

MUSLIMS WAIT FOR DEEDS, MR. LAXMAN!

In his Presidential Address, the newly elected President of the BJP Shri Bangaru Laxman has called for the inclusion of the Muslims in its social base and asked the workers of his party to endeavour to this end. However, this is not the first time that the BJP leadership realises that it cannot reach any higher from the plateau it already occupies without making itself more acceptable to other social groups and in those regions of the country where it does not have a hold. This was the essential motivation behind the formation of the pre-election National Democratic Alliances before the 1999 General Election.

The BJP then also took pains to emphasise its secular character and its concern for the religious minorities because it realises that it did not command the goodwill of the religious minorities, particularly of the Muslim community. But, at the time of distributing its tickets, once again it ignored the Muslims. As a result, today it has only one Muslim member in the Lok Sabha, who by virtue of being a Muslim has also been inducted into the Council of Ministers, though as a new comer he does not have the stature to serve as an influential link between his party and his community.

Since Mr. Laxman's point of departure is the Muslim vote, his remarks are likely to be discarded as election rhetoric or political gimmick. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that his own 10-Point plan for the upliftment of the backward sections of the people does not even mention the 'minorities'.

To many Muslim intellectuals, Mr. Laxman's invitation immediately recalls Jonathan Swift's fable of the Spider and the Bee. The spider may be anxious to welcome the bee to his parlour, but after 50 years of democracy, the 'bee' has become wiser. At the same time the credibility of the political parties and of politicians has sunk to a record low. No section of the electorate is like to accept the bonafides of any political party or its declarations at their face value. The general tendency is to treat such a declaration as a political manoeuvre.

The Muslim community itself has tried many parties, which carry Secularism on their sleeves, and yet it feels cheated. It feels frustrated and disenchanted with the system when it finds that in many State legislatures it is not represented at all and even in the Union legislature, the parliament, its level of deprivation is nearly 50 per cent. And no secular party is bothered about it.

However, the BJP heads the coalition government at the Centre and rules UP, Gujarat, and Himachal Pradesh, as well as through the NDA it has a hand in the

governance of other States like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP had indeed come to occupy the centre of the political stage. Its natural desire to maintain and strengthen its political hegemony is understandable. Therefore, it would not be wise for the Muslim community to reject the overture summarily off-the-cuff or to ignore the ideology of the BJP, its nexus with the RSS and its track record of anti-minorityism.

The BJP is and remains committed to the ideology of Hindutva, which equates India with Hinduism, Indian history with the history of the Hindu people and Indian culture with the Hindu culture. There is a touch of obscurantism, revivalism and revanchism in this ideology. The BJP sees politics as a zero sum game in which every loss to the 'other' is regarded as a gain for the Hindus. The BJP stands for the transformation of India into Hindu Rashtra, for the dominance of the Hindus. The religious minorities, in particular the Muslims, naturally see in Hindutva the threat of religious assimilation and cultural submergence. Under the BJP rule they have experienced the systematic translation of these apprehensions into facts of life through coercion, indoctrination and brain washing, through methodical saffronisation of education, culture and government controlled media. Mr. Laxman or for that matter any top leader of the BJP has not disassociated the BJP from this pernicious and exclusivist ideology. Nor can he dare to delink it from its close nexus with the RSS. Even a leader like Atal Behari Vajpayee who symbolically attends the shakha, salutes the RSS flag, donates Guru Dakshina and calls the RSS 'our mother', 'our guru' and even 'our soul' is forced by political compulsions publicly to affirm his RSS links and share the dais with, and the dreams, of the VHP brand of Sadhus and Sants! As Prime Minister, he routinely consults the RSS hierarchy. His Ministers report to it. For all practical purposes, the RSS has today the status of the 'Rajguru' and an extra-constitutional remote control in modern terms.

The political track record of the BJP from its very inception and in its earlier incarnation as the Jan Sangh has been constantly anti-Muslim. It has always opposed and adopted a hostile attitude towards any legitimate interest or aspiration of the Muslim community, turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to its most routine grievances. It never lifted a finger for the legitimate claims of the Muslim victims of communal violence or against discrimination in the distribution of welfare and development benefits. Indeed it has projected the Muslims as the historical adversary of the Hindus who must be

punished or put in their place, now that the time had come to balance the account of the centuries. The RSS and the Sangh Parivar including the BJP have even refused to recognise the very concept of minorities or the identity of non-Hindu religious communities. Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, once the President of the Party and now the Minister of Human Resource Development, labelled the Muslims as 'Mohammadi Hindus' and the Christians as 'Masihi Hindus'. Even Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's proclamation quoted by Mr. Laxman sounds like a programme of assimilation of Islam as a 'Panth' of the Hindu Dharma.

As a political party the BJP has always ignored the genuine grievances of the Muslim community – under-representation in the political structure, economic deprivation, educational backwardness, deliberate demonisation of the community, vilification of all that Muslims hold dear and sacred, Allah, the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet, systematic aspersions against all Muslim institutions, Masjids and Madarsas and, in general, the treatment of Muslims as second class citizen. To provide a mask, the BJP relied on few Muslim stooges but it has never tried to build any communication with the Muslim masses, organisations, institutions and leadership. Its spokesmen blame the Muslim community for the 'sins' of invasion and Partition and ridiculed Islamic history. The Sangh Parivar's object is to create an environment of distrust and suspicion against the Muslim community, thus sow both fear and revenge in the Hindi mind which can be harvested as votes or brought into action in conflict situations of Parivar's making.

With this track record it is obvious that the Muslim community will not take Mr. Laxman at his words but put the BJP to a rigorous test to find out whether there has been a change of heart, a change in its mind-set, whether it has discarded the RSS ideology, the philosophy of Hindutva and the policy of anti-minorityism, whether it has disowned the thoughts and edicts of Savarkar and Golwalkar, whether it really looks upon the Muslim Indians as the children of Mother India and as equal citizens of the Indian State, whether it will defend and protect them against violence, vilification, injustice and discrimination, whether its governments will curb those who plan and execute programmes of violence against the life, property and honour of the community and whether in situations of conflict they would stay neutral and punish the aggressors. And whether the BJP shall show any understanding of the legitimate Muslim aspirations, which are in consonance with the Constitution as well as the international laws and conventions applicable to the minorities and universal norms of human rights.

The Muslim Indians would certainly ask themselves

whether the BJP is trying to put on a pro-Muslim mask to secure their votes at no cost or whether it is really trying to extend its outreach among the secular Hindus and the liberal fencesitters in order to achieve absolute power and **whether, on forming a Sangh-controlled government on its own, the BJP will then ruthlessly execute its plan of Hinduisation of India and liquidation of all traces of Islamic presence from India.**

The Muslim Indians today demand no special rights, concessions or privileges but Identity, Dignity, Justice and Security. They say NO to religious assimilation, cultural homogenisation, physical humiliation and mental torture. They want an end to discrimination in public and private employment, in the flow of public credit and in the distribution of benefits of development and welfare. They are against separatism and they demand participation in governance through equitable representation in the legislature, the political executive, the permanent executive and the judiciary.

If Mr. Laxman is really serious about the status of the Muslim Indians and his motive and purpose are not merely to snatch the Muslim vote from the secular parties or to neutralise it, it has to engage in heart-searching and try to win the heart and mind of the Muslim community by declaring a solemn commitment to implement the final judicial verdict on the Babari Masjid and stop the sabre-rattling by the VHP and Bajrang Dal against the law of the land and the consequent threat to public order and vicious propaganda against the Muslims. The BJP should solemnly declare also that it does not stand for any change in the Muslim personal law, against the will of, and without any demand from within, the Community, that it shall recognise the Muslim Indians as a Backward Class and extend to them the policy of reservation in public employment and welfare measures, that it shall give serious thought to the introduction of proportional representation system, or as an alternative, introduce reservation with joint electorate for them in the legislatures, that its governments, particularly in UP, shall enable Urdu-speaking children to learn their mother tongue at school and receive their primary instruction through its medium and shall not try to vilify or destabilise Muslim institutions or terrorise them into closure.

The BJP spokesmen accuse the secular parties of engaging on deliberate propaganda against their party and thus misleading the Muslim community and exploiting it as a vote-bank. The Muslims are not babes in the wood, they are politically mature and take their own decisions. The Community is not the bonded labour of any political party. And unfortunately many a time it has also to choose

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

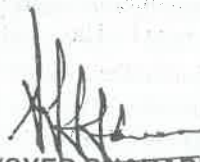
between more than one secular parties. But today it does not serve as a vote bank for any political party because largely it votes tactically and constituency-wise, for the most winnable candidate of any secular party.

The BJP spokesmen also make the point that other parties have deliberately kept them economically and educationally backward and far from the national mainstream of progress. If the secular parties failed the Muslims when they were in power, the real cause was the constant accusation of minorityism and appeasement by the BJP and other members of the Sangh Parivar, the infiltration by the RSS and other Hindu communal elements in the administration and the creation of a political environment in which all parties feared massive shift of Hindu votes towards the BJP, if they were seen as 'pampering' the Muslims.

Today, the BJP, is out of the zone of consideration for Muslim voters for obvious political reasons. It is for the BJP to change its image and prove by words and deeds that the allegations by the secular parties against it have no basis. **The initiative in the form of explicit change in the mindset and concrete action must come from the BJP and its sister organisations in the Sangh Parivar.** So far the BJP has tried to neutralise Muslim antagonism by using its stooges, by coining slogans, of 3 T's (a la Arif Beg) and 4 S's (a la Naqvi) or by shedding crocodile tears over their backwardness, specially the miserable lot of Muslim women or by giving verbal assurances on the occasion of elections but doing nothing! Wisely, the Muslims have always refused to walk into the spider's parlour or believe the sweet words or trust the liberal mask of the BJP. Nor will they place any more credence in the words of President Laxman, unless and until he comes out with a time-bound Programme of Action and sees to its implementation by the governments of, or led by, his party at the Centre or in the States. **To jump aboard the BJP ship, in desperation or fear or euphoria would be to commit political suicide.**

The BJP will be judged by the Muslims not by its promises but by the performance of its governments, not by the words of its leaders but by its deeds in situations of conflict, not by its profession of secularism but by its practice, when the Muslims face violence and injustice.

For this the BJP has to be re-born as a party of Indian Nationalism and not of Hindu Nationalism, as the messenger of Bharatiyata and not of Hindutva.



1st October, 2000

(SYED SHAHABUDDIN)



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BJP: President Bangaru Laxman's Address at National Council Nagpur, 27-28 August, 2000 (Extracts)

... Our party has rapidly expanded its social base to reach out to newer areas of our social and geographical space... However, the results of the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, and also, recent elections in some States show a trend that demands a serious look from us. Our gains seem to be have reached a plateau. Both our seats and the vote share in the Lok Sabha elections of 1998 and 1999 remained more or less the same... We should also honestly introspect on the factors that are impeding our continued rapid expansion. I can identify three such factors... The third factor is the equation between our party and the Muslim community...

An undeniable feature of Indian politics for the past five decades has been a certain distance separating Indian Muslims and the Bharatiya Janata Party and, earlier, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. What is equally undeniable is that this distance has not helped either our Muslim brethren or our party...

... Muslims have not been able to play their due role in the country's democratic process. Such parties as they have been supporting have mostly used them as vote banks, to keep them away from the BJP by using the bogey of communalism... The Muslim masses ... have, by and large, neither got their rightful share in the nation's development nor been able to join the national mainstream to play their due role in nation-building.

On our part, we in the BJP have not made sustained efforts to reach out to Indian Muslims in a bid to weaken the influence on their minds of the sustained negative propaganda by our adversaries. We have somehow taken it for granted that our party will never receive any significant support from them. This pre-conceived approach has not helped our party, either... One of the chief reasons for our less-than-expected success was our party's failure to secure Muslim votes... Muslims tend to keep away from the BJP.

We cannot afford to allow this situation to continue. If we do so, we shall be hurting our own future prospects, and Muslims will continue to be used as vote banks by our adversaries... The Chennai Declaration ... adopted in the last session of the National Council in Dec., 1999 has said:

"... It has, especially, become necessary to expand the party's support base among religious minorities, who are an integral part of our society. The party shall thoroughly review its existing relationship with religious minorities consistent with its resolve to strengthen Indian nationhood. Based on a sincere and principled approach of espousing and redressing their issues in a just and non-appeasement manner, the BJP shall make intensified efforts to increase its support base among religious minorities.

... Muslims are the last major section of Indian society that we need to reach out to. There is nothing in our ideology, policies, and programmes for anyone to

surmise that we should not, or cannot, do so...

Several favourable factors make me optimistic...

- First, many Muslims are thoroughly disillusioned with the politics of "minorityism" of the parties that they have been traditionally supporting. They have seen through the insincerity of these parties...
- Secondly, ... our Governments, both at the Centre and in States, have been fair and non-discriminating towards all communities.
- Thirdly, they know that they have experienced no diminution of, or threat to, their religious freedom under our governments.
- Fourthly, our record of maintaining communal peace and harmony stands in sharp contrast to what prevailed earlier.
- Fifthly, ... economic reforms ... are certain to speed up all-round development, creating more employment and more ... opportunities for all, including Indian Muslims.
- Last, the integrity and stature of our leadership cannot but evoke respect and admiration among Muslims....

... All that is needed, is for us to take our appeal and our activities to Muslim homes and mohallas... Our party should draw up a concrete charter of action to translate our intent into practice. We should forcefully espouse developmental issues concerning common Muslims. We should actively work to bring more and more dynamic and socially respected Muslim activists into our party. We should also have more Muslims in our list of candidates to various elections... Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya ... said: "Muslims are the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood."

Waheeduddin Khan's Suggestion

... When you go to a doctor and he says he will cure you, don't you take his word for it?... They must take steps to remove the community's educational backwardness. Abandon your hate campaign. Change your pro-Hindu, anti-Muslim image... Give us something (like reservation) within your limitations. Confine Saraswati Vandana and Vande Mataram to your homes and mandirs. Maintain the status-quo on places of worship. Abide by the court's decision on Babari. Stop defaming our Madarsas.

(Source: The Times of India, 3 September, 2000)

Shahabuddin's Response

Mr. Wahiduddin Khan makes an untenable comparison. The patient (Muslim) has not gone to the doctor (BJP). The doctor is overanxious to treat him. So a wise patient is bound to ask him for his credentials, professional experience and public image.

Essentially, the BJP has to support its words by deeds. **Mr. Khan has suggested some overdue initiatives by the BJP. They are good as far as they go. But I seriously doubt if the BJP will oblige its old champion!**

BJP: National Council - Resolution on Political Situation Nagpur, 28 August, 2000

... Pakistan, under the present military regime, continues to promote cross-border terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of India. Indeed, the military regime in Islamabad has displayed increasing belligerence and made no effort to hide the fact that Pakistan has adopted cross-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy...

There has been increasing international condemnation of Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism, fuelled by mounting religious extremism in that country. This cross-border terrorism threatens peace and stability in the region and beyond and, therefore, calls for concerted international action also. In this context, we urge the early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention Against Terrorism and call upon the Government to pursue it vigorously at the coming UN General Assembly session.

... We urge all political parties to take a balanced and considered view of the proposed anti-terrorism law, rather than reject it on the basis of unfounded apprehensions and partisan politics...

The National Council calls upon the Government to take all possible steps to ensure the security of life and property of every citizen of India...

A clear message needs to be sent to terrorists and their masters across the border that every Indian's life is precious and will be defended and that indulging in cross-border terrorism cannot continue to remain a cost-free option.

At the same time, the Government should not hesitate to talk to those Indians who are willing to give up violence and sit across the table... We resolve to strengthen the Government's hand in both its campaign against terrorism as well as in its peace initiatives... The rejection of the Autonomy Report of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly is a step in the right direction. The BJP is fully committed to Jammu and Kashmir being integral part of India and to the defence of National sovereignty.

