

DALIT ATROCITIES - 2005

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JANUARY

RPI tells Star: Say sorry for insult to Ambedkar (2)

Mumbai, Jan. 1: Three hundred members of the Republican Party of India (RPI) staged a demonstration at the Star TV office at Andheri, Mumbai, on Wednesday evening to protest against some dialogues about the Constitution of India in the serial Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi aired by Star TV. The RPI members shouted slogans like "RPI zindabad, Smriti murdabad" and "RPI zindabad, Ekta Kapoor murdabad". The activists appeared deeply offended by a scene in which Tulsi (played by Smriti Malhotra) tells Ansh Gujral (played by Aakashdeep Saigal) that the Constitution should be amended to include a clause for marital rape. Speaking to The Asian Age, Mr Damodar Bokade, Andheri taluka president of the RPI, said, "The characters stated that the Indian Constitution be changed or rewritten. The Constitution has been drafted by Dr B.R. Ambedkar and this statement is an insult to him." The activists also demanded a written apology from the producer, Ekta Kapoor, and from actress Smriti Malhotra, for the dialogue. (Asian Age 2.1.05)

Punjab dalit boys report torture by jat Sikhs (2)

Chandigarh, Jan. 3: Upper caste jat Sikh men in southwestern Punjab's Fazilka Area thrashed, tortured and subjected three young dalit village boys to extreme humiliation which included forcing the victims to drink urine. And even though the incident was reported more than a month ago, the local police is reluctant to book the culprits because they are allegedly being protected by the local Congress party legislator, Mr Mohinder Rinwa. Recounting the horrendous treatment they were subjected to, Bittoo, 16, Piara, 12, and Gurbax, 20, told The Asian Age how, on November 27, they had been abducted and illegally detained at the house of the Village Patrewal sarpanch Gurdas Singh. Here, the sarpanch and other members of the local Jhakar clan first beat them mercilessly, forced them to consume alcohol and finally compelled them to drink urine while holding a gun to their heads. "They said they would kill us if we refused to drink their peshaab (urine)," a visibly terrorised Piara Singh the youngest of the three victims said. And when the boys' families reported the matter to the local police, all three of them were taken to the police post at the neighbouring Khui Khera viltage, -where- they -were-, subjected to further torture when they refused to sign a compromise with their jat Sikh attackers. "We were held illegally inside the chowki for eleven whole days," said Bal-winder Singh, the boy's paternal uncle who was also detained and beaten by the police. The police also detained 14-year-old Nanak Singh a young cousin of the boys. They were released only after they agreed to sign blank sheets of paper. (Asian Age 4.1.05)

MLA misusing funds meant for SC/STs, alleges CAG (2)

New Delhi: Looking for some innovative means of siphoning off funds? Turn towards Delhi MLAs for inspiration. In the on-going audit, Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found that MLAs have been misusing the funds meant for development in SC, ST dominated areas and Harijan bastis. Seeing the misuse, CAG has raised an objection and asked Delhi government to stop releasing funds for this purpose. CAG has also suggested that the government should conduct a census of the Capital to determine where and how many colonies have 51% or more SC and ST population. There is a separate head in Delhi's budget for development work in SC and ST colonies. For instance, in 2003-04, this head had an allocation of Rs 28 crore and in 2004-05 about Rs 22 crore. The criteria is that if an MLA of the area gives a certificate that a colony has 51% or more population concentration of SC and ST and needs roads or drains, it is considered a Harijan basti or SC/ST colony. This certificate is then forwarded to the SC/ST development corporation under Delhi government, that asks the finance department for funds and the money is

released. (Times of India 4.1.05)

Dalits thrown out of relief camps (2)

Nagapattinam. Jan. 6: THERE'S something even an earthquake measuring 9 on the Richter scale and a tsunami that kills over 1 lakh people can't crack: the walls between caste. That's why at Ground Zero in Nagapattinam, Murugesan and his family of four have been living on the streets in Nambiarnagar. That's why like 31 other families, they have been thrown out of relief camps. That's why they are hounded out of schools they have sneaked into, they are pushed to the rear of food and water lines, given leftovers, not allowed to use toilets or even drink water provided by a UN agency. That's why some NGOs are setting up separate facilities for them. Because they are all Dalits. They are survivors from 63 damaged villages—30 of them flattened—all marooned in their own islands, facing the brunt of a majority of fishermen who are from the Meenavar community—listed in official records as Most Backward Class (MBC)—for whom Dalits are still untouchable. The Indian Express toured the camps to find an old story of caste hatred being replayed in camp after camp: • In the GVR Marriage Hall Relief Camp, Dalits cannot drink water from tanks put up by UNICEF. The Meenavars say they "pollute" the water. • In the Nallukadai Street Relief Camp, a Meenavar Thalaivar, or leader, grabbed all cartons of glucose biscuits delivered by a Coimbatore NGO. The Dalits were told: these are not for you. • At Puttur Relief Camp, the Meenavars have hoarded family relief kits, rice packets, new clothes and other relief material. When the Dalits asked for some, they paid a heavy price—they had to spend the night on the road. • At the Neelayadatchi Temple Camp, Dalits are not allowed inside the temple, especially when rice and cash doles are being handed out. • Dalits from three villages taking shelter at Ganapati cinema hall in Tharambagadi are thrown out every night because the Meenavar fisherwomen say they did not "feel safe" falling sleep with Dalits around. • So 32 ostracised Dalit families took shelter in the GRM girls' school in Than-javur. But four days ago, even the school asked them to vacate saying it was due to re-open. Those doing the discriminating brush all this aside. Says Chellayya, a Meenavar fisherman at a Tharambagadi camp: "These Dalits have been playing mischief, going back to the villages and looting houses. That's why we don't want them around here." (Indian Express 7.1.05)

Waves failed to crack caste wall (2)

Keshvanpalayam (TN), January 7: THE DALITS of Keshvanpalayam thought they had seen — and survived — the worst after the tsunami hit their village on January 7. But they had more coming their way. upper caste survivors are forcing them out of relief camps and denying them aid supplies. Kuppuswamy Ramachandran, 32, a Dalit, said the fishing community (a relatively higher caste) didn't allow him and his family to sleep in a marriage hall because they belonged to the lowest caste. After three days, we were moved out to a school but now the school is going to reopen within three days and the teachers drove us out," he said. The tsunami destroyed swathes of farmland and the Dalits, mostly daily-wage farmers, no longer have jobs. At Keshvanpalayam, the Dalits had only flattened homes to show while survivors elsewhere enjoyed relief supplies such as food, medicines, sleeping mats and kerosene. No government official or aid has flowed into the village — 30 km from Nagapattinam — which houses 83 Dalit families. Cranes and bulldozers cleared the debris of a neighbouring fishing community, but they are yet to reach here. Chandra Jayaram, 35, who lost her husband to the tsunami, said her family has not received the promised government aid. "At the relief camps, we are treated differently due to our caste. We are not given relief supplies. The government says we will only be given leftovers," Jayaram said. S. Karuppiyah, field coordinator with the Human Rights Forum for Dalit Liberation, said that some villages, the bodies of untouchables were removed with reluctance. "Dalits are given no help to bury their dead. They are given only alcohol to get over the stench," he said. (Hindustan Times 8.1.05)

On the ground, they say: handle with care (2)

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 7: TAKING note of The Indian Express report on the way Dalit survivors are being ostracised, chairman of the National Commission of Scheduled Castes said here today that the panel's director in Chennai has been asked to visit the areas and take action. Said chairman Suraj Bhan: "I have prepared a note for the commission's Tamil Nadu representative,

Kannagi Packianathan. We shall ask our director in Chennai tomorrow to herself visit the spot and take necessary action." In Chennai, too, NGOs and relief agencies met today to grapple with a problem that's not only hampering relief but undermining the credibility of the official establishment. Sources who attended the meeting in Chennai told The Indian Express that caste confrontations came up for discussion when John Kurien from the Thiruvananthapuram-based Centre for Development Studies explained the "peculiar aspects" of relief distribution among fishermen. (Indian Express 8.1.05)

Call to protect basic rights of Dalits in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, JAN. 8. Dalit organisations of Rajasthan -- which took up the issue of continuing caste-based discrimination in the State with the Governor, Pratibha Patil, recently -- have now approached the higher echelons of bureaucracy to demand that the administrative machinery be sensitised about protection of Dalits' basic rights. A delegation of Dalit bodies, led by the chairperson of the Centre for Dalit Rights, P.L. Mimroth, met the Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Surendra Kumar, and the Law Secretary, G.S. Hora, here over the week-end and sought strict implementation of the laws against atrocities on Dalits. A memorandum submitted to the two officials called for ensuring effective functioning of the State-level high-power Vigilance and Monitoring Committee, headed by the Chief Minister, under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, to review the "prevailing human rights violations" against Dalits. The State convenor of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights and former MP, Than Singh, said the State Government had shown no willingness to identify the untouchability-prone and atrocity-prone areas and take remedial measures. "On the contrary, Rajasthan is ranking first in the country in the practice of all kinds of discrimination against Dalits," he said. The memorandum stated that the State Government should recover all lands of Dalits illegally possessed, encroached upon, grabbed, or forcibly occupied by the "people belonging to dominant castes, feudal lords and erstwhile rulers" defeating the ceiling laws. (The Hindu 9.1.05)

No dalits were insulted: MLA (2)

Chandigarh, Jan. 8: Denying that Dalit youths were forced to drink urine in a Ferozepur village recently, Congress MLA from Abohar, Mr Mohinder Rinwa, on Saturday claimed that a "non-existent" issue is being given political overtones by the BJP and accused the saffron party of "engineering caste clashes." "It is a political drama staged by some BJP leaders from Punjab. There has been no such incident where these youths, who are actually Rai Sikhs, a backward community, were forced to taste urine and suffer humiliation at the residence of the Patrewal village sarpanch," Mr Rinwa told reporters here. "All the three are known criminals and two of them belong to a village which is 70 km away from the Patrewal village, where this incident is alleged to have taken place," he said. Patrewal village head Gurdas Singh Jakhar, along with some village locals, were also present at the press conference. "A non-existent issue is being given political overtones by the BJP for their vested interests, but we will not allow them to succeed in vitiating the peaceful atmosphere of the village," said Mr Rinwa. (Asian Age 9.1.05)

Crimes against Dalits: Stats or just big lies? (2)

New Delhi: Figures always don't tell the true story and the statistics of the ministry of social justice is no different. In registers, crime against SC/ST may have gone down, but turn the figures on its head, the picture is different. Number of cases have gone down because the men in khaki are not registering all the crimes committed against backward castes. Even if cases are registered, the conviction process is slow. From 26,285 cases registered under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in 1999, the number has gone down to 22,066 in 2003. UP leads the pack, showing the highest number of registered cases. On the face of it, UP may seem to be like a hell hole for lower castes. But turn the figure on its head and you see a somewhat different picture. Ruled in phases by India's first Dalit woman CM, Mayawati, some say there was tremendous pressure on administration to register cases. But with 61,207 cases pending in UP courts since the law was enacted in 1989, most cases end up in legal quagmire. In the list of pending cases, Madhya Pradesh ranks second with 14,030. Bihar is yet to submit its figures. Sources said registration of cases do not mean much because most of them fall flat in the courts. As a rule, such cases have to be investigated by deputy superintends of police. "But generally the state

police directs junior officers to probe such cases and cases are dismissed soon," said an official. As stories of such atrocities increase, the ministry has decided to take up the issue with home minister and law minister. On January 11, it has organised a conference on prevention of atrocities against the SC/ST to be attended by the home, law and tribal affairs ministers. The national commissions of human rights, women, SC/ST, safai karamchari, NGOs and heads of police cells looking into the problem have also been invited. (Times of India 10.1.05)

Dalit can't cook mid-day meal (2)

Bhubamswar, January 10: THE MID-DAY meal (MDM) scheme in Orissa has fallen prey to caste discrimination where a dalit women in Kendrapara district was allegedly denied cooking job for the fear that upper caste students may shy away from the programme if "Dalit" women were taken as cooks. The Ambedkar Lohia Vichar Manch (ALVM), an organisation working for the Dalit rights, has lodged separate complaints in this regard with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the National Commission on SC/STs (NCS). The organisation has sought inquiries into the "injustice" done to Dalit women and demanded stringent punishment for "government officials patronising the social evil". The government guideline to recruit women, preferably from among the SCs and STs in the MDM scheme, has been violated, the ALVM said. ALVM secretary Rabindra Behera said: "We have informed the NHRC and the NCS about the poor treatment shown to Dalit women and about their exclusion from the MDM scheme which is there in the knowledge of government authorities." There are 1,428 primary schools in Kendrapara district, where the MDM scheme is operational. However, only in five to six schools, the cooks are "Dalit" women, while in the rest, only upper caste women have been employed. The district collector, when contacted, said the complaints are being investigated. "Earlier we had received complaints about schoolchildren skipping the meals cooked by Dalit women and the matter was deliberated at a high-level meeting recently," the collector said. (Hindustan Times 11.1.05)

Dalit cause: Centre takes up cudgels (2)

New Delhi: WITH THE conviction rate in atrocities against Dalits and tribals pegged at about 10 per cent since the last several years, the Centre has on Tuesday convened a national conference to break the jinx. "Out of 20,781 cases (of atrocities against Dalits) disposed of during 2003, only 2,694 ended in convictions while 18,087 cases were either withdrawn or ended in acquittal," Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment said in a statement on Monday. It said the conference would deliberate on reasons for low rate of convictions, speedy disposal of pending cases and on ways and means to generate awareness as well as action for prevention of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The ministry has identified 13 states as atrocity prone and set up in them a total of 133 special courts for speedy trial of cases under Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. According to official sources, nine states that account for 90 per cent of the total atrocities cases against Dalits and tribals include Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. "These states accounted for 90 per cent of the total 22,066 cases registered under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in the year 2003," the Ministry's statement said. (Pioneer 11.1.05)

Centre moots laws, courts to protect SC/STs (2)

New Delhi, Jan. 11: Taking note of the delay in justice in cases of atrocity against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the government on Tuesday favoured a "comprehensive law" and setting up of exclusive "special courts" in all districts across the country. "A special mechanism and special laws are needed to deal with the situation," Union law minister H.R. Bhardwaj said while speaking at a national conference on prevention of atrocities against SCs and STs. Mr Bhardwaj said along with attitudinal changes, amendments in the existing laws were necessary to impart justice without delay and added that there was a need for a constant review of the criminal justice system in the country. Observing that only "lip sympathy" was being rendered to victims of atrocities, Mr Bhardwaj said discrimination against SCs and STs should be removed at the grassroot level and suggested that MPs and MLAs set an example by living and eating with them. "Unless we change our attitude, atrocities will continue," he said. The law minister later urged

Union home minister Shivraj Patil, who was also present, to help frame a comprehensive law for speedy criminal justice. Union social justice and empowerment minister Meira Kumar said over 16 crore people were victims of atrocity or untouchability and expressed concern over the low rate of conviction due to ineffective investigation, casual handling of prosecution of cases and acquittals on technical grounds. (Asian Age 12.1.05)

NCW concern over atrocities on Dalits in Tamil Nadu (2)

NEW DELHI, JAN. 13. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has expressed concern over the plight of Dalit women in Tamil Nadu, where atrocities, poverty, illiteracy, and servitude had "driven them to insecurity." It has suggested a new law for the prevention of atrocities against women that would also have provisions for providing them relief and rehabilitation. Releasing a report on the "Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in Tamil Nadu," the NCW chairperson, Poornima Advani, said the "pernicious" social evils of caste and patriarchy, along with globalisation and displacements, had driven Dalit women to servitude. These challenges need to be effectively countered to ensure their right to life with dignity and without discrimination, she said. The report said the incidence of rape and molestation of teenaged girls who were promised with marriage, which resulted in unwed mothers, was shocking and indicated continuing feudal bondage that Dalit women faced in a caste-based society. "Sexual harassment by upper caste men needs to be dealt with by strictly implementing provisions for preventing of atrocities under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act," the report said. The report said violence against girls was also rampant in the State. Violence involves a wide variety of offences like torture, sexual abuse, rape, murder, bonded labour practices, child marriage and discrimination in hostels. (The Hindu 14.1.05)

FEBRUARY – 2005

Dalit lawyers highlight discrimination in judicial system (2)

JAIPUR, FEB. 6. Dalit lawyers from various parts of Rajasthan highlighted the cases of bias and discrimination in the judicial system at a State-level convention here on Saturday and underlined the need for sensitising the presiding officers of courts and public prosecutors to ensure justice to the people belonging to Scheduled Castes. The convention - the first of its kind in the State - was organised jointly by the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) and the Human Rights Law Network. The participants narrated instances reflecting prejudice against Dalits and pointed out that the attitude and behaviour of those in judiciary smacked of derision for Dalits. The national co-convenor of NCDHR, P.L. Mimroth, said the conviction rate under the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was abysmally low in Rajasthan because of an "inherent bias" against Dalits that often led to weakening of cases by the prosecution. He said the courts should take an extra care to find out truth in such matters. The Executive Director of Human Rights Law Network and a Supreme Court lawyer, Collin Gonsalves, said the Dalit organisations were planning to hold a colloquium of judges shortly to discuss measures for ensuring justice to Dalits. Several judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts, including three from the Rajasthan High Court, have reportedly given their consent to attend the colloquium. Mr. Gonsalves said the public prosecutors should be held accountable for poor representation of criminal cases in which Dalits were victims. (The Hindu 7.2.05)

BSP plans aggressive stir over temple issue (2)

UNA, FEB. 6 The Bahujan Samaj-wadi Party will launch an "aggressive campaign" in Himachal Pradesh against the alleged atrocities committed on the Dalits at Santoshgarh during last month's demolition of Guru Ravi Das Temple here. BSP National Secretary and incharge of the State affairs Maan Singh Manehra told mediapersons after presiding over a State-level party workers meet here today that the entire episode had been discussed in detail and their leader Mayawati would soon come to Himachal and address a public meeting here after February 23. Terming the alleged police excesses on the protesting Dalits as "government-sponsored terrorism", he said the BSP would fight for upholding the sentiments of the Dalits towards Guru Ravi Das and appealed to the Government to construct a new temple at the same place from where the old one

was demolished, if it wanted peace in the State. The BSP leader said the acceptability graph of the party was on the rise in Himachal Pradesh. Mr Manehra said a massive organisational overhaul was underway in the country and that the BSP was the party of not only the Dalits, but even of the people from other sections of the society. (The Hindu 7.2.05)

Centre for Dalit, Minorities Studies opened (2)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 7. Describing caste as a major feature of Indian society and politics, the former President, K.R. Narayanan, today remarked that in spite of a broadminded and liberated society, the problems of caste and minority issues continue to hound the country even today. Speaking at the inauguration of the Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia here, the former President while narrating his personal experiences of dealing with caste prejudice during his young days said: "We cannot understand India without understanding the problems of Dalits and minorities." While welcoming the University's initiative in introducing the course, Mr. Narayanan said it was strange how the subject had been neglected in recent times. "I cannot understand how we neglected this social study for so long. The study of caste and community has got postponed for rather long." Calling it the need of the hour, the Union Minister of State for Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Kumari Selja, said: "It is not that the issues of politics and economy are less important or influential than those of caste and religion. Instead the latter are the very forms in which the former are sought to be fought out and resolved." (The Hindu 8.2.05)

Debate on reservation for Dalit Christians (2)

New Delhi, Feb. 11: Brushing aside the Centre's stand opposing court's intervention in matter relating to inclusion of any particular community in the Scheduled Caste list, the Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine the legality of the sensitive issue raised in a petition demanding reservation for dalits even after their conversion to Christianity. "It is a crucial issue and we would examine the legal side of the issue on the basis of the rulings cited by the petitioner and the attorney-general," a bench comprising Chief Justice R.C. Lahoti and Justice G.P. Mathur said, while adjourning the matter for four weeks. Opposing the petition filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation on this issue, Attorney-General Milon Banerjee was curt and straight. "It is matter of policy and legislation and the courts should keep out of it," he said even while citing his correspondence with the government urging it to consider, the issue "sympathetically." Mr Banerjee said that the apex court itself had ruled that any amendment to the Presidential Order of 1950 regarding SCs or STs was within the purview of the legislative action. (Asian Age 12.2.05)

Massacre report in Assembly after 9 Yrs (2)

Jaipur, Feb. 15: The Rajasthan government tabled the report on the sensitive Kumher massacre in the Assembly on Monday, 13 years after the incident. It was the Rajasthan's first and worst Dalit carnage and claimed lives of over 15 people in Bharatpur district. After ignoring demand of Dalit organisations, Rajasthan high court's directive forced to the BJP government to table the report in the House. Justice K.S. Lodha had submitted his report on August 1, 1996. Dalit rights activist P.L. Mimroth, chairman of Centre for Dalit Rights, had filed a writ petition in the high court saying that the government had deliberately decided not to make the report public. "I filed a contempt application when the government was reluctant to make public the report, my application is still pending," Mr Mimroth said. Thirteen years after the incident, wounds of oppressed Dalits are still fresh. "Our people were roasted by a mob in broad daylight and administration failed to protect us as we are victim of discrimination," says Mr Mimroth. The government did not present the report in the Assembly keeping in mind parliamentary elections, which were followed by municipal and panchayat elections, he alleged. The incident occurred on June 6, 1992 in Kuhmer town of Bharatpur where upper caste Hindus assembled in a panchayat and attacked Dalit localities in which 15 Dalits were killed. (Asian Age 16.2.05)

Dalit woman alleges minister role in stripping (2)

JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 16: RAJASTHAN Agriculture Minister Prabhu Lal Saini is in the eye of a storm over the alleged kidnapping and public stripping of a Dalit woman member of a panchayat

in Tonk district. In a complaint filed with Tonk police, Sosar Devi Raigar, a representative of the Deoli Panchayat, has alleged that she was abducted and humiliated by BJP workers on Saini's instructions to prevent her from voting against the party candidate in the recent elections for local bodies. And while the police have arrested several people accused in the complaint, Saini's name has been struck off the FIR registered on Sosar Devi's complaint. In the FIR, Devi said she was forced off a tractor while on her way to cast the vote for panchayat pradhan on February 10. She was later dragged into the mustard fields in the village and beaten allegedly by the henchmen of Udai Lal Gurjar, the BJP candidate for the post. Later, she was stripped in public. Devi said the BJP workers would have killed her had not the local SP arrived in time. The Tonk SP, however, refused comment. "My abductors took me to a local resthouse where Saini threatened me to either vote for the BJP candidate or face the consequences," she said. While Saini was not available for comment, Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria denied the allegations. (Indian Express 17/2/05)

Rape, murder of 17-yr-old haunts Rabri home turf (2)

RAGHOPUR, FEBRUARY 16: UNDELIVERED promises of housing, electricity, education and land are not the only reasons the Dalits of Madaha, in the Bihar chief minister's constituency, are not voting for Rabri Devi this time. Six months after the rape and murder of 17-year-old Manju Devi who was killed allegedly because she dared lodge a complaint of rape, the wounds are still raw. "They had threatened to kill her if she did not withdraw the complaint," recalls father Ram Das. Manju Devi was strangled and stabbed to death on August 26 last year. Ram Das and other villagers will vote for Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which does not have much of a base in this constituency. They have deserted the RID because the murder accused, they say, are close relatives of a senior RJD leader. Nor will they vote for Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP as they believe one of the killers is being protected by one of Paswan's relatives. "The killers are living in the village. They regularly threaten us and tell us to withdraw the case," says Rajkumar Das, Manju's brother. After the local police station refused their complaint, (Indian Express 17/2/05)

Woman cop who filed complaint against SP suspended (2)

BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 17: THE issue of a Deputy Superintendent of Police in Madhya Pradesh accusing her senior of harassment has acquired political overtones with the Opposition charging the government of victimising the Dalit police officer. The DySP, Anita Malviya, was suspended today after a late Wednesday night transfer to the state Crime Record Bureau (SCRB). Malviya, belonging to the SC category, had filed the complaint in the Anusuchit Jati Kalyan (AJK) police station on Tuesday against Bhopal SP Pawan Shrivastava. State DGP S.K. Das had ordered an IG level inquiry into the case. Malviya said she would fight the case and denied having indulged in insubordination. "You can stretch your tolerance limit to a point. The trauma was getting unbearable and that is why I took the step. It is unfortunate that instead of looking at my appeal, suspension has been served on me," she said today. (Indian Express 18/2/05)

Govt. discriminating against weaker sections: Congress (2)

JAIPUR, FEB. 23. The Rajasthan Assembly today witnessed noisy scenes over an allegation by the Opposition Congress members that the State Government was indulging in DISCRIMINATION against the people belonging to Scheduled Castes and Tribes, other Backward Classes and minority communities by not releasing adequate loans through the Finance and Development Corporations for these sections. The issue came up during question hour when Mohammed Mahir Azad (Congress) sought to know the details of guarantee provided by the State Government for getting Central subsidy for schemes undertaken by the Corporations. The Social Welfare Minister, Madan Dilawar, clarified that guarantee was given only for the loans sanctioned by these Corporations. The Minister's reply failed to satisfy the Congress MLAs, who charged that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government was showing prejudice against the weaker sections by releasing very little amount as loans. "Over one-lakh people seek loans for self-employment every year, but the credit was sanctioned to only a few people after the BJP came to power," Mr. Mahir Azad said. (The Hindu 24/2/05)

'Provide equal opportunities to Dalits (2)

JAIPUR, FEB. 24. The National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights has called upon the Rajasthan Government to take meaningful steps for welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes by launching health care campaigns for them, opening residential schools for students and ensuring strict implementation of the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. A delegation of NCDHR met the State Medical and Health Minister, Digambar Singh, and the Social Welfare Minister, Madan Dilawar, here early this week and submitted memoranda to them asking for providing equal opportunities to Dalits in various walks of life and taking special measures for upkeep of their localities and meet their needs. The NCDHR's State convenor and former MP, Than Singh, said the State Government should prefer the local tribal women in the appointment of medical workers at the health sub-centres in the Tribal Sub-Plan areas to ensure better delivery of immunisation and maternal and child health services. The Dalit body felt that the prerequisite of below poverty line (BPL) should be waived in the implementation of various health care schemes in the localities inhabited by SC, ST and minorities. The benefit under the Chief Minister's Life Saving Fund and tuberculosis control programme should also be extended to the deserving people, it stated. Mr. Than Singh requested the Social Welfare Minister to open more hostels for Dalit and tribal students and hike their scholarships. He said the financial assistance to the victims of caste violence under the SC/ST Act should be released immediately after the criminal case was registered. (The Hindu 25/2/05)

MARCH – 05

Dalits, adivasis protest eviction (2)

New Delhi, March 4: "Stop state sponsored police repression on Dalits and adivasis and eviction of tribals from forests in the name of "forest protection." That's the demands of the adivasis, Dalits, small farmers and rural workers from Orissa, Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Around 150 of them are here in the capital to take forward their "campaign against the plunder of resources." To register their protests they sat on a dharna at Jantar Mantar on Friday and will continue the same on Saturday concluding the protest with a candle light vigil later in the evening. The group plans to submit a memorandum to the President Mr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam seeking his intervention to secure the rights of the tribals as the activists allege that the centre, state and the judiciary have failed to take any action. This group is also demanding that the memorandums of understanding signed with multi-national mining companies in the three states should be cancelled. The tribals and workers are being led by activists from struggle groups from the three states. These include Prakrutik Sampad Surakshaya Parishad from Kashipur, Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha and Jan Sangharsh Morcha from Madhya Pradesh. (Asian Age 5/3/05)

People want development, not Dalit agenda: Gaur (2)

MAIHAR (MADHYA PRADESH), MARCH 12. The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Babulal Gaur, today said while inaugurating the Satna-Maihar-Umaria (Bond EOT) road that people want development and not the Dalit agenda. Inaugurating the Satna-Mai-har-Umaria highway, built by the Malaysian firm I.J.M. (India) Limited in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation, Mr. Gaur said it was not an occasion to narrate the tale of 10 years of Congress misrule in Madhya Pradesh. "The Congress has been punished by the people and pushed into the corner and the fact that it could win only 39 seats in the 230-member State Assembly since it had neglected its role when it came to building the economic infrastructure amply reflects this," he added. Mr. Gaur said his Government's priority is infrastructure and it is determined to fulfil its commitments on the road, power and water fronts. Mr. Gaur also took a dig at the state of affairs in Bihar and said that he found, while campaigning there recently, that the law and order situation has taken a nose-dive. The cinema theatre owners in Patna have even stopped the late night shows as they are always afraid that they could be kidnapped, he said, adding that the paradox is that even the criminals have become leaders in Bihar. Talking to newsmen later, Mr. Gaur said his government was determined to connect all the important tourist centres in the State with good international-quality roads. Within the next one year, the Government would be investing Rs. 100 crores on "tourism roads" to provide better connectivity with places like Bandhavgarh, Sanchi and Mandu. (The Hindu 13/3/05)

Dargah wedding for dalits on TN coast (2)

