

MINORITIES: MUSLIMS - 2010

JANUARY TO DECEMBER – 2010

Under pressure to 'convert', husband files petition seeking wife's return (7)

Mumbai: Accusing his in-laws of illegal confinement of his wife, a man in an inter-religion wedlock, has filed a habeas corpus petition in the Bombay High Court seeking its intervention to secure her return to their home in suburban Chandivali. The 26-year-old petitioner from Bihar, Ravi Tiwari, has alleged he has been asked by his in-laws to convert to Islam and pay Rs five lakh to them in return for his wife. Tiwari said he was ready to convert to Islam but he did not have the money to pay to his wife's family. The petitioner said he fell in love with Sabeena Langoo, 22, in Pune where he had gone to study MBA. Sabeena's father had a business in the neighbourhood, he said. The duo fell in love and wanted to get married but Tiwari faced opposition from Sabeena's family. Her parents took her to a place in Kashmir and wanted to get her married to someone else. But Sabeena escaped and returned to Mumbai where she tied the knot with Tiwari in October last year. As Sabeena's parents pressurised her to return to her family home, she filed a petition two months back in the High Court asking for protection from her family. The court granted her relief while directing the couple to report to Chandivali police station regularly to inform about her whereabouts. In November last, Sabeena's sister and brother visited their house in Chandivali and insisted on taking her home as their father was not well. Instead of taking her home, they took her to their native place in Kashmir where they confined her. (Indian Express 6/1/10)

Home Ministry applies for stay of order on use of word 'Allah' (7)

Kuala Lumpur, January 06, 2010: The Home Ministry filed an application to stay the execution of the High Court ruling that the word "Allah" can be used by the Catholic weekly magazine, Herald. The application was filed at the High Court Registry in Kuala Lumpur. On Monday, the ministry lodged an appeal with the Court of Appeal against the ruling. On December 31, High Court Judge Lau Bee Lan ruled that pursuant to Articles 11 and 12 of the Federal Constitution, the Herald had the constitutional right to use the word in respect of instruction and education of the congregation in the Christian religion. She also said that pursuant to Article 11(4) of the Federal Constitution, it was an offence for non-Muslims to use the word "Allah" to Muslims to propagate the religion but it was not an offence for non-Muslims to use the word to non-Muslims for the purpose of religion. On February 16, Archbishop Murphy Pakiam filed for a judicial review on the use of the word "Allah" in the church's publications for the period January 1 to December 31, 2009, naming the Home Ministry and the government as respondents and claiming that the word 'Allah' was not exclusive to the religion of Islam. The Herald, which is printed in four languages, has been using the word 'Allah' as a translation for 'God' in its Malay-language section. The Home Minister had justified the ban on the grounds of national security and to avert misunderstanding and confusion among Muslims. (Hindustan Times 7/1/10)

Muslim law board mulls corpus to help destitute women (7)

Lucknow: The upcoming meet of All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) will deliberate on constituting a corpus to help destitute Muslim women. Scheduled for March 19-21 in Lucknow, the Board meet is expected to discuss several topical issues pertaining to Muslim women. To set an agenda on women issues, the Board has convened a special meeting of Muslim women's organisations on January 17 in Lucknow. Secretary, AIMPLB, Maulana Wali Rahmani will interact with the representatives of women organisation for framing an agenda for the proposed meet. Lucknow, which will host the AIMPLB for the first time, has four Muslim women from the city who are members of the Board. The list includes Dr Naseem I Farooqui, Rukhsana Lari, Dr Safiya Naseem and Begum Ishtiyah Qureishi. "Muslim women are facing lots of problems in the society. It is our duty to guide them besides making them aware about their rights," said Dr Farooqui. She opined that the most burning issue is related to court directives, which are against the Islamic Shariah. "A woman is the utmost sufferer in these cases. Muslims women are in a fix and unable to understand where to approach for relief within the fold of the religion," she said. She stated that the issue of constituting a corpus for helping the Muslim widows or divorcees is on the agenda of the Board. "Such women, who have no one to depend on, should be provided relief from Waqf board. Since it is not possible there is an urgent need for a Muslim Women Destitute Fund for helping them, I had raised the issue in the recently concluded executive committee meeting of the Board," said Farooqui. Maulana

Khalid Rasheed Farangi Mahli who is also the organising secretary for the Board meet too favoured constitution of such a fund. "It was proposed earlier also but could not materialise due to lack of consensus. We will see that it gets shape this time," he said. Farangi Mahli said that it will be stressed that the Board plays an active role in spreading awareness among Muslim women. "If they are aware of their rights it will lead to social reform, which is a boon for the society," he said. Meanwhile, Mohd Suleman Rahimabadi, member, organising committee stated that representatives from various Muslim women organisations have been invited for their views and opinion on January 17. "The issues will be taken up after getting a feel of the problems faced by Muslim women," he added. (Pioneer 7/1/10)

Criticism of religion OK but not malice (7)

Mumbai, Jan. 6 (PTI): Every religion is "open to criticism" but malicious writing aimed at promoting communal hatred is not permissible, Bombay High Court ruled today. The judgment came as a full bench of the court upheld a ban on a book, Islam — A concept of Political World Invasion By Muslims, authored by advocate R.V. Bhasin. The book had been banned by the Maharashtra government in 2007 on the ground that it contained derogatory remarks about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad and insulted Muslim sentiments. Bhasin, who in his book argues that Islam encourages terrorism and does not tolerate other faiths, had challenged the ban, saying it violated the right to freedom of speech. "In our constitutional set up, everything is open to criticism and religion is no exception.... Every religion, whether it is Islam, Hinduism, Christianity or any other religion, can be criticised.... Even if the author is wrong, he has the right to be wrong," the judges said. "But what needs to be seen is whether the author has done this exercise bona fide." The court said an author had the "right to put forth a perspective that a particular religion is not secular" but, in Bhasin's case, the criticism was "not academic" as he had "gone on to pass insulting comments" about Muslims, particularly Indian Muslims. "If writing is calculated to promote feelings of enmity or hatred, it is no defence to a charge under Section 153-A of the IPC (promoting enmity between communities) that the writing contains a truthful account..." the court said. "It cannot be denied that misguided Muslim youths have indulged in acts of terrorism. But misguided youths are in every religion." (Telegraph 7/1/10)

In 2009, more Muslim kids joined school (7)

NEW DELHI: Government's various initiatives for minorities seem to be paying dividend, with Muslim enrolment in schools -- for long a source of deep concern -- beginning to grow slowly but steadily. The latest figures, part of National University of Educational Planning and Education's statistics, to be released shortly, shows that both in primary and upper primary level, Muslim enrolment has improved. Though it is early, a definite improvement can be seen in north Indian states. Data collected from 1.29 million recognised elementary schools in 633 districts revealed a total enrolment of 14.83 million Muslim children in primary classes in 2008-09, which is 11.03% of the total 134.38 million enrolment in primary (I to V) classes. During the previous year, the same was 10.49% and in 2006-07, it was 9.39%. Of the total Muslim enrolment in primary classes, the percentage of Muslim girls was 48.93%, similar to the share of girls in overall primary enrolment (48.38%). Bihar continued to be among the performing states while Karnataka showed slow decline in Muslim enrolment, both at primary and upper primary level. Kerala remained the undisputed leader as it showed big improvement in enrolment both at primary and upper primary level. Remarkably, the percentage of Muslim girls to total Muslim enrolment in upper primary classes is 50.03%, which is above the national average of 47.58%. The highest percentage of Muslim enrolment was observed in Lakshadweep (99.73%) mainly due to the fact that the percentage of Muslim population to total population in the Union Territory in 2001 was as high as 95.47%. In Bihar, Muslim enrolment at primary level improved from 11.27% in 2007-08 to 12.96% in 2008-09. Even Assam showed a big improvement: from 31.94% in 2007-08 to 35.08% in 2008-09. Decline was most evident in Karnataka: from 15.06% to 14.67%. In Kerala, enrolment went up to 26.22% from 21.49% in 2007-08. Enrolment in upper primary classes also improved to 9.13% in 2008-09 from 8.54% in 2007-08 and 7.52% in 2006-07. Of the total 53.35 million enrolment in upper primary classes in the country in 2008-09, Muslim enrolment was 4.87 million. In Bihar, upper primary enrolment of Muslims improved from 8.22% in 2007-08 to 10.35% in 2008-09. Decline in Karnataka was more perceptible: from 16.73% to 13.81%. The data also revealed a share of 10.49% Muslim enrolment in elementary classes (I to VIII) of which 49.20% were Muslim girls (to total Muslim enrolment). Preliminary enrolment data for the year 2008-09 also revealed that there were certain pockets in the country with high percentage of Muslim enrolment. There were about 87,690 schools with more than 25% Muslim enrolment (to total enrolment in

elementary classes) which was 6.84% of the total schools that imparted elementary education in the country. Similarly, 62,534 (4.88%) schools had above 50% Muslim enrolment as compared to 48,946 schools (3.82%) having 75% and above and 41,300 schools (3.22%) even having a share of 90% and above Muslim enrolment to total enrolment. Because of the high share of Muslim population to total population in J&K, 12 districts of the state had above 90% Muslim enrolment in 2008-09 in primary classes which was also true for enrolment in upper primary classes. On the other hand, 25 districts in the country had more than 50% Muslim enrolment in primary classes in 2008-09 compared to 20 such districts in case of upper primary enrolment. Fifteen districts of J&K, one each in Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Lakshadweep and Kerala and five districts of Assam had more than 50% Muslim enrolment in primary classes. (Times of India 10/1/10)

Religious heads take up aspiring Ministers' cause (7)

Ranchi: Gone are the days when Imam Bukhari of Jama Masjid stood condemned in the eyes of non-Muslim communities for issuing 'fatwa' to Muslims, virtually ordering them to vote for certain political parties. Similarly, pontiffs of different faiths have openly lent support to politicians in Jharkhand but they are hardly ever criticised for doing so. In the name of representation to their respective communities, religious heads have left no stone unturned in impressing upon the Shibu Soren Government to induct their nominees in the council of ministers. However, the Chief Minister has not heeded their request, following Constitutional constraints to limit his Council to not more than twelve members. As a result, members from the Christian community were not accommodated in the Ministry. Consequently, Christian MLAs aspiring to become Ministers made a beeline for their religious heads and sought their support in exerting pressure on the Chief Minister, all in the name of protecting their community's interests. Significantly, Christian MLAs belonging to ruling parties did not hesitate to join hands with their community in opposition. For instance, Simon Marandi of the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha has been working in tandem with Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee chief Pradeep Balamuchu. They called on their religious head at Ranchi, who is supposed to be close to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. They asked the pontiff to initiate talks with Soren. The religious mentor is said to have asked the CM to offer a prestigious position to Marandi if he cannot be accommodated in the Cabinet. Another JMM MLA from the same community is Nalin Soren. He was a Minister in the erstwhile Shibu Soren Government and staked a claim this time too for a Cabinet berth. Marandi is said to have roped him in to mount pressure on the CM to induct a Christian Minister. Similarly, a religious head of a local math of world repute — who has been in Ranchi for the past 19 years — is being cultivated by political stalwarts aspiring to Cabinet berths. The religious head in saffron has reportedly spoken to the CM to induct Teklal Mahato of JMM to the Council. Mahato had failed to get a Cabinet berth since Mathura Mahato had already been inducted from the JMM quota. However, reacting to Soren's decision to deny him the berth, Teklal joined hands with Marandi and Balamuchu in the pro-Christian-Mahato tirade against the Soren Government. Soren, however, seems indifferent to their demands. He has been left with no option but to keep the matter hanging. As he said, "We have constraints to have merely a council of 12 Ministers and it is not possible to make people of all castes and creeds happy by inducting their nominees as such." (Pioneer 16/1/2010)

Seminar on family planning among Muslims held (7)

Bhopal: Muslim Community prefers means of family planning like condom, contraceptive pills, IUD, more as compared to Hindu Community, whereas the demand for terminal means like male and female sterilisation is just relatively lesser in this community. The view was expressed while referring to National Family Health Survey, at the third day of seminar organised by Shyam Sansthan. Total 8 research papers were presented on Friday in the seminar, in which above-mentioned statement was said in a research paper on 'Analysis of Demand of Family Planning in Muslim Community of MP'. Gopal Saran, president, Narmada Development Authority of Appellate Board said that grounds of birthrate should be again discussed in perspective of current scenario. He was finishing the seminar, in which he said that such kind of seminars should be organized after regular interval of time. At this occasion, Veena Bandopadhyay of United Nation Population Fund was also present. Birthrate in Muslim community is higher as compared to the same rate in Hindu community, this was concluded in another research paper presented in the function. It is clear from research paper presented in seminar that there is a need to work at district level for the success on population control. (Pioneer 17/1/10)

There is no place for terrorism in Islam: Maulana Madni (7)

MP and senior leader of Jamiat-ul Ulema Hind, Maulana Syed Mehmood Asad Madni said he would oppose the Central Madarsa Board which infringes religious and cultural identity of Madarsa. Madni was speaking at a conference 'Usol-e Insaf' held at the Urdu High School compound at Jalna, Maharashtra on Sunday. He said that the government should give reservation to Muslims without disturbing other quotas. He said the UPA government should amend the Constitution and bring a bill of reservation in the Parliament. However, Madni said that Muslims should pursue education as qualities and brains would be valued and respected. He urged Muslims to prepare a vision of 20 years for spreading education in the community. He said that education is solution for all problems. He lambasted the Maharashtra government for arresting innocent persons. He said the accused should not be branded as a criminal. An accused, irrespective of caste and religious, should not be declared criminal unless the court declares. He appealed the Muslims not to fall prey to emotive issues which are obstacles of their development. He appealed the community to be aware of deceivers who provoke the community. (Hindustan Times 18/1/10)

Ministry for automatic inclusion of Muslims in BPL list (7)

New Delhi: In a move that could stir the political pot, the rural development ministry under Congress leader CP Joshi has given a proposal on 'automatic inclusion' of Muslims in the below-poverty line (BPL) list of families along with Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Aware of the political sensitivities involved, the ministry plans to replace the word 'Muslim' with 'minority' to pre-empt opposition—especially from BJP-ruled states who are likely to protest the move. Inaugurating a conference of social editors, rural development minister CP Joshi said that to simplify the process of identification of BPL families, his department has broadly decided on automatic 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'. It has been proposed, he said, that SCs, STs and minorities will be automatically included in the BPL list and then the well-off families would be excluded on basis of Income Tax returns, land etc. Joshi justified the proposal of automatic inclusion stating that "SCs, STs and minorities together form less than 37% of the population" — less than the BPL population pegged by the SC Saxena and Suresh Tendulkar Committee reports released recently. He, however, said that his ministry was waiting for the NSSO survey to decide the mode to be adopted for the new BPL survey. By proposing of automatic inclusion of Muslims under the 'minority' head, Joshi has gone beyond what the Saxena Committee report — it was appointed by the rural development ministry — recommended on the methodology to be adopted for a BPL survey. While it said that weightage should be given to certain social groups, including Muslims, during the survey, it did not favour automatic inclusion. According to the Saxena report, SCs/STs would get three points and Most Backward Castes (MBC) two points. The Saxena report said that Muslims and OBCs be given one point each. Automatic inclusion of Muslims in the BPL list could be the first major attempt by the Congress-led UPA government to woo the vote bank that roughly constitutes 18% of the country's population. The proposal could be significant given that Uttar Pradesh and Bihar go to state polls in 2012 and 2010 respectively, states where the Congress is desperately trying to get a foothold. Inclusion and exclusion from the BPL list is a big issue in the rural hinterland, particularly in the Hindi heartland, since benefits of most Central and state-sponsored welfare schemes like Indira Awas Yojna, old age pension are decided on the basis of the list. (Financial Express 20/1/10)

Photo-shy Muslim women should not vote: SC (7)

If having photographs on election identity cards and electoral rolls defies religious tenets and betrays sentiments of a section of Muslim women, it is for them to decide whether to vote or not. "If they are so religious, don't vote," a bench of chief justice KG Balakrishnan and justice Deepak Verma remarked on Friday. They were hearing an appeal by Tamil Nadu's (TN's) Ajmal Khan against the election commission's (EC's) mandate to carry photo identity cards for voting. Khan also raised brows at EC publishing electoral rolls with photos of Muslim women. "What these women would do if they were to contest elections," the bench asked Khan's counsel V Balaji, pointing out that during elections, posters carrying photographs of candidates are put up all over a constituency. Balaji said it was against the tenets of Islam for a Muslim woman to get photographed without a veil (burqa). He argued that the Holy Quran laid down that Muslim women wear burqa and cover their faces. The face of a Muslim woman can only be seen by her husband or close relatives, he said. As such, he said, EC should not take photographs of Muslim women without veils or unveiled photographs should not be given to any other person. "Such a law violates Article 25 of the Constitution that guarantees right to practice any religion of one's choice," the counsel said, seeking to unveil a constitutional issue hidden in the case. Counsel for Tamil Nadu

Election Commission Balaji Srinivasan said Ajmal Khan wanted to create confusion at the ground level. He said the voter identity cards and electoral rolls he had objected to had been prepared in Puducherry, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and the rest of the country. Nowhere did Muslim women object to the EC order, Srinivasan said. Moreover, Muslim women get photographed for passports, he said. In 2006, the Madras high court had dismissed Khan's petition filed after EC started printing electoral rolls with photographs of voters for the Madurai Central assembly constituency.(DNA 22/1/10)

SP to re-launch pro-Muslim image (7)

Lucknow: Returning to basics, the Samajwadi Party (SP) has decided to re-launch Mullah Mulayam's image to woo the Muslim vote bank. Party leaders also do not rule out the return of some Muslim leaders who had deserted the organisation in past three years. Party's Muslim MLA Iqbal Mahmood from Sambhal, who launched a scathing attack on Amar Singh candidly remarked: "We were against Kalyan and Amar Singh and now both have been shown the door, so no issue is left. Muslims have expressed their anger by not voting for the party but we hope to get back their favour," he added. Iqbal even claimed that Azam Khan will soon be allowed re-entry in the party. "Azam Khan is also a Muslim and when the community is with Mulayam he will return. He may not admit this right now, but time will surely change his decision," he said. For SP, Muslims and Yadavs accounted as the base vote till 2007 Assembly elections. However, in a change of events, many Muslim leaders left the party blaming Mulayam's bonhomie with Kalyan Singh while training their guns at Amar Singh. The SP bore the brunt in 2009 Parliamentary polls when all its 14 Muslim candidates were trounced at the hustings. Having learnt its lessons well, the party dumped Kalyan and has sidelined Amar Singh. The next step is placating the Muslim leaders who have deserted the party. Party insiders said that it has been decided to field at least 100 Muslim candidates in upcoming assembly elections in 2012. The search is also on for Muslim faces that can swing the community in their favour. Party MLA Waqar Ahmed Shah welcomed the gesture, claiming that tide is turning in favour of the SP. "Mulayam Singh is still the accepted leader among Muslims. The community understands that he has stood for them in tough time. There was temporary phase when Muslims were angry but now dust has settled," he said. State chief Akhilesh Yadav claimed that Muslims were with the party and still have confidence in netaji (Mulayam). "Election results are a different thing but we got Muslim votes everywhere in the State. There may be some confusion but it has been sorted out, and the community is solidly with us," he remarked. The party has envisaged a road show for Mulayam at Muslim-dominated areas which will culminate with a conclave in the State capital in the coming days.(Pioneer 26/1/10)

HC to decide on marriage of Muslim minor (7)

Mumbai, January 28, 2010: The Bombay High Court is expected to pass a judgment on the issue in a petition filed by an Aurangabad resident, whose 15-year-old daughter's marriage was stalled by the Mumbai police. The petitioner, Zakia Begum, has said her daughter was scheduled to marry a Ghatkopar resident, Arshad Akramuddin Haji Khan, on December 10 last year. However, a few hours before the marriage, the Ghatkopar police reached the bride's residence in Aurangabad following a complaint lodged by her maternal uncle and took her in custody. The police also booked several members of both the families for violating the provisions of the Restraint of Child Marriage Act, 1929. The girl was later produced before the Child Welfare Committee and sent to a private shelter home in Versova. Begum, through lawyer Prakash Wagh, contended that the restrictions on minor's marriage as provided in the Child Marriage Restraint Act were not applicable to Muslims in India. The petition added that the Muslim Personal Law has recognised the age at attainment of puberty or the age of 15 for adulthood for personal matters like marriage, alimony and divorce. Begum contended that the action of the Ghatkopar police in her daughter's case was in violation of the rights conferred up on her by Article 25 of the Constitution, which guarantees citizens the right to freely profess, practise and propagate the religion of their choice. She also cited judgments of the Supreme Court, which has held that Muslim Personal Laws would prevail over other enactments in conflicting situations concerning personal matters like marriage and divorce. The petition will come up for hearing before a division bench of Justice Ranjana Desai and Justice Mridula Bhatkar on January 29. (Hindustan Times 28/1/10)

Two mosques and a Christian NGO stoned by miscreants in Karnataka (7)

Managalore: Unidentified miscreants hurled stones at two mosques and a Christian NGO here, injuring a boy and damaging a statue of Mother Mary, a week after attacks on two churches in the state.

