

DALIT ATROCITIES IN INDIA - 2004

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12th Jan

SC, ST to get free gas connections (2)

RAIPUR, JAN. 11. Amidst talks of an early Lok Sabha election, the BJP Government in Chhattisgarh has decided to distribute 50,000 gas connection free of cost, upgrade over 5000 primary schools and provide insurance cover to 43 lakh students of the State. After several rounds of deliberations with all the departments, including Ministers and secretaries, the Government has decided to provide free gas connections to 50,000 SC and ST families, living below poverty line, official sources told PTI here today. Considering their health and hygienic condition, in the next 100 days, the 50,000 families would be provided with environment-friendly and smokeless gas stoves through the rural development department, they said.

Similarly, the Chief Minister has also directed officials to speed up the work to provide insurance cover against accident to about 43 lakh school and college going students of the State by meeting the expenditure from its exchequer, they said. Steps are also being taken to upgrade 4,500 education guarantee schools as primary schools and about 550 primary schools to middle schools for which discussion had also been held with the Finance Ministry for managing the budgetary burden, they said. (Hindu 12.1.04)

Victims of honour killings recall horror (2)

NEW DELHI, JAN. 11. On November 25 last year, 22-year-old Jasbeer -- the only earning member of his family -- was brutally murdered after his hands were chopped off and legs cut by swords and other sharp-edge weapons by a group of four angry Rajputs in broad daylight in a local market of Hoshiarpur district of Punjab. His fault -hailing from the Jat community, Jasbeer had dared to marry his neighbour Geeta, a Rajput girl, some two months ago.

"The marriage was not only opposed by our parents, but by the Rajput community as a whole who were angry that I had married someone who they termed was from an inferior community. They had openly announced a cash award of Rs. 50,000 to anyone who would chop Jasbeer's hand," said Geeta, who is yet to recover from the shock of her life. An eyewitness to the cruel murder along with her mother-in-law, Kashmiri Kaur, 65, a brave Geeta was in Delhi to narrate the tale of horror at a daylong Convention Against Honour Killings/ Violence organised by the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA). "As I am one of the eye-witnesses, I am receiving threatening calls from the fourth killer who is absconding. The other three have been arrested," she said. Though provided two armed policemen by Punjab Police, Geeta said: "My life is in danger. The members of my Rajput community can kill me anytime." (Hindu 12.1.04)

14th Jan

Dalits barred entry into Nathdwara temple (2)

JAIPUR, JAN. 13. Dalits participating in a national Dalit Swadhikar rally that crossed Rajasthan the other day were denied entry into the famous Shrinath temple in Nathdwara, despite a 15-year-old judgment of the Rajasthan High Court directing the State Government to ensure unhindered access for Dalits to the temple. The rally, organised by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, started from four different locations in the country last month and would culminate in Mumbai on January 15 at the World Social Forum venue. The northern segment, starting from New Delhi, arrived in Nathdwara after covering 16 districts in Rajasthan on January 2, when the participants tried to enter the Shrinath temple for worship. The convenor of the

Centre for Dalit Human Rights, P.L. Mimroth, who accompanied the rallyists, told reporters here today that hundreds of people assembled in the town and stopped the rally -- comprising 35 Dalit activists -- about 2 km from the temple and used abusive and threatening language against them. The crowd comprised local residents belonging to the so-called upper castes and was determined not to allow Dalits into the temple, considered the second richest in the country. Though the rallyists could have visited the temple without being noticed, the people recognised their caste status after spotting a local Dalit, Kishan Lal, among them. "They were the normal next door people whom we regularly meet in our daily life. But when it came to the temple, they were adamant on not allowing us inside so as to protect the sanctity of their religion," Mr. Mimroth said, adding that Dalits had always been exploited for selfish interests of upper castes but never treated equally. (Hindu 14.1.04)

15th Jan

Concern over 'atrocities' against Dalits (2)

LONDON, JAN. 14. Several Labour MPs have jointly tabled a motion in the Commons voicing concern over what they have called "organised" atrocities against Dalits in India, and other parts of South Asia. The motion, the second of its kind in recent months, also calls upon the British Home Office to monitor the activities of U.K.-based "extremist" Hindutva organisations which have been accused of supporting divisive campaigns in India. The MPs urge the British Government to "re-evaluate" its foreign aid agreements and development programmes on the basis of their effect on Dalit communities. The "early day motion," signed by 11 MPs including the left-wing MP, Jeremy Corbyn, who has extensive contacts with human rights groups in India, follows allegations of misuse of charitable donations by some U.K.-based right-wing Hindutva groups. Britain's charities commission is investigating accusations that they have been funding anti-minorities' campaigns in India. The allegations have been strongly denied by these groups. The motion says: "This deplores continues and organised atrocities against Dalits in South Asia, especially in India; calls upon the Home Office to monitor the activities of extremist Hindutva organisations operating in the United Kingdom to ensure that they are not supporting atrocities against Dalits in India...". (Hindu 15.1.04)

30th Jan

Backward Classes Commission submits report (2)

NEW DELHI, JAN. 29. The National Commission for Backward Classes has submitted its report on the revision of the income criteria for determining the creamy layer among the Other Backward Classes to the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister, Satyanarayan Jatiya. The chairperson of the Commission, Justice Ram Surat Singh, presented the report. There had been a demand to increase the basic income criteria to Rs. 5 lakhs a year from the present Rs. 1 lakh but it is believed that the Commission has recommended fixing of this gross annual income at Rs. 3 lakhs. The Government is keen on accepting the recommendations before the Lok Sabha elections are announced. Talking to reporters at the media workshop, the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Vankaiah Naidu, said that his party was in favour of an upward revision of the criteria for the creamy layer among the OBCs. The Commission, constituted in October last year to review the income criteria for excluding the creamy layer among the OBCs, had been asked to submit its report within three months. It had been told to evolve a formula for periodic revision of the criteria and the income for determining the creamy layer. It had also been directed to advise the Government on, among other things, whether the creamy layer criteria would apply to the offsprings of persons belonging to the excluded categories and whether the income or exclusion should constitute only from salaries or from agricultural land or both. Another term of reference for the Commission had been to consider how income from sources other than salary or agricultural land was to be dealt with. (The Hindu 30.1.04)

Cheated Dalit kills self (2)

JAIPUR, Jan. 31. -- A Dalit has committed suicide, setting himself on fire after being allegedly cheated of government grants. Police said Bajrang Dal -Meghwal (40), a resident of Bedia village in Kota district, was sanctioned Rs 20,000 under Indira Aawas Yojna last year. But the husband

of village sarpanch, her deputy and panchayat secretary took Rs 2,000 from him as bribe to release the first installment, Rs 10,000, in December. Before the second installment, they forced him to sign the receipt of a signed Cheque, pocketing the money themselves. A case was registered under SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. (Statesman 1.2.04)

Dalits to rally against Mahajan's remarks (2)

New Delhi: CRITICISING THE Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) general secretary Pramod Mahajan's remarks against Priyanka Gandhi Vadhera and Rahul Gandhi, AICC Secretary and Dalit leader, MLA Jaikishen said that the Dalit communities and the backward class people will hold a protest march from the party headquarters' to the Prime Minister's residence, on February 2. Mr Mahajan had stated that the post of Prime Minister should be occupied by a person of 100 per cent Indian origin. Mr Jaikishen said Mr Mahajan's remark about Ms Priyanka and Rahul were totally against the democratic and constitutional norms and could not be silently tolerated by the Congress and its supporters. According to him, more than a dozen Dalit organisations like the Valmiki Veer Sena, the Ambedkar Veer Sena, the Kabir Jan Kalyan Manch, the Parjapati Mahasabha and other organisations associated with the congress will take part in the march. Mr. Jaiprissheh also welcomed the decision of Ms Priyanka Vadhera and Rahul Gndhi join the Congress party. (Pioneer 21.1.04)

Income limit for 'creamy layer' raised (2)

New Delhi Feb 4: The Centre today decided to more than double the income ceiling for determining the 'creamy layer' among the Other backward Classes (OBCs) from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs, 2.5 lakhs a year. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Union Cabinet here today. Announcing the decision, the Government spokesperson said it was in line with the recommendations of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC). The Cabinet also accepted the panel's recommendation that it be entrusted with the task of periodic revision of the income criteria in future too, considering at it had the expertise and experience in matters relating to the OBCs. The Chairperson of the NCBC, Justice Ram Surat Singh, had submitted the recommendations to the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Satyananarayan Jatiya, a week ago. The panel had been asked in October last year to look into the issue of revising the income criteria following demands from a section of the OBCs to increase it, on the ground that the existing limit of Rs. 1 lakh was too low. In addition, it was asked to evolve a formula for periodic revision of the income criteria. (The Hindu 5.2.04)

Dalits call Mahapanchayat against ashram demolition (2)

Meerut: ANGRY OVER the, demolition of Ravidas Ashram, angry Dalits called a Mahapanchayat to protest against this decision of the Meerut district administration.

The Dalit community had been sitting on a dharna since January 19 after the district administration demolished Ravidas Ashram in Hastinapur which was constructed on the land belonging to the Forest Department. The police had also arrested 33 people from there but no political leader reached there to lend their support. On the day of the Mahapanchayat, crowds started gathering early in the morning and police was deployed all around. Contrary to the earlier scenario, many political leaders thronged the venue to convince the gathering of its support. Contrary to the the organiser's demand, the politicians did not refrain from politicising the event. They blamed each other for ignoring the Dalit community. Dalit leaders of all the political parties including MLA Ranvir Rana of Lok dal, MLC Ramchandra Balmiki of BJP, Vinod Harit of BSP and state minister Prabhu Dayal Balmiki and Mukesh Sidharth of SP were present at the venue. The result was that the public forced the leaders to get down from the stage. They demanded that the leaders should forget their political differences. Instead of pursuing their own interests, they should work together in convincing the district administration to give clearance to construct Ravidas Ashram at its original place. (Pioneer 5.2.04)

UP's dalit women do a Mirch Masala (2)

Lucknow: In a real life re-enactment of the fiery courage displayed by Smita Patil in Mirch Masala, thousands of Dalit women of Bhaunri village in Chitrakoot kept the powerful upper caste village pradhan and his goons at bay, with sacks of mirchi powder. A cold night of February 18, 2001,

changed the caste and gender dynamics of this hitherto peaceful village. Incensed by the temerity of the lower caste dalits in voting for the opposite party, the village pradhan and his lackeys went on the rampage fracturing heads and breaking the bones of several villagers, including women. When a local raised his voice against these atrocities he was shot dead in broad daylight. The women decided they would not remain mute witnesses. Three days later, nearly 1,000 villagers—90 per cent women—took out a demonstration. An FIR was then registered. What followed was a prolonged struggle. They kept red chilli powder in homes for self defence. Finally, the deadly quartet, pradhan and four others, were arrested. What is heartening is that the exclusionist caste configurations that was a way of life in Bhaunri have been transcended by these women. (Times of India 7.2.04)

Dalits got free land, but rich farmers chased them away (2)

Shivrajpur (Chhatarpur, MP) THE GOVERNMENT had recently made an effort to distribute land to Dalits in rural areas of Madhya Pradesh. However, this has not brought an end to their woes. They now face a new battle against rich farmers. Achhelal Chamar was thrilled. The Government was giving him two acres of land free of cost. A little later he was even more grateful to know that he would also be given wages — in the form of foodgrains — for working on his own field. The field, he thought, would rid him of all his sufferings. He was so ecstatic that he did not even mind Rs 6,000 from a money lender to meet the "demands" of Patwari and other local officials who would then expedite the process of transforming him from a landless labourer to a proud land owner. In August 2000, Achhelal, a scheduled caste resident of Shivrajpur village in Chhatarpur district, got the patta (ownership deed) of two acres of land. This moment of joy was soon replaced by the pressin" sense of his responsibility towards the land. The ploughing began and the seeds of rai were sown. But the saplings had to face the scorching heat of summer. Achhelal realised that it was not enough to have the land. He had to dig a well as well. "I talked to the other four har-ijans in the village who had also been given patta in the same area. We all decided to face the challenge together and dig a well that would provide irrigation for our fields. So we started digging the rocky land under the blazing sun," says Achhelal. It was after they had dug at least eight feet deep that the rich peasants in the area felt the threat of assertion from the harijans, the "talking animals." (Pioneer 11.2.04)

Minority report: Govt forgets rules (2)

New Delhi: Desperate to secure sinecures for its Dalit leaders before the polls, the government has put the horse before the cart in making political appointments to the national commissions for SCs and STs. Former UP governor Suraj Bhan is expected to be the new chairman of the national commission for SCs. When contacted, Bhan, who is also a former Lok Sabha deputy Speaker said, "I have also heard it being discussed. It can happen very soon." A delegation of four members of the old commission met the President on Tuesday to protest this move. These members, mostly from the BJP, who would lose their job soon, have raised procedural issues in their memorandum to the President. After the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, the government was not expected to make such cabinet minister-rank appointments to a commission mandated by the Constitution. If Bhan's appointment was made before the Lok Sabha dissolution, then the government has done it without following laid down procedures. (Times of India 18.2.04)

NHRC seeks report on rape of minor girl (2)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 21. Expressing serious concern over the plight of a minor Dalit girl who gave birth to a child after an upper caste j man in a village in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh raped her allegedly, the National Human Rights Commission has sought a report from the government on this incident within four weeks. Acting on a complaint from social activist and economist, Dr. Pentapati Pullarao, the Commission issued notice to the Senior Superintendent of Police, West Godavari and made it clear to him that if there was no response, the Commission might proceed to take such action as "it deems proper".

Dr. Rao, in his complaint brought to the notice of the Commission about the rape of a 17-year-old girl of Mulaparu hamlet. After the rape the boy asked the girl to keep quiet promising to marry her and later when she conceived he tried to get her an abortion but in vain. She later gave a police complaint against the boy but because of his influence no action was taken.

