

Sadhus raise voice against terror

Raising a united voice against terror, sadhus in this ancient temple town Monday gave a call to combat terror.

The sadhus were gathered at an anti-terrorism rally organized here by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national general secretary and former local MP Vinay Katiyar, who sought to exhort locals to retaliate not only against terrorists but even more vehemently against those who patronised them.

"Those found to be shielding terrorists deserve as much punishment as those carrying out the act; and they must not be allowed to take shelter in the name of human rights," he asserted while flaying the central government for its "soft peddling" on the issue.

Katiyar is better known as a frontrunner of the Ram temple movement that had led to the demolition of the Babri masjid in 1992, triggering India's worst communal riots that left hundreds dead. He is facing trial in the demolition criminal conspiracy. The rally is being seen as a plank for his political revival from this constituency now represented by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

The rally was convened in the wake of last week's serial bombings in [Jaipur](#) that left more than 60 dead and over 150 injured, Katiyar got a boost with several prominent sadhus of dozens of local Hindu monasteries joining hands with him in the anti-terror move.

However, as against his claim of mobilizing a gathering of about 15,000, the actual attendance stood at barely about 3,000.

Their political design also became quite apparent with the bulk of the sadhus repeatedly calling upon the audience to "vote for the right party that could deal firmly with terror".

The only well-known saint who objected against using the occasion to further the interests of any political party was Gyan Das, who is not only the president of an all India representative body of Hindu religious congregations but also the head priest of Ayodhya's oldest temple - Hanuman Garhi.

"Our objective in assembling here was to raise a united voice against terror, not to push political agendas of anyone," he told the gathering.

However, Katiyar and his sadhu allies who dominated the gathering even went to the extent of seeking "elimination of terrorists as soon as they were caught".

They all flayed the UPA government for repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). Terming the move as a politically motivated one aimed as "Muslim appeasement", Katiyar said, "if the BJP comes back to power, we will bring back such deterrent laws to curb terror."

Referring to the UPA government's "lack of political will leading to dithering over hanging to Afzal Guru (sentenced in the Indian parliament attack)", he said, "I fail to understand how different leaders from Kashmir including its chief minister have been saying that Afzal Guru's hanging would cause an upheaval in the country."

He went on to add, "if we were to come to power, we would get him hanged on the very first day since the country's apex court had already awarded him a death sentence."

Katiyar proposes to hold similar "anti-terror" rallies in different parts of the country over the coming months.

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