

T01- 10/10/2003

CONVERSATIONS WITH READERS

Muslim Front

This refers to Shrikant Bhat's letter ('Secular Front, Oct 8) on the formation of a new front called Muslims for a Secular Democracy (MSD) by Javed Akhtar and Javed Anand. Mr Bhat writes, "Secularism means nothing more than the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of religion." The trouble with Mr Akhtar and Mr Anand is that they are for the elimination of religion itself. They have every right to their brand of 'Marxist fundamentalism' but what gives them the right to point fingers at 'Muslim fundamentalism', especially if they are now joining a Muslim front? They can't have their cake and eat it.

Ghulam Muhammed, via e-mail

II

It was heartening to learn that a national alliance called Muslims for a Secular Democracy has been formed to call the bluff of fundamentalist mullahs and to review core issues like population control and the use of loudspeakers for azaans. The attempt

is hailworthy and one hopes it will reduce the bitterness between the majority and minority communities.

-D.P. Chakraborty, Mumbai

III

The formation of a liberal front of Muslims on Gandhi Jayanti is a good sign. To begin with, the Shahi Imam should be ostracised for saying that he does not regret 9\11. The paucity of resistance to hate-filled and bigoted leaders exists in most religions. Christianity has its share of narrow-minded bigots and Hinduism has similar champions as well. But it is to the credit of the Hindus in general that they do not normally react violently to criticism. One does not hear of 'fatwas' being issued against those who dissent.

Let us not remain silent spectators when our religious leaders make statements filled with hatred and intolerance. Our country's and our children's future depend on us.

-Dr Thomas Kuruvilla, Mumbai

IV

The MSD should take up issues like modernising madrassas. For instance, the glorification of historical figures like Aurangzeb, Babar and Mohammed Ghazni should stop, as was suggested by the great freedom-fighter, socialist and Gandhian Dr Ram Manohar Lohia. If Hitler's atrocities can be condemned not only by Jews and non-Germans but by Germans as well, there is no reason why Aurangzeb should not be condemned by Muslims. In any case, it is not as if Aurangzeb or Babar are the ancestors of today's Muslims.

-B.B. Khot via e-mail