It was under these circumstances the present complaint was filed seeking the intervention of the Commission to render justice to the hapless woman, now with a child. Besides urging the Commission to direct the government to initiate action against the culprit, Dr. Rao also wanted suitable compensation be awarded to the girl. (The Hindu 22.2.04)

Atrocities against Dalits continue (2)

JAIPUR, FEB. 26. The Centre for Dalit Human Rights today claimed that the cases of cruelty, atrocities and discrimination against Dalits in Rajasthan had not reduced despite the change of Government and the laws like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act had been completely ignored in the State. The CDHR's convenor, P.L. Mimroth, said the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government had shown no difference of perception on the Dalit issues than that of the previous Congress regime. "The issues of protection of Dalits and defending their dignity are nowhere on the Government's agenda irrespective of which party comes to power," he told reporters here. The CDHR has decided to move the Rajasthan High Court seeking its direction to the State Government to strictly implement the SC/ST Act and take effective measures to prevent atrocities against Dalits. A campaign will also be launched to change the mindset of the so-called upper castes in favour of abolishing untouchability still rampant in several parts of the State. Mr. Mimroth took strong exception to the State Government's failure to table in the Assembly the report of the Justice Lodha Commission that had inquired into the infamous massacre of 17 Dalits in Kumher in 1992, despite a direction by the Rajasthan High Court. The CDHR will now take the matter to the United Nation's Human Rights Commission seeking its intervention to secure justice for the victims. (The Hindu 27.2.04)

2nd March

Every party wants a Dalit leader in its kitty (2)

Patna: IN AN era of coalition and caste-based votebank politics, Dalits are increasingly playing a pivotal role in the formation of the government at the Centre—and so their leaders like Ram Vilas Paswan and Mayawati enjoy more political importance than any other leader. Every political party loves, likes and wishes to have them in their kitty to reach the magic figure for government formation. However, post Paswan and Mayawati, the NDA in Bihar has set its eyes on three RJD Dalit leaders to keep their invaluable votes intact during the forthcoming Parliamentary elections. According to Party sources, immediately after LJP leader Ram Vilas Paswan formally shut his doors on the NDA to go with the Congress-RJD alliance, the NDA has set its eyes on other Dalit leaders of the state. The NDA, according to sources, is in constant touch with the leaders and has reportedly promised to field them from their choice of constituency. And all of them, Ramai Ram, Purnamasi Ram and Chhedi Paswan of the ruling RJD have declared their intention to contest the 14th Lok Sabha elections, party willing or not. Senior RJD leader and Cabinet Minister in the Rabri Devi government, Ramai Ram has already announced his intention of contesting the forthcoming elections from Hajipur against Mr Paswan. (Pioneer 2.3.04)

21st March

Tandav Sena to join dance of death (2)

PATNA, March 20. — The dance of death in blood-drenched Bihar seems set to get more frenzied over the coming days as the killing armies of Bihar have added another to their number. On Thursday, Bhumihar youths in Gaya announced the formation of yet another private army — Tandav Sena — to counter the terror the outlawed Maoist Communist Centre has allegedly been perpetrating on upper castes. The move comes close on the heels of a series of killings of upper caste members in the Tekari sub-division of Gaya over the past week. Investigations by The Statesman revealed that the 25-30 men who form the core of the Tandav Sena comprise both fresh recruits and those who have broken away from the dreaded Ranvir Sena; the most lethal of the upper caste private armies of Bihar. Its self-styled zonal commander is Chunnu Sharma, alias Badshah. According to an official source, with the arrest last year of Brah-meshwar Singh or "mukhia", the chief of the Ranvir Sena, the outfit entered a period of comparative inactivity and Tandav Sena aims to fill the vacuum. (Statesman 21.3.04)

24th March

In Punjab, a division along caste lines (2)

Far away from the glitter of 'Shining India,' the Dalits in Punjab are finding themselves subjected to increased discrimination after having exercised their 'free will' in the recent elections to the State Assembly and panchayats. They are now uncertain about casting their vote in the coming Lok Sabha elections. Some Dalit leaders have even been deprived of their voting rights for speaking out against discrimination by the "upper castes." A much-publicised clash between Dalits and the prosperous Jat Sikhs over the control of a place of worship in Talhan in Lalandhar led to the administration taking action recently. But Dalits feel the police and the bureaucracy have been ineffective in checking discrimination elsewhere in Punjab such as Kurd, Hassanpur (Sangrur) and Dyon (Bhatinda) villages. In Kurd, close to Andhra Pradesh Governor Surjit Singh Barnala's hometown, farmers refuse to give directions to the Harijan panchayat building where the Dalits have assembled to narrate their side of the story. They are being "taught a lesson" for putting up a candidate against an upper caste-supported Dalit in the panchayat elections. Mud was dumped on the road to block sewage from their homes flowing into the traditional sewage pond. The sewage has accumulated on the road, stopped bus services and entered their homes. They are being harassed in other ways too. The village headman has stopped the payment of old age pension to 85-year-old Babu Singh, his blind wife Dilip Kaur and the infirm Mangat Singh. He also refused to attest the marriage of Jagraj Singh's daughter, depriving him of a cash grant from the Punjab Government at a time when there is little employment for the Dalits because of mechanisation and the inflow of migrant labour. (The Hindu 24.3.04)

29th March

Dalits' tilt towards BJP worries Congress (2)

New Delhi: The Congress manifesto has gone all out to regain its traditional base among Dalits and tribals voters. The renewed thrust on regaining the disenfranchised voters is out of concern that this segment has steadily shifted towards the BJP. The BJP stole the show in constituencies reserved for the Scheduled Caste and Tribes in 1999 general elections and the more recent Assembly polls. Of the 79 constituencies set aside for the Scheduled Castes, the BJP bagged 25 seats in 1999. The party put up a good show in reserved constituencies in Madhya Pradesh (undivided), Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (Undivided). (Pioneer 29.3.04)

Dalits angry about Bangaru treatment (2)

New Delhi, March 2: Even as the BJP has denied ticket to former party president Bangaru Laxman, there is growing resentment among the Dalits within the party for handing out step-motherly treatment to him, primarily because he happens to be a Dalit. There is all the more resentment in this section of BJP workers over drawing a parallel between Mr Laxman and former Union minister Dilip Singh Jedoo. Recently, BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan told reporters that during screening of the names at the party's central election committee meet chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee it was decided not to nominate either of them because of the taint involved in their being seen on camera taking money. However Mr. Laxman's supporters say there is a vast difference between the two cases. (Asian Age 29.3.04)

31st March

Don't tell India Shining to these Dalits (2)

Just 25 kilometres away lies Mahad, where Dr B.R. Ambedkar launched his campaign against untouchability over six decades ago. But for the Dalits of Kuravade, a dusty village in Mangaon taluka of Raigad district, it may as well have been another world. It's been a year since they were socially boycotted by the rest of the village, and they have been struggling to cope with its effects ever since. Their crime: they drew water from the common village well. That too only after some miscreants threw human excreta in the well near their hamlet following an altercation with them. This happened in March last year. It was a local NGO Sarvahara Jan Andolan which staged a satyagraha and encouraged the Dalits to draw water from the common well. (Indian Express 31.3.04)

27th April

In Venkaiah's town, tell us your caste if you want water (2)

AS Nellore goes to the polls tomorrow, many of its citizens know that while their vote counts, it will not grant them water from the well or tea in a steel tumbler. Ask Lakshmi. A day before the election, she stood nervously, begging two girls from the Reddy community to pour some water from the village well into her bucket. They ignored her, chatted among themselves and perhaps secretly enjoyed her discomfiture. After one full hour, bored of their little game, they gave Lakshmi her water. This happens everyday and whoever comes to power will not change Lakshmi's daily routine. She and other Scheduled Caste villagers are not allowed to dip their buckets into the only source of drinking water in the area. Sometimes she waits all day to get her bucket filled. (Indian Express 27.4.04)

29th April

Here Dalits don't go with DMK (2)

CHIDAMBARAM: The southern gate of the 1,000 year-old Chidambaram temple opens into the courtyard and then a wall. This ought to be the main door as the nandi (Shiva's vehicle) is here. Dalits of the town want the wall to be broken. "To grow politically, we must redeem cultural rights," says Thirumavalavan who founded Dalit Panthers and came second in Chidambaram reserved constituency in 1999 with 2.25 lakh votes. Now, he wants to forge a Dalit-Muslim-Christian alliance, but frets that minorities are "allergic" to George Fernandes' ... photograph on his posters. He could not strike an alliance with Tamil Nadu parties, so along with another Dalit leader Krishnaswamy, he has taken the JD(U) symbol. Now he's trying to boost his tally by another 25,000 votes. This region in North Tamil Nadu is dominated by "lower caste" Vanniyars. After PMK was formed and after getting a share of power at the Centre, Vanniyars have gone up in social esteem. And the main political contests in this reserved seat are between Vanniyars and Dalits. Today, Brahmins oppose Vanniyars and allege that 9,000 acres of temple land have been encroached on by the community. Thirumavalavan has therefore not attacked Brahmins on the temple issue. (Times of India 28.4.04)

1ST May

Dalit asks water for all, gets stick (2)

PUNE, APRIL 30 : A GROUP of upper-caste Hindus allegedly thrashed a Dalit on Wednesday at Nimone village, 12 km from Pune, for demanding that water be equally distributed among villagers. The Dalit, 35-year-old Bhagvan Mahadeo Lad, was 1 beaten with sticks, iron rods and axes by seven men. The incident came to light when some villagers brought a badly injured Lad to Pune's Sassoon Hospital. Later, policemen from Shirur police station recorded his complaint. However, no one has been arrested. Local police officials were not available for comment. Additional SP (Pune Rural) Suresh Kamalakar confirmed that such a case has been filed. He said he had ordered an inquiry by an officer of DSP rank into the incident. Like many others, this sleepy village on the Chau-phula-Shirur Road, has been facing severe water shortage for the last few months and villagers depend on tankers. In the FIR, Lad stated that he was attacked when he insisted that the tanker must be emptied into storage tanks built by the Gram Panchayat so that there would be equal distribution of water. However, Lad alleged, the upper-caste men were against the idea and told him that the water tanker was not meant for the lower-caste people. (Indian Express 1.5.04)

3rd May

Three killed, several in Raigad caste conflict (2)

MUMBAI.MAY2: Twenty-one-year-old Arun Khaire from Talanagar in Raigad district awoke with a start early Sunday morning to the screams and cries of his family, and watched in horror as a mob of 30-odd men wielding swords and rods stormed into his house. As they ransacked the place and brutally beat up his relatives including the women and children, Khaire and a couple of others who dared to resist, were assaulted with weapons. Khaire was slashed with a sword. The mob, comprising members of his own Kunbi community, had just taken their rivalry with the Agri members of the village to a new level. Khaire's family had faced the brunt of the attack for supporting the Agris in this running feud fuelled by an explosive mix of politics and religion. And this time, the toll was heavy - three dead and several injured. Standing outside the general ward at Sion Hospital, Khaire shudders as he recalls how "they came in separate groups and attacked

us from different directions. Some of us were in the fields when they were surrounded. They had planned it very well." Three men, Umaji Omale (60), his brother Shivaram Omale (47) and Shahadeo Navshe, were killed while five were seriously injured in the clash, police sources said. "Two of the injured are in a very critical condition," said Dr Anil Singhal at Sion Hospital. (Indian Express 3.5.04)

7th May

Accused behind bars but fear sweeps killing fields (2)

MUMBAI.MAY6: THE police today arrested seven prime accused in the Talaghar triple murders, rounding up all but one of the 22 attackers named in the FIR. That, however, is little consolation to the Agri survivors of the caste massacre as the call for revenge is already growing louder.

Three members of the Agri community were hacked to death on Sunday by a mob from Talaghar village, of the Maratha Kunbi community. "Our lives will not be spared by the rival group once they return home. We don't want to go home," said a shaky Ravindra Omle, while attending to the injured villagers. Ravindra's uncles Urnaji Omle and Shivram Omle and cousin Sahadev Navshe were killed in the attack, triggered by a caste and political feud between the financially-strong Maratha Kunbis who are supported by the NCP and Agri farmers who owe their allegiance to the Peasants and Workers Party. Sarika Navshe lost her husband Sahadev as his elder brother looked on. Sarika says she knew Talaghar's community feud would lead to something tragic but not that her own people would be responsible for it. "My husband's elder brother Gopinath remained a spectator when he was being attacked. He came back to me saying... "That pig is dying in the fields, go get him some water." The reason—the brothers supported different parties. The fear has cut through. Many Maratha-Kunbis, who fled Talaghar on Sunday fearing retaliation from Agris, have not returned yet. (Indian Express 7.5.04)

11th May

Delhi dalits go by anti-Manuvadi rule, BSP gaining (2)

New Delhi May 10: For the dalits in the capital, just two parties exist — "ameer" which they identify with the Congress and the BJP, and "gareeb," which they identify with the Bahujan Samaj Party. So it was behind the BSP that the dalits based in various parts of the city seem to have thrown their weight in the Lok Sabha elections on Monday. While the BSP's vote share is expected to increase this time, it could make going tough for the Congress in an otherwise straight contest between the BJP and the Congress in all the seven Lok Sabha seats. Buoyed by BSP supremo Mayawati's election meetings in the capital, the dalits seemed to have found an instinctive rallying point in her "Manuvad" bashing. "Hum chhole samaj ke log hainjise bade samaj ke log .gumrah karte rahen ham, (we belong to the lower strata of the society, which has been misled by the upper) crust)," said a charged Tilak Raj minutes after pressing the button on the BSP's elephant symbol in the Nand Nagri D-b'lock school. But is not Ms Mayawati arousing mean instincts for electoral gains? "No, behenji's slogan of hamara vote tumhari sarkar nahi chalega is absolutely justified," he added. (Asian Age 11.5.04)

Mother is stripped as son unable to pay loan (2)

Pune, May 10: The police arrested four people near here for allegedly stripping a dalit woman because her son failed to repay the Rs 5,000 loan he had taken from his employer. In a bizarre incident, five men allegedly stripped her naked . on May 2 at Theur village near Pune.