To check the problem of infiltration and illegal immigration ... the Passport Act is being amended. This is a step in the right direction. We urge Government to take up a time-bound programme of issuing multi-purpose photo identity card to all citizens and create a centralized database that can ultimately serve as a National Register of Citizens.

Despite a concerted effort by Pakistan's ISI working through anti-national agencies ... communal peace has remained largely undisturbed... While committed to the

protection of all sections of the people, the National Council urges the people to beware of divisive forces that are trying to disrupt communal harmony to malign the BJP and the NDA Government...

We deplore the Congress' demand for a judicial inquiry into the massacres by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir...

... The adoption of National Population Policy, 2000 and the setting of the National Commission on Population as well as a National Population Stabilization Fund are steps in the right direction to tackle the problem of runaway population growth...

... The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes never got the full benefit of reservation in jobs because no clearance of backlog could be done beyond the 50 per cent ceiling imposed by the Supreme Court. The benefits of reservation were also denied because of certain stiff eligibility conditions. The Constitution has now been amended to provide for waiving of these restrictions and for reservations in promotions.

... The National Council calls upon the Union and the State Governments to take time-bound steps to clear the backlog...

... We urge Government to expedite the Lokpal Bill and call upon all political parties to arrive at a consensus on the Women's Reservation Bill... Simultaneously, comprehensive electoral reforms and constituency delimitation, without affecting the number of constituencies, need to be expedited.

... There is an urgent need to repeal IMDT Act in Assam...

Continuing the Change Editorial, Hindustan Times, 4 Sept., 2000

... Vajpayee ... is trying to make the BJP acquire a kinder, gentler face. As much is clear from what the new party president ... has said about the organisation's attitude towards Muslims. Arguably, it is a tactical ploy guided by electoral considerations.

It is also clear that far weightier evidence of the BJP's change of heart will be needed before its decades-old anti-minority image can be changed. But the point nevertheless is that even the half-hearted, and perhaps even insincere, gesture might not have been made unless an acknowledged moderate like Vajpayee was at the helm...

BJP: Secretary Mukhtar Naqvi's Views

... When I joined the BJP in 1984 ... I liked most about the party was the unequivocal approach of its leadership towards the Muslims. They were not hypocritical like the so-called secular parties.

In the BJP's programme and ideology there is nothing anti-Muslim or chauvinist; it is a nationalist party. So the Muslims fit in there very well...

It is important for the Muslims to have their religious rights protected. But these are not the only issues, they can wait. It is often said that the Muslims' problems are Babari Masjid, Urdu, personal law and Article 370. but to my mind these are not their real problems. Their basic problems are education, unemployment, equality and security – the four Ss in Hindi – siksha, suraksha; samman and samriddhi or education, security, respect and prosperity. Fed on the wrong rhetoric the Muslims have lagged behind and could not be part of the mainstream for half a century.

... The so-called secular parties have deliberately misled Muslims... Muslims are a major part of Indian life and they cannot be ignored. So the BJP felt a new initiative is required. The situation is changing. The BJP is picking up seats from Muslim dominated areas...

The RSS has never been anti-Muslim. Hindutva cannot be equated with religion... The BJP formulates its own policy and it has no bias against the Muslims... RSS Chief and General Secretary ... have a very clear view that Muslims should get full honour and protection of their religious rights.

We feel that the fear of being reduced to second-class citizens has to be removed. But it is equally important to keep in mind that ... foreign invaders and outsiders cannot be our ideals. So there is no harm if Mughalsarai gives way to Deendayal Nagar...

Urdu is an Indian language... When it was the court language every community learnt it... Now the situation has changed. Go to a Muslim area and you will see children learning Hindi and English...

There is a rethinking in the Muslim community on this issue. Majority of Muslims are convinced that the BJP should be given a chance, that they should trust it, even if experimentally on the basis of the performance of the Vajpayee Government...

(Source: The Times of India, 8 September, 2000)

President K.R. Narayanan's Speech on Independence Day, 14 August, 2000

... The precious heritage of tolerance of different faiths and ideologies, which has been the cementing force in our complex pluralistic society, is showing signs of breaking down and a new intolerance, resulting often in violence, is manifesting itself in our society.

AIMMM Statement, 1 September, 2000 Muslims Wait for Concrete Evidence of Change of Heart

"The AIMMM has noted the advice of the newly elected President of the BJP Shri Bangaru Laxman, in his Presidential Address at Nagpur to his party workers to reach out to the Muslim community in order to broaden its electoral base.

Such declarations are a part of the democratic process. Any political party, particularly, one which sees itself as a national party and as 'the natural party of governance' and which heads a coalition Government at the Centre should naturally desire to have at least a part of the votes of the Muslim community, the second largest community in the country with a pan-Indian spread, in order to secure a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha on its own and improve its performance at the State level.

However, since its first incarnation as Jan Sangh, the BJP has not only ignored the legitimate grievances of the Muslim community but adopted a hostile and adversarial attitude towards Muslims. As a result, the Muslim community, which may be feeling unhappy today with all political parties, has demonstratively rejected the BJP, as a party, which is anti-secular, anti-minority and anti-Muslim.

Given the commitment of the BJP to the divisive and exclusivist ideology of Hindutva, its espousal of Hindu Rashtravad and Cultural Nationalism, its close nexus with the RSS and other members of the Sangh Parivar and its own track record, particularly in the last 2 decades, on all matters of concern to the Muslim community, it would need more than expressions of sympathy and goodwill for the BJP to be taken seriously by the community as a possible custodian of its legitimate rights and interests and for the fulfillment of its aspirations and hopes.

Unless and until the BJP changes its traditional mindset, substitutes Hindutva by Bharatiyata, recognises the rights of the Muslim Indians as equal citizens and of the Muslim Community, as a community and takes concrete steps to respect them and assures them Dignity, Equality and Justice, the Muslim Community is not likely to take Mr. Laxman's words seriously.

Till then his words are likely to be interpreted as nothing more than an electoral rhetoric or a political gesture to divide Muslim votes and detach them from the secular parties and also to attract the votes of secular and liberal Hindus.

However, the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat advises the community that instead of summarily rejecting the gesture, it should wait for some concrete evidence of a real change in the attitude of the BJP and some concrete and constructive response to the Muslim situation by the Governments at the Centre and the States governed by the BJP and its allies. □

Neena Vyas on Laxman's Uphill Task

Even if new BJP president, meant what he said about Muslims ... party leaders, if they are honest with themselves, will admit that it is going to be an uphill task to change the attitude of not only its karyakartas but also its netas.

The fact is that the large majority of BJP members see Muslims as pro-Pakistan and potential ISI recruits, and privately they say this. The Kashmir problem is also seen by the BJP as essentially a Muslim issue...

... In all its 20 years the BJP never made any sincere efforts to attract the Muslims. In fact, **the calculation was that Muslims voting for a non-BJP candidate in any constituency would help consolidation of the Hindu vote in its favour.**

... Perhaps, the BJP has realised that if it ever wants to come to power on its own, it will have to get **the votes of the minorities who constitute about 20 per cent of the population.** In the numbers game of electoral politics, no party can afford to begin with a minus-20 mark...

Laxman himself **has been swinging from an almost anti-Hindutva stance to a pro-Hindutva attitude.** On his way to Nagpur he said the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation never played a major role in boosting the party's growth, that in fact numerous other people's struggles taken up by the party had paid electoral dividends. He also said that people were no longer attracted by the party's Hindutva ideology... And now in the latest issue of the RSS mouthpiece, Panchjanya, he has asserted that **"There is no question of giving up Hindutva. After all, I am inside a Hindutva party. I have never said that we are giving up our core ideology"**.

What is clear is that **the party has kept its options open.** For now ... the party stands committed to its NDA agenda. But it is certainly not giving up on its core Hindutva ideology. The emphasis has changed **"for now"**...

Laxman has been stressing that the BJP never was a "one issue party", but the fact is that between 1990 and 1996 the party had almost given up every issue but the three core Hindutva ones. Its politics centred around attacking **"pseudo-secularism"** and what it called **"appeasement of the minorities"** without bothering about the fact that let alone being pampered the Muslims had fallen behind both in literacy and employment... If the old mantra was Hindutva, the new virtue is flexibility, a euphemism for being practical to suit the new political climate.

A major concern for the party is not to allow its old ideological moorings to come in the way of forging and consolidating ties with allies. For this, it has to keep Hindutva in check...

... Having made Laxman its first Dalit president, the BJP is keen to take advantage of this and draw larger support from the weaker sections.

Ironically, the Nagpur session saw all senior party leaders pay homage at the "Deekshabhoomi" of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, where he embraced Buddhism... The BJP ... was proud to be seen **praising Dr. Ambedkar's act of denouncing Hinduism.** The party wanted to declare that it did not believe in Manuwadi Hindutva...

At Nagpur the party travelled a little further down the road it had taken in Bangalore and Chennai, and which has been clearly mapped out by the Vajpayee Government. Neither RSS criticism nor skepticism in the party were to be allowed to come in the way. But, the option to go aggressively back to Hindutva has not been given up...

Re-inventing the BJP

Editorial, Times of India, 30 August, 2000

... The BJP is ... India's only 'ideas' party; it is a party where ideologues are employed full-time to craft electoral strategies and think up socio-philosophic formulations. The BJP invented the term 'social engineering' to at once get rid of the upper caste image it was burdened with and to widen its base. Social engineering fused together the party's backbone of upper castes with the more socially backward castes, and with spectacular effect, especially in the politically crucial UP. With the exit of Kalyan Singh, that experiment has lost much of its sheen. Another area of concern for the party has been its anti-minorities image. The BJP's first overtures in this respect were made some years back in Goa at a meeting of its national executive; it has since followed this up with periodic promises made in its party manifesto as well as in other forums. But evidently not with much success, as is apparent from party president B. Laxman's renewed call from Nagpur... What is behind the BJP's current call? Is it an image building exercise by a party that is now in office, and must therefore demonstrate a social conscience? Is it an electoral strategy? Or is it a genuine attempt at course correction?

It is a mix of all, judging by the imperatives before the party. The BJP is now at the head of a coalition, where no single ideology can prevail. The move is also an electoral compulsion. Today, the BJP has reached a plateau both in terms of the seats won and the votes polled. It needs to expand its base — whether in order to go it alone in future elections or to get into a coalitional arrangement. In UP, ... an electoral rout. An alliance with the BSP would most certainly give it a winning base, but Mayawati will agree to it only if the BJP publicly adopts a minority-friendly face... BJP has a single USP and that is Vajpayee. Without him it is nothing. In other words, the BJP must evolve a long-term vision — for itself and the country... The Muslims are important not because they are a vote bank, but because they are vital for the idea of India... If the BJP is to emerge as the Grand New Party, it must do so not by turning into a replica of the Grand Old Party but by re-inventing itself totally. □

Neerja Chowdhury on Calculated Attempt to Win Over Liberal Hindus

The BJP's overture to Muslims at Nagpur is a calculated attempt to win over the liberal Hindus and not so much the minorities. In the game of realpolitik, the party is trying to broaden its appeal because of electoral compulsions and with an eye on coalition politics. In the process, the party's own character may be undergoing a change which may turn out to be more than tactical.

The BJP has UP on its mind where elections are due next year and where its popularity has taken a sharp plunge. The polls in that state can be advanced after the formation of Uttaranchal on November 1.

Traditionally the liberal Hindus have not been hardcore supporters of the BJP but voted for it in large numbers in 1998 and 1999 because of its liberal face—Atal Behari Vajpayee. The party's nationalistic approach on several issues had enhanced its appeal for them. **But its attitude towards the minorities has made them uneasy.** It would be naïve to believe that the party expects the Muslims to support it. After the concerted attacks on Christians and their churches in the past two years, the Muslims can hardly be expected to take Bangaru Laxman's invitation at its face value. He is, in fact, appealing to the liberal Hindus.

The party had lost no time in putting its Hindutva agenda on the backburner when it formed a coalition government in 1998. In Nagpur it took one more step away from Ram in its attempt to fill the space once occupied by the Congress which shows no sign of getting rejuvenated. This was Vajpayee's goal that has now been adopted by Advani, Laxman and others. Advani's words delinking governance from ideology show which way the wind is blowing.

The BJP has already hijacked the Congress economic agenda. While that party is agonizing over whether Manmohanomics led to its defeat or not, with Manmohan Singh himself in the doghouse, the BJP has shown more resolve in brushing aside reservations and plunging headlong into the second generation of reforms.

On the social front also, the party has undone the Supreme Court verdict on relaxing marks for the Dalits in promotions with the help of a Constitutional amendment, while the Congress has not yet been able to even set up a cell in the AICC on the OBCs, simply because it has not been able to take a position on whether to go in for reservations for them in educational institutions or not. Unlike the Congress, the BJP has come to terms with the reality of coalitions in India.

It knows it will have to deal with regional parties as its allies for sometime and has to take into account their sensibilities on minorities. Soon after taking over as party chief, Bangaru Laxman had distanced the party from the RSS agenda, asking its members not to be apologetic **about temporarily falling silent on issues** like

BJP: President New, Double-Speak Old Editorial, The People's Democracy, 3 September, 2000

The BJP has completed yet another exercise in perfidy and double-speak... This is merely a tactical ploy to seek to make the BJP more acceptable not so much to the minorities but to the liberal and secular elements within the majority...

Further, there was total silence about the insidious anti-minority bashing that continues to be perpetrated by other tentacles of the RSS octopus. Clearly, the BJP is seeking to fool the people once again while at its core remains the effort to establish the RSS concept of a rabidly intolerant 'Hindu Rashtra'... The people are going to judge the BP on the basis of its policies and work on the ground... The BJP continues to be a strident communal party pre-occupied with perpetuating the caste inequalities under upper caste domination...

BJP National Meet Editorial, The New Age

... There is nothing new in the proposal. After breaking from Janata Party on the issue of dual membership in 1980, Atal Behari Vajpayee as first President of BJP ... has advocated almost the same line and had even suggested opening of doors of RSS for Muslims. But soon the same Vajpayee declared that "RSS is my soul" and supported all that ghastly doings of the Sangh Parivar which we have witnessed during the last decade and which culminated in demolition of the Babari Masjid at Ayodhya... This single event has affected the psyche of Indian Muslims most adversely.

... Bangaru Laxman did not have a single word of regret over this bestiality of his followers. Nobody expected him either to apologise or promise reconstruction of Babari Masjid at the place where it stood till December 6, 1992. If he was ... sincere, he could at least have promised that BJP and its allied organisations including the head of the Parivar, RSS, will abide by the court verdict on the disputed land in Ayodhya... Overwhelming majority of the country's population is opposed to its concept of Hindutva. That is real strength of secular forces. The task now is to mobilize and move this force to beat back the fascistic offensive of the BJP led government carried and patronized by the Sangh Parivar.

Article 370, a uniform civil code and Ayodhya. He had made it clear that the party would not brook criticism from within the Parivar beyond a point.

With polls in five States due next year, Nagpur has been an attempt to brew an electoral potion which is a mix of liberal rhetoric about minorities and a nationalistic fervour created through Pakistan-bashing.

(Source: The Indian Express, 30 August, 2000)

National Press on Laxman's Change of Course

The BJP Tries Image Engineering Editorial, The Statesman

... The BJP realizes that, but here the difficulties of a fundamental ideological reorientation are enormous because it would call into question the very notion of the Sangh Parivar. The RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan has gone on record to say that the BJP is no longer a party with a difference, which is good news, if one goes by the meaning the RSS attaches to the word "difference". But, on the other hand, the Prime Minister still feels obliged to go to Nagpur and look at the memorials to Hedgewar and Golwalkar. To say, at L.K. Advani did, that we are all "political Hindus" means nothing. There is only one way to be a Hindu, that is by being born one. The other problem is that the BJP leadership does not see this attitude as communal, but, at the grassroot level, that is what it boils down to... The fact that Bangaru Laxman is now the party president is an indication that the party has a shrewder understanding of the "image engineering" that is necessary for survival within the mainstream.

