

Quiet birthday for Advani; President, PM send greetings

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) veteran L.K. Advani turned 82 on a quiet note Sunday, meeting well wishers at home - but not attending any political functions - on what could be his last birthday as leader of opposition. President Pratibha Patil sent him a bouquet and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh greeted him.

It was a marked change from last year when Advani on this day launched a website virtually heralding his campaign for prime ministership - an effort that proved unsuccessful.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also greeted him, while in the evening senior BJP leaders Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitely, Rajnath Singh, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa and state Tourism Minister G. Janardhana Reddy called on him at his house.

'Advaniji is meeting people at home. But no political function has been organised by the party on the day,' said a party spokesperson wishing to remain anonymous.

For Advani, 2009 could have been the most important year of his political journey. But after the debacle his party faced at the hands of the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections as well as in state polls later, followed by a mutiny of sorts by BJP leaders against his authority, Advani has been keeping a low profile.

Advani was born Nov 8, 1927, in Karachi, now in Pakistan. He joined the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1942 at the young age of 15. He was soon to take part in active politics, joining the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (the precursor to the BJP) in 1951.

He held various positions in the government 1977 onwards, becoming union minister for information and broadcasting that year in the Morarji Desai-led Janata government. He became home minister in 1998 and was deputy prime minister between 1999 and 2004 in the cabinet of then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Rumours are now rife that Advani will soon hang up his boots as leader of opposition.

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