However, the victim lodged, a police complaint on Friday with the help of activists of a dalit organisation. A day after the complaint, the police'3 arrested four people accused of stripping the 40-year-old woman. The arrested were identified as Suresh Kunjir, 53, his two > sons, Sanjay and Dinesh, and brother Balasaheb Kunjir. Deputy superintendent of rural police Praveen Patil said the accused were booked under the Maharashtra Atrocities Act. The Kunjir family is engaged in brick-kiln business near Theur, he added. In her compliant to police, the : victim, who is from the neighbouring Indapur sub-district in Pune district, stated that her son and daughter-in-law worked at a brick kiln in Theur and that they had taken a loan of Rs 5,000 from the Kunjir family. She claimed her son and the daughter-in-law had been working without wages for several weeks to repay the loan and yet their employer claimed they owed him money. (Asian Age 11.5.04)

15th May

Delhi's Dalits snub BSP again (2)

New Delhi: THE DALIT voters in the Capital have once again rejected the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Even as Mayawati continues to hold ground in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, in Delhi the BSP once again disappointed. Its candidates lost so badly that they had to even forfeit their deposit on all the seats. The BSP had fielded candidates from East Delhi, Outer Delhi and Karol Bagh constituencies as these boast of a significant Dalit population. The party, interestingly, was actually anticipated a win in Karol Bagh. Despite a public rally addressed by Mayawati in the city in the run up to the polls, the results in the Capital have proved that the elephant has miles to go before it can carve a niche in Delhi. The party's candidate from Karol Bagh, Satya Pal Singh, could manage only 6,634 votes out of the 2,49,184 polled. He was pitted against Krishna Tirath of the Congress and Anita Arya of the BJP. Scheduled Castes (SC) constitute 35 per cent of the population of Karol Bagh, the only reserved constituency in the Capital. Scheduled Tribes (ST), meanwhile, constitute 0.03 per cent of the population. (Pioneer 15.5.04)

17th May

Schoolgirls allege abuse by teacher (2)

AROUND 12 girl students belonging to Scheduled Caste families have decided to discontinue their studies in protest against the "cruel and humiliating" behaviour of their teacher. The students have accused the head teacher of the government elementary school in Mehua village of Punjab of scarring their faces with his nails. Angry parents have threatened to pull out their wards from the school unless action is taken against the teacher. Deputy commissioner Hussan Lal has ordered an inquiry into the matter following a complaint by the village sarpanch. (Hindustan Times 17.5.04)

24th May

Pregnant dalit woman abused by upper-caste Brahmins (2)

Faridabad, May 23: Barely 20 km away from Delhi and there is a dark inhumane world where a section of society faces assault every time they ask for their rights. Rape and humiliation is a daily affair. But the local administration of Faridabad in Haryana seems to be turning a blind eye to this increasing abuse of dalits. For instance, the Hathin Tehsil police in Faridabad is yet to register FIR in the case of six months pregnant Sushila who was brutally assaulted by six upper-caste men nearly one-and-a-half months ago. Still in trauma, Sushila (23) wreaths in agony, fearing miscarriage. Her crime? She tried to prevent the accused from beating her husband Khemchand who had "dared" to negotiate his labour charges on early morning of April 4. Her intervention irked Neetu, Babal, Sanjay, Ramavatar, Rajendera, Narendra and Bhajan Singh, all from Brahmin community. They dragged Sushila by her hair, kicked at her stomach and beat her mercilessly until she was unconscious. The accused who live nearby also used obscene and vulgar language, using the couple's caste names. "I am unsure of the baby's fate," murmurs Sushila, a mother of two. She cannot feel the movement or the heartbeat of the child, she says.

Repeated visits to the police has not helped, Khemchand, a daily wage earner told The Asian Age. The culprits are scot-free and are intimidating them. (Asian Age 24.5.04)

26th May

Dalit woman's death rocks Maharashtra Assembly (2)

MUMBAI, MAY 25. The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party-Shiv Sena members disrupted the proceedings in the Maharashtra Assembly today, leading to adjournment of the session twice, over the death of a Dalit woman in Aurangabad, who allegedly set herself on fire in a police station. . . . Moving an adjournment motion on the issue after the question hour, BJP leader Gopinath Munde said the victim, Manda-bai Sandu Hirvale, had gone to the MIDC police station at Aurangabad on the night of May 23 to file a complaint and the police inspector, Dayaram Bhoite, had doused her with kerosene and set her on fire. She later died of burns. Mr. Munde said the woman had approached the police station nine times in the past to register a complaint and appeal for protection to her but the police did not oblige. She had appealed to the District Collector also, but her complaint was ignored. Mr. Munde, who visited the area, said the woman had given a dying declaration before a magistrate. The Home Minister, R.R. Patil, said the

woman had committed suicide and the incident did not take place in the premises of the police station. (The Hindu 26.5.004)

27th May

Brutal attack on Dalits (2)

The People's Watch – Tamil Nadu and the Dalits Human Rights Monitoring (DHRM) is deeply concerned over the brutal and inhuman attack on the Dalits settlement in the Kalapatti village of Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, India by the Dominant caste people of the same village. Nearly 100 Dalits houses were attacked by 200 Dominant caste using swords and other sharp and deadly weapons. Many Dalit houses were burnt and properties like televisions, grinding machines, cycles, were damaged or set on fire. Not only this they also killed the cattle of the Dalits and set fire to the cattle. They assaulted women by sexually abusing them trying to pull their sarees. Nearly 100 Dalit houses were completely raised to the ground due to this fire. Most of the people sustained serious injuries all over their body, on their head, neck, back, cheek etc due to the cuts caused by the sharp weapons. The dominant caste people also pushed the Dalits to the ground and stamped them with their legs abusing them using caste names. The dominant caste mob had taken away money and jewels from the Dalit houses during the violence. This brutal attack was carried out for nearly two hours, from 6.30 – 8.30 p.m. The Dominant caste mob was that violent that the 8-month year baby boy of Gopal and Nithya who was sleeping in a cradle was hit against the wall in a most inhuman manner. Also a 75 year old Muthan s/o Mottaiyappan who was just then returning from work to the village was hit by sharp weapons immediately when he got down from the bus. This innocent old man did not know for what reason he was attacked so brutally. Another old woman named Valliammal (45 years) w/o Kittan was hit on her head and started bleeding badly when she went to the rescue of her son. Most of the Dalits tried to escape to save their lives. But they were further stopped on their way out and attacked with weapons once again. In this occurrence, 14 Dalits were severely attacked with the sharp and deadly weapons and they sustained terrible injuries and have been admitted to the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital. Today there is a threat for their lives and security. (Ref: **E.mail: dhrm@pwtm.org**)

Treat petition filed against Swaraj as complaint: HC (2)

NEW DELHI, MAY 26: THE Delhi High Court today disposed of a petition against BJP leader Sushma Swaraj, by directing the Delhi police to treat the petition as a "normal complaint" and to take "action as per law". The bench comprised Chief Justice B.C. Patel and Justice B.D.Ahmed. The petition, filed by Dalit leader Mo Kandaswamy Singh, stated that Sushma Swaraj had tried to "create enmity between religions and between castes" by protesting against Sonia Gandhi's possible appointment as Prime Minister. The petitioner had demanded that an FIR be lodged against Swaraj. Kandaswamy alleged that this "irresponsible behaviour" had even led a 30-year-old BJP activist to commit suicide. He claimed that this was ample evidence of the public unrest that had been incited by her statements. Kandaswamy, president of the Dalit Communist Party of India, had also sought action against Swaraj's husband Swaraj Kausjial, Govin-dacharya arid Madhya Pradesh CM Uma Bharati for alleged "promotion of enmity between classes, castes, religion and races"; (Indian Express 27.5.04)

31st May

When the rains washed away a village's shame (2)

JOHRANPUR (SOLAN), MAY 30: INDIA is shining—at least here. A unique rainwater harvesting programme in this non-descript village launched three summers ago has achieved what seemed impossible: weeding out the casteism and untouchability that had been plaguing the village for years. Not only has Johranpur in Solan district of Himachal Pradesh become a model as far as social integration of the Rajput and Dalit families is concerned, it has also taken the lead in integrating women from both communities into the mainstream. "We are like an extended family and there is absolutely no question of discrimination. We drink the same water and work together, hand-in-hand for uplift of the economic status of the village. Before the project, our village was just another piece of parched land. Today we boast of plantations producing different crops—

mangoes, amla, brinjal, papaya, chillies, gourds and tomatoes. There has also been a quantum jump in the amount of wheat and maize we could manage to produce here," says 70-year-old Balwant Singh. (Indian Express 31.5.04)

3rd June

6 TN dalits turn to Islam (2)

Chennai, June 2: Alleging discrimination by caste Hindus, six dalits have embraced Islam after a feast of biryani provided by some Muslim preachers at Melmandhai village, near Thoothukudi, about 600 km south of Chennai, according to reports reaching here. The event on May 23 jolted the Jayalalitha government since it took place within days of the chief minister revoking her controversial law banning forced religious conversions. She did so as part of many sops to win back public support after suffering a rout in the recent Lok Sabha elections. The Hindu Munnani has promptly blamed the government for the Melmandhai conversions, saying they would not have happened if the anti-conversion law was still in place. About two dozen Muslims from Thanjavur, Theni and Erwadi went to the dalit colony in the village, housing about 150 families, that Sunday evening with biryani packets and a couple of clerics. Once the food was served, the dalits were treated to a sermon on Islam and six of them came forward to be converted, eyewitnesses said. (Asian Age 3.6.04)

7th June

Dalit protest in vain (2)

NEW DELHI, June 6. - Those applying to the Delhi University have now realised what's students' politics is all about. In attempt to garner support, a students' political body, Dalit Chattra Morcha, held a demonstration outside the residence of the vice-chancellor. After two hours of protest in sweltering heat, the students came to know that Professor Deepak Nayar is not even in India. The DCM claimed that the Schedule Caste students were facing lots of hardship because of the authorities' insistence that they should furnish their original bonafide certificates while purchasing the centralised admission forms. A charter of demand was submitted by the DCM activists, which called for transparency in centralised SC admissions, removal of gap-year clause and making admission process easy for SC candidates. The DCM president, Mr Amit Khanakwal, said, "If the university fails to rectify the errors and shortcomings in the admission; process we will be forced to restart our protest". (Statesman 7.6.04)

10th June

SC students assaulted in Khalsa College (2)

New Delhi, June 9. — Sometimes a simple query on readmission in a Delhi University college can lead to severe beating. This was what happened to two Scheduled Caste BA (Pass) students, Sumit Kumar and Sushil Kumar, who had gone to enquire about their re-admission at SGTB Khalsa College (evening) in Dev Nagar in central Delhi. They were abused and beaten up by a group of people in the college. In a complaint filed at the Parsad Nagar police station, the victims have alleged that they were beaten up by eight people, including the coach of the college gymnasium, and were abused on caste lines. They claimed that later this group threatened to strip of their names from the college. The victims claimed that they were referred to as backward castes with remarks: "You low caste will study in this college, it is your natural duty to sweep, not to study." "These are a group of musclemen very active in the college. One of the suspects is Manjeet Singh, who was a student earlier and now a gymnasium coach, but he assists more in admissions. He along with his group created a terror amongst students by their muscle power and bashed us on Monday for no fault," said Mr Sushil Kumar. (Statesman 10.6.04)

17TH June

Jayalalitha gifts cycles to schoolgirls (2)

Chennai: Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalitha continued her politics of gratification by ordering free bicycles on Wednesday to about three lakh schoolgirls studying in Class 12, which would cost the cash-strapped government Rs 47.36 crores a year, reports our special correspondent. The scheme would cover all the plus-two girl students of the backward and most-backward

classes. Already, about 1.54 lakh Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe girl students in Class 12 are getting free cycles. (Asian Age 17.6.04)

19th June

CDHR team complains against Dausa Collector (2)

JAIPUR, JUNE 18. The activists of the Centre for Dalit Human Rights here have accused the District Collector of Dausa of misbehaving with them and using derogatory remarks when they tried to meet him recently to submit a memorandum. They have also accused the district police of not registering a complaint against the Collector under the provisions of the Untouchability Act. According to a statement by Chanda Lal Bairwa, coordinator of CDHR, the Collector, Sandeep Verma, not only refused to take the memorandum they carried with them pertaining to the destruction of a temple belonging to Dalits at Malgawas village by the "upper castes" three months back but also behaved in a manner which called for action against him under the "untouchability laws. "A case on the destruction of the Shiv temple and the damages caused to the idols is registered at the Sainthal police station in Dausa district. Our attempt was to inform the Collector that nothing has been done in the case even after three months," Mr. Bairwa said. The members of the delegation, led by Umakant Khare, the chief executive, had taken an appointment with the Collector for the meeting, he noted. The delegation's attempt to file a complaint against the Collector came to a naught as the station officer at Kothwali police station refused to entertain such a petition, Mr. Bairwa said. "This is a mockery of the Indian Constitution as well as the justice system in the country which considers untouchability a serious offence," he pointed out. (Hindu 19.6.04)

22nd June

Essop's tale lands Pooja in racism row (2)

DURBAN, June 21. — A South African girl of Indian origin was turned down at a Bollywood star hunt contest allegedly because she was "too dark". The contest was judged, among others, by actress Pooja Bhatt. Twenty-three year-old Ms Rivona Essop, who took part in the finals of the event, alleged the organisers told her she "was too dark and should try her luck in South Indian movies". Pooja Bhatt too told Essop the same thing off-camera, The Sunday Times quoted the aspiring actress as having said after the event, which was screened on Britain's Channel 4 television. "The whole experience was farcical... I had received rave reviews throughout the event, only to be suddenly told that I was not the right colour. Besides, the contest appeared to be rigged," she alleged (Statesman 22.6.04)

23rd June

Caste writ runs with the dogs in Thoothukudi (2)

TIRUNELVELI, JUNE22: DISCRIMINATION seems to have taken a bizarre turn at Shanmugapuram village in Thoothukudi district. The dominant community, the Reddryars, have allegedly issued a diktat, barring Dalits from "rearing male dogs". Their objection—such male dogs could mate with the female ones from the "chaste" Hindu colonies. The Reddryars will not accept charges of discrimination but are outraged that such reports have leaked out. The Dalits, of the Arundhathiyar community, are too scared to speak out. The norm on dogs, however, is only the eccentric fringe of systematic discrimination practised in the village, according to a journal released by the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University (MSU). The journal, brought out by the Department of Communication, says Dalits are forbidden from keeping towels on their shoulders when they enter the upper caste streets. In schools, their children are seated separately, away from the students of the dominant caste. Some of them are allegedly also forced to work at their teachers' houses after school hours. M. Bharathan of Human Rights Kalam, Tirunelveli, came upon the "inhuman" discrimination against Dalits during a visit to the village, located in Ettayapu-ram taluk, in September. "The Dalits are illiterate and afraid to speak out against their masters. Things will change only if the Dalits are given education and opportunities to become economically self-dependent," he said. District secretary of the CPI(M) unit in Thoothukudi, P. Esakimuthu, said a group of members of the Democratic Youth Federation of India had visited the village recently and found several examples of discrimination against Dalits. The team didn't know of a diktat against Dalits raising dogs; it did not find dogs in their

colonies, though. Thoothukudi District Collector V Chandrasekharan, however, dismissed the reports. "I don't see prevalence of any such discrimination in Thoothukudi villages," he said. Shanmugapuram has about 50 Dalit (Arundhathiyars) and 150 Reddiyar families. The Dalits work as labourers in the Red-diyars' lands and are dependent on the dominant castes for their livelihood. The Reddiyars, however, deny such reports, calling them imaginary and intended to tarnish the image of the village. The Dalits agree but make it clear they won't talk to journalists. One of them even asked this reporter to leave the village immediately. A Reddiyar said mediapersons would not be allowed to visit the village. (Indian Express 23.6.04)

25th June

Dalits seek reservation in private sector (2)

NEW DELHI, JUNE 24. Appealing to the corporate sector to fulfil its social responsibility, the Indian Justice Party today reiterated its demand for reservation for the Dalits in the private sector. The party also asked the Government to include the same in the forthcoming Budget.

