

# MINORITIES – MUSLIMS - 2005)

(Gujarat Riots, Best Bakery Case, Godhra Report and Muslims General)

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## Poorest Biharis are Muslims (7)

Patna, Jan. 2: With Assembly elections round the "corner, Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi is delaying the publication of a socio-economic survey that says that Muslims are the least developed community in the state. According to official sources, the government is likely to make public the findings, which expose the high rate of poverty and backwardness among Muslims, only after the February elections. The sources said the survey report was submitted to the government recently. The ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal fears that if the findings become public knowledge, then it might lose out on traditional Muslim support besides earning the wrath of the

Opposition, and even allies. Muslims form 16 per cent of the state's population. But their socio-economic status in the state, as revealed by the report, paints a sad picture. The report says the Muslim population in the state is poorer than others. "Close to 50 per cent of the rural Muslims and 44.8 per cent of urban Muslims live below the poverty line," the report says. Compared to this, 44.3 per cent of Bihar's rural population and 32.9 per cent of the urban population are poor. A total of 28.4 per cent of rural Muslim workers are landless labourers. (Asian Age 3.1.05)

## Stormy affair: Muslim board to take up birth control issue (7)

Lucknow: After triple talaq, the next contentious issue on the agenda of All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) could well be birth control. Board's general body meeting, slated for March in Bhopal, is likely to be a stormy affair in the face of it's vice-president Maulana Kalbe Sadiq's open advocacy of "limiting the family size voluntarily" It is second time since last September that the Shia cleric has ruffled the feathers of hardliners by his radical views on the touchy subject. Sadiq, sources close to him claimed on Monday, had "initially planned to take up the issue during last executive meeting of AIMPLB on December 25, but held back because of dissenting opinions among the majority of his peers." Sharing the dais at the Bhopal meet, however, would be a much more confident Sadiq. The maulana, one of his confidants claimed, hasfatwas from 40 Shia mujtahids (qualified interpreters of scriptures) from all over the Islamic world favouring birth control in his possession. They hope that he may win over many converts to his view in the board during the intervening period. Sadiq is learnt to have shown the mujtahid's decrees to members during private meetings. "They all realise that ground beneath their feet is shaking and like triple talaq it could just be a matter of time before they muster enough courage to come out in public," claimed sources. (Times of India 4.1.05)

## Latest Zahira turn: Never asked for Best retrial (7)

New Delhi, January 3: IN YET another twist to the Best Bakery case, key witness Zahira Sheikh has submitted to the Supreme Court that she never filed any affidavit before it on the basis of which the case was transferred out of Gujarat to Maharashtra. The SC had on April 12, 2004, transferred the case to Maharashtra on the basis of an affidavit filed by her that she had been "coerced" to turn hostile, leading to the acquittal of all 21 accused in the case by a Vadodara fast track court. "All these matters contain an affidavit supposed to have been made by me in September, 2003. I do not recall having made any such affidavit because this one

'document' which is found in every writ or application or appeal does not contain any evidence of my having sworn it as it does not bear my signatures, nor there is any sign of having been sworn to or affirmed before any authority competent to administer the oath," she said in an affidavit, filed through counsel D.K. Garg. (Hindustan Times 4.1.05)

## Muslims harassed by Congress: SP (7)

Lucknow, Jan. 5: The Samajwadi Party-Congress battle in Uttar Pradesh has taken a turn for the worse with the former now accusing the latter of "insulting Muslims because they did not vote 'for the Congress."

Samajwadi minister Mohammed Azam Khan told reporters on Wednesday that the Congress — which was considerably irked over the Maulana Mohammed Ali Jauhar University issue — had now resorted to harassing Haj pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh. Mr Khan, who is also the chairman of the state Haj committee, was livid over being denied permission by the Centre to visit Saudi Arabia to oversee arrangements for Haj pilgrims. Releasing copies of a letter sent to him by the ministry of external affairs on Tuesday in which it has been stated that permission was being denied to him "from a political angle," the Samajwadi minister demanded to know what the political angle was. "I want to know whether I am a spy, an anti-national agent or a mafia. What is the political angle due to which permission has been denied to me?" he asked.

The minister said that he was sending the letter for legal examination and would not hesitate to seek legal redressal on the issue. "Our MPs may, of course, raise this issue in Parliament but I will fight this as my own battle. What does the Centre mean by saying that I cannot be allowed to go abroad from the 'political angle.'" (Asian Age 6.1.05)

Gujarat D.G asked about riot accused (7)

New Delhi, Jan. 6: The Supreme Court took exception to the fact that a key accused in the Naroda Patiya massacre case has not yet been apprehended by the Gujarat police despite the apex court directing his arrest in August last year. A bench comprising Justice B.N. Agrawal and Justice P.K. Balasubramaniam directed the director-general of state police to file an affidavit explaining why the accused Shashikant alias Tinio Yuvraj has not been apprehended so far. , Shashikant . was arrested for his alleged role in the Naroda Patiya massacre in which 58 persons were killed during the post-Godhra riots, but was granted bail by the trial court.

On the allegation that he was threatening the witnesses and victims to withdraw their statements against him, the high court had cancelled his bail. The Supreme Court had on August 2 rejected the bail plea of Shashikant and upheld the order of the high court. (Asian Age 7.1.05)

Bhopal youth kept away from Hindu wife even after SDM order (7)

BHOPAL, JANUARY 7: DOCUMENTS tucked inside a folder, Shariq leaves for another day with his lawyer. For more than a month now, this Muslim youth from Bhopal has been frantically trying to get his Hindu wife back. His conversion to Hinduism and even a magistrate's order have failed to raze the wall created by religious bigots, bringing the role of the police under a scanner.

Shariq married Anima Rai Shrivastava on November 22 at the Arya Samaj temple in Mahavir Nagar, after four years of courtship and stiff resistance from parents. They had met when Shariq joined a computer firm owned by Anima's brother, in which she herself was the technical director. In April, Shariq converted to Hinduism, and even changed his name to Aditya Shrivastava.

But troubles began just four days after the marriage—a police team intercepted Shariq near a shopping complex. "I was picked up by the police and asked about the whereabouts of my wife. I took the team to my flat, and after questioning Anima, they said we will have to accompany them to the police station for some formality," recalls Shariq. He did not realise that the nightmare had just begun. While the youth was detained under charges of disturbing peace, Anima was forcibly sent to her Gwalior home. "I obtained a bail next day and started looking for Anima," says Shariq. On December 1, he approached the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Bhopal, Kamal Nagar, and a search warrant was issued through the Aishbaug police station. Three days later, the police claimed they had visited Gwalior but had not found the girl. ((Indian Express 8.1.05)

Naroda Patia widow dies of her burns (7)

Ahmedabad There was no getting second time lucky for her. After putting up a tough "fight for exactly a month, Bibi Bano, a 30-year old riot widow from Naroda-Patia succumbed to the burns inflicted by her lover on Friday. Bano was set ablaze in her house on December 7 by her lover Tanvir Bashir Ahmad. Ahmad had wanted to lay his hands on the compensation money of Rs 3.5 lakh Bano received for the death of her husband, daughter Shabnam , and nine other family members — all victims of the the Naroda-Patia massacre of February 28,2002. "Bano had sustained over 55% burns and had developed complications of pneumonitis and septicemia," said a senior doctor, Srikant Lagvankar. Emotional scenes were witnessed inside the emergency ward of the V S Hospital as representatives of voluntary agencies, who had helped Bibi Bano stand on her feet again, broke down on seeing Bano lose the battle for life. Bano's family had also arrived from Gulbarga in Karnataka to be with her in her last hour. (Times

of India 8.1.05)

'Find out who is speaking the truth in Best case (7)

New Delhi: Dealing with a "delicate" situation created by conflicting statements made by Best Bakery carnage case key witness Zahira Habibullah Shaikh, who also sought to make social activist Teesta Setalvad's role a suspect, the Supreme Court on Monday ordered a probe to ascertain the truth. Zahira has repeatedly retracted from her statement and also said that she had never filed an affidavit in the crucial petition that led to a retrial in the Bakery case. She also alleged that Teesta minted money by selling the Bakery case abroad but the social activist alleged that the local VHP and BJP leaders in Vadodara had lured\* Zahira through huge money to change her statement. Conceding that the situation was "delicate", a Bench of Justices Arijit Pasayat and H K Sema asked the Registrar General to take the help of an inspector general rank official from Delhi Police and conduct a probe into the basis of Zahira's statements and Teesta 's affidavits in the apex court. (Times of India 11.1.04)

Bilkis Bano case: Charges framed against 19 accuse (7)

Mumbai, January 13: A SPECIAL court on Thursday framed charges against 19 of the 20 accused in the Bilkis Bano rape and massacre case. The case for the trial of Dr Sangeeta Prasad was kept separate as she is undergoing treatment. Charges were framed against the accused for their alleged involvement in attacking a group of 17 members of the minority community in post-Godhra riots on March 3, 2002, at Devgarh Baria village, Dahod district. Twelve of the accused allegedly attacked the victims and gangraped Bilkis Bano, then six months pregnant, and sexually assaulted her family members. Six of the accused are policemen while two are doctors. They have been charged with shielding the guilty. The accused pleaded not guilty. The court has fixed recording of evidence for January 27 and issued summons to Bilkis to appear on that date. (Hindustan Times 14.1.05)

Godhra fire accidental, says Banerjee panel (7)

NEW DELHI, JAN. 17. Debunking the previous National Democratic Alliance regime's "conspiracy theory" behind the fire incident in the Ahmedabad-bound Sabarmati Express at Godhra on February 27, 2002, in which 59 people died, the Justice U.C. Banerjee Committee today said the fire in the S-6 coach was purely "accidental." "With the elimination of the "petrol theory", the "miscreant activity theory" and the ruling out of any possibility of "electrical fire", the fire in the S-6 coach can at this stage be ascribed as an 'accidental fire'," the Committee said in its interim report. It noted that there was a preponderance of evidence that the fire originated in the coach S-6 itself without any external input. "Moreover, the possibility of an inflammable liquid having been used is completely ruled out as there was first a smell of burning, followed by dense smoke and flames thereafter. This sequence is not possible in case the fire is caused by an inflammable liquid thrown on the floor of the coach or an inflammable object thrown from outside the coach. The 'inflammable liquid theory' also gets negated by the statement of some of the passengers who suffered injuries on the upper portion of the body and not the lower body and who crawled towards the door on elbows and could get out without much injury," the Committee concluded. (The Hindu 18.1.05)

What line will Nanavati take? (7)

Ahmedabad, January 17: NOW THAT a railway probe has termed the Godhra train fire "accidental", the big question is: what direction will the Nanavati-Shah Commission probe now take?

The Nanavati Commission was set up by the Narendra Modi government to probe Godhra and post-Godhra riots. As per legal provisions, the Nanavati Commission — instituted under the Commission of Inquiries Act — is a higher entity when compared to the Banerjee Committee. But senior lawyers feel it will be difficult for the former to differ from the findings of the Banerjee Committee, which was assisted by a panel of technical experts. The Banerjee panel report came on a day when the Nanavati Commission was cross-examining the chief investigating officer in the Godhra case. During Monday's cross-examination, the officer, Noel Parmar, insisted on a conspiracy angle to the case. But several activists, NGOs and lawyers had earlier told the Nanavati-Shah Commission that the fire could only have been accidental. Senior lawyer and human rights activist Girish Patel told Hindustan Times that after the Banerjee report findings, the Sangh Parivar's "conspiracy theory and justifications for engineering an anti-minority pogrom" fall flat. In an affidavit filed before the Nanavati Commission on July 1, 2002, the Jan Sangharsh Manch had said the fire was 'accidental'. Advocate Mukul Sinha of the manch claimed that the

Banerjee report has vindicated the Manch's findings. The Manch affidavit had noted that the 'kar sewaks had stopped the train after a skirmish on the platform. While this was on, the coach caught fire accidentally. (Hindustan Times 18.1.05)

Court summons Advani in Babri case (7)

LUCKNOW, JAN. 18. In a decision that may revive proceedings against him, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court today issued notice to the former Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, to appear before it on February 25 in the Babri Masjid demolition case. Giving his order on a criminal revision petition filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the former Faizabad District Magistrate, R.N. Srivastava, Justice M.A. Khan also issued notices to the former Union Ministers, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders, Ashok Singhal, Vishnu Hari Dalmiya and Acharya Giriraj Kishore, and the Shiv Sena leader, Moreswar Save. The petitions were filed against the May 2001 order of the special trial court, Lucknow, which had dropped proceedings in the Ayodhya case against 21 respondents, including Mr. Advani and Mr. Joshi. (The Hindu 19.1.05)

Zahira does not know her bank balance (7)

Mumbai, Jan. 18: Zahira Sheikh, the prime witness in the Best Bakery case on Tuesday told the special court that she does not know the balance in her bank account at Baroda and was also not aware of the alleged money deposited in her bank account in Mumbai. The prosecution on Mon-day told the court that huge amounts were deposited in the bank accounts of Zahira and her brother before their deposition at the Baroda fast track court where the entire family was declared hostile. Public prosecutor Manjula Rao told the court that two installments of different amounts were deposited in the bank account of Zahira Sheikh at Baroda, a week before she was to depose at the Baroda fast track court. However, Zahira said that she did not remember any money being deposited in her account. Ms Rao said that Rs 10,000 were deposited in Zahira's account on May 27, 2002. Another instalment of Rs 35,000 was deposited on May 10, 2003, almost a year after the first instalment, she said. Zahira was declared hostile by the Baroda court on May 17, 2003, added Ms Rao. She also pointed out that Zahira's siblings had deposed before the Baroda court on May 9, 2004, a day before the money was deposited. Zahira, however, maintained that she was not aware of any amount being deposited. (Asian Age 19.1.05)

Bhopal youth, fighting for Hindu wife's custody, murdered (7)

BHOPAL, JANUARY 21: BARELY a fortnight after The Indian Express reported Shariq's legal fight to take home his Hindu wife, the Bhopal youth was found murdered along with his brother and a friend in the old city area here. Although police said the murder was triggered by an 'eve-teasing' incident involving Shariq's friends at a shop, his relatives and friends suspect foulplay in the way the assailants repeatedly attacked him. Says Rashid Khan, a resident of Baug Dilkhusa area, where the murder took place: "When I rushed to the shop, I couldn't stand there, such was the brutality of the murder. Shariq had been stabbed repeatedly." Shariq's legal battle for his wife Anima Shrivastava had grabbed the headlines after he failed to secure her custody despite converting to Hinduism. And though Anima submitted a statement before the Sub Divisional Magistrate, expressing her desire to stay with Shariq, she was forcibly taken away to Gwalior by her parents. However, Bhopal SP Pawan Shrivastava ruled out any link between the murder and the case. "Shariq and his brother Sheru happened to arrive at the wrong time and got caught in the brawl," he told The Indian Express. (Indian Express 22.1.05)

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)

#### Godhra report details negligence by Railways (7)

NEW DELHI, JAN. 21. Apart from concluding that the fire which engulfed the Sabarmati Express at Godhra on February 27, 2002 was probably caused by an accident, the Justice U.C. Banerjee Committee has indicted the Railways on at least eight counts of negligence, amounting, in many cases, to serious violation of procedures mandated either by statute or plain common sense.

To the millions of Indians who travel by train every day, the picture that emerges is a sobering — and even disturbing — one. Hinting that the officials involved were either incompetent or effecting a cover-up, Mr. Justice Banerjee writes that if the way the Railways acted in the run-up to and aftermath of the Godhra fire can be taken to be "the normal functioning of the Railways... then only God can help the passengers." Describing the violations in considerable detail, the committee's 165-page Interim Report — a copy of which is with The Hindu — attacks senior railway officials for giving credence to rumours about the incident that were patently false or absurd. At any rate, the Railways was party to both the destruction of forensic evidence and a sloppy system of record-keeping, which combined to help obscure the truth about the circumstances under which 59 passengers were burnt to death on board coach S-6 of the train. (The Hindu 22.1.05)

#### Banerjee report may expose NDA misdeeds (7)

New Delhi, January 21: AN OBVIOUS inference being drawn from the findings of the Justice U.C. Banerjee Committee report on the Godhra train fire is that investigations conducted by the Gujarat police were far from satisfactory and perhaps even manipulated. If this is true, it leaves scope for a conclusion that there could have been a state conspiracy to show the incident in a dimension far removed from reality. The report has already raised suspicion that it is aimed at helping railway minister Laloo Prasad Yadav's chances in the Bihar assembly elections. But if what it says is true, then many untruths and half-truths of the NDA regime may be exposed.

The most crucial aspect of the report is that it is based on excellent documentation available in the records of the Railways. This alone could perhaps expose the findings of the Gujarat police, who do not have the backing of much documentary evidence and are largely based on confessions, affidavits and witness accounts. In fact, the investigations have so many loopholes that experts feel the case prepared by the police could never stand the true test of law. Since there is no question the Railways have the best maintained records, the report virtually establishes the time of the fire at about 7.55 am. Attempts to show the time as 8.20 am stand refuted. (Hindustan Times 22.1.05)

#### Godhra probe panels on a collision course (7)

New Delhi: The two Godhra probe panels, headed by retired SC Justices (GT Nanavati and U C Banerjee, appear to be on a collision course over the Sabarmati Express train carnage. Justice Nanavati, who heads the commission inquiring into the Godhra riots 2002, said on Monday that he was in possession of evidence that suggested that the fire which gutted the S-6 coach of Sabarmati Express started from outside. Justice Nanavati said the evidence in his possession indicated that Godhra station, some persons forced their entry into the coach carrying kar sevaks after cutting the vestibule. Though Nanavati said the "evidence" was yet to be verified, his remark is significant since it conflicts with the findings of Justice U C Banerjee that the fire, which killed 59 kar sevaks and their kin triggering a month-long communal conflagration, started from inside the compartment. (Times of India 25.1.05)

#### Release innocent Muslims held in Godhra case (7)

NEW DELHI, JAN. 28. Academics, film-makers and activists from across the country have urged the Prime Minister to secure the immediate release of over "200 innocent Muslims put behind bars on the charge of burning the train in Godhra" as the "conspiracy theory" which led to the Gujarat carnage in 2002 had been rendered null and void by the interim report of U. C. Banerjee who is investigating the incident. In an open letter to Manmohan Singh, under the banner of Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD), the 75 signatories demanded that "all those who have been put behind bars on the charge of burning the train be immediately released and suitably compensated for the torture and humiliation which they have suffered during this long period." They have made out a case for formulating provisions "so that the likes of Modi cannot usurp the due process of law to pursue their divisive politics." (The Hindu 29.1.05)

Amnesty report is biased: Gujarat (7)

Gandhinagar, Jan. 29: Stunned by the damning report of Amnesty International alleging complicity and involvement of state administration in the 2002 communal riots the state government on Friday claimed that the observations were biased, lacked objective assessment of facts and were based on reports, articles and observations of persons whose leanings were against the state's interest. Calling the report on the "unfortunate " communal riots "highly regrettable and one-sided", a home department spokesperson said efforts to prevent and control the post-Godhra riots were not appreciated enough. The spokesman strongly objected to prejudice against the state by Amnesty International for publicising a one-sided report and orchestrating adverse propaganda despite a request by the state government to withhold the report in view of the pending cases in various courts. The spokesperson claimed that the report failed to highlight the state government's efforts to mobilise all forces including the paramilitary forces and the Army to control the situation and has merely depicted the failure of the government. (Asian Age 30.1.05)

## FEBRUARY -05

Neighbour saw Yasmin when Bakery burned (7)

MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 3: ASLAM Sheikh, who lost seven family members during the Best Bakery carnage, told the court on Thursday that Zaheera's sister-in-law, Yasmin, was in the bakery the day it was burnt down. Questioned by special public prosecutor Manjula Rao, Aslam said he had personally left behind his wife, two children, his brother Feroze's wife and two children in the Bakery on the night of March 1, 2002. It was there, he claimed, that he had seen the entire Sheikh family, Yasmin and Zaheera's grandmother Zareena. Yasmin's presence was vehemently denied by Zaheera's family who say she was with her parents on the fate.ful night. Aslam also said that he then went to one Sharada Bakery for some personal work. He claimed his brother, Ashraf, had come to Sharada Bakery and told him about the carnage. The next day, Aslam revealed, he saw the seven bodies of his family members. However, defence lawyer D.S. Jambaulikar pointed out several omissions in Aslam's deposition and police statement. While Aslam told the court he had heard the mob shout, "Maaro, j'alaao (Hit, bum)," he agreed he had not told this to the police. Aslam also claimed that Zaheera had come along with him and had made the complaint on his behalf, as he was in a state of shock. (Indian Express 4.2.05)

'Haren said Modj authored riots' (7)

Ahmedabad: The father of slain Gujarat minister Haren Pandya told the Nanavati-Shah commission of inquiry on Thursday that his son had said that the 2002 riots were "state-sponsored" and "orchestrated" by chief minister Narendra, Modi who was the "author and architect of the riots". A former school teacher, Vithal Pandya said that his son — who was the then revenue minister — told him about a meeting of BJP workers that took place in Lunawada in Panchmahals on February 27, 2002 — the day when the Godhra carnage took place — where Modi instructed workers to fan out in the state. "Haren told me about the incident. He also told me that the authorities had instructed the police that the revenge of Godhra deaths should be allowed and that they should go soft on kar sevaks," Pandya told the commission. Pandya said, "He (Haren) observed that this was for the first time that the state government had supported a bandh call given by an outfit on February 28 and no previous chief minister of Gu-jarat had supported such a call in past communal riots." Stressing that his son was not a fanatic, Pandya said that Haren had on February 27 itself remarked that if not checked in Godhra itself, the repercussions of the train carnage would go out of hand. "Most party members shared his (Haren's) sentiments, but some fundamentalists within the party did not approve of this feeling," he said. (Times of India 4.2.05)

NGOs release report's full text (7)

New Delhi, Feb. 7: In a move that is likely to fuel further controversies, two NGOs on Monday released what they claimed is the "full text" of the interim report of the Justice U.C. Banerjee Committee investigating the train fire in Godhra which sparked widespread riots in Gujarat nearly three years ago. The NGOs — Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD) and Human Rights Law Network (HRLW) — while releasing the text at a press conference, also criticised the Justice Nanavati Commission for not

coming out with a report on the incidents in Godhra in 2002 even though it had completed collecting evidence. HRLW's Colin Gonsalves, who is also a Supreme Court advocate, said they had got the Justice Banerjee report from a "good source" but declined to divulge who it was. "We believe people should have access to the full text of the report to form their own opinion which is why we decided to publicly release it when we got access to it," said Ms Shabnam Hashmi of ANHAD. (Asian Age 8.2.05)

Human rights magazine prints Godhra panel report (7)

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 7: THE interim report of the Justice U.C. Banerjee Committee on Sabarmati fire and Godhra riots has now been converted into a public document by a human rights magazine, Combat Law. The entire text of the report was published. The report had pointed out that the railways did not conduct any inquiry into the incident though it was the statutory obligation on the part of the Commissioner of Railway Safety to make an inquiry immediately. It also pointed out that the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Western Circle, (Mumbai) informed the railway administration after eight months of the incident, that it didn't think it prudent to hold an inquiry as the state government had ordered an inquiry under the Commission of Inquiry Act. The report expresses surprise at the slipshod report of the then divisional railway manager of Baroda.

"We are not commenting on the report but we feel that people have a right to the full text...people before had only one kind of information," said activist Shabnam Hashmi of the Anhad and Human Rights Law Network. (Indian Express 8.2.05)

Call off tour if Pak won't play here: Gujarat cricket body (7)

New Delhi: Riled by reports that Pakistan do not want to play a cricket Test match in Ahmedabad because of post-Godhra riots, the Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) has urged the Indian cricket board (BCCI) to call off their forthcoming tour to India. A fuming GCA president, Narhari Amin, told TOI on Sunday, "Godhra is 100 km away from Ahmedabad and in any case riots took place three years back. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has no right to take such a decision regarding a match venue on these grounds." Although GCA is yet to get official word on PCB's disinterest in playing in Ahmedabad, Amin, a Congress leader and a former deputy chief minister of Gujarat, has vowed to take the matter up at all possible levels. Meanwhile, PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan told TOI that it was a "private issue between PCB and BCC and saying anything may be misunderstood by many". (Times of India 7.2.05)

Madrassa board chief draws flak on cultural nationalism (7)

JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 10: WITH the "blessings" of the RSS, the Rajasthan Madarsa Board chief is organising an all-India conclave in Jaipur on Saturday to teach Muslims the tenets of "cultural nationalism". While Board chairman M.A. Ansari is gung-ho about the two-day event, Islamic organisations are up in arms calling the conclave an attempt by the RSS to saffronise their institutions with help from their puppets. Top RSS functionaries, including K. Sudershan, and "Muslim intellectuals" are expected to address the gathering. The event is being touted as an attempt to stir an all-India movement of "nationalistic" Muslims. Ansari said the agenda is simple: Hindu-Muslim unity. "We want Muslims to give up their current mindset and understand the realities of a multicultural rural India." And his catchphrase? "Agar Bharatiya hain to wafadaar to hona hi padega (If we are Indians, we have to be loyal)." While his critics are not too concerned about these shibboleths, two other points on the agenda have ignited their fury: Vande Mataram and cows. In an invitation circulated throughout India, the organisers have expressed their desire to ensure Vande Mataram echoes throughout the country and that cows are protected zealously. (Indian Express 11.2.05)

Gujarat Muslims on US radar (7)

Washington, Feb. 10: President George W. Bush's pledge last month to bring democracy to oppressed peoples throughout the world will soon reach Muslims in Gujarat if the US state department under its new secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, has its way. The department's bureau of democracy, human rights and labour yesterday announced its support for projects in Gujarat aimed at bringing legal redress to Muslims. Describing Indian Muslims as "marginalised", it announced support for building civil society for the minority community nationwide and for programmes aimed at promoting their inclusiveness. A total of \$15 million has been set apart for such projects worldwide during the financial year 2005. The state department has invited organisations to submit proposals which focus on promotion of human rights, political participation, media freedom, rule of law, women's rights and civil society among Muslims.

