

Year 2002

Vajpayee Doublespeak

### 'GUJARAT BOOSTED SECULARISM DEBATE'

December 26 2002

Source: The Pioneer

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee feels that the energy that had erupted in Gujarat needs to be properly channelised. He also thinks that the Gujarat outcome will help the nation understand secularism in the proper perspective.

**"Ab Shabdon ke sahi aarth lagaye ja rahe hain,"** Mr Vajpayee said in an interview with Hindi daily Dainik Bhaskar, hinting that the true meaning of these words was being understood now. **"Secularism had become a slogan. No attempt was being made to probe what the real form of secularism should be. It was not being debated. Little wonder, we remain fiercely secular for 364 days and launch an election campaign from temples on the 365th day,"** he remarked.

**"Unhe Deviji ke mandir mein puja karke abhiyan chalane mein koi aapatti nahin hoti,"** Mr Vajpayee quipped. He was probably taking a dig at Congress President Sonia Gandhi who had launched her election campaign in Gujarat after offering puja at Ambaji temple. He burst into laughter when asked if his Government, too, was surviving because of "Deviji", hinting that he faced no real threat from the Opposition as long as Mrs Sonia Gandhi remained the Congress president.

Asked if the Gujarat episode would help him keep the country united, Mr Vajpayee said, **"Ye jo urja nikali hai, use santulit rakhna hoga. Aur ise is yukti se nirman mein lagana hoga jisase hamare jeewan ke jo mulya hain, unki rakhsa ho sake (The energy that has been generated should be kept in balance. And this should be used in a manner which would help us preserve the values of our life)."**

Asked how people like Togadia could be taken along and whether that wasn't a difficult task, the Prime Minister expressed the hope that everybody would cooperate. Replying to another question, he ruled out any ministerial reshuffle in the immediate future. In the course of the interview, he touched on a range of issues, including the judiciary and disinvestment. To a question on some cases of corruption in the judiciary coming to light, Mr Vajpayee said the Government was contemplating measures to ensure that the judiciary discharged its functions properly. "We always thought that corruption would never enter the judiciary but as some reports in this regard are coming to light, the Government will take

necessary steps," he said. If necessary, the Constitution would be amended, he assured, adding that discussions were also underway to set up a National Judicial Commission.

On disinvestment, Mr Vajpayee said there were some problems but he did not consider them insurmountable. He added that taking everyone along in a coalition government made it difficult for the BJP-led NDA Government to take "hard decisions". "But, at the same time, the NDA Government has completed three years in office successfully and it has been able to tell its constituents that the future of the country is safe in its hands," he said. On media reports of problems being posed for the Government by the BJP allies and the Sangh Parivar, Mr Vajpayee said he was "more disturbed about the stories than the internal squabbles".

### Secularism defined correctly after Gujarat polls: PM

**December 26 2002**

**Source: Rediff on the net**

The real face of secularism came out in the open after the recent elections in the Gujarat, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said on Wednesday.

The Gujarat elections will not change the national political scenario, but concepts like secularism were now being defined correctly, Vajpayee said. He made these remarks in an interview to the Dainik Bhaskar daily on the occasion of his 78th birthday.

He said secularism had always remained a slogan and its meaning and definition was never really debated.

### Muslims are not repentant for Godhra: Vajpayee

**December 18, 2002**

**Source: Rediff on the net**

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Tuesday asked the Narendra Modi government in Gujarat to ensure the safety of the lives, properties and dignity of all the people, but insisted that the Muslims were still not 'repentant' for the Godhra carnage pointing to their lack of unequivocal condemnation of the incident.

**"Why didn't many people of the Muslim community condemn the Godhra incident? Even today, there is no repentance that we committed a mistake or that this should not have happened and that it was a crime," Vajpayee said while addressing the BJP parliamentary party meeting in Delhi.**

**"But we have to live together. Now, we have to take the responsibility of keeping everyone together. We have got a majority in Gujarat and we are also in power at the Centre. We have to protect the life, property and dignity of all and build a nation without any discrimination," he said.**

Vajpayee advised Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi to make a new

beginning by carrying along even all those who opposed the BJP.

### PM stands for Prime Minister & Praising Modi

December 09 2002

Source: The Indian Express

Vadodara, Jamnagar, December 7: GODHRA, Akshardham and "Miya Musharraf" took a backseat today as Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi shared the stage with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on his first campaign stop in the state.

In fact, wearing his Prime Ministerial hat, Vajpayee seemed to have nudged aside the Hindutva card, leaving it for Modi and other BJP leaders as the poll campaign enters its crucial last stretch.

So in Jamnagar, with Modi looking visibly uncomfortable, Vajpayee held forth on the importance of unity in diversity. **"This country has honoured this culture since thousands of years. We have been taught that God is one but there are different ways to go near him. Everyone's feelings should be honoured. There cannot be politics based on religion. We want everyone to have equal rights and it is our kartavya to honour this,"** he said.

Earlier, in Vadodara, his first stop-where the crowd was more responsive to Modi than to Vajpayee-he said that elected MLAs would choose their leader. This was in direct contrast to Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani's line that Modi would be the Chief Minister.

It was here that the first veiled rebuffs to Modi came. Speaking first, the Chief Minister urged people "to keep awake on December 12 and vote-or be ready to lose sleep for the next five years." Before the PM's speech, Modi left the stage claiming that he had to make arrangements for the next stop in Jamnagar.

Referring to this, Vajpayee took a dig at the Chief Minister: **"I don't think there's any need for me to speak after Modi's speech...Main unka advocate hoon aur unke mamle ki pairvi karna meri farz hai." (As his advocate, it's my duty to plead his case.) If he had been here, I had a few arguments for him."**

Vajpayee then told people not to follow Modi's "advice on sleep" adding they should always remain vigilant. The PM, who is known to have expressed his displeasure over the way Modi handled Godhra's aftermath, skirted the issue confining himself to: **"I am happy at the prevailing peace in Gujarat after a spell of unfortunate events."**

### Vajpayee to VHP : Honour EC Ban on Religious Processions

November 16, 2002

[Source: The Hindustan Times]

Clearly addressing the VHP, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee on Friday asked **"all organisations" to honour the Election Commission (EC) ban on religious processions in Gujarat. In a statement, Vajpayee said, "Godhra, along with its aftermath, should not be made into an election issue in the coming state assembly polls."**

The Prime Minister also took the unusual step of inviting a television crew to Race Course Road to get his message across.

### VHP rejects PM's plea, to go ahead with yatra

November 16 2002

Source: **The Deccan Herald**

DH News Service Ahmedabad/ NEW DELHI, Nov 15

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in Ahmedabad today brushed aside Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's appeal not to go ahead with its controversial "yatra" and said it would go ahead with the march from Sunday with a replica of the S-6 coach in which 58 people were burnt to death...In New Delhi, backing the Election Commission's decision to ban the yatra and the Gujarat Government's refusal of permission to the VHP, Mr Vajpayee issued a statement in which he appealed to "all organisations" to honour the constitutional authority's directive and help the State administration in discharging its duty. He also disagreed with the **BJP's criticism of the EC decision. Replying to a question by "Aaj Tak" television channel, Mr Vajpayee said: "On the face of it, the decision might look wrong but given the circumstances in Gujarat, the ban order is correct."** The prime minister said **Godhra violence and subsequent communal violence should not be made an election issue.**

Mr Vajpayee asked the parties to debate development issues and not the ones that will inflame passions and vitiate the atmosphere. Meanwhile, VHP international general secretary Pravin Togadiya, sharply reacting to Vajpayee's statement, said in Ahmedabad: **"We are ready to face any consequences. We will go ahead with it and there is no change in the yatra programme."** Referring to Mr Vajpayee's advice not to make Godhra a poll issue, the VHP leader retorted: **"Godhra is the heart of Hindutva and it was impossible to forget the gruesome Godhra carnage. "Godhra is the part of the issue. I expect the prime minister to safeguard the basic fundamental rights of Hindus and not to succumb to pressure from secular forces."**

### Vajpayee's last chance

November 01, 2002

Source: **The Hindustan Times**

The BJP and the government it heads could not have received a more comprehensive and damning moral, constitutional and political reprimand than the Supreme Court's judgment on the Election Commission's powers on Articles 174 and 324. The rebuff is especially humiliating because the BJP had staked all on an early election in Gujarat in which it would cynically exploit polarisation and insecurity following independent India's worst communal pogrom. More generally and importantly, the verdict is a severe indictment of the policy of generalised confrontation and intimidation adopted by the BJP towards the vital institutions of our parliamentary democracy. Rather than gracefully defer to a statutory authority, the party launched a slander campaign against the EC. It stooped to accusing J.M. Lyngdoh of bias for the opposition, in particular the Congress, by virtue of his Christian parentage! This was a nauseating invocation of the kind of crass primordialism one associates with groups like the VHP and the Bajrang Dal which remain unreconciled to the dawning of the Modern Epoch, leave alone the re-foundation of India on a pluralist-secular constitutional basis half-a-century ago.

**The government's and the BJP's arguments in court were shocking. They audaciously claimed that Gujarat has fully regained normalcy and the minorities feel totally safe under the ever-compassionate Narendra Milosevic Modi. The media has decisively nailed this lie. Now the EC itself says as many as 400,000 Muslims have fled Gujarat altogether and 224,000 remain untraced. These are huge numbers by any standards. The episode sheds new light on the quality of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's leadership. Vajpayee was known to be unhappy about aggressively challenging the EC through a constitutional reference. But he capitulated to the hardliners. He is now hoist with his own petard. This caving-in follows a pattern that has repeated itself and progressively eroded Vajpayee's power and authority. As early as March 1998, Vajpayee let the RSS veto his appointment of finance minister, signalling his weakness. Later that year, the Bajrang Dal-VHP launched their vile anti-Christian campaign. Instead of condemning it and prosecuting the communal thugs, Vajpayee called for a 'national debate' on conversion. Graham Staines' barbaric killing followed. In Gujarat, the VHP further tightened its grip on the BJP.**

**The period 1999-2001 saw countless instances when Vajpayee allowed his RSS loyalties - remember "Sangh is my soul"? - prevail over his duties as prime minister of secular India. He allowed the hawkish L.K. Advani to veto an agreed India-Pakistan draft at Agra, let Bal Thackeray blackmail the public over his arrest for his self-confessed role in the 1993 Mumbai violence, delivered his "India-of-my-dreams" Staten Island speech, and endorsed the ultra-sectarian Ramjanmabhoomi campaign as a "national movement".** In such instances, Vajpayee yielded ground to his rival-competitors of the Hindutva Hard Right - at the expense of democratic norms, the law and the NDA's own agreed agenda. He let the communalists make deep inroads into the political space and shift the goalposts. Vajpayee thus beat a retreat from his ambitious goal to tame the BJP into a 'normal' conservative party a la Europe's Christian Democrats.

In 2002, even this deeply unflattering record has paled into insignificance. Early this year, the VHP launched a tub-thumping campaign on the Ayodhya temple. When the government tried to restrain it - it legally had to - it went berserk in Gujarat, as if in reaction. Godhra and the organised, State-sponsored violence that followed posed the greatest-ever dilemma for Vajpayee: bring Modi to heel and stop the butchery, or let barbarism prevail. In March, Vajpayee promised to do the first. But by April 12, the hardliners had the better of him. In Goa, he sang Modi's praises and abused Muslims in Hindutva's vile language, disgracing his office. Such concessions to the Hard Right have never strengthened Vajpayee, only prolonged his tenure. Within two months of Goa, the Hindutva Hard Right's prime candidate had become his deputy, eroding Vajpayee's USP as the BJP's only acceptable public face. Since then, a hot-cold war has raged in the cabinet, party and Sangh parivar, with all the major actors flexing muscles, hitting out and grabbing turf. Thus, Vajpayee has resisted passing the department of personnel and the National Security Council to Advani. Advani has refused to act as his firefighter within the party (which his nominees now largely control). The VHP has mounted a campaign to disempower and humiliate Vajpayee, through Brajesh Mishra as surrogate and through direct personal attacks. The swadeshi lobby too has bared its fangs. And Bal Thackeray has added his own venom by exhorting Hindus to form terrorist 'suicide-squads' - because the government cannot protect them. However, the RSS, their collective paterfamilias, has refused to intervene. It has declined to play its long-established role as the parivar's ideological mentor, organisational gatekeeper and ultimate arbiter of internal disputes. **The October 24 BJP-RSS meeting produced an uneasy, unequal truce - largely at Vajpayee's expense, although he put a brave face on it during his confidence-exuding speech the next day. In plain truth, the parivar's power balance has altered in favour of the VHP-RSS.** They have shifted the terms of discourse and the Centre-Right political terrain itself. They have ideological differences with the Vajpayee leadership. Worse, they are bent upon implementing their own agenda, however anti-consensual. They interfere with the day-to-day working of ministries, especially on postings and transfers. The hardliners are loath to play second fiddle to the BJP's parliamentary wing. They regard its leaders as wimps, lacking a commitment to Hindutva. Why, they regard them as outright usurpers. **They believe - not without reason - that it is they who put the BJP in power; without the Ayodhya campaign, it couldn't have grown meteorically from two to 89 seats, and so on.**

The BJP's leadership sees these men as a nuisance - politically naïve fanatics. But it lacks the stomach to deal with them upfront, through the law. It is these tensions - both contingent or short-term, and structural or long-term - that are at the root of the fierce power struggle in the BJP and the parivar. One reason for the fight's ferocity is the BJP's disastrous governmental performance. It has failed in every field - the economy, education, social policy, law and order, foreign policy, security.

