prosperity and social harmony.

## A 'confession'

Earlier, Mr. Naidu said he had on several occasions visited a 'dargah' (memorial for Muslim saints) and offered prayers. "I myself go to the dargah in my native place," he told the rally.

While asserting that Hindutva was the soul of India, he said the term 'Hindu' denoted a cultural heritage and not a religious identity. — PTI

Our Special Correspondent reports:

Turning to the foreign origins of the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, the State BJP president, Vinay Katiyar, said, "the Congress first imported wheat and oil to feed the people. Now it is trying to impose a foreign woman as a leader on the country". The Union Agriculture Minister, Rajnath Singh, reiterated this point while referring to the bachelor status of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. Mr. Vajpayee remained a bachelor to serve the country. "In contrast, Sonia Gandhi renounced her country for the sake of her marriage," he said. "The country," Mr. Singh added, "would never allow a foreign woman to rule over its people".

The reconciliatory appeal to the Muslims by the BJP leaders today, however, was in direct contrast to the tone and tenor of the speeches made by Mr. Katiyar, who has been calling upon the people to revive the spirit of 1991 when the BJP had polarised the State on communal lines. He has been raising all contentious issues, including the abrogation of Article 370, imposition of a common civil code and cornering the Muslims on the question of family planning, during his State-wide march "to awaken the people about the concept of cultural nationalism".

# BJP wary of facing minority tide

Sudesh K Verma in New Delhi

May 18. — BJP leaders are mulling the issue of preventing an aggressive minority vote against the party even if they (the minority community) do not vote in favour of it. Aggressive minority voting means more than 80 per cent polling from the community which otherwise does not poll more than 50 per cent, BJP leaders said.

The party's *samrasta* (social harmony) rally at Rampur in western Uttar Pradesh has the twin purpose of placating the minority community as well as sending a message that the BJP had not lost out on Muslim support. Rampur, from where BJP general secretary Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi was elected, has more than 50 per cent of its electorate from the minority community.

The rally may help the BJP send a message that it is not treating the minority as untouchables and that it is keen on a reconciliation after Godhra. The country's tough stand on the US-led war on Iraq followed by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's goodwill gesture towards Pakistan may touch the right chord, they calculate.

Therefore, 28 May promises to be a big event in the state as all BJP state leaders — Mr Rajnath Singh, Mr Vinay Katiyar, Mr Kalraj Mishra and the cine star and Union minister, Mr Sha-

turghan Sinha, will be present at Rampur. Party chief Mr M Venkaiah Naidu is also slated to attend.

This is also a show of Mr Naqvi's Muslim support base and a proof of his own claim that he is no longer a decorative Muslim BJP leader. He has been keeping in touch with the electorate of his constituency and an impressive turnout from the community will enhance his stature.

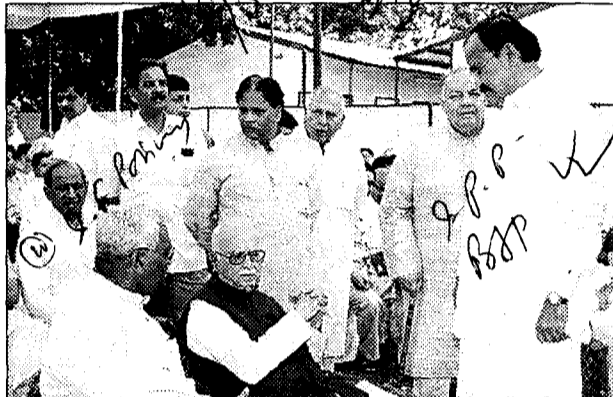
If minorities do not vote aggressively this would lead to split of their votes and marginalisation of their numerical strength in select constituencies. This would suit the BSP as well since aggressive voting invariably goes in favour of one particular party which in the case of Uttar Pradesh could be the Samajwadi Party, a BJP leader said.

Minority-dominated Rampur has been a Congress bastion. Its candidate, Begum Noor Bano, lost to Mr Naqvi in 1998 by 5000 votes — a difference of less than one per cent of votes. In 1999, however, she defeated Mr Naqvi by about 14 per cent votes.

The BSP polled fairly in both Lok Sabha elections — 16 per cent votes in 1998 and about 14 per cent in 1999. The Samajwadi polled closer to 14 per cent.

If the BJP and BSP contest the Lok Sabha elections in the state in alliance, Rampur is certain to go to the BJP. Subdued minority voting there could mean an easy victory for the BJP.

# PM must take up POK issue first, says RSS



**CENTRE COURT:** Deputy prime minister L.K. Advani and BJP president Venkaiah Naidu with other BJP leaders at the launch of BJP Sahyog Cell in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 9 MAY

**E**VEN as deputy prime minister L.K. Advani on Friday underplayed differences in the government over Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's latest peace initiative, the RSS raised the bar for the Prime Minister when it said return of the Pakistan occupied Kashmir should be the basis of any political engagement with Pakistan.

RSS spokesman Ram Madhav, who maintained that there should be no dilution of New Delhi's twin preconditions — end to cross-border terrorism and dismantling of the terror infrastructure across the border — said a lasting solution to the conflict can come only if Pakistan concedes the 1994 resolution of Parliament. He said: "Without finding a solution to Kashmir as per the unanimous 1994 Parliament resolution seeking return of Pakistan occupied Kashmir to India,

no political relation can be established between the two countries." He, however, said RSS was not opposed to restoration of cultural, sporting and aviation ties with Pakistan.

The mood in Parliament, which overwhelmingly favoured increased pressure on Pakistan, also encouraged the RSS to call for a muscular response to the challenge posed by the neighbour. "India needs to give up signs of war-weariness and reaffirm its position, taken unanimously in Parliament in 1994, that the only outstanding issue between India and Pakistan is the status of occupied Kashmir which should return to India," he said, adding that without a resolution of the Kashmir imbroglio, "other issues of negotiations may not yield much dividends."

The RSS leader also came out against any domineering role for the United States in the settlement of the Indo-Pakistan confrontation.

# Advani warns on criticism

10/5 HF !! J.P. Pant BJP

## BJP sets up mechanism for partymen to vent steam

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, May 9

THE BJP'S grievance cell, Sahog, opened on Friday, will see regular interaction between party ministers and cadres. At least three BJP ministers will be available at the headquarters for two hours daily to hear grouses of partymen.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani warned BJP and other NDA leaders against open criticism of the government's policies. "Whatever views one may have, there should be no public criticism. It should be done at the appropriate forum," he said.

Advani took a dig at those who were trying to create a divide between him and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Directing his ire especially at the media, he said, "This is a puerile approach." The DPM said he was fully in agreement with what Vajpayee had said in Parliament - that Pakistan must stop cross-border terrorism.

"How can you have friendship with Pakistan if it doesn't dismantle the terrorist infrastructure in that country?" He referred to the reports about his absence in Lok Sabha on Thursday when Vajpayee was replying to a debate on Indo-Pak relations. Advani hit out at the Opposition parties, saying their efforts were directed at creating a rift within NDA partners. He said the recent three-day meeting of the Sangh Parivar, which was attended by top leadership of the BJP, RSS, VHP, SJM and BMS "was a conscious effort by the Parivar to have synergy among the ideological family and these meetings will be held on a regular basis".

He praised BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu for increasing the synergy between BJP ministers, MPs and workers. Speaking on the occasion, Naidu hit out at the Congress and other Opposition parties, saying they should first put their own house in order before criticising the ruling NDA. He referred to the action against Congress MPs in Lok Sabha who had raised a Calling Attention Motion on defence matters.



L.K. Advani and Venkaiah Naidu with other BJP leaders at the launching of BJP Sahyog Cell at party headquarters in New Delhi on Friday.

## Centre, Opp in blame game

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, May 9

THE GOVERNMENT and the Opposition indulged in a blame game over the fate of the Women's Reservation Bill and the George Fernandes boycott issue as the Budget session wrapped up on Friday.

At a press conference, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj initially sought to pass the blame on the Congress and the Left parties for refusing to back the proposal to "remove" the opponents of the Women's Bill (the SP and the RJD members) to ensure its passage in the Lok Sabha. These parties had re-

portedly rejected the idea at a BAC meeting on the ground that they were working in coordination in the Opposition.

But it was only after subsequent queries that Swaraj admitted that BJP representative V.K. Malhotra, too, was against the idea of removing the members, some of whom, like the Shiv Sena, the Samata or the JD (U), are part of the ruling coalition.

Congress spokesperson Jaipal Reddy strongly repudiated the suggestion, claiming that the party was for the passage of the Bill in the current session. "If the government was genuine and had the political will, it would have gone about it", he said.

Swaraj - whose only regret in an otherwise satisfactory session was that the Women's Reservation Bill was not passed - indicated that the government would bring a revamped Bill if the Speaker evolved a consensus on it or its alternative at the June 16 all-party meeting. The CPI(M), on its part, demanded a special session of Parliament to pass the Bill after the Speaker's meeting.