The bureau for democracy, human rights and labour, notorious for its intrusion in countries that Washington is not comfortable with, has been funding or helping similar programmes since 1998. But this is the first time that it is offering to directly get involved in India either for promoting human rights or civil society on behalf of the country's minorities. Its only other programme which had an Indian element was held five years ago, when it spent \$275,000 on a meeting in Delhi on global democracy (Telegraph 11.2.05)

#### Muslim group favours uniform civil code (7)

JAIPUR, FEB. 13. The participants in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-sponsored "Nationalist Muslim Conclave", which ended here today, announced their plans to launch a nation-wide campaign for adoption of the Uniform Civil Code and evolve a consensus in favour of complete ban on the cow slaughter. The campaign will lay a special emphasis on generating awareness among Muslim women about their rights. The two-day convention wound up with a public meeting held at the open air theatre of Ravindra Manch here under heavy security arrangements in view of continuing protests by the Muslim organisations. Prohibitory orders continued to be in force around the main venue of the conclave, Muslim Musafirkhana, where police staged a flag march and cordoned off nearby roads. Three persons, including a woman activist, were arrested on Saturday evening on charges of disturbing peace when they waved black flags and led a crowd raising slogans against the RSS. They were protesting against the RSS chief, K.S. Su-darshan, arriving at the Musa-firkhana to address the delegates in a closed-door session. The valedictory session of the conclave witnessed some tense moments this morning with a number of participants taking exception to the controversial issues being interpreted "to suit the RSS ideology". Many of them reportedly left the venue while alleging that they were not informed of the subjects and nature of discussions scheduled to take place. (The Hindu 14.7.05)

#### 2 Muslim bodies want Atal as Babri accused (7)

Lucknow, Feb. 20: The Sunni Central Waqf Board — one of the main plaintiffs in the Ayodhyacase — and the All-India Babri Masjid Action Committee are planning to seek inclusion of the name of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee as an accused in the demolition case.

The board's decision comes in the wake of disclosures made in a video CD in which Mr Vajpayee is seen exhorting people to "level the ground" at the Babri site. "The video CD clearly shows Mr Vajpayee urging people to demolish the Babri Masjid which proves his involvement in the conspiracy to demolish the mosque. Till now there was no evidence that Mr Vajpayee was a party to the plan to demolish the mosque. After seeing the video CD, we have decided to explore the possibility of getting Mr Vajpayee's name included in the accused list," said Mr Zafaryab Jilani, counsel for the board and convenor of the All-India Babri Masjid Action Committee.

According to Mr Jilani, the board members, however, would be consulting senior lawyers involved in the Ayodhya cases in court and also the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board before finally filing a petition in court. (Asian Age 21.2.05)

#### 3 killed during Muharram clash, curfew clamped (7)

LUCKNOW, FEB 20. Three persons were killed and about 10 wounded in a sectarian clash during a Muharram procession in Old Lucknow even as indefinite curfew was clamped in the area. State Principal home secretary Alok Sinha told mediapersons here that the condition of four of the injured, including a policeman, was critical. Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav announced an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakhs and Rs 3 lakhs to the kin of those killed and critically injured respectively. Mr Sinha said the curfew had been clamped in selected troubled spots in Thakurganj area to prevent any untoward incident. Officials maintained that situation was tense but under control. All the deceased belonged to a particular sect of the community, however, the administration was yet to give names of the victims. The bodies had been sent for post mortem. The home secretary said the victims were wounded in firing from .12 bore gun and later three persons succumbed. He said two culprits involved in the firing incident had been identified but were yet to be arrested. Mr Sinha said the trouble started when some people objected to the unfurling of a religious flag during a Tazia procession this morning near Chhota Imambara. This sparked a clash and incidents of stone throwing and arson. (The Hindu 21.2.05)

#### Zahira told to disclose assets (7)

New Delhi, Feb. 21: The Supreme Court directed Best Bakery case key witness Zahira Sheikh to disclose

her assets and bank balance within four weeks. This assumes significance in the backdrop of allegations and counter-allegations levelled by Zahira and social activist Teesta Setalvad in the high-profile case. A Supreme Court bench, comprising Justice Arijit Pasayat and Justice H.K. Sema, also asked Zahira to submit details of the financial position-of her relatives ' to the high level committee appointed to probe the issue. The apex court also extended the time by three months within which a report would be given by the high-level committee headed by its Registrar-General B.M. Gupta. Recently, Delhi police joint commissioner Kan-waljit Deol was drafted in as the second member of the committee. Appearing for Zahira, senior advocate P.N. Lekhi requested the court to also direct Ms Setalvad to furnish details of her assets. (Asian Age 22.2.05)

VHP doctored photos: Witness (7)

Ahmedabad, February 22: DEPOSING BEFORE the Nanavati-Shah commission probing the Sabarmati Express inferno, an eye-witness told the commission that the ill-fated train's chain was pulled as some people shouting ' Jai Sri Ram' were left behind in the Godhra station. She also alleged that one of the photographs of the train that she clicked was doctored by the VHP to show dead bodies in the foreground of a burning coach. Sadhvisri Minaxi Deviji's statement contradicts the Gujarat Police's conspiracy theory that the chain was pulled by Muslims. Earlier, the guard of the train had also testified that the chain was pulled by 'kar sewaks' as some of their people were left behind on the platform. (Hindustan Times 23/2/05)

Gujarat riot cop chief promoted, man who complained ignored (7)

AHMEDABAD, FEBRUARY 23: IN a reshuffle of Gujarat's top police officials today, R B Sreekumar, whose affidavit and deposition before the Gujarat riots commission had embarrassed the Modi government, was superseded for promotion. On the other hand, P C Pande, who was police commissioner of Ahmedabad during the riots, has been promoted to Director General rank, and will take charge as director of the state Anti-Corruption Bureau. Pande is currently on deputation to the CISF. While promoting three of its four Addl DGs to DG rank, the government preferred Sreekumar's junior, K R Kaushik, over him. Sreekumar is from the 1971 IPS batch while Kaushik is from the 1972 batch. Deposing before the Justice G T Nanavati and Justice K G Shah Inquiry Commission last year, Sreekumar had alleged lapses in heeding intelligence reports and said the police force had been tied down by political interference. As for Pande, his posting in the CBI as Addl Director in 2003 had snowballed into a controversy after petitioners pointed out in the Supreme Court that the agency was probing riot-related cases. Last October, the Centre told the court it was shifting Pande from the CBI. (Indian Express 24/2/05)

Bilkis points out 12 accused (7)

Mumbai, Feb. 22: Bilkis Banu on Tuesday identified all the 12 accused by name in a gangrape and mass murder case. Three of the accused had allegedly raped Bilkis Banu, who was pregnant at that time, and the nine other accused had allegedly murdered 14 of her relatives, including her daughter. She deposed in-camera before the court of special judge U.D. Salvi of the Mazgaon sessions court and named 12 of the total 20 accused who were in the dock. Special public prosecutor R.K. Shah told reporters Bilkis Banu pointed at the accused who had allegedly gangraped her, and also those who allegedly killed her three-year-old daughter, and attributed roles to each of the accused in the crime. (Asian Age 23/2/05)

Love story causes a communal flare-up (7)

Baroda, Feb. 23: One constable of State Reserve Police unit was injured and few others reportedly suffered minor injuries in a communal flare up in the old city area on Monday. A mob of around 100 people from both the communities started pelting stones at each other on Monday at around 10 pm and also targeted few shops in the area. Police commissioner Sudhir Sinha said, "An affair between a Hindu girl, Krishna, and a Muslim boy, Akbar, was the cause of the flare-up."

Earlier, some untoward incident had happened near Mehta Pol in the evening, which went unreported. Later, miscreants exploded Sutli bombs near a school in Mehta Pol at night, which brought people from surrounding areas on road. The swelling crowds added to the mounting tension leading to people from both the communities pelting stones at each other, he said.

A mobile unit of SRP unit soon reached the place and lathicharged the crowd, which was dispersed only after two teargas shells were lobbed. A complaint in this regard was filed with the city police station by Nirmal Singh Ravubha, the constable injured in the incident. (Asian Age 24/2/05)

## MARCH – 05

NGO's forgive 'n' forget idea kicks up a row (7)

AHMEDABAD, FEBRUARY 28: THE efforts of voluntary group Jan Andolan to bring about reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims in some villages divided by the 2002 riots has run into controversy. Other groups are opposing Jan Andolan's idea that Muslims should withdraw cases of arson or looting to facilitate reconciliation with Hindus. Jan Andolan chief Mukul Sinha says withdrawing such cases will allow Muslims displaced by the riots to go back to their villages without any fear. "There are many villages to which Muslims have been unable to return even three years after the riots," he says. "Let's not talk of far-off places, there are villages hardly 20 km from Ahmedabad to which Muslims haven't returned. They are warned not to return."

Sinha adds that he's not for withdrawal of cases of serious offences. "All that is being suggested is that, in instances where there was no loss of life, no rape, or other heinous charge, people should withdraw cases and find ways of getting on with life," he says. Activists like advocate Girish Patel, Prof Nisar Ahmed Ansari, Achyut Yagnik and others don't buy that idea. They say there can be no reconciliation without justice. This difference of opinion came to the fore on Sunday after Jan Andolan circulated a note on its proposal and called for a dharna to push the idea. The note says the proposal has the backing of some 40 muftis from Ahmedabad, who have agreed to canvass for it. (Indian Express 1/3/05)

Panel not to take up riot cases (7)

Ahmedabad, Feb. 28: Although human rights groups, including the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women, have managed to prod the Gujarat government to set up the State Women's Commission, there are indications that atrocity cases of 2002 riots will not be under its purview. Education minister in-charge of women and child welfare Anandi Patel seems to be clear about her stand on the issue. "Why should the women's commission take up the cases of violence against women in post-Godhra riots?" she wondered when asked by The Asian Age if the commission will deal with 2002 atrocity cases. She said, "Why should the commission take up those cases now that they are already being tried in various courts? It will focus on cases of violence against women including rape, abduction and domestic violence reported henceforth." Although it is hard to quantify the exact number of cases of sexual violence pertaining to 2002 riots that have been reported, the fact remains that countless cases of rape and sexual violence of 2002 riots are yet to come to fore. In January 2003, the National Commission for Women had even expressed dissatisfaction with the Gujarat government's handling of rape cases stemming from the 2002 riots, noting that there were no convictions during the year. (Asian Age 1/3/05)

Jafri widow claims compensation (7)

Ahmedabad, March 1: Jafri and 24 other surviving families of the Gulbarg Society massacre have demanded compensations totaling Rs 60 crore from three Hindu organizations which had called for the Gujarat bandh. The violence that followed had resulted in at least 39 deaths and destruction of 25 houses on February 28, 2002. Zakia's husband Ehsan Jafri was among the 39 killed by a mob of nearly 8,000 VHP and Bajrang Dal supporters during the bandh. She has sought compensation of Rs 70 lakh from the state units of the VHP, BJP and RSS. These organisations had called for the statewide bandh in protest against the February 27 killing of 59

'kar sewaks' aboard the Sabaramati Express at Godhra. Separate legal notices have been sent to the state units of the VHP, BJP and RSS under the Law of Torts, senior advocate S.M. Vora told HT on Tuesday. The claim has been taken from a full bench judgement of the Kerala High Court, later confirmed by the Supreme Court in 1998, which ordered political parties to pay compensations for death and damages caused during bandhs called by them, Vora said. (Hindustan Times 2/3/05)

Narayanan on Gujarat 'conspiracy' (7)

Thiruvananthapuram, March 1: FORMER PRESIDENT K.R. Narayanan has said that the 2002 communal violence in Gujarat was the result of a "conspiracy" between the BJP-led governments at the Centre and the state. He made these comments in an interview with Malayalam magazine Manava Samskriti. "Vajpayee did not do anything positive in Gujarat," Narayanan said, adding that he, as the President at the time, wrote several letters to Prime Minister Vajpayee and talked to him in detail about the riots. "I asked the Army to be deployed to suppress the violence... The Army was sent but there was no shooting against

those who engineered violence. Had it been done, a lot of gruesome incidents could have been prevented," Narayanan said in his interview to Manava Samskriti editor and Congress legislator P.T. Thomas. "If the Army was given powers to suppress the violence, the tragedy in Gujarat could have been avoided. But the state government did not do it. The Centre also did the same. It was a conspiracy between the state and central governments." Narayanan also accused the NBA government of having several "hidden agendas." "The BJP government had several hidden agendas and education was one area where they tried to put forward their ideology. I intervened when they came up with some names for the post of vice-chancellors, which created bad blood in my relations with Murli Manohar Joshi and a few others." (Hindustan Times 2/3/05)

Is police slow in reviewing cases? (7)

Ahmedabad, March 3: As per the Supreme Court directive the police department has submitted its second quarterly progress report of reviewed riot cases, which states that of the total 2,024 cases, 1,521 have been reviewed up to January 31, 2005, of which 518 cases have been re-opened. Director-general of police A.K. Bhargav said the other 1,000 odd cases that were reviewed were in various stages of scrutiny and might be reopened if need be. He accepted that

abad city and Gandhinagar range that comprises Sabarkantha and Mehsana districts. These are the places where the majority of riot cases were registered. Mr Bhargav said there were many reasons for the delay including supervisory officers being on leave and relocation of complainants and difficulty in tracing them. In certain cases there were a large number of witnesses to be questioned, he said. But a police source said after the strictures passed by the Supreme Court, no officer was willing to be pulled up by the court for lapses in investigations.

So they were investigating the case but the policy adopted was go slow, the source said. (Asian Age 4/3/05)

How govt 'tutored' Sreekumar (7)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 3: INSTRUCTING an officer to be evasive while answering questions about the Godhra carnage, telling him not to answer certain kinds of questions, conducting a mock cross-examination before he deposed before the riots commission. The Gujarat government seems to have done it all. R.B. Sreekumar, an IPS officer whose affidavits and deposition before the Gujarat riots commission have embarrassed the government, has told Express that after he filed affidavits before the commission, he was tutored on how he should depose and even put through a mock cross-examination. Sreekumar had filed two affidavits before the commission. In them, he had alleged government failure to act on intelligence, and also that the police had been tied down by political interference. Tehelka, a news weekly, on Thursday released an audio CD of Sreekumar being tutored by government counsel Arvind Pandya, who appears before the commission, and IAS officer Girishchandra Murmu. In a transcript of the CD released by Tehelka, Pandya and Murmu instruct Sreekumar on how

to deal with questions and tell him not to reveal details gathered by the Intelligence Bureau, of which he was head. They also tell him not to refrain from answering questions about the Godhra carnage and its aftermath. "I was cross-examined by the commission on August 31, 2004. I was briefed by the two officials on August 24," he said. Other officers appearing before the commission had also been briefed, he said. (Indian Express 4/3/05)

Naroda residents fear to return (7)

Ahmedabad, March 6: "Kitne mar gaye, jal gaye, kat gaye." This is how the resists of Naroda Patiya, one of the worst-affected areas in the 2002 Gujarat riots, describe those horrifying moments when they saw relatives, friends and neighbours being caught, burnt and killed before their eyes. The bitterness refuses to go, as life is now a struggle for most families displaced by the riots. It has been three years since then but the survivors are still hounded by terror as they struggle to come to grips with life. Many families who fled for their lives from Naroda Patiya in March 2002 do not want to return to the area. They fear that the tola (rioters) will return. The menfolk of these families still find it hard to get jobs, and since schools are located in far-off places the children, particularly girls, are struggling to pursue their studies. Some have even dropped out of school. These people told The Asian Age that the government had done nothing much to aid the riot victims so far. (Asian Age 7/3/05)

Fatwa fury on communists (7)

Thiruvananthapuram, March 6: The moderate-minded Indian Union Muslim League has latched on to an Islamic scholar's decades-old fatwa against communist Muslims in the party's fight for votes in Kerala. Egypt-born Yusuf al Qaradawi's fatwa rules that a communist, who is an atheist, has no place in Islam; that Muslim women should not be married to communists, and a communist Muslim has no right to Islamic burial in a mosque cemetery and to ancestral property.

The Islamic Publishing House in Kozhikode, which is pro-Jamaat-e-Islami, had published the fatwa 18 years ago. Qaradawi now lives in Qatar and has links with the Muslim Brotherhood, which is outlawed in Egypt. His edict came in handy for the League's Karuvarakundu unit to call for a social boycott of communists within the community. The League's state leadership, however, sought to distance itself from the local unit's efforts. "The League has (issued) no fatwas," Malappuram district secretary K.E.A. Majeed said. The party, he stressed, is a political entity and not a religious one. The League has been in a war of nerves with the CPM since last month when the latter held its triennial state conference for the first time in the League citadel of Malappuram. CPM leaders had claimed that the huge Muslim turnout at a rally showed the community's gravitation towards the party and its increasing alienation from the League. (Telegraph 7/3/05)

Panel defers decision on calling K.R. Narayanan (7)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 9. The G.T. Nanavati and K.G. Shah judicial inquiry commission probing the Godhra train carnage and the communal riots that followed in Gujarat has deferred till March 19 its decision on whether to summon the former President, K.R. Narayanan. Mukul Sinha, the advocate for the Jan Sangharsha Manch which is fighting the cases of the victims, requested the commission to cross-examine Mr. Narayanan following his statement in the media that the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, had failed to take any action to stop the Gujarat riots despite his intervention. When the commission met today to consider Dr. Sinha's application, the State Government pleader raised objections claiming that anyone talking about the riots need not be summoned. Mr. Nanavati said that the former President's remarks could not be taken lightly.

The commission would try to find out from Mr. Narayanan whether the media reports were authentic and decide at its next hearing about summoning him. The commission postponed till March 19 decisions on other applications about cross-examination of other witnesses. (The Hindu 10/3/05)

60 years on, Govt tries to understand Muslim mind (7)

NEW DELHI, March 12. —Nearly 60 years after Independence, the Centre has finally realised that it does not know enough about Indian Muslims. So, it has formed a committee to gather sufficient information regarding the socio-economic and educational status of Muslims within the next year-and-a-half. The lack of information about the community, about a sixth of the country's population, is coming in the way of providing them jobs, including through reservations, and producing minority-specific programmes to improve their social and economic position. The recently appointed seven-member committee, headed by Mr Justice Rajender Sachar, retired Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, comprises academics and other experts. Among the data being sought is how many Muslims work in the public and private sectors. Clearly, the government is looking at some form of reservations. For, the committee has to find out how many "Muslim OBCs" are there in a state and what percentage it is to the total OBC population. The other crucial issue is how social sector programmes are helping Muslims. Do they have sufficient access to schools, hospitals and bank loans available from government agencies? Are there enough opportunities in Muslim majority areas? Also, do they have these opportunities compared with members of other communities? As one member of the committee said: "If you take all religious communities as a whole and look at them in terms of socio-economic position, the Muslims are at the lowest position." (Statesman 13/3/05)

Prohibitory orders clamped in Bhilwara (7)

JAIPUR, MARCH 15. The situation in Bhilwara town in southern Rajasthan, which witnessed communal violence following the murder of a Bajrang Dal activist on Friday last, continues to remain tense. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal workers blocked the Bhilwara-Bea-war road for six hours today to protest against the lack of progress in the investigation into the alleged killing of another activist early this month. While a Bajrang Dal activist, Raju Bairwa, was killed in the town allegedly by some persons of the minority community on Friday, an instructor in the Rash-triya Swayamsevak Sangh 'shakha', Satyanarain Sharma, was found dead in the nearby Karjalia village on March 1. Today's protest was focused on

Satyanarain's alleged murder with the activists claiming that the culprits were being shielded. The Sangh Parivar activists blocked traffic at Haripura square - 28 km from Bhilwara -for about six hours and raised slogans against the failure of police to nab the murderers. The blockade was lifted only after a message from the Home Minister, Gulab Chand Kataria, assuring his personal attention to the matter was passed on to the agitationists. Prohibitory orders enforced over the week-end in Bhilwara will continue till March 21 even as an incident of a Maulvi being stabbed in the town on Sunday has heightened the tension. The clergyman was hospitalised and was now stated to be out of danger. (The Hindu 16/3/05)

Cop threatened to eliminate me: Witness (7)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 15: A WITNESS in the Godhra carnage case has alleged that a police officer threatened to kill him in an "encounter" or fix him in the case if he deposed before the riots commission. In an affidavit filed before the Justice G.T. Nanavati and Justice KG. Shah Commission on Tuesday, Anwar Ab-dul Sattar Kalandar said he was threatened by Deputy Superintendent Noel Parmar, who is on the special investigating team set up for the case. Kalandar also filed an application seeking police protection but the commission rejected it. On March 21, the commission will hear an application to summon for deposition Kalandar and nine other witnesses in the case. Kalandar, a truck driver, met The Indian Express on the outskirts of the city. He said he was first contacted by police on March 5. "A policeman came to my house on March 5, gave me a cellphone number and asked me to call Pa-marswafo. When I did, Par-marsaab asked me if I had deposed before the Banerjee commission, to which I said no. He asked me not to tell anyone about this conversation and asked me to meet him the next day, but I did not go," Kalandar said. He said the policemen again came and made him call up Parmar on March 13. "Parmarsaai told me he had information that I had deposed before the Banerjee commission. He said if I deposed before the Nanavati commission, or met anyone in this regard, he would have me killed in an encounter. I haven't gone home since then," he said. (Indian Express 16/3/05)

Gujarat riots cost Modi US visa (7)

New Delhi, March 18: INDO-US BONHOMIE after the 'landmark' visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice evaporated on Friday after Washington denied Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi a diplomatic visa to visit the United States. The US also cancelled Modi's business and tourist visa—an act the Indian government strongly condemned, saying it was "uncalled for and displays lack of courtesy and sensitivity towards a constitutionally elected chief minister of a state of India." The visas were denied and revoked over Modi's alleged role in abetting the Gujarat riots of 2002, the US embassy spokesman said. "We can confirm that Chief Minister of Gujarat state Narendra Modi applied for but was denied the diplomatic visa under Section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act," said the spokesman. Modi was scheduled to visit the US later this month for "an event organised by the Asian-American Hotel Owners' Association". The diplomatic snub, sources indicated, was possibly the fallout of a resolution introduced in the US Congress on March 16 condemning Modi for "promoting attitudes of racial supremacy, racial hatred and the legacy of Nazism", besides "inciting bigotry and intolerance". The MEA summoned American deputy chief of mission Bob Blake to register the government's protest. Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, who met Blake for 30 minutes, lodged a "strong protest" and urged the US government to reconsider the decision. (Hindustan Times 19/3/05)

Has US not Modified the law? (7)

New Delhi: THE US State Department's claim that its decision to deny Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi entry into US because he does "not qualify for a visa under Section 212(a)(2)(G) of the US Immigration and Nationality Act which prohibits the admission to the US of any foreign Government official responsible for serious violations of religion freedom" hides more than it reveals. The specific section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that has been cited actually says: "Any alien who, while serving as a foreign Government official, was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time during the preceding 24-month period, particularly severe violations of religious freedom, as defined in Section 3 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and the spouse and children, if any, are inadmissible." Even if Mr Modi were to be guilty as charged by the US, American law does not debar him from securing a visa because more than 24 months have lapsed since the Godhra massacre and subsequent riots in Gujarat which occurred during the last days of February and early March 2002. In any event, Mr Modi has neither been charged with nor found guilty of being "responsible for or (having) directly carried out particularly

severe violations of religious freedom" by any court of law in India. The Justices Nanavati-Shah Commission of Inquiry is yet to submit its report. (Pioneer 20/3/05)

Decision was based on NHRC's findings: U.S. (7)

WASHINGTON, MARCH 19. The United States says the decision to deny a diplomatic visa to the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, was based not on any determination made by Washington but on the findings of the National Human Rights Commission of India. The Deputy Spokesman of the U.S. State Department, Adam Ereli, said that it was incorrect to say that the Bush administration had determined that Mr. Modi was behind the Gujarat riots of 2002. "The fact of the matter is that it was the Indians who investigated the riots and it was the Indian Government who determined that State institutions failed to act in a way that would prevent violence and would prevent religious persecution." "So this is not a matter of the United States saying something happened or something didn't happen. It is a matter of the United States responding to a finding by the Indian National Human Rights Commission pointing to comprehensive failure on the part of the State Government of Gujarat to control persistent violations of rights," the spokesman said. Mr. Ereli said the U.S. administration officials had made a determination on two things based on the NHRC findings. "Number one, we determined that [on] an application for a diplomatic visa to come to the United States that the terms for issuing that visa under U.S. law had not been met, and so we decided not to issue the visa based on U.S. law and based on findings of fact by the Indian National Commission," Mr. Ereli said. (The Hindu 20/3/05)

Modi, Advani say US has stepped on India's pride (7)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 20: THE Bharat Swabhiman Rally organised by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to protest the US decision to revoke Chief Minister Narendra Modi's visa was attended by over 10,000 BJP workers from across the state. Among them were some 50 MLAs, including 15 known to be part of the oust-Modi campaign. Although stalwarts of the campaign, such as Keshubhai Pa-tel and MPs Vallabhbhai Kathiriya and A.K. Patel were absent, some vocal dissidents such as MLA Gordhan Zadaphia took part in the rally. Asked about the dissident presence at the rally, Zadaphia said: "Don't use that word (dissident). This is a party affair, and we are all backing it, and that's why I'm here. And don't ask me which camp the MLAs who attended the rally were from. Why should I keep note of who from which group was present?"

In their addresses to party workers at the Kankaria football ground, BJP president L.K. Advani and Modi said that the US had stepped on India's pride. Said Modi: "Whether the US administration gives me a visa or not, it will have to explain its action. Today I will unmask its double standards. The US spreads rumours to weaken democratic systems in countries, then attacks them as has happened in Iraq. For ten years they said Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, but even after the attack they have no proof of the weapons' existence." (Indian Express 21/3/05)

Zahira fails to appear before panel again (7)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 21. For the fourth time, the key witness of the Best Bakery communal riot case, Zahira Sheikh, failed to appear before the G.T. Nanavati and K.G. Shah judicial commission here today which also kept pending a decision on summoning the former president, K. R. Narayanan. She has now been asked to appear before the commission on April 13.

Ms. Sheikh through her lawyer, Narendra Makwana, pleaded that she was still busy completing her affidavit to be submitted before the Supreme Court and would need at least one more adjournment before she would be ready to appear before it. Ms. Sheikh was summoned by the commission probing into the Godhra train carnage and the post-Godhra communal riots in Guj-arat on a plea by the advocate of the Jan Sang-harsha Mancch, Mukul Sinha, for cross-examination following her media statements in November contradicting the affidavits she had filed before the commission in which she named some of the accused. The application for cross-examination was submitted in December and since then, Ms. Sheikh had been summoned thrice but she failed to appear on health grounds or due to other reasons and every time sought further postponement of the cross-examination. (The Hindu 22/3/05)

Anti-Modi protests erupt in NY (7)

Ahmedabad/New York: The Coalition Against Genocide (CAG) held a demonstration against the event organised by the Association of Indian Americans in North America (AIANA) at Madison Square Garden in New York City, that had a speech delivered by Narendra Modi via satellite from Gandhinagar. The

demonstration included members of many constituent organisations of the CAG in the New York area. Members of the New York-based sister umbrella organisation Tri State Coalition Against Genocide also participated in the rally. A CAG spokesman said its focus had been to educate and inform the American public and policy-makers about Modi's role in the 2002 Gu-jarat pogrom and the continued harassment of victims under his regime.