BJP's Dilemma Editorial, The Times of India

... The members of the RSS family are in an undefined relationship; there is no formal agreement between them; there are no clauses and sub-clauses by which they are bound to each other. What does bind them is a strong, emotional relationship. In other words, while theoretically the BJP is an independent entity, free to pursue any course it wants, in practice it is constrained by the RSS's position as its spiritual mentor. The RSS, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, in turn, go all out to support the BJP in successive elections. Indeed, had it not been for the VHP-inspired Ramjanmabhoomi movement, it is doubtful if the BJP would have come to the forefront of electoral politics, much less gain the strength to form a government. It is this mutually-dependent and mutually-beneficial relationship that has been threatened by the compulsion of the BJP's coalitional politics... Indeed, it says something about the transformation in the BJP that the ideologically rigid Advani should today acknowledge that ideology and governance are incompatible... Hazy ideology has meant unhappy rank and file and bad electoral verdicts. It is a story with a complex script: If the PM is all powerful, can he exist without his party?

Utterly, Ataly BJP Editorial, Indian Express, 29 Aug., 2000

... The other major theme (was) the need of the party to reach out to Muslims as a political constituency. Again, there was no attempt to duck realities and again the message was unequivocal...

... This is not the first time that attempts have been made to bring Muslims within the fold. Before the 1998 General Elections, for instance, when Vajpayee

The BJP's Search for a New Line Editorial, The Hindu, 30 August, 2000

... Given the long history of the BJP's majoritarian approach to politics, the very spirit behind the foundation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the fact that its organisational muscle constitutes those who were drawn into the fold essentially in the course of the campaign dominated by Hindutva slogans, any radical shift in its central theme can hardly be achieved by mere exhortations... In this context, Laxman's address ... can be of little more than rhetorical significance... The impression that the BJP and the various other outfits of the Sangh Parivar are anti-minority was not the creation of outsiders; their own activities hitherto and the slogans as well as the statements by functionaries ... including those at the top over a period of time have underlined the revanchist character of the platform. Indeed, the rationale behind advocating a shift ... shows that it was not a call for a change of heart but rather (than) need for the party to expand its base.

... The fact that sections within the Sangh Parivar - the VHP and the Bajrang Dal in particular ... turning their ire on members of the Christian community and institutions run by them since the BJP came to power cannot be glossed over. And in most instances when such attacks took place, the BJP's senior leaders were seen condoning such acts... The new line - that the BJP will now strive to shed its animosity towards the Muslim community - will be received with some skepticism.

Wooing Muslims Editorial, The Hindustan Times

The stagnation of the party's vote ... has seemingly made (the new President) tell the party to woo the Muslims... The belief, substantiated by Golwalkar's writings, that the Sangh Parivar does not envisage equal status for non-Hindus in the land of its vision ... keeps the minorities away from his party. In fact, if Laxman cares to ascertain how the ordinary members of his party routinely speak about the Muslim 'invaders' and their past atrocities, he will get further evidence of the reasons for the Muslim alienation...

... Laxman's ... foray into political philosophy with the call for a convergence of beliefs of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Hedgewar can only be regarded with a sense of bemusement... Gandhi was a true proponent of India as a country of all communities living together as equals, an ideal which is not shared by the RSS... Given such a fundamental difference, there is hardly any scope for closing the gap between Gandhi and Hedgewar.

was being projected as India's man of destiny with a liberal face, the BJP organised a Muslim youth conference and fielded six Muslim candidates, five more than it had done in 1996... □

National Press on Vajpayee as Swayamsevak

Non-Resident Hindutva

Editorial, Times of India, 12 Sept., 2000

... Atal Behari Vajpayee ... tightrope-walked his way out of potential trouble at a meeting called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in New York. Would Vajpayee promise to complete the Ram temple in Ayodhya? asked one among the assembled saints. "If I have a two-thirds majority, I would endeavour to build an India of my dreams". The saints did not ask Vajpayee if the Ram temple was part of his dreams; they assumed it was... For Vajpayee's saffron fan club, his answer was much-needed affirmation that the BJP had not dropped the Ram temple from its agenda. For his liberal admirers it was equally affirmation that there was no place for the temple in Vajpayee's larger vision. There was further play on words, when the prime minister said he would always be a swayamsevak, the nation's swayamsevak... So, there he was once again — a committed sanghi from one angle and a committed liberal-nationalist from another.

There is one question, though. Why did Vajpayee consider it necessary to attend a meeting of the VHP? Had he not said whatever he said at a saffron conclave there simply was no scope for a controversy... The saffron backdrop ensured that doubts on this score would remain. And more so given the growing ideological divide within the BJP back home... The Vajpayee group — powerful though it is — knows the consequences of alienating the RSS. Without the latter's organisational strength and ability to mobilise support, the BJP could find itself at a major disadvantage at election time. What better way simultaneously to please the liberals and the RSS than to play the liberal card at home — including wooing the Muslims — and the saffron card overseas? Unfortunately for the BJP, there is a danger in this: Like the Congress before it, it could find itself falling between two stools.

The Old Line Again?

Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 12 Sept., 2000

... His comment that an India of 'our' dreams will be built if the party gets a 2/3 majority in Parliament will reinforce the belief that the BJP's present moderate position on various contentious issues cannot be taken seriously... The fact of Vajpayee making the point gives it a different dimension by indicating that there is, after all, little difference between the so-called hardliners and moderates in the organisation... The Prime Minister's reference to spending the rest of his life as a swayamsevak will be seen as echoing his earlier "RSS is my soul" statement... (These) remarks cannot but raise fresh doubts about the sincerity of the BJP's latest overture towards the Muslims which gave the impression that the party was

Et Tu, Vajpayee?

Editorial, The Indian Express, 12 Sept., 2000

... Whatever the subterfuge adopted by the organizers, the meeting was essentially a VHP affair... Vajpayee's presence at that venue was unacceptable. What's worse, it vested the meeting with an unwarranted political importance, and this at a time when the BJP has been consciously trying to distance itself from the VHP and other outfits of its ilk. In fact, every time the VHP makes a statement critical of the Vajpayee government, the BJP spokesmen labour the point that the BJP and the VHP are two different entities.

... The havoc (VHP) had caused in Gujarat in the name of protesting against the killing of Hindu pilgrims in Kashmir is too recent to be forgotten.

... That his remarks can be interpreted in both ways and with perfect justification is a tribute to his eloquence. But then politics is not just about semantics...

I may be Prime Minister today, may not be tomorrow... But one thing that nobody can rob me of is my being a Swayamsevak.

- A.B. Vajpayee,
Prime Minister of India

Truth and Incongruity

Editorial, The Hindu,

12 September, 2000

... This is not the first time Mr. Vajpayee, a founding-member of the erstwhile Jana Sangh, has characterised himself as a "swayamsevak". During his

two years as Prime Minister, he has made no secret of his sympathy for the RSS, which he has both defended and praised on the floor of Parliament... Irrespective of what he intended to mean, the point really is whether he should have said what he did when he did. It is somewhat incongruous for a Prime Minister on an official tour abroad to claim that he had attended a meeting as a "swayamsevak".

In fact, the Prime Minister's very decision to attend the Staten Island function - which was dominated by Hindu religious leaders and those with 'saffronite' political views - was ill-advised... From all accounts, the ... function ... appeared ... more like a politico-religious jamboree.

... Some of the Prime Minister's remarks bore the stamp of the Hindutva agenda... His yearning for a two-thirds majority to pursue the BJP's exclusivist agenda is also likely to cause some discomfiture among the constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)...

There is also the question what the international community will make of what he said... At a time when India is trying to convince the world that it is a victim of religion-backed terrorism ... it is important that it does not allow itself to be accused of intolerance or bigotry...

preparing to chart a new course in domestic politics. Now it seems that nothing really has changed. □

On the Tightrope Editorial, The Pioneer, 12 Sept., 2000

... We have done a lot even though we are in a minority. We can build the India of our dreams if the people give us two-thirds majority.

... The expansion of the BJP's social base would be pointless if means losing its original Hindutva constituency. Hence the need for ambiguity and tightrope walking on the part of its leaders which, one hopes, would diminish progressively as it evolves further towards being a nationalist party of 21st century India.

Vajpayee's Dreams, How Saffron are They? Editorial, The Statesman, 13 Sept., 2000

It is difficult to judge whether Vajpayee's dreams include the implementation of what has come to be known as the core Hindutva agenda ... There is no point in saying that the BJP has its own agenda, the audience, especially the Muslim audience, clearly holds them responsible for the behaviour of (Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal). For good reason. If there is a Sangh Parivar, there **must be a notion of a shared ethos, of collective action and collective survival** — there must be something keeping **the family together**.

... **The fact is that the BJP remains a Hindu party and its existence within the mainstream will continue to be problematic until there is a radical reformulation of its core ideology**... Vajpayee wants to put (Hindutva) ideology in cold storage for the time being — because he wants his government to survive, stay the course and establish the BJP as a credible alternative to the Congress. A strong and positive approach towards the Muslims would be a part of the strategy, but how he ... deals with rank and file apprehensions about an erosion of their core constituency is the big question...

Of Swayamsevaks and Semantics Editorial, The Hindu, 14 September, 2000

The Prime Minister's clarification ... deserves a qualified welcome...

Overall, the Prime Minister Vajpayee's clarificatory statement will take some of the heat out of the controversy over his ... speech... The Prime Minister's remarks were treated as evidence of the BJP's doublespeak on Ayodhya and he was charged with having committed an act of impropriety by lending the impression that he was present at the function in his capacity as the leader of a political party rather than the Prime Minister of the country... The controversy was largely of his own making.

... Mr. Vajpayee may say that wrong meanings were read into his words but it doesn't take a degree in

Siddharth Varadarajan On Vajpayee's Real Self

... Vajpayee ... has only stated a point he has never attempted to hide. In February, he (said): "The RSS is not a political outfit. It is a cultural and social organisation and I don't think objections should be raised on anybody joining it."

In May 1995, he wrote an article in the RSS organ *Organiser* titled 'The Sangh is my soul'... According to Atal Behari Vajpayee, the RSS has a two-fold task. "One is to organise the Hindus...The other is to assimilate the non-Hindus, like Muslims and Christians, in the mainstream. They can follow the faith of their own conviction...But they must have a feeling of patriotism for this country". The prime minister's description echoed a fundamental tenet of RSS theology: that all Indian Hindus are, by definition, patriotic, while Indian Muslims and Christians have to be 'assimilated' into loving their country.

Elaborating on the role of Muslims in India, Vajpayee repeated the familiar RSS charge that Muslims have "yet to learn the art of existing and flourishing in a country where (they) are in a minority". "The Quran", he alleged, "offers no guidance in this regard. It only talks of killing kafirs or converting them to Islam. But they cannot do it always and everywhere. How can they do it where they are in a minority? If they try to do it, a major clash will take place and only the members of the minority will be killed".

Ironically, in August 1979, Vajpayee had written an article in the *Indian Express* criticising the RSS for not doing enough to address the genuine apprehensions of people. "Its repudiation of the theocratic form of the state was welcome, yet the question could legitimately be asked - why does it not open its doors to non-Hindus...(and as a) natural corollary...clear(ly) enunciate that by Hindu Rashtra it means the Indian nation, which includes non-Hindus as equal members." To this day, the RSS has never really answered that question, though in all fairness, Vajpayee has never really bothered to ask it again.

(Source: The Times of India, 12 September, 2000)

semantics to make a reasonable conjecture about why the Prime Minister indulged in such verbal jugglery... Spurred by the desire to play to a gallery that was packed with fawning party sympathisers, ... the Prime Minister appears to have chosen to indulge in some clever verbal play. The imprecise meanings and the ambiguous formulations seem very much as if they were intended for the consumption of the ... politico-religious leaders... □

Abroad, PM should Embrace all Indians Shahabuddin's Historical Letter to Vajpayee, 9 October, 1998

During your stay in New York, you attended and addressed a Reception by the Indian American Community on 27 September, 1998.

I have before me an advertisement issued by the 4 major sponsors including Overseas Friends of BJP. However, the list of co-sponsors includes a large number of Hindu Mandirs and organisations including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, Hindu Centre, Hindu Sevika Samiti, Hindu Students Council, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and others.

There are no doubt several ethnic bodies, representing Gujaratis, Haryanvis, Keralites, Maharashtrians and Sindhis. But we miss organisation of Muslims, Christians and Buddhist Indians. We also miss other linguistic/ethnic groups like Tamils, Telugus, Bengalis, Biharis who are also active.

I sincerely feel that whatever party the Prime Minister belongs to, abroad he is the head of our Government and, as such, he should be welcomed by all sections of the Indian community and, on his part, he should embrace all.

Because of my high personal regard for you, I have thought it fit to draw your attention to such omission. Your office and the sponsors should have exerted themselves to bring in everyone.

[Mr. Vajpayee had graciously acknowledged the letter on 28 October, 1998 - Editor].

Stuff of Dreams

Editorial, Hindustan Times, 14 Sept., 2000

The Prime Minister's clarification that ... should defuse the recent controversy. However, ... one man's dream can be another's night-mare... In India today much of the earlier consensus on politics, economic direction, foreign and nuclear policy, etc. has broken down...

... The differences in the social and cultural spheres are no less sharp than those in the economic sector. Here, the belief among the right-wing hardliners of the kind who were present at Vajpayee's New York meeting is that India cannot attain its ordained destiny of being a great power unless it asserts its Hindu identity.

It is not a view shared by those whose India is a country where the concepts of pluralism and of the secular dissociation between the State and religion prevail. In such a country, no single religion or culture will have primacy of place. To them, India can only be great if all its communities participate as equals in the exciting adventure of building a new nation which is proud of its rich multicultural heritage... It is self-evident that an India of everyone's dreams can only be built by treading the middle path and eschewing sectarian interests, both of the Left and the Right.

IUML: Statement on PM's Split Personality, 11 September, 2000

We deeply regret that Prime Minister Vajpayee deemed it fit in his tour of the United States to ... share a platform with the leaders of the VHP. The participation does not augur well for secular democracy. It also exhibits total insensitivity to the present popular protest against VHP's bid to secure UN NGO status.

Quite expected, the Prime Minister was presented the demand for construction of temple on the site of the Babari Masjid at Ayodhya. It is shocking that the Prime Minister chose to be vague and apologetic ... explaining reportedly that his was a coalition government and that he did not enjoy full majority, and he also appealed for a two third majority to "build the India of our dream".

Secular India, committed to the rule of law, is deeply hurt. The credibility, if at all there was any ... of the recent so-called favourable disposition of the RSS and the BJP towards Muslims stands exploded and shattered.

The Prime Minister unfortunately seeks shelter under the cover that his presence at the function the proceeds of which goes to strengthen the cause of the VHP, was in his capacity as 'Swayamsevak'. This invests the Prime Minister with a split-personality convenient for the furtherance of the communal fascist agenda which is now not so hidden.

The allies of the BJP need to sit up, take serious note and reconsider their continuance in the NDA.

Limits of Moderation,

Editorial, The Statesman, 9 Sept., 2000

... What does its growing Vajpayeeisation bode for the BJP? At one level, ... it may well signal a welcome moderation of the party's stance on key issues — be it the distancing from contentious issues, or the olive branch to Muslims. It may even lead to a more harmonised government policy on economic issues, one that is less strained by contrary pulls and tugs from within the party. Yet, the sidelining of all difference cannot bode well for the party in the long term. Despite their individual differences and idiosyncrasies, Uma Bharati, Sushma Swaraj and now Govindacharya may have more in common than they know: their marginalisation may point to the same process of creeping homogenisation in Vajpayee's BJP.