Canara Organisation for Development and Peace, a Christian NGO situated at Nanthura Padavu area was stoned yesterday, causing damage to the portrait of Mother Mary, police said. The Father of the NGO Onilla D' Souza has lodged a complaint. Miscreants also threw stones at two mosques and a boy housed in one of them received minor injuries, they said. Police have stepped up security following the incidents. The incidents come after two churches were stoned at Mysore and at Bhatkal in Uttara Kannada district on January 25. Coming under attack, Karnataka chief minister BS Yeddyurappa had blamed an "organised group" for twin attacks on churches, saying it was an attempt to tarnish the BJP government's image. But, governor Dr HR Bhardwaj had reminded the state government that it was its constitutional duty to deal with heavy hand forces disturbing communal peace and harmony. (DNA 1/2/10)

Muslim employee sacked for bigamy (7)

New Delhi, February 02, 2010: The Supreme Court has refused to entertain the plea of a Muslim employee who lost his job with the Rajasthan police 22 years ago on the ground that he remarried without divorcing his first wife. A SC bench threw out Liaquat Ali's petition, as it was not convinced that the petitioner should get back his job after two decades. Ali's case did not proceed even though the bench, earlier headed by Justice Tarun Chatterjee, since retired, had issued notice on his petition in 2008. Ali's counsel, Mukesh Sharma, said: "The bench dismissed the plea on learning that my client has been without a job for 22 years." Ali had approached the apex court, challenging the Rajasthan High Court's judgment upholding the state government's decision to remove him from service. There are two charges: One, the constable didn't divorce his first wife; two, he didn't take prior permission from the government before remarrying. The Rajasthan Civil Services (Conduct) Rule, 1971 doesn't permit a government employee to remarry if his first wife is alive. Remarriage is allowed only on two conditions — after divorcing the first wife, or with the government's permission. Ali's services were terminated after a disciplinary committee found he had flouted the rules. Ali challenged his termination order before the high court on the ground that he had obtained divorce under the Muslim personal law board from his first wife, Farida Khatoon, and married Maksuda Khatoon. Sharma said: "We also sought quashing of the disciplinary proceedings as my client was not given a hearing." He refuted the charges of a police report that concluded that Ali was not divorced from his first wife — not even as per the Muslim law. (Hindustan Times 3/2/10)

Muslim women can be snapped without burqa: Cleric (7)

Muzaffarnagar (UP), Feb 1: In the midst of controversy over photographing of burqa-clad Muslim women for voter cards, a leading Shia cleric today said they can be snapped without the veil as Islamic law permitted it under special circumstances. Backing the Supreme Court's rejection of the argument that women cannot be asked to lift face-covering veils for I-card photography, Maulana Kalbe Jawaad, also a member of Muslim Personal Law Board, said it was similar to women getting themselves photographed for obtaining passports for Haj pilgrimage. He also told reporters here that Muslim women could approach Shariat courts to claim maintenance in divorce cases. "There is provision in Shariat Law to provide 'Harjana' (maintenance) to the estranged wife in a divorce case," he said. He said all Muslim clerics should keep an effective check on cases of harassment on women and prevent litigation regarding family disputes. (Central Chronicle 3/2/10)

West Bengal announces 10 pct quota for Muslims in govt jobs (7)

Kolkata On a day when the Andhra Pradesh High Court struck down job reservation for Muslims, the West Bengal government on Monday announced 10 per cent quota in employment for the community under the OBC category. The state government declared the quota for the Muslims who were educationally, socially and economically backward in the state. "We have decided to accept the recommendations of the Ranganath Mishra Commission and will take steps to implement it", Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee told newsmen at the state secretariat without waiting for the Centre's decision on the report. He said like other states there was reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in the state. The government, he said, had begun the process of identifying Muslims who were educationally, socially and economically backward. There was 7 per cent reservation for OBCs in the state. "After identification, we will provide reservation to them under the OBC category", the Chief Minister said. Earlier in the day, a Constitution bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court struck down a state law providing 4 per cent reservation in educational institutions and jobs to 15 groups belonging to the Muslim community.

Soon after the court's order, Chief Minister K Rosaiah directed the state advocate general D S R Murthy to file a special leave petition in the Supreme Court challenging the verdict. On February one, the ruling Left Front had endorsed the Ranganath Mishra panel recommendations for job reservation for minorities. Left Front chairman Biman Bose had said that reservation was wanted for socially and economically backward Muslims and not on the basis of religion. The announcement for reservation comes ahead of elections to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and 82 municipalities in May-June this year which are seen as the 'semi-final' before next year's assembly polls in the state. (Express India 9/2/10)

HC quashes Andhra law on quotas for Muslims (7)

Hyderabad: Stating that religion cannot be the basis for quota, the Andhra Pradesh High Court today quashed a state law providing four per cent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions to 15 socially and educationally backward classes among Muslims. A seven-member constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice A R Dave, said the law on quota for minorities was "unsustainable" and "could not be implemented". The bench, however, said that admissions granted since 2007 under the minority quota would remain valid. This is the third time since 2004 that the HC has quashed a quota for Muslims. Soon after the court order, Chief Minister K Rosaiah directed state advocate general D S R Murthy to file a special leave petition in the Supreme Court, challenging the verdict. "The state government is committed to providing 4 per cent reservation to backward class Muslims in the state," he said. When the government passed the legislation in 2007, several NGOs and social organisations challenged the law in court and filed PILs, contending that the reservation was unconstitutional. The petitioners argued that the government identified backward classes in the community without gathering scientific data. The High Court, in its interim order, permitted admissions made under the quota. This was challenged by the petitioners in the Supreme Court. The apex court stayed implementation of the order but left it to the High Court to dispose the batch of writ petitions. (Indian Express 10/2/10)

Muslim youths stage dharna (7)

ONGOLE: Some 200 youths belonging to Muslim Development Organisation took out a rally and staged dharna near Prakasam Bhavan here on Tuesday demanding the State government to surmount legal problems and continue four per cent reservation for Muslims. Earlier, the activists took out a rally from Addanki bus stand to the Collectorate where they squatted on the road holding up traffic. Later, they set fire to effigies of BJP and VHP which opposed reservations for Muslims. Addressing the gathering, district general secretary of Muslim Development Organisation, Kareem, pointed out that the reservation had immensely benefited poor Muslim children to study. The High Court order which struck down reservation would endanger their education, he said. He demanded the UPA government to amend the Constitution suitably to provide reservation for poor Muslims in educational institutions to eradicate poverty among the backward community. They later submitted a memorandum to district Collector Kantilal Dande seeking continuation of reservations for Muslims. Mr Kareem said the organisation gave a call for district bandh on Feb 11 when its members from all corners of the district would converge at Ongole and lay siege to the Collectorate to press for their demand. (The Hindu 10/2/10)

Mulayam a "green snake in the grass" for Muslims: Amar Singh (7)

NEW DELHI: Attacking Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav for the first time after being expelled from the party, Amar Singh virtually dubbed him as a "green snake in the grass" for Muslims. "I don't support Kalyan Singh ideologically, but personally feel he is better than Mulayam Singh Yadav... At least people like Kalyan and Bal Thackeray openly attack Muslims. "These people are less dangerous than those secular leaders, who say they are with Muslims but stab them in their back. Who is more dangerous, the enemy who is visible or the one who is like a green snake in the grass. It is for you to decide," Singh said. The expelled SP leader, who was addressing a symposium on 'Prevailing Conditions in the Country and Muslims' organised by Muslim Political Council of India, used the opportunity to vent his ire against the SP chief. "Mulayam Singh Yadav said he and Kalyan Singh came closer in order to consolidate Yadav and backward community votes, thinking that even if Muslims don't vote for SP, the Yadav-OBC votes would far outnumber them. However this plan of his backfired as Muslims left him and backward votes could not be consolidated," he said. The former SP spokesman added that after the failure of this move, "The party leadership conveniently put the entire blame on me, as I was the dustbin of the party". Singh said, "It was Yadav who made Kalyan Singh's son Rajvir SP general secretary and it

was again Mulayam who during his earlier tenure as UP Chief Minister had made Rajvir and Kalyan's close associate Kusum Rai, his cabinet colleagues". (Times of India 11/2/10)

No going back on burqa ban: French envoy (7)

NEW DELHI: Despite the controversy it has generated internationally, the proposed ban on burqa in France, home to four million Muslims, is all set to come into force. Announcing this, the French ambassador to India, Jerome Bonnafont, said on Wednesday that nobody should migrate to any country whose law he or she is not willing to respect or abide by. The French government, which believes that the ban is about rights of a woman and not religion, had earlier said that any foreigner coming to live in France will have to sign an agreement acknowledging that wearing the full veil in public is banned in the country. In January, French parliamentarians had recommended a ban on any veil which covered the face. Bonnafont said wearing a burqa or nikab in public places in France was in contradiction of the principles of freedom and equality. "If someone does not feel at ease with French laws, why should they stay in France," Bonnafont said. Bonnafont contended that those insisting on making burqa compulsory for Muslim women had a "political agenda" as religion did not prescribe it. French president Nicolas Sarkozy has maintained that the ban on burqa has nothing to do with religion and that it actually is an issue of a woman's freedom and dignity. France has the largest concentration of Muslims in Europe and Islam is the country's second most practiced religion. According to estimates, nearly 2,000 women wear the burqa or the niqab in the public. Most of these women are believed to be migrants from former French colonies in Africa. In 2004, the French Parliament had passed a law banning headscarves worn by Muslim women, Sikh turbans, large Christian crucifixes and Jewish skull caps. The issue of Sikhs has been raised twice by PM Manmohan Singh in his meetings with Sarkozy. There is also the perception that if the ban on burqa does come into effect, it will become even more difficult to persuade the French government to lift the ban on Sikh turbans. (Times of India 11/2/10)

Spotlight on Muslim women and social exclusion (7)

NEW DELHI: Despite attempts at homogenisation and stereotyping of the Muslim community by the media and also by the society at large, there is a great deal of diversity within the community, Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Subhashini Ali has said. Inaugurating a symposium on "Muslim Women: Issues of Social Exclusion" at Jamia Millia Islamia here on Wednesday, Ms. Ali said: "While one cannot demand reservations on the basis of religion, similar opportunities have to be extended to all backward and unprivileged individuals regardless of religion." The symposium was organised by Jamia's K. R. Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies in association with Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan. Islamic scholar Asghar Ali Engineer emphasised that it was necessary to concentrate on inclusion of Muslim women when speaking of representation in government services or elsewhere. "While Muslim representation in the IAS is 2.4 per cent, in the Indian Police Service it is 3.5 per cent," Mr. Engineer said, adding that the quantum of representation of Muslim women in services was rarely questioned. "Muslim women face exclusion not only from outside the community but also from within," he said. Speaking about polygamy, Mr. Engineer stated: "The Ulemas say that polygamy is intended to prevent prostitution. Where does the Quran say this? Also the wife's opinion on remarriage is never considered." The purdah too was not rendered compulsory by the Quran. "Yet one must not forcefully make someone either abandon or adopt the purdah. A process of dialogue and understanding is needed. The Ulemas can also be engaged with," he said. Encouraging Arabic scholarship among Muslim women, Mr. Engineer said: "Muslim women should learn Arabic and read the Quran else their freedom would be usurped by the Ulemas. Islam has given rights of freedom to Muslim women. Thus it is wrong that fatwas of Ulemas are considered as representing the Quran or Islam." There was also a need to codify Muslim personal law. "These issues are not the preserve of elite middle class Muslim women alone. Strong engagement at the grassroots level is also needed," Mr. Engineer said. Stating that the biggest threat during communal violence was to women, Shabnam Hashmi of ANHAD said: "At the time of communal riots women bear the repercussions usually for years to come." "The Government is taking major initiatives to improve the backwardness of Muslims, but what is planned at the higher levels and what is translated on the ground is very different." (The Hindu 12/2/10)

Muslims launch relay hunger strike (7)

ONGOLE: The Muslim joint action committee began its relay fast agitation demanding that the government continue 4 per cent reservation for Muslims surmounting legal problems. Fourteen youths observed fast at the camp near Moulana Abul Kalam Azad statue on Srinivasa cinema road. The relay

fast would continue till the government met their demand, said Pathan Haneef Khan, committee convenor. As the High Court struck down the reservation for Muslims, the committee asked the state government to move the Supreme Court for stay and continue the reservation facility. Several committees appointed by the state and central governments found out that 80 per cent of Muslims are backward socially, economically and politically and recommended reservations for them in educational institutions and jobs, he said. Mr Haneef asked the political parties not to take decisions considering Muslims as vote banks. They should instead consider their backwardness and take decisions to ameliorate their conditions keeping politics away. The joint action committee was formed with this objective in view. He thanked Congress, TDP, PRP, CPI and CPI(M) for joining it besides several organizations like Muslim Development Organisation and Muslim Intellectual Forum. The committee would continue its agitation until the government obtained stay from Supreme Court and continued reservation benefit to Muslims. (The Hindu 18/2/10)

Muslims cold to Gadkari call for negotiated settlement of Babri issue (7)

New Delhi: Muslim leaders have given a lukewarm response to BJP president Nitin Gadkari's overture for negotiated settlement of the Ram Janam Bhoomi/Babri Masjid dispute. Chairman of Delhi State Minorities Commission Kamal Faruqi told The Pioneer, "It is a political statement. The BJP needs to establish its credibility as it was the party responsible for the destruction of Babri Masjid." "Such initiatives have been taken earlier but it needs to be seen if BJP's affiliate organisations like Bajrang Dal and VHP toe the line....Gadkari has spoken soft but there is nothing new and the Muslims are not amused," Faruqi added. Spokesperson of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind Abdul Hameed Noumani said, "On the face value, Gadkari's proposal is good but in practical terms no Muslim individual or organisation is in a position to speak for the community as a whole. The Government alone can bring both the communities on the negotiating table for a settlement...otherwise another dispute would arise if others try to tinker with the sensitive issue." The JUH has always opposed the dispute being seen from a Muslim-Hindu angle and has instead advocated to view the issue from the perspective of justice and injustice. Both the communities have played politics over the controversy and since the matter is in court, the issue should be left to it for resolution, Noumani added. Convener of the Babri Masjid Committee of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board Sayeed Qasim Rasool Ilyas also favoured settlement of the dispute through courts. "Muslims are not interested in construction of a new mosque in Ayodhya as there are 19 mosques in that town. The issue of title of the disputed land should be decided as the Muslims have been accused of constructing a mosque after demolition of a temple." "The BJP is in search of a political issue and so it has raked up the issue of negotiated settlement of the dispute," Ilyas added. Jamshed Zaidi of Samajwadi Party said people are more concerned about issues like price rise and raking up the mandir-masjid dispute could be a measure to divert attention from the real issues facing the nation. (Pioneer 22/2/10)

'Social exclusion' of Muslims alleged (7)

Hyderabad: The government had not done enough to bring about social inclusion of Muslims and other marginalised sections of society. Social exclusion on the basis of caste, religion and gender had led to denial of equal opportunities and access to resources resulting in deprivation of certain sections of society. This was the view of large number of participants at the national conference on "Exclusionary perspectives for Muslims and marginalised groups", which commenced here on Monday. The three-day conference organised by the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusion Policy at the Maulana Azad National Urdu University saw sociologists, political scientists, economists and historians expressing concern at the pathetic socio-economic conditions of Muslims and the marginalised groups as a result of discrimination. T.K. Oommen, eminent sociologist, said social exclusion had become a universal phenomenon. Stratification, hierarchy and caste system had produced cumulative deprivation of the minorities. Muslims and Christians were perceived as cultural outsiders, which was not correct, Prof. Oommen said. Denying that there was any minority appeasement in the country, he felt religious minorities deserved reservations, but such a move would raise the hackles of the communal forces. The Constitution had been amended several times and it could be amended yet again for this purpose. "It is not religion but social status we should look at", Prof. Oommen remarked. Referring to the inadequate representation to Muslims in the elected bodies, he said constituencies, which had high minority population, should not be reserved for SCs. He wanted Muslims themselves to take the lead to accelerate the pace of their inclusion. Imparting of secular education was an important factor and on the contrary 'Madrasa' education only reinforced the religious identity. The tendency to link language to religion also

played havoc. Urdu was much more spread than Hindi, but its speakers were subjected to cultural disability and this was compounded by political revenge, Prof. Oommen said. Amir Ullah Khan, Dean, Bangalore Management Academy, said quotas and subsidies benefitted only a small segment. He wondered should reservations be applied only to government jobs or extended to private sector also. MANUU V-C K.R. Iqbal Ahmed, said social exclusion had an impact on an individual's access to equal opportunities. Several factors including caste and hierarchal system was responsible for it, he said. Earlier, Abdul Matin, director, CSSEIP, welcomed the delegates.(The Hindu 23/2/10)

Muslims laud anti-communal bill (7)

Mumbai: Muslim intellectuals have welcomed the Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill president Pratibha Patil mentioned in her pre-budget speech on Monday.

"We are happy about this bill because people need to realise that there is no scope for fundamentalists, Muslim or Hindu, to fester such thoughts in today's society," said JS Bandukwala, an academician. Muslim leaders say that the bill will make government authorities, and especially the police, accountable, who, in the case of the Gujarat riots, had reportedly not been forthcoming to file the First Information Reports (FIRs). "Muslims have been demanding accountability on the part of the state government, and more so the police. The FIR, in fact, is only the first step. We want the cases to reach their final conclusion, and responsibility pinned on the accused," said Sultan Shahin, a Muslim writer. Muslim intellectuals say that though such a bill may help control the violence spilling out onto the streets, a strong willingness is required on the part of both the communities to put national pride above communal issues. "The bill is a certainly a positive step, but communalism has infiltrated our system, for which Muslim and Hindu politicians are to be blamed. Our leaders need to realise that religion should be kept within one's four walls," said Feroze Bakht Ahmed, the grand nephew of Maulana Azad, one of the foremost leaders of the freedom struggle. (DNA 23/2/10)

PIL says cannot have mosque in Hindu area, HC says intolerance has to go (4)

Mumbai A resident of a Hindu-dominated locality in Navi Mumbai has challenged the construction of a mosque; the Bombay High Court has told her such intolerance has to go. The petition, filed by Sumitra Kadu of Sector 50E, Nerul, alleges that CIDCO given a Muslim trust a 1042.27-sq-metre, reserved plot. Her advocate, G N Salunke, told the court Wednesday that not one Muslim family lives in a radius of 1 km from the site and only 331 Muslim families live beyond that radius. "If the mosque is allowed there is every possibility of encroachment on the public open premises in the locality by Muslim encroachers which may badly affect the development of the city," says the petition, heard by a division bench of Justice F I Rebello and Justice J H Bhatia. "So minorities cannot have their own place of worship? This intolerance has to go. Either we should live together or pack our bags and go," the bench said. Kadu contends she is a project-affected person and 12.5 per cent of the area was reserved for their rehabilitation which has not been completed yet. Her lawyer said the police commissioner has repeatedly stated there is likely to be a law-and-order problem if construction of the mosque is allowed, yet CIDCO has handed over the plot to the trustees of the mosque. "Public in the locality is very much annoyed and aggressive and there is every possibility to riot and in law-and-order point of view the allotment is required to be cancelled," the PIL states. It says the trustees are neither project-affected persons nor residents of Sector 50E. The construction of the mosque, it says, will affect the construction of a college the land was reserved for. The plot is also a mangroves bed but permission has not been sought to hack it, the PIL adds. The court directed CIDCO to file an affidavit and submit a map of the area in two weeks. The court also told Salunke and the CIDCO counsel to come up with a workable solution. (Express India 4/3/10)

"Courts must accept Muslim wife's assertions in a polygamous marriage" (7)

Kochi: A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Wednesday declared that courts must accept the assertions of a Muslim wife in a polygamous marriage that she had been treated inequitably by her husband in claims for divorce under Section 2(viii) (f) of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939. The Bench of Justice R. Basant and Justice M.C. Hari Rani gave the ruling while dismissing an appeal filed by a Muslim man against a single judge's verdict upholding the lower court's order for divorce on a petition filed by his wife. The court held that in a claim for divorce under Section 2(viii) of the Act, it was the assertion of the woman that mattered. She was the best judge to decide whether she had been treated equitably or not. When it was admitted or proved that there had been a second marriage and when the wife asserted that she had been treated inequitably and that she would like to walk out of such

a marriage, no court could fetter her right to quit the marriage. Whether there was cross-examination or not, her assertions would have to be accepted. The Koran mandates that she must be 'dealt with fairly and justly.' The Koran declares that it will be impossible for a husband to treat his wife fairly when there is 'plurality of wives.' If she perceived the treatment to be unjust and inequitable, her assertions would have to be accepted totally. The court pointed out that a Muslim husband had the right to walk out of the marriage unilaterally even in a monogamous marriage. "At least when faced with the ignominy of polygamy, the wife must on her assertions be able to secure an order through court to quit such marriage. Her assertions need not be tested on any other touchstone. It is, of course, true that Section 2 (viii)(f) of the Act does not recognise a polygamous marriage by itself as a ground for divorce; but read reasonably, the provision concedes to the wife the right to walk out of the marriage if she is satisfied that she has not been treated equitably in such marriage." The Bench said the fact that she had "consented to a polygamous marriage, that she had lived with her co-wife happily for some time or that she had entered into a polygamous marriage with a 'consciousness' that she would be a second wife were 'all no effective defences' in a claim for divorce. The judges observed that when it came to the unilateral right of the Muslim man to divorce his wife, he need not reveal intimate confidential details in the realm of privacy to any one including the court or an outsider. He could divorce her without making any allegations or without the intervention of courts. Mutual recriminations could be avoided. (The Hindu 4/3/10)