There was a dichotomy of views also on the boycott issue. Congress spokesperson Jaipal Reddy said he had given notice to the Speaker seeking a discussion on the tehelka debate in the run-up to ending the boycott. The notice is still pending, he said.

## VAJPAYEE WELCOMES COORDINATION

# RSS affiliates resolve 'to work together'

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, MAY 3.** The result of the three-day conclave of the top leadership of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh affiliates which concluded here today, described by the RSS chief, K.S. Sudershan, as "refreshing" and "good", was that each of the RSS organisations, though independent, would help and coordinate its activities with the others as much as possible.

The elections on the horizon may not have been directly discussed, but the silent message heard loud and clear was: when the chips are down, when the elections are round the corner, the Sangh organisations will work together and for each other. In short, everyone will work for the BJP in the run-up to the elections.

The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, who spoke for 10 minutes at the very end, welcomed the successful effort to coordinate Sangh Parivar activities and was elated enough by the success of the show to wish increased frequency of such conclaves even as he underscored the need for the RSS to work more intensely in remote regions to make the people there feel more connected to

the rest of India. On the India-Pakistan initiative, Mr. Vajpayee stated clearly that he had so far remained non-committal in his response to the Pakistan Prime Minister's invitation for talks. Later, the RSS spokesperson, Ram Madhav, said the organisation wanted a positive Pakistani response "on the ground" (they want to see the end of cross-border terrorism) and only then the "process" (of thaw in the India-Pakistan relations) should proceed further.

Given the fact of open squabbling and use of abusive language between leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and some of the other arms of the RSS such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch and the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the meeting, it seemed, was held in an atmosphere of cordiality.

During the three-day deliberations, BJP leaders made it clear that the "party was as much committed to the Ram temple issue and to resolving the Ayodhya tangle as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad", Mr. Madhav later told presspersons. The BJP's total support for a legislation to resolve the Ayodhya issue as demanded by the VHP was promised. But it was for the VHP to

get the support from MPs of other parties, including allies and the Congress. The RSS' tacit approval of the VHP's "trishul diksha" programme was acknowledged when Mr. Madhav said the programme was symbolic, even as he insisted that the subject was not discussed — the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, had not raised it, let alone criticise it, he emphasised.

Disinvestment was apparently given considerable attention with the SJM and even the RSS bosses emphasising that companies in the oil sector should be treated as strategic and not be put up for sale and there should be careful reconsideration of the sale of profit-making PSUs. The Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, and the Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, did not participate in the deliberations which were limited to those from the RSS stables.

The RSS spokesperson emphasised that the meet was "not a dialogue between the RSS and the Government" but an internal discussion within the RSS family organisations. Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani were there as RSS members and not as government representatives.

# VHP to continue 'trishul diksha'

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 2.** The Vishwa Hindu Parishad seems determined to continue with its 'trishul diksha' programme over the next few months, even as it intensifies its campaign among MPs, asking them to support resolution of the Ayodhya issue through a legislation to hand over the disputed land of the Babri-Ram Jammabhoomi complex to the VHP-controlled trust, the Ram Jammabhoomi Nyas.

The former Bajrang Dal chief, Surendra Jain, who is now an office-bearer of the VHP, today said the 'trishul diksha' programme would be organised across two lakh villages in the country.

They also have plans for a similar function here on May 4. He said that those criticising the VHP had not uttered a word against the distribution of lath-

is' by the Rashtriya Janata Dal of Laloo Prasad Yadav. He pointed out that on various occasions the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, had also held aloft a sword.

A massive programme in the rural areas will also be under-

taken to mobilise support for the Ram temple, he said, even as he denied that the VHP's programmes were designed to help the BJP in the coming elections to the State Assemblies.

The VHP will ask all MPs to give their views on the Ayodhya

issue to try and ascertain support for resolution of the dispute through legislation. This will be done between the ongoing parliamentary session, which is coming to an end, and the start of the monsoon session of Parliament.

## Advani expresses disapproval

**NEW DELHI, MAY 2.** The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today took a critical view of the VHP's 'trishul programme', saying it marred the organisation's image, even as efforts were made to hammer out a consensus on key economic issues and Ayodhya on the second day of the Sangh Parivar conclave here today.

In his brief address to the 55-odd participants at the three-day meeting, Mr. Advani wondered whether the VHP was acquiring the image of a trident-distributing organisation and whether it was good for its image, which had several "positive aspects", including the 'ekal vidyalayas' (single teacher schools in re-

mote areas), highly-placed RSS sources told PTI. He wondered whether the VHP was acquiring the image unwittingly or consciously wanted to go ahead with it, the sources said.

The VHP international working president, Ashok Singhal, and secretary-general, Praveen Togadia, silently heard Mr. Advani's counsel, the sources said, adding that both the leaders did not respond.

The sources said the Swadeshi Jagran Manch leaders, S. Gurumurthy and Murlidhar Rao, expressed serious reservations over the Government's economic policies, particularly on divestment of the strategic oil sector.



# BJP repeats VHP mandir mantra

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 29 APRIL

FACED with the VHP's campaign for legislative back-up for the temple programme, the BJP, on Tuesday, swiftly took evasive measures, deflecting the saffron fire on to Congress. The BJP repeated its support for the "mandir wahin banayenge" demand of the VHP, but also pleaded its inability to do more because of the constraint of numbers in both Houses.

The BJP spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, also acknowledged that the Bill supporting the temple demand would meet pockets of resistance within the NDA coalition. The confession was accompanied by aggression, rather than contrition, as Mr Malhotra tried to put the onus for the passage of a pro-temple Bill on Congress. "The law being demanded

by the VHP can become a reality with Congress support," said the BJP spokesperson in what seemed to be the BJP's yet another saffron attempt to bait the Congress into taking a pro-Hindutva position that it cannot take without alienating its support base among the Muslims.

The Parivar has been trying to lure the Congress into taking a pro-Hindutva stance in the recognition that party will find it difficult to rise to the bait and expose itself to fresh "pseudo secularism" salvos. The Congress, which is reluctant to go to the "secular" lengths that Left travel with ease, finds it difficult to tread the middle path between the "secular" and "saffron" extremes. It tripped badly while attempting the balancing act on a private member's resolution calling for a ban on cow slaughter in this session of Parliament.

30 APR 2003

30 APR 2003

The Economic Times

# VHP's trishul drive is thoughtless but ban foolish: Advani

MANINI CHATTERJEE

NEW DELHI, APRIL 25

DEPUTY Prime Minister L K Advani today described the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's *trishul diksha* programme as "*nasamjhi*" (thoughtless) but said Rajasthan's decision to ban its distribution was "much more foolish."

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Advani said this was exactly what he had told Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot two months ago.

The Government had so far refrained from making any official comment on the *trishul* distribution programme. Nor had it taken up with Rajasthan the issue of Jogadia's arrest or the state notification regulating the possession and distribu-

tion of *trishuls*.

Denying that he had ever described the *trishul* as a dangerous weapon, Advani conceded that Gehlot had raised the issue at the chief ministers' conference on internal security in February.

At the conference most chief ministers spoke of the ISI factor and proliferation of dangerous weapons within the country. But Gehlot, Advani recalled, referred to the VHP's *trishul* and demanded that it be banned.

Neither the Prime Minister nor he responded to the demand, but at an informal tea held after the conference, Advani said he did speak to Gehlot about it. "I said that their (VHP's) programme is thoughtless (*nasamjhi*) but to take

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Govindacharya quits BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19. The former BJP general secretary, K.N. Govindacharya, today announced his decision to quit the party altogether — he will not renew his membership which is coming to an end — but he will continue to function as a 'swayamsewak' of the RSS.

Talking to reporters here today, Mr. Govindacharya denied that he had made any comments to a news agency on Friday that in his view the BJP had little chance to oust Digvijay Singh from Madhya Pradesh and Sheila Dikshit from Delhi. In a statement today, he described the report as a deliberate mischief.

Earlier in the day, in Jabalpur, the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, dismissed his reported comments as of no consequence since he "was no longer a political figure."

It was quite clear that the party had adopted a 'could-not-

care-less attitude' about Mr. Govindacharya's comments and his work and his decision not to renew the membership of the party seemed to stem from this. A mutual antipathy seemed to have set in.

The man who was once considered the ideologue of the party said he wanted to work outside "power politics" on a wider canvas that would give him the freedom to look at larger issues of hunger, unemployment, lack of development, hegemony of the West through the World Trade Organisation, and a host of other issues.

He would, however, keep his commitment of submitting his report on the study of the country's economic situation to the BJP president as soon as it was completed.

He would participate in organisational and constructive actions through the Swadeshi Jagran Manch and other organisations, some of them Gandhian.

20 APR 2003

# BJP reviews poll strategy for 4 States

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 17.** A number of election-related issues, especially the question of projecting the chief ministerial candidates in Delhi and Chhattisgarh, were discussed at a meeting between the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Venkaiah Naidu, and the general secretary in-charge of elections, Pramod Mahajan, here this evening. The political situation in four States was reviewed at the hour-long meeting.

