

MINORITIES: SIKHS - 2005

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Sikhs want Nanavati report to be made public (7)

New Delhi: Prominent Sikh personalities of the city have demanded that the government immediately release to the public the Nanavati Commission report on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

The commission headed by Justice G T Nanavati, a retired Supreme Court judge, is the second judicial body to probe the sequence of events that led to violence against the Sikh community in the aftermath of the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984. The commission was appointed by the previous National Democratic Alliance government in 1999. R S Chhatwal secretary of The Sikh Forum, which was set up by prominent Sikhs of the city in the wake of the 1984 carnage, said: "The entire community is keenly awaiting the findings of the report and the recommendations made by Justice Nanavati. The report should be brought out into the open immediately. The government should not withhold the report from the public for any reasons whatsoever." Agrees Harvinder Singh Sarna, general secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal, Delhi: "Everybody should know what's there in the report. (Times of India 11.2.05)

Shabd sardar jokes anger Sikhs (7)

Mumbai, Feb. 18: Hundreds of Sikhs gave a memorandum to Ms Rangita Nandy, chief executive of Prithish Nandy Communications and producer of the Hindi movie Shabd, to remove parts of the film which allegedly displayed the Sikh community in a poor light and made fun of them. Prithish Nandy Communications, or PNC, is promoted and owned by columnist, poet and former journalist Prithish Nandy. In the movie, actor Zayed Khan keeps using the word "sardar" as a joke. The memorandum said: "It hurts our self-respect to find the word 'sardar' used therein in a disrespectful manner. In the relevant scene, the heroine is sad and glum. To make her laugh, the lover says: 'one sardar.' Thereafter, both of them burst into boisterous laughter. If this was not sufficient, it was repeated: 'May I tell a joke? One sardar!'" Asked Parbinder Singh Chandok, president of Sikh Brotherhood International: "What makes the writer, director and actors think that this work just expresses amusement?" Talking to The Asian Age, Ms Rangita Nandy said: "We don't have any intention to hurt any community's sentiments. However, it is part of the script." She pointed out that the film had been cleared by the Central Board for Film Certification without any cuts. "If there was anything objectionable that hurts any community or class of people, then the CBFC would definitely have asked us to chop it." (Asian Age 19.2.05)

Pakistani Sikhs join Amarinder's quest (7)

HASAN ABDAL (PAKISTAN), MARCH 15. Efforts by the Punjab Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, to fulfil the "Ardas" (Sikh prayer) were wholeheartedly supported by Pakistani Sikhs today. They sought Capt. Singh's support to request the Indian Government to relax travel restrictions on pilgrims seeking to visit the community's shrines there. The issue came up when Capt. Singh reached Hasan Abdal, 30 km from Rawalpindi, this morning to pray at the historic Gurdwara Panja Sahib —associated with the life of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev. The Chief Minister of the Pakistani province of Punjab, Pervez Elahi, accompanied him. While representatives of the small Sikh community here appreciated the efforts of Capt. Singh and Mr. Elahi to improve India-Pakistan relations, they expressed hope that these would result in fulfilment of the "Ardas". Sikhs all over the world wanted an unhindered access to shrines in India and Pakistan, of which they had been deprived due to the country's partition in 1947. They said that the issue of access of Indian Sikhs to shrines now in Pakistan, especially Panja Sahib, Nanakana Sahib and Dera Sahib, was being given consideration. The need of Pakistani Sikhs in this matter did not attract the necessary attention, they rued. (The Hindu 16/3/05)

Pak Sikhs pray for peace (7)

Nankana Sahib (Pakistan), March 16: Sikh religious leaders, at the birthplace of Sikhism's founder, Guru

Nanak at the Nankana Sahib shrine in the Pakistani province of Punjab, on Wednesday joined politicians from India and Pakistan in calling for peace and - friendship. The head priest of the shrine, filial Prem Singh., said a special ardas (prayer) in which he called for lasting peace between the two nuclear neighbours. The special prayer, recited in honour of the chief minister Amarinder Singh, who is on a four-day visit to Pakistani Punjab, was followed by a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a new highway linking the India-Pakistan Border at Wagah with the Sikh shrine at Nankana Sahib. The new road is expected to hugely facilitate the increased traffic of Sikh pilgrims from India. Greater numbers of religious tourists have started coming across the border after the considerable improvement in India-Pakistan relations over the past year. During this period, which saw mutual visits by the chief ministers and thousands of common people of Indian and Pakistani Punjab, the state government of Pakistani Punjab has taken up a number of projects aimed at improving facilities for Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from India. (Asian Age 17/3/05)

