

# Notice to Paswan for "violation"

Religion  
& Politics

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## 'Muslim CM' campaign cited

Legal Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission on Thursday issued a notice to Lok Jan Shakti Party president and Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan for favouring a Muslim chief minister for Bihar during his election campaign.

The notice was based on two complaints — filed by the former Director-General of BSF, Prakash Singh, and Gaurav Kathuria — accusing Mr. Paswan of appealing to voters in the name of religion, which was in violation of the Model Code of Conduct as well as the Representation of the People Act. The complainants alleged that he was arousing ill-will between two communities in the name of religion. He has been asked to reply by October 24.

### Justifies stand

Patna Special Correspondent reports:

Mr. Paswan defended his stand on a Muslim chief minister on the grounds that only this would "to get justice for the community."

He wondered whether the RJD and the NDA were not playing caste politics by projecting Rabri Devi and Nitish Kumar as their chief ministers.

### FIR against Rabri

The Vaishali district administration has filed a first information report (FIR) against the

former Bihar Chief Minister, Rabri Devi, on the charge that she had violated the Model Code of Conduct.

She arrived at Hajipur in a cavalcade of 30 vehicles for filing her nomination for the Raghapur constituency on October 4. She also used loudspeakers without permission, the FIR said.

The district officials have suspended a magistrate and the inspector of the Mahua police station for allegedly allowing the Rashtriya Janata Dal leader and Railway Minister Lalu Prasad to drive a car without a number plate from the helipad to his meeting venue at Cherhokal in the Mahua block.

A case has been filed against RJD candidate Shivchandra Ram, who owned the car.

The police also arrested the RJD nominee in Belaganj, Surendra Prasad Yadav, on the charge of carrying illegal firearms.

### Re-arrest ordered

ANI reports:

The Election Commission on Thursday directed the police to re-arrest the younger brother of Union Minister Jaiprakash Narain Yadav, Vijay Prakash, who was released on bail within two hours of his arrest on October 18.

Police had arrested Mr. Vijay Prakash for carrying a rifle, Rs. 6.68 lakhs in cash and 50 bottles of liquor during the poll.

# BJP attacks fatwa, vote-bank politics

“UPA Government practises minorityism”

Neena Vyas

**CHENNAI:** The Bharatiya Janata Party's political resolution adopted here on Saturday charged the United Progressive Alliance Government with practising "minorityism" to the extent that it could once again nurture the kind of Muslim separatism which led to the creation of Pakistan.

The party said the Government was obsessed with vote-bank politics, that it revived religion-based reservation in education and employment — the reference was to the attempt to provide reservation to Muslims in Andhra Pradesh and create a 50 per cent quota for Muslims in Aligarh Muslim University — in violation of the criteria settled by the Constitution.

## “Minority appeasement”

In the “atmosphere of minority appeasement” resulting from the UPA Government's vote-bank politics, Muslim clergy were emboldened to indulge in the “politics of fatwas,” issuing directives aimed at intimidating women, it said.

During the discussion on the political resolution on the second day of the national executive committee meeting, senior delegate Pyarelal Khandelwal wanted a few words added saying it was this kind of mentality that led to the two-nation theory propounded by Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Pakistan founder).

## “Feeble attempt”

The addition was seen as a feeble attempt to revive the Jinnah controversy, which had embarrassed party president L.K. Advani, and was not accepted.

The resolution launched an all-out attack on the UPA, accusing it of “incoherence, recklessness and drift,” saying that “negativism” was its hallmark and charging it with “squandering the rich inheritance” bequeathed to the country by the Vajpayee Government.

## “Strategic veto”

It covered much the same ground Mr. Advani dealt with in his presidential address on Friday. It spoke about the “overriding veto of the UPA chairperson [Sonia Gandhi] and her coterie,” the “strategic veto” of the Left and the “blackmail of the tainted ministers” that marked decision-making in the UPA.

While Mr. Advani described Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as the weakest Prime Minister the country had had, the political resolution said “the Prime Minister, who did not wield authority even in his own

Cabinet,” was presiding over “this fractious combination” that was the UPA.

Asked why the BJP had not evaluated its role as Opposition, party leader Sushma Swaraj, who released the resolution, said it would play effective Opposition. The resolution said the BJP would go to the people and “vigorously mobilise public opinion against the Government.” She added the National Democratic Alliance headed by the party was “the alternative” to the UPA.

## Advani issue

Asked about the timetable for Mr. Advani's exit as party president, an apparently displeased Ms. Swaraj said: “I have no information whether it will be in December or tomorrow.”

But could the BJP play its role when its president's authority stood undermined and his continuation was uncertain? Ms. Swaraj said, “No, his position is not undermined.”

# Congress turns down Paswan's plea on Muslim CM

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Religion  
Bandra

You cannot put the cart before the horse: Digvijay

Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress has virtually turned down the suggestion of Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJP) president Ram Vilas Paswan that a Muslim should be projected as Chief Minister if it wanted him to join a secular alliance for the Bihar Assembly polls.

"The issue of Chief Minister can be decided later. Let us get the majority, once we get it we can consider...you cannot put the cart before the horse," AICC general secretary Digvijay Singh told reporters a day after he met Mr. Paswan for the third time.

Mr. Singh said Mr. Paswan was not as "rigid" as he was during the two earlier rounds of meetings. He has been impressing upon Mr. Paswan the need to have a broad secular alliance for the Bihar polls, including Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The Congress has been trying to convince Mr. Paswan that his stand not to join any coalition that includes the RJD would only help the Janata Dal (United)-Bharatiya Janata Party alliance.

Mr. Paswan on Saturday stuck to his stand to have a Muslim

Chief Minister. The LJP would play a key role in government formation, he said.

At a seminar, he said the issue of having a Muslim Chief Minister was not about religion, but about rights since the community, which had a substantial population had held the top post in the State only once.

Efforts were on to create a third alternative comprising non-BJP, non-RJD parties such as the CPI, All India Forward Bloc, Revolutionary Socialist Party and Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, he said.

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THE HINDU

# Advani wants seer case moved out of Tamil Nadu

Sarita Kaushik  
Nagpur, January 14

BJP PRESIDENT L.K. Advani on Friday sought the shifting of cases against Kanchi seer Jayendra Saraswati outside Tamil Nadu, accusing the state government of persecuting him.

Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting with RSS leaders, Advani urged the Central government to intervene for the well-being of the seer. "We have told Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that the sentiments of millions of Hindus have been hurt by the investigations being conducted with a

vindictive attitude and the ill-treatment meted out to Jayendra Saraswati," Advani told reporters.

The BJP chief, who arrived here on Friday morning, was talking to reporters at the airport from where he went for a closed-door day-long meeting at the RSS headquarters.

Advani dismissed speculation about his visit saying such interactions with the RSS were "periodic." He rebuffed questions on the seer, possibly meeting to plan a strategy, saying there was no question of "strategising" on such issues.

He, however, said it would

ernment also has a duty towards its people, to ensure that this happens."

Criticising the Jayalalithaa government's manner of conducting investigations, Advani said that while the law has to take its own course in case of any "alleged crime," it does not mean that an impression of arbitrariness should be given in case of any "particular section of population."

Advani also referred to assurances given by Prime Minister Singh to a delegation led by former President R. Venkataraman and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in this regard.



L.K. Advani

be in the interest of everyone concerned in the case for investigations in the seer case to be shifted from the state. "Of course, the court can ensure this but I would think that the Central gov-

## Sangh plans nationwide stir at closed-door meet

HT Correspondent  
Nagpur, January 14

THE RSS has decided to launch a nationwide agitation over the Kanchi seer case with the BJP and VHP supporting it.

While the RSS, VHP and BJP will work in tandem, details of the agitation will be worked out separately by each of the parties.

Talking to reporters out-

side the RSS headquarters on Friday, RSS spokesperson Ram Madhav lifted the veil of secrecy over the closed-door talks being held here over the last two days.

Indicating that the RSS meant to carry the agitation full throttle, Madhav said, "It is in the interest of the Tamil Nadu government to see that the issue does not snowball into the Ram Janmabhoomi of the

South." Stating that the BJP had already announced a seven-day agitation from January 15, Madhav said the same would now be supported by the VHP.

He said that the main role would be played by the VHP while the support in the political arena will be carried out by the BJP.

Each will bolster the other's chaitked out programme, he added.

## COMMUNAL HOARDING IN BHOPAL

# RSS stirs cauldron

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Religion of  
Persecution

Santosh Singh in Bhopal

Jan. 14. — The RSS has stirred a fresh controversy in Madhya Pradesh with a hoarding that poses a direct question: *Aapke nani-pote Hindu rah sakege kya* (Will your grandchildren remain Hindus?). Its footsoldiers claim that this is the message of Census 2001... read between the lines. The Bhopal RSS chief, Mr Vilas Goley, finds nothing wrong with the hoarding which he describes as a plea to unite Hindus.

It bears recall that more than a year ago, the RSS had disrupted the staging of Habib Tanvir's play, *Ponga Pandit*, and had screened a film on Veer Savarkar at an Indore theatre during a programme to train 6,000 RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal activists.

The hoarding has been put up at Bhopal's Roshanpura Square and Banganga prior to the RSS' *path sanchalan* (march) to be held at Yadgare-e-Shahjahan Park on 23 January.

The state's BJP government claims that it is concerned over

the law and order aspect as Muslims are predominant in the peripheral areas. On the ground, however, the Madhya Pradesh government has taken no steps to check the RSS.

And to justify inaction, the district administration pleads that since there have been no complaints against the hoarding, the authorities can't act on their own. The Bhopal Municipal Corporation says its duty is to allot space for a hoarding, not to vet its contents.

Only a group of intellectuals, including Habib Tanvir, has so far voiced its protest through a joint statement.

The administration's response makes a mockery of Section 153-A of the Indian Penal Code which states that anyone "promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, or doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony by either the spoken or the written word, or doing anything to disturb the peace shall be punished with imprisonment up to three years, with fine or both".



The controversial hoarding. — PTI

# Jaya sticks to seer duty, snaps at BJP

M.R. VENKATESH

Coimbatore, Jan. 16: Hours before Kanchi seer Jayendra Saraswati broke his week-long vow of silence, Jayalithaa released a statement reiterating that her government was doing its duty in pursuing the cases against the Kanchi pontiffs and ruled out withdrawing them.

She snapped at the BJP, insinuating that it was trying to "politically rehabilitate itself" by taking up the cudgels for the Kanchi pontiffs, both accused in a murder case. The thrust drew a counter in Delhi, with BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra reiterating that the move was "driven by revenge".

"It is all a case of vengeance. The minimum court-fees which had to be extended to them were not. In the past, when any eminent person was arrested, be it Indira Gandhi, Sheikh Abdullah or

BJP leaders, they were housed in guest houses and not jails. Even the Prime Minister wrote to her twice, saying the traditions of the *mutt* should not be broken," he said.

Jayendra Saraswati has been granted conditional bail by the Supreme Court and is camping at Kalavai, 45 km from Kancheepuram. The bail application of junior acharya Vijayendra Saraswati will come up at the Chengalpatu sessions court tomorrow.

In the hard-hitting seven-page statement released in Chennai, Jayalithaa defended the "systematic and meticulous" police investigation into a sensitive case involving the "brutal murder" of temple manager Shankar Raman.

Jayalithaa repeated that in acting to uphold law and order, she was only discharging her duties as chief minister "without any fear or favour, which is what the oath of



Jayalalitha: Guns blazing

office would require any person in her position to do".

She pointed out that the Shankar Raman murder, an assault on Kanchi Mutt associate Radhakrishnan in Chennai and an earlier attack on priest Thirukoshtiyur Madhavan by strangers who had "no relationship whatsoever with the victims" had posed a great challenge to police.

Religion → Faith

After painstaking investigation, a pattern emerged. "When certain names behind these attacks were first brought to my notice, I was totally shocked and pained," she said.

"Nobody expected nor would anybody find it palatable that the two sankaracharyas as *peetathipathis* of the Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt would so seriously deviate from the path of Hindu *shastras*... and be included as accused in a murder case," the statement said.