While the party had decided that Uma Bharti will be the chief ministerial candidate in Madhya Pradesh and Vasundhara Raje in Rajasthan, a similar clarity is not there with respect to Delhi and Chhattisgarh. This issue is expected to be sorted out at the highest levels of the party, a senior party leader said, even as he indicated that "in all probability" the man for the top job would be Madanlal Khurana, Delhi unit chief of the party. A formal announcement may be made in a few days. One opinion was that a change at this juncture could prove disastrous

for the party in the capital. It was also felt that the Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, whose name has been mentioned as a replacement for Mr. Khurana as a chief ministerial candidate, may not be interested in "state-level politics" when "he was already a major player at the national level".

In Chhattisgarh, the contenders are, Dilip Singh Judev, who is as popular a leader, Ramesh Bains, MP from Raipur who had defeated V.C. Shukla, and Raman Singh, who has resigned his Ministerial position to lead the party's State unit. "If the party comes to the conclusion that there is a definite electoral advantage in projecting a chief ministerial candidate, we will do so, otherwise we may not," the senior party leader said.

After surveys in the four States where Assembly elections are scheduled later this year the BJP has come to the conclusion that the chance of winning is high in Rajasthan and low in Delhi, with Madhya Pradesh considered to be a better bet than Chhattisgarh. At the same time it is realised that even in Rajasthan the task of de-

feating the Gehlot Government will not be easy. The party is acutely conscious of the fact that even when it had the vice-president, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, leading it in the State it was never able to get to the bare majority mark of 101 seats in an Assembly of 200.

The truck operators strike is another cause for worry, as people's perception is that the Centre is somehow responsible. These things can also have an impact on the elections, it is felt.

Over the next few weeks Mr. Mahajan is likely to set up election management committees in the four States, and the party is planning to do some homework on State election manifestos well ahead of schedule, so that it has enough time to popularise its programme.

Later this month, around April 28, Mr. Mahajan is likely to visit Chhattisgarh to acquaint himself with the ground realities in the State and possible election issues. Next month, around May 10, he has planned to visit Madhya Pradesh, and as for Rajasthan, he was there just recently during a meeting of the State executive committee.

18 APR 2003

THE HINDU

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18 APR 2013

OFF ANTON

# BJP speechless as 'swadeshi' Sangh attacks Atal

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 16: Swadeshi ideologue Dattopant Thengadi's alleged uncharitable remarks against him may have hurt Atal Bihari Vajpayee, but the BJP seemed reluctant to defend the Prime Minister — on or off record.

Rather, the overweening feeling in the party is that it was "getting difficult" to justify the Centre's economic policies in the run-up to the elections and that,

in a way, the views expressed by the Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Thengadi were in order.

"The swadeshi yatra (which Thengadi flagged off on Monday) is not expected to propagate the BJP or government policies in villages. Its focus will naturally be anti-establishment," a senior BJP leader said.

He asserted that "certain points" that the Manch raised on the World Trade Organisation and divestment could not be ignored. "Ever since our government came to power, the only in-

puts available to our ministers came from the bureaucracy. Political inputs of the sort which should have come from the BJP are not available. The Manch is trying to form a link between the people and the party," he added.

BJP sources admitted that at a high-level RSS-BJP meeting two weeks ago in Mumbai, none of their representatives could effectively counter the criticism that came from the other side in the form of "well-researched papers with facts and figures".

This was despite the pres-

ence of BJP heavyweights like party chief M. Venkaiah Naidu, human resources development minister Muri Manohar Joshi and general secretaries Pramod Mahajan, Rajnath Singh and Sanjay Joshi.

The RSS was represented by *sarsanghachalak* K.S. Sudarshan, Madan Das Devi, Mohanrao Bhagwat and Swadeshi Jagran Manch convener S. Gurumurthy.

The BJP leaders were so "floored" by the Sangh's presentation that they readily agreed to pass its recommendations to the

relevant ministries.

Stressing that there was "room for course correction", BJP sources conceded that both the party and the government had failed to "project divestment in the right light". "The business of selling off family silver has not gone down well with people," they said. It was time that the government and the BJP asked whether India needed a "growth-oriented economy based on FDI or one based on indigenous production", they added.

But there were also voices

that felt that the BJP's unwillingness to put its best foot forward on Vajpayee was dictated entirely by political considerations. Thengadi, they said, was as much a part of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) as the Manch. The BMS is said to be the country's largest trade union and its members form the Manch cadre.

"In a sense, these are also the BJP's foot soldiers during an election. But the BMS' survival as a trade union depends on an anti-divestment stand. So there's

no way the BJP can check its views," the sources said.

If anything, this section was also sceptical about Thengadi, the sources added. Thengadi, a former Rajya Sabha MP of the Jan Sangh, quit politics when the party embraced Gandhian socialism because he reportedly believed that socialism went against the Jan Sangh's advocacy of an economy with "internal liberalisation" and de-regulations. "Now his current politics is based on socialism. It's hard to digest this," the sources said.

# Togadia remanded to judicial custody

By Our Staff Correspondent

**JAIPUR, APRIL 14.** The Vishwa Hindu Parishad general secretary, Praveen Togadia, who was arrested in Ajmer district on Sunday for violating prohibitory orders and the ban on distribution of 'trishuls', was today remanded to judicial custody for two days by a city court in Ajmer. The hearing on his bail application was postponed to April 16.

Mr. Togadia was arrested at Gegal near Ajmer when he was returning after participating in a "Dharma Sabha" organised by the VHP at Subhash Udyan where he distributed the banned 'trishuls'.

Police registered a case against him under Section 4/25 of the Arms Act for possessing and distributing a banned weapon, Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for violating the prohibitory orders and Section 153-A of the I.P.C. for inciting communal passions and doing an act prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.

He was produced before the Judicial Magistrate, Lata Gaur, at her residence this morning with a plea for seven days' police remand to enable police to recover the "trishuls" from him. However, the magistrate sent him to judicial custody and directed him to be produced in her court on April 16, when she would hear arguments on his bail application.

The VHP has called for a State-wide bandh tomorrow. The Opposition BJP has extended its support to the bandh call and asked its functionaries and workers to cooperate with the VHP activists in making it a success.

The Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, in a statement here, alleged that the Sangh Parivar was vitiating the atmosphere in the State to derive "political mileage". "We will not allow the Sangh Parivar outfits under any circumstances to indulge in Gujarat-like violence and destroy communal harmony or hamper industrial activities in our peaceful State," he said.

However, the VHP vice-president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, who arrived in Ajmer today, warned that the State Government would be held responsible for any communal trouble during the bandh. Police arrested

1 5 APR 2003

THE HINDU

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2003

## STAMPING OUT DISSENT

9 P.P. 1388

THE QUIET EXIT of the Union Rural Development Minister, Shanta Kumar, from the National Democratic Alliance Government is not only an indication of the factional rivalries in the BJP, but also a pointer to the shrinking of the space for dissent and democratic discussion in the party. The immediate context of the resignation of Mr. Kumar is the politics revolving around the just-concluded Assembly election in Himachal Pradesh. Following the defeat of the BJP in the election in his home State, Mr. Kumar faulted the performance of the State Government led by his rival within the party, Prem Kumar Dhumal. But, rather than use Mr. Kumar's diagnosis of the defeat as an opportunity for introspection, the BJP high command decided to attribute the Himachal Pradesh drubbing to infighting and dissidence. Although the BJP is entitled to prescribe its own cures for its own maladies, the attempt to shift the blame on to Mr. Kumar suggests an unwillingness to learn from mistakes, a refusal to accept that the Gujarat model of fashioning electoral victories cannot be replicated everywhere. Apparently, the party needed a beyond-the-obvious explanation for a defeat so soon after the euphoria over the success in Gujarat. The failure in Himachal Pradesh must have been difficult to swallow, but that was no reason for the BJP top leadership to try and pin down Mr. Kumar as the villain of the piece. True, Mr. Kumar, a former Chief Minister, nurtured a faction in the State unit of the BJP against the Dhumal Government. But, then, the BJP high command virtually formalised the factionalism by appointing Mr. Kumar as the head of the party poll panel in Himachal Pradesh. By pointing to inner party squabbles, and by implication, holding Mr. Kumar responsible for the electoral defeat, the BJP high command actually ignored the poor performance of the Dhumal Government.

However, the Shanta Kumar episode goes be-

yond the immediate context of regional politics. A strong critic of the extremist brand of Hindutva politics inside the BJP, Mr. Kumar came close to losing his place in the Cabinet once before when he suggested that the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, should step down after the post-Godhra riots. Although he later expressed regret to the party high command for his statement, Mr. Kumar still stood by his call for controlling elements who "in the name of Hindutva" were bringing a bad name to the Sangh Parivar. Despite his deep roots in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Mr. Kumar seemed to have very little appreciation for the hate campaign that is characteristic of the majoritarian politics of the BJP. And, as he repeatedly tried to articulate a sanitised, less confrontationist form of the Sangh ideology, the BJP leadership found him to be an embarrassment. Sadly, as a senior leader raising inconvenient questions, Mr. Kumar attracted more enemies than admirers. There was no place for him during these times when people like Mr. Modi are the heroes of the BJP.