Chennai, March 17: Eight displaced dalit couples tied the nuptial knot at the famous Nagore Dargah, close to Nagapattinam, which was among the worst affected coastal town in south Tamil Nadu. The Society of Daughters of Mary Immaculate, a Christian NGO, sponsored the marriages, thereby completing the happy picture of communal amity even as nightmares of the December 26 disaster continue to haunt many. "All the eight dalit couples were married as per the Hindu tradition. It was a great sight, as people from all three religions got together in this effort towards post-tsunami reconstruction as marriage brings happiness to families battered by the disaster," Dr J. Radhakrishnan, district collector Nagapattinam, said. He said the dalits insisted on marrying in the Nagore Dargah, a famous Muslim shrine, also frequented by believers of other religions as it symbolises communal amity. "Besides, they had all taken shelter in the durgah when their houses were swept away by the tsunami," Dr Radhakrishnan said in a phone interview. The Nagore Dargah had sheltered hundreds of families displaced by the tsunami. A number of bodies were also buried in pits dug inside the shrine. The dargah houses the grave of a much-revered Muslim religious leader of southern Tamil Nadu and draws thousands of pilgrims of all faiths seeking cure for their ailments. (Asian Age 18/3/05)

Dalit youth's murder sparks off tension in Pali district (2)

JAIPUR, MARCH 19. The gruesome murder of a Dalit youth in Bedkalan village in Pali district of Rajasthan allegedly by a former Congress MLA early this month has sparked off tension in the region with Dalits accusing the influential people of so-called higher castes of threatening them and eye-witnesses to the incident complaining of being intimidated. The accused, along with his two accomplices, has since been arrested. The relatives of the deceased, Mohan Meghwal, have migrated to nearby Jait-aran and are staging an indefinite dharna outside the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's office demanding that the chargesheet against the accused, Tha-kur Shivdan Singh, be submitted in the trial court without delay and the family members and witnesses be given protection. Mohan was stabbed to death with a dagger in broad daylight at the village square on March 1 and a tractor was run over his body. A delegation comprising about two dozen Dalits from Bedkalan village, which visited the State Capital today to meet the Chief Minister and senior officials, alleged that Shivdan Singh had murdered Mohan taking umbrage at his intention to contest for Sarpanch in the recent panchayat elections. Mohan was disqualified following a "false evidence" proving that he had violated the two-child norm. Two eye-witnesses to the alleged murder, Om Prakash and Sanwal Ram, said at an interaction with mediaper-sons here that police had provided heavy protection to the household of the culprits while the presence of policemen in the Dalit locality was "perfunctory". "Hundreds of people of upper castes gathered at Shivdan Singh's house recently on his mother's death and fired in the air to frighten us," said Om Prakash.(The Hindu 20/3/05)

Dalit Panchayat held (2)

LUCKNOW, MARCH 20. Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) today held a 'Dalit Panchayat' here and announced it would kick-start a state-level movement to woo the Dalit and other backward communities. The Panchayat, presided over by the State Congress President, Salman Khurshid, was aimed at making a dent in the BSP vote bank. AICC General Secretary and UP in-charge Satyavart Chaturvedi, Union Ministers Mahabir Prasad and Sriprakash Jaiswal and other prominent Congress leaders also addressed the meet. Later briefing newsmen, Mr Chaturvedi said seven important resolutions pertaining to socio-economic and political problems of the SCs, STs and backward classes were unanimously passed by the Panchayat. "We have resolved that for the socio-economic development of the downtrodden, a 20-point programme would be introduced in the State including demanding reservation in the government and private sector," he added. (The Hindu 21/3/05)

APRIL 2005

Dalits: Polls to be exercise in futility (2)

Madurai, April 3: The Election Commission may have announced the bi-annual elections to fill

vacancies in the reserved panchayats of Keeripatti, Pappapatti and Nattamangalam in Madurai district, but Dalits here feel that it will be another exercise in futility like all the other elections held in these constituencies ever since they were declared reserved constituencies in 1996. Two men, who contested the elections for Keeripatti and Pappapatti in 2003, on behalf of the Dalit Panthers of India, said they are shunned by the upper castes in their village for daring to enter the fray against their wishes. The people of their own community in these villages are boycotting them and they are also afraid to be seen with them for fear of upsetting the upper castes, they said. On the other hand, the Piramalai Kallars, the land owning high caste community leaders here deny that they are preventing the Dalits from filing nominations for the posts of presidents of the reserved panchayats. "If they are not coming forward to file nominations, how can we be blamed for it?" their leaders questioned. Mr Annakodi, a former president of the Pappapatti panchayat and Usilampatti panchayat says that they were not standing in the way of the Dalits contesting elections. But he said when the Dalits were a minority in these panchayats, it was unreasonable for the authorities to designate them as reserved constituencies. Mr Poongudiyan and Mr Suppan contested the polls for the panchayat president post of Keeripatti and Pappapatti respectively with the backing of the DPI. But they lost badly due to their opponents who were nominated by the upper caste communities in their villages. The men had found it hard to campaign in these villages even under heavy security. Mr Poongudiyan was attacked by villagers at Keeripatti, when he went to campaign for the elections in 2003. A case was registered against more than 100 for the attack, but so far no action has been taken against them. (Asian Age 4/4/05)

In UP, Dalit & Muslim IAS officials out in cold (2)

Lucknow: MULAYAM SINGH Yadav's heart may beat for Muslims and dalits, but his deeds do not match his words. And this could be seen best in the posting of IAS officials. No dalit or Muslim IAS officer is in plum or decision making posts as all of them are occupied by upper caste. Take the case of Muslim IAS officers: The senior most officer is Anis Ansari — a 1973 batch official. He is posted as Principal Secretary, in Panchayati Raj department. Interestingly, the same post was held by 1982 batch IAS officials, that too almost eight years ago. Among other Muslim officials, Naseem Zaidi, a 1976 batch IAS officer is on Central deputation. Similarly, Halim Khan is in Delhi. Majid Ali, another Muslim IAS officer, is posted in Kanpur, while Md Mustafa is Special secretary in Minority Welfare department. "It seems the Chief Minister has no faith on Muslim officials and therefore he has kept them away from active administrative work," a senior Muslim IAS official told *The Pioneer* on Tuesday. The situation is no different for the dalit officials. There are at least 20 dalit IAS officials of 1970 to 1981 batch. Senior most is Sambhu Nath, a 1970-batch IAS officer. He is Principal Secretary to the Governor. The 1972-batch Chandra Pal is waiting posting while his batch mate HK Birdi is in Department of General Administration. The 1974-batch Harish Chandra is member Revenue Board while DS Bains of the same batch is Chairman, Sugar Corporation. Karnail Singh (1975 batch), who was Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, has gone to the Centre on deputation while Rajendra Bhonwal, again of 1975 batch is in department of programme implementation. The only saving grace for dalit officials, per se, is appointment of DC Lakha as Principal Secretary, Food and Civil Supplies. Though it is said to be a "critical posting" in view of alleged food scam, the posting seems to be a plum one. (Pioneer 6/4/05)

Dirty face of tsunami relief (2)

Chennai, April 5: There is an overriding sense of being hard done by "Why can't they provide the same relief — at least the rice and cash — to we Dalits as they have to the fishermen?" asks a Dalit woman in Nagapattinam, the Tamil Nadu district worst hit by the December tsunami. The woman, her face shrunk and wrinkles all over her forehead, is one of the hundreds in the coastal tract who were dependent on inland fisheries. They now barely manage to eke out a living by "catching prawns with their hands" while the males in their families work as daily wage labourers for the upper-caste fisherfolk. "If anything, our votes are much more than the fishermen and yet nobody from the government has bothered to come to us," the old lady fumes. These scenes are part of *Caste 'e' Away*, a 30-minute documentary on the discrimination against Dalits during tsunami relief and rehabilitation. The scene then cuts to a desolate long culvert on which a state transport bus whizzes past. The commentary by actor-turned-filmmaker Revathy zooms on

another tragic facet of exploitation of Dalits in tsunami relief works — transporting thousands of Dalits from all over Tamil Nadu as conservancy workers to remove the dead from the devastated hamlets of fisherfolk. The film, produced by the Chennai-based Dr Ambedkar Centre, aims to highlight the ugly side of tsunami relief and rehabilitation in the state to sensitise the administration at Fort St. George and in New Delhi to the caste-based discrimination even in a human tragedy of mammoth proportions. (Telegraph 6/4/05)

Notice to Centre on reservation for Dalit converts (2)

NEW DELHI, APRIL 11. The Supreme Court today issued notice to the Government on a public interest litigation petition seeking extension of reservation to the Scheduled Caste people even after they convert to Christianity. A Bench, comprising Chief Justice R.C. Lahoti and Justice G.P. Mathur, which in February said that it would examine this question, issued the notice to the Government after the Attorney-General, Milon Banerjee, pointed out that no formal notice had been issued. He said the Government would file its response. The Bench asked Mr. Banerjee and other parties to make brief submissions citing the relevant case laws and directed the listing of the matter for final disposal in August. On a petition filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation, challenging the constitutional validity of Paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Orders, 1950 by which Scheduled Castes people professing and converting faith in religions different from Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism were deprived of reservation benefits, the court in October last had sought the views of the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General, in his response, had submitted that as it was a policy matter, courts should keep out of it. He cited earlier apex court rulings holding that any amendment to the Presidential Order of 1950 regarding the inclusion of any particular community within the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes was within the purview of the legislative action. (The Hindu 12/4/05)

Dalit woman gangraped in Bihar village (2)

Patna: Caste violence reared its head once again in Bihar with the brutal gangrape of the wife of a Dalit policeman by a gang of alleged upper caste men. The incident took place in Munger district, though the woman's constable husband is posted in Begusarai. The police said she was gangraped on Sunday night by four powerful men of the area, including a petrol pump owner. She Was Staying in a college hostel in Munger. (Asian Age 14/4/05)

Mother is paraded naked after; son elopes (2)

Ranchi: In a ghastly act, a 50-year-old woman was paraded naked on the outskirts of the Jharkhand capital after her son eloped with a girl. According to the police, the incident took place on Tuesday at Baski village. The woman was paraded naked after the village elders decided to "punish" her for her son's conduct. Sandeep Lohra, the son, was in love with a tribal girl of the village. Finding it difficult to get married, they eloped three days ago. The girl's family was opposed to their marriage as they belonged to a different caste. The family launched a search operation but failed to track him down. The family then summoned a meeting of the panchayat, which decided that the boy's family should be "insulted." (Asian Age 14/4/05)

Protests over typo in Ambedkar ad (2)

Aurangabad, April 14: DALIT ACTIVISTS attacked several newspaper offices here to protest the use of the word "homage" in a quarter page spread released by the I&B Ministry on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on Thursday. The ad — released through the Department of Audio Visual publicity and carried by Loksatta, Tarun Bharat and Gawkari — used the word shradhanjali which is normally used on death anniversaries. Over 50 activists ransacked the office of Gawkari in Khokadpu-ra. The paper's resident editor Deepak Patwe told HT he couldn't gather why his office alone was targeted when the same advertisement had appeared in at least two other newspapers. Early in the morning, Loksatta editions were burnt at Gul-mandi. As a precautionary measure, the office shut for the day and security personnel were deployed around it, senior editor Pramod Mane said. (Hindustan Times 15/4/05)

Caste parties on Vijayawada campuses (2)

Vijayawada, April 14: The "ugly" caste factor is rampant on college campuses in Vijayawada.

Students of engineering colleges throw many parties — farewell for seniors, welcome parties for new students — but only those belonging to a particular caste are welcome. "C-parties" are meant for Chaudarys alone (in other words Kammas), "K-evenings" are for the Kapus while "D's discos" are for the minorities and other classes. J. Manjula, student of Siddhartha Engineering College said, "On the very first day of college our seniors tell us to introduce ourselves by clearly mentioning which community we belong to. Accordingly, they befriend us." Once the groups are formed, it is a case of who is better-and bigger. Moreover, if C-party spends a certain amount, K-party tends to splurge more. "Comparisons are inevitable. If students belonging to one caste chill out with frills and thrills, we plan a better bash," laughed V. Raghunath of KLCE. Sadly, it is alleged that lecturers also get dragged into this caste-based groupism. They follow the caste rule when attending a party. "Lecturers do not encourage these kind of activities. On an odd occasion, perhaps one or two teachers may have attended such a party for a short time primarily because of the close rapport they share with the students. Otherwise, by and large we stay out of it," clarified a lecturer. However, Dr V. Vasudeva Rao, the principal of Sid-dhartha Engineering College admitted, "Students indulging in caste-based parties is a sad state of affairs." (The Hindu 15/4/05)

Paswan for Dalit-minority unity (2)

BHOPAL: The Lok Janshakti Party president, Ram Vilas Paswan, said here on Thursday that his party would try to unite Dalits, minorities and the poor youths belonging to the upper castes keeping in focus the next round of elections in Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the country.

Addressing the Ambedkar Jayanti rally here, Mr. Paswan said his party would fight for the rights of the backward castes and shall never pit one caste or religion against the other. His party already Holds the key to the formation of the next Government in Bihar, he said, adding "people are now leading a normal and secure life in Bihar, whereas earlier one only heard of rapes and murders in the State". Now it was his turn to devote full attention to Madhya Pradesh, he said, further stating that he would not rest till the national Vice-President of the party, Phool Singh Baraiya, becomes the State Chief Minister. He also accused the Bahujan Samaj Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, of trying to malign the image of Mr. Baraiya, who headed the State unit of the BSP before he was dismissed from the party. Mr. Paswan said that he believed in accomplishing what he says and this has been demonstrated by him on every occasion. (The Hindu 15/4/05)

Dalit rights propaged on Ambedkar Jayanti (2)

New Delhi: The 114th birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar, celebrated as International Dalit Day in the city on Thursday, saw leaders, politicians, activists, schools and NGOs propagating the message of "liberation". The day, they said, marks the need to emancipate and liberate the oppressed who are discriminated against culturally, politically, socially and economically.

Said Minister of state for Schedule Cast/Schedule Tribes welfare Raj Kumar Chauhan: "Babasaheb was the one who brought the concept of reservation in the Indian Constitution. Apart from reservation, we should strive to help the dalits in all ways." After inaugurating an Ambedkar statuette at a government park in Mongolpuri, Chauhan spoke about the welfare work carried out by the government for dalits including launching financial schemes, educational loans and employment schemes. Chauhan said: "The sqfai karamchari commission is one such scheme which is about 90% complete and will be in place within the next 2-3 months." The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) that provides a platform for activists observed the occasion by voicing some of its demands at the celebrations of Ambedkar's birth anniversary.

Their list of demands included ending the culture of impunity, need for affirmative action and reparation for all historical injustice in form of land and assets. Said national convenor of National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, Paul Divakar: "Although we are not unhappy with the government schemes but the smoke screen and facades of development should be removed first and foremost. There are laws but what about their implementation?" The fact remains that there are over 20 crore dalits across the country, not inclusive of other faiths. More than 20% of them do not have access to safe drinking water, 70% of these households have no electricity and 90% have no sanitation. Rural dalit households are worse hit with about 78% households having no electricity. (Times of India 15/4/05)

HC brings Dalit youth, his 'kidnapped' wife together (2)

JAIPUR, APRIL 19: THE love story of a Dalit youth, whose life became a nightmare since his marriage to the daughter of a district judge, ended on a happy note today when the high court reunited the couple. Acting on a habeas corpus petition moved by Virendra Meena, a division bench today ordered that Meena be reunited with his wife Renu, who had allegedly been "kidnapped" by her brother after she married Meena at an Arya Samaj temple. Meena had married Renu, daughter of Sawai Madhopur District Judge Dharam Singh, on October 25 last year. The marriage had infuriated the girl's family, forcing the duo to flee Sawai Madhopur. Unable to trace the girl, the city police arrested Meena's father, Brij Mohan, who at the time of the marriage was in Madhya Pradesh. The court remanded Brij Mohan to custody "until the girl was recovered". He was, however, released later by the HC. On April 11, according to a case filed by Meena, Renu had been "kidnapped" by her brother from their house in Sanganer, 10 km from Jaipur. When the police failed to act on the FIR filed by Meena, he moved the HC, which asked the Jaipur SP to produce the girl in the court on Monday. Tension marked Renu's arrival at the court. Around 100 irate men stormed the premises in the morning. Additional police force was called in, on the intervention of the bench, to restore order. The drama ended on a pleasant note when the court ordered the reunion, after Renu said she wanted to live with her husband. (Indian Express 20/4/05)

Plight of Dalits on global agenda: UN names 2 reps (2)

New Delhi: The relentless discrimination of the Dalits can no longer be pushed under the carpet as a domestic social problem. The plight of the Dalits has been internationalised with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR), currently meeting in Geneva, finally adopting a resolution to appoint two special rapporteurs to "investigate and find solutions to tackle the entrenched problem of caste-based discrimination." The resolution which was passed in August 2004 by the UN sub-commission but after adoption, the two rapporteurs — Yozo Yokota and Chin-Sung Chung — will undertake a three-year study to put together a set of guidelines to eliminate caste-based discrimination. The duo will work in collaboration with various organs of the United Nations including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance; the ILO and Unesco. What has come in for special praise from Dalit activists is the role of the Indian government at the UN Commission. Unlike the previous dispensation which opposed equating caste-discrimination with racial prejudice, UPA government representatives did not either block passing of the resolution nor its adoption. Says Vincent Manoharan of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights: "This is a belated victory in the internationalisation of the plight of Dalits. I welcome the stance of the recently-elected Indian government, which did not stand in the way of the passing and adoption of this resolution." Dalit activists also point out that adoption of the resolution would not only be beneficial in highlighting caste-discrimination in India but other countries as well. (Times of India 23/4/05)

Fact-finding team demands justice for Dalit's family (2)

JAIPUR: A fact-finding team of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), which visited Bedkalan village in Pali district of Rajasthan recently to probe the gruesome murder of a Dalit youth last month, has demanded justice for the family of the deceased and protection to eyewitnesses to facilitate their return to the village. The family members, who have migrated to Jaitaran, are on an indefinite dharna outside the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's office demanding an assurance of fair trial in the case. Mohari Meghwal was stabbed to death in broad daylight at the village square in Bedkalan on March 1 allegedly by Shivdan Singh, an influential Rajput leader of the region and former Congress MLA, who reportedly took umbrage at Mohan's intention to contest for sarpanch in the panchayat elections. A tractor was later run over Mohan's body in full view of the horrified villagers. Though Shivdan Singh and his two accomplices have since been arrested, the local leaders of Rajput and other so-called higher castes have been threatening Mohan's next of kin and eye-witnesses with dire consequences. The mobilisation on caste lines has led to tension in the region, while police have provided heavy protection to the household of the culprits. The eye-witnesses have complained of intimidation and an intense pressure not to depose in the court against the alleged murderers. The seven-member team of NCDHR, which

went to Bedkalan on April 11, found that casteism in the region was deep-rooted and untouchability was acute. Any small attempt of assertion by Dalits is viewed as an act of arrogance and disobedience to the social hierarchy in which Rajputs and other higher castes dominate. (The Hindu 24/4/05)

Dalit resigns within 5 mins of assuming panchayat post (2)

Madurai, April 24: Mr Azhagumalai in Keeripatti has done his job well. Sponsored by upper caste Thevars in the April 19 panchayat president election, the Dalit scored a huge victory against a challenger put up by the Dalit Panthers of India, thereby reaffirming the caste dominance in his village about 45 km from here. However, within five minutes of taking charge of his new office on Saturday morning, the 60-year-old Dalit handed over his resignation to election officer S. Ramachandran as per the diktat of his upper caste bosses. It was a reenactment of the socio-political farce that has been going on for almost a decade in Keeripatti and two other villages in Madurai district, where the upper caste landlords have been effectively sabotaging the panchayat president elections just because the posts were reserved for Dalits. The upper castes do not want to be administered by a Dalit, that too, a labourer working in their fields. Mr. Azhagu won 487 votes in the Tuesday poll to trounce DPI's Poongodi who managed a mere 29 votes. But there were no celebrations for the victor as he knew that he must affix his thumb print on the resignation letter already penned by an upper caste boss. Receiving the letter, election officer Ramachandran said he will hand it over to district collector D. Rajendran. Sources at the collector's office told this newspaper that the resignation will be forwarded to the state Election Commission for notifying the by-election once again next year. (Asian Age 25/4/05)

Dalit resignation spurs protests in TN (2)

Madurai, April 25: The Dalit Panthers of India held demonstrations in 29 district headquarters protesting against the resignation of newly-elected Keeripatti panchayat president V. Azhagumalai on Sunday. The DPI is also calling for a CBI probe into the death of Karayanapatti Narasingam, the DPI candidate for Papapatti, who died under mysterious circumstances. Mr Azhagumalai, the Dalit candidate fielded by the villagers, scored a thumping victory over his rival and DPI candidate Poongodi with a margin of 458 votes. The election to this reserved constituency was held on April 19 and out of the 521 votes polled, Mr Azhagumalai secured 487 and his rival only 29 votes. Five votes were declared spoilt. But within minutes of assuming office, Mr Azhagumalai submitted his resignation. This panchayat has not had a president for the past nine years as only a Dalit can hold this post under the Panchayat Act. In the year 2002, the victorious candidate Karutha Kannan, who was also the village candidate, quit soon after he assumed charge. On Sunday morning, tight security arrangements had been made when Mr Azhagumalai came to the panchayat office in Keeripatti to assume charge accompanied by his lawyers and upper caste supporters. He was sworn-in by the election officer Ramachandran. He signed his acceptance and occupied the official seat. But five minutes later, he handed his resignation letter to the assistant returning officer Rajendran. When the officer asked him an explanation for his resignation, Mr Azhagumalai kept silent. His advocates then handed over an explanation letter to the officer. He said in his letter that he was resigning from the post of his own free will and was not being forced to do so. He said members of the Piramalai Kallar community who had elected him to the post with a big majority, were classified under the schedule caste till January 26, 1950, and enjoyed the same benefits as Dalits. (Asian Age 26/4/05)

National campaign on Dalit rights welcomes U.N. resolution (2)

NEW DELHI: The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) has welcomed the United Nations resolution on the appointment of special rapporteurs to undertake a study on the condition of communities suffering from "work and descent-based discrimination." In a statement issued here on Tuesday, the NCDHR general secretary, J. Vincent Manoharan, said that it was a belated victory in the international recognition of the plight of Dalits. "I also recognise and welcome the stand of the recently elected Indian Government which did not come in the way of the passing and adoption of this resolution," he said. The special rapporteurs, Yozo Yokota and Chin-Sung Chung, will undertake a three-year study, and will put together a draft set of principles and guidelines to eliminate the form of discrimination under scrutiny. The NCDHR

feels that this study will help Dalits in India to pressure the Government and the U.N. mechanism for the effective implementation of the Constitutional guarantee, special legislation and all other affirmative actions to be suggested by the two special rapporteurs for addressing the issue of caste-based discrimination and for the overall empowerment of Dalits and other marginalised communities in the world. The resolution was adopted at the 61st session of the U.N. earlier this month. Caste and related forms of discrimination is dehumanising people in both public and private spheres. The antecedents of those discriminated against determines not only their social status, but also impedes their choice of occupation, living conditions, and ability to participate in social and economic activities, a statement issued by the NCHDR said. "In India, the Dalit community numbers around 170 million, but related forms of discrimination are practised in countries as diverse as Nigeria, Japan, Senegal and Bangladesh. It is estimated that 260 million people globally are deprived of their basic rights by these forms of discrimination," the statement said. (The Hindu 27/4/05)

Officials step in to end dalit boycott in TN village (2)

Madurai, April 27: Uneasy peace prevails between the upper caste thevars and the dalits in Keeripatti villager near Madurai after the district administration intervened following allegations that the thevars were socially boycotting the dalits for defying their diktat against a dalit being elected as pan-chayat president. The thevars signed under official supervision, a peace agreement with the dalits, under which the government would ensure that no "outsider" would be allowed to create trouble in the village. A special branch police team would be posted in keeripatti to ensure this is enforced. It is being inferred that the outsider refers to the Dalit Panthers of India, which had fielded a candidate in the April 19 election for the panchayat president's post that has been reserved for Dalits. "The meeting between the thevars and dalits reached an agreement that they would give up all antagonism and there would be no social boycott of the dalits. The five-point agreement also included an assurance that the village will not allow any outsiders to create trouble," a senior officer, who was involved in the negotiations, said. The dalit candidate, V. Azhagumalai, put up by the thevars in the panchayat by-election had -scored a huge victory against the DPI candidate P. Poongodi. Within five minutes of his assuming office as the president of the panchayat, Mr Azhagumalai gave in his resignation, which he-said was at the behest of the people of the village who had voted for him — the thevars constitute a majority. (Asian Age 28/4/05)

Atrocities on SC/ST call for Central intervention, says House panel (2)

New Delhi: A PARLIAMENTARY committee has stated that atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes constitute internal disturbance as stated in Article 355 of the Constitution and has called for Central intervention under various provisions against the offending states. The committee has castigated the Home Ministry for using "police and public order" being "state subjects" as excuse for absolving themselves of the responsibility implied under Article 355. Lamenting the failure to check the atrocities against SC/STs after five decades of Independence, the Committee on welfare of the SC/ST has expressed surprise at the absence of the use of Article 355 and other constitutional measures in cases of atrocities against weaker sections and recommended extreme step wherever warranted. The committee is chaired by former social justice minister and BJP MP Satyanarayan Jatiya with 19 MPs from Lok Sa.bha and 10 from Rajya Sabha. Confronted with rising figures of crime against SC/ST, the Centre all along contended that it was a state subject. The Committee has hit back and virtually tagged the argument as indifference while offering several options. It has said the "role of Central ministries under Article 256 has been restricted to pursuing the states to implement the Acts. To the MHA's argument that police is a state subject, the committee observed: "They somehow seem, to have forgotten the constitutional obligation under Entry 65 (C) of Union List and Entries 1,2,3 of the Concurrent List. They have also failed to shoulder the implied responsibility of protecting every state from internal disturbances as laid down in Article 355." (Pioneer 28/4/05)

May – 2005

Discrimination against Dalits (2)

Dalits all over the world have something to rejoice about. Durban was not in vain. On April 19,

2005, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights adopted a Resolution to appoint two Special Rapporteurs to tackle caste-based discrimination. The appointment of the two rapporteurs, Yozo Yokota and Chin-Sung Chung, was the result of years of painstaking advocacy work by the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) and the International Dalit Solidarity Network. The resolution was first passed in August 2004 by the U.N. Sub-Commission.

