

MINORITIES – MUSLIMS - 2008

(January to December 2008)

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Muslims discuss Islamic investments (7)

Kolkata : Muslims from the city and nearby areas attended a conference on Sunday to figure out ways to invest that did not violate their religious tenets. The conference, aimed at educating and sensitising Muslims on Islamic investments that follow Sharia laws, saw eager participation of hundreds, including women. Shariah scholar Mufti Arshad Kandhalvi said: "We tried to inform the people and clear doubts about how to invest keeping in mind Sharia laws". The meeting also discussed the Islamic equity index, which includes 41 scrips from the top 100 companies listed on the stock exchanges. Information was passed on what stocks were excluded in view of the Sharia laws. According to the Islamic tradition, wealth generation through interest is prohibited. Officials from moneycontrol.com, CNBC Awaz and Parsoli Corp Ltd, the organisers of the event, tried to assist and explain different aspects to potential investors in the stock market without violating religious laws. (Pioneer 7/1/08)

Implement Sachar report, says NCP (7)

NEW DELHI: The Nationalist Congress Party on Wednesday called for immediate implementation of the Sachar Committee report on Muslims, and for consolidation of minority votes so that secular forces were not weakened. An NCP convention on minorities here also demanded that the Babri mosque be rebuilt at its original place at Ayodhya. Chairing the meeting, party president and Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said the Sachar report brought out the backwardness of one section of society that could not be ignored. The NCP would translate the report into all languages so that non-Muslims understood the plight of the community. "The minority is asking not for more or for favour, but only for what is their right," he said. Exhorting the Muslim community to ensure that it created an atmosphere for education of each child, Mr. Pawar said a pledge should be taken to treat education as a priority. At the same time, there should be a struggle against unemployment. "On these twin issues, the minority community should work with a missionary zeal." He gave a call for "minority unity" to thwart communalism and strengthen secular forces. A resolution said Mr. Pawar "was the first person to demand strict action against those who demolished the Babri mosque, however high and mighty. This convention demands that the mosque be rebuilt at its original place." (The Hindu 10/1/08)

Muslim groups: No renewal of SIMI ban (7)

New Delhi, Jan. 13: The All-India Muslim Majlis-E-Mishawarat (AIMMM), an umbrella organisation of several Muslim organisations, has demanded that the ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) should not be renewed. A resolution passed by the markazi majlis (central council) of AIMMM said that the ban has been in place since September 2001 despite the absence of hard evidence that the outfit is involved in specific acts of terrorism. The markazi majlis has also drawn attention to various other issues concerning the Muslim community, ranging from the the Sachar report to the fatwas that are frequently issued, in its detailed resolution. For instance, it has criticised the Centre's decision to give yet another extension to the Liberhan panel which is probing the demolition of the Babri Masjid and also demanded that the visa given to Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin should not be renewed. The resolution has also criticised the Orissa government for failing to check the recent violence against the Christian community in the state. The central council which met in the capital on Saturday in its resolution said, "Unless the government comes up with any substantial proof that of SIMI's involvement in terrorism, the ban should not be renewed and its former members should be left to lead peaceful lives." The resolution also alleges that "under the guise of fighting terrorism, Muslim youth are harassed in many parts of the country". Stating that while "terrorists must be punished for their misdeeds", the

resolution says that "Muslim youth and localities should not be harassed in the name of fighting terrorism". In the case of Taslima, the resolution has said that the government is setting a wrong precedent by spending so much of public money on protecting somebody who is a non-official foreign visitor and who does not "enjoy the fundamental rights under our Constitution's Article 19". On the BJP victory in the recently held Gujarat polls, the majlis resolution said that while it "respects the results", it hopes that "Mr Modi and his ilk will have learnt their lessons and will mend their ways in order to serve all segments of Gujarati society. "The resolution has attributed Mr Modi's victory to the "manufactured environment of fear for the victims and security and impunity for criminal elements". The Congress party has come in for strong criticism in the resolution with it the expression of "dismay" for the way in which it fought the Gujarat polls by "adopting soft Hindutava as a policy." The majlis has its reasons for attacking the congress for its "soft Hindutva". Its resolution notes that the party not only "embraced" legislators who were till recently with the BJP, some of them also being accused in the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, but also "balked" from initiating action against those who bragged about their role during the communal riots. Regarding the Himachal Pradesh government's recent decision to allow government employees to participate in RRS activities, the central council has called upon the Centre to "formulate a single policy on such a sensitive issue applicable to all parts of the country"..... (Asian Age 14/1/08)

Sachar report to dominate minority education panel meet (7)

New Delhi, Jan. 14: It's the Sachar report that's likely to occupy centrestage when the National Monitoring Committee for Minority Education meets in the city on Wednesday. Undoubtedly, the reason why the Union human resource development minister Arjun Singh, among other things, sought an update from his ministry officials on the report's implementation when he convened a meeting on minority education in his ministry on Monday. Mr Singh is the chairman of the monitoring committee, constituted by the UPA government in August 2004 with a four-point agenda: monitor the implementation of the Minorities Education chapter of the Programme of Action, 1992, monitor the HRD ministry's on-going schemes that are targeting minorities and also give suggestions to the government on issues like reservation, recognition and affiliation of minority institutions. According to the HRD ministry sources, Wednesday's meeting is expected to seek an update on the work done in the light of the Sachar committee's recommendations. The report which was given to the government a little over a year ago has highlighted the poor socio-economic as well as educational status of the country's Muslims. In the case of school education, for instance, the report has noted that "the condition of Muslims is a matter of grave concern." As for higher education, the report has noted: "One of the key reasons for the lower participation of Muslims in higher education is their significantly low achievement level in higher secondary attainment rates." The ministry sources said that the report's implementation has become the "principal monitoring mechanism for the Prime Minister's Office, the ministry of minority affairs and the HRD ministry". Monday's meeting was part of the government's efforts to quantify those targets in terms of physical targets, the sources added. The meeting also took stock of the Eleventh Plan allocations for HRD and how these could also be used for targeting the 88 Muslim minority districts and 272 blocks with a 20-25 per cent concentration of Muslim population in the country. With the government also planning to set up many new model schools in the Eleventh Plan, the issue of how they may also be set up in Muslim concentration districts was also discussed. The government's flagship Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which aims to universalise education among children in the 6-14 age group by 2010 and how it can target minority students was also discussed on Monday's meeting. As for education provided by madrasas, linking it with the SSA is what is being explored, said ministry sources. Regarding the proposal by the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) to set up a Central Madrasa Board, sources said there is no such proposal on the anvil so far. (Asian Age 15/1/08)

HC seeks govt reply on plea against Sachar report (7)

New Delhi, January 20: The Delhi High Court has asked the Union Government to file its reply by February 7 on a PIL seeking a direction against the implementation of the Sachar Committee report. According to advocate P N Lekhi, who filed the PIL on behalf of Patriots' Forum, they sought to know whether the Sachar panel report had not treated the Muslims in a manner

inconsistent with the treatment given to other recognised minorities; whether it was tainted with the logic of racial compartmentalisation and communitarianism; whether it did not promise the rise of political Islam in India in violation of the Constitution; whether Muslims, who had “ruled” the peninsula, could be treated as a minority; and whether it did not degenerate into the process initiated by the “pre-August 14, 1947, days of collecting Muslims under the banner of Islam”. The Centre had set up Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee to look into the social, economic and educational status of Muslims and suggest ways to improve it. Its report was presented to the Parliament on November 30, 2006. Lekhi said that any promotion of Muslims as a religious community would result in “destruction” of the secular polity promised by the Constitution and was thus against its basic structure. “The petition wishes to know whether the terms of reference of the Sachar Committee are not an extension of the Pakistan resolution of 1940 made in Lahore,” he said. Lekhi claimed that the Sachar report ran contrary to all Supreme Court judgments on secularism. Arguing that the Committee’s recommendations were made on an irrational basis, he claimed that the Sachar Committee itself had said that in nine states the Muslims were educationally more advanced than other communities. Patriots’ Forum Secretary General R K Ohri told The Indian Express that the Forum had sent two written representations to the Sachar panel in October 2005 and May 18, 2006, but got no response. He said that the panel had ignored four “globally accepted human development indicators — infant mortality, child mortality, degree of urbanisation, and life expectancy at birth — where Muslims were better off than Hindus”. “Muslims’ lower per capita income is because of higher population growth rate and lower work participation rates among their women,” he claimed. The next hearing has been fixed for February. (Indian Express 21/1/08)

‘Muslims facing social boycott’ (7)

JAIPUR: Muslim groups in Rajasthan have expressed concern over continuing fear and insecurity in Kapasan tehsil of Chittaurgarh district where communal elements attacked some localities after Id-ul-Zuha this past month accusing Muslims of slaughtering a missing cow. Houses, shops, fields, standing crops, tube-wells and vehicles belonging to Muslims in half-a-dozen villages were torched in the violence on December 23 and 24. Muslims who fled their houses have since returned to face social boycott and open threats to their lives, with the police refusing to register their complaints naming specific accused. A four-member fact-finding team of Rajasthan Muslim Forum which visited the violence-hit villages over the weekend said it found the Muslim families living in their damaged houses in a state of terror and still waiting for any kind of relief from the State Government. In contrast, the next of kin of a rioter killed in the police firing were promptly given an assistance of Rs.1 lakh by the Government and Rs.4 lakh by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Police opened fire on the violent crowd on December 23 when the mob caught hold of two policemen on being prevented from storming into the Muslim-dominated Sindhion Ka Kheda hamlet. The large-scale violence took place during a bandh called by Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal after the cow’s remains were reportedly found in a field belonging to a Muslim man. However, the Sarpanch of Usnar village, Maghulal Jat – in whose well the carcass was spotted – was given a clean chit. Jamat-e-Islami Hind State president Mohammed Salim, who led the team, said here on Monday that the violence had a distinct pattern of Muslims being “selectively targeted”: “Villagers told us that the groups of rioters roaming on motorcycles were carrying with them petrol cans and lists of Muslims’ houses and shops,” he said. According to the fact-finding team, the pattern of violence also suggests that communal elements had deliberately spread rumours of cow slaughter to provoke the majority community against Muslims and attack their fields and business establishments to destroy them economically. None of the persons who masterminded the attacks has been arrested, even though eight Muslim “suspects” were held on charges of keeping illegal weapons. According to the fact-finding team, when the victims tried to lodge complaints identifying the accused, the police flatly refused to register the first information reports. The fact-finding team came across an identical pattern of Muslims being targeted everywhere. With the tube-wells and sprinkler systems at Muslims’ fields extensively damaged, the standing rabi crops across hundreds of bighas of land are on the verge of destruction. (The Hindu 22/1/08)

Muslim enrolment just 9% in primary schools: Study (7)

NEW DELHI: Comprising more than 13% of Indian population, Muslim enrolment at the primary level (class I-V) was a meagre 9.39% while in upper primary (class VI-VIII) it was 7.52% in 2006-07. The data of Muslim enrolment in schools, collected for the first time, only confirms what the Sachar Committee report indicated about their educational status. The survey, conducted by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) for HRD ministry, shows that in Muslim-dominated states like UP, Bihar, West Bengal and Kerala, the community needs a giant leap to make it to the mainstream. Assam, J&K, Andhra Pradesh and to some extent West Bengal are the only exceptions. However, sources point out that since this is the first time that data on Muslims has been calculated, there is a probability of some data infirmity. Also, it is possible that a few states could have included enrolment of OBC Muslim students in the OBC figures rather than factoring them separately. There is also a chance that a few schools did not report Muslim enrolment figures. "A clearer picture would emerge from next year," one official said. NUEPA's education statistics released on Tuesday also shows that enrolment percentage of SCs/STs/OBCs has not changed much since the previous years. But there has been a change in the overall ranking of states on the basis of Educational Development Index. The EDI - based on indicators like access, infrastructure, teachers and outcomes in both primary and upper primary level - introduced last year, shows that Kerala remains the top state for the second consecutive year, but, Puducherry has climbed up two steps and is now in the second position. Delhi has come down to third from the second slot. Tamil Nadu has come down to the fourth position from last year's third slot, while Andhra Pradesh has fallen four positions - down from eighth to 12th. Even Karnataka has come down to the eighth slot from sixth last year. States like Bihar, UP, West Bengal, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh continue to hover - a few notches up and down - among the bottom of the heap. As for Muslim enrolment, in J&K with 66.97% Muslims, their enrolment is 62.52% at the primary level and 60.55% in upper primary classes. Assam with 30.92% of Muslim population has also done well. Here enrolment in primary schools is 30.42% but comes down significantly in upper primary to stand at 17.39%. Andhra Pradesh has 9.17% Muslim population and enrolment in primary level is 10% and upper primary 9.11%. West Bengal seems to have caught up. With Muslim population of over 25%, enrolment in primary is 27.92% but comes down to 19.63% in upper primary classes. Kerala has 24.7% Muslim population but enrolment is pathetic - at 10.13% at the primary level and 9.59% in the upper primary level. (Times of India 23/1/08)

Thackeray wants Sachar report burnt, houses for Marathis (7)

MUMBAI, JANUARY 22: Accusing the UPA Government of appeasing Muslims, Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray has said that the Sachar Committee's report on the plight of Muslims must be burnt. He has also demanded that the Marathi Manoos in Mumbai should get good, spacious houses in the towers mushrooming all over the metropolis. In the second part of his exclusive interview to the Sena mouthpiece Saamna (of which he is the editor), Thackeray said that till "impotent and spineless" leaders ruled the country, there was no hope for Hindus, who had become "eunuchs". Thackeray vehemently opposed quota for Muslims and the extension of reservations in the armed forces and the police. "Don't infect the armed forces and the police with this (quota system)," the Shiv Sena supremo said, pointing out that if the rulers were so moved by the plight of Muslims, they should send their children to madrasas for education. Commenting on the plight of the Marathi Manoos, Thackeray said up to 50 per cent of the houses in Mumbai be provided to them. He said if the builders provide houses to the locals they should be spacious, "long and wide". He even issued a threat: "or else, we won't allow a brick to be laid for the towers". (Indian Express 23/1/08)

CPM wants fast justice in Gujarat riot cases (7)

New Delhi, January 24 : The CPI(M) on Thursday called for expediting the Gujarat riot cases, saying the real challenge facing Indian democracy today is to "demonstrate the promptness and the efficacy of the justice delivery system". In an editorial titled 'After Bilkis Bano, ensure justice for all' in CPI(M)'s mouthpiece People's Democracy, the party also noted that "the judgment in this particular case proves, once again, the fact that justice to victims of the communal carnage is not possible in Gujarat". The party alleged that the Gujarat Government had already closed "more than 1600 cases claiming lack of any evidence". It also said "it was only in 2004 at the express

intervention of the Supreme Court that these were reopened. Of the six specific cases that the apex court had asked the CBI to investigate, only two — Bilkis Bano and Best Bakery massacre cases—were tried. Justice continues to elude the victims of other massacres like the Naroda Patiya case.” Commenting on the Bilkis Bano case, the editorial opined: “judgment has come after six cruel years of agony and wait, justice nevertheless seems to have been finally delivered”. “There are several hundreds of pending cases relating to the Gujarat carnage. Given the track record of the system of delivery of justice in our country, particularly in relation to justice to the victims of communal riots, it is imperative to ensure that justice in the remaining cases is delivered at the earliest,” the party demanded. The editorial further reads: “the real challenge facing the judiciary, in fact facing the Indian democratic system itself, is to demonstrate the promptness and efficacy of the justice delivery system”. (Indian Express 25/1/08)

Do not arrest innocent Muslims: convention (7)