This struggle's idiom is abuse, ethnic venom, hate-speech. The hate-speech

campaigners are dangerous Right-wingers, but not quite lunatics. They know what they want. Their methods are rational.

**Vajpayee's preferred, instinctive, awkward, way out of this siege is to deliver homilies about not forgetting the 'Gujarat violence' and maintaining 'decorum' and 'civilised language', and to counterpose one conservative agenda, disinvestment, to another, swadeshi. This latter is hardly the main economic issue confronting India. It is far more vital to address the two '65's - the \$ 65 billion in foreign reserves and 65 million tonnes in granaries, amidst rampant deprivation, joblessness and starvation deaths; and to get public finances in order.** Vajpayee can recover his dignity and strength only through purposive, firm action: apply hate-speech laws to the Hindutva fanatics, sack Modi as the BJP's main leader and chief campaigner in Gujarat, arrest and prosecute Thackeray, throw Togadia behind bars. As the Hard Right closes in on him, Vajpayee faces a choice: capitulate to rabid Hindutva and emasculate himself, or stand up for constitutional values and take on the fanatics. If he does the first, his tenure will abort in utter ignominy, throwing India into a vicious communal crisis. By following the second option, he will at least have tried to do something for Indian citizens - never mind Advani and other bigots.

### Atal blasts high priests of the West

November 01 2002

Source: The Pioneer

Emphasising India's nuclear doctrine of "minimum credible deterrence," Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Thursday called upon the "high priests of non-proliferation" to look around and tackle the "clandestine and illegal development and transfer of nuclear and missile technologies."

**"We have been transparent about our nuclear weapons programme and the reasons for our nuclear testing in May 1998 are well known,"** Mr Vajpayee said while addressing scientists at the foundation day function of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre here on Thursday. Mr Vajpayee told the advanced nuke nations that "instead of targeting countries which have played by the rules, they should tackle the illegal transfer of nuclear and missile technology."

Stating that "we have been denied technologies and products on the unfounded suspicion that they might be applied to a weapons programme," the Prime Minister added, "these technology-denial regimes have irritated us, they have retarded our progress."

"However, these denials did not stop us and brought out the best in us," Mr Vajpayee, who spent a day at the BARC, said. Mr Vajpayee also invited foreign nations to join in the nuclear power programme in India to realise the objective of reaching 20,000 MW by 2020 as "nuclear power is the most environment friendly

form of energy." Stating that "country's nuclear power programme has entirely different development objective", the Prime Minister said that every co-operation project in nuclear power would be open to international safeguards. Praising the country's nuclear

scientists, the Prime Minister said "our nuclear weapons programme was developed indigenously and did not violate any of India's international obligations". Hitting hard at the developed nations over objectives of Kyoto Protocol on climate change, Mr Vajpayee said: **"It is truly ironic that we are lectured on our moral obligations to clamp down on emission while being denied international technology co-operation for the alternative, which can achieve this without penalising our development."** He urged Indian scientists and engineers to continue on the path of innovation and invention, which have taken the country's atomic energy programme to this advanced stage. Mr Vajpayee hoped that the fast breeder reactor can be commercially exploited soon

### Vajpayee finds his voice

October 26, 2002

Source: **The Telegraph**

**"What happened in Gujarat cannot and must not be forgotten. Let us take a pledge that Gujarat will never be repeated,"** he said, addressing a rally at the Talkatora Stadium to mark three years of his government. In a clear message to Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and VHP leaders who had badmouthed the minorities, Sonia Gandhi and Brajesh Mishra lately, **Vajpayee said: "There is no place for violence or abusive language in politics." "One should not cross the limits of decency and decorum and only civilised language should be used,"** he said....

But it was the reference to deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani at the end of his speech which assured the gathering that the recent "illness" had not dulled Vajpayee's eloquence. Advani refused to speak despite being listed as a speaker and despite repeated requests from BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu and NDA convener George Fernandes. **Vajpayee said: "I was advised to speak less and I wanted Advani to speak. But he did not and that I am sure will make big news with headlines like Vajpayee aur Advani ke beech sangharsh (war between Vajpayee and Advani). But we have worked together in the past and will do so in the future."**

The context for this was the interpretation given to cancellation of a news conference in his constituency last Sunday. "I called off my Lucknow press conference because of a bad throat. But I did address a meeting later because it was pre-arranged. But when I opened the papers next day, what did I see? 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee flees Lucknow!' **Why should I flee Lucknow? It's my constituency, a place where I threw stones and had stones thrown at me. The press is free to write what it wants but I may not relish a headline like Lal Krishna Advani refuses to speak."**



### Vajpayee bias sermon to cops

**October 10, 2002**

**Source: The Telegraph**

New Delhi, Sept. 30: Wary of a communal backlash and aware that cops had earned a bad name after the Godhra riots, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee today appealed to the police force to act without bias and win the trust of all sections of society.

**"I appeal to you, the police leadership, to spare no pains in inculcating in your men a sense of duty for protecting communal harmony in the country. You should ensure that not even a small section of the police force gets carried away at a time of provocation," Vajpayee told a conference of police officers.**

He also warned the police not to allow politicians to dictate terms and stressed that the force must be "apolitical, neutral and free of sectarian, regional or any other kind of bias. They must consciously try to earn the trust of all sections of our society. In doing so, they not only become better policemen, but will also serve as a binding force to our diverse society".

### Gujarat events a shame: PM

**September 15 2002**

**Source: The Hindu**

NEW YORK Sept. 14. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has reiterated that the Gujarat riots were not a "good thing." Addressing members of the Indian community at a reception on Friday night, Mr. Vajpayee said that wherever he went, there was a discussion on Gujarat. The Gujaratis themselves said that they indulged in riots every two years, but this was "not good."

**"A situation should not be created at home which forces us to bow our heads in shame before others (abroad),"** Mr. Vajpayee said. In what was a distinct aside in his otherwise general speech on India and Indians living abroad, he sought to reinforce his "moderate" image in the light of the happenings in Gujarat.

Earlier, Mr. Vajpayee was told by a delegation of the American Federation of Muslims from India (AFMI) that there was need to ensure that India's secular, pluralistic status was not compromised. Attacking the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the AFMI chief, A. Rahman Nakerdar, said the authorities had allowed a "free hand" to killers and looters in Gujarat. **"We are disappointed with the Gujarat Government's handling of relief, rehabilitation and compensation for victims of the carnage. The process has been slow and discriminatory... Our aim in seeking this meeting was to request the Prime Minister to ensure the fullest and earliest rehabilitation."**

### Vajpayee: Gujarat riots embarrass me wherever I go, says Vajpayee

**September 15, 2002**

**Source: Rediff on the net**

Deploing the recent communal riots in Gujarat, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Friday admitted that wherever he went the killings in the state were mentioned.

**"A situation should not be created at home which forces us to bow our heads in shame before others [abroad],"** Vajpayee said while speaking at a reception hosted in his honour by Indian Ambassador to the US Lalit Mansingh. Seeing no justification for the Gujarat riots, Vajpayee said people of Gujarat would say riots were not a new phenomenon in the state, but "this is not good." Vajpayee, who was cheered repeatedly by non-resident Indians present at the reception, said there was political stability in the country and that this had come about because his National Democratic Alliance government had the capability to carry along with it a majority of the people..... **"What is needed is to understand the real face of terrorism," he said, adding the September 11 attack on New York's World Trade Centre had "touched everybody's heart..."**

[PTI]

### Violence in Gujarat an aberration: PM

**September 14 2002**

**Source: The Hindustan Times**

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said the recent communal violence in Gujarat was an "aberration" and that the situation there is "now under control".

The Gujarat events came up during Vajpayee's interaction with American Jewish leaders during when the Prime Minister said much "misunderstanding" has been spread about the state since the riots. **"What happened recently (in Gujarat) was an aberration. However, everything is now under control, things are normal,"** he said yesterday. Vajpayee said many foreigners have visited the state recently and could speak for themselves and make current judgements about the current situation.

In fact, different communities have been living together in Gujarat for centuries, he said, adding they have a history of tolerance in the State and this is the State that produced Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel.

### Vajpayee sends Goel to tick off Modi

**September 13 2002**

**Source: The Telegraph**

New Delhi, Sept. 12: Touched to the quick by Narendra Modi's provocative anti-Muslim tatements during the Gaurav Yatra, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee called from the US to ask minister of state Vijay Goel to meet the chief minister and tell him to stop being so brazen. Goel, who is minister of state in the PMO, met Modi in Ahmedabad on Tuesday and conveyed Vajpayee's message. He

was slated to visit Gandhidham in Kutch for an earthquake relief-related programme on September 11. But Vajpayee told the minister to reschedule his trip and meet Modi.

Sources close to the Prime Minister said they would "closely" watch the next leg of the Gaurav Yatra - which resumes on Saturday - to see if the warning has had an impact on Modi. Goel, who was in Mumbai today, said the chief minister had claimed he was "misquoted". Asked if he was convinced with Modi's explanation, the minister said: "If he says so, it must be true." Modi's description of the relief camps housing Muslim riot victims as "baby-manufacturing factories" was brought to Vajpayee's notice by his aides. The Prime Minister had left for the US the day after the Gaurav Yatra began.

### Vajpayee, Advani attend RSS programme

**August 08 2002**

**Source: The Deccan Herald**

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani and a host of Union Ministers, BJP Leaders and MPs today participated in the RSS' "Gurudakshina" programme at the residence of Minister of State for Home I D Swami.

At the ceremony, attended by Senior RSS functionaries Madan Das Devi, Sripati Shastri and Satyanarayan Bansal, the leaders offered "gurudakshina" to the RSS in envelopes deposited into an urn placed below the saffron flag of the Sangh. Prominent among those present were BJP President Venkaiah Naidu, Party Leader Arun Jaitley and Union Ministers Ram Naik, Pramod Mahajan, B C Khanduri, Vidyasagar Rao and Santosh Gangwar. BJD MP Prasanna Acharya was also present at the function.

The programme held around the "Vyas Poornima", featured a "baudhik" (discourse) by Shastri

### 'Homecoming' For Vajpayee

**June 20 2002**

**Source: The Telegraph**

New Delhi, June 19: In a feel-good message to the RSS, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said attending a function organised by the Sangh's Hindi mouthpiece Panchajanya was like "homecoming". Panchajanya

held a special function today to confer awards on "meritorious" journalists. Such a function has been held for the last three years at the Prime Minister's official residence, and the chief guest has been Vajpayee, of course. Vajpayee - who was Panchajanya's first editor - said: "**This is like homecoming for me.**"

Punning on present editor Tarun Vijay's name, he added: "**When I was tarun (a youth), I also edited Panchajanya.**" In yet another pun on the name of the venue - the conference hall at 7, Race Course Road which is called

Panchavati -he said: "Now Panchajanya has travelled all the way to Panchavati."

### PM Admits Adding A Word To Goa Speech

May 17 2002

Source: The Telegraph

New Delhi, May 16: Though Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee admitted he had interpolated a word in a portion of his speech in Goa, Speaker Manohar Joshi today rejected a privilege motion against him for allegedly misleading the Lok Sabha on a reference to Muslims.

In his notice, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi stated that Vajpayee, while seeking to clarify misgivings about certain portions of a public speech made by him in Goa, had stated on the floor of the House on May 1, **"What I said about Islam is as follows... Wherever such Muslims live, they tend not to mingle with others; instead of propagating their ideas in a peaceful manner, they want to spread their faith by resorting to terror and threats."**

Das Munshi claimed that in the video recording of Vajpayee's speech in Goa, the word "such" had not been used before the word "Muslims" and by this interpolation, an attempt was made to alter the meaning of the sentence.

While accepting the Speaker's verdict, the Congress claimed moral victory, saying Vajpayee had admitted to inserting a word "such" before "Muslims." In his clarification before the Speaker, Vajpayee, however, emphasised that the spirit of his speech had implied what he had stated in the Lok Sabha: that there were two types of Islam, one tolerant and the other jihadi. The Prime Minister further clarified that he meant no disrespect to Islam.

**Vajpayee told the Speaker that no one who read the entire Goa speech had any doubt that his reference was about followers of "militant Islam".**

**Vajpayee also pointed out that the PMO had issued a clarification on his behalf on April 14 and also released the text of his speech to the media with the necessary correction.**

**"It is this corrected version from which I read the relevant paragraphs while speaking on (the) Gujarat situation in the wee hours of May 1, 2002," he said.**

Joshi observed that he had received the clarification from Vajpayee. In his ruling, the Speaker said: "I am inclined to accept the clarification given by the Prime Minister. No question of privilege is, therefore, involved in the matter. The notice of Priya Ranjan Das Munshi is disallowed."