Also, in securing the exit of Mr. Kumar from the Union Ministry, the BJP must be hoping to restrain anyone speaking out of line. Both as a Minister and as a partyman, Mr. Kumar was known to be forthright in his views. Indeed, if the BJP high command did not act earlier, it was almost certainly because the senior leaders did not want to upset the equilibrium before the Himachal Pradesh Assembly election. Now, with the BJP out of power in the hill State, there is nothing to be lost even if Mr. Kumar decides to foment trouble in the party. At the same time, he would serve as an example to all the dissidents in the BJP, and not just in Himachal Pradesh. There is no scope for dissidence in the BJP, unless, of course, the dissident is a strongman like Mr. Modi. Mr. Kumar, as it turns out, was the small price that the BJP was only too happy to pay in the endeavour to stamp out dissent.

8 APR 2003

THE HINDU



# Winning nation's trust comes first: PM

**Says Govt will solve all issues with national interest in mind**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 6**

**P**RIME MINISTER A.B. Vajpayee said today that his Government would cope with all contentious issues with only broader national interests in mind. He was speaking at a function held at the BJP headquarters to mark the party's 23rd foundation day.

Vajpayee said the prerequisite for resolving issues was winning the trust of the people. "While we would take care of the interests of the BJP as well

as the states concerned, we would take decisions keeping only larger national interests in mind," he said. Recalling the sensitive linguistic dispute in Punjab, Vajpayee said, "even though the votes dictated that we took one stand, the RSS played its role and Guru Gollwalkar ruled that we had to identify ourselves with Punjab, the mother-tongue, rather than Hindi, which also happens to be our language."

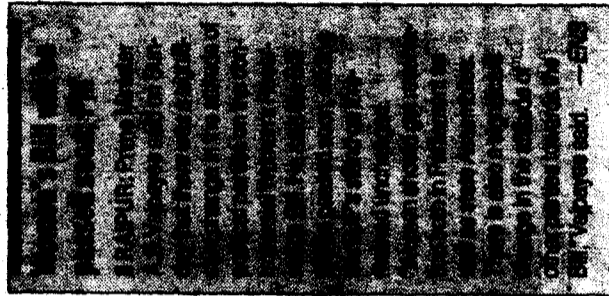
On the Cauvery water dispute, he said the issue had been resolved. "The Centre has played its role," he said, adding that neither Tamil Nadu nor Karnataka took the stand that it would not accept the Supreme Court verdict.

He maintained that "there were some other contentious issues too like the river water



**BJP chief Venkatesh Naidu and PM A.B. Vajpayee at the party's foundation day in Delhi on Sunday. Express photo**

dispute (SYL link canal) between Haryana and Punjab that need to be dealt with," smaller states like Chhattis-



**PM Vajpayee last. — ENP**

garh, but these states went to Congress. "They (Congress) were not in favour of their cre-

ation also, but they got the windfall — *Billi ke bhugya k chhatar phoot gaya.*"

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Madan Lal Khurana intervened to correct him by pointing out that it held good for Uttaranchal, but not Chhattisgarh, which was yet to go to the polls. The Prime Minister said winds of change were blowing through Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh as he could figure out from the public meetings he had addressed at Indore and Bilaspur.

Speaking on the occasion party President M. Venkatesh Naidu said, "We are not an ordinary party, but one with a mission and we have to work like missionaries on the path shown by our leaders like Shyama Prasad Mookherjee and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya."

# BJP resurrects old slogan

SUDESH K VERMA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

INDORE, April 5. — The BJP today tried to resurrect its old slogan of being a party with a difference, giving it a new ideological thrust and reasserting the core values of the NDA coalition to further increase its acceptability among regional parties.

While the first task was left to the ideologue and Deputy Prime Minister Mr LK Advani, the latter was done through a political resolution of the two-day national executive of the party that concluded here today.

Mr Advani, while delivering the valedictory address (the Prime Minister's

## Fissures in Samata

PATNA, April 5. — Fissures in the Samata Party has surfaced again with party legislators loyal to Mr Nitish Kumar "authorising" him to take action against party chief Mr George Fernandes for "encouraging" dissident activity in the party. — SNS

■ Details on page 10

message was through an intervention), invoked party ideologue Deen Dayal Upadhyaya and asked party members to be ready to be judged by their conduct. "Why should something that has been our strength, our sustaining force, get dilu-

ted now when we are in power? Does this mean that idealism and power politics cannot go together," he asked and added "we have to remind ourselves that without that distinctive strength we risk ourselves" being "rejected by the people in the same way they rejected the Congress from 1967 onwards". Mr Advani said "hard work and pace of growth, ability to adapt, ability to win the confidence of regional parties, commitment to national interests and capacity to overcome the temptation of vote bank politics and performance in government" were vital for establishing the BJP as a party with a difference.

■ See BJP: page 10

# BJP again pledges to strengthen coalition

Our Political Bureau  
INDORE 5 APRIL

THE BJP on Saturday once again pledged its commitment to strengthen the NDA and said the by now familiar "communal-secular" theme of the Opposition cannot arrest the progress of the coalition. The political resolution, which claimed a paradigm shift in national politics, said the political networking between regional parties and BJP has shown blind anti-BJPism was no longer a saleable issue.

"In every episode of destabilisation, the Congress employed the same bogey — that the "communal" BJP's ascent to power had endangered secularism. But in tone and logic, this is no different from the Muslim League's propaganda against the Congress in the pre-Partition years," the resolution said.

The resolution, which asserted that the political experiment anchored by the BJP at the Centre will ensure a precipitous decline of the Congress, said the principal rival did not have the necessary wherewithal to challenge the NDA. "Never in its 118-year-long history and certainly not in its post-Independence history, has the Congress been more ideologically adrift, organisationally en-

feebled and uncertain about its present and future leadership," the resolution said.

The BJP resolution also drew satisfaction over its success in striking political deals with regional formations — something that was unthinkable till a couple of years ago. "The BJP has demonstrated its capability to win the trust and support of smaller and regional parties, which have come to play a major role in national politics."

The BJP national executive put on record its special thanks to

## (ATAL) ORDER

the Telugu Desam Party, indicating that the current outside support could grow into a formal alliance for the next Lok Sabha election. The BJP resolution, which also listed the achievements of the Vajpayee government, asked the government to immediately begin work on the bouquet of infrastructure projects — something that has major employment generation potential — and further strengthen the pro-poor schemes line Antyodaya Anna Yojana and mid-day meal schemes.

The national executive, which deliberated the poll-preparedness of the party, decided to concentrate the entire organisational energy in the four poll bound states of MP, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh and Delhi.

## Party leaders backtrack on VAT

Our Political Bureau  
INDORE 5 APRIL

BJP's backtracking over VAT seems to be turning into a full-scale retreat with the party national executive on Saturday virtually washing its hands of the reform measure, which has upset the powerful traders constituency. Anxious to appease the trading community, the party on Saturday adopted a separate resolution on VAT disclaiming the authorship of what was not long ago introduced as a bold tax reform. "BJP wishes to make it clear that VAT is not a partisan issue. The very concept of VAT was initiated during the Congress regime and majority of all state governments belonging to all political parties have accepted it voluntarily," the resolution said.

Though BJP's top decision-making body also noted that the "wide spread resentment" had to do with the "misunderstanding in the minds of the business community all over the country about the implementation of VAT," it was difficult to miss the apologetic note of the resolution.

THE STATESMAN

6 APR 2003

# BJP calls it 'unjustified war'

By Neena Vyas

INDORE, APRIL 4. The Bharatiya Janata Party today abandoned its Government's "middle-path" on the Iraq war. The party's national executive committee unanimously adopted a resolution squarely blaming the United States, Britain and the allies for launching an "unjustified war" and causing a grave humanitarian crisis.

Deploing the assault on Iraq and its people, the party called for an "immediate end" to the war and demanded that a peaceful, political solution be sought within the framework of the United Nations.

The one-page resolution was adopted this morning in the presence of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, and the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, who was in the chair. While the "seniors" in the party did not speak on the resolution, no one was left in doubt that it had been "cleared" at the very top.

There was not much of an explanation why the Government had been shy to "name" the U.S. and its other allies earlier. But it was said that the situation on the

ground had been changing by the day.

The thousands of civilian casualties in the war and the trampling of the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq were factors that led the BJP to rethink its position.

In addition, it was felt, and stated in the resolution, that the Iraq crisis was diluting the global war against terrorism with clear evidence of "double standards" being used in the campaign.

It was in Pakistan, "the epicentre of terrorism", that "the most serious manifestation of a nexus between authoritarian rule, weapons of mass destruction, drug-trafficking and terrorism flourish," the resolution stated.

The recent gruesome murder of Kashmiri Pandits in Nadimarg was an example of how the Iraq crisis was being used by patrons of terrorism (Pakistan) to advance their goal of spreading conflict and violence in India.

Apparently, even this strongly-worded resolution was marginally diluted by removing the words "strongly condemn ... the United States," a senior party functionary said.