LUCKNOW: A convention on “Allegations of Terrorism and Muslims” has cautioned the Central and State governments against the official machinery targeting innocent persons. Solid evidence should be gathered before a person is arrested for his alleged involvement in a terror act, it said. Inaugurating the convention here on Saturday, the president of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), Rabey Hasni Nadwi, said Islam did not allow terror or any other act of violence. It was regrettable that terrorism was being associated with Muslims. Maulana Nadwi said that it was a crime even to make such an allegation. He said the country had witnessed many other incidents of violence, which were not included in the category of terrorism. General Secretary of the All-India Milli Council Manzoor Alam demanded a judicial commission to conduct an open hearing on the arrests made in the last 15 years in different parts of the country. He said the officials responsible for persecuting innocent Muslims in the name of terrorism should be punished. The convener of the Rajasthan Muslim Forum, Engineer Mohammad Saleem from Jaipur, said the Muslims of the country were passing through testing times. Admitting that terrorism is for real, Mr. Saleem said efforts should be made by the government agencies to unmask the real terrorists and forces trying to divide and weaken the country. The Hyderabad-based assistant general secretary of the Muslim Personal Law Board, Abdul Rahim Qureishi, said allegations of terrorism were meant to break the confidence of Muslims. He regretted that terror acts elsewhere in the country were being linked with the Mecca Masjid blast in Hyderabad. He said hundreds of innocent youths were arrested in the aftermath of the mosque blast. He alleged that a section of the media was controlled by the police agencies. Welcoming the participants, AIMPLB member and Naib (deputy) Imam of Lucknow’s Aishbagh Idgah, Khalid Rasheed Firangi Mahali, demanded a White Paper on fake encounters and urged the Central and Uttar Pradesh governments to release the innocent Muslims arrested on charges of terrorism. The convention was organised by Maulana Khalid Rasheed, Maulana Mohammad Ahmed of the Jamaat-e-Islami (Hind) Uttar Pradesh unit and Maulana Saeedur Rehman, Principal of Darul Uloom, Nadwatul Ulema, Lucknow. The Hindu 3/2/08)

Muslim majority J-K to set up separate minority commission (7)

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 7: To address the problems of minorities in the state, the government has decided to set up a state minority commission, in which, unlike the rest of the country, Muslims will be treated as a majority community. Officials said the decision to set up the commission has come in the backdrop of the Union Minority Affairs Ministry decision to award scholarships to minority Muslims, despite the fact Muslims are a majority community in the state. This new commission, once set up, will address political grievances and development of the state’s minority communities. The commission, which will be set up by Jammu and Kashmir’s Social Welfare department, will also hear the complaints of “denial of rights to minorities” here. “We have decided to set up a state minority commission which will be constituted soon,” Social Welfare additional secretary K K Kitchloo said. The state minority commission will be headed by a chairman, preferably by a retired high court judge and its members will be nominated by the government. Although the Social Welfare department will take a legal opinion from the Law department to decide whether the commission will have the power of a civil court to summon people, call for records and receive evidence on affidavits, officials said the commission would seek to address political discrimination often being alleged by minorities. The commission will

also make recommendations for the preservation of the languages of minorities and will also suggest minority development programmes to the government. "The government has failed to address the concerns of Kashmiri Pandits, and the minorities' situation in the state was quite in contrast to the national level," said Panun Kashmir chairman Dr Agnishekhar. (Indian Express 8/2/08)

Muslim League warns of stir on Sachar report (7)

HYDERABAD: The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) on Monday said it would launch a nationwide agitation from March 10 if the Centre did not implement in toto the recommendations of the Rajendra Sachar Committee for the welfare of minorities and also ensure that the Ranganath Mishra Commission's Report was tabled in Parliament. At a press conference here, IUML president G.M. Banatwala said though nine months had passed, the Mishra Commission report was yet to be tabled. The agitation would start with letters and telegrams to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and take a more serious form if the demands were not met, he warned. Mr. Banatwala also condemned India's defence support to Israel, including help in launching satellites. (The Hindu 19/2/08)

Sachar: Kerala to set up minority dept (7)

KOCHI, FEBRUARY 21: Acting on the recommendations of its 11-member panel deputed to look into the report of the Rajinder Sachar Committee that analysed the social and educational status of the Muslims, the Left Government in Kerala is likely to set up a full-fledged state department for the welfare of minorities along with a Minorities Development Corporation, Government sources informed. The committee, headed by CPI(M) leader and Local Administration Minister Paloli Mohammed Kutty, had handed over a 15-point list of recommendations to Chief Minister V S Achuthanandan, who said the Cabinet would decide on those. Sources said the committee has also asked the Government to sanction more schools and colleges for Muslims considering their educational backwardness, and to ensure a foolproof mechanism to ensure that Muslims get full reservation benefits. For the latter, the Paloli committee is learnt to have also suggested de-linking appointments based on merit from appointments under the reserved categories, by the state Public Service Commission. The committee comprising MPs K E Ismail of CPI and T K Hamza of the CPI(M), Left MLAs K T Jaleel and A A Azeez; and community leaders and public figures like C Ahamed Kunji, Dr Hussain Randathani, O Abdurrahman, Dr Fazal Gafoor, T K Wilson and Kadackal Abdul Azeez Moulavi, had drawn responses from some 5,000 people across the state before framing its recommendations. It has also mooted an Arabic University in the state, among other initiatives. Government sources claimed the committee had sifted through all available field data to reach its recommendations for bettering the lot of the state's Muslims, comprising about one-fourth of Kerala's population. Some of these include that there are still only 7.5 per cent Muslims in state Government employment, and the community's backwardness in the area of higher education often denies them even available reservation benefits. For instance, the state Government's Justice Narendran Commission which looked into this issue had found that over 7,000 jobs reserved for Muslims in the Government had actually gone to others, more particularly the higher posts. Kerala Muslims have only a 1.6 per cent representation in the civil services and senior positions, much lower than in the neighbouring southern states. IN MINORITY • A 2006 study by the Left-inclined Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad had reported that only 8.1 per cent of Muslims in the state access higher studies, against 18.7 per cent of Hindus and even 10.30 per cent of Scheduled Castes • A 2004 study by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) in Thiruvananthapuram had said that only 15 per cent of Kerala's Muslims reach a higher secondary school, compared to 29 per cent of Hindus and 36 per cent of Christians in the state (Indian Express 22/2/08)

Muslim forum to give legal aid to UP terror suspects (7)

LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 24: Members of various Muslim organisations in Uttar Pradesh have decided to evolve a system to ensure legal aid to terror suspects who had been refused legal assistance by lawyers of the state. As of now, it is difficult for an accused to get a lawyer to defend his case as Bar associations of the state had decided to boycott terror suspects in the

wake of bomb explosions that rocked court premises in Faizabad, Varanasi and Lucknow. The legal wing of "Atankwad Virodhi Andolan" (AVA), set up by various Muslim organisations, has decided to convene a meeting of advocates belonging to the Muslim community on March 16 to discuss the issue. "We want to ensure the rule of law. Our concern is about the basic human rights," Zafaryab Jilani, who heads the legal wing of AVA, told The Indian Express. He said that Bar Associations in different cities, including Lucknow and Faizabad, had passed a resolution, asking their members not to take up cases of terror suspects. The AVA came into existence after some prominent leaders of Muslim community, including Rabey Nadwi, chairman of All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Abdur Rahim Qureshi, assistant general secretary of AIMPLB, Jalaluddin Omri, national president of Jamaat Islami, Salim Quashmi, principal of Dar ul Uloom, Dr Manzoor Aalam, general secretary of All India Milli Council and Dr Shakil Samdani, senior reader, AMU, met and discussed the problems that the community members were facing. The AVA has a 12-member executive committee and a 35-member working committee. The working committee has six members who are practising lawyers. Zafaryab Jilani, who also fights the Babri Masjid demolition case, said the proposed meeting of the lawyers would decide a pattern on how to provide legal aid to terror suspects. Besides Lucknow and Allahabad, lawyers of Azamgarh, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Meerut and Faizabad would be present at the meeting. "In these places, the problem is serious. We can't ensure representation of every district at the meeting," he added. Citing the problems of terror suspects, Jilani said the family members of Tariq and Khalid, accused in the November 23 blasts, had met them. "I saw the documents. I am convinced that they were not arrested from Bara Banki as claimed by the police. But I don't know as to what role they have played. Wo ham malumat kar rahe hain," he said. The family members of one Kaushar who is in jail in connection with the attack on the CRPF's Rampur Centre on the New Year day have similar problems. "I suggested his family members talk to Kaushar and collect his plea regarding his arrest. Akhir kya wajahe hain use pakda gaya. Wo kya sochta hai. If he is innocent, he must be given legal aid," he added. Lawyer Mustaq Ahemad Siddiquee, who is also a member of the AVA working committee, said advocates can't refuse to take up cases. "No case should go defenceless. Let 10 criminals go unchecked, but one innocent should not be punished," he added. (Indian Express 25/2/08)

Muslim groups condemn terrorism (7)

DEOBAND, Feb. 25: Denouncing terrorism in all its manifestations, top Muslim groups in India today adopted a declaration calling it "un-Islamic" and terming it against the Islamic principle of "peace". The declaration adopted by the organisations at a meeting here today, however, also criticised attempts to malign Muslims and madrassas. The Anti-terrorism Conference organised by Islamic Seminary Darul Uloom in Uttar Pradesh's Deoband town was attended by clerics, scholars and religious leaders from several sects and groups across the country. "Islam is a religion of mercy for all humanity. Islam sternly condemns all kinds of oppression, violence and terrorism. It has regarded oppression, mischief, rioting and murder among severest sins and crimes," said the declaration, adopted by over 10,000 participants. "Islam prohibits killing of innocent people," it said. The conference, however, expressed its deep concern and agony on the present global condition in which most nations are adopting an adverse attitude towards Muslims. "It is a matter of greater concern that the internal and external policies of a country are getting heavily influenced by these forces," it said. The gathering also condemned attempts to implicate Muslims and particularly religious institutions in terrorist acts. "The disease (terrorism) has been diagnosed in a wrong way. Whenever there is any incident of terrorism, every possible attempt is made to link it to Muslims and particularly who have studied in madrassas and some religious institutions. This is totally wrong," said Mr Adil Siddiqui, the Public Relations Officer of Darul Uloom. (Statesman 26/2/08)

HC notice to Centre on plea against Sachar panel report (7)

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued notices to the Centre on a plea that the proposal to give post-matriculation scholarship to minority community students should be put on hold till the disposal of a PIL challenging the Sachar Committee report. A Delhi HC bench comprising Chief Justice M K Sharma and Justice Reva Khetrpal sought responses from the Home and Minority affairs ministries by March 26. Senior advocate P N Lekhi, appearing for NGO

Rashtriya Mukti Morcha who had challenged the Sachar committee report, which deals with minority-related issues, and government's follow-up action, submitted that the Centre and others be restrained from extending scholarships to students of minority communities. "The authorities cannot go ahead with this scheme as the Sachar Committee report is under challenge before this court," he said. Allowing his arguments, the bench asked the government to file a detailed affidavit by March 26, the day when the main petition would come up for hearing. Lekhi, who also submitted a brief synopsis dealing with laws relating to minorities, said that the government's move, though noble, was in contravention of the existing legal provisions. He said that in most of the north-eastern states minorities are in a majority and this issue needed a comprehensive study. Earlier, the court had asked the Centre to file a detailed affidavit in response to the PIL, seeking a stay on the implementation of the Sachar Committee report. (Times of India 5/3/08)

Wounds of 2002 riots have healed: Modi (7)

New Delhi: Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi claimed on Friday that the wounds of the 2002 communal riots had healed and Muslims were doing well in his State. "The wounds of the citizens of my State have healed and they are living in peace, reaping the fruits of development," he said. Mr. Modi, with former Chief Ministers Digvijay Singh and Farooq Abdullah, was interacting with a gathering at the India Today Conclave here. However, he said he would be unable to heal the wounds of those people who had been raising these issues time and again as "this was their means to earn a livelihood." Mr. Abdullah intervened to say that "such matters" should not be raked up constantly. "The time has come for us to forget these incidents and wish that those do not recur," he said. When Mr. Singh asked him why no ticket was given to a single Muslim candidate, Mr. Modi wanted to know why the Congress fielded fewer Muslim candidates compared to the previous elections. — PTI (The Hindu (16/03/08))

Panel commissions study on non-Muslim minorities (7)

NEW DELHI: Faced with a dearth of information on the socio-economic and educational status of non-Muslim minorities, the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has commissioned a study to plug the gaps and see how the other minority communities compare with one another and the majority community. Patterned though on the lines of the Sachar Committee Report on the social, economic and educational status of Muslims, the NCM-authorized study by the Delhi-based Institute for Human Development (IHD) is modest in scope, using data from the Census and the National Sample Survey Organisation to draw conclusions. Taking a leaf out of Sachar's book and inspired by its spin-offs, the NCM decided that it would be worth the effort to commission a similar study on the status of non-Muslim minorities who often complain of being ignored. "They do not protest, in the way the Bharatiya Janata Party does, the attention that goes to Muslims, but there is a feeling that the largest minority community hogs all the attention at the cost of others," said an NCM official. Eager to take the discourse on minorities away from the contentious issues of identity, personal law and communal violence, the NCM study seeks to look at the socio-economic development of the non-Muslim minorities in the hope that together with the Sachar report it could provide a body of evidence on the status of minorities. The IHD — headed by the former Union Minister Y.K. Alagh — has submitted the report and it is likely to be discussed by the Commission at its meeting in May before it is formally adopted. (The Hindu 10/4/08)

Muslim who wed Hindu girl killed (7)

Mumbai, April 27: An inter-faith marriage drama that had played out in Mumbai several months ago involving a young couple ended tragically on Sunday when the groom was shot dead by unidentified assailants. Mohammad Hanif Shah, 28, who had incurred the wrath of several people two years ago for marrying Hema Bhatnagar, a Hindu who took on the name Heena after marriage and converted to Islam, was shot dead near his residence at Mansore in Madhya Pradesh. The local police told this newspaper that the incident happened at around seven in the morning and quoted eyewitnesses as having seen Shah sipping tea with his killers moments before the murder. Tragically, Hanif was planning the naming ceremony of their firstborn in May and was all excited about it, friends of Hanif told the police. The incident had similarities with the sensational Rizwanur Rehman-Priyanka Todi case of Kolkata, where a Muslim boy had married a Hindu girl against her parents' wishes. Unfortunately, the case has now ended exactly like

Kolkata's infamous love story. Inspector Vivek Gupta of the Yashodharman Nagar police station said that a call had been made to Hanif at about 6.30 am on Sunday and the caller had asked Hanif to come to the main square of Yasho-dharman Nagar, which was near Hanif's house. Mr Gupta said: "I think these people were known to Hanif as he had tea with them, according to witnesses, and there was a heated argument among them. Later on, one of them put a revolver in Hanif's mouth and shot him. Hanif died on the way to the hospital." When this newspaper spoke to Heena, she said: "My husband has been murdered. Hanif had so many plans. He wanted our son to be named Ishan. Now it is all gone." Heena had alleged that her family members may be directly involved in the killing. Mansore superintendent of police R.K. Chaudhari told this newspaper that the possibility of Heena's parents being behind involved in the murder of Hanif would be investigated. "Our investigations are being carried out to see whether it was some kind of personal rivalry. And since Heena has blamed her parents, we will be working on that angle as well." Friends of the couple are distraught. One of them, Shahid Mansoori, said: "The couple was really made for each other. With Hanif gone, Heena has been left all alone with their unborn baby." Hanif's father had passed away last year during the time when the couple was criss-crossing the nation looking for safety. Mohammad Hanif had fallen in love with Heena, then Hema, and eventually they decided to marry. Hema's family members have political connections and were vehemently against the marriage. Opposition from many quarters made Hanif and Heena move from city to city looking for protection. Last year, in the middle of August, Hanif and Heena had approached the media in Mumbai seeking help. In all interviews, Heena had claimed that her father was politically very powerful and alleged that he would have them killed if they returned to their native Madhya Pradesh. Heena had said: "My father is against my marriage with Hanif and he has threatened me that they would kill Hanif if we enter the boundary of Mansore." Hanif, who had his own orchestra, said: "I have legally married Hema, alias Heena, but her father wants us to get separated as I belong to another religion." After some time, however, the couple had returned to their hometown thinking that nobody would want to harm them. (Asian Age 28/4/08)

