

MINORITIES: MUSLIMS - 2009

JANUARY TO DECEMBER – 2009

**Compiled By
K. Samu**

**Human Rights Documentation,
Indian Social Institute, Lodi Road, New Delhi – 110 009, (India)**

`Muslims urged to lay more stress on education' (7)

PATNA: Union minister of state for HRD M A A Fatmi called upon Muslims to lay more stress on education saying the main reason for their overall backwardness was educational backwardness. He was speaking here on Sunday at a seminar to commemorate the death anniversary of Shah Mushtaq Ahmad, a former MLA, freedom fighter and top leader of Urdu movement, organized by the Urdu Council. Fatmi said Urdu should be linked with employment for the development of this language. He referred to Maulana Azad National Open Urdu University and said Urdu has been made a mode for technical education too and several students have got diploma in engineering and ITI from this university and are now employed with various companies in India and abroad. NCP general secretary Tariq Anwar, MP, who is youngest son of Ahmad, condemned communalism and terrorism in strong words. He said terrorism is a corrupt form of communalism which is very dangerous for the unity and integrity of the country and a threat to its secular credentials. (Times of India 12/1/09)

Upstart Muslim group calls Kolkata bandh (7)

Kolkata: A steadily weakening State Government and a disruptive opposition seem to have provided the audacity even to inconsequential outfits to call bandhs in West Bengal. A Muslim outfit with negligible influence in Kolkata has called a bandh on Friday. Though Kolkata has seldom witnessed a shutdown over an international issue the West Bengal unit of Milli Ittehad Parishad (MIP) has called for "Kolkata Bandh" on January 16 protesting the Israeli attack on the Gaza strip. Demanding that India sever diplomatic connections with Israel, West Bengal MIP convenor Abdul Aziz said his organisation's bandh call "to mark solidarity with the Palestine" was device to "raise public opinion against Israeli attack on Muslims." He felt political parties in India enjoyed impressive political acumen and hoped all groups would come out in the open to back his call. He demand the "Union Govt should stand by the Palestine people against the occupation of Israel and for peace and universal brotherhood," he maintained alleging the US was in league with Israel in launching attack on Gaza and branded it as the mastermind for most of the terrorist outfits across the world. There was no reaction either from the CPI(M) or Trinamool Congress who remained non-committal. While senior Trinamool leader Madan Mitra said his party had no information adding Trinamool was already protesting Israeli attack on Palestine. The CPI(M) on its part picked up the usual whipping boy in the US claiming behind every strike against the Muslims stood the US. On whether they backed the bandh the Marxists said, "We have our own programmes against the Israeli attack." This even as experts felt the bandh was likely to be a success as no party would dare oppose it ahead of the elections. (Pioneer 13/1/09)

Women stopped from using road in Bangladesh town (7)

Dhaka, Jan 13: For the last month, women in a Bangladesh town have been unable to use a road that has a mosque on it, but also the post office and several homes, thanks to a self-styled Muslim cleric who says their presence is illegal under Islamic law. Retired soldier Abdus Sattar, who calls himself 'Pir', has been guarding the road in Chittagong's Pirojpur town with the help of a stick for the last month. And the administration is yet to act against Sattar, said Tuesday. A graffiti on Bara Masjid Road in Mathbaria says 'women are forbidden on this road'. Besides the mosque, the road has the town's post office and residences. Those going to the hospital also need to use the road. Women residents and girls going to the local school are taunted and scared off, the newspaper said. The newspaper correspondent confronted Sattar after he witnessed a woman school teacher seeking to rush her sick child being barred from using the road. Instead of replying and revealing his identity, the man showed the writings on a wall that read 'Movement of women on this road is completely forbidden by order of Pir-e-Kamel Maulana Md Abdus Sattar (retd soldier)'. The man was Abdus Sattar himself. An official at the post office, seeking anonymity, said: 'Remittance from abroad comes here through money transfer. But as women cannot

come here using the road we face difficulty providing them the money. We informed the administration but no action has been taken so far.'Sattar said: 'There is a mosque on this road. Use of this road by women is najayez (illegal in Islam). So I have not only issued orders to women forbidding them from using this road, I also prevent them from using it every day. I will do so as long as I live. The devotees in the mosque will help me in this.'Mathbaria Central Jame Masjid committee president and Mathbaria Municipality mayor Rafiuddin Ferdous said the matter had been discussed in the mosque committee. The devotees had agreed to take action against the so-called Pir. (Central Chronicle 14/1/09)

IAF cites religion to ban beard for Muslims (7)

New Delhi: Defending an Indian Air Force policy that forbids Muslim personnel recruited after 2002 from keeping a beard, the Union Government has told the Supreme Court that its policies are "secular in nature" and that only those Air Force personnel are permitted to grow hair or keep a beard, "whose religion specifically prohibits" cutting hair. In Islam, it added, keeping a beard is not compulsory. "It is submitted that all Muslims do not keep a beard. The practice of growing and keeping beard is optional and sporting a beard is not universally recognised in the religion of Islam." The government's response was to an appeal by Aircraftsman Ansari Aftab Ahmad, who challenged the validity of the IAF's instructions, dated February 24 and April 1, 2003, prohibiting Muslim personnel from growing a beard. The court in September 2008 sought a scrutiny of the rule. "The main aim of the policy, which lays down dress and department rules for the Air Force personnel, is that personnel should be known by the duty which he performs and not by the religion to which he belongs," the Government told the apex court. The policy, the Air Force stressed, was "issued in the interest of cohesiveness in a combatant force like the IAF and also keeping in view the security implications." "All Air Force personnel, while on duty, are required to wear similar uniform and do not display any sign or object which marks him distinct from others. In an armed force, it is always intended that to the extent possible, all personnel should look identifiably similar so that they may work in a cohesive, co-operative and co-ordinate manner," it said. Apart from Ahmad, another petitioner, Mohammad Zubair, had challenged the Air Force policy on similar grounds. Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan had earlier argued his case before the bench of Justices C K Thakker and D K Jain, saying that the rule impinged on the petitioner's fundamental right to follow his religion, which makes it obligatory to grow a beard. "This executive direction to the petitioner to shave off (his) beard is patently illegal, without any sanction or authority of law, besides being against the spirit of Article 25 of the Constitution and also against the secular ethos of the armed forces," were the primary objections of Zubair, whose plea was dismissed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. (Indian Express 18/1/09)

2 Bengal madrasas turn a chapter, more Hindus than Muslims on rolls (7)

Kolkata: Madrasas across the country may be under the scanner for imparting Islamic fundamentalist teachings and accused of being factories of narrow orthodoxy, but in West Bengal, there are at least two where Hindu students outnumber Muslims. Located about 110 km from Kolkata, the Orgram Chatuspalli High Madrasa in Burdwan district and Kasba MM High Madrasa in Uttar Dinajpur district are known for their academic excellence and secular credentials. While at Orgram, 64 per cent — 555 of the 883 students — are Hindus, at Kasba, 647 of 1,069 students, or 60 per cent, are Hindus. "It is not that lack of school facilities has forced the Hindu students in the village to fall back on the madrasa," says Md Younus Ali Baidya, a teacher at Orgram. The Orgram High School, which is Bengali-medium, up to Class XII and affiliated to the West Bengal State Board, is in fact just a stone's throw away. "It is the secular ambience and excellent standard of teaching which draw students," he says. Students leaving the madrasa have a degree equal to higher secondary status. Even teachers at the madrasa come from both the communities. Of the 11 teachers at the Orgram madrasa, six teachers are Hindus and five Muslim. Most of the students belong to families of agricultural labourers or daily wage earners. The guardians, who themselves lack 2 Bengal madrasas turn a chapter, more Hindus than Muslims on rolls formal education, have no hesitation in sending their wards to these institutes or having them study Arabic or Islamic Studies. These two subjects are compulsory in senior classes in madrasas and students have to appear for them in their Class X exam under the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education. Kanika Roy, studying in Class X, is one of the best students in Arabic at the Orgram Chatuspalli Madrasa. She can recite "suras" from the Quran and read Arabic as well as her Muslim friends. She also knows the biographies of Islamic saints and one of her favourites is Begum Rokeya, a Muslim social reformer from Bengal. At the madrasa, students in lower classes get books free of cost while all girl students are given school uniforms

in each session. "What will the children do studying only religious scripts? Instead, we lay more emphasis on teaching science and mathematics," says Headmaster Anwar Hussain. The madrasa started in a thatched hut in 1975 on land donated by locals. It was affiliated to the West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education in 1980, and in 2005 was granted the status of a High madrasa. (Indian Express 19/1/09)

Madrasas not terror hubs, says Jamiat (7)

Mumbai: Denying charges that Madrasas were Terror hubs, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind general secretary Maulana Hakimuddin Qasmi has said that Darul Uloom or any Madrasas in the country never harboured terror activities. "Darul Uloom Deoband was the first Madrasas in the country to take part in the freedom struggle. How can it harbour terrorists? Those who have queries about activities of Madrasas can visit it during any hour of the day," he said. Without naming Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, Qasmi said, "The leader of a particular party openly invites to form suicide squads and brand Darul Uloom Deoband as bastion of terrorism but the state has failed to take any action against him." Qasmi was speaking at a press conference to announce one-day conference of Jamiat Ulama-i-Maharashtra to be held at Azad Maidan in Mumbai on February 14. The conference would denounce terrorism and raise various issues being faced by Muslims in the state, he said. (Indian Express 23/1/09)

Muslim organisations urged to issue fatwa against terrorism (7)

MUMBAI: The Dharma Raksha Manch, a coalition of Hindu religious institutions and leaders, has urged 13 major Muslim organisations to issue a fatwa against terrorism and jihad. At a press conference on Wednesday, Swami Dayanand Maharaj and others said that before a terror attack, e-mails were sent quoting the Koran. The Manch, concerned by religious motivation for terror, planned to send an appeal, signed by several acharyas, to the 13 Islamic institutions individually. When it was pointed out that many of them had condemned terror, representatives of the Manch said mere condemnation was not enough. The Muslim groups should issue a fatwa that India was not Dar-ul Harab (India is not a land against which Islamists have to wage a war); and it was Dar-ul Aman (land of peace), where Muslims can practise Islam without any impediment, said a resolution passed at a meeting of the Manch on Wednesday. The two-day meeting, which will culminate in a public meeting on Thursday, will discuss 11 points of concern. Madandas Devi of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) said his organisation was fully behind this effort. The phrase "Hindu terror" was false, insulting and inappropriate. Ashok Singhal of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) said India had a sacred religious tradition and a spiritual identity. However, by making it a secular country, that identity was being wiped out. While seeking a change in leadership at the Centre, the Manch said it was not supporting any political party. Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy presented a paper on his idea of a Hindu agenda. He sought unity among Hindus; a unity based on a mindset that was nurtured and fostered on the fundamentals of a renaissance. He sought the re-writing of history textbooks of educational institutions, besides a commitment of zero tolerance of terrorists, to never negotiate with them, and to retaliate against their political objectives. Dr. Swamy also advocated a commitment to "re-throne" Sanskrit as Hindustan's link language. (The Hindu 29/1/09)

Hundreds of protesting Muslims from Uttar Pradesh reach Delhi(7)

New Delhi, January 29, 2009: Hundreds of Muslims from Uttar Pradesh, wanting to hold demonstrations in the national capital against the alleged harassment of youths by police on the pretext of tackling terror, arrived at the Old Delhi Railway Station here in a special train amid tight security early on Thursday. A posse of paramilitary and police personnel welcomed the train, christened the Ulema Express, at the heavily guarded platform number A1 of the station at about 1.30 am, nearly three hours before the scheduled time of arrival. The train, which set off from Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh town at about 12.30 pm on Wednesday, was to arrive here at 4 am Thursday but reached early since it was not allowed to halt at any station between Kanpur and New Delhi for security reasons, an official said. Most occupants of the train, not willing to come out of the coaches before their scheduled 11 am protest rally at Jantar Mantar in the heart of the national capital, pulled down window shutters when this reporter tried to speak to them. The Muslims, angry about the killing of two young men from Azamgarh in a shootout with the police in the Batla House area of New Delhi a few months ago, want to hold the rally to press upon the government their demand to set up a judicial probe into the shootout, headed by a sitting supreme court judge and make the report public within 30 days. The Delhi Police had accused the men killed in the shootout of being involved in the September 13 serial bombings in the national capital. "We waited enough but by awarding the Ashok Chakra to MC Sharma (the police inspector killed in the shootout) the Congress led

UPA (United Progressive Alliance) has authenticated the Sep 19 Batla House encounter," Mulana Amir Rasadi, convener of Ulama Council that organised the Ulema Express trip, told IANS. "The fact remains that we have lost our two promising youths. Sharma was honoured even before any probe into such a horrible incident. We have lost all faith in the system and are now united to show New Delhi our real strength," Rasadi said. The council has paid Rs 1.4 million to the railways to charter the train and Rs 300,000 as a security deposit for the journey. Each traveller bought a coupon of Rs 700 for the trip. The train will take them back Thursday evening. "We have organised this historic train with the help of individual donations," said the thin, bespectacled Rasadi, who is in his early 50s. The 22 coaches of the train carried 90-odd passengers each. There was enough food for everyone on the train - bread, kabaabs, rice and gram. But they needed water and pulled the emergency brake chain at many railway stations between Azamgarh and Kanpur. After the passengers fell asleep, the train sped off, not halting till Delhi. Maulana Wasiullah, a passenger who spoke after much persuading, said, "Very soon we will be a political force and in a position to dictate terms to the central government. This is the last option left with us to save our children from the bullet of the police. The UPA or the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party), they all have anti-Muslim instincts, which is simply unacceptable in any civil society." (Hindustan Times 30/1/09)

Concern over backwardness of Muslim community (7)

NEW DELHI: Expressing concern over social and economic backwardness of the Muslim community, the All-India Milli Council on Saturday demanded reservations for minorities in Parliament, State Assemblies, government jobs and educational institutions. Addressing a rally at the Ramlila Grounds here, Council vice-president Mufti Ashraf Ali said: "After Independence the country adopted a secular model with good intentions. Although development is taking place in many areas in our country, we have seen that Muslims have not come into the national mainstream. If the country has to progress then the Muslims must be uplifted. We should become equal stakeholders so that our country marches on the path of development and progress." Former Chief Justice of India A. M. Ahmadi said January 30 was an important day for the country because of the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi. "But just a few months ago Mumbai was attacked and so many innocent lives were lost. But the positive thing about the tragedy was that divergent communities forgot their differences and sent across the message of unity and integrity. We are citizens of this country, not guests or tenants. We have a right to live here like other citizens. As minorities we have one or two special provisions." Justice Ahmadi said the Muslim community must understand why political parties take a decision in their favour either through appeasement or try to hoist the flag of pseudo-secularism. "At the end of the day, you are always told that it is because of their generosity that you are staying in this country. They succeed in sowing the seeds of fear in your minds and hearts. You must not remain behind closed doors but come out in the open. With tameez and tehzeeb you must demand your rights." Calling upon the Muslim community to give utmost priority to education, Justice Ahmadi said every job has a minimum educational qualification. "You must encourage your children to study. Reservation is okay but how much percentage of people benefit from it is the moot question. Therefore, the entire community must see to it that children get complete education so that they can stand on their own feet," he asserted. Senior journalist Aziz Burney said that Muslims love this country can be seen from the fact that they chose to stay with Jawaharlal Nehru and not M.A. Jinnah. "We firmly believe in the democratic pattern. Muslims must not allow themselves to be used as vote banks. We have tried to educate ourselves but our educational institutions like Aligarh Muslim University have been targeted. When we went to study at Jamia Millia Islamia we saw the controversial Batla House incident. There should be a judicial inquiry into it." Later the Council in its declaration demanded that the practice of political apartheid by political parties must end. "Muslims must be treated as equal citizens of this country. The Election Commission should ask all political parties to field at least 10 per cent of their candidates from the minorities for every elected body. All kind of organisations propagating hate should be banned and a Judicial Commission be constituted to examine all cases of anti-minorities killings since 1984," the Council declared. The Council's political awareness caravan that concluded in the Capital has been moving through State Capitals, towns and villages for the past three months. (The Hindu 1/2/09)

UP madrasa board bans co-education (7)

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education (UPBME) has banned co-education in madrasas across the state, saying it is against the "spirit of Islam". "In Islam, parda (veil) is very important. By allowing co-education we promote 'be-pardgi' (women without veil), which is against Shariyat... This is why we have directed all the madrasas to do away with the co-education system from

this academic session. And we will ensure that this directive is followed in letter and spirit," UPBME chairman Haji Rizawan Haq said. He said a madraasa is an institution of learning, where Islamic studies, literature and philosophy are taught among others. The avowed aim of madraasa education is to inculcate the belief and practice of Islam among its followers and guide them to follow Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. The education is basically standing on two pillars of Quran and Sunna (Tradition of Prophet Mohammad), he said. Uttar Pradesh has more than 16,000 madrassas of which only over 1,900 are affiliated to the UPBME including 360 'wait for aid' from the government. More than seven lakh students are enrolled in these madrassas (affiliated) for a number of courses like Maulvi and Munshi (equivalent to matriculation), Aalim (BA), Kamil and Fazil (MA). (DNA 1/2/09)

Muslims unimpressed as SP tries to assuage Kalyan hurt (7)

Lucknow: After redefining its relationship with Kalyan Singh as a "friendship" rather than an alliance, the Samajwadi Party on Tuesday went one step further to contain the damage over its alliance with the former BJP leader. Kalyan, the party said, "should tender an unconditional apology for the Babri Masjid demolition". While party general secretary Amar Singh landed in Deoband — to apparently a cold reception — SP chief Mulayam Singh Yadav had no better luck at his meeting with over 100 Bareilly Sunni Muslim clerics. After finding that no prominent Darul Uloom Deoband cleric was willing to entertain him, Amar Singh went to the neighbouring Darul Uloom Waqf madrasa. Addressing students there, he sought Kalyan's apology and said he would speak to Mulayam over the issue. He also tried to convince Maulana Ahsan Kazmi, the ustad of the madrasa, that Kalyan had not joined the party and that the SP had tied up with him only to weaken the BJP. Singh, accompanied by party MP Kazi Rashid Masood and local MLA Imran Masood, arrived in Deoband by a helicopter from Delhi. During his three-hour stay at Deoband, the SP leader also met Maulana Arshad Madni, the president of the Jamait Ulema Hind. At the over-three-hour meeting of Mulayam with Sunni clerics, barring a few voices of support, the opinion was against "friendship" with Kalyan. Muslims can never forgive Kalyan for his role in the Babri demolition, they said categorically. They also warned that the relationship would hit the SP in the Lok Sabha elections. "In no way should the SP take assistance of Kalyan Singh or his son Rajveer," commented a cleric. Pointing out that Kalyan had even served a day in jail over the Babri demolition, Syeed Shamin Baba, the maulana of a dargah in Amedbedkarnagar, said: "How can we forgive him for mere political reasons?" Muslim Convention Convener Yasin Akhtar Misbahi also said the SP would find it hard to convince the community on Kalyan. The SP has been facing a Muslim backlash ever since the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister declared his support for the party. Its own Muslim leader Azam Khan has raised a banner of revolt, a matter that came up at the meeting. In his speech that lasted more than one and a half hours, Mulayam repeatedly asserted that Kalyan had not been admitted into the party, and that the "friendship" would only weaken the BJP. He also assured the clerics that the SP would act as per their wishes. Mulayam also reminded the meeting of the measures taken by his Government for the uplift of minorities. "I am a true friend of the Muslims and have never ditched them." (Indian Express 4/2/09)

Madrasa ban in UP a state subject: Govt (7)

ion to ban co-education in madrasas across the state is a "state subject", the Centre declined to intervene in the subject reports our special correspondent. "Madrasa education is a state subject. We do not want to interfere with the decision of the UP madrasa board," minister of state for HRD M.A.A. Fatmi said. Earlier, the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education had banned co-education in madrasas across Uttar Pradesh, stating it is against the "spirit of Islam". Mr Fatmi said the government will set up a Central madrasa board which will take care of all concerns of the students. "Madrasas are now coming under the state madrasa boards. It is their responsibility to take a decision (on their functioning)," Mr Fatmi said. (Asian Age 5/2/09)

'Muslims can never forgive Kalyan over Babri issue' (7)