The struggle began with the build-up to the World Conference Against Racism in 2001. The then Indian Government was determined to block it. "Caste is not race," its representative in Geneva argued. "No, you're right," said Martin Macwan, then Convener of NCDHR. "It's far worse than race." "You cannot wash our dirty linen in public" argued the Government. "Your admission that we have dirty linen is a first step forward. It's an admission that the problem exists," retorted the NCDHR. The road to U.N. recognition of the problem proved rocky. But a brilliant advocacy campaign managed the breakthrough. The Sub-Commission, in August 2000, issued a significant resolution declaring that discrimination based on work and descent is prohibited by international human rights law, and called on Governments to take measures to eliminate this type of discrimination. In a series of working papers presented to the Sub-Commission, the global dimensions of this form of discrimination, and its main features, have been examined in considerable detail. The Commission's decision comes in the wake of an International Consultation held in Kathmandu last year on how to address the problem. (The Hindu 2/5/05)

IDBI chief held for making casteist remark (2)

Mumbai: A posse of Mumbai policemen marched into the swanky IDBI office in the World Trade Centre on Friday and ordered the bank chairman V P Shetty to drive down to a police station and face arrest for hurling casteist insults against a general manager of the bank. Shetty was later released on bail of Rs 10,000. Shetty's arrest by assistant commissioner of police Mohan Rathod was made on a complaint filed against him by general manager B W Ramteke, who belongs to a scheduled caste. The bank chief had moved high court seeking protection but failed to get relief on Friday. Soon after the HC order, policemen rushed to the IDBI office and asked Shetty to report to the assistant commissioner's office in Colaba. IDBI had ordered tight security at its tower complex and mediapersons were kept at bay. Police jeeps were parked in the building's compound to take Shetty away. "Since Shetty agreed to cooperate, we let him come in his own car instead of taking him in a police jeep," senior inspector of Cuffe Parade police station Vilas Pandit said. Advocate Satish Maneshinde, who appeared for Shetty in the HC, said the leading bank executive was arrested under section 7(1) D of the Protection of Civil Rights Act which deals with insulting a person on grounds of un-touchability. He, however, said that a case under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (prevention of atrocities) Act, 1989, has not been made out by Ramteke. The court took note of the fact that the allegedly casteist insult was not given in public, Maneshinde stated. (Times of India 7/5/05)

Delhi relaxes rules for SC/STs (2)

New Delhi, May 7: The Delhi government on Saturday decided to relax rules regarding the issuing of certificates to members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes seeking reservation benefits. The Delhi Cabinet in a meeting accepted the recommendations of the Charan Singh Kanderla Committee on SC/STs. A major recommendation of the committee is that any SC and ST member who has a birth certificate issued in Delhi or has completed matriculation here or has lived here for at least five years will be able to get a certificate from the national capital of Delhi. Earlier, only those SC/ST persons whose families had settled in Delhi prior to 1951 could be issued an SC/ST certificate in the capital. (Asian Age 8/5/05)

BSP's dalit temple nears completion (2)

Lucknow, May 7: Dalits will soon have a temple of their own — a temple where they can offer tributes to dalit icons and celebrate the empowerment of the downtrodden in the country. The temple, called the "Bahujan Samaj Prerna Kendra," is actually Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati's dream tribute to her mentor Kanshi Ram who had expressed a desire, about two years ago, that he wished to see his own memorial in his lifetime. The magnificent pyramid shaped structure made of red sandstone is situated adjacent to the BSP state office on the posh Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg and has been funded entirely by the party. The 70-foot tall structure

with a dome at the top, is receiving finishing touches and will be dedicated to the Bahujan Samaj on June 3 by Ms Mayawati. The Prerna Kendra will have a statue of Mr Kanshi Ram and also one of Ms Mayawati in the main hall. Statues of other dalit icons like Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Shahuji Maharaj, Jyotiba Phule, Narayan Guru and, of course, Periyar will be installed later. Apart from this, the Prerna Kendra will have a library of dalit literature and a prayer/meditation room. "The Prerna Kendra will also have a section on Lord Buddha and Dr Ambedkar so that dalits can get in-depth knowledge about their life, their teachings and their philosophy," the leader disclosed. (Asian Age 8/5/05)

Caste colour given to Chapra, EC goes ballistic (2)

New Delhi, May 8: Senior IAS officer L. V Saptarishi - who has alleged that election commissioners B.B. Tandon and N. Gopaldaswamy attempted to countermand Lok Sabha polls in Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav's constituency Chapra - on Sunday accused them of making casteist remarks against Yadavs. At a press conference, Saptarishi, who was special observer in Bihar during the polls, said that after he submitted his report about Chapra, Tandon had asked him who the Superintendent of Police of the district was and where was he from. "I said he is some Yadav... maybe from Bihar or UP," said Saptarishi. "Then Tandon reacted: 'No matter where he is from, all Yadavs are the same.'" Saptarishi claimed Gopaldaswamy had said: "We will have to take some drastic steps against Lalu." Saptarishi - who had earlier written to Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj accusing Tandon and Gopaldaswamy of putting pressure to countermand Chapra polls - said there was nothing in his report which could have warranted the countermanding. "I was shocked to hear that (about the countermanding)," he said. Asked why he was making this public after a year, Saptarishi said it was because Tandon was taking over as chief election commissioner later this month. Chief Election Commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy, however, asserted on Sunday that Tandon and Gopaldaswamy had not made casteist remarks against Yadavs during discussions on Saptarishi's report. (Hindustan Times 9/5/05)

UN's help sought by Dalit Panthers (2)

Chennai, May 9: The Dalit Panthers of India will petition the United Nations on the "democratic farce" being enacted in the four reserved panchayats of Tamil Nadu, where the upper castes prevent dalits from being elected as president, according to DPI general secretary Thol. Thirumavalavan. Casteist forces were blocking dalits from getting elected as presidents in the reserved panchayats of Pappapatti, Keeripatti, Nattarmangalam and Kottakachiyandal for the last nine years, he said. When a dalit dared to contest in these villages, he was squarely defeated by the candidate put up by the upper castes and he too would resign immediately after taking charge of the panchayat, the DPI leader said on the sidelines of an all-party meeting which discussed the issue here. The meeting referred to the ostracising of 15 dalit families in Keeripatti for voting for a rebel dalit and demanded that the government set up grocery shops in dalit areas to counter the social boycott. It was cowardice on the part of the authorities to hold talks with the upper caste representatives instead of taking them to task, they said. (Asian Age 10/5/05)

Teacher tastes caste-slur sticks (2)

Krishnagar, May 12: The headmistress of a school in Nadia has been suspended on charges of making snide remarks about students belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. The incident follows Bengal cadre IAS officer L.V. Saptarishi's allegations of caste bias among election commissioners and the chairperson of the Industrial Development Bank of India being arrested under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, on charges of making casteist comments about a colleague. Radhanath Biswas, the secretary of the managing committee of Dignagar Girls' High School, about 80 km from Calcutta, and the former sabhadhipati of Nadia zilla parishad, said the panel had unanimously decided to suspend headmistress Kuheli Pramanik as she had not responded to the showcause notice. "The allegations against the headmistress are grave. We have received complaints that she humiliated SC and ST students through remarks that smack of a caste bias. Some students broke down in front of me. So, I slapped a showcause notice on her," said Biswas. The district inspector of secondary schools, Mahadeb Soren, said the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education had been informed about the suspension. "The managing committee of the school comes under the board. So, we have

informed it," he said. The secretary said, according to the complaints, Pramanik had told some students that they do not deserve facilities they get as members of backward classes. "She also told some students not to waste time studying in the school as it would be better to marry sweepers who worked there," claimed Biswas. (Telegraph 13/5/05)

SC/ ST main victims of bonded labour, reports ILO (2)

New Delhi: AN OVERWHELMING majority of victims of bonded labour in India are from the scheduled castes and tribes and the assessment of the magnanimity of the problem may be far conservative due to lack of in-depth, sector-specific studies of the same. This has been observed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its latest world report on bonded labour released here on Wednesday. Agriculture, brick-making and mining have been identified as the key areas where such exploitation is rampant and Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar are the states where this practice largely persists. According to Herman Van der Laan, ILO director for South Asia, with more SC/ST leaders occupying political space at the national level, the organisation hopes the problem will be addressed soon. "The fact that you have Cabinet ministers or important politicians who represent the SC/ST constituencies shows that there is a gradual awakening among the exploited sections to fight for their rights," Mr Van der Laan told The Pioneer on Wednesday. However, despite the ILO representative's optimism, the ground realities appear quite disappointing. For, in a number of states, the poorest of the rural population have become increasingly dependent on wage labour and indebtedness has forced the workforce to accept bonded labour. (Pioneer 13/5/05)

Keep OBCs out of our quota: Dalit, tribal MPs (2)

New Delhi: In a rude reminder to advocates of the grand non-'upper caste' social coalition, Dalit and tribal MPs are resisting the move to club OBCs with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of the Bill that seeks to provide legal cover to job reservations. Leading the protest is the SC/ST Parliamentary Forum - a 130-strong group of MPs who belong to the two categories from across all parties. The stance was finalised at a recent meeting, and R S Gavai, chairman of the forum, has since written to government asking for OBCs to be kept out of the purview of the Bill. The proposed legislation is called the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (Reservation Bill), 2004. The grouse of the agitating MPs is that the nomenclature is based on the assumption that the interests of Dalits and tribals are common, and those of the OBCs are different. While the forum stresses that it is not against government bringing a separate Bill for OBC reservations, it fears that the bunching of the three categories may undermine the constitutional safeguard that only Dalits and tribals have. Moreover, they feel the grounds on which OBCs have been given reservation are not the same as those for Dalits and tribals. OBCs, for instance, never had to suffer untouchability, or even social discrimination on the same scale as the Dalits. Members of the forum justify their opposition to the Bill by saying that OBCs did not have to suffer economic exploitation on the same scale as tribals. There is also the apprehension that lumping the three groups together might lead to a demand that the 'creamy layer' among the Dalits and tribals could be barred from enjoying quota benefits. (Times of India 16/5/05)

Evil of caste system in India flayed (2)

NEW DELHI: "India nurtures the illusion of superpowerdom from the debris of manual scavenging," said former Union Health Secretary K. B. Saxena on Tuesday launching a blistering attack on the persistent evil of the caste system in India. Initiating a discussion on his National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Report on prevention of atrocities against Scheduled Castes held here under the aegis of Janhastakshep, a non-government organisation, and the Rajendra Prasad Academy, Mr. Saxena said globalisation, economic liberalisation and World Bank directives had only compounded problems. According to Mr. Saxena, India's three-pronged strategy to end the servitude of the Scheduled Castes is "unparalleled in the world". Such strong protective measures composed of protective laws, compensatory discrimination and development do not exist anywhere else. "If only policies and laws could create society, then we would have paradise here," he added. Painting a dismal picture, Mr. Saxena said starting with a Republican Constitution, India had enacted a raft of laws for protection and development of the weaker

sections. "But they are all frustrated by the apathy of politicians, the undying bias of bureaucrats and total hostility of civil society. As a result, untouchability continues even here in Delhi."

Mr. Saxena urged civil society to exert pressure on the authorities to bring about sweeping social changes. As noted by other speakers at the discussion, three episodes had recently made headlines. (The Hindu 18/5/05)

Villagers reject 'Dalit' food in school (2)

Gaya: More than 2,500 years ago, Sujata, the Dalit devotee of Buddha, offered kheer to the fasting saint. While obliging Sujata, Buddha did not ask her caste, but it is not so in the 21st century Gaya where Buddha attained enlightenment. In Patheri village, two Dalit women, Shruti and Kamla, were rebuked and chastised for cooking kheer for a Centre-sponsored midday meal scheme for primary school children. The village falls under the Atari police station, and is about 65 km north-east from Sujata's village. On May 5, the two women were nominated to cook the inaugural meal. They took extra care to prepare the dish. But when the time came to serve kheer, a few villagers entered the school and abused them for their "audacity" to cook for the children from higher castes. "Ee din aa gaya hai ki hamara bachcha Dalit ka banaya hua khayega (a day has come when our children will have to eat meals cooked by Dalits)?" the leader of the irate group of villagers said. And then came the decree — "Koi nahin khayega (nobody will eat)." And nobody, not even Kuldeep, the child of a poor cobbler, himself a Dalit, could dare violate the command. After sometime, the ground was dug up near the school and the kheer was dumped into the hole. That was the beginning as well as the end of the midday meal scheme in the Patheri primary school. (Times of India 19/5/05)

'Neglect' of Scheduled Castes in Outer Delhi area (2)

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Anusuchit Jati Vikas Sangathan will stage a protest and burn effigies of the State Development Minister, Raj Kumar Chauhan, the Member of Parliament from Outer Delhi, Sajjan Kumar, and the Nangaloi MLA, Bijender Singh, at the Delhi Secretariat on Friday for their "continued neglect of the Scheduled Caste and failure to cater to the needs of the Dalits of their area". According to Sangathan president Chhatar Singh Rachoya, both Mr. Kumar and Mr. Singh have worked against the interests of the Dalits of their area leading to strong resentment against them. He said despite several reminders, these leaders were not signing the forms granting widow pension and financial aid to Dalit women under the schemes of the Delhi Government. Similarly, he charged that although all the formalities for the construction of the Panchayat Ghar at Nangloi had been completed, the file had suddenly gone missing and both these politicians were to be blamed for this act. Stating that they had also met the Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit, on the issue, Mr. Rachoya said Ms. Dikshit had asked them to give their problems in writing and that was the reason they were holding a demonstration at Delhi Secretariat on May 20 and would then submit a memorandum to her with regard to their demands. (The Hindu 19/5/05)

Inter-caste bigotry deprives kids of mid-day meal in Bihar (2)

PATNA: About 2,500 years ago, a fasting lord Buddha partook of a bowl of kheer (sweet rice meal) offered by a lower caste woman, but in caste-ridden Bihar tiny tots were forced to go without food just because it was cooked by Dalit women. Two Dalit women--Shruti and Kamla were rebuked for cooking kheer for a Centre-sponsored mid-day meal scheme for primary school children at Patheri under Atri block in Gaya district. It happened on May 5. The two Dalit women prepared the inaugural meal taking extra care about cleanliness but when the time came to serve the kheer, a few upper caste villagers entered the school, used filthy and abusive language against them for their audacity to cook the meal for children of upper castes, "A day has come when our children will have to eat kheer prepared by Dalits," the villagers fumed and ordered the Dalit women to leave the premises. "Nobody will eat it," they decreed and nobody, not not even Kuldeep, the child of a poor cobbler, himself a Dalit, could dare defy the diktat. The irate villagers later dug up the earth inside the school and buried the kheer as hungry children watched helplessly. The matter came to light when the terrified headmaster of the school Rudra Narayan and a few others complained to their superiors. Governor Buta Singh took serious exception to the incident and instructed the Chief Secretary KAH Subramanian to order an inquiry by Gaya

district magistrate Chaitnya Prasad. When contacted, Prasad confirmed the incident and said the administration had taken effective steps to ensure that mid-day meal was distributed among the school children in Gaya district without any problem. (Pioneer 23/5/2005)

JUNE 2005

Dalits demand return of land in Madurai (2)

Madurai, May 31: The Panchami Land Retrieval Committee, and the Society for Integrated Rural Development (SIRD), Madurai have demanded that panchami lands should be restored to the dalits, the rightful owners and that a special tahsildar should be appointed for each district to look into the status of these lands. Speaking to reporters, Mr Ayyankalai, president of the Panchami Land Retrieval Committee, said that 2.5 lakhs acres of land had been allotted to the dalits by the British in 1892, to pave way for their social and economic development. These lands were later transferred to non-dalit usurers who allegedly tricked them into parting with the land, by lending them money. This way more than 80 per cent of the land was transferred to non-dalits, he claimed. The department of land administration in a GO dated August 19, 1996 said that all panchami lands that were with non-dalits should be retrieved and handed back to the dalits, by the respective collectors. The order specified that the land should be handed back to the original owners or their families. But, now he alleged most of these lands had been handed over to private parties by illegal ways. (Asian Age 1/6/05)

Not pro-Dalit, BSP open to upper castes: Maya (2)

LUCKNOW, JUNE 9: Mayawati today threw open the Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) doors to Brahmins and other upper castes, promising Cabinet berths to all those who win elections. Dismissing the party's "pro-Dalit" image as a canard spread by the Opposition, the BSP chief extended an open offer of tickets to the upper castes in the Assembly and parliamentary elections. "The votebanks of the Congress and the BJP have been shattered and only the BSP can outseat the Mulayam government in Uttar Pradesh," Mayawati told the Brahmin convention at Ambedkar Maidan this afternoon. "All those from upper castes coming to the party's fold and winning their seats will be made ministers once the BSP gets an absolute majority." The mercury touched 45 degrees Celsius today but crowds, in vermilion and ramnami dupattas, continued to flock to the convention. "Haathi nahi Ganesh hain, Brahma Vishnu Mahesh hain (It's not elephant (BSP symbol) but a combination of Hindu Gods)", went the slogan as the BSP chief, for the first time, addressed a Brahmin Sammelan. "Jiski jitni tayyari, uski utni bhagidari (those who are prepared will get a share)," Mayawati said, stressing that the BSP was open to not only Brahmins but all upper castes. "Kewal Brahman nahin, balki Vaishya, Kshatriya, Tyagi aur Kayasth, sabhi ka party mein swagat hai (The party is ready to welcome not only Brahmins but other upper castes)," she said while crowd responded with "Brahman ki yahi pukar, Mayawati chauthi baar". "The opposition has painted the BSP with a pro-Dalit image while the fact is just the opposite," the former CM charged. "The BSP was never against the upper castes and also Hinduism. The opposition has spread this canard to get political mileage but not any more." Mayawati also dealt a threat to CM Mulayam Singh Yadav. "Shri Mulayam Singh Yadavji, let Assembly polls come and I will reduce your party to the status of 1991 when the Samajwadi Party got only 30 seats out of the total 425 that time (before creation of Uttaranchal)," she said. (Indian Express 10/6/05)

Incentive hiked for inter-caste marriages (2)

Pioneer News Service/ Bhubaneswar : In a significant move to encourage inter-caste marriages the State Government on Friday enhanced the reward amount from Rs 3,000 to Rs 10,000 for couples, people going in for inter-caste marriages. A decision to this effect was taken at a high level meeting presided over by the Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik. The move will encourage inter-caste marriages and will redress caste-related problems in the society, official sources said. Going by the law, if a boy from a higher caste gets married to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe girl, the couple will get a reward of Rs 10,000. The same will hold good in case of a higher caste girl marrying a boy from a lower caste. In another important development, the State government decided to reserve 38 per cent of seats at Plus Two and Plus Three levels in all

government colleges for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students. Stringent action will be taken against those institutions violating the rule. The literacy level among Scheduled Castes has increased from 36.78 per cent to 55.53 per cent. The Chief Minister urged the officials to take effective steps to enhance economic conditions of the economically backward classes in the State. The government has constituted a committee to consider the demands of "Cheek-Cheek Badhei" one of the lower castes in the State, to be taken into the fold of Scheduled Castes. The committee has been asked to submit its report within a month and comprises senior PCC president Jayadev Jena, BJD MLAs Sanantan Bishi and Bimbadhar Kuanr. (Pioneer 11/6/05)

Ajmer Dalit lawyers to set up legal aid centre (2)

JAIPUR: Dalit lawyers in Ajmer have decided to establish a legal aid centre to help out the victims of caste-based violence and ensure effective implementation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The centre will make legal intervention free of cost in the cases of persecution of Dalits in the district and fight for justice for them. Dalit lawyers, participating in a convention organised by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and the Human Rights Law Network in Ajmer on Saturday, pointed out that the conviction rate under the Act was abysmally low in Rajasthan despite the full-fledged special courts functioning in all districts. "The prosecution is often unable to present the cases effectively and the judicial system is generally hostile to Dalits," Satish Kumar, State secretary of NCDHR, said. The participants in the convention called for rigorous measures for strengthening the capacity of Dalit lawyers to enable them to take up the cases of atrocities on those belonging to SC and ST. The State agencies should also deal with the caste-based offences with the seriousness they deserved, they felt. Colin Gonsalves, senior advocate of the Supreme Court, said the SC/ST Act was one of the most effective statutes in the world, vesting the State authorities with extensive powers to check crimes against Dalits. However, recent surveys had found that the conviction rate under the law was only one to two per cent in most of the States, he added. (The Hindu 13/6/05)

Why UP Brahmins may go with BSP (2)

Lucknow, June 12: WHEN SAMAJWADI Party Chief Mulayam Singh Yadav first started wooing Rajputs, many questioned how a backward-dominated party could think of getting a militant caste under its banner. Today, even his adversaries admit there has been a steady shift of Rajputs from the BJP to the SP. It isn't surprising then that the champion of the Dalits, BSP chief Mayawati, is going all out to woo Brahmins. And the same argument is being used to write off her efforts. While some quote the BSP slogan "Tilak, taraju aw talwar, inko maaro jute chaar" to make their point, others are raking up the promotion of untouchability by pandits in the past. But if the turnout at her 23 Brahmin sammelans is any indication, the day isn't far when Dalits, Muslims and Brahmins will regroup under the BSP banner. So the question now is, why would the Brahmins go with the BSP? Rajputs and Brahmins had been in political wilderness ever since the state's politics changed under Mulayam and Mayawati. While Mulayam pursued backward politics, Mayawati gave voice to Dalits. So much so that even the BJP, which rode to power on upper caste support, had to pursue backward politics. The party's Brahmin face was replaced by a backward. Similarly, they floundered with the Rajput votebank. With the BJP fast losing political space, the Congress showed little sign of improvement as it lost all three votebanks - Brahmins, Muslims and Dalits. The SP and BSP pounced on the neglected votebanks. The Rajputs went the SP way while the Brahmins remained with the BJP for lack of a clear option. Now, they see a better option in the BSP as socially and economically, there is no clash between them and the Dalits. (Hindustan Times 13/6/05)

20-yr-old Dalit gang-raped, killed (2)

A 20-year-old Dalit woman was gang raped and later killed to remove the evidence. The incident occurred on Sunday at village Kandoli under the Pilkhuwa police station. The woman, whose husband is a tailor and works in Delhi, left her house for some work and did not return after two hours. Her husband, Som Pal, and mother-in-law, Balbiri, anxious over her absence from the house, went to look for her. A local villager informed them that their daughter-in-law's body was lying in a field. The family members reached the spot and were stunned to find her body. She had clearly been raped and strangled to death by a piece of cloth. Her mouth was sealed with a

tape. It seems she had resisted much before being raped. The villagers immediately informed the police. When the police tried to take the body for post-mortem, angry villagers stopped them and demanded the presence of senior police officers on the scene of crime. Somehow, the police managed to take the dead body to mortuary. Father-in-law, Samay Singh, alleged that goons of the area were behind the incidents. He said they had in the past, too, made an attempt to physically abuse her. (Pioneer 14/6/05 IN)

year-old Dalit raped; cops refuse to register case (2)

Ghaziabad : A minor Dalit girl was raped in a village under Dhaulana police station of this district. The police instead of registering a case asked the victim's family not to register the case since it would lower their reputation in society. On Monday, according to sources, Vir Singh a brick kiln labourer living in village Sukhdevpur was at work, his five-year-old daughter was playing nearby. Some men took her to an abandoned area and raped her. After that they fled the scene leaving the child seriously injured. After about an hour, when Vir Singh noticed that his daughter was missing he organised a search. She was found lying in a pool of blood in a nearby field. Along with some other labourers he took her to the Sapnawat police post where the police men asked them not to register the case and asked him to take his daughter to a hospital for treatment. But the enraged family contacted the Dhaulana police station to get the case registered, however, here too, the police were reluctant to register a case. In the evening Sanjay Chaudhary, the brick kiln owner, reached the police station and requested the police to register a case. However, once again, the police refused to register the case. No case has been registered by the police till Tuesday afternoon. (Pioneer 15/6/05)

All work, no funds for Dalit panchayat head (2)

BODHGAYA, JUNE 17 : Deomanti Devi should have been the face of social engineering, which the Rashtriya Janata Dal swore by during the 15 years it was in power in the state. Especially as she was based in Bodhgaya, to which 70,000 foreign tourists flock each year. But the Dalit chairperson of the Bodhgaya Nagar Panchayat, under which the Mahabodhi temple complex falls, says she "regrets" her foray into public life. Deomanti says not many listen to her at panchayat meetings. She is even more upset at "being deprived of allowances and other entitlements privy to a civic body head". The chairperson used to sell peanuts near the temple complex to look after her six children and an alcoholic husband. "Now, being the chairperson, I cannot even do that. What respect will people give to a chairman who sells peanuts," she asks. Since becoming chairperson in August 2002 Deomanti has knocked on many doors — including that of the Urban Development Department — for her allowances. "I was told that I should get a manual for civic body authorities from Patna and go through it. I did so with the help of some educated neighbours as I am illiterate... But even for taking that trip to Patna at the end of 2002 I was not paid a single paisa", she says. "Last year alone, I had gone to Patna four times but no travel allowance was paid," Deomanti adds. So where does she get the money to run the Ambassador allotted to her. "What can I do, I take some money from the funds for development projects in the wards..." is the reply. (Indian Express 18/6/05)

Dalit Panther chief is lying, claims Karuna (2)

Chennai, June 17: DMK president M. Karunanidhi on Friday termed as "blatant lies" the allegation by Dalit Panthers of the India or DPI leader Thol Thirumavalavan, that he was instigating by Union minister E.V.K.S Elangovan to criticise the pro-Tamil protests led by PMK leader Dr S. Ramadoss. Reacting sharply to Mr Thirumavalavan's charge Mr Karunanidhi in a statement claimed, "This is an evil design to help chief minister J. Jayalalithaa, who is trying to drive a wedge between the alliance partners of the Democratic Progressive Alliance or DPA." Mr Karunanidhi stressed that he had nothing to do with the views expressed by Mr Elangovan, and said that the Union minister should not have spoken in such a manner. Addressing a seminar in Chennai earlier this week, Mr Elangovan made a veiled criticism of Dr Ramadoss' Tamil Protection Movement, maintaining that Opposition to the English language would hurt the employment opportunities of the youth in Tamil Nadu. He said no true Tamil would believe that he was an enemy of Tamil language. Tamil Nadu and in the country, but also across the globe, Mr Karunanidhi said no true Tamil would believe the statement that he was an enemy of the efforts

taken for the development of Tamil language. Mr Karunanidhi also did not agree with the argument that he was against Dr Ramadoss leading a pro-Tamil agitation because the supporters of such a campaign would vote for the PMK. (Asian Age 18/6/05)

Temple festival: "rights denied to Dalits" (2)

CHENNAI: Voicing serious concern over the denial of rights to Dalits to pull the Kandadevi temple car, advocates told the Madras High Court on Tuesday that the administration had yet again demonstrated that it was mightier than courts. Senior counsel K. Chandru mentioned the matter before the First Bench, comprising the Chief Justice Markandey Katju and Justice P.M. Ibrahim Kali-fulla, and said that Puthiya Tha-mizhagam leader K. Krishnasamy and other Dalit leaders were arrested over 100 km away from the festival venue. He prayed for their immediate release and permission to participate in the car festival. Prohibitory orders In the afternoon, when the matter was again taken up for hearing, Advocate-General N.R. Chandran told the Bench that Dr. Krishnasamy was arrested because he had incited violence in the region in 1998. He also submitted that prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure had been promulgated in the area with a view to maintaining law and order. However, Mr. Chandru said: "The State Government is not interested in empowering the Dalits. They are out to prevent the Dalits from participating in the car festival and are perpetuating injustice. By enforcing Section 144 of CrPC they are treating the aggressors and the aggressed equally." A leader of a recognised political party, who is also a doctor and former MLA, has been fighting for his right for the last seven years. As early as May 30, he sent representations seeking police protection to participate in the festival. Instead of protecting him from the aggressors, he was prevented from leaving his hotel at Tiruchi, situated more than 100 km from the festival venue, in the name of law and order, he said. (The Hindu 22/6/05)

Dalits hoist black flags around Kandadevi (2)

THE PROTEST: A black flag hoisted at a house at Malaiyittanvaya near Devakottai on Wednesday. DEVAKOTTAI: A day after the conclusion of the Sri Swarnamoortheshwarar temple car festival, black flags were hoisted in 10 villages around Kandadevi in Sivaganga district, protesting the alleged prevention of Dalits and their leaders from entering the town by the police during the car-pulling ceremony on Tuesday. Black flags were seen at Malaiyittanvayal, Keezha Sembonmari, Siruvazhi, Mannanvayal, Vengalur, Thalaiyur, Eravuseri, Madakottai, S. Kottai and Perattukottai. The Dalits alleged that the police took them in a police van and detained them in nearby marriage halls till the festival got over. V. Karunanidhi of Malaiyittanvayal alleged that police set up checkpoints at important junctions, took 'selected persons' into preventive custody and 'detained' many of them. "It was a totally one-sided festival. Only a few Dalits in each village of four 'nadus' managed to get in. A majority of them could not enter the area." However, Superintendent of Police (Sivaganga) S. Nallasivam denied the allegation. "We acted in a fair manner. Dalits and other community people cooperated with the administration. But some elements wanted to destabilise the festival. We prevented that," he told The Hindu . Asked about the allegation that the Dalits were prevented from entering Kandadevi, Mr. Nallasivam said the police had set up the checkpoints only to regulate the crowd and to prevent entry of anti-socials, and not to stop the Dalits. He said the police arrested 40 Dalits and 54 Nattars at Kandadevi as a preventive measure. They were released immediately after the function got over. The police had not supported any particular community, he added. On the arrest of Dalit Panthers of India leader Thol Thirumavalavan and Puthiya Thamizhagam leader K. Krishnasamy, he said they were arrested following a 'volatile situation' and the directions of the Madras High Court order. Police 'bandobust' would continue for few more days in and around Kandadevi. Over 650 police personnel were deployed in the area. (Ref: The Hindu 23/6/05)

After 8 yrs, Dalits get to pull Shiva's chariot in Tamil Nadu (2)

Kandadevi, Tn, June 23: For the first time in eight years, Dalits in this southern Tamil Nadu hamlet got to push the 300-year-old ornate chariot that bears a Shiva idol yesterday after the Madras High Court ruled that all caste groups should be allowed to participate. However, the

show of caste amity turned out to be a sham of sorts with police sneaking in over 25 Dalits who were acceptable to the upper caste Thevar leaders, virtually at the last minute, while arresting leading Dalit activists. Dalits had been barred from the festival in recent years after the upper-cast Thevars and local nattars (descendants of the royal family) objected to their participation, leading to caste clashes in the region. With Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa not wanting to antagonise the dominant Thevars or risk a caste clash in this Sivaganga district village, about 400 km from Chennai, district authorities and state police ensured that the court directive was followed only in letter. They did so by handpicking 25 Dalits, mostly Kandadevi local body staff and owing allegiance to the AIADMK, to drag the chariot. (Indian Express 23/6/05)

No Dalit was allowed to take part in temple festival' (2)

CHENNAI: : Not a single Dalit was allowed to pull the car at Kandadevi in Sivaganagai district on Tuesday, and the district administration's claim that the Dalits had taken part in large numbers was far from truth, Puthiya Thamizhagam president K. Krishnasami said Wednesday. The Madras High Court's directive that the administration should ensure full participation of the Dalits was "violated", Dr. Krishnasamy told presspersons here. He alleged that only 13 Dalits, handpicked up the administration, were allowed to take part; even they were allowed only to "touch" the rope and whisked away after the car started its journey. A day before, the police arrested more than 1000 Dalits, including 250 women, from 178 villages at and around Kandadevi. While Dalit leaders, including him, were prevented, caste Hindu leaders were allowed to take part in the festival. Members of a fact-finding committee, set up by the party, were also not permitted to visit Kandadevi. They were arrested along with Dalit leaders. He demanded action against the Collector under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Dr. Krishnasamy said the party was planning to file a contempt petition against the State Government for violating the court order. The Left parties were trying to politicise the issue. The party considered the incident a "national shame" and would observe mourning for seven days. The Dalits would wear black badges and hoist black flags in their homes. It was also planning to stage a demonstration in front of the Raj Bhavan here on July 4 and submit a memorandum to the Governor, demanding action against the Government for "discriminating" against the Dalits (Ref: The Hindu 23/6/05)

Rajasthan Dalit body opposes disbanding of village police post (2)

JAIPUR: The Centre for Dalit Rights has demanded strengthening of the permanent police post established in September 2002 at Chakwada village, near here, after violence over Dalits' assertion of their right to bath in the public pond. The villagers belonging to so-called higher castes have been pressing for disbanding of the police post following the dismissal of the criminal case against 17 persons in connection with violence and atrocities on Dalits. The CDR, in a memorandum submitted to the District Collector, Sudhansh Pant, pointed out that if the police post was removed from the village, there was an apprehension that the local Dalits might face harassment by the miscreants once again. A large number of people were injured in a clash between police and higher caste people in September 2002 when the latter stopped a march of Dalits to the village to exercise their right of access to the public pond. The chairperson of CDR, P.L. Mimroth, said the villagers were once again creating tension by polluting the pond in a bid to prevent Dalits from taking bath there and demanding that the police post be removed. "The authorities seem to be amenable to their unreasonable demand and are likely to disband the police post established on the directions of the State Human Rights Commission," he said. The Special Court functioning under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act here had dismissed the case in connection with the Chakwada incidents in April last and discharged all the 17 accused at the preliminary stage. Mr. Mimroth alleged that the prosecution had played a biased role in pursuing the case. The CDR intends to prefer a revision in the Rajasthan High Court against the Special Court's judgment. Mr. Mimroth said the district administration should take steps for proper maintenance and cleanliness of the village pond and ensure that the law and order situation in the region was not disturbed. The delegation which met the Collector here on Tuesday to apprise him of the situation in Chakwada and make the demand for keeping the miscreants under check included Mr. Mimroth, State secretary of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, Satish Kumar, CDR convenor, Ramdayal Bairwa, and a Dalit activist from Chakwada, Babulal Bairwa (Ref: The Hindu 23/6/05)

Power struggle for Dalit leadership in Congress (2)

NEW DELHI: In fast-changing political equations within the Delhi Congress, a new and forceful section of new Dalit leaders are trying to establish their identity, triggering off a power struggle among various leaders to gain control over this important vote bank that has the potential to throw up an alternative leadership at the State level. The Dalit leadership in the Delhi unit of the Congress is headed by the Assembly Speaker, Chaudhary Prem Singh, who has set a record of sorts by having won all the elections he has contested so far. However, his age and the new crop of Dalit leaders has somewhat marginalised the position held by Chaudhary Prem Singh although he continues to command respect among his partymen and voters. Political observers here are of the view that the real struggle is now between the Development and Food and Supplies Minister, Raj Kumar Chauhan, the AICC secretary and Sultanpuri MLA, Jai Kishen, and the Bawana MLA, Surinder Kumar.