Shimoga, Hassan, Mangalore peaceful (7)

Bangalore: The situation in Shimoga, Hassan and Mangalore remained calm on Wednesday after they were hit by incidents of violence over publication of a purported article by Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen. Barring stray stone-throwing incidents, the situation in Shimoga showed signs of returning to normalcy with authorities relaxing curfew for two hours to enable people to buy essential commodities. Shimoga has been under curfew for the last two days after protests by Muslims over the Kannada version of the article on burqa published in a leading Kannada daily turned violent leading to two deaths including one in police firing. The situation in Mangalore, where unidentified persons had, on Tuesday night, attacked two newspaper offices and hurled a petrol bomb on one of the establishments, "was under control and peaceful," according to Dakshina Kannada district Superintendent of Police Subramanyeshwara Rao. A petrol bomb was hurled on the office of Kannada Prabha, which carried the article and another evening paper was stoned. Prohibitory orders in Mangalore would continue on Thursday also, Rao added. Meanwhile, the All-India Minority Forum on Wednesday demanded that controversial Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen and eminent painter MF Hussain "unconditionally apologise in writing" that they would not hurt the religious sentiments of any community. "We hold that Taslima had delved in anti-Islam writings while Hussain painted Hindu deity Saraswati in the nude in the recent past, which are both condemnable," Forum convenor Maulana Abdur Rahim said in Kolkata. (Pioneer 4/3/10)

Where Hindus and Muslims pray together (7)

GADDEAJIPUR: When Hindus visit a temple in Gaddeajipur village of Uttar Pradesh, they also make it a point to pray at the adjacent mausoleum. It is no different for Muslims. For, the villagers believe their prayers will not be answered otherwise. Gaddeajipur village, located on the outskirts of Hardoi district, some 110 km from state capital Lucknow, sees Hindus and Muslims pray together at the Lord Hanuman Temple and the Jind Peer Baba Mazar that are adjacent to each other. According to locals, any prayer offered only at the mazar or the temple is not fulfilled, as the almighty, according to them, answers only those prayers that are offered at both the places. "You can term it a specialty of this place...Whosoever comes here pays equal obeisance to Baba and Hanumanji...In fact, it has become a ritual for this place," said Kanta Pushpak, 59, who runs a grocery shop in Gaddeajipur village. Locals say both the temple and the mausoleum came up nearly 80 years ago, but the mazar was set up a few months before the temple was built. "Around 1930, Muslim devotees built the mazar to pay homage to Jind Peer Baba, who cured the chronic and dreaded diseases of several thousands of people," Ahmad Mobeen, 61, who owns a garment shop in Hardoi's Pali town, told IANS on telephone. Due to his spiritual powers, the Baba not only became popular among Muslims but was also revered among Hindus, who also later started visiting him to seek a cure for health problems, according to villagers. "Gradually, Hindus started worshipping Baba by making his idols. However, when Baba came to know about it, he asked Hindus not to worship his idols and pray only before the idols of their deities," Mobeen said. "He even asked Muslims to take a pledge to help Hindus in their prayers and other rituals. Keeping their promise, after the death of Baba, Muslims invited Hindus to build a temple just near the mazar," he added. Though the temple and the

mausoleum remain abuzz with activities all seven days a week, devotees turn up at the religious place in huge numbers Tuesdays and Thursdays. "Special prayers are offered on these two days and it is believed that those paying obeisance on the two days get instant blessing by the almighty," said Satya Brat Kumar, an ayurveda medical practitioner in the village. Locals are proud to have such a religious place in their village and say it should be a lesson for those who make every effort to widen the rift between Hindus and Muslims for vested interests. "The temple and the mazar should be known to all, particularly the politicians of our country, who don't hesitate in raking up issues which amount to animosity between members of the two communities," said Ijaz Waris, 37, who runs a battery shop in the village. "We feel privileged to be part of a village which projects the unique Hindu-Muslim bonding and brotherhood," he added. (Times of India 12/3/10)

Muslim Law Board distances itself from Women's Reservation Bill (7)

LUCKNOW: The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has distanced itself from the much talked about Women's Reservation Bill. The Board began its three-day annual convention in Lucknow on Friday. The Assistant Secretary-General of the Law Board, Maulana Abdul Rahim Qureshi, made it clear that the 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies envisaged in the Women's Reservation Bill does not figure on the Board's agenda. Though the issue of women's reservation is important, it is not in the Board's jurisdiction nor under its purview, the Maulana told reporters here. He said the Board's jurisdiction extended only to matters related to interference in the "shariat" laws of the Muslims and formulation of strategy to counter it and "Islah-e-Ma'ashra" (reform of Muslim society). Not all issues were within the purview of the Board, he added. Stating that the Board was opposed to the Communal Violence Bill, Maulana Qureshi said it had serious objections to certain points proposed in the legislation. He made it clear that since the Communal Violence Bill is related to the Liberhan Commission report on the demolition of the Babri Masjid, it figures on the Board's agenda. The Board's spokesman, Qasim Rasool Ilyas, said the organisation wants a thorough discussion on the Bill. It was felt that the suggestions and views of the Board's representatives should be incorporated. After the opening session at Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema here, which was addressed by AIMPLB Chairman Maulana Rabey Hasni Nadwi, the election of the new president by the Board members would take place on Saturday. This would be followed by a thorough discussion on the issues on the Board's agenda. An important issue related to the Board's objection to some recent court verdicts not in consonance with the shariat laws. Mr. Ilyas said it was felt that the shariat laws had not been properly interpreted in these verdicts. "Islah-e-Ma'ashra" or reform of Muslim society has figured on the Board's agenda since its inception and though it has achieved notable success, its implementation has been hampered by the absence of proper documentation. The status of "Darul Qazas" or Islamic courts dealing with personal matters would also be discussed at this meeting. On the Babri Masjid, the Board will demand an early verdict in the demolition case. Maulana Qureshi said the Board would demand that the names of those mentioned in the Liberhan Commission report be included in the FIR. (The Hindu 20/3/10)

Left's temple Bill: Muslims back Hindu cause (7)

Kochi: The Devaswom Bill, aimed at giving the Government more control over the affairs of Hindu temples in the State, is set to become the biggest legal and political trap for the CPI(M) and the LDF Government it leads after the Self-Financing Colleges Bill of 2006. Legal experts are pointing out that the Bill, introduced in the Assembly on Monday, may not stand the test of the Constitution while various outfits of minority communities have already declared in-principle support to the Hindu organizations in their objections to the Bill. To make matters worse for the CPI(M), various Muslim organizations have asked the Government to consider passing the Bill only after building a consensus. The Hindu Parliament has decided to convene a Hindu leadership meet on March 27 to discuss the issue of the Bill even as several Hindu religious outfits and Hindu community organizations expressed their resolve to defeat the bid to pass the Bill at any cost. Reports said that Devaswom Minister Kadannappaly Ramachandran, who presented Travancore-Kochi Hindu Religious Institutions (Amendment) Bill in the House on Monday, had held a secret meeting with leaders of the Nair Service Society (NSS), the influential outfit of Hindu upper caste Nairs, in a bid to cool its rage. However, NSS leaders have not yet showed any sign of softening their position. The main objections of the organizations to the Bill is that there are provisions in it that enable the Government to review the decisions of the Devaswom Boards (temple-administration bodies). It is also feared that the Bill, now limited to affairs of Hindu temples, could pave way for similar legislations to control places of worship of other religions also. The Bill also seeks to raise the number of members

from three to seven in the Travancore and Kochi Devaswom Boards, which administer almost all the Hindu temples in southern and Central Kerala respectively. Critics say that this is to enable all partners in the coalition to get memberships in the boards. As per the present system, the CPI(M) takes the post of the board president while RSP and CPI get a member's post each. Muslim organizations like All-India Jamiat'ul Ulema, Suni Yuvajana Sangham and the Kerala Nadvat'ul Mujahiddin have already criticized the Government move to pass the Bill without discussing it with the Hindu outfits. State KNM secretary AP Abdul Khader Moulvi, Jamiat'ul Ulema general secretary Kanthapuram AP Abubacker Musliar, SYS secretary K Alikkuty Musliar said the Government should clear the doubts expressed by Hindu outfits. The Congress-led UDF Opposition, which has taken a stand that it does not want to share the responsibility for the Bill which has already become the subject of a political and social controversy, had walked out the House when the Bill was introduced on Monday, saying it had "no part in this blood". At least one constituents of the UDF, which is reported to represent Christian interests, has alleged that the CPI(M)-led LDF is trying to bring Hindu temples under its total control. The Government has left the Bill for the consideration of the Subject committee rejecting the Opposition demand for referring it to the Select Committee. Devaswom Minister Kadannappally of the Congress(S) has reportedly taken a stand that he is "helpless" in the case of the Bill as he has been forced to work for it under compulsion from the CPI(M) which had made him a Minister. (Pioneer 25/3/10)

Courts may declare India as Hindu Rashtra: Akbaruddin(7)

Hyderabad, March 22: The Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen floor leader in the Assembly, Mr Akbaruddin Owaisi, on Monday said the "judiciary may declare India to be a Hindu Rashtra and pronounce the adherents of religious minorities to be a second class citizens." Participating in a debate in the Assembly, Mr Owaisi said instead of strengthening the secular character of the Constitution, judicial pronouncements in recent times tended to turn against religious minorities, more particularly Muslims and Christians. "If this trend is allowed to continue, the government may be forced to give up its secular mukhota (mask). We must put an end to this dangerous trend by clearly delineating once again the powers that separate the judiciary from the executive and the legislature," he said. The Majlis leader was cautioned to maintain restraint while speaking about the judiciary by the Deputy Speaker Mr N Manohar, who was in the chair. Mr Owaisi replied that he was exercising his Constitutionally guaranteed right to speak on the judiciary in the Assembly. The Majlis leader was critical of the judiciary for its rulings against four per cent reservation to Muslims, state funding for pilgrimage to Jerusalem by Christians and construction of new churches or their renovation. Maintaining that judicial activism had become "hyper active," Mr Owaisi said public interest litigations were being filed and entertained by the courts on a daily basis. "The High Court may be getting more PILs than original and appellate writ petitions and suits," he added. Mr Owaisi referred to two HC judgments by benches headed by then Chief Justice Mr Anil R. Dave and said the petitioners in these cases were Mr Satish Agarwal, who contested the 2009 Lok Sabha elections on a BJP ticket, and Mr T Hanuman Chowdary, IT adviser with the Telugu Desam government. "A day will come when all the welfare schemes meant for the minorities would be nullified by the courts on PILs filed by Sangh Parivar activists," he said. He said the state government had failed to defend its actions and policies in the courts. He sought to know from the Chief Minister whether the state intended to appeal against HC orders on pilgrimage and funding to churches. The Majlis leader said the proceeds of Common Good Fund raised from Hindu temples were utilised for renovation of temples and construction of Ramalayams in weaker section colonies. But proceeds collected by Wakf Board from wakf institutions were used for salaries. He demanded that these funds should be utilised for repair of mosques. (Central Chronicle 25/3/10)

650 ABVP activists detained during Bihar bandh (7)

Patna: The day long dawn-to-dusk shutdown called by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ended on a relatively peaceful note here on Thursday. The bandh was declared by ABVP activists in protest against Bihar Chief Minister Mr. Nitish Kumar's decision to allot 100 acres of land to the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), permitting them to open a branch in the Muslim-dominated Kishanganj district. Barring a few disturbances and a mild lathi-charge by the police on ABVP activists in the morning, the bandh failed to make any serious impact. According to unconfirmed reports, however, a textile shop was burnt in Patna. While shops in Kishanganj, which has around 67% Muslim voters, remained closed, agitating ABVP activists blocked roads near Chhapra, briefly disrupting traffic. Following a clash on Wednesday between ABVP workers and the police in which

around 20 personnel were injured, elaborate security arrangements were made in view of the shutdown. According to Bihar DGP Neelmani, 650 ABVP activists were detained across Bihar. The bandh was supported by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal-- both Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) affiliates. "The AMU has been fundamentally divisive in nature. Kishanganj has been a hotbed of Harkat-al-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) [Pakistan's Secret Service] activities. The government's decision to allot land in such a sensitive area is therefore in bad taste," said an ABVP spokesperson. "There have been incidents where the national flag has been burnt within the university premises. Moreover, it has nurtured the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and is responsible for fostering extremist tendencies among its students," said Patna ABVP General Secretary Amritanshu Shekhar. (The Hindu 2/4/10)

Concern over role of communal forces (7)

KOLLAM: The State conference of the Hindu Aikya Vedi, which concluded here on Sunday, adopted a policy that stated that the pernicious influence of communal elements had increased in all spheres of society. The policy draft, moved by the organisation's general secretary, Kummanam Rajashekar, expressed deep concern over the situation. It said the rich had usurped all the benefits of the economic and administrative systems, while the poor continued to be sidelined. The government exposed its feudal-fascist outlook by suppressing the agitation for land by the landless and controlling the administration of Hindu temples. The policy stated that including Christians and Muslims on the Scheduled communities list as recommended by the Ranganatha Mishra Commission report would be unjustified and against the law of the land. Extending or denying benefits and approaching problems on the basis of religion did not augur well for a modern society. Poverty and backwardness had no religion. Religious terrorism had established its roots in Kerala. Religious appeasement by the authorities was one of the main causes for the growth of religious terrorism in the State. People who spread hatred on the basis of religion and tried to spread their own religion should be seen as terrorists. The struggle to liberate temples should continue till the time the devotees got their right to worship and administrative control over temples. The economic conditions of the Hindus were worsening by the day. The deterioration of the traditional sectors was ruining the lives of the workers. Many were selling off their properties and settling in smaller properties elsewhere. (The Hindu 6/4/10)

HC dismisses PIL against construction of mosque in Navi Mumbai (7)

Mumbai , April 07, 2010: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday dismissed a PIL taking exception to construction of a mosque in Nerul area of neighbouring Navi Mumbai. A division bench of Justices F I Rebello and Amjad Sayed dismissed the PIL, saying, that reasons for the same will be recorded later. Petitioner Sumitra Kadu, a local, had opposed CIDCO's decision to hand over a plot in sector 50-E to a trust for construction of a mosque. Petition alleged that not a single Muslim family lived within the radius of one kilometre. Further, even the Police Commissioner had refused to give permission to build mosque in the area, saying, that it could lead to "law and order situation", the petition claimed. However, at an earlier hearing, the High Court had observed that "this intolerance must go". (Hindustan Times 7/4/10)

Muslim community unhappy with Shoaib-Ayesha row (7)

HYDERABAD: The Shoaib Malik-Ayesha Siddiqui imbroglio may have been resolved, but it seems to have left a bitter taste in the Muslim community. Hyderabad Muslims, in particular, feel the principal characters of the melodrama, could have settled the row without bringing disrepute to Islam through their war in the media. The campaign unleashed by Mr. Malik and Ms. Siddiqui to prove each other wrong was in brazen disregard for Islamic principles. The matter could have been sorted out without washing the dirty linen in public. "The whole thing was so painful — trading charges through the media. None of the families involved in the controversy is adhering to the principles of Shariat. They are only interested in their selfish ends. Finally the divorce is given but we still don't know who is at fault," said Sayeeda Aquila Khamoosh, member of the Muslim Personal Law Board. Traditional Muslims are shocked at the way tennis star Sania Mirza and Mr. Malik, her husband-to-be, have been moving together even before they are formally married. "What we are seeing today is the result of such waywardness and unfettered freedom," Ms. Aquila said. Mr. Malik's initial refusal to offer divorce to Ms. Siddiqui and then finally giving in has shown not just him but the Muslim community in poor light, the Muslim leaders feel. Islam has laid down clear instructions to resolve disputes arising out of marital discord. "But all these are given the go-

by and the families just traded charges through the media,” said Professor Rehana Sultana of the Maulana Azad National Urdu University. Religious leaders also failed to nip the crisis in the bud. “They ought to have come forward and exerted both moral and social pressure,” added Professor Sultana, who also heads the Progressive Women’s Welfare Organisation. “The whole thing is blown out of proportion as if that is the most important issue when Hyderabad is rocked by communal violence. The media needs to redefine its priorities,” said Mazhar Husain, director of the Confederation of Voluntary Associations. (The Hindu 9/4/10)

More Hindus than Muslims have two wives (7)

The Shoaib-Ayesha-Sania drama, played out live on TV for days, has enhanced the image of Ayesha and her family. The same cannot be said of the former Pakistan captain who sold himself short by denying his first marriage. Indians and Pakistanis alike can now heave a sigh of relief the controversy is settled. But the entire saga offers important lessons. First, although Muslim Personal Law allows a man to take a second wife during the lifetime of the first, it cannot be a license to commit injustice. Under Islamic tenets, a man is allowed to take a second wife only if he is in a position to provide equal partnership and amenities to both. However, if you were to carry out an honest survey across the country, you would find that more Hindu men than Muslims have more than one wife. In such cases, the second wife is neither recognized by society nor given the legal status of ‘wife’. It’s interesting to note that throughout the controversy — and despite Sania’s wholehearted support for Shoaib — the Muslim community in particular and Indian society at large was solidly behind Ayesha, who was seen as the victim in the whole saga. Perhaps that’s why Shoaib did not succeed in his attempt to cover up his first marriage. Also, Ayesha’s acceptance of a divorce without preconditions sends out a strong signal to the Pakistani people — the people of India are forgiving if you make amends. But I am still intrigued about the most important aspect of this drama — the basis of the divorce. Under Islamic law, a husband has to give a reason for divorcing his wife and if she is not satisfied with it, she can ask for divorce under the khula rights. What reason did Shoaib give for divorcing Ayesha? That is still not clear. (Times of India 10/4/10)

Muslim nurses allowed to wear long sleeves to protect modesty in UK (7)

London: Britain’s Department of Health has decided to allow Muslim doctors and nurses to wear long sleeves to protect their modesty, while treating patients. The decision is getting a lot of flak from a number of groups, who see it as yet another example of granting preferential treatment to the minorities. Campaigners have warned that the NHS is putting lives at risk by allowing long sleeves. It goes against the earlier NHS guidance that all staff should be ‘bare below the elbow’, which was introduced after long sleeves were blamed for spreading MRSA, a bacteria responsible for some serious infections. The change has been brought in after some women Muslim staff at the NHS objected to being forced to bare their arms on wards. Muslim doctors and nurses are to be issued with disposable sleeves, elasticated at wrist and elbow, to cover up the arms. The department has also relaxed its no jewellery rule to let Sikhs wear their karas but they will have to push up the karas to the elbow when dealing with patients. The decision to allow women Muslim staff to opt out of a strict NHS dress code for religious reasons has also been criticised by Christian groups. This new guidance is compared to the recent treatment of nurse Shirley Chaplin who lost her discrimination case against Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital Trust which claimed the cross she wore round her neck was a ‘hazard’ in case it scratched patients. Chaplin has accused the NHS of ‘double standards’. She added, “What can you say? It seems that life is stacked up against Christians these days.” Derek Butler, chairman of the MRSA Action UK has told the Daily Mail, “Anything such as jewellery, long sleeves and ties can harbour bacteria and transfer superbugs to patients. This is why they should be banned for all staff regardless of their religion.” Lord Carey, a former Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken in favour of Shirley Chaplin. He along with six bishops wrote an open letter complaining Christians were being ‘treated with disrespect’. He has even criticised senior judges for being biased against Christianity. Lord Carey claims that some have given ‘disturbing and dangerous’ rulings that could lead to Christians being barred from workplaces. (Pioneer 13/4/10)

Jaipur Muslims yet to get land for mosque, school (7)