"Reservation for the Dalits in the private sector has been included in the Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance. Now it is time for the Government to include it in the Budget and for the Government to pass a legislation on this," said the Indian Justice Party president, Udit Raj, at a press conference here today. Pointing out the anomalies in the usual debate on merit and efficiency put forward by the private sector, he added: "It is not correct to say that reservation would lead to reduction in efficiency. After all, alumni of IITs and IIMs are the most sought after people in the industry today. Yes, it is true that the private sector makes more profit than the government sector, but that is not because people are not good. It is because there is pressure in the private sector to perform whereas in the Government sector, with security of job, there is no such pressure." (The Hindu 25.6.04)

26th June

As OPCC chief, Jena expected to stem Dalit alienation (2)

Bhubaneswar: THE CORONATION of Jaydev Jena as the Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president reflects the party's anxiety about its shrinking Dalit base in the state. A senior Dalit leader, Mr Jena would be expected to stem the progressive alienation of Scheduled Castes and Tribes from the Congress, which suffered its second consecutive defeat at the hands of Biju Janata Dal-Bhartiya Janata Party combine in the last Assembly elections. For the last several decades, Dalits in Orissa had stood behind the Congress which won one election after another. The pattern of Dalit support to the party broke for the first time in 1990 when late Biju Patnaik-led Janata Dal (JD) won in the state. Both the JD and its two Communist allies, the CPI and the CPI(M) — were able to woo away sizeable chunks of SC/ST votes resulting in the downfall of the Congress. Things changed for the worse for the Congress in 2000 when its Dalit votebank started shifting decisively towards the BJP-BJD combine. With Dalits and the backwards drifting from the Congress, the party suffered one of its worst electoral defeats that year. That the party is yet to retrieve its lost votebank is evident from the drubbing it got in the recent Assembly elections. (Pioneer 26.6.04)

27th June

Dalit dogs untouchable too (2)

Tuticorin (Tamil Nadu), June 26: Upper caste Hindus in a village here have banned Dalits from rearing dogs. The reason – the dogs may mate with bitches that move around dwelling areas of upper castes, who regard the Dalits untouchable. M. Bharathan of Human Rights Kalam, an NGO, who has visited the village, T Shanmughapuram, near Ettayapuram in the district, said the ban was enforced by upper caste Reddiyars. But the Reddiyars and Dalits denied the existence of such a ban. The district administration said untouchability is not practised in the area. (Telegraph 27.6.04)

29th June

On hungerstrike, he gets his due: Death (2)

THANE, JUNE 28: HE DIED at 35, starving for over a month at the feet of a statue of Babasaheb Ambedkar just metres away from the Thane Collector's office, demanding dues for migrant

labourers. And Anna Chanappa Hulgunde's life might be the price the Vadar community paid to get heard. And today, when television cameras and microphones turned to Anna's younger brother, Raju, veteran of protests in Wada, Shahapur and Jawhar, he could hardly speak. A case has been registered against the sub-contractor who owed the Dalit labourers and the Hulgundes their dues. Mahendra Lalan of Ankit Constructions, Mulund, has been charged under Section 306 of the IPC, for abetting suicide. Lalan and his son, Ankit, were arrested today. The extended Hulgunde family has been on fast-unto-death since May 31, demanding Rs 4.75 lakh due to 190 migrant labourers from the Vadar Samaj for road and petrol pump construction works at three sites in Wada taluka, around 100 km north of Mumbai. The Vadars are a poor, nomadic tribe known for their skill as stone-cutters. The Hulgundes were labour contractors and had arranged workers for a construction firm undertaking private works. It has been a hopeless struggle since work was completed in 2000. "We were only paid for daily rations," said Raju. Thane ACP Nandkumar Chougule said meetings were on for the past month between the protesters, Lalan, the Thane collector IS. Chahal and SP (rural) Ramrao Pawar to resolve the issue. A fortnight ago, the SP met the disputing parties too. "Lalan had it in writing from the Hulgundes that he owed them nothing," (Indian Express 29.6.04)

7th July

Asking for wage hike? Are you a Naxalite? (2)

Badki Akona (Jehanabad): ASK ANY Dalit of Badki Akona village about POTA and he will tell you its a law against Naxalites. And who is a Naxalite? Well, the one who demands more wages. And what is the level of wage in the village? Two kg of rice or wheat and half kg of sattu (gram powder). Now convert this wage-in-kind into cash and what you arrive at is a pittance Rs 16, that is one-fourth of the statutory minimum wage. Badki Akona is a village in the Ghosi region of Jehanabad district in Bihar. The district, particularly its Ghosi region, is considered stronghold of Ranveer Sena, a private army of criminals belonging to upper caste landowners in south Bihar. You can demand more wages only at your own peril. "If you do so, you are declared a Naxalite to be hounded both by the police and the Ranveer Sena," says Binay Ram, a Dalit and a daily wage earner of Basdki Akona. But what if a labourer refuses to work and migrates in search of better wages? Most of us cant do that either as we remain tied to individual land owners. It is Daskathia system that keeps us bounded, says Binay. Under the Daskathia system, a local practice in Jehananabad, a landowner grants 10 katha (a little less than half acre) of land to a labourer who cultivates it and keeps the harvest. In return, he has to be always ready to work for the landowner at the standard wage of two kg of rice or wheat and half kg of sattu. However, if a labourer is unable or unavailable or refuses to attend to his masters call, the land granted to him is confiscated along with the standing crop and, if harvested, he is forced to pay the rent for the entire year. (Pioneer 7.7.04)

10th July

Three Dalit women gangraped in MP (2)

CHHINDWARA(MP),JULY9 : THREE women of a Dalit family were dragged out of their house and allegedly gangraped by nine youth at a village in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district late last night. Eight of the accused were arrested today, police said. The accused barged into the house of Govardhan late last night and dragged his wife, sister-in-law and daughter-in-law out out and raped them barely 500 metres from their house at Bhomatola village, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Chhindwara Range) R.P. Singh said. Govardhan's wife and sister-in-law are both in their 40s while his daughter-in-law is barely 20yearsold. Singh added that eight of the accused had been arrested, while one is absconding. A manhunt has been launched in an around the neighbourhood to nab him. The gangrape is suspected to be a fallout of the alleged elopement of a 15-year-old girl belonging to the caste of the accused with Govardhan's 20-year-old son, Nitesh on My 5, Singh said. The girl, who had gone to the field on July 5, did not return home following which her family filed a complaint with the police at Kaniwada, Singh added. Subsequently, the village panchayat was assembled the same day over the matter. Several villagers told the panchayat members that Nitesh had seduced the girl and taken her to an unknown place, he said. Police said the women were admitted to the Seoni District Hospital. (Indian Express 10.7.04)

12th July

Dalit gangrape: Bharti to punish witnesses too (2)

Seoni (Madhya Pradesh), July 11: A high-level probe began on Sunday into the alleged gangrape of three dalit women at Bomatola village with the recording of statements of eyewitnesses and the victims by a senior police official. The probe team led by DIG Anuradha Shankar, camping here for the last two days, recorded the statements. Meanwhile, acting Kanhiwada police station in-charge was suspended for dereliction in duty. The officer reportedly did not take notice of a complaint regarding alleged elopement of girl with a family member of the victim's women after which the attack took place on July 8. The police force was deployed in the village to avert any untoward situation. The state Congress on Sunday demanded a compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the victims and prompt action against the accused. Chief minister Uma Bharti said she would create fear in the society so that such incidents are not repeated and "society does not remain mute spectators to such heinous crime against women." (Asian Age 12.7.04)

15th July

Pandemonium in Uma regime over dalit rapes (2)

Bhopal, July 14: Law and order blues continued to haunt the Uma Bharti regime as last week's gang rape of three dalit women at Seoni dominated discussions at the state Assembly on Tuesday. The CM's announcement of an all-women committee comprising local MLA's, a member of the state women's commission, a senior lady police officer, and a lady journalist to probe the issue failed to reassure the Opposition. Alarm, in fact, was expressed at the general decline of law and order, especially the state capital where a murder a day has been the norm for the last week. In the debate on the admissibility of an adjournment motion on the rape issue, the Congress, predictably enough, tried politicising the incident by arguing that the rapists were BJP men who were admitted into the party just before the Assembly polls. A former minister, Mr Govind Singh, claimed he had proof of this, but failed to produce it. Congressmen also argued that the area was a saffron stronghold where 90 per cent of the vote had been cast in its favour. (Asian Age 15.7.04)

17th July

'Dalit movement has hit roadblock of mere eulogy' (2)

New Delhi: THE DALIT movement has hit a roadblock and appears to be bereft of inspiration for forward movement. "Limiting itself to eugolisation of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar and hitting out at symbols of Hinduism has caused the movement a loss of momentum," said noted anthropologist Professor R S Khare. while delivering a lecture at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation on Friday. Prof Khare is director of Centre for Critical Human Survival issue. Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville (VA) USA. He was speaking on the issue of "Dalits' Changing challenges: When the outside overtakes the inside". Prof Khare said that Dr Ambedkar had given too much to the Dalit society and became their voice. "Everybody has taken in the name of Dr Ambedkar and it has become quite a fashion which serves their purpose. The Ambedkar's movement today stands completely politicised in the country. It is a mere recital of Dr Ambedkar's , glory. It is good to read. There is no doubt that he had contributed more than anyone else. But what is the next step after Ambedkar. Limiting itself to eugolisation of Dr Ambedkar, has in fact added more challenges to dalits," he said. (Pioneer 17.7.04)

20th July

Six Dalits attempt suicide at Collectorate (2)

ONGOLE, JULY 19. Six Dalits of Vengamukkalapalem in Ongole mandal here today attempted suicide by consuming pesticide right in the corridors of the Collectorate protesting against the alleged indifference of officials in sorting out a dispute over a piece of land assigned to them on the outskirts of the town way back in 1970. The Dalits, Nathula Hanumantha Rao, Anjaneyulu, Anil Kumar, Chundi Samson, Chundi Babu Rao and Kasumarthy Rajinikanth, all aged between 24 and 30 years, had earlier warned the Collector, B. Udayalakshmi, that they would take their lives if she did not solve the problem forthwith. They were rushed to the district headquarters hospital located opposite the Collectorate. Later, the Collector said arrangements had been made

to shift a couple of them, said to be in a critical condition, to Guntur. Talking to The Hindu, she said three ambulances were requisitioned to transport them. (The Hindu 20.7.04)

'Rise in crimes against Scheduled Castes, Tribes' (2)

NEW DELHI, JULY 19. Crimes against the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes showed a steady increase between 1998 and 2002 with Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh topping the list. While the number of cases of atrocities against SCs rose from 7,445 in 1998 to 33,507 in 2002, the cases against STs went up from 725 to 6,774 in the same period. Figures available with the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that the cases in Uttar Pradesh stood at 2,737 in 1998 and in 2002 it was 7,927. Madhya Pradesh reported just 85 cases against STs in 1998 and it rose to 2,504 in 2002. Statistics available with the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes Commissions indicate that Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu recorded high incidence of atrocities against SC/ST between 1996-2000. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar reported the maximum number of serious crimes against SC/STs. State-wise review of the serious crimes against the SCs/STs showed that the highest incidence of murder cases in respect of SCs in 2002 was Uttar Pradesh (371), followed by Madhya Pradesh (79), Rajasthan (44) and Gujarat (34). The highest rape cases were reported from Madhya Pradesh (412), Uttar Pradesh (305), Rajasthan (123), Maharashtra (64), Chhattisgarh (64) and Kerala (48). As regards total crimes against SCs, U.P. topped with (7,927), followed by Madhya Pradesh (7,217), Rajasthan (4,535), Tamil Nadu (2,097), Karnataka (1,787), Gujarat (1,370), Bihar (1,579) and Orissa (1,195). More than 90 per cent of the cases have been reported from these States. (The Hindu 20.7.04)

24th July

Justice denied because rapist was a Lodhi (2)

Bhopal: "My husband is the vice-president of B JP's Nateran town unit and a RSS member of Vidisha district unit. And yet, there is no justice for us in a BJP-ruled state," a rape victim, with tears in her eyes, she said. The victim, a nurse at the Bandrabatha sub-health centre, was allegedly raped by a policeman on May 26. "There won't be any justice because I am a Dalit while the culprit is an OBC Lodhi, a member of CM Uma Bharati's community," she said.