Addressing the rally, several speakers countered Modi's claim about the denial of visa to him being an insult to India. Dr Shaik Ubaid, president of Indian Muslim Council-USA denounced Modi's incitements and hate speeches against the US and the subsequent destruction of American businesses in Gujarat by his supporters. He demanded that the AIANA not add further fuel to this anti-Americanism by supporting Modi and demanding reinstatement of his visa.

Smita Narula, a former Asia specialist at Human Rights Watch (HRW), spoke at length about the complicity of Modi's administration in the massacres of 2002. (Times of India 22/3/05)

Invite cloud over Modi's London trip (7)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 22: WHILE the storm over the US revoking Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's visa is yet to pass over, there's another one brewing. The chief minister's office (CMO) says Modi will be attending the March 26 Gujarat Day Celebrations at the Royal Albert Hall, London. But it's not clear who has invited him. The organisers of the event, the Asian Music Circuit, say they haven't invited Modi and don't know on whose invitation he plans to be there.

Asian Music Circuit's website dedicates a whole page to the event, but nowhere does it mention Modi. The website says folk singer Praful Dave and percussionist Trilok Gurtu and Sandeep Raval will be performing at the event, to be compered by Harish Bhi-mani. It also names the sponsors. One Asian Music Circuit office-bearer, who didn't want to be named, told The Indian Express: "We are a non-political body and do not want to be dragged into any controversy. We have not invited Modi but he may attend the function." Modi's office, which has been briefing the press for the last two days, says he has been invited by Asian Voice, a London publication. The chief minister's public relations officer, Jagdishchandra Thakkar, claims Modi's visit to London is an official tour, in which he will be accompanied by tourism secretary R.M. Patel, secretary (CMO) A.K. Sharma, and officer on special duty (in-fotech) Parag Shah. (Indian Express 23/3/05)

'Denial of visa to Modi has nothing to do with India-U.S. ties' (7)

WASHINGTON, MARCH 22. The Bush administration is seeking to downplay the controversy surrounding the denial of a visa to the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, saying the issue has nothing to do with the broader aspects of India-United States relations. "The issue of this visa, frankly, I think, should be separated entirely from the broader issue of U.S.-India relations. Why? Because it's a specific case dealing with a specific visit. It has nothing to do with bilateral relations. It has nothing to do with our close partnership and good friendship with India. It is a technical matter related to a visa application," the State Department deputy spokesman, Adam Ereli, said. "... one should not make more of this decision than it is. It's a decision based on the application —based on the interpretation of law with respect to a specific request for a visa. It is not a reflection of our views of the Government of Gujarat or the people of Gujarat or a reflection of our bilateral relations," he added. Mr. Ereli also said that Washington was "deeply appreciative" of the role played by both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Vajpayee government "in opening the way for positive transformation" of the bilateral relationship; and of the "great respect" the U.S. had for "the many successful Gujaratis who live and work in the United States and the thousands who are issued visas to the United States each month." (The Hindu 23/3/05)

Zahira will face action for perjury (7)

Mumbai, March 23: The prosecution in the Best Bakery case on Wednesday said that it would move the special court to seek perjury action against prime witness Zahira Sheikh, who had turned "hostile" during the re-trial. "We will file an application for initiating action against Zahira for perjury but it will happen later," prosecution sources said, while claiming that Zahira had lied during her deposition that continued for nearly 20 days during December 2004 and January 2005. It is, however, not clear whether other members of her family, including Zahira's mother Sehrunissa, sister Saeera and brothers Nafitullah and Nasibullah would also be named in the application for perjury to be filed by the prosecution as they too had turned hostile. Earlier, her other family members had also turned hostile. Zahira was declared hostile on

December 21 by the prosecution and a day later a TV channel had shown Baroda MLA Madhu Srivastava talking about having paid money to her. (Asian Age 24/3/05)

#### 15. Rights activists were pressing for Modi's arrest (7)

LONDON, MARCH 24. Asian human rights activists were today trying to obtain an arrest warrant against the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, ahead of his planned visit to Britain tomorrow. The visit has since been cancelled. Suresh Grover of the 'Monitoring Group' and 'Awaaz' — the two organisations spearheading the campaign for Mr. Modi's arrest — said: "We are making all efforts to have him arrested for torture under the British Criminal Justice Act." Mr. Grover said the family of two British nationals, Saeed and Sakil Daud, who were killed in the Gujarat violence, had given their "consent" for a case to be filed against Mr. Modi. A case demanding compensation from the Gujarat Government was pending in an Indian court. Mr. Grover said that a similar move during Mr. Modi's visit in 2003 had failed on a technicality. This time they were on firmer grounds, he claimed. "Unlike on the previous occasion, this time we have the consent of the Daud family to seek Mr. Modi's arrest on their behalf," he said. Efforts were being made to get the same judge, who had heard the case in 2003, to give them a hearing again. More organisations urged the British Government to revoke Mr. Modi's visa, arguing that his visit would "inflame" passions. (The Hindu 25/3/05)

#### 16. Modi puts off trip to U.K. (7)

GANDHINAGAR, MARCH 24. The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has postponed his trip to the United Kingdom on the advice of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to avoid possible law and order problems in that country. A spokesman of the Chief Minister's office here said Mr. Modi received a call from Dr. Singh and the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, at around 10.30 p.m. advising him not to go to the U.K. in view of possible law and order problems.

He was told that the Centre had received communication to this effect from the U.K. He was also told that there was a possibility of a terrorist attack and that his own security was under threat. "Mr Modi decided to postpone the visit accepting the Prime Minister's advice," the spokesman said. The spokesman made it clear that though the trip was "postponed" for the time being, it was likely to be cancelled later. Mr. Modi was scheduled to leave for the U.K. tomorrow to attend a "Gujarat Day" celebrations in London on March 26 and address a meeting of non-resident Indians the next day. He was to return to India on March 28. (The Hindu 25/3/05)

#### 17. Civil rights activists claim victory (7)

LONDON, MARCH 25. Asian civil rights groups have hailed the last-minute cancellation of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi's visit to Britain as a "victory" for their campaign but said that they would continue to press for a permanent ban on his entry into the United Kingdom.

Activists of the Left-wing South Asia Solidarity Group and a host of Muslim organisations had threatened to picket Mr. Modi wherever he went during his visit. There was also a move to have an arrest warrant issued against him on behalf of a British Indian family, two of whose members were killed in the allegedly state-sponsored communal violence in Gujarat three years ago.

"Clearly, the momentum that we built up against his visit and the pressure we brought to bear upon the British Government not to allow him to come here appear to have resulted in the advice that he should reconsider his travel plans," said a spokesperson of the South Asia Solidarity Group. She said the campaign against "divisive forces" would continue. "It is not just about one person but against the entire Sangh Parivar and its activities," she added. (The Hindu 26/3/05)

#### 18. Riot-accused MLA at large, DIG moved (7)

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 27: POLICE haven't yet arrested BJP's Radhanpur MLA Shankar Chaudhary and 10 others accused in a post-Godhra riot case despite orders from the DIG. Instead, DIG Satish Varma, who issued a written order last week directing his subordinates to arrest the accused, has been shunted out to a police training school in Junagadh. MLA Chaudhary is alleged to have led a mob on March 1, 2002, attacking Muslim properties. He is accused of opening fire on two Muslim youths. Others allegedly stopped the vehicle in which the injured youths were being taken to hospital and set it on fire. However, Patan SP AB. Vasava maintains there were "no directions from the DIG to arrest the accused". He says investigation is still on to establish the allegation that they had died to bullets from Chaudhary's gun. Vasava said police had sought permission from the sub-divisional magistrate for exhuming the body of

one of the victims. Among the other accused, four have BJP links — Dr Raval, a medical practitioner; Prakash Dakshini, the Radhanpur nagarpalika chairman; builder Vinod Gok-lani; and Praveen Mahalak-shmi, a parry worker. Hie case is of double murder, arson, rioting, and loot. (Indiian Express 28/3/05)

Zaheera questions, NHRC in Best case (7)

NEW DELHI, MARCH 29: QUESTIONING the veracity of a petition by the National Human Rights Commission on the Gujarat riots, Best Bakery key witness Zaheera Sheikh has asked the Supreme Court-appointed probe committee for an opportunity to cross-examine the NHRC chief. She also called for a probe into the wealth of social activist Teesta Setalvad. Zaheera filed an affidavit before the committee headed by registrar-general B.M. Gupta, who along with Kan-waljeet Deol, has been assigned the task of finding out the truth behind the alleged conflicting statements made by Zaheera and Setalvad. It was based on the petitions of the NHRC and Setalvad that the apex court started monitoring the post-Godhra riots cases. Zaheera has alleged that her statements before the NHRC were doctored and placed before SC, which had set aside the acquittal of all 21 accused and ordered fresh trial in Mumbai. Zaheera said in her affidavit: "I was taken to the office of NHRC and made to say orally what Teesta had told me to say". She said her so-called statement produced by NHRC before the SC was not what she said before the Commission. "I would like my lawyer to examine the chairman of the NHRC in respect of her statement, which formed part of the affidavit filed on behalf of the human rights body". (Indian Express 30/3/05)

## **APRIL – 2005**

Zahira's affidavit challenged by Gujarat Govt (7)

New Delhi: The Gujarat government has questioned the veracity of the affidavit submitted in the Best Bakery case by controversial witness Zahira Sheikh. It was this affidavit which led to a crucial judgment ordering retrial in the case. The Gujarat government's affidavit filed in the Supreme Court said that Zahira's affidavit was prepared when she was under the "custody" of, social activist Teesta Setalvad, with whom she recently developed sharp differences. The state's affidavit was filed in response to a notice to determine whether the retractions by Zahira and the counter-allegations by Setalvad amounted to misleading the court through perjury, thus liable for contempt action. A Bench of Justices Arijit Pasayat and H K Sema extended till May 31 the term of Mumbai special court trying the Best Bakery case in which 21 persons are facing trial for allegedly burning alive 14 innocent persons. All the accused persons were acquitted by a Vadodara fast track court. Zahira later said she had testified under threat from the accused. (Times of India 5/4/05)

Muslims flee villages, tension in Rajasthan (7)

Jaipur, April 9: Communal tension forced Muslims to flee villages in Bhilwara district while curfew remained in force in Mandal town for a second day. Curfew was imposed in Mandal on Friday following group clashes during a procession and the death of one person in police firing.

The trouble began when a saffron flag was hoisted on a mosque in Mandal on Friday and violence broke out while a religious procession was in progress. Rajasthan home minister Gulab Chand Kataria told this correspondent an all-party committee would be constituted to restore communal harmony. "The committee will visit the troubled area whenever such situations arise in the state," he said. The home minister said the divisional commissioner has been asked to probe the incident in Mandal. When asked about the social boycott in Karjalia village in Bhilwara district, he said there was a problem and the government would try to bridge the gap between the communities. Facing ostracism, Muslims had migrated to safer places from Karjalia village, where an RSS activist was killed on March 1. (Asian Age 10/4/05)

FIR against Teesta (7)

Vadodara, April 9: A FIRST information report (FIR) was registered against Mumbai-based social activist Teesta Setal-vad, former deputy mayor of Vadodara Mohammed Vora and four others for allegedly keeping Zahira Sheikh, Best Bakery case prime witness, under illegal confinement and for threatening her. A Vadodara court had on Friday ordered a police inquiry into Zahira's allegations that she never signed any affidavit requesting the Supreme Court to order retrial in the case. Four other accused in this case are Arif Malik, Munna Malik (both hailing from Vadodara), Raees Khan (Ahmedabad) and Issac

(Mumbai). There are about 10 people involved in this case whose names and addresses are not available, the police said. The offence was registered under various sections of the IPC, Bombay Police Act and the Arms Act. Chetan Gore, the convenor of 'Ananya and Nagrik Atyachar Nivaran Samiti', had approached the court of first class judicial magistrate C.D. Vaghela on Friday to inquire into the case after the police and the state home department failed to respond to his request for conducting investigation. In the FIR, it is alleged that Zahira and her brother Nafitullah were forcibly taken away from their houses at knife-point and taken to Mumbai where they were kept in a hotel and were threatened to be killed. (Hindustan Times 10/4/05)

#### [Modi ordered elimination of minorities, alleges ADG \(7\)](#)

Ahmedabad: In an explosive submission to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), where he has challenged his recent supersession, additional director general of Gujarat police R B Sreekumar has said CM Narendra Modi and his bureaucrats issued illegal orders, like "elimination" of minorities and distorted facts about the actual situation in the state, during his tenure as state intelligence chief. He also has revealed how Modi himself issued instructions to tap the phones of state Congress chief Shankersinh Vaghela, his former cabinet minister Haren Pandya and certain Muslim police officers and municipal corporators. Sreekumar has made these revelations in a blow-by-blow account contained in a "semi-official" diary annexed to his petition before CAT. This diary contains details of his interactions as additional DGP (intelligence) between April 16 and September 19, 2002 with Modi and other officials. An entry dated June 28 2002 says that after a meeting to discuss preparations for the forthcoming rath yatra, then chief secretary G Subbarao told Sreekumar, "If someone is trying to disturb the rath yatra or planning to spoil the same, that person be eliminated." (Times of India 14/4/05)

#### [Sreekumar fires third salvo at Modi \(7\)](#)

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 14: IN YET another salvo at the Narendra Modi government, Additional DGP R.B. Sreekumar has filed a third affidavit before the riots commission, alleging that he was being prevented from speaking out the truth. His 128-page affidavit, submitted to the Nanavati & Shah Commission on Wednesday, includes two transcripts — one, of his conversation with Under Secretary Dinesh Kapa-dia; and two, of his conversation with Secretary G.C. Murmu and State Counsel before the commission, Arvind Pandya. Sreekumar has also appended a typed version of his personal register of "illegal" verbal instructions received by him from the government top brass during his tenure as Additional Director-General (CID, intelligence) from April 9,2002 to September 17,2002. His affidavit says he was bringing to the notice of the Commission "instances of harassment and victimisation perpetrated on me by the higher authorities in the government, who are my supervisory officers, on account of my truthful deposition to the Commission on August 31,2004, during the cross-examination and also on October 6,2004, in my second affidavit." he official alleges in his affidavit that after he filed his first affidavit on July 15, 2002, he was approached some senior police officers, who tried to persuade him against deposing before the Commission on August 31,2004, as it would damage the political interests of the government. (Indian Express 15/4/05)

#### [Another U-turn: Zahira denies she filed affidavit \(7\)](#)

Ahmedabad, April 13: THE CONTROVERSY over Zahira Sheikh's conflicting testimonies deepened on Wednesday as she denied having filed any affidavit before the Nanavati-Shah Commission probing the Godhra carnage and riots in 2002. The prime witness in the Best Bakery case, who finally appeared before the commission after several summons, confirmed the signatures on the affidavit were hers but denied its contents. In the affidavit filed in May 2002, Zahira purportedly named all the accused in the case. But after the case was reopened for retrial, she accused social activist Teesta Setalvad of coercing her into doing so. On the grounds that the affidavit dates back to a good year before Zahira met Setalvad, Jan Sangharsh Manch lawyer Mukul Sinha had sought her cross-examination. Zahira pleaded to the commission that her cross-examination be postponed as she had to appear before an SC panel on April 18. But the commission rejected her plea, saying the panel was only inquiring into the Zahira-Setalvad dispute and today's proceedings were unlikely to affect that. It scheduled her cross-examination for Thursday. Meanwhile, the commission has written to former President K.R. Narayanan, asking him if he would be willing to depose before it to clarify statements attributed to him in a Malayalam magazine. Narayanan reportedly told the magazine his instructions to then PM A.B. Vajpayee about effective army deployment during the riots were ignored. (Hindustan Times 14/4/0)

BJP to focus on rise in Muslim numbers (7)

Lucknow, April 16: In a clear bid to sharpen its "Hindutva" weapon, the BJP in Uttar Pradesh is now planning to focus on the diminishing Hindu population. The latest issue of the BJP mouthpiece Kamal Jyoti, currently under print, raises the population "imbalance" issue with renewed fervour. The issue will be officially released at the party's state executive, scheduled to be held in Moradabad next week. According to sources, the special issue of Kamal Jyoti carries articles that highlight the dangers of growing minority population and the decline in Hindu population and bases its arguments on recent census figures. The magazine details the "dangers" of the "developing situation" and also the threat that Hindus will face in the future from the growing Muslim population. "Our purpose is to give rise to a heated debate in society on this issue and awaken Hindu sentiments. The more the so-called secular forces react on this issue, the more beneficial it will be for the party, which is now determined to its original Hindu agenda. Moreover, apart from political considerations, the emerging imbalances in population are a matter of serious concern. India has survived as a multi-racial and multi-religious country only because the majority comprised of Hindus who are known for their immense tolerance. If this complexion is changed, there is bound to be a major social upheaval in the coming years," said a senior party leader. (Asian Age 17/4/05)

Gujarat – riot victims demand fresh probe (7)

NEW DELHI, April 16. — Even after three years they break down while narrating the trauma and woes they faced when angry mobs attacked and killed their relatives. Victims of communal carnage in Gujarat gathered in the Capital, demanding impartial probe by the CBI into one the worst riots that the country ever saw. The meet was organised by SAHMAT, where the victims, speaking to the press, spoke of the pain and trauma they went through during and after the riots. The victims raised question on the role of the government, the police and even the public prosecutor during and after the Gujarat riots. "I saw how my 21-year-old son was brutally killed.

He was abused and stripped naked and was then murdered by policemen," said Zahid Bhai, a victim of riots in Rasoolabad. "Farooq Hakim, who is present in this conference, was shot five bullets by the police, due to which he cannot walk properly even after three years of the incident," added Zahid. In Sardarpura, 33 people were killed in one night. Nanoo Mia, a resident of Sardarpura claimed that the genocide of Gujarat was planned months in advance by the state.

"Even now we don't feel safe. The real culprits are still at large and always threaten us to leave the area. However, no action has been taken against them," he said. Just two days back Nanoo claims that his two sons were arrested on the charge of trying to kill a man whom he never knew. "Under these circumstances we cannot trust the police, whose role in the past has been suspicious," he added. "These are just a few examples of state atrocities. There are thousands of riot victims who have failed to get proper food and shelter. The Modi government is not doing any-thing to help these victims. (Statesman 17/4/05)

Muslim leaders protest demolition of mosque (7)

Hyderabad: THE STATE Government's directive to the officials to go ahead with the removal of the religious places coming in the way of the road widening seems to have run into rough weather. With the demolition of three mosques in Medak districts to make way for the widening of the National Highway No 5 creating serious trouble and angering the Muslim community, Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy has been forced to review his earlier order. A delegation of Muslim leaders belonging to the various organisations met the Chief Minister last night and strongly protested over the incidents of Saturday last. The delegation led by the MIM President Salahuddin Owaisi including party MP and legislators and several other prominent Muslim leaders of different organisation wanted to know the reasons for resorting to the demolition of the mosques all of a sudden. Describing the action of the administration as unwarranted and provocative, the Muslim leaders told the Chief Minister that such action will not be tolerated and will lead to serious consequences. Member of Parliament from Hyderabad Asaduddin Owaisi said that the delegation made it clear to the Chief Minister that no body can allow the demolition of mosques because they were the Waqf properties. He demanded the immediate reconstruction of all the three mosque from the Waqf Board funds. "All these community leaders had played a key role in bringing the Congress to power in the state and now the people are asking us whether Congress is ruling the state or the BJP was in power", Asad Owaisi asked the Chief Minister. (Pioneer 19/4/05)

Dismissal of Rajasthan Minister, CBI inquiry demanded (7)

JAIPUR: Accusing the Rajasthan Home Minister, Gulab Chand Kataria, of instigating violence against Muslims in the communally-sensitive Bhilwara district, the Sadbhav Manch and Rajasthan Muslim Forum on Monday demanded his immediate removal and institution of an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the recent spate of communal clashes in the district. A five-member delegation of the two organisations visited Mandal and Bhilwara towns on April 15 to take stock of the situation there and found that Muslims were living in a state of shock and terror with both the communal outfits and police targeting them. Muslims, who were forced to migrate from Karjalua, Kalias, Udo Ka Badia and Brah-mino Ki Saredi villages, are finding it difficult to return to their homes. The representatives of the two bodies, addressing a Press conference here after failing to get an appointment with the Chief Minister, Vasundhara

Raje, alleged that Mr. Kataria had given signals to the district administration not to take action against the rioters who burnt a dozen shops of Muslims in Mandal, damaged two mosques - including the Jama Masjid - and two tombs in the town, and drove Muslims out of several villages.

"Mr. Kataria has acted like a hardcore Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh activist during the turbulence over the past one month. The trouble-makers felt encouraged every time he visited Bhilwara during the period," Sawai Singh, convenor of the Sadbhav Manch, said and added that Mr. Kataria's "misbehaviour" with a delegation of Muslims in Bhilwara was equally outrageous.

The delegation was told by the local people that the rioters, who were mostly the RSS and Bajrang Dal activists, were given a "free hand" to indulge in loot and arson during curfew in Mandal on April 8 and even the police personnel assisted them at some places in setting the shops on fire. "There was evidence suggesting that policemen provided kerosene and diesel to arsonists," said Abdul Latif, a member of the delegation. (The Hindu 19/4/05)

Total recall of Gujarat genocide (7)

New Delhi, April 18: THE "BREAKDOWN of constitutional machinery in Gujarat" was relived on Monday at a convention organised by three activist groups in Delhi when victims of the post-Godhra riots narrated their experiences. The convention: Flashback Gujarat 2002 — The Indian State and Mass Crime — was jointly organised by Citizens for Justice and Peace, Mumbai, the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, Delhi and the Human Rights Law Network, Delhi. The meet was held to highlight the plight of those struggling for justice and the pressing need for state and administrative support to these people. "We managed to escape even as corpses were still heaving onto the parapet of our house. Trembling, we boarded the police van only to be confronted by a policeman who asked how so many of us had survived," said Zakia Jafri, wife of slain parliamentarian Ehsan Jafri. A statement by the Citizens for Justice and Peace said "key witnesses of the major carnages, three years after the horrors that lost them near and dear ones, cannot step back into their villages or localities simply because they have chosen to fight for justice. Many are victims of the massacres as well as eyewitnesses. This is the stark and shameful reality of Gujarat, three years after the genocide where at a rough estimate, about 61,000 persons remain internally displaced within the state". Congress spokesperson Anand Sharma, who attended the convention, said it was the duty of the political class to support the struggle for justice. The sentiment was echoed by CPM politburo member Brinda Karat who added that the citizens must come forward to beg the Supreme Court to urgently hear a plea for re-investigation of the entire massacre by the CBI. (Hindustan Times 19/4/05)

Court turns down Zahira's complaint (7)

"We will not adjourn proceedings for any clarification"

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday declined to entertain an application from Zahira Sheikh, key witness in the Best Bakery case questioning the procedure adopted by the high-power committee probing the veracity of the statements made by her as well as those by social activist Teesta Setalvad. Heading a bench, Justice Arijit Pasayat told the counsel, "We will not adjourn the proceedings for any clarification. If at all she has any grievance that can be ventilated after the submission of the report by the committee." As a result of this order the enquiry will continue tomorrow. In her application, Ms. Sheikh took exception to the Registrar-General's order stating she was the subject and scope of the inquiry. Refuting this, she said, "her conduct is not the subject of inquiry but the subject is the alleged offer of inducements, the manner of inducements and the persons responsible for the inducements." Ms. Sheikh regretted that the manner in which the inquiry committee had proceeded was contrary to the accepted

procedural requirements. While one yardstick was adopted for Ms. Setalvad, "a 180 degree right about turn (procedure) while dealing with her." She therefore prayed that this inquiry be assigned to the District and Sessions Judge, Delhi or any other judicial officer. On April 18, the committee in its order said that while Ms. Sheikh would be orally examined, written replies would be sought from Ms. Setalvad on the ground that Ms. Sheikh was not as mature, educated and literate as the social activist. The order said: "the reasons behind calling her for such examination and not calling her for written clarification are known. (The Hindu 21/4/05)

#### Dismissal of Modi Government sought (7)

NEW DELHI: Leading social and political activists, artists and members of the legal and academic professions have demanded that the Narendra Modi Government in Gujarat be dismissed under Article 356 of the Constitution to ensure justice to the victims of the 2002 carnage. In a statement on Wednesday, they said that perpetrators of the carnage have little chance of being booked till the Modi Government remained. "If justice is to prevail, a necessary condition for this must be created through dismissal of the Modi Government under Article 356 of the Constitution.

The Gujarat case is an exceptional one in so much as the State Government has been seriously implicated by the National Human Rights Commission and even the Supreme Court in what is perhaps the most inhuman, horrendous and un-Constitutional act in the history of post-Independence India," the statement said. Three years after the carnage about 61,000 persons remained displaced within Gujarat, most belonging to the minority community, the statement said.