The BJP would do well to cast a look at its main rival here. Years of centralisation of all power, decades of the high-handed snuffing out of dissent, have denuded the Congress of all vibrancy and vigour. Today, the Congress flounders from one crisis to another; lack of inner party democracy has made it a minefield of unresolved tensions. Perhaps Vajpayee's BJP is still to learn that coherence does not necessarily have to be achieved by expelling difference. And that, if too strictly etched out, the Laxman rekha may well become a barricade. □

Neerja Chowdhury On Compulsions of Coalition Culture

At a philosophical plane, L.K. Advani's statement in Nagpur – that good governance has no relation with ideology – is a contradiction in terms...

Why then has Advani made such a statement? His words carry a host of political messages. It is one more signal that the party's erstwhile hawk has not only out Hindutva on the back burner but is delinking it from governance in principle. This amounts to more than just a tactical retreat on the party's core issues. What he seems to be saying is not so much that ideology has no relation with governance but that running a government has no relation with (the party's) ideology. Implicit in the statement is an admission that Hindutva is too narrow a base for the ideological underpinnings of a party that has plateaued and is eyeing new horizons.

It may have been used by the BJP to make a quantum leap forward by getting the support of a community agitated over an issue at a particular moment. But a stint in power has made it clear that a temple at Ayodhya cannot feed people, give them employment or health or educational facilities, build roads, or deal with the growing cacophony of demands coming from various interest groups and regions.

It has also brought home the point that many of its programmes were mere slogans that were suitable only for a party in opposition...

Advani is clearly positioning himself as the number two in the party, even as he goes out of his way to show that he does not want to challenge Vajpayee's leadership in any way. He is also casting himself in the mould of Atal Behari Vajpayee – as the next moderate face of the BJP – realizing the compulsions of coalitional governance. Are here to say.

... In fact, the hardliners in the party are already beginning to express their disappointment with Advani for not taking on the prime minister for many of his policies and for going soft on the party's ideology.

The prime minister's frail health has created a climate of uncertainty in the party and outside it, and brought the issue of succession to the fore again. Advani is the natural successor to Vajpayee in more ways than one...

There is one view in the Sangh Parivar that Vajpayee should make way for someone else, given his poor health, to facilitate a smooth succession... Clearly, Advani is more acceptable to the party than anybody else and the allies may accept Advani rather than go for an election.

However, steering the party to a new phase of becoming a mainstream organisation that is, at the same time, acceptable to both the RSS-BJP hardliners and to the allies, will be no cakewalk.

(Source: The Indian Express, 4 September, 2000)

SP: Tilt Towards High Castes

... The Samajwadi Party, on 24 August 2000, announced its State Executive ... indicating its intention to give more representation to upper castes... The SP, considered a political association of Yadavas and Muslims, has made a strong bid to reject the stigma in its new executive announced by the State Party President, Ram Saran Das.

In the 51-member committee there are **seven Thakurs and seven Muslims**. The representation to Thakurs is significant as their ratio in the State's population is merely two-thirds of the minority community. **The SP has also nominated four Brahmins and two Kayasthas**. A majority of the members, however, belong to the backward classes and scheduled castes but the increased representation to upper castes certainly indicates a shift in the perceptions of Mulayam Singh Yadav... (Source: The Hindu, 25 August, 2000)

UP: The Rajput Factor

... Disgusted at the "systematic persecution" of their kinsmen the Rajputs – Ministers, MLAs and office-bearers cutting across party lines – have decided to put up stiff resistance. Bureaucrats are providing tacit support...

"The 11.6 per cent Rajput votes would play a decisive role in the outcome of the next Assembly elections", thundered Minister of State for Energy Vivek Singh. He ruled out any marked division in Rajput votes...

If Rajputs put up a joint front, it would prove fatal for the BJP. The party is already feeling the impact of denying the Chief Minister's chair to Union Minister Rajnath Singh. Rajnath has emerged as the symbol of 'Rajput resistance'...

In the electoral politics of UP, Rajputs are considered a floating vote. The reason is their inability to put up a united front. But this time, Rajputs seem determined to reverse the trend... The low percentage (of Rajputs) in a House of 425 ... is the result of anomalies in demarcation of reserved constituencies. Most of the reserved seats are Rajput dominated...

(Source: The Anti-Corruption Weekly, 30 July – 6 August, 2000)

Yadav Raj – Worse Than its Opposition Editorial, The Statesman, 26 August, 2000

...The Yadavs are a different species altogether. They were the principal beneficiaries of the land reform programmes implemented in the fifties, to the extent that they are now the most powerful land owning caste in the two states and their arrival on the political stage has been spectacular. Some of them naturally tend to believe that having acquired the status, they also have a right to the "privileges" associated with those whom they have

(Contd. on Page 447)

Proceedings of the Parliament

(16-25 August, 2000)

I – Rajya Sabha

Special Mention:

- 18 Aug : On Telecasting of Urdu News on DD, Hyderabad by C. Ramachandraiah.
- 22 Aug : On Objectionable labels in advertisement by J. Natarajan.
- 25 Aug : On Malayali Muslims in Pakistan by V.P. Duraisamy.
- : On Implementation of recommendations of National Steering Committee on Textbook Evaluation by E. Faleiro.

Government Bills:

- 17 Aug : The Constitution (88th Amendment) Bill, 1999 introduced, discussed and passed. M.A. Rashid participates.
- 21 Aug : Passport (Entry without Visa) (Amendment) Bill, 2000, introduced, discussed and passed.

Private Bills:

- 18 Aug : **Introduced:** Prevention of Insult to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2000 by K. Chatterjee.
- : Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2000 to amend Article 15 by R.S. Gavai.
- : Population (Amendment) Bill, 2000 to amend Article 29 by S. Pachauri.
- Discussed:** Eradication of Unemployment Bill, 1996.
- 25 Aug : **Discussion** on Private Resolution on Family Planning and Population Control. Withdrawn.

II – Lok Sabha

Tabled:

- 18 Aug : Annual Report (AR) of Salarjung Museum for 1998-99.
- : A.R. of Khuda Bakhsh Memorial Public Library for 1998-99.
- 20 Aug : A.R. of National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language for 1998-99.
- : A.R. of Central Social Welfare Board for 1998-99.
- 25 Aug : A.R. of Sahitya Akademy for 1998-99.
- : A.R. of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan for 1997-98.
- : Report on Committee on Policy of Education

Discussion under Rule 193:

- 17 Aug : On Atrocities against Minorities, initiated by Mo'inul Hasan.
- : R. Alvi, A.G.F. Osmani, E. Ahamed participate.
- 18 Aug : Minister of Home Affairs replies.
- 21 Aug : Congress Motion on Killing of Amarnath Yatra Pilgrims.
- : G.M. Banatwalla participates.

22 Aug : Advani replies. Motion negatived.

Government Bill:

- 22 Aug : Constitution (88th Amendment) Bill, 1999 (Amendment to Article 338) as passed by Rajya Sabha adopted.
- G.M. Banatwalla participates.

Matters under Rule 377:

- 22 Aug : On Construction of Airport in Ajmer by R.S. Rawat.
- : On _____ of Rajbanshis in West Bengal by P.R. Dasmunshi.

Private Bills/Resolutions:

- 25 Aug : Moved Resolution on Reservation in Public Employment and Education moved by E. Ahamed.
- : Compulsory Military Training Bill.
- : Population Policy (Bill).
- : Citizens (Identity Card) Bill.
- : The Constitution (Amendment) Bill to amend Article 16-A.

(Contd. from Page 446)

displaced in the socio-economic, if not the caste, hierarchy. In other words, Yadav raj is the same thing as Thakur-Brahmin raj, if not worse. They may not have caste privileges, but they have something that is even better – overlordship of the administration which they have broken and bent to their will, through the systematic use of muscle power and the prerogatives of office in continuance of methods which brought them to power.

(Contd. from Page 449)

or its size. The identity may not only be the caste. It may also be religious, tribal, linguistic or racial. Even regional identity may also be divisible into various components – so long as there is a minimum level of concentration in a given area.

The battle, today all over the world, is not for 'Roti' alone but for 'Pahchan' and 'Izzat'. In this sense, this is a universal development – the world is at the threshold of ethnicity, in the widest sense of the term. India is the single biggest social laboratory for this historic stage in Man's evolution.

We, in India, should therefore apply our mind to this process in a more universal and pragmatic frame, which should take into account all possible variations in man's condition and all possible means of ensuring the full flowering of Man's genius whatever his identity and full respect to his rights as a human being, as a member of his social group and as a citizen of his state. □

Gail Omvedt on Proportional Representation for Universalisation of Democracy

The recent (article) by Dr. Satinath Choudhary ... "Empowering Social Minorities" (The Hindu, July 18, 2000) ... in the ongoing discussion on review of the Constitution... Dr. Choudhary, a Dalit himself, has struck at the heart of the matter of representation and empowerment.

His argument is simple. No reservation of any kind, for women or for Dalits, whether by reservation of constituencies or by requiring political parties to allot a proportion of their tickets, will do any good as long as it is linked to the current form of electoral system.. What is this current system? It is one in which there are territorial (geographically-based) constituencies which send only one representative, the winner of the largest number of votes, to Parliament. This is most commonly known as a first-past-the-post or FPTP system...

The main fault of an FPTP system of single-member territorial constituencies is that minorities are systematically under-represented. For social minorities which are geographically concentrated, as some ethnic groups are, this may not be so serious. But for those minorities which are spread throughout a country, as Dalits are in India and as African- Americans are in the U.S. (to take the two most obvious examples), the result can be devastating. They will not achieve real representation simply because the majority (or sizeable plurality) of white or caste- Hindu voters can, with a plurality of votes in the constituency, determine who gets elected. **Minorities can be shut out in every constituency and so get almost no representation in Parliament.**

Muslims in India, for example, have less than half of their proportion of the population as MPs. In the U.S. today, African- Americans, with 12 per cent of the population, have only 7 per cent of the seats in the Congress, while Latinos, who are 10 per cent of the population, have only 3 per cent. And even this is the highest proportion they have achieved in the history of the country, and has been made possible only due to gerrymandering of constituencies, something recently banned by the U.S. Supreme Court! ...

... Dalits because of reservation, have a percentage of MPs equivalent to their proportion of the population - but, as Dr. Choudhary argues, this is not a true representation because they are, in effect, chosen by an upper-caste majority dominated by very different political and social ideas than those held by the majority of Dalits themselves. As evidence he cites data showing that the BJP in the 1996 election won 40 per cent of the seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes while, as surveys have shown, only 10 per cent of Scheduled Castes actually supported them.

Electoral systems based on proportional representation solve this problem in a very simple way. They use, first of all, multi-seat constituencies (these may

range from constituencies electing five to seven MPs to constituencies covering a whole country) rather than the single-member ... constituencies. In the simplest form of PR, the Party List system, political parties put forward their list of candidates. In the Closed List version, voters can only choose the party they want; in the Open List form (which is what is advocated by Dr. Choudhary) they may vote for individual candidates and so have a say in how candidates are ranked in the party lists themselves. The Open List system is obviously more democratic. But in both versions, once the vote is in, each political party is allotted a proportion of the elected MPs according to the vote received...

... PR ... works much better than other systems in ensuring that minority social groups and minority political views - as long as these provide the motives through which people vote - get representation...

This shutting out of minorities is what Ambedkar feared would happen to Dalits in India. From the beginning, he was certain that Dalits would not get representation in the existing FPTP system. As early as 1919, at the time of his testimony before the Southborough Committee, he posed the problem of representation...

... By the time of Independence and the drafting of the Constitution, separate electorates were thoroughly discredited, and reservation within single-member constituencies was the only option considered... The failure to consider any other alternative electoral system is remarkable...

... The Constitutional Review Commission set up by the BJP Government (has) to frightened progressives or minorities. Dalits have very understandably agitated against the very idea of a review, using as their banner the emotional cry that "Ambedkar's Constitution" must not be touched.

However, emotion can be misleading. On the issue of electoral systems, PR versus FPTP, some rethinking is necessary...

... The PR electoral systems empower not only social minorities. They also help to empower political minorities, or minorities of opinion and so are supported in the U.S. by minority parties as diverse as the Greens and the Libertarian party.

It is striking that with all the discussion of democratic struggles and expanding democracy in India, almost no one has thought of debating the mechanisms of democratic representation... To discuss proportional representation today is to discuss what may seem to be a radical Constitutional change, but one very much in the spirit of Ambedkar, who was concerned throughout his life about defeating the tyranny of the majority.

(Source: The Hindu, 23 and 24 August, 2000)

Keith Flory on Loss of an Opportunity

The rifle barrels had not even cooled when the cease-fire was scrapped in as unilateral a manner as it was announced... And as statements and accusations fly thick and fast, (the common people are) left wondering what went wrong.

The pertinent question might be what went right. A government whose competence is open to question, an opposition that hardly lives up to its claim to be responsible, and a militant group that was not really capable of acting independently were all elements in what might be dubbed a tragi-comedy if only its outcome were not so lethal...

It would be all too simple to blast Pakistan, as the government has been doing... Placing a higher value to perceived diplomatic and political harvests that might be reaped... India "responded positively" to the Hizbul Mujahideen's (HM) offer even before its complete ramifications had been spelt out...

... Leaders of the Government and the host of self-styled Kashmir experts were to town – on TV or in print – about how a breakthrough had been achieved, how Pakistan had lost its stranglehold over the largest militant group and the only one with genuine Kashmiri roots...

All that euphoria might have been justified if aimed solely at creating the atmosphere in which peace talks might progress. Alas, that translated into rather hasty action on the ground...

Then it was in the full glare of publicity that the Home Secretary and Special Secretary in that ministry ... met the HM leaders at a venue at which the media had congregated. A "photo-opportunity" was created...

Was it necessary for such high-ranking officials to participate in a meeting at which only the ground rules for the cease-fire were to be worked out? Surely that could have been entrusted to local officials and local commanders of the security forces. The room for manoeuvre was restricted at the first step. It was as though all was cut and dried, only signatures remained to be put to the dotted line...

Surely the government ought to have opted to entrust the negotiations to a non-official. A person acceptable to both sides who could have functioned as a genuine intermediary, who by using the time-tested method of shuttling back and forth could have kept both sides talking until common ground was reached, step by step. Peace talks are a protracted process.

... It was indeed a welcome, and courageous step that A.B. Vajpayee took in declaring that the talks were being held without pre-conditions, within the framework of humanity and not the limitations of Constitutional

provisions. It might have sounded great, but it did bring the opposition parties into the picture, awkward questions were asked. The clouds began to gather.

The most unfavourable fallout of that ... was the pressure it placed on the HM. Its leaders, too, had shown a high degree of courage in offering a cease-fire, they might have sought signs of a positive response, but they could hardly have expected that India would seek to create an impression that it had succeeded in snapping the HM's Pakistan connection.

... To accuse the HM of changing its stance by suddenly insisting that Pakistan be associated with the talks is a dangerous over-simplification. The stakes were raised sky high even before the cards were dealt.

The opposition parties created further complications. All paid lip service to supporting the peace process but buckled at the first test of national resolve – the killings...

If over-reaction had marked the response to the cease-fire offer of 24 July, it also marked its withdrawal. The tirade against Pakistan – which never supported the cease-fire – might go down well in certain domestic circles but does not cool the climate in which some stray threats might be picked up again. The Home Minister's statement in Parliament ... created the impression that the door to the HM had been shut...

In the same breath L.K. Advani slammed the Hurriyat leaders for not joining in the trumpet-blowing over the HM's cease-fire offer. Did he really expect them to overnight vacate the space they have been striving to create for themselves, space which the government had helped create by the release of its leaders...