She said she was under tremendous pressure from the police, the administration and even a state cabinet minister to withdraw the rape charge against Puran Singh Narbariya, a head constable posted at the Pathari police station in Vidisha district. She alleged finance minister Raghavji even asked her to "take back the case." Later Raghavji told TNN, "I never asked her to withdraw the case. I just told her she should not indulge in blackmailing." (Times of India 24.7.04)

25th July

SC students protest as DU fails to counsel their case (2)

NEW DELHI, July 24. — The candidates belonging to the Scheduled Caste category, who cleared the Delhi University Medical Dental entrance - 2004, today staged a protest against the failure of the authorities to take the counselling for the medical course. A significant number of candidates joined by their parents faced closed door at various stages in the Delhi University, when they turned up for the centralised counselling for the Bachelor of Dental Surgeon course in the Maulana Azad Medical College. The DU Faculty of Medical Sciences has informed these candidates to report to the Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute before 24 July for the counselling. These candidates claimed that they have just received the "letters of information" yesterday only and when they had turned up at the designated VPCI in the morning, they found the premises closed, as it was a weekend. One of the candidates, Ms Poonam Kumar, said, "We reported to the scheduled counselling place on time only to find out that it was locked. (Statesman 25.7.04)

26th July

Violence in Kerala over Dalit student's suicide (2)

Thiruvananthapuram, July 25: JUST A spark was needed for the smoldering education sector in Kerala to go up in flames. The suicide of a Dalit engineering student, Rajani S. Anand, triggered widespread violence in the state. Rampaging students targeted banks, burnt down official ve-

hicles and even ministers were not spared. Unable to pay her education bills, Rajani, the daughter of a daily-wage labourer Sivanandan, ended her life by jumping from a seven-storied government building in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. Rajani was forced to discontinue her studies last year as her family could not afford the fees. Rajani, who passed the matriculation and higher secondary examinations with distinction, had knocked on all doors for money to continue her computer engineering studies. Though her father approached many nationalized banks for an education loan, it did not materialize. "I approached five banks at least. With just two cents of land and my meager daily earnings how can I pay a collateral security to these banks," asked an inconsolable Sivanandan, who is struggling to come to terms with the fact that his brilliant daughter was no more "I approached the panchayat, the Scheduled Caste Development Board, religious institutions and politicians. But all turned me away," he said while criticizing those who were now shedding tears over his daughter's death. (Hindustan Times 26.7.04)

27th July

Committee to be set up to settle SC/ST issue (2)

New Delhi, July 26: Delhi Assembly on Monday recommended setting up of a high power committee to look into the criterion for granting of certificates for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, which entitled them for reservations in various spheres including employment. The committee would comprise MLAs and Constitution-legal experts. A Motion was moved by the Patpatganj (S,C) MLA Amrish Singh Gautam with this regard on Monday which demanded that the requirement in the application form for issue of SC/ST certificates, that is the arrival and residence in Delhi since 1951 be done away with and such certificates be issued to all those who are residing in Delhi since their birth or for five years. It also demanded that all persons belonging to the SC/ST community be treated equally and opportunity be provided to them by Delhi government in employment, education and other schemes as is being done by the Central government. (Asian Age 27.7.04)

28th July

Another dalit faces Amethi upper caste ire (2)

Lucknow, July 27: Yet another dalit in Amethi Lok Sabha constituency, represented by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, became victim of upper caste ire on Sunday evening when some affluent local persons set his thatched house on fire and allegedly misbehaved with a female member of his family. It is noteworthy that a similar incident had taken place in Amethi's Punnpur village in November 2002 when Ms Mayawati was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. A dalit's house was razed by a local BJP leader and Ms Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had not only taken up cudgels on behalf of the victim, but had also ensured that his house was rebuilt through shramdaan by Congress workers. In Sunday's incident, Gaya Prasad, a dalit, reportedly had an altercation with some upper caste members at Dula-pur village in Sultanpur district. The altercation took an ugly turn and the upper caste members set his thatched house on fire. When some female members protested, they were also manhandled by the miscreants. The victim lodged a complaint with the Munshiganj police, but no arrests have been made yet. When contacted on Monday evening, the Munshiganj police said it was still investigating the matter. - The state home department and the state police headquarters had no information till late on Monday night about the incident. "What is so great if a thatched house has been set on fire? For all you know, it could have been an accidental fire. Some people want to derive publicity from every little incident by giving it a casteist colour," said a senior police official. (Asian Age 28.7.04)

29th July

UP Dalit MLAs unite against Land Act amendment (2)

LUCKNOW, JULY 28: NEARLY 80 Dalit legislators, including those of the ruling Samajwadi Party, plan to lodge a unified protest to ensure that the proposed amendment to the UP Zamindari Land Abolition Act does not assume the shape of a Bill. The issue has become a binding force among Dalit MLAs and this unity may land Uttar Pradesh CM Mulayam Singh Yadav in trouble. The amendment will enable non-Dalits to buy land from Dalits. The Cabinet has already approved the proposed amendment in the Act in its meeting on Tuesday but it has yet to

assume the shape of the Bill, which requires approval in the House. Nearly two dozen Dalit legislators belonging to the SP met state Revenue Minister Ambika Chaudhary in front of the Assembly today. "We want the proposed amendment scrapped immediately as it will sound a death knell for members belonging to lower castes," said Vimla Rakesh, an SP legislator. The BSP has also decided to oppose tabling of the amended Act, while two SC legislators in the Congress are also likely to join their counterparts. "The Samajwadi Party is playing in the hands of the moneyed people and making suitable amendments in existing Acts to ensure maximum benefit to these people. The Act had so far restricted selling of land owned by a Dalit to a non-Dalit, while after the amendment, and if it takes the shape of a Bill, any individual will be free to buy land from Dalits," said B SP leader Swami Prasad Maurya. (Indian Express 29.7.04)

30th July

Dalit UP farmer commits suicide (2)

RAMNAGAR (BARABANKI), JULY 29: TWO years ago, Mansaram's father and two neighbours had taken a loan to buy a tractor. But the bank auctioned off the tractor and his land for a paltry sum when they failed to repay the debt. Mansaram (23) killed himself on Wednesday—the first-ever case of farmer suicide in UP. The inquiry committee has found the district administration guilty of not following procedures while auctioning off the land. And CM Mulayam Singh Yadav has suspended the DM of Barabanki and five senior officials. But this is too little action, coming too late for Mansaram's family. His 60-year-old father, Kallu, has been numbed by the shock. For a loan of Rs 3.4 lakh, Kallu had to pledge his six-and-a-half beegha of land with the UP Sahkari Gram Vikas Bank. His share was Rs 1.10 lakh. Bank officials say while Rs 3.4 lakh was disbursed, the sum evaluated for the tractor was Rs. 2.7 lakh. The bank issued a Recovery Certificate in June. Then on, it did not follow any procedure for auctioning. As per rules, it were to issue a legal notice and plant a flag on the property but the probe panel says the bank auctioned off the land on the sly. (Indian Express 30.7.04)

4th Aug

RIM slaps Rs 55,000 bill on labourer (2)

Ahmedabad, Aug 3: A daily wage earner Vagji Parmar is in horns of dilemma saddled with a legal notice for nonpayment of Rs 55,074 served by Reliance India Mobile for two nonexistent mobile phones. He has complained of harassment to police commissioner K.R. Kaushik. A Dalit, Parmar in his letter to the police commissioner has even contended that it was a case of harassment to a Scheduled Caste. He has also attached copies of the letter written by him to Web World owned by Reliance Industries at Maninagar on December 2003 after he was billed by the company. He had informed the company that he did not procure any mobile from them nor did he ever possessed any mobile phone and therefore the billing in his name was totally misplaced. Mr Parmar told The Asian Age that he was a poor daily wage earner with his wife working as a construction labourer and therefore there was no question of his possessing a mobile phone. Surprisingly even after Parmar writing to the company informing them that he had never procured any mobile phone from them he was sent another bill on June 1. (Asian Age 4.8.04)

5th Aug

In UP, landlord's Dalit labourer is also his rubber-stamp pradhan (2)

SIKRORIHA (HARDOI), AUGUST 4: TRY spotting the village headman, pradhan, in this photograph. The man on the left is Harkaran Nath Dwivedi. He owns 200 acres, carries a pistol, claims to be a BJP worker and holds a darbar outside his house everyday. The man on the extreme right is Rudan, a Dalit. He works on Dwivedi's fields, lives in a mudhouse which does not even have a charpoy. For over nine years, Rudan has been the pradhan of this village. He does not say anything when his master is around, he just scribbles his name wherever Dwivedi asks him to sign. In the land of Mayawati, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Dalit empowerment, Rudan has been working as a "bonded" pradhan. How did he become the pradhan? Dwivedi has the answer. "My grandfather Ganga Prasad Dwivedi was pradhan for 32 years and my father Ram Nath Dwivedi took over when my grandfather died. I was also the elected pradhan until 1994, when the government declared my village panchayat a reserved area," says Dwivedi. In 1994, Dwivedi was forced to put Rudan as the candidate from this re-

served village panchayat. Rudan won—and won again in 1999. "My days have gone, now Rudan is the pradhan," says Dwivedi. (Indian Express 5.8.04)

8th Aug

Land reforms have not helped Dalits in Andhra Pradesh (2)

HYDERABAD, AUG. 7. On July 19, six Dalits consumed pesticide to highlight the official apathy in handing over land allocated for them. One of them, Hanumantha Rao, died in hospital. The issue made it to the front pages of the local press. The problem was settled later with the intervention of the Chief Minister, Y.S. Rajasekh-ara Reddy, who promised a review of the results of the land reforms process. This has set in motion a debate on the land reforms and the hurdles in implementing them. The issue also assumes significance as it is going to be a priority item in the agenda for talks with the People's War which has gained strength from the protracted land struggles. Setting up commission At a recent meeting with the Left parties, the Chief Minister said a commission would be set up to look into the distribution of the surplus land to the landless poor — a demand being aired by several Dalit organisations and the Left. It is a challenging task for the new Congress Government to bring the violators (of land rights), to justice. Between 1948 and 1970, the abolition of the Estates Act, the Enam Abolition Act and the Telangana Tenancy Act effectively transferred the control of over 349 lakh acres to farmers and tillers. But only 0.5 per cent of this land has reached the hands of the SCs or the STs. The land reforms movement later could not really make the Dalits possess land despite being issued pattas (title deeds). (The Hindu 8.8.04)

17th Aug

Dalit MLA not allowed to hoist tricolour on I-Day (2)

Damoh, August 16: A DALIT MLA was prevented from unfurling the tricolour during an Independence Day function at Patharia in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district. Sona Bai, an MLA from the ruling BJP, told HT over the phone that Janpad president Raghuvver Singh and a few policemen did not allow her to hoist the national flag during the function. "They called me Chamaria and also manhandled me... I have received an injury on my right hand," she said. When she tried to register a police complaint, the town inspector and SDM turned her away "If these police and revenue officers behave in such a manner with an MLA, what will they do with common people?" she wondered. She said that she spoke to chief minister Uma Bharti who assured her that action would be taken against the guilty Damoh Collector Sandeep Saxena rushed to Patharia on Sunday night and recorded her statement. (Hindustan Times 17.8.04)

28TH Aug

Dalit woman stripped in public by upper caste youth (2)

Bhopal - IN YET another incident of atrocity against women, a Dalit woman was disrobed by a youth belonging to an upper caste at the Nivari village under the Rchli Police Station in Sagar district on Friday. The victim has alleged that she was verbally abused, thrashed and disrobed publicly in the village by Raja, a youth belonging to the Pandit community. The incident pertains to Friday when the victim had gone to Raja's house to apologise for the damage done to his crop by her cattle that had inadvertently strayed in his agricultural field. Enraged by the damage to his crop. Raja refused to listen to her explanation and thrashed her while using caste-specific abuses. The victim said that she was then stripped in public view. However, the district police have another: version to narrate. Superintendent of Police, Sagar district, KP Khare, while speaking to the victim alleged that she had gone to Raja's house to apologise for the damage done to his crops by her cattle. But Raja refused to listen to her and thrashed her, used caste-specific abuses and then disrobed her in public view The Pioneer said: "The argument between the woman and the accused arose over a quarrel between their children. The woman has alleged that the accused misbehaved with her by manhandling her. We have registered cases against the accused under sections 323, 506 of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe Act, and are looking for him. The accused would be arrested by Saturday latest." The incident is one among the many incidents that have happened in Madhya Pradesh in recent past. (Pioneer, 28-8-2004)

3RD September

Rs. 4,000 cr. for SC/ST welfare - (2)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2. The Rural Development Ministry will spend about Rs. 4,000 crores on individual beneficiary schemes and development of need-based infrastructure under the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe habitations. The cash component and 50-lakh tonnes of foodgrains worth Rs. 5,000 crores will be provided for creating wage employment. The Union Rural Development Minister, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, has written to the Chief Ministers of some States to expedite their claims for re-release of the first installment under the scheme. As many as 13 districts are yet to take the first installment. For most others, which have utilised 60 per cent of the resources made available to them, the release of the second installment started on August 31. The 20 districts, for which the second installment has been released, will get 37.26-lakh metric tonnes of foodgrains, which is about 75 per cent of the annual allocation. The foodgrains will be released by the Food Corporation of India. The Ministry believes that the early release of funds this year will enable the Panchayati Raj institutions to implement the scheme effectively and provide employment in the lean agricultural season, particularly in the States hit by drought or floods. In addition, the Centre will release 8.02-lakh metric tonnes of foodgrains free of cost to the States affected by natural calamities. (The Hindu, 3-9-2004)

Empower SC/STs, employ them in private sector: VP - (2)

