

SC to handle Ayodhya title dispute as 'land issue'

The court then recorded that over 500 exhibits, which include the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana* and documents in various languages including Sanskrit and Pali, have been filed. The depositions of 87 witnesses have also been filed along with the Archaeological Survey of India's reports. However, some translations are yet to be completed and copies of videos have to be made. The court asked the parties to do so in the next two weeks.

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, for the appellants, objected to a submission by senior advocate C.S. Vaidyanathan that appellants should provide them with a synopsis of the propositions they are going to make in court.

Mr. Dhavan said the respondents should not dictate what propositions he should argue on.

"What is relevant for me, may be irrelevant for you. I will open the case however I want. I will not be curtailed by any propositions. Let me present the case as I want... (then turning to Mr. Vaidyanathan) You (respondents) want a proposition? Here is one. You are wrong, a 100 times wrong," Mr. Dhavan said.

"Such hyperbole should be avoided," Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the Uttar Pradesh government, responded.

Senior advocate K. Parasaran, on behalf of the deity Ram Lalla, rose to address the court at this point, submitting that the Bench should confine itself to the documents on record rather than fan out.

"What kind of evidence will be there from 30,000 years ago? The incident relates to the *Treta Yuga*," Mr. Parasaran submitted.

The court indicated that it may prioritise the Ayodhya appeals once the final hearings commence.

Urges dedicated time

Mr. Dhavan said the court should dedicate time to the appeals rather than hear them in the one-hour intervals between Constitution Bench hearings.

The practice now in the CJI court is that a five-judge Constitution Bench sits morning and afternoon from Tuesdays to Thursdays. An hour each is spent on other cases, including PILs, just before the Constitution Bench convenes for the day. Mr. Dhavan did not want that treatment to be meted out to the Ayodhya case.

But a visibly annoyed CJI Misra said these "other cases" are heard in between Constitution Bench hearings because they deal with "over 700 poor litigants waiting for justice".

The court posted the Ayodhya case for hearing on March 14.

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