

COMMUNAL RIOTS - 2008

(January to December 2008)

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Normalcy yet to be restored in Kandhamal (7)

BHUBANESWAR: The people belonging to both the communities in the communal violence affected Kandhamal district were still living with fear in their mind, a team of leaders of the ruling Biju Janata Dal said here on Monday. A five-member team of the party that visited the violence affected areas in Kandhamal on January 19 and 20 said that normalcy had not been fully restored in the district. The leaders said that people belonging to both the communities had been affected by the violence. While more Hindus had been affected in Brahmanigaon, more Christians had been affected in Barakhama area, they said. However, senior legislator Jayaram Pangri who led the team said that they found the relief measures very satisfactory. "Not a single affected person complained about the relief measures being taken by the Government," Mr. Pangri said. Asked about the reasons behind the violence, Mr. Pangri and other members of the team said they would not reply to this query as a judicial inquiry had been ordered into the whole incident. Thousands of people had affected in the violence that claimed three lives. Hundreds of houses were burnt down and many churches were damaged during the violence from December 24 to 27. (The Hindu 22/1/08)

One dead, clashes in Dhar as RSS ignores order, takes out rally (7)

BHOPAL, JANUARY 21: Around 1,200 RSS volunteers were arrested on Monday as they took out a Path Sanchalan in Badnawar town of Dhar district, violating prohibitory orders imposed in the wake of communal clashes. On Saturday, communal clashes erupted as the RSS took out an "awareness rally" coinciding with Muharram procession. While RSS leader Ashish Basu claims a few volunteers were attacked by a mob after they lost their way and strayed into a Muslim locality, a local Congress MLA tells a different story. "RSS activists attacked a Muslim family in the Malipura Mohalla, a Hindu-dominated area, killing 60-year-old Abbas Ramzan. They didn't spare anyone and chopped off the fingers of a pregnant woman in the family," local Congress MLA Rajvardhan Singh told The Indian Express on Monday. "They didn't have the permission to take out a rally and despite that they went ahead. Even the police couldn't stop them. Although authorities had imposed prohibitory orders, they did not announce a curfew. Despite the obvious violation of the prohibitory orders, the police did not arrest them." Defending his activists, Basu said the event was planned a month in advance and was impossible to cancel. Last month, RSS planned a similar Path Sanchalan in Dewas district which led to communal violence, following the murder of former pracharak Sunil Joshi. Joshi, an accused in a double murder, was gunned down in Dewas town. (Indian Express 22/1/08)

Bilkis case: 11 get life, 7 acquitted (7)

Mumbai, Jan. 21: Judge U.D. Salvi of the city sessions court on Monday awarded life imprisonment and penalty of Rs 34,000 each to the 11 convicted persons on the charges of gangrape of Bilkis Bano and the murder of her family members. Ms Bano was gangraped by her neighbours during the Godhra riots in Gujarat and saw her baby girl killed in front of her eyes. Assistant police inspector Sonabhai Khoyabhai Gori, who was also involved, was fined Rs 3,000 along with imprisonment of three-years for framing incorrect records. Ms Bano, who was six months pregnant, was gangraped along with the two women of the family and 14 other members of the family were murdered during the communal violence that erupted in Gujarat after a coach of Sabarmati Express was set ablaze on February 27, 2002. "It appears to be a balanced judgment, but I'm not satisfied with the acquittal of the seven accused due to the lack of evidences," said special police prosecutor R.K. Shah, who also demanded death penalty for three rapists during the court hearing. "Once we get the judgment copy of the case, we will decide on

how to go for an appeal demanding death penalty for the three rapists involved in the case," he added while speaking to this newspaper. Defence counsel advocate S.K. Dave said, "We are going to appeal in the high court against the judgment given by the special court judge." He also requested the judge to charge a small penalty amount to the convicted persons as their families are financially weak. "We are thankful for the support of our family members and well-wishers as they believed in our innocence," said Dr Sangeeta Arun Prasad, who was acquitted along with her husband and five others due to the lack of evidences in tampering with the medical reports of the victims. The trial was shifted from a court in Ahmedabad to Mumbai in August 2003 by the Supreme Court after the Central Bureau of Investigation and Ms Bano expressed apprehensions that witnesses in the case could be harmed if the trial was conducted in Gujarat. The relatives of the convicted persons who gathered in the court premise openly denounced the judgment and were demanding for the justice in the case. "All the accused in the Bilkis Bano case are innocent and they are wrongly convicted due to the false allegations made by Ms Bano," said Mr Rajesh Soni, a relative of one of the convicted, from Godhra. (Asian Age 22/1/08)

Pay Rs 38 lakh tax: I-T Dept to Zahira Sheikh (7)

VADODARA: Key witness in the Best Bakery case, Zahira Sheikh, who was convicted of perjury by a special court in Mumbai, has been asked to pay Rs 38.63 lakh as income tax by the Vadodara I-T department. The IT department has also asked BJP MLA Madhu Shrivastava, embroiled in a controversy of allegedly trying to bribe Zahira, to cough up Rs 28.06 lakh, while his brother, Congress councillor Chandrakant Shrivastava, has been asked to pay Rs 36.02 lakh. Madhu Shrivastava, however, has disagreed with the amount and said that he has received a notice for paying Rs 11.6 lakh. He has appealed against the notice and called it "politically motivated". The Supreme Court had ordered investigation into financial assets of Zahira and the Shrivastava brothers after Tehelka caught Madhu Shrivastava on tape claiming to have bribed Zahira with Rs 18 lakh to change her statement in court. Officials checked Zahira's accounts of three years, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06. The I-T department considered the Tehelka tapes in their scrutiny and found that Rs 1 lakh had been paid as deposit to a builder in Mumbai to purchase a flat in which Zahira lived. The I-T sleuths also found discrepancies in the entries in her bank accounts as Rs 1.36 lakh did not tally. Besides, Zahira had paid Rs 55,000 to purchase a house at Ektanagar in Vadodara. According to sources, the IT department has imposed a 300% penalty. But chartered accountant Rajkumar Mandovara, who handles Zahira's accounts, refuted the department's order and said that he had challenged it. Although the last day for appeal was February 1, Zahira has asked for another 15 days to appeal against the order, citing social engagements. (Times of India 2/2/08)

Gujarat riots cases: Centre for CBI probe (7)

New Delhi, Feb. 18: The Centre has favoured a CBI investigation into cases related to the Godhra incident and the subsequent riots in 2002 and supported the stand of the NHRC and some NGOs to transfer the cases outside Gujarat for free and fair trial. "The Centre submits that it would have no objection to the investigation of the cases by the CBI and transfer outside Gujarat," it said in its affidavit filed in the Supreme Court in response to the petitions listed for hearing on Tuesday. The Centre was responding to a bunch of petitions filed by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and various NGOs, expressing apprehension that the victims may not get justice if the cases were allowed to remain with the state authorities. The Centre in its support pointed out various instances, including the top court's previous orders, which suggested that the state machinery was not impartial. The top court had earlier said that it would not allow the criminal justice system to be derailed by the police. The petitions have been filed for the 13 cases arising from five incidents of riots in Godhra, Naroda Patia, Gulbarga Society, Sadarpura and Ode in 2002. The Gujarat government has opposed the transfer of the cases outside the state questioning the locus standi of NHRC and the NGOs to interfere in the criminal litigation by way of PIL. The state government's contention was based on the judgment of the top court in a matter related to the fodder scam in which it held that "the PIL is totally foreign to pending criminal proceedings". (PTI) (Asian Age 19/2/08)

Teesta's attack leaves SC fuming (7)

New Delhi : The Supreme Court on Tuesday warned it would not hear any of the pending Godhra riot cases if social activist Teesta Setalvad represented the petitioners. The court was outraged over its criticism by Setalvad for delay in providing justice to the riot victims. Setalvad had attacked the judiciary in a recent write-up published in leading newspapers. In 2003, the Supreme Court had stayed trial in a dozen cases relating to the Godhra riots and shifted the Best Bakery trial outside Gujarat. In this backdrop, such brazen criticism was the least the court had expected from Setalvad, whose NGO -- Citizen for Justice and Peace -- is one of the petitioners before the Supreme Court. Chief Justice of India KG Balakrishnan decried Setalvad's write-up as "shameful" and "in bad taste". While hearing a bail petition of a riot accused, the Bench headed by Chief Justice referred to the write-up and expressed disgust over her comments alleging the Godhra matters are being "fixed" in court. "There are 60,000 cases in the Supreme Court. Nobody fixes the cases manually. It is done by the computer," a visibly upset Bench said. "We see so many articles in the media, sometimes they are educative and sometimes we ignore it. But this article is simply not in good taste," it added. The Bench commented the article appeared in several publications, including a Malayalam weekly. So annoyed was the Bench it went to the extent to suggest, "If she (Teesta) is representing these petitioners, we do not want to hear it." Senior advocate Harish Salve, who was present in the court asked the court to treat the matter with contempt and let go off the case. Incidentally, Salve is the amicus curiae in the matter concerning the shifting of trial outside Gujarat, where Teesta's NGO Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) is pressing for trial of a dozen cases to be shifted outside State. Setalvad, who is the secretary of the NGO, was also involved in the Best Bakery and Bilkis Bano cases and is pursuing a PIL to remove Gujarat Police chief PC Pandey stating he was recruited at the behest of Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Ironically, at the time the Bench was raining fury on Teesta, a separate Bench of the apex court was hearing the petition filed by the CJP along with the batch petitions filed by National Human Rights Commission in the Godhra trial. The matter is expected to come up for hearing in March next. (Pioneer 20/2/08)

Communal clashes in Rajasthan, several injured (7)

JAIPUR: At least 28 people, including seven policemen, were injured and 12 shops torched in two communal clashes which erupted during Holi festivities in Rajasthan's Chittorgarh and Tonk cities on Saturday. Eighteen people, five of them policemen, were injured in Chittorgarh town, some 275 kms from the state capital, where curfew had been clamped, District Collector P L Agarwal said over telephone. Twelve shops and some vehicles were set afire during the clash triggered by a trivial issue, he said. Police fired rubber bullets and teargas shells to disperse clashing groups, he said adding curfew was clamped in the town. The injured were hospitalised, Agarwal said adding adequate police had been deployed to maintain peace in the city. In Tonk, the trouble erupted when members of a particular community were taking out a Holi procession at Heera Chowk, SP (Tonk) Giriraj Meena said. Some youths allegedly used abusive language against members of another community sparking the violence, he said. Ten people, including two policemen, were wounded when the two sides pelted stones at each other, the SP said. The situation was now under control though tension ran high in the city, he said. (Times of India 23/3/08)

Fake encounter: Gujarat against bail to cops (7)

New Delhi, March 24: Vehemently opposing the grant of bail to Gujarat police officer N K Amin and Rajasthan cadre IPS officer Dinesh M N, accused in the fake encounter killing of Sohrabuddin Sheikh and the subsequent killing of his wife Kausar Bi, the Gujarat Government on Monday informed the Supreme Court that the investigation into the twin murder is still pending and is at a crucial stage. Responding to an appeal filed by Amin and others, where they have challenged the cancellation of their bail by the Gujarat High Court, the state Government submitted that "no hard and fast rule can be laid down for grant of bail." "The high court, while considering the seriousness and gravity of the offence in its entirety, rightly cancelled the bail," it said, referring to the judgment dated January 25, 2008, where the regular bail granted to N K Amin was cancelled. Amin was granted bail by the Sessions court on October 5, 2007. D H Trivedi, Inspector, Gujarat police, who filed an affidavit on behalf of the state Government, apprehended

that the "petitioner (Amin) is a high ranking officer and if enlarged on bail, there is all likelihood of him influencing the witnesses and tampering with evidence." The affidavit, filed by Modi Government last week, came up before a Bench headed by Justice Arijit Pasayat on Monday, which then posted the matter for further directions on March 26. Earlier, Amin was granted anticipatory bail in June 2007, which was later cancelled by the apex court in August, 2007, pursuant to which he was arrested on August 26, 2007. Pointing out that the high court rightly noted the presence of Amin at the cremation of Kausar Bi, just few days after Sohrabuddin was killed in an alleged fake encounter, the Gujarat government submitted that investigations is still pending "with regard to where and how Kausar Bi was murdered." Also, narco-analysis tests of all the 13 accused in the fake encounter killing are pending, it said. Enlarging the accused on bail depends upon the nature of the offence. "The more heinous a crime, greater the chance for rejection of bail," it said. While Amin was initially accused of destruction of evidence relating to the death of Kausar Bi, Dinesh, SP, Udaipur was accused of being involved in conspiracy to murder Sohrabuddin. However, later both the police officers were charged for murder under Section 302 besides under other sections like 193, 201 and 120 B of Indian Penal Code. While opposing the grant of bail, the government also brushed aside claims like the police personnel had a meritorious past record. "Antecedents of Sohrabuddin and meritorious record of petitioners are irrelevant," the affidavit stated. (The Indian Express 25/3/08)

Probe afresh 14 Gujarat cases: court (7)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday said a five-member special investigation team (SIT) would conduct a fresh probe or further investigations into 14 post-Godhra communal riots cases to enable a free and fair trial. It had stayed the trial in these cases on petitions filed by the National Human Rights Commission and the Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP), which sought a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation and transfer of the cases outside Gujarat. A Bench consisting of Justices Arijit Pasayat, P. Sathasivam and Aftab Alam said the SIT would comprise three senior IPS officers from Gujarat, Geeta Johri, Shivanand Jha and Ashish Bhatia; the retired CBI Director R.K. Raghavan and a retired police officer of Uttar Pradesh C. B. Satpathy. The Bench said it would pass a formal order on Wednesday. It did not consider the Centre's suggestion for entrusting the probe to the CBI and shifting the cases to Maharashtra. In 2003, the NHRC filed a transfer petition apprehending that the trial if conducted in Gujarat would not be free and fair, as witnesses were being threatened. Subsequently, the CJP filed a similar petition. The cases included the Gulberg, Ode and Sardarpur massacres, and the Naroda Gaon, Naroda Patiya, Baranpura, Machipith, Tarsali, Pandarwada and Raghovpura killings. Earlier in the day, amicus curiae Harish Salve suggested that the court order a CBI probe or set up a SIT comprising Gujarat police officers of unimpeachable integrity. The Gujarat government's senior counsel Mukul Rohatgi opposed the setting up of any outside agency to conduct the investigation. Justice Pasayat said: "We want at least two officers who are from outside Gujarat." Mr. Rohatgi suggested the names of Ms. Johri, Mr. Jha and Mr. Bhatia. The judge said the SIT could include Mr. Raghavan and Mr. Satpathy. Justice Pasayat asked Mr. Salve to suggest a remedy if the investigating officer refused to record the statement of a witness. Mr. Salve said he would come up with his suggestions on Wednesday, when the court takes up other related petitions .
(Hindu 26/3/08)

Ex-CBI chief to head Gujarat riots probe team (7)

New Delhi : The burning of the Sabarmati Express at Godhra and ten related riot cases will now be further probed by a five-member Special Investigation Team headed by former CBI Director RK Raghavan. While constituting the SIT, the Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed its disgust over the Gujarat riots stating such "religious fanatics" to be "worse than terrorists". It said: "These are cases where there is an element of communal disharmony which is not to be countenanced... If in the name of religion people are liquidated that is essentially a slur and a blot on the society governed by the Constitution of India which in its Preamble refers to Secularism." At the same time, the Bench headed by Justice Arijit Pasayat also appreciated the stand of the Gujarat Government on its suggestion that "it had no objection if a further investigation is conducted so that people's faith in the transparency of criminal justice system in the State is fortified." Terming it as a "fair" stand, the court accepted the State's contention that no attempts

were being made to shield any accused. But since all parties had agreed to the constitution of SIT, the court struck a balance with its order. The Bench, which comprised also of Justices P Sathasivam and Aftab Alam also detailed the role of the SIT, while hearing the bunch of petitions filed by the National Human Rights Commission, several riot victims and NGOs. Any witness who claimed police had not recorded his/her testimony would be at liberty to approach the SIT that is to be convened by Inspector General, Gujarat Police, Geetha Johri. The special team has been entrusted to investigate complaints and record witnesses in relation to the 10 criminal trials. These are Gulbarga Society case (involving the death of former Congress MP Ehsan Zafri), Godhra train burning case, Sardarpura case, Mehsana case, Ahmedabad case, Naroda Patiya case, Naroda Gaon case, Anand (Ode case), Himmatnagar case involving the death of three British nationals, and Dipda Darwaza case involving death of 11 Muslims. The court empowered the SIT to record the statements of the witnesses after they were to give in writing their wish to depose in the case. Besides, the special team can investigate or enquire or even conduct further investigation upon the given statements. In this regard the State Government has been asked to extend all necessary help. Besides Raghavan and Johri, the SIT would also comprise of retired Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh CB Satpathy along with Gujarat Police IGP Ashish Bhatia and Sivanand Jha. The SIT has to meet within ten days to work out the modalities for investigation. The high-powered team will have to conclude its investigations within three months and submit a report to the Supreme Court. The matter will next be heard in the last week of August. (Pioneer 27/3/08)

