

## After brawl, much bonhomie in Rajya Sabha

There was much bonhomie in the Rajya Sabha Tuesday afternoon following an unseemly brawl over a religious slogan that had disrupted the house earlier in the day after Home Minister P. Chidambaram tabled the report of the Liberhan Commission that probed the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid.

S.S. Ahluwalia of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Amar Singh of the Samajwadi Party (SP) who were involved in the fisticuffs, walked the last mile to admit to Chairman Hamid Ansari that what had happened was most unfortunate and assure him that it would not happen again.

The trouble had broken out soon after noon as the home minister finished reading out a statement tabling the Liberhan report. BJP MPs broke out into cries of 'Jai Shri Ram' and this appeared to anger Amar Singh, who got up and advanced menacingly toward Ahluwalia, waving his right hand at him and objecting to the slogans.

Amar Singh seemingly tried to push Ahluwalia but was in turn violently pushed back. Opposition members immediately rushed to push the two apart and in the process, some of them got into their own scuffles.

Prithviraj Chavan, minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office, ran towards the agitated MPs but could not defuse the situation.

Then, abruptly, Amar Singh turned around and walked back to his seat shouting 'Ya Ali'.

In the midst of all this, Deputy Chairman K. Rahman Khan adjourned the house till 2 p.m. This was the third adjournment of the house since morning -- the first time over the Ranganath Misra Commission report on reservations for Dalit Muslims and Christians and then over the corruption scam involving former Jharkhand chief minister Madhu Koda.

As tempers cooled in the house, Ahluwalia looked toward Amar Singh and remarked: 'Kamaal hai, Musalmanon ko bachane ke liye, ek Sikh ko maar rahe ho (How ironic, to save Muslims you are beating up a Sikh).'

The analogy was apt as both are minority communities.

When the house reassembled at 2 p.m., both Amar Singh and Ahluwalia bent over backwards to go down memory lane.

'We go back a long way. We started out our student politics in the Congress together. Whatever happened was most unfortunate. I will ensure it does not happen again but please don't provoke me again,' Amar Singh said while looking at Ahluwalia and addressing him by his first name -- Surinder.

Ahluwalia was not to be left behind.

'You are perhaps forgetting that we studied at Calcutta University together. We started our student politics together. Whatever has happened was most unfortunate,' the BJP leader maintained.

'Right, now let's get on with the rest of the business,' Ansari declared, signalling an end to the unfortunate episode.

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