New Delhi, September 2 : FORMER PRIME Minister V.P. Singh has supported reservation for SCs and STs in the private sector. "When the state is being privatised, the private sector, at some point, has to share social responsibility, without affecting efficiency," Singh said. Singh said the private sector could also help by providing education and training to empower the weaker sections. But he didn't step into the quagmire of whether the job quota should be extended to minorities. "Let first things come first," he said, in response to queries. Singh favoured the creation of a mechanism — like fast track courts — to deal with the issue of "tainted" ministers. "A consensus needs to be evolved on a legislation to speed up justice," he said. He maintained that early disposal of such cases would ensure that the guilty are punished and the innocent do not become victims of a smear campaign. Singh emphasised on the need to work out a consensus among states on the problem of water sharing. He said the river interlinking project was a "good idea." Singh, who along with Left leaders, will stage a demonstration on Saturday, also dwelt on the problems of the small-scale industries. He demanded that areas — occupied 70 per cent by industries — be declared industrial belts. "We hope that the Centre will take the necessary steps when the case comes up in the Supreme Court on September 7," he said. As for the move to reopen the inquiry into the Godhra incident, Singh said: "If there is material evidence, it should be done...."he said. (Hindustan Times, 3-9-2004)

11th September

Govt. indifferent towards atrocities on Dalits (2)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 10. The Dalit Study Circle and the Chhattisgarh Satnami Samaj have alleged that Hindutva 'casteist colour' had percolated deep in the administration and the police set-up of Chhattisgarh after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) took over in November last year. This was evident from the Government's 'inaction and indifference' over increasing atrocities on the Dalits and Adivasis of the State. Addressing a press conference here, Goldy M.George of the Dalit Study Circle and Ta-maskar Tandon of the Chhattisgarh Satnami Samaj said unless the progressive and democratic forces understood the gravity of the situation and support the cause of Dalits in the State, the Brahministic casteism would surface in new forms and manifestations. Referring to some specific incidents, Mr. George said that the inhabitants of two Satnami (Dalits who are followers of Spiritual leader Guru Ghasidas) bastis in Gumka village (Durg district) were beaten up by the upper-caste Hindus and non-Dalits on August 16 because they had wanted the Hindus to participate in their festival as had been the tradition. While men were beaten mercilessly, women were disrobed and humiliated and even the cattle were not spared, Mr. George said. Earlier, the people of the two bastis in the Hindu-dominated Gumka village had been subjected to social boycott, not allowed to fetch water from the village well and put to such harassments in the name of caste. Tension between Dalits and non-Dalits had been brewing ever since a Dalit woman had been elected as the 'sarpanch' in the Panchayat elections in 2000.

"However, it was not so blatant until the Congress ruled the State," Mr. George said adding that this had resulted in the Dalits renewing the demand for a separate electorate for the Dalits as mooted by B.R.Ambedkar. While 20 people were arrested on August 24 on some frivolous charges in this connection and released on bail on September 4, the police, even after the mass attack, did not book the culprits under SC./ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and other more stringent provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Mr. Tandon pointed out. (The Hindu 11.9.04)

12th September

Lessons in untouchability at school (2)

BHOPAL, Sept. 11. — Learning the three "R"s in school is fine. But what happens when teachers encourage the medieval concept of untouchability? This is exactly what two teachers did. They asked students not to eat meals cooked by a Dalit woman. The "untouchable" was Bhavribai, a Jatav woman employed as a cook at a primary school in Shivpuri's Purankedi village under the state government's much hyped mid-day meal scheme. The principal, a teacher and a school official were suspended yesterday. The government had to save its face by sending the Shivpuri collector to the school. All students had meals under one roof and the cook was none other than Bhavribai. The incident took place last week. Upper caste and OBC students refused to accept the meal prepared by Bhavribai Jatav. School principal Mr Rajendra Srivastava and teacher Mr Pawan Awasthy made separate cooking arrangements. While a Lodhi cook was employed for the upper case and OBC children. Bhavribai cook for the Dalit students. (Stateman 12.9.04)

Dalits demand quota in private sector (2)

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 11. Dalits from across the country have demanded a separate electorate to create a credible and effective leadership among them and eradicate untouchability and discrimination. Addressing a meeting here on Friday, the former Member of Parliament, H.Hanumanthappa, gave a call to launch a 'Dalit Andolan' from September 24 to create awareness among the people — the Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST) in particular — about their rights. The struggle would force the society and the Government to take notice of the problems and demands of the Dalits and help them secure their rights as equal citizens of the country. Mr. Hanumanthappa, convenor of the Dalit Andolan, wanted the Government to continue the policy of reservation. It must be extended to the private sector and other economic activities as well. Mr. Hanumanthappa pointed out that the much promised reservation in the private sector was hanging fire. This he said was because of the adamant and belligerent attitude of the corporate sector and the extra cautious handling of the issue by the Government. The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) has also strongly advocated the need for a change in the Government's stand on caste discrimination and untouchability. Speakers at a national consultation on 'Challenging Untouchability and Caste Discrimination — National and International Policies' here on Friday felt that despite the Constitution prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of caste, race, religion and gender, Dalits across the country were being subjected to discrimination and treated as untouchables. (The Hindu 12.9.04)

13th Sept.

Here Dalits can't run for a reserved post (2)

MADURAI, SEPTEMBER 12: THEY are just three little dots on the map of Madurai district in southern Tamil Nadu. But Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattarmangalam— near Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's Andipatti constituency—are fast becoming big blotches of shame on the map of Indian democracy. For several years now, the upper caste Thevars in these three villages have not let a Dalit occupy the panchayat president's post, reserved exclusively for Scheduled Castes. Panchayat elections have now been announced for the three villages once again—the 17th time in the last eight years. But as an Assistant Returning Officer at Keeripatti says: "I don't think anyone will contest the elections this time too Since the Panchaya Raj Act came to be implemented in Tamil Nadu 1996, Dalits have file nominations in Pappapai and Keeripatti. But on both occasions, the winners quickly quit the posts after getting elected. And the losers—those who filed nominations defying the Thevars—have fled the hamlets. Indian Express 13.9.04)

No reservations about this Dalit couple's merit (2)

AHMEDABAD, SEPTEMBER 12: AMID all the clamour for job reservation in the private sector, a Dalit couple has proved their point by clearing an exam for government jobs in the general category. Prakash Majumdar and his wife Sujata Solanki, who learnt on Wednesday that they have passed the Gujarat Public Service Commission examination, said they wanted to prove that Dalits can make it to the top even without reservation. We had decided from the beginning we would not mention in the application forms that we belonged to the Scheduled Castes. Sayus Prakash. And prove they did: Sujata ranked 39th, and hopes would be made a Deputy Superintendent of Police, Prakash came 110th and hopes for a section officer's post. (Indian Express 13.9.04)

18th September

Dalit raped, killed in Bihar; month on, accused at large (2)

Patna, September 17: A MONTH after a Dalit was raped and murdered, allegedly by relatives of an RJD legislator in the constituency of Chief Minister Rabri Devi, the police is yet to make headway in the probe. The 18-year-old was murdered on August 26 after she ignored threats and filed a police complaint, 10 days after she was raped. The victim's brother, Rajkumar Das, said accused Uday Rai and Nanhaki Rai had threatened to kill her if she did not withdraw the rape case. "They are still threatening us," he said. The Chamar community, to which the victim belonged, has also been threatened. According to the Vaishali police, Uday and Nanhaki, both relatives of MLC Uday Narain Rai of the RJD, are absconding. Villagers of Raghapur Diera, however, said they were roaming around freely and were not being arrested because of the political clout they wield. Uday Narain Rai had vacated the Raghapur Assembly seat for Rabri Devi and consequently, was nominated to the upper house of the legislature. Rai said the accused were his relatives but he was not shielding them. "I have not seen them in the past six months," he said. (Indian Express 18.9.04)

26th September

Poverty drives Dalit student to suicide (2)

JAIPUR, Sept. 25. — There might be various government schemes for scheduled caste students, but their benefits are not reaching the ground level, as apparent from a recent suicide by a Dalit teenager. Rajinder, a 17-year-old Dalit student, committed suicide in Sadulsahar of Sriganganagar district after his parents could not pay his school fee or meet his treatment expenses. A student of class .1.1, Rajinder was a meritorious student and had scored about 70 per cent marks in his matriculation examination. His father, Hari Ram, is a daily wager and works for other People in fields. A few days ago, Rajinder had asked for Rs 275 as computer fees. But as Hari gets most of his payment after the crops are collected, he didn't have the amount and promised to arrange it in some days. In the meantime, Rajinder fell ill and his family once again could not afford to pay for his treatment. "The poor economic condition of the family apparently depressed Rajinder. He committed suicide on Thursday evening by hanging himself with a rope when he was alone in the house," police said. (Statesman 26.9.04)

27th September

Panel on SCs to seek panchayat feedback from Dalits nationwide (2)

New Delhi: THE NATIONAL Commission for Scheduled Castes plans to call a state-wise interaction with members of panchayats from the Dalit community for a feedback on how their powers or institutions are being usurped. The nationwide sessions will start with a meet of panch and sarpanch of five districts of Haryana in Ambala in the end of October. With elected Dalits from the lowest rung of political ladder detailing their problems in states, these meetings may bring State Governments under direct scrutiny of the constitutional commission. Chairman of the National Commission, Mr Suraj Bhan, told The Pioneer, "There are cases with us to show the posts for Dalits are being manipulated by unscrupulous elements for illegal political power." Terming his initiative "an attempt at understanding the problems faced by Dalit representatives first hand", Mr Bhan said, "It will start with Haryana from where serious complaints have been lodged in the past and then move over as a nationwide exercise." The meetings in big states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh will be held in more than one legs.

The experimental meeting will comprise all the Dalit elected members of five Haryana districts —

Ambala, Panchkula, Jamunanagar, Kurushetra and Karnal. Besides the panchayat members, members of municipal committees, notified area committees and cantonment boards will also be present at the meetings. Representatives of government banks from these districts will also be there to inform the gathering on monetary schemes for the community. (Pioneer 27.9.04)

28th Sept.

Family 'kills' 15-year-old for eloping with Dalit (2)

MAHUA, SEPTEMBER 27: SHE was 15 and said she was in love. She was to be married later this winter but chose to run away with a Dalit boy instead, leaving a seething family behind. She was found in Mumbai and brought home. Three weeks later, Neelam died. But nobody is mourning her death in Shahadpur. Her father Roop Singh's house is eerily quiet. There are no women in the house, and instead of mourning, the family is busy refuting charges of an "honour killing". On the night of September 22, Neelam died "under mysterious circumstances". At that time, only her grand uncle, father and uncles were home. Quietly, they had reportedly cremated her. "For two days, we kept hearing about a girl who had been killed by her family for running away with a lower caste boy," recalls Ganpat Ram, SHO of the Mahua police station. By September 25 evening, the police had registered a case of murder against Neelam's father and uncles. "We were not convinced with their explanation," says Ram. "Now, we have initiated a full-blown investigation." (Indian Express 28.9.04)

29th September

TN dalit candidates face tough times (2)

Pappapatti (Tamil Nadu), Sept. 28: When elections were held for approximately 1,000 posts in local bodies across Tamil Nadu on Monday, four panchayats remained untouched, literally. Reserved for dalits to be elected as presidents, these panchayats have been without elections for years as the upper caste thevars made sure no dalit dared to contest and, if someone did defy their diktat, he was driven away for good. Pappapatti, Keeripalti and Nattar-mangalam in Madurai district, and Koltakatchiyendal in nearby Virudhunagar district, have been in the news for the wrong reasons after being reserved for dalits to be elected presidents of their panchayats. While the last mentioned panchayat did have a dalit president for the first five-year-term after the Panchayat Raj system came into vogue in 1996, the other three could not find a single dalit among their population to be crowned. The upper caste thevars would not allow that. Result: There have been 17 elections, held every six months, to find the presidents of these panchayats, but without success. A rare "aberration" occurred here and there, though. For instance, in April 2002, Irulan Subban, a 38-year-old farmhand, decided to defy the thevars and filed his papers for president. The local bigwig, Chellakannu Thevar, then asked his dalit servant Thanikodi to contest against the rebel and got him a handsome victory. Subban fled the village and is now hiding at his sister's house in a different village. (Asian Age 29.9.04)

1st October

Casteist flavour to mid-day meal (2)

LUCKNOW, Sept. 30. — The students of Gora Primary School, not far from the state capital, still have a lot to learn about social-equality. This is obvious from an incident that occurred last Wednesday, when upper caste ' students from this school refused to have a-1 meal with their Dalit classmates. The occasion was the launch of the mid-day meal scheme following a Supreme Court order last Wednesday. The gram pradhan, who has been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the success of the mid-day meal scheme, had arranged for the students to have a cooked meal at a local hotel, as the-school had not been able to make the necessary arrangements. However, during meal time, students belonging to the upper caste-left without eating the rice and dal cooked for them, reportedly because they could not do so along with Dalit classmates. District officials are unsure whether the students' parents had anything to do with their wards behaviour or whether they acted on their own. (Statesman 1.10.04)

12th October

Dalits targeted to cover up Khandwa forest wood theft (2)

Bhopal: THEFT OF forest wood from the jungles of Khandwa district is causing problems to the police. Such an incident triggered a case of excesses against a Dalit in Rajgarh village. The police have registered a criminal case and arrested the offenders. According to the police, a team of Forest department raided the village few days ago and seized a large amount of wood from the possession of over a dozen influential people of the village. Later, those people found out that a local Dalit had tipped off the forest officials in connection with illegal felling of trees. Following this, seven offenders including six of upper caste caught the Dalit, Harakchand and severely beat him up. They kept him in captivity and paraded him in the village, garlanding him shoes. The police came to know about the incident after 24 hours and an FIR was registered with the Piplaud police station under Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Atrocities Eradication Act against Suresh, Mahesh, their father Jagannath, Subhash, Dashrath, Kailash and Shivlal. Superintendent of Police DC Sagar told The Pioneer that all the accused have been arrested and Rs 7,500 have been given as compensation to the victim. (Pioneer 12.10.04)

