

DALIT ATROCITIES IN INDIA - 2003

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1st Jan.

Priyanka dalit joins Mayawati (2)

Lucknow, Dec. 31: Ms Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's good deed in Amethi, where she fought for a dalit, Ram Bhajan, who had been rendered homeless, has boomeranged. Ram Bhajan has forsaken the Congress and opted for the BSP. At a press conference held in Sultanpur on Monday, Ram Bhajan and his son Shamhhu Nath alleged that the Congress was using their case for political gain and they had nothing to do with the party or its leaders. He said that though Ms Priyanka Gandhi had declared that the Congress would buy a plot of land for him and help him rebuild his house through shram-daan, the fact was that the Congress was planning to build a party office and use his name for the purpose. (Asian Age 1.1.03)

5th Jan

Conversion law causes caste polarization (2)

TIRUNELVELI: Besides creating a wedge among religions, the recently-enacted anti-conversion law has provided succour to another divisive trend — caste polarisation which virtually ruined the peace and prosperity in the southern part of Tamil Nadu in the past. For, leaders of caste Hindus, who have maintained bitter enmity with Dalits for generations, have started projecting themselves as the 'custodian' of this controversial legislation. An indication of the precarious polarisation is a Hindu revival conference to be conducted here on Sunday by the All-India Mooventhar Munnatra Kazhagam, a predominantly Thevar outfit. Leaders of Hindu outfits and local supporters of the law are expected to participate. To be precise, the Thevars in the south are stridently supporting the law as the Dalits and their organisations, Dalits Panthers of India and Puthiya Tamizhagam, are vehemently opposing the measure for reasons of oppression practised against them for decades. (Hindu 5.1.03)

7th Jan

Dalits embrace Buddhism in Mayawati's backyard (2)

Meerut, January 6: MORE THAN 400 Dalits converted to Buddhism in Mayawati's backyard on Sunday, under the banner of the Lord Buddha Club and the All-India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations. Dalits turned up for the conversion ceremony at Gandhi Park, in the heart of the city, from Saharanpur and neighbouring districts. The move is being seen as evidence of Mayawati's dwindling hold on Dalits. The Chief Minister is the MLA from Harora in Saharanpur. The Dalits expressed resentment against Hinduism's "oppressive" caste system, and the way they continued to be exploited. They adopted Buddhism in a "Dharam Deeksha" and "Adhikar Bachao Samaroh" in the presence of the Lord Buddha Club's president Uditraj and other functionaries. (Hindustan Times 7.1.03)

Dalit lynching accused get bail (2)

Rohtak, January 6: NINETEEN OF THE 30 accused arrested in the Dalit lynching case in Jhajjar district were released on bail on Saturday. With five accused getting bail last month and six taking anticipatory bail, so far the 30 accused in the case have been released. The Jhajjar police had identified 32 persons as suspects in the Dalit lynching case. Two suspects are absconding. Those released on bail were welcomed at a function organised by supporters on one of the accused at Jhajjar on Saturday. (Hindustan Times 7.1.03)

6th Jan

Mayavati invites Dalit ire (2)

Lucknow, After inviting the wrath of Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh barely a month ago, Mayavati has rubbed Dalit leader Udit Raj the wrong way. Raj, the founder of the Justice Party, a newly-formed Dalit outfit, has alleged that Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Vinay Katiyar's recent statement that B.R. Ambedkar had decried Muslims as terrorists was prompted by Mayavati's unprincipled flirting with Hindutva. But with Mayavati's Bahujan Samaj Party increasingly resenting Katiyar's statement, deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani has summoned the state BJP chief and senior leader Lalji Tandon to Delhi on Tuesday (Telegraph 6.1.03)

9th Jan

UP, Rajasthan top list of crime against dalits (2)

New Delhi, Jan. 8: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are the three major states which collectively add up to 67.4 per cent of the total crime committed against scheduled castes in the country. While Uttar Pradesh has been ranked number one in terms of highest percentage share in the total crime against dalits in the country, Rajasthan has the dubious distinction of being at the top in terms of having the highest rate of total cognisable crimes in India. These glaring facts were placed before the chief secretaries and directors-general of the police of all 35 states and Union Territories at a conference on internal security on Tuesday. (Asian Age 9.1.03)

12th Jan

Separated UP lovers commit suicide (2)

Lucknow, Jan. 11: He was a high-caste Brahmin and she belonged to a dalit family. And they committed suicide when their parents refused to accept the relationship. This tragic incident took place in Bhatkherwa village in Malihabad township, about 38 km from Lucknow, on Thursday, leaving the entire village stunned. According to the residents of the village, 22-year-old Sushil Pandit fell in love with 19-year-old Pinky, who belonged to a dalit family. Pinky lived in the village with her maternal grandparents and used to meet Sushil on the sly. When news of their relationship spread, there was a furore in the village. The brahmin community termed the relationship as blasphemous while the dalit community also refused to accept the alliance. (Asian Age 12.1.03)

14th Jan

Digvijay woos dalit voters with Rs 250 cr. bonanza (2)

Bhopal, Jan. 13: To attract the lion's share of the dalit vote in this year's Assembly poll, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh on Monday announced a Rs 250-crore largesse for the state's downtrodden. The decision has been formally approved by the state Cabinet. Dalits constitute 36 per cent of the total state populace of 6.4 crores, 21 per cent being STs and the rest SCs. Addressing a press conference on the first anniversary of the supposedly historic Bhopal Conference where a 21 point dalit agenda was drawn up, the chief minister said much headway had been made since and a number of economic measures were in the pipeline for them. (Asian Age 14.1.03)

Dalit woman, daughter paraded naked (2)

KHANDWA, JAN. 13. A Dalit woman and her daughter were stripped and paraded naked in Pachaya village of the Pandhana tehsil by some influential members of the village on Thursday. Narayan Natthu, husband of the woman, was beaten up in the incident, the family told | presspersons here today. Police, however, denied that the women were paraded naked even as they registered a case of assault against 10 persons of whom eight have been arrested. They rejected the daughter's claim that four youths of the village had raped her. (Hindu 14.1.03)

15th Jan

BJP lashes out at Digvijay's dalit agenda (2)

Bhopal, Jan. 14: Only too well aware of its potential efficacy as an electoral weapon, the Madhya Pradesh BJP has criticised chief minister Digvijay Singh 's so called dalit agenda which presumably aims at "charting a new course for them in the 21st century." State BJP general-secretary Kaptan Singh Solanki told a meeting of the party's backward cell that the dalit agenda

unleashed by the CM was a vicious plot to rupture the internal harmony of rural MP. This will be fought tooth and nail. In fact a portion of the agenda's contents was positively anti-national. (Asian Age 15.1.03)

16th Jan

Families blame each other for Dalit couple's mystery death (2)

AGRA, JANUARY 15: MYSTERY deepens around the death of a Dalit couple who had eloped and "married" in Saharanpur district with the girl's and boy's family busy laying the blame on the other. The boy's brother has accused the girl's family of having burnt the couple alive, while the girl's father has lodged a counter complaint, alleging his "minor" daughter was kidnapped by the boy. It is not clear whether the couple was burnt alive or dead. But yes, they were burnt," says Inspector-General of Police (Meerut zone) EC. Sabbarwal. According to reports, Rakesh, a resident of Harijan Basti in Tbetro village, had Men in love with his neighbour Sunaina. The girl's family was apparently against the affair because Rakesh had a broken marriage behind him and also a number of alleged relationships with other women. On Friday, Sunaina left home on the pretext that she was going to a neighbour's house and "eloped" with Rakesh. (Indian Express 16.1.03)

24th Jan

All are insulting Ambedkar, says Paswan (2)

LUCKNOW, JANUARY 23 : IT'S now the turn of former Union minister and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) chief Ram Vilas Paswan to join the Ambekar bandwagon in Uttar Pradesh. State BJP chief Vinay Katiyar has already set a de- ! bate in motion through his tour in which he is projecting Ambekar as anti-Muslim, a strategy that the champions of the Dalit cause are finding difficult to digest. At a press conference, Paswan said conflicting statements by BJP leaders on Ambedkar's views regarding Muslims were part of a well-planned strategy of the ruling coalition. "The statements are like different channels on the same TV set, catering to different interest. The BJP is trying to consolidate its Hindu vote bank whereas the BSP is trying to keep its flock intact and in this attempt, both the parties are downgrading the stature of Ambedkar," he claimed. (Indian Express 24.1.03)

Dalits in varsity management (2)

Lucknow: Jan. 23: In Keeping with her Dalit agenda, Uttar Pradesh CM Mayawati first changed the name of King George Medical College to Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj Medical University and has now ensured representation to Scheduled Castes/Tribes and Other Backward Classes in its management. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting here today. It was also decided that certain rules and regulations of CSM Medical University 2002, would be amended to facilitate representation of SC/STs and OBCs. Under the decision, inclusion of a professor, an associate professor or lecturer each from the SC/ST and OBC has been made compulsory in the college executive body. (Indian Express 24.1.003)

Huts of Dalits set ablaze in U.P. (2)

VARANASI, JAN. 23. Huts belonging to the Scheduled Castes were set on fire today by members of an upper caste community sparking tension in a village in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, police sources said. About a dozen huts of Mushhars were destroyed and a woman was injured when members of the Patel community set the "jhuggis" on fire at Bhatpurwa village. An old man of the Patel community was beaten up allegedly by the Mushhars on Wednesday following a dispute over cutting of trees and today's incident was a sequel to it, the sources added. An inquiry has been ordered. (Hindu 24.1.03)

2nd Feb

Amethi Dalit: Knocked out by Priyanka kindness, Maya ire (2)

Amethi, February 1: CALL HIM a hero and he smiles shyly. Ask him his future plans and he stares blankly Ram Bhajan, 60, is the Dalit farm worker whose house was razed by upper caste goons, but whose cause was taken up by Priyanka Gandhi in November 2002. Today, the new celebrity of Amethi's Punnpur village doesn't know if he should celebrate or lament. He is proud

and excited that he met Priyanka and Sonia Gandhi. But he is so frightened of the police that he refuses to even go near the PAC camp pitched close to where his kuchcha house used to stand. "I'd never been to a thana till we were picked up by the police," he says. "Now the sight of them frightens me so much that soil my pants." (Hindustan Times 2.2.03)

9th Feb

Two beaten to death (2)

Gaya: Two dalits were beaten to death by activists of the banned Maoist Communist Centre at Pipra village in Bihar's Gaya district on Friday night after an MCC court declared them criminals (Asian Age 9.2.03)

10th Feb

14 cops hurt in clash with Dalits (2)

Meerut, February 9: FOURTEEN POLICEMEN including two circle officers and 12 Dalits were injured in a clash in Maliyana area on Saturday evening. The clash occurred when a police team went to settle a dispute over a cremation ground between the residents of Maliyana and Lallapura colonies. However, Lallapura Dalits provoked by the police's alleged favour of Maliyana residents attacked the cops, torched a police patrol car and smashed the Gypsy of the city magistrate. (Hindustan Times 10.2.03)

Focus on Dalit, minorities' rights (2)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 9. Media coverage of specific rights including minority and Dalit rights came in for close scrutiny here today at a series of panel discussions on the second day of the two-day conference on "Media and Right to Development" organised by the Press Institute of India to coincide with its 40th anniversary celebrations. The tone for the discussion was set by lawyer Prashant Bhushan, who felt that "media has largely failed in discharging its responsibility to making people alive to the scale of the problem when it comes to securing their right to justice". And he largely attributed this to the fear of contempt among the media. (Hindu 10.2.03)

11th Feb

Rajasthan told to implement SC,ST schemes (2)

JAIPUR, FEB. 10. The Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Vijay Sonkar Shastri, today asked the Rajasthan Government to ensure speedy implementation of the schemes for welfare of those belonging to SC and ST and settle their grievances on priority. Reviewing the progress of various schemes for SC and ST during his visit here, Dr. Shastri said ! the projects should serve the purpose of benefiting these sections. He said that there were nearly 60,000 vacancies in Government services and called for a special drive to fill up the vacant posts. Dr. Shastri took up the appraisal of the Centrally- sponsored schemes as well as those run by the State Government with the State Chief Secretary, R.K. Nair, and other senior officials, while underlining the need for effective implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. (Hindu 11.2.03)

13th Feb

Uddhav's bid to woo Dalits (2)

MUMBAI, FEB. 12. In his first political move after being formally elected working president of the Shiv Sena, Uddhav Thackeray, has extended an olive branch to the Dalits of Maharashtra and that too a hawk among their leaders, the RPI president, Ram-das Athavale. But the latter's response was lukewarm. Mr. Athavale advised the junior Thackeray to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, the late Prabodhankar, and not his father, Bal Thackeray. The occasion was the unveiling of Prabodhankar's portrait at the Marathi department of Bombay University at the hands of his grandson in the presence of many Dalit leaders, including Mr. Athavale. The Prabodhankar was the popular title of the late Keshav Seetaram Thackeray because of his public education campaigns against social evils like un-touchability, sati, dowry, etc. He had actively supported the late Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. (Hindu 13.2.03)

14th Feb

Seven Dalits shot dead (2)

Nawada: Criminals shot dead seven Dalits in two separate incidents in Warisaliganj of Nawada district on Wednesday night. In Pachchhim Tola Dariyapur, criminals shot dead five Dalits and injured another. Police officers here attribute the killings to the ongoing war of attrition between the gangs of Akhilesh Singh and Shok Mahto. (Times of India 14.2.03)

16th Feb

Girl raped, bribed (2)

Ghaziabad: A TEENAGED Dalit girl was gangraped and tortured by a gang of 15 criminals for over 20 days in Ghaziabad. When the girl developed serious gynaecological problems, her torturers burnt her tongue with a hot iron brush to render her incapable of relating her ordeal to anyone and left her to die in a ditch. To add insult to the injury, the concerned police Circle Officer allegedly tried to hush up the case by bribing the victim with Rs 20,000. The incident came to light only after the victim's mother appeared before senior police officials on February 13 and narrated the tale. The victim, a 13-year-old daughter of a peon working at Adhyatmik Nagar Inter College in Oasna, was abducted by the gang on January 13 while out buying vegetables. She was sedated and rendered unconscious. Later, the criminals gangraped her through the night. This continued for more than 20 days. (Pioneer 16.2.03)

17th Feb

Delhi IIT gets stay on SC, ST panel's fiat on expulsion (2)

New Delhi, Feb. 16: WHILE IITs were being feted in India and abroad to mark their golden jubilee, the one in the Capital was being hounded by the National Commission for SCs and STs to re-admit an expelled Dalit student or face legal consequences. As a result, IIT Delhi moved the High Court. On February 13, the Delhi HC stayed the proceedings initiated by the commission against the institute for allegedly discriminating against the expelled Dalit student, R. Kalyanasundaram. Justice C.K. Mahajan passed the stay order on the basis of IIT's contention that the commission, which is vested with the powers of a civil court to enforce attendance for its proceedings, has no jurisdiction to review its orders and re-open a matter already decided. (Indian Express 17.2.03)

Durg sarpanch changes lives but begs for a living (2)

PRATAP PUR (DURG), FEB 16: JHUMAK Lal of Pratap Pur village is a sarpanch with a difference. He is a Dalit sarpanch in an upper-caste village, and he begs for a living. He lives in a small, dilapidated mud house, donated by the villagers and that was previously used to keep pigs. Away from the main village, it has no power. Jhumak has no assured source of income or family support, so he begs in nearby villages to support his wife and two minor children. If he finds himself busy with sarpanch activities, Resham Bai substitutes him on the "job". As sarpanch, Jhumak is expected to attend official functions, and since he climbed to the post, he has learnt to sign his name in Hindi on official papers. But if that's the extent of his literacy, it's certainly not a reflection of his ability. On January 26 this year, Jhumak received a special award for his panchayat for ending untouchability. His panchayat has also fixed its targets for the family planning programme. (Indian Express 17.2.03)

20th Feb

Two arrested for Dalit's rape (2)

New Delhi: THE DADRI police have arrested two persons for the rape of a Dalit woman on Tuesday evening. According to the police a newly married Dalit woman Rani (name changed), resident of Bambar Village, was allegedly raped by Vinod and Krishan Kumar when she went to relieve herself in the fields on Sunday evening. A rape case was registered against the two at Dadri Police station on the complaint of victim. (Hindustan Times 20.2.03)

8th March

Uproar over Dalit marriage party. (2)

JAIPUR, MARCH 7. An incident involving a violent attack on a marriage party of Dalits and dismounting of two bridegrooms from horses in a village in Tonk district, falling in the constituency

of the Deputy Chief Minister, Banwarilal Bairwa, rocked the Rajasthan Assembly today with the Opposition BJP trying to put the Congress (I) on the defensive. Over half-a-dozen members of the marriage party of the Bairwa caste were injured in Barthala village on Wednesday evening when a crowd of upper caste people attacked them with stones reportedly thrashed the bridegrooms-and others with sticks and other weapons. The terrified Dalits ran from there and reported the matter to police. The marriage procession was later taken to the house of the brides through the same route under police protection. However, no arrests were made even after 36 hours and six accused were apprehended only this morning after a local newspaper carried a report about the incident prominently. The matter was raised in the Assembly during the zero hour by agitated BJP and Independent members. They wanted to know why there was delay in registering the FIR and arresting the culprits. The Opposition's aggressive posture during the debate, which lasted 45 minutes amid pandemonium, seemed to be aimed more at ' embarrassing the ruling party than preventing such atrocities against Dalits. (The Hindu, 8-3-2003)

11th March

Aligarh tense after mob kills Dalits. (2)

Aligarh: Panic struck half a dozen villages under the Khair police station, 50 km from here, after a violent mob killed two Dalits in broad daylight. According to sources, the killing of a Jat, Ram Babu, on Saturday morning was the main reason behind the killing. Sources further say that had the police acted promptly, the incident could have been easily averted. According to reports, the station officer in charge of the Khair police station didn't even bother to inform the district headquarters about the incident. The news reached senior district officials late in the afternoon. The station officer has been suspended for negligence. (Times of India, 11-3-2003)