Cong in fix as allies seek implementation of Ranganath Mishra Commission report (7)

New Delhi, April 1 : With the elections round the corner, the UPA Government seems to be stuck with the subtle political ramifications of the Ranganath Mishra Commission Report that has backed the demand for extending reservation benefits to Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims. The Government, which has been sitting on the report since May 2007, is now forced to make its stand clear with coalition partners like the DMK, Lok Janshakti Party and RJD pressing the Government to place it before the Parliament in the coming session. With their eyes fixed on the forthcoming elections, these parties see the Commission report as a good opportunity to take on the Mayawati Government, as it might split the Dalit votes with Hindu Dalits unwilling to share the reservation pie. Both Ram Vilas Paswan and Lalu Prasad Yadav have decided to take up the issue with the Prime Minister, who is understood to be "hesitant" on the issue. "We have decided to ask the Government to place the report in the next session itself. Otherwise, we will be forced to take the issue to the public," said a RJD MP. The two parties are in touch with DMK chief M Karunanidhi, who had earlier written a letter to the PM requesting him to take steps to amend the Constitution to extend the benefit of reservation to Dalits belonging to Christian and Muslim communities. "There is no denying the fact that while there are some privileges available to the Scheduled Castes belonging to Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist religions, the Dalits among Christians and Muslims have been deprived of their fair share in them on grounds of their religion," Karunanidhi had said. However, the Congress is hesitant to "open yet another Pandora's box". The party is not convinced that this would lead to a split in Mayawati's Dalit vote bank. "It may backfire. Why create problems on the eve of elections?" asked a Congress leader. There is also a demand from Muslim and Christian groups for treatment of Dalit converts as SCs to entitle them to benefits of reservation in jobs and education. Various Muslim and Christian sects are planning to form a joint platform to launch an agitation to demand the implementation of the report. (Indian Express 2/4/08)

ARC: No need for separate law to deal with communal clashes (7)

New Delhi : The UPA Government may have tried to take the credit for introducing the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, but the Administrative Reforms Commission has negated the role of such a specific legislation. Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005 was tabled in the Rajya Sabha on December 5, 2006 and referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs for detailed examinations. Going into details of religious conflicts in the country, the commission, headed by senior Congress leader M Veerappa Moily has suggested incorporating the contents of the proposed Bill in the CrPC and the IPC itself. "A separate law to deal with communal

violence is not required," the report recommended and warned that such a legislation might even lead to restricting the use of substantive provisions in the basic laws. "It is better to strengthen the basic laws themselves, where necessary," the report added. The seventh in the series of the Administrative Commission Report that has been presented recently to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the report has also criticised the SEZ policy. "In order to prevent conflict situations from arising and leading to violence, it is necessary that industrial activities and SEZs are located in areas where they cause least displacement and...do not usurp productive agricultural lands," a recent report of the Commission said while referring to the large scale violence that took place in the Left ruled West Bengal. The report has said that the Left extremist violence has "gained people's confidence, grown in strength particularly in forest and tribal areas, by mobilising dispossessed and marginal sections," adding that the matching preparedness from the Government is absent. The commission has suggested the bureaucrats living in the Left conflict areas to "keep the door open for negotiations...and not necessarily insist on preconditions such as laying down of arms." "The temptation to utilise the police forces is very high but it should be remembered that unaccountable police action and abuse of police power validates the violence even among the hitherto non-involved population," the report added. In case of other political conflicts as was witnessed recently in Kerala between the CPI(M) and the RSS-BJP, and those in Maharashtra against the north Indians, the report has urged the political outfits to restrict the use of identity politics. (Pioneer 1/4/08)

Marad case: Bail to 106 accused (7)

KOCHI: : The Kerala High court on Friday granted bail to 106 more accused in the 'Marad carnage', which had claimed nine lives in 2003. Earlier, the High Court had granted bail to about 30 accused in the case. While granting bail, Justice R Basant imposed stringent conditions, including the need to furnish a bond of Rs 2 lakh each and three solvent sureties for the like sum. The court also said one of the sureties should be a blood relative of the accused. The place of residence should be specified by the accused before they are released on bail and they should reside within 3 km of the special court. The accused have been directed not to travel to any other place. (The Indian Express 5/4/08)

Mumbai tense after Sena activists' clash with minority community (7)

MUMBAI: Tension prevailed in communally sensitive Bhindi Bazaar locality of south Mumbai after Shiv Sena activists clashed with people from minority community in the area, police said on Sunday. The clashes erupted late Saturday night following an altercation between the two groups over the pasting of a poster, they said. The friction led to stone pelting by both sides. Police resorted to mild lathicharge to disperse the crowd, they said. There was no official confirmation about the number of people injured in the stone pelting. The incident occurred after a Shiv Sena corporator pasted a poster wishing people on the occasion of Marathi New Year Gudi Padwa next to that of a minority community leader. This act infuriated people from the minority community who allegedly tore the poster put up by the corporator, they said. An angry group of Sena activists then clashed with those from the minority community over the issue, they said. The situation is completely under control and additional forces have been rushed to the spot to prevent any untoward incident, a senior police officer said. Senior police officers are at the spot while there was no immediate word on how many people have been picked up. (Times of India 6/4/08)

Riots victims protest Mehta's induction (7)

Ahmedabad, April 9: The appointment of retired Gujarat high court judge Justice Akshay Mehta to the Nanavati Commission triggered a controversy quickly with the organisation representing the post-Godhra riots victims deciding to boycott the proceedings besides demanding his removal. "Allegations were made against Justice Mehta in a sting operation "Kalank" of Tehelka and a TV channel," advocate Mukul Sinha, who heads the Jan Sangharsh Manch (JSM) representing a section of the riot victims said on Wednesday. "He is the same judge whom Babu Bajrangi, the main accused of Naroda Patia case, referred to as "apna admi" in the Tehelka tapes," Mr Sinha said. "Whether the allegations are true or not is a different matter," Mr Sinha added. "The government should not have appointed Justice Mehta in the commission," Mr Sinha said, adding

the JSM is going to write to the state government to change its decision. "We had also suggested name of five judges to be appointed to the panel. The government should have appointed anyone from this list," he added. The state government on Tuesday appointed Justice Mehta in the commission after Justice K.G. Shah passed away recently. Justice Mehta has served as a judge in the Gujarat high court for seven years before retiring in 2007. (PTI) (Asian Age 10/4/08)

Baroda: 25 held after violence (7)

Baroda: Twenty-five persons have been taken into custody following a minor communal flare-up in Bavanpura-Kotyark Nagar in the Panigate police station area, the police said on Thursday. The violence broke out as a couple was asked to behave decently in the garden located in the area. This resulted into people belonging to two groups coming out from their houses on road on Wednesday night and started pelting stones at each other. The mob also damaged several vehicles and set a scooter on fire. It soon spread to surrounding areas. (PTI) (Asian Age 11/4/08)

Communal trouble in Kerala district: 3 killed in 4 days (7)

KOCHI, APRIL 17: Three communal murders in the last four days have pushed Kasargod, a Kerala district bordering Karnataka, to the edge. Today, B Suhas, a prominent city lawyer and the district Vice-President of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, a BJP-affiliated trade union, was stabbed to death as he stepped out of his office. Prohibitory orders and a total ban on two-wheelers have been imposed in the district. Official sources said police reinforcements were being rushed to the affected areas. Police sources say the latest eruption in this communally-sensitive district was on Sunday after a man among a bunch of Vishu festival revellers, all BJP supporters, chose to get off a car to urinate near the town bus stand, which was not far from a mosque. Someone objected and an altercation followed, soon drawing a restive crowd. The police say five men followed the BJP men as they moved away, and stabbed one of them, Sandeep Kumar, who died on the way to a local hospital. The police arrested three men, Abdul Rahman, Mohammed Rafeeq and Sahil Khan for the killing, while two others are absconding. The BJP called for a district-wide hartal the next day, which saw some Muslim youths on motorcycles being waylaid on the road and attacked, in Karanthakad. Retaliation followed soon enough : Two BJP workers, Krishna Prasad and Chandrasaha Acharya, were stabbed in Mogral, some distance away. On Wednesday, Mohammed Sinan, who was riding a motorcycle home was waylaid at Anebagilu and stabbed to death. The entire district had logged out of life today though there was no call for a hartal. Shops were shut and roads were empty. The few buses of the state road transport corporation that were on the road stopped plying after they were attacked in some areas. Known for lending a communal colour to even localised political clashes in no time, Kasargod was only beginning to recover from the bloody clashes between the CPM and the Muslim League over the last three months, when the new cycle of violence began. The CPM-League clashes, beginning from trivial local spats, had left a trail of arson before the spat graduated to communally provocative actions. The local administration had to call in the Rapid Action Force a month ago, which staged flag marches in several parts of the district. (Indian Express 18/4/08)

Peace eludes Kasargod as 1 more dies in violence (7)

Kochi, April 18: The communal violence in Kasargod showed no signs of a let up on Friday with president of a locally prominent mosque committee being killed in broad daylight. The Friday violence has taken the number of dead to four over the past five days. Sixty-year-old C M Mohammad Kunhi Haji, president of Adakatabail Bilal Masjid Committee, was attacked on his way to the mosque. He succumbed to stab wounds on the way to hospital. To back up the prohibitory orders in force in the district, the worried administration imposed curfew in the worst-hit Hosdurg, Neelaswaram and Bekal areas on Friday. Top police officers, led by an Additional DGP, managed the deployment of a large police force sent in from neighbouring districts. But sporadic clashes and attacks continued in many parts. Three people, A K Azeez, Abdul Rahim and Rashid, were waylaid and hacked early morning on a road near Kanhangad. All three have been hospitalised and Rashid was reported to be in a critical condition. (Indian Express 19/4/08)

2 dead in police firing; curfew in Maharashtra town (7)

MUMBAI: Communal violence rocked Chopda, a tehsil town, north Maharashtra, on Tuesday night, leading to curfew and police firing that left two dead. Fifteen persons were injured, including one in police firing. Two groups belonging to different communities attacked each other, pelting stones, soda-water bottles and bricks after a dispute over the playing of a song in a marriage ceremony. The rioters set on fire 10 roadside stalls. Police sources said that over 25 rounds were fired to disperse the mob. The injured were admitted to the district civil hospital at Jalgaon. The police imposed curfew till 6 p.m. Shiv Sena member Gulab Patil raised the issue in the Assembly. Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil, who holds the Home portfolio, ordered a CID inquiry. He also announced ex gratia payment of Rs. 1 lakh to the next of kin of the dead. (Indian Express 24/4/08)

SIT visits Godhra station, inspects burnt coach (7)

Godhra, April 25: The Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) — conducting fresh inquiries into the 2002 Gujarat riots — on Friday visited Godhra, the town which sparked off riots after the burning of a coach of the Sabarmati Express on February 28, 2002. The team went to the Godhra Railway Station and inspected the burnt S-6 coach. The SIT, led by former Central Bureau of Investigation director R K Raghavan, also visited Ode in Anand district, where 27 people were killed in the riots. Speaking to the media, Raghavan said: "We are trying to understand what exactly happened on February 28, 2002 and what led to the carnage. The SIT is trying to look into the incident afresh and we hope to complete our work as fast as possible." The SIT arrived in Godhra at 11 am and, in a convoy of nine cars, headed straight for the railway station. They were guided through the station and the burnt coach by Rakesh Asthana, former Special IG who has been appointed to investigate the train burning incident, Deputy Superintendent of Police (Western Railway) Noel Parmar and J K Bhatt, former Panchmahals Superintendent of Police and now DIG- Intelligence. The team walked from the main entrance of the railway station to Signal Falia, where the train was burnt, killing 53. (Indian Express 26/4/08)

15 yrs after riots, cases collapse (7)

Mumbai, May 11: When the first judgment came in March-end from a special court assigned to hear cases pertaining to the 1992-1993 post-Babri demolition riots, citizens who had led a campaign demanding a special fast track court for trials in cases involving influential politicians indicted by the Justice Srikrishna Commission were surprised: The first judgment, an acquittal, was in a case of petty theft. Over a month later, here is the update from the four courts — two magistrate courts and two sessions courts: • Twelve cases have been disposed of, 11 ending in acquittals of all accused. • Put together, the magistrates acquitted 44 people. • In the only case where the prosecution managed to establish an offence, two people were convicted to three months' imprisonment, for assaulting and molesting a Muslim couple. "Nearly 148 cases have been sent to the special magistrate courts and over 45 cases to the sessions courts, but has the state realised that they also need to appoint a special public prosecutor?" asks Shakil Ahmed of the Nirbhay Bano Andolan, a petitioner in the Supreme Court hearing a plea for implementation of the Srikrishna Commission's recommendations. Not only has the state ignored the need to appoint experienced public prosecutors in these four courts, but it has also failed to provide any special aid to the prosecution, in terms of adequate support from investigating officers. The result of the oversight is in the judgments delivered: • Of the total 12 cases disposed of, the state failed to produce important — and rather basic — post-investigative documents like a police diary and statements of the victims in four cases. • In seven cases, the complainants were untraceable. • In as many as three cases, witnesses retracted their statements. • In three instances the prosecution could not produce any witness before the court. v Perhaps worst, of the 17 policemen examined altogether, 11 turned hostile. Asked why the state Government, which set up these courts on March 12, had not appointed special public prosecutors, Principal Secretary (Law and Judiciary) N B Geelani said: "The department was not aware that no special public prosecutor was appointed for the special court till date. The state can now look into the matter and appoint one, only for the two sessions courts as and when the need arises." On the acquittal of the senior Shiv Sena leaders Gajanan Kirtikar, Ravindra Waikar and former Shiv Sena leader Nandkumar Kale (now with the MNS), Ahmed added: "If the police failed to produce diary notings from the day of the event, then on what basis did the Special Task Force go about reinvestigating the

case? Also action should be taken against policemen when they fail to furnish important documents in court leading to the accused walking free." The state's Director General of Police A N Roy said he would not like to comment on specific cases. "In general, the conviction rate in riot cases has been low over the years. It is very hard to prove these cases for the simple reason that witnesses do not want to come forward as they fear that they have to live alongside others who they do not want to name." He said another factor is that many of the 1993 cases were registered years after the incidents took place. "And therefore, it is possible that there were difficulties in gathering evidence," he said. Senior counsel Colin Gonsalves, an advocate for one of the petitions filed in the Supreme Court demanding implementation of the Srikrishna Commission report, says: "This is an ugly face of our country, in every case of atrocities against the minority, the Government has been overly prejudiced. The state has made no attempt to gather any evidence and apply any judicial mind before bringing all these cases before the special court. In incidents where evidences were produced before the Commission, it's the police's discretion to gather them once again and produce it before the court." (Indian Express 12/5/08)

Bones found by SIT in Gujarat (7)

Ahmedabad, May 15: Bones suspected to be of victims of post-Godhra riots were found by a Supreme Court-appointed investigation team at Ode village in Anand district of Gujarat during an excavation of the place, sources involved in the operation said. The bones were found by SIT set up by the Supreme Court at Piruwali Bhagol where a house was burnt down during the 2002 riots, the sources added. The SIT was constituted by the apex court to probe the Godhra train burning and post-Godhra riot cases. The SIT has been conducting a search operation for a couple of days at three sites at Ode village where about 25 people were killed by rioters six years ago. According to sources, the bones were packed in plastic bags and sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory in Gandhinagar for testing. Sources said that ever since the riots, the villagers have been saying that some people were burnt alive in the house. The sites, where the SIT is conducting the excavation, are Piruwali Bhagol, a step-well in Ode main bazar and a dry well located in Malav Bhagol area, they added. According to sources, the search is being conducted by local authorities under the supervision of SIT member Shivanand Jha. Heavy duty pumps are being used to empty the step-well in the main bazar. "We have been pumping out water for three days now. But still there is lot of water to be pumped out," said a district official involved in the search operation. The SIT, entrusted with the task of investigating the Godhra and post-Godhra riot cases, have till date made one arrest in the Gulbarg Society case where 38 persons, including Congress' ex-MP Ehasan Jafry, were killed. The SIT has formed nine teams, each headed by an officer of the rank of deputy superintendent of police, to assist in the probe. The members of SIT visited the sites of riots and familiarised themselves with the sequence of events that occurred during the violence. The team also visited the site where S6 coach of the Sabarmati Express train was burnt near Godhra railway station and had also inspected the coach. The SIT was asked to submit its final report within three months of its formation by the apex court. Former Central Bureau of Investigation chief R.K. Raghvan is heading the SIT while former DGP of Uttar Pradesh A. Sathpathy is a member of the team along with three IPS officers of Gujarat — Geetha Johri, Ashish Bhatia and Shivanand Jha. (PTI) (Asian Age 16/5/08)