### No appeasement in name of secularism: Vajpayee

May 15 2002

Source: The Pioneer

**An aggressive Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Tuesday said,**

**appeasement cannot be pursued in the name of secularism. BJP is committed to secularism, however, it would not pursue the policy of appeasement, Mr Vajpayee said while speaking in the BJP parliamentary party.**

Though no details of the speech were provided, sources confirmed the Prime Minister having made the remark. The Prime Minister also stood firm on his Goa speech despite criticism

from a section of the Opposition. It seems he wants to convey the message that it was time when a clear differentiation was made among liberal Muslims and jihadi elements and that no efforts be made to defend the deeds of the latter in the name of secularism.

Mr Vajpayee reiterated that the country did not need lessons on secularism from others. India and its culture have always been secular and would remain so, he said.

Suggesting that the root of the Islamic fundamentalism was nearer home, the Prime Minister said, there was comparative peace in West Asian countries where the predominant religion was Islam. Temples and gurudwaras exist there, he said.

Sharing his experience, Mr Vajpayee said that when he asked a diplomat from these countries whether he could name a liberal Islamic group, the latter had no reply. Mr Vajpayee also clarified the speech made in Banaras that was allegedly attributed to him. He said that he never said that the party did not need Muslim votes.

### **Naidu meets Vajpayee, says Modi must go**

**May 11, 2002**

**Source: The Hindustan Times**

After the Telugu Desam's recent brush with the BJP on the Gujarat issue, party chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Friday to discuss the situation in the state. Naidu is believed to have repeated the demand for Chief Minister Narendra Modi's removal.

While refusing to reveal details of the talks he had with Vajpayee, Naidu said he had discussed various aspects of the Gujarat issue and expressed in full his views on the matter. He indicated that his party continued to disagree with the BJP over Gujarat and stuck to the stand it had taken during the debate on the recent Opposition-sponsored censure motion. "We raised four demands relating to Gujarat in the Lok Sabha. Since we were not satisfied with the government's response to those, we staged a walkout in protest," Naidu said. These demands included Modi's removal, postponement of Assembly elections, an end to violence and better rehabilitation measures.

Naidu's refusal to disclose details of the discussions, matched by a similar response from the PMO, indicated that both sides wished to avoid a further deterioration in relations by going public with their differences.

Naidu told reporters that his party would continue to extend issue-based support to the NDA Government. The meeting is significant given the speculation that Vajpayee is having second thoughts over Modi's fate.

### I am against Hindu militancy too: PM

**May 07 2002**

**Source: The Hindustan Times**

(New Delhi, May 6) The Prime Minister said in the Rajya Sabha that the Government considered the Gujarat violence a blot on the nation and would not hesitate to invoke Article 355 in the state.

The Prime Minister's statement comes a day after he said in Gwalior that there was no need to invoke the provision if the state government was working in concert with the Centre's directions.

Vajpayee clarified his Gwalior statement and said, **"I was asked whether notice was being given to the Gujarat government under Article 355 as promised by the government during the discussion. I said the debate is on in Parliament and in effect, it is a notice to the Gujarat authorities,"** he said.

### Religious violence underestimated: PM

**May 01 2002**

**Source: The Hindustan Times**

NEW DELHI, May 1 Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said on Wednesday his Government had failed to anticipate the widespread reprisals against Muslims in Gujarat after 59 Hindus were killed in late February.

Vajpayee's statement was the first by him since the communal riots to accept some responsibility for failing to anticipate the violence in Gujarat in which more than 900 people, have been killed.

**"Somehow we felt that the reaction to the Godhra incident would not be so gruesome,"** Vajpayee told Parliament referring to the torching of a train in Godhra in which the 59 were burned alive.

**"This is what we felt. It was wrong. I only realised how strong it was later,"** Vajpayee said at the end of a 16-hour debate on a censure motion over the Government's handling of the religious violence in the State.

### Vajpayee Equates Islam with Terrorism

**April 28, 2002**

**Source: The Milli Gazette**

Unprecedented outpouring, unbecoming of a prime minister Vajpayee equates Islam with terrorism A statement by the Indian prime minister equating Islam with

terrorism

continues to cause an unprecedented uproar in the Indian political life, especially among Muslims and secular circles. Vajpayee has been accused of having finally cast off his 'moderate' mask which he has carefully donned all these years to present an acceptable face of the Hindu extremists whose political party, the BJP, he leads.

The whole world heard Vajpayee say it live on TV on April 12 in Goa:

**'Jahan Jahan Musalman hain ghul milkar nahi rahte hain** (wherever there are Muslims they don't want to live in peace)'. And this was just the beginning.

Vajpayee went ahead with Muslim-bashing and added, **'Auron se ghulna milna nahi chahte. Shantipurna tarike se**

**parchar karne ke bajaye atankwad se dara dhamka kar apne mat ka parchar karna chahte hain** (They don't want to mix with others. Instead, they want to preach and propagate their religion by creating fear and terror in the minds of others).

Vajpayee dwelt at length on 'Islamic fundamentalism' in the countries he visited recently. He said: 'one version of Islam taught love, peace and compassion' while 'Islam today was being used for militancy and Jihad and trying to bring the world under its influence. **'Har jagah jahan Muslims**

**bahut sankhya mein rahte hain, unki chinta hai ki kahin Islam ugra rup na le**

**le** (wherever Muslims live in large numbers, the rulers apprehend that Islam can take an aggressive turn)' Vajpayee went on to say. As if even this was not enough, the prime minister of a country, which has 131.5 million Muslim population, tried to squarely blame Muslims for the on-going riots in Gujarat. Less than a fortnight ago Vajpayee himself had condemned the killings and the continued riots in Gujarat as a kalank (blot) on India's face. But now he says:

**'Gujarat mein kya hua? Agar Sabarmati na hota to jo hua who nahi hota**

(What happened in Gujarat? If the attack on Sabarmati [train] had not taken place, then what followed [anti-Muslim violence] would not have happened). Mr Vajpayee did condemn the aftermath of the train attack at Godhra but hastened to add: **Lekin aag lagai**

**kisne?** (But who started the fire?). It is the same theory what the Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi who is directly and indirectly involved in the massacres in the state has been advocating. Modi has all along been maintaining that the riots are a direct 'reaction' of what happened in Godhra. After the outcry at all levels inside and outside Parliament, Vajpayee took recourse to the time-tested trick of claiming that the media has quoted him 'out of context'.

Vajpayee and his spin-doctors now claim that his remarks were being misrepresented: 'It is projected as anti-Islam and anti-Muslim. A motivated propaganda, both within the country and internationally, is sought to be launched on the basis of such misrepresentation. My remarks

taken in totality contained nothing that is either against Islam or Muslims'

Vajpayee said in a press statement. Stating that in his speech in Goa he had drawn attention to two

contradictory streams in Islam, Vajpayee added in his press statement, 'I had

said Islam has two forms. One is that which tolerates others, which teaches its adherents to follow the path of truth, which preaches compassion and sensitivity.'

**'But these days militancy in the name of Islam leaves no room for tolerance. It has raised the slogan of Jihad. It is dreaming of recasting the entire world in its mould' he added.....**

### Vajpayee reveals his true colors

**April 28 2002**

**Source: CNN**

Vajpayee reveals his true colors

April 18, 2002 Posted: 10:08 PM HKT (1408 GMT)

By Mark Tully

(CNN) --

The communal violence in the western Indian state of Gujarat -- which is still continuing sporadically nearly eight weeks after it first broke out -- has cast doubts on the future of secularism in India.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, known to believe in moderation in politics, has now come out openly in support of the Hindu hardliners in his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These hardliners now seem determined to revive the campaign for a Hindu India.

Vajpayee has often been described as the mask, hiding the true nature of his Bharatiya Janata Party with its ambition to establish a Hindu India. For four years as leader, he has held that mask firmly in place but last weekend the mask slipped, or more accurately, he threw it away. There was nothing accidental about the hard-hitting speech he made at a rally during the party's National Executive meeting in Goa.

Vajpayee maintained that wherever there were Muslims in the world there was strife and suggested that Hindus had the right to decide the freedom to be allowed to other religions.

"We have allowed Hindus and Muslims to say their prayers," the Indian leader said.

### **Support for Modi**

He backed his party's support for Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, who has been widely criticized for failing to control the recent outbreak of Hindu-Muslim violence and to provide adequate relief for the displaced.

Gangs of Hindu rioters went on the rampage in Gujaray, killing hundreds of Muslims and razing buildings and homes in revenge attacks fuelled by the firebombing of a train carrying Hindu activists.

The activists were returning from a controversial site sacred to both Hindus and Muslims in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya.

They had been campaigning for the rebuilding of a Hindu temple on the site of a mosque torn down in 1992.

At least 59 Hindus were killed when several carriages of the train were torched



on February 27.

That attack sparked the worst sectarian violence in India for more than a decade, leaving around 800 people dead and thousands homeless. Vajpayee also backed the suggestion that Modi should dissolve the Gujarat State Assembly and go for an election. The BJP clearly believes that the attacks on Muslims, the killings, the rape, the burning and the looting will be popular with the Hindu electorate in Gujarat, and wants to hold an election before the anti-Muslim sentiment subsides.

No option

In taking this stand, Vajpayee knew he was threatening the survival of his government, so why did he throw away his mask? He had no option. Under his leadership the BJP has recently suffered a series of electoral disasters. Just before Goa, it was humiliated in local body elections in Delhi, once its stronghold.

These defeats have revived the long-running dispute within the party. On the one side, there have been those like Vajpayee who believe that an uncompromising Hindu agenda will never attract more than minority support. On the other side, the ideologues maintain that the only purpose of the party is to promote what they call Hindutva, arguing that the party always becomes weaker when it abandons or waters down its Hindu agenda. The evidence of recent elections left Vajpayee defenseless against the hardliners, so he had to back them when he faced his party in Goa.

Turning point?

After Goa, Indians were asking whether this was a turning point in their history. Has the country got its first Prime Minister who is prepared to be blatantly pro-Hindu? Is there going to be an election in Gujarat openly fought on communal lines? If so and the BJP wins, will it decide to go it alone in other parts of the country fighting elections with campaigns which provoke hatred of Muslims?. Ten years ago Indians were also asking whether the secularism which had been the guiding principle of the constitution since independence had gone for good.

The question was provoked by the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya and the communal violence that erupted in its wake. But secularism was restored and the Vajpayee line prevailed in the BJP.

Temporary phenomenon

So it's tempting to forecast that Gujarat and its aftermath will also prove to be a temporary phenomenon. Already Vajpayee is claiming to have been misunderstood, and if he is to hold his coalition together he can not allow the temperature to remain at fever level.

The BJP seems to be having second thoughts about holding an immediate election in Gujarat.

But even if the Cassandras are proved wrong that does not mean the wounds of Gujarat will heal.

Muslims' confidence in Indian secularism has been shaken again. Until the majority of Hindus make it absolutely clear that they are determined to live up to

the Indian tradition of equal respect for all religions, there will be no antidote to the communal poison being spread by some leaders of both communities.

### 'Had House promptly flayed Godhra carnage, Gujarat would not have taken place'

April 18 2002

Source: The Pioneer

'Had House promptly flayed Godhra carnage, Gujarat would not have taken place'

Rana Ajit/New Delhi

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Wednesday said that had Parliament "promptly and unequivocally" condemned the Godhra carnage, subsequent developments would not have taken place. **"Had the Lok Sabha disapproved whatever happened in Gujarat on February 27... the way Sabarmati Express was attacked, there perhaps would not have been a spate of violent incidents in the State,"** said the Prime Minister, adding that "not that Parliament did not disapprove it, but it didn't do so strongly and unequivocally."

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee holds up one of the books released by Vice-President Krishan Kant (not in the picture) on the occasion of the 75th birthday of former Prime Minister Chandrashekhar in the Capital on Wednesday

- Alwin Singh/Pioneer

Mr Vajpayee made these remarks at a function at Vigyan Bhawan in the Capital organised to felicitate former Prime Minister Chandrashekhar on his 75th birthday.

### Vajpayee clarifies remarks on Muslims

April 15 2002

Source: The Hindustan Times

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday expressed surprise at the "baseless and misinformed criticism" of his speech at a public meeting in Goa on Friday and said it contained nothing that is either against Islam or Muslims.

In a statement, he said, **"It is projected as anti-Islam and anti-Muslim. A motivated propaganda both within the country and internationally is sought to be launched on the basis of such representation. My remarks taken in totality contained nothing that is either against Islam or Muslims,"** he said.

The PM said he had drawn attention to two contradictory streams in Islam. **"I had said Islam has two forms. One is that which tolerates others, which teaches its adherents to follow the path of truth, which preaches compassion and sensitivity."**

**"But these days, militancy in the name of Islam leaves no room for tolerance. It has raised the slogan of jihad. It is dreaming of recasting the entire world in its mould. "**

The Prime Minister said in pointing out these two divergent facets of Islam, "I

**have not said anything new or different from what numerous perceptive observers, including many devout and concerned Muslims around the world, have already said."**

He clarified he had said in his speech that India was a multi-religious but secular nation, which gives its citizens the right to follow their faith freely.