13th March

Playing the eternal caste-victim. (2)

EVEN BEFORE one proceeds any further with this editorial, one can be sure that Ms Mayawati will be condemning it as being upper-caste and anti-Dalit. What is condemnable is the way the BJP leader uses the Dalit card as a "get out of jail" card time and again to play her cherished role of a proud Dalit against whom the 'Manuvadi' lot has ganged up. The Dalit card is flashed with extra aplomb when there are very valid reasons to accuse the UP chief minister of foul play. After being 'caught' on videotape for 'hinting' to her partymen to divert a portion of the state's development funds to the party a charge which she wrote off as being conjured up by anti-Dalit forces - she has now been targeted by opposition parties for using state funds to celebrate her birthday. This time round, she hasn't even bothered to come up with any excuse. Instead, she has 'defended' her act by stating that she was targeted – once again! – simply because she is a Dalit. (Hindustan Times, 13-3-2003)

15th March

Dalit woman gang-raped. (2)

Rohtak, March 14 : THE DALIT woman who was abducted from her house at Kharhara village near Rohtak on Wednesday was later gang-raped by half-a-dozen men from the same village and left in the fields of another village. The victim Sunehari Devi told the police that she was forcibly taken to a house of one of the abductors where she was raped by all the six abductors. They later took her to the fields of a nearby village where she was forcibly made to drink liquor. When she regained consciousness she found herself lying abandoned in the fields of the nearby Basawa village. She later walked down to the Mehal town where her husband is employed and filed a complaint with the police. Meanwhile, various political and social organisations have come out strongly against the abduction and gang-rape of the Dalit woman and have demanded immediate arrest of all the perpetrators. (Hindustan Times, 15-3-2003)

17th March

A feast to focus on Dalit-Muslim unity. (2)

JAIPUR, MARCH 16. A unique interaction of Dalits and Muslims at a feast organised exclusively for them here today provided an opportunity to both the communities to Clarify the doubts about

each other and remove misgivings. Dalits and Muslims found some common grounds that could unite them in their struggle against discrimination and injustice in public life. The feast formed part of a series of such programmes being organised all over the country by the All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations in the wake of last year's violence in Gujarat, in which Dalits had participated in large numbers reportedly at the instigation of the so called upper castes. The national president of the confederation, Udit Raj, said both Dalits and Muslims were suffering at the hands of upper castes, who were exploiting the former to settle score with the latter. "Dalit-Muslim unity is the need of the hour in a State like Rajasthan where riots can erupt any time because of the Sangh Parivar's hate campaign," he said. (The Hindu, 17-3-2003)

22ND march

Dalits protest denial of rights (2)

JAIPUR, MARCH 21. Activists of the Centre for Dalit Human Rights (CDHR) staged a demonstration outside the Rajasthan Assembly today to protest against the increasing atrocities and caste-based discrimination against Dalits in the State, leading to their subjugation and denial of basic human rights to them. Those who participated in the agitation included Dalits from Bharthala, where bridegrooms were dismounted from horses in a marriage procession recently, and Chakwara, where they were denied the right to bathe in a public pond. A large number of women also took part. The agitationists raised slogans in protest against un-touchability -- saying it had assumed dangerous proportions in the State -- and against the grabbing of land by the dominant caste groups. They also alleged that the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, were not being implemented honestly. (Hindu 22.3.03)

Priest 'humiliates' Dalit woman (2)

DATIA (MP), MARCH 21. Police have registered a case against a priest for allegedly 'humiliating' a Dalit woman for entering a temple at Indergarh in the district. Police today said that as per the complaint, when Munni Jatav was offering prayers at the temple of Sheetalamata at Indergarh yesterday, the priest Virendra Pande abused her. When Munni protested, the priest allegedly threatened to kill her if she again came to the temple and forced her to leave the place. (Hindu 22.3.03)

24th March

BJP's Dalit meet in Mhow (2)

Bhopal: The BJP will organise a Dalit meet on March 25-26 at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh, the birthplace of B R Ambedkar, to counter chief minister Digvijay Singh's Dalit Agenda. More than 5,000 Dalits, including the BJP's Dalit members, will attend the meet to discuss a new national agenda for the improvement of ; Scheduled Castes. Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, several Union ministers and BJP leaders will attend the convention. The Dasha aur Disha convention will be the second congregation of Dalits in MP since January 2002. (Times of India 24.3.03)

25th March

Dalit's forced conversion triggers row (2)

Meerut: TENSION HAS gripped some of the villages of Partapur area over the acceptance of Islam as religion by a Dalit youth. Police force and PAC have been deployed in the village to avoid any untoward incident. The youth's family members have alleged that some Muslim community members have misguided and lured the youth. On the other hand, people of the Muslim community have denied the charge. Tilak Ram Jatav's son Vikram Singh (converted name Mohammed Akram) of village Kanshi is a tailor by profession. Vikram is an educated youth — he had completed his Masters in History. He had different views about religion since his childhood. Earlier, he attended prayers at a church on many occasions, but after sometime, he stopped going to the church. He used to have arguments over religion with his father. (Pioneer 25.3.03)

26th March

All accused in Dalit rape case held in Rohtak (2)

Rohtak, March 25: THE POLICE have arrested all six accused in the abduction and gangrape case of a dalit woman at Kharkara Village on March 13. Those arrested are Virender alias Bhondu, Devinder alias Gholu, Bijender, Manpal alias Mannu, Bhajan Singh alias Bhaisni and Pradeep, all residents of Kharkar village. According to A.K. Roy, SSP of Rohtak, Virender, Devender and Bijender were arrested by the Deputy Superintendent of Police Rajender Singh on March 23. Manpal and Bhajan Singh were arrested on March 15 and Pradeep was arrested by the Meham police on March 17. The six accused had allegedly abducted a dalit woman from her house on March 13 and raped her. (Hindu 26.3.03)

5TH April

Dalit family has to bear brunt of Jat in-laws' ire. (2)

New Delhi: A Dalit family in Narela has alleged harassment by a Jat family, following a marriage between members of the two communities. They alleged that despite complaints, the police had not registered a case. The trouble started when the families found out that Satish Kumar, belonging to the Dalit family, had married Babita, the daughter of Bi-jender Singh, an influential Jat in Narela. The couple got married on May 15,2001. They registered the marriage at Tis Hazari courts a week later. The couple did not inform their families about the marriage immediately. On September 17, they left for Hardwar. Meanwhile, Babita's family registered a case of kidnapping against Kumar, claiming she was 17 years old. This was quashed by the court, after Babita's birth certificate, which was submitted during the marriage registration, showed her to be over, 18. Kumar's family alleged that the Narela police had called for Kumar's brother Ashok, and beat him up during interrogation. They said the police repeatedly raided their house without any warrant. Kumar said the police team was often accompanied by Babita's family. (Times of India, 5-4-2003)

7th April

Dalit burning alive: 8 held (2)

Nasik: Eight out of 10 people allegedly involved in the burning alive of a 40 year old Dalit at Borhale village, were arrested in Nandurbar, north Maharashtra today. (Statesman 7.4.03)

9th April

Maya's Govt goes out of its way to deprive Dalit of land (2)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has criticised the Uttar Pradesh government for acting against the legitimate rights of landless scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people in the state. While upholding the right to own village land by a landless labourer belonging to the deprived class, the court expressed "surprise" at the fact that the state government and its revenue officials had challenged the labourer's entitlement before the high court. "It seems to be a clear case of non-application of mind on the part of authorities concerned... who are supposed to effectuate the socio-economic objective of the legislation", said a Bench, comprising Justices K G Balakrishnan and P Venkataraman Reddi. About five years ago, Manohar petitioned the apex court against an Allahabad High Court verdict, depriving him of 2.45 acre of "gaon sabha" land that he had been cultivating for about 15 years. The sub-divisional officer had allotted him the land under the provisions of the UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act. Section 122 B (4F) of the Act says a landless SC/ST person was entitled to possession of the land if he was continuously in its possession prior to June 30,1975. The state government, however, challenged the allotment and got it cancelled. (Times of India 9.4.03)

11th April

Gujarat third in crimes against dalits (2)

Ahmedabad, April 10: Gujarat ranks third in the country in terms of atrocities committed against dalits, after Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, according to the National Crime Records Bureau. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, in 1998 the total number of atrocities against dalits in the country was 25,617. Of these, 8,894 cases were registered in Gujarat alone. Another set of statistics reveals worse: in 1998, 28 cases of rape of dalit women were registered in Gujarat — the seventh highest in the country. But, despite these statistics, the BJP government in Gujarat

has done nothing substantial during its tenure to check offences against the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. (Asian Age 11.4.03)

13th April

RSS Dalit ace for Digvijay now (2)

BHOPAL: APRIL 12: THE Sangh Parivar is all set to take on Madhya Pradesh CM Digvijay Singh and his Dalit agenda. And one of the first steps in this direction is the release of a book that sets out the RSS viewpoint on Ambedkar. The book, Sangharsh Mahamanav Ka, is the Hindi translation of a text by Ramesh Patange, an RSS-affiliated editor of a Nagpur weekly and will be released at a high-profile function on April 14, Ambedkar's birth anniversary. This will precede the BJP's convention on Dalits at Ambedkar's birthplace, Mhow, on April 25-26, which is to be attended by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee. (Indian Express 13.4.03)

15th April

Public schools free for SC, ST (2)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14: IN an election year, this sop goes to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit today said that the fees of SC/ST children studying in public schools would be reimbursed in the new session. The scheme will, however, only benefit the children of parents who earn less than Rs 48,000 per year. The government will pay the admission fee, tuition fee, sports and extra-curricular expenses, science and laboratory fees. Addressing a function on the 112th birth anniversary of B.R. Ambedkar, Dikshit said the step will give the children of weaker sections an opportunity to get the best education offered by reputed public schools (Indian Express 15.4.03)

Babasaheb remembered in a big way (2)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14. A large number of people from the Capital as well as neighbouring townships converged on Parliament Street here today to pay tributes to B.R. Ambedkar on his 112th birth anniversary. However, lack of planning by the Delhi police caused grave problems for those working and living in the surrounding areas, particularly Rafi Marg. Members of various political parties, socio-cultural organisations, workers' unions and SC/ST organisations of various banks and public sector undertakings, which included the Dalit Sahitya Kendra, the Dalit Seha, the All-India SC/ST Organisations and the Justice Party, assembled on Parliament Street in front of the Parliament House complex and paid floral tributes at the statue of the founding father of the Indian Constitution. (Hindu 15.4.03)

Embrace Buddhism, Mayawati tells Dalits (2)

Lucknow, April 14: UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Mayawati has asked Dalits to embrace Buddhism if they can no longer endure exploitation under Hinduism. And she was willing to lead the way, she said at a massive rally on Monday. The chief minister announced the registration of as many as 136 criminal cases against SP chief Mulayam Singh Yadav in 40 UP districts. Among them were cases pertaining to the "fake" CDs against her, she said. She had spent her life fighting manuvadi Hinduism, Mayawati said. Dalits had suffered trying to enter temples, but this would no longer be tolerated. If Hindu religious leaders did not mend their ways, she would lead her followers into the "Buddhist fold" to protect their "social dignity". (Hindustan Times 15.4.03)

100 embrace Buddhism (2)

ABOUT 100 people embraced Buddhism in a ceremony held on Ambedkar Jayanti at Balmiki Ashram in Chandigarh on Monday. While some of the converts were from around the city, many hailed from nearby places in Haryana. In a function organised by All-India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations, about 10 children also embraced Christianity. The confederation termed these conversions as a move against "discrimination against Dalits". (Hindustan Times 15.4.03)

16th April

Udit Raj a bigger headache for Maya (2)

New Delhi, April 15: HAS BSP leader Mayawati's 'pardafash' rally against SP chief Mulayam Singh Yadav unmasked her own hidden fears? What's worrying the UP Chief Minister more: her

Samajwadi bete noire's relentless smear campaign, the Sangh Parivar's obscurantist agenda or the emerging neo-Buddhist challenge? While keeping company with the BJP, Mayawati has been troubled more by the ideological questions raised by the Justice Party's Udit Raj and Lok Janshakti's Ram Vilas Paswan's populist push to carve a niche among the Dalits' in UP. Not surprising, therefore, that amid a welter of charges against Mulayam, the BSP leader found time to heap scorn on them. Udit Raj and Paswan haven't posed any formidable challenge yet to Mayawati's monopoly of the Dalit vote. But among the relatively erudite Scheduled Caste electorate, they have triggered a debate on the BSP's willingness to suffer the Sangh Parivar's campaign against conversions. (Hindustan Times 16.4.03)

17th April

Udit Raj joins issue with Mayawati (2)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 16. The president of Justice Party, Udit Raj, today joined issue with the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, and said she "contradicted" herself when she advocated that Dalits could embrace Buddhism protesting against Hindu religious practices while having an alliance with the BJP. Reacting to Ms. Mayawati's comments at the Lucknow rally on Monday, he said the BSP leader had in the past opposed his move for mass conversions. Besides the BSP was running a coalition Government with the help of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which was opposed to religious conversions. Citing the instance of the Gujarat Government, which recently enacted an anti-conversion law, he said Ms Mayawati had campaigned for the BJP ahead of the Assembly polls last year. (Hindu 17.4.03)

22nd April

BJP whips up Dalit agenda (2)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21: AN EXCLUSIVE agenda for Dalits, a heady mix of Hindutva and "yatras", complete statehood for Delhi and projection of Madan Lal Khurana, Vasundhara Raje and Uma Bharati as chief ministers. All this is on the cards as the BJP braces to face polls in Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh this year-end. The BJP has planned a national convention of its Dalit leaders at Mhow in MP on April 25 and 26 to adopt an agenda for Dalit upliftment. Mhow has been chosen as it is the birthplace of B.R. Ambedkar. Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani would inaugurate the meet, which would adopt the Mhow declaration. (Indian Express 22.4.03)

Udit Raj claims Puri temple was built on Buddhist site (2)

Bhubaneswar, April 21: Prominent dalit leader and neo-Bhuddhist Udit Raj on Monday claimed that a Buddhist temple existed at the site of Lord Jagannath temple at Puri and demanded excavation of the site, even as the VHP dismissed the claim saying that it was an insane person's remark. Mr Raj said the present temple at Puri was built at a disputed site. Calling upon the Hindu leaders to hand over the temple to the Buddhists, Mr Raj claimed that the Hindus had taken over the temple by force. The claim that a Buddhist temple existed at Puri was even supported by Swami Vivekananda, he added. The dalit leader reiterated his earlier claim that the disputed site at Ayodhya was a Buddhist one. (Asian Age 22.4.03)

24th April

Haryana's 2 worlds, 60 km apart (2)

Simla (Haryana) April 23: Simla village in the heart of Haryana's Kaithal district finds itself in the headlines once again and resents it. Villagers here don't want to talk about the day four years back that two young Dalit lovers were beaten to death with lathis for eloping. On Monday, 27 men – 14 related to the boy, Desraj, including his brothers, and 13 related to the girl, Nirmala – received life sentences. Six women from both sides of the family were acquitted of the charges. The girl's side was charged with Desraj's murder and the boy's family with Nirmala's. The houses of both families are now inhabited only by women. (Indian Express 24.4.03)

26th April

Tussle for Dalit votes at BJP's SC Morcha meet (2)

Mhow, April 25: THE BJP'S Scheduled Caste Morcha convention began at B.R. Ambedkar's birthplace on Friday with the approaching assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh looming over the whole show. The B JP chief used the occasion to announce that Uma Bharti was the party's chief ministerial candidate while the Congress made its presence felt with copies of its Dalit Agenda smuggled into the convention hall. The tussle for Dalit votes was clear through the day. There was a eulogy to B.R. Ambedkar and a vow to work for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes. In the same breath came the allegation that the Congress had paid only lip service to Dalits in all the years of its rule at the Centre and in the states. The Congress, however, had the organisers of the convention on the wrong foot even before it started. Around 11 a.m., as BJP workers started arriving at Ma-heshwari School with Uma Bharti, copies of Digvijay Singh's Dalit Agenda were surreptitiously distributed. (Hindustan Times 26.4.03)

27th April

200 Dalit families displaced in Haryana (2)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 26. Alleging that cases of Dalit atrocities in Haryana had witnessed a spurt in recent past, a Dalit organisation today highlighted the latest incident where nearly 200 Dalit families were allegedly evicted by members of so-called upper castes in a Haryana village/Accusing the State Government and the local administration of being hand-in-glove with the culprits, it said these displaced families were living in penury and their children face a bleak future. Pointing out that this was the second major incident of atrocities on Dalits in Haryana as only a few months ago at least four Dalits were lynched by a mob at Jhajjar, the Dalit Mukti Sangathan alleged that hundreds of hapless members of 200 Dalit families of Harsoula village in Kaithal district of Haryana have been evicted and their houses demolished. The organisation said the problem began in February this year when members of the Dalit community decided to celebrate Ravidas Jayanti in their village. This was objected to by the upper castes who asked them to cancel the programme. When the Dalit community approached the village panchayat, it refused to intervene. The matter was then reported to the police. The Sangathan alleged that at a meeting called by the police to resolve the issue, Dalits were beaten up by the members of the upper castes in police presence and their houses attacked. Several Dalits were injured in the incident. (Hindu 27.4.03)

29th April

Caste shadow over MP schools (2)