Though Mr. Chauhan has managed to hold his own as a minister in the Sheila Dikshit Government, he has failed to extend his area of influence beyond his own constituency. Mr. Chauhan continues to be the favourite of the Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit, despite the fact that his relations with his one-time political guru and Outer Delhi Member of Parliament, Sajjan Kumar, have come under strain. Mr. Chauhan also has a running battle with Mr. Jai Kishen and though the boundaries of their constituencies run almost parallel, they leave no opportunity to run down each other. Observers feel that in view of the changing equations, a lot of re-positioning is taking place to capture the leadership of this strong vote bank. It is learnt that Mr. Sajjan Kumar is now focusing on promoting Mr. Surinder Kumar as the new Dalit leader of the area and his name has come up as a strong contender for the post of district president of the Rohini District Congress Committee. (The Hindu 24/6/05)

Woman tonsured, beaten up in UP (2)

Bijnore, UP: A 45-year-old dalit woman was allegedly tonsured and beaten up following a diktat by a community panchayat which accused her of having a "loose character", district officials said here on Thursday. (Asian age 24/6/05)

Seers plan drive against untouchability (2)

Hyderabad, June 26: For the first time, seers from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are planning to launch a drive against untouchability. Seers and sadhus will join hands cutting across community lines to spread the message of equality. They will campaign to allow people from weaker sections to perform pujas in village temples. As a result, all the 32,000 small temples that are going to be freed from government control in accordance with chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's decision, will have nitya pujas performed by local devotees. A convention of seers and saints, with participation of about 1,000 spiritual heads at Guntur on July 12, is expected to come up with a new slogan against untouchability. Seers of different peethams, who assembled in Hyderabad on June 21, reportedly discussed the problems caused by the practice of untouchability. According to sources, there were two basic realisations among the seers. One, the menace of untouchability is leading to conversions and the spread of other religious campaigns in villages, and two, the temples are lacking in care due to untouchability. When contacted by this correspondent, Hampi Viroopaksha Vidyaranya Mahapeetham Seer Vidyaranya Bharati said, "Untouchability was not a part of ancient Hindu dharma. It is a practice adopted later for the benefit of certain sections. So, as heads of various cults, we need to campaign against it." "After all, temples are places that are intended to establish and strengthen social relations in villages. They are places of peace and we want that holy feeling revived," he added. The convenor of the newly formed Dharmacharyula Mandali Swaroopanandendra Saraswathi blamed untouchability on the British. "The practice of untouchability was strategically introduced during the British period, may be for their administrative convenience. What purpose does it serve to the Hindu dharma?" he asked. (Asiian Age 27/6/05)

Dalit youth beaten up for joining a college

Patna: A dalit youth in Bihar was branded a Maoist, beaten and handed over to the police by upper caste men in East Champaran district - his fault was he had worn clean clothes and "dared" to enrol himself in a college.

Premhansh Sah, 20, of Koudiya village was beaten by the "babus", or upper caste men, of the village who abused him for daring to wear dark glasses and shoes in the village. The police let him off after they found him innocent.

The police said Sah's relatives told them that upper caste men "disliked it" if a dalit youth wore clean clothes and enrolled for higher education. "My son was disliked by the 'babus'. They had warned him in the past to discontinue his education or face the consequences," Sah's widowed mother told police officials. (Asian Age 30/6/05)

Custodial deaths of SCs: panel seeks data (2)

CHANDIGARH: The Chairman of the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes, Suraj Bhan, has alleged that the situation in Punjab was such that it had to consider means to "save the SCs from the Punjab Police." Dr. Bhan was interacting with reporters after meeting top officers of the civil and police administration of the State here on Wednesday. He sought statistics related to the custodial deaths of SC people and other alleged violations of the Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act 1998. Dr. Bhan said that there had been an alarming increase in such incidents since June 2004 in Punjab, which had the highest percentage of SCs in the country. Other States reported higher incidents of atrocities but Punjab's custodial deaths were a cause for alarm. Dr. Bhan said that the Punjab Government had not acknowledged a letter by his predecessor in 2002. The Punjab Government has assured the deployment of an officer from the SC at the SHO level, in sensitive areas across five districts. Chief Secretary Jai Singh Gill assured the Commission that within a week, the Government would set up vigilance committees to monitor the implementation of the statute. (The Hindu 30/6/05)

Expedite welfare schemes for Scheduled Castes: Rangasamy (2)

PONDICHERRY: N. Rangasamy, Chief Minister, called upon officials concerned with the implementation of welfare schemes for Scheduled Castes to achieve the goals set in the Special Component Plan for the downtrodden. Mr. Rangasamy, who is the chairman of the State Level Committee for Welfare of the Scheduled Castes, was addressing its second meeting here on Wednesday. The Chief Minister who returned from Delhi after attending the 51st National Development Council meeting on Tuesday, his Cabinet colleagues A. Elumalai (Local Administration Minister) and M. Chandirakasu (Welfare Minister), legislators from reserved constituencies, Secretary to the Government A.K. Chathurvedi, officials and heads of departments implementing the welfare schemes for the downtrodden participated in the deliberations. The meeting reviewed utilisation of funds sanctioned under the Special Component Plan for SC welfare programmes and also identified the areas where improvement was yet to be shown, an official source told newsmen at the end of the meeting. Sixteen per cent of the total budgetary allocations has been earmarked under the plan for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes in Pondicherry. (The Hindu 30/6/05 int)

JULY 2005

Two Bihar Dalit women in Nobel race (2)

PATNA: A ray of hope for recognition on a global scale is there for Bihar's two illiterate, Dalit women social activists working at the grassroots level. Both of them belong to a Yadav-dominated nondescript Lakhnaur Khairi village in Madhubani district. The two Dalit women, Tiliya Devi (in her mid-40s) and America Devi (in her mid-30s), who are associated with the Jhanjharpur-based people's organisation "Lok Shakti Sangathan", are among those on the preliminary list of nominees for this year's Nobel Peace Prize which is to be given to 1,000 women from all over the world jointly. Tiliya fought opposition from all quarters, including in her home, for bringing about a change in the life of her downtrodden community. Along the way, she succeeded in rallying hordes of women in favour of her fight for a better life and took on the might of the upper-caste people who had encroached upon the agricultural land belonging to Mushars.

She contested the panchayat elections and has been working as a panchayat samiti member since 2001. (The Hindu 2/7/05)

DU in dock over SC/ST students' admission (2)

NEW DELHI, July 1. — There is no end to problems with the admission process in Delhi University. Even as the university officials are struggling to make the process hassle free, the issue of admissions of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students is drawing a lot of criticism. More than a hundred students visited the office of the dean of students' welfare, Dr S K Vij, to sort out various problems faced by them. Most of these students complained about not getting the college or course of their choice. While filling up the form, students are required to name the colleges according to their preferences. "I applied for Shaheed Bhagat Singh College but they have given me Swami Shraddhanand College. I have approached the university authorities but they are not speaking out on the issue," said one student. Another girl from the north east who applied for English (Honours) is being offered Punjabi (Honours) in Khalsa College. There are other students who have failed to make it to the list despite scoring a good percentage. Take the case of Ashwini Kumar who has scored 72 per cent in the best of four subjects in class XII. When the university came out with the first list for SC/ST students, Ashwini failed to find his name in it. On approaching the dean of students' welfare, he was told that there must have been some problem with his admission form. The DSW has, however, refused to comment on the issue till he finds out where the fault lies. "I have yet to find out whether there is anything wrong with the computerised list that the university has prepared. Till then the admissions will be done based on this list only," said Dr Vij. (Statesman 2/7/05)

Punjab dalits in dire straits (2)

CHANDIGARH, July 2. Punjab not only has the highest dalit population in the country, but it has also earned the dubious distinction of a state with high atrocities and discrimination against the dalits. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes has identified Punjab, in a report, as having the highest number of custodial deaths of the schedule castes in the entire country. Since last year, the state has had at least eight such cases of custodial deaths in various districts. The NCSC has written letters to all state governments to suggest some steps to check atrocities against the dalits. The Punjab government has, however, neither replied to the letter nor implemented the suggestions. Apart from prevention of crime against dalits in police custody, the commission had also suggested that measures be taken to ensure that relevant sections of what is considered offence under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribe Prevention of Atrocities Act be displayed in each police post and in the offices of the deputy commissioner, senior SP and deputy SP in all districts. However, the DGP assured the commission that scheduled caste SHOs would be posted in five districts of the state from where the maximum number of cases of atrocities had been reported. (Statesman 3/7/05)

Man moves HC for custody of wife 'detained' by parents (2)

New Delhi: A young manager of a firm has approached the high court seeking his wife's custody who he says has been illegally detained by her parents. According to him, her parents are against the marriage since it is inter-caste. The boy belongs to the scheduled caste category and lives in Laxmi Nagar, while the girl is a Brahmin and a resident of Mandawali. During a hearing on Monday, before the court of Chief Justice B C Patel and Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, the girl's father said she would not go back to the boy as the local pan-chayat had declared the marriage null and void. To this, Justice Kaul said that the panchayat had no role to play in such decisions. "The girl is a major. It's her decision and if she wants to stay with the boy, she can do so," said Justice Kaul. As the girl was not present in the court at the time of hearing, she was summoned for a personal presence at 2 pm. When she appeared before the court, the judges took the girl for an in-chamber interview. After 30 minutes, they summoned the boy into the chamber and spoke to the couple together. Later the parents, the girl and the boy were asked to re-appear on Friday. The boy's advocate K K Vashisth said the couple got married as per the Vedic Hindu rites on November 28, 2004 in an east Delhi temple. (Times of India 5/7/05)

Guidelines to reserve seats for SCs, STs (2)

Bhubaneswar, July 4: THE CRITERIA for reserving Assembly seats for Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) will follow guidelines issued by the Delimitation Commission to the state election commissioners throughout the country. While seats would be reserved in those constituencies for STs, where their population is the "largest", seats for SCs would be reserved in those constituencies, where their population was comparatively large". In a letter, Shangara Ram, secretary of the Delimitation Commission, said the constituencies to be reserved for STs will be those, where the percentage of ST population was the largest.....". However, Scheduled Caste constituencies will be distributed in different parts of the state and seats will be reserved for Scheduled Caste in those constituencies, where the percentage of their population to the total population is comparatively large. While working out the allocation for each district, the number of seats to be reserved for SCs in those districts will have to be worked out separately. If a district has five seats with the highest proportion of ST population in a state, all the five seats in the district will be reserved for STs. But in case of reservation for SCs, all the five seats will be distributed among five districts. Each constituency in these districts having the highest percentage of SC population will be reserved for them. The letter adds, "The Delimitation Commission has decided that all Assembly constituencies in a district will be confined within the territorial limits of that district." (Hindustan Times 5/7/05)

Dalit groups demand arrest of rapists (2)

JAIPUR: Dalit groups have demanded arrest of persons responsible for alleged rape and consequent murder of a 32-year-old Dalit woman labourer in a crusher unit at Todaraisingh in Tonk district of Rajasthan last month. The demand follows the report of a fact-finding team which visited the area. In a memorandum to Pawan Surana, Chairperson of the State Women's Commission, the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights said what the local police were making out to be an accident involving a stone crusher was a case of gang-rape by two employees of the factory. "The duo, after calling the victim on the pretext of making her the payment of her wages on June 19, had repeatedly raped her and murdered her thereafter," the memorandum alleged. "In order to destroy the evidence and make it appear an accident they threw her into the crusher," Kavita Srivastava, general secretary of the Rajasthan People's Union for Civil Liberties, who accompanied the fact-finding team, said. An enquiry committee of the All India Progressive Women's Association which visited the area also has come out with similar observations. "It is a case of rape and murder and there is evidence available to prove it," Srilatha Swamination, AIPWA president, said. "It is a matter of concern that the police are protecting the murderers. The Deputy Superintendent of Police told us that there was no evidence to arrest the suspects as it was an accident case," Satish Kumar, State secretary of NCDHR, said. The first information report in the case is registered under Sections 302, 376 IPP and under 3(i)(xii), 3(i)(ii) and 3(i)(v) of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. The memorandum, charging that it was a "clear case of rape and murder", said the perpetrators were politically influential people. (The Hindu 6/7/05)

Reservation for Dalit Christians urged (2)

KOTTAYAM: Dalit Christian Maha Sabha (DCMS) has called for special reservation for the community in panchayats. Speaking to media persons, State president of the organisation Peter Anakkallu said the State Government was well within its rights to provide adequate representation for Dalit Christians in the Panchayati Raj Act. Alleging discrimination on the basis of religion, Mr. Peter said that while Governments of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have made recommendations supporting inclusion of Dalit Christians in the schedule list, both the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) Governments had failed to make a positive move in this direction. The organisation will take out a march to the house of Chief Minister Oommen Chandy at Puthuppally on Sunday, July 17, organisers said. (The Hindu 8/7/05)

SC panel to meet seers on text review (2)

New Delhi, July 8: The National Commission for Scheduled Castes will ask all the religious heads to screen sacred books of all religions for deleting derogatory remarks against Scheduled Castes.

The commission will also hold meetings with all religious gurus, including all Shankaracharyas. The first meeting will be held with Shankaracharya of Sringeri on July 12. Talking to this correspondent, chairman of the commission, Dr Suraj Bhan said, "Holy books need certain screening. There are several things in the dharam granth (religious scriptures) which are against untouchability. The commission has decided to request all religious heads for screening of holy books." "Take the example of Mann Smriti. It says, "Dhol, Chamaar, Shudra, Pasu, Nari. Yeh Sab Hain Tarran Ke Adhikari. It's very derogatory. These remarks are against untouchability," said Dr Suraj Bhan, adding that it has also been written in the text that if scheduled caste listens to the chants of Veda, lead will be poured into his or her ear. "We must not follow these remarks because these are against humanity," he added. The Commission will also meet Tibetan spiritual guru Dalia Lama in this regard. "I will write to spiritual guru Dalia Lama also. I would like to meet him also in this regard. I will also meet gurus of Jain and Sikh religion. I will request all religious heads that these derogatory remarks should now be deleted from the holy books. We are living in 21st century there should not be any discrimination on the basis of caste and religion. I am quite confident that religious gurus will definitely support us in our effort to create an awareness against untouchability in the country," Dr Bhan said. He further said, "I will also request Swami Ram Devji Mahraj to support us in our this campaign. I hope that people will also support us." (Asian Age 9/7/05)

Conversion game in Agra in full steam (2)

Agra : The Agra Dalits are a confused lot nowadays. As the town becomes a laboratory for religious experimentation, the Dalit is unwillingly playing the guinea pig, alternately sporting the cross and the Om. According to a recent survey of Agra division's seven districts, made by Hindu organisations in the region, over 2 lakh Dalits have been converted to Christianity. It's the Dalits in the Valmiki community that have borne the brunt of conversions the most. Almost 90 per cent of the Valmikis have come under the sway of baptism drives and converted to Christianity. Now, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has launched a massive campaign to bring back the convertees into the Hindu fold. Regional co-coordinator, Hindu Jagran Vibhag of the VHP, Indrajit Arya claims that a large number of these convertees still followed Hindu customs, despite being warned of dire consequences by the missionaries for indulging in "Hindu idol worship." The women still observe the karwachauth fast, the cross on their neck notwithstanding. The "purification drive" that aims to facilitate the "home coming" of the convertees has successfully purified just over 18,000 in the past one year, including 17 priests. In February this year, 5,000 converts were brought back into the fold in a purification camp in Etah on a single day. Eversince, 600 Dharm Raksha Samiti activists have continually been visiting the villages. The newly baptised villagers are re-converted to Hinduism either by Arya Samaj leaders in small groups or through a havan, that purifies them en masse. (Pioneer 10/7/05)

3 of Dalit family hacked to death near Ujjain (2)

BHOPAL, JULY 11: Three members of a Dalit family were hacked to death by an upper caste family near Bamankheda village, 70 km from Ujjain, late last night. The alleged cause of the attack was a stolen buffalo. Ujjain SP, G Janardan, said a hunt is on for the nine accused. The attack took place when one of the victims, Bhagirath, was on his way to lodge a complaint at the local police station against a Rajput family, said the police. Armed with sharp weapons, Sohan Singh Rajput and eight of his family members had attacked him. On hearing Bhagirath's calls for help, his father Kachru and brother Ramchandra ran to his aid. They were assaulted as well. Two hours later, the police reached the spot to find Bhagirath and his brother dead. Kachru was seriously injured. He died later at a local hospital. Before he died, Kachru gave a statement to the police saying Singh's family had accused him and his sons of trying to steal a buffalo. They had been harrasing them since then, he said. They had also abused Kachru and threatened to teach him a lesson. On Sunday night, Singh's family members had pelted stones at Kachru's house, following which his sons had decided to file a police complaint. The police is also examining the possibility of old enmity. The two families had reportedly clashed earlier as well. The district administration has announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to Kachru's family. (Indian Express 12/7/05)

CM 'inaccessible', Dalit leaders knock at Governor's door (2)

JAIPUR: Disappointed with "inaccessibility" of Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, Dalit leaders of Rajasthan on Tuesday met the Governor, Pratibha Patil, demanding measures for ensuring rightful share of Dalits and tribals in the State's land, water, wealth and resources, and called for effective implementation of the special laws for their protection. A delegation of half-a-dozen Dalit leaders urged Ms. Patil to impress upon the State Government the need to impart justice to Dalits by ensuring to them equitable access to the means of livelihood and implement the land reforms and ceiling laws. They demanded the establishment of a Land Tribunal for allotting land to Scheduled Castes and Tribes and providing inputs of seeds, fertiliser and irrigation facilities. The delegation affirmed that special courts, special public prosecutors and vigilance and monitoring committees should be appointed in all districts without delay for full and effective implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and measures taken to prevent violence against Dalit women in the villages. A memorandum submitted by the delegation to the Governor pointed out that a substantial portion of the cultivable Government land in the State had been illegally encroached upon by the powerful feudal lords, politicians and bureaucrats belonging to dominant castes. It said the land should be taken over by the Government by enacting a special law and distributed to the landless rural population. (The Hindu 13/7/05)

Dalits organise hearing in TN (2)

Madurai, July 17: For the first time in their history, Dalit Christians in the country are organising a public hearing in Madurai on Monday to highlight the discrimination being perpetrated against them and to demand their Constitutional and Human Rights. Speaking to the press, Dr John Dayal, member, National Integration Council, Government of India and president of the All India Catholic Union said that the public hearing was being organised by the National Movement for Dalit Christian Rights. Dalits from all southern states will depose on human dignity, social political and economic disempowerment before a panel of jurists of international fame headed by Justice P.B. Sawant, retired Supreme Court judge, including Sona Khan, a world expert on Islamic jurisprudence and gender rights, member of Parliament Karvendhan, former labour joint commissioner V.B. Balaram and former minorities commission member Jawahar. He said Madurai was the most appropriate place to conduct the public hearing, as it was the cradle of the great Tamil civilisation and also where atrocities against Dalits was high. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Pondicherry and Karnataka has over 70 per cent of the entire Dalit Christian population. Of India's approximately 2.5 crore Christians, over 60 per cent were converts from the former untouchables or scheduled castes.

Christian, Dalit woes discussed in TN (2)

Madurai, July 18: Forty-one people from the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Pondicherry deposed at a public hearing on the problems of Dalit-Christians here on Monday. Retired Supreme Court Justice P.B. Sawant headed the jury present at the first ever public hearing organised by the National Movement for Dalit Christians' Rights. John Mary of Panchan Kuppam in Cuddalore district said that the 72 children in his hamlet who belonged to families affected by the tsunami, were deprived of the benefit of exemption from paying of school and public examination fees because they were Dalit-Christians. Another Dalit from Punnavanam in Tirunelveli district said casteism was practised among the Christians where he lived. Christian-Dalits were not allowed to hold church services during funerals, although the uppercaste Christians held them. A member of the jury, barrister Sona Khan, said it was the duty of the state to ensure that every individual enjoyed the right to development. It was the right of every Dalit to enjoy all the benefits provided by the government. Member of Parliament and president of the All India Bar Council, Mr Karvendhan read out the resolutions passed by the jury, which came to the conclusion that it was socially as well as legally unrealistic to distinguish between Dalits who belonged to different religions. Followers of all religions other than Parsis had been converts from the Hindu religion. It was a sad reality that those who had converted from Hinduism to other religions carried with them their caste distinctions, whether they belonged to the higher or lower castes, the jury added. (Asian Age 19/7/05)

Report on providing reservation in services to SCs, STs, OBCs submitted (2)

MADURAI: A report on providing reservation in services and posts to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes has been submitted to the Centre by the Parliamentary Standing Committee and the Reservation in Services and Posts Bill 2004 is likely to be tabled in Parliament soon, E.M. Sudarsana Natchiappan, member, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, has said. Speaking at a one-day Dalit Christian People's Tribunal organised by the National Movement for Dalit Christians' Rights here on Monday, Mr. Natchiappan said the comprehensive report was being scrutinised by the Government and he hoped that a favourable decision would be taken in this regard. Earlier, lighting a kuthuvilakku, the Archbishop Emeritus of Madurai, M. Arockiaswamy, said the Government should provide benefits to Dalit Christians on the basis of caste to which they belonged and not discriminate them on religious grounds. The Dindigul Bishop, Antony Pappusamy, said Dalit Christians were being discriminated and as a result had to forego all Government benefits meant for Dalits. Depositing before the tribunal, headed by the former judge of Supreme Court, P. B. Sawant, John Mary from Cuddalore district said Dalit Christians affected by the tsunami in certain villages in her district had not been provided relief by the State Government so far. (The Hindu 19/7/05)

Promulgate ordinance to protect Dalits of Pondicherry origin: DPI (2)

PONDICHERRY: The general secretary of Dalit Panthers, Tol. Tirumavalavan, has urged the Pondicherry Administration to promulgate an ordinance to protect the rights of Dalits of Pondicherry origin in reservations. Addressing newsmen here on Monday, Mr. Tirumavalavan said that a joint meeting of functionaries and office bearers of the central wing and constituency wise units of the Pondicherry wing of the party held in Chennai on July 16 adopted resolutions reiterating the plea to protect Dalits. He said it was indeed a sorry spectacle that certain "divisive forces" were trying to drive a wedge between the local Dalits and the Dalits residing in the Union Territory after migration from the other States after 1964. His party was firm that the "rights of local Dalits to social justice" and also the "democratic rights of those who had migrated to Pondicherry from other States" should be protected. He said with a view to arriving at a permanent solution for reservation in job opportunities for the Dalits of Pondicherry origin and the Dalits who had migrated from other States, the administration should launch enumeration of these two sections separately. The Government should then decide on proportional basis of reservation for them without affecting either of the two sections. (The Hindu 19/7/05)

SC panel: Change caste setup in Army (2)

New Delhi, July 19: The National Commission for Scheduled Caste wants the entire complexion of the Indian Army changed. The chairman of the commission has proposed that the caste-based regimentation of the Army should be dismantled. If it was not possible, he has suggested that a new "Ambedkar regiment" should be raised. Talking to this correspondent, Dr Suraj Bhan, chairman of the Commission, said "I have written to the Centre for change in the name of several Army regiments namely Jat, Sikhs, Dogra and Rajputana. Army regiments should not be identified on the basis of caste. Government must change the name of these regiments." He further said "If the name of above regiments can not be changed then there should a regiment especially for the Scheduled Castes in the Indian Army." (Asian Age 20/7/05)

'Abusive remarks on dalits in holy books be deleted' (2)

New Delhi: Expressing serious concern over continued practice of untouchability across the country, National Commission for Scheduled Castes on Monday said it was talking to religious leaders to seek deletion of "objectionable and derogatory" references to dalits in religious scriptures. Citing references from the religious scriptures, the chairman of the commission, Surajbhan said all these references were "promoting untouchability" and negating the constitution which ensures equality and social justice to every citizen of the country. Suggesting that scriptures containing derogatory remarks about dalits should come out with new editions deleting such remarks, Surajbhan said the commission has sought the blessings of shankaracharya swami, Awdeshananad who had assured them full cooperation in eradicating the social evil. "We are also approaching other shankaracharyas, as per the suggestion of Swami Awdeshanand, and

would soon organise meetings in various states and at the panchayat level to apprise them about dalit's rights," he said. (Asian Age 20/7/05)

Dalit MLAs meet Sonia, lash out against their own Govt. (2)

NEW DELHI: Congress legislators from Delhi belonging to the Scheduled Castes met the party president, Sonia Gandhi, on Wednesday and complained about the Sheila Dikshit Government's "indifferent attitude" towards the community and its failure to implement the poll promises as well as resolutions passed by the State Assembly on important matters including constitution of an SC/ST Commission for Delhi. Led by the Assembly Speaker, Chaudhary Prem Singh, a group of ten SC legislators, with the exception of the Food and Supplies Minister, Raj Kumar Chauhan, told the Congress president that the Delhi Government had failed to resolve their problems despite repeated reminders. Some of the MLAs even questioned Mr. Chauhan's claim to being a Dalit leader and wanted a change in the community's representation in the Delhi Cabinet. It is learnt that Mr. Prem Singh was the first to lash out at Mr. Chauhan followed by the other MLAs including Brahm Pal, Jai Kishen and Amrish Gautam. They alleged that the Government had failed to spend the funds meant for the welfare of those living in Harijan bastis, indicating lack of seriousness on the part of the Delhi Government for this community. The legislators also complained that despite repeated promises the Delhi Government had failed to constitute a SC/ST Commission for Delhi. Both Vir Singh Dhingan and Charan Singh Kandera said the Delhi Assembly had also passed a resolution for constitution of a Safai Karamchari Commission but nothing had been done to fulfil the promise made to their community. They also pointed out that despite repeated representations to the Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit, about discrimination in posting, appointment and transfer of SC officers, nothing concrete had been done. (The Hindu 21/7/05)

Panel to probe MP 'posing' as Dalit for elections (2)

NEW DELHI, JULY 20: The National Commission for Scheduled Castes is investigating a case where an MP from Uttar Pradesh who had said in court he was a non-Dalit posed as one to contest Lok Sabha elections from the reserved Bijnore constituency. Suraj Bhan, the Chairman of the Scheduled Castes Commission, said the case of MP Munshi Ram "Pal" was the most prominent among thousands of instances of non-Dalits obtaining bogus caste certificates to avail of jobs reserved for Scheduled Castes. The panel chairman said investigations had proved that Munshi Ram, as the law-maker likes to call himself, had called himself a non-Dalit in court. He did so when he had to sell a piece of land in his native Nagina village in Bijnore. Under UP law, a Scheduled Caste can sell his land only to a member of his community. Yet, Munshi Ram was elected last year from a seat reserved for SCs on a Rashtriya Lok Dal ticket. Bhan has demanded a CBI probe adding that the SC Commission has summoned the Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary and Home Secretary, who have agreed to provide records relating to Munshi Ram's case as well as many other similar cases. The MP, who says the panel is playing into the hands of his rivals, insists he belongs to the "Khatike (SC) baridari" and wants the commission to hear him out. He admits he had not filled the mandatory papers when he sold his land, but says: "Just because I did not declare myself an SC while selling a piece of land does not change my identity." (Indian Express 21/7/05)