"But at the same time, when the evidentiary materials backing the charges turns the needle of suspicion against the acharyas, things cannot be left as they are."

Jayalithaa seems to have hardened her stand following statements from the *mutt* devotees and the BJP's charge that her government was "going berserk" in the case. "Maintenance of law and

order makes no distinction between the rich and poor, between a religious head and an atheist," she said, pointing out that some "groups and vested interests (were) actively manipulating the media to spread misinformation".

She said that "there was absolutely no role for her intervention or interference in this case" and that as chief minister in charge of the police, she was being informed about the case only on a "strictly need-to-know basis".

The BJP seems to think, she said, religious heads like the acharyas were "above the law, that they could not be questioned or any investigation pressed against them".

"Only the people should judge whether the BJP's stand on this issue is correct or erroneous," she said, adding that the BJP knows the law well enough to be aware that the cases cannot be withdrawn.

# Godhra probe sees accident

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Jan. 17: The Godhra train fire in which 59 people were killed three years ago was accidental, an inquiry report said today.

A Centre-appointed committee headed by Justice U.C. Banerjee said in its interim report there was no reason to infer that miscreants from outside had a role to play in the blaze in a coach of the Sabarmati Express on February 27, 2002.

The finding flies in the face of the Narendra Modi government's justification that the subsequent riots in which over 1,000 people of the minority community died were the result of an emotional reaction to a planned carnage.

State police investigations have led to the arrest of over 100 people, who have been accused of hatching a conspiracy to set fire to the train carrying *kar sevaks* from Ayodhya.

Even today as Justice Banerjee's report said the fire was accidental, a top Gujarat police officer deposed before a state-level inquiry commission claiming that "terrorist links" to the incident had emerged.

The Banerjee committee,

formed by the Manmohan Singh government on September 4, 2004, to "ascertain the precise cause of fire in the coach S6", also rejected the notion that inflammable substance could have been used.

"In my view it is not possible since the sequence of fire shows that first there was a smell of burning, followed by dense smoke and flames thereafter. This sequence is not possible in case the fire is caused by an inflammable liquid thrown on the floor of the coach or an inflammable object thrown from outside the coach," it said.

The committee pointed out that the report by the divisional railway manager, Vadodara, that the fire was caused by miscreants is a "figment of his imagination without ascertaining the matter in its prop-

er perspective".

Justice Banerjee wondered how *kar sevaks* armed with *trishuls* would allow themselves to be burnt without a murmur by persons entering the coach from outside.

The committee has observed that the possible cause of the fire could be cooking. "Some evidence of cooking inside the coach by *kar sevaks* was also given before the committee," Justice Banerjee told reporters.

"Other reasons have also been cited, including an unextinguished cigarette butt."

The findings appear to be consistent with an earlier report prepared by the Forensic Science Laboratory which maintained that the fire had started within the coach.

Quoting a submission by a traveller in S6, the judge

added: "The passengers did not realise that there was a fire in the train till the time the smoke became thick and started irritating the eyes and choking the throat; it was at that stage only the realisation arose to leave the coach. They ran to the door and used luggage to break the windows."

He criticised the railway authorities for the slipshod way in dealing with the fire.

"The entire approach seems to be very casual and, unfortunately, the high-ups in the Western Railways did not adhere to even the basic rules mandated in the accident manual," the former judge said.

"Based on the records made available, the committee is of the view that all is not well with railway safety."

Railway minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, who is preparing for elections in Bihar, said he would take action against Nitish Kumar, his predecessor and political rival in his home state, if there was any indication of a cover-up.

Nitish Kumar described the report as a "political stunt" before an election. His ally, the BJP, called it an "extra-constitutional effort to influence the course of justice".

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## THE FINDINGS

- Fire originated inside the coach
- No inflammable liquid was used
- *Kar sevaks* were armed with *trishuls* and could have stopped miscreants from entering the coach if there had been such an attempt
- Petrol theory, miscreant theory and electrical fire as possible cause of the blaze eliminated
- Possibility only of an accidental fire
- Failure on part of the railway safety commission and the railway administration to conduct a statutory inquiry
- The Godhra fire brigade delayed its arrival and came with ineffective engines and non-functioning motor pumps

# হিন্দুত্বের বাঘ

বাঘের পিঠে সওয়ার হওয়ার বিপদ বিজেপি হাড়ে-হাড়ে টের পাইতেছে। গোধরা-কাণ্ডকে সামনে রাখিয়া এই দল কেবল গুজরাতে ক্ষীয়মাণ রাজনৈতিক প্রভাব পুনরুদ্ধার করিয়া নরেন্দ্র মোদীর নেতৃত্বে ক্ষমতায় ফেরে নাই, রাজস্থান ও মধ্যপ্রদেশেও কংগ্রেসের কাছ হইতে শাসনক্ষমতা ছিনাইয়া লইয়াছিল। নরেন্দ্র মোদী হইয়া উঠিয়াছিলেন হিন্দুত্বের নবীন 'পোস্টার-বয়'। তাঁহাকে রাজ্যে-রাজ্যে জনসভায় হাজির করাইয়া এবং বক্তৃতা দেওয়াইয়া বিজেপি নির্বাচনী বৈতরণী পার হওয়ার চেষ্টায় মাতিয়াছিল। পরে, বিশেষত লোকসভা নির্বাচনে বিপর্যয়ের পর হিন্দুত্বের তাস ব্যুমেরাং হইয়া বিজেপিকে আঘাত করিতে শুরু করে। এ বার রেল মন্ত্রক নিযুক্ত গোধরা-কাণ্ডের বিচারবিভাগীয় তদন্ত-কমিশন তাহার অন্তর্বর্তী রিপোর্টে মোদী, বিজেপি ও সংঘ পরিবারের 'মুসলিম ষড়যন্ত্র' তত্ত্ব নস্যাৎ করিয়া দেওয়ায় বিজেপি গোধরা লইয়া আক্রমণাত্মক অবস্থান লইবার সিদ্ধান্ত করিয়াছে। বিজেপির তত্ত্ব ছিল, গুজরাতে মুসলিমপ্রধান জনপদ গোধরায় সবরমতী এক্সপ্রেসের একটি বগিতে অযোধ্যা-ফেরত করসেবকদের বাহির হইতে পেট্রোল বা কেরোসিন ঢালিয়া পুড়াইয়া মারা হইয়াছিল। এই পৈশাচিক হত্যাকাণ্ডের 'স্বাভাবিক, স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত এবং ন্যায়সঙ্গত প্রতিক্রিয়া'ই নাকি গুজরাত 'দাঙ্গা', যাহাতে প্রায় দুই হাজার সংখ্যালঘু নিহত হন, লুণ্ঠিত, ধর্ষিত হন আরও অনেকে। নরেন্দ্র মোদী তো এই প্রসঙ্গে নিউটনের গতিবিজ্ঞানের তৃতীয় সূত্রের উল্লেখ করিয়া দাঙ্গাকে বেধতাও দেন। বিচারবিভাগীয় কমিশনের রিপোর্ট বিজেপির সেই তত্ত্বের পালের হাওয়া কাড়িয়া লইয়াছে।

এমন একটা সময় এই অন্তর্বর্তী রিপোর্ট প্রকাশিত হইয়াছে, যখন বিহার, ঝাড়খণ্ড ও হরিয়ানায় বিধানসভা নির্বাচন আসন্ন। এই নির্বাচনগুলিতে গোধরা যে প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী সকল পক্ষের কাছেই একটি মুখ্য প্রচারের বিষয় হইয়া উঠিবে, তাহাতে সন্দেহ নাই। বিশেষত বিহার ও ঝাড়খণ্ডে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের শিবির ইহাতে যতটা উজ্জীবিত, বিজেপি-সংযুক্ত জনতা জোট ততটাই বেগতিক। বিজেপির কিছু নেতা এই তদন্ত ও তাহার রিপোর্টকে রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্যপ্রণোদিত আখ্যা দিয়াছেন। কেহ বলিয়াছেন, গোধরা কাণ্ডের তদন্ত কোনও রেল-কমিশনের বিচার্য বিষয়ই হইতে পারে না। কিন্তু অগ্নিকাণ্ডটি রেলের বগিতে, রেল স্টেশনেই হইয়াছিল। রেলযাত্রীরাই তাহার শিকার হইয়াছিলেন। রেল-নিরাপত্তার নিরিখ হইতে কাণ্ডটির বিশদ তদন্ত করা উচিত ছিল। তদানীন্তন রেলমন্ত্রী সংযুক্ত জনতার নীতীশ কুমার কেন সেই তদন্ত করান নাই, তাহার উত্তরসূরি হিসাবে লালুপ্রসাদ সেই সঙ্গত প্রশ্নও তুলিয়াছেন। নীতীশ কুমার ও তাহার দলও তাই বিপাকে। সংযুক্ত জনতা যে হিন্দুত্বের অনুমোদনকারী নয়, নির্বাচকমণ্ডলীকে তাহা বুঝাইতে বেগ পাইতে হইবে। নীতীশ কুমার-শরদ যাদবদের অস্বস্তি বাড়াইয়া দিয়াছে হিন্দুত্বকেই আবার তুরূপের তাস করার বিজেপি প্রকল্প। প্রকল্পটি স্পষ্ট হইয়াছিল উমা ভারতীকে বিহারে নির্বাচনী প্রচারে নামাইবার সিদ্ধান্তে। মোদীর রণহস্তার তাহাকে আরও স্বচ্ছ করিয়া তুলিল।

নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে দলে কোণঠাসা বা বহিষ্কার করার পরিবর্তে বিজেপি তাঁহাকে দিয়া ভোট জয়ের বিপজ্জনক খেলা খেলিয়াছে গোধরা-কাণ্ডের অন্তর্বর্তী রিপোর্ট প্রকাশ হইবামাত্র মোদীর সরকার নানা বিবৃতি মারফত তাহা ভ্রান্ত প্রতিপন্ন করার চেষ্টা করিয়াছে মোদী নিজে এই রিপোর্টকে নির্বাচনী প্রচারে তাহার বিহার সফরের আমন্ত্রণ রূপে ব্যাখ্যা করিয়াছেন। তিনি কী প্রচার করিবেন, তাহা অনুমান করা কঠিন নয়। আশঙ্কা গভীর যে, তাহার পাটলিপুত্র অভিযানের লক্ষ্য থাকিবে ভোটারদের সাম্প্রদায়িক মেরুকরণ তাহাতে পাটীগণিতের হিসাবে লালুপ্রসাদ যাদবেরই লাভবা- হইবার সম্ভাবনা, যেহেতু যাদব-মুসলিম-দলিত ভোটারের আমানত। তাঁহার অক্ষুণ্ণ থাকিবে। কিন্তু নির্বাচকমণ্ডলীর সাম্প্রদায়িক মেরুকরণ কি জাতির পক্ষে সমূহ সর্বনাশের শঙ্কা ডাকিয়া আনিবে না? বিজেপি কি এখনও শিখিবে না, রামমন্দের বা পংখ্যাদ্যু- পীড়নের মতো বিষয় জাতির এজেন্ডা হইতে নির্বাসিত হইয়াছে? হিন্দুত্ব লইয়া সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ হিন্দুও আর মাথা ঘামায় না। জৈন-সরস্বতীর গ্রেফতারি লইয়া বাজার গরম করার কৌশল বিজেপিকে এক পা-ও আগাইয়া দেয় নাই। অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী ইহাকে 'হিন্দু সমাজের কাছে চ্যালেঞ্জ' রূপে বর্ণনা করিলেও হিন্দু সমাজ সাড়া দেয় নাই। অথচ নরেন্দ্র মোদী এবং উমা ভারতীকে দিয়া প্রচারের সিদ্ধান্ত দেখাইয়া দেয়, ক্ষমতাচ্যুতির অজ্ঞাতবাস হইতে জাতীয় রাজনীতির ইন্দ্রপ্রস্থে প্রত্যাবর্তনের সদিচ্ছা বিজেপির নাই। হিন্দুত্বের বাঘ তাহার সওয়ারকে ভক্ষণ করিতেছে।



# Laloo flashes Godhra, Nitish rushes to EC

*Religious faith*  
OUR BUREAU 1/1

**Patna/New Delhi, Jan. 18:** Laloo Prasad Yadav today hit the campaign trail with a copy of a panel report that termed the Godhra carnage an "accident", running the risk of drawing the Election Commission's attention a day after it indicted him.