Bhopal, April 28: A teacher at a primary government school in Ujjain, has never, in her 25 years in the profession, drunk the water or used the toilet in the school because the facilities were also being used by the lower caste students in the school. Another teacher at a government school in Harda asks Dalit students in his class to stand up when they fill forms for scholarships. During recess at another school, the children appear to have unconsciously segregated themselves according to caste, gender and economic status. A little girl hurries past a group that taunts her with Dhoban (washerwoman). These are real situations recorded by researchers of a Bhopal-based NGO, Eklavya, along with the National Institutes of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, Vishakhapatnam, Jaipur, and the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK. (Hindustan Times 29.4.03)

NGO takes up cause of dalits in Kutch (2)

Ahmedabad, April 28: One Haribhai Ranabhai, a Koli living in Suvai village of Rapar taluka in Kutch, was recently murdered, allegedly by two darbars — Ratanbha Sodha and Bahadursinh Sodha — of the same village. Despite an FIR lodged at the local police station by the victim's wife, Behavioural Science Centre, an NGO working for human rights in the Kutch region, alleges that the district administration has not taken any concrete action in the case. Behavioural Science Centre will hold a sammelan in Rapar taluka on April 29 to bring to light the murder of Haribhai Ranabhai, informed BSC's Geeta Oza. She said BSC will present a memorandum to the district collector and would pressurise the government to reject the bail application of the accused. The organisation will also demand that severe action should be taken so that the two accused are not acquitted. "Considering the fact that cases of violation of human rights of dalits, tribals and OBCs in Kutch district is very high and that not all cases come to light, either since victims fear backlash

after lodging a complaint or due to sheer apathy of the government, we would even ask the department of social welfare to take up the responsibility of creating confidence among these sections of people so that cases of atrocities are reported and resolved," Ms Oza said. (Asian Age 29.4.03)

2nd May

Notice to DIG on Dalit woman's rape

NEW DELHI, MAY 1. The National Human Rights Commission has issued notice to the Deputy Inspector-General of Police of West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh on a complaint it has received about a landless Dalit woman who was raped by two men living in Bommidi Panchayat, under the jurisdiction of the Ungutur police station. Seeking financial relief for the victim, who is in hospital, the complaint said that since the rapists were also Dalits the crime was not viewed seriously, unlike cases where Dalit women are raped by non-Dalit men, when the Scheduled Caste Prevention of Atrocities Act is applicable. As the rapists, who have been arrested, are from the same area the woman and her family are fearful that they will face violence if they pursue the case. The Commission has been asked to ensure that they are provided protection. (Hindu 2.5.03)

4th May

When SC/ST cases disappear in UP, think it's just maya

NEW DELHI | MAY 3: MAYAWATI today completed one year as UP's chief minister. Among her most significant achievements is the steep fall in crime against dalits. Cases under the SC-ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 fell by 62 per cent in 2002. Is it the magic of a dalit chief minister? Or just maya? Here is the story. Mayawati, the greatest protector of the dalits, had virtually put the SC/ST Act in abeyance in UP for a year now — something no other chief minister would dare to do. Last year, the Mayawati government issued an order, put out by the Chief Secretary D S Bagga, for the district administration heads that in the interest of social harmony, they should use greater restraint in filing cases under the Act. The DMs and SPs were instructed through an order dated June 12, 2002 that they should register only murder and rape cases under the Act. These cases would have anyway been registered under the IPC, and did not require a law like the SC/ST Act. (Indian Express 4.5.03)

5th May

After violence, Dalits face social boycott

KRNAGAR, MAY 4: DALIT families of Hard-hanahalli in Karnataka are living under great duress after being ostracised by upper caste land-holders who threw them out of their own land, depriving them of their only earnings. Social boycott against these 25 families belonging to the lowest rung of Scheduled Castes has kept them away from other sub-sects as well. Village headmen have banned any interaction with this community of Dalits in the village. The episode is a sequel to an earlier attack on the community following a dispute which erupted during the village festival on April 18. They had invited the ire of the upper caste members by questioning their wisdom in preventing Dalits from taking part in religious processions. According to Kaaliah, a member of the ostracised community, the upper caste diktat came as a surprise "as earlier, there were no such differences among different communities". (Indian Express 5.5.03)

Conversion will not help, says Bangaru

New Delhi May 4: FORMER BJP president Bangaru Laxman, joining issue with UP Chief Minister Mayawati for her threat to convert to Buddhism today said that conversion was no panacea for the problems of Dalits Laxman, the first Dalit president of the BJP, told The Indian Express that the Dalits, instead of adopting an escapist approach, should fight for their due in Hindu society. He said: "For me, neither pity nor an escape would do (Na dainyam, na palaynam). I would not give up my faith. I would rather strive for an honourable place within the Hindu society." He said he would suggest to Mayawati to launch a crash programme to make every Dalit of UP a literate. "Once a Dalit is educated he would not settle down for anything short of what is due to him " (Indian Express 5.5.03)

6th May

Attacks on Dalits rock LS

New Delhi, May 5: THE OPPOSITION raised a range of issues in the Lok Sabha on Monday, disrupting question hour for over half-an-hour. Several issues, from the killing of Dalits in Haryana to communal violence in Kerala to forcible eviction of Samajwadi Party activists from their office in Lucknow, were sought to be raised before question hour could begin. Speaker Manohar Joshi disallowed any discussion on the adjournment notices submitted by members. But he did allow some Opposition leaders to speak briefly before question hour. The issues were later taken up during zero hour. Congress chief Sonia Gandhi insisted that the House hear out the continuing atrocities against Dalits in Haryana. Her party colleague Buta Singh said that about 275 Dalit families offering prayers at a temple in Harsola village in Kaithal district of Haryana were allegedly attacked by members of the upper castes and a girl was killed in February this year. Singh attacked the BJP-led government for not being able to protect the lives and property of Dalits who had been made the target of attacks by the upper castes earlier in Haryana. (Hindustan Times 6.5.03)

7th May

Udit Raj asks Maya to become Buddhist

New Delhi, May 6: Justice Party chief Udit Raj has challenged Bahujan Samaj Party vice-president Mayawati to convert to Buddhism. Addressing reporters, Mr Udit Raj announced that he planned to hold a Buddhist diksha ceremony soon at Ambedkar Park in Lucknow. He, however, said he will wait to announce the date of the function till Ms Mayawati replies to his request. But the Justice Party chief also expressed his apprehension that Ms Mayawati may not respond nor will she allow him to hold this function. Mr Raj said that Ms Mayawati was not sincere towards the dalit cause and was merely acting as a conduit for her ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party, and predicted that at the instance of the BJP, the BSP would set up candidates for the four state Assembly elections to cut into anti-BJP votes and thereby help the BJP win the elections in these four states. (Asian Age 7.5.03)

9th May

Ostracised Dalits refuse to return

Kaithal, May 8: FEAR IS writ large on their faces. Numbed by terror, they shudder at the thought of returning home. This is the plight of over 250 Harijan families of Harsola village in Kaithal district of Haryana. Ostracised by upper caste men, they shuttle around Kaithal town for refuge. . Camping around a Harijan colony in Kaithal, they say, "We cannot dream of home. The upper-caste men will kill us if we dare go back." They are wallowing in squalor and on the verge of starvation. There are no basic provisions even of drinking water and power in the area. "The upper caste men drove us out, because we did not vote for their candidate, Ram Pal Majra, an MLA from Pai constituency," say Balbir, a victimised Dalit. His voice trails off as he recalls the attack on February 11. "We had quietly assembled to discuss the forthcoming Guru Ravidas birthday, when hundreds of armed men attacked us. Our houses were ransacked, our -shops vandalised and household goods smashed. More than 20 people were seriously injured," he said. The scared Harijans, including women and children, fled. However, after intervention by political leaders and the district administration, they agreed to return. "But on March 20 when the main accused in the February 11 attack was released from jail, the upper caste men took out a victory celebration and again attacked us. We fled. This time we are not going back," Balbir said. Many pockets in Harsola now wear a deserted look. (Hindustan Times 9.5.03)

13th May

Caste feud comes to the fore in Orissa

Bhubaneswar: ORISSA SEEMS to be going the Bihar way, with caste system coming to the fore. The upper caste *Kshatriyas*, organised under the banner of Nilachal Khandayat Kshatriya Mahasabha, have unleashed a reign of terror against the lowly barbers of Brahmagiri block under Puri district forcing many of them to flee their homes. Leaders of the Ambedkar Lohia Vichar Manch who have taken up cudgels on behalf of the barbers, locally known as *bariks*, on Monday alleged that *Kshatriyas* were forcing the barbers to perform such demeaning chores as

washing and wiping their feet and cleaning up their used plates and glasses. When Karunakar Barik of Kanhalpada village recently refused to do the bidding of the upper caste landlords, standing crop in his fields was looted and a fine of Rs 4 lakh was slapped on him. Fearing for his life, Barik fled the village. With the Ambedkar Lohia Vichar Manch taking up their cause, the barbers of the area have staged a *dharna* near the Puri collector's office, demanding restoration of their right to live with dignity. (Pioneer 13.5.03)

14th May

Dalit politics: Noises in the air, ground unclean

Bhopal: About 5,000 Dalit families in Bhopal eke out a living cleaning dry toilets. This in a state which has become the hub of Dalit sloganeering in the past year-and-a-half. Incidentally, in a situation where both the BJP and the chief minister are eyeing the Dalit vote-bank, CM Digvijay Singh was not permitted to go to Vancouver for a Dalit conference. The BJP is setting the stage to come out with its Dalit agenda. Although both parties are fighting for the significant 36 per cent of the Dalit votebank, neither has taken note of the fact that these 'valmikis' or 'mehtars' continue their dehumanising work hardly five km from the chief minister's official residence. The National Human Development Report 2001 says 7.87 per cent households in MP have access to flush toilets as against 90.14 per cent in Karnataka, 58.14 per cent in Bihar and 9.46 per cent in Orissa. (Times of India 14.5.03)

15th May

Violence to keep Dalits away from temples (2)

Kolhapur, May 14: Adalit movement to be allowed entry into temples in the Kolhapur district of Maharashtra has taken a bloody turn with the upper castes resorting to violence against it. Earlier, upper caste community members had tried ostracizing and threatening Dalit Mahasangh, the outfit spearheading the movement. The Mahasangh is active in Sangli, Satara and Kolhapur districts. Yesterday, upper caste members pelted stones and blocked roads when a Dalit group was returning after a visit to the Basweshwara temple at Hitni, a village in Kolhapur district. A violent mob also set afire the tehsildar's jeep and two police motorbikes and pelted stones at police on bandobast duty, Police took 30 villagers into custody who were later released on bail. (Indian Express 15.5.03)

16th May

Dalit agenda: Diggy plans to attend business meet in US

Bhopal, May 15: Determined to extract maximum political mileage from his so called dalit agenda and other paper initiatives in the social sector, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh will now be attending the Indo-US Joint Business Council Meet in New York. This his hackers feel, will partially make up for the failure to make it to Vancouver to attend an international conference on dalits which was arranged by an NGO. Mr. Singh had voluntarily informed reporters during his last press conference that his trip to Vancouver stood cancelled due to the ministry of external affairs refusal to grant him political clearance. Pressed for details Mr Singh's cryptic reply was "Ask Them". (Asian Age 16.5.03)

18th May

Many dalits convert to Christianity in Bhojpur

Patna: There are reports that several Dalits in Bihar's Bhojpur district converted to Christianity. Preliminary investigations reveal that a group of Dalits in Udwananagar block have converted to Christianity. But our probe suggests 10 to 15 persons have converted in the past one month and not 100 as suggested by some media reports. Bhojpur district magistrate Sanjay Kumar said on Saturday. He said the district administration has recorded their statements. In many cases, the head of a family embraces Christianity but not the rest, Kumar said. (Times of India 18.5.03)

19th May

No staff, state SC/ST panel moves court

Dehradun, May 18: The Uttaranchal Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes commission has moved the state high court over non-payment of salary and non-availability of

staff for the last one and a half years. The court has issued a showcause notice to the state returnable in four weeks directing it to pay the salaries. The panel had been constituted by the previous BJP government. In the last 18 months of Congress rule, except for an official car, the commission has not been provided even basic facilities like office, staff or a permanent secretary. Girish Lal Tamta was appointed chairman of the commission by the BJP government for three years. The commission has as its other members S.S. Chauhan and S.S. Nagia. (Indian Express 19.5.03)

20th May

Penalise poll-dodging TN villages: Panel

Chennai, May 19: The National SC/ST Commission has asked the State Government to withdraw all facilities and funds for and penalize four reserved villages in southern Tamil Nadu, where panchayat elections have not been held for a few years now due to alleged upper caste intimidation. Concerned at the administration's inability to hold the polls, the Commission Chairman, Bijay Sonkar Shastri, who was in the city today, also instructed the Chief Secretary, Lakshmi Pranesh, to immediately depute a team of capable officials, MLAs and public representatives to the villages and create an atmosphere conducive to conducting the exercise. Such a discrimination should not be allowed to continue in this modern age, Mr Shastri asserted, in an interaction with the media, after discussions with the Chief Secretary and other senior officials. (Hindu 20.5.03)

SC/ST panel frowns on TN's no-Dalit panchayats (2)

CHENNAI, May 19. — National Commission for SC/ST chairman Mr Bijay Sonkar Shastri today took a stern view of the four reserved village panchayats in Madurai and Virudhunagar districts where Dalits were being disallowed from contesting elections by the dominant Thevar caste. "We will withdraw all funds and facilities to these panchayats until elections are held," Mr Shastri told reporters. He held discussions with state government officials today. Mr Shastri said the government officials, led by chief secretary Mrs Lakshmi Pranesh, had agreed to his suggestion to send a team to the four village panchayats — Keeripatti, Pappanpatti and Nattarmangalam in Madurai district and Kottak-atchiendal in Virudhunagar district — to create a conducive atmosphere for the local body elections to be held there. "We have given instructions to the government that elections should be conducted at the earliest. We told them that that if the villagers tried to stop the conduct of elections, they would be penalised by the state." Funds for infrastructure projects would be cut off, the chairman said. (Statesman 20.5.03)

24th May

Buddhism beckons dalits in Gujarat

Ahmedabad, May 23: Defying the Freedom of Religion Act 2003, which is likely to be enacted within the next fortnight, about one lakh dalits from across Gujarat are likely to embrace Buddhism on June 15 in Baroda during a ceremony that will probably be the biggest mass conversion ever to have taken place in the state. The mass conversion will be a significant event in the state that has already earned ill-fame for being ranked third in the country in terms of atrocities committed on dalits. Those involved in promoting Buddhism in the state believe that a large percentage of dalits are expected to participate in the ceremony from Baroda, Mehsana, Surendranagar and Ahmedabad, where dalits face socio-economic oppression. National general secretary of the Vishwa Boudh Sangh, which has organised the ceremony in Baroda, Bhantey Sangh Priye, asserted that the conversions of the dalits to Buddhism would be voluntary and "without tempting them with money or promises." He said, "The estimated one-lakh dalits, who are expected to embrace Buddhism, will abandon Hinduism at their own will for they have realised that the religion has deprived them of socio-economic benefits and never treated them at par with others." (Asian Age 24.5.03)

4th June

1 lakh Dalits to convert, Modi wary (2)

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 3: THE Gujarat government is in for a major embarrassment with the Vishwa Boudh Sangh (VBS) planning to organise a mass conversion on June 15, announcing

that around one lakh Dalits would embrace Buddhism that day. The VBS move comes close on the heels of the government's Freedom of Religion Act that seeks to prevent conversions and which, the Narendra Modi regime claims, helped to its recent bypoll victory. Buddhism and Jainism— covered in the Hindu Code Bill as offshoots of Hinduism — are out of the Act's purview. "There is resentment among tribals against conversions," Minister of State for Home Amit Shah had claimed explaining the party's victory in the south Gujarat constituency of Songarh. But he was at a loss to explain the massive turnout predicted for the June 15 function. "For us it's a matter of law and order and not conversion," he said, adding that the turnout wouldn't be high. While the VBS's ability to mobilise one lakh Dalits for conversion to Buddhism does seem suspect, the wary government has activated its intelligence apparatus to watch the Sangh's activities in the run-up to the programme at Vadodara. (Indian Express 4.6.03)

5th June

NHRC to probe Kaithal Dalits issue (2)

NEW DELHI, JUNE 4: FOUR months after 275 Dalit families of Harsola village in Haryana's Kaithal district were allegedly forced to abandon their homes to escape attacks by their upper caste neighbours, the NHRC has decided to investigate the incident. The incident happened on February 10 when a group of men belonging to upper castes allegedly attacked a Dalit neighbourhood. Fearing more attacks, all the 275 Dalit families thereafter left their homes and fled the village. Senior Congress leaders Buta Singh, Bhajan Lal and Dr K.R. Punia, who brought the incident to the NHRC's notice yesterday, said that after initial attempts by villagers and the administration to bring about a compromise, the Dalits were again left homeless. "The 275 Dalit families are putting up in Kaithal away from their homes and, to add to their woes, the district administration has been accusing them of having vested interests in perpetuating their condition," a petition filed by the Congress leaders to NHRC Chairman AS. Anand yesterday said. (Indian Express 5.6.03)

6th June

Jat-Dalit tiff turns violent (2)

Jalandhar /Talhan, June 5 : One person was killed and seven injured in police firing when caste violence that rocked Talhan village today spilled over to Jalandhar late in the evening. Police opened fire on a 1,000-strong mob of BSP workers and Dalits near Buta Mandi after they set fire to a bus and a fire-tender. The firing was ordered after protesters gheraoed police and thrashed a policeman, whose condition is stated to be critical. (Indian Express, 6-6-2003)

Conversions put Modi in a spot (2)

Ahmedabad, June 5: Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi's law banning conversions will be tested on June 15 when the Vishwa Boudh Sangh holds a mass conversion programme. As many as 55,000 Dalits have said in writing that they will voluntarily convert to Buddhism in Vadodara on that day. According to the law banning forced conversions, passed less than two months ago, anyone willing to convert is required to seek permission from the district collector. The BJP initially tried to play down the mass conversion and the VHP followed suit, saying it had no objection if Dalits turned Buddhists. But the government and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad are becoming nervous now that conversions are becoming popular with Dalits in many towns embracing Buddhism. (Telegraph 6.6.03)

7th June

Dalits on rampage over police firing in Jalandhar (2)

Jalandhar, June 6: ENRAGED OVER the police firing on Thursday, that killed one person and injured seven people on Thursday evening, thousands of Dalits on Friday took to the streets in Buta Mandi in Jalandhar burning vehicles and pelting stones. The Dalits were protesting the "biased" role of the police on Thursday following a clash between Jats and members of their community in Tallan village. The Dalits charged the police with helping a mob comprising Jat youths, which, they alleged, attacked Dalits and destroyed their property. The Dalits, who are dominant in the Buta Mandi area, laid siege on the Nakodar road from late on Thursday night.