Delete Dalit slur from scriptures (2)

New Delhi: Delete "objectionable references" to Dalits from the scriptures if you want to intensify the fight against untouchability, says National Commission for Scheduled Castes chairman Suraj Bhan. Bhan claims he has the blessings of the Sankarac-harya of Sringeri Mutt has for his demand and he will soon meet other Sankara-charyas to garner support for his cause. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, Bhan said that references like dhol gan-war shudra pashu nari, sakal tadan keadhikari (drum, illiterate, Dalit, animal, women, all are fit only to be beaten) in Ramcharitmanas should not be allowed in print in a society with a Constitution giving equal rights to all. He said fresh edited versions of these scriptures should be brought out. Bhan said the Commission will hold conferences in all the states to "generate awakening" on the subject. In a bid to garner support for his endeavour, Bhan met the religious head of the Sringeri seat earlier last week. "He has agreed to support my cause and asked me to speak to other

Sankara-charyas on this issue and then a joint appeal can be made," he said. Saying that Dalits were still subject to discrimination, Bhan said atrocities against them were continuing to rise despite government's attempts to control them. He said eight Dalits were killed in police custody last year. "The same story exists in all states," he said. Recalling tales of tsunami survivors from upper castes refusing to share relief camps with Dalits, Bhan lamented, "Untouchability was in their minds despite having come back from the jaws of death. (Times of India 21/7/05)

Bijnor MP lands in caste tangle (2)

New Delhi: Munshiram Pal, MP from the Bijnor SC reserved constituency, is in a caste soup. Revenue records of a land sale and two relating land purchase aver that Pal is not a Scheduled Caste. Legally, a Dalit cannot sell his land to a non-Dalit though there is no such bar on purchase of land. The MP, however, claims that land records cannot change his caste. At the same time, he has accepted a "lapse" on his part not to seek "permission" to sell the land. The mention of "neither the seller nor the buyer being SCs" on purchase records, according to him, is superfluous as there is no legal bar on Dalits from buying land. This, he says, is a "lapse" of the revenue officials. Now, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes has summoned records pertaining to Pal's caste history in two weeks. On Monday, the district magistrate of Bijnor and the home secretary of Uttar Pradesh appeared before the commission. Giving his take on the issue, commission chairman Suraj Bhan said: "It looks suspicious. The same tehsildar says he is not a Dalit and later issues him an SC certificate." As the one who petitioned the commission, Bhupendra Pal Singh of Vishwa Dalit Parishad alleged that Pal is a 'gadariya' (shepherd) by caste and had "managed" a bogus caste certificate to contest elections in 2004. "We demand that his certificate be cancelled and a case be lodged against him." But Munshiram Pal is unfazed. Speaking to TOI, he blamed the dust raked up over his caste as the intra-Dalit squabble between chamars and non-chamars. "I am a 'Khatik' (an SC). The chamars are livid that a non-chamar has become the MP and so they are targeting me. It is meaningless and my school records can be checked," he said. On the face of it, three revenue records are damning piece of evidence against Pal. (Times of India 23/7/05)

5 dalits killed in MP over caste disputes (2)

Bhopal, July 26: Dalits continue to be at the receiving end in most backward districts of Madhya Pradesh. And their oppressors are not necessarily the upper castes. Topping the list of dalit bashing districts is OBC dominated Chhatarpur, the political playground of the now down and out former chief minister, Ms Lima Bharti. Of the 11 killings in the district this month, five were of dalits. A 35-year-old dalit woman was beaten to death by a bunch of youths allegedly over a private dispute on Sunday. Superintendent of police Yogesh Chowdhury admitted to this newspaper that since the local populace was overwhelmingly OBC, they were in a position to throw their weight around. And among the OBCs, it was the Lodhis (Ms Bharti's caste) who called the shots. Local sources also said Ms Bharli's old grouse that upper castes were behind most of the caste-related killings no longer held true. There has been a sea change in the social dynamics. Much like Bihar where the Yadavs were dreaded by the other OBC formations. Mr Chowdhury said given the abysmal poverty levels in the district (Chattarpur is MP's second poorest), quarrels broke out over trifles and were usually resolved with the death of one. "A man's refusal to serve a glass of water was often a good reason to kill him." Land disputes, however, topped the list. A case was registered against a group of Muslims for attempting to cart away a newly-married dalit woman in the Gulpura village of Morena district. (Asian Age 27/7/05)

Congress alleges rise in atrocities on Dalits in U.P. (2)

LUCKNOW: The Congress today alleged that the atrocities on Dalits in Uttar Pradesh were on the rise and the State police was refusing to take cognizance of the situation. The Congress claimed that the ruling Government led by Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav of Samajwadi Party was also not concerned about the plight of the Dalits in terms of rights, education and availability of electricity and water. A delegation of Uttar Pradesh Congress Dalit Utthan Task Force today met the Governor, T.V. Rajeswar and handed over a memorandum to this effect. Earlier, members of the task force staged a dharna outside the Vidhan Sabha here at a call given by State unit Congress president Salman Khurshid. In its memorandum, the UP Congress Dalit

Utthan Task Force demanded that the Governor take effective steps to check the violations of rights being committed on Dalits by the State Government. The memorandum also demanded reservation for Dalits in the private sector as privatisation was having its ill-effects on the community. Later, Mr. Khurshid told reporters that the ruling coalition in the State was increasingly getting trapped in its own moves and the courts would shortly expose the misdeeds. Referring to the decision of the State Government to hold Panchayat elections, he said it was necessary to hold free and fair elections than to hold them on time. "Let them hold the elections, we will use the Supreme Court to ensure that fairness and democracy prevailed," he added. (The Hindu 28/7/05)

Dalit party calls for July 30 bandh (2)

CHENNAI: : The Puthiya Thamizhagam will organise rail and road roko on July 30 to demand scrapping of the draft report of the delimitation commission on Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies in the State. It has also called for a "bandh" in the southern districts on the same date, party president K. Krishnasamy told presspersons here on Wednesday. He alleged that the report had done "injustice" to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, most backward classes and the minority communities. As per the report, there would be no reserved Parliamentary constituencies in the southern districts. Tenkasi and Pollachi would be made general constituencies and Villupuram and Kancheepuram would be classified as reserved. As for Assembly constituencies, he said areas where the SC/ST population was predominant would be divided and attached to different constituencies. (The Hiindu 28/7/05)

Government accepts proposals on Scheduled Castes (2)

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Government on Thursday accepted the recommendations of the House Committee that all those migrant Scheduled Caste members whose castes were listed in the Delhi Government list and fulfil the necessary conditions be given the caste certificate as original residents of the Capital. Addressing a press conference, the Delhi Food and Supplies Minister, Raj Kumar Chauhan, who also holds charge of SC/ST Welfare, said a House Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of the Narela MLA, Charan Singh Kandra, to look into the problems of SCs who migrated to Delhi after 1951. It has been recommended that any applicant fulfilling any of the three conditions outlined by the Government be issued a caste certificate. According to Mr. Chauhan, the SC members should be issued caste certificates as original residents of Delhi and for this purpose attestation of the application by a Member of Parliament, MLA, Councillor or Member of the SC/ST Welfare Boards should be accepted as proof of genuineness of the applicant. The applicant should have been born in Delhi for which he or she has to produce the birth certificate as evidence. He or she should have studied in Delhi for which they have to produce the matriculation certificate or marks-sheet as proof or they should have resided in Delhi for the last five years for which he or she has to produce domicile certificate or any other proof of residence in Delhi. Mr. Chauhan said verification of the parent's certificate from the original issuing authority should be done away with unless there was a specific complaint against the applicant, giving rise to serious doubts about genuineness or the original certificate. (The Hindu 29/7/05)

AUGUST 2005

Dalit women to get priority (2)

Madurai, Aug. 7: While advocating dalit liberation, it is imperative that the liberation of dalit women should be given priority, because they bore the brunt of atrocities against the community, said S. Karupiah, secretary of the Village Education Service Association (VESA). Briefing mediapersons on the three-day national conference hosted by the Dalit Intellectual Collective, Delhi, in association with Vikas Adhyan Kendra, Mumbai, and VESA held in Kerala recently, he said dalit women were also human beings who needed all respect and dignity from society. But they were being treated as commercial commodities by the men. Though women from the so-called upper caste also faced many problems, the sufferings of the dalit women were something of greater magnitude, he said. He said the sufferings of dalit women were threefold — caste, class and male chauvinism. The conference highlighted that the dalit women should have the

right to choose their husbands, divorce if they wish it and the right to share their ancestral properties with their brothers. Politics and politicians had adopted a negative and antagonistic attitude in order to resolve their problems. But this had not paid any dividends and now a time had come to deal with the problem through dialogue. It should be ensured that an attitudinal change is brought among the society, which was responsible for causing injustice to dalits. It was high time that the dalits too enjoyed all the privileges enjoyed by the others in society, he said. Political empowerment alone will not help to end the historical cultural injustice being perpetrated against the dalits in India. This was possible only by working out an agenda not only for the overall liberation of the dalits. He said education was yet to bring about the required change in the dalit community. (Asian Age 8/8/05)

RJD leader beats pregnant Dalit woman to death (2)

Patna : Lalu brand of social Justice: Party leader and ex-MLA beat a Dalit woman to death. Rashtriya Janata Dal chief, Lalu Prasad Yadav has self-assuredly been the sole proprietor and upholder of social justice, equality and the like. This has proved instrumental in selling his brand of politics for more than 15 years in Bihar. His own party leader and former MLA espousing the cause of social justice and equality beat a young, pregnant Dalit woman to death in his own backyard. The former RJD MLA Sunil Kumar Pushpam allegedly thrashed a Dalit woman who was pregnant. Manju Devi, wife of Binod Sada, was beaten so brutally with a rifle butt on Tuesday that she succumbed to her injuries and died in the hospital on Saturday. Her fault was that she was a little slow in moving out of the way to let the MLA's jeep pass on a muddy village tract. The hapless Dalit woman in her mid-twenties, of Checheni-Beethan village in Samastipur was on her way to the market when the MLA's jeep came from the back and honked at her on the Sirsia bundh of the district. Manju took some time to move to a dry place before she could let the jeep pass. This made the MLA lose his temper and in a fit of rage, he beat her. Sunil Kumar had won the last Assembly elections held in February, from Hasanpur constituency in Samastipur, on an RJD ticket. He defeated Ran Nandan Mandal of Lok Janshakti Party by over 6,000 votes. According to the complaint lodged with the local police station, the infuriated MLA Sunil Kumar Pushpam, who had won the February elections by promising uplift of Dalits and social justice, got off his vehicle and began to thrash Manju with his rifle butt. His men, in the meanwhile, stood guard. Manju was badly injured and had a miscarriage on the spot. She was left bleeding profusely. Later, she was admitted to a nearby hospital in Begusarai district, where she breathed her last. Sources in the hospital said that Manju died because of internal haemorrhage and rupture of veins. (Pioneer 8/8/05)

Dalits prevented from taking part in Kandadevi festival, says petition (2)

MADURAI : : A public interest litigation petition moved before the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Tuesday alleged that the Sivaganga district administration and the police prevented the Dalits from taking part in the Kandadevi car festival on June 21. Admitting the PIL that sought permission to take out a procession against the denial of rights of the Dalits, a Division Bench of Justice K.P. Sivasubramaniam and Justice S.K. Krishnan issued notice to the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Devakottai sub-division, returnable by August 16. A. Ganesan, organiser of the Federation for the Rights on Kandadevi Car Festival, a body of 25 organisations, said in his petition that the principal seat of the High Court on June 16 had directed the Collector to ensure participation of all Hindus in the car festival of the Swarnamoortheswarar temple. Subsequently, an Inspector General of Police, 7 Superintendents of Police, 13 Additional Superintendents of Police, 37 Deputy Superintendents of Police, 60 inspectors, 150 sub-inspectors, 2,000 constables and a battalion each from the Tamil Nadu Special Police and the Home Guards were deployed. He alleged that over 100 Dalits were arrested as a preventive measure and some more detained at Aravayal station. Cases were foisted on these people. Leaders of some parties were also illegally detained for more than 10 hours until the end of the festival. Though the Government claimed that 26 Dalits participated in the festival, only 7 of them were allowed to pull the car. (Te Hindu 10/8/05)

Dalits raise demand for quota in pvt sector (2)

New Delhi: Pressure on UPA government to legislate on reservations in the private sector is growing, with Lok Sabha deputy speaker C S Atwal and former President K R Narayanan on Tuesday joining the chorus from the platform of a two-day national summit of nationwide Dalit organisations. Narayanan released a Delhi Declaration, summing up the demand for Dalits and tribals and specifying the way it should be implemented. The conclave resolved to hold a direct dialogue with the industry on the issue and threatened that Dalits will boycott products of those business houses which oppose the quota. Only a day earlier, the Left parties — with Sitaram Yechury of CPM and D Raja of CPI — pressed the UPA to enact the Bill for private sector quota and even accused the government of dragging its feet on the issue after one year in power. Former prime minister V P Singh advocated the same. The demand thus is set to lead to an increase pressure on UPA government, which is caught between its poll promise — with mounting pressure from all sides — and resistance from strong industrial organisations. (Times of India 10/8/05)

Bid to exclude Dalits from mainstream raises concern (2)

JAIPUR: Dalit activists from across the country participating in a national convention of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), which began here on Wednesday, expressed concern over the majoritarian cultural resurgence and market-oriented development excluding Dalits from the mainstream and relegating them to a secondary status. The participants from 15 States felt that the development of human rights discourse based on individual liberty had led to more atrocities on Dalits with little attention being paid to their collective security. Moreover, the religious sanction given to untouchability and discrimination against Dalits had made it difficult to secure equal rights for these sections of population. The two-day convention is devoted to finding ways to establish dignity and security of Dalits, liberate them from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation and hunger, and evolve a strong Dalit leadership that can challenge the unjust and unequal power equations. A Millennium Dalit Charter will also be released at the end of the convention. The Rajasthan Governor, Pratibha Patil, inaugurating the convention, said Dalits had a right to raise their voice against any form of atrocity and discrimination. "There is a need to change the mindset among the dominant castes in favour of giving equal rights and opportunities to Dalits. Our Constitution and civil laws have enough provisions for this," she said. (The Hindu 11/8/05)

All-party team seeks amendment to scheduled castes categorisation (2)

NEW DELHI: Seeking an amendment to the Constitution and provision for categorisation of reservation for scheduled castes, an all-party delegation from Andhra Pradesh on Thursday called on the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and leaders of various political parties for early legislation. Leading the delegation, the Andhra Pradesh Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, Koneru Ranga Rao, said they impressed upon these leaders the need to bring a Bill at the earliest to make suitable amendment to Article 341 by introducing sub-section 3 that would give the States powers to make suitable laws for social justice. The move is to ensure social justice and not to divide castes," Mr. Rao said at a press conference. He said the all-party delegation reflected the all-round acceptance of the measure following the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Act 2000. Subsequently, the State legislature had adopted a unanimous resolution during December last year to impress upon the Centre the need to bring Central legislation/Constitutional amendment for A, B, C and D categorisation of SC reservation. The amendment would enable the State to effect grouping sub-classification of the castes mentioned in the list of SCs. In a memorandum, the delegation said 59 castes were identified as backward and included in the list of scheduled castes appended to the Constitution. The population of SCs in the State according to 2001 Census stood at 123 lakhs of which 58 lakhs were Madigas and some 48 lakh Malas. (The Hindu 12/8/05)

Landlords confine 45 dalits in village (2)

New Delhi, Aug. 11: At least 45 persons belonging to the Schedule Castes, ostracised by landlords in their village in Haryana for praying in a local temple, have been forcibly confined to their homes by the upper caste villagers. According to information reaching here, the landlords

are forcibly shaving off the moustache of one male member of the dalits every day. This shocking incident of casteism was reported from in the small Haryana village of Badhram, near Palwal. The villagers are being forcibly held in their own homes for 18 days. The local police did not take any action for weeks despite the fact that a complaint had been lodged. Finally, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes on Thursday instructed the inspector-general of police (Gurgaon range) to provide security to the SC villagers and submit an action-taken report within 10 days. On Wednesday, 65-year-old Bhajan Lal's moustache was shaved off against his will. Mr Lal is worried about the fate of his family as his son Raju has been missing after he was beaten up by the upper caste villagers. Talking to this correspondent, Rajneesh, who was beaten up by the upper caste villagers for praying at the temple on July 20, said, "They have created terror in the village. They want to kill me because I visited the temple. They also want to kill my family members in the village. Now they are looking for my younger brother Lekhram." He added: "People belonging to the upper castes have taken 45 persons of the Scheduled Caste community hostage. Once we had installed a statue of Bhimrao Ambedkar, but it was later removed by the upper caste people. The upper caste villagers of Fazalpur, Alwalpur and Bhadram village have already announced that they will kill us if we go to temples." (Asian Age 12/8/05)

Landlords set 3 houses on fire (2)

Badhram (Haryana): A deputy superintendent of Haryana police (DSP) arrived at this village on Friday following a report in these columns of atrocities against dalits, but the attacks continued despite his presence. The landlords set fire to three houses, beat up a dalit and attacked a woman. The DSP was in the same village taking down complaints from the dalits, who now have no trust left in the administration. The tiny village, interestingly, is just 100 km from the national capital. The landlords brutally beat up Bhim, dragged Hemlata (named changed), 30, out of her house and beat her mercilessly. Landlords have ostracised dalits and confined to their homes 45 persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes since July 20, when they offered prayers at a local temple. Dalits have been beaten, and the moustache of one dalit man is lopped off every day. When this correspondent visited the village on Friday, at least 15 dalit women turned up to narrate their plight and sought protection as local policemen have refused to take cognisance of their complaints. The upper caste villagers have no remorse for what they have done. The village pradhan defended the action and vowed to teach "them" a lesson for praying at the temple. Talking to this correspondent, Mr Bhajan Lal (65), half of whose moustache was shaved off on the landlords' orders on Thursday, said, "They will kill us. The police is also supporting them. We are helpless." Gesturing helplessly, he said, "We are thinking of leaving this village. This is the last option to save our families." (Asian Age 16/8/05)

AP dalit woman told to hoist flag (2)

Krishnagiri, Aug. 15: A little village near here has done India proud when its "upper caste" people nominated a poor dalit woman to hoist the national tricolour and distribute the Independence Day sweets to them. Mekala Chinna Palli village, about 10 km from Krishnagiri, has a population of a little more than 4,000, half of them women. Dalits are a minority here while the Chettiars form a major chunk of the 70 per cent upper caste segment. Like most villages dominated by the upper castes, MC Palli too had treated the dalits as untouchables till a few years back but things began to look up for the latter as the younger generation, better educated now, resolved to do away with discriminatory practices, such as the two-tumbler system under which the dalits are served tea in separate glasses in wayside hotels. The village leadership resolved to showcase MC Palli as a model of caste amity. "We wanted to prove we have risen above discriminatory practices. So we decided to get a dalit woman to hoist the national flag," said village panchayat chairperson G. Kalaivani. (Asian Age 16/8/05)

Dalits at the receiving end, says report (2)

NEW DELHI: A fact-finding report by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) on intimidation and social ostracism of Dalits in Badhram, near Palwal in Haryana, has demanded immediate action by the Central and State governments against the perpetrators of the crime. According to the report, the head priest of the village temple in Badhram verbally abused (on caste lines) a Dalit youth, Rajneesh, on July 24 this year upon seeing him pick a branch from a

neem tree in the temple. This led to a quarrel, in which Rajneesh was hit on the head. On seeing his condition, enraged Dalits, beat up the head priest. Upper caste villagers retaliated by beating up two Dalits. The local police refused to register an FIR filed by the Dalits while they registered the FIR filed by the priest and upper caste villagers. Seven Dalits have been charged for offences under the IPC of which four were arrested immediately, and later released on bail. The report says that most Dalit youths have fled from the village in fear and the upper caste villagers have completely ostracised Dalits. They have directed the village shopkeepers not to sell any commodity to Dalits. The report says that on August 12, upper caste villagers set three houses belonging to Dalit families on fire. According to the report, upper caste men beat up three Dalits and assaulted a woman. An FIR was lodged at Chandhat Police Station under various sections of IPC and Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) Prevention of Atrocities Act. None of those named in the FIR have been arrested so far. The report points out that the crisis is a culmination of events in recent years arising from the assertiveness of the Dalits in Badhram and the awareness of their rights. Dalits in the village had refused to do 'begar' or forced labour for the upper caste villagers. The construction of a statue of Dr B.R. Ambedkar and a park on Panchayat land had become a bone of contention between Dalits and upper caste villagers. According to the report, the police and State administration have a history of siding with the upper castes. The district level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee required to set up as per the SC and ST Prevention of Atrocity Rules is not in place. The Deputy Commissioner of Faridabad, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of the area and the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent of Police of Faridabad have not visited Badhram to assess the extent of atrocity, loss and damage to property in order to submit a report to the State government as required by the SC and ST Prevention of Atrocities Rules, 1995. The report has demanded that an FIR be lodged on the basis of the complaint filed by Dalits on 24 July, immediate withdrawal of false cases foisted on them, a CBI enquiry into the case, and compensation to the victims permissible under the SC and ST Prevention of Atrocities Rules. (The Hindu 17/8/05)

Revised development norms for SC/ST areas (2)

NEW DELHI: In a significant decision aimed at speeding up development works in the Capital's Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe localities, the Delhi Cabinet on Tuesday approved revised guidelines paving the way for undertaking such works in areas having 33 per cent SC/ST population against the earlier limit of 50 per cent. An amount of Rs.22crores was also approved for various works during the current financial year. The Cabinet, which met under the leadership of the Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit, approved the new guidelines in view of the information sought by the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, on the steps taken by the Delhi Government for the welfare of the SC/ST community in the Capital. As per the new guidelines, any residential locality having SC/ST population of more than 33 per cent as per the 2001 census would be eligible for getting works done under this scheme. Earlier, the residential localities were eligible only if the percentage of such population exceeded 50 per cent. Under this new scheme, the money would be used for repair, construction of common bathrooms and community latrines, repair and relaying of side drains and pavements and repair of kuccha roads, concrete flooring of approach roads and repair or construction of community centres. All residential localities located on private land, in unauthorised colonies in extended Lal Dora resettlement colonies and colonies carved out under the 20-Point Programme would be covered under this scheme. The issue had created a stir last year when a large amount of the funds earmarked for such areas went unutilised and in some cases it was even diverted for undertaking various other works in the general category. (The Hindu 17/8/05)

Haryana, Punjab lead in atrocities against dalits (2)

New Delhi, Aug 19: Haryana and Punjab are the new front runners in getting dubious distinction of being the most hostile places for dalits in the country. There has been a spurt in the incidents of atrocities on dalits in the two north Indian states. If nine of them died in police custody in Punjab\ life in neighbouring Haryana has become too harsh in wake of ostracisation. Talking to this correspondent, Mr Suraj Bhan, chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, said "Nine dalits have died in police custody in the last one year in Punjab. But the state government did not take any step to take action against the erring police officials. It was

only after the commission's intervention that the state government took some action. Same is the case with Haryana. Dalits are not allowed to offer prayers at temples in Haryana's villages. Now dalits have constructed their own temples in most of the villages in Haryana." "What happened in Badhran village of Palwal ? It's quite shocking that landlords are mercilessly beating dalits in the village and the police is not taking any action against the accused," he said referring to the series carried in The Asian Age. "The police in both states is not taking action against the landlords. In fact in certain villages of Haryana, the police is supporting landlords," said Mr Bhan. He further said "In Kaithal district of Haryana around 300 dalits had to leave their village because their were being ostracised by the landlords. And the police did not do anything. How can the police remain just a mute spectator when the dalits are being ostracised by the landlords." (Asian Age 20/8/05)

Dalit family faces persecution, threatens suicide (2)

JAIPUR: A Dalit family in Nimora village, near here, has threatened to commit suicide unless its persecution for the past two years for constructing a temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman and worshipping the deity is stopped forthwith and those threatening the family and not allowing it to use the public hand-pump, allegedly in collusion with the local police officials, are brought to book. The influential people belonging to higher castes in Nimora, situated in Bassi tehsil, imposed a fine of Rs. 21,000 on the family of Krishna Gopal Dhanka for its "audacity" to build the temple on its own land and assaulted the family members for conducting regular worship of Lord Hanuman. The police did not take any action initially, though it registered an FIR later on being approached through a lawyer. The Dhanka family has accused the dominant villagers of trying to demolish the temple, abusing and assaulting the family, pelting stones on its house during night and making false complaints to the police against them. The threat, intimidation and boycott have been continuing since October 2003, when the fine was imposed, and the family is living in the village with a deep sense of insecurity and frustration. The villagers hounded out the family in January 2004 and it spent about ten days outside the village in a state of destitution. The Dhankas could return to Nimora only on the intervention of the then Home Secretary, D.S. Sagar, but their systematic persecution continues unabated. The family members are not allowed to use the public hand-pump in the village. "When we went to police with the plea to take action, the police officials scornfully told us to abide by the decree of higher castes. They told us that lower castes had no right to build a temple and asked us to either demolish it on our own to buy peace or leave the village," Bhanwar Lal, son of Krishna Gopal, told The Hindu here on Tuesday. (The Hindu 25/8/05)

On reservation for Dalit converts, it's Nitish vs BJP (2)

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 24: The ideological gulf between the BJP and one of its closest allies came to the fore in the Lok Sabha today. While JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar made an unequivocal demand that Dalits who had converted to Christianity or Islam should also get the benefit of reservation, the BJP insisted that "religion-based reservations" was totally unacceptable. The issue came up during an impromptu discussion on the need to avoid a confrontation between the judiciary and the legislature in wake of Supreme Court Chief Justice R C Lahoti's critical remarks on the issue of reservation in unaided private educational institutions. While defending the right of Parliament to enact laws to ensure "social justice", BJP leader V K Malhotra—taking a different line from other MPs—said the legislature too should avoid making that go against the Constitution and cited "religion-based reservations" as an example. His statement sparked off protests from several MPs such as Ilyas Azmi (BSP) and A Obaidullah (MIM) but their remarks were struck off the record. What took the House by surprise was Nitish Kumar's forceful advocacy for reservations for Dalit Muslims and Christians. Undeterred by protests from the BJP, Nitish insisted that the Indian reality was that "changing one's religion does not change one's caste." Despite conversion, Dalit Muslims and Christians faced acute discrimination and should be accorded the same benefits as other Dalits. (Indian Express 25/8/05)

'Dalits of all religions must get same rights' (2)

New Delhi, Aug. 27: Representatives of 1.8 crore dalit Christians moved the Justice Ranganath Mishra National Commission for Linguistic and Religious Minorities, demanding an early decision

on declaring them eligible for the same rights and protection of law given to dalits professing Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh faiths. The advocacy group for dalit Christians led by All-India Catholic Union president Dr John Dayal gave a memorandum to the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission through its Christian member, Dr Anil Wilson. It also met Christian member V.V. Augustine of the National Minorities Commission and Reverend Valson Thampu, the Christian member of the National Commission on Minority Educational Institutions. The dalit Christian leaders also met various political leaders, including CPM general— secretary Prakash Karat, CPI national secretary D. Raja and Janata Dal(United) leader Nitish Kumar. In the memorandum to the Mishra Commission, the dalit Christian, leaders demanded opportunity to make written, oral and visual presentation to the commission, bringing before it adequate literature and other evidence on the issue. The memorandum to the Mishra Commission came after the government told the Supreme Court on August 23 that it was handing over the issue to the commission. The government statement demanding a four-month adjournment of the dalit Christians PIL had led the Chief Justice of India to pull up the government for its attitude to the judgements of the top court. (Asian Age 28/8/05)

Dalits plan to move court for tsunami relief (2)

CHENNAI: : Amid large-scale allegations of discrimination against Dalits in tsunami relief and rehabilitation, a consolidation of Dalit organisations has mooted a plan to approach the court. At a daylong public hearing organised here on Tuesday, 22 Dalits from the 13 affected districts alleged they had been left out of most of the relief works executed by the Government and non-governmental organisations. They emotionally recounted the discrimination they faced for the past eight months, as a seven-member jury listened sympathetically. The jury included retired Madras High Court judges Sami Durai and B. Akbar Basha Khadiri, C. Chellappan, former member, National SC/ST Commission, Vasanthi Devi, former chairperson, State Commission for Women, Annie Raja, general secretary, National Federation of Indian Women, Shabnam Hashmi, human rights activist, New Delhi, and A. Marx. Rani of Muttukadu in Villupuram district said 150-odd Dalit families had received no relief except a small package containing saris, soaps and food that was unfit for consumption. All the Government had to do to restore livelihood to the men in the village was to give them two catamarans and two nets ('modaavalai'), but this had not been done. Women should be given training in other trades. Malini, from Sirgazhi in Nagapattinam district, said the 15 Dalit families in their village had to pay Rs.1,000 a family to fishermen leaders who told them that unless they paid up, the entire relief package would not reach them. Dhanavel of Kottaimedu, Cheyyar, said only 11 families who had lost their catamarans and nets were paid Rs. 10,000, though many more had been affected. They charged that fishermen in the affected areas had cornered all the relief, in collusion with the authorities, and the Dalits whose livelihood also depended on the sea were left out of every scheme. However, some of them acknowledged that the limited relief they received was due to the benevolence of NGOs and Dalit movements. (The Hindu 31/8/05)