Campaigning at Belaganj near Gaya, Laloo Prasad said the Justice U.C. Banerjee committee's interim report had brought out the "truth of Godhra" and he, as railway minister, would not spare the guilty.

His Bihar rival, Nitish Kumar, immediately wrote to the Election Commission, which had yesterday reprimanded Laloo Prasad in a cash distribution complaint and put him on notice.

Nitish asked the panel to "ban" the use of the report as a "political weapon". It would create communal tension, said Nitish, who was railway minister when the incident happened.

Chief election commissio-

*19/1*  
ner T.S. Krishnamurthy, who is in Ranchi, said he was yet to see the complaint. "I will go through all the letters after reaching Delhi and suitable action will be taken in every case after a thorough inquiry," he said. Krishnamurthy is to tour Bihar on Thursday.

Laloo Prasad's Rashtriya Janata Dal vowed to include the presentation of the interim report in its manifesto, saying it is a "significant" document that nails the falsehoods promoted by the National Democratic Alliance.

The report, made public yesterday, dismisses the possibility of miscreants having set the coach on fire from outside on February 27, 2002, and says the blaze started from within.

Sources in Delhi said the Election Commission is likely to take cognisance of Nitish's complaint and conduct an inquiry.

An official in the Election Commission said the complaint would be given a "fair hearing". "We like to think that we give all serious issues

a fair hearing," the official added.

If the commission decides to take up the complaint, it can ask observers deputed in Bihar to submit reports on the impact of the Godhra report on the campaign. However, the official said, the commission would not give an opinion before it makes its own assessment.

Nitish has pointed out in his letter that in the December 2002 elections in Gujarat, the Election Commission had asked parties not to turn the Sabarmati Express tragedy into a campaign issue.

The commission, then headed by J.M. Lyngdoh, had observed that a campaign with Godhra as the central theme would polarise voters on communal lines.

The commission had prohibited the use, chiefly by activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, of posters, hoardings, T-shirts and a model depicting the burning S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express in a rally.

■ See Page 6

# Keep religion out of election: CEC

*Religion out of election*  
*Religion out of election*  
*Religion out of election*

**Ranchi:** Warning strict action against those exploiting religion to influence the electorate, Chief Election Commissioner T S Krishnamurthy on Wednesday said it would be "unfortunate" if parties rake the Justice U C Banerjee report on the Godhra incident during the election campaign.

When his attention was drawn to reports that RJD president Lalu Prasad had blamed the BJP and RSS for post-Godhra riots in Gujarat in his election campaign in Bihar, Krishnamurthy said, "We have to verify the authenticity of the statement. But the commission will take action if religion is used for political exploitation."

Prasad, while campaigning in rural areas of Gaya and Aurangabad

issues of development and good governance.

"Political parties must learn good democracy and good governance," he asserted. The CEC did not agree with the idea of many political parties to resort to graffiti to counter Naxal slogans against a poll boycott.

"We will follow the rules strictly. The administration has been asked to take appropriate steps to tackle such wall writings by Naxalites in some areas," Krishnamurthy said. Stating that the commission had taken note of a political party's allegation against another for distributing lethal bows and arrows (among partymen), he



said the administration had been asked to initiate action.

The CEC, who met nine political parties separately on Tuesday, said one party leader alleged that a particular IAS officer in the state had been meeting a political figure.

"We expect the officials to be neutral in their approach and provide a level-playing field to all," he said. Expressing dissatisfaction over the Jharkhand administration for its "inability" to provide identity cards to every one, he said it was unfortunate that only about 60% of the electorate had been provided with them. "However, the voter can use any one of the 14 documents that the election commission has already approved," Krishnamurthy said. PTI

# Salt into the wound!

## Banerjee panel leaves questions unanswered

The crucial problem of establishing the truth in respect of the fire on the Sabarmati Express in Godhra that claimed 59 lives in February 2002 remains unclear after the Banerjee Commission's interim report. The carnage engineered after that in Gujarat left a trail of huge suffering. The question is whether those who unseated the NDA at the Centre in last May's parliamentary election are as concerned about the suffering as about using it as a convenient tool to woo the minority vote-bank. They have reason to be delighted with the Banerjee Commission, set up by Union railway minister Lalu Prasad for purposes which are all his own. It is a different matter that, in a hurry to bring out an interim report, the Commission leaves important questions unanswered and rubs salt into festering wounds.

How could a departmental inquiry pre-empt the criminal trial and the Nanavati Commission? Why was the report timed to help Lalu make it a campaign issue for assembly election that has invited criticism from the Election Commission? What evidence did his Commission have and who were their witnesses? The retired judge did not help matters by refusing questions after releasing the report. He did say with disarming simplicity, in a television interview, that he was unaware of political nuances.

Whether he thus played into the hands of the minister appears to be a question which perhaps, his great friend, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, might care to answer. The question that survives is why, if the Commission is not considering extraneous purposes, it chooses this precise time to rule out a conspiracy, suggest an "accident" based on demonstrably inadequate premises and help Lalu regain the confidence of minorities just when he needs it the most.

The RJD leader's camp is cheerful. The railway minister, who did not wait for a court verdict or the Nanavati Commission's findings, ordered this departmental inquiry knowing that another commission was on the job and a criminal trial was in progress. What the Banerjee Commission now does is to come to conclusions on the Godhra incident that make the other commission and trial somewhat superfluous.

It leaves a bad taste for those who have an implicit faith in our retired judiciary and who watch Lalu indulge in one gimmick after another. But even after these calculated games, the man under scrutiny in the huge fodder scam, may still not be out of trouble. His main rival, Ram Vilas Paswan, and the Congress are still relying on the possibilities of staging a comeback in the Bihar assembly election.

The irony is that Paswan and Congress are singing the same tune on the report while hoping at the same time that the minorities will desert Lalu. If in the midst of all this, Godhra remains an unsolved mystery, none of these parties may have any regrets. The rest of the country must regret that institutions are targeted, that confidence is shaken by willing tools of politicians, and that these scars will take longer to heal — if at all.

*Relating to*

# Cases filed on Godhra 'CD' issue *no. 11 19/2*

By Our Special Correspondent

**PATNA, FEB. 13.** Even as the Rashtriya Janata Dal today clarified its position over the controversial "CD on Godhra" to the Election Commission, the latter cracked the whip lodging criminal cases in at least two districts where the CD had been screened and posters relating to the Gujarat riots had been pasted.

A delegation of the RJD today submitted its response to the show cause notice issued to it by the commission on the release of the controversial CD charging that the party had violated the model code of conduct.

The RJD submitted its reply to the Chief Electoral Officer, K.C. Saha, here who would forward it to the commission in Delhi for a decision.

The party MP, Ram Kripal Yadav, denied that the party had

anything to do with the CD and that the commission was free to take action against those responsible for its release.

On the other hand, a case has been lodged against unknown persons at the Rupauli police station in Purnia district under the Representation of the People Act. The police were also examining the role of the RJD MLA and candidate, Bima Bharti, in this connection.

### FIRs against five

In a related matter, FIRs were lodged at the Supaul and Pipra police stations in the Supaul constituency against five persons for pasting posters relating to the Gujarat riots. The commission's special adviser, K.J. Rao, inquired into the matter. The police said the posters were found on the RJD offices and neighbouring houses and had been ordered by Mr. Rao to file the cases.

THE HINDU

14 FEB 2005

# US denies diplomatic visa to Modi

**New Delhi:** In a stinging snub to Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, the US on Friday denied him a diplomatic visa and revoked his tourist/business visa under a law that bars such a privilege to anyone who carries out severe violations of religious freedom.

Modi has been denied diplomatic visa and his tourist/business visa, already granted, has also been revoked under a section of US Immigration and Nationality Act, a spokesman of the US embassy said here. The act prohibits anybody who was "responsible for or directly carried out at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom."

The CM was to pay a five-day visit to the US from March 20 and some Indian-American groups had threatened to organise protests against him and two American congressmen had planned to introduce a resolution condemning the policies and actions of the state administration in the light of post-Godhra riots that rocked the state in 2002. "We can confirm that chief minister of Gujarat state Narendra Modi applied for but was denied the diplomatic visa under section 214 (B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act because he was not coming for the purpose that qualified for diplomatic visa," the spokesman said.

"His tourist/business visa was revoked under section 212 (A) (2) (G) of the act which makes any government official who was responsible for or directly carried out at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom, ineligible for visa," he added.

The BJP reacted sharply to the denial of visa, saying it was "unwarranted" and had caused "insult" to the entire nation. The party asked the central government to intervene in the matter and make a statement, particularly clarifying whether it was done "in its knowledge." "Granting visa is the sovereign right of any state but the manner in which it was done and reasons given (for denial of visa to modi) are unacceptable," senior BJP leader and for-

## India lodges strong protest

**New Delhi:** India on Friday lodged a strong protest to the US for its "uncalled for" decision to deny visa to Gujarat CM Narendra Modi and sought an "urgent reconsideration."

Hours after the US decision, external affairs ministry summoned US head of mission and conveyed its protest. US deputy chief of mission Robert Blake, who met foreign secretary Shyam Saran for 30 minutes, said that he had explained the reasons for the decision and India had asked Washington to review it.

External affairs ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna told reporters that the US embassy action was "uncalled for and displays lack of courtesy and sensitivity towards a constitutionally-elected chief minister of a state of India."

The ministry of external affairs called the head of the mission to lodge a strong protest against the denial of visa to Modi and requested "urgent reconsideration" of the decision. he said. PTI

mer external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha told reporters in New Delhi.

Sinha said the Central government should take up this issue strongly with the US embassy and government. "Modi was going to the US on an invitation from gujarati community. The US administration has come to the con-

clusion without checking facts with Gujarat government. This is unwarranted," Sinha said. The Congress assailed US action but made it clear that the party's stand on the issue should in no way be linked to its opposition to the controversial bjp leader. Party



spokesman Anand Sharma said the US action was "not called for" given the fact that Modi is a chief minister and is holding a constitutional position.

"Why should we use such strong words," he said when asked whether the Congress would condemn the US action. "India will feel strongly when a chief minister is denied visa," he said when asked whether Washington's move was an insult to the country.

Replying to a question, he said the Congress had also attacked the US for subjecting George Fernandes to strip search when he had visited that country as defence minister in the NDA government. PTI

Freedom

## Modi calls it as insult to constitution

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Ahmedabad:** Fuming over the cancellation of his US visa, Narendra Modi on Friday refused to dub it a personal embarrassment and instead tried to project the US move as "an affront to the Indian Constitution and sovereignty."

Addressing a crowded press conference, in one of his rare interactions with the media in Gujarat, a combative Modi said he was writing to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to take the necessary measures to "uphold the self-respect of Indians in the wake of this US attack."

"The US should know that the entire minority community has been hounded out of Kashmir because of Pakistani backing to terrorists, but the US government does not behave in this fashion with the Pakistani head of state. Similarly, minorities in Bangladesh are being persecuted for the last 30 years but the US has never allowed this violation of human rights to interfere with its diplomatic relations with Bangladesh."

Modi asked whether India should also treat the US Chief of Army in the same way, should he decide to visit India, if all the human rights violations by the US army in Iraq are to be taken into consideration. Without naming his detractors, he said the US decision to deny him a visa was taken under the influence of "terrorist-sponsored NGOs."

Modi frequently used phrases like "America ka dussahas, America ki manmani and America ka dushkritiya" during his half-hour press conference.

# U.S. sticks to guns on Modi visa issue

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 21.** Despite the Indian Government's request to reconsider the issue, the United States will not grant an entry visa to the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. This was communicated by the U.S. Embassy here to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) today.