Lucknow: Coming down heavily on Samajwadi Party supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav for joining hands with Kalyan Singh, rebel SP MP Shafiq-ur-Rehman Barq on Thursday said Muslims could never forgive the former BJP leader for his role in the Babri mosque demolition. "We can never forgive Kalyan for the Babri mosque demolition. How can Mulayam Singh, who claims himself to be secular join hands with Kalyan," Barq told reporters Lucknow. Alleging that Yadav was befooling Muslims, the three times MP from Moradabad said "that he (Mulayam) failed to provide proper representation to the community in his regime". Asked whether he can forgive Kalyan, Barq said "he could never do so and advised Mulayam to

ask Kalyan to apologise to the Muslim community in Parliament". "He (Kalyan) always said that he was proud of the demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya and joining hands with him is not tolerable to him and also other Muslim leaders", Barq said. Asked whether he was in touch with BSP for securing a ticket from Moradabad, Barq said that he was in touch with all the parties including Congress and BSP. "I have decided to contest the coming Lok Sabha polls as an independent candidate. I will consider offers from other parties when they come", he said. About SP's founder member Mohammad Azam Khan's annoyance with SP and reports of his joining BSP, Barq said he was in touch with all Muslims leaders of SP. Claiming that Mulayam's love for Muslims is a farce, the rebel MP said "he (Mulayam) should ensure that name of the party, its MLAs and MPs should be written in Urdu also, if he really has some respect for the community". (Indian Express 6/2/09)

BSP slogan upsets Muslims in UP (7)

LUCKNOW: A fatwa (decree) recently issued by Islamic seminary Dar-ul Uloom terming Bahujan Samaj Party's slogan 'Jai Bhim' as un-Islamic and violative of Shariat has evoked mixed reactions from different sections in Uttar Pradesh, which sends 80 representatives to the Lok Sabha. The fatwa issued by the Islamic seminary Dar-ul Uloom Deoband said that the BSP's slogan of invoking Dalit leader Bhimrao Ambedkar, was "against the Islamic law, as the religion does not permit such a salutation for anyone except Allah." "The fatwa was issued by chief Mufti Habibur Rehman, Mufti Mehmood and Mufti Zeulislam on February 7 on a query raised by a medico M Mehraj Khan," seminary sources said. While the decree had caused a concern among the Muslim leaders of BSP, a cleric from the seminary Asad Madani, who had recently joined the party said the slogan was not a compulsion for the party workers and at the same time backed the fatwa saying, "It was based on Shariat law." Samajwadi Party leader and spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said, "The slogan of Jai Bhim has been forced on BSP leaders". Reacting to the fatwa, senior BJP leader Hriday Narayan Dikshit said, "Jai Bhim is simply a form of salutation. India is a democratic country and every citizen is free to use any form of salutation. It is really unfortunate that now fatwas are being issued on how people interact with each other." (Times of India 15/2/09)

Muslims protest police 'harassment' (7)

Lucknow: To protest against alleged harassment of Muslim youths by Anti Terror Squad of the Uttar Pradesh police and anti-community approach of the BSP Government, the Ulema Council on Friday staged a massive demonstration at historic Tile Wali Masjid and announced its plans to enter electoral politics. Thousands of people who came from Azamgarh and adjoining areas demanded a probe into the Batla House case, in which two youths from the district were killed in an encounter with the Delhi police and immediate release of others arrested on charges of terrorism. "Innocent youths are being implicated in false cases and harassed in the name of terror. A youth is picked up by the police from somewhere else and later it is claimed that he was arrested from Lucknow for his involvement in some bomb blast case," Ulema Council leader Tahir Madani said, while addressing the gathering. "An attempt is being made to paint a bad picture of the community and this would not be tolerated," he said. Demanding a fair inquiry into Batla House case, the Council leader alleged that the Uttar Pradesh ATS had crossed its limits. "Harassment of youths by ATS would not be tolerated; the Council has warned the Chief Minister to control the force otherwise it will have serious ramifications," he said. "If the situation fails to improve and this injustice continues, agitations would be launched in all districts of the State," he warned. Lashing out at the BSP, SP, BJP and Congress, Mr. Madani said that with Lok Sabha elections round the corner, the political parties were ready with a new set of promises. "This time the Muslims will not fall to their false promises. We will teach them a lesson and throw anti-community parties out of power," he said. He also said that the Council would lay the foundation of a new political regime in the country and asked the community members to vote in favour of its candidates in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. He said that the Council's tirade would continue till the time justice was meted out to the Muslims. – PTI (The Hindu 21/2/09)

Muslims to hold convention against terrorism (7)

BERHAMPUR: Jamiat-Ulama-I-Orissa (JUJO), a socio-religious organisation of Muslims in Orissa has decided to unite the Muslim community in the State against acts of terrorism. The JUJO has decided to hold a large convention against terrorism in Bhubaneswar on March 1. The leaders of the JUJO are now touring the state to unite the Muslim community against terrorism and the anti-terrorism convention. Its leaders, including the general secretary of the JUJO, Mufti Ashraf Ali Qasmi, were in Berhampur on

Saturday. The meeting of the community leaders held at GDMCA hall at the call of the JUIO was attended by secretary of Ganjam Muslim Cultural Association, Md Khaled sahib, president of Berhampur peace committee, M.A.Sattar Taiyeb and other senior persons of the community. Speaking to newsmen after the meeting Mufti Quasmi said the JUIO, which is related to the Jamiat-Ulama-I-Hind, was founded in 1919 to unite Muslims. The Jamiat had opposed the two nation theory and formation of Pakistan. The Jamiat, which believes in peaceful coexistence of all communities in India, has passed 'fatwa' and 'farman' against terrorism, which was endorsed by more than 6,000 Muslim theologians in the country. "Now we want to take this message against terrorism to every youth and Muslim family of the state," said Mufti Qasmi. "Our main aim is to make people especially youths realise that any person who supports terrorism and communalism is nothing but a follower of Satan and their any attempt to destabilise the country has to be thwarted," he added. The leaders of JUIO said during the Bhubaneswar convention they would try to remove the misconception about Islam and its teachings so that the youngsters do not get misguided by the vested interests. "We would also devise strategies to stop terrorists get foot on Orissa soil and to stop motives of divisive forces," they said. This convention of Muslims would also press for implementation of Sachhar Committee recommendations regarding reservation for religious minorities in elections and appointments. The JUIO stressed for the formation of a minority commission in Orissa and merger of different departments related to the minority affairs. There would also be demand for proper power to the state wakf board so that it could get its property vacated from encroachments. (The Hindu 22/2/09)

Muslims top list of minority community complainants with NHRC (1)

New Delhi, February 22, 2009: Among minority communities, Muslims have topped the list in approaching the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) with complaints of rights violation in the past 11 months. Out of a total of 10,568 complaints received between April 2008 and February 11 this year, 9,248 were from the Muslim community, official statistics said. The number of complaints lodged by Sikhs stood at 877 while Christians have filed 412 complaints so far, according to the figures. The Commission said a total of 10,025 cases have been settled while 543 complaints are yet to be settled. The trend was the same in the previous two fiscals with 11,178 and 8,390 complaints of rights violation pertaining to Muslims getting registered with the Commission. In 2007-08, 1,003 Sikhs complained to the Commission, while 613 Christians approached the rights body alleging that their rights were violated. A total of 12,794 complaints were filed in that fiscal. The statistics said 12,139 cases were disposed of and 655 were pending. The figures for 2006-07 revealed that 851 Sikhs and 362 Christians complained about rights violation. Out of a total of 9,603 cases, 404 complaints are still pending. (Hindustan Times 22/2/09)

Muslim parties form new front in UP (7)

LUCKNOW: Feb. 24: Three days after the Ulema Council announced its decision to contest elections on its own, three Muslim parties have declared that they would contest the coming Lok Sabha elections under the banner of UP Muslim Mahaaz. The three parties that have pooled in their resources under this banner are the Parcham Party of India (PPI), the Muslim Majlis and the National Loktantrik Party (NLP). These three parties, interestingly, had participated in the Ulema Council rally held in Lucknow last week. "We are upset at the manner in which the Ulema Council leaders declared that they would contest 7 or 8 seats in the Lok Sabha elections. This announcement was made without consulting us and so we have decided to form a separate front. We want to increase Muslim participation in politics instead of just hankering after certain issues," said Salim Peerzada, president of the Parcham Party of India. Arshad Khan, president of the National Loktantrik Party said that the Muslim Mahaaz was open to alliances with the Left parties. "The Left parties are our natural allies and have maintained their secular credentials. We have also learnt from our past mistakes and any alliance, this time, will be more practical and long lasting," he added. The two leaders ruled out any alliance with the Samajwadi Party that had allied with former BJP leader Kalyan Singh. "The minority community can never forgive either the BJP or Kalyan Singh for the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The community is also disillusioned with the Congress, the BSP and the Samajwadi Party that have only used Muslims and dalits as vote banks. Muslims now want an alternative and it is only when their own participation in politics is increased that the government will begin to respond their our problems," the two leaders said. Explaining further, the Mahaaz leaders said that while the BSP had campaigned for Mr Narendra Modi in Gujarat, the Samajwadi Party had struck a friendship with Mr Kalyan Singh and the Rashtriya Lok Dal had joined hands with the BJP. The Congress, too, has used Muslims to further its political agenda. "In such a situation, there is no political party which

can be relied upon by the minorities," they said. The Muslim Mahaaz will contest on all the 80 Lok Sabha seats and the candidates will be decided in consultation with the parties in the front. The leaders underlined the fact that the Muslim Mahaaz would function on the principle of collective leadership and leaders would all factions will collective take decisions. "There is no individualism in the front and we will function together" they said. (Asian Age 25/2/09)

Jamiat resents arrest of Muslims as terrorists (7)

LUCKNOW: The Jamiatul Ulema-i- Hind (JUH) on Sunday registered its strong protest against Muslim youth being targeted in the name of terrorism. The "witch-hunt" should end immediately if India was to be saved from falling prey to the designs of the divisive forces. The Jamiat warned that any interference in the autonomous functioning of the 'madrasas' (religious training schools) by constituting a Madrasa Board would not be tolerated as the move smacked of a design to deny 'madrasa' education to Muslim children. Making a forceful plea for saving the secular fabric of the country, the Jamiat said the apparent weakness of the secular parties to foil the agenda of the divisive forces posed a grave threat to the unity of the nation. The Jamiat's strong line on issues galling the Muslim psyche was represented forcefully by JUH president Maulana Syed Arshad Madani, while addressing a 'Jalsa-i-aam' (open convention) here. Maulana Madani was particularly harsh on the UPA government. He said that in the last four years, the Muslims had been labelled as terrorists and the move to defame the minority community betrayed a pernicious design. The Maulana slammed the former Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, who was accused of implementing the RSS, Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena agenda. He alleged that the game plan to brand the Muslims terrorists was executed by Mr. Patil. He said the Muslims had always been the loyal citizens of the country and no proof was needed for this. He assailed the practice of arresting Muslim youth, particularly from Azamgarh and Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh, and branding them as HuJI or Lashkar-e-Taiba operatives after every terrorist attack. Referring to the 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai, the Maulana said Mumbai Anti-Terrorism Squad chief Hemant Karkare would have exposed the real players behind the series of bomb blasts and terror attacks in different parts of the country if he had not been killed. The Jamiat chief demanded a CBI probe into the Batla House encounter and said that the Muslims arrested on charges of terrorism should be released. The president of Jamiat's U.P. wing, Maulana Syed Ashhad Rashidi, laid stress on strengthening the secular forces, while the Mufti-e-Hind, Maulana Mufti Manzoor Ahmed, said the controversy over Muslims sporting beard amounted to interfering in their personal affairs. A resolution condemning Israel for the attack on Gaza Strip and expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people urged the government to snap diplomatic ties with Israel. Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee president Rita Bahuguna Joshi said the root cause of terrorism lay in injustice and mistrust. She lauded the role played by the Muslims in the freedom struggle. (The Hindu 2/3/09)

Muslim body asks govt. to ban engaging women on night duty (7)

Madurai (PTI): A Muslim body has asked the government to ban engaging women on night duty in companies which work round the clock. "International Islamic Marg Academy," an organisation claimed to be engaged in the welfare of Muslims, said it opposed women going for jobs "unless the family circumstances forced them to do so". Addressing the Marg members at its three day meeting which commenced on Monday, its General Secretary Khalid Saifullah Rahmani said the government should bring in a law banning employing women for night shifts. He said the Marg was guided by the principles of Quran. (The Hindu 3/3/09)

Muslim student moves SC against school rule against beard (7)

New Delhi: A class X Muslim student has moved the Supreme Court seeking quashing of a school regulation preventing him from sporting a beard, saying every citizen should be allowed to follow his religious beliefs. Mohammad Salim of Nirmala Convent Higher Secondary School, a government-recognised minority institution in Madhya Pradesh, has sought quashing of the school regulation requiring students to be clean-shaven. Challenging the Madhya Pradesh High Court verdict that dismissed his plea, Salim submitted that every citizen was entitled to follow his religious principles and that no one should restrain him from doing so in a secular country like India. Keeping a beard is accorded high importance in Islam, the petition said. Appearing for the student, senior advocate B A Khan said that Article 25 of the Constitution guaranteed protection to Salim to pursue his religious practice of keeping a beard and the regulation providing for shaving it off was violative of this provision. He said the act of the principal to force the student to leave the school for keeping a beard was against "his religious

conscience, belief and custom of his family". Pointing out that Sikh community members were allowed to keep a beard and sport a turban, Salim alleged there was a clear discrimination on part of the school to force him to be clean shaven and this rule was violative of his fundamental rights. Stating that the bi-laws framed by the minority school should be "reasonable and rational," the student alleged that he was being "harassed with some ulterior motive or due to some communal feeling, which is very harmful for the society and for the nation as a whole." The high court had accepted the school plea that it had the right to frame its own bi-laws in accordance with constitutional provisions and pointed to the apex court judgement in the case of PA Inamdar and Others vs State of Maharashtra. The Supreme Court had held that neither any reservation policy nor any quota can be enforced by the state in a minority or non-minority institutions as they were free to admit students of their own choice including students of non-minority community and their own community from other states. However, a bench headed by Justice R V Raveendran while adjourning the matter for March 30 asked the student to ascertain whether the school was government-aided or not. (Indian Express 24/3/09)

Muslim schoolboy takes fight to keep beard to SC (7)

New Delhi/Bhopal, March 25, 2009: Can a Muslim student of a Christian minority school claim a fundamental right to sport a beard against the rules of the school? A 16-year-old boy from Madhya Pradesh has moved Supreme Court against an order of the state high court rejecting his petition challenging the decision of Nirmala Convent Higher Secondary School to throw him out for refusing to shave his beard. Mohammad Salim, a Class X student, has sought quashing of the regulation that requires students to be clean-shaven on the grounds that it violates his fundamental right to religion under Article 25 of the Constitution. The high court had in December 2008 accepted the school's contention that it had the right to establish and administer a minority institution under Article 30 of the Constitution and frame its own rules. Supreme Court upheld this right in the P.A. Inamdar and Others versus State of Maharashtra case, it had said. The SC asked Salim to ascertain if the school is government-aided or not and posted the matter for hearing on March 30. Salim, from Vidisha district, contended that every citizen should be allowed to follow his religious beliefs and none should restrain him from doing so in a secular India. He said keeping a beard is accorded high importance in Islam. His counsel B.A. Khan argued: "The principal's act to force the student to leave the school for keeping a beard was against his religious conscience, belief and custom of his family." Pointing out that Sikhs are allowed to keep a beard and sport a turban, Salim alleged the school was discriminating against him. Stating that the by-laws framed by a minority school should be "reasonable and rational", he alleged he was being "harassed with some ulterior motive or due to some communal feeling, which is very harmful to society and the nation". "In 2008, I performed Chilla (40-day prayer session) and I decided not to shave my beard. When I returned to school the next academic session, the authorities told me I had to shave or I wouldn't be allowed in school," Salim told HT. He said principal Teresa Martin served him a notice to collect his transfer certificate if he wasn't ready to follow the rules. Martin couldn't be contacted. (The Hindustan Times 25/3/09)

3. Caretaker of graveyard roughed up for setting bodies on fire (7)

Kolkata: Tension erupted in Paharpur under the Garden Reach police station area on Tuesday after locals alleged that the caretaker of a Muslim burial ground was incinerating decomposed bodies to make room for new bodies. It was around 3 pm when some people reached there for burial. "After the burial, most of the people left. But a few of us were praying at the graves. We smelt something burning inside the burial ground," said Mohammed Pappu, a resident of the area. According to him, they found some bones and skulls lying in a mound of dry grass and leaves. Later, over 2,000 locals gathered at the ground and tried to beat up the caretaker, Sheikh Jumman. "The ground had been full for the last one year. He was probably making room for more bodies so that he could earn money," said Abdul Gaffer, a local resident. Locals also blocked the kacchi sadak and Ramnagar crossing for more than two hours. Later, police contingents from the Garden Reach and Watgunge police stations were called in. Jumman and his assistant Sheikh Jiauddin were taken into police custody. Till late Tuesday evening, no formal complaint had been lodged against anyone. (Indian Express 25/3/09)

Muslims are citizens of India like anyone else: BJP (7)

Stung by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's attack on its senior leader L K Advani, the BJP on Thursday accused him of indulging in 'communal politics' by reminding people about Babri Masjid demolition ahead

of the elections. BJP president Rajnath Singh said reference to the demolition amounted to 'instigating' a particular community on the eve of polls. "We were surprised. It was not expected from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to say all this," the BJP chief said in an interview. He was commenting on the attack on Advani by the Prime Minister who had said that the BJP leader had played a 'prominent role in Babri Masjid destruction'. "To remind people about Babri Masjid is vote-bank politics, communal politics. It is to instigate the sentiments of a particular community," the BJP chief said. He insisted that the BJP disfavours 'polarisation on communal lines' as it believes in the politics of 'justice for all and appeasement of none'. The BJP also believes in taking along people of all religions instead of appeasing any particular section or community, he said. Ads By Google"BJP stands for creating a sense of confidence and not sense of fear," Rajnath Singh said, alleging that the Congress was trying to create fear by projecting BJP as anti-Muslim. Asked about BJP's views vis-a-vis Muslims, the BJP chief said, "they are citizens of India like anyone else". When referred to the Prime Minister's contention that Advani is 'not fit' to lead the country, he shot back: "If Advaniji is not fit, then who is?" When his attention was drawn to the reported anti-Muslim speech of BJP candidate Varun Gandhi in his constituency Pilibhit, Singh said Varun has denied having made those remarks and everybody should accept it. Accepting Varun's argument that the tapes have been tampered with to malign him and the BJP, he said his party does not believe in the kind of comments that have been attributed to Varun in the CDs. Singh insisted that his party does not believe in 'spreading hatred' or politics of religion, caste or creed. Rejecting the Election Commission's advice to the BJP against fielding Varun in view of his reported hate speeches, Singh said it has 'no right' to say who should be the candidate of any party. He ruled out withdrawing Varun from the fray. On BJP's key ally JD-U's demand for action against Varun, Singh said there can be 'difference of opinion' between partners but it would not affect the alliance. (Indian Express 26/3/09)

Islamic group moves court against Varun Gandhi (7)

NEW DELHI: An Islamic organisation Thursday moved a Delhi court, seeking to bar Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Varun Gandhi from contesting elections, following his alleged hate speeches directed at Muslims. In a petition filed before additional senior civil judge Manoj Kumar, Delhi-based Ittehad-e-Mili Muslimin (IMM) has filed a civil suit for a permanent injunction against Gandhi, debarring him from entering the electoral process at least for the next two polls. The court, which asked the IMM to cite case laws and legal provisions regarding the case's maintainability, has fixed the hearing Friday. Citing the alleged hate speech of the 29-year-old BJP leader at Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh, the IMM, in its petition, said: "Varun Gandhi has violated the model code of conduct and abused the Muslim community. He (Varun) has not only violated the model code of conduct but also crossed all boundaries of India's culture, civilisation and secular character." The Allahabad High Court Wednesday rejected Varun's plea for quashing of an FIR filed against him for his alleged anti-Muslim speeches in Pilibhit and his anticipatory bail granted by the Delhi High Court is going to lapse Friday. (Express Buzz 27/3/09)

SC rejects Muslim student beard plea (7)

New Delhi, March 30: Rejecting the plea of a Muslim student that he be permitted to sport a beard in his school, the Supreme Court on Monday observed secularism cannot be overstretched and that "Talibanisation" of the country cannot be permitted. "We don't want to have talibans in the country. Tomorrow, a girl student may want to wear a burqa. Can we allow it?" Justice Markandeya Katju, speaking for a bench headed by Justice Raveendran, observed. Asserting that he was a secularist to the core, Justice Katju however said religious beliefs cannot be overstretched. "I am secularist. We should strike a balance between rights and personal beliefs. We cannot overstretch secularism," the judge, who is known for his incisive remarks, said. Justice Katju passed the observation while dismissing the petition. Moham-med Salim of Nirmala Convent Higher Secondary School in MP, had sought quashing of the school regulation requiring students to be clean-shaven. —PTI (Asian Age 31/3/09)