But even in its final form the resolution

"deplored" the military action of the U.S. and its allies, it demanded that a solution be found within the U.N. framework, it pointed out that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq must be preserved, and reiterated that the people of Iraq alone had the right to determine their political future and exercise full control over their natural resources.

In short, it rubbished the "regime change" Bush-Blair doctrine.

Apparently, even the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, said that Iraq crisis was not an issue of the religious identity of that country. The American "arrogance of power" was seen as equally hateful.

"It was a choice between 'sanpnath' and 'nagnath'," a senior party leader said — a choice between two deadly species of snakes.

Expressing anguish over the plight of the Iraqi people, the party called for speedy relief through humanitarian aid from the international community.

The resolution was moved by the general secretary, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, and some of the key speakers in the discussion were Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley, Ram Naik and Ravi Prasad.

HINDOO

5 APR 2003

2003

# U.P. alliance to continue: BJP

10/1  
By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 1.** The Bharatiya Janata Party leadership today gave a clear message to its legislators from Uttar Pradesh: the party's alliance with the Mayawati Government is here to stay and rather than blaming the coalition the party should do some self-introspection on why its support base in the State had dwindled over the last few years.

More than a hundred BJP MLAs, MLCs, State unit office-bearers and Ministers took part in a four-hour discussion with the party's central leadership on the "deteriorating" political situation in the State. For about an hour, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, joined the deliberations at the residence of the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, where three general secretaries, Rajnath Singh, Pramod Mahajan and Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, were present.

Later in the evening, the legislators and leaders had tea with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, at his residence. They were told that coalitions were inevitable when mandates were fractured. The message to those disenchanted with the Mayawati Government was unambiguous: learn to function within the "dharma" of coalition politics.

While there is no doubt that many legislators have been expressing the view that continuation in the coalition Government was costing the party dearly, Mr. Advani himself made it clear that the party's graph had dipped considerably well before the coalition took shape. After all, the Assembly election results had placed the BJP in the

number three slot and the BSP in the number two position.

About 50 MLAs participated in the discussions. They spoke on the problems in the State — broken election promises, non-performance and inaccessibility of Ministers, the Raja Bhaiyya POTA case, the fact that legislators were living under the threat of cases being foisted on them, etc. Their suggestions will be processed and decisions taken on how to proceed to make the coalition Government more effective and improve the BJP's own support base.

The party leadership decided that it would meet the BJP Ministers in the State separately to ensure that they pay heed to legislators.

Apparently, Mr. Advani reminded the legislators of the State's political importance. The party must take lessons from the plight of the Congress which had not been able to recover after it lost its base in the State. The moral was that a coalition with Mayawati was essential to get the maximum winning seats for the alliance on this side of the political fence.

The Ayodhya issue did not figure, Mr. Mahajan later told reporters. He said that only one legislator said that if the party wanted 300 seats in the Lok Sabha a Ram temple at the 'janmasthan' in Ayodhya was a must. But it seems that as far as the NDA Government is concerned a fresh attempt on Ayodhya is out of the question. Privately, one party leader noted that Ayodhya was not on the NDA agenda and there was no way the Cabinet of an NDA Government would approve a legislation to hand over the disputed Ayodhya land to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

THE HINDU

- 2 APR 2002

# VHP to gherao parliament today

By Smita Gupta  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

989-1388  
11/29/22

**New Delhi:** Stung by media reports that it had gone "soft" on the Ram temple issue so as not to destabilise the BJP-led government and unnerved by the lack of enthusiasm among its followers, the VHP on Sunday announced that its activists would gherao parliament on Monday.

The centre of action will shift from Ayodhya to Delhi, the seat of power, the VHP's Acharya Dharmendra thundered, setting the tone for the concluding session of the two-day Dharam Sansad here.

But rhetoric and the announcement of Monday's gherao apart, there was no forward movement from Saturday. And VHP international general secretary Pravin Togadia, named "supreme commander" by Acharya Dharmendra, urged the men in saffron to "cooperate" with the police, be disciplined and only do what was permitted during the gherao on Monday since security personnel were the rakhshaks, who took terrorist bullets.

Earlier, in a no-holds-barred speech, the Acharya attacked the BJP leadership for exploiting the Ram

temple issue only to win elections. "The temple has not been built as yet, not because the sants have not pressed hard enough, but because the government has betrayed the Ram sewaks who sacrificed themselves for the Ram temple."

He said that the mobilisation the VHP had announced on Saturday—from March 5 to 24, culminating in the Dilli Chalo on March 25—would not be a tame affair. "What happened in Gujarat, will happen everywhere," he said.

The Acharya's special target was the Prime Minister, whom he accused of not just betraying the "sants of the country", but also the country itself by pulling back soldiers from the Indo-Pak border. "Rasgulla khane walen, French restaurant me fish khane wala (Pradhan Mantri), aap mandir kab banayenge? Kya khakar hriday parivartan hoga? (When will those eating rasgullas, and fish in French

restaurants get the temple constructed? What will you eat so that you have a change of heart?) Are you going to force us to take the law into our hands?" he asked.



A sadhu holds a trident next to a security guard during the second day of the VHP's 'Dharam Sansad' in New Delhi on Sunday.

● See Edit: (S)trident Posture, Page 14

No date specified by Dharam Sansad

# VHP goes soft on temple

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 22. — The Vajpayee government appears to have got another breather on Ayodhya from the VHP Dharam Sansad which today failed to specify the date for construction of the proposed Ram temple. It, however, announced a plan to recruit about one crore cadre for construction of the temple at any suitable date.

"Temple construction can begin any time. No date will be announced. We will take mobilisation to the level from where temple construction will automatically start," VHP international general secretary Mr Pravin Togadia told reporters after the meeting. On tough action from the Dharam Sansad, he hinted at the possibility of thousands of reli-

gious leaders holding a demonstration in front of Parliament to highlight their demand.

In a tactical move, the VHP has decided to shift

**The VHP has decided to shift the focus of the Temple movement from Ayodhya to Delhi**

the focus of the Temple movement from Ayodhya to Delhi. The plan of action includes a demonstration here on 27 March which will be preceded by a "Delhi chalo" (march to Delhi) campaign throughout the country between 5 and 24 March. The Dharam Sansad also declared this to be the last dharam sansad on

Ayodhya. The action will now be coordinated by the 'margdarshak mandal' (governing council) which has leaders of all important sects as members.

The organisation's failure to announce a date is reportedly due to the efforts of VHP leader Mr Ashok Singhal and HRD minister Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, who prevailed on others not to get into a confrontation with the government.

The VHP leaders who are members of the 'margdarshak mandal' concluded that there was no point in announcing a date till there was clearance from the Court. The Prime Minister's statement, where he spoke about historical facts

■ See VHP: page 7  
■ Editorial: Fairness and decency, page 8

**'DHARAM SANSAD' TODAY / THREAT OF A 'FIGHT TO THE FINISH'**

# Disputed land will come to us: VHP

By Neena Vyas

**NEW DELHI, FEB 21.** The Vishwa Hindu Parishad today warned that Hindu "sadhus" and "sants" were getting restive and impatient, even angry, because a decision on handing over the land in Ayodhya for construction of a Ram temple had been delayed due to the "slackness" and "neglect" of the Vajpayee Government.

"Sooner or later, in some way or another not only the undisputed land, but also the disputed land has to come to us," the VHP leader, Ashok Singhal, said today, charging the Government with having delayed it for far too long.

The "sants" could decide to start a "satyagraha" or "sacrifice" through self-immolation, Mr. Singhal said, even as the Marg Darshak Mandal Samiti, which is the working committee of the VHP-controlled "Dharam Sansad" (a body of "sadhus" and "sants") continued its day-long deliberations ahead of the "Dharam Sansad" starting tomorrow. It is at the "Dharam Sansad" that a plan of "action" is expected to be unfolded by the VHP and the 'sants'.

The idea that something "dramatic" would be announced by the "Dharam Sansad" was supported by Mahant Avaidyanath, a former BJP MP and a saffron-robed 'sadhu'. He said the "sants" were so angry that they had vowed never to attend any "Dharam Sansad" again to discuss the Ram temple issue. This time, he added, it would be "a fight to the finish" (*'aar paar ki ladayi'*).

Mr. Singhal stated that irre-



**Swami Parmanand Maharaj (left), Mahant Avaidyanath and the VHP president, Ashok Singhal, before addressing a press conference on the Ayodhya issue in New Delhi on Friday. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty**

spective of what happens in the Supreme Court on March 6, the VHP demand was that the land acquired by the Government in Ayodhya should be returned to the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas after which temple construction would begin with "more than 500 workers to be deployed at the site". Asked whether he would confront the courts if a decision was not favourable, Mr. Singhal said: "We are not in confrontation with the courts, we are in confrontation with the Government which has to implement the 1994 judgment and give us the land."

Although the former Chief Justice of India, J. S. Verma, had

clarified recently that his 1994 majority judgment had clearly stated that no part of the 67 acres of acquired land could be transferred back to anyone till the final disposal of the main Ayodhya title suit, Mr. Singhal today insisted that his interpretation was correct, in that the Government can return much of the acquired land.