Nanavati Commission visits Godhra site (7)

GODHRA: The Nanavati Commission, probing the Godhra train burning and the post-Godhra riot cases, on Sunday visited the site where the S6 coach of Sabarmati Express was burnt in 2002 and also inspected the coach. The two-member Commission is being headed by Justice G T Nanavati and has Justice Akshay Mehta as its second member. Justice Mehta was appointed to the Commission following the death of Justice K G Shah in March this year. Initially, the government had appointed Justice Shah to probe the Godhra train burning case. Later, the government appointed Justice Nanavati as head of the Commission and also widened the scope of inquiry by including the post-Godhra riots cases. Both, Justice Nanavati and Justice Mehta arrived here at around 0945 hrs and first inspected the site where the S6 coach was burnt on February 27, 2002, killing 58 people, mainly kar sevaks returning from Ayodhya. They also inspected the S6 coach till 1100 hours before returning to Ahmedabad. Commission has been

conducting hearing since last six years after it was formed following the post-Godhra communal riots that engulfed the state. (Times of India 18/5/08)

'93 riots case: Cop claims memory lapse, can't identify Sena leader (7)

Mumbai, May 26 : The police constable who was in-charge of patrolling at Nirmal Nagar area in Bandra (east) during the communal riots in 1992-93 claimed to have lost his memory and hence could not recollect what happened 16 years ago. Pandurang Tayde, the police constable, entrusted with the duty of making a diary noting all the political activities in the communally tense areas of Nirmal Nagar told the court that he had met with an accident in 2004 following which he lost his memory. On December 27, 1992, former member of Parliament and senior Shiv Sena leader Madhukar Sarpotdar along with other party leaders led a mob of more than 200 people towards a Ganesh temple in Bandra, according to the prosecution. The prosecution said Sarpotdar made a derogatory speech against Muslims following which the mob turned violent. A case of stone pelting and inciting the mob was filed against seven persons. Tayde not only forgot everything that happened on the day of incident, but could not identify Sarpotdar as one of the political leaders who led the mob. "How will a person remember what happened 16 years ago?" asked Tayde when the prosecution tried to examine him. As five witnesses have turned hostile in the court, Additional Public Prosecutor M Kadam now plans to move an application demanding the medical status of Tayde's health. "Prosecution can do nothing, if the witnesses turn hostile. One of the main witnesses has failed to appear in court though he was summoned several times and now he has gone for a pilgrimage," said Kadam, adding the death of the investigation officer had made the case weak. Though the prosecution did not appeal for a warrant to be issued against absent witness, the court has given a final chance to the prosecution to prove the case before the final judgment. (Indian Express 27/5/08)

SIT apprehends eight in Gujarat (7)

AHMEDABAD: The Special Investigation Team, appointed by the Supreme Court for a fresh probe into some dozen macabre incidents during the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, has arrested eight people in connection with the Sardarpura massacre in Mehsana district. They accused were granted three-day remand and handed over to the SIT. About 30 people were killed or burnt alive at Sardarpura on March 1, 2002, in the wake of the Godhra train carnage. (The Hindu 28/5/08)

Rs. 29.81-cr. package for Bhagalpur victims (7)

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Thursday cleared a Rs. 29.81-crore relief and rehabilitation package for the victims of the communal riots which broke out in Bhagalpur, Bihar in October 1989. This brings the payment of ex gratia to the victims on a par with the package announced earlier for the victims of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. Announcing the decision, Finance Minister and Cabinet spokesperson P. Chidambaram said that in respect of those killed, the next of kin would be paid an ex gratia at Rs. 3.5 lakh a victim. Each of the injured would get Rs. 1.25 lakh. In the case of the dead, the ex gratia would be in addition to the amount paid by the State government, while in the case of the injured, the sum paid by the State government would be deducted. In all, 844 people were killed and 22 injured. The Cabinet also gave its nod for a memorandum of agreement between the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and Canada's National Institute of Renewal Energy at the University of Saskatchewan and approved the signing of an agreement with Syria for avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion in relation to taxes on income. The Cabinet's Committee on Economic Affairs approved a Rs. 678-crore scheme for the preparation of the Indian team for the 2010 Commonwealth games, to be held in Delhi, to maximise India's medal tally. Steps would be taken to institutionalise a system for preparation of elite sportspersons for prestigious international competitive events, including qualifying championships for major international events, provide state-of-the-art training to them and develop a system of selection of sportspersons based on performance monitoring. Specifically, the scheme would involve upgrading 10 centres of the Sports Authority of India to international standards in terms of training facilities, and procurement of sport science and medical equipment for SAI Centres to provide state-of-the-art sport science back-up and medical facilities for the sportspersons. Comprehensive and intensive training and exposure would be

provided both within and outside the country for 305 days a year to 1,286 medal probables. The scheme would be implemented over three years. Of the total amount, Rs. 375 crore would be spent on training and exposure, Rs. 85 crore for upgrading the SAI centres and Rs. 218 crore for providing sport science back-up and medical facilities. The CCEA also cleared a Rs. 234.3-crore scheme for development of an information system on the water resources of the country with a view to ensuring its better management and faster resolution of water disputes. All information, barring the sensitive and classified, would be placed in the public domain. The scheme would be fully operational by 2011-end. (The Hindu 13/6/08)

SC provides legal aid for Gujarat riots probe team (7)

NEW DELHI, JUNE 17 : Following a request by former CBI director R K Raghavan, chief of the Special Investigative Team (SIT) formed to carry out a fresh probe into 10 cases of the 2002 Gujarat riots, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked Solicitor General G E Vahanavti and another senior advocate to assist the team. A Vacation Bench presided over by Justice Arijit Pasayat asked Vahanavti and K G Menon, another senior advocate, to provide all sorts of legal help to the SIT in conducting their probe. Earlier in March, a three-member Bench, also presided over by Justice Pasayat had ordered the Modi Government to set up a SIT which would take a fresh look into some of the worst riots cases of 2002. The SIT includes three senior police officers from Gujarat — Gita Johri, Sivananad Jha and Ashish Bhatia. It also has former Uttar Pradesh DGP C B Satpathy. Asked to submit its report within three months, the SIT will probe 10 cases relating to rioting in seven places. This includes Godhra where 81 people were killed and the Gulbarga Society where 68 were massacred. (Indian Express 18/6/08)

2002 riots: Special probe team may seek time (7)

Ahmedabad, June 20: The Special Investigation Team that is probing the Gujarat riots is likely to ask for more time. Though there are just 10 days left for the deadline to wrap up the probe, investigations are far from over. "The investigation has gone well so far and I am happy with its progress so far," said former CBI director K. Raghavan who heads the SIT. But the team, says Raghavan, has been "treading very cautiously". "A lot of investigation had been done earlier into these cases and we have to take those too into consideration," Raghvan said while claiming that he was under no political pressure. "We have been given a free hand." Raghavan asserts it is too early to say if the probe will reveal something drastically new. "But investigations are on in all the cases. I am an optimistic, perhaps some more unknown cases may surface," Raghavan said. However, he refused to speak on the possibility of any specific case being wrapped up first. While the SIT chief is optimistic about the probe, others are not so sure. "We have made representations in several cases including the massacre in Naroda Patiya, Naroda Gaon, Godhra and Gulbarga society. We had even produced phone records and details pointing to the involvement of some top VHP leaders," said lawyer Dr. Mukul Sinha of the Jansangrash Manch. "But we have not heard anything from the team since or seen any action taken. Now that their original term is getting over, we are apprehensive," he said. "We deposed before the team and they have taken down our statement," says Rupa Modi, mother of 12-year-old Azhar who went missing after the Gulbarga Society massacre. "We can only hope that these investigations would yield something and the cases would be shifted out of Gujarat," Rupa said. The probe into the cases has been divided among Geeta Johri, Shivanand Jha and Ashish Bhatia, all belonging to the Gujarat cadre of the IPS. Geeta Johri, the SIT convener, said. "We may have to seek an extension, and we will take a call on that in our next meeting," she said. Following its request last Tuesday, the SC, incidentally, allowed the SIT to seek the assistance of Solicitor General G.E. Vahanavti and senior advocate K.G. Menon of the Mumbai High Court. "The role of this team, as we understand it, is somewhat similar to that of the CBI," said Tanvir Zafri, son of slain Congress MP Ehsaan Zafri. "So far, the team has not exposed the role of the police and the administration in the riots," he said. The team made its first arrest in April 19 when it arrested Parbat Thakore, an absconder in the infamous Gulbarga massacre case, in which former Congress MP Ehsaan Jafri and 39 others were killed. On May 26, the team had arrested eight others—Jaitaram Patel, Natwar Patel, Ashwin Patel, Baldev Patel, Kanu Patel, Daya Patel, Ramesh Patel and Babu Vana Patel—all residents of Sardarpura village, in connection with the Sardar Pura riots in Mehsana district, where 33 people were killed. (Indian Express 21/6/08)

Minorities Commission says Indore riots pre-planned, no SIMI role (7)

BHOPAL, JULY 15: The National Commission for Minorities (NCM), which visited Indore areas recently hit by riots, on Tuesday said that the violence was "pre-planned" and asked the BJP-ruled state Government to provide protection to witnesses so that they "won't feel unsafe". The commission led by Chairman Mohamed Shafi Qureshi added that the SIMI was named only to divert attention. However, it did not name any organisation as having instigated the riots. While top police officers had not said anything, Madhya Pradesh PWD Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, who hails from Indore, had blamed the disturbances on SIMI, which is banned in the state. The NCM, which met top bureaucrats before visiting the riot-hit localities and calling on the families of those who were killed in the violence, stated that innocents should not be framed and asked the administration to bring the accused to book. "The Government should protect the witnesses so that truth comes out." Qureshi, who was the governor of Madhya Pradesh in the 1990s, said he looked at the riots as a "human tragedy" and would not politicise them. In addition to the compensation announced by the state Government, the NCM said it would ensure that the victims got Rs 3 lakh each from the Centre. The commission will submit its report to the Prime Minister and said it was entirely up to the state Government whether to order a judicial inquiry into the riots or not. Hailing from Jammu and Kashmir, Qureshi also talked about the Amarnath shrine controversy, saying it was sad that a pilgrimage that was a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity had been used to create disturbances and vitiate the atmosphere. Among the localities the commission visited were the worst-hit Juna Risala, Khajrana and Sindhi Colony. It asked the Government to provide basic amenities to Muslim-dominated localities after observing that they lacked rudimentary infrastructure. It also met 25 victims admitted to Mayur Hospital, and was satisfied with the treatment being provided to them. Among unruly scenes seen during the commission's tour, supporters of a BJP councillor and a Congress councillor clashed as the BJP's Saddam Pathan accused the Congress's Sarvar Khan of blaming his party for no reason. Pathan alleged that Khan had not bothered to visit the victims but was defaming the BJP Government before the minorities commission. Khan's son reportedly slapped Pathan. Though both parties went to the police station they struck a compromise and did not file a complaint. (Indian Express 16/7/08)

12 injured in Ghaziabad clash (7)

Ghaziabad, July 24: Twelve persons, including two policemen, were injured as members of two communities clashed on Thursday over the construction of a mosque in Loni area of Ghaziabad, the police said. According to the police, the locals who suffered injuries were admitted to several hospitals in the area, while the policemen were shifted to the Civil Hospital in Ghaziabad. Four companies of armed police personnel and policemen from Sahibabad police station were deployed to restore peace in the area. Police said at least 500 people were involved in the incident. "There were differences between the two communities over the construction of a structure around the mosque near Nithori Chowki. The land on which the proposed structure was to come up belonged to the Land Management Committee of the Panchayat. The two groups were called to the police station this morning and the problems were resolved," said a police official. "However, the situation flared up when the group supporting the construction fired in the air to scare three members of the other group on their way back from the police station," SP (City) Vijay Bhushan said. After the firing, members of the two groups clashed pelting stones at each other. The situation went out of control when more and more people from neighbouring areas joined the fight. It took a couple of hours for the police to control the situation, officials said. "Both groups were armed with lathis and sharp-edged weapons. They smashed the windshields of several vehicles and set several others on fire. A bus of the Uttar Pradesh Road Transport Corporation, along with a truck, a car and two motorbikes were set on fire," an official of the Loni police station said. The atmosphere was tense till late in the night and ADM Vishal Singh and Senior Superintendent of Police of Ghaziabad Deepak Ratan were present at the spot along with other officials. Eight people have been arrested and raids were on to round up the others. While six of the injured were rushed to the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital in Delhi, four were taken to Navjeevan Hospital in Ghaziabad. Two of them are said to be in serious condition. The circle

officer of border area Satpal Singh suffered serious injuries. Additional forces are expected to be deployed during the night, police said. (Indian Express 25/7/08)

Curfew imposed in Jammu (7)

Jammu: A day after the large-scale violence in which around 70 persons were injured, curfew was imposed in Jammu on Sunday. Protesters, however, defied the orders and took out rallies, clashed with police and burnt tyres, as demonstrations against the revocation of the order allotting land to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board showed no signs of abating. Police fired several rounds in the air to disperse the mobs and resorted to cane-charge. Over 300 protesters assembled on the Jammu-Poonch highway at Domanna on Sunday. Several Shri Amarnath Sangharsh Samiti activists were picked up by the police and put under preventive detention. The Samiti chief Leela Karan Sharma was picked up by the police as he was addressing newsmen. "We have detained the Mayor and other protesting leaders for law and order purposes," Superintendent of Police (North) Randeep Kumar told The Hindu. "But this is preventive detention. We will not register any case." Curfew was relaxed in some areas after 5 p.m. The three-day strike has been extended till Monday. Fresh protests erupted a few days ago after the death of Kuldeep Kumar, who was on a hunger strike in protest against the State government's decision to cancel the land allotment order, on Wednesday. In the last three days, 40 police personnel, mostly constables, have been injured. Police personnel became the target of the protesters after Kumar's wife Shilpi alleged that police tried to cremate her husband's body on the intervening night of July 23 at Bishnah without the family's permission. "We accept that there was a judgmental error as police tried to cremate the body early in the morning in the presence of the family of the deceased," Divisional Commissioner Sudhanshu Pandey said. "One has to understand the tense situation under which the decision was taken." The State administration said a probe had been ordered into the issue. The police are awaiting the post-mortem report from the Government Medical College. Meanwhile, an appeal for peace by Governor N.N. Vohra has evoked little response. The protesters have demanded that the Governor first clarify his stand on the issue. "I had humbly extended an invitation to all those who are aggrieved and concerned over various issues," Mr. Vohra said. "I sincerely feel that there is no issue which cannot be resolved amicably through a process of dialogue. I, therefore, renew my appeal to the people of Jammu to come forward and help in restoring normality through dialogue. Let us work together towards this goal." (The Hindu 28/7/08)

Fearing backlash, scores of families fled Naroda Patiya (7)