Kerala to implement Sachar Committee report (7)

Kochi, April 30: In a politically loaded move, Kerala's Left cabinet on Wednesday decided to implement the Rajinder Sachar Committee report on Muslim backwardness, along the lines suggested by its 11-member Paloli Mohammed Kutty committee that had looked into the report. The 11-member state Government panel headed by CPM central committee member and Kerala's local administration minister Paloli Mohammed Kutty had come up with a 15-point list of recommendations taking off from the Sachar panel report. This was after the committee, which the Left had thoughtfully populated with both politicians and apolitical opinion leaders in the Muslim community, held its sittings in every district to draw suggestions. The recommendations, which the state cabinet endorsed on Wednesday, include setting up an independent department for minority welfare and a full-fledged Muslim Welfare Commission, among others. The committee has urged the government to put in place job quotas in the private sector, besides asking for more schools and colleges for Muslims coupled with more educational support systems like scholarships and hostels. The committee has also asked the government to stop hiring temporary employees in government service, since no community reservation norms could be followed in such recruitments. Another of its recommendations is to classify government employees on the basis of how they get into service—on the basis of merit or by reservation—so that Muslim candidates could get the full benefits of community reservation. The cabinet's endorsement decision may spell advantage all the way for the state's Left. At one stroke, this may scuttle the congealing anti-Left formation of important casteist and community outfits using the plank of the government attempts to regulate the mostly Christian and Muslim run private self financing colleges, possibly help it re-build some bridges it had burnt with the influential minority sections over the same issue. This might also put the Muslim League in the Congress-led opposition camp in a delicate situation: It can neither endorse the Paloli recommendations and play itself into the Left hands, nor dare to oppose it and risk a further erosion of its rapidly depleting vote base. The Congress, too, may walk a tightrope in this to avert offending traditionally friendly and powerful caste formations like the Nair Service Society, that are up against the Sachar recommendations. (Indian Express 1/5/08)

Non-Muslim minorities high on socio-economic ladder (7)

New Delhi, May 2: While the Sachar Commission Report highlighted the poor socio economic condition of Indian Muslims, a survey by the National Minority Commission has some encouraging signals for the other four notified minority communities in the country. The report titled 'Socio-economic Status of Notified Minority Communities (Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis) except Muslims', says that the minority communities—apart from the Muslims—have a literacy rate higher than the average literacy rate of the country and that the proportion of undernourished children among these communities is way behind the national average. As per the report, being fine-tuned at the NCM and to be released soon, the Parsis have the highest literacy rate among the notified minorities—97.9 per cent followed by Christians 80.3 per cent, Buddhists with 72.7 per cent and Sikhs with 69.4 per cent. This is against the country's average literacy rate of 64.8 per cent. The literacy rate among women in these communities is also higher than the national average of 54.6 per cent. Christian women have the highest literacy rate at 76.2% and Buddhist women have the lowest at 61.7 per cent. Among the four minority communities, the male-female literacy gap is highest among the Buddhists and the lowest among the Parsis. The Sachar Commission had put the literacy rate of Muslims at 59.1 per cent. These minority communities also have a better health and nutrition record than the national average of 47 per cent. Buddhists have the highest proportion of undernourished children at 39.2 per cent and Sikhs have the lowest at 22.8 per cent. This is against the all-India average for malnourished children—47 per cent. According to the report, the fertility rate has fallen too. "The fertility rate of all minority communities, except the Buddhists whose rate of growth is already very low, experienced a fall. The rate of fall in fertility rate is highest among the Sikhs," the report states. Among the minorities, landowning is the highest among Christians—only 54.81 per cent are landless and the situation has been improving over the last decade. On the other hand, the proportion of landless among Sikhs and Buddhists has gone up in the last decade. It now stands at 66.50 per cent for Sikhs and 71.60 per cent for Buddhists. The report states that among the lowest strata of minority communities, the Christians have the largest proportion of self-employed workers and that the Buddhists are the least self-employed. Among the rich, self-employment is high among the Sikhs and least among the Parsis. According to the report, Parsis are more involved in tertiary activities like administrative, executive and managerial occupations. It also says that as many as 68 per cent live in rural areas. The four minorities constitute 5 per cent of the country's total population. Of this, the Christians account for 2.3 per cent, Sikhs for 1.9 per cent, Buddhists for 0.8 per cent and the Parsis stand at .007 per cent. It is understood that the National Minority Commission went ahead with this survey on the four notified minority communities since majority of the Commission members felt that the Sachar Commission Report dealt mainly with the Muslim community. (Indian Express 3/5/08)

Muslims court arrest as ASI refuses to open mosque (7)

Vellore, May 9: Protesting Archaeological Survey of India's decision not to allow prayer inside the Nawab Mosque in the historical Vellore Fort, thousands of Muslims courted arrest here on Friday. Though police officers, including the Swift Action Group and Tamil Nadu Special Police, swarmed the area providing five-ring security to prevent the protestors' entry into the premise, the people mobilised by the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnatra Kazhagam outnumbered the uniformed men. However, sources said there were hectic parleys behind the scene between the state Government and TMMK leaders in the past couple of days to ensure that there was no untoward incident reported during the protest. The police had planned to arrest them even before entering the district, but did not carry it out after requests by TMMK leaders to the senior politicians, said police sources. They had reportedly given assurance that they will not enter the mosque premise by force, though the community members were mobilised stating that. Over 5,000 people led by TMMK president M H Jawaharullah gathered near the fort and offered prayers. "We will continue our protest until we are allowed to offer prayer inside the Nawab Mosque," said Jawaharullah. The protestors were lodged in 10 marriage halls in and around Vellore. The demand for permission to offer prayers inside the mosque was first aired sometime back. Recently, the local civic body supported the claim and soon, TMMK, a minor state party, took an aggressive stance on the issue. The ASI denied permission, stating that the mosque was not functional when they

took over the fort's control in 1921. Questioning the rationale behind this, TMMK leaders point to that both Jalakanteshwar temple and St John's Church, barely 100 metres away from the mosque, have been open for prayers. However, there are oppositions to the protest from the Muslim community itself. Many argue that the issue could be taken up legally, instead of taking to the streets that might jeopardise communal harmony. Dravida Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam, another regional outfit, has openly criticised TMMK's protest as a political conspiracy. Majority of the Jamaat had also taken the stand that the issue should be solved amicably instead of whipping up the passion. Jumping into the fray, Dalit party Viduthalai Chiruthikal Katchi has supported the TMMK, while Hindu Munnani, Hindu Makkal Katchi, Janata Party have criticised the TMMK. An ASI official said the monument is protected under the Ancient Monuments Preservation and Maintenance Act of 1904 will not be open to prayers. (Indian Express 10/5/08)

HC raps govt on Sachar panel report (7)

NEW DELHI: The Central government came in for some searing criticism by Delhi HC on Monday with respect to implementation of Sachar Committee recommendations for welfare of Muslims. "You (government) are trying to please one community and this is where the rot lies," were the scathing remarks of an angry bench headed by Justice T S Thakur while dealing with a petition pending in HC since December last, challenging the Sachar committee recommendations. "You are trying to please one community. Poverty is the common enemy. You should fight against poverty rather than saying that you would fight against poverty for one community only," the bench observed during the hearing. The bench wondered why the government's benevolence was targeted at one community alone, "You are saying that more money be spent for one minority community. Should it not cut across caste and religion? Does the Sachar committee say that facilities are available to other communities?" the HC demanded. (Times of India 13/5/08)

Sachar effect: On UGC orders, BHU wants Muslim teachers (7)

Varanasi, May 20: Benaras Hindu University has started looking for Muslim teachers for appointment in its educational institutions located in Muslim-dominated areas, following a UGC directive in this regard. On May 6, UGC Joint Secretary Urmilla Devi sent a letter to BHU Registrar N Sunderam asking the university to comply with the Justice Sachar Committee's recommendations to post Muslim teachers in educational institutions located in areas of Muslim concentration. At present, out of 3,000-odd teachers in BHU, just a little over 40 belong to the Muslim community. The component of Muslim students in its 18,000-strong student base is a little more than 300. Following the UGC letter, BHU Deputy Registrar (OBC and Minority Cell) Chedi Lal Yadav asked directors of institutes, deans of faculties, heads of departments/offices, principals of Mahila Maha Vidyalayas and affiliated colleges of the university to start looking for appropriate candidates for the posts. On March 10, Sunil Kumar, Joint Secretary (Minorities), in the Union Human Resources Development Ministry had written to UGC Chairman Sukhdeo Thorat over the Sachar Committee recommendations on appointment of Muslim teachers in educational institutions located in areas with high Muslim population. The Sachar Committee's findings were that only one in 25 students enrolled in higher education at the undergraduate level was a Muslim, and the figure dropped further to only one in 50 at the post-graduate level. The HRD Ministry letter requested the UGC Chairman to advise universities and colleges "suitably" so that the alarmingly low representation of Muslim students in higher education could be improved. While a senior Muslim teacher at BHU, D G A Khan, who is a professor in the Political Science Department, appreciated the move, he pointed out that much more needed to be done. "The decision makers should also work on providing scholarships to Muslim students, recognising madaras to enable their students to appear in entrance tests," he said. (Indian Express 21/5/08)

Package for Gujarat riots victims (7)

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Thursday announced a relief package worth more than Rs. 330 crore for the victims of the 2002 post-Godhra riots in Gujarat. A meeting of the Union Cabinet, presided over by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, approved a proposal for payment of additional ex gratia to the victims as also towards damaged residential properties and uninsured commercial property. The next of kin of 1,169 people killed in the riots would be paid Rs.3.5-lakh ex gratia in addition to the amount paid by the State government, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram told

journalists. This would amount to an additional liability of Rs.40.91 crore on the exchequer, he said. A sum of Rs.1.25 lakh would be paid to each of the 2,548 people injured after deducting the amount already paid to them by the State government, he said. This would cost the Central exchequer Rs.29.64 crore. The liability on ex gratia assistance for riot victims for death and injury would come to Rs.70.55 crore. The amount has already been released to the Gujarat government for disbursement. The victims, whose residential properties had been damaged, would get an additional ex gratia 10 times the amount given by the State government after excluding the amount already paid by the State. The additional liability on this count would come to Rs.262.44 crore. The Gujarat government had paid Rs.29.16 crore in 29,467 cases of damage to residential properties. The Cabinet also gave its approval for grant of additional ex gratia for damage to uninsured commercial and industrial properties, he said. In these cases, the ex gratia would be 10 times the amount given by the State government, deducting the amount already paid. The package for the Gujarat riot victims will be on a par with the measures taken for the victims of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. (The Hindu 23/5/08)

Jamiat plans massive anti-terror rally on May 31 (7)

NEW DELHI: : The Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind has decided to take the Darul Uloom anti-terrorism resolution-passed at a gathering of Muslim scholars in Deoband on February 25-"to the masses". In fact, the Jamiat is planning a massive gathering on May 31 with participation from across various Muslim sects. Sources said the inspiration was the 1995 Million March in the US, where a record number of African Americans took to the streets. Saying that so far there have just been "seminars and conferences" on terror, Jamiat general secretary Mehmood Madani said it had to be made "clear that elements claiming any sympathy or inspiration from clerics or the scriptures are simply out of line and misplaced". The thinking is that each time there are terror attacks, assumed to be perpetrated by some supposedly inspired by 'militant' Islam, there is all sorts of pressure on the largest minority community. The clerics believe it is, therefore, necessary to establish that there is mass anger amongst Indian Muslims as well against acts of terror. (Indian Express 23/5/08)

'Madrasa' teacher detained by SIT (7)

JAIPUR: In its continued crackdown on Muslim youth in connection with the May 13 serial blasts in Jaipur that claimed 66 lives, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Rajasthan police has detained a 'madrasa' teacher in Bharatpur and seized his laptop, mobile phone, personal diary and other articles from his house. The detainee, identified as Mohammed Ilyas, runs a 'madrasa' near Kumer Gate in Bharatpur. He was brought here on Monday for interrogation. Investigators were trying to ascertain whether he had made "suspicious" international calls from his mobile phone before the blasts and stored incriminating material in his computer. Panic gripped the Kumer Gate area when about 30 policemen raided the teacher's house at midnight after calling him to the city police station. Eyewitness accounts alleged that the policemen ransacked the house while looking for suspicious objects. Inspector-General of Police Laxman Meena, who heads SIT, confirmed to The Hindu on Wednesday that Mr. Ilyas was in custody. "SIT investigators are grilling him but he has so far not given any substantial information linking him with the crime. We have not yet formally arrested him," he said. Mr. Meena said two other youths were also picked up from outside the 'madrasa' but they were let off after questioning. While SIT has not revealed the total number of persons detained, a former State president of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), Mohammed Sajid, is one of the prime suspects in its custody. However, his alleged links with the perpetrators of the blasts have not been established. Mr. Sajid, who runs the primary-level Ayesha Siddiqua Madrasa at Udai Kalan village in Sawai Madhopur district, was the SIMI State chief before it was banned several years ago. SIT officers earlier assured his family members that he would be released after his mobile phone's call details were confirmed. Others picked up for questioning include Muslim youth from Sikar and Sawai Madhopur districts as well as the Ramganj and Subhash Chowk areas in the Walled City. (The Hindu 29/5/08)

Madrasa Board monitoring probe (7)

JAIPUR: The Rajasthan Madrasa Board is closely monitoring investigations into the May 13 serial blasts in Jaipur in the wake of the State police detaining clerics, teachers and managers of madrasas on suspicion. There is disquiet in Bharatpur and Udai Kalan over the arrest of madrasa functionaries. Incidentally, none of the madrasas from where the Special Investigation Team made arrests is registered with the State government-run board. Board chairman Hidayat Khan told The Hindu here on Thursday that the police and intelligence agencies visiting madrasas to look for suspicious activities was nothing new. "Police authorities maintained records of madrasas and their teachers and students, especially in the areas adjoining India-Pakistan border, even before the Jaipur blasts." However, the detention of madrasa functionaries for interrogation without even a sketchy proof against them has angered the board. Mr. Khan said it was strange that the police crackdown on the seminaries had started even before the preliminary probe made sure of the facts of the case. Of the 5,000 madrasas in the State, 2,710 are registered with the board. With about 2.10 lakh students enrolled in these seminaries, the board looks after school education and government-run schemes to benefit the institutions. Mr. Khan said the board was in constant touch with the managers of all registered madrasas to get first-hand information on police enquiries. He said those detained by the SIT were not connected with the seminaries recognised by the board. (The Hindu 30/5/08)

'Muslims feel discriminated in all states' (7)

New Delhi: May 29: Eminent scholar and Jamia Millia Islamia's vice-chancellor professor Mushirul Hasan has asked the Central government to go in for socio-economic upliftment of the Muslim community. Professor Hasan said that special schemes for the community like granting scholarships or building housing societies will have only marginal impact on the community's upliftment. He said the community feels discriminated in all states in the country irrespective of which political party is ruling that state. "It is a misplaced assumption that government guarantees human rights as there are many incidents of human rights violations in almost every part of the globe," said Jamia Millia Islamia's vice-chancellor. He said the word terror has been generalised, without assessing its impact in individual cases and linking the Muslim community with terror has become a global phenomena. Professor Hasan said there are historical facts on this community's resistance against violence and terror-related activities but the community is being targeted which is disturbing. (Asian Age 30/5/08)

Jamiat fatwa against terrorism (7)