The mob first pelted stones at passing vehicles and then set ablaze a fire tender and a bus of the Himachal Roadways. (Hindustan Times 7.6.03)

8th June

Caste violence continues in Jalandhar (2)

Jalandhar: Curfew was clamped in more areas here on Saturday as caste violence continued for the third day. FIRs were registered against Punjab BJP vice-president Vijaya Sampla, district BSP chief Pawan Tinu and 12 others for allegedly instigating riots. A minor clash broke out this morning in Talhan village, where an indefinite curfew had been in force since Thursday night, following clashes between Jats, Sikhs and Dalits, official sources said. Overnight violence was reported from a number of areas in the district, prompting authorities to clamp curfew in Buta Man-di, Bhargo Camp, Abadpura, Siddharth Nagar, Ravi Dass Nagar, Jyoti Chowk and Nakodar Chowk, they said. Besides Sampla and Tinu, the police have booked Dalit Action Committee president Channu Ram and committee member Lahori Ram, among others, in connection with the violence. Shops remained closed here in response to the Jalandhar bandh call given by the Dalit Action Committee and policemen were deployed in view of the cremation of a Dalit youth killed in police firing, following clashes on Thursday night. (Times of India 8.6.03)

9th June

Tension simmers in Punjab village (2)

Chandigarh, June 8: Heightened caste tensions continued for the fourth day in Talhan village, where a clash between the dalit residents and the land-owning jat Sikhs on Thursday evening had provoked largescale rioting across large parts of Jalandhar City and spread to several neighbouring villages and settlements. While the rest of the area, including the riot-affected localities of Jalandhar, remained relatively calm on Sunday, in Talhan things took another ugly turn when curfew was relaxed for an hour on Sunday morning. Taking advantage of the relaxation, a group of dalit youths entered the home of a jat Sikh family and attacked those inside with swords and iron rods. At least five members of the family were gravely injured. The dalit men are said to have acted "in retaliation for Saturday's incident, where two of their brethren were beaten up unidentified persons. Curiously, the incident occurred despite the presence of more than 200 armed state police personnel under the command of a superintendent of police. The police had been deployed in the village in the village to pre-empt precisely this kind of incident. (Asian Age 9.6.03)

Dalit girl burnt, family blames land dispute (2)

MEERUT.JUNE 8, MYSTERY surrounds the death by burning of a Dalit girl in the Muslim-dominated Belda village of Saharanpur district on Friday morning. While some blame rivalry over land for the incident, police say the 14-year-old girl was pregnant and may have committed suicide. The girl's mother, Kamla has filed a report accusing Mehtab and Rukhsana, of the same village, of having killed her daughter. She pointed out that Mehtab's family had a land dispute with them and that the former had threatened her daughter recently when she had dumped something on the property. Both Mehtab and Rukhsana are in custody. The girl had come to Belda to spend holidays at her aunt's house. On Friday morning, she was at home with her cousins when, according to the family, she was attacked and set on fire. The cousins, both minors, ran outside, screaming for help. (Indian Express 9.6.03)

10th June

Despite ban, Dalits to convert in Gujarat (2)

Ahmedabad, June 9: THOUSANDS OF Dalits from all over Gujarat are planning to convert to Buddhism, right in the face of the Narendra Modi government's anti-conversion law. The Viswa Boudha Sangh is spearheading the Dalits' conversion ceremony to be held at Vadodara on Sunday. The ceremony won't be 'breaking' the law since the ground rules of the anti-conversion law, christened the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003, have not been notified yet. Plus, the law doesn't specify the names of religions to which conversions are banned. And since the Sangh Parivar considers Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism as part of larger 'Hindutva', they may not be

too worried. But what can cause embarrassment to the Narendra Modi government and the Sangh Parivar is the reason stated by the Dalits for embracing Buddhism. When asked about the provocation for the conversion move, VBS national executive member Surinder Singh Kaloria said Dalits were dumped after being used against the Muslims during last year's post-Godhra riots. "When Dalits were killed in riots, they were hailed as Hindu martyrs, but those arrested were ignored," said Kaloria. He said the Parivar didn't stand up for the Dalits who were nabbed after the riots. (Hindustan Times 10.6.03)

TN dalit group forces Kamal Hassan to halt film shooting (2)

Chennai, June 9: Actor-producer Kamal Hassan was on Monday forced to defer the commencement of shooting for his film *Sandiyar* at picturesque Theni after high-profile dalit group Puthiya Tamizhagam insisted it would disrupt the shooting as the film promoted violence. After making elaborate arrangements to get his filmstars and technicians to Theni for the shooting of *Sandiyar* and putting up the sets for the opening court sequence, Hassan had to cancel the shoot as the stand-off with the dalit party continued. Also, the district police administration refused him permission, according to information reaching here. Superintendent of police Amal Raj, according to sources, told Hassan that while he could provide security for filmstars, it would not be possible to guard the entire film unit during the shooting. Hassan had taken a huge contingent of men from a private security agency in Chennai. (Asian Age 10.6.03)

11th June

Punjab caste war: Officials fiddled as Jalandhar exploded (2)

Chandigarh, June 10: THE VIOLENT clashes between Jats and Dalits in Tallan village near Jalandhar are largely blamed on the failure of the Punjab administration to grasp the seriousness of the sectarian divide. On April 22, the office of the additional director general of police (intelligence), Punjab, had communicated to the principal secretary to the Chief Minister, principal secretary (home) Sanjit Sinha and the then chief secretary, YS. Ratra, that tension between Jats Sikhs and Dalits could "culminate in a law and order problem". Ratra's successor Rajan Kashyap held two meetings with officials, including the commissioner, and additional deputy commissioner, Jalandhar, but the issue was allowed to drag. "Had it been made time-bound, the situation could have been diffused," said a senior police functionary. The five page note prepared by the state intelligence department mentions not only the background of the Tallan dispute and the genesis of the problem but also suggests remedial measures. It mentions not only the caste-wise population breakup of the village, which is predominantly Harijan, but also how the place came to be worshipped. (Hindustan Times 11.6.03)

They smashed our VCR, said it's not for Dalits (2)

TALHAN, JUNE 10: IN divided Talhan, they have been baying for each other's blood. The Jat sarpanch says he catches sleep during the day so that he can stay awake at night. His predecessor, a Dalit, tells you he's been doing the same ever since caste violence overtook this Jalandhar village. Caste consciousness isn't new to Punjab villages, especially Talhan. Almost every village in the state has two different gurdwaras: one for the upper castes and the other for the not-so-fortunate. There's little here to suggest that Sikhism shuns caste. Even the cremation grounds are caste-specific. And this latest bout of caste violence has only deepened the scars. No one feels safe. Sunil's an MBA but that qualification has little meaning now. People in his area know him because he's one of them, a Dalit. And there's no mistaking the fear and worry, both in Dalit and Jat quarters; You just have to lift the curfew and there will be bloodshed. (Indian Express 11.6.03)

13th June

Rally for Dalits conversion postponed (2)

THE PROPOSED conversion of thousands of Dalits to Buddhism has been temporarily called off following denial of permission for the public ground at Sama area in Vadodara where the ceremony was to be held on Sunday. Announcing the postponement, Viswa Boudha Sangh (VBS) national general secretary Bhunte Sanghpriya alleged the state police were harassing and threatening the Dalits and warning them against converting. The VHP had threatened to disrupt

the rally if it there was any criticism of Hindus. The VBS said the conversions were a mark of protest against the Hindus using the Dalits in last year's riots, but dumping them later on. Sanghpriya said the conversion rally would now be held on Vijaya Dashami day on October 5. However, he said conversions in small numbers would start in the tehsil towns and villages from June 20. (Hindustan Times 13.6.03)

Parties flayed for attempts to dilute reservation policy (2)

JAIPUR, JUNE 12. The Centre for Dalit Human Rights (CDHR) today flayed the attempts by the two *major* political parties — Congress(I) and BJP — to "dilute and destroy" the original concept of reservation policy by favouring quota for the poor among the so called upper castes and said the expansion of reservation on this line would defeat the objectives of social justice. "The stand of both these parties is politically motivated. Their talk of providing reservation on the economic basis is part of their game to outmanoeuvre each other and garner votes," P.L. Mimroth, convener of CDHR and a noted lawyer, told reporters here. Mr. Mimroth pointed out that reservation had been originally conceived for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes who had been discriminated against throughout history on the ground of class and caste. "Reservation, which is an affirmative action policy designed to give Dalits their due share, should have nothing to do with economic status of any community," he said. The nation-wide debate on reservation on economic criteria was triggered following the Ra-jasthan Cabinet recently adopting a resolution favouring granting of reservation to the poor among upper castes. "While the Congress promises reservation for the privileged Brahmins, the BJP advocates affirmative action for poor Muslims," Mr. Mimroth regretted. (Hindu 13.6.03)

14th June

Caste clash over chariot (2)

Chennai, June 13: Hours after chief minister Jayalalithaa refused to consider Kamalahaasan's plea for police protection to shoot his controversial film, a caste clash near Theni killed one and injured 11 this evening. According to reports reaching Chennai, the clash was sparked by upper-caste Hindus' alleged refusal to let Dalits pull a chariot through their locality during a temple festival at Kombai village. The village is part of a sensitive belt known to be prone to caste tensions. The temple chariot of Thirularayar Perumal had rolled out for the first time in 11 years as the car festival was observed today Earlier, Jayalalithaa said the Theni superintendent of police was "fully within his rights" to deny permission to shoot Kamalahaasan's film, *Sandiar*, in the district. The Puthiya Tamizhagam had objected to the film, alleging it had casteist overtones. (Telegraph 14.6.03)

Dalits, jat, Sikhs at Talhan sign truce (2)

Chandigarh, June 14: The dalits and the land-owning jat Sikh residents of village Talhan on the outskirts of Jalandhar signed a formal truce on Saturday to end a five-month old feud over the control of a religious shrine. The dalits had been demanding due representation in the management of the village shrine and their resentment over being denied this had led to violent clashes both in Talhan village as well as in surrounding areas of Jalandhar and beyond. However, on Saturday evening, both groups reached a settlement which was personally brokered by chief minister Amarinder Singh, the police and the Jalandhar district administration with help from Sikh leaders like Bhai Manjit Singh and Har-minder Singh Gill. Sources told *The Asian Age* that senior Akali Dal leaders led by former SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur had made every possible attempt to scuttle the peace efforts. Bibi Jagir Kaur had been constantly on the phone U> a group of jat Sikhs who had locked themselves into the village gurdwara and was egging them on to continue the siege to a point that the police was forced to enter, a highly-placed source said. (Asian Age 15.6.03)

17th June

Woman sarpanch paraded naked, one held (2)

Bhubaneswar, June 16: A woman sarpanch belonging to the scheduled caste community was on Saturday allegedly stripped and assaulted by some ruling Biju Janata Dal supporters at Batira village in Kendrapara district. The victim Niyati Behera, 25, was attacked when she refused to

give the culprits cement and iron rods meant for construction of 12 houses for scheduled caste people of that village under Indira Awas Yojana. The police has arrested one Narayan Behera in connection with the incident. According the FIR lodged by the husband of the victim, in Patkura police station, the lady was sleeping in her thatched house on Saturday night when the miscreants entered and assaulted her husband with a bamboo stick. After her husband fell unconscious, the miscreants dragged her, stripped and then paraded her in the village. They also molested her and tore her clothes, the FIR says. (Asian Age 17.6.03)

21st June

Kamal Hassan drops Sandiyar title (2)

CHENNAI, JUNE 20. The controversy over Kamal Hassan's latest movie ended in an anti-climax today with the actor buying peace with protesting Dalit outfits, by dropping the controversial title Sandiyar with a new title but the same script, the shooting, which was stalled a fortnight ago in scenic Them, as the police refused security for the crew, would resume on Tamil Nadu soil soon. Mr Kamal Hassan's dramatic announcement of changing the title came after a 25-minute discussion with the Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, at the Secretariat here. "The problems are over. The shooting will begin in Tamil Nadu, the visibly relieved film star told the media, Emerging from the Chief Minister's office Mr. Kamal Hassan, who sports the now-famous "Sandiyar" handlebar sideburns, insisted that he had no intention of hurting anyone's feelings. If the title was the problem, he would change it. What would be the new title? A smiling Kamal Hassan quipped: "I have not yet decided. (Hindu 21.6.03)

23rd June

Rape sharpens caste divide in Rajasthan village (2)

BEHRONDA. JUNE 22: ON THE streets of non-descript Behronda village in south-eastern Rajasthan, mistrust and suspicion lurk around every corner. The divide has only sharpened ever since the Sapotara police arrested a Rajput man for allegedly raping a scheduled caste woman. On the fringe of the Rajput dominated village, Hari Prasad lives in a one-room hut with his wife and three children. Ten years after his family was literally driven out of the village and one month after his wife was reportedly raped, Prasad has returned to his land and disrupted Behronda's uneasy calm. "I am petrified and was quite sure I won't return after this incident," a broken Prasad says. "But police found us, reassured us and brought us back. Technically I am not living in the village and I never go in there for anything. For all my supplies, I just walk the extra mile to Masad village." According to FIR filed by the couple, on May 18, Prasad's wife was home alone with her children when she was raped in the dead of the night. In her complaint, she named a Rajput man who has since been arrested. Ever since the incident, the woman has started covering her face, hesitantly lifting her veil even in the presence of women. "I don't like people to see my marks," she whispers, referring to the burn marks on her face, adding that her rapist used a cigarette butt to scar her for life. (Indian Express 23.6.03)

24th June

Atrocities against dalits on rise: police (2)

Bangalore, June 23: For a state which enjoys an IT-savvy image, this could come as a shock of sorts. The atrocities against dalits in Karnataka in the past few years are on the increase and have risen from 1062 in 2000 to 1232 in 2002. This is happening even as they assert themselves for their rights, says Mr Subhash Bharani, additional director general of police, law and order and the nodal officer in the state for dealing with such cases. In 2000, the cases of atrocities on dalits registered under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (prevention of atrocities) Act 1989, was 1062 which rose to 1070 the next year and then jumped to 1232 in 2002. In 2003, the number of cases recorded till March was 263. "It is sad that the atrocities are continuing unabated in an age when we claim to be educated and enlightened," Mr Bharani told The Asian Age. He identified Bangalore Rural, Kolar, Tumkur, Gulbarga, Raichur and Bellary as the districts reporting a higher number of cases while Dharwad, Bijapur and Belgaum had a comparatively lesser number. The reasons for the rise in atrocities, according to him are manifold. For one, dalits have begun organising and asserting themselves for rights which has led to a backlash from members of other communities. "As they get educated, they also become more aware of

their rights. Once they start fighting for their rights, the friction with other communities is inevitable leading to caste-based harassment," (Asian Age 24.6.030)

26th June

Two SC boys paraded naked for demanding their dues (2)

Bhubaneswar, June 25: Two scheduled caste minor boys of Nuagaon village under Kujang block in Jagatsinghpur district were allegedly stripped and paraded naked in the village recently by their employer. Their only fault was asking for clearance of old dues. Ambedkar-Lohia Manch, a forum which is working for protection of the rights of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities, alleged on Wednesday that Gobinda Mallick (17) and Ashok Mallick (16) were tortured by their employer Tamali Pradhan of the same village when they stopped work demanding their dues.