15th October

Hundreds of Dalits embrace Buddhism (2)

PERAMBALUR. OCT. 14. Hundreds of Dalits from the Southern States today embraced Buddhism in the presence of monks from the Nagpur monastery, in Perambalur district. Their ordination followed an administration of oath and 'Boudh Dhamma Diksha' by Bhante Bodhi Dhamma, founder and national president, International Buddhist Youth Organisation (IBYO). "Renouncing" Hinduism and Hindu Gods were among the oaths administered at the ceremony, organised by the Dr. Am-bedkar Youth Front and the IBYO. About 1,500 people took the final oath. Over 50 people had their heads tonsured. K. Kandasamy, State president of the Dr. Ambedkar Youth Front and K.B. Dhamma Sen, IBYO State secretary, said embracing Buddhism was their only solution from the sufferings and "subjugation" caused by "caste-ridden" Hinduism. They assailed the Dravidian parties for blocking the rise of Dalit-centric political parties. During the daylong ceremony, groups of people came from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karna-taka, Pondicherry, and parts of Tamil Nadu, including Tuticorin, Vellore, Chennai, Tiruvannamalai and Ramanathapuram. (The Hindu 15.10.04)

16th October

Plea for National Commission for Backward Classes rejected (2)

NEW DELHI, OCT. 15. The Supreme Court today declined to entertain a writ petition filed by a Member of Parliament seeking a direction to the Centre and States to create National/State Commissions for Backward Classes within a specified period. A Bench of Justice Y.K. Sabharwal and Justice D.M. Dhar-madhikari while dismissing the petition filed by Asaduddin Owaisi from Andhra Pradesh, asked the petitioner to first approach the Governments and if no action was taken, to come to the court. The Bench told the counsel that as an MP, he could have raised the matter in Parliament and tried to get a legislation passed. To a question from the Judges whether the petitioner had approached the Government in this regard, the counsel said 'no' and therefore the bench asked the petitioner to approach the government first. The petitioner submitted that the Muslim community was not adequately represented with reference to their population, either in educational institutions or in the posts under the control of the State. (Hindu 16.10.04)

18th October

Caste tension in UP village (2)

Ghaziabad: TENSION IS prevailing in village Nangla Musha after students in school here refused to take meal prepared by a Dalit woman under Central Government sponsored mid-day meal scheme for school children. Gopi, husband of the Dalit women, Pradhan of the village, said the meal would only be prepared and served by his wife and up-pradhan Vimla. No other woman would be allowed to prepare meal for the school children. The Dalit community of the village is enraged after the incidence. In a meeting under the chairmanship of Gopi, passed a resolution that if the school children continue to boycott the meal, it would not be allowed to be served in the school. The meal would only be prepared and served by his wife Vimla. Principal of the school Anand Swarup said there are 131 students in the school and 100 students refused to take the meal prepared by Vimla. On the day when the students refused to take the meal, there were

129 students present and 100 refused to take meal. A student Hina, daughter of Wazid Ali said that her mother had asked her not to take the meal prepared by Vimla. (Pioneer 18.10.04)

20th October

Rulings by 'caste panchayats' unconstitutional: Aiyar (2)

NEW DELHI, OCT. 19. Referring to the controversy over recent "casteist judgments" by panchayats, the Union Panchayati Raj Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, today clarified that these "social" rulings had nothing to do with the duly elected panchayats under the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Recently, a panchayat in Haryana ordered the dissolution of the marriage of a couple and asked the husband and his pregnant wife to live like "a brother and sister." The panchayat of Assanda village in Jhajjar district directed the couple — belonging to the "dahiya" gotra and "rathee" gotra — to refrain from leading a married life while accusing them of belonging to the same caste. In another incident, a "maha panchayat" of 52 villages in Fatehabad district of Haryana ordered the dissolution of a marriage of 2002, on the grounds that the bride and the groom belonged to the same gotra. In yet another incident, a panchayat near Meerut asked an eight-month pregnant Gudiya to return to her first husband, who was a prisoner of war for several years in Pakistan. Gudiya is pregnant by her second husband whom she married four years after her first husband went missing. Referring to these rulings, Mr. Aiyar said these were not in conformity with the Constitutional provisions or based on the objectivity of free of caste and creed consideration. Some caste groups, calling themselves panchayats, were interfering in matters relating to marriage and other social issues. (The Hindu 20.10.04)

NHRC chief writes to Manmohan (2)

NEW DELHI, OCT. 19. The Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Justice A.S. Anand, has written to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Chief Ministers to prepare an action plan to prevent "untouchability" and atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs). Mr. Justice Anand has also written to the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and 13 Union Ministers to implement the recommendations of the Report on Prevention of Atrocities Against the SCs, which include identifying the areas prone to atrocity and untouchability and preparing an action plan. He has also asked Dr. Singh to institute an appropriate mechanism to monitor the steps taken to prevent atrocities against the SCs. Addressing a press conference after releasing the report here today, Mr. Justice Anand said the results of the Prevention of SC/ST Atrocities Act, seeking punishment to the offenders, had been poor because of the lopsided implementation of the Act and lack of political will to deal with the situation. The main reason for the continuing atrocities against the vulnerable sections was the indifference of society and its refusal to change its mindset to solve the problem. He had written to the Central and State Governments to implement the important recommendations of the report prepared by the former IAS officer, K. B. Saxena. (The Hindu 20.10.04)

24th Oct

Gujarat caste clash: One killed, 15 hurt (2)

Ahmedabad, Oct. 23: One Muman Bharvad was killed on the spot and more than 15 persons were injured in a clash between Bharvad and Rajput communities in Dodar village of Sanand taluka on Friday. The incident occurred when a court commission was conducting a panchnama for the construction of a road that will pass through Muman Bharvad's farm. According to police, over the years the two communities have clashed several times over this issue. The Rajputs, who came in hundreds in tractors attacked men of the Bharvad community with lathis and dharias. All the injured were rushed to Kesarlal hospital. DSP Ahmedabad Rural, Manoj Agrawal said they have rounded up seven men from the village who were involved in rioting. Both groups filed complaint against each other at Sanand police station. Mr Agrawal said they have stationed SRP at the village, and that situation is now peaceful. (Asian Age 24.10.04)

28th October

Four of Dalit family commit suicide (2)

Ahmedabad/Rajkot: "Oil ki dastan suna doon; phir yeh raat chaand nahi aayega..." goes the suicide note of the 45-year-old Dinesh Parmar, whose decomposed body along with his family's

was found in his home at Shweta Duplex on Wednesday. Parmar, his wife Madhu (40) and daughters Payal (19) and Nisha (17) had consumed insecticide. An engineer with LIC, Parmar had been suspended from the company for corruption charges two years back. In his six-page suicide note, he has blamed five LIC officials and two Rajkot-based contractors for driving him to suicide. He has charged the officials with nurturing an anti-Dalit bias. A case of accidental death has been registered, but the police may book the named LIC officials. The note begins on October 20, though Parmar signed off on October 23, suggesting that it may have been written over three days. Neighbours claim to have last seen the Parmars on Sunday. Rajan Kapadia, a relative, said that Nisha seemed "normal" when he visited her on Sunday. (Times of India 28.10.04)

2nd Nov.

Dalits upset over Shinde's removal (2)

Mumbai: The removal from office of Maharashtra's first Dalit chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde by Congress has created widespread resentment among Dalits. The fact that now chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and his deputy R R Patil and even the leader of the opposition in the assembly Narayan Rane are all Marathas has further upset the backward castes. Prof D N Sandanshiv, a prominent Dalit intellectual and legal expert, said not only the removal of Shinde but also the manner in which he was ejected from Mantralaya was unbecoming of a party which claims to stand by Dalits. He said Shinde was eased out even though he had led his party to victory against all odds. Also, till the eleventh hour it appeared that Shinde will be allowed to retain his job. But all of a sudden Deshmukh was pitchforked to the CM's post. Obviously Maratha leaders cannot tolerate a Dalit chief minister, he alleged. He said Shinde had angered the Maratha lobby by taking the historic decision of providing reservation for backward castes in jobs in the cooperative sector which has hundreds of sugar factories, spinning mills, dairies and banks in its fold in rural Maharashtra. He said the Maratha Mahasangh and other bodies of the Maratha caste had openly opposed this decision taken by Shinde in May, 2004. He feared that this decision may be diluted by the new Maratha-dominated dispensation. (Times of India 2.11.04)

8th Nov.

Dalits demand their 'due' rights (2)

NEW DELHI, NOV. 7. The All India Congress Committee secretary, Jaikishan, today organised a Mahapanchayat at the Ambedkar Bhawan here to seek immediate solutions to the socio-economic problems of the Dalits and Backward Classes from the Congress governments at the Centre and in Delhi. Mar Jaikishan said the Mahapanchayat has passed six important resolutions pertaining to different problems of the Dalits and Backward Classes. It has urged the Delhi Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit, to withdraw the more than six-year-old decision of the previous BJP government to deprive lakhs of families from the constitutional right of reservation by not issuing SC and BC certificates to those who had come to Delhi after 1954. Ms Dikshit has been called upon to extend the time limit to 2004. Stating that the decision had not only affected the rights of Dalits and BCs, he said, it has also affected the promotions of government employees. Further, the Mahapanchayat also called upon the Delhi Government to allow the Scheduled Tribes too the right of reservation on government services. Noting that thousands of vacancies existed in the reserved posts in various government departments, it said filling of these slots would also check the growing problem of unemployment. (Hindu 8.11.04)

10th Nov.

Another couple in caste trouble (2)

Rohtak, Nov. 9: Close on the heels of a panchayat allowing a couple to live as husband and wife, another couple in Haryana's Jhajjar district, exiled four years ago due to lineage, were on Tuesday allowed to return to their village with a rider. A panchayat in Jaundhi village decided to permit Ashish and his wife Dar-shana to reside on the outskirts of the village provided they withdraw their petition in the Punjab & Haryana high court seeking rehabilitation. Ashish accepted the decision, but his mother-in-law protested saying the two were not animals who could live in fields. She insisted that her daughter and son-in-law be allowed to stay in their home in Jaundhi. The meeting was attended by representatives of Dagar and Gahlout khaps (clans), Jhajjar SSP

and representatives of some, women's organisations. The panchayat had ordered- AshJsh, whose lineage is Etegar, and Darshana, who isGahlout, to leave as maririage between members of two lineages is prohibited. (Asian Age 10.11.04)

18th Nov.

Mahapanchayat of Dalits on Nov. 20 (2)

NEW DELHI, NOV. 17. The All-India Congress Committee secretary, Jai Kishen, today announced that the second Mahapanchayat of Dalits and Backward Classes would be convened here on November 20 to decide on the future plan of action in protest against the Delhi Government's "failure" to revoke the order barring people of this category from getting Government jobs if they were not of Delhi domicile before 1951. Terming the order issued by the previous NDA Government and notified by the Delhi Government as "arbitrary" and against the interests of Dalits and Backward Classes, Mr. Jai Kishen, a Congress MLA from Sultanpur Majra, said the Mahapanchayat was being held at Valmiki Mandir on Panchkuain Road in New Delhi. This meeting would give a direction to the struggle of Dalits against the atrocities committed on them. He said the six-year of the NDA rule was the worst period for the Dalits and Backward Classes as the elitist Vajpayee regime left no stone unturned to marginalise this section of society. He said due to the failure to revoke the order, thousands of citizens belonging to the SC/ST community had been suffering for the past many years. The Mahapanchayat would also request the Union Government to provide reservation to this category in the private sector and fill up vacancies in Government jobs that had fallen vacant years ago. (The Hindu 18.11.04)

21st Nov.

Mumbai college text caught in caste row (2)

Mumbai, Nov. 20: Mumbai University's Marathi literature syllabus has come under fire from academician Vijay Barve, who has raised objections to an article by social reformer Jyotiba Phule, titled "Casteism", in a textbook for second-year students. Mr Barve has claimed that "the most controversial and provocative piece" makes casteist comments. However, members of the board of studies of Mumbai University have refuted his allegations. Part of the article deals with a dialogue between Jyotiba and his son Yeshwant. His son wonders why God did not intervene instead of allowing the "Shudras" to suffer for centuries. Jyotiba answers: "The Almighty finally took pity on the Shudras. To free the Shudras from the trap of casteism, God sent the casteless Muslims. Unfortunately, the Muslims failed the Almighty. They started indulging themselves... Therefore, God, the creator, got quite angry and destroyed the Muslim empire." The son then wonders: "After demolishing the Muslim kingdom, did the Almighty relax?" Jyotiba's answer is: "No, God did not rest. The English were a barbaric lot at one time and used to live in the jungle. God let the English progress and develop, made them adventurous and sent them to India to free the shudras from the slavery of the brahmins." (Asian Age 21.11.04)

Meet criticizes anti-Dalit decisions (2)

NEW DELHI, NOV. 20. Thousands of senior representatives of Dalit communities and Backward Classes met at the second Mahapanchayat held here today and urged the Central and Delhi Governments to withdraw certain decisions taken by the previous Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance Government and the Delhi Government that had been "harming" the socio-economic interests of Dalits and Backward Classes. Criticising the previous BJP-led Government for taking anti-Dalit and anti-Backward Classes decisions, convenor of the Mahapanchayat, Jai Kishan said as a result of these decisions taken by the previous Government, no Schedule Caste or Backward Class certificates were being issued to those who had come to Delhi after 1951. This decision has affected more than 50 lakh people of Delhi as they were deprived of their Constitutional right of reservation. He also criticised the reported move of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to privatise sanitation work and said this was not in the interest of the Valmiki Samaj and would lead to unemployment and further exploitation of this deprived section of the society. Speaking on the occasion, the AICC in-charge Delhi, Ash-ok Gehlot said that Congress had always worked for the upliftment of the Dalits and backward classes and assured that Mahapanchayat that the present United Progressive Alliance Government led by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh would leave no stone unturned to solve the problems being

faced by this section of the society. (The Hindu 21.11.04)

26th Nov.