In a brief statement to the press, the U.S. Ambassador, David C. Mulford, reiterated Washington's earlier stand that Mr. Modi could not be granted a diplomatic visa as the purpose for which he wished to travel to the U.S. did not make him eligible for one. As for the Gujarat Chief Minister's existing tourist/business visa, he said this had been revoked under Section 212 (a) (2) (g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which made any foreign government official who "was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom" ineligible for a visa.

"The MEA requested that the Department of State review the decision to revoke his tourist/business visa," Mr. Mulford said. "Upon review, the State Department re-affirmed the original decision."

Reacting to the decision, the

MEA spokesman said that the Government of India "regrets that in spite of its demarche ... for an urgent reconsideration of their decision to deny a visa to Mr. Modi ... the U.S. has not revised its decision ... This disregards the fact of the constitutional position of the Chief Minister of Gujarat as a democratically elected leader and appears to be based on selective judgment."

## No visa ban on BJP

In his statement, Mr. Mulford stressed that the visa ban "applies to Mr. Narendra Modi only" and not to the Bharatiya Janata Party as a whole. "It is based on the fact that, as head of the State Government in Gujarat between February 2002 and May 2002, [Mr. Modi] was responsible for the performance of state institutions at that time. The U.S. State Department's detailed views on this matter are included in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and the International Religious Freedom Report. Both reports document the violence in Gujarat from February 2002 to May 2002 and cite the Indian National Human Rights Commission report, which states there was 'a comprehensive failure on the part of the State Government to control the per-

sistent violation of rights of life, liberty, equality, and dignity of the people of the State'."

The U.S. Ambassador rejected the charge that the denial of visa to Mr. Modi was "directed at the BJP institutionally or Gujaratis as a community." The U.S., he said, "is deeply appreciative of the role that the BJP, and the Vajpayee Government in particular, played in opening the way for the positive transformation in U.S.-India relations. I would note also the great respect the U.S. has for the many successful Gujaratis who live and work in the U.S. and the thousands who are issued visas ... each month."

Though Mr. Mulford said that the U.S. and India, "as two great and vibrant democracies, share common values on the freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and representative government," the MEA spokesman said the denial of a visa to Mr. Modi was "not in keeping with the objectives that India and the U.S. share as democratic countries." Every country has a sovereign right to issue or deny visas, he said, but democratic tradition and practice "must uphold the dignity of political office that is the result of elections and a mandate given by the people of a country or State."

# Now, UK sponsors disown invite to Modi

Vijay Dutt  
London, March 23

AMERICA SHUT the doors on him; the British haven't gone that far. But Narendra Modi's UK trip could well end in a bizarre case of "Destination Unknown".

The "hosts" who are supposed to have invited the Gujarat chief minister to the March 26 Gujarat Day celebrations at Royal Albert Hall are suddenly saying they have nothing to do with resurgent Hindutva's latest mascot.

With just two days to go for the trip, no one is willing to own up to inviting Modi, who faces the prospect of demonstrations

against his visit.

The web site of the Asian Music Circuit (AMC), the event's organisers, has an entire page on the programme but makes no mention of Modi. Yet, a January 7 letter addressed to the chief minister, apparently signed by AMC chairman Viram Jasani and two other bigwigs, does appear to be an invitation.

A copy of the letter, faxed to HT by C.B. Patel, publisher and editor of the Asian Voice, a co-sponsor of the event, says at one place, "Given the historic and prestigious nature of the event (on March 26 at Royal Albert Hall) we would be delighted if

you could grace the occasion as our honoured chief guest."

Jasani could not be contacted for an explanation. But AMC officials said they were an apolitical organisation and would like to stay out of controversy. However, an unnamed AMC officer-bearer has been quoted by a news portal as saying, "We haven't invited Modi but he may attend the function."

It seems everyone has decided that ambiguity is the best policy. However, Patel said, "I am not a host but one of the event sponsors. Modi is an elected chief minister, and he can promote India and Gujarat as tourist and

investment destinations. He is welcome to London."

Meanwhile, Suresh Grover of AWAAZ, the group that had tried to get an arrest warrant out against Modi during his previous visit to Britain, said, "We will move the Bow Street magistrate's court again and seek his arrest under the Criminal Justice Act on torture."

As for who had invited Modi, Grover said, "AMC officials told me that they were under tremendous pressure to invite Modi and let him address the audience."

AWAAZ and the Dawood family, which lost two of its members during the Gujarat riots,

have also made "strong" representations to the foreign office and the home office seeking a ban on Modi entering Britain.

While the foreign office has said it cannot intervene as Modi holds a valid visa, the home office is yet to respond. But though the British government may not bar Modi from entering the country, it will stick to its policy of having no official contact with him.

The Gujarat chief minister is all dressed up but may have nowhere to go once he lands up in London.



Narendra Modi No takers

See also Page 3

# BJP committed to Ram temple, says Advani

New Delhi: Calling on the party to do some "honest soul-searching" and apply "necessary correctives", BJP president L K Advani on Wednesday reaffirmed his party's commitment for reconstruction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.



He said the "biggest challenge" before the party was its speedy revival in Uttar Pradesh while consolidating base in its "traditionally strong" states and recovering the lost ground in states which had "slipped".

Addressing the BJP national council meeting on the occasion of the party's silver jubilee celebrations, Advani said, "I have said that the silver jubilee year is as much an occasion for introspection as it is for celebration. Let us use this occasion to do some honest soul-searching and apply necessary correctives, wherever needed."

Though the veteran leader did not refer to any particular issue or area in which the party should introspect, he did say that the BJP, while in power at the Centre for six years, had somehow neglected to pay proper attention to its core constituency.

"We did not remain adequately in contact with those who support us and work for us because of our ideology. Also, we, somewhat, ignored our own

karyakartas (activists). We failed to address their grievances. And we did not always respond to their feedback respectfully," he said.

Advani said the party took its core constituency, that stood with it in the low and high tide of politics, for granted, which had a definite effect on the outcome in the Lok Sabha elections.

"We must draw the right lessons from this experience. If we do so, I have no doubt that the BJP will return to the path of ascendancy whenever the Lok Sabha elections are held next," he said.

The national council session is being attended by over 300 delegates from all over the country and senior leaders, including former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, chief ministers, state unit presidents and NDA convener George Fernandes, who is there as a guest.

Looking at the challenges and opportunities ahead, Advani said the party must take multiple steps to strengthen its appeal to the youth and make it the voice and choice of young India. On the Ayodhya issue, Advani said, "Our party's commitment to reconstruction of the Ram temple remains total, unshakable and irreversible. We continue to believe that a negotiated settlement through dialogue between representatives of Hindu and Muslim communities in an atmosphere of mutual trust, goodwill and accommodation is the most desirable route to solve this long-pending issue." PTI



# RSS conversion claim refuted

Muslims for apology over Sudarshan's remark

Religion & Politics  
HD-5  
289

Special Correspondent

**JAIPUR:** The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's claim that it converted nearly 500 Muslim families to Hinduism at a "Dharma Sabha" (religious assembly) recently in Beawar town of Rajasthan was on Thursday refuted by Muslims of the region, who stated that those who attended the Sabha were the descendants of the people who had embraced Hinduism long before Independence. They said the purported conversion was an "eyewash" aimed at deceiving none other than Hindus.

The office-bearers of Rajasthan Cheeta-Mehrat (Kathat) Mahasabha - representing the local Muslims - denounced at a Press conference here the attempts by the RSS to create an impression that Muslims were coming to the fold of Hinduism in large numbers and demanded action against the Sangh leaders for disturbing communal harmony in the region through their frequent programmes.

The RSS chief, K.S. Sudarshan, addressing the Dharma Sabha organised in the Ashapura Mata temple on the outskirts of Beawar on Monday, had called upon Hindus to accept the people who had converted to other religions "under coercion" and now wanted to come back to the fold of the religion of their ancestors. He said such families should be encouraged to revert to Hinduism and given due respect.

The general secretary of the Mahasabha, Shafi Mohammed Kathat, pointed out that the

**Both the RSS and the VHP have organised a series of "conversion ceremonies" in and around Beawar during the past decade and constructed the Ashapura Mata temple as the rallying centre**

Cheeta-Mehrat clan of Rajputs in the Ajmer-Merwara region had converted to Islam in the 14th and 15th centuries but was not acquainted fully with the Islamic rites. The people of the clan practised the rituals of both the religions till early 20th century when a section of them embraced Hinduism and others added the 'Kathat' suffix to their caste to express their Muslim identity.

The Sangh Parivar has identified Cheeta-Mehrats, who are already Hindus, as the target group in its conversion drive and flaunted them as those who have abandoned Islam to accept the faith of their forefathers. Both the RSS and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad have organised a series of "conversion ceremonies" in and around Beawar during the past decade and constructed the Ashapura Mata temple, dedicated to the family deity of the Rajput ruler, Prithviraj Chauhan, as the rallying centre.

Mr. Shafi Mohammed said the

function which was shown as the Dharma Sabha was in fact the annual fair organised every year to mark Ramnavmi and the people of all religions participate in it as a social gathering.

The Mahasabha's president, Zafar Mohammed Cheeta, said such events had invariably led to tension between Hindus and Muslims in the region and created a confusion among outsiders who were not aware of the complexities of social structure of Cheeta-Mehrats. "In spite of professing different religions, our social customs are identical. We maintain very cordial relations and participate in each other's family functions," he pointed out.

Mr. Zafar Mohammed charged the Sangh Parivar with trying to get political mileage out of its campaign of "lies and deceit. The Mahasabha took exception to the misinformation campaign launched in the rural areas around Beawar and clarified that Cheeta-Mehrats had converted to Islam long before the foundation of Mughal rule in India. The population of Cheeta-Mehrat (Kathat) caste is presently estimated at 10 lakhs.

The Mahasabha demanded an apology from the RSS for Mr. Sudarshan's statement claiming that Cheeta-Mehrats were forcibly converted as Muslims and called upon the Government to take stringent action against the Sangh and its affiliates for deceiving the people at large about the conversion in Beawar - that never took place - to prevent communal tension in the State.

23 APR 2005

THE HINDU

## No extension for Mukherjee probe panel

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The supreme court on Friday rejected the plea for extension of the term of the Justice M K Mukherjee inquiry commission into the mysterious disappearance of Azad Hind Fauj founder Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose about 60 years ago. The term of the commission, headed by former supreme court judge Justice Mukherjee, expires on May 14.

Petitioner Anuj Kumar Dhar had pleaded that scrapping the panel would impede the efforts to unravel the mystery around Bose's disappearance. A bench of Chief Justice R C Lahoti, Justices D M Dharmadhikari and G P Mathur said it was for the Centre to decide whether or not to give an extension to the commission.

The commission is at liberty to submit its report and the Centre could take further action in accordance with the Commissions of Inquiry Act.

The commission was appointed on April 14, 1999 and was given a six-month extension in November 2004.

07 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

# 'Table Phukan report or I move court'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

**F**ORMER Defence Minister George Fernandes today threatened to sue the UPA government if it did not table the Justice Phukan Commission report in Parliament by Monday. "If they don't table the report, I have no option but to go to court. I am ready for a legal battle," Fernandes said this afternoon at his residence.

"They are legally bound to table that report. When a Commission finishes its report,

legally it is supposed to be tabled in Parliament," he said, and indicated that if the UPA government acquiesced and tabled Justice S.N. Phukan's findings (on the Tehelka scam) in the house on Monday, he would go to Parliament House "to take a look at it" but would not break the NDA's boycott and attend Parliament.

Fernandes also wrote a letter today to Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee in which he said, "I request you to direct the government to fulfill its commitment and lay the report before Parliament immediately." In a note



**UPA legally bound: George**

attached to the letter, Fernandes said that Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee's suo moto statement in Parliament on May 4 had "unwittingly perhaps, given a clean chit to me

for the second time."

When asked if there would be anyone from the NDA to respond to questions in Parliament in case the Phukan Commission report was tabled on Monday, Fernandes said, "The NDA boycott is for other reasons. Besides, the report is 700 pages long. It will take a long time for them to go through it."

