

I differed with Vajpayee on Ayodhya, Modi removal, says Advani

New Delhi, December 26: Paying his wholehearted honour to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 85th birthday Friday, senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader L.K. Advani has admitted that he had differences with the former prime minister on issues like the Ayodhya movement and the removal of Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi after the 2002 Godhra train burning and the riots that followed.

Recalling his long association with Vajpayee since the founding of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh in 1951, Advani has vividly described in an article, laced with nostalgia, how the two of them worked together to bring the BJP to power in 1998.

"He used to consult me even earlier on all policy issues, and he would never go ahead with an idea if he knew that I had a different view on the same. Such was the understanding between the two of us," Advani wrote in an article published in the Indian Express Friday. Vajpayee appointed Advani as deputy prime minister on June 29, 2002.

The veteran BJP leader, who resigned as leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha last week, however, said despite their "unparalleled partnership," there were differences between them on some issues.

"He (Vajpayee) had reservations about the BJP getting directly associated with the Ayodhya movement. But he accepted the collective decision of the party - showing that he was a thorough democrat, by conviction and temperament," Advani wrote.

Advani, along with the party top brass, had strongly objected to the indictment of Vajpayee by the Liberhan Commission in its report on the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid.

The second instance, Advani pointed out, related to differing perceptions over the alleged responsibility of Modi for the Gujarat riots that followed the Godhra train burning.

"Atalji was among those in the party who thought that Modi should be asked to quit," Advani wrote.

"I was convinced, after talking to a large number of people, that Modi was being unfairly targeted. He was, in my opinion, more sinned against than sinning," he said.

Describing Vajpayee as "man of destiny", Advani said: "...it's unparalleled in independent India's history for two personalities to have worked together in the same organization for so long and with such a strong spirit of partnership."

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