The upshot of the government's skyscraper high posturing is that it is leaving itself with no one to talk to in Kashmir. Even Farooq Abdullah (whose claim to represent the views of the majority of Kashmiris is open to serious question) is being bashed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad – and the government cannot claim to be free of its influence...

An opportunity has been lost, apportioning blame brings no comfort. The most positive assessment would be that some kind of loose, informal arrangement might still be salvaged by keeping up contacts with those elements of the HM that wish to abandon the gun – for whatever reason. And should that come about there would be no need for "announcements" that only complicate matters.

... The role of the media has to be examined. To what extent did it contribute to making first steps appear the last...

(Source: The Statesman, 12 August, 2000)

E. Ahamed on Atrocities on Minorities, Lok Sabha, 17 August, 2000

... Only two days back that we have celebrated the 53rd Independence Day of our country... It is a matter of regret that still we have to discuss the atrocities committed on minorities (as they face) consistent threats, harassment and atrocities... There are elements in this country (to the) minorities and (they) are creating many problems not only for the Government ... and for the peace-loving people... (Recently) destruction of ... the properties, business places and industrial units belonging to the Muslims ... in Surat – with the connivance of the administration, is shocking for all right-thinking Indians...

... On 9th August I went to Ahmedabad and on 10 and 11th, I visited Surat... What have I seen? ... In Gujarat, the VHP had called the Bandh on 3rd August. While Muslims were participating in the Bandh ... their properties, their business places, their houses and their industrial units had been destroyed, I am a witness to it – material and machinery worth crores of rupees had been destroyed. Why? ... I ask why such crimes and atrocities are taking places against Muslims. Did they not support this Government on the sensitive issue of Kashmir? ...

... Every time incidents involving Muslims are being linked with ISI. If there is ISI hand, the government should take action against ISI. There was a promise made by the Home Minister (for) a White Paper on ISI. Why has it not been given so far? ...

We have absolutely nothing against taking whatever action that deserves to be taken by the Government against ISI. But the poor innocent and the hapless people of the minority community must be spared.

... The activities of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad are creating a lot of heartburn among the minorities... (Even) the Samata Party's National Council passed a resolution (which said):

"We must however ensure that organizations like the VHP and Bajrang Dal are not allowed to fan tension or tarnish the image of NDA. They are not the true representatives of the Hindu community."

This is the view even among those who are in the NDA. Then, why have they not been curbed or controlled.

... It is the duty of the Home Minister to take steps, stringent action, whenever, there is violence and terror against minorities.

While inaugurating a meeting of the Chief Secretaries, Home Secretaries and the Directors-General of Police of different States, the Home Minister is reported to have said:

"These incidents that is, the atrocities against minorities, specially Christians, do not appear to be emanating from any tension between the communities. As the sequence of these incidents indicate the possibility of an anti-Indian element trying to create disaffection in society and give the country a bad name cannot be ruled

Police Collabroation with Sangh Parivar in Surat

Shahabuddin's Letter HM Advani, 14 Aug., 2000

The Jamiat-ul-Ulama-Hind team which has just returned from a visit to Surat has reported that **the material loss suffered by the Muslim community of Surat in the recent disturbances runs into crores** as valuable, immovable and moveable property including residential houses and household effects, shops with their goods of trade and factories with their machinery, equipment, raw material and finished products and vehicles, both personal and commercial, have been looted and burnt, not to count the loss of life and honour. **All these losses were inflicted by mobs with the negligence and connivance, if not the collaboration, of the local police.**

I request you to advise the Government of Gujarat to appoint a Claims Commissioner to register and examine all claims from the sufferers and announce a comprehensive scheme of compensation as in the case of Delhi Disturbances of 1984.

Words and Deeds

Editorial, Hindustan Times, 4 Sept., 2000

After the self-cleansing ritual at Nagpur, this is bad news for the BJP. The National Commission on Minorities has squarely blamed the VHP and Bajrang Dal for the riots in Surat... "Since the riots in Surat were a sequel to the Gujarat bandh call given by the VHP/Bajrang Dal, the state Government should impress upon the organisers of the bandh to publicly accept full moral responsibility for failing to prevent their field functionaries from resorting to violence while enforcing the bandh. This will have a lasting impact on the prevention of riots in Gujarat," the report says. Indeed, with the increasing number of attacks against Christians and Muslims, Gujarat is fast earning the unenviable reputation of being the stomping ground of Sangh Parivar outfits, which are seemingly doing their best to refute the fatuous saffron claim that the BJP is working towards a riot-free India... The state provides a frightening example of what Hindu Rashtra really means for the minorities.

... The NCM's indictment has poured cold water on the party's bid to flaunt a pro-minority outlook. In this context, the NCM's conclusions have only reinforced what is widely believed, that it will take much more than a declaration of pious intent to dispel the suspicion that the projected new face of the BJP is nothing but a mask born of the exigencies of realpolitik, while its anti-minority agenda remains deeply entrenched within the rank and file as well among sections of the leadership...

out". This is what Shri Advani said. Who are these elements? Then why is the Government shying away from controlling these elements? Why has the Government not taken action against them? Who is protecting them? ...

Joydeep Ray**On Role of VHP & BD in Ahmedabad**

Every time Ahmedabad has communal trouble, two names invariably crop up – Babu Bajrangji and Harshad Giletwala. Police admit they are perpetual trouble-makers. Yet there is no stopping these Bajrang Dal activists, who have a string of criminal cases pending against them, including murder, cheating, riots and hatching conspiracy. Both have been arrested several times.

Many senior city police officers prefer not to comment on their activities because whenever they take any action, the VHP accuses them of framing charges against 'The innocent Gau-Raksha activists'.

Assistant Commissioner R.J. Savani who has seen Babu Patel alias Babu Bajrangji in action. (But) this man was behind the law and order problem in Naroda area on March 16, on the eve of Bakr-Id. He also did some mischief on August 3 – the day of the statewide bandh called by the VHP", Savani told.

Offences like instigating riots, possession of illegal arms, cases of cheating and forging documents also remain pending against Bajrangji. A case was registered by the Sardarnagar Police in mid-April against Bajrangji and his associates for cheating residents of Rs.32 lakh, forging documents, using fake seals and even forcible possession of someone else's property. But even four months after the case was registered, police says: "investigation is on".

Same is the case with Harshad Giletwala, who was allegedly involved in the sensational Bhagyodaya restaurant arson case in Drive-In area in July 1999. Giletwala and one of his associates Bhaskar Bhatt, had allegedly set ablaze Imdar Momin, Manager of the restaurant, on July 30 following communal tension in the city. Giletwala was released on bail and was back in action in the walled city. The August 3 looting and communal violence in Saraspur was master-minded by Giletwala, police says. A senior police official said: "Even if we arrest them, they come out on bail, making us feel helpless..."

(Source: The Indian Express, 12 August, 2000)

A.A. Engineer**On Prosecution for Bal Thackeray**

... If the Government of Maharashtra is really serious ... it should implement ... the Srikrishna Commission Report which is gathering dust in the Government shelves so far. It has not until now even undone the ATR filed by the Shiv Sena-BJP government dubbing the report as 'biased against the Hindus'... The Government of Maharashtra (should, therefore,) immediately ... bring to book not only Bal Thackeray but all those named by Justice Srikrishna including the police officials. This way it will not only redeem its pledge but also enhance its credibility in the eyes of public.

Rathin Das**On Hindu-Muslim Solidarity in Surat**

... Neighbours protected people of other communities from the dagger-wielding rioters, the sprawling Limbayat area of (Surat) when the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had called for a bandh in protest against the killings of Amarnath-bound pilgrims in Kashmir.

The Limbayat area, which was under night curfew ... following the bandh on August 3, is a virtual mini-India with labourers from all parts of the country making a living out of small menial jobs...

(On August 4) morning a crowd with saffron scarves on head and assorted weaponry in hand had swooped down on the Limbayat in search of minorities who they said didn't deserve to live in this country. As the crowd straightaway charged at the first minority house and slayed 45-year-old Yusuf Gulam Khatki, the Hindu neighbours in other lanes quickly ran to the other minority houses and hurriedly escorted them inside various houses of majority community people.

The simple and prompt effort of the majority community people saved as many as 54 minority lives... Yusuf Gulam Khatki died on the spot despite the best efforts of one of his ... neighbours... Autorickshaw driver Yusuf ran to his Hindu neighbour's house who came to his rescue. But the rioters ... went on inflicting more wounds to Yusuf (and) snuffed out his life on the spot.

So scared are the (Muslim) survivors ... that they would not even reveal the name of the Hindu saviours...

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 15 August, 2000)

Malkani: Distinction Between Riot and Mass Murder

The media keeps referring to the 1984 carnage that followed Mrs. Gandhi's killing, as a "riot". But was it really a riot..

A riot is defined as a confrontation between two angry and armed groups of individuals. But in this case, **it was a number of organized and armed bands of hoodlums that went on a spree murdering some three thousand unarmed Sikhs in cold blood – apparently with the police looking the other way.**

It was "mass murder", pure and simple, and not any "riot". It is about time we called it by its proper name.

(Source: The Times of India, 26 June, 2000)

Shahabuddin's Letters to Saiyid Hamid

**On Urdu Case in Supreme Court
26 August, 2000**

You may kindly recall that I had mentioned to you the appeal by the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan against the Allahabad High Court judgement in our favour, on recognition of Urdu as Second Official Language of UP, pending in the Supreme Court. I have repeatedly asked Dr. Khaliq Anjum that the Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu Hind should intervene in the case and take it up as the Supreme Court verdict would be of critical importance to status of Urdu not only in UP but in all other Urdu-concentration States. So far Dr. Anjum has not deemed it fit to accept my suggestion. He had mentioned that the Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu-Uttar Pradesh shall take it up. But it has not. I request you to take up this matter with the ATUH urgently.

Secondly, on continued denial of Urdu Education in UP i.e. teaching of Urdu at school level and use of Urdu as medium of primary instruction for those children whose Mother Tongue is Urdu, the Urdu Movement should file a writ in the Allahabad High Court. I request you also be give due consideration to this proposal. This can be done through your organisation Association of Minority Educational Institutions, UP, Lucknow. I shall be happy to assist in the formulation of the writ.

Introduce Mother Tongue as Compulsory Subject

Shahabuddin to Laloo Prasad Yadav, 7 August, 00

The Government of Bihar has, as you know, decided to introduce the course of study of the Central Board of Secondary Education for the Secondary Examination.

A problem has arisen because Central Board of Secondary Education syllabus includes 2 languages only, out of a long list of languages. Naturally the two languages would be Hindi and English.

Thus, the minority languages of Bihar which are compulsory under the present scheme, shall be totally left out.

Urdu, Bengali, Oriya, Nepali, Maithili, Munda, Oraon and Santhali are recognised in Bihar at the school level.

The only solution is to modify the CBSE syllabus with the addition of ONE MORE LANGUAGE as Mother Tongue. For linguistic minorities, their Mother Tongue should be compulsory. Hindi-speaking students, whose Mother Tongue is Hindi, should have the option to take Sanskrit or any other MIL, from among those spoken in Bihar.

I request you to consider the suggestion and advise the State Government accordingly.

**On Urdu University
12 September, 2000**

I have read your editorial "More than a University" regarding the progress of the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (Nation and the World, 1 September, 2000).

You have emphasized the long-term contribution that the University shall make in your view, to the economic uplift of the Urdu-speaking population, as 'its social role far exceeds its academic goals'.

Respectfully, I disagree with your criteria: posterity shall judge the University by the contribution it makes to uplift Urdu itself to the level where it can serve as the medium of modern education, not just at the under-graduate level but at the post-graduate level and for higher and professional education. Today, years after its formal establishment, it is still engaged in distance education, a task which could have been easily preferred by the IGNOU itself, simply by making its courses available also in Urdu, apart from Hindi and English. After all Urdu is the only other pan-Indian Language.

Secondly, even after it develops its own campus and, hopefully, affiliates Urdu-medium colleges across the country, it would be managing the education of a very small percentage of the students who speak Urdu or whose Mother Tongue is Urdu. So quantitatively its existence is not going to make much difference to the educational or economic status of the community.

Thirdly, even from a purely economic or, more realistically, employment angle, the University should not be expected to create, statistically speaking, more than a marginal number of additional jobs for its Urdu-knowing products. Opening areas of employment and utilization is beyond the power of any University; perhaps it was not even part of the objective behind establishing the University. So, I would like the MANUU to lay emphasis on the development of Urdu language as a vehicle for the transmission of modern knowledge, specially science and technology. It should not worry about the numbers but it should play the role that no one is prepared to play today. And surely, among million of Urdu-speakers, it can find some Urdu-speakers and Urdu-loving scholars who would devote themselves to this historic task of re-forging the links with the historic Osmania experiment and take it forward. That would be its achievement.

Urdu Teaching in A.P.

No. of Urdu Medium Schools	No. of Vacancies of Urdu-medium Teachers
Primary 1039	Secondary Grade 927
Upper Primary 427	Urdu Grade I & II 66
High 100	Others 95
Total 1566	Total 1088

(Reply by M/Secondary Education to Asaduddin Owaisi and others)

Alice Albinia on Madarsa Education

One should not underestimate the prestige, for a Muslim, of receiving a solid Islamic education. "It is the pride of every family to have a Hafiz" is repeatedly told.

But it is also true that for many Muslims in India, madarsa education is their only alternative to no education at all... Supported as they are by endowments from rich patrons and local donations of clothes, food and cash, madarsas offer a cheaper education than the local government school. Board and lodging is provided at a minimal rate. Tuition is entirely free.

For this reason, madarsas are often looked down upon by urban Muslims – even comparatively poor urban Muslims – as the repository of orphans and destitute...

For many of the students of Delhi's more prestigious madarsas, there is ... the rigorous eight years of training for a mufti qualification, which ... is apparently, "100 per cent guarantee" of a subsequent post as a madarsa teacher.

But for pupils of the smaller schools, life books a lot bleaker. Not least because for many of them, their aspirations go beyond the religious. A substantial number of the teenage boys I met wanted to become, not religious teachers, but government "officers".

... Government schools are not designed to teach religion. The problem, nowadays, is that madarsas have not shown much inclination to teach anything but...

... Defensiveness ... has also given rise to the charge of fundamentalism from certain quarters.

Acolytes of the madarsa system are adamant that "Indian citizens have rights to their fundamental rights"; and that this form of education is "against terrorist activities, and for love, peace and humanity".

Surprisingly, perhaps, the state Education Department tends to agree "Fundamentalism is not the issue", says Union Secretary for Education, M.K. Kaw, "These institutions should be encouraged, for they provide a good education for those rooted within their own cultures. But as with the Sanskrit schools, our concern has been to attempt to bring them into the mainstream". Under the plan "Modernization of Madarsa Education", the Government has, since 1993, been offering financial assistance to these and other "minority" education bodies for the funding of science, mathematics, social sciences, Hindi and English teaching.

But what do the madarsas themselves make of such initiatives? In general, the issue of secular education seemed to raise many hackles...

Educationalists such as Siraj Hussain, the new Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi, respond to these entrenched attitudes by pushing for change from within. Hussain, who has just completed (a) new, broad-ranging primary level syllabus for madarsas in UP, is an advocate of higher secular education for madarsa students, and he is keen to see a rise in the

number of admission of madarsa students to university courses. At present, Jamia Millia in New Delhi admits madarsa students for Arabic Studies, while the Unani Medicine Degree at Jamia Hamdard has a madarsa reservation of 10 places out of the fifty available.

Hussain concedes that a "certain class of educated" Muslim would never dream of giving its progeny a madarsa education. But like M.K. Kaw, he insists that madarsas are a valuable educational commodity: "They alone are responsible for raising literacy rates amongst poor Indian Muslims"...