NEW DELHI: Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, one of the leading Islamic organisations, along with several other Muslim outfits owing allegiance to different sects and ideologies, issued a "fatwa" against terrorism at the Anti-Terrorism Global Peace Conference at Ramliila Grounds here on Saturday. The "fatwa," sought by Member of Parliament and Jamiat leader Mahmood Asad Madani and issued on the letterhead of Darul Uloom Deoband, read: "Islam is a religion of peace and security. In its eyes, on any part over the surface of the earth spreading mischief, rioting, breach of peace, bloodshed, killing of innocent persons and plundering are the most inhuman crimes." Welcoming the fatwa, Mr. Madani said: "Terrorism has emerged as the most serious challenge faced by our nation in recent times. It threatens to strike at the very root of secular structure of our society besides causing irreparable loss in terms of human lives and property. The conference today has provided the opportunity for the entire Islamic community to come on a single platform and raise its voice against terrorism." The conference, organised as part of a series of such public meetings across the country, adopted a seven-point declaration condemning the propaganda that "regards terrorism as synonymous with jihad." "There is a world of difference between terrorism and jihad. Jihad is constructive and terrorism is destructive. Jihad is for the establishment of peace...terrorism is the gravest crime as held by Koran and Islam," the declaration said. Addressing the huge gathering, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind president Hazrat Maulana Qari Sayed Mohammad Usman said: "We appeal to the Government of India and international community that if they are sincere about rooting out the menace of terrorism they must strive to establish justice and fair play in society. The implementation of the Sachar Committee Report will help eradicate injustice and deprivation. The Government should take immediate action for its implementation." Social activist Swami Agnivesh said: "It is wrong to attribute the wrongdoings of a few individuals to the whole community. I would not mince words to say that the United States

is the terrorist number one. To defame the Holy Koran and Islam is the worst form of terrorism. Islam stands for peace and brotherhood and there cannot be a bigger lie than saying that Muslims are terrorists. Who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi and former Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi? Were their assassins Muslims?" he asked. (The Hindu 1/6/08)

Muslims need affirmative action to develop: Ansari (7)

New Delhi, June 7: Identifying lack of education as the single biggest problem afflicting the Muslim community, Vice-President Hamid Ansari on Saturday called for "affirmative action" by the Government for Muslims in this field. "The biggest problem is that a segment of the society is educationally lagging behind, and as a responsible state, it is essential for the Government and fellow citizens to take affirmative action," Ansari said after releasing a book Muslims of India since Partition authored by journalist Balraj Puri. Ansari was careful not to directly touch the sensitive subject of reservations for Muslims but lauded the work of Sachar Committee which recently came out with a voluminous report on the economic, social and educational status of Muslims in India. "The work done by the Sachar Committee was mandated and the results produced, by all accounts, are good. It was well done in professional terms," he said, adding that the report clearly pointed to the educational backwardness of the community as a whole. "As a responsible state, therefore, it is essential to take affirmative actions in the case of Muslims. This is a process that a developing society has to go through," he said. Ansari said the Government was obliged to provide three things to all its citizens: security, addressing exclusion and ensuring empowerment. "Empowerment of the people is possible only through education and it is essential again to go back and underline that education must be provided to all the segments of society," he said. (Indian Express 8/6/08)

Sangh chief says Muslims for cow slaughter ban, Govt reluctant (7)

NAGPUR, JUNE 8: "Muslims are being wrongfully produced in witness box for the Government's inability to pass the anti-cow slaughter Bill. Muslims are not against ban on cow-slaughter; in fact they are in its favour." "Nepal and Tibet should have been incorporated into India at the time of Independence since this was the wish of both the regions. But Nehru didn't let it happen." "Gurjjars are placing their own interests before national interests and have stopped the functioning of railways, roads and administration with the power of their stick." In his address to trainees at the end of third year of an RSS officers' training camp, Sangh chief K S Sudershan on Sunday had a new take on several old, favourite issues with the Parivar. According to him, Muslims were unfairly blamed for cow slaughter. "As a matter of fact, even the most fundamentalist of Muslims... says that there is no diktat in the Quran to kill cows. In fact, they say a Hadis has termed cow's flesh as poison and cow urine as nectar. At a recent conclave in Delhi, some 4,000 Muslim representatives passed a resolution in favour of a cow-slaughter ban, and at another conclave, the Qureshi community took a vow that they would neither butcher a cow nor sell its flesh," Sudershan claimed, adding, "it is the rulers who are raising this bogey" in order to delay a Bill against cow slaughter. Responding to an appeal by the chief of Shimoga Peeth Swami Raghaveshwar Bharati, the chief guest, Sudershan went on to claim that saving the cow could help stop farmers' suicides. "Farmers have forgotten natural farming done with cow's help," he said. Sudershan criticised the Gurjjars for resorting to violence and bringing normal life to a halt in order to get ST status. Without calling the demand improper, he said: "The Gurjjars have actually ruled many empires in historical times and have protected the country from invasions from across the borders." While the RSS never had love lost for Nehru, Sudershan gave this too a twist by accusing the former prime minister of ensuring that Nepal and Tibet were kept out of the Indian Republic, though they wanted to join it. According to him, Nehru worried that the world would say India had become an expansionist immediately after gaining Independence. Turning his ire on human rights activists who moved the Supreme Court against the Salwa Judum movement in Chhattisgarh, Sudershan said: "They are not manavadhikar (human rights) activists, they are danavadhikar (demon rights) activists. They want the movement to be stopped because their men (Maoists), who are like demons, are dying," he said. (Indian Express 9/6/08)

Islam is against terror, says Maulana Madani (7)

NEW DELHI: Reiterating that terrorism and extremism were against the very basic tenets of Islam, Maulana Arshad Madani, President of Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind, on Wednesday alleged that a vilification campaign has been launched globally to hold Islam responsible for the rise of violence, extremism and political unrest in various parts of the world. Talking to reporters here, Maulana Arshad Madani said Darul-Uloom, Deoband, a reputed and respected institute of Islamic learning, has decided to present Islam in its real and true perspective to create greater awareness about the Prophet's message of harmony and amity. "In this backdrop, the Mufti of this 140-year-old Islamic seminary issued a 'fatwa' [Islamic decree] against terrorism stating that killing of innocent people was not compatible with Islam," he said while lauding and supporting the measure. Holding American terror policies responsible for making world peace vulnerable, the Maulana said that communal forces in India were also bent upon whipping communal passions to dent the democratic image of the country. "Their aim is also to foment trouble among various communities for their own political objectives and goals," he said. He urged the government to take steps to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the country. "The minorities, particularly Muslims, want to play an active role in the development and welfare of the country like other communities but it is necessary to create a conducive and cordial atmosphere so that they do not feel neglected and marginalised," he said. In his opinion, the enterprise of Muslims had been deliberately suppressed and attempts were being made in many parts of the world to snap the relationship between true Islam and a genuine Muslim. (The Hindu 12/6/08)

Muslims feeling dejected in UP: minorities panel (7)

LUCKNOW: The National Commission for Minorities on Thursday maintained that Muslims were dejected with the grim scenario in Uttar Pradesh where they were the most discriminated lot among all the minorities. The Commission, which concluded a two-day sitting in Lucknow on Thursday, found that the confidence level among the Muslims was low. This had been reflected in the Commission receiving the maximum number of complaints from UP. There was a difference of about 60 per cent between the complaints received from UP and those from the other States, the Commission has found. Four types of complaints from the Muslims were received by the Commission – individual complaints; complaints related to lack of civic facilities like sanitation and education; complaints related to the conduct of local officials, especially the police; and finally complaints pertaining to bias and discrimination. Commission Chairman Mohammed Shafi Qureshi told reporters that the Muslims were feeling rather dejected as no practical steps had been taken [by the authorities] to change their lifestyle. He said reports related to their welfare had not been properly implemented, adding that the solution to their problems had to be found at the level of the State governments. The Commission Chairman said the feeling had gained ground among the country's largest minority that their religion was the basis of their discrimination in educational and social life. "Give them practical results on the ground to restore their confidence," added Mr. Qureshi, a former Governor of UP. He placed on record the positive response from the State Government towards the welfare of the Muslims and other minorities. The Commission held talks with the State Chief Secretary, Atul Kumar Gupta, and other State officials on Wednesday to know about the various problems and the measures taken for their redress. Sachar report He said the Commission, which was visiting other States as well, would make its recommendations on how to implement the Sachar Committee report and effectively fulfil its objective. Commission member Dileep Padgaonkar, who was present at the press conference, said the National Commission for Minorities was not at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, although moves were afoot to grant similar status to the minorities panel. Delegations of Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians also met the Commission members during its two-day sitting. The problems narrated by the Sikh representatives were mostly related to settlement of claims of the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. According to Harcharan Singh Josh, another member of the Commission, more than 50 per cent cases have been settled. The problems of the Buddhists were related to the status of Pali language in the State and their failure to be certified as members of the Buddhist minority community. (The Hindu 13/6/08)

Deoband fatwa on conversion (7)

Lucknow, July 2: The Darul Uloom Deoband has now issued a fatwa saying that it was illegal for women to convert to Islam for the sake of marriage. The fatwa was issued in response to a question posed before the Darul Uloom Deoband asking whether the conversion of a non-Muslim woman for getting married into Islam was justified. Mufti Ahsan Kazmi, who issued the fatwa, said that conversion to Islam must be in good faith and not for some specific interest. The president of the Uttar Pradesh imam organisation, Mufti Zulfikar, has also come out in support of the fatwa. (Asian Age 3/7/08)

Rajasthan Muslim doctor kept in 'illegal detention', released (7)

JAIPUR: The Rajasthan police picked up a young Muslim doctor of the Unani system of medicine employed with the State Government on suspicion of his involvement in the May 13 serial blasts in Jaipur and kept him in "illegal detention" for four days in the third week of June. He was released on June 22 when the investigators failed to get anything substantial from him. This was the second instance of a professional hunted down in connection with the Jaipur blasts, while several maulvis, imams of mosques and madrasa teachers were detained earlier. Electronics engineer Rashid Hussain working with an IT major here was incarcerated for nine days before he was released on June 9 when the police agencies failed to find anything incriminating against him. Policemen picked up 33-year-old Amanullah Jamali, at the State Government's Community Health Centre at Bagri Nagar in Pali district, on June 19 when he was travelling by a Rajasthan Roadways bus to attend his duty. He was first taken to the Beawar city police station and later the Alwar Gate police station in Ajmer, where he was allegedly tortured for four days. Dr. Jamali – a graduate in Unani medicine and surgery from Aligarh Muslim University – was appointed Medical Officer under the National Rural Health Mission on January 15 this year. He belongs to Bihar and lives in a rented house with his wife and a two-year-old son on Sojat Road, 6 km from Bagri Nagar, and travels daily to attend his duty at the Community Health Centre. Dr. Jamali told The Hindu that he had lost his mobile phone a few days before the police picked him up. The police apparently discovered the phone and traced from the call details his presence in Jaipur on the day the bombs exploded in the city. The doctor produced evidence before his interrogators to support his claim that he was in Jaipur on May 12 and 13 to get himself registered with the Board of Indian Medicine, but to no avail. "Policemen brutally thrashed me several times and beat me with canes and abused me," he said. Dr. Jamali's younger brother and brother-in-law, who rushed to the police station on June 21 after they came to know of his whereabouts, were also detained there and not allowed to leave for a day. All of them were released on June 22. Inspector-General of Police Laxman Meena – who heads the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the blasts – did not respond to calls made by The Hindu. The doctor regretted that he was picked up and tortured in police custody only because of his Muslim identity: "My track record as an honest and upright government doctor had no relevance for the policemen." Dr. Jamali, who studied up to the twelfth standard in Beawar, was a Unani medicine student at Aligarh Muslim University between 1999 and 2006 and did medical practice in Agra for one year before coming back to Rajasthan to join the service. The State unit of Jamat-e-Islami Hind, which has been following up cases of detention by the SIT, has taken strong exception to the illegal confinement of Dr. Jamali. (The Hindu 3/7/08)

Further probe into Kausar Bi's death meaningless: Gujarat Govt to court (7)

Ahmedabad, July 3: The investigations into the tragic death of Kausar Bi, who had allegedly suffered at the hands of the Gujarat and Rajasthan police, hit a new low on Thursday with the Gujarat Government making an oral submission before the sessions court saying further probe "would be meaningless". The 32-year-old widow of Sohrabbudin Shaikh, who was killed in a fake encounter by a team of the Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS) of the Gujarat and Rajasthan police, was raped and murdered before her body was burnt, a CID investigation had revealed. The ATS had picked the couple from a bus on their way to Sangli from Hyderabad and had claimed that Shaikh had entered Gujarat to kill Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Two days later Kausar Bi was allegedly killed and burnt by the same team at Illol, native village of one of the accused officers D G Vanzara, who was the then DIG(ATS). With the Gujarat Government's submission, her death would remain a mystery if a fresh probe is not ordered. The Special public prosecutor appointed by the Government in this case, V P Atre, told the court that investigation into Kausar Bi's death

would be a “meaningless exercise”. “A long time has elapsed after Kausar Bi was killed under mysterious circumstances, the body was not found and the chances of gathering evidence were bleak,” he said. The Prosecutor’s submission came in reply to a rejoinder filed by Sohrabuddin’s brother Rubabuddin Shaikh last week. Rubabuddin in his letter had contended that the investigation officer had not conducted the investigation properly in the Sohrabuddin case and the chargesheet filed by the CID (Crime) was silent on some important issues. (Indian Express 4/7/08)

At Muslim women’s meet, Advani says change has to be driven from within (7)

New Delhi, July 13: In a forceful enunciation of his vision for the country’s Muslims, BJP prime ministerial candidate L K Advani on Sunday made a strong pitch for changes in the community from within at a well-attended meeting of Muslim women, even as he said that “secularism is the bedrock of our civilisation”. “The BJP’s politics is about the 100 per cent population of the country, not just its 82 per cent Hindu community,” he said. In a shift from his Ayodhya phase, Advani gave a new slogan on the occasion: “Jo rashtra hit ki baat karega, wohi is desh par raaj karega (Only those who talk of the country’s development will rule it).” During the Ayodhya agitation, Advani said only those who talked of “Hindu hit” could govern. Without referring to the Sachar Committee, he agreed with one of its key findings on the backwardness among the community’s women. “Studies have shown that Muslim women are among the poorest, educationally the most disenfranchised, economically the most vulnerable, politically the most under-represented group in the country,” he said. His blueprint for their well-being was, however, markedly different from what has been prescribed by the Sachar panel. “Let girls (along with boys in the Muslim community) go higher and higher in education so that they can avail the opportunities created in the 21st century... The community’s own initiatives and reforms are important and necessary. Focus more on women’s education and providing opportunities for women to be employed,” he said. Lambasting the Congress, “which has ruled for the longest period, both at the Centre and in many states after Independence, ‘thus responsible for the Muslim backwardness’,” he said the BJP “was not anti-minority but believed in anti-minorityism”. “The concept of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ should not be stretched too far. When the State is enjoined by the Constitution not to discriminate on the basis of religion, there is no need to bring in the ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ identity of citizens in every sphere of public life. Some parties for votebank considerations want Muslims to remain in the ‘minority mindset’. Their politics of ‘minorityism’ is helping no one,” he said, in an obvious reference to the Congress, adding that “the community should not remain pawns in the selfish politics of the Congress and other pseudo-secular parties”. While the recent BJP national executive in Delhi was in news when the party president sought a debate on the inclusion of “secularism” in the Constitution, Advani used the occasion to outline his own vision. “Respect for all faiths — which in modern times is known by the term ‘secularism’ — is the signature tune of India’s spiritual heritage. It is the bedrock of our civilisation. This fidelity to genuine secularism has defined the spirit of the Indian Constitution, long before the word ‘secularism’ was formally introduced in it during the Emergency,” he said. BJP’s Minority Morcha chief Shahnawaz Hussain came in for profuse praise from Advani. “When Shahnawaz told me about the plan to hold a Muslim women’s conference, I had some doubts. My doubts are dispelled today. I am not only impressed by the numbers but also by the enthusiasm of the Muslim women here.” Citing Hussain’s election from Bhagalpur, where he drew considerable support from the Muslims, he appealed to the community to join the party in good numbers. “We want all-round development. Irrespective of the percentage of Muslims who vote for the BJP and the NDA, our government will work for everyone.” A jubilant Hussain later told The Indian Express that the BJP minority morcha will organise a rally of one lakh Muslims in Delhi in October. “There was a tremendous response from states like Gujarat and Rajasthan. We will prove that Advani’s good governance plank is for everyone,” he said. Najma Heptullah, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Kiran Maheshwari, Vijay Kumar Malhotra and Vijay Goel were also present on the occasion.(Indian Express 14/7/08)

