

DALIT ATROCITIES - 2006

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Bihar wakes up to New Year massacre (2)

RAMPUR-SYAMCHAK (RAGHOPUR), JAN 1: BIHAR Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's worst nightmare came alive on the first day of the New Year. Six members of a poor, Extremely Backward Caste family—a pregnant woman and her five children—were burnt alive early this morning. The incident happened in the Raghopur Assembly constituency represented by former chief minister Rabri Devi. The attackers first locked the thatched mud house in which Vijeyndra Mahto's wife and five children were sleeping, sprinkled petrol on the house and set it ablaze. To ensure that none survived, the killers stood guard as the house burnt and fired in the air to scare away villagers. Mahto, who was sleeping outside, is alive. He is in a Patna hospital with serious burn injuries. The massacre was over the theft of a buffalo. Jagat Rai, from a Yadav family of the village, allegedly stole Mahto's buffalo in September last year. An FIR was lodged and eight Yadavs were named as accused. The buffalo was rescued and three persons including Rai, his son and nephew, were arrested. Rai was released on bail and he started threatening the Mahto family to withdraw the case. But Mahto refused. In a Patna hospital, Mahto said the officer in-charge of Raghopur police station, Nooruddin Khan, asked for money to act against Jagat Rai. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar rushed to the village along with top police officers. "It's the most heinous crime. (Indian Express 2/1/06)

Village upset as dalit marries Australian (2)

Patna, Jan. 9: A dalit from Bihar has once again established that everything is fair in love and war. Refusing to pay any heed to the criticism from his near and dear ones, 25-year-old Sanjay Manjhi of Mushar Toli locality of Bodh Gaya in Bihar married Erin Batlet, an Australian, at a local village temple on Sunday evening. Mr Manjhi runs a shop in Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh) while Ms Batlet is a tourist guide. "Erin had once dropped in at my shop. I fell in love with her at that very moment," recalls Mr Manjhi. "It was love at first sight and such was the intensity that we had a court marriage on December 27, almost a month after we met," Mr Manjhi says. The dalit was in the eye of storm after his relatives came to know about the marriage. The couple had to face stiff resistance from the villagers when they said they wanted to get "married" again at a local village temple. In fact, the villagers also threatened to stop any contact with his family if Mr Manjhi insisted on marrying a girl from outside the community. (Asian Age 10/1/06)

Jharkhand police kitchens dish out casteism (2)

Ranchi : It is an irony of ironies. Although Jharkhand has a Dalit police chief, Dalits are considered untouchable in the police force. In this unfortunate development over the years, Jharkhand, which has never had a traditional caste system, appears to have been infected by the caste virus from neighbouring Bihar. For proof, visit Ranchi's police line located on Kanke Road right opposite the official residence of Chief Minister Arjun Munda. Here, more than 1,000 policemen of various castes may share the hall, restrooms, and other facilities but they must have separate kitchens along caste lines. As a result the police line has eight such caste kitchens catering separately to Brahmins, Bhumiards, Rajputs, tribals, Dalits, and backwards. These kitchens have names like Bhojpur and Patna kitchens, indicating where the caste bug came from. "How can I share food with a dalit? We need to follow our religion and cleanliness according to the caste system to maintain the sanctity of our caste," says a Brahmin cop. Interestingly, the cooks' salaries vary from kitchen to kitchen, depending on the caste. "Some cooks get Rs 1000 while others get Rs 700 per month. It depends where one is cooking," says Vijay Mahto one of the cooks. The Brahmin, Bhumiar and Rajput kitchens pay their cooks Rs 1000 a month. Muslims too have a separate kitchen but they have a Hindu cook. The mode of preparation too varies from kitchen to kitchen. For instance, while LPG is used in the Brahmin kitchen, other kitchens use

charcoal and coal. The dalit kitchen is located at a distance from the other kitchens. Residents of the police line are used to this segregation and find no problem in eating separately. Why separate kitchens? "We do not have an official kitchen. The kitchens are run privately by the policemen who share the total expenditure. How one can stop them from separating the kitchens when they themselves are running it," said a Rajput policemen. (Pioneer 14/1/06)

Paying a price for securing justice for his daughter (2)

CHANDIGARH: A 40-year-old dalit, Bant Singh, has paid the price through amputation of three of his limbs, as about five years ago he managed to secure justice for his then minor daughter, who was gang raped by upper caste, influential and landed individuals from his Jhabbar village of the remote Mansa district in Punjab. Doctors in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the PGI's Emergency ward, are struggling to save his right leg, prevent sepsis and revive his kidneys. They may need many units of blood beyond the seven, which have already been transfused. Bant's wife, four sons and four daughters, close relatives and activists of some leftists groups look on with grim faces, prepared for the worst. Various leftist groups and human rights organisations, have demanded that Bant Singh be paid Rs 10 lakh as compensation and be provided an attendant, whose salary be paid by the present Sarpanch of the village. They also seek a Government job for his wife, as the family's only bread earner, who made a living through working as farm labour and rearing hogs and goats, lay completely disabled. The State organiser of the Liberation faction of the CPI (ML), Jeeta Kaur has announced that her organisation would hold a rally in the village on January 16 to be followed by a 'dharna' in front of the Mansa district civil hospital on January 25. The organisation's local secretary, Sukhcharan Singh Danewalia narrates that Bant Singh's ordeal began ever since he resisted all attempts to pressurise or lure him into reaching a compromise with the individuals, who had raped his daughter in the year 2000. Two years later, the trial court convicted three persons, Mandhir Singh, Tarsem Singh and Gurmail Kaur, for their involvement in the case. The three were handed life imprisonment sentences. (The Hindu 16/1/06)

Landlords burn Dalit woman to death (2)

Bulandshahr : Upper caste landlords of a village in Bulandshahr burned a Dalit woman to death. After the incident, the police registered a case against the accused. However, the landlords are absconding. According to sources, in the wee hours of Thursday, villagers noticed a charred body of woman lying in the ditch along side a road in village Danagarh. The body was identified as that of Naina Devi (50). Husband Rati Ram told this reporter that landlords of the village had been torturing them since long. Therefore, he had left the village and went to Chandigarh to earn a livelihood. However, his wife stayed back in the village and was earning for herself and the children. Rati Ram was here in the village since last week. Some dominants of the village had been taunting him but he kept mum thinking everything would be alright soon. The aggressive young boys belonging to the upper caste dragged Naina Devi to the road side and burnt her alive after spraying kerosene on her body. They had threatened Rati Ram of dire consequences if he went to the police station to get the case registered. On Thursday morning, Rati Ram lodged a complaint with Kotwali Dibal stating that four persons burnt to his wife dead. On the complaint, the police registered the case under section 302 of IPC and under SC, ST Act. The SSP said that the murder was committed due to on going rivalry between the dominants and the family of Rati Ram since long. We have constituted the team of competent police officer to nab the criminals soon. (Pioneer 16/1/06)

Bihar dalit woman, baby kept captive (2)

Patna, Jan. 18: A dalit woman and her newborn child in Bihar had to remain in captivity of the owner of a private nursing home for almost two months for failing to clear the medical expenses incurred on her. Government officials rescued Sonma Devi from the private nursing home in Biharsharif after they came to know about the incident on Tuesday. "We were running short of money and hardly had enough money to get our daughter released. The money-lenders had also declined to extend any sort of help to us," Kaushalya Devi, Sonma's mother, said after getting her daughter released. The family members had paid Rs 6,000, which was taken as a loan from the local shylocks, to the nursing home authorities but the owners refused to release the woman and

the child unless the rest amount was paid. Kaushalya Devi had managed to raise Rs 6,000 against a rate of interest of 60 per cent annually. After getting admitted to the nursing home in the third week of November, Sonma had given birth to a child on November 19. The doctors had presented medical bills worth several thousands of rupees. Not only the dalit family's request for a concession was turned down but also the family was banned to enter the nursing home without the money. Later, Kaushalya Devi raised the issue at the janta darbar of the district magistrate in Bihar Sharif on Tuesday. Finally, a team of the local officials raised the nursing home and got the woman and her newborn child released. Asian Age 19/1/06)

SC/ST grants for higher studies get CCEA nod (2)

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs today approved a fellowship scheme for providing financial help to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students wanting to pursue higher studies. The scheme, called the Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship, is expected to benefit 667 Scheduled Tribe students and 1,333 Scheduled Caste students in 2005-06. The University Grants Commission (UGC) will be the nodal agency implementing the scheme. Information and Broadcasting Minister Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi said: "This is very good news for SC and ST meritorious students with dreams to complete M.Phil and Ph.D courses." The CCEA has also approved an amendment in the centrally-sponsored scheme on Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in the Northeast, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal. "The amendment responds to the aspiration and urges of farmers and horticulturists," Dasmunsi said. The CCEA approved a Rs 29.99 crore increase in the corpus fund of Maulana Azad Education Foundation which was set up in 1989 to promote education among the weaker sections and backward minorities. The Foundation currently operates on the income generated from its Rs 70.01 crore corpus which will now increase to Rs 100 crore. The Foundation has disbursed Rs 80.5 crore to 622 NGOs till date. (Indian Exp 20/1/06)

Rajasthan Dalit social worker gangraped, family says cover-up (2)

JAIPUR, JANUARY 24: In a chilling reminder of the Bhanwari Devi case, a Rajasthan anganwadi worker was allegedly gangraped by her supervisors during a state-sponsored training session. Instead of helping the 25-year-old Dalit woman, the police tried to hush-up the incident, declaring her mentally unstable and packing her off to a psychiatric clinic. According to the FIR, the woman, an anganwadi sahyogini, was raped by three of her supervisors after her female supervisor took her to a room at the training centre in Karauli, some 150 km from Jaipur. The incident took place on the night of December 30. Her husband was told three days later that she had been admitted to a hospital after a "mental breakdown". "We brought her back to Karauli but the police refused to file our case. When they finally lodged an FIR on January 20, the SP again sent her with a constable to Jaipur to get her admitted to the SMS Hospital's psychiatric centre," husband Ram Niwas Meena said. SP B K Pande denied the charge: "We didn't send her to the psychiatric centre. We have arrested two accused and are hunting for the other two." Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria, who visited her in hospital today, said a probe will be held. (Indian Exp 25/1/06)

Politically correct NCERT edits Premchand (2)

New Delhi: Jan. 27. — The National Council of Education and Research Training has decided to purge its textbooks of derogatory references towards Dalits. The educational body has decided to remove the word "chamar" from Hindi textbooks of class IX and XI. The controversial word used in Premchand's Rangbhumi has been replaced by the less offensive Dalit. The NCERT has also decided to incorporate chapters from famous Dalit writers in school textbooks. However, interestingly the word chamar has not been replaced in their writings as has been done in Premchand's works. In Om Prakash Balmiki's (Dalit writer) Khanabadhosh, for instance, a footnote has been provided stating that "the word is constitutionally banned and should not be practiced in social behaviour". Speaking to The Statesman, the head of the department of languages, NCERT, Professor Ramjanam Sharma, said the council has made a great effort to incorporate Dalit literature in the syllabi.free of any controversy. "We have edited a lot of the writings after witnessing the hue and cry over the word "chamar" in Rangbhumi. We have edited the word out except in the opening sentence," he added. Elaborating on the need to promote Dalit writers in the syllabus of Classes IX and XI, Prof Sharma said efforts are being made to

sensitise students towards the marginalised status of backward communities. He said these writers feel only they can truly understand the trauma of belonging to a backward community in a Brahmanical society. (Statesman 28/1/06)

Daughter of a Dalit victim demands compensation (2)

NEW DELHI: The young daughter of a Dalit farm labour activist, Bant Singh, whose hands and a leg had to be amputated after he was brutally thrashed allegedly by the sons of the "Sarpanch" of Jhabbar village and their accomplices at Mansa in Punjab on January 5, has demanded a compensation of Rs.10 lakhs and a job for her mother. Speaking at a press conference organised by the Forum for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) here on Friday, the young woman said her father was "punished" for fighting and winning a legal battle in a case in which she was gang-raped in 2002, when she was a minor. Defying the "panchayat" decision ordering her to marry one of the rapists, Bant Singh had got a case registered and the accused arrested, who were later sentenced to life imprisonment. "Since then my father has been attacked thrice. The latest was on January 5, in which two sons of the present "Sarpanch", Jaswant, and five others attacked my father and beat him up badly. The police earlier registered a case under Section 325 of the Indian Penal Code and the accused were released on bail. It was only after the media and several organisations took up the issue that the police added sections under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Act and other harsh sections," said the young woman, adding that she would continue to fight till she got justice. All India Progressive Women's Association convenor Jeeta Kaur said doctors were trying to save Bant Singh's only leg but his condition was deteriorating as the leg had got infested with gangrene. Satya Sivaraman, a journalist and member of the FDI team that probed the incident, talked about atrocities on Dalits, especially women, in Punjab. He also talked about the widespread exploitation of poor agricultural labourers there. (The Hindu 28/1/06)

Captain upholds stand on SC/ST uplift (2)

Chandigarh : Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday reiterated his resolve to safeguard the interests of SCs and STs through effective measures for their uplift. Presiding over a meeting of State-level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes: Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989, Capt Singh directed the top brass of the civil and police administration to ensure implementation of this Act in letter and spirit. He said all the provisions of the Act should be adhered to strictly. Responding to demands of Committee members, Capt Singh announced a grant of Rs 50 crore for a "houses to houseless" scheme for SC beneficiaries besides Rs 12 crore for dharamshalas. A sum of Rs 23 crore is released every month out of a dedicated fund of Rs 450 crore against pension for SCs. Capt Singh further said 30 per cent of the funds under Punjab Nirman Programme has been earmarked for overall development and welfare of Dalits. It may be mentioned here that SCs in Punjab are comparably far better placed than in other States. Visible discrimination against them is almost negligible. There are no separate colleges or schools or hostels for SCs as is the practice in southern States. Unlike Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, UP, Bihar, and Himachal Pradesh SCs in Punjab also face no humiliation while visiting religious places.(Pioneer 1/2/06)

Dalit family finally gets some respite from court (2)

JAIPUR: A Dalit family in Nimora village near here -- facing persecution for constructing a temple of Lord Hanuman and worshipping the deity -- has finally got some reprieve with a Sessions court striking down an order of a lower court, which had accepted the closure by police of a criminal case against the higher caste people. Additional Sessions Judge Prakash Chand Sharma quashed the verdict of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Bassi, by which he had accepted the final report of police and rejected a protest petition of the victimised Dalit family. The Sessions court remanded the case back to the magistrate with the direction to pass a fresh order. The family of Krishna Gopal Dhanka is being harassed for over three years for its "audacity" to build the Hanuman temple on its own land. Brahmins in the village assaulted the family members for conducting regular worship and imposed a fine of Rs. 21,000 on them. The family was twice hounded out for several days and could return to the village on the intervention of higher authorities. The prosecution not only filed a final report in the case on behalf of the police in the

magistrate's court, but also presented a case under Sec. 182 of Indian Penal Code against Dhanka for giving "false information" to the police. The magistrate accepted the final report, rejected Dhanka's protest petition and initiated criminal proceedings under Sec. 182 against him last year. The Sessions court in Jaipur, while accepting the revision application of the Dalit family, observed that the lower court had erred by not taking into account Dhanka's statements and the evidence collected by police during investigation. (The Hindu 2/2/06)

Patna hate story: father, family kill son-in-law; daughter critical after assault (2)

PATNA, FEBRUARY 3: Shailendra Mishra, a Patna schoolteacher, was lynched, his head crushed with a stone, and his newly married wife Pushpanjali assaulted by a group led by her father. This was their "punishment" for marrying without the family's consent. And belonging to the same gotra (sub-caste)—although they were of the same caste. Pushpanjali's father Umesh Mishra has been arrested and police are looking for her two brothers and a dozen others. Pushpanjali, in her 20s, is battling for her life in a city hospital. Shailendra, in his late 30s, and Pushpanjali lived in the same neighbourhood. They eloped and tied the knot in Hajipur a few days ago. The couple returned today and when the bride went home, over a dozen people went to Shailendra's house. Dragging him out, they beat him up. When Pushpanjali tried to intervene, they beat her up too. They were taken to the Patna Medical College and Hospital where Shailendra was declared "brought dead". Pushpanjali has "multiple head injuries and it's difficult to save her," said Umashankar Singh, the doctor attending on her. J P Rai, Khajkela police station in-charge, where the FIR has been lodged, said the bride's father is a priest. (Indian Express 4/2/06)

Punjab Govt. steps for Dalit welfare (2)

CHANDIGARH: Against the backdrop of simmering discontent and indications of growing caste tensions the Punjab Government has initiated steps not only to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes through effective measures for their uplift but also ensure them a life of dignity and self-esteem. While various development and welfare projects have been at different stages of implementation, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh recently presided over a meeting of the State level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989. He announced that instead of the usual six months, the committee would meet every two months to sort out the issues relating to the welfare of Dalits. While directing the top brass of the Civil and Police administration to ensure strict implementation of the statute, he stressed that "complacency would not be tolerated at any cost." The recent case of a Dalit, Bant Singh of Jhabbar village in Mansa district who lost two arms and a leg apparently due to official apathy after being beaten up allegedly by upper castes, has created ripples in the State. He had "dared" to continue his pursuit for justice for his daughter who had been raped about four years ago. The concern of the Chief Minister on this account is understandable as crime against the Scheduled Castes has been on the rise. As against 15 cases registered under the relevant sections of law in 1994, 94 cases were recorded in 2004. During the same period, the number of rapes cases reported has also doubled. Responding to the demands of the members of the committee, Capt. Singh announced a grant of Rs. 50 crores for the scheme under "houses to houseless" for the SCs beneficiaries besides Rs. 12 crores for dharamshalas of Scheduled Castes. A sum of Rs. 23 crores was directed to be released every month, from the Dedicated Fund of Rs. 450 crores against pensions to the SC beneficiaries. The disbursement of these pensions has been entrusted to the village panchayats. (The Hindu 8/2/06)

Caste coup: Councillor, kin ostracised for backing BJP

Jaipur: Feb. 8. — The concept of empowerment got a jolt when a caste panchayat in Rajasmand district of Rajasthan ostracised an elected councillor Ms Bhagwati Khatik and her family. All they had done was to vote for the BJP without the approval of the panchayat. Her vote helped the BJP to form the board of Rajasmand civic body. But the caste panchayat held that since Ms Khatik had won with the support of Khatik community, she had no right to vote for the BJP without its permission. Ms Bhagwati had contested the municipal election as an Independent after both the Congress and the BJP failed to field any candidate from the Khatik community. In the Election, both the BJP and the Congress failed to secure a majority. In the backdrop of this,

Ms Bhagwati voted for the BJP. But apparently Ms Bhagwati had not consulted her community, which had fielded her as a candidate, before voting in favour of the BJP. This angered it. As a result, the Khatik community asked her to put in her papers. On her refusal, the community decided to keep the councillor and her family away from their activities. The community has ruled that no one would talk or invite the ostracised family to social functions. If anyone violated the order, he or she would be fined Rs 5,000, the caste panchayat ruled. (Statesman 9/2/06)

Punjab caste wall to evict dwellers comes crumbling down ((2)

Chandigarh, Feb. 7: The Germans had their Berlin Wall, the Chinese still have their Great Wall, and the Punjabis came close to claiming their own. It didn't survive long enough. Late last night, parts of the 10-foot-high wall that civic authorities in Fazilka, Ferozepur, had built without an opening around 20 dwellings of the lower-caste Muslim Gujjars, cutting them off from the rest of the world, were broken down. The wall had come up three months ago to force the dwellers to sell their land so that a bus stand could be built by a private organisation. "We have made two openings in the wall. The rest will be demolished soon," said SSP S.S.Srivastava. "Allah has finally listened to our prayers and the wall is no more," said Kasim, one of the hemmed-in residents. But the past few weeks had been traumatic. To keep home Ores burning, the Gujjars, milkmen by profession, had been scaling the wall. "We were being hounded to sell our land. And when we resisted, the municipal authorities, mostly upper castes, simply built the wall around our dwellings," said Kamal Khan, another resident. Over 150 people live in the settlement registered in the names of the Gujjars. Khan said the pressure began mounting on them to sell their land following the decision of the Amarinder Singh-led Congress government to invite builders from the country and abroad to invest in new colonies. Land prices in the state have skyrocketed since the invitation. The Gujjars say they were not allowed to take their cattle out for grazing. "How can we take them? When it is not easy to scale the wall, how can we take the animals out? Many have died," said Ali, who was beaten up for resisting the wall when it was being built. (Telegraph 8/2/06)

Dalit woman to address UN meet in New York (2)

PATNA: Her frail frame disguises the steel within, which not only saw her tame the abusive menfolk who battered their wives after getting drunk but also earned her a opportunity to address a United Nations meet in faraway New York. For Girija Devi, 59, a Dalit Mushar (a rat-eating caste) woman from the dingy Bhirkhia-Chipulia village, about 30 km from Motihari, the headquarters of Bihar's East Champaran district, it will be a long journey to New York where she will address the 15th session of the UN's division of Advancement Of Woman and department of Economic and Social Affairs later this month--in Bhojpuri. Life has changed for the once demure housewife who suffered humiliation at the hands of the male members of the family, including her husband Singheshwar Manjhi, who used to get drunk and took it out on her Ever since she received the invite from the UN body on January 30 journalists from the print and electronic media continue to stream into the village every day to see the woman whose courage changed the lives of her community and report her success story. Girija, a mother of four, was communicated the invitation by 'Action Aid', an NGO, with which her 'Mushar Vikas Manch', which she formed six years ago, 'works in close cooperation in the fight against alcoholism. Girija, who can barely sign and speaks only in Bhojpuri, lost her nerve when she came to know of the invitation. (The Hindu 13/2/06)

Dalit girl fends off attackers, loses right arm (2)

Lucknow : A gutsy Dalit teenager fought off a gang-rape attempt but lost her right arm when the frustrated men chopped it off as a vengeful measure in an Uttar Pradesh village. The 15-year-old girl, Anju, put up a daring fight against the four men who tried to rape her in the fields near Achalda village in Auraiya district, 250 km from here, Sunday. Frustrated at the daring resistance put up by Anju, the men chopped off her arm and abandoned her, leaving her bleeding profusely in an unconscious state. They allegedly carried away her arm, police said. Significantly, the incident took place in the neighbourhood of Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's hometown, Etawah. When the girl approached the Auraiya police station to register her complaint, the cops refused to register the case. It was only after her father, Lal Singh, approached the district

superintendent of police that a formal report was lodged. Auraiya district superintendent of police Dharamveer said, "When the girl and her father came to me with their complaint, I ordered the concerned police station to register a case against the alleged culprits. We will bring the guilty to book." Anju has named Veeresh Yadav as the key accused who, along with three others, abducted her while she was on way to the local market. "They intercepted me at a lonely spot and dragged me to the nearby fields where they tried to tear off my clothes and rape me. But I continued to resist with my nails and teeth and managed to run some distance. Then Veeresh caught hold of me again and used a sharp-edged weapon to chop off my arm," the girl said in her report. Alleging that Dalits were at the receiving end of atrocities by powerful Yadavs, the girl's father told the police that earlier too Veeresh Yadav and his friends had intimidated Anju and threatened to sexually assault her. The alleged culprits are still at large. (Pioneer 14/2/06)

Dalit denied quota due to conversion (2)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court issued notice to the Centre on a petition challenging the validity of denying the benefits of reservation to the dalits converted to Islam or Christianity, reports our correspondent. A bench comprising Chief Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, Justice C.K. Thakker and Justice R.V. Raveendran issued notice on the petition of a dalit, Dr Mukesh Kumar, who had converted to Islam and become Moham-med Sadiq. He applied for the post of a lecturer under the SC quota but his claim was rejected. (Asian Age 14/2/06)

Govt yet to decide on SC status of Dalit Christians (2)

New Delhi : Providing Scheduled Caste status to Dalit Christians remains on the agenda of the Government and members of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities would be collecting more information on the issue after visiting some States. Additional Solicitor General Gopal Subramanian submitted before a Bench of Chief Justice YK Sabharwal, Justice CK Thakker and Justice PK Balasubramnain that the Commission would be able to complete its task by March, a month before its tenure ends. The apex court posted the matter for further hearing to first week of April, saying by then a more comprehensive picture on the issue would be before the Court. A seven-member Committee, headed by former Chief Justice of India Rangnath Misra, has visited Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Orissa, West Bengal, Kerala, Uttaranchal, Maharashtra, Mizoram and Tripura. The Court is hearing a PIL seeking SC status for Dalit Christians who were SCs before conversion. The PIL, filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL), contends that paragraph three of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 was coming in its way as SCs on conversion to Christianity lose all benefits. (Pioneer (16/2/06)

Dalit teenager raped, brutalised in Hardwar (2)

Dehra Dun : A teenaged Dalit girl was allegedly kidnapped at gunpoint in Hardwar town, brutally beaten and burnt with cigarettes before being raped by a youth for refusing to marry him, the Uttaranchal Women's Commission said on Wednesday. The Commission, which was approached by the victim's father after a village headman allegedly let off the suspect with a penalty of Rs 21,000 and a "shoe-beating", has lodged an FIR, its chairperson Santosh Chauhan said. Hardwar Senior Superintendent of Police Abhinav Kumar said a special police team had been formed to arrest the accused, Ashok, and they had also questioned his father in efforts to track him. The incident occurred on February 9 when the 18-year-old girl was returning to her village Dhanpura on an autorickshaw along with other girls from the switch manufacturing factory, where she worked in a packaging unit, Chauhan said. When the auto was passing through Jwalapur area of the town, Ashok allegedly stopped the vehicle at gunpoint and kidnapped the girl, she said. "He then took her to a hotel where he forcibly plied her with liquor, beat her up, burnt her with cigarettes and repeatedly raped her. The next day, Ashok left the Dalit girl near the factory," Chauhan said. The girl had apparently refused to marry him, she said adding that the tale did not end there. When the villagers came to know of the incident, they asked her father not to report the matter to the police. "The 'gram pradhan' (village headman) asked the accused to pay Rs 21,000 as penalty to the girl and sentenced him to a shoe-beating." (Pioneer 6\16/2/06)

Home Ministry seeks report on alleged rape of casual worker (2)

NEW DELHI: Sexually assaulted, and her right hand cut off to pressure her to withdraw the complaint against the accused, Kamla Bai is a shattered person. A casual agricultural worker in a village in Raisena — the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister's constituency — Kamla Bai and her sister were reportedly gang-raped by five upper caste men in December last year. Two of the accused are government teachers. When the two women lodged a complaint with the police, they were pressured to withdraw it. The accused reportedly dismembered Kamla Bai's right hand on December 7. Her husband Prakash Gond was arrested on false charges, tortured and even made to sign on blank papers while in custody. "Worse, doubts have been raised over our morality," Kamla Bai told reporters here on Wednesday at the office of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) which has taken up the case. The police did arrest the culprits but the cases registered against them were weak, thus ensuring they got bail. While she was in hospital, a delegation of the State Women's Commission visited her only to ask her to withdraw the case for which they promised her money. "How much money can they give me? I want hand for hand," Kamla Bai said. The matter was raised in the winter session of Parliament by AIDWA president and M.P. Brinda Karat who also met Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil in this connection on Tuesday. Mr. Patil has sought a report from the Madhya Pradesh Government within a week. "The issue is not only of injustice being meted out to her but also of her being deprived of livelihood because she cannot work anymore," Ms. Karat said. (The Hindu 17/2/06)

Dalit women tortured in jail (2)

THREE DALIT women from Muktsar district in Punjab have accused the police of torturing them, including administering electric shock to their "private parts", and confining them illegally. Talking to reporters at the B JP headquarters in Chandigarh on Friday, Amarjit Kaur, Virpal Kaur and Rani alleged they were picked up by the police after they rejected the overtures of two drug traffickers to join the flesh trade. Amarjit alleged she and Virpal were detained for five days at the police station. "We were tortured in the presence of the SHO. We were stripped and electric shock administered to our private parts," she said, adding that she suffered a miscarriage due to this. Virpal said their families were silenced with threats. Both claimed they were let off without registration of any complaint or FIR after five days. They alleged the SHO was acting at the behest of the drug traffickers. Rani's claims were similar. The district BJP unit aren't buying the DSP's claim that the women were picked up for trafficking poppy husk and plan to approach the Punjab Human Rights Commission, National Women's Commission and SC/ST Commission. (Hindustan Times 18/2/06)

CPI(M) to fight caste oppression (2)

NEW DELHI : Seeking to renew a link between the fight against globalisation/imperialism and caste and class oppression, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) will launch a struggle and convert it into a movement. "It is not enough to pass a general resolution. We have to make a concrete study on the form of caste and class oppression in different areas, mobilise the people and link different sections of the society. Only then will we be able to generate a movement," general secretary Prakash Karat said at a CPI (M)-organised, all-India convention on the problems of Dalits here on Wednesday. During the Independence struggle, the fight against imperial forces got de-linked from the struggle against class exploitation and the fight against caste oppression. This link could be restored in the current fight against "imperialist-dictated policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation." Studies by the party in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu showed prevalence of the system. In Tamil Nadu, untouchability was still practiced in nearly 40 per cent of the villages. In Andhra Pradesh, the State committee had taken concrete steps to bring people together to fight the system. Criticising both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, Mr. Karat said they failed to attack the real problem. After Independence, the Congress limited the fight against caste oppression by giving concessions and providing reservation. On the other hand, the BJP saw the fight against caste system through its Hindutva prism. The objective of the convention was to make the party and its units all over the country take up social issues and organise campaigns and struggles. (The Hindu 23/2/06)

Dalit woman denied passport (2)

Patna, February 27: A day after Girija Devi, a Dalit woman who was scheduled to attend a UN seminar in the US, failed to get her passport, Opposition parties in the state have threatened to take up the issue in the assembly. Girija Devi, a 59-year-old mother of four from the Musahar community, was scheduled to address a seminar on 'Women Environment and Development Organisation' in Bhojpur. "It was the state government's fault. This was done to stop her from attending the UN convention to present her views," said RJD leader Shayam Rajak. Musahar Vikas Manch leader Amar Kumar Majhi said red-tapism was to blame. "The old Dalit woman was forced to run from one office to another. She would have done Bihar proud by speaking at an international convention," he said. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, "I will take action. Let me collect the facts." (Hindustan Times 28/2/06)

Dalit beaten, loses limbs (2)

Chandigarh, March 2: A collective of 13 Punjab-based farm worker organisations have decided to march on and block access to the state Legislative Assembly on Friday to protest against what they view as the government's reluctance to act against culprits responsible for a brutal attack on a lower caste worker. Bant Singh of village Jhabbar in the southern district of Mansa was mercilessly beaten by some members of the upper caste jat community in January and his injuries had necessitated the amputation of both his arms and one leg. A lower caste farm labourer from village Jhabbar, Singh was abducted and brutally beaten and left to die by seven upper caste or jats in January (2006). The poor worker, who has had both arms and a leg amputated because of his injuries, said he was targeted "for daring to file criminal charges against some jat villagers who had raped his 17-year old daughter four years ago." He said, "They apparently wanted to teach me a lesson for daring to stand up against and accuse jats." Still undergoing treatment in a Chandigarh hospital where doctors are trying to save his only remaining limb, Singh rather courageously took some time off from his hospital bed to join his friends and many supporters from various Punjab-based worker organisations to address a news conference at the local press club. Carried to the venue on a stretcher, Singh told reporters he would not give up what he knows could be a long fight for justice. The president of the action committee of farm workers' organisations, Mr Bhagwant Singh Samaon, said, "It is important to get justice for Bant Singh because the man has come to symbolise the continuing oppression of lower castes across even a prosperous and supposedly forward-looking state like Punjab." Mr Samaon demanded that Singh, who was the lone earning hand in his family of eight children and a wife, must be generously compensated by the state government. He demanded that besides adequate cash compensation, the worker's wife must be given a government job and his children must be provided with individual scholarships. (Asian Age 3/3/06)

Funds for SC/STs not used properly (2)

March 13, 2006: The Delhi government's tall claim of helping make the future bright for students from scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities and OBCs is nothing but farce. As per records available from the department for welfare of the SC\ST\OBC\Minorities, the government has not only entirely failed to use the funds available to achieve its target for the year 2005-2006, but also very less has been spent for the welfare of the students. As a result funds in many schemes have lapsed. For instance, under the scheme Free supply of stationary to SC\ST\OBC\Minorities Students in Schools, the government till January 2006 has spent only Rs 74 lakhs against the revised outlay of Rs 5.33 crores. Though it aimed to help 74,000 students from the group, only 18,040 have been benefited from the scheme. Same is the plight of the Open Merit Scholarship Scheme. Here, none of the students were found intelligent enough to get the scholarship. As a result, Rs 4 lakhs have lapsed under the scheme. Against the target of 8,000 students, at present only 2,740 students Class 6-8, studying in Delhi schools, are availing financial assistance of Rs 150 and Rs 250, respectively. Thus only Rs 11.51 lakhs have been incurred under the scheme upto January 2006 against the available fund of Rs 40 lakhs. Another scheme that is suffering is the scholarship plan of Rs 150 per month to day scholars and Rs 275 per month to hostellers in government-run ITIs. Not a single student has been selected for scholarship by the government which had otherwise kept the target to select 1,900 student for 2005-06. Similarly, no student has been identified to receive tuition fee from the government.

