

# MINORITIES GENERAL 2005

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## Congress blasts Gujarat literacy survey (7)

New Delhi: THE CONGRESS on Friday criticised the Narendra Modi Government for conducting a survey in villages based on "caste, creed and religion", saying it was "part of the communal agenda" of the Sangh Parivar. It also urged the Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil to initiate action against the State Government. Contesting the State Government's claim that it was a literacy survey, especially among women, the Congress said the BJP was bent upon creating rift among different communities by this kind of act which had neither precedent nor constitutional. In a statement issued by AICC secretary Tom Vadakkan, it said, "The survey, called Village Diary, will act as a spark for disturbing peace in the villages." The statement said 18,000 teachers had been assigned the task of collecting information in a prescribed format, which, interestingly, contains only two columns pertaining to information on education and schools and the remaining 25 columns seek -information about their castes, communities, religions, festivals and religious places in their villages. The statement said the BJP and the Sangh Parivar were intending to collect information of a particular community in every village with a clear view to target them during communal riots. (Pioneer 22.1.05)

## Now Tom Vadakkan may head for NCM (7)

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11: TOM Vadakkan, an old hand in the Congress media cell, is likely to head for the National Commission for Minorities. The NCM, which is set for a major restructuring that would make it a constitutional body with statutory power, would have a new panel altogether.

Vadakkan, sources said, is slated to become one of the vice-chairpersons at the NCM. But it may not be a smooth transition of power. The amendment Bill for restructuring of the Commission is still pending before the Parliamentary Committee after it was introduced in the last session of Parliament and referred to the Standing Committee. Admitting that Vadakkan is headed for the NCM, Girija Vyas, who headed the medial cell before being appointed National Commission for Women, said, "Some announce-ment on this (Vadakkan's new assign-ment) is likely to come by the end of this week". Vadakkan said, "I am ready to take up whatever repsonsibility the party gives me. I have no extra baggage to pack" However, he insisted that he has not been "formally" approached. (Indian Express 12.2.05)

## Sindhi body at SC door over remoal of Sindh from anthem (7)

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 23: THE Sindhi Council of India today filed an application in Supreme Court opposing a PIL seeking deletion of 'Sindh' from the national anthem saying such a move would be a blow to the community. The application said 'Sindh'in the anthem denoted • India's cultural heritage and not any physical territory. Deleting the term would be a body-blow to the seven million-strong Hindu Sindhi's in India, it said. Backing the Centre's stand on retaining 'Sindh' in the anthem, the application denounced attempts to link it to the province in Pakistan. "In Pakistan, Sindhi is not an official language. The official work even in Sindh province after partition in 1947 is carried on in Urdu. The Pakistan government, has forced Urdu medium in Sindh schools," it said. Sindhis were creators of wealth and generate employment, the Council contended and added that majority of Hindu Sindhis migrated to India after Partition. However, it was wrong to say that the migration happened because then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had promised a separate state for Sindhi's, but admitted that he had helped rehabilitate them. (Indian Express 24/2/05)

## Govt to oppose any changes in national anthem (7)

New Delhi, March 4: THE CENTRE will strongly oppose the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed in Supreme Court seeking deletion of the word Sindh and its replacement with Kashmir from the national anthem. The Home Ministry, in its affidavit to be filed before the Apex Court on Monday, will state that the word Sindh cannot be dropped since it represents a "distinct culture and not any State or region in the country" The Ministry's view is that when the 'song' was written by Rabindranath Tagore in 1911 neither

Maharashtra nor Gujarat were in existence, but still the "song" had the line "Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat, Maratha." In fact, in 1911, Maharashtra was known as the Bombay Province, the affidavit states. Even in 1950, the affidavit clarifies, when the "song" was adopted as the national anthem, Maharashtra did not exist and it was still known as the Bombay Province. "So it is very clear that the emphasis of Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat, Maratha is on a distinct culture and regions," the affidavit states. "The Ministry was very clear that the national anthem cannot be changed or tampered in any manner and the affidavit will put across out this point of view in Supreme Court," a senior Ministry official said. The MHA's opinion is that if Sindh is replaced by the word Kashmir in the national anthem, it will trigger strong protest from other states demanding inclusion of their names in the national anthem as well. (Hindustan Times 5/3/05)

