

AYODHYA VERDICT Congress asks Advani, BJP not to reopen wounds

IANs, New Delhi

The Congress yesterday expressed hope that veteran leader LK Advani or his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would not re-start the Ayodhya movement that created a communal divide in the country.

Calling Advani as the "Bhishma Pitamah" of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Congress spokesman Manish Tewari said the saffron leader's controversial rath yatra from Gujarat's Somnath to Ayodhya 20 years ago had impacted the country's secularism.

"Pitamah of National Democratic Alliance... With wisdom of hindsight, I do hope that neither Advani nor his party does anything which impacts India's pluralism and secularism or in any manner reopens any of the old wounds which have taken a long time to heal," Tewari told reporters here on the very day when Advani visited Somnath to mark the anniversary of the 1990 rath yatra.

"The implications of that yatra, the communal conflagration it unleashed, the wounds it opened... The nation has barely been able to surmount it," Tewari said.

Earlier in the day, Advani, who visited the Somnath temple in Gujarat along with former party leader Uma Bharti, urged the Supreme Court to allow the Allahabad High Court to deliver the Ayodhya verdict. He said people had been waiting for a judgment in the case for over five decades.



A boy holds a white rose during a rally to protest against the country's justice system in front of Presidential Office in Taipei yesterday. Taiwan is considering tightening its child sex abuse laws following public outrage on three cases where defendants were controversially cleared or given light jail sentences.

Row over 'untouchable' Indian dog

BBC ONLINE

Police in India are investigating claims that a Dalit woman has been ordered to pay compensation to the high-caste owners of a dog she fed.

"The woman says the village council wants her to pay a fine of 15,000 rupees (\$330) for feeding the dog, which the owners have now kicked out. They are reported to have said the dog is 'untouchable', but deny being motivated by caste considerations.

Although widespread, discrimination against Dalits is an offence in India. Dalits, who make up nearly 20 percent of the Indian population, say little has changed despite the government enacting various laws banning caste-based discrimination.

'HE GOT VERY ANGRY'

The incident took place in Malikpur village in Morena district in central Madhya Pradesh state. "I made some roti [Indian bread] and took it to my husband who works in a farm. After I had fed him, we had some leftovers which I gave to the dog," the Dalit woman, Sunita Jatav, said. She said the owner of the dog, Amrutlal Kirari, saw her feeding him. "He got very angry and said 'You've fed my dog, it has become an untouchable now'."

Mrs Jatav said Mr Kirari left the dog, a black mongrel called Sheru, tied to a pole outside her house. On Monday, the village council met and decided that Sheru had been defiled and hence Mr Kirari should be paid 15,000 rupees as compensation, Mrs Jatav alleged.

Myanmar election campaign begins

AP, Yangon

Campaigning has begun in Myanmar for November elections, with state television and radio broadcasting the first officially sanctioned party announcements.

The National Unity Party, descendant of the party that ruled under late strongman Ne Win, who held power from 1962 until 1988, made the first broadcast Friday night. A transcript was printed in state-run newspapers Saturday.

The ruling junta plans to hold general elections on November 7, the first in 20 years. Detained Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory in the 1990 polls, but was not allowed to take power by the military. It decided to boycott this year's elections, charging that the process is unfair and undemocratic.

The government announced last week that the 37 political parties contesting the elections will each be allowed 15 minutes of airtime to describe their party platforms.

Detainee releases offered to ease Kashmir unrest

AP, New Delhi

The Indian government said Saturday it will ask authorities to release hundreds of students and youths detained during months of civil unrest that has left at least 107 people dead in Kashmir and review the massive deployment of security forces there.

The government also offered a dialogue, saying it would appoint interlocutors to talk to all stakeholders in the Indian-controlled portion of the divided Himalayan region, where many oppose Indian rule. It stopped short of offering direct talks with separatist leaders.

These "steps should address the concerns of different sections of people, including protesters," Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram said. At least 107 people, mostly teenage boys and young men in their 20s, have died in the crackdown on often-violent demonstrations since June, with every death stoking public anger and more protests. The government's proposals follow a visit by nearly 40 lawmakers from major Indian national parties to seek ways to end the unrest.