JAIPUR: The Rajasthan Government has refused to part with a piece of land at a prime location in the city which it had allotted to the Muslim community for construction of a school during its previous tenure in June 2003. When the allottees protested, it insisted on getting the District Magistrate’s clearance which is not needed for any educational institution. The State Government not only did turn down repeated

requests to hand over the 1,000 square metre land adjacent to a mosque site in Mansarovar locality here, it also moved the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission last October challenging the lower court's decree to give possession to the allottees. The distraught Mansarovar Muslim Welfare Society (MMWS) is mired in a protracted legal battle both for the school and the mosque. The Jaipur Collector has not given permission for construction of the mosque since September 2002, when its land was handed over to Muslims after allotment by the Rajasthan Housing Board with the due process. Both the Jaipur Collector and the Housing Board have cited "threat to the law and order situation" as the solitary ground for not allowing construction of the mosque and not giving land for school. The Muslim residents of Mansarovar – stated to be the biggest residential colony in the State – have been running from pillar to post to make the State Government deliver what it had promised. The MMWS paid Rs. 13.20 lakh each as well as ancillary expenses and lease money demanded by the Housing Board for the allotment of the two plots for mosque and school at Varun Path in 2002 and 2003 respectively. Seven years after the allotments were made on paper, the Muslims are still offering Namaaz under temporary sheds at the mosque site. Rajasthan Housing Board Chairman Lalit Kothari contacted by The Hindu said the Board would take a final decision only after the disposal of the case by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. "When the matter is before a quasi-judicial body, we cannot do anything," he added. Strongly denouncing the Housing Board's role ever since it allotted the two plots, MMWS secretary Syed Saadat Ali said here on Tuesday that the Board had repeatedly contended in the District Consumer Forum and later in the State Consumer Commission that it would give possession of the school land only after the District Magistrate issues a no-objection certificate. "This is a specious ground. There is no law requiring the DM's permission for opening a school." Mr. Ali regretted that the ruling Congress, which makes tall claims about promoting education among minorities, was not allowing a school to come up in a locality with a significant Muslim population. "We envisaged the school as a modern educational institution to cater to the needs of children in a 10-km radius. But the State Government is least bothered." (The Hindu 14/4/10)

Need for awareness of legal rights among Muslims stressed (7)

MALAPPURAM: National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) chairman M.S.A. Siddiqui has bewailed the lack of awareness among the Muslim community in the country of their rights. "It is unfortunate that Muslims in the country, unlike the Christian community, are ignorant of their legal rights. The Muslim community doesn't take advantage of the legal benefits they are entitled to," Mr. Siddiqui said, while addressing an audience of representatives from different minority institutions at PSMO College, Tirurangadi, on Saturday. Mr. Siddiqui underscored the necessity of educating the Muslim community and creating awareness among them of their legal rights, especially in an era in which education plays a vital role in society's progress. Explaining the functions and powers of the commission, Mr. Siddiqui warned the minority institutions which refuse to admit students of that minority community. "You can't have the cake and eat it too," he said. "It is not an individual right; rather, it is the community right under which minority institutions enjoy the minority status," he said, reminding the minorities of the commission's powers to withdraw the minority status. Mr. Siddiqui said the commission had powers to take decisions in disputes of affiliation between a university and a minority institution. "If any dispute arises between a minority educational institution and a university relating to its affiliation to such university, the decision of the commission thereon shall be final," he said. He said the reservation policies of the States would not be applicable to institutions with minority status. Mr. Siddiqui answered the questions posed by the principals of minority institutions. K. Alikutty, president of the Pocker Sahib Memorial Orphanage Committee, presided over the function. Major K. Ibrain, Principal of PSMO College, welcomed the gathering. K. Kutty Ahamed Kutty, MLA; district panchayat president Arimbra Mohammed; Tirurangadi block panchayat president M.A. Khader were present. (The Hindu 18/4/10)

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No love jihad movement in State' (7)

BANGALORE: The State Government on Thursday informed the Karnataka High Court that there was no love jihad movement in the State. The State made this submission when the court was hearing a petition by Selvaraj seeking a direction to the Chamarajnar police to trace his daughter, Shelja Raj, who he claimed was a victim of love jihad. He said love jihad meant that Muslim youth were being used to lure Hindu and Christian girls. The girls got married to Muslims and then were indoctrinated into jihad. The police had investigated the case and come to the conclusion that Shelja had married a Muslim youth of her own free will and that there was no force used to convert Shelja into a Muslim. Though the Shelja case was closed, the court had asked the police to investigate incidents of love jihad in Karnataka. The State police had filed an interim report several months ago. When the matter came up on Thursday, the State filed a final report on love jihad. The report, filed by Director-General and Inspector-General of Police Ajai Kumar Singh, said teams were formed to look into such incidents in all the districts. The police said there was no organised attempt by any group or individual in Karnataka to entice girls and women into marriage. However, a large number of Hindu girls have converted to Islam of their own will.(The Hindu 23/4/10)

Community slams focus on Muslims (7)

Hyderabad: Media revelations that intelligence agencies targeted Muslim-dominated areas of the Old City in Hyderabad as well as a few other cities for telephone tapping have evoked strong reaction from the community. The issue of targeting minorities in the fight against terrorism has come into sharp focus. All India Muslim Personal Law Board secretary and Tameer-e-Millat president Moulana Abdul Raheem Qureshi said telephone tapping was a serious violation of the right to privacy, which was constitutionally guaranteed. He said the telephone tapping instance once again highlighted the fact that Home Ministries — both at the Centre and State — and their intelligence agencies were out to selectively target the Muslim minority. "The policy of targeting Muslims on the pretext of terrorism should be stopped forthwith," he demanded calling for legislation against tapping. He also demanded to know whether intelligence agencies had similarly targeted strongholds of organisations like the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal. Qureshi rued that while questions in Parliament and the debate in media was focused only on the tapping of phones of some political leaders, it was not highlighted that Intelligence Bureau and State agencies had targeted Muslim-dominated areas of Hyderabad and Lucknow. According to Outlook magazine, a new technology was used in Hyderabad and Lucknow on the suggestion of MK Narayanan, the then National Security Adviser in the Prime Minister's Office. However, nothing objectionable came to notice.(Pioneer 26/4/10)

Showcasing legacy of Islamic culture (7)

NEW DELHI: The Indian Council for Cultural Relations is hosting a six-day photographic exhibition of works by the veteran historian/film-maker Benoy K. Behl at its Azad Bhavan Art Gallery here these days. "Islamic Monuments of India", curated by Dr. Neeru Misra of ICCR, was inaugurated this past Friday. "A view of the rich Islamic heritage of India is presented in the exhibition showcasing 40 of my photographs taken across the country. India is an enchanted land, watered by streams of compassionate philosophies since ancient times. There are flourishing communities here of the Islamic, Christian, Zoroastrian and

Jewish faiths, as well as of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh faiths that were born here. There is a great cosmopolitan heritage of India's culture and art. This is what I have tried to emphasise in the exhibition," says Behl. Besides the well-known Mughal monuments, the exhibition features the exquisite mosques and dargahs of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kashmir and other parts of the country. Far more than in the North of India, it was in the Deccan that India imbibed the cultural and artistic influences of Persia and the Arab world. The many exquisite monuments of the Deccan display the confluence of cultures which took place here. The exhibition is open for viewing up to this Wednesday.(The Hindu 27/4/10)

Muslim cleric body to hit streets (7)

New Delhi: The Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, a wide-reaching body of Muslim clerics, will launch a countrywide agitation to pressure the UPA government on key demands, including changes to the proposed communal violence legislation. "The Bill in its present form will be inconsequential in controlling such clashes, which kill thousands. We want responsibility fixed on police and district administration," Jamiat leader Mahmood Madni, a Rajya Sabha MP, said. The Jamiat will also demand reservation in jobs and education, a signature demand of several Muslim organisations. The agitation will roll out from Kolkata on May 3. Once unwavering in its support for the Congress, the Jamiat now shares an unstable relationship with the party. Madni, who figures in a Georgetown University list of 500 most influential Muslims, can still swing elections with his massive following. Jamiat has used its massive demonstrations in the past to bargain deals. Many are watching Madni's political moves after he wrested control over the organisation following a power struggle with uncle Arshad, who recently lost a bid to win a Rajya Sabha nomination to songwriter Javed Akhtar. (Hindustan Times 29/4/10)

Hyderabad blast: More proof they were wrongly arrested (7)

Uma Sudhir, Sudhi Ranjan Sen, Rajan Mahan, Tuesday May 4, 2010, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Rajasthan
When the Ajmer Dargah near Jaipur and then the Mecca Masjid in Hyderabad were targeted by bombs five months apart, the police and the government immediately blamed Pakistani-based terror groups like the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI). The attacks in Ajmer and Hyderabad took place in 2007. Three people were killed in the Ajmer attack in October; another nine had died in May in the Hyderabad explosion. Three years later, new evidence suggests that the investigating agencies and the government got it all wrong. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) says it now believes that radical Hindu groups planned those blasts. What's led to this new theory is the arrests last week of three men by the Rajasthan Anti-Terror Squad. They were tracked down because they were using SIM cards found in the debris after the attack at Ajmer. The men arrested are all Hindus, and are believed to be associated with Abhinav Bharat, a Hindu radical group that allegedly planned and executed a terror attack in Malegaon in Maharashtra in 2008. Six people were killed, and more than one hundred injured. Among those arrested for that attack were Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur and an army officer, Lieutenant Colonel S P Purohit for the Malegaon attack. Their alleged agenda: to target Muslim crowds. Purohit, in recent interrogation, has allegedly said that a man named Sunil Joshi was behind the Ajmer blast of 2006. That's what the Rajasthan police also suspects. Joshi allegedly knew Sadhvi Pragya well. He died in December 2007, but phone records show that he was in touch with one of the three men arrested for the Ajmer blasts last week. "Colonel Purohit, arrested for Malegaon blast, has confessed that Sunil Joshi had organised the Dargah operation with the help of Devendra Gupta," Rajasthan Home Minister Shanti Dhariwal told The Hindu newspaper on May 2. The CBI says that in both the Ajmer and Hyderabad blasts, identical explosives were used. Cellphones triggered both bombs. The initial allegation that Pakistan-based groups were behind the Ajmer and Hyderabad blasts of 2007 meant that young Muslims paid the price. Muslims like Ibrahim Junaid, who, along with 25 others, was picked up from the Old City of Hyderabad and accused of terror links. They were reportedly tortured in illegal custody. There was no chargesheet accusing them of links to the Mecca Masjid attack. Instead they were accused of conspiring to wage war against the state, of preparing and playing out CDs of the Gujarat communal riots of 2002 to create communal tension. "Without proof, they arrested our children. They didn't even inform us. We didn't know their whereabouts for 7-8 days," said Arifunnisa, Junaid's mother. All 26 men were later acquitted but they say the stigma never goes away. Junaid says, "When there is a blast, youth of a particular community are targeted. They are playing with our lives. That happened to me. I lost a year in college. I was not able to do my MD because of this." Junaid and some of the other Muslims who were arrested have gone to court against their arrests. "We are demanding compensation from the police

officers who tortured us. That they should be made to pay compensation from their salary, says Rayeesuddin. NDTV 4/5/10)

Kerala school in headscarf row (7)

Thiruvananthapuram, May 5: A Kerala Christian school that threw out a Muslim girl allegedly for wearing a headscarf (mafftha) is facing the ire of student organisations and probes by several government agencies. The state's director of public instruction, A.P.M. Mohammed Haneesh, today ordered a probe against the Believers' Church English Medium School in the southern district of Alappuzha, which issued a transfer certificate (TC) to the Class IX student, T.N. Nabela, on April 26. Her father Nazir Musaliyar alleged the school authorities could not tolerate a student with headscarf. Nabela had cleared Class IX but was denied promotion to Class X, he alleged. "The authorities had dissuaded her from wearing the scarf and were waiting for an opportunity to send her away", said Musaliyar, who is the imam of a local mosque. However, Philipose Thomas, the education officer of Believers' Church schools, alleged "a conspiracy by vested interests to defame the school". The school had never barred anyone from wearing the headscarf, he claimed, though it was not part of the uniform. "Other students have been wearing headscarves, to which we've not objected. But Nabela's parents wanted to take her away for some reason and we were persuaded to assign the headscarf (matter) as the reason on the TC. This was to make it clear that the transfer was not because of poor academic performance," Thomas said. Locals said most students took off their headscarves at the school gate and kept them in their schoolbags till they left after classes. But unlike them, Nabela used to don the scarf at school. Haneesh, the director of public instruction, said: "The school will have to take back the student. It's an issue of rights violation if it (the allegation) is true. And if the school does not readmit her, the government will withdraw the no objection certificate to the school." Alappuzha collector P. Venugopal has convened a meeting of both sides on May 7. The state human rights commission has ordered a probe against the school. Activists of the SFI, the ruling CPM's student wing, and the AISF marched to the school, ending in a brush with police. The Popular Front of India, a combine of pro-Muslim bodies, staged a sit-in and demonstration. (Telegraph 6/5/10)

Head scarf row: Muslim girl's father moves court (7)

Alappuzha (Kerala), May 11 (PTI): An Imam whose daughter was allegedly given Transfer Certificate (TC) by a church-run school for insisting on wearing head scarf has filed a petition in a court here seeking action against the principal. Three days after the principal was suspended, Nazir Musliar filed a petition yesterday in the Judicial Magistrate court at Ambalappuzha near here, stating that the action of principal Mary Jazinta of Gurupuram Believers' Church school amounted to "hurting religious sentiments and harming communal harmony". Nazir, an Imam of a local mosque, had earlier complained that his daughter Nabala was given "compulsory TC" by the school authorities after she was promoted to class X this year. The authorities of the school, managed by evangelical Christian congregation Believers' Church, had maintained that the TC was given on her parents' request and it was not their policy to infringe on religious rights of students. As the issue snowballed into a controversy, the government conducted a probe and ordered the school to take back the girl, which it did, besides suspending the principal. However, the girl's parents did not want their daughter to continue in the same school and insisted that the government initiate legal action against the principal, arguing the issue involved fundamental rights and religious freedom. Nazir told reporters he was taking legal steps as the district administration did not take action against the principal as demanded by him at the conciliatory talks called by the district collector last week. The girl's parents have been insisting that criminal proceedings be initiated against the principal. (Deccan Herald 11/5/10)

"Muslim women are partners in development process" (7)

LUCKNOW: A cross-section of Muslim women feel trivial issues such as dress code or earning to make a living made no impact on the march of the contemporary and educated women, who felt no qualms in contributing to the family's income. Since Islam does not discriminate between men and women, a woman was entitled to contribute financially towards the household's income as her husband was the general opinion, they say. For, hundreds of women of the community have now become partners in the development process. Deoband-based Islamic seminary Darul Uloom in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh has backtracked on the controversial fatwa issued by it, prohibiting Muslim women from mingling with men in workplaces. The seminary has also denied that it had asked Muslim women to wear "purdah" in workplaces. Only an opinion of dress code was given, it said. It also denied stating that a family's

dependence on a woman's earning was illegal. Shahnaz Sidrat, founder of "Bazme Khawateen," an organisation working for the betterment of Muslim women, says: "I have observed hijab [purdah] for the last 16 years in my office where there are male employees and there has been no problem. Islam permits women to work, but within the parameters of morality." The Deoband opinion, according to Ms. Sidrat, was liable to take the community backward. "In any case working Muslim women seldom pay heed to opinions or fatwas," she said. A basic fact that has often been missed is that with changing times and India progressing towards becoming a global economic powerhouse, Muslim women have emerged as major players in the development process. Naish Hasan, a founder-member of the Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, told The Hindu that hundreds of Muslim women were involved in implementation of development schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme and taken up several other occupations for earning a livelihood. Ms. Hasan said she favoured the participation of Muslim women in the development process. President of the All India Muslim Women Personal Law Board, Shaista Ambar, wanted to know whether ulema can arrange a decent meal for destitute Muslim women on a regular basis. Ms. Ambar feels women are capable enough to know the limitations at workplaces imposed upon them by the "Shariat." (The Hindu 14/5/10)

Govt's fitting reply to fatwas: Progressive steps for Muslim welfare (7)

New Delhi: Do Fatwas affect government policies? No, said minister for minority affairs Salman Khurshid. The minister said that there was an overwhelming response to the government's progressive steps to empower Muslim women. About 50% of scholarships were claimed by the Muslim girls and there was a growing demand to open banks and schools in Muslim dominated districts. "No such announcement has ever proved to be a hindrance to our schemes. There is no feedback that the performance of our schemes has got affected due to any propaganda. Why should we be worried, when our programmes are not affected," Khurshid said. According to him the community itself is taking progressive strides and working hard to come out of backwardness. "Even though we have reserved 30 per cent of scholarships for girls, nearly 50 per cent of these scholarships go to women. And, about 1.28 lakh muslim women have been trained under a special leadership development programme," he said. "The greatest condemnation to any negative thinking is a proactive act of development," is how Khurshid reacted to some recent Fatwas. On the latest Fatwa from Darul-Uloom against having insurance policies, the minister said: "I am Muslim. I have a bank account and I have an insurance too. We want to develop the community which is why we are opening more banks and schools in minority areas and no one is stopping us. In fact, there is a demand for more banks, schools and scholarships in the minority dominated belts. My greatest condemnation of such things is through the figures (success of minority schemes). Why should I stop my work and get into condemnation exercise," he said. In a fitting reply to the reactionary Fatwas issued every now and then by Muslim clergies, the government has taken some progressive steps that is not only in contradiction to Fatwas but also helps Muslim women to stay in tune with the modern times. Taking a proactive step to involve Muslim women in the decision making bodies of the community, the government is making it mandatory for an active representation of women in the Central Waqf Council and the state Waqf boards. Waqf is a Muslim charitable trust. Provisions have been made in the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2010, passed by the Lok Sabha, to have at least two women on the board in both Central Waqf Council and State Waqf Boards. The government has taken a strong step towards gender justice in management of religious properties by giving one-third representation to women," said Khurshid. The Bill, which will now go to Rajya Sabha, also has a provision to give maintenance to all such divorced women who have been denied financial rights by their husbands and in-laws. (DNA 15/5/10)

Setalvad condemns threats to Javed Akhtar (7)

New Delhi: The Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) has condemned the threats issued to Rajya Sabha member Javed Akhtar, who is also on its Board of Directors. Mr. Akhtar, who received the threats through e-mail, had challenged a recent fatwa of the Darul uloom, Deoband, against Muslim women working with men. In a statement, CJP secretary Teesta Setalvad said: "The CJP stands for basic democratic rights of all individuals as also of the minority within the minority, women of ethnic and religious minorities. The right to freedom of movement and work is a basic right of an individual as also of all Muslim women. Across the world, millions of Muslim women are visible in the workplace. In India too, Muslim women are present in all walks of life." "As an active founder-trustee, Mr. Akhtar has been, as all others on its Board, a part of the CJP's collective efforts to ensure justice to the victims and punishment to the perpetrators of the Gujarat 2002 carnage. He has spoken out often against the politics of hatred and intimidation. "The

CJP believes that all threats of violence and aggression are threats to an individual's liberty and basic human rights, also guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. Intimidation and threats, whether they come from spokespersons of the so-called majority or minority, are equally condemnable. "The CJP is fully behind Mr. Akhtar, who is also the president, Muslims for Secular Democracy, and his views that oppose a retrograde worldviews and support the basic rights of Muslim women." (The Hindu 17/5/10)

Modern woman hit by burqa ban (7)

Paris: The ban on burqa in France may not have pleased the Islamists, but it has also not been welcomed by modern Muslim women. One runs her own company, another is a housewife and a third, a divorcee, raises her children by herself. Like nearly 2,000 other Muslim women who freely wear face-covering veils anywhere in France, their lives will soon change and they are worried. French Justice Minister Michele Alliot-Marie today presented a draft law to the Cabinet banning Muslim veils that cover the face, the first formal step in a process to forbid such attire in all public places in France. It calls for USD 185 fines and, in some cases, citizenship classes for women who run afoul of the law. The measure notably creates a new offence, "inciting to hide the face," and anyone convicted of forcing a woman to wear such a veil risks a year in prison and a USD 18,555 fine, according to a copy of the text. "Citizenship should be experienced with an uncovered face," President Nicolas Sarkozy told the Cabinet meeting, in remarks released by his office. "There can be no other solution but a ban in all public places." Although the Interior Ministry estimates there are only 1,900 women in France who cover their faces with veils, the planned law would be another defining moment for Islam here as the nation tries to bring its Muslim population, at least 5 million, the largest in western Europe into the mainstream, even by force of law. The bill is to go before parliament in July, and despite the acrimonious debate that is sure to come, there is little doubt the measure will become law. Sarkozy, who says such veils oppress women, wants a law banning them on the books as soon as possible. "If the law is voted, I won't take off my veil. ... No one will dictate my way of life" but God, said Najat, a divorcee, who gave her age as "45 plus." She was one of a half-dozen women who, in a rare move, met with reporters yesterday to express their worries about changes they say will impact their lives to the core. Like others, she refused to give her full name. All said they fear for their safety in an increasingly tense climate. Najat was among those who said she has been increasingly harassed since debate over the planned law began nearly a year ago. (Financial Express 20/5/10)

Babri: Court relief for Advani (7)