Reports have emerged that the Phukan Commission's virtual clean chit to Fernandes on allegations of dubious defence procurements as part of the Tehelka scam, was the result of an allegedly unnecessary trip Justice Phukan

made with his wife and Commission members as a guest of the Armed Forces and Defence Ministry, which he was investigating.

**Debunking** Justice Phukan's submission that he had never asked for air transport, but simply stated his requirement to visit these places as part of the Commission's investigation, Fernandes said that a request for the IAF Avro aircraft came from the Commission itself, and not from his ministry.

"The file containing the request for an aircraft landed upon my table with all other

files. At some level, someone must have made the request. Nobody in my department or ministry suggested this. Someone from the Commission made the request for an aircraft," Fernandes said.

He added, "What if I had said no? Then I would have been accused of obstructing justice. Anyway, it was within my authority to sanction the aircraft, and I used my authority. It was my duty to respond to his request." Fernandes had sanctioned use of the aircraft for the Phukan Commission's visit on December 22, 2003 for five days.

# Phukan report tabled, junked

JAY Raina  
New Delhi, May 13

THE GOVERNMENT has rejected the findings of the Phukan Commission, which gives a clean chit to George Fernandes in the controversial defence deals exposed by Tehelka.

The report of the one-man commission of Justice S.N. Phukan was tabled in Parliament on Friday. It absolves Fernandes in all major deals worth billions of dollars, but the government dubbed it "incomplete" and said Jus-

tice Phukan's conclusions were "bereft of reasoning".

The government has now decided to entrust the entire inquiry to the CBI. In a statement, the government said it had gone along with the directions of the Lok Sabha Speaker even after the attorney-general advised that no such obligation was cast on it.

Fernandes mocked the government for the rejection. "The commission has presented the truth, which is that I have not taken a single paisa from anyone," the former defence minister said.

The government has criticised the commission for failing to complete its probe in three-and-a-half years. But Fernandes said this was a lame excuse. "In complete disrespect and disregard to the commission, it was suddenly wound up by advancing a lame excuse that no progress had been made, when the Congress itself had caused the initial delay and later by seeking repeated adjournments," he said.

Set up in 2001, the commission had submitted a "part report" to the Prime Minister on February 4, 2004. The gov-

ernment said the part report did not cover a vital aspect — the question of illicit gains by persons in public office, individuals and other organisations.

"Upon pursuing the proceedings before the commission, it is clear that Justice Phukan, in arriving at his conclusions, has not appropriately dealt with the submissions of the commission's counsel... that cases of wrongdoing with reference to most of the transactions were made out, without absolving any particular individual," it said.

**Related report on Page 7**

14 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Afghan judge asks for an US apology

Kabul, May 14

THE US should apologise for any desecration of the Koran and punish those responsible, a top Afghan official said on Saturday as sporadic anti-US protests flared for a fifth day.

Sixteen Afghans have been killed and more than 100 hurt since Wednesday in the worst anti-US protests across the country since the Americans invaded in 2001. *Newsweek* magazine said in its May 9 edition that investigators probing abuses at the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay found that interrogators "had placed Korans on toilets, and in at least one case flushed a holy book down the toilet".

"If the Americans have done this, then they should admit it and punish those who did it and apologise to Muslims," Chief Justice Fazl Hadi Shinwari said.

His call echoed the demands of many of those who have been taking to the streets of Afghan towns and cities this week. Protests erupted again on Saturday but apart from some stone throwing, there was no violence, officials said.

"There were demonstrations ... but there was no violence, they

were all peaceful," said interior ministry spokesman Lutfullah Mashal.

The US has tried to calm global Muslim outrage over the incident, saying disrespect for the Koran was abhorrent and would not be tolerated, and authorities were investigating the allegation.

Afghan protesters were out again on Saturday in the southern town of Spin Boldak, on the border with Pakistan, in neighbouring Zabul province, in Farah province in the west and in Badghis in the northwest, officials said. School students threw stones at an aid agency office in Badghis but no one was hurt, residents said.

The protests began in the conservative eastern city of Jalalabad on Tuesday. Violence erupted there on Wednesday when four protesters were killed. Clashes occurred in different places on Thursday and Friday.

The *Outlook* said there was already anti-American feeling among Muslims who saw US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as wars against Islam. The senseless desecration only played into the hands of fanatics who wanted to undermine democracy.

Reuters

MAY 2007

# Wave of anger in Arab world

Atul Aneja

*Religion by religion*

**MANAMA:** A wave of anger has swept through the Arab world following reports about the desecration of the Koran in the American detention facility of Guantanamo Bay.

The report has evoked loud protests across the region including Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, Egypt, Gaza and Iraq.

At the Jabaliya refugee camp in

*10-15*

the northern Gaza Strip, around 2,000 Palestinians marched through the streets, holding aloft copies of the Koran. The protesters waved flags of the radical Palestinian group, Hamas.

Demonstrators who had assembled after Friday prayers burnt American and Israeli flags. Around 400 persons mounted a similar protest in the West Bank city of Hebron. In Saudi Arabia, which is

*15/5*

the guardian of Islam's holiest places, authorities urged Washington to carry out a speedy investigation and take "dissuasive measures."

In Egypt, the banned Muslim Brotherhood expressed "extreme anger" and called for a public apology from the U.S. Government.

The fallout of the incident was also felt in Iraq, where both Shia and Sunni clerics condemned the alleged incident.

15 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

# VC defends quota step

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, May 23:** The vice-chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Naseem Ahmed, today said the decision to allow 50 per cent reservation for Muslims in some courses was within the ambit of the Constitution under Article 31 (1).

"We have done it in only 43 courses of higher technical learning out of a total of 289 after getting a go-ahead from the Centre and actually it comes to only 15.2 per cent for all the courses, while the BJP-led NDA that is criticising it now had allowed 50 per cent reservation across the board to Delhi's Jamia Hamdard University.

"There is nothing communal about it. The proportion of Muslim and non-Muslim students is still going to remain the same. The difference will be that now we would get better Muslim students from all over the country and not just those from among the internal students or from only Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It is a step to enhance the level of AMU as a national university," he said.

However, he said the university continues to provide 25 per cent seats to internal students and reduce it slowly so that the existing system is not

demolished in one go.

Under the old policy, 50 per cent seats were reserved for internal students, while the remaining 50 per cent seats were for students selected on the basis of countrywide tests.

Now, while 50 per cent seats are reserved for Muslim candidates, 25 per cent are for internal students and the remaining 25 per cent for students in the general category.

Ahmed added that the decision was also in line with the judgment of a 11-judge bench of the Supreme Court in the TMA Pai Foundation case, in which the court had said minority educational institutions would have the right to admit students of their choice.

"There is a history behind this decision that started when a committee under Badaruddin Tayyabji in 1987 recommended 50 per cent reservation for Muslims. The same was cleared by the executive council, academic council and the court of the AMU.

"Then, again, recommendations to the same effect were made by the Mumtaz Ahmed Khan committee in 2001 and duly cleared by the university's councils but it could never be applied, as the then Union government sat on it. Now, when the UPA government has accepted and allowed it, it is being made into an issue."

# আলিগড় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে সংরক্ষণে আপত্তি ৪ বাম দলের

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ২১ মে— আলিগড় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে মুসলিম ছাত্রছাত্রীদের জন্য ৫০ শতাংশ আসন সংরক্ষণের সিদ্ধান্তকে 'অযৌক্তিক' ও 'ভুল' বলল বাম দলগুলি। কেন্দ্রের মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রক এই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ৩৬টি পাঠ্যক্রমে মুসলিম ছাত্রছাত্রীদের জন্য অর্ধেক আসন সংরক্ষিত রাখার প্রস্তাবে অনুমোদন দেওয়ায় কড়া সমালোচনা করেছে সি পি এম পলিটব্যুরো। শনিবার দলের বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, কোনও কেন্দ্রীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়েই ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে আসন সংরক্ষণের নিয়ম নেই। আলিগড় মুসলিম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়েও না। এর নিয়মকানুন সংসদে অনুমোদিত আইনে নির্দিষ্ট করে দেওয়া আছে। পলিটব্যুরোর বক্তব্য, মুসলিম-সহ অন্য সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায়ের ছাত্রছাত্রীদের জন্য সংবিধানে পৃথক শিক্ষা

প্রতিষ্ঠানের কথা বলা হয়েছে। কিন্তু আলিগড় মুসলিম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় সংখ্যালঘু গোষ্ঠীর জন্য নির্দিষ্ট নয়। এখানে ৫০ শতাংশ আসন সংরক্ষণের সিদ্ধান্ত কার্যকর করা হলে তা হবে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নিয়মের বিরোধী এবং পক্ষপাতদুষ্ট। কেন্দ্রের এই সিদ্ধান্ত সাম্প্রদায়িক শক্তিকে উৎসাহিত করবে। বিরোধিতা করেছে আর এস পি এবং ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকও। আর এস পি সাংসদ অবনী রায় বলেছেন, বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় স্তরে বর্তমানে যে সংরক্ষণের নিয়ম আছে তা-ই যথেষ্ট, এ জন্য ধর্ম পরিচয়কে আলাদা করে টেনে আনার দরকার নেই। ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লকের জি দেবরাজন বলেন, ধর্মনিরপেক্ষতার নামে সিদ্ধান্ত আসলে সাম্প্রদায়িক দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকেই পরিচালিত। আমরা বিরোধিতা করব।

22 MAY 2005 AAJKAL



## **Banerjee panel gets extension**

**New Delhi:** The U C Banerjee committee, probing the torching of Sabarmati express at Godhra in February, 2002, was today given a three-month extension by the Union cabinet to complete its probe.

The extension would be effective for three months beyond June 4 this year, finance minister P Chidambaram said after a meeting of the cabinet chaired by the PM.

"The extension period will enable the high level committee to complete its complex investigations and finalise its report", he said. The committee was appointed by railway minister Lalu Prasad after the Congress-led UPA came to power in Centre. It had run into controversy for submitting an interim report this year on January 17 terming as an accidental fire the train blaze that killed 59 Kar sevaks. The incident had triggered communal riots in the state in 2002. The interim report had also ruled out inflammable liquid being thrown into the coach. PTI

27 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

## *Religion and politics*

We reproduce with permission an editorial of June 9, 2005 from *Dawn*, Pakistan's respected and most widely circulated English language newspaper. It provides an interesting insight into the key issues that the BJP president and former Deputy Prime Minister, Lal Krishna Advani, raised during his recent visit to Pakistan: FD-13

WHETHER or not Mr. L.K. Advani is persuaded to take back his resignation as president of the Bharatiya Janata Party, he has managed to bring into sharp focus the dilemma of religio-political parties in today's rapidly globalising, and inevitably secularising, world. The politics of extremism and of exploiting religious sentiments for political purposes may become irrelevant even in limited, regional contexts. Mr. Advani may be considered an unlikely catalyst for a debate on this issue, but again he may be just the person. It was Mr. Advani who led the notorious 'rath yatra' that mobilised both urban and rural Hindus and culminated in the cruel destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992. He now says that the mosque's demolition was the "saddest day of my life," but he had expressed no such feelings at that time. His belated remorse may sound unconvincing. Similarly his discovery of the Quaid-i-Azam as a secular leader flies in the face of long-held Hindu nationalist creed that owes its revitalisation to Mr. Advani himself. But if even a person like him believes that it is time to re-evaluate the role of revivalist parties and to change policies, it is as much political realism as an intelligent realisation of the irresistible forces that now confront many traditional political notions and practices.

This is not only an Indian or a BJP problem. Pakistan too faces similar issues, perhaps in an acuter form because our Constitution specifically provides for a state based on religion and is thus a durable point of reference for religious parties. They consider the Quaid's August 11 [1947] speech, to which Mr. Advani referred, as something best forgotten or treated as an aberration. Much of the BJP leadership appears to feel that its Hindu card, which paid it

dividends in the '90s, has lost its magic. The party is widely believed to have been trounced in the last general elections because of its preoccupation with religious politics to the exclusion of the bread-and-butter concerns of ordinary Indians. It now seeks to move to a middle ground and become something of the kind of multi-denomination church that Congress has been since its earlier socialist leanings. The BJP's more extreme Hindutva allies resist the new likely orientation, and it should be interesting to see how long they will be able to maintain their present position.