### Riots were planned: UK mission

**April 15 2002**

**Source: The Hindustan Times**

Riots were planned: UK mission  
Saurabh Shukla  
(New Delhi, April 14)

**The British High Commission in the Capital has reported to the British Foreign Office in London** that the continuing violence in Gujarat is aimed at removing Muslim influence from parts of the state. **Significantly, the report, prepared by three British diplomats who recently toured the affected areas, placed the death toll at around 2,000.** The figure - arrived at from information shared by civil rights groups, victim families and state police officials - is more than **double the official death toll of 850.**

In terms of India's international image, the report does the most damage by stating that the post-Godhra violence in Gujarat was pre-planned. If the Sabarmati Express tragedy hadn't happened, another flashpoint would have been created to justify pre-meditated violence as reaction, the report says. And all this, according to the report, will affect foreign investment in India.

**The number of people rendered homeless has been reported as 1,40,000 (1,00,000 Muslims and 40,000 Hindus). Conditions in relief camps, the report says, are miserable.**

**Extremely critical of the Sangh Parivar's role, the report identifies the VHP and Bajrang Dal as the main instruments for realising the ghettoisation of the Muslims. The High Commission's team to Gujarat was led by Peter Holland, First Secretary in the Mission's Political Section.** They were assigned the fact-finding task after a British national of Indian origin was burned to death, and two of his family went missing. The report was sent to the British Foreign Office in London on Friday.

Though there is no official word on the report from the UK mission, sources said that it endorsed broadly the media reports on the carnage while noting that the state bureaucracy was now busy covering up its acts of omission.

The team also observed that in some areas, the police had been specifically instructed not to act, while in some others, the force was communally polarised and looked the other way without any prompting by political bosses.

The report also questions the discrimination between the amount paid as

compensation to victims/ next of kin of the Godhra tragedy and the subsequent riots.

It also says that minority establishments and property were specially targeted by the rioting mobs in most places.

### 'Biggest Sinner Vajpayee To Blame For Gujarat Carnage' -

April 15, 2002

Source: [The Asian Age](#)

Sri Jagatguru Swamy Adhukar Shajanand Dev Teerthji Maharaj, a rival claimant to the Puri Shankaracharya's throne, on Sunday criticised Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's handling of the Gujarat carnage and branded him the biggest sinner among all those inflicting communal injuries on minorities. Squarely blaming Mr Vajpayee for the mass destruction of lives and property of Muslims in Gujarat, the swamy said what happened in Gujarat was not because of communal riots but carnage unleashed in a well-planned move by the RSS, VHP and other communal forces with the support of the government machinery.

Addressing a large gathering at a national-level convention on communal harmony organised by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, the swamy said that instead of taking stern action against Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and initiating effective steps to rehabilitate the victims, restore normalcy and gain confidence of the minorities, Mr Vajpayee is shamelessly backing the "undoings" of the Gujarat government.

**"Vajpayee sabse bada paapi hai. Woh girgit ki tarah rang badalta hai. Sangh Parivar ka agenda implement karne ke liye. Vajpayee koi nachne-gaane wala nahin hai, na hi koi nautanki ka leader hai, woh to Hindustan ka pramukh hai aur logon ki zindagi ki hifazat karna uski zimmedari hai," the swamy said.** The swamy added that Mr Vajpayee may have been elected Prime Minister of the country through democratic process, but we "dharmic groups (religious scholars and leaders)" do not accept him as the pramukh (Prime Minister)

of the country. Political leaders like Mr Vajpayee and all those RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal leaders should stop indulging in communal based politics, he said. **"We (dharmic people) are here to take care of the religion and politicians should concentrate and confine themselves to developmental activities like providing employment, food, clothing and shelter to the citizens," the swamy said.**

### [My Speech On Muslims Was Misinterpreted, Says Vajpayee](#)

April 15 2002

Source: [The Asian Age](#)

New Delhi, April 14 Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday claimed that his speech at a public meeting in Goa was misinterpreted and added he had said nothing against Islam or Muslims.

Mr Vajpayee gave his clarification at the meeting of the National Democratic Alliance partners at his residence late on Sunday night. "I am surprised and pained by the baseless and misinformed criticism of my speech at a public meeting in Goa on Friday," he said in a written statement which was released to the press after the meeting. **The Prime Minister expressed surprise that he is praised as a "secular leader" when he condemns intolerance in Hindutva, but is criticised as a "communal leader" when he highlights negative aspects of militant Islam. "Such double standards do no good to a healthy debate on what is true secularism and what is in the interest of our nation and the world," he said.** Clarifying that his speech, which was televised by major news channels, contained nothing "either against Islam or against Muslims," the Prime Minister said that his remarks had to be taken in their totality. Mr Vajpayee claimed that he had drawn attention to two contradictory streams in Islam. **"I had said, 'Islam has two forms. One is that which tolerates others, which teaches its adherents to follow the path of trust, which preaches compassion and sensitivity. But these days, militancy in the name of Islam leaves no room for tolerance, It has raised the slogan of jihad. It is dreaming of recasting the entire world in its mould'," he said.** The Prime Minister said that he was referring to militant Islam and not to ordinary Muslims in general when he talked that some people "tend not to live in co-existence with others, not to mingle with others, and instead of propagating their ideas in a peaceful manner, resort to terror and threat." Mr Vajpayee emphasised that he had stressed in the speech that India is a multi-religious but secular nation, which gives the right to all its citizens to follow their faiths freely. There can not be any discrimination in India on the basis of the faith of a citizen. "My view that madrasa education should include, apart from the teaching of Islam, lessons in science and other subjects is also reiterated by many people, including all forward-looking Muslims," he said.

### Godhra Burnt Gujarat

**April 13, 2002**

**Source: The Pioneer**

'With just days to go for the Budget Session of Parliament to reconvene, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee strongly counter-attacked critics of Hindutva and linked the burning of ramsewaks on board the Sabarmati Express with the larger threat of Islamic extremism. It was a forthright Mr Vajpayee who seemed to have shrugged off an apologetic stance over the Gujarat violence even as he took care to emphasise that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stood opposed to all forms and shades of fundamentalism.

He said that even on his visits abroad, leaders stated that Islamic fundamentalism was creating serious problems. Apart from drawing a connection between those who perpetrated the Godhra tragedy and the larger threat of Islamic extremism, Mr Vajpayee said that militant Islam wanted to use the force of sword to spread its message.

In a speech that can be termed to have been cast in the Hindutva mould, the Prime Minister said clearly that it was the Godhra incident, where innocent, helpless people who had committed no crime were burnt alive, which led to the retaliatory violence. **"Godhra main agar nirdosh, nirihi our nirapradh logon ko jalaya naa gaya hota to Gujarat ki trasdi ko taala jaa sakta tha.** (If in Godhra innocents weren't burnt alive, Gujarat violence could have been averted.)"

In a bid to counter the mounting pressure over his Government over Gujarat, the Prime Minister said none should forget how the violence began. He said that it was important to remember *"aag lagai kisney, aag phaili kaisey* (who ignited the fire, what were the reasons for it turning out of control)." He brushed aside the charge that secularism in the country was under danger. He said that the Government did not discriminate the people because of their religion.

The Prime Minister delivered his speech in a public rally after Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi had offered his resignation for the BJP national executive to take a decision about his continuation....During his speech, an offensive Mr Vajpayee said, **"Two forms of Islam prevailed at the moment. One was that which was tolerant... the kind of religion that believed in spreading the message of honesty, kindness and love, he said. The other spread dangerous teachings." ...In the second form of religion, there was no place of tolerance, he added.**Mr Vajpayee added that militant Islam was trying to change the world to its mode through jihad. In the same vein, the Prime Minister said wherever Muslims lived, they refuse to intermingle with the other part of the society. ***Vey dara-dhamkaakar apni baat manwana chahetein hain* (they were forcing their wishes through terror-tactics).**"

In yet another strong comment, Mr Vajpayee said that it was necessary that the Muslims should learn to live in peace with others and should not spread the message of their religion through the force of sword.Mr Vajpayee said that the country did not need lessons of secularism from others. India was secular even before Islam and Christianity put their feet here, he added.

In a veiled reference, he attacked Muslim kings who destroying temples. He said, "The Hindus kings in other countries also fought among themselves but never indulged in destroying places of worship. That was not our culture."

[Krishnamurthy overruled PM on Modi resignation](#)

April 13, 2002

Source: [Rediff on the net](#)

[Sheela Bhatt in Panaji ]

On Friday evening Atal Bihari Vajpayee must have realised that it is not enough to be the prime minister of India. Ever since riots following the Godhra carnage shook Gujarat, it was an open secret that Vajpayee wanted Narendra Modi to own moral responsibility and step down as the chief minister. But when the crunch time came, Vajpayee found his own partymen deserting him. A top Bharatiya Janata Party leader speaking to rediff.com

said, "**When Modi forwarded his resignation to Vajpayee, the PM said 'Istifa dete hai to le lena chahiye. Assembly dissolve karke aage dekhenge.'**" (If he is resigning we should accept his resignation. We should think further after dissolving the assembly)."

But the prime minister found too few takers for his line. Party president Jana Krishnamurthy said, "**If we accept the resignation, Congressmen will claim that it's due to their demand that we buckled.**" Krishnamurthy insisted that **Modi must not resign. And he told the meeting, "I am rejecting Modi's offer to resign."**

A BJP source said, "It was a well-played drama. Even the office-bearers of the party who met in the morning were not aware of it. Law Minister Arun Jaitley played an important role to save his friend Modi." He added, "The invisible hand of RSS saved Modi, everyone accepted Jana's verdict. There was no discussion on the Gujarat carnage, the police's role, plight of the victims or about the communal divide. Before they could discuss anything Modi's resignation offer was rejected."

### RSS forces Vajpayee to change tack on Modi issue

**April 13 2002**

**Source: Rediff on the net**

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's resignation on Friday to the ongoing Bharatiya Janata Party national executive meet in Goa and the latter rejecting it is the result of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh triumphing over Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a top official of the Prime Minister's Office said.

**"The prime minister was open to suggestions from BJP and other political quarters that given the continuing violence in Gujarat, Modi's replacement would not seem odd. However, the RSS leadership, especially former BJP president Kushabhau Thakre, put his foot down that Modi's replacement was unacceptable," the official told rediff.com**

He said ever since the crisis in Gujarat commenced, Thakre, Union Home Minister Lal Kishenchand Advani and Vajpayee met on six occasions at the latter's Race Course road residence to discuss it. Each time Thakre turned down Vajpayee's suggestion about replacing Modi after which the prime minister abandoned the idea, the official said.

**"Before the prime minister left for his tour (of Singapore and Cambodia), he veered around to the view that it was in his government's long-term interests not to cave in to the pressure tactics of either the ruling partners or the opposition parties to replace the Gujarat chief minister," he said. He said that Thakre, the most influential among the RSS leaders, spread the word among the Sangh that Modi would have to be defended, even at the cost of the Vajpayee government.** That is why senior BJP leaders with RSS links like BJP chief K Jana Krishnamurthy, Jagdish Prasad Mathur, Arun Jaitley and Pramod Mahajan provided sufficient indications that Modi would not be removed. In fact, responding to a media report that Prime Minister Vajpayee had decided to replace Modi, Mathur dismissed it as 'baloney' saying, "**Log gup-shup chhaap dete hain, yeh theek nahin hai** (people publish rumours, this is not correct)."

The PMO official indicated that the 'strategy' pertaining to Modi's handing over his resignation to the BJP national executive in Goa ( and its subsequent rejection ) had been finalised by Union Law Minister Arun Jaitley with the blessings of the RSS leadership. "The Gujarat chief minister's handing over his resignation and the BJP national executive rejecting it was like 'heads-I-win-tails-you-lose' kind of situation for the RSS leaders," the official said.

### Vajpayee in Goa April 12, 2002

After Modi's offer, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took a strident pro-Hindutva line at a public rally. He said the Godhra killings marked the beginning of communal trouble and it was Islamic terrorism, not Hindu extremism, which was the real danger to India and the world.

Vajpayee said trouble was brewing wherever Muslims lived in large numbers because attempts were being made to spread Islam through terror and by use of the sword. The world had woken up to this danger. But, he said, people were saying that secularism was in danger in India because of Hindu extremism.

**"We should not forget that the first incident was the torching of the train (in Godhra). Who set fire to the train to kill innocent women and children? How did the violence start?"** he asked. "Whatever happened later was also condemnable," the Prime Minister later conceded.

