

12.05 hrs

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Now the Prime Minister will make a statement.

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

RAM JANMA BHOOMI- BABRI MASJID DISPUTE

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO): The Ram Janma Bhoomi- Babri Masjid dispute has been agitating the minds of all those who believe in the values of secularism and governance based upon Constitutional principles. During the last few weeks, the developments at Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid complex have been unfolding rapidly. The order of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court dated 15 July was a water-shed in the series of recent developments. The High Court, in its interim order, restrained the parties from undertaking or continuing any construction activity on the 2.77 acres of land which had been notified by the Government of Uttar Pradesh for acquisition. The Court also directed that if it was necessary to do any construction on the land, prior permission from the Court would be obtained.

While the Government of Uttar Pradesh repeatedly assured the Government of India as also the National Integration Council that they would undertake to have the orders of the High Court implemented, the construction activity at the Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid complex continued.

The non-implementation of the High Court orders created misgivings among the people. This matter came up for consideration before the Supreme Court in a writ petition. During the hearing of the petition on 22 July 1992, the Supreme Court called for suspension of the construction work of any kind on the acquired land.

In a further affidavit filed by the Government of Uttar Pradesh in the Supreme Court

on 23 July 1992, the State Government unconditionally undertook to obey the orders passed by the Supreme Court and by the Allahabad High Court. It was further mentioned in the affidavit that the suggestions made by the Supreme Court at the time of the hearing on 22 July 1992 had given a new dimension to the negotiations which had been going on between the State Government and the religious leaders. The Government of Uttar Pradesh assured the Supreme Court that the State Government was using all means at its command to ensure that an agreement is reached by all parties concerned so that the orders of the Court are effectively implemented. The affidavit, *inter-alia*, referred to the invitation given by me to the leaders of the religious groups to meet me for discussion on 23 July 1992.

In the light of the submissions made by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court adjourned the hearing of the petition to Monday, 27 July 1992. The Supreme Court said, *inter-alia*, that exploring a solution to this problem is in the larger national interest.

I am sure all the right thinking people will share the concern of the Central Government to find an amicable solution of the problem. The Central Government believes that all avenues of amicable settlement must be sincerely explored in the first instance. Our effort, therefore, has been to defuse the situation, avoid a confrontationist approach, and to bring about reconciliation of views of various concerned parties. While doing so, we have been acutely conscious of the importance of upholding the dignity of the judiciary and respect for the rule of law. It was on this basis that we had repeatedly urged the Government of Uttar Pradesh and all other concerned parties to abide by the directions of the Court, both in letter and spirit, and not to do anything which will undermine the basic principles of the Constitution.

As was stated in the Congress manifesto, we are committed to finding a negotiated settlement of this issue which fully re-

spects the sentiments, of both communities involved. If such a settlement cannot be reached, all parties must respect the order and verdict of the Court. The Congress is for the construction of the Temple without dismantling the Mosque.

It was the responsibility of the Government of Uttar Pradesh to ensure that the orders of the Court are implemented and the construction activity on the acquired land is stopped. However, the situation was allowed to escalate to a point where the State Government expressed its inability to do anything and in fact requested that either the Home Minister or I should persuade the Sants and Mahants to stop the work. In view of the critical situation which had come about at Ayodhya, I had a meeting with the religious leaders on 23 July 1992. During the discussion, I drew the attention of the delegation to the serious situation created by the non-compliance of the Court orders by the Government of Uttar Pradesh. I also informed the delegation that I would be in a position to begin the process of dialogue only after the construction activity comes to a halt. Finally, I requested the religious leaders to see that the work is stopped so that efforts to solve the Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute etc. could thereafter be proceed with, in a time-bound manner. I also told them that once the work is stopped, I would revive the efforts initiated by the previous Government that had remained unfinished, plus the preliminary soundings I have been making for some time past. The purpose of this exercise is to bring about an amicable settlement through negotiations. In case it becomes necessary, the litigation pending in various Courts on the subject could be consolidated and considered by one judicial authority, whose decision will be binding on all parties. This would require a fairly elaborate exercise at Government level and appropriate submissions to the Courts for their consideration. I expressed my belief that this exercise at Government level could be expedited and completed within 4 months' time. I found agreement on this approach.

The construction activity on the acquired

land at the Ram Janma Bhoomi—Babri Masjid complex is reported to have ceased on 26 July. I hope this will pave the way for arriving at an agreed solution of the problem and bring about an amicable settlement of this long-standing issues. I therefore appeal to all political parties and all sections of the people to help in strengthening the traditional values of religious tolerance and in maintaining peace, tranquility and communal harmony.

[English]

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Midnapore): Will the House be given any opportunity at any time to discuss the statement or ask for clarifications?

MR. SPEAKER: I think if the Members of this House desire, we can have the discussion tomorrow at 12 O' Clock. You can ask the questions tomorrow at 12 O'Clock.

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Ponnani): Not desire to have discussion, but clarifications.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, we can have them tomorrow at 12 O' Clock.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH (Aonla): Mr. Speaker.....[Interruptions]

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: For once we can dispense with it.

[Interruptions]

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, The Diploma Institute of Tourism Department is being shifted to Gwalior. The Parliamentary Affairs Minister had assured us to discuss this matter in the House. But neither any action has been taken on it so far