It noted that in the past few months courageous statements of serving police officials have lent voice to the outrage expressed by hundreds of individuals and groups. The statement was signed by M.K. Raina, Jayati Ghosh, Ashok Vajpayee, Rahul Bose, Vivan Sundaram, Ali Javed, Ritu Me-non, Anil Dharker, Nikhil Wagle, Prabhat Patnaik, Zoya Hassan, Asad Zaidi, Madhu Kishwar, K.K. Sharma, Aniar Farooqui and others. (The Hindu 21/4/05)

#### RSS conversion claim refuted (7)

JAIPUR: The Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh's claim that it converted nearly 500 Muslim families to Hinduism at a "Dharma Sabha" (religious assembly) recently in Beawar town of Ra-jasthan was on Thursday refuted by Muslims of the region, who stated that those who attended the Sabha were the descendants of the people who had embraced Hinduism long before Independence. They said the purported conversion was an "eyewash" aimed at deceiving none other than Hindus. The office-bearers of Rajasthan Cheeta-Mehrat (Kathat) Mahasabha - representing the local Muslims - denounced at a Press conference here the attempts by the RSS to create an impression that Muslims were coming to the fold of Hinduism in large numbers and demanded action against the Sangh leaders for disturbing communal harmony in the region through their frequent programmes. The RSS chief, K.S. Sudarshan, addressing the Dharma Sabha organised in the Ashapura Mata temple on the outskirts of Beawar on Monday, had called upon Hindus to accept the people who had converted to other religions "under coercion" and now wanted to come back to the fold of the religion of their ancestors. He said such families should be encouraged to revert to Hinduism and given due respect. The general secretary of the Mahasabha, Shaft Mohammed Kathat, pointed out that the Cheeta-Mehrat clan of Rajputs in the Ajmer-Merwara region had converted to Islam in the 14th and 15th centuries but was not acquainted fully with the Islamic rites. The people of the clan practised the rituals of both the religions till early 20th century when a section of them embraced Hinduism and others added the 'Kathat' suffix to their caste to express their Muslim identity. (The Hindu 22/4/05)

#### Godhra: Gujarat cop 'proves' his diary is authentic (7)

Ahmedabad, April 23: IT'S OFFICIAL now. Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and several state ministers and senior government officers issued illegal and blatantly communal instructions to the state police during the 2002 Godhra riots. Former state intelligence chief R.B. Sreekumar's lawyers on Saturday presented to the media the original diary in which he had made entries of all such instructions. They all bore the signature of the then IG (Administration) O.E Mathur, thereby giving them official authenticity. In fact, the last page had a hand-written entry signed by Mathur certifying that the diary had 207 pages in all. This revelation blows to bits the state government's claim that the diary - transcripts of which have been submitted to the Central Administrative Tribunal in connection with Sreekumar's appeal challenging his supersession — has no veracity as it is of a personal nature. It also exposes as hollow the claim that

Sreekumar is making these allegations out of "frustration" due to his supersession, as the entries date to when he was still serving as intelligence chief. Sreekumar started maintaining the "demi-official" diary after his posting as additional DGP (intelligence) here during the riots. In the diary, he noted down all instructions to the police as well as the action taken on them. One of the entries in the diary records Modi's outright rejection of the intelligence chiefs finding that Hindus were on the offensive and his order that the police concentrate on Muslims instead. Another has the CM himself offering to be the 'source for intelligence gathering on the Sangh Parivar and asking the police not to bother about it, conclusively proving the state leadership's complicity with rioters. (Hindustan Times 24.4.05)

Muslim family driven out of village (7)

A MUSLIM family has been forced out of their village in Mansa, Punjab after a boy from the family married a Jat girl. The village panchayat decided to throw the family out and villagers promptly implemented the decision. About six months ago, Angrez Khan (26) had married Paramjit Kaur (25) apparently without the consent of the girl's family. The couple had also sought police security.

Following several clashes between the two families since the marriage, the entire village has turned against the Muslim family. Finally the panchayat took the decision that the Muslim family leave the village. (Hindustan Times 25/4/05)

Post-Godhra riots were a conspiracy: Narayanan (7)

Ahmedabad: Dealing a body blow to the former Vajpayee-led NBA dispensation, former President K R Narayanan confirmed to the Nanavati-Shah Commission of having talked about a definite "conspiracy" between the Centre and the state government in perpetuating the riots in Gujarat in 2002. Narayanan, in a brief letter written to the commission on April 8, 2005, has confirmed that the contents of his interview published in a Malayalam magazine, indicting the Vajpayee government for inaction, were correct. Considered to be a vital piece of evidence, this letter was received by the commission probing the Godhra and post-Godhra riots on April 15. Initially, the commission denied any knowledge of the letter, but subsequently decided to disclose receipt of the letter on Monday. The former President's acknowledgement of these facts could open up possibilities of his deposition before the Nanavati-Shah Commission, especially now that the expanded terms of reference deal with the role of the chief minister and the Gujarat administration. When contacted, Narayanan's office in New Delhi confirmed having sent the ex-President's letter, "in response to a query from the commission." Narayanan was away in Turkey and was unavailable for comment. Narayanan had stated in this interview published last month that there was governmental and administrative support for the communal riots in Gujarat, in that the Centre did not give powers to the military to shoot. (Times of India 26/4/05)

High-level panel to prepare report on Muslims' status (7)

NEW DELHI: The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, has set up a high-level committee to prepare a comprehensive report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in India. The seven-member committee — headed by the former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, Rajindar Sachar — has been asked to submit its report by June 2006. The committee has been set up to address the absence of "authentic information about the social, economic and educational status of the community." The absence of such data, according to the Government, came in the way of planning, formulating and implementing specific interventions, policies and programmes to address the issues of socio-economic backwardness of the community.

Though there is no mention of it in the terms of reference, the report will be used as an input to help the Government take a view on whether there should be reservation for Muslims in education and employment. In its Common Minimum Programme, the United Progressive Alliance said efforts would be made to see how best the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities, including reservation in education and employment, is enhanced. Besides looking at the demographic spread of Muslims and the community's record vis-a-vis various social indices such as literacy, dropout, Maternal Mortality Rate and Infant Mortality Rate, the committee has been asked to dwell at length on their economic status. (The Hindu 27/4/05)

More to probe than meets the eye in violence-hit Rajasthan town (7)

MANDAL (RAJASTHAN): Despite the district administration's claims of being impartial in the investigation into the communal clashes in Mandal early this month, justice eludes Muslims who were targeted by the

communal outfits and the police and were left with their property destroyed, self-esteem outraged and religious beliefs humiliated. The violence in the town in Bhilwara district erupted during a post-Holi procession on April 8 following an incident of hoisting of a saffron flag on a mosque. Violent mobs indulged in arson to avenge the alleged pelting of stones on the procession and put a dozen shops on fire. It was followed by the police crackdown in which a large number of Muslims were beaten up and their houses ransacked "before their arrest.

The 27 Muslims, who have been accused of attacking the procession, face the charges as serious as those of attempt to murder and promoting enmity between different communities. Though they have been granted bail after two weeks, they are still unable to overcome the trauma which they underwent in police custody. Only seven persons from the majority community have so far been arrested on charges of burning down shops. (Indian Express 28/4/05)

Mass migration of Muslims after murder of RSS activist (7)

KARJALIA (RAJASTHAN): Mass migration of Muslim families from Karjalia village in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan following the murder of a Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh activist recently seems to have convinced the Sangh Parivar of the efficacy of its strategy to use an incident as a pretext to browbeat the minority community. Muslims have been terrorised and boycotted in the village even after their return. The developments in Karjalia since March 1, when 16-year-old Satyanarain Sharma - an instructor in the RSS 'shakha' - was found dead in a field, have

made an alarming addition to the spate of communal incidents in Bhilwara. The arrest of two Muslim boys in connection with the murder on 'unconvincing\* grounds has left the community aghast in the village. Satyanarain's father, Ramgo-pal Sharma, and the RSS activists of the village - who accuse three Muslim families of creating trouble in the past - had the support of none other than the Home Minister, Gulab Chand Kataria, who visited Karjalia on March 16 and offered to resign if the accused were not arrested within three days. Police acted swiftly and arrested Farooq Mohammed and Moin Khan the next day. The two boys were already in informal custody of the police since March 4 and an atmosphere of terror and intimidation was created in and around Karjalia. (The Hindu 30/4/05)

## **MAY -2005**

Muslim growth rate is highest but falling: Panel (7)

New Delhi, April 30: AN EXPERT committee set up by the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has said that though the growth rate of Muslims was more than that of other communities, it has declined over the years. The expert committee of demographers also found that growth rate of Muslims in the border areas of Assam and West Bengal was disproportionately high, probably due to immigration from Bangladesh. Sharing its findings with mediapersons on Saturday, committee chief Ashish Bose said that on analysing the religion-based data in the Census 2001 report, the committee found that the growth rate of Muslims was 29.5 per cent between 1991 and 2001 as against 21.5 per cent for all communities. It was lower than the growth rate during 1981-91 (32.9 per cent), 1971-81 (30.7 per cent), 1961-71 (30.8 per cent). Bose said the average growth rate among Muslims was primarily due to higher than average births and lower mortality "It may still be high but it is not alarming and will stabilise over the years as this is a transition phase," he said. The Census report released last September initially showed a high growth rate of 36 per cent among Muslims, leading to protests by the Sangh Parivar. (Hindustan Times 1/5/05)

Muslim board adopts Nikah-nama (7)

BHOPAL: The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board on Sunday issued the Bhopal declaration which reiterated the Board's commitment to concerted initiatives to bring about social reforms and root out social evils. The declaration — issued at the end of the AIMPLB's three-day conclave at the Taj-ul-Mas-jid here — laid stress on the need for a strong social reform movement with the focus on the present school and college-going generation. At a press conference, AIMPLB secretary Abdul Rahim Qureshi said the conclave also adopted the model "Nikahnama" stipulating the rights of the wife and that the man should not divorce his wife or pronounce "triple-talaq" unless he felt there was no way they could live together as husband and wife..

The Nikahnama (marriage contract) has been approved unanimously by members of the Muslim Personal Law Board, he said. The Nikahnama declares dowry or even a party for the marriage guests as a crime. To a question on the issue of divorce, he said that AIMPLB was bound by the Quran and was not

supposed to follow the example of any Muslim country. The new guidelines for marriage under the model Nikah-nama lay special stress on simplifying the wedding ceremony and making it less expensive. (The Hindu 2/5/05)

#### Accused in riot murder walk free (7)

AHMEDABAD.MAY 6: FORTY-FIVE persons accused of setting a Muslim couple on fire in Ladol in Vijapur taluka during the post-Godhra riots were acquitted by a local court in Mehsana district for lack of evidence. The 45 accused include BJP taluka pramukh Prahlad Patel and several VHP and RSS members. Acquitting the accused, fast-track judge R Gajjar said the prosecution had not been able to prove a case against the accused and even the statements of the eyewitnesses did not provide any concrete evidence. The eyewitnesses statements cannot be accepted as they had not named the accused persons when the police were registering an FIR, the judge said.

On March 1, 2002 a Hindu mob had attacked Muslim houses in Ladol village. Forty five-year-old Gullubhai Sheikh and his wife Saida Bibi were set ablaze by the mob after they refused to open the doors of their house. The mob broke the doors, sprinkled kerosene and set the house ablaze. While the couple succumbed to injuries, their 10-year-old son Mohsin Sheikh went into hiding. Mohsin registered a case but had failed to name any of the accused before the police. He later migrated to Uttar Pradesh with his relatives. During court proceedings, Mohsin deposed and named some of the accused persons but no identification parade was conducted, said defence counsel B C Barot. (Indian Express 7/5/05)

#### Gujarat riots black spot for BJP (7)

New Delhi, May 8: BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan, in an article in the party mouthpiece BJP Today, has described the trouble within the organisation as a "third concern" for the party.

Mr Mahajan also hit out strongly against Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, describing the 2002 Gujarat riots as the party's "second regret." For him, the –riots proved a dampener to our resolve to turn India into a riot-free nation." He described the Godhra tragedy and the incidents that followed immediately afterwards in February-March 2002 as a "black spot for any civilised society." His "first regret" was the Vajpayee government's failure to build the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. In an indirect reference to the ongoing factionalism within the organisation, Mr Mahajan stated: "The third matter of concern is the internal situation in the party." It can be recalled that after Mr L.K. Advani took over as party president, there had been several instances of indiscipline and factionalism within the organisation. Ms Uma Bharti was the first to raise the banner of revolt against the central leadership. Mr Mahajan added: "Shortcomings in the golden history of 25 years are but natural." He added, without elaborating: "In retrospect, I also recall not so good memories." Mr Mahajan then trained his guns at the Gujarat administration. "The Gujarat riots is the second regret for us. It proved a dampner to our resolve to turn India into a riot-free nation, he said. (Asian Age 9/5/05)

#### Ten convicted in '89 Bhagalpur riots (7)

Patna: In a significant order the District and Sessions Judge VII of Bhagalpur on Monday convicted 10 people while letting off 13 others in the infamous Bhagalpur communal riots case. A total of 23 people had been named accused in the case lodged in the Sultanganj police station on October 14, 1989. The final verdict, however would be delivered on May 12. It may be recalled that in the Bhagalpur communal riots five people belonging to a minority community had been butchered in village Kamarganj on October 14, 1989. The verdict comes after a fifteen year long wait. A total of 1,158 people had been killed in those riots. So far, only 500 victims have received compensation which came soon after the riots. (Pioneer 10/5/05)

#### New dimension to communal tension in Bhilwara (7)

JAIPUR: A new aspect of alleged threats and intimidation has been added to the growing communal tension in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan, with the authors of a report - exposing the role of Sangh Parivar in the recent anti-Muslim violence in collusion with the local police officials - being singled out and hounded with the intention to "muzzle criticism". The booklet, "Fasivad Ki Aa-hatein" (Footsteps of Fascism), was published early this month to record the findings of a four-member team of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) that carried out an investigation following the violence in Mandal. The report has blamed the Bajrang Dal leaders for replicating the Gujarat model to target the Muslim community in the town. The chief writer of the booklet and a Dalit activist, Bhanwar Meghwanshi, alleged at a Press

conference here on Tuesday that while the Bajrang Dal activists had launched a campaign to terrorise him and enforced a social boycott against him, police had also started harassing him and his family members, although no legal case had been made out against him. "The in-charge of Mandal police station, Bhajju Ram, and the officials under him visited my office in Bhilwara twice on May 4 and 6 and my residence in Sir-dias village on May 9 to make enquiries without spelling out the charges against me," Mr. Meghwanshi said. He said the complicity of the State machinery in the attempt to muzzle criticism amounted to an undeclared ban on the booklet. (The Hindu 11/5/05)

#### Best Bakery takes a new turn (7)

MUMBAI: The Best Bakery trial took an unexpected turn on Wednesday when a journalist appeared before the court and submitted a video tape and a VCD of his interviews with Zahira Sheikh and members of her family as evidence. The court has taken custody of the cassette saying "prima facie it appears that evidence produced may be relevant" and the prosecution is likely to examine him on Thursday. Prakash Shankar, now working as assignment editor with Prasar Bharati, Doordarshan News, made an application saying that in the April 18, 2002 interview Zahira's family narrated the burning of Best Bakery, resulting in the death of 14 persons. At that time he was working with a private channel, he said. The 19-minute video clip, a copy of which is with The Hindu, shows Zahira, her mother and both brothers narrating the March 1, 2002 incidents. They name the assailants and say that even after over one-and-a-half months, no one contacted them. Zahira's brother, Nafitullah's says that first nine persons, including three Hindus, were killed on the ground floor while 16 persons watched the incident from the top floor. "It went on from 8 p.m. till 10 a.m. the next day. They asked us to come down and told us that they would not harm us if we left but as we came down they tied us up. They attacked us with swords and then poured kerosene. Only six of us escaped because a police van came." (The Hindu 13/5/05)

#### S.S. Bhandari blames Modi (7)

NEW DELHI: The former Gujarat Governor and senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Sunder Singh Bhandari, has found fault with the Narendra Modi Government for delaying action against rioters in Gujarat during the post-Godhra violence in 2002. Significantly, he has charged the then Vajpayee Government at the Centre with "taking the riots lightly" and "failing to react in time" to the grim situation. He has also commented on the leadership issue in the BJP, virtually stating that the race is between "Advani and Advani", that except for short three or four stints by others in the presidential position, it was always Mr. Advani who came back to assume the party president's mantle. He has added unequivocally that it was time for the two senior leaders to make room for a younger leadership. Mr. Bhandari's comments have come in the course of an interview published in the Outlook Saptahik dated 23 May, which hit the stands on Thursday.

Mr. Bhandari, a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh 'pracharak' who was Governor of Gujarat at the time of the riots, said: "I had only one complaint, that there was delay in the action taken by the Government (of Gujarat). If action had been taken on time then some things would not have happened." He further said that the morning after the rioting started he talked to Mr. Modi and he told him that the Government had swung into action, but the fact is that action should have started the previous night when the trouble began. Four to six hours were wasted." (The Hindu 13/5/05)

#### Communal tension grips parts of Meerut (7)

Meerut: THERE APPEARS to be an insidious pattern to the repeated communal incidents occurring in Meerut which threatens its fragile social fabric. On Thursday night, a group of people beat up a father and his 12-year-old son belonging to another community for allegedly teasing females in the walled area of the city. Speedy intervention by senior police and administrative officials, brought a potentially explosive situation under control with the help of local leaders.

On Thursday the afternoon, the young daughter of a Congress leader, was molested by two youths on a motor-cycle, in the Kotwali area of the city. On hearing her cries for help, shopkeepers from the area helped rescue the girl. In the ensuing confusion the two young men managed to flee but not before the registration number of their mobike was noted. Once again, the local police arrived promptly, but by now the restive crowd protested against the growing incidence of eve-teasing. On their part the police, which included the Circle Officer, tried to pacify the crowd and assured them that the offenders would quickly be brought to book. The second incident on Thursday took place at about 8.30 pm, when Zaheer and his son Shadab of Ismail Nagar area were returning home after closing their shop, near Budhana Gate. It is

alleged that somebody passed a remark at Zaheer to which his son protested. Soon a crowd gathered and one of them hit Zaheer's on his face. Shadab rushed home and soon hundreds of people from Ismail Nagar reached the spot and started shouting slogans against BJP (City) MLA. Soon a rumour was circulated that the local BJP MLA had been manhandled, though at that time he was sitting safely in a doctor's clinic. The agitated local residents started shouting slogans against the people of the other community. The local police informed all senior officials of district administration about the tension between the two communities. (Pioneer 14/5/05)

JUNE 05

Godhra: SPP places POTA review panel's view in court (7)

AHMEDABAD, MAY 31: THE Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) conducting the Godhra case on Tuesday placed the opinion of the Central POTA Review Committee in the case before the designated court here and sought further two week's time to submit his opinion on the matter.

Citing that the voluminous chargesheets and record running into thousands of pages had to be read "before he requested the court to drop POTA charges against the accused in the case." Last week, the Central POTA Review Committee had submitted to the State Government its opinion in the case, suggesting dropping of POTA charges against all the 131 accused in the case. The committee had stated that prima-facie no case under POTA was made out against the accused.

'And the Godhra train carnage was not a case of waging war against the state but a fallout of the scuffle between vendors and passengers of the S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express," the review committee has observed in its report. But the SPP. HM Dhruv, argued before the court that the prosecutor was in no way under a compulsion to agree with the findings of the court. Dhruv also told the court that as per the Gujarat High Court judgement, he was to first place the review committee's report in the court and also move an appropriate application under Section 321 of the CrPc for withdrawal of prosecution under POTA against the accused. (Indian Express 1/6/05)

Godhra panel refuses to issue summons to Vajpayee, Fernandes (7)

AHMEDABAD: The G.T. Nanavati-K.G. Shah judicial inquiry commission, which is probing into the Godhra train carnage and the communal riots that followed, will write to the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the former Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the former Gujarat Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, asking them if they were willing to depose before it.

The Commission rejected the plea of the advocate of the riot victims, Mukul Sinha, for issuing summons -or sending any notice to force them to appear before the commission. However, along with the letters, it agreed to send copies of Dr. Sinha's applications for issuing them summons

and the documents which formed the basis for such a demand. Dr. Sinha had sought the cross-examination of Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Bhandari and Mr. Fernandes on the basis of press statements about their roles during the Gujarat riots. The request was made following the former President, K.R. Narayana-nan's press interview that he had written to Mr. Vajpayee for early intervention by the Army to control the riots but he failed to act on time. The Commission rejected Dr. Sinha's plea for summoning Mr. Narayanan after the former President informed it that he had "nothing more to add" to his earlier press statement. Mr. Bhandari had also made some remarks about the handling of the riots by the Narendra Modi Government and had suggested a thorough inquiry. Though he retracted his statement, Dr. Sinha wanted to cross-examine him. (The Hindu 3/6/05)

Panel urges more credit access for Muslim youths (7)

Hyderabad: THE PRIME Minister's High Level Committee on the problems of Muslims community of India has called for promoting increased access of Muslim youth to micro-credit, preferential credit from regular banks and participation in marketing schemes. It also took note of the low representation of the community both in the public and private organised sector of employment and urged the need to conceive innovative strategies to improve Muslims representation at all level of organise sector employment. Justice Rajendar Sachar, chairman of HLC and other members, after four days of interaction with Muslim intellectuals, leaders and activists from various cross-sections of the society told the media that the committee has identified several socio-economic and educational problems of the Muslims in Andhra Pradesh. Addressing the news conference on the conclusion of the visit he said the committee would complete its mandated work of studying the problems of Muslim community all over the country in a year's

time and submit its report to the Prime Minister in June next year. "The HLC has recognised the competence, high spirit and the ability of the Muslim Youth to succeed, especially in the field of micro-entrepreneurship, craftsmanship and development of the national and international market," Justice Sachar said. (Pioneer 7/6/05)

#### 'Separate census an insult to Muslims' (7)

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party president, Harsh Vardhan, has described the exercise of a separate census of the Muslims of the Capital by the Delhi Government on the directions of the Prime Minister as "an insult for the Muslims" and stated that it "hurts their feelings". Seeing the move as an "attempt at appeasement", Dr. Vardhan has stated that the language of the letter sent by the Prime Minister Office to the Delhi Government was very objectionable. "It has been written that the Muslims are uneducated, less earning and their employment is irregular," he said, adding that the letter also describes these aspects as their "characteristic". Stating that the President of India belongs to the Muslim community and has been a top scientist of the country, Dr. Vardhan said Indian Muslims have served the nation in various important positions and so "the PMO has no right to say that the Indian Muslims are uneducated, backward and are living in filthy conditions". The Delhi BJP president also claimed that the Congress has always believed in the divide and rule policy and charged that now the party wants to conduct a separate census of the Muslims of India through the Prime Minister. "This decision," he said, has the potential of breaking the national unity and harmony of the country. (The Hindu 15/6/05)

#### 5% quota for Muslims in Andhra (7)

Hyderabad : The path has been cleared for the extension of five per cent reservation in educational institutions and jobs to the Muslim minority with the Backward Classes Commission submitting its report to Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy on Tuesday.

The commission headed by Justice D Subramanian met the Chief Minister at his official residence and submitted the report to him. The Chairman said that the commission met the people from all walks of life and visited several places in the State and received recommendations. "After analyzing all the information and collecting the details about the socio-economic and educational status of Muslims we have prepared an unanimous report," he said. Even though Justice Subramanian refused to reveal the contents of the report saying it was for the Government to make it public, it is understood that the commission has recommended five per cent reservations to the community removing a major legal and technical obstacle in the process. Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy told newsmen that from the beginning it was the intention of the Government to include the Muslims in the list of backward classes to extend them the 5% reservations. But he made it clear that it will not be at the cost of any other backward community. "It is in addition to the reservations already enjoyed by the other backward classes in the State," he said. (Pioneer 15/6/05)

#### Centre to move court against Modi refusal (7)

New Delhi, June 19: The government may have stuck to its decision on divestment of Bhel despite opposition by the Left parties, but on the issue of dropping of Pota charges against the Godhra-case accused, it seems to have accommodated the Left's demand. "The Centre will move court on this issue. the central government's public prosecutor will proceed as per the law. The Pota review committee recommendations will be implemented," Mr Sita-ram Yechury of CPI(M) told reporters after the UPA-Left coordination committee meeting on Sunday evening.

The Centre's decision to move court comes after the Narendra Modi government rejected the recommendations of the Pota review committee to drop the anti-terror law charges against Godhra train carnage case accused. Asked about another of Left's demand, Mr Yechury said: "some cases can be referred to the CBI." The issue of hike in the petroleum product prices, did not come up at the coordination committee meeting between the Left parties and the UPA. (Asian Age 20/6/05)

#### Stay away from hardliners: RSS tells Muslims (7)

LUCKNOW, JUNE 19: Close on the heels of taking on BJP chief Advani on his Jinnah remarks, the RSS chief K S Sudarshan addressed the Muslims, bidding them to be careful of those who advocate militant Islam and dubbing India as Darul Islam (land of Islam). Speaking at the closing function of the three-day RSS training programme at the Lakshman Mela grounds, Sudarshan was rebutting the claims of political leaders who demonised the RSS in their bid to capture Muslim votes. Exhorting the minority community to

stay clear of such leaders as well as the forces which propagated the militant aspect of Islam, the RSS chief said: "For Muslims, India is Darul Islam and it was high time they understood that their interests were protected only in this country". But the RSS chief had his own definition of Darul Islam. Though the literal meaning of the term is the "land of Islam", for Sudarshan, it meant "shanti ka desh (a peaceful land)." In his 45-minute address, the RSS sarsanghchhalak touched upon a whole gamut of issues. Even Jinnah was given a passing reference. Jinnah, he said, was propped up by the British for making Pakistan a reality and Mountbatten was sent to India for this purpose. Sudarshan said the current problems in the country — including the Kashmir issue — had remained unsolved for want of strong leadership. "Indira Gandhi was the only leader who showed her firmness in solving burning issues, the rest have shown no eagerness to find a solution to the problems," he remarked. At the same time, the RSS chief reminded her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, was responsible all the problems that beset India today. The genesis of all problems — including the economic crisis — can be traced to his rule and even after 57 years of Independence, they remain unsolved. (Indian Express 20/6/05)

#### **Quota for Muslims dangerous: Swamy (7)**

CHENNAI: Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy has criticised the Andhra Pradesh Government's decision to provide five per cent reservation for Muslims in employment and education. Describing the decision as a "dangerous development," Dr. Swamy said it was against national interest and would sow the seeds of "further partition" like the separate electorate instituted by British rulers in 1919. Talking to mediapersons here on Tuesday, Dr. Swamy said that reservation was an antidote for socially deprived or discriminated classes such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the Hindu community and not to those (Muslims and Christians) who were the ruling class in the country. Asked whether he concurred with the view of Bharatiya Janata Party president L. K. Advani that Jinnah was a secularist, Dr. Swamy said that he was unaware of Mr. Advani's statement. "But I am of the view that appreciating Jinnah's secularism is like appreciating Hitler's vegetarianism. One cannot appreciate Hitler just because he was a vegetarian." However, he said that this was not a reaction to Mr. Advani's statement. Charging that Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram had put the country's economy in "reverse gear," Dr. Swamy urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to sack him in the interest of the country. He said that according to a study conducted by the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Sivaganga was the poorest district in Tamil Nadu. (The Hindu 22/6/05)

#### **Centre says Gujarat has to seek CBI riots probe (7)**

New Delhi: The Centre on Wednesday clarified its stand on the Gujarat riot cases, saying it would entrust these cases to the Central Bureau of Investigation if the state government made a request. At one level, the government statement emphasises the limitations on the Centre in matters concerning law and order, a state subject. But it also appears to be a signal from the Congress-led government at the Centre to the Left that it is prepared to go as far as possible to accommodate the concerns of its allies about post-Godhra cases. The Left wants the 2002 riot cases to be handed over to the CBI. It had also asked for dropping of Pota charges against those accused in the Godhra case, in which a train was set on fire. The Union home ministry statement said the government will entrust the investigation into cases relating to the post-Godhra riots in 2002 to the CBI "if the state government of Gujarat makes a request in this regard, or if the courts so direct". "The government will also support any plea for transfer of cases under trial to courts outside the state of Gujarat," it added. The Supreme Court has already directed the transfer of some cases from Gujarat to courts in Maharashtra. The ministry said suitable instructions had been given to government counsels to inform the Supreme Court about this stand of the Centre whenever the cases come up for hearing before the top court. The Centre has also advised the Gujarat government from time to time to ensure that investigations and trials in communal riot cases are conducted in a "fair and impartial manner", the ministry said. Several petitions relating to these cases are pending before the Supreme Court. The Union government is a respondent in four of the cases. The Supreme Court had ordered the constitution of review committees by the state government to review about 2,000 cases where summary reports were filed against first information reports lodged earlier. (Asian Age 23/6/05)

#### **Tension following group clash (7)**

BANGALORE: There was tension on Tannery Road in K.G. Halli Police Station limits on Wednesday following a communal clash. Two vehicles were damaged in stone throwing. The police said around 8.30

p.m. a youth belonging to a particular community was committing nuisance on the roadside when a group of youths belonging to another community reportedly thrashed him. The youth, who was assaulted, went home and returned with nearly 20 people of his community. The two groups clashed with each other and indulged in stone-throwing. As tension mounted in the area, shopkeepers closed down their shops, the police said. The police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Security has been tightened in the area. (Ref: The Hindu 23/6/05)

#### **Quota for Muslims politically motivated: Sharad Yadav (7)**

NEW DELHI: The chairman of the Janata Dal (United) Parliamentary Board, Sharad Yadav, on Wednesday said the Andhra Pradesh Government's decision to make five per cent reservation for Muslims in educational institutions and government jobs was violative of the Constitution and against the spirit of the reservation policy.