Lucknow, May 21, 2010: The Allahabad High Court on Thursday dismissed the CBI's petition challenging a special court's decision to exonerate saffron leaders L.K. Advani and Bal Thackeray in the Babri Masjid demolition case. Advani and Thackeray are among 21 leaders accused by the CBI of complicity in the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992. A judge of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court upheld the May 4, 2001, decision by the special judge (Ayodhya issue) to acquit the saffron brass. "There is no occasion for this court to make any interference in the impugned order," the Bench said. "...Nothing is found against the correctness, legality, propriety or regularity in respect of any of the findings of the lower court," the judge said. Reacting to the court order, All India Muslim Personal Law Board member Zafaryab Jilani said the investigating agency should move the Supreme Court. (Hindustan Times 21/5/10)

Muslims protest against Facebook (7)

Mumbai, May 21: Muslims in the city today protested against the social networking website 'Facebook' for hosting a competition by inviting users to draw a caricature of Prophet Mohammad. In a protest meeting held at Minara Masjid at Bhendi Bazar and at Hindustani Masjid at Byculla in South Mumbai, various Muslim organisations demanded for a permanent ban on 'Facebook' and chanted slogans against the website operators. The protest meeting at Minara Masjid, conducted by Raza Academy, demanded ban on Facebook and asked the government to take action against the organisers of the competition. Protesters blocked traffic at Bhendi Bazar. Hindustani Masjid noted Islamic scholar Maulana Abdul Jabbar Kadri said, "we cannot tolerate such things which hurt the sentiments of millions of Muslims across the world". The competition, called Draw Mohammed Day, was announced on April 20 and was scheduled to be held on May 20. Protests have been organised in several parts of the city against the competition. (Central Chronicle 22/5/10)

Rajasthan Govt. accused of shielding Balesar rioters (7)

JAIPUR: Muslim groups in Rajasthan on Wednesday expressed concern over the Congress-led Government allegedly shielding the culprits of recent communal violence at Balesar village in Jodhpur district and demanded immediate arrest of the rioters, besides rebuilding of the Idgah demolished by them. The Rajasthan Muslim Forum, an umbrella organisation of Muslim groups, said in a statement here that the Government's failure to act in accordance with the law had sent across a "disquieting message" creating doubts about its sincerity in controlling communal elements and rendering justice to the victims of violence. Muslim Forum convenor Qari Moinuddin said the law had not caught up with the rioters. The Forum described as "outrageous" the financial assistance given to the rioters killed or injured in the police firing at Balesar. The 4,000-strong crowd of rioters was allegedly led by four Sarpanches of the region. Three of them have been named in the FIRs lodged by Muslim residents of the village. The State Government has shunted out Jodhpur Rural Superintendent of Police Sharat Kaviraj. Forum member Mohammed Salim pointed out that the previous BJP regime too had removed an SP of Udaipur in a similar case of firing on rioters at Sarada village. "The similarity in the approach of both Congress and BJP is baffling," said Mr. Salim, who is also the State unit president of Jamat-e-Islami Hind. Association for Protection of Civil Rights convenor and Rajasthan High Court lawyer Paikar Farooq – also a Forum member – said the delay in reconstruction of Idgah was likely to create legal complications as the matter could be taken to court and dragged for years. Malis have already declared that the Idgah was an encroachment and would not be allowed to be rebuilt. The violence erupted on May 22 allegedly over the construction of an NREGA project road with Mali and Muslim localities situated on opposite sides. While the two communities earlier agreed to give land for the road equally from their sides, the Sarpanch started construction work taking land only from the Muslim side. Malis allegedly attacked the Muslim locality when the latter objected to the construction. (The Hindu 3/6/10)

Slow pace of Ayodhya trial main issue on MPLB agenda (7)

LUCKNOW: Slow pace of Ayodhya trial in CBI court is one of the main issues on the agenda coming up before annual working committee meeting of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB). The meet is slated to be held in Aurangabad on June 6. Talking to TOI on Thursday, senior member of board and lawyer Zafaryab Jilani said recent transfer of the chief judicial magistrate, Faizabad who was presiding over the trial, has led to a reasonable apprehension about further delay in the matter. Since 2007 to the present day, the special court has been able to record statements of only eight witnesses while the ninth witness is still deposing before it. The transfer of the judge at the crucial time could complicate things he said more so as the successor a lady is already on maternity leave. The matter will be raised in Aurangabad, Jilani said. The development goes against the assurance given by home minister P Chidambaram who had promised an expeditious trial of all demolition cases during the discussion on the Liberhan Commission's report in parliament. The board, Jilani said, had also demanded day-to-day trial in the case. However, the long gaps in the dates for hearing continue and it shows that the request had fallen on deaf ears. The lackadaisical approach of the CBI in the matter will also come up for discussion, he said. Moreover, the meeting will take up the Waqf Amendment Bill passed by parliament on May 7. "Prime minister Manmohan Singh had promised that he would seek opinion from all Muslims MPs before the passage of the bill but nothing to this effect was done." The bill, according to Jilani, has many glaring anomalies which if ignored would have grave repercussions. For instance, the unbridled power to the chief executive officer of the Waqf Board has been butt of fierce criticism. "The official, according to the provision, can ignore the wishes of the board in decision-making and this kind of unchallenged authority has led to much concern among the members of AIMPLB," Jilani pointed out. (Times of India 4/6/10)

Muslim groups demand closure of Israeli embassy in India (7)

New Delhi, June 04, 2010: Muslim organisations will on Friday take out a march in the Indian capital to protest the attack by Israeli commandos on a Gaza aid flotilla that killed 16 activists May 30, and demand the closure of Israeli embassy in India. The coordinator of the march SQR Ilyas said: "We will demand from the government of India to convey the feelings of Indian people to the Israeli government and also demand the closure of the Israeli embassy and severing of all trade and military ties with Israel." The Free Gaza flotilla of six ships with 700 activists on board and carrying 10,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid was boarded by the Israeli forces as it tried to break the Gaza embargo. "We are organising this march to acquaint the country's civil society about the assault by Israeli forces," he added. The march from India Gate to the Israeli embassy is being organised by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat Ulema-e Hind, Markazi

Jamiat Ahle Hadith, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, All India Milli Council, Muslim Political Council of India, Indian Islahi Movement, Majlis-e Fikr-o-Amal and Students Islamic Organisation of India, a press statement said. After the march, the protestees will submit a memorandum to the UN office in Delhi and to the prime minister. (Hindustan Times 4/6/10)

Muslim board assails CBI on Babri masjid issue (7)

Lucknow, June 06, 2010: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) on Sunday assailed the CBI for adopting dilly-dallying tactics in Babri Masjid demolition case. The board has also expressed its displeasure over controversial Central Waqf Bill 2010. The executive committee of the board at its meeting in Aurangabad on Sunday criticized the CBI for not properly tackling the Babri Masjid case. Taking cognizance of High Court decision on May 21 letting off senior BJP leaders, including LK Advani, in the case the board has asked the Congress-led UPA government to direct the CBI to move Supreme Court in the matter. The High Court upheld the Lucknow CBI court order dropping criminal proceedings against these leaders. "The Board is quite unhappy with the CBI", senior advocate and executive committee member Zafaryab Jilani told Hindustan Times over phone from Aurangabad. Jilani said the board was of the view that CBI was not taking proper interest in the case and the probe agency had thus failed to expedite the issue in the court. He said the central government had been asked to properly look into the issue. Jilani also asked the state government to issue fresh notification clubbing two demolition cases pending in Rai Bareilly and Lucknow. While conspiracy case involving BJP leaders is pending in special court Rai Bareilly, demolition case against Karsevaks is held up in Lucknow court. The board has also flayed the centre for rushing through Waqf Bill 2010 in the Lok Sabha without taking the objections raised by Muslim MPs. The Bill is now pending in Upper House. Jilani said even the AIMPLB had also sent a memorandum suggesting some amendments but there was no response from the UPA government. Jilani said the Bill was against the interest of the community in which the powers Mutawalli (care-taker) of Waqf properties would be eroded and properties given by Hindus to Waqf boards would not be considered as Muslim Auqaf. In this connection the AIMPLB legal committee will be meeting in later this month in Delhi to chalk out an action plan. Jilani further said that a committee under the chairmanship of Maulana Wali Rahmani had also been constituted to prepare case against compulsory education Bill. Jilani said minority educational institutions and Madarsas should be excluded from the bill. AIMPLB chairman Maulana Rabe Hasani Nadvi presided over one-day meeting. (Hindustan Times 6/6/10)

Babri jolt to Cong over new wakf law (7)

New Delhi, June 7: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has opposed the Centre's recent move to amend the wakf act, dismaying the Congress which was banking on Muslim votes in the coming Bihar and Uttar Pradesh polls. What can hurt the Congress most is the board's argument that the amendment will weaken the Muslims' case in the 60-year-old suit over the ownership of the land on which the Babri Masjid stood. The amendment makes registration of wakf properties mandatory. The board claims the Babri Masjid was not registered, and that the amendment would demolish the Muslims' contention in the title suit in Allahabad High Court. The board says the Centre used a "pliable" minority affairs minister, Salman Khursheed, to push an anti-Muslim legislation that has been passed by the Lok Sabha and awaits Rajya Sabha clearance. Sources, however, say the minority affairs ministry has found out that the Babri Masjid plot had indeed been registered in Faizabad. The Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Wakf Board has told the Centre the mosque was registered under Section 37 of the Muslim Wakf Act. But the law board argues that the courts do not accept this registration. The sources said this was because the court was still hearing the title suit, and any decision on the registration could come only as part of the verdict. The law board, however, decided at its executive meeting yesterday to take the matter up with the Centre and the Congress. Even the Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat described the amendment as the Congress's "most dangerous act". Some Muslim leaders feel the amended law would rob the community of many wakf properties. Some Congress leaders, however, suggested the propaganda had been engineered by a party lobby that wants Khursheed out of the minority affairs ministry. Law board members have also alleged the Centre deliberately rushed the amendment through on the last day of the budget session, a Friday, when most Lok Sabha members, especially Muslims, were absent. However, 13 MPs, eight of them Muslim, had participated in the debate with none opposing the amendments. The 13 included MPs from the Congress, BJP, Samajwadi, RJD, BJD, BSP, CPM and CPI and Independents. The amendments were based on inputs from a joint parliamentary panel. (Telegraph 8/6/10)

Modi govt ad mistakes UP Muslims for Gujarat (7)

New Delhi: Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi's plan to generate goodwill among Muslims in Bihar has backfired because of a newspaper advertisement. The advertisement, sponsored by the Gujarat government, and published in newspapers in Patna ahead of Narendra Modi's rally, shows burqa-clad girls which it claims are from Gujarat. However, it is now learnt that the girls featuring in it study in a school in Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh district and not Gujarat. The picture was taken without permission from a US-based website, twocircles.net, run by Indian Muslims. "We are utterly shocked that this photograph is so daringly and shamelessly being claimed to be of Gujarat and is being used for image-building purposes," say the owners of the website where the pictures were first published. Twocircles.net is now planning to sue the Gujarat government for copyright violation. The government has however, dismissed the allegations. A senior official in the government has pinned the blame on the advertisement agency which was given the task of preparing the copy. The official also defends the advertisement saying that it never claimed that the girls were Muslims from Gujarat. The Shibli National Girls School in Azamgarh, where those girls study, has lambasted the government for misusing the picture of its students. "The publication of these pictures without permission goes to show that Muslims are not taken seriously," Dr Iftekhar Ahmad, the Principal, tells CNN-IBN. Dr Ahmad says he will explore legal options after consulting the school management. (CNN IBN 12/6/10)

Shun khap, Muslim leaders tell community

New Delhi, June 13: Several Muslim groups have asked community members not to oppose inter-caste and intra-caste marriages, worried over the increasing instances of khap diktats against such matches. Zakat Foundation of India (ZFI) has issued such an appeal, signed by all major groups representing the community, saying Muslims have been asked to take the side of religion and not caste because Islam does not restrict inter-caste and intra-caste marriages. "The Holy Quran has given clear guidelines about marriages with relatives. Any restriction beyond Quranic teachings has been created by people themselves," said the foundation president, Zafar Mahmood. Of late, there have been several instances when Muslim-dominated khap panchayats — traditional caste councils with no official standing, yet influential — had issued such diktats. Recently, a khap panchayat in Haryana annulled the marriage of Ikhlas, a 22-year-old Indian Reserve Battalion policeman, with Anjum, who is from Rajasthan. They were told the marriage was illegal because their families were part of the same clan nearly 125 years ago. The panchayat's argument was that the girl's family had migrated from the boy's village nearly 100 years ago. The families of Ikhlas and Anjum were socially boycotted after the marriage. The couple moved court against the decision. The khap head, Ramzan Chaudhary, defended the decision saying that Haryana's khap panchayat culture was as important to Muslims as their religion. Muslim community leaders are also planning to hold a series of meetings in Muslim-dominated rural belts. They have held three meetings in Haryana, where they urged the Muslims to follow the Shariat, the doctrines that regulate the lives of those who profess Islam, and not any "un-Islamic culture". According to Zafar, Islam does not permit any caste or gotra system: "Nikah is permitted between any believing man and believing woman." Muslim leaders are of the opinion that khap panchayats are "un-Islamic". "A true Muslim should always follow the Shariat and not these un-Islamic cultural practices," said Anwar Jamal of Jamiat Ulema. (Telegraph 14/6/10)

Declare Dalit Muslims SC: Nitish (7)

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday demanded that the Centre include Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians in the Scheduled Castes category. Speaking at the national convention of All-India Pasmanda Muslim Mehaz (AIPMM) — a forum taking up the cause of poor Muslims — Nitish said: "Of the 90 Muslim-dominated districts covered by the Sachar Committee, seven are from Bihar. But save only Kisanjanj, no other Bihar district has got any amenities from the Centre." The Chief Minister said that the Centre is sitting on the recommendations of the Sachar Committee and Justice Rangnath Mishra Commission. "We keep sending reminders to Centre but without any results," said Nitish, adding that discrimination on ground of religion is not fair. In Bihar alone, there are about 1 crore OBC Muslims, most of whom can press claim for Dalit status on basis of their weaker socio-economic condition. The Muslim conference assumes greater significance in wake of just-concluded BJP National Executive in Patna, projecting Narendra Modi at expense of Nitish Kumar's displeasure. (Financial Express 2/7/10)

BJP threatens stir against quotas for Muslims (7)

BANGALORE: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Sunday threatened to launch a mass agitation if the central government implemented the Ranganath Mishra Commission report which recommended 15 percent reservation for Muslims in education and government employment. "We will launch a massive agitation if the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government implements the commission's recommendations as it would deprive the other backward classes (OBCs) of reservation in jobs and educational institutions," BJP president Nitin Gadkari said here. Addressing a massive convention of backward classes, organised by the state unit of the party at the Bangalore Palace grounds here, Gadkari said the report smacked of vote bank politics of the Congress. "The report deserves to be thrown into the dustbin as its recommendations will only further divide the people and deny the backward classes their right to education and jobs," Gadkari asserted. The report, which was submitted to the prime minister May 22, 2007, also recommended the inclusion of Muslims and Christian Dalits in the Scheduled Caste (SC) list. The National Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities was headed by former chief justice of India and Law Commission member Tahir Mahmood. Terming the report as a curse on India's pluralistic society, Gadkari said one of its recommendation were to reserve 8.4 percent out of the existing 27 percent OBC quota for minorities. "If the 27 percent quota for OBCs is diluted, what happens to social justice for the deprived sections of society?" Gadkari asked, drawing applause from about 5,000 people who participated in the convention. The commission was set up by the first UPA government in 2005 to suggest the criterion for identifying the socially and economically backward among religious and linguistic minorities. Reiterating Gadkari's stand on the report, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the party would not allow the UPA government to rob the OBCs of their legitimate right to 27 percent quota for jobs in government services and seats in educational institutions. "Even Jawaharlal Nehru opposed reservation to converted SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs)," Chouhan recalled, addressing the convention. Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa declared that his government would allocate Rs.1,000 crore for the welfare of the backward classes in the next fiscal's budget as against Rs.640 crore allotted in this fiscal's budget. (Express Buzz 5/7/10)

HCI to give training to Muslim graduates for UPSC exams (7)

Bhopal: In an effort to boost the number of Muslims in Civil Services, Haj Committee of India (HCI) will provide training to Muslim graduates for UPSC examinations from the year 2010 onwards. For the purpose, top 50 Muslim students will be selected through a screening test, held at 10 centres across India. Executive Officer Madhya Pradesh State Haj Committee Dawood Khan said, "We have come to know about this programme of HCI from other State Haj committees. We have sent a proposal to them to include Bhopal also, so that the Muslim students from the State can also avail the benefit of the ongoing programme." Chhattisgarh State Haj Committee President and in-charge of Madhya Pradesh affairs for HCI, Saleem Raj, while talking to The Pioneer said, "In the screening test, the aspirants will be checked on their Islamic and General Knowledge. After getting selected, the students would be provided hostel facility with food at subsidised rates." Raj informed that the selected students would be trained at the Mumbai office of the Haj Committee of India. The other facilities would include hostel, food, Internet and books. Mumbai university professors will coach and guide them for UPSC exam subjects. Students will not be allowed to meet their family members during the training period. The fees is highly subsidised and would be just Rs 2,000 per month for food and hostel facilities. There will be some consideration for students belonging to families living below the poverty line. Desirous students could contact Director of Coaching & Guidance cell, Prof Hashim for more details at 022-22612969 or they could visit Haj Committee, Mumbai. (Pioneer 7/7/10)

Afzal should be punished, says Muslim leader (7)

Parliament attack case convict Afzal Guru, who is on death row, should be punished as decided by the judicial system of the country, a top leader of a prominent Muslim organisation said today. General Secretary of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind Maulana Mahmood Madani said those apprehending strong protest from the Muslims if the punishment against Guru was carried out actually want to gain "political mileage" out of the issue. "I do not think the community will oppose it. Some crazy people may oppose it but it will not be the community," he told Aaj Tak, replying to a question. "There is a judicial system in the country and people have full faith and confidence in it. After the judicial process, it has been proved that the man is guilty." Without naming Guru, Madani said if somebody has committed a crime then he must be punished. "I can say with full confidence that if somebody has committed a crime then he must be punished at any cost what ever be the repercussions. You should do justice," he said. Asked whether

some people were trying to defame the community by saying that it will react strongly if Guru is hanged, he replied: "yes". "In a way they are defaming the community. They want to take political benefit," he said. However, he added he cannot give "guarantee" that there will be no protest or violence if Guru's sentence is carried out. The Supreme Court had in 2005 upheld the Delhi High Court verdict confirming the trial court judgement which had awarded capital punishment to Guru for his role in the conspiracy behind the December 13, 2001, terror attack on Parliament. (Indian Express 11/7/10)

Congress disrespecting patriotism of Muslims: BJP (7)

New Delhi BJP on Tuesday said Congress was "shedding crocodile tears" over Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru's conviction and accused it of raising the issue of Hindu and Muslim terror to deflect attention from "real terrorism". "BJP and our president Nitin Gadkari have only placed the common belief on the Afzal Guru case before the people. But the Congress is shedding Afzali (sic) tears and in the process disrespecting the patriotism of crores of Indian Muslims. No Muslim in India supports terror," party vice-president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said. Gadkari had created a controversy recently when he asked the Congress whether Afzal was its "son-in-law" and this was preventing it from hanging him. BJP has often accused Congress of delaying Afzal's hanging for minority appeasement. Naqvi said while on one hand the Congress and its leaders, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul, were maintaining a "conspicuous silence" on the Afzal case, on the other some of their leaders were raising the "bogey" of Hindu and Muslim terror. "Unfortunately, the Congress is bent on deflecting attention from real terrorism and its all round failure in controlling separatists, naxals and terrorists by raising such issues," Naqvi said. BJP and the Sangh Parivar have been on the backfoot ever since the names of some RSS activists have figured in the list of suspects in the Mecca Masjid and other blast cases. When asked about Congress General Secretary Digvijay Singh's comments against Gadkari, Naqvi said, "Congress leaders should be concerned about their party. We never asked them why they could not get a president from India and had to import one from abroad. What has been her contribution till now?" He alleged that Congress' attitude towards Gadkari was a "sign of fear" in their minds about the BJP President. The Rajya Sabha MP also questioned the Congress as to why it felt that hanging Afzal Guru would create a law and order problem in the country. "By labelling the call against terrorism as a call against Muslims, the Congress is disrespecting crores of Muslims," he said. (Express India 13/7/10)

Ban on SIMI needed to bring Muslims into mainstream: Centre (7)

New Delhi: The Centre on Tuesday justified its decision before a Tribunal to extend the ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) saying such an action is needed to bring the Muslim community to the national mainstream by checking its disgruntled elements. "There has been substantial increase in Muslim population and also in (their) getting opportunity in various public sectors but some disgruntled elements are propagating rumours of Government discriminating against them. This ban is justified to bring Muslim in the mainstream," Additional Solicitor General (ASG) AS Chandhiok. The ASG made the submission before a Tribunal, headed by Delhi HC judge Justice Sanjiv Khanna, which is hearing on the legality of Centre's decision to extend the ban for the fifth time. The Centre contended that there has been sufficient evidence to prove that SIMI has been operating in the country despite being banned in 2001. The Centre had on February 5 had extended the ban on SIMI, the fifth since 2001, by two years from February 7 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. SIMI was outlawed for the first time in September 2001 for its involvement in terrorist acts and the ban was extended in 2003 and 2006. The last ban on SIMI, formed in April 1977 as a youth wing of terror outfit Jamaat Islami-e-Hind, was extended for two years on February 8, 2008. In its notification, the Home Ministry had declared SIMI as an "unlawful association indulging in activities prejudicial to the security of the country" and with "potential of disturbing peace and communal harmony and disrupting the secular fabric of the country". The group is alleged to have close links with Pakistan-based terror outfits, LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammad. The ASG also submitted that confessions of SIMI functionaries had been recorded according to provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. (Pioneer 14/7/10)

Madrasas will be kept out of RTE Act: Sibal

Union Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal on Thursday held out the categorical assurance that madrasas would be kept out of the purview of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Mr. Sibal, who was addressing a large congregation of Muslim Ulema and educationists, said the exemption to madrasas and other minority educational institutions would be specified in a set of guidelines to be incorporated soon in the RTE Act. Mr. Sibal said the Muslim fear that the Act would endanger madrasa education was unfounded in the context of the constitutional guarantees available to the community to establish and run their own educational institutions. "Door door se hamara koi irada nahi hai (we will not dream of interfering in your rights)," he said. The Minister's promise was met with deafening applause from the assembled Ulema and Muslim leaders who, through the morning, had kept up the chant of "threat to madrasas." Speaker after speaker denounced the Act as an assault on the minority right to run educational institutions guaranteed by Article 30 of the Constitution. Many saw it as part of a world-wide design to target and subdue the community.