Sacked SGPC employees stage-managed conversion (7)

Chandigarh: CONVERSIONS TO and out of Sikhism have suddenly captured the attention of the SGPC which claims to be the manager of all Sikh religious affairs. Causing much consternation to the SGPC, the media has reported that 56 of its 'sacked' employees have given up Sikhism, shed all religious symbols and embraced Christianity in the Goindwal district of Amritsar. Goindwal has historic and religious significance as a place where Sikh Gurus started the practice of sangat (congregation) and pangat (people from all walks of life coming for a free langar). News of the conversion spread like wild fire and since the SGPC enjoys the Shiromani Akali Dal's patronage (SGPC president Bibi Jagir Kaur is a protege of SAD chief Parkash Singh Badal), Mr Badal's detractors naturally targeted the SGPC for its failure to check the conversions. The SGPC immediately swung into action. While Bibi Jagir Kaur denounced it as a "blackmail" threat by the sacked employees to regain their jobs, a fact-finding committee was constituted to verify the reported conversion. It has come to light that it was at the instance of a scribe of a vernacular newspaper of Jalandhar that the SGPC employees tried this tactic to regain their jobs. Media reports now suggest the conversion story was "stage-managed"; even the Bishop concerned has denied admitting anyone into the Christian faith. Sikh scholars feel while one waits for the echo of this episode to fall silent, the SGPC should treat it as a wake up call and set its house in order, particularly the organisation's 'Dharma parchar committee', a wing responsible for preaching and propagating Sikhism and baptising Sikhs. (Pioneer 20/4/05)

Sikhs angry over Jo Bole So Nihaal (7)

Lucknow, May 16: Sikhs in Lucknow are up in arms over actor Sunny Deol's latest release Jo Bole So Nihaal and are pressing for the removal of some "objectionable" sequences from the film that have purportedly hurt religious sentiments. A 10-member committee of Sikhs, led by Rajendra Singh Bagga, president of the Lucknow Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, watched the film on Monday and has decided to list the "objectionable scenes" from the film. The cinema exhibitors have agreed to forward this list to the film's distributors who will be requested to allow deletion of the scenes from the prints being screened here. According to Mr Bagga, the film has hurt Sikh sentiments by distorting the Gurbani. "Lines have been added on to Gurbani and some lines have been distorted to rhyme with others. The film has some vulgar scenes where the Gurbani is being recited in the background. (Asian Age 17/5/05)

'Jo Bole So Nihal' withdrawn from theatres in Punjab, Haryana (7)

CHANDIGARH: Within hours of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) demanding a ban on the controversial Hindi film "Jo Bole So Nihal", its distributors withdrew the movie from theatres across Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh on Thursday. "We have sent out telegram messages to the theatres running this film to stop its screening immediately," said I. P. S. Chadha, brother of liquor baron Ponty Chadha and producer of the film, on behalf of Ginny Arts film production company. He said all objectionable scenes in the film had already been removed. About the title of the film, he said it would not be possible to change it immediately.

"As a result of this we have thought of stopping its screening," he added. He said Ginny Arts was ready to face the losses on account of the stoppage of screening. Any further suggestions from SGPC about the film were welcome, Mr. Chadha added. In Mumbai, "Jo Bole So Nihal" director Rahul Hawaii said the film was not aimed at belittling the Sikhs or hurting the community in any way. The decision to withdraw it from theatres in Punjab was taken solely by the distributor for the region, he added. (The Hindu 20.5.05)

Badal warns Haryana Government (7)

CHANDIGARH: The president of Shiromani Akali Dal, Parkash Singh Badal, on Monday warned that any attempt to form a separate gurdwara management committee for Haryana would have a direct bearing on peace in Punjab, "as the Sikhs would not brook any interference in their religious matters from any State or Central government". Talking to reporters after chairing an emergency meeting of the party's apex decision-making body, the Political Affairs Committee (PAC), here this afternoon, Mr. Badal cautioned that the Congress through its governments in Haryana as well as Punjab was fanning the ambers of religious sentiments. Mr. Badal said Monday's meeting was convened on a single-point agenda of taking stock of the situation arising out of certain statements made by the Chief Minister of Haryana, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, which indicated that the State Government was contemplating forming a separate management committee for the shrines in that State. The Akali leader said that the party would not tolerate any attempt to dilute the supremacy of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which the Sikhs had achieved after making numerous sacrifices during the British rule.