In Pakistan, the religious factor in politics assumed a dominant character under Ziaul Haq's military regime but was perhaps beginning to be pushed back in subsequent years till sections of our establishment discovered the utility of employing the Afghan jihad remnants for purposes of state policy. The events of 9/11 not only gave new life to religious parties — partly in response to America's own crusading extremism — but also precipitated dangerously warped forms of assertion that are reflected in acts of terrorism. When a process of introspection will begin within our own religious parties is a pressing question. Equally pressing is when the government, party leaders, and state agencies will stop extracting mileage out of religious politics and stop conducting the political debate in a religious vocabulary. The establishment of a genuinely democratic and participatory system, based on the bedrock of electoral accountability, is ultimately the only way to remove angularities from our politics and make our political parties more responsive to temporal realities. Otherwise, we can easily become an anachronism in a world changing around us. (Copyright *Dawn*)

10 JUN 2005

THE HINDU

# আডবাবাণীর পাশে দাঁড়িয়ে সড়েঘর বিবাদের ইন্ধন সিপিএমের

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

৯ জুন: জিমা-বিতর্কে অপ্রত্যাশিত সমর্থন জুটে গেল লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবাণীর।

সঙ্ঘ পরিবার এবং বিজেপি-র একাংশ প্রবল বিরোধিতা করলে কী হয়, আডবাবাণীর 'বক্তব্যের সমর্থনে এগিয়ে এসেছেন সিপিএমের কেন্দ্রীয় নেতৃত্ব। তবে 'প্রাক্তন' বিজেপি সভাপতির 'রাজনৈতিক সততা' নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলতে ছাড়েননি তাঁরা।

দলীয় মুখপত্র 'পিপলস ডেমোক্রেসিস' পরবর্তী সংখ্যার সম্পাদকীয়তে লেখা হয়েছে, এ কথা স্বীকার না-করা অনুচিত হবে যে, পাকিস্তানে আডবাবাণী কখনওই জিমা-কো সরাসরি ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ বলে আখ্যা দেননি। জিমার '৪৭ সালের ১১ অগস্ট দেওয়া বক্তৃতার অংশ তুলে ধরে তিনি শুধু বলতে

চেয়েছেন যে, জিমা পাকিস্তানকে ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ রাষ্ট্র হিসাবে দেখতে চেয়েছিলেন।

আডবাবাণীর বক্তব্যে যে আপত্তিকর কিছু ছিল না, তা মেনে নিয়েছে আর এক বাম দল সিপিআই-ও। আজ ভুবনেশ্বরে সিপিআই নেতা এ বি বর্ধন বলেছেন, "জিমার বক্তৃতা উদ্ধৃত করে আডবাবাণী যা বলেছেন, সেটা নিয়ে আমাদের কিছু বলার নেই।"

সিপিএমের মুখপত্রের আগামী সংখ্যা প্রকাশিত হবে ১২ জুন। সেখানে সম্পাদকীয়ের বক্তব্য, 'আডবাবাণীর এই হিসাবে অংশ তুলে ধরা একটি কারণ জিমার ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ দর্শন থেকে পাকিস্তান সবে এসেছে। আমরা জেনেছি, আডবাবাণী পরোক্ষ ভাবে পাকিস্তানের নেতৃত্বকে এই বিচ্যুতি সংশোধনের পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন। কিন্তু

তিনি এটা চাইকেও আরএসএস এবং বিশ্ব হিন্দু পরিষদ তাঁর বক্তব্যকে অনুমোদন দেয়নি, গ্রহণও করেনি। তারা আডবাবাণীর এই মন্তব্যকে সরাসরি জিমা ও দ্বিজাতি তত্ত্বের প্রতি সমর্থন বলে মনে করেছে। আরএসএস এমনও

বাংলাদেশ-পাকিস্তান-সহ অঞ্চল ভারতের প্লোগান দিচ্ছে।' প্রসঙ্গত, এ বার পাকিস্তান গিয়ে আডবাবাণী দেশ ভাগের ঐতিহাসিক সত্যতা স্বীকার করে নিয়েছেন। এবং উল্লেখ প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন, তিনটি দেশ মিলে স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের সম্মিলিত ইতিহাস রচনা করুক।

সিপিএম নেতৃত্ব বলছেন, আরএসএসের দর্শন হিন্দু রাষ্ট্র আর অতীতে পাকিস্তানকে আডবাবাণী 'অসং রাষ্ট্র' আখ্যা দিয়েছিলেন। দীর্ঘ দিন এই প্রচারের পরে আজ আডবাবাণীর ভালবলকে আরএসএস মেনে নিতে পারেনি। তাদের কাছে পাকিস্তান-বিরোধিতা

এবং সিপিএম-বিরোধিতা সমতুল্য। লক্ষ্যপূরণের জন্য সর্বদা মুসলিম-বিরোধিতা করে সাম্প্রদায়িক মেরু-করণকে ধারালো করাই আরএসএসের কৌশল।

আডবাবাণীর 'ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ' বক্তব্যের সারবস্তুকে সমর্থন করে এবং আরএসএস-সঙ্ঘ পরিবারের কড়া সমালোচনা করে বিজেপি-র মধ্যে কোমল আরও বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে সিপিএম। আরএসএস নেতারা বলছেন, 'আডবাবাণী আজ বামদলের প্রশংসাপত্র পাচ্ছেন। আমাদের সমর্থনের প্রয়োজন তিনি অনুভব করছেন না।'

তবে আডবাবাণী কেন হঠাৎ এমন ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ হয়ে উঠেছেন, এ ব্যাপারে অবশ্য সিপিএম তাদের সম্পাদকীয়তে বেশ কিছু প্রশ্ন তুলেছে। প্রথমত, আডবাবাণী এটা করে আরএসএস তথা সঙ্ঘ পরিবারের

বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতা বাড়াতে চেয়েছিলেন। জিমা-কো ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ বলে তিনি বীর সাতারকরণকেও ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ বলার যুক্তি প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে পারতেন। কারণ, জিমার দু'বছর আগেই সাতারকরণ দ্বিজাতি তত্ত্বের কথা বলেছিলেন।

কাজেই সাতারকরণকে সমর্থন করেও আডবাবাণী ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ থাকতে পারেন জিমার দেহাই দিয়ে। কিন্তু সঙ্ঘ পরিবার তা গ্রহণ না-করার ফলে আডবাবাণী বিষয়টি নিয়ে বিতর্ক চলা। তবে তিনি পাকিস্তানে যা বলে এসেছেন, তা পর্যালোচনা করতে রাজি হননি। আরএসএস কিন্তু এই বিতর্কে যোগ দেয়নি।

পাকিস্তানের মাটিতে বাবরি মসজিদ ধ্বংসের জন্য দুঃখপ্রকাশ, পারভেজ মুশারফের প্রশংসা— এ সবও আরএসএস এবং নরেন্দ্র মোদীর ভাল লাগেনি। কারণ, মোদী পাক প্রেসিডেন্টকে সব সময় 'মিঞা মুশারফ' বলে

ব্যঙ্গ করেন। সর্বোপরি শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ার প্রতি আডবাবাণীর সমর্থনেও সঙ্ঘ ক্ষুধা। কেন না এর ফলে মনমোহন সিংহ সরকারের বিরুদ্ধে তাদের সমালোচনা ভোঁতা হয়ে গিয়েছে।

সিপিএম নেতৃত্ব লিখেছেন, গত লোকসভা নির্বাচনে বিপর্যয়ের পর থেকেই পরিবারের সঙ্ঘট তীব্র হয়েছে। তার পরে নতুন প্রজন্মকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়ার কথা বলে বিতর্ক বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন আরএসএস নেতা সুদর্শন।

সিপিএম নেতৃত্ব অবশ্য সঙ্ঘকে মরণ করিয়ে দিয়েছেন যে, বিজেপি-র চালিকা শক্তি আজও আরএসএস। কাজেই বাঁরা বলছেন আডবাবাণী উদার পথে হটিতে চান, তাঁদের মনে রাখতে হবে, আরএসএসের নিয়ন্ত্রণ মুক্ত হওয়া বিজেপি-র পক্ষে কার্যত অসম্ভব। তাই বিজেপি-র এই সাম্প্রতিক কার্যকলাপ সম্পর্কে মানুষকে আরও সতর্ক হতে হবে।

# Murmurs over Andhra Pradesh move on quotas

## The Andhra Pradesh Government's decision to provide five per cent reservation in education and employment for Muslims has sparked a debate.

Belgium & India

W. Chandrakanth

**T**HE ANDHRA Pradesh Government's decision to implement five per cent reservation for Muslims in education and employment, excluding the creamy layer, has renewed the debate on the issue of quotas on the basis of religion. The reservation is based on the recommendations of the Backward Classes Commission, which submitted its report on June 14. The State Cabinet on Friday approved it to include Muslims under the 'E' category without disturbing the existing reservation for Backward Communities in the 'ABCD' categories and sent the draft ordinance to the Governor for approval.

The move, hailed by the Congress as a necessary obligation, has been decried, predictably, by the Bharatiya Janata Party. It has threatened to go to court and also explore other moves to cry a halt to the "communal politics of the Congress."

Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy justified it as "minimum justice" done to Muslims reeling under backwardness. While the State Cabinet accepted the recommendation to provide 5 per cent reservation, it turned down the proposal to include some

sections of Muslims (Dudekula, Laddaf, Pindari/Noorbasha and Mehtar) presently under the BC (B) and BC (A) categories, in the proposed 'E' group.

The Congress had included the promise of providing reservation to Muslims in its election manifesto and on July 11, 2004, the State Government issued an order providing for reservation. It was based on the statistics supplied by the Minority Welfare Department. Thus, it thought, it kept its word two months after returning to power. But on September 21, 2004, a Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court set aside the GO on the ground that it did not have the backing of the Commission for Backward Classes. The High Court ordered the Government to complete the process of reconstituting the Commission within three months and initiate a process of consultation.

Soon after the GO was issued last year, an angry BJP chief L.K. Advani reacted sharply calling it a retrograde step with potential for "a catastrophic cascading effect."

Speaking at a "Convention Against Religion Based Reservation" in Mumbai on August 14, 2004, Mr. Advani called the move "the Congress party's surrender to the politics of appeasement." "Does the Congress

party know the implication of what it is doing," he asked. He further added that the decision was not only harmful for the country, but to the Muslim community as such.

Dr. Rajasekhara Reddy hit back saying: "[The] entire world knows who is communal. Muslims constitute 9.2 per cent of the A.P. population and a large section of them reel under abject poverty. You cannot leave a considerable chunk of your population deprived of socio-economic opportunities and yet plan to develop the State or nation."

The State Government is aware of the legal hurdles it might have to face and is prepared to fight it out. The total reservation in the State has crossed 50 per cent. Reservation for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes, hitherto, constituted 46 per cent. The case, if contested, will be presented on the strength of the following statistics: more than 77 per cent of the population falls under the deprived category and hence it is only appropriate that it provides 51 per cent reservation.

Statistics compiled by various Departments show that Muslims are way below others in education, recording just 9.45 per cent at the primary education level. By the

time they reach Class Ten, only 6.93 per cent remain in school. In graduation, their percentage is 6.17, in Engineering, 1.39 per cent to 3.92 per cent, in MBBS 3.72 per cent, and in medical PG four per cent.

It was also found that hardly 12 persons out of every 1,000 possess more than four hectares. More than 50 per cent of Muslims in the rural areas do not own any land compared to other communities and those dependent on smallholdings are also hardly 50 per cent of the others.

As for the unemployment rate in the rural areas: it is 16 per cent among Muslims compared to the average eight per cent. In the urban areas, they are above the national average of 42 per cent by accounting for 67 per cent. Their monthly per capita expenditure is also very low at Rs.113 (in 615 out of every 1,000 cases).