However, hostel facility is being availed by 96 boys studying in Class 12 at free of cost, while only 28 girls use the facility against the target of 74. (The Asianage 13.3.06)

SC panel complains to Kalam (2)

NEW DELHI, MARCH 29: The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has asked President A P J Abdul Kalam to intervene over the UPA government's "reluctance" to act in cases of atrocities against members of the scheduled castes. The NCSC chief, former governor Suraj Bhan, told The Indian Express: "The situation is serious; the government is not cooperating with us to do justice to the scheduled castes." According to Bhan, with 34,000 cases of atrocities against Dalits registered in 2004, and with a conviction rate of just 3 per cent, social unrest in the country can only escalate. "Our experience has been that, in spite of there being very strong laws, the prolonged court cases make possible a growing tendency on the part of the accused to put pressure on victims to withdraw cases," Bhan said. Tensions between the Ministry of Social Welfare and Bhan—an NDA appointee—have been long in the brewing. Bhan is particularly upset with the ministry for shooting down, on financial grounds, his latest proposal on organising national consultations on atrocities against Dalits. It also seems that the ministry had refused to pay for a dinner party Bhan hosted for MPs from the scheduled castes and tribes last year. The exasperated National Commission for Scheduled Castes chief had then managed to foot the bill with help from the commission's sister concern, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. (Indian Express 30/3/06)

Dalit youth's murder: three held (2)

HYDERABAD: Three suspects, including a Telugu Desam corporator, were picked up by the Uppal police on Friday in connection with the kidnap and murder of a Dalit youth here on Friday. The police had let them off earlier due to lack of evidence in the kidnap of a private company worker N. Ashok of Ramanthapur but they turned out to be alleged conspirators when his body was discovered in a decomposed state in the Musi near Bacharam in Hayatnagar on Thursday. "While one of the suspects Maruthi Ramulu confessed to have poisoned Ashok to death, the role of his mother-in-law Shakuntala and Boudhanagar corporator K. Narayana is being ascertained," Saroornagar ACP Jaganmohan Reddy told a press conference here. The case took many twists and turns since Ashok went missing on March 18. Five days later, his wife Shirisha approached the Uppal police suspecting the involvement of her mother Shakuntala, the corporator and Maruthi Ramulu with whom Ashok was reportedly seen last. Based on her complaint, the Uppal police booked a kidnap case. Shirisha maintained that she married Ashok a year ago against her mother's wishes after falling in love with him while he was living next to their house at Warasiguda. She complained to the police that her mother tried in vain to break the marriage with the help of the corporator. She also pointed the needle of suspicion towards Ramulu, who hails from Ashok's native village in Warangal district, and tried to broker a compromise. "We questioned the complainant's mother, the corporator and the driver but had to set them free since no evidence was found against any of them then," the ACP explained. (The Hindu 1/4/06)

UPA ignores rights of SCs, STs (2)

New Delhi : The Congress-led UPA government had claimed that it attached highest priority to developing physical infrastructure for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in particular. Not only this, the UPA's common minimum programme, which helped it win votes, had promised to enact a Reservation Act to codify all reservations for the Scheduled Castes. However, two years down the line, the dalits are still facing the same hardships that they were facing before the CMP was formulated. Nothing has changed for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. As far as the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill is concerned, which aims to provide tribals rights to forest resources linked intimately with their lives, has also not seen the light of the day. The draft bill aims to compensate the "injustice" done to the forest-dwelling tribes that were denied their traditional rights to forest lands and resources. However, it has failed to impress the targeted beneficiaries. Besides, the Centre has failed to constitute a separate regulatory authority for effective regulation of the reservation policy. The parliamentary committee on welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also recommended constitution of a separate regulatory authority. According to observers, the basic objective of the UPA government

is to provide maximum benefits for the welfare of SCs and STs as guaranteed by the Constitution and, while providing benefits to them, intention of the implementing authority should be clear and unbiased. Article 46 (Directive Principles of the State Policy) of the Constitution provides that educational and economic interests of SCs and STs be safeguarded. Experts also believe that besides implementing strictly the existing laws, the government should not hesitate to evolve new laws, rules or ways to give maximum benefits to people belonging to SCs and STs. Necessary amendments may be made in the Constitution to enable passage of a Reservation Act and the same should be placed in the 9th Schedule of the Constitution. But the UPA government has been doing anything in this regard. (Asian Age 3/4/06)

Rabri & Co. SCuttled them economically (2)

New Delhi The scheduled Castes in Bihar account for 15 per cent of the total population, but the State during Lalu-Rabri rule did not show any keenness in getting funds from the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the economic uplift of SCs. Ministry officials have now pinned hope on the new regime. Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry releases over Rs 400 crore to several States annually under Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Special Component Plan (SCP) for the economic uplift of SCs. The officials have now pinned the hope on the new dispensation in the State vis-à-vis the utilisation of SCs funds. "For the past many years, Bihar has not displayed any keenness in getting the funds under SCA to SCP scheme. In 2003-04, Bihar was released over Rs 9 crore out of which the State claimed to have utilised about Rs 5 crore. Since the State Government did not submit the utilisation details, no funds were released during 2004-05," a Ministry official said. "We, however, kept sending reminders to the State Government in this regard in vain. As a result, no funds were released during 2005-06 too. It is a big loss to the State's SC population. During the new financial year beginning April 2006, funds will be released provided the State Government gives us the utilisation details of earlier funds released," the official further said. Apart from Bihar, other States not showing seriousness in getting funds under SCA to SCP scheme are Jharkhand, Kerala, and Goa. The States making most of the funds include Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Karnataka. Over Rs 150 crore were released to these States during the current financial year. (Pioneer 3/4/06)

Lucknow dalit rally on April 7 (2)

Lucknow, April 4: The two-month-long Dalit Mukti-Yatra, launched by the Indian Justice Party, will culminate in a rally in Lucknow on April 7. The Indian Justice Party, led by Dr Udit Raj, aims at providing a political alternative to dalits in the state by edging out the Bahujan Samaj Party. Dr Udit Raj, who earlier led the All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations, has been fighting for protection of the rights of dalits. He has raised his voice against anti-reservation orders, organised great Bauddh Diksha Programme to eradicate the caste system, demanded reservation in private sector and raised his voice for reservation in the US business in India and filling up the backlog vacancies. Despite his efforts, he realised that social organisations have their own limitations and are not powerful enough to fight the adverse impact of privatization and globalization. He launched the Indian Justice Party with these objectives in mind. "Dr Ambedkar also said that political party is the master key to realise the objectives. Dalits in the UP are being exploited by certain dalit leaders in the name of Dr. Ambedkar's mission. The benefit of this dalit movement is confined to the leadership. Lakhs of Bahujan Samaj workers and leaders have remained exploited while their leaders are now promoting the same values through Brahmin Sammelans, which are responsible for discrimination and caste system," says Dr Udit Raj. Through the Dalit Mukti-Yatra, Dr Udit Raj has raised the issue of deprivation and exploitation of dalits at the hands of their own leaders. (Asian Age 5/4/06)

Set up protection cells: Dalit rights fora (2)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Centre, all States and Union Territories, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for SC & ST on a petition seeking effective measures to prevent atrocities on Dalits. A Bench consisting of Justices Ruma Pal, Dalveer Bhandari and Markandey Katju issued the notice on Monday on the plea by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, Sakshi--Human Rights Watch and the Centre for Dalit

Rights. The petitioners wanted a direction issued to the respondents to appoint nodal officers and set up protection cells, as envisaged under the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. They said the victims were not allowed to make complaints and first information reports were rarely registered. Even when they were registered, there was no reference to proper sections of the Act. The victims were invariably forced to compromise on pain of social/economic boycott. Separate special courts should be set up in each district within six months as provided under the Act. All cases of atrocities on the Dalits and tribals must be regularly monitored by judicial officers. Such cases should receive top priority and the victims should get speedy justice. The petitioners also sought a direction to trial courts to send a report every six months to the High Court concerned. (The Hindu 12/4/06)

NDA scraps panel on Ranvir Sena (2)

Patna, April 10: The NDA government in Bihar has scrapped the Justice Amir Das Commission notified to probe the nexus between politicians and Ranvir Sena, an outlawed militia of upper caste landlords responsible for the killing of several hundred dalits in the state. Senior NDA leaders, including deputy chief minister Sushilkumar Modi and road construction minister Nandkishore Yadav, were expected to face the heat generated out of commission's report. The request for an extension by the commission, notified after the infamous Lakshmanpur Bathe massacre on December 1, 1997, wherein 59 dalits were killed, was turned down by the Nitish Kumar government as it "realised" of late that not only the commission failed to come out with its final report even after eight years but, also, it was "irrelevant" today. Interestingly, it is known, the commission was compiling records and evidences it collected and was expected to come out with the final report in just a few months. While probing the nexus between politicians and militants, the commission had served notices on 38 politicians, including BJP leaders Murli Manohar Joshi, C.P. Thakur and Kailashpati Mishra. RJD leaders Kanti Singh Akhilesh Prasad Singh (now ministers in the Union government), Arun Kumar and Shivanand Tiwary, LJP's Ram Jatan Sinha (previously in the Congress) had also deposed before the commission. Statements of 400 witnesses had also been recorded while the Sena's chief, Brahmsewar Singh, presently behind bars in Beur Jail, was to be questioned shortly. If people associated with the probe are to be believed, the commission required only three to five months extension to prepare the final report. (Asian Age 12/4/06)

In UP, dalits reconvert to Hinduism (2)

Lucknow, April 10: More than 295 dalits belonging to 57 families in Jaunpur district of Uttar Pradesh have reconverted to Hinduism. These persons had converted to Christianity last year and their conversion had kicked up a major controversy with a section of the people claiming that they were being forced to convert. In an elaborate ceremony on Sunday, these families were initiated back into the Hindu religion in the presence of representatives from the Hindu Jagran Manch and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The reconversion ceremony took place in Chandvak Khas village under Chandvak police station village where 108 persons belonging to 22 families had converted to Christianity last year. Another ceremony took place in Bagerwa gram panchayat where 187 persons reverted back to the Hindu fold. Local RSS functionary Murlipal told this newspaper on Monday that some local Christian missionaries had lured the dalits, and some tribals, into Christianity by promising them a better life and education for their children. "We are very happy that they are returning to their parent religion and we will make sure that they do not get misled again," the RSS functionary said. "When these people converted to Christianity last year, we did not raise any objections because we knew it would lead to a major controversy. However, a year later, these people have seen through the game and came to us with as plea that they wanted to revert to being Hindus. We asked them to go back and give it another thought but they all came back to us and so we finally arranged for their return to the Hindutva fold," he said. Kunwar Nagina, a local tribal who had led others when he converted to Christianity last year, told this newspaper that when they found that there was no difference between the two religions, they decided to revert back to Hinduism. (Asian Age 12/4/06)

Funds for SCs, STs remain unused (2)

New Delhi, April 13: The dismal performance of the various welfare schemes of the Delhi government, aimed at encouraging students belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities and Other Backward Castes (OBC), may provide food for thought to many. A case in point are the Delhi welfare department records, which indicate that various incentives promised to dalit and backward community students at the school level (Class 6 to Class 12) in the form of providing free stationary and scholarship, and in vocational institutions by offering tuition fee and scholarship, have failed to deliver desired results. Not only do targets for these schemes remain grossly unachieved, major portions of funds have also lapsed for the year 2005-2006. With nil achievements, some schemes have remained an eyewash. For instance, under the scheme "Free supply of stationary to SC\ST\OBC\minority students in schools" the government till January 2006 has spent only Rs 74 lakhs against the revised outlay of Rs 5.33 crores. Though it aimed to help 74,000 students from the segment, only 25 per cent (18,040) could avail these benefits. Not a single student has been selected under the scheme "vocational and technical scholarship" in the various industrial training institutes run by the government against the ambitious target of 1,900 students, resulting in a lapse of Rs 20 lakhs. Against the target of 8,000 students, only 2,740 students from Class 6 to Class 8 are availing financial assistance of Rs 150 and Rs 250 respectively. Thus, the government have spend Rs 11.51 lakhs against the available fund of Rs 40 lakhs. The financial income is not considered a criteria in case of the SC/ST students, while the income should not exceed Rs 48,000 in case of OBC and minorities students. Also, if the government data are to be believed one gets the impression that the students from the beneficiary segment are not "intelligent" enough to be selected for the scholarship offered at various educational level. (Asian Age 14/4/06)

States told to identify areas prone to atrocities (2)

New Delhi, April 15: 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. Besides, 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. 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. "Police and public order are state subjects under the Constitution and the primary responsibility of detection, registration, investigation and prosecution as well as prevention of crime vests with the state governments," said the official. (Asian Age 16/4/06)

Dalit lynched while gathering grain (2)

GAYA: Bindu Devi (25), a Dalit, paid with her life on Sunday for gathering the remains of wheat in a field after harvest. She was lynched allegedly by upper caste members of Dihree Baishar village in Rohtas district of south Bihar. An FIR has been lodged but no arrests have been made so far. Reports said Bindu Devi, of the musahar caste, was gathering the grains when a few youths of the village shouted at her and beat her up with lathis. She died immediately. Rohtas DIG UK Singh said the FIR was against four named and three unknown people. Dalits of the village have blocked roads, demanding immediate arrests. (Indian Express 25/4/06)

Ban on book by Rajasthan an anti-Dalit act: CPI(M) (2)

JAIPUR: The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has described the Rajasthan Government's decision to proscribe the book, "Ve Sharam Se Hindu Kahate Hai Kyon?" (Why are they ashamed of being called Hindus?) as an "anti-Dalit" act. Coming in the wake of a similar action against another book, "Haqeeqat", the ban on the book, which expressed Dalit anguish against oppression of caste Hindus, was a fascist move to suppress the voices of the depressed and the

downtrodden, the party said. The State Secretariat of CPI (M) Rajasthan in a statement here said the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government had been taking an adversarial stand against the Dalits and minorities ever since it came to power two-and-a-half years ago. The ban on "Haqeeqat", authored by M.G. Mathew, was followed by a planned attack by the workers of the BJP, Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on Christian institutions with tacit support of the State Government, it said. The attacks followed a State crackdown on the Kota-based Emmanuel Mission institutions and arrests of functionaries of the Mission. "Some of them, arrested in February last, are still in jail," the party pointed out. The whole anti-Christian campaign culminated in an oppressive legislation, the Rajasthan Freedom of Religion Bill, passed by the State Assembly early this month, it said. "Now the Government machinery has turned against the Dalits by applying Sections 153-A and 295-A against Sohanlal Singaria, the author of the book, 'Ve Sharam Se Hindu Kahate Hai Kyon?' This is reflective of the feudal attitude of the Government," the party said. "If the same parameters are applied, Satyarth Prakash, authored by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Kabir Vani, which too had spoken against the superstitions and outdated practices of Hindu religion, also would face the same fate in Rajasthan," it said. (The Hindu 30/4/06)

SC/ST number in Govt services low, indicates data (2)

New Delhi : Despite reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) in the academic institutions for decades, their representation in Group A and B of Central Government services is far off from 22.5 per cent. As per the latest national data compiled by Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, SCs account for only 11.93 per cent in Group A services against the quota of 15 per cent, while STs' percentage stands at 4.18. Though there is a two per cent improvement over 9.09 per cent in the case of SC and 2.53 per cent in ST since 1991, Ministry officials feel that a lot needs to be done, so they can carve a niche for themselves in the service sector on their own. "Reservation for them in such services should have been much higher as the children of beneficiaries of quotas in the Government services have access to better education compared to their parents," a Ministry official said. SC/ ST students have reservation upto 22.5 per cent in all academic institutions including Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and all other central universities. The fact that hardly any percentage of SC/ST candidates apply for jobs under the general category is "a reflection on the effectiveness of all affirmative measures being taken at the grassroots level." What gives the Ministry officials a sense of satisfaction is the fact that the percentage of SCs in Group B category stands at 14.32 per cent against 11.82 per cent in 1991. The total number of Group B employees has substantially gone up in the last decade, from 1,02,532 in 1991, the latest figure stands at 1,81,905. Among Group C Central Government employees, SCs account for 16.29 per cent. There is a slight improvement in the figure compared to 15.65 per cent in 1991. Even the percentage of STs in Group C services is 6.54, a marked improvement over 4.98 per cent in 1991. Their share in Group D services is only 6.46 per cent. STs account for only 4.18 and 4.32 per cent in Group A and B government services. (Pioneer 16/5/06)

17 killed in Bihar election violence (2)

PATNA: Nine persons, mostly Dalits, were massacred in the home district of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar among a total of 17 killed in separate incidents of violence during the second phase of panchayat elections in the State on Thursday. The turnout was put at 68 per cent in 57 blocks of 37 districts where polling was held. The nine, most of whom belonged to the extremely backward Kahar caste, were gunned down by a gang while retreating after losing one of its key member in a clash outside a polling booth. The clash outside the polling booth took place at Bhadarpur village in Sheikhpura district allegedly between the supporters of two candidates belonging to the same Bhumihar caste, Tantan Singh and Ramanuj Singh. Ramanuj Singh lost one of his sharp shooters in the battle to capture the booth. While retreating, the Ramanuj Singh's allegedly gang attacked a group of people at Goachak village in Nalanda district just about 1.5 km from Bhadarpur village in the neighbouring

district. Of the nine killed, eight were Kahars and the ninth a Yadav. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar denied gang rivalry behind the massacre stressing that the killers fired indiscriminately on their way back after losing one of their gang members. He condemned the killing and called for peace. Mr. Kumar would be visiting the spot on Friday. Earlier, State Home Secretary Afzal Amanullah said he suspected involvement of the Akhilesh Singh gang behind the carnage. The Police Headquarters was a confused house. IG Operations Anil Sinha sought to conceal facts and mislead the Press. He corrected himself at the directive of the Chief Minister and admitted that it was a poll-related incident and the fallout of the clash outside a polling booth in which one person was killed. Earlier Mr. Sinha maintained that there was no poll in Bhadarpur today and refused to divulge whether the death of one person was the outcome of a clash. (The Hindu 19/5/06)

Nine killed in new caste violence in Bihar (2)

Patna, May 21: In a fresh incident of caste violence at least nine people were reportedly killed in Manipur village of Shiekhpora district in Bihar on late Saturday night, just two days after an equal number of persons were shot dead in Gowadih village of Nalanda district on May 18. This time the victims were identified as the supporters of Mr Akhilesh Singh, an upper caste Bhumiar leader of Bihar, while assailants were claimed to be the men of Mr Ashok Mahto, a leader of Kurmis. On May 18, alleged supporters of Mr Akhilesh Singha had killed nine persons in Nalanda who were claimed to be the followers of Mr Ashok Mahto. Akshilesh is absconding after having escaped from jail last year. The police headquarters in Patna has confirmed deaths of only six persons and said senior police officers have rushed to the spot to avoid any further killings. There is no permanent SP posted in Shiekhpora district. The report that police headquarters received from the district claims a sophisticated weapon-wielding members of the Ashok Mahato gang swooped on the village at around 11 pm and gunned down six persons. "It was the result of a rivalry between Ashok Mahto gang and Akhilesh Singh gang. We suspect it was the former this time," a police headquarters spokesman told reporters in Patna. Meanwhile, fear and tension has gripped Bihar villages after the killing of eighteen people in two days. Eyewitnesses to the incident have told the police, the attackers surrounded three houses in Manipur village and opened fired on the families sleeping inside. "One after another massacre takes place here. There is a total lack of administration; there is no law and order," said a villager. The massacre comes ahead of the third phase of panchayat elections to be held on May 21 in the state. Also, the massacre happened just a day after Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar ordered a probe into the killing of nine people belonging to backward castes by alleged Akhilesh Singh men. (Asian Age 22/5/06)

In spite of quota, SC/STs not getting their due (2)

New Delhi : While the OBC leaders clamour for their share in quota pie, the fact remains that Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes are the ones who deserve affirmative action. Facts speak for themselves. Notwithstanding reservation for STs in academic institutions coupled with several supportive schemes, the tribal-dominated states like Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have produced just a single IAS officer in the past six years. It is even worse in the case of engineering services where none of the tribal aspirants from these states could manage to get through, while in Combined Medical Services Examination, only one ST candidate could get a job in a year. "If education to the tribal children at the primary and secondary level is not effectively taken care, it would certainly get tougher for them. We are working on a series of measures to ensure they have access to quality education at primary level," said a Tribal Ministry official. The figures available with the Department of Personnel and Training (DOPT) paint a gloomy picture. Not only civil services, tribals have not been given jobs in other senior government services. "These figures warrant more effective measures in terms of making quality education available to them at primary and higher secondary level," the official added. Tribal candidates are entitled for 7.5 per cent job reservation in Civil Services and other Grade I jobs provided by the Government of India but the candidates from these states have not benefited from this. Records show that a particular tribe from Rajasthan is reaping the benefit of this reservation at the expense of other tribals. According to Census 2001, Scheduled Tribes (STs),

form 31.8 per cent of the total population of Chhattisgarh, 20.3 per cent in Madhya Pradesh and 26.3 per cent in Jharkhand. The number of tribals from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh in civil services has been quite abysmal during the last five years. (Pioneer 22/5/06)

Now, 25% Plan funds sought for SCs & STs ((2))

New Delhi, May 22: With the reservation issue confounding the UPA government from all sides, a group of parliamentarians added fresh fuel to the fire today, as they asked Planning Commission Deputy Chairperson Montek Singh Ahluwalia to earmark 25 per cent of Plan funds for SCs and STs in the country. The MPs also wanted 'schools of excellence' that would have no entrance tests for SC/ST students and 70 per cent of the seats reserved for them. Over 40 MPs, part of the parliamentary forum of SC/ST, met Ahluwalia today to seek his assurance that their community gets ample opportunity to move up the socio-economic ladder. They argued that the 25 per cent of the Plan funds would be in proportion to the population of SCs and STs. The MPs asked this to be implemented before the beginning of the 11th Plan. Discussing the guidelines for the formulation and implementation of a Scheduled Caste Special Plan (SCP) and Tribal Special Plan (TSP) at the Centre, state and district levels, the MPs also sought a separate documentation for these Plan funds. The Plan panel has already issued guidelines for this allocation and asked states to get back with their requirements. All but three states have approved the guidelines. The panel is in dialogue with the three states yet to approve the guidelines (Indian Express 23/5/06)

Dalit groom rides horse, is stoned (2)

Jaipur, May 26: The dalits of Amarpura village in south Rajasthan have been facing a social boycott because one dalit groom "dared" to ride a horse in his marriage procession. "When Banshi Meghwal broke the tradition and rode a horse on May 17, the upper caste Hindus stoned the marriage procession and beat up our community members," Nand Lal, the groom's uncle, told this correspondent over the telephone. "They attacked our wedding procession even though a police party was present," he added. The police has arrested eight villagers on charges of attacking a police party. "We are trying to arrest a dozen persons named by the dalits. They have been absconding since the incident was reported," said Himanshu Singh, the SHO of Kheroda police station under Udaipur district. "The situation is under control," he said. Amarpura, 50 km from Udaipur, is dominated by the "upper castes" and has a small dalit presence. In various part of Rajasthan, dalits are not allowed to ride a horse during their wedding procession. "Every man wants to ride a horse in his marriage procession, what was our crime," asked Nand Lal. "Upper caste" Hindus feel riding a horse is their privilege. According to the dalits, the incident occurred when groom Banshi was leading his marriage party on horseback to a local temple and "upper caste" Hindus started throwing stones. Policemen were present as the dalits had given prior information about the procession. "The increasing prosperity and education of dalits has annoyed the upper caste Hindus," said Mohan Meghwal of Amarpura. The "upper caste" Hindus said there was no caste discrimination. But the dalits said even shopkeepers are not ready to sell them provisions and water-tanker owners refuse to supply them water. A group of Arya Samaj activists had visited the village to perform a yagna with the dalits and had condemned the incident. "Among the Hindus, only the Arya Samaj supports us, no VHP leaders come to the village," said Nand Lal. The VHP has a strong presence in Udaipur. The only store in the village that sells provisions to dalits is Narayan Jat's shop. (Asian Age 27/5/06]

Dalit grooms on horses are stoned (2)

Jaipur, May 30: In Rajasthan, if a dalit bridegroom rides a horse in his marriage procession, he faces stiff resistance from "upper caste" Hindus. The state has witnessed over a dozen incidents of dalit grooms' wedding processions being stoned by the "upper caste". Mangilal Nayak of Samsia village, under Kotri police station in Bhilwara district, was beaten up by "upper caste" Hindus when his grandson rode a horse in his marriage procession. Nayak has been admitted to Bhilwara's MGH Hospital with injuries. According to his FIR, "upper caste" Hindus attacked on him on May 19. But Kotri police station house officer Bhanwar Singh told this correspondent that it had no connection to the dalit issue. "The marriage took place a month ago and it was an old dispute that ended in the beating of Mangilal. We have arrested two persons in this regard," he said. On April 28, a dalit bridegroom was unseated from his horse in Pakhand village, in

Rajsamand district, and "upper caste" people beat up the members of the wedding procession. In another incident, in Udaipur district, dalit groom Banshi and his wedding procession were stoned by "upper caste" Hindus. The dalits have named 24 people in the FIR and the police has arrested over a dozen of them. On May 14, a dalit, Shyoji Khateek of Akoda village in Bundi district, was busy with preparations for his two daughters' weddings. When the bridegrooms rode horses and led the procession, the "upper caste" Hindus attacked the marriage party and unseated the grooms. The case has been reported to the Hindoli police station. In many cases, dalit grooms' wedding processions were allowed only when the police made security arrangements. Even in Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje's Jhalawar district, one dalit groom could freely lead his procession only when the police provided protection. According to National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, Mangilal Raiger of Chaker village, in Jhalawar district, was able to perform his daughter's marriage last month only in the presence of the police. (The Hindu 31/5/06)

Bengal Minister wants chairs reserved for SC/ST officials (2)

Kolkata : The reservation imbroglio seems to have impinged on Bengal in a different way. As though the ongoing countrywide crisis was not enough, a Minister from the State has raked up a parallel controversy of sorts by demanding reserved seats for the officials belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories at the all-important Writers' Buildings. Tribal Affairs Minister Deblina Hembram has suddenly started feeling for the SC/ST employees working at the Writers' Buildings. According to sources in the Public Works Department, Hembram has shot off a letter to the PWD Minister, responsible for allotting offices to the Government employees, Kshiti Goswami to make separate sitting arrangements for the those who belong to the given category as they "do not feel confident in entering the VIP enclosure" at the State secretariat. Like most secretariats, the Writers' Buildings has separate sitting arrangements for the general employees and the VIPs who are accommodated in the "protected area". Like the other employees, the SC/ST officials who hail from the remote villages and lack the kind of exposure like their colleagues who live in Kolkata or other urban areas naturally find it difficult in shuttling between the "protected area" and the general area, the Minister has argued. She wants the PWD Minister to make separate sitting arrangement for the SC/ST employees inside the VIP enclosure "as this will make them feel free at their work place and they will not have to go in and out of the 'protected place'", sources at the PWD said quoting the Minister's letter. On whether the PWD Minister would be able to oblige as he is already dumped with similar requests demanding better sitting arrangements, the top department officials said, Goswami has for the time being obliged by forwarding the letter to the respective secretary with a note. (Pioneer 1/6/06)

Upper castes dominate national media, says survey in Delhi (2)

New Delhi: In the first-ever statistical analysis of its kind, a survey of the social profile of more than 300 senior journalists in 37 Hindi and English newspapers and television channels in the capital has found that "Hindu upper caste men" — who form eight per cent of the country's population — hold 71 per cent of the top jobs in the national media. Women, non-upper castes, and Muslims are grossly under-represented in relation to their share in the population. The survey notes that Dalits and Adivasis "are conspicuous by their absence among the decision-makers. Not even one of the 315 key decision-makers belonged to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes." The survey was designed and executed by Anil Chamaria, freelance journalist, Jitendra Kumar from the Media Study Group and Yogendra Yadav, senior fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). If men and women are taken together, the share of upper caste Hindus or 'dwijas' in the upper echelons of the media is 85 per cent. These castes account for 16 per cent of the national population. Brahmins alone, the survey found, hold 49 per cent of the top jobs in national journalism. If non-'dwija' forward castes like Marathas, Patels, Jats and Reddys are added, the total forward caste share stands at 88 per cent. In contrast, OBCs, who are estimated to constitute around 40 per cent of the population, account for an "abysmally low" four per cent of top media jobs. In the English print media, OBCs account for just one per cent of top jobs and in the Hindi print media eight per cent. Muslims too, the survey noted, are "severely under-represented in the national media": they account for only three per cent among the key

decision makers in the national media, compared with 13.4 per cent in the country's population. Muslims do better in the Hindi electronic media, forming six per cent of key decision-makers. In the English electronic media, the survey found there were no Muslims at the senior-most levels in Delhi. Christians, however, are proportionately represented in the media (mainly in the English media). Their share is about four per cent compared with their population share of 2.3 per cent. Doubly disadvantaged sections of the population, such as women Other Backward Classes or backward caste Muslims and Christians, are nearly absent among the key decision-makers. The survey, for example, found that there was not a single OBC woman among the 315 journalists enumerated. (The Hindu 5/6/06)

Death in police station, probe sought (2)

JAIPUR: The National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights has demanded a CBI enquiry into the death of a Dalit woman in Chomu police station of Jaipur district on Thursday. The woman, Kamla, who was brought to the police station to meet her son who is in police custody on a charge of murder, had died of mental shock and agony due to police misbehaviour, an enquiry report by NCDHR and Centre for Dalit Rights said. The main Opposition in the State, the Congress party has made a similar demand. Pradesh Congress Committee president B.D.Kalla in a statement on Friday demanded a judicial enquiry into the case. The party has alleged that the death had taken place at the police station following the ill treatment of the victim. The Chomu police last week had arrested Kamla's son Sumit on a charge of murdering a history sheeter Sikandar Khan. Kamla, a schoolteacher was taken to the police station on Thursday last by five constables, including two women constables to meet her son in the lock up. The police version is that the woman, apparently depressed over the act of her son had consumed poison at home before leaving for the police station. She gave a dying declaration to this effect but her family members had challenge this. The NCDHR team , which visited the spot, found the role of the police and administration "doubtful". (The Hindu 5/6/06)

Ministry lacks information on OBCs (2)

New Delhi, June 4: The departmentally related Standing Committee on social justice and empowerment is "constrained" to find that the ministry has no data available about the total population of backward classes and also the number of OBC persons living below double the poverty line. In the absence of this vital data the ministry could not fix targets under its various welfare schemes for OBCs. In its report (on National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation) presented to the two Houses of Parliament in the last month, it "surprised" that the fund allocation is based on the assumption that all states receive funds proportionate to their OBC population. But it is not satisfied with the ministry's reply that the office of the registrar-general of India has turned down its request to conduct census of people who fall under the OBCs category. "The absence of an accurate data of backward classes, the basic objective of the corporation i.e. economic development of poor sections of backward classes, would not be achieved. Therefore, the ministry should vigorously pursue with the registrar-general of India to conduct a survey of OBCs and the persons living below double the poverty line in this category," it recommended. The committee, headed by Ms Sumitra Mahajan, further pointed out that only Haryana, Rajasthan, Tripura, Chandigarh and Dadar and Nagar Haveli have conducted survey of OBC's living the poverty line on the ministry's request while Gujarat, Orissa and Delhi governments have shown their inability to carry out survey, it says. The committee also surprised to note that Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have not even notified the backward classes so far and are not obtaining loan assistance at all. (Asian Age 5/6/06)

Dividing SCs' share is quota concern in Andhra (2)

New Delhi, June 6: The Union Government will soon appoint a commission on sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh, for purposes of reservations. A panel of three names was with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who would select the head of the commission, Government sources said. Sub-categorisation of Dalits is a controversial political issue in Andhra Pradesh, and in the Congress party particularly. During his recent visit to Delhi, Chief Minister Rajshekhhar Reddy urged Singh to expedite the matter, whereas some Congress MPs — such as

Harsh Kumar and J D Seelam — opposed the move in their letters to the Prime Minister. The Andhra Government introduced four categories within the SCs by a law in 2000 and split the reservation of 15 per cent among them. 'Malas,' a group with 25 castes, was allotted six per cent; 'Madigas', a group of 18 castes, got six per cent; and two smaller groups 'Rellis' and 'Adi Andhra' got one per cent each. The reason given was that the Malas were getting much more than their proportionate share in reservation benefits. The sub-categorisation was expected to trickle down benefits of reservation to lower groups within the SCs. After four years, the AP Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Act was struck down by the Supreme Court in November 2004. "All castes included in the presidential list for a state are deemed to be SCs, which means they form a class by themselves. This legislation, apart from being beyond the legislative competence of the state, is also violative of Article 14 of the Constitution," the Supreme Court stated. Soon after, the AP Legislative Assembly passed a resolution recommending the Centre to take up the matter in Parliament. "It is a difficult situation. Once it is done in a particular state, other states like Karnataka, Haryana and Punjab, where this problem has cropped up already may insist on similar provision," says Seelam, AICC secretary. The commission in pipeline will investigate if some groups among SCs have received disproportionate benefits before further action is taken on the issue. (Indian Express 7/6/06)

Quota II: Punjab OKs free power for SCs, poor or rich it doesn't matter (2)