Vajpayee lamented that there was an outcry over the threat to secularism in India when the riots began in Gujarat after the Godhra massacre. **"A series of small incidents -- some of which assumed big proportions -- began after innocent women and children were burnt alive in the train. If the first incident had not taken place, Gujarat would have been spared the subsequent violence,"** he said, echoing the views of the VHP. Speaking in the company of Home Minister L.K. Advani and Human Resources Development Minister M.M. Joshi, Vajpayee said secularism existed in India much before the



advent of Islam or Christianity. **"It is not that Islam or Christianity brought secularism to India," he said. "The very fact that all faiths were welcomed in India and allowed to be practised was good proof of India's secular character. Nobody was hounded and no one attempted to convert anyone to Hinduism."** Recalling his visit to ruins of Hindu temples in Cambodia, Vajpayee said he did not see a single instance of a Hindu ruler demolishing temples built by other kings. **"Victorious kings built new temples but never demolished the existing ones," he said.**

### Victims' tales of horror shocks Atal

April 05 2002

Source: The Hindustan Times

What happened in Godhra was shameful, but what happened later was equally shameful. The answer to madness is not madness. The duty of our government is to protect the property, life and honour of everybody... there is no scope for discrimination. This is also what our religion and culture tell us.

There should be an end to heartbreak now. We have to live together and die together. I can't even imagine how one can burn another person alive. Are we humans or not? People tell me I came late. I wanted to come earlier, but I was told... the arrangements for my security would have sent the other arrangements into disarray.

### Follow Raj dharma, PM tells CM

April 5, 2002

Source: The Pioneer

**"You are not alone in this hour of crisis. The entire country is with you."**

With this message Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Thursday began his day-long visit to the riot-ravaged State of Gujarat, providing the much-needed healing touch to the thousands living in sheer fear and misery in the State. And he ended his visit to death and destruction by bluntly asking Chief Minister Narendra Modi to follow "raj dharma" making no discrimination on the basis of religion and adding that the minority community needed protection. In between, the Prime Minister, in the course of his visits to Godhra and relief camps in Ahmedabad, made an impassioned plea to the people of the State to put hatred and violence behind them. Describing the Gujarat violence as shameful and a blot on the country, the Prime Minister said, **"With what face, I do not know, I will go abroad after what has happened here."** He was referring to his forthcoming visits

to Singapore and Cambodia. Speaking to about 8,000 distraught Muslims holed up in the Shah-e-Alam camp in the Walled City in Ahmedabad, Mr Vajpayee said, **"Apne desh mein**

***refugee ho jana, yeh dil ko cheerane wali baat hai*** (becoming refugee in one's own country is something that pierces the heart)." The Prime Minister said, "Whatever had happened in Godhra should be condemned. But what went on after that in other parts of the State should also be equally condemned by one and all." ***"Yeh pagalpan bandh hona chahiye (this madness should stop)," he said amid applause from the inmates. "Aag se aag nahin bujhta (fire does not stop fire). To prevent the fire from spreading you need water,"*** he said.

Mr Vajpayee referred to Wednesday's killings in rural Ahmedabad and told them **"main yahan lashe ginane nahi aaya hoon (I have not come here to count corpses)."**

**"What happened this time in Gujarat cannot be even imagined by a civilised man. I cannot even think of how a man can be torched to death. This is inhuman," Mr Vajpayee said.**

Earlier the Prime Minister visited the Godhra railway station and saw for himself the burnt remnants of the railway compartment where 58 passengers met a fiery death on February 27.

Mr Vajpayee looked shocked as he went inside the S-6 coach, using a wooden ladder to climb up. Stunned, he didn't utter a word. He later spoke to the station master who briefed him about the events of the fateful day and also to the Inspector-General of Police, P P Aghja who filled him on other details. Mr Vajpayee, who was accompanied by Central ministers Arun Jaitley, C P Thakur, Uma Bharati and Kashiram Rana and Chief Minister Narendra Modi, returned to Ahmedabad in the afternoon but not before he had heard five delegations of riot victims and received their representations. Speaking at the Kankaria relief camp in Ahmedabad, where about 575 violence-affected people belonging to the majority community have taken shelter since February 28, the Prime Minister wondered, ***"Jaan na pehchan, bin baat ke..."*** ***Addressing reporters at the end of his visit, Mr Vajpayee said, "My one message to the Chief Minister is that he should follow raj dharam. These are very meaningful words. A ruler should not make any discrimination between his subjects on the basis of caste, creed and religion."***

### **Muslims not alone in this time of crisis: Vajpayee**

**April 5, 2002**

**Source: Rediff on the net**

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Thursday told Muslims of Gujarat that they were not alone in this time of crisis and that the entire country was with them. **"You are not alone at this time of crisis, we all are with you. The entire country is with you,"** he told riot victims at the Shah Alam relief camp in Ahmedabad, where nearly 8000 Muslims affected by over a month of communal violence have taken shelter.

In an emotional outburst, Vajpayee said: ***"Apne desh mein refugee ho jana, yeh dil ko cheerane wali baat hai "*** (becoming refugee in one's own country is heart wrenching).

He said India's standing in the comity of nations for its pluralistic character has been badly affected by the violence in Gujarat. **"With what face, I do not know, I will go abroad after what all has happened here,"** he added. The prime minister said while what happened in Godhra was condemnable, what followed in other parts of the state must also be deplored. **"Yeh pagalpan bandh hona chahiye" (this madness must stop),**" he said.

### PM lets Modi off with a few words of wisdom

April 05 2002

Source: The Indian Express

PM lets Modi off with a few words of wisdom

**Chorus at the camp: 'Why don't you act against the man by your side?'**

Janyala Sreenivas

Ahmedabad, April 4

It was expected to be the healing touch to an entire community living in shock and fear while it counts its dead. And a clear message of strong action against those responsible for the carnage, particularly the state government's inaction. But Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's emotional 15-minute speech to the victims bounced off angry, cynical ears. What angered the 8,000 inmates at the largest relief camp was the sight of Chief Minister Narendra Modi—who has never visited the camp until this afternoon—standing beside the Prime Minister. And just one line of criticism from Vajpayee—that, too, indirect. **"It's high time," Vajpayee said, "(that) government officials and politicians understand their responsibilities and do their job properly."**

So the Prime Minister was taken aback when a man got up to point at Modi and say: **"This man is responsible for this evil in Gujarat. Do something about him."** Vajpayee listened to Nanumiya Rasoolkhan Malik, who lost 12 members of his family in the Naroda Patiya carnage in which 91 were burnt alive. Malik broke down and stooped to touch the PM's feet begging him to stop the violence and arrange for proper facilities for the victims. While Vajpayee searched for words to respond, Union Law Minister Arun Jaitley comforted the victim and led him away from the PM.

Vajpayee also met Rehana Pathan, a widow, and two boys who were orphaned in the riots. After meeting them, Vajpayee said: **"I will not allow this to continue."**

Earlier, when the PM entered the camp, he faced a restive, hostile crowd. Shouting slogans against Chief Minister Narendra Modi and the police, the people asked for Modi's removal and an inquiry by a sitting Supreme Court judge. They carried placards saying: 'Save Muslims', 'We are also citizens of India,' 'Let's have peace,' and the most telling of them all: 'By the time you reached here, Muslims have already reached the graveyards.' Vajpayee's speech was littered with emotional outbursts. **"I do not know with what face I will go abroad (he's scheduled to leave for Singapore and Cambodia this**

**Sunday) after all that has happened in Gujarat,"** he said.

Moved by the plight of the victims packed like sardines under a tent at the relief camp, the prime minister in a choked voice said: **"You have become homeless in your own home and refugees in your own country. What can be more sorrowful than this? It is a shame."** **"The stories of violence that I heard both in Godhra and after that all over the state, are enough to break anybody's heart. Let us put an end to this,"** Vajpayee said. Raising his hands in a gesture of helplessness, he asked: **"Women and children too? Why? What did they do?"** It didn't take Vajpayee more than a couple of minutes to see through the facade that was set up at the camp. **"I know the real conditions in which you are living in this camp till now,"** he said. **"I will ensure you get better facilities and you are looked after well from now."** Those who visited the camp before the PM's visit would not believe their eyes at the transformation. The entire camp was covered by a tent, a snack stall started serving piping hot ganthias and samosas while the Indian Red Cross arranged for biscuits and other eatables neatly packed in plastic containers.

**"You know my entire life,"** Vajpayee told the victims. **"I understand your suffering. The whole country is with you in your hour of sorrow. But let us not let the poison of communal hatred enter our minds. We must live in peace and maintain brotherhood."**

Indicating he was aware of the criticism of police for their inaction and inability to control violence, Vajpayee said the government would not allow this to continue. "Police should be alert and the state government should do its duty," he said.

**"The guilty will be found and punished."**

When we cannot give life, what right do we have to it take away?" The frustration and anger of the victims was visible as several people tried to break the security cordon and meet the Prime Minister. "Why doesn't he listen to us? Who will convey our plight to him," an elderly man shouted. As soon as the PM ended his speech and turned back, the crowd was on its feet shouting Narendra modi hai hai, Narendra Modi murdabad. While the PM's convoy was about to leave, several hundred youths who tried to enter the camp clashed with police outside in the Shah Alam area giving security personnel some tense moments.

At the Kankaria relief camp, where about 200 Hindus are taking shelter, the mood was very different. It was in contrast to Shah Alam. Instead of a hostile crowd, the Prime Minister was greeted by hordes of people outside the camp praising Modi and shouting pro-government slogans! Hundreds of youths danced and beat drums from rooftops of the Municipal Officers Quarters adjoining the camp. In the camp, running in municipal school no 7 and 8, Vajpayee met four women who narrated their plight after their houses were burnt down in Shah Alam, Bhilniwas and Totnakam area. In his speech there, Vajpayee dwelt on the Godhra incident. **"I don't understand how people can be burnt alive. "Na jaan na pehchan. koi dushmani nahi..."** Vajpayee assured them of arranging help. As soon as he finished his speech, one woman, who fled with her family from Bhilniwas, got up and said: "They asked us to go away saying they wanted to created a Pakistan here. We are poor people where will we go? I am scared to go back."

## Gujarat incidents a blot: PM

April 05 2002

Source: The Hindu

AHMEDABAD April 4. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has made no secret of his displeasure about the way the Narendra Modi Government in Gujarat has handled the riots and asked the people to shun violence and restore amity and peace in the State. In an unscheduled brief address to the inmates of the Shah Alam Roza minority relief camp here today, Mr. Vajpayee told officials in clear terms to "perform their duty" and the political leadership to "undertake their responsibility." It was the Government's duty to protect everyone's life and property "without any discrimination" and could not allow the "madness" to overtake humanity.

Mr. Vajpayee said the Gujarat events were a "blot" on India which enjoyed respect and prestige in the comity of nations because of the way the 100 crore people of diverse religion, culture and ethnic groups lived together happily, "share our griefs and joys, but never forget the message of peace and brotherhood." But what was happening in Gujarat was not only heart-rending but "most inhuman and horrible." An emotional Mr. Vajpayee seemed to have instantly touched the hearts of the riot victims living in difficult conditions in the relief camps. Even while showing bitterness against Mr. Modi, who was standing next to the Prime Minister, the 8,000 or so inmates of the camp repeatedly appreciated Mr. Vajpayee's concern over their sufferings. Mr. Vajpayee said that Hindu rites require a person to be put on the pyre only after his death. **"I cannot imagine how a living being can be burnt alive, have all the people become mad? Have Satanic forces overtaken the humanity," he asked in an emotion-choked voice.**

He said that while the Godhra train carnage was "shameful" for the entire humanity, the post-Godhra violence was no less condemnable. "Madness cannot be answered with madness, fire cannot douse fire, you need water to stop fire from spreading," he said. He appealed to the non-government organisations and prominent citizens to assist the Government to "apply the balm" on the wounds of the minorities.

In an obvious reference to some Hindu extremist organisations' designs to "drive out Muslims" from the country, Mr. Vajpayee said: **"Stop all talks of enmity, separatism. For centuries, Hindus and Muslims have lived together in this country and will continue to do so, there is no option."** He said the Hindu religion and culture did not believe in discriminating against anyone on grounds of religion, caste or culture. **"This is why India is respected the world over, our voice is heard among the comity of nations. We cannot be slaves to madness and fanaticism."** Mr. Vajpayee said he was due to embark upon a foreign tour soon which included Muslim countries. **"I do not know what face I will show them now after the shameful events in Gujarat."** It was a matter of great shame that people had become refugees in their own land, homeless in

their own home. **"The way you have been made to live in the relief camps, is also a matter of great shame to us."**

**"I have come here to share your grief, to tell you that the entire nation feel for your sufferings,"** he said. He might be criticised for coming more than 35 days after the violence broke out. After Mr. Vajpayee completed his speech and was preparing to leave, the festive crowd started shouting anti-Modi slogans but was pacified by the organisers.

While Mr. Modi was allowed to accompany Mr. Vajpayee in the camp as part of an understanding reached with the organisers on Wednesday night, the Minister of State for Home, Gordhan Jhadaphia, who the victims believe was equally responsible for the massacre was asked to keep off the camp.