AHMEDABAD, JULY 27: Six years is a long time to wipe away tears, come to terms with the loss of a loved one, to rebuild a life. But as the people living in the 1,000-odd Muslim houses in Naroda Patiya will tell you, six years has not been long enough to wipe away the fear from their hearts. On Saturday evening, when Ahmedabad was being jolted by one bomb blast after the other, in Naroda Patiya, the only Muslim settlement in a 7-km radius on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, many anxious residents were already packing up to leave for safety. Here, terror has lurked beneath the surface ever since the riots in 2002, considered by many as the most brutal backlash born out of Godhra, claimed 103 lives in Naroda Patiya and the nearby Naroda Gam. "As soon as news of the blasts came, I remembered 2002. My wife was almost hysterical, saying we had to leave this place. Even I thought anything could happen. So I took my three children and my wife and went to Shah-e-Alam (a Muslim neighbourhood)," says Abdul Khaliq, 50, whose house was ransacked and burnt during the riots. Khaliq returned on Sunday evening only after he was satisfied that the situation was under control and there was no attempt to take 'revenge' against Muslims. The Khaliq family's story is one that was repeated across the narrow lanes of Naroda Patiya. Those who had relatives living in 'safer' parts of the city locked their houses and fled. Those who stayed behind believed they were taking a huge risk. For Fatima Bano, fondly known as Aapa in her neighbourhood, staying back was not even an option worth considering. The 2002 violence had claimed eight lives in her brother's family. Her four shops were also torched. She says, "Dil me dahshat baith gaya hai. Bachche jinhone dhammal dekha hai, vo bahut ghabra jaate hain. Mere aadmi ko police ne bahut maara tha 2002 me, mere aitbaar nahin ab kisi pe. (I am terrified. My children who had seen the riots become very tense whenever something like this happens. My husband was badly beaten by the police in 2002, I

don't trust anybody now)." Fatima, 45, along with her four children and husband spent Saturday night at Narol with a relative and returned on Sunday evening. But they remain apprehensive. A police outpost just outside the settlement and a major centre of the State Reserve Police a stone's throw away are not enough to inspire confidence in the residents. Yet, most people are reluctant to admit that they feel compelled to leave their homes whenever a 'sensitive' situation arises. "Most people refuse to acknowledge that they are leaving because of the blasts. They will just say they are visiting relatives. Everybody knows but nobody says. Somehow there is a guilt associated with the admission of your own distrust of a community," says Mohammad Salim, a social worker living in Naroda Patiya, adding, "Since yesterday around 100 families left this place for safer localities. Most have returned now only because there has been no violence." (Indian Express 28/7/08)

In Jammu's Kishtwar, Army called out after communal clashes, firing (7)

Jammu, August 12: A teenage boy was among two persons killed in police firing and 30 others were injured in a grenade blast during communal clashes in Kishtwar town of Jammu region today, forcing authorities to call out the Army and clamp curfew. Protesting the killing of Hurriyat leader Sheikh Abdul Aziz in police firing in the Valley, Muslims gathered in numbers near Hadyal Chowk of Kishtwar this morning. Some from the crowd hurled stones which injured two Hindus. As word spread, Hindus got together and clashed with the Muslims. An unidentified person hurled a grenade which left over 30 injured. After the blast, more people spilled on to the streets and hurled stones at each other. Unable to scatter the mobs, police opened fire, killing two persons — they were identified as Mohammad Maqbool (36) of Hadyal Mohalla and Gufarang (13) of Keshwan Mohalla. Aziz Gagroo was critically injured and was taken to the Kishtwar district hospital. The Shri Amarnath Yatra Sangharsh Samiti, condemning the attack on Hindus, accused the administration of being a "mute spectator while shops of Hindus were set ablaze". (Indian Express 13/8/08)

Call for debate on draft of Communal Crimes Bill (7)

Bangalore: Advocates and civil society activists have demanded that the draft of the Communal Crimes Bill, 2008, which has been "kept in cold storage" by the United Progressive Alliance Government for eight months, be placed for public debate. Speaking at a discussion here on Thursday, organised by the Alternative Law Forum, Saumya Uma, advocate and coordinator of ICC-India campaign, said that the draft was submitted by civil society groups in January. This was after the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005, which focused on enhancing the powers of the State and Central governments in dealing with communal violence, was rejected by civil society groups. Giving such powers would be counter-productive since violence often happens with "state complicity", she pointed out. Tracing the history of the law, Ms. Uma said that the demand for a law on communal violence had emerged from the record of recurring violence in India and the complete absence of specific laws to deal with mass crimes, especially communal violence. The focus of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) is on "individual crimes" and not "mass crimes", she added. The draft bill submitted by the civil society groups, Ms. Uma said, pays special attention to enhancing the accountability of public officials. (The Hindu 16/8/08)

Communal clashes in Assam (7)

Guwahati: Miscreants on Sunday set ablaze over 40 houses and fired indiscriminately, injuring at least six persons, in Sonitpur district of Assam as communal tension gripped northern Assam districts of Darrang, Udalguri and Sonitpur. There have been clashes between the Bodos and Muslims over the past three days. Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma and Forest Minister Rockybul Hussain left for the affected areas to take stock of the situation. They urged the people not to panic. Principal Secretary (Home) Subhas Das told The Hindu that additional police and paramilitary personnel were sent to the affected places. Inspector-General of Police (Law and Order) Bhaskarjyoti Mahanta is camping in the area and monitoring the situation. Mr. Das said rumours added to the tension and peace committees had been formed to bring the situation under control. The clashes started on August 14 after the killing of a person. Seven people were injured in a communal clash at Routa in Udalguri district during a bandh called by the Muslim

Students Association. Tension mounted in the three districts after the killing of a couple in lower Assam's Chirang district on Friday by four persons at Anthaibari village under the Bengtol police station. One person, who was attacked by a mob at Gelabil in Udalguri, died of his injuries on Saturday night. (The Hindu 18/8/08)

Minor mishap triggers communal clashes in Ahmedabad (7)

AHMEDABAD, AUGUST 18: Communal tension erupted in Shahpur, Dariapur and Mirzapur areas on Sunday night following an accident involving an auto-rickshaw and a motorcycle. Clashes continued on Monday with incidents of stone pelting being reported in Shahpur and Madhavpura areas. Senior police officers are not ruling out the arrest of a Shahpur youth in connection with the Ahmedabad serial blasts as the root cause behind the clashes. Inspector P R Pandya of Madhavpura said, "We have arrested 13 people on rioting charges and the situation is under control." According to Shahpur police, a collision between a biker and a rickshaw happened near Delhi Darwaja on Sunday night leading to stone pelting near Rentiya Vadi and Halim ni Khadki. Many policemen and civilians were injured in the clashes. To control the violence the police had to lob more than a hundred tear-gas shells on the mobs. Five separate cases of rioting have been registered against a 1000-strong mob. (Indian Express 19/8/08)

Orissa police on alert after ashram attack (7)

BHUBANESWAR: The police all over Orissa have been put on alert after Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Swami Lakshmanananda and four disciples, including a woman, were killed in an attack by armed men at Jalespata in the communally sensitive Kandhamal district on Saturday. The assailants opened fire and hurled bombs at his ashram at 8.30 p.m., Director-General of Police Gopal Chandra Nanda told The Hindu over telephone. "We suspect that the assailants could be Maoists," he said. The Superintendent of Police and district officials reached the spot. Mr. Nanda said several senior police officials were asked to go to the district to prevent any untoward incident. The SPs in all 30 districts were put on alert. Police sources said police were deployed near churches and prayer houses in the district. On Friday, a threatening letter was received at the ashram and the Tumidibanda police station was informed. Last year, Kandhamal district witnessed large-scale violence involving Hindus and Christians on Christmas-eve, following an attack on Swami Lakshmanananda. (The Hindu 24/8/08)

VHP bandh turns violent in Orissa, churches attacked (7)

BHUBANESWAR: Orissa was on the boil on Monday during a bandh called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal in protest against the killing of VHP leader Swami Lakshmanananda. Protesters burnt alive a 20-year-old woman in an orphanage at Khuntpalli village in Bargarh district. In Kandhamal district, where the Swami and four others were killed by suspected Maoists on Saturday night, a villager was burnt to death. Many churches, prayer houses and other Christian institutions were attacked in Kandhamal, Bargarh, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Boudh, Sundargarh and Jajpur districts. At least two prayer houses were damaged in the capital city. Director-General of Police Gopal Chandra Nanda said the woman who was killed in the orphanage was a student. Asked whether the victim was a nun, he said it was yet to be ascertained. As regards the death of a villager in Kandhamal, Mr. Nanda said the police had received information, but were yet to reach the spot. Unconfirmed reports said the victim, Rasanand Pradhan, who was suffering from paralysis, could not escape when many houses in the Christian-majority village were set on fire. Road and rail traffic was affected all over the State during the bandh. Banks, markets and business establishments remained closed, while government offices recorded thin attendance. Educational institutions were closed. In the Assembly, the Naveen Patnaik government faced an embarrassing situation when Bharatiya Janata Party legislators trooped into the well and stalled the proceedings demanding the immediate arrest of those involved in the killing of the Swami. Simultaneously, the Opposition Congress demanded a discussion on the "deteriorating" law and order situation. They demanded the resignation of the Biju Janata Dal-BJP coalition government for its failure to maintain law and order. Speaker Kishore Kumar Mohanty adjourned the House for the day after he failed to persuade the BJP members to allow the proceedings to continue. The Congress, however, gave

notice for moving a no-confidence motion against the government on Tuesday. (The Hindu 26/8/08)

Violence in Jammu too, Samiti puts off talks (7)

JAMMU, AUGUST 25 : In a major setback, the Shri Amarnath Sangarsh Samiti (SASS) on Monday said it would not hold any talks with the Governor's panel until the Inspector General of Police (Jammu zone) K Rajendra Kumar and Senior Superintendent of Police Jammu Manohar Singh were transferred. Samiti convenor Leela Karan Sharma said this decision had been taken in view of the "police atrocities in various parts of Jammu, especially in Digaina, Satwari Nai Basti, Akhnoor road and Kathua, today". The fourth round of talks was set to be held in a day or so. Sharma alleged that the police ransacked houses and damaged nearly 150 private vehicles in Satwari and Nai Basti areas today. Charging the police with using brute force on protestors, he claimed that a four-year-old was among those injured in police action. Meanwhile, a 72-hour curfew was clamped in Kathua town today following fresh incidents of violence at various places, which left many injured. All roads across Jammu region wore a deserted look as pro-Amarnath protesters imposed "civil curfew" following the "chakka jam" call by the Samiti. Protestors blocked roads by burning tyres, putting up barbed wire and holding dharnas. Trouble erupted at Digiana when a contingent of the Jammu & Kashmir Armed Police tried to stop a mob of protestors from taking out a procession on the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway. As protestors pelted stones, police resorted to lathicharge and lobbed teargas shells. At least two dozen people, including SSP Singh, were injured. In Jammu city, police lobbed teargas shells and fired rubber bullets to disperse a mob of youths pelting stones. A police van was set ablaze by protestors on the Jammu-Akhnoor road. Nearly a dozen people were injured in a clash with the police at Kathua, forcing the administration to impose curfew. The situation remained volatile in other parts of Jammu as well. (Indian Express 26/8/08)

Hindu families move out of Poonch villages (7)

JAMMU, AUGUST 25: Three days after communal clashes broke out in Poonch, Hindu families have started moving out from the villages that were affected. Sources said female members of nearly a dozen families in Bainch village have shifted to Poonch town, where they are putting up at the Dashnami akhara. Similarly, at least three families from Dalera village have shifted in with their relatives in Poonch town. Both these villages saw attacks by Muslims on shops belonging to Hindus, who are in a minority in the area, during the last three days. During a visit to Dalera on Monday, the Deputy Commissioner and Senior Superintendent of Police of Poonch assured the Hindus of adequate security arrangements, including setting up a CRPF post there. Locals told the officials that trouble began when some masked men came to the village and announced that Muslims had been killed in Poonch town and their shops looted. While there was no relaxation of curfew in Poonch town on the day, some protestors torched a medical shop and a two-wheeler on the outskirts at Khanetar. A police party was rushed to the area to disperse the protestors. There was tension in Surankote town as Muslims took out a procession and raised pro-Azadi slogans. Deputy Inspector General of Police, Rajouri-Poonch range, Prithvi Raj Manhas said the situation was under control in Poonch. He said curfew could be relaxed on Tuesday. (Indian Express 26/8/08)

Curfew continues in Srinagar (7)

Srinagar: Aug. 26: Security forces in thousands continued to be out on the streets of Srinagar and other towns of the Kashmir Valley on Tuesday to enforce curfew on the third day straight. An uneasy calm prevailed in the region even though the death toll in Monday's police firings on protestors has risen to five after one of the injured persons succumbed in a hospital here in the morning. The non-stop curfew has caused tremendous hardships to the Valley's six million population, particularly those living in cities and towns, including summer capital Srinagar, where the security forces are strictly enforcing security restrictions. People have been without essential supplies, and even medicines, and for the second day running no newspaper could be published from here as the security forces have restricted the movements of the members of the fourth estate as well. In Jammu, preparations are underway for the fourth round of talks between a four-member special committee set up by the governor and the Shri Amarnath Yatra Sangharsh

Samiti, which has, however, sought an explanation from the administration over what it alleged was reign of terror unleashed by the police and Rapid Action Force against the protesters in certain areas of the winter capital, particularly in Nai Basti locality during the one-day wheel jam campaign on Monday. The samiti has also demanded shifting of some senior police officers, including IGP K. Rajendra Kumar, as a precondition for continuing dialogue over the Amarnath land issue. Government officials were, however, hopeful of the two sides meeting as per scheduled on Wednesday. In the Valley, the police raided the homes of various separatist leaders who have gone underground to evade arrest when the clampdown began on Sunday night but could find only Muhammad Ashraf Sahrai, a close associate of Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Unconfirmed reports said that Syeda Aasiya Andrabi, leader of all-women Dukhtaran-e-Millat, too has been arrested. The manhunt for others, including Syed Shabir Ahmed Shah, Naeem Ahmed Khan and Massarat Aalam, is on, said the officials. Rumours spread here on Tuesday that Mr Geelani and two other prominent separatist leaders, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Muhammad Yasin Malik, arrested earlier have been flown out of the Valley. Authorities here denied it but refused to divulge their whereabouts. A report said that Mr Geelani had been shifted to a guesthouse at Gulmarg but was brought back here on Tuesday afternoon after he suffered a mild bronchitis attack. Gulmarg had been sealed off by paramilitary and Army personnel for the first time in many decades to prevent people from neighbouring villages to relocate there. (Asian Age 27/8/08)

Togadia claims bid to attack, wants apology (7)

BHUBANESWAR: Aug. 26: Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) international general secretary Praveen Bhai Togadia on Tuesday escaped an assault bid on him by some unidentified persons at Kalingaghati in Orissa's Kandhamal district. He was targeted by the miscreants returning to Bhubaneswar after attending the funeral ceremony of the slain seer Laxmananand Saraswati. The anti-socials tried to launch an attack by obstructing his security convoy by putting big trees on the sloppy hill pass. However, the mishap was averted as the escort personnel immediately swung into action. They fanned out in all directions looking for the miscreants. Mr Togadia was made to return to a nearest CRPF camp. After the police cleared the road, he returned to Bhubaneswar. Addressing a press conference here, Mr Togadia said the seer — who was a national core committee member of the VHP — was murdered as he always voiced against large-scale conversion activities carried on by missionaries. Blaming the Naveen Patnaik government for not being able to protect the swami, he sought an apology from the CM. He warned that unless all the culprits were brought to the book, sadhus and saints from across the country will congregate Bhubaneswar. (Asian Age 27/8/08)

Communal clashes in Poonch, Mandi (7)

JAMMU, AUGUST 26: Fresh communal tensions flared up in Poonch and Mandi towns late on Monday night and Tuesday when they clashed with each other. Defying the curfew, Muslims took out three separate processions and moved towards the main town at around 11:30 pm. After reaching there, the mob of over a thousand people also raised provocative slogans. Soon, people from the Hindu community came out of their houses and countered the slogans. This led to stone pelting from both sides, which continued till security forces reached the spot around 12.30 am and dispersed the mob. One Vijay Kumar has been arrested in connection with the rioting. A similar incident was also witnessed at Allah Peer Mohalla and Mandi town where Hindus took out protest rallies and demanded a judicial inquiry and compensation for shops and vehicles allegedly burnt by Muslims in four areas of the district on August 22. Though curfew was in force in Poonch town, a protest rally was again organised on the day at Mandi. DIG of Rajouri-Poonch, Prithvi Raj Manhas said the situation was under control in all the areas of the district but curfew wasn't relaxed in Poonch town. Meanwhile, members of both communities held a joint meeting in some parts of the district and formed a committee named "Aman Shanti". (Indian Express 27/8/08)

Targeted by angry mob, police watching, Christians flee after their houses burnt (7)