NEW DELHI, JUNE 7: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's appeal to political parties not to announce free power schemes seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Last week, Punjab quietly changed its policy to provide free power to mainly poor Scheduled Caste (SC) consumers and cleared a proposal which allows all SC consumers, irrespective of their economic condition, access to 200 units of free power. Assembly elections are due in Punjab early next year. Advertisement Punjab government sources said that the state had an estimated 39.8 lakh domestic consumers and those expected to benefit from this new scheme, once the state regulatory commission gives its nod, would be in the region of 7-10 lakh consumers. Unhappy with this decision of the state, the Centre is expected to ask the Amarinder Singh government to explain this latest move as the "Prime Minister is against free power" policy. Power Ministry sources said that if Punjab is unable to justify the decision which is retrograde to the reforms process, the Ministry would stop the incentive-linked funding given to states under the accelerated power development reform programme and those given for rural electrification. When The Indian Express reached Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh for comment, he said he did not think the decision was a populist move. He said the state would provide all budgetary support to the power sector on account of this decision. According to the CM, people were not benefiting from the earlier policy and, therefore, "we are being fair to the people and have removed the restriction of 500 watts". He said many SC consumers in the state, on account of rising affluence, had loads above 500 watts. This decision, he said, was based on the feedback received from certain sections complaining that they felt "left out" under the previous policy. The subsidy burden on the state exchequer as result of this decision would more than double and is expected to be at least Rs 300 crore. This is over and above the burden that the state already faces on account of free power to agriculture which, according to the Chief Minister, is around Rs 1200 crore—thereby taking the total subsidy burden on account of free power to Rs 1500 crore. (Indian Express 8/6/06)

Dalit is killed for attending a kirtan (2)

Lucknow, June 14: A dalit youth was brutally murdered by a group of backward caste persons for having dared to attend a "kirtan" in Budha Barthana village in Ferozabad district on Tuesday night. According to reports reaching here, Mukesh, a Dalit youth was attending a 'Bhagwad kirtan' that had been organised on the outskirts of the village on Tuesday. As the religious fervour touched a crescendo, Mukesh quietly snuggled up to the podium and began playing a 'Chimta' (a rustic rhythmic instrument used in religious singing). A group of about ten men — all belonging to Lodh Rajput community— suddenly got up and shouted at Mukesh. "How can you even dare to sit in a religious function like this?" they screamed and dragged the youth out of the pandal. "They kept kicking him in the chest and beat him up ruthlessly. We kept pleading for mercy but they

would not listen to us. Then they put him in a jeep and took him away. When he died on the way, they threw his body on the highway," said Jogendra. (Asian Age 15/6/06)

Congress expresses concern over attacks on Dalits in Rajasthan (2)

JAIPUR: The All-India Congress Committee has expressed concern over the increasing incidence of attacks on Dalits in Rajasthan. AICC's Scheduled Caste Cell terms Rajasthan as the "worst State" in the whole of North India when it comes to Dalit safety and security. Former Union Minister and chairman of All-India SC Cell Yogendra Makwana, who was here in connection with the recent attacks on Dalit marriage processions and a case of custodial death of a Dalit woman, said the Scheduled Castes were in better shape in otherwise much maligned Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. "It is a grim situation here for the SCs," he said talking to media persons prior to addressing a Dalit rally. He submitted a memorandum to Rajasthan Governor Pratibha Patil at Raj Bhavan here later. Ms. Patil is presently in Mount Abu, Raj Bhavan's summer camp. Mr. Makwana said during a span of 26 days (from May 7 to June 1 this year) there had been six cases involving Dalits in Rajasthan and in most of them the police and the local administration had taken a partisan stand. The latest was the case of Kamla Chouhan, a 55-year-old school teacher who died after being summoned to the police station in Chomu on June 1. Alleging police torture, Mr. Makwana said the police had not registered a complaint from her son so far. "In her so-called confession made in the presence of the Sub Divisional Magistrate, Chomu, saying that she had consumed poison prior to coming to the police station, her thumb impression was taken. Why would a teacher give her thumb impression?" Mr. Makwana wondered. He listed four instances including one in Jhalawar, represented in the Lok Sabha in the past by Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, in which Dalit marriage processions were attacked and the bridegrooms forcibly made to step down from the horseback. In the case of Mangi-lal Raiger's daughter Giriraj Bai in Chulet village in Khanpur tehsil of Jhalawar — in which some miscreants hurled stones at the "nikasi" (return procession) — the local police station did not register a complaint, he charged. (The Hindu 15/6/06)

Doctor robs dalit woman of kidney (2)

Lucknow, June 20: In a bizarre incident, a dalit woman has been robbed of her kidney by an Uttaranchal-based doctor. The woman has been waging a lone battle to get a case registered against the doctor but the police has, so far, refused to lodge her complaint. The victim has now written to the President of India and the National Human Rights Commission for justice and is also preparing to go to court. According to Phool Singh, a resident of Akbarpur Patti village in Jyotiba Phule Nagar, his wife Maya, 45, had been diagnosed as having stones in the uterus in December 2003. "We are poor and could not afford to bear the expenses of the operation. A relative told us about one Dr Arun Richharia at Rudrapur in Uttaranchal, who does not charge fees from poor people. I took my wife to Dr Richharia's clinic, and she was operated upon by the doctor on December 20, 2003. We returned home after the operation, but after some time my wife again complained of pain. I took her back to the doctor for a checkup but he said that it was a minor post-operative problem that would vanish after a few months," says Phool Singh. The couple returned to their village, but Maya continued to suffer from intermittent pangs of pain for almost two years after the operation. Finally, in January this year, the couple went to consult another doctor in the district, who recommended an ultrasound test. "When we got the ultrasound test done, we were shocked to find that Maya's left kidney was missing. The following day we went to Dr Richharia's clinic and informed the receptionist of our problem. To our dismay, the doctor refused to meet us and the hospital staff physically assaulted us for 'attempting to malign the reputation of the doctor'," says Phool Singh. The couple went to the local police station, but the police refused to register their complaint. "The police was obviously under the influence of the doctor, and though we showed them all the relevant papers related to the operation, they just refused to entertain our complaint," says Phool Singh. (Asian Age 21/6/06)

Upper castes ill-treated us: Dalits (2)

Jaipur, June 20: Dalits in Cidiyas village, in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district, say they were ill-treated when they worked as labourers engaged in famine relief. "The upper caste Hindus treated us as untouchables when they served drinking water," said Prema Meghwal. The village falls under the

constituency of Rajasthan rural development minister Kalulal Gujar and has a small dalit population. The upper caste Hindus employed three upper caste women — Madhu, Chandi and Pushpa Suthar — to serve water to the dalits at the relief work site, Badri Meghwal told this correspondent. Last week, they decided to clean up the temple to Devra, a local deity, and asked the relief workers to volunteer. "They employed dalit women to clean the premises. When the work was finished, they collected Rs 5 from each worker, barring dalits, saying their contribution would not be accepted by the deity," claimed Bhanwar Meghwanshi, a dalit activist in Cidiyas. "It is shocking for us as the deity accepted our voluntary work, but not offerings," said Mr Meghwanshi, well known among Rajasthan's dalits as he publishes a magazine titled Diamond India from his village Cidiyas. His wife Prema, who feeds her family by working as a relief worker, said there were 50 people employed at a government relief work of which 13 were dalits. "You can see 23 workers are from a single powerful caste. Their males will not work, but they get a share in the earnings because the payment is task-based," said Prema, adding, "We were not allowed to touch the pitcher and water served by upper caste women when we requested them," she said. The dalits raised the issue in the village, but the upper caste Hindus said it was a tradition and no one had the right to oppose it. "I have asked the sub-divisional officer to look into the matter and send a report," said Bhilwara additional district magistrate M.L. Yadav. Reeling under severe drought conditions, Cidiyas has 300 dalits and is dominated by caste Hindus. "Many times we quench our thirst with polluted water served by caste Hindus," said Mr Meghwanshi. "It is painful for us as it happens during government-run relief work," he added. (Asian Age 21/6/06)

Dalit woman beaten up and paraded naked (2)

Patna, June 23: A 50-year-old dalit woman in a Jharkhand village was beaten up and paraded naked for allegedly "selling" a 12-year-old boy in Uttar Pradesh two years ago. Balchand has been traceless ever since Sukri took him to UP with the assurance of a job. After the family of Balchand Oraon failed to trace the boy, they approached Sukri, a resident of Saram village. When Balchand's father Mangra Oraon inquired about his son, Sukri said he had run away at Mugalsarai station and she had no clue about his whereabouts. Some people who had accompanied Mangra Oraon started beating up Sukri. Her husband Indru Nayak was also beaten up when he tried to intervene. Sukri was then forcefully taken to Balchand's village and stripped. She was forced to roam around the village and was later tied to a tree. The villagers then started beating her with sticks. The boy's family believes Sukri sold Balchand and that he was still in the captivity of the owner of a brick kiln. After seven hours of trauma, the village elders decided that the dalit woman should be burnt alive so that no other person would dare to do such a thing. Just when kerosene was being poured on her, some local journalists and the Chhoo police reached and rescued her. Mangra has been arrested. (Asian Age 24/6/06)

Dalit institute wants inclusion of discriminated groups in quota sop (2)

New Delhi : The debate over the quota for SC/ST in the private sector gets a new twist with the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies (IIDS) recommending the inclusion of all 'discriminated groups' in the ambit of the Centre's new reservation sop. The Institute, headed by Prof Sukhdeo Thorat, also the chairman of University Grants Commission, has favoured the legislation by the State Governments, making mandatory for the private players to get quotas for the discriminated groups of the society. "In our report, we have suggested the quota for all discriminated groups including OBCs in the private sector," Anant Pant, a senior fellow at IIDS, told The Pioneer on Friday. Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry had commissioned the IIDS to prepare a report on the affirmative actions taken by different countries to uplift the discriminated groups. "The report gives a broad guideline to the Ministry to pursue the issue of quota in private sector to a logical accomplishment," Pant explained. The common minimum programme of the Congress led UPA Government does not talk of quota for the OBC or for that matter any other discriminated groups of the society. Which is why Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Meira Kumar has maintained a studied silence on the ambit of the private sector quota. Prof Thorat on Friday evening made a presentation to Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Meira Kumar on the report titled "Nature and Forms of Reservation and Affirmative Policy in Government and Private Sector in Selected Countries for Discriminated Groups." The senior Ministry officials also

attended the presentation. "The report strengthens the Ministry's efforts to get quota for SC/ST in the private sector. It is, however, up to the Government to adopt the theory of discriminated groups," a senior Ministry official said. The report comes in the midst of the assertions from Meira Kumar on Friday that "quotas are a must" for the development of the country. The scheduled castes, tribes, and other marginalised sections of the society have limited access to higher education. (Pioneer 24/6/06)

SC body backs woman sarpanch (2)

New Delhi, June 27: The National Commission of Scheduled Castes has asked the superintendent of police of Jhajjar district (Haryana) to furnish the details in the alleged implication of a "dalit woman sarpanch", Sheela Devi, in a murder case. Her family members have approached the National Commission for Scheduled Castes which had earlier sent notice to the SP of Jhajjar that if the reply was not filed within the stipulated time, the commission may exercise the powers of civil courts conferred on it by the Constitution. On February 24, 2006, Youth Congress leader Bachu Pehlwan was shot dead in broad daylight by three men, near local MLA's office in Bahadurgarh. Immediately, the police arrested nine people for his murder including a dalit woman sarpanch of Mandothi. Sheela Devi had won the village panchayat election in 2000 from a reserved seat. Currently Sheela is under police arrest. But her family members are crying foul. According to them the village is notorious for group politics which has resulted in several gang wars. They allege that murder of Bachu Pehlwan is the result of a gang war. To vindicate their stand they sighted the 26 murders that have taken place in the village after the gang war was ensued between the two groups of Jats in 1994. The family members of Sheela Devi also allege that the village panchayat was about to receive Rs 4 crores as land compensation and one group was eyeing this amount. The group with the support of local MLA Rajendar Joon has falsely implicated Sheela and her husband. MLA Rajendra Joon was quick to refute the charges. He said, "The matter has not occurred because of the money, instead it is because of the rivalry that Bachu was murdered." "In the war of the two groups, the dalits are suffering as the poor people have to do what the groups of the goon are saying. They used to ask the sarpanch to use scandalous methods to siphon off the allocated money," he said. Mr Joon further countered the charges by saying, "It was me who used to stop them and this has made me an eyesore for them." (Asian Age 28/6/06)

Officials conceal hunger deaths (2)

Lucknow, June 27: Shankar, 45, a dalit landless labourer in Barabanki district died of hunger on June 14. The district officials had cancelled his "Antyodaya" card (which entitled him to some ration) four months ago. "After my husband died of hunger, the officials came to my house with 50 kilos of wheat and rice and made me pose for photographs. They promised me Rs 20,000 as compensation and said that they would give us another Rs 1 lakh. But not a single penny has come to me so far," says Phoolmati, the distraught wife of Shankar and a mother of seven children. Phoolmati, who was brought to Lucknow by the NGO "Sanjhi Duniya" and presented before the media, said that the block development officer who visited their home after Shankar's death on June 14 had certified that her husband had died of starvation. "He saw our house and found not even a single grain of food. He gave us Rs 200 from his own pocket and left. The next day, however, some more officials came, they spoke to the village pradhan and everything changed. They insisted that we had a bank balance and owned 11 biswan of land and hence we were not entitled to the "Antyodaya" card. "They also said that Shankar had died a natural death and warned us not to talk to the media." Shankar's body was hurriedly buried on the outskirts of the village and two sacks of salt were poured on it to hasten the process of decomposition," recalls Phoolmati. Two Dalit Panther activists however took up cudgels on behalf of Phoolmati and the incident made its way to headlines in local newspapers. "The officers came rushing back to the village and gave back the "Antyodaya" cards to Phoolmati and other landless labourers whose card had earlier been cancelled. We now demand action against those officials who were responsible for the cancellation of cards and subsequently, Shankar's death," says Bhagwati Prasad, a Dalit Panther activist. Dr Roop Rekha Verma of "Sanjhi Duniya" dismissed the district officials' claim that Shankar owned 11 biswan of land and said, "We would be very grateful if the

district authorities can give the possession of this land to Phoolmati and her children so that they live comfortably in future. (Asian Age 28/6/06)

Meira Kumar describes Rajasthan as 'worst State' (2)

JAIPUR: The Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Meira Kumar, on Tuesday described Rajasthan as the "worst State" in the country in the matter of Dalit atrocities. "Rajasthan, which is rich in culture and heritage, was extremely backward in social justice," she charged. Talking to newsmen after a visit to "Prayas", an NGO working with the physically challenged, Ms. Kumar said statistics with her department indicated that Rajasthan "topped" the list among the States in Dalit atrocities. "The progress in the social welfare activities in the State is not satisfactory." Disability problems were more in Rajasthan due to its typical geographical conditions, Ms. Kumar observed. Uniform education would be given to disabled as well as normal children under the Education for All campaign, she said. Her Ministry was considering amendments to the Disabled Persons (Protection of Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. Ms. Kumar, who spoke at the Congress training camp going on at Padampura near here in the evening on "The Congress and the Dalit uplift", said the proposed increase in the reservation quota for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes was justifiable. (The Hindu 29/6/06)

Dalit demand to tow car at Kandadevi (2)

Madurai, July 1: Tension is mounting in Sivaganga and its neighbouring districts as the controversial Kandadevi car festival, of the Swarna Muktheeswarar temple near Devakottai in Sivaganga district, is scheduled to be held on July 9. Nearly 4,000 police personnel are expected to be pressed into service to prevent any untoward incident during the festival. The car of this ancient temple was constructed about 300 years ago and since the beginning it has been the Nattars (the upper caste Hindus) who towed it, using the four ropes, with each rope representing a village. The four villages, called nadus, which had the traditional rights to pull the car, are Unjanai, Semponmari, Iravuseri and Sennilai. Each of these nadus comprise many smaller hamlets. The dalits in the villages also participated in the festival and they were in charge of placing blocks of wood under the car's massive wheels to slow them down during the journey to allow devotees to offer puja and gifts on the way. But, in 1998, a controversy arose and the dalits sought rights to tow the car also. The DMK government was then unable to bring about a compromise and the car festival was not performed for three years from 1998 to 2000. However, the AIADMK government, which came to power, conducted the festival under tight security in 2001 and 2002. The festival was given a miss in 2003, but was again held the following two years. Now, the new DMK government is under pressure to show its concern for dalits to offer worship in temples as equals. With minister for Hindu religious and charitable endowments K.R. Periyakaruppan being from Sivaganga district, the responsibility seems to be even more onerous. The administration hopes that the festival will take place without any hurdle as superintendent of police P.P. Nallasivam, who was successful in conducting the event last year and was even honoured by the AIADMK government, has been retained in the district by the DMK, although many other police officials were transferred throughout the state. (Asian Age 2/7/06)

SC/ST applicants exempted from NET (2)

New Delhi, June 2: The selection process of teachers in Delhi University might get delayed for sometime after the University Grants Commission changed the rule for the selection of SC/ST candidates seeking employment in various colleges. Massive recruitment process was on in the university in which over 800 vacancies were to be filled but after the UGC's fresh instructions, final process of recruitment would get delayed. According to the new rule SC/ST applicants have been exempted from National Eligibility Test which is mandatory for the selection of teachers in the universities. While the recruitment process is on, the university has directed the colleges to recruit teachers following the UGC norms. This means, that colleges will have to publish corrigendum and advertise for various posts freshly. The executive council of the university approved the instructions on June 22. Dean of college planning, Prof Shirin Rathore issued fresh instructions to the colleges to hold results of the selection committees. "We sent a letter to each college to follow the UGC norms concerning the recruitment of the teachers. We wrote to the

colleges to hold results if the selection committee meeting has already been held after June 14," Prof Rathore said. As a result, the recent UGC norm is sure to delay the recruitment process. "The recruitment process might get delayed for a minimum of ten days. It can get delayed further too," Dr S.K. Arora, principal, Hansraj College said. However, dalit right activists on the campus are not satisfied with the modus operandi. "Many colleges are still holding selection committee meetings and surprisingly, they are declaring results too. The UGC norms should be held supreme and each college should abide by it," academic council member, Pradeep Kumar said. (Asian Age 3/7/06)

Harassment of Dalit, tribal activists condemned (2)

JAIPUR: The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) on Friday condemned the alleged harassment of Dalit and tribal activists campaigning for proper implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Badwani district of Madhya Pradesh, saying violence and hooliganism against them would lead to loss of credibility for the whole programme. The MKSS, led by social activist and Magsaysay Award winner Aruna Roy, demanded immediate action on complaints made by Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan (JADS) and withdrawal of cases registered against its members. Ms. Roy said in a statement issued here that the matter directly involved the issue of Government's resolve to implement the NREG Act in its true spirit with transparency and accountability. The JADS has alleged that a crowd led by local political leaders assaulted its activists, blocked their way, shouted abuses and refused to let them enter the venue of a meeting on NREGS called by the Collector at Pati in Badwani district on June 16. Senior administrative officers present at the scene along with a police force did nothing to stop the hooliganism. The activists attending the meeting, convened after the failure of a "Jan Sunwai" organised by a team of the Union Ministry of Rural Development, were shouted down and the meeting ended in disarray. The activists who tried to lodge a complaint at the Pati police station were not allowed to go there, while cases were registered against 26 members of the Sangathan. According to JADS, its attempts to raise the issues of non-issuance of job cards, failure to provide work and unemployment allowance to nearly 3,000 applicants, delayed payment of wages, use of labour displacing machinery, failure to implement the transparency and accountability provisions, and failure to consult Gram Sabhas were being resisted by vested interests who were supported by the Administration. (The Hindu 1/7/06)

'Dalits getting raw deal in Modi land' (2)

GANDHINAGAR, July 3: Claiming that the Dalits were "eclipsed" under the present dispensation in Gujarat, Union social justice and empowerment minister Ms Meira Kumar today criticised the Narendra Modi-led government for the "atrocities" meted out to Dalits and other backward sections of the society. "The present government in Gujarat has a poor track record in tackling crimes against the backward sections of the society," Ms Kumar said addressing the day-long jan-mitra shibir (conference of party workers) organised by the scheduled caste cell of the Congress. She claimed that Dalits were "eclipsed" in Gujarat at present. "In 2005, there were 967 cases of atrocities against Dalits in Gujarat where many were murdered, raped, burnt and seriously injured," Ms Kumar told the gathering. "In the past six months, there were 412 cases of atrocities registered against backward classes including Dalits," she said. (Statesman 4/7/06)

Dalit claims top court bar injustice (2)

New Delhi, July 8: A dalit woman has accused the Delhi police and the former vice-president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, (SCBA) Ms Priya Hingorani, of pressuring her to withdraw a criminal complaint against the then vice-president of the SCBA. Hemlata Badgujjar, a dalit, has alleged that senior officials of the Delhi police are turning a blind eye to her complaint against Ms Hingorani despite the fact that the FIR was registered about a year back in September 2005. She now alleges that the police is trying to provide relief to the former heavyweight of the top court's Bar Association. Ms Badgujjar's complaint against Ms Hingorani, registered at the Tilak Marg police station, (FIR No. 389/05), dated September 16, 2005, accuses Ms Hingorani of mowing her down by a Mitsubishi Lancer in front of the D gate of the Supreme Court and threatening to blacken Ms Badgujjar's face, for being a dalit. However, the FIR names no one as the accused and the column has been left blank. "They have purposely not put her name as the accused

despite my written complaints to the SHO, Tilak Marg and the commissioner of police. it's more than a year now," alleges Ms Badgujjar. The FIR lists the nature of the offence under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. All complaints filed under this act call for an immediate arrest of the accused. The offence is non-bailable and Ms Badgujjar alleges that the police has not made any arrest till date, due to the clout of the former vice-president of the SCBA. "Ms Hingorani used her office and clout as the vice-president of the Supreme Court Bar Association and won over the police," claims Ms Badgujjar. Meanwhile, even the role of then president of the Supreme Court Bar Association P.H. Parekh has come under the scanner as the dalit woman wrote to the police that the president of the Bar Association was forcing her to withdraw her complaint against the vice-president. On the other hand, Ms Hingorani wrote to the SHO Tilak Marg police station in September 2005, that the complaint against her was false and no cognisance should be taken of it. (Asian Age 9/7/06)

Rajasthan caste divide: Dalits are denied water (2)

Jaipur, July 9: Water has again revealed the caste divide in Rajasthan. Upper caste Hindus in Jaisinghpura village under Jaipur district prevented dalits from taking water from a government tanker. When a water tanker reached the village that has been facing severe water crisis, upper caste people prevented the dalits from taking water, according to Puran Raigar, a dalit villager. The village, located only 25 km from Jaipur, had no potable water as most of the wells had dried up in summer. On July 3, a government vehicle brought water for the villagers. "They told us that upper caste Hindus have the right to get water first, and if any water would be left over only then could the dalits take their share," complained Raigar. The village has 150 upper caste families and 18 dalits families. When we opposed the discrimination, the upper caste Hindus beat us up with sticks, said Shankar, another dalit villager. A group of dalits from Jaisinghpura went to Jaipur to complain against the discrimination and lodged an FIR with the Chaksu police. "We have no way to quench our thirst as there is no source of water in the village," said Shankar. (Asian Age 10.7.06)

Protection demanded for Dalit families (2)

JAIPUR: The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) on Sunday demanded protection to Dalit families of Bhagwanpura village in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan in the aftermath of a violent attack on their houses in the night of July 2. Several Dalits were injured and their houses ransacked allegedly in the presence of police. A three-member fact-finding team of NCDHR, which visited Bhagwanpura over the weekend, noticed an atmosphere of fear and panic among Dalits in the village in the midst of their social boycott by the people of higher castes. Police have not registered any criminal case in connection with the incident and launched the probe on the basis of a previous FIR. Trouble started on July 2 when two Dalit children, visiting the village to attend a function in the family of relatives, purchased ice-cream in saucers at a shop. When the shopkeeper learned about the children's caste, he snatched saucers from them and thrashed them. Later, the elders of Dalit family apologised on behalf of children for breaking the "caste norms". As the news about the children belonging to Valmiki (sweeper) caste eating ice-cream in the saucers of an upper caste shopkeeper spread in the village, influential people gathered in Charbhujia temple and decided to "teach a lesson" to Dalits. Meanwhile, Dalits -- sensing trouble -- lodged a complaint at Mandal police station and sought protection to their houses. NCDHR State secretary Satish Kumar said a huge crowd of higher caste people attacked Dalits' houses in the night, even though a police force from Mandal had already been deployed in the locality. Policemen allegedly remained mute spectators when arsonists ransacked houses for three hours, beat Dalits, pillaged household goods and insulted women. The injuries of one of the victims were described as "normal" by the doctor at the local Government hospital despite fractures in his arm. The NCDHR has demanded initiation of criminal proceedings under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against the doctor and in-charge of Mandal police station for dereliction of duty. (The Hindu 10/7/06)

Inter-caste marriages are in national interest: court (2)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday expressed concern over the growing opposition to, intimidation of, and violence against inter-caste couples. A Bench consisting of Justices Ashok Bhan and Markandey Katju directed the administration and the police throughout the country to extend protection to such couples against harassment and initiate action against those who resorted to or instigated violence. Writing the judgment, Justice Katju said: "The caste system is a curse on the nation and the sooner it is destroyed, the better. In fact, it is dividing the nation at a time when we have to be united to face the challenges before the nation. Hence, inter-caste marriages are in fact in the national interest, as they will result in destroying the caste system. However, disturbing news is coming from several parts that young men and women who unite in inter-caste marriages are threatened with violence, or violence is actually committed on them." Expressing anguish, the Bench said: "Such acts of violence or threats or harassment are wholly illegal and those who commit them must be severely punished. This is a free and democratic country and once a person becomes a major he or she can marry whosoever he or she likes. If the parents of the boy or girl do not approve of an inter-caste or inter-religious marriage, the maximum they can do is to cut off social relations with the son or the daughter, but they cannot give threats or commit or instigate acts of violence and cannot harass the person who opts for inter-caste or inter-religious marriage." (The Hindu 8/7/06)

Mukhiya beaten up for using a chair (2)

Patna: A mukhiya (village head) belonging to a Scheduled Caste was beaten up in Bihar's Bhojpur district for sitting on a chair in front of upper caste men. The victim, Sughar Paswan, is a retired school teacher and was elected mukhiya in the just completed panchayat elections. So terrified was the teacher, that he approached the police on Sunday evening to inform them of the incident that had taken place on July 5. "I was presiding over a gram sabha meeting at Haswadih village to review the list of those living below poverty line (BPL) when some youth belonging to the upper caste came in. They asked me to get down of the chair and sit on the floor," the victim told the police. Later in the evening, when he visited the local market, some youths bashed him and tore his cloths, reported our correspondent. (Asian Age 11/7/06)

RSS: Only dalits can lead Hindus (2)

New Delhi, July 23: In a significant move, the RSS has asked the Hindu community to organise themselves under dalit leadership and said that "good Hindus" were present in all political parties. It also said that "all governments" had worked against the sentiments of the majority community, but not the 1998-2004 NDA governments. "Hindu society can (rise) if they start viewing dalits as Ram and Hanuman, touch their feet...Only dalits and the deprived can uplift us," says the RSS organ Panchjanya. (Asian Age 24/7/06)

Rs 25,000 reward for inter-caste marriages (2)

Patna, July 27: Every district of Bihar will soon have hoardings, banners and posters advertising a cash reward of Rs 25,000 for those who marry outside their caste. It is not a new scheme of the government, but an attempt to find out couples who marry outside their castes. The amount will be given in the form of a National Savings Certificate to eligible couples who furnish proof of their castes and that it is their first marriage. "There are provisions of a reward to solemnise inter-caste marriage. The Supreme Court had recently asked for the promotion of inter-caste marriages, but hardly any couple turns up to claim the reward in Bihar. The amount has remained unspent for years," said Vijay Prakash, Bihar welfare secretary. He said the government's advertisement campaign will not only promote inter-caste marriages but would also ask eligible couples to claim the reward. A sum of Rs 10 lakhs was earmarked for this in the last fiscal and it has been increased to Rs 11 lakhs for the current fiscal. Mr Prakash said reports from the district have revealed that only nine have applied for the cash reward so far. In Purnia district, eight couples claimed the award. There were no claimants in Katihar, Araria and Kishanganj districts. (Asian Age 28/7/06)

Industry unveils 'concrete' plans for Dalits (2)

Chennai : The Indian industry on Friday came out with an action plan for affirmative action in favour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and took pains to clarify that its 'concrete'

steps for the upliftment of these classes were not aimed at pre-empting any legislation on reservation in the private sector. The action plan, jointly prepared by the Confederation of Indian Industry and Assocham, proposes that industry will ensure greater representation for SC/ST candidates in its recruitment at all levels, and 'expects the efforts to become visible within the next year'. The plan also envisages that larger companies will 'mentor and create' at least one entrepreneur from SCs and STs a year, and in the first year, hundred such entrepreneurs will be created, and the figure would be scaled in the future. 'This certainly is not to pre-empt any law but only an articulation of our responsibility to address a social issue whose time has come,' said CII President R. Seshasayee told a press conference, at which he released the report along with J. J. Irani, chairman of the CII Task Force on Affirmative Action. At the same time, Seshasayee made it clear that industry did not favour any legislation on the subject as 'it will not be the right way to achieve social equity'. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, to whom the report was given on Thursday, had responded 'positively' after going through the proposals quickly, he added. Dr. Irani said though there was no fear of legislation behind the report, the prospects of legislation on reservation in the private sector had actually receded after the industry came out with its own voluntary action programme. The two industry leaders do not favour any target for SC/ST recruitments, as that would amount to introducing reservation. (Pioneer 29/7/06)

Caste remark Accused told to teach 15 kids (2)

New Delhi: A retired principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya school, who faced trial under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) Act for allegedly passing casteist remarks against a lady teacher, was absolved of the charges on Friday but on the condition of giving free tuitions to the children belonging to the SC/ST community. Justice A K Sikri quashed the criminal case against V P Garg while asking him to teach 10 children from the SC/ST category and five students from the general category. Garg has to give regular tuitions classes to the 15 students till March next year. Although the offence under the SC/ST Act is non-compoundable and envisages a minimum punishment of six months, the high court exercised its extra-jurisdictional power to quash the case. Justice Sikri set Garg free on account of his background wherein he has never faced a criminal case in the past. However, the condition of giving free tuition classes was incorporated in the order to achieve the aim and objectives of the Act. Justice Sikri also appointed the ACP of the area, where the case was registered, to supervise Garg. The complainant has to prepare the list of 15 students who shall go to Garg for the free classes. A case under the SC/ST Act was registered under Garg in 1998. At the time of the alleged offence, he worked with Kendriya Vidyalaya, Pitampura. However, the ordeal of facing trial for eight years forced him to compromise the matter with the complainant. Garg gave an unconditional apology to the teacher, who in return agreed to withdraw the case. On Friday, the two appeared before the court of Justice Sikri. Even the Delhi Police counsel did not object to the compromise despite the offence being non-compoundable. State prosecutor M N Dudeja, however, urged the court to ensure that quashing of the FIR should not deliver an erroneous impression. (Times of India 29/7/06)

DU SC/ST teachers form own panel (2)

New Delhi: A section of DU teachers constituted the DU schedule caste/schedule tribe teachers' association on Friday. This panel claims to be a platform to put forth grievances of SC/ST teachers. According to the association members, discrimination prevails in the university as far as appointment and promotion of SC/ST teachers is concerned and the body would work towards this cause. "Even though the university ordinance talks about policy reservations for SC/STs at the teaching posts, it has not been implemented," said Dhani Ram, president of the newly-constituted body. He added, "The varsity has not appointed a single principal or a HOD from the reserved category and even out of 1,100 lecturers, there are only 27 SC/ST teachers who have been appointed at the post." The university officials, however, disagree and say they didn't get deserving candidates from the reserved category. "A number of posts are lying vacant. Either the candidates have not cleared the National Eligibility Test (NET) or they have not done their PhD, so it is not possible to appoint them. Also, we do not get any applications for subjects like maths, computer science, physics, chemistry, botany, economics among some others," said a senior university official. Teachers from the non-reserved category echoed similar views. "There is no discrimination as we follow the roster as laid by DU for appointing and promoting teachers. We

take care of every teacher's grievances," said Bidyut Chakraborty, HoD of political science. (Times of India 29/7/06)

Centre mulls mother's SC status for children (2)

New Delhi : The Centre is inching towards according the status of Scheduled Castes to children born to an SC woman married to a non-SC. Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry has sought the opinion of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes on the matter before the enactment of the law to fructify the move. "The matter would come up for deliberations and discussion in the coming meeting of the Commission. There is an opinion in favour of granting SC status and resultant benefits to the children whose fathers are from the non-SC category," an official in the Commission said. Ministry's move would entitle the children of a non-SC father and SC mother to be treated as SC, and get all benefits as per the Government rules. Ministry sources said the proposal would be placed before the Cabinet for consideration and approval as soon as the opinion from the Commission is received. According to the Ministry officials, the Constitution needs to be amended to accord the SC status to such children. The officials referred to a Supreme Court judgment in December 2005 to bring home the point. The court held that an upper caste Hindu woman cannot get SC/ST status just because she marries a man from that community and she can't claim the benefit of reservation. A Bench comprising Justice SB Sinha and PK Balasubramanyan had 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." (Pioneer 2/8/06)

JNUSU condemns 'caste abuse' incident (2)