The future of Islamic education ... lies in striking a balance between the sacred and the secular.

(Source: The Pioneer, 10 September, 2000)

List of Reputed Madarsas in India

1. Darul Uloom, Deoband, 1866
2. Mazaheral Uloom, Saharanpur, 1866
3. Madarsa Baqiyat-us-Salehat, Vellore, Tamilnadu, 1883
4. Jamia Mazharul Uloom, Banaras, 1893
5. Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema, Lucknow, 1894
6. Madarsa Ameenia, Delhi, 1897
7. Darul Uloom Khalilia Nizamia, Tonk, 1899
8. Jamia Arabia Hayatul Uloom, Mubarakpur, 1899
9. Madarsa-tul Islah, Sarai Mir, Azamgarh, 1909
10. Jamia Darus Salam, Umarabad, 1924

Police Census of Madarsas in Gujarat Text of Secret Police Circular

Subject: Information about Madarsas

Ref: Letter No. D-1-8 M.A./79/2000 received from IGP, Intelligence, Gujarat, Ahmedabad.

Jai Bharat. This is to state with reference to the above that as the information pertaining to Kutch district has been called for as above about Madarsas, you should submit the same in the following proforma very secretly, police station and area-wise.

If any difference is found between your information and that received from LIB field stations, action will be taken against the concerned may be noted.

Time limit must be observed as this information is to be submitted within 8 days.

1. Sr. No.
2. Name of Police Station
3. Name of Madarsa
4. When the Madarsa was established
5. Name of Manager, individual or organisation
6. Name of Teaching Moulvi and his Address
7. No. of Students
8. Source of Income
9. Is it getting foreign aid? If so, the name of the country and aiding organisation
10. Remarks.

Sd/-

For DSP, Bhuj-Kutchh

Rising Unemployment Among Muslim in West Bengal, 1990-1999

A Report by Md. Ashfaque

... During the last ten years (1990-1999) the number of registered unemployed on the live registers in West Bengal increased from 48,20,331 at the end of 1990 to 55,55,952 by the end of 1999, while more than 40,00,000 registered job seekers did not renew their registration or had their registration cancelled during this period... 47,66,176 new job seekers had registered their names...

Names of 21,09,560 (44 per cent of the number of new registrations during 1990-99 or 40 per cent of the average number of job seekers on the live register) were submitted during this period to the employers for consideration against vacancies. During the same period (1990-1999) 2,91,768 Muslims had come forward to register themselves, but the names of only 70,945 Muslims (24 per cent of the number of Muslims who had registered their names during the period or 10.58 per cent of the average number of Muslims on the live register) were submitted to the employers for consideration...

At the end of 1999 there were 55,55,952 unemployed job seekers on the live register of employment exchanges in West Bengal. Out of these 55,55,952 registered job seekers 7,31,357 (13 per cent) were Muslims.

The average number of job seekers on the live register of employment exchanges during the last ten years was 52,72,997 (12.71 per cent). Out of this average of 52,72,997 the average annual submission was 2,10,956 (4 per cent) job seekers of all categories per annum. In the case of Muslims out of the average number of 6,70,443 (12.71 per cent) Muslim job seekers on the live registers the average submission was only 7,095 (1 per cent of the total names of Muslim job seekers on the live registers) per annum.

Despite the fact that about 13 per cent of the registered job seekers, available on the live register of employment exchanges, were Muslims, the total 21,09,560 names submitted during these ten years to the employers for consideration against vacancies included the names of only 70,945 Muslims (3.36 per cent of the total submissions).

During these ten years (1990-99) out of the 93,156 registered unemployed persons placed in employment through the employment exchanges only 4232 (4.54 per cent) were Muslims. Out of the total 21,09,560 submissions made by the employment exchanges during the ten year period 93,156 persons (4 per cent) had succeeded in getting placements in jobs.

In the case of Muslims out of 70,945 names of registered Muslim job seekers whose names were submitted to the employers during these ten years 4,232 (6 per cent) were successful in getting jobs through the

employment exchanges. Success rate in the case of Muslims (6 per cent of the total Muslim names submitted for consideration by the employers) was, therefore, higher than the average success rates in all categories (4 per cent of the total submissions).

This shows that the Muslim job seekers are not in any way inferior to others. Muslims of West Bengal do not lag behind others in meeting the criteria for being selected to jobs but still they are denied equality in employment opportunity. They are placed in a disadvantageous position because of bias and prejudice in matters of submission of names. The concerned authorities of the State Government are not doing proper justice with the registered Muslim job seekers in the matter of submission and are submitting very few names of Muslim job seekers for consideration by the employers. This discrimination has been going on for a long time. For the Muslims in West Bengal the constitutional guarantees of equality in employment opportunity have proved to be a false promise...

... The Muslim confidence in the Employment Exchanges has been badly shaken. (That is why) over the years the number of unemployed Muslims coming forward to register their names in the Employment Exchanges has fallen from 47,908 in 1990 to an average of 27,096 per year during 1991-99. During this period more than 1,60,000 frustrated Muslim job seekers did not renew their registrations or had got their names cancelled from the live register of employment exchanges.

West Bengal accounts for 8 per cent of the total population of India. According to the Census (1991, Muslim population) was 1,60,75,836 (17 per cent of the total 9,52,22,853 Muslim population of India).

... West Bengal is second only to Uttar Pradesh which has a Muslim population of 2,41,09,684 (25 per cent of the total Muslim population of India).

Muslims in West Bengal constituted 24 per cent of the total population of the State. Scheduled Castes accounts for 24% and Scheduled Tribes for 6 per cent of the population of the State in 1991. The population of Other Backward Classes in West Bengal is estimated to be about 10 per cent of the total population of the State. Under the Governor Orders 37 per cent of the jobs in the West Bengal State Services are reserved for Scheduled Castes (22 per cent, Scheduled Tribes (6 per cent) and Other Backward Classes (9 per cent).

Though Muslims are (clearly) underrepresented in the services there is no provision for any reservation for them in West Bengal. Some other States like Kerala have

(Contd. on Page 450)

Shahabuddin on Haj Arrangements for 2001

Letter to Chairman, Haj Committee, 29 August, 2000

I thank you once again for inviting me to the Annual Haj Conference in New Delhi.

I have now gone through your notes on Review of Arrangements for Haj 2000 and the Preparations for Haj 2001.

I would like to make the following comments and request you to place my views before the next meeting of the Haj Committee.

Last Date: The last date should **NOT** be extended. However, all late applications should be diarised in chronological order of receipt.

Haj Quota: Within a week of the last date, it should be possible to fix the approximate 'Haj Quota' in the light of the total number of applications received, even without scrutiny about eligibility. This quota should be announced and it should **NOT** be changed later.

Accommodation in Mecca: I welcome the concept but it is not clear how and on what basis have the number and rates for various categories been fixed. I think a small Delegation of the Haj Committee should immediately proceed to Mecca and alongwith the C.G. make inquiries about the availability and market rate and fix the number and rate for each category realistically.

Selection of Buildings: The Haj Committee should stop the practice of sending B.S.T.'s. It should alternatively prepare a roster for deputation for 14 days of one Member of the Haj Committee, by rotation right from now, who should okay or reject all buildings selected by the Consul (Haj) or the CGI. In case of rejection, the case should be referred to the Consul General and the Chairman and finalised by them by consultation. I do not think it is necessary to involve the Ambassador in Riyadh except in the unlikely event of disagreement between the CG and Chairman.

Haj Charter: I understand that Saudia has refused to participate. So the Haj Committee should ask Air India if it can provide the service through its own aircrafts. If it is, the Charter Fare should be fixed at not higher than 66.6 per cent of the return IATA fare. If the Air India cannot, the Haj Committee should float its own tender and select the foreign carrier and decide the charter terms and work out detailed norms for ground and in-flight facilities. What is important is that the Charter Agreement, with Air India or a foreign carrier should be signed by the Haj Committee and not by Air India or by the Government of India. Needless to say, the technical advice of A.A.I. and DGCA and the guidance of the MCA and the MEA should be available to the Haj Committee throughout the negotiations. Indeed the AAI and DGCA representatives

should be included in the Charter Negotiating Team as consultants.

Baggage: It is a brilliant idea to standardise the personal baggage but the size only and not its quality should be fixed by the Haj Committee. This should be left to the State Haj Committees to procure and distribute the suitcases/boxes. The Haj Committee should play no part in this procurement.

Training of Pilgrims: A training programme can be effectively conducted only if the pilgrims are batched by districts and by one plane-land, say, 450. 450 Pilgrims from one district or contiguous districts should be treated as a unit, for a Training Course.

Welfare of Pilgrims: My suggestions are:

- 1) Each Batch should have one Amirul Hujjaj from within its ranks. He may be paid a small honorarium but no free seat or accommodation.
- 2) For each Batch, the State Government should select a general physician of the rank of Civil Asst. Surgeon (with about 5-10 years experience) and a compounder and a nurse who should travel with the batch in India, to Saudi Arabia and back and in Saudi Arabia. This Medical Team should be accommodated along with the pilgrims.
The Central Government should only select medical teams for the Central Dispensary in Mecca/Medina and a few Zonal Dispensaries. This should include some specialists.
- 3) The State Government should depute a junior executive officer with each batch to act as the Khadim-ul-Hujjaj. He should be on official deputation but he should travel, stay and move with the pilgrims in his charge. The pilgrim of each batch should know their Amirul Hujjaj, their Medical Team and their Khadim-ul-Hujjaj and vice-versa. They should live with each other and be available to them night and day.
- 5) The administrative personnel, on deputation to the CGI, Jeddah, should be reduced only to those required to man the Haj Terminal, the Haj Office in Jeddah, Mecca and Medina. They should not be higher than Section Officer/Assistant in rank. Their number should progressively increase with the out-going Hajis and go down with the in-coming Hajis.
- 6) For all footwork in Mecca/Medina, local Indians should be recruited as temporary Haj Staff.
- 7) Volunteers from the Indian community should be organised language/state-wise and utilised with specific groups and for specific missions. □

Shahabuddin on Mathura Dispute

I - Letter to NCM Chairman, 18 August, 2000

The current disturbance in Mathura is yet another example of municipal/administrative negligence in demarcating the graveyards, now within the municipal areas and of the Wakf authorities in building boundary walls around them. So long as they remain open, they are bound to attract unlawful occupation, both by the Muslims and the non-Muslims under one pretext or the other, particularly because with urban expansion they have become commercially valuable. However, public graveyards are public Wakfs and do not attract limitation. Unlawful occupation can, therefore, be removed easily, if such public Wakfs (and other public religious endowments of public character) are declared as 'public premises' for purposes of vacation of unlawful occupation. The trouble in Mathura arose because part of a graveyard whose title was sub-judice was sought to be bull-dozed and built over by a private party, apparently with the connivance of local police and the support of the local Parivar elements. The Muslim youth protested and clashed with the police. At least 3 (if not 6) persons have lost their life.

I request the Commission to visit Mathura and apart from short-term recommendations on the local developments, to recommend nation-wide long-term measures for demarcation of public graveyards and for construction of boundary walls by the community, with financial assistance by the Government, as indicated in 1981 on the floor of the Parliament by the then Home Minister Giani Zail Singh after the Bihar Sharif Riots.

II - Letter to UP Chief Minister, 18 Aug., 2000

May I draw your attention to the unfortunate situation in Mathura when at least 3, if not 6, lives have been lost in police firing on Muslim youth who were demonstrating against bull-doing of, and construction on, a part of a graveyard **under dispute**. It is unfortunate that the local authorities and the police remained silent spectators for 2 days. I request you

- to instruct the local authorities to maintain status quo till the title to the disputed land is judicially decided;
- to order a judicial inquiry in the police firing which appears to be excessive;
- to sanction ex-gratia payment to the next-of-kin of those killed, in accordance with the national norms.

You may also like to **order demarcation of all public graveyards in urban areas** in accordance with land/municipal records and construction of boundary walls with the use of Government funds, if necessary, **in order to avoid recurrence of such disputes.**

NCM's Letter to Govt. of UP

The Commission has received a representation against recent Police firing in Mathura in which 3 lives have been lost. The police firing is alleged to be excessive due to which a judicial enquiry has been demanded. It is requested that full facts of the case alongwith the comments of the State Government may kindly be

GOI's Letter of 7.10.83 to State Wakf Boards on Encroachment of Wakf Properties

... Over the years, there have been widespread encroachments on Wakf properties and there have been representations from time to time, about them... The Secretary, Legislative Deptt., Ministry of Law, Govt. of India, has drawn the attention of the Chief Secretaries of the State Govts./UTs about the need for a constant watch and appropriate action on the part of the State Governments towards satisfactory solution of the long outstanding problems of restoration of Wakf properties in adverse possession of Government Deptts., Local bodies and also other non-official agencies and individuals.

After a careful consideration of the matter ... the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Section 62 (1) of the Wakf Act, 1954, hereby directs the Wakf Board, To take all possible steps and measures towards prevention of encroachments taking place on the Wakf properties ... and also for the vacation of encroachments which have already taken place on the Wakf properties ... including the following specific steps: -

- The Wakf Board should keep a vigilant watch on the Wakf properties within its jurisdiction and whenever there is any reasonable ground or suspicion for apprehending a possible encroachment on any such property, the matter should be taken up appropriately with the concerned authorities in order to see that the possible threatened encroachment is prevented.
- FIR should be promptly filed with the concerned Police Station and the concerned senior Police/Revenue authorities of the State Government should be kept informed and their assistance sought for vacating the illegal encroachments.
- In cases where it is necessary to establish title or defend title in a Civil Court, recourse under Section 36 B of the Wakf Act, 1954 and/or any other law should be had expeditiously and the matter should be pursued vigorously. **[This has become redundant under the Wakf Act, 1995 - Editor].**
- Action should also be taken to suitably inform the public that no transaction, involving sale, gift, mortgage, exchange or a lease ... of immovable property of a Wakf would be valid under the law, in terms of Section 36A of the Act ... without the previous sanction of the Wakf Board.
- The State Government should be kept informed of the encroachments that have already taken place and the Central Government should be informed of the steps taken by the Wakf Board by a Regular quarterly report.

(Source: Circular No. 14(4)/83-Wakf dated 7 October, 1983)

furnished to this Commission as early as possible.

It is understood that the minority community in Mathura was aggrieved against construction on a disputed Qabristan land. Your report should, therefore, specifically indicate the action taken by you to maintain the status quo on the disputed land and protection of the Qabristan.

(NCM's Letter No. M/29/71/9/00-NCM dated 22.8.2000 to Chief Secretary of UP)

Grand Old Man of Mewat

Haji Chaw Khan is a legendary figure in Mewat region of Rajasthan. He lives in Pahadi town in a room in a Mahura... He looks after the cases of the Wakf Board...

He has married four times and lives with his present wife and 20 children including 8 sons and 12 daughters in this tiny village in Rajasthan. He cannot recall how many of his children are dead. The number may be between 10 and 12; he has lost two of his wives and third one migrated to Pakistan in 1947.

The entire Khan clan comprises about 50 members. He does not remember the names of most of his grandchildren nor is he able to recognise them.

He does not correctly remember his date of birth but says he passed the 8th standard examination in 1935... Khan has never touched wine or cigarette in his life. Brisk walking has kept him fit all these years.

Khan has only one more wish – to die in peace. He believes this is possible only if Hindus and Muslims coexist peacefully... Communal passions bother him deeply. The decline of moral values in society pains him. "I get very upset over the killings of innocent people in Kashmir. Corruption has become rampant in public life and people have become self-centred".

"some people may be willing to sell their country out of sheer greed, but he may belong to any community...". He is confident of India's potential to become a super power.