Mr. Yadav told reporters that the State Government should have consulted all political parties before taking such a decision that seemed to be in pursuit of electoral politics. The Mandal Commission had given reservation to Muslims on the basis of social and educational backwardness and there was no constitutional provision for reservation on grounds of religion or community. "This politically motivated move of the Andhra Pradesh Government, supported by the UPA Government at the Centre, is violative of Articles 14, 15, 16 and 340," he said. Mr. Yadav said he favoured affirmative action for the socially and educationally backward classes.

"The general five per cent reservation for Muslims dilutes affirmative action for Dalit Muslims who are included in the 27 per cent reservation for backward communities. There is a good chance that the five per cent would be cornered by the elite among the Muslims while the Dalit Muslims might face resentment by other communities in the 27 per cent. This reservation on the basis of religion smacks of divisive politics and needs to be debated," he said. The Government should try and help Muslims, not by politically appeasing them but by genuinely looking at their educational and social needs. If backward Muslims were left out of the Mandal Commission list, the National Commission for Backward Classes could go into that and include them. (The Hindu 24/6/05)

#### **Muslims not a minority: RSS chief (7)**

LUCKNOW: Training his guns on India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, RSS chief KS Sudarshan on Sunday said the "English-minded" PM was responsible for the ills facing the country but had a word of praise for the "lady of firm determination" Indira Gandhi. "If we go to the root of the problems being faced by the country, we find that Nehru is responsible," Sudarshan said while addressing the concluding ceremony of 'Sangh Shiksha Varg' on the banks of the river Gomti here. He said Nehru was "English-minded" and the erstwhile British Raj wanted their "own man" at the helm as Prime Minister so that their interests were protected.

But the RSS chief had a word of praise for Pt Nehru's daughter former PM Indira Gandhi, saying she was "a lady of firm determination" unlike today's "central leadership" (the UPA government) which lacked determination. Contending that the RSS was being misprojected as "anti-Muslim", Sudarshan said "the Muslims should not be called a minority" for India was their home and their roots were in this country. "Allah ne unko yahan janam diya hai... Unka kartavya hai ki woh sajda karne to Mecca-Madina jayen par jab sar kaatne ki bari aye to Hindustan ke liye kaaten" (With Allah's grace, they (Muslims) were born in this country... They should bow their heads at Mecca-Madina but lay down their lives for India when required)," Sudarshan said. (Times of India 20/6/05 IN)

#### **Riots: CBI pleads inability to register FIR against Modi (7)**

NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is learnt to have conveyed to the Centre its inability to register a case against Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, the State Government and other key senior officials for their alleged complicity in the March 2002 riots in Gujarat. Highly-placed government sources said the agency had conveyed its views to the Ministry of Personnel and Public Grievances, the nodal ministry that administratively controlled the CBI. The Centre, sources said, was of the view that there was enough evidence for registering a First Information Report (FIR) against Mr. Modi, the State Government and others in the personal diaries of R. Sreekumar, a senior IPS officer and Gujarat police official. Mr. Sreekumar, who was intelligence chief during the Gujarat riots, had stated before the Central Administrative Tribunal that Mr. Modi and key administration officials of the State Government were involved in the violence during the 2002 Gujarat riots. The Central Government felt it was enough for

the agency to have registered an FIR but the CBI said that the law did not allow it to directly register a case without the sanction or request of the State Government or a court directive, sources said. (The Hindu 24/6/05)

JULY -05

### **Order discharging Advani set aside (7)**

NEW DELHI: The Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court on Wednesday set aside a trial court order discharging Bharatiya Janata Party president L.K. Advani in the Babri Masjid demolition case. It ordered trial against seven others, including BJP leaders Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti and Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Ashok Singhal. Disposing of criminal revision petitions filed against the discharge of Mr. Advani by a Rae Bareilly court on September 19, 2003, Justice Y.R. Tripathi asked him to appear before the trial court on July 28 to "receive further directions." Justice Tripathi allowed the criminal revision petition, filed by Haji Mehboob and Mohd Siddique, and set aside the impugned order insofar as it related to the discharge of Mr. Advani. "It is directed that L.K. Advani along with criminal revision petitioners — Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti, Vinay Katiyar, Ashok Singhal, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, Vishnu Hari Dalmiya and Sadhvi Ritambhara — shall also be charged and tried for offences under Section 149 and sub-section (1) of 505 of the Indian Penal Code read with Section 149 in accordance with the law," Justice Tripathi said in his 45-page order, according to agency reports. Section 149 deals with intention to provoke people into rioting, arson and indulging in rioting with intent to create disorder. Sub-section (1) of 505 deals with delivering fiery speeches which could hurt religious feelings and create discord among communities. (The Hindu 7/7/05)

### **Muslims fear backlash after hate mail deluge (7)**

London, July 8 (Reuters): Muslim leaders called on worshippers to pray today for the victims of the London bombings blamed on radical Islamists, as fears of an anti-Muslim backlash were fuelled by a deluge of abusive messages. The Muslim Council of Britain said it had received 30,000 messages of hate via e-mail, jamming its computers. The Islamic Human Rights Commission warned London Muslims to stay at home to avoid retaliation. London police chief Ian Blair said the authorities were in touch with Muslim leaders and those of other faiths to protect symbolic buildings. "We are aware of one or two very minor incidents across the country but so far, as I would expect, Britain, with its liberal and welcoming approach to people, is taking it in its stride," Blair said. Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned bombers who "act in the name of Islam" but said the majority of Muslims, both in Britain and abroad, were decent people who hated terrorism. Many in London's Edgware Road — close to one of the underground stations that was attacked and home to scores of Lebanese, Iraqi and Egyptian businesses — condemned yesterday's attacks but feared there would be a knee-jerk revenge reaction. "The whole world now will point at me and say I am an Arab and Muslim terrorist," said Zakaria Koubissi, a 29-year-old manager of a Lebanese restaurant. "We expect to be harassed. It is a natural reaction, but people should know that Islam does not tell or allow us to kill innocent people," he added. (The telegraph 9/7/05)

### **Mosques, madrasas attacked in UK (7)**

London, July 11: Backlash and reprisal attacks against British Asians seem to be gaining momentum: three further attacks were reported on mosques and Islamic educational centres in east London and Bristol. In the attack on the east London centre, a number of windows were smashed. Residents from the Muslim-dominated Brick Lane area there remained indoors for most of Sunday following the stone-throwing incident. The fresh attacks come after the police was called in to investigate at least four arson attacks on mosques across the UK over the weekend. The arson attacks were reported from mosques in Leeds, Belvedere, Telford and Birkenhead. In other areas of London, like Middlesex, a South Asian woman reported attempted arson after she noticed "liquid dripping down her door and smelt petrol" on the day of the terrorist attacks. The same day, five white men were arrested after bottles were thrown at the windows of a gurdwara in south London. In a separate incident, arson was reported at the home of an Asian family in Southall. In a statement, the Metropolitan police said the force was keeping an open mind on the motive for the London attacks, but that many of the allegations involved threatening phone calls or racist abuse. A spokesman said "reassurance patrols" were being carried out in areas considered vulnerable. All major news channels here have been receiving calls from Asians, mostly Muslims, who have experienced either spitting or shoving incidents on the roads of London. (Asian Age 12/7/05)

### **IUML, Bajrang in Mataram war (7)**

Bhopal, July 12: The Ayodhya attack, the London bomb blasts, and the ruling BJP's decision to encourage the singing of Vande Mataram in government offices and schools seems to have goaded communal organisations, both Hindu and Muslim, in old Bhopal to settle scores through a poster war. The first poster, printed in the name of the Indian Union Muslim League, was seen pasted on a few walls on Monday. It warned Muslims against intoning Vande Mataram since it would be deemed a direct affront to Allah. Co-religionists, in fact, were told to even avoid being seen anywhere near the anthem-singing site. Failure to comply would invite instant retribution. The local Muslim clergy, however, promptly took the initiative to cool off tensions by assuring their brethren that there was nothing to worry about since the singing of Vande Mataram hadn't been made compulsory. The state government circular on the subject had only requested optimum participation in the singing on the first day of every month. The Bajrang Dal responded with its very own posters during an anti-terrorism rally the same day. Responsibility for the poster was credited to a Delhi-based body called Akhand Hindustan Morcha, whose address and telephone numbers were imprinted. The creators of the poster were contacted in Delhi and they did not hesitate to admit that they were behind its publication. Police sources, however, told this newspaper that there was nothing overly objectionable in the contents. It primarily sought to inform the public of how some misguided Islamic fundamentalists were bent on spreading violence in the name of jihad, the London bomb blasts being the latest evidence of it. (Asian Age 13/7/05)

### **Builders want to demolish mosque(7)**

Mumbai: The residents of CST Road, near the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) in Mumbai, are up in arms against Diwan Builders because the builders want to demolish the Hafzul Imam Masjid, which comes in the way of their construction of a huge building tower. To placate the Muslim residents in the area, the developers have promised to build another mosque in close proximity to the current one. "The real estate prices in and around BKC are anything between Rs 14,000 and Rs 16,000 per sq ft. The builders want to earn big bucks. Though the builder has promised us that he will construct a masjid in the area, it is a sentimental issue. Any place of worship being brought down becomes a controversy in Mumbai," said Taufeeq Ahmed, a resident of Mohammed Estate where the mosque stands. The mosque has been there for about 35 years. This newspaper tried to contact Mr Bhupendra Mehta, the manager of Diwan Builders, but could not get in touch with him. Diwan Builders has many construction projects in this area. The construction activity falls under the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) SRA scheme. "Under SRA rules, no house of worship can be brought down. Also, this structure is pre-1995 and leaves no room for the builder to demolish it," said Mr Sirish Upadhyay of the Students and Youth Association. (Asian Age 15/7/05)

### **Curfew imposed on Dhar after 2 die in communal violence (7)**

Bhopal : Indefinite curfew was imposed in communally sensitive Dhar city after a minor dispute among children led to a murder and subsequent riots. As many as 51 miscreants were arrested after two persons were murdered in clashes that started on Tuesday, said DIG Dhar Pramod Phalnikar. After a dispute among children, a group of armed miscreants attacked the house of Raju Bhairvi in Gandhi Colony on Tuesday night killing him on the spot and injuring his two brothers, who tried to intervene. While the body of Raju Bhairvi was being taken to his house from the hospital, few among the mourners forced closure of shops and indulged in stone-throwing despite prohibitory orders under section 144 CrPC enforced since this morning. On Wednesday, 50-year-old Allah Noor, a shopkeeper, was murdered by unidentified rioters that worsened the situation. As the situation deteriorated, curfew was clamped in this district town, District Collector D P Ahuja said. Besides special Task Force jawans, two companies of Special Armed Force were also deployed in the town, which had earlier witnessed a series of clashes. Police patrolling in sensitive areas was being carried out. One of the injured, whose condition was reported to be serious, had been shifted to Indore, police said. The body of Raju Bhairvi had been cremated under tight security, while senior police and civilian officials were keeping a strict vigil. By Wednesday evening the police arrested 31 people taking the number of those arrested to 51 in the incident. While two people were arrested in connection with Tuesday murder the rest were apprehended for violating the curfew. (Pioneer 21/7/05)

### **Muslims angry over VHP plea to vacate houses near mandir (7)**

Lucknow : Muslim residents of Ayodhya have reacted with anger to the VHP's petition to the President and Union Home Minister, asking that occupants of houses on the periphery of the Ram Janmabhoomi complex be made to leave on the plea that they are vulnerable to jihadi pressure and hence a security threat. Nearly all the occupants are Muslims. Haji Mehboob, a senior leader of the Babri Masjid Movement and president of the Anjuman Muhafiz Muazib Avadh, dismissing the move, said, "the VHP demand is totally unjustified. We are not going to tolerate this. We also plan to meet the President and Union Home Minister to put forward our side of the story. The VHP can't be allowed to whip up a communal divide. They have already failed in their designs and have been exposed before the people of Ayodhya and Faizabad." Saying that most of the houses were at least four generations old, he justified his stand by adding, "the VHP is simply looking for an issue since their efforts to encash on the terrorist strike have failed miserably for lack of public support." There are about 50 houses and shops belonging to the minority community in the periphery of the RJB complex mainly in Duari Kuan, Karziana, Panji Tola, Katra and Tehri Bazar localities accounting for a population of nearly 3,000 families. Ironically, when the VHP was meeting the President, the Nehru Yuva Kendra was taking out a sadbhavna yatra in Ayodhya to promote communal amity. However few seemed to notice the procession on Tuesday and many dismissed it as an "official exercise." (Pioneer 21/7/05)

#### **Jamiat asks Muslim ministers to quit (7)**

Guwahati, July 22: The Assam unit of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind said here on Friday that all the Muslim ministers of the ruling Congress government should resign from the government owning the moral responsibility for their "complete failure in protecting the rights of minorities in Assam". Addressing a crowded press conference, Assam Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind president Badruddin Ajamal said: "We are requesting them to honour the sentiment of the minority people of the state. If they fail to do so, obviously, they will face the wrath of voters in the forthcoming Assembly elections." After downsizing of the Assam ministry, there are five Muslim ministers in the Gogoi council of ministers. Most of them were appointed at the recommendation of the Assam Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind. Expressing deep anguish over the remark of Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi, widely reported in the local media that he does not require the votes of Muslims, Mr Ajamal, in an oblique remark, said: "He is the chief minister of Assam, how can we dare to challenge his authority?" However, Mr Gogoi has already denied media reports and clarified that he had never made such a remark. Indicating that Jamiat may launch a new political platform to assert the presence of minorities in the state, he said: "More than 13 minority organisations have requested us to launch a separate political party. We have decided to organise a convention of minorities on August 20 to take a final decision in this regard." In an obvious reference to the ruling Congress, he said: "Some senior political leaders of the state have started playing dirty games to divide minorities between Assamese and Bengali-speaking Muslims. This is unfortunate." (Asian Age 23/7/05)

#### **Raje Govt plans to relocate madarsas out of mosques (7)**

Jaipur: THERE IS a move to relocate the madarsas, which are currently functioning from the premises of mosques in various parts in Rajasthan. Though the proposal was mooted long ago, things started moving recently, when the State Government carried out a fresh survey of madarsas, in view of its plan to modernise them. According to official sources over seven hundred madarsas in the state are functioning from the mosques premises and the Government is preparing to plan to relocate them out of the mosque at the earliest. The Madarsa Board, on its own, had sent the proposal to the State Government to get new premises for the madarsas, which have no building and are functioning from the Mosques. The sources said that Government has approached industrial houses and charitable organisation to come forward to construct schools building, including for madarsas and students hostel as Government has not sufficient funds to take this big project. As part of its plan to modernise the madarsas, the Government has released Rs 4 cores to the Madarsa Board. The Board has the plan to introduce computer education in selective madarsas. This is the first time that Board has got enough funds from the government to modernise the education in the madarsas. (Pioneer 27/7/05)

AUGUST 05

#### **Scared, Muslims flee workplaces (7)**

Guwahati : Fear and panic have gripped Bengali speaking Muslim daily wage labourers in Assam with hundreds of them fleeing their workplaces, including many from the State's main city of Guwahati, apprehending a crackdown by authorities to deport them to Bangladesh. A Government spokesman confirmed the exodus and said it was a result of some 'mischievous propaganda' by people with 'vested interests' to scare away religious and linguistic minority people to leave their workplaces. "There is no need for panic. We have asked the police and civil authorities to maintain strict vigil so that no genuine Indian citizens are harassed by people with some political affiliations trying to create communal tension," the spokesman said. "We cannot say the people who have left for some reason are all Muslims. There could be people from other faiths as well," he added. Many of these Bengali workers were engaged in construction works, brick kilns, and pedal rickshaws in Assam, besides doing menial jobs. The immediate provocation for the exodus is the repealing of the controversial Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act to identify illegal Bangladeshis. The Supreme Court, last month, decided to replace the 22-year-old IMDT Act with the Foreigners Act in Assam saying the previous legislation was a hindrance in identifying and deporting illegal Bangladeshis from the State. Under the IMDT Act, the onus of proving one's citizenship rested on the complainant rather than the accused, while it is just the reverse under the Foreigners Act. (Pioneer 3/8/05)

### **'UP Muslims insecure, deprived' (7)**

Lucknow, Aug. 7: In Mulayam Singh Yadav's 'Uttam Pradesh', Muslims are experiencing an "acute sense of deprivation, a sense of insecurity and an all-pervasive presence of inferiority complex." These are observations made by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's high-level committee for preparation of a report on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India. The committee, headed by Justice Rajendra Sachar, met over 800 representatives from the community from different walks of life and different strata of society over three days here. Talking to reporters on Sunday, Justice Sachar said that these observations were made on the basis of statements made by Muslim representatives before the committee. Justice Sachar made it clear that the committee did not have any intention of maligning any government and nor did it have any political agenda. The committee members said that there was an overriding concern among Muslims over the lack of representation of the community in various fields. "Reservation is an instrument which can help the community achieve representation in proportion to its population. As of now, there is tremendous disparity among community members in rural and urban areas and the situation is gloomier in the rural areas where Muslims are no better placed than Scheduled Castes and Tribes," said Dr Abu Saleh Shariff, member-secretary of the committee. The committee found that there was increasing awareness among Muslims to raise their educational standards. "Schools for Muslim girls are not available in the immediate vicinity and paucity of girls' hostels is another problem area. Besides, Muslims feel that modernisation of education in madrasas is required and many said that despite various announcements, facilities in madrasas had not improved. In fact, there are severe contradictions in what the government has said and what the people have said. Therefore, we will be sending our own teams to verify the ground realities," the members said. (Asan Age 8/8/05)

### **SC draws the line for Gujarat cops (7)**

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 8: Annoyed with the Gujarat police for having failed to arrest the main accused in a post-Godhra riot case, the Supreme Court today said either they were conniving with the accused or were "worthless". A bench comprising Justice B.N. Agrawal and Justice A.K. Mathur was hearing an anticipatory bail petition filed by Sashikant alias Tino Yuvraj — the main accused in the Naroda-Patiya riot case. The judges reminded that the apex court had directed the Gujarat DGP even earlier to apprehend the accused. "Either the police are conniving with the accused or are wholly worthless," the bench said. Taking serious note of the non-compliance of its order, the court issued an ultimatum to the DGP. It warned him that if suitable steps were not taken by August 22, when the matter comes up for hearing next, he would have to present himself before the court to explain the position. The court also perused a report by the DGP, but expressed unhappiness over the contents, which it said did not mention whether the police had initiated moves to attach the property of the accused to secure his presence. The SC had in 2004 rejected the bail plea of Shashikant and asked the police to take him into custody. The accused, who was out on bail, had approached the apex court after his bail was cancelled by the Gujarat HC. He was among the 46 accused whose names figured in FIRs lodged with the Naroda-Patiya police after the riots. (Indian Express 9/8/05)

### **Congress front backs BJP stand in Gujarat riots probe (7)**

New Delhi, Aug. 11: The Congress party, which was virtually compelled by a determined Left Front to take action against two senior party members named in the Nanavati Commission report on the 1984 anti-Sikh violence, has completely opted out of the inquiry being carried out by Justice G.T. Nanavati into the Gujarat riots. It has instead joined issue with a civil rights organisation pleading for justice for the victims by filing a petition through a front organisation that has it arguing on the same side as the BJP and the Narendra Modi government in the state. The Jan Sangharsh Manch, a civil rights body, has filed a petition before the commission against President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's refusal to part with letters reportedly written by his predecessor, Mr K.R. Narayanan, where he claimed to have asked the then NDA government to move the Army into Gujarat to control the violence. The point that will now be argued on August 20 in Ahmedabad will centre around one question: Whether the present President can claim privilege on these documents. This is being opposed, predictably, by the state government and the BJP. But the Congress, although not directly represented, has raised "technical objections" against the petition through a Muslim lawyer representing an organisation that is recognised in Gujarat as a front for the Congress party. Stunned activists point out that instead of "helping us, they are working with the BJP on this". (Asian Age 12/8/05)

### **CPI (M) calls for law to tackle communal violence (7)**

NEW DELHI: Underlining the need for a comprehensive model law to tackle communal violence, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has suggested that the Centre should take the initiative and consult all States on this. "There is an urgent need for the Central Government to take the initiative for consulting all the States to evolve a mechanism by which the States' rights and autonomy shall be maintained on the one hand and, on the other, necessary legislative powers should be acquired to deal with the prevention of communal riots and providing speedy justice to the victims," an editorial in the recent edition of the party organ People's Democracy said. In the backdrop of the report of Justice G.T. Nanavati Commission that probed the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, the editorial said the question of punishing the perpetrators of communal strife was necessary not only from the viewpoint of humanism and compassion but it was imperative that justice be delivered in order to strengthen the secular democratic foundations of the modern Indian republic. The National Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance Government speaks of a comprehensive law to deal with communal violence. The editorial said while few would disagree with the need for such a law, concerns were expressed during the discussions while formulating the CMP. These concerns relate to the federal structure of the Constitution under which the division of responsibilities and authority between the Centre and the States places the issue of law and order as a State subject. (The Hindu 16/8/05)

### **No relief for riot victims: CPM (7)**

New Delhi, Aug. 16: Observing that relief for the victims of Gujarat riots does not appear near and that the Nanavati Commission's report on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots has singularly failed to establish culpability, the CPI(M) has reiterated the necessity of enacting a comprehensive law to deal with communal violence in order to improve the justice delivery system. Recalling the mention of such a law in the national common minimum programme of the UPA government, the editorial, published in the latest issue of the CPI(M) mouthpiece People's Democracy, said there was an urgent need for the Union government to take the initiative of consulting all states to evolve a mechanism by which the states' rights and autonomy shall be maintained on the one hand and, on the other, necessary legislative powers should be acquired to deal with the prevention of communal riots and providing speedy justice to the victims. The editorial, titled "Punish the perpetrators of communal strife", also said it was an "ironic coincidence" that on a day when the government tabled the action taken report on the Nanavati Commission report, the Supreme Court came out with a blistering comment that the Gujarat police was either "conniving with the accused or worthless". The editorial read: "For three long years after the gruesome state-sponsored communal carnage in Gujarat, the guilty are yet to be apprehended, while the victims continue to languish. This, despite a huge array of circumstantial evidence available through media reports and eyewitness accounts." "While the various cases concerning the Gujarat carnage continue to be heard in various courts, neither relief for the victims nor the elimination of fear and insecurity for the minorities appears near. It is once again ironic that the same Justice Nanavati is now to probe the Gujarat carnage!" (Asian Age 17/8/05)

### **Muslim bodies defensive on Shariat (7)**

Lucknow, Aug 17: With the Supreme Court questioning the legality of Shariat courts, Muslim clerics are now clearly on the defensive, while progressive leaders in the community are in an upbeat mood. The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notices to the union government, seven state governments and three Muslim bodies — All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, Darul-Uloom and Muslims for Secular Democracy — on a PIL filed by advocate Vishwa Lochan Madan that questions the legality and validity of Shariat courts and fatwas issued by them. The PIL mentions the Imrana case, in particular, to plead its case before the court. The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board was clearly defensive on the issue and its spokesman said that the board was likely to convene a meeting soon to discuss the reply to the Supreme Court notice. However, senior high court advocate and member of the AIMPLB, Mr Zafaryab Jilani, told reporters: "Much of the misconception arises because of misinterpretation of facts. Darul Qaza which means 'house of the Qazi' merely gives its opinion on religious matters and should not be termed as Shariat court. The Darul Qaza does not run a parallel judicial system, but merely deals with family disputes and affairs of Muslims. In fact, this helps in reducing the burden on courts." Mr Jilani further explained that Article 25 and 26 of the Indian Constitution confers the freedom to profess, practice and propagate a religion of one's choice and the Shariat Application Act 1937 also came into existence because Muslims are governed by Shariat laws in matters related to family, inheritance, marriage, among others. (Asian Age. 18/8/05)