### Atal's ration for the riot-ravaged

**April 05 2002**

**Source: The Hindustan Times**

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Thursday announced a package of relief measures for the riot-hit people of Gujarat including two-month free ration to below poverty line (BPL) families living in affected areas. Announcing the package at the end of his day-long visit to Godhra and Ahmedabad and some relief camps sheltering violence victims, Mr Vajpayee said each affected BPL family would be provided with 35 kg of foodgrain. This measure has been taken as these families were suffering economically and they had no jobs, he said. Mr Vajpayee said the expenditure on foodgrain provided in relief camps would be borne by the Centre. Each bereaved family would be paid Rs 1 lakh as ex-gratia from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, Mr Vajpayee said, adding this would be in addition to Rs 50,000 each being given to these families by the State Government. Those who suffered permanent disability in the violence would be given Rs 50,000 each, he said. Mr Vajpayee said the Centre would bear the entire cost of rehabilitation of all orphans and widows. He said all children in relief camps would be provided one set of text books and school uniforms free of cost. The Prime Minister said that he had held talks with the State Government on the issue of providing facilities in the relief camps and added that the State would pay attention to it.

Referring to the rehabilitation of affected people in rural areas, he said Rs 50,000 would be given to those whose houses had been fully damaged while Rs 15,000 would be given to those whose dwellings suffered partial damage.

In the urban areas, reconstruction would be undertaken after carrying of a comprehensive survey, he said. Mr Vajpayee said the Centre would bear the entire cost. But care should be taken to get the work done by a good architect, he said and cautioned that there should be no discrimination on communal lines in matters of rehabilitation.

He said in the areas where factories and shops had been damaged, adequate relief amount would be given after the survey was conducted. Mr Vajpayee, who visited Godhra before going around Ahmedabad, appealed to political parties to rise above party lines and devote themselves to rehabilitation of the riot-affected

people. During his day-long visit to riot-torn Gujarat Mr Vajpayee also met members of the relief and rehabilitation committee headed by State Governor S S Bhandari and NGOs involved in relief work.

Addressing members of the committee, which was set up on his instructions, Mr Vajpayee said a sense of security has to be instilled in the riot victims living in the camps and for this task Government, Opposition and NGOs have to work together. During his meeting with NGO representatives at the Circuit House here, the Prime Minister noted their suggestions for restoring peace, lessening tension and rehabilitation of affected people.

### Modi Survives With Atal Slap

**April 05 2002**

**Source: The Telegraph**

Ahmedabad, April 4: His anguish punctuated by flashes of anger, Atal Bihari Vajpayee said all the words of healing the wounded of Gujarat wanted to hear from the Prime Minister, barring one.

**"My one message to the chief minister is that he should follow raj dharma (ethics of governance),"** Vajpayee said, capping a dash across the debris from Godhra to Ahmedabad.

**"That's what I am practising,"** chief minister Narendra Modi piped in, but the Prime Minister cut him short: "I am sure Narenbhai is doing it." But what followed was music to Modi's ears. Asked whether there would be a change of leadership in the state, Vajpayee said he does not foresee any such possibility. But the Prime Minister also discounted the chances of a snap poll in the state - something Modi was keen on.

Similar balancing acts were in evidence during Vajpayee's visit, the overriding theme of which was an unequivocal - and repeated - condemnation of the carnage and impassioned appeals for tolerance.

The Prime Minister's team itself reflected the conflicting pulls and pressures under which he was working. He landed in Gujarat accompanied by Hindutva hardliner Uma Bharti and the minority-friendly face of the BJP, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi. But Naqvi, who enjoys little support among his community and whose presence stoked tempers in one of the relief camps, was completely overshadowed by Bharti.

But the Prime Minister did not mince words while promising protection to the minority community. **"The majority (community) is capable of safeguarding its interests. It has number on its side. It is only the minority which needs protection,"** he said in reply to a question at the airport on his way back.

Vajpayee said what happened in Godhra should be condemned but events after that should also be condemned. **"They are more shameful,"** he said in what was the first such unqualified condemnation by any BJP leader. He asserted more than once that it was the responsibility of the political leadership and officials to end violence, which again flared up in the state, killing one.

Vajpayee announced a relief package that included a payment of Rs 1 lakh each

to the relatives of the dead, foodgrain, uniforms and books for children and bearing of the entire expenditure for rehabilitation of orphans and widows. **"Aman kayam rakhna rajneetik neta aur अधिकारियों की जिम्मेवारी है,"** Atal Bihari Vajpayee told the 8,000-odd residents of Ahmedabad's biggest relief camp, Shah-e-Alam Dargah. He visited the site of the Godhra carnage and toured relief camps, offering the victims words of comfort and vowing to punish the guilty. Due to leave on a tour of Southeast Asian nations, Vajpayee said: **"With what face, I do not know, I will go abroad after what all has happened here."** **"I have come to tell you that you are not alone in this hour of crisis. The whole country is with you,"** Vajpayee told victims of the riots. **"I lost my sister just three days ago. I know how painful it is. But you have suffered far more. You have become homeless and refugees in your own country. Many of you have lost your dear ones."** Vajpayee said he had not come to Gujarat to count deaths. **"We have seen enough deaths. I have come here to tell the people that we will do our level best to end the suffering."**

### Modi by side, PM snubs his Govt`

April 05 2002

Source: Hindustan Times

Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee said there was no plan to remove Narendra Modi as CM of Gujarat and there would be no early elections in the state at a late-evening press conference here.

Announcing a clutch of relief measures, Vajpayee also said that the officials in the state have been told that they should discharge their duties impartially. In answer to another question about the need for a "majority commission", he said that the majority community needed no protection.

The Prime Minister also said the priority at this juncture should be the restoration of law and order in the state.

Earlier, Vajpayee delivered a snub to the Gujarat government during his one-day visit to the state. He asked government officials to do their duty and politicians to realise their responsibilities. His remarks were seen as a clear indictment of Modi, who has claimed that everything possible was being done to mitigate the hardships of people in relief camps. Vajpayee's visit, however, failed to stem the tide of violence there. Two persons were killed in police firing at Modasa town in Sabarkantha district on Thursday as large-scale violence broke out when curfew was relaxed.

Addressing a gathering of minorities at the Shah Alam Roza relief camp here, Vajpayee expressed sympathy for those who lost close relations in the carnage that followed the Godhra massacre.

He said the Godhra incident was shameful but quickly added that whatever happened after that was equally shameful. **"Madness is not the reply to madness, fire can not be doused with fire,"** he said, as Modi looked on.

Referring to his forthcoming visit abroad, which will include some Islamic countries, Vajpayee asked, **"What face shall I show abroad?"** He said he had



wanted to visit Gujarat earlier, but was advised not to because the administration would be overburdened making special arrangements for his visit. He regretted that so many people had become refugees in their own country. **"I cannot think how human beings, including women and children, can be burnt alive," he said.**

### Keep out of religious matters: VHP to Vajpayee

**April 02 2002**

**Source: Rediff on the net**

Keep out of religious matters: VHP to Vajpayee

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad on Monday asked Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to confine himself to politics and leave matters of faith to religious leaders. The Sangh Parivar outfit also said that the continuing violence in Gujarat was a **"popular upsurge and people's answer to jihadi terrorism."** **"It is better if he [Vajpayee] confines himself to politics and leaves matters of faith to religious leaders,"** VHP senior vice-president Giriraj Kishore said when asked about the prime minister's statement seeking to distance himself from the proponents of Hindutva.

When asked if the VHP considered Vajpayee as a member of the Sangh Parivar, Kishore said: "He is a member of the NDA [National Democratic Alliance]. His emphasis has been on NDA."

Meanwhile, VHP international general secretary Pravin Togadia, who was also present, said: "The Indian state and [pseudo] secularism has failed to protect Hindus and control jihadi

terrorism and hence people are fast making up their mind to defend themselves.

**"What is happening in Gujarat is not communal riots but people's answer to Islamic jihad,"** he said.

He alleged that the Indian polity, "including NDA", has been practising "one-way secularism" and "acting as a defendant of jihadi terrorism".

While asserting that VHP was not justifying the violence in the state, he said, "But what is happening in Gujarat is an upsurge, a rebellion." PTI

### Poet in Vajpayee betrays Prime Minister's turmoil

**April 1, 2002**

**Source: The Hindustan Times**

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee may no longer sing songs, but his poetry speaks volumes about his deep disillusionment since he took over the reins of the Indian government in 1998.

Vajpayee's latest poetic offering "Geet Nahin Gaata Hoon" (I don't sing songs), penned in the inspiring environs of the hill town of Nainital in Uttaranchal state, reflects despair contrasting sharply with his favoured theme of hope and determination.

The prime minister, known to amuse with his wit and stun with flashes of outspokenness, has used verse to convey his worst fears - betrayal, defeat, loneliness and friendlessness. He also hints at resentment against his own Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

It was to a surprised media at the Raj Bhawan, governor's residence, Saturday that Vajpayee recited: "**Geet nahin gaata hoon, benaqaab chhehre hain, daag bade gehre hain, tootta tilism aaj, sach se bhay khaata hoon... (No longer do I sing, the masks have dropped, the scars run very deep, the spell is broken, the truth scares me...).**"

"**Lagi kuchh aisi nazar, bikhra sheeshe ka shahar, apno ke mele mein, meet nahin paata hoon... (Such was the evil eye, the city of glass shattered, I stand without friends among my own...).**"

"**Peeth main choori sa chaand, rahu gaya rekha phaand, mukti ke kshanon mein, baar baar bandh jaata hoon, geet nahin gaata hoon... (The moon is a knife in the back, Rahu's (god of misfortune) fury has crossed the limit, in moments of salvation, I get tied down again and again, no longer do I sing...)**"

This poem is the exact opposite of the rousing "Geet Naya Gaata Hoon" (I sing a new song), recited by Vajpayee in his first prime ministerial address in 1998 from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort on India's Independence Day on August 15. In that poem, Vajpayee, buoyed by the Pokhran nuclear tests conducted by his government, chanted: "**Haar nahin manoonga, raar nayee thaanoonga, kaal ke kapaal par likhta, mitaata hoon, geet naya gaata hoon (I will not give in, I will wage a new fight, I write and erase on time's forehead as I go along, I sing a new song)...**"

### Vajpayee cuts Modi poll plank to size

March 28 2002

Source: **The Indian Express**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 27: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today shot down Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's hopes for a snap poll in the State and directed him to focus his energies on rehabilitating victims of the recent violence and restoring normalcy instead. "**We told him that law and order should be strictly implemented and that rehabilitation work should be a collective effort,**" Vajpayee told The Indian Express this evening during a brief interaction at a book release function. Modi's first official meeting with the PM after the carnage in Gujarat was divided into two parts. The first part was an audio-visual presentation by state officials of the government's relief and rehabilitation efforts. The second was a 20-minute closed door discussion at which only Vajpayee, Home Minister L K Advani and Modi were present.

It was during this session that Vajpayee and Advani did some plainspeaking. It is not clear whether Modi broached the subject of an early poll or whether the central leaders brought it up themselves. But Vajpayee and Advani are believed to have told the CM in no uncertain

terms that all talk of a mid-term assembly poll must stop. There has been considerable speculation both in Gandhinagar and here that the BJP wants to call a snap poll to "exploit" the communally charged atmosphere in Gujarat and sweep to victory.

The PM and the HM are understood to have stressed that such talk can only damage the party and the nation as it sends out all the wrong signals. They told him that the entire country as well as the world community are monitoring events in Gujarat closely and warned him not to ignore national and international perceptions about the situation in his state. The coming months are a test not just for his government but for also for the BJP and the nation as a whole, they pointed out. It is significant that Vajpayee and Advani met him together, not separately. This is being interpreted in party circles as an effort to emphasise to Modi and his sympathisers here that there is no difference of opinion on Gujarat between the two top BJP leaders and they should not try to play on an imagined cleavage here at the Centre. At the end of the meeting, Modi emerged with his job intact. But he has been put on notice and now it's up to him to deliver. Some of the tough talking seemed to have an impact. When he spoke to correspondents later, he ruled out a mid-term poll, saying he had not even started his work yet. At the same time, he kept up the bluster to claim that the PM and "everyone" are "satisfied" with the manner in which he has handled the situation in his state.

### Vintage Atal soothes House

March 17 2002

Source: The Pioneer

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee seems to have perfected the art of wriggling out of difficult situations. And it is not his arguments that help him in the ordeal. He manages to blunt the Opposition attack with a much smaller weapon - his oratorical skills.

On Saturday, the Prime Minister might have faced a difficult time replying to the debate on motion of thanks to the President's address, as it came soon after the tense drama in Ayodhya and Gujarat riots, but Mr Vajpayee used his wit, humour and eloquence to sail through easily. In the process, he not only showered praises on himself but also poke fun at the Opposition.

**"Constitution ka palan bhi ho gaya aur shila puja bhi,"** he said amid laughter from the treasury benches, adding: **"I acted tough when it was called for and respected the people's sentiments wherever required."** Mr Vajpayee left the Opposition numb by his simplistic explanation that helped him cater to both the hardliners and the Opposition.