Phulbani (Orissa), August 27: For 21-year-old Pushpalata Digal, a first-year Sociology Master's student at Phulbani Government College, for her sisters, for her brother and her father John Nayek, a retired Orissa police havildar, life since Monday has been a trauma. Their wait today is for a relief camp. For, they have visited home after home in their neighbourhood asking for shelter

only to be refused because they are Christians. Their house in the Amlapada area, right next to the District Collectorate, was ransacked and its belongings torched on the morning of August 25 by a procession mourning the death of Swami Lakshmananda Saraswati. The procession was escorted by police who, eyewitnesses said, looked the other way. Several houses belonging to Christians were ransacked all along the procession route. The victims range from retired police officers to a retired Additional District Magistrate. A number of orphanages in the town faced a similar fate. In more remote villages, the situation is worse — Christian families, including women and children, are leaving their villages and fleeing to adjacent hills and forests. “The only clothes my two sisters and I have are what we are wearing,” says Pushpalata, in tears. “There’s nothing else left in or of our house. It was around 8 am on Monday when a procession of Swamiji’s followers was passing by. Suddenly, around 100 men, armed with iron rods and lathis, attacked our house and tried to break in. My brother Moses, my sister Taruni and I stood with our backs to the door but we failed to stop them barge in. We somehow escapes through our back door.” The charred heap in front of the house includes burnt clothes, rupee notes, furniture, TV set and a scooter. “The policemen stood right there along the mob and watched the entire scene,” said Pushpalata. “Today, we are going door to door in the neighbourhood begging for shelter only to be refused because we are Christians.” “I served the Orissa police force loyally for years,” said her father. “And now this is what I get in return. I saw policemen in uniform and arms standing near my house and watching people set it on fire. Till now, no police official or government men has come to us and ask about our plight,” said John. Next door to the Nayeks is a Christian orphanage where 15 children are huddled together in the back room, the only one spared by the mob. “After the Nayek’s house they came to ours. I just ran away with the children. Now we have no food, no gas and are living under fear. These children are my responsibility. I only have some rice left to last a couple of days more. With the curfew on and out of fear, I cannot even go out,” said Haseena Mishra, the widow who runs the orphanage. The day was a nightmare for 11-year-old Hemant Kumar Nayek in the orphanage. “There were so many people shouting outside. Our Ma’am told us to pray and we held each other’s hands. When they came in, we ran away,” said Hemant. “I do not know. Ma’am said they were bad people,” said Hemant, when asked who were the outsiders. The family of 80-year-old Prafulla Nayek, former ADM of Kandamal, shared the same fate. His house was attacked and ransacked. “I called the police for help but no one responded. The mob were able to ransack the front portion of the house. What can I say?” said Prafulla Nayek. Even now, there is no sign of police or security at the homes of the victims. More serious is the situation in rural areas, including Baliguda, Chakapada, Barakhamba, K Nuagan, where rows of houses belong to the minority community have been burnt or ransacked. Hundreds have fled their homes, most of them to the nearby hills. At Kanjamendi Colony at K Nuagan, there are only a few Christian families staying, with around 10 houses ransacked. After a 7-km trek up the Damberi Parvat, The Indian Express caught up with a group of villagers who have taken shelter in the forest. Men, women and children perched atop a hill with whatever is left of their belongings. “Over 300 people fled our village and have taken shelter in the forest since last Monday. After the mob attacked our village we took all we can and came here. Here we have almost nothing to eat, there is a constant downpour, our children are sick. But we are alive, thanks to God,” said Kanu Chandra Nayek, a bag on his back. His wife Sukumari and children Manas (10) and Sanjita (18) were with him. According to them, a mob attacked and ransacked their houses in the colony of the morning of August 25. “We called the police when we were attacked. Nobody has come until now,” said Hilton Nayek, an advocate in Baliguda court. He said he could neither go back to his home nor visit the court. Asked about their plight, Kishan Kumar, Collector of Kandamal, said: “We will arrange for relief camps shortly. This includes in areas like Firingia, G Udaygiri, Tikabali and K Nuagan.” When asked about complaints of police inaction, DIG R P Kuche said: “We are doing our best to control the violence and protect the innocent. The process takes some time. I will look into the matter of police personnel present during any vandalism. Our priority is to restore law and order.” Said Saytabrata Sahu, Divisional Revenue Commissioner of Kandamal: “We are trying to provide relief to everyone affected. We have formed peace committees. This is all I can say.” (Indian Express 28/8/08)

Woman burnt by the mob was Hindu, not Christian (7)

Bhubaneswar: : The 22-year-old woman who was burnt by a mob in Orissa's Bargarh district during the statewide bandh called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on Monday has turned out to be a Hindu, not a Christian as was first believed. The woman, Rajani Majhi, was a Hindu and a student of Padampur Women's College in Bargarh district, said Deputy Inspector General of Police (northern range) Y B Khurania. Her biological father Laxmi Prasad Mahakud and foster father Guchu Majhi are both Hindus. They are residents of Nuapada village under Jharbandh police jurisdiction in the district. Padampur Sub-Collector Prabhat Bhoi told The Indian Express that Majhi's eagerness to rescue the children of the Khuntapali orphanage from the murderous mob of 300 led to her end. "The orphanage was running in a house with a tiled roof where some wooden construction material was stored. The roof was supported by wooden beams. So when the mob threw burning missiles, the wooden beams as well as the wooden construction material caught fire," said Bhoi. The district administration gave Majhi's family Rs 10,000 as ex gratia. The priest, father Eddy, was saved as he locked himself in a latrine after being thrashed by the mob. He was now battling for life in a hospital in neighbouring Sambalpur, the officials said. Meanwhile, the National Commission for Women on Wednesday set up a three-member team to inquire into the woman's burning. The team will now visit the state and meet police officers investigating the case. (Indian Express 28/8/08)

J&K calm, curfew in 10 districts (7)

Srinagar: Aug. 28: Kashmir Valley remained by and large peaceful on Thursday after days of mayhem during which eight people were killed in security force's firing on curfew-defying crowds. Curfew is in force in all major and small towns of the 10 districts of Valley and in Jammu's Udhampur, Poonch and Kishtwar areas. However, a report from Baramulla said that the security forces fired rubber bullets into an irate crowd to disperse it after the use of tear-smoke and cane-charge failed to yield the desired result. Two persons were injured, reports said, adding that the security forces swung into action when the crowd chanting pro-freedom slogans tried to remove the Concertina barbed wire laid by the troops a few days ago to block the way out of the old part of the town. Srinagar's Maisuma locality and the towns of Tral and Kulgam in the south also witnessed protests whereas the police on Wednesday night raided the office of Muslim League here and arrested some of its members. The police, as was alleged by its leader Massarat Alam, after ransacking the office sealed it. Tral villagers alleged that the security forces have restricted them even from relocating to their fields and orchards, which is resulting into decaying of their cash crop in the harvest season. Meanwhile, all-women right-wing Dukhtara-e-Millat chief Sayeda Aasiya Andrabi with another separatist activist Raja Merajuddin Kalwal of Syed Ali Geelani's Tekhrik-e-Hurriyat party has been detained under state's stringent Public Safety Act. Under this act in force in Jammu and Kashmir since 1970's, a person can be put behind the bars for a period up to two years without a trial being initiated. However, such detentions are subject to periodical reviews by the competent authority. Officials here denied Valley population is faced with acute shortage of food products and other essentials and medicines. They also claimed that no curbs have been imposed on local newspapers which failed to hit the stands for the fourth day straight on Thursday. (Asian Age 29/8/08)

NCM doubts intent of BJP (7)

NEW DELHI: Sept. 15: The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has questioned the manner in which the BJP-led Karnataka government has tackled the attacks on members of the Christian community, its places of worship and institutions in the state. With the state government headed by Mr B.S.Yeddyurappa unable to contain the growing violence, an NCM team left for Karnataka on Monday to assess the situation for itself. "The state government has been caught napping else the violence would not have spread to more areas," NCM chairman Mohammed Shafi Qureshi told this newspaper. Noting that the violence has spread, he said the police has not been able to check violence. He added, "the question is how has the government tackled the problem". (Asian Age 16/9/08)

Tension after attack on temples in Orissa (7)

Bhubaneswar: Sept. 15: In a development that threatened to further worsen communal situation in Orissa, unidentified miscreants attacked a Hanuman temple and attempted to set afire another

Hindu shrine in two separate incidents in Sundergarh district on Sunday night. According to the police, some people armed with traditional weapons attacked a Hanuman temple at Peruppada village and damaged the idol. Similarly, some unidentified persons tried to torch the main door of a temple in Sagabahal village. The incidents sparked tension in the areas. "We have rushed additional forces to these areas to prevent any flare up of the situation", said Sundergarh SP Narasingha Bhoi. He said efforts have been initiated to form peace committees in these villages to calm down the tempers. The district administration feared that the incidents may create a communal divide in the region in view of riots in Kandhamal district in the aftermath of killing of VHP leader Swami Laxmananand Saraswati on August 23. Meanwhile, barring stray incidents, the overall situation in Kandhamal district remained calm on Monday. "There were isolated incidents of clashes reported from a few villages. However, they were dispersed by security forces. Except for these minor incidents, the district remained violence free", said an official. (Asian Age 16/9/08)

One killed as police open fire to quell Vadodara clashes (7)

VADODARA: At least one person was killed and 20 others were injured in police firing and stone throwing on Monday following a communal clash in parts of old Vadodara city over an alleged attack on a Ganesh idol immersion procession. The police fired four rounds as even after their lobbing 21 teargas shells the warring groups continued to throw stones at each other in the Fatehpura locality on Monday morning. An indefinite curfew was clamped in the areas under the Fatehpura police station. In the evening, the situation was stated to be "under control but tense." Trouble started late Sunday night when, after the alleged attack on the idol immersion procession at Fatehpura, people from both communities gathered in the area and threw stones, injuring about 15 people, including four policemen. The police brought the situation under control, by resorting to lathi charge, and dispersed the mobs. On Monday morning, despite police bandobust, people from both communities gathered again at Fatehpura and indulged in stone-throwing. The trouble spread to the neighbouring Yakutpura, also a minority-dominated locality in the old city. At least five persons were injured. The police then lobbed teargas shells but as the clashing crowds did not disperse, opened fire, injuring four persons. One of them died on the way to hospital, while the other three are said to be recovering. (The Hindu 16/9/08)

'BJP has turned Karnataka into Gujarat of South' (7)

Bangalore, September 15: Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda on Monday alleged that minorities were at the receiving end of Sangh Parivar 'fanatics' in Karnataka and charged ruling BJP with attempting to turn the state into the "Gujarat of south". "Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa has lived upto his promise that he would implement a 'Gujarat Model' in the state", he said in his caustic remarks a day after some churches were attacked allegedly by pro-Hindu groups in the state. "Karnataka has today emerged as the worst Terror and communal hub among all the southern states," the JD(S) leader told reporters in Bangalore. "The violence in Tiptur and the attacks on churches in Davangere, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Mangalore are manifestations of the manner in which the Sangh Parivar organisations are fast spreading their tentacles across the state and turning it into a Gujarat of the south," he said. Targeting senior BJP leader L K Advani, Gowda said he was shocked to find that BJP's prime ministerial candidate did not express any concern over the situation in the state. "Has the mask of secularism that the octogenarian Advani was trying to wear by describing Pakistan founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah as secular, terming the demolition of Babri Masjid as a 'black day' and paying obeisance at the Ajmer Dargah come off, as he gets into a 'must win' mode in his hurry to occupy 7, Race Course Road?" he asked. Gowda sought the immediate resignation of state Home Minister V S Acharya owning moral responsibility for the "spate of violence against minorities". (Indian Express 17/9/08)

Situation remains tense in Mangalore (7)

Police beat a protester during a clash in Mangalore. A bandh was called in Mangalore after Hindu activist's stabbing on Monday. Mangalore, September 16: The situation continued to remain tense but under control in the troubled areas of Mangalore where violence erupted after attacks on churches and prayer halls by suspected Hindu activists, police said on Tuesday. A bandh called

by 'Sriram Sena' to protest stabbing of one of its activists on Monday evoked good response in the area as most of the shops, business establishments, schools and colleges remained closed on Tuesday, the police added. Police are maintaining tight vigil in all the areas and over 50 suspected Bajrang Dal activists have been arrested in connection with the attack in the three districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udipi and Chikmagalur. On Monday, hundreds of Christians took to streets in parts of Mangalore and Bantwal protesting Sunday's attack on churches and prayer houses over alleged forcible conversions by Missionaries, a charge denied by the Bishop of Mangalore. (Indian Express 17/9/08)

Mob kills cop, torch police station in Orissa (7)

Bhubaneswar, September 16: Armed attackers on Tuesday shot dead a police constable and set fire to a police station in Orissa's riot-hit Kandhamal district. The spurt in violence has led to heavy force deployment in the area. A large number of attackers armed with country-made guns and crude weapons gunned down a constable and set ablaze the police station at Gochapada early this morning, Director General of Police Gopal Nanda said. Other policemen present at the police station, located about 36 km from district headquarters town of Phulbani, seemed to have fled into the forest as they were heavily outnumbered by the attackers, he said. Kandhamal District Collector Krishan Kumar said the mob comprised about 500 people who were carrying fire arms and other weapons. Additional security forces have been deployed in the area in the wake of the incident in the sensitive district which has been witnessing violence for the last three weeks, both the DGP and the district collector said. Police sources said the mob was demanding release of a man held by the security personnel but local residents felt that the attack was retaliatory action of the police firing at Kurtamgarh in Tumudibandh area on September 13. The roads leading to Gochapada had been blocked by logs and boulders which were being cleared to facilitate the movement of forces, the sources said. The state police chief said it was not the first instance of a police station being attacked and torched as similar incidents had taken place during the riots that had rocked Kandhamal district in December 2007. (Indian Express 17/9/08)

First part of Godhra report submitted (7)

GANDHINAGAR: The Nanavati Commission, probing the Godhra train carnage and subsequent riots in Gujarat, submitted the first part of its report to Chief Minister Narendra Modi here on Thursday. Commission members Justice G.T. Nanavati and Justice Akshay Mehta handed over the report to him, in the presence of Minister of State for Home Amit Shah. The contents of the commission's recommendations were not immediately known. Government sources said the report was likely to be tabled in the Assembly during a three-day session beginning on September 25. The government appointed a one-man commission constituted by the retired Gujarat High Court judge, K.G. Shah, in March 2002, to probe the Godhra train carnage in February 2002 and the communal riots that followed. Following objections from many sections, particularly human rights activists, the retired Supreme Court judge, Justice Nanavati, was appointed to head the commission. Sources in the commission said more than 44,000 affidavits were filed and during the six years of its tenure so far, extended by the government several times, it examined over 1,000 witnesses. Following the death of Justice Shah earlier this year, Justice Mehta, also a retired judge of the High Court, was appointed in his place in April. The Jansangharsha Manch, representing riot victims before the commission, however, decided to boycott its proceedings. The Manch advocate, Mukul Sinha, claimed that Justice Mehta was "too close" to Mr. Modi to expect impartiality from the commission in its reports. On the submission of the first part of the report, Dr. Sinha expressed surprise at the "speed and energy" with which the commission completed the investigation on the train carnage. Questioning the "urgency" of submitting the report as six years had already passed, he said if the Nanavati Commission should have waited for the report on the train carnage by the Special Investigation Team appointed by the Supreme Court. The apex court recently extended the time limit of the SIT till December this year. He also expressed apprehension over the advisability of bifurcating the commission's report into two, one on the train carnage and the other on post-Godhra riots. Such piecemeal efforts would not ensure justice for the riot victims, Dr. Sinha said. (The Hindu 19/9/08)

Communal situation deteriorating: CPI (7)

NEW DELHI: The Communist Party of India on Sunday expressed concern about the 'continuously deteriorating communal situation' and accused the Sangh Parivar and the Bharatiya Janata Party of returning to their "original agenda of communal polarisation." Referring to the widespread violence against Christians in Orissa and Karnataka, the party national executive charged it was planned and executed by Sangh parivar outfits like the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad with the open support of the administration and the police. Briefing the media, deputy general secretary S. Sudhakar Reddy said the two-day national executive meeting, which ended on Sunday, called upon party units all over the country to immediately launch a campaign against communalism, on its own as well as in cooperation with other Left and secular parties. In its resolution, the national executive said that from the "pattern" adopted in Orissa and Karnataka it was "obvious" that the BJP was using its control over the state machinery to do a Gujarat there. The goal was to communally polarise the States and cash in on the situation during elections. The resolution said it was 'astonishing' that the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre, instead of taking strong note of the BJP design, was trying to play it down. It also charged that the Centre was lending a helping hand to the Sangh parivar by "swallowing the prescriptions of the Narendra Modi government" on the issue of terrorism. "It is almost echoing the propaganda of the Sangh parivar." Mr. Reddy said after repealing POTA, the government was now talking of the need for stronger laws to fight terror. "We opposed POTA since it had provisions in which the accused had to prove his innocence. This goes against the principle of natural justice where the prosecution has to prove the charges." The executive emphasised thorough investigation without any pre-conceived mindset in all recent cases of terrorism and communal violence. All aspects, including the role of political beneficiaries, should also be properly investigated, it said. "Religious fundamentalism and communalism of different hues compete and supplement each other." It expressed deep shock and anguish at the loss of lives and injuries in the Delhi serial blasts, which exposed the "utter failure of the intelligence services." Stating that while police action brought some relief to the people, it cautioned that in dealing with the situation care should be taken not to allow alienation of particular communities or religious groups. The executive adopted resolutions on the Bihar floods, opposed the U.S. intrusions in Pakistan, and demanded that the Chhattisgarh government stop the Salwa Judum campaign against naxalites. (The Hindu 22/9/08)