Chidambaram said New Delhi would advise the state government to "immediately release all students and youth detained or arrested for pelting stones and withdraw charges against them." There are believed to be hundreds of such detainees.

Ed Miliband elected Labour Party leader

BBC ONLINE

Ed Miliband is the new Labour leader, it has been announced at a special conference in Manchester.

He beat brother David by the wafer thin margin of 50.65 percent to 49.35 percent after second, third and fourth preference votes came into play.

Ed Balls was third, Andy Burnham fourth and Diane Abbott last in the ballot of Labour members and trade unionists.

Mr Miliband, 40, replaces acting leader Harriet Harman in the contest triggered by the resignation of Gordon Brown.

He paid tribute to each of his fellow candidates in turn and told the conference: "Today we draw a line under this contest and move forward united as a team."

The shadow energy secretary appears to have benefited from a last-minute surge of



Ed, right, and his brother David Miliband.

support before voting in the postal ballot closed on Wednesday.

Older brother David won a majority of support from Labour's MPs at Westminster, but appears to have been defeated due to Ed's dominance among trade unions and grassroots activists in Labour's electoral

college voting system.

BBC political editor Nick Robinson said in the first three rounds of voting David Miliband was ahead, it was only when votes were reallocated as the other candidates were knocked out that his younger brother was pushed over the winning line.

Mr Miliband hugged David after the result was announced. In his victory speech, he vowed to unify the party, telling delegates "The Labour Party in the future must be a vehicle that doesn't just attract thousands of young people but tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of young people who see us as their voice in British politics today."

He paid tribute to his predecessors Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, but added: "We lost the election and we lost it badly. My message to the country is this: I know we lost trust, I know we lost touch, I know we need to change."

Open floodgates displace two million in Nigeria

AFP, Duse

Opened dams have displaced some two million people in northern Nigeria, officials said, adding to flood misery that has already washed away entire villages across a wide swathe of the region.

The flooding in Jigawa state following the opening of the dams last month has wiped out huge areas of farmland and sent residents seeking shelter in schools, according to the local government.

No deaths were reported in Jigawa state, but casualties have occurred elsewhere. In Sokoto state in Nigeria's northwestern corner, local chiefs told NGO workers that around 40 people were killed when a dam burst, but the number could not be confirmed.

Heavy seasonal rain has led to the flooding and opening of the gates in the north of Africa's most populous nation.

"We have about two million people affected," Umar Kyari told AFP, adding that there were no reported deaths in Jigawa, which has a popula-

tion of about 4.3 million people.

The water has subsided to a degree in recent weeks in Jigawa, but a number of villages remained submerged on Friday, with water up to the roofs in certain areas. Some villagers were using canoes in the villages.

Many of the villages in the flooded areas consisted of mud-and-thatch huts and were populated by fishermen who work the river and farmers growing maize, millet and rice.

Jigawa is located in the far north of Nigeria along the border with the Niger.

In Sokoto state, in Nigeria's northwestern corner, entire villages have been reported washed away after a dam burst earlier this month.

Doctors Without Borders has been working to assist the displaced there with water and shelter.

The organisation has estimated that around 40,000 people remain displaced in northern Sokoto, but it has been unable to confirm the numbers because access to the area is difficult and boats scarce.

Nobel laureate Soyinka starts political party

BBC ONLINE

Nobel literature laureate Wole Soyinka has launched a political party in Nigeria, months before the presidential election.

He was elected chairman of The Democratic Front for a People's Federation at an event in Lagos.

The new party says it aims to tackle corruption and improve health and education in Nigeria.

Wole Soyinka's books and plays have won worldwide acclaim but he is also renowned as a political activist.

His book "The Man Died" in 1972 dealt with his period in jail during Nigeria's 1967-70 civil war.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Army recruitment. Includes title 'বাংলাদেশ সেনাবাহিনী লিখিত পরীক্ষার ফলাফল', exam details, and a large table of results for various posts and ranks.

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