Gobinda and Ashok had been working as dockers in a tractor owned by Tomali for two years. Although Tomali used to regularly pay the wages to the two boys in the first year, he had discontinued payment for the last one year. Harassed Gobinda and Ashok stopped working, which has infuriated Tomali. To avenge the humiliation, the ALM said, "Tomali hatched a conspiracy and charged that the two boys had stolen his electric water pump. On May 13, Tomali and his friend Ajit Prasad Rout dragged the boys from their houses, stripped them off and made them parade naked in the village. (Asian Age 26.6.03)

1st July

Shadow cast(e) over admissions (2)

Mumbai, June 30: The SSC results are out but the stress continues. Standard 10 students belonging to the backward class are facing a problem as far as first year junior college admissions into Ruparel College, Matunga are concerned. The reason: The students do not have caste certificates to prove they belong to the underprivileged section of society. As a result of this, the students belonging to the reserved class have started submitting their forms in the open category. Ruparel College began accepting forms from June 24 and will put up the first merit list on June 30. Most of the students have received a first class, however, the problem continues. The parents of the backward class children are frustrated as a result of the inconvenience caused to them. One of the aggrieved parent said, "For the last two days, we have been requesting the college authorities to admit our children. Though my son has secured enough to get admission in the reserved category, nobody in Ruparel College is entertaining us." Other parents echoed the same concern in saying, "We have applied for the caste certificate, but there is a delay because of lengthy procedures." (Asian Age 1.7.03)

2nd July

Girl's brothers kill dalit lover (2)

Ahmedabad, July 1: Two Muslim brothers beat to death a dalit man for allegedly having illicit relations with their sister at Sihor Taluka, in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district, on Monday. The victim, Trikam Nathu, 35, a mason, met Hasmin Adam, 32, who works as a daily wager, during the course of his work, according to the police. Police sources said their relationship grew intimate, especially since they lived in the same neighbourhood. However, her brothers Yunus Adam and Mustafa Adam had serious reservations about the relationship. On Monday, at around 2.30 am, the two brothers caught Nathu and their sister Hasmin in a compromising position. Enraged with this, they beat up Nathu and hit him on the head with a stone, resulting in his death. District superintendent of police Anupam Gehlot said both the accused were absconding but they hoped to arrested the duo soon. Meanwhile, he said there was no tension in Sihor following the incident since it was a private dispute concerning two families, and not a communal issue. Police sub-inspector Nanbha Chauhan, (Asian Age 2.7.03)

5th July

Digvijay setting stage for caste clash: BJP (2)

BHOPAL, JULY 4. The Bharatiya Ja-nata Party in Madhya Pradesh has accused the Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, of creating a volatile situation that could lead to a "class struggle" due to the "reckless" manner in which Dalits and Other Backward Classes in rural areas are being divided following the Government's decision to distribute grazing land to landless Scheduled

Castes and Scheduled Tribes people from the across the State. Addressing a Press conference here today, the State unit BIP spokesman, Kailash Vijayvargiya, charged that Mr. Singh would go down in history as "a person instrumental in tearing apart the fabric of unity in Madhya Pradesh and dividing society on narrow lines of caste and class". Mr. Vijayvargiya said the State Government, in its zeal to implement its Dalit Agenda, had allotted pattas (land ownership certificates) to 2.5 lakh of the 12 lakh Dalit families that were supposed to be covered under the latest land allotment scheme. He said reports of violent clashes are continuously being reported from different parts of the State as in a large number of cases, the land allotted to Dalits was already being tilled by others, particularly those belonging to OBCs, he pointed out. (Hindu 5.7.03)

Maya's latest diktat: Power to Dalit villages (2)

Lucknow: Mayawati's latest diktat that all Dalit villages and bastis be electrified and be provided power free of cost under the Kutir Jyoti Yojana could not have come at a worse time for the state's power sector. The power sector is already reeling under a financial crisis and heavily dependent on electricity import to meet the requirements. The directives of the chief minister were issued during a review meeting of the power sector held on Monday. While the officials have set about their task in right earnest, no one has told the chief minister how much the measure will cost. Another factor that will not be brought to her notice is that fact that there are a number of other villages which need electrification. It is the second factor which the opposition parties have chosen to target. Congress legislature party leader Pramod Tewari observes: "It would have been far better if she had made this facility available to all the weaker sections of society." He justified Mayawati's ambitious declarations saying she knew her days were numbered and was, therefore, making promises which she was sure would not be fulfilled. (Times of India 5.7.03)

9th July

Mass fine for crop destruction (2)

BHOPAL, JULY 8. The Madhya Pradesh Government has decided to impose a mass fine of Rs. 25.33 lakhs on the non-Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Tribes residents of five villages in Rajgarh district who had been accused of destroying crops produced by members of the SC, ST communities on land allotted to them under a special scheme. The District Collector of Rajgarh has slapped the fine on 773 non-SC, ST families. The Collector has asserted that action would be initiated under the rules to collect the fine. The State Government had ordered that criminal cases be registered against those committing atrocities against SCs, STs in Raj-garh & villages and also indicated the move to slap a mass fine against the non-SC, ST villagers. The Rajgarh SDO, who investigated complaints against the accused, had recommended the slapping of fine against the entire non-SC, ST communities. The State Government had withheld the flow of development-related funds to a village in Panna district after a woman had committed "sati". (Hindu 9.7.03)

10th July

Talhan: SC/ST panel lames govt (2)

JALANDHAR, JULY 9: WHILE holding the district administration directly responsible for caste clashes in Talhan, Chairman of National Commission for SC/ST Bijay Sonkar Shastri today said, in a missive to the PM, that he would make a case against some district officials for their "dubious" role during the episode. Shastri, addressing media-persons, after visiting Talhan and meeting leaders of both Jat and Dalit communities, said he would send the report of his visit to Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and President Abdul Kalam. Blaming the district administration and the government for the clashes, he alleged that the agreement between both the communities and the administration had only been partially implemented as around 20 persons, arrested for the violence, are yet to be released. Flaying the government's decision to appoint an SDM-level official to inquire into the incident, Shastri said a senior officer should be entrusted with the enquiry. He also demanded a relief of Rs 10 lakh for Vijay Kumar Kala's family, who was killed in the Boota Mandi firing incident, as against the Rs 5 lakh announced by the government. (Indian Express 10.7.03)

Private sector for Dalit cause: Party (2)

Shimla: The Congress has called for a "dialogue" with the private sector to find ways in which the representation of Dalits can be increased. After deep introspection at the brain-storming session that ended here on Wednesday, the party has made an attempt to widen the ambit of reservations by seeking US-style 'workplace diversity' in the private sector. The text on reservations adopted by the Congress reads: "The start of a purposeful dialogue with private industry on how best India's social diversity could be reflected in the private sector in different ways like reservations and fiscal incentives, how privatisation, where inevitable, can protect the welfare of the weaker sections and how government procurement can promote entrepreneurship among Dalits and Adivasis." Though this carefully worded statement talks only of "dialogue" and not of legislation, the Congress has become the first national party to moot affirmative action in the private sector as official policy. Lest the middle classes take this amiss, the party has in the Shimla Sankalp or resolve, reminded them that the party still takes pride in launching economic reforms. (Times of India 10.7.03)

12th July

HC issues notice to Bihar officials over scavengers (2)

PATNA, JULY 11: TAKING suo motu cognisance of an Express report, which was reproduced by its sister publication Jansatta, on the human scavengers in Bihar, the Patna High Court sent notices to Bihar officials. The Express report on July 2, reproduced by Jansatta on July 4, had narrated the subhuman existence of more than 12,000 scavengers who carry human faeces on their heads to earn a living. They belong to the Methor caste, one of the lowest among Dalits. "What is astonishing is that such an inhuman activity has flourished despite the clear mandate of the law to root it out," said a division bench comprising Chief Justice Ravi S. Dhawan and Justice R.S. Dhawan, issuing notices to the development secretary, all district magistrates, the five chief executive officers of municipal corporations and the executives of the nagar parishads in the state. They have been asked to reply within three weeks about the "prevalence of the malady within their area and the steps taken to root it out." The court said: "Such activities are reminiscent of the dark era of civilisation when one class of men had to suffer such ignominy for the comfort of another... Today, with the advent of modern infrastructure and competency to root it out, it is all the more inexcusable." (Indian Express 12.7.03)

16th July

A fight for Dalit vote bank (2)

CHANDIGARH, JULY 15: The Bahujan Samaj Party and the ruling Congress in Punjab indulged in major sabre-rattling today as their leaders, claiming to be the "real" representatives of the Dalit community, swore to politically decimate any challenger to their stake over the "vote bank". At a largely attended "Swabhiman Maha Rally" organised at the Parade grounds here, the BSP's second-in-command and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, appealed to Dalits to ensure "an absolute political annihilation" of the Congress party in any future elections. She asked the Dalits to consolidate themselves into a major political power if they expected any justice and termination of oppression. In a marathon speech lasting just short of two hours, Ms Mayawati used the Talhan episode of Jalandhar district in Punjab to launch a no-holds-barred tirade against the Congress, whom she accused of hatching a conspiracy to divide the people on casteist lines. She said that after its "complete failure to handle the Talhan episode and provide justice to the victims who were Dalits", the Congress government in Punjab led by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had no right to stay in power. (Hindu 16.7.03)

Dalit murder to be probed (2)

MUMBAI : Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal on Tuesday announced in the State Assembly a high level investigation into the gruesome killing of a Dalit youth, who was allegedly set ablaze alive, in Bhutegaon of Jalna district, on May 23. Mr Bhujbal, who also holds Home portfolio, told the members during Question Hour that an IG level senior official would conduct a thorough probe into the incident. Replying to a query raised by Diwakar Raote (Shiv Sena), he said the Government had taken the incident seriously and would soon file chargesheet against those found guilty. (Pioneer 16.7.03)

Jog's poll pot: No tests for SC for govt job (2)

RAIPUR.JULY15: LUCKY for Ajit Jogi that the model code of conduct hasn't kicked in. The Chhattisgarh government today scrapped all mandatory pre-conditions of tests and interviews for tribals, scheduled castes and other backward castes (OBCs) applying for government jobs. A weekly Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Jogi, decided that the backlog of 5,700 posts in all state departments will be cleared by appointing unemployed tribals, SCs and OBCs, without holding any tests. The backlog's been there since the creation of the state and after the government departments finalised their administrative set-ups. But the recruitment process began only this month, just when the state was getting ready for Assembly polls. (Indian Express 16.7.03)

17th July

Maharashtra faces Dalit backlash (2)

Mumbai/Aurangabad, July 16: IN THE beginning it seemed like a simple water dispute in a drought-prone district of Maharashtra. But then the waters burst into flames, shaking the political establishment and waking them to the reality of a possible Dalit uprising. After a series of recent atrocities against them, Dalit activists went on a rampage. The state's first Dalit Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde is at pains to state that he is considering applying MCOCA and POTA on the perpetrators of the atrocities. This is a give-away of the extent of the problem the CM is facing, considering the offences are punishable under the Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act. But the CM knows more than he is publicly letting on. He has been quite disturbed at the pattern of the attacks, which have so far not invited much protest from the otherwise pro-active Dalit leaders. That is because every one of the Dalits attacked are Matangs. Traditionally water carriers, they have stayed aloof from the "republican" Dalits — followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar. (Hindustan Times 17.7.03)

Maharashtra finds new use for POTA (2)

MUMBAI, JULY16: Murders of three Dalit girls in Aurangabad in a month have rattled the Maharashtra Government so much that it announced today that it would invoke provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) to tackle such crimes. Angered by the criticism from within his party on the same issue, Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde had offered to step down on Tuesday. Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who is also the home minister, said the government would use a particular provision under POTA which deals with sectarian terrorism "Sectarian terrorism also means spreading terror against a particular community and attacks on Dalits may fit in this category," he announced in the Assembly today. "We will select one of the recent incidents to experiment with the provisions of POTA. The case will be filed in the court to see whether it becomes a useful tool to deal with the attacks on Dalits in the state," Bhujbal said. (Indian Express 17.7.03)

18th July

Maharashtra Govt. to test POTA on crimes against Dalits (2)

MUMBAI, JULY 17. The Maharashtra's Progressive Democratic Front today referring to the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray's exhortation that the Dalit issue should not be 'politicised', said that in at least one of the several cases of atrocities on Dalits, it would test the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). Though the Protection of Civil Rights Act was available, POTA covers acts of "sectoral terrorism", the Deputy Chief Minister, Chhagan Bhujbal announced here on Wednesday, even as the Chief Minister, Sushilkumar Shinde, said he preferred to be part of a "casteless society", though often described as "a Dalit Chief Minister". Mr. Bhujbal said a case would be identified for application of the POTA provisions "to see if it works". A few days back, Mr. Shinde had said in the Assembly that he was pained at the instances of atrocities against Dalits in the State. On Tuesday, he told his coalition MLAs that if his being a Dalit Chief Minister were the cause for the "hurt" being inflicted on innocent Dalits, he would not hesitate to step down and wanted to see if the provisions of the Maharashtra Organised Crime Control Act or POTA could check it. (Hindu 18.7.03)

19th July

Paswan rally to protest Dalit atrocities (2)

NEW DELHI (PNS): Lok Janashakti president Ram Vilas Paswan on Friday led a cycle rally of his partymen from Panipat to Sonapat. The party's cycle rally, heading for New Delhi from various places in Haryana and Punjab, is to congregate on Parliament on the first day of the Monsoon session of Parliament in a bid to highlight the acts of brutalities against Dalits at Jhajhar in Haryana and Talhan in Punjab. On July 11, Mr Paswan had flagged off a cycle rally of his partymen from Jalandhar and planned to reach Ludhiana, while leading the same. But Punjab police had arrested him near Phillor. He flagged off another team at Panipat on Friday and led the same to Sonapat. Various other senior leaders of his party, including party deputy supremo Arif Mohammed Khan, MP Ramchander Paswan and Ram Vir Singh Vidhuri, too are to lead such rallies from different places in Haryana and Punjab. (Pioneer 19.7.03)

Dalits demand plum pvt. Jobs (2)

NEW DELHI, JULY 18: HUNDREDS of Dalits marched to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry today, demanding that the country's private sector frame economic policies that were "socially responsible". Led by Shishupal Singh, convener of the Delhi Dalit Diversity Group, the protesters submitted a memorandum at FICCI. The memorandum demanded placement for qualified Dalit professionals and positions for others at the junior level. Calling for "diversity" in supplies, dealership and workforce, the group stated that it was not lobbying for a rigid quota system or a compromise in the private sector's standards but for place in the maximum eligibility criterion. (Indian Express 19.7.03)

Maya slaps SC/ST Act against BJP MLA (2)

LUCKNOW, JULY 18: LOOKS like the BJP and BSP are heading for another showdown in Uttar Pradesh. The Mayawati government today booked BJP MLA from Chilkahar in Ballia district, Ram Iqbal Singh, under the SC/ST Act. It also transferred the District Magistrate and SP, Ballia, who were directed by the Chief Minister to take action against the BJP MLA yesterday. The MLA has been fighting to restore a piece of land that reportedly ' belongs to a Dalit but has been usurped by BSP legislator from Rasra, Thuraram. Ram Iqbal has sent a written complaint to BJP chief M. Venkaiah Naidu highlighting his plight. The party may take up the issue at its national executive at Raipur. The row over the land snowballed into a major controversy yesterday after Chief Minister Mayawati laid a foundation stone for the Ambedkar Community Centre on the same piece of land while on a tour to the district. (Indian Express 19.7.03)

23rd July

Centre trying to usurp Buddhist site: Udit Raj (2)

NEW DELHI, JULY 22. Demanding that Adi Badri be declared an international Buddhist pilgrimage site, the All-India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations president, Udit Raj, today alleged, that the BJP-led Government at the Centre was "conspiring to usurp" the historic civilisation site in Yamunanagar district of Haryana where a "Buddhist stupa" has been found during excavation. Mr. Raj, who also heads the Lord Buddha Club, further alleged that "in the name of reviving and discovering Hindu culture and religion, the BJP Government was hurriedly destroying India's great civilization with a view to attracting Hindus and include the issue in its political agenda. (Hindu 23.7.03)

DU admissions: SC/ST students' woes continue (2)

New Delhi: THE WOES of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) students seeking admission to Delhi University (DU) continue. Out of the 2,100 students who have applied with fresh form, only 1,352 were allotted seats in the supplementary list that came out on Monday. This has added to the frustration of the SC/ST students. A sizeable number of the left out students rushed to the Dean Students Welfare office. Later, they were told to submit written applications to the Dean. The second list is due on July 25. The Dr Atindra Sen, University Registrar and Dr Hema Raghvan, Dean of Students Welfare, on Tuesday were summoned by the National Commission for SC/ST and asked for clarifications on the alleged irregularities in admitting the SC/ST students. (Pioneer 23.7.03)

29th July

M.P. House adjourns over fine on OBC villagers (2)

BHOPAL, JULY 28. The Madhya Pradesh Assembly was briefly adjourned today on its opening day of the monsoon session when the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party members started protesting against the State Government's recent decision to impose a collective fine on residents of five villages, all of them belonging to the backward classes. The collective fine had been imposed on the basis of the charge that those belonging to the OBC category had destroyed standing crops on and that had been freshly distributed by the Government among villagers belonging to the SC/ST communities. Later talking to a group of newsmen, the Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, said that the BJP stand in the House clearly exposed that party's mentality towards those belonging to the SC/ST communities. The Leader of the Opposition, Babulal Gaur, on the other side defended his party's stand saying that a police case has already been registered and those accused of destroying the standing crops were being prosecuted. Under the circumstances, how can the Government think in terms of punishing the "entire community" for the second time, he quipped. (Hindu 29.7.03)

4th Aug

Brother joins Opp. Digvijay move will fan caste tension (2)

BHOPAL, AUGUST 3: MADHYA Pradesh CM Digvijay Singh has been hit by a broadside from a rather unexpected quarter — his own brother Laxman Singh. At a press conference here today, Laxman declared that the state government's decision to impose a community fine on five villages in Rajgarh district would fan the kind of caste conflict that exists in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Digvijay has already been facing flak from the Opposition over the issue. During the ongoing Assembly session, Digvijay stated that if such a decision was feudal, he was indeed feudal. But the attack on his policies today comes from a quarter much closer to home, and from one who has been a frequent source of embarrassment for him. In fact, just a few months ago, in May, Laxman was among four Congress MPs who defied the party's decision to boycott George Fernandes in Parliament. When the Defence Minister rose to reply to a calling attention motion tabled by Congress MP Jagmeet Brar on frequent MiG crashes, Jagmeet, along with Laxman, K.P. Singh Deo and Vilas Muttemwar, chose to stay on to listen to Fernandes. (Indian Express 4.8.03)

6th Aug

Digvijay ropes in brother to oppose Dalit lands plan (2)

Bhopal, Aug. 5: Quintessential and far-sighted politician that he is, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh roped in his younger brother Laxman Singh, a Congress MP, on Sunday to come out with a statement opposing his own (the chief minister's) decision to impose a collective fine on upper castes and OBCs in villages where crops cultivated on Dalit-owned land had been ravaged. Clashes have been reported from many regions following the state government's decision to allot each landless Dalit a hectare of grazing land under the Dalit agenda to ensure their vote in the coming polls. Like a loyal sibling ready to advance the political cause of a family elder, Mr Laxman Singh told a press conference that he disagreed with his brother's decision to impose such a fine since it would encourage caste conflicts. The move was all the more unwarranted since the real culprits had already served a 15-day jail sentence. Imposing a fine would thus have been tantamount to punishing them twice for the same offence. Even Dalit sarpanchs in Rajgarh (his constituency) from where some incidents had been reported had opposed the unjustified punishment. (Asian Age 6.8.03)