NEW DELHI: Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) has condemned the alleged incident of "caste abuse" and "violence" against Saurabh Kamal, a first year B.A Spanish student, on Tuesday night. The Union has charged the administration of trying to suppress the "caste abuse" factor. "We have been told by the police that the administration asked them not to mention caste abuse. We have also decided to approach the SC/ST Commission, Human Rights Commission and Minister of Human Resource Development," said Anand, convenor of School of International Studies at JNUSU. Identifying the people they believe are behind the incident, JNUSU claims that the main instigator Mahendra Singh Chauhan, who is not a student anymore, has many complaints against him, but no action has been taken against him. "Saurabh took his brother Amritashva, a former student, to Mahendra to ask him to stop harassing him. Mahendra gathered a mob and then beat them outside Lohit Hostel," said Anand. "This incident is one in the long list of incident involving violence, threat and intimidation initiated by Chauhan and others in the University over the last year or so. Chauhan already has several cases pending against him, ranging from physical assault, threats to using abusive language in the University. However, the JNU administration has not taken action against him so far," the Union has charged. While an enquiry has been set up by the administration into the incident, JNUSU has charged the Vice-Chancellor of deliberately denying its demand on including a member of the Equal Opportunity Office on this committee. "The refusal by the Vice-Chancellor to acknowledge that caste abuse is the central factor in this case is a cause of great concern to JNUSU as it goes completely against the socially sensitive character of our University," stated a press statement issued by JNUSU. (The Hindu 4/8/06)

Govt employees accused of blocking SC/ST recruitment (2)

Bhopal : Government officials in Madhya Pradesh are not following guidelines set for the recruitment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes candidates, according to Dalit leaders. The State Government has launched special drive to benefit people of SC/ST, but the officials are not working accordingly, they said. As per the rules, the aspirants are given one month's time for applying for the desired posts in different districts. But the candidates are being provided only four to seven days' time for the purpose, they added. Similar situation prevails in Woman and Child Development department, Betul, Polytechnic Jabalpur, District Collectorate, Khargone, said another local. He said the treasury office of Ratlam fixed June 30 as the last date for submitting application. A Commerce graduate, Sunil Dhurve of Bhopal -wanted to apply for a post in Khargone collectorate - told the Pioneer, "It was already too late to apply for the post of

stenographer. When contacted over phone, the officials asked to approach personally. This happened despite the last date had expired." He alleged that the role of officials seems to be suspicious in the recruitment drive. State Tribal Welfare Commission member Yashwant Singh Darbar said bureaucrats were responsible for the current condition of tribals. "The State Government launches several schemes for the tribal people, but they never reach to the common people at grassroots level," he added. He also accused the officials for recruiting their own candidates, because only candidates who no in advance about the jobs can complete their applications in advance and can submit them within four days. He demanded a high-level enquiry against these officials who did not give adequate time to aspirants for filling the form. "Even in State Public Service Commission, one month's time is provided for applying," he said..... (Pioneer 10/8/06)

Dalit graves in TN dug up (2)

Madurai, Aug. 12: A dalit burial ground in Malaipatti, near Usilampatti in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, is allegedly being desecrated by sand smugglers who are digging up the graves to take the sand and illegally transport it to make quick money. The dalits have been using the burial ground, located near the bank of the river Aswamanadhi, to lay their dead to rest for over 50 years. The villagers say sand smugglers are hurting their sentiments by taking the sand from the burial ground and disturbing the graves. With the price of sand from government quarries shooting up to as much as Rs 4,500 per truckload, smugglers are making good money selling sand from small streams and riverbeds. They transport the sand using bullock carts and tractors and sell these loads, smaller than the truckloads, for as much as Rs 1,500 per load. Sinnan (name changed) claims that they have stood silent spectators as tractors and bullock carts take loads of sand without permission from any authority. "They have political backing," he maintained. He said sand smugglers who entered the village to take sand from the river bank a few months ago threatened the villagers when they tried to stop them. Digging from the river bank, the smugglers reached the nearby burial ground of the dalits and did not spare the graves in their quest to carry away as much sand as possible. Digging to depths of up to 10 feet, they have disturbed several graves, according to the villagers, who complain that human remains are now surfacing. Human bones can be found strewn all over the burial ground, they say. In fact, a few weeks ago, the villagers were shocked to see the body of a village elder, who had been given a decent funeral, lying on the river bank in a decomposed state. They said this was the handiwork of the sand smugglers, who had just thrown aside the body when they came across it while digging within the burial ground..... Asian Age 13/8/06)

Bihar police finally files case of 7 rape victims (2)

Patna, Aug. 22: The Bihar police on Tuesday, finally registered complaints of seven Dalit women, who were earlier denied justice despite claiming that they had been gangraped in Suryagarha village of Lakhisarai district by local landlords, and ordered the district police to frame rape charges against the four accused. According to reports, some upper caste men had outraged the modesty of dalit women, at gunpoint on August 7, as they had refused to caste votes in favour of a particular candidate in the recent panchayat polls. The male members in the family of most of the victim were outside Bihar when the incident took place. Later, when dalits of the village protested the rape blocking roads in the area, local police lathicharged the mob. (Asian Age 23/8/06)

MLA jailed for molesting Dalit (2)

PATNA, AUGUST 22: A ruling JD(U) MLA in Bihar was jailed on Monday on charges of molesting a Dalit woman in February this year. Ramswaroop Prasad from Islampur was remanded to judicial custody by a local court. Prasad was accused of barging into the house of a Dalit woman of his constituency along with his supporters and molesting her. The woman had lodged a complaint with the local court allegedly after the local police refused to lodge her complaint. The incident took place in the home district of CM Nitish Kumar and only two months after he assumed office. In another incident, seven Dalit women were allegedly raped by members of a powerful upper caste in Suryagarha of Lakhisarai district. It was alleged that the police refused to lodge an FIR in this regard. Police swung into action only after the women knocked the CM's door

being spurred by Opposition RJD which staged a dharna over the incident. Police arrested the accused and a probe was ordered with the promise of strong action against the culprits. Sources said that the CM had ordered an official inquiry into the incident after some of the victims met him at his official residence today. Earlier this month four Dalit youths were accused of being cattle thieves and lynched in an upper caste village in the presence of the local police. Here too police acted only today after the CM intervened. IG Anil Sinha said the officer-in-charge of the concerned police station has been suspended and the SP has been asked to probe the incident. These incidents in quick succession have not only jolted the efforts of Nitish Kumar to institute the "rule of law" and project a clean image of the government but also provided some basis to RJD's campaign that the government had failed to protect the weaker sections of the society. The RJD today staged a dharna against these incidents. (Indian Express 23/8/06)

Dalit stabbed in eye after brawl over toddy (2)

PATNA, AUGUST 23:Lying in a Patna hospital, 50-year-old Dalit Bhola Chowdhury starts shivering when asked to name those who stabbed him in the eye. "They will kill me," he says. The landless toddy-seller from Mahinawan village of Patna district has lost his left eye completely. On Monday night, a group of village strongmen pounced on him on his way home, "blindfolded him and beat him up." Then they stabbed him in the left eye, says wife Rampoori Devi. Dr U. P. Sinha of Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) said that Bhola's left eye was severely injured. "There was no way it could have been saved. We have operated and removed the eye," the doctor said. But why was Bhola assaulted? "We don't know. We are poor people. We do not have enmity with anyone in the village," his wife says. But she admits her husband had a fight with village strongmen over toddy a couple of days ago. But she's too scared to name them. The family is landless and earns a living out of selling toddy. Circle Inspector of Bihta, Shakeel Azam, said that two days ago Bhola had a brawl with Mahesh Yadav over toddy. "We suspect that this could have led to the attack. But we can't act since nobody has been named in the FIR," he said. The state has witnessed at least three other attacks against Dalits this month. In all cases, the police acted only after the Chief Minister's intervention. • Seven Dalit women from Suryagarha in Lakhisarai district alleged that they had been raped by members of a powerful upper caste on August 7 and charged that the police refused to lodge an FIR. Police acted only on Tuesday, after the opposition RJD raised the issue. • Earlier this month, four Dalit youth were lynched in an upper-caste village of Bhojpur allegedly in the presence of the local police. The youth were accused of stealing cows. Once again, the RJD raised the issue and on Tuesday, the Chief Minister intervened, the officer-in-charge was suspended and a probe ordered. • Early this month, an eye of a 10-year-old Dalit boy was gouged out with a sharp weapon allegedly by upper-caste men in Dhabouli village of Begusarai since his parents had not voted for a particular candidate in the panchayat polls. (Indian Exp 24/8/06)

Nitish: RJD just creating a ruckus (2)

PATNA, AUGUST 24:Reacting to the alleged rape of some Dalit women and the lynching of Dalit youths, incidents which rocked the Lok Sabha on Thursday, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar charged the RJD of unnecessarily raising a hue and cry over the issue. "Their intention is only to create a ruckus and nothing else. I have personally intervened in the two incidents and strong action has been taken. So where is the need to raise a hue and cry over the issue," the CM asked. In the incident in which a group of Dalit women from Suryagarha have alleged rape, the CM said a case has been lodged and all four suspects arrested. "A probe has also been ordered and strong action will be taken if the police officers concerned are found guilty of negligence," he stressed. On the other incident in which four Dalit youths were lynched in a village in Bhojpur district, allegedly in the presence of a policeman, he said the sub-inspector concerned has already been suspended and a probe ordered. "If found guilty he will be punished," he pointed out. Meanwhile, IG (Headquarters) Anil Sinha denied the rape victims' charge that the police had refused to lodge their case. He claimed that initially the women had not brought up the rape charge. "They had complained of only assault and loot and a case was lodged in this regard. Much later they alleged rape and now a case has been lodged and all the accused arrested," Sinha said. (Indian Express 25/8/06)

2 dalits gangraped in Bihar (2)

Patna, Aug. 25: Just a day after RJD and JD(U) MPs clashed in the Lok Sabha over the rape of seven dalit women in Bihar, two dalit women on Friday alleged that they were gangraped by armed criminals in Bihar's Gaya district. The victims were the 30-year-old daughter and 25-year-old daughter-in-law of an old dalit man of Sarbahda village under Khigersarai police station in Gaya. According to the FIR lodged with the police, not only the dalit women were raped at gunpoint, but more than 10 armed miscreants also looted valuables from their house. The incident, which took place early on Thursday, came to light on Friday morning. Confirming the incident, Gaya superintendent of police Amit Jain said preliminary reports suggest the accused and the victims were relatives. "We are looking for one Shailendra Mahato. He is the prime accused and is still at large," the superintendent of police said. This is the fourth incident where dalits have been subjected to atrocities by upper caste persons. Recently, seven dalit women had alleged that four upper caste persons had raped them in Suryagarha village in Lakhisarai district. This incident led to chaos in the Lok Sabha when JD(U) MP Prabhunath Singh alleged that one of the accused was a close relative of railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav. It was Mr Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party which took up the issue after the police allegedly denied framing rape charges against the accused. The women were punished for voting for a dalit candidate in the recently-completed panchayat polls. Also, there was a nationwide furor when four dalit youths were beaten to death in front of the police in Bihar's Bhojpur district, a traditional stronghold of upper caste persons, just a few weeks back. Two separate cases were also reported where a child and an old person were blinded for different reasons. The eyes of 10-year-old Ajit Kumar of Dhabouli village in Begusarai district were gauged with a pointed grass-cutting tool on August 13 as his parents had refused to vote for a particular candidate in the panchayat polls. On Tuesday, a 65-year-old was blinded by upper caste men in Maner for allegedly stealing two bottles of liquor. (Asian Age 26/8/06)

Dalit panchayats won't be de-reserved, says Karunanidhi (2)

CHENNAI: The State Government has decided not to de-reserve panchayats of Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattaramangalam in Madurai district and Kottakatchiyendal in Virudhunagar district for the forthcoming local body elections. Talking to newsmen after a Cabinet meeting here on Saturday, Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi said the Government decided to exempt them from the "rotation policy." The decision followed the demand by several political parties that the four panchayats should not be de-reserved till Dalit presidents served a full term. Claiming that the introduction of a Bill in Parliament on Friday to provide reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in central educational institutions as yet another chapter in the history of reservation, the Chief Minister said though the Bill was for implementation in phases, it was a victory for social justice. "From here we will continue our next battle to achieve our goal of getting 27 per cent reservation in all educational institutions." Reacting to the demand of Pattali Makkal Katchi leader S. Ramadoss for introduction of reservation at one stroke, the Chief Minister said reservation was a sensitive issue and had to be undertaken step by step. Unlike in the Neyveli Lignite Corporation issue, where there was a consensus among all political parties in the State, in the reservation issue there were different views. "One has to tread cautiously." The Chief Minister said all constituents of the Democratic Progressive Alliance were consulted before introducing the quota bill, which was referred to the standing committee. The contents of the bill were discussed at a Cabinet meeting in which all Ministers belonging to Tamil Nadu were present. He would personally try and convince Dr. Ramadoss, who had expressed reservations over the Bill, he said. (The Hindu 27/8/06)

Panel wants special force for SC/ST (2)

New Delhi, Aug. 26: A Parliamentary Committee on the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs) has recommended the setting up of a special Central force to combat atrocities against SC/STs. The committee has suggested that establishment of an agency on the lines of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States could be considered. Expressing concern at the cases of atrocities against SC/STs in the country, the committee, comprising 30 MPs, stated, "Continuity of such incidents despite stringent laws establish failure of the state police machinery and justify setting up of a special central force to counter such

threats." "Though atrocities on the SC/STs is a law and order problem and handled by the state police forces, the government would, however, appreciate that atrocities on SC/STs and similar incidents cannot be allowed to happen or recur. If provisions are not available in the present federal structure of functioning of the Indian union, the option of having an agency on the lines of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as in the US will have to be seriously considered," the committee in its report noted. The committee made the suggestions after the Union home ministry observed that "under the scheme of constitutional division of responsibilities, the Central government has no control over the state police forces". The home ministry also told the committee that "merely because the service records of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers are maintained by the home ministry, it may not be appropriate to conclude that the state police forces will be more responsive and amenable to intervention by the ministry".
(Asian Age 27/8/06)

Dalits in Orissa build a temple (2)

Bhubaneswar, Aug. 29: The dalits of Chauriberhappur village in Orissa's Kendrapara district have built a temple for themselves after they were denied entry into village temple by the upper caste people. On Tuesday, Mr Sanjay Mallick, a local Dalit leader led his fellowmen to enter the Ma Mangala temple. Mr Mallick broke a coconut at the temple to inaugurate it. "The dalits in the village got the opportunity to worship in a temple for the first time on Tuesday," Mr Mallick said. Most of the people of Chauriberhappur are dalits. Of them, 900 belong to the Hadi (scavenger) caste, who eke out their living by cleaning streets, toilets and doing other odd jobs. The upper caste people whose number comes to around 100, have imposed restrictions on the dalits on entering the village temple. Last year, the dalits decided to build their own temple. "Several dalit youths have come forward with contributions for the construction of the temple. We have appointed a Brahmin as the priest of the temple. We have raised funds to manage the temple and pay the monthly salary of the priest," Mr Abhimanyu Naik, former ward member, said. (Asian Age 30/8/06)

Dalit poet, RSS chief exchange notes (2)

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30:It was an unusual encounter at a book release function here today as RSS chief KS Sudarshan and noted Marathi poet and Dalit Panthers founder Namdeo Dhasal engaged each other in debate enveloping caste, Hinduism and communal harmony. The two, however, carried on parallel arguments, with Dhasal seeking answers to larger contemporary social issues and the RSS Sarsanghchalak peddling the Parivar line. Deoband issues fatwa against life insurance for Sunnis, Shia clerics disagreeWho named controversial painting 'Bharatmata'? Not MF HusainPM to ulemas: help us help you become stakeholders in progress10-year-old married to youth, Darul Uloom rules it 'illegal'US gets a letter from Assam madrasas: train our teachers. The function was organised by Sangh Parivar outfits Seva Bharati and the Navyuvak Dalit Utthan Sangh to mark the release of a the book, Samrasata Ke Sutradhar. Dhasal, an ardent follower of BR Ambedkar, said he would have to face taunts back home now that he had attended a Parivar function, stepping into "the enemy camp". "They would call me names from tomorrow but I don't mind," he said, adding, "I don't consider the RSS untouchable...If the RSS can do something to bring about social change, it is welcome." Dhasal, who is the subject of a chapter — A million Mutinees — by VS Naipaul, ended with an appeal to Sudarshan. "What will happen to the 800 castes which exist in our country? Do something about them." Sudarshan, who spoke after Dhasal, said, "The Sangh does not believe in caste...We told our people don't worry about caste, let it be. The feeling of superiority or inferiority should end. Call leaders of all castes and ensure that they have their meals together...We say we all are Hindus. We strive for Hindu consolidation, transcending castes." (The Hindu 31/8/06)

15,000 Gujjars storm railway station (2)

Jaipur, Sept. 3: A crowd of over 15,000 Gujjars, demanding Scheduled Tribe status, stormed Hindon railway station under Karuli district on Sunday. Railway tracks were also uprooted while the police watched the destruction helplessly. The incident forced the authorities to divert traffic on the Mumbai-Delhi rail route. The Gujjars reached Hindon from far-flung areas of Chambal and eastern Rajasthan on Sunday and assembled on the railway station and it's nearby area. The

crowd not only destroyed a railway track, but they also damaged the signal system at the station. As the local administration failed to anticipate the graveness of the situation, policemen were outnumbered and could not contain the mob. "The protest has affected half-a-dozen trains, including the Golden Temple express running between Amritsar and Mumbai, divisional manager K.K. Atal of Kota rail division said. "We will repair the track as soon the crowd is dispersed," he added. According to eyewitnesses, it was hours before the police came in to control the situation, even though the Gujar Arkashan Samiti [GAS] had informed ten days ago about this agitation. "Our struggle is aimed to achieve ST status, Kirodi Bensla, the leader of GAS, said. The Gujjars, who enjoy OBC status, are politically powerful in Rajasthan. But the inclusion of Jats in the OBC list has left them unsecured. The Gujjars have been demanding Scheduled Tribe status, saying that they belong to the tribe, but were not listed as "tribe". The Gujjar's demand has been opposed by the tribal Meena community. The tribals make up for 12 per cent population of the state. During the Assembly elections, political leaders supported the Gujjars keeping in mind their vote bank. However, this incident has put all leaders in a tight spot. (Asian Age 4/9/06)

Caste system had a genetic impact (2)

Hyderabad, Sept. 3: The rigid caste hierarchy of India has had a genetic impact, a study claims. The genetic makeup of people belonging to the upper castes is similar, when compared with people from lower castes. Brahmins, who occupy the top position in the Indian Varna system, are genetically closer to the next group, Kshatriyas, than they are to people of lower castes. Similarly, the genetic distance between Kshatriyas and Vysyas is closer than the genetic distance between Vysyas and Brahmins. Muslim groups such as Dudekula and Shaik resemble other lower-rung communities in their genetic makeup. These findings emerged from a study on "genetic stratification versus social stratification" of people in Andhra Pradesh conducted by the Biological Anthropology Unit of the Indian Statistical Institute, in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology. The results of the study were published in Human Biology magazine in the United States. Interestingly, the study also revealed that the people of Andhra Pradesh, irrespective of caste or socio-economic status, were genetically closer to each other than they were to people elsewhere. For instance, Brahmins from Andhra Pradesh were found to be genetically closer to people of other castes in the state than they were to Brahmins in other states. As part of the study, DNA samples of 948 individuals belonging to 27 caste groups in Andhra Pradesh were analysed. The nature and extent of genomic diversity was examined with reference to socio-economic and geographic affiliations. Andhra Pradesh boasts a population of tremendous variety, with members of several castes, tribes and religious groups living here. The castes or socio-economic categories studied by the researchers included: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vysya, Akuthota, Kamma, Kapu, Pokanati, Panta, Vanne, Balija, Ekila, Kurava, Thogata, Yadava, Ediga, Gangla, Jangam, Chakali, Mangali, Vaddi, Madiga, Mala, Erukala, Sugali and Yanadi. Two Muslim groups, Dudekula and Shaik, were also included in the study. "Compared to other Indian and world populations, the population of Andhra Pradesh forms a clearly separated cluster," said Prof. B. Mohan Reddy of the Indian Statistical Institute, who was the project leader..... (Asian Age 4/9/06)

Chaos over SC/ST posts in DU (2)

New Delhi, Sept. 22: Confusion prevails over the recruitment of SC/ST teachers in Delhi University. While Delhi University has declared that old roster will be followed a few colleges have declared that they will use the new roster and they are also holding interviews ignoring old roster. Delhi University declared recently that old roster system for the recruitment of SC\ST teachers will be followed. But the colleges issued corrigendum declaring that the interviews will be conducted not considering as a department as a single unit but the whole college as a unit. It happened in the wake of a UGC circular that was sent to the university to fill up the SC\ST vacancies before appointing any general category candidates or else they would be denied the grant. Later, UGC issued another letter stating that the college be considered a unit for recruitment purpose. Following which the colleges issued corrigendum. "Registrar, Amarendra Dubey issued a letter to the colleges stating the UGC's directions on the issue. The colleges issued corrigendum stating that the whole college will be treated as a unit for the appointment of the teachers. But with the university having decided to opt for old roster system confusion prevails," Delhi University

teachers' association, treasurer, Mr Prakash Narayan, said. The roster is a formula that was devised by UGC in 1997 that every seventh candidate appointed would be from the SC category, fourteenth from ST category, fourteen from SC category, fifteenth from ST category and so on and so forth. But the roster cannot be worked out 22.5 per cent appointment for reserved candidates. (Asian Age 23/9/06)

Dalit women in UP protection force (2)

Lucknow, Sept. 23: In a move that will lead to empowerment of dalit women in Uttar Pradesh, the Mulayam Singh government has decided to enrol dalit women in the Prantiya Rakshak Dal. The Prantiya Rakshak Dal (PRD) is a state-level protection force that is usually deployed to maintain law and order in villages, in large congregations like the Kumbh Mela and during elections. The strength of the PRD force in UP is 24,000 and PRD jawans are sent for refresher training every three years. This will be the first time that women will get a chance to be a part of the PRD which, till now, is an all male force. The state government has now cleared the way for enrolment of more than 500 dalit women in the PRD and recruitment will begin shortly from the district to the block level. Talking to this newspaper on Saturday, a senior official of the PRD department said, "This is being done for the first time to empower dalit women in the age group of 20 to 30. Under the gender budgeting programme, nearly 30 per cent of the PRD force will comprise of women. In the coming assembly elections, people will see dalit women dressed in khaki PRD uniforms deployed at polling booths." The state government believes that this decision will not only instil confidence in dalit women but will also take them away from traditional menial jobs. "Once the PRD enrolment begins, we see dalit women moving away from menial jobs and becoming increasingly aware of the need for education," the official said. According to sources, the state government has decided to encourage women to seek enrolment through a massive publicity campaign next month. "We will convince the women in the SC/ST categories to step out of their homes and join the PRD which will give them financial independence, dignity and status in society," the official added. (Asian Age 24/9/06)

Equal & separate: In AIIMS hostels, SC/ST means you live with your own (2)

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 25: A majority of SC/ST students at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the country's premier medical school which was at the heart of anti-quota protests recently, live in clusters in the college hostel as they feel "safe and comfortable". Though they were allotted rooms randomly when they first joined the college, SC/ST students have sought reallocation to specific sections of the hostel after some of them alleged that they were harassed by 'general category' students. Hostel records, obtained by The Indian Express under the Right to Information Act reveal that of the 45 male SC/ST students who have been in AIIMS for more than a year, at least 34 are living in clusters. Of these, 23 have sought reallocation from rooms which they were originally allotted when they joined the college, the records show. Of the total 306 students in AIIMS, 65 (21%) belong to SC/ST category. SC/ST students living in the clusters claim that while some moved to the clusters voluntarily as they felt "safe and comfortable", many were forced to leave the rooms allotted to them as they were unable to bear harassment by some 'upper caste' students. Hostel superintendent Dr G K Rath refused to comment, saying he was not authorised to speak to the press. Boys' hostel secretary Tarique Zaman said that "Dalit students move not because they are forced to, but because they want to live with their friends". (Indian Express 26/9/06)

Dalit Panthers of India joins DMK-led alliance (2)

CHENNAI: Dalit Panthers of India general secretary Thol. Thirumavalavan announced on Wednesday that the party would fight the local body elections as part of the the Democratic Progressive Alliance. He made the announcement after calling on Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam president and Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. Talking to presspersons after the DPI joined hands with the DMK, Mr. Karunanidhi said the DPI would be given the chance of contesting "the posts of at least two Municipal chairmen." A decision on the number of wards to be given to the DPI would be decided in "the next two days," he said. The seats would be given out of the DMK's share, Mr. Karunanidhi said. A decision on what symbol the DPI candidates would contest was yet to be taken, he said. Asked why the DPI chose to join the DMK alliance, Mr. Karunanidhi said: "They

have come to the place they should. They should have come earlier." The DMK president dismissed problems in seat sharing within the alliance saying: "It's all been solved." Elaborating on the reasons for leaving the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led front, Mr. Thirumavalavan said that in electoral politics time decided which side the party was part of. The DPI was "deeply insulted" by the AIADMK when it came to sharing of seats for the local body elections. When the district-level leaders of the AIADMK-led alliance met, the DPI was not only given very few seats, it was allotted wards where the chances of victory were very dim. A few district office-bearers were incensed, but he tried to sort out the issue with the AIADMK leadership. Even as he tried to contact the party leadership, the AIADMK began filing nominations in seats allotted to the DPI, he said. Mr. Thirumavalavan said he was unable to establish contact with the AIADMK leadership, despite being a leader of the front. It was at this juncture the DMK welcomed the party. (The Hindu 28/9/06)

Dalit model village project deferred till Assembly polls (2)

New Delhi :An ambitious Dalit welfare scheme of the Centre has been put on hold so that its announcement could be timed with the Assembly elections to four States next year. According to sources, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was expected to announce the Scheduled Caste model village project on Independence day, but he dropped it at the last minute. The programme was designed to identify SC-dominated villages across the country to transform them into model villages. The programme, which would seek resources from the private sector, has since then been referred to a Group of Ministers headed by Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee. Sources pointed out that the Government wanted to be doubly sure about people's response to the project as well as the response of the industry it planned to seek assistance from. "The Congress also wanted to time it with the Assembly elections next year," sources said. Source said that the Government also developed cold feet in the implementation the scheme due to negative feedback received about the progress of the National Rozgar Guarantee scheme. "We wanted to make sure that the ambitious pro-SC project, did not get mired in bureaucratic red-tapism like NREG. Because that would have been politically counter-productive," sources said. A document prepared for the project said "India has 1,06,912 villages with 30 percent SC population, converting all these villages into model villages is an enormous task."To smoothen the path of implementation of the project, it was decided that all these villages would be taken up in phases and both with the help of corporate sector and the NGOs..... (Pioneer 29/9/06)

Dalit boy is forced to drink urine (2)

Jaipur, Sept. 28: Fifteen-year-old Nemaram, a dalit, was forced to drink urine and chilly was put into his anus by "influential" people of Beetan village in Nagaur district, as Nemaram refused to confess to a theft. The local police admitted that Nemaram was interrogated in the police station and was freed when not found guilty. A shaken Nemaram was taken to hospital by his mother, who pleaded for justice. The police has named four persons for torturing Nemaram, but no arrest has been made so far. According to the police, Nemaram was abducted on September 20, by influential people of the village. "I requested them to give me water and they forced me to drink urine," he told the police. He was tortured for three days as the abductors forced him to confess a false theft. (Asian Age 29/9/06)

Dalit paraded half-naked for 'not toeing' Panchayat line (2)

BHOPAL, OCTOBER 4: A women was allegedly beaten up, stripped and paraded by women in Dedgaon village of Harda district because a young girl from the village had been found in her house in a compromising position with an upper-caste boy. Fulvatibai of Korku tribe alleged she was paraded naked in public. Four female relatives of the girl, of Gond tribe, and two upper-caste women allegedly also strung a garland of shoes around her neck. According to Fulvatibai, she was tortured because she refused to give a false statement to the police that she invited had the girl to her house and locked her in. She claimed the girl had an affair with the boy and the two had entered the house in her absence. However, the girl's family in a counter-complaint alleged Fulvatibai of inviting the 17-year-old to her house where Madan was already present and he molested her. SP (SC/ST) M.L. Solanki told The Indian Express that Fulvatibai was severely beaten up and paraded half-naked with a garland of shoes. Four women have been arrested and

the police are looking for Madan, an OBC, who is at large. The police have also booked Fulvatibai for abetment to molestation on a complaint from the girl's father. The girl told the police Fulvatibai had invited her home when she was returning after immersing a Durga idol at night. A team of state women's commission has left for the village to investigate the matter. The commission said it saw no reason to disbelieve the girl's statement but felt the women should not have taken law into their own hands. A police official said the village panchayat met after the incident and wanted Fulvatibai to give a statement to the police that would save the girl's honour. When she refused to toe the majority line, the women decided to teach her a lesson, he said. Ramesh, the girl's brother, has also been identified as an accused. (Indian Express 5/10/06)

Discrimination divide: Untouchability still alive in Gandhi's land (2)

Ahmedabad, October 4: Shailesh Solanki, a Class VII student of Lodhariyal Primary School, a zila panchayat school in Lodhariyal, Sanand, has only one worry about school. And it's not his impending exams. It is the discrimination he faces from teachers almost every day during the time mid-day meals are served. Reason? His caste, for Solanki belongs to the 'Valmiki' caste, under the Scheduled Tribes category which is shunned by the Koli Patel community, an OBC caste that forms the majority in the village. Solanki says, "We are not allowed to sit with children of the other castes. We are always asked to sit separately. This is done every time we are served food at noon. Even the food served to us is less in quantity." If this is a glaring example of untouchability being practised in a state where Gandhiji was born, there are more such stories. Parul Solanki, a Class V student who is also a Dalit, says, "Every morning we have a prayer ceremony at the school but we are seldom asked to participate in it. We watch while other children take part." Parul adds that she has never questioned the teacher on this. Ajay Solanki, a Dalit studying in Class V, says, "We are always made to sit apart from the rest of the class by the teachers so that there is no contact between us and other students." Shailesh Nanjibhai, another student, says, "I and other students like myself are not allowed to participate in events like 'Garba' during Navratri or any other event." However, school authorities deny it all. Goverdhan Patel, principal of the school says, "Nothing like what the children describe is ever practised here. All students sit together and eat during the meal." Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat, Gajaraben Patel agrees and says, "I do not know why children say they are being discriminated, it is probably because of their immaturity." She adds, "I only go the school when I have a specific reason otherwise I rarely visit the school." (Indian Express 5/10/06)

Dalit icon Kanshi Ram no more (2)

New Delhi: Bahujan Samaj Party founder Kanshi Ram died here early Monday morning after a protracted illness. The 72-year-old bachelor-politician, who became an icon of Dalit empowerment in his lifetime by catapulting the BSP as a major player in the politics of North India, was cremated at Nigambodh Ghat here in the evening. Amid the chanting of Buddhist hymns, his protégé and present BSP chief Mayawati lit his funeral pyre as thousands of his tearful followers shouted slogans like "Kanshi Ram Amar Rahen." Mayawati stands guard over the body of the BSP founder in New Delhi on Monday S Sabu | Pioneer, Top leaders from across the political spectrum, including Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul, BJP leader Sushma Swaraj and former Prime Minister IK Gujral attended the funeral. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Leader of Opposition LK Advani and several Union Ministers had driven to Mayawati's residence at 11 Humayun Road to pay floral tributes to the departed leader even as President APJ Kalam sent a condolence message. Suffering from multiple ailments like stroke, diabetes and hypertension, Kanshi Ram had been virtually bedridden for more than two years. He died of a heart attack at 12.30am at Mayawati's Humayun Road residence. The BSP founder, whose life was never free of controversies, found himself in the middle of one even after his death. As Mayawati announced he would be cremated at the Nigambodh Ghat here, some of his family members alleged foul play and demanded that they be allowed to perform the last rites. They even went to the Delhi High Court but did not succeed in getting a post-mortem ordered. However the court allowed them to attend the last rights "under police protection." (Pioneer 10/10/06)

BSP leader lived and died for his mission (2)

In the early Nineties, his unobtrusive presence at the State Guest House in Lucknow did not invite much attention. His press conferences were sparsely attended and low on "news" content. He would invariably hold his pen in vertical position to demonstrate the supremacy of upper caste and then swing it to the horizontal position to emphasise the need for equality. The next few years, however, changed it all. After the 1993 elections in Uttar Pradesh, Kanshi Ram got catapulted to the centre stage of politics and his Bahujan Samaj Party became a key player in the Mulayam Singh government. His press conferences got increasingly crowded. The news content rose proportionately and his mere arrival at the State Guest House created ripples in political circles. His pen, however, remained with him and so did his philosophy. Kanshi Ram will always be remembered as the man who elbowed the national parties out of Uttar Pradesh, replaced communalism with casteism — and that too, when Ayodhya fires were burning bright — and introduced the era of coalitions in the state. The BSP first tasted power in 1993 when it struck an alliance with the then fledgling Samajwadi Party and emerged to become a major ally in the Mulayam Singh government. Within two years, the BSP formed its own government after the high drama that was enacted in the same State Guest House on June 2, 1995. It was Kanshi Ram's foresight that made him forge the unbeatable dalit-backward alliance — an alliance that could have changed the face of the country had it not fallen prey to overriding ambitions. In June 1995, when the BJP agreed to extend outside support to a BSP government Kanshi Ram was in hospital. From his hospital bed in Delhi, he supervised the formation of the first BSP government and the coronation of his would-be-successor Ms Mayawati. With the passage of time, he gradually allowed Ms Mayawati to take charge of his mission and his party, ensuring her acceptability at all levels. (Asian age 10/10/06)

Special measures taken to rehabilitate Dalits: Govt. (2)