Though the Opposition was visibly upset at his logic, Mr Vajpayee took credit for stopping his own MPs from going to Ayodhya and hailed the role of Vinay Katyar

who, according to him, played a constructive role in the entire episode. He also belittled the gravity of the involvement of a PMO official in accepting the shila by saying, "**Shila to lena thha, use rakhne ka prabandh karna thha so kiya.**" Mr Vajpayee sought to explain his indulgence with sadhus and sants by not getting into any serious debate on the merits of the act but by cleverly hinting that the Congress too indulges similarly. So, the matter that kept the Opposition agitated all this while evoked laughter from all corners and it blew over, at least, for the moment.

**Mr Vajpayee said, "Paramhansji naraj ho gaye the. Par baad mein maan gaye aur aashirwaad bhi de diya ki tumhari sarkar kai saal chalegi. Jab Soniaji ko bhi dekhta hun santan ke samne sashtang jhukte huye, to lagta hai aashirwad mein gun hai."**

At this Ms Gandhi, whose visit to Shankaracharya had created controversy, squirmed in her chair.

Mr Vajpayee then went on to say that the Ayodhya issue was creating difficulties in maintaining communal harmony and must be solved soon. "**Wounds should not be allowed to fester,**" he said, suggesting that talks to solve this problem must continue.

Mr Vajpayee, however, must have rattled his party colleagues by admitting that the State Government's efforts at relief and rehabilitation of riot victims were insufficient in Gujarat. He said the country survived difficult times only because of its inherent strength and no party should take credit for it. He directed the Gujarat Government to set up all-party committees under the chairmanship of the Governor and speed up relief work. Referring to Ms Gandhi's question as to the status of India's demand for return of 20 wanted terrorists and criminals from Pakistan, he said: "Our efforts are on, but no progress has been made as yet." He ruled out resumption of talks with Pakistan till it ended cross-border terrorism to create a conducive atmosphere. "**Infiltration of terrorists from across the border has not stopped nor have terrorists' acts being committed in the country,**" he said, adding ground situation would be assessed only after snow melted in the mountains along the border. Mr Vajpayee also expressed the Centre's readiness to introduce a fresh legislation for reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies if all parties agree to arrive at a consensus on a reduced quota.

Taking a dig at Mr Jaipal Reddy's usage of difficult words in Parliament, he said: "This is the place to express your thoughts, not demonstrate your word power".

Mr Reddy, however, used the same word, humongous, which had created controversy in the House a couple of days ago, again during the debate on Prime Minister's statement on Ayodhya, with peals of laughter following his humongous phrases.

## SC will decide fate of bhoomi puja, PM tells Muslim leaders

March 10 2002

Source: **The Hindustan Times**

(New Delhi, March 9) Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made clear on Saturday that the Centre would follow the directives of the Supreme Court in deciding the fate of the bhoomi puja that is slated, in the Kanchi Shankaracharya's formula, to be held in Ayodhya on March 15. The Supreme Court will hear a petition on deploying the army to prevent any construction at the disputed site in Ayodhya on March 13. Vajpayee made this clear in two separate meetings with the All-India Organisation of Imams of Mosques and a 24-member delegation of Muslim intellectuals. "The government will go by the directions of the Supreme Court over the proposed puja," he is understood to have assured them. Civil Aviation Minister Shahnawaz Hussain, Minister of State in the PMO Vijay Goel, National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra and Vajpayee's close aide Sudhendra Kulkarni were also present at the meetings.

## Angry PM to Sangh: I can't govern if you pull rug from under my feet:

March 8, 2002

Source: **The Indian Express**

Vajpayee's unhappiness over Parivar's pushing-around, doublespeak, prompts VHP's Ashok Singhal to give him an 'explicit' commitment on Ayodhya  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 7: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is reportedly furious with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for the statements of its leaders in recent days and yesterday's volte face by its vice-president Giriraj Kishore, and has had it conveyed to them and to the Sangh Parivar that if that is their attitude others can run the government.....It is a result of the Prime Minister's unhappiness that Ashok Singhal gave an 'explicit' commitment today, saying the VHP would abide by the verdict of the Court. In his February 27 letter to Vajpayee, the commitment was implicit. Singhal also called on the Prime Minister late at night and reportedly asked for easing of some curbs on ramsevaks in Ayodhya, to which Vajpayee is said to have agreed.

## 'Sants have lost faith in Vajpayee'

March 05 2002

Source: **The Hindu**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4. It was their moment under the sun and they fully basked in it; often turning the press conference called to announce their decision

on the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya into a religious discourse of sorts.

With two television channels covering their press conference live and the media hanging on to their every word, the `sants' associated with the Ram temple agitation today sought to make the most of the media attention. They spoke in different voices, though. While the former BJP MP, Avidyanath, and Ram Vilas Das Vedanti, said that a final decision would be taken at a meeting of the `sants' tomorrow and indicated a willingness to postpone their programme if the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, set a time-frame for resolution of the issue, the VHP international president, Ashok Singhal, insisted that there was no change in the plans to move the pillars at 2-15 p.m. on March 15.

Though Mr. Singhal was upset with certain questions, the `sants' were perfectly at ease; wearing a smile even as they caustically criticised the Vajpayee Government for not steering the Ramjanmabhoomi movement to its logical end after being elected to power on its ``strength".

Providing quotable quotes and television bytes galore, the president of the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas, Ramchandra Paramhans, and Avidyanath sought to show the Congress as a better ally of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement than the BJP Government. Likening the decade since the demolition of the Babri Masjid to Ram's ``vanvaas" (banishment from Ayodhya), they lamented that a Ram temple at his birthplace remained a dream, despite a BJP Government at the Centre. In particular, sant Paramhans trained his guns on Mr. Vajpayee; reminding him that he would have been a non-entity without the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. Repeatedly stating that the `sants' would not approach the Prime Minister, he accused Mr. Vajpayee of trying to ``better the British and Mulayam Singh Yadav." The `sants' had lost faith in Mr. Vajpayee as he had gone back on his word several times. ``Pradhan Mantri bahut chalaak hai (the Prime Minister is very shrewd)." He went on saying there would be no compromising on the temple issue. ``Hum kisi ke baap ki jagah ko nahin maang rahe hain (we are not asking for someone's private property)", he said adding that they were just asking for a place where the earlier governments had allowed them access. Continuing his tough posturing, sant Paramhans added for good measure that even if Lord Ram were to tell him that the disputed site was not his birthplace, he would not budge!

### It's a black mark, says PM

**March 03 2002**

**Source: The Hindu**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 2. Appealing for calm in Gujarat and the rest of the country, the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, today described the violence in the State as a ``black mark on the nation's forehead" and conceded that the senseless massacre of women and children had ``lowered India's prestige in the world".

In a televised address, Mr. Vajpayee invoked the joint appeal issued by the all-party meeting on Friday and expressed the hope that the country would come through the current crisis. The Prime Minister, however, neither patted nor indicted the Gujarat Government for its handling of the post-Godhra situation.

Later, Mr. Vajpayee consulted the Sangh Parivar leaders on how best to avoid a confrontation with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on the Ayodhya issue. He and his Ministerial and party colleagues - L.K. Advani, Jana Krishnamurthi and Kushabhau Thakre - held talks with the RSS leaders, Madandas Devi and H.V. Seshadri.

Mr. Vajpayee had enlisted the help of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to mediate between the Government and the recalcitrant VHP. After the confabulations at the Prime Minister's residence, Mr. Devi announced that "religious leaders" would meet Mr. Vajpayee and or Mr. Advani and expressed the hope that a solution could be round the corner.

It is believed that the Ramjanmabhoomi Trust leader, Mahant Paramhans, is likely to be here tomorrow, but the Mahant is reported to be reluctant to travel to the Prime Minister's residence. Though the RSS leaders are confident of a "solution", they feel that the onus is on the Government to make an offer the "sants" could accept.

VHP demarche to Govt. Notwithstanding the RSS optimism, Mr. Vajpayee's efforts to make the VHP see reason appear to have run into trouble. Even though a VHP spokesman expressed concern of sorts over the unending violence in Gujarat, what he had to say about the Ayodhya imbroglio brought no cheer to the Government. The spokesman, Veereshwar Dwivedi, issued a kind of demarche to the Government, making three demands: first, that the VHP be allowed to carry out its March 15 programme; second, that the Government return within three months the 43 acres of land acquired by it at Ayodhya to the VHP; and third, that all the restrictions on the movement of "kar sevaks" in Ayodhya be removed. For good measure, the spokesman wanted a written undertaking from the Prime Minister and only then could the organisation consider his appeal for "suspending" its "movement". Similarly, the Prime Minister received mixed comfort from the RSS chief, K.C. Sudarshan. In a statement from Bhatinda, Mr. Sudarshan said that the

senseless violence should stop because Pakistan-inspired elements were "trying to destroy our national unity". He appealed to Muslims not to "tolerate people who indulge in such heinous activities in the name of Islam".

Curbs on "kar sevaks" criticised

If this plea for sanity did provide some comfort to the Prime minister, the RSS chief nonetheless warned that the Governments - Central or in the States - had no business curbing the citizens' democratic right to travel to Ayodhya.

Restrictions imposed on the "kar sevaks" were an affront to the "Hindu sentiments" and the Government was duty-bound to provide security to all those who wanted to make a pilgrimage to a holy place, he said. This part of the statement is being explained as part of the RSS leadership's effort to humour the VHP.

## Vajpayee cancels trip to Commonwealth meet

February 28 2002

Source: **The Hindustan Times**

New Delhi, February 27 **Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will not take part in the Commonwealth summit in Australia following religious tensions that erupted at home on Wednesday, his spokesman said.**

**"He is not going in view of the political developments here. Particularly in light of today's developments in Gujarat,"** Ashok Tandon told Reuters.

Tandon said External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh would represent India at the meeting of mostly former British colonies at a resort in Coolumb, north of Brisbane, from March 2 to 5.

Fifty-seven people, including 15 children, were burnt alive when a train carrying Hindu activists from the controversial site of a razed mosque was torched by a suspected Muslim mob in Gujarat on Wednesday.

After the incident, Vajpayee appealed to the Hindu activists to shelve their plans to build a new temple on the site in Ayodhya. But the activists rejected his plea and said they would stick to their plans in defiance of a court order.

## Suspend movement, PM tells VHP

February 28 2002

Source: **The Hindu**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 27. The Vajpayee Government and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad today found themselves inching towards a confrontation over the Ayodhya dispute. The dominant official mood seems to be to ensure that the demands of law and order take precedence over any past or current soft corner for the VHP leaders and their cause. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in particular, appears to be in a mood to call the VHP bluff.

Preparing for an inevitable show-down with the 'mandir' proponents, the Prime Minister late tonight cancelled his visit to Australia, where he was scheduled to lead India's delegation at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. The External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, will now represent the country. In the evening, in an effort to impress upon the VHP leaders the seriousness of the Government's intent to fulfill its constitutional obligations, the Prime Minister invited the VHP leader, Ashok Singhal, for a discussion. Mr. Singhal was accompanied by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leader, Madan Das Devi (who liaises between the BJP and the Sangh) and Rama Jois, a retired judge who is said to be well-versed with the legal entanglements of the Ayodhya dispute.

Besides Mr. Vajpayee, the Government side was represented by the Home Minister, L.K.Advani, his Defence counterpart, Mr. George Fernandes (who recently had confabulations with the Kanchi Sankaracharya), and the Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley (who has been asked by the Prime Minister to examine the



`legal' aspects of the Ayodhya dispute).

On their part, the `mandir' leaders are believed to have pressed their point of view that the Centre could easily \_ and without any legal encumbrance \_ hand over the ``undisputed land" in Ayodhya to the Ramjanmabhoomi Trust. Mr. Vajpayee told them that the Government would find it a difficult demand to concede. Nonetheless, undeterred by the rejection of an earlier appeal by Acharya Giriraj Kishore, another `mandir' leader, the Prime Minister once again appealed to the VHP to suspend its `movement'. The VHP leaders, however, appear to have spurned the appeal and have instead opted for confrontation with the Government. Earlier in the day, both Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani came pretty close to warning the VHP that the ``kar sevaks" would not be allowed to disturb the status quo in Ayodhya. While regretting the outbreak of violence in Gujarat, Mr. Vajpayee made it clear that the Government's stand had already been spelled out. He was referring to the commitment made in the President's address in Parliament that the Government was duty bound to maintain the court-decreed status quo in Ayodhya.

Mr. Vajpayee, who was talking to newsmen at Hyderabad House, reminded the VHP leadership that his Government had secured the backing of all the political parties and warned that violence and confrontation would not help resolve the dispute.

Advani's warning

But much more significant was the statement issued, in the morning, by Mr. Advani. He warned that **``if, however, they (VHP leaders) persist in their present approach, the Government of India would not hesitate to take action against those who defy court orders or create problems for law and order."**

Even though Mr. Advani acknowledged his ``proud association" with the Ayodhya movement, he noted that ``it is the duty of Government \_in this case, both Central as well as State\_ to ensure that court orders are not violated by anyone."