7th Aug

Stop dalit eviction (2)

New Delhi: National president of Lok Janshakti Party Ram Vilas Paswan, on Wednesday, called for an immediate stay on eviction of dalits and demanded protection for their temples. Addressing a rally attended by about 5,000 people at Jantar Mantar, Paswan said the government's decision to get the memorial of Babu Jagjivan Ram on Krishna Menon Marg vacated was the latest instance of atrocities against dalits. Paswan, who is organising a Third Front for challenging other

parties in the ensuing elections in Delhi, said atrocities against dalits had increased after the NDA government came to power at the Centre. "On the one hand the BJP is supporting the construction of a temple in Ayodhya, on the other, ancient temples of Sant Guru Ravidas are being demolished in different parts of the country," he alleged. He said two of these temples, one in R K Puram Sector 3 and the other in Tughlakabad, were damaged recently and the authorities had failed to intervene. Paswan claimed other instances of atrocities against dalits included the killing in Jhajjar in Haryana, the incident in Talhan in Punjab and the demolition of a dalit temple near PGI Chandigarh. (Times of India 7.8.03)

SC/ST panel questions NHRC demand for Best Bakery retrial (2)

New Delhi The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on Wednesday questioned the validity of the National Human Rights Commission's decision to move the Supreme Court for the retrial of the Best Bakery case. In a letter to the Secretary General of NHRC, the SC/ST panel sought details of the meeting in which the decision was taken. In the letter, the NCSCST has argued that under Section 3 of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, chairmen of the NCSCST, National Commission for Minorities and the National Commission for Women are deemed members of the NHRC. The NCSCST further argued that this status comes into play in the discharge of functions covered under Clause (b) to (j) of the Section 12 of the Act. The chairman of the NCSCST, Mr Bizay Sonkar Shastri, has also sought an explanation why he, as a member of the NHRC was not called for the meeting. Rejecting NCSCST's contention, NHRC sources said the 1993 Act envisages no role for chairpersons of the other panels in the functioning of the commission while discharging individual complaints as provided under Clause (a) of Section 12 of the Act. The chairpersons of other panels, sources in NHRC added, come into the picture in the functions mentioned in Clause (b) to (j) of Section 12 of the Act, Clause (a) of the Section 12 reads that the Commission shall "inquire, suo moto or on a petition presented to it by a victim or any person on his behalf, into any complaint of that talks of violation of human rights and any negligence in the prevention of such a violation by a public servant." The NHRC, sources said, had acted in the Best Bakery case on the strength of individual complaints. It further said that chairpersons of other commissions are involved only in a matter of general interest to the human rights protection. (Pioneer 7.8.03)

8th Aug

Rajasthan decides to close coaching institute for Dalits (2)

JAIPUR, AUG. 7. In a breach of its professed commitment to work for the welfare of Dalits, the Congress-led Government in Rajasthan is closing a premier institute for coaching of Scheduled Caste and Tribe students for competitive examinations. The B.R. Ambedkar Pre-Exam Coaching Centre here has been lying in disarray for the past three years. The State Government, instead of trying to revive the institute or improve its functioning, has now decided to close it and use its sprawling campus, including the hostel, for training teachers for disabled children. About a dozen Dalit students staying in the hostel have been served eviction notices. The centre — situated in Jhalana Doongri Institutional Area here — was inaugurated in December 1976 by the then Chief Minister, Harideo Joshi, under a Centrally-sponsored scheme to encourage the Dalit youths to appear in the Civil Services and other competitive exams and improve their skills. The Central Government has been providing huge grant-in-aid regularly to the State for running the institute. However, the institute stopped all training programmes for inexplicable reasons about three years ago and has since been lying defunct. (Hindu 8.8.03)

11th Aug

Dalit killed for entering temple (2)

Bhitasi village (Anand): Not everyone in this Gujarati village was shocked when a 28-year-old Dalit man died on Friday after being thrashed severely by upper caste residents for sitting in the verandah of a temple here. Police officials and social workers say such incidents occur regularly, but only a handful are reported as members of the lower caste community still fear the wrath of the upper caste residents. Raman Chaturbhai Vankar in Bhitasi village near Anklaav town was allegedly severely beaten up by members of the upper caste community on July 25 for sitting in the

verandah of Bhathiji temple. The doctor's certificate states that Raman suffered only simple injuries, had no internal injuries and would be fine within a week. But Raman died on Friday. The four accused — Suresh Lakha Bhoi, Bhikha Chiman-raj, Asha Rama Bhoi and Mahendrasinh Jaswantsinh Raj — were arrested but later released on bail. With tears welling in her eyes, Raman's sister Vimla said, "We had gone to the fields and sat down in the temple verandah as he was tired. For this, both of us were verbally abused and then Raman was badly beaten up by them (accused). Raman's death is also due to the negligence of the doctor, who told us he would be fine and gave a certificate saying his injuries weren't serious. (Times of India 11.8.03)

12th Aug

Caste violence in UP, 48 wounded (2)

Lucknow, Aug. 13: The contradictions within the ruling coalition in Uttar Pradesh and the ideological differences between the BJP and BSP have finally started emerging on the surface in the form of caste conflicts. The first major caste clash was seen in Mau district on Wednesday when Thakurs and dalits entered into a fierce battle that left 48 persons, most of them dalits, seriously injured. Tension is prevailing in the village and additional forces have been rushed to the site of the incident. According to reports reaching here, the clash was a result of a property dispute being contested in court. The Thakurs of Tajapur village under Sarai Lakhnashi police station had staked claim to some agricultural land in the area on the grounds that they owned it in the revenue records. The local dalits, however, insisted that the land in question belonged to the Gram Sabha and had been forcibly usurped by the Thakurs. On Wednesday morning, the Thakurs, equipped with firearms, arrived at the disputed land and tried to force the dalits to vacate their land. (Asian Age 12.8.03)

21st Aug

Multi-crore scheme for Dalits in Punjab (2)

PATIALA, AUG. 20. The Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in Punjab here today launched a Rs 500 crore scheme to provide latrines to ten lakh families of Dalits and other weaker sections of society to mark 59th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Launching the "Rajiv Gandhi Pendu Jan Sehat Kalyan Yojna" here, the Chief Minister said that Rs 142 crores had been allocated for the current year when about two lakh toilets would be constructed in beneficiary individual houses free of cost. The scheme would be completed in three years, he said. He criticised the former Chief Minister, Parkash Singh Badal, for having opposed the Rajiv-Longowal accord alleging that his predecessor was never interested in the signing of the accord. Paying tributes to Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, whose death anniversary also falls today, Capt. Singh said that, but for leaders like Mr. Badal, peace could have returned to Punjab earlier. (Hindu 21.8.03)

22nd Aug

Paswan seeks reservation for Dalits in judiciary (2)

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 21: WHILE demanding an increase in the number of reserved seats for Dalits, both in the executive and the legislature, Lok Janshakti Party leader Ram Vilas Paswan today demanded reservation in the judiciary as well. He also asked for a special Dalit regiment in the Armed forces. He said while there are laws governing reservations for Dalits and protection of their rights, the problem came in their implementation by the judiciary. "Whenever we have asked for reservation in the judiciary, people think we are mad. But the fact is that all issues pertaining to Dalits get stuck there," he said. Initiating a discussion under Rule 193 on atrocities on Dalits in various parts of the country, Paswan took the lead in attacking the Government for not implementing the recommendations of the Delimitation Commission to raise the representation of Dalits, Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other backward classes in Parliament and state Assemblies. (Indian Express 22.8.03)

23rd Aug

Dalit atrocities: Advani passes buck to states (2)

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 22: MEMBERS of Opposition parties, normally vocal on the rights of the states, today pleaded for a Central intervention to protect Dalits against atrocities. Deputy Prime

Minister L.K. Advani, on the other hand, contended that the Centre, even though concerned, had a limited role. He maintained: "The primary responsibility is of the states. The Centre does not have the authority to act under the present Constitution. The Centre's job is to advise states from time to time." Lok Janshakti Party leader Ram Vilas Paswan, who was persistent with his demand for stronger action against the accused in the Jhajjar case, remained unconvinced. "I have never seen India's Home Minister as helpless as today. Please don't say you are helpless." Advani said special cells have been set up in 17 states and a Union Territory to deal with the problem. A total of 37 special courts have also been constituted in 10 states. A dozen states—AP, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, MP, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, TN and UP — have identified the areas prone to atrocities against Dalits. Regarding Jhajjar, he said the Haryana government had informed him that the trial of the accused was on, while a compensation of Rs 5 lakh each had been given to the next of kin of those killed. (Indian Express 23.8.03)

24th Aug

Dalits demand quota in private, Govt.-aided schools (2)

NEW DELHI, AUG. 23. A large number of people, particularly from the) Dalit community, today demanded reservation in admissions to private and Government-aided schools for students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Assembled under the banner of the Dalit Diversity Group, the gathering, which included social activists, writers, teachers and employees from both Government as well as private sector, asserted that unless a Dalit child was imparted good education, he could not grow up the social ladder. "Unless we ensure that Dalit students also get quality education, which is accessible to students of upper classes, we cannot hope to build a just society. We talk of social and economic equality which could be achieved only through education. We cannot have two different types of education policy -one for private schools and another for Government schools," speakers said. "While on one hand private and Government-aided schools have too many resources and their students get quality education, the Government schools are in a bad shape sans any facility and here only students from weaker sections of the society take admission. So, where is the parity in the education system," they remarked. (Hindu 24.8.03)

28th Aug

Sangh feels UP divorce rocked caste equation (2)

New Delhi: Giving a "social" dimension to the Uttar Pradesh developments, certain Sangh Parivar leaders consider the divorce between the BJP and the BSP a greater loss at the national level than an achievement in UP politics. The Sangh leaders know that the attempted "social coalition" was not working in UP, with its core constituency of Brahmin-Bania-Thakur not willing to hold hands with the Dalits. They also know that the Rajputs had already drifted away from the Sangh due to this coalition and that even Brahmins were restive about the continuance of the alliance. "But this alliance meant a lot for us elsewhere. Mayawati was an example that we could use to dispel the myth that we are an upper caste organisation. We work a lot among Dalits and we know how strong the message had gone down that the Sangh Parivar had let a Dalit become the chief minister of the country's largest state," said a senior Parivar leader. The calculation obviously was that apart from UP, the Sangh would never have to abdicate leadership to the Dalits. But now, the "myth" has been strengthened with the Sangh's detractors pointing out that the alliance was only opportunistic and not based on social realities. (Times of India 28.8.03)

31st Aug

PM launches BJP Dalit agenda (2)

Khandwa: Five days after separation from Mayawati and her BSP, the BJP on Saturday launched its own Dalit agenda from Madhya Pradesh. The 38-point declaration, titled Mhow Sankalp Patra, was released in the presence of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at a public meeting in Chhaigaon, 15 km from here. The 56-page declaration analyses the state of Dalits, notes failures of past governments to improve their plight and says what the BJP will now do. The declaration promises food, clothing and shelter for all Dalits. It speaks of the BJP's determination to provide education and health facilities to every Dalit, to generate employment and to stop exploitation of the community. There is an emphasis on bringing the Scheduled Castes "closer" to other castes

and sections of society instead of isolating them. The PM arrived in Omkareshwar, 110 km from Indore, on Thursday to lay the foundation stone of the 520 MW project of the Narmada Hydroelectric Development Corporation. He addressed a large gathering at a kisan rally in Chhaigaon, where the Dalit Declaration was launched. (Times of India 31.8.03)

10th September

Attack on Dalit triggers mass conversion (2)

Bhitas/Anand: A month after a 28-year-old Dalit, Raman Vankar, was allegedly beaten to death by upper caste persons in the Vankar Vaas village, 25 Dalits embraced Buddhism on Tuesday. The Dalits who included Vankar's family members, adopted Buddhism on Tuesday. The conversion was organised by the Vishwa Boudh Sangh. Residents of the Vankar Vaas say they are still slaves of the upper-caste Dar-bars who dominate the village. "If we continue to follow the same religion, we will be beaten to death even if we make the mistake of sitting on the verandah of a temple," says Mr mala Solanki. Raman Vankar was allegedly beaten to death on July 25. Though the medical officer had issued a certificate saying his injuries were not serious, Raman succumbed to his injuries on August 8. Dalits have sought police protection as they still fear for their lives. Four state reserve police constables have been posted at the Vaas. "Why should I continue to follow a religion which does not allow us to freely worship in a temple?" asks Raman's sister Vimla. "Converting to Buddhism is a bliss. At least, we will earn some respectability in the society," adds Vimla. She alleges the police are not taking any action against the accused even though she has received letters threatening to kill her. "They are moving around freely and threatening us." (Times of India 10.9.03)

11TH September

Stop untouchability, say Dalits (2)

JAIPUR, SEPT. 10. Activists for Dalit rights have sought strict implementation of the SC&ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 and Rules 1995 to stop the practice of untouchability in Rajasthan. Seeking affirmative action with regards to the Dalit land and recruitment of Dalits to police force, they suggested a "campaign against untouchability" in the same manner as of the Pulse Polio Campaign. Atrocities against Dalits as well as untouchability were on the increase in the State in the vitiated atmosphere of growing fundamentalism, communalism and caste feelings, the Dalit leaders who met the Rajasthan Home Minister, Gulab Singh Shaktawat and the State Director General of Police, V.K. Hansuka, under the banner of Centre for Dalit Human Rights (CDHR) stated in separate memorandums submitted to them. "Untouchability stands abolished under the Constitution of India, but it is still virulent, assuming dangerous proportions," the Dalit leaders, led by P.L. Mimroth, convener of CDHR said. In the name of untouchability and tradition, basic human rights were denied to Dalits by dominant caste groups, they said. In some panchayats, the SCs, STs and Dalit women were not allowed to exercise their rights and were being prevented from reaping the benefits and concessions. (Hindu 11.9.03)

13TH September

Protect Dalits, Cong tells Mulayam (2)

New Delhi, September 12: PROTECTION OF Dalits and weaker sections, tackling unemployment and ensuring availability of power are among the major issues the Congress would want in the Samajwadi Party-led coalition's common minimum programme in UP. The Congress' concern for the weaker sections has increased following apprehension that the Raja Bhaiyya episode and Mayawati's collapse might fuel an upper caste backlash against the SCs. "The protection of Dalits is high in our list of priorities," said Nawal Kishore Sharma, AICC general secretary in charge of UP. The issue came up when Sonia Gandhi and Mulayam Singh Yadav held a meeting, with the Congress president urging the Chief Minister to ensure there were no atrocities against the Dalits. Notwithstanding the Congress's decision to stay out of the government "for the time being", the party would want a CMP to guide the coalition's functioning in UP whether or not it shares power in the state. (Hindustan Times 13.9.03)

16th September

Disrespect to dalit icons will lead to violent war: Maya (2)

Lucknow, Sept. 15: Former UP chief minister and Bahujan Samaj Party leader Ms Mayawati warned of a violent war in the country if any disrespect was shown by the Mulayam Singh Yadav government to the dalit icons, particularly statues and memorials related to Dr B.R. Ambedkar. Ms Mayawati sought centres intervention in the matter and said that the Bahujan Samaj would never forgive any efforts to desecrate dalit icons. Addressing a press conference, the former chief minister said that the Mulayam Singh Yadav government had stopped work at the Ambedkar Sahitya Sansthan and Sanghralaya while the multi-crore Ambedkar Sthal and the Ambedkar Maidan had been plunged into darkness. "Statues of Dr Ambedkar adorn these places and if any damage is done, then Mulayam Singh Yadav will be solely responsible for the khoon-kharaba (bloodshed) that follows," she explained. Ms Mayawati came down heavily on Opposition parties and castigated them for spreading the canard that she was about to flee the country. "This rumour has been spread by my rivals only to demoralise and disheartens my cadres and my legislators. I want to make it clear that I will never flee this country and leave the people of Bahujan Samaj at the mercy of Manuwadi forces. If the Opposition does not stop spreading such rumours, I will make their leaders flee the country," she stated. (Asian Age 16.9.03)

18th September

Mulayam accuses BSP of tarnishing Ambedkar's stature (2)

Lucknow, Sept 17: UP chief ' minister, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, on Wednesday, accused the Bahujan Samaj Party of reducing the stature of Dr B R Ambedkar by projecting him as a caste leader. The chief minister said that Dr Ambedkar was recognized as a national leader but the BSP had reduced him to the status of a leader of a sub-caste. The BSP had generated hatred for Dr Ambedkar and nothing can be worse than this. There have been repeated attempts to use him name to segregate one caste form other castes, he said. The chief minister was replying to an adjournment notice moved by the BSP alleging that the new government in Uttar Pradesh had stalled all developmental work in Ambedkar villages. The concept of Ambedkar villages was developed by me in 1994 when I was chief minister but we never used it to widen divisions in society. It is mischievous to even suggest that work on Ambedkar villages has been stalled and all allegations are baseless. I condemn this tendency to generate hatred and contempt between different sections of society. (Asian Age 18.9.003)

22nd September

Inspector alleges casteism in Delhi Police (2)

New Delhi, September 21 A DELHI Police inspector has alleged rampant casteism in the force. The inspector, now with the Traffic Police, had in a letter to the Union Home Minister, stated that people from Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC/ST) are discriminated against and seldom posted as SHOs of police stations. Inspector Balbir Singh, till recently with the North District's Public Grievance Cell, has never been posted as an SHO in 33 years of service. In a letter to the Commissioner of Police, Singh states that only particular inspectors are being posted as SHOs while SC inspectors are being deprived of the opportunity The Scheduled Caste personnel, are being dumped in non-active and non-sensitive units of the Delhi Police. The SC/ST officers are being treated indifferently in clear violation of Article 14 of the Constitution of India," Singh states in the letter. He belongs to the Scheduled Caste community Singh has even sent a legal notice to the Commissioner of Police under civil procedure court through his lawyer. (Hindustan Times 22.9.03)

23rd Sept.