The PAC authorised party secretary-general, S.S. Dhindsa, to seek an appointment with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to apprise him of the dangers of any such decision related to breaking up of the SGPC, which according to him was the supreme body on religious affairs of the Sikhs settled globally. (The Hindu 24/5/05)

1984 riot victims to get Rs 1.23 lakh each (7)

NEW DELHI, May 22. — Holding the state liable for its failure to protect the life and liberty of citizens, Delhi High Court has directed the Centre to pay a compensation of Rs 1.23 lakh each to all those who suffered injuries during the anti-Sikh riots following the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. "It is the bounden duty and responsibility of the state to secure and safeguard the life and liberty of an individual from mob violence," Ms Justice Gita Mittal said in her landmark judgment, which would benefit about 2,800 Sikhs injured during the riots in the Capital. The court asked the government to pay the compensation within a month to one Mr Manjit Singh Sawhney, who was injured and lost his sister in a mob attack which killed seven at Tuglaqabad railway station in November 1984. It also asked the Centre to pay him an additional amount of Rs 11,000 as cost of protracted litigation that went on for four years. To secure parity among all those who suffered injuries during the riots and were given an ex-gratia amount of Rs 2,000 only, Ms Justice Mittal ordered that they all be paid the enhanced amount.

It took note of the fact that in the case of Mrs Bhajan Kaur, who lost her husband in the same place during the riots, a general order was passed in July 1996 directing the Centre to pay the enhanced compensation in all similar cases. The court calculated the compensation payable to the petitioner at Rs 75,000 with interest from the date of incident which was quantified at Rs 50,000. It deducted Rs 2,000 that had already been paid to him as exgratia. (Statesman 23/5/05)

'Stay off our religious affairs' (7)

CHANDIGARH: Unanimously rejecting a proposal to form a separate body to manage the affairs of Sikh shrines in Haryana, an emergency session of the general house of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has warned the "Congress" governments at the Centre as well in the states of Haryana and Punjab against provoking the Sikh community, which would not brook any interference in their religious affairs. The resolution to this effect was moved by the SGPC chief, Bibi Jagir Kaur, who chaired the session. As many as 154 members out of a total of 185 took part in the proceedings that spanned five hours in the Committee's headquarters located in the Golden Temple complex. Later talking to reporters, Bibi Kaur claimed that the proceedings were conducted in an extremely peaceful atmosphere and denied any controversy. She said members were unanimous in expressing their view that the SGPC was the supreme body managing the affairs of the Sikh community. "The SGPC was established through an act of Parliament after a prolonged struggle by the Sikhs against the foreign rulers and its general house had representatives of Sikhs settled across the world." Responding to queries, Bibi Jagir Kaur said she would lead a delegation of SGPC members to call on the Prime Minister, Man-mohan Singh, to apprise him of the sentimentality involved in the issue. She said the Haryana Assembly was not empowered to split the SGPC and create a parallel management system on its own. (The Hindu 1/6/05)

Blast accused eyed top Sikh leaders: Cops (7)

New Delhi, June 1: THE TERRORISTS behind the twin blasts of May 22 at Delhi's Liberty and Satyam cinema wanted to eliminate some top Sikh religious heads, according to intelligence agencies. The investigations point to Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence bid to revive the dark days of Punjab militancy. The film Jo Bole So Nihal was just the immediate cause. Both Balwinder Singh, who has been arrested and Jaspal Singh alias Raja had travelled to Bangkok and from there taken to Dubai by one Shahid. It was in Dubai that Jaspal, who is still at large, apparently spoke to Wad-hawa Singh, the head of banned Babbar Khalsa International. The Special Cell team of Jt CP Karnal Singh and DCP Ajay Kumar worked round the clock scanning cell phone records and dossiers on terrorists to track Balwinder and Jagannath Ya-dav. Commissioner of Police KK Paul himself spent several hours at the Special Cell headquarters at Lodhi Colony supervising the investigation. "It was a team effort by Delhi Police and Intelligence agencies which led to solving of the case," said the Jt CP. Based on the clues from the crime spot and eyewitness accounts, police zeroed in on Yadav. Yadav, according to a staffer at the Satyam cineplex, was behaving in a very suspicious manner. (Hindustan Times 2/6/05)

NCM asks MEA to act on Sikh attacks (7)