Muslims inching towards Congress: survey (7)

Lucknow: After two decades of estrangement with the Congress over the unlocking of the Babri Masjid, subsequent shilanayas in front of the disputed shrine and finally the demolition of the mosque on December 6, 1992, Muslims seem to be warming towards the party. This was according to a survey conducted by the All India Milli Council, an umbrella body of Muslim religious organisations. The council will soon release its findings. Though in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Congress ranks behind the SP, RJD and LJP, it is ahead of the BSP in the state. "In both UP and Bihar, SP and RJD are ahead of all other

parties when it comes to parties preferred by the Muslims. But in the rest of the country, the minorities only favour the Congress," said Dr Manzoor Alam, secretary general of the council. "The BSP is the least favoured party of the Muslims. They feel it cannot be trusted and can go with any party, including the BJP. It always says that it will do what best suits the interests of the Dalits," he added. For Muslims, Congress, SP, RJD and the Left parties are those who have been consistent in their fight against communal forces. For parties like BSP and Telgu Desam Party, secularism has been a matter of convenience, said Alam. The Muslims will support the BSP if its Muslim candidates are in a position to defeat the BJP, he added. "Mulayam Singh's friendship with Kalyan Singh will have no impact on the electoral prospects of the SP, particularly in constituencies where Muslims are in significant number. Azam Khan is a senior leader of the party but he is ignorant of the ground realities of UP," Alam said. Out of the total 80 seats in the state, the council has identified 26 Lok Sabha seats, with Muslim population ranging from 18 to 50 per cent. Lok Sabha seats with maximum Muslim population are — Rampur (50 per cent), Moradabad (41 percent) and Saharanpur (39 per cent). (Indian Express 7/4/09)

Islamic scholar defends ruling (7)

New Delhi, April 15, 2009: Muslim religious leaders should desist from unhealthy criticism of the Supreme Court, Islamic scholar and Law Commission member Tahir Mahmood said of what he described as Urdu press's tirade against a judge of the court. "Muslim religious leaders and their blind followers must avoid making unhealthy criticism of the country's apex court," Mahmood said, talking about the widespread criticism of Justice Markande Katju in the Urdu press. The SC recently dismissed a Muslim boy's petition challenging a Madhya Pradesh High Court order refusing him to sport beard in a Christian minority school. Dismissing the petition of Md Salim, Justice Katju had said secularism couldn't be overstretched and "Talibinasation" not allowed in India. The remarks created uproar in the Muslim community and Urdu media reported protests from all over the country. Disapproving the criticism, Mahmood told HT, "... The judiciary in India is favourably disposed towards the minorities... but it can't be compelled to always side with the conservative thinking on controversial religious issues." "Religious people do not trust legal scholars within the community and by propagating their flawed understanding of the Constitution and court judgments, they provoke unrest among the Muslims against the country's legal and judicial system", Mahmood said. He said Justice Katju had not pronounced any general verdict on the Muslims' right to keep beard. "The case was decided in a particular context. As one minority obviously cannot be allowed to exercise its religious freedom in the institutions belonging to another minority..., the decision in this case is beyond reproach," he said. (Hindustan Times 15/4/09)

Rights group alarmed over Islamic law in Swat (7)

ISLAMABAD (AP):An international human rights group urged Pakistan to reverse its decision to enforce Islamic law in a northwestern valley in a peace pact with the Taliban, saying the deal threatens women and takes the region back to the "Dark Ages." Human Rights Watch said the government's move amounted to granting the Taliban "de-facto administrative control of the Swat Valley" and "presents a grave threat to the rights of women and other basic rights in the troubled region." The Taliban are "taking Swat back to the Dark Ages and the Pakistani government is now complicit in their horrific abuses," Ali Dayan Hasan, a senior South Asia researcher for the New York-based group, said Wednesday. The Swat Valley is less than 100 miles (160 kilometers) from Islamabad and once attracted hordes of tourists. Eighteen months of fighting between security forces and militants in Swat prompted the provincial government in February to agree to impose Islamic law there and in surrounding areas as part of peace efforts. The Taliban agreed to a cease-fire. Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari approved the agreement late Monday after lawmakers urged him to sign it. There still remain many questions about the exact nature of the pact, including who will have final authority over the appointment of judges trained in Islamic law. Defenders say the deal will drain public support for extremists who have hijacked long-standing calls in Swat for reform of Pakistan's snail-paced justice system. But critics worry it rewards hard-liners who have beheaded political opponents and burned scores of schools for girls in the name of Islam. The White House criticized the Pakistani move, saying it undermines democracy and human rights. Western officials also worry the valley will turn into a sanctuary for militants who may be involved in attacks on U.S. and NATO forces in neighboring Afghanistan. On Wednesday, a suicide car bomber attacked a police checkpoint in Charsadda, a town elsewhere in the northwest, killing nine police officers and seven civilians, said Riaz Khan, a senior police officer. Bomb expert Hukam Khan estimated 330 pounds (150 kilograms) of explosives were used in the attack, leaving a huge crater. The vehicle used in the attack

came from Swat, said a senior intelligence official who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media on the record. "We also found a video of a 14- or 15-year-old boy in a car not far away from the scene of the attack," the official said Thursday. "In that video, a boy was seen reading the Quran, and we are investigating whether he was the attacker." Critics of the Swat deal doubt that the militants' ambitions end at the valley's borders. In recent days, the Swat Taliban staged a foray into the neighboring Buner district, clashing with residents there. (The Hindu 16/4/09)

Should Muslims have their own political party? (7)

A couple of weeks ago, the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid in New Delhi exhorted Muslims to launch their own political party, as the existing ones are merely using Muslims as a vote bank and not working for the welfare of the community. But is it really a good idea to have such a party on religious lines? Though Muslim parties such as the (AUDF), and the newly started Maharashtra United Democratic Front (MUDF) are already in the fray in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, the consensus amongst Muslims themselves seems to be against the idea. Says Burhauddin Qasmi, president, MUDF, "This time the Muslims have decided to go for elections on their own strength. The Congress is calling us communal but we want a voice and this is the first step." Irshad Ilmi, the editor of the Kanpur-based Urdu newspaper, Siyasat Jadid, believes that the concept of the Muslim political party will not work outside Assam where the AUDF is popular. "The community needs to become more active in politics and join mainstream parties and assimilate. You cannot lock the community into a religious straitjacket like this," he says. Qasmi and the other Muslim leaders also agree that although this year the Muslims have, out of frustration, fielded their own candidates, this is not the solution for getting them into the political mainstream. Muslims across Maharashtra say there is a crying need for a stronger leadership within the community, for leaders who can take the voice of the common Muslim to the national level. "We have been ignored for 40-50 years. We definitely want a pressure group so that Muslims are taken seriously at the national level and their issues handled well." says Ansari Muktar, head master of Jammah-E-Islam school, Malegaon. Athar Siddiqui of the Lucknow-based Centre for Objective Research and Development, an organisation which carries out surveys of problems within the Muslim community, holds that Muslims do not have the ability to develop a middle-class leadership. "They are simply not allowed the freedom and space to grow, as they are crushed by both the religious leaders as well as the political parties. This is why Muslims won't be able to develop a party of their own," he says. Ishrat Siddiqui, founder, Movement for Empowerment of Muslims, a Kanpur-based group, believes that a purely Muslim political party is a bad idea as it would end up polarising polls along communal lines. "I am aware of the fact that in some parts of the country like Assam and some parts of UP an experiment is on in this regard but personally I think that they will fail. The whole concept of representation of Muslims in political parties has been a complete failure," he says. Mohammed Anwar Hussain of the Jamiat Ulema I Hind, an organisation of Islamic scholars headquartered in Delhi, is more optimistic. "Muslims are becoming shrewd. They are voting for whoever is promising them development, not community-based agendas. The AUDF in Assam may seem like a Muslim party but it is headed by a secular, deeply-rooted Assamese. In Bihar, Nitish Kumar is popular because of his work. The Shahi Imam is a man confined to a grand old mosque. What would he know of the world outside? How does he claim to represent the community?" (IndiaInfo 26/4/09)

Poor public education in Pak forcing families to turn to madrasas (7)

New York, May 4 (ANI): Pakistani families living below the poverty line are turning to madrasas or Islamic schools, where their children are fed and housed while being taught a more militant brand of Islam, due to the deteriorating condition of public education in the country. Though madrasas make up only about seven percent of primary schools in Pakistan, their influence has been amplified by the inadequacy of public education and the innate religiosity of the countryside, where two-thirds of the people live. The elementary school in a poor village is easy to mistake for a cow shed. It has a dirt floor and no lights, and crows swoop through its glassless windows, The New York Times reports. The concentration of madrasas in southern Punjab has become an urgent concern in the face of Pakistan's expanding insurgency. The schools offer almost no instruction beyond the memorizing of the Koran, creating a widening pool of young minds that are sympathetic to militancy. In an analysis of the profiles of suicide bombers who have struck in Punjab, the Pakistan police said that more than two-thirds had attended madrasas. "We are at the beginning of a great storm that is about to sweep the country," said Ibn Abduh Rehman, who directs the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, an independent organization. "It's red alert for Pakistan." President Barack Obama said in a news conference last week that he was "gravely

concerned" about the situation in Pakistan, and asked Congress to more than triple assistance to Pakistan for non-military purposes, including education. But education has never been a priority here, and even Pakistan's current plan to double education spending next year might collapse as have past efforts, which were thwarted by sluggish bureaucracies, unstable governments and a lack of commitment by Pakistan's governing elite to the poor, The NYT says. Pakistani families have long turned to madrasas, and the religious schools make up a relatively small minority. But even for the majority who attend public school, learning has an Islamic bent. Literacy in Pakistan has grown from barely 20 percent at independence 61 years ago, and the government recently improved the curriculum and reduced its emphasis on Islam. But even today, only about half of Pakistanis can read and write, far below the proportion in countries with similar per-capita income, like Vietnam. (ANI) (One India 4/5/09)

BJP's Capitulation to Modi: A Disgrace to Democracy (7)

HAS the Bharatiya Janata Party abandoned all pretence of playing by democratic rules and decided to stoop to the lowest possible level on the Gujarat carnage issue? Going by its reaction to the Supreme Court's order that the Special Investigation Team probe Chief Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, his ministers and officials for abetting the communal violence of 2002, it seems so. The Court's directive shows that even seven years after the butchery of 2,000 Muslims, the Gujarat pogrom continues to haunt India. The Court's order is in line with its directions to transfer major legal cases in the carnage out of Gujarat. It expresses scepticism about the state's inclination to do justice to the pogrom's victims. Instead of recognising its gravity, the BJP has maligned the Court order as politically motivated and timed to coincide with polling in the general election in Gujarat. Mr Modi has melodramatically pledged to go to jail if found guilty and be "reborn to serve Gujarat". The BJP's self-styled legal luminaries have declared that "there's no evidence" to indict Gujarat's Slobodan Milosevic, who will turn the "secular brigade's" attack "to his advantage" in the Gujarat elections. The SIT cannot be accused of secularist zeal. Since it was created by the Supreme Court in 2008, it has only filed one new charge sheet in the 10 cases investigated. The present petition by Ms Zakia, widow of former MP, Ehsan Jafri, names Mr Modi and 62 other state functionaries including 11 Cabinet ministers, three MLAs and 38 bureaucrats. Among the latter are the then state chief secretary and police chief. Based on a senior police official's diaries, eyewitness accounts and media reports, the petition alleges that Mr Modi's cabinet met after the Godhra incident of February 27, and ordered top civil servants to allow "Hindus" (read, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, RSS and Bajrang Dal thugs) "to vent their anger". This mirrors the findings of over 30 independent reports by national and international citizens' initiatives, former bureaucrats, scholars, feminists and human rights groups. These show that Gujarat's government machinery refused to restrain armed mobs from killing Muslims, raping and sexually humiliating Muslim women, burning homes, destroying mosques, and pillaging property worth Rs 4,000 crore. Two ministers (Mr Ashok Bhatt and Mr IK Jadeja) positioned themselves in police control rooms or chambers and prevented personnel from being sent to rescue people under mob attack. State police chief, Mr Chakravarthi and Ahmedabad Police Commissioner, Mr Pandey delayed imposing curfew and failed to prevent the butchery. What followed was Independent India's worst communal carnage conducted with state backing, elaborate planning, and later, an extensive cover-up. These facts are too well-established to need substantiation. But the Modi government erased them from police diaries and First Information Reports and distorted them through "rolling FIRs", which name no suspects. It also rigged the Nanavati Commission's inquiries and sabotaged the CBI's investigations by destroying records, abducting witnesses, and leading false evidence. This compounded the original offence. By April 2002, the groundwork had been laid for the charades of inquiry that shielded or exculpated the culprits. This systematic seven-year-long sabotage of justice could have been pre-empted had the BJP-led central government dismissed Mr Modi in early March 2002 and imposed President's Rule on Gujarat for violating the Constitution. But beyond appealing for restraint "as if there were two sides to blame for the violence" the government did nothing. Gujarat's second tragedy was that secular parties failed to mount sustained pressure on the Centre to impose President's Rule. Had all the non-NDA parties taken extraordinary actions, they could have generated irresistible pressure "actions like dharnas in state capitals, and a collective fast-unto-death in Gandhinagar. In 1974, Morarji Desai secured the dismissal of the Chimanbhai Patel government through a hunger strike for mere corruption. Gujarat's third tragedy was that the state-level opposition didn't even try to mobilise powerful protests. Mr Modi tyrannised Gujarat, mocked the Constitution, and politically dis-empowered both Muslims, 12 percent of Gujarat's population, and a larger chunk of secular non-Muslims. Then followed the fourth tragedy: Assembly elections, when lakhs of victims lived in makeshift camps amidst a

breakdown of law and order. By late 2002, communal polarisation grew into near-apartheid. Conducting elections amidst such conditions is mocking democracy. The BJP, and the man who presided over the butchery of 2002, deserve to be politically punished, even if some criminal cases against the culprits cannot be brought to completion soon. Assuming that the SIT conducts an honest job, it will still take years for the 63 people named for instigating the riots in Ms Zakia Ahsan's petition to be brought to justice. However, some minimal justice will be done if the public rebuffs Mr Modi and his ideology of Moditva (bloodsoaked Hindutva, coupled with ruthlessness, machismo and disregard for democratic norms) by overwhelmingly voting against the BJP. By the time these lines appear in print, polling in Gujarat will have ended. But people in other states can still express their disgust with the BJP's divisive, exclusionist and hate-filled politics. This is not a call for vindictiveness. The Congress has at least apologised for the 1984 anti-Sikh violence and withdrawn Mr Jagdish Tytler and Mr Sajjan Kumar's candidature in Delhi. The BJP continues to be in denial of the Gujarat pogrom. It must be punished more severely than in 2004 because it's embracing Moditva today. A campaign was launched even before the Supreme Court order to promote Mr Modi as the BJP's Prime Minister-in-waiting post-LK Advani. It was initiated by two senior BJP leaders, Mr Arun Shourie and Mr Arun Jaitely. In part, this campaign is explained by the BJP's disenchantment with Mr Advani, who has failed to impress its members. In part, it's meant to promote a new concept of tough leadership, which delights in cruelty, undemocratic elitism and 'getting things done' for the privileged ? in the case of the huge subsidies given to Tata Motors by Modi. The BJP's capitulation to Moditva will be an even greater disgrace than its humiliation at the hustings. (Navhind Times 7/5/09)

Muslim rights organisation takes up case of hijab-clad mother (7)

Washington, May 11 : The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) today called on state and national law enforcement authorities to investigate possible civil rights violations in the harassment of a Muslim mother in North Carolina whose home has been targeted repeatedly by vandals. It said egg-throwing vandals targeted the hijab-wearing mother's home since 2005. The 53-year-old mother of four in Greensboro, N C, who wears an Islamic head scarf (hijab), reports that vandals have been throwing eggs at her home since she moved into the neighborhood. She believes the attacks have been prompted by her Islamic attire. The last attack on her house came on April 13. "We urge local, state and national law enforcement authorities to investigate the possible bias motive in this troubling case and to bring the perpetrators to justice," said CAIR National Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper. "No American of any faith should be subjected to such harassment." Mr Hooper added that it is up to state and national religious and political leaders to challenge the growing level of Islamophobia in American society that can result in such incidents. CAIR, America's largest Muslim civil liberties organisation, has 35 offices and chapters nationwide and in Canada and helps enhance the understanding of Islam. (New Kerala 11/5/09)

TV channels airing extreme Islam should be contained: Scholar (7)

Dubai, May 12 : Satellite channels airing extreme versions of Islam and offering instant fatwas and fortune-telling should be monitored and regulated, senior television executives have said. Fahad al Shimemeri, general director of the Saudi-based Al Majd Network, said programmes that advocate sorcery, black magic (and) un-Islamic practices were being broadcast into millions of homes in the GCC, the National daily said. According to some Indian community leaders, India may also take a cue from this move as some talk shows recently quoted a Muslim scholar as saying that women need not go to work as it is the duty of men to take care of her. Speaking on the sidelines of the eighth annual Arab Media Forum, he said the rapid growth in unregulated channels and fatwa programmes posed a direct threat to true versions of Islam. Among the 500 satellite channels available, 80 religious stations are outnumbered only by those providing light entertainment, according to the Dubai Press Club. Many others dedicate a proportion of their time to fatwa programmes. Mr al Shimemeri, a trained Islamic scholar, also criticised channels that claimed to offer Islamic edicts from unqualified Muftis. Anyone is appearing on TV and is issuing a fatwa, he said. "We really need to stop that because the youth are getting a distorted image of Islam." At the same workshop, entitled From terrestrial fatwa to satellite fatwa, Ahmed al Haddad, director of UAE's Fatwa Administration, said while the big audiences available to satellite channels meant they could be a useful medium for education, they could also be a threat. "Some of these channels are causing grave concerns," he said. (New Kerala 12/5/09)

Muslim vote key in final U.P. phase (7)

LUCKNOW: The Muslim vote is set to play a crucial role in the fifth and final round of polling on Wednesday in 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in Uttar Pradesh. These constituencies are located mainly in the Rohilkhand region where Muslim population is concentrated. So vital is the support of the Muslims in deciding the fate of the candidates in at least 10 of the 14 constituencies that the ruling Bahujan Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party and the Congress have focussed on garnering the Muslim votes during campaigning for the fifth round. In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the SP, riding on the support of the minority community, had won six of these 14 seats. The going appears to be tough for Mulayam Singh's party in this election as the Congress and the BSP appeared to have made deep inroads into the once-invincible vote bank of the SP in the region. In this context, the rebellion of the SP's most credible Muslim face, Mohammad Azam Khan, has been the biggest setback to the former Chief Minister. Mr. Khan's running feud with the SP nominee in Rampur, Jayaprada, and the party general secretary, Amar Singh, threatened to mar the party's chances in the constituency. The political drama in Rampur continued, even on the eve of the final round of the battle. At a press conference on Tuesday, Mr. Khan threatened to initiate legal proceedings against Ms. Jayaprada if she failed to prove her charge that he was instrumental in distributing objectionable CDs featuring her. Sensing trouble in the Samajwadi camp, the Congress is trying to woo Muslim voters towards its candidate, Begum Noor Bano, a former MP from Rampur. The Congress had reportedly sent feelers to Mr. Khan. The Bharatiya Janata Party has also fielded a Muslim from Rampur, party vice-president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, who too is a former MP of the area. In Budaun, Salim Iqbal Sherwani, who was denied the ticket by Mr. Mulayam Singh, is banking on the Muslim support to enable him to win the seat for the fifth successive time, this time as a Congress candidate. Mr. Singh has fielded his nephew, Dharmendra Yadav from Budaun, while D.P. Yadav is the BSP candidate. Mr. Sherwani was among the two Muslim MPs, who were dumped by the SP chief, the other being Shafiqur Rehman Barq, the MP from Moradabad. Mr. Barq joined the BSP and he is the party candidate from Sambhal. Another former MP of SP, Shahid Siddiqui, is in the fray as a BSP candidate in another Muslim-dominated seat, Bijnore, which, till the 2004 Lok Sabha polls, was a reserved constituency when it was bagged by the Rashtriya Lok Dal. In Moradabad — the district has the largest number of Muslims (17.36 lakh) in the State — the Congress had fielded the former Indian cricket captain, Mohammad Azharuddin, whereas in Saharanpur, the SP's Rasheed Masood is determined to retain the seat which he won in 2004. Pilibhit was another constituency where the Muslim voters had an established presence. Here, Varun Gandhi of the BJP is pitted against V.M. Singh of the Congress and Ganga Charan Rajput of the BSP. The Hindu 13/5/09)