Ailing Kanshi Ram tells Jogi to help fulfill his Dalit dream (2)

RAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 22: BSP leader Kanshi Ram had an emotional meeting with an unusual visitor yesterday. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Ajit Jogi called on Kanshi Ram at Batra Hospital. With damp eyes Kanshi Ram reportedly told Jogi: "My mission is only half-accomplished. I am leaving it to you." The BSP leader had expressed his desire to meet Jogi when the Chief Minister's son Amit called on him two days ago. Sources close to Jogi said Kanshi Ram became quite emotional even as Jogi hoped that he (Kanshi Ram) would soon be back and see his mission accomplished. In Chhattisgarh, where the 11 per cent Dalit population is set to play a crucial role in 25 to 30 Assembly segments, Jogi has been carefully nursing this section right from the

time he became chief minister. A powerful Satnami community — comprising 80 per cent of the state's Scheduled Caste population — has always been on Jogi's agenda, besides Adivasis and OBCs as part of his social engineering drive. (Indian Express 23.9.03)

25th September

Dalit loved, married but was cast out (2)

Chennai, Sept. 24: In yet another case of a village panchayat indulging in abuse of human rights to "discipline the oppressed classes," a Dalit youth was beaten up and ostracised from his village after he loved and married an 'upper caste' Vanniar girl near the temple town of Thiruvannamalai, about 200 km south of here. According to a complaint filed by the bride Kanthi with the all-women's police station at Thiruvannamalai, the panchayat elders in her Vadugapooni village had tied up her Dalit father-in-law and assaulted him because his son Rajendran had secretly married her and the two eloped to Bangalore. The old man was threatened with dire consequences if his son did not bring the girl back. On hearing about it, she and her husband returned to the village only to face the wrath of the elders, one of them snatched away her mangalsutra and the panchayat declared the marriage null and void. That was not all. The old man was made to pay a fine of Rs 20,000 to the panchayat and made to prostrate before all its members as atonement for his sons crime of eloping with their upper-caste girl. The brides widowed mother Mallika was slapped a fine of Rs 40,000 for having encouraged the lovers, but when she refused to pay up, she was ostracised from the village. The family, which also included Kanthi's brother, was also threatened by the panchayatdars. "The panchayat elders also passed a diktat that none should work on our fields and we were forbidden from drawing water from the community well," Kanthi told the police. While she and her husband had gone underground under the care of some friends, the rest of the family, including her sister and brother, stayed with the grandmother in another village for over a month now, since the panchayatdars had threatened to kill them all. (Asian Age 25.9.03)

28th September

Use of word Harijan objected (2)

JAIPUR, SEPT. 27. A Dalit activist organisation, Centre for Dalit Human Rights (CDHR), has complained to the Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission on the frequent use of the word "Harijan" to refer to Dalits by the officials and newspapers in the State. The Centre has sought directives from the Commission to the Government of Rajasthan and the media through the Press Council of India asking them not to use the "derogatory word". The immediate provocation for CDHR to take up the issue was the news item published by a local Hindi daily yesterday on the activities of the Social Welfare Department of the State Government in connection with the Gandhi Jayanti week. "You will appreciate that 'Harijan' word has already been considered derogatory, insulting and against the dignity of millions of Dalits and oppressed people in India..." P.L.Mimroth, convener of CDHR wrote in a memorandum to Justice Sayed Sagir Ahmed, Chairperson of RSHRC. "...about two decades back the then Union Home Minister had issued a circular to all the Government Departments banning the use of 'Harijan' word in all official papers and functions," the memorandum noted. Mr. Mimroth, who was pained to come across the use of the word in the press and the media, pointed out that the Press Council of India in its various decisions had prohibited the use of the word in the newspapers and journals. It was a matter of regret that despite the ban the top officials of the Rajasthan Government as well as the newspapers were frequently using the word "hurting the dignity and feelings of millions of Dalits in the country," he said. (Hindu 28.9.03)

Notice on protection of Dalits (2)

CHANDIGARH, SEPT. 27. The Punjab and Haryana High Court today issued notice to the Haryana Government on a public interest litigation seeking directions to provide adequate security to 170 Dalit families who were threatened by upper castes Jats. A division bench of the Chief Justice Binod Kumar Roy and Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel issued the notice returnable by October 20. The respondents include the Home Secretary, State Police Chief and Kaithal district police chief. The petition, moved by World Human Rights Protection Council through its secretary advocate Shammi Khan, requested security for the dalit families of village Harsola of Kaithal

district so they could return to their homes. These Dalit families now camping outside the village for seven months have not been able to cultivate their land nor could send their children to school in the face of threats from the Jats. Media reports in this regard too have been annexed with the petition. It further alleged that the Jats had taken their lands and crops amid recurrent threats and harassment and pleaded for adequate compensation for the loss of their earning and crops. The matter was also taken up with the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which has also sought a report in the matter. (Hindu 28.9.03)

29th September

Ranveer Sena links: Joshi, Thakur to be served notice (2)

Patna, September 28: UNION MINISTERS Murli Manohar Joshi and CP. Thakur figure in the list of leaders, who will be served notice by the Amir Das judicial commission for their alleged nexus with the outlawed Ranveer Sena. The Amir Das commission was set up to probe links of politicians with the Ranveer Sena after the Laxmanpur-Bathe massacre in ehanadbad district in 1997. The Sena men had then killed 56 Dalits, including women and children. Besides, Joshi and Thakur, others on the list include leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Sushil Kumar Modi, Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee president Ram Jatan Sinha, Samata Party MP Arun Kumar, and former Union Minister Ram Laxhan Singh Yadav. Two Bihar ministers Shivanand Tiwari and Akhilesh Prasad Singh have also been charged with aiding the Ranveer Sena. The names of these politicians came up during cross-examination of witnesses over the last six years. (Hindustan Times 29.9.03)

30th September

Dalit woman forced to drink 'excreta' in Madurai village (2)

MADURAI, SEPTEMBER 29: A 38-YEAR-old Dalit woman was allegedly forced to drink excreta mixed with water in front of her husband and children after she spurned the advances of an upper caste villager in Keela Urappanur village in Thirumangalam block of Madurai district recently. Muthumari, wife of a labourer, Pitchai, told media-persons yesterday that a group of "high caste" people also splashed human excreta on her family. Muthukumari said she was on her way home on September 22 when Raju, who had been making advances, grabbed her hand. She managed to run home. When Pitchai learnt about the incident, he told her it was too late to go to the panchayat and that they should postpone it till the next day. But a group of 15 people barged into their house, Muthumari said. After abusing her, they allegedly tried to outrage her modesty. Raju's wife accused Muthumari of trying to insinuate her husband and allegedly threw a bucketful of human excreta. She reportedly forced Muthumari to drink excreta mixed with water. Sources said the accused are still roaming freely even after police complaints were filed. (Indian Express 30.9.03)

SC/ST panel member moves HC (2)

New Delhi, Sept. 29: AT A time when the Government is set to bifurcate the All India Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission (SC/ST commission) into two separate and more empowered commissions, infighting has brought the working of the constitutional body almost to a halt. The Commission, which is entrusted with judicial powers and hears cases of injustice on country's nearly one-third population is victim of a protracted fight between its youngest member Vijay Kumar Chowdhary and Chairman, Bijoy Sonkar Sastri. Chowdhary has now gone to court with his grievance that "the chairman is interfering" with his work. His petition has already been admitted by the Delhi High Court and notice has been issued to Sastri. While Chowdhary and Sastri's strained relations have created a sort of impasse in the Commission, sources say the fight is likely to throw up a lot of muck about the recent goings-on there. For past six months, no meeting of the Commission has been held which is against the rulebook that says a meeting once in two months is a must. The tension came out in the open in June when Sastri issued an order withdrawing Chowdhary's work and powers (like tours etc.). "I had to issue the orders when I received complaints against Chowdhary from governments of Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand about his inappropriate conduct," Sastri told The Indian Express. (Indian Express 30.9.03)

5th October

Thackeray woos Dalits (2)

MUMBAI, Oct. 4. — Virtually sounding the bugle for Shiv Sena's campaign for next year's crucial polls in Maharashtra, party supremo Bal Thackeray today strongly appealed to Dalits to strengthen the Bhim Shakti-Shiv Shakti movement, promising them that his party would not betray their interests. "You have tried several tie-ups before but this time give Bhim Shakti and Shiv Shakti a try and see the difference", Thackeray told the party's annual Dussehra rally here. Dalit leaders have always seen their interest first and indulged in money-making but Shiv Sena would adopt a different approach and strive for the Dalits, the Sena chief said. Thackeray said the Shiv Sena was concerned about uplift of Dalits who comprise nearly 11 per cent population in the state. Harping on Sena's "Me Mumbaikar campaign", Thackeray exhorted the local population in the city to be enterprising instead of being a passive worker. Today, people coming from outside the state were occupying prime positions because the local people were not enterprising, he said. (Statesman 5.10.03)

6th October

5000 Gujarat Dalits convert to Buddhism (2)

Ahmedabad, October 5: AROUND 5,000 Dalits and Adivasis from all over Gujarat converted to Buddhism on Sunday in protest against what the event organizers called the dual policy of upper caste Hindus 'to use these backward classes in riots against Muslims, but dumping them later'. The cock-a-snook move at the State Government's recently enacted anti-conversion law was organized by the Visva Bouddha Sangh (VBS) at an impressive rally in Vadodara where several monks chanted hymns from the scriptures. The conversion ceremony was earlier scheduled for June this year. It had to be cancelled at the eleventh hour as the district administration did not grant permission in view of the state's anti-conversion law, known as the 'Freedom of Religion Act'. The Narendra Modi Government passed the law soon after coming back to power. The programme was re-scheduled for this day as Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar too had converted thousands of Dalits to Buddhism on Dussehra Day in 1956, in protest against the discrimination by the upper caste Hindus, the organisers said. Though the gathering at Sunday's conversion rally was much less than the one lakh claimed by the organizers earlier, the very fact that nearly 5,000 Dalits embraced Buddhism despite the state's anti-conversion law is an embarrassment for the BJP government. (Hindustan Times 6.10.03)

9th October

BJP's Dalit politics upsets Parivar plans (2)

New Delhi, October 8: THE SANGH Parivar's chariot appears to have got stuck in the caste quagmire of the Hindi heartland. The failure of its ambitious bid at a social accord with the Dalits in UP is bound to find resonance in Rajasthan, MP, Chhattisgarh and Delhi assembly polls. The BSP's Mayawati is not the only Dalit leader who has had problems with the BJP. Lok Janshakti's Ram Vilas Paswan had walked out of the NDA over the Gujarat issue, much before the UP entente collapsed. These rather disconcerting images — and the post-Tehelka isolation of former BJP chief Bangaru Laxman — seem to have influenced RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan's Vijayadashami address. But it remains to be seen whether his arguments to identify the temple movement with the Dalits and Vanavasis would cut ice with Rajasthan, MP and Chhattisgarh electorate. The Sangh's gameplan to charge the political atmosphere with the temple slogan seems to be in a shambles. In the run-up to the assembly polls, its strategy reportedly was to capitalise on a clutch of court cases related to Ayodhya, Graham Staines' murder and the ASI's findings. But la affaire M.M. Joshi and the VHP's estrangement from the BJP have upset the plan. The focus now is on the BJP's inability to strike a social alliance with the Dalits. (Hindustan Times 9.10.03)

15th October

Dalits renounce Hinduism to embrace Buddhism (2)

Bangalore, Oct. 14 : Thousands of Dalits embraced Buddhism here on Tuesday to commemorate the 47th anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's initiation into the Buddhist faith. Though the exact number of those who converted could not be ascertained, the organisers claimed that more

than 20,000 people took pledge during the Buddha Dhamma Dheeksha programme. The programme, conducted by Buddha 'Dhamma initiation state organisation, was attended by dalits from different parts of Karnataka who took the 22-point oath that Dr Ambedkar had administered at the initiation ceremony at Nagpur in 1956 to embrace Buddhism. In their oath, which was administered by Dharmaguru Poojya Vgabte Bodhidhamma and Manorakshita Bhante, they renounced Hinduism and said they firmly believe that dhamma of Budha is the only true religion. The number of conversions fell much short of the claims of the organisers who had projected that 50,000 dalits would embrace Buddhism. However, working president of the Buddha Dhamma initiation state organisation, R.A. Audi claimed that more than 20,000 people had taken the oath. Speakers at the function claimed dalits were suffering because of the caste hierarchy in Hinduism and the conversion programme was a step towards restoring their self-respect. Meanwhile the Karnataka chapter of the All-India Christian Council expressed its complete solidarity with the dalits who converted to Buddhism in Bangalore. (Asian Age 15.10.03)

16th October

Year after Jhajjar lynching, accused roaming freely (2)

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 15 : A YEAR ago, five Dalits were lynched in Jhajjar. Today, when one of the victims' 82-year-old father came up to former PM I.K. Gujral and said "they were waiting for justice", he did not know where to look. "I have been a PM, but when they say this, I don't have the courage to look them in the eye. They hold the mirror of truth to me and I am embarrassed," said Gujral at a meeting organised by Dalit activist Udit Raj's Indian Justice Party. The reason for Gujral's embarrassment was the fact that even after a year, all the accused are out on bail. The victims' families, who had come to Delhi for the meeting said they had given up hope. "We are scared to approach anyone, they (accused) have godfathers right at the top, said Ratan Singh father of 23 year old Virender who was killed. The topic of discussion was 'Dalit versus cow'. On October 15 last year, Virender and his friends Kailash, Dayachand, Totaram and Raju were en route to Karnal with a cow carcass. They were stopped outside the police station at Dulina and word spread that they had "slaughtered and were skinning a cow". A mob gathered and under the nose of police, they were beaten to death. Though the victims' kin have been given Rs 5 lakh in compensation and their families given Oass IV jobs, they say they cannot rest in peace till they see the accused behind bars. (Indian Express 16.10.03)

19th October

Dalits seek equal rights (2)

JAIPUR, OCT. 18. Dalit organisations of Rajasthan have released a 20-point agenda and demanded its inclusion in the manifestoes of all political parties for the forthcoming Assembly elections, saying it would provide them with an opportunity to prove their commitment to the cause of welfare of Dalits. The convenor of the Centre for Dalit Human Rights (CDHR), P.L. Mimroth, releasing the agenda here today, said no Government in the State had treated the Dalit issues with the seriousness they deserved. "Despite forming 30 per cent of the State's population, Dalits have been the victims of the worst forms of injustice, persecution and exploitation since independence," he lamented. The Dalit organisations -- including CDHR, Dalit Jan Samajik Nyay Samiti, Dr. Ambedkar Nyay Sangharsh Mahasangh and the SC/ST Advocates' Association — have called upon the ruling Congress (I), Opposition BJP and others to declare publicly their stand on the atrocities against Dalits and whether they wished to protect Dalits. Mr. Mimroth said the intention of various parties would be revealed by the way the agenda is incorporated in their manifestoes. The agenda has been forwarded to the State units of Congress (I), BJP, CPI (M), CPI (ML), Samajwadi Party, Indian National Lok Dal, Nationalist Congress Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal, Janata Dal (Secular) and Bahujan Samaj Party. The principal issue to which the attention of all political parties has been drawn is the violation of Dalits' right to equality by encroachments on their land and denial of remedies available under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. "The upper caste people have illegally occupied huge tracts of land after illegally evicting Dalits," Mr. Mimroth said. (Hindu 19.10.03)

Bihar Dalits fight losing battle in temples (2)

DHOBDIHA (NALANDA), OCTOBER 19: WHEN it came to laying the foundation stone in 1989

for the controversial Ram temple at Ayodhya, the BJP had picked a Dalit from Bihar, Kameshwar Chaupal, to do the honours. But even as the BJP again raises the pitch on the issue ahead of polls, Dalits are excluded from Hindu rituals in most parts of Bihar. In almost all village temples in the state, scheduled castes are barred, often violently. Recently, Ramal Ram, a Dalit, was shot dead after his son Khelaw Ram insisted on offering Durga Puja on October 4 in Baheri village of Kaimur district. Changing the mindset of the people is a tall order. We are often helpless, admits chaupal, a BJP state general secretary and a legislator now. In several other villages across the state, where temple entry for Dalits has become a controversy in the past five years, tension dropped only after Dalits withdrew their claims. Six years ago in Nalanda's Dhob Diha village, a few Dalit boys claimed their right to worship in the village's Devi Sthan, the shrine of the village deity who is worshipped on occasions like marriage or festivals. Traditionally, Dalits were allowed to worship without touching or stepping inside the shrine. After clashes, the administration intervened and declared that the Dalits could enter the shrine. But nothing has changed in the village. The police can protect us for one day. Once they are gone what will we do? Asks Tetri Devi. (Indian Express 20.10.03)

22nd October

A symbol of continuing untouchability (2)

MADURAI, OCT. 21. Even as the Madurai district administration today claimed that it had not yet received the resignation sent by K. Azhagar, president of the Pappapatti panchayat reserved for Scheduled Castes, Opposition parties and human rights outfits accused the Government of "failing to stand up to the challenge from the forces, which had been resisting Dalit empowerment in the region." The Collector, B. Chandra Mohan, said here, "I may get it (resignation) in course of time." Reacting to the development, the People's Watch-Tamil Nadu said Pappapatti had become a "symbol of continuing untouchability, throwing Article 17 (abolition of untouchability) of the Constitution to the winds." Its executive director, Henri Tiphagne, accused the State Government of being "responsible for the height of untouchability once again expressed through the resignation of Mr. Azhagar," who claimed that he quit the post shortly after he was sworn in yesterday. "The core objective of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution has not been met in Pappapatti since 1996," Mr. Tiphagne said. (Hindu 22.10.03)

2nd Nov.