(Source: The Hindustan Times, 13 September, 2000)

Raashid Paul

On Female Foeticide in the Valley

In the last a few years, female foeticide is finding an increasing favour in Valley.

... The general belief is that women opt for this barbarian action out of compulsion. The fact, however, is contrary to this. There is usually no pressure from the in-laws as is often held forth as the main cause for this practice. Women, according to a reliable survey, have been found to be driven by their own preference for the male child. An inbuilt social mindset which generally views female child as a liability also spurs this decision.

A recently published project report titled 'Multi-dimensional Problems of Women in the Kashmir Valley' sponsored by Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, and supervised by a leading sociologist Dr. Bashir A. Dabla also endorses this view. The report says that women in Kashmir opt for this ... practice voluntarily... The report, however, underlines a sharp polarization in the society... While a sizeable group of women favour female foeticide, rest of the society strongly opposes it...

The study also ... reveals the discrimination against girl-child...

(Source: The Greater Kashmir, 16 August, 2000)

Ashok Das

Masarrat Forgotten: Marriages Continue

Masarrat is hardly remembered today. Four years ago, as an emaciated girl of 14, she seized the nation's conscience as a victim of "Arab marriages". In two months, she was married to three Arabs, all of her grandfather's age. And when arrangements were being made by her father and stepmother to marry her off again, she lodged a complaint. "**It is not marriage, it's forced prostitution**". Masarrat had told the police then.

Today, not even the Department of Minority Welfare, the Wakf Board and the NGOs that took up her cause know where she is and what she is doing. In Hyderabad, (Arab marriages) continue as poverty and illiteracy dominate the landscape. In the name of family reputation, the helpless girls are told to shut up and bear... The number of Arabs visiting Hyderabad has fallen in recent times because of the economic recession in the Gulf. The Wakf Board has no records regarding the number of marriages. But brokers in the Old City areas here say that on an average, 20 such marriages are performed in the Old City every month as against 60 to 70 marriages earlier.

Police officials say that matters come to light only when the girl-victim comes forward to lodge a complaint. The Arabs arrive at Hyderabad on a short trip, drive straight to the homes of the brides pre-fixed by brokers, and are married soon after. The parents are paid amounts ranging between Rs.10,000 to Rs.50,000. They take their bridges to their hotel rooms and dump these hapless after a week or so, and then catch flight home...

This exploitation has made the girls as well as their parents wary... (Source: The Hindustan Times, 17 August, 2000)

Indian Wives and Half-Arab Children in Kozhikode

... Hundreds of poor Muslim women in Kozhikode, most of whom are still in their thirties, the only lasting gain from their brief marriages to ageing Arabs are the offspring.

There are hundreds of distinctly Arab-looking boys and girls – whose fathers live in memory or a rare fading photograph or an old letter – in the slum-like hovels of Kozhikode... Favoured by visiting Arabs for seasonal sex and companionship for many decades...

In the past few decades, Kerala witnessed a Gulf boom and increased interaction with the Arab countries. (From) the rich dhow-owning Arab businessmen (to) deck-hand, khalasi and menial worker in Arab gear (apart from) visiting Arabs... Girls, invariably in their teens, were available aplenty thanks to the huge dowry and other demands on their parents from local grooms... Hundreds of (deserted) women with similar tales ... look out into the sea. (Many have lost hope).

(Source: The Indian Express, 15 August, 2000)

Sikh Leader S.S. Mann on Sikh Identity and Grievances

Lok Sabha, 17 August, 2000

... The ultra nationalist Right Wing forces have (now) taken control of this country. It may be the BJP or the Congress. There is no difference between these two parties as far ... ultra nationalism is concerned...

(In) 1984 ... at that time, though Indira Gandhi gave orders to the Indian Army to enter the Golden Temple, the BJP said that it should have been done some six months before. In 1984, the Sikh relics from the Golden Temple were taken away by the Indian Army. Since then we have had so many Prime Ministers ... but those relics have not been returned...

As far as the Sikh massacre of 1984 is concerned, the hoodlums who perpetrated this heinous crime are still at large. No party, whether it be the BJP or the Congress, has taken any action against (them)... I fail to understand that if the BJP is for the Minorities, then why are these hoodlums still at large? (This) pains me. It pained me when the Babari Masjid was ... razed to the ground... The BJP (was) then ruling the State and the Central Government of P.V. Narasimha Rao did nothing about it, it simply fiddled and kept quiet. This nexus ... is very shameful.

On the passage of the Uttaranchal Bill, the Sikhs were pained because they felt that the Udham Singh Nagar should not have gone to the Uttaranchal. The BJP and the NDA supported the Bill and they proposed it. The Congress seconded its proposal...

Many Sikhs have been in jail since 1984... Article 21 of the Indian Constitution mentions that there shall be a speedy trial. But ... there has been no trial for the Sikh prisoners. Advani had promised that the Sikh detainees would be released but (his promise) has remained only on paper.

There are fake encounters against the minorities. People are caught and not brought to justice but killed. That has happened to the Sikhs. It has happened to the Muslims... You find that the state of India is not at peace with any of its minorities. Look at the peripheral State of Punjab that has become an army cantonment; look at Kashmir that is an army cantonment; and look at the North-East that is an army cantonment. This sort of things scares us.

We are very very unhappy and insecure... We are a religious minority and also a linguistic minority. We have our population in the border State of Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and in Jammu and Kashmir. But Punjabi is not taught in any of these States and the minorities there are not getting their fair share of justice and their Constitutional rights. We now see that ultra-

nationalist feelings are coming into our bureaucrats and our military officers. Most of them, when they retire, invariably want to join the BJP and the RSS-sponsored parties. We face a danger that like in Fiji we are going to be demographically upset from the influx of imported labour in Punjab. They are being given ration cards and allowed to vote. It is painful to feel that the Sikhs in their own State would become a minority in times to come.

There is the Human Rights Commission and there is the Minorities Commission but they do not have any teeth. They cannot punish any person. The Human Rights Commission cannot go into any case which is more than two years old. But the atrocities and the perpetration of genocide that has taken place against the Sikh people is of much earlier times. I would advise the Home Minister to put some teeth into the Human Rights Commission so that we can get justice.

We want to protest that ... under Article 25 of the Constitution (the Sikhs) are clubbed with the Hindus. In the Hindu Marriage Act, we are clubbed with the Hindus. We are a separate people; we have a separate language; a separate religion; a separate culture; and a separate dialect; and we want the Parliament to change the law and say that we are a separate people.

... When I recently visited Canada and USA (many) Sikhs complained that they were on the blacklist and do not get visas. This is something that perturbs me... I wish that the vengeance against the Sikhs ... ceased and they were respected and brought on at par with the majority community.

(Contd. from Page 456)

hurdles...

Of course, even if these reforms become part of Muslim Personal Law, that is only half the battle won. One of the biggest handicaps that women in the community have had to reckon with is their own disempowerment. Not only are their literacy levels abysmal, their participation in the workforce is much lower than that of their counterparts in other communities. This being the case, it is not surprising that many have been cheated even of their traditional rights. Therefore, legal reform should rightly be only one part of a reform project that seeks to ensure a better existence for the Muslim women... The world has changed. There is no reason that when Muslim nations like Pakistan and Bangladesh have introduced laws that have controlled polygamy and made relations within marriage more equitable, women here have to inhabit a medieval world dominated by the three 'C's — the *choolah*, the *chaddar* and the *chardewaari*. □

M.K. Rasgotri: Report on Visit to Pakistan (31 July – 7 August, 2000)

Cordiality and respectful attention ...greeted my group of five retired Indian diplomats in the media, at political meetings and social gathers, in artistic and academic circles and in private homes in Islamabad and Lahore between July 31 and August 7. At the people's level there is widespread desire for peace and friendship with India, strong feelings on the Kashmir question in some quarters notwithstanding.

Perhaps, (there is) growing awareness of a new trajectory of risk inherent in relentless tension and conflict between two nuclear-armed neighbours... They want nuclear menace contained through cooperative management of mutual deterrence... (They) want resumption of dialogue with India to avert danger of war...

We freely aired our view that terrorist violence would not lead to a solution of the complex Kashmir problem and India will not be coerced into talks under threat of violence. This was not contested; and few gave credence to the myth propagated by Islamabad that Pakistan's support for the "Kashmiri's struggle" is merely moral, political and diplomatic. Among thoughtful people there is some worry about the likely effects, on their own society, of their state's sponsorship of violence in its neighbourhood.

The press in Pakistan is free; and eminent intellectuals do, now and then, commend peaceful and pragmatic approaches to the Kashmir problem...

Pakistan's economy is in shambles... There is growing scepticism about the military's ability to restore economic health. Drastic reduction in military expenditure, peace and multi-faceted economic cooperation with India could help revive the economy, but these options run counter to the jihadist policy of the state authorities.

Jihad organisations, the Jamait-e-Islami, Harkat and other armed gangs have acquired some street power but little genuine political clout. They are controlled by the ISI and their activities are conducted under its benign gaze...

Despite the numerous madarsas and terrorist training centres scattered across Pakistan, the country's society with its large aristocratic upper crust, it is highly sophisticated elite and its progressive younger generation, stands in no danger of being Talibanised. Like in India, in Pakistan also, the people with all their religious and traditional moorings, are in search of a modern future in a fast changing world...

The military government's performance thus far has been lack-lustre and return to democratic rule is inevitable. It can happen sooner than the three-year period allowed General Musharraf by the Supreme Court. For one thing,

the military's rise to political power was more a case of happenstance than the result a well-prepared plan... For another reason, the country's problems are too complex to be resolved without popular participation in governance. Besides, General Musharraf, whom I met for an hour on August 7 did not strike me as a man who would truly relish a military dictator's role. For the time being, though, he is firmly in the saddle and enjoys the loyalty and solid support of the armed forces... New political favourites are coming to the fore...

There is a pretty general feeling of envy for India's democracy and the fact that except for a brief period of the Emergency in the '70s no crisis of any kind has been allowed to interrupt its unfettered functioning. Civilian control over the armed forces and the latter's willing submission to the civil authorities also evoke much admiration. The quality and calibre of our leaders are favourably commented upon...

(Source: The Pioneer, 24 August, 2000)

Facilitate Repatriation of Malyalis to India Shahabuddin to HM Advani, 21 August, 2000

I have taken note of the plea for the facilitation of visits to India by Pakistani nationals of Malyali origin made to the President jointly by some MP's. These persons have been residing in Pakistan for many years. Many of them are advanced in age and they would like to return to their native land for good.

This is a common problem faced by many Pakistanis of Indian origin from other parts of the country whose immediate families continue to be divided. Some had left India at the time of partition not knowing what the future had in store for them and without understanding the full implications of their migration for their family. Some had opted for service in Pakistan and had hoped that on retirement they would come back home.

When I was in the Ministry, in some cases the MHA/MEA had agreed to grant of long-term visas, or annual extension of visa to such aged persons who had returned to India for good and had even applied for Indian citizenship.

From the humanitarian point of view the government may consider the possibility of grant of long-term visas to such old persons, say above 65, who no longer lead an active life, who have not come to any adverse notice and who have immediate blood relations living in India who would look after them. This would mean a more peaceful death for them in their original habitat, with their surviving relations around them.

I request you to consider this proposal sympathetically. □

The Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders The United Nations, New York, August 28 – 31, 2000 Commitment to Global Peace

Humanity stands at a critical juncture in history, one that calls for strong moral and spiritual leadership to help set a new direction for society. We, as religious and spiritual leaders, recognize our special responsibility for the well-being of the human family and peace on earth.

Whereas the United Nations and the religions of the world have a common concern for human dignity, justice and peace;

Whereas we accept that men and women are equal partners in all aspects of life and children are the hope of the future;

Whereas religions have contributed to the peace of the world but have also been used to create division and fuel hostilities;

Whereas our world is plagued by violence, war and destruction, which are sometime perpetrated in the name of religion;

Whereas armed conflict is a dire tragedy for the human lives ruined and lost, for the larger living world, and for the future of our religious and spiritual traditions;

Whereas no individual, group or nation can any longer live as an isolated microcosm in our interdependent world, but rather all must realize that our every action has an impact on others and the emerging global community;

Whereas in an interdependent world peace requires agreement on fundamental ethical values;

Whereas there can be no real peace until all groups and communities acknowledge the cultural and religious diversity of the human family in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding;

Whereas building peace requires an attitude of reverence for life, freedom and justice, the eradication of poverty, and the protection of the environment for present and future generations;

Whereas a true culture of peace must be founded upon the cultivation of the inner dimension of peace, which is the heritage of the religious and spiritual traditions;

Whereas religious and spiritual traditions are a core source of the realization of a better life for the human family and all life on Earth;

In light of the above, and with a view to discharging our duty to the human family, we declare our commitment and determination:

1. To collaborate with the United Nations and all men and women of goodwill locally, regionally and globally in the pursuit of peace in all its dimensions;
2. To lead humanity by word and deed in a renewed commitment to ethical and spiritual values, which include a deep sense of respect for all life and for each person's inherent dignity and right to live in a world free of violence;
3. To manage and resolve non-violently the conflicts

generated by religious and ethnic differences, and to condemn all violence committed in the name of religion while seeking to remove the roots of the violence;

4. To appeal to all religious communities and ethnic and national groups to respect the right to freedom of religion, to seek reconciliation, and to engage in mutual forgiveness and healing;
5. To awaken in all individuals and communities a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family as a whole and a recognition that all human beings – regardless of religion, race, gender and ethnic origin – have the right to education, health care, and an opportunity to achieve a secure and sustainable livelihood;
6. To promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations, eradicating poverty and reversing the current trend towards a widening gap between rich and poor;
7. To educate our communities about the urgent need to care for the earth's ecological systems and all forms of life and to support efforts to make environmental protection and restoration integral to all development planning and activity;
8. To develop and promote a global reforestation campaign as a concrete and practical means for environmental restoration, calling upon others to join us in regional tree planting programs;
9. To join with the United Nations in the call for all nation states to work for the universal abolition of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction for the safety and security of life on this planet;
10. To combat those commercial practices and applications of technology that degrade the environment and the quality of human life;
11. To practice and promote in our communities the values of the inner dimension of peace, including especially study, prayer, meditation, a sense of the sacred, humility, love, compassion, tolerance and a spirit of service, which are fundamental to the creation of a peaceful society.

We, as religious and spiritual leaders, pledge our commitment to work together to promote the inner and outer conditions that foster peace and the non-violent management and resolution of conflict. We appeal to the followers of all religious traditions and to the human community as a whole to cooperate in building peaceful societies, to seek mutual understanding through dialogue where there are differences, to refrain from violence, to practice compassion, and to uphold the dignity of all life.

Vladimir Radyuhin on Russia's Coming Debacle in Chechnya

While no one has claimed responsibility for the (recent bomb blasts in Moscow), Russian authorities have strong reasons to suspect a Chechen connection. The blast went off exactly a year after hundreds of militants from Chechnya invaded neighbouring Dagestan with a declared purpose of setting up an independent Islamic state spanning both regions. Shortly after the rebels were driven back to Chechnya, a spate of devastating bomb attacks rocked Russian cities killing nearly 300 people. Moscow blamed the bombings on Chechen terrorists, although it is yet to prove the charge. (Russian) launched a large-scale ground offensive to recapture Chechnya, which it had surrendered to separatists in 1996 after two years of bloody war.

Today Russia is as far from subduing Chechnya... The second Chechen campaign has turned out to be a carbon copy of the first war that Russia lost. Federal forces, currently numbering 80,000, have occupied the whole of Chechnya, except for a tiny mountainous part in the south, but their control of the small region, which is only 160 km long and 100 km wide, is nominal... Chechen guerillas ... rely on widespread support of the local population. During the day they are peaceful civilians and in the night they plant mines and mount lightning attacks on Russian garrisons. The textbook guerilla tactics have proved quite effective... During the twelve months of hostilities in Dagestan and Chechnya, Russia has lost 10,370 men, killed or wounded, 10 per cent of the military force deployed in the region at the peak of the operation.