Muslim girls benefit from govt scholarship schemes (7)

New Delhi, June 20: The UPA Government may be still grappling with the ‘Muslim factor’ in the Nuclear Deal. But it can be proud of one thing — the girl students in the minority communities are

surging ahead like never before, courtesy its various minorities-friendly initiatives. The annual assessment carried out by the Government for the year 2007-08 has found that girls have bagged around 62 per cent of the various scholarship schemes initiated by the Minorities Ministry last year; 67 per cent of the scholarships in the case of the merit-cum-means scheme have gone to girls while it is 58 per cent in the case of the post-matric scholarships. As per the data, the Muslim community has secured 72.7 per cent of the total scholarships while Christians and Sikhs have secured 17.55 per cent and 6.54 per cent, respectively. Gender-wise break up of scholarships availed gives a more encouraging picture which defies many conventional perceptions. In the case of the Muslim community, girls have bagged 61 per cent of the post-matric scholarships sanctioned in 2007 while boys have got only 39 per cent. It is 63 per cent and 37 per cent in the case of the Christian community and 30.48 and 69.52 per cent in the Sikh community. "The annual assessment carried out by the Ministry has been an eye opener for even us. We never expected this kind of a turnaround. If we are able to sustain this momentum for a while, then there is no stopping the girls," said the official concerned. The most important significance of these figures, according to the official, is the fact that these scholarships are meant for higher education. "If girls have secured more than 60 per cent of the scholarships for higher education, then it means there will be more women professionals from the minority communities," he said. What adds more sheen to the whole affair is the fact that all these scholarships are awarded purely on the basis of merit, he added. It may be recalled that the Sachar Committee report had stated that the graduation rate amongst Muslims was only 5 per cent — 12 per cent among males and 6 per cent among females in urban areas; 5 per cent for males and only 1 per cent for females in rural areas. (Indian Express 21/7/08)

Muslim bodies decry blasts (7)

NEW DELHI: Prominent Muslim organisations have described the serial bomb blasts in Bangalore and Ahmedabad as a heinous crime against entire humanity. The All India Milli Council, Jamaat-Islami Hind and All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat said that no effort should be spared to nab the culprits behind these dastardly crimes. They offered condolences and sympathies to the families of those killed and also the injured. Demanding a high-level impartial and time-bound investigation, secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami Nusrat Ali cautioned the government and the intelligence agencies against harassing innocent people. "Intelligence agencies should not float certain names without proper investigation. The government must look into the real motives of perpetrators of such crimes," he said. He appealed to the people to remain calm and united against forces trying to disrupt communal harmony. All India Milli Council general secretary M. Manzoor Alam said the quick succession in which the blasts occurred in the two States was stunning. "For quite some time, we have had this haunting feeling that we are not able to stop such violence because we have somehow been avoiding thinking out of the box," he said. The timing of the blasts, in the run-up to the general election, posed the question "who stands to gain from such attacks." "We hope that investigations will include all probable groups and individuals, than focussing on the usual suspects alone. Only comprehensive and fresh thinking will yield any results in our endeavour to put an end to such violence," he said. (The Hindu 29/7/08)

Donating blood, he says: 'Hundreds need help, no matter Hindu or Muslim' (7)

VADODARA: Just hours after the terror attacks, more than 260 Hindu as well as Muslim youths had lined up at six blood camps in Vadodara. Thanks to their efforts, city-based Suraktam blood bank was able to immediately send around 170 bottles of blood to Ahmedabad. It has held six blood camps over the past two days. "Hundreds of people need help in Ahmedabad. In such a situation, I am not bothered about who is a Hindu or Muslim. What I care is how to save people and I am ready to help," says 25-year-old Firoz Pathan from Khatriwaad. Dr Belim Osman, who works in the surgery department of SSG Hospital and organised a blood camp, found many people with rare blood groups had come in. Dr R B Bhesania, who heads the Suraktam blood bank, says around 350 Muslim youths as well as the Saurashtra Leuva Samaj in Vadodara were on call to donate blood. Other blood banks in the city claim they are equally well-stocked after donation drives. (Indian Express 29/7/08)

Sushma's remark invites Gujarat Muslim ire (7)

Ahmedabad, July 30: BJP leader Sushma Swaraj's remark that "blasts are an attempt by the UPA Government to win over Muslim votes which got divided over pro-American deal pursued by it" has invited strong reactions and condemnation from Muslims in the state. Angry over her remark made at a press conference in New Delhi on Monday, Muslim leaders here asked if Swaraj meant by her comments that "Muslims throughout the country were happy at the blasts and would return to the Congress fold now". Condemning Swaraj in the strongest terms, former professor of Physics at M S University and Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) president J S Bandukwala said, "It appears Sushma is out of her mind. If this is the type of leadership the BJP has at national level, no one can save the country." "Frustration over her party's failure to grab power during the trust vote seems to have motivated her to make such an irresponsible statement," said Hanif Lakdawala of NGO Sanchetna. "With UP Chief Minister Mayawati emerging as an alternative to lead the non-Congress parties at the national level, the BJP has virtually become isolated and reduced to pariah status. That is why it is using a language to provoke communal sentiments and divide society on religious lines to gain benefits in the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls," said Lakdawala. However, he expressed confidence that no rational person would buy her idea. He urged senior BJP leaders to condemn her statement and also restrain her from making such senseless remarks in future. Joining the issue, leading advocate Hashim Qureshi said, "Swaraj's statement was an indication how frustrated the BJP leaders felt after the trust vote and were trying to use religious sentiments for political dividends." While demanding an impartial investigation into the blasts by the CBI, Qureshi said investigators should also interrogate certain elements from the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal because some activists of these outfits had been found to be involved in Coimbatore, Nanded and Thane blasts. "Moreover, the Indo-US nuclear deal has nothing to do with Muslim support to the Congress. Muslims in UP and Bihar had withdrawn their support to the Congress long back and voted for regional leaders like BSP, SP and RJD," Qureshi added. Advocate Sofia Khan said linking the Indo-US nuclear deal with Muslims was an attempt to communalise society. "What Swaraj has stated displays her political immaturity. It is really shameful that she is attempting to cash in politically from the blasts when both Hindus and Muslims have suffered from it and the law and order agencies are having a tough time in ensuring peace and harmony," said Sofia. (Indian Express 31/7/08)

In name of Gujarat terror alert, Muslim tourists turned away from Narmada dam (7)

Vadodara, August 5: While the Gujarat police stepped up security for the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Narmada district after the blasts in Ahmedabad, policemen at the dam site turned away groups of Muslim holiday-makers from the popular picnic spot. Many Muslim tourists, including a Chartered Accountant and his family and a visiting London-based NRI family, were shooed away after they entered the dam site on Sunday and Monday, allegedly because patrolling cops found they had Muslim names. Among those turned away on Sunday was Imtiaz Attarwala, a Chartered Accountant from Vadodara. With him were eight family members. "We were given entry passes and allowed to cross the checkpoint to the spot. Then a police Inspector, B M Rajvanshi, patrolling at the dam site, spotted us and asked my name. As soon as I told him (my name), we were asked to go away." Attarwala is both pained and shocked. "Vadodara is around 100 km from the Sardar Sarovar, and I had taken my family to show them the beauty of the place. I am sad that I am still identified by my name, not my nationality," he told The Indian Express. Ismail Belif from Bharuch had gone there with his extended family including his visiting London-based sister Yasmeen Shabbhi Manjhwa and her husband. "We were a group of 13 members and had completed all formalities to enter. But once we did, the police officials came up to ask our names. My NRI brother-in-law, Shabbir Manjahava, was even questioned about his origins." Belif added: "Shabbir told them he was originally from Kosamba area, and the cops remarked: 'Abhi abhi toh wahan se bomb mile hain'." Belif, currently in Mumbai, managed to videograph the conversation with policemen on his mobile phone. "The cops asked Belif to show his driving licence, and his sister and husband, their passports. They did not carry their passports. They immediately asked all of us to get out of the site," says Belif's driver Hanif Banwa, who was with them. Belif's family friend Zuber Nanbava says they asked the grilling cops for the phone numbers of local police authorities to sort out the misunderstanding. "But we were given wrong numbers and clearly misguided," he says. Narmada district Superintendent of Police (SP) Khurshid Ahmed claimed the tourists were

sent back only because they had entered after the 6 pm deadline. However, the entry pass issued for the Attarwala family by the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL) has logged 4:55 pm, Sunday. The pass issued for Belif's family shows the time as 4:27 pm, Monday. When contacted by The Indian Express, senior police officers said they would make amends. "We will invite back all those who were turned away to visit the place," said SP Ahmed. "The issue will be taken up soon with SSNNL Chief Executive Engineer since the SSNNL tourism department has lodged a complaint with us," said G M Tadvi, Deputy Collector in charge of Narmada district. "A report regarding ill-treatment of Muslim tourists has been submitted to me by the SSNNL Public Relation Office. I will order an inquiry soon," he added. This incident comes after Godhra police called 52 local clerics on Sunday and asked them to disclose who funded the local madrasas and what kind of training went on there besides being asked to "disclose" details of the funds they received from Pakistan. Leaders of several prominent local Muslim religious organizations who took part in the "community watch meeting" presided over by Godhra Town Inspector MS Patel are now fuming over the humiliation. Top police brass in Bharuch has sought to disown the event. Godhra Superintendent of Police JR Motalia says he had "no clue about any such meeting." (Indian Express 6/8/08)

SIMI ban lifted (7)

New Delhi : In a major loss of face for the Centre, the ban on the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), first imposed in 2001, has been quashed by a single-judge tribunal, which was reviewing the case. The order, delivered to the Ministry of Home Affairs in a sealed cover, has blamed the Government for its failure to put on record any fresh evidence of the involvement of the dreaded organisation in terror activities. According to sources, as the Centre and Intelligence Bureau (IB) could "not place fresh evidence pertaining to the involvement of SIMI in unlawful and destructive activities in the country", the Unlawful Activities Prevention Tribunal (UAPT) on Tuesday lifted the ban imposed on SIMI by the Centre. According to sources, Justice Geeta Mittal forwarded the judgment to the Home Ministry. The order comes as a major embarrassment for the Congress-led UPA Government, which is battling the charges of soft-peddling terror issues, including keeping in abeyance the hanging of Parliament attack main accused Mohammed Afzal Guru. The order flies in the face of the charges levelled by Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil that terror attacks in BJP-ruled States happened because of weak local policing. Rattled by the development, the Home Ministry said it would challenge the order. According to an agency report, a Ministry spokesperson said, "The Ministry will examine the order in detail and take remedial action on priority. A preliminary perusal of the tribunal's order indicates that it has not confirmed the ban on SIMI on technical grounds." The order comprehensively exposes the poor follow-up of the Centre and the counter-terror agencies functioning directly under the aegis of the MHA. According to sources, State Governments on their part have made comprehensive presentation on the terror bodies' involvement in various subversive activities. The Andhra Pradesh police, for example, is reported to have presented irrefutable links of SIMI in Hyderabad blasts. Links of SIMI in Mumbai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Varanasi, Lucknow and Malegon have already surfaced. This organisation has come to be regarded as the fountainhead of home-grown terrorism. "However, the State inputs could not get corroborated by the Centre and MHA agencies," a well-placed source told The Pioneer. That Centre had adopted a lacklustre attitude towards the issue was evident the way presentation was made by its officials during tribunal hearings. Not satisfied with the Centre's submission, the tribunal had asked Additional Solicitor General (ASG) AK Pathak if the Government had proof against the banned outfit? "It is the fundamental right of a person that he must know by which action of his, such strong action has been taken against him? You are saying that SIMI was involved in communal riots, bomb blasts and destructive activities. Tell me, which riots after February 2006 were engineered by SIMI and place the material before me," Justice Mittal said. The Centre's presentation was so poor that the tribunal had commented: "You can't presume. You have registered 106 fresh cases. But there is no mention of the FIR details. Some of the cases are registered in Bhopal, some in Jaipur, others in Malegaon and Ghatkopar, but there is no mention of the FIR numbers. What is the requirement of law? What is to be tested? It has serious impact." The tribunal further grilled the Additional Solicitor General while expressing displeasure on the MHA's "casual approach". Justice Mittal also stated that if the Centre was claiming SIMI's involvement in these activities, the onus was on

the Government to place the proof on record. Justice Mittal had asked the Home Secretary and IB officials to appear before the tribunal to justify the ban. "What precluded the Government from stating the facts? You have to satisfy the tribunal about the sufficiency of the reason behind issuing a fresh notification (on the ban)," Justice Mittal had observed. The tribunal had reserved its judgment on August 1 after being briefed by the Home Ministry and IB officials. (Pioneer 6/8/08)

Court stays order lifting ban on SIMI (7)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed a tribunal order quashing the Centre's February 7 notification declaring the Students Islamic Movement of India an unlawful organisation. The Special Tribunal has been set up under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. A Bench stayed the order on a mention made by Additional Solicitor-General Gopal Subramaniam about the Centre filing a special leave petition against the lifting of the ban. The Bench, consisting of Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justice A.K. Mathur, ordered notice to the SIMI seeking its response in three weeks. Mr. Subramaniam said the tribunal, in its 264-page order passed on Tuesday, did not express anything on the merits of the case though the government had provided Intelligence Bureau reports pointing to the involvement of SIMI members in terrorist activities. He said the tribunal had done something above the law and if the order was not stayed, it would result in serious consequences. The Centre said that "being a group of students and youth, the SIMI is easily influenced by hardcore Muslim terrorist organisations operating from Jammu and Kashmir. The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and the Lashker-e-Taiba have successfully penetrated into SIMI cadre to achieve their goals." It said the SIMI had launched a country-wide campaign since November 1996 to mobilise support for Muslims and a caliphate for the community. The SIMI was against Indian nationalism and worked to replace it with an international Islamic order. The organisation had been active in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Referring to the tribunal's finding that the notification did not specify the reason for declaring the SIMI an unlawful association, the SLP said it had failed to take into consideration voluminous oral and documentary evidence justifying the ban. It was brought to tribunal's notice that the draft notification was attached to a Cabinet note, which was presented in a sealed cover. The Centre said it was clearly mentioned in the notification that if the SIMI's unlawful activities were not curbed immediately, it would continue with its subversive activities and reorganise its activists, who were still absconding; destroy the secular fabric of the country, polluting the minds of the people by creating communal disharmony; propagate anti-national sentiments and escalate secessionism by supporting militancy. (The Hindu 7/8/08)

Gujarat to probe Muslims being turned away from dam (7)