New Delhi, July 11: Worried over the recent hate attacks against ethnic minorities in London, the National Commission for Minorities will seek assistance from ministry of external affairs to galvanise its missions abroad to prevent any misinformation campaign against any particular community. The commission will also send letters to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC) to take measures as the Sikh community is particularly vulnerable to hate crimes which have increased following the serial blasts in London. Talking to this correspondent, Mr Tarlochan Singh, chairman of the National Commission for Minorities, said, "The commission has decided to write to the SGPC. We will request the SGPC to call a meeting of the Sikh religious gurus of all European countries in this regard. Attacks on two places of Sikh worship in the United Kingdom is a matter of serious concern. I also request British government to take all necessary steps to apprehend the perpetrators of these attacks and protect the Sikh community against any further expressions of racial tension." "Such shocking attacks are against the spirit of pluralism and religious freedom which the United Kingdom upholds. The commission has also decided to write to the Centre urging it to alert its missions abroad so that such incidents cannot take place in future. When something happens in India all European nations immediately alert their missions in the country. We can also alert our embassies so that such incidents can be avoided in future," said the chairman. (Asian Age 12.7.05)

Sikhs angry with UP CM, threaten to burn selves (7)

Lucknow, July 23: Sikhs in Uttar Pradesh are up in arms against the Mulayam Singh government over the manner in which the state government has been discriminating against them. Sikh leaders have threatened to immolate themselves on Shahidi Diwas of Guru Teg Bahadurji on November 24 if the state government does not stop appeasement of a particular community and chooses to ignore other minority groups. This, incidentally, is the first time that Sikhs have risen up to demand their share of rights in the state. "The State Minority Commission has turned into a 'Muslim Commission' while the State Minority Welfare and Development Corporation has transformed into Muslim Welfare and Development Board. The state government is going out of its way to favour and pamper Muslims while the interests of other minority communities are being ignored. This is a wake up call for the government to amend its priorities and policies, failing which we will be forced to launch an agitation," says Mr Rajinder Singh Bagga, president of the State Sikh Federation. To begin with, a group of senior Sikh leaders led by Sardar Kuldeep Singh Sethi, convenor of the UP Sikh Federation, Sardar Nirpal Singh Pali, vice-president of the Lucknow Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee and organising secretary Sardar Harvinder Singh Titu will immolate themselves on November 24 in front of the Naka Gurudwara in Lucknow. Mr Bagga says that on the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh on January 6, he will also sacrifice himself for the service of the community. Explaining the reasons for this drastic step, Mr Bagga says, "Last year, more than 100 Sikh students applied for loans but all of them were thrown into the dustbin by the State Minority Welfare and Development Corporation. (Asian Age 24/7/05)

Report on Nanavati panel to be tabled (7)

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the Action Taken Report on the recommendations of the Nanavati Commission, which probed the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. This paves the way for tabling the report in Parliament. The deadline for placing the report expires on Monday. Announcing the

Cabinet decision, Union Minister and Cabinet spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy, did not say when the report would be tabled — Friday or Monday. "It will be placed before the deadline expires. Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, will have to get the clearance from Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee." The Cabinet also cleared a set of eight Bills, which would be introduced in Parliament during the current session. They include one to amend the Bill on protection of women from domestic violence and another to provide for greater inheritance rights for women under the Hindu Succession Act. Other Bills relate to the enactment of integrated food laws for better food safety and standards; amendment to the Railways Act for setting up an authority for the development of Railway land; and amendment to the Banking Companies Act to increase the number of whole-time directors from two to four, restrict the number of shareholder directors to three, set up a restructuring authority for potentially weak banks and to enable more flexibility to the bank boards and improve their corporate governance. (The Hindu 5/8/05)

'I'm denied access to my Mecca'

Chandigarh, Aug. 7: India's former Chief Election Commissioner, Mr M.S. Gill, has condemned what he views as "an inordinate delay" in granting Punjabis and Sikhs free access to Guru Nanak's birthplace at Nankana Sahib in Pakistan. "Why am I being stopped from visiting my Mecca, my Vatican, my Kashi?" Mr Gill, who is also a Congress party member of the Rajya Sabha, asked responding to reports published in The Asian Age. The report described how New Delhi and Islamabad were going slow on the proposal to start an Amritsar-Lahore-Nankana Sahib bus service. An ardent backer of the proposal, which could translate into unprecedented cheer for millions of Sikhs, the former CEC said the government appeared to be employing "double standards". "We happily spend Rs 200 crores to facilitate the journey of 80,000 of our Muslim brothers to Mecca each year. Special terminals are set up for the Haj pilgrims at Srinagar, Hyderabad, Delhi and Mumbai. Special flights are operated. But the access to Nankana Sahib through Wagah continues to remain blocked," he lamented. "It is critical for the government to remain secular and treat all communities equally. Wagah must be opened to Sikh pilgrims," he insisted. According to him, Nankana Sahib remains the only religious spot across the world where devotees wishing to visit must first seek separate clearances from the home ministries of two countries. "The Jathas that travel to Guru Nanak's birthplace once or twice a year have to first be cleared by authorities in both Pakistan and India," he said. (Asan Age 8/8/05)