JAIPUR: The Rajasthan Government on Monday claimed that it had taken special measures to rehabilitate Dalit families affected by recent floods in Barmer district and refuted allegations that Dalits were being thrown out of rehabilitation camps and there was widespread discrimination against them in relief and resettlement. Reacting to a news report, "Floods fail to wash away hatred against Dalits", published in these columns on Sunday, Director Information and Public Relations Amar Singh Rathore said the accusations were "completely baseless and factually incorrect". He asserted that the State administration was committed to providing all possible relief to all affected citizens. The news item had quoted the fact-finding report of a monitoring committee appointed by the Dalit groups of the State that visited the flood-affected areas in Barmer recently. The Centre for Dalit Rights (CDR) and other Dalit bodies had charged that there was an all-pervading prejudice against Dalits and they were being excluded from the Government survey to assess the damage. Mr. Rathore in a communique to The Hindu said the district administration and State Government had been sincerely working to provide relief to the affected citizens ever since large parts of Barmer and Jaisalmer districts bore the brunt of 600 mm of rainfall for three days in August. As soon as the district administration issued warning about heavy rains in Barmer, including the villages mentioned in the news report, Dalits were shifted to relief camps along with other affected villagers. "Initially, all marooned people were evacuated by the Army and put up in temporary camps. Any allegation of discrimination is tantamount to casting aspersions even on the Army, which is unthinkable." Mr. Rathore said the CDR office-bearers did not contact Barmer Collector Subir Kumar, who is overall in charge of relief operations; Divisional Commissioner B.L.Arya; Principal Secretary Urban Development, Lalit Panwar, who was sent to Barmer to supervise relief works; Relief Secretary R.K.Meena, or any other senior officer having responsibility of monitoring relief operations. (The Hindu 10.10.06)

Centre wants more from pvt sector for SC/STs (2)

New Delhi : The Centre does not seem very happy with the affirmative actions of industry like skill development and training for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry wants the industry players to offer more to reflect the spirit of quota in the private sector. The Ministry will get back to the industry afresh, seeking more effective measures on part of the industry to ensure a fair presence of SC/ST in the private sector. "The industry's gesture is praiseworthy, but too little and too late. The Government wants the industry players to come out with measures that make difference in terms of increasing the presence of SCs/STs in

the private sector. Developing the skills of about 100 engineers hardly makes any difference. The number is too little and there is no commitment if they would be given the jobs too," sources in Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry told The Pioneer. Ministry, that has regularly been getting queries about the prospects of the quota in the private sector, is contemplating to work out an action plan that suits not only the industry but also helps the government save the face for itself after having developed the cold feet over the matter. Though a priority matter in the UPA's common minimum programme, there has not been headway on the issue of private sector quota. According to sources, the Ministry wants the industry to repackage the "proposed affirmative actions in such a manner that it accommodates the spirit of quota and ensure that the presence of SC/STs in private sector increases in due course."The present report of CII-ASSOCHAM does not adequately address this concern. There seems to be nothing binding on the industry. Everything appears to be voluntary," they added. (Pioneer 10/10/06)

Dalit gets Rs 4.5 lakhs for deaths (2)

Nagpur, Oct. 12: Over 12 days after the merciless lynching of four members of the Bhotmange family of village Khairlanji in Bhandara district, the Maharashtra government has woken up and paid compensation of Rs 4.5 lakhs to the victims' kin. The Maharashtra government on Thursday paid compensation of Rs 4.5 lakhs to Mr Bhaiyyalal Bhotmange, whose wife Surekha (44), daughter Priyanka (18), and sons Roshan (23) and Sudhir (21) were killed in mob frenzy on September 29. The cheque was handed over by Maharashtra minister for social justice Chandrakant Handore. Speaking to reporters in Nagpur later, Mr Handore said the incident was clearly a case of atrocity against dalits and hence compensation was paid as per the Atrocity Act. Under the provisions of the Act, a compensation of Rs 2 lakhs is paid for the death of each earning member of a family and Rs 1 lakh for the death of each non-earning member. The compensation payable to Mr Bhotmange was Rs 6 lakhs for the death of two earning members and two non-earning members of the family, Mr Handore said. However, only 75 per cent of the total amount due is paid to the next of kin pending the disposal of the case, hence the cheque for Rs 4.5 lakhs, the minister explained. Mr Handore said Mr Bhotmange owned five acres of land in the village. The owner of the adjacent field wanted to have a passage through the middle of the field, and would not make do with the passage provided by Mr Bhotmange along one edge. The dispute was deliberately allowed to aggravate and ultimately assumed the form of mob frenzy against a particular section of society to which the Bhotmange family belonged, Mr Handore said. The police had arrested 32 persons in this connection, and two or three other suspects were absconding, he said. All the suspects were from the same village, he said. (Asian Age 13/10/06)

Waiting for job card, starving Dalit cremates 3 of own (2)

BANWARA (GAYA), OCTOBER 12: By the time Tulsi Bhuyian, 50, of Banwara village received his job card for the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on October 6, he had cremated his wife Gita Devi and his newborn granddaughter. In just two days, the landless Dalit labourer saw three members of the family die. "They were sick and weak. There was nothing to eat in the house for the last three days. There is no work and so no money to buy food," he said. Though Sherghati SDO Durgesh Nandan said that these were not hunger deaths and Tulsi's wife was suffering from TB and daughter-in-law from jaundice, District Magistrate Jitendra Srivastava admitted there have been administrative lapses. "The mukhiya and the panchayat sewak have been served show-cause notice why job cards were delayed and why no work was done under the Employment Guarantee Scheme," Srivastava told The Indian Express. He said he could not yet establish if the deaths were caused by starvation but admitted that the Bhuyian family was "very very poor" and "there may be an element of truth in the allegations". No one denies Tulsi Bhuyian's claim that there was no work, and no food. When officials reached the house after the deaths, they did not find any foodgrain. Not just him, but six other musahar families of Banwara too had very little to eat. They were given rice and flour by government officials. There was hardly any work available for the last couple of months for 40 families of landless labourers in this village. The NREGS, launched in February, remains a virtual non-starter. The SDO too admitted that there was very little work and too much of poverty. Job cards to 28 villagers were delivered on October 6, though they had applied a couple of months ago. On some of the job cards, the entries were back-dated. In May, there was work to strengthen a canal under the food-for-work

programme. The job card showed each of them received 5 kg of rice worth Rs 32.25 and cash of Rs 35.75. It adds to Rs 68 as stipulated under the NREGS. "But we received no foodgrain. We got only cash which varied from Rs 20-25 each day. The Mukhiya said that it was according to the measurement of the soil they had dug", said Tulsi (Indian Express 13/10/06)

Dalits to embrace Buddhism, Christianity (2)

Nagpur: The All-India Conference of SC/ST Organisations, Lord Buddha Club and the All-India Christian Council will organise mass conversions here on Saturday where a large number of Dalits plan to embrace Buddhism and Christianity, SC/ST Conference president Udit Raj and Council chief Joseph D'Souza said on Friday. The copies of the anti-conversion laws passed by BJP-ruled States would be burnt on the occasion, Mr. Raj and Mr. D'Souza said. told a joint press conference. Several international human rights activists from different organisations would be observing the conversions on Saturday, Mr. Raj said. (The Hindu 14/10/06)

Mayawati to embrace Buddhism (2)

New Delhi: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati and her followers will embrace Buddhism after the BSP gains an absolute majority at the Centre. Ms. Mayawati announced this on Monday after the conclusion of the seventh day rites of party founder Kanshi Ram which were conducted according to Buddhist traditions at her New Delhi residence. Addressing the press, she said that although Kanshi Ram did not convert to Buddhism, he was Buddhist by belief. It was exactly 50 years ago, on October 14, 1956, that Babasaheb Ambedkar converted to Buddhism. "It was Manyavar's dream to see the BSP in power at the Centre, and in the States, before the 50th anniversary of Babasaheb's conversion. Unfortunately, that did not happen," she said. What was the connection between political power and religious conversion? The BSP chief said power was essential to spread any faith. "It is not about me becoming a Buddhist. I could do it today but it would be just me. We have to spread the faith for which absolute majority at the Centre is a pre-requisite." Ms. Mayawati said she lit the funeral pyre of Kanshi Ram because both she and her mentor strongly believed in gender equality. "It was his view, and also mine, [that] boys and girls are equal in all respects. If a girl can discharge other responsibilities, there is no reason why she cannot perform the last rites of her near and dear. I believe that my gesture is an example for other women; by lighting the funeral pyre of my guru I have laid the foundation of future social transformation." (The Hindu 17/10/06)

'Untouchable' panchayats finally get chiefs who won't resign (2)

CHENNAI, OCTOBER 19: Most of them were "sponsored" candidates put up by the "upper caste Thevars", but the four "reserved" panchayats of Keeripatti, Pappapatti and Nattarmangalam in Madurai district and Kottatchiyendal in neighbouring Virudhunagar district will finally have presidents for the first time in a decade. While P Periyakaruppan was elected president of the Pappapatti panchayat, P Ganesan was the successful candidate for Nattarmangalam. Both were sponsored by the Thevars, but have sworn not to tender their resignations. In Keeripatti, M Balusamy was elected unopposed after the nominations of two other candidates backed by the dominant caste were rejected on scrutiny. In Kottatchiyendal, one of the two nominees put up by the Thevars withdrew his nomination facilitating the other being elected unopposed. All the four panchayats, reserved for the Scheduled Castes, had been notorious for election boycotts. On several occasions, candidates put up by the Thevars resigned the day they were elected, making a mockery of the panchayat elections being held every six months for the past decade. Few Dalits even dared to stand for election and those who did fled their villages never to come back following threats to their lives and ostracism. Nearly 20 elections had been held in these panchayats so far. But not a single one yielded a president who lasted for more than a day. The dominant Thevars have been demanding de-reservation and have ensured that no Dalit occupied the president's chair. Last April, V Azhagumalai, propped up by the Thevars, tendered his resignation as Keeripatti panchayat president barely five minutes after assuming office. Earlier, in April 2002, Karutha Kannan quit soon after taking charge saying he had done so in accordance with the wishes of the villagers who voted for him. (Indian Express 20/10/06)

Boycotted Dalits of Kadkol have none to fall back on (2)

KADKOL (BIJAPUR DISTRICT): Seven year-old Chaitra and her younger sister Anjali have rashes all over their bodies. Their parents Sangappa Ka-nal and Yallawa believe the children have measles. Asked why they had not consulted a doctor, tears fill their eyes. "We hardly have enough food to feed them, how can we arrange money for medicines? They will survive if their fate is strong," says Sangappa. Sangappa's is one among around 80 Dalit families in Kadkol village of Basavanabagewadi taluk in Bijapur district against whom there is a social and economic boycott by caste Hindus. Most of the Dalits are agricultural labourers. They worked under the village landlords till the boycott was imposed on them on July 25, the day they dared collect water from the village tank. Before that they had no access to the tank, and non-Dalits used to pour water from it into their vessels. When at last they fought and gained access to it they lost all means of livelihood. The landlords, mostly caste Hindus, stopped giving them work. Shops and flourmills were shut for them. An undeclared restriction came into force at the doors of fair price shops under the public distribution system. "Now, even if they open the shops and flourmills to us, we don't have either money to purchase essential commodities or cereals to grind," said an elderly woman. (The Hindu 21/10/06)

'Dog caste' row in Kerala (2)

Thiruvananthapuram, Oct. 23: A village officer in Kottayam has been suspended for issuing a certificate stating that a barber of the locality was born in the "dog" caste. The barber, P.C. Vijayan, had sought a caste certificate from the village officer of Perumbaicode last November to avail of financial assistance from the municipality to build a house on his plot. As per the directives of the village officer, Mr Vijayan also produced his school certificate. The village officer examined the school certificate, in which Mr Vijayan's caste was given as "Shurakan (Malayalam for barber)". However, when Mr Vijayan was issued the caste certificate, he was shocked to note that his caste was given as "Shunakan", which means dog. It is not known whether the error was inadvertent or deliberate. But when Mr Vijayan approached the village officer and pointed out the error, the latter refused to correct it. "I pointed it out as soon as I got the certificate, but the official said that if I wanted to change it I should give a notification in the government gazette," he said. Since then, Mr Vijayan has knocked at many doors to get the mistake corrected. But the officials have not budged. The error has ensured that he was taken off the priority list of beneficiaries for housing loans from the municipality. After Mr Vijayan's story was telecast by a TV channel, the district collector asked the revenue divisional officer to inquire into the matter. The village officer was suspended on the basis of the RDO's report. However, Mr Vijayan is not angry with the official and has not lodged a complaint. He prefers to see it as a humorous episode. (Asian Age 24/10/06)

UP Govt orders fresh probe into rape by SDM father (2)

New Delhi, October 23: The Uttar Pradesh Government has ordered a fresh inquiry into the sensational case of a 25-year-old Dalit woman who has accused her SDM (sub-divisional magistrate) father of raping her and unleashing a reign of terror against her husband's family to avenge her escape. Pratima, a science graduate, had approached the National Commission for Woman (NCW) nearly a month ago. Although the authorities in Lucknow are yet to respond to NCW letters, Pratima was called by the Director General of Police Bua Singh and Chief Secretary Navin Chandra Bajpai to Lucknow recently. "They gave me a patient hearing and have promised a fair inquiry into the false cases lodged against my husband's family and also my personal exploitation by my father," she told The Indian Express. An officer of the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police has been given the charge of the inquiry. Pratima has alleged that her father Birendra Kumar, SDM of Derapur in Banda district of Kanpur, had repeatedly raped her for one year and the police authorities did not pay heed to her several complaints. Buckling under SDM's influence, inquiry officers would inform her father about it and eventually she would be made to deny having made such a complaint. Finally, she had escaped and married a distant relative's son. Pratima's petition with the NCW said her "powerful father used his influence to allegedly kill her brother-in-law and got several false cases lodged against her in-laws." In between, she was allegedly abducted and raped by her father again and only a habeas corpus petition filed by her husband set her free. Pratima, who is seven-month pregnant, has been offered a job by the DGP. "They arranged a job for me for Rs 15,000 per month in a sugar mill

and assured full security to the family."Fearing attacks, Pratima and her husband have taken refuge in Delhi. However, maintaining her scepticism, Pratima said: "I want the false legal cases against my husband's family withdrawn to feel secure." The NCW has decided to send a special team to Lucknow to conduct an independent probe. (Indian Express 24/10/06)

Dalits resolve to reclaim land (2)

JAI PUR: Dalit groups in Rajasthan have resolved to reclaim the land rightfully belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the State. After cases of untouchability, maximum instances of Dalit atrocities in Rajasthan pertained to those related to land, charged the activists assembled here to discuss human rights issues. The activists, brought together by the Centre for Dalit Rights (CDR) from various parts of Rajasthan, noted that cases of untouchability continue to dominate the list of cases filed under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. However, the land-related issues came second, with growing instances of dominant caste persons forcibly taking over land belonging to Dalits. Such cases are said to be maximum in Jodhpur district, against which the State Government had reportedly launched a drive in September last. Figures for the past two-and-a-half years presented by CDR Chairperson P.L.Mimroth said land issues accounted for as many as 238 out of a total of 863 cases registered in Rajasthan during the period. Many Dalit activists had to leave their land and villages because they stood up and fought against the atrocities perpetrated on them by the dominant castes, he said. "Rajasthan has maximum vacant land. Let us occupy that land and put up temporary sheds. Land ownership is the only way to break untouchability," said Paul Diwakar, convener of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, addressing the gathering. "Land struggles are crucial for Dalits. We have to lay our claim on the land," added Mr. Diwakar, who extolled the expertise of Dalits in crafts and farming. "In India we are facing untouchability on a day-to-day basis. Every minute five atrocities are committed against Dalits in the country," Mr. Diwakar said pointing out that the situation of untouchability had become worse than ever. "These are the worst of times as far as the caste-based discrimination in the country is concerned." (The Hindu 26/10/06)

Happy Birthday Lord Macaulay, thank you for 'Dalit empowerment'(2)

New Delhi, October 25: He's the Big Mac for the Dalit intelligentsia — reviled as the ugly face of English imperialism by detractors, exalted by intellectual renegades. Lord Macaulay, denounced for trying to dare promote English among Indians, to make them "intellectual slaves" of the British Empire, celebrated his 206th birthday today with merriment, joviality and jesting, in the heart of the city. It was a birthday party organized by Chandrabhan Prasad, Dalit intellectual and activist, who hails Macaulay as the Father of Indian Modernity, for it was after the introduction of his English system of education in 1854, that Dalits got the right to education, he says. As sodas popped and the whisky poured (aptly called, Teacher's Scotch) Prasad led his guests - a motley mix of Dalit poets, singers, academia, a sprinkling of the international media, social scientists Ashish Nandy, Gail Omvedt - to the centrepiece of the party's action. The unveiling of a portrait, English, the Mother Goddess, painted by Dalit artist Shant Swaroop Baudh. Said Bhan, "Today, English-speaking Dalits and Adivasis are less disrespected, therefore, empowered by Goddess English, Dalits can take their place in the new globalised world." Bhan has three reasons for revering Macaulay - his insistence to teach the "natives" English broke the stranglehold of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic teaching, a privilege of only the elite castes and, he argued, for the European kind of modern education, with focus on modern sciences. "Imagine, if we had only followed indigenous study," said Bhan, "we would be like Afghanistan or Nepal today." "I certainly do not agree with some of Bhan's thesis," said an aghast Nandy, "but I certainly support every oppressed community or individual's right to pick up any weapon, be it political, academic or intellectual incorrectness, to fight the establishment. It's the sheer audacity of it that makes it so forceful." Dalit poet Parak sang a couplet to the portrait - a refashioned Statue of Liberty, wearing a hippie hat, holding a massive pink pen, standing on a computer, with a blazing map of India in the background - Oh, Devi Ma/ Please Let us Learn English/ Even the dogs understand English, to cheers and laughter, even as Lord Macaulay's portrait, looking the perfect English buccaneer, gazed below. Bhan then declared his new intention - the painting will be printed on calendars and distributed at all Dalit conclaves and community meetings. "Hereafter, the first sounds all newborn Dalit and Adivasi babies will hear from their parents is - abcd. Immediately after birth, parents or a

nearest relative will walk up to the child and whisper in the ear - abcd," he said mirthfully.
(Indian Express 26/10/06)

Direct action needed to lift SC/STs: Panel of Ministers (2)

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 29: Not satisfied with the reservation policy for Scheduled Castes, UPA ministers have advocated direct action programmes such as dedicated schools, preference in government purchase and fully-equipped villages for the socially backward groups. A group of ministers, chaired by Fertiliser & Chemicals Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, has recommended that 136 Special Navodaya Schools (SNV) be set up in SC-dominated villages. For the Scheduled Tribe, it has pegged the SNVs at 72. After analysing the 2001 census, the Committee of Ministers for Dalit Affairs proposed that a special plan be drawn to ensure Dalit children have access to "quality education". To that end, it has suggested SNVs — where 60 per cent of the seats would be earmarked only for SC/ST children — be set up in villages where SC/ST population is 40 per cent or more. The 2001 census showed that literacy among SCs was 54.69 per cent and among STs 47.1 per cent compared to 68.81 for others. Though the literacy gap had reduced in 1991-2001 decade, yet illiteracy remained large and required sustained efforts to bridge it. On the economic front, the panel has backed Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's proposal to extend the Madhya Pradesh model of reserving one-third of government's requirement from SCs and STs. The recommendation is that the Ministry of Small Scale Industries draw up a "statutory procurement policy" to implement the MP example of setting aside 30 per cent of government purchases from SC and ST traders and suppliers. The Prime Minister's Office had put forward the proposal in July 2005 with the hope that "thousands of lakhs of self-employed youths will benefit immediately". (Indian Express 30/10/06)

RSS organ calls for Dalit priests (2)

NEW DELHI: : With neo-Buddhist movements attracting renewed attention in the aftermath of Kanshi Ram's death, the RSS has called for the appointment of Dalit priests at Hindu pilgrim centres. RSS journal Panchjanya has said in an editorial in its latest issue that "the time has come for a consolidation of Hindu brotherhood". Describing Dalits as "warriors of faith", it said the "disadvantaged should be suitably trained and made high priests of Hindu centres along with those who call themselves Brahmins due to their birth". The suggestion is indicative of a realisation in the parivar that a proactive approach is needed to check the alienation of large sections of Dalits from the mainstream. (Indian Express 30/10/06)

Dalits threaten satyagraha against temple entry ban (2)

Bhubaneswar : The Ambedkar- Lohia Vichar Manch on Wednesday announced to hold a satyagraha against the prohibition of Dalits into the Jagannath temple at Keradagada in Rajnagar block of Kendrapara district. Manch chairman Sangram Mallick told reporters here that it was an unfortunate matter in the State and the Manch would hold a satyagraha and a public meeting there on November 19. "While Dalits are free to enter temples elsewhere in the district, upper caste people have been barring them from doing so at Keradagada," he said. Meanwhile, about 1,200 Dalits threatened to embrace some other religion if they were not allowed into the temple. The Dalits who are peeved at being barred from entering the Jagannath temple have floated a new outfit 'Dalit Manch' to take forward their stir. The agitating Dalits belong to Sandhapalli, Ostia, Balisinghpatnam, Sanabada, Gopalpur and Keredagarh GPs. Sources said they had decided to launch a peaceful agitation on 'Kartik Purnima'. However, District Collector Kashinath Sahu said he had already asked the local tehsildar and police to look into the matter. Refusal of entry to Dalits into the temple had triggered off tension in the area a year ago after some women were allegedly penalised for 'desecration,' following which the NHRC had asked the local administration to step in. (Pioneer 2/11/06)

Dalits protest killing of family (2)

Nagpur: The killing of four members of a Dalit family in Bhandara district of Maharashtra on Monday sparked violent protests by Dalits, who set on fire several vehicles and fought pitched battles with the police. At least 15 persons were arrested in connection with arson and violence, police said. The protesters set on fire several vehicles, including a police van and state transport

buses, at the Indora locality here, they said. "The police resorted to cane charge and fired about 45 teargas shells to disperse the protesters," Additional Commissioner of Police Bhushan Kumar Upadhyaya told PTI here on Monday night. He said some policemen received minor injuries in stone pelting. The number of Dalits injured in the lathicharge was unknown. Four members of a Dalit family were allegedly killed by non-Dalits at Khairlanji in Bhandara district two months ago. The Government on Monday ordered a CID probe into the incident, Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil said in Mumbai. Trouble broke out when the protesters burnt tyres to block traffic on the busy Nagpur-Jabalpur National Highway. (The Hindu 7/11/06)

Caste war feared in Chambal (2)

Bhopal : After the notorious Gadaria gang has killed five more people of Gujjar community in Chambal ravines a caste-war is suspected to be brewing in the region. The Home Minister has requested the Gujjars not to retaliate. In the recent past, 19 people of the Gujjar community have been gunned down by the Gadarias. This has alarmed the community and the issue is likely to be raised strongly in the Gujjar Maha Panchayat scheduled in Bhopal on November 7. Minister of State for Home Nagendra Singh while talking to The Pioneer said that he has assured stern action against Gadaria gang and requested the Gujjars not to retaliate against the incident. However, the Gujjars staged a chakkajam on the Agra-Mumbai highway demanding immediate action against the Gadarias. A former dacoit Malkhan Singh claimed that it was a police stunt to claim having killed Dayaram. The police officials posted in Chambal ravines are not concentrating on eliminating the dacoity menace. "When I had surrendered, the State Government had claimed that several facilities would be provided and the cases would be closed, but they were merely promises," he added. Singh stated that police had been harassing the relatives of dacoits, which provoked them. Meanwhile, Gujjar Vikas Sangathan State president Virendra Singh Harsana while talking to media persons here on Monday, said that 19 people of the Gujjar community had been killed so far in the ravines and this was a serious problem. "We are chalking out a strategy to tackle this problem and strict action would be taken against Gadarias and police. We would take up the issue with the State Government because the working of the police has been exposed," he added. He claimed that people of the community are up in the arms over the incident and the Gujjars were ready to face any consequences. (Pioneer 7/11/06)

Gadariya gang suspect in Gurjar killing (2)

BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 6: Five people belonging to the Gurjar community were shot dead yesterday allegedly by the Dayaram Gadariya gang in the dense forest of Shivpuri in northern Madhya Pradesh. The five villagers were apparently kidnapped in the day when they were on their way to Mohna village and shot dead late in the night in Karhara village under the Gopalpur Police Station, IG (Gwalior) Sarabjit Singh told The Indian Express today. "We suspect the involvement of the Gadariya gang," he added. They accused the villagers of being police informers. The gangsters had come in search of one Dashrath Gurjar, who they alleged tipped the police about Gopal, a member of their gang, who was killed by the police in an encounter. They left a note at the spot saying that Dashrath be handed over to them. Curiously, the note bore the signature of Dayaram and five other dacoits. A couple of months ago, the Madhya Pradesh police had claimed that they had succeeded in eliminating the gang leader that has committed several kidnappings and murders in the northern part of the state. To make their claim doubly sure, the police had got Dayaram's DNA tested in two different laboratories. Recently, they announced that the DNA tests proved that Dayaram had been eliminated. Singh said the note could be a sham, left at the spot to mislead the police and the villagers. He added the police had no doubt that Dayaram had been killed. Meanwhile, the Gurjar community blocked a highway demanding that they be provided security and weapons. They alleged that the police acted indifferently when they went to lodge a complaint about missing villagers yesterday evening. A police inspector was suspended. (Indian Express 7/11/06)

Dalits denied entry into another temple (2)

Bhubaneswar : Even as the issue of Dalits' entry into a temple continues to be controversial in Keradagada and neighbouring villages of Rajnagar tehsil in Kendrapara district, yet another upper caste rule debarring Dalits from a Hindu place of worship has sparked a fresh row, with the

matter becoming a subject of the National Human Rights Commission's (NHRC) consideration. Acting on a report that Dalits were denied entry into the temple at Chauriberhampur locality of Kendrapara town, the NHRC has asked the District Collector to conduct an inquiry into the matter and submit an action-taken report within four weeks, official sources said. The NHRC's report stated that about 400 Dalits of Chouriberhampur were being denied religious rights as upper castes did not allow them to have darshan of the deity. Chiouriberhampur is located close to the District Collectorate. As a mark of protest against the upper caste fiat, the Dalits have built a temple of their own in the locality, the report stated. (Pioneer 7/11/06)

Village quiet after it ganged up to hack Dalit mother, 3 children (2)

KHAIRLANJI (BHANDARA), NOVEMBER 7: A day after mobs ran riot in Nagpur, protesting the killing of four of a Dalit family, an eerie silence has descended on Khairlanji, the village in Bhandara district where the family was hacked to death. No one here's willing to talk, not anymore: "We haven't seen anything. So what can we say?" Policemen, who weren't there when they were needed, simply wave you on. In eastern Vidarbha's paddy belt, Khairlanji has never been the same ever since the Bhotmanges, one of the three Mahar families in the village who became Buddhists, objected to people cutting across their field to get to their own. The Bhotmanges, who had land in Khairlanji, had moved in from neighbouring Ambagadh. This simple assertion of their right annoyed others in the village. Cutting across castes, they all ganged up against the Bhotmanges. Surekha Bhotmange, a mother of three, sought the help of Siddharth Gajbhiye, a cousin from neighbouring Dhusala, in the matter and this annoyed the villagers even more because Gajbhiye had already had a fight with one of them over a money transaction. Some villagers chased and beat up Gajbhiye. The Bhotmanges, especially Surekha, stood up for Gajbhiye and testified against the villagers, leading to their arrest. On September 29, Surekha, her sons Sudhir and Roshan and daughter Priyanka were hacked to death and their bodies thrown in a nullah. Priyanka and Roshan were stripped before they were killed. The attackers showed no mercy to even Sudhir who was visually impaired. Bhaiyyalal, Surekha's husband, was the only one to survive. "I was in the field when I heard people shout. When I rushed to my hut, I saw some 50-60 people attacking my family." Realising he couldn't take on the mob, Bhaiyyalal fled, seeking shelter with relatives in nearby Warthi. "The local police should have gauged the seriousness of the development that led to the incident and acted to prevent it. They are at fault," says a police officer. (Indian Express 8/11/06)

Khairlanji protests: Cops look for the invisible hand (2)

NAGPUR, NOVEMBER 7 : Have the front activists of ultra-Leftist groups taken over the protests against the Khairlanji killings? That is the question nagging the Nagpur Police though. In a flare-up in the city yesterday, protests in Dalit-majority areas against the killing of four members of a Dalit family turned violent. The police resorted to lathicharge to disperse the rioting mob. The protests shifted to the satellite town of Kamptee around 11 pm. The situation became so tense that the police had to call in a State Reserve Police company and impose curfew, which is still in force. Today, similar protests were staged in Yavatmal city leading to imposition of curfew in Patinagar and Ambikanagar. Bhandara district also witnessed minor incidents of violence. "These kinds of protests are generally organised by leaders wanting to take credit for the same. We do not know any such leaders here. So, who are the people who instigated the mobs yesterday is what we trying to find out," said Commissioner of Police SPS Yadav here today. "It was an entirely new kind of protest organisation. Handbills were distributed first — through backdoors — and suddenly there was a crowd of some 3,000 people in Indora," Yadav said. The handbills categorically declared that henceforth the agitation won't be allowed to be led by any politician and it called upon the Dalits to exact justice for themselves. "The Hindus will rape and kill our daughters and sons. Shall we remain mute?" it asked. Response to the appeal was instant. Protesters stoned the house of north Nagpur Congress MLA Nitin Raut, himself a Dalit, who was the first one to visit Khairlanji and raise the issue. Throughout the day, protesters allegedly made abusive calls to a Hindi channel correspondent asking him to cover the protests and threatening to kill him he didn't do so. When asked if the instigators were non-political, Yadav said, "I can't say everything now. We hope to catch them soon." A lot of misinformation was also being spread. (Indian Express 8/11/06)

All-party felicitation for Dalit panchayat presidents in Chennai (2)

CHENNAI/MADURAI: Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi and leaders of the allies of the DMK will get together here in Chennai to felicitate the panchayat chiefs of Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattarmangalam in Madurai district and Kottakatchiyendhal in Virudhunagar district. The felicitation meeting 'Samathuva peruvizha' will be held on November 13. Local body elections were repeatedly turned into a farce in these panchayats with Dalits either refusing to contest or resigning after being elected. Caste Hindus did not support the idea of a Dalit heading their village and had repeatedly defeated attempts at holding elections. All that has changed. The concerted efforts of the government, the political leadership and the district administration have yielded results and the Dalits now occupy the chairs of panchayat presidents in these four villages. Local Administration Minister M.K. Stalin, who led the efforts to ensure that each of the villages accepted a Dalit as their president, said that it was a great victory for the downtrodden that the Dalits functioned freely as presidents in these four villages. "I would rate this a bigger achievement than the DMK-led front sweeping the State [in the local body polls]," Mr. Stalin told The Hindu. Important people in each of the villages and officials who were part of the campaign to persuade the villagers to accept a Dalit as their president — numbering 50 from each of the villages — were also invited to participate in the Chennai function. The Government would foot the travel and boarding cost. The Chief Minister had given an assurance in the Assembly during the last session that elections would be held in the villages and the Dalits would head them for five years. He had also stated that a function would be organised in Chennai to felicitate them. The Chief Minister and he wanted all political parties to participate. (The Hindu 8/11/06)

After Nagpur, Dalits take protest to Mantralaya (2)

After the violent protests in Nagpur on Monday, Dalit activists and others on Wednesday demonstrated inside Mantralaya, the State secretariat, to demand action against those guilty of killing four members of a family in Khairlanji village in Bhandara district in September. The protestors, mostly women, entered the building while a meeting of the State Cabinet was in progress. They shouted slogans against the government and the police and demanded action against those responsible for the incident. Police later arrested them. Khairlanji village in Mohadi taluka of Bhandara district was witness to a brutal incident on September 29 when four members of the Dalit Bhotmange family were stripped naked and killed by a mob. According to reports, Bhaiyalal Bhotmange had opposed his land being taken over by the village head. Bhaiyalal's wife, Surekha, 44, daughter Priyanka, 18, sons Roshan 23 and Sudhir 21 were first stripped naked, dragged from their hut to an open ground and hacked to death. Bhaiyalal was an eyewitness to the entire incident. Surekha and Priyanka were beaten and allegedly gang raped. The first post-mortem report said that the women were not raped, according to the police. While Priyanka's body was found on September 30, police retrieved the other bodies the next day. Bhaiyalal's son Roshan was doing his graduation and his daughter has studied up to the 12th standard. She was declared the best NCC cadet in her school. According to a statement put out by Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, an NGO, the family came to the village 10 years ago and two out of their five acres was grabbed by the upper caste village head. Whenever they raised their voice against this, Bhaiyalal and his wife were beaten by other villagers. Republican Party of India leader Ramdas Athavale on Wednesday met Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil to demand quick justice in the case. Later talking to reporters, Mr. Patil said that despite taking appropriate action in the case, there are tensions in the area and violent protests. (The Hindu 9/11/06)

Surviving kin names MP, MLA (2)

