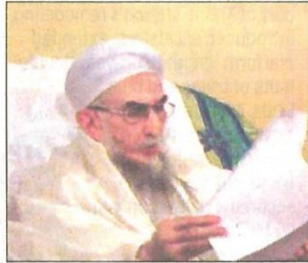


New Syedna's uncle takes succession row to HC

Mohammed Wajihuddin | TNN

Mumbai: Nearly three months after the death of Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin, the 52nd Dai al-Mutlaq or spiritual head of the Dawoodi Bohra community, his half-brother Khuzaima Qutbuddin has moved the Bombay high court against the succession of his nephew Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin as the community's head.

In his 700-page petition, Qutbuddin, apart from calling Saifuddin's succession as "false", has also sought the court's intervention to restrain him from "holding himself out as or doing any acts, deeds or things as the Dai al-Mutlaq of the Dawoodi Bohra community". Dai al-Mutlaq, or simply Dai, is the spiritual and temporal head of the community and controls a vast network of trusts which manage cha-



Khuzaima Qutbuddin (L) says the claim of Syedna Burhanuddin pronouncing *nass* (succession) on his son Mufaddal Saifuddin was false as "he (Burhanuddin) had suffered a debilitating stroke and was medically unfit to even speak". A source close to Syedna Saifuddin's family said they would not comment now

rities, mosques, madrassas, mausoleums and community halls.

"We tried repeatedly to resolve the issue internally. We even invited him for a debate and to establish the rightful claim of *nass* (succession). But all the attempts have been ignored and rebuffed by Shehzada Mufaddal Saifuddin," said Qutbuddin's son Abdeali

Qutbuddin. He added that his father has submitted "credible" documents to the court to support his claim to the much-revered title of Dai.

A source close to the family of Syedna Saifuddin told **TOI** that "they will not comment on the latest development as they have not seen the petition filed by Khuzaima Qutbuddin".

The battle for succession began soon after Syedna Burhanuddin's death on January 17, when Qutbuddin claimed that the late Syedna had chosen him as his successor 50 years ago. This claim was immediately rejected by Saifuddin's followers. A small group of Qutbuddin supporters even complained of threats and harassment.

Abdeali said his father only wanted to ensure that "the path shown by the previous Dais is followed, and the community is not torn asunder by false claimants". Abdeali also said the "false claims" have ruptured the fabric of the Dawoodi Bohra community, with many wives leaving their husbands and children getting separated from their fathers.

► **'Was too ill to speak clearly', P 7**

'Ex-Syedna was too ill to speak clearly'

THE SUCCESSION ROW

SYEDNA MOHAMMED BURHANUDDIN



The 52nd Dai al-Mutlaq (spiritual head) of the Dawoodi Bohra community, he had succeeded his father, Syedna Taher Saifuddin, in 1965. He led the community for five decades. Syedna Burhanuddin died on January 17, 2014, at his Saifee Mahal residence in Malabar Hill at the age of 102

SYEDNA MUFADDAL SAIFUDDIN (70)

Second son of Syedna Burhanuddin, Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin became the 53rd Dai after his father's death. In June 2011, Syedna Burhanuddin pronounced Mufaddal Saifuddin as his successor from his hospital bed in London, and later re-conferred the succession on Mufaddal Saifuddin. A majority of Bohras have shown allegiance to him



KHUZAIMA QUTBUDDIN (73)



Half-brother of Syedna Burhanuddin, Khuzaima Qutbuddin claimed that he was the real Dai as Syedna Burhanuddin had declared him his Mazoon (deputy) and secretly appointed him as his successor 50 years ago. He claimed that Mufaddal Saifuddin, his brothers and other family members took advantage of the stroke that Syedna Burhanuddin had suffered in London and falsely declared that he had proclaimed Mufaddal Saifuddin as his successor. Khuzaima Qutbuddin and his family members moved out of Saifee Mahal on the day Syedna Burhanuddin died

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Seeking judicial intervention, Khuzaima Qutbuddin has said that the claim of Syedna Burhanuddin pronouncing Mufaddal Saifuddin as his successor in March 2011 in London was false as "Syedna Burhanuddin had suffered a debilitating stroke and was medically unfit to even speak".

To create confusion in the community, added Qutbuddin's

son Abdeali, Syedna Burhanuddin was brought to Mumbai in a critical condition in an air ambulance. "A ceremony was staged (at Saifee Masjid) where thousands were present but Syedna (Burhanuddin) could not speak clearly due to effects of the stroke," said Khuzaima Qutbuddin's other son Aziz.

He added that he would soon come out with more details on the merits in the claims being made by his father.