Credible evidence against Tytler: Nanavati (7)

NEW DELHI: The Nanavati Commission, which probed the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, has found "credible evidence" against senior Congress leader Jagdish Tytler and said he "very probably" had a hand in organising the attacks. The report recommended action against Mr. Tytler, now Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs. On the role of another senior Congress leader, Sajjan Kumar, the Commission recommended examination of only those cases in which witnesses accused him specifically and yet no charge sheets were filed and the cases terminated as untraced. It said there was no evidence of the involvement of Kamal Nath, now Commerce Minister, in instigating the mobs. However, the Government's Action Taken Report (ATR), tabled along with the Commission report in Parliament on Monday, has dismissed the observation that Mr. Tytler "very probably" had a hand in organising the attacks, stating the panel itself was not absolutely sure of his involvement. The ATR pointed out that in criminal cases, a person could not be prosecuted simply on the basis of "probability" and any further action would not be justified. It said Mr. Tytler was not mentioned as an accused in cases of arson and looting in three first information reports filed in the Bara Hindu Rao police station. After the completion of trial, 13 accused were convicted and one was declared proclaimed offender. In another case, all the 31 accused were acquitted in 1992. (The Hindu 9/8/05)

Who were the real killers? (7)

New Delhi : Dr Death of Kalyanpuri unmasked by Nanavati--- Justice Nanavati Commission of Inquiry has said in its report that the anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984 was an organised carnage. The report points an accusing finger at Congress workers of Delhi who instigated the mobs and encouraged them to kill Sikhs. While the role of four Congress MPs of Delhi of that time, HKL Bhagat, Jagdish Tytler, Dharam Dass Shastri and Sajjan Kumar, has been the subject of intense controversy, little attention has been focussed on lesser functionaries of the Congress who, according to the Commission, were the real killers. According to the Ahuja Committee, 2,733 Sikhs were killed during the mad fury that engulfed the Capital after Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31, 1984. Of the rioters, only 15 have been convicted so

far. Kishori, nicknamed the "Butcher of Trilokpuri", was sentenced to death in four cases. He is biding time in Tihar Jail as his petition against the death sentence is pending in Supreme Court. The death sentence of Manohar Lal, another accused, has been commuted to life imprisonment. Mr HS Phoolka, counsel for the November 1984 Carnage Justice Committee, says 200 people have been charged with rioting but that has not helped the cause of the victims as the real killers have been left off the hook. The Pioneer investigates the role of some of the individuals accused of committing heinous crimes during the carnage. Though the Ahuja Committee estimated that 610 deaths had occurred in Kalyanpuri area, according to Delhi Police records only 154 Sikhs were killed. The Nanavati Commission states that there was an effort by the then Delhi Police officers to conceal the number of deaths. (Pioneer 10/8/05)

Army deployment took time during 1984 riots (7)

NEW DELHI: The Nanavati Commission, which probed the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, came across evidence to show that on October 31, 1984 either meetings were held or the persons who could organise attacks were contacted and given instructions to kill Sikhs and loot their houses and shops. "The attacks were made in a systematic manner and without much fear of the police; almost suggesting that they were assured that they would not be harmed while committing those acts and even thereafter," the Commission said in its report tabled in Parliament on Monday. From November 1, 1984, another 'cause of exploitation of the situation' had joined the initial 'cause of anger.' The exploitation of the situation was by anti-social elements who saw an opportunity of looting things without the fear of being punished. "The criminals got an opportunity to show their might and increase their hold. The exploitation of the situation was also by the local political leaders for their political and personal gains like increasing the clout by showing their importance, popularity, and hold over the masses. Lack of the fear of the police force was also one of the causes for the happening of so many incidents within those 3 or 4 days. If the police had taken prompt and effective steps, many lives would not have been lost and so many properties would not have been looted, destroyed or burnt," it said. If this was how the Commission described the situation on the ground, there is another key question of how the high-ups took time to decide on calling the Army for assistance of the local authorities to restore law and order when Delhi streets were ruled by criminals, anti-social elements. (The Hindu 10/8/05)

Mother of all cover-ups (7)