Nagpur, Nov. 8: Mr Bhaiyyalal Bhotmange, whose entire family was wiped out in village Khairlanji in Bhandara district of Vidarbha over a month ago, has named several local political bigwigs as conspirators and demanded the death sentence for the culprits involved in the lynching of his wife, daughter and two sons. In what was probably his first formal interaction with the media here on Wednesday, Mr Bhotmange named a member of Parliament and two legislators, besides leaders from his village, as being involved in the conspiracy to eliminate his family. Asked what his demand was, Mr Bhotmange snapped, "Hang the culprits!" However, he quickly added that he

wanted justice to be done without injustice being meted out to anyone. He initially justified the violence accompanying the protests over the Khairlanji massacre, saying this would build pressure on the government to act, but on prompting from human rights activists accompanying him, corrected himself by decrying the violence and justifying peaceful demonstrations. Mr Bhotmange appeared visibly shaken and disturbed by the unprecedented tragedy that had befallen him. He has still not recovered from the shock. Haltingly, he recalled the terrible happenings of the night of September 30. He choked with emotion thrice from the haunting memories of the awful incident, especially when he recalled the moment when he saw the naked body of his 18-year-old daughter, Priyanka. He is so terrified by the events that he flatly refuses to return to his home in Khairlanji. "I will never return to Khairlanji," he asserted. Activists accompanying Mr Bhotmange said, he had to be hospitalised and treated for trauma soon after the incident and has still not recovered from the shock. He could not walk without being supported and spoke in a low voice. He feels the police is deliberately dragging its feet over the investigations into the incident because it wants the case to be hushed up. Mr Siddharth Gajbhiye, the police patil of a neighbouring village and a distant relative of Mr Bhotmange's wife Surekha, who was initially targeted in the land dispute that led to the lynching, also recalled in detail the sequence of events before September 30. Mr Gajbhiye has threatened to file a defamation case against the people who claimed he had not paid wages to the labourers who had worked on his field. (Asian Age 9/11/06)

Congress seeks report on Vidarbha deaths (2)

New Delhi, Nov. 8: The Congress high command has sought a report from the Maharashtra government and the Pradesh Congress Committee on the issue of killing of dalits at Khairlanji village in Vidarbha region. Replying to a question on attacks on dalits and its strong reaction in Nagpur, the second capital of Maharashtra, Congress spokesman Satyavrat Chaturvedi said, Hamne Pradesh Congress aur sarkarse vistrut report maangi hain (We have asked for a detail report from the MPCC and the state government). He did not give any hint whether the AICC would be sending its representatives to visit the actual spot and meet the affected persons. After bomb blasts in Mumbai and Malegaon, the killing of dalits in Vidarbha is causing concerned to the Central leadership. Significantly, the incident took place in the midst of the local body polls being held in phases. And it is at a time when the Congress is planning to hold a public meeting of party president Sonia Gandhi in Vidarbha, expectedly in Nagpur, after her meetings at Latur and Chakur in Marathawada region. Meanwhile, women activists of dalit groups, on Wednesday, staged a noisy protest at the mantralaya in Mumbai, to demand action against those involved in the killing of four members of a dalit family at Khairlanji village. According to a report, the women, who were protesting outside the venue of a Cabinet meeting in the secretariat, were taken into custody when some of them tried to force their way into the meet, officials said. Since Monday, angry dalit activists have been indulging in arson and violence in and around Nagpur over the killings, prompting the police to use batons and teargas to disperse them. Curfew has also been imposed in the area. (Asian Age 9/11/06)

Dalit buried for lack of funds for last rites (2)

Jaipur, Nov. 10: Eighty-year-old Mangu Nayak, a dalit, breathed his last on Thursday at a Hanuman temple located in the Scheduled Caste-dominated Dongeshvar colony in Masuda town, under Ajmer district. However, Mangu's body was buried and not cremated as his family could not afford to bear the expenses of last rites. Neither the local administration nor Hindutva organisations show any interest in performing his last rites. "People informed the local administration of Mangu's death, but no one bothered about it," Kishan Natraj, a local, said. Mangu was living alone after his wife died years back. Survived by a daughter, Mangu used to earn his bread by temple in a temple. As his daughter was pregnant and living in Ajmer, his son-in-law Rama Nayak came to Masooda, but he too expressed his helplessness in arranging wood and pure ghee to be used in the funeral. Rama Nayak said he was a daily wager, thus, it was difficult for him to spare money for the funeral. The villagers tried best on their part, but could not arrange for the last rite. "At last, the people decided to bury him instead, Mr Natraj said. "The residents of area the brought a piece of cloth and wrapped his body and Mangu was buried in an open land," he further said. Masooda sarpanch Pushkar Tripathi, who was away when the

incident took place, made efforts to perform last rites of Mangu according to the Hindu religion. But Mangu's son-in-law refused saying there was no way that a body will be dug out to perform last rites. "It is shame for us as there are many rich people in our area and Hindu organisations, but no one turned to help, Mr Natraj, who himself is a dalit, said. (Asian Age 11/11/06)

Dalits defer plan to force way into Jagannath (2)

Bhubaneswar, Nov. 11: Dalits have decided to postpone their programme to forcibly enter the Jagannath temple at Keraragard village in Orissa's Kendrapara district in protest against the age-old restrictions on their entry into the 300-year-old shrine. Ambedkar-Lohai Bichar Manch president Sangram Mallick said the dalits agreed to put their programme on hold after the district administration assured them of an amicable settlement of the issue within a week. Earlier, the dalits had resolved to forcibly enter the shrine on November 19 to avenge the humiliation of four dalit women by the priests and upper-caste people when they entered the temple's sanctum sanctorum last year. On Saturday, police and district authorities discussed the issue with leaders from both sides. Before this, Mr Rabindra Narayan Bhanjadeo, a scion of the Rajkanika royal family, and Mr Managobinda Jena, manager of the Rajkanika palace, on Wednesday sought help from Dibyasingh Dev, gajapati of Puri, to settle the matter. Dalit leader Rabindra Nath Sethi asked the district collector to take action against the upper-caste people who were allegedly preventing his community members from entering the temple. The district authorities have assured the dalits to probe the matter and take necessary action against the guilty. (Asian Age 12/11/06)

Dalit women key to land rights fight (2)

New Delhi, Nov. 10: Dalit women have been at the forefront of dalit land rights movements and whenever they have participated in these campaigns they have been much more successful, advised Mr Nicholas, the convenor of the National Federation for Dalit Land Rights Movement, at a seminar at the India Social Forum in New Delhi on Friday. He said at the seminar, which discussed "Caste and Class Attacks on Dalit Land Rights," that dalit women must always be involved in land rights movements. Manas Tena, also a convenor of same federation, said there are two areas where the federation is fighting for land rights of dalits and these include cases where dalits hold possession of the land, but do not have right of the land and the other where the land belongs to them on paper, meaning they have rights, but they do not have possession of the land. "We are working at three levels — first is the local level, second is the national level and finally at the South Asian level where dalits from Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan also face the same problems in their countries." Elaborating on dalit land rights movements, Mr Nicholas said the dalits are about 162 million strong in India and of these about 70 per cent do not own any land. So, we are agitating for land to be given to the dalits for their upliftment. He said it has been observed that dalit women retain their land much better than their male counterparts and added that this was also historically true. (Asian Age 11/11/06)

Dalits' murder: AIDWA plans stir (2)

NEW DELHI: The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) has sought a CBI inquiry into the killing of four Dalits in Khairlanji village in Maharashtra earlier this month. In a statement here on Tuesday, after its vice presidents Brinda Karat and Kalindi Deshpande returned from the site, the AIDWA called upon the Central Government to take note of the matter. It also decided to raise the issue with the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women. The Association will launch a nationwide agitation to ensure that the culprits are brought to book. Criticising the manner in which the State Government handled the issue, it called for the dismissal of the police officers guilty of dereliction of duty. Two women and two men of the same family were stripped naked and paraded in the village before being brutally murdered allegedly by members of the upper castes, but the police refused to take cognisance of the incident, the statement said. The organisation condemned the manner in which Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra R.R. Patil dismissed the protests by the Dalit community as the work of 'naxalites.' These remarks were an attempt to overlook the caste prejudice of the police, it said. (The Hindu 15/11/06)

CBI asked to probe Khairlanji killings (2)

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra Government has decided to hand over the probe into the killing of a Dalit family of four at Khairlanji village to the CBI. "A letter requesting the CBI to take over the investigation would go today," Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil, who also holds the Home portfolio, told reporters on Tuesday. He said the decision followed several Dalit organisations' demand that the CBI be entrusted with the case for a transparent and impartial investigation. Mr. Patil said the State CID would continue to investigate till the CBI took over. (The Hindu 15/11/06)

Dalit converts can't claim minority status too: Jaitley (2)

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 14: Keeping pace with varying suggestions from UPA ministers for empowerment of Muslims, the BJP reinforced its counter-offensive today. Party general secretary Arun Jaitley contended the move for conferring quota benefits on Dalit Muslims and Christians "is a constitutional charter for conversion, which would bring about a constitutional upheaval." Jaitley, a former law minister, said Dalits and minorities are governed by different schemes of constitutional provisions. The SCs have been given special rights under Article 16. On the other hand, minorities have been provided with certain privileges under Articles 29 and 30, which allow them to set up their own educational institutions and reserve seats for themselves beyond even the mandatory 50 per cent ceiling. "The Dalits who have converted to other religions cannot claim benefits from both routes," Jaitley said. He cited a 1950 Presidential order promulgated under Article 341 (clause-1) of Constitution to buttress his argument. The order says "no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism shall be deemed to be a SC." The BJP leader said the rationale for providing a constitutional protection to Dalits rests on the premise that social disability and cultural suffering has been an unfortunate characteristic of Hindu society. "When a Dalit converts to a faith which professes to possess a casteless character, the stigma of being a Dalit goes," he said, adding the issue has been settled by the SC in the Soosai versus Union of India in 1983. The apex court laid that a person belonging to SC upon conversion to Christianity is not entitled to welfare assistance. (Indian Express 15/11/06)

Police were lax in probing Khairlanji killings: Dalit activists (2)

BHANDARA: Despite the Maharashtra Government's decision to hand over the Khairlanji case to the CBI earlier this week, Dalit leaders and activists say the Government's reaction is too late. The matter was being investigated by the CID since November 7 and only two days back did the State decide to include two policemen as co-accused in the case. The incident occurred on September 29 around 6.00 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. at Khairlanji village in Mohadi taluka of Bhandara district. When Bhaiyalal Bhotmange saw the mob attacking his family, he fled to his relative Siddharth Gajbhiye's house in the nearby village of Dhusala and called the police station at Andhalgaon. Before this, Bhaiyalal's wife Surekha, who was later killed, had already alerted relatives at Varti village and also informed Siddharth Gajbhiye's brother Rajendra who too had called the police. Bhandara superintendent of police Suresh Sagar acknowledged that the local police had been lax in investigating the case. Though the head constable Baban Meshram went to the village at 8.30 p.m. on September 29 and found no one from the Bhotmange family, the matter was not investigated. He should have registered a suo motu offence and he and other officers should have searched all night for the missing people. There was not even a station diary entry made in this respect, he pointed out. Seventeen-year-old Priyanka Bhotmange's body was found on the morning of September 30 in the canal, about 10-12 km away from Khairlanji. The matter was entered in the accident death register. In the meanwhile, Bhaiyalal had reported to the police that his family was missing. (The Hindu 19/11/06)

Hague meet focus is dalit women rights (2)

New Delhi, Nov. 18: The National Federation of Dalit Women and the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, in association with Dalit Network Netherlands, will organise the first-ever conference on the rights of dalit women at Hague from Monday. A delegation of 80 persons representing voluntary organisations and community leaders from various states will take part in the two-day conference apart from representatives of the community from Nepal and Pakistan. The conference aims to communicate the state of affairs of the dalit women who roughly comprise two per cent of the world's population, according to a functionary of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). "The empowerment of dalit women is closely linked

to the realisation of their human rights. The conference will strive on how the human rights of dalit women, violence against them and the millennium development goals are linked," said co-convenor of NCDHR, Dr Vimal Thorat. The conference will also give an opportunity to the Indian voluntary organisations to network with the international organisations to highlight the plight of the dalit women who face discrimination at the social, gender and economic fronts, Dr Thorat said. Solidarity and advocacy programmes will be evolved at the conference, apart from devising strategies on improving the condition of the dalit women. Besides, lobbying with international human rights groups will also be undertaken to get human rights of dalit women high on agenda of national and international policy makers, she said. "I will struggle for the cause of dalit women and seek the support of international organisations so that others do not face the discrimination that I have suffered being a member of the marginalised community," said a community leader from Gujarat, Ms Majula Parmar. Ms Parmar will deliver an account of her life at the conference to highlight the plight of the community in Gujarat. Another community leader from Andhra Pradesh, Ms Sridevi Bangaru, said, "Dalit women suffer discrimination due to gender, social and economic condition. Caste decides profession and patriarchy decides marriage and economic deprivation leads to exploitation on the job front." Ms Bangaru is also scheduled to address the international conference. (Asian Age 19/11/06)

Dalit panchayat chief 'auctioned' (2)

Madurai, Nov. 19: The brouhaha over the celebrations held recently by the DMK government to pat itself for getting the upper castes to accept Dalit presidents in four caste-ridden panchayats has hardly died down. Now, is emerging from a village nearby that a Dalit woman president had been "enslaved" to do the bidding of an upper caste Thevar. At an "auction", allegedly held at the village square on Saturday, the half-a-dozen "elders" of Kodikulam village, about 20 kms from Madurai, sold the "controlling rights" on the newly elected woman Dalit president Balamani Veeman to a local Thevar landlord Karuppusamy Ayyavu, who offered Rs.2.16 lakh to the village committee as his bid. "Karuppu", as he is called in the village of about 5000 people, can pay up the bid amount from "income" in course of time, it is alleged. "He will pay the committee, whose members will spend a part of this Rs.2.16 lakh towards some development works and pocket the rest. In return, he will take the commissions from the works that Balamani will sign as the panchayat president during her five-year term," said M. Thangaraj, CPM secretary of the Chellampatti union under which Kodikulam falls. Karuppu was forceful in denying that such an auction took place. "I have been chosen by the village only to assist Balamani because she is illiterate and her husband is old. I will go around with her to make sure she efficiently handles her duties and responsibilities as the panchayat president. There was no auction and I am not paying Rs2.16 lakh," he said. Marxist Thangaraj, however, insisted that Karuppu has paid an "advance" of Rs.10,000 with the promise to settle the balance of his Rs.2.16 lakh bid in a couple of weeks. "Kodikulam is not an isolated instance. The Pottulupatti panchayat president's post was auctioned well before the elections held on October 15. A Thevar farmer called Amaithi had paid Rs 2 lakh for the post and went through a farcical exercise to get himself elected as president," he told this newspaper. (Asian Age 20/11/06)

Dalit women set to air programmes (2)

MACHNOOR (Medak district): A quartet of Dalit women, sing "jagadam pata", a song on a fight between a local landlord and a Dalit tenant, which unfolded in their village of Machnoor. In the adjoining room of the domed studio, 'General' Narsamma moves the knob on a mixer, occasionally helped by Algolu Narsamma. These Dalit women are all set to broadcast their hour-long programme from the country's first full-fledged Community Radio Station set up here by a non-governmental organisation, Deccan Development Society (DDS). The Union Cabinet cleared the proposal to licence them on November 16. There are at least three such community radios set up but all of them depend on AIR for broadcasting. But for the licence, everything was in place with UNESCO providing part of the funds. The studio building was made with locally available low cost material, two 16 and 4 channel mixers and stereo recorders, two 100-watt FM transmitters with a coverage area of 30 km radius reaching out to 100 villages, were already set up. "Licence for the community radio was denied all these years citing security reasons. Now that the policy got the Cabinet nod we are immensely happy. It will herald democratisation of India's airwaves.

People's radio has become a reality", said P. V. Satheesh, Director of DDS. "It bridges the gap as mainstream media has no space for them", observed Vinod Pavarala, Dean of Communication, University of Hyderabad. Making radio programmes has been a child's play for these tape-recorder wielding Dalit women, as they have canned 500 hours of them so far. "It's our radio and we will broadcast programmes made by us for our benefit. We will talk about seeds, crop diversity, organic farming, health, hygiene, women's problems and sending children to school, virtually everything that touches the community," said 'General' Narsamma brimming with confidence. There is expectation that the radio tailored to community needs would not only lend voice to the voiceless marginalised community but revive interest in the dying oral folk traditions like "Bichapola patalu." (The Hindu 20/11/06)

TN orders probe into panchayat auction (2)

CHENNAI, NOVEMBER 19: Shocked by reports of a panchayat president being auctioned in Kodikulam near Madurai on Saturday, the Tamil Nadu Government has ordered a probe into the issue. The Kodikulam panchayat was reserved for a Dalit woman in the just-concluded civic polls. Speaking to The Indian Express, state Rural Development and Panchayat Raj secretary, Ashok Vardhan Shetty, said: "I have asked the Madurai District Collector to probe the matter. We will definitely take care of it. We will appoint a co-signatory (from outside the village) in the place of the vice-president of the panchayat to ensure that no one controls the president." Madurai District Collector T Udayachandran visited Kodikulam today and spoke to the villagers about the auction in the village square. A farmer, Karuupusamy Ayyavu Thevar, won the auction "for controlling" the panchayat president, Balamani Veeman, a poor farm hand, with his highest bid of Rs 2.16 lakh. The village elders had decided that the highest bidder would use the president, an illiterate Dalit woman, as "a rubber stamp". Udayachandran also ordered the Usilampatty DSP, S Balasubramaniam, to probe the issue and submit a report. Balasubramaniam said he had visited the village this evening. "Naturally, they will be scared to talk. But we will find out who took part in the auction and take action against them," he warned. (Indian Express 20/11/06)

Caste tensions move beyond Khairlanji village (2)

Koholgaon (Gondia district): Khairlanji is not the only village to witness a dispute between Dalits and other castes over access through their land. In Koholgaon village, a newly dug road cuts through land allotted to build statues of the Buddha and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. This has angered the 22 Dalit families living there as the land, less than an acre, had been donated by a local villager in 1971 for a Boudh Vihar. The plan to build the Boudh Vihar was approved at a gram sabha in 1997. Despite this, work on the road began in May this year under the government-sponsored Sampoorna Gram Rozgar Yojana (SGRY). The Dalit families complained to the block development officer (BDO) of Arjuni Morgaon taluka (where the village is located). In response, he sent a letter to the sarpanch saying that the construction of the road was unlawful. He said the work should be stopped or else the village would have to face the consequences. Despite the BDO's order, work on the road continued. In May, when construction began, people protested and filed a complaint with the police but no action was taken. In July the villagers went to court and although the matter has been admitted, a final order has not yet been passed. According to Nilkanth Raut from Koholgaon, a Panchayat Samiti member and a local Congress MLA are the ones responsible for initiating the construction of the road. Koholgaon, 130 km from Nagpur, is a village with about 150 to 200 houses mostly comprising the Kunbi and Teli communities as well as 22 Dalit families. On September 21, things came to a head when the tehsildar refused to stop work without a court order. However, people tried to stop work and almost succeeded. The next morning, a villager, Sadashiv Goguskar, abused the Dalit families. Usha Tembhurne said that she and four other women went to the police station to file a complaint against him. The police then returned to the village with the women to get more witnesses. By then a huge crowd had gathered and they started attacking the Dalit families. Ramchandra Tembhurne, who was beaten badly, dislocated his shoulder and another woman, Pushpa, fell unconscious. The beating happened in front of the police. Most of the women and older persons fled into the nearby forest. (The Hindu 21/11/06)

Dalits to storm Orissa temple (2)

Bhubaneswar, Nov. 21: Orissa dalits have rejected a request by the Puri Gajapati king to postpone their forced entry into the Jagannath Temple at Keradagad in Kendrapara district until the return of Sankaracharya Nischalananda Saraswati to the state. The Puri seer is out of station for some religious discourses in other parts of the country. The dalits have decided to enter the temple on Sunday. The dalits had earlier threatened to enter the temple on November 19 to avenge the "humiliation" of four dalit women, who were allegedly assaulted by the temple priests and some upper caste persons, after they entered the sanctum sanctorum. The administration had urged them to postpone their plan for a week, within which, it was assured, that the issue will be sorted out. "The administration has failed to break the ice between the upper caste persons in the village and the dalits, for which we have decided to enter the temple on November 26," said Sangram Mallik, state president of the Lohia-Ambedkar Bichar Manch. According to the manch, around 2,000 dalits from different parts of the state will congregate at Keradagad that day and enter the temple in a planned manner. As per the plan, young girls, followed by married women, will first step into the temple premises. Others will then follow them, singing devotional songs and playing musical instruments. The National Scheduled Caste Commission had last year directed the administration to take action against those who had assaulted the dalit women. Mr Mallik alleged that the district administration, as well as the local royal family, were patronising the upper castes' discrimination against dalits. "It is very unfortunate that the district administration and the royal family, who are supposed to be protectors of the rights of dalits, are behaving in a partisan manner. Instead of doing the needful, it appears that they are adopting an upper caste appeasement policy," Mr Mallik said, adding that there was no going back from the proposed temple entry programme on Sunday. Chief priest of the temple, Narayan Das, said, "Dalits are not allowed to enter the 300-year-old temple established by the king of Rajkanika. Pre-Independence, the temple was managed by the priests appointed by the royal family and post-Independence, it is being managed by a trust. The dalits have no right to interfere in the age-old practice of the temple management." (Asian Age 22/11/06)

Is Gajapati above Constitution, ask Dalits (2)

Bhubaneswar : Stepping up their campaign against the Kanika royal palace over the entry of Dalits into the age -old Keredagada Jagannath Temple in Rajnagar block of Kendrapara district, Dalit Mukti Andolan and Ambedkar-Lohia Vichar Manch jointly asked the Gajapati king Dibya Singh Deo on Wednesday if he was above the Constitution. He was advising the people to wait till the Puri seer's return from Allahabad and on his advice the next course of action should be taken over the temple entry. Sources in Gobardhan Pitha informed The Pioneer the seer would be back on December 28. Sources also revealed after the reaction of Dwaraka seer Swaroopananda Saraswati in favour of Dalits, it would not be proper on part of the Puri seer to raise a voice against them. "Unless, Guruji reaches here, we can't do anything," Gobardhan Pith sources added. The Dalits have postponed their mass temple entry date till November 26 instead of their plan for November 19 after the Kanika King Rabindra Narayan Bhanj Deo sought the reaction of the Mukti Mandap and the Gajapati King. But there is no report yet from the Mandap while the Gajapati King fell into controversy by suggesting the Dalits to wait Puri Sankaracharya's return. A long wait has created resentment among the Dalits, which compelled them to stick to their demands, sources said. The Dalits have urged the Government to provide full security to them at the time of temple entry and they have also requested the Kendrapara district administration to turn down the proposal of the Gajapati King. "The Gajapati King has no rights to advocate for the Kanika King and such attempts have violated the Dalits' fundamental as well as constitutional rights," Dalit Mukti Andolan general secretary Pratap Sahoo said. Ambedkar Lohia Vichar Manch's Kedar Ray also criticised the Gajapati King as well as the Kanika King and suggested them to be careful about the Dalits' rights in society. (Pioneer 23/11/06)

State's record dismal, Mulayam plays the Dalit Muslim quota card (2)

LUCKNOW, NOVEMBER 22: Gearing for Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh next year, the Mulayam Singh government is all set to get a resolution adopted by the House which will ask the Centre to include Dalit Muslims and Christians in reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This demand is very similar to the one made by Union Minister for Minority Affairs A R Antulay, first reported by The Indian Express. And only two days ago, Andhra Pradesh

Chief Minister YSR Reddy had written to the PM, seeking quota for Muslims. Incidentally, UP ranks at the bottom when it comes to representation from Muslims in virtually every sector, from education to employment. The proposed resolution, which was supposed to be tabled today but will now be brought before the House early next month, states that "depriving Muslim and Christian Dalits of reservation is against Section 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India". UP Revenue Minister Ambika Chowdhary told The Indian Express: "It was supposed to be tabled in the House by the Chief Minister himself but he didn't get time to do it today. Now the CM will present it on December 4". The item was included in the day's Assembly agenda. Minister for Muslim Waqf Shakir Ali, who maintained that "there is no Dalit as such in the minority community", pointed out that the "backward classes among the Muslims and Christians live a more miserable life than any Hindu Dalit... they must be included in the list of SCs so that they can avail the benefit of reservation." Ali said that the UP Assembly will adopt a resolution and forward it to the Centre. But already a section of the Muslim clerics are calling the move "unIslamic", saying governments must "avoid raking up an issue which will create chaos instead of benefiting the minority community." All India Muslim Personal Law Board's Khalid Rashid Firangimahali alleged that the government was trying to divide the community on caste lines by branding some from the community as Dalits. "There is no Dalit, no caste structure as such in Islam. Such a move of the government will promote caste conflict in the community," he said. Indian Express 23/11/06)

MP Dalit girl refused to drop rape charge, burnt (2)

SAHALWADA (PIPARIYA), NOVEMBER 23: A 15-year-old Dalit girl, who refused to drop a rape charge against an upper-caste youth, was burnt alive by the alleged rapist when she was sleeping at her home late Tuesday. Asha Katiya told the police before she died of her burns at a hospital in Pipariya on Wednesday that Chhote Singh Rajput had threatened to kill her if she did not change her statement in court. "I will burn you, set your house afire and cut your father into pieces," her mother, Shashibai, quoted the 22-year-old as warning them when she was with her daughter in the field on Tuesday afternoon. Late in the afternoon, riding the only horse in the village, Chhote Singh sped past the girl's house and around 9 pm, doused the victim with kerosene from an opening in the roof of a room where she was sleeping and threw a burning matchstick, Anita, the victim's aunt, told The Indian Express on Thursday. Anita claimed she saw Chhote Singh escape into the fields. Unlike the Dalit family which is very poor, the Rajput family owns two acres of land. The horse belongs to someone else but Chhote Singh rode it occasionally. Asha had been allegedly raped in July and the court proceedings were on in Hoshangabad, the district headquarters about 90 km away. She was to appear in the court in a month. The family had a tough time arranging for a vehicle to take Asha to the hospital as she lay outside her house. The family members alleged that though there are many vehicles in the upper-caste dominated village, no one came to their rescue and they had to call one from Sandia, about 8 km away. "They thought if Asha dies the rape case will have no meaning," Asha's grandmother Narbadi alleged. The victim's mother said the family was all prepared to leave the village the next morning but Chhote Singh struck before that. The family, however, did not inform the police or the villagers about the threat to their life. The upper-caste villagers deny the charges levelled by the Dalit family. "He was with us when the incident happened, there are many eyewitnesses," Chhote Singh's parents Laxaman Singh and Jeerabai claimed. He wanted to douse the fire but returned when he learnt that the girl's father named him, Govind Sharma, a neighbour claimed. "The police are simply not recording our statements, they are going by what the girl said before dying, they should investigate the case properly," Harish Sharma, a villager said, suggesting that the girl committed suicide. "It was a mistake all of us commit in our youth," he said of the rape charge. According to him, the family was getting frustrated because they could not find a match for her. SP Ved Prakash Sharma and DSP (SC/ST) J S Jaggi said the police are going by the dying declaration where the victim clearly named Chhote Singh. The alleged killer was arrested on Wednesday afternoon from his home, a proof the villagers say proves his innocence. "He would have fled the village had he committed the crime," sarpanch Govind Singh Rajput said. (Indian Express 24/11/06)

Dalit manch puts off temple entry move (2)

BHUBANESWAR: Even as tension continued to prevail in Keredagada and surrounding villages in Kendrapara district, Ambedkar-Lohia Vichar Manch on Saturday announced its decision to postpone the programme of the entry of Dalits into the local Jagannath temple. In a statement, the Manch, which has been spearheading the movement, said it had decided to postpone the programme following High Court's order of status quo at Keredagada temple. The Manch had, earlier, announced that Dalits of Keredagada and nearby villages would enter the Jagannath temple on Sunday. The Manch said it would chalk out its future course of action only after the High Court disposed of the petition on the issue. The case is likely to come up for further hearing on November 29. Acting upon a petition by the Kendrapara administration, the court had ordered that no one, except the priests and Sevayats, be allowed entry into the temple till the disposal of the petition. The Vichar Manch had initially announced to organise the temple entry programme on November 19. However, it had shifted the date to November 26 after discussions with the local administration. The district administration had come under criticism from various quarters for not facilitating entry of the Dalits into the temple. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) had also announced its decision to participate in the temple entry programme of the Dalits. The administration had found itself in a tight spot in view of the strong opposition from the upper caste people of the area to the proposed entry of the Dalits into the temple. The issue was also raised in the State Assembly by Biju Janata Dal legislator Ranendra Pratap Swain during the zero hour on Friday. Stating that not allowing the Dalits enter the temple amounted to violation of their Constitutional rights, Mr. Swain demanded that the issue should be discussed in the Assembly. (The Hindu 26/11/06)

Boy raped, killed (2)

Jammu : A minor boy belonging to scheduled caste was allegedly raped and murdered by an unidentified person in Jinder Mehlu in RS Pura near Jammu on Saturday. The incident came to light when villagers recovered body of seven-year-old Suraj Kumar, son of Swaran Lal, a farm labourer, sending shock waves in the entire area. (Pioneer 26/11/06)

Public worshipping Lord Jagannath from outside (2)

Kendrapara : The public of Keredagada and its adjoining areas (Dalits and upper caste) alike, have been deprived of entering the controversial Jagannath Temple at Keredagada, following the High Court order on Friday in which the district administration was ordered not to allow public entry into the temple (except for servitors and priests). The High Court said this would continue till the disposal of a writ petition filed by the administration which is supposed to come up for discussion in the HC on November 29. An advocate of Aul area Akshay Kumar Mallick had filed a PIL with the HC stating the district administration and the local police had failed to protect the rights of the Dalits. On the other hand the upper caste people have been opposing the Dalits' entry into the temple. Admitting the PIL, the HC gave direction to the district administration to deploy minimum required force for maintaining law and order situation in and around the temple. According to the district administration they cannot allow the public in the temple as the HC has given order in this regard. At least two platoons of police have been deployed near the temple to avert any untoward incident. The public is worshipping the Lord from outside the temple and the process will continue till further orders of the HC. According to the public, it was the first time in the history of Keredagada that they were being deprived of entering the temple even if they were upper caste people. To worship the Lord now they have to see the idol of Lord Jagannath through the nine holes in the wall of the temple made by the then King of Kanika to give an opportunity to the Dalits to worship and see the Lord, informed official sources. Dalits are jubilant as the upper caste people are now worshipping with them. They should experience the pain of worshipping the deity from outside through the nine holes of the temple wall, they said. Meanwhile, the situation at Keredagada is still tense as the Dalits are hellbent on entry and the upper caste wants to restrict them. (Pioneer 27/11/066)

Dalit temple entry: Sadhus to meet Kanika, Puri kings (2)

Bhubaneswar : The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Sunday alleged that restricting dalits' entry into the Keredagada Jagannath Temple is violation of the provisions mentioned in Section 3 of

the Civil Rights Protection Act and urged the Government to solve the controversy between dalits and upper caste people in Kendrapara. Earlier, a ten-member delegation comprising Swami Lakshmananda Saraswati, Swami Ashimananda Saraswati, Swami Jiban Chaitanya and Swami Bhagaban Das visited Keradagada and discussed the issue with both dalits and upper caste people. The delegation said those opposing dalits' entering to the temple are anti-Hindus and are threat to communal harmony. "It was a pre-planned effort by some people with certain vested objectives to disintegrate Hindus by not allowing the dalits into the age old temple and VHP would not tolerate any kind of conspiracy against the dalits," VHP State secretary Gouri Prasad Rath said. Dalits have every right to enter any temple as they are Hindus and restricting them from doing so amounts to violating the Civil Rights Protection Act, he said adding criminal cases should be filed against those opposing their entry into the temple. "We have full faith on the High Court and it would take the sentiments of the people into consideration before announcing its verdict," Rath said. "We are criticising the opposition to dalits' entry into the temple and VHP would mobilise people across the State to fight against the devil designs of some groups," VHP spokesman Debasis Tripathy said. He made it clear VHP would continue to support the dalits. Meanwhile, VHP sources informed a delegation of sadhus led by the VHP would soon meet both the Puri king Dibya Singh Deo and Kanika King Rabindra Narayan Bhanj Deo over the dalits' rights of entry into the temple at Keradagada. It may be noted here the HC has ordered a status quo on the issue barring public entry (except the priests) into the temple till disposal of a petition filed by the administration. The case will come up for further hearing on November 29. (Pioneer 27/11/066)

Public hearing on land rights of Dalits in Rajasthan (2)