Gandhinagar, August 6: Taking a serious view of security personnel turning away Muslim holiday-makers from the Sardar Sarovar dam site in Narmada, the Gujarat Home Department has decided to inquire into the episode. "We have taken a serious note of the incident as reported in your newspaper today. In the first place, that should not have happened at all. I will inquire into it," Gujarat Minister of State for Home Amit Shah told The Indian Express on Wednesday. As reported by this paper, the personnel posted at the dam site as part of security measures in the wake of the July 26 serial blasts in Ahmedabad had turned away several Muslim tourists, including a visiting London-based NRI family, on Sunday. Inspector B M Rajvanshi, who was patrolling the dam site, was reported to have even asked the name of one of the Muslim tourists, and then directed them to go away. The armed guards posted there had even questioned one of the NRI family members about his origins. When this Muslim NRI told the patrolling cops that he was from Kosamba area, the cops reportedly remarked: Abhi abhi toh wahan se bombs mile hain. The incident had caused a great deal of embarrassment and shock to the Muslim holiday-makers at the dam site, popular picnic spot in Gujarat. Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited (SSNNL)'s managing director A K Joti has described the incident as "most unfortunate, and in bad taste". He said the Nigam's tourism cell at the dam site issues entry passes to all tourists without any discrimination. "It's really sad that the security guards posted there should behave

with Muslim visitors in such a bizarre manner. The Nigam will draw the attention of the Home Department to this," Joti added. (Indian Express 8/8/08)

Delimitation makes Muslims a force (7)

Hyderabad: Aug. 13: The delimitation process has made Muslims a dominant force in 15 Lok Sabha seats of the state and a deciding factor in 40 Assembly constituencies. In the redrawn electoral map of the state, Muslims along with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will decide winners in 107 Assembly and 22 Lok Sabha seats. In effect, they will decide who will rule the state. Constituencies have been revamped by the Delimitation Commission in such a way that adjoining Muslim-dominated mandals were merged. The commission took the 2001 Census as a base while undertaking its delimitation exercise. While Hyderabad Lok Sabha seat is on top with 70 per cent Muslim voters, Nandyal in Kurnool district stood second with 17.77 per cent. Two Lok Sabha seats, Rajampet and Kadapa, in chief minister Dr Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy's native Kadapa district have 15 per cent Muslim voters. The strength of Muslim voters ranges from 10 to 14.94 per cent in Nizamabad, Kurnool, Chevella, Zahirabad, Guntur, Adilabad, Nellore, Narasaraopet, Hindupur, Mahbubnagar and Anantapur Lok Sabha segments. In 2001, the Census also took into account religious affiliations and this came of help to the delimitation commission. There are even mandal-wise statistics of SC/STs, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Jains. The Assembly constituencies also saw a major change with Muslims becoming a dominant force in more than 40 of them, where they constitute more than 15 per cent of voters. (Asian Age 14/8/08)

Indian polity is being unfair to Muslims, says Shabana Azmi (7)

New Delhi: In a stinging attack on the country's polity, film actress-turned-social activist Shabana Azmi has accused it of being "unfair" to Muslims, making only "token gestures," instead of addressing the real issues. She also targeted the Muslim leadership, saying it had not bothered to "clear the air about what Islam actually is" and contended that Muslims should change the image of their religion and community. Asked on Karan Thapar's 'Devil's Advocate' show on CNN-IBN whether the country's politics had been "unfair" to Muslims, Ms. Azmi replied, "yes." On whether it was individual politicians, the system or political parties that were to blame, she said, "I think there is not enough understanding of the fact that in a democracy how you treat the security of the minority must be an important part of its success." "You can't make only token gestures and actually let them be in the state that they are as the Rajinder Sachar Committee report shows. So what happens is that token gestures are made, but real issues are never addressed." Asked whether she would say that Muslims were "victims of discrimination," she said she could not buy a flat in Mumbai "because I am a Muslim." She said she had read that the same had happened to actor Saif Ali Khan. On what being a Muslim meant to her, Ms. Azmi said: "I've been raised in a very liberal, bohemian family in which religion has not played any part at all. For me, being a Muslim really was about Urdu, about eating biryani and wearing shararas on Id. So the cultural aspect of me was Muslim otherwise, because I am not religious, the religion did not matter. After the riots following the Babri Masjid demolition, I suddenly had people saying, you are a Muslim and hurling it as an accusation ... it was a self-consciousness that I have never before experienced ... [what] it made me do is say 'yes, I am Muslim and what do you want to do about it?' That, I can say, is increasingly happening, particularly in the western world. A lot of young kids today are wearing the burqa, are taking on an identity which really they don't feel. Just because when you push somebody against the wall that's what they come up with" Ms. Azmi, who is a five-time National Film Award winner, emphatically said that Muslims did not need their "own leaders" and to press her point she cited that Jawaharlal Nehru was "a leader for Muslims and that's the way it should be." She accused the politicians of promoting a stereotypical image of the Muslim community and not allowing moderate, liberal Muslim voices to be heard. "You look at all the politicians, whether it is Atal Bihari Vajpayee, whether it is Indira Gandhi, whether it is anybody, the minute it is a Muslim question, you will get the 'dariwaralas' and only all the Maulvis to speak," said the former Member of Parliament.The Hindu 17/8/08)

Jaipur blasts: Muslim groups sceptical over arrests (7)

JAI PUR: Muslim groups in Rajasthan on Wednesday expressed scepticism over the claim of the State police of having cracked the May 13 Jaipur serial blasts case. They said the investigation

followed a “predetermined pattern” and failed to win the people’s confidence. The Rajasthan Muslim Forum — an apex body of Muslim groups — said the arrests of prime suspect Shahbaz Hussain from Lucknow and seven alleged conspirators from Kota were based on the confessions made by those held in neighbouring Gujarat. The arrests would fail to stand judicial scrutiny during the trial, it said. Muslim Forum convener Qari Moinuddin said Director-General of Police K.S. Bains admitted that the police were yet to build a prima facie evidence against the accused. “In this scenario, it is preposterous for the State police to make tall claims of having unearthed the roots of the conspiracy. The case against all the suspects is very weak.” Mr. Moinuddin said there was resentment in Lucknow against Shahbaz’s arrest — as evident by a demonstration held in the city on Wednesday — and the Special Investigation Team had no solid material, except the arrest warrant, to justify his detention. Similarly, the case against the seven accused belonging to Kota — who were already in the SIT’s detention for several days — was slapped merely on the basis of their acquaintance with Sajid Mansuri who, the Gujarat police say, masterminded the Ahmedabad and Jaipur blasts. “Merely knowing a person does not make anyone a criminal. None of them had any role in carrying out the blasts,” said Mr. Moinuddin. The accused include an elderly physician, Ishaq Qureshi, and his son, Taufeeq, who is a Unani medicine student in Jaipur. The Muslim Forum felt that targeting professionals like them was a ploy of the police to give credence to its speculation of educated Muslims joining the terror net. Jamat-e-Islami Hind State president and the Forum’s member Mohammed Salim alleged the police had cooked up the cases to contain the growing resentment against indiscriminate arrests and illegal detention of Muslim youths. “On the pretext of investigation, Muslims were harassed and their constitutional rights were violated by their prolonged detention and torture in custody.” Mr. Salim said that while the medical students released after detention were finding it difficult to continue their studies, electronics engineer Rashid Hussain and government physician Amanullah Jamali had lost their jobs. Civil rights groups will stage a demonstration opposite the Collectorate here on Thursday in protest against the harassment of innocent people during investigations. Mr. Salim said the Muslim youths were summoned to police stations, detained beyond 24 hours and their families were not informed about their whereabouts. “The powerful blast in Kanpur on Sunday, in which two Bajrang Dal activists were killed while making bombs, is a clear testimony to the fact that communal forces are involved in the acts of terror in the country. It is strange that the police are not yet ready to look beyond the prism of SIMI [Students Islamic Movement of India],” said Mr. Salim. Abdul Latif of the All-India Milli Council said that while empirical pieces of evidence had emerged showing clearly the role of the Bajrang Dal and other Hindutva outfits in the incidents at Malegaon, Nanded, Thane and Kanpur, the State DGP had made a “ridiculous claim” of SIMI organising training camps in the Kota region. The Muslim Forum also denounced a decision of the Rajasthan High Court Bar Association not to represent any accused in the blasts case in the court and described it as a breach of professional ethics of lawyers. (The Hindu 28/8/08)

HRD ministry rejects Sachar proposal (7)

New Delhi, August 29: The Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has shot down one of the key recommendations made by the Sachar Committee to address the grievances of the minority community on an equal footing. Planned as an ombudsman to address the grievances of deprived groups, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has not found any favour at all with the Arjun Singh headed HRD Ministry, which has termed the move “undesirable” and the body as “not required”, and rejected it. The HRD Ministry has written to the Minority Affairs Ministry, which is in the process of collecting the views of various concerned ministries on the subject of EOC, that the commission does not seem desirable as there are already several national-level bodies and panels for affirmative action. Creation of another body will only lead to a multiplicity of such organisations and duplication of functions, said an official from the MMA. MMA secretary M N Prasad when contacted said that he was not aware if the HRD Ministry had written objecting to the EOC. “The process of getting ministerial views is on. I am not aware of the HRD Ministry writing to us and opposing it. However, there are oppositions and objections to every proposal and these are sorted out,” he said. Prasad said that the ministry would try to take a legislation on the issue to the Parliament as early as possible. Sources say that Arjun Singh’s opposition to the EOC is strange, considering his pro-minority image. Singh, incidentally, has been out of action for nearly a month and has just started official work from his residence of late. The EOC, which has

already got the PMO's go ahead and is aimed at 'enhancing the legal basis for providing equal opportunities', was one of the key recommendations made by the Justice Rajinder Sachar committee in its report. The committee had said, "It is a well accepted maxim in law that not only must justice be done, but it must appear to be done. It is in that context that the committee recommends that an EOC should be constituted by the government to look into the grievances of deprived groups." The committee report when taken to the Cabinet in May 2007 decided that "the widespread feeling of discrimination among the Muslim community will be addressed by setting up an Equal Opportunities Commission to look into the grievances of deprived groups. An expert group will be set up to examine and determine the structure and function of an EOC. We expect this mechanism to operate in a manner which gives confidence to the minorities that any denial of equal opportunity or bias or discrimination in dealing with them will be attended to and redressal given". The EOC is envisaged as vested with the powers of a civil court to summon and investigate and recommend action without passing any sentences. A panel headed by legal expert N R Madhava Menon was set up by the MMA to help finalise the nature and functions of the EOC. The panel's report was circulated to various ministries a month back for their suggestions. It is during this exercise that the MMA has faced a roadblock unexpectedly from the HRD Ministry. Ministerial views have to be taken into account before taking proposals to the Cabinet. (Indian Express 30/8/08)

Muslims upset over putting 'zakat' under scanner (7)

JAIPUR: Muslim groups in Rajasthan on Thursday expressed concern over the State police and investigating agencies putting the collection of "zakat" (charity) for madrasas during the ongoing month of Ramzan under the scanner in the wake of recent serial blasts in several cities. Police enquiries have reportedly led to panic among the teachers and managers of over 4,500 madrasas in the State. The police drive, coming hot on the heels of a survey of madrasas undertaken by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, is seemingly aimed at finding out the sources of funds and their utilisation by madrasas amid apprehensions that the terror attacks across the country were possibly being financed through clandestine channels. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan's survey, on the other hand, seeks to find out the precise number of madrasas functioning in various districts, number of students enrolled, impact of the mid-day meals scheme and the improvement, if any, in the standard of education after the appointment of government para-teachers. Scores of madrasa functionaries travelling to Jaipur and other towns for collection of zakat have been taken to police stations and questioned since this past Saturday, when blasts hit Delhi. However, the police have acknowledged that none of the traditional Islamic seminaries in the State has connection with any radical outfit. A madrasa teacher from Kota, Maulana Rafiq Qasmi – detained for a few hours at the Central Bus Stand police station here earlier this week – was set free after he executed a bond for good behaviour before the Sub-Divisional Magistrate. CPI (M) leader Waqar-ul-Ahad intervened to secure his release. Under Islamic traditions, it is obligatory for every Muslim who crosses a certain threshold of property ownership to pay as zakat 2.5 per cent of wealth which he or she has had for a full lunar year. Muslims generally pay zakat during the fasting month of Ramzan. Madrasa teachers and functionaries from villages and small towns travel with receipt books to bigger cities during Ramzan every year to get the charity and painstakingly maintain a record of the funds received and spent. The Rajasthan Muslim Forum – an apex body of 17 Muslim groups – said it would be a "gross mistake" to presume that the zakat funds were being misused for financing terrorist activities. (The Hindu 19/9/08)

Advani faces criticism over Sachar remark (7)

NEW DELHI: Sept. 21: "I challenge Mr L.K. Advani to say that if the BJP comes to power, it will abolish this ministry. I challenge Mr Advani to also say that the scholarships given to minorities will be cut and the development of waqf properties will be stopped." Throwing these challenges at the BJP's prime ministerial candidate was Asaduddin Owaisi, All-India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader and a member of the Lok Sabha. His party is with the UPA. The challenge has come in the wake of the BJP leader's speech on Sunday in Ahmedabad reiterating his party's position on the Sachar Committee report — that the implementation of its recommendations was part of the UPA government policy of minority appeasement. The Sachar report had detailed the by and large poor socio-economic and educational status of the country's

Muslims. It was the report which had prompted the present government to set up the minority affairs ministry. But Mr Advani, who was releasing a book titled Sachar Committee — Conspiracy to Divide the Nation, which has been brought out by the Ahmedabad-based Bharatiya Vihar Manch, had an interesting appeal to make to "my Muslim brethren" with regard to the Sachar panel's report. He called upon the community "to see through the inadequacies of the Sachar committee". Mr Advani also noted: "Inequalities and backwardness in socio-economic development are not specific to any particular community in India. To a greater or lesser extent, they are true about all communities." For good measure he added, "There is no basis for the allegation or insinuation of systemic discrimination and injustice against any particular religious community." To this, the Hyderabad MP's retort was: "The Sachar report did not rely on personal data. It used data from the national census, the NSS surveys, RBI figures. It was empirical evidence that was used and if Mr Advani says that this is wrong, then he is suffering from selective amnesia. It shows how much confidence he has in government organisations." (Asian Age 22/9/08)

Do not look at Muslims suspiciously: Mayawati (7)

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati on Sunday derided the attempts to target Muslims in the name of terrorism. The community should not be held responsible for the recent terror acts in Delhi and elsewhere, she said at a press conference. The Muslims in the State were being looked upon with suspicion. The community should not be harassed on the basis of a dubious (intelligence) report. While reiterating her resolve to end terrorism in the State, if full cooperation was extended to the State government by the Centre, she warned the officials that strict action would be taken if she received complaints of harassment of innocent persons belonging to the minority community or any other caste. Ms. Mayawati also took up the cause of Christians. They were feeling insecure in the BJP-ruled States, she alleged. Referring to the incidents in Orissa, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, she said it showed that the communal forces had become strong. Accusing the Centre of playing politics on the issue, Ms. Mayawati demanded the UPA government to exercise a tight leash on the activities of the outfits aligned with the BJP, as well as other organisations, in a bid to maintain communal harmony. The Chief Minister, who has called a meeting here on Monday for discussing the law and order scenario in the background of the recent incidents and terror-links with U.P., said the Samajwadi Party regime had brought disrepute to the State, vis-à-vis terrorist activities. Terrorist activities in U.P. started with the Sankat Mochan bomb blast followed by the Ayodhya incident and the blast in the Shramjeevi Express, all under the SP regime. Ms. Mayawati was of the view that had the SP government crushed terrorism, U.P. would not have earned a bad name. Compared to the previous regime, priority was accorded to the rule of law, she said and lauded the police for nabbing the accused named in the attack on the Rampur Group Centre of CRPF and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The Anti-Terrorist Squad recently arrested an ISI agent in Bahraich. The Chief Minister further referred to the arrest of Abu Bashar, main suspect in the Ahmedabad serial blasts, on August 16, 2008 and Shahbaz Husain, suspect in the Jaipur serial bomb blasts here on August 25, 2008, by the State police. On July 25, 2008, the Special Task Force took the lid off the fake currency racket in the State. Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Syed Ahmed Bukhari, SP leader Abu Aasim Azmi, Tariq Bukhari and Teesta Setalvad visited Azamgarh and protested against the arrest of Abu Bashar, she pointed out. Extending cooperation to the Union government in fighting terror, she said that stern directives had been issued to the police officers against staging fake encounters. At the same time, no leniency would be shown to the terrorist elements, she added. (The Hindu 22/9/08)