Uneasy calm in Kandhmal (7)

Bhubaneswar : A month into the brutal murder of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati and four of his disciples, tension continues to simmer in Kandhmal district, though violence has abated. The 86-year-old monk was killed on August 23 at his Jalespata Ashram. While the ashram inmates were busy performing puja on Janmashtami, the swami was dragged into a room and hacked to death. "Swamiji was killed at the instance of the Church. The timing was also chosen by them in order to take revenge on Swamiji for obstructing their activities," claimed Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) state unit general secretary Gouri Shanakar Rath. However, Cuttack Archbishop Raphael Cheenath denied allegations of illegal conversions. He maintained there was no forcible conversion. "The Orissa government should order a CBI probe into the murder of Swamiji and the aftermath violence relating to it," he said, adding the people were still feeling insecure and hiding in the dense forest. While tribal leader Lambodar Kanhar said the issue can be resolved if the government took action against the exploiters and protected the rights of the tribals, the usually reticent Puri Maharaja Dibya Singh Deb demanded conversions should stop without delay. Kandhmal boasts a population of nearly 6.5 lakh with nearly 1.18 lakh converted Christians. The Christian population has increased from merely one thousand to nearly 1.18 lakh within a span of 35 years as per the census report of 2001. "Yes, conversion is one of the main reasons for the ongoing conflict in Kandhmal," admitted State Home Secretary TK Mishra. Kandhas and Panas are the original inhabitants of Kandhmal. Kandhas constitute nearly 60 per cent of the population. With the arrival of Christian missionaries, a number of panas embraced Christianity. Interestingly, missionaries have entered the tribal pockets of the state while avoiding the coastal belt. Trouble began after converted Christians demanded rights enjoyed by the Kandha tribals. Allegations surfaced that several converted Pana Christians entered government jobs by producing fake caste certificates and encroached their land. After arriving in Kandhmal in 1969 Swami Laxmanananda began educating Kandhas on the matter. He stood as a major stumbling block for missionaries pursuing the conversion agenda. He started the Parabartan Yatra to

encourage the converted to re-embrace Hinduism. Though the state has the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, its implementation has been far from satisfactory. The Act mandates that, those wanting to change religion must apply before the district magistrate and get the necessary clearance. All the churches have been asked to follow the Act. But blatant violation of the law has been done over the years. Officials figure say only two people were legally converted to Christianity. "We are now feeling the pinch of non-implementation of the Act," remarked the state's law Minister Biswabhusan Harichandan, adding that the government would soon take steps to effectively implement the Act. Sources said post-Kandhamal controversy the state government has already issued direction to all collectors and SPs to stringently implement the Act. (Pioneer 24/8/08)

Muslim mob attacked train: Nanavati Commission (7)

GANDHINAGAR: The Nanavati-Mehta judicial inquiry commission has based its conclusion that the Godhra train carnage was a "pre-planned conspiracy" on the recorded evidence of over 100 witnesses, who claimed to having heard a crowd of about a 1,000 Muslims shouting "set the train on fire and kill the Hindus." The report said "instigating slogans" were also made over loudspeakers from a nearby mosque to attack Hindus. The evidence recorded by the commission also claimed that a mob of Muslims attacked the train and stoned the coaches so heavily that the passengers could not come out. This was to ensure maximum casualties when the S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express was "set afire." The commission, in its 168-page report, said the "conspiracy" was hatched by some local Muslims at the Aman guest house in Godhra the previous night. The conspirators immediately made arrangements for collecting about 140 litres of petrol from a nearby pump on the night of February 26, 2002, the next day when the train arrived in Godhra, Hasan Lala, after forcibly opening the vestibule between coaches S-6 and S-7, entered S-6 and threw burning rags setting it on fire. The report named Moulvi Umerji of the local mosque as the "mastermind" of the conspiracy. It said Rajak Kurkure, Salim Panwala, Saukatlal, Imran Sheri, Rafiq Batuk, Salim Jarda, Jabbar, and Siraj Lala were among those who participated in the conspiracy to "cause harm to the kar sevaks travelling in that coach." According to the report, setting fire to the train was part of a "larger conspiracy" to "instil a sense of fear" in the administration and create "anarchy" in the state. It, however, has not named the architects of the "larger conspiracy." The commission disagreed with the contentions of the Banerjee committee and the Jan Sangharsha Manch, which represented the riot victims before the commission, that alarm chains could not be operated from outside under the modified system introduced by the Railways in 1995. Quoting a railway officer of the carriage and wagon department, Ahmedabad, it said the alarm chain could still be pulled from outside. Quoting a number of surviving passengers, the commission said they had seen the mob outside the coach throwing stones and also some "burning rags" and some "inflammable liquid materials" through the windows. "The passengers had informed DSP Raju Bhargava at about 8.30 a.m. that the train was attacked by a mob and many passengers were injured and killed. Where was the time or reason for the passengers to concoct a false story," it asked. "Considering the situation prevailing then, it is highly unlikely that the passengers had any discussion amongst themselves and they had decided to give a false version about the attack on the train," it said. The report said the passengers immediately after getting down from the coach gave the same version of the mob attack and throwing of inflammable materials inside the coach to the District Collector. Godhra station superintendent Katija, who was also present with the Collector, gave the same evidence, corroborated by assistant station master Rajendraprasad Meena, who was present at "A" cabin, near which the incident took place, and the railway protection force commandants. The commission said the passengers of the train were attacked the second time some three hours after the stone throwing and burning incident when the train was being shunted to detach the two affected coaches. Two Muslim mobs of about 700 people started pelting stones on the passengers waiting on the yard for the train to reassemble and resume their onward journey to Ahmedabad. The police had to open fire, killing two persons and injuring one to disperse the violent mobs. This refutes the theory that the fire was accidental, it claimed.

The commission claimed that there was no evidence to justify the contention that the kar sevaks had been fighting with Muslim vendors at stations before Godhra as alleged earlier, though there

were some minor scuffles with three Muslim vendors on the Godhra platform. But though there was no "reliable evidence" to show that any attempt was made by the kar sevaks to abduct Sofiabonu, Salim Panwala spread a "false rumour" to that effect to collect a mob that started pelting stones on the passengers. The commission dismissed as "not worthy of any credence" the Manch theory that there was no crowd, except a small group of curious on-lookers, no stone-throwing and no conspiratorial setting of fire. Without mentioning the Banerjee report, the Nanavati commission rejected the "accidental fire" theory stating that the reasoning that a fire was caused by the overturning of a burning stove used for cooking by some kar sevaks in the compartment or that it was set off by an electric short circuit was baseless. There was no space for anyone to light the stove in the over-crowded coach carrying more than 200 passengers and any spillover of kerosene from the stove, though out of the question, could not have caused such heavy fire and damage. Dismissing the short circuit theory, the commission said in such an event the passengers would not have climbed up to the upper berths to protect themselves as electric lines were going through the top of the coaches, and rather they would have climbed down on the floor. In such an event, the windows on the platform side of the coach would not have been closed or the windowpanes broken by stone throwing. "The smoke before fire" did not necessarily mean electric short circuit as propounded by the Manch but because the fire was caused by some inflammable materials thrown on the floor from outside, it concluded. It said the Centre or the Railways had not appeared before the commission to claim the fire to be accidental and on the contrary the railway officials and the government railway protection force personnel present on the spot had stated that the attack was by the Muslim mob and that the coach was set ablaze by petrol, (The Hindu 26/9/08)

Supreme Court won't restrain Gujarat from acting on report (7)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to restrain the Gujarat government from circulating, publishing and acting on the Nanavati Commission report on the Godhra train carnage. (The commission, appointed by the State government, said the February 27, 2002 fire aboard coach S-6 of the Sabarmati Express at the Godhra station was a "pre-planned conspiracy by local Muslims.") A Bench, consisting of Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justice P. Sathasivam, however, issued notice to the government on a special leave petition filed by Citizens for Justice and Peace against a Gujarat High Court order refusing to pass an interim order restraining it from placing the report in the Assembly. Senior counsel Rajinder Sachar said there was no provision under law for a commission to submit an interim report particularly when there were several terms of reference. He said the High Court earlier restrained the tabling of the Justice Banerjee Committee report on the same issue in Parliament. (The Banerjee Committee, appointed by Railway Minister Lalu Prasad, said the fire was "purely accidental.") Mr. Sachar argued that the Nanavati Commission had named the conspirators and if the government arrested them, communal harmony would be disturbed. When Justice Balakrishnan asked counsel whether the commission had given any specific direction to the government or recommendations for implementation of the report, Mr. Sachar said "We have not gone through the report." Justice Balakrishnan said: "It would not be possible to pass an interim order without hearing the Gujarat government." The Bench then posted the matter to October 13. The petitioner said tabling one part of the Nanavati report and making it public was detrimental to the public interest. It questioned the commission's action in withholding the report on the "dubious role" of the State government in supporting the accused involved in the carnage against the minority community, which followed the train fire. (The Hindu 27/9/08)

8 more die as mob violence erupts in new Assam areas (7)

Guwahati: Oct. 5: The communal clashes that erupted on Friday continued to rock northern Assam, with eight more deaths reported on Sunday. In all, 33 people have lost their lives. Four people were killed when the police fired at mobs of villagers at three different places on Sunday. The armed mobs were trying to set ablaze villages of a rival community in Udalguri. The Army staged flag marches in trouble-torn Udalguri and Darrang districts on Sunday as communal clashes started spreading to some new areas. One death was reported from Baskha, another district which falls under the Bodoland Territorial Council. Three bullet-ridden bodies were recovered from different remote villages of Udalguri district, security sources said. More than

40,000 people have been displaced so far in the two worst hit districts of Udalguri and Darrang. The state administration has set up relief camps at Udalguri, Mangaldoi and Dalgaon for the riot victims, but these have so far proved inadequate to accommodate the large number of people displaced by the violence. Home ministry sources here said on Sunday that the Assam government had been alerted about the simmering communal tension between the two communities in the area immediately after the August 14 incident, in which at least 16 people were killed at Udalguri. The local administration had also sought the deployment of more security forces, but this was ignored. The deputy commissioner of Darrang district, Mr Dhruba Hazarika, told this newspaper that the situation was tense, but under control. "We are taking all necessary steps to control the situation, and the security forces have been given shoot-at-sight orders," he said. The situation was brought under control in Sonitpur district, where the district administration and the police has set up camps of senior officers in most of the vulnerable areas, and are keeping close watch on the situation. Sontipur superintendent of police Surendar Kumar told this newspaper: "Our biggest problem is rumour-mongers. We are trying to control it in order to pacify the situation." The district administration has also started forming peace committees at the village level in order to prevent the violence from spilling over into new areas. The state government and the police is being silent on the actual death toll in the latest round of communal clashes, but sources in the Union home ministry in New Delhi confirmed the death of eight more people, taking the overall death toll to 33 on Sunday. (Asian Age 6/10/08)

Assam death toll up to 39 (7)

UDALGURI: The death toll in the clashes between Bodos and immigrant Muslim settlers in the northern Assam districts of Udalguri and Darrang and the lower Assam district of Baksa has gone up to 39. The exodus from the riot-hit areas continued till Monday evening with the number of people displaced going up to 1,10,000. The clashes, which broke out on October 3, have left 26 dead including 10 in police firing in Udalguri district, and 13 dead including five in police firing in Darrang district. There was no report of any fresh clash. Subhash Das, Principal Secretary, Home, told The Hindu that of the 21 additional companies of paramilitary forces sought by the State government, the Centre sanctioned 14, four of which were already deployed. The government has told the DGP that the officer-in-charge of a police station will be held responsible if fresh clashes break out in the areas under its jurisdiction. (The Hindu 7/10/08)

Tension in Gujarat town after group clash (7)

Gandhinagar : Tension prevails in Deesa town of north Gujarat on Monday after a communal clash led to a police station being attacked, some shops being looted and razed and about a dozen people, including a policeman being injured. Official sources termed the situation under control. Following the violence, shops and business establishments downed their shutters. Scattered incidents of stone throwing were reported throughout the day. The trouble was reportedly sparked off when a few people seized a vehicle, carrying buffalo calves, coming from Rajasthan and on it's way to Dhanera town. The driver, who belonged to the minority community filed a complaint with the police against Bharat Kothari, the leader of the group. Later, a mob of about 500 attacked Kothari's shop. Subsequently, rumours spread that Kothari had been killed in the attack. This rumour triggered off the violence. Kothari subsequently denied that he had anything to do with the seizure. Banaskantha district superintendent of police DN Patel described the situation as tense but under control. An FIR has been filed against the mob, he added. (Pioneer 7/10/08)

Here, the riot victim is a day old (7)

Burigaon High Madrassa Relief Camp (Darrang): As Nuruda Amin lay bleeding after giving birth to her sixth child – a baby girl — at Khoirkata village in Udalguri on Sunday night, she suddenly heard her family members and villagers hurrying. Before she realised what was happening, Nuruda found that her house had been set on fire by a mob. Nuruda managed to crawl to a nearby paddy field to pass a sleepless night. Her five other minor children — four sons and a daughter — and her frail husband Kalachand were by her side watching helplessly. The family — from this backward village of immigrant settlers — walked about 12 km to take shelter in Burigaon High Madrassa Relief Camp under Dalgaon police station in adjacent Darrang district. On

Monday, a visibly frail Nuruda was sitting with her one-day-old baby on a tarpaulin sheet inside the madrasa. Her husband was being administered intravenous fluids for his severe weakness. Doctors and the nurse attending on Nuruda told The Hindu that they had given her an injection to control bleeding. The trauma of having been nearly burnt alive along with her newborn was evident in Nuruda's eyes. While Nuruda and other inmates of the camp had tales of violent attacks by mobs from surrounding Bodo villages to tell the visitors, inmates of the Bodo relief camp at Udalguri College too had traumatic experiences to narrate. Altogether 7,460 Bodo families from 28 violence-affected villages in Udalguri district have taken shelter in the relief camp after immigrant settlers attacked their villages and torched houses on Friday night in which seven persons were killed and 35 injured. While the relief camps of both the communities were overcrowded with people fleeing their villages, burnt houses along National Highway 52 bore testimony to the destruction and violent retaliation by both the sides. At Aminpara village under the Udalguri police station, some villagers could be seen trying to salvage rice from the granaries that were gutted when attackers set ablaze their houses along the national highway, less than a kilometre from a police outpost. (The Hindu 7/10/08)

Curfew continues in Dhule; no fresh violence (7)

MUMBAI: Dhule continues to be under curfew for the third day, though no fresh incident of violence was reported after 3.30 p.m. In the morning, trouble spread to Sakhri taluk. Collector Prajakta Lavangare told The Hindu that the mobs had gathered at Sakhri but no clashes occurred as the situation was quickly defused. Some shops were burnt in the area. Tension prevailed in the city between 12 noon and 2 p.m. but the situation was brought under control. Police opened fire in two places to curb rioting, said deputy superintendent Paval. No fresh casualties were reported. Four people had been killed in the riots. Members of the Hindu Rakshak Samiti, Hiram Gawli and Raju Marathe were among the 250 people arrested for the riots. "We have caught all the main persons," Ms. Lavangere said. Houses were burnt in the Gajanan Nagar, Devpur area and in the Hamil Mathadi colony. Additional reinforcements are being sent to the city in view of the uncertain law and order situation. On Monday a cracker factory was set on fire on the outskirts of the city and houses in some parts were damaged in arson. This is the third riot in Maharashtra in the last one week. Riots broke out at Rabodi in Thane city last Monday and later at Murud in Raigad district was in the grip of communal fury. In Murud, on September 30 a Durga pooja procession near a masjid in the Bazaar Peth market area caused tension. (The Hindu 8/10/08)