New Delhi: The Nanavati Commission report, which has failed to fix responsibility for the 1984 anti-Sikh violence, has involuntarily disclosed what can be described as one of the most elaborate cover-up exercises undertaken by successive Central governments for the past 20 years. Nine inquiries later, the Sikhs demanding justice are no closer to fixing responsibility on specific leaders and officers, many of whom have been exonerated in criminal cases because of "lack of evidence". The Nanavati Commission itself received 2,557 affidavits naming Congress leaders for inciting and leading mobs in Delhi during those days. It recorded interviews with 89 persons, including journalists, Army officers, police officers and eminent persons who had either witnessed the violence, or tried to knock at the government's door for action at the time. Much of this evidence is included in the report, but even so Justice Nanavati took the view that the violence was not systematically organised by the Congress party, that just a few of the Congress leaders named were involved, and that it was actually the police that had failed to do its duty. The earlier commissions of inquiry had also preferred to hold the police and the administration responsible for the deaths of 2,733 Sikhs (unofficially 4,000) and had remained reluctant to pin the blame on the politicians. (Asian Age 10/8/05)

Jagdish Tytler resigns bowing to pressure (7)

NEW DELHI: Bowing to intense pressure from within the Congress, its allies and supporting Left parties and the Opposition, Minister of State for Overseas Indian Affairs Jagdish Tytler put in his papers late on Wednesday. He submitted his resignation to Congress president Sonia Gandhi with the request that it be forwarded to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The resignation came barely hours after Dr. Singh assured the Lok Sabha that the Government would reopen and re-examine cases against specific individuals named by the Nanavati Commission that went into the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. The assurance was given during his intervention in a discussion on the adjournment motion sponsored by the Opposition on the failure of the Government to take action against those indicted by the Commission. The House, however, rejected the motion. Reiterating the assurances given by the Prime Minister, Home Minister

Shivraj Patil said the guilty would not be protected. Also, he denied any attempt by the Government to "whitewash" the findings of the Commission. Authoritative sources said Dr. Singh met Mr. Tytler in the afternoon and asked him to resign from the Council of Ministers. The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance has been drawing flak since the Nanavati Commission report and the Action Taken Report were tabled in the Lok Sabha on Monday. The Nanavati Commission report mentioned there was "credible evidence" that Mr. Tytler "very probably" had a hand in organising the attacks. (The Hindu 11/8/05)

Sikhs in Jharkhand unhappy with Nanavati report (7)

Ranchi : Various Sikh bodies in Jharkhand are unhappy with the Nanavati Commission report which, they feel, has ignored the plight of Sikhs here who suffered major losses during the 1984 carnage. According to official figures, 73 Sikhs were killed in the State but unofficial figures put the number at more than 200. The highest number of deaths took place in Bokaro where 69 Sikhs were killed and two each in Ranchi and Jamshedpur. "The Nanavati Commission has overlooked the plight of the State. After Delhi, the highest number of Sikhs were killed in Kanpur and Bokaro," lamented Sardar Harbhajan Singh, chief of the Sikh Gurudwara Prabhadhak Committee of Bokaro. He said, "Only 15 widows were given a compensation of Rs 20,000 each while compensation eludes the rest." Shailendra Singh, president of the Central Gurudawara Prabhadhank Committee of Jamshedpur says, "We are feeling disillusioned with the commission report. A meeting will be convened to discuss the issue." Sikhs in the State are unhappy with the fact that none of the accused in the riots have been convicted even after 21 years. They deeply resent the fact that many of the accused have been absolved by the court in the absence of evidence. Baldev Singh, a Sikh of Jamshedpur, recalls how his property was damaged and burnt in front of the police. He personally lodged an FIR against certain people but no one has been arrested so far. "Six Sikhs were killed in 1984 in the coal city and hundreds of families suffered major losses. The report does not talk about the plight of those families who either lost their near and dear ones or lost their property and houses " says Ajit Singh Dadwal, a member of the Gurudwara Prabhadhak Committee of Dhanbad. (Pioneer 11/8/05)

Manmohan: I bow my head in shame (7)

NEW DELHI: In an extraordinary gesture, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday apologised to the nation for the 1984 killing of thousands of Sikhs soon after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. He reiterated that in deference to the sentiments expressed in Parliament, the Government would re-open and re-examine "within the ambit of law" cases against individuals and police officials named in the Nanavati Commission Report. "I have no hesitation in apologising not only to the Sikh community but to the whole nation because what took place in 1984 is the negation of the concept of nationhood and of the Indian Constitution. On behalf of the Government and the entire people of the country, I bow my head in shame for what happened," Dr. Singh said intervening in a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on a motion under Rule 168 moved by the BJP for modification of the Action Taken Report of the Nanavati Commission on the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and action against those indicted in the report. Question hour was suspended to take up the discussion with the rider that this would not be treated as a precedent. The motion was defeated by voice vote. Confessing that speaking on the occasion was "a great emotional strain" for him, he said it was time for introspection that such "ghastly tragedies" in which 4,000 people were killed never took place again. "I do not stand on false prestige. To err is human. There were lapses in 1984. Several commissions have been set up. We still do not know the truth. The search must go on." (The Hindu 12/8/05)