The exclusion of the creamy layer means children of those with an annual income of more than Rs.2.5 lakh and also the wards of judges and Class I officers will not get the benefit of reservation. The State Government has considered the conditions that the Union Government adopted in deciding on the creamy layer concept for jobs and admissions at the Central level.

TEMPLE ATTACK ■ LeT, Jaish 'could be involved'

# Advani demands 'befitting' reply

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP  
GUWAHATI, JULY 5

**C**RITICISING the UPA Government for its poor handling of internal security, BJP chief L.K. Advani has called for a "befitting reply" to today's Ayodhya attack.

The former Deputy Prime Minister, who arrived here today to address a BJP rally, said the "dastardly" attack by six militants on the high-security makeshift Ram temple was a disgrace for the country.

"The attack on (the) Ram mandir is a very serious incident... and the country should give a befitting reply to the forces behind the attack. The government should take a very tough stand in dealing with terrorists," Advani said.

The BJP chief, who learned of the attack as he flew from Shillong to Guwahati, got the details after he landed here shortly before noon. He then rang up Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil to get the official version of the incident. "I must congratulate the security personnel who successfully foiled the attempt of the terrorists to barge into the shrine," he added.



PTI

Advani, who rushed back to Delhi after winding up his two-day tour of Meghalaya and Assam, said he was in constant touch with the Director-General of CRPF which is responsible for the shrine's security. He said the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed could be behind the attack. "These two terrorist outfits are constantly on the prowl to create trouble in the country," the BJP chief added.

Advani said senior party leaders Kalyan Singh and Rajnath Singh had been sent to Ayodhya to take stock.

Addressing a BJP rally here later, the BJP chief said the

UPA government was complacent about internal security. This is what made terrorist outfits dare to attack the Ayodhya temple, he added. "The UPA Government has remained complacent on internal security matters. It also does not have a firm policy and a coordinate strategy to contain Naxalite activities in different states," Advani said.

Even so, he welcomed the Centre's initiative in bringing ULFA to the negotiating table and said the BJP would not oppose talks with Assam militants. "We are however opposed to the ULFA demand for holding talks on sovereignty. Sovereignty is not a matter to be discussed with any armed militant group," the former Deputy Prime Minister said.

As Advani arrived in Shillong yesterday, ULFA chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa issued a statement accusing the BJP of communal politics and urging Assam's people to keep away from the party. "The people of Assam should remain alert against the communal designs of the BJP," Rajkhowa said in the statement that was e-mailed to newspapers last evening.

# Exit Jinnah, Enter Ram

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 6 JULY

BJP president LK Advani on Wednesday shed his liberal mask and donned the saffron robe as he sought to put the Ayodhya issue back on the political centrestage, and snuggle himself back into the hearts of the Hindu-minded.

A day after the jihadi strike in Ayodhya, Mr Advani made a desperate attempt to exorcise the ghosts of Karachi by reaffirming his credentials as a Ram Bhakt. Addressing a demonstration held by his party here this afternoon, the BJP chief declared that the Ramjanmahoomi issue has come alive and that his party was committed to the construction of the temple at the disputed site. His remarks were aimed as much at removing the ideological confusion that had gripped the party since his image-rebuilding trip to Pakistan as at sending a message to the RSS and its affiliates.

The demonstration was held as part of the BJP's plans to whip up public sentiments against the failure of the Centre and the Mulayam Singh government to pre-empt the jihadi attack, and put Ayodhya back on the country's political map. In Uttar Pradesh and the BJP-ruled states, where the party had organised bandhs, the response was quite satisfactory. Thus lending credence to the view that the fractious parivar had, for once, decided to bury their differences and close ranks on an issue which shaped the BJP's political reflexes in the late 80s, helping it leapfrog to the status of the largest party in the Lok Sabha less than a decade later.

With the BJP now in the Opposition, it can afford

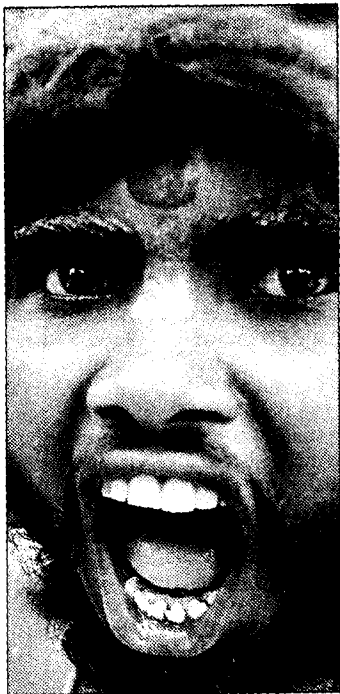
the luxury of a hardline position in an attempt to mobilise its cadre. It, however, runs the risk of antagonising its allies such as the JD(U), which would be wary of its partner's decision to re-embrace Hindutva with gusto. Nitish Kumar, the NDA's chief ministerial candidate in Bihar, would be suspicious of any move that has the unintended consequence of forcing the state's sizeable minority community to rally behind Laloo Prasad Yadav.

As the BJP unleashes attempts to reclaim its socio-political space by taking refuge in religious mobilisation once again, there is a distinct sense of edginess in the Congress camp. It threatens to send its plans of regaining its foothold in the Hindi heartland, especially in UP, for a six. Besides sending the Muslims scurrying back to the Samajwadi Party in large numbers, the process also contains within it the potential of blurring caste-identities.

It was this process which saw the Congress being obliterated from large tracts of the Hindi heartland in the late 80s and 90s, when Hindutva held sway. The BJP would fervently be hoping for a re-run of the situation in an attempt to claw back to the political centrestage.

Sensing an opportunity to capitalise on Tuesday's terror-strike in Ayodhya and also to rebuild bridges with the sangh parivar, Mr Advani carefully

sought to play on the sentiments of the cadre. "The Ramjanmahoomi issue, which had got buried, has come alive once again after yesterday's militant attack in Ayodhya. Our party believes in resolving the issue either through judiciary or through talks between the two communities. But Ram Temple will be built right there," the BJP chief asserted amidst repeated chants of "Jai Sri Ram".



THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2005

## No time for partisan calculations



The fidayeen assault on the disputed Ram temple complex in Ayodhya is a reminder that terror strikes when least expected – and it strikes to create panic. Tuesday's terrorist attack came after a suspiciously long hiatus, in itself reason for the Government to have been cautious and well prepared. In the event, the terrorists failed in their macabre mission thanks to the quick reflexes of the security forces who risked their life and limb to save the structure; there is no estimating the mayhem that would have ensued but for the valiant effort of the men on the spot. They reached within 100 metres of the makeshift temple before they were overpowered and gunned down. Tragically, they almost succeeded in their design – which undoubtedly was to spread disaffection and ill will in the polity. The attack started a blame game that saw political parties pitching into each other: the Centre against the Mulayam Singh Government and the Bharatiya Janata Party against the Centre.

The most cynically opportunistic in all this was the BJP which pounced on the incident in the manner of a drowning man clutching at straws. The party, led by no less than Jaswant Singh, characterised the strike as an attack on "Hindu sentiments" and asked for the resignation of the Central and State Home Ministers. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal struck belligerent poses while Narendra Modi equated July 5 Ayodhya with the 9/11 terrorist strikes in the United States. Not to be outdone, Lal Krishna Advani sought a "fitting reply" to the fidayeen attack. Perhaps by this he meant a "fitting protest" and little else. Nonetheless, this kind of language was best avoided in the prevailing inflammatory atmosphere. In any event, the question arises as to what the BJP is protesting. There was a security breach in Ayodhya but the disputed shrine came to no harm. The security forces got the better of the terrorists with barely any civilian casualty, which is much more than what the BJP could claim while in office. On December 13, 2001, terrorists breached the fortress-like security of Parliament. They entered the complex through a gate used exclusively by VIPs. The September 24, 2002 fidayeen attack on the Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar left 33 civilians dead and scores injured. These were greater tragedies which by the same logic should have brought a larger share of blame to the then government. Yet Mr. Advani did not offer to resign. Nor did he need to. There is an element of inevitability to any suicide mission which causes some damage even when it is not wholly successful. Which is why it is important that security strategies to tackle terrorism are accompanied by political measures as well. And one vitally important political route is to work for harmony within the country, particularly in Kashmir, and work for peace between India and Pakistan. That would call for a united resolve among political parties not to let their partisan interests get in the way of the quest for peace and order.

07 JUL 2005

HINDU

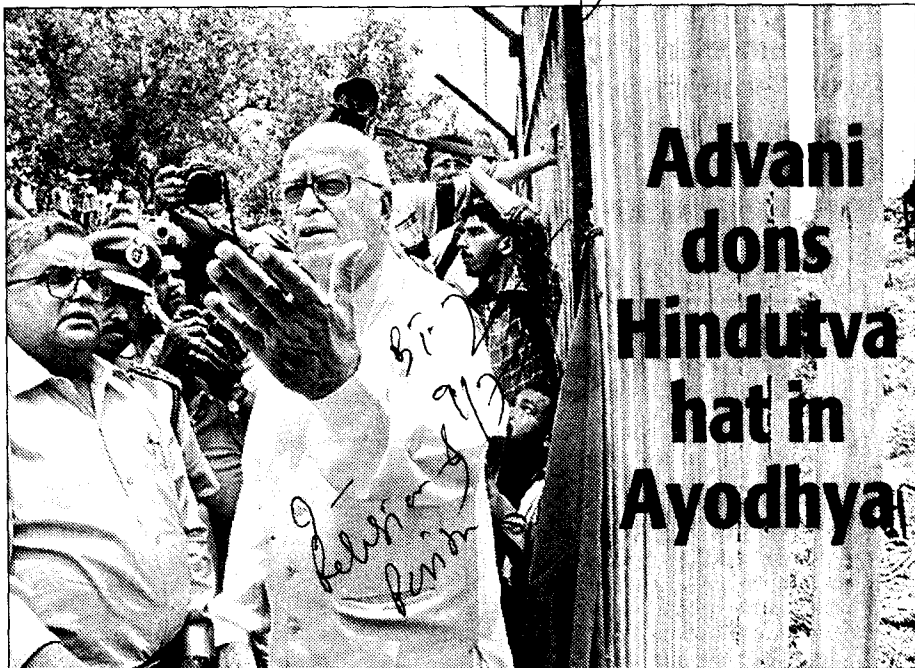
## Pota, Temple Return As Key Issues

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 8 JULY

**L**K Advani's efforts to endear himself with the Sangh parivar, relations with whom had turned frosty after his Pakistan visit, continued on Friday, with the BJP president donning the saffron robe again during his visit to Ayodhya, his first after the aborted bid by a gang of jihadis to storm the place. His daylong trip to Ayodhya, a town which provided the platform for the BJP's remarkable ascent to the top of the political ladder a little less than two decades ago, saw him making just the right noises about issues close to the Sangh parivar's ideological beliefs, including the Ram temple and Pota, the NDA enacted anti-terror law which has now been scrapped by the UPA government.

It also saw the BJP president having a chance-meeting with Ashok Singhal, president of the VHP, which has launched a vicious campaign against Mr Advani for the ideological infidelity displayed by him during his week-long trip to Pakistan.

Mr Singhal, who is in the fore-



front of this campaign, ran into the BJP chief as he made his way into Karsewakpuram to address a party meeting. The two leaders greeted each other before going their way.

In his speech at Karsewakpuram, Mr Advani, who appears to be on a course-correction drive to mend fences with the RSS and its affiliates, emphasised all those things which would please the Hindu-minded. Besides flaying the Manmohan Singh government for repealing Pota, thereby rendering the country vulnerable to more such terror-strikes,

he harped on the temple issue, asserting that it was "back in the minds of the people."

"It is my charge that by scrapping Pota, the central government has sent a message that it could compromise on terrorism. This perception must be removed," Mr Advani told the gathering, which had a fair sprinkling of VHP activists. He was accompanied by party colleagues Kalyan Singh, Sushma Swaraj, Rajnath Singh and Uma Bharti. "This issue has remained dormant in the past many years because of various factors. It's

the terrorists who have again resurrected it and brought it back to the minds of the people of the country," he added. When asked whether the government should share deep anguish of the Hindus over the incident, Advani replied, "I would say the whole country, this is an occasion when we should basically think about the Ram temple and the intense desire of crores of people. That's what I feel". Efforts should be made, Mr Advani added, to resolve the issue in an atmosphere of coordination and cooperation.