Beyond Kandhamal's 'communal' divide (7)

Bhubaneswar : Much has been talked about the Hindu-Christian communal violence that erupted in Kandhamal after the brutal murder of VHP's 86-year-old monk Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati on August 23. With as many as 35 persons killed and thousands rendered homeless, Orissa now stares at the prospect of an imposition of the President's Rule for its alleged "failure to prevent violence and killings of Christians". But, as Kendra Sahitya Academy award winner for literary activities, Mohapatra Nilamani Sahoo, points out, "The ongoing conflict and continuing clash is only a reflection of the age-old conflict between two major inhabitants of Kandhamal. One can easily trace the issue of the conflict between Kandhas and Panas in late Gopinath Mohanty's famous novel Parajaa and Amrutar Santan, written way back in 1940s." Mohanty was a Gyanapitha awardee for his research-based outstanding literary activities. Kandhas and Panas are the original inhabitants of Kandhamal district, boasting a population of nearly 6.5 lakh. Out of it more than 60 percent are Kandhas with the Panas and other communities constituting the rest. While most Kandhas are Hindus who follow their own indigenous culture, a majority of Panas is converted Christians who constitute nearly 1.18 lakh of the total population. Tension had also broken out in 1990s between Kandhas and Panas. The conflict aggravated after the Panas started demanding reservation and a reclassification as Scheduled Tribes. "The Panas felt that they could not take full advantage of the State's affirmative action as long as they were classified as a Scheduled Caste. They wanted to be reclassified as Scheduled Tribe, a demand that brought them in conflict with the Kandhas," points out noted journalist Swapan Dasgupta. Once the Panas get the status of tribals, they would be privileged to enjoy all associated benefits as enjoyed by Kandhas. Knowing fully well the plans and their outcome, the Kandhas started

opposing it tooth and nail. "The conflict is no more confined to Hindus and Christians. It is more than that. The land grabbed unlawfully by the Panas should be reverted to Kandhas. The issue of fake certificates should also be inquired into," demands senior Kandha leader and president of the Kui Samaj Lambodar Kanhar. "If the Government solved the conflict between Kandhs and Panas, all simmering tension would meet a natural death," he suggests..... (Pioneer 8/10/08)

Assam death toll 51; curfew, shoot-at-sight continues (7)

UDALGURI (Assam): The death toll mounted to 51 in Assam's violence-scarred Udalguri and Darrang districts with the recovery of 11 bodies on Tuesday of victims of clashes between illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and indigenous people since Friday. Official sources said three bodies were recovered from Panbari area of Darrang district, while two bodies each were found from Paschim Hahiligaon in Tangla area and Mazbat, besides four from Kalaigaon, Rajapukhuri and Jhargaon areas of Udalguri district. The bodies were recovered from villages burnt down when search operations were launched for survivors and bodies. IGP (Law and Order) Bhaskarjyoti Mahanta told reporters here that of the 51 killed, 26 died in clashes and the rest in police firing. Thirty persons, including 19 were killed in Udalguri in clashes and 21, including seven in Darrang, while 90 were injured, Mahanta said. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi claimed the situation had "improved" with no fresh violence reported since last evening. With indefinite curfew and shoot-at-sight continuing in the two districts, Gogoi said in a statement in Guwahati that the army was staging flag marches to prevent recurrence of trouble. He said, he had asked the army and para-military to maintain strict vigil so that the violence did not spread to new areas. Strong measures were suggested against those spreading rumours and dealing firmly with miscreants trying to engineer rift among the communities. (Times of India 8/10/08)

Communal tension in UP town (7)

LUCKNOW: Oct. 9: Tension prevailed in Bahraich district on Thursday after members of one community raised slogans when a procession carrying an idol of Goddess Durga was passing near the Karbala ground in Gangwal bazaar. Members of both the communities came out on the street, armed with swords and sticks, and pelted stones at one another. The irate mob also damaged the police jeep. SP Chandra Prakash said the immersion procession was stopped after slogans were raised by the other community. (Asian Age 10/10/08)

The communal divide in Dhule (7)

DHULE: For a city once held up as an example of communal harmony, Dhule's reputation lies in tatters. The riots that broke out on October 5 have virtually disrupted the place. Ten people died and over 200 were injured in the clashes that broke out, ostensibly over an offensive poster. There is curfew for the seventh day running, though it has been relaxed for three hours since a couple of days. About 4,000 people continue to live in five relief camps. Initially, there were eight camps with about 6,300 people. The signs of rioting are everywhere, right from the octroi check post, which has a huge burnt truck lying in front of it, to the small colonies. The city is deserted, except for the police, and tension has not abated in the affected areas. In Gajanan Colony, 82-year-old Manik Choudhary and his wife Padmabai are checking out the remains of their charred house. "They pulled us out at noon and burnt the place down," says Padmabai. "We just managed to leave with the clothes on our back. I did not dream of taking anything with me," she says. Now, like the others from Gajanan colony, they live in a camp at Arihant Mangal Karyalay, run by a Jain businessman. "We were staying on rent for Rs. 1000, what will happen to us now, we don't even have children to support us," Padmabai adds. Residents are still trying to find out what happened in Gajanan colony. At least 50 homes have been burnt and there are piles of charred vehicles everywhere. People say they were attacked at around noon and they only had enough time to flee. Padma Patil says she held back the mob with the help of cement sacks brought for repairs. "Those sacks saved my family's life otherwise we would have been burnt to death," she says. The police came five or six hours late, allege the residents. Once the people left, the mob looted and burnt the houses. Inside the homes, cupboards are bare and many television sets have been smashed. Muslims have been living alongside this colony for years and there has never been any trouble. Yuvraj Choudhary, a daily wage worker in the cotton market, weeps as he points to his house. The door was burnt down with petrol and they were saved by

local boys who held back the mob. His house is completely burnt. Local people say the attack was planned. "Otherwise how can so many people come together and attack a large colony like this," asks Choudhary. "Now there is an atmosphere of fear and terror, my children want to leave here," he says. Some Muslim houses too have been burnt here. Manjula Mistry had saved enough for her daughter Komal's wedding during Diwali. Her husband had done up the place using expensive materials. "Now there is nothing, we were looted and chased out of the house," she says. "We had such good relations with the Muslims, we helped them so much. Why did they do this," she asks. Most people here are daily wagers or small traders and are trying to work out their losses. Many have lost documents and valuables apart from cash. At the nearby Arihant Mangal Karyalay, Hukumchand Jain is their benefactor. The wedding hall is buzzing with cooking in the evening. At least 1,000 people live here, he says and the Jains and traders are helping out. Both communities have been deeply scarred by the events of the past week. At Vitha Bhati, an entire Muslim colony has been burnt. There are similarities in the stories of the two places. Both have working class communities and both have suffered. Unlike Jain, there is no one to set up a camp for these residents. The trouble started last Sunday night when the riots spread like wildfire through the city. (The Hindu 12/10/08)

RSS activist's death: tension at Thalassery (7)

THALASSERY: Tension prevailed in Thalassery following the death of a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) activist in a bomb explosion at Komathupara, near here, late night on Friday. C.K. Anoop, 21 died on the way to hospital. Another RSS activist, Rijesh, 29, who had also suffered injuries in the explosion, has been admitted to the Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode. A CPI(M) worker identified as Jithesh, 28, was injured in a clash between rival workers. While the RSS and the Bharatiya Janata Party alleged that Anoop was killed in bomb attacks by Communist Party of India (Marxist) activists, the CPI(M) here stated that the RSS activists were injured when country-made bombs they were carrying went off. Tension prevailed at Thalassery and nearby areas following the incident. The RSS-BJP activists had ransacked the Thalassery CPI(M) local committee office around 2 p.m. on Saturday after the body was taken to Komathuvayal after a post-mortem. A television set and furniture were damaged. A few houses of CPI(M) and BJP-RSS activists came under attack. A platoon of armed police had been deployed here. Inspector-General of Police V. Shantharam and Superintendent of Police S. Sreejith were camping here. A hartal observed by the BJP-RSS at the Thalassery Assembly constituency was total. Buses were exempted from the hartal. (The Hindu 12/10/08)

Pre-planned attack in Dungarpur, alleges report (7)

JAIPUR: A delegation that visited the Adivasi-dominated Dungarpur town in south Rajasthan to investigate the recent communal clashes in the area has termed the developments as a "pre-mediated operation" to polarise the votes on communal lines prior to the coming State Assembly elections. The delegation questioned the role of State Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria, who visited the town soon after the incidents. "It was a pre-planned attack on the Muslim community in order to damage their business and also to create a sense of insecurity among them," said Sawai Singh, president of the Sadbhavana Manch, who led the delegation along with Engineer Mohammed Saleem of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. "The Administration remained a mute witness as armed men belonging to Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and Bharatiya Janata Party took over. The visit of Mr. Kataria further emboldened the rioters," he charged. The delegation comprised former judge and president of the Bodh Mahasabha, Tek Chand Rahul, K. Anand of the Samata Sainik Dal and Mohammed Nazimuddin and Abdul Aziz of the Rajasthan Muslim Forum. They said 13 establishments including shops and three big godowns, four houses and five vehicles belonging to the minorities were damaged in the violence. "The violence was not accidental. There was a design to it," Mr. Rahul charged. "Apart from the absence of any coordination between the police and the Administration after the outbreak of violence our investigations revealed the complicity of lower level police functionaries in the town in the rioting," he added. "There was a crowd of 300 men damaging property and setting fire to shops in the main market of Dungarpur. A contingent of 100 policemen followed them but did nothing," he said. The incidents of arson and looting, which had taken place in the town from September 27 to October 3, had led to a loss of at least Rs.2 crore to the community, Mr. Saleem said. "The

Muslim establishments were singled out for attack and arson. It appeared as if the shops were marked in advance and targeted," he said. Giving a specific instance, he noted that expensive equipment and furniture in a dental clinic run by a Muslim doctor were taken out on the road and destroyed as the building belonged to a Hindu. "The other places in south Rajasthan such as Rajsamand, Pratapgarh and Banswara have seen such attacks against the minorities in the recent past. Obviously the attempt is to create a Gujarat-like situation in Rajasthan prior to the elections," Mr. Saleem asserted. The Sadbhavana Manch, which has demanded dismissal of Home Minister Kataria, is now planning to approach the Rajasthan Governor, the National Human Rights Commission and the Minorities Commission. (The Hindu 12/10/08)

Six burnt alive in Adilabad (7)

BHAINSA (ADILABAD DT.): Six members of a family, including three children, were burnt alive at Vatoli village near Bhainsa town in Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh in the early hours of Sunday. The incident comes as a sequel to the communal flare-up that claimed three lives in Bhainsa town on October 10. The six belonged to a tailor's family, one of only two families belonging to a particular community in this small village about 12 km from the communally sensitive Bhainsa town. The badly charred bodies of the head of the family, his wife, daughter and three grand children were extracted from the debris in one of the three rooms of the tiled house. The daughter had come home from Himayatnagar in Maharashtra with her child and her aunt's two sons. While neighbours said they did not hear anything, relatives of the victims said they noticed the house on fire at about 2 a.m. They contacted the fire force. Though the fire was doused, the bodies were discovered only in the morning. The family is said to have had cordial relations with the neighbours. "Had the family head feared for his life he would not have attended a bhajan programme organised that day," a villager pointed out. He is said to have returned at about midnight. One of the theories being looked into is the role of outsiders in the crime. Home Minister K. Jana Reddy, who visited Vatoli accompanied by Labour Minister G. Vinod and Director General of Police S.S.P. Yadav, said a CBI inquiry would be sought into the incident. He ordered a judicial inquiry into the conspiracy part and a CB-CID inquiry into the loss of lives and destruction of property in the Bhainsa violence. To control further spread of violence and instil confidence among the people here, the Rapid Action Force would be deployed, he said. Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi and State secretary of the Communist Party of India K. Narayana also visited Vatoli and Bhainsa. (The Hindu 13/10/08)

Fight terrorism & communal violence firmly, says NIC (7)

NEW DELHI: While expressing concern at communal violence and terror attacks in various parts of the country, the National Integration Council on Monday resolved to preserve and protect at all costs the foundations of secularism, equality, justice — social, economic and political — and fraternity among all communities. After a day-long meeting here, chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the NIC adopted a six-point resolution which condemned all acts of violence, and covert and overt attempts to strike at the roots of the country's "national integrity, solidarity and pluralism. It decided to deal with all forms of extremism, terrorism and violence firmly and in accordance with the rule of law. The 14th meeting of the NIC recognised that unity in diversity and communal harmony constituted the bedrock of "our nationhood and civilisational values. Preserving this unique heritage is the challenge of our times and the bounden duty of every citizen." In his closing remarks, Dr. Singh expressed satisfaction over the "broad consensus" at the meeting on the need to contain communal discord and violence, protect minority rights, and uphold the ideals of nationalism, secularism, inclusiveness and non-violence. "The Council has been unanimous in the condemnation of the recent acts of communal strife and discord in some parts of our country. There has also been agreement that terrorism constitutes a major challenge to the cohesiveness of our nation." Dr. Singh told a galaxy of political leaders, including Chief Ministers, his Cabinet colleagues, and eminent persons from other fields who are NIC members, that the challenge of terrorism had to be met "effectively." He cautioned that targeting and profiling of particular communities had to be avoided. "It has to be recognised that terrorists have no religion." Dr. Singh noted that suggestions were also received to put in place an institutionalised mechanism within the NIC to pursue relevant issues on a continuous basis. Briefing journalists, Home Minister Shivraj Patil said some members did suggest a ban on the

Bajrang Dal, which was accused of engineering violence against Christians in Orissa and Karnataka. While admitting that there were differences between him and Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the steps taken to control communal violence in Kandhamal district, Mr. Patil said there was no rancour. Both disagreed on how violence in Kandhamal could have been contained and their areas of disagreement included optimal deployment of forces and crackdown on those involved in inciting and indulging in violence against Christians. (The Hindu 14/10/08)

Court: no bar on Nanavati preliminary report (7)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to restrain the Gujarat government from implementing, circulating or acting on the Justice Nanavati Commission report on the Godhra train carnage. A Bench consisting of Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justices P. Sathasivam and Aftab Alam, however, asked the Gujarat government to respond to a petition, filed by Citizens for Justice and Peace, seeking a stay on circulation of the report on the ground that the Commission was not authorised to give its report in parts. The Chief Justice told senior counsel Rajinder Sachar, appearing for the NGO, that under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, there was no bar on the commission giving a preliminary report or making some recommendations. "The report is only a recommendation. The government may or may not act on it. What is your apprehension?" Mr. Sachar, however, said the commission could not give a preliminary report and the government could only place an action taken report in the Assembly. If the report was circulated it would hurt communal harmony. Senior counsel Soli Sorabjee, appearing for Gujarat, said the report was already placed in the Assembly and House accepted it. There were no recommendations in the preliminary report. The Chief Justice told Mr. Sachar that the court would consider the petitioner's grievances only after getting the response from the government, and granted three weeks to Gujarat for filing its response to the SLP, which is directed against a High Court order refusing to restrain the government from placing the report in the Assembly. In their SLP, the petitioners said tabling one part of the Nanavati report and making it public were detrimental to the public interest. They questioned the commission's action in withholding the report on the dubious role of the State government in supporting the accused involved in a mass carnage of the minority community. (The Hindu 14/10/08)

Karnataka violence was waiting to happen (7)

MANGALORE: The Hindu-Christian conflict in coastal Karnataka over the last few weeks was a time bomb waiting to explode. And, ironically, it's the highly literate districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi — which pioneered banking and hotel industry in India — that have become home to right-wing outfits like Bajrang Dal as well as Islamic terrorists and evangelical groups. The Hindu-Muslim conflict in the area owes its origin to cow slaughter, while Hindu-Christian fights are due to religious conversions. The communal disturbances after the Babri Masjid demolition at Ayodhya, the Hindu-Muslim riots at Bhatkal in 1993 and communal violence in 1998 and 2006 in Dakshina Kannada left a deep scar on the psyche of the people here. The Sangh parivar has gained in strength in these years, while evangelical groups have grown in size and influence over the last decade. Now, over 60 denominations of Protestant groups exist in Dakshina Kannada alone. Incidents like beating up of pastors or disturbing prayers have been taking place for the last five years, but on a small scale — moreover, police prevented these from intensifying. The evangelical groups, too, did not make much noise against it as they knew they had to work in such conditions. The Sangh parivar got a boost after the BJP's brush with power in 2006 under the JD(S)-BJP coalition government. But ever since the BJP assumed power on its own for the first time in a southern state in Karnataka, there is widespread perception in political circles — particularly the Congress — that the right-wing forces are looking to make Karnataka a Hindutva laboratory. If this is their aim, they couldn't have found a more suitable place than coastal Karnataka. Polarization spells consolidation of Hindu votes for the BJP. As the party knows that it can't get Christian votes (the traditional supporters of Congress), the Bajrang Dal is peddling the issue of conversions by repeatedly accusing Christian missionaries of indulging in forced conversions. The simultaneous attacks on churches in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Chikmagalur on September 14 was unprecedented. Bajrang Dal state convener Mahendra Kumar had ordered the attacks without the approval of the higher-ups in the Sangh parivar. Despite Christian protests, vandalism spilled to other districts and continued for nearly a week. Mahendra