After SC verdict, embarrassed Maya drops NSA against Varun (7)

New Delhi: An embarrassed Mayawati government revoked its detention order under NSA against Varun Gandhi for his alleged hate speeches following a direction from the Supreme Court which made known its disapproval of the grounds for booking him. "Following the Supreme Court order, the state government has revoked NSA against Varun Gandhi", a senior government official said in Lucknow. The UP government's move came within hours of the Supreme Court directing it to "forthwith withdraw" the detention order slapped on Varun on March 29. 29-year-old Varun was charged with inciting communal passion by making provocative and inflammatory speeches during elections meetings in Pilibhit on March seven and eight. He was lodged in Etah jail and has been on parole since April 16. A bench headed by Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan disposed of the petition filed by Varun challenging the imposition of the NSA as well as the application filed by the Uttar Pradesh government seeking setting aside the decision of the State Advisory Board recommending revocation of the stringent law against him. The apex court took exception to the submission made by the state government that the District Magistrate (DM) of Pilibhit could not be heard and only the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) was present before the Advisory Board during the hearing. "This cannot be a ground to challenge the decision of the Advisory Board. The ADM was present. He must have been instructed by the DM," the bench observed when UP Advocate General Jyotindra Mishra contended that the DM was not heard by the Advisory Board. The Court said notice was given fixing the date for hearing before the Advisory Board and the authority should have been present to put forth its views. "Why you were not present?" it asked. After the Bench, also comprising Justices P Sathasivam and Deepak Verma passed the order, the BJP leader's counsel and senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi did not press for the second petition seeking damages of Rs 10 lakh from the UP government. UP Home department officials said while the NSA detention order has been withdrawn, other cases pending against Varun were being pursued and law would take its own course. The apex court was critical of the UP Government approaching it with an application against the decision

of the State Advisory Board which had not found sufficient ground for invocation of NSA against Varun. (Financial Express 11/5/09)

Muslim Alliance in U.P. puts forth its demands (7)

NEW DELHI: A day before counting of votes, the Uttar Pradesh Muslim Alliance, a new group of five political parties and two social organisations, said elected MPs owing allegiance to it would support a government that commits itself to separate reservation for poor Muslims and a Rs.25,000-crore package for the community. Claiming that the group would win at least 10 Lok Sabha seats, UPMA chairman M.J. Khan said here on Friday it would support a political formation at the Centre only on the basis of a firm commitment to implement their three-point agenda. These points include the removal of religion-based discrimination in the Constitution and the trifurcation of the OBC quota among advanced OBCs, most backward classes (MBCs) and Muslims based on their share in the population as worked out by the Mandal Commission. Another demand is a special package of Rs. 25,000 crore annually for Muslims to be given by the Centre towards their education, employment and economic development. UPMA is a group of U.P.-focussed major social and political bodies. These are the All India Ulema Council, the All India Momin Conference, the All India Muslim Council, the Muslims Economic Forum, the National Loktantrik Party, the Jamait-e-Islami U.P., the All India Milli Tanzeem and its related organisations — the Peace Party, the Ulema Council and the U.P. Milli Mahaz. "We will form a National Muslim Alliance bringing together like-minded political and social organisations to emerge as a strong leadership of the Muslim community," Mr. Khan said. "Since Independence, Muslims have been delivered only promises, which will not be tolerated now," he said. (The Hindu 16/5/09)

SP gets drubbing from Muslim voters (7)

ALLAHABAD: The results of the Lok Sabha elections have left the Samajwadi Party and Muslim community in deep introspection as none of the 12 Muslim candidates fielded by the party in Uttar Pradesh could win. The other major parties, however, fared somewhat better when compared to SP. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) had fielded 14 Muslim candidates of whom four won, while three candidates out of nine fielded by the Congress also managed to romp home victorious. So the big question is what was the reason behind the loss of Muslim candidates fielded by a party (read SP) which till now projected itself as the messiah of Muslims in the country. Talking to TOI, former state director general of police S M Naseem said, "It is unfortunate that SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav and his general secretary Amar Singh need Muslim voters rather than leaders. This is the reason why claims of leaders like Salim Sherwani and Shafi-ur-rehman Burq and Shahid Siddiqui were ignored forcing them to leave the party and join others." He added that only those candidates from the Muslim community were given tickets who supported the entry of persons like Kalyan Singh against the wishes of party supporters and senior leaders. However, a certain section of members of the community feel that candidates fielded by outfits like the Peace Party and Ulema Council also played spoilsport with the fortunes of Muslim candidates fielded by Samajwadi Party. This is because candidates of these outfits walked away with a major chunk of Muslim votes. Attributing this to lack of a leader in the Muslim community who could become a rallying point for the community, well known industrialist Asad Noorani said the problems of the minority became aggravated in the backdrop of inflammatory statements issued by BJP leader Varun Gandhi. This forced the Muslims to return to a national party which could effectively safeguard their interests both at the local as well as national level. Moreover, Noorani added, a large section of Muslim community had become apprehensive that Uttar Pradesh might become a second Gujarat in the wake of Varun Gandhi's statement. Coupled with this the Kalyan factor also played a major role in herding away Muslims from SP fold, Noorani reasoned. Noorani's statement may hold some weight in view of the fact that die hard supporters of SP including former advocate general S M A Kazmi left the party in a huff after the entry of Kalyan Singh and joined the BSP along with several other disgruntled leaders. On the other hand, convenor of Allahabad Mohurrum Jhoola committee, Ghulam Rasool felt that preference of people for national parties in the polls marginalised the stature of regional parties like the SP and BSP in the state. Regarding the loss of Muslim candidates, he said, "How can Muslims support a party which welcomed a person responsible for the Babri masjid demolition." Rasool added that even a leader like Azam Khan, who galvanised the Muslims in favour of SP, confined himself to his pocket borough Rampur where he was engaged in a bitter feud with party candidate Jaya Prada and SP general secretary Amar Singh, thereby finding little time to mobilise support for other candidates. (Times of India 19/5/09)

Delhi High Court upholds Muslim girl's marriage (7)

NEW DELHI: Upholding the marriage of a five-month-pregnant teenaged Muslim girl, the Delhi High Court has handed over her custody to her mother-in-law as her husband is in judicial custody. A Division Bench comprising Justices B.D. Ahmed and Ajit Bharihoke passed the judgment while deciding a petition filed by the girl's father seeking a direction to the Delhi police for procuring the girl before the Court. The Bench decided the case on the basis of the Shariat (Muslim personal law) which considers a Muslim girl a major if she has reached puberty. The Bench said that since the girl had reached puberty, she was a major and mature enough to choose her life partner. Counsel for the petitioner, R.D. Rana, had opposed the marriage on the ground that the girl was below the marriageable age of 18. He further argued that the marriage could not be justified on the basis of Shariat as it was not solemnised under that law. He submitted that in the garb of marriage the accused could not escape the punishment of the offence under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code. He also opposed the argument that the girl had consented to marry the boy, submitting that that the consent was immaterial because it had been established on the basis of documents that she was below 16 years of age. The couple got married in a court here last year. They belong to weaker sections of society. The girl's father is a security guard. The New Ashok Nagar police had arrested the boy last month at Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh when the girl's father moved the Court. The Court also dismissed his petition. Before the order of the Court to hand over the girl to her mother-in-law, she was put up at a Nari Niketan here. (The Hindu 19/5/09)

Mob violence over 'rape', murder of minor (7)

Vadodara: 12-year-old girl found beheaded, accused commits suicide; bodies found in suspect's house in Kheda village An alleged rape and murder of a minor girl belonging to the Muslim community snowballed into a communal flare-up in Anghadi village of Thasra taluka of Kheda district on Tuesday, police said. According to the police, the incident occurred after 1.30 pm when the victim (12) went out to fetch water. Sub-Inspector V Vaghela of Thasra police station, where the offence has been registered, said: "As the girl did not return for long, her relatives started looking for her. After failing to find her, around 4.30 pm they knocked on their neighbour, Deva Talpada's door. People grew suspicious when there was no response from Talpada's house. They climbed up to the roof of the house and saw the headless body of the victim, and Talpada lying inside." (Indian Express 28/5/09)

Dalit count up to 10, Muslim down to 5 (7)

New Delhi: One trend the Congress attributes its 2009 surge to is the "return" of Muslims to the party in several states, especially in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. In fact, the Congress tally in districts with 25% or more of minority presence went up four-fold to 42. But given that the party fielded only 18 Muslims of whom 11 were elected, the Council of Ministers announced on Wednesday had just five Muslim faces — one less than in the previous UPA government. Incidentally, 30 Muslims were elected in this Lok Sabha, of whom 27 are with the UPA. In comparison, the Council of Ministers has 10 Dalit faces, up from seven in the last government. Two are from Karnataka: Mallikarjun Kharge and K H Muniyappa; two from Maharashtra: Sushilkumar Shinde and Mukul Wasnik; Kumari Selja from Haryana; Panabaka Lakshmi from Andhra Pradesh; Mohan Jatua of Trinamool Congress from West Bengal; Meira Kumar from Bihar; A Raja from Tamil Nadu; and, Krishna Tirath from Delhi. (Indian Express 28/5/09)

Act on Sachar, says JD-U (7)

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY: The Janata Dal-U today demanded immediate implementation of the Sachar Committee report and sought Scheduled Caste status for Dalit Christians and Muslims. The party's two-day national executive, that ended here today, was dominated by the NDA's defeat in the Lok Sabha. The party chief, Mr Sharad Yadav, said BJP being the biggest partner in the coalition should be blamed "more" but not totally. Briefing reporters after the conclusion of the meeting, Mr Yadav took no names but said some issues cropped up during the elections that did not help the NDA, an apparent reference to BJP's clamour for Mr Narendra Modi as Prime Minister and Mr Varun Gandhi's speeches. "Some internal fights in the alliance did cause losses to NDA. JD-U also suffered losses. The concern was expressed in the meeting over this aspect and we will discuss how to solve whenever a meeting of NDA takes place," Mr Yadav said. "The kind of understanding that should be in the alliance like what it was during Atalji's time was somehow missing," he added. Mr Yadav, however, evaded a direct reply when asked whether there was a demand from Jharkhand to snap ties with BJP. He also denied that JD-U would demand the Deputy Speaker post as it was with an NDA ally SAD in the last Lok Sabha. On the BJP's opposition to

reservation for Dalit Christians and Muslims, the senior JD(U) leader and Bihar chief minister, Mr Nitish Kumar, said, "We are a different political party. Their (BJP's) opinion could be different. But we will air our views." Demanding an end to the practice of implementation of Central government schemes in states, the party's resolution said, "The money spent in these schemes should be directly provided to the states and they should be allowed to run schemes according to their needs." The party also alleged that the Central government's schemes failed to achieve their targets. "The Centre should focus on the subjects specified in the Union list. I wonder why they are focussing so much on subjects of the State list. This is a temptation which people (the central government) should check," Mr Kumar said. The party resolution reiterated the demand for special state status for Bihar. "Bihar deserves a special package from the Centre under the special state status keeping in mind the level of poverty and status of private investment in the state," the resolution said. In a TV interview, meanwhile, the BJP leader, Mr Venkaiah Naidu, defended Mr L K Advani on the BJP's defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. "There are various reasons... different states behaved in different manner. It is not about leaders alone," Mr Naidu said. Answering a question on whether Mr Advani's age and his hardline image was the reason behind BJP's defeat, Mr Naidu said no individual is responsible for the party's performance and, therefore, Mr Advani cannot be held solely responsible (Statesman 31/5/09)

Muslim meet on women's rights on Sunday (7)

Bhopal: Bhopal is all set to welcome the sacked general secretary of the Samajwadi Party (SP) and chairman of the Minorities Forum of India (MFI), Mohammed Azam Khan who is expected to visit the State capital on Sunday, June 7 to participate in a religious programme to be held at Ravindra Bhavan that has been organised jointly by 'Al Jawad Foundation' of Lucknow and 'Hum Ek Hain' of Bhopal. Renowned Muslim clerics from all over the country would participate in the conference. Zehra Mustafawi Khomeini, daughter of Iranian religious leader and politician late Ayatollah Khomeini would be the chief guest and Iranian Cultural Counselor Karim Najafi would be the guest of honour on the occasion. Many other dignitaries including the Consulate general of Iran in India and noted Shia clerics Kalbe Jawad and Kalbe Rushaid both from Lucknow, Shahar Qazi Bhopal— Moulana Abdul Lateef Sahab, Molana Sharafat Ali Naqvi, Uttar Pradesh Waqf Board Chairman Waseem Rizvi and some of the political leaders of the country would also attend the programme. The theme of the programme would be a conference on the life of 'Hazrat-e- Fatima Al Zehra' daughter of the Prophet Mohammed and is titled as Seerat — e— Janab Fatima Zehra. The topic of the discussion in conference would be women's rights and human values. Azam who enjoys strong clout over here and is considered as the hero among the Muslims has strong mass base and enjoys huge support of the community. MFI State president Chowdhry Munawwar Saleem talking to The Pioneer confirmed the programme of Khan. He further said that MFI would accord warm welcome to Khan on his arrival to the State capital. All preparations have been completed for the heroic welcome of our leaders. We want to give message through the grand welcome to him that Azam Khan is above all political designations, he might have been sacked by the Samajwadi Party leadership but he rules the heart of the people especially Muslims not only in Uttar Pradesh but all over the country. How can the community forget that he has been sacked by the SP for opposing Kalyan Singh the destructor of the mosque, Saleem added. 'Hum Ek Hain', Secretary and the convener of the conference Manzar Bhopali said, "It is for the first time that such a programme is going to take place in Bhopal in which dignitaries from India and Iran would participate, we also like to give message through this conference about the importance of women's rights and human values in Islam." (Pioneer 3/6/09)

Quota for Muslims is a double-edged sword: Khurshid (7)

New Delhi In contrast to predecessor A R Antulay who maintained a studied silence on the the issue of reservation, newly-appointed Minority Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid has called quota for Muslims a "double-edged sword" which could create "envy, hostility and resistance". He has instead advocated affirmative action as a tool to "inject an ability to compete" rather than make them "constant beneficiaries of additional help". In an interview to The Indian Express, Khurshid said it was time to explore "angles" other than reservation. He said it was his intention to roll out some "quick impact" schemes and fine-tune delivery of recommendations made by the Justice Rajinder Sachar committee. "You don't want to try and please somebody and not get them the comfort of actually getting any relief. I think it is much better to get substantive relief, substantive opportunity rather than stick your mind only on one particular way of doing it." "If you can get them what they want by another method... what they want is opportunity, why should we just follow a standard line of reservation. There may be a better way. If there isn't then, we will come

back to discussing reservation. Let us look at other angles," Khurshid said when asked about implementation of the Ranganath Mishra committee report which he maintained he had not read. "I don't think we have clarity on reservation. There are expectations and demands for reservation of all kinds... I think what we need to do is look at affirmative action a little more seriously. Reservation is a double-edged sword for Muslims. Must not do anything that creates envy, hostility and resistance," he said. His comments come at a time when there is a clamour among Muslim organisations for implementation of the Ranganath Mishra Committee report which suggested, among other things, 15 per cent reservation for minorities (of this 10 per cent should be for Muslims) in education and employment. The report has been gathering dust at the Minority Ministry for the last two years. The Mishra commission for religious-linguistic minorities had also demanded SC status for Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims. Khurshid said it was time to "look at affirmative action a little more seriously" with a view to "inject an ability to compete rather than becoming constant beneficiaries of additional help". In this context, he said the list of institutions, where scholarships would be awarded, should be expanded to include some outstanding private schools as well. "The biggest scheme is scholarship. But the scholarship today is largely empowerment scholarship... I think we need to have greater emphasis on excellence. We don't want to fall into the Macaulay trap of creating clerks. It is important to move from being peons to being clerks. But we want to make CEOs as well," he said. Besides fine-tuning implementation of the Sachar committee recommendations, he said his immediate priority would be to identify some "quick-impact" schemes like setting up big medical centres and universities in rural areas. "If you come up with a housing project in Bhadohi it will have an impact, identified clearly as an outcome of our efforts to implement the Sachar committee report. I think a major big hospital in eastern Uttar Pradesh will have an impact... A hospital is not going to treat Muslims only, it will treat everybody. But there will be a sense, if it comes, that Muslims are not just asking, but they are giving," he said. "Whatever we do must convince people that it is effective and it has an impact. It should not be and must not appear to be window-dressing to fulfill some goody-goody behaviour expectations. It must have grassroot impact," he added. (Indian Express 8/6/09)

"Quotas for Muslims futile talk; affirmative action ok" (7)

New Delhi, June 11: Minority Affairs Minister Salman Khursheed on Thursday said that there is no point getting into a futile argument on reservation for Muslims till a constitutional amendment enables it and instead favoured affirmative action for the betterment of the community. "One day it might be possible if you get consensus in the country and you get a constitutional instrument by which it (reservation) could be done," he said. While arguing that he was not against reservation for minorities, he stressed the need for the "majority's acceptance, support and willing implementation in the empowerment of minorities". Till then why get into a futile argument, he wondered. But reservation is not the only way (for minority welfare), he said, adding, "affirmative action has many other ways". The minister said he would rather focus on existing tools to carry out minority welfare work. Highlighting the various measures taken by the UPA government in this regard, he said there should be concentration on reaping benefits of all this. Evading a direct reply on the fate of the Rangnath Mishra Commission report that recommended specific measures to better the lot of minorities, and which has been pending with the last UPA government, Khursheed said, "Rangnath Commission report, first, will have to be decided by the Parliament and the government. That has not happened yet." "It is beyond my ministry. This is something that already before the entire Cabinet and it is with Prime Minister now," he added when asked if his ministry would take any initiative to push for immediate implementation of the Rangnath Mishra Commission report. The minister also chose not to give any specific opinion on the vexed issue of reservation for Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims. (Zee News 11/6/09)

Muslim forum opposes division of State (7)

A Muslim forum, comprising academicians, intellectuals, political activists and religious heads, today strongly opposed bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh stating that the move would adversely affect the interests of the minority community. The division of State would not only endanger the security of Muslims but also obstruct the ongoing developmental and welfare programmes meant for minorities, the forum felt. A meet on "Telangana and its ramifications for the Muslims", chaired by Pradesh Congress Committee general secretary Abid Rasool Khan, was held here this morning. It discussed various subjects pertaining to the community. Former MP Khaleel Ur Rahman, Urdu Academy vice-chairman SK Afzaluddin, Osmania University Professor Abdur Rahim, Congress leaders Zaffar Javed, SM Javeed and others representing various Telangana districts participated in the conference. Briefing newsmen later, Rasool Khan, along

with Muslim community leaders, said after learning about the failure of law and order and proliferation of communal elements in both Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, the two small States created during the previous BJP-led NDA regime, the Muslims had resolved to strongly oppose formation of a Telangana State. A team would be constituted shortly (in another 10 days) to tour all districts in Telangana to elicit people's opinion on the statehood issue followed by a public meeting on the topic in the city in July, he explained. Khan demanded that TRS MP K Chandrasekhara Rao should tender an apology to the Muslim community and resign from the Mahaboobnagar Parliament seat for 'deceiving' Muslims in the recently-concluded polls. After showering promises on the minority community before the polls, his decision to support the BJP-led NDA immediately after elections had hurt the Muslims' sentiments all over the State. "Let him resign and contest again with the BJP's support from the Mahaboobnagar segment," he challenged. Strengthening of madarasas, political reservation in elected bodies, implementation of Sachar committee report and a law to protect minorities on the lines of SC/ST Atrocities Act were among the topics on which resolutions were passed at the conference. (Express Buzz 14/6/09)

Muslim groups protest 'Taliban terror' in Pakistan (7)