I'm with NDA, says Ekka (19)

Jaipur, March 8: INDEPENDENT MLA Enos Ekka, in whose hands perhaps lies chief minister Shibu Soren's future, scotched all speculation about a change of heart because of pressure from Christian leaders. "I cannot support a government (led by JMM leader Soren) which has sold Jharkhand for individual gains. We want to usher in a new era of development. The matter is settled now," he said, denying that he was being kept here against his wishes. "I am under no pressure from the church. I have also not been approached by any Christian leader (to support the UPA). I don't think they will even think of trying to persuade me on religious lines," Ekka told the Hindustan Times here where 34 MLAs from Jharkhand are being kept. Christians dominate Ekka's constituency Kalebira, and there is speculation in political circles about his possible switch-over to the JMM-led coalition. Ekka and Independent MLA, Harinarayan Roy, are the two crucial pawns in the political chess game being played by the UPA and the NDA in Jharkhand. (Times of India 9/3/05)

Muslims, Christians not minorities: RSS (7)

MANGALORE, March 11. — According to RSS general secretary i Mr Mohan Rao Bhagvat, Muslims and Christians cannot be termed minorities as they had not come from outside India but were Hindus before changing their religion. Inaugurating a three-day national general council meeting here in which over 1200 delegates from all over India are participating, Mr Bhagvat said by merely changing their way of worship, the Christians and Muslims could not acquire the tag of minorities. He said in reality only the Jews and Parsis, who had been uprooted from their native lands and chose to settle in India, should get that status. Against this, he said forefathers of 99.9 per cent Muslims and Christians were Hindus. Unlike others, the Parsis and Jews, the RSS general secretary said, had submerged their identities in the national mainstream. In this context, he referred to the judgements of the Supreme Court where, he claimed, it was categorically stated that "the Hindu" only denoted a way of life covering different modes of worship. It was therefore, in the interest of the nation to put an early end to the concept of "minorityism". (Statesman 12/3/05)

Give Bodh Gaya to Buddhists: NCM (7)

New Delhi, April 1: THE NATIONAL Commission for Minorities (NCM) has suggested changes in the current law to facilitate handing over management of the Bodh Gaya shrine to the Buddhists. It has also called for nomination of members of the Parsi community to Parliament and the Assemblies of Gujarat and Maharashtra, which have a sizeable concentration of the community This would be a fitting mark of recognition of the outstanding contribution made by the community in the industrial, commercial and educational spheres. These recommendations were made at a recent meeting of the NCM under the chairmanship of Sardar Tarlochan Singh, a Commission press release said on Thursday. The decisions have been conveyed to the Union government for appropriate action. The NCM said the provisions of the Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949, enacted by Bi-har, has ensured the Buddhists are always in a minority in the committee entrusted with the management and control of the temple. (Hindustan Times 2/4/05)

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Maratha." In fact, in 1911, Maharashtra was known as the Bombay Province, the affidavit states. Even in 1950, the affidavit clarifies, when the "song" was adopted as the national anthem, Maharashtra did not exist and it was still known as the Bombay Province. "So it is very clear that the emphasis of Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat, Maratha is on a distinct culture and regions," the affidavit states. "The Ministry was very clear that the national anthem cannot be changed or tampered in any manner and the affidavit will put across out this point of view in Supreme Court," a senior Ministry official said. The MHA's opinion is that if Sindh is replaced by the word Kashmir in the national anthem, it will trigger strong protest from other states demanding inclusion of their names in the national anthem as well. (Hindustan Times 5/3/05)

Panel to promote communal harmony (7)