SC/ST riot victims being cold shouldered (2)

Ahmedabad, Nov. 1: "State government by its lackadaisical approach has failed to provide compensation to victims of communal riots especially those belonging to backward classes," said Narayan Singh Keshari, member of National Commission for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, Government of India. Concluding his three-day visit to the city he shared, his views on the overall situation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the state.

Speaking about rehabilitation of backward classes in the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam project, he said, "They should be provided compensation so that they can re-establish themselves at a new place. Commenting on the rehabilitation of the earthquake affected, he said, there was hue and cry about rehabilitation after earthquake and communal riots but there was no mention of SCs and STs. Even after one and half years after the riots, no financial help has been provided for the victims of backward class. He remarked that scheduled castes and scheduled tribes comprise nearly 30 crore out of the population.

He also stated despite reservations to backward classes, many class III and class IV grade vacancies are lying empty. (Asian Age 2.11.03)

Dalit death heat on cops (2)

Patna: The bogey of Dalit politics has been resurrected with Lok Janshakti Party leader Ram Vilas Paswan threatening to launch an agitation if immediate action is not taken against police officials allegedly responsible for the death of a 37-year-old mechanic. Om Prakash alias K.B. Paswan, an electrical mechanic, was found dead in a marsh in Rukanpura last Wednesday reportedly with bruises on his body. The resident of Danapur was missing since Tuesday evening, according to family members. Prakash was working in houses in Rukanpura, under Dan-

apur police station, on Tuesday, according to Baswani Devi, a relative. Around 8 pm, he had gone to a roadside tea stall near which a group of residents had put up a roadblock to collect money for chhat puja. A team of police officers led by Promod Kumar the Inspector of the police station soon reached the area and resorted to lathicharge to disperse the group. When we heard about the police action we began to search for Prakash. We also went to the police station to look for him when he had not returned till late at night. But the police said they were not aware of any body called Prakash, said Baswani Devi. Next day, Prakash's body was found in a low lying area about 3 km from the place of the lathicharge.

10TH Nov.

Dalit killings to echo in UP Budget Session (2)

Lucknow, Nov. 9: Dalit killings and atrocities on minorities in Uttar Pradesh will find a resounding echo in the budget session of the UP Assembly that begins here from Monday.

The Bahujan Samaj Party is busy collecting details of dalit killings that have taken place in the state during the past two months and will use it as a weapon to hit out at the Mulayam Singh Yadav government. "Dalits have been at the receiving end in this government. Whether it is Agra or Unnao, the dalits have suffered the most and we will definitely demand an explanation from the government in the Assembly on this issue," BSP, leader Swami Prasad Maurya told The Asian Age on Sunday. In Unnao district — where seven dalits were burnt alive on Wednesday night — two more dalits were shot dead on Saturday night. The reason, once again, was a stray goat that ventured into the fields of the Thakurs. The Thakur reportedly abused the dalits for not keeping their goats tied and the dalits retaliated by killing one of the Thakurs. The Thakurs then shot dead two dalits to avenge the death of their kin. "The straying of goats is simply an excuse to target dalits in this regime. One goat cannot be the reason for so many killings. (Asian Age 10.11.03)

13th Nov.

Unnao killings: doubts over police version (2)

NEW DELHI, NOV 12. An independent fact-finding team has said that police misrepresented the burning to death of seven people, including three children, in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh on November 5 as a neighbourhood feud with caste overtones. A preliminary report of the team, comprising university teachers, lawyers, trade unionists and political activists, says that the attack was designed to terrorise the Scheduled Caste Kanjar community, to which the seven belonged, from whom they have been trying to wrest the land on which they are settled. On November 5, the Uttar Pradesh police reported the murders in village Dostpur Shivli, in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district, as a result of a feud between neighbours. The police said that a dispute caused by some goats belonging to the family of Gangaram Kanjar straying on to the property of Ramnath Pasi had escalated leading to the murders. The fact-finding team found that it was not so simple. Those who attacked Gangaram Kanjar's family included different caste groups, including upper caste Thakurs. Both the upper caste landlords of the village and the village pradhan Mulai Pasi had an interest in the land on which Kanjar's live. The team found that the local police failed to act in time and prevent the murders although "it had full knowledge both of the initial dispute regarding the goat and the sentiments of the village rich against the Kanjar settlement". The fact-finding team, which visited Oostpur Shivli on November 9, also raised doubts about the facts as recorded by the police in the FIR. The goat incident occurred around 3 pm. Villagers had told the media that the burning of the house, in which Gangaram and six of his family were killed, occurred two hours after this. (Hindu 13.11.03)

Now horses in Bihar divided on caste lines (2)

Patna: As if dividing humans along caste lines wasn't enough, now even horses have been given castes in Bihar — with the "Brahmin horses" predictably being the fairest ones. Horse traders at the Senepur cattle fair in Bihar have separated their animals along lines of colour, size and behaviour to classify them under various castes. An official in charge of the fair said: "The horses are identified just like humans — as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras." White horses with wide foreheads are considered Brahmins, while brown horses blessed with keen ears and broad chests are the Kshatriyas. The Vaishyas are maroon in colour with thin legs and long

necks. The Shudra horses are dark brown and generally considered to be of inferior quality, if a horse trader is to be believed. "We decide the caste of a horse after a thorough checkup of its , colour, size, facial cut and behaviour," said horse trader Ramadhar Singh. The first rule for identifying the horse's caste is colour, followed by size. (Pioneer 13.11.03)

20th Nov.

Lynching of Dalits: Haryana pays Rs. 5 lakhs compensation (2)

NEW DELHI, NOV. 19. Following the intervention of the National Human Rights Commission in the case of the lynching of five Dalits at Jhajjar, the Haryana Government has paid a compensation of Rs. 5 lakhs each to the families of the deceased and provided employment to a dependent of each family. In addition, a punishment of stoppage of two increments permanently to 11 police personnel had been ordered and disciplinary enquiry in respect of five other police officers had been initiated. The NHRC has asked the Haryana Government to indicate the result of the enquiry against the five officers. The Commission took suo motu cognizance of a newspaper report which said: "five Dalits, all in their twenties, were beaten to death on October 15, 2002 and two of them burnt alive." The victims were reported to have been dragged out of a police post where they had taken refuge and lynched in the presence of the City Magistrate, the Deputy Superintendent of Police of Jhajjar and Bhadurgarh, the Block Development Officer and at least 50 policemen. (Hindu 20.11.03)

1st Dec.

Dalit accuses doctor of 'ill-treatment' (2)

Baroda, Nov. 30: A dalit has alleged harassment by doctors at the Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad General hospital at Baroda. Pravin Vaghela, 35, in a complaint at the Raopura police on November 27 stated he was harassed because he was found to be a "dalit". Pravin, resident of Manjalpura area, said the incident occurred after he got himself admitted to the hospital as he had some eye problem and had approached the ophthalmology unit at SSG. After preliminary examination by associate professor Geeta Gandhi his case was handed over to one junior doctor who reportedly did not pay attention to Mr Vaghela. When he complained, the doctor asked his name and inquired about his caste. After he became aware that he was from the lower caste, the doctor hurled abuses and slapped him. When he complained to Dr Gandhi, she too deemed it fit to support the junior doctor. The complainant, subsequently approached Raopura police and wanted to file a case under atrocity on Harijans Act. However, the police did not take any action till Saturday evening until Mr Vaghela, the president of Bharatiya Dalit Panthers, approached the Baroda commissioner of police Sudhir Sinha. (Asian Age 1.12.03)

8th Dec.

Dalit leader suffocated to death: Autopsy (2)

Ghaziabad: The autopsy conducted on 32-year- old Dalit leader Bir Singh, who died in the custody of the Dhaulana police on Saturday, indicates that he died of asphyxiation and not of a heart attack as suggested by the police. Official medical sources said that Bir Singh had not died of a heart attack or other natural causes. An official said that Singh's body also had several injuries on his head, face, arms and hands. As reported earlier, Bir Singh and Babloo, both from Dehra, had been arrested on Friday night as the police feared "breach of peace". After Singh died in custody on Friday evening, a mob of Dehra residents stoned the police station. Additional superintendent of police V K Shekhar has been ordered to conduct an inquiry into the case. Until late on Sunday evening, no report had been filed, either by or against the police. (Times of India 8.12.03)

10th Dec.

Resurgent Dalits draw the line at BPL (2)

Madumar: ' THAKURS ARE angry with him as he has seen through their "manipulations" in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) Census in his village and Dalits are after his blood because he has not been able to put a stop, to it. Sarpanch Kashiram, therefore, has little choice. He spends most of his time outside the village. However, Kashiram, the Sarpanch of Madumar village in

Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh, is not a renegade. He insists on having re-identification of BPL households in his Panchayat. He is firm in his efforts to persuade the block and district officials to go in for a fresh survey. So far he has not received a positive response. The BPL Census is conducted at the beginning of each five-year plan, with the objective of targeting the identified poor households under various rural development programmes. The latest Census, being done for the Tenth Plan, is based on 13 scorable socio-economic parameters for assessing the poverty level of each rural household. The score-based ranking of all households in a Panchayat is to be used for classification into poor and non-poor. "Government officials carried out the identification of BPL households without even consulting me. The Thakurs influenced them and succeeded in manipulating the ranking of households in the village on the poverty scale. When the list was read out in the Gram Sabha meeting, it became obvious that most of the poorest households were not given their due ranking while quite a number of well-to-do families were shown as deprived, says Kashiram. (Pioneer 10.12.03)

15th Dec.

Dalits seek quota in private sector (2)

NEW DELHI, DEC. 15. A large number of activists of All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations today participated in a rally at the Ramlila Ground here to raise their voice against globalisation and to seek reservation for Dalits in the private sector. Chanting slogans like "the Government which will not talk about reservation will no longer be there" and "the assets of the country have been built by peoples' taxes, Government cannot sell", the rallyists decried the policy of globalisation and privatisation stating the farmers were the worst affected by them as they were dictated by international organisations like the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Similarly, the rally said the new labour policy was dictated by international agencies and issues such as voluntary retirement scheme, downsizing of government departments and filling up of backlog vacancies were a by-product of this policy. Addressing the gathering the national chairman of the Confederation, Udit Raj, called for reservation for Dalits in private sector and higher judiciary, land reforms, compulsory and equal education, withdrawal of remaining anti-reservation orders, enactment of Reservation Act and placing it in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, time-bound promotions for the Safai Karamcharis, reservation in government contracts and recognition to caste certificate of one State in others as well. (Hindu 15.12.03)

16th Dec.

These kids told: you are Dalit, go eat elsewhere (2)

CHOTIIA, DECEMBER 15: At least seven Dalit teachers have been transferred in Gujarat's Surendranagar district for objecting to segregation of upper and lower caste students during mid-day meals in some schools. Now upper-caste parents in other villages are using the threat of transfer to keep Dalit teachers from opposing the practice. During training we are taught to treat every student the same irrespective of caste or religion, but here it is not so," said Girishbhai Wadher, a Dalit headmaster who was transferred from the primary school in Bhojpari village to one in Mehindad, and then to one in Kafeera. Wadher, joined service three years ago, said the discrimination was not so rampant or visible when he joined three years ago. "In August some upper-caste parents in Bhojpari and Bhojpara villages asked the mid-day meals in-charge to make Dalit students sit Separately," he said. (Indian Express 16.12.03)

19th Dec.

Minister on why no quota for Dalit converts (2)

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18. The Government today told the Lok Sabha that reservation had not been extended to "Dalit Muslims" and "Dalit Christians" till date for fear of generating a controversy in and outside the country even as some members from the ruling benches sought to associate themselves with the Opposition-sponsored calling-attention motion favouring their inclusion in the list of Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes much to the chagrin of the BJP MPs. Responding to the motion, the Social Justice and Empowerment Minister, Satya Narayan Jatiya, took shelter under the observations of the Registrar General of India and the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which had looked into the issue

of inclusion of the Scheduled Castes who had converted to Islam and Christianity, and found that extension of reservation to "Dalit Muslims" and "Dalit Christians" was not justifiable. In the case of the Scheduled Castes, who had converted to Islam, the RGI had opined that it would give rise to a serious controversy and also "discontentment among Muslims if their community is recognised on a par with those of Hindu castes on the ground of backwardness arising due to the traditional practice of untouchability." (Hindu 19.12.030)

Wife was honest sarpanch so Dalit paid with his life (2)

KAMREJ, DECEMBER 18: FOR the second time in a week, Gujarat is in the news for atrocities on Dalits. If in Surendranagar, seven Dalit teachers were transferred because they objected to segregation of upper and lower caste students during mid-day meals in schools, in Bhavnagar the harassed husband of Kamrej's first Dalit Sarpanch Gangaben Maru has allegedly committed suicide because he couldn't get her to quit her post: she had told her upper-caste rivals she would never give in to their demands for a cut in government grants. Over the last five months, 55-year-old Gangaben's family had known nothing except threats, abuse and harassment. She was not even allowed to enter the Panchayat office. The man responsible, Haresh Sanga, is vice-president of the Bhavnagar taluka pan-chayat and wields considerable clout. When things got worse, Gangaben sought police protection. But it was too late: her husband's body was found on the village outskirts. (Indian Exp. 19.12.03)

21st Dec.

Dalit Christians demand justified (2)

CHENNAI, DEC. 20. The All-India Christian People's Forum has reiterated its demand to the BJP-led Government for providing equal status to Christian Dalits, on a par with Hindu, Sikh and neo Buddhist Dalits, for reservation in education and job opportunities. It also urged the Centre not "to misrepresent obvious facts and mislead Parliament, the Indian public and the international Christian community," but to concede the just demand of the Christian Dalits to be included in the Scheduled Castes list. Taking objection to the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Sathyanarayan Jatia's statement on the Christian Dalit issue, the AICPF general-secretary, Brindavan C. Moses, said the Minister was taking shelter under the observation made by the Registrar-General of India that "stratification among Christians on the basis of caste" could turn into an international controversy, as it would be construed as if India was imposing its caste system in Christian Hierarchical stratification among Indian Christians on the caste basis began a long time ago and it was well entrenched here. Christian Dalits formed more than 60 per cent of the Indian Christian population as people had embraced the faith primarily as a form of social protest against exploitation, oppression and the practice of untouchability in Hindu society, he said. (Hindu 21.12.03)

23rd Dec.

Two Dalits killed in Maya turf for theft (2)

MEERUT, DECEMBER 22: THERE is mounting tension in former Uttar Pradesh CM Mayawati's constituency Harora following the alleged killing of two Dalit youths by members of the Thakur community yesterday. Police have arrested Karan Singh, the main accused in the case, and a hunt is on to trace the other culprits, police said today. Security has been beefed up and PAC personnel have been rushed to the area, the police added. The youths, Vikas alias Vikka and Munesh, both 22 years old and residents of Santagarh, were picked up by some Thakurs from a cricket playground yesterday and beaten up for stealing a water pump and motor, sources said. According to villagers, Karan Singh of Hasanpur came with some persons on three motorcycles to the playground and took the youths away on some pretext. Later, the two were severely beaten up, said SSP Sunil Gupta. Police rushed to the site and the youths were taken to hospital. But Vikas died on the way and Munesh died in hospital, police said. The bodies were created today amid security. (Indian Express 23.12.003)

Dalits still being denied human rights (2)

JAIPUR, DEC. 22. A Dalit activist organisation, the Centre for Dalit Human Rights (CDHR), has asked the Rajas-than government to ensure social and economic justice to the Scheduled

Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women in the State. The administrative machinery needed sensitisation in the wake of growing communal and casteist feelings, it said. The convener of the CDHR core group, P.L. Mimroth, said here today that instances of caste-based discrimination had been on the increase in Rajasthan and untouchability was being perpetuated in several parts of the State in the name of 'tradition'. The basic human rights were being denied to the Dalits by the dominant caste groups, especially in the rural areas, he said. In some of the panchayats, SCs, STs and Dalit women were not being allowed to exercise their rights freely and were being prevented from making use of the benefits and concessions due to them, Mr. Mimroth complained. The SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocity) Act 1989 and the Rules 1995 were not implemented sincerely, he charged. It is being pointed out that the land allotted or assigned to the SCs and STs were not fully under the occupation or cultivation of the beneficiaries. "We demand a rightful and proportionate share of land, total wealth and capital in Rajasthan for Dalits, tribals and women. These communities should have equitable access to means of livelihood through land or through other means of production and economic empowerment," Mr. Mimroth pointed out. (Hindu 23.12.03)

30th Dec.

SCs, STs better off in urban areas, says study (2)

NEW DELHI, DEC. 29. A study by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has found that in terms of economic empowerment, the so-called "disadvantaged" groups of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes were relatively better off in the urban areas than in the rural ones. According to the study, on an average, the income of an urban ST household was 2.22 times that of a rural ST household and it was 1.99 times higher in case of SC urban households as compared to the rural ones. The income of all "other" households in urban areas belonging to the higher castes was also 1.99 times the average income of their rural counterparts. The study found that the ST households, on an average, earned higher incomes than SC households in both rural and urban areas. The rate of savings of an ST household in urban areas was the highest compared to all other castes. While the rate of savings in urban areas among households belonging to SCs and "other" castes was more or less the same, the income of households belonging to SCs, on average, was lower by 28 per cent of households belonging to the higher castes. "This shows that this disadvantaged group in urban areas makes extra efforts to save for the uncertain future by curtailing expenditure," the NCAER has said. Economists with the Council feel that the reservation policies, along with better infrastructural facilities, in the urban areas probably contributed to an improvement in the general well being of the SC and ST households. (Hindu 30.12.03)