Dalit houses in Haryana village set on fire (2)

Chandigarh, Aug. 31: Upper caste Jat villagers, angry over police inaction in a recent murder case, torched more than twenty houses belonging to dalit Balmiki families in Gohana township on the border of Delhi in Haryana's Sonapat district. More than 500 Jat villagers had gathered at Gohana's Satsang Bhawan on Wednesday afternoon to protest against the reluctance of the local police to book the culprits responsible for the murder of Manjit Singh, a property dealer from Gadhwal village, who was allegedly done to death by a group of Balmikis two weeks ago. The furious Jats had earlier also held a Barah-Panchayat (twelve-village panchayat) at the victim's village on Tuesday. Simmering temper flared quickly at Wednesday afternoon's meeting in Gohana when some of the participants egged on others to "teach the Dalits a lesson they would remember." The Jats poured out of the Satsang Bhawan and proceeded to the nearby Balmiki settlement where within minutes they had set more than twenty homes on fire. The crowd fled the scene soon after. Fortunately, there was no loss of life or injuries since the 150 Balmiki families living there had deserted the settlement several hours earlier clearly apprehending reprisals by the Jats. The local administration was completely helpless in preventing the incident. The angry

Jat mob easily overwhelmed the inadequate police contingent present on the scene. The cops who at first attempted to make a stand by letting off a volley of shots in the air, were forced to retreat and quietly watch the Jats make a bonfire out of the Dalit hutments. (Asian Age 1/9/05)

Haryana tense as Dalits call bandh today (2)

Gohana (Sonapat) : Tension prevailed in Haryana after Dalits, angry over Wednesday's torching of houses by a crowd, blocked the busy Ambala-Delhi highway at Lal Batti Chowk in this industrial town on Thursday, burnt a bus, and raised anti-Government slogans. Police fired in the air to quell arsonists and imposed prohibitory orders to maintain law and order. A Dalit panchayat later held a meeting and gave a call for Haryana bandh on Friday and another bandh on September 5. Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who visited the spot on Thursday, said those behind Wednesday's arson attack "would not be spared" and cases had been registered under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Atrocities Act against 23 people, including a son and a brother of Member of Parliament from Sonapat Kishan Singh Sangwan. "We are with the Dalits. They are our brothers. The guilty will not be spared," he said, adding that he would consider the demand for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into Wednesday's incident. Though no one was hurt, over 1,000 Dalit families have left Gohana, fearing for their lives. Police said they have launched a hunt to nab Pradeep and Ranbir, son and brother of Mr Sangwan, who is also the national vice-president of the BJP. This tiny town in Haryana has virtually turned into a police camp after several houses of Dalits were set ablaze in Balmiki Colony near Baroda Chowk on Wednesday. At least 30 houses were burnt in the fire while 20 others were partially gutted. (Pioneer 2/9/05)

BJP MP's sons, brother booked for arson (2)

SONEPAT/NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 1: A DAY after 30 houses in a Valmiki colony at Gohana was burned by a mob, 23 people, including the son and brother of BJP national vice-president Kishan Singh Sangwan, were booked for arson even as Dalit organisations blocked the national highway calling for a Haryana-wide bandh tomorrow and an all-India strike on September 5. The mob torched Dalits' houses in the Valmiki colony reportedly in retaliation to the murder of an upper caste youth on August 27. While Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that an administrative probe would be conducted into the incident, the BJP said it will send a five-member fact-finding team to the area tomorrow. It will be led by the MP and the President of its Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Morcha, Ramnath Kovind. Sangwan is the party's MP from Sonapat. His son Pradeep and brother Ranbir have been booked under various sections of IPC and Arms Act. Both are currently absconding. Meanwhile, alleging police protection to those responsible for the incident, Dalit organisations held up traffic on the Ambala-Delhi Highway at Lal Batti Chowk for nearly 40 minutes and later submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner. Prohibitory orders are in place and senior police officers are in town. Officials added that compensation can only be provided after the approval of the Election Commission, as the model code of conduct was in force due to the coming by-election to the Rohtak Lok Sabha Constituency. (Indian Express 2/9/05)

Intra-Dalit friction sparked Gohana row (2)

Gohana (Sonapat) : The Gohana incident, in which houses of 12 Dalits were torched on Wednesday near Sonapat, has divided the community with the Khatiks - the non-Balmiki Dalits - holding the view that what happened at Balmiki Basti was a fallout of the "criminal indulgences of the Balmiki youths that had enraged the locals". According to Raman Singh Khatik, "After the torching incident, the police recovered 2 kg of charas, two Japanese pistols worth Rs 4 lakh and 250 rounds of live bullets." Some Balmiki youths are allegedly dreaded in the area for having committed "nine murders", three of these this year. According to non-Balmiki Dalits, the horrific Wednesday incident will bring peace in the town as the Balmiki youths, who had become a nuisance, will now be more restrained. These youths intimidated shopkeepers and collected hafta (extortion money) of around Rs 150 from each one of them. When a Pioneer reporter reached Gohana, women complained that these miscreants often harassed women and girls. As a result, women found it difficult to venture out of their houses in the evening hours. "Two girls are still undergoing treatment at the PGI Hospital in Rohtak," said Kavita Rani. These youths did not

spare even the policemen. Former DSP Kuldeep Shivach and disrobed and beaten up in his office, informed a villager. "The incident is not an outcome of caste dispute. It represents people's frustration over and anger against their misdeeds," he said. The Haryana bandh called by the Dalit panchayat, meanwhile, received a muted response. Shops and vends functioned as usual in the area. (3/9/05)

'Mahapanchayat' rules out caste animosity (2)

GOHANA (HARYANA): The "sarvajatiya-panchayat" attended by "sarpanches" of 96 villages, including those from the Dalit community, on Friday termed the burning down of houses at Balmiki Basti in the Gohana sub-division of Sonapat on Wednesday as a fall-out of the murder of a young man on August 27 and not a result of any animosity between the two communities. Attended by over 5,000 people, the meeting began at the Nai Anaj Mandi on Jind Road around 11 a.m. During the meeting, "sarpanches" of different villages expressed their views on the episode. At 1-30 p.m., the "panches" issued a statement demanding immediate arrest of the rest of the accused responsible for the murder of Baljeet, a resident of Gadhwal village. The "panchayat" gave the administration a deadline of two days to arrest the accused, Lara and Kaka, residents of Valmiki Basti, and a constant source of trouble. The Inspector General of Police (Rohtak Range), V.N. Rai, confirmed that Lara and Kaka had a criminal past and had earlier been arrested in cases of rioting and petty fights. Claiming that most of the people named in the FIR on the burning down of about 35 houses were not the actual culprits, the "panchayat" urged the administration to arrest the real ones instead. After the meeting hundreds of people sat on dharna on Jind Road, blocking vehicular movement and demanding the arrest of those who murdered Baljeet. Earlier, the Bahujan Samajwadi Party president, Mayawati, visited Valmiki Basti and met those rendered homeless due to the incident. She demanded appropriate compensation for them and also a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation. (The Hindu 3/9/05)

SEPTEMBER 2005

UP village stops dalit mukhiya (2)

New Delhi, Sept. 3: Forty-two-year-old Vitthan, wife of Sonpal, who won the panchayat election from Marriayaa block of Etawah district of Uttar Pradesh, was forced to miss the oath-taking ceremony that took place on Friday as the upper caste community of the village was angry at a dalit woman becoming mukhiya (village head). Ms Vitthan, the elected representative of the people of Marriayaa, can not even enter her village now. She has been on the run since August 28 — the day she was elected — as the village landlords had threatened her of dire consequences if she dared return. She came to New Delhi and lodged a complaint with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. Rupram Nishad, elder brother of Sonpal, blames her political rivals for the misery of Ms Vitthan. "Azad Kumar Yadav, who was defeated by Vitthan, is the main accused who is behind the incident. He, along with Satish Singh Yadav, Chuna Yadav, Ashok Kumar Yadav and Mohan Singh Yadav, attacked Vithan soon after the declaration of result on August 25," Mr Rupram said, adding that they threatened her to resign from the post of mukhiya and leave the village. (Asian Age. 4/9/05)

NHRC takes note of Gohana incident (2)

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday took suo moto cognisance, based on media reports, of the torching of houses belonging to Dalits by a mob belonging to upper castes at Gohana in Sonapat district of Haryana, on August 27. It has directed that the news reports be sent to the Chief Secretary, Haryana, and the District Magistrate, Sonapat, and asked for their response within four weeks. (The Hindu 4/9/05)

Dalits block traffic (2)

OVER HUNDRED Dalit activists jammed traffic for about half an hour at Peeragarhi Chowk in Paschim Vihar area in west Delhi to protest against the Gohana incident in which houses of Dalits were burnt on last Wednesday. The Dalit leaders blocked the traffic at about nine in the morning. They demanded action against the accused and compensation for the victims whose houses were burnt. Few of them also shouted slogans saying "That Dalits all over the country would unite

and fight against the atrocities on Dalits in Haryana and will continue to agitate till the victims of Gohana get justice."The commuters had to either divert their routes or wait for hours for the blockade to clear. More inconvenience was caused due to peak hours. The police however claimed that the mob dispersed within half an hour and traffic resumed its normal pace. (Hindustan Times 4/9/05)

CPI(M) stages protest against Gohana incident (2)

NEW DELHI: The Delhi State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Saturday staged a protest march here against the burning down of 50 houses of Dalits at Gohana in Sonapat on August 31. Several activists gathered at Windsor Place in New Delhi and marched to Sansad Marg condemning the "dastardly and casteist attack". Addressing a gathering, Inderjeet Singh, secretary (Haryana State Committee), alleged that the police and the administration were involved in the attack. He said the excuse given by the administration that strong action by the police would have resulted in loss of lives was reminiscent of similar justification advanced by them for the lynching of five Dalits in Duleena village, Jhajjar, a few years ago. Jogendra Sharma, Member, Central Committee, CPI(M), said the State Government had failed to provide protection to the Dalits though it claimed to be their well-wisher. The speakers demanded immediate arrest of those involved in the attack. They demanded a CBI inquiry into the role of the local Bharatiya Janata Party MP, Kishan Singh Sangwan, who was allegedly behind the attack and full compensation to the victims. They demanded immediate suspension of the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police. (The Hindu 4/9/05)

Interim relief of Rs 50,000 for Gohana victims (2)

New Delhi : In wake of the casteist violence that ravaged Gohana in Haryana four days back, Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda has announced an interim relief of Rs 50,000 to the members of the family affected by the carnage. The Haryana Government took this decision when a delegation consisting of the elderly members of the affected families met the Chief Minister of Haryana on Sunday. After hearing their grievances and plight the CM came to this decision. According to the decision, rehabilitation and restoration works being undertaken for the affected families in Gohana will be done under the supervision of the Commissioner of Rohtak Division, NC Wadhwa. He will also be required to supervise the assessment being carried out by the Committee consisting of PWD and Tehsildar constituted earlier to assess the loss of properties or articles in the damaged houses. The Committee has been ordered to complete the assessment work within three days instead of one week in order to determine the final compensation to be paid to the affected families. According to an earlier decision the Public Welfare Department (B&R) has already taken up the work of repair and restoration of damaged houses for which the entire expenditure will be borne by the State Government. (Pioneer 5/9/055)

Gohana incidents: Hooda orders CBI probe (2)

NEW DELHI: Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda ordered a CBI inquiry on Monday into the murder of a youth and the subsequent incidents of arson at Gohana village in Sonapat district of Haryana that led to some Dalit families fleeing their homes. Flanked by a number of Dalit leaders from Delhi and Haryana who presented him a memorandum in support of their demands, Mr. Hooda said the CBI would not only probe the murder of Baljit Siwach but also into what led to the subsequent arson. It would also investigate if there was any laxity by officials in dealing with the situation. He said cases under the SC/ST Act had been registered against 23 people and four of the accused arrested. In the murder case, four out of the seven accused had been taken into custody and a manhunt launched for the others. Terming the incidents as part of a political conspiracy to destabilise public harmony, Mr. Hooda said the role of the BJP Member of Parliament from Sonapat, Kishan Sangwan, would also be probed. A case has been registered against his son and other relatives. Mr. Hooda said the compensation for each family had been enhanced from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1 lakh. A police post would be created in Gohana to give a sense of security to the people. (The Hindu 6/9/05)

Demand for Hooda's dismissal by "Dalit Mahapanchayat" (2)

NEW DELHI: A "Dalit Mahapanchayat" organised on Monday at the Ramlila Grounds here in the wake of the burning down of over 35 houses of Dalits at Valmiki Basti in Gohana village of Haryana on August 31 demanded dismissal of the Bhupinder Singh Hooda Government in the State and a thorough probe into the entire episode by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Held under the aegis of Akhil Bharatiya Valmiki Samaj, the meeting was attended by a large number of people from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and other States. In a resolution, the "panchayat" demanded dismissal of the Haryana Government and also demanded a compensation of Rs. 20 lakhs to each of the affected Dalit families and a CBI probe into the incident to unearth the truth. The "panchayat" also urged the authorities concerned to initiate criminal proceedings against the area Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police as they had failed to prevent the incident despite information that the Dalits living at Valmiki Basti could be targeted after the murder of a financier, Baljeet, on August 27. After the murder, most residents of Valmiki Basti had fled apprehending an attack. The two officers in question have been transferred out following allegations of negligence on their part. The community leaders also asked for a compensation of Rs. 1 lakh to the next of kin of Baljeet. Some of the participants were of the view that the First Information Report pertaining to the murder should be set aside and a fresh investigation into the matter launched. (The Hindu 6/9/05)

Gohana spills over to Punjab: 50 hurt (2)

Chandigarh :Balmiki Sangathan men set afire 17 vehicles; attack gurudwara, temple---- Members of Balmiki Sangathan in Punjab, who had called a bandh to protest the last week's torching of Dalit houses in Gohana, turned violent in Amritsar and Kapurthala on Monday. The protesters fought pitched battle with the police and set on fire 17 vehicles in Amritsar and damaged a gurudwara at Amrit Bazar and board of Satianarayan mandir in Kapurthala. Around 40 police officials and 10 protesters were injured in different incidents. An agency report, quoting Superintendent of Police DP Singh, said the protestors clashed with police on streets and hurled soft drink bottles, which left around 40 police officials injured. In Amritsar, they damaged 10 buses, including four Punjab Roadways buses, five other vehicles and set afire two motorcycles, the report said. The crowd, brandishing iron and wooden rods, attacked police at different places in the walled city.They went into a private school building near town hall and dragged children from their class rooms besides beating them. They damaged public property at the busiest Hall Bazar area where the window panes of some eating joints were smashed. In Kapurthala, sporadic incidents of violence forced the police to lathicharge, fire tear gas shells, and deploy Black Cat commandos and riot-control vehicles in sensitive areas to prevent the situation from spiralling out of control. Sources said the Balmiki Sangathan had on Sunday held a meeting at Shehariyan in Kapurthala to "chalk out a plan of action" and express solidarity with the Gohana victims. It was decided at this meeting to enforce a complete bandh on Monday. (Pioneer 6/9/05)

Probe ordered into attack on Dalits in Akola (2)

MUMBAI: Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh on Tuesday announced a magisterial inquiry into the recent attack on Dalits in Akola district. Briefing reporters after a Cabinet meeting, he said 13 houses and two shops were destroyed in the attack. The total loss of property amounted to Rs. 5.47 lakh. The Government would rebuild the homes. Referring to the flood relief operations, Mr. Deshmukh said farmers who had lost their crops would be compensated — Rs. 25,000 a hectare for irrigated land and Rs. 15,000 a hectare for unirrigated land up to two hectares. Since the Central aid was not yet approved, the State would fork out the relief amounts. So far the State has spent Rs. 429 crores for relief. (The Hindu 7/9/05)

6 held for Gohana dalit violence (2)

New Delhi, Sept. 6: The police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested two more persons named in the FIR for burning dalit houses in Gohana. Also arrested were four persons, including the prime suspect in the murder of a financier that triggered the casteist violence. Superintendent of police Rajinder Singh said investigations in both cases were in progress and a hunt was on for the others involved. Special teams had been formed and a new police post had been established in Balmiki Basti of Gohana town to instil confidence among the dalits. Those arrested in connection with the arson incident at Balmiki Basti on August 31 are Radhey Sham of Lath village and Manoj

of Bhainswan Khurd village in the district. The police had earlier arrested Rampal of Nooran Khera village and Rajesh of Chhatehra village in the case. In the case relating to the murder of Baljeet, a financier of Garhwal village, the police arrested four persons, including the prime suspect. They were identified as Shiv Lal, Veeru, alias Jatinder, Chhota, alias Hari Dass, and Rakesh, alias Khakoo. (Asian Age 7/9/05)

CBI seizes police records on Gohana violence (2)

CHANDIGARH: Officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), probing the Gohana violence in which Dalits were targeted, on Monday seized police records related to the incidents and also questioned some persons at Gohana, in Sonapat district. CBI sources, while confirming this, said a few victims, whose houses were torched in a Dalit colony on August 31, pointed a finger at the son and brother of the Sonapat Bharatiya Janata Party MP, Kishan Singh Sangwan. They accused the duo of being involved in the attack. The two are among the 23 named in the FIR registered with the Gohana police. The CBI has registered two cases relating to the incidents of violence and arson and the murder of financier Baljeet Siwach, which is believed to have led to the violence. In a related incident, another three-member CBI team arrived at Panchkula on Saturday to inquire into the violence that took place on September 2 after the Gohana incident. The team questioned some police officials and scrutinised records. (The Hindu 13/9/05)

Dalit-Adivasi alliance for panchayat poll (2)

KOZHIKODE: : A Dalit-tribal political platform has been forged to mobilise the disadvantaged groups as an electoral force and to contest the forthcoming elections to local bodies. The initiative for the alliance has come from C. K. Janu, president of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha and M. Geetanandan who was in the frontline of the tribal agitation for land rights in the Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary. Mr. Geetanandan described the alliance as a coming together of groups representing people who had been denied " their legitimate right to life." "This alliance would contest future elections also," Mr. Geetanandan said at a press conference in Kozhikode on Friday. The Farmers Relief Forum and the RMS have reached an understanding on seat-sharing in Kannur, Kozhikode and Wayanad districts where these groups have made their presence felt by organising agitations. The Farmers Relief Forum has been spearheading farmers' agitations in Wayanad. In Wayanad alone the new front has decided to contest nearly 300 seats. In Ernakulam and Alapuzha districts, where a number of fishermen candidates are expected to contest elections, activists of the RMS and the Farmers Relief Forum would be active as campaigners. Activists of the RMS would contest in the other districts as Independent candidates with the support of organisations of Dalits and tribal people. (The Hindu 13/9/05)

'Cobra' AP going Bihar way: CPM (2)

New Delhi/Hyderabad: CPI(M) politburo member Sitaram Yechury on Monday expressed concern that Andhra Pradesh is going the Bihar way with the emergence of caste-based private armies like Nallamalla Cobra (Nallatrachu). Mr Yechury said that in the north private armies are used primarily to oppress the weaker sections. The police and the administration do not help the private armies' victims as they lack clout. Most problems are rooted in backwardness and greater development is the answer, Mr Yechury said. In a sense, even the demand for a separate Telangana emerges from backwardness, he said. The CPI(M) opposes statehood for Telangana. For tackling backwardness, he said, the government should formulate a well-funded specific development plan. Land and land rights are at the core of the problem, Mr Yechury said, adding that violence breaks out when these rights are diluted. The state government should address these issues in right earnest; if timely measures are not initiated, the situation could soon worsen, he said. If such caste-based private armies are allowed to survive, a majority of attacks would be directed against dalits and the landless poor. Most of the private armies would be operated by rich, upper-caste people. For them, the weaker sections are the target, he said, adding that in addition to organised massacres, private armies use dehumanising programmes to insult the weaker sections. Private armies take the guise of anti-Maoist groups and spring up after a major attack by extremists. Fear Vikas, Green Tigers, Nalladandu, Red Tigers, Tirumala Tigers, Palnadu Tigers, Kakatiya Cobras, Narsa Cobras, Nallamalla Nallatrachu (Cobras) and Kranthi

Sena are some of the gangs. The gangs have fiery logos featuring cobras, tigers and guns. (Asian Age 14/9/05)

Dalit's daughter is hostage (2)

New Delhi, Sept. 13: Sixty-year-old Moolchand, a resident of Ballabgarh in Haryana, has lost faith in the police. Landlords of a nearby village have kept his 16-year-old daughter hostage for the last three months. Whenever Moolchand approaches the police, the policemen start beating him up and sometimes senior officials make derogatory remarks since he is a dalit, he says. Talking to this correspondent, Moolchand said, "There is nobody in the village who will help me, simply because I am a dalit. I know that my daughter is in the custody of landlords. Even the local police knows that. When the landlords kidnapped my daughter, I lodged a complaint with the local police but no action was taken against the landlords." "After lodging several complaints, I requested police officials several times to rescue my daughter. But now the policemen have started abusing me. Sometimes they beat me and pass derogatory remarks against me and my community. Now with the help of the local police, the landlords have threatened me with dire consequences. I am worried about my wife Sheila and four other children. The landlords sometimes threaten my family in my absence. I don't know what to do," said Moolchand. He further said, "I am a very poor man. It's really difficult for me to fight with the landlords of the village. The police has also become anti-dalit in the village. Last time when I visited the police station, one of the senior officials said, 'What will you do with your daughter, she is now pregnant?'" (Asian Age 14/9/05)

Mangal blanks out dalit's role in history' (2)

Lucknow, Sept. 13: Trouble for Ketan Mehta's magnum opus Mangal Pandey — The Rising continues to brew in Uttar Pradesh. After the court case slapped on the film director and crew by Mangal Pandey's descendants in Ballia for allegedly showing the war hero in a poor light, it is now a UP-based dalit organisation called Swayam Sudhar Samiti that is gunning for the filmmakers. The dalits are enraged over the fact that the filmmakers make no mention of Matadin, a dalit, who had first informed Mangal Pandey that the cartridges were being greased with animal fat and it was this that led to the 1857 war of Independence. The film shows a dalit called Nainsukh informing Mangal Pandey of the use of animal fat in cartridges that were given to Indian soldiers for use. However, there is no mention of Matadin. According to Mr Dev Kumar, convener of the Swayam Sudhar Samiti, it is an established fact that it was a dalit — and not a Brahmin — who first ignited the spark of revolt against the British rule. The Swayam Sudhar Samiti has collected all relevant documents that detail Matadin's role in inspiring Mangal Pandey to revolt against the British and is now preparing to file public interest litigation against the filmmakers, demanding an unconditional apology for blanking out Matadin's role in the first war of Independence. (Asian Age 14/9/05)

Dreaded criminal turns Dalit activist (2)

New Delhi : Shocking! But true. A dreaded criminal, Jag Mohan Singh, arrested by the Delhi Police crime branch for his involvement in more than 10 heinous crimes, including a murder and murderous attempts on three businessmen, is the same person who was rousing rabble at the Ramlila Ground in Delhi on September 5. "Fighting for the civil liberties and rights of Dalits" after the Gohana incident, he led from the front in cursing the top leaders of the Congress. Mohan Singh alias Jagmohan Singh is a senior leader in the Akhil Bharatiya Balmiki Samaj. Talking to The Pioneer on September 5, he said that the Dalit community wants the dismissal of the Hooda Government. Himself named in the 'most wanted' list of Delhi Police, Jagmohan demanded a CBI probe into the Gohana arson. In the conversation, he expressed an acute sympathy towards the Balmiki youths who killed the Jat boy Baljit Singh in Gohana. He backed the Balmiki community by terming the incident in Gohana as anti-Dalit and blamed the entire upper caste community and Haryana Government for their demeaning behaviour towards the Dalits. He demanded from the Haryana Government to double the interim relief amount from Rs 50,000 to Rs one lakh to each to the affected families. On Tuesday, anti-auto theft squad and anti-robbery cell of Delhi Police received an information about this alleged extortionist coming in a Toyota Qualis, which was involved in a criminal case. He was nabbed near Hanuman Mandir, Connaught Place. The police also recovered the car, one pistol and four live cartridges from him. Police are contemplating a

strict action against him under MCOCA. Mohar Singh, a listed criminal of Paharganj, was wanted by the Delhi Police in one case of murder, attempt to murder, robbery and criminal intimidation. In 2000, he was detained under National Security Act (NSA), in order to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order. But the arrest was not effective in dissuading him from indulging in violent activities. (Pioneer 16/9/05)

Dalit movement goes global (2)

NEW DELHI: Seeking to globally raise the issue of reservation in the private sector and caste-based discrimination, the Dalit Freedom Network is organising a two-day international conference in Washington D.C. from October 5. To be addressed by the chairman of the All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations, the meeting will also seek to "expose" the Sangh Parivar, sensitise the U.N. for protection of Dalit human rights, and appeal to the United States to provide work opportunities to Dalits. Addressing a press conference here, the Chairman of the Confederation, Udit Raj, said in the era of globalisation it had become imperative to fight certain causes globally. Mr. Raj said he would address the meeting along with other DFN representatives such as international president Joseph D' Souza, executive director Nancy Ricks, Deputy Speaker of the British House of Lords Caroline Cox, and former US Senator from Colorado, William Armstrong. Mr. Raj said a great friend of India, US Congressman Joseph Pitts, would be the host of this meeting to be held at Capitol Hill. The objective of DFN, he said, was to establish education centres for Dalits in India, empower Dalits economically, provide medical and other health facilities to them, and protect their human rights. Stating that DFN was engaged in bringing awareness in the US about Dalits in India, he said, it believes that the magnitude of caste problems can not be fought by a few, but by many people not only in India but worldwide. Having established about 40 centres of education for Dalits in India which are not only imparting scholastic lessons and curricula, but giving global exposure and awareness about human rights, he said, DFN will enable them to choose right options in their future. (The Hindu 16/9/05)

Dalits pitch tent in US for a cause (2)

New Delhi, September 15: TAKING A leaf out of the Sangh's book, Dalits now plan to fight their battle for affirmative action, including job reservations in the private sector in India, from foreign soil as well. The Dalit Freedom Network has been set up in Washington with the help of the American government to raise awareness about the plight of Dalits in India and secure resources to fund holistic programmes, including education centres, economic development, medical services and human rights advocacy. These issues will be highlighted in the DFN's first Dalit meet in Washington on October 5-6. "In the era of globalisation, it has become imperative to fight certain causes globally," said Udit Raj of the All-India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations, who like the Osmania University's Professor Kancha Ilaiah, is on the DFN's advisory board. Conscious that the NRIs, who are Sangh supporters, may not quite sympathise with their cause, the network plans to seek support among American opinion-makers who can influence the agenda both in the US as well as in India, especially where affirmative action is concerned. With several MNCs entering the Indian market, it has become particularly important. "Through this meet, we will appeal to MNCs and foreign investors to provide reservation in their establishments in India. We will appeal to the American media to give space to Dalits in their concerns in India," said Udit Raj, citing successful efforts of the Editors' Association of America to increase representation of blacks from 2 per cent to more than 9 per cent. (The Hindustan Times 16/9/05)

Gaya Dalits' last supper: Goat carcass (2)

Barachatti (Gaya): More than 15 Dalits have died in drought-hit Barachatti and Mohanpur blocks of Gaya district, some of them after consuming the carcass of a goat in a desperation. Starvation and disease stalks a vast population here and the total lack of medicare is adding to the toll of human lives. "People are dying like flies. We fear many more deaths in the coming days," says Baleshwar Yadav of Barwadih village. The words have a chilling ring of truth. This correspondent on Friday watched people dying, with foam trickling down their mouths and nostrils and their fingers twisted. In Jalhi village alone, 13 deaths have been reported. Overall, over 25,000 people are said to have fled their homes in Mohanpur block. Scenes of unimaginable agony abound, in village after village. As we enter Jalhi, news of Hiramman Man-jhi's son Baldeo (4) meeting a

painful death greets us. •— —i At the neighbouring Boat village, Kari Devi (40) has just died and the body of Rita Kumari (6), daughter of Sukar Manjhi, is being taken out on its last journey. At Piprahi, a handful of villagers are returning after performing the last rites of 45-year-old Basrath Manjhi. "The situation is horrible," says Ishwar Manjhi at Jalhi. In a span of less than a month, 13 villagers, mostly children, have died, he says. Most deaths were due to diarrhoea, villagers say. "No doctor ever came here, but from the symptoms we are sure it was diarrhoea," says Baleshwar Manjhi who himself lost his young son. Other villagers nod in confirmation. Even as Ishwar recalls the names of the victims, a woman rushes in, crying. She whispers something to a person and hurries back. The toll has just risen to 14. At neighbouring Bongia village, people confess the deaths began after some starving people dug out the carcass of a goat and ate it. Ramji Choudhary says although only a few persons had died in the village, the most likely reason was the consumption of spurious meat. Rambriksh Manjhi, whose father was one of the victims, confirms the account. At least three members of his family are still sick, a three-year old child being in a serious condition. (Times of India 17/9/05)