Punjab officers seek relief for 32,000 displaced families (7)

New Delhi : There are 32,000 families who suffered the most during the November '84 anti-Sikh pogrom and were forced to flee to save their lives. Majority of these displaced families belonged to Delhi and are now living in Punjab. Though some of them got C and D grade jobs in Punjab Government, those who failed to find favour have been forced to eke out a living for themselves. In a meeting held by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), for the implementation of the recommendation of Justice Nanavati Commission of Inquiry, the officers of Punjab Government asked for compensation to those who were uprooted from their homes in 1984. Anjuly Chib Duggal, the Resident Commissioner of Punjab and Vinod Bhalla, the Additional Secretary, relief in Punjab Government, who attended the meeting raised the issue of 32,000 families who migrated from Delhi after their families were targeted by mobs. There was talk to give them incentives so that they could return to their original houses but finally it was not feasible as that would

displace them for the third time. Officers in the MHA have been burning the midnight oil to work out a respectable compensation package for such families after the UPA Government constituted two committees to determine the degree of compensation to be given to the dependants of those killed during the frenzy that swept across the country after the assassination of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi. (Pioneer 20/8/05)

Panel suggests Rs 5 lakhs each for Sikh riot victims (7)

New Delhi, Aug. 21: The committee set up by the Centre to give employment and livelihood to the victims feels that Rs 5 lakhs each may be paid as compensation to those who suffered in the 1984 Sikh riots. The panel is also considering to provide relief to nearly 30,000 Sikhs who migrated to Punjab after 1984 riots. The issue of giving relief to the Sikhs, who left their homes in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh to go to Punjab, was raised by representatives from Punjab, who attended the first meeting of the committee chaired by secretary in the Union home ministry D.K. Sankaran here. The Centre had on August 13 constituted two committees to implement assurances given by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union home minister Shivraj Patil in Parliament earlier this month, with regard to payment of compensation and other kinds of relief to victims of anti-Sikh violence. The terms of reference for the committee headed by special secretary (home) K.P. Singh includes examination of adequacy and uniformity of compensation given to next of kin of those killed. (Asian Age 22/8/05)

Injured to get Rs 1.25 lakh each (7)

New Delhi, Sept. 12: The Delhi government, 20 years after the anti-Sikh riots in the capital, on Monday announced a compensation of Rs 1.25 lakh each to the persons injured in the violence. A total of 2,966 persons injured in the 1984 riots, who had earlier been given relief in three categories of Rs 500, Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,000, will benefit from the decision. The notification would be made shortly and the money could be claimed by the affected people in about a week, government sources said. The Delhi Cabinet, in its meeting chaired by chief minister Sheila Dikshit on Monday decided to give the compensation acting on a recent Delhi high court directive on rehabilitation of the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. "Close to 3,000 people have been identified and they will be given Rs 1.25 lakh each as compensation," Ms Dikshit told reporters after the Cabinet meet. "The Prime Minister had categorically stated on the floor of Parliament that the government will do its best to provide relief to the riot-affected people, and respecting that we decided not to challenge the high court order and are announcing the compensation," the chief minister said. She said the government will soon bring out a notification on the procedure for claiming the compensation. The compensation will cost the state exchequer Rs 36.55 crore. The high court had given the directive for compensation to be paid to the riot victims acting on a petition filed by one Manjit Singh Sawhney. In another decision, the Cabinet gave the nod to setting up of Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe courts to put a check on and settle the matter of fake certificates being used by applicants for seeking jobs and other benefits. (Asian Age 13/9/05)

Jail officials seek to bury Sikh shave-off incident (7)

Agra : An incident in which the beard and hair of a Sikh prisoner was shaved off on September 26 in a jail here is haunting the jail authorities with fear of a communal trouble. Though the jail authorities had taken disciplinary action against two jail personnel named by the Sikh inmate in his complaint, senior officials still are hesitant to talk about the incident, fearing it would spark off communal tension. The incident had come to light on September 26, when jail authorities along with mediapersons had visited the jail, a day after rioting in the jail premises. Dharmvir thought it prudent to bring this incident to their knowledge. He showed them his photograph displaying a flowing beard and turban. Dharmvir said he had vowed to eat just one time and not allow his hair to grow back, till the two responsible jail personnel were punished for shaving off his hair. In 2004, Dharmvir Singh was put behind the bars for possessing narcotics and he has since been living in the barrack 8-A of the jail. He alleged that the prison authorities had skipped him during the distribution of daily rations on August 6. And when he threatened to complain to senior officials about being left out, two prison guards Suresh Babu Yadav and Jitendra Yadav dragged him out of the barrack gate and thrashed him badly, and then shaved off his moustache, beard and hair. A delegation of Guru Sikh Welfare Association had met the Deputy Inspector General (Jail) ML Prakash immediately after the incident and demanded the removal of the two prison guards and a high-level inquiry into the incident. (Pioneer 5/10/05)