NEW DELHI: Several Muslim organisations on Tuesday came together to protest the "Wahabi Talibani terrorism" in Pakistan which they blamed for the recent killing of India-born Mufti Sarfaraz Naeemi in Lahore and several other scholars. Most of the participants in the protest at Jantar Mantar were Bareilvi Muslims or Sunni Muslims with Sufi leanings. Raza Academy, Muslim Students Organisation of India (MSO), Islamic Education Board of India, All India Qazi Council and New Age Media Centre were some of the organisations which carried out the protest. "We came together to protest the ongoing killings of Sunni scholars by the Wahabi Talibani terrorists in Pakistan. The killing of Mufti Sarfaraz Naeemi of Jamia Naeemia is enough to reveal their agenda against moderate majority Sunni Muslims," said Shahnawaz Warsi, the chief of MSO. Other leaders said they refused to acknowledge the Taliban because of its inhuman and unIslamic activities. "We declare them terrorists and a bunch of dacoits," they said in a statement, adding that the Pakistani government must punish those responsible for these killings. "We support the Pakistani government in its war against these terrorists. Terrorists are nothing but enemy of Islam and have presented their distorted version of Islam," said convenor Syed Modi. The leaders also condemned the decision by Taliban to demand religious tax (jizya) from Sikhs and said Taliban posed a potent threat to India. "We also want the Indian government to provide adequate security to Ajmer Sharif urs. These terrorists may cause damage to the place," said another leader. (Times of India 17/6/09)

Twin demands from minorities (7)

New Delhi, June 30: The minorities cannot mark time any longer: having waited almost 17 years for the Liberhan report, they are demanding that the dossier be made public at the earliest and time-bound action taken. The Babri Masjid Action Committee, a conglomeration of Muslim groups, today urged the Centre to place the Babri report before Parliament in the budget session starting July 3. "I appeal to the government to table the report in Parliament and take concrete action within three months," said Zafaryab Jilani, the Babri committee convener. He claimed that political parties were playing hide-and-seek with the report, and accused the Congress and the BJP of holding it up. "Both the BJP and the Congress came to power after the commission was formed, but even then it took 17 years to submit the report," Jilani said. "I have come to know that the commission completed its work in 2006 but the Congress delayed it because of political reasons. It feared the commission may hold partymen responsible for the demolition of the masjid." S.Q.R. Illyas, the convener of the Babri Masjid Committee of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, echoed Jilani. He said the report, as well as the action-taken report, should be tabled in the next session. Others took aim at the time the commission, which got 48 extensions, took to submit the report. Syed Ahmad Bukhari, the head cleric of Jama Masjid, said the long time taken was a perfect case of justice delayed amounting to justice denied. "The very fact that it took 17 years to submit the findings amounts to befooling Muslims," he claimed. The Liberhan commission got 48 extensions after it was set up within 10 days of the demolition of the 16th century mosque on December 6, 1992. The panel was to submit its report by March 16, 1993. But it sought repeated extensions to complete its investigation. The last three-month extension was given in March this year. Bukhari claimed submission of the report amounted to nothing because the government could sit on it for a long time. "Only if it is tabled at the earliest will it be known whether the commission has held the real culprits responsible for the demolition or not," he said. Some are suspecting the government might hold up the report. "Since there is not going to be any election soon, the government can sit on it for any length of time and release it when it suits

them," said Tasleem Rehmani of the Muslim Political Council. The delay in filing the dossier had grabbed international attention after Asma Jahangir, the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief of the UN human rights council, mentioned it in her report. "While an inquiry into large-scale communal violence should not be done in indecent haste, it should be accorded the highest priority both by the investigation, the judiciary and any commission appointed to study the situation. Unreasonable protraction of the inquiry only keeps tensions simmering and devalues justice," Jahangir had said. "I was astonished to learn that just before I arrived in India, the Liberhan Commission --- probing the circumstances leading to the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya --- got the 44th extension to conclude its inquiry." (Telegraph 1/7/09)

Muslim leaders denounce reported move to legalise gay sex (7)

New Delhi, July 01, 2009: Amid government moves for a re-look at the homosexual laws, several Muslim leaders have said any attempt to legally permit sex is an attack on religious and moral values. "Legalisation of homosexuality is an attack on Indian religious and moral values," over a dozen prominent Muslim religious leaders said in a statement. The statement has been endorsed by Maulana Jalaluddin Omari, President of the Jamaat-e Islami Hind, Maulana Muhammad Salim Qasimi, Rector of Darul Uloom Waqf, Deoban, Maulana Mufti Mukarram Ahmad, Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Fatehpuri, among others. "We are shocked to see reports in the media that the Union government is considering the repeal of Section 377 of the IPC, which means making homosexuality legal," the statement said yesterday. It said that homosexuality is a sin and a social evil which will only lead to societal disintegration and break-up of the family. Appealing to the government not to be influenced by the "decadent trends of the Western culture" and not to give in to the demands of a minuscule minority, the statement said the government should not test the patience of the silent vast majority of the country which abhors such behaviour. A prominent body of Muslim community Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind had earlier hit out at the government's proposed move, saying the repeal of the section would create "sexual anarchy" in the society. (Hindustan Times 1/7/09)

CSSE welcomes govt's move on Sachar Committee report (7)

Bangalore, Jun 30 : The Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion (CSSE) at the National Law School of India University here today released an open letter to Union Minority Affairs Minister Salman Khursheed welcoming the proposed setting up Equal Opportunity and Diversity Commission. The open letter signed by over 100 prominent academics, activists and members of the civil society, welcomed the initiative covering the public and private sectors, marking a paradigm shift in India's approach to equality. "Moving beyond an exclusive focus on reservations, the proposed measures recognise that discrimination takes place on multiple grounds, and that compartmentalising suffering through group-specific measures may spawn politics of resentment," Dr S Japhet, Professor and Director of CSSE said. The government had appointed two expert committees under Dr Madhav Menon and Dr Amitabh Kundu to consider the recommendations of the Sachar Committee which reported on 'Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim community in India.' While the former recommended Equal Opportunity Commission Bill to prohibit discrimination against 'deprived groups' defined on certain grounds such as sex, disability, religion, caste and language, the latter recommended constitution of a Diversity Commission, the letter said. (New Kerala 1/7/09)

Muslim board to discuss Liberhan report July 12 (7)

Lucknow, July 01, 2009: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Wednesday said its members would discuss the Babri Masjid probe report in its executive body meet at Kozhikode on July 12. "Even though the (Liberhan) Commission has taken 17 years instead of three months to submit its report, we would still like to know what the report has to say about the martyrdom of the 16th century Babri Masjid," senior board member Maulana Khalid Rasheed told IANS in Lucknow. The report on the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition by the Liberhan Commission, which was formed 17 years ago, was submitted Tuesday to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Rasheed said: "Since our next meeting is due at Calicut in the next 10 days, all members of the Muslim Personal Law Board would naturally like to take a decision on that report at the meet." Rasheed, who was also Lucknow Idgah's Naib Imam and head of a three and a half century old seminary Firangi Mahal, hoped "the report would least of all, expose the role of several political leaders behind the demolition". AIMPLB legal adviser Zafaryab Jilani who has been convenor of the erstwhile Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) wants "punishment" for all those who

were responsible for the demolition. Jilani has been closely associated with the legal aspects of the issue being dealt with simultaneously by a special trial court as well as the Allahabad High Court. Jilani urged the Muslim law panel to ask the prime minister to take a decision on the report within three months after it is tabled before the parliament. "I hope the government does not waste any time in placing the report before the parliament now," he said. (Hindustan Times 2/7/09)

Muslims demand a better deal (7)

JAIPUR: The Rajasthan unit of All-India Milli Council on Saturday demanded some special measures for the Muslim community in the State Budget to be presented in the Assembly this coming Wednesday to act on the Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee's recommendations pertaining to both policy formulation and implementation. Milli Council State general secretary Abdul Qayoom Akhtar, flanked by other leaders, told media persons here that Muslims expect some major budgetary announcements for them in spheres such as madrasa education, waqf properties, bank loans, artisanship, development of minority-dominated areas, finance and economy. "Muslims in Rajasthan voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Congress in the recent Lok Sabha elections and had a major role in sending 20 MPs from the State to New Delhi. They have a legitimate aspiration to join the mainstream of development in the wake of their abysmal poverty and backwardness confirmed by the Sachar Committee," said Mr. Akhtar. The Milli Council hoped that the Congress-led Government in the State now would take an initiative to implement the Sachar Committee's recommendations through budget allocations. The Milli Council leaders called upon Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who also holds the Finance portfolio, to announce establishment of a township for artisans with the facilities of training, finance, manufacturing and marketing. "About 40 per cent of the Muslim population in the State comprises artisans and 28 per cent unorganised labourers. They will benefit immensely from such a project," said Mr. Akhtar. An "extremely poor" share of Muslims in the bank loans also calls for formulation of a special scheme their economic empowerment through interest-free loans, cooperative societies and self-help groups. The Council leaders requested Mr. Gehlot to announce a special package for madrasas to facilitate their modernisation and appointment of para-teachers. Other demands pertained to establishment of a Waqf Development Council with an initial corpus of Rs.100 crore. (The Hindu 5/7/09)

Don't link terrorism with Islam: Imran Khan (7)

Lahore, July 5 : Cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan has said that terrorism should not be linked with Islam. Talking to media persons after visiting Jamia Naeemia to express grief over the assassination of country's top religious scholar Sarfaraz Naeemi here, Khan termed the suicide bombings as a 'political issue.' "No religion can allow suicide bombing. There is no solution to this problem in Islam. The suicide bombing is an entirely political issue," The Daily Times quoted Khan, as saying. He criticized the PPP-led government for towing the lines of the United States, and said that the extremism in Pakistan could not be rooted out until the US continues its operation in Afghanistan. "Pakistan is heading towards disaster as the ruling political leadership is in pursuit of dollars for their personal gains. The growing extremism in Pakistan cannot be curbed as long as US stays in Afghanistan," the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) chief said. Khan said he is sure that mid-term polls will be held in the country, but added that even the polls would not be able to pull Pakistan out from the current turbulent situation. (New Kerala 5/7/09)

"Manch distorting facts in plea to summon Modi" (7)

AHMEDABAD: The Gujarat government has opposed summoning of Chief Minister Narendra Modi, and others for cross-examination before the G. T. Nanavati-Akshay Mehta Judicial Enquiry Commission probing the Godhra train carnage and post-Godhra communal riots in 2002. In a written submission on Friday, government pleader T. S. Nanavati said the April 2009 application by the Jansangharsh Manch "does not deserve to be granted." For, there were "certain factually incorrect and imaginary circumstances narrated" in the application. Advocate-General, Kamal Trivedi, who was present before the Commission when Manch advocate Mukul Sinha argued for summoning Mr. Modi and six former Ministers, and police and administration officials, would present the government's view on Saturday. Questioning the "bona fides" of the Manch, a non-governmental organisation, which it said was constituted primarily to represent trade union workers and espouse labour laws, in moving the application, the government submission referred to the NGO's claim about the fire aboard the Sabarmati Express as "accidental," in the face of a "plethora of evidence" before the Commission that it was a pre-planned attack by certain persons. "The present application coming from such applicant, who has scant regard for the truth and is always out to

distort the facts, deserves to be rejected on this ground alone," the government said. The government "suo motu enlarging the scope" of the Commission to enquire into the role and conduct of the Chief Minister and other Ministers was a "most democratic and transparent action," it said. Referring to the claim that the violence which followed the train carnage was "instigated by the Chief Minister and his coterie of Ministers and in connivance with the State administration," the government submission said these factors and circumstances narrated by the applicant were "imaginary and only indicative of the malicious attempt" of the Manch to "distort the true facts and present them in an untrue manner." The government said the circumstances narrated in the submissions were not only "conjectural but also far from suggestive of any incriminating circumstances, much less suggesting state-sponsored violence. Most of the circumstances narrated in the application are contrary to the record and evidence led before the Commission and are demonstrably incorrect." Earlier, Dr. Sinha maintained that "undue hurry" was shown in completing the post-mortem on the victims of the train carnage even before the inquest officer signed his recommendation for post-mortem; the circumstances in which the bodies were brought to Ahmedabad from Godhra "at the instance of the Chief Minister" the very next day which further ignited the large-scale post-Godhra violence, and "inaction" on the part of Mr. Modi to persuade his own ruling party to desist from giving a "bandh" call "knowing well that it could ignite violence." Dr. Sinha maintained that the Commission, even without basing its decision on the evidence available against the Chief Minister, could still summon him and some members of his Cabinet at least to know their "version" of the events. That could help it arrive at a conclusion about the circumstances that led to the train carnage and post-Godhra riots. (The Hindu 11/7/09)

Peace message goes out from mosques (7)

MYSORE: A message calling for peace and harmony went out from the city mosques after the Friday prayers following an appeal by the city police and the district administration to prevent escalation of violence. Earlier, the authorities convened a meeting of Muslim clergies where Police Commissioner Sunil Agarwal and the Deputy Commissioner P. Manivannan sought their help in maintaining peace in the city which has witnessed incidents of violence and is simmering in tension since the last 10 days. The meeting was attended by Khusro Quraishi, Chairman, Karnataka State Minorities Commission, in which about 20 moulvis were present and agreed to read out a message of peace and impress upon those attending prayers to eschew violence and maintain vigil against instigators. Later speaking to presspersons, Mr. Agarwal said the situation in the city was under control and attributed Thursday's violence to instigation by outside elements. He said the police had received information that a few of the instigators had come from the neighbouring States. More than 200 persons have been arrested in connection with Thursday's violence and defying of prohibitory orders at Fountain Circle. In all, 26 cases have been registered in connection with the violence. (The Hindu 11/7/09)

Modi never told police to allow Hindus to vent their anger, says AG (7)

AHMEDABAD: Advocate General (AG) of the Gujarat government Kamal Trivedi on Saturday denied that there was any "instruction" issued by Chief Minister Narendra Modi to the police to "allow" the Hindus to vent their anger against the minorities in the aftermath of the Godhra train carnage in February 2002. Opposing the Jansangharsh Manch application before the G.T. Nanavati-Akshay Mehta judicial enquiry commission to summon Mr. Modi to examine their "role and conduct" during the post-Godhra riots, Mr. Trivedi said the evidence available with the Commission suggests that the police were told to take every possible step to maintain law and order and to contain violence. In his presentation before the commission here, Mr. Trivedi also denied that Mr. Modi had "entered" the burnt S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express at the Godhra railway yard "with an entourage" and in the process destroyed some important evidence. He said Mr. Modi had only climbed up the steps of the burnt coach and peeped inside. Also, he was accompanied by some government officials and not by an "entourage" of the party workers. Referring to the high-level meeting convened by the Chief Minister on the night of the train carnage to review the situation in view of the protest "bandh" call given by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad the next day, Mr. Trivedi said the Manch heavily relied on the third affidavit of the former Additional DGP, R.B. Sreekumar, in which he quoted the then DGP, K. Chakravarthy, having told him that Mr. Modi wanted the police to "allow" the Hindus to vent their anger. But the affidavits filed by Mr. Chakravarthy himself, the then Additional Home Secretary Ashok Narayan, and the then Ahmedabad Police Commissioner P.C. Pande, who were present at the meeting, stated that instructions were given by the Chief Minister to "do everything possible to prevent any upsurge of violence and further to take all lawful and necessary steps

to ensure arrest of such violence.” Mr. Trivedi said even Mr. Sreekumar in his first two affidavits made no insinuation but made such “blatant and untrue allegation” only on being denied promotion later to embarrass the government. The AG also questioned the authenticity of the two compact discs containing the list of mobile phone numbers which formed the major part of argument of the Manch to summon Mr. Modi and others. Quoting from the affidavit filed by Rahul Sharma, the then SP assisting the crime branch in the riot investigation, who had arranged for the CDs from the then two mobile service providers, Mr. Trivedi said Mr. Sharma himself admitted that he had taken the CDs home, copied them on the hard disc, analysed, zipped and made two new CDs. Manch advocate Mukul Sinha, who disputed Mr. Trivedi’s contentions on the authenticity of the CDs, pointed out that the government in its case in the Gujarat High Court on the arrest by the Special Investigation Team of the former Minister of State for Women’s Welfare, Mayaben Kodnani, had used the same CDs as authentic and used the information they contained to file the charge sheet against her. On his request, the Commission gave Dr. Sinha time on July 15 to argue on the authenticity of the CDs. (The Hindu 13/7/09)

A door opens for Muslim girls (7)

Lucknow, July 15: Nadwa-tul-Ulema, one of India’s oldest and most conservative seats of Islamic learning, has opened its doors to women for being trained to become muftis or jurists. Nadwa registrar Mohammad Haroon confirmed that 12 Muslim girls had enrolled in the course, called fazeelat, at different madarsas at Rae Bareilly, Azamgarh and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. “On completion of fazeelat, these girls would be eligible for a one-year course of iftah, following which they would get the degree of mufti,” said Haroon. Women till now were not permitted to pursue fazeelat, which is a pre-requisite to complete the iftah course for becoming muftis. Islamic scholars said the move would go a long way in the emancipation of Muslim women. Maulvis have traditionally enjoyed a monopoly over the right to issue fatwas, or religious decrees, which were often aimed at curbing women’s rights. All this could change once women become muftis and earn the right to issue their own fatwas. “We welcome this as Muslim women will now have a level playing field to defend their rights,” said Shaista Amber, chairperson of the All India Muslim Women’s Personal Law Board. “Who understands the problems of a woman except another woman?” she added, saying when women become muftis they would be guided by women’s interests while issuing fatwas. The Nadwa-tul-Ulema was founded at Kanpur in 1894 with a mission to oppose western education. It has a formidable reputation among the Sunni sect with its words and verdicts being respected even in Saudi Arabia. The title of “nadvi” (someone who has passed out from the Nadwa) is taken as a sign of one’s scholarship and credibility. The institution was intended to be a modified version of the Deoband, the biggest Islamic seminary in India. Many scholars reckon the Nadwa-tul-Ulema to be a bigger name than Deoband, whose followers are known for issuing fatwas, at times reckless ones. The Nadwa, which draws a large number of Muslim students from all over the country, on the other hand has always struck a middle path between classical Islam and modernity, say teachers. Hizbur Rahman, a senior cleric and teacher at the Nadwa, said a separate building inside the male-dominated institute would be earmarked for holding the classes for women. “The teachers, obviously male ones, would teach them from outside the purdah — the space would be divided by a curtain between the girl students and the teacher,” he said. The university has over 10,000 students — all male — at its sprawling complex near the banks of the Gomti on the western outskirts of Lucknow. The campus is dotted with buildings built in traditional Avadhi and Muslim architectural style. Although history has examples of women muftis in the remote past, most of the contemporary Islamic world barred them till 2006 when Syria made a breakthrough and appointed two women muftis to work in Damascus and Aleppo. Last year in Lucknow, a Muslim woman priest assumed the role of a qazi for a marriage. (Telegraph 16/7/09)

Two Muslim youths, security firm attacked (7)

MANGALORE: Two Muslim youths, who were arriving at the city by a bus from Thumbe on Monday, were attacked allegedly by the members of Sri Rama Sene. The victims, Mohammed Irfan (23) and Fayaz (22), were admitted to Government Wenlock Hospital here, where they were treated and discharged. Mr. Irfan told The Hindu that a few men entered the bus he was travelling by at Pumpwell, surrounded him and Mr. Fayaz, and waited till it crossed Jyothi Circle, where they allegedly stopped the bus and assaulted them. “They kept on charging us with being part of a group that had desecrated some temples in Mangalore,” Mr. Irfan said. Before carrying out this attack, the assailants invited a section of the media to cover it. A man, who identified himself as an activist of the sene, contacted many presspersons over telephone, and asked them to watch out for a Jain Travels bus near Jyothi Circle and watch “some action”. The Hindu

was not invited to cover the event. However, the same person later called this correspondent and said: "The action has been carried out based on a complaint by members of the Durga Sene." Convenor of the sene Madhusudan Urwastore said: "I am not sure of whether the attackers were from sene. I will find out and inform you." A case has been registered in the Mangalore North police station. Later, the group stormed the office of a private security firm in Balmatta and demanded that the management immediately released the allegedly long overdue salary of a few women employees. A number of activists, allegedly belonging to Hindutva groups, along with the aggrieved women employees, tried to force their way into the office of the Karnataka Security Services. But, the office staff managed to stave off their advances by locking themselves in. Unable to enter, the activists laid a 30-minute siege on the office before leaving the place with threats of dire consequences. Mr. Urwastore told The Hindu that the firm had not paid the salary to over 20 women security guards, who were allegedly made to work at a local BPO firm. He said: "The company's management has assured us that the payment will be made by July 23, failing which they will have to face dire consequences." Director (Operations) of Karnataka Security Services Dominic Jose claimed that the women employees in question were yet to get an "all dues cleared" certificate from their supervisor, which involved surrendering of their company-provided uniforms and identity cards. "Let them first get the clearance. We will then pay them their salary in full," he said, without mentioning anything about the July 23 deadline. Mr. Urwastore said that the operation was carried out by the sene's newly formed labour rights wing. Even in this incident, alleged sene's activists informed sections of the media before attacking the security firm. (The Hindu 21/7/09)

Muslim Law Board flays Moily's remarks (7)