Not against the Act

However, a small section of speakers — among them the former Delhi State Minorities Commission chairman Kamal Farooqui, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind leader Mahmood Madani and Islamic scholar and Jamaat-e-Islami Hind leader Maulana Syed Jalauddin Umari — clarified that while they had serious misgivings about the Act's impact on Muslim religious education, they were not against the Act per se. Nor did they want to convey the impression that Muslims opposed universalisation of education. Mr. Sibal drove home the point that the RTE Act with its emphasis on quality education did not come a day too soon. For far too long, schools had got away with offering poor quality education. It was the right of every child not only to get education but to get good quality education. He said the quality prescriptions in the Act applied to all schools, including government and aided schools, and school managements could no longer hope to get away with lame excuses. In an indirect dig at the audience which repeatedly invoked Article 30, the Minister said, "The emphasis in Article 30 is on administration, not on maladministration." (The Hindu, 6/8/2010)

Another honour killing: Couple shot in Aligarh

LUCKNOW: In yet another case of honour killing, a Muslim couple was shot dead by the girl's brother in Aligarh on Saturday. The couple had eloped only to return after being promised a traditional wedding by both the families. However, they walked straight into the trap and were killed on their return. The incident took place in Delhight of Aligarh. Police said Rashid had an affair with his neighbour Khushnama, who was already married and even had a two-year-old child. She had been living with her parents and wanted to divorce her husband to marry Rashid. On August 5, she eloped with Rashid. However, Khushnama's family asked them to return with a promise that the two would be married properly. On Saturday afternoon, the two families met to sort out the matter but girl's brother MOhammad disapproved of the relation and shot them dead while families were still engaged in talks. (TOI, 8/8/2010)

"Children of divorced Muslim women cannot be denied maintenance"

The Delhi High Court has held that children of divorced Muslim women cannot be denied maintenance because of 'any restrictive provision contained in the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986.' The Act was passed by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1986 to nullify the decision of the Supreme Court in the famous Shah Bano case. Dismissing a petition by the father of a minor daughter against a lower court order that had granted a maintenance of Rs.2,000 per month to her, Justice S.N. Dhingra said: "I consider that the benefit under Section 125 (order for maintenance of wives, children and parents) of the Criminal Procedure Code cannot be denied to a minor daughter because of any restrictive provision contained in the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986." The petitioner, Rashid Ali, had challenged the lower court order on the ground that in view of Section 3 (b) of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, the right of a child to claim maintenance from the father after two years of divorce of the mother did not survive. Rashid Ali's daughter was staying with his separated wife. Describing the contention of the petitioner as baseless, Justice Dhingra said that even a wife who had been divorced under the Muslim Personal Law was entitled to claim maintenance under Section 125 of the Code after the Iddat period. "A petition under Section 125 of the Code will be maintainable (for the wife) before family courts so long as she does not remarry and the amount of maintenance to be awarded..... cannot be restricted for Iddat period only," Justice Dhingra quoted the Supreme Court as saying in a judgment. (The Hindu, 16/8/2010)

Minorities ministry sharpens Muslim focus

In keeping with the Prime Minister's "New 15-Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities", the Union ministry of minority affairs (MoMA) is busy chalking out strategy to help improve the condition of the country's minorities. It is also focusing on the proper implementation of various schemes already introduced by it to help improve the lot of the country's minorities, particularly Muslims. The focus on the Muslim community, the largest minority in India, got a fillip following the report of the Sachar Committee, commissioned during the tenure of UPA-I, which highlighted the poor socio-economic and educational condition of the country's Muslims. With the PM's new programme having among its objectives the goals of "enhancing opportunities for education", the ministry, headed by Mr Salman Khurshid, is focusing on helping meritorious minority students pursue their education. According to ministry officials, the scholarship schemes introduced by it, with a percentage ear-marked for Muslim girl students, have been evoking a good response. Apart from this, the Maulana Azad Education Foundation, a voluntary, non-profit society funded by the government, also had its corpus increased in recent years, they noted. At present its corpus is around `425 crores. (AA, 27/8/2010)

Muslim League to launch TV channel

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is set to become the third political party in Kerala to launch a television channel. Named Channel IBC (Independent Broadcasting Council), the Kozhikode-based channel will champion the cause of minorities and backward communities. In the first phase, the channel will be available for cable TV customers in MPEG 4 format and a full-fledged satellite channel to reach Malayalees across the world will be launched in the second phase. Kozhikode-based Keds Communications will coordinate the operations of the channel. According to PK Kunhalikkutty, State general secretary of the Muslim League, the new channel would work for the advancement of the backward and minority sections and function as the voice of the good interests and development dreams of the people. He assured that the party channel would uphold and maintain the values of true journalism. It would also give importance to the culture of Malabar, he said. Kunhalikkutty, who heads the official leadership of the Muslim League, has been toying with the idea of starting an exclusive party channel since 2005, after a news channel brought out several reports concerning his alleged involvement in a sex scandal. Kunhalikkutty was forced to resign as minister following this. His own party colleague MK Muneer, one of the League secretaries, is the chairman of this channel. All prominent Muslim organizations in Kerala already have interests in the field of print media. The Muslim League is running a daily newspaper, Chandrika, as its mouthpiece, which would undergo an overhauling soon, according to Kunhalikkutty. However, this would happen only after the 2011 Assembly elections due to reasons linked to political strategies. The party is also publishing several periodicals. The Sunni sect led by Kanthapuram AP Aboobacker Musliar is bringing out a Malayalam daily newspaper titled Siraj with five editions, including one in Dubai. One of the two factions of the Kerala Nadvat'ul Mujahiddin is publishing its own newspaper Varthamanam, with an edition each from Kozhikode and Doha, Qatar. The Kerala unit of the Jama'at-e-Islami, allegedly an Islamist outfit, is running its own Malayalam daily, Madhyamam, which also has a weekly in the same name. Islamist Popular Front of India, presently facing investigations regarding a Taliban-model attack on a professor, is publishing its multi-edition newspaper, Thejas. Kerala, which already has more than a dozen television channels, is set to witness an explosion in the visual media sector in 2011 as several new channels are in the pipeline presently. It is said that the Jama'at-e-Islami is planning to launch a TV channel based in Kozhikode. A prominent media figure, who recently resigned from a channel, is reportedly preparing to start a TV channel in association with some NRIs. The CPI(M) in Kerala, through the Malayalam Communications Ltd it controls, is running three channels: Kairali in the infotainment segment, People in the whole-news sector and WE in the entertainment segment. The State Congress is running its own channel named Jai Hind. (Dailypioneer, 30/8/2010)

'Iftars by political leaders against Ramzan spirit'

MUMBAI: As a Muslim breaks his Ramzan fast in the evening, a band of angels record the faithful's piety and report it back to Allah. Allah, pleased with the devout follower, showers him with rewards. However, according to many in the community, the entire purpose is lost at Iftar parties hosted by political workers who are more interested in showing their loyalty towards their netas rather than Allah. Such parties hosted by politicians have been inviting criticism from Muslims religious leaders. Political Iftar, says a cleric, may not be completely un-Islamic, but it's against the spirit of Ramzan that asks followers of Islam to show their utmost devotion to God. "It is not against Shariat laws, but certainly doesn't gel with the spirit of the holy month of Ramzan. Muslims should stop attending political Iftars," said senior cleric Maulana Abu Hassan Nadvi. Haji Arafat of the MNS is so "disturbed" by the gatherings that he has not only decided not to host an Iftar party but has also been asking his party workers not to attend them. "If the Congress-NCP is so concerned about the Muslims, they should reduce the prices of sugar and milk, just for a day Eid," said Arafat. "We know political Iftars are just attempts to please some leaders. My Roza

and Iftar are for Allah, not for a neta." However, political Iftar parties are as big a rage this Ramzan as before. Samajwadi Party's state chief and MLA Abu Asim Azmi threw an Iftar party at a five-star hotel last week. "Azmi's Iftar was for the babus in Mantralaya, business magnates and politicians. The common man was not invited," said a former MLA who has worked with Azmi in the past. Incidentally, Azmi organised another party at a restaurant in the crowded Bhandi Bazaar mainly for media persons, but some of his political workers were also spotted there, feasting on the scrumptious food. The Iftars invariably reach a crescendo towards the weekend. NCP leader Sharad Pawar threw a lavish party on Saturday at Qaiser Baug in Dongri, while the BJP's minority morcha's head Haider Azam hosted a dinner at Haj House on Sunday. Chief minister Ashok Chavan's Iftar will be on September 7, again at Haj House. "Muslims should stop attending such gatherings if they feel their piety will be compromised," said N Raeen, vice-president, Jamitaul Ulema (Maharashtra). A section of the Urdu media too has slammed political Iftars. "People forego their tarawih (namaz at night) to forage for food. It should be banned," said columnist Farooque Ansari in Urdu Times. (TOI, 29/8/2010)

Many Muslim students yet to receive incentive money

PATNA: Rakhshinda Jabeen passed matric in 2009. She was happy to secure first division. The poor girl's happiness doubled when she was told that she was eligible for an incentive of Rs 10,000 that the state government has introduced for all the Muslim students securing first division in matric examination. Her dream to pursue higher education was shattered when she failed to get the money. "Till date, I have not received this money," Jabeen said and added that she even failed to elicit any response from the authorities concerned. Jabeen's is not an isolated case. When a social activist, Hammad Qasim, called from a mosque those students who were denied incentive, dozens of students or their guardians turned up. They also carried the copies of the application forms and the marksheets. Imtiyaz, Nawazish, Shama Aziz, Noor Arfin, Saddam Khan, Sameer, Sadab Nasim, Shakil Ahmad, Sanaullah and Tabassum are among the students who were denied the incentive of Rs 10,000. Though a year has lapsed, there is no official information whether they would get the incentive or not. "In my school, most of the students securing first division have received the incentive but my name is missing from the list of beneficiaries," said Imtiyaz of Madhubani. In fact, chief minister Nitish Kumar takes pride when he refers to his Mukhya Mantri Protsahan Rashi Yojana and says a simple initiative has increased the number of Muslim students passing matric with first division manifold. Nitish quotes figures: "In 2007, a total of 2,627 Muslim students passed the examination with first division. In 2008, this figure shot up to 6,800; in 2009, the number swelled to 11,000 and in the 2010 examination, over 20,000 students passed with first division." Minority welfare minister Shahid Ali Khan claims all the eligible students of 2009 have received the incentive money. "There had been some complaints from some girl students and their cases have been reviewed and they will get the incentive money soon," he told TOI. When TOI informed him about several students, both boys and girls, who did not get the money, he was surprised. "If it is true, I will personally look into it and ensure that they got the incentive," he said, adding that in 2008 too, about 2,000 students had been left out but later on they also got it. "We are committed to give all the eligible students incentive as per the directive of the chief minister," he said. Khan also disclosed that from next year, Muslim students passing matric examination with first division will not require to submit application forms to claim the money. He said, "The minority welfare department will seek the list of such students from the Bihar School Examination Board and cheques for each student would be sent to the DM or the district education officer concerned for delivering the same to schools." TOI, 1/9/2010)

India condemns Quran burning bid in US

India on Thursday condemned the plan by the pastor of a small Florida church to burn copies of the holy Quran to mark the 9/11 attacks and called on US authorities to take "strong action" to prevent such an "outrage" being committed. Home Minister P Chidambaram while deploring Pastor Terry Jones's move to burn copies of Islam's holiest text on September 11 also requested the Indian media to exercise "great restraint" over the coverage of the act to help maintain peace and harmony. (Pioneer, 9/10/2010)

Kendrapara mosque opens doors to women

KENDRAPARA: Hundreds of Muslim women offered prayers at an exclusive namaz for females at Kendrapara's Minar mosque on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr on Saturday. Mosque authorities said the annual event was aimed at women's empowerment. "Each year, Eid brings joy to hundreds of women from the Alhadis sect in Kendrapara as they offer special prayers at the mosque at Badahat in Kendrapara," said Ainur Haque, cleric of Minar mosque. "The mosque managing committee's decision is a bold step towards giving women equal rights," he added. The women pray at the mosque every Friday. A thin curtain separates them from men, who also offer namaz at same time. The women put off their

burkhas during the prayers. Minar mosque, however, is the lone mosque in Kendrapara district to allow women to attend namaz. "In rest of the 22 mosques in coastal district, Muslim women aren't entitled to perform namaz," said Mohammad Akil of Kendrapara. (IE. 12/9/2010)

SC considers PIL asking for Scheduled Castes status for Muslims

New Delhi, September, 14 : The Supreme Court today granted three months to the Centre to file its response on a petition seeking treatment of certain groups in Muslim community as Scheduled Castes for quota benefits in jobs and education. A Bench of Justices P Sathasivam and B S Chauhan said it was not inclined to issue any mandamus (direction) to the government on the issue as it was a policy matter and asked for its response on the PIL seeking such a benefit. The Bench said since it has to be a policy decision, it was for the government to come out with its stand as the courts have limited role in the matter. A similar petition seeking SC, ST status for certain class of persons within the Christian community was pending before another Bench. The apex court passed the directions on a PIL filed by an NGO in 2008 contending that Muslim Dalits like Hindu khatiks, are engaged in the profession of slaughtering goats and have not been given Scheduled Caste status. It was contended that originally both sets of khatiks were the same community and there is documentary proof to the effect that the Muslim khatiks are local converts but they are not guaranteed SC status like their Hindu counterparts, the PIL filed by Akhil Maharashtra Muslim Khatik Samaj said. Counsel Mushtaq Ahmad said the Samaj was seeking parity-based constitutional relief for Muslim counterparts of Hindu SCs on the ground that the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, is unconstitutional as it is religion-based. (Dalitnews, 14/9/2010)

Muslim elders condemn violence over desecration

Prominent Indian Muslims have condemned the violent reaction, including the attacks on churches, by a section of the community in India to the alleged desecration of the Holy Koran in the U.S. "Any religious follower has a right to protest the desecration of the religious scriptures but has no right to attack individuals or places of worship of others as Islam forbids it very clearly. Any such attack needs to be equally condemned as that of the desecration of the Koran by two individuals in the U.S.," said a statement signed by Manzoor Alam, general secretary, All-India Milli Council; Mujtaba Farooque, secretary, Jamat-e-Islami Hind; Niaz Farouqi, secretary, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind; and Navaid Hamid, secretary, South Asian Council for Minorities. The signatories said they equally condemned the attempts of some individuals in the U.S. to desecrate the Quran: "...these misguided individuals [obviously] never went through the message of the Koran which has universal appeal and the message of peace and brotherhood for all mankind..." The group appealed to the Muslim community in India to show restraint as any violent reaction would only deepen the divide between the "followers of the two Abrahamic religions — Islam and Christianity — across the globe." "We appeal to the governments of U.S. and India to explore all possibilities of legal action against all those who have desecrated the Islamic holy book or have vandalised religious properties or have attacked innocent individuals in the name of religion." (The Hindu, 15/9/2010)

Wakfs Board calls for vacating stay on delivery of verdict

The Supreme Court will hear on Tuesday the Ayodhya dispute case, in which by an interim order on September 23, the Allahabad High Court had been restrained from pronouncing the verdict in the four title suits. A Bench comprising Chief Justice S.H. Kapadia and Justices Aftab Alam and K.S. Radhakrishnan will hear petitioner Ramesh Chandra Tripathi, who wanted a negotiated settlement; the Sunni Central Board of Wakfs, Uttar Pradesh; the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board; Baba Dharamdas; Mohd. Hashim; and the All-India Hindu Maha Sabha pleading for vacating the stay and allowing the High Court to pronounce the verdict. The Bench will also hear Attorney-General G.E. Vahanvati for the Centre, and other defendants in the connected suits. Since Justice D.V. Sharma, one of the three judges on the Special Bench of the Allahabad High Court that had reserved the verdict in the title suits, is to retire on October 1, the Supreme Court will have to take a decision on Tuesday whether to extend the interim stay or not. Mr. Tripathi was aggrieved at the Allahabad High Court order of September 17 refusing to defer the judgment to explore the possibility of an amicable settlement through negotiations between the parties to the dispute. On September 23, while staying the pronouncement of the verdict, the Supreme Court had issued notice to the parties and posted the matter for further hearing on September 28. In its response, the Wakfs Board said: "The facts which unambiguously establish that a dispute of this nature and background cannot be resolved through mediation/reconciliation/arbitration. With the culmination of 60 years of continuous court proceedings and when judgment was reserved to be pronounced on September 24, an attempt at the last moment was made to put the clock back and to frustrate the entire efforts made

by the parties and the court to decide the dispute once and for all." (The Hindu, 28/9/2010)

Muslims won't object to building mandir, masjid together'

In a significant remark, a top leader of All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has said if the court verdict in Babri Masjid title case paved the way for the construction of a mosque and a temple side by side in Ayodhya, Muslims will not have any objection to it. Maulana Abdul Raheem Qureshi, secretary and spokesperson of Muslim Personal Law Board said here on Monday that there was nothing wrong in the idea because several places in India, including Hyderabad, had mosques and temples side by side. Talking to The Pioneer, Maulana Qureshi said on the basis of the evidence on the record — documentary as well as oral — the Allahabad High Court can deliver a verdict that title on the built up area of the Babri Masjid, including the area of three domes and the inner courtyard, belong to Muslims and the title over the outer courtyard where Ram Chabutra existed belong to Hindus. He said the Hindu community had used Ram Chabutra for 150 years for worship and if it is given to them, Muslims will not have any objection. When asked whether it meant that a mosque and a temple could exist side by side, Maulana Qureshi said, "They can be built, they should be built. There is nothing wrong in that." But he felt that the proposed mosque and the temple should have separate entrances and exits and that the Government should properly utilise the large extent of land it has acquired. "The acquired land should be divided into different portions and be used to provide separate ways to the masjid and the mandir," he stated. Pointing out that in 1885, a mahant had claimed that Ram Chabutra adjacent to Babri Masjid was the birthplace of Lord Ram and had taken the same position in the court, Maulana Qureshi said Muslims had not opposed the claim. "Their (Hindu) claim was never on Babri Masjid, but on Ram Chabutra," he said. "If now they are claiming that Babri Masjid was the Ram Janam Sthan, then should prove it, not on the basis of the sources of British or a footnote in English translation of Babarnama, but that was a conspiracy of the British," he added. He said the installation of the idols in the mosque on the night of December 22, 1949, was a case of trespassing. But he rued that the culprits were never punished even after police had registered FIR. "On the contrary, Muslims were stopped from entering the mosque. The then district magistrate, JU Ugra had filed an affidavit in 1949 that Isha (night prayers) were offered in December 1949 there and Hindus had never claimed before that it was a temple. He said the Board decided to move a petition in the Supreme Court opposing the deferring of the verdict of Allahabad High Court because the case involves many issues, including the rule of law, without which no country can exist. "The judicial verdict should be pronounced and respected by all. The party, which is not satisfied with it, can always move Supreme Court. We have moved our petition to make our position clear that the court verdict should not be delayed," he said. On the issue of out of court settlement and compromise, the AIMPLB secretary said that it could have been possible if the other party had agreed to move from its stated stand. "They (Hindu organisations) only want Muslims to sign a blank cheque and Muslims were not ready to do so or withdraw from Babri Masjid. Many efforts were made for compromise when Chandrashekar was the Prime Minister and during early days of PV Narasimha Rao. But nothing could come out of it because Vishwa Hindu Parishad, BJP, RSS and ABVP were not ready to move from their position although they do not have evidence". (Pioneer, 28/9/2010)