'They said we split India, then called us communal' (7)

Malegaon, October 2: Two days after a bomb blast killed five Muslims in Maharashtra's communally sensitive town of Malegaon and briefly sparked mob violence, the state police had said on Wednesday that it was nervous about namaaz on Eid as tens of thousands of devout were expected to gather and emotions could once again flare. What they got instead on Thursday were tears. "First you pointed fingers at us, saying that we divided the country. Then you told us that we are communal, and now you tell us we are terrorists," one of Malegaon's most prominent clerics, Mufti Mohammed Ismail, said as he led 1.5 lakh people at namaaz at the Idgah Maidan in

the textile town. And then he broke down in full public view, after condemning Monday night's blast which hit the town after Muslims had broken their fasts. His words struck a chord with many in the crowd and brought tears in their eyes too. While urging Muslim youth to have "better sense and a conscience", the imam asked the Government and the police to ensure that innocent people were not rounded up as suspects. Speaking of "secular politics", he said, "Kaan khol ke sun lo, jo qaum tumhe takhto taj pe bitha sakti hai, wohi qaum tumhara janaaza bhi nikaal sakti hai." (A community which can place you on a pedestal can also take out your funeral procession). Hundreds of policemen guarded the venue as the imam touched on "callous investigations", "innocent Muslims identified as terrorists" and of the lack of justice for the 2006 serial blasts which killed 37 people. The idea of "an educated Muslim", the imam said, was lost today as educated young men were picked up without evidence and then shown as involved in Terror activities. The prayer session ended with the imam asking the community to remain alert and help a "just investigation" if they get leads. Meanwhile, the Collector visited the families of the five killed in the blasts and handed them compensation cheques of Rs 5 lakh each. (Indian Express 3/10/08)

Assam violence worse than Orissa: Ex-CM (7)

GUWAHATI: Oct. 5: Former chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta here on Sunday sought the intervention of the Central government in containing the situation which he described "worse than Orissa". After visiting the violence-hit district on Sunday, Mr Mahanta told this newspaper, "Despite the government clamping curfew and issuing shoot-on-sight orders, violence is continuing and there are complaints that there is no security forces present in several vulnerable areas." Referring to the involvement of militants group as claimed by chief minister Tarun Gogoi, Mr Mahanta said: "It is simply a refrain. There have been several instances of ethnic clashes in the past also but all the time the Gogoi government has failed to react and protect the people." He said, "Mr Gogoi also failed to take action against those who hoisted the Pakistani flag on their houses in Darrang and Udalguri districts. This was recorded and reported by a news channel to which Mr Gogoi claims to be his own channel." He dared Mr Gogoi to publish a white paper on all the ethnic clashes that took place since 2001. Meanwhile, the Assam United Democratic Front here on Sunday accused the ruling Congress government of hatching conspiracy with the Bodo leaders to drive out Muslims from the Bodoland Territorial Council areas. "The Assam government now made it clear that (Asian Age 6/10/08)

Call for political empowerment of Muslims (7)

JAIPUR: Community leaders, intellectuals, academicians and activists underlined the significance of political empowerment of Muslims through their due representation in the legislatures to find a platform for raising their issues at a political convention of the All-India Milli Council here on Saturday. The participants in the day-long convention felt that the Muslim community could highlight its grievances and draw the attention of the civil society to the difficulties faced by it if it made itself "politically relevant" and made common cause with other deprived groups such as Dalits, tribals and marginalised sections. Among others, former MP Syed Shahabuddin, Gurdeep Singh of Akali Dal, Digant Oza of South Asia Free Media Association, Mumbai-based activist Abdul Rehman Milli, Rajasthan Minorities Commission's Member G. Khan and Milli Council's secretary general M. Manzoor Alam addressed the convention. Mr. Shahabuddin said the political parties were not putting up Muslim candidates in elections in proportion to their population and "strong governments", when voted to power, did not care for the community. He said Muslims were usually not fielded from the seats with good potential for winning. Referring to the Rajasthan Assembly elections due later this year, Mr. Shahabuddin said at least 17 of the 200 seats should go to Muslims as they comprised 8.5 per cent of the State's population. He said all political parties should be apprised of the community's expectations and told to give tickets to an adequate number of candidates. Milli Council's State general secretary Abdul Qayoom Akhtar said the educated section of the community should act as a pressure group to wield political influence. He said the lack of monitoring had led to the State Government not taking action to release scholarships to students of minority communities and open branches of banks in the Muslim-dominated areas. While former civil servant A.R. Khan underlined the need for building up a dynamic social capital for the community's progress, Mansoori Samaj leader Abdul Latif said there was a lesson to be learnt from the Dalit leadership in Uttar Pradesh that had succeeded in

capturing power by its social engineering. Local representatives of the Milli Council pointed out that there were as many as 26 Assembly constituencies after delimitation in the State where the population of Muslim voters exceeded 40,000. The participants felt that Muslims were in a position to influence election results at these seats. The speakers called upon Muslims to exercise their franchise prudently and not allow themselves to be exploited by any political party. They also said a government depending on the support of diversified parties (The Hindu 12/10/08)

Muslims targeted in Dhule (7)

DHULE: Mohammed Salim Nizamuddin, a 42-year-old powerloom worker, was returning home from Bhiwandi on October 5 in a jeep. When the vehicle reached the highway near Dhule on Sunday evening, he and his four co-passengers were pulled out by a mob. "They broke the glass on the jeep. We were beaten up badly. I just ran for my life and took shelter nearby," he said. Mohammed said the people who gave him shelter told him not to reveal their identity. "Such is the terror in Dhule that even those who shelter Muslims are targeted," he said. He added that there was a police van in front of their vehicle which tipped off the mob that there were Muslims in the jeep. "The mob beat us saying we had destroyed a temple," he added. Dhule city has a population of around five lakh, of which 25 per cent is Muslim. When the riots broke out on October 5, there was a lot of tension at the Civil hospital too. According to an official source who wishes to remain anonymous, there was a fracas outside the hospital between the two communities. Some patients were beaten up outside the casualty ward and the police did nothing. IG, Nashik Range, S.P. Gupta, however, said this was all "bunkum." Nothing of the sort happened. The hospital has admitted a number of Muslim patients but civil surgeon T.D. Khot denied that any incident like this took place. "We don't know what happened outside the hospital but we treated 220 patients, of whom 71 were Muslim. Of the 28 patients still admitted, 14 are Muslim," he said. The Muslims still at the hospital did not complain of any ill-treatment. At the Civil hospital, Abdus Sattar, 53, a head-load worker, with back injuries and a fracture of the right hand, says he was attacked by some boys on the night of October 8. "I was letting out my goats for the night, when I was ambushed. I had to wait till morning to come to hospital because of curfew," he said. Sheikh Ramzan, who sells chillies in the market, left for home early on Sunday due to the riots but he did not escape. The mob attacked Ramzan and now he has multiple leg fractures and his right foot has a serious axe injury. "I had to drag myself for some distance before the police brought me here," he said. However, a different picture emerged at the Sarvajanic hospital run by the Dawoodi Bohra Charitable Trust. Dr. Abid Sheikh of the Trust said he had taken a patient to the Civil hospital on October 5 evening with a bad cervical cut. "We entered the hospital and there was a mob attacking the Muslims. The ambulance was surrounded. We left the patient there and had to run for our lives," Dr. Sheikh said. The patient had come to Sarvajanic but since there were no emergency services there, Dr. Sheikh had to take him to the Civil hospital..... (The Hindu 15/10/08)

Muslim policemen removed from Advani duty, Kerala orders probe (7)

Thiruvananthapuram, October 15 The Kerala Government has asked the Director General of Police to probe the last-minute removal of two Muslim policemen from the security duty of Bharatiya Janata Party leader L K Advani during his Kozhikode visit on Tuesday. Home Minister Koderi Balakrishnan has asked DGP Raman Srivastava to inquire into the incident. Muslim leaders have alleged religious discrimination by the National Security Guard which was in charge of the security arrangements at the helipad in Kozhikode. Advani, who flew in from Kasaragod, was in the city to attend a party function. The Muslim policemen, who had undergone special training for VIP duty, were deputed to be part of Advani's motorcade. Around a dozen police drivers reported for duty at the helipad on Tuesday morning. NSG officials sought the list of police personnel on duty and, after going through it, allegedly told two persons with Muslim names to leave. "This is an insult to the secular face of the state. Both policemen had participated in the training sessions for VIP visit. But last minute, they were removed on religious grounds. That should not have happened in Kerala," said Indian Union Muslim League state general secretary P K Kunhalikutty. The BJP today said the decision to remove the Muslim drivers was "wrong." "It is wrong and none of our leaders was aware of it. Our party has never differentiated anyone on the

basis of caste, religion or creed," party vice-president Muqtar Abbas Naqvi told PTI. Naqvi alleged it was part of UPA's vote-bank politics. Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahamed raised the issue with Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta. Gupta has asked Director General NSG J K Dutt to probe the matter. (Indian Express 16/10/08)

Court for body to regulate Muslim marriages (7)

KOCHI: A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Wednesday observed that legislation for setting up bodies at Central and regional levels to regulate, control and supervise Muslim marriages and divorces was the need of the hour. The Bench of Justice Kurian Joseph and Justice Harun-UI-Rashid, while passing a verdict in a matrimonial case involving a Muslim couple, said an effective system should be introduced for protecting the Muslim society and women from "indiscreet marriage and divorce." The court observed that though polygamy was allowed in the strict sense by Islam, there was no system in India to supervise or control such indiscreet marriage and divorce. Going by Koranic verses, permission to marry more than one woman, but not more than four, was given at a time when there were lots of orphans, widows and captives of war who were unable to maintain a dignified life. Polygamy was allowed then due to unavoidable circumstances. In fact, the practice was discouraged by imposing stringent conditions. The court observed that even after 15th century, some people of the community seemed to be very particular in following the practice, unmindful of whether such circumstances existed or not. They entered into more than one marriage, mostly for their personal pleasure. The court said polygamy was unlawful in the country. It called for strong moral strength, if not religious factor, to eradicate polygamy from among the Muslims. The court said there was no system in the country to ascertain and decide whether a person was eligible to contract more than one marriage during the subsistence of the first marriage. Men in the community enjoyed unrestricted freedom to marry women of their choice and pronounce talaq according to their whims and fancies. In fact, most of such marriages were illegal since they were against Koranic injunctions. The court pointed out that in Pakistan, Muslim family law regulated polygamy and provided for an arbitration council. As per the laws in Muslim countries such as Iraq, the husband must satisfy the court the reasons for divorce. These provisions were intended to regulate marriage and supervise its sanctity. The Bench appealed to all concerned within the community and the administrative authority and the government to study the problems faced by "helpless and destitute women and children" and bestow thoughts on the ways and means to alleviate their problems. (The Hindu 23/10/08)

Panel seeks opinion on Muslim laws (7)

NEW DELHI: Nov. 3: Months before the general elections are scheduled to be held in the country, the Law Commission of India's report, recommending changes and proper implementation of the Muslim laws in the country, has been forwarded by the commission to leading Muslim organisations and the National Commission for Minorities, seeking their opinion. The move is also being described as the Centre's attempt of appeasing its minority vote bank. The report was forwarded to All India Muslim Personal Law Board, All India Milli Council, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, to seek an opinion from the community leaders, in October. Sources stated that the report has been forwarded to these organisations in an effort to skirt away from any controversies that could be generated by the sensitive subject. Sources pointed out that it was for the first time, since its creation by that a report proposing changes in the Muslim laws had been prepared by the Commission. after seeking suggestions from the community leaders the report would be presented to Union law minister H.R. Bharadwaj by the end 2008. NCM chairman Mohammad Shafi Qureshi confirmed that the report has been received by them. "The Commission would review the report soon," he added. (Asian Age 4/11/08)

'Not enough done for Muslims' (7)

New Delhi: Nov. 3: Playing the minority card ahead of the general elections, the Samajwadi Party general secretary Amar Singh has raked up the issue of communal violence in four of the Congress-ruled states, saying that not enough was being done to protect the Muslims in these states. Mr Singh has also clubbed the Congress together with NDA on the issue of communal violence in the states ruled by them. Mr Singh said that while Christians are being attacked in the

NDA-ruled states, Muslims are being attacked in the Congress-ruled states. "On the direction of party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav I have toured all the communal violence affected places in the country. In Maharashtra, Digram and Bhuria have suffered communal violence with the Muslims suffering the most. Further, Muslims were targeted in Malegoan blasts," Mr Singh said, while emphasising that the state is being ruled by the Congress and Nationalist Congress Party alliance also in place at the Centre. Mr Singh further elaborated the Assam communal violence, as he said that more than two lakh Muslims are there in the camp, while they were attacked by a Bodo group. "The Congress government in Assam is supported by the Bodos. The government there has failed to protect the Muslims," said Mr Singh. The SP leader further shared his experience of the Adilabad communal violence in Andhra Pradesh, while again demanding judicial probe in the Batla house encounter. "All these four states are ruled by the Congress. I am raising this issue being the party supporting the Congress at the Centre. The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh needs to look into the issue," said the SP leader. He further charged that the NDA ruled states whether it's Orissa or Karnatka or Chhattisgarh the Christians are being attacked everywhere. "There is this situation that while the Muslims are being attacked in the Congress ruled states, the Christians are being attacked in the NDA ruled states," said Mr Singh. (Asian Age 4/11/08)

Compensation to Muslim youth wrongly held after Hyderabad blasts (7)

Hyderabad, Nov 14: With an eye on crucial minority votes in the ensuing elections, the Congress government in Andhra Pradesh has decided to compensate 21 Muslim youths who were wrongly detained and tortured after the serial bomb blasts here last year. The government said it would pay Rs.30,000 to cover part of the cost of buying an auto-rickshaws to each of the 21 youths wrongly held in connection with the bombings at Mecca Masjid, Lumbini Park and Gokul Chat. State Minorities Welfare Minister Mohammad Ali Shabbir told reporters here Friday that compensation would be paid to all those who were arrested on the suspicion of being linked to the blasts, but were proved innocent. Though the state minority commission submitted its report on the torture of innocent youths to the government in October last year, only now has the government decided to act on its recommendations. Nine people were killed in a blast during Friday prayers at the historic Mecca Masjid on May 18 last year. Twin blasts at Lumbini Park and Gokul Chat, a popular eatery, claimed 43 lives on Aug 25. Police had detained 70 Muslims on suspicion after the blasts. Majority of them were released after a few weeks, while about 25 were booked on charges like criminal conspiracy and waging war against the state. The move to compensate them comes close on the heels of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, the oldest and biggest Muslim organisation, holding a massive public meeting here Sunday. Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, one of the speakers at the meet, had promised to help rehabilitate those found innocent. Seven of those held after the blasts have been acquitted by the courts. A city court on Nov 4 acquitted four youths arrested after the Mecca Masjid blast. Those acquitted included Shoab Jagirdar, a native of Jalna in Maharashtra, his relative and engineering student Imran Khan, Mohammed Adul Kaleem and Abdul Majeed. Abdul Majeed is the younger brother of Mohammed Abdul Shahid alias Bilal, an alleged member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant outfit. The police claimed that Bilal, who was believed to be hiding in Bangladesh, was the mastermind of all terror attacks in south India during the last two years. However, Mohammed Rayeesuddin, one of those acquitted, has refused to accept the government's compensation. "If the government is sincere in paying the compensation, let them withdraw the false cases booked against me," he said..... (New Kerala 14/11/08)

Andhra's 'healing touch' to 'innocent' Muslims (7)