HYDERABAD: The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board has taken objection to Union Law Minister Veerappa Moily's observation that bigamy is against the tenets of Islam and asserted that a Muslim man can marry up to four women. In a press release issued here today, assistant general secretary of the board Abdul Rahim Quraishi said that it was unfortunate that the Law Commission had come to a conclusion without understanding the Quran and the traditions laid down by the Prophet. "Sometimes a man needs to take another woman as wife and, in certain conditions, will be forced to do so in the interest of the society." Quraishi said that Indian Muslims did not follow any other country and the Law Commission's argument that some Islamic countries had banned polygamy did not have a binding on them. He wondered why the commission took up the subject and recalled the commission's statement in the past that bigamy was not rampant in India. The Muslim Law Board assistant secretary demanded that the government consult the Muslims before making a law on bigamy. (Express Buzz 5/8/09)

Indian Muslims bitterly divided over bigamy (7)

NEW DELHI: Do bigamy and Islam go together? The Law Commission of India doesn't think so. Indian clerics of all hues disagree. But they don't seem to have the backing of ordinary Muslims. The issue of a Muslim man having more than one wife has always divided the country's second largest religious minority. The row has escalated since the Law Commission asserted Thursday that bigamy conflicts with the "true Islamic law in letter and spirit." "Bigamy is not against the spirit of Islam," asserted Maulana Abdul Khaleeq Sambhali, pro-vice chancellor of Darul Uloom in Deoband town, some 150 km from here, and one of the biggest seminaries in India. "Islam permits a man to have more than one wife provided he does justice to both his wives on economic and other issues," the Maulana told IANS on telephone from Deoband. Sambhali was reacting to the 227th Law Commission report submitted to the central government. While falling short of suggesting a change in Muslim law that permits bigamy, the commission report said: "We fully agree that traditional understanding of Muslim law on bigamy is gravely faulty and conflicts with true Islamic law in letter and spirit." This is one of the most radical observations on the subject in any recent government publication. Renowned Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan concurred with Sambhali but with a moderate touch for which he is known. "Islam permits a man to have a second wife but under certain conditions," the ageing Khan told IANS here. Khan added quickly that while bigamy was widespread during medieval periods when wars turned the gender ratio in favour of women, Muslims now did not practise bigamy. Asked if he would support a ban on bigamy in India a la Turkey and Tunisia, Khan said: "Ban is not a solution. Instead people must be taught and made aware in what conditions a man can marry more than one wife." Even in Muslim countries such as Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Morocco, Pakistan and Bangladesh, polygamy is subject to judicial review. The Indian clerics' views supporting bigamy is met with disgust by most middle class Muslims. "The system of bigamy is inherently unfair to women and such practices should be stopped," thundered Arshan Alam,

assistant professor at the Centre For Jawaharlal Nehru Studies in Jamia Millia Islamia here. He said that to stop such practices, the Indian state, as it has acted in the case of Hindus, "must take the initiative because it has the authority to regulate and legislate on such issues". Alam is opposed to the veto power the largely conservative Ulema appears to hold over Muslim issues that affect millions. The government needs to rope in liberal and intellectual Muslims, he said. Shazia Naz, 27, a housewife in Delhi, agreed with Alam. "If my husband marries another woman, it would be one of the most humiliating things in my life," she said. "In such cases I would prefer to get a divorce." Naz also said the Indian Muslim community needed to take the initiative to battle social customs out of tune with today's world. Although many Indians are under the impression that Muslim men tend to take more than one wife, government-backed statistics prove that this is a myth. According to a 1974 government survey, one of the last on the subject, tribals account for around 14 percent of all bigamous marriages in India. Surprisingly, Muslims are at the bottom with 5.6 percent of bigamous marriages while upper caste Hindus come a notch above them -- 5.8 percent. "In any case, how can Muslim men have two wives when there are not so many Muslim women in the country?" asked Alam. -(Express Buzz 10/8/09)

Muslim body seeks expulsion of BJP MP for 'unprovoked firing' (7)

NEW DELHI: A day after his supporters allegedly opened fire on activists of Ulema Council leading to death of a person in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, a prominent Muslim organisation on Thursday demanded expulsion of BJP MP Ramakant Yadav from his party and also the Lok Sabha. All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat (AIMMM) president Zafarul-Islam Khan demanded BJP to expel Yadav from the party membership, alleging that one person was killed and two were injured in the "unprovoked firing" by Yadav's supporters on a procession of the Ulema Council near Phoolpur in Azamgarh. Khan also sought Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar to "initiate proceedings to expel" Yadav from the House, saying, "his real place is jail and not in the sacred temple of democracy", a statement from AIMMM, an umbrella body of Muslim organisations in the country, said. Condemning the incident, he said Yadav "is a known gangster with many criminal cases against him and yet political parties embrace him and his likes, which is a matter of shame". One person was killed and two others injured when supporters of BJP MP Ramakant Yadav allegedly opened fire on activists of Ulema Council following a minor dispute over not giving way to a vehicle in Phoolpur area yesterday. (Times of India 13/8/09)

Buddha admits not much done for Muslims during Left rule (7)

Kolkata: After the Sachchar Committee in its report pulled up the West Bengal Government for not doing much to improve the lot of Muslims in the State, Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Thursday accepted that there had hardly been any improvement in the condition of the community in the State in the last 30 years of the Marxist rule. The Chief Minister however quickly linked "historical reasons" with the poor condition of Muslims of his State. "There is no point arguing that the condition of the Muslims is not very inspiring in our State. Various historical reasons have been largely responsible for their poor condition. We have also to concede that the Muslims still continue to be far too backward than other communities of the State," he said adding however that irrespective of the causes the minorities must not be left to their condition. "After all how far can we hide behind excuses and allow a sizeable part of West Bengal to languish in backwardness?" the Chief Minister said. He was speaking at a function hosted by Alia University for Muslims where 35,000 students would get training in various streams with 90 per cent subsidy from the State Government. The decision to improve the Muslims' lot including providing them with jobs, education and health facilities was taken after the 2009 general election in which in the ruling LF suffered its worst defeat in last 30 years. Reports suggest that the Muslims do not even represent 10 per cent of the workforce in the Kolkata Police and Kolkata Municipal Corporation, notwithstanding the fact that they constitute more than 25 per cent of the State's population. Worse still only 2 per cent Muslim women were in Government jobs. Reports also said the number of Muslim employees in Group A and B positions comprise about 4.7 per cent. In the lower Group C and D, they were just 1.8 per cent. (Pioneer 14/8/09)

Muslim body lauds Jaswant's views on Jinnah (7)

Lucknow: The Congress may be seeing red over BJP leader Jaswant Singh's opinion on Mohammed Ali Jinnah in his book but the All-India Muslim Majlis (AIMM) has decided to felicitate former Union Minister for his candid admission on Qaid-e-Azam of Pakistan. Singh's comments in his book 'Jinnah: India, Partition, Independence', have been condemned by the Congress. The BJP leader, though having denied

that the book was a party document, has earned praises from unexpected quarters. The AIMM even announced that Singh would soon be felicitated at a function in New Delhi. AIMM state vice-president Yousuf Habib said: "We congratulate Jaswant Singh for his candid comments on Jinnah. It also shows that the Congress concealed a historical fact for so many years." AIMM spokesman Badar Kazmi said: "The Congress leaders should realise their mistake as they have always blamed the Muslims for the country's partition." The leaders claimed that Jinnah's negative image, as projected by the Congress, would be washed away as the historical fact was open. The outfit also welcomed Singh's remark claiming that Muslims had been treated as alien in the country. "It reflects the integrity, honesty and greatness of Singh. One should have the courage to admit this when the Congress has always painted a different picture for country's Muslims," Yousuf remarked. (Pioneer 18/8/09)

Student kept out of college for wearing head scarf (7)

MANGALORE: The Sri Venkatarama Swamy (SVS) College in Bantwal has restricted a first year BCom student from attending the classes till she conforms to the rules and regulations of the college, which is not to display her religious identity, the head scarf. The student Aysha Asmin from Panemangalore, after objections from saffron-leaning students, was told by the college management not to wear the head scarf, which she started wearing after the college had prevented her from wearing the burqa. Aysha has not been attending the classes from past 12 days. Trouble started after the college elections. She alleged that college student union president Bharath started to heckle her for wearing a scarf saying that they too would come wearing a saffron scarf. "He was taken aback when I said I don't mind. I don't even mind wearing a Saffron scarf", Aysha told TOI. After this, harassment continued, but Aysha was stoic till it reached a flash point when the principal told her not to attend classes. Aysha's father Mohammed clarifies that he admitted his daughter to the college only after clarifying that there would be no issue for wearing a burqa in the college with a lecturer. "In fact, I wore a burqa on the day of the interview. The principal did not object. If he had any objection, he would have told us", says Aysha. College principal Seetharam Mayya counters the allegation saying, "We have told them clearly that burqa can be worn outside the college premises, not inside. We have 23 other Muslim girl students and none of them wear scarf. The girl (Aysha) is stubborn." Mangalore University vice-chancellor Prof K M Kaveriappa says that the matter comes under disciplinary issue of the college, and that the university has no role to play in such matters. "It should be mentioned in the prospectus. In case such an issue is not mentioned in the prospectus, the college cannot impose it all of a sudden", he noted. Mayya says, it comes under rules and regulations section of the college and has not been delineated in the prospectus. (Times of India 18/8/09)

Jaswant condemns Gujarat ban on his book (7)

Shimla: Criticising a ban imposed on his book by Gujarat government, expelled BJP leader Jaswant Singh on Thursday said it amounted to "banning thinking" and likened the step to the one taken against noted author Salman Rushdie for his controversial work 'Satanic Verses'. "I am greatly saddened by it," Singh told reporters on the Gujarat government's decision to ban his book "Jinnah - India, Partition, Independence". "The day we start banning books, we are banning thinking," said Singh, who was expelled by BJP for the book in which he has praised the Pakistan founder M A Jinnah. He said the step taken by Gujarat government was "another example of (action taken against) Salman Rushdie and Satanic Verses" which was banned for its controversial contents on Islam. Asked to comment on BJP's contention that he had been expelled for his uncharitable comments in the book against Sardar Patel and that his views on Jinnah were different from those of L K Advani, he said, "Let me understand why (I was expelled). Nobody has told me". On his continuance as MP from Darjeeling, he said he got a telephonic call from his constituency that the people there wanted him to continue as their representative in Lok Sabha. Gujarat government last night banned Jaswant's book on Jinnah alleging it was an attempt to defame the image of the country's first Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel by "questioning his patriotic spirit". "Jaswant Singh's book questions role of Sardar Patel during the partition of India as well as his patriotic spirit. This is an attempt to tarnish the image of Patel who is considered the architect of modern united India," a statement issued by the state government said. "It is a bid to defame Patel by distorting historical facts," it charged. "So, the state government has decided to ban the book with immediate effect for wider public interest," it said. "As per the ban, there cannot be sale, distribution or publication of the book in the state," it said. (Financial Express 20/8/09)

Kalyan's bid to woo Muslims (7)

Agra: Kalyan Singh presented a mathematical equation to convince Muslims on the second day of the special national convention of the Samajwadi Party (SP) in Agra on Thursday. His son Rajveer Singh too tried to set things straight with the minorities by assuring them a new beginning. The Lodh leader also played backward card by urging them to unite under the stewardship of Mulayam Singh for returning to power in the state. Claiming to be a friend of the minority community, Kalyan said, "Since I am Mulayam's friend, who is your friend, so being a friend's friend, I am your friend also." Further substantiating his point, Kalyan said: "the BJP is your enemy and I am BJP's enemy. So that way also I become your friend as we have a common enemy in the saffron party." The former BJP leader candidly admitted to his 'one mistake' which, he claimed, he committed in his entire political career. "It was rejoining the BJP and dissolving my Rashtriya Kranti Party (RKP). I would have been better off if my RKP still existed. Now I have no personal ambition left and will strive during the rest of my life for forging Hindu-Muslim unity." The dilemma of the Lodh leader was evident as he continued to offer explanations for switching sides. Muslims remained the main issue in his nearly one-hour long speech. "I understand there is confusion and doubt in the minds of minority community but please make an effort to end this confusion. For once, accept the reality and let us wage a battle against communalism. Muslims voted for me in Etah, my candidate Kamlesh Valmiki won from Bulandshahr with Muslim support and we lost Aligarh marginally due to sabotage by some internal forces," he said. In his address, Kalyan Singh sought five years' time from minorities to remove all the confusion prevailing in their minds over his integrity. He vehemently decried branding all Muslims as terrorists. "It is a move to divide the two communities by the BJP. It will have dangerous repercussions as terrorists have no religion." However, the former BJP stalwart got support from some unexpected quarters. SP Maharashtra unit chief and former party MP Abu Asim Azmi and Rashid Masood openly supported his inclusion into the party fold. Azmi minced no words in claiming that Kalyan's inclusion was necessary for attaining power in the coming years. "In elections you need to plug in all the loopholes. There is no harm if Kalyan's entry helps the party in increasing its vote bank and getting its candidates elected during assembly elections." Talking exclusively to 'The Pioneer' Azmi remarked: "There is no harm in roping in Kalyan. Everyone is doing the same. Congress took Shivsena stalwarts Chhagan Bhujbal, Narayan Rane and Sanjay Nirupam in Maharashtra and Shanker Singh Vaghela of the BJP in Gujarat into its fold. Does the party has any switch which changed their loyalties overnight?" rued Azmi. On the future role of Kalyan Singh in the party, Azmi said, "it is simple. We will use him to the hilt to marginalise the BJP." Similarly, senior party leader and former MP Rasheed Masood urged the Muslims to forgive Kalyan as he was a changed man. "When our Prophet forgave those who came into his fold, we should also emulate him and accept Kalyan." Earlier, Kalyan also played 'backward' card by urging the OBCs too unite for regaining power in the state. "There are 54 backward castes including some from the Muslim community. There is a move to keep this population away from power. We need to realise it and rally behind Mulayam for attaining power," he said. He also decried the women reservation bill in present form on grounds that it would not serve the purpose of OBC and other downtrodden community. Meanwhile, picking up the lines from his father, Rajveer Singh too urged for Muslims' support. (Pioneer 21/8/09)

Government rejects Sachar recommendation on Wakf boards (7)

The government has rejected a recommendation of the Sachar Committee to create Indian Wakf Services on the lines of the civil services to appoint officers to boards that manage Muslim religious and community properties. A Right To Information (RTI) application was filed to know the reasons behind the rejection of the recommendation by the minority affairs ministry, but it has refused to reply. 'We had filed an RTI application to know the reasons for rejecting the recommendation of the Sachar Committee, but the ministry refused to give an answer for not creating Wakf services saying that it does not come under the purview of the RTI Act,' Zafar Mahmood, president of the Zakat Foundation of India, told IANS. The NGO works for issues concerning the Muslim community. A senior official in the ministry told IANS on condition of anonymity: 'The government has rejected it as to create these services is a complicated process. Also, the Wakf Boards across the country are in a pathetic condition.' According to the Wakf Act of 1995, only an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer or an officer appointed by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) can be appointed as CEO of the central and state wakf boards and the officer has to be a Muslim. However, the Sachar Committee appointed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to study and prepare a report on the social, economic and educational status of Indian Muslims found that there was an acute dearth of Muslim officers in the country. The Sachar report said 'where a CEO is not high ranking in the hierarchy of the state bureaucracy, the interests of the Wakf board often suffer'. The

committee recommended that in the civil services tests conducted by the UPSC, an examination for the cadre of Indian Wakf Services should also be included and those Muslims candidates who qualify in the examinations be made CEOs of Wakf boards. Mahmood, who was once an officer on special duty in the Prime Minister's Office, pointed out that 'most of the CEOs of the 27 Wakf boards in the country are promoted officers and not of the appropriate seniority level, which is not in consonance with the Wakf Act'. Under the concept of Wakf, Muslims adhering to the principles of 'endowment' embedded in Islam donate large and valuable amounts of property in the name of Allah. The proceeds from these properties - from their sale, rent or use for the welfare of the community - are dedicated to meeting the needs of the poor and the maintenance of the property. There are 27 Wakf boards in the country functioning under different state governments. The states of Haryana and Punjab have a joint Wakf board. Apart from these Wakf boards there is a Central Wakf Council which gives direction to them. India, with 150 million Muslims, has the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia (India E-News 2/9/09)

Encounter not fake: Gujarat Govt (7)

New Delhi, September 08, 2009: The Gujarat government on Tuesday rejected the magisterial inquiry report stating that the encounter in 2004 in which Mumbai college student Ishrat Jahan and three others were killed was fake. The state government cited an affidavit filed by the Union Home Ministry in its defence. The affidavit said the encounter was genuine and had described the deceased as Lashkar-e-Tayyeba militants. "The probe report is bad in law and we outrightly reject it. We will challenge it in a higher court. The magistrate has overstepped his jurisdiction," Gujarat government spokesperson Jaynarayan Vyas said. He cited the Union Home Ministry's affidavit filed in the Gujarat High Court on August 6, stating that "Ishrat and her three accomplices were LeT operatives and the Centre had passed on the information to the state government on the organisation's activities." But Ishrat Jahan's sister Mushrat Jahan said, "We stand vindicated. We had known from the very beginning that Ishrat was innocent and that the police killed her as part of a well-hatched conspiracy. She loved her country like anybody else." Despite the Gujarat government's assertion that the encounter was "genuine", it faces uncomfortable questions. The immediate trouble for it is in the fake encounters in which Sohrabuddin Sheikh, his wife Kausar Bi and their friend, Tulsiram Prajapati, were killed between November 2005 and March 2006. The Gujarat government has already admitted before the Supreme Court that all three were killed in fake encounters. The court has told the state to pay Rs 10 lakh (Rs 1 million) as compensation to the Shekih family, and the case was likely to be heard further on Wednesday. The Gujarat Police faces allegations of having killed 20 people in 11 fake encounters between 2002 and 2006. The Ishrat Jahan probe report is likely to also put the UPA government in a spot. It will have to explain how the Home Ministry affidavit supported the Gujarat government's stand. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) demanded Modi's resignation over the fake encounters, saying, "The targeted killings of persons belonging to the minority community by the state police reveals the state of affairs under the Narendra Modi government." (Hindustan Times 7/9/09)

SAfrican Indian Muslim women come out in support of 'Hijab' (7)

Hundreds of Indian Muslim women here have come out in support of Muslim women's right to wear 'Hijab,' a traditional headgear, worldwide. Over 500 women visitors pledged their support for an international campaign asserting Islamic tradition of wearing Hijab during a live broadcast by the Johannesburg-based radio service Channel Islam International (CII) in the mainly Indian area of Lenasia over the weekend. Muslims across the world are protesting against a ban on 'Hijab' in France. The CII gave a free scarf to every woman who voiced her support to the campaign. "Although we are fortunate to have strong constitutional support for the rights of Muslim women in South Africa to wear the Hijab, it is surprising that countries with supposedly far longer democracies are now denying this right to the extent that innocent Muslim women are now coming under attack," CII Director Ashraf Seedat said. Ads by Google Give The Gift of Love Your zakat will change someones life today.www.islamic-relief.orgHow to Convert to Islam Seedat said the spirit of 'World Hijab Day' was to counter the "Western propaganda" to link Hijab with backwardness, terrorism and the repression of women. "Some people are attacking Hijab by attributing it to the oppression of women in Muslim society whereas it is the symbol of women's modesty, prestige and honour in the Muslim society," Seedat said. September 4 was declared 'International Hijab Solidarity Day' at a conference of the Assembly for the Protection of Hijab in London in

July because it is the day on which France banned Muslim women from wearing the hijab. (Indian Express 7/9/09)

Muslim leadership flays Gujarat govt (7)

NEW DELHI: Sept. 8: "In Gujarat, there were no terrorists. But the harassment and torture of innocent people must have created some. We didn't know terrorism before Narendra Modi's rule. But the policies he has been pursuing is leading to terrorism," said Zakia Jowher, one of the founder-members of the Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA) on Tuesday. Flaying Mr Modi's government, she said that Mumbai resident Ishrat Jehan's killing in a fake encounter in 2004 was a reflection of the policies being followed by him where innocent people are being targeted. Ms Jowher noted that right after the killing of Ishrat Jehan and three other men allegedly because they were terrorists, there had been reports that the "encounter" was stage-managed. All four had been killed elsewhere and their bodies then brought to Ahmedabad and arranged on the road to make it appear like an encounter, she said. Ms Jowher said this was part of a pattern to detain, arrest and torture members belonging to the Muslim community in the state and charge them with things like conspiring to wage jihad or to kill Mr Modi. Mr S.Q.R. Ilyas, who is assistant convener of the Coordination Committee of Indian Muslim Organisations, on Tuesday demanded that there should be a judicial inquiry into all such police encounters as also terror attacks. In the light of the judicial inquiry report which has concluded that Ishrat and three others were killed in a fake encounter, Mr Ilyas alleged that all such police encounters are false, including the Batla House. Yet another Muslim leader, Mujtaba Farooq of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, noted that the Ishrat Jehan killing indicated the attitude of the administration in general and that of the police in particular towards the Muslim community. (Asian Age 9/9/09)