### **Zahira plea rejected, panel to report soon (7)**

New Delhi, Aug. 17: The court on Wednesday turned down the plea of Ms Zahira Sheikh, a key witness in the Best Bakery case, seeking a week's time to submit her written statements before the high-powered committee probing the authenticity of her accusation in the case. Shortly before the committee was to submit its report on the flip-flops of the witness in the case, she through her counsel, sought seven days time, which a two-judge bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Arijit Pasayat, refused to give. In order to facilitate the committee to submit its report without any further delay, the court refused to entertain such pleas of Ms Zahira. However, the court allowed the committee to file its report by August 24, which is scheduled to expire on Thursday and posted the case for hearing on August 29. Ms Zahira, through her counsel D.K. Garg, alleged that the report of the committee was finalised as per the information given by the registrar-general of the top court, Mr B.M. Gupta, who heads the committee, without giving an opportunity to submit her written statements before the probe panel. Earlier, the court had appointed the committee to find out the veracity of Ms zahira's accusation that social activist Teesta Setalvad had forced her to sign statements implicating the accused in the case. The committee had also probed into the bank accounts of Ms zahira and her relatives in the wake of the sting operation about a BJP MLA bribing her to turn hostile in the trial court. (Asian Age 18/8/05)

### **'Muslims denied rights, feeling insecure' (7)**

JAIPUR: The crucial links between the issues relating to poverty, backwardness, unemployment and low literacy levels among Muslims in Rajasthan and the "sense of insecurity and helplessness" prevailing in the community were highlighted during the first interactive session of a high-level committee, appointed by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, here on Monday. The members of the committee are on a visit to Jaipur till August 24 to study the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in the State for preparation of a report on these aspects for facilitating the Government's intervention to address the relevant issues. The committee is headed by the former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, Rajinder Sachar. Academicians, intellectuals, social activists, lawyers, entrepreneurs and youngsters participating in the dialogue affirmed that the socio-economic development of Muslims could not be ensured unless the mindset of those in power was changed in favour of treating the community on par with others and stop discrimination against them. They said Muslims in the State were feeling insecure in the wake of a series of communal incidents during the past year-and-a-half. The alleged role of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in heightening anxiety among Muslims through its actions supporting the communal elements came in for sharp criticism during the interaction. "It is an irony that the Minister in charge of Social Welfare Department, which has made arrangements for the committee's visit, is himself facing charges of encouraging anti-Muslim violence," said Mohammed Salim, president of the State unit of Jamate-e-Islami Hind. (The Hindu 23/8/05)

### **Urdu 'sidelined' in Jharkhand, allege Muslims (7)**

Ranchi : Various Muslim organisations in Jharkhand are unhappy over the State Cabinet's move to accord Bangla and Santhali second language status and not include Urdu in the list. Several Muslim organisations have come down heavily on the State Government following this move. "The State Government wants to create trouble in the name of language. We have no problem if Bangla and Santhali are given second language status. But Muslims should get their due," said Professor Sidique Mujib, vice-president of Jharkhand Tanjim. "Urdu is the second most popularly spoken language in the State. The State Government should give Urdu second language status," said Professor Abujar Usmani, president of Anjuman Tarakki A Urdu. Nine Muslim bodies held a meeting on Sunday in Ranchi, and decided to launch a Statewide stir in this regard. They will stage demonstrations in front of offices of the district administration of all 22 districts. There are 20 per cent Bangla speaking people in the State and Santhali language is widely spoken by the tribal community which constitutes 27 per cent of the total population here. The Muslim population constitutes nearly 10 per cent. In undivided Bihar, Urdu enjoyed second language status. "The Government's move is to divert the attention of the people from a contentious issue. We will go to any extent to oppose such a move," said Professor Abu Talib of Milli council. (Pioneer 23/8/05)

### **PM sends officer to help Gujarat victims (7)**

New Delhi, Aug. 22: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has stepped in personally to take the first steps for paying compensation to the victims of the Gujarat violence—He has reportedly sent a special emissary to the state to look into the details. Dr Singh had intervened in Parliament to apologise for the anti-Sikh violence, which had claimed 4,000 lives in 1984. The Union home ministry has set up two committees to look into the matter of compensation for the families of the victims more than two decades after the violence. The affected families had been agitating for adequate compensation. The government is also looking into the proposal to provide employment to the affected Sikh youth. In a bid to preempt a similar demand by the victims of the Gujarat violence, Dr Singh has started the process to look into the demand for adequate relief and rehabilitation of the families who have been ignored by the Gujarat government. Nearly 2,500 persons are reported to have died in the Gujarat violence, which is currently being inquired into by a two-member commission headed by Justice Nanavati. (Asian Age 23/8/05)

### **In Rae Bareli, how a routine crime acquired communal overtones (7)**

DALMAU (RAE BARELI), AUGUST 21: A group of small-town tough guys tease a girl. A man from the girl's locality objects to it. An altercation takes place, then a fistfight and finally gunshots, killing the man. A revenge killing follows. This scene is common in Uttar Pradesh. But its entire complexion changes when you throw in the fact that the tough guys were Muslims. That the man who objected was a Hindu, a Dalit, and an Army jawan posted in Jammu & Kashmir's Rajouri area. And that Dalmau village, where it happened, is a stone's throw away from Rae Bareli, constituency of Congress president Sonia Gandhi. A clinical look at the incident doesn't give it a communal colour—nothing similar has happened before in Dalmau. Neither is there a political setting that may have planted the seeds of communal hatred here. In fact, it could well have passed off Friday last as any other incident, and it quite did. Yet, this incident has now filled the air with communal tension in a village of around 20,000 people. At first, it was only between Bachchi Ali—and his boys—and Ramesh Sonkar, the jawan. Now, it is They and Us, Hindus versus Muslims. "Most communal fires at many places across India have started from such incidents, especially eve-teasing," says a senior IPS officer. Indeed, there are now more policemen than people in the Miya Ka Tola pocket, where people disappear behind half-closed doors at the first sight of "outsiders". And, in the smaller pocket of butchers within Miya Ka Tola, they have all fled in fear after Naeem Mohammed, one of them, was lynched in retaliation to Sonkar's killing. (Indian Express 22/8/05)

### **Gujarat riot victim finds govt school where his house stood (7)**

BHUMASVADA (VADODARA), AUGUST 24: When the post-Godhra riots broke out, Sadiq Pathan and his family, the only Muslims in this village, fled. On their return, they found the house razed, the plot cleared of bamboo and teak. On it stood three pre-fab classrooms and a toilet, an extension of the adjacent government primary school. Ever since, 75-year-old Pathan has been trying to get back his ancestral property. Even a court order in his favour hasn't helped. Ranged against him are the school authorities, who say he was an encroacher, and the villagers who say they are prepared to pool money to appeal the order. But Pathan plods on. He now lives in Chalamali, some 30 km away and has found a job

there as a muezzin. "This is the land of my ancestors. How can I let go of it so easily?" he asks. "If villagers want to grab my land, I should be given another plot elsewhere." Pathan first took his case to the local authorities who directed him to the courts. The district court ordered that the status quo before the riots broke out be maintained: Pathan must be allowed to have possession of the plot on which his house stood till the case was disposed. The Kwant taluka development officer (TDO) went in appeal to a fast-track court, claiming that the land belonged to the government. The TDO said Pathan was an encroacher. In April this year, the fast-track court rejected the appeal. Again the authorities were told to maintain status quo as of 2002. But the school extension still stands on Pathan's land. A new school gate that has been put up opens on to his land. "It was my grandmother who had donated land for the village school," he says. "Despite that the villagers want to take away the land where my house stood." Head teacher Banasingh Rathwa, who seems to be leading the fight against Pathan, says the land belongs to the panchayat. Teacher Kalubhai, too, argues for keeping the extension where it stands. "We are prepared to fight it out for the sake of our children's education," he says. (Indian Express 25/8/05)

### **Rajasthan lets Sangh target Muslims, says PM's team (7)**

New Delhi: Is Rajasthan being turned by the RSS and the ruling BJP government into another Gujarat? Activists who have been speaking of growing discrimination against Muslims, and the segregation of Muslims in the state, found unexpected support from the Prime Minister's high-level committee on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India, which also found a high level of insecurity amongst Muslims and a "deepening distrust between Muslims and Hindus" in Rajasthan. The state government, according to sources, has "turned a blind eye to the Muslims, as if the community simply does not exist". Well-known activist Kavita Srivastava told this newspaper from Jaipur that the situation has never been as bad as it is now, and that Muslims are being deliberately targeted by the RSS and BJP, which are spearheading a social and economic boycott of the community. The high-powered committee headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar, which was in Rajasthan for four days, received numerous complaints speaking of discrimination against Muslims at all levels. According to an assessment by sources, it is as if the state has decided that Muslims simply do not exist and they are being made to fade out of existence. Civil rights activists working in the affected villages, where tension has been simmering for months, point out that Muslims have had to leave their houses and are unable to return to their villages in Bhilwara district, which is the worst affected. In the cities, Muslims find they are unable to get loans to purchase property from banks, and that landlords are "discouraged" from selling them houses, or even giving them out on rent. The result is that, like in Ahmedabad, a segregation of communities is taking place with Hindus and Muslims now living separately. (Asian Age 26/8/05)

### **Muslim Board disagrees with SC (7)**

New Delhi : 'Constitution grants us separate legal framework'----- Unfazed by the recent Supreme Court's directions, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Sunday said it would contest the apex court's contention that Islamic courts were "challenging" the country's judicial system. As a matter of fact, the Board perceives that the petition will be an opportunity to legitimise Darul Qaza (Islamic court), the Board said. "We are preparing our response to the petition. The Darul Qaza operates within the Constitution. The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, gives power to the Darul Qaza to decide on family matters when the disputed parties are Muslims. We will submit a detailed note on how proceedings are conducted in Darul Qaza," said Rahim Quraishi, assistant general secretary, AIMPLB. The Darul Qaza does not take up criminal cases or matters pending in civil courts, he added. "The Board is taking the petition in a positive manner. This is our strength. We will convert this into an opportunity to get recognised. We are sure that the Supreme Court will give this to Darul Qaza, which is working under Shariat Application Act, 1937," AIMPLB chairperson Rabe Hassan Nadvi said. Justifying the several Darul Qaza in parts of the country, the Board said it provided speedy justice and "poor people need not hire lawyers". "The Shariat courts help smooth differences and they are less problematic. People in the villages do not have access to lawyers and in these courts they can solve their problems easily," the chairperson said. The AIMPLB argued that Islamic courts are complimentary Muslim Board disagrees with SC to India's judicial system and not "parallel" to it. (Pioneer 29/8/05)

### **'Zahira lied, maybe for money' (7)**

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 29: A Supreme Court appointed committee which went into charges by and against Best Bakery case witness Zahira Sheikh, whose family was killed in the post-Godhra riots in

Gujarat, has concluded that she lied in the course of her testimony probably under inducement. Ironically, it was Zahira's allegations against her one-time mentor and activist Teesta Setalvad that led to the formation of the committee. But the panel found that she had gone back even on this. The bench of Justice Arijit Pasayat and Justice H.K. Sema, however, made it clear that it would accept the report only after hearing the counsel for both Teesta and Zahira. The report, prepared by Supreme Court Registrar General B.M. Gupta, said: "looking to the aforementioned status in full, including all other circumstances of the case, I feel no hesitation to mention that Zahira is not such a lady who speaks the truth. She has developed an image of a self-condemned liar whose statements alone cannot safely be accepted". On January 10, the court had referred the matter for inquiry after Zahira's "flip flops" and allegations that she may have been induced to do so. The report submitted today raises serious questions on Zahira's conduct. It clearly says there "appears a high probability of money changing hands" which was the "allurement" by which Zahira "was induced for giving a particular statement in the trial court, Vadodara which was supportive to the defence/accused and against the case of the prosecution". (Indian Exp. 30/8/05)

SEPTEMBER

### **Godhra panel says no to President's privilege (7)**

AHMEDABAD, SEPT 6: The Godhra inquiry commission today rejected the privilege sought by Rashtrapati Bhavan and instructed that the letters written by former president K R Narayanan to former prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in connection with the Gujarat riots be produced before it. The Nanavati-Shah panel upheld an application filed by advocate Mukul Sinha wherein he challenged the privilege sought by the Rashtrapati Bhavan and instructed the letters be produced before it. However, the Commission has not given any timeframe for the President's Office to hand over the letters. Advocate Sinha said, "The Commission has said that the President's office cannot seek privilege (under Article 74/2) of the Constitution." He said that this was for the first time that a commission has issued such instructions to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, adding, "They (President's office) have the right to appeal against this in a court if they wish." The Rashtrapati Bhavan had previously refused to send the documents to the commission on the grounds of privilege but had acknowledged that the former president had spoken to the media about these letters. Narayanan had said in an interview to a Kerala-based journalist that he had written letters to Vajpayee when the riots broke out and had told him (Vajpayee) to send Army at the earliest. He said in the interview that he did not get any reply from Vajpayee and that his requests also went unheeded. Narayanan had written these letters to Vajpayee between February 20 and March 31, 2002. (Indian Exp 7/9/05)

### **Indian Muslims say they don't feel safe post 9/11 (7)**

New Delhi, September 10: FOUR YEARS ago on this day, New York's twin towers fell to a terrorist attack. The event sparked off two wars — in Afghanistan and in Iraq — and global upheaval. But has the chain of events after 9/11 affected the lives of Muslims in India, as elsewhere? An HT survey of 883 Muslims in seven cities shows the answers don't come as an emphatic "yes" or "no". Whether 9/11 and America's War against Terrorism has impacted the lives of Indian Muslims depends on which Muslim you speak to — the average man on the street or the globetrotter. For instance, the survey finds that overall only 42 per cent of the community sympathises with the 9/11 attackers. But when you go out of the metros, you get a different picture: in Patna it was 61 per cent, in Lucknow 56 per cent, and in Hyderabad 51 per cent. As for whether their lives changed since 9/11, only 43 per cent overall says it has. At the same time, however, nearly two-thirds — 63 per cent — says the attacks made their community more vulnerable to hatred. And if you thought our cities were more cosmopolitan, then figure this — the feeling of vulnerability was much higher in the metros (80 per cent in Delhi, 71 per cent in Mum-bai). In both metros and smaller cities, however, no one thinks the US is winning its war against terrorism (88 per cent says no in Kolkata, 91 per cent in Patna). And half of the community, whether in Mumbai or in Lucknow, does not think Islam is being practiced in its true spirit. A lot of churning is still ahead. (Hindustan Times 11/9/05)

### **BJP assails fatwa, vote-bank politics (7)**

CHENNAI: The Bharatiya Janata Party's political resolution adopted here on Saturday charged the United Progressive Alliance Government with practising "minorityism" to the extent that it could once again nurture the kind of Muslim separatism which led to the creation of Pakistan. The party said the

Government was obsessed with vote-bank politics, that it revived religion-based reservation in education and employment — the reference was to the attempt to provide reservation to Muslims in Andhra Pradesh and create a 50 per cent quota for Muslims in Aligarh Muslim University — in violation of the criteria settled by the Constitution. In the "atmosphere of minority appeasement" resulting from the UPA Government's vote-bank politics, Muslim clergy were emboldened to indulge in the "politics of fatwas," issuing directives aimed at intimidating women, it said. During the discussion on the political resolution on the second day of the national executive committee meeting, senior delegate Pyarelal Khandelwal wanted a few words added saying it was this kind of mentality that led to the two-nation theory propounded by Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Pakistan founder). (The Hindu 18/9/05)

### **Muslim girls' fight against odds (7)**

JAIPUR: An interactive programme on the education of Muslim girls organised here on Thursday highlighted the adversities and hardships obstructing educational advancement of the fair sex despite their desire to join schools and colleges and excel in studies to march ahead in their lives. Each of the 223 girls participating in the programme had a story of fight against the odds and struggle against poverty, disadvantage and affliction. Though some of the girls succeeded in getting a good level of education, the majority of them have to drop out of schools due to a number of factors, primarily the inability of their parents to bear the cost of education. The Chairperson of the Rajasthan Women's Commission, Pawan Surana, who was specially invited to the programme, was left aghast on hearing the narratives of deprivation of Muslim girls. She expressed surprise over the gaping hole in the implementation of the State Government's schemes for promotion of education among weaker sections. The half-day programme was organised by the National Muslim Women's Welfare Society on the premises of a Government Middle School in the Muslim-dominated Baas Badanpura locality adjacent to the Walled City here. A number of social activists attended the event, to which the State Women's Commission and the UNICEF also extended support. The saga of destitution, distress, difficulties and dilemma was common to all the girls, who were anguished at their inability to compete with those from other communities. The Society's president, Nishat Hussain, pointed out that it was not just the vicious circle of poverty which had blocked educational advancement of Muslim girls, but the social structure heavily loaded against the poor and victimised Muslims the most. (The Hindu 23/9/05)

OCTOBER

### **Muslim law board to seek PM aid (7)**

New Delhi, Oct. 2: The Muslim Personal Law Board will meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union law minister H.R. Bharadwaj on the issue of Shariat courts. The move assumes importance in the backdrop of Supreme Court notices to the Centre, Dar-ul-Uloom of Deoband and All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, besides several states on August 16, on a petition accusing the two most important Muslim bodies of trying to interfere with the country's legal system and introducing parallel Islamic laws in violation of the Constitution. The Hyderabad-based Muslim Personal Law Board assistant general secretary A.R. Qureshi told this correspondent, "The Muslim Personal Law Board delegation would meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union law minister H.R. Bharadwaj only next month, since it is Maah-e-Ramzan now." Mr Qureshi said, "The Centre is the first respondent in this case and this why we wish to represent to both the Prime Minister and Mr Bharadwaj on the issues relating to the Dar-ul-Qaza, so that when they file their reply to the notice before the Supreme Court, the issue would be put in a perspective. In fact, the Dar-ul-Qaza is not a parallel judiciary, but an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) "mechanism". No criminal cases are taken up. Similarly, cases pending in the courts are also not taken up in Dar-ul-Qaza, which has been in existence since the 1920s. Besides, the Dar-ul-Qaza is recognised by the Shariat Application Act, 1937, and the Act is in force even today. So, the Dar-ul-Qaza is part of the Indian law and not something that is being foisted on the legal system." (Asian Age 3/10/05)

### **Minority Commission urges madarsas to upgrade syllabi to university standards (7)**

New Delhi : The chairman of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Sardar Tarlochan Singh has underlined the need for educating students about other religions in lakhs of madarsas scattered all across the country. Referring to the meeting of the Commission held on September 28, Mr Singh said: "The meeting has succeeded in clearing various doubts about madarsa education." According to Mr Singh, a number of issues related to madarsa education, including their academic advancement, were discussed in

the meeting. The panelists agreed that religious education was a valuable and useful tool for improving the personality of students. The discussion was attended by eminent educationists like the director of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, JV Raghavan, former Union education secretary MK Kaw, the director of DAV College Managing Committee, HR Gandhar, and the former vice-chancellor of Punjab University, Dr Amrik Singh. "So far 27,600 madarsas have been registered in various states and 1,600 madarsas are annually availing the Government grant for modernisation," said Union education ministry's joint secretary Sunil Kumar. Dr Amrik Singh stressed the need for proper education to Muslim students during the discussions. The Ministry of Human Resources Development (HRD) is likely to talk to the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) to recognise degrees awarded by madarsas in order to admit them to undergraduate and postgraduate courses. (Pioneer 3/10/05)

### **AMU loses its minority status (7)**

Lucknow: The Allahabad high court stripped the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) of its minority status on Tuesday by quashing an 1981 amendment to the AMU Act. The court also struck down as illegal, reservation of seats for Muslims in its post-graduate medical courses. The decision on the AMU, a premier educational institution held in high esteem for its standards, could evoke resentment, particularly among minorities. In his judgment, Justice Arun Tandon observed that the AMU (Amendment) Act, 1981 was unconstitutional and that the AMU could not be termed as a minority institution. In 1981, Parliament had overruled a 1968 judgment of the Supreme Court in the Ajeez Pasha case. The apex court in 1968 had ruled that AMU was not an institution established by minorities and had been set up under the Act passed by the Central legislature. Justice Tandon observed that Parliament had no power to overrule a judgment given by the court and it could only remove defects in the law. According to the court, the 1981 amendment to the Act was an attempt to overrule the Supreme Court's judgment and therefore, was unconstitutional. The court also declared as illegal, the notification issued by the Union human resources development ministry on February 25 that permitted AMU to reserve seats for Muslims in post-graduate medical courses. (Asian Age 5/10/05)

### **Respect minority character of AMU, says Congress (7)**

NEW DELHI: A day after the Allahabad High Court quashed the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) Amendment Act 1981 providing minority institution status to the university, the Congress on Wednesday said its minority character should be maintained and respected. The Bharatiya Janata Party welcomed the verdict, which also declared illegal the recent decision of the AMU to reserve seats in post-graduate medical courses for Muslims. While taking a firm stand on the status of the AMU, Congress spokesman Anand Sharma sought to sidestep questions on the reservation issue, stating that it was a decision of the university. "It is within the jurisdiction and domain of AMU to respond to the court verdict on the reservation and decide on a future course of action," he said to questions on the issue at the party's routine briefing here. BJP vice-president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi cautioned the Government that any reservation based on religion would endanger unity and tear apart the social fabric of the country. In a statement, he said the party had already disapproved of the decision of the Human Resource Development Ministry to declare reservation for Muslims in the AMU. As long back as 1968 the Supreme Court had declared that the AMU was not a minority institution, he said. He said: "The BJP believes that the cultural and educational advancement of Muslims crucially hinges on giving them access to institutions of high quality." The National Commission for Minorities has urged the Government to ensure that students admitted to various educational and professional courses in the AMU are not disturbed. (The Hindu 6/10/05)

### **'Govt tried to make madrasa in Aligarh' (7)**

NEW DELHI, Oct. 5. — Allahabad High Court's verdict stripping Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) of its status as a minority institution and quashing of the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry's 25 February notification stipulating 50 per cent reservation for Muslims in Aligarh Muslim University's post-graduate professional courses, sparked off sharply-divided reactions from the BJP and the Congress today. The BJP, predictably, welcomed the High Court's decision, demanding "cancellation of the reservation order by the government" without going for an appeal against the court verdict. "The government has committed a sin as it tried to convert the Aligarh Muslim University into an Aligarh Muslim Madrasa," BJP vice-president Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said. "The UPA government should rather cancel its reservation order that aimed to damage the original equal-opportunity foundations of the AMU. It should desist from going for a Shah Bano-type solution to nullify the judgement, Mr. Naqvi said. The BJP leader

cautioned the Muslim community against the Congress-led government's "conspiracy" "to create a religious divide in the field of education just to gain political mileage by playing the minority card", alleging, the Centre's niyat (motive)" had been to deny Muslims quality education. The Congress said the AMU was granted the status of a minority institution through an amendment to the Central Act in 1981. "It is now the AMU's jurisdiction to respond to the current situation arising out of the High Court verdict," said the AICC spokesman, Mr Anand Sharma. The Congress made it clear that the party "respects the AMU's minority character", saying the varsity made a remarkable contribution to national education. (Statesman 6/10/05)

#### **Centre turns down plea by Nanavati (7)**

AHMEDABAD: The Centre has turned down the G.T. Nanavati and K.G. Shah Commission's request to furnish a copy of the correspondence between the former President, K.R. Narayanan, and the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, on the Gujarat riots. Jugal Kishor, Under-Secretary in the Union Department of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension, filed an affidavit before the Commission here on Friday stating the disclosure of the contents of the President's letter to Mr. Vajpayee could lead to "injury to public cause." The Centre was of the "considered view and satisfied" that the disclosure of the letter would "certainly cause injury to the public interest and that the public interest will suffer thereby." The affidavit said the Government was not claiming privilege on grounds of expediency or to avoid any embarrassment or inconvenient situation or because of any apprehension that the document, if produced, would defeat the case of the State. The Government also decided not to permit anyone to produce the document or give evidence on the basis of the correspondence under Sections 123 and 124 of the Indian Evidence Act. Reacting to the Centre's stand, Mukul Sinha, advocate for the riot victims, said he would move the Commission before October 22 for a direction to the Prime Minister's Office to produce the President's letter. (The Hindu 15/7/05)

#### **Mau on boil for 3<sup>rd</sup> day (7)**

Lucknow: EVEN AS shoot-at-sight orders were issued in riot-torn Mau, a fresh bout of violence on Saturday claimed two more lives, taking the total death toll in the Dussehra-triggered communal clash to five. The State Government, however, claimed that only three persons had been killed, nine injured and 30 shops either looted or set afire. Eighty nine persons have been arrested. Mau was dogged by violence for the third consecutive day despite the State Government's Friday claim that the situation "is under control and the administration has done a commendable job." The Saturday bout had Principal Secretary (Home) Alok Singh and DGP Yashpal Singh scurrying for a situation assessment of the riot-torn town on Saturday even as four senior police officers and five companies each of the PAC and the RAF were battling the situation under curfew conditions. Communal tension was sparked off in the township on Thursday after a group clash over the use of loudspeakers during a Bharat Milap procession. This snow-balled into violence, arson and looting. Despite curfew on Friday, miscreants roamed the streets indulging in arson and violence. A dozen were seriously injured after miscreants lobbed bombs into the Brahmin Tola locality. Anti-social elements armed with semi-automatic firearms opened indiscriminate fire near the branch of Oriental Bank of Commerce injuring several persons. In Kathupurwa locality, houses of two local journalists were set afire. The violence resulted in the exodus of a particular community. Despite a flag march by the RAF and PAC personnel, marauders pelted the Shahganj passenger train with stones, compelling the Railways to divert several trains, including the Lichhavi Express, from Ballia. (Pioneer 16/10/05)

#### **RSS man Rajasthan Waqf chief (7)**

Jaipur, Oct. 15: RSS supporter Slawad Khan has been elected unopposed as chairman of the Rajasthan Waqf Board on Friday while the Opposition Congress failed to counter the move. The Jamaat-e-Islami said it was a dangerous thing and the Waqf body would be used by communal elements. Mr Khan, who heads the state unit of My Hindustan, a body floated by the Sangh Parivar, said he was delighted at being elected unopposed with the blessings of nationalist forces. He said, "I will not hesitate in giving credit to the RSS for my victory. I believe in nationalism. The newly-elected chairman of the board is known as the protege of RSS senior functionary Indresh Kumar, who is incharge of Muslim affairs in RSS. Mr Khan was instrumental in organising four big conventions of My Hindustan in Rajasthan. One such programme was organised in Jaipur and it was opposed by the minority community. According to sources, transport minister Yunus Khan was not in favour of Mr Slawad Khan and tried to support another person. However, the