'Insane' Dalit chained for two years in Orissa (2)

Kendrapada: The tropical rain lashes Upendra Naik's face as he sits on the veranda of a two-room asbestos house in Chauriberhampore village on the outskirts of Kendrapada town. The 32-year-old Dalit would have moved out of the rain, only if he could. For two years, he has been fettered there, his legs put in chains by villagers who believe he is insane. Naik is a victim of the collective conscience of his village. In July 2003, a village committee ruled him insane and eager vigilantes tied up the man in the veranda. The darker irony is that the state government and the police all know about Upendra, but aren't doing anything to unshackle him from his plight. Appeals by his wife, 27-year-old Suparna, for mercy and clemency have fallen on deaf and insensitive ears. "All my pleadings have gone in vain. The committee refuses to hear me," she said. Frustrated, Suparna left Upendra four months ago and moved back to her father's home, said Ananda Naik, Upendra's father. The old man in his seventies now cooks meals and brings them to his son three times a day. Upendra him self is tired of telling his story and tears well up before his lips can form words. "I am an innocent person. But some unscrupulous villagers have chained my legs." (Times of India 20/9/05)

Scheduled castes panel now serves notice to AAI (2)

New Delhi, Sept. 21: The National Commission for Scheduled Castes has served notice on Airport Authority of India to fillup all the SC/ST vacancies. The commission has also instructed AAI to stop pension and other retirement benefits to certain senior officials of the authority who are responsible for causing delay in the appointments of SC/ST candidates. Recently in a letter written to chairman of the AAI, Mr Devender Vaddeti, member, NCSC, said, "As per the meeting held on April 26, 2005, regarding the special recruitment of SC/STs drive (number of posts-approximately 300) in Airport Authority of India which was published in 2003 and to say that chairman along with other officials of AAI assured that 'management is giving personal attention in this special recruitment drive and will submit the list of appointees by July 31, 2005. But till date no reply has been received from your office." (Asian Age 22/9/05)

Scheduled Castes panel warns States (2)

NEW DELHI: Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes Suraj Bhan on Tuesday threatened to crack the whip if State Governments continued to ignore its requests for information on various issues pertaining to SCs. Briefing mediapersons here, Mr. Bhan said despite two months since the expiry of the deadline, not a single State Government had furnished data on the number of SCs recruited over the past decade. "We will not tolerate this much longer. We are empowered by law to issue summons, but this is something we have not used till date," Mr. Bhan said, adding that State Governments had similarly ignored the Commission's requests for information on complaints of bogus SC certificates being used to corner jobs reserved for the socially disadvantaged sections of society. Also, the Commission has decided to press for the setting up of special courts to handle cases of atrocities against SCs to ensure speedy dispensation of cases. As per figures available, 45,000 cases of atrocities against SCs were reported from across the country in the last calendar year. However, Mr. Bhan said the actual

number would be greater as these cases were only those that were reported. (The Hindu 28/9/05)

Gujarat BJP seeks details of Dalit meet (2)

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat BJP president Vajubhai Vala has sought a detailed report about a convention of Dalits in Rajkot where party dissidents shared the platform with the Congress to denounce the Narendra Modi Government in the State. The main organiser of the convention, organised under the aegis of the Dalit Mahapanchayat Samiti, was the dissident BJP member of the Assembly, Sidhartha Parmar, who with several thousand Dalits from the Saurashtra region and some other parts of the State, took a vow to fight for justice. Leaders on the dais symbolically raised guns skywards, shouting anti-government slogans. The convention adopted some 15 resolutions, the main contention being that the welfare measures for Dalits, such as scholarships to students and bicycles to the girl students of the community and other schemes introduced by the previous Keshubhai Patel Ministry, had been discontinued by the Modi administration. Expressing lack of confidence in the present Government, the convention raised the demand for a separate "Dalitstan" carved out of the State where they could be ruled by members of their community. Mr. Parmar even offered to "sacrifice his life" for the cause of the Dalits. The Congress Mayor, Gauriben Sindhav, the former Mayor, Mansukh Chavda, Manhar Makwana, MLA, and several other Congress leaders belonging to the Dalit community also attended the convention. They lambasted the Modi Government for inept handling of Dalit welfare schemes, and not caring to fill the reservation quota in government jobs and educational institutions or carry forward the backlog to benefit the weaker sections of the society. (The Hindu 28/9/05)

OCTOBER 2005

Orissa villagers protest against inhuman practice (2)

BHUBANESWAR: Members of the barber community at Bhubanpati, a coastal village in Puri district of Orissa, are scared of returning to their houses. Four women were beaten up and another was paraded naked allegedly by a group of "upper caste" men in the village on September 19. "We are not sure when we will be able to return to our homes. We have lost everything," Sabitri Barik, one of the victims, said here on Friday. The women and their family members are here to organise a dharna outside the Raj Bhavan and submit a memorandum to Governor Rameshwar Thakur on Saturday. The women were abused by large number of men, allegedly from the Khandayat community, because their husbands refused to wash the feet of the groom and guests during marriage ceremonies as per custom. The women were later locked up in a room and their houses looted when the male members were away. "I was dragged out of my house and beaten up. They also looted our house and took away all that we had saved for our daughter's marriage," Pratima Barik said. Her husband, Hadibandhu Barik (51), has not set foot in the village since March after two men, including a 75-year-old, were beaten up and tortured for not agreeing to wash the feet of the groom and the guests during a marriage, she said. "I am scared to go to my village because the Khandayats will surely attack me," said Hadibandhu Barik. "Our children are educated and they are not willing to do the customary job of washing the feet of upper caste men, clear the left-overs after the marriage feast and wash the utensils." (The Hindu 1/10/05)

BJP's Dalit meet a ploy: Jamuna Devi (2)

BHOPAL: The Leader of the Opposition in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, Jamuna Devi, lashed out at the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party on Friday describing the national Dalit convention the latter has planned here on Saturday as an attempt to mislead the people. It was also to divert people's attention away from the atrocities being committed on Dalits and Scheduled Tribes in the State, she added. Addressing a Press conference here, Ms. Devi said the ruling party was organising the convention to sweep under the carpet its own failure to implement the promises it had made for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes. She said the Scheduled Caste MLAs did not have adequate representation in the State Cabinet. After winning 30 of the 34 Assembly seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes in the State, there were only two Scheduled Caste Ministers in the Ministry, she added. The Opposition leader said that the BJP had made 13 electoral promises for Dalits but not a single one had been fulfilled. On the other extreme, many welfare schemes

started by the previous Congress Government for the benefit of Dalits have been scrapped, she pointed out. While the BJP had promised in its election manifesto that Dalits would get proper drinking water supply, concrete houses and sanitation facilities, the 'anti-Dalit Government' was now engaged in uprooting the hapless slum-dwellers. The State Government was also busy demolishing the system that had been put in place by the previous Congress Government for educating the Scheduled Castes, she said adding "all this is an attempt to patronize their own Shishu Mandirs". The BJP has also failed to provide either employment or two hectares of unencumbered land to every Scheduled Caste family under the farm labourer category, she alleged. (The Hindu 1/10/05)

Dalit accuses Petronet of sabotaging appointment (2)

New Delhi, Oct. 1: The issue of caste and coterie, the bane of Indian bureaucracy has allegedly struck in the appointment of CEO in private company Petronet LNG Limited (PLL). Director projects of Gail Prabhakar Rao, a dalit candidate for the post, has moved the court, alleging that gail head Prashanto Bannerjee has sabotaged his chance. Mr Rao has moved the Delhi high court seeking a stay on the appointment of the PLL CEO. The court has issued notices to the ministry of petroleum and natural gas, the scheduled caste commission, PLL, as well as Gail CMD Prashanto Bannerjee. On September 1, Mr Pro-sad Dasgupta was appointed to the post by the board of directors of PLL. Mr Rao has alleged that he had applied for the post and routed his application through the proper channel, that of CMD Gail, which Mr Bannerjee had refused to forward but instead did it for another applicant from Gail. Mr Rao has also insinuated that Mr Bannerjee had participated in the selection process and canvassed against him, a charge which has been contested by Mr Bannerjee. An explanation has been sought by the SC commission. Mr Bannerjee has put forward 12 justifications to shield the charge that he tried to jeopardise Mr Rao's career. However, the ministry has not endorsed any of these. It has said that Mr Rao deserves a sympathetic hearing on the grounds of being a dalit. (Asian Age 2/10/05)

BJP calls to end atrocities on Dalits (2)

New Delhi : Delhi Pradesh BJP president Dr Harsh Vardhan has urged the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Orissa to curb the atrocities being inflicted upon the barber community and other Dalit communities in the two states. Dr Vardhan has written to Mulayam Singh Yadav and Naveen Patnaik chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Orissa respectively in this context. Addressing the demonstrators at Jantar Mantar on Tuesday, the city BJP president requested both the chief ministers to punish the guilty persons. In Orissa, atrocities ranging from washing the feet of the upper class to cleaning their leftovers are being committed against the Dalits and the barber community. Expressing dismay over the atrocities on Dalit communities in various parts of the country, Dr Vardhan said: "We should do everything possible to ensure the people from the weaker sections of the society are not harassed at all." (Pioneer 5/10/05)

Dalit Sarpanch accuses cops of rape in Rajasthan (2)

JAIPUR: A Dalit woman sarpanch in Jhalawar district of Rajasthan has accused the station house officer of the Gangdhar police station, an assistant sub-inspector and two local functionaries of the Bharatiya Janata Party of raping her on September 22 night. No case has been registered on her complaint so far even after her appeals to the Collector and the Superintendent of Police, she charged. The victim, Sarpanch of Rojhana village, who appeared before media persons along with her husband Puralal Doli and her two children in the Pradesh Congress Committee office on Wednesday, said she had gone to the Gangdhar police station in Dag panchayat samiti to complain against the corporal punishment meted out to the students of local school by two teachers. She considered filing a case against the "torture" of students after her efforts to negotiate the issue between the teachers and parents of children failed, she said. The woman sarpanch, who belongs to the Congress, mentioned the names of Fateh Singh Chouhan, SHO, Ganga Ram, ASI and two BJP leaders as the perpetrators of the atrocity against her. According to her, when she went to the police station the police personnel presented there first abused her calling her caste names. "We will take out your sarpanch-ship today," the men reportedly said after a round of beating and prior to the alleged rape inside the police station itself. She was pushed out of the police station thereafter. No medical examination of the victim could be done so

far though the clothes worn by her at the time of the rape are reportedly kept intact. (The Hindu 6/10/05)

Dalit woman identifies rapists (2)

Jaipur : A dalit woman allegedly raped in a temple complex at Jodhpur four days ago, on Wednesday identified four accused during a parade at the central jail here, official sources said. The identification parade was conducted in presence of the magistrate, the sources said adding police will file a challan in the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court against the four - Guddu, Anil, Shankar and Manoj. (Piioneer 6/10/05)

U.P. Govt. gives SC, ST status to 16 more castes (2)

LUCKNOW: Pending approval by the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh Government on Wednesday decided to include 16 backward castes in the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes even as the State Election Commission objected to the move following enforcement of the model code of conduct due to the ongoing panchayat polls. While those belonging to Nishad, Kewat, Mallah, Dhivar, Dhimar, Batham, Bind, Kashyap, Kahar, Turha, Gaur, Manjhi, Bhar, Rajbhar, Kori and Kumhar (Prajapati) have been provided with SC status, the Kol community was given ST status. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, announcing the decision after the cabinet meeting here, said the people of these communities would enjoy the benefits of the new status following issuance of the government order (GO) shortly. The government has decided to give the facility to an estimated 5 million people under the power attained by it under Section 13 of the UP Lok Seva (SC/ST and other backwards reservation) Act 1994. Though Mr Yadav denied that the announcement amounted to a violation of the model code of conduct at present imposed in the state in view of Zila Panchayat and Khestra Panchayat elections, the State Election Commission has taken up the issue. State Election Commissioner Aparmita Prasad Singh said here that it was an arbitrary decision by the government and no permission was taken from the EC before the announcement. He, however, refused to comment whether the announcement will attract any action from Commission. (The Hindu 6/10/05)

A long wait for justice (2)

JAIPUR: Dalits in Dhira village in Banner district of Ra-jasthan are waiting for action against those responsible for alleged murder of a Dalit youth who was working as an agricultural labourer in the farms of the dominant Rajputs even five months after the crime. Police have made no headway in the investigations after registering the first information report on the orders of a local court. The body of the victim, Ghewa Ram, was allegedly thrown into a well after his murder on May 17 last and it was made out as a suicide case. The National Human Rights Commission has issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Director General of Police, and Collector and Superintendent of Police of Barmer on a complaint made by the Dalit organisations. The respondents have been asked to submit the requisite information within four weeks. A report released by a fact-finding team of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) here has observed that the local Rajputs were still terrorising the victim's family and other Dalits in the village. Police have not arrested any of the accused who have been named in the FIR. The fact-finding team, while stating that Ghewa Ram had been murdered under a pre-planned conspiracy, pointed out that the entire Barmer district seemed to be under the socio-economic and political dominance of Rajputs who were "behaving as the feudal lords". The State Government has not provided any assistance or relief to the victim's family. The NCDHR has demanded immediate arrest of the perpetrators of the crime and steps for providing safety and payment of compensation to the next of kin of Ghewa Ram. (The Hindu 6/10/05)

Action sought against landlords for blocking pathway of Dalits (2)

UDUPI: Members of Bhoomigagi Horata Samiti, Pragatipara Chintakara Vedike and Marathi Samaj Seva Sangh staged a dharna in front of the Deputy Commissioner's Office here on Thursday, demanding protection of the rights of Dalits in Kodlady village in Kundapur taluk. In a memorandum submitted to Deputy Commissioner T. Sham Bhatt, the samiti said that hundreds of Dalit families have been living in Kodlady village for generations. But two landlords living in that village have constructed a compound wall and blocked the pathway used by the Dalits. When

some Dalits protested, they were threatened. Although the matter has been brought to the notice of the concerned officials, no action has been taken. The district administration should protect the rights of the Dalits and clear the pathway for them, the memorandum stated. Cases should be booked against the guilty under Prevention of Atrocities Against Dalits Act, the memorandum added. Mr. Bhatt promised members that action will be taken to solve the problem in three days. The three organisations also submitted a memorandum to Superintendent of Police S. Murugan, who promised to take action. The organisations took out a procession from Brahmagiri Junction to the Deputy Commissioner's Office. (7/10/05)

Call for inclusion of Muslim castes SC list (2)

LUCKNOW: The All India United Muslim Morcha today urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav to recommend to the Centre inclusion of several Muslim castes in scheduled castes list to ensure their all-round development. "Almost 85 per cent of the Muslim population belongs to these castes and has remained backward due to a mistake in Article 341 of the Constitution which provides for SC/ST benefits to only Dalits belonging to religions other than Muslims. We urge the Chief Minister to get a resolution passed by the State Assembly for including them in the SC/ST list as well," working chairman of the UP chapter of the Morcha Salahuddin Sheebu said here. (The Hindu 9/10/05)

Caste row: 28-year-old assaulted by neighbours (2)

New Delhi, Oct. 9: The cruelty of the deep-rooted caste system prevalent in our society was exposed in the capital on Saturday evening when a 28-year-old youth belonging to a "lower caste" was allegedly beaten in a brutal manner by his upper caste neighbours in Jahtikaran village in Southwest Delhi. Kishna, a daily wage earner was seriously injured and is battling for life at Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan Hospital. Manoj, a nephew of Kishna, told this newspaper that Kishna has received major injuries on the head and waist. No arrest has been made so far in the case, he complained. Though the police claimed to have registered an FIR soon after the incident, he, along with his family members, refuted the police claim and accused the police of siding with the culprits. Manoj said that Kishna was beaten with crutches by Rajinder Tyagi and his two sons, who live in the same village, in a field on Saturday evening. "The three were drunk and hit unsuspecting Kishna. Some of our well-wishers rushed to tell us about the incident. By the time we reached there the three had fled from the spot." Kishna's aunt Sheela alleged that such acts were not new in the village dominated by Tyagis. "Our 20 Valmiki families cannot raise voice against the strong 300 Tyagi families in the village." she said. Manoj added that though the DD No. (35) case has been filed at the Jhatikaran police station, the police is yet to register the case. The complaint has been made against Mr Tyagi and his two sons for inflicting grievous injuries on Kishna. However, Mr Sanjeev Parmar, SHO of the area police station, claimed that FIR No. 110 has been filed under Section 308 of the IPC (causing injuries). He added: "And since no complain was made regarding use of casteist remarks, the sections of the Scheduled Caste Act has not been included in the FIR." On being asked why no one has been arrested or detained so far in the case, the police official said: "We are waiting for the victim to recover. We can't arrest anyone till then." (Asian Age 10/10/05)

Two Dalit farmers' bid to commit suicide (2)

NIZAMABAD: Two Scheduled Castes farmers — Venkatesh and Durgaiyah of Ootupally village in Bodhan mandal — on Monday made an attempt to commit suicide by dousing themselves with kerosene in front of the Collectorate for the alleged apathy of officials in sanctioning loan. Venkatesh (35) and Durgaiyah (50) from Ootupally arrived for the grievance day. They wanted to see the Collector, but before meeting the Collector they made the attempt to end the lives. Soon, the policemen who were on guard duty foiled their attempt and informed the authorities. They explained that they had been assigned land in 1996 and on which they got dug borewells in 2001. The administration had sanctioned them electric motors through the SC Corporation, but did not pay drilling charges so far. When contacted, Collector D.V. Raidu said there was no system in the Government for reimbursing the borewell drilling charges. (The Hindu 11/10/05)

Dalit grievances to be redressed (2)

BANGALORE: The State Government on Monday assured Dalit organisations that it will look into the grievances of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people, including hostel facility for students and increase in scholarship amount. Addressing presspersons after a two-hour meeting with leaders of two factions of the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS), Deputy Chief Minister M.P. Prakash said the Government is committed to the welfare of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people. Chief Minister N. Dharam Singh and Social Welfare Minister Y. Nagappa also attended the meeting. Mr. Prakash said the president of Karnataka Dalita, Hindulida, Alpasankyatara Samiti (DHAS), Y. Sampangi, and State DSS convener Shivanna placed a number of issues concerning Dalits in the State. The issues included increasing the number of hostels and the scholarship amount for meritorious students, filling of backlog vacancies, reservation in the private sector and action against those who obtain government jobs by producing caste certificates obtained by giving false information. Mr. Prakash said the leaders were informed about the legal hurdles on the way of providing reservation in the private sector. The Centre would have to amend the Constitution to provide such reservation, he said. Another demand was that the Government should give more powers to the Civil Rights Enforcement Cell to deal firmly with those who produce caste certificates based on falsified documents. The Government will examine the matter, Mr. Prakash said. (The Hindu 11/10/05)

Uma plays caste card for CM's post (2)

Bhopal, Oct. 12: BJP leader Uma Bharti has generally never been perceived as a casteist leader on the lines of Mr Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, or Ms Mayawati. Her status of "sadhvi," howsoever tenuous, has over the years helped her to widen her appeal beyond the confines of caste. Not any more. Desperate to be reinstated as chief minister, she now seems determined to play the caste card with a vengeance. Ms Bharti made this quite apparent during her anti-upper caste tirade at the party's recent Dalit mahasangam in Bhopal in the presence of party chief L.K. Advani and others. Madhya Pradesh BJP insiders are positive that the sadhvi may be getting ready to cast herself in a casteist mould to retrieve the political ground lost after the events leading to her resignation as the chief minister and subsequent suspension from the party. At the rally, Ms Bharti harangued the dalits to "snatch" their rights from their upper caste overlords rather than wait for the government to hand them out in dribbles. She counselled them not to be like ravenous vultures feeding off the leftover carcasses, but on the contrary, like man-eating tigers going in for the big kill. The sadhvi said job reservations were there to stay till there was even a single Dalit lacking the basics of life. She reiterated her demand for reservations in the private sector. Her views on reservations, in fact, took many of her party colleagues by surprise. Most thought it a virtual somersault on the position she had taken at the party's Dalit convention at Mhow before the 2003 Assembly polls. (Asian Age 13/10/05)

Upper-caste villagers puncture dalit's nose (2)

Jaipur, Oct. 12: A dalit's nose was punctured with a needle and a thread put through it by the powerful farming community in Rampur village under Bhratpur district on Monday. Even though the local police arrested one person in this connection, it said that it was only a case of beating a dalit. Dalit organisations, however, do not agree with the police version. v According to the FIR lodged with the Gadhi Bajna police station of Bayana sub-division, Rampura's Babulal Jatava, a dalit, complained to the police that he was paraded after his nose was punctured by Kalua and a few others. It was the second such case in the last few years in eastern Rajasthan when a dalit's nose was punctured. The police arrested one person on the charges of beating Babulal while two more persons are still wanted. Deputy SP Narayan Toges of Bayana told this correspondent that Babulal had falsely implicated Kalua Gujar because he borrowed some money from Kalua. "The dalit himself had admitted it. Though a fight had taken place between the two groups, the allegation of the nose puncturing is not true," he said. However, the police recovered the needle and the thread allegedly used in this connection. (Asiian Age 13/10/05)

Barbers by Upper Caste Community and Bonded Labor System in Orissa.(2)

The Human Rights Activist and the activist who has spearheaded struggles of Barbers Movement, in Puri district, Orissa, Mr Baghambar Patnaik is now in Jharpada Special Jail

(Bhubaneswar) protesting against the state government's inaction to declare the barbers as Bonded Labourer and the non-implementation of Bonded Labour Act 1976 in the state. Mr Pattnaik was arrested on 4th October 2005 after leading the silent rally of more than 300 barbers. This rally comes in the aftermath of the incident at Bhubanapati village in Bramhagiri on September 19, 2005 in which several women of the barber community were dragged by their hair by the upper castes, ostensibly for their refusal to perpetrate the discriminatory practice. It is to be noted that 82 families of barbers in 17 villages of Puri are being socially and economically boycotted by the upper castes after the former's refusal to continue the age-old practice of washing feet and other inhuman and degrading traditions. Though the police and the state administration are ready to release Mr Pattnaik on bail but he has resolved not to accept bail till the barbers are declared as bonded laborers and are free from the clutches of the upper castes. The movement on this issue is continuing since last 5 years. (ncas@dataone.in, 18/10/05)

Gujarat IAS officer sent back from Bihar after he said 'can't have Dalit, OBC staff' (2)

PATNA, OCTOBER 18: "Don't you have a software that identifies officials by their caste?" an IAS officer appointed by the Election Commission of India as an observer for the Bihar polls reportedly wanted to know from the state officials. When he was told that there was no such software, he allegedly pitied the condition of Bihar. "We have an excellent software in Gujarat." After a series of blatant observations against Dalits and backward castes, Sanjay Nandan, a 1988-batch IAS officer from the Gujarat cadre, has been recalled by the Election Commission of India. Nandan, appointed observer for the Paliganj constituency in Patna, allegedly told local officials that "no person belonging to the reserved category should be posted" on his staff during his stay in Patna. He reportedly checked up several times to ensure that the driver, liaison officer, security officials and even the escort are not "from the reserved category." "They could lodge complaints against me under the Atrocities Act," he is reported to have told local officials. When local officials protested, he reminded them of the punitive actions that he could take for "disobeying the orders of a representative of the Election Commission." Within a week of his stay in Patna, Nandan's behaviour came to be widely resented. His presentation on the software that he claimed to be in use in Gujarat was at a formal meeting to review election arrangements. Nandan reportedly talked about the utility of such a software to pick and choose officials according to caste and religion. Senior state election officials informally conveyed this to the EC and Nandan was recalled on October 3, sources in the state government told The Indian Express. (Indian Exp 19/10/05)

50 years after Ambedkar, another conversion wave (2)

New Delhi: Encouraged by an impressive turnout of Hindu Dalits from across the country at the show of neo-Buddhist strength at Nagpur last week, Dalit activists plan to organise a mega-conversion event next year to coincide with B R Ambedkar's embrace of Buddhism 50 years ago at the same venue. Not many noticed when lakhs of people, many of them Dalits, visited "Deekshabhoomi" in Nagpur last week to mark the anniversary of Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism on Dusshera Day in 1956 in what was essentially a protest against caste discrimination. The calculation of the Dalit activists is that the mainstream indifference would give way to close attention — even concern — next year when they plan to turn the 50th anniversary of Ambedkar's deeksha into a mega-conversion event. Just as many Blacks took to Islam in the US to protest discrimination, activists here feel Dalits would also shake Hindu caste complacency. As JNU sociology teacher Vivek Kumar said after returning from Nagpur: "It could be a massive event next year and may kick up a new wave of 'deeksha.'" Y S Alone, an art-historian from Kurukshetra University, said, "Dalits are again viewing conversion as a cultural act to establish then-identity in society The desire to do so is on the rise." Dalits have steadily been converting to Buddhism in large numbers. While conversion of just over a hundred of them at Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu in late 70s sparked a furore, provoking VHP to expand its reach among the category it had so far neglected, conversion to Buddhism is not frowned upon similarly perhaps because of the belief that it does not represent a complete break from the larger Hindu fold. (Times of India 21/10/05)

Haryana's Dalit women give Karva Chauth a beamy touch (2)

Nathupur, Sonapat: In Haryana's Nathupur, if it's Karva Chauth, a trip to the beauty parlour's a must. Fasting and facials, bleaches and benedictions go hand in hand. And Suman Devi, who runs a cottage beauty business, literally, hasn't been busier. In the past two days, customers of all castes and age have eagerly trooped in. "Quite a few of them are Dalits," says the beautician. Barely a furlong away, mirror and mehndi are the points of attention in a Dalit home. Generation Next housewives in a Valmiki household are decking up for the day Meena, an attractive 20-something, has taken out her wedding finery while younger sister Reena, also married into the same family, puts on her lipliner. "These days, most Dalits do the Karva Chauth. And we do it in the same style as the savarnas (upper castes)." It wasn't always like this. A decade ago only the brahmin and baniya women celebrated Karva Chauth in these parts of Sonapat district. But times have changed. Now, the Dalits not only observe the fast, they splurge. Some go to Narela, located on the western periphery of Delhi, to buy their saris, jewellery and make-up. In fact, a Dalit woman also runs one of the three beauty parlours in the village and boasts of a clientele that includes jats and brahmins. Caste doesn't come in the way of business for village bangle-seller Shar-da Bansal either. "Many Dalits come to me to buy bangles for the festival," she says. Bansal has been too busy plying her trade to perform her own afternoon ritual of listening to the katha. "I have sold bangles worth Rs 1,500 to about 80 women today," she says. (Times of India 21/10/05)

Dalit woman in UP panchayat poll fray set on fire (2)

Lucknow: Looking for empowerment can be fatal for Dalit women in UP. Prabhawati, a 28-year-old testimony to this may have to pay for her life for refusing to be cowed by other villagers who wanted her to step down from contesting a panchayat election. On Saturday, she was battling for her life with 90% burns at a Mirzapur hospital on Saturday. Prabhawati was dragged out of her home on Thursday, the day of the panchayat vote in Mujera Khurd village, by men from her own caste who wanted another candidate to win. As other villagers watched in petrified horror, these assailants poured kerosene on her and lit a bonfire to mock empowerment of low caste women. Of course, many in the village had seen what happened and Gulab, Prabhawati's hapless husband, has filed an FIR with the police station in Cheel, naming three people. But this being UP, police hadn't made a single arrest until late on Saturday. Gulab, a resident of Mujehra Khurd village in Cheel police circle, said in his FIR that a man named Lalji, his brother Juggan and another person called Jhilmit Singh, barged into his house late in the night on October 20 and assaulted Prabhawati. They then conducted the gory torture of pouring kerosene. Gulab told police his wife was contesting elections and the accused had repeatedly asked her to step down which she refused. Prabhawati also reportedly had a heated public argument with the men earlier in the day. At the hospital, doctors described Prabhawati's condition as critical and gave no guarantee that she would live through another night. (Times of India 23/10/05)

Panel: Add caste in Art. 17 (2)

New Delhi, Oct. 24: The National Commission for Scheduled Castes has demanded amendment to Article 17 of the Constitution, which talks about "abolition of untouchability". The commission has said the word "caste system" should also be included in Article 17. It said that in Article 17, untouchability should be read with caste system. The commission will discuss the issue with its members on Tuesday and will send a report to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in this regard. Talking to this correspondent, chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, Mr Suraj Bhan, said, "The commission is not in favour of reservation. Abolish caste system and take away reservation. In a recent meeting with a member of Parliament representing reserved constituencies, I asked to stop demanding reservation, ask for the amendment in the Constitution." He added: "I basically want inclusion of word 'caste system' in Article 17 of the Constitution. Article 17 says that untouchability is abolished in India. I want that caste system word should also be added with untouchability. Then it will be read: caste system and untouchability are abolished in India. The commission will discuss the matter at length on Tuesday." (Asian Age 25/10/05)

Social justice cast(e) off in JNU polls (2)