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The Economic Times

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# অন্ধ্রে মুসলিমদের জন্য ৫%

## সংরক্ষণ চাকরি ও শিক্ষায়

হায়দরাবাদ, ৯ জুলাই (পি টি আই)— অন্ধ্রে সরকারি চাকরিতে এবং শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানে মুসলিমদের জন্য ৫ শতাংশ সংরক্ষণ চালু হচ্ছে। অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশই দেশের প্রথম রাজ্য, যেখানে সংখ্যালঘুদের জন্য এই ধরনের সংরক্ষণ চালু হচ্ছে। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী রাজশেখর রেড্ডি আজ এই সিদ্ধান্তের কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন। এই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগে এবং পরে বি জে পি ও সম্মত পরিবারের তুমুল ক্ষোভ সামলাতে হয়েছে তাঁকে। বি জে পি-র মতে, ভোটের রাজনীতি ও সংখ্যালঘু-তোষণের স্বার্থেই এই সংরক্ষণ। ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে চাকরি এবং শিক্ষায় সংরক্ষণ চালু করে অন্ধ্র এক বিপজ্জনক নজির গড়ল। রাজ্য-রাজ্যে এবার প্রতিক্রিয়া শুরু হবে। বি জে পি-র হাতে বড় অস্ত্র তুলে দিলেও, সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে রেড্ডি জানিয়েছেন, তাঁর সরকার নির্বাচনী প্রতিশ্রুতি পালন করেছে। ইস্তাহারে বলা হয়েছিল, কংগ্রেস ক্ষমতায় এলে মুসলিমদের জন্য সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করবে। অর্থাৎ পরিষ্কার ভাষায় জনতার দরবারে সব কিছুই জানিয়েছিলেন তাঁরা। এর পর প্রতিশ্রুতি রূপায়ণে বাধা কোথায়? রেড্ডি বলেছেন, অন্ধ্রে মোট জনসংখ্যার ৯.২ শতাংশ মুসলিম। সব

মিলিয়ে ওঁদের সংখ্যা প্রায় ৭০ লক্ষ। সামাজিক, অর্থনৈতিক ও শিক্ষার দিক থেকে পিছিয়ে রয়েছেন ওঁরা। ওঁদের উন্নয়নের কথা কংগ্রেস সরকারকে ভাবতেই হবে। বি জে পি যথারীতি তীব্র ক্ষোভ জানিয়ে বলেছে, এই পদক্ষেপ সংবিধান-বিরোধী। অনগ্রসর শ্রেণীর উন্নয়ন কমিশনের রিপোর্ট নিয়ে গত মাসে বিধানসভায় তুমুল ঝড় বয়ে যায়। শেষ পর্যন্ত অবশ্য প্রস্তাবটি গৃহীত হয়। অন্ধ্রে চাকরি ও শিক্ষায় এখন মোট সংরক্ষণের পরিমাণ দাঁড়াল ৫১ শতাংশ। সুপ্রিম কোর্ট কিন্তু সংরক্ষণের উর্ধ্বসীমা বেঁধে দিয়েছিল। সুপ্রিম কোর্ট বলেছিল, উর্ধ্বসীমা কখনওই ৫০ শতাংশের বেশি হতে পারবে না। অন্ধ্র সরকার এর জবাবে বলেছে, তফসিলি জাতি, তফসিলি উপজাতি, অনগ্রসর শ্রেণী ও মুসলিমরা মিলিতভাবে রাজ্যের মোট জনসংখ্যার ৭৭ শতাংশ। ওঁদের প্রত্যেকের জন্য আনুপাতিক হারে সংরক্ষণ করতে গিয়ে ৫১ শতাংশ দাঁড়িয়েছে। এতে আদালতের নির্দেশ অগ্রাহ্য করা হয়নি বলেই সরকার মনে করে। অন্য দিকে, মুসলিমদের জন্য আলাদা বিমা চালুর কথা ভাবছে জীবনবিমা কর্পোরেশন। এই বিমার পরিকল্পনা নিয়ে চিন্তা-ভাবনা করছে তারা।

10 JUL 2005

AAJKAL

# A peep into the mind of Mohammed Ali Jinnah

Shankar Bajpai

**I**N VIEW of the recent controversy over Mohammed Ali Jinnah's beliefs and motives in the creation of Pakistan, the following documentary record of what he said to an objective observer in April 1940, hardly two weeks after the passing of the Lahore Resolution, may be of public interest.

Girja Shankar Bajpai is not a name many will know today, but his remarkable career made him a prominent figure once. A civil servant by profession, setting several records, he was as skilled in debates in the legislature as he was in diplomacy. He was the first Secretary-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prime Minister Nehru retained him as long as health permitted as his principal foreign affairs adviser, although his clear-eyed realism led to strong disagreements.

What Bajpai did is relevant here in that he had a rare rapport with the leaders of the nationalist movements. His affinities and associations were closest with the likes of Sapru, Jayakar, Setalvad, Chintamani — the so-called Liberals who, alas, could not bring themselves to indulge in the rough and tumble of politics — but he was equally at home with Bhulabhai Desai, K.M. Munshi, Satyamurti, and Bidhan Roy. In 1940, Bajpai was one of the six Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, the colonial version of a Cabinet.

The Viceroy was Linlithgow, whose main interest, agriculture, reinforced a bovine indifference to political climates. In a rare moment of initiative, he thought he would bring in some additional members from public life. In the spring of 1940, the disasters of war had not yet overtaken Britain, and Linlithgow's inadequacies had added to the confusion about what the nationalists could expect by way of progress towards self-government. Bajpai suggested some steps, and was asked to sound out the opinion among his contacts. The meeting with Jinnah happened in that context.

Jinnah's masterly ambiguity about the nature and make-up of Pakistan has led some analysts,

“Mr. Jinnah said that no solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem could be entirely free from risks.”

including some observers at the time, to argue it was a bargaining chip. His famous remark about getting a “moth-eaten, truncated Pakistan” no less than the “secularism” of his Pakistan Constituent Assembly speech about Hindus and Muslims ceasing to be Hindus and Muslims in the state's eyes (which is deleted in official Pakistani versions) would indicate that he had wanted something different from what emerged. However, that will always be debatable. That he was ready for the Balkanisation of India is the main point of the conversation reproduced here.

Jinnah had made himself a skilful politician — and politics is about power. The whole thrust of his efforts was to secure equal power for unequal groups, and he used religion for that purpose. Would a different result have been obtained had he been handled differently? We can keep speculating on that too. All that is certain is that neither side got what it strove for, and we are all still coping with the consequences. The following is a reproduction of what Girija Shankar Bajpai wrote after one of his meetings with Jinnah:

**“Note of a conversation with Mr. Jinnah — 18-4-1940:”**

“Yesterday I made a friendly call on Mr. M. A. Jinnah whom I have known since my student days in England. He had come to know the previous day of my impending visit to Bombay and had extended an invitation to tea which I promptly accepted.

“2. I was with him for an hour and three quarters, practically all the time in the role of a listener. I have never known Mr. Jinnah suffer from diffidence. The impression he gave me yesterday was that he felt himself to be on the “top of the world.” Doubtless the volume and unanimity of applause that he received during the

recent session of the Muslim League at Lahore had contributed to this sense of exaltation.

“3. Mr. Jinnah's main topic was the proposal to Balkanise India which the League, under his leadership, has now publicly adopted as its goal. He began by emphasising his initial prejudice to the idea of breaking up India into separate Sovereign States, a prejudice which, he added, had lasted for many years and which had only been overcome finally, during the last few weeks, as the result of concentrated and detached thinking. What he had looked upon as a day-dream when the late Sir Mohd. Iqbal commended it to Indian Muslims was now, of course with the improvements that he had introduced, the only logical and practical solution of the Indian problem. Muslims, he claimed, represented a distinct religious and social entity and could never tolerate the idea of Hindu domination. Such domination, he continued, must be an essential feature of an All-India Federation.

“India was more comparable to Europe than to any other political unit. If the political unity of Europe was a mere dream, how could it be anything else in the case of India? A unity inspired by sincere allegiance to common ideals was quite out of the question for a sub-continent with so many heterogeneous nationalities as Muslims, Hindus of Aryan origin and Hindus of Dravidian stock. The Muslim claim for separate States was similar to that of the Telugus in South India, who want a separate linguistic province of their own; if the latter was legitimate, why should the former be looked upon as inimical to Indian interests? In fact, he said that as early as 1917, the late Mr. C. R. Das had put forward the idea of a separate Dominion of Bengal.

“4. It is not a feature of the scheme of separate States as expounded by Mr. Jinnah that the

Muslim minorities such as those which exist in Bihar and the United Provinces should migrate to those provinces where Muslims are in a majority. He concedes that, in the proposed separate Sovereign States, there would be Hindu and Muslim minorities. But he has persuaded himself that, so long as there are certain States where the Muslims control not merely internal administration but such matters as Defence, Communications and Commerce, in brief all those subjects which would otherwise be federal, Muslims will have a consciousness of political power, independent and complete, without which their aspirations and historical sentiments would never be satisfied. Mr. Jinnah also argued that the idea of a separate Sovereign State would also simplify the problem of fitting Indian States into the fragmented India of his conception. Mr. Jinnah has, however, the following “concessions” in mind vis-à-vis His Majesty's Government:

“(a) That the conglomeration of Sovereign States which India, if divided, would constitute, should remain within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

“(b) That the transfer of Defence should be a slow process, extending, possibly, over 40 or 50 years.

“(c) That this transfer should be effected, not to the legislature of any of the proposed Sovereign States, but to their Executives.

“5. Mr. Jinnah's attitude towards the Congress may be summed up as follows:

“(i) A profound distrust of Mr. Gandhi. With bitter but vivid reminiscence he described how, on several occasions in the past, Mr. Gandhi had frustrated all of Mr. Jinnah's constructive efforts to advance India on the path of Dominion Status. Mr. Jinnah could no longer treat the Mahatma as a sane leader.

“(ii) An arrogant contempt for the Congress High Command. He described the majority of them as a collection of “crooks.”

“6. Mr. Jinnah averred a ready desire to come to an arrangement with non-Congress Hindus, but pointed out the impossibility of doing so while these elements lacked both cohesion and effective leadership.

“7. The arguments against Mr. Jinnah's scheme of dismembering India are both numerous and conclusive. The most important of these, that is, that if Muslim sentiment was as vitally and fiercely opposed to Hindu hegemony as he contended, the creation of separate States, in some of which, on his own admission, Muslims would be in a minority, would only inaugurate a series of wars between predominantly Hindu and Muhammadan States, I casually mentioned to him. Mr. Jinnah admitted the danger but said that no solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem could be entirely free from risks. The other arguments I did not attempt to formulate, as I thought it more prudent to listen than to discuss.

“8. It remains to be seen how Mr. Jinnah will react to the declarations made in Parliament yesterday by the spokesmen of almost all parties against the League's demand for separate Muslim States. To a man in whom pride takes the form of a greater and greater persistence in error, the more the error of a course chosen and commended by him is exposed, the declarations will probably serve as an affront and, consequently, a stimulus, at least to an even more ardent public advocacy of his plan. I learnt from other quarters, however, that Mr. Jinnah's newly born fervour for a Muslim Pakistan is no more than a rejoinder to extreme Congress claims and that, if some method could be devised to secure, both in the provinces and at the Centre, an effective infusion of true representatives of Muslim opinion a Balkanised India may lose most of its present attraction, even for him.”

Sd. By G. S. Bajpai  
Member, Viceroy's Executive Council & sent to Viceroy  
19-4-1940”

(Shankar Bajpai, Girija Shankar Bajpai's son, was India's Ambassador to the United States, China, and Pakistan. He is a Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley.)

## CARTOONSCAPE