RSS vetoed it. Mr Yunus Khan is the lone Muslim face in the Raje government. The Opposition Congress could not challenge it. Even the Congress has five votes while the total number of voters was 11. Senior Congress MLAs Mahir Azad and Atmadudin Khan are members of the board but they could not formulate a strategy to counter the RSS move. The Jamaat-e-Islami's state chief Salim Engineer expressed his concern over the election of an RSS supporter. "The RSS would implement its communal agenda in the Waqf body. Unfortunately, this time they have found a Muslim face to carry out their agenda," Mr Engineer said. (Asian Age 16/10/05)

#### **Violence spreads in Mau, two more are killed (7)**

Lucknow: Violence continued unabated in Mau district for the third consecutive day on Sunday after a communal flareup that has claimed seven lives so far. Two more persons were killed and five others injured in a fresh bout of violence on Sunday. While one person was shot dead near the railway station, another was killed in mob violence near Madanpura. Three dead bodies were also recovered from the riot-affected areas. More than 180 persons have been arrested in connection with the riots that began on Friday, following a dispute over use of microphone during the traditional Bharat Milap programme that is a part of the Dussehra festivities. Four senior officials, including the commissioner, the district magistrate, the deputy inspector-general of police and the senior superintendent of police, have been suspended. While Mau town remained largely peaceful on Sunday, communal violence spread to the suburban areas and outskirts of the township, from where sporadic incidents of communal clashes were reported throughout the day. There were reports of a school being burnt down by rioters even as the paramilitary forces continued to stage flag marches in the township. The state election commission has, meanwhile, deferred the panchayat elections in Mau district, where polling was scheduled for October 17 and 20. The state's principal home secretary, Mr Alok Sinha, told reporters that curfew was on in Mau town and the district administration had been asked to make arrangements for the supply of food to residents. (Asian Age 17/10/05)

#### **Peace meets held, no fresh violence (7)**

MAU: Shoot-at-sight orders remained in force as additional forces were deployed in sensitive areas and peace meetings were organised on Monday to defuse the situation in this curfew-bound town where communal riots have claimed seven lives. Additional security personnel were rushed to areas where fresh incidents were reported on Sunday and a close vigil was being maintained, according to official sources. While senior police officials including the DIG (Range) are camping in the town to monitor the situation, meetings of peace committees were being organised to diffuse the tension. Essential commodities were being provided to the people residing in curfew-bound areas, they said. So far 32 people have been injured while 180 arrests made in connection with the riots that broke out last week over Dussehra festivities. Meanwhile, the local independent MLA Mukhtar Ansari, denied allegations of inciting violence saying the BJP had hatched a conspiracy to trigger communal violence "with a view to gain political mileage and malign my image". He demanded that the town be handed over to the army for maintaining law and order and registration of cases against the suspended Commissioner, District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police and Circle officer. Several long and short distance trains passing through Mau or originating here had either been cancelled or diverted to other routes as a precautionary measure, sources said. Movement of roadways buses coming here from Gorakhpur, Azamgarh and Ballia had also been suspended. Ten companies of Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and two of the Rapid Action Force had been deployed in the town where senior officials, drawn from neighbouring districts were camping, they said. (The Hindu 18/10/05)

#### **Ansari, BJP leader booked for inciting riots in Mau (7)**

MAU: Police on Tuesday lodged FIRs against controversial independent MLA Mukhtar Ansari and BJP Member of Legislative Council Ramji Singh for inciting communal riots here even as an uneasy calm prevailed in the curfew-bound town with Rapid Action Force and Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) jawans patrolling the streets. Mr Ansari, who was seen moving in an open jeep escorted by armed guards during the riots, was booked along with 100 others under various sections of IPC on charges of inciting riots, murder and violation of curfew, official sources said. Director-General of State Police, Yashpal Singh, said raids were going on to arrest Mr Ansari and action would be taken against him soon. Mr Ansari on his part blamed the Hindu Mahasabha for the communal tension and said he would co-operate with the probe ordered by the State Government on Monday into the riots. The district administration also lodged

an FIR against BJP member of Legislative Council, Ramji Singh and some Hindu Yuva Vahini activists for inciting riots, they said. Curfew continued for the fifth consecutive day and shoot-at-sight orders remained in force as jawans of the Rapid Action Force, PAC and police personnel patrolled the streets under supervision of senior officials. Mr. Yashpal Singh, who was here along with the Principal Secretary, Home, Alok Sinha to review the situation, also assured that peace would be restored in the town within a day or two. Seven people were killed and 36 injured in the riots that erupted on Thursday last over Dussehra celebrations leading to imposition of curfew. (The Hindu 19/10/05)

#### **Zahira was likely to have been induced to turn hostile: report (7)**

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to 11 persons, including Gujarat BJP MLA Madhu Srivastava, referred to in the report submitted by the committee that probed the veracity of the statements made by Zahira Sheikh, key witness in the Best Bakery case. The committee — headed by Supreme Court Registrar-General B.M. Gupta — had held that Ms. Sheikh was likely to have been induced to turn hostile in the case. It had said: "Ms. Zahira has developed an image of self condemned liar whose statements alone cannot be safely accepted." The Committee held "Ms. Zahira who once earned public sympathy out of her desertion through the condemned tragedy has made concerted efforts and has engaged herself in having cash/comforts from every possible corners." The Committee, however, said that despite the best efforts it could not identify the person/persons responsible for the inducement, in the absence of concrete evidence. During the last hearing in August the apex court had asked the parties to give their response to the report and posted the matter for hearing today. When the matter was taken up on Monday by a Bench comprising Justice Arijit Pasayat and Justice H.K. Sema, senior counsel P.N. Lekhi, appearing for Ms. Sheikh, said the report deserved to be rejected and a CBI probe should be ordered. There was no judicial approach by the committee, he said. The Bench expressed surprise at the stand taken by the Gujarat Government on the report. It told senior counsel Mukul Rohatgi: "you are neither supporting nor opposing. It is very strange." Counsel said: "We don't want to take a definite stand one way or the other." The Bench also heard senior counsel Harish Salve, appearing for social activist Teesta Setalvad, before ordering notice to the 11 persons cited in the report and posted the matter for further hearing on November 21. (The Hindu 25/10/05)

#### **City of Taj back to normal (7)**

AGRA: A day after clashes broke out between members of two communities here over allegations of misbehaviour with a woman who had allegedly stolen clothes from a store in Subhash Bazar on Sunday, normality returned to this historic city of the Taj on Monday. For a change, the bazaar — a hub of wholesale business in clothes and shoes — remained open on Monday, normally the weekly holiday. Though business was brisk, some shopkeepers said customers from far-off areas were still sceptical about coming all the way. "This is the festive season and we cannot afford to lose out on this annual opportunity," said one shopkeeper. All of them had to down their shutters on Sunday after violence broke out. One of the sales managers of Rajkumar and Sons in Subhash Bazar — the point where it all started — speaking on condition of anonymity said one of their boys had noticed that a woman had not paid for the clothes she had taken along with her. He spotted her at some distance and asked her to pay up. However, the woman allegedly told the people of her community that the shop staff had molested her while frisking her on the pretext of recovering "stolen" clothes. Following the allegations, some men from the nearby Mantola locality confronted the staff. An argument broke out between them and led to fisticuffs. More and more people joined in from both sides and began hurling stones. (The Hindu 25/10/05)

#### **Girl convert appears in court with MIM MP (7)**

Hyderabad, Oct. 24: Pallavi, who calls herself Sana Fathima after she converted to Islam, surfaced after two months in the AP high court on Monday along with Asaduddin Owaisi, Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen MP from Hyderabad. She had gone missing on July 26, 2004. Her parents had alleged that she had been kidnapped. Her neighbour Khadar Ali was later found murdered in Anantapur district's Kadiri town, amidst reports that she had eloped with him. Pallavi's parents and relatives are accused in the case. Her mother, Ms K. Yamma had filed a petition in the AP high court asking for directions to the police to present her in court as they suspected that Pallavi was kept in custody, in an illegal manner. On Monday, Pallavi presented herself before the court and said that she had converted to Islam, and that she feared a threat from her parents. A division bench, comprising acting Chief Justice Bilal Nazki and Justice R. Subash Reddy closed Ms Yamma's Habeas Corpus petition. The bench, after hearing Pallavi In Camera

permitted her to go wherever she wanted as she complained of threat to her life from her parents. Earlier, Pallavi arrived at the high court in a burkha and tried to submit a petition before the bench at 10.30 am. When the judges asked who had brought her to the court, she replied that she had come on her own. When the judges asked her how could the court identify her as Pallavi, she said that she was brought by Mr Asaduddin Owaisi, and he would identify her. The court enquired after Mr Asaduddin Owaisi, who presented himself before the judges. The bench recorded the statement given by Pallavi. She stated that there was no pressure on her to appear before the court and that she had embraced Islam and since there was threat to her life from her parents as she was not willing to give her address. The bench, after recording her statement and satisfying itself that she was indeed Pallavi, permitted her to stay as per her will and wish as she is an adult. (Asian Age 25/10/05)

### **Godhra 2005: BJP-led civic body, backed by Muslims (7)**

VADODARA, NOVEMBER 4:: THIS is as real as realpolitik can get. In Godhra, synonymous now with the Sabarmati Express carnage and the riot that engulfed Gujarat in its wake the municipality is going to be governed by the BJP with support from all the 18 elected Muslims. "Even if they say they don't want our support, we will go and sit in the BJP's lap rather than oppose them," says a Muslim leader who is leading this initiative. He did not wish to be named. When the results for the October 25 municipal elections were out, the BJP emerged as the biggest group. Of the 42 seats, it won 19, but that does not give it a clear majority. The second-largest group is of 18 Muslims who had stood as independents. The community, which has generally been allied with the Congress, decided not to have any truck with that party this time. The remaining five councilors, all Hindus, are known to be allied with the Congress. But they, too, had stood as independents. There was no official Congress candidate. "Even if the BJP spurns us initially, we will somehow negotiate for a power-sharing arrangement," says Rafiq Alam of the Muslim group. Alam was the standing-committee chairman in the previous regime, in which a group of 17 Muslim independents had governed the municipality with support from the Congress. In that council, the BJP, with 12 councillors, had sat in opposition. (Indian Express 5/11/05)

### **UP riots over cow slaughter (7)**

Lucknow, Nov. 5: One person died and 13 were injured in communal clashes in three villages in Barabanki district on Friday evening. Twelve persons have been arrested and additional forces have been deployed in the villages. The station officer of Mohammadpur Khala has been suspended for dereliction of duty and the circle officer has been transferred. District magistrate Ashish Goyal said that the situation was tense, but under control. The clashes were the fallout of escalating communal tension in the area following an incident of cow slaughter on Diwali. According to reports, on the night of Diwali two local youths Chakkane and Gufran, slaughtered a cow and were found selling the meat. This led to verbal clashes and tension between two communities, but local police officials immediately swung into action and pacified the two groups after promising action against the offenders. Two days later, when one group found that no action has been taken against Chakkane and Gufran and the two were roaming freely in the village, it led to a free-for-all in which about two dozen houses were burnt down and two shops were gutted. As violence spread to two adjoining villages, senior district officials rushed in with additional forces and brought the situation under control. A case for inciting communal violence has been filed against 12 persons and efforts are on to arrest the two youth responsible for the clashes. (Asian Age 6/11/05)

### **Muslim bill dismissed (7)**

Hyderabad, Nov. 7: A five-member Constitutional Bench of the Andhra Pradesh high court on Monday struck down the law providing five per cent reservation for Muslims in public employment and educational institutions. The Constitutional Bench comprising acting Chief Justice Bilal Nazki, Justice G. Raghuram, Justice V.V.S. Rao, Justice N.V. Ramana and Justice R. Subash Reddy unanimously declared that the action of the state government in providing quotas for Muslims as a community was unconstitutional, ultra vires and unsustainable. The bench said the report of the Backward Classes Commission, based on which the state government had provided the quota, was unscientific and unsustainable. The court gave three weeks for the government to move the Supreme Court and chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy said the government would appeal the judgment. The judgment could badly hit thousands of students who had secured admission to professional courses through the five per cent quota. The court ordered a one-month status quo on their admissions. By the time the period ends, the students would be halfway through the academic year and awaiting the Supreme Court's decision. The Telugu Desam criticised the Congress government for pushing through the reservation with an eye on Muslim votes ahead of municipal elections in September. The CPI said the court should have taken socio-economic aspects into consideration without going by the technicalities. This is the second time that the court has struck down quotas for Muslims. On September 21, 2004 the high court had struck down government order (GO) 33 of July 12, 2004 that provided five per cent reservation for Muslims. The court had held that the GO was ultra vires and that the state government had not consulted the Backward Classes Commission before providing reservation. The state government duly set up a Backward Classes Commission headed by retired high court judge Dalva Subramaniam. Based on its report, the government promulgated two ordinances, No. 8 and No. 13, providing reservation for Muslims while excluding the creamy layer. The AP Assembly later enacted the AP Reservation of Seats Act, or Act 21, of 2005, replacing Ordinance 8. (Asian Age 8/11/05)

### **Muslims enraged by order (7)**

Hyderabad, Nov. 8: Muslim religious leaders on Tuesday held the bureaucracy responsible for the "half-baked" data in the Backward Class Commission's report, based on which the state passed a "weak legislation", which gave five per cent reservations for Muslims in government jobs and educational institutions. "The Telugu Desam government had conducted a survey as part of the Velugu (poverty alleviation) programme. It found that 80 per cent of Muslims in the state were living below the poverty line. Officials did not submit the report to the Backward Class Commission, Tameer-e-Millat president Abdul Rahim Qureshi told this correspondent. "Had all the heads of department sent their reports on the number of Muslims in their sections, the BC Commission would have got vital data on employment," Mr Qureshi said. A group of the ulema and representatives of Muslim religious organisations met at Darussalam, headquarters of the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), to discuss their course of action in the wake of the judgement of the AP high court that reservation to Muslims was against the Constitution. MIM supremo Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi and the party's

Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, Millat-e-Islamia president Moulana Hameeduddin Aquil Hussami, Jamat-e-Islami Hind leaders Abu Nasr Aber and Azharuddin and Tameer-e-Millat president Abdul Rahim Qureshi and vice-president Moulana Sulaiman Sikandar participated in the meeting. (Asian Age 9/11/05)

### **BJP renders cleric fatwa on divorce unlawful (7)**

Bhopal : The BJP has criticised the fatwa issued by Dar-ul-Uloom Khargone, seeking to annul a civil court's divorce decree, saying such a religious fiat pose a challenge to the law of the land and openly question the power of the judiciary to adjudicate the affairs of the Muslim community. Reacting to the fatwa Bharatiya Janata Party leader Rameshwar Sharma said that the law cannot be hijacked by seminaries and clerics. "The law is the same for a pundit and a maulvi, when a pundit does not interfere in divorce proceedings, why should a mufti/maulvi allowed to do so," Mr Sharma said. The Congress, however, said that the BJP is being irresponsible and is trying to disrupt communal peace and harmony in the state. Congress MLA Arif Aqueel said that political parties should not interfere in religious proceedings. "As per Islam, matrimonial disputes are settled by the seminaries. Political parties are making a big deal of this by seeing it as contempt of court. The Dar-ul-Uloom is not challenging the law of the land. We should be allowed to follow what is prescribed by Islam without being misinterpreted as rebels," said Aqueel. Meanwhile, Qazi Abdul Latif elucidated that only the husband has the right to divorce his wife and the court could not adjudicate the matter. "As per Islam, no court can force a husband to divorce his wife. The girl should have solicited advice from Dar-ul-Uloom before re-marrying. Mulk ka kanoon alag hai aur Shari'ah ka alag. Islam gives full right to the husband, though the girl can tell her side of the story and seek for annulment too," said the Qazi. (Pioneer 11/11/055)

### **Modi gave free hand to Hindus: Shreekumar (7)**

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat Additional Director-General of Police R.B. Shreekumar has said that Chief Minister Narendra Modi had asked the police to allow Hindus to "give vent to their anger" after the Godhra train carnage on February 27, 2002. Filing his fourth affidavit before the G.T. Nanavati-K.G. Shah Judicial Inquiry Commission probing the carnage and the communal riots that followed, Mr. Shreekumar quoted the then Director-General of Police, K. Chakravarthi, to claim that Mr. Modi had issued such an order. The Commission secretary said Mr. Shreekumar had filed the fourth affidavit running into over 100 pages on October 28, but had declined to part with a copy of it saying it was with the retired judges comprising the Commission. Mr. Shreekumar, who has been allegedly denied a promotion, is fighting a case before the Central Administrative Tribunal. In his affidavit, he recounted his conversation with the then DGP, when he [Shreekumar] was the DGP (Armed Units). He said that Mr. Chakravarthi had told him that Mr. Modi, after his visit to Godhra, had convened a meeting of senior police officials in his official chamber in Gandhinagar on February 27. Mr. Modi claimed to have told the officials present, which included Mr. Chakravarthi, that he was aware that the police normally treated a riot situation fairly. "If you arrest two Muslims, you also arrest two Hindus. But this time, it will not do. Allow the Hindus to give vent to their anger," Mr Modi told the officials, as narrated by Mr Chakravarthi," Mr. Shreekumar said. Mr. Shreekumar also quoted Mr. Chakravarthi as having told him that

the police had found the Chief Minister's "open pro-Hindu posture" a major obstacle in initiating action against Hindu communal elements, who went on the rampage against the minorities following the carnage. (The Hindu 12/11/05)

### **Muslims worst-hit by globalization (7)**

KOCHI: Muslims are the worst victims of globalisation in India, according to Rajindar Sachar, jurist, human-rights campaigner and head of Prime Minister's high-level committee on the conditions of Muslims. "A large number of Muslims are artisans and craftsmen," he said in an interview. "Their products are threatened by cheap imports from abroad." The Chinese silk or imported carpets and leather products tend to throw silk weavers in Karnataka or leather-goods makers in Uttar Pradesh and carpet-makers in Kashmir out of job. Also, the foreign direct investment (FDI), facilitated by globalisation, helps to boost mechanisation and automation, which edge human labour out and drastically cut jobs. Since Muslims' number is very low in the service sector, particularly in Government jobs, they cannot duck the harsh blows of globalisation. They face open competition. He suggests that Muslims be helped to upgrade their skills to meet the onslaughts. "Globalisation is certainly not good for the country," he said. It is bad for the economy, increases unemployment and hits the poor most. Public-sector companies are thrown out of existence. Globalisation is against a just and equitable society; it thrives on inequities in income and opportunities. r. Sachar, a former chief justice of Delhi High Court and former head of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, feels that there has been a de-escalation of communal tension in the country after the UFA Government came to power. However, the human rights situation continues to be grim. The record of most States on this count is very poor. Police atrocities and custodial torture have not ebbed; slum-dwellers are kicked out of their hutments and tribal people are displaced. (The Hindu 13/7/05)

### **Jaya: Survey of Wakf properties completed (7)**

Chennai, Nov. 15: Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa on Tuesday announced that a survey of Wakf properties has been undertaken by the state government, to identify the original extent of the board's properties, in order to restore them to the individual Wakf institutions. Inaugurating a national conference of chairpersons and CEOs of state Wakf boards, here, she said that hundreds of thousands of acres and properties had been lost by the Wakfs, either by way of encroachments or in other ways. Such loss of the Wakf's property was an issue of concern to the Muslim community all over the country. "A duty is enjoined on the state government to assist the Wakf boards in reclaiming these properties," she said adding that her government would provide all necessary assistance to protect such properties in the state and render all support to retrieve the encroached Wakf lands. Laying stress on women's empowerment, the chief minister called for an increased focus by all state Wakf boards on the expansion of literacy, education and imparting of life skills, particularly to Muslim women. "It is my firm belief that real progress for the Muslim community and particularly for Muslim women can be achieved only through education," she said. Organised under the auspices of the Tamil Nadu State Wakf Board, the day-long conference would discuss issues like strengthening the state Wakf boards, improving their functioning, exploring

ways and means to secure repossession of encroached Wakf properties and deliberate over the need to bring in legislative amendments to the Wakf Act, to enable the Wakf Boards to have more powers. Declaring that her government had always pursued a proactive policy in implementing schemes for the welfare of the minorities, Ms Jayalalithaa said that Tamil Nadu was the only state in the country which provided a pension to 1,804 retired ulemas, spending Rs 1.20 crores for this purpose. (Asian Age 16/11/05)

### **Tension in Mau areas; night curfew continues (7)**

Mau (U.P.): Tension gripped Sabzi Mandi and Hatti Madari areas here on Tuesday following arson and stone-pelting even as the night curfew continued in the riot-torn town. Some people tried to set ablaze a house in the Sabzi Mandi area but a police picket reached the spot forcing them to flee, police said. Stones were hurled at some houses in Hatti Madari triggering tension, they said. Security personnel, however, prevented the situation from going out of control. Curfew was clamped in the town following communal clashes during Dussehra festival in which 12 people were killed and 40 others injured. (The Hindu 16/11/05)

### **Arjun's latest: Muslim quota in IITs, IIMs (7)**

New Delhi: The standing committee of the high-profile National Monitoring Committee for Minorities' Education (NMCME), a high-profile body under the HRD ministry, has recommended reservation for minorities in institutions like IIMs, IITs and the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade. NMCME is headed by HRD minister Arjun Singh, while former UP minister Zafar All Naqvi is the chairman of the standing committee. The report, to be discussed at NMCME meeting on Thursday, also says: "De-recognition of AMU from minority status is an unfortunate development and not in the best interests of the minority community." "It is necessary to appeal against the court decision, so that many other minority institutions with similar history are not deprived of their minority status," the report says. The committee has also felt the need for an "overarching legislation encompassing the entire range of educational rights, enshrined in Article 30(i) of the Constitution. Such a legislation can spell out the details of the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice". But there is criticism of the ministry's programmes and affiliates. For instance, it clearly says that minority communities are not benefiting from the high-profile Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in states like UP and Bihar. The funds earmarked for this campaign are not being utilised properly or they are delayed at the state government level. However, the worst criticism is reserved for All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for its "insensitivity to the needs of minority institutions, unfair practices by certain staff members etc". The committee has asked the ministry to institute a "thorough enquiry into the functioning of the AICTE". (Times of India 17/11/05)

### **Student shown door for burqa (7)**

Behrampore, Nov. 18: A first-year student of Behrampore Girls' College had been asked by her teachers not to come to college if she continued to wear a burqa until the institution's governing body decided her fate. Nineteen-year-old Shah Banu, a

philosophy honours student, was also allegedly turned out of the class by the head of her department. Citing the college prospectus — that asks girls to attend classes either in a sari or salwar kameez — Mamata Samaddar told her to complain to the principal if she wanted to. Shah Banu said: "I have been going out in a burqa since I was in Class X. I'm so used to it that I can't go out in a sari or salwar kameez." At Hariharpara, 220 km from Calcutta, Shah Banu lives with her husband of 11 months, Yunus Sheikh, a motor spares dealer. Like her, Sushmita Mondal, a high school teacher in Naoda, also in Murshidabad, was pulled up by the authorities this April for attending school in a burqa.

On her first day in Amtala Annadamani Girls' High School, Sushmita, who converted to Islam at the time of her marriage, wore a burqa and was told by senior colleagues and the school administration to "follow tradition" by sticking to a sari. But finally the school had to relent.