JAIPUR, APRIL 9. The reference to the communal violence in Mandal town of Bhilwara district - in which one person was killed on Friday - in the Rajas-than Assembly today prompted the Home Minister, Gulab Chand Kataria, to announce the appointment of an all-party committee to make efforts for maintaining communal harmony all over the State. The committee's members will shortly leave for the troubled town. The curfew clamped in Mandal following the violence and police firing continued without any relaxation today and no fresh incident was reported. The communal clash was triggered by the hoisting of a saffron flag atop a mosque on Friday morning, after which a post-Holi procession was disrupted by stone-pelting. Police fired three rounds in the air to disperse the mob indulging in a pitched battle on the roads. Six persons were injured in the clash and the rioters set ablaze over a dozen shops in the town, about 15 km from Bhilwara. The body of the deceased, Kahnaiyalal Bairagi -who was the son of a temple priest - was cremated after post-mortem today, even as his relatives claimed that he was killed in the police firing. The State Government has replaced the Bhilwara Superintendent of Police, Ashok Rathore, by the Kota (Rural) SP, Govind Gupta. Police have registered two cases in connection with the disruption of the procession and one case regarding the hoisting of saffron flag on the mosque. While 12 persons were detained on charges of throwing stones, police were still looking for the culprits in the third case. A portion of the mosque was later damaged when a tailor's shop on its ground floor was set on fire. (The Hindu 10/4/05)

"Allocation for welfare of minorities inadequate" (7)

NEW DELHI: Perturbed over the reduction in the budgetary allocation for the minorities, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment has said that the Government was not serious in its commitment to the welfare of the minorities since the funds granted for their welfare were woefully inadequate. In its seventh report, the committee said that keeping in view the economic and educational backwardness of the minorities, the Ministry should take up the matter with the Planning Commission for enhancement in budgetary allocation for the minority division. The minority community was not fully aware of the schemes formulated by the Government for their welfare and upliftment. The Government should take the initiative for generating awareness among them by distributing pamphlets and displaying hoardings at different public places in English, Hindi and other regional languages, giving details of the schemes meant for them at the panchayat level, the report said. (The Hindu 24/4/05)

Census numbers underrated, say Buddhist leaders (7)

NEW DELHI, JUNE 8: Buddhist leaders, including Tenzin Ngodupa, a representative of exiled Tibetan leader Dalai Lama, today rejected government's claim that India has only 80 lakh Buddhists and said these figures, projected in the recently-released Census of Religions were "grossly understated." The Buddhist leaders were interacting with the census report during their interaction with population expert Dr Ashish Bose. Bose, who had analysed the census report for each religious community for the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), said the number of Buddhists had remained constant at 79.55 lakh for over a decade. The community constitutes about 0.8 per cent of India's population. The leaders alleged that census enumerators were "biased" against the community and deliberately "showed lakhs of Buddhists as Hindus." The leaders claimed that their actual number was nearly five crore. However, Bose said while the leaders had genuine reasons to complain against the figures, it was quite possible that the enumerators failed to understand that Buddhists were non-Hindus due to their common surnames. "Some leaders complained that the enumerators noted all the details in pencil and tampered with it later," Bose said. The leaders from Maharashtra were angry over "deliberate omission" of registering neo-Buddhists as "Hindus." Tarlochan Singh, chairman, NCM, told Express that he would ask the Centre to take cognisance of the Buddhist leaders' grievances and consider reappraisal of the census data. (Indian Express 9/6/05)

### **Minority panel notice to Stephen's (7)**

New Delhi: The National Commission for Minority Education has sent a notice to St Stephen's college to file a reply to the complaint submitted by 10 students on the Christian quota seats in the college. The problem started earlier this month, when the college decided not to even call them for an interview. Said P Prashant, father of a complainants: "My daughter was not even asked to appear for the interview, though she had 67% in the best four subjects. How can St Stephen's deny admission to a member of the minority community, when the college calls itself a minority institution?" As per a Supreme Court order, St Stephen's has to reserve 50% seats for the minority community. However, according to college insiders, this seldom happens. Said a senior teacher: "For the past several years, the college has not been filling up the reserved seats. Instead, around 30% of the seats are kept for the reserved candidates while the rest are filled by the general category students." Anil Wilson, principal of St Stephen's, was not available for comment. (Times of India 2/7/05)