Gujarat police accused of torture of Muslim detainees (7)

NEW DELHI: If Dalits and tribals in the country are being held for naxalite insurgency, the Muslim community is being prosecuted on charges of terrorism, human rights activist Harsh Mander said here on Tuesday. "On the basis of scientific evidence it can be said that torture does not induce people to speak the truth. Rather it obscures the truth," said Mr. Mander, addressing a press conference organised by human rights organisation Act Now for Harmony And Democracy (ANHAD) to bring to light illegal detention, arbitrary arrest and torture of five Muslim youths at Vadodara in Gujarat. Referring to the manner in which people were taken away at random by the police, Mr. Mander said: "There is a pattern that exists in these cases. First, policemen in plain clothes pick up the individuals concerned and carry them away in vehicles which are not police cars. Next they are blindfolded and taken to farmhouses where they are tortured. The families are informed only later. Usually these victims do not have a criminal record." "If a person is a Muslim, then it is almost presumed that he is a terrorist and the burden of proof is on the individual to prove that he is not a terrorist," Mr. Mander added. Shabnam Hashmi of ANHAD said the five youths in Vadodara were arbitrarily picked up by the police on the pretext that they were planning to bomb the "Ganesh Visarjan" ceremony. "They were picked up on September 1 and 2. A few days later they were produced in court and the Vadodara Police Commissioner addressed a press conference where he alleged that the detainees had been in possession of a rocket launcher and suttli bombs," she said, adding that two pieces of pipe had been identified as the so-called "rocket launcher"! "When the detainees were presented in court, their body language and their bodily condition indicated that they had been tortured," Ms. Hashmi said, alleging that the youths had been detained just before a by-election on September 10 in order to rouse sentiments. Ms. Hashmi said the National Commission for Minorities which had been approached in this regard has decided to send a team to Gujarat to investigate the case. Grieving over the way her son had been treated by the police, young Zahir Abbas Amiruddin Shaikh's mother Rehmat said: "My son received electric shocks nearly four times on each of the five days of his detention. I hope he does not lose his sanity." Naseem, whose 39-year-old husband Iqbal was also picked up, said: "My husband who was detained during this Ramzan month was not allowed to break his fast. Even after he was arrested, the police kept coming home and harassing us." Dwelling on the legal aspect of the arrest, advocate Vrinda Grover said: "The law does not provide for illegal detention of people. Detention of people in farmhouses which are not jails is illegal." (The Hindu 1/10/09)

Minority report: Design behind linking Muslims to terror acts (7)

NEW DELHI: Khatoon, Musarrat and Shamima were present at a meet on "What it means to be a Muslim in India Today" organized by Anhad in the capital. Speakers, including eminent lawyers and the next of

kin of arrested persons on terror charges, levelled serious allegations against police and state governments and spoke of an increasing incidence of discrimination against the community. "Police are arresting people violating all norms. They don't wear name plates, come in vehicles without number plates and create fear among the mass. "Every year, 10,000-12,000 young boys used to leave Azamgarh for higher studies — this year it has reduced to only 2,000," claims Tarique Shafique, general secretary of Sanjanpur Sangharsh Samiti. The two slain terrorists in Batla House encounter — Atif and Asif — came from here. Tarique claims there was a design behind branding Azamgarh a terror tinderbox and that the two were innocents and had only come to Delhi to pursue higher studies. Khatoon also agrees with Tarique when it comes to a 'design' behind linking Muslims to terrorism. "Common Hindus or anyone belonging to any other religion have nothing against Muslims. Political leaders design the attacks and conspiracy. The cops who picked up my son said they would be brought back after being produced before the 'bade sahab' and I am still waiting. If someone tells me who that 'bade sahab' is, I will meet him and seek the release of my sons," the old women laments. Narrating their case, Musarrat says the branding of her sister Ishrat as a terrorist has destroyed their social life. "The recent findings proving that she was killed in a fake encounter is hardly a relief for our family. Please stop police from taking innocent lives. We all love the country as much as people from other community do," she says.(Times of India 4/10/09)

Concern over 'despair and fear' among Muslims (7)

NEW DELHI: Of the several fears that haunt Indian Muslims today, the worry of being "picked up" by the law enforcement agencies is the most compelling. At the end of a three-day national conference in the Capital on Monday on the status of Muslims in contemporary India, community representatives from across the country voiced fear and despair as their immediate concerns. Victims who have either been accused of being involved in terror activities or have relatives behind bars for alleged involvement in acts of terror shared their experiences before a panel of eminent people who have now come up with a set of 12 recommendations. Referring to the feeling of "despair and fear" among the Muslims, former bureaucrat Harsh Mander who was also a panellist said Muslims feel let down by the police and the judiciary in particular and by the media and the political parties to some extent as well. He said the ongoing war on terror has emerged as a pattern that can be seen not just in Gujarat but in several other States as well: "Muslim youths with no criminal records are picked up illegally by policemen in plain clothes, taken to farmhouse, etc., and kept for days on end and tortured brutally." Taking note of the feeling of discrimination felt by Muslims in various spheres, the recommendations put forth by the panel suggest a high-power judicial commission headed by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court appointed to examine all cases of terror across the country. "Those that seem doubtful or fabricated should be handed over to a special investigation team. It should complete its task in a year so that prolonged detention of persons against whom there is little convincing evidence is not prolonged," the panel recommended. Prosecution of police officers who have tampered with evidence in cases which can result in capital punishment, compensation for victims who were detained but found innocent, a concerted drive to recruit in larger number Muslims to all levels of the police, civil administration and judiciary have also been recommended. The jury members after studying the submissions, which include complaints like discrimination in matters of renting houses in non-Muslim dominated areas, prejudices and biases of public institutions against Muslims and reinforcing stereotypes by the media, also recommended enactment of a Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill with changes suggested by the civil society groups. "Strong action should be taken under Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code against organisations which indulge in hate campaigns and communal propaganda. The requirement of prior sanction of the State government before a complaint is registered under this Act should be waived," the panel recommended. The panel has also proposed a law against communal discrimination on the lines of the SC/ST Act to recognise specific crimes of discrimination against minorities and punish these severely. "The Prime Minister should nominate a 10-member committee to undertake a nationwide campaign against communalisation of society, akin to the literacy campaign and temple entry campaigns of the past. This committee should also study and document these social processes of structural discrimination, some of which came to light in the national meet," it recommended. Pointing out that the Indian society at present is not truly secular, film-maker Mahesh Bhatt, who was also on the jury, said there is an immediate need to "implement an anti-discrimination law".(The Hindu 6/10/09)

Muslims protest 'purdah' misuse by criminals (7)

CHENNAI: The Bhuvanewari arrest and 'confession' soap opera seems to be unending. And the stage appears to be the City Police Commissioner's office, with the media in full attendance. On Tuesday, it was the turn of a group of Muslim women activists of the Indian Tauheed Jamaat to troop into the CoP's office and protest against the 'purdah' cover given to television artiste Bhuvanewari while she was being brought to the police station. The actress was arrested recently for allegedly indulging in prostitution. In a petition to the Police Commissioner, T Rajendran, the Jamaat activists said the 'purdah' was considered as a sacred and dignified garment by the Muslims worldwide. Bhuvanewari, who was accused in a prostitution case, appeared in this traditional dress while being taken to the police station and this had hurt the sentiments of the Muslim community in the State. It had become customary for those involved in the flesh racket and other crimes to hide behind the 'purdah,'the Jamaat claimed, and appealed to the police not to allow the practice in future. Jamaat activist Masuda Alima told the media that the police must openly bring in the criminals so that the world could see them. Masuda warned that the Jamaat would launch a massive agitation if the 'purdah' was misused by the criminals. On Monday, Kollywood stars had descended on the CoP's office to protest against Bhuvanewari's 'confession' that several actresses were involved in prostitution. (Express Buzz 7/10/09)

Muslims, Dalits urged to unite for their rights (7)

Bhopal, Oct 13: In the backdrop of atrocities being committed on Muslims and Dalits it is imperative that Muslim voluntary organisations and movements come to the forefront for the advancement of the community and to create awareness about their rights, political participation and the need to organise. National general secretary of the newly launched Social Democratic Party of India, (SDPI), A Sayeed, while addressing the party's Madhya Pradesh unit office-bearers here the other day said that it is high time for the Muslims to take initiative for a political movement that values democracy and social and economic equality. It should be an honest movement to uphold social justice and moral tenets, he added. He said that since Independence anti-Muslim forces have joined hands to keep Muslims out from the corridors of power. The political scenario in India be it so-called secular forces like Congress, the Communists, Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party or the bandwagon of Hindutva forces like BJP, VHP, Bajrang Dal etc all have a common agenda to keep Muslims and Dalits at the fringe end of the power structure and instil in them the terror of fear, he added. He said, the influence exerted by communal forces, both inside and from outside, has weakened secular structure of the country. The administration does not take measures to stop the well-orchestrated attacks on the Muslims. Neither does it punish the culprits of such crimes. Special security acts are used mostly against the poor in general and the Muslims and the Dalits in particular, he added. Sayeed asserted that the SDPI was formed to realise a social order and political system based on the Indian Constitutional ideals of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity. The SDPI has its presence in 16 states with about 1.5 lakh cadres, he stated. Maulana Usman Baig, National Working Committee member of the party, said that Muslims have been pushed down by the inferiority complex created by the peculiar historic developments. They are under the wrong impression that any political move of their own is wrong. While the national secular parties are anxious to use the Muslim votes they have been reluctant to take them in as equal partners. They have failed to secure the rights of the Muslims as citizens and refused to give even legal protection to them during communal riots, which are a byword for collective anti-Muslim attacks. Advocate Sajid Siddiqui, president of the MP state unit of the party, termed the movement as a new chapter in the history of Indian politics. He hoped that the office-bearers would work dedicatedly in the state to realise a new political order. Delegates from Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior Sheopur and Bhopal attended SDPI's Madhya Pradesh State leaders get-together held here. (Central Chronicle 14/10/09)

Muslim leaders bat for a Central Madrassa board (7)

BHUBANESWAR, 19 OCT: Leaders of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, (new), formed today has claimed that 85 percent of the Muslims favored Union human resource development minister Mr Kapil Sibal's proposal of establishing a Central Madrasa Board. "We welcome the proposal and support it wholeheartedly," said one of the leaders of the new Muslim personal law board as opposed to the old board which outrightly rejected the proposal. According to members of the board, creation of a Central Madrasaa Board would interfere in religious matters. Also, since each state already has a madrassa board, the new proposal did not make much sense, said the leaders here today. Maulana Toqir Raza Khan, president of the new all India Muslim Personal Law Board, however, said he found no reason to object to the proposed Central Madrasa Board. "Those who oppose such a move are trying to guard their

own personal interests rather than the interest of the muslim community," he said. He said the new body led by him is working towards peace and communal harmony in the country. It will also campaign to try and settle minor disputes within the community rather than burden law courts. The Orissa unit of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Zaidi was formed today and Sayeed Al Rasool was nominated as the state president. SNS (Statesman 20/10/09)

Muslims should honour Hindu sentiments on Ram Temple: Dwarka Peeth Seer (7)

JAMSHEDPUR: The Shankaracharya of Dwarka Peeth, Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati Maharaj, has appealed to the Muslim community to honour the religious sentiments of Hindus and cooperate in the construction of Ram Temple at Ram Janambhoomi in Ayodhya. "Ram Temple at the birth place of Lord Ram is one of the holiest places for Hindus as Mecca for Muslims and Vatican for Christians," Swaroopanand Saraswati told newsmen here last night. Temples and Masjids can be built at any place but the birthplace (of Lord Ram) cannot be shifted, he said while emphasizing for a concrete step to end the dispute over the issue. He said the issue should be resolved in a cordial atmosphere without disturbing the prevailing communal harmony. Taking a dig at BJP, the Shankaracharya said the Ram Mandir issue was grabbed from the Sadhus and the issue was forgotten by them. The Shankaracharya also expressed concern over the rampant pollution in the Ganges river. (Times of India 22/10/09)

Muslim leaders thwart veiled attacks (7)

KOCH I/ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: With love jihad becoming a topic of discussion in the State, Muslim religious leaders have urged community members not to heed such baseless allegations targeting the community. On Friday, at several mosques in the city, the Haatib (speaker) exhorted members of the community not to believe in reports about love jihad or Romeo jihad as Islam was against pre-marital relationships. The Haatib also said that the community did not resort to such activities as Islam was against forceful conversion. "We do not believe in converting people to Islam through such activities. There have been attempts by various sectors to target the community by levelling baseless allegations. We should ignore them," said a believer of Islam, quoting the Haatib's speech prior to the the Juma (special prayer session on Fridays). Jamaat-e-Islami secretary M K Mohammed Ali said that Islam was against using forceful means for conversion. "There has been a tendency among youngsters to fall in love during their college days, but we do not think that any particular community is using love as a means to conversion," he said. Some mosques in Thiruvananthapuram district too are sensitising the faithful against Love Jihad. "Though we have not come across any sort of love jihad activities here, it has indeed become a point of discussion during the regular prayer meetings," Vallakkadavu Jama-ath president Saiffudin told Express. "The faithful are told that getting involved in such activities is similar to cheating, which is a sin as per the Holy Quran," he said. President of the Palayam Jama-ath Sheikh Hussain said that such matters had not come up in the mosque so far as it was felt that no such activities were taking place there. Beemapally Jama-ath secretary T Basheer shared the view. (Express Buzz 24/10/09)

Now, a Jihad for 'love' (7)

NDTV Correspondent, Saturday October 24, 2009, Thiruvananthapuram, Bangalore: In the era of the suicide bomber, what is a 'Love Jihad'? Well that is a term that has surfaced out of Kerala and Karnataka - with allegations that young Muslims are using love to win over young Hindu and Christian women with the aim of converting them to Islam. The Karnataka government seems to think that this is happening, and that it needs to be stopped. "Love and affection between two individuals - majors - resulting in marriage and a happy life thereafter is absolutely not a subject for the state or anybody to interfere. But these are case reported to High Court also nowadays with tragic consequences. They are forced after so called love and affection, they are married and converted into Islam or some other religion and then they are sent to training classes. I believe and thereafter they are left in the middle, totally tragic consequences," said Karnataka Home Minister V S Acharya. The term 'Love Jihad' seems to have originated in coastal Karnataka and Kerala, a belt known for communal tension. Churches were attacked after allegations of forced conversion to Christianity. The young daughter of an MLA from Kasargod said she was pulled off a bus and abused for talking to a Muslim boy. In this context, the expressed concern over conversion through a love jihad is in tune with the overall atmosphere of suspicion. Any communal issue that erupts in Mangalore usually flows down into northern Kerala. Reports of men persuading girls to fall in love with them, and then making them convert have emerged from Kannur, Kasargod. But the

top cop of Kerala says there is no organisation called the 'Love Jihad'. "The complaints that I have received are not from the girls or their parents. It is mostly from who I call third parties. They have pointed out large number of cases, which they suspect are due to such an operation. We are bound to verify. The intelligence and SPs of all districts are verifying whether it is a natural love affair. There is no organisation that calls itself love jihad," said Jacob Punnoose, Kerala DGP. What makes it all the more complicated is that there are precious few formal complaints from families said to be involved. There is one case pending in the Karnataka High Court where a father says his daughter has been lured away - she says she simply fell in love. (NDTV 24/10/09)

Chidambaram assures Muslims of rights (7)

Meerut, November 03, 2009 Home Minister P. Chidambaram on Tuesday said Muslims have every right to live and prosper in India, as "this is the land of their birth. It is a matter of pride for us that all major religions of the world, including Islam, exist and thrive in India." Addressing the three-day 30th general session of the Islamic seminary Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind at Deoband in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district, about 150 km northeast of Delhi, he said, "The golden rule in a democracy is that it is the duty of the majority to protect the minority." Chidambaram said, "The role reverses where the minorities are in majority, such as the Sikhs in Punjab and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. There, the minorities should follow the golden rule of protection." Congress leader and Minister of State for Communications and Technology Sachin Pilot and CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury also addressed the session. The second half of the session was addressed by yoga guru Baba Ramdev, who told a gathering of over 10,000 clerics that Hindu-Muslim unity "could transform India into one of the most powerful nations of the world". Acknowledging the contribution of Muslim scholars and leaders to the freedom movement and nation building, Chidambaram hailed the seminary for rejecting violence in the name of Islam. He said he was glad that the seminary issued a fatwa (religious diktat) against terrorism on February 25, 2008. "Islam rejects all kinds of unwarranted violence, breach of peace, bloodshed, killing and plunder and does not allow it in any form," he said. (Hindustan Times 3/11/09)

"Move to set up Board will destroy 'madrasa' identity" (7)

DEOBAND (Uttar Pradesh): Articulating the grievances of Muslims, the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind (JUH) on Tuesday reiterated its strong opposition to the proposal to set up a Central Madrasa Board as another attempt by the government to interfere in the 'madrasa' education system. It condemned attempts to equate terrorism with the minority community. The Jamiat urged the United Progressive Alliance government to implement the Sachar Committee and Ranganath Misra Commission reports in a way to benefit a maximum number of people, and "stop making lucrative promises." The JUH expressed concern at communal hatred and violence on the issue of "Vande Mataram," and anguish over the Delhi High Court verdict on Article 377. It also demanded separate reservation for Muslim OBCs and opposed the Women's Reservation Bill. Twenty-one resolutions were adopted on the concluding day of the three-day 30th general session of the JUH held at Shaikhul Hind Nagar here. A copy of the resolutions was presented to Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram, who was present. The Central Madrasa Board would dilute the identity and destroy the spiritual character of 'madrasas,' a resolution said. If the government was really serious about eliminating backwardness among Muslims, modern schools and colleges should be opened in Muslim-populated areas, and the minority character of the Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia University restored. Another resolution deplored the propaganda equating terrorism with "jihad." While jihad was constructive, terrorism was a destructive phenomenon, it said. The meeting condemned "fidayeen" attacks in which innocents lost their lives and said an attempt should be made to bring misguided youth back into the mainstream. The resolution on "Vande Mataram" said the issue was being exploited to target Muslims. Stating that patriotism did not require singing "Vande Mataram" in schools, the JUH supported the fatwa by Darululoom, Deoband, on the subject. On homosexuality, the JUH it urged the government not to amend Article 377 of the Constitution and asked it to take a clear stand on the Delhi High Court judgment, which decriminalised homosexuality. It noted the criticism of the verdict by religious leaders of all communities. Demanding separate reservation for the Muslim OBCs listed by the Mandal Commission, a resolution demanded that Muslim labour castes and the backward classes should be treated on a par with Dalits by amending Article 341. The JUH said if the Women's Bill was passed in its present form, Muslim representation in Parliament would be further diminished. It condemned "American barbarism against the people of Iraq," and "American aggression in Afghanistan." In his address, JUH leader Maulana Mahmood Madani said the country could not progress if Muslims

remained backward. Seeking equal rights for them, he said the JUH condemned terrorism, and at the same time government interference in 'madrasas' would not be tolerated. Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha K. Rahman Khan sought to allay the fears over the Central Madrasa Board and said it would not be formed without the approval of Muslims. (The Hindu 4/11/09)

Vande Mataram: Muslim artistes, academicians criticise Jamiat resolution (7)

