**‘Advani is neither tired nor retired… (But) he has never said he is in the race for PM’ | The Indian Express**

Related. In this Idea Exchange,BJP president Rajnath Singh speaks about his partys ability to retain allies,its leadership debate and Modis popularity. This session was moderated by Assistant Editor Ravish Tiwari. Rajnath Singh: The biggest challenge before us today is the crisis of credibility in politics. This crisis is increasing because politicians words and deeds dont match. The PM had said in the 2G spectrum case that he and his government were prepared to appear in front of any committee,be it the PAC or JPC. We invited him to the PAC,he did not come. Normally,I do not speak about the PM. He has too much responsibility on his shoulders,but I am expressing a concern here. He said Ceasars wife should be above suspicion. Why make such a statement? Even then,he did not come before the JPC. Thats what I mean when I talk of mismatch between words and deeds. Political parties have been saying that the CBI should not be misused. The government is not ready to accept this. It says the CBI is an autonomous body. The Supreme Court gave a directive saying the coal scam status report on the investigation should be submitted directly to it. But the Law Minister calls the CBI Director to his office to discuss changes in the report. Changes may have been made. You say one thing in Parliament and another outside Parliament. This is why the governments credibility is being eroded. Be it on the economic front or the diplomatic front,the government has proved a failure. Maneesh Chhibber: You spoke about the CBIs autonomy. Your government was in power for six years,what did you do? We did not misuse the CBI even on a single issue. We never misused the CBI on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. We could have done that and closed the matter forever but we did not. D K Singh: The BJP keeps asking the Congress about their PM candidate,but who will be your PM candidate? We never ask the Congress about their candidate. We will soon answer this question (on our candidate). The parliamentary board meeting will decide after detailed discussions. In 2009,I talked to everyone individually and then called the meeting. We will adopt the same procedure this time. Coomi Kapoor: The JD(U) and BJP are engaged in a verbal duel. When will you feel that the JD(U) has crossed the Lakshman Rekha? The Lakshman Rekha is always there. Two political parties in a coalition will have their boundaries or differences on certain issues. But we would not want to break the friendship with the JD(U),Shiv Sena or Akali Dal. It will be unfortunate for all of us. Shekhar Gupta: Will you give veto power to any party on the leadership issue? Friendship does not recognise veto. Mutual considerations and dialogue can resolve many crises. Coomi Kapoor: Does the BJP have the right to veto? Our allies believe that the single largest party selects the prime ministerial candidate. But there are a few of our allies who feel they should be consulted. D K Singh: Nitish Kumar feels that a secular face,like A B Vajpayees,should lead the nation. Do you agree? The BJP is Indias largest secular party. Our ideology and our commitment make us strong. And that is why we have never faced a vertical division. Had we been communal,we would not be talking about Vasudhaiva kutumbakam. Swaraj Thapa: How far will you go to retain allies like the JD(U) and others? No one discusses these issues with the president of the party,but theres no doubt that if there is someone who is the most popular leader in the country,it is Narendra Modi. D K Singh: But is his a secular face? The most secular party in this country is the BJP. If there is a communal party in this country,it is the Congress. The Samajwadi Party calls itself a secular party but,after it took over,Uttar Pradesh has witnessed more than 15 incidents of communal violence. There have been Congress governments in Gujarat and there has been communal tension under them. Just because of one unfortunate incident (Gujarat riots 2002),it is not right to repeatedly blame a chief minister. What happened in 1984? Indira Gandhi was assassinated and the country is still recuperating from the pain (of the riots that followed). The country doesnt need vote bank politics,we need politics to build the country. Political parties should not indulge in politics just to form governments but to build societies and the country. Pragya Kaushika: Would you share with us your strategy for the Karnataka Assembly elections? Have you received a proposal from (former BJP leader) B S Yeddyurappa? There is no such proposal. In Karnataka,we did not compromise on corruption. Pranab Dhal Samanta: Is there a possibility that you will go into the Lok Sabha elections without announcing a prime ministerial candidate? That depends on the central parliamentary board. We will talk to different people on this and a meeting of the board will be called. Pragya Kaushika: Assembly elections in Delhi are round the corner. Will you be able to come to power? Who will be your chief ministerial candidate? We have not projected any chief ministerial candidate for Delhi till now. The candidate will be decided after a meeting of the central parliamentary board. Internal democracy is our biggest strength. We are not a dynastic party. I come from a very humble family and I am the president of the BJP. I have been chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and a cabinet minister twice. I was the state party president in UP and Atal Bihari Vajpayee brought me to the Surface Transport Ministry at the Centre. I was surprised as many were vying for that department. This is what internal democracy is about. We discuss each and every aspect,there are differences but we are able to reach a consensus within the party. Internal democracy,along with our ideology,is our biggest strength. Shyamlal Yadav: You say your party is not dynastic. However,your partys UP team was formed recently and most of the members come from big political families. My son has entered politics. I was state president when his name was proposed for the Assembly elections. The entire central election committee backed the state committees proposal. When I went home,my son knew I wasnt happy. He told me that he understood my compulsions and he said he would not contest the elections. This time,too,I did not ask Nitin Gadkari to give him a ticket. It was the state units proposal. He was made general secretary. I conveyed my displeasure to Gadkariji. I said that unless my son works in the party for 10 years,he will not ask for a ticket. But as in every other field,in politics too,an atmosphere is created inside homes and family members develop interest. What more can I doprovided for a good education,everything. Now I am the party president but my son will be treated as an ordinary worker in the party. Vandita Mishra: Over the last few years,a lot has been said about the RSSs micro management of the BJP. As the new party president,do you think this is a perception or a reality that needs to be addressed? I