### Vajpayee Cannot Persuade VHP

February 28 2002

Source: The Hindu

NEW DELHI, FEB. 27. **As riots erupted in Gujarat, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, made a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to get the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders to withdraw their call to gather ``Ram bhakts" at Ayodhya and start construction of a temple on March 15.** After an hour-long meeting with Mr. Vajpayee, senior VHP leaders virtually rejected his appeal and said he should speak to the ``sants" who had fixed the Ayodhya programme. Later, Mr. Vajpayee called the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Jana Krishnamurthi, for a meeting to discuss a suggestion from some very senior BJP leaders in Government and outside that the party should immediately issue an appeal to all its members not to join the so-called ``Ram bhakts" in Ayodhya.

However, neither the appeals made by Mr. Vajpayee and the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, nor the shocking incident in Gujarat today and the eruption of communal violence in the State seem to have impressed the VHP. While both the BJP and the VHP strongly condemned the violence let loose on slogan shouting ``kar sevaks" and stated they suspected ``an ISI backed fundamentalist" conspiracy to destabilise the Government, the VHP leaders also let it be known that this would not deter thousands more from joining the ongoing ``yagna" in Ayodhya and the construction work that would follow.

**The senior VHP leader, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, had this to say: ``Revered sants had met the Prime Minister on January 27 and asked him to hand over the acquired land in Ayodhya to the Ram Janmabhoomi Trust so that we could begin building the temple peacefully. But the Prime Minister refused and that led the sants to decide on a date to start the construction. The VHP cannot change the dates."**

### I did not say it: PM

February 22 2002

Source: **The Hindu**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 21. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today refuted the reports and the suggestion that the BJP is prepared to spurn the Muslim vote. In a lengthy rejoinder, the Prime Minister took on the Opposition parties which have criticised his reported ``we can do without the Muslim vote" statement.

Mr. Vajpayee was reported to have told an election rally in Varanasi that the BJP would win without the Muslim votes. In his rejoinder, the Prime Minister reproduced verbatim his remarks. Talking about the appeal made by other parties to Muslims to vote against the BJP, Mr. Vajpayee said, he had observed: **``To urge our Muslim brothers to vote in such a way as to defeat the BJP ... that connotes a very wrong way of thinking. For one thing, the BJP is going to win even if they vote against the party. But my question is: why should they vote against us?"**

In his Varanasi remarks, Mr. Vajpayee said, he had further added: **``The way we have governed the country for the past two-and-a-half years is a testimony to the truth that we do not discriminate on the basis of religion. For us, Muslims are not merely Muslims. In our eyes, they are human beings, we look upon them as Bharat mata ki santan (the children of India). Muslims too are fighting for India on the borders."**

Conceding that in the past, some Muslim voters were probably influenced by the Opposition's propaganda against the BJP, the Prime Minister said his Government's performance had set the record straight and has belied the "alarmist predictions". And, invoking his own personal credibility, Mr. Vajpayee asserted that ``never in my long life in politics have I played the communal card to win elections". Claiming to have been ``saddened" by the political parties' reaction, he said, ``far from seeking to divide the people of India, it (the statement) was aimed at fortifying their unity".

## BJP can win even without Muslim votes: PM

February 20 2002

Source: **The Hindu**

VARANASI, FEB. 19. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party would win the elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly even if the Muslim vote went against it.

**Addressing a public meeting here, Mr. Vajpayee assailed the opposition parties which had ``appealed to the Muslims not to vote for the BJP," and said his party had not discriminated against the minority community. The Muslims had been treated equally by the NDA Government at the Centre and in all the BJP-run States.**

**Mr. Vajpayee said it was not proper for the Muslims to adopt an ``anti-BJP stance" and claimed that the party would win the elections even if they voted against it.** Appealing to the electorate to give a ``clear mandate" to the BJP-led coalition in the State, he said the Rajnath Singh Government had performed well despite a fractured verdict. ``It is necessary to have the same party's Governments at the Centre and the States to ensure a sustained development."

Mr. Vajpayee took a dig at the Samajwadi Party when he asked the SP leadership to explain socialism, which had not succeeded anywhere in the world, including Russia. ``**Any talk of socialism is out of sync with the changing times, which is governed by the open market economy.**"

Charging the opposition with entertaining ``hopes" of toppling the NDA Government once the results of the Assembly elections in Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Punjab were out, he said it was only wishful thinking. - PTI, UNI

## Vajpayee helpless, says defiant VHP; to begin work from Mar 15

February 19, 2002

Source: **The Hindustan Times**

Vajpayee helpless, says defiant VHP; to begin work from Mar 15

A defiant VHP on Monday threatened to begin the process of Ram Temple construction at Ayodhya from March 15, even as it said Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was "helpless" in resolving the dispute. "The Government can still solve the problem if it has the political will

and there is time till March 12, after which we will begin moving the material to the construction site from March 15," VHP senior Vice President Acharya Giriraj Kishore told a press conference here. "At the most police may open fire on us. We are ready to face any consequences," he said. Expressing "surprise" over Vajpayee's contention that the problem could not be solved due to the "unrelenting" attitude of both the sides, Kishore said that the VHP was never invited by the Prime

Minister for any negotiation on the issue. "Our doors are always open for negotiations. It was the Babri Masjid Committee which walked out of the talks.

Their stand is that they will abide by the court order, but never allow the court to give its verdict," he said. Stating that the Government was only a custodian and not the owner of the undisputed land, the VHP leader demanded that the land be returned to the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas (Trust). He, however, attributed Vajpayee's recent statement on the Ayodhya deadlock to his "helplessless". "He (Vajpayee) is helpless due to NDA", Kishore remarked. Asked how VHP could "help" him out, the VHP leader said "only NDA leaders can do it".

### PM to Muslims: SIMI was not your friend

February 16 2002

Source: The Pioneer

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Friday issued an appeal to the Muslim community to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party, advising them not to be misled by parties which treat them as mere "voters."

***"Woh log apko bas voter samajhte hain jabki ham insaan samajhte hain, Bharat mata ki santan samajhte hain (These parties consider you to be mere voters but we consider you as children of Bharat mata)," the Prime Minister said.***

Without naming anyone, he said that some parties were fanning communalism and casteism for the sake of votes. This trend is dangerous and must be stopped immediately, Mr Vajpayee said.

Hinting at the Samajwadi Party, he said some parties were opposing the ban on SIMI "for nothing." Explaining the reasons behind the ban on SIMI, he said, "The Government had definite proof that SIMI was working against the interests of the nation," he said.

On the controversy created on the madarsa issue, Mr Vajpayee said, **"We are not against all madarsas. But we want them to teach science, geography and other subjects as well to prepare children studying there to face global challenges in every field."** These madarsas were subjected to criticism only when they do not carry out productive activities and indulge in other acts, he added.

The Government desired to provide money to the madarsas for their modernisation which was being resisted by the Opposition, which was out to disturb the tranquility of the country, the Prime Minister alleged.

He said the West Bengal Government had proposed to initiate some measures against madarsas but was under pressure not to go ahead with it. The parties in UP were opposing action as they had elections in mind. But there were no elections in West Bengal, the Prime Minister said. Mr Vajpayee also claimed that it was the BJP only who could form a stable Government in the State. He appealed to the voters to give a clear mandate to his party. In a fresh offensive, the Prime Minister said Pakistan continues to be a haven for terrorists where most of the fleeing Taliban fighters are hiding and demanded that Islamabad hand over the 20 terrorists and criminals sought by India.

Mr Vajpayee demanded handing over of the 20 terrorists from Pakistan saying they had committed heinous crimes in India. "Pakistan's dream to grab Kashmir with the help of terrorists will not be allowed to succeed.

Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and it is being developed as part of the country," he said. On the volatile border situation, Mr Vajpayee said that despite the continuous threat perception from Pakistan, the Indian Government had not indulged in any offensive. "**Agar ham par koi war karega to ham prahar zaroor karenge (if some country attacks us, we will give it a befitting reply).**" Mr Vajpayee also appealed to the electorate to vote for a Government that would have "cordial relations with the Union Government so that the State's progress is not halted." Mr Vajpayee said Uttar Pradesh being the largest State of the country has always helped the Government at the Centre. "**Aap UP mein hamari majboot sarkar denge to mujhe dunia se do-do hath karne ka bal milega (If you provide me a solid Government in UP, I would be able to face any challenge from the world)**" Mr Vajpayee said.

### Assembly poll not a referendum on Centre: Vajpayee

February 12 2002

Source: **The Hindu**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 11. **The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today rejected Opposition contention that the outcome of the Assembly election would be a referendum on his Government and dismissed talk of a post-poll alliance with parties like the BSP in Uttar Pradesh.**

**"Where does the Centre come into the picture. The results may have a bearing on parties,"** he said in an informal chat with journalists here, after his election campaign programme in Bareilly and Agra was cancelled due to bad weather. The Prime Minister said the NDA Government's performance was being "appreciated" by the people and the Opposition "will be in difficulty if they tried to link the poll outcome with the Centre's performance".

**"There are no complaints against the Centre and if there are any, they are against the States,"** he said.

Expressing confidence that the BJP would get a majority in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, Mr. Vajpayee said there was no question of a post-poll alliance with any party including the BSP. -PTI

### Opposition misleading minorities: Vajpayee

February 10, 2002

Source: **The Hindustan Times**

In his first election rally in UP, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Saturday charged opposition parties with misleading minorities of the country. He said that a "fear psychosis" is being instilled in the community and they are being told to vote against the BJP.

"You have seen us in the government in UP and at the Centre. Have we ever distinguished between any community?" he asked the primarily urban gathering.

Vajpayee reiterated that the government believed in secularism and the interests of all sections was safe in the BJP dispensation. Others who joined Vajpayee in addressing the gathering were CM Rajnath Singh, BJP UP chief Kalraj Mishra and Agriculture Minister Ajit Singh. However, it was the Prime Minister who enthused the crowd, particularly when he referred to Pakistan sending terrorists to the country.

**"It is Pakistan which has to decide whether it wants friendship with India or not. We do not have any hard feelings against the neighbouring country but it has to show sincere efforts for peace by checking cross-border terrorism," he said.**

He said that there were several areas in which both the countries could cooperate: "The priorities of both the countries should be the removal of poverty and fighting illiteracy, mutual trade and creation of employment opportunities." "Instead of tackling these issues for which peace is a necessity, Pakistan rulers are creating a hostile environment by sending terrorists to India," he said.

### BJP not exploiting border issue: PM

**January 22 2002**

**Source: The Hindu**

NEW DELHI, JAN. 21. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today denied charges that the BJP was attempting to exploit the current Indo-Pak tension in the coming Assembly elections.

**"Our jawans are guarding the borders to protect us. The entire nation is standing unitedly behind them. No one is thinking of political parties or elections now,"** Mr. Vajpayee said addressing a congregation at Rakab Ganj Gurdwara here on the occasion of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary.

The Prime Minister said the Sikh guru had used both `Shakti' (force) and `Bhakti' (devotion) to protect the nation and religion. "He used `Shakti' to check oppression and violence, and `Bhakti' to lead people on the path of peace and love."

Centuries have passed, but the message of the guru had "remained alive" in the hearts and minds of the people, Mr. Vajpayee said.

"Guru Gobind Singh's life is a perfect example of sacrifice, compassion and universal brotherhood of man," Mr. Vajpayee said adding his birth anniversary was "a day to re-dedicate ourselves to the virtues and ideals espoused by the guru".

### Dove In Delhi, Hawk In Poll Hub

**January 03 2002**

**Source: The Telegraph**

Lucknow, Jan. 2: Rolling back diplomatic compulsions for a brief while, Prime Minister Atal

Bihari Vajpayee today told election-bound Uttar Pradesh what the BJP wanted to hear.

Launching a broadside against Pakistan and an occasional potshot at the US, Vajpayee ridiculed Islamabad's demand for evidence to hand over suspects wanted in India.

**"The bullet marks on the Parliament building and the bodies littered around it are enough evidence. What more evidence do they want?"** Vajpayee asked at a meeting of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. **"We have tolerated enough, now we have to retaliate. This madness has to**

**be fought. This time, it will be decisive and final,"** Vajpayee, who had held out an olive branch to Pakistan in his New Year musings, told a sea of silent samajis. He added that the terrorists "certainly" came from Pakistan. **"We also know why they came and who sent them. We have recovered enough documents from them to tell us who was behind the gory act. Dimag kiska tha, organisation tha ya desh tha, humko sab pata chal chuka hai,"** Vajpayee added. Referring to the US, the Prime Minister said: "They thought nobody could touch them, but the World Trade Center attack demolished the confidence. The West has understood religious terrorism only now. They used to say earlier that terrorism in India was a territorial problem. It is not, and now they know."

Vajpayee added that the fight against terrorism has to begin in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Prime Minister's comments came at a time when the BJP has turned restive over the conciliatory gestures from both India and Pakistan in the last few days.

The party feels that any sign of accommodation now will backfire during the February polls, especially since it had raised the war tempo initially.

However, Vajpayee, who is under international pressure to calm tempers on the border, was quick to add that America's efforts have united the world against terrorism. He pointed out that while India supported the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, "another country" was backing the Taliban. "See, now the face of Afghanistan has changed. Pakistan, too, will change."