The VHP, which had earlier claimed that it had been saying, that the "Dharam Sansad" would fix a final date for start of temple construction, today Mr. Singhal said there was no need for a date. "*Jab zamin milegi, tab shuru karenge*" (we will start the construction when we get

the land), he said. The main issue was getting the Government to give the land.

The VHP leader's charge was that Hindus were still to get freedom, and this could not be done till at least three main temple sites were restored to them — at Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura. He said it was a shame that with an overwhelming majority of Hindus in Parliament what could have been done in a day through legislation had become a matter of a lengthy dispute. "If Sardar Patel had been alive there would have been no need for us to agitate on this issue," was Mr. Singhal's final barb.



BJP polishes off-court game

# Work on temple back-up plan

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

**New Delhi, Feb. 20: Murli Manohar Joshi today assured VHP leaders that a "suitable" formula would be worked out if the Supreme Court delays vacating its stay on religious activity on the Ayodhya site or takes an "adverse" view of the Centre's plea to lift the ban.**

The assurance, on the eve of a meeting of the VHP's apex steering committee — the Marg Darshak Mandal — came when the human resources development minister met the organisation's leaders, including working president Ashok Singhal.

Sources close to Joshi said the "formula" would be to make out a case that it was "tenable" — legally and otherwise — to restore the "undisputed" land purportedly in the possession of the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas.

For the first time, the government has also got down to the task of demarcating the undisputed land.

The Centre's case rests on an observation made by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court in its 1994 judgment, which upheld the acquisition of the Ayodhya land by the government after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The court had said the "undisputed owners" must be handed back the "area found to be superfluous" after making provisions for the land needed to construct either a temple or a mosque.

In this case it is the Nyas, which was given a part of the "undisputed" (or "superfluous") land by the Uttar Pradesh government, then headed by the BJP, in 1992.

If this legal route is choked, government sources said they would have to resort to what Rajiv Gandhi did when he overturned the apex court's verdict in the Shah Bano case. This means bringing an executive order allowing the Centre to give the "undisputed" land to the Nyas. "But this would be the last option," the sources stressed.

The BJP hopes the tone and tenor of the VHP's three-day *dharna sansad*, which begins on Saturday, would be less rancorous than last year when the Prime Minister came under attack

at a public meeting of the saints.

Asked what could have changed in a year, a source said: "The government's application before the court and, more important, for the first time the government went on record to state in Parliament that the court must expedite the settlement and give an early record."

"Earlier, the government's stock response was it should be resolved through negotiations or the court but it never committed itself to a time-frame."

The other reason was the decision to steer clear of the "usual" VHP-Muslim dialogue, which yielded nothing. Indeed, the VHP gave a veiled warning to Kanchi Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati not to fall into the "dialogue trap" and undermine his credibility.

Joshi's involvement as the Centre's chief mediator was also "welcomed". "Unlike the Prime Minister and the deputy Prime Minister, he has been faithful to the Hindutva agenda without being apologetic," a VHP functionary explained.

The BJP's aggressive posture on cow slaughter has also given the VHP "hope" that it is returning to its Hindutva agenda. The BJP has urged the Centre to bring in a legislation banning cow slaughter.

Sources indicated that, while it may not be possible to introduce the Bill in the budget session, it could be brought in the monsoon session.

## Atal 'hopeful'

**Mandi, Feb. 20: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today said that "we are considering building a grand temple at Ayodhya".**

**Addressing an election rally in Himachal Pradesh on the eve of a Supreme Court hearing on Ayodhya, Vajpayee said: "I am sure with the kind of historical evidence there will be a favourable verdict from the court. But there could be a verdict against, too. The verdict should be respected."**

■ Beef battle, Page 6

# BJP leaders in U.P. want coalition ended

By Neena Vyas

ND 1  
1572

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 14.** Leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh today let their central leadership know in no uncertain terms that the continuation of the Mayawati-led coalition Government in the State had increasingly become untenable and could be done only at the cost of substantial erosion in the BJP's own support base.

That the ties between the BJP and Ms. Mayawati's party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, has come near the breaking-point became obvious when the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, refused to entertain a question on this at the end of a meeting of the party leaders here. Is there any threat to the U.P. Government? "No questions and no answers please," was his reply. When the U.P. legislature party leader, Lalji Tandon, was asked a similar question, his curt response was telling: "The Chief Minister will answer that question." The suggestion was that if she mends her ways the coalition may continue.

At the two-hour long meeting of about 16 State BJP leaders at Mr. Naidu's residence in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Human Resource Development Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi and the two general secretaries, Rajnath Singh and M.A.Naqvi, the messy political situation in U.P. was discussed thread-bare ahead of a crucial meeting with Ms. Mayawati at Mr. Advani's residence tomorrow.

The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is also expected to come into the picture after the

meeting. Significantly, at today's meeting the RSS leader, Madan Das Devi, was also present.

Some of those who attended the meeting later said that "everything was discussed; some felt that the coalition should be ended, that the BJP should withdraw its support to the Mayawati Government". But they also got the feeling that the central leadership was more inclined to "somehow carry on".

Mr. Naidu later told reporters that some suggestions had come and these would be discussed further. There was a hint that the suggestions included a coordination mechanism between the two parties. He said that the issues raised by the State leaders would be discussed again tomorrow at the meeting between Mr. Advani and Ms. Mayawati at which Dr. Joshi, the State BJP president, Vinay Katiyar, the 'prabhari', Kalraj Mishra, and Mr. Tandon will be present.

Although today's discussions were described by Mr. Naidu as "constructive and meaningful", he said "the way things are going in U.P. was discussed in detail by the State leaders who expressed their views and gave some suggestions".

However, in the final analysis the central BJP leadership may not be prepared to ring the death knell for the U.P. Government just yet with a number of Assembly elections due. The BJP high command also has its eyes firmly fixed on the 2004 Lok Sabha election when it hopes a tie-up with Ms. Mayawati could mean a landslide for the alliance in U.P. But the State leaders are desperate as they feel the ground slipping under their feet.

15 FEB 2003

# PM reasons, Togadia warns

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

**NEW DELHI/TIRUCHIRAPALLI, Feb. 8.** — The Prime Minister today nudged the court to expedite the decision on Ayodhya even as the VHP upped the rhetoric and urged all parties to join hands for a legislation that will facilitate the building of the Ram temple.

In an apparent defence of the Centre approaching the Supreme Court on Ayodhya, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said the people expected the judiciary to give its verdict on sensitive issues expeditiously. He, how-

ever, distanced himself from Sangh Parivar hardliners, saying "no issue", howsoever justified in the eyes of one party, could justify confrontation and communal violence.

"When a dispute can't be resolved through negotiations, the verdict of the judiciary has to be accepted by all concerned," he said at a chief ministers' conference on internal security. The law and the nation's interests, he said, are "supreme".

The nation had learnt at a great cost that sensitive issues shouldn't be left unresolved,

the Prime Minister said. "When circumstances bring such matters to the court, people expect the judiciary to give its verdict expeditiously. This would enable us to leave behind contentious issues... and move on to deal confidently with... nation building."

Internal security can't be ensured without peace and communal harmony, he said. To make his point, Mr Vajpayee referred to last year's attacks on temples in Gujarat and Jammu that did not end up in

■ See **AYODHYA: page 10**

## 95-10 AYODHYA: 9/2

(Continued from page 1)

communal riots, but made no mention of the Godhra carnage or the riots that followed.

At Tiruchirapalli, VHP leader Mr Praveen Togadia said all parties, including the Congress, should bring about a legislation in Parliament to facilitate the building of Ram temple in Ayodhya. His call was tagged with a warning: "If hurdles were created in the way of the temple construction, there would be country-wide agitations."

Mr Togadia was speaking at a Hindu Youth Conference, organised by the VHP's youth wing. He said: "If Muslims don't give in to the construction of the temple, Hindus will stake their rights on every mosque that had been constructed on sites where temples stood."

Those who attended the conference included VHP's international working presi-

dent Mr Ashok Singhal, and the two Kancheepuram seers — Shri Jayendra Saraswathi and Shri Vijayendra Saraswathi. Mr Togadia wondered that while the Japan emperor was the protector of Buddhism and the Queen of England defender of the Protestant faith, why the Indian Prime Minister fight shy of protecting the rights of the Hindus.

Mr Singhal urged the youths to become Arjuns and join the "holy fight" against "pseudo-secularists" to vanquish the "extremist Islamic forces".

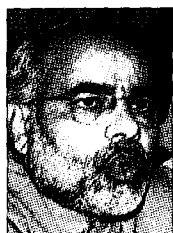
Since none of the four pillars of the country (legislature, executive, judiciary and the media) backed the Hindus in their "justifiable fight against terrorists", he argued, "what's wrong with a Hindu youth killing a Staines".

He warned that there would be more assaults on Christian missionaries if religious conversions were not stopped.