Govt refers probe, compensation issues to Cabinet (7)

New Delhi : The Government has decided to refer the matter of further investigation and compensation of the 1984 anti- Sikh pogrom to the Cabinet. The decision to go for a Cabinet approval in this regard was taken in a review meeting chaired by the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on Tuesday. The meeting was held in the light of the severe indictment of former Ministers Jagdish Tytler and HKL Bhagat, former Member of Parliament (MP) Dharam Dass Shastri and sitting MP Sajjan Kumar by Justice GT Nanavati Commission. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), looking into the recommendations of Nanavati Commission has called for a detailed enquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against Tytler, Bhagat, Shastri and Sajjan Kumar since the charges against them were grave in nature. Presided by Home Minister Shivraj Patil, a meeting to discuss the further course of action was held in the MHA on Monday. Sources said, it was felt that CBI should probe the charges against those indicted by the Commission since there were charges of specific nature against these leaders. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had assured the Parliament during the Monsoon Session that his Government would take all necessary action on the recommendations of the Nanavati Commission, including re-investigation of certain riot cases if necessary. The Prime Minister had promised to re-open the cases against those who were indicted by Nanavati Commission, to provide employment and suitable compensation to the dependents of those killed during the mindless frenzy that had engulfed the Capital. (Pioneer 5/10/05)

Haryana bans text 'insulting' Sikh guru (7)

Chandigarh, Oct. 15: The government of Haryana on Saturday imposed a ban on Bhasha Manjri-VI, a Class 6 textbook purported to contain derogatory references to the tenth Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said all available copies of the offensive textbook, officially prescribed for students of Delhi Public School at Hisar, had been seized. In addition, the deputy commissioner of Hisar has been directed to conduct a thorough inquiry into how the text was permitted as a school-book. The DC has been asked to submit a detailed report to the chief minister. Bhasha Manjri-VI, edited by Doon School's former Hindi department head and two other scholars, contains a chapter attributed to one Rabindranath Tagore which bears derogatory and apparently fictitious narratives stating that Guru Gobind Singh killed a Pathan trader who sold him horses. (Asian Age 16/10/05)

Higher compensation likely for 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims (7)

NEW DELHI: Compensation to families of the victims of 1984 anti-Sikh riots is likely to be increased substantially. Two high-power committees, set up by the Union Home Ministry in August to look into their rehabilitation, have taken a "liberal view." They have almost finalised their findings and their reports will be put up before the Cabinet by this month-end, said senior Ministry officials. If the proposals got Cabinet approval, the Government could raise the compensation for each killing to Rs. 8 lakhs-10 lakhs. For loss of shops and business establishments, each businessman or trader could hope to get Rs. 10 lakhs-15 lakhs. The committees took note of the fact that the highest compensation of Rs. 3.5 lakhs was paid in Delhi in 1996. They took the view that interest for the past 20 years should also be taken into account for any semblance of uniformity in compensation packages, sources said. (The Hindu 21/10/05)

French Sikhs lose right to wear turban (7)

PARIS: A Sikh who won the right to wear his turban in his driving licence identity photo only to see that right withdrawn a day later will pursue his battle to find out if "one can be both Sikh and French," a spokesman for the community has said. "We'll get to the bottom of this," said Kudrat Singh, who acts as spokesman for many in the Sikh community. "Can you be both a Sikh and French considering the ethnic character of Sikhs," he said, contending the Sikh religion is linked to the ethnic issue. "What we want from France is a yes or no." The Council of State, France's highest administrative body, ruled on Monday that Shingara Mann Singh can wear his turban in the photo because a ban on covering the head in official photos came from the wrong Ministry — the Interior Ministry. The following day, the Transport Ministry changed its order, saying the Interior Ministry's ban was applicable for driving licences. The move meant that Mr. Singh could not receive his licence as long as he wore a turban. His lawyer, Patrice Spinosi, said he would take the case back to the Council of State to verify that such a manoeuvre was legal. (The Hindu 11/12/05)

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

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