New Delhi: Oct. 24. — The much acclaimed student politics of Jawaharlal Nehru University is under attack. Neutral students have accused various unions of "blatant hypocrisy" for failing to

give representation to Dalit and socially backward students in the forthcoming polls. "Student leaders give hard hitting speeches about social justice and social progression, taking a leaf out of Marxist and Maoist ideology, but when it comes to practicing what they preach, they are found miserably wanting," said Mr Zahid Haque, a JNU veteran. The aggrieved section is so let down that they are planning to boycott the JNUSU polls this year. The only Dalit student who became president of JNU for two sessions -1996-97 and 1997-98 - and now an assistant professor in Delhi University, Mr Batti Lal Bhairwa, said, "JNU politics, cutting across all unions, has been dominated by upper caste students. Hence, no attempt has been made to groom leadership among Dalits and other socially backward students. All this talk of proletariat and socially equitable politics by SFI, AISA and AISF is only a sharn. That explains why there are no Dalit and OBC candidates fielded by the major students' outfits in the JNUSU elections in the last 7-8 years." The pattern is repeated this year as well as all candidates of major parties are from the upper caste, added Mr Bhairwa. Bharat Kumar, president of United Dalit Students federation in JNU, is also peeved over the neglect of lower caste students, and attributed it to the stranglehold of upper caste students in all unions. "Dalit and OBC students mostly come from non-public school backgrounds and they find themselves lost on the campus, which is dominated by English speaking students," said Mr Kumar. (Statesman 25/10/05)

NOVEMBER 2005

Girl's family butchers youth to death (2)

Aligarh: A YADAV youth was brutally butchered to death in Aligarh for having an affair with a Brahmin girl. The youth was put through torture when his genitals were chopped off with a knife on the night of Diwali. Manoj, the boy from the Yadav community, and Kusum, the Brahmin girl, were both residents of Nagola village, about 22 km from Aligarh. The two had been engaged in a love affair for almost six months. However, the inter-caste affair was unacceptable to the girl's family and they had objected to the affair on numerous occasions, said Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Khair, Mansaram Gautam. On the night of Diwali, Kusum's family members, led by her grandparents, Surjan Lal and Gayatri Devi, planned to call Manoj to their house. They asked a local youth, Shiva, to call Manoj saying that Kusum would be waiting for him outside her home. Shiva had often played messenger in the affair and it was easy for Manoj to fall into the trap. Thrilled by the prospect of meeting his beloved, Manoj quietly slipped out of his house around 11 pm and headed for Kusum's house. He reached his destination at 12am and signaled for her to come out. However, on arrival, he was greeted by Kusum's uncle Raj Kumar and mother Guddi. They invited him into the house and began beating him up. They were joined by Kusum's grandparents, who dragged Manoj out of the house on to the road, while the panic-stricken Kusum watched helplessly. They thrashed Manoj with cudgels and iron rods. When they had beaten him half-dead, they stabbed him in the belly with knives. Finally, they left him to die on the road after castrating him. (Pioneer 7/11/05)

First Dalit President Narayanan dies at 85 (2)

New Delhi: Kocheril Ra-man Narayanan, India's first Dalit president, died at the Army Research and Referral Hospital here on Wednesday. He was 85-years-old. The end came at 5:45 pm. He is survived by wife Usha and two daughters Amrita and Chitra, who is India's ambassador to Turkey. Narayanan, very ill for some time, was admitted to hospital on October 29 after he complained of acute breathlessness. For the past 12 days he was on a ventilator. Medical evaluation had revealed evidence of right side pneumonia and renal failure. From October 31, he was put on life support system. On November 4, he slipped into a coma. Doctors told BTOI that since 4 pm on Wednesday, both his kidneys had started to fail. (Times of India 10/11/055)

Cong offers sops to Dalits, youth in Punjab (2)

Chandigarh : In a bid to secure the youth and Dalit vote-bank for next Assembly election, which is expected in January 2007, the Punjab Government is going to announce sops like employment for youth, reservations for Dalits in the allotment of residential and industrial plots and permits to operate buses. Firstly, the Government is bracing itself to ensure that promises of additional reservation which it made to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward

Castes (OBCs), who form about 31 per cent of the population, are fulfilled. Secondly, all departments have been told to find out job opportunities and inject "new human resources needed to meet the challenges of the new functions of the departments". Also, the policies for the handicapped are to be revived. Sources said "to woo the youth vote, Punjab Chief Minister, Capt Amarinder Singh, has been convinced by his cabinet ministers and advisers that some recruitment drive is needed to be carried out. Meanwhile state government is boasting that the state has enough money to cater to the state's people demand. It is expected that Capt Singh will himself or his cabinet colleagues may announce about recruitment drives to employ teachers and doctors. Interestingly, Congress high command, by installing Shamsheer Singh Dullu, as Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee has sent a message to the Dalits that they were wanted back into the party. The absence of the major presence of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Punjab is a factor on which the Congress is hoping to woo back the Dalits. (Pioneer 15/11/05)

NDA: Upper caste in danger in Bihar (2)

New Delhi: The NDA spin doctors have swung into action to gain political mileage from the killings of the Ranvir Sena activists by the Naxalites in Bihar. For the NDA strategists, "the time is ripe for consolidation of its upper caste vote bank." The BJP, which has been losing its upper caste vote bank in the state, is now focusing on the "atrocities" being committed on the upper caste under the Lalu regime. It has also accused the RJD and state administration of being in "collusion with the Naxalites." That the BJP was going to stress on the "caste divide" became evident with the party's senior leader, Mr Shahnawaz Hussain, questioning the need to keep Maoist leader Ajay Kanu in the same prison (Jehanabad Jail) where the Ranvir Sena area commander, Bada Sharma, was lodged. "What was the need to shift him from Beur Jail and keep him in the same prison as that of Sharma," asked Mr Hussain. He said there was a "conspiracy" in the move and alleged that the state administration was encouraging "a caste divide." The youth wing of the BJP, which organised a bandh at Jehanabad, echoed similar views. Mr Hussain said that the state administration was aware of the situation and had information that the Naxalites could organise such an attack. On Monday, the BJP had demanded the resignation of home minister Shivraj Patil. The NDA leaders will now meet the relatives of the slain Ranvir Sena activists. The NDA leaders, who had been targeting the Naxalites, will also project the Centre as being "soft on them." A senior party functionary said, "It is now clear that the upper caste in Bihar is in great danger and the Centre was not taking any step to provide them with security." The party will now hold rallies and meetings over the issue, sources said. (Asian Age 16/11/05)

Rs 45 lakh: Govt ensures SC, ST share in MP fund (2)

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 17: Of the annual MPLADS allocation of Rs 2 crore, 22.5 per cent will now have to be spent on infrastructure development in Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe localities. According to the new MPLADS guidelines formulated by the UPA government, presented by the Minister of Statistic and Programme Implementation Oscar Fernandes at the Economic Editors meeting today, "permissible work costing not less than Rs 30 lakh out of the annual allocation" would go for SC-dominant localities population and "Rs 15 lakh for areas inhabited by ST population". In case "a constituency does not have an ST-inhabited area, such funds may be utilised in SC-inhabited areas and vice versa". While the guidelines say it would be the "responsibility of the district authority to enforce this provision of the guidelines", Fernandes said the state governments would also be made responsible. To reduce delays in the implementation of works related to the MPLADS funds, the guidelines have also made it mandatory for the district authorities to clear works recommended by the MPs within 45 days. Making it easier for MPs to donate funds for natural calamities, the guidelines allow MPLADS works in areas affected by natural calamities. "Lok Sabha MPs from non-affected areas of the state can also recommend permissible works up to a maximum of Rs 10 lakh per annum in the affected areas in that state", the guidelines state. Such funds would be released by the nodal district of the MP concerned to the District Authority of the affected district. And, in case of a calamity designated by the Central Government to be of a "severe nature" in any part of the country, an MP can recommend works up to a maximum of Rs 50 lakh for the affected area. (Indian Express 18/11/055)

Special cells will safeguard SC/ST: Centre (2)

New Delhi, Nov. 19: The Centre has instructed all state governments to prepare an action plan and take necessary preventive steps to protect the life and property of the members belonging to SC and ST community. Besides, the Centre has instructed all states to identify atrocity—prone areas and implement the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1951 and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 both in letter and spirit. Talking to this correspondent, a senior official of the Union home ministry said "Majority of the state governments and Union territories have set up special cells to deal with offences against SCs and STs. Some state governments have identified atrocity prone sensitive areas for taking necessary preventive steps to protect the life and property of the members of the SCs and STs also. But there are certain states who have not taken any initiative so far." He further said, "the ministry has also asked all state governments to set up special cells to deal with the offences against SCs and STs and ensure speedy disposal of pending cases with the police." Besides, instructions have been issued to recruit sufficient number of persons belonging to SCs and STs in police force at cutting edge level, he added. "The police" and "public order" are state subjects under the Constitution of India, and the primary responsibility of detection, registration, investigation and prosecution as well as prevention of crime vests with the individual state governments. (Asian Age 20/11/05)

Ambedkar love letters anger Prakash (2)

New Delhi, Nov. 19: A collection of love letters written to Dr B.R. Ambedkar by British woman Francis Fitzgerald and being published by Roli Books has upset his grandson, Mr Prakash Ambedkar. The grandson, a former member of Parliament, has reportedly lodged a complaint with the Delhi police to prevent the publication of the letters. According to the complaint, the publication of these letters "could hurt dalit sentiments in the country". When contacted, Mr Prakash Ambedkar refused to comment on the issue. "I don't want to talk about it," he said. Roli Books publisher Pramod Kapoor, confirming the police complaint, said he has decided to "go ahead with the publication of the book despite the complaint". The book, authored by Prof. Arun Kamble, a Marathi professor in Mumbai University, is a collection of love letters written to Dr Ambedkar by Francis, who was a typist in Britain's House of Commons and also worked in India House in London. The correspondence spans over 20 years, from 1922 to 1943. The address from where Francis wrote to Dr Ambedkar, as given in the letters, was 10, King Henry's Road, Hampstead, UK. Claiming that the letters were "authentic", Prof. Kamble said they were given to him by Dr Ambedkar's librarian, Mr S.S. Rege. Mr Pramod Kapoor of Roli Books said, "There is nothing secretive about them. These are original letters." He added that the police came to his office in early November on the basis of a complaint lodged by Mr Prakash Ambedkar. They were told that the collection of letters, if published, could "incite the dalits in the country". However, Mr Kapoor made it clear that there was "nothing illegal and publishing the book would take at least 10 months". (Asian Age 20/11/05)

Economic policies strengthening caste system' (2)

JAIPUR: Speakers at a seminar on "Impact of World Trade Organisation and globalisation on Dalits" here on Sunday affirmed that new economic policies were strengthening the caste system in the country by perpetuating injustice against the marginalised sections and encouraging privatisation. Dalit intellectuals, academicians and experts participating in the seminar said the unrestrained opening of market to the foreign players on their own terms would not only weaken the national economy but would also put the interests of Dalits in jeopardy. Dalits, they pointed out, were already at the receiving end in the caste hierarchy. The one-day seminar was organised jointly by the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights and the Jaipur-based Centre for Dalit Rights. Social activists and financial experts working for empowerment of Dalits, called for exerting pressure on the Centre for taking an independent stand at the WTO Ministerial meeting in Hongkong next month. Noted Dalit thinker and educationist, D. Prempathi, said the economic reforms launched in the 1990's were aimed at perpetuating the Varnashram Dharma that had brought untold sufferings to Dalits for the last 2,000 years. He said globalisation would intensify stagnancy in the Indian society responsible for lack of improvement in Dalits' conditions. Prof. Prempathi correlated the introduction of economic liberalisation with the launching of Hindutva ideology in politics, while affirming that both the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party were trying to subjugate Dalits by resorting to discriminatory policies. Subroto Dutta of the Rajasthan Budget

Analysis Centre pointed out that the budgetary provisions for Dalits and tribals were consistently being reduced, while there was no plan to bring luxury items within the tax net. O.P. Mathur, convenor of Jan Vichar Manch, said the WTO was working against the interests of farmers in the developing world since its inception and was armtwisting the Third World through the non-productive international finance capital. (The Hindu 21/11/05)

Lovers end life on tracks in Gurgaon (2)

Gurgaon: A 22-year-old man and a 16-year-old girl committed suicide by jumping in front of a train at Dhankot station on Sunday morning. The victims, Mukesh and Suman, were residents of Madalpur village in Jhajjar district. Mukesh belonged to Yadav community and the girl was a Dalit. The two were neighbours and fell in love with each other. As both belonged to different castes, their family members and even the villagers were against their marriage, especially since the girl was still a minor. According to police officials, while Mukesh was in tenthouse business, Suman studied in class X. Their relationship had become known to all about two months back, following which, their family members began mistreating them. The girl's family even threatened to get her married to someone else, if she continued the affair. Unable to take it any more, the two decided to end their lives. They reached the Dhankot village railway station and jumped in front of an inter-city train travelling between Rewari and Delhi, at 10.40 am. Said the station head officer, Ajmer Singh: "The family has been inform«J«bat" none of them have turned up the claim the bodies. (Times of India 21/11/05)

SC Status for Christians to be examined (2)

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 28: THE Centre today told the Supreme Court that several aspects, including whether Dalits who had converted to Christianity suffered social inequalities like untouchability even after their conversion, have to be looked into before deciding to extend reservation benefits to Dalit Christians. A commission constituted to look into the matter was expected to give its reply by April 2006, Additional Solicitor-General Gopal Subramaniam told a bench of Chief Justice Y K Sabharwal, Justice C K Thakker and Justice R V Raveendran. The bench was hearing a PIL seeking grant of Scheduled Caste status for Dalit Christians. Following the ASG's submission, the Court said it would examine the issue after getting detailed information and would also like to see progress made by the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities in this regard. "We may have to hear the matter in detail after information is supplied," the bench said, adding it would not like to express any opinion on the issue at this stage. The PIL filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation contended that para three of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 was coming in its way as Scheduled Castes, on conversion to Christianity, lose all benefits. (Indian Express 29/11/05)

Rallies to create awareness among Dalits (2)

JAIPUR: Dalit rights caravans in the shape of huge public rallies, which have started from three different places in Rajasthan, will traverse the State for over a week and reach here on December 6 for a mass public meeting. The programme has been organised to create awareness among Dalits about their rights. The first rally started from Phalodi in Jodhpur district on November 22, while two other rallies were kicked off from Chittaurgarh and Sriganganagar on November 27. All these caravans will congregate at Shaheed Circle here on December 6 and proceed to the Statue Circle, near the State Secretariat, for the public meeting. The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) is organising the event in association with the Urmul Marusthali Bunkar Vikas Samiti, Phalodi; Prayaas, Chittaurgarh; and the Centre for Dalit Rights, Jaipur. The State convenor of NCDHR and former MP, Than Singh, said here on Monday that Dalits in Rajasthan were facing discrimination and exploitation in all walks of life despite some of them having succeeded in getting Government jobs, financial strength and political power. (The Hindu 29/11/05)

Dalit groups ask rights panel to intervene (2)

NEW DELHI: Demanding intervention of the Chhattisgarh State Human Rights Commission, Dalit Mukti Morcha and Dalit Study Circle have submitted a fact-finding report that has found that Dalit students were being discriminated against in the mid-day meal scheme at Bhokludih village near

Pithora block of Mahasamund district in Chhattisgarh. The report has found that two Dalit boys, Jitendra Kurre and Nageshwar Kurre, both studying in the fifth standard in the primary school in Bhokludih, were humiliated by cook Moti while she was serving them food as part of the mid-day meal scheme. The students, who were asked to sit separately and were given less food than the others, protested and asked for sufficient food to be given in a proper manner. They also asked for space to sit with the other non-Dalit students. When the discriminatory treatment continued, they tried entering the kitchen saying they would serve the food to ensure that the quantity provided to them was not less. The cook blocked their entry and said they could neither enter the kitchen nor serve the food, as they were Chamars. The students lodged a complaint with the teacher Kamala Chauhan, who instructed the cook to serve them adequate food in a dignified manner. The cook then went to the sarpanch Deepanjali Sahu. The sarpanch, along with her husband Shankar Sahu, and a few others and shouted at the Dalit boys. The teacher then moved an application within the Education Department saying that the cook with the support of the sarpanch had practised un-touchability within the school premises. The authorities transferred the teacher. The parents of the children then filed a complaint with the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe special police station. The police have so far not taken any action. (The Hindu 29/11/05)

DECEMBER 2005

Dalit rally on Dec. 11 (2)

NEW DELHI: The All-India Confederation of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Organisations will hold a rally at the Ramlila grounds here on December 11 to protest again non-fulfilment of promises made to the Dalits by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance Government at the Centre. Members of Dalit community from across the country are expected to attend the rally that would be addressed by eminent leaders. (The Hindu 1/12/05)

Dalit Bihar Speaker ushers in new era (2)

Patna : For the first time in the Constitutional history of Bihar, a dalit leader, Uday Narayan Chaudhury, was unanimously elected as the Assembly Speaker on Wednesday. All the political parties supported the proposal of JD-U leader Chaudhury's name for the post of the new Bihar Assembly Speaker. Chaudhury had won the election from the Imamganj Assembly constituency in Gaya district. "Uday Narayan Chaudhury comes from the dalit segment of the society and perhaps it has happened for the time in Bihar that a dalit has been unanimously elected as the Assembly Speaker. And I would like to thank all the political parties for their cooperation in his election," Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said. Mr Kumar, while talking to journalists, also said that he would try his best to seek the cooperation of Opposition parties in running the Government and everyone would be given equal opportunity in the House. The newly-elected Speaker Uday Narayan Chaudhury later expressed happiness and also thanked the political parties for their cooperation. "I will try to conduct the House without any prejudice. Every voice would be given opportunity inside the House as per the rules and regulations," he said. Nitish Kumar later said the State Government urged the Union Home Ministry for more Central forces to be deployed in the State. "Taking in view the extremist problem in the State, more central forces are required and for this I've already urged the Central Government," the Chief Minister said (Pioneer 1/12/05)

Dalit woman's arm chopped off (2)

Bhopal: Kamala Bai and her Dalit family had been a problem. The 35-year-old mother of three and her family had refused to take back some rape cases against local upper caste men. So 'justice' was meted out the way feudal Madhya Pradesh knows best. Six men stormed Kamala Bai's home in Nigari village on Friday night, woke up the woman and her children and chopped off a part of her right forearm, the very arm she had raised in protest against her rape and dared to file a complaint at the Silwani police station in Raisen district in April 2002. A second case of rape was lodged against one of the attackers by Kamala Bai's sister in September. "My husband ran away when the attackers came and I was left alone in the courtyard. They tied my hands and feet and then chopped my hand with an axe," Kamala Bai told a TV channel. After the bloodshed on Friday, Kamala Bai was rushed to Hamidia Hospital in Bhopal. Doctors on Saturday said although her injury wasn't life-threatening, her arm could not be fixed. Police did not appear

worried, though. They said the case would be treated routinely with all the concomitant paperwork. Raisen's superintendent of police Jagat Singh Sanswal told reporters no arrests had taken place or were planned. "We are yet to confirm the incident. When we have conducted the investigations, the culprits will be arrested." In fact, local police are blaming Kamala Bai's family for repeatedly crying rape. They say a DSP investigated into the FIR of the rape charge alleged by Kamala Bai's sister in September. Upon investigation, it was found that the case was false. The police don't believe the rape charges brought by Kamala Bai and her sister, officers said. This was mostly because the sisters have been unable to hold on to their testimonies in courts, the police say. There was no clear answer from the police on allegations that the Dalit family was being pressured to take back the two rape cases. (Times of India 11/12/05)

Dalits dissatisfied with UPA Government: Udit Raj (2)

NEW DELHI: The All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisation on Sunday criticised the United Progressive Alliance Government for failing to provide reservation for the Dalits in the private sector and demanded immediate steps for reserving seats for this section of society in the judiciary and the Army as well. Speaking at a large gathering of Dalits at Ramlila Ground here, the chairman of the confederation, Udit Raj, said Dalits were very dissatisfied with the UPA Government for not having done anything for their cause every since it took office about 18 months ago. "Though the UPA Government has appointed a Group of Minister to look into the issue of reservation in private sector, so far nothing has come out in the open. The Government should make a law for reservation in the private sector," he said. Warning that the previous National Democratic Alliance Government had lost the elections because it had rendered a large number of Dalits working in the public sector enterprises jobless by disinvesting its holdings, he said the UPA regime should work towards the betterment of this section. Mr Raj also raised the issue of filling up vacant posts. "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had promised to the Dalit leaders that by December 2005 about 80 per cent of the backlog in vacancies would be filled up, but various government departments did not even have the statistics and figures of the backlog. Therefore fulfilment of the promise appears unlikely especially as there is no political will," he said. Further on the issue of reservation, he said while the Reservation Bill was introduced in Parliament in 2004 it has still not become a law. Stating that the Bill was not properly drafted and the reservation for SCs/STs and the Other Backward Classes was put together and not separately, Mr Raj demanded that the Bill be passed promptly. (The Hindu 12/11/05)

Price of Dalit woman's hand: Rs 12,000 (2)

Bhopal : The 35-year-old rape victim from Raisen, whose right hand was chopped off after she refused to withdraw her complaint, has been given Rs 10,000 compensation from the Chief Minister's Fund besides Rs 2,000 by Raisen district administration. Meanwhile, all the five accused were produced before the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate in Raisen on Monday. They were subsequently sent to jail for 14 days. The victim had lodged the rape complaint against Manmod Singh Mehra and his friends on September 25 and the offenders were pressurising the victim to change her statements or withdraw the complaint. After she declined to do so, she was assaulted on December 8. She is undergoing treatment at the Hamidia Hospital, Bhopal. The Raisen Police had registered a case under Sections 336, 436, 147, and 148 of the IPC and Section 323 of SC/ST Atrocities Eradication Act against Manmod Singh, Devi Singh Raghuvanshi, Prem Narayan Raghuvanshi, Dinesh Raghuvanshi and Ramsevak Raghuvanshi. The action was taken after National Woman Commission took cognizance and sought report from Madhya Pradesh Police. Meanwhile, Gondwana Gantantra Party (GGP) State president Gulzar Singh Markam while talking to mediapersons here on Monday said that a fact finding team of the party had visited the Nigari village on Sunday and found that lax attitude of the administration led to the incident. Mr Markam demanded a high-level inquiry in the incident and stated that DSP AJK and Silwani SHO should be suspended immediately because they were responsible for not taking action against the offenders. He also demanded that a compensation of Rs 10 lakh should be given to the victim. (Pioneer 13/12/05)

Six girls barred from entering JNU hostel (2)

NEW DELHI: Jhelum hostel of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has been declared out of bounds for six girl students for allegedly beating up a Dalit resident of the hostel this past Friday. An independent enquiry headed by Chief Proctor, V.K. Jain, has also been initiated into the matter. The incident seems to have been triggered by a fight between two male residents of Jhelum hostel, who are reportedly roommates and had an argument over an Ambedkar poster that had been put up by the Dalit student on Friday. Things reportedly went out of hand when the argument resulted in the two coming to blows, with both receiving injuries in the end. It was, however, later in the evening that female friends of the non-Dalit student went and reportedly beat up the Dalit student. The girls, however, have reportedly claimed that they had been sexually harassed by the victim for the past two months and had only taken a stern step to deal with the problem. A complaint was lodged by the girls with the Gender Sensitisation Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH) of the University on the same evening and before they went ahead and beat him up. Despite the connection between the two cases, the university has decided to treat them as two different incidents with the enquiry likely to deal with them separately. With the sequence of events still not very clear, university officials said a decision would be taken only after the enquiry committee submits its report. The four-member committee headed by V.K. Jain includes Prof. Rekha Vardan, Vidhu Verma and D.K. Lobial. "We have received complaints and counter complaints and are looking into the matter. The Vice-Chancellor has suggested that the report be submitted at the earliest, and we are hoping to do that. As of now things are not very clear," said Mr. Jain. (The Hindu 14/12/05)

Dalits fined for entering temple (2)

Bhubaneswar, Dec. 16: Dalit women continue to suffer at the hands of upper caste people in Orissa. In a recent case, a few dalit women of Jenasahi, in coastal Kendrapara district, were punished for entering a Hindu temple in violation of the age-old tradition. According to an inquiry report submitted by Rajnagar tehsildar Laxmi Narayan Sethy to the district authorities on Thursday, some dalit women were fined Rs 1,001 by the upper caste people and temple servitors for entering the Jagannath temple at Keredagarh to worship the Goddess on Karthik Purnima, despite a "ban" on their entry by the royal families. The district collector had asked the tehsildar to conduct an inquiry after some dalit women submitted a petition stating that they were fined for entering the Jagannath temple by the upper caste people. The report said some dalit women of Jenasahi had entered the sanctum sanctorum of the Jagannath temple, managed by the royal family of Kanika. When the upper caste people and the servitors came to know about the incident, they summoned the dalit women and imposed a fine of Rs 1,001 each for violating the tradition which banned the entry of dalits into the temple. (Asian Age 17/12/05)

Inter-caste marriage does not confer SC/ST status: court (2)

New Delhi: An upper caste Hindu woman cannot get the SC/ST status just because she marries a man from that community and she cannot claim the benefit of reservation, the Supreme Court has held. A Bench consisting of Justices S.B. Sinha and P.K. Balasubramanian, citing an earlier judgment, said "no person who is not an SC/ST by birth will be deemed a member of SC/ST merely because he or she marries a person belonging to SC/ST." The Bench set aside a Delhi High Court order, which conferred the benefit of reservation meant for the Scheduled Castes on a forward caste woman to contest municipal elections from a reserved constituency on the ground of her marriage to an SC man. "It is one thing to say that a lady belonging to a forward caste has been accepted by the community to which her husband belongs; it is quite another to say that her marriage has been accepted only by her husband's family," the Bench said. "The question as regards change of caste in view of her marriage may be relevant in relation to Hindus, but when the question of change of caste is referable to the category belonging to a special class of citizens which requires protective discrimination and affirmative action, a different rule will apply." Sunita contested from a reserved constituency on the ground that she was married to an SC man. The trial court set aside her election. But on appeal, the High Court upheld her election. Allowing the appeal preferred by the defeated candidate, the apex court Bench said acquisition of the SC status by voluntary mobility would play a fraud on the Constitution and frustrate the benign policy under Articles 15 (4) and 16 (4). (The Hindu 22/12/05)

Panel on SCs, STs wants cell in PMO (2)

NEW DELHI: The Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has reiterated its recommendation of setting up a cell in the Prime Minister's Office to monitor the progress of the schemes for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. The committee, in a report presented in Parliament on Wednesday, pointed out that the programmes and schemes meant for development of the SCs/STs had not yielded the desired results. It sought information on the steps taken by the Ministries concerned for proper utilisation of funds for the schemes. The report says that the committee members were not convinced by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's reply that a monitoring cell at the Prime Minister's Office may not be so urgent, as the Planning Commission and the Ministry reviewed the progress of the schemes on a monthly and quarterly basis. The committee said the problems faced in implementation of the projects should be brought to the notice of the State Governments that lagged behind. The report also took serious note of the Government's "slackness" in drafting a national policy for tribals. It directed that a time-bound action be taken on the matter. (The Hindu 22/12/05)

'Teach abolition of untouchability in schools' (2)

New Delhi, Dec. 26: The National Commission for Scheduled Caste has demanded introduction of a separate subject on "abolition of untouchability" from Class 5 as a compulsory subject. The commission has decided to constitute an eleven member committee to work on the curriculum of the subject. The commission will soon send a detailed report to the President of India and Union ministry of human resource development in this regard. Talking to this correspondent, the chairman of the commission Dr Suraj Bhan said, "If government can introduce a separate chapter on disaster management in the school curriculum, then why not a separate subject can be introduced on "untouchability". There is an urgent need to create awareness among the schoolchildren for the abolition of untouchability in the society. It is the job of the government to decided whether it should be introduced as a separate subject or a separate chapter." "The commission just wants that it should be introduced from Class 5 and should be made compulsory for all students. An eleven member committee, which will work on the curriculum of the subject, will be constituted by the commission in the first week of January. The committee will give its final report within three months, which will be later submitted to the President of India and Union ministry of human resource development," said Dr Bhan. The NCSC has also urged religious heads to screen sacred books of all religions for deleting derogatory remarks against scheduled castes. The commission is also holding talks with religious heads in this regard. He said, "Holy books need certain screening. There are several things in the dharam granth which are against untouchability. The commission has requested all religious heads for screening of holy books." (Asian Age 27/12/05)

Rights panel sends notice on dalit issue (2)

Bhubaneswar: The National Human Rights Commission has issued a notice to the Kendrapara district administration for not appointing dalit women as cooks in schools, for preparing mid-day meals, by our special correspondent. The notice was served following a complaint by the district Dalit Manch accusing the administration of violating a government order which made it mandatory to appoint dalit women as cooks in 1,420 primary schools in the district. "The authorities did not appoint dalit women, as the practice of untouchability prevails in rural areas and towns of the district," president of the Kendrapara district Dalit Manch, Bijaya Mallik alleged. She said that in a number of schools, dalit women were removed from service as the students refused to take meals prepared by them (Asian Age.com 27/12/05)