### **"Minority appeasement" policy draws flak (7)**

NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday accused the United Progressive Alliance Government of following a policy of "minority appeasement." The political trend, if remained unchecked, would have serious consequences on Indian nationhood, it said. The past 14 months have witnessed a concerted bid by the Congress and its allies to both placate and encourage divisive tendencies in the nation. They have not only encouraged regressive trends but have lost no opportunity to denigrate Hindus," a resolution adopted at the party's central office-bearers meeting said. The Congress response to the Supreme Court's rejection of the Illegal Migrants Determination Act epitomised the problem and the BJP had for long held the view that the "deceitful law has served as a legal cover for the unchecked illegal migration of Bangladeshis into Assam," it said. "The BJP sees this wanton disregard of national interests as a bid to placate its minority vote bank which includes people who have no right to vote in India in the first place. The BJP will resist with a mass agitation any attempt to legitimise the Bangladeshisation of Eastern India." The party reiterated its commitment to a uniform civil code for all Indians and pending such a law, it would press for the review of all family laws to bring them in line with gender justice and modern ethical standards. Expressing concern over the "spurious secular yardstick" being applied to history taught in schools, the resolution alleged that the Human Resource Development Ministry was systematically vitiating the minds of the young and undermining the cultural basis of the people. It called for the immediate withdrawal of all "offending" textbooks. (The Hindu 25/7/05)

### **Discourage listing religious groups as minorities: court (7)**

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has rejected a demand for a direction to the Union Government to notify Jains as a 'minority' within the meaning of the National Commission for Minorities Act. A three-judge Bench, comprising Chief Justice R.C. Lahoti, Justice D.M. Dharmadhikari and Justice P.K. Balasubramanyan, said the practice of listing religious groups as minority communities should be discouraged. The court asked the Minorities Commission to suggest ways of creating social conditions under which the list of notified minorities "is gradually reduced and done away with altogether." Different treatment to linguistic minorities based on language within the State was understandable. "But if the same concept for minorities on the basis of religion is encouraged, the whole country, which is already under class and social conflicts due to various divisive forces, will further face division on the basis of religious diversities," the Bench said. Writing the judgment, Mr. Justice Dharmadhikari said: "Such claims to minority status based on religion would increase in the fond hope of various sections getting special protection, privileges and treatment as part of constitutional guarantees. Encouragement to such fissiparous tendencies would be a serious jolt to the secular structure of constitutional democracy." The Bench said: "We should guard against making our country akin to a theocratic state based on multinationalism. Our concept of secularism is that 'state' will have no religion. The state will treat all religions and religious groups equally and with equal respect without in any manner interfering with their individual rights of religion, faith and worship." (The Hindu 11/8/05)

### **Welfare programmes for minorities non-existent in Rajasthan: Panel (7)**

JAIPUR: A high-level committee on the Muslim community, appointed by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on Wednesday castigated the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government in Rajasthan for failing to

implement welfare programmes for minorities and observed that the few programmes for Muslims were not only devoid of any physical and financial targets, but there was also a lack of will on the part of the State Government to extend their benefits to Muslims. The committee members told reporters here at the end of their three-day visit to Jaipur that the much-publicised 15-point programme for minorities was "non-existent" in the State and Muslims had an acute sense of insecurity while facing social boycott at several places and found themselves confronted with poverty, backwardness, unemployment, communal tension and exclusionary process. The seven-member committee has been appointed to study the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community for preparation of a report on these aspects for facilitating the Government's intervention to address the relevant issues. Justice Rajinder Sachar, noted human rights activist and former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, is the committee's chairperson. The member-secretary of the committee, Abu Saleh Shariff, pointed out that a meagre amount of Rs. 3 crores was spent on the minorities' welfare programmes last year and "nobody knows who the beneficiaries were". The committee found a strong view that the existing regular welfare schemes were good enough for the Muslim community if they were implemented without biases. (The Hindu 25/8/05)

#### **Scheduled Castes issue referred to National Commission (7)**

NEW DELHI: The Central Government has formally referred to the newly constituted National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (NCRLM) the issue of whether a person belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SC) should, on converting to Christianity or Islam, necessarily lose his SC status. This issue is pending before the Supreme Court, before which the Government has said that it had decided to have the issue examined by a Commission. The NCRLM has been informed that a notification to enlarge its terms of reference in order to cover this specific issue is being drafted. (The Hindu 31/8/05)

