

Samajwadi Party justifies support to Congress, but no commitment

Justifying its support to the Congress-led government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Samajwadi Party Saturday said it had to choose between the secular and the non-secular parties and that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) prime ministerial candidate L.K. Advani was 'more lethal' than US President George W Bush.

At the same time, Samajwadi Party general secretary Amar Singh stopped short of backing the government in case its Left allies who support it from the outside pull the plug over the India-US civilian nuclear deal.

Talking to reporters here, Singh rejected the charge of his allies in the United National Progressive Alliance (UNPA) that the party was being 'opportunistic' in bailing out the government.

In this context, Singh noted that the 39 MPs of his party had all along been supporting the government from the outside.

'Both Chautala and Naidu knew before joining the UNPA that we had not withdrawn the letter of support to the government. We have been consistent in our stand, which has not changed and in the greater secular need of the nation, we will not change our stance,' he maintained.

Singh was reacting to statements from Indian National Lok Dal leader Om Prakash Chautala and Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu criticising the Samajwadi Party for its decision to back the government and the nuclear deal.

'They have been with the communal forces,' Singh said, referring to the two parties' alliance with the BJP during the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime that was voted out in the 2004 general elections.

Although Samajwadi Party's support to the government is almost a foregone conclusion in the wake of the Left withdrawal, Singh claimed that there had been no 'formal talks' on this so far.

Singh said his party was backing the nuclear deal as its leadership was convinced of its advantages and that it was in the national interest.

'It is not a Hindu or a Muslim deal. It is in the national interest. We are not doing a favour to the prime minister or (Congress chief) Sonia Gandhi by supporting the deal,' he contended.

The Samajwadi Party is facing a revolt within the party from some of its Muslim members, who are opposed to the nuclear deal.

Singh, along with party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and senior leader Ram Gopal Yadav had also sought former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's views on the nuclear deal. The prime minister and National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan have also briefed them about the deal.

The Samajwadi Party leader reiterated that he did not want the BJP to take advantage of the political crisis over the nuclear deal.

'Advani is more lethal than Bush. The threat of Bush will come to an end (as his term is about to end) but the threat of Advani is likely to come (after the general elections scheduled for 2009),' Singh maintained.

However, Singh said his party would continue to oppose the Congress and the government on issues like price rise and inflation.

'When we met the prime minister, we discussed these issues. We are against his policies,' he said.

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