have been president before and I am president again. No RSS office-bearer has told me whom to appoint or whom to designate for a position. Be it micro or macro,the RSS never does this. I want the Government of India to try to put a sweetener in the deal,to try to compensate for the deal. But the boundary dispute should get resolved. We will try our best,there is no opposition from our side. Archna Shukla: You have repeatedly been asked about the impression that the RSS is micro managing the BJP. You also said the BJP is the most secular party,but thats not the popular perception. Why have you not been able to handle these questions? Allegations can be made against anyone. Even Lord Ram had to face allegations. We have been in power for very long. We have run the government for six years in Delhi,and several states in the country have BJP governments right now. No one can accuse any BJP government of discriminating against anyone on the basis of caste,creed or religion. There are,of course,accusations made for the sake of accusing. We raised the issue of riots in Congress-ruled states and in UP,but no one says anything about that. It is all about perception. People discuss the 2002 riots again and again because they want to raise apprehensions in the minds of Hindus and Muslims,they want to keep them in fear to get their votes. D K Singh: There was a time when 23 parties were with you,now you have a handful. Why? Were there shortcomings in the BJPs coalition management? No. If anyone has the ability to run a coalition,then it is the BJP. Look at the Congress. While in power,the TMC left,the DMK left,and there is no telling who will leave next. We have not been in power,and yet our earlier alliance of four to five parties from 15-17 years ago is still working. Let the elections happen. Let us come back as the single largest party,then see what happens. Even if we get a majority on our own,our alliance partners will have a stake in the government. And if needed,not just 24,26 parties will come forward. D K Singh: Have you reached out to the former NDA constituents? We havent discussed their coming back as NDA allies but we have good relations with them. We keep talking to Mamataji,Naveen Patnaik,we talk to everyone. Coomi Kapoor: What is L K Advanis role in the party? Is he an elder statesman or is he a PM candidate? He is our leader,he shows us the way. Advaniji has never said I am in the race for prime minister. No one in our party ever does that. We never have a race. Swaraj Thapa: Senior leaders,including Yashwant Sinha,have said that Advani should be the PM candidate. Would the BJP or NDA benefit if he was the candidate? We first have to talk to our central parliamentary board. Ravish Tiwari: Is he tired or retired ? He is neither tired nor retired. Vandita Mishra: You say no one is the PM candidate. But Modi,after winning the Assembly elections in Gujarat,is travelling across the country,speaking at different forums. What is that all about? You ask the people who are inviting him. Why did FICCI invite him? Why did Sri Ram College invite him? You ask them. It is not like he is going there to declare himself the PM candidate. People invite him to speak,so he is going. Ambreen Khan: Narendra Modis rapid rise has been welcomed in the corporate sector. But some people say he runs a one-man ship,he is a control freak. Are you worried that if he comes to power,he will set everyone else aside? That is not the case. During my earlier stint as party president,when Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat,we took several decisions that were against his wishes. But he always honoured the decision made by the party president. He (Modi) has always taken everyone along and is doing so now. Had he not taken people alongand I am not just talking about the party,but society and the people of Gujarathe would not have been made Chief Minister for the third time. A leader should have initiative,common sense,he should be rational. These qualities are enough,one does not need more than that. They say that to run this country,to save the country,we need an economist. But where has that got us? Deepak Kumar (EXIMS): If the BJP comes to power,what will you do to end corruption? Bring in transparency and changes in the system wherever needed. Our priority will be transparency. Rooting out corruption is an ideal situation but corruption can definitely be minimised. To make things transparent,you need to fix responsibility. We need laws and a will. We have supported the Lokpal Bill. D K Singh: Is Narendra Modi the best BJP CM? What differences do you see between his model of governance and Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhans model of development ? Every state has different problems. We cant say that if one model works in one state,it will work in another and then in another. Narendra Modi is doing a good job,Shivraj Singh is also performing well. So are Raman Singh,Manohar Parrikar and Jagadish Shettar. D K Singh: Is Modi the best chief minister for the BJP? That is what the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation said. D K Singh: Do you agree with the changes brought into the Lokayukta Bill in Gujarat? It has completely undermined the Lokayukta. There is nothing to disagree with. Everyone agrees that there is minimum corruption in Gujarat. Ravish Tiwari: During Vajpayees time,you wanted to open up the insurance and pension sectors. Why has the BJP developed cold feet on the issue now? It is not that we are vehemently opposing the issue,we are rethinking it. But we are completely opposed to FDI in retail trade. Ravish Tiwari: You will not get the numbers till you recover in Uttar Pradesh. How do you plan to do that? I am confident that the BJP will achieve success in the Lok Sabha elections. That is because the people are not just disappointed but angry,furious at the performance of the Congress-UPA in its second term. That was not the case after their first term. People want a change. If there is any party that can provide an alternative,it is the BJP. That is the trend: people are attracted to the political party that can give them an alternative. We need a good increase in the number of seats from UP. We have set a target of 40 seats. We are working towards that. Dilip Bobb: Will this government complete its full term? We believe that the mandate of the people should be respected. We will never destabilise an elected government. If the government falls due to its own internal contradictions,then we are ready for elections. Swaraj Thapa: The government is taking populist measures such as the Food Security Bill. Will the BJP support these measures? We will not oppose the schemes. We will support the Food Security Bill but with certain amendments. Several states are not happy with the proposal. They are saying the PDS system is already choked. We have to keep this in mind. I dont think the Direct Benefits Transfer Scheme will bring any benefits. You transfer the cash and when people go to the market,they find prices increasing every day. So what is the value of this money? But we will not oppose the scheme.