School education minister Kanti Biswas had clarified earlier that no code could be imposed on teachers dressed decently. When Shah Banu met principal Srilata Chowdhury, she was told to fetch her father. Abul Hossain, an affluent farmer, was told not to send his daughter to college until the issue was discussed at the governing body meeting. "The principal told me to submit a written application seeking permission so that my daughter could attend college in a burqa. I did that, but have not received her response to my application yet," said Hossain. (Telegraph 19/11/05)

### **Mau probe indicts BJP MP (7)**

Lucknow, November 20: A THREE-member probe panel led by senior IPS officer VN. Rai, ADG (vigilance), set up to probe last month's Mau riots has indicted BJP MP Yogi Adityanath. It said the MP - with considerable clout in eastern Uttar Pradesh - had a role in the flare-up and "intervention of secular forces was essential to stop communalism." The state would have to show its will power, otherwise, several other Maus can happen, the report inferred. According to the report, Yogi functioned through different fronts like the Hindu Yuva Vahani, Hindu Jagran Manch, Sri Ram Shakti Prakoshtha, Gorakhnath, Purvanchal Vikas Manch, Vishwa Hindu Mahasabha and the Hindu Mahasabha. Accusing the district administration of failing to control the riots, the report said it was the most violent of all flare-ups. For the first time, rioters organized themselves in "such a systematic manner", the report added. The report also cited many firsts. Schools and hospitals belonging to the minority community were vandalized and religious places of a particular community desecrated. Powerlooms - the textile town's lifeline - were also destroyed. However, not everything was lost, the report noted. "There were saner elements, who risked their lives to protect people." The report also took a dig at Mukhtar Ansari -often dubbed the Mau strongman. "It is common belief that the Mau district administration used to dance to Ansari's tune and officers of his choice were appointed in the district. Such an administration might have been good for other things, but countering communal riots was not possible for these officers. That is why the riot continued," the report hit out. (Hindustan Times 21/11/05)

### **Mulayam says no to judicial probe into Mau riots (7)**

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav on Wednesday rejected the Opposition demand for a Central Bureau of Investigation or judicial probe

into the recent Mau communal riots. Protesting the decision, the entire Opposition, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Congress, staged a noisy walkout from the Assembly after a four-hour discussion. Mr. Yadav said a three-member enquiry committee headed by the chairperson, Revenue Board, and former Chief Secretary, Neera Yadav, would be asked to give its report at the earliest. "If the members were not satisfied with the report the government would consider a judicial probe." A sum of Rs. 5 crores would be spent for reconstruction work in Mau town. Denying allegations that the government stood a mute spectator during the riots, he said it was its harsh measures that resulted in the "instant controlling" of violence. The Chief Minister gave a clean chit to Mukhtar Ansari (Independent MLA from Mau) and said the Hindu Vahini instigated communal violence. "The government would be forced to take strict action against the Vahini, an outfit of the B JP MP from Gorakhpur Yogi Adityanath, if it did not give up its evil design to divide society." The House witnessed noisy scenes when Speaker Mata Prasad Pandey did not allow the lone Hindu Mahasabha member Radha Mohan Das Agrawal to participate in the discussion. Later, he was allowed to speak at the intervention of the Chief Minister. (The Hindu 24/11/05)

#### **10. Cabinet approves communal violence bill (7)**

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 24: THERE shouldn't be another Godhra, but the government will be better prepared in that eventuality. As per the National Common Minimum Programme, the UPA Cabinet today approved the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005. Briefing mediapersons, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said the Bill would be introduced in Parliament and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will put the draft provisions of the Bill on its web-site so that a widespread, informed debate can take place on the same. Asked if the Bill included a provision that allowed the Centre to prevail over states, Mukherjee replied in the affirmative. This is a significant provision as law and order is a state subject. According to the preamble to the Bill, it is in exercise of the constitutional "duty of the Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance". Though the exact provisions of the Bill approved by the Cabinet today are not known yet, an earlier draft finalised by the MHA, envisioned giving the Centre unprecedented powers over states. Moreover, it equipped the armed forces with draconian powers of arrest, search and seizure and called for special courts to try cases, even arming them with the power to extern people "likely to commit a scheduled offence". However, before the draft reached the Cabinet, the Home Ministry version of the Bill was studied by the Prime Minister's Office and the National Advisory Council headed by Congress president Sonia Gandhi. (Indian Express 25/11/0555)

#### **Mau tense after lynching of youth (7)**

Varanasi, November 26: THE SCARS of the recent riots still fresh, Mail witnessed communal tension again on Friday after a youth from the minority community was lynched by a mob for sexually assaulting a minor girl. Markets remained closed and demonstrations were held on Saturday to protest the assault on the minor. According to sources, the 13-year-old, a resident of Mahrانيا under Kotwali police station, had left home to dump some waste but did not return for a long time. Her worried family

members were told that some youth had taken her inside a powerloom unit in Kyaritola area. A mob accompanied the girl's family to the powerloom unit and found the girl unconscious. The furious mob then got hold of Mohammad Khursheed, a youth present there, and beat him up. Khursheed, who was critically injured, was taken to Varanasi for treatment where he was declared brought dead. The news spread like wildfire, bringing back communal tension in the area. Additional police force had to be deployed in several areas of the town to prevent violence. (Hindustan Times 27/11/05)

#### **Police avert communal clash near Anand (7)**

AHMEDABAD: About half-a-dozen auto rickshaws and shops were damaged and set on fire in a communal clash at Napadwanta village near Anand town in central Gujarat on Thursday. Timely intervention by the police, however, managed to avert a riot after a youth was stabbed and seriously wounded by some members of the rival community following quarrel over occupying a seat in a State bus. (The Hindu 2/12/05)

#### **Relative of Mau MLA surrenders (7)**

LUCKNOW: One of the 10 accused in the sensational killing of BJP legislator Krishnanand Rai on Thursday surrendered in a Ghazipur court. Ejaj-ul-Haq, a relative of controversial Mau Independent MLA Mukhtar Ansari, surrendered before the Ghazipur Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), who remanded him to 14-day judicial custody. He was later sent to jail. Ansari, who is also accused in the high-profile murder case, is already lodged in jail in another case. Meanwhile, resentment prevailed in east Uttar Pradesh districts over the gruesome assassination of Mr Rai. His last rites were performed amid stepped-up security at Varanasi on Wednesday night. Even as the BJP protest continued, party president Lal Krishna Advani is slated to visit Ghazipur on December 6 to offer condolences to the bereaved family. Mr Advani, possibly with some senior national leaders, would visit Mr Rai's native place, the State BJP spokesman said here. A dharna to protest the daylight killing of the MLA continued for the third day in Varanasi on Thursday with the State BJP president, Keshari Nath Tripathi, leading it. Senior party leaders Rajnath Singh and Kalarj Mishra also sat on the dharna demanding a CBI probe into the incident. According to a report from Varanasi, Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had telephoned Rajnath Singh and urged him to discontinue the indefinite dharna. A report from Ghazipur said an agitated mob had vandalised and set afire the Tazpur railway station in the district. On Wednesday night, Karimuddinpur railway station was also damaged by a rampaging mob protesting the killing. (The Hindu 2/12/05)

#### **No Delhi relief for Gujarat victims (7)**

New Delhi: The Centre seems to lack a clear policy on payment of compensation to riot victims. While the Centre has promised to make the compensation uniform for death and injury in the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984, there no move on the part of the Centre to refer the Gujarat communal riots case to the panel set up in the Union home ministry for compensation to the anti-Sikh riots victims. Union minister of state for home S. Reghupathy, in a written answer in the Lok Sabha, ruled out payment of compensation to riot victims in Gujarat on the lines of the compensation paid to the victims of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. In a written reply to Mr Asaduddin Owaisi (MIM), Mr Reghupathy said: "The government had set up two official committees, one headed by Dr D.K. Sankaran, secretary (border management) in the home ministry, to look into the adequacy of relief-rehabilitation and other assistance such as employment given to the widows/families of the victims. The other committee, headed by then special secretary (home) K.P. Singh, is to examine the adequacy and uniformity of compensation given in death and injury cases." (Asian Age 2/12/05)

#### **Centre seeks power to transfer riot trials outside state (7)**

VIRTUALLY TAKING a leaf out of the recent Supreme Court's trend-setting orders of transferring trials of various communal riot cases of Gujarat to Maharashtra, the Centre's Congress-led UPA Government is all set to usurp the power of transferring the trials of riots cases from one State to another. The Union Government's much-hyped communal harmony bill seeks to empower the Centre to transfer the trial of a riot case from one State to another, if it thinks it to be in the interests of justice. But the way this provision has been sought to be incorporated in the statute book, the efficacy of this provision would be

questionable. The Section 24 of the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005, to be introduced in Parliament later this week, provides that a State Government may approach the Union Government to seek the transfer of the trial of a communal riot case to another State, in case it thinks it to be expedient to cause of justice. "If a state government is of the opinion that it is expedient to establish additional special courts outside the State for the trial of various penal offenses committed during a communal riot, it may request the Union Government to establish" the same and the Centre would do the needful after examining its various aspects, reads Section 24 (2) of the Bill. But this provision raises the question why, to begin with, a state government would seek transfer of a riot case, outside its territorial jurisdiction? For any state government, seeking transfer of the trial of a riot case, outside its territorial jurisdiction, would be deemed as its inability to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice, opine various officials of Union Ministries of Home and Law & Justice, questioning the efficacy and use of this provision. (Pioneer 5/12/05)

#### **Bill to combat communal violence (7)**

NEW DELHI: The Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill proposing to double the fine and imprisonment, to provide funds for relief and rehabilitation and compensation for the victims was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. The Bill, seeking to give more powers to the Centre and States to prevent and control communal violence, would be sent to the Home Ministry's Parliamentary Standing Committee for examination, Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil told newsmen here. As the Bill was introduced amidst disturbances in the morning, Mr. Patil dwelt on its salient features at an interaction with the media later in the day. Framed to fulfil a promise made in the common minimum programme, Mr. Patil said, it was aimed at controlling communal violence, severely punishing its perpetrators and giving compensation to the victims. He said it provided for constitution of national, state and district communal disturbance relief and rehabilitation councils and prohibited any discrimination in providing compensation and relief to victims of communal violence on grounds of sex, caste, community or religion. The Bill laid down that the state councils shall submit a report to the national council to review the implementation of the orders passed by courts with regard to awarding of compensation. Mr. Patil said the Bill proposed to arm State Governments with powers to declare certain areas communally disturbed, lay down measures for prevention of acts leading to communal violence and enhance punishments. The punishment for not obeying the directive to deposit firearms, etc., in an area declared communally disturbed would attract a jail term up to three years and contravening any order to maintain peace would lead to imprisonment up to one year, he said. Abettors of disobedience could also be jailed up to three years, he added. (The Hindu 6/12/05)

#### **Muslims still await justice (7)**

New Delhi, Dec. 6: Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen MP Asad Owaisi on Tuesday lamented that even 13 years after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, the culprits have not been brought to book. It is not merely the Muslims, but all those cherishing the secular ideal, who look upon December 6 as a Black Day. Mr Asad Owaisi told this correspondent, "The Babri Masjid demolition took place under media glare and yet neither the prosecution could be completed nor has the Liberhan Commission of Inquiry submitted its report. Culprits have not been brought to book till date." If no action is initiated and the culprits are allowed to get away scot free for their vandal act, then the people will lose faith in the rule of law, he said. After the horrendous assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948, this was the second most horrendous incident, he said. In fact, Mr Asad Owaisi had moved an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha but it could not be considered owing to the disruption of proceedings by the Opposition on the Volcker Committee issue. The adjournment motion of Mr Asad Owaisi read, "That this House agreed to adjourn all business for the day to discuss the important issue on the demolition of the Babri,^dasjid on,this , fateful day of Decembers 6. What happened on that day was a blot on democracy and the secular fabric of the country that was characterized by the Ganga-Jamni tehzeeb he said. (Asian Age 7/12/05)

#### **Hindu woman fights for Muslims' cause (7)**

New Delhi, Dec. 6: Shobha, a Hindu woman, is the voice of around 700 hapless Muslims whose jhuggies were uprooted by the DDA near Mohan Cooperatives in Badarpur area of South Delhi, early last year. Her sole focus is to get back shelter for her Muslim brethren. In her fifties, Sobha has been running pillar to post from one office to another at the DDA headquarters with a group of five elderly Muslims, to get a piece of land for the rehabilitation of about 72 displaced families. "We were not even served the notice and

the DDA bulldozers razed our jhuggies at the Muslim Camp II comprising of about 72 jhuggies calling it as an encroachment. Though the DDA officials and politicians at that time had promised us to allot some alternative site, no survey has been carried out so far," said 65-year-old Nasur Ulla and Id Mohmmmed, victims of the displacement. The group has complete faith on Sobha who was made a pradhan years back. "She has been a perfect leader by helping us many times. And we are fully sure that this time too she will help us sail through the present crisis," said Nasur Ulla, a balloon seller. "Humanity is above all religion, Whether Hindu or Muslim we are facing similar problems and are in dire need of shelter," said Sobha, a native of Gorakhpur and speaks of the problems presently faced by her people. (Asian Age 7/12/05)

#### **Life term for 11 in Gujarat riot case (7)**

GODHRA, DECEMBER 14: A Gujarat fast-track court today sentenced 11 men to life imprisonment for hacking and burning to death Muslims of their village and dumping their bodies in dry wells during the post-Godhra riots. Three others got 10 years in another case from the same village. This is the fourth 2002 riot case from the Panchmahals district which has resulted in a conviction in the last two months. The case relates to incidents that took place on March 3 and March 5, 2002, in Ajanwa village, some 20 km from the taluka headquarters town of Santrampur. After hearing of the Godhra carnage of February 27, Muslims living in the village had fled to the fields and the jungles around it. Some of them would return to their homes at night. According to the case papers, there was no violence in the village till March 3, when a mob of villagers ransacked and burnt empty houses and shops that belonged to Muslims. It cornered one Gulab Kalu, who was never found. In the incident of March 5, a mob of villagers caught hold of 16 Muslims, including old men, women, and children. Some were burnt alive, some hacked to death and then burnt. Most of the bodies were dumped into two dry wells. When police arrived the next day, three women were found alive inside the wells. They also found others left for dead. They recovered from the wells the bodies of eight adults and three children. The FIR named 34 accused, including the 29 named in the March 3 incident. Two brothers from the village, Razak and Gafoor Sheikh, became complainants in the FIRs for the two incidents. Gafoor's wife Ruqaiyah was one of those killed. The FIR for the March 3 incident names 29 suspects, and that for the March 5 incident names 34, including those named in the first. Both FIRs were clubbed together and treated as one case, tried in the court of additional sessions judge R D Thakar. (Indian Exp 15/12/05)

#### **Bengal Muslims need our help: CM (7)**

Kolkata, Dec. 16: Acknowledging that the Muslims in the state were economically backward, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Friday said that there was an urgent need for their upliftment. "But the states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh which tried to give reservations to the Muslims had to face legal road blocks. We are, therefore, exploring some alternative mechanism to give the backward Muslims of the state the necessary leg up," he added. Mr Bhattacharjee was speaking at the inauguration of Milan Mela at Park Circus Maidan. The annual event was organised by the West Bengal Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (WBMDFC). Pointing out that the Muslims constituted 27 per cent of the state's population, Mr Bhattacharjee expressed his anguish over their abysmal representation in government employment. "It is a pity that only three per cent Muslims are in government jobs," he added. The chief minister agreed that housing was another major problem of the Muslims and said that the state government was trying to solve it. "We are trying to provide accommodation to them in Rajarhat. Even in the proposed housing colonies in West Howrah and Dankuni, Muslims will get adequate residential quarters," he added. Mr Bhattacharjee reiterated the need for the modernisation of madrasas in the state. Citing the recommendations of the Kidwai Commission, he stressed the need for the introduction of modern subjects in madrasas. "The madrasas should also introduce the teaching of English, science and computers in their curriculum otherwise the Muslim children will remain backward," he cautioned. Echoing his opinion, the editor-in-chief of The Asian Age, M.J. Akbar who was invited as the chief guest at the Mela, emphasised the need for the learning other subjects. "Learning Arabic is not enough. The Muslim children should also learn English, science and other subjects," he added. Mr Akbar lauded Mr Bhattacharjee's efforts for the upliftment of the minorities. "People ask how could the CPI(M) rule the state for nearly three decades. Well, at least one reason is clear: the minorities are safe and happy here," he added. (Asian Age 17/12/05)

#### **No intelligence failure: Gujarat (7)**

AHMEDABAD: The Gujarat Government has denied any "serious failure" of the State Intelligence Department to prevent the train carnage or in "fulfilling its constitutional obligation" of protecting the "lives, liberty and dignity" of "all its people" during the post-Godhra riots in 2002. "For every incident of violence reported, there have been innumerable instances of lives saved, property saved and protected by the State administration," the Government said in its 'action taken report' on the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission, which was submitted to the G.T. Nanavati and K.G. Shah judicial inquiry commission here on Saturday. In respect of crimes registered till June 24, 2002, the report said 19,603 people were arrested for 4,184 offences and the other accused were being identified and arrested. "All those responsible for various crimes will be brought to book." While the Intelligence Department kept track of the movements of kar sevaks from Gujarat to Ayodhya and from time to time notified the Uttar Pradesh police and other authorities, the U.P. police failed to inform the State of their return from Ayodhya. This failure caused the tragedy at the Godhra station, the report said. It listed more than a dozen messages sent to the U.P. police and other authorities from February 7, 2002 about the plans of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to send groups of kar sevaks to perform the "Shiladan Mahayagna" for 100 days from February 24. The U.P. police were also informed that the first batch of 3,500 kar sevaks would leave Ahmedabad by the Sabarmati Express on February 22 and prior to that a "Ram Mahayagna" was planned at every taluk and district headquarters in the State by the VHP to recruit kar sevaks. In response to a message from the U.P. Inspector-General (communal intelligence), the police in that State were informed as early as February 16 that the first batch of kar sevaks would include about 150 Bajrang Dal activists armed with trishuls (tridents). It was during the return of this group that the Godhra train carnage occurred. (The Hindu 18/12/05)

#### **Civil society groups criticise Communal Violence Bill (7)**

NEW DELHI: Civil society groups and individuals across the country have criticised the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation Bill), which the Central Government introduced in the Rajya Sabha on December 5. Rejecting the Bill, they called upon the Government to consult all stakeholders and civil society groups and prepare a new law, which would strengthen the hands of citizens to make the Government accountable. In a statement, 42 organisations and individuals said the Government had not consulted civil society groups or try to forge a consensus on the Bill. Citing the Gujarat instance where the State Government was found to be 'complicit' in the violence against Muslims by many independent investigations, the statement said that instead of giving the Government more powers, the law should concentrate on giving citizens the power to hold the Government accountable and criminally liable for their acts of omission and commission and failure to protect or rehabilitate victims and failure to punish the guilty. Emphasising that the Bill did not provide for punishment against public servants who failed to prevent communal violence, it said the Bill required prior consent of the State Government to prosecute public servants. The statement said the existing power of the Central Government to intervene in cases where the State Government had a hand in the violence was negated by a provision, which required the Centre to seek permission of the State Governments for such an intervention. (The Hindu 18/12/05)

#### **Majnu row acquires communal colour (7)**

Meerut : The Meerut controversy over police brutality on couples in a park took a queer turn on Thursday with Bajrang Dal volunteers behaving like moral police in another park as the custodians of law stood around like mute spectators. On their part, Samajwadi Party activists have blamed the police of being communal as most of the boys rounded up under Operation Majnu belong to the minority community. Meanwhile, the status of the Senior Superintendent of Police RR Verma remained wrapped in mystery through the day. While the city was agog with rumours of his transfer, his seniors here, the Zonal Inspector General of Police and Deputy Inspector General of Police, remained mum. Secretary (Home) Alok Sinha told The Pioneer from Lucknow that Verma was away on two day's leave. Bajrang Dal activists attacked couples in Gandhi Park giving Samajwadi Party activists an opportunity to claim that they had targeted youths of the Muslim community. The Shiv Sena and the Bajrang Dal took out processions on Thursday and burnt effigies of Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Then activists of these outfits went to Gandhi Park on Thursday afternoon and chased couples sitting there talking to each other. These activists beat up the couples but policemen on duty there refused to come to the aid of the hapless youth. "We will not allow Muslim youth spoil the girls of Hindu community," said Sanjay Bajpai, an office-bearer of Bajrang Dal. Meanwhile in a damage-control exercise, the Uttar Pradesh Government has ordered a probe by a DIG into the beating up of couples by police and Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav promised stern

action against errant officials. The Government also decided to conduct administrative inquiry to "fix responsibility" on the officials involved in 'Operation Majnu' which triggered a nationwide outcry over moral policing. "I admit the mistake committed by the police. I am totally with the young couples. Action has been initiated against some police officials connected in this matter," Mr Yadav told reporters in Delhi. (Pioneer. 23/12/05)

### **8 bodies in mass grave (7)**

Ahmedabad: When Ghulam Ganibhai Kharadi dug up a plot near the Panam riverbed on Tuesday morning, he uncovered a mass grave filled with what are believed to be the bodies of the Pandarwada riot victims. Eight skeletal remains were recovered by Tuesday evening and at least 12 more are likely to emerge from the same grave. According to Ahmedabad-based social worker Azeem Khan, who rushed to the spot, the survivors of the riot, desperate to find out what had happened to their loved ones, managed to get an employee of the Lunawada Nagarpalika drunk. It was this drunk employee who let slip that the victims were buried there, Mr Khan said. Ghulam Ganibhai Kharadi, who found the mass grave, was one of those who had lost kin: his brother Mehboob Painter had been killed in the Pandarwada massacre in Panchmahals, Gujarat, on March 1, 2002. A team of forensic science experts from the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, and CBI officials from Mumbai have already left for Lunawada. Mumbai-based human rights activist Teesta Setalwad is flying down to Ahmedabad on Wednesday to file an appeal in the Gujarat high court for the reinvestigation of the Pandarwada riots by the CBI. Twenty-one people from the minority community were killed in the rioting in this village. Although police records show that post-mortems were performed on 21 bodies, the bodies were apparently never handed over to the relatives of the victims. Lunawada town police inspector M.D. Puwar told this newspaper that 21 deaths have been accounted for as they had the post-mortem records. "While one body was handed over to the relatives of the victim, the rest were handed over to the municipality since there were no claimants. The bodies were buried at the spot some time in March 2002," he said. (Asian Age 28/12/05)

### **Rs. 714 crore aid for Sikh riot victims (7)**

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved a Rs. 714-crore package of additional assistance for relief and rehabilitation of the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and other places. The package includes an ex-gratia payment of Rs. 3.5 lakh each to the families of those killed and Rs. 1.25 lakh for those injured. The compensation for the families of those killed will be in addition to the amount already given by State governments, while the relief for the injured will be minus the amount already paid as per a court judgment. The other salient features of the package are an increased compensation for damaged residential and uninsured commercial and industrial properties, and a rehabilitation grant for families who migrated to Punjab under duress from the riot-affected areas in other States. The compensation for the damaged residential and uninsured commercial and industrial properties would be 10 times the amount sanctioned earlier, minus the amount already paid, while those who migrated would be given the rehabilitation grant at Rs. 2 lakh. The grant for those who migrated to Punjab would, however, be given to only those who were still living there. It is estimated that there are 22,000 such families. The grant to the migrant families would account for the bulk of the package at Rs. 440 crore. (The Hindu 30/12/05)

### **Mass grave: NHRC seeks report from Gujarat, CBI (7)**

NEW DELHI: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought a report from the Gujarat Government and the Central Bureau of India on media reports on the unearthing of a mass grave at Lunawada in Panchmahals district. The NHRC, which took suo motu cognisance of the matter, has asked the CBI Director and the Director-General of Police, Gujarat, to submit their comments within two weeks. The mass grave is believed to contain the skeletal remains of the victims of the post-Godhra violence in 2002. A relative of a riot victim filed a writ petition in the Gujarat High Court on Wednesday, seeking a CBI investigation into the unearthing of a mass grave and DNA testing of the skeletal remains. The petition was filed before Justice C. K. Buch after some of the relatives of the riot victims on Tuesday dug up a mass grave besides the Panam river and claimed that the skeletal remains seen there might be those of the victims of a massacre in the nearby Pandrawada. The petition was filed by Ameena Habib Rasool of Pandarwada, whose young son was killed in the riots. "Citizens for Justice and Peace" is the second petitioner. The petitioners demanded that the samples of the skeletal remains be sent to the Red Hill Laboratory in Hyderabad for DNA testing. "The petitioners have prayed for the sealing of the entire remains unearthed by relatives of the deceased on December 27, 2005, in the presence of the relatives,

who must be treated as complainants," it said. The petition alleged that "no proper post-mortem of any of the deceased was done by the police" and the relatives found clothes belonging to the victims alongside the skeletal remains, which, it said, showed that no proper investigation was done. "The non-removal of the clothes of the deceased itself suggests that the bodies were buried without proper post-mortem. Normally, after post-mortem, bodies are kept in white shrouds; but here the clothes of the victims who had been massacred were found in tact." (The Hindu 29/12/05)

### **Gujarat Congress-Modi nexus alleged (7)**

New Delhi, Dec. 28: "Namu and Amu" is now the infamous Congress-BJP team operating in Gujarat and, according to social activists, working in tandem to ensure that those guilty of the 2002 violence in the state escape the law. Chief minister Narendra Modi (Namu) is awarding lucrative contracts for civil construction work to Congress members, with CLP leader Arjun Modhwadia (Amu), who is now officiating as PCC president, perceived as a behind-the-scenes comrade-in-arms. When contacted by this newspaper, Mr Modhwadia denied the allegation and said that "Modi is not doing anything by himself, he cannot give anything to anybody." He insisted that the Congress Party was as aggressive as it possibly could be in such a situation — in which the entire state administration was hostile and the Opposition could not move without being framed on false charges. Mr Modhwadia, who is in Delhi instead of leading the party in the state in an offensive against Mr Modi following the discovery of the mass graves, said that he himself was facing cases filed by the state government for breaking into a house and looting. He said he had gone to the residence of minister of state Chatri Singh Mori to rescue a woman who had allegedly been kidnapped. The Nanavati Commission had sent a notice to the Centre, along with a petition filed by social activists, asking it to explain why it had claimed privilege and refused to release the letter written by late President K.R. Narayanan to then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee asking about the delay in deployment of forces to control the Gujarat violence in 2002. Mr Mukul Sinha, whose organisation has been working hard to ensure a fair verdict by the Nanavati Commission, said that the Union government was bound to give the reasons as to why it had taken the position that disclosure of what the letter contained would be injurious to the public interest. They said that the late President's letter was crucial evidence for those seeking justice for victims of the violence. The Congress-led UPA government has been asked to reply by January 2. Asian Age 29/12/05)

### **Centre calls for report on mass grave (7)**

New Delhi, Dec. 28: The Centre has sought a report from the Gujarat government on the digging out of skeletal remains from a mass grave in Panchmahals district, the Congress said on Wednesday. "This is very unfortunate. There cannot be another example of killing of human beings. The CBI team has already rushed to Gujarat while the state government would also send its report to the Centre in this regard," AICC general secretary Janardan Dwiwedi told reporters in reply to questions. Earlier, reacting to it AICC general secretary Ambika Soni accused Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi of "always attempting" to run the state instilling "fear and social tension" among people. "What had happened during the rule of Modi has lowered the image of India among the comity of nations." "He always tried to create social tensions through his speeches. He tried to run the state instilling fear among the people," Ms Soni told reporters. She said instilling fear may work once but would not last for long. "Those who are brave will expose the misdeeds of the Modi government." On the resignation of BJP general secretary Sanjay Joshi in the wake of a scandal over a video compact disc purportedly showing him in a compromising position, she said: "I do not know what is there in the CD. But let me say that the RSS ideology has been of cultural policing. Joshi was a representative of the RSS in the BJP to teach it the ideology. Their claims of moral and cultural policing have been exposed again and again," Ms Soni said. (Asian Age 29/12/05)

### **Court to CBI: Collect mass graves' DNA (7)**

Ahmedabad, Dec. 29: A Gujarat high court interim order on Thursday directed that the investigation and testing of the skeletal remains recovered from Panam riverbed in Lunawada, believed to be the remains of the Pandarwada riot victims, would be supervised by the CBI. Samples of skeletal remains, clothes and other pieces of evidence will be collected and sealed in front of CBI officials and sent to Red Hill Forensic Science Laboratory in Hyderabad for DNA testing and a report will be submitted to the Gujarat high court. The high court will hear the matter on February 10. Taking into consideration the state's assertion that the local administration buried the bodies legally, with complete transparency, Justice C.K. Buch stated that there should not be any hesitation on the part of the state to hand over the investigation of the skeletal

remains to the CBI. Blood samples from close relatives of victims would also be drawn for the purpose of investigation. The court said that the state machinery would be available to assist the CBI. Justice Buch specified that if the findings of the Hyderabad-based laboratory did not corroborate those of the state administration, then it "would be forced to pass further orders in the interest of justice". During the hearing of the petition moved by riot victim Ameena Habib Rasool and Citizens for Justice and Peace activist Teesta Setalvad, advocate M.M. Tirmizi said the skeletal remains were found surreptitiously buried by the accused by the riverbed and the state police appeared to have been party to the disposal of the bodies, and, therefore, the investigation should be handed over to the CBI. Mr Tirmizi asserted that the bodies should not be sent to FSL, Gandhinagar, but to the Red Hill Forensic Science Laboratory. Arguing on behalf of the state, additional advocate-general Kamal Trivedi contended that as the hearing of a petition seeking a CBI inquiry into several 2002 Godhra and post-Godhra riot cases, including the Pandarwada riot case, is pending before the Supreme Court, the petitioner is attempting "backdoor entry" by moving an appeal in the high court. (Asian Age 30/12/05)