# Mind your own business, angry Modi tells industry

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi was at his abrasive worst on Thursday, telling industrialists gathered here under the banner of the CII for an interaction with him that he was not prepared to answer their concerns about law and order in his state.



Narendra Modi

"You and your pseudo-secularist friends," he thundered at the captains of industry, "can come to Gujarat if you want an answer. Talk to our citizens. Gujarat is the most peaceful state in the country."

Continuing in the same vein, he said, "You shouldn't go by what is written in the papers...Gujarat is the only state which can produce a Gandhi, but when required, it can also produce a Patel—I think you understand what I mean."

"I feel the CII has been unfair to Gujarat last year. The Planning Commission has not asked us about law and order. In the last eight months, we attracted Rs 8,000 crore of investment. So, why are you asking me about law and order?" Mr Modi asked. "There is no need to give Gujarat a bad name", he added. "I know there are people in this country with vested interests. But what is your interest?"

What provoked Mr Modi's outburst was, as he put it, the "teekhi" (sharp) language used by industrialists Rahul Bajaj and

Jamshyd Godrej, who spoke before him. Referring to the CII's recent interaction with Mr Modi in Mumbai where sharp questions were put to the CM, Mr Godrej said that while such meetings should not be "disrupted", he hoped that (Mr Modi) would use his huge mandate to ensure the safety and security of all of Gujarat's citizens.

If Mr Godrej was relatively low-key, Mr Bajaj was pointed. He said that 2002 was a "lost year" for Gujarat on the economic front. "It is not just the lack of infrastructure, but also the sense of insecurity. I hope this won't happen in Gujarat—this comes to mind because of the unfortunate events of last year."

Then he turned to Mr Modi directly: "We would like to know what you believe in, what you stand for, because leadership is important. You are today the undisputed leader of your party and government in Gujarat and we want to know you better. We are prepared to work with governments of all hues, but we also have our own views on what is good for our society and what works for it."

Clearly, all this was too much for Mr Modi. But after he had his say, Mr Bajaj had the last word: "We may have our differences but that is what a democracy is all about. There was nothing personal in what Jamshyd or I said, nor were we passing a value judgment—we were just expressing the apprehensions of our members. In any case, it is best not to rake up past history, but better to look forward. Personally, I was very impressed by something you said that one should not use one's authority without responsibility."

Officials in Islamabad said a fourth note verbalise as his fees from the mahanta of Decguri. Netaji had spent the first 16 years of his life in this house before he went to Kolkata to join the Presidency college. His aunt Bibhabati Bose had handed over the land along with the building to the state government in 1954. Subsequently, Netaji Seva Sadan Trust Board with the Orissa chief minister as ex-officio president was handed over the building to the state government in three phases. The ancestral house of Netaji had been lying in a pipided condition for decades before the decision taken to turn it into a memorial. Netaji's father Kinath Bose had forces and Marxists from Cuttack in 1885 to gain ground. "These children of Macaulay and Marx have ruined the country... they feel ashamed to call themselves Hindus... He said that Ambedkar in September 1953 had admitted that "he was just a

### NETAJI:

renovation work had been handed over to the government in 1954. Subsequently, Netaji Seva Sadan Trust Board with the Orissa chief minister as ex-officio president was handed over the building to the state government in three phases. The ancestral house of Netaji had been lying in a pipided condition for decades before the decision taken to turn it into a memorial. Netaji's father Kinath Bose had forces and Marxists from Cuttack in 1885 to gain ground. "These children of Macaulay and Marx have ruined the country... they feel ashamed to call themselves Hindus... He said that Ambedkar in September 1953 had admitted that "he was just a

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SAYAK's fantasy "Badhu-  
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MEGHANAD BHATTAR-  
CHARYA. Plans open.

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no good to free India".  
The time has come when  
Indian youth should feel  
proud about their country  
and its rich heritage, he  
said, adding that it was  
"absolutely necessary to  
rewrite the country's history  
because students should be  
taught 'true history' and not  
the one which Western  
historians have written".

# 'Buddha correct on madrasas'

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Jan. 22. — The battle of words between the Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh (RSS) and the CPI-M acquired a sharp edge today with RSS chief Mr KS Sudarshan lashing out at the ruling Communists for being "mortally afraid of a Hindu reawakening because they fear that it will ultimately dislodge them", and the chief minister responding with a firm brush-off — "the RSS and VHP are unwanted guests... they should stay out of West Bengal".

Addressing a well-attended rally at Shahid Minar — heart of the Marxist citadel of Kolkata — Mr Sudarshan said chief minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had to withdraw his statement that terrorist activities were being carried out from some madrasas following pressure from the CPI-M leadership. "Buddhababu's statement was absolutely correct but he had to backtrack following pressure from his party,"

## Jesuits criticised



Mr KS Sudarshan at the rally.

KOLKATA, Jan. 22. — Mr Sudarshan today made a scathing attack on Jesuit missionaries for their policy of conversion. He said that Jesuits have to take an oath of secrecy that they would strengthen Christianity by converting more people. "...Because of this many nations do not allow Jesuits to work in their countries."

He said in rural areas Jesuits have lured the poor and converted them, and categorically said the RSS would oppose conversions. — SNS

Communal slur on CPM, pg 4

he said, adding that the city has become a "haven for ISI agents".

The chief minister, for his part,

<sup>SF-1</sup> insisted that "they have failed to understand the sense of values of the people of West Bengal... these Togadias and Sudarshans will come and go but West Bengal will remain West Bengal".

Mr Sudarshan, however, clearly seemed to think otherwise. Referring to Gujarat, he said Hindus had "fought unitedly against the anti-Hindu propaganda of political parties opposing the BJP and the press. Political parties had scared the Muslims and said that they would be in deep trouble if the BJP came to power and it is such irresponsible campaigns that have affected the country's progress," he maintained. "It is unfortunate that every time it is the Hindus who have been put in the dock."

Mr Sudarshan said that the RSS will "not tolerate this... we will protest against any kind of anti-Hindu propaganda," he said, adding that all Hindus should come together to prevent "pseudo-secular"

Turn to page 2

# Parivar split on exploiting Gujarat

By Mahendra Ved  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Will the BJP replicate Gujarat in other states where elections are due this year? This question is being asked in political circles after the BJP's success in Gujarat last month.

Conflicting signals have emerged from what Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee said in his year-end musings from Goa and what the leadership of the BJP's sangh parivar affiliate, the VHP, has had to say.

Deputy PM L.K. Advani reacted sharply when TNN put the question to him. "What is meant by replicating Gujarat? Does it imply that Godhra would be replicated in other parts of the country?" he asked. He said the question arose from the bias of the English language media that had sought to put the BJP and the Modi government in the dock for the last 10 months. The poll results were a protest against this bias, he said.

"The more you talk of Gujarat and Godhra, the more wrong you will be. It will only benefit us. If the Congress had not harped on Godhra, it



L.K. Advani

would have done better in the elections," Mr Advani observed.

The Congress thinks differently. "Of course, we could not stop the BJP from coming to power in Gujarat. But everyone has ignored an important point: despite the Hindutva card, Modi's 'gaurav yatra' and making the polls the most expensive fought so far in a state, the BJP and the sangh parivar could reduce the Congress' strength by just one seat. Which means we held our own," says Kamal Nath, Congress general secretary in charge of Gujarat.

As in other political parties, there is no denying the convulsions within the BJP and the RSS, which must now deal with the VHP. Mr Vajpayee's musings critical of the extremist view of Hindutva, came at the end of two weeks of internal assessment of the Gujarat poll outcome by the top leadership. Whether Gujarat can be

repeated in other parts of the country is the moot point that the election results' outcome had thrown up.

If Gujarat has spelt a spectacular victory for the BJP, it has also placed on its strategists the onus of determining how far the party, as the political arm of the sangh parivar, should dovetail its policies with the larger programme of the parivar.

The BJP's political agenda would necessarily include carrying the partners of the ruling NDA. There have been rumblings among the NDA constituents in the aftermath of the Gujarat carnage, more so, after the poll outcome. That the Samata Party's Shambhu Srivastava welcomed Mr Vajpayee's stand against the extreme form of Hindutva is indicative of the mood within the smaller NDA parties that may stick with the BJP for power, but with serious misgivings.

That the next round of elections is barely three months away appears to have forced a touch of sobriety. After the victory laps and the rhetoric about "replicating Hindutva" in the rest of the country, the BJP has distanced itself from the strident VHP line.

# Sangh snubs VHP, puts stamp on Atal's musings

RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Jan. 4: Days after the Vishwa Hindu Parishad mocked the Prime Minister's Goa musings as an expression of "pseudo-Hindutva", the RSS today rose to Atal Bihari Vajpayee's defence, saying his New Year reflections were "very important" and "every person should look at them seriously and with an open mind".

The two-page statement in Hindi — whose title translates as "The true meaning of secularism" — was written by former RSS chief Rajendra Singh alias Rajju Bhairya and released by the party's media cell.