Hyderabad, November 13 They were among 70 Muslim men picked up by the Hyderabad police in the wake of two terror attacks in the city last year. At least 15 of them, according to a report by a state government panel, were subjected to various forms of torture during custody that lasted six to nine months: stripping, physical abuse, electric shocks, some had their beards plucked out; in one case, a two-litre water bottle was said to have been hung from the victim's penis. Now the Andhra Pradesh government admits they are innocent and, as a 'healing touch,' is offering them a "rehabilitation package" of Rs 30,000 and Rs-80,000 loans to buy autorickshaws. Even this offer has come only after some of the men approached the Andhra Pradesh Minority Finance Commission for financial assistance saying they were unable to find employment after the

“stigma” of the arrests — many lost their jobs and face ostracism by friends and family. These men were picked up by police investigating the Mecca Masjid blast on May 18 that killed nine people and the Lumbini Park and Gokul Chaat House blasts on August 26 last year that killed 42 people. As many as 22 of those picked up are free now, cleared of all charges; one is on bail in another case. After two habeas corpus petitions in the court following their arrests, the state government told the Andhra Pradesh Minorities Commission to look into allegations of police excesses. The commission appointed advocate Ravi Chandran and a forensics expert from a government medical college to study the cases. Their report, submitted to the government last October, (reported by The Indian Express, October 31, 2007) gave details of the alleged torture that the men were subjected to. The report draws from a medical examination conducted on 20 undertrials by Dr T Mahender Reddy, Professor of Forensic Medicine, government Kamineni Medical College, Hyderabad. Speaking to The Indian Express, Minister for Minorities Welfare Mohammed Shabbir Ali says: “These youths turned out to be innocent. Police picked up a number of people for interrogation. Those who were innocent were given a clean chit and were allowed to go. Based on their allegations that they were detained illegally and that their names have been tarnished for ever, we are planning to compensate them. There is a stigma attached to them and the government should help them in rehabilitation.” The Minister, however, says he doesn’t want to “blame the police at this juncture” in light of the torture report. “Police do their work based on information and sometimes the information can be wrong. Many youths were picked up but police filed cases against only 31. Instead of implicating the others in any other case, at least the police released them,” he says. Says Principal Secretary, Home, Ajoyendra Pyal: “I have come to know of the minister’s statement. The police have their own methods of working. I cannot comment on why or how these youths were picked up and who turned out to be innocent. The police have so far not admitted that they made a mistake. If the case of these youths comes to me I will surely examine it.” The police say they didn’t pick up these men directly in connection with the blasts at Mecca Masjid or Lumbini Park and Gokul Chaat. Says Hyderabad Police Commissioner B Prasada Rao: “The Mecca Masjid blast case still remains unsolved. (There is) not even a single worthwhile clue in that case. As for the Lumbini Park and Gokul Chaat case, we only know of the persons arrested by Mumbai police recently claiming that they were behind these blasts. Police arrested youths in Hyderabad during the course of blast investigations but they stumbled upon these youths for other reasons. A majority of the cases filed against them are conspiracy to spread communal hatred, forging of documents, obtaining SIM cards by providing false information and personal details and forging papers to acquire passports, and possible connections with SIMI. Of course, once they were detained, police also probed if they had anything to do with the blasts. These youths had nothing to do with the blasts but cases have been filed against them for the original reason they were picked up. Some youths have been acquitted but we are preparing to go an appeal.”(Express India 14/11/08)

Witch-hunting of Muslims condemned (7)

Hyderabad: Speakers at a public meeting here strongly condemned the witch-hunting of Muslim community by the police. The recent findings of ATS amply proved who were the ‘masterminds’ behind the terror attacks at Malegaon and other places. They deplored the atmosphere of fear and suspicion created about minorities by blaming them for every act of terror. The public meeting was organised by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind on the occasion of the arrival of its ‘Caravan of Peace and Justice’ here from Delhi. A large number of persons, including women, attended the meeting at the open air theatre at Public Gardens. Syed Jalaluddin Ansar Umari, president, JIH, wondered why BJP leader L.K. Advani had stopped talking of POTA after the role of Sangh Parivar in the terror attacks became clear. He deplored the foisting of false cases on innocent Muslim youth, particularly the educated ones, and their arrest and torture. Now it was clear who were behind these terror incidents, Mr. Umari said. He blamed the media for its failure to distinguish between an accused and a suspect and urged it to be impartial and unbiased in reporting incidents. Malik Motasim Khan, JIH president, A.P and Orissa zone, said the country was faced with two types of terrorism – overseas white terrorism and Sangh terrorism. He said the JIH would not call the acts of few persons as ‘Hindu terrorism’ and said prefixes like Lt., Major and Sadhvi were important and should not be linked to terrorists. While the Army would cleanse its ranks, it was time the Election Commission should cancel registration of parties involved in

terror acts, he said. Justice Sardar Ali Khan, former chairman, National Minorities Commission, said if the country lacked anything it was justice. Muslims were the second biggest majority in the country and by alienating them the country could not progress. Abdul Raheem Qureshi, president, All India Tameer-e-Millat, said country could not progress without peace and for this to come justice was essential. He wanted more interfaith dialogues to be conducted to dispel misgivings. Kancha Ilaiah, writer, K.R. Chowdhry and R.M. Mandal, social activists also spoke. The meeting called for liberating law enforcing agencies and individuals from all kinds of prejudices and bigotry to ensure enduring peace. In a resolution it said the exposure of involvement of Sangh Parivar and military official in terrorist attacks had created a 'dangerously convoluted' situation in the country. The 'reckless sensationalism' of news by media had led to an unprecedented communal divide and mutual distrust. There was a growing sense of insecurity among the minorities, especially Muslims and Christians. In another resolution, the assemblage called for establishment of independent tribunal to investigate all incidents of terror, police atrocities and torture occurred during last decade. It wanted an effective mechanism to be put in place to ensure honest and unbiased reporting by media. The meeting demanded a ban on leakage of confidential reports and confessions extracted under duress. (The Hindu 17/11/08)

Muslim body refuses to bury 9 killers (7)

MUMBAI: The Muslim Council on Sunday decided not to allow burial of the bodies of the nine terrorists killed during the Mumbai siege in the Marine Lines Bada Qabrastan (cemetery). The council said it was trying to send a message to all cemeteries in India that none of the bodies should be buried on Indian soil. Bhai Jagtap, a Congress MLA from VP Road-JJ constituency, told TOI some Muslim organisations had approached him demanding that the terrorists should not be buried in any cemetery in India. "Considering their sentiments, I am trying to get in touch with deputy CM R R Patil and other senior leaders. I will forward this message to the state government," said Jagtap. The council authorities have handed over a letter to the Marine Lines cemetery in this regard. In 2003, a Pakistani national killed in an encounter was buried in a Mumbai cemetery. This time, it has been decided not to allow burial of the terrorists because of the gravity of the attack. However, other Muslims organisations are yet to take a decision on the issue. (Times of India 1/12/08)

Terror attacks disturb Muslim psyche (7)

PATNA: For a majority of Indian Muslims, the terror outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Indian Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Jehad, Al-Badr, Deccan Mujahideen may be alien but because of these elusive organisations, the community is being seen with suspicion. The series of terror attacks in recent past has definitely left an adverse impact on the psyche of Muslims, particularly the youth who have developed a sense of insecurity. "The frustration among them is leading them to nowhere," said Prof Shamim Ahmad Munami. Mohammad Afzal said he is upset. "My friends have started looking at me with suspicion," said the 22-year-old science student living in one of the private lodges in dingy lanes in Sabzibagh. "Like me several others are being ignored and sidelined for no fault of us. Our friends look at us as if we are responsible for the Mumbai terror," lamented a visibly shaken youth. "Muslims are indeed suffering from fear psychosis due to the misdeeds of a few," said Syed Akbar Ali, a retired professor of psychology. "Terrorists may be Muslim by birth but they are actually radical Muslims who have fully deviated from Islamic ethos. Islam preaches peace and compassion and those indulging in violence are only defaming the religion," he asserted. However, prominent surgeon Dr A A Hai disagreed. "I don't think Muslims are feeling guilty. Some may be feeling shaky while some ashamed but majority of Muslims feel whatever is happening is wrong and they condemn it," he said. "If a person, identified as Muslim, is killing innocents then he cannot be a Muslim," he added. "The entire community cannot be blamed for the misdeeds of a few people nor can terrorism be seen through any religious angle," said Advantage Media managing director Khurshid Ahmad. Tagging violence to religion will be counter-productive, he added. Maulana Anisur Rahman Quasmi of Imarat Shariah was critical of the tendency to link religion with terror. "This is very harmful for the country and it is badly affecting the psyche of youths of all religions," he said. All India Muslim Personal Law Board general secretary Maulana Syed Nizamuddin refused to share the perception that only Muslims are involved in terrorism. "The Mumbai attack was a well planned conspiracy and it cannot be a

handiwork of a handful of Muslims. Everything should be seen in totality whether it is the Batla House encounter or Malegaon blasts," the cleric said. (Times of India 1/12/08)

Muslim clerics hit out at terror (7)

LUCKNOW: Muslim pacification, post Mumbai strike seems to have become a dirty word among opinion makers in the minority community here. Hitting out at the soft approach to terror shown by politicians, prominent clerics from both Shia and Sunni sects, called for decisive action against Pakistan for having dared challenge peace and security of the metropolis. A joint communique signed by Maulana Khalid Rasheed Firangimahali, the naib imam of Idgah and a member of All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Maulana Mohammad Mushtaq, president of All India Sunni Board and Maulana Naimurrehman, president of the Ulema Council of India, forwarded to Union home minister PC Chidambaram on Wednesday, demanded a firm stand against terrorists in order to restore faith of people in good and effective governance. Talking to TOI Maulana Rasheed expressed anguish at the popular thinking among political class that Indian Muslims harboured sympathy and owed allegiance to Pakistan and also that any action against the neighbouring country will earn them the community's wrath. The delusion is ill founded and humiliating to every nationalist Muslim who considers himself/herself an Indian first and a Muslim later, he said. If the government actually has irrefutable evidence of Pakistan's hand in Mumbai terror attack, it should send strong protest signals without losing further time, said the missionary school educated ulema who issued the first fatwa against terrorism last year. We could begin by targeting terrorist training camps in PoK, he said. It no more requires negotiations and delay causing procedural formalities, he added. It is time the government rid itself of the notion that any tough stance on terrorism could lead to loss of Muslim votes, says the communique. Indian Muslims are not prepared to compromise on national security and patriotic enough to stand by any just stand taken in the regard. Echoing similar sentiments, chief spokesperson of the all India Shia Personal Law Board Yasoob Abbas said that the awam now demands decisive action to nail insurgents who have infiltrated the soil due to our meek approach to the burning issue. The government needs to realise that a terrorist is neither a Muslim nor a Hindu and therefore pussyfooting about the issue under the misconception that strong action against the section will be suicidal to their vote bank, was bound to boomerang. We demand tough and effective action against perpetrators of terrorism and religion here is no consideration, he said. Meanwhile, the All-India Shia Husaini Fund, Lucknow at a condolence meeting held here on Wednesday and paid homage to the people, the members of security forces and the policemen who died in the terrorists attack in Mumbai. Speaking at the meeting, Hasan Mahdi, general secretary of the organisation, posed a question: "How long the people of our country will tolerate attacks by the Pakistani terrorists?". He said that a number of terrorists camps were still running on Pakistani soil where Pakistani terrorists along with those terrorists who had run away from India and were given shelter in Pakistan were hatching conspiracies against India. He has asked the government of India to attack and destroy the training camps. The meeting condoled the loss of lives of innocent people in Mumbai and expressed solidarity with their family members. (Times of India 4/12/08)

Muslim organisations to scale down celebrations (7)

NEW DELHI: A number of Muslim organisations across the country have condemned the "beastly" terror attacks in Mumbai and appealed to the community to scale down Eid-ul-Azha celebrations on December 9. In a statement, the Coordination Committee of Indian Muslims (CCIM) sought a "high-level, transparent, unbiased and truthful inquiry" into the Mumbai attacks. It urged the authorities, civil society groups and media to work together to expose the real perpetrators of these "unprecedented" attacks. "Leaving the real culprits behind the curtains of suspicion will only help terrorists fortify their activities and increase the feeling of insecurity among the people," it said. The CCIM member-organisations include the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat-Ahl-e-Hadees and the All India Milli Council. Leading Islamic seminary Dar-ul-Uloom and the All India Organisation of Imams of Mosques (AIOIM) have appealed to Muslims in the country to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha in a simple manner. In a booklet detailing the concept of 'qurbani' or sacrifice on the occasion of Bakrid, brought out by Deoband-based Dar-ul-Uloom, the seminary has advised Muslims to

refrain from sacrificing cows to avoid hurting the sentiments of the Hindus. The AIOIM asked imams around the country to pray for the victims of the Mumbai attacks, during Eid prayers. Anis Suhrawardy, spokesperson of Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, said that terrorism was not related to any religion and both the communities had suffered in such attacks, be it Mumbai or Malegaon. "Both the communities have to find a way to tackle such an unprecedented situation when you have terrorists coming through sea route and creating mayhem and terror in Mumbai. Every citizen is an Indian first and Hindu, Muslim or Sikh later. In this attack, all Indians have suffered and entire nation has been hurt. We have to also review our security and intelligence set up and tighten it further so that all citizens feel safe..." Mr. Suhrawardy said. Mufti Mohammad Mukarram Ahmed, Shahi Imam of Fatehpuri mosque in the walled city, appealed to all Muslims to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha with simplicity. "We are with all those families who have suffered in this terror strike. We are praying for peace and harmony," the Shahi Imam, widely respected in the community, told The Hindu on Friday. He reiterated that neither the holy Koran nor the Prophet favoured use of violence against foe or friend. "Terrorism has no place in Islam or any other religion. We are with the government in its efforts to tackle this menace, our full cooperation will be available to it," the Shahi Imam said. The All-India Babri Masjid Re-building Committee said the organisation would not hold any demonstration or dharna on Saturday, the 16th anniversary of the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. (The Hindu 6/12/08)

Muslim bodies oppose new terror law, fear misuse (7)

New Delhi: Even as the Government moved to enact new laws to counter terror, prominent Muslim organisations and bodies came out strongly against the move saying the law will be "misused" against minorities as was the case with POTA and TADA earlier. A note of caution also came from Minority Affairs Minister A R Antulay, who said the law could be misused like any other law. He also wanted the new laws to be made applicable to cases of communal riots, a demand raised by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) on Wednesday. "Except the provision that the confessions of the accused in police custody would be admissible as evidence, everything that was present in POTA and TADA have been included in the new law. Giving extraordinary powers to police is definitely going to be misused. It will be misused," S Q R Ilias, Working Committee member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, told The Indian Express. Muslim organisations were particularly upset with the provision to extend police custody of an accused without bail for 180 days. "This is just like POTA. That means a person would not get bail for six months before he gets to prove that he is innocent," Jamaat-i-Islami-Hind leader Mujtaba Farooq said. He said innocent Muslims always found themselves at the receiving end of such laws and anti-terror probes. "This law will be definitely misused. These Bills should have been opened to the public to seek their opinion. Common people, NGOs, human rights activists and organisations could have got an opportunity to register their views," he said. Muslim Political Council's T R Rehmani said there was no need for a new law or amendments in the existing laws and they were sufficient to deal with terrorism. "We had opposed the TADA and POTA. Many of the provisions that were there in those laws found place in the new law," he said. He said what was needed was fixing of responsibility of police officials rather than coming out with a new law. On the other hand, the CBCI suggested the definition of a terrorist should be made more comprehensive in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill 2008 as found in The National Security Guard Act 1986 so that it can cover incidents of communal violence also. According to the CBCI, the 1986 Act defines a terrorist as a person who acts with an intent to strike Terror in the people or any section of the people or to alienate any section of the people or to adversely affect the harmony amongst different sections of the people. (Indian Express 18/12/08)