New Delhi, Nov 18 (PTI) : Over 100 artistes and academicians belonging to Muslim community today launched a scathing attack on Jamiat-Ulema-e Hind resolution on 'Vande Mataram' saying the move would only "unnecessarily provoke" a controversy and strengthen Hindutva forces. "We don't believe Vande Mataram is a test case of some one's patriotism. We strongly condemn the Jamiat move to unnecessarily provoke a controversy over it." "This move has only strengthened the Hindutva forces, which have been in disarray since the last Parliamentary elections. We also condemn the Hindu right wing forces' attempt to impose its recitation on citizens to prove one's patriotism," they said in a statement. The 115 signatories of the statement include historian Irfan Habib, actors Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi, lyricist Javed Akhtar and filmmaker Sayed Mirza. They also criticised the Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind's move to establish non-residential schools for girls with a "specially carved out" syllabus, saying it was a "retrogressive move not only isolate girls from the mainstream but also to keep them confined to the secluded sectarian atmosphere." Speaking at a press conference where the statement was released, filmmaker Sohail Hashmi said "the voice of Mullahs does not represent the voice of the entire Muslim community in the country." Hashmi said, "a clergy cannot solve the problems. We need to look out for secular solutions. There is a voice among Muslims which is left unheard. The voice of the particular section or the clergy is not the voice of all the Muslims." Speaking on the same lines senior journalist, Zafar Agha said, "We need India to understand that the voice of Mullahs isn't the voice of all of us. There is a large number of liberal, educated Muslims who are totally against the resolution and the fatwa." Scientist and poet Gauhar Raza said, "Whatever they are proposing is anti-scientific and anti-democratic. We, Muslims have a voice, which just needs to be amplified." Regarding the Jamiat's move in girl's education, Hashmi said the rate of educated Muslims is already less and this system would decline it further. Supporting the Centre's move to standardise modern education syllabus through establishing a madrasa board, the group said, "This will open a window for madrasa students to modern education and surveys show that an overwhelmingly large number of Muslims are in favour of modern education." (Deccan Herald 19/11/09)

Pro-RSS Muslims take anti-terror vow (7)

New Delhi, November 20, 2009: A group of Muslims from across the country converged on the Gateway of India in Mumbai on Thursday noon to protest against terrorism. This marked the launch of a week-long "Tiranga Yatra" to observe the first anniversary of the November 26 Mumbai terror attack. These are pro-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Muslims, who call themselves Muslim Rashtriya Manch (Muslim National Forum). "We were about 1000, and we took a pledge against terror," said Tanveer Ahmed, sanrakshak of the manch. They now return to their native places to campaign against terrorism till November 26. The group is also against cow slaughter, a pet issue of the RSS. "We will file a petition for a ban on cow slaughter," manch convenor Mohammad Afzal told Hindustan Times. At the launch of the RSS' Gou Gram Yatra for cow protection and village development, the manch reportedly presented 3 lakh Muslims' signatures against cow slaughter, recently. Afzal opposes the Deoband fatwa calling Vande Mataram un-Islamic. "In Islam, no prayer is complete till you touch your forehead to the ground," he said. "So bowing before the motherland (Vande Mataram) is (an) Islamic practice." He added that though the motherland was not Allah (god), it deserved respect. The manch, founded in 2002, draws marg darshan (guidance) from RSS pracharak Indresh Kumar. There were reports last year that a Malegaon blast accused told the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad that he had plotted to kill Kumar, charging him of being "soft on Muslims". "The manch has dialogues with the RSS, and the sangh has told me to take this interaction forward," said Kumar. "But they are an organisation of Muslims and for Muslims, not of the RSS." But an RSS activist said, on condition of anonymity, that RSS-affiliated organisations working with any segment of society grow from efforts of one or more pracharaks. "If they work well, they slowly start reporting to the RSS," he said. "Let's see if this happens in this case in future." Muslim Rashtriya Manch has led other agitations too. Manch members celebrated the 150th anniversary of 1857 uprising in 2007-08, seeking blessings from the then RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan. On August 13, 2008, they took out the Paigham-e-Aman (message of peace) yatra in favour of land grant to Amarnath pilgrims. "If Muslims are

free to say the namaz in India, why should Hindus be denied religious freedom in Kashmir?" said Afzal. (Hindustan Times 20/11/09)

Muslim leaders say they did no wrong post-Babri (7)

MUMBAI: Blaming Sangh Parivar for the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, Muslim leaders on Monday denied that they violated any law during their agitation. They were responding to a report in certain section of media, which claimed that the Liberhan Commission had indicted BJP's top leaders in its findings. "On many occasions we organised marches to Ayodhya, but we were never allowed to go beyond Faizabad. We would be put into army and police vans while kar sevaks were allowed to pull down the mosque," said Mohammed Azam Khan, who was a minister in the previous Mulayam Singh Yadav's government and a prominent AIBMAC member. Some Muslim leaders said the entire Sangh Parivar, especially its political wing BJP, was trying to revive the issue to gain lost grounds after the Lok Sabha poll debacle. "BJP is desperate to restart the Ram Mandir movement. The Liberhan panel's report may help BJP in this regard," said Yusuf Muchalla, senior advocate and a member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. (Times of India 24/11/09)

'Expedite Babri cases pending in courts' (7)

LUCKNOW: With the Liberhan Commission and the action taken report (ATR) tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, the All-India Babri Masjid Action Committee (AIBMAC) has demanded that the Babri cases pending in the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court and the Special CBI Court in Rae Bareilly and Lucknow be expedited. Zafaryab Jilani, convenor of the AIBMAC, said the Centre should approach the Supreme Court or the High Court for expediting the cases. "The move should be made soon by the Government by giving an application through an appropriate authority in the interest of justice," Mr. Jilani told TheHindu, adding that the AIBMAC favoured day-to-day hearing in the case. The secular parties, particularly the Samajwadi Party and the Left, should exert pressure on the Government for expeditious disposal of the cases pending in the law courts, Mr. Jilani added. The hearing in the case relating to the title suit of the Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya pending in the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court continued till August 28, 2009, and no hearing has taken place since then. In the case (crime number 198 pertaining to charges of conspiracy to demolish the mosque against eight persons) pending before the CBI Court in Rae Bareilly, another witness deposed before the court on Monday. The court has fixed December 19 as the next date of hearing. Hearing in another case (crime number 197) is pending in the CBI court in Lucknow. While almost all the top Bharatiya Janata Party and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leaders have been indicted by the Liberhan Commission, the AIBMAC has reportedly also been subjected to criticism. "The Muslim leaders were not called to depose before the Commission," Mr. Jilani said. However, on former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee being indicted by the Commission, Mr. Jilani said that though Mr. Vajpayee might have been aware of the conspiracy (to demolish the mosque), he was not present at any of the meetings which have been given as evidence by the CBI. The AIBMAC was also surprised over former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao being given a virtual clean chit by the Liberhan panel. In fact, a contempt petition was filed against Mr. Rao and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh in the apex court after the demolition of the masjid. The case is still pending, Mr. Jilani said. Since the contentious Ayodhya issue has returned to the limelight, the Liberhan Commission report and the ATR would figure in the one-day Executive Committee meeting of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board in Lucknow on December 20. (The Hindu 25/11/09)

Samajwadi Party to felicitate Azmi at minority meet in Kanpur (7)

Kanpur: Samajwadi Party is organising a 'Minority Conference' tomorrow on the eve of the 17th anniversary of the demolition of Babri masjid, in which party MLA in Maharashtra Abu Asim Azmi would be felicitated. Clerics and ulemas have also been invited to the conference to discuss the problems of Muslim society, party leaders said here. "We will be felicitating Azmi in Kanpur on December 5, for taking oath in Hindi in the Maharashtra assembly," party spokesperson Rajendra Chowdhury said in Lucknow. He said Azmi had made north-Indians proud by taking on Maharashtra Navnirman Sena despite threats. (dna 4/12/09)

600 protestors arrested on Babri anniversary (7)

The 17th anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition on Sunday passed off peacefully barring sporadic protests by Hindu and Muslim activists and arrest of over 600 people in Chennai and Ayodhya to maintain

law and order. Demonstrations were held in various parts of the country amid tight security with some groups demanding that recommendations of the Liberhan Commission report be implemented while others raised questions over the findings. Under directions from the Union Home Ministry, Uttar Pradesh and other state governments beefed up security and Ayodhya-Faizabad area was converted into a virtual fortress. Police arrested about a dozen activists of Shiv Sena who burnt an effigy of Justice M S Liberhan on a main road in Ayodhya. Faizabad Senior Superintendent of Police R K S Rathore said they were arrested for violating prohibitory orders. In Chennai, around 500 members of 'Thouheed Jamad', including 150 women, were arrested when they tried to picket in front of Union Home Minister P Chidambaram's residence demanding arrest of those behind the demolition. About 100 members of Hindu Munnani were arrested when they tried to stage a railway blockade at the Central station in Ayodhya demanding construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya. While the VHP observed the day as "Shourya Diwas (valour day)", Samajwadi Party marked it as "Kala Diwas (black day)". All India Babri Masjid Action Committee held special prayers for peace and harmony. (Hindustan Times 6/12/09)

Book cases against Babri accused: MIM (7)

Hyderabad: Majlis MP Asaduddin Owaisi demanded the Centre to book cases against the 68 persons accused by the Liberhan Commission for the Babri Masjid demolition under section 120b of IPC for hatching a criminal conspiracy. This conspiracy clause should also be added against BJP leaders -- L.K. Advani, Uma Bharati, Kalyan Singh and Murlu Manohar Joshi -- and other Sangh Parivar leaders against whom cases are booked in FIR 197 and 198. He was addressing a protest public meeting organised in connection with the Babri Masjid demolition anniversary at Zafar Shah ground in Mallepally on Saturday night. Majlis legislators Syed Ahmed Pasha Qaudri, Afsar Khan, Moazam Khan, Ahmed Balala and Mumtaz Ahmed Khan were present. The Liberhan Commission had clearly stated that the medieval mosque at Ayodhya was brought down as per a well-planned conspiracy, Mr. Asaduddin said and wondered whether Mr. Advani and others would get punishment during their life time and whether the law would catch up with them. "It will be a victory for the Constitution and democracy only when those responsible for the Masjid demolition are brought to book. The 30 crore Muslims of country are testing the secular credentials of the government," the MIM MP said. Holding former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao responsible for the Ayodhya tragedy, he demanded immediate renaming of the Expressway and also rechristening of all projects named after Mr. Rao. He demanded reconstruction of the Babri Masjid at the same spot and urged Muslims to continue to struggle for the cause. (The Hindu 7/12/09)

Kerala HC finds signs of 'Love Jihad', asks law to check it (7)

Observing that there are indications of "forceful" religious conversions under the guise of "love" in Kerala, the state high court today suggested the government to consider enacting a law to prohibit such "deceptive" acts. "Under the pretext of love there cannot be any compulsive, deceptive conversion," the court said. Justice K T Sankaran made the observations dismissing anticipatory bail applications by two accused in activities of 'Love Jihad', allegedly involving converting girls from other religions to Islam after enticing them to marry Muslim boys. After perusing the case diary in 'Love Jihad' cases, he held there were indications of forceful religious conversions. From some of the police reports, it was clear there was a 'concerted' effort to convert girls of a particular religion to another with the 'blessings of some outfits', he said. This should be of concern to people at large and government was bound to protect the fundamental rights of citizens, the court said and asked the legislature to consider enactment of law to prohibit compulsive conversion of religious faiths. Any use of force for propagation of religion was illegal and may cause law and order problems, Sankaran said. Quoting statistics, the court said during the last four years 3,000 to 4,000 religious conversions have taken place after love affairs. According to reports by special branch of police, fundamental outfits like National Democratic Front (NDF) and Campus Front have roots in college campuses in various cities, it said. As per available information, the plan was to 'trap' brilliant upper caste Hindu and Christian girls from well-to-do families. Though there was no evidence so far to show 'Love Jihad' has operations all over India, it was said the programme was started in 1996 with blessings of some Muslim organisations, the court observed. (Indian Express 10/12/09)

Rajasthan officialdom refuses permission to discuss Liberhan report (7)

JAI PUR: Civil rights activists taking part in a "Karvan-e-Aman" (Caravan for Peace) from Ayodhya to Ajmer were left astounded by a blunt refusal of permission by the Rajasthan Government's Suchana Kendra (State Information Bureau) here on Friday to hold a discussion on the Liberhan Commission's

report on Babri Masjid demolition on the pretext of rules prohibiting “political events” on the premises. Activists working with local civil rights organisations had brought the 30-odd participants in the caravan to the Suchana Kendra, soon after their arrival in Jaipur on way to Ajmer, for a formal welcome and expression of solidarity with their cause for promoting communal harmony. The caravan had set out from Ayodhya on December 6 and covered major towns in Uttar Pradesh before entering Rajasthan. The participants in the week-long journey include noted Mumbai-based scholar and chairperson of the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Yugal Kishore Sharan Shastri, a priest of a temple adjacent to the Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya. The entourage comprises activists, academicians and students from several States. They had listed a discussion on the Liberhan Commission’s report on the agenda and wanted to go ahead with it after a short break following the welcome addresses. However, Suchana Kendra Deputy Director Jitendra Mathur flatly refused permission for this, saying the hall was booked in the name of Samgra Seva Sangh for welcoming the delegates and the norms did not allow any “political discussion” in the government institution. The Suchana Kendra is run by the State Government’s Directorate of Information & Public Relations for publicising government schemes and promoting cultural, literary and academic activities. Meetings, symposiums and cultural events are regularly organised in the building. The flabbergasted activists tried to reason with the official and explained that the Liberhan Commission’s report was a public document and their dialogue on it, far from raising any political issue, would improve people’s understanding on the subjects of secularism, communal harmony and good governance. The Suchana Kendra head did not relent and asked them to leave. The bewildered travellers and local organisers headed for the Pink City Press Club where they hurriedly made arrangements and organised a two-hour programme analysing all aspects of the Liberhan Report and the Action Taken Report, while suggesting measures for solving the vexed Ayodhya issue and calling for stringent action against those indicted by the Commission. Activists such as Kavita Srivastava and Radhakant Saxena of People’s Union for Civil Liberties, Mohammed Salim of Jamat-e-Islami Hind and Mohammed Hasan of Irada regretted that their freedom of expression on an issue vital for secularism had been “suppressed” under the Congress regime in the State. Director of Information & Public Relations Amar Singh Rathore, contacted by The Hindu, said Suchana Kendra rules and regulations did not allow “discussion on any political ideology whatsoever”. The institution, which is the hub of Jaipur’s literary and cultural activities, should not be dragged into such controversies, he said. Asked how a dialogue on the report of a Commission appointed by the Union Government could be termed a political debate, Mr. Rathore said the proposed discussion had “political overtones”. (The Hindu 12/12/09)

Muslims oppose registration of marriages (7)

CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu Registration of Marriages Act, 2009 which makes compulsory registration of all marriages irrespective of religions has drawn strong resentment from many Muslim fora in the State. However, the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam is of the opinion that “there is nothing objectionable in the legislation as it does not intervene in the Muslim Personal Law (MPL)”. The main objections raised by those fora which oppose the Act are - the legislation is unnecessary as already the marriages conducted by Muslims are registered in Jamaaths and that, by implementing this law, the State government is trying to snatch away the powers of Jamaaths and act as supreme decision making body. While the Muslims would get no additional benefit by registering their marriages with the government, these fora say that the government is trying to slowly ‘inject’ the Union Civil Code (UCC) on Muslims. M G Dawood Miakhan, president of the Indian Union Muslim League (Tamil Nadu) told Express that the new law was prone to misuse on many counts which would ultimately affect the Muslim women and their children. As the law makes registration as mandatory for all marriages what would be the status of the children who born out of marriages which are not registered?, he asked. Miakhan said the new legislation was an attempt of the Congress- led government at the Centre to ‘inject’ the UCC on Muslims in a gradual manner. Further, the legislation itself would go against the assurance of the former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that the Union Civil Code would not be implemented until the minorities approved it. Though the Act is based on a verdict of the Supreme Court, the present law goes against the Article 25 of the Constitution (interfering in the religious rights). Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, who had withdrawn the controversial anti-conversion law should raise his voice against this legislation also and repeal this immediately, he said. Mohammed Munir, vice president, India Tauheed Jamaath, said the legislation would interfere with the MPL as it would annul the powers of the Jamaath with regard to the conduct of marriages and granting divorces etc. Already, the Muslim laws on marriage are very strict and

there was no need for registering their marriages apart from Jamaaths and other Muslim bodies. The Uttar Pradesh government had already withdrew the law after an unsuccessful attempt. The Tamil Nadu government has enacted the legislation without knowing the underlying dangers in it. S A Kaja Mohideen, Jananayaka Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam, said Muslims would abide only by Shariath and nothing else with regard to the conduct of marriages. Similarly, Sunnath Jamaath Aikkia Peravai, Melai Nasar, opposed the legislation saying that Muslims would not get any additional benefit by registering their marriages with the government apart from the Jamaaths. Sheik Dawood, president, Tamil Maanila Muslim League, said the law would not apply to Muslims as from time immemorial, Muslim marriages are being registered. The compulsion that the Muslims should do another subregistration is unnecessary. Contrary to this view, MH Jawahirullah, president, TMMK, welcomed the legislation saying that it was based on a SC verdict. Besides, the law, at no point of time, interferes with the Muslim personal law. Asked about the contention that the law was an attempt to inject UCC, Jawahirullah denied it saying that the legislation at no point, interferes with the MPL. "Further, we should not be suspicious about each and every move of the government", he added. In fact, those who are going abroad for study and getting employment, such certificates would be of great help. At present, one has to undergo tedious procedures to get such certificates, he pointed out. (Express Buzz 13/12/09)

India: Parliament set to discuss proposed equal rights for Dalit Christians, Muslims (7)

Mumbai (AsiaNews) - The parliament in New Delhi is set to discuss for the first time in its history the application for recognition to Dalit Christians and Muslims the same rights now granted only to Dalit Hindus and Buddhists. On 18 December, the National Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Ncrlm) presented to the Lok Sabha the proposal to change the law which for 59 years justifies the discrimination of Dalits according to their religious affiliation. The report produced by Rangnath Mishra, former Chief Justice, "suggests that paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950 - originally limited to Hindu Dalits, later extended to Sikh and Buddhist, but still excludes Muslims, Christians, Jains, Parsis, etc.. - Should be completely removed with an appropriate action so as to completely decouple the status of Dalits from religion and make the social grouping of the Scheduled Castes completely neutral regarding religious denomination as well as for the Scheduled Tribes "(see Volume I of the Report of Ncrlm) . The Ncrlm report hopes the launch of a new law will provide for all the Dalit a guaranteed quota in the civil and political employment and representation. The debate remains regarding the position of Dalit Hindus converted to Islam and Christianity. For Asha Das, a member of the secretariat of the Commission, they should be accorded the status of Other Backward Class and not Scheduled Castes. The Ncrlm states that the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order goes against Articles 14, 15 and 25 of the Constitution. The problem raised by the Rangnath report has already been addressed in the past by the Supreme Court which called for a revision of the law. In 2000 the parliaments of the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh passed laws for the equal treatment of all Dalits. But the issue had never come up to the Lok Sabha. And this despite the promises of the various successive premiers and governments and protests at national and local levels by Dalit Muslims and Christians. (Asian News 18/12/09)

Minority commission: 10% quota for Muslims (7)

NEW DELHI: A government-appointed Commission has recommended 10 per cent reservation for Muslims and five per cent for other minorities in government jobs and favoured Scheduled Caste status for Dalits in all religions. The report of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, headed by former Chief Justice of India Rangnath Mishra, was tabled by Minority Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid in the Lok Sabha today. Among a host of recommendations, the Commission recommends delinking of Scheduled Caste status from religion and abrogation of the 1950 Scheduled Caste Order which "still excludes Muslims, Christians, Jains and Parsis from the SC net." The Order originally restricted the SC status to Hindus only but was later opened it to Buddhists and Sikhs. With regard to quota, the Commission says that 10 per cent should be reserved for Muslims and five per cent for other minorities in central and state government jobs in all cadre and grades. It added that in case of non-availability of Muslims to fill the 10 per cent earmarked seats, these may be made available to other minorities but in "no case" shall any seat within the recommended 15 per cent shall be given to anybody from the majority community. (Express Buzz 18/12/09)

Togadia warns agitation against reservation for Muslims (7)

Ahmedabad, Dec 18 : Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) Secretary General Pravin Togadia today decried attempts to provide reservation to Muslims and other religious minorities and warned of a nation-wide democratic agitation. Reacting strongly on the Rangnath Mishra report recommending 10 per cent reservation to Muslims and five per cent to other religious minorities, tabled by Minority Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid in Parliament, Dr Togadia termed it as anti- constitutional and anti-national and said it was aimed at depriving reservation benefits to Hindu Scheduled Castes. Talking to reporters here, he criticised giving reservation benefits to Muslims and Christians, who belonged to Scheduled Castes before their conversion. "This will not only promote conversions but also will leave Hindu SCs, OBCs and tribals without jobs, education and loans," he said, adding, 'those who do not follow national growth norms of development like population control have no right on the country's resources". Pointing out that the Constituency Assembly after considered discussion had rejected reservation on religious lines, Dr Togadia alleged that the reservation on religious basis was mooted by the Congress as a "conspiracy" to safeguard Muslim and Christian vote bank. (New Kerala 18/12/09)

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