Dalit Christians need reservation (2)

Mumbai, Nov. 25: The All-India Christian Council has appealed to the Union government to grant reservation rights to those dalits who have converted to Christianity. The council pointed out that while reservation rights are provided to converted "Sikhs and Buddhists, the privilege is not accorded to converted Christians. The council's general secretary, Dr Abraham Mathai, said that the council filed a petition at the Supreme Court, following which the top court asked attorney-general Milon Banerjee to verify the Union government's view regarding the matter. "This proves that the Supreme Court has taken notice of the situation. After reviewing the prima facie evidence, the injustice against the converted Christians has come to light. If the Centre does not clear its stand to the court, it might go on to prove that the government is not secular as it claims and it encourages reconversion to Hinduism," he added. Dr Mathai also said that not granting reservation rights to dalit Christians is a violation of Article 25 of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion. "The dalit Christians could not enjoy their fundamental right because of restrictions imposed, if they converted to Christianity," he said. (Asian Age 26.11.04)

29th Nov

7 Yrs ago this week 59 Dalits were killed, charges are yet to be framed (2)

LAXMANPUR-BATHE, NOVEMBER 28: IN the final month of 1997, this obscure rural corner in Bihar shook India. On December 1 that year, 59 Dalits were killed here in a massacre that had then president K.R. Narayan exclaiming, "It is a national shame." On the night of December 1-2, about 250 Ranvir Sena men crossed the Sone river from Bhojpur district to the Subhas Nagar Tola in Laxmanpur-Bathe. They surrounded the hamlet and started firing. It was as simple as that. Of the 59 who died, 26 were women; 19 were children under the age of 10. The victims were all Dalits. The Ranvir Sena assailants had come from Barki Kharaon and Chotki Kharaon villages in Bhojpur. There were two "provocations". First, five people from the upper castes had been gunned down by CPI-ML activists only recently in the area. More immediately, there was a land dispute. Adjoining the Kamta village was a disputed patch cultivated by the upper caste. Landless Dalits, propped up by the Naxalites, had sought to forcibly harvest the crop. In mid-November, these people marched down the village, seeking direct action on what they felt were overdue 'land reforms'. Among the marchers were some from Subhas Nagar Tola. (Indian Express 29.11.04)

1st Dec

We might end up in jail or hang if you testify. (2)

NARAYANPUR, NOVEMBER 30: AFTER 12 Dalits were killed here on February 10, 1999, Laloo Yadav promised a "speedy" trial. The trial in the Narayanpur massacre case is speedy all right — witness after witness comes to testify in, roughly, one sentence: "I have not seen anything." Krishna Das, the informant and prime witness, told the trial court in Jehanabad on May 14, 2002, "I know that the incident happened but did not name any of the accused to the police." Sidhan Singh of the same village is the main accused. But with over a dozen witnesses resorting to one-sentence testimonies, acquittal is only a matter of time. The Narayanpur massacre was a political landmark in Bihar's rocky history. It led to the dismissal of the Rabri Devi government — it was reinstated later — by the then NDA government. A day after the killings, a Ranvir Sena press release regretted the "operation was not proper... Our aim was a much bigger massacre." Sonia Gandhi who visited the spot said: "Any government which is helpless in preventing such heinous acts forfeits its moral authority to govern." (Indian Express 1.12.04)

2nd Dec

Massacres in Bihar: Killers in this case were Dalits (2)

BARA, DECEMBER 1: IT was cold, clinical and almost primitive. On February 12, 1992, 36 people of the upper-castes were killed here, apparently by an MCC squad. All males in this Bhumihar hamlet were gathered, marched off to the bank of a nearby canal. Their hands were tied, and their throats slit. Thirty-six bled to death, the others survived. This time, the Laloo

Prasad Yadav government responded by invoking the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA), giving a unique twist to Bihar's caste wars. For, in no case where Dalits were killed was TADA used. The anti-terror law was only brought into play after a massacre of an upper-caste group. Death sentences were awarded to four people by the TADA court—all of them extremely poor and landless, three of them Dalits. "Here, whoever is not with us is with the MCC, says Satyendra Sharma, who introduces himself as the Gaya district chief of the upper caste Ranvir Sena. This is his defence when asked about the implication of the four as accused, in a crime evidently perpetrated by a trained MCC posse. (Indian Express 2.12.04)

3rd Dec

Dalit groups to hold dignity rally on Dec. 5 (2)

New Delhi, Dec. 2: Several dalit organisations, peoples' organisations and other groups have jointly called for a Peoples' Dignity Rally on December 5 at Ramlila grounds. Sunday is — International Day of Dalits Struggle and the World Dignity Day. Hundreds of activists, historians, social scientists, filmmakers, artists, writers, journalists and members of Parliament have endorsed their solidarity for the rally being organised by the World Dignity Forum. Those who have shown support for the cause include eminent citizens like actress and MP Shabana Azmi, political psychologist Ashish Nandy, historian Sumit Sarkar, publisher of Zubaan Urvashi Butalia, Mr U.R. Ananthamurthy, Javed Akhtar, political scientist Nivedita Menon, columnist Praful Bidwai and Prof. Kamal Mitra Chenoy from JNU. They have shown support for the 70,000 dalits coming for the rally to demand socio-political inclusion and the right to live with dignity. Minorities facing persecution, the rights of the agricultural workers, construction workers, migrant and domestic workers and the desire of the dalits to come together not only to demand the right to live with dignity for themselves, but for others equally discriminated are the issues that the rally seeks to highlight. (Asian Age 3.12.04)

4th Dec

Tragic end to love affair (2)

HAVING A love affair is still considered a crime in this belt and punishment for love-birds is death. Parents of a young girl killed their own daughter because she loved a dalit community boy and declared that she would not marry anybody else. Parents of the girl were arrested by the police and they clearly said that they-were not ashamed of their act as their daughter was trying to spoil their image and respect in the society. Dead girl's community is also supporting the act of the parents of the hapless girl. According to sources, Jayanti Prasad Sharma, who belongs to Brahmin community, lived in village Alipur Morna along with his wife Rita and daughter Ruby. His daughter Ruby was only 17 years old and she studied in class 11th in the school of the village. It is commonly known that Ruby was having a love-affair with one Yogendra Jatav of her own village. Yogendra's family lived in the neighbourhood of Jayanti Prasad and he knew Ruby from his childhood days. Yogendra (18) belonged to dalit community and was also studying in the same school in which Ruby studied in class 11th. Both of them went to the school together everyday and their friends knew that they were having a love affair for quite some time (Pioneer 4.12.04)

Caste away: Dalit Muslims seek their rights (2)

New Delhi: Caste division may be sacrilegious in Islam, but in India it is a reality. A bitter truth which the 15% "upper class Muslims" may have ignored for long but can't wish away. Groups of Dalit Muslims from all over the country gathered in the Capital on Saturday to claim their right to equality. They demanded reservation in jobs and education, just as their caste fellows among Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists have. Being "indigenous" hasn't helped us, they claimed. "The 15% Arshraf (the upper class, mostly of Arab, Persian and Afghan origin) control jobs, education and political space while we are still lugging the low-caste tag from our pre-conversion days," said Usman Ha-lalkhor, representative of one of the many backward communities among the Muslims demanding quota. Social scientist Imtiaz Ahmed blamed the truncated vision of the Muslim leaders who failed to get benefits for the socially and economically backward in the community MP A H Ansari blamed the political parties for picking only the influential Muslims to represent the community. "When the Dalit Muslims ask for affirmative action, it is put down by many in the

community as a way to divide the society. A similar argument was given to the Dalits among Hindus when they asked for reservation. If they are so concerned about keeping unity in their religion, why don't they stop discrimination and do something for the socially-economically backward," asked political scientist Yogendra Yadav. (Times of India 4.12.04)

11th Dec

Couple tonsured, paraded naked for intercaste marriage (2)

Ranchi: ANOTHER PANCHAYAT has played havoc — this time with a newly married couple who were tonsured, stripped and paraded naked in the village only to be eventually ostracised from the village. The ghastly act took place in Manhu village of Ranchi's Khuti subdivision on Thursday about 40 km from the State Capital. Vishnu Naik, son of Budua Naik who is a Scheduled Caste, committed the crime of getting married to the love of his life Galo, daughter of Bagnu Pahan who belongs to a Scheduled Tribe. The couple had been in love for the past four years and decided to tie the knot a while ago. Anticipating opposition, the two eloped and got married outside the village. The couple returned to their village three days ago. The village panchayat is convened every Thursday. As the panchayat met for its routine weekly sitting this Thursday, Vishnu's issue was brought to the meeting's notice by the girl's father. The panchayat was convened at the community hall and all villagers were asked to be present at the meeting. In its judgement, the panchayat agreed to the objection raised by the girl's father on the unacceptability of a tribal girl getting married to a Dalit boy. The panchayat condemned the marriage and found the couple guilty of having married outside their respective communities. (Pioneer 11.12.04)

Harassed couple to ignore panchayat threat (2)

RANCHI, DEC. 10. A day after being paraded naked by panchayat members for marrying outside their respective castes at Manhu village in Jharkhand, the couple today said they were ready to face social boycott. Supported by mother Angni Devi, groom Bishnu Nayak who is a part-time driver dared the village elders and said "we declared ourselves husband and wife in an affidavit and now we will cement it with rituals." An agitated Angni Devi asked the girl to show her bruises and scars suffered at the panchayat meeting. "I accept Galo Kumari as my daughter-in-law and will go back to village with my son and daughter-in-law after two/ three days," Devi told reporters at Mahadev Tola, over 50 km from Ranchi, where they are presently lodged. At the order of the panchayat under Khunti sub-division the two had been beaten up and then paraded naked before people yesterday, the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Madhusudan Bari, said. The police are looking for the village head, Birsa Munda, who chaired the meeting. (The Hindu 11.12.04)

13th Dec

Industrialists averse to share wealth with poor: Udit Raj (2)

NEW DELHI, DEC. 12. Reservation in private sector, compulsory and equal education and validity of caste certificate of one State in another was sought by Dalits at a meeting held under the banner of the All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations at the Ramliya Grounds here today. Addressing the gathering, the national chairman of the confederation, Udit Raj, said though globalisation and privatisation of the economy has taken place in India, the economy is yet to see industrialists share the wealth with the poor as in the case of Afro Americans, Red Indians and Mexicans in the United States. On the contrary, he said, the industrialist here had opposed the reservation to Dalits in the private sector when the Prime Minister met them on the issue on December 4. Of the view that the industrialists would have done better to oppose siphoning of profits to the tune of Rs 6,000 crores by the two soft drink giants or by uniting against the trade and commerce restrictions imposed by World Trade Organisation, IMF and World Bank, Mr Raj said unfortunately the Indian industrialists are not interested in the welfare of the masses and are only concerned about their own bank balances. (The Hindu 13.12.04)

20th Dec

Dalits ask Sonia for Andhra quota bill (2)

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Dalits from Andhra Pradesh, led by Congress MP Sarvey Satyanarayana, met Congress president Sonia Gandhi and urged her to ensure that a legislation was brought in

the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament. The bill is required in the wake of the Supreme Court striking down the categorisation of reservation for Dalits. This assumes significance in the backdrop of the Supreme Court ruling on November 5 proclaiming that only Parliament can pass a law for categorising reservation for the Dalits. The AP government had issued a government order on June 6, 1997, classifying the scheduled castes in A, B C and D categories. An Assembly resolution was passed on April 22, 1998 and later an ordinance was promulgated and presidential assent was obtained. Finally, the Andhra Pradesh Assembly on April 1, 2000, made an act to rationalise reservations, in order to facilitate the categorisation. Mr Satyanarayana said it was at the instance of Mrs Gandhi that the AP Assembly had passed an unanimous resolution on December 10, in order to pave the way for the categorisation of reservations. (Asian Age 20.12.04)

Five per cent RIICO plots for SCs/STs (2)

JAIPUR, DEC. 19. The Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO) has decided to keep five per cent reservation in industrial plots in the non saturated industrial areas for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women entrepreneurs. Earlier the reservation has been only for women entrepreneurs. The chairman and managing director of RIICO, Rakesh Hooja, said the corporation, in its board meeting recently, had also decided to provide incentives to good borrowers having a net worth above Rs.1.5 crore and a turnover of Rs.5 crore, at an interest rate of 9 per cent per annum. This rate would be 10 per cent for such borrowers whose net worth and turn over are from Rs.50 lakh to Rs.1.5 crore and Rs.1 crore to Rs.5 crores, respectively. The corporation has introduced another scheme which provides a 1 per cent rebate on interest over a period of three years to borrowers who remain in the category of standard account at the close of the year. In order to meet the working capital requirements a scheme has been introduced to grant short-term loan, repayable within 18 months, at an interest rate of 10 per cent per annum. (Hindu 20.12.04)

31st Dec

Dalits seek Governor's intervention (2)

JAIPUR, DEC. 30. Accusing the Rajasthan Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje, of being "totally inaccessible" to Dalits ever since she assumed office, the Dalit organisations in the State have approached the Governor, Pratibha Patil, seeking her intervention to ensure justice to Dalits and stop caste-based discrimination. Representatives of Dalit organisations led by the chairperson of Centre for Dalit Rights, P.L. Mimroth, met Ms. Patil here on Wednesday and charged that the administrative machinery in the State was insensitive to the plight of Dalits who were the victims of endless atrocities. He said Ms. Raje had shown no willingness to listen to the grievances of Dalits during the past one year. The delegation of Dalits urged the Governor to direct the State Government to take steps for strict implementation of laws protecting the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and ensure their access to the means of livelihood by safeguarding their share in land, water, wealth and capital. Mr. Mimroth said those belonging to so-called higher castes had grabbed the Dalits' lands at several places. A memorandum submitted by Dalit bodies to Ms. Patil alleged that there were serious lapses on the part of the State Government in the abolition of untouchability and prevention of the denial of basic human rights to Dalits in the rural areas. "The incident in Chakwada where Dalits were denied access to the public pond was a glaring instance of untouchability still practised in the name of customs," it said. (The Hindu 31.12.04)