Muslim body rejects HC verdict on Ayodhya

A body of Muslim scholars and clerics, who gathered at Jama Masjid on Thursday, rejected the verdict of the Allahabad high court on the Ayodhya title suit. They also rejected any reconciliation bid and demanded that the Centre clear its stand on the issue. Nearly 40 muslim scholars, led by Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid Maulana Syed Ahmed Bukhari, passed a resolution in which they claimed that giving away the mosque land or its partition is "haram" under Shariah (Islamic jurisprudence). Representatives of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board were not called for the meeting. "We reject the judgment of the Allahabad high court and demand that the Central government express its stand clearly. The Congress should do the same," said Bukhari. He said the body has written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and sought time to meet him and discuss the issue further. The Shahi Imam had met Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav on Wednesday, said sources. Maulana Abdul Lateef Qasmi, Darul-uloom Deoband, alleged that the Congress is directly responsible for all anti-masjid acts. Asked if he was seeking the support of other political parties as Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav had met him, the Shahi Imam said: "Support of anybody who is with the Muslim community is welcome". He said the convention would be a party to the appeal before the Supreme Court. (TOI, 8/10/2010)

Telangana will provide 12 p.c. reservation to Muslims, promises TRS

A Muslim would be made the Deputy Chief Minister and 12 per cent reservations provided to the community after the formation of separate Telangana state, TRS president K. Chandrasekhar Rao said here today. "A Muslim will be the Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana and there will be four-five Muslim ministers. The community would also get 12 per cent reservation, which is their right," he said, addressing a group of Muslim leaders who joined the TRS. Muslims remain backward in all spheres of life though all political parties talked big about their welfare, Mr. Rao said. Telangana had true secular culture with majority Hindus and Muslims living in perfect harmony but communal riots were organised in Andhra Pradesh as part of power politics, he alleged. "Telangana region, from the Quli Qutub Shah rule to the seventh Nizam, had a true secular culture. Even Mahatma Gandhi praised the way Hindus and Muslim live together here. That is the beauty and greatness of Telangana," he said. Successive governments in Andhra Pradesh never provided adequate funds for Muslim welfare and lands belonging to Waqf board in Hyderabad have been encroached upon, the TRS president alleged. Asserting that no one can stop the formation of Telangana, he said adequate funds would be allocated for welfare of minorities and every inch of Waqf land would be protected after the separate State is formed, the TRS president said. "Announcement regarding formation of separate State has already been made. But a break has come. After the Sri Krishna committee submits its report by the end of this year, we will fight through peaceful non-cooperation movement in the way Mahatma Gandhi showed us," he added. (The Hindu, 11/10/2010)

3 of a family die at Ajmer dargah after 40-day fast on 'Khwaja orders'

AJMER: Three members of a family from Allahabad died of starvation while observing chilla kashi — a 40-day fast — to "ward off black magic" at 14th century saint Khwaja Moinudeen Chishti's mausoleum in Ajmer on Monday. Sources identified the deceased as Mohammed Salam (14), Nausar (17) and Kaiser (28). The three were declared brought dead at a local hospital, while 10 others including two kids were admitted there in a critical condition. The family had been fasting for 38 days, claiming that they were doing it "on the Khwaja's orders". Head of the family, Mohammed Mustafa (59), said, "We were fasting to ward off black magic that my brother had performed on me and my family about four years back." Mustafa, a retired merchant navy official, said they started fasting after he had a dream "ordering" him to do so during his visit to Ajmer dargah. "Everything was going wrong with my family ever since the witchcraft was performed," he said. He regretted that they were just two days short of finishing the 40-day fast on the Khwaja's "order". Mustafa's son, Rizwan Sheikh, said the family used to spend most of its time at the shrine, where the family had been staying for over two years. (TOI, 12/10/2010)

Family violated principles, say scholars

JAIPUR: The incident of starvation deaths in Ajmer dargah received wide condemnation from religious heads. They called the practice of consciously dying of hunger as un-Islamic' and uncalled' for. The family started fasting more than a month ago. Even three children, aged between 2 and 14, were also forced to join the fasting of 40 days. They couldn't sustain hunger and collapsed on Monday afternoon. The incident also started a debate on who all are eligible to follow the Sufi practice of Chilla Kashi. Syed Nazmul Hasan Chishti, a Sufi scholar, said: "No common man is allowed to go into retreat by Sufi masters. As per the popular belief, a disciple is never allowed to practice Chilla Kashi until he spends a decade with his Sufi master." He argued that if anyone goes into retreat, he should do it under the supervision of his immediate Sufi master. Pointing towards this case, he said that forcing children into the

practice was a sin. Syed Salman Chisthy, another Sufi scholar, further explained that during the meditation period, the believer goes into remembrance of Allah through deep meditation to attain spiritual heights. Fasting is observed between dawn and sunset. It is necessary for the believer to have early morning meals and food after magrib prayers, he said. (TOI, 12/10/2010)

Everybody was aware, but none took action

AJMER: The starvation deaths in the dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti -- a place where no one goes hungry -- created anger among devotees. They claimed that the two dargah committees and the Anjuman -- an organization of khadims -- were often at odds over dargah management. It was just for this reason that they failed to notice the condition of twelve people who were silently dying of starvation in the premises of the dargah. According to devotees, the representatives of both the bodies were prompt in rushing the family members to hospital. However, no measures were taken though everybody was aware of their deteriorating condition. "Twelve of a family were on fast since the last 38 days and they were sitting inside the dargah for long hours. Many times, the whole family was seen sitting in the dargah throughout the nights and the workers and khadims were well aware of it," said a devotee, who visits the dargah on regular basis. "They used to sit near astane," said Zulfikar Chishti, a khadim. He blamed the dargah committee for negligence. "Not as authorities, but as human beings, it was the responsibility of dargah officials to persuade the family members to break the fast. If they were adamant, the district administration should have been informed," said Mahboob Ali of Mumbai, who visited the dargah on Monday. A member of dargah committee, Mohammad Iliyas Kadri, told TOI that he had asked Nazim Ahmed to look into the matter. Nazim Ahmed refused to comment on the incident. However, he claimed that as soon as he came to know about the incident, the family members were rushed to hospital. (TOI, 12/10/2010)

AIMPLB to move Supreme Court

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has decided to challenge the Allahabad High Court verdict on the Ayodhya title suits. At the same time, it "is not against talks but the proposal has to be fair and in consonance with the Constitution, the Shariat and the dignity of Muslims," said AIMPLB assistant general secretary and spokesperson Abdur Rahim Quraishi. A unanimous resolution adopted at the working committee meeting here on Saturday said: "The committee of the Law Board considers it the right and obligation of the Indian Muslims to challenge the verdict in the apex court and remove distortions introduced by the [High Court] judgment in the basic values of the Constitution and the established norms of jurisprudence." According to Mr. Quraishi, the committee authorised board president Maulana Rabey Hasni Nadwi and general secretary Maulana Syed Nizamuddin to decide in what capacity the AIMPLB will move the Supreme Court — as intervener or whether it will assist the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board. The Waqf Board has already decided to move the Supreme Court. Before announcing the decision to file an appeal, the AIMPLB meeting discussed the High Court verdict. The members felt that the judgment suffered from a number of "infirmities." **No proposal at present** : Even though the AIMPLB was not averse to talks, it wanted a level-playing field, sources on the board said. Pointing out that there was no proposal or formula at present from the board's side (for finding an amicable solution), Mr. Quraishi told journalists that if a proposal was given by the "other side," it would be examined in the light of the Constitution, principles of the Shariat and the dignity of the Muslims. On the possibility of a temple and a mosque co-existing at the disputed site, the AIMPLB's Babri Masjid committee convener, Syed Qasim Rasool Ilyas, said the Muslims were not opposed to the co-existence of a temple and a mosque, and several such sites could be found in the country, but a concrete proposal had to be made. The oldest surviving litigant, Mohammed Hashim Ansari's efforts at reconciliation with the help of Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad chief Mahant Gyan Das have not escaped the AIMPLB's attention, notwithstanding his move being termed an "individual initiative." Mr. Ilyas, who claimed to have had a telephonic conversation with the octogenarian, said Mr. Ansari had assured him that he would abide by the AIMPLB's decision. **Nirmohi Akhara stand** : Meanwhile, reports from Ayodhya said the Nirmohi Akhara might also move the Supreme Court with a plea for handing over the Ram Janmabhoomi for construction of a temple. Both Mr. Ansari and Mahant Gyan Das have reportedly said reconciliation moves will not end despite the parties to the title suits moving the Supreme Court. (The Hindu, 16/10/2010)

'Constituencies with sizable Muslim population be de-reserved'

Muslims get less representation in Parliament and state Assemblies because the seats where minority population is in the range of 20 to 30 per cent are reserved, a former member of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) has claimed. Abdul Ali Azizi who completed his term at the Commission as its member on October 13, suggested that either such constituencies be de-reserved or minority,

particularly Muslims, be given benefits accorded to scheduled castes. "It is surprising and very sad to note that wherever minority population is more than 20-25 per cent, sometimes 30 per cent, these constituencies in Parliament and in the (state) Assembly have been reserved," he said. "So where from minorities will come forward? How will they get a chance for representation?," he asked, describing it as "one of the serious issues". He sought that either such constituencies be "kept open" or by an amendment in the Constitution, "minority, particularly Muslims," be considered as scheduled castes and be given benefits accordingly. Before the amendment in Article 341, Christians and Muslims were in SC and ST categories till 1950. "That should be considered," he suggested. "By embracing to some other religion or by getting converted into other religion his social status is not converted. Person converts to only his concepts and thought but his socio-economic status or political status remains the same," he contended. "It's not only about their education and social status but also their political and economic conditions. Their condition is much more miserable than the Dalits of this country," he added. (IE, 18/10/2010)

After Muslims, BJP fields Christians

The BJP's experiment with Muslims in the recent corporation polls in Gujarat may not have yielded the desired results, but that has not deterred the party from attempting to woo the Christian community in the nagarpalika and panchayat elections. For the first time, the party will field Christians from Surat, Tapi and Dangs districts in South Gujarat, areas where the party had a confrontational past with the community. The BJP has fielded 21 Christian candidates belonging to both the Catholic and Protestant sections in various taluka and panchayat polls. One such place is Subir in Dangs district, home to the Shabari Kumbh Mela organised by the VHP and Sangh. The place hit the headlines after an attack on a church there. South Gujarat — which has a considerable Christian population in its tribal areas — has witnessed sporadic attacks on tribals and missionaries by the saffron brigade. The attacks on tribal Christians and a sustained campaign against "missionary activities" that led to communal strife in the late nineties are no longer talked about. "The only dominant issue is now development. Even Christians are ready to contest on the BJP symbol," said Ramsinh Rathwa, the BJP's Gujarat ST cell morcha president. Party leaders, however, admit privately that the reason behind wooing Christians is "political compulsion" — these areas have remained a Congress stronghold. Said Madhuben Vasava, BJP's Christian candidate from Umapada taluka panchayat: "This is for the first time the BJP has offered us tickets and we welcome their decision. We have support of our community and our priests are happy." (IE, 21/10/2010)

Boy 'killed' over mosque rivalry?

VIJAYAWADA: A 12-year-old Kondapally boy, who went missing from his school on Monday, was found dead in a drain in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Police suspect the boy could be a victim of rivalry between two Muslim groups who have been fighting to gain control over a mosque in Kondapalli. Class VII student Shaik Fayaz Hussain Ali's body was found by a watchman of a municipal park in Krishnalanka in the drain abutting the park in the morning. There were no injury marks on his body. Police recovered the bicycle of the boy from the spot. "There is a possibility that the boy might have come to the park on his bicycle and accidentally slipped into the channel. But, we are not ruling out the kidnap and murder angle," said a senior police official. As of now, a case under section 174 of IPC was registered. Fayaz went to the school on Monday morning but did not return home. His younger brother Miyaz and sister Mobina, who also study in the same school, searched for him and later alerted their parents. When enquired, the parents were told by the school management that Fayaz did not attend the classes. It was then the worried parents lodged a complaint with the police. Sources said two groups have been fighting for the control of the local Jama masjid for the past few years. Fayaz's father Mukthiar Ali has been acting as the chairman of the mosque committee for the last three years, much to the chagrin of the rival group. Sources said Mukthiar has the blessings of a minister from the district and hence continuing to occupy the post, which was not to the liking of the rival group. "The rival group kidnapped Fayaz, killed him and later dumped his body in the drain," a relative alleged. He demanded action against the rival group members for the heinous crime. (TOI, 27/10/2010)

'Fatwa' cancelling 'nikah' after jest on Skype sparks debate

The recent instance of a Qatari Muslim having had to face the prospect of his marriage being terminated for (jokingly) typing the word "talaq" thrice while chatting on Skype with his wife has generated varied opinions. The youth's "nikah" was annulled following a "fatwa" issued by the leading Islamic seminary, Darul Uloom, Deoband in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. The fatwa was in response to a written request (number 26,075) from the youth, whose identity is unknown. He wanted to know whether his nikah was valid as he had typed talaq three times while chatting with his wife. The Darul Uloom in its

fatwa maintained that "when the talaq is pronounced three times, it means the talaq has taken place. It does not matter whether it is reciprocated by the wife, or not. The wife has become "haram" [illegal]." The fatwa stated that the husband had neither the right to take her back, nor solemnise a new marriage without "halaalah," which meant that his wife after the mandatory "iddat" period of four months and 10 days will have to marry another man, seek divorce from her second husband, again undergo the "iddat" period before remarrying her first husband.

Authenticity

Reacting to the fatwa, the Naib Imam of Lucknow's Aishbagh Idgah and executive member of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), Maulana Khalid Rasheed Firangi Mahali, said: "The important point here is that the husband had admitted that he had typed talaq thrice and whether he did not mean to divorce his wife, or had jokingly referred to the dreaded word, does not hold ground in this case." The Maulana, however, added that the authenticity of the e-mail and whether it was sent by the man must be proved as there was also a possibility of the e-mail being hacked.

Issue between husband and wife

According to Naish Hasan, founder-member and general secretary of Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, the man should not have approached Darul Uloom as it was an issue between a husband and his wife, what if talaq was typed or written three times, or 10 times. "The fatwa should be rejected," Ms. Hasan said. She said that the triple talaq was a "pre-Islamic" concept, and the Holy Koran was silent on it. Ms. Hasan was of the opinion that the marriage could not be annulled under these circumstances.

A serious issue

AIMPLB member Kamal Farooqui said 'nikah' was a contract, a serious issue, and talaq could not be pronounced thrice even in a lighter vein. "Chatting in which the youth reportedly typed talaq thrice is evidence enough," Mr. Farooqui told The Hindu from Delhi. He said in Islam marriage was a "pious union." (The Hindu, 29/10/2010)

Will Muslims voters back 'secular' Nitish?

PATNA/HAJIPUR: One of the most intriguing aspects of the ongoing Bihar elections, and the subject of much speculation of course, is how the Muslims, who comprise over 15% of the electorate, will vote. What has further compounded matters is the emergence of a new class of "progressive" Muslim voters who are said to be most influenced by chief minister Nitish Kumar, whose disapproval of his Gujarat counterpart has certainly and warmed the cockles of many in the community. According to the influential and respected Mohammed Wali Rahmani, who is trying to replicate the success of Bihar Super-30 with his own Rahmani-30 for IIT aspirants from the community, Nitish would have gained much more if he had displayed a little more 'hunar'. Hunar is a scheme launched by the Bihar government two years ago for Muslim girls, who were not inclined towards studying. Though it was aimed at imparting skills — including weaving, knitting, use of computer and maternity care — the initiative now seems to have lost its way. "From my interaction with Muslims from all corners of the state, their vote will be divided between JD(U) and RJD. For JD(U), things would have been much better for the party if hunar had been properly implemented. Unfortunately, the people handling education in the state has killed it," claims Rahmani. "In a place like Kishanganj, they have enrolled just 22 children. In Sheikhpura, it is only 16. This shows that the government is not taking it seriously, and this will be a factor," he warns. Hunar, meant to improve the socio-economic conditions of Muslims, was supposed to enroll over 13,000 in the first year, but shoddy implementation, he says, has eroded goodwill among the community. He also believes that the Ayodhya verdict could have some sort of impact on the JD-U's prospect because the average Muslim voter is not nuanced enough to get the discernible difference between Nitish and the BJP. While the Congress has given tickets to as many as 49 Muslim candidates, there is nothing to suggest that it has cut much ice with the minority community. (TOI, 03/11/2010)

'Raped' K'mal nun finally deposes before court

Putting all speculations to rest, the Baliguda Catholic church nun, who was allegedly raped during the Kandhamal violence in 2008, deposed before the trial court here on Wednesday. Due to paucity of time the nun was only examined by the prosecution, with the court fixing November 8 for cross examination by the defence counsels. Two other witnesses in the case also recorded their statements in the Cuttack District and Session's Court. The court has been holding trial of this sensational case since August this year following directions from the Odisha High Court. The nun had on past five occasions ignored the court summons and even unsuccessfully approached the High Court pleading to defer the proceedings in

the trial court. However as directed on Tuesday, the nun appeared in the court on Wednesday along with her counsel and she was only subjected to examination by the prosecution on the day. The nun also identified four accused from among the 10 arrested persons in the case who were produced in the court. Similarly, the recalled witness Chhotray Marandi, the local doctor who had examined the nun on the day of the incident on August 25, 2008, also deposed before the court. The doctor was earlier asked by the court to produce certain documents pertaining to the examination and treatment of the victim. Chandrapati Pradhani, a key witness and the informant in the case also recorded his statements before the court on the day and both the witnesses were cross examined by the defense counsels. The trial court has already examined at least 25 witnesses in the case till now and eight more witnesses now left to be examined, sources said. (Pioneer, 04/11/2010)

"Islam distorted by a few extremists"

Asserting that Islam embodied a religion of peace, fairness and tolerance, U.S. President Barack Obama said here on Sunday that the religion was being "distorted" by a few extremists. Mr. Obama was responding to a student who invited his opinion on jihad during his town hall style meeting at Mumbai's St. Xavier's college. "The phrase jihad has a lot of meaning within Islam and is subject to a lot of different interpretations, but I will say that first Islam is one of the world's great religions. More than a billion people practise Islam and an overwhelming majority view their obligations to a religion that reaffirms peace, fairness, tolerance. I think all of us recognise that this great religion in the hands of a few extremists has been distorted by violence," Mr. Obama said. Challenge He saw isolating these "distorted notions" as the challenge before us. He stressed on practising universal principles, irrespective of one's religion or opinion of a religion. "Whatever may be your religion we can treat each other with respect as per some of the universal principles. Young people like you can make a huge impact in reaffirming that you can be a strong observer of your faith without putting somebody else down. How you respond to each other is probably as important as any speech a President makes. It's necessary in a world that's getting smaller, where more and more people of different backgrounds, race and ethnicities are interacting, innovating and working," Mr. Obama told students. "Healthy materialism" To a question of materialism in today's world, the U.S. President opted for "a healthy materialism." "I don't want any young person here to be dismissive of a healthy materialism because in a country like India people are still trapped in poverty. You should be working to lift folks out of poverty. Companies and businesses have a huge role in making that happen. Having said that, if all you are thinking about is material wealth, then that shows a poverty of ambition," he replied to the question he described as "terrific." Hailing the entrepreneurial spirit in the context of materialism, he said, "We should not underestimate how liberating economic growth can be for a country." It was essential to fulfil people's needs. Hails Gandhiji He offered inspiration by alluding to Gandhiji's simple lifestyle from what he saw at Mani Bhavan. "This is a man who changed history like probably no one else in the 20th century in terms of the number of lives he affected. He had nothing except an indomitable spirit," he said. He said regardless of our occupation we had a moral obligation towards others who have been left behind. When asked how he embodied Gandhi's principles in his daily life, Mr. Obama rued that he mostly found himself "awfully short of following the example of Gandhi and [Martin Luther] King. However, though America was a priority, he recognised his relationship with other nations, in his capacity as the U.S. President. "I can't ignore abuse of human rights in another country, hardships that may be suffered by somebody of a different nationality. That is what I carry with me on a day to day basis," he said. (The Hindu, 08/11/2010)