BJP sources hoped that the RSS' stamp of approval on the Goa ruminations would "isolate" the VHP and reinforce its image as the parivar's prime "trouble-maker". It has also spared the BJP the ticklish job of answering the VHP's charges against Vajpayee and risk incurring its wrath before the next round of Assembly elections.

The operative part of Rajju Bhairya's statement read: "To reinterpret certain words, find their correct meaning and place

them in the context of their Indianness (*Bharateeyata*) are tasks all of us should embark on because they can help redefine controversial words correctly and put an end to differences on basic issues."

Vajpayee had said: "There is no difference between such (his interpretation of) Hindutva and *Bharateeyata*, since both are expressions of the same '*chintan*' (thought). Both affirm that India belongs to all, and all belong to India."

The Prime Minister had sought to give a more liberal definition of Hindutva than the one "projected by some people in a narrow, rigid and extremist manner" (to quote from the musings) but the obvious reference to the VHP so irked its leaders that Acharya Giriraj Kishore called Vajpayee a "pseudo-Hindu".

The RSS, however, gave its own spin to Vajpayee's Hindutva interpretation. Rajju Bhairya took exception to the Hindi translation of secularism as "*dharmanirpekshta*" (neutrality towards all religions) and argued that the western definition could not be superimposed on India because "India has never taken a

rigid view of religion or sectarianism and, therefore, it has never been a theocratic state".

The former RSS chief added: "Nowadays, secularism is translated as *dharmanirpeksh* and this is highly inappropriate. *Dharma* is not the correct translation of religion. In our country, *dharma* has a high place because it forms the basis of society. The social order is erected on the foundation of *dharma*, *dharma* is the source of rules and values and it is the only means of integrating different social components. Therefore, Krishna said in the Gita that whenever *adharma* dominates the country and governance, I return in a new *avatar* to destroy the saboteurs and re-establish *dharma*."

"How can we run a country by being neutral towards the concept of *dharma* by which every god and every noble being swears?" Rajju Bhairya asked. He asserted it was impossible to have a word like "*dharmanirpekshta*" in India and suggested that secularism's Hindi equivalent should be either "*sampraday nirpekshta*" (neutrality towards all communities) or "*panth nirpekshta*" (neutrality

towards all sects). Quoting a Supreme Court ruling which stated that Hindutva was a way of life, he said: "Therefore, Hindutva and *Bharateeyata* mean the same. Hindu *dharma* is a humane *dharma*."

The former Sangh chief — regarded as a skilled practitioner of realpolitik hailing from Uttar Pradesh — said in his efforts to evolve a new Hindi coinage for secularism, he asked former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to take the initiative in one of the several meetings he had with him on the Ram temple issue. He claimed that Rao had accepted that "*dharmanirpeksh*" was a misnomer. "But when I requested him to rectify the wrong without ado, he laughed and said who will listen to me?"

But what might disconcert Vajpayee and the BJP was Rajju Bhairya's indirect questioning of the words secularism and socialism in the preamble to the Constitution. Noting that they were introduced by Indira Gandhi, Rajju Bhairya's take was they were "superfluous" as spirit of the two concepts had in any case permeated the Constitution.

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THE TELEGRAPH



## ELUSIVE SPIRIT

There is a perturbed spirit about. Its name is *Hindutva*. Nobody quite knows what it means. Even among its advocates, there is a difference about its definition. The prime minister, Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has in his annual musings, defined it as an inclusive concept. According to the prime minister, believers in *Hindutva* should not discriminate against anybody, should not exclude anybody. *Hindutva*, Mr Vajpayee tried to tell the nation, celebrates unity in diversity as the core of Indian culture. He fortified this view with quotations from Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh — all of whom had written about the great variety of Indian culture. Mr Vajpayee regretted that an “all-encompassing view of human life” like *Hindutva* had been projected by some as a rigid and fundamentalist doctrine. The last point was a deliberate swipe at organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and sections of the Bharatiya Janata Party which have tried to convert *Hindutva* into a fanatical creed. The points made by Mr Vajpayee in his musings are significant because he has been a lifelong advocate of *Hindutva* through that ideology’s many political incarnations, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh and the BJP. These cannot be treated as off-the-cuff remarks. On the contrary, they are his considered views on an ideology that is his *weltanschauung*.

It is clear, however, that other adherents of *Hindutva* belonging to the *sangh parivar* do not subscribe to the definition formulated by the prime minister. The vice-president of the VHP, Mr Giriraj Kishore, has denied the very idea of a narrow and dogmatic interpretation of *Hindutva*. He described *Hindutva* as the main power of the country. There appears to be a congruence here between the views of Mr Vajpayee and those of the objects of his criticism. Both agree that *Hindutva* is at the very core of Indian culture. The point of difference is regarding the viability of an extremist definition. It strikes neither Mr Vajpayee nor, of course, the hawks within the *sangh parivar*, that there are beliefs and practices pursued by large numbers of Indians which are not remotely derived from *Hindutva*, however defined. To make *Hindutva* the core is to exclude such people. Indian culture is a composite one and *Hindutva* is only one of the elements that go into its making.

In terms of politics Mr Vajpayee has a different kind of importance. He is obviously trying to distance himself and the BJP from the strand of *Hindutva* that propagates hatred and violence. His aim is not so much the interpretation of *Hindutva* as to announce to the people of India and to the BJP his disapproval of the kind of violence perpetrated in Gujarat in the name of *Hindutva*. Mr Vajpayee spoke, as is his wont, as the prime minister of India and not of the BJP. But by virtually equating *Hindutva* with toleration, he may have yielded ground to the hardliners in the *sangh parivar* who have always peddled a similar fiction. *Hindutva* is not amenable to a rigorous definition. This allows it to be interpreted according to political convenience.

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# Vajpayee's Goa musings maul VHP

By Manoj Joshi  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has sharply criticised the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for projecting "a narrow and extremist" version of Hindutva. In his 'Musings from Goa', released to the media on Tuesday, he did not name the outfit, referring instead to "some people" who were putting across an "unfortunate and unacceptable interpretation that runs contrary to its (Hindutva's) true spirit".

For the second year running, his 'musings' have sought to reassure public opinion alarmed by the Sangh Parivar's rhetoric. His 2000 Kumarakom musings sought to set to rest the "Ayodhya-as-national-sentiment" remark and attacked the VHP's narrowly-focused movement to build a temple at the site of the Babri masjid in Ayodhya. His Goa thoughts reflect a desire to calm the fears raised by various VHP leaders who have spoken in the wake of the Gujarat election verdict.

But they also mark a new intensity in the battle of hearts and minds within the Sangh Parivar itself. In the latest issue of the RSS mouthpiece, 'Panchajanya', the outfit's chief, K.S.



**BASKING IN A SAFFRON GLOW:** Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on a Goa beach on Tuesday.

Sudarshan, has said that the Gujarat polls had set the stage for a new Maharashtra between "the votaries of Hindutva and its opponents".

VHP leader Pravin Togadia has been more shrill in his criticism of the opponents of Hindutva. A more elliptical manifestation of the struggle has been the surprise attack of VHP chief Ashok Singhal on L.K. Advani for allegedly hurting the Ram Janambhoomi cause by his 1991 rath yatra.

Mr Vajpayee maintains that Hindutva is no different from Bharateeyata (Indianness) and pitting "secularism" against "Hindutva" is "incorrect and untenable". His version

of secularism is an orthodox one—India as a state that shows respect to all faiths and does not discriminate between them. Mr Vajpayee said that his understanding was that "Hindutva" was a forward-looking concept, "not one that seeks to take us back, that is reform-minded and not one that protects obscurantism and injustice". The authorities cited in the "musings" are significant—Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, not Savarkar, who first coined the term Hindutva and gave it an anti-minority twist, or RSS icon Golwalkar.

The second major theme of the Goa musings is Pakistan and Kashmir. After chastising Islamabad for backing terrorism by religious extremists in India, the PM called on Pakistan to "abandon its insistence" on the centrality of the Kashmir issue and to open up trade and cultural ties and promote people-to-people contacts.

**Comment:** No one will quarrel with his musings have become as predictable as the New Year, and his promises as fragile as the famed New Year resolutions. The question is—Is the parivar's Hindutva the same as Hindutva as it is commonly understood?

## Sangh Parivar hits back

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Disagreeing with the Prime Minister's 'Goa musings', the VHP on Tuesday asserted that no Hindu could be "narrow, rigid and extremist" even as the RSS reminded him of his own poetic description of a real Hindu as one who

wages a relentless war against evil.

"Opposing" Mr Vajpayee's reference to hardline Hindutva, senior VHP vice-president Acharya Giriraj Kishore said, "No Hindu can ever be narrow, rigid and extremist. Hindutva is

the main current of the country and the country is fast realising its strength. Those who say Hindutva cannot be the basis of progress are mistaken."

Defending the VHP's policy of aggressive Hindutva, he said, "We also believe that every action has a reaction."

Meanwhile, RSS joint spokesman Ram Madhav said, "It is not out of place to remind Mr Vajpayee of his own poem, 'Hindu tan man, Hindu jeevan', which describes the real Hindu as one who wages a relentless war against evil."