JAIPUR: The growing instances of dominant caste persons forcibly taking over the land belonging to Dalits and the land mafia transferring the land of Scheduled Castes and Tribes through clandestine and fraudulent methods were brought to light at a public hearing on Dalits' land rights here on Sunday. The Centre for Dalit Rights (CDR) and other Dalit groups, which organised the public hearing, resolved to reclaim the land rightfully belonging to SC and ST communities in Rajasthan and demanded that the Government acquire the surplus 'benami' land and distribute it to landless Dalits for cultivation. CDR chairperson P.L. Mimroth noted that the greed of higher castes to grab the land of Dalits was a major reason behind as many as 252 cases of atrocities and discrimination against Dalits in the State during the past two years. He said the State Government had failed to protect agricultural land of Dalits despite strict revenue laws being in force. Members of a "jury", headed by the former Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court, Justice M.L. Shrimal, observed after hearing 13 cases that a strong will of the State was required to protect the land rights of Dalits and expel trespassers and land-grabbers even by amending the revenue laws, if needed. The majority of the 74 cases brought to the public hearing pertained to influential people belonging to higher castes first encroaching upon Dalits' land and then transferring it in their name through forged documents. A land dispute in Habibwala village in Dausa district even led to the brutal murder of a Dalit Raigar youth. A Dalit victim, Jinsiram Bairwa, of Luharkheda village in Karauli district could not get possession of his land taken over by Gujjars despite a court order in his favour. In another case, the Land Allotment Committee of district administration in Biwai village of Dausa district gave title deeds of land plots previously occupied by Dalits to dominant caste persons. Dalits activists attending the public hearing pointed out that whenever the State Government allots land to Dalits, the relevant documents are not given to them, which weakens their rightful claim. Even if the entitlement is in the name of Dalits, they are not in de facto possession. When Dalits mortgage their land to banks and cooperative societies for getting loans and fail to make repayment on time, the banks and cooperative bodies sell the land in auction without waiting for the mandatory period. There are many cases in which the higher caste people purchase Dalits' land in the name of some Dalit person and reap the benefit. The dominant caste people often encroach on parts of Dalits' land in their neighbourhood taking undue advantage of their ignorance of the field boundaries and price of land owned. When Dalits, who borrow money from higher caste villagers, are unable to return it, the upper caste people grab their land. A demand was made at the end of the public hearing to amend the Benami Transaction Act, 1989. (The Hindu 28/11/06)

Atrocities on Dalits: Manmohan urged to convene meet (2)

NEW DELHI: Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Brinda Karat has urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to convene a high-level meeting of State Home Ministers to tackle atrocities on Dalits in the country in a mission mode. Her request came in the Rajya Sabha during zero hour. Raising the issue of the caste-based killing in Khairlangi village of Bhandara district of Maharashtra about a month ago, Ms. Karat appealed to all political parties to close ranks in dealing with the growing atrocities on Dalits. She said the Central Bureau of Investigation inquiry into the incident should be made "time-bound." There should be fast-track courts to speed up cases of attacks on Dalits and bring the guilty to book. Ms. Karat said the Khairlangi tragedy could have been averted had the administration and the police been sensitive and taken timely action. Instead, for two weeks no case was registered against the alleged perpetrators of the crime. Later, only two low-ranking police personnel were arrested and they were let off on bail. The post-mortem report of the two women did not reflect the atrocities committed on them including rape, she charged. She said when the Dalits came on the streets to protest the lack of Government action and the "doctoring" of autopsy reports, they were arrested. Even today they are in jail labelled as naxalites. "What is this? If people take to the streets, they are called naxalites. The Special Inspector-General told me when I visited the place that they were arrested for levelling allegations without evidence." Associating with Ms. Karat, members of the BJP and the Samajwadi Party demanded that those agitating for justice should be released. Sushma Swaraj (BJP) said the incident was doubly condemnable. (The Hindu 29/11/06)

'Dalit killings being probed' (2)

New Delhi, Nov. 28: Union minister of state for personnel Suresh Pachauri on Tuesday assured the Rajya Sabha that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has begun its probe into the dalit killings in Bhandara district in Maharashtra on November 25. The minister informed the House that the probe would cover all aspects of the incident and the guilty would be brought to the book. The issue was raised in Rajya Sabha by CPI(M) member Brinda Karat during the Zero Hour, who demanded a time-bound probe and punishing of the guilty persons. Ms Karat strongly condemned the state administration, including the police who she alleged had helped the accused to get bail and did not mention in the FIR of the brutal marks that were present on the body of the two women. Mr Pachauri said that the principal secretary of the Maharashtra government had sent a communication to the Centre on November 14 and the CBI had agreed to investigate the issue. "Our interest is in ensuring a fair and objective investigation by the CBI and punishing the guilty persons," Mr Pachauri said. Earlier, the Upper House unanimously condemned atrocities against dalits in the country, particularly the recent incident in Nagpur in which four members of a dalit family were murdered and their women dishonoured while the police and administration remained passive spectators. Expressing serious concern over growing atrocities on dalits, the CPI(M) has asked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to convene a meeting of state home ministers to deal with such incidents. Ms Karat also demanded that cases of dalit atrocities should be referred to fast track courts for speedy disposal. "When such incidents take place, they spread caste hatred. These incidents have become order of the day," Ms Karat claimed. Supported by members from other political parties, Ms Karat blamed the state administration and the police for the delay in filing an FIR against the culprits. (Asian Age 29/11/06)

DALITS

Dalit protests turn violent (2)

MUMBAI: Violent protests by Dalits on Thursday in Maharashtra, over the desecration of an Ambedkar statue in Kanpur, left four persons dead and many injured many. Throughout the day, mobs burnt trains and buses and threw stones, even as the police tried to bring the situation under control, calling in more forces and imposing curfew. In the morning, a group of protesters stopped the Deccan Queen, the train that runs between Pune and Mumbai, at Ulhasnagar as it approached the city. Passengers were asked to get down, and five coaches were set afire. This led to the disruption of services on the long distance line for several hours. Later in the day, another group set fire to a coach of a local suburban train. Services on the local and long

distance line were restored by evening. Director-General of Police P.S. Pasricha told reporters that a mob of over 7,000, trying to disrupt services, attacked railway installations and beat up the staff there. Police opened fire in the air at Bandra in Mumbai and at Mukundwadi and Naregaon in Aurangabad. Six buses were set on fire in the northern suburb of Mulund in Mumbai. The worst arson took place at Pimpri-Chinchwad near Pune. In all, about 100 buses were damaged. Two police station areas of Nanded, Pimpri-Chinchwad and Osmanabad were put under curfew till Friday morning. Dr. Pasricha said that about 50 persons and as many policemen were injured in stone throwing and lathicharge. About 2,000 persons, including over 400 in Mumbai, have been arrested. Both the DGP and Maharashtra Home Minister R.R. Patil would not hazard a guess about the causes of the sudden violence. They said the State intelligence was asked to find the reasons and the police would investigate the matter. Mr. Patil said Dr. Ambedkar was widely revered in Maharashtra. Therefore, nobody in the State would tolerate the desecration of his statue. (The Hindu 1/12/06)

CPI condemns Kanpur incident (2)

NEW DELHI: The Communist Party of India on Thursday strongly condemned the defacement of the statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Kanpur and demanded that the culprits responsible for this vandalism be booked and punished. Reacting to the resultant "worsening" situation in Maharashtra, the party Central Secretariat, in a statement, charged that the Vilasrao Deshmukh Government had "completely failed" to tackle the situation. It alleged that since the Kharilanjhi killings, the State Government was faulting. "It lacks sensitivity and political acumen to address the concerns of the Dalits and understand their strong feelings. Dalits are no more to tolerate the violations of human rights. The CPI condemns the police firing and large-scale lathi-charge in Maharashtra," the statement said. The party demanded adequate compensation to the kith and kin of those killed in the police firing and release all arrested Dalit activists. (The Hindu 1/12/06)

Paswan for stringent action (2)

LUCKNOW: As the reaction to the desecration of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar's statue in Kanpur on Tuesday night gathered further momentum in Maharashtra, the Union Minister for Steel, Chemical and Fertiliser, Ram Vilas Paswan, on Thursday justified the outpouring and described it as a good sign --- of Dalits becoming aware of human rights violation. On a visit to Lucknow in connection with a conference on 'Valmiki Samaj' (sanitation workers are drawn from this Dalit sub-caste), the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) president said Ambedkar was a national leader and any insult to him would not be tolerated. Demanding stringent action against those who desecrated the Ambedkar statue, Mr Paswan warned the Mulayam Singh Yadav Government that inaction on its part would be construed as the Government's connivance in the despicable act. The LJP had decided to stage a dharna at Ambedkar's statue in Lucknow on Friday in support of its demand. Later, a memorandum would be submitted to the Governor. The future course of action would be decided at a party meeting in New Delhi on December 4. On February 24, 2007, a rally would be held at the Ambedkar Maidan here. Mr. Paswan, whose party is trying to emerge as an alternative to Bahujan Samaj Party vis-à-vis Dalit politics in Uttar Pradesh stated that the Kanpur incident had exposed the failings in the BSP. Taking a dig at the BSP president, Mayawati, Mr Paswan remarked that the party had abandoned Ambedkar's mission and was more interested in completing Kanshi Ram's mission. Though the reaction to the Kanpur incident in the industrial metropolis was quelled by the police and the district administration which replaced the desecrated statue with a new one on Wednesday, the LJP and the BSP have been quick to capitalise on the issue. While the LJP conference adopted a resolution condemning the incident and demanding immediate arrest of the culprits, the BSP had indicated that the party would take up the issue, particularly, the killing of Dalits in police firing in Nashik and Ulhasnagar. (The Hindu 1/12/06)

Muslims ahead of dalits (2)

New Delhi, Nov. 30: Muslims are low on the development ladder but dalits are still on the bottom rung, as determined by social, educational and economic indicators. The high-level committee under Justice Rajinder Sachar has reached this conclusion in a report on the status of Muslims in India that contradicts widespread media speculation that Muslims had replaced dalits on the

development scale. Muslims exhibiting "deficits and deprivation in practically all dimensions of development" fall below the Hindu-OBCs, other minorities and Hindu- General (mostly upper castes) in almost all the indicators considered by the committee. West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Assam are the four states amongst those with a sizeable Muslim population where the situation has been described by the committee as particularly "grave" for the Muslims. Significantly, despite these "deficits", the Muslims have registered a lower infant mortality rate and sex ratio. The Sachar committee has stopped short of recommending reservation for Muslims, backward or otherwise. Instead, it has suggested affirmative action without giving it the status of a recommendation. The report has divided Muslims, in terms of their social structure, into ashrafs, who are those without any social disabilities; ajlafs who are equivalent to the Hindu-OBCs; and the arzals, equivalent to the Hindu dalits. The committee suggests that the ajlafs need "additional attention which could be similar to that of Hindu-OBCs". The arzals, in its view, "may be designated as Most Backward Classes as they need multifarious measures, including reservation, as they are 'cumulatively oppressed.'" Significantly, the report has not factored in the status of Muslim women in the report. It has recognised women as "the torchbearers of community identity" and, while speaking of "gender-based fear", has made no effort to grade the social, economic and educational development of women or recommend specific measures to address their specific concerns. Also, while noting the impact that insecurity and communal violence have on the community, the Sachar committee has failed to include specific recommendations to address this issue even though it has admitted that Muslims "fearing for their security" are choosing to live in ghettos. Police high-handedness and targeted communal violence, which the committee admits are a matter of concern in the community, have been dismissed in two paragraphs with no effort being made to deal substantively with these major issues in its conclusion or recommendations..... (Asian Age 1/12/06)

Violence in Surat, Osmanabad (2)

Ahmedabad, Nov. 30: A mob on Thursday pelted stones and damaged vehicles in the Pandesara locality here protesting alleged desecration of Dr B.R. Ambedkar's statue in Kanpur, the police said here. "A mob of about 50-odd people took out a rally in the area to protest the statue desecration," Surat police commissioner Sudhir Sinha said. "Members of this group became violent and pelted stones and damaged a bus and another vehicle at Prem Nagar and Dakshineswar temple area," he added. "Eight persons were arrested in connection with the violence," Mr Sinha said, adding that security has been reinforced in the affected areas. Meanwhile, curfew has been enforced for 24 hours in 12 localities of Pune's Pimpri-Chinchwad from 6.30 am on Thursday, police commissioner D.N. Jadhav told reporters here. He said the situation had been brought under control on Wednesday for sometime. But the agitation spread from one area to another, leading to violence at 44 places in Pune city and Pimpri-Chinchwad areas since Wednesday resulting to injuries to 13 policemen. Mr Jadhav said that 60 vehicles were damaged and set ablaze by agitators since the stir began in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. He also said that agitators blocked roads at a number of places in Pimpri-Chinchwad and in Pune station vicinity. The agitators threw burning tyres on the railway tracks at Khirkee when the Deccan Queen Express was going to Mumbai from Pune. The road block agitation affected train services and vehicular traffic between Pune-Mumbai in the morning. Mr Jadhav said that a senior police officer will be holding meeting with the dalit leaders with a view to finding a solution to the ongoing agitation. Curfew has also been imposed in Osmanabad, about 250 kilometres from here, after one person was killed in the police firing on Thursday. Meanwhile, the police fired into the air and burst teargas shells to disperse a mob after seven policemen were injured in stone pelting by agitators in Aurangabad on Thursday. One company of the State Reserve Police Force has been deployed in the city to maintain law and order. (Asian Age 1/12/06)

Dalits for quota in private sector (2)

NEW DELHI: Demanding the right to compulsory education with equal opportunities, a large number of Dalit leaders and activists on Sunday stressed that the quota system needs to be introduced in the private sector also as government jobs were shrinking due to privatisation and globalisation. The leaders were addressing a rally organised by the All-India Confederation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Organisations at Jantar Mantar here. Referring to the

killing of Dalits at Khairlanji in Maharashtra and desecration of the statue of Bhim Rao Ambedkar in Kanpur, they blamed the Government for "failing" to provide security to Dalits and backward people. Stating that the country could not grow until Dalits were given equal opportunities and brought into the national mainstream, the confederation chairman, Udit Raj, accused the Manmohan Singh Government of failing to fulfil promises made in the United Progressive Alliance's Common Minimum Programme on Dalits and backward communities. "Neither has the Government brought in any Act to strengthen reservation for SCs and STs in jobs, nor has it ensured reservation for Dalits in the private sector. It has also failed to fill vacant posts meant for them or bring special schemes for their social and economic uplift. The Union Government had constituted a Group of Ministers for making recommendations for reservation for Dalits in the private sector but suddenly it was dissolved. It is very difficult to understand what is restricting the Left-supported UPA Government from taking concrete steps for the uplift of Dalits and backward communities." Mr. Raj demanded that a caste certificate issued to an SC and ST candidate by one State for availing himself of the benefits of reservation in education and jobs should be made valid in all States. (The Hindu 4/12/06)

Dalits stick to rally plan (2)

MUMBAI: Dalit parties, mostly RPI factions, on Saturday rejected the Maharashtra Government's appeal to postpone their December 4 protest rally in Nagpur. They stuck to their guns at an all-party meeting called here by Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh. He appealed to the Dalits to hold the rally after December 6, death anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, in view of the fragile peace in the State. The Opposition Shiv Sena-BJP supports the rally, which coincides with the opening of the winter session of the Legislature in Nagpur. Later, briefing reporters on the outcome of the meeting, held in the wake of Statewide disturbances following desecration of an Ambedkar statue in Kanpur, Mr. Deshmukh said the Dalit leaders wanted to have wider consultations with their colleagues before making any promise. He said he was hopeful that his plea would be considered favourably as all demands by the Dalits in connection with the Khairlanji killings had been accepted. But Jogendra Kawade, MLC and leader of the People's Republican Party, said not all demands were accepted. One of them was the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil, who holds the Home portfolio. "We actually want the dismissal of the Deshmukh Government and imposition of President's rule," Prof. Kawade told The Hindu later. The Dalit leaders warned that any attempt to ban the rally would be counter-productive. Other Dalit leaders who attended the meeting included Ramdas Athavale, Sulekha Kumbhar, Rajendra Gavai, Arjun Dangle and Gangadhar Ghade. (The Hindu 3/12/06)

Dalit survivor calls on Sonia (2)

NEW DELHI: Bhaiyyalal Bhotmange, the lone survivor of the Dalit family killed in Khairlanji village in Bhandara district of Maharashtra, met Congress president Sonia Gandhi here on Saturday. Ms. Gandhi is understood to have assured him that she would personally follow up the matter. Mr. Bhotmange was accompanied by local Congress MLA Sewakbhau Vaghaye-Lakhani who said the entire village had ganged up against the Bhotmanges and only a brain-mapping test of the accused would reveal their real intent. Four members of the Bhotmange family were killed on September 29 over a land dispute. After the killings came to light and questions were raised over investigations by the local police, the Maharashtra police handed over the case to the CBI. (The Hindu 3/12/06)

Statue row: SHO shunted out, Dalit parties call for inquiry (2)

kanpur/nagpur, december 2: The Station House Officer (SHO) of Kakadeo area, where Dr BR Ambedkar's statue was vandalised triggering statewide violence, was replaced today while two constables were suspended. President of the Republican Party of India, Ramdas Athavale, who was put under "house arrest" in Circuit House here last night after his arrival from Maharashtra, threatened violent protest in Uttar Pradesh like those in Maharashtra, saying "atrocities against Dalits would not be tolerated". Athavale demanded an inquiry of the entire episode by a retired Supreme Court judge and arrest of the "real culprits". In Nagpur, meanwhile, with the police refusing permission for a proposed Khairlanji protest march on December 4, the opening day of the assembly session, the Sanyukta Republican Jan Andolan Samiti has decided to instead hold

a "massive peace rally" at the Deekshabhoomi. The rally will be addressed by RPI leaders including Prakash Ambedkar, Ramdas Athawale, Jogendra Kawade, Rajendra Gavai, T M Kamble, Gangadhar Gade and Umakant Ramteke. (Indian Express 3/12/06)

Statues desecrated in Ranchi; bandh today (2)

RANCHI, DECEMBER 3: After the protests over the desecration of Ambedkar statue in Kanpur subsided in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, a dawn to dusk bandh has been called in Ranchi tomorrow over the vandalism of five statues of Ganapati, Brahma, Shankar, Parvati and Durga at the Mahadeo Dham temple here on Saturday. The bandh was called by the BJP to protest against the vandalism and the failure of the police to arrest the culprits. "Essential services will not come under the purview of the bandh," said party Ranchi unit president Sanjay Seth. The statues were found broken yesterday. BJP leaders, including former chief minister Arjun Munda turned up at the temple to voice their concern. Party workers put up a blockade on the state highway and also at the railway station paralysing rail traffic till 12 noon. Ramesh Shukla, a priest at the Mahadeo Dham temple, said the management has decided to install new statues. "In place of these statues, we are going to install new statues," said , the priest of the temple. Meanwhile, the UP Government on Sunday ordered a magisterial inquiry into the desecration of a statue of B R Ambedkar in Kanpur. DGP Bua Singh and Chief Secretary Satish Agarwal said the state has taken up the matter seriously and efforts would be made to avoid such incidents in future. (Indian Express 4/12/06)

UP for including Dalit Muslims, Christians in SC category (2)

LUCKNOW: The Uttar Pradesh Government on Monday tabled a resolution in the Assembly, demanding that the Centre include Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians in the Scheduled Caste category by deleting Clause 3 of the Constitutional (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950. The move drew an instant reaction from the Bharatiya Janata Party members. They stormed the well of the House, protesting against the manner in which Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mohd Azam Khan tabled the resolution. This forced the Speaker to adjourn the House. The resolution was tabled amid uproarious scenes and even as the Bahujan Samaj Party members were staging a dharna in the well in protest against the Parliamentary Affairs Minister's accusation that the Ambedkar statue's desecration in Kanpur was masterminded by the BSP. The BSP had earlier demanded a CBI inquiry into the Kanpur incident. Leader of the Opposition Lalji Tandon and the Congress supported the BSP's demand. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav said action had been taken in the form of arrest of the culprits and suspension of the Kanpur SSP and Kakadeo Station House Officer. The resolution said all sections listed in the Scheduled Caste category, under Article 341 of the Constitution, should be extended reservation benefits, irrespective of to which religion they belonged. All classes of Scheduled Castes, including Muslims or Christians, should be given the same benefit. Denial of such benefit to Dalit Muslims and Christians not only violated Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution, but was also against the principles of justice. The resolution said it was the firm belief of the Government that just as religion cannot form the basis of quota benefits, denial of these rights to Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians, solely on the basis of their religion, also violated the Constitution. While the BJP members stormed Speaker Mata Prasad Pandey's chamber during the adjournment period, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister defended the Government move. He told newsmen that the BJP was opposing the resolution because of the word "Muslim." The tabling of the resolution figured in the House business agenda for the day. (The Hindu 5/12/06)

Dalit rally foiled in Nagpur (2)

NAGPUR: The Congress-NCP led Democratic Front Government foiled a bid by Dalits to take out a protest rally here on Monday, resorting to a series of measures including a censure motion in the Maharashtra Assembly on the first day of the winter session in this city. Authorities deployed police personnel in unprecedented numbers, and sealed all roads to prevent activists of various groups of the Republican Party of India from reaching the city to protest against the Khairlanji rape and killings of Dalits. The police, who denied permission for the protest march, started making preventive arrests on Sunday night. The activists wanted to march to the Legislature from Deekshabhoomi here, but following police action they tried to begin their rally from the

Patwardhan Park. However, the police picked up their leaders to prevent them from regrouping. Among the arrested were Lok Sabha member Ramdas Athavale, Prakash Ambedkar, P.M. Kamble, Rajendra Gavai and the former minister, Sulekha Kumbhare. The police also arrested Communist Party of India MP D. Raja, who arrived here to support the protesters. Most of the 300 arrested activists were released after the Legislature adjourned for the day. The authorities deployed three companies of the Rapid Action Force, one unit of the Central Reserve Police Force, and two companies of the State Reserve Police, in addition to the 5,000-strong local constabulary. Most roads leading to the Legislature complex and Deekshabhoomi were heavily barricaded and closed to vehicular traffic. Tabling an adjournment motion, Shiv Sena member and Leader of the Opposition Ramdas Kadam said the wife and the daughter of Bhaiyalal Bhotmange were raped and tortured to death; two of his sons, one of whom was visually challenged, were murdered. The police tried to save the culprits and tampered with evidence, he alleged. Mr. Kadam wanted Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and Deputy Chief Minister R.R. Patil to resign on moral grounds. "Nobody involved in such a heinous act or supporting it should be allowed to go scot-free, no matter which party he belongs to."(The Hindu 5/12/06)

Acquittal of Kambalapalli accused a setback to Dalits (2)

Bangalore: The acquittal of all the 46 accused in the carnage in Kambalapalli village of Kolar district, in which seven Dalits were burnt alive on March 11, 2000, has come as a huge setback to Dalits and progressive segments of the political spectrum fighting caste hegemony. When Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy arrives at the Vidhana Soudha on December 6 to garland B.R. Ambedkar's statue to mark the 50th anniversary of the great Dalit leader's conversion to Buddhism, Dalit Sangharsha Samiti and other organisations will hand over a memorandum to him demanding that the Government go on an appeal in the High Court over the verdict. The organisations are also planning to stage a series of protests. "Judgments such as this would make Dalits lose faith in the judiciary," Dalit Sangharsha Samiti (Ambedkarvaada) State convenor Mavalli Shankar told The Hindu. He recalled a series of incidents in Karnataka and other States, including the Kadakol incident in Bijapur district where Dalits faced social boycott and the Kherlanji incident in Maharashtra of rape and murder of Dalits. Mr. Shankar said that laws to protect Dalits had remained only on paper. Seven Dalits were burnt alive in their house in Kambalapalli village near Chintamani in Kolar district by an "upper caste" mob on the evening of March 11, 2000. The incident evoked national outrage in the following months and the issue was raised in Parliament. Reports in the media and those by fact-finding teams concluded that the incident had its roots in a complex web of socio-political factors including entrenched feelings of upper caste intolerance towards lower castes in the backdrop of the growing Dalit mobilisation. The murder of an upper caste waterman, responsible for pumping water to drums and buckets, by a Dalit group was the immediate provocation for the massacre in Kambalapalli. (The Hindu 6/12/06)

Dalits take out 'Dignity March' (2)

NEW DELHI: A large number of men, women and children from across the country participated in a 'Dalit Dignity March' here on Tuesday, seeking social and political reforms for their emancipation. Issues such as the Dalit killings in Khairlanji and the desecration of a statue of B.R. Ambedkar in Kanpur were raised during the rally, held to observe the World Dignity Day. The participants raised slogans against the Governments of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh for their "failure" to book the culprits in these incidents. Political leaders, cutting across party lines, extended their support to the Dalits. Addressing the rally, Communist Party of India (CPI) national secretary D. Raja said: "Dalits and adivasis are the most oppressed sections of society. Khairlanji is not an isolated incident. Atrocities against Dalits are on the rise and have become more brutal than before." The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and All-India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary, Digvijay Singh, expressed his solidarity with the Dalits. "Governments need to clear the backlog of vacancies in the category of reserved jobs. They must also take affirmative action to give Dalits economic independence." Exhorting Dalits to exercise their franchise cautiously, Janata Dal (United) president Sharad Yadav said: "In a democracy, your vote is key to your development. You must know about your rights and choose your leaders carefully. You must elect only those representatives who will take up issues that affect you and

work to resolve them." The Dalits have demanded the setting up of a commission to enquire into their socio-economic status, implementation of a time-bound programme for land distribution, and measures to ensure health, education and employment to all. (The Hindu 6/12/06)

Khairlanji: Dalit leaders for early probe (2)

MUMBAI, DECEMBER 5 : Apprehensive that the accused in the Khairlanji case will be released on bail if the chargesheet is not filed within the stipulated 90 days, Dalit leaders have decided to make a representation to the government to move the court to get the period extended till the CBI completes probe. "The incident took place on September 29 and so far 41 persons were arrested," Dr BR Ambedkar's grandson and leader of the Bharatiya Republican Party Bhaujan Mahasangh Prakash Ambedkar said today. "According to rules, the police have to file a chargesheet within 90 days. The investigations were handed over to the CID and now the CBI has taken over. We are afraid that the process would continue beyond that period, in which case the arrested persons would be released." On the failure of the morcha at Nagpur on Monday, he said it was because all the leaders were detained. And since the CBI had taken over the case, it was necessary to halt all agitations. They also did not want any trouble on December 6 at Chaityabhoomi, Dadar, where lakhs of people would congregate to pay homage to Dr Ambedkar on his 50th death anniversary. He said the reason why the leaders did not call off the morcha earlier was to send the message to the government that Dalits were not "mixed up with the Naxals". He said that there was no question of giving a clean chit to a BJP MLA and an NCP MLA, who were accused of aiding the accused in the Khairlanji case. The allegations made against them by Bhaiyalal Bhotmange would be investigated by the CBI, he added. (Indian Express 6/12/06)

Dalit atrocities on agenda of Dec 9 state council meet (2)

New DELHI: : Atrocities on Dalits will be the agenda of discussion in the Inter State Council meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on December 9. The conclave will be held after the meeting of the National Development Council comes to an end in the evening on the same day. All CMs, lieutenant governors of Union Territories and six Union Cabinet ministers will attend the ISC meeting. The last meeting was held on 28 June last year. The agenda assumes importance in view of the recent incidents related to Dalits including the desecration of Dr BR Ambedkar's statue at Kanpur in UP and the subsequent violent upsurge in Maharashtra. Concerned over the incidents, the Centre will tell the states to initiate measures to avoid such incidents. (Indian Express 7/12/06)

Attack on weaker sections a disgrace: Manmohan (2)

NEW DELHI: Terming continuing atrocities against weaker sections as a "national disgrace in a civilised society," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday suggested that the States consider setting up special cells, manned preferably by officers belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes community, to monitor implementation of laws. In his address to the Inter-State Council meet here on Saturday evening with focus on atrocities on weaker sections, Dr. Singh said implementation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act had not been effective as it could have been and that "cases continue to be registered under weaker provisions of the IPC [Indian Penal Code] rather than the stronger provisions of the POA Act. More often than not, the distinction between regular crimes and those covered by the POA Act has not percolated down." In an apparent reference to the recent Khairlanji killings, the Prime Minister said that in the recent past there have been disturbing incidents and reports of atrocities against SCs and STs in some places. "It is my perception that there seem to be some areas which are more atrocity prone. There are also shocking reports at times of apathy and a lack of sensitivity in handling the aftermath of such incidents. The figures of atrocities should be a matter of grave national concern for all of us. A disconcerting feature is that some States account for a majority of the incidents of such atrocities," the Prime Minister told the meeting attended by Chief Ministers. He stressed that laws alone were not sufficient in dealing with social violence and there must be compassion for the victim and a firm resolve to deal with the perpetrator of these crimes. A political will was required to eliminate atrocities the will to

enforce law and ensure easy access to police and judicial system to the vulnerable sections. Dr. Singh said time was ripe for a comprehensive review of the existing approaches, strategies and measures, which were in place so that "we are effective in controlling such incidents and are able to generate a greater sense of security and hope among our weaker sections." (The Hindu 10/12/06)

Police 'suppressing' Dalit protests: report (2)

NEW DELHI: A "fact-finding" team of 10 human rights organisations, which toured some areas in Maharashtra after the killings of four Dalits at Khairlanji, has accused the police of continuing to violently suppress legitimate protests against the incident. A report by the team said the police opened fire during the closing stages of a rally in Amravati killing one and injuring three on November 15. On the same day, a group of 25 women on their way to the rally were arrested and beaten up. At Yawatmal, a rally led by activist Pramodini Kamteke ended with the police entering Dalit homes and beating up people. The report also recorded "malicious victimisation" such as the dismissal of a woman constable in Kamptee near Nagpur. An Amravati school teacher was arrested because he had some posters and fact-finding reports. He has since been suspended from service and hospitalised after suffering from a heart attack. A physically-challenged Military Engineering Service employee, along with his wife was beaten up by police. Apart from demanding a probe by the National Human Rights Commission and registration of cases under the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the team has demanded withdrawal of cases and reinstatement of employees. The team, which toured Amravati, Kamptee, Khairlanji and nearby areas of Nagpur, included activists from the People's Union for Civil Liberties, the People's Union for Democratic Rights, the Jaatiya Shoshan Virrudh Sangharsh Samiti, the Samajik Nyay Morcha, the Dalit Intellectual Forum of Human Rights, the Apeksha and the Committee Against Violence on Women. (The Hindu 11/12/06)

Paswan eyes Dalit-Muslim combine (2)

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 10 : Union minister and Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) president Ram Vilas Paswan seems to have grabbed the initiative in putting together Muslims and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the same platform in the wake of the Sachar committee report. Hoping to unite the two groups politically, he is organising an International Conference for Dalits & Minorities in the Parliament premises on December 27 and 28. About a thousand delegates are expected from across India, and about a hundred from abroad, including Dalit and minority persons of Indian origin, NRIs, and disadvantaged indigenous groups from Japan and Australia. All Dalit and minority MPs have been invited, besides Dalit and Muslim scholars. It's not hard to see the political significance of the conference: Uttar Pradesh goes to elections soon, and several Dalit leaders are rallying to forge a solid vote bank. Paswan reckons that if Dalits and Muslims come together, they will be unbeatable: "Agar 40 pratishat log apne beech dard ka rishta jodenge, to inse loha kaun lega? (Who will dare oppose 40 per cent of the electorate if they share their pain and difficulties?)" "It is very necessary for Dalits and Muslims to get together politically," Paswan told The Indian Express. "The data shows that the minorities and SC/STs are nearly together at the bottom when it comes to access to education, land, other assets. If they don't assist each other during communal and caste riots, who will?" One of the demands to be raised at the conference, he said, would be allotment of Central and state budget funds for minority and SC/STs in proportion to their population. He said job reservations in the private sector would help, but self-respect was more important: "We want Navodaya-type schools in areas with Dalit and minority concentration. We will also demand that 40 per cent of villages with Dalit population be demarcated as Prime Minister's model villages, to get focused attention." Paswan said the recent violence set off by the desecration of an Ambedkar statue was a "good sign" as it demonstrated Dalit empowerment at the grassroots, for earlier Dalits would do only what their leaders told them to. (Indian Express 11/12/06)

Plan to rid nation of Dalit atrocities by 2010, minister assures state council (2)

New Delhi, December 10: Rattled by the spate of atrocities on Dalits and its likely fallout on the political front, the government has begun working on a blueprint to free the country of untouchability within the next four years. Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Meira

Kumar said at the Inter State Council meeting on Saturday that work has begun on a plan to rid the country of atrocities on Dalits and tribals by 2010. She also suggested a plethora of steps to ensure speedy justice and punishment to perpetrators of crime. Expressing concern that acts of violence against Scheduled Castes were on the rise, Kumar argued for an annual judicial review to assess the pendency of cases and number of acquittals. She also requested Home Minister Shivraj Patil that incidents of violence against the lower castes be passed on to her ministry on an institutional basis. Echoing Kumar at the conclave was Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers Ram Vilas Paswan who proposed that a prime minister's trophy be given every year to the state where no incidents were reported. To ensure expedition of pending cases, he explained the merits of having "exclusive courts" instead of the present system of special courts. The tenth meeting of the Inter State Council was held in the backdrop of a Dalit backlash in Maharashtra, following the desecration of an Ambedkar statue in Kanpur. The Congress-led UPA government is worried over the negative fallout of the movement, especially since Assembly polls in four states including Uttar Pradesh are scheduled early next year. Referring to reports of FIRs not being registered in some cases, Shivraj Patil pointed out that some states were lagging behind in the implementation of the existing laws like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. He made a case for amending the law that would enable a copy of the FIR to be sent to magistrates for record, while saying that it has come to the notice of the ministry, that police, in some instances, have refused to take up cases under the Act and instead preferred investigation under the provisions of the penal code. The chief ministers and lieutenant governors who attended the meeting agreed to the suggestion of having exclusive special courts and special prosecutors to ensure speedy investigation and disposal of cases in a time bound manner, even as they were urged by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to usher in effective measures to prevent harassment of the communities. (Indian Express 11/12/06)

Dec. 20: Dalit groups to enter temple (2)

