

Questions continue to pour on Karkare's killing

Himanshi Dhawan, TNN Dec 20, 2008, 12.12am IST

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NEW DELHI: Minority affairs minister A R Antulay might have deeply embarrassed his own party but the throng of the faithful that welcomed him at a mosque near Parliament where he went to offer afternoon prayers reflected a groundswell of support in his community.

Antulay's stand on Mumbai anti-terrorism squad chief Hemant Karkare's killing -- that it was linked to the officer investigating Hindu radicals accused in the Malegaon case -- has earned him the overwhelming support of opinion-makers in the Muslim community who feel that the concerns are valid.

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Muslim organisations and members of Parliament have pointed a finger of suspicion at the "mysterious circumstances" under which Karkare and his two other officers -- Ashok Kamte and Vijay Salaskar -- were killed just when the ATS was making sensational disclosures regarding the alleged involvement of Hindu extremist outfits in the Malegaon blast case.

JD(U) MP Ejaz Ali said the question raised by the minister was a timely one. "The circumstances around Hemant Karkare's death are suspicious. He was getting threats to his life and his wife has refused compensation offered to her. We demand a probe by the CBI or a joint parliamentary committee on the issue," he said. The MP added that national interest must be given precedence over religious and political concerns.

Similar reservations on Karkare's killing were raised by Mohammed Adeb, independent member of the Rajya Sabha from UP who felt the "sudden" deaths of the three officers were on everyone's mind. "It is a question that should not be politicised," he said. At pains to disassociate himself from the Congress, Adeb said he was neither an admirer of the Congress party nor Antulay. "People with secular credentials have wanted to know about this (the circumstances around Karkare's death). I don't understand what the fuss is all about? This is a democracy and we have every right to ask for a probe," he said.

Jamiat-e-Islami-Hind president Jalal Umri alleged that the government was trying to brush the issue under the carpet. "Up till the Malegaon probe, only Muslim names were being named in every blast as suspects. But after the ATS investigation, things that we had suspected for long since the Nagpur blasts would have been backed by hard evidence finally," he said. Umri added that Antulay was not wrong but to condemn him was wrong.

All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMMM) said it was relevant to note that no demands had been made by terrorists. "It was as if the terrorists had intended to kill the three and they accomplished this," Zafarul Islam Khan, AIMMM president, said.

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