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Antulay questions Karkare's death

Last Updated: Wednesday, December 17, 2008 - 00:00

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New Delhi, Dec 17: Union Minorities Affairs Minister AR Antulay courted controversy on Wednesday by suspecting the truth behind Maharashtra Anti-Terror Squad chief Hemant Karkare's killing during the Mumbai attacks. His divisive statement on such a sensitive issue is now bound to send ripples across the nation, with the Opposition already seeking a clarification from the Prime Minister.

Maintaining that "there is more than what meets the eyes", he said "Karkare was investigating some cases in which "there are non-Muslims also", an apparent reference to the Malegaon blasts case in which sadhvi Pragya Thakur and a Lt Colonel Shrikant Prasad Purohit were 11 persons to be arrested.

Union Minority Affairs

Minister A R Antulay set off a major controversy today when he raised doubts over the killing of Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare by Pakistani terrorists, suggesting a link with the Malegaon blasts that were investigated by him.

Opposition parties were quick to attack the minister for his "misdemeanour" and demanded immediate clarification from the Prime Minister but the Congress party distanced itself saying they were his "personal remarks".

BJP and Shiv Sena members raked up the issue in Lok Sabha and demanded Home Minister P Chidambaram, who had moved two anti-terror bills, to clarify the situation.

Maintaining that "there is more than what meets the eyes", Antulay said Karkare was investigating some cases in which "there are non-Muslims also", an apparent reference to the Malegaon blasts case in which sadhvi Pragya Thakur and a Lt Colonel Shrikant Prasad Purohit were among the 11 persons

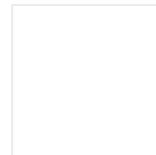


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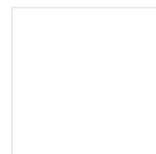
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to be arrested.

"Unfortunately his end came. It may be a separate inquiry how his (Karkare`s) end came, he told reporters outside Parliament.

Antulay said "Karkare found that there are non Muslims involved in the acts terrorism during his investigations in some cases. Any person going to the roots of terror has always been the target, he said.

"Superficially speaking they (terrorists) had no reason to kill Karkare. Whether he (Karkare) was victim of terrorism or terrorism plus something. I do not know," he added.

Reacting to Antulay`s remarks, Congress spokesman Abhishek Manu Singhvi they should be treated his "personal views" and Congress party does not not agree with them and does not not support such a formulation.

To a question, he said there was no no question embarrassment to the party.

Samajwadi Party MP Amar Singh, who himself was in the centre of a controversy when he had raised doubts over the killing of a Delhi police official in an encounter recently, said a senior leader like Antulay should before issuing any statement uphold the cherished tradition of collective wisdom of the Cabinet.

Not not completely disapproving the remarks, Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said Antulay must be having "more information" since he hails from Maharashtra.

Congress disassociates itself from Antulay`s remarks

The Congress today disassociated itself from the statement of Minority Affairs Minister A R Antulay suggesting that the killing of Mumbai ATS chief Hemant Karkare could be due to his investigation of the Malegaon blast.

"If it (the statement of Antulay) is correct we do not accept the innuendo and the aspersions cast," Congress spokesman Abhishek Singhvi told reporters here.

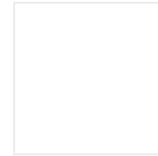
Singhvi said the Congress does not accept expressing doubt and raising questions on the issue.

"This should be the end of the matter. The Congress does not agree with Antulay`s statement," Singhvi said.

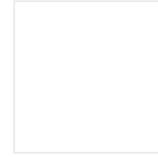
Anti-terror laws should cover communal riots`

Minority Affairs Minister A R Antulay today demanded that communal riots should be brought under the purview of the new anti- terror law being brought in by the government to combat terrorism.

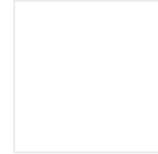
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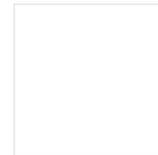
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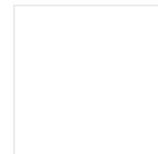
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"This law should also be applicable against communal rioters because rioters are also terrorists," he told reporters here adding that "this is his personal view that nobody can stop him from airing".

Referring to the killing of a large number of people in communal riots in independent India, he said those people who inflame communal riots should also be punished.

He, however, refused to answer whether this demand was raised in the cabinet and later shot down by the government.

First Published: Wednesday, December 17, 2008 - 00:00

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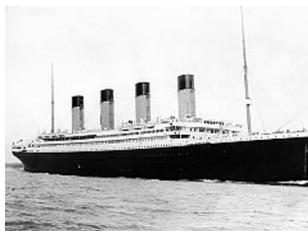
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