Kumar held a press conference and took responsibility for the attacks, but added that Roman Catholic churches were hit by mistake. The VHP, Bajrang Dal and people representing the Protestant denominations concede that the issue wouldn't have assumed such salience if Catholic churches had not got involved. But while these incidents have boosted the Bajrang Dal in Karnataka, these have also embarrassed the BJP state government, which went into damage control by arresting Mahendra Kumar. Known for its discipline, the Sangh parivar decided to punish the 32-year-old Kumar for taking a unilateral decision. He was forced to resign while still in prison. The issue, for now, is on the back burner as Sangh parivar addresses another issue — of Datta Peetha or Sri Guru Dattatreya Swami Baba Budan Peetha. Datta Jayanthi on October 13 saw thousands of Bajrang Dal and VHP activists take active part in the ceremony. The Peetha reflected Hindu-Muslim harmony and people from both faiths visited the place until the Hindutva brigade intervened and vowed to make it the 'Ayodhya' of the south. (Times of India 15/10/08)

Guidelines to curb communal violence (7)

New Delhi: Oct. 16: Putting the onus of controlling communal flare-ups on state governments like the ones witnessed in Orissa and Karnataka, the Union home ministry on Thursday issued guidelines suggesting prompt and immediate preventive measures to be adopted at the state-level to contain incidents of communal violence. The guidelines have also demanded the setting up of special courts and special investigation teams for the expeditious trial of such cases. The 28-page guidelines have been issued soon after the meeting of the National Integration Council (NIC) where there was a broad political consensus on containing communal discord and violence to protect the rights of the minority groups. The guidelines state that whenever any communal incident occurs, prohibitory orders or curfew should be imposed and potential trouble-mongers should be arrested. It also says that the state government concerned may consider appointing special public prosecutors for proper prosecution of cases. With large number of cases undergoing judicial scrutiny, it said special courts may be set up, whenever the situation warranted for expeditious trial and disposal of cases. The guidelines also said that a system of expeditious disbursement of relief for riot victims should be devised. Interim relief may be provided immediately to the individuals for any loss or damage suffered due to communal violence, it said. It said that communally sensitive places should be identified in the riot-prone areas for making necessary administrative arrangements. A separate set of guidelines on Central scheme for assistance to victims of terrorist and communal violence suggested that the home ministry should complete the processing of the application within two weeks, after its receipt from the district committee. The ministry has been given a free hand to decide without waiting for recommendations of the district committee, the grant of assistance under this scheme subject to the other eligibility conditions. (Asian Age 17/10/08)

What ails Kandhamal? (7)

According to Orissa CM, the Kandhamal violence was a result of 'suspicion and anger' between tribals and non-tribals. Parivar body alleges atrocities by CRPF men in Kandhamal Bhubaneswar, October 21: : Is religious conversion the prime reason behind the recent violence in Orissa's Kandhamal? While the state Government is tight-lipped over the issue, contradictory statements are voiced. According to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the Kandhamal violence was a result of 'suspicion and anger' between tribals and non-tribals. He also contends that naxalite activities added another dimension to the complicated situation in Kandhamal. Christian leaders say that forcing anyone to change their religion is against Christianity, while Hindu groups claim 'inducement, allurements and coercion', have been used to convert a large number of people in the state. Emphasising that Christians did not indulge in such practice, the Vicar General in the Bishop House here Joseph Kalathil sought to know of an instance of forcible conversion in the state. A prominent church leader, Rev Pradip Das, also does not agree that forcible conversions are taking place. "I would describe conversion as a transformation of a person. This can only be possible when a person's heart is changed and it can be only done by god." State President of the Hindu Jagaran Samukhya (HJS) Ashok Sahu does not agree. "The census figures of Kandhamal confirm rampant and unlawful conversion in the district," Sahu, a retired IPS officer says. (Indian Express 22/10/08)

Hindu group behind Malegaon, Modasa blasts: Cops (7)

Mumbai, October 22 : The Maharashtra police are said to have cracked the September 29 bomb blasts in Malegaon and Modasa town in neighbouring Gujarat saying these were allegedly carried out by the Hindu Jagran Manch, an Indore-based Hindu extremist group known to have links to the BJP's student wing, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). The key suspects are being questioned, top Maharashtra Police sources have told The Indian Express. Five Muslims were killed in a powerful blast in the communally sensitive textile town of Malegaon in Maharashtra and one Muslim boy was killed in the explosion in Modasa in Sabarkantha district. Both bombs were placed on motorcycles parked in crowded areas days before Eid and set off after Muslims had broken their Ramzan fast on a Monday evening. The BJP had condemned both the blasts. Investigators initially suspected Islamist groups such as SIMI or the Indian Mujahideen to be behind the near-simultaneous attacks — the first blast was at Modasa at 9.26 pm, the second minutes later in Malegaon — as they came in the aftermath of blasts in Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Delhi. (Indian Express 23/10/08)

Growing communal violence (7)

The recent Hindu-Christian strife in Orissa, the spate of violence over land transfer to the Amarnath Shrine Board, the pro-azadi stirs in the Kashmir valley are all indicative of the fact that religious intolerance and social discontent is on the rise. Moreover, the terrorist strikes in Jaipur, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and in the nation's capital, Delhi, have reinforced the fact that the fundamentalist and disruptive forces are hell-bent to shatter India's secular image. Today, there is a growing outcry all over the country that unless something is done soon, our long-cherished secularism is clearly in danger. And, none other than the country's Prime Minister is seeing the warning signals. He has rightly called for strengthening of laws and a stricter enforcement of the same. A point that is widely being made is that the growing inequality, the widening gap between the rich and the poor residing in the same area, the increasing unemployment and underemployment, specially among the economically weaker sections, the dwindling farm income on which a major section of the population lives and the lack of good educational facilities among the disadvantaged sections have all led the youth wayward. There can be no denying that all these factors have contributed to the protests and violence in different forms – be it an assertion of religious rights or the upholding of the impoverished cause by the Maoists, resorting to violence and the killings. While the development process continues to be geared towards the interests of the upper class and providing them opportunities, to the extent possible, the impoverished and the backward sections continue to languish in poverty and squalor. Moreover, the urban bias in India's planning has accentuated the problem with an increase in migration from the rural to the urban centres in search of employment and livelihood. In Orissa, extreme poverty as well as illiteracy of a large section of the tribal population has become the hunting ground of various religious groups. The dastardly incident of the murder of Graham Staines in January 1999 has again been repeated in Kandamahal district, where six lakh people live with over half being Hindu Kandh tribes. Sociologists are of the firm opinion that religion in the State the 22 per cent tribal population, most of whom have followed their own religion for several years. Unfortunately, as is well known, the tribals have little understanding of the religion they practise or convert into and are credulous enough to believe everything their preachers tell them. Indeed, the conflict between the Church and the indigenous, specially Hinduism, has been simmering in Orissa (as also in many other States) for quite some time. While the Church has been trying to garner strength through conversions, Hinduism has suddenly become aggressive, blending local culture with militant nationalism. While Hindu-Christian discord is a matter of fact in several districts of Orissa, Muslim fundamentalism has also been an area of great, if not greater, concern with the problem engulfing almost the entire nation. Whether it is the Student's Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) or the Indian Mujahideen, their activities have revealed utter hatred for the country, obviously without any sanction from the general Muslim mass. And, if the Sachar Committee report is to be believed, this has happened because of perverted interpretation of religious preaching coupled with lack of education. The unity of Islamic fundamentalists is possibly behind the coming together of the Hindus in Jammu. But with the rise of sheer aggressiveness of the Muslims and the anti-national feelings, fuelled by Pakistan and to some extent by Bangladesh, the backlash from the Hindus is steadily becoming a reality in certain parts of the country. The attitude of the

ruling Congress towards Muslim fundamentalists has been one of appeasement, as it finds nothing wrong in nurturing a lax security apparatus on the ground that special laws to counter terror may eliminate minorities. But such leniency has not been followed with strong political will to spread education among the minorities and bring them into the mainstream. There is a feeling, and not without justification, that if communal violence has to be curbed, stricter measures are required, irrespective of caste, creed and religion. More so as reports reveal that around 2000 people have been killed in such incidents between 2001 and 2007. This contemporary Indifference to true religion or to proper religious understanding can be attributed to the materialist tendencies in society and the trend towards greater accumulation of wealth. Morality has lost its significance, as also the concept of shared humanity and fellow feeling. At such a crucial juncture, if the much-needed transformation is to follow the materialist path – abandoning moral and ethical values, the future clearly doesn't look bright. The basic question is: What should be done? Firstly, there is need for an all-round change in our approach to development, as it is breaking the very fabric of ordinary people's lives all over the world and marginalising the majority. For a real and effective transformation, based on the premise of right to development for every human being, an alternative strategy has to involve the people and only the people, their capacities and liabilities. (Assam Tribune 3/11/08)

Purohit handed over to Pune ATS (7)

NASHIK: Malegaon bomb blast accused Lt Col Srikant Prasad Purohit was handed over to the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) of Pune for his interrogation in a three-year-old case of beating up a Christian priest in Khadki near that city. He will be brought before a court in Pune on Wednesday for police custody remand, Judge H.K. Ganatra of the chief judicial magistrate court here explained to him. While another Malegaon blast suspect, Samir Kulkarni, has been accused of beating the priest and absconding after that, the Pune police want to probe Purohit's role in the case, the court was told. Kulkarni, who shifted to Madhya Pradesh from Pune over two years ago to spread the rightwing Hindutva group Abhinav Bharat's message, was Tuesday remanded in magisterial custody in the Malegaon case and sent to Nashik jail along with Sadhvi Pragya Thakur and six others. Earlier, Mumbai ATS handling the Malegaon bomb blast case presented Purohit to the court and sought his magisterial custody on expiry of his police custody. A team of police from Pune had arrived to claim his custody for the Khadki assault on a Christian. Purohit's lawyer Avinash Bhide objected to his client being handed over to the Pune ATS on the plea that Judge Ganatra was holding charge in the absence of Chief Judicial Magistrate K.D. Boche. Purohit's transfer to the Pune police ensures that he remains available to ATS even after the expiry of his maximum permissible police custody of 14 days. Police sources said Nashik police were meanwhile preparing to seek the army officer's police custody remand for a case of fake arms license. (Times of India 18/11/08)

Marad panel mooted CBI probe: Kodiyaeri (7)

Thiruvananthapuram: Home Minister Kodiyaeri Balakrishnan said here on Tuesday that the Thomas Joseph Commission had suggested in its detailed report an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to find out whether there was a "larger conspiracy" behind the Marad communal killings. The State government had hence decided to ask for such an investigation. Speaking to presspersons, he said the State did not want the CBI to reinvestigate the Marad killings as a whole because the crime angle of the case was already committed for trial. He said the Union government had turned down two pleas by the State requesting CBI inquiry into the conspiracy angle. He asked why the Centre feared such an inquiry. Mr. Kodiyaeri said the police have been instructed not to inconvenience two-wheeler riders, chiefly families and women, under the excuse of enforcing the use of helmets. This did not mean that those riding two-wheelers without the protective headgear would go scot-free. The police would note down the vehicle numbers of such errant riders and also motorists who did not wear seatbelts and send them notices to appear before the police or the court. The government might even consider not renewing the licences of those who continuously repeated the offence, the Minister said. Additional Director-General Police, South Zone, V.R. Rajeevan, said only traffic policemen would enforce the use of helmets. They had been instructed not to stop two-wheeler riders on the side

of bends and curves on the road. Mr. Kodiyeri said that the government had issued no direction asking the police to desist from checking vehicles at random on the roads. (The Hindu 19/11/08)

400 killed in Nigerian violence (7)

Jos (Nigeria), December 01, 2008: Residents delivered more bodies to the main mosque in the central Nigerian city of Jos on Sunday, bringing the death toll from two days of clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs to around 400 people. Rival ethnic and religious mobs have burned homes, shops, mosques and churches in fighting triggered by a disputed local election in a city at the crossroads of Nigeria's Muslim north and Christian south. It is the country's worst unrest for years. Murtala Sani Hashim, who has been registering the dead as they are brought to the city's main mosque, told Reuters he had listed 367 bodies and more were arriving. Ten corpses wrapped in blankets, two of them infants, lay behind him. A doctor at one of the city's main hospitals said he had received 25 corpses and 154 injured since the unrest began. "Gunshot wounds, machete injuries, those are the two main types," Dr Aboi Madaki, director of clinical services at Jos University Teaching Hospital, told Reuters. The overall toll was expected to be higher, with some victims already buried and others taken to other clinics. The violence appeared to die down on Sunday. Soldiers patrolled on foot and in jeeps to enforce a 24-hour curfew imposed on the worst-hit areas. People who ventured out walked with their hands in the air to show they were unarmed. "They are still picking up dead bodies outside. Some areas were not reachable until now," said Al Mansur, a 53-year-old farmer who said all the homes around his had been razed. Overturned and burnt-out vehicles littered the streets while several churches, a block of houses and an Islamic school in one neighbourhood were gutted by fire. The Red Cross said around 7,000 people had fled their homes and were sheltering in government buildings, an army barracks and religious centres. A senior police official said five neighbourhoods had been hit by unrest and 523 people detained. (Hindustan Times 1/12/08)

Procession leads to tension (7)

Bangalore: : Situation turned tense in and around Lingarajapuram Main Road on Sunday evening as police took MLA S Raghu, former MLA Nirmal Kumar Surana and 26 activists of Vishwa Hindu Parishat (VHP) into custody for forcefully trying to take out a procession violating prohibitory orders. The VHP workers staged a flash protest in front of the Fraser Town police station following the incident. The police released all of them later and the convention concluded peacefully. VHP had scheduled Santa Yatra-2008, a religious convention at the BBMP Ground in Lingarajapuram. The organisers had decided to take out the procession before the convention agenda was finalised. The police decided to impose the prohibitory orders in Shivajinagar, Bharathinagar, Fraser Town and DJ Halli police limits except 100 metre radius at the Ground to thwart any untoward incidents. Despite the prohibitory orders, the organisers tried to take out a procession. Hence, the police were forced to arrest Raghu, Surana and others, said the police. The angry VHP workers staged the protest in front of the Fraser Town police station and condemned the arrests. The flash protest had its impact as there was traffic jam on Lazar Road, MM Road and Pottery Road. The police blocked the Pottery Road as the protesters sat on the road. (Deccan Herald 1/12/08)

Orissa tops list of communal violence (7)

New Delhi, December 22, 2008: Orissa has earned the dubious distinction of having the highest number of cases of communal violence this year, recording a 12-time jump in such incidents compared to last year, while Jammu and Kashmir earned laurels for not having a single such incident. The all-India figure of 855 incidents of communal violence has also surpassed that of the previous year's 761, according to latest government data. Orissa, which was in news for the attack against Christians, reported 178 such incidents till November 30 this year, topping the list followed by Madhya Pradesh (115) and Uttar Pradesh (104). Last year, Orissa recorded only 15 such cases while Madhya Pradesh, last year's topper, had 180 such incidents and Uttar Pradesh had 138. Maharashtra, which was second last year with 140 cases, had 97 cases this year. There were no incidents of communal riots in Jammu and Kashmir this year, the official data said which noted that there was only one such case last year in the state in which four persons were injured. In 2006 also, there were no communal incidents. Among those 153 killed this year in communal

riots, Orissa again topped the list accounting for 28 per cent deaths. A total of 43 people were killed and 78 injured in the eastern state this year compared to three and 61 respectively in 2007. Thrity-two people were killed in Madhya Pradesh this year while 17 were killed in Maharashtra in communal riots, the government figures said. (Hindustan Times 23/12/08)