Moscow (claims) that only 2,000 militants, three-fourths of whom were foreign mercenaries, were still active in Chechnya. The proportion of foreigners appears to be grossly exaggerated... Anyway, the figure represents only a small core of seasoned fighters... For major operations, rebel commanders mobilise hundreds and sometimes thousands of well-armed, battle-ready fighters to achieve local manpower superiority and launch punishing attacks on military units...

Continued rebel attacks on military convoys have forced the Russian forces to adopt an increasingly immobile and defensive posture. They sit in hundreds of fortified garrisons scattered across Chechnya, awaiting attack every night and not knowing for certain where the enemy is...

"Unfortunately, we are making the same mistakes again," the former deputy chief commander in Chechnya, General Vladimir Shamanov, said in a recent interview. "Events in Chechnya are unfolding according to the worst possible scenario and all victorious reports from the region are just a pack of lies."

The Russian President, Vladimir Putin, who has been the driving force in a year-long offensive, insists

there will be no replay of the 1996 withdrawal from Chechnya... Putin concedes the need to seek a political solution to the conflict. Moscow has relied on Chechen collaborators to bring peace to the region. But all attempts to set up local militia have fallen through and Moscow-appointed Chechen administrators have failed to persuade militants to lay down arms.

... Kremlin has refused to talk to the Chechen ... President, Aslan Maskhadov, on the grounds that he has joined hands with the "terrorists". Analysts said it was another mistake...

Meanwhile, public support for the Chechen war ... for the first time fell below the 50 per cent mark - 49 per cent backed the war (in July), down from 55 per cent in June and 73 per cent in March...

Gen. Manilov, whose numerous deadlines for ending rebel resistance in Chechnya have failed to materialise, has recently promised that by the year-end "the crime incidence in Chechnya will be no higher than in other parts of Russia".... His forecast (may) still come true if terrorist attacks across Russia escalate to the same level as in Chechnya.

(Source: The Hindu, 13 August, 2000)

•• Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan MQM Chief Altaf Hussain's Views

... Unfortunately, in Pakistan, the ISI is not answerable to anyone and is above law. A top Tehrik-e-Istiqal leader Air Marshal (retd.) Asghar Khan filed a petition in Supreme Court against the involvement of the ISI in politics and distribution of funds belonging to the national exchequer to politicians of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad, Jamaat-e-Islami and others. However, the Court has taken no cognisance...

... The rule of Punjabi establishment and their hegemony over Pakistan has ruined the country. Ethno-linguistic minorities, including the Sindhis, Mohajirs, Pakhtoons, Balochs, Seraikis and minorities in smaller provinces feel insecure and deprived. This deprivation may (become) a threat to national integration. ... The junta government ... is scared of losing its hegemony over smaller provinces...

(Source: The Pioneer, 27 August, 2000)

Islamic Instruction in China

... 10 Islamic institutes have been set up for graduating Imams for mosques, and other Dawah activists. More than 30,000 Qur'an schools have been opened at various mosques for the purpose (of) memorizing the Holy Qur'an, as well as (acquiring) religious knowledge and (learning) Arabic.

... Arabic being the language of the Qur'an (is) spreading among the new generation of Chinese Muslims who have stuck to their Islamic identity and faith.

(Source: Radiance Viewswkly, 27 August - 2 September, 2000)

Chronology of the Month

(16 August – 15 September, 2000)

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

BJP: *President elect B. Laxman calls upon BJP cadre to reach out to Muslims to improve electoral prospects (27 Aug). Statement received with skepticism and suspicion by Muslim leadership and secular forces. His 10-point programme for deprived groups does not include Muslim.

*VHP and Shiv Sena oppose BJP's new line.

*Congress condemn it as poll gimmick and opportunism.

*Laxman reiterates Hindutva ideology and permanent commitment with Ayodhya and other issues, not on NDA Agenda (31 Aug).

*Vajpayee claims BJP's identity is separate from RSS (2 Sept). In New York reiterates his permanent membership of the RSS (9 Sept). Secular parties protest and seek clarification. Clarification rejected, even by RSS spokesman.

*Vajpayee tightens his grip over BJP in selecting office-bearers (11 Sept).

Government: *PM Vajpayee addresses UN Millennial Summit in New York and pays official visit to USA; addresses VHP meeting in New York and US Congress. All speeches focus on Pakistan's adoption of terrorism as State policy. CTBT not signed; sanctions not lifted.

*VHP Sadhus and nominees form part of Indian delegation to unofficial Religious Summit in New York (28 Sept). Some MP's protest.

NDA: *Mamata Banerjee demands President's rule in W. Bengal but rules out quitting NDA (24 Aug). NDA delegation suggests declaration of troubled districts as Disturbed.

*TDP opposes saffronisation of education (14 Sept).

*JD(U) on thrashed of split. Paswan to form new party.

Constitutional Review: Commission records little progress (28 Aug). Punjab demands autonomy.

Census: *TDP leader and other MP's demand Caste Census (18 Aug).

Small States: Ajit Singh's campaign for Harit Pradesh out of UP picks up. Purvanchal and Bundelkhand movements also gain momentum.

*Demand for Vidarbha, Telengana, Sikkim-Darjeeling also raised.

Electoral Reform: *CPM question EC's competence to deregister parties (18 Aug).

*Government decides not to change State-wise distribution of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats upto 2025 but to rationalize size of Constituencies in States.

*CEC Gill asks for early resolution of pending issues like control on Poll Officials (12 Sept).

Reservation: *Rajya Sabha passes Constitution amendment to reduce qualification for SC/ST (17 Aug).

PIO - Fiji: *Ex-PM Mahendra Choudhury visits India and leaves empty handed. Interim Government of Fiji

questions Choudhury's loyalty (24 Aug).

*Government sets up panel to review status of and policy towards PIO's (1 Sept).

UN Summit: *Pledges concerted action against international terrorism (9 Sept).

Pakistan: Vajpayee rejects dialogue with Pakistan until it stops support to terrorism in the name of Jihad (8 Sept).

Religious Minorities: *MP's voice concern over persecution of minorities in Lok Sabha. In reply HM Advani omits Surat (17 Aug).

*US State Dept. raps India over treatment of minorities (6 Sept).

*US Congress opens Special Session to hear Vajpayee with Vedic invocation (14 Sept).

Veerappan Affair: S.C. refuses to authorise release of TADA detainees and withdrawal of cases as part of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka's deal with Veerappan (29 Aug). Asks State Government to quit if it can't handle law and order.

Population Control: Maharashtra introduces 2 child norms and penalties for third child (4 Sept). Muslims feel targeted.

Human Rights: *SC rules out deadline for custodial torture cases (5 Sept).

*NHRC directs AP to pay compensation for custodial death after torture, UP Government for death of undertrial due to police negligence, UP Government for detention of innocent persons, Karnataka for death in police custody; notices J&K and Union for missing persons

ISI: *UP police claims discovery of ISI base in UP and a new militant outfit. *Some more persons belonging to Deendar Anjuman arrested in Maharashtra, AP and Kerala. *Senior Congress leader Tayyab Husain, now Minister in Rajasthan accused by VHP of linkage with ISI. CM orders inquiry.

KASHMIR QUESTION

Government: *Advani says Government open to talks with all militants, who give up violence and terror (17 Aug).

*Vajpayee blames Pakistan for derailing peace process (17 Aug).

*Defence Minister Fernandes rules out hot pursuit (26 Aug).

Sangh Parivar: *RSS opposes second cease-fire; counsels emergency and war (25 Aug).

*RSS presses for trifurcation (27 Aug). Hizb opposes division on communal lines (20 Aug).

*VHP advocates war against militants (22 Aug).

*BJP N.C. endorses J&K Policy (28 Aug). Other

Parties: *A.B. Hindu Mahasabha demands abrogation of Article 370 and resettlement of displaced Pandits (10 Sept).

*Ex-MHA M.M. Sayeed calls for unconditional talks with Pakistan (3 Sept).

Congress: *Lok Sabha Resolution for judicial probe in killing of Amarnath pilgrims lost (22 Aug).

*SP demands air strikes against training camps in Pakistan.

Hurriyat: *Reiterates idea of tripartite talks (19 Aug). Rejects suggestion to have separate talks between India and Pakistan. Differences surface between Geelani and Ishaq (28 Aug).

*OIC recognises Hurriyat as representative of Kashmir people.

Hizb: *Dismisses spokesman Quraishi; Dar section in Kashmir calls for another cease-fire (22 Aug). Tries to rope in other militants (24 Aug). Hizb sticks to tripartite talks. Salahuddin backs Dar against Geelani (25 Aug). Hizb opposes dialogue within Indian Constitution (12 Sept). Pak J.I. takes over Hizb (10 Sept).

*Opposes and stops Census 2001 in J&K.

Militancy: Offices and camps selectively targeted. Lashkar's suicide squads in operation (12 Sept).

*Hafiz Ansari survives second attack (1 Sept).

*Lashkar enforces 'purdah', wants TV relays and beauty parlours to close (8 Sept).

*Ex-Army Chief S.R. Chowdhury proposes internationalization of LoC (20 Aug).

*Vajpayee Habibullah, IAS, sees autonomy along way to resolve crisis (2 Sept).

Others: *PPF leaders propose semi-sovereign status for J&K (2 Sept). Hizb opposes (3 Sept).

Foreign Reaction - Pakistan: *CEO Musharraf at Special UN Summit calls for intervention of Security Council (7 Sept). Canvasses for US mediation. Asks for more pressure on India (8 Sept).

USA: *US asks Pakistan to create conducive situation for dialogue (14 Sept).

UK: *Home Secretary Straw supports bilateral negotiation (8 Sept).

China: *Proposes Pakistan's involvement in Kashmir solution (11 Sept).

Maldives: *President Qayoom calls for direct talks (22 Aug).

Human Rights: *NHRC seeks report on Sopore killings (22 Aug). *J&K. to pay Rs. 2 lakh as interim relief for custodial death (30 Aug).

Pandian Commission: *SP, Anantnag, blames army for killing of 5 innocent persons. Commission records evidence of 50 witnesses (30 Aug).

BABARI MASJID QUESTION

Political Development: *In his speech in New York, Vajpayee promises VHP to construct Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, if he get 2/3 majority (9 Sept).

*UP BJP President Kalraj Mishra visits Ayodhya for Darshan and blessings of VHP-related Sants (1 Sept).

CBI Case: *Allahabad H.C. hears revision petition by the accused (24 Aug), orders deferral of hearing by another 6

weeks (14 Sept).

Liberhan Commission: *Former CM Kalyan Singh fails to turn up (18 Aug). Files petition with Delhi H.C. for quashing summons (22 Aug). Commission adjourns hearing to 22 Sept (4 Sept). Hearing of writ filed by Kalyan Singh and 24 Ministers of his cabinet postponed (14 Sept).

Title Suit: *AIMPLB decides not to produce more witnesses. H.C. reserves orders.

VHP: *Plans Model Yatra from Jaipur to Ayodhya. Congress asks GOI to clarify stand.

*Reiterates resolve to begin construction, without waiting for court order and 'even if NDA government falls' (12 Sept). Speeds up work on pillars.

*BMMCC asks Government to take note of VHP's plans (29 Aug).

*UP Government appoints experts to advise on facelift for Ayodhya (10 Sept).

OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN

AMU: *Agra Police arrests BUMS final student Abdul Mubeen (3 Sept). Charges him with involvement with ISI and sabotage. SIMI denies connection. Students Struggle Committee holds dharna. IB Inspector Rajan Sharma manhandled (6 Sept). VC rusticates 4 students named by administration.

*UP authorities launch propaganda campaign against AMU and press VC to close University. Staff Association and EC oppose move.

*Muslim leaders visit Campus. University continues to function normally.

*Stage managed students unrest on denial of admission tapers off.

Personal Law: *S.C. Constitution Bench hears cases relating to Muslim Divorcees Act, 1986 (29 Aug). AIMPLB is represented.

*Central Government seeks views of states on amendment to Hindu Secession Act, 1956 on property rights of daughters (29 Aug).

*NHRC proposes raise of maintenance under Section 125 to Rs. 5000 (11 Sept).

*GS AIMPLB emphasises need for Dar-ul Qaza for cheap and expeditious justice (27 Aug).

*Muslim Women's Forum calls for codification of Muslim Personal Law (23 Aug).

Communal Violence: *In its Report on Communal Situation in Gujarat, the NCM holds VHP and Bajrang Dal responsible and recommends higher representation of Muslims in police force and imposition of punitive fines (31 Aug). *Maharashtra sets up STF to implement Sri Krishna Report (31 Aug).

*Mathura returns to normal, curfew lifted (22 Aug). Communal Violence in Nanded. Curfew clamped (13 Sept).

UP Religious Places Bill: *Some provisions referred to State for clarification (22 Aug). *V.K. Malhotra, MP calls for ban on construction of Madarsas in border districts.

CHRONOLOGY

Minorities Commission: *Rajasthan Minorities Commission seeks statutory status (13 Sept).

Education: *Congress MP E. Faleiro urges Government to implement recommendations of the National Steering Committee on Textbook Evaluation, 1991 (25 Aug).

Urdu: *CBSE reportedly agrees to include Urdu as optional subject for secondary level (31 Aug).

Haj: *Haj Committee holds Annual Haj Conference in Delhi. *MOS Panja promises Haj Bill in winter session (22 Aug).

Conversion: *DM, Meerut, orders magisterial inquiry into conversion of a Hindu family to Islam (17 Aug).

Infiltration: *SC asks Central Government to decide whether to repeal (DT) Act (28 Aug).

Reservation: *IUMI President Banatwalla in Lok Sabha demands reservation for Muslims in public employment.

Renaming: *Delhi HC asks Union to clarify stand on guidelines for renaming of roads (5 Sept).

Monuments: *Delhi H.C. serves notice on ASI regarding unauthorized construction in and near Begumpuri Masjid (2 Sept).

Cattle Menace: *Delhi H.C. asks Government to clarify stand on stray cattle (7 Sept).

Other Minorities: *Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh Delegations at World Peace Summit oppose right to propagate religion under 1948 UNDHR (2 Sept).

*Church and priest's residence attacked in Oghana (Udaipur) (31 Aug).

*President of SGPC sees need for separate Sikh Personal Law (20 Aug).

*Allahabad H.C. includes Sikh Jats in B.C. (25 Aug).

Muslim World - Central Asia: *IDSA Seminar on India-Central Asia considers India's policy directionless (12 Sept).

Palestine: *President Arafat visits India to explain PLO's stand on Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and Jewish settlements (18 Aug). *PM Barak offers state for peace (18 Aug). Palestinian National Council decides to defer proclamation of independence (13 Sept).

Pakistan: *Commonwealth considers military rule in Pakistan unacceptable.

Bangladesh: *Government decides to return property of Hindus seized in 1965 (3 Sept).

*PM Hasina's demand from Pakistan for apology affect bilateral relations (10 Sept).

Obituary: *Ex-Minister, Kerala, P.P. Umer Koya, 87, passes away in Kozhikode (1 Sept).

*Film Actor Mohd. Mukri, 78, passes away in Mumbai.

*Prof. Md. Aslam Khan, former HOD of Persian in Delhi University, passes away (16 Aug).

*Former J&K Minister Zainab Begum, 84, passes away in Srinagar (16 Aug).

Commemoration: *11th death anniversary of Sheikh Abdullah observed in Srinagar (9 Sept).

*Oxford University Centre for Islamic Studies announces Abul Hasan Ali Nadavi Scholarship (14 Sept).

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**THE ASSOCIATION
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