Muslim leaders approve Obama's 'jihad' remarks

NEW DELHI: Muslim activists and opinion-makers on Sunday widely approved of President Barack Obama's remarks on jihad without hiding their reservations about the US policy towards the current turomil in the Islamic world. They sought to draw a line between the real meaning of 'jihad' and the current spell of violence targeting the innocent. In their opinion Obama's comments on jihad at Mumbai's St Xavier's College earlier in the day was a clear attempt at separating the violent campaign from the basic concept of jihad. "Jihad can in no way assume the form of violence against the innocent and those who are perpetrating such violent acts have done great disservice to Islam," said Kamal Farooqi, a prominent member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. "To that extent President Obama is correct," he said. Farooqi agreed with Obama that certain elements had distorted the image of Islam by resorting to violence in the name of faith. Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind leader Maulana Masood Madani said that Obama 'correctly' understood that wrong impressions about jihad had been created in the wake of distortions of the concept by certain elements. "It's true that jihad has been wrongly interpreted by some people; however, I don't know by what yardsticks the US brands someone a jihadi or non-jihadi," said Madani, a Rajya Sabha member. The same view was shared by Congress MP Rashid Alvi who forcefully

argued that Islam could in no way be judged by the activity of terrorist organisations like al-Qaida or Lashkar-e-Taiba. "He is right -- jihad originally meant struggle against injustice, it does not mean killing the innocent," Alvi said. He said that the current crisis facing Islam had been set off by the activity of a small group. "There is nothing wrong with the religion, Obama is right," he said. (TOI, 08/11/2010)

Muslim women face multiple discrimination: AIDWA

"The triple talaq is a sword hanging over the heads of married Muslim women," said Sehba Farooqui, secretary of the Delhi State Unit of the All India Democratic Women's Association, in her introduction to the resolution on the practice of triple talaq passed by the 9th national conference of the organisation on Wednesday. "A minor disagreement can result in talaq." Drawing attention to a case where a wife was recently divorced by triple talaq through an online Skype chat, the resolution highlighted the "iniquity and absurdness" of a practice that is affecting thousands of Muslim women in the country today. The Darul-Uloom-Deoband upheld the husband's right and issued a fatwa against the wife. The AIDWA resolution argues that not only is the practice of triple talaq discriminatory and unjust towards the wife and thus against constitutional principles, it is also contrary to Islam. "Triple talaq said in one sitting is a part of one interpretation of the Koran. Actually, the Koran proscribes it," argues Ms. Farooqui. "There is another interpretation that talaq should be given over the three-month period, and we are urging that this pro-woman option be exercised." Triple talaq, according to the resolution, has been proscribed or limited in a number of countries across the world, for example in Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Turkey and Tunisia, and that it is only in India that Muslim men have untrammelled freedom to pronounce triple talaq. AIDWA sent a representation against the practice signed by 20,000 Muslim women to the central government and the Muslim Personal Law Board, but this was ignored. The occasion was also marked by the release of a book entitled 'Muslim Women: AIDWA's Interventions and Struggles,' a collection of articles, reports and documents on the many levels of discrimination faced by Muslim women: in the personal sphere, as victims of communalism and terrorism, and as a section deprived of basic rights of citizenship. For AIDWA, however, the issue of fighting for citizenship rights – for fair wages, jobs, access to civic amenities (including the public distribution system), is an area of immediate priority, said Ms. Farooqui. "In Delhi, for example, Muslim women are concentrated in exploitative home-based industries working on piece rates, where they earn between Rs.1000 and Rs. 1200 a month. They cannot afford to lose their jobs when their men are out of work, but here we have fought for provident fund provisions for such women." The contrasts in the status of Muslim women across the country is vividly illustrated by the experiences of Tajwar Sultana, an activist who lives and works in the crowded bylanes of the Jama Masjid area of Old Delhi, and 35-year-old Parveen Akhtar from West Tripura, who is an elected member of the Zilla Parishad. "There is absolutely no practice of triple talaq in my State," said Ms. Akhtar with a laugh, adding that Muslim women have come forward significantly into the political space. "In the Ashabadi Panchayat of Baksanagar block of the nine members, eight are Muslim and one Hindu. The State government has introduced many schemes for Muslim women." (The Hindu, 11/11/2010)

Non-conventional methods adopted by Muslim community for matrimony

Those who regard Muslims as an orthodox lot need to reconsider their opinion, as the community is fast changing to keep pace with the times. With youngsters pushing radicals to the background, the community is adopting all new methods and technology required to compete in the scientific age. For instance the community is adopting non-conventional methods for matrimonial purposes including matrimonial advertisements in the print media and on the Internet, through websites preferably those that exclusively provide community matches. A Muslim matrimony website Nikah.com an online service, offers a private, and secure environment for meeting other single Muslims. The website, which works through its alliance of regional Muslim matrimony portals across the globe is an excellent example of community's willingness to move to the latest technology. The Islamic Matrimony portal's Madhya Pradesh incharge Tanveer Qasmi while talking to The Pioneer said, "At Nikah.com our mission is to help single Muslims get married to the right Islamic partner. But that can't happen unless there's another relationship, another connection, that's built on trust, openness, and mutual respect - the one between us and our members and between us and our affiliate partners." Qasmi further said that the site provides details of over 18 lakh individuals from across the globe and has till now succeeded in making over 1 lakh matches, since its inception in 1998. The city office, which was only opened nearly a month and a half ago, is already getting a very good response, he added. Molana Azmat Shah Makki, Nikah Khawan (Qazi who solemnizes marriages) for the Shahjehanabad circle of the State capital said, "There is nothing wrong in taking help of the print or internet to find the right match for boys and girls, the community should take maximum advantage of the technology that has simplified the process, using latest technology also saves time and makes more options available." The portal also provides access to other Islamic websites, be they matrimonial portals or any other. The web portal guides and helps single Muslims find the right

partners to complete an important aspect of the personal and social life. In order to reach out to single Muslims and help them to find their life partners in a Halal (lawful) way, without providing any friendship or penpal services, the website is geared up with all technical advancements and includes multiple languages to reach out to every single Muslim around the world. (Pioneer, 12/11/2010)

Talaq on cellphone valid, says Deoband

Talaq uttered thrice by a Muslim man on a mobile phone will be considered valid even if his wife is unable to hear it all the three times due to network and other problems, a fresh fatwa has ruled. This ruling was given by the Darul Ifta, the fatwa department of leading Sunni Islamic seminary Darul Uloom Deoband, in reply to a question posted by a man. He had asked that in case no witness was present when he uttered talaq over phone, would it be considered valid. "I angrily said talaq three times to my wife on cellphone but she claimed that she didn't hear it even once, and nobody was around. Please tell me whether the talaq has taken place," he asked. In its reply, the Darul Ifta said, "If you have said talaqs thrice to your wife, it is valid." The fatwa said the woman would be free to marry after her iddat period (three months after divorce) is over. "It is not necessary that for talaq to take place the wife hears it or witnesses are present," it ruled. In October, the seminary had ruled that saying talaq three times even in jest was valid as per Islamic law. A youth, in his query, had said that while chatting with his wife over the net he had playfully typed talaq thrice. Claiming to have little knowledge about Islam, the youth said he didn't know how a talaq was executed. The youth said he was living happily with his wife and wanted to live with her in future as well. The Darul Ifta, in its reply, said once talaq was spelt out thrice it amounted to a divorce. As per the ruling, the woman would be required to complete the iddat period after which she could marry another man. She would be then required to divorce her second husband and go through the iddat period again. "Only then would she be allowed to re-marry her former husband." (The Hindu, 16/11/2010)

'Civil society is almost non-existent in Afghanistan'

James C Dabhi is country director of Afghanistan Research and Development Institute in Kabul and visiting professor at universities in Bamiyan and Herat. Dabhi, a former executive director with New Delhi-based Indian Social Institute, spoke to Humra Quraishi about the challenges of working in Afghanistan:

Why did you, a Jesuit priest from India, opt to work in Afghanistan - a war-torn Muslim country?

As a Jesuit, I think my primary calling is to work and contribute to social justice and human development. So much of anti-Muslim feelings and behaviour is generated because of some events and actions of a few people. For the actions of a few, entire communities are blamed, badly treated and their national identities, loyalty and love for humanity are doubted. In such a situation, I think that greater Jesuit engagement in social research, education and development in Muslim countries is required. I am from Gujarat and I have seen religious extremism. To me Afghanistan was something similar in a different setting.

You've been in Afghanistan for two years now. What's your impression of the country?

Education, infrastructure, agriculture and overall awareness about peace and justice have increased. There are more girls and women in schools and universities and public life than before. Some voices in the media highlight the gender injustice, corruption, ethnic discrimination, drug economy etc.

The Taliban, the warring factions within Afghanistan, the US, the UK and allied forces have thrust the war on the people. The international community and UN agencies despite their limitations have done good work. However, they have to improve their efforts and prepare the locals to take over the responsibilities in the years to come.

Afghanistan's neighbours must stop using that country for their interests at the cost of the local people. There is hardly any civil society here in Afghanistan to resist and raise its voice against the vested interests within and outside. Eliminating enlightened civil society members is not a big deal here. Like in India many of the religious leaders here often are part of the problem than the solution. Newspapers are a luxury here and limited to major cities. So access to news is through radio, television and mobile phones. So protests against civilian deaths are limited.

Could there be a peaceful way to clear this mess in Afghanistan?

To be honest it does not seem to be possible in the near future. Afghanistan presently has its own 'elected government' but it is no secret that it is governed and managed by a combination of internal and external actors, interests and political compulsions. The legacy of warlords, the feudal and patriarchal

ways of local governance, corruption, ethnic rivalries, family and clan networks all play a role in the politics and economy of Afghanistan.

People show their dislike for religious extremists in private but they are afraid to say it openly. Many people also detest the presence of foreign forces, particularly the US, yet they know the consequences if these are moved out immediately. Many people are dependent on the international community for their livelihood. Afghanistan currently relies on aid to meet 90 per cent of its budget.

The Taliban is not the only actor responsible for the insecurity. The warlords, drug mafia, transport lobbies, timber mafia, security companies (foreign and local), politicians and bureaucrats, business rivals, neighbouring countries and other international players, all have their share in creating and sustaining insecurity. Insecurity is also a blessing in disguise for NGO personnel including the UN bodies. It may restrict their movement but it increases the 'risk allowance' attached to a fat salary substantially. (TOI, 17/11/2010)

J-K breaks 250-year rule, stops Mirwaiz from leading prayers

For the first time in 250 years – ever since the institution of the Mirwaiz was created in Kashmir – the state government on Wednesday did not allow present Mirwaiz and moderate Hurriyat chairman Umar Farooq to lead prayers at Eidgah, the Valley's biggest prayer ground. Mirwaiz was placed under house arrest, along with his colleagues, to prevent them from taking out a protest march soon after the prayers ended. The arrest of Mirwaiz is significant. In the 250 years of their history, successive Mirwaizs have led prayers at Eidgah without a break. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who is the thirteenth in this lineage, has followed this long tradition by delivering the customary sermon on the day before the prayers. People from all over Srinagar and nearby villages travel to Eidgah to be part of the massive congregation and chiefly to hear Mirwaiz speak. However, the state government, fearing a repeat of the violence on the previous Eid, did not allow Mirwaiz to lead the prayers. On Eid-ul-Fitr, Mirwaiz had made a dramatic post-prayer decision to march to Lal Chowk where the mob went on rampage and burnt a government building. Mirwaiz told 'The Indian Express': "Not allowing me to lead the prayers is an extreme step by the government. This is a blatant intervention in our religious affairs." He said the present state government has achieved the "dubious distinction" of being the first to deny Mirwaiz the right to perform his religious obligation. "The government has to bear in mind that this strategy will not cow us down. We will continue our struggle for a lasting solution to Kashmir," he said. Though primarily concerned with propagating and preaching the religion, the institution of Mirwaiz has transformed over the last century. Mirwaiz has now acquired a pronounced political role. It was Molvi Yusuf Shah, the grand uncle of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who in the early twentieth century was the first to involve himself in the political struggle against the autocratic Dogra rule in the state. His successor Molvi Farooq, also the father of Mirwaiz, was an influential political leader who floated a party called Awami Action Committee which fought elections and through the eighties emerged as a vaunted opposition to the National Conference. However, after his assassination in 1990, Umar Farooq became the new Mirwaiz Kashmir and subsequently the first chairman of the separatist conglomerate Hurriyat Conference. He is now the most influential separatist leader in Kashmir, together with Hurriyat hawk Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Meanwhile, Muttahida Majlis Ulema, a body of religious scholars has condemned the government's decision not to allow Mirwaiz to lead the prayers. "The government should seriously rethink its strategy. It is negative and anti-Islamic," a statement issued by the body said. (IE, 18/11/2010)

Darul fatwa says donating blood un-Islamic

In a potentially controversial decree, Islamic seminary Darul Uloom Deoband has said that donation of blood and body parts was against the tenets of Islam, but observed that giving blood to save the life of a near and dear one was acceptable. However, the opinion of the prominent Islamic seminary has not gone down well with several Muslim intellectuals who have asserted that religious bodies have already stated that there was no (no) problem with blood donation. In a 'fatwa' issued in response to a question, the seminary said donating blood or body parts was not permitted in Islam as human beings are not the "owners" of their bodies. The decree is posted on the website of Darul Uloom's fatwa section dealing with 'haram and halal' issues, where a questioner asked the seminary its opinion on whether taking part in blood donation camps is right or wrong. Terming the fatwa as 'incorrect,' noted scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan said it should not deter the Muslim community from donating blood. "We have time and again appealed to the community to come out to donate blood, and will continue to do so," he said, when his response was sought on the issue. In the fatwa, the seminary said, "We are not owners of our body parts to handle them freely. So it is unlawful to donate blood or body parts." However, it added, "If

someone donated blood to save the life of a near relative, it is allowed." Chairman of the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi, Akhtarul Wase said donating blood was necessary to save lives and recalled that the Islamic Fiqh Academy -- the body that deals in Islamic jurisprudence -- has already stated that there was no problem in donating blood. He said a fatwa is only an opinion. (IE, 24/11/2010)

Muslim activists protest 'anti-women' divorce fatwa

MUMBAI: A group of Muslim women activists has challenged the Darul Uloom Deoband's recent fatwa that states a divorce "pronounced" by a man over the phone is valid even if his wife failed to hear it due to network problems. The Islamic seminary's fatwa department stated: "For talaq, it is not necessary that the wife should hear it or witnesses are present on the spot." At a press meet on Thursday, members of Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA) lashed out at the "anti-women, regressive fatwas that had rendered the life of many Muslim women miserable". BMMA's Maharashtra convener Khatoon Shaikh asked, "If a marriage requires the consent of the bride, without which a nikah is not valid, how can the same union be terminated unilaterally without the consent of the wife?" Pointing out the Quran's spirit of gender justice, some of the activists read out relevant verses from the holy book that say arbitration is required before talaq is pronounced. "Muslim laws need to be codified. Once it is so done according to the Quranic principles of justice and equality, such fatwas will have no relevance," said Noorjehan Safia Niaz, BMMA's founding member, who has also written to the Deoband seminary. The letter, among other things, questions the source of the fatwas that prohibit women from riding bicycles, talking loudly and working with men without wearing veils. Condemning such fatwas, Javed Anand of Muslims for Secular Democracy (MSD) said, "These fatwas are anti-women, anti-human, anti-Islamic and anti-Constitutional. Deoband must stop making mockery of religion." The BMMA, along with a number of other women's groups such as Mahila Shakti Mandal, Samjhauta Mahila Mandal, Hukook Mahila Sangathan and Ashana Trust, provides legal and emotional support to women in distress. (TOI, 26/11/2010)

'Self-empowerment a must for Muslims'

NEW DELHI: If the Muslim community has to fare well and meet its educational goals in the 21st century, the initiative has to come from within. Mere dependence on the government is not the solution, and neither is it desirable. This was the view of the participants at a seminar — Minority Education Rights: New Challenges — in the Capital on Saturday. Speaking on the controversy over the minority status of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and Jamia Millia Islamia, MoS for Minority Affairs Salman Khurshid, said the government was committed to ensuring special status for these two prestigious institutions. "Both the Prime Minister and Congress president are well aware of the issue, and we hope that it will be sorted out at the earliest," he said. However, the minister added that it was imperative that the community should take advantages offered by a liberal democracy like India, thanks to the rights enshrined in the Constitution. RS deputy chairperson Dr K Rahman Khan reiterated this point further by saying that the community had to empower itself. "We cannot keep waiting for the government. The government is not a provider, but a facilitator," he said pointing out that the leaders of the community should take responsibility and set up many more educational institutions instead of just raising the issue of AMU and Jamia. "We can't keep sitting on old laurels. These are age-old and important institutions, but we can't just stop at them," he emphasised. Prof S Wasim Akhtar, vice-chancellor of Integral University, who was conferred on the Aligarh Movement Award at the function for his contribution in the field of minority education, said, "the success of the Muslim community lies in education and they should strive hard for it. It is important for us to demand our rights from the government, but it is also important that we push our personal boundaries." Social activist Nafisa Ali said, "We must understand the importance of education for economic as well as social empowerment. It was imperative that all children from the community receive an education." (TOI, 29/11/2010)

Muslim women rise up against false talaqs

HYDERABAD: Is the certificate of a divorce with the qazi's seal on it a legal document? Well, in an increasing number of cases, the certificate is being challenged in family courts by Muslim women. Their argument? The clauses laid down by the Holy Quran for a `talaq' to become operational are not being followed, and hence the certificate with the qazi's signature should be declared null and void. In about half a dozen such cases filed in the city's family courts in the recent past, the women have argued that they are the victims of a talaq which was given without following the procedure of having a pre-divorce conference, a mandatory reconciliation attempt by elders from both sides before the men can pronounce a triple talaq. In one such case, the Secunderabad family court in a recent judgement has upheld the clause cited by the woman and quashed the qazi's divorce deed as null and void. Three more petitions of similar nature are currently being heard by the judge in the same court. The court is learnt to be largely

basing its views on a Supreme Court judgement of 2002 where the apex court passed an order in favour of a woman, dismissing the qazi's divorce document as null and void, and gave her an opportunity to iron out differences with her spouse. Religious leaders said that it was a matter of concern that the divorce certificate was being challenged in the court, but did not fault the women for the same. They said that such cases were arising because many men were obtaining the qazi's document fraudulently. "It is being rampantly misused by men wanting a hasty divorce from their spouses. By presenting distorted, one-sided versions to the qazi, they are convincing him to sign the divorce document. It is rather shameful that deeds so far considered the final word in the community are now being challenged in the courtrooms where they are being overruled," said Maulana Naqi Imam Khan Quadri, president of Sunni Ulma Board. Qazis explain that the triple talaq is meant to hasten the divorce process once all attempts at reconciliation between the spouses by the family elders (pre-divorce conference) fail to yield a positive result. "Or else, the divorce has to be pronounced over a period of three months, with a month's gap between each utterance of `talaq'," said Wasim Ahmed Khan, a senior family court advocate. However, such rules are being given a miss. In the petitions filed in the court, the women have alleged that their husbands have approached the qazi for a marriage dissolution by pronouncing `talaq' thrice, in their absence. Since the wife's presence is not mandatory, the qazi who records the man's version puts his seal of authority and grants divorce. A copy of the divorce certificate is thereafter sent to the wife, the legal sanctity of which now stands challenged. (TOI, 27/11/2010)

Urdu poet penalised for anti-Modi remarks

The Gujarat Urdu Sahitya Academy has unequivocally rejected budding poet Aqeel Shatir's plea that he did not violate its rules and regulations, and asked him to refund the amount given to him as assistance immediately. The Ahmedabad-based Urdu poet was served notice on November 15 asking him why the book publishing assistance of Rs. 10,000 should not be recovered from him for remarks against Chief Minister Narendra Modi in his first book of poems *Abhi Zinda Hoon Main*, (I am Still Alive). Mr. Aqeel had sent his reply on December 1 claiming that the objectionable remarks of another poet were removed from the book before it was placed in the market for sale. Academy registrar Harshad Trivedi in a cryptic three-line letter dated December 24, which Mr. Aqeel received here on Monday, said his "explanation was not accepted." Forty-nine-year-old Aqeel, who runs an STD-PCO booth and is also a photo-journalist contributing to Delhi-based weekly Urdu magazine *Akhbar-e-Nau*, had sought financial assistance from the State-owned Academy for publishing his book. He was granted Rs. 10,000, the maximum allowed to help budding writers, in October 2008. Damaging Modi's image Two years later he was slapped with a notice by the Academy for objectionable paragraphs which showed Mr. Modi in a "very poor light" and damaging his image among the people. The remarks were by Raunaq Afroz Bhiwandi, who wrote an assessment of the book. According to Mr. Aqeel, regardless of what the title might suggest, his poems were not based on the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat. But Raunaq Afroz apparently thought otherwise. The objectionable paragraph in Mr. Afroz's five-page piece was removed by the writer. But the Academy accused him of duplicity in having given it copies of the book without the remarks and restoring them in the copies put for sale. In fact, some 80 copies of the book Mr. Aqeel distributed to poets who had gathered for a *Mushaira* here on the occasion of his book launch, carried the objectionable paragraph. But the notice, he believes, is a sort of arm-twister as his application under the Right to Information Act questioning the style of functioning of the Academy is pending before the State Commissioner of Information. (Hindu, 28/12/2010)

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