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Sparks fly at Mani Shankar Aiyar's book launch

- Special Correspondent

The launch of Mani Shankar Aiyar's provocatively titled book "One Year of Modi Government-Achhe Din? Ha! Ha!!p" on Wednesday here deteriorated at many points into a slugfest between the Opposition MPs and representatives of the BJP and RSS who took part in a panel discussion.

Possibly, the most entertaining speaker was Mr. Aiyar who did not participate in the panel discussion but made acerbic comments while introducing the panellists.

Thanking the BJP's Seshadri Chari and RSS ideologue Rakesh Sinha profusely for showing up, he said he had tried every member of the Union Cabinet but no one had agreed to come. Now, he hoped that Mr. Chari, one of the nicest men he knew, would at some stage become a Minister.



The names of Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu and BJP MP Chandan Mitra were on the invitation but both dropped out.

Describing Congress general secretary Digvijaya Singh as someone with whom he was in total agreement, he said he hoped he would become Prime Minister. When the audience burst into laughter at the implications, Mr. Aiyar quickly said that they had misunderstood him – he supported Mr.

Singh only because he was the one who would make him External Affairs Minister.

And when it came to the CPI(M)'s Nilotpal Basu, he referred to his own Left leanings, and said, "We must hang together or be hanged separately."

The panel discussion, chaired by Rajdeep Sardesai, saw him posing the question: "Is the Nehru-Gandhi era over, and is it now the Modi era?"

Mr. Singh, Mr. Basu, and the JD(U)'s Pawan Verma, attacked the Modi government, all pointing out the sheen had vanished in one year.

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