Bhubaneswar, Dec. 11: Dalits on Monday decided to enter the 300-year-old Jagannath temple at Keraragada village in Orissa's Kendrapara district en masse on December 20. The dalits have decided to organise a public meeting at Keraragada on the same day before entering the shrine. "Leaders of sundry political parties will join us in stepping into the temple", said Sangram Mallik, a dalit leader. The decision comes after the district administration failed to persuade the upper caste Hindus in the village to allow the dalits to enter the temple. Dalits and representatives of the upper castes criticised each other during a meeting, called by the district administration to resolve the issue. "We will allow the dalits to enter the temple despite opposition from the upper caste people", said Kendrapara district collector Kasinath Sahoo. Armed with Orissa high court's order permitting the entry of all Hindus, irrespective of caste, into the temple, the district administration asked the upper caste Hindus not to prevent the dalits from worshiping in the temple. "To protect the dalits' right to enter the temple, the police on Monday filed a case under Section 3 of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocity) Act against three upper caste leaders of the village on charges of organising the people to oppose the entry of dalits in the temple by violating the court order," Mr Kasinath Sahoo informed. The upper caste people, however, appeared determined to stop the dalits from entering the village temple. "We will not perform rituals of the deity if the dalits are allowed into the temple," said Narayan Das, a priest of the temple. "The district administration is trying to terrorise the upper caste people by siding with the dalits," said president of Jagannath protection committee, Seshadev Nanda. "The Orissa high court has recently said in its landmark judgment that no devotee can be debarred from entering the temple on the ground of his caste, creed and colour," Orissa's Ambedkar Lohia Vichar Manch president said. (Asian Age 12/12/06)

Dalit's hut set on fire in Nashik, village, 3 arrested (2)

Mumbai, December 11 : Three villagers attacked a Dalit woman and set fire to her house at the Maratha-dominated Brahmangaon village in Niphad tehsil of Nashik district on Monday. The Lasalgaon police have registered a case against the three under the Prevention of Atrocities (against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Act. According to an FIR lodged by the Dalit woman, Maya Balu Shejwal, who stays in a thatched hut at Brahmangaon village, Ravi Karbhari Mahale, the member of the local gram panchayat, Mangesh Gawli, son of deputy sarpanch Anna

Gawli, and Ashok Kargude a clerk with the gram panchayat, attacked her and ransacked the house around 10 am on Monday. Later, they set fire to the thatched hut. Her husband was away at Lasalgaon when the incident took place. The FIR said the trio wanted the land on which the hut was built to construct a toilet. The attackers allegedly abused her and stated that they did not want a Mahar in their village. Brahmangaon has only one Dalit family and the Shejwals work as farm labourers. The couple has five children. "There was some land dispute between the complainant and the gram panchayat and today, three persons tried to burn down the house," Nashik Superintendent of Police Rajvardhan said. "An offence has been registered and two of the accused have been arrested. There is peace and the whole village is apologetic about the incident," he added. (Indian Express 12/12/06)

Decline in cases of atrocities against SCs/STs: Minister (2)

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria has affirmed that a recent decision of the State Government to appoint case officers for disposal of matters relating to Scheduled Castes and Tribes had led to a decline in atrocities against these sections. The case officers posted at police stations ensure speedy investigation and prosecution. Addressing the 10th meeting of the Inter-State Council in New Delhi over the weekend, Mr. Kataria said the prosecution had filed charge sheets in all cases, except five, under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act during 2005. He said the case officers had helped the victims and witnesses depose without fear in courts. Mr. Kataria said Rajasthan had registered a twofold increase in the convictions under the SC/ST Act following efforts made by the special cells established in 18 districts for speedy investigation and trial. These cells would be set up shortly in the remaining districts, he added. The Minister said special courts under the SC/ST Act were functioning in 17 districts of the State. There were very few complaints of the first information reports in these cases not being registered as the police authorities has been instructed to be vigilant in this regard, he said. Mr. Kataria said a 24-hour helpline would be started at the State police headquarters very soon, facilitating the registration of complaints at a toll-free telephone. The complaints will be immediately sent to the respective districts for prompt investigation and action. While Prime Minister Manmohan Singh presided over the Council's meeting, Rajasthan was represented, among others, by State Chief Secretary Anil Vaish, Additional Chief Secretary A.K. Ahuja, Home Secretary V.S. Singh, and the State's Resident Commissioner in New Delhi, Umesh Kumar. (The Hindu 12/12/06)

Hundreds of dalits enter temple (2)

Jaipur, Dec. 12: Hundreds of dalits entered a local temple in Rajasthan on Tuesday amidst tight security in protest against a dalit priest being denied entry into the temple. The dalits assembled at village Sulia, in Bhilwara district, and organised a public meeting under the leadership of Magsaysay awardee Aruna Roy. The dalits, who complained that they were discriminated against, said a priest from their own community had been prevented from worshipping by "upper caste" Hindus. The dalit procession was led by dalit priest Hajari Balai. and they entered the temple holding placards and singing bhajans (devotional songs). They expressed happiness that their entering the temple passed off peacefully. The administration had deployed the police to maintain law and order in view of the prevailing tension. The issue divided villagers into two groups this October when caste Hindus prevented the entry of Hajari Balai, who said he worships, as per tradition, at the temple of the goddess in the village. The dalits said the caste Hindus beat up the dalit priest and that they had lodged a case against the "upper caste" Hindus but the police did not take action. "No arrest has been made so far," said dalit activist Bhanwar Meghvanshi. The dalits had organised a meeting on October 18 this year and had threatened to change their religion if they were not allowed to enter the temple on December 12. "We feel discriminated against and insulted when caste Hindus deny a dalit priest the right of worship," says Bhanwar Meghvanshi, who mobilised the dalits. The village falls under the constituency of Rajasthan rural development minister Kalu Lal Gujar. Mr Gujar, however, had led a group of dalits to enter the temple on November 26, but the local dalits boycotted the attempt and fled the village. The dalits hoisted black flags on their houses when the minister organised the entry of dalits into the temple as they believed it was stage-managed. (Asian Age 13/12/06)

Dalits enter temple amid tension (2)

SULIA (RAJASTHAN): Peaceful entry of hundreds of Dalits into the ancient Chawanda Mata temple here on Tuesday could not hide complicity of the Administration and the police with the dominant Gujjar caste in persecution of Dalit families through insinuations, slapping of false charges and denial of equal rights. Gujjars of the village, situated 260 km from Jaipur, stayed away from the Dalit Adivasi Adhikar Sammelan organised on the temple premises and virtually boycotted the Dalits' entry into the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Policemen were deployed in large numbers in the temple premises. Though the presence of a large number of civil rights activists, including Magsaysay Award winner Aruna Roy, and media persons from Jaipur gave confidence to the local Dalits to defy restrictions imposed by the Gujjars, tension in the atmosphere was palpable with a question mark raised over the stance of the Gujjars and higher castes on the issue. The insinuation that Dalits were demanding a share in the 26-bigha agricultural land of the temple and offerings made to the deity was a deliberate ploy to shift attention from assertion of rights by Dalits to enter the temple and offer prayers as equal members of the Hindu community. "We do not want a single inch of the land or a single paisa from the offerings. Ours is a struggle for self-respect," said Bhanwar Meghwanshi, the young convenor of Dalit Adivasi Adhikar Abhiyan. He pointed out that Gujjar and Dalit priests had been worshipping Goddess Chawanda in the temple as a tradition, which was abruptly stopped for no reason other than hatred for Dalits. The Gujjar priest, Mewa Ram, accompanied by youngsters from his community allegedly thrashed the 80-year-old Dalit priest Hazari Balai during the Navratra festivities on October 1 and declared a ban on the entry of Dalits into the temple. The police registered an FIR after nine days following a great deal of persuasion, but have not arrested any of the 12 accused. (The Hindu 14/12/06)

Sevayats lock Keredagada temple after entry by 18 Dalits (2)

Kendrapara : Sevayats of the Jagannath temple at Keredagada on Thursday locked up the shrine's sanctum sanctorum at the instance of the upper caste people following the entry of 18 Dalits into the temple. The sandhya arati ritual of the temple was also stopped. The upper caste people said the temple's sanctum sanctorum would not be reopened till the Raja of Kanika decided the next course of action. The outer entrance of the temple, however, remained open. A police force later tried to bring about a settlement between the upper caste people and the Dalits. Earlier in the day, a group of four Dalits of Keredagada village under Rajnagar block in Kendrapara district first entered into the sanctum sanctorum of the 300-year-old temple, which was built by the then King of Kanika, Sailendra Narayan Bhanjdeo, informed the Tehsildar of Rajnagar.

During their entry into the shrine, no untoward incident took place and the situation there was totally normal, official sources added. However, the trouble began when 14 more Dalits entered the temple later in the day, with the upper caste people asking the priests to leave the shrine after closing the door of the sanctum sanctorum. The four Dalits, who entered the temple first, were identified as Kailash Jena, Aswini Jena, Ramesh Jena and Suresh Gochhayat. They said their feelings of satisfaction and happiness after witnessing the Lord in the temple could not be expressed in words. "It was a special day for us in our life, as we have entered into the temple, said Gochhayat. The Dalit Manch was not opposing the Kanika King, but it was opposed to the old practices performed by the Kanika royal palace. Dalits are like other citizens of the country and are not slaves or anti-Hindu, he said. Earlier, the upper caste people and sevayats of the temple had restricted the Dalits from entering the temple as per a long-standing tradition, According to the King's order, the Dalits only had the privilege of witnessing the deity through the nine holes of the shrine. (Pioneer 15/12/06)

Trouble-free entry for Dalits to Orissa temple (2)

BHUBANESWAR: The Dalits of Keredagada village in Orissa's Kendrapara district entered the Lord Jagannath temple of their village on Thursday despite stiff opposition from the caste Hindus of the area. The entry of the Dalits into the 300-year-old temple was smooth and trouble-free. One platoon of policemen was on duty near the temple when five Dalits entered the temple and had darshan of the deities around at 12.25 p.m. Senior officials of the administration were also present. However, tension started building up when more and more Dalits from Keredagada and

nearby hamlets started visiting the temple and the priests left the shrine, resulting in non-performance of the rituals. Official sources said the priests and servitors left the temple following instructions from the upper caste people, who have since decided to hold a meeting on Friday to decide their stand. The Dalits were able to muster the courage to enter the temple following a recent order of the High Court, which said that any Hindu, irrespective of his caste, could enter any Hindu temple. The High Court passed the order while disposing of a public interest litigation petition filed by a lawyer seeking protection for the Dalits seeking entry into the Keredagada temple. (The Hindu 15/12/06)

22 villages of Kendrapara tense (2)

KEREDAGADA: The situation in 22 villages of the coastal Kendrapara district was tense on Friday, a day after Dalits entered the 300-year-old Jagannath temple here. A sizeable section of upper-caste people have decided to sit on a hunger strike in front of the temple till King of Kanika R. N. Bhanjadeo, interim trustee of the temple, found a solution to the "post Dalit-entry situation." The rituals in the temple have been stopped in protest of the Thursday's incident. About 100 upper caste youth took out a rally, raising slogans against administration. There were reports of rituals not performed in many temples of the village. Police have been deployed in large numbers and all shops were closed. Three schools wore a deserted look. The mood among the Dalits of the village was jubilant. "This is not an issue of starving. When a dog can enter the temple premises, why we have been for ages forced to see Lord Jagannath through nine holes in the boundary wall. We want to lead a respectable life and the entry into the temple is a symbol of breaking the social barrier," Baidyanath Jena, who entered the shrine first, said. Uchhabarna Bikash Parishad, a forum floated by upper caste people has called upon its people to go back to hard caste line. Superintendent of Police Satrugna Parida said: "We will act as per the law. The police are here to provide safety to everybody. It will be better if they manage to solve the problem among themselves." On November 5, 2005, when four Dalit girls were allegedly not allowed to enter the temple. The Orissa High Court had ruled that any Hindu could enter any Hindu temple. (The Hindu 16/12/06)

Temple issue: Minister asks Orissa to ensure social justice (2)

NEW DELHI: Against the backdrop of the controversy over Dalits entering the 300-year-old Jagannath temple in Keredagada village, the Centre on Saturday asked the Orissa Government to ensure social justice in the State. Speaking at the Global Convention of NRIs and Non-Resident Oriyas on "Emerging Opportunities in Orissa", Union Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi said: "Nobody should be prevented from entering the temple on the basis of their caste." He said the Orissa Government should focus on ensuring social justice along with developments in other fields. (The Hindu 17/12/06)

Dalits dispute Minister's claim (2)

JAIPUR: The Centre for Dalit Rights (CDR) has disputed a claim made by Rajasthan Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria at the Inter-State Council meeting in New Delhi recently that the State had registered a sharp decline in the number of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Tribes and a twofold increase in convictions under the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. CDR chairman P.L. Mimroth told reporters here over the weekend that the instances of atrocities against Dalits were many times more than the official figures of 2,941 (SCs) and 719 (STs) during 2006, with the majority of cases not registered by the police. "Even the registered cases are weakened by poor investigations and defective prosecution in courts," he charged. Mr. Mimroth said the State Government's reluctance to give protection to Dalits was proved by the fact that it had not notified any area as atrocity-prone under the SC/ST Act and had not fully used the Central grants of Rs. 2 crores in 2005 and Rs. 2.10 crores in 2006 for taking measures to prevent atrocities. The CDR, while denouncing Mr. Kataria's "false claim", pointed out that the State-level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee under Rule 16 of the SC/ST Act, appointed for the first time in July 2004, had not complied with the mandatory provision of the Chief Minister heading it. The committee headed by Social Welfare Minister Madan Dilawar was defunct and ineffective, it added. Mr. Mimroth said the CDR, during its probe into a large number of atrocities against Dalits, had found that those belonging to dominant castes had used land

disputes as a pretext to target Dalits in the majority of cases. He demanded that the Government acquire land forcibly occupied by feudal lords and higher castes and distribute it to the landless Dalits. The CDR also called for effective implementation of the SC/ST Act by ensuring accountability of Investigating Officers and Special Public Prosecutors. Mr. Mimroth said the Government should provide training to police and administrative officers to develop sensitivity to the instances of victimisation, discrimination and violence against Dalits. (The Hindu 17/12/06)

Caste Hindus agree to allow Dalits into temple (2)

BHUBANESWAR: After four days of uncertainty, the administration on Sunday succeeded in making caste Hindus agree to allow Dalits enter the Jagannath temple in Keredagada village of Orissa's Kendrapara district. Tension gripped Keredagada and adjoining villages after hundreds of Dalits entered the temple on Thursday despite opposition from the upper caste people. The Dalit move was backed by a High Court order, which said all Hindus, irrespective of their caste, could enter any Hindu temple. The Dalit entry into the 300-year-old shrine resulted in the priests and servitors deserting the temple and the upper castes observing a bandh in the area on Friday followed by a protest dharna on Saturday. The rituals in the temple were resumed late on Saturday after the king of the erstwhile Kanika kingdom and interim trustee of the temple, Rabindra Narayan Bhanjdeo, visited the site and held discussions with the caste Hindus. They, however, did not respond to Mr. Bhanjdeo's appeal to give up their opposition to Dalit entry into the temple. Revenue Divisional Commissioner (Central) Suresh Mohapatra and Deputy Inspector-General (Central) S.K. Upadhyaya reached the area and held a meeting with representatives of both the Dalits and the upper castes and an agreement was reached. It was decided at the meeting that the nine holes on the outer wall of the temple through which the Dalits had darshan of the deities from a distance in the past would be demolished and a new entrance would be constructed. (The Hindu 18/12/06)

Message in seized documents: Dalits to be Maoists' driving force (2)

NAGPUR, DECEMBER 17: Khairlanji sparked a debate on the link between Naxals and the protests by Dalits in the state. If policy documents of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), seized during the past two years, and the recent three letters purportedly written by CPI (Maoist) secretary Chandrakant to some newspapers are anything to go by, then the Naxalite plan to absorb Dalits in their fold appears to be in full swing. "Strategy and Tactics", a Naxal policy document issued by the state committee of CPI (Maoist) to its cadres, seized immediately after the formation of CPI (Maoist) in 2004 following the merger of erstwhile People's War Group and Maoist Communist Centre in 2004, says, "The Dalits and Scheduled Castes should be treated as a special social section that is peculiar to the obnoxious caste-ridden Indian society. Though a vast majority among them belongs to poor and landless peasantry and to the proletariat and other wage-earning sections, they are also the victims of social oppression and upper caste atrocities. While mobilising the vast masses of the Dalits who constitute around 17.5 per cent of the Indian population into the agrarian revolution, we must also lay special emphasis upon the task of fighting all forms of social oppression and caste discrimination practiced by upper castes against them." The document mentions that "appropriate organisational forms should be evolved at various levels to fight the evils of untouchability, upper caste atrocities and other forms of discrimination. At the same time, we must desist from forming an exclusively caste-based organisation for the Dalits, which will only lead to their further segregation". "We must expose the hollowness of the policies of the ruling class and the opportunist Dalit leaders who build their own electoral fortunes in the name of taking up Dalit issues," the document further says. Another document seized in 2005 from arrested state committee member Madanlal, however, tries to distinguish between Prakash Ambedkar and other Republican Party faction leaders. "Athavale (Ramdas), Gavai (R S) and Dhasal (Namdeo) have lost their independent public base and have become puppets in the hands of main ruling parties. By taking up a broad socio-economic programme, Prakash Ambedkar tried to break ahead of the exclusive Dalit cordon, but it hasn't been able to gather momentum because of semi-capitalist class Dalits remained within the political framework," says the document. (Indian Express 18/12/06)

Temple entry row: SC Commission expresses concern (2)

Kendrapara/Bhubaneswar : The National Commission for Scheduled Castes has expressed its displeasure over the continuation of the obnoxious practice of preventing Dalits from entering the 300-year-old Jagannath temple at Keredagada despite a High Court order in their favour. A two-member team comprising commission Deputy Director SK Naskar and Research Officer DN Palchadhury on Monday visited Keredagada village where Dalits and upper caste villagers are at loggerheads over the former's entry into the Jagannath temple. " It is shocking for us that Dalits are only entitled to worship the deity through the nine holes on the outer wall of the temple. This obnoxious practice has been going on in Keredagada since long," Naskar told reporters. The authorities are yet to take proper steps for their entry, he added. "We will submit a report in a week to the Commission and the Government about our opinion on the proposed plan to replace the holes with a grill," Naskar said. He claimed Dalit anger against the upper caste people was yet to abate as they had failed to enter the temple peacefully even after the court allowed them. According to a solution reached between the Dalits and the upper caste people, the local administration would build an iron grill after demolishing the nine holes and both Dalits and upper caste villagers would see the deity from a common platform outside the sanctum sanctorum. The Keredagada temple is not a private property and its management is governed by an endowment commissioner under the Hindu Religious Endowment Act, 1952. Priests, upper caste members and the royal family, whose ancestors built the temple, have no right to prevent the entry of Dalits, Naskar added. "The district administration should take action under Section 3 of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the Orissa Temple Entry Act, 1948, against the people who have been opposing Dalit entry," he said.(Pioneer 20/12/06)

Khairlanji: 20 days on, CBI makes no arrests (2)

NAGPUR, DECEMBER 20: Aabout 20 days after the CBI took over the Khairlanji probe, there have been no fresh arrests in the killing of members of a Dalit family on September 29. Dalit organisations and leaders have been alleging that local police are shielding the accused and not arresting them despite their involvement in the crime. Their distrust of the local police had led the state government to hand over the probe initially to CID (Crime). The CID had arrested three more, apart from the original 44 persons arrested by the Bhandara police. They were suspended police station in-charge of Andhalgaon, which has jurisdiction over Khairlanji, Siddheshwar Bharne, Sarpanch of the village Upasrao Khandate and his deputy. Egged on by community leaders, Bhaiyyalal Bhotmange, whose entire family had been wiped out in the gruesome attack by irate Khairlanji villagers, had been claiming involvement of eight more women in the crime apart from the two arrested so far. Dalit political leaders have also been clamouring against local BJP MLA Madhukar Kukde and NCP MLA Nana Panchabuddhe, alleging their indirect involvement too either in abetting the crime or destroying the evidence. Dissatisfied by the police and CID probe, they had been demanding CBI probe, which was finally granted and the CBI had started the probe on December 1. "No single person, however, has been added so far to the list of the arrested, suggesting how arresting anyone without evidence isn't possible and done," an official said. (Indian Express 21/12/06)

Dalit-OBC rift has Cong worried in Maharashtra (2)

New Delhi, December 22: Victory in recent by-polls notwithstanding, Congress managers are worried that a widening rift between other backward castes (OBCs) and Dalits — particularly in the Vidarbha region — will affect the party's long-term prospects in the crucial state of Maharashtra. Republican Party of India's (RPI) decision to part ways with NCP-Congress alliance is seen in the Congress as a bid for gaining on Dalit sentiments that followed recent violence in the region. RPI leader Ramdas Athavale has said he would strive for a third front, opposed to NCP-Cong and BJP-Shiv Sena. In the short-term though, Congress is gearing up for elections to 16 municipal corporations, including Mumbai, with Sonia Gandhi scheduled to address a rally in Shivaji Park tomorrow. The state Congress has requested Sonia to address at least three more rallies in other regions in January 2007. In December first week the Congress won Dariapur in western Vidarbha where agricultural crisis is the worst and Chimur in eastern Vidarbha where the killing of members of a Dalit family in Khairlanji had caused a major flare-up. Both seats went to polls because sitting Shiv Sena MLAs resigned to contest as Congress candidates. From the impressive victory margins, it appeared that the Congress had managed to overcome both the

adverse factors — agrarian crisis and Dalit anger. But senior Congressmen now agree that the party has a lot to worry about in Maharashtra and the Dalit-OBC schism could make the party vulnerable. “It is pleasing that we won both the seats, but Congress cannot afford to be complacent. If the Dalits and OBCs drift apart that will shake the very social base of Congress in Vidarbha from where the party draws strength,” says PCC spokesperson Sanjay Nirupam. Of the 67 Assembly segments in Vidarbha, 29 are with the Congress at present. A similar tension in early 1990s between Marathas and Dalits in the Marathwada region over the renaming of Marathwada University after BR Ambedkar was one reason of the Congress’ position weakening in the region. Large sections of Dalits and OBCs combine to vote Congress at present but their interests are now diverging, threatening the party. Congress dilemma in balancing these forces is evident from the fact that there are 1.40 lakh cases of Dalit atrocities pending in the state because in most of the cases the accused are OBCs. Kunbis, Telis and Malis — the prominent backward castes in Vidarbha — make a mighty political bloc, closely followed by Dalits. In the absence of an exclusive Dalits’ party, they have been voting the Congress for long. But the Khairlanji incident in which the Dalits were targeted by Kunbis exposed the chink in the armour. While the Dalits accused the Congress of dragging its feet in delivering justice, a Congress MLA reportedly took out a rally to “protect the Kunbi pride.” (Indian Express 23/12/06)

Khairlanji: CBI likely to frame charges against 28 accused (2)

NAGPUR, DECEMBER 22 : Of the 46 persons arrested in the Khairlanji Dalit killing case, the CBI is likely to frame charges only against 28. The chargesheet is likely to be filed on December 25 or December 26. According to reliable sources, the CBI has conducted the lie-detector test on all the accused, but is likely to charge the 28 who were arrested immediately after the September 29 incident. “Which eventually means that the rest would walk free,” the sources said. Under tremendous pressure from Dalit organisations and leaders for allegedly not doing enough to nab the culprits, including some women, the state government had kept on putting people behind bars. Further demands had led the government to announce a CBI probe. “We have been saying for long that the law didn’t permit the arrest of anyone without proper evidence, but there was great pressure,” an official said. If the CBI actually chargesheets only 28 persons, it would be a kind of vindication for the local police in Bhandara. The CBI has been working on the case since December 1, but hasn’t arrested anyone since then, again hinting at lack of proper evidence. (Indian Express 23/12/06)

Dalits seek legal possession of assigned land (2)

BERHAMPUR: Land provided to 30 dalit families of Manpur village under Bhanjanagar tehsil of Ganjam district in 1976 is alleged to have been taken over by others through deceit. On Saturday, a delegation of the tribal organisation Lok Sangram Manch, led by Santosh Mallik, met Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC), southern range, S.P. Thakur to broach the issue. Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Mallik informed that the official, while expressing concern over the matter, directed the Ganjam district administration to investigate into it. He, however, added that if the administration failed to provide land rights to the dalits, the Lok Sangram Manch would forcefully occupy and distribute it among the dalits. Hari Nayak, a dalit of the village, alleged that in 1976 the Revenue Department decided to hand over 42 acres of ceiling surplus land near the village to 30 landless dalit families of the village. They were even issued letters, which they preserve till date. But they could not get the pattas or legal documents for the said land as they demanded equal distribution of land among the families, which did not happen. Till date, the land was neither equally distributed nor pattas given. The dalits were surprised when they came to know that the 42 acres of land was taken over by some moneyed people of their area who had even managed to get pattas for the land from the Revenue Department. They had no option but to approach the authorities to demand pattas and legal possession over the land assigned to them way back in 1976. (The Hindu 25/12/06)

‘Naxals trying to woo dalits’ (2)

Gadchiroli, Dec. 25: The police department in Maharashtra is concerned over evident efforts by naxalite organisations to attract dalits into the folds of their movement. Naxalite material discovered from various places in the naxalite-infested areas of Vidarbha aims at inciting the

passions of dalits and provoking them to take up arms against what is described as "injustice" against their community. One pamphlet calls upon dalits to protest against the recent killings of four members of a dalit family in Khairlanji in Bhandara district of the region and other "similar instances of injustice". The existing system of administration in the country had failed to provide justice to dalits, the material says, adding that armed struggle was the only way to solve the problems of the community. It also calls upon dalits to take up arms to get rid of the caste system. The leaflet goes on to list other instances of "injustice" against dalits in Aurangabad, Nandurbar, Konkan and other places. It also mentions the firing at Ramabai Nagar in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, as well as the Manorama Kamble rape and murder case of Nagpur. The pamphlet, bearing the name of the so-called Gadchiroli Division of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), criticises the dalit leadership as having played into the hands of communal forces. A handwritten note in the Gondi language discovered on the person of one of the three naxalites killed in an encounter with the police on Friday last (December 22) also makes specific mention of the Khairlanji killings, and calls for a "chakka jam" (road blockade) agitation on January 2 and 3. The "headquarters" had been informed of the Khairlanji incident, the note states. (Asian Age 26/12/06)

Dalit woman stripped, paraded for stealing fruit (2)

Patna : A middle-aged Dalit woman in Bihar was tonsured and paraded half-naked on the orders of the husband of a woman village head for allegedly stealing a few bananas. Basra Devi, in her mid 50s, of Balua Basanta village in Vaishali district was meted out the 'punishment' on Saturday. "I was forcibly tonsured and paraded half-naked in the village by the people despite pleading that I was innocent," Besra Devi said. According to villagers, after she refused to pay a fine her head was shaved. "How can I pay a fine when I don't have enough to eat?" she said. Satyanarayan Chaurasia, the landowner husband of the village woman head, has denied torturing and humiliating Besra Devi. "I have nothing to do with it," he said. But villagers say it was done on his orders. A few days ago, some landowners chopped off the fingers of a 10-year-old Dalit girl, Khusbu, for plucking a few leaves of spinach from a vegetable field in a village in Bhagalpur district. (Pioneer 26/12/06)

'Focus on dalits, Muslims' (2)

New Delhi, Dec. 27: Former Prime Minister V.P. Singh on Wednesday suggested that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh should visit at least one slum once a year which can give slum-dwellers "tassalli (satisfaction)". Addressing a Dalits and Minorities International Conference organised by UP chief and Union minister Ram Vilas Paswan, Mr Singh virtually set a agenda for Dr Manmohan Singh to take steps for the upliftment of these communities. He suggested that backward-caste Muslims who qualified for reservation under the Mandal Commission should be given the benefit by creating a sub-quota. This required no constitutional amendment, he said. He said 'backward-caste Muslims should get the reservation benefit under the category of "socially and educationally backward" on the basis of the Sachar Committee report. He said the Prime Minister should set up an all-India judicial service commission on the Public Service Commission for the appointment of judges, which would provide reservation facilities. Asking the government how it would safeguard the interests of agricultural labourers after acquiring land for industrial development (SEZs) and where will they go, the former Prime Minister pointed out that dalits and tribals have been working on farm as labourers. Without naming the BJP, he attacked the saffron party for trying to divide Hindus and Muslims. "Ek ne Ajanta and Ellora diya, to doosre ne Taj, ek ne Tulsi diya, to doosre ne Kabri, ek ne Jawaharlal diya, to doosre ne Abul Kalam, ek ne Ashok Kumar diya, to doosre ne Dilip Kumar, ek ne Lata Mangeshkar diya, to doosre ne Surayya aur ek ne Gavaskar diya to, doosr ne Pathan (Irfan)," Mr Singh said, hitting out at the divisive propaganda. On minorities and dalits, he said, "Ek shaque ka shikar hai to doos-ra apmaan ka (if one is a victim of suspicion, the other is a victim of humiliation)." (Asian Age 28/12/06)

Khairlanji: No rape in CBI chargesheet (2)

NAGPUR, DECEMBER 27: THE CBI today filed a chargesheet against eleven persons in the Khairlanji case where four members of Dalit Bhiyyalal Bhotmange's family were brutally murdered by villagers on September 29. While the chargesheet says the eleven and others had hatched a criminal conspiracy for the killings, it states that there were no findings to suggest that Surekha

and Priyanka Bhotmange, wife and daughter of Bhiyyalal Bhotmange respectively, were raped before being killed. The CBI's conclusion on the rape was based on the report by experts from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. The chargesheet, submitted before the court of Judicial Magistrate First Class (JFMC) at Mohadi tahsil, says the accused outraged the modesty of Surekha and Priyanka by removing their clothes. The eleven — Gopal and Sakru Binjewar, Shantrughna, Mahipal, Dharampal, Vishwanath, Ramu and Shishupal Dhande, Jagdish and Prabhakar Mandlekar and Purushottam Titarmare—have been charged with criminal conspiracy, unlawful assembly with deadly weapons, murder, trespass, outraging modesty of women, destruction of evidence besides offences under the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The CBI submitted that the investigation in respect of the remaining 35 accused, in judicial custody now, and SS Bharne, suspended police station in-charge of Andhalgaon and others, is still on. The chargesheet says that the probe established that the 11 and others hatched a criminal conspiracy on September 29 evening at Khairlanji village with the objective to murder Bhaiyyalal and his family members. They formed an unlawful assembly with deadly weapons like sticks and cycle chains and made criminal trespass into Bhotmanges' house between 6 pm and 6.30 pm. They uttered casteist remarks while killing Surekha, Priyanka, Sudhir and Roshan Bhotmange. They threw the bodies in Pench canal to destroy evidence. They also outraged the modesty of Surekha and Priyanka by removing their clothes, it states. The local Andhalgaon police had arrested 44 persons during their investigation. The case was later entrusted to CID on November 8 which arrested three more persons. After being handed over the case, the CBI inspected the spot of the crime with experts from CFSL, New Delhi. Some witnesses were examined and statements of some were recorded. (Indian Express 28/12/06)

CBI files charges against 11 on Khairlanji killings (2)

Mumbai: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday filed a chargesheet against 11 persons in connection with the much-discussed killing of four members of a Dalit family at Khairlanji village in Bhandara district of Maharashtra, nearly three months after the incident. The CBI filed the 15-page chargesheet against the 11 persons—belonging to Kunbi and Kalar communities - in the first class judicial magistrate's court at Tumsar in Bhandara district for murder, criminal conspiracy, unlawful assembly with deadly weapons and outraging the modesty of women. However, significantly enough, the CBI has made it known to the court that it does not have enough evidence to establish that two of the women killed in the incident had been raped. The CBI is likely to file chargesheets against some more persons from the remaining 36, who are being currently investigated by the apex-investigating agency, sources said. The Khairlanji incident, as the Dalit killings have come to be known as in Maharashtra, saw four members of Bhotmange family - Surekha (45), her daughter Priyanka (18), sons Roshan (23) and Sudhir (21) lynched by a group of villagers in Khairlanji late September 29 night, ostensibly over a land dispute. The four bodies were recovered from a canal near the village. Primary indications suggested that Priyanka and Surekha might have been gang-raped before being killed by the mob. The local district administration - particularly the senior police officials and civil surgeon--failed in handling the incident. Following protests all over the State against the incident, the Democratic Front (DF) Government on November 14 finally decided to handover the investigations to the CBI. (Pioneer 28/12/06)

Untouchability is a blot on humanity, says Manmohan (2)

NEW DELHI: Inaugurating the Dalit-Minority International Conference here on Wednesday, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said it was necessary to make a distinction between the problems faced by Dalits and those by minorities. "Dalits have faced a unique discrimination in our society that is fundamentally different from the problems of minority groups in general. Untouchability is not just social discrimination. It is a blot on humanity," Dr. Singh said. Dr. Singh pointed out that even after 60 years of Constitutional and legal protection and State support, Dalits still faced social discrimination. He called for a continued political, social, cultural and intellectual battle against the practice. The Government would take all necessary steps to help in the social, educational and economic empowerment of Dalits. He said: "In fact, our Government has taken several steps in the past two years to empower the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes

both through affirmative action and by reinforcing our Constitutional commitment to reservation and empowerment through education. "The principle that explicit measures should be taken to protect the interests of minorities is an idea embedded in our political discourse and in our Constitutional provisions." Congress president Sonia Gandhi said she hoped the two-day Dalit-Minority International Conference here would provide an effective platform for discussion on issues concerning social justice and economic empowerment of these sections in society. Ms. Gandhi said the conference was important, as it would raise awareness on these issues. (The Hindu 28/12/06)