#### **Ahamed attacks NCM chairman (7)**

New Delhi, Sept. 5: Union minister of state for external affairs E. Ahamed on Monday said that the present National Commission for Minorities has outlived the very purpose for which it was constituted. He expressed his resentment and reservation on the partisan attitude of NCM chief Tarlochan Singh which was against the basic interest of minorities, and the support extended by him to the state governments on political grounds. "The minorities in different states demand that the model set up by the Central government in constituting the Rajendra Sachar Committee and Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission should be followed," he said. The minister said that in Rajasthan, it is a fact that hundreds of Muslims appeared before the Rajendra Sachar Committee and ventilated their feelings of senses of insecurity and other grievances under the BJP government which the NCM chairman termed as "observation of the Prime Minister's high-level committee" (instead of Muslim community members observation) and also certified that he did not find any atmosphere of fear psychosis, distrust or terror among Muslims in the state. The NCM chairman did not know the ground realities while giving such good conduct certificates to these state governments, he added. (Asian Age 6/9/05)

#### **'Bill on senior citizens should apply for all' (7)**

NEW DELHI: National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities member Tahir Mahmood has demanded that the Older Persons (Maintenance, Care and Health) Bill, 2005, should be applicable to all Indians irrespective of their religion. Reacting to media reports suggesting that the Government was planning to exempt Muslims and Christians from the Bill in deference to their personal laws, Mr. Mahmood none of its provision of the proposed legislation was in conflict with Muslim personal law. Instead, "most are in conformity with the policy of Islamic family jurisprudence." Under Muslim law, he said, "children's maintenance-liability to their parents is well established and enforceable irrespective of the parents' religion, and daughters -- regardless of their marital status (The Hindu 23/9/05)

#### **Religious freedom improved under UPA: Bush admn (7)**

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 9: THE status of religious freedom in India has improved under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), a senior Bush Administration official said on Tuesday. "The new government has taken important steps to improve religious freedom situation," said John Hanford, ambassador-at-large, International Religious Freedom, Department of State, after releasing annual report on International Religious Freedom in Washington. Praising the Manmohan Singh Government for a "remarkable improvement" in religious freedom in India after it came to power, the report said: "With a Muslim President, Sikh Prime Minister — the first time a member of a religious minority ever held the

post—and a Christian head of the governing parliamentary party, the UPA government demonstrated its commitment to a policy of religious inclusion at its highest levels and throughout this generally tolerant and highly diverse society." The PM came in for special praise to withdraw controversial school textbooks that had been condemned for espousing a "Hindu nationalist agenda". The report is unlike those during the tenure of the NDA Government, when it alleged that the administration "failed to act effectively" to counter societal attacks against minorities. However, the report felt the UPA at times did not act quickly enough to counter attacks against minorities. (Indian Express 10/11/05)

#### **``Population has nothing to do with religion" (7)**

NEW DELHI: Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Brinda Karat on Tuesday criticised Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh chief K.S. Sudarshan for his remarks on family planning norms. Population was a development issue and had nothing to do with Hindus and Muslims. "Mr. Sudarshan has got it all wrong because the decision to plan a family is taken by husband and wife together, irrespective of caste and community," she said. "He [Mr. Sudarshan] has tried to associate the issue with religious communities." According to Ms. Karat, his statement makes a Muslim woman appear a child-producing machine. She was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a symposium on "Issues before Muslim women," organised by the All India Democratic Women's Association here. On the need to bring about reforms in the Sharia, Ms. Karat said things were moving in the right direction and more women were coming forward to seek changes in the Muslim laws for their benefit. "There was a time when the All India Muslim Personal Law Board did not recognise the need for reforms but today it is open to talks with the community and is working towards resolving the contentious issues." Pointing out that women across the communities were oppressed, Ms. Karat said that when it came to Muslims there was more discrimination by the government. She cited its reluctance to give loans or have special schemes for women employed in the small sector. "Discrimination is unjustified," she said, calling on women of all communities to join the movement against state-sponsored discrimination. (The Hindu 23/11/05)

#### **Can discrimination be made on the ground of religion, asks apex court (1)**

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court said on Monday that it would examine the constitutional validity of paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Orders, 1950, which deprives the Scheduled Castes of reservation benefits on their conversion to Christianity. A three-judge Bench, comprising Chief Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, Justice C.K. Thakker and Justice R.V. Raveendran, posted the matter to February 2006 for further directions. It asked Additional Solicitor-General Gopal Subramaniam to inform the court on the progress of the Justice Ranganath Misra Commission, which is studying the question. It asked Mr. Subramaniam: "Can discrimination be made on the ground of religion, and whether such a discrimination is not violative of Articles 14, 15 and 25 of the Constitution." He told the court that there was no discrimination based on religion, and it was only based on social status, untouchability and comparable disability. The Bench said: "We express no opinion at this stage on the issues involved as we may have to hear the matter in detail." It made it clear that it was not linking the recommendations that might be made by the Commission with the petitions before the court.

The Bench was hearing petitions filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation and others challenging the constitutional validity of paragraph 3 of the 1950 Presidential Order, under which Scheduled Castes people professing and converting to religions different from Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism were deprived of reservation benefits. (The Hindu 29/11/05)

#### **Hindu board to fight IPS Radha's case (7)**

Lucknow/Bhubaneswar, Nov. 28: Moved by IPS officer D.K. Panda's devotion to Lord Krishna, the All-India Hindu Personal Law Board has decided to fight for the officer's rights. The board is preparing to file a petition in the high court, claiming that the UP government's attitude towards the IPS officer — who now calls himself "Radha" and dresses in women's clothes — was a clear violation of the right to equality and right to religion. In an interview to this newspaper on Monday, Mr Ashok Pandey, president of the All-India Hindu Personal Law Board, said, "the chief minister had announced that D.K. Panda would be duly punished for his misdeeds. The officer's 'misdeed' is that he has been openly worshipping Lord Krishna, which is not a crime. The officer is dressing up as Radha, but that too is not a crime because former Andhra Pradesh chief minister N.T. Rama Rao was also known to wear saris whenever he prayed. Panda has never violated service rules, and he wore a uniform when he went to meet the DGP last week." Meanwhile, Mr Panda has voluntarily retired from his job. The board president further alleged that by

targeting D.K. Panda, the state government was actually indulging in minority appeasement. (Asian Age 29/11/050)

### **Minorities fail to get full loans (7)**

New Delhi, Dec. 10: Though the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation is empowered to give cheap loans of up to Rs 5 lakhs, few beneficiaries get anywhere close to that ceiling. A parliamentary committee has blamed red tape for this. This is one of the findings of the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry of social justice and environment, which submitted its report during this session. The MPs' panel was also unhappy that the ministry had no data on the number of low-income people — those who earn less than double the poverty line — from among the minorities, and on how many had been able to cross the line, thanks to financial help from the minorities development and finance corporation. The all-party panel headed by BJP MP Sumitra Mahajan suggested that the corporation had been tightfisted with the cheap loans it gives for self-employment projects. During the last three years, 56,000 people have benefited from the NMDFC's term loan scheme. The average loan has been of around Rs 40,000/ Only a "negligible" number of individuals took loans of around Rs 5 lakhs, the ceiling. The state channelising agencies that hand out the cash for the minorities development corporation don't encourage loans above Rs 50,000 since the application has to travel to the headquarters for anything bigger. When the parliamentary committee asked the social justice secretary for comment, they were told that big loans were not being given because a person who is below double the poverty line "normally does not think in terms of taking a loan of Rs 5 lakhs." (Asian Age 11/12/05)

### **Bihar MPs fight over killings in East Champaran (7)**

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 13: Bihar's RJD members clashed with JD(U) and BJP members of the state in the Lok Sabha today forcing the Speaker to adjourn the House for lunch 15 minutes before schedule. RJD members targeted the newly elected Nitish Kumar government, saying that fear psychosis has gripped the minority community in Bihar following the killing of five persons in broad daylight in east Champaran district. Raising the issue during zero hour, Devendra Prasad Yadav demanded that the Centre seek a report from the JD(U)-BJP government immediately, and a committee visit Bihar for an on-the-spot study of the situation. Taking a dig at the Kumar government, Ram Kripal Yadav, also of RJD, said that such incidents were taking place in the regime of those who had promised good governance. "As soon as they came to power, such attacks on minorities have started taking place. Such a government should be dismissed," he said. Countering the charge, Prabhunath Singh of JD(U), and some BJP members, said that the killings were due to a land dispute and minorities were not targeted. RJD members, including Raghunath Jha, insisted of having their say in spite of speaker Somnath Chatterjee making it clear that only those who had given notices would be allowed to speak. The members continued to protest, and the Speaker adjourned the house. (Indian Exp 14/12/05)

### **Arjun Singh's minority fixation has Govt in fix (7)**

New Delhi: The UPA Government's controversial decision to go for amending the Constitution to provide SC/ST quota in unaided private professional institutions and keep the minority institutions out of its purview, bears the unmistakable signature of Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh, whose overzealous 'minorityism' has repeatedly landed the Manmohan Singh Government in troubled waters. After the Supreme Court struck down quota provisions in unaided minority and private institutions, an all-party consensus had emerged for amending the Constitution and the HRD Ministry was assigned the task to work out the nitty-gritty of a new legislation. But the HRD Ministry sprung a surprise by sneaking in an exemption to the minority institutions, which was opposed by the Law Ministry, but ratified by the Union Cabinet. However, it opened a Pandora's Box with the BJP and the Left sharply opposing the 'minority' clause and OBC MPs latching on to the opportunity to demand quota for their own castes. This is not the first time that Mr Arjun Singh has brought the UPA Government either in confrontation with its own allies, or with the Supreme Court. The UPA Government had faced major embarrassment when the Allahabad High Court scrapped the Aligarh Muslim University's special minority status after HRD Ministry introduced 50 per cent reservation for Muslims in AMU. Later, the HRD Ministry filed a review petition in the Allahabad High Court on the issue. The HRD Ministry, which also advised the AMU authority to file a case in the Apex Court, later asked the varsity to withdraw its plea. When Mr Singh's decision had triggered a major controversy and the Left, including a section of his own party, begun to question its rationale, he tried to distance himself from the decision of his Ministry. Mr Singh wrote to the UPA allies that his Ministry

only conveyed its "no objection" to the suggestion. "My Ministry conveyed its no objection to the university upon being approached by it, after being convinced that the decision is fully in keeping with the nature of the institution, that it was in accordance with the powers conferred on the university by the AMU Act, 1920," the letter said. However, the damage was done. Mr Singh's decision prompted filing of 34 separate PILs following which the Allahabad High Court not only struck down the quota provision but also the minority status of AMU. (Pioneer 16/12/05)

**'Forcing any law on any community not possible' (7)**

NEW DELHI: Stating that imposing a uniform civil code in the country was complicated and it was not possible to force reform on another community unless it was ready for change, the Union Minister for Law and Justice, H.R. Bharadwaj, said on Tuesday that it was important to preserve the diversity of India. Speaking after releasing "Education: A Mission in Jeopardy" -- a book by Supreme Court advocate M.P. Raju here in the Capital -- Mr. Bharadwaj said there were different communities in India and it was not possible to force any law on another community. "However, where there are problems we should have legislation, which has begun in right earnest. We are working to remove discrimination against women from laws. We recently had an amendment to the Hindu Succession Act as it discriminated against women," he added.

Talking about the question of reservation in private schools and colleges, Mr. Bharadwaj said: "We should avoid controversy wherever it is possible. Education is the basic norms and it is what makes a man a human being after training the mind. I think dharma is to teach righteousness. The norms of education should be such that even a poor man gets it." The book which is a critique on the recent Supreme Court judgements on admission and fees in private unaided educational institution also looks at the reservation-quota debate. It deals with the concerns of the management of private schools, colleges and other educational institutes and also discusses whether the difference between minority and non-minority institutions have blurred into non-existence. The book has been published by Media House, Delhi. The function was followed by a panel discussion on "